



10 Tips: Solving Marketing's Biggest Problem of 2013 (*Gaining Opt-Ins*)

by Rob Tate, PossibleNOW

At the beginning of each year, I take some time to de-clutter my digital life. Like everyone else I know, my inbox is already full of messages from co-workers, friends, family and more. In order to keep it from getting out of control, I spend time weeding out all the irrelevant stuff. And I'm not alone.

According to Forrester Research, the average consumer will receive a *whopping 9,000 email marketing messages a year by 2014*.

Consumers want to cut down on this marketing traffic and keep their inboxes focused on the information they want most. I'm especially mindful of this in my work with brands to honor consumer preferences and privacy. Far too many marketers bombard consumers with ineffective messages and clumsy requests. As a result, their marketing programs are stuck in neutral, struggling with small opt-in audiences.

Here are 10 tips designed to earn opt-ins and keep your customers in the conversation:

1. Define the value.

What's in it for me? Unless a consumer is convinced that you can deliver relevant, timely information that's important to them, they are unlikely to stay in the conversation. Reciprocity of value begins with you — make a clear statement of value and consumers will respond positively.

2. Provide communication options that suit consumers' needs.

Using a "one-size-fits-all" marketing approach weakens the value proposition and suggests the entire relationship will be inflexible and advanced on your terms. Make it easy for consumers to select channels and the frequency of communication that works for them.

3. Invite consumers to join a conversation, not a monologue.

Establish feedback patterns that make it clear you want to listen and gear the experience around a consumer's evolving needs. Understanding how to talk back is just as critical as the decision to engage at all.

4. Clearly state how you will use a consumer's information.

Explain why you want consumer data and what you plan to do with it. This initiates a cycle of reinforced trust and consumers are more than willing to reward companies that make and keep promises about value, privacy and relevance.

5. Establish a clear path to opting out.

Consumers are far more likely to start a relationship if they own the ability to end it someday. It's a key component to building trust and must be clear with the initial invitation.

6. Offer the ability to "opt-in" through a thoughtful, branded experience.

If a consumer is attracted to your brand, reward them with an opt-in experience that owns that brand as fully and completely as the products and services they are seeking. All too often, opt-in screens and messages represent unbranded interruptions that feel cheap, careless and disconnected.

7. Don't bombard consumers with communication requests.

Ask early but not over and over. Respect a consumer's awareness of the initial offer and make it good enough to earn their careful consideration. Nagging and prompting for communication through various channels suggests the relationship you're asking for will be equally annoying.

8. Keep it simple.

Ask only for key data points that will clearly aid in delivering a better experience for the consumer. Lengthy forms and fields that don't seem to relate to the task at hand are aggravating and create suspicion about how you'll use the information.

9. Ask at the right time.

In other words, position opt-in requests to coincide with positive brand interactions. If the consumer is engaging with your brand to resolve a complaint, make sure it's addressed to their satisfaction before asking to elevate the relationship.

10. Listen and learn.

Companies with active social media listening tools can spot organic opportunities for an opt-in and react quickly to capture them. A compliment on Twitter represents a wonderful starting point for a more engaged relationship — be prepared to act on it!

Thoughtful consumer engagement isn't just the future of marketing — it's the present. Seize the moment with an active, effective plan to build your brand community and manage communications to the consumers' expectations.



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