



Web marketing concepts (CMW)

Class 8

Web marketing strategies : e-mail campaigns

We know how to optimize organic referencing through SEO. But this alone won't make a web site popular. Different strategies and approaches can be used in order to generate a higher volume of quality traffic in order to generate more leads and more sales.

An e-mail campaign consist into sending a web mail promotional message to a list of prospects (targeted customers) in order to increase traffic and potentially generate leads and sales.

Although e-mail campaigns are a cost-effective way for you to connect with your segments to promote your brand and to generate more quality traffic, they can easily seem like spam. So, it is important to make it the right way.

Unsolicited e-mails (spam) are very annoying and can lead to many problems. You should never choose such an option. There are many ways to generate an e-mail marketing list.

Sign-up form

The best way to create a prospects list is to create a signup form on your website. Make the form very visible and consider creating a pop-up for first-time visitors.

The prospects gathered this way obviously are interested in your website and what you offer.

Sign-up sheets

Just for like any communications, you can use any social events such as business meetings or a congress to give or leave sign-up sheets for people to fill.

Especially if the prospects have talked to you, are already informed about what you have to offer, these subscribers can be very valuable.

It is also a very good idea to make your business cards available as well, making sure they include your website's URL.

Social medias

If you use social networks such as a Facebook page, you should definitely use it! Create a link to your sign-up form so your followers can subscribe to your mailing list.

Different strategies such as a special offer to your social networks subscribers may convince them to do so even more efficiently.

Landing pages

Effective and well-made landing pages can be very efficient in order for visitors to subscribe to mailing lists.

Contest and promotions

Organizing a contest or offering mailing lists subscribers special advantages can convince your visitors to subscribe to mailing lists.

Commercial lists

Some enterprises sale prospects lists quite well targeted. Although this can seem interesting, this still generates spam. It is not recommended and even illegal in some countries, and some e-mail campaign services strictly forbid it.

E-mails retrieval

One of the most acceptable unsolicited e-mail you may want to consider (but again, we wouldn't recommend it) are those that can be sent to users whom visited your website.

With relatively simple programs, it is possible to retrieve visitors informations such as their e-mail addresses so you can send a message to them (e.g.: promotion or special rebate).

In such circumstances, make it clear this is the only message they will receive from you. You may also offer them to subscribe to your mailing list for regular updates and promotions.

How to create an effective e-mail campaign

Just as any marketing efforts, an email campaign must first be prepared. It must then be well produced and conducted and, finally, results must be evaluated in order to optimize further campaigns.

Know your product

Web marketing is normal marketing done with the help of Internet related technologies. So, this means general marketing rules and methods very generally apply.

Knowing your product means being able to focus on the benefits for the consumers and how it should be positioned accordingly to competition.

Target your markets

Communications need to be adapted for specific publics. Dividing the global market into segments will allow you to adapt your communications to your chosen segments characteristics.

As opposed to traditional medias advertising, it is easy and cheap to produce multiple well adapted communications targeting several segments.

Goals, expectations and frequency

All of your subscribers won't necessarily have the same expectations. You may want to have a special automatic e-mails sent to new subscribers, one to exiting customers and another one to general prospects, for instance.

Sign-up forms make it possible to gather important informations about your subscribers in order for you to group them strategically so messages sent can be correctly adapted.

It is also important to identify a goal for each specific communication. One can be a one-time welcome word explaining what subscribers may expect, another one may be occasional tips and tricks for existing customers, some others may be regular communications announcing new articles for a blog, etc. Finally, don't forget to use a *call to action*.

Frequency is major factor in the efficiency of an e-mail strategy. If communications are sent too often and for no good reasons, subscribers won't feel like reading them.

Content management

Especially if you are sending regular messages to your subscribers, it can become difficult to decide what to communicate to them. After they know about your products and services, there's a lot you can tell them:

- New products and services
- Tips and tricks
- Upcoming events
- Coverage from previous events
- Press coverages
- Links to popular posts from social medias
- Surveys
- Positive reviews or anecdotes from customers

Create your message

If you send communications that are useless, your subscribers will soon stop reading them, unsubscribe or define the sender as spam.

Write an efficient **subject line**. People scan their inbox and decide which emails they delete, which ones they will read later and, most importantly, which ones they read immediately. Anything too catchy or reminding of advertisement sure won't be prioritized. A descriptive subject line is almost always the best, or one making an attractive promise. But then, the content needs to reach the subscribers expectations.

Don't write a very long communication. Make it clear and right to the point using content hierarchy and inverted pyramid's method. If needed, use a link subscribers can follow to get detailed informations.

Don't be too formal. The brand personality must be used and design rules correctly applied using a header and a footer, nice headings, photographs, negative space, etc.

Treat your subscribers like VIPs. Let them know first about news and promotions and do not hesitate to offer them special privileges.

Coding an HTML e-mail

Coding an HTML e-mail isn't very different than coding a web pages. Although, because of the multiple e-mail clients available, coding must be simplified to avoid problems. But before starting designing and coding a message, it is important to understand how it works.

Multipart/Alternative MIME Format

It is unfortunately impossible to simply attach an HTML file along with all the images to an e-mail and send it or to type HTML in the message with links to the needed elements. This won't work.

The e-mail needs to be sent from your server using *Multipart/Alternative MIME format* which sends a plain-text format and the HTML codes in a bundle. If a users can't see the HTML version of the message, the plain-text format will be used instead.

In order to do so, you need a program making it possible to send emails in *Multipart/Alternative MIME format* or use a third party service such as **mailchimp.com** that will send the message for you.

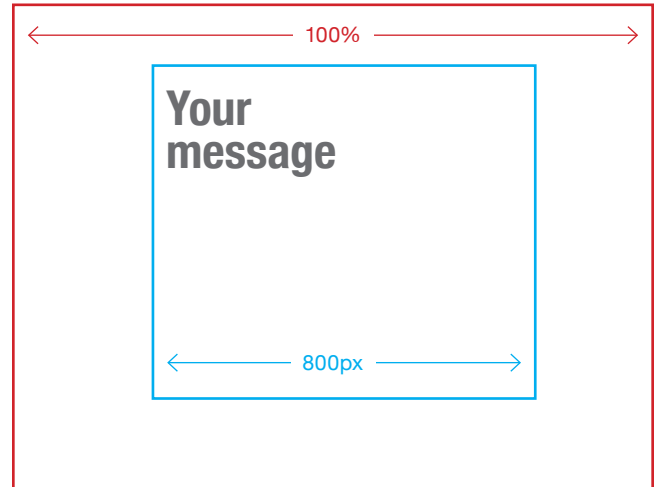
Then, if you would choose to send plain-text messages to avoid using a third party service, you would need to use a special software in order for the message to be sent once to each e-mail addresses independently. It would also be a very bad idea to use CC or ICC to send bulk e-mails. And even using a special software, chances are your mail server would block your sending suspecting spamming.

Positioning

One major difference between e-mail and usual HTML coding is positioning. You can forget about CSS positioning right away and do just like we were doing in the 90's and use nested tables with `<table>` tags and attributes.

At least two tables should be used: one for general positioning, and one containing you message.

The first one consists into a 100% wide table which will be used to center the one containing the message. The nested table should have a maximum width of between 600 and 800 pixels.



```
<table border="0" width="100%">
<tr>
<td align="center">
```

```
<table border="0" width="800">
<tr>
<td align="left">
Your<br />message
</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

```
</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

Important notes

You shouldn't just create and slice a full-image design. Use images and text, nest more tables when needed for more complex positioning and only use absolute links for images.

CSS may be used, but keep them as simple as possible (don't use shorthands) and write it in the tags or in the `<head>` section of the HTML document.