

E-mail Marketing—Getting It Right

Done well, e-mail permission marketing—where members choose to receive your information online—builds your credit union's member relationships. Carefully evaluate and make decisions about these key factors that can make or break an e-mail campaign or e-mail newsletter:

1. *What format?* Rich media (sound, video, animation), HTML (hypertext markup language), or text?

While e-mail marketing messages are formatted in HTML about 61% of the time, 62% of consumers prefer to receive text e-mail, reports *B2Buzz*, an e-mail newsletter from B2Bworks, a digital marketing firm in Chicago. This could be because consumers seek valuable content, while marketers want the greater branding and visual impact possible with HTML or rich media.

A 2001 study by DoubleClick, a New York-based e-marketing firm, offers a different viewpoint. It shows 22% of consumers prefer text, 37% prefer HTML, 36% don't care, and 5% didn't know.

You can address formatting in two ways:

- ◆ Ask members what format they prefer, and give them a choice; and
- ◆ Make sure your e-mail delivery system supports multipart e-mail formats that deliver e-mail in the format your members' various e-mail clients support.

Multipart e-mail formats become important because e-mail clients (such as America Online, Lotus Notes, Outlook, Eudora, Netscape) and Web mail providers such as Yahoo! and Hotmail process HTML differently. This makes it important to test your e-mail on different clients before mailing it.

2. *How often?* Balance your communication needs with members' desire to receive information from you.

Carefully evaluate your e-mail frequency to members. Most businesses send such information monthly, according to DoubleClick.

3. *When?* What time of day, and what day of the week? If you have a periodic e-mail, test different delivery times. Once you find an optimal time, stick with it.

Research shows consumers like a periodic, scheduled delivery time for information they value. This creates and reinforces the relationship you're looking for in your e-mail communications. For consumer marketers, clickthrough rates are highest on Sunday, says DoubleClick.

4. *What type of content?* Your content strategy should parallel and support your overall marketing strategy. If you provide a member newsletter via e-mail, include value-added information to make the newsletter useful to members.

Also evaluate writing style, subject matter, and the degree of personalization your member databases allow. Copy should be easy for members to scan, with intuitive links to more in-depth information on your Web site.¹

5. *What measures of success?* E-marketing allows you to more effectively create goals and evaluate metrics than offline marketing activities.

For example, for your member newsletter you might want to evaluate these metrics: open rates, pass-along newsletters, member feedback, clickthroughs leading to new services sold, clickthroughs creating site traffic, bounce-backs, and so forth. Depending on your membership size and available re-

¹One source for newsletter copy and art is Credit Union Copy Art & Express from CUNA: 800-356-8010, ext. 4658, or www.cuna.org/data/cu/pubs/copy_express.html.