



Exploring the Six Factors of E-mail Relevance: Triggers

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The old adage, “timing is everything,” couldn’t be more true when it comes to e-mail marketing. Your ability to immediately respond to a customer’s behavior or consistently acknowledge static elements of significance to that customer can be the difference between relationship-building, revenue generation and missed opportunities. “Triggered” e-mail campaigns are an easy and highly effective vehicle for creating relevance and capitalizing on the many valuable touch points throughout a customer’s lifecycle.

Set it and forget it

Beyond the obvious benefit of automation (reducing costs, maximizing resources and minimizing human error), triggers provide you with a virtually effortless, yet personalized way to: build and strengthen your relationships with customers; evoke positive feelings about your company’s brand; and, drive prospects and customers to act.

It’s important to note that triggers can indeed be performed manually. However, automated triggers can give you assurance that your e-mail messages are consistently delivered at the most opportune time—even in your absence. Let’s face it, even for a small business it would be taxing on time and resources to manually respond to a customer’s behavior. And...consider the effort involved in tracking and manually addressing each individual customer’s significant events, such as the date of their wedding anniversary or when they hit “gold level” spending status. The reality is that most marketers can’t possibly capture every opportunity right at the time it presents itself.

With fully automated, triggered e-mail campaigns, you essentially, “set it and forget it” and allow pre-determined business rules of varying complexity to help you engage with your customers at critical moments in time. Triggered messages or a sequence of messages can be set to automatically address static data elements, such as birthdays and anniversaries, and respond to certain behaviors and events (i.e. a customer signed up for a service, changed information in his profile, purchased something, simply opened or clicked on an e-mail, or reached a threshold in your loyalty program).

Pulling the trigger

The best way to demonstrate the value of triggers is to examine some of the types of triggered campaigns that can have a very positive impact on e-mail marketing efforts.

Welcome Triggers

At the risk of sounding trite—you never get a second chance to make a first impression; welcome triggers provide a great opportunity to make a good impression on customers right out of the gate. Every customer likes some form of acknowledgement, especially a thank you, when they have made a purchase, subscribed to a service or newsletter or newly engaged in various other ways with your company. Through welcome triggers you can easily and quickly communicate your appreciation for a customer's business, educate him about your company, product and services, and offer discounts or incentives that will drive him to make a first purchase (if he hasn't already). Welcome messages also enable you to ask questions in order to learn more about a customer and gather data that can be utilized for future personalization efforts.

First Purchase Triggers

As with all triggered campaigns, a first purchase program enables you to deliver a targeted message to a customer at the most relevant time—immediately following her initial purchase. Don't miss your chance to thank her for buying your product or service, and entice her with recommendations or offers for related purchases. Triggered messages can play an important role in helping to drive a customer to make a second purchase, especially within that critical time period of 30 days after her initial transaction.

Dormant Triggers

Dormant customer campaigns create a particularly efficient way to try to re-engage customers that have been inactive for a defined period time. Through these triggered messages, you can easily “check-in” with a customer, acknowledge that you haven't heard from him in a while (six months, one year, etc.) and inquire what your company can do to be of service to him. This may remind him that he purchased products that he liked from your company in the past and encourage him to consider what you are offering at that time. Let's be honest, these campaigns can also assist you in cleaning your database; if in the end the customer continues to be unresponsive to these messages, you know to remove him from your contact list.

Abandoned Shopping Cart Triggers

Triggered abandoned cart campaigns are an easy way to “entice a customer back” and drive incremental revenue. If a customer thought enough about a product to place it in her shopping cart, but didn’t make the purchase, she may have had to attend to other things or is still contemplating the purchase. By simply sending a reminder to her after a defined period of time (i.e. when the cart has been abandoned for three days, etc.), you may spur her into action. Free shipping offers and discounts to purchase within seven days are also effective triggers, but should be used intermittently, so as not to “train” a consumer to wait for the discount.

Goodwill Triggers

As we’ve discussed in the past, goodwill campaigns can help you to strengthen your relationship with a customer and demonstrate goodwill in providing her with unsolicited, yet helpful information or advice that enhances her experience with your company. There is a spectrum of goodwill messages that can be effectively triggered, such as surveys about a product or service sent 10 or 30 days following a purchase, and point balance notifications. You can also automatically send reminders to a customer about resources available to him. Additionally through these campaigns, you can create an opportunity to interact with a customer by acknowledging events specific to his customer lifecycle. For example, you could send him a sincere thank you for his business throughout the past year on the anniversary of his first purchase or the date he became a member of your loyalty program. Sending reminders of other special events such as birthdays is another excellent way to create goodwill.

Milestone Triggers

While they sometimes contain goodwill messaging, milestone campaigns are another distinct type of personalized campaign that you can successfully trigger to have higher impact e-mail programs. Milestones, such as when a customer reaches a certain threshold, give you a great excuse to approach them with information of interest. For example, you can alert a customer when she attains platinum level spending status or congratulate her on her 25th purchase, and explain what new benefits she will now receive. Milestones create simple touch points for you to maintain timely, triggered communication with your customers, generate positive feelings toward your brand, and in some cases, further capitalize on these relationships by making special offers that will entice them to spend more money!



Okay, don't *completely* forget it

Triggers are among the most critical factors in achieving e-mail relevance because they can enable you to immediately, consistently and successfully interact with your customers, providing them with the right information at the right time. However, in order to ensure the ongoing, positive impact of triggered e-mail campaigns, you should check back every six months to make sure that the content of your triggers is still relevant to not only customers, but your company's branding, messaging and current product offerings.