

Email



A Five-Phase Approach to Email Marketing

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By [Albert Gadbut](#) | [More by this Author](#)

The president and CEO of AcquireWeb, Inc. outlines how to apply best practices from permission marketing, brand management and direct marketing to email.

One of the biggest challenges associated with email marketing programs is establishing meaningful contact with customer targets in order to increase sales, while protecting and enhancing your brand.

Successful email marketing designed to drive sales and build brands requires adopting a methodology that includes more precise prospect targeting, better permission-based models, a better overall consumer experience and better quality lists.

More precise prospect targeting

Better targeting translates directly into better response rates. Accurate customer profiling, which looks at demographic information related to consumers, business industry type and company size, is needed to define the target market. Knowing more about the target company or individual leads to messages with a high degree of relevance and therefore, impact: the higher the relevance, the better chance that the intended message will break through the clutter.

Better permission-based models

Any customer or potential customer will be more apt to read an email from a trusted source. In building a permission-based email list, it is sometimes better to go beyond simple opt-in/opt-out where the customer gives the OK just once and use confirmed or double opt-in. While some marketers may see this as an unnecessarily high goal, double opt-in/opt-out reinforces the relationship with the customer, serving as a reminder that they have granted their permission, and improves the likelihood that the emails will be opened.

A better overall consumer experience

Marketers need to also keep in mind that simply inundating their customers with too many irrelevant messages will deteriorate customer relationships and counter any long-term loyalty goals. The emphasis needs to be on the quality of the experience. Relevance, personalization and segmentation all add to the overall user experience.

Better quality lists

And finally, list selection can make or break the success of any campaign. However, few list owners and managers understand how to best develop such lists. It is important to find a source that can provide accurate data. A highly targeted, accurate, permission-based list is a valuable asset-- the more accurate the information, the better delivery of your messages.

Furthermore, a successful email marketing program should encompass a multi-

phased approach that provides an unprecedented ability to reach a targeted group of prospects by combining data compilation, sourcing and analysis to produce real results.

The phases of this type of program include:

Phase I: Identify your target audience

Identify your target audience by using sophisticated technology and an extensive database to provide the most accurate customer profile. Then, based on this program, select your best prospects from a pool of permission-based individual contact records to find prospect matches for your profile. From this prospect universe, further hone your customer target list based on your particular preferences, such as campaign size, budget, geographic region or additional campaign requirements.

Phase II: Establish contact with your audience

Based on scientifically proven permission letters, establish contact with your audience by generating a permission letter and sending it to your predetermined target list, inquiring whether they would like to receive information and/or promotional offers from you. This tactic establishes a second level of permission based on responses received.

Message deliverability is confirmed by successful permission letter delivery, further insuring the success of your program. You may also establish links and tracking mechanisms on a multi-channel basis. As well, controlling your own creative assures consistent messaging and seamless integration with other multi-channel messages.

Phase III: Campaign in progress

Once you've sent out your branded messages to the target audience, test the creative based on geo-demographics and other target preferences, and package your message differently to subsets of your prospect audience. A reliable scientific approach is A/B split testing. Also, expanded creative options allow you to link to websites and provide offline methods of contact, and incorporate motion and sound for added appeal.

Frequency is your key to success. Studies show that by being in front of your target audience frequently, you are able to educate them while they are researching their purchases. Most importantly, you need to be there in front of them and trigger a response when they are actually in the market to buy.

Phase IV: Ongoing analysis

Throughout your campaign perform open, click and conversion sales analysis. Then, within your campaign, after enough responses are generated to do so, build and utilize a predictive model to refine your audience even further.

Phase V: Review program success and ROI

Finally, review the program success and ROI based on a post-campaign analysis with the data generated and/or an extensive match-back analysis. The reliability of this approach enables you to confidently expand your program.

And lastly, a key factor in delivering a successful email marketing program that builds brands and drives sales is selecting one that provides an affordable platform for marketers to test their campaigns in a controlled environment, making it possible to lower their risk and make any necessary adjustments to optimize their results.

Albert Gadbut is the founder of [AcquireWeb, Inc.](#), an innovator of email marketing solutions, and [Acquire Marketing Services](#), a division of AcquireWeb. [Read full bio.](#)