

Social Marketing's Benefits Rival Email For Small Businesses

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Cost-effectiveness and ease of use boost adoption

Social media has quickly moved up the ranks of top marketing tactics among small and medium-sized business (SMBs). April 2011 research from Pitney Bowes indicates that by some measures of desirability, it's in close competition with email.

When asked why they used several marketing tactics, US SMBs were most likely to say they chose social media marketing for its cost-effectiveness (54%) and ease of use (53%).

Respondents were still more likely to rate email as cost-effective and easy to use, but the older online marketing channel was ahead by less than 10 percentage points. No format besides social media approached it in these dimensions.

SMBs also tended to feel nearly as comfortable and knowledgeable with social media as they did with email, ahead of other channels.

Social media fell behind two other marketing tactics—direct mail and advertising—in proven effectiveness, however.

Still, its value for money spent has helped social media adoption rise quickly among small businesses. Pitney Bowes found that social media was used more frequently than direct mail, though still behind email and advertising overall.

And it was the marketing tactic most likely to have been adopted in the past year, with 20% of respondents having taken it up in that time.

Email marketing software firm Constant Contact also found in April 2011 that usage of social media marketing was more popular among small businesses than direct mail, and behind only email marketing, a company website and print advertising.

Four out of five respondents to that survey said they had increased their use of social media marketing in the past year.

Within the social realm, respondents were most likely to use Facebook, and rated it most effective of any venue.

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