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Email Marketing

Background

If you're new to email marketing, we wrote this for you. It's a list of all the things you need to consider when you work on an email marketing project. We'll take you step-by-step through what it takes to get your email campaigns out the door. We will also cover why you need to consider this as part of your marketing strategy.

Email marketing should be treated like a full blown website project. The same basic methodology is needed: Discovery and Planning, Execution, and Follow-up. If you break your project down into these stages, you will experience fewer bumps in the road and will reap the rewards quicker.

What is it?

It is one of the cheapest and quickest ways of keeping your customers informed of what you are up to. If you are selling goods online this is the best way to let them know you have a new range or a sale.

With Email Marketing you can:

- Have customisable HTML emails (They look pretty)
- Create email campaigns for a specific purpose
- Schedule automatic delivery of a series of emails with Email Auto Responder
- Build, manage, and secure your email marketing contacts
- Send email marketing communications and be confident they'll get delivered
- Get results fast with instant tracking and reporting

More importantly it is a great way to build a relationship with your customers so that you are first in their mind when they need your goods or services. We can offer some very creative ideas for you if you're stuck!

How do you do it?

1. Decide what different types of email marketing you plan to send, whether it be a quarterly newsletter, new promotions, information newsletters, season clear outs, build credibility with free information, event invitations etc.

2. Pick an email service provider (ESP). Lots of good ones to choose from like Constant Contact, iContact, and MailChimp.
You want features like list management, with automatic bounce cleaning; email reports; built-in templates (or the ability to upload your own to edit).

3. Setup email accounts and aliases on your email server. You will probably want your email marketing to come from "newsletters@example.com" instead of "bob@example.com" Pick appropriate aliases, because you want this to be used consistently and long term (you'll be "training" spam filters to accept emails from this address).

3. Create a database and signup form that includes all relevant fields. Plan ahead, because these kinds of things are hard to add later. The sign up form should be integrated into your web site on every page. It should be simple to sign up and the information should go straight into your database without any manual work required.

4. Now the fun part. Designing and coding HTML email campaigns. Coding HTML email is like a trip back in time to the late 1990's. It's all table cells and well, more table cells. It's not like coding web pages. If you don't read all the secret little tips, tricks and hacks, your design will break in some of the major email apps. You might want to call in someone in who has experience in this area. Once you have a knack for designing and coding HTML emails, you're ready to get started designing!

Testing & Troubleshooting

When you're designing your HTML emails, you should test them in as many different email programs as possible. This is not like testing a web page in Firefox, then Internet Explorer, then Safari. There are about 2 dozen different email programs (Outlook, Lotus, Thunderbird, Apple Mail, etc) and webmail services (AOL, Gmail, YahooMail, Hotmail, etc) you should look at. You can install all those different email programs and sign up for all those different webmail services.

What are the rules?

Privacy policy - When you send email marketing, you usually host your list on a 3rd party site. You also tend to track opens and clicks, and you tend to link that activity back to the recipient. This is all standard, stuff in email marketing. You need to be upfront about this with your subscribers.

Op in opt out process – You need to make it as simple as possible for people to unsubscribe. If they do not want to be on the list they are missing out not you.

Don't make them too long – people like a good read but in digest, remember we are all busy. If you have further information, offer it on a link page or separate document. They can then choose to read it or not.

Don't just sell; offer something like your expertise in a certain area.

How will it benefit me?

Here are a few points:-

- Customer database building
- Instant contact with customers
- Cheapest way to market
- Customers already know who you are
- Confidence in your company

Time to Deliver!

When it's time to deliver, don't just hit the "send" button and move on to your next project. There's still work to be done. If it's your first email campaign (and it's going out to a large list), you may want to be around and on call when you deliver it (so long as it's not going out around 2am or something). Or at least have some staff ready at the time of send. Depending on the email campaign, you can get a lot of phone calls and replies back from their recipients, some positive, some not so positive. It can be a stressful time for a new email marketer.

The Follow up Phase

After your campaign has been sent, you can have access to your email marketing stats. You may want to set aside some time to go over your campaign reports, and discuss what it all means, and what stats you should keep an eye on for future campaigns. You may need to ask questions like, "How come my open rate was only 50%?" or "What does bounce rate mean?" and "What's a normal unsubscribe rate for my industry?"

Ongoing Consulting

After your email marketing project is over, there are opportunities for ongoing support. As you grow more confident with email marketing, you'll want to experiment with A/B testing, list segmentation and ROI tracking.

Conclusion

As you can see, an email marketing project can involve a lot more than slicing up a JPEG into HTML. It can be just as large, complex, and resource-intensive as a web development project.

But with the right methodology, a healthy dose of planning and testing, and the proper tools, you'll be a pro in no time at all.

For more information on our Email Marketing packages or to get some friendly professional help give us a call on **(01522) 822520** or visit our website.