

What Works & What Doesn't in Viral Marketing

Stop with the enforced e-mail forwards already! Trying to force or bribe people to forward your info to a friends or family in order to be rewarded or win looks skanky in today's ultra-permission-based world. Especially when you tell visitors nothing about their friend's or family's privacy in the space directly next to the e-mail form.

A true viral campaign gets forwarded because consumers are compelled to do so by the glory of the content, not because you bribed them with points or something else.

What absolutely will not work:

Suggesting that e-mail recipients forward your message to their friends and family will not work. Adding a line at the bottom of your e-mail that reads "Please feel free to forward this message to a friend" is more likely to get it deleted than forwarded.

What absolutely will work:

Offering something worthy of sharing like a valuable discount, vital information or offering an incentive for sharing like additional entries into a sweepstakes or an added discount or premium service will work.

Relevant or timely information, research, or studies that are included in your e-mail might encourage the recipients to share with their family and friends. Interactive content like a quiz or test, especially if it's fun, will inspire forwarding.

Jokes and cartoons are almost always forwarded to everybody the recipient knows. Why? Because they are entertaining and entertainment is meant to be shared.

A really cool multimedia experience is always going to achieve a lot of pass-along. Rich media is new and the novelty and tech factors alone are often enough to make the e-mail recipient eager to share it.

Oops! Almost forgot one really important thing...You can craft a brilliant e-mail following all the rules, but if a consumer visits your site and has an experience less than what was promised, you are going to achieve viral marketing, alright...the bad kind. So be certain that your product or service is ready and is as advertised.

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