Use Your Business Emails Effectively

In my last column, I promised to share three more specific ideas about how tracking your emails for your small business can provide you with some great marketing opportunities. These come from a discussion that I had with some local CEOs that are very serious about using email marketing effectively and we focused on how to use the email data to improve their marketing. I had just gotten some advice on this topic from Miranda Paquet from Constant Contact. She gave some great ideas about using the data available from an email company like Constant Contact and I shared several of these with the CEOs.

To really use email tracking effectively you need to go beyond vanity metrics — you need to take the information in your reports and do something with it. In my last column, I illustrated with two examples of how email tracking can create new opportunities for your business. Now I will give three more.

Idea # 3. Remove those you can no longer reach

- **Where to look:** Bounced emails
- **Why:** Emails bounce for a variety of reasons. Things like server errors, full mailboxes, and out of office messages often cause temporary issues, but out-of-date or nonexistent addresses are often permanent problems. Regularly removing contacts with ongoing issues will help you maintain a strong delivery rate and increase your open rate.

- **What to do next:** Export a list of bounced emails and look for those with ongoing issues. If you have an alternative way of reaching a contact, via phone or in person, follow up with them for updated information. If you have contacts that consistently bounce, remove them from your list.

Idea # 4. Reevaluate your sending schedule

- **Where to look:** Open rate and unsubscribes
- **Why:** Sticking to a consistent schedule can help manage your subscribers’ expectations of when they’ll hear from you. But how confident are you that you’re sending emails as often as your subscribers like? And do you know what time and day to send to get the best results? Getting your timing and frequency right will result in more eyes on your emails.

- **What to try next:** Look to the industry trends to see what time and day typically perform best for your industry. After sending an email at this time, check back with your
reports to see if your open rates are higher than usual. To find the right frequency, you can survey your subscribers to ask how often they want to hear from you. While long-form newsletters used to be the norm, you should consider sending more frequent newsletters with less information to accommodate mobile readers. Just make sure you aren’t turning people off with too many messages — if you see a spike in unsubscribes, dial back on your sending frequency.

Idea # 5. Reconsider your design

➢ Where to look: Mobile open rate, click-through rate

➢ Why: With more than half of all emails now opened on a mobile device, many small business owners need to give their emails a makeover. Switching to a mobile-friendly template makes it easier for readers to view your emails from any device. Following mobile best practices also encourages people to take action on the information you’re sending out.

➢ What to try next: Recent research on this topic showed that emails with about 20 lines of text and three or fewer images receive the highest click-through rate. With Constant Contact and similar services, you can track your mobile opens to see what percentage of your audience is opening emails from their mobile device. Before you send your email, send a test email to yourself and make sure your call to action appears prominently even on a small screen. After making these layout changes, check back with your click-throughs to see if more people are engaging with your links.

What can you do today? Tracking your emails can help you stay on top of your email marketing and identify new opportunities for your business. Try out one of these five ideas in my last two columns and check back with your reports to see if your actions are making an impact.

_______________

Dean L. Swanson
Southeast Minnesota SCORE
c/o Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce
220 South Broadway, Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55904
www.seminnesota.score.org/
*Dean is a volunteer SCORE Mentor and Regional Vice President for the North West Region