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### Successful Mutations of E-mail Marketing

by Dyanna S. Culp Temos

The reputation of E-mail marketing lies in the gutter; smeared by misuse and misunderstanding of its true potential.



Like millions of others, I'm frustrated and disgusted by the volume and indiscriminate targeting of the e-mails I receive.

#### What marketing morons are behind the majority of these messages?

Don't they realize that as the problem grows we become faster at hitting the delete button and rush to download the latest anti-spam programs? Mass e-mailing is a downward marketing spiral; becoming less and less successful. The low percentage of click-throughs that translate to profits is becoming smaller and smaller as spammers frantically send out more and more e-mails.

#### Many are proclaiming the death of Direct Marketing e-mail.

But, all we really need is a change in "HOW" this new tool is used to reach customers. Mutant variations sometimes survive extinction of the original form. The goal is to attract potential customers, not to enrage them. Traditional, time tested marketing strategies always start by profiling the target audience. They begin by defining the demographics and personal preferences of the audience most likely to be interested in a product. Second, a message or sales pitch strategy is developed. Then comes the question: what are the most effective methods for reaching the desired audience?

***"Mutant variations sometimes survive extinction of the original form..."***

#### Effective e-mail marketing occurs when using your own client contact database.

Every contact you've ever had that could be a potential customer should be in your e-mail database. If you don't have such a list there are fast and effective ways to compile one.

#### Strategies for Building a Customer Contact Database

- Offer a free monthly e-mail newsletter with news related to your industry and your products. In a prominent position, on all of your Web pages, place a

newsletter sign-up link.

- Use low cost advertising on permission based e-mail newsletters. For instance, Sprinks now offers "Direct Sprinks" which designs massive numbers of newsletters to fit "signed up" target audiences. The differences between open rates on mass e-mails and these permission based targeted newsletters is astounding. In contrast to the miniscule click-throughs mass e-mails receive; a recent industry report showed permission based e-mail has the potential to receive open rates as high as 61.4%. You select a target audience, place a text hyperlink ad, and pay per-click rather than a large flat fee at [www.sprinks.com](http://www.sprinks.com)
- Establish Web site member-only login sections - require an e-mail for participation.
- Add fun online surveys to your Web site- require an e-mail for participation.
- Offer free screensaver downloads or useful software programs -require an e-mail in the final step before downloading.
- Use Enticing Portal Text Hyper Links on sites that match your target audience. Establish a landing page for the clickthrough URL. Fill the landing page with a newsletter sign up, free preview of a members only section, free screensavers, etc- all requiring an e-mail input. Depending on the source, these text link ads are available as PPC (pay-per-click) or the less cost effective CRM (cost per impression).

#### **Don't rent or sell your client lists!**

After establishing a client database you may be tempted by lucrative offers to buy or rent your list. If you value that list, don't even consider it. Instead, place notices wherever you collect e-mails making it clear you DO NOT sell or rent contact information. You'll see a higher sign-up rate from an appreciative audience.

#### **You have no list and don't want to wait?**

Impatience is not a virtue or a successful business tactic, but if you must rent or buy e-mail addresses- proceed with caution. The cheaper lists are usually worthless and filled with people who seem to have no idea how they got on these "permission based" lists. Spend a few more dollars for a targeted demographic group. Of course the majority may still not appreciate your solicitations, and you could end up on the spam lists with your ISP contacting you regarding your spamming problem. Most semi-reputable alternatives offer Full Service E-mail package deals. They design it, e-mail out using their opt-in lists, and track your results.

#### **Some Outsourcing Options:**

- Livemercial is a savvy state of the art e-mail marketing company. Minimum cost will run around \$2500 for a streaming video e-mail to one million targeted customers on a cream of the crop opt-in list. The more well known (and even more expensive Naviant) is actually a Livemercial vendor. [www.livemercial.com](http://www.livemercial.com)
- Annodyne Interactive has been in the news for their recent Rollerblade Flash e-mail campaign. [www.annodyne.com](http://www.annodyne.com)
- Innovyx clients include Adobe and Hyatt hotels. [www.innovyx.com](http://www.innovyx.com)
- Yes Mail has anti-spam awareness, and has been around since 1995. [www.yesmail.com](http://www.yesmail.com)
- National Dial Net is basic, affordable, and claims adherence to e-mail marketing law. [www.nationaldialnet.com](http://www.nationaldialnet.com)
- More Names Now is a low cost option. View their Consumer master file with 30 categories and demographic details at: [www.morenamesnow.com](http://www.morenamesnow.com)

#### **A successful message "involves" the recipient.**

A large number of marketing studies (many funded for some odd reason by the Department of Defense) demonstrate that message interactivity generates

higher reader retention and delivers other benefits such as improved click-through rates.

Some suggestions:

- Ask a question in your message headers, but make it relevant. Don't ask if they need life insurance, and then have content for Viagra or the most prolific spam of 2003- increasing your cock size.
- Have a survey in the e-mail, or a contest registration link.
- Use interactive flash or html

#### **Plain text, html or rich media?**

Using a plain text e-mail means all recipients will see the message as you intended, but it will be so very boring... html gives you color, interactivity, embedded hyperlinks and will be accepted by most "modern" e-mail user systems. Rich Media is the queen of e-mail marketing and includes imbedded flash or the more exotic - streaming video. Rich media may lose many potential viewers, but the message can be loaded to a site and the e-mail have an alternative html teaser message leading to the Web version of the rich media e-mail.

#### **Always provide easily visible opt out options in the e-mail AND on your Web site.**

Many of us are wise to the fake opt out links that just verify the message was sent to a live e-mail account. Providing an opt out on your Web site makes you more legitimate, allows viewers to easily opt out, and could save you from the spam police.

***"Impatience is not a virtue or a successful business tactic... proceed with caution..."***

#### **The legal future of e-mail marketing could be rigid.**

37 states now have e-mail Spam laws. Most are in their infancy but it won't be long before all will be enforced with varying degrees of penalties. Fired up by the do not call legislation, the U.S. Senate and House recently approved a federal anti spam bill with severe financial penalties for each individual case of spam. Review federal, state and international spam laws, at: [www.spamlaws.com](http://www.spamlaws.com)

The Future Survival of E-mail Marketing requires refining and mutating existing strategies. Continued use of mass non-targeted spam e-mailing will result in decreased click-throughs, the spam police, ISP threats to drop service, and before long- legal consequences from both state and federal laws. Possible penalties include seizure of financial assets of both the company and individuals involved in spamming. Have no doubt that the government can trace the source of spam e-mail campaigns. If in doubt, go back a few issues and review the section on The FBI's Carnivore / DCS1000 in the article Cloaking Technology Part II E-mail and Online Privacy.

#### **Establish a cozy relationship with customers who actually want your e-mails.**

By building a customer database, offering information and products in which your targeted audience is interested, and exerting control over how often you hit the send button- you'll have people eagerly awaiting your news and special offers. Companies like Strategic Data Corporation, Net Perceptions, and Marketwitch have invested large sums in new targeted marketing analysis software- clients already include giants such as AOL, AT&T and MCI. We in the online industry must champion changes for responsible marketing tactics or forever lose the privilege to Big Brother.

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