



How Email Can Boost Your Website's Performance

By Eric Keiles

Email marketing campaigns can be extremely profitable if done right. By right, we mean *permission-based or opt-in* email – not wholesale blasting of emails you purchased or “found”. People who give you permission to market to them or who have a business relationship (past clients, for example) are the only people who will appreciate your efforts to keep them in touch with what’s going on in your company. With the popularity of spam filters and the increasing amount of email received by people each day, email advertisement has become more of a challenge. This permission-based system of email promotion provides websites with good numbers of return visitors and prospects as well as creating a relationship with your customers and prospects.

On the home page of your website, you should always have a sign in box or an opt-in form. Your visitors should have the option to provide you with their email address at multiple points in their visit to your website. Encourage them to sign up for your newsletter, new product information, podcasts, blogs, articles or whatever you identify as valuable information your prospects and clients will be willing to trade their email address for. Note: try not to bribe the mass market with offers of flat screen TV giveaways. Make it something relevant to your product or service or you will have a database of people who like to watch TV – not who are interested in your product!

Send emails to these contacts as frequently you feel comfortable with. Every week or two might be good for some, but too frequently for others. Once per month is the recommended minimum to be frequent enough to develop a relationship with the reader. Include information on these updates to keep these visitors coming back to your site. The goal of the email is to constantly link readers back to the website where they can see all of the good things happening at your company. Sending emails to your customers is very important for good customer service to let them know new things that can help them, the minute they are available.

Remember, traditional marketing suggests that a visitor to your site usually sees a product or service five to seven times before committing to a sale. By sending email reminders about your products and services, you can get visitors to return

to your site to browse (and hopefully buy!). By the way, if the reader of your email decides they don't want to receive your messages any more, that's OK too. We always give people an easy way to "unsubscribe". If they don't want to hear our messages any more, we certainly don't want to bother them or create any ill will. That is a key aspect of permission-based emails.

Email also aids in obtaining referrals to your website.

Businesses can use email to grow referral business by encouraging word of mouth. The right tools and incentives make all the difference in turning customers and prospects into referral sources through email messages that can be easily forwarded on to others:

"Frank, I am forwarding this email to you because this company might offer what you have been looking for"

Most email tools offer a "refer a friend" feature that makes it easy to pass the word by just hitting a button. The new person can be added to your distribution list and so the list grows. The internet is the perfect breeding ground for word of mouth advertising, and emails make it much easier to facilitate this action. Our communication has been affected by the convenience and ease of email, and a consistent email campaign that includes valuable content, not only gives your customers (read: fans) something of value to pass along, but it also gives them the vehicle with which to pass it.

With permission-based emails, your message can be seen and heard by prospects that you could never get to any other way. And, when you combine your referral efforts with other marketing events in your company, you create a "marketing machine" able to sweep prospects into a regular communication program educating them on *why your company is the obvious choice to do business with.*

Never before has there been a medium so powerful in electronically introducing your business to a warm market, and keeping subscribers up-to-date on the exciting things your company has to offer. Start quarterly and move up to monthly to get started on a program that can jumpstart your prospecting efforts today.

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