

Don't Let This Be Goodbye *Graceful Ways to Address Email Opt-Outs*

When faced with an opt-out to your email marketing efforts, do you let your subscriber simply walk away? If you look at opt-outs as an opportunity to engage and communicate with customers, you'll see that they also represent a chance to learn more about customer needs and to build greater value.

Try these simple steps to "save the sale" — and to learn more about the needs and wants of your subscribers in the process:

Take it back — Give recipients a final chance to change their minds. Inquire one last time if their intention is to opt out, and include a convenient way to get back in. If you go easy on the hard sell and focus on the benefits of being on your list, you may discover that a great percentage of potential opt-outers change their minds.

Offer more options — Give recipients control over their own destinies. This might include choosing the frequency of the

communication, or providing a handful of newsletters tailored to various audiences rather than a one-size-fits-all weekly blast.

Dig deep — Ask recipients why they want to opt out. Are they no longer in the market for your product or service, or were they receiving too many emails from your company? Use this feedback to develop best practices for future efforts.

Finally, accept the inevitable — If the recipient is bent on leaving, don't burn bridges. Make sure opt-outs are confirmed with a friendly, professional message that ends the relationship on a positive note... including a link to re-subscribe, of course.

Forecast: What's Old is New Again

In a recent issue of the daily online newsletter *Early to Rise*, direct mail guru

Clayton Makepeace made some savvy observations that should be given careful consideration as marketers start their second-quarter planning:

Cheaper media and multi-step promotions will gain in prominence. As open and click-through rates continue to decline, increasing numbers of Internet marketers will turn to traditional media — television, radio, and print — to drive prospects to landing pages and websites. According to Makepeace, online giants like eBay, Ditech, and Geico are already leading the way.

Advertorials that deliver value while making a sale will double and triple revenues and profits for many companies.

(cont'd on p. 3)

Speaking of Goodbyes...

British pop star Robbie Williams holds a dubious distinction — his song "Angels" has topped a Music Choice poll as the tune respondents would like played at their funerals. Frank Sinatra's "My Way" was second in the voting, with Monty Python's "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life," Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven," and "Who Wants to Live Forever" by Queen rounding out the top five. Always the consummate marketer, Music Choice's Simon George says, "Wanting to share your most treasured musical gem with those you're leaving behind is the perfect way to leave a lasting impression."

Source: BBC News

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Online Media Rooms

Like most of us, time-starved journalists are increasingly conducting much of their legwork online. What can you do to make their jobs a little easier...and maybe gain some ink along the way?

Your website is the first place a reporter will look to learn more about your company. Yet too often, their efforts are stymied by poor navigation, unnecessary plug-ins, hidden contact information, and cumbersome registration requirements — all the usual don'ts.

Plus, the press may have unique needs, such as the ability to download high-resolution images that are print ready.

An online press room is today's equivalent of the old-school press kit. Make sure you're supplying all the information a reporter, producer, or editor might need in a visually appealing, easily accessible way:

- Press releases archived by year
- Company background
- Bios of key players
- Downloadable high-resolution images, such as headshots, logos, or product photographs

Companies with multimedia capabilities should also consider including video news releases, webinar content, or streaming video from your latest trade event for the reporter who was unable to attend.

And don't forget to post a careful selection of clips — scans or links to past media coverage can go a long way toward earning you even greater exposure.

“Think like a man of action, act like a man of thought.”

Henri Bergson, French philosopher

Best Practices: Old Standby with a New Twist



When thoughtfully executed, case studies can be a highly effective selling tool. The Ballantine Corporation, a family-owned direct mail production company based in northern New Jersey, found a way to combine two proven marketing tools for maximum effectiveness — using high-impact case studies as the focus of its monthly email newsletter.

Ballantine provides creative, print production, and mailing services for direct response marketers. The company's free "Sample of the Month" newsletter offers details on a recent

project, including a brief description of the mailing and its goals, the services provided by Ballantine, and most importantly, quantitative results whenever possible.

In addition to the case study, the newsletter also manages to shoehorn in a subtle sales pitch or two — an announcement of a new client, or photos of Ballantine personnel at recent industry events — to reinforce the company's positioning as a direct mail insider.

According to Ryan Côté, Ballantine's director of marketing, the newsletter has proven to be a terrific low-cost marketing vehicle. "It's inexpensive, gives us a reason to contact our clients and prospects on a regular basis, and, given its consistent 35-45% open rate, provides information our subscribers enjoy receiving."

The newsletter was originally conceived to keep Ballantine on the radar screen for clients and prospects, and to help spark new ideas for their upcoming mailings. An unexpected benefit? Clients are clamoring to be featured in upcoming issues.

Says Côté, "We have clients requesting to be featured on a regular basis, which further solidifies our relationship with them. While I can't attribute any new clients solely to the newsletter, I do know that it's played a major role in the relationship-building process."

So, how do you improve on a marketing tool that's already basically a home run? Côté plans to add streaming video to his newsletter in the near future. "A 30-second clip of the featured piece will show what it looks like, how it opens, and how the recipient interacts with it. We have to continually think of ways to make the newsletter more interesting if we expect our clients and prospects to keep reading it."

Source: ballantine.com

Direct Mail 101 — Response Lists

"Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted. The trouble is I don't know which half."

William Hesketh Lever

Why send direct mail to people who don't respond to it? So asks copywriter Bob Bly, especially when there's a simple solution.

According to the U.S. Postal Service, 48% of consumers never buy through the mail. When buying a list to market a product via mail order, be sure to ask your list provider for "response lists" — customers who have purchased through the mail. Better yet, look for response lists of prospects who have responded to the same promotional channel you're using, says Bly. For instance, a list of prospects that have purchased through a direct mail solicitation typically will generate a greater response to your direct mail package than those who bought online or through a telemarketer.

Source: bly.com



Inklings

What's all the fuss about buzz marketing?

It seems every marketing ezine that hit our in-boxes over the last two months led with a story about word-of-mouth marketing, and why it's suddenly the "must-have" secret behind successful branding.

However, most of the articles seemed to overlook two simple components for creating a buzz around your product or service:

- 1) Treat people well and they will talk about the experience.
- 2) Inject a little personality and creativity into your promotional efforts. The safe approach rarely equates to effective branding.

If you're like me, you've been getting more than a bit distressed about the state of customer service these days — calls that are

never returned, blatantly rude employees, strategic partners gone AWOL, and vendors who just don't seem to get it.

It's frustrating that the bar on our service expectations has been set so low, the barely competent are frequently viewed as best in class. But, you have to admit that this collective mediocrity makes the truly outstanding stand out even more. Especially when it comes using clever, self-effacing humor in your marketing efforts.

For example, on a recent jaunt to Atlantic City, the high-volume audio blaring out of the Trump Taj Mahal onto the boardwalk barely registered, because it was simply more of the usual blah blah — Donald Trump's loud-mouth bravado.

On the other hand, though the entrance to Caesar's was blocked by messy construction, we made a special effort to get there. Why? Mostly to show our appreciation for a simple sign acknowledging the inconvenience — "Hey, Rome wasn't built in a day."

Do right by your customers, show a little good humor, and the buzz will come.

Welcome to the newly redesigned *Creative Compost*. Though our look may have changed, we're counting on you to confirm that our usefulness hasn't.

As always, we welcome your thoughts at compost@fahouryink.com.

Happy marketing,

Lisa Fahoury, Editor

Forecast (from p. 1)

Involvement devices designed to increase your site's "stickiness" — games, contests, and interactive self-tests — will produce greater traffic and corresponding sales.

Makepeace observes that current marketing models are fading in effectiveness, even as their costs are rising. His advice? Review, test, and revamp product formats, pricing strategies, and promotional tactics to keep things fresh...and customers buying.

Source: earlytorise.com



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Take the Stares Steps for can't-miss brand building



What do rapper Nelly, Nickelodeon, Panasonic, and The Children's Place retail stores have in common?

They've all taken advantage of the dramatic impact delivered by adStep® from Stareways, which places advertising on the face of stair steps to create a wall of imagery that pedestrians just can't miss.

The patented system uses a laminated adhesive-backed vinyl designed to withstand heavy traffic. Graphics are guaranteed to have a lifespan of at least six months.

StareWays handles creative and production, and partners with leading out-of-home media companies — including Viacom and ClearChannel — for placement in venues ranging from trade shows and convention halls to malls, airports, and sports arenas.

Stareways "is one of the few out-of-home media companies to cross into so many different venues," according to VP/National Sales Manager Marc Rosenberg. "As long as there's a staircase, we can use it to promote your product in a highly unique way."

Source: stareways.com



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**An innovative twist on the
typical case study...see
page 2 for details!**

Marketing Tips & Tidbits

TALK ABOUT extending a product's usage into vast new territories! Fabric softener Bounce has launched the Bounce Fresh Ideas Message Board, a place where users can discover unusual uses for the dryer sheets — and add their own ideas. Who knew Bounce was an effective bug and mouse repellent? Makes you think twice about actually using it on your clothes. Check it out at: bounceeverywhere.com/freshideas/.

HOW CAN paid author/speakers differentiate themselves from other lecturers on the circuit to boost bookings? As part of your fee, specify that every attendee will receive a copy of your latest book. This adds to your value as a presenter, and puts a high-impact leave-behind into the hands of future customers and referral sources.

WHO SAYS your new publication has to get lost on already-crowded newsstand racks? *OK Magazine* ensured some attention by turning a New York City newsstand into a

recent red carpet event. Purchasers of the new celebrity magazine's premiere issue were treated to cheering fans and their very own pushy paparazzi.

MAX CUSTOM MEDIA, known for its urban "wild postings" and racks of free promotional postcards in high-end public restrooms, has unveiled its latest POP innovation — the MaxMirror program. Motion-sensitive backlit mirrors in high-traffic areas display full-color ads until a patron approaches, then convert to display the usual reflection. Units can be wall mounted or free standing, with Max Custom Media handling production, installation, and maintenance. MaxMirrors are currently available in limited markets, with a minimum buy of 25 mirrors during a 30-day campaign. For details: maxcustom.com.

Lexus drivers probably take for granted such high-end amenities as GPS and headlight mini-wipers. Now you can add a more practical benefit to the list...premium parking. Lexus has begun offering dedicated Lexus-only parking for event attendees at Atlanta's Turner Field and the NHL Florida

Panthers' Office Depot Center, subsidized by local dealers. What's in it for them? With thousands of fans walking past the lots during a sold-out game, the marketing benefits are obvious.

FSI Fun Facts

- More than 136 billion coupons were distributed via the Sunday newspaper's free-standing inserts (FSIs) during the first six months of 2005, according to a recent Marx FSI Trend Report. That's the largest number of FSI coupons distributed in any six-month period during the last decade.
- According to the 2005 Coupon Trend Report, FSIs accounted for 67.2% of all coupons redeemed in 2004 — higher than in 2003 (62.4%) and 2002 (60.8%).
- Wal-Mart became the top retail redeemer of manufacturers' coupons in 2004, replacing Kroger, which had held the number one spot for more than a decade.

Source: factsfiguresfuture.com