

Opt-In Email Offers A Lesson In Loyalty Creation

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Consent and reciprocal value resonate most with consumers

As digital touchpoints become more extensive and increasingly elaborate, companies are changing tactics to increase customer retention. Lessons learned from email marketing—where permission is critical and consumers have come to expect valuable offers—can help marketers get the most from their other digital touchpoints with customers.

“When it comes to fostering customer loyalty, opt-in email marketing is not just a major channel in itself. It’s an excellent example for all other touchpoints,” said David Hallerman, eMarketer principal analyst and author of the new report, “The Lessons of Email: Using Digital Touchpoints for Customer Loyalty.” “Email marketing has been around for a long time, so it might not have the same sizzle as newer, hotter marketing channels. But don’t confuse lack of flash with lack of effectiveness. Consumers are more open to email messaging than most other digital marketing, and it still gets results.”

In an October 2011 survey of US internet users by Adpropos, 47% of respondents said they held a positive attitude toward email ads, the highest positive response for any of the digital ad formats measured.

Internet users’ favorable feelings towards email advertising stem largely from marketers contacting only those recipients who have granted them permission to do so, as well as from the personalization and relevancy common to such messages. Those efforts leave consumers with a greater sense of control over their relationship with a brand and a perception of having gotten reciprocal value from the interaction.

Savvy marketers are applying that lesson to their other principal digital touchpoints—brand websites, social media and mobile—in order to more effectively reach customers and further encourage loyalty across channels.

“Generally speaking, neither brands nor customers want to connect through a single channel,” said Hallerman. “Proliferation [of digital touchpoints] has created both opportunity and complexity for marketers, who face challenges figuring out how and when to communicate with customers.” Consumer acceptance of opt-in email exemplifies what happens when brands offer [consumers] control.

The full report, “The Lessons of Email: Using Digital Touchpoints for Customer Loyalty,” also answers these key questions:

- How can marketers use digital channels to build brand loyalty and retain customers?
- What shared elements play a role in all digital touchpoints?
- What can brands learn from email marketing that translates to their own customer loyalty efforts?

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