2018 Marketing
with Microsoft Dynamics 365

Idea eBook

30 Ways to Transform Your Marketing in 30 Days

ClickDimensions

Table of Contents

Introduction

As marketers, we're always looking for new ideas. What will help us find, nurture, convert and engage our ideal customers, more effectively and efficiently? That, and ClickDimensions' commitment to marketers using Microsoft Dynamics, is what inspired us to produce the first edition of this eBook and a new version every year since.

With the ***2018 Marketing with Microsoft Dynamics 365 Idea eBook***, we decided to try something a little different. So, rather than the hundreds of pages found in Idea eBook editions past, this one is pared down to suit marketers' increasingly hectic schedules. It's 30 ways to change your marketing in 30 days. Whether you read these tip-filled articles in 30 straight days or spread it out over the course of several months is entirely up to you. Either way, this eBook aims to help you transform your marketing in 2018.

Happy Marketing!

How to Set Better Marketing Goals in 2018

To achieve success, you need to define what it looks like before you get there. Ideally, goals should be attainable while also allowing for reaching and achieving greater growth. Fortunately, there is a framework that can help you effectively create those kinds of goals.

No matter the objective, ensure that you set S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound) goals. In essence, S.M.A.R.T. goals help ensure that your objectives are clear and specific enough that it's easy to determine whether you hit your mark or, if you didn't, how short you fell of achieving a set goal.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Explained

Specific – Be as specific as you can with your goals. Outline the who, what, when, where of your objectives.

Measurable – If you can't measure a goal, how can you be sure you have achieved it? For each goal you set, ensure that you have a method for measurement.

Attainable – Lofty goals may sound good on paper, but they won't do much good if they are impossible to achieve. Use your current performance and, when available, that of your competitors to know what's reasonable and achievable.

Relevant – Choose goals that really matter. How relevance is defined will differ for every company, but you should think about those that have the potential to make a real business impact.

Time-Bound – To create a sense of urgency, every goal should have a deadline. But be sure to be realistic when setting a given goal and consider the timelines for other goals or marketing activities as well.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Examples

Some examples of S.M.A.R.T. goals include:

- Growing your LinkedIn followers by five percent each month for the next six months.
- Increasing your average click-through rate on your monthly email newsletter by 10 percent over the next year.
- Doubling the number of likes on Instagram posts in the next three months.
- Decreasing website bounce rate by 5 percent in the next quarter.
- Generating a minimum of 1,000 new marketing qualified leads each quarter in the next year

Be sure that you set enough goals to make meaningful progress, but not so many that you feel overwhelmed. A few goals related to each of your major marketing initiatives should work well. Or you can try setting primary and secondary goals based on your priorities, which could be either be specific to different areas of your marketing strategy or to the various tactics that make up your strategy.

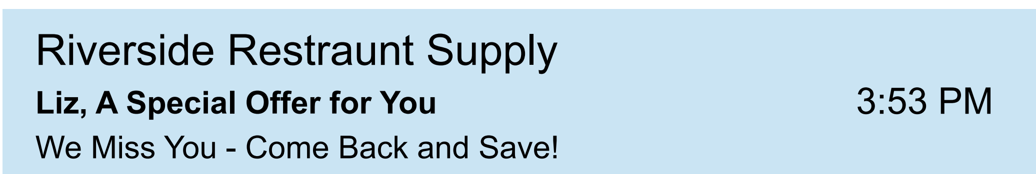
2 5 Ideas for Using Personalization in Emails

Email marketing is no longer a one-size-fits-all initiative. Consumers now expect customized communications from the organizations they do business with. And when businesses meet those expectations, they reap the benefits. Research from Experian reveals that emails with personalized subject lines are 26 percent more likely to be opened. And according to Aberdeen Group, personalized emails improve click-through rates by 14 percent and conversion rates by 10 percent.

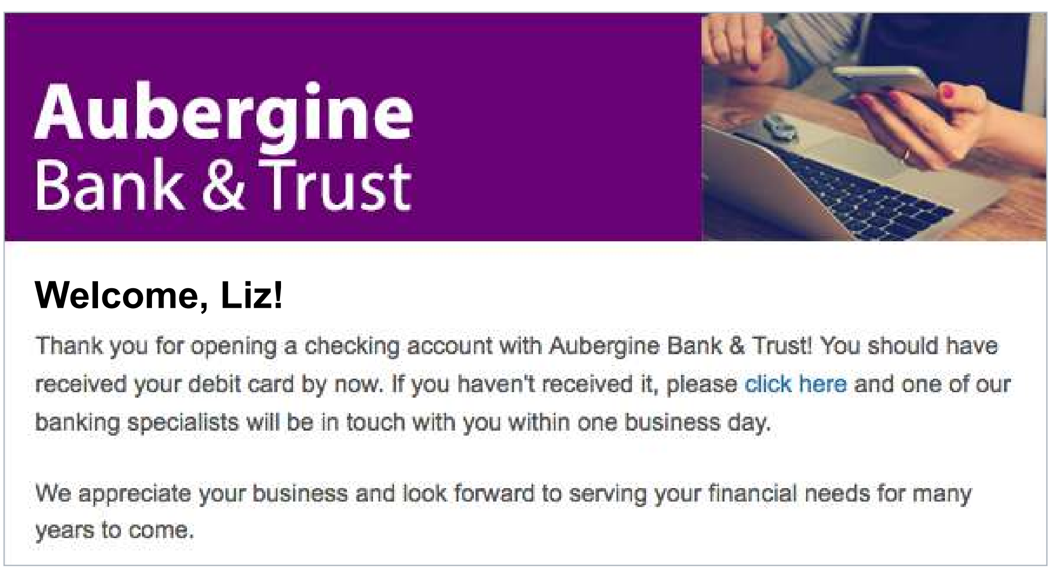
So, what can you personalize in an email? You are only limited by the information that you have available in Microsoft Dynamics 365/CRM. While that's great news in terms of the flexibility you have for customizing campaigns, it can also be a little daunting to figure out where to start. To help you get started with personalization and take your emails to the next level, here are five ideas for how to use personalization in your emails:

1. Name.

Using a lead or contact's name in an email is likely the most common use of email personalization, and rightly so. It's a simple and effective way to show your recipients that you know who they are, and it helps create a connection with recipients immediately. You can use names in an email subject line or preheader, as seen here:



Or choose to greet your customers or leads by name in the content of the email:

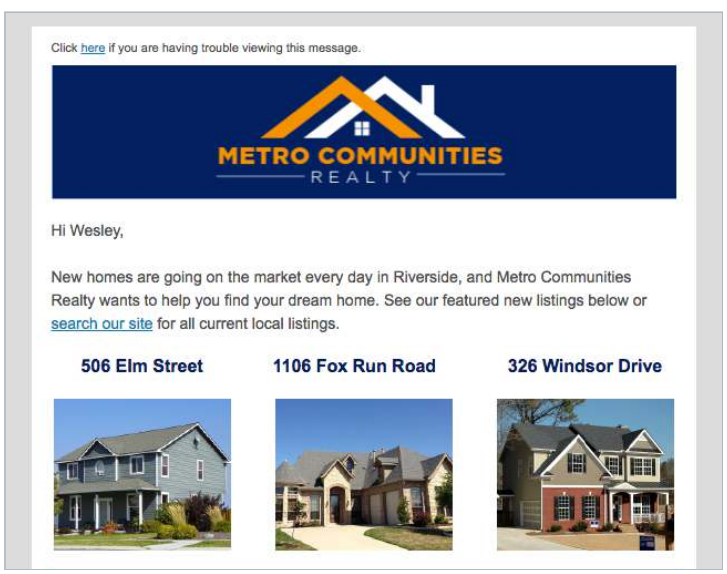


2. Important dates.

Our lives are filled with dates worth remembering and recognizing, both professionally and personally. So, what better way to endear yourself to your customers or prospects than to acknowledge these important dates too? An anniversary as it relates to your organization is a popular pick for a date to recognize. In the example email below, you can see how a professional association incorporated a date to recognize how long an individual had been a member of the association.

3. Location.

Consider these two subject lines: “Check out these hot new restaurants” versus “Check out these hot new Atlanta restaurants.” If you’re a foodie, you might be inclined to open the email either way, but the subject line that references the city you live in is more attention-grabbing because you know that the content is localized to you and very relevant. Localization also works well in the body of an email, as seen in the example below for a real estate brokerage, which references the city where the recipient wants to buy a new home and displays a few homes available in that location.

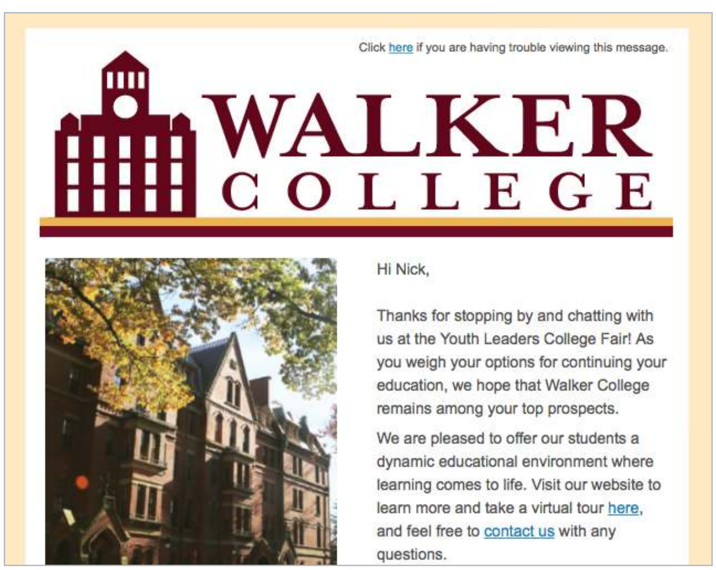


4. Dollar amounts.

As seen in the example below, nonprofits can use dollar amounts as an effective way to personalize their emails. This personalization allows the organization to recognize a donor's specific contribution rather than just a general reference to an unspecified donation amount. Other examples of this personalization in action could be retailers with loyalty programs using dollar amount personalization to thank a customer for spending a certain amount or a financial institution could employ this type of personalization to show how much a customer has saved using a round-up on purchases savings account.

5. How you met.

Sometimes people need a little reminder of how they met your organization, and they also like seeing that you remember too. This is particularly true for new leads who are having their first few interactions with your business. Did they visit your website? Make a purchase from your store? Attend an event? For example, a college wanted to send an email blast to prospective students that their representatives had spoken with at a series of college fairs. Using personalization, they were able to incorporate the name of the specific event each prospective student attended, providing a customized email experience.



3 6 Types of Video to Use in Your Marketing

Showing is more compelling than telling. In today's content-driven marketing world, marketers are increasingly turning to video to showcase their brand's stories and engage with prospects and customers. In fact, according to a Demand Metric report, 69% of sales and marketing professionals have used video marketing, and the remaining 31% are planning to use it in the future.

Whether you are like the majority of that surveyed group and are a veteran video marketer, or you have yet to utilize this powerful and popular channel, here are six ideas for types of videos that you can use in your marketing initiatives:

1. Explainer videos.
Think of these as how-to or tutorial videos. You can use explainer videos to show customers or prospects how to do something, often in a more effective or efficient way. These videos allow individuals to see what they are trying to accomplish in action, rather than just reading along. A company that makes grills, for example, could create an explainer video to teach people the best way to clean their grills in time for all those summertime backyard barbeques. Or a non-profit organization that focuses on pet rescue could use video to demonstrate how to choose the best collar and leash for your dog.

2. Webinar videos.
Research from the Content Marketing Institute shows that marketers rank webinars among their top five most effective tactics. If your organization currently hosts webinars or is planning to add them to your marketing mix, make your webinar content go the extra mile by recording the event and using the video in your marketing efforts.

3. Behind-the-scenes videos.
Also known as culture videos, behind-the-scenes videos do exactly what their name implies – they give you a sneak peek inside an organization. Companies use these videos to provide an inside look at their operations and people, and allow audiences to develop a more personal connection with an organization. Behind-the-scenes videos can serve a wide variety of marketing purposes, and are also an effective recruiting tool for HR teams.

4. Testimonial videos.
People often trust their peers more than advertisements, which is what makes case studies so impactful. Take your case studies to the next level with testimonial videos. When we develop a print case study here at ClickDimensions, we also ask if the person being interviewed would be willing to go on camera for a testimonial. Some people just aren't comfortable being on video, but for those that are, it gives us a great way to showcase our customers' and partners' experiences with ClickDimensions on video and in print.

5. Interview videos.

Looking for some new blog content? An interview video may be just what you're looking for. In an interview video, you could opt to have two or more people on camera, or go with more of a news program style, with the interviewer off camera. This style of video could be used for a wide variety of purposes. For example, a product manager could talk about a new product being launched, a CEO could discuss industry trends or a marketing director could confer the benefits of attending a company conference or event.

6. Welcome videos.

Video can be a compelling part of the customer onboarding process. A welcome video could provide an overview of an organization as a whole, convey a company's philosophy, describe some of the company's history and give people an idea of what to expect as a customer of your organization. A hospital's labor and delivery department, for example, could create a welcome video for expectant moms who will be giving birth there. A cruise line could also make use of a welcome video to show first-time cruisers what to expect once they are on board.

4 How to Determine the Right Social Networks for Your Business

Social media delivers a wide variety of benefits to businesses. It can increase brand awareness and exposure, drive traffic and help you be a part of valuable conversations with your customers and prospects.

On the flip side of that coin, social media can cause a lot of frustration for businesses and marketers. How will you respond to negative comments or reviews? Who will be responsible for posting? How often will you post? And – first things first – which social media platforms should you even be on?

When there were fewer social networks, that last question was significantly easier to answer. Many companies established a presence on all the big social platforms and called it a day on that decision. But as new social channels began to proliferate, so too did the question of how businesses could be in all social places at one time and – more importantly – should they even try to be. Here are a few things to consider as you determine which social networks are right for your business:

Function

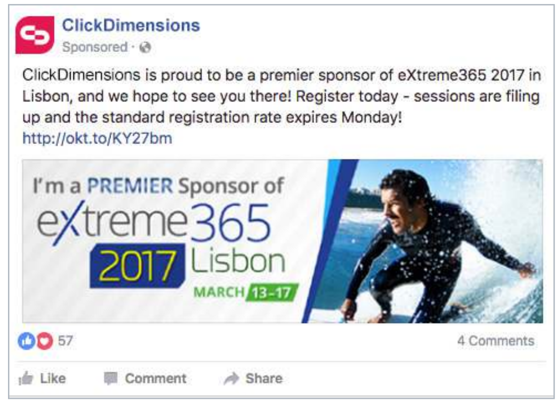
Before setting up shop on a given social network, take time to consider what people do there. In other words, are they sharing recipes or resumes? LinkedIn's business and job-seeking focus make it perfect for a staffing firm, while a food manufacturer might have more success connecting with customers on Pinterest. Also consider the visual nature of each platform. While visuals are becoming increasingly important across all social channels, if your product or service lends itself well to photo or video, a platform like Instagram or YouTube would be a great place to devote some of your social energy. However, don't be afraid to think outside the box on how you could showcase your brand visually.

Fit

The size of a social network doesn't matter as much as fit. When you compare Snapchat's 100 million daily active users with Facebook's more than 1 billion active daily users, it may seem like a no-brainer where you need to devote your efforts. But if the demographics and expectations of Snapchat users suit your brand better, you're better off being there. Also keep in mind that more users often means more competition for attention, so you just might find better opportunities to make solid connections with your audience and stand out on smaller or more niche platforms.

Pay for Play

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all use algorithmic timelines, with Facebook being the earliest adopter of this technology. Brands have realized over time that an algorithm-based news feed makes it difficult to reach potential and even current followers organically. To compensate for this lack of reach, many companies invest in social media advertising in some form or fashion (more to come later in this guide on the types of social media advertising). Be sure to factor this "pay for play" aspect of some social networks into your overall social strategy. If you don't have the budget to engage in social advertising, or simply don't choose to, that could help determine the platforms you choose to be on and how much time you spend on each.



Newer Doesn't Mean Better

The more popular social media becomes in our personal and professional lives, the more we will continue to see new social platforms develop. While some of these new additions to the social media landscape will be a perfect fit for your brand, others won't bring much value. As marketers, we always want to remain on the cutting edge and use the newest methods to communicate with our audiences, but newer isn't necessarily better in the social media world. Give yourself the freedom to experiment with new social channels, but remember that the social networks that have been around for years have stayed around and popular for good reason.

Finally, keep in mind that choosing social networks for your business doesn't have to be an all or nothing decision. Your company can have a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest, and you don't have to devote equal energy and effort to each.

5 6 Content Marketing Mistakes to Avoid

According to Demand Metric, content marketing costs 62 percent less than traditional marketing and generates three times as many leads. That one stat alone makes a compelling case for content marketing, but as with all things in life, if it's worth doing, it's worth doing well. Here are six mistakes to avoid as you either embark on or continue your content marketing efforts.

1. Not creating content consistently.
The quantity versus quality debate rages on in many content marketing circles, but we think both sides win. To be the most successful at content marketing, you need to create high-quality content on a consistent basis. A content calendar is a must for marketing teams looking to create content consistently.

2. Not repurposing content.
If you aren't repurposing content, you aren't getting the most of every eBook you publish, blog post you write or video you create. You're also spending more time than necessary creating content. While not all content is suitable for repurposing because it is or will quickly become outdated, there is a good chance that you have evergreen content that can be transformed from a webinar to a YouTube video or blog posts into a white paper, for example. Get helpful tips for repurposing content in this blog post.

3. Not understanding your audience.
Successful content marketing requires knowing your audience and what they want. After all, if you know who you are talking to, it is much easier to say the right things. That's the idea behind personas, and how they can help your organization achieve content marketing success. In marketing terms, a persona is a fictional person that represents your ideal buyer, and you can see a snapshot example of what they look like below. CRM and web analytics data along with customer surveys and interviews can help you develop personas for your customers, thus helping you create more targeted content.

Robert

Role: Head Chef
Age: 25-35
Location: New York

Susan

Role: Hotel Catering Manager
Age: 30-40
Location: London

Joseph

Role: Coffee Shop Owner
Age: 40-55
Location: Sacramento

4. Not mapping content to the buying cycle.

To connect with and convert customers, content has to speak to where individuals are in the buying cycle and take into consideration the journey from lead to customer. Otherwise, you risk alienating leads and customers by not addressing their needs at that moment in time. For example, a guide for first time homebuyers is more appropriate for someone in the research phase of the buying cycle than someone who just closed on their first home.

5. Not providing variety.

As you produce content for your company, keep in mind that everyone learns and prefers to consume content in different ways. If you're only producing eBooks or blog posts, for example, you're likely missing an opportunity to connect with certain leads and customers. Try diversifying your content mix for better results. Visual content such as videos, infographics or SlideShare presentations can help provide the variety you need to appeal to a wider range of interests and learning styles, and help your content marketing efforts be more successful.

6. Not measuring and reporting.

What's your most popular eBook? How many downloads did your last white paper get? How many views does your latest video have? If you don't know the answer to those questions and others related to content performance, it's hard to know what is working and what isn't for your organization. While success will be measured in different ways for different types of content, have methods in place for gathering and reporting data so you can continuously improve your content marketing strategy.

Text Me: 8 Ways to use SMS with Your Customers

It's no secret that consumers and marketers today love email. But with an open rate of 98 percent, according to Mobile Marketing Watch, SMS messages can give email some serious competition.

SMS, or Short Message Service, utilizes the text messaging functionality of a mobile device and can reach anyone with a phone that has texting capabilities. SMS messages consist of 160 characters with standard messaging rates. Because we're all so connected to our phones today, SMS makes reaching customers quick and easy. Keep in mind, however, that individuals must opt in to receive messaging, otherwise businesses are in violation of privacy guidelines established by the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) and subject to penalties.

So now that you know a little about the what and why of SMS, let's talk about the when. Here are eight times when a text would make a great addition to your marketing mix:

1. Welcome.
Did someone just make their first purchase from your business or sign up to receive your email newsletter? While an email might be your go-to for welcoming them, try a quick text message instead of or in addition to your standard welcome email. Starting your customer relationships off with a text can provide a unique engagement point and pave the way for future SMS communications from your company.

2. Promotions and sales.
Special offers and SMS messages go hand in hand. The immediacy of a text message lends itself well to short-term promotions, and can add the needed urgency necessary to move a recipient to purchase. For sales or promotions that are a bit longer-term, you could use SMS in combination with email or other channels to ensure you reach customers everywhere.

3. Reminders.
Life is hectic, but SMS messages can help you make it a little less so for your audiences. Whether you're reminding a customer of a service appointment at their home or reminding a volunteer of their shift at the annual fundraising gala tomorrow, SMS messages are perfect for helping people remember commitments.

4. Follow up.
The next logical step after a reminder text message before an event is a follow up SMS afterwards. In the follow up SMS message, thank customers for their business and provide a way for them to share their experience. That could be through a reply to your SMS, an email address or a link to a survey.

5. Customer feedback.
A customer feedback SMS message would be much like the follow up text message we just discussed. But remember, you don't have to wait until after someone engages with your business to solicit customer feedback. Use SMS messages to periodically send surveys or other requests for feedback.

6. Tips.

Tap into your organization's expertise with this type of text message. Whether your team's knowledge centers on software or sustainability, you could provide your customers with helpful tips via SMS. These tips can easily be pulled from existing content like blog posts, eBooks or videos, and can be a valuable and quick touchpoint with customers.

7. Enhancing an event.

SMS messaging can play an important role in events. From a basketball game to a user conference, text messages can be used to effectively enhance an attendee's event experience. You could, for example, use SMS to guide attendees to various points of interest on a tradeshow floor or provide a traffic alert after a big sporting event.

8. Reconnecting.

Has it been awhile since you have connected with certain customers? Try using an SMS message to rekindle the relationship. The content of the message will vary according to your business and the specific customers that you hope to connect with, but you could try sending them a link to an interesting piece of content or a promo code for a limited-time sale.

7 Email Checklist: Avoiding the Junk Folder

When a customer experiences bulking (the technical term for when emails are delivered to a junk/spam folder), there are some standard things that the team here at ClickDimensions checks first. If you are having problems with delivery to your recipients' inboxes, see if one or more of the items on our checklist below applies to your emails. And even if you aren't having difficulties with email deliverability, it's worth a read through of this checklist to remember these things for your next campaign.

1. SPF Record

If you have a SPF record set up for the sending domain, it should include the ClickDimensions domain (customers.clickdimensions.com) and it should be free of errors. There are several free sites you can use to check your SPF record: Kitterman, MxToolbox, wiseTools. These sites will check for number of lookups, syntax, redundancies and empty lookups.

If you don't have a SPF record set up for your sending domain, it might not have as big of an impact as a broken SPF record, but we still recommend setting one up as a best practice. Some email providers will flag a sender if there is no SPF record set up.

2. CNAME

An email CNAME is more optional than the SPF record. A CNAME will rebrand the redirect links in your email to coordinate with your sending domain. When the sending domain and the link domains match, it makes the email look professional and polished. Not having a CNAME set up will not affect deliverability for an email. However, a broken CNAME record can create 404 errors and result in your email being flagged as spam. CNAME records require set up in both the ClickDimensions application and the DNS records for your domain.

3. Links

There are several things you need to keep in mind when including links and buttons in your email.

- Make sure all the URLs resolve to a website (and hopefully the correct one). A URL that is broken or that leads to a page that is no longer available can result in a 404 error. In addition to it being a poor customer experience, a 404 error will cause a spam filter to flag your email. Test, test and test again before you send a campaign.
- Don't use short URLs. Short URLs are great for social media where characters or screen space is limited, but they are also a tactic used in phishing emails, which means spam filters will flag your email as spam.
- Most sensitive spam filters (think financial institutions and government agencies) will also flag full URLs since all links in ClickDimensions use a redirect URL to track metrics. For example, if you have www.microsoft.com in the email copy, the redirect URL for this may actually be elink.clickdimensions.com. The discrepancy with URLs can cause some emails to be flagged. We recommend instead to hyperlink a word or phrase for text links.

4. Text Version

One of the easiest things you can do to reduce your spam score (more on that later) is to include a text version of your email. Mailbox providers and spam filters like to see emails that come with a HTML and text version (called Multipart MIME).

5. HTML

Spam filters parse the HTML of an email to determine if there are any elements that look like phishing. If there are errors in the HTML, the filter will be unable to parse it and will most likely flag the email as a result. This isn't a common issue because everyone is testing their emails before they send them (right?), but it's worth noting.

6. Images

There are just a few things to keep in mind about images in emails:

- Always have descriptive alt text for images. Spam filters will check for this, but almost more importantly, a recipient can still understand the message and navigate the email with images turned off.
- Balance images with text. I've seen some really beautiful image-heavy emails, but an email still needs some text to get your message across to those recipients that have images turned off. Also, your spam score may increase slightly if the email is mostly images. Include a few sentences and maybe a text link to ensure all audiences can read your email.

Here is how one of our ClickDimensions newsletters looks with images turned off:

You don't get to see the pretty pictures for each topic, but with background images, alt text and text, you can still understand and navigate the email.

7. Spam Score

The SpamAssassin spam score is a widely used measurement to predict how your email may be received by various mailbox providers and ISPs. You can view the spam score and which rules were triggered by using the test email function in ClickDimensions. A spam score ranges from zero to 10. We like to see spam scores of three or less.

Spam Assassin Report

Is Spam: False

Spam Score: 2.8

Points	Rule Name	Rule Description
00	T_KAM_HTML_FONT_INVALID	BODY: Test for Invalidly Named or Formatted
02	HTML_IMAGE_RATIO_04	BODY: HTML has a low ratio of text to image area
00	HTML_MESSAGE	BODY: HTML included in message
01	HTML_FONT_LOW_CONTRAST	BODY: HTML font color similar or identical to

Mail-tester is a free, user-friendly tool that you can also use to see your SpamAssassin spam score for an email. Mail-tester will give you a custom email address where you send your email and then you can view the report on their website. Tip: the email address can be reused. Create a contact with the Mail-tester email address and include it on the marketing list you use for testing.

7 Reasons Why You Should Nurture Leads

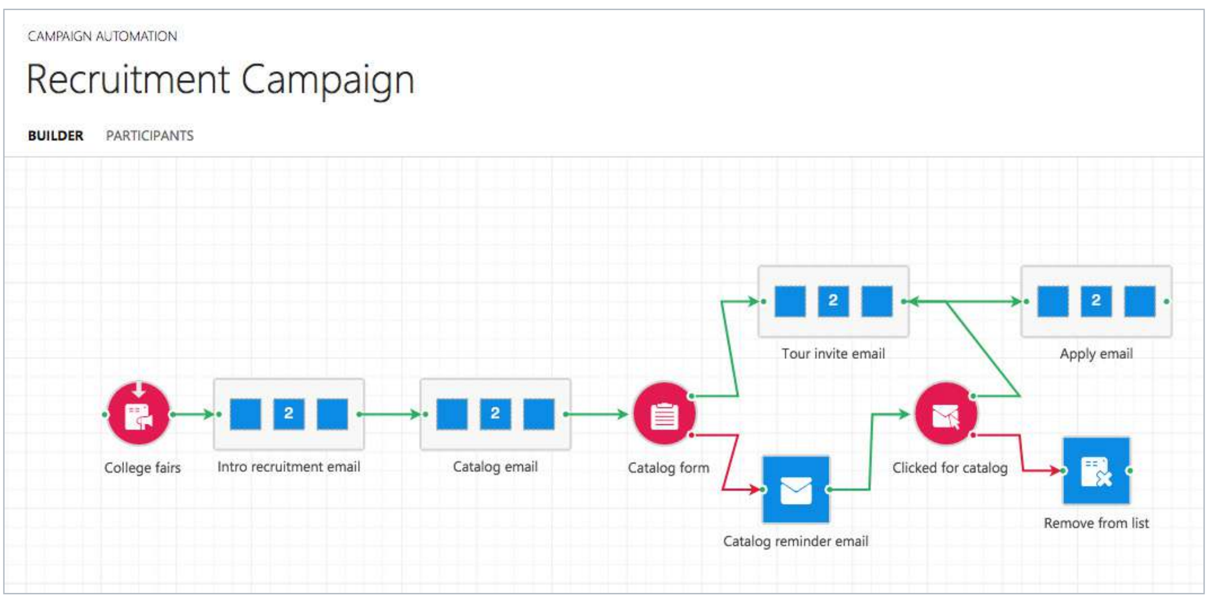
First, the bad news: According to MarketingSherpa, 79 percent of marketing leads never convert to customers. The good news is that there is something you can do about that poor performance. It's lead nurturing, and here are seven reasons why you should get started nurturing leads today:

1. Keep your organization top of mind

A Gleanster Research study reveals that 50 percent of leads are qualified, but not ready to buy. So, what happens to those leads in the meantime? Too often, they fall off a company's radar and, in turn, the company falls off the customer's radar too. Lead nurturing campaigns are an effective way to keep your company top of mind as an individual progresses from prospect to customer.

2. Educate leads about your products and services.

According to Forrester Research, today's buyers are anywhere from two-thirds to 90 percent of the way through the buying process before they reach out to a vendor. What are they doing during that time? Research. Once they have contacted your organization, assist in their research efforts by adding them to a lead nurturing campaign that will educate them about your products and services, or even your industry and broader trends that may impact their purchasing decision. In the example campaign automation below, we see how a college or university might choose to educate prospective students about their institution through informative emails, a catalog download and an invitation to attend a campus tour.



3. Save valuable sales resources.
Sales teams are so focused on the here and now (and rightly so) that they don't often have time to think about or court leads that aren't ready to buy right away. Using lead nurturing campaign automations, you can free up your sales team to focus on the hottest and most immediate deals at hand, while still building a pipeline for the future.

4. Help overcome objections during the buying process.
"It's too expensive." "Now isn't the right time." "I don't really have a need for this product." You have heard all these objections, and many more, before – or at least your sales team has. You can make it easier for sales to close deals when leads are sales-ready by addressing these objections and overcoming them in the content you send within lead nurturing campaigns.

5. Learn more about your leads.
Adding leads to a campaign automation is a great way to find out more about what interests them. As they interact with the messages within a campaign automation, leads will follow specific paths within that automation. This personalizes their experience while also showing you what interests them the most. Do they click on links for certain products or services? Have they downloaded content about a particular topic? This can refine your understanding of who they are, what they want and how best to sell to them.

6. Increase trust in your brand.
Campaign automations help you maintain consistent communication with your prospects, which in turn increases their familiarity with your brand and can help foster trust. You can further build this trust with lead nurturing campaigns that deliver content that speaks to their pain points, answers their questions and demonstrates your organization's position as an industry leader.

7. Bridging the sales and marketing gap.
Nurture programs bring value to both marketing and sales teams, and can help to close the gap between them. Marketing can construct a nurture campaign that includes the exact messaging that they want presented to the prospect, and sales can determine the appropriate campaign automation in which to place a prospect based on their level of buying readiness.

9 Ways to Use Marketing Automation Beyond Email

Marketing automation and email marketing go hand in hand. In fact, they are used in the same sentence so often that they are sometimes thought of as one and the same. But despite seeming so synonymous, the two are actually quite different. While email marketing is an important component of a marketing automation solution, these powerful platforms go well beyond email marketing in terms of features and benefits. Here are nine ways you can use marketing automation beyond email marketing:

1. Subscription management.
Subscription management allows email subscribers to choose which emails they receive from an organization by allowing them to opt in to some types of messages while opting out of receiving others. For example, an individual may choose to receive your new product emails and monthly newsletter, but not your lunch and learn invitations. Without subscription management, email marketing is an all or nothing proposition. Your email recipients can either choose to receive all your organization's messages or none of them. Today, consumers demand choices and personalized experiences, which means they would often rather opt out of all communications than receive messages that they feel don't speak to who they are and what they want from your business.

2. Nurture marketing.
Nurture marketing, also known as drip marketing or campaign automation, is the act of sending a series of customized communications to a prospect or customer over a period of time based on their interactions. While nurture campaigns typically feature email, they can also include direct mail, SMS messaging, phone calls or any other "touch" a company makes with an individual. Automated nurture programs respond to actions taken by those being nurtured, thus creating a more personalized experience. Using various decision points set within a campaign automation, nurture marketing helps you respond to your leads' and customers' actions by sending messages that correspond to those actions. It helps people feel like people rather than just another name in a database.

3. Landing pages and forms.
Landing pages are web pages that stand alone from a company's main website and are designed to accomplish a single objective, typically lead generation. Forms are often a part of landing pages in order to capture lead data when someone, for example, downloads an eBook, registers for a webinar or requests more information about a particular product or service. These two marketing automation features allow you to focus on one topic or piece of content and provide a means for collecting lead data. Landing pages create a cleaner experience than a web page by removing distractions like navigation bars and are highly focused on one call to action, which can greatly increase conversions.

4. Surveys.
Although surveys can be conducted in a variety of ways, online surveys are now the most common choice for companies and organizations seeking data and feedback from their audiences, and the method you will find within a marketing automation solution. Do you want to know what attendees thought about your company's most recent webinar or their impressions of your new ecommerce website? Surveys can provide you with insights in these situations and countless others.

5. Web intelligence.
Web intelligence, also known as web tracking or web analytics, uses a tracking code inserted into web pages to provide insight into how that website is being used and record data about the traffic that accesses it. You can see which pages have been clicked on, how long a user spent on a certain page, how they got to your website and other valuable information. Based on data like site visits, page views, form captures, referring source, duration spent on site and more, you can gain valuable insights into the performance of your marketing campaigns and strategies and adjust them, if needed, accordingly.

6. Event management.
Event integrations allow you to connect online event management systems with marketing automation platforms. These connectors can vary by marketing automation platforms. ClickDimensions, for example, offers connectors to GoToWebinar, WebEx, Eventbrite and Cvent. While many offline marketing channels continue to see declining interest and budgetary allocation from companies, events are bucking that trend. In-person and online events offer brands a powerful way to connect with their audiences and strengthen those relationships, while giving attendees the opportunity to be informed or entertained – or both.

7. SMS messaging.
SMS, or Short Message Service, can reach anyone with a mobile device that has text messaging capabilities. SMS messages can be sent in bulk or individually through some marketing automation platforms. SMS is one of the fastest marketing channels available today. With no spam or other email filters to contend with, messages arrive on mobile devices within a few seconds of when you hit send. And when they arrive, SMS messages enjoy rapid and high open rates, making them an especially good fit for time-sensitive information.

8. Lead scoring.
Lead scoring involves ranking leads on a scale based on how interested a prospect is in a company's products or services, how likely they are to buy and how soon they will be ready to move from prospect to customer. Using a lead scoring model, prospects are assigned points based on the actions they take. So, a lead that downloads an eBook might earn 10 points, while one that visits your company's pricing page earns 25 points. Lead scoring can help sales and marketing teams come together to agree upon the factors that make for a hot lead, and can follow up accordingly – whether with a sales call or by adding the lead to a nurture program.

9. Social marketing.
Social marketing tools within a marketing automation solution give you the ability to tap into the power and popularity of social media through features like social posting, social sharing and social discovery. These tools, though they will vary by platform, can help businesses make social an integrated part of marketing, sales and customer experience initiatives, and also report on those efforts. With nearly one-third of the world using social media regularly, according to eMarketer, social is an essential part of marketing for organizations of all kinds.

10 5 Questions to Ask to Design a Memorable Customer Experience

Great customer experiences don't come pre-packaged and ready to go. They are created by individual organizations to suit their unique business model, philosophy and customers. They also require careful consideration of various business elements and processes, as well as a strategic plan in order to be effective and resonate with customers. If your organization is ready to embark on the journey to create a memorable customer experience, here are five questions to ask internally when designing that experience:

1. What does your brand stand for?

While this may have been defined within your organization many years ago as part of a mission statement or establishing the company's values, now is a great time to revisit what your brand stands for. The broad ideas and purpose behind your brand should guide your efforts to create a memorable customer experience, as those concepts should be present in every customer interaction.

2. Who owns the customer experience?

When it comes to customer experience, it's important to designate ownership. While it's true that everyone within your organization owns and contributes to the customer experience, someone who can have an overarching view of the experience throughout the organization should be appointed. This helps ensure that efforts within individual departments complement one another to form a seamless experience for customers.

3. Do you have a strategy in place?

Just as it is important to map out customer journeys, it is also important to map out your organization's strategy for elevating the customer experience. Since great customer experiences aren't built in a day, this strategy should document which efforts and initiatives will be implemented when. You may choose those that will have the greatest impact, those that are easiest to implement as your first priority or another strategy entirely, depending on what best suits your business.

4. What problems do you hope to address?

Does your organization have a problem with customer churn, bad online reviews or abandoned shopping carts? These are all examples of issues that can be addressed with a memorable customer experience. Take the time to outline your customers' top complaints and what customer-related issues you encounter and find a way to resolve them within the customer experience. For example, the abandoned shopping cart problem could be addressed by sending those customers a reminder email about what they left in their cart or even offering them a discount on those items.

5. What are your customer experience goals?

Every organization wants happy, engaged and loyal customers and brand advocates as a result of their customer experience. To keep your efforts focused and quantify your results, define more specific goals for your customer experience efforts. Do you want to reduce your customer churn rate, for example? Or are you looking to increase your Net Promoter Score? Or is it important to decrease the response time for support tickets? Whatever your goals, put them in writing and make sure everyone within your organization knows not only what they are, but the progress being made towards achieving them.

11 15 Email Subject Line Hacks to Try in Your Email Campaigns

Crafting unique, yet effective, subject lines is a common problem for marketers. For starters, the worst-case scenario – being designated as spam – is most influenced by the subject line, with 69 percent of emails marked as spam based solely on it. And 35 percent of email recipients open emails based on subject line alone.

How can you get prospects and customers to open your email campaigns? Here are 15 email subject line hacks to try with your upcoming campaigns:

1. Start with an action verb.
Make your subject line actionable. Use action verbs to create compelling subject lines. Some examples of action verbs for emails include shop, see, learn, enrich, organize and upgrade.

2. Keep it short and avoid filler.
When drafting your subject line, avoid filler words and keep it short. Try to keep your subject line under 50 characters. Write your subject line and then examine whether you could edit it down and make it more succinct.

3. Experiment with emojis.
This email subject line hack goes against conventional wisdom, which is to avoid weird symbols in your subject line. Emojis have become more popular in the past few years and because of this, many businesses have started using them in their subject lines. While they may not be right for your audience, it's worth giving emojis a try to see if they can boost your open rates.

4. Avoid spam trigger words.
Try to avoid using words and phrases that may be considered spammy, like "free," "extra income," or "million." But remember: context is important. "Free" may be considered spammy in some cases, while in others, it may not affect your email's spam score.

5. Drop the formalities.
When you email a friend or family member, do you capitalize every word in your subject line? More than likely, you don't. An easy hack to test is dropping the formalities (title case) and only capitalize the first word in your subject line. By using standard capitalization instead of title capitalization (every word capitalized), you're creating a more casual and humanized subject line.

6. Add personalization.
Using an email marketing and marketing automation platform like ClickDimensions combined with CRM data, you can add dynamic content to your email subject lines. This makes every email feel personalized to the recipient. Try using their first name, company name (if you're a B2B marketer), city or any other data you have collected in CRM.

7. Create curiosity.
How do you create curiosity? Your subject line should describe the email just enough that it piques interest, but not enough to ruin the "surprise." This isn't as easy as it sounds. One way email marketers create curiosity is by asking a question or using words such as unusual, strange, limited, rare or secret.

8. Create urgency.
Create urgency in your email subject line by setting a clear time limit on when an offer ends. Email marketers will generally use words like hurry, get it now, ends [when?] limited, etc. Note that this technique can work wonders for your open rates, but be cautious and use it sparingly. Using urgency too often can cause fatigue in your subscribers.

9. Lead with a number.
We all like reading numbered lists in articles and blog posts because we know exactly what we're in store for in terms of length and number of tips. Email subject lines are no different. Try leading your email subject with a number and see how it works with your audience.

10. Find a common enemy.
A great subject line formula used by many marketers is to create a common enemy for your readers to unite behind. What person, place, or thing do your readers hate? And how can you use this common enemy to get them to open your emails?

- When [enemy] says no: Here's what you should do
- Stop letting [enemy] get the last word
- Has [enemy] made [thing] obsolete?

11. Use social proof.
Social proof, often in the form of testimonials from customers or influencers, has been proven to be extremely effective in helping market to prospects that have very little knowledge of your product. So how can you add social proof to your subject lines? Here are some examples:

- Why [influencer] uses [your product/service]
- Why more than 2,000 marketers use our app
- How [customer] increased sales by using [your product/service]

12. Rhymes and alliteration.

Rhymes are music to our ears. They grab your attention and spice up a boring subject line. Use rhyming and alliteration in your subject lines to create a subject line that stands out in the inbox.

13. Create shock and awe.

Sometimes subject lines are just downright boring, but it doesn't have to be that way. One subject line formula that many marketers use is to create shock and/or awe. Shock and awe subject lines create curiosity and make your readers want to open your email to learn more. Some examples include:

- 5 ways your competitor's marketing is better than yours
- How Kanye made 3k in 40 minutes
- Productivity is overrated without this tool

14. Invite or announce.

Nobody wants to be left behind. Readers want the newest and latest information in your industry. Use this to your advantage by creating subject lines that "break the news." Use invitations to create interest around your product or service. Invite your audience to answer a question, fill out a survey, provide feedback, try your product, etc.

15. Target an audience.

You have likely heard it before, but you should be segmenting your audience. Every email list has a variety of audiences that are interested in different things. By targeting a segment of your audience, you're increasing the relevancy of your content to your readers. Whether they're marketers or moms, be sure to call out the audience in your subject line to generate interest.

12 6 Tips for Bringing Together Sales and Marketing

It's a tale older than time. Sales says that marketing doesn't bring them good leads, and marketing says sales doesn't follow up on the leads they get from marketing. But it doesn't have to be this way. When these two teams come together, they are more successful individually and entire organizations benefit. According to MarketingProfs, organizations with tightly-aligned sales and marketing had 36 percent higher customer retention rates and achieved 38% higher sales win rates.

So how can you achieve sales and marketing alignment in your organization? Here are six tips:

1. Get leadership buy in.
As with many important initiatives, the first step in bringing sales and marketing together is getting buy in from the C-suite. This executive level buy-in puts weight and importance behind an initiative, which can help persuade others to get on board. Naturally, sales and marketing leadership need to buy in as well, as they will be on the frontlines of the initiative and make or break the alignment efforts.

2. Recognize that sales and marketing have changed.
Sales and marketing teams need to develop a shared understanding that the role of these two departments has changed dramatically in recent years. Access to information has changed the way that consumers interact with businesses, which has in turn changed the way that organizations market and sell to their prospects and customers. According to Forrester, today's buyers are anywhere from two-thirds to 90 percent of the way through the buying process before they reach out to a vendor. Recognizing this shift will help both sales and marketing teams rethink their traditional roles and division of responsibilities within the buying cycle.

3. Agree on definitions.
As we said in the intro of this post, leads can be a big source of contention between sales and marketing. That's often because the two teams disagree on what constitutes a hot lead. To end that debate, sit down and discuss what defines a sales-ready lead for your organization. If you're using ClickDimensions, our lead scoring feature can help. You could, for example, decide that a lead will stay with marketing until they reach a certain score. Also, be sure to define what the lead nurturing process will be as well as how leads will be passed off from marketing to sales.

4. Meet regularly.
When your sales and marketing teams first embark on better aligning efforts, it's common to have more meetings as you establish processes, protocols and definitions. Make sure meetings don't fall by the way side as you get things rolling. Communication is key. While the entire teams don't need to meet that frequently, having a marketing presence at a sales meeting (and vice versa) can help keep everyone on the same page and identify areas that need attention.

5. Collaborate on content.
While a salesperson may not have any interest in writing a 30-page eBook, he or she may have some thoughts on what the topic should be for that piece and others. They can also provide insight into which pieces of content are currently resonating with leads, and more importantly, which ones attract the best leads. Sales reps talk with prospects daily, which means they often have a very good idea about prospect pain points and areas of interest – insights that can help create great content that helps both teams succeed.

6. Utilize technology.
Technology can help with a great number of business initiatives today, including sales and marketing alignment. And we touched on this briefly in this article when talking about lead scoring above. Utilizing Microsoft Dynamics 365 or CRM with the ClickDimensions marketing automation solution is a great way to align your sales and marketing teams. Combining these two powerful technologies gives each team insight into the same data and access to the same tools, allowing for more effective sales and marketing activities.

13 Refreshing Your Content Marketing Strategy

Content marketing is well-known for bringing big benefits to the organizations that employ it as a marketing tactic. Now is a great time to take a second look at your approach to content marketing so you can enjoy greater success with your content efforts. Here are four tips:

1. Audit your content.
You may have a pretty good mental list of your content, but if you haven't already, take the time to document all your content assets. The process of listing all your content out in one place can help you see what topics you have covered well and where gaps may exist. Once you have everything documented, analyze each piece and make note of how successful each content asset has been. How many downloads or views did it get? How many leads did it earn you? How many of those leads converted to customers?

Having all this information in one place will help you more easily and concretely see what's working, what's not and what's missing, so you can create more effective content moving forward. If a piece isn't performing well, consider what can be done to make it more effective, whether that's updated information, a different format or different timing.

2. Create a calendar.
Content calendars are an essential tool for content marketing because they help content creators stay focused and help ensure that your team is checking all your content marketing boxes. Are you producing a good variety of content? Does your content correspond with other happenings in your company, like a new product or service release? Are you creating cohesive campaigns? Do you have your content mapped out for the entire year? These are all questions that a content calendar can help you answer.

If you already have a content calendar in place, keep in mind that it's a good idea to regularly revisit and, if needed, revise your content calendar. Small tweaks to your content planning can have a big impact on results.

A	G	H	I	J	K
W/C	Content Item 1	Content Item 2	Content Item 3	Social Activity 1	Social Activity 2
30-Dec	Topic 1 Blog Post Title			Promote blog post on Facebook, Twitter, Google+	
6-Jan		Topic 2 Whitepaper		Promote whitepaper on Topic 2 LinkedIn groups	
13-Jan			Topic 3 Video	Promote video on YouTube, Google+	
20-Jan					
27-Jan					

3. Focus on distribution.

Similar to the old saying about the tree falling in the forest, if a great piece of content is created, but no one is there to read or watch it, will it make an impact? Today, content of all kinds abounds, often making it harder for people to find your content. Switch up your content strategy by focusing heavily on distribution and try tapping new methods of promotion. For example, if you currently post your eBooks to Facebook, try boosting those posts too.

By maximizing your distribution channels, you not only maximize your reach, but you can also more effectively determine whether a content asset was underperforming due to the topic or format or whether it just wasn't getting the exposure it needed.

4. Tap other voices.

In many organizations, ClickDimensions among them, company blog posts are written by a variety of the company's subject matter experts. If that's not already the case in your company, try diversifying your pool of blog contributors to include several different departments, which will give you new perspectives and expertise.

While blogs lend themselves well to this contributor structure, also think about other types of content where you could add new voices. For example, you might create a video series where you interview people throughout your organization or feature tips from various company experts in an eBook. Also, don't forget to call upon people outside of your organization for things like guest blogging or partnering on content like a survey or white paper.

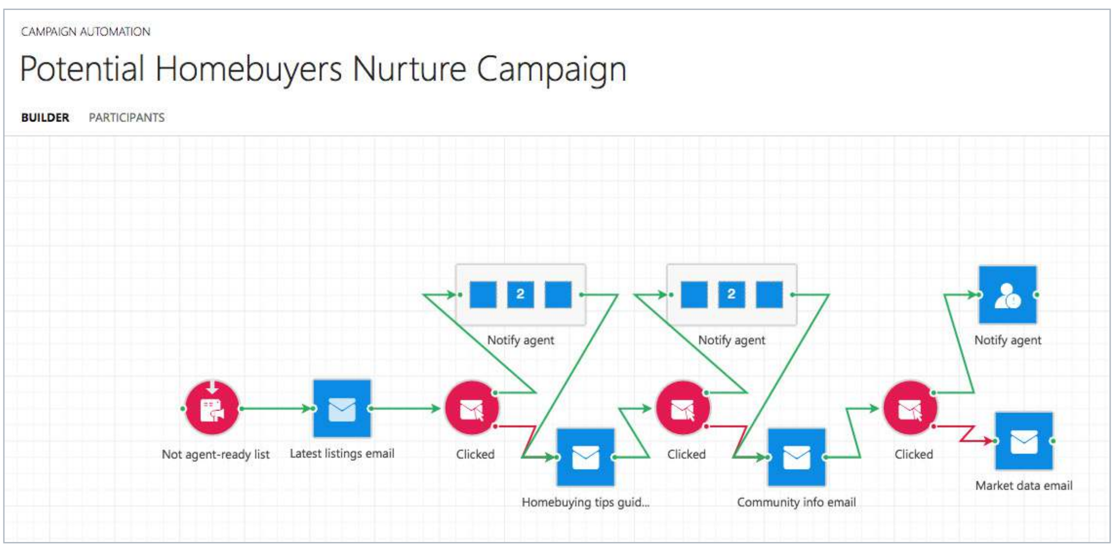
14 6 Things to Keep in Mind When Creating Nurture Campaigns

Nurture marketing, also known as campaign automation or drip marketing, involves sending a series of relevant and timely communications to prospects or customers over time. These automated campaigns respond to the recipients' actions, thus creating a more personalized experience.

If a prospect that you're nurturing within a campaign automation does not click a certain link in an email, for example, you might send them a follow up email. On the other hand, if they do click on that link, you might send them a different email or even notify a salesperson to call the individual.

Nurture campaigns often deliver big benefits to organizations that utilize them. To maximize your campaign automation success, here are six things to keep in mind as you plan and create your campaigns:

1. Content.
Lead nurturing campaigns should contain information that will be of value to your leads or customers. Content isn't one size fits all. Make sure that the content in every nurture email is extremely relevant to the audience and speaks to their needs at that moment in time. In the example ClickDimensions campaign automation below, we see how a real estate brokerage might choose to nurture prospective homebuyers through relevant and informative content like new listings, a homebuying tips guide, market data and more.



2. Timing.
Schedule messages appropriately based on the type of nurture campaign. A campaign for sales-ready leads, for example, could have a shorter timeline than one for inactive leads that touches the prospect only a few times per year. ClickDimensions customers can use date timers and wait timers to ensure that their campaign automations touch the right people at the right time.

3. Consistency.

Nurture programs help to establish trust and credibility. Make sure that messages are consistent with and reinforce the company's brand. While consistency is important, every email should not be identical. Consider using different types of emails in your lead nurturing campaigns – perhaps some HTML emails with graphics that highlight an offer, and some plain text emails that look like personalized, one-on-one emails from someone within your company.

4. Targeting and Personalization.

One of the many benefits of a campaign automation built in ClickDimensions is that messages can be customized based on the interactions a prospect has with the emails. Use this capability to its fullest extent with dynamic content and targeted messaging. Don't just develop a series of generic emails that are sent over and over again; create personalized experiences. In the email example below, we can see how a staffing firm could personalize an email to leads, using their first name, the city where they live and the types of opportunities they are looking for.

5. Permission.

Ensure that nurture emails – and all other emails you send, for that matter – don't violate spam rules. For example, the CAN-SPAM Act in the U.S. and CASL in Canada include specific guidance for giving email recipients the opportunity to opt-in or opt-out of receiving emails.

6. Data.

CRM data can be extremely helpful when creating nurture programs. Statistics such as industry and company size for business-to-business campaigns, or age, gender or location for business-to-consumer, can help tailor the message to a particular audience. Using web tracking data in a system like ClickDimensions, you can gain even more knowledge about prospects. What ads are people clicking on to get to your website? On which pages do they spend the most time? Knowing what content your prospects are most interested in can help to target the message in nurture campaign emails.

15 4 SEO Tips for Dynamics 365 Marketers

Did you know that, according to Forrester, 93 percent of online experiences begin with a search engine? That's why search engine optimization (SEO) is so important for brands today. As the only marketing automation and email marketing solution that's natively embedded in Microsoft Dynamics 365, ClickDimensions is committed to helping Dynamics 365 and CRM users become better marketers, which is why we're pleased to bring you these four tips to keep in mind as you optimize your website:

1. Audience first.
Always put your audience first. Not only will you convert more leads, but catering to your audience, you will also rank higher in search engines. One of Google's recent updates, dubbed "Fred," focused on removing low-value content from the top of search results. This content was written specifically for revenue generation and did not provide value to a searcher – in other words, it didn't put Google's audience first. Be sure to follow Google's Webmaster Guidelines to find out what kind of content is best for websites and what to avoid, like irrelevant keywords and hiding text or links on your pages.

2. Map keywords to your buyer journey.
Do you know what questions your buyers are asking before they make a purchase? Do your keywords match the needs of your audience? Review your marketing personas and think about what questions are being asked in each part of the buyer cycle. What do they search for when they begin their search? What question do the ask once they're looking for a solution? And finally, what do they search for when they've decided on a solution? For example, searches may start as "men's jackets" but they eventually lead to "men's red Columbia winter jacket size L." Use Google's autocomplete feature (as known as Google Suggest) to see what kind of keywords and phrases are being used for your main keyword. From there, you can begin to extrapolate questions your buyers may be asking before choosing your product or service.

3. Be social.
As with content marketing, it's important to provide value to your audience through social media. Social media follower counts do not play a role in ranking or SEO, rather, each post is treated as a new page for your brand. Each tweet or Facebook post is looked at as another link in your SEO link profile. Quantity of social posts is not enough to move the needle, however. Google is interested in social authority and which brands consistently get linked to day-in and day-out.

4. Get back to basics.
Google continually tweaks their algorithm to incorporate new information and puts emphasis on different aspects of your SEO profile, which means sometimes what works today may not work tomorrow. However, there are SEO basics every business should follow, like:

- Include the keyword in your title, H1 and in the text of your website pages
- Include similar keywords in your copy (these are referred to as LSI keywords)
- Include ALT text for all images
- Include both internal and external links on the page
- Create links to your page/content from external websites

The list could go on and on, but what's important to understand is that even if you cross everything off this checklist, it may still take time or additional work before you rank for a particular keyword. There is no magic formula for the number of links you need or the amount of on-page optimization that needs to happen before your page rank improves. Focus on listening to your audience's needs and writing content based around what will answer their questions in every stage of the buying cycle.

16 5 Ideas for Marketing List Segmentation

When it comes to email marketing, success can often be more dependent on your lists than the message itself. After all, how well will your email perform if it doesn't reach your intended recipients? If you have worked hard to maintain clean marketing lists – great! But now what? How do you maximize the potential of your marketing lists so you can increase your email marketing effectiveness? Marketing list segmentation is one of the first tactics that comes to mind.

Segmenting marketing lists is an incredibly powerful way to send your emails to the right people at the right time. List segmentation allows you to match your content with your customers' interests, which will increase interaction with your email and drive conversions. The possibilities for segmenting marketing lists are unlimited. Depending on the information you collect and maintain in your CRM, you can create lists that are specific to a variety of different audiences. To get started, here are five ideas for list segmentation:

1. Geography.
Geographical segmentation is one of the easiest and most effective ways to customize emails to a specific audience. Sort by country, zip code, state/province or other geographic boundaries. Customize your email to cater to the local area. For example, a sporting goods store could advertise snow boards to customers in Colorado while promoting surf boards to buyers in California.

2.Verticals.
Segment your marketing list by type (corporation, government, non-profit), industry or company size to target specific audiences. A software company, for example, could segment by company size to promote a small business software to one list and an enterprise-level solution to another.

3. Demographics.
Demographic data like age, gender, whether an individual has children, household income and more can be a very effective way to better target your email messages to your audiences. For example, a hotel chain could promote kid-friendly packages to one segmented list and couples-only packages to another. Or a financial institution could create a segmented list of individuals nearing retirement age to connect with them regarding retirement financial planning services.

4. Interest.
Using web intelligence, you can segment your list by how interested a contact or lead is in your company. Send one email to contacts that have a high lead score and a different email to customers that have a low score. The low-score email could attempt to reignite interest in your products or services, while the high-score email could entice interested customers with a special offer.

5. Behavior.
Using campaign automation, you can add and remove contacts to marketing lists based on their interactions with your emails. For example, if a recipient does not open one or more of your emails, they can be put on a "cold" list while an individual who clicks on a link in your email could be added to a "warm" marketing list. You could then use these lists for future segmented email marketing initiatives.

17 6 Ways to Foster Customer Loyalty

An astounding 89 percent of consumers, in a recent eConsultancy survey, said that a great customer experience is a key factor in brand loyalty. But that loyalty doesn't happen overnight. Instead, it's up to your organization to build customer loyalty over time and in every interaction. Start fostering customer loyalty now with these six tips:

1. Listen up.
Companies that lead the way in customer experience may be different in their approaches, but they all share one important thing in common: they listen to their customers. Give your customers the opportunity to be heard, and make sure that your organization is listening.

2. Go above and beyond.
A good customer experience minimizes customer frustrations and makes it easy to do business with your company. That experience can be made great by adding elements that surprise and delight customers – a handwritten note as a thank you for a purchase, for example – while setting your business apart.

3. Make it personal.
People like being treated as individuals and value personal relationships. You can deliver and garner customer loyalty by gathering, storing and acting on information about your customers such as birthdays, hometowns, hobbies, past purchases and other unique details that allow you to personalize the experience.

4. Create emotional connections.
Emotions drive purchasing decisions, whether that purchase is software or steaks. Take time to figure out what those emotions are for your customers and how you can genuinely appeal to them in your customer experience. Don't forget to share your organization's own emotions and passion when telling your story too.

5. Mind the details.
Keep in mind that every detail can improve or diminish a customer experience and can impact customer loyalty. For example, let's imagine that your organization has an ecommerce site and strives to have a user-friendly checkout process. If a customer has to make two clicks instead of one to start checking out, that detracts from the customer experience. Everything should be streamlined and seamless.

6. Make it a priority.
To be successful, the customer experience needs to be valued and emphasized from the top down in your organization. Also, keep in mind that it isn't a "fix it and forget it" initiative. Regular conversations should take place in every department regarding how well the customer experience is currently performing and how to continuously improve upon it to foster customer loyalty.

18 5 Types of Online Advertising to Generate Leads

Even with inbound marketing tactics taking center stage in recent years, advertising is still an important part of a comprehensive lead generation strategy, particularly online. Today, online advertising offers a variety of options when it comes to how your ads will look and where they will appear. Try the following types of online advertisements, and their accompanying tips, to generate more leads for your organization.

1. Pay-per-click ads.
Placed at the top of search engine results, pay-per-click (PPC) ads are a great way to get noticed. They are highly targeted to the keywords you select, so PPC ads are often extremely effective at generating high-quality leads. To help your ads stand out from the crowd, be sure to use clear and engaging language and have a compelling offer.

2. Display ads.
More visual than their text-based PPC counterparts, display ads are also highly effective at lead generation because of their targeting abilities. Display ads can be placed on selected websites and come in a wide variety of formats including static images, GIFs, videos, wallpapers, popups and more. Be sure to keep your ads free of clutter and to be creative – interactive ads are a great way to grab attention and earn clicks.

3. Remarketing ads.
Also known as retargeting, remarketing ads are much like display ads in appearance, but with a different process behind how these ads appear where they do. When someone visits your website, a cookie is dropped on that visitor and as they travel around the internet, your ads will appear to them on many different sites they visit. Remarketing is often very cost-effective, so it can be a great way to stretch your ad dollars or get started with online advertising. Try A/B testing your ads to see which ones resonate with your audience and result in conversions.

4. Native ads.

While PPC and display ads are more obviously advertising, native ads seek to blend in with their surroundings. The content for these non-traditional, non-disruptive ads should be helpful, engaging and highly targeted to a specific audience. While different from content marketing, native advertising can be a great way to repurpose and extend the reach of your content marketing efforts.


It's good to keep in mind that if you use this method on web content other than subscription pages, there is a chance that the content will be forwarded. For instance, if you have a form that dynamically populates with the original recipient's name and that recipient forwards the form to someone, the form will still be personalized with the original recipient's name. That is because the FreeMarker in the form only generates when it is originally sent from CRM to the original recipient.

Please note: The custom code in this blog post is provided as-is and we do not provide support on the implementation of this code.

Written by Marissa Clontz, ClickDimensions Marketing Success Manager Team Lead

Posted on 22 February 2017 at 09:00 AM in Dynamic Content, Subscription Management | Permalink | Comments (0)

Reblog (0) Tweet G+1 1 Like Digg This Save to del.icio.us

5. Social media ads.

To stay competitive on social media, many businesses today complement their organic social media efforts with paid initiatives. Ad options vary by social platform, but can encompass everything from static images to auto-play videos. These ads can appear directly in the user's feed or on the side of the page. With social ads, beware of too much repetition. People typically spend lots of time on social media every day, so you want to be sure to switch your ad content frequently to avoid message fatigue.

19 5 Landing Page Best Practices

Websites are essential marketing tools for businesses of all sizes and types today, but with their tremendous benefits comes limitations too. Websites typically contain a great deal of information, which can be distracting to visitors, even when they're directly linked to a specific page on your website.

Enter landing pages. Landing pages are web pages that stand alone from a company's main website and are designed to accomplish a single objective, typically lead generation. Forms are often a part of landing pages in order to capture lead data when someone, for example, downloads an eBook, registers for a webinar or requests more information about a particular product or service.

So how do you create and optimize your landing pages to maximize success and conversions? Here are five tips:

1. Reassure visitors.
People often arrive on landing pages because something in an ad, email or social media post entices them to click on a link, rather than being directed there from your organization's website. Through your landing page verbiage and design, you can help reassure them that they are in the right place, which will help decrease bounces and increase conversions. Landing page headlines are particularly important. Be direct rather than clever. If, for example, you have an ad for an eBook, be sure that your landing page headline includes the title or topic of that eBook. Also, match the design of your ad or email to that of the landing page so it feels familiar to visitors.

2. Have one clear call to action.

Whether it's to register for a webinar, request more information about a product, download content or receive special offers, your call to action (also known as a CTA) is what you want your landing page visitors to do. To maximize conversions, ask only one thing of your visitors and be sure that it's completely clear what that one thing is. Repeat your CTA throughout the landing page too. As seen in the example below, we use the download call to action in three different places on this eBook landing page.

3. Remove clutter.

The landing page example above also illustrates another essential landing page best practice – removing clutter. Attention spans today are notoriously short and by removing options for navigating to other pages, you help keep visitors focused. In our example, we removed all our typical website navigation options and opted for a simple link to the ClickDimensions home page via our logo and our phone number.

4. Be brief.

In another nod to short attention spans, be sure to keep your landing page copy brief. However, not so brief that you don't convey the value of your offer. When creating your copy, work to answer, "What's in it for me?" for your visitors and then look for ways to present that in a brief and digestible fashion. Short paragraphs of a sentence or two and bulleted lists work well on landing pages. Brevity is also important on your form. Don't ask for so much information that your landing page visitors decide that what you're asking for isn't as valuable as your offer.

5. Keep visuals to a minimum.

If you're sensing a minimalist theme when it comes to landing pages, you're on the right track. Simpler is better, and that applies to your visuals too. Aim for a clean design that helps illustrate your offer, whether it's a product demo or an eBook download. You can also use visual cues such as arrows or color to call more attention to your CTA.

20 Common Email HTML Issues

You may encounter some common HTML issues when coding your email templates such as spacing, font changes and HTML limitations. Spacing (such as between paragraphs or lines) does not always stay in place when emails are sent. Some email clients, such as Outlook or Gmail, enforce their own rules or may ignore any rules entirely. One simple fix is to use break tags,
 after each text block. Another solution involves setting the padding, margin styles and line height, then setting the style inline to gain control over spacing. Some email service providers render <p> inconsistently when compared with <td>.

Another issue you may encounter is limitations of font types that can be used in emails. Images are usually blocked automatically by the majority of email clients, but live text is consistently seen by the recipient. Sans Serif and Serif are font families that are somewhat consistent across email platforms. Web safe fonts are Arial, Tahoma, Verdana, Century Gothic, Times New Roman and Georgia. If you select a different font that is not considered a web safe font, then a fallback font may be needed for your email. The fallback font will display (if you selected it) if the template's font is not rendered by the email client. Even so, the email client may choose to use their preprogrammed choice. For example, Outlook 2007/10/13 will display Times New Roman as a fallback font.

Also, it's important to remember that HTML for use in an email is not the same as HTML used in a web browser. Emails can support static images, HTML and nested tables with a template width of 600px. They can also support simple inline CSS with web safe fonts as previously discussed. GIFs can be incorporated too. Embedded videos, iFrames and JavaScript should not be used in email templates.

21 12 Types of Content to Post on Social Media

To be effective on social media, your organization needs content – and lots of it. On social media, people want to be entertained or educated, or both. What that looks like in terms of the specific content you post will depend upon your business, industry and your brand's personality, but here are a dozen ideas to inspire you:

1. Blog posts.
No matter which side of the "are blogs social media?" debate you fall on, it's a good idea to share your blog posts on your social networks. You don't have to limit yourself to new posts either. Sharing older, but popular posts can help you get more mileage out of existing content.

2. eBooks.
eBooks and guides are a no-brainer for posting on social. Content like this tends to be gated behind a form, so posting it on social can help you generate leads. It's also a great way to showcase your company's thought leadership.

3.Case studies or testimonials.
Show just how much your customers love your company by sharing testimonials on your social media pages. These can either be more traditional printed case studies or even just a customer quote turned into an image. Testimonial videos are especially effective at communicating customer stories.

4. A look behind the scenes.
Whether it's a glimpse into your product or people, behind-the-scenes photos and videos make for effective social media content. They help humanize your business and can help customers feel more connected with your brand.

5. Curated content.
To be successful, social media requires a significant amount of content. The good news is that you don't have to create all this content yourself. Post relevant news stories or blog articles and encourage engagement by inviting followers to share their thoughts in the comments.

6. Tips.
Tips often work well on social because they play into the need to be brief. They also allow you to easily create visual content, with a tip stylized into an image, and are perfect for repurposing snippets from blog posts, eBooks and other long-form content.

7. Quotes.
Much like tips, quotes work well because they are quick, shareable and can be placed on an image to drive visual interest. While famous quotes are the more popular way to go, you could also opt to share insights from your company leadership about your business or industry.

8. Explainer videos.

Explainer videos show your audience how to do something, often in a more effective or efficient way. These videos allow individuals to see what they are trying to accomplish in action, rather than just reading along.

9. Events.

Is your company hosting a webinar or attending the next big industry tradeshow? Share the news on social. Photos from in-person events are particularly effective at driving engagement, both online and off.

10. Infographics.

Infographics allow you to take complex concepts and present them in an easy-to-understand and eye-catching visual form. While the standard format for an infographic is a large still image, they can also be put into motion and turned into a video infographic to add more variety to your social content.

11. Holiday greetings.

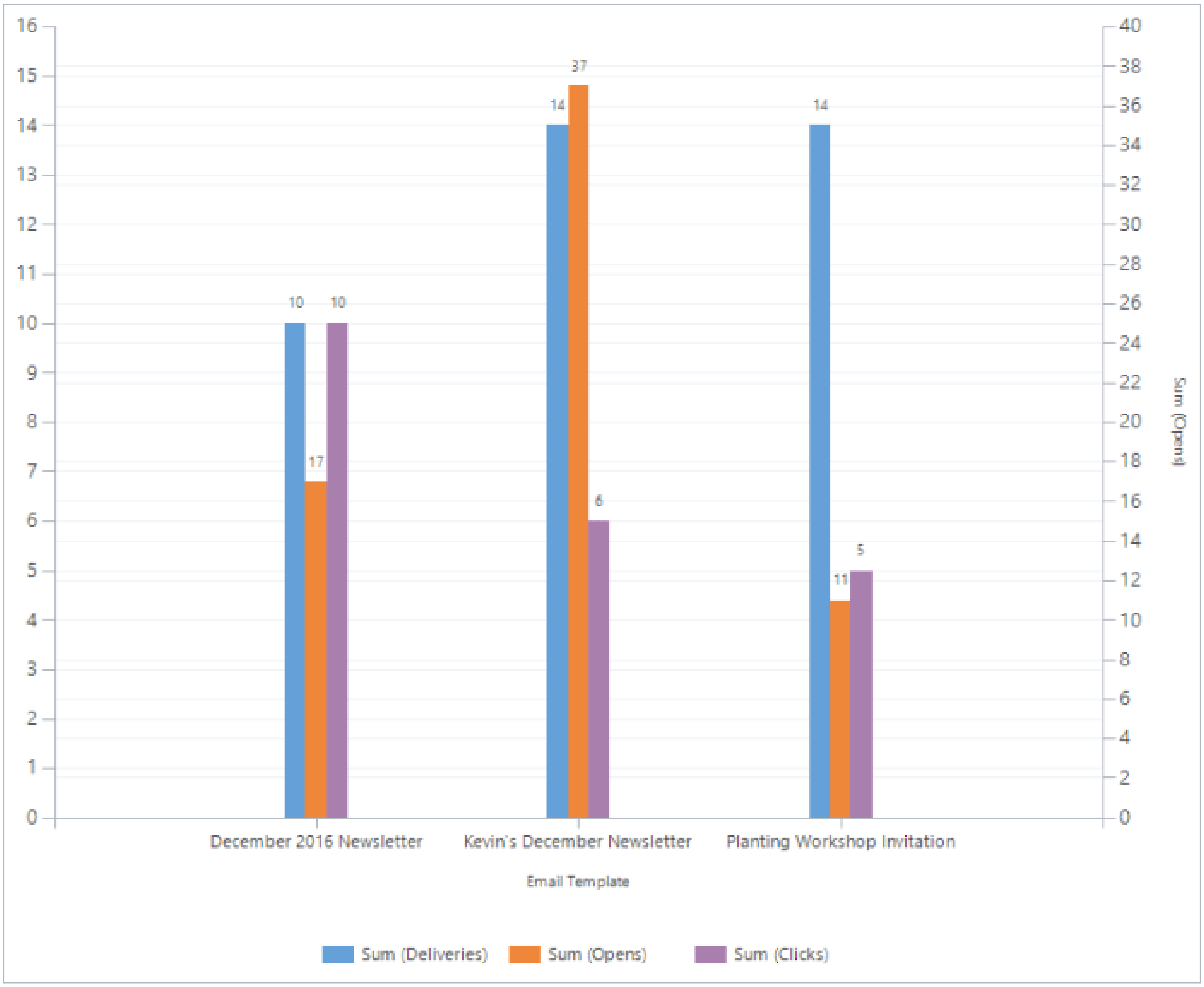
If you have spent any amount of time on social media, you know that every day is a holiday. From Star Wars Day to National Grilled Cheese Sandwich Day to International Cat Day, there's a holiday for nearly everything. In addition to more traditional and mainstream holidays, find ways to connect these celebrations to your business to create fun and timely content.

12. Company and product announcements.

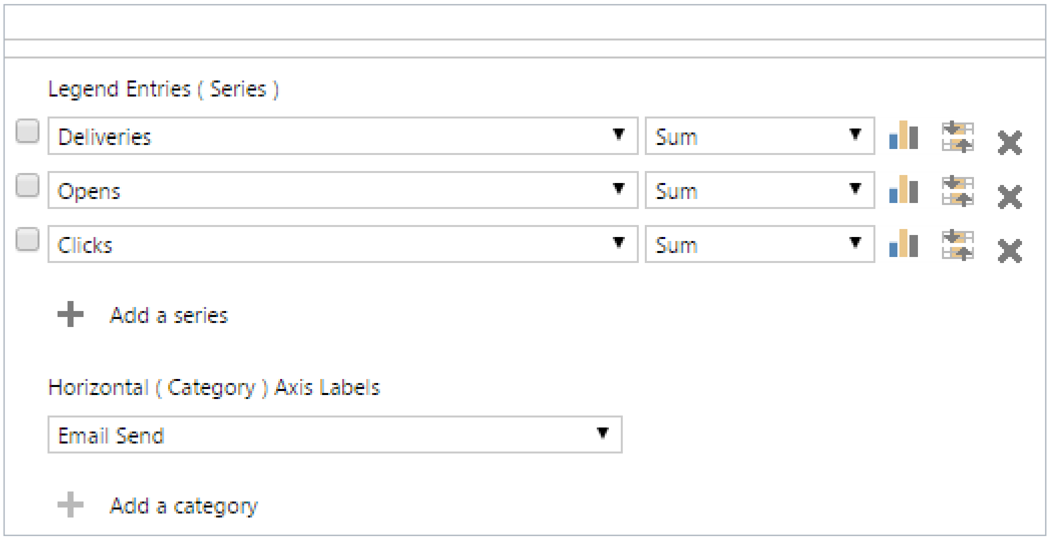
Company and product announcements have a place on social, but be sure to use this type of content sparingly so as not to seem overly promotional. Share new product developments to generate excitement and demand, or post news like company award wins to show how your business is exceling or growing.

22 Modifying Multi-Series CRM Charts to Use a Single Axis

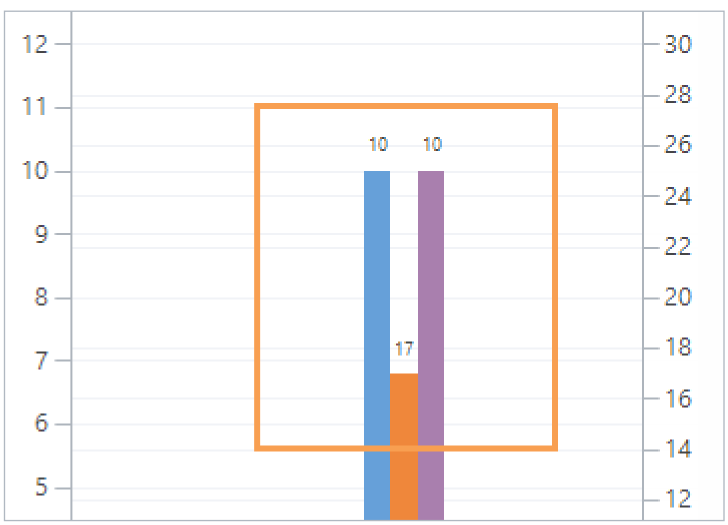
Microsoft Dynamics 365/CRM gives you the ability to create multi-series charts. This means that you can graph two or more fields side by side so you can compare their values visually. One example of this using ClickDimensions data would be a comparison of delivery, total open and total click email event counts grouped by email send. Using this example, we would have one category (horizontal) axis: Email Send, and two series (vertical) axis: Deliveries and Opens. When the chart is previewed, the sum of each email event count for each email send will be displayed side by side, allowing you to see how your email sends performed in comparison to one another.



In the chart designer for our email send comparison chart, we have defined the Deliveries, Opens and Clicks fields as Legend Entries (Series), and the email send as the Horizontal (Category) Axis.

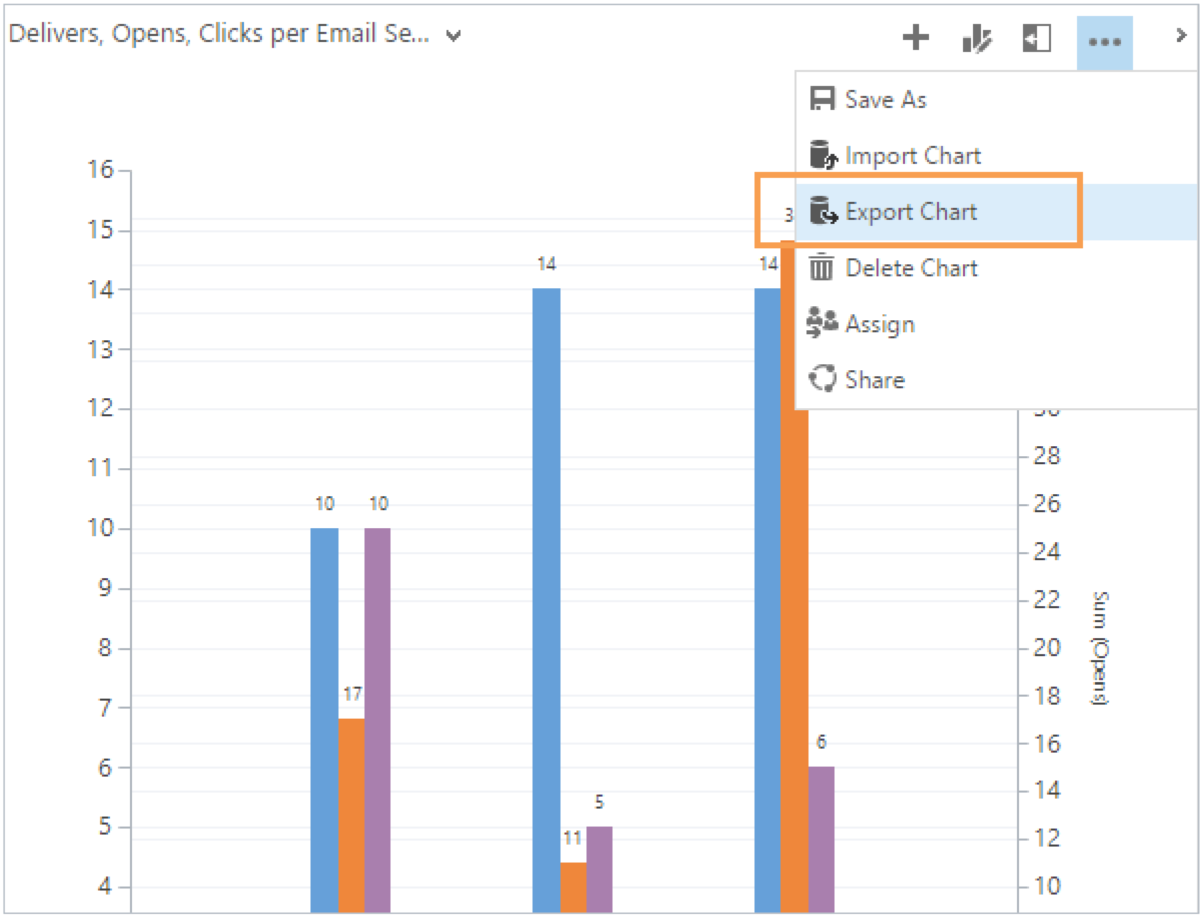


The problem we encounter here is that CRM automatically applies different scales for the different series on either side of the graph. In this scenario, the data is still accurate, but the chart is very misleading as a visual aid because the different scales mean that the corresponding bars' heights do not accurately correlate to one another. For example, in the screenshot below, we can see that there are 17 total opens, 10 total clicks and 10 deliveries, but the bar representing the open count is only half as tall as the bars representing the clicks and deliveries, despite representing a larger value.



There is no way to resolve this issue within the CRM chart designer, but we can fix it by exporting the chart and modifying its XML.

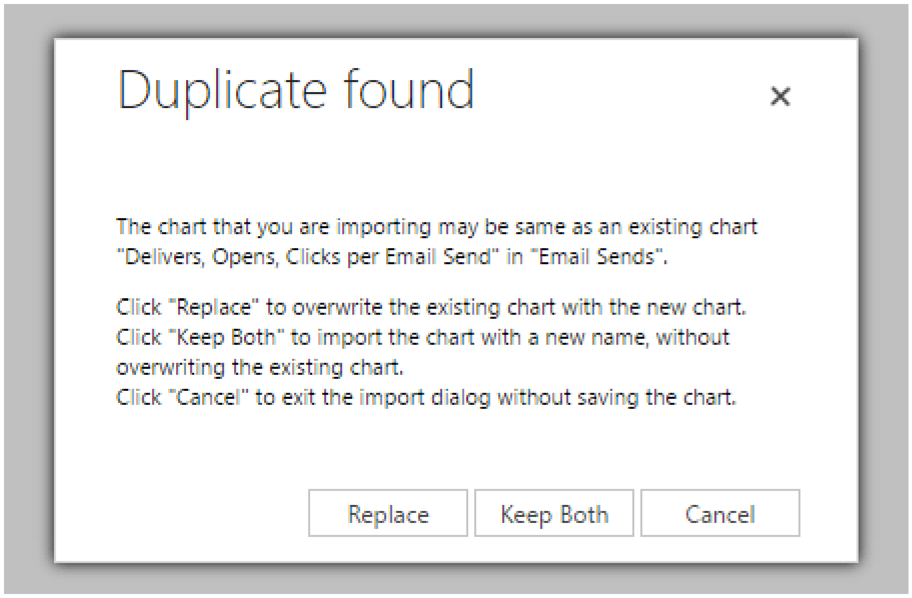
To export personal charts, open the chart pane in CRM and select the chart you want to modify. Click the More Commands button in the chart pane, then click the Export Chart button. NOTE: To re-import the chart, use the Import Chart button above the Export Chart button.



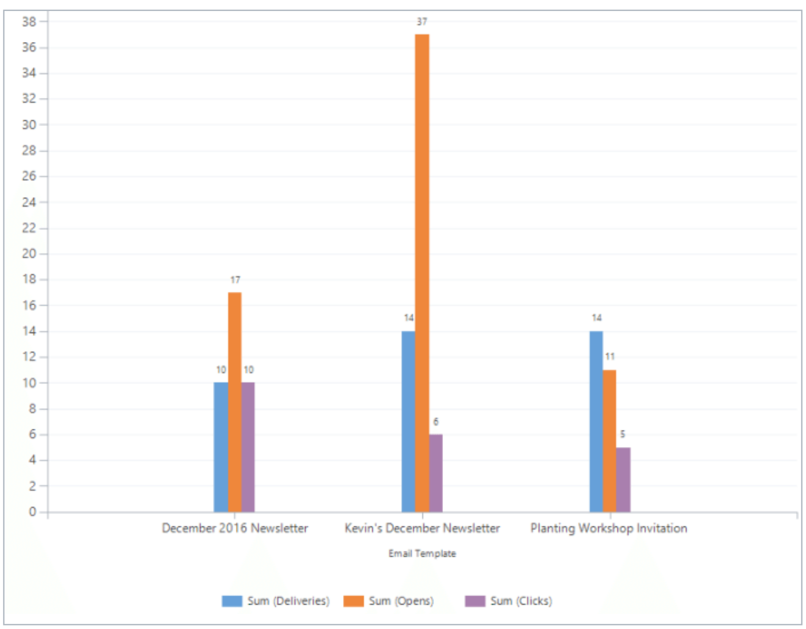
When you export the chart, an XML file will be downloaded. To modify the file, open it in a compatible program, such as Notepad. Within the <presentationdescription> tag in the XML, you will see a <series> tag containing another <series> tag for each of your series defined in the chart. On the second series, you will see an attribute called YAxisType. Remove this attribute so that it looks like the <series> tag above it.

```
  <presentationdescription>
    <Chart Palette="None" PaletteCustomColors="91,151,213;
237,125,49; 160,116,166; 255,192,0; 68,114,196; 112,173,71;
37,94,145; 158,72,14; 117,55,125; 153,115,0; 38,68,120;
67,104,43; 124,175,221; 241,151,90; 186,144,192; 255,205,51;
105,142,208; 140,193,104; 50,125,194; 210,96,18; 150,83,159;
204,154,0; 51,90,161; 90,138,57;">
      <Series>
        <Series ChartType="Column" IsValueShownAsLabel="True"
Font="{0}, 9.5px" LabelForeColor="59, 59, 59"
CustomProperties="PointWidth=0.75, MaxPixelPointWidth=40" />
        <Series ChartType="Column" IsValueShownAsLabel="True"
Font="{0}, 9.5px" LabelForeColor="59, 59, 59"
CustomProperties="PointWidth=0.75, MaxPixelPointWidth=40"
YAxisType="Secondary" />
        <Series ChartType="Column" IsValueShownAsLabel="True"
Font="{0}, 9.5px" LabelForeColor="59, 59, 59"
CustomProperties="PointWidth=0.75, MaxPixelPointWidth=40" />
      </Series>
```

Save the XML file, and then re-import the file using the previously mentioned Import Chart button in the chart pane's More Commands list. Upload the XML file, and then click Next. You will be prompted to replace the existing chart or to keep both. Choose Replace if you only want to keep the updated chart.



The chart will be updated, and you can now check the chart again to view the changes. The chart now only uses one series for the vertical axis. This means that all the compared values to be displayed use the same scale, which makes the chart much more useful as a visual representation of the data.



Note that modifying the XML did not change any of the chart's previous functionality, so you will still be able to drill down into individual bars to examine the relevant data.

23 4 Essential Tips for a Successful Webinar

From marketing to training to customer engagement, webinars allow us to accomplish many different business goals. But how do we ensure that we are getting the most out of each event and achieving webinar success? Here are four of our essential tips:

1. Select a compelling topic.
What questions do your customers or prospects often ask? How can your potential webinar attendees do something better or more efficiently? What's new in your business or industry? Answering those questions can often help you brainstorm a compelling topic for your next webinar. Once you have a topic selected, make sure to tailor it to your target audience. If your company sells to small business owners, for example, think about whether you would like to target new or seasoned small business owners, or a combination of the two. This can help you further refine your topic and make it more appealing to your selected audience.

2. Choose the right day and time.
Over the years, there have been numerous studies and surveys on the best day to hold a webinar. While they vary somewhat in their specific findings, they do all tend to agree that Mondays and Fridays are the worst days for webinars. Many of those studies also agree that webinars on Wednesdays and Thursdays have the highest attendance rates. While these days of the week may also work best for your webinar, be sure to consider your audience and industry and whether a different day might be a better choice. Picking a time of day may be trickier than deciding a day of the week, depending on where your audience is located. For a local audience, give or take a time zone or two, 11 am is often an ideal time for many attendees. If you have more of a global audience, consider offering your webinar multiple times and different times of the day to accommodate people across a broader range of time zones.

3. Spread the word.
How successful can a webinar really be if no one attends? That's why it's important to promote your webinar in as many ways as makes sense for your audience. Think about their relationship to your company and their preferred methods of communication, and then plan your promotion strategy from there. If you already have your desired attendees' information in CRM, email marketing is an ideal way to garner webinar registrations. You could also include webinar invitations as part of a thought leadership, lead nurturing or other campaign automation. If you want to use a webinar to generate leads, social media posts or online advertising would be perfect for promoting your event. To maximize the effectiveness of your webinar promotions, combine these communication methods and be creative – you could, for example, create a short video as a trailer of sorts for the webinar.

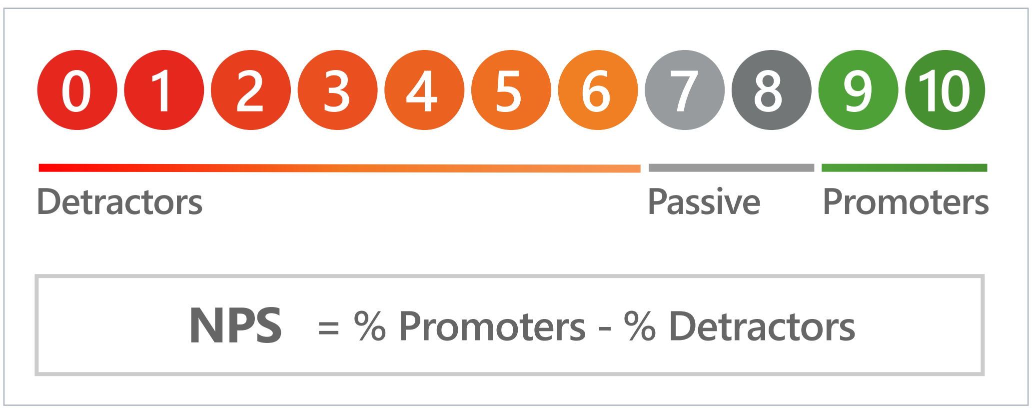
4. Utilize technology.
Event technology can help increase event attendance by 20 percent and decrease costs by 30 percent, according to Frost & Sullivan. Technology can also help you better track attendance and registrations. ClickDimensions' integrations with WebEx and GoToWebinar bring registration and attendee information directly into Microsoft Dynamics 365. This allows you to easily track, all in one place, which leads or contacts are registering for or attending your events for overall greater event insights and success.

24 Effective Customer Experiences: How to Measure Success

Is your organization talking about customer experience? If not, it should be. According to Gartner, 64 percent of people now think that customer experience is more important than price in their choice of brand.

To ensure that their customer experiences are as memorable and effective as they were designed to be, organizations look to quantify how customers perceive these experiences. Here is a look at some common ways customer experience is measured in organizations of all kinds.

Net Promoter Score (NPS) is probably the most well-known customer experience metric. The Net Promoter Score is calculated based on customer responses to one question: “How likely is it that you would recommend [name of brand] to a friend or colleague?” NPS is used to measure customer loyalty and, since it is so widely used, it can also help organizations benchmark against others. One challenge with using the NPS is that, while it can convey customer sentiment about your organization, it cannot tell you reasons behind that sentiment or how to improve it.



Net Promoter Score respondents are considered promoters (ranking 9-10), passives (ranking 7-8) or detractors (ranking 0-6). The NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters. NPS can range anywhere from -100 to 100, and actual average scores vary widely by industry.

To get to the reasons behind why customers feel the way that they do, many organizations use satisfaction as a vital customer experience metric. There are several different ways to measure satisfaction, but one commonly-used approach is to ask customers how satisfied they were with a given transaction or interaction by asking them to rate that particular experience and provide feedback on why they gave the rating they did.

This approach works well for keeping a regular pulse on customer sentiment, but may not work well in industries where purchases and customer interactions happen less frequently. In cases like these, a lengthier semi-annual or annual customer satisfaction survey would be a more effective approach.

While many customer experience insights are gained from customers themselves, organizations can also use internal metrics to gauge customer experience effectiveness. Response time is one such metric. In a restaurant, for example, one measure of response time would be the amount of time it takes for food to be delivered to patrons after they have placed their order. Organizations can also look at the number of referrals they receive from customers and the revenue earned from those referrals as a measurement of customer experience effectiveness. Customer churn rate, which is the percentage of customers who don't make a repeat purchase or cancel a subscription service, can provide additional insight into the success of your customer experience.

25 8 Email Marketing Mistakes to Avoid

Mistakes happen. To err is human. It was an honest mistake. While all these phrases about mistakes are true, when it comes to email marketing, we think it's best to try to avoid as many goofs and flubs as possible. Here are eight common email marketing mistakes and how to avoid them:

1. Not minding your subject line.
Subject lines can make or break an email campaign. No matter how valuable or important the content of an email, if your subject line fails to hook the recipient at a glance, your open rate – and therefore the success of your entire campaign – suffers. Be sure that your subject line accurately conveys what's in the body of the email and that it inspires recipients to open the message too. Also, proofread your subject several times to ensure that a typo doesn't ruin your email's first impression.

2. Overlooking the preheader.
There are three things that recipients will see when your email hits their inbox: the sender name, the subject and the preheader – the line of teaser text that appears below an email's subject. The subject line is what grabs your readers' attention, but as an extension of your subject line, the preheader can really help you increase opens and clicks. Don't waste this opportunity to supplement your subject line and encourage opens.

3. Unclear sender name and email.
We all gravitate towards emails sent by people we know. Make sure that the values you use for your "From" name and email clearly indicate who you are to avoid confusing your recipients or causing them to delete your message. If they do not recognize who the email is from, they are less likely to interact with it, thus damaging your open and click rates.

4. Not using backup values for dynamic content.
Include a default value if you incorporate dynamic content into your emails. This will ensure that some content will be displayed even if the data you are trying to reference on your recipient's record is not available. When you add dynamic text to your template, it will look something like this: ${Recipient.contact.firstname[0]!""}. Include a default value with your dynamic text in order to display that text if the data you are referencing is not available, for example ${Recipient.contact.firstname[0]!"Customer"}.

5. Not testing.
Be sure to thoroughly test emails before you send them. It is always better to discover spelling errors before you send an email to a long list of recipients. Send it to yourself and review it thoroughly before you send, and ask a colleague or two to review your work. Also, be aware of what your email will look like on different devices.

6. Ignoring segmentation.

The days of so-called “batch and blast” email marketing are behind us, so be sure to not overlook the power of list segmentation. Segmenting marketing lists is an incredibly powerful way to send your emails to the right people at the right time. List segmentation allows you to match your content with your customers’ interests, which will increase interaction with your email and drive conversions.

7. Not optimizing for mobile.

Mobile opens have now surpassed desktop opens for emails. So it’s important to format your email so that it appears correctly on different devices. In addition to a mobile-responsive email, the links used in an email should also be optimized for mobile. Many people will simply leave your site if they are redirected to pages that do not work well on their screen. You need to ensure that your email recipients have the best possible viewing experience regardless of the device they use.

8. Not practicing permission-based marketing.

It may be last on this list, but it’s first in importance. In email marketing, permission-based marketing means that your recipients have opted in to receive your emails. In your marketing lists, include only email addresses that have been freely given for the purpose of receiving marketing communications. In addition to helping you avoid running afoul of laws and regulations governing email marketing, permission-based marketing can help you increase your delivery, open and click rates. If someone has taken the initiative to give you their email address because they are interested in what your business offers, they are more likely to be welcoming and responsive to the messages you send.

26 Mobile Marketing: 3 Key Considerations

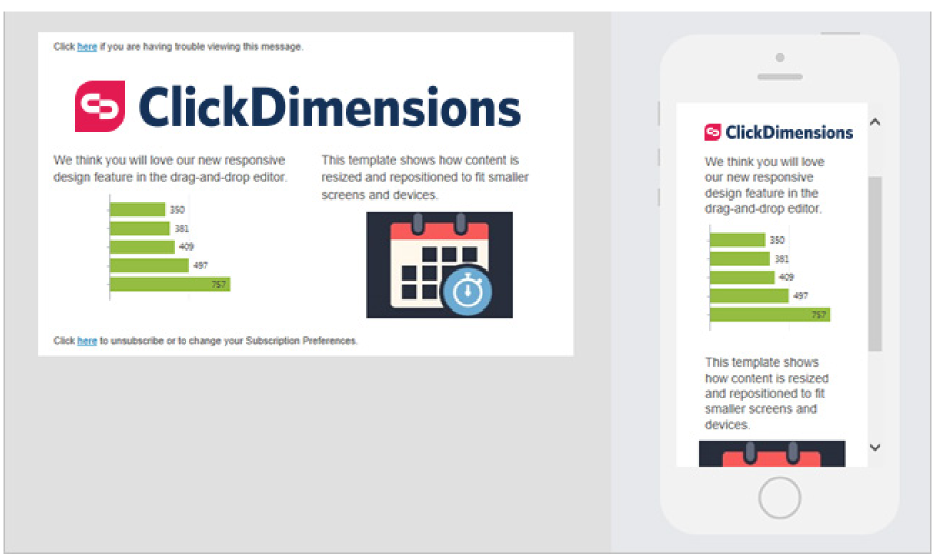
Smartphone and tablet owners spend nearly three hours on average staring at these devices every day, according to digital analytics firm Flurry. And research from Ericsson indicates that by 2020, there will be 6.1 billion smartphone users around the globe. With stats like these, marketers have been standing up and taking notice of the power of mobile devices. If you're among that group of marketers, here are three important factors to consider as you engage in mobile marketing:

1. Usability.
Mobile has had a huge impact on the way people obtain and communicate information. Smartphones and tablets make our daily lives easier and often blend seamlessly with our activities throughout the day. Usability is important when it comes to how a website or app is programmed to function. If your app is too technical or your responsive website design doesn't flow well, people lose interest and go elsewhere.

Factors that contribute to overall usability include:

1. Easy-to-read content
2. Simplified navigation
3. Touch screen elements
4. Readability
5. Performance of the program

Keep in mind that responsive design for websites means more than shifting where things appear on a screen. Make sure your website is easy to navigate, call-to-action buttons are large and legible, and the overall look and feel of the website encourages your users to linger on the site longer, regardless of how small their screen is.



Apps, which are already designed to make a person's life easier, should place usability as one of the highest priorities. An app is completely built for mobile from the start. It is beneficial to conduct usability testing during the alpha and beta stages to prevent people from discovering issues after the app has launched.

2. Timing.

You can't grab a customer or prospect's interest if they're asleep or too busy at work. Your customers drive your business, so if your buyers are more likely to online shop over their lunch break, but you're sending daily deals emails at 7:00 pm, you won't maximize traffic to your site.

If you're using push marketing tactics like SMS, or text messaging, timing is everything. Because the nature of these messages is immediate delivery, improper timing could turn off some customers. It's off-putting to receive a text at 3:00 am because a company did not take into account that the user is in a different time zone.

3. Privacy.

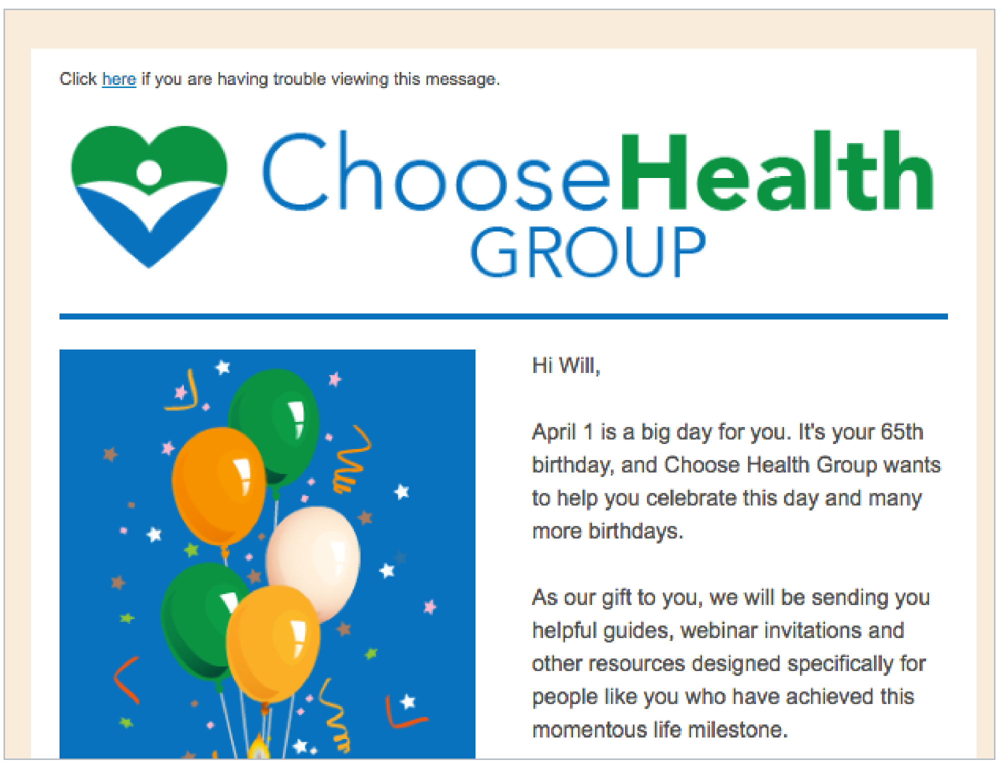
When your phone is a part of your daily life, privacy becomes increasingly more important. Phones house sensitive data, and it's vital that people feel like this data is secure. The Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) has established a set of mobile guidelines that businesses need to follow to maintain proper privacy policies without penalization. The guidelines highlight how businesses should obtain and send information, maintain privacy and security, and the preferred language and principles for mobile development. It's important for people to know that companies are respectful of sensitive information and comply with industry regulations. Successful privacy policies help build consumer trust.

27 5 Ways to Humanize Your Marketing

Here's something we all have in common and we all know a lot about: being human. Despite knowing so much about it, when it comes to marketing, we sometimes can lose sight of the human element. We talk of marketing to businesses and consumers, leads and customers. But really, when it comes down to it, we're all marketing to people, and people like to be spoken to as such. Humanize your marketing with these 5 tips:

1. Segment.
You can't address people more as individuals until you understand who they are. Use list segmentation to your advantage here. Think about the characteristics of the people you want to contact and how you might want to tailor your messaging based on those characteristics to address the unique problems and challenges these individuals face. Are there both males and females on the list? Where do they live? What is their job title? What industry do they work in? When it comes to segmenting your marketing lists, you are only limited by the data you have in Dynamics 365/CRM.

2. Personalize.
Research shows that personalization improves opens, click-through rates and conversions. It's a great way to show your audiences that you know who they are and you want to treat them as more than just another name in your database. As with segmentation, your possibilities for personalization are only limited by the data you have available in CRM.



3. Be helpful.

Think about your email inbox, personal or professional, for a moment. It's packed with unread messages and you only have a short time to get through them before moving on to your next task. How do you decide what to open and what to delete? While messages from your boss or your sister are likely a given for being opened, the decision for others relies heavily on how helpful they are to the recipient. Whether it's saving money on tickets to their favorite team's next big game or being educated about a trend impacting their industry, what problem does a message solve? For all your company's messaging and the content you create, shift your thinking away from your company and more to your audience. How can you address their needs rather than showcasing your product or service's features?

4. Simplify your messaging.

Every industry has its own jargon, and often, people working in that industry just love to use it. But that doesn't mean that your customers and prospects love it too. Work to eliminate unnecessary jargon from all your communications, and make the rest of your messaging more approachable too. Even if your brand's style leans more towards professional than casual, you can still make your messaging more conversational. Also, re-read everything you write with an editor's eye, and ask yourself what can be cut to make your message more concise and clear. While removing a few words from a sentence or paragraph might seem small, it can have a big impact on readability and connecting with your audience.

5. Engage in conversations.

As much as we like being spoken to like people, we also like knowing that people – not brands – are the ones speaking to us. And perhaps more importantly, that the people behind those brands are actively engaging in conversation rather than the communication being a one-way street. Fortunately, social media makes this easier than ever. Take the time to find out what people are saying about your company or talking about within your industry on social media, and join in the conversation. This two-way communication, no matter how simple, speaks volumes about your company's willingness to engage with prospects, customers and other audiences as people.

28 Tips for Creating Lead Nurturing Content

Relatively speaking, getting leads into your CRM is the easy part. Converting them into customers can be a different story entirely. According to MarketingSherpa, 79 percent of marketing leads never convert to sales, and lack of lead nurturing is the common cause for this poor performance. Using ClickDimensions' campaign automation tool, you can easily create an automated lead nurturing campaign that sends a series of relevant and timely messages to your prospects over time. But what should you send in those messages? Content isn't one size fits all, so the content you send should suit the individual receiving it and where he or she is in the buying cycle. Leads will fall into one of three phases within the buying cycle: awareness, research or decision.

In the awareness stage, customers are just realizing that they have a business need. They are unsure of which products or services will help them solve their problems. It is important in this phase to make prospects aware of your brand and stay top-of-mind so that when they decide to move forward with a purchase, your company is on their radar.

The research stage of the buying cycle is where people spend most of their time. This is the phase where consumers are shopping around. They are learning what is necessary to solve their problem and investigating potential solutions. Educational content is essential in this phase to move individuals to the next phase in the buying cycle.

In the third stage of the buying cycle, known as the evaluation stage, the rubber meets the road. Prospects have narrowed down their decision to a few options, and they are evaluating possible vendors. At this point, it is important to build credibility and trust with the customer and overcome any objections – why should they go with your company over the competition?

While these three phases vary in terms of the kinds of content that are appropriate for nurturing campaigns, the content that you create for leads in these phases should share a few common traits:

1. Creating value.
Take a quality over quantity approach and create lead nurturing campaign automations that contain information that will be of value to your leads. Make sure that the content in every nurturing email is extremely relevant to the audience and speaks to their needs at that moment in time.

2. Boosting your brand.
Leads are just getting to know your brand, so make sure that the impression you leave on them is a good one. The content you send in any lead nurturing campaign should increase brand awareness while also establishing your organization as a thought leader in your industry. This is your chance to establish that your company aims to be helpful to its customers and meet their needs in every interaction.

3. Building trust. Sending prospects high-quality, relevant content is a great way to build their trust and position your organization more as an advisor and less as one that is only out to make a sale. This trust is not only effective at moving leads through the buying cycle, it also builds the foundation for customer loyalty in the future.

29 7 Steps to Make the Most out of Your Split Tests

Split tests, also known as A/B testing, simply test one variable in an email send against another variable. An example of this would be if you wanted to see whether an email with a green Click Here button receives more clicks than an email with a blue Click Here button.

Try these helpful tips for getting the most out of your next email split test:

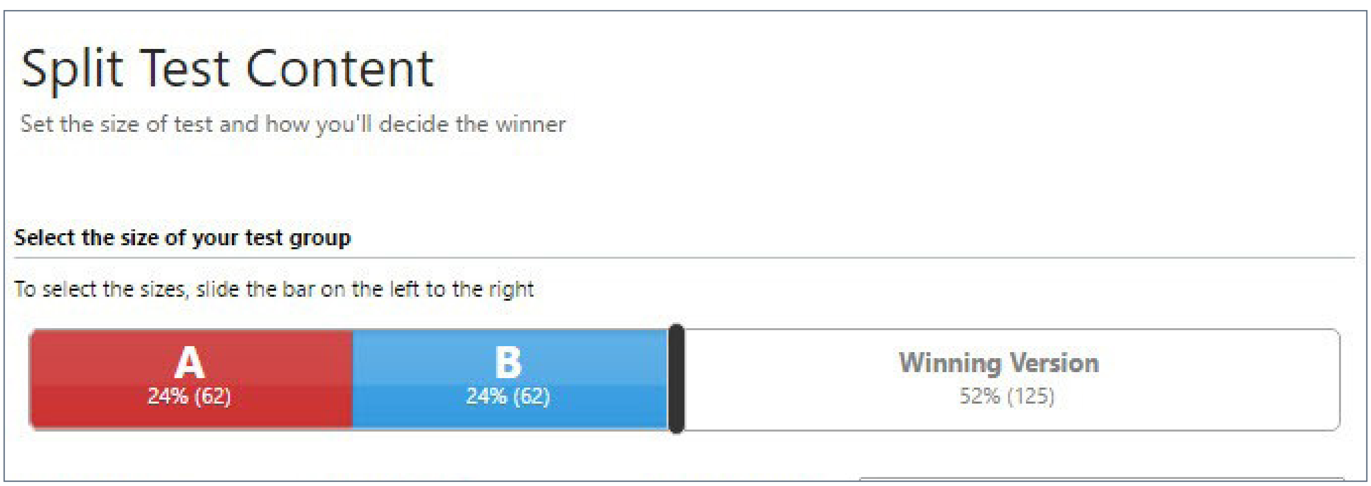
1. Change only one variable.
To run a split test, you need to create two different versions of an email send. You will send out these two emails to two separate groups of recipients, and analyze which email send performs better.

As you begin testing your email sends, you may find that there are many variables you want to test. However, we recommend that you choose only one of these variables per split test so you can be sure which of the variables causes a change in performance.

Keep in mind that simple things such as the image you choose, your subject line, sender name or the color of your Click Here button can lead to big changes in your email's performance.

2. Determine your sample size.
If you are split testing an email, you will probably want to send the two versions of your test to a smaller sub-section of your recipient list. Once the split test has finished running, you can pick a winner manually or have the ClickDimensions split test wizard choose the winner for you based on clicks or opens, and then send the winning version to the remainder of your list.

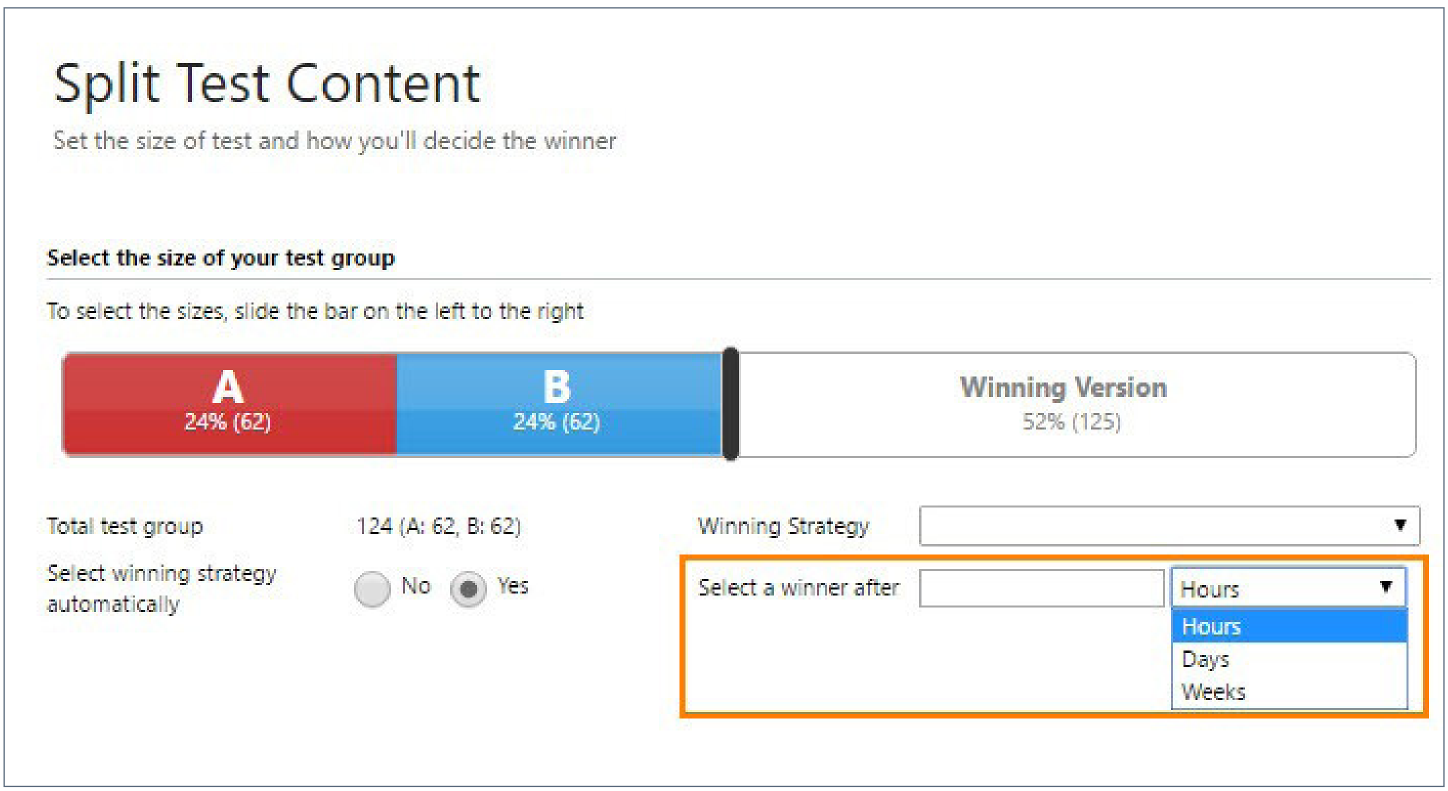
3. Split your test groups equally.
When sending emails, you have control over your recipients, which means you can create equal test groups. Splitting lists evenly helps ensure that your results are reflective of the entire email list.



4. Test both versions at once.
Timing can make a big difference in your email send's results. The time of day, day of the week and even month of the year can have major impacts on your email send statistics. If you were to send out Version A on Tuesday and Version B on Friday, you would not be able to conclude whether the change in opens was due to the email's different subject line or the day of the week the email was received. For this reason, when you run split tests, we recommend that you run the two versions at the same time.

There will be situations where you want to use the split test wizard to test the email send timing itself to find the best time to send your email. In this scenario, you will just want to make sure that all other variables are the same.

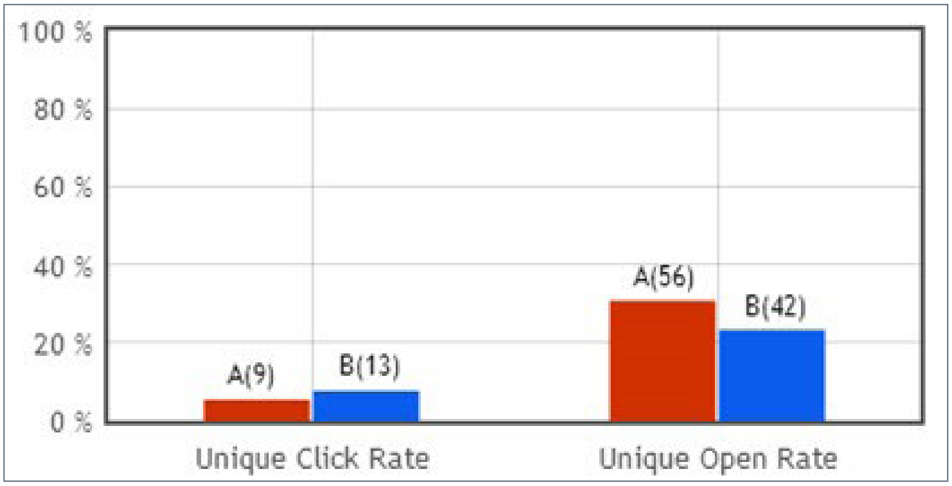
5. Run the test long enough to get significant results.
Depending on your business and how you set up the split test, getting significant results could take hours, days or sometimes weeks. When determining how long your split test should run before selecting a winning version, you will want to consider the email events and email statistics of your other email sends. If you receive opens and clicks rather quickly for most of your email sends, you may want to select a few hours as your winning version indicator. However, if there is typically a lag in your recipients interacting with your emails, you will want to increase the time it takes before a winning version is selected.



6. Act on your results.
If one version of your split test performed better than the other version, congratulations! You have a winner! Complete your test by choosing your split test winning version manually or, in ClickDimensions, you can allow the split test wizard to choose the winner for you.

If neither version performed better, you can conclude that the variable you chose to test did not impact your results. If this is the case, you could either choose one of the versions as the winner or run another split test using a new variable to test performance.

Split tests help you view results on a send-by-send basis. You can, however, apply your learnings from each test to future email sends. For example, if you've conducted multiple split tests and have found that using numbers in email subject lines generates more clicks, or that sending out your emails on Thursdays gives you the most opens, you might want to consider using those methods in your future email sends.



7. Plan your next test.
The split test you just finished may have helped you discover a new way to make your email sends more effective. Just keep in mind that there is always more room for enhancing your email sends. You could even try conducting a split test on another aspect of the same email you just ran a test on. For example, if you just tested the subject line of your email send, you could also do a new test on the email's color scheme or images.

30 5 Tips for Effectively Telling Your Brand's Story

Storytelling isn't just for classrooms, camp fires or bedtime anymore. Today, consumers want to feel a connection with the brands they do business with, and storytelling is an essential part of forming that connection.

Great brand stories have the power to foster customer trust and loyalty, and can transform the way internal audiences perceive and talk about their organizations. But how do you effectively tell your brand's story to maximize its impact? Follow these five tips:

1. Remember that it isn't about you.
This point may be counterintuitive since it is your brand's story we're talking about, but the best brand stories put customers in the starring role. It should focus on your customers and what your product or service helps them achieve. Brands that play a supporting role in their own stories will have more success in building trust from customers because they are more helpful and less salesy.

2. Know your audience.
While knowing your audience is an essential aspect of all marketing efforts, it's worth emphasizing when considering your brand's story. Think about who you are talking to, what they value and what language would most appeal to them. What would be most relatable to your audience? The more detail you have about your audience, the better. Be sure to refer to or create your brand's personas before embarking on creating your brand story.

3. Be human
Even if you are selling to other businesses, your brand story should be directed towards the people behind those businesses. Focus on how your products or services impact actual people and make a difference in their lives. And being human applies to your brand too. Think about how the people behind your business – whether they are founders, employees, customers or partners – can tell the story for you.

4. Go beyond what you sell.
A brand story shouldn't sound like a product brochure or a sales demo. It should talk about how your company got started, why you do what you do, where your organization excels and what your vision is for the future. Use your brand story to define your purpose rather than your product offerings.

5. Be real.
Authenticity goes a long way towards creating a successful brand story. Use real people, real situations, real benefits and real examples of success as much as possible. And while it's only natural to highlight positive aspects of your brand, be sure that you aren't over hyping who you are and what you do.

About ClickDimensions

ClickDimensions is the only marketing automation platform that is exclusively created for and natively built in Microsoft Dynamics 365. Our solution brings together email marketing, campaign automation, web intelligence, surveys, web forms and landing pages, social marketing and more to help organizations attract more leads, close more sales and more effectively engage customers – all from the comfort of Dynamics 365.

To learn more about getting more out of Dynamics 365 with a powerful and user-friendly marketing toolkit, visit us at clickdimensions.com, read our blog at blog.clickdimensions.com or follow us on Twitter at @ClickDimensions.

ClickDimensions