Tips for a successful lead generation e-mail campaign

Sending out an e-mail as part of your lead generation campaign is not unlike trying to strike up a conversation with someone you would ultimately like to date. The goal is to be so irresistible with that pick-up line that the prospective suitor - or in this case, the prospective clients - will be willing to commit to your product or service for the long term.

The challenge is to stand out, since the average inbox is an extremely crowded place. According to a self-described 'limited and biased towards Gmail' study, which was conducted by PandoDaily, and which is based on data collected in late 2012 and early 2013 from analysis performed on 38,000 inboxes, 30% of people have between 10,000 and 21,000 e-mails in their inboxes.

"This means that most people are suffering from serious e-mail fatigue already," says Louise Robinson, Managing Director of CG Consulting, a Cape Town-based strategic marketing consultancy specialising in lead generation and database creation. "So it is important for companies to come up with campaigns that will be so engaging, they will lead to successful sales conversions. They need to ensure that their e-mails do not land in the trash, or worse yet, remain entirely unopened."

Keep it short and sweet

In order to accomplish this, Robinson says that there are a few tips campaign creators ought to consider and follow when composing the e-mail. "You have to consider that most people do not use desktop computers to check their e-mail anymore. In fact, two out of three e-mails these days are reportedly opened on a mobile device and 63% of all decision makers check their e-mail on their cellphones. This means that your e-mail has to read really well on a device with a small screen, therefore the font you use cannot be too small, and your e-mail must not be too wordy."

And in case you think that if your e-mail is intriguing enough they will check it again later from their desktops, bad news: research performed by Litmus shows that 97% of people read the e-mail they receive only once and on a single device.

"The short and sweet rule applies to the headings and the text of the mail," Robinson explains. "White papers are boring, so only send longer text if you have been asked for it, and never send attachments."

Subject matters

"The subject of your e-mail should also grab your reader's attention," Robinson says. "According to statistics, 35% of e-mail recipients decide whether or not to open an e-mail based solely on the line written in the subject."

She adds that the right strategy, focus and relevance go a long way. "For example, you wouldn't want to send the CEO of a bank a debt consolidation e-mail."

Keep it simple

Another thing to keep in mind, Robinson says, is that in order to get people to co-operate by clicking on a link in your mail, you need to have them do as little as possible. "Don't give them too many links to click on. It might seem counter-intuitive. After all, more links would surely lead to more clicks, won't it? No, it won't, because according to Hick's Law, fewer choices means less confusion. Having too many options can paralyse some people and if it seems like too much work, they will rather not do anything at all. One call-to-action is enough, so try and focus on a single product or service per e-mail, if possible."

Best time to send

One would think when you send it doesn't matter much, since it is not a phone call where you have to time it to reach the other person, but an e-mail that can be sent and read at any time. However, even the time and day of the week you choose to send your e-mail could make a huge difference to the success rate of your lead conversion and sales, Robinson says.

"If all your customers are in one time zone, send it at a time when you know that they are already awake and bound to check mail, instead of in the middle of the night," she advises. "That way, you will ensure that your e-mail is seen and, most likely, read. Friday afternoons aren't great if you are wanting sales and marketing to reply, but Mondays after 10 are good, and apparently Wednesdays are the best if you have a product to sell! Also, it is important to remember not to spam your audience. If you spam two million people in the hopes that a few will buy from you, you are wasting your time and theirs."

In conclusion, Robinson says that creating an effective e-mail campaign takes time. "Always follow you e-mail campaign up with a phone call. You will be surprised how far you get! If you do not have the time to do it yourself, you can always outsource it to consultancies whose specialities include lead generation via e-mail campaigns and e-mail blasts, such as CG Consulting, who will do all the heavy lifting for you."

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