

Retailers failing at the first e-hurdle

Even global heavyweights are not getting the basics right in communicating with customers.

With the clutches of the global recession loosening, it has never been more important for brands to nourish and nurture their consumer relationships.

As such, the importance of email marketing in connecting brands with an increasingly international customer base, has grown at an incredible rate.

With this growing trend, one could be forgiven for thinking that retailers were shining examples of how to communicate effectively online, and create engaging, relevant marketing strategies.

Quite the opposite.

According to our new study, numerous retailers – even global heavyweights – are failing to succeed in getting even the basics right in communicating with their consumers.

Effective online communication is intrinsic in engaging potential customers, and rewarding loyal brand ambassadors. So why are so many brands falling at the first hurdle?

In an age where people are more likely to email than pick up the phone, buy their shopping online rather than in-store and

browse offers at their computer rather than on the high street, you'd think that brands, especially the retail brands which are increasingly relying on online sales, would be shining examples of flawless communication and interaction online.

It appears not.

We recently conducted a study of top UK retailers to analyse just how well retail brands are communicating with their consumers through email.

To carry out the study, we signed up to all available newsletters from the Top 100 Hot Shops/Websites as listed by the IMRG and Hitwise, in order to analyse how effectively the brands used email as a method of communication.

What we didn't expect was for any of these top brands to be failing at the first hurdle which was indeed the case in some instances.

Out of the 100 brands surveyed, ten per cent didn't

Just how brands are failing to get it right:

- Retailers that had option to sign up to newsletter but never sent any emails out: 19 per cent
- Retailers that failed to deliver regular email communications: 29 per cent
- Retailers that failed to send a welcome message: 60 per cent
- Retailers that didn't have a newsletter sign up option: ten per cent
- Retailers that had option to sign up but needed mobile phone number or credit card: six per cent



have an obvious newsletter sign-up option, nearly 20 per cent had a sign-up option, but never sent any emails out, and a whopping 29 per cent failed to deliver regular email communications following subscription.

These are three of the most basic rules of email marketing – and top retailers are still slipping up.

Other common mistakes included a massive 60 per cent neglecting to send a welcome message and brands asking for a mobile number or credit card details to simply register.

Not exactly inviting or engaging for the consumer.

Three golden rules

What our study really shows is that not only are brands not making the most out of email, but they are failing to even get

It's an understatement to say that the results were surprising. Why are there still some top brands, who frankly should know better, making simple, avoidable mistakes when communicating with their consumers online?

GUEST AUTHOR – EMAIL MARKETING

SIMON BOWKER says some top brands are not communicating correctly with customers.

the basics right. Regular communications and easy sign-up options are essential for a brand's online success and email plays a huge role in the communication before, during and following a purchase.

The basics aren't difficult to get right – brands need to keep in mind the three following golden rules of email:

1. Incentivise: Target new customers with a relevant incentive. One of the most well-known examples of this can be applied to 'basket abandoners'. Industry research demonstrates that up to 75 per cent of online shoppers abandon their shopping baskets before completing the checkout procedure.

To win back this lost sale you can trigger an email response offering a compelling incentive for products that the customer has already shown an interest in.

However, it's advisable to limit offers to products above a certain value, and cap the number of incentives per subscriber.

2. Remind: Show lapsed customers why they signed up to receive your newsletter in the first place. What did you use in your original message and can you try to re-employ this tactic to encourage users to respond to your emails now? Overall, make sure your remarketing campaigns are based around users' identified interests.

If this doesn't work then it

might be worth removing these subscribers from your list. A drastic step, yes, but it's better to have quality over quantity.

3. Reward: Identify frequent buyers and reward them with appropriate offers. You could set up a triggered loyalty scheme campaign where subscribers are rewarded with exclusive discounts, points for every £1 they spend or voucher codes if they spend a certain amount online within a set time.

Driving traffic

Brands operating online ignore this advice at their own risk.

In the crucial summer months, when brands are looking to drive traffic to their site, perhaps even more than

drive footfall in store, they simply cannot afford to be making these silly mistakes.

Consumers are increasingly looking online as a more stress-free way of shopping and, thanks to the rise in digital and social media, there is a power change occurring, from brand to consumer.

No longer can brands tell a consumer what product to buy and when.

This, in conjunction with increased competition and market saturation, means brands need to invest more than ever in their relationships and understand what their consumers really want – and how to deliver added value.

Or face disappearing from the market altogether.

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