

Advertising in the
Digital Age, Part 5

Make the most of transactional marketing

by Douglas Knorr and Phil Callighan



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Headquartered in Traverse City, Mich., the firm serves clients throughout the United States.

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Capitalize on order confirmations, delivery notifications and other transactional e-mail messages that you send as part of the order and delivery process. By their very nature, transactional emails are highly relevant to your customer and are very likely to be opened and read.

Once you've confirmed the order, notified customers of the delivery or provided other essential information, you can naturally cross-sell or up-sell your customer in the same email by recommending additional products or services she might also want.

Take a tip from Amazon.com and offer relevant companion pieces or best sellers based on the products someone has purchased. Highlight them in a "You Might Also Like" section of the email and include links to your website for immediate

review and purchase.

Include an offer to subscribe to your e-newsletter and other regular email communications so you can strengthen the relationship and continue to deliver value that results in repeat purchases.

Be sure to send your transactional messages in HTML format, not plain text. This enables you to reinforce your brand image and visually enhance the overall customer experience.

Whatever the current state of your transactional messages, continually test and optimize the branding, messaging, offers, and timing for greater relevance.

Strengthen your e-club welcome messaging

To boost your success rate in capturing email addresses of website visitors, give them reasons to join your store's e-club. Incentives for an e-club might be special online-only promotions, advance notice of public sales, news about different trends and styles, or all of the above.

When someone signs up, don't settle for a plain, text-based email message that does nothing more than confirm that she signed up. The moment you acquire a consumer's email address is a key point of engagement. In fact, this is possibly the most relevant and defining moment in the new relationship. The way in which you welcome new email subscribers can either develop or destroy potential customer relations.

Don't ignore the trusting step she has taken; transform your welcome email into a thoughtful, automated welcome program. Shortly after she signs up, send her a series

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of well-timed emails that provide an introduction to your brand, website, and products, and define what future emails will cover.

Send well-designed HTML emails that grab a new subscriber's attention, create personal connections, and convert these sign-ups into customers. Set goals for your welcome program so that expectations can be managed.

Implement progressive profiling. Ask for more personal information with each email or conduct online surveys to gain knowledge of customer preferences or attitudes. Build a comprehensive profile from the outset in order to segment and tailor ongoing communications for greater relevance and ROI.

However, don't ask the customer more than one or two questions at a time. You don't want them to be turned off by

your curiosity.

Deliver value from day one, and you'll go a long way toward building customer loyalty.

Re-engage customers with a win-back program

As you know, it costs much more to attract a new customer than it does to keep an existing one. However, few businesses make the effort to re-engage a customer whose account has been dormant for a long time.

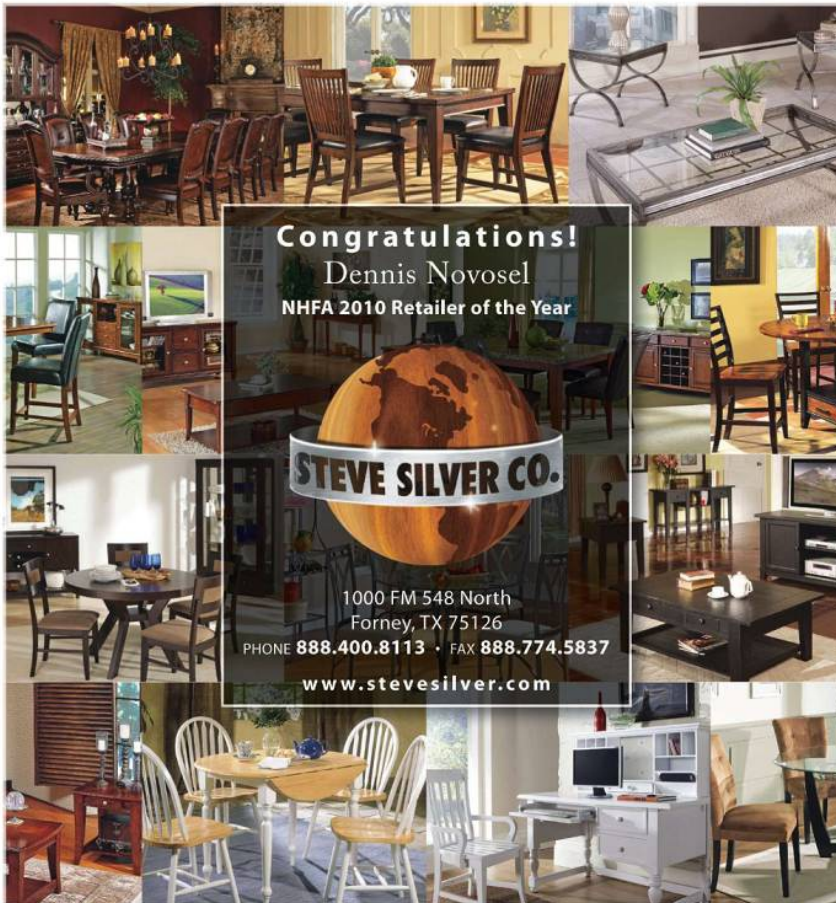
To cultivate customer retention, implement an automated win-back program. Adjusting for your selling cycles and seasonality, send normally active customers a personalized email or series of emails, triggered automatically after a period of inactivity.

Let customers know you've noticed that they haven't made a purchase in a while with a "We've missed you" message. By re-establishing a personal dialogue with them, you have the chance to re-engage them.

Tailor your messages closely to previous purchases and known preferences. Send a survey to solicit feedback or an exclusive offer that's too good to pass up.

The win-back emails must stand out from other promotional messages you've sent in the past — and be distinct from competitor emails that are vying for attention in the customer's inbox. Use enticing graphic design and creative messaging to let customers know you value them and still have something valuable to offer them.

In summary, you need to enhance your online presence, increase your customer outreach and build stronger




relationships with one-on-one customer communications in this digital age of advertising.

While the Internet will help you achieve many of these steps, keep in mind that all digital media is simply "media." The Internet, while powerful and critical to your future success, is not the only medium people use today.

Your challenge is to develop a strategic marketing program that integrates both "new" and traditional media (newsprint, circulars, broadcast, outdoor, direct mail) to effectively and efficiently reach and build consumer relationships that will lead to sales.

Regardless of the media you use, you must then hold your advertising accountable. As you may have heard, "What gets measured gets improved." So take advantage of website statistics, pay-per-click analytics and other metrics to ensure your digital media is performing as envisioned or promised.

It is also vital to manage all social media relationships daily. Your social media activities must integrate with your traditional advertising.

By expanding your digital communications and implementing a strong, integrated click-and-brick strategy, you will successfully increase store traffic, sales and profits. 

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The Internet has profoundly changed the way we live, the way we shop and the entire media landscape. We are firmly entrenched in a Digital Age where the consumer is empowered by the Internet. This series addresses communication strategies you, as a retailer, should employ to increase relevant communications with customers. You will find the previous four articles on the NHFA website, www.nhfa.org. Click on the magazine cover to access the current issue and the archived editions.



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