
KnowledgeBuilder

eCampaigns Email Marketing Service Category
*articles, pointers and how-to information on using & making the most of
email marketing through eCampaigns.*

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eCampaigns Email Marketing Service

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Great Email Marketing Comments from...guess where...a SPAM Message!

Thank heaven for my anti-spam protection, my inbox is spared from about 200 emails per day that don't belong there. However, the compulsive e-mailaholic that I am still checks my blocked queue for messages that may not warrant being banned from the happy journey from server to Shovi World Headquarters.

Today we found a piece of unsolicited email that was both ironic and worth sharing. The email came from an email marketing company trying to get me to sign up with them (little did they -- or whomever put me on this list -- know that we have our own email marketing system, eCampaigns). The content was the answer to something we've heard before so it's worth sharing...enjoy!

Whenever I meet with a new client, it seems I always get asked the same question:

"Do you have access to lists of email addresses for purchase?"

It never fails. With email marketing as cost-effective as it is, almost all companies are intrigued by the possibility of getting their email out to tens of thousands of potential new customers. And why not? After all, what company hasn't purchased a "snail mail" list as part of their direct mail efforts?

At first glance, it makes a ton of sense. But a closer look at the nature of email marketing teaches us that, unlike direct mail, the purchase of email lists can do more harm than good.

Quite simply, email is not direct mail.

There are so many reasons why, but it mainly boils down to customer control. With email, your customers expect to be in control of the relationship. They decide whether or not they want receive email from you, what kinds of information to receive, when they're ready to unsubscribe, even when they're so annoyed by your emails that they (heaven forbid) click on the "this is spam" button.

Unlike direct mail, customers have come to expect that kind of control with email. Plain and simple, they don't want to receive spam from you.

So if you do choose to send out unsolicited email...sure, there may be a few (very few) potential new customers who will be intrigued by what you have to offer and seek further information. But chances are very high that even more recipients will get annoyed by the disturbance and make a beeline for the "this is spam" button.

And if enough people do just that, well, good luck getting your future emails delivered - even to customers who have opted-in to your mailings. Internet Service Providers such as Hotmail, Yahoo, AOL, etc. now think you're a spammer, and will send your future emails directly to their customers' "spam" folder.

And besides...how eager would you be to do business with a company that sends you spam?

If you're bummed about all this, relax. You're almost guaranteed to get great results from your in-house list, made up of people who have asked to receive information from you. They're not only willing to receive your emails, they're often excited to hear from you!

Text formatting, page encoding and "smart quotes"

Smart quotes (or "curly" quotes) - there's an issue with the way text readers interpret them, so if you ever paste them into a WYSIWYG editor you run the risk of the quotes coming out VERY funny looking.

Generally, people using our WYSIWYG editors are publishing their content after typing it out in MS Word or other word processor. This creates extra formatting tags that can be easily copied and pasted into a WYSIWYG editor, BUT the formatting may not be correct HTML formatting.

To avoid this issue, we recommend using straight quotes.

1) turn OFF smart quotes in your Microsoft Word settings. This is found under Tools > Auto Correct Options > AutoFormat. UNCHECK the "Replace Straight Quotes with Smart Quotes" box.

2) compose your content in Notepad, or another all-text editor. Save the text file, then paste the email into the WYSIWYG editor. Formatting it directly in the Create Message window as opposed to Word will also make for cleaner formatting codes.

If you MUST use smart quotes, we recommend switching to the HTML Source View of your editor and replacing the quotes with the HTML equivalent as follows:

left side quote: “
right side quote: ”
apostrophe: ’

don't forget the semicolon at the end.

WHY Does this Happen Anyway? The reason (especially if you paste from Word) is due to the different methods of character encoding. Your web page and your Word settings might use Unicode and ISO, respectively, and as such certain characters like a quotation mark are represented as two totally different characters when their encoding is passed from one document to another.

This is also the reason that PC users who exchange emails with Mac users might find question marks instead of spaces in replies, or other weird characters.

Why is "nobody@host.shovi.com" sending our emails out in eCampaigns?

We get a lot of questions as to why, in Microsoft Outlook, email messages sent via eCampaigns show up as nobody@host.shovi.com on behalf of [sender's email address]. Here's the explanation:

When eCampaigns sends out an email, it is sending it out on your behalf directly from our server. It is not logging into your email account using your user name and password, and it isn't sending the email out through your mail server. As such, it would be improper to portray your email address as the actual Sender in the email headers.

What's an email header? An email header is a set of information that tells email servers about the message being delivered. There is information about the Sender, who should be displayed in the "From" field, whether replies to that email should go somewhere else, what server the message originated from, and much more. Well-formatted headers will help emails pass through security checks on mail servers that use the headers to verify that the message is coming from a legitimate source (and not being sent as spam).

So, by disclosing the fact that the "from" and "sender" address are two different people, it helps verify the authenticity of your email message.

Also, Outlook is the only popular email application that displays the Sender address when you open the message. You will notice, however, that the "From" field in the preview window still shows the correct "From" address.

In conclusion, the display of the Sender header is an aesthetic issue which we've found to be noticed more by senders than recipients. In exchange for being able to send email with well-formatted headers that will be delivered to more inboxes and not spam folders, we feel this is worth the aesthetic inconvenience.

Adding sender email addresses to various email programs

We recently received an email newsletter from Staples® that had a link for how to add senders to most popular email applications' address books, to help ensure that email delivery from their email marketing activities ends up in the recipients' inboxes.

Even when eCampaigns says that it has delivered your email to all of the intended recipients, this doesn't mean it reached their inbox. Spam filters, server settings and other factors could inhibit the actual inbox delivery, but nearly all programs have a "list" that you can be added to that will bypass all the server checks to get an email into their inbox.

Here is the link: <http://e.staples-deals.com/staplespages/wrapper/index.asp>. We encourage you to keep this link on file to help troubleshoot why someone might not be receiving one of your email messages from eCampaigns. In the future we will offer a service to create a branded version of this page for your particular business, and can even incorporate these instructions into the "thank you" pages for your various lists.

Lessons from our first aggressive email marketing campaign

We recently helped a client send out an email campaign that was intended to drive fundraising traffic to a particular initiative. Proud to say it was extremely effective, but the point of this post is to talk about what factors contributed to the success.

There were three emails altogether...one last December (2006) to promote this fundraising initiative in time for the holidays, one last week indicating that there was "one week left" and one on Sunday - a day before the fundraising deadline. From this process we learned a few things worth sharing, and they have application across any type of email campaign:

Create a sense of urgency - we used terms like "Last Chance" and "One Week Left" in our subject lines, toward the FRONT of the subject line. You have to be careful that you don't go overboard (especially with all caps) because you will trigger many anti-spam filters and your email won't go through to as many recipients. But a sense of urgency in the beginning of the subject line will be very helpful to get the reader to open up your message.

Tell them what they need to do - Once the email has been opened, provide links to your website and make sure they stand out. Don't use phrases like "Click here to visit our site", instead turn the action statement into the hyperlink ("time is running out, use our secure online donation form to make sure you make the deadline") was a phrase that pulled double-duty for us and was very effective.

Get Link-Happy - Make sure you place the link to your "action page" in several places in the email text, as well as on any images you have embedded in the email.

Get them to your site fast - Keep the text short...the point here is to create a sense of urgency to go to the site. Once you get the reader to your website, make sure any expanded text is clearly displayed and easy to read, but also that they can "buy" or "act" without hunting for the starting point (in our case, a form)

These four points have application across any type of campaign, whether the goal be to promote a piece of news or to drive commerce. The key is truly to let your website do the hard work and let the email just be the attention-getter.