Enhance Lead Generation and Sales with e-Newsletters

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Introduction

Over the past several years weBranding has worked with close to dozens of firms to help them communicate more effectively with clients and prospects, cross-sell additional services and generate leads. During that time we have developed a list of questions we ask both clients and prospects to determine how they can more effectively use electronic newsletters (e-Newsletters) to achieve their business objectives.

Is there a mechanism for people to provide e-mail addresses and get more information on your home page?

We are surprised how many firms bury their lead-generating contact forms under layers of web pages and obscure sounding hyperlinks, if they include them at all. Sites see most of their traffic arrive on the home page, and there's no guarantee visitors will scroll down, must less click on multiple links to subscribe to your e-Newsletter. Of course some will delve deeper into your site; but most won't. Instead, entice visitors to start a relationship with your firm right up front. Provide a lead input contact area on every page, in a highly visible manner.

Is there a similar mechanism on every page of your site?

We mentioned this in the last point, but it is important enough to mention again. You have no way to know when a prospect will be ready to request more information and begin a relationship. Therefore, include a mechanism on each page. Also, to help people quickly locate the form, use a consistent button, link, or "call-out" box in the same place on every page. Which mechanism you consistently use is dependent solely on the minimal amount of information you need, so you can provide the potential client the information they (not you) require. If the visitor to your Web site is ready to provide their e-mail address because they want you to contact them with more information, please have the patience not to ask for their social security number at the same time. This leads to the next point.

Do you only ask for the information you need?

What information you collect will of course vary by firm, but if standard procedure is to follow up with a phone call, don't request a physical address up front. Study-after-study have shown that the more information you request, the less often individuals will complete the form. Simply stated, requesting too much information is a barrier to for prospects to opt-in.

Keeping that in mind will help you determine whether the lead mechanism on each web page is a small form that perhaps only requests an e-mail address, or a button or hyperlink that immediately takes the visitor to a web page with other limited, but perhaps necessary fields to complete, such as name, phone number, company, address, interests.

Whenever possible make any form as easy to complete as possible. For instance, you've all seen the drop down lists for state or country selection, but how about taking things step further? If you absolutely, positively need to know before you contact the prospect whether they are interested in a 1) business valuation, 2) estate tax planning, or 3) not for profit regulations, or a combination, simplify the process. Make those categories easy to pick with a simple radio button they can click, rather than making the prospect fill in a blank box. Keep it simple.

Do you use the online form to qualify prospects?

If you use some basic information (industry, revenue, hardware configuration, etc.) to qualify prospects, request it without going overboard. If prospects are in the market for your product, they probably won't mind telling you a little about their company. Keep it relevant.

Do prospects dictate the terms of your relationship?

Ask prospects how they want you to communicate with them. A phone call? A live demo? Just the e-newsletter? Do they have specific questions about your product they'd like answered? Do they want to speak with someone right away? Ask, and they'll tell you. Once again, use the "radio button click" rather than the "fill in the blank" alternative.

Do you use e-mail as secondary contact method when you're unable to reach a prospect via phone?

Few salespeople, even the best-of-the-best, reach each lead via a phone call. Therefore, a quick e-mail requesting to set a time to talk can be very beneficial approach. Although we haven't seen overwhelming success when using e-mail as the initial or sole method of contact, it can be an effective tool for opening a dialogue with individuals who are hard to reach by phone.

The key here is brevity. Do not attempt to sell them or explain features and benefits with this e-mail. Simply state that you've had difficulty reaching them as they requested and you would like them to tell you what day and time you should call back to guarantee you could answer any of their questions. It goes without saying that calling back precisely when they request is critical.

Do you use an automated use of e-mail messages to educate prospects about your products or services and move them through the sales cycle?

Automated e-mail is a perfect method to educate prospects about the benefits and features of your product. Use sequential e-mail at the beginning of the relationship while the

If you're attacking your market from multiple positions and your competition isn't, you have all the advantage and it will show up in your increased success and income.

Jay Abraham

prospect's still engaged with your product, as well as a method to turn "cold" leads into "hot" leads.

Sequential e-mail doesn't require lots of creative resources, just a one-time commitment to develop content based on your unique selling propositions. Consider using customer testimonials and/or success stories or an "information-based offer" like a white paper. But most important of all, don't forget a clear and strong "call to action" and detailed contact information.

Keep in mind, once the creative has been developed, it can be used time-and-time again, since each prospect will only see it once. The ongoing cost to run the program is minimal, but the results can be staggering.

Do you publish at least one e-Newsletter to keep your brand on the mind of your prospects?

They are our most cost-effective way to build a relationship with and educate prospects. Published monthly, at a minimum, they are a powerful lead generation tool. Just make sure that your e-Newsletter contains timely, accurate, and engaging information, an easy way for individuals to contact you, and that you comply with the CAN-SPAM act. Do you have a comprehensive, consistent strategy for using e-mail in your lead generation or sales process?

Random e-mail and e-Newsletter initiatives that pop-up up here or there can be effective, but with just a little planning, you can have a more robust and stable lead generation program. Put a plan in place, test messages and offers, and make the successful initiatives part of your new, efficient marketing plan; while ceasing less effective initiatives.

If properly implemented, online electronic campaigns can be a cost-effective method to boost lead-generation and sales efforts. Give it a try today.

About weBranding

weBranding is a small marketing and interactive virtual consulting firm based outside St. Louis. MO. Our primary focus is helping small to mid-sized organizations harness the Internet and emerging technologies to generate leads and build brand awareness. Feel free to contact Tommy Young at 618-566-0034 or via email with any questions or to set-up a short initial "sourcing" meeting to talk about your requirements and how we'd approach meeting your needs on time and on budget.