

7 Tips For E-Blasting With Explosive Results

As postage rates continue to rise, it's more important for you to find less expensive ways to reach customers. So, why not join those businesses that are turning to e-communications to promote themselves?

The three most common e-mail communications are:

- *Custom e-mails*: For targeted customers, a well-crafted and personalized email sent from a high-ranking person in your organization can quickly open the door to a new relationship.
- *e-Blasts*: These are short, postcard-like pieces that deliver snippets of information, like announcing a holiday special, or introducing new hours or a new location.
- *e-Newsletters*: These pieces are longer and typically work much like a printed newsletter, with several short headlined articles and story-related graphics or pictures.

Remember that all of these items are delivered to your prospect's inbox, so it's important that you pay attention to a few points:

- **It's all about who you know.** Although it seems obvious, many clients forget that in order to reach out to customers via e-mail, you need a list of e-mail addresses. So, how can you beef up your mailing list?
 - Add a sign up form to your website.
 - Run a special offer for first-time subscribers to your list. For example, give newbies a coupon for a discount or BOGO offer, or enter them in a drawing for a chance to win a really cool prize.
 - Include a "forward to a friend" link in your e-communications so your current subscribers can easily refer you to someone else. Once people know how great your email is, they'll want to sign up too!
- **It's all about who you are.** Although often overlooked, the "from" address is the first thing many subscribers will read, and it can be the thing that will encourage them to open your e-mail. If you want the e-mail to have a more personal feel, you may want to use your CEO's email address there. If not, maybe it makes more sense to use a generic e-mail address like "info@...".
- **It's all about knowing what to do.** No one wants to open an email that sounds boring... especially if it's from a company they don't know. Instead, try starting your subject line with a call-to-action. Verbs like "Read..." or "Act Now..." or "Join..." all encourage readers to get involved. And of course, don't forget to keep the subject line simple and short.
- **It's all about getting by the gatekeeper.** A spam filter is like a net that catches email which appears to be junk. The challenge is that each e-mail vendor's spam filters looks for a specific list of things, so finding a way to not get caught



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in any of those nets can be a major hurdle. The good news is that while each e-mail vendor has a different set of filters in place, there are some things they all look for. You can reduce your chances of getting stuck in "spam-land" by following a few simple rules:

- Avoid using these in your subject line: the word "free," a dollar sign (\$), an exclamation point (!), or words typed in all capital letters.
 - Don't use a solid graphic image in the body of your e-mail. Instead, use a combination of live text and graphics.
- **It's all about saying what you mean.** Again, this suggestion may sound basic, but it's important to write good content that is relevant to your clients. By writing about topics your audience relates to, you'll build your readership rate (i.e., the number of people who actually open and read your email) and people will start looking forward to your emails.
 - **It's all about timing.** Statistics show that readership rates for e-mails are the highest on Tuesdays and Wednesday between 10am and 2pm, so think about when you want to blast your audience. (FYI: Tuesday is also statistically the most productive work day.) It's thought that people are either too busy or too distracted at other times of the week to read non-essential emails.
 - **It's all about using the right tools.** If an agency codes your e-communications using HTML, they're probably well aware of the fact that you can use only old-school HTML to build it because e-mail services don't recognize CSS. (If you're using a freelancer rather than an established agency, you may want to mention this to them.)

Another good option for creating a custom look for your e-communications is to use a service like Constant Contact or Cooler Email. These database services do everything from managing your e-mail list (for a small fee) to offering you a whole range of designed templates. With their help, even a novice can create a great looking e-blast without being a full-time developer!

E-communications can be an effective and cost-efficient tool to help you promote your business and connect with clients. So don't be afraid to experiment...

And next month, we'll discuss ways you can use viral online marketing..



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