Email Marketing for Small Businesses in the Future

CEOs that are strategizing their marketing efforts for the next three to five years are asking a complex question: What is the future of Email marketing and how do I make sure that my marketing efforts are in sync with where this digital world is going?

It’s easy to find predictions. Search “Email 2020” and you’ll get back loads of results predicting what the digital world will be like in a few years. Some of them are probably spot on, while others may be wildly inaccurate. Truthfully, there is no crystal ball that will allow you to predict what the future holds. So how do you position yourself today to ensure future success, regardless of what the future holds?

I have been studying several posts and articles on this topic and have found a few have some great ideas. One such is done by Return Path who is a leading email data solutions provider that was founded in 1999. It is headquartered in New York, and also has offices in Denver, Sunnyvale, Austin, Indianapolis, Toronto, London, Paris, Munich, Hamburg, Sydney, and Sao Paulo. They released a report recently, in which they explore visionary ideas on what the future of email will look like based on their data-backed 20/20 vision.

Email is everywhere. People use it daily in both their work and personal lives to send documents, share updates, register for online accounts, and more. Return Path’s document concludes that “while not as visible as social media and TV commercials, it quietly but effectively produces the highest ROI of any marketing channel. According to Venture Beat, mid-sized businesses receive an average of 246 percent ROI from email marketing. So despite what some “thought leaders” may suggest, email is not dead—nor is it dying any time soon.”

In fact, email is more prevalent than ever and is constantly changing, developing, and producing rich data. Email provides a direct connection to individual people and contains multiple elements that can be fine-tuned to create a unique experience. I share some observations that I have gleaned.

- In the future, both email marketers and mailbox providers will change how they interact with email. Mailbox providers will develop stricter filtering policies so you will need to take advantage of your data to develop engaging email experiences that will land in the inbox.

- With the adoption of IPv6, domain reputation will be a major factor in filtering decisions. For those of you who aren’t intimately familiar with how IP addresses work, most of the world is using what’s called an IPv4 address. However, with the amount of internet enabled devices in use today,
we are quickly running out of numbers to go around. Just as the addition of new area codes allowed for an exponential expansion in phone numbers, IPv6 contains more numerals in the address, allowing for more addresses to be created.

➢ So what does the above mean for email marketers? The adoption of IPv6 will provide a wealth of IP addresses that spammers can—and will—exploit. Rather than being tied to one IP address, once an IP address begins to experience reputation issues, a spammer can simply move on to a new IP address. To keep spammers out, mailbox providers will increasingly rely on domain- based reputation to judge incoming mail and marketers will need to maintain a pristine reputation to pass their filters.

➢ My instinct is that this means that, more than ever, small businesses should choose an email provider that has a good history of keeping up with the digital marketplace and provides a comprehensive menu of services. It also means that most mailbox providers will need to incorporate individual level engagement into their filtering decisions.

➢ Senders will need to start monitoring and increasing the engagement of individual subscribers in addition to the overall engagement of their list.

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