Secrets to Successful Email Marketing

Reports of the decline and pending demise of email have been greatly exaggerated. Sure, our inboxes may be more clogged than ever before. But that only drives us to work harder to separate the "spam" from the messages we want.

Email as a communication and marketing channel is as strong as ever. Our mission—and your job as a marketer—is to create and sustain a place in the minds and inboxes of your prospects, customers, partners and other key constituents such that they look forward to, anticipate, accept and respond to your email marketing.

The following pages provide a variety of recommendations to improve your strategy, approach and tactics for a variety of variables, stages and specifics in your email marketing campaigns.

Matt Heinz
President, Heinz Marketing Inc.
matt@heinzmarketing.com

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Eight Tips For Better Email Subject Lines

The job of an envelope in direct mail isn't to close the sale or generate a call. In most cases, the job of the envelope is to get you to open the envelope.

The subject line of your email is really no different. Add enough information, context or interest to gain the click. Here are eight specific tips to make your subject lines better.

1. Tease

Please don't confuse an effective tease with bait and switch. Whatever you imply in the tease had better be reflected fully in the body of the email. But giving a hint of what's to come is a great way to build interest, anticipation and action.

2. Personalize

The same subject line for all recipients often fails to engage and drive the action and response you want. Personalization also doesn't only apply to first names and company names. Speak to the recipient's industry, an upcoming event they're attending, or something else they care about.

3. Be Specific

A tease that's too ambiguous can still go well over the recipient's head. Be specific enough with your copy that the reader fully understands what you mean, what you're talking about, and what you likely have in store from them after the open.

4. Prioritize

Use the most important words or subject matter as close to the front of the subject line as possible. The farther out you go, the less likely the recipient is to read it and the more likely the email client will truncate it (especially if the subject line is being read on a mobile device).

5. Use Numbers

If you're offering advice, tell the reader how many tips the email includes. Copy such as "Three pitfalls" always drives more response than "Common pitfalls".

6. Watch Your Length

Try to keep the subject line below 50 characters. Bonus points for 35 or fewer.

7. The "From" Line Should Be from A Real Person

Please don't send your emails from the company. Or a generic alias (such as sales@companyname.com). Or, worse, an email address such as "do-not-reply@companyname.com). Emails from people (even if they're made up) are 23 percent more likely to get opened than emails from nonentities. (This isn't really subject line related per se, but it's important)

8. Test

Whenever possible, test variations of your subject line to get optimal open rates in subsequent sends and campaigns. Although emails offer a wide variety of variables to test, subject lines are among the fastest and easiest to test, and also offer the highest potential to increase overall conversion and impact (since they're near the top of the email-specific funnel).

Let's face it, nobody likes to buy software. It's a means to an end, and often the path from cost to revenue impact isn't always clear. Even with marketing automation software, whose inherent intention is to make your marketing efforts both more streamlined (lower cost) and more effective (higher sales pipeline output), it can be difficult to carve out the dollars necessary to get rolling.

If others in your group or organization need convincing to give marketing automation software a go, here are nine proven ways to get the thumbs-up.

1. Do The Math

Demonstrate quantifiably what a lift in some of your key response and sales pipeline metrics could do to sales and revenue growth. Don't just talk about automating marketing. Doing more with less is interesting, but not nearly as interesting as increased response, higher volumes of engaged, sales prospects for your sales team, larger qualified sales pipelines to work with, and more monthly/quarterly closed business. Build a simple model that demonstrates the impact of improvement at a handful of key funnel points your organization already has a focus on.

2. Show The Math From Others

Use the marketing automation vendors you're talking with to gather examples and case studies of how other companies have already done what you're modeling. Especially look for companies that look close to you—online businesses, B2B businesses, SaaS businesses, etc.

3. Think About Customer Retention In Addition To Acquisition

There's no reason you need to justify marketing automation purely based on new customer acquisition. Most software suites can manage the entire customer lifecycle, including early-customer onboarding, behavior and usage-based communication scenarios and more. The result is higher engagement, lifetime value and referral potential—all of which can also be modeled into your before-and-after ROI.

4. Show Samples of Metrics/Reports Possible

Get your team excited about the specific metrics they could use on a regular basis to help manage the business. Marketo, for example, has developed a set of metrics and reports in their automation system that looks beyond traditional marketing metrics (clicks, opens, etc.) and instead looks at a set of revenue performance and prediction measures. These speak directly to current and future revenue potential within your wider prospect pipeline. I'm guessing your boss and executive team would love this kind of future sales and revenue visibility.

5. Outline Domain and Black List Risk

If you continue to do "batch and send" email marketing, vs. the more intelligent multi-track marketing that automation software systems enable, you're putting your entire company's reputation at risk with ISPs and email delivery watch lists. The risk of getting blacklisted is real and getting more likely for companies that aren't managing prospect relationships carefully. Make sure the organization understands this risk (not only to ongoing email marketing, but to the domain itself, corporate email deliverability, customer marketing, etc.)

6. More Email (Not Less)

The most common objection I hear to investing in marketing automation software is that the company's existing, batch-and-send strategies just need to get smarter. But usually, that just means harder and harder decisions about which messages and emails should go out to a prospect list that already gets way too much email. The more you send in bulk like this, the more your prospects will tune out... or unsubscribe. With more intelligent, multi-track automated marketing systems, you can actually increase your regular email volume while ensuring the right message gets to the right prospect at the right time. Higher volume, plus higher response rates, equals happiness for your sales team and executive team.

7. Long-Term Headcount Reduction

Some organizations have been able to model long-term headcount reductions in marketing as well as sales with successful marketing automation implementations. This doesn't mean eliminating roles in the organization immediately, but does mean that fewer marketing heads may be needed as the company continues to grow and more of the marketing execution is automated. Those eliminated future heads are meaningful to your CFO.

8. Impact On Inside Sales Performance

Your VP of Sales should be your strongest ally in pitching a marketing automation investment, as he or she should understand quantifiably what the likely impact would be on the team. Inside reps should have more qualified leads, leads that are ready to convert into and through the pipeline at a higher rate. Over time, fewer sales reps may be needed with higher individual productivity rates to achieve the same or higher sales outputs. Work with your sales counterpart to build this model and business case.

9. Don't Talk About Software

As I said at the beginning, nobody likes to buy software. And although that's what this is, it's not about that. Build your case based first on what it does, not what it is. Paint a picture of the success and outcomes you're trying to achieve, then once you have the entire team head-nodding in agreement, outline the solution.

Scaring Your Prospects Isn't Going To Make Them Buy

There are many ways to watch what your customers and prospects are doing, without them knowing it. Send an email campaign and you know who opened, who clicked, and what they ended up doing after the click. With the right software, you can see which companies (and even individuals) were on your site yesterday—including how long they were there, what they looked at, and so on.

This is valuable stuff. But too many companies use this insight to scare their customers. Not intentionally, at least not always. But if you tell me you're watching, that's just plain creepy.

A well-known marketing automation vendor has a particularly bad history of this. I'm not the only person who's visited their Web site, come back a few days later, only to get a phone call the next day from a sales rep who says "I saw you were looking at our pricing page yesterday and wanted to see if you had any questions."

The same company uses other scary sales tactics as well. A friend who runs marketing at a start-up got a voicemail from the vendor's sales rep. An hour later, the rep called the start-up's CEO to say he couldn't get ahold of the marketing VP, and wanted to confirm he had the right contact information.

I'm not sure who thought it was a good idea to use the "let's get his boss to pressure him into calling us back" tactic. But I can't imagine it works very well.

If you're watching my behavior, act on it. But don't be so obvious. Next time you send me an email, target it with information specific to what I was looking at on the Web site last time. If I was on the pricing page yesterday, maybe today's a good day to send me a short-term price-based incentive to purchase now.

Gathering intelligence about your prospects is important, but how you use that information is far more important. The set-up is nothing without proper execution and conversion.

How To Revive Dormant Newsletter Subscribers

With any email, newsletter or nurture campaign, there's going to be a sizeable portion of your list that just doesn't respond. They don't click and they rarely, if ever, open. So how do you get them to become more active again? The answer is more complicated than just a set of reactivation tactics.

First off, *make sure they're dormant and not dead*. And make sure you regularly clear out the dead.

Very few newsletter or nurture marketing managers actively clean their databases of regular hard-bounce addresses. If an email hasn't been delivered to a particular address for several sends in a row (meaning you get a hard-bounce back from the recipient's server), it's best to take that email out of future sends. Too many hard bounces will tell Internet service providers that you're a possible spammer, and can get the rest of your emails blocked.

Also, *don't assume that dormant means no value is being delivered*. Just because I didn't click doesn't mean I don't want the next issue. Just because I didn't engage this time doesn't mean I didn't appreciate a heads-up on whatever the content was. What if I was just too busy today? What if I really want that sweater but don't have any money until next payday?

Depending on the nature and objective of your email campaign, the quantity and quality of impressions you generate by putting another permission-based email in someone's inbox may be enough. At least for now. I assume that you, too, get plenty of email newsletters and don't read them all. Don't click on them all. Probably don't even open them all. But you definitely want to keep getting them, and there's a branded, contiguous relationship that still exists there. Healthy portions of your "dormant" subscribers are getting the same value from you today.

Of course, for those recipients who truly aren't paying as much attention, there are a few tactical things you can try as well.

First, consider changing the domain, IP address or even email service provider from which you're sending. These changes can make the email appear different to the hosting server, and can either help with deliverability or get that email out of the spam filter where it's been languishing for several issues now.

Also play with how the email appears to the recipient when first received in their inbox. Is the "from" name and address inviting? Are you using the same subject line over and over vs. highlighting some content that drives more opens?

Consider these and other more active/aggressive tactics to a segment of your list that you think might be dormant. If active subscribers already have you on their safe sender list, there's no reason to switch up the domain or IP address on them. But by testing these and other tactics on a subgroup of potentially dormant subscribers, you may find a mix of strategies and tactics that increase engagement and performance of the entire list in short order.

Thought this was a good question on Focus.com. Here are six tips:

1. Define "Engaging" (For You And The Recipient)

What is a successful outcome of the email? What do you want the prospect to do, and what does the prospect need from you at this moment? Have a specific definition of success or results, even for something this tactical.

2. Focus On The Subject Line

Subject lines are like envelopes in direct mail. If your prospect doesn't get past the envelope, it doesn't matter what's written or offered inside. Also, the job of the envelope isn't to close the sale. The job of the envelope is to get you to open the envelope. Don't use that as an excuse to overpromise or deceive the recipient, but focus on content and copy that will drive interest and action.

3. Write To Them (Not For You)

Simple things like not starting sentences like "I" and "we" are important, but in a broader sense your content needs to tie directly to a pain or need the prospect has. If your email is a follow-up to a recent conversation, reflect that up front and reiterate the value delivered or promised in that conversation.

4. Tie It To something THEY Did

Sales prospects are far more likely to respond to something they did vs. something you did for them. Their own actions and requests will have far more credibility, especially early in the sales process when you're still creating your own credibility and trust with the prospect. Tying back to something the prospect did or asked for will increase engagement and response rates.

5. Make A Request, Make It Specific and Urgent

Don't leave your email open ended. Tell the prospect exactly what you want them to do next if they're interested. Make it something easy, specific and quick to do. Your email is one of many they'll receive today, and will quickly get lost in their inbox. How easy are you making it for them to take action right now?

6. Don't Make It Look Like A Marketing Email

Beware of overproduced templates. Don't let the design get in the way of the message. Good design increases readability and engagement, but your sales prospect isn't going to respond to great email design. And they might in fact be turned off by something that looks too polished or like a template. Be clear, be clean, and be efficient (with copy as well as design).

Marketing Is A Game Of Inches

It's not good enough to say "we'll email our customers in the morning instead of the afternoon" or "Tuesday is the best day to send our newsletter." That's way too general.

What time, precisely, is the best time to send? What specific time Tuesday morning (local time for the recipient, not your time)? When are your customers specifically most receptive to your message?

Quick example:

I had been publishing new blog posts each weekday morning between 8:10 and 8:25 a.m. Pacific time. My assumption had been that I wanted to reach readers early, when they get into the office, and before they're consumed by the morning's priorities and fire drills.

Recently, I tested posting content closer to 8:45 a.m. We're talking about a mere 20–25 minutes later.

This small change lifted my immediate readership (measured by views and clicks within the first 60 minutes) by 65–90 percent (with the range reflecting a multi-day test).

One more quick example:

At a past job, while testing dozens of variables to increase conversion rate on a two-page registration form, the single-largest variable we discovered to lift conversion was changing the background color from white to light blue.

Details matter. What are yours?

Eight Common Mistakes With Transactional Email (And How To Fix Them)

They're often the least conspicuous emails we receive, but they're among the most profitable tools smart marketers have in their arsenal. The basic transactional email—order confirmations, shipping notifications, service updates, etc.—can drive click through rates more than three times that of commercial email, according to industry analysts.

And yet, in most organizations, transactional emails are an afterthought.

Recently, I presented a Webinar with WhatCounts, titled *Multiply Your Revenue Returns with Transactional Email*, in which I walked through several best practices and samples of good and bad transactional emails, including some best practices that can be leveraged immediately to improve response and revenue performance.

In addition to the best practices, there are several common mistakes many companies make with their transactional email—many simply because there's too little focus on leveraging them as proactive, intentional customer communication tools. Here are eight common mistakes we covered in the Webinar:

Marketing Doesn't Own The Email According to industry research, 53 percent of transactional emails are controlled outside of marketing. They're quickly written by customer operations, IT or another department with little thought to the message, intent and desired next action. Rectifying this ownership conflict alone (and folding transactional email into the purview of the core email marketing team) will put most organizations on the right path.

Under Communication There's a difference between commercial email (often about something we didn't ask for) and a transactional email about something we care about—our order, our account, the service levels we receive. As consumers, we want this information, and smart companies provide a lot of it. Yes, you can over communicate via email with your customers. But when it comes to the core of your relationship, and purchase behavior that the customer initiates, most companies aren't communicating enough.

Focusing Only On The Transaction Your customer bought something, and you send them a receipt. That's appropriate, but it's also too linear. What did they need it for? What else might they need? If they bought an appliance, would they like it delivered? If they bought a new HDTV, would they like to purchase installation and set-up services? Transactional emails are a great place to do contextual upselling at the point of purchase.

Not Paying Attention To Timing I'm so surprised when I receive an email confirmation for something I ordered long ago. And in Internet time, long ago means 20–30 minutes or more. If I just placed the order online, I'm still at my computer. I'm still thinking about that order. I might still be thinking about the things I left in the shopping cart for later. At this moment, I'm most likely to 1) read your email, and 2) take action on something related to that purchase that I also need.

Making It A One-Way Street Some companies and service providers apparently don't want to hear from you. They want your order, sure, but the "do not reply" in the email address makes it clear they want to talk at you, not with you. Every interaction with your customer is an opportunity to build brand preference, future purchase behavior, loyalty, and pass-along value. Make that interaction a one-way communication channel and you're missing the point, let alone the opportunity.

No Personality You've worked hard to create a consistent brand. Most of your marketing—your Web site, your advertising, your content strategy, your social media channels—all play a key, integrated role in reinforcing that brand. And then you get that transactional email—text-based, cold, from a corporate email address (that tells you not to reply, no less). Every touch point with your customer is a chance to reinforce their choice, confirm their decision to go with you, strengthen the bond you have with that customer today and tomorrow.

Hard To Read It's so incredibly clear when someone who isn't thinking about the customer experience writes transactional emails. They aren't thinking about what the customer wants to see, and what you want them to do next. If you send me a shipping notification, make sure the details I care most about (when my product will arrive, for example) are the most prominent thing on the page. Cross selling is fine, but if you bury the primary message, your response-driven transactional email might have the opposite impact you're looking for.

Not Enough Resources Let's say the marketing department in fact owns your transactional emails. I bet they get far less attention than your commercial emails. Few companies think about how to optimize transactional emails—A/B testing, trying different offers, and segmenting messages by different customer segments. If transactional emails are proven to drive significantly higher response rates than our other email campaigns, shouldn't the resources we put behind them be somewhat commensurate with that?

Is Context More Important Than Permission In Email Marketing?

I get a lot of junk mail at home. Some of it, though unsolicited, is actually valuable. If an advertiser was smart enough to map my interests with their products or services, I'm more likely to take a quick look. I didn't ask ESPN to send me that baseball-themed catalog, for example. But I still read through it and picked up a new t-shirt for the season ahead.

Email's not really that different. A clogged inbox is annoying, sure. I didn't give everybody a double opt-in. But if you're dumb enough to spam me about stuff I have no demonstrated interest in, you probably don't care about your relationship with me (or your reputation) anyway.

If you do care about both our relationship and your reputation, you learn enough about me to send me something targeted. Something meaningful. Something you know I'll look twice at before it's deleted. Heck, I might even open, click and engage.

Permission in marketing is still an important and coveted asset. It's the foundation of long-term relationships. But what about context? What about exploring the potential of a relationship with a customer who doesn't yet know you, but that you still treat with respect?

If I have a targeted email list, and a targeted and relevant offer, is that still spam? Or is it opportunity knocking?

I know my perspective, from the marketer's side, is biased. But I'm a consumer, too. And I read some of my spam.

When Are Your Customers Reading Their Email?

I'm writing this on a Sunday night. It's not yet the workweek, but I'm catching up on a few things and getting organized for my Monday nonetheless.

Do you do this? Do your customers and prospects do this? If they do, would tonight be a great time to hit them with an email?

It's not Monday morning yet; they're not being bombarded by fire drills and urgent requests. They're probably catching up on a few things with a glass of wine close-by.

The magical "Tuesday at 10:00 a.m." email marketing day and time isn't what it used to be. But if it was ever really effective, it was still a lazy way of emailing all your prospects at the same time. The better you understand the rhythm of their week, the more likely you are to reach them at the right time to improve your response rates.

Want to reach real estate agents? Email them Sunday afternoon. Many are working, sitting at open houses, bored.

Want to reach pastors? Avoid Fridays and Mondays, the typical days they take off after working on Sunday.

Want to reach executives during the workweek? Try hitting them at 5:10 p.m. They're likely done with their meeting schedule, and back at their office catching up. At their desk, watching their screen, looking directly at the email notification with your name on it that just popped up in the corner.

Of course, that assumes you hit them at 5:10 p.m. local time, which requires splitting your list by time zone.

More work to email this way? Yes. More likely to increase readership and response? Absolutely.

Take another look at how effective the timing of your email marketing is. Because how many emails are you really reading on Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.?

Doing Business With Your Out-Of-Office Emails

A client told me yesterday that they save my out-of-office auto-reply email messages. That's just cool. If you haven't yet emailed me when I'm traveling, my out-of-office (OOF) message includes the obligatory "where I am, when I'll be back" stuff but also has a set of 5–7 interesting sales, marketing or productivity articles I recommend reading in the meantime.

I've essentially turned my OOF messages into mini-newsletters, another way to create an impression with the people around me. (I stole this idea from Andy Sernovitz. Can't remember the specific context, but he was the inspiration.

I bet you could do the same for your business. At minimum, when you're traveling, put something a little more interesting into your out-of-office messages. It will take you less than a minute, and it'll stand out.

Better yet, think about how you might use this functionality in Outlook on a more regular basis.

For example, why wouldn't your customer service team have this feature on all the time? It could remind customers where they might be able to get an answer more quickly, point out new ways of getting their questions answered, even announce new features or upsell opportunities.

PR and investor relations folks could have something similar on anytime they're away from their desks for an extended period of time.

Think about your role, the people who contact you most often, and what you want them to know about you. What you want to say to them, if you knew they were listening right now.

Because that out-of-office message comes back right away, and you know they're at their desks, reading email, because they just sent you one. How will you leverage that opportunity?

Here's a recent sample:

Thanks very much for your email. I'm traveling to the Holiday Bowl (Go Dawgs!) and back on New Years Eve. Response to email and voicemail may be slower than usual. If this is urgent or an emergency, try my cell phone. Otherwise, I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

In the meantime, some light reading:

Ten productive ways to work in the last days of the year
http://bit.ly/eB1g2w

Six things to do instead of working today
http://bit.ly/eD5uKr

Eight cocktails to try in the New Year
http://bit.ly/fHYKQU

How to talk about your competitors
http://bit.ly/gWatVB

Hot stove baseball marketing ideas
http://bit.ly/ec9lKt

Seven bad habits of highly unsuccessful sales people
http://bit.ly/emSIvK

Thanks,
Matt

I'm not going to begrudge anybody for taking the four-day weekend off. But this weekend likely represents a significant sales and marketing opportunity in some B2B segments.

A report by Mashable showed that the majority of us are checking work email during holidays. I'd imagine that volume is significantly higher on a day like Black Friday, with overall inbound email significantly lower than the average workday. Would your message have a better likelihood of getting read this weekend?

You might not have any luck closing business or getting contracts signed the day after Thanksgiving, but what about getting commitment to attend a Webinar? What about finally getting that appointment scheduled?

The better you understand your customer, the more likely you'll be able to identify whether and how they'll be interested in speaking with you this weekend. If your customer or prospect works in retail or e-commerce, you better believe they're working (if from home) over the busy shopping weekend. Real estate agents and brokers will be back at it this weekend as well (and likely sitting in empty open houses on Sunday, bored, and willing to take a call).

In many cases, expecting prospects to take your call on a holiday weekend might not be realistic. But weekends like this might be your most productive with some well-placed, well-intentioned email.

Got this recently from Eloqua.Was very impressed with the whole approach, the copy, the respect built in, and the value-add at the end. Take a look and let me know what you think (reprinted with permission).

Subject Line: I'm afraid you don't qualify

Matt,

I noticed that you signed up for Eloqua's webinar on targeting and segmentation back in mid-March. Time flies, huh?

I'm following up to ask what prompted you to register for this event? Is Heinz Marketing LLC considering marketing automation to help solve the challenges discussed in the webinar?

Here's why I ask: I run marketing programs for Eloqua and I see that our lead scoring system didn't pass you on to our sales team for a follow-up call. It may have been your title (General Management—Chairman, CEO, President, Partner, Owner) or industry (Business Services), or because of non-activity. So, I thought I'd reach out and just ask.

If you or your colleagues are considering marketing automation, let me know and I'll connect you with a salesperson to better understand your challenges and map out some potential solutions. If not, no harm done—please continue to enjoy our free resources and toolkits! In fact, here is some additional information on targeting and segmentation that you might find helpful.

Thanks,

Jim

Anatomy Of A Better Pre-Event Email

I'm recently attended Dreamforce, and apparently a whole lot of companies knew that.

Two weeks prior to the event, I received literally dozens of emails from companies targeting Dreamforce attendees. It was an interesting study in different strategies, objectives and perspectives in engaging an audience before you (potentially) see them live at an event.

It's also helped me hone some specific best practices that could help each of these companies (and yours as well) drive greater response and performance from pre-event emails. Done right, these emails can increase success at the event as well as drive additional revenue opportunities before, during and after.

Here are four things I've specifically noticed and/or would recommend to drive greater performance.

Send Email from A Person, Not A Company I'm much more likely to open an email from a person (whose name is in the "from" line, whose email address shows up there, and who signed the email too) than an email from a company with an "info@" email address. I'm also much more likely to respond directly to an email from a person vs. a company (and would expect a reply from that person too, which hasn't happened consistently either).

Put Some News In The Subject Line I know you want me to meet with you. But that in the subject line isn't going to get me to engage. I've even seen subject lines in the past week that literally give the dates and location of the event. How is that driving open rates? Instead, use something to entice me. Tease a giveaway; give me a benefit worth stopping by to learn more about. You can't make a subject line communicate everything, and its main goal is to get the email opened, but start with something that gets my attention and piques my interest.

Get Me To Pre-Register For Something I really like the pre-event emails that allow me to self-select greater interest. They either invite me to a private briefing or to schedule when I'll stop by the booth. The majority of email recipients won't respond to this, but that's not the point. If you can get a handful of attendees committed to stopping by, your booth performance immediately is better than just hoping passers-by are the people you want to meet, and who want to meet you too.

But Don't Force Me To Commit As much as I prefer the pre-registration option above, I also don't want to commit. I have enough meetings planned for this week already, I don't necessarily want or need to schedule something when I can stop by anytime during open show floor hours. I may not want to commit, but that doesn't mean I'm less interested or less qualified.

A different tactic to engage prospects like this could be to simply have them pre-register for a visit without a specific time. Tell prospects you'll have a special gift reserved for them when they come, whenever that is. Then, have that list at the booth so you can fulfill that offer. This tactic gives you a registered list of more interested prospects, gives me (the attendee) more flexibility, but puts you at the top of my "need to visit" priority list for the show floor.

Don't Be So Short Sighted You can get really clever with your email subject line to increase open rates, but if the body copy and topic is inconsistent (or makes the subject line feel misleading), your click through rate and long-term reputation will suffer.

Treating every lead as if they're ready to buy might help you squeeze some additional sales out of the current month or quarter, but that will be at the expense of helping those customers buy down the road. Push them too hard now and they might not trust you later.

You can convince a wary prospect to sign up with a really low barrier to entry offer, but if they weren't a good match for your product or service to begin with they're going to waste a lot of your time, never be happy, and hurt your reputation with others who might have been happy, long-term customers.

You can cut a lot of corners and do a lot of interesting things to make your numbers look better today, this week, this month. But if you plan to be in business well beyond that short period of time, be sure you're not doing harm to your long-term reputation, response rates and sales opportunities in the process.

Great Email Response Tactic Or Going Too Far?

I received an email from Eloqua recently (click to enlarge for a closer look). I say "great" because I liked the creativity surrounding the way they got me to open and read it. But I'm wondering how effective it would ultimately be at scale, and whether it would do more harm than good.

The concept is essentially a forwarded email that looks like it is coming straight from one person to me. It's simple and brilliant. Adding a "FW:" at the beginning of the usual subject line, then actually forwarding an original email to me with a quick introduction, made the email look personal, and ensured that it explicitly did NOT look like the barrage of spam and one-to-many emails we all get. I'm guessing they got a high open rate on this.

That's why I like it. But I also wonder if, once people realize it's actually part of a mass campaign, if they'd be upset that it looked like something more personal. Would recipients think this is deceiving? Would they think this tactic is disingenuous?

Maybe I'm overthinking it. I'd love to test this. What do you think?

More Information About Us

8201 164th Ave. NE, Suite 200
Redmond WA 98052
Ph. 877.291.0006
www.heinzmarketing.com

About Matt Heinz

Matt Heinz is the Founder and President of Heinz Marketing Inc. Matt brings more than 12 years of marketing, business development and sales experience from a variety of organizations, vertical industries and company sizes. His career has focused on delivering measurable results for his employers and clients in the way of greater sales, revenue growth, product success and customer loyalty.

About Heinz Marketing

Heinz Marketing is a Seattle marketing agency focused on sales acceleration. Heinz Marketing helps clients achieve sustained sales success by growing revenue from existing customers and cost effectively identifying and winning new customers.

Contact Heinz Marketing

Heinz Marketing Inc.
8201 164th Ave NE, Suite 200
Redmond, WA 98052
877.291.0006
www.heinzmarketing.com
acceleration@heinzmarketing.com

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