Email Continues to Be An Effective Marketing Tool

I was talking to a SCORE client last week who asked me if email marketing is still a viable strategy for marketing the small business. That question is a good reminder for CEOs because of all the new channels of marketing that have sprung up in the last few years. So let’s focus on email marketing.

Email marketing is inexpensive and delivers an amazing return on investment (ROI). A 2016 survey by the Direct Marketing Association and Demand Metric found that email marketing had a median ROI of 122 percent — more than four times higher than other marketing formats, including social media, direct mail and paid search.

Julie Gordon, Director of Marketing Partnerships, Deluxe Corp (one of SCORE’s content resource partners) says that “Email marketing is one of the most economical ways to generate repeat sales. A lot of business owners don’t want to spam their customer base, but it’s not spamming when those customers want to hear from you.”

Email is a strong way to drive revenue because people actually want to hear from businesses via email. A 2017 study from Adobe showed that 61 percent of consumers said they prefer receiving offers via email, up 24 percent from the previous year.

Email is a marketing tool that almost every business should have in its arsenal. I will provide some easy steps you can take to get your email marketing efforts up and running. Let us start by some suggestions on how to build an effective email following.

When you begin your email marketing efforts, determine who you want to send emails to. While many consumers like receiving offers via email, they can also be turned off by unsolicited messages. The trick is to get customers to sign up for your email list, a signal that you have their permission to show up in their inbox.

Here are some easy ways to build your subscriber list:

- A sign-up page on your website: Including a field on your website where visitors can sign up to get emails is one of the easiest ways to collect email addresses. Just be sure to let visitors know what they’re signing up for — a regular newsletter, weekly specials or deals, announcements, and so on.
• Collect email addresses in person: If you deal with customers face-to-face at an office or storefront, you can provide a sign-up sheet for those interested in hearing from your business. All you need is their name and email address. You can also make it easy for them to sign up by asking for their business card.

• Social media: If you’re using social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter, you can post a link to your email sign-up page and encourage your followers to join.

• Make signing up a contest: Give customers a chance to win something for providing their email address.

• Don’t give up on bouncebacks: If you receive bounceback notices from incorrect or invalid email addresses, ask customers if you can update their email address on your list.

A big caution. You don’t want to annoy your subscribers by inundating them with multiple emails each day, so in most cases a “less is more” approach works best. When you do send emails, make sure they’re relevant and provide some sort of value to the reader. Here a few types to consider sending:

1. Welcome email: Just as it sounds, a welcome email is a message you should send to those who are new to your subscriber list. It can tell subscribers what to expect from future emails, and perhaps provide an introductory offer in appreciation of their signing up.

2. Newsletter: A newsletter email is best sent regularly, such as once a month or every two weeks. It can include topics such as recent company news, upcoming sales or specials, and other content related to your industry. Keep it short. For longer content you’d like to share, include links to associated webpages.

3. Promotional email: These messages interest your subscribers most. The message can be short and simple, for example, “This week only, large pizzas for only $10!” Successful promotional emails typically include eye-catching graphics and minimal text, just as any other sort of advertisement would.

4. New inventory email: Let subscribers know you have new products in stock. Include some details about the new arrivals, along with photos that make them enticing. If your business is more service-oriented, use this type of message to promote new services you may offer.

5. Reorder email: Remind subscribers that it’s time to reorder a certain product, such as vitamins, pet medications or printer cartridges. A well-timed reorder email will be especially appreciated by those who don’t always remember when it’s time to re-up on the products you offer.