

Lists and Databases

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Properly building and effectively using lists and databases can make or break your e-mail marketing campaign – without good, up-to-date data at the core of your e-mail strategy, the chance of seeing campaign success is slim. These articles focus on optimizing unsubscribe requests; list segmentation; and improving databases.

Key ways to optimize unsubscribe requests

BY ARTHUR SWEETSER

As the Internet audience matures, convincing people to sign up for e-mail marketing has become much more of a challenge. That makes every address added to your database a valuable asset. Though many companies fixate on address acquisition, they don't pay sufficient attention to the relevance of their e-mail campaigns. And that can turn opt-ins into opt-outs in the blink of an eye and increase the pressure to acquire more new names.



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It's definitely a vicious cycle.

So, what's a marketer to do when they discover their hard-won consumers actually don't plan to stick around?

Structure your unsubscribe process the right

way and you can get customers to think twice before leaving.

Measure twice, cut once It may sound silly, but the first step in your unsubscribe process might be to ask: "Are you sure?" If you reiterate the benefits, the customer might give you a second chance. Or ask for feedback. When you ask: "What could we have done differently?" you may be surprised at the responses. Also, try providing a phone number or e-mail address for customer service as part of your unsubscribe form and whatever issue led the customer to unsubscribe may be resolved.

Pick and choose Don't assume that a customer wants to unsubscribe from all of your messages. Some customers may not be inter-

ested in promotional messages but still want product upgrades or new account services. If you have more than one newsletter, or different types of messages, offer those as options.

Many companies have loyalty programs or special memberships, which include exclusive e-mails or "members only" promotions. It's smart to have a special unsubscribe process, allowing these customers to opt-out of your general e-mail messaging. Remind them of their status and ask them specifically if they'd like to stay subscribed to the e-mails which are a benefit of their membership.

Preferential treatment A preference center can be a key component in retaining a customer's interest and increasing the relevance of your e-mails. Let your customers determine how often they receive your e-mails and which e-mail address you should use to communicate with them. Allowing customers to self-select their interests creates ready-made segments for your marketing programs at a lower cost and level of effort.

Don't burn your bridges Industry research shows less than 20% of marketers send a goodbye message and less than 10% take the opportunity to inform subscribers of other ways to stay connected. Let the customer know your door will always remain open and provide an easy way for them to re-subscribe if they change their mind. Present your customers with other communication options, like blogs, RSS feeds or podcasts so they can keep up to date with company happenings on their own schedule.

No one likes to think about divorce when getting married, so it's understandable that e-mail marketers don't like to think about losing subscribers when developing lead-generation strategies. But if you can think like a customer and place the control in their hands, you'll have a happier and more successful long-term relationship.

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