Increasing Your Email Holiday Marketing Effectiveness

If the holidays are an important time for your small business, there’s a good chance holiday planning is already in the back of your mind. In fact, that was exactly the topic of discussion at a small business CEO roundtable that I attended recently. I will share some of the great ideas that we included.

While you may not have all your plans finalized, or even started at this point, you know that the next couple months are going to go fast and the season will be here before you know it.

The group concluded that given the heavy shift to communicating with customers/clients through digital technology, when it comes to your holiday marketing, no tool will offer more opportunities to increase sales this season than email marketing.

According to marketing analytics company, Custora, email marketing was the number one driver of sales on Black Friday 2014, resulting in 27.3 percent of online sales.

Whether you’re gearing up for the big shopping days at the start of the holiday season — like Black Friday (November 27), Small Business Saturday (November 28), or Cyber Monday (November 30) — or looking to drive sales into the New Year, the right email marketing plan can make a world of difference.

Some members of the CEO Roundtable shared what they had learned from Lauren Sullivan and Ryan Pinkham from Constant Contact. I will share a few of the great ideas that we discussed.

Know who you’re dealing with. Start your planning process by thinking about your customer base. Who are they? What motivates them? And how can you reach them effectively?

With the amount of emails consumers are receiving during the busy holiday months, you want to go beyond the sending basics and look for opportunities to target messages to different groups of people on your list.

One of the best ways to stand out in a crowded inbox is to personalize the messages you send out. Rather than sending the same offer or information to your entire email list, look for opportunities to target your emails to the different groups of people on your email list.
Focus on mobile. 53 percent of consumers who shopped online last holiday season did so on a smartphone or tablet. Combine this with the fact that more than half of all emails are now opened on a mobile device, and it’s clear that mobile needs to be at the center of your holiday marketing plans.

One of the best ways to get your holiday emails mobile-ready is to choose an email template that works well on mobile. For example, those that use Constant Contact can simply search ‘mobile’ when selecting a template.

In addition to the template you choose, make sure you’re keeping your message as focused as possible this holiday season. The most effective holiday emails will include your branding, 1-3 images, less than 20 lines of text, and one strong action for readers to take.

Invest in your subject line. Your subject line is one of the most important lines of your entire email. It’s the first thing people see when your email lands in their inbox, and for a lot of people it will have the biggest impact on whether they click to open.

Incorporate social media. Bringing your email marketing and social media marketing together is proven to help boost business results throughout the year.

In fact, small businesses that use multiple channels, like social media, in conjunction with email report: more customer engagement (73 percent), more new customers (57 percent), more website traffic (54 percent), more revenue (40 percent), and more referrals (39 percent).

Bringing your email and social media marketing together can have an even bigger impact during the holiday season.

Adding video is another way to generate engagement during the holiday season. I see several small businesses that use email to drive visitors to a holiday video on their YouTube channel.

Automate your messages to help you organize your efforts. As things get busy during the holiday season, it’s easy to let marketing tasks get pushed off to the side. One of the best ways to avoid this setback is to create automated emails to send to your list.
As an example, with a tool like Constant Contact’s Autoresponder feature, you can create a series of automated emails that will be sent to a select group of subscribers over a scheduled period of time.

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