



Email Frequency: How Relevancy Tactics Changed the Rules

Marketers are used to planning ahead as most media buys must be scheduled months in advance. The problem that most email marketers face is how to plan the schedule.

The Information Age

Email newsletters *were* a thing of beauty, a work of art worthy of the Renaissance. Direct marketers were using technology to reach millions of subscribers instantly -- and it worked as conversions and ROI reached record levels. Not only were monthly email newsletters used to keep the corporate brand in front of subscribers, they were also used to up-sell current customers, convert leads to sales, and inform everyone about all of the upcoming corporate events. When done well, the monthly email newsletter was nothing short of a masterpiece that inspired subscribers to take action. For most newsletters, that action was "click here for more information."

Although that approach worked for a while, we're no longer in the Renaissance. We're in the Information Age. People don't want to "click here" for more information, they just want the information. And they don't want to wait until next month to receive your newsletter and then waste time sifting through all of content that doesn't apply to them just to read the one thing that does. They want the information presented to them in a timely, efficient manner, and this has presented a lot of new opportunities for marketers to reach out to their subscribers more often in new, inventive ways.

Now more than ever, email marketers have the ability to send more messages to their subscriber base in order to enhance, and in a few cases replace, their corporate, one-size-fits-all email. However, for most companies corporate newsletters are still very beneficial. Just because there are industrial paint sprayers that can paint a house in under an hour, you wouldn't use one to repaint the Sistine Chapel. And just because you can send short, targeted messages to your customers doesn't mean that your corporate newsletter isn't valuable, especially for B2B companies where the buyer needs more information on your organization in order to make their purchasing decisions. The key is to find out how to make all of your email campaigns work together and to segment your lists so you are only sending the right type of email with the right content to the right recipient at the right time.

Dynamic Profiling

Email marketers have always known the value of customer data. From lengthy opt-in processes to elaborate preference centers and monthly surveys, marketers have devised ways to ask subscribers to tell them what information to send. Over the years, marketers have streamlined these processes so they are only collecting the pertinent data needed for segmented campaigns, but they are still dependent upon the subscribers to provide, and in some cases manage, the information themselves. Which not only limits the amount of data that can be obtained from each subscriber, but it also leads to missing data from subscribers that do not provide complete information.

Marketers needed a way to gain control of the data capture process as the information, when used correctly, can become one of an organization's greatest assets. Dynamic profiling is one of the tools that put the control back into the marketers' hands as it is a behavioral tracking tool that automates

specific data capture. Behavioral tracking is similar to “clickstream” tracking in that it monitors the information that is being viewed. However, “clickstream” tracking usually refers to monitoring visitors’ pathways through your website while behavioral tracking of email campaigns refers to monitoring the links that recipients click on in an email message. Dynamic profiling automatically captures each click, giving you the opportunity to analyze the information that each subscriber is viewing. It provides undeniable proof of what information your subscribers are reading and what information they are ignoring.

Web Analytics

Another tool that gives marketers more control over their data capture is web analytics. Regular email metrics can only follow a recipient up until he or she clicks on a link in a message. Once the recipient clicks-through the message to go to the sender’s web site, the email metrics end and web analytics take over. Web analytics track the “clickstream” data users generate as they visit page to page on your web site. An email program that is integrated with web analytics allows you to tie goal conversions back to a specific email send, or even track goal conversions hourly to determine the exact time of day that you received the most traffic and business on your site.

Email marketers can get even more specific purchasing information by integrating their email marketing solution with other information stored in other customer databases. For example, an email marketing solution that has been integrated with the organization’s CRM application provides additional insight into each subscriber that couldn’t be captured through email marketing alone, such as purchase history. This way, marketers can target customers that purchased a specific item and send them a relevant email containing cross-selling information on a related product.

All of these tools provide a wealth of information on your subscribers. Best of all, you capture the data behind the scenes without relying on your subscribers to tell you what they are looking for or what information to send them.

Using Data to Determine Optimal Frequency

There isn’t a magic formula that you can use to tell you when and how often to send messages to your subscriber, but if you capture the right data, you won’t need one. The timing of the email is dependent on the action of the subscriber, not on an arbitrary date selected by the marketing department. It goes without saying that the more active subscribers are, the more interested they are in your products and services. Subscribers that are reading your emails, clicking on the links to gather additional information, and converting are the subscribers you can send emails to more frequently, as long as the emails contain relevant information that will be viewed favorably by the recipients.

To determine your optimal frequency, analyze your data and use common sense as your guide. While there are some risks to increasing the frequency of your email campaigns, the rewards are great. To mitigate the risks, you must carefully monitor the results of each send, not just the emails that your subscribers are opening and clicking on, but also the emails they are not reading as this could be a sign of fatigue. It is also important to monitor your open and click-through metrics along with the number of un-subscribes and complaints. While relevant emails have fewer un-subscribes and complaints, the increase in frequency could bump the numbers up somewhat if the emails aren’t directly targeted with new offers and specific information the recipients want. You must also monitor your bounce logs closely so you do not continue to mail to invalid email addresses.

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