Email: the best lead generation channel, optimise performance and take analytics to the next level

42% of businesses stated email is their best performing lead generation channel in a recent benchmark report by B2B Marketing Magazine. And email marketing is still set to grow as a channel, 75.8% of marketers say they're using more email now than they were 3 years ago and investment in email marketing is set to increase by 18% from 2010 to 2014.

So how can you keep content fresh and achieve stand out to ensure you continue to deliver leads for your business in a channel that's so oversubscribed?

EMAIL PERFORMANCE

Several factors are affecting email performance. Data expires at a rate of 25% a year due to people changing jobs and their names. Technology impacts how people see and interact with emails as 16% of all emails are now opened on smart phones. And the average B2B marketer receives in excess of 100 emails a day, so how can you get cut through? And if your recipient does open your email and click through, how can you gain as much insight into that person and their actions as possible?

> "42% of businesses stated email is their best performing lead generation channel."

1. DATA

Email performance is highly dependent on quality of data and whilst businesses can replenish lists through purchasing data from third parties and encouraging new contacts to subscribe, the best way to prevent expiration is to nurture the data you already have.

All data, including your customers, lead capture database and email marketing lists should be housed under one roof in a marketing automation solution to allow you to pool all of your activity into one fluid process.

> "Investment in email marketing set to increase by 18% from 2010 to 2014."

This will allow you to build targeted lists of data that you can segment according to your target audience, deploy tailored email campaigns and measure email performance including behaviours and activities alongside what these prospects do on your website.

The data base can then be segmented depending on their activity and leads scored grounded on their level of engagement. Qualified leads then get passed through to your customer database and warm leads should be moved to a nurture cycle.

This approach allows you to analyse marketing and sales performance across your full marketing activity, rather than email in isolation and take learning's across channels and apply to the full range of activity, ultimately improving the performance of your campaigns.

2. AGE OF THE SMART PHONE

52% of people receive business information around the clock, including weekends due to their smart phones and 16% of all emails are opened on mobile devices. So how well do your emails integrate with mobile?

Steps to ensure your emails work well on mobile include testing email templates across different smart phones and mobile devices to ensure they render properly and offering plain text and HTML versions of the emails. Plain text tends to present better on smart phones and HTML versions don't render well with images often not displaying correctly, so include descriptions of any images in your emails.

> "16% of all emails are opened on mobile devices."

Call to actions need to be clear and easy to read and use on these devices so ensure they can be seen without scrolling and they are big enough CTA buttons for touch screen users to easily click on. Also phone numbers should be in a format that allows people to click on them to dial.

Landing pages need to be optimised for mobile too, flash doesn't work on mobile so it's best to include a j-query version of any banners so that your mobile audience don't miss out. Pages also need to load within 5 seconds or less so shouldn't be any bigger than 20KB. To maximise response from this goal–orientated audience messages should be concise and include a call to action in a prominent place. Plus if your page includes a contact form ideally it should have 1-3 fields but definitely not more than 7.

3. GETTING MORE CUT THROUGH – SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION

To get the best performing emails many top B2B marketers are integrating them with their social media activity.

To do this for your business:

- Add social media buttons to emails so that content can be shared, enabling you to reach a wider audience and raise awareness for your content and your brand.

- Use social media interactions to target email subscribers, focusing on those that engage with your brand on social media activity, including twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook and target them with relevant, personalised emails.

- And increase your subscription data list through your social platforms by including a choice for people to subscribe to your emails.

> "Increase your subscription data list through social platforms by including a choice to subscribe to emails."

4. OPTIMISE YOUR ANALYTICS

Most businesses measure the performance of their email campaigns by open rates, click throughs and enquiries. All valuable information and important insight into the performance of your email activity, however what about your prospects that don't click on the links you've given them and what if you could gather much more insight on their next actions?

Next generation IP tracking software allows you to upload data lists containing your email recipients so that post email you can see if they visit your website, even if they don't click through from the relevant link. It also allows you to track their full journey throughout your website including exactly which pages they go on and how long they spend on each page. This gives you valuable insight into which of your products or services they are interested in and an awareness of your prospect you wouldn't normally be able to obtain.

> "Track their full journey throughout your website including exactly which pages they visit."

This insight can be used in many ways:

- Take learning's to improve your email messaging and content for future communications so that recipients are more likely to respond in the preferred way.
- Use insight to further segment your data and tailor messages to these individuals depending on what they looked at on your site, ensuring the next email you send them is relevant to their interests or needs.
- Pass contact information to your sales team for follow up, particularly if your prospect was close to making a purchase but didn't

For more information about this IP tracking solution and how it can positively impact your email campaigns, please contact Lead Forensics on 0203 131 0153.

Sources: Forrester Research, Forbes Insight, Aberdeen Research & Search Engine Watch