

Living in the MOEment: Manufacturing Brand Moments

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Welcome to the fourth installment of our Moments of Engagement series. In our previous articles, we delved into the reasons lifecycle messaging is so effective and learned how to manufacture meaningful touch points based on customer or merchandise lifecycles.

In this article, we'll widen our scope and look at your business as a whole, focusing on Brand Moments of Engagement, or MOEs. What are brand MOEs? Well, imagine this:

you just get out of one of those invigorating creative meetings; all stakeholders have agreed to launch an e-mail, featuring not your products, not even offers. Instead, this e-mail is one dreamed up in late night brainstorm sessions, featuring editorials, refreshing content and even a chic animation, announcing your new season or your new line. Something new, something different. Something that will perk up the eyes of your target audience.

Brand MOEs are these pivotal pieces of the e-mail marketing cadence! They are that elusive "something different" that stands out from the promotional e-mail or enhances the promotional e-mail by offering a refreshing break and a bit of cool. Unfortunately they are often removed from the marketing calendar for their lack of pure revenue-driving abilities and replaced with less sophisticated "batch-and-blast" messages. While the payoff may not be as immediate, Brand MOEs encourage increased long-term brand affinity, which can drive sales long after the e-mail is sent.

Let's take a look at four popular brand MOEs and review some questions to ask when considering adding them to your e-mail marketing toolkit.

1. Editorial Content

E-mail newsletters reach far and wide across industries and verticals, but the one detail that connects them all is editorial content and brand 'news'. Editorial content differs from promotional copy in that it tends to educate around a larger topic, not solely a product. While the end goal may be product-related, the content is truly a soft sell. For example, Bed Bath and Beyond recently partnered with Real Simple magazine to present monthly tips on topics like streamlining your morning routine. The e-mail features lifestyle tips along with complementary products available from Bed Bath and Beyond.



Other types of editorial content include information on trends or ways to use a product. For retailers, this can be fashion trends, for travel it can be trends in resort amenities, for financial services companies it can be trends in consumer spending. Showing interesting or time-saving ways to use a product is an excellent way to illustrate how your brand fills a need in the consumer's life. There really are no limits to these types of e-mails, since editorial content is related to the lifestyle your brand represents.

Another benefit to editorial content is that it can be a great source for viral or social media campaigns. Tips and tricks, trends or opinions can be conversation starters, so be sure to make this content sharable. Be creative! Think about including videos, games, or widgets in your e-mail newsletters.

2. Celebration time!

In a culture of abundant revelry and celebrations, adding your brand to this mix may provide an excuse for a mid-customer lifecycle touch point. A brand-day is just that – a self-developed “day” that you as the marketer can turn into a cool and noteworthy promotion! For example, each year Kiehl's commemorates the day the company was founded with “Kiehl's Day.” They send e-mail describing the history of the company and promoting special offers available in store and online throughout the week.

Similarly, online retailer Bluefly sent out a “Happy Birthday to Us” e-mail – similar to the message of Kiehl's, but taking it a step further by sending the happy birthday message five days in a row and focusing on one product per day. A very cool and noteworthy promotion indeed.

3. Holiday hugs

Holiday hugs are another word for e-mails sent only around holiday time. They feature one brief, clean message, usually void of any offers or cross-sells. They are used to engender goodwill and also to reinforce brand attributes. Ralph Lauren has turned these types of communications into an art form, sending them during every larger holiday. For example, their 2009 New Year's message featured a black-and-white image of a couple dancing with the copy: “Happy New Years from RalphLauren.com.” Simple, classic, and elegant, exactly what the brand represents.

Don't limit these types of messages to the most commonly celebrated holidays. Stand out from the pack by recognizing holidays that are a little unusual, like National High Five Day, or that are significant to your customers. Take a look at your customer demographics and you may find a message around National Administrative Professionals Day or Grandparents Day makes sense.

4. Current events

While it's not quite status quo, many brands do delve into the political and cultural sphere, focusing on current events. Quite a few companies saw success in November 2008 by tying promotions to the election of the 44th President of the United States, offering 44% off on November 4th, or 100 days of deals to coincide with the first 100 days of the new administration.



Some marketers use the e-mail audience as a platform for their cultural philosophies or to announce an interesting partnership. Consumers like to do business with companies they feel support their community. If you sponsor local charity events or arts organizations, let your customers know about it. Inviting them to exclusive events is a highly effective relationship builder. Last Spring, Martin+Osa invited customers to shop for the benefit of the American Cancer Society. These types of initiatives resonate with customers and encourage positive word of mouth.

There's another way to look at current events as well. In the clothing retail world, a new season means a great excuse for a new wardrobe. Capitalize on this by making a BIG seasonal splash! That is, include a teaser, or countdown to the new season in subsequent pre-launch messages, tie in a season launch game or sweepstakes, and then, on the final day, announce your season with a bang! Offers go a long way, but ultimately the more visually appealing the content, the more engaged your audience will be – thus animation and product imagery is key.

Trying to uncover your brand MOEs can be more of a challenge than lifecycle or even merchandise MOEs. But creativity, knowledge of your customer base, and an eye for relevant intrigue is key. The following questions can provide a starting point:

Where are my brand Moments of Engagement?

- Has your brand recently shifted its positioning?
- Are there any new cultural or national events that impact your brand?
- Does your brand celebrate anything internally? Is this appropriate for your customer base?
- Does your brand work with or create any experts?
- Where is your brand most lacking in the lifecycle message touch point?
- How often does your brand update its Web site?

At the end of the day, these messages are what connect your audience to your brand: they form that hopefully long-lasting customer bond, creating not only loyalty, but also an emotional tie that sustains over time, resulting in a customer you can count on in the long run.