

e-Newsletters: Increased Sales & Profitability



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Introduction

Would you like to discover the secret to becoming the industry expert? The firm that not only gets more business, but more profitable business? Let's face the facts. Every business provides a product or service. In that respect, you are no different from your competition. However, you can do something that sets you apart - a simple thing really, that can make a significant difference in how your firm is perceived - and perception is reality.

Successful marketing of any product or service can only be realized by identifying and solving a need, be it real or perceived. One of the most successful ways to discover need, present solutions, track interest and brand your firm as the expert with the resources and knowledge to resolve any problem is now available through the power of the Internet.

Consider publishing an e-mail Newsletter (e-Newsletter). Before you reject the idea as too much work, consider that technology exists that can make the process simpler than the standard printed newsletter could ever achieve. Combine simplicity with valuable information and opportune sales messages and an e-Newsletter will create a powerful tool to generate leads and build successful client relationships.

Good advertising, be it a commercial on radio or TV, a printed piece in the local newspaper or a direct mail business reply card is written always from the perspective of one person to another. Just like 'word-of-mouth' advertising, your story is best told on a personal level. An e-Newsletter can give you that edge, 24-7 to every associate, suspect, prospect and client in your database. Throw in the most exciting and compelling benefit of an e-Newsletter, the tracking capability it provides and you can be quickly on your way to increased sales.

Of course, in today's Internet Age, we are all bombarded with too much information and too little time to absorb it all. That's why content is king. Content that involves tips on working better, more efficiently and more profitably is always well received. People buy from companies they trust and companies they perceive as knowledgeable experts.

Thousands of firms are realizing the benefits of using e-Newsletters to generate leads, brand their business name and obtain sales in unprecedented volumes. e-Newsletters are the perfect way to capitalize on the strengths of the Internet.

What is an e-Newsletter?

Using an e-Newsletter approach to selling products and services focuses more on the customer than on the seller. By this, we mean that an e-Newsletter is first and foremost a resource for its subscribers. e-Newsletters:

- Educate
- Inform
- Explain

By highlighting issues that are important to the subscriber-base and providing valuable, relevant and timely content, e-Newsletters generate interest and maintain high readership rates.

Successful marketing is about solving prospects' problems. e-Newsletters provide the perfect platform to demonstrate that you are familiar with the issues facing potential clients, interested in finding out what they need and can offer practical, applicable solutions to help them succeed. The primary message is not, "Buy from us because we're the best," but rather "Here is some information that may be useful to you. If you need professional assistance, we hope you will remember our interest in helping your company become more profitable."

Marketers who advocate the use of hype and aggressive selling will not likely appreciate the e-Newsletter's subtlety, but many (if not most) of your customers will. Appealing to a customer's needs is what truly effective marketing is all about. e-Newsletters garner their appeal because they can be tailored to a specific target audience and even customized per individual subscriber.

I do not regard advertising as entertainment or an art form, but as a medium of information.

David Ogilvy

This “interpersonalization” capability of the Internet is powerful and significant. It would not be cost-effective or practical to print and distribute two or three different versions of a newsletter, let alone customize the newsletter to appeal to each client or prospect. Conversely, the Internet makes customization a relative breeze.

As Fairfax Cone (a famous ad-agency executive in the mid 20th century) said, “There is no such thing as a Mass Mind. The Mass Audience is made up of individuals, and good advertising is written always from one person to another. When it is aimed at millions it rarely moves anyone.”

e-Newsletters are a viable and realistic way to deliver a customized message that entices readers to explore the e-Newsletter’s content while simultaneously causing them to recognize the sender as an industry expert. E-Newsletters are not SPAM. These e-mails are welcomed and often actively solicited by the subscriber. The list of subscribers can be segmented by a number of variables in order to solidify their appeal and relevance.

Information can be targeted by:

- Salesperson
- Size of firm
- Location
- Vertical market
- Client vs. prospect

The key to success with e-Newsletters is to provide content that informs, is relevant and saves the reader time.

Importance of e-Newsletter Content

An e-Newsletter is an extension of the firm producing or sponsoring the newsletter and the content must be given careful consideration. The whole idea of an e-Newsletter is to inform

The average business executive
receives more than 80 emails per day

Direct Marketing Association

and educate. Consequently, the articles that are used must be accurate and not be advertisements disguised as editorials. Remember, e-Newsletters are not blatant sales vehicles. While revenue generation is a primary goal for a business-to-business e-Newsletter, many do not contain outright advertising and only do so if it directly relates to the article(s) being presented. Attributes of good e-Newsletter content are:

1. Saves Time

In the age of the Internet, we are all bombarded with too much information and too little time to absorb it all. Content that is original, current and summarizes industry issues is both useful and appreciated. Rather than having to read multiple articles, effective e-Newsletter articles analyze and condense the information. They often include content that may not be readily familiar or available to the reader.

2. Delivers Critical Information

Content that involves tips on working better, more efficiently and more profitably is always well received. Best practices information that keeps readers up to date concerning industry trends or competitive initiatives helps e-Newsletter recipients improve their company's operations. e-Newsletters are well suited to present this type of business information, including strategies and techniques designed to combat the common pitfalls of business.

3. Creates Experts

Regardless of what you are selling, prospects and clients need to regard you as an expert in the field. Providing smart, current, original and educational articles in an e-Newsletter, customized for each reader and delivered regularly, will solidify the publisher (sender) as an expert in the field. People buy from companies they trust and companies they perceive as knowledgeable experts.

e-Newsletters and the Sales Cycle

The actual sales-cycle is quite an interesting dynamic. Sales don't occur overnight or on a whim. An e-Newsletter is an excellent, non-intimidating vehicle for moving people through the sales process by encouraging them to become buying customers. Whether you are appealing to new prospects or informing existing clients of new products or service, a sale starts when a need is recognized. e-Newsletters enlighten the reader and help needs to be recognized.

The effectiveness of the e-Newsletter lies in the ability to directly, but subtly, create a need by presenting valuable information in a way that expresses a viewpoint without pushing a particular product or solution. Well-written articles that highlight current practices and keep readers informed of industry trends and statistics will cause readers to think about and apply the information to their own situation.

Once a prospect recognizes they have a need, they are considered a legitimate lead. It is at this point in the sales cycle that you have to persuade them of your ability to meet their newly identified need. The e-Newsletter becomes invaluable not only because it sets you up as the expert, but the prospect has already established a relationship with your company. The prospect may investigate other options, but as long as the e-Newsletters keep arriving regularly, chalk-full of excellent information and resources, your name will continue to be in the forefront.

While leads that are created by new prospects are an excellent source of potential revenue, current clients have been shown to be the best source of revenue generation. Why? Because the time in the sales cycle is shorter, therefore the sale is more profitable. e-Newsletters provide the perfect platform to advise current clients of other products or services offered and keep them in the sales loop.

This ability to cross-sell current clients is key to the success of e-Newsletter marketing. The information is not presented in a hard sell, "Look what we also do" style, but rather as an

added bonus to the great service the client is already receiving. The best new business leads are current clients because they know you and trust the relationship. This familiarity will shorten the sales cycle considerably and generate reliable, long-term revenue that is more profitable.

Mine Client Information by Tracking Usage

The most exciting and compelling benefits of an e-Newsletter stem from the tracking capability it provides. Unlike a printed newsletter, an e-Newsletter invokes interaction with the reader. When a reader wants to continue reading an e-Newsletter article, he or she clicks on a link and is immediately taken to the full article for more information. This click is traceable, which means the sponsor of the e-Newsletter can develop interest and usage profiles for each subscriber.

This omnipotence is what really excites sales reps and business owners, who are trying desperately to understand what their clients want and what interests them. Imagine knowing that 90% of your subscribers are reading an article on how to avoid a wrongful dismissal suit. If you were considering offering a seminar on employee recruitment, you might rethink that plan and offer one on wrongful dismissal instead.

If readers are demonstrating a high interest in tax saving articles, then the e-Newsletter publisher can promptly send reminders of the company's accounting services designed to minimize taxes. This creates a well-supported opportunity to develop new business.

Learn Who Your Prospects Are

Ultimately, the more you know about your buyers' interests and actions, the more likely you will be to identify their problems and offer valuable solutions. Prospects can be moved through the sales cycle and current clients can be up-sold products or services they have demonstrated an interest in but are not currently buying from your company. Frequent interaction with a certain type of information is strong evidence that a need has been established. E-Newsletters give you the ability to capitalize on that information and turn the prospect into a client, even before they have the chance to research other options.

Personalize Messages

Once you have established what each specific subscriber is interested in, e-Newsletters can be segmented according to these interests. Follow-up e-mails, incentives or phone calls personalized for each prospect will help move them quickly through the sale. Additionally, the "Subject Line:" can be individually tailored, giving the subscriber the impression that they are receiving a one-of-a-kind personalized e-mail.

As we discussed earlier, different articles can be sent to different individuals according to job function. The CFO and CIO will probably be interested in different benefits of a new accounting system (the CFO with return-on-investment and the CIO with integration to current systems), but if they are sold on the idea with benefits specific to their concerns, then making a final sale should be that much easier.

Generate Incentives

A successful e-Newsletter campaign is a fabulous tool to convert those already in the sales cycle with customized incentives and special promotions tailored specifically to their needs. An added benefit is that you can control the timing of the incentive to best meet your operational goals and take back some control of the timing of the decision (i.e. end of a quarter or fiscal year). Including customer success stories as a feature of the e-Newsletter is a powerful incentive as well. Not only does it generate more interest due to demonstrated results, but being a featured customer can be positioned as a highly effective advertising tactic that benefits both parties.

Drive Readers Offline

While encouraging customers and prospects to visit a website is certainly important in any electronic commerce venture, final sales often only result after person-to-person communication. The legitimacy and credibility created through the e-Newsletter reaffirms that the publisher runs a real and tangible business that can be contacted for further information.

e-Newsletters create relationships and people buy from firms they know. The familiarity, trust and competence that are built through providing an e-Newsletter will smoothly turn a prospect into a customer. That relationship will then naturally evolve into customer loyalty and dedication - two invaluable factors in revenue generation and sustainability.

Thousands of firms are realizing the benefits of using e-Newsletters to: generate leads, encourage prospects to enter and current clients to re-enter the sales cycle and to obtain sales in unprecedented volumes. e-Newsletters are the perfect way to capitalize on the strengths of the Internet. They allow you to customize and personalize messages bringing the most value to every reader, prospect, lead and client. Aggressive sales goals do not need

aggressive sales tactics; the subtlety and intuitiveness of an e-Newsletter and all the features discussed herein, may just be the solution to your needs.

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.

