

Help and advice



Leo Aspden on email marketing

Don't forget the five Ps when emailing

EMAIL has become such an integral part of business and personal communication tools that the challenge for any business considering using email marketing is how to cut through the clutter, avoid that all too familiar status of 'junk mail', and get your message across.

To use email marketing effectively, consider this five-step guide to the five Ps of business-to-business email marketing.

1. Plan an integrated approach: Avoid considering email in isolation, rather see it as an essential part of your marketing communication channels, along with brochures, direct mail, advertising, PR, websites, point of sale and exhibitions.

Stop thinking about that list of contacts and what you can do with it. Instead consider the customer journey from understanding, creating awareness, informing about your products and services, through to generating leads and sales.

Email can be a constructive way of gaining a better understanding of your customers and target audience to improve the relevance of all of your marketing communications.

2. Prospecting with permission: To avoid being blacklisted and comply with current legislation it is essential that you have a clear policy on data capture which is transparent and clear. We are all aware of occasions when we ended up on someone's mailing list, and we didn't even understand why.

Make sure that your invitations to join or subscribe are clear so that members must

take action to receive your messages and that they realise that this action will result in communication from your company or associates. Design your subscribe forms with this in mind and remember, keep in simple.

3. Pure and relevant content: Keeping it pure is the most important consideration, which will influence the effectiveness of your email marketing. Don't start with your product, services or what it is you want to say, rather focus on your customers and target audience.

Understand what they do, and what information is of interest to them. Consider which pages of your website they are viewing, which products and services they already buy.

Don't be tempted to think that what you have to say will be relevant, and more importantly, use different messages for groups with different interests. Identifying relevant content will enable you to offer better products, services, promotions and communication with your customers.

4. Provide options: You can improve your results from email by providing customers and prospects with a clear set of options and control about what they want to receive and when. Allow users to choose the frequency of the communications (e.g., monthly or weekly).

If the email is not of interest, many firms may wish to unsubscribe. Ensure that you include a clear option to unsubscribe (opt-out) in all email communications.

Be sure to offer the opportunity to select what type of communication they receive, if they are not interested in the information

provided they could be in other services or information that your company can offer (e.g., news, technical, offers, new products).

5. Promote confidence: The final guideline of B2B email marketing is to promote confidence amongst your target audience. Like all good marketing, treat this as part of an ongoing relationship building process.

'Does exactly what it says on the tin' is equally important here, ensure you can live up to your claims and promises, and ensure information is accurate. Respect your target audience's wishes.

If they choose to opt-out respect this and if they have chosen to receive a certain type of information don't take the liberty of sending them something else as well. Break or abuse the trust and they will simply go elsewhere.

As email continues to abound, cutting through the clutter is key to the success of what is a very cost effective medium.

Plan email as an integral part of all communications, take the high ground and use permission based data capture, keep content pure and relevant, provide clear options for users and promote confidence to maximise the investment and return from your email marketing campaigns. **CFJ**

Leo Aspden represents the Chartered Institute of Marketing as north west Ambassador for SMEs. ■ www.reach-mc.co.uk ■ www.cim.co.uk

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Peter Allan on opening an export office overseas

Setting up abroad is not an alien task

THE parent company of Burmatex and Ryalux, Airea Plc, is about to open our first international office in Poland. To share our experience with UK businesses considering possible international expansion, I am writing this month about opening an office abroad.

Tomasz Bochenski has been instrumental to the success of our Polish office project. So I will explain what we did and why.

Of course, the decision to expand can take years of deliberation and involve many factors. It makes sense to have some history operating within the area of the office location you are considering. We have been working in Poland for around seven years, using the area as a base to penetrate Central Europe. To open an office in Konin, near Poznan, seemed the right thing to do.

By physically establishing your

business in a country, it is easier to concentrate on the individuality of the customer; it is also especially important to be able to communicate in their language.

Getting the location right can cause headaches as it needs to fulfil different criteria. An office abroad should act as a gateway to other regions, ideally other countries. Cost is always a big factor. One of the reasons we chose Konin is the accessibility to the A2, an international motorway with links to Berlin and Russia.

It is more economical as it is away from Poznan where the city rents are very high. Plus we had local knowledge thanks to Tomasz, and finding a suitable space was hassle-free.

Inside information helps the recruitment process and choosing the right people for the job is just as important as the location.

When selecting the location, consider the size and layout of the space. It is better to go a little bigger and have room for expansion, than to grow out of a space too quickly and have to start the process all over again. The Konin office includes office work space, a showroom, a sampling room and conference facilities.

The most exciting part of the new office is the design and interior element – this is where you can have some fun.

Darren Clanford, creative director for Airea plc, has worked closely with the Polish team to create a scheme which has the wow factor, like the head office in Ossett.

When introducing new office locations to a business, information and communication systems are vital. The ideal is to operate a 'one office'

environment, regardless of the number of locations.

It shouldn't matter which site you are working from, the speed and consistency of a system must be the same.

If you don't have an internal IT manager, you can outsource this service either from the UK or abroad, however it is helpful to use a contractor that understands your business needs.

When all the plans have come together and the office abroad is ready, you can host an official launch party. Invite distributors, business partners, local business people and colleagues to see what is new in town. **CFJ**

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