

Saving cents, making sense...

May 2008

Another postage increase – what with petrol, food, interest rates and who knows what else soaring, it's timely to look at the most cost effective medium of promotion. The dreaded e-mail newsletter.

I say dreaded, because spam mails have made us all nervous when opening our inboxes and equally have made us nervous about sending them in case someone thinks WE'RE spamming THEM.

There are two essential rules to follow to keep you out of the brown stuff and I absolutely follow these to the letter.

1. Make sure your email recipients want to receive your emails; and
2. Confirm this acceptance by some sort of opt-in process (and always ensure you have an opt-out process too!)

The test question to ask is "am I welcome?" If the customer signs up for the newsletter, make sure to send them an email confirming their sign up. Give them another option to click on and then you know you've got their consent.

Once you've ticked those boxes it's over to you. I think it's desirable to stay in touch with your customer at least every two months. It's not too frequent, yet it is probably regular enough to keep your business name in the "easy recall" section of their brain.

Aside from frequency, you'll need to think about appearance. Whether you set up a newsletter template (like this one), or send your epistle as an email with little or no graphics.

Think about whether your customers have broadband or dialup – broadband allows you a little extra leeway regarding graphics and size of files. But remember, not everyone has the latest software – if you have Vista and everyone else is operating XP (or earlier) – all the fancy work you've created will come out in plain text or worse.

Most viewers (but not all by any means) will be using Outlook Express or Microsoft Outlook and will probably have their view set so there is a preview pane in their inbox. Remember the top part of your email will be seen automatically without the customer having to click your email open. Make it work for you! You have approximately 5-8 cms screen to make it impossible for your customer to delete your message. Don't waste it.

Finally, ensure the layout is user friendly. Don't push the important links to the bottom of the page. There is no limit for the height of the newsletter, but try and keep it short – two or three mouse scrolls is fine. People are busy!

Test your NZ knowledge!

- Which little South Island town was the birthplace of Ernest Rutherford?
- Which town is known as the Gumboot Capital of NZ?
- What is the name of the beach used by Burt Monro and his world famous modified Indian motorcycle?

A: Spring Grove (or Brightwater) near Nelson; Taihape; Oreti Beach, Invercargill

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