

Engaging the Unengaged

insight

David Baker | August 2008



Imagine a world without email? I just sent around the latest AOL report “[Email Addiction](#)” to my global team and some of the comments were fascinating, all coming from people that live and breathe email marketing. I had used two year old stats on consumer email behavior in many presentations over the years, so it was fun to see the newest statistics that recognizes that email is even more addictive than it was in the past. I think sometimes we blur the trends of consumer use of email for personal reasons and professional reasons, with that of email marketing and the business value exchanges that have evolved our use of this digital channel. All the consumer trends indicate we are using it more and it’s more pervasive in our lives than ever, is it a great marketing and sales channel though from a Lifetime Value perspective? Is social media diminishing the value of these communications? Some say, with the rise of participation in social networking sites, people are using email less and relying on updated information on their site to syndicate updates rather than email.

This may be the case in some instances, but remember we use email for many things and the real issue is time in the inbox that’s important to us as marketers. When the consumers that buy goods from us begin to spend more time managing their social networking sites and profiles than they do in their inbox, then I’ll be worried. In my opinion, these social networking sites will collide with consumer management and expectations as did email. It will be too hard to keep up with Linked In, Gather.com, MySpace, FaceBook and all my other health related, sports related and family related sites that I manage today and the flood of updates and notices I will receive on my pages. This is akin to managing email cross six active email accounts.

Getting back to email - with list attrition at or about 30% per year, meaning people will fall off your customer email file for any number of delivery, tenure or opt-out reasons. You will likely have a staggered set of customer groups that are not very engaged or never engaged or not active in the email channel with your business.

Our goal as marketers is to incrementally engage as many people through the preferred channel of their preference with as many diversified values as we can possibly entertain and support. Some do a better job than others of diversifying their email portfolio, by providing service value in email exchanges. But few have the bandwidth to focus or engage the other 30 or possibly 40% of your database that will expire within two years of their initial opt in.

There are many tactics to try to re-engage dormant or lapsed customers via email, but it starts with a real close assessment of your email portfolio. Do you have a newsletter or broad, engaging content sent on a regular basis? Do you support all the service and transactional entry points to your business (online/offline)? Do you provide other site side communication value (content syndication, membership programs)? Are your promotional strategies built for the seasonality of the consumer and continually evolving? Are there other loyalty values you

drive through email, outside of the proverbial newsletter and adhoc promotions? Do you have a program specifically designed for new members, old members, high-value members and lapsed members? And it goes on!

Each communication strategy you develop is an asset in your portfolio and should be looked at that way. It makes it easier to make decision on which touch point and asset align for the greatest value to the business.

Something to chew on for the non-engaged! Look closely at the core reason customers entered your email program and gave you permission to send them email in the first place, expect that opt in connection to last only so long before you have to re-engage them or expand your email portfolio for this changing need.

If there is a pure connection to the brand, a purchasing relationship with the business you have to continually challenge your email portfolio to perform and drive the value it did when your consumer's first joined. And guess what? The portfolio you had yesterday may not have enough value to the consumer two years from now or even today. Continue to re-invent reasons for your consumer to connect through the email channel and diversify your email portfolio.

***This article was originally published in MediaPost, August 2008*

About the Author

David Baker is the Vice President of Email Solutions for Avenue A | Razorfish. Baker's responsibilities include expanding email marketing offerings and expertise across the agency and tightly integrating programs into the current and future global digital marketing initiatives of clients.

Baker is an accomplished speaker and a weekly "Email Insider" columnist and advisory board member for Media Post. He frequently presents at industry conferences, including the ad:tech, OMMA, DMA, Inbox and International Conferences. Currently, he sits on two email sub-committees for the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), and participates in several Email Round Tables with the Email Experience Council (EEC).

Baker has more than 15 years of experience in marketing and advertising and hails from Agency.com where he served as the vice president of email and analytical solutions. In that role he was directly responsible for developing the email and analytical business practice for seven of Agency.com's national and international offices. He helped build brand recognition for clients including VISA, Ladbrokes, 3M, UPromise, Shutterfly, Miller, CNN, Maidenform, Energizer Brands, Del Monte Foods and others. Prior to his position at Agency.com, Baker worked for Targetbase another OmniCom agency building out integrated email services into their direct marketing service practice.

About Avenue A | Razorfish™

Avenue A | Razorfish is one of the largest interactive marketing and technology companies in the world. With a demonstrated commitment to innovation, Avenue A | Razorfish counsels its clients on how to leverage digital channels such as the Web, mobile devices, in-store technologies and other emerging media to engage people, build brand loyalty and provide excellent customer service. The company is increasingly advising marketers on Social Influence Marketing™, its approach for employing social media and social influencers to achieve the marketing and business needs of an organization. Its award-winning client teams provide solutions through their strategic counsel, digital advertising and content creation, media buying, analytics, technology and user experience. Avenue A | Razorfish has offices in markets across the United States, and in Australia, China, France, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom. Clients—many of them served in multiple markets—include Carnival Cruise Lines, Coors Brewing Company, Kraft, Levi's, McDonald's and Starwood Hotels. Visit <http://www.avenuea-razorfish.com> for more information.

Avenue A | Razorfish
821 2nd Avenue, Suite 1800
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: 206.816.8800
Fax: 206.816.8808