

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Age before beauty: Look before you leap into social media

Marketers need to balance traditional and emerging media according to e-Dialog 2008 E-mail Attitudes Survey

LONDON, 11th November, 2008 – Despite the many industry voices that herald the importance of social and multi-media content in e-mail marketing, only 12 per cent of UK consumers claim they would be more likely to respond to messages linked to video, micro-sites and social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube. Indeed nearly a quarter of adults (22 per cent) claim that this kind of content would actually make them less likely to respond. According to the 2008 E-mail Attitudes Survey from e-Dialog, the e-mail marketing services provider, which has polled the views of a representative sample of 1,965 British adults with research specialist YouGov, traditional e-mail marketing principles still retain a vital role.

Social media not yet the Holy Grail

The survey results indicate that e-mail campaigns using multimedia and social media content need to be planned and approached in a highly targeted way by brands. For example, one of the key factors in this planning needs to be a consideration of a target audience's age group, with the research demonstrating a clear generational difference in consumers' attitudes to social and multimedia. Almost a fifth of 18-24 year olds favour e-mail marketing messages linking to content of this nature compared to just nine per cent of 45 to 54 year olds.

Simone Barratt, e-Dialog's UK managing director commented: "The results of the Attitudes Survey clearly support our view that you cannot take a blanket approach to the integration of traditional and emerging media. We currently work on some very successful social media campaigns with clients – using tactics such as e-mail triggers that direct customers to appropriate MySpace or Facebook pages and widgets – but, as exciting and innovative as this work is, it can never be a one-size-fits-all approach. The old principles of targeting and personalisation still hold true and, despite the industry hype, at the end of 2008 this type of content is simply not appropriate for everyone."

The research also revealed that five per cent of adults claim to spend the most time using e-mail accounts connected to social networks such as Facebook, Bebo and MySpace, and almost one in five (19 per cent) of 18-24 year olds and almost one in 10 (Nine per cent) of 25-34 year olds claim that their social networking e-mail is now their primary e-mail account. However, crucially, only three percent of the total of those surveyed would prefer brands to contact them via social network e-mail accounts. Even among 18-24 year olds, the age group most likely to use their social network account as their primary e-mail channel, this statistic was subject to only a minor rise to just nine per cent.

Barratt commented: "While there are many advantages for brands in using a Facebook platform for example, it is clear consumers regard their Facebook e-mail accounts as sacrosanct, personal spaces where brands do not belong. Social media is here to stay

but it is imperative that brands realise it is impossible simply to crowbar their traditional e-mail tactics into a consumer's social media account. As with all aspects of emerging media, it is a matter of evidence based and intelligent integration."

Recommend recommendations

While there is a mixed attitude on linking to social and multi-media content, e-Dialog's research shows that brands should seriously consider incorporating customer reviews and recommendations into their e-mail marketing campaigns. In total, more than a third (36 per cent) of respondents claimed that they would be more likely to respond to an offer sent via e-mail if it offered genuine customer reviews.

However, these results also reinforced the age gap in attitudes. In this case an older demographic was most receptive with nearly 40 percent of 45-54 year olds stating that customer reviews would make them more likely to respond. Interestingly, women seem to place more emphasis on peer-to-peer recommendation with 38 per cent more likely to respond compared to 33 per cent for men.

Barratt commented: "The inclusion of customer testimonials can be an extremely rewarding strategy however, what is often misunderstood is that e-mail is not only a means of showcasing testimonials but an excellent way of gathering them. For example, we work on campaigns where – using incentives such as voucher redemption – customers are invited to click-through e-mail triggers straight to the brand's site where they can then offer feedback on products they love. The most effective e-mail marketing should always be considered to be a dialogue, but doubly so when it is linked to genuine customer feedback."

Traditional and best?

Although the research revealed that consumers' e-mail preferences are altering in response to new technology and platforms it also indicates that traditional e-mail marketing principles still retain a very important role for brands.

Barratt commented: "While the e-mail marketing landscape is undoubtedly changing with the explosion of multimedia and social networks, brands and the industry must not become seduced by emerging media and channels for their own sake. The basic principles of delivering the right message to the right audience at the right time and on the right channel still apply."

About e-Dialog

Established in 1997, e-Dialog is a proven provider of intelligent e-mail marketing solutions. Through a unique combination of strategic services and relevance enabling technologies, e-Dialog empowers marketers to take meaningful action on their data in order to deliver contextually targeted communications to customers. Some of the world's most recognized brands, including AirTran Airways, American Eagle Outfitters, Avis, Boots, BMG Music Service, British Airways, CBS, Hewlett Packard EMEA, Nintendo, the NFL, Reuters, the Royal Bank of Scotland group of companies, and The TJX Companies, have partnered with e-Dialog to enhance their permission-based e-mail marketing efforts and maximize long-term customer value.

e-Dialog is recognized as a leader by the industry's foremost independent analysts. Most recently and for the third consecutive year, e-Dialog received top placement among service-oriented ESPs from JupiterResearch. In September 2006, e-Dialog was the first e-mail service provider to achieve certification for ISO 27001:2005, the global information security standard. e-Dialog, with offices in Boston, London, New York, and Seattle, is a wholly owned subsidiary of GSI Commerce Inc. (Nasdaq: GSIC).

For more information, visit www.e-dialog.com or contact Arthur Sweetser at 781-372-3353 or Peter Duffy at +44 (0) 20 7659 2716.

#

Press Contacts:

Daljit Bhurji
+44 (0) 20 7659 6218
dbhurji@e-dialog.com

Jean Borgman
(508) 451-5944
jborgman@e-dialog.com