

Take Action on Inactive List Segments

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No matter how excellent your acquisition strategy, it's a sad fact that response rates for e-mail marketing campaigns begin to drop almost immediately once a consumer joins a list. After the first thirty days, you could have a drop in engagement averaging 20%. After six months, the drop can be even steeper, rising to an average of 50%, a statistic that should move creating a re-engagement strategy to the top of every marketer's to do list, if only to not waste the valuable dollars that went into adding that consumer to the list in the first place. There's nothing to lose in trying to re-engage this segment of your list – they aren't interacting with your brand right now, so why not test some of these re-activation techniques?

Survey customers about current e-mail content.

A simple e-mail survey to inactive customers can help determine the root of the problem. Did the e-mail program not meet the customer's expectations? Was the content not relevant to the customer's interests? The answers may allow you to engage inactive customers with an alternative program, or at least understand what improvements or changes need to be made to current e-mail programs.

Change e-mail content for the inactive segment.

Re-engaging inactive customers presents a convenient opportunity to try new things – for example, adding interactive elements, experimenting with a new format, or testing new subject lines. If something new manages to rekindle the interest of a certain percentage of inactive customers, it may be worth testing against the rest of your e-mail list. If these changes have no impact, there's no down side, since you didn't expose your most faithful and profitable customers to these changes.

Invite inactive customers to update their profile.

If an inactive customer hasn't evaluated her profile in a while, it could be the reason why the e-mails have gone unnoticed. Send an e-mail that encourages inactive customers to review their profile information. Let them know that updating profiles will help you deliver more relevant e-mail. It's an easy and inexpensive way to re-engage inactive customers with your brand.

**Experiment with zero frequency.**

Suppress the inactive customer list and re-introduce it when a new e-mail communication stream with a compelling offer goes live or a can't miss event comes around. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, and inactive customers may be more apt to open or click an e-mail from a company when they realize they haven't heard from them in a while. This strategy can achieve solid results. Tests have shown between 5% and 10% of inactive customers opened or clicked on the e-mail when reintroduced into the communication stream after being suppressed for a time.

Finally, remember that any of these re-activation programs can be implemented as a trigger, simply by targeting segments that have been inactive for a year, six months, or three months – the earlier the better. A monthly inactive trigger means less work for you, with more results!