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TECHNOLOGY

How to make your customers feel welcome

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In this week's column, Volker Wiewer, CEO of email marketing company eCircle looks at how to make sure your first impressions really count with your customers.

As much as we all know first impressions aren't the be all and end all of a relationship, there's no denying the impact they can have. When dealing with customers it's especially important to make sure you get off to a great start. If a customer has opted in to receive communications from you or registered with your site in order to make purchases,

don't simply confirm their subscription, give them something more – they deserve it. You need to reward, remind and reassure your customers with your welcome messages and reinforce what your brand and proposition is all about.

The welcome message – The start of a beautiful relationship

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More often than not, welcome emails are controlled by web or customer service teams and it's unusual for marketing teams to get involved. These are missed opportunities! If you think about it, a welcome email, which should be sent within minutes of people signing up to your proposition, is the time when a recipient will be very receptive to your brand. Welcome emails should always include certain minimum details to enhance the likelihood of long term and beneficial relationships with your customers.

What to include in your welcome emails?

Say thank you

Firstly, you need to thank your recipient for signing up. You can communicate this in the subject line as well as the main body of the message. As simple as the gesture is, you're far more likely to get repeat business and retain customer loyalty if you maintain a positive attitude and relationship with your customers. This initial positive response also helps set the tone for the rest of your relationship with the customer.

Reward your customers

Reward your customer: A welcome email gives you the perfect chance to reward your customers. Perhaps you could include a voucher offering them 10% off their next purchase or free shipping with their first order. Not only will this make them feel good about your brand and proposition, it'll also encourage them to spend further with you!

Reassure, remind and reflect

By confirming a customer's account, you're reassuring them that their registration was successful. Remind your customers why it was a good decision to do business with you. The easiest way to do this is include a bulleted list of benefits. You'll earn their confidence, reflect your value and encourage them to open future emails. You can also remind customers that they can sign up to other email communications or special offers. Every contact you have with your customers should reflect your brand and its values and reinforce the benefits.

Make yourself known

Ensure the recipient knows that the welcome email is from your company. Include the company name in the sender field, the subject line or indeed both! If they're waiting for an email from you then you want them to be able to spot it easily amongst their other emails.

The possibilities with your welcome emails are endless. You can include links back to your site, provide log in details and customer service contact details clearly. Above all you need to be timely. Your welcome email should be sent within at least two hours of a customer signing up and should set the tone of your proposition and manage the recipient's expectations. As the old saying goes you 'never get a second chance to make a first impression', so make it a good one and in turn you'll reap the long term benefits.