The Rise of Real-Time Personalization with Customer Big Data for modern Email Marketing ‹

To what extent can we personalize the emails in real-time? How to improve customer experience through Big Data? What can be done to gain more visibility for the emails? When is the best time to send emails? How frequently can we send emails to customers? How to optimize customer segmentation to improve engagement with the customers?

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HOW EFFECTIVE YOU THINK IS THE EMAIL CHANNEL PER SE FOR MARKETING?

The other day I was having a conversation with my neighbour, who incidentally heads the Business development for Kindle and customer lifecycle marketing at Amazon India, and when he asked me this question, I did not have any research reports handy to show him statistics on email marketing success. But here is how he eventually agreed that email is indeed an effective channel for marketing.

Marketing, as Philip Kotler says, is about managing profitable customer relationships. While there are multiple channels through which we can establish and nourish customer relationships, there are two important questions that you must ask yourself every time when you frame a marketing strategy.

Question | One

Which channel do your target customers prefer?

It is good to know whether they spend most of their time on LinkedIn or Facebook, YouTube or blogs. Because, it is easier to target your customers right where they are, rather than to invest your energy and money elsewhere and attempt to bring your customers there. When it comes to Email, the Double opt-in process ensures that the mail channel is opted by the customers themselves and you are not wasting your energy on a no man's land. Also, Email is one of the best marketing channels in terms of return on investment and conversion tracking.

Question | Two

> **What mediums or devices do your customers use to access their emails?**

If you were still thinking that one has to switch on his computer at home or office and open his inbox to check emails, it is time you were reminded that Pierce Brosnan does not do James bond movies any more. Myntra's app-only model points out that the rapid proliferation of smartphones is something that modern marketers simply cannot ignore. These days almost everybody has an internet enabled smartphone. It would help a great deal to understand what percentage of your customer base is smartphone enabled and design the content of your emails accordingly. Some of the things that your smartphone enabled customers might love you for are – short and quick-to-load emails, clear call-to-action buttons and a mobile friendly landing page; all this bundled into that sleek push notification for emails on your customer's smartphone. So every time your customer receives a mail, he hears a beep and when he unlocks his phone, your mail is waiting for him in the notifications area for further actions.

With this, I and my neighbour agreed that email, considering its ROI and its frequency of getting noticed by the customers, is definitely an effective channel for marketing. But after that conversation I wondered how email marketing as a practice can be made effective? That led me to three more questions.

Question | Three

> **What to include in the email?**

This depends on whether the campaign is about creating brand awareness, encouraging conversion or remarketing. For an effective email campaign, it is necessary to engage with each customer individually. This can be made possible by personalizing emails according to customers' demographics, previous purchase

history, buying behaviour, geographic location, interests and so forth. Kenscio's email marketing software provides for real time personalization even after the mail is sent. Imagine Dominos sent you an email last month with discount vouchers for your favourite pizza. In case, you noticed the email only today and opened it, you will view the latest discount vouchers applicable for the current month instead of the invalid vouchers sent the last month. This kind of real time personalization when the email is opened, will keep the mail content relevant and hence increase the chances of customer conversion.

Question | Four

When is the right time to send emails?

One simple click and there are numerous research reports in the internet that suggest you the most preferred time to send out emails. One says Tuesday 7A.M to 9A.M, the other says Wednesday 4P.M to 6P.M while another says Friday 6P.M to 10P.M. Now you would be all balled up on which one is right. Also, some people check mails when they wake up, some when they break for lunch and some even when they are in a boring meeting.

It is time you realized that there is no one window of time slot for all businesses that can be justified as the perfect hour to send emails for maximum responses. Instead of going by research reports, it would be best to monitor your email responses frequently. Your customer data is your treasure. In a matter of time, you will appreciate as to when each customer opens or clicks his emails. You may then categorize your customer list and do split send-outs in different windows of time slots depending on when the customer is mostly likely to check mails and hence boost your open rates.

Question | Five

How often to send mails?

There is no one fixed number that can be deemed as the best count of mails that you must send to customers in

a week or month. However, it is a good practice to put yourself in your customers' shoes and think how often you would want to see those mails, if you were a customer.

Also, you could categorize your mailing list as the most engaging vs normal vs inactive customers. The most engaging category would include customers who have registered for your mails and are actively opening or clicking your mails. You could send mailers to them on a weekly / fortnightly / monthly basis as per their subscription requirements while it is best to go slow with the inactive customers to safeguard your IP reputation. If the sender domain is spam trapped, the mails might start hitting customers' junk folders.

TO SUMMARIZE,

A successful email marketing campaign depends on many factors such as the demographics of your target audience, the frequency and timings when they are likely to be active on email, the devices they use to access emails, their buying behaviour, their purchase history, their interests and so on; all collectively put as 'Customer Big Data'. If you appreciate each of your customers and personalize the email to respect his individuality and automate to send content that he is interested in, in a language that he prefers, at a time that he is likely to open the email, best suited to a device that he frequently uses for opening his emails – *Attaboy! Yow donnit!*

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