Three Tips for Great Email Results

Here are three tips for helping small businesses improve their email marketing success that I have learned from email professionals.

1. **Design your emails for high open rates.** Most email marketing providers offer predesigned templates that you can customize to fit your business’s brand, with no graphic design experience necessary. Keep these pointers in mind when designing your emails:
   - Avoid text-only emails. Text-only emails often feel unprofessional and dated. Email between friends or colleagues is largely a written medium, but email from businesses should be visual. That’s not to say words aren’t important. Just remember to include some quality graphics or imagery to accompany your words.
   - Use strong photography. Leading with an eye-catching photo is often the most effective way to immediately captivate your readers. If you’re using a photo to showcase a product, you don’t want it to look like the image was shot by an intern in the break room. You don’t have to break the bank on a fancy camera, but try to use techniques such as smart background choices to help make the image of the product pop.
   - Choose clean fonts. Try to use fonts that are easy to read, and use one or two at most. Take inspiration from eye-catching ads or magazine layouts to come up with some ideas. Avoid fonts that are too playful or hard to read on smaller screens.
   - Don’t forget about mobile. Most emails are opened on mobile devices, so be sure to format your emails so that they’re easily readable at a small size. Nothing is more annoying than opening an email on your smartphone only to see that the images don’t load, the links are too tiny to tap or the text is unreadable.
   - Extend your brand to email. At a minimum, be sure to include your logo in all your email marketing. If possible, make the colors and typefaces align with what you use in your marketing materials and on your website. Add links to your website, social media profiles and any relevant landing pages. Don’t forget to make sure your address and/or phone number appear too, so customers can easily contact you.

2. **Get customers to take action!** In most of the emails you send, your goal will be to get the recipient to take some sort of action, whether it’s making an
appointment, buying a product or inquiring about your services. Here are a few quick tips on putting effective calls to action (CTAs) in your emails:

- **Add buttons:** Buttons help your calls to action stand out from the rest of the text in your message. When email readers see a button within a message, they assume it will take them where they need to go to complete an action.
- **Use simple text:** Each of your call to action buttons should use short and simple text, preferably two or three words. Common examples include “Buy Now,” “Read More,” “Learn More,” “Book Now” or “Make an Appointment.”
- **Don’t overdo it:** More is not always merrier. Don’t dilute your calls to action by including too many. Try to limit yourself to just one or two buttons per message. Often, one near the top and another at the end of the message are sufficient.
- **Use white space:** Be sure to leave plenty of white space between your buttons and email text to help your calls to action stand out even more.

### 3. Track your emails’ effectiveness

One of the best things about email marketing, besides its high ROI, is how easy it is to measure its effectiveness. Check these metrics regularly:

- **Delivery rate:** This is the percentage of emails that were actually delivered to your readers’ inboxes, as opposed to those that bounced back. The higher your delivery rate, the more you’re reaching your desired audience. A lower rate means you have too many addresses on your list that are inactive or invalid. Strive for delivery to be as close to 100 percent as possible.

- **Open rate:** This is the percentage of email recipients who clicked to open (and presumably read) your email. A low open rate may mean you need to improve your subject lines to make sure subscribers are interested enough to open your messages. You could also consider changing the “from” email address to something your readers will recognize. Aim for open rates that are at least 20 percent or higher.

- **Clickthrough rate:** This is the percentage of recipients who clicked on a link within your email to take the action you intended. Consistently low clickthrough rates mean you likely need to reconsider the type of content or deals you include in your emails. A good clickthrough rate is about 2.5 percent.
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 Certified SCORE Mentor and former SCORE Chapter Chair, District Director, and Regional Vice President for the North West Region