

## **What's New in Email Marketing: Part 1**

Digitally speaking, it's been around a long time but there's still a lot of new clever marketing thinking being applied to email marketing fuelled by even smarter technology. Peter Ellis of Being Communications begins a series of reports covering what is 'new' including:

- ...the impact of the mobile phone on email marketing
- ...how social networking campaigns plug in to your email campaigns
- ...the best times to send your email
- ...how to improve customer engagement with email
- ...new ways to improve the chances of your emails reaching recipients' inboxes

But first of all, is email marketing still relevant?

According to the latest email marketing census, email's share of budgets has increased to 23% of annual digital marketing budgets in 2010, so the importance of email marketing to digital marketers is clear. Econsultancy, experts and spokespersons for the digital industry quote "Email marketing remains one of the most important tools available to digital marketers since it provides a cost-effective technique for a company brand to reach prospects and customers with relevant, timely communications."

Indeed budgeted spend on email marketing was only slightly behind budgets for Web site and search marketing, activities which tend to be much more widely discussed online. Investment in email marketing reflects the results delivered, with respondents to the latest email census rating email as the best channel for return on investment after search engine optimisation, with almost two thirds of company respondents (78%) rating email as either "excellent" or "good". It would appear that email marketing; sometimes termed the unsung hero of digital marketing, is still very relevant.

### **Going Mobile: Coping with the Revolution**

An important challenge for email marketers has been the increase in email use through mobile, fuelled by the growth of mobile phones sales and smartphones in particular. The research firm Radicati Group predict the wireless email market will hit 1 billion mailboxes by 2013 (Radicati, 2009); Nielsen claim 41.6% of US mobile Internet time is spent with email, a rise of 10% across the previous 12 months (Nielsen, 2010).

With the mobile revolution expected to continue throughout 2011, what are the implications for email marketers?

Despite relatively low adoption of using mobiles for emails, their use is increasing, so it is definitely worthwhile creating a mobile-friendly email experience, but first do the research on your proportion of mobile email users.

Review the importance of mobile marketing to your organisation and how you will create a mobile email marketing experience. To decide on whether mobile is a big issue for you research is needed, either through asking subscribers about their attitudes and preferences for mobile email, or by accessing your web analytics. At a recent roundtable, an email marketer whose main audience were

'on the road' sales representatives, and therefore mobile, described how email was one of their main platforms.

There are simple steps that you can take to improve the experience for the mobile audience. First, offer a preference for plain text emails in the customer communications preference centre. Second, a repurposed plain text version should always be produced where copy is reduced to highlight the main offers and to encourage action. Third a "view email in browser" or "mobile friendly friendly" link should be included in the pre-header.

Your web analytics will show you the screen resolutions and operating systems of subscribers who interact with your email, but not those that don't. Google Analytics has recently introduced an 'Advanced Segment' to isolate users of iPhones and if you have campaign tracking setup for email you can also track iPhone email interactions nicely.

So, in summary:

- Regarding design, marketers should take extra care when working on email design: make sure templates are optimised not just for desktop and web-based email clients, but also for mobile clients.

- Time and frequency of send. Viewing habits are different for "mobile email viewing". It's important to carefully think of the best time and number of messages required to reach your recipients.

Next time we look at what's new in plugging your social networking campaigns in to your email campaigns.

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