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10 Tips for Successful E-mail Marketing

Are you harnessing of the power of e-mail marketing? Despite the proliferation of social media, e-mail is still one of the most effective ways to connect with customers and build trust. Try these 10 steps to make e-mail marketing work for you.

1. **Collect e-mail addresses.** Make it easy for customers to opt-in to your e-mails. A brick-and-mortar business can have sign-up forms at checkout or mail them with invoices. Put a form on your website that makes signup easy. Offer a discount, free information or other incentive to encourage signups.

2. **Tell customers what to expect.** Post your privacy policy on your website. When customers subscribe, e-mail a welcome telling them how often they will hear from you (monthly? weekly?) and how to unsubscribe.

3. **Craft compelling subject lines.** The subject line gets customers to open the e-mail…or not. The best subject lines are short, to the point and clearly convey the benefit to the recipient. Avoid exclamation points and all-capital letters — these amateur moves will get your message marked as junk mail.

4. **Make it attractive.** The design of your e-mails should be consistent with your company's website and your other marketing materials. Use your logo, color, photos and graphics to enhance visual appeal.

5. **Proofread.** E-mail marketing messages riddled with spelling and grammar errors reflect poorly on your business. Carefully proofread e-mails, paying special attention to figures, discounts and prices. If proofreading isn't your strong suit, enlist someone else.

6. **Be responsive.** Your e-mail marketing campaign may prompt queries or questions from customers. People expect prompt responses to e-mails, so answer right away or your e-mails could do more harm than good.

7. **Create an e-newsletter.** A monthly e-newsletter including useful tips, news about your business, stories about customers, and special offers from your business is a great way to connect with customers.

8. **Get help.** Many Web hosting companies offer e-mail marketing packages. If you use the same company that hosts your website, it's easy to have your e-mails share the look and feel of your site. Or, try Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com), a popular service that provides templates and other tools to simplify e-mail marketing.

9. **Analyze results.** Look for an e-mail marketing service that provides analytics tools. Use analytics to assess the effectiveness of your e-mail marketing campaigns and adjust them for better results.

10. **Keep it legal.** Many legal regulations govern e-mail marketing. For example, you must include an opt-out link and a physical business address in each e-mail; process unsubscribe requests within 10 days; and avoid deceptive subject lines. A good e-mail marketing service will help you follow the rules of the CAN-SPAM Act, but the final responsibility is yours.

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