Business Booster

WANT MORE CUSTOMERS TO OPEN YOUR E-NEWSLETTER?

> If you’re reading this, then you’ve already discovered how to improve your newsletter’s readership. Asking a question in the subject line is one of four tactics a major media company recently deployed to entice more recipients to read.

Using less content, more white space and clearer calls-to-action also helped Comcast maintain a 18 percent click-to-open rate of its FanCast newsletter as its subscriber base grew more than 300 percent year-over-year, according to a recent article in Marketing Sherpa.

The company didn’t want to do a major newsletter redesign (sound familiar?) but found ways to tweak the layout and content, including reducing the number of articles each week and moving images and calls to action (like a coupon for retailers) higher in the layout. The changes didn’t just improve readership, they also led to a 244 percent increase in the volume of unique visitors coming to the Fancast site from e-mail! 🌊

Sales Builder

SITES PUSH YOUR DEALS, PULL IN A FOLLOWING

> “Deal of the day” discounts are popping up all over the Web, especially on Facebook and Twitter. And they’re helping small businesses tap into the power of peer pressure and the thrill of bargain scoring. Sites like Groupon.com and LivingSocial.com feature a daily deal for a limited time (usually 24 hours) from a local merchant. Groupon adds the buy-in bait — deals can be redeemed only if enough “takers” agree to buy it. LivingSocial’s deals go live the minute they go up. The buy-in requirement not only turns the sites’ subscribers into its own marketing team, it also ensures a certain number of customers.

There’s no upfront cost to the business; the sites handle marketing and distribution of coupons. You get the e-mail addresses and new customers. If the deal does not reach a critical mass, the e-mail blast and the 24 hours of exposure on Groupon are free. If the deal is redeemed, Groupon keeps a percentage of each unit sold. Groupon collects customer payment for you, distributes Groupon vouchers to the customers, and mails you a check. In return, they take a portion (usually 50 percent) of each sale redeemed. LivingSocial has a similar arrangement in which they take a portion of the proceeds of the sale.

The exposure to new customers is what impressed florist Christine Vasconcelo, who used Groupon to promote a $40 arrangement Thanksgiving week. Calls started coming as soon as the Bloomingdays deal was featured. She sold 49 arrangements — all to new customers — and split the proceeds evenly.

Cost wise, Vasconcelo broke even, but “there are thousands of customers who saw the name of my florist for one day and may remember me,” she said. “That is priceless.”

A word of warning: The sites have discretion over which day to feature you, so don’t go signing up right before a major holiday. 🌊

Question: What are your expectations of your sales over the next six months?

| Growers: First Quarter 2009 vs First Quarter 2010 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| WILL IMPROVE | REMAIN THE SAME | WILL WORSEN | UNSURE |
| Wholesaler |
| Retailer |