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Permission Is Not Optional In Email Marketing

Permission is not an optional extra, but is the basic apparatus in email marketing. Permission is the key component in gaining recipient trust, optimizing deliverability and getting investment returns. It is practiced by all legitimate email marketers. But many new email marketers, especially those from print, television, radio and direct mail background resist the idea of taking permission. They fail to realize that email is different from the rest as it is a personal medium, similar to telephone. And the result of decline in telemarketing is a clear proof of this malpractice.

Email marketing isn't about smacking the recipient with one email after another nor is it about list size. Initially some do get okay results when they do not take permission. These kinds of marketers send out floods of email to email list gathered in trade shows, from white paper downloaders and visitors. But for most of the marketers, mediocre result is not the goal. When subscribers give permission for emailing, results such as increased response rates, better deliverability, and increased brand affinity and trust can be seen. It does take time to build a list based on permission and to send out relevant messages to targeted readers. This list will become shorter by the day if this list is an unsolicited email list. In simple words, permission helps in achieving better results and it is the only method to build strong relationships with customers via emails.

Few marketers think that their non-permission programs are bringing results which are just fine. But when they review their open rate, click rate and conversion rates, they can conclude that they could have improved the results by at least five times if they had used the permission based approach. Permission not only means the subscriber's consent of receiving emails from the company. It can be further broken down into expressed consent and implied consent. Expressed permission is what the subscriber gives when he fills the opt-in form or clicks on the email permission checkbox when he is filling the registration form. Implied permission is not given actively, but is a following result of another actions like not un-checking the pre-checked email permission box. This practice is not healthy and can affect the relationship with the customer. Therefore, expressed permission is the acceptable one. Implied permission can also be expressed as opt-out.

The U.S. issued law for commercial email in 2003 which is also called as CAN-SPAM. This law allows opt-out marketing if certain conditions are met. The opt-out emails should include a working unsubscribe link. The commercial email should be labeled as a promotional email if affirmative consent is not given by the recipient. This law only has legal criteria and does not promote opt-in or best practices. Opt-out email marketing gets the company blacklisted instantly. This means most of the money and time spend in emailing is wasted. In opt-out email marketing, there is a high chance of sending emails to addresses which do not exist or which block the messages.

Opt-in email marketing is of two types: Single opt-in and double opt-in. In Single opt-in, the subscriber is automatically added after the completion of web form or after emailing a request. In Double opt-in, also known as confirmed opt-in, the subscriber is sent an automated email message immediately after the request to which the subscriber must reply to confirm the subscription and to be added to the email list.

Statistics and surveys have proven the benefits of using opt-in email marketing. Instead of wasting resources on people who aren't interested in the company's services or product, a small part of the same resources can be utilized effectively by reaching out to the targeted customers.

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