The Power of

Email Marketing and

Social Media Marketing

Introduction

Generating new sales and repeat business from existing customers is the lifeline of all companies. Your company would simply not be able to grow without existing customers staying engaged with your brand and new leads entering your sales pipeline. By implementing a strategically planned email marketing strategy, your company can generate new leads and nurture existing ones to ensure continued business growth.

Email is a tool that nearly everyone uses today, and it continues to grow and be more prevalent among Internet users worldwide. Email marketing is a type of drip marketing technique and is best described as a direct marketing strategy that involves scheduling several promotional messages with relevant contact and specific "call-to-actions" via email. Email marketing isn't just sending a mass message or a one-time blast to your database. It is a campaign that spans over a period of time.

Email marketing should always be considered a strong component of your overall marketing strategy. When accompanied by other marketing techniques (such as social media marketing, which we will discuss in greater detail in this paper), it can reap significant benefits for your company.

Back to Basics: 5 Things to Consider with Email Marketing

Before deep diving into a strategy to integrate social media into your email marketing, you must first ensure that you are implementing general best practices into your email marketing. Social integration isn't going to boost your email results if your email campaigns are ineffective or poorly written and designed. So let's go back to basics for a moment and discuss some general email marketing guidelines.

1. Start With a Clean Database

A clean and complete database of contacts is the cornerstone to your overall email marketing success. The same way telemarketing wore out its welcome, so has unsolicited email marketing. Therefore, the best way to ensure that you collect quality information is to obtain it with permission directly from the contact. This is why permission-based email marketing offers better response rates, increased trust in your company's brand and better deliverability.

Building your database can be done by simply asking for it. Every communication or touchpoint with your prospects and customers should start and end with a request for an email address. Build your subscription list wherever you connect with people, whether it is through service or sales calls, events and meetings, day-to-day emails, an in-store guest book or your website and company blog.

5 Questions to Ask Yourself as You Are Building Your Subscription List:

1. Am I collecting contact information at every customer touchpoint?
2. Am I asking for permission as well as contact information?
3. Am I clearly describing my email frequency and content?
4. Am I sending a welcome email or a confirmation email when people subscribe?
5. Am I using permission and subscription reminders to stay current?

According to a study by Transact Media Group, 57% of those surveyed will fill out a card to receive email alerts when asked to. Since email has become a very popular form of communication, asking for a person's email address is less invasive than asking for their phone number.

Be sure to determine the effectiveness of each technique by evaluating the following:

- **Visibility**: How prominent does your sign-up invitation appear on your website, landing pages or other forms of communication?
- **Transparency**: Does your opt-in process appear professional and trustworthy? Do you give users the option to select the subscribe checkbox or is it pre-checked already?
- **Flexibility**: Do you allow your subscribers to choose the type of content they would like to receive as well as select their preferred frequency and format?
- **Continuity:** Do you send new subscribers a personal welcome message after they subscribe?

Try subscribing to your own email database and this will shed light on some areas that could be improved in your opt-in / subscription process.

2. Keep it Personal

The trick to keeping your email personal to make your readers believe you are writing to them and only them. You accomplish this by personalizing your messages to include information that is unique to your readers. Emails that open with "Dear Friend" or "Dear Customer" tell the reader that your company is too important to offer a personal connection with customers. Greeting your readers with "Hi John" rather than "Dear Customer" goes a long way.

To do this, you will need to ensure that your database's first and last names are in separate columns in your email list. When you upload your newsletter into your email marketing system, you would need to plug in the appropriate field in order for the system to pull the correct name field automatically.

Steer clear of including the recipient's name in the subject line otherwise your email might look "spammy". You likely wouldn't write an email to your family, friends or business colleagues with their name directly in the subject line, so keep personalization for the greeting in the body of the message.

It also helps that your email comes from a person in your company, rather than your company as a whole. There is an added sense of comfort that comes from knowing there is a person behind the keyboard. So try signing off your emails with a personal name, business title and direct contact information. You can also include a graphic of the sender's signature as well as a small photograph to establish increased personalization. Personalization allows you to connect with the reader and improves response rates dramatically.

3. Compose a Catchy Subject Line

When your email lands in your subscribers' inbox, the subject line is first text your readers will see aside from the sender's name. A key component of email success is writing a subject line that is compelling enough to influence readers to open your email. Your subject line could make or break the success of your campaign. If the subject line isn't catchy, the email won't get opened no matter how compelling

your offer (the body of the email) could be. Your subject line forms an overall impression of your email. It sets the stage for the rest of the copy.

With email marketing, you have about 3 seconds and approximately 6 words (or 40 characters) to make an impression and motivate recipients to open your email. So take into consideration the following tips when writing your subject line.

- **Tell readers what's in it for them:** Readers will look for the immediate benefit of taking the time to open your email. Your subject line should answer the reader's question of "Will this email help me solve a problem, meet a need or make life easier?"
- **Make your subject line "catchy" not "spammy":** Every Internet Service Provider (ISP) has spam filters to prevent unwanted messages from entering your inbox. Using all uppercase letters, exclamation marks or symbols could make your message appear spammy.
- **Utilize motivating words:** Choose words that motivate recipients to do something (complete your call-to-action). Words like "improve", "enhance", "focus", "boost", "discover" and "learn" are powerful motivating verbs to use in your subject line.
- **Convey a sense of urgency:** Urgency is the most powerful form of persuasion. Try setting a deadline for readers to act on your email. Phrases like "5 days left", "last day to act" or "response required by" are good examples of creating urgency.

Ultimately, the best way to improve your subject lines is to test them. Over time, testing your subject lines will help you become better at formulating them.

4. Educate and Captivate

No hard selling. Your readers subscribe to receive email communications because they are looking for valuable information, not because they want to be bombarded with a bunch of different sales pitches. Leverage email marketing as an opportunity to position yourself as an expert in your industry. Keep readers engaged by providing them with tips and techniques that they will find interesting.

Ensure that each email has a specific call-to-action. Your readers are likely looking for educational and valuable content. As a sender, your purpose will vary from campaign to campaign. Whether your goal is to capture more information from your readers to further segment your list, persuade them to book an appointment, request for a quote, make a purchase, join a membership, etc. Either way, your call-to-action should be clear, concise and compelling.

5. Design Your Emails for Mobile

Mobile phones, and especially Smart Phones, have become indispensable assets for both personal and business productivity. Most marketers don't know how many of their subscribers read emails on their mobile devices. But with the growing popularity of Smart Phones, like Blackberrys and the iPhone, it's safe to say that more and more people use their cell phones for activities other than talking, such as reading emails. Take note of the following stats:

- 67% of B2B email users view their emails on their mobile devices (MarketingSherpa 2008)
- 64% of key decision-makers view emails on their mobile devices (MarketingSherpa 2008)
- 55% of consumers updated their mobile devices to get email on the go (Epsilon Survey 2009)

This often poses a problem for HTML emails. Not all mobile devices display HTML properly. Some will remove your images or stack them vertically while only displaying the text portion of HTML. Other devices will only display plain text. Be sure to design your email in such a way that your mobile users can read your emails properly. Consider items such as: screen size, character length, shortened URLs as well as ensuring the landing page or website you reference in your email is mobile-friendly.

Benefits of Social Media and Email Marketing

Social media, including social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn as well as online video sites (YouTube), blogs and social bookmarking sites, have exploded in recent years. The emergence of social media has transformed the way people communicate online, and particularly how companies market their products and services to their target audience.
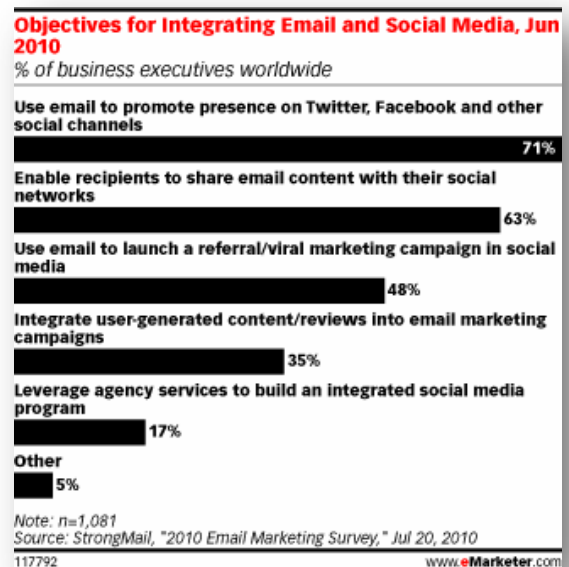
Social media isn't a threat to email marketing; it's a tool that complements email because it provides additional channels for sharing information and engaging readers. By integrating social media and email marketing, you can strengthen the reach and viral marketing potential of your campaigns.

Why Marketers Integrate Email and Social Media

Businesses use social media in their email marketing campaigns for a number of different reasons. Since social media has the capacity to reach a large audience very quickly, this provides an opportunity for a company to share content, increase their online following and enhance their brand credibility.

A recent survey shows that 71% of business executives worldwide use email marketing to promote their presence on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. Meanwhile, 63% integrate the two strategies to enable email subscribers to share email content with their social networks.
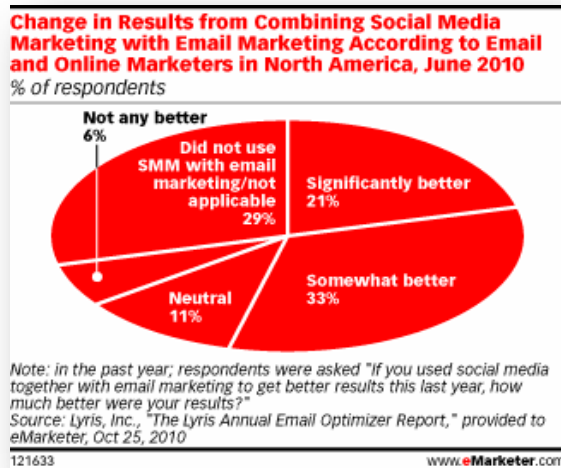
User engagement is also noted as an objective of social media and email marketing with 35% of respondents integrating user-generated content/reviews into email marketing campaigns.

Objectives for Integrating Email and Social Media, Jun 2010
% of business executives worldwide

Use email to promote presence on Twitter, Facebook and other social channels — 71%

Enable recipients to share email content with their social networks — 63%

Use email to launch a referral/viral marketing campaign in social media — 48%

Integrate user-generated content/reviews into email marketing campaigns — 35%

Leverage agency services to build an integrated social media program — 17%

Other — 5%

Note: n=1,081
Source: StrongMail, "2010 Email Marketing Survey," Jul 20, 2010
117792   www.eMarketer.com

Social Media Shown to Improve Email Results

Statistics also show that marketers who integrate social media with email marketing see improvements in their results from a social media standpoint as well in their email campaigns. According to an article by eMarketer ("What Are the Benefits of Email-Social Media Integration?" released in November 2010), 34% of respondents rated social media as the online marketing channel with the greatest positive effective when integrated with email, compared to 29% who said web analytics and only 3% who said mobile marketing.

The Power of Email Marketing and Social Media Marketing

Change in Results from Combining Social Media Marketing with Email Marketing According to Email and Online Marketers in North America, June 2010
% of respondents

Not any better 6%
Did not use SMM with email marketing/not applicable 29%
Significantly better 21%
Somewhat better 33%
Neutral 11%

Note: in the past year; respondents were asked "If you used social media together with email marketing to get better results this last year, how much better were your results?"
Source: Lyris, Inc., "The Lyris Annual Email Optimizer Report," provided to eMarketer, Oct 25, 2010
121633
www.eMarketer.com

Within the same article, it states that more than half of email and online marketers (53%) said that combining social media marketing with email marketing generated either *significantly better* or *somewhat better* results. Most of the remaining respondents either saw neutral results or did not use social media with their email marketing. Only 6% of respondents said that social media had no change in results.

It is evident that marketers who have integrated social media into their email marketing programs have seen improved campaign results and will likely continue with this integrated approach.

3 Ways to Combine Social Media with Email Marketing

There are a number of ways to integrate social media with your email marketing strategy. The method that you choose for your business will depend on the goals you want to achieve. For example, if your goal is to syndicate your content online, then you will likely tailor your campaigns to persuade readers to share your email content with their social networks. If your goal is simply to grow your online following, then you would probably message your email communications in a way to encourage your readers to become your Facebook fan, follow you on Twitter, connect with you on LinkedIn, etc.

Social Media Marketing Tactics US Small Businesses Integrated with Their E-Mail Marketing Campaigns in 2009 (% of respondents)

Tweet my e-mail newsletters — 36.01%
Broadcast blog entries to my e-mail list — 35.14%
Add sign-up forms on social media pages like Facebook — 25.38%
Include "follow us" links in e-mail messages — 23.56%
Place a link to each e-mail message on social media pages — 20.05%
Include share options in e-mail messages — 13.10%
None — 31.87%

Source: AWeber, "E-Mail Marketing Customer Survey," provided to eMarketer, June 15, 2010
116567
www.eMarketer.com

Based on a survey conducted by AWeber and provided to eMarketer in June 2010, 36% of respondents said they integrate social media with email marketing with the purpose of motivating their readers to tweet their email newsletters to their Twitter followers. Meanwhile, 35% said they broadcast their blog entries to their email database.
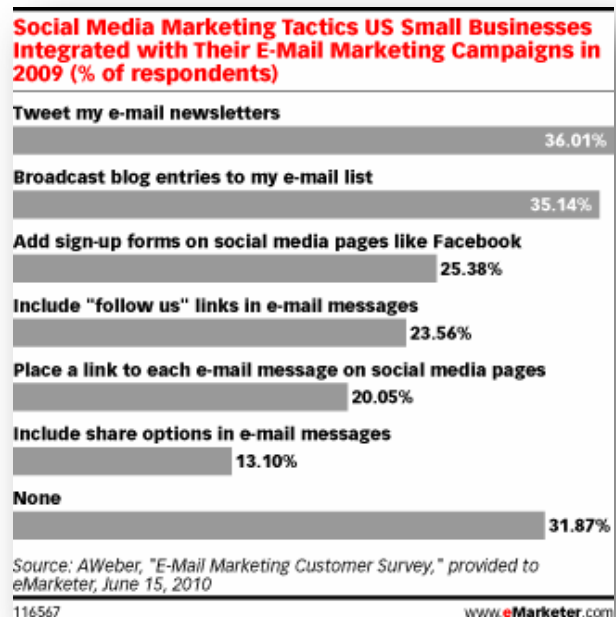
Database building is also a noted priority as 25% of respondents said they add sign-up forms on their social media pages for their target audience to subscribe to their newsletters. Building their social following is just as important with 23% including "follow us" links within their email messages.

Here we will discuss 3 main tactics for implementing an integrated social media and email marketing strategy to share your newsletter content, build your social following and email subscription database and promote your email content in the social media platforms.

1. Include "Share" Buttons in Your Newsletters

One way to combine social media with email marketing is to include social sharing links in your newsletter templates. A study by MarketingSherpa states that marketers who integrated social media "share" buttons in their email newsletters saw a 25% boost in reader interaction and a surge in inbound traffic from social networking sites (June 8, 2009 case study).

Many websites today now have a "share" button located at the top. This allows website visitors to share web content with their social networks. Adding these social sharing links to your email newsletters is a great way to expand your readership beyond your subscribers at no additional cost. Here are 5 tips to consider when including "share" buttons in your newsletters:

Tip 1: **Identify the most relevant social networking sites** – It's important to select only the social media sites that are relevant to your company. There are many to choose from, but take a moment to think about your target audience and where they are likely to converge on the social portals to discuss topics related to your product or service. Then zero in on the social networking sites that are most relevant to your business.

Tip 2: **Integrate the "share" icons into your newsletter templates** – This requires adding unique HTML code into your newsletter template. Identify if your existing email marketing system has a feature that will include the "share" icons in your emails automatically.

Tip 3: **Test the new newsletter template with a focus group** – Whenever you change your newsletter template, it's a good idea to test it with a small, segmented list prior to rolling it out to your entire database. Make sure the "share" icons render properly and the links direct readers to the right location. You may find that adjustments need to be made to the size or location of the "share" icons. If you do, make those adjustments and re-test.

Tip 4: **Roll out the newsletter template to the rest of your database** – Once you are satisfied with the template, you can then start using it for your regular newsletters with the rest of your database.

Tip 5: **Track shared article metrics** – Tracking the shared articles in your newsletter is no different than tracking any other click on your newsletter. Your email marketing system should have sufficient tracking capabilities allowing you to track how many times readers click on your "share" icons. Tracking the number of people who view your content after it's been shared may be a challenge. However, for a platform like Twitter, you can use a URL shortening tool like bit.ly to measure how many times a shared article is clicked on.

If you have several articles in your newsletter, be sure to link each article to a page on the web. It is recommended that you include an introduction paragraph of the article and a "Read more" link allowing your subscribers to read the complete article online. If you choose to go this route, be sure your "share" buttons are set up to share the URL of each article on the web.

Avoid using Javascript because most email clients cannot render it. Instead stick to images and text links for the "share" buttons. As mentioned, look for an email marketing system that can share your

newsletter across various social media sites automatically through the system. For example, WSI Digital Marketing Pro supports several popular social media sites, including MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, Delicious, Digg and Google Bookmarks. A powerful email marketing system can streamline the process of incorporating social sharing links in your newsletter for you.

2. Increase Your Social Following Through Email Marketing

Aside from allowing your readers to share your newsletter with their social networks with "share" buttons, don't forget to include links for your subscribers to follow you on the social media sites. Try creating a call-out box in the header of your newsletter or in the sidebar with call-to-actions like "Become a Facebook Fan", "Follow Us on Twitter" or "Subscribe to our YouTube Channel".

Not only will your readers know that you have a social media presence, but they will also have easy access to connect with you online, thus building your online following. Be sure to test your tactics. Try positioning your "follow me" icons in various places on your newsletter and track the clickthrough rates to determine which location works best.

Remember to leverage the email signature you use in your day-to-day emails. Consider adding "follow me" links in your email signature to build your online following as well as a "subscribe" link inviting people to subscribe to your newsletters.

3. Promote Your Email Content in the Social Media Platforms

Don't be afraid to cross promote social media and email marketing. As mentioned above, you can use your email marketing to let your readers know that you have a social media profile. On the same token, you can use your social media profile to bring awareness to your newsletter.

Remind your Facebook fans, Twitter followers, LinkedIn contacts and YouTube channel subscribers that you have a regular email newsletter and encourage them to subscribe to receive emails from you. Once they sign up, they are likely the subscribers who will share your email content with their own social networks.

Use email marketing as a catalyst to start conversations online about your brand. Create compelling content that people will want to read and share. Include a specific call-to-action asking readers to spread the word about your content, whether it is an enticing offer or helpful information.

Social Media Sites Used and Produced the Best Email Marketing Results (June 2010)

- 80% of respondents used Facebook
- 28% said Facebook produced the best results
- 71% of respondents used Twitter
- 10% said Twitter produced the best results
- 48% of respondents used LinkedIn
- 8% said LinkedIn produced the best results
- 43% of respondents used YouTube
- 8% said YouTube produced the best results
- 38% of respondents used a company blog
- 6% said a blog produced the best results

Source: eMarketer, October 2010

Keep in mind that you should not be directly selling your products or services to your readers. Instead, provide education and valuable information to them – content that they would find useful to share with their connections.

Conclusion

Email marketing is probably one of the least expensive and most measurable, effective and easy to implement methods of online marketing. Of course, many companies are still struggling with fundamental issues like spam filters and blocked emails. With knowledge, expertise and the right tools and technologies, your business can stop walking the email marketing tightrope and start converting instead.

Moreover, when social media elements are incorporated into an email marketing campaign, your business can boost your results drastically, both from an email marketing perspective but also on the social media front. Simple acts such as including "share" icons to encourage readers to share your newsletter with their friends and "follow me" links to make it easy for readers to follow you on the social networks can make a huge difference in your overall marketing performance. With valuable content, an enticing offer and a well thought-out social media integration strategy, your email marketing can build your subscription database, increase your online following, keep your audience engaged with your company and enhance your overall brand reputation.

For more information about email marketing, ask your WSI Consultant about the WSI Email Marketing Strategy Guide, a 50+ page resource to help your company establish an email marketing strategy.

About the Author

WSI is the world's #1 franchise offering digital marketing services to suit the needs of multiple industries. The company has the world's largest Digital Marketing Consultants' network and a strong head office in Toronto, Canada. WSI Digital Marketing Consultants have helped thousands of small and medium-sized businesses realize their online marketing potential. By using innovative Internet technologies and advanced digital marketing strategies, businesses can have a WSI Digital Marketing System tailored to their individual needs to elevate their Internet presence and profitability to new levels. In 2010, WSI was the proud recipient of 6 Standard of Excellence Awards at the Annual WebAwards Competition organized by the Web Marketing Association (WMA). WSI has been ranked the #1 Internet Services Franchise in Entrepreneur Magazine's Franchise 500 listing for 10 years in a row. Entrepreneur Magazine also ranks WSI at #13 among the Top Home Based Franchises and #49 in America's Top Global Franchises. With the support and cooperation of its customers, franchise network, employees, suppliers and charitable organizations, WSI aims to help make child poverty history through its global outreach program.

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