Questions About Email Marketing Effectiveness

I am pleased to get requests about this column and provide some answers to comments and questions about my previous week’s topic entitled “Increasing Your Email Holiday Marketing Effectiveness”. Here are some of the comments and my responses.

First, Jen O. said, “Dean you said 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. Could you give some examples that I can use to do this?”

Yes, Jen, here are a few ideas to consider:

- Exclusive offer to new subscribers: Create a special offer for new subscribers who joined your list since last holiday season. Let them know how you can help them during the holidays and include details about any of the special services you offer during these busy months.

- Special discount based on click-through activity: Use your click-through reports to see who is clicking on a particular link in a recent email. For example, if you recently sent an email announcing a new line of products and saw a lot of people clicking through to your website, you can target those people with a follow-up email with a special holiday offer on those items.

- Event invitation for VIPs: Reward your most loyal customers this holiday season by giving them early access to an upcoming sale or event.

Next, Robert K emailed me and said that I need to say more about “investing in your subject line”. The message here is that 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. It plays a big part in getting your recipient to open your email or to delete it. What I am saying is that you should not take this part of your email lightly. You need to spend some time to figure out what will trigger a positive response.

I saw a great example for this. A fashion retailer that calls her shop “No Rest for Bridget” says that investing time in choosing the right subject line has allowed them to get more opens when promoting specials during the holidays and throughout the year. Online manager, Kolbie Richardson explains: “We test out different subject lines to see what gets us the best results. It’s crazy, just little tweaks like that can definitely deliver
different results, so we’re constantly experimenting with different things. We’ve found that ambiguous subject lines work well. Our last email subject line was ‘Say Yes To This Dress!’ Things like that pique curiosity and work well because people want to click to see what we’re talking about.”

When creating your email marketing message, sometimes it’s hard to know where to begin. Fortunately, there are best practices to use as a foundation if you’re feeling stuck.

Before you even start writing your message, here are a couple tips to keep in mind:

- **Subject lines:** 50 characters (or fewer) is the perfect length to catch the attention of your subscribers. Make sure to emphasize the first 32-40 characters, as many mobile inboxes will cut the subject line off after 32 characters.

- **Length of text:** Keep your message concise so your readers can consume your message quickly and easily. About 20 lines of text is the sweet spot for many industries, but the most important thing is to have a clear call-to-action so your subscribers know how to act on your message.

- **Colors and fonts:** Even during festive times of year, it’s important to use some restraint. Stick to three colors or less and a maximum of four fonts — too many colors and fonts will be distracting to your readers and take away from your message.

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