

The Do's and Don'ts of E-mail Marketing – By Tricia Robinson – DM News

E-mail has moved beyond its infancy and has proven to be a high-yield marketing channel, so much so that everyone is jumping on board. Separate your messages from the clutter by implementing these dos and avoiding these don'ts. David Letterman has his top 10s, now here are mine:

Do include a call to action. In fact, include it several times throughout the e-mail. Be specific and create a sense of urgency by including an expiration date. Include the first one in the subject line. Put the second at the top to display in the preview pane. Even if your recipients never scroll, they now have two opportunities to take action. Finally, always include a call to action at the end. If your recipients were interested enough to read the entire message, don't make them scroll up.

Do make the e-mail unique to your company. Have a style unique to your brand or company and intertwine some flavor so it never gets old. Include an accurate logo that is clearly visible and clickable. If the link is to your Web site, ensure it functions properly. Train your recipients to recognize your brand and leave with a positive impression.

Do include an unsubscribe option. Always include the unsubscribe option. It's not just a courtesy, it's the law. CAN-SPAM dictates that every e-mail marketing message include the functional opt out and gives the marketer 10 days to suppress the opt out.

Do include white-listing instructions. Once readers become interested in your e-mails, they won't want to miss any of them. Show them how to add you to their white list. This decreases your company's chances of being marked as spam in future mailings. Also, recipients will connect and become familiar with your brand. Think of it as being on their VIP list.

Do consider using an e-mail service provider to send your campaigns. With ever-changing best practices, this is the most reliable, efficient way to manage your e-mail campaigns. It lets you track e-mails, measure campaign results and improve and modify your e-mail strategy while your ESP focuses on message hosting, best-practices consulting and delivery.

Don't overwhelm the recipient's inbox. Sending daily marketing e-mails can cause more harm than good to your campaign. It also damages your brand's reputation. If messages are flooding inboxes, recipients are more likely to unsubscribe or mark your messages as junk.

Don't get too wordy. Starting with the subject line, keep everything short and to the point. Paragraphs should be short but catchy enough to grab people's attention. Use simple words and short phrases. Arrange the text so a quick scan can easily reveal the main message. Use bullet points wherever possible.

Don't misspell words or use poor grammar. This is obvious, but nothing will turn people away faster than an e-mail filled with mistakes. It not only shows incompetence on your part, but it also reflects poorly on the quality and reputation of your brand. Take time to double and triple check your text, scrutinize the copy until you find nothing wrong with it, then have someone else check it again.

Don't keep sending messages when there is no interest. If your open and click-through rates are plummeting, change your approach or stop sending to the recipient. Try sending a reminder e-mail - they may have opted in but forgotten why. If there is still no action by the recipient, clean your distribution list.

Don't send e-mails without a clear purpose. Every e-mail should have a purpose, and it should be obvious. Have a specific goal you want to accomplish with each e-mail. Recipients should not be wondering why a certain message was delivered to their inbox. Instead, they will understand and appreciate it when your message caters to their interests. Know yourself and know your audience, too.

As the old saying goes, you have to learn to crawl before you can walk. Keep my top 10 dos and don'ts in mind for your next campaign, and you'll be on your feet and running in no time.