2019 Marketing with Microsoft Dynamics 365

Idea eBook

30 Ways to Transform Your Marketing in 30 Days

ClickDimensions

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Introduction

Great marketing starts with an idea. The idea is the fuel that sparks everything else in a campaign – including results. The critical importance of the idea, and our commitment to helping marketers using Microsoft Dynamics 365, is what inspired us to create this edition of ClickDimensions' annual Idea eBook and every version before it.

In the *2019 Marketing with Microsoft Dynamics 365 Idea eBook*, you will find 30 articles jam-packed with tips, tricks and ideas for improving your marketing in the year ahead. It's 30 ways to transform your marketing in 30 days. Whether you read everything in one sitting or consult individual articles in the months ahead, our hope is that the knowledge shared in this eBook will help your marketing have its best year yet.

Happy Marketing!

10 New Ways to Grow Your Email Marketing Lists

"I don't need to grow my email marketing lists," said no marketer ever. While the quest to grow email marketing lists is as old as email marketing itself, in a post-GDPR world, the need to grow lists may now be more urgent for marketers. The repermissioning campaigns that organizations sent out before GDPR came into effect resulted in drastically reduced list sizes for many.

While the upshot of those decreased list sizes is often increased engagement with emails, many marketers are now focused on expanding their reach once again. Here are 10 new ways to keep your ideas flowing and your email marketing lists growing.

1. Blog call to action.
Utilize your blog's valuable real estate to the fullest by including a call to action (CTA) at the end of each post. These CTAs can direct readers to subscribe to your newsletter, exclusive discount emails or other marketing lists.

2. Get social.
Your email subscribers and social followers aren't always one and the same. Convert your social-only audiences to email subscribers by making them aware of the various opportunities to subscribe, telling them what's in it for them and asking them to join your lists.

3. Send great emails.
Sending emails that people truly want to receive not only helps you retain current subscribers, it also can help grow your lists by encouraging your recipients to forward your emails. If the email content is intriguing or valuable enough, those forwards can result in subscriptions too.

4. Create compelling content.
With so much content available for consumption today, your content marketing initiatives need to stand out from the crowd in order to garner downloads and email list subscriptions. Utilize personas to create content that really resonates with your audiences.

5. Make sign ups easy.
While you may want all the information you can possibly get about an email subscriber, they don't share the same sentiment when it comes to providing their own information. Decide what data is essential for you to collect and then remove the rest from your forms, thus eliminating friction in the sign-up process.

6. Host a webinar.
Webinars are great educational opportunities for busy professionals today, and an effective way for the organizations that host them to grow their email lists. You could create an events marketing list and include an option to sign up for this list during webinar registration. An option to sign up could also be included in the email when you send the webinar recording.

7. Provide a sneak peek.
Sometimes the best way to get someone to subscribe to a list is by showing them what they are in store for once they sign up. For a newsletter, this sneak peek could come in the form of a sample past newsletter on your sign-up page, for example.

8. Split test.
Split testing, or A/B testing, can help you determine what's working and what isn't with your emails by testing two different versions against each other. This testing can help you perfect your emails and drive higher retention and subscription rates.

9. Social advocacy.
We talked earlier about social posts focused on various email subscription options on your corporate social media pages, but what if you could amplify that by spreading the word with your employees' social media connections too? With a social advocacy tool from a solution like the ClickDimensions social engagement platform, you can provide employees with a quick and easy way to share your company's social messages with their networks.

10. Guest blogging.
Guest blogging can be a powerful way to reach new audiences, so it's worth looking for these opportunities among companies you partner with or other organizations that serve your customers or industry. Provide a link to your blog or newsletter sign up as part of your guest blog bio.

5 Challenges Marketing Automation Can Help You Overcome

You love a good challenge. Who doesn't, right? Marketing automation is right there with you. These all-in-one solutions that feature email marketing, automated nurture campaigns, web forms, landing pages, web intelligence, surveys, social marketing and more are ready to step up to help solve several significant challenges that businesses today face.

Whether you're in the market for a marketing automation solution or looking to ensure that you get the most out of your existing one, here are five of the top challenges marketing automation can help you overcome:

1. Lack of lead conversion.
In an ideal world, every potential customer would become a paying customer as soon as they express interest. In reality, businesses today rarely find themselves in that situation and more often encounter consumers that want to be educated and informed, not given the hard sell. Organizations can easily deliver using marketing automation, allowing them to nurture prospects via multiple channels until they are ready to buy, thus increasing conversions, rather than losing touch with these individuals as they move through the buying cycle.

2. Unengaged customers.
Marketing automation isn't just for marketing. It's also an essential tool for engaging customers today and fostering brand loyalty. Customer service and account management teams need to deliver personalized communications to their customers across a wide variety of channels, and understand customer needs at any given time. While email is a preferred communications tool for companies and consumers alike, the customer experience can be enhanced by marketing automation tools such as SMS messaging, web intelligence, social marketing and subscription management, to name a few.

3. Marketing inefficiencies.
Time is one of the most precious commodities today, and marketing automation can help organizations make the most of it. Marketing automation can help reduce the time marketing teams spend creating, scheduling and sending many types of emails or other communications. This means less time devoted to routine tasks and more time executing big ideas and strategies. Marketing automation can also help sales teams increase their efficiency by helping them to focus on the hottest leads rather than on those that need more nurturing.

4. Lack of sales and marketing alignment.
Technology can help with a great number of business initiatives today, including sales and marketing alignment. Utilizing marketing automation with a CRM solution like Microsoft Dynamics 365 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. It can also help the two teams more effectively collaborate on campaigns to ensure that prospects get the right message and right attention at the right time.

5. Generating more revenue.
Email marketing platforms – which many organizations use before graduating to marketing automation – give you a lot of basic statistics, like open and click rates, that show you how one email campaign performed. While these are useful in shaping your future email marketing efforts, they do little to tell you the overall health of your marketing initiatives and how those efforts are impacting your company's bottom line. Marketing automation allows you to track prospects and customers throughout the buying cycle, giving you big picture results. This can help you determine the effectiveness of your individual marketing programs and the impact on revenue.

The Right Way to Run an Email Re-Engagement Campaign

Unengaged subscribers can be a risky population and have a negative impact on campaign metrics, sender reputation and inbox placement. Before purging this segment of your list, you may want to reach out one more time to make sure they are no longer interested in your emails. These emails are usually called re-engagement campaigns and there is a right way and wrong way to do them.

Here are seven things to keep in mind when designing your re-engagement campaign:

1. Re-engagement campaigns work best when run on a consistent basis.
List maintenance in general is best to do on an ongoing, consistent basis. Not unlike other cleaning tasks, breaking it into smaller chunks on a regular basis makes the job easier and less intimidating. It also ensures there won't be long stretches of time where list quality suffers, and poor engagement drags down your sending reputation or inbox placement. Ideally, you should clean your lists every six months.

2. Segment the audience.
As a best practice, you should send to your entire database on a regular basis and at a minimum of every five months. If an email address is abandoned, this allows you to catch it during the period where the email server is returning a hard bounce. This also helps with customer recognition with your brand and the fact that they are subscribed to your emails. During the re-engagement campaign, you want to segment your list based on the last time they interacted with your emails. Start with the most recently engaged – the last time they interacted was within 60 days, for example. Then work backward (90 days, 120 days, etc.). If you notice a drop off in interactions or an increase in blacklists or complaints, you have probably reached the end of your population that has potential. Stop while you are ahead.

3. Use email verification, if needed.
If you don't send to your entire database at least every five months, but still want to reach out to a population that hasn't been sent to and is unengaged, run your list through an email verification tool first. If you don't know the source of the email addresses or if you have consent, avoid including them in your campaign and go ahead and remove them.

4. Unsubscribes are not evil.
Welcome emails and re-engagement emails should have the option to unsubscribe in prominent and conspicuous locations. You don't have to hide it in the footer, and you don't have to only have it in one location. If a recipient no longer wants to receive your emails, you want them to be able to unsubscribe easily. The alternative is much worse.

5. Include more than one touch.
Re-engagement campaigns shouldn't be a one-and-done campaign. Send two to three touches and change the messaging for each. Use different subject lines and have the messaging in logical order.

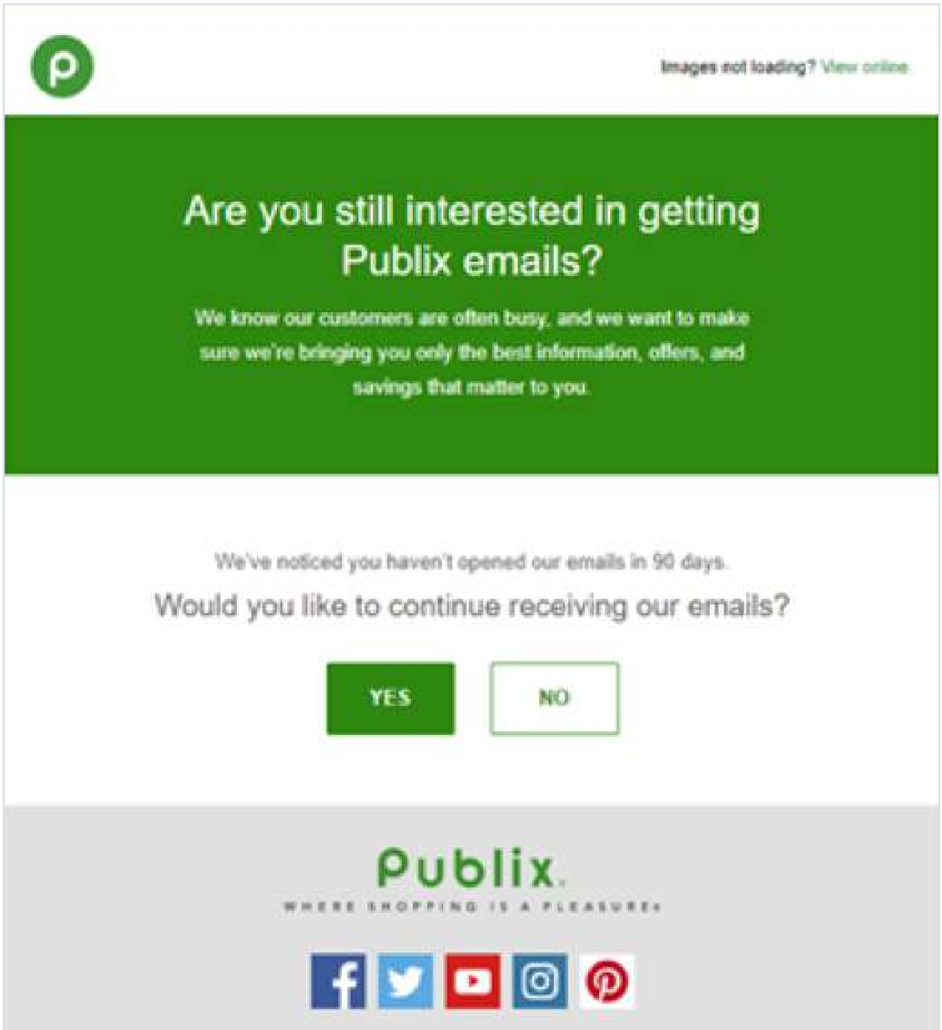
6. Be compelling.
It is so important to make sure that you are including information about the benefits of receiving your emails. What's in it for the recipient? Answer that question in the email content. Some re-engagement emails are funny, some are flashy, some include incentives. All of that is fine. How you choose to be compelling will depend on your brand and the content of your emails.

7. Be okay with purging email addresses if they don't re-engage.
Repeat after me: "I will delete any email address that does not take action on my re-engagement emails." Unengaged subscribers are dragging your list down. Be okay with letting them go.

Need some inspiration? Below are a few examples of good re-engagement emails.

Publix

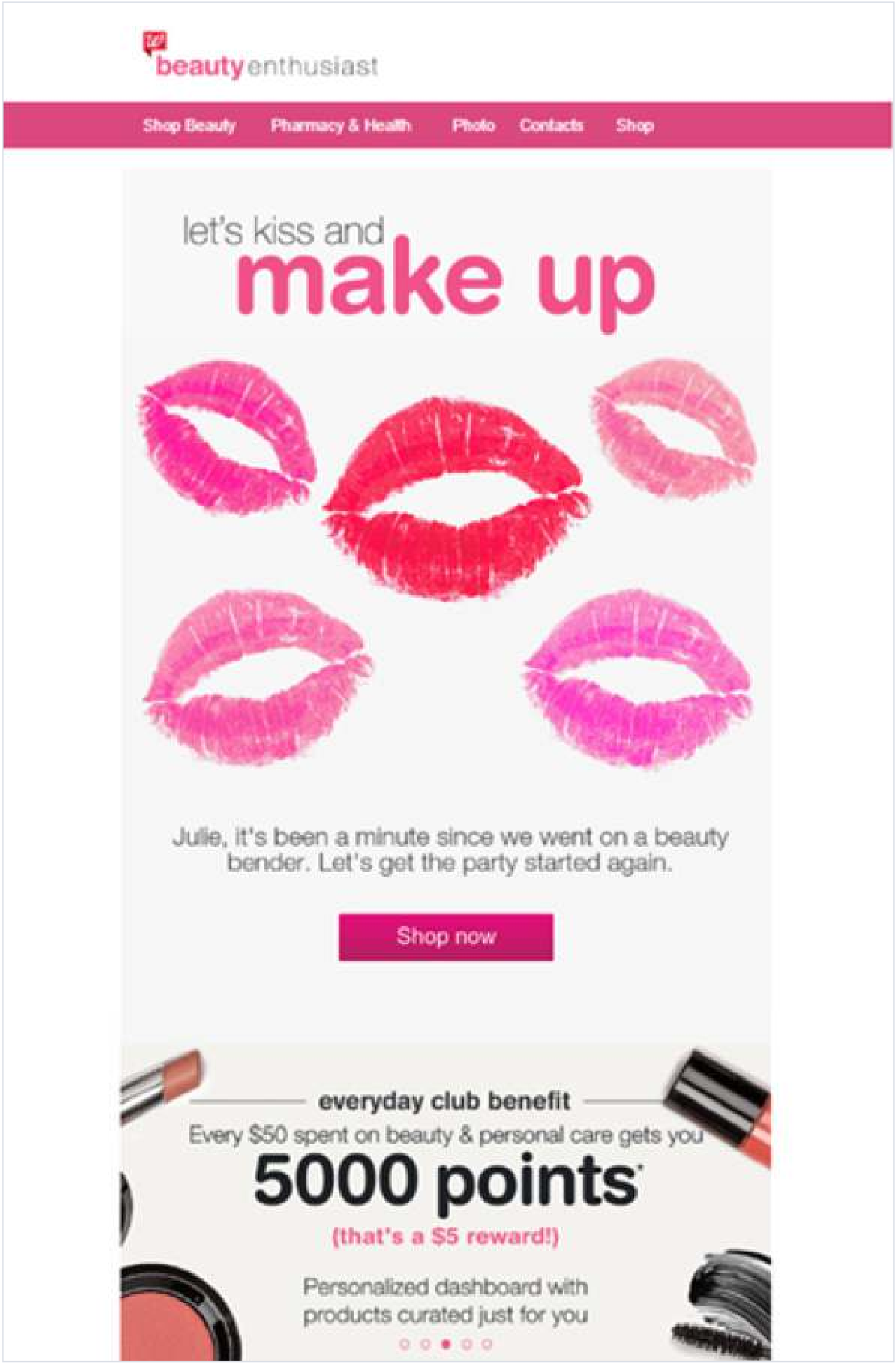
Subject: Valued Customer, how are things? We miss you around here!



Publix is very upfront about why they are sending this email. They include information about the benefits of receiving their email: "the best information, offers, and savings that matter to you." They also include that the recipient hasn't opened their emails in 90 days. And then they provide a means to either engage and continue receiving emails, "YES" or to unsubscribe, "NO" (an unsubscribe link is included in the footer as well as a link to manage email preferences).

Walgreens

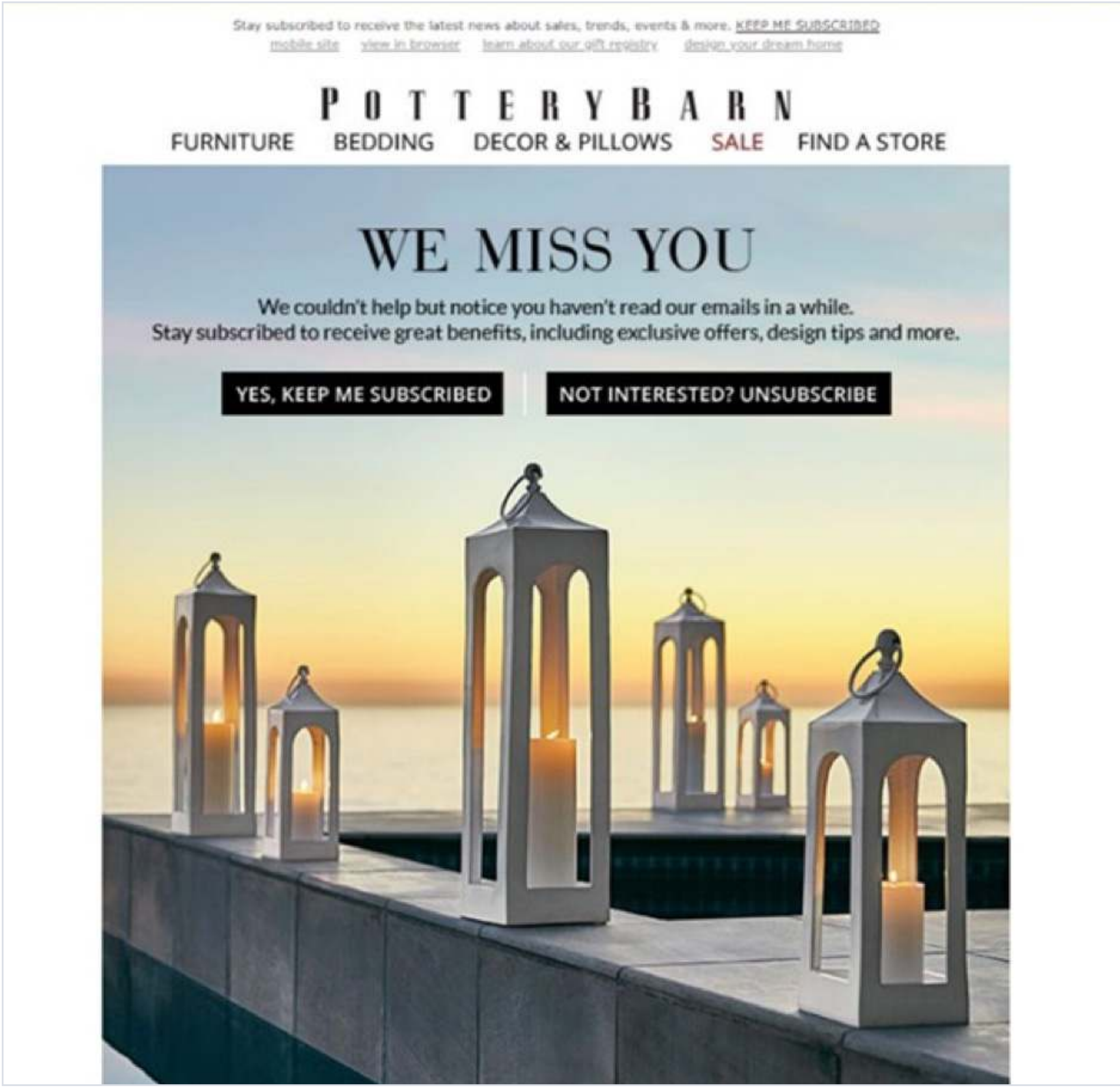
Subject: Julie, was it something we said?



Walgreens is a little more fun with their email and encourages the recipient to shop online. They also include an incentive of the Beauty Enthusiast club and information about exclusive information they send. The email is also animated, adding a fun and eye-catching touch.

Pottery Barn

Subject: We'd love to stay in touch! But only if you want to…



True to the Pottery Barn brand, they have beautiful imagery. The email includes the reasons why the recipient should stay subscribed: "Stay subscribed to receive great benefits, including exclusive offers, design tips and more." And they give the option to stay subscribed or to unsubscribe in bold black buttons at the top of the email.

11 Types of Campaigns to Automate

Automated campaigns, also known as nurture campaigns or campaign automations, are an effective way for brands to connect with their audiences while also increasing the efficiency of their marketing teams. But what types of campaigns should you automate? While the types of campaign automations you can create for prospects and customers are virtually endless, here are some ideas for popular nurture campaigns to help you achieve your sales, marketing and customer success goals:

1. Welcome campaign.
When a new lead enters your CRM by signing up for a newsletter, downloading an eBook or otherwise engaging with your company for the first time, add them to a welcome campaign. This campaign automation provides introductory information about your company and, based on their interactions with the messages within the campaign, can help you gain a better understanding of a prospect's motivations and interests.

2. Post-event campaign.
Trade shows, conferences, lunch and learns, webinars, and other offline and online events are great for engaging with customers and leads alike. While you might send a customer a personal follow up after seeing them at an event, a post-event campaign automation is a good solution for following up with prospects and gauging their interest. These nurture campaigns often work best when they are customized to reflect the event and the information presented there.

3. Warm up campaign.
According to Gleanster Research, half of all qualified leads aren't ready to purchase immediately. Without campaign automation, these leads can fall off the radar entirely or won't receive follow up until after they have decided to go another route. A warm up nurture campaign is an effective way to keep your company top of mind until a prospect is ready to buy and to help educate them along the way.

4. Competitor campaign.
A competitor campaign uses campaign automation to send out a series of messages to prospects, telling them the benefits of using your product versus that of competitors. This can be accomplished in a few different ways, but you will want to avoid bashing competitors, as that can turn off recipients. Your nurturing messages can focus on how you stand out from competitors as a whole or you can name drop a particular competitor, if you are aiming to convince that competitor's customers to make the switch.

5. Customer onboarding campaign.
Depending on the nature of your business, new customer onboarding might be a very manual and personalized process. While you don't want to detract from that experience, an onboarding campaign can help enhance it. Using campaign automation, you can send new customers a series of messages regarding training opportunities or other helpful information they will want to know as a new customer, and even discover which new customers need additional personal attention based on their interactions with messages.

6. Cross-sell or upsell campaign.
Existing customers are a great source of new sales, and often require less effort to close than new leads. Cross-sell and upsell campaigns can help educate your customers about other products or services in your lineup that might be of interest. To avoid alienating your customers, be sure to tailor the messages within these campaign automations so they speak to the audience's preferences, rather than sending general sales pitches.

7. Promotional campaign.
Much like new offerings, new promotions are a great way to engage your audiences and increase sales. Using campaign automation, you can tailor your promotional campaigns to the individual audience. So, if your company is having a big sale on a particular product, for example, you might offer prospects a larger discount to help drive the sale or opt to sweeten the deal for your existing customers in an effort to retain them.

8. Launch campaign.
If your organization is getting ready to roll out a new product, service or initiative, a launch campaign can help you spread the word. These campaigns can target customers or prospects, though it may be most effective to have different campaign automations for different audiences, as the messaging may differ slightly for each. Launch campaigns can either start before launch to build excitement or after the product or service launches to announce its availability.

9. Customer retention campaign.
After all the hard work it takes to earn a customer's business, a customer retention campaign can help ensure that you keep it too. The structure and timing within this campaign automation will vary greatly according to your industry. For example, an organization that relies on annual renewals may only run this nurture campaign yearly, while a business that sells to customers throughout the year may rely on retention campaigns more frequently.

10. Re-engagement campaign.
At any given time, your CRM is filled with prospects that never became a closed deal or one-time customers that have since moved on. While you won't win back every customer or wake up every lead, re-engagement nurture campaigns can help get the conversation going again. Through campaign automation, try offering these individuals helpful pieces of content or exclusive discounts, or both, to rekindle the relationship.

11. Thought leadership campaign.
Thought leadership campaigns can work well for individuals at any stage of the buying cycle. These campaign automations can help you soft sell prospects and retain customers, all while establishing your organization's expertise within your industry. Content marketing is an essential part of thought leadership campaigns, as each message in the campaign automation should feature white papers, eBooks, infographics, webinars or other helpful content.

7 Simple Tips for Writing Marketing Content Faster and More Efficiently

From blog articles to ad copy and eBooks to video scripts, great writing is the cornerstone of memorable marketing. While most marketers recognize the importance of writing, that doesn't mean that all embrace it. For many who fall into the "hate it" versus "love it" camp, the amount of time it takes to write quality content plays a big part in their dissatisfaction. It's understandable. It can be very time-consuming to create quality content, but with a few simple tips and tricks, you can start to write faster and more efficiently.¬

1. Keep your ideas.
The idea for a piece of content can often be the hardest part, and one of the biggest obstacles to efficient writing is coming up with a great idea. Set yourself up for success with idea files. These can be on your computer, on your phone, in a notebook. or in all those places and more, but they can be your go-to source when you need to start writing. Use whatever system works best for you for storing these notes. One important thing to remember is to include enough detail so you remember what each idea was about when you revisit them. Few things are more frustrating than finding a half-baked note about an idea and not being able to remember the full intent behind it.

2. Find the right time.
While many productivity articles and experts will advise that you knock out a difficult task or project first thing in the morning, writing might not be that thing for you. Take the time to notice when you feel like words flow more freely for you. Is that 8 am or 4 pm? Once you notice a pattern in what works best for you, follow that as much as possible. Depending on your position, writing might happen throughout your day, but try to stick with focusing on writing as much as possible during that sweet spot timeframe and leave other tasks like editing or meetings for other times.

3. Break it down.
When you're planning a piece of content, it can seem pretty daunting. How is that 10-page eBook or 1,000-word blog post ever going to be completed? It's simple. Don't focus so much on the whole; think about the parts instead. Using this blog post as an example, there's an introduction, a list of points and the details of those points. For longer content, make an outline and focus more on completing the individual sections than the entire piece. Breaking it down like this helps the writing seem more achievable, which can help you be more productive as you go about the writing task at hand.

4. Find the best approach.
Does writing an introduction make you cringe? Or do you get hung up on the meat of a content piece? Whatever it is, we all have our Achilles heel when it comes to writing. The trick to overcoming it is first figuring out what your hang up is and then finding the best way to overcome it. The important part is to do what works for you. If introductions hold you up, start with another section and save the intro for last and chances are good that an idea for that intro will come to you along the way.

5. Avoid multitasking.
Multitasking is often seen as a strength, but when it comes to writing content, it can be a huge weakness. That's because good writing requires focus, and it's hard to be efficient at it if you are constantly switching tasks. You know best what your biggest distractions are, so work to eliminate them so you can efficiently power through your content writing. If it's email, try closing your email program for a set amount of time

while working on your content. If you find yourself distracted by conversations with co-workers, try putting on headphones and listening to music. No matter the distraction or the cure for it, focus on your writing and forget everything else, even if it is only for an hour.

6. Remember the route that works best.
Approach revamping your writing process the same way you would maneuvering your commute – remember the route that works best and stick with it. If you find that writing after lunch and starting with the end of a content piece is most effective for you and helps you write more efficiently, commit to that as your routine. Just keep in mind that, much like traffic, some days, even the tried and true route just doesn't work. On those days, take a deep breath and see our next tip.

7. Get out of your own head.
Sometimes, no matter what you do or the tricks you try, that little flashing cursor on the screen just mocks you relentlessly as you struggle to even find one word to put on the page. It's at that point you need to step away. Take a walk outside, get a cup of coffee, respond to some emails – whatever you need to do to take a break, do it. While this might not sound like the best way to write efficiently, sometimes you need to get out of your own head to get your writing back on the right track.

3 SEO and SEM Tools You Can Utilize for Competitor Analysis

Staying on top of the competition can be quite a feat, especially when you don't know where to start or what keywords they are using in their Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) strategy. One way that you can get leverage on your competition is by utilizing various SEO and SEM tools to analyze the keywords and phrases that your competitors are using. Depending on the tool, you may even be able to tell how much traffic they are getting to their site or how much they are paying per click in their SEM campaigns. These tools can help you monitor your performance and measure it against your competition for better leverage and visibility.

1. Link Explorer.
Link Explorer is an SEO tool that allows you to research backlinks, find link-building opportunities and discover potentially damaging links. You can use this tool for competitive analysis to see if you can leverage any of the link-building opportunities that competitors are using, or to even compare metrics between your organization and the competition by analyzing where they rank in Google and what are their top-performing pages. This tool is free, but if you are looking for more in-depth analytics and full access to link opportunities and more, it will require a monthly subscription.

2. SpyFu.
SpyFu only allows you a certain amount of reports that you can pull for free, but it's amazing for paid search competitive analysis. With this tool, you can see how much your competitors are investing in their Google AdWords campaigns and even see how much they are paying per click. You can analyze what words they are targeting and create a SEM strategy around those opportunities. This tool also allows you to see what organic keywords your competitors' organic SEO campaigns are targeting.

3. SEMrush.
SEMrush is a paid, but fully complete SEM tool. Not only does it share both organic search and paid search analysis of whatever competitor domain you drop into the search bar, it also allows you to compile keyword research, site audits and backlink analysis. It helps you to create well-crafted SEO-friendly content that analyzes your competitor's content while giving you ideas for new content – another way to get ahead of your competition and get winning results.

In terms of analyzing your competitors and crafting a strategy that will help you beat your competition, these tools will get the job done. All it takes is a lot of research and planning, and soon you will be creating content that will draw in potential customers and drown out your competition.

6 Email Footer Best Practices

While often overlooked, the footer is one of the most crucial elements of your marketing emails. It signifies the end of your message and is often the last thing readers see before ending their interaction with your email. This incredibly versatile section of your emails can dramatically affect your email's impact on your customers. Because a good email footer is so vital, we wanted to share some best practices that can help you take full advantage of it, while fostering the relationship with your readers.

1. Your company's contact information.
One of the best places to provide basic contact information to your customers is the footer. In fact, per some region's spam laws, it is illegal to send emails without sharing your organization's name and a method through which the recipient can contact your company.

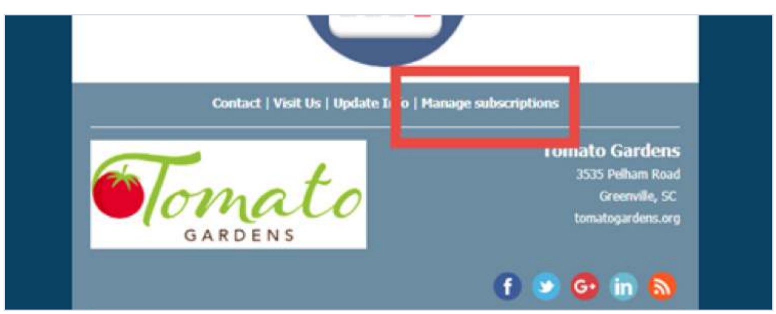
We recommend sharing your company's name, address, phone number, a reply-to email and any other contact information you believe will help your recipients connect with you. Like a good business card, the order, weight and hierarchy of this information matters. Styling the information in a way that drives customers to your preferred contact method is going to make life easier for both you and your recipients.

In addition, to make the process easier for individuals who need to reach out to you by phone, you can make the phone number a callable link. You could also share the days and times you are available to answer the phone.

2. Your branding.
Your email, like every interaction with your customers, is another opportunity to form connections and build trust. A footer is a great way to tie your message back to your brand by sharing your logo, a brief "About the Company" message, a note about your values or even a photo of your team. However, keep in mind that less is more. A succinct reminder about your brand can have a more powerful impact than a lengthy description.

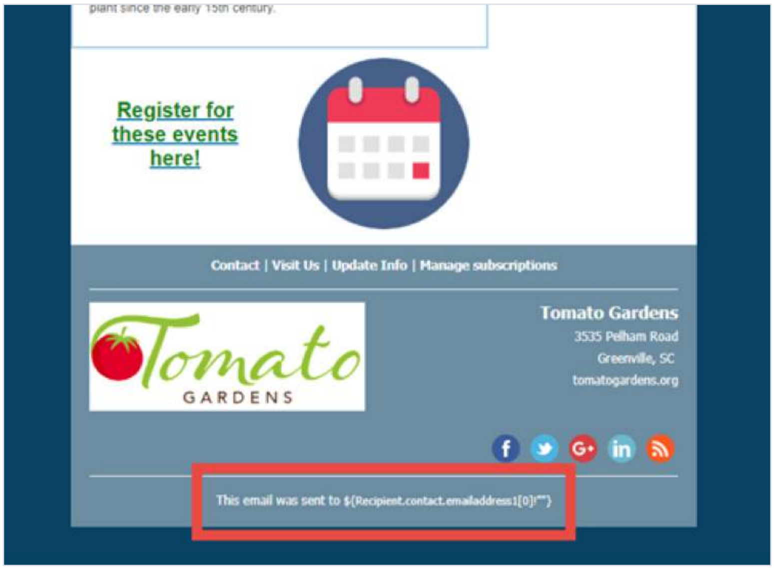
3. Subscription management options.
For the sake of compliance and customer satisfaction, it is always important to provide email recipients the opportunity to manage their subscription preferences and/or opt out of emails from your organization. The footer is a great place to host that vital link.

As you likely know, if you want to offer the ability to opt out of all emails, the global unsubscribe link can remove the recipient from all mailings. To manage their preferences, the customer would benefit from a subscription management page. But you can also offer links to both. The combination of the two can make it clear that the customer can not only opt out of emails, but also make decisions about the kinds of data they receive and even opt in to new topics.



4. Information about the email communication.
The footer can be a great opportunity to clarify to whom the email was sent, how you got the address and help them continue to receive emails from your organization.

To address that first concept, you could simply let the recipient know the email address to which the message was sent. This is especially helpful if recipients are forwarding the message to other individuals. The recipients receiving forwarded emails can use that information to manage their subscriptions in the future. The image below shows how it can be easily done using dynamic content to populate the recipient's email address when the email is sent.



Regarding how you got their email address, we recommend a permission reminder. These statements indicating how they opted in to your emails allow you to clarify to customers how they began receiving these messages and, again, can assist them if they need to manage their email preferences in the future. Permission reminders can be structured like the following:

Why are you receiving this email?

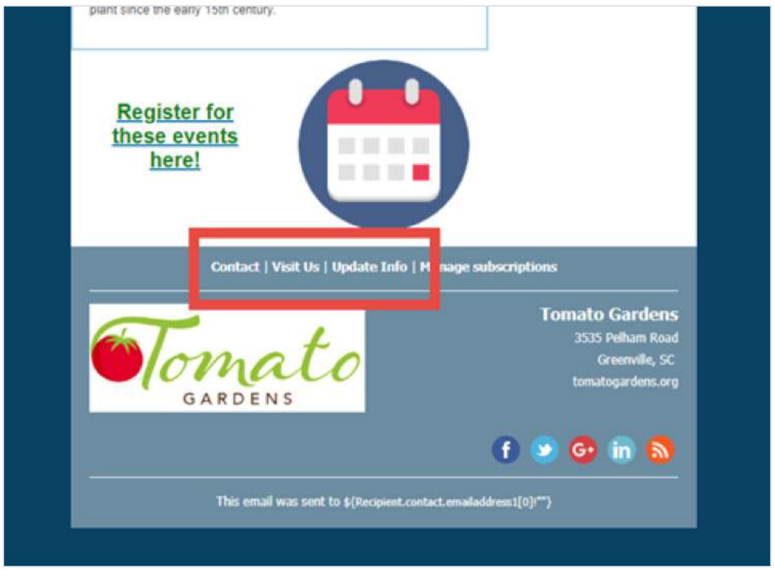
Because "you signed up for our xyz mailing list"

You will most likely have customers who expressed their permission in different ways. To dynamically display the recipient's opt-in method, you can include FreeMarker code that pulls a value you store on their contact or lead record in Dynamics 365/CRM. To do this, you would need to have recorded the method by which they opted into your messages within a field on their record.

Finally, you could include a note for the recipient about adding to their Safe Senders list the email address you used to send the email. Including this message will allow your customers to increase the chances of successful email deliveries into their inbox in the future.

5. Links.
The footer is often the last thing customers see before the end of their interaction with your emails. If the customer has finished reading your email and has not clicked on the call to action, this is the last chance to make that connection. Here are some of the kinds of links you may want to put in your emails:

- **Website** – If your recipients do want to learn more, talk to your team or buy your product or service, they can go to your website to do so. To make that transition from email to online, you need to offer a convenient link to your website.
- **Links to content above** – Internal hyperlinks can redirect customers to a section they may want to revisit or highlight an area they may have missed.
- **Social icons** – Providing links to your social media pages or for recipients to share the email on their social media profiles can encourage interactions with an email's message on other platforms.
- **Legal info** – If you want to share the details of your privacy policy or your copyright policy, having a link to a large, detailed landing page with all the relevant information can save space in your email while still being compliant with privacy and SPAM laws and regulations.



6. Style.

Emails come in a variety of shapes, lengths and appearances. While the final appearance of your email will depend on your company's personal design style, there are some common style choices we see in footers across a variety of industries. The first is that companies often reverse the color scheme of their email message. For example, if you have been using a white background and dark blue text, inverting those so that your background is now dark blue and your text is white can help emphasize the transition from your email's body into the footer of your message.

Second, simplicity is key. Customers need to be able to find the important information in your footer right away. A simple, minimal layout makes the content of the footer more accessible. It is helpful to keep in mind that this is not the message of your email, but a helpful way to reach out and learn more. By limiting the data in your footer to a few select pieces of information, you make the chances of a positive interaction with your footer far greater than if you were to include all possible components you think a customer may ever need.

Beyond Customer Satisfaction: 5 Ways to Use Surveys to Engage Customers

Opinions – everyone has them and businesses often love asking their customers for them. This ask most often comes in the form of a customer satisfaction survey, which is an important tool for organizations looking to understand how they are measuring up in the minds of their customers. But surveying customers shouldn't stop there.

Here are five ways you can use surveys to tap into valuable customer insights while engaging that audience at the same time:

1. Get content ideas.
If you engage in content marketing, you know how difficult it can be to consistently come up with topics that interest your audiences. So why not go straight to the source? Ask your customers what topics they would like to read about on your blog or in eBooks, or if there's a webinar topic that would be of interest. The results may provide ideas that you had never considered before and can fuel your content calendar for months to come.

2. Create a competition.
If your company has several products or services in its lineup, try creating a competition where customers vote for their favorite. This quick survey would be a fun way to boost customer engagement and can also serve as great content for social media. Similarly, if you are planning to launch a new product or service, you could ask customers to vote on specific features to be included or, if appropriate, even ask them to help you name the newcomer.

3. Segment lists.
While it's likely you already have a great deal of information about your customers within your CRM system, surveys can help you fill in missing details. Try adding a survey link in your next customer newsletter or email blast that asks recipients to complete a short survey that will help your organization better tailor communications to their interests. Questions could be demographic in nature, which could also be used to strengthen your marketing personas, or could be used to find out other information such as product or service preferences.

4. Grade your website.
Regardless of your industry, customers often visit an organization's website for a variety of reasons, from making a purchase on an e-commerce site to downloading content to getting contact information for one of your company's office locations. With so many reasons to visit your website, customers are likely to have opinions on how easy it is to access the information they need and the overall user-friendliness of your site. Ask them to complete a short survey in order to find out how you can improve future website visits.

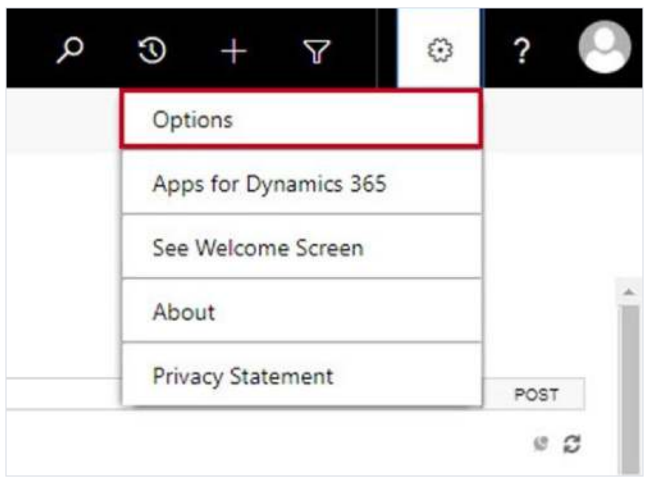
5. Follow up more frequently.
Customer satisfaction surveys are often conducted on an infrequent basis, and quite a few customer transactions and interactions can take place between one customer satisfaction survey and the next. Use short surveys to follow up with your customers more often. For example, in confirmation emails after purchases or donations, you could include a link to a one- or two-question survey that asks about their experience during that particular transaction.

Tips for Using Personalized Email Content and CRM Language Translations

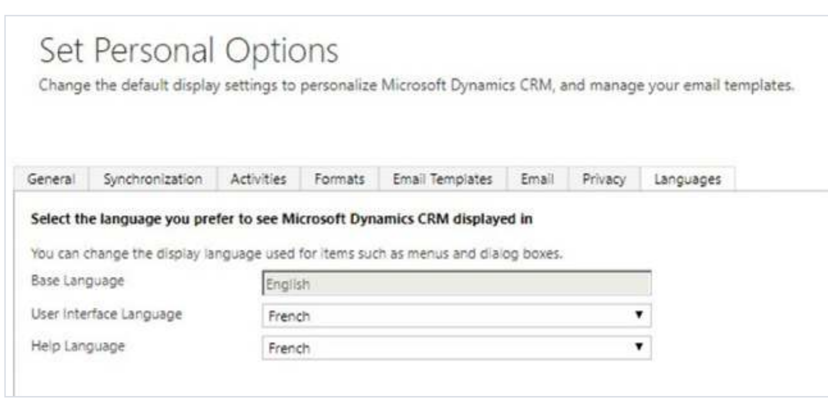
Rendering of personalized email content populated via FreeMarker code is dependent on many elements, but two of the most ubiquitous are field types referenced and CRM language settings. As a global organization, we have customers using ClickDimensions in a myriad of languages. However, when it comes to FreeMarker, language translation can make it a little challenging, especially when users set their CRM language differently than the base language. This post explores some common misconceptions or confusions that may arise when using FreeMarker in an environment where the CRM base language and user languages may differ.

Please note that language settings are a native CRM function and not a ClickDimensions function.

You can see what your environment's CRM base language is, as well as change your user interface language by going to Settings, located in the gear icon on the right-hand side of the top navigation menu bar, and clicking Options. The navigation shown below is from a Dynamics 365 environment.



Next, click on the Languages tab. The CRM base language is set upon configuration of the environment and cannot be changed. A CRM user's user interface language options (languages to choose from) will depend on what language packs are installed. The screenshot below is from an environment where the base language is English and the user language is set to French.



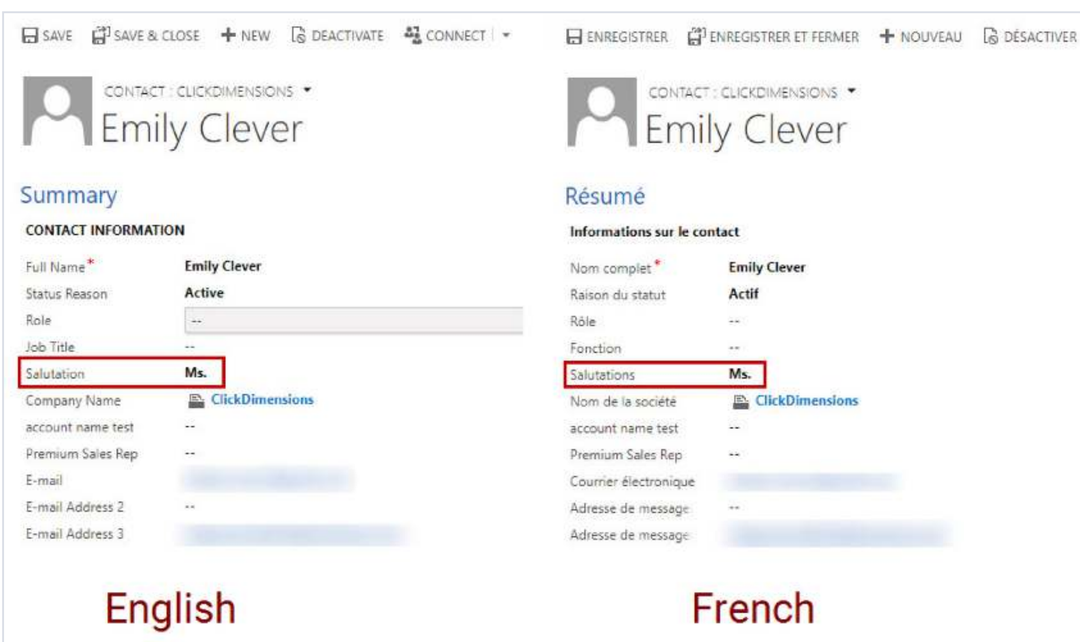
When users of a CRM environment are going to be using it in different languages, potential exists for confusion to occur. For instance, when users are trying to test a ClickDimensions email send with personalized content via FreeMarker, the resulting language of the content may be unexpected — meaning, the users sending that email are expecting to see data in one language, but the received email has data in a different language. This sounds like a trick, but nothing is actually changing because it all boils down to what language the CRM is being viewed in and what type of field the data is being pulled from. You can think of a user language setting as a language facade, where it is just showing everything to a CRM user in their preferred language.

Text Fields

If your email dynamic content is referencing a text field on the lead or contact record, the FreeMarker will pull in the field's text value(s) exactly as it appears, regardless of the CRM base language or user language. This is because the text field value does not change depending on the language of the CRM. Regardless of what the CRM's language is set to, the text value will be whatever was input into that field.

Let's say you are a company headquartered in Paris with employees and customers in France and the United States. Your CRM's base language is in French and your users in the U.S. have their user languages set to English. Therefore, the users in Paris will see their CRM environment and all the data in French, while the users in the U.S. will see their CRM environment and data in English instead. The language of the data within the environment does not actually change.

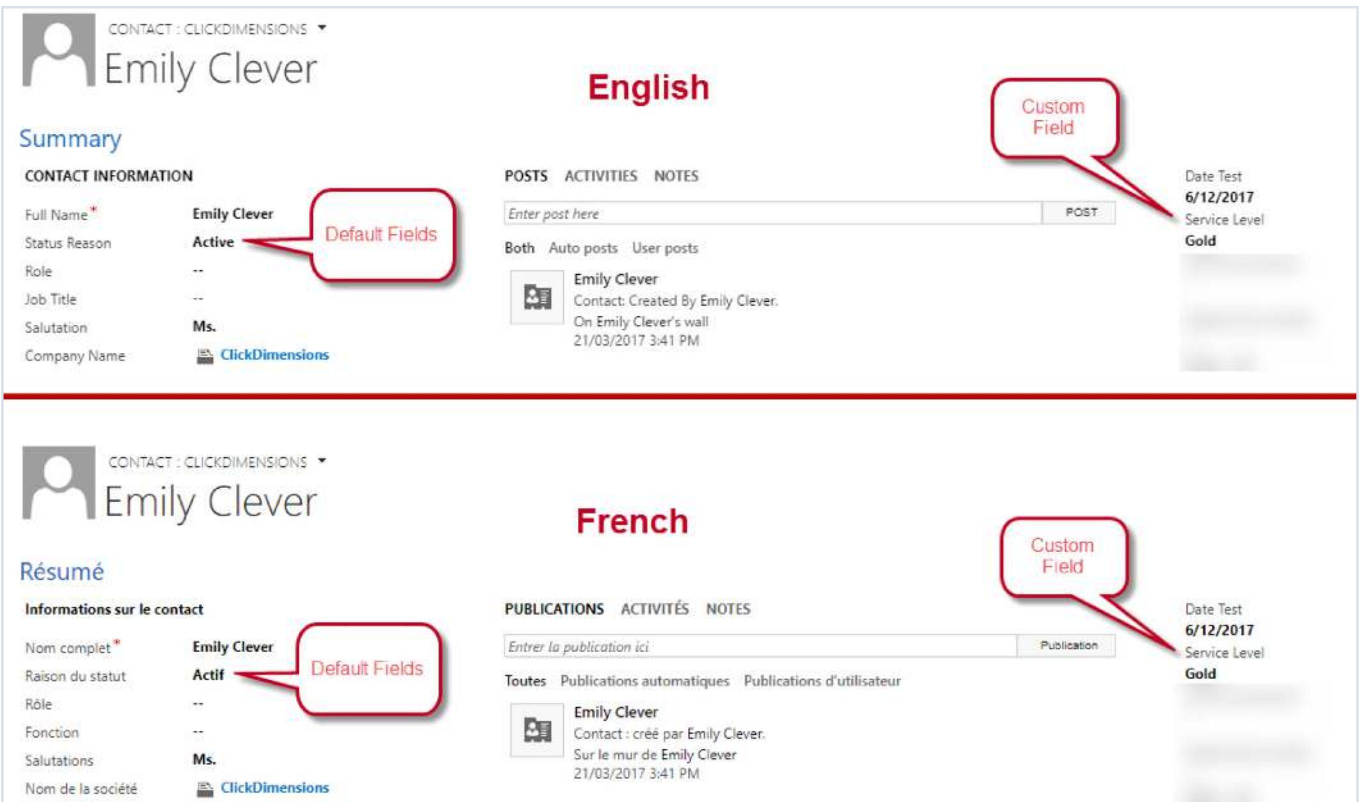
Your company uses the native CRM text field of Salutation to insert salutations dynamically into emails to their recipients (using FreeMarker of course), like Mr. and Ms. in English or M. and Mme. in French. Because your company is detailed, your salutation field values are intentionally inserted to be congruent with the language of the customer. So, if a French user looks at a contact record of a U.S. customer, the salutation value will be in English while the field's display name will be in French, along with the rest of the record. Then, if a U.S. user were to look at that same customer's record, they will see the record appear in English, with the salutation value in English as well. In the comparison screenshot below you can see what the record and salutation field look like when the CRM is viewed in English versus French. You will notice that while the word "Salutation" gets translated from English to French, the value of the text field, "Ms.," stays in English.



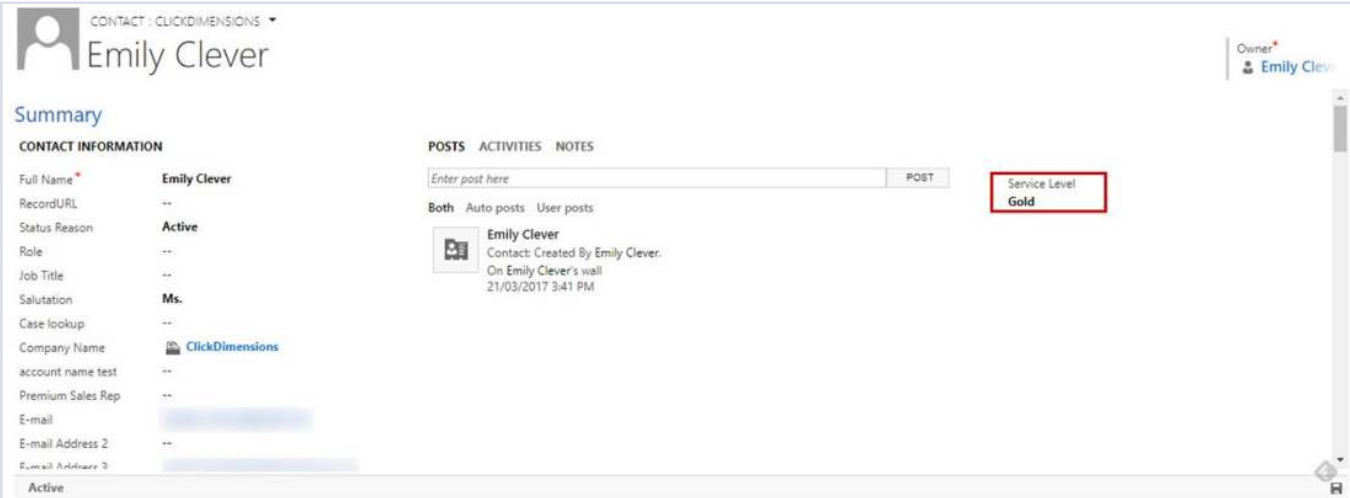
When the French user wants to send an email to a contact like Emily's above, using FreeMarker for the Salutation field (${Recipient.contact.salutation[0]!””}), they can rest easy knowing that the value they see in the contact's record will be the value populated as the email's salutation. Because no matter what language they are viewing CRM in, that text field's value is the true value. The email received by Emily will have the Ms. English value as the salutation.

Option Fields: Option Sets

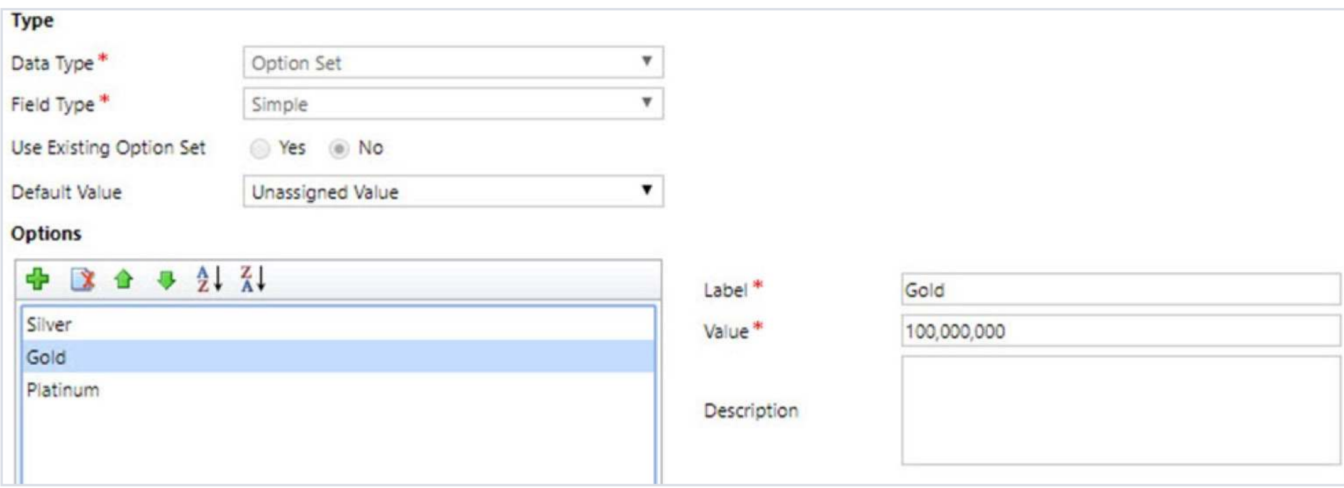
If your email FreeMarker is referencing a type of options field on the lead or contact record, the behavior can be a little confusing regarding the value that is expected to populate in a ClickDimensions email. Factors like whether the CRM field is a default or custom field and if the CRM is being viewed in the base language or a different user language, is what can make it confusing. Out of the box, default fields are in the base language. Natively, the values in default option fields like Option Sets will translate when the user language is set to a different language than the base language, but custom option fields will not translate. CRM administrators can import translations for items like custom fields, but out-of-the-box, this is what to expect: For default CRM fields (like Status Reason), when you have a CRM with users setting their user language different from the base language, the value will translate when the user language changes. Again, custom fields will not. In the screenshot below, you'll see an environment in the languages of English and French, where the contact record has default and custom fields.



As an example, imagine a company (for context, everything is in English) that has three different service package levels – Gold, Silver and Platinum. In this case, they have a custom option set field called Service Level that has been set on each customer's lead or contact record.



If we look at the custom option set field's properties, you can see here that this field's options each have their labels written in English. The Gold service package level option is currently selected.



The label is key here, as those are the field's real/front facing values. When referencing an options type of field with FreeMarker in a ClickDimensions email send, the FreeMarker will pull in the label of that field's selected option. Whatever appears in the field's properties – label field, is what will populate into an email. So, with the custom option set Service Level field above being created in English, FreeMarker will pull any of the three English values, like the value of Gold, into the email as is, in English.

In the following paragraphs, I outline a few different base language scenarios to illustrate how the email content is expected to appear depending on the CRM user's user language.

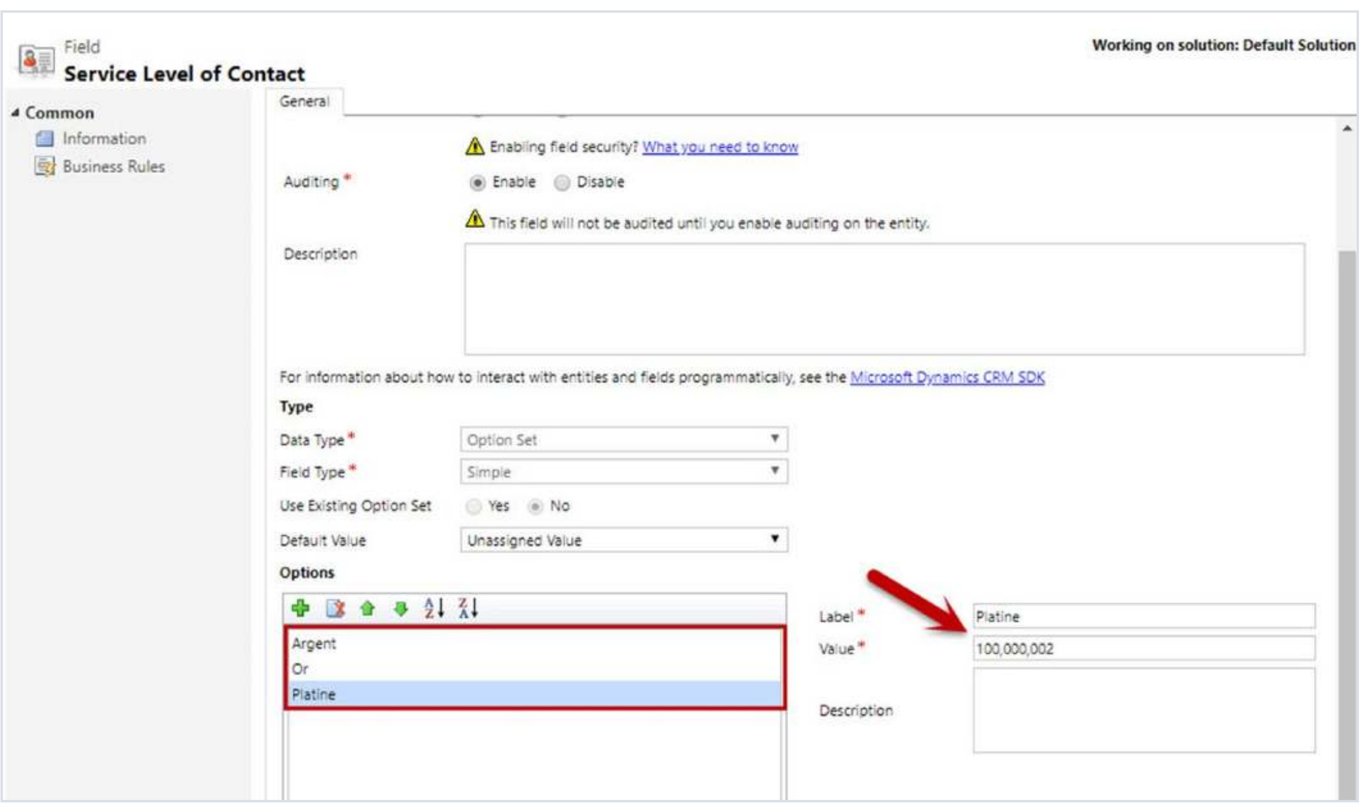
Non-English Base Language Scenario

Let's go back to the scenario I mentioned earlier with French and U.S. users in a French base language environment, where the U.S. users have their user languages set to English. A user on your U.S. team wants to send out ClickDimensions emails that indicate to the customer their current service level, in the language of that customer's preference. The Service Level field in this company's environment was set up by the French CRM admin who created it all it in French. The admin thought ahead and knew that U.S. users would be viewing the CRM in English, so he modified the CRM's translations, so this custom field could all be translated to English. So, when the U.S. user views a contact record, the Service Level field and its options will appear in English.

For the email, the U.S. user inserts FreeMarker to pull the service level field value for a U.S. Contact, whose level they see as Silver. Before sending the email to the contact, they wanted to test everything out by sending an email to themselves first and it's good that they did. The populated FreeMarker value in the received email was the French word "Argent." What the user forgot was that they have their user language set to English and are not viewing CRM in its French base language. So, when they saw the customer's level as Silver in the contact record, they were expecting that to populate in the email.

English Base Language Scenario

For this next scenario, let's imagine we have a company with U.S. users and French users, but because the company is headquartered in the U.S., the base language for the CRM is in English. However, the CRM admin is still in France. So, when the admin is configuring custom fields, such as our Service Level field in the prior example, the base language is in English but the field values themselves are in French. As you can see in the screenshot below, which is taken from an environment with a base language of English, we have a custom option set field with our service package levels.

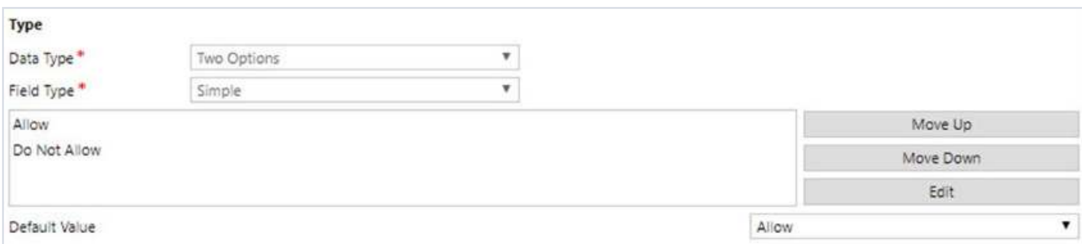


When testing, the FreeMarker will pull the French values here into the final email because that's what was input into the field properties, regardless of base or user language.

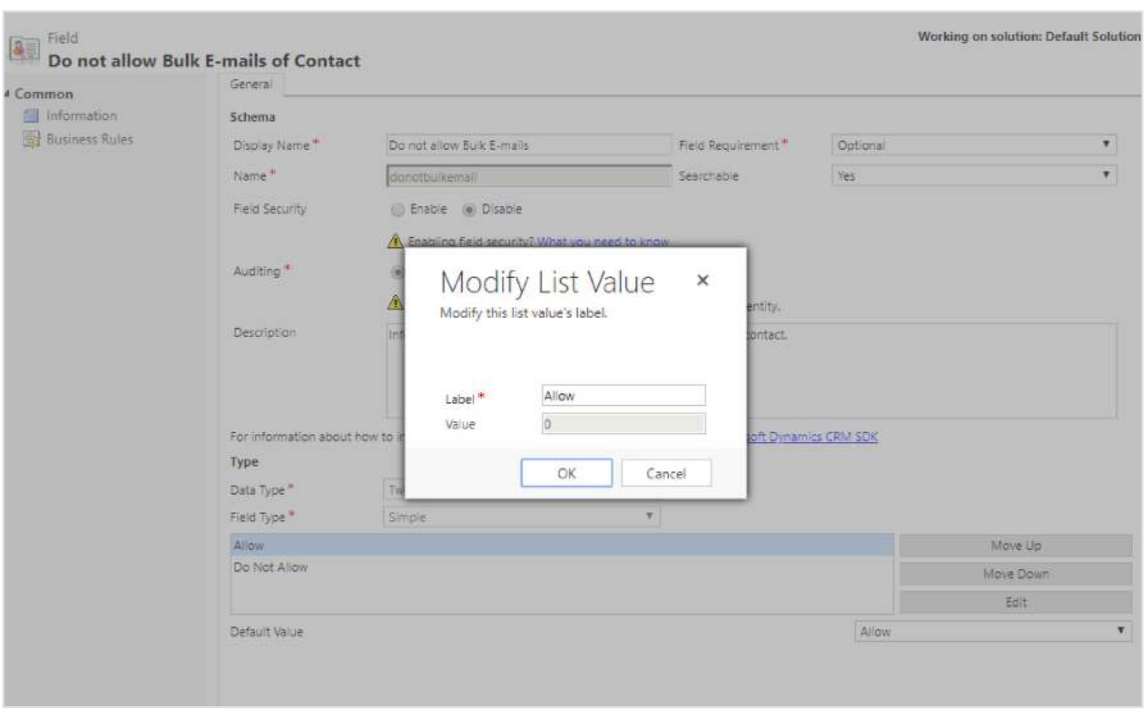
Remember, for default option set fields, those will translate when viewed in the user language. So, for any fields that translate in the user language, users might not always know if the field is currently translated into their language or not. For custom fields, it can be equally hard to tell if the values were set up in French or if the values are actually in English, if the admin has configured those to translate. You can always ask your CRM admin to look at the field's properties to know what language the values are in or you can switch the user language back to be the same as the base language and look at the field's values.

Option Fields: Two Options

Two option fields work the same way as option sets. FreeMarker will pull the field's label in the language that the field options were either built in (custom fields) or came in out of the box (default fields). So, if the CRM's base language is in French, and the CRM admin built the values in French, then the values pulled by the FreeMarker will be in French. Additionally, labels can be customized. Below are the properties for a default two option CRM field, Do Not Allow Bulk Email. There are three types of option fields—option sets, two options and checkboxes—and they all align with this behavior.



By clicking Edit, you can see the label of the field and you are able to change it if you wish.



Takeaways or Additional Options for Populating Desired Language Content

If your company inserts text values that are already in the specific customer's preferred language, then a text field is the easiest way to ensure your FreeMarker pulls in text in the language you want. Whatever is put in the text field is the value that will be in the final email. In this method, what you see is what you get, because no matter what language the CRM is being viewed in, the field value will appear the same.

You could use conditional statements to render the desired information. For example, you could add FreeMarker that looks to see if a custom field has been configured for your contacts and leads that indicates that individual's language preference. So, if language = French and the service level = Silver and have it to display "Argent" for those individuals, and language = English and service level = Silver and force it to display "Silver" for those individuals (or whatever the value of the picklist field may be).

Additionally, your CRM admin could create separate option set fields for English and French values, but it is important to remember customizations can only be done in the base language. So, in our imaginary scenario with the French CRM admin setting up the Service Level field in all French, they would need to create an additional Service Level field for English values.

Lastly, we always recommend segmenting your emails when all else fails. Divide your marketing list into service level and/or by language to ensure the correct emails go to the correct recipients.

3 Ways Social Advocacy Can be Your Best Sales Tool

Social advocacy is a must today when searching for new ways to advance your organization. In case you aren't familiar, social advocacy allows companies to amplify their social marketing reach by providing a platform for their employees to quickly and easily share the company's social media posts with their own individual networks. It can also include an element of gamification to encourage employee participation. In addition to extending brand reach, engaging in social advocacy also increases employee satisfaction, strengthens company-customer relationships and helps achieve organizational goals. There are also three ways that social advocacy can amplify sales.

1. Becoming an industry thought leader through content sharing.
Sharing thought-provoking content that is applicable to your target market can trigger wider engagement with a previously untapped audience and generate new leads. Word-of-mouth marketing has become extremely efficient with social media, especially when a large group of employees can quickly share from their own social platforms to reach a vast audience. Rich content that is consistent, helpful, provides tips or tricks, or general industry topics related to current events can build credibility and attracts people who want to know more, which in turn, attracts qualified leads.

2. Building familiarity and relationships.
Through strategically targeted social content, your company can draw in related business opportunities, leads, customers and/or partners to build meaningful relationships through social media. This authenticity and trust is developed through direct one-on-one communication with people who participate in discussions related to your content. You have direct access to respond accordingly, quickly and educationally. Old school marketing meant touching many people at once, but with social interaction your marketing is elevated to the next level and even humanized for little to a fraction of the cost. Not only can you let your audiences know what's going on with your business, but you also gain key insights as to what is going on with them. Learning who attends what events or conferences, possible pain points they experience, product updates, news from press releases – it all makes it easier to have those sales conversations when the time comes. Best of all, these efforts are only amplified by your employee social advocates.

3. Embracing your employees to embrace the brand.
Transforming employees into advocates for your company builds your business from within. If you motivate your employees and get them excited about becoming involved across your social platforms, that energy will translate to each sector of your business. Showcasing events employees attended as speakers or highlighting employee contributions such as blog articles or press mentions are a few ways to actively engage your team and make them the star of the show. Social advocacy helps empower your employees to know that their contribution to support the company makes a difference.

Bringing social advocacy to the forefront of your business should be an ongoing priority. As an underutilized sales tool, it could be a powerful channel for enhancing your company's reputation with key stakeholders.

6 Ways a Marketing Automation Solution Can Help Improve the Customer Experience

We have said it before and we will say it again: Marketing automation isn't just for marketing anymore. A marketing automation solution is an essential tool for both ramping up on creating a memorable customer experience and maintaining that experience over time. These technology platforms include a wide variety of features that can be used to enhance the customer experience, including those outlined below. This isn't an exhaustive list of all the features you might find in a marketing automation solution, but rather a glimpse at some of those that might be most effectively used in customer interactions.

1. Email marketing.
According to Litmus, 72 percent of people prefer email communication. With a stat like that, it's easy to see why the email marketing feature within a marketing automation system is a valuable tool for your customer experience efforts. From the first interaction with your organization to initial purchase to loyal customer, there are many occasions and ways that email can contribute to improving the customer experience. Email campaigns can be specifically targeted to specific segments of customers, and personalization tools can be used to address customers by name or to reference other details such as their most recent purchase, their account number, their birthday and much more. Email is a great way to stay connected with customers and address their ongoing needs.

2. Campaign automation.
By enabling you to send the right communications at the right time, campaign automations can help you transform the customer experience from mediocre to memorable. Using various decision points, campaign automations help you respond to customer actions by sending messages that respond to those actions. For example, using campaign automation, you can send new customers a series of messages regarding training opportunities or other helpful information they will want to know as a new customer. Based on what they click within these messages, you could discover which customers may need additional personal attention and provide it for them.

3. Landing pages and forms.
Landing pages and forms are often associated with leads and demand generation, but these same tools can also be used effectively once those leads have converted to customers. Customers love content too, and landing pages and forms are a perfect fit with content marketing efforts. The information gleaned from the forms completed for content downloads can help inform interactions and relationships with customers, and the content itself is a prime opportunity for improving a customer's experience by educating, entertaining or helping them.

4. Surveys.
Customer satisfaction surveys and surveys that follow customer transactions are an important part of the customer experience. Surveys can also be used in a variety of other ways to gain valuable customer insights while also engaging that audience. For example, you could ask customers to tell you what topics they would like to read about on your blog or in eBooks, or even use surveys to create a competition where customers vote for their favorite of your company's products or services.

5. Event management.
Many marketing automation systems have integrations that connect with popular event management platforms. ClickDimensions, for example, currently offers event integrations with GoToWebinar, WebEx, Cvent and Eventbrite. These integrations allow you to see event, registration and attendee information directly within Microsoft Dynamics 365, giving you greater insight into who registers for and attends your organization's events. Events, both online and off, can be used to connect with and delight customers. Consider offering your customers regular educational or training webinars, or host an in-person customer reception or conference that offers information or experiences that are exclusively for customers.

6. SMS messaging.
According to Mobile Marketing Watch, SMS messages have an open rate of 98 percent. With customers so tuned into SMS, it can be an effective channel for strengthening your customer experience efforts. Appointment or event reminders, special offers or thank you messages are all well-suited for SMS and can help make your company's customer experience stand out, and help you win the hearts and loyalty of your customers.

12 Leveraging Google Tag Manager to Track SEM Conversions

Google Tag Manager (GTM) allows you to tag your website or landing pages so they can be triggered every time a user visits a specific page. Coupled with Google Analytics, GTM is a useful tool for collecting and analyzing data. By managing all the tags on your website or landing pages, you can effectively and efficiently create digital marketing strategies that you can adapt and scale based on the data that you receive from your tags. Here are three important things to keep in mind so you can get the most out of Google Tag Manager:

1. Account structure.
With Google Tag Manager, it is very important that you structure your account correctly so that it can serve accurate data from the tags. Once you log into GTM, you can create accounts. There is one domain per account. In that account, you create a workspace where you input a container code on your website. Sometimes this can be done utilizing a plug-in if you are using a WordPress website. Once you add this container code, you can add a tag based off a certain tag type. From there, you enter a conversion ID from your Google Ads account and choose which pages you want the tag to trigger. Usually, these pages are your landing pages. For better visibility and accurate data, I would suggest tracking conversion pages after a visitor has completed their purchase or downloaded the piece of content they were looking for. That way, you are not just tracking the users that visited the page, but the users that converted once they viewed the page.

2. Utilizing variables.
GTM has variables that serve as a placeholder for values that populate in both triggers and tags. Those variables help capture when a tag should trigger an activity and captures the value of a transaction or product ID. Google has both built-in variables and custom variables. Built-in variables are predefined and handle the need for tag and trigger configurations while custom variables can be built to suit specific requirements, whether it's a multiple domain website or page titles. Utilizing these variables will allow you store a value across both Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager.

3. Testing, testing and more testing.
Before your GTM workspace is published, you can preview it before you set it live. In the preview phase, you can preview and debug your tags, triggers and variables so that you are tracking your data correctly and efficiently. You don't want to just set up the workspace and look for tracking only to discover that it's not tracking accurately. So, preview it and debug it, if necessary. Once GTM has gathered some data from your website and landing pages, you can utilize this data to make your marketing efforts more successful.

Google Tag Manager can be somewhat tricky to work with initially, but once you get the hang of it, it provides valuable data that can provide much needed insight into your digital marketing campaigns. The tags and triggers help you to see whether an item is removed from a cart or how people are arriving at your site, and they can allow you to monitor form submissions and even file downloads.

6 Tips for SMS Marketing Success

How much time on average do people spend on their smartphones every day? The answer varies widely from one study to another, but estimates range from 2.5 hours to five hours. In short, the answer is a lot.

All that time spent on smartphones presents tremendous opportunities for marketers to get their messages heard and establish deeper connections with their audiences. And while we might first think of people checking their email or scrolling through social media on their phones, there's another activity that is often overlooked as a marketing opportunity – text messaging, also known as SMS messaging.

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, according to research from SAP, 76 percent of people report that they will open text messages before emails, making them an especially good fit for time-sensitive information.

So, how do you realize marketing success with SMS messaging? Here are six tips:

1. Have permission.
First and foremost, before you use SMS marketing with anyone in your CRM database, ensure that they have opted-in to receive such messages from your organization. Not only is this a best practice for marketing in general, but without permission, you can violate many laws and regulations. Be sure to also provide an opt-out option to your subscribers.

2. Get to the point.
With SMS messages, you are limited to 160 characters in a single message, so brevity is a must. That means there's no room for nonessential information. Make sure your message is concise while also including all the key details someone needs to be interested in your message – who, what, when, where and how are all great points to cover.

3. Be clear.
You may be tempted to abbreviate words in your message in order to fit within the 160-character limit, but avoid that temptation. Abbreviations, slang or jargon can be easily misunderstood, rendering your message ineffective. Ask a colleague or friend to review your message to ensure that it's clear and easy to understand.

4. Have a strong call to action.
Make it clear to your recipients what you want them to do. Whether it's showing a text for a discount, clicking a link to sign up for something, responding to your message or a number of other actions, ensure that recipients know what to do and that it's easy for them to do it.

5. Focus on timing.
Be careful not to send SMS messages too early in the morning or too late at night, and be aware of how different time zones will impact that timing. Also, take advantage of the immediacy of text messaging when planning your campaigns. If you're using SMS to tell customers about a special promotion that starts on Friday at noon, for example, send the text exactly when the promotion starts. No matter what you're conveying via SMS, tap into its potential for real-time communication by telling your recipients what is happening right now or in the very near future.

6. Grow your subscribers.

To maximize the reach of your SMS messaging, you need to increase opt-ins. Your customers may not be aware that SMS is an option for communicating with your business, so ensure they see that message across channels. Promote via social, your website, email marketing campaigns and any other channels you regularly utilize. If they aren't opted-in already, ensure contacts that you have a phone number for receive a simple opt-in text message to further grow your list.

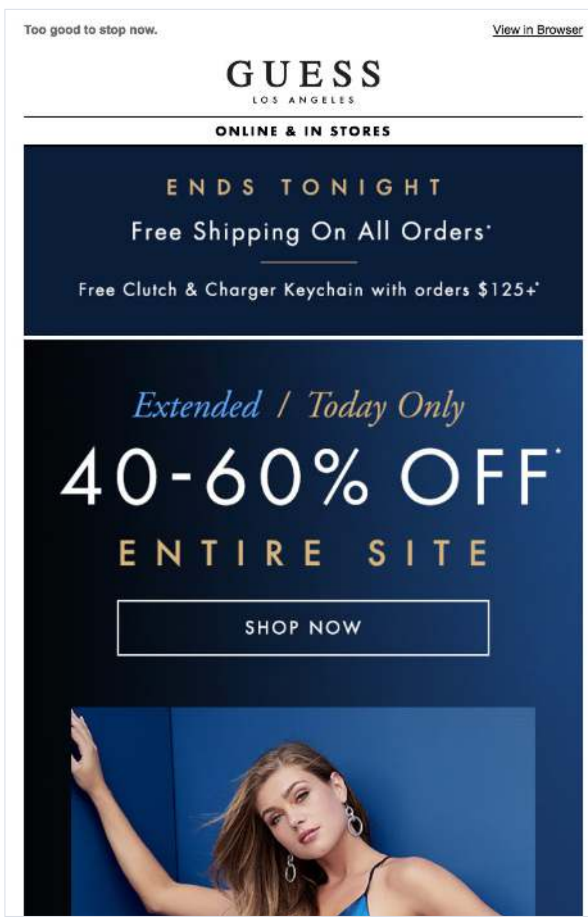
14 3 Email Design Tips for Non-Designers

Email marketing is one of the easiest and most common ways for businesses to communicate and connect with their customers. Since we live in such a visual world today, in addition to a compelling message, these emails need to have an engaging design. Many companies have a graphic designer on staff who ensures emails look visually appealing. But what if you don't have a graphic designer on your team? Using the three tips below, your emails can still look great even if you don't have a professional designer on staff.

1. Understand a few basic design elements.
There are a few key design elements that, when applied, can drastically improve the look and feel of your e-mail.

Hierarchy of Elements:

A good design practice that most businesses already follow is putting the most important information at the top of the email. Depending upon the type of device or browser the recipient is using, sometimes longer messages will get cut off. You want to make sure the key message you want to convey is at the top where readers are more likely to see it. For instance, in this email from Guess, the most important information is at the very top of the email. So even if you just saw that part, you would know that they are having a sale and when it is ending.

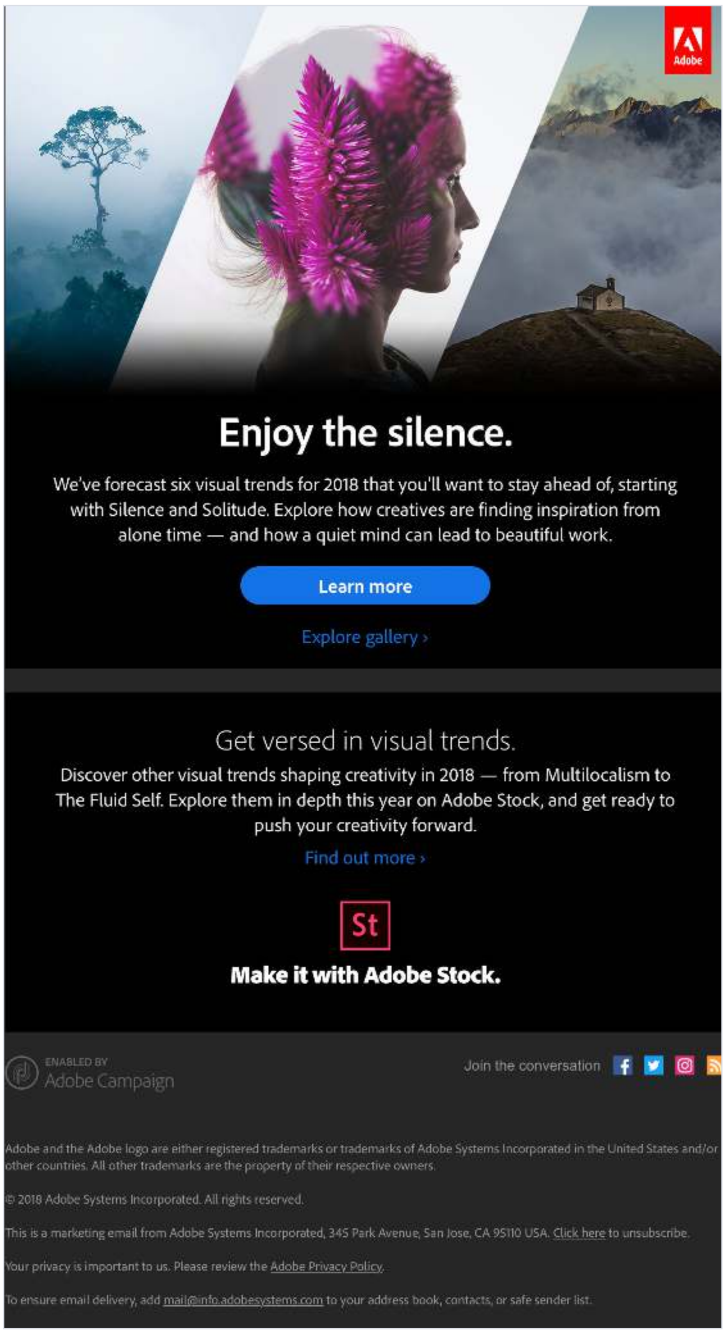


White Space:

Have you ever received an email that was so over-crowded with information and images that you weren't sure what you were supposed to be looking at? Usually messages like that have very little white space, and sometimes none at all. White space doesn't have to necessarily be white in color; it just refers to a section that has unused space around it. Apple excels at using white space in their emails and advertisements. Notice how the spacing surrounding the title, the image of the phone and call to actions at the bottom allow the viewer to easily see all the information without any confusion or having to search for it.

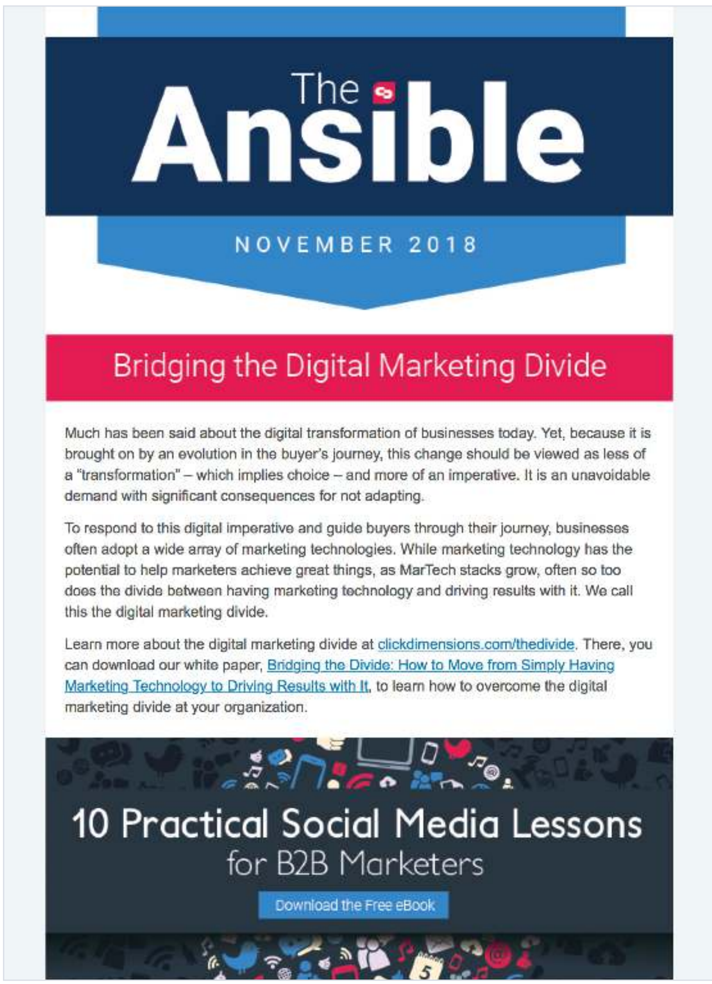
Font Usage:

A good rule of thumb when it comes to fonts is less is more. In most cases, you want to stick to a maximum of two different fonts. Otherwise, the eye finds it hard to scan multiple typefaces and things start to look messy and cluttered. If you are having trouble deciding which fonts look good together, an easy tip is to use different variants of the same font family. For instance, maybe your header is Roboto Bold, but your tagline is Roboto Italicized. Another way to make things visually interesting is to use different sizes of the same font. In this email from Adobe you can see how even though same font is used, the different sizes and styles draw the reader's attention to different parts of the email.



2. Keep it simple.
Often, companies include way more content than they need to in an email. Keeping a design clean and simple is usually the best approach to any kind of email. As mentioned earlier when talking about hierarchy, if your message is too long, you risk it getting cut off and your recipients often aren't going to read the entire thing. Studies show that you have an average of eight seconds to catch a reader's attention and engage with them. Make sure you don't waste yours with an email that is over-crowed and over-complicated!

3. Consistency is key.
Consistency is the foundation to a strong design. If you use different fonts, colors and styles every time you send an email, your brand is going to suffer. You want your reader to be able to easily recognize your company when they receive digital communication from you. An easy way to do this is to learn your brand guidelines so you can implement them in your emails. You may have noticed that in our very own ClickDimensions newsletter, The Ansible, we use the same colors and fonts every time to adhere to our brand guidelines and build a stronger connection between our customers and our brand.



As you can see, learning a few graphic design skills doesn't have to be difficult! Once you start putting these tips into practice, they will soon become second nature. Just start with the basics and you will be on your way to creating visually engaging emails for your business in no time!

Content Curation for B2B Marketers: 6 Tips for Social Media

One of the most familiar phrases in marketing today is, "content is king." Time and time again, this statement has proven to be true in all areas of marketing. It can be especially relevant in social media. Social media requires that you constantly feed the content machine, which can be difficult and time-consuming if you are relying solely on original content. That's where content curation comes in. By sharing news and topics that are of interest to your audiences from other respected sources, you provide valuable resources for your followers while filling your social media editorial calendar. However, having a content curation plan is essential to its success. Here are five tips for achieving that success:

1. Stick to a strategy.
What do you want your brand to be known for? Before you begin to share content from other sources, you should define your mission and what you want to achieve. Outline specific categories that align with your business such as best practices, industry news or how-to articles. Segmenting content into buckets will make it easier to organize what you share and how often. This method will ultimately become an easy way to create a content calendar for quick publishing.

2. Always put your audience's interest first.
As with all things marketing, understanding what your audience wants is key. This can be done through research, or even simply monitoring what your audience is clicking, sharing, retweeting and what pages or thought leaders they follow. Looking beyond mainstream sources and branching out to related underground content is another way to attract new followers. Consider using other methods to find content such as the ClickDimensions social engagement platform. This will save you time from having to sift through articles looking for related and/or specific topics.

3. Read everything before sharing.
Using content from credible trustworthy sources is imperative, which is why it is important to read through anything you may be considering sharing. If necessary, involve others on your team to assist with reviewing articles from outside sources. This can help you avoid the embarrassment of sharing content that doesn't align well with your business.

4. Switch it up.
You may not always have lengthy articles to share, and that's perfectly acceptable. It helps ensure variety and promote engagement. Switching up your content formats with infographics, podcasts, videos or images diversifies your curated content while still adding value.

5. Add your voice.
Including your perspective or drawing conclusions from content will elevate your content curation strategy. You could even blend your ideas with curated content to create an original new topic. Adding your opinion and commentary gives you an opportunity to position your business as a thought leader and ignite conversation. People naturally trust those with reputable influence in their industry.

6. Analyze.
Conduct an audit on which curated content performs better than others by pulling reports from unique tracking URLs, clicks, shares, etc. Analyzing the engagement rate can help you optimize content so that it is better resonates with your audience and drives future success.

16 5 Unlikely Places for Content Marketing Inspiration

Ideas and inspiration. If you were to ask a room full of content marketers what they need to be successful, ideas and inspiration would likely top that list. That's because they are the fuel for everything else in the content marketing process, and at some point, even the best, most experienced and most talented content marketers run low on that fuel.

So, what do you do when the more conventional sources of content marketing inspiration are all tapped out or just aren't giving you the insight and vision you need to create a remarkable piece of content? Try these five more unlikely sources to generate new content marketing ideas:

1. Pop culture.
Turn on a TV, browse a news website or scroll through Facebook, and you are likely to see a lot of celebrity news. While you may or may not care which famous people are breaking up or making up today, celebrities and pop culture are a powerful draw for modern audiences. To capitalize on this for your own content, think about how you can spin today's headlines for your own audiences. Does the current top-rated movie at the box office offer insights that would be relevant to your customers? Or does the latest celebrity feud demonstrate a lesson or trend for your industry?

2. Your kids.
If you have kids or spend any amount of time around them, particularly young ones, you know that they ask a lot of questions. Depending on your industry, questions like "Why is the sky blue?" and "Why can't I eat chocolate chip cookies for dinner?" might not make for the best content. However, there is still content marketing inspiration to be gleaned here. Think about why children formulate questions like they do. They want to understand the world around them and why they should or shouldn't do certain things. As adults, we're no different. So, think about how you can make the world make more sense for your customers and how you can answer their questions about why they should or shouldn't do certain things related to your industry.

3. Traveling on an airplane.
Airplanes are like giant waiting rooms in the sky. You're just killing time waiting to arrive at your destination, not able to go anywhere else. This is the perfect place for content marketing inspiration to strike. You just have to let it happen. Instead of purchasing Wi-Fi and catching up on emails, try relaxing instead. Look out the window or put in your earbuds and listen to your favorite tunes. Studies have shown that creativity is more likely to happen when we step away from work and clear our heads, and a flight is a great environment to do exactly that. To help keep your thoughts from drifting too far, try focusing on a particular topic or question. For example, what keeps your customers up at night or how will industry changes impact your audiences.

4. Binging on Netflix shows.
Netflix is doing a tremendous job of creating content people want to watch. And if you're a subscriber of the streaming service, you and the many consecutive hours you've spent parked in front of the TV likely know this already. Netflix's award wins and increasing popularity is rooted in its more recent focus on original content, which is known for great storytelling. So, the next time you are binging a Netflix series or checking out one of their original films, pay attention to how the story is told. What captivates you? What makes you want to keep watching well past your bedtime? While Netflix is dealing in the realm of fiction and your content is nonfiction, you can still use the same storytelling techniques to inspire your content and make it irresistible to your audiences.

5. Job descriptions.

For B2B marketers, job titles are an essential part of marketing personas. They can also be used to help you create your next content marketing hit. Simply search for employment opportunities for those job titles and read the job description section. This will give you an idea of the job expectations for your customers and can help you create content that helps them meet those expectations. Periodic searches of these job descriptions are also an effective way to see emerging trends for your customers. For example, you might see a particular technology or skill suddenly start to appear in job descriptions. Respond to this with content and your customers will thank you.

17 So, You've Set up Your Pay-Per-Click Campaigns – Now What?

Here's a bit of a tough pill to swallow for time-crunched marketers: creating pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns is not a set it and forget it process. For PPC campaigns to be successful and to deliver the best possible results, you must give them your attention. If you are not working on improving your PPC campaigns at least once or twice a week, over time, things could change that would negatively impact your results. The good news is that marketers who work to continuously improve their pay-per-click campaigns reap the rewards in their return on investment. So, how can we ensure continued campaign success? Here are two key things to do:

1. Optimize.
Optimizing your pay-per-click campaigns is essential for campaign success. A few optimizing techniques involve reviewing the search query, which are the keywords that people use to trigger your ads. If those query strings aren't relevant to the product or service that you offer, add them to the negative keyword list. Why pay for a click that isn't going to bring you a return on your investment?

Another tip for optimizing your PPC campaigns is precise ad copy. Ensure that the keywords that you are bidding on appear in your ad copy at least once in a creative way. Make sure that you are not being redundant, and the ad copy makes sense. Also ensure that the same wording that you are bidding on is the same wording that is in your ads and that the same wording is also found on the landing page that your ads connect to. This will drastically improve your quality score, which can lower the amount you pay per click and increase the visibility of your ads.

2. Bidding and keyword matching.
If you are not adjusting your bidding on your keywords manually or using broad match keyword matching on the keywords you are targeting, adjusting those can help increase the amount of clicks you receive from the campaigns that are currently running. Simply changing your keywords from broad match to exact match or phrase match can help weed out irrelevant traffic and help increase your click-through rate. It helps potential customers who are searching for your exact product or service find what they are looking for, instead of your ad popping up for every inquiry. You pay for a narrower, yet concentrated search. That search can yield a better return on your investment than a broad match keyword match can.

Changing your automated bidding to a more manual bidding structure allows you to have more control over the amount that you are paying per click. It helps you stay informed on exactly how much you are spending, or the maximum amount that you will spend on a click. If you don't want to manually change your bidding or you don't have that amount of time, stick to an automated bidding structure but make sure that you are still managing it periodically. As mentioned in the intro, PPC isn't a set it and forget it endeavor.

Beyond Birthdays: 5 Occasion Emails to Delight Your Customers

Birthdays are now a big digital occasion. From a Facebook timeline covered with wishes to an inbox filled with greetings, birthdays are no longer the relatively private celebration they once were. Birthdays are also now a big opportunity for brands looking to surprise, delight and connect with their customers, which today often comes in the form of an email. The downside is that this occasion only comes once a year. Fortunately, birthdays aren't the only occasions brands can celebrate with their customers as they look to boost their customer experience. Below are five ideas for other occasions to mark with your customers throughout the year.

But first, a brief reminder before we get started with the ideas. Keep in mind that, for some of these ideas, you can be limited by the data that you store within your CRM and make a conscious effort to gather data that can help you enhance the customer experience in small, but powerful ways.

1. Firsts with your company.
The day that a prospect converts to a customer is a big deal. Why not give it the attention that it's due? Whether it's the first time they made an individual purchase, used your service or signed a contract, take the time to thank them for their business. You could also use this opportunity to send them a brief survey to share their opinion on how your business or products have met their expectations in the time since your relationship started. Or send them a special promotional offer as a thank you.

2. Job promotions.
For B2B marketers, job promotions are an excellent opportunity to connect with customers. While you won't find this data in CRM, you will want to update an individual's contact record with this new information. You can then send a personalized email using dynamic content that includes their new title. This allows you to go beyond a simple congrats from a sales person or account manager on LinkedIn and show that your company as a whole cares about their career advancement and success.

3. Anniversaries.
There are a few different options for recognizing your customers' anniversaries and it again depends on the information you choose to gather and store in your CRM. The anniversary you recognize may also be influenced by whether your business is B2B or B2C. Wedding anniversaries may be more appropriate for B2C while work anniversaries might make more sense on the B2B side of things. Either way, personalized anniversary email greetings are a way to show customers that you remember big moments in their lives.

4. Family changes.
Speaking of big moments, they don't really get any bigger than a marriage or the birth or adoption of a child. Recognizing these special events can really help you go the extra mile in the customer experience. However, unless you are in the wedding industry or make products for babies, it can sometimes be challenging for brands to be aware of these events. Train your sales team, customer service reps, account managers and other customer-facing employees to listen out for these happenings in their conversations with customers and empower them to send designated congratulatory company email communications in celebration.

5. Professional recognition days or weeks
March 30 is Doctors Day. August 19 is Chef Appreciation Day. October 10 is International Newspaper Carrier Day. Pick any day or week of the year, and there's a holiday or observance associated with it, some of which recognize certain professions. Join in the celebration with a targeted email. So, for example, if you have a segment of customers that are nurse practitioners, you could send them an email thanking them for their professional contributions during Nurse Practitioner Week in November.

19 3 Google Analytics Features That Could Enhance Your Email Marketing Campaigns

Leveraging Google Analytics in your email marketing campaigns can drastically improve your results. These simple tools can help provide valuable insights into your subscribers and help win back potential customers you may have lost along the way. Some of these tools are more complex than others, but they all aid in producing the best results for your email marketing campaigns.

1. Goal Setting.
While this feature is a simple one, the way you utilize it could significantly improve the results of your email marketing campaigns. A goal through Google Analytics allows you to keep a record of a page that you specify when a visitor has gone to your website and shown interest in your product/service. Whether that's a newsletter sign up or a contact us form, setting a goal will allow you to see when you meet these goals. It will also help you analyze your leads and customers, and better understand their preferences and behaviors so that you can appeal to them in a way that will produce great results.

2. Email Campaign Tracking.
Connecting your email marketing campaigns with a web analytics solution like Google Analytics can help drastically improve the effectiveness of your email marketing campaigns. By using a tracking code from your email system, like ClickDimensions, and putting it on your web pages, it allows you to track when an individual clicks through from your email campaign to the website. "Beyond the click tracking" helps you to analyze the interaction with different pages or review the bounce rate. Analyzing this information will allow you to gauge and test what is working for your potential customers and what isn't. Maybe the page you linked the email marketing campaign to doesn't provide the information that your subscribers need or maybe the font choice or color selection isn't engaging enough. By reviewing the data this tracking provides, you can analyze your efforts and try something different next time.

3. Email Campaign Tagging.
Google Analytics allows you to create UTM tracking for all your email templates and individual email assets. Once you do this, you can easily track, report and analyze the performance of your email marketing campaign. Once your campaign tagging is set up, you can see where the traffic is coming from, where they went to on your website, how long they stayed on your website, and whether they completed a goal or even converted to a sale.

By utilizing these Google Analytics features and tying them into your email marketing campaigns, you will be able to differentiate between active or non-active subscribers. You can then formulate a plan for engaging those that aren't actively engaged with your brand. When trying to understand customer behaviors, remember to test and measure everything, whether it's the wording on the campaign, the color scheme of the campaign or the landing page that the campaign connects to. Analyze this information, apply changes and measure the effects of those changes, so that you produce better results for your business and your customers.

20 Preserving Sender Reputation When Moving to a New Email Service Provider

Switching email vendors can mean a lot of moving parts and, if you're like most marketers, a lot of questions. While you're likely focused on the specifics of breaking in a new system, there might be one thing you had not considered – email deliverability. When thinking about email deliverability and moving to a new email service provider (ESP), there are a few things to remember to ensure a smooth transition.

First, while you will be sending from new IP addresses, you will carry your domain reputation with you. The most important thing you can do for email deliverability when switching email service providers is to start sending through the new provider using the best data. There is data at your old ESP that you will want to take with you. All the email addresses from subscribers that unsubscribed, marked your email as spam, hard bounced or became undeliverable (more than three soft bounces) will need to be suppressed in the new system.

Honoring unsubscribes have both an email deliverability component and a legal component. Unsubscribes should be recorded at the company level and be ESP agonistic. If you unsubscribe from a company's email, you expect them to stop sending me email. You don't expect to start receiving email again if they switch ESPs.

The other data components that need to be considered, spam complaints and bounces, have only email deliverability impacts. Sending to invalid recipients, recipients that have marked your email as spam, or receiving large volumes of bounces can impact your sender reputation. If the old ESP has already "cleaned that data out," you certainly want to avoid sending to those recipients again.

To follow best practices, unsubscribes should be preserved instead of removing the email address from the marketing population. If the latter is done and the recipient is reintroduced to the marketing population, the unsubscribe won't be honored. As for the other data points, either removal from the database or suppression will work.

While we are on the subject of cleaning up data, removing unengaged subscribers periodically will help keep data fresh (not to mention improve campaign metrics). We usually recommend doing this at least every six months, but historical data is needed. If you have subscribers that haven't opened or clicked in nine to 12 months, there are good reasons to suppress them. You will want to retain some of the engagement data from the previous ESP to help with this process. We will get into more detail about the why and how of unengaged subscribers in an upcoming post.

Lastly, and probably the most straightforward tip when switching ESPs, make sure that whichever sending domain is chosen that the necessary DNS records are in place prior to sending. Is your SPF record updated? Do you have DMARC in place on the sending domain? Is the email CNAME configured properly? If you are a ClickDimensions customer, we are happy to help with these items during onboarding.

To recap, when moving to a new ESP, you don't want to cause any harm to the sending reputation you have worked hard to establish. During the transition you will need data from your old system to:

- Bring over any email addresses that need to remain suppressed (unsubscribes, spam complaints, hard bounces and undeliverables)
- Bring over unsubscribes so those recipients remain unsubscribed
- Query the historical data to identify the email addresses that are unengaged, so they can be removed

That way you can start with your best foot – er, data – forward.

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10 Benefits of Outsourcing Marketing

More tactics. More technology. More data. More results. Less time. Doing more with less is a way of life for many marketers today. With the continued growth of new ways to reach consumers, new marketing tactics and new technologies, the marketing workload can feel more unmanageable than ever.

So, what's a savvy marketing team to do to keep pace with the demands of the day? For many, outsourcing marketing, either to a marketing agency or a managed services provider, is a smart solution. Here are 10 ways organizations benefit from an outsourced marketing relationship:

1. Outside insights and innovation.
As marketers, we all get stuck in a rut sometimes. Either out of familiarity or necessity, or a little of both, we sometimes stick with the same strategies or tactics without exploring other options. Outsourcing is a great way to break out of this rut by giving you access to individuals who have a fresh perspective on your business and can offer new ideas for innovating your marketing efforts.

2. Scale efforts quickly.
When you need to act quickly, relying on existing resources can hinder those efforts. Working with a marketing agency or managed services provider gives you greater bandwidth to scale marketing efforts quickly and respond to revenue contribution demands.

3. Avoid worrying about staff leaves or vacations.
Team member time off can be a significant cause of stress for marketing teams, even though it's a necessary part of work life. This is particularly true for longer leaves like for medical reasons or the birth or adoption of a child. Instead of worrying about who will cover for the absent employee, you can turn to outsourcing to handle that workload without overwhelming other team members.

4. Reduced overhead expenses.
Marketing departments often get to the point where they would like to add a new skillset, but they either don't have quite enough work to justify a full-time employee or don't want to (or can't) foot the bill for overhead expenses that come with employees like benefits and training. Outsourcing gives you the manpower and skills you need without the overhead expenses.

5. Expanded marketing channel expertise.
The channels by which marketers can reach customers and prospects today feels virtually endless, and yet new ones still pop up regularly. A marketing agency or managed services provider can help you expand your presence in a new or existing marketing channel for your team, thus increasing your opportunities for reaching your audiences.

6. Shifting from tactics to strategy.
Many marketing teams get so bogged down in the "what" that they forget the "why." Outsourcing can give you a chance to change that. An agency or managed services provider can help one of two ways here. You could either task them with creating a marketing strategy or outsource some of your regular tactics, so your team can focus on building out an effective marketing strategy in-house.

7. Access to the best technology.
Agencies invest heavily in having the best technology to serve their customers and execute their campaigns, which means you get access to this technology too. Managed services typically come from marketing technology companies, so going this route, you can ensure you have access to experts in the technology your team utilizes.

8. Increased efficiency.
Do you sometimes feel like you will never see the end of your to-do list? Or like you just don't have enough hours in the day to get things done? Outsourcing some of your marketing efforts can help increase your efficiency like you never thought possible. Agencies and managed service providers have a wide variety of resources at their fingertips to ensure they get your jobs done.

9. Decreased internal staff load.
Managing too-large workloads can lead to burnout which can lead to employees seeking out new job opportunities. Outsourcing to an agency or managed services provider can help keep your marketing team members happy by decreasing their individual workloads and allowing them to focus on the parts of their jobs they find most engaging and rewarding.

10. Achieving results and ROI.
At the end of the day, results are what really matter to marketers. With their expertise and ability to be an extra set of hands to established marketing teams, marketing agencies and managed service providers can deliver.

22 3 Google Remarketing Ad Tips You Need to Try

Utilizing Google AdWords remarketing display ads can prove to be very beneficial to your business. Not only does it give you the opportunity to target the users who were specifically on your website browsing for information, it allows you to target those users based on their behavior on your site, so you can persuade them to convert. This handy tool can be very effective if you are looking to increase your conversions and decrease the amount of people that bounce off your website. But, if you are not careful, this tool can also be tricky. Without a strategy, you can easily blow your budget by targeting anyone that visits your site. Below are three tips to make sure that Google remarketing ads are working for you:

1. Visually engaging graphics.
Creating visually engaging content and graphics is very important when you are trying to get users to convert. Let's be honest; you expect to be wowed by the graphics in a remarketing campaign. Something so engaging that it would catch your attention while you are browsing another website, whether that's a catchy GIF of a cat playing with yarn or a photo that is simple and aesthetically pleasing. Either way, creating something eye-catching is a must so that you grab your audience's attention, keep it and entice them to click.

2. Niche targeted audience.
Creating a niche targeted audience that connects with your remarketing display ads will help you to choose individuals who are more likely to convert. Utilizing Google Analytics allows you to target behaviors. Whether you want to target someone who has been lingering on the pricing page or an individual who has viewed a specific video one or more times, Google Analytics allows you to go deep into the behavior, create an audience and attach it to your Google AdWords remarketing display ads. By crafting a niche audience, you are ensuring that you are only remarketing those individuals who are more likely to convert than someone who just landed on your website by mistake and bounced right off.

3. Conversion-centric landing page.

Aside from creating visually engaging graphics and a niche targeted audience that is more likely to convert, it is very important that you give people a way to convert once you have snagged them. That is through a conversion-centric landing page. Connect your AdWords campaign to a landing page that is aesthetically pleasing, but also has the “goods” you need to grab information from your audience. Whether that is a form field where they supply their email address for a newsletter or a longer form asking for information to download the latest eBook, requiring an action on the landing page will allow you the opportunity to snag that end user and persuade them to convert. You lost them the first time on your website, so make sure the second time counts!

These simple tips can bring the conversion rate of your remarketing display ads up by 30 percent or more! By targeting the right user with the right content and directing them to a landing page that is both visually engaging and conversion-focused, you will not only save money, but also bring in more money.

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5 Tips for Creating an Effective and Easy Annual Marketing Plan

As a new year approaches, you're likely hurriedly trying to wrap up all the projects and goals you wanted to accomplish for this year, all while trying to enjoy everything that the holiday season has to offer. And you still need to plan for next year too.

While it can be tempting to skip creating a formal annual marketing plan, especially during such a busy time of year, don't succumb to that temptation. A documented annual marketing plan sets the foundation for the coming year. It takes that solid foundation for everything you build upon it to be successful.

If you're reading this thinking that you simply don't have time to create an annual marketing plan, you aren't alone. But an effective marketing plan doesn't have to be overly complicated to create, as we outline in the tips below.

1. Set the stage.
All good future planning starts with a look at past progress and achievements. So, kick off your marketing plan with a brief look back. Provide highlights of your current-year to-date, including things like number of leads generated, ad conversion rates, social media followers, email stat averages, website traffic and other related statistics, along with a comparison to the year before so you can document progress or setbacks. Also, outline the challenges you faced during the current year.

2. Rely on research.
You know your target audience and customers, right? After all, you market to them on a daily basis. But it's important to recognize that these audiences can change, even ever so slightly, over time. Use your annual marketing plan as an opportunity to explore whether your target market has evolved. Dig into your own data and some basic market research to ensure that your ideas about your target audiences still align with who they actually are. Include this information in your marketing plan so everyone is on the same page about who marketing is targeting.

3. Analyze the year ahead.
A SWOT analysis is a simple and straightforward way to paint a picture of the year ahead. What are your company's strengths and weaknesses? What opportunities and threats does your business face? Creating a SWOT analysis can help you uncover any internal or external factors that could impact your marketing strategy in the coming year.

4. Spell out your strategy.
Now that you've examined your audience and your SWOT analysis for the year ahead, you're ready to detail how your company will approach the market. How will you stand out from competitors? What messaging will you use? What tactics and channels will you use to reach your audiences? How will your approach differ for various audience segments? These are all important questions to answer in the strategy section of your marketing plan.

5. Budget.
An annual marketing plan wouldn't be complete without a budget breakdown. A simple pie chart is a great way to illustrate the entire budget that your department has been allocated, along with how you will spend that money. Broad categories – such as PR, advertising, events, etc. – are fine for these purposes. You can think of this as a budget snapshot and save the details for a separate and more in-depth budget document.

6 Tips for Managing a Social Media Crisis

Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but one day, chances are very good that your business will have to deal with a social media crisis. With the continued and increasing popularity of social media as a communications channel for brands, there are more opportunities for both the good and the bad. To weather the storm when bad things do happen, consider these tips for handling a social media crisis:

1. Evaluate.
There's a big difference between a crisis and a problem. Before taking any actions, determine whether the events taking place are a minor problem or a major issue. This can avoid wasting time and resources for something that requires a simple solution. For example, a minor customer complaint can be dealt with through a direct and personalized response. However, an accidentally offensive post or a negative situation involving your company that arises outside of social media should necessitate elevating the issue to the status of crisis.

2. Have a plan.
Don't wait until a disaster strikes to plan how you will respond to it. Take the time now to prepare a social media crisis plan, if you don't have one already. To ensure the thoroughness of your crisis plan, brainstorm with other members of your team to flesh out a variety of potential crisis scenarios that could impact your business. Be sure to account for both online and offline threats, then map out a plan for how each should be responded to both internally and externally and who is responsible for executing each part of that plan. Also create a more general crisis plan for any issues that may arise that don't fit into the scenarios you identify so you are prepared for the unknown as much as the known.

3. Respond quickly.
Social media moves in real-time, which can be both beneficial and detrimental. In a crisis, that speed can work against your business if you aren't prepared to respond quickly. According to Edelman, while 28 percent of crises spread internationally within one hour, it takes an average of 21 hours for companies to issue meaningful external responses. The first step in rapid response is realizing that it will often require a tiered approach. First, aim to simply acknowledge the issue and commit to providing more details as soon as you have them. This can help buy your organization time to gather more information about the situation in order to craft more in-depth statements.

4. Don't argue or hide comments.
When a sea of negativity is staring you in the face, it can be tempting to delete negative posts. Resist that temptation because attempting to silence those voices will simply bring more frustration and fury your way. In addition, while it's great to respond to comments or questions in a helpful and positive manner, don't let the interaction dissolve into an argument. Avoid taking comments personally or falling into the trap of going back and forth with trolls. Instead, find a way to take the conversation off social by offering an email address, phone number or other offline avenue for persistent individuals to contact.

5. Educate employees.
Thanks to social media, it's easier than ever to find employees of any given organization. Keep this in mind as you prepare for or work through a crisis. While you may have a point person or multiple people designated to respond to inquiries and provide official responses, there is nothing stopping anyone from reaching out to your employees. Ensure that they know what to do and who to route individuals to when this happens. Also,

ensure that transparency prevails in your employee communications – let them know what's going on, what the planned resolution will be and when it should be resolved. You want employees to feel confident in the resolution of any crisis and that they aren't kept in the dark during it.

6. Document lessons learned.

Once the storm clouds have passed and the crisis is over, take time to hold a debriefing session with the key players involved. Talk about what worked and what didn't. What would you do differently next time? Were there people that weren't involved that should have been, or vice versa? Would you use the same or different communication channels the next time around? Be sure to hold this session soon after the crisis has passed so the lessons learned are still fresh on everyone's minds.

Thinking Outside the Booth: How to Plan for Trade Show Success

The booth – it's often thought of as the heart of every company's trade show appearance. Yet true trade show effectiveness is determined well before exhibitors are gathered in their designated spaces in the exhibit hall and even well after the booth and the leftover swag are shipped back home. Here are five ways to plan for trade show success, both pre- and post-event:

1. Determine your goals.
First things first; what do you hope to accomplish by exhibiting at a given trade show? While gathering leads is the primary goal for most companies at most trade shows, it isn't that cut and dry. Put a number to your goal. How many leads do you want to generate? And keep in mind that leads aren't the same as badges scanned. Badge scans measure your booth traffic, but you will need to determine some qualifying criteria for what makes some of those individuals leads. Also, keep in mind that some shows might not be about generating leads. Sometimes the goal might be to connect with customers or partners, for example.

2. Ensure everyone is on the same page.
If you have a trade show booth, you will need people to staff it. For your event to be a success, ensure that everyone on your trade show team is on the same page. Here at ClickDimensions, we create an agenda for every show we exhibit at and distribute it to every team member who will be working a given show. This agenda includes venue information, exhibit hall hours, details about any parties or after-hour events we are sponsoring, arrival and departure information for our attending team members, assigned booth hours for every team member, dress code and other related essentials. Roughly a week before the event, we also hold a prep call with everyone on our team who is attending to go over the agenda and answer any questions.

3. Promote your participation.
While it's true that many trade show attendees will simply find your booth as they wander the trade show floor, don't count on it. Conferences are hectic and sometimes schedules don't allow for large chunks of time to explore the exhibit hall. Or attendees use those breaks to check email and catch up with work. To maximize your exhibit hall time, before you attend a conference, make a list of must-visit exhibitors. You will likely find that many exhibitors make this list because of emails or social media posts prior to the conference. So, make sure you build awareness in the time leading up to the conference and that you answer an important question for attendees – what's in it for me? Why should they take time out of their busy schedule to visit your company's booth? It could be a solution to one of their biggest pain points, a new product or service you're showcasing, or even a great giveaway or piece of swag – or all of the above!

4. Schedule meetings.
In your pre-show emails, offer attendees the opportunity to schedule a meeting with a member of your team while at the event. There can be different scheduling opportunities for different audiences. For example, an existing customer or partner might benefit from meeting with a member of your executive team while a salesperson or product specialist is a better fit for a meeting with a prospect. The value of face-to-face time can't be underestimated, and these meetings can help your company form more meaningful connections than a booth drop-in. Just be sure that you check and recheck the event's schedule and the schedules of those holding meetings to avoid double booking or scheduling meetings during important conference happenings, like a keynote.

5. Follow up.

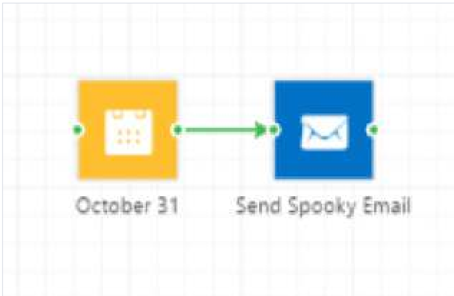
Have you ever visited a trade show booth, been interested in a product or service, requested additional information and then you never heard from the company again? If so, you know it's very frustrating. The exhibitor should follow up with the attendee, not the other way around. Make sure that you segment your trade show contacts to ensure the best follow up. Some may get a general "nice to meet you, here's some more info about who we are and what we do" email. For others, a more personalized email direct from someone on your team would be more appropriate. Also, make sure you follow up with your co-workers who represented your company at the event to debrief. Find out what worked and what didn't, so you can optimize your trade show presence for future success.

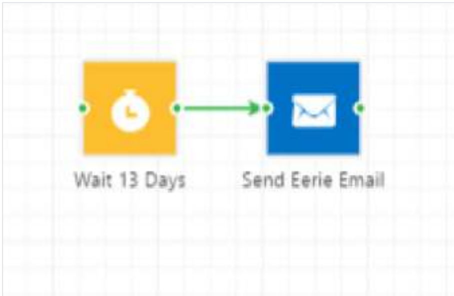
26 6 Ways Your Campaign Automations Can Scare Away Your Leads and Customers

What was that? You might think that noise was the bogeyman or another creature that goes bump in the night. In actuality, it was the sound of your customers or leads fleeing from your campaign automations, also known as nurture or drip marketing. But never fear, we're here to show you how to turn that around. Here are six ways your campaign automations might be scaring your leads and customers, and how you can take your automated campaigns from frightful to delightful:

1. Content issues.
Within your campaign automations, are you sending the same content to leads and customers alike or sending messages that don't provide a benefit to the recipients? If so, you might be spooking your audience. Campaign automations should contain information that will be of value to your leads or customers. Also, make sure that the content in every nurturing email is extremely relevant to those receiving it. While a piece of content can easily work for leads and customers, be sure to personalize the messages that promote that content, so they address each audience individually.

2. Bad timing.
If you aren't putting any thought into the timing of your campaign automations, they aren't likely to be well-received by your leads and customers. Schedule messages appropriately based on the type of campaign automation. A campaign for sales-ready leads, for example, would likely have a shorter timeline than one for inactive leads that touches prospects only a few times per year. Regardless of the type of campaign, wait and date timers (as seen below) within the ClickDimensions campaign automation builder can help you schedule everything perfectly.





3. No consistency.
Nurture programs can help establish trust between a consumer and company while also building that company's credibility. However, inconsistency in your messaging is a quick way to put an end to that benefit. For example, if your brand's voice is very professional and the messages in your campaign automation have a more humorous tone, this can be very off-putting to your recipients because it's unexpected and doesn't feel authentic. Take the time to make sure that all your nurture marketing messages are consistent with and reinforce the company's brand.

4. Lack of targeting and personalization.
One of the many benefits of a campaign automation is that messages can be customized based on the interactions a prospect has with the emails. Failing to use this aspect of the ClickDimensions campaign automation builder not only doesn't use this tool to its fullest, it also isn't as effective with leads and customers. Don't just develop and send a series of generic emails that are sent repeatedly; create personalized experiences.

5. Lack of permission.
Permission-based marketing means that the individuals that you are marketing to have directly granted your organization permission to do so. Ensure that nurture emails – and every email you send, for that matter – don't violate spam rules. Failure to engage in permission-based marketing may not only alienate your message's recipients, it can also cause you to break the law. For example, the CAN-SPAM Act in the United States, CASL in Canada and GDPR in the European Union include specific guidance for giving email recipients the opportunity to opt in or opt out of receiving emails.

6. Not utilizing data.
Data in CRM 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 ClickDimensions' web intelligence feature, you can gain even more knowledge about customers and 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 audience is most interested in can help target the messaging in your campaign automations.

27 What is Social Listening and Why Should Your Brand Care?

Did you hear that? If you aren't participating in social listening, the answer is likely "no." And what exactly is the "that" you didn't hear? Insights into your brand and industry from potential and existing customers, which is business intelligence organizations can't afford to miss. Before you miss out on more of this valuable information, let's take a look at what social listening is, why it's so important and how it can help.

What is Social Listening?
Social listening is the process of monitoring social media conversations to understand what people are saying about a brand or industry. It goes beyond the @mentions, comments and other notifications you receive for your company's social media accounts and encompasses social media platforms as a whole. Going beyond social monitoring, where you are simply looking at what is being said and responding accordingly, social listening also involves analyzing the larger trends around social conversations.

Why is Social Listening Important?
For many years, businesses – particularly B2B brands – could get away with not having a social media presence. But those days are now long gone. Social media is no longer a nice-to-have for businesses, it is a must-have. People turn to social media in many aspects of their lives, and connecting with and discussing brands is a part of that activity.

How Can Social Listening Help My Brand?
A tremendous amount of customer data is generated by all the active users on social media today, and without social listening you don't have access to that data, which can help you:

1. Create better content.
Quality content is an essential part of any social media strategy. And the more relevant the content to your audience, the more engaged they will be. But how do you determine what content will be the most engaging. Instead of throwing different types of content out to see what sticks with your audience, utilize social listening. It can help you better understand the hashtags and language people use when discussing your brand or industry, as well as trends in content popularity.

2. Track brand sentiment.
Over time, social listening can help you see changes in the sentiment around your brand and what influences those changes. For example, if you suddenly see an uptick in positive sentiment, what caused it? Did you release a new product or service? Or did your company recently receive some positive press coverage? The longer you listen and understand, the more you can help reverse the negative or capitalize on the positive.

3. Improve customer experience.
Thanks to the power and popularity of social media, the customer experience is more important than ever before. Social listening can help you improve your organization's customer experience. By responding to conversations about your brand, you assure customers that you hear them and care about both their compliments and complaints. You can also start to see patterns in conversations and respond accordingly. For example, is a problem affecting just one customer or shared by many? This intelligence can help you drive smarter business decisions.

4. Focus.
Social media today is a noisy, crowded place. It's easy to get caught up in irrelevant and unimportant distractions. Social listening helps you to focus on the conversations, mentions, keywords and competitors that truly matter and will give you the most valuable business intelligence.

Tips and Tricks for Using Emojis in Your Email Marketing

Emojis are now ubiquitous in everyday communications, and email marketers have been hopping on board since the emoji exploded in the early 2010s. And for good reason. According to some studies, using emojis in subject lines can even increase your unique open rate.

That said, there are some important things to keep in mind when using emojis in your email marketing. First, always remember that all email clients have their own rules for rendering content, so emojis may appear differently from platform to platform—though the central idea of the emoji should stay the same. For example, take a look at how Apple renders an apple compared to Google, compared to Microsoft:

Source: Emojipedia

Emoji Dos

Whether you're a marketer swept up in emoji fever or just want to boost your brand's visibility, here are some best practices to consider when utilizing emojis in your emails.

- Use emojis in subject lines. Again, some studies indicate that this can increase your open rate when done properly. While you can use emojis in the body of the email if it's appropriate, using emojis in subject lines may have more of an overall impact.
- Some marketers recommend finding an emoji that represents your brand and using it in every email send. This can give your email communications a cohesive feel, create an instantly recognizable brand identity and help your emails stand out in an inbox crowded with emails from other brands.
- Test your email sends across multiple email clients—and devices. Don't forget that a substantial portion of emails are read on mobile devices, where the screens are much smaller. If you're using an emoji in your subject line, make sure to keep the entire subject line brief.
- Be expressive and creative. Emojis can convey ideas quickly and instantly, and some of the most creative subject lines use emojis in new ways. Don't limit yourself to using an emoji in place of a word, although that can be a great space-saving technique. You can also cook up equations, conjure scenes and tell a story with well-placed emojis.
- Be aware of some double meanings.

- When in doubt, keep it simple.
- Run split tests to determine how your audience responds to emoji use.

Emoji Don'ts

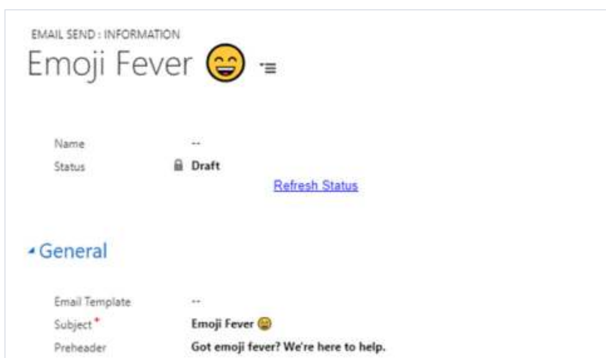
While emojis are effective in a variety of email marketing situations, sometimes they just don't work. Here are some things to avoid with your use of emojis.

- Don't use emojis when the tone is serious or needs to be straightforward. A serious email to your investors, for example, likely isn't the best place for emojis.
- Don't go overboard. While being creative is a good thing, too many emojis in one subject line can look amateurish or just silly.
- Don't use emojis if you know that most of your customers are on older email clients. Gmail renders emojis well, as does Apple Mail, Yahoo! Mail, Windows Mail and Android Mail. However, older versions of Outlook (2003 and earlier) as well as older Windows and Mac operating systems may struggle.

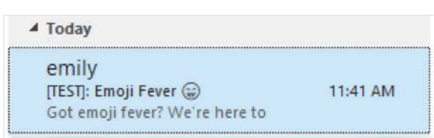
How to Use Emojis

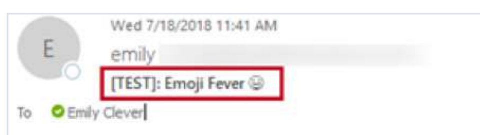
Once you're ready to use emojis in your ClickDimensions emails, your next question may be how to do it. While ClickDimensions doesn't have a native emoji keyboard like your smartphone might, you can simply copy and paste emojis from my favorite resource, Emojipedia. This site has a great breakdown of emojis by developer (Apple, Google, Microsoft, etc.) as well as limitations for each.

Just copy and paste your emoji into the email send subject line or body.



Then, make sure you test across multiple devices.





To change your emoji, simply delete the one from your email send and copy and paste a new one of your choosing.

How B2B Marketers Can Get Started with SMS Marketing

As texting has become more and more common between friends and family, so too does it grow in popularity among brands. However, to date, much of that use has been by B2C marketers. But B2B marketers shouldn't miss out – particularly since, according to Mobile Marketing Watch, SMS messages have an open rate of 98 percent. In addition, per research from AT&T, 85 percent of mobile device users prefer a text from businesses over phone calls or emails.

If you're a B2B marketer that hasn't explored the SMS channel, you might be wondering how to get started. Read on to find out!

1. Create a list

Before you can reap the rewards of SMS marketing, you need to have a list of people to text – and have the permission to do so. You can build your list one of a few ways. One option is to send an initial text asking your customers and prospects to opt in to receive SMS messages from your organization. A downside to this approach is that your message will have to be very concise to fit in the 160-character maximum for SMS messages. Another approach is to promote joining your SMS subscriber list via email, social media, webinars and other channels. The downside is that this method isn't as direct as the SMS sign-up option. You can also combine the two options to maximize reach. Regardless of how you build your list – or lists, as segmentation is just as beneficial in SMS as in email – be sure that you have permission to text everyone on it to avoid running afoul of applicable laws and regulations.

2. Plan your messages.

Aim to be one thing in your SMS marketing messages – helpful. This messaging may look different to different businesses in different industries, but your overall goal should be to add value to your customer and prospect relationships. While that should be the case for all your marketing endeavors, it is especially important in a channel like SMS that delivers such immediacy. It's easy to become intrusive – and rack up unsubscribes – if you aren't adding value. To keep your SMS subscribers happy, send them links to informative content, new product or feature announcements, exclusive promotional offers, occasional surveys and other related content. Also, it's important to remember to identify yourself as the sender in every message you send so recipients know who your messages are from as soon as they are received.

3. Mind your timing.

What is one of the last things you want to think about as you sit down to dinner with your family? Work surely ranks high on that list, right? So, as a B2B marketer, if you are sending SMS messages to your customers at dinnertime, they likely won't be received favorably. Instead, opt for hours that are safely within working hours. For example, at 4 pm, one of your subscribers may have hours left in their workday while an early riser recipient might be heading home. To be on the safe side, stick with late morning or early afternoon. And always be mindful of time zones.

As you progress in your journey with SMS marketing, be sure to take stock of how your campaigns are performing. What's converting and what's not? Are you retaining subscribers or are they dropping off? Answer these questions on a regular basis to ensure continued SMS marketing success.

30 5 Ways to Increase Brand Trust with Your Marketing

Trust us. Although brands may not say those words directly to their customers, there's a big push today for organizations to earn customer trust. That's because without it, customer loyalty and retention are at serious risk or even nonexistent.

Fortunately, the marketing strategies and tactics you use to convert and connect with your customers can go a long way towards earning and maintaining their trust. Here are five ways to increase brand trust with your marketing:

1. Permission-based marketing.
First and foremost, recognize that you won't earn trust by sending emails or SMS messages to people who haven't said they want to hear from you. Permission-based marketing means that your recipients have opted in to receive your email or text messages, making these individuals more responsive to the messages you receive from them. In addition to increasing trust in your brand and improving your marketing performance, permission-based marketing can help you avoid running afoul of the growing body of laws and regulations that govern email and SMS marketing.

2. Subscription management.
Consumers today expect choices now more than ever, and they appreciate and trust the brands that are willing to give them the power of choice. Subscription management is a great way to deliver, allowing 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. This can not only improve brand trust by showing you respect customer preferences, it can help cut down on global unsubscribes.

3. Helpful content.
Content marketing is so prevalent today that in some circles it's now just thought of as marketing. That's because businesses have found that educating and informing customers is far more impactful than overtly selling to them. When creating content, always step into your customers' shoes. What keeps them up at night? What will help them do their jobs better? What do they want to learn? By developing content around those questions, your brand becomes a trusted resource for both potential and existing customers. Sharing knowledge is a powerful and effective way to build trust.

4. Engaging on social.
Put the "social" in "social media" on every social network where your organization has a presence. Respond to comments, participate in discussions and share posts from others, rather than simply putting your own content out there. This demonstrates that your company is a fully engaged member of a given social platform, which can help drive followers and build trust in your brand.

5. Personalization.
There's nothing like a batch and blast, one-size-fits-all email marketing message to make a recipient feel like a brand doesn't know them at all. Instead, use dynamic content in your emails to personalize for your recipients. From their name to their geographic location to the date they became a customer, you can use the data in your CRM to customize your messages. This helps foster trust in your brand by showing customers that you know them and view them individually, instead of them feeling like just another contact in your database.

About ClickDimensions

ClickDimensions is the leading marketing automation platform for Microsoft Dynamics 365, natively built inside your CRM environment. 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.

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