



How to: Get the most out of email marketing

Simon Bowker from eCircle explains how travel agencies can use email more effectively
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Email is one of the best ways for travel companies to communicate with potential and current customers in a friendly and engaging manner.



It is astonishing just how many travel companies are failing to make the most out of this marketing channel.

It is not hard to see the benefits of brilliant email marketing when you look at successful online brands, such as lastminute.com, which use email as its primary form of marketing.

By improving emails, with relatively simple techniques, travel companies can drive footfall and sales to both their bricks and click stores.

Get the message across

It is easy to come a cropper at the first hurdle. In a consumer's crowded inbox you need to make sure the title of your emails is crystal clear.

Consider what will catch the attention of your reader, and then test and retest on a small section of your database to see what generates the best results.

Think about what your customers are looking for. When we worked with Tourism Ireland to drive traffic to its site, and increase tourist numbers to Ireland, a combined approach of using a 24-day advent calendar campaign with daily updates, localised content, prize draws and video messages proved to be the best approach. The campaigns gained **high open rates of 72%**, and **click rates of 97%**.

Communicate effectively

Personalisation and segmentation go hand in hand when it comes to communicating in a relevant way with your customers. Looking at customers' lifestyles can help you deliver the right content, at the right time.

For example, if you have young working professionals signed up to your newsletter, they may be more likely to take you up on an offer for a cheap weekend city break than a family with young children.

There is more to personalising an email than just making sure the right person's name appears at the top of your message.

Using the technology that's now available from many email software providers (ESPs), it's possible to send out very specific content to your customers.

Web analytics

Integrating email and web analytics can dramatically increase campaign conversions, as well as enhancing and enriching your customer data, which can ultimately help you to feed back into your segmentation and personalisation programme.

It is important to monitor click-throughs from your newsletters and email campaigns, as they can help you understand what offer or product really grabs their attention.

You can also use the data collected to create personalised and tailored landing pages for your customers with customised product lists that reflect that individual's preferences.

Click-throughs that don't convert immediately are not completely lost - you can re-engage these people by sending a targeted email highlighting the product they had originally selected, or offering them a suitable alternative can often be the nudge needed to convert that initial interest into a sale.

Integrating email into your wider marketing

Technology is making it easier for your customers to share the information you send to them. So make sure your email is linked up to appropriate social media channels.

It is also important to give your customers a variety of ways to get in touch with you. They may be happy to receive the initial information about holidays via email, but might prefer to talk through the deal with someone over the phone, or even be sent a brochure in the post.

Make sure all your contact details are obvious on emails, as this can have an impact on sales.

With more customers using the internet at some point during their holiday research, destination decisions and purchasing stages of their holiday choice, it is vital that travel companies get their digital marketing right.

Email has a pivotal role to play as it is the most direct and personal way to talk to your customers online. Done in the right way, it can have a big impact on your sales.

Useful links

technologyweekly.mad.co.uk - Technology Weekly has lots of easy-to-read best practice guides.

econsultancy.com - has regular discussions and updates on the latest developments in email marketing.

Simon Bowker has worked in online marketing for more than 10 years, and has worked for eCircle since 2002. eCircle is a digital direct marketing company that works with travel clients including TUfly, Tourism Ireland and The Holiday Place.

