

PART IV: THE TRUTH ABOUT CUSTOMER-FOCUSED  
EMAIL STRATEGY

TRUTH

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How to be relevant

Before buying this book, you probably looked at the title, thumbed through the table of contents, and scanned the back cover. Am I right? Well, what if you planned to read this book for valuable information about email marketing but instead found it full of self-serving content and advertisements from my company? You probably would throw it to the side, and rightfully so. Sending irrelevant email messages to your customers and prospects will yield the same result. I can guarantee it.

Don't get caught up in the greed. The results delivered by sending the right kind of emails, at the right time, can draw some marketers into the dark side of sending too many emails (most of which are irrelevant to subscribers) hoping to get even more benefits. Quicker than you can read this sentence, you can alienate recipients and kill the power of email by doing this. If you learn nothing else from this book, let it be this: If you are sending messages that offer little value to recipients, every other strategy, tactic, or best practice you put in place will be of little worth.

## **What is relevancy?**

When it comes to relevancy, I'm not just talking about adding a subscriber's first name to personalize your emails. You should be doing that anyway. I'm talking about using what you know about subscribers to your advantage and letting it help you decide when the timing is right to send. Generally, a relevant email is one that contains something of value to the recipient (for example, a discount or useful advice) and reflects what you know about that recipient (for example, the content and timing are targeted to the recipient's needs).

According to JupiterResearch, after cost factors, the most important influence on purchase behavior is relevance. Showing users a product they've previously considered leads to immediate purchases by 60 percent of respondents and deferred purchases by 58 percent. Subject line personalization leads to only 9 percent of immediate purchases and 8 percent of deferred purchases.

There are several aspects of relevancy. The content and value proposition is the most important. This is how or why you decide to act on the email, whether that is clicking on a link, calling a number,

or going into a store. Without valuable content or a clear purpose of the email, your message will likely be seen as irrelevant to the recipient. Being relevant is also about timing, unique offers, and doing everything you can to know what interests each recipient or drives them to make a purchase. So put your data to good use. The people who have signed up to receive content from you have taken the first step. Now it's up to you.

Here are some of the things that relevancy can do for your email program:

- **Drive loyalty**—If you are sending emails that differ in content (and context) from what recipients signed up to receive, they will disengage. On the other hand, using email to send targeted communications can drive brand loyalty through the roof.
- **Impact delivery**—Relevancy not only affects brand loyalty, but it can also impact delivery of your messages. If customers sign up for your email program expecting case studies, coupons, or some other benefit that you touted but instead get something else, they may report you as spam. If enough people do this, you may find your future emails blocked from delivery by ISPs.
- **Boost results and expand your audience**—If you are sending messages that are of value to recipients, they will be more likely to perform the desired action (like buying something) or pass it along to others. Let subscribers assist in your targeted marketing efforts. This aids the relevancy factor since a message coming from a trusted friend or colleague becomes that much more relevant to the recipient of a forwarded email.
- **Help you stand out in the crowd**—Chances are, if someone signs up for your email program to receive the best deal on buying widgets, and a competitor of yours offers a similar email communication, the recipient has signed up for both of them. If

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### **Making it happen**

Be sure to closely read the Truths related to frequency (Truth 23),

Subject lines (Truth 26), personalization (Truth 24) and segmentation (Truth 25), among others, as these provide the tactical keys to implementing a relevant email that gets read and drives response.

A good relevancy benchmark is your email sign-up center since your guide to consistent relevancy is what you promised to send subscribers when they signed up. The next Truth outlines how to make sure you cover all the bases and stay on target.

