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Predicting the 2008 Trends in E-mail Marketing

By John Rizzi, *President & CEO*

Forget what the Chinese Calendar says, because e-Dialog believes 2008 will be the Year of the E-mail Marketer. According to JupiterResearch, the overall e-mail market is expected to increase from \$1.2 billion in 2007 to \$2.1 billion in 2012¹. As a result, e-mail will inevitably draw more marketing investment, and at an even faster pace than today. In fact, the growing importance of e-mail as a channel is going to earn marketers a more prominent seat at the executive table.

How can we predict that, you ask? Of course we have no magic crystal ball at our disposal. But a keen examination of the trends points to a bold and brighter forecast for 2008 – and beyond.


E-mail will become the catalyst for marketing communications. Executives are becoming increasingly aware that e-mail offers the most immediate and actionable data. They are also beginning to understand that it is the most reliable. Very few channels can provide the complexity of data needed to target an individual with relevant communications. With e-mail, however, that complexity of data is inherent. What's more, it's relatively easy to analyze and apply to the next campaign.

Timely, measurable, and actionable data – it should come as no surprise that e-mail is increasingly relied upon as the means to initiate and maintain relationships between the brand and consumers. It will no longer simply be about getting a campaign out the door in order to boost revenue; e-mail will become the primary tool in the marketer's cache.

Solutions for actionable, real-time data will be paramount. At the speed of business today, marketers can no longer wait hours – or worse, days – to receive the information they need from a data warehouse. For that reason, when it comes to outsourcing, marketers will be placing greater emphasis on ESPs that can support their data management and segmentation needs.

The key advantages of e-mail lie in its timeliness and individualized experience, which is why such a tremendous emphasis is now being placed on relevant e-mail marketing. However, an e-mail is only as

¹ "US E-mail Marketing Forecast 2007 - 2012" JupiterResearch, published December 17, 2007

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relevant as the data that is being used to target it, and marketers can't afford to let e-mail's potential impact languish waiting for the right data to come from the warehouse. Sophisticated ESPs can crunch the necessary data in minutes, using their own tools in conjunction with the actionable data every e-mail campaign intrinsically provides.

Marketers will bear witness to the demise of text-based e-mail campaigns. On top of the availability of real-time data, e-mail also offers the flexibility to include more dynamic content and compelling offers. At the same time, marketers are recognizing that there is business value in every e-mail exchange with customers – even the simple, everyday transactional messages.

Customers feel the same way. They expect more value in an e-mail marketing relationship, which means they have higher expectations than a run-of-the-mill “your order has shipped” message. Even transactional messages will be expected to carry intrinsic marketing value, and marketers will look to tie every e-mail more closely to their goals and integrate with other channels.

Of course this predicted demise does not apply to mobile marketing, for which text-based email will continue to thrive. However, the ease with which dynamic content can be incorporated into HTML e-mail campaigns will make text-based e-mails on your desktop a relic of the past.

Outsourcing will be the key to effective e-mail campaign automation. One of the most intriguing differences between e-mail and other marketing channels, of course, is the ability to incorporate complex business rules to drive dynamic content and highly intelligent campaign automation. That complexity, along with the belief that e-mail is becoming a more fundamental component to marketing success, will compel more companies to outsource to ESPs.

This is not unlike the e-commerce outsourcing boom that took place in the late 1990's, when companies realized it was more efficient and cost-effective to outsource their e-commerce needs to vendors already boasting the necessary resources and expertise. Along those same lines, ESPs will need to provide better automation tools to support data synchronization, content management, and triggered messaging programs – all keys to e-mail marketing success.

Consumers will expect e-mail to be integral to the brand experience. The reality is that e-mail is becoming more than just a fundamental component to marketing success. It is also becoming more integral to the brand experience, and customers like it. E-mail serves customers well when it is an extension of a company's products or services, while doing so on the customer's individual terms.



Consider this example: Apple stores have eliminated the need for customers to stand in line. Store clerks can complete transactions using a handheld device, provided the customer is willing to have the receipt sent via e-mail. This lends itself well to Apple's brand perception, which is avant-garde and ultra-focused on the needs of the user. Ideally, consumers and the company both benefit as e-mail becomes more intrinsic to the brand relationship, because it also enables the company to provide better service at a lower cost.

Essentially, consumers will declare war on what they perceive to be bad e-mail. Brands will need to work harder at delivering value and relevance with every communication, while offering consumers more control – for example, the ability to set frequency or set their preferences. Brand relationships will no longer be exclusively on the company's terms.

E-mail will play a key role in redefining how marketers measure success. With the increased visibility of e-mail and its importance, there will be a shift to new metrics that only e-mail and similar channels can provide. For example, online consumer behavior, analysis around message relevance, process vs. profit, and lifetime value will all emerge as key marketing analytics.

Ultimately, the combinations of e-mail's knack for orchestrating long-term consumer relationships and its ability to deliver reliable, unambiguous metrics will help earn e-mail marketers a rightful seat in the executive boardroom. Is there really any better way to end the Year of the E-mail Marketer?