Email supplement 2010

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Why trigger campaigns are the next step for email marketing



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Formats may change but the message remains the same



"People have gone from sitting in front of their desks looking at a screen to accessing their messages via their phones. They are now also consuming messages in multiple places, offline, inbox, Facebook, LinkedIn etc."

Ed Weatherall, MD, Concep

Nothing stays the same, some things change for the better and some things for the worse, but what is for sure is that they change. This presents us with the challenge of staying up to date and working out who and what to listen to.

Email marketing is definitely a channel that has changed and to get noticed it is a lot more challenging. People have gone from receiving a couple of emails to hundreds per day. They've gone from sitting in front of their desks looking at a screen to accessing their messages via their phones. They are now also consuming messages in multiple places, offline, inbox, Facebook, LinkedIn etc.

With all of these changes, different challenges appear. Spam and deliverability are still very much part of the game, although the landscape may have changed slightly, but there are also the creative challenges with most people now blocking images.

So where does that leave us? The following pages will give you access to some of the great content that has been developed for *B2B Marketing* by people who consider themselves in the know. We are the people who as part of our day jobs stay up to date on this stuff; we have time to do the research, we have time to investigate and test, talk to the ISPs and work with industry bodies.

Ed Weatherall, MD, Concep

Contents

4 Trigger campaigns
Are dynamic or trigger-based campaigns, which distribute content based on recipients' interaction with previous emails, the future of effective email marketing? **Claire Weekes** investigates

6 Best practice: Email prospecting
Andy Taylor of Infogroup UK on how to use email as an effective prospecting tool

7 Email review: BusinessLink
Rob Hunter of Adestra gives his verdict on a recent enewsletter from BusinessLink

8 Online lead generation
The recession made focusing on lead generation a key focus for most marketing teams, but what techniques are available and how do they compare? **Alex Blyth** reports

10 Case study: Cushman & Wakefield
The surveyor's highly effective approach to email won two categories at the **B2B Marketing Awards 2009**

11 Best practice: Measurement and understanding of metrics
Ed Weatherall of Concep on how to track, measure and tweak your email marketing campaigns

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Get trigger happy

Trigger email campaigns are being increasingly touted as the clever email marketer's tool, ready to cut through inbox clutter and give the customer what they want, when they want it. **Claire Weekes reports**

Making your email stand out in the average business professional's inbox is a pretty tough challenge. Most decision maker's inboxes burgeon – attended only between a flurry of meetings and phone calls. Which is why the use of trigger campaigns amongst B2B marketers is on the rise.

Put simply, trigger marketing works on the premise that you communicate with your customers only when they've given you a sign that they're ready to buy. More complex is the way in which trigger marketing works – using analytics to scrutinise customer behaviour and alert marketers to actions or changes in behaviour that might indicate the customer's need for their product or service.

"An 'event-triggered' communication might be initiated through a prospect or customer clicking on a link to the firm's website, browsing certain pages while logged in, making an order, responding to a survey or through the anniversary of a purchase, for example," explains François Laxalt, marketing intelligence manager at Neolane. "These 'events' present the opportunity to quickly follow up while the contact is potentially in an enquiry or purchase frame of mind."

Five times the power

According to Gartner, event-triggered marketing messages receive up to five times the response rate of non-targeted push messages. You've just got to be prepared to put in the leg-work early on to reap the benefits. "Generally you would aim to automate trigger campaigns, particularly for larger companies handling high volumes of new subscriptions and sales across a large product mix," says Luke Griffiths, VP professional services at e-Dialog. Before any of this, you obviously need to identify and create business rules behind the trigger. "Test. Then automate. The sophistication of tools that you are using can be a dependency," he warns.

Taking your first steps on the trigger campaign ladder doesn't necessarily mean having to go straight to vendors for expensive off-the-shelf solutions. "Look at existing tools, such as web analytics and determine whether this can be integrated with your email marketing vendor rather than simply purchasing another solution," advises Craig Whiston, head of client services at Coremetrics.



"The timeframe for a response is dependant upon the event... It's about nurturing towards a sale – and determining when the right moment for a trigger response might be"

François Laxalt, marketing intelligence manager, Neolane

Similarly, a trigger campaign doesn't necessarily rely on a CRM system to track users' open rates. Simon Robinson, marketing and alliances director for EMEA at Responsys, points out that it's viable to use a CRM system, such as Salesforce, but not essential. "You should consider the ease with which you can integrate your email with other third party vendors. This helps to ensure a cross-channel, holistic approach that enables marketers to reach out to customers through the correct channel and at the most influential moments of their lifecycle."

Testing the water

Email marketing specialist, Newsweaver, worked on a trigger campaign for an Irish training company; the first steps to test the water were fairly simple. They started 'tagging' clicks on its monthly newsletters, which let recipients know about upcoming courses and events in relation to government IS09000 standards.

By looking at which recipients were clicking on information about which courses, it could send those recipients follow-up emails based only on more information about the specific event they had clicked on. "They took advantage of

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the metrics available to them – it was a hand assembled, non-automated trigger – and it got them a 32 per cent lift in registrations on their courses," explains Denise Cox, Newsweaver's newsletter specialist.

Somewhere down the line, automation is likely to play a part – "by having an automated process it ensures the marketing team can concentrate on the 'value add' elements – setting up the campaign, analysing the results and refining the process, rather than the physical deployment of details," says Robinson.

However, starting an ill-advised automated campaign can have repercussions, as Griffiths warns. "Before we set up a trigger campaign with our clients, we always make sure that we understand exactly which points of the customer lifecycle we wish to automate. Once the process is set up, some of our clients opt to be entirely self-service; others prefer us to manage it. It all depends on the nature of the business."

Right on time

So how do you avoid putting together an "ill-advised" trigger campaign? One of the biggest dilemmas is often over when, and how often, a trigger message should be deployed.

"A key part of managing your campaign is knowing what stage the person is at in the buying cycle. If they're downloading information on pricing, then they're pretty far in the cycle and every hour is vital so you want to follow up immediately, which may even be with a call rather than an email," says Christopher Doran, vice president at Manticore. "At the other end of the spectrum, if they're just trying to search for some information via a white paper, they're in the discovery phase, so being too aggressive can put them off. There, I'd typically recommend a follow-up within seven to 14 days with some additional information to continue the dialogue."

Putting the power into the hands of your customers should also help prevent them from switching off, adds Griffiths. "At the point where you capture their email contact details, it is important to set up a preference capture tool so that you can establish exactly what content they wish to receive.

"By putting the power over content back in the hands of your customer, you will ensure that they are only receiving information directly of interest to them. There is always an opportunity to expand your relationship with them further down the line, but if they unsubscribe after receiving a week of inappropriate content you could have irreparably lost that contact."

Missing a trick?

Sometimes a trigger email can be 'tacked on' to another type of communication email. Notification emails, for example, typically have a high open rate. "Yet surprisingly, they are one of the most under used types of trigger campaign" points out Nick Gold, UK managing director at Emailvision. "Companies are missing an opportunity here, as emails that confirm a purchase or other action are something that your contact expects to see. This is the ideal time to start a lifecycle of communication and if done correctly could lead to further interaction with the customer," he says.

"When it comes to triggered notification emails, structure is key. Best practice guidelines should be in place to ensure that they are not purely used as a cross sell tool. For emails confirming a transaction, 80 per cent of the message should refer to the purchase just made, while the remaining 20 per cent can be used as an up sell or cross sell tool. The email also needs to appear in a consistent format so that recipients associate it with your company website."

The golden rule of the trigger campaign is that it must add value for the customer. Think of it, says Ed Weatherall, managing director at Concep, as like the beginnings of a relationship. "It's like thinking, 'how many times do I text or call this girl I met last night – do I wait 24 hours, do I seem desperate if I do it straight away, do I wait three days?' There are no hard and fast rules, only constant testing and monitoring can give you the answers in the end."



"By putting the power over content back in the hands of your customer you will ensure that they are only receiving information directly of interest to them"

Luke Griffiths, VP professional services, e-Dialog



Trigger campaigns – the future of email marketing?

Trigger campaigns enable a much more focused and relevant dialogue, says **Robin Collyer**, regional director UKI, Aprimo

"Email marketing is still in the process of transforming. Earlier forms were unsophisticated and relied on simple campaigns that were not particularly differentiated. You could monitor who had opened the email and that was pretty much it. But it was cheap and as a result grew rapidly. Consequently, much email marketing was, and still is, thrown out by a user's system as spam. The marketer's challenge now is to use email campaigns to earn the respect of the recipient by not spamming and providing useful and relevant content.

A dynamic or trigger campaign allows a marketer to plan a complete programme of communication with multiple stages that monitors certain behaviours displayed by the recipient. It then takes each recipient on a relevant journey depending on those behaviours – thereby nurturing their interest.

Essentially, dynamic or trigger campaigns allow marketers to establish a much more focused and relevant dialogue with a customer or prospect. This is something that the 'market' – be it consumers or businesses – expects.

Using the right tools, dynamic or trigger campaigns also allow marketers to act much more rapidly in response to a piece of information they receive about a customer or prospect rather than waiting weeks or maybe even months to respond, by which time a customer's interest may have changed. Progressive profiling – capturing a little bit of data from each interaction – is also a much friendlier way to build a picture of your customer or prospect.

HOW TO... plan your email marketing to prospects

Email marketing to prospects is difficult but not impossible, if you follow some basic rules, according to **Andy Taylor,** head of sales and marketing at Infogroup UK

So many B2B email marketing campaigns to cold prospects are doomed to failure from the beginning – simply because they are not properly planned or costed. Perhaps because email campaigns are low-cost to implement, many B2B marketers seem to adopt the suck-it-and-see approach, with no clear idea about what they aim to achieve.

So, how do you go about devising your strategy? The first step is to clarify your objectives. These could include:

- Build customer interaction/brand
- Drive customers to your website
- Sell products/services
- Promote events or news
- Cultivate customer interest
- Build your prospect email list.
- 51 per cent spend at least £10,000 a year
- 30 per cent spending £5000 or less annually.

Focus on one or two goals per campaign. Being focused is the key to success. You need to accept that no single campaign can achieve all of your goals especially when you are trying to reach out to prospects that you don't have an existing relationship with. Therefore you need to be realistic, and devise individual campaigns that each focus on a maximum of two objectives.

Once you have decided what you want to achieve, you need to work out how you are going to achieve it. Think about which segment of your target market will you approach and which messages you want to communicate to them.

Refining the numbers

You can then put some numbers into the mix. You may want to set a target for the number of customers you need to drive to your website, or the uplift in sales you are aiming to achieve, or by how much you want to grow your email list.

Initially, this exercise may largely involve plucking numbers out of the air. However, with a robust measurement system in place to track email responses to, you'll quickly be able to develop more realistic targets. With each campaign your targets will become more accurate.

Calculate your costs

Once you know what you want to achieve, how you're going to do it and with whom, you have a strategy. All you need to do now is allocate a budget. To calculate your budget you need to know:



"Focus on one or two goals per campaign. Being focused is the keyto success."

Andy Taylor, head of marketing, Infogroup UK

- **Your objectives** and how quickly you want to achieve them. For example, 100 new customers in a year
- **Conversion rates.** What proportion of email responses become sales?
- **Response rates.** A low 4-5 per cent response rate is typical for email marketing to cold prospects. However, if you work with a good supplier, you should be able to achieve unique open response rates of at least 10-12 per cent. Over time you will become better at gauging your own response rates.
- **Your costs** for services such as design, copywriting, email fulfilment and enquiry handling.

To work out the budget for your campaign, it helps to work back from your ultimate objective. Let's say you want to gain 100 new customers in a year, and 10 per cent of responses turn into sales – you then know you need to generate 1000 responses over the year.

If ten per cent of your emails generate responses, you will need to send out 10,000 emails in a year to reach your response goal. If you then know that it costs £385 in total to email a thousand prospects, your annual B2B email marketing budget will be £3850.

Balance your budget

If this calculation process generates a budget that is beyond your means, you will need to take one of these actions:

1. Improve your conversion rates
2. Improve your response rates
3. Reduce your costs (although this might affect your response rates)
4. Lower your expectations.

You will probably need to spend some time working though this equation, getting the balance right so that it works for your business and budget.

Nevertheless, time spent planning and budgeting now will be rewarded in the long run with more successful and measurable B2B email marketing campaigns that make a valuable contribution to your business objectives.

knowledge bank B2B marketing

The Knowledge Bank is an essential and comprehensive information resource streamed around key aspects of B2B Marketing. To access the Knowledge Bank, go to www.b2bm.biz/knowledgebank/email



Email masterclass: Business Link

Reviewed by **Rob Hunter**, group account director, Adestra

Initial impressions

Good points: The Business Link newsletter will be instantly recognised by subscribers and is consistent with the website branding. The email is well laid out and easy to read. Images are put to good use, drawing your eye to the different items with a succinct article summary to generate interest and clicks.

Bad points: Data collection is key to a successful email marketing campaign. Given that contacts must be a member of Business Link to receive the email newsletter, it is likely that lots of information is gathered over time but this does not appear to be used in the email. The email is addressed to 'Dear colleague', for example, which is fine as a default, but if the contact's name is held it should be used. Information about industry sector or geographical location can also be used to ensure that contacts receive information which is most relevant to them.

Content

Good points: The content is informative and the email is about the right length for an email newsletter. The subscribe link has been included so that if the email is forwarded the new recipient can sign up.

Bad points: The area 'above-the-fold' is one of the most valuable areas in an email. The from name, from address and subject line are key to getting your email opened and read. To maximise results, the recipient needs to get enough information about the content to encourage them to read on. A better option would be to include content keywords in the subject line, such as: Business Link: Twitter, cost control, funding and finance, apprentices.

Technical aspects

Good points: As a general rule the email follows best practice guidelines and complies with relevant legislation. Key content is text based, and images have relevant alt text.

The links within the email use a related subdomain which removes the risk of the email being marked as potential phishing. This can occur when the link domains do not match the from address domain.

The code within the emails works well and renders correctly in the key email providers. The email is not caught up by spam or junk filters thanks to a good image to text ratio and a small number of words currently carrying a spam score or weight. However, it is important to test this for every campaign as content of the email will change for each send.

Bad points: Following best practice to ensure that the email renders as expected can sometimes impact on design and this email may not be to everyone's taste visually.



Summary

Business Link has done a good job of delivering valuable content alongside relevant value-add services whilst maintaining the style of the newsletter. However, there remain some opportunities for optimisation.

Rating: ★★★★★

Generation acceleration

As more and more B2B marketers grapple with online lead generation, **Alex Blyth** uncovers the best techniques to get that campaign started

"Anyone who has attended a trade show recently knows exactly how much online has taken over from traditional lead generation methods," says Malcolm Duckett, VP operations at digital marketing company Magiq. "Although telemarketing may be used to progress a discussion, online has in the last two years become the way to source opportunities."

In early 2007 online lead generation was still in its infancy, but the speed of its growth since then has been dizzying. Most observers agree that it has been greatly accelerated by the recession, but that it was always going to be popular anyway. This is for two reasons.

Firstly, the Internet is increasingly where business buyers go to research their purchases, and so it can produce an impressive return on investment for marketers. As Carl Robertson, chief marketing officer at telecommunications provider COLT, says, "We have been forced to achieve more with smaller marketing budgets. Our investment in digital marketing has already reduced our acquisition cost per lead from €250 to €33."

Secondly, those signing off marketing spend are demanding to see evidence of results, and performance is more measurable online. Stan Woods, MD of online lead generation agency Velocity, says, "With the dawn of online lead generation, marketers can know within seconds whether or not a campaign is working. This allows them to optimise campaigns, to score leads for the sales team and to report results accurately."

He does add, however, that only a small percentage of B2B companies have embraced online lead generation as fully as they could. He puts this down to the fact that it requires a radically new way of working. Some are leading the way, and reaping the benefits. Others need to get to grips with the techniques involved. Over the next decade ignoring online lead generation will not be an option.

OLG: The big six techniques

There are hundreds of ways to generate leads online. However, these are the big six to consider:

1. Natural search

Few serious B2B marketers now fail to optimise their websites for search engines. Stephen Alexander, MD of digital marketing agency First Internet says, "Search engine optimisation (SEO) is appealing because you don't have to pay for each visit to your site as you do with pay-per-click (PPC).

"However, SEO can be time consuming and achieving first page ranking can be costly due to the professional time it requires. The key to success is focusing on optimising your website for a couple of well-researched key terms rather than diluting the effort by attempting to optimise it for an overly ambitious number of terms."

2. Paid search

The next step for most B2B marketers is to look into PPC advertising. Alexander continues, "PPC advertising can propel your company to the top of Google's paid-for listings within minutes. Statistics packages will reveal which key words are working, allowing you to delete redundant key words. It's possible to set a daily budget and work within its parameters. There are tricks to making PPC provide optimum return on investment. For example, making full use of negative key words helps by filtering out unhelpful and irrelevant traffic to your site which you would have to pay for."

Online lead generation: Six Golden Rules

Picking the right mix of techniques is only half the battle with online lead generation. Bear in mind these six golden rules.

1. Don't run a tap into a leaking bucket

When a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) provider first approached Clear Thought Consulting they asked for a lead generation campaign. However, it quickly became clear that before generating fresh leads they needed to pay attention to those they already had.

2. Keep rolling the snowball

There is so much noise in the online space that to be heard and to build awareness you need to maintain momentum and consistency over a good length of time.

3. Don't neglect your offline channels

70 per cent of all incoming enquiries to corporate voucher company Love2reward now come from online sources. It has achieved this through steady use of search activity and e-shots that direct potential customers to relevant landing pages. However, Martin Cooper, sales and marketing manager notes, "The majority of those prospects arrived at our website via core brand term searches and so if we stopped promoting those brands at trade exhibitions and in print media enquiries would suffer."

4. Measure, measure, measure

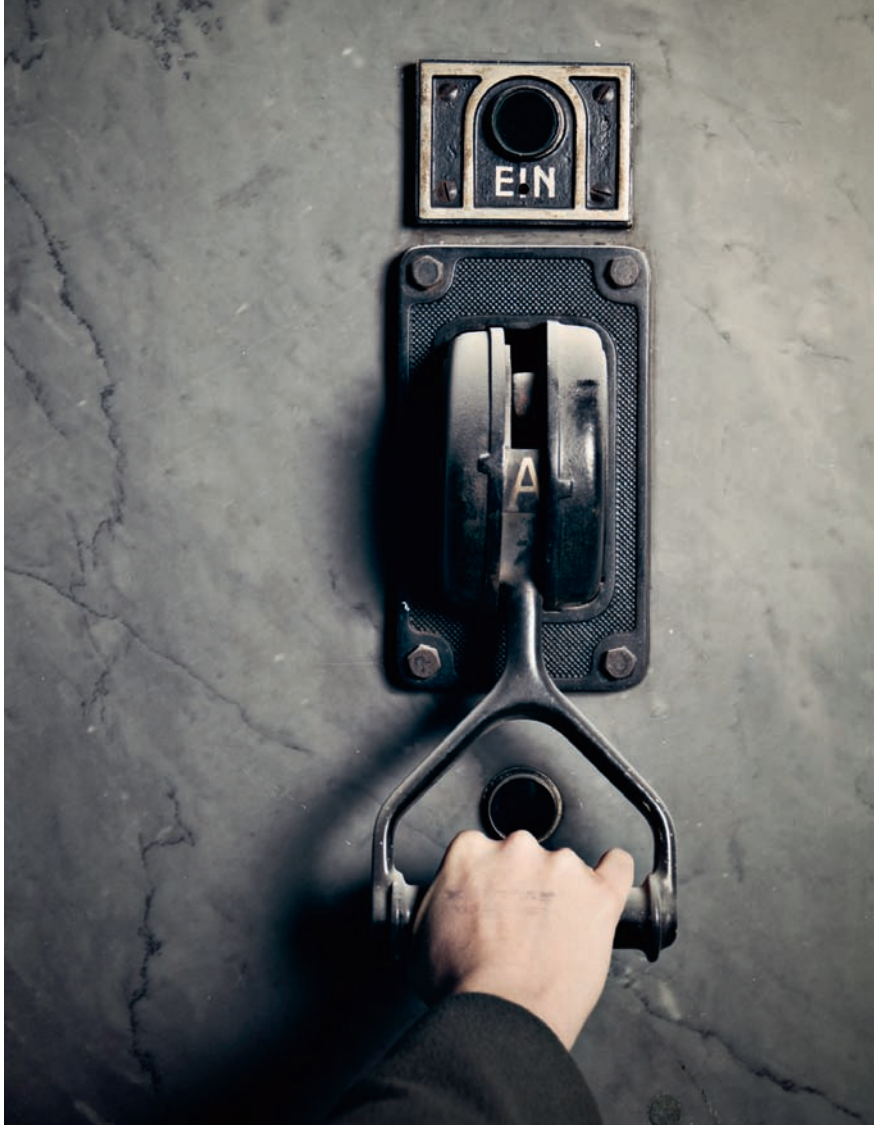
Peter Wilson, digital strategy manager at software provider Sage UK, offers this advice: "It's vital to analyse your online lead generation activity. At Sage, we have a training plan designed to ensure that all campaign managers, whether digital or not, are confident in web analytics. We are committed to ensuring that this thinking is embedded within all campaigns."

5. Manage the pipeline

In the same way, online lead generation allows you to track and manage your leads through the sales pipeline. Patricia Harriss, director at Creative Direction Consultants says, "We are running a campaign for Fujitsu that tracks where the leads come from and watches as they progress down the sales funnel. Their actions and reactions trigger different outbound communications at different times."

6. Automate

Finally, the software that allows you to automate much of this entire process is rapidly becoming more sophisticated and more affordable. Kristin Hambelton, senior director of marketing at marketing automation software provider Neolane says, "Automation allows you to save money and reduce the time you spend on it from a week to a day. What's more it also helps you produce content that is more timely and so more relevant. That in turn increases the effectiveness of your lead generation activity."



Case study: ShipServ

ShipServ is a B2B marketplace for the shipping industry. Suppliers can sell items ranging from spare parts for ships to on-board safety equipment, and the cans of coke sold in vending machines.

When John Watton, VP marketing, joined the company two and a half years ago it generated leads almost entirely through its outbound call centre in Manila. It had done some banner ads and AdWords work, but Watton saw that there was an opportunity for the company to do much more online lead generation.

He explains, "About a year ago I began using social media. I'd always backed away from it, as I was sceptical if any of our prospects would actually be there, but I figured it doesn't cost anything, so why not join LinkedIn and set up a group. We now have 900 members and some good discussions which provide us with leads."

Watton continues, "I also use Twitter to push our thoughts out. Both are now in our top 20 traffic referring sites, and this free activity has allowed us to reduce our expenditure on banner ads and pay-per-click ads. Most of our leads still come from the call centre, but about 30 per cent now come from these online sources, from almost zero two years ago."

3. Online advertising

Bryony Thomas, chief clear thinker at Clear Thought Consulting says, "Buying advertising on another website allows you to directly target your audience. You can also get your ads to work much harder for you these days using techniques like video-tagging. This is where you tag parts of the video, so when viewers see something they like they click on it and are redirected straight to further information on that product or service. You can also make sure that your ad links to a highly relevant landing page. However, you have to endure reasonably heavy upfront costs in copy and creative, as well as a high number of eyes on your ads that will go wasted."

4. Article or content marketing

"Article marketing can be a very powerful technique," says Thomas. "It involves writing pieces and submitting them to free article websites. As well as demonstrating thought leadership and raising awareness, it also helps to expand your digital footprint, pushing your site up the search engine rankings. Furthermore it can give you content for blogs, which gives you a reason to email people, and provides a library of comment available for press releases, speeches, and even proposals."

5. Social media

Search, online advertising and article marketing are all useful ways of generating leads online, but without doubt all the buzz at the moment is around social media. "This is the big one in my opinion," says Thomas. "For one of our clients, Fraudscreen, we recently ran a webinar and white paper campaign, in which 70 per cent of the response was generated through social media. Overall, the campaign was 20 per cent over target for awareness, as measured by suspect data capture. The campaign was able to bring leads in at 24 per cent less than the targeted £-per lead."



"With the dawn of online lead generation, marketers can know within seconds whether or not a campaign is working"

Stan Woods, MD, Velocity

6. Broadcast email

Finally there is email. For much of the past decade this has been the primary online lead generation technique, but there are signs it may be fading in importance. Ed Weatherall, MD of email marketing company Concep admits that response rates for email broadcasts are falling. He reports seeing discounts of up to 30 per cent from list brokers, indicating that the days of mass-mailing lists of email addresses may well be past.

"People mis-used email," says Weatherall. "They blasted 20,000 addresses to generate three leads. I know people who use their BlackBerries on the way into work to delete the emails they don't want to see when they get into the office. This is forcing marketers to become more inventive, by for instance piggybacking on someone else's communications, and so sharing their contacts and reputation."

Indeed, email is far from finished as a lead generation technique. Creative Direction recently ran a campaign for headset manufacturer Plantronics which generated 1470 SME leads against a target of 1000 for the £86,500 budget and consequently scooped the B2B Marketing Award for best lead generation campaign. It used pre-opted in ebulletins, online broadcasts, web TV, online display ads, and Google search. The best performing method was the pre-opted in ebulletins, delivering almost half of all leads generated.

For more information go to www.b2bm.biz/knowledgebank/email

Real results for real estate

The property services giant used an email campaign from Concep to spearhead a campaign to generate more revenue from existing occupiers, and combat the effects of the recession

Cushman & Wakefield is the world's largest privately-held real estate services firm, with 221 offices in 58 countries. It represents a diverse customer base, ranging from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies.

With the ecomonic downturn forcing many UK businesses to reduce costs associated with real estate and generate revenue or release capital, Cushman & Wakefield saw an opportunity to strengthen its relationships and forge new ones. It needed to because in 2008 occupiers only generated 19 per cent of turnover for the company – the remaining 81 per cent coming from investors and developers.

Cushman & Wakefield realised that it could generate a lot more income from owner occupiers, but it only had contact with 20 per cent of them in the market. The campaign's primary objective therefore was to increase the number of known occupiers, build relationships with key individuals and generate revenue from those leads.



The campaign comprised of two distinct phases and was designed to increase the amount of revenue Cushman & Wakefield generated from occupiers of real estate. Phase one was designed to generate new leads from clients who already had a relationship with the business, whilst stage two sought to nurture new leads from previously unknown businesses, utilising market intelligence gained from phase one.

The first step in phase one was to trawl various CRM systems and create a single, de-duped database of known occupiers. This was the first time Cushman & Wakefield held all of this data in one location. Previously, there were a total of 114 contact owners within the business who held information on occupiers. After cleaning the data, Cushman & Wakefield appointed a single contact owner for each client; a first for the business.

The database was segmented according to specific markets, namely retail business space and private equity. Capitalising on the market's desire to reduce costs and release revenue from expensive property portfolios, Cushman & Wakefield designed 'top 10 tips' campaign which differed according to the specific needs of each sector. Personalised emails were sent to 1071 individuals in client companies. From there, marketers could work out which of the top 10 tips were most useful and create a profile for each client.

After week one, Cushman & Wakefield's contact owners telephoned clients, tailoring conversations according to profiles. During this conversation, contacts were invited to one of a series of five seminars held throughout the UK. Content was directly influenced by the insights gathered from the emails – the topics most important to clients were matched to seminar content.

Phase two, which shared the ultimate goal of seminar attendance, was a DM campaign. Cushman & Wakefield targeted named individuals at companies with at least 500 employees and a turnover of more than £40 million – 3789 businesses in total.

Four postcards, introducing the company and its market expertise, were sent over a three week period, followed by



a personalised letter that came bundled with a sector-relevant 'Top 10 tips' brochure. This was then followed by a telephone call to the named individual and an invitation to one of the five seminars.

Cushman & Wakefield's main objective was to increase revenue from this largely untapped group. Six weeks after the campaign ended it had generated in excess of £1.5 million worth of business from phase one, and £200,000 from phase two. The campaign itself only cost £28,000. The business has also increased its database of occupiers by 35 per cent.

HOW TO... measure email marketing and understand metrics

Learn to track, measure and tweak – secrets of successful email marketing. By **Ed Weatherall,** MD, Concep

Getting your email out there, making sure it gets read and doing all you can to guarantee its relevance is just the start. Businesses that really understand email marketing know that the key differentiator is the ability to track, measure and tweak.

In fact, without proper scrutiny of data, there is little chance of ever becoming a successful email marketer. Unless you really understand your audience and how it interacts with your campaign, you are never going to refine the communication and improve the design to craft the truly targeted message.

Much has been made of email's ability to be tracked and measured. It is often cited as one of the key advantages of marketing through the medium. However, most marketers are not drilling deep enough and exploiting the true potential of the facts and figures at their disposal.

Critical analysis

You have to make the time and invest the energy. Your business has to examine what content its audience finds interesting so that future campaigns can be made even more relevant and achieve even greater levels of cut-through.

If you see users are interacting with content, treat this with the urgency and energy it deserves. Follow up the email communication with a telephone call, invitations to relevant events and so on.

Understanding what that user finds useful and interesting will help you avoid falling into the trap of continuing to send irrelevant content in future campaigns. Every interaction will generate data and help build a fuller picture of the person with whom you are communicating.

Compare that situation with direct mail. Small mail campaigns could take weeks and often aren't effective because the business isn't able to track results properly. With email, results are almost instantaneous. Technology can enable the marketer to track everything; from who looked at what, for how long, where they went next, who became undeliverable to who opted out.

The fact that email can tell you all of this is fantastic news for all the old-school direct marketers, but what use is knowledge without application? Seeing how many people opted out following a campaign is great, but it's what you do with that information that counts.

Stop the rot

Losing one contact from your database is unfortunate, but without understanding the reasons why that person may have opted out you stand little chance of stopping similar prospects doing likewise. Attrition is a big enough problem in B2C, but in B2B the situation is amplified.

The value of an individual within a database is far higher in B2B than in B2C. The potential transaction value is higher, but the number of people you can communicate with is far scarcer. The pool from which you are drawing may only contain a few thousand people. If people start opting out – and you've no idea why – you are in danger of destroying the whole channel.

Scrutinise the email campaign. Really pull it apart and work out how it all fits together, how the constituent parts work and what happens if some are altered, refined or deleted?

It's only by running these tests, sending out different iterations of a campaign to different segments of the database, that you will be able to test the notion of personalised and targeted messages. You can see what works and what doesn't.

Ask the right questions

This is where most businesses fail spectacularly. Once the campaign has closed, they will be sitting on all manner of statistics, but very few companies will actually use this information.

How many of you ask rigorous questions of your data? How did the personalised campaign compare to the one that wasn't personalised? You've got a group who are interacting with the email, so what do you do next? How do you nudge them along the sales cycle? Are they the people who should now receive a DM piece? A telephone call? Do you have any idea? Could you get an idea by looking at past campaigns?

These are challenging questions, but the answers can be hugely rewarding.

Worse, many businesses think they are tracking and measuring and testing, but they're not.

They may look at the spike in traffic, or be wowed by the user journey, but few will apply the underlying data to the optimisation of future campaigns.

From bad news to good

Opt-outs and undeliverables are the classic data sets that are undervalued by marketers. Often seen as bad news, they are buried and forgotten about. But getting to grips with this information and really understanding it can yield significant results.

For example, one undeliverable address could mean that a new person is now in a purchasing position. This is someone your business should be contacting. If you are able to get to that person and build a relationship before your competitor, you have gained a significant advantage. All thanks to proper scrutiny of your data.

Data can be daunting to the uninitiated, but to the trained eye it can be the key differentiator between you and your competitors. If you make that data sweat you will gain valuable insights into your database. If you don't, contacts will drop away and be picked up by those around you.

The Knowledge Bank is an essential and comprehensive information resource streamed around key aspects of B2B Marketing.

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For more information go to **www.b2bm.biz/knowledgebank/email**

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