31 Ways to Supercharge Your Email Marketing

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Or, visit our website and blog at www.multichannelmagic.com. You will find a treasure of information for managing and improving your business.

How to Get the Most Return from Your Marketing Investment

Email is the most effective and economical marketing tool available today. It allows small companies to stay in touch with customers and prospects without investing heavily in technology or labor. Once the email marketing strategy is created and tested, minimal maintenance is required to keep your company in front of people when they are ready to buy.

The ability to provide the lowest price appears to give big box stores and retail chains a competitive advantage but appearances can be deceiving. Studies have shown that convenience and service create more loyalty than pricing. This is good news for independent retailers who focus more on building relationships than becoming the low price leader.

Email provides an economical and effective way to build relationships beyond the in-store experience. There are four areas where email excels: Customer acquisition, retention, sales, and service. Most large retailers primarily use email for acquisition and sales. Once people shift from prospect to customer, they move into the templated sales cycle of one promotion after another with the occasional order confirmation thrown in.

There is a better way.

An email marketing strategy that keeps people informed about trends, provides helpful tips, and speaks personally to them, shifts email from a promotional tool to a loyalty builder. Creating and implementing the strategy is simple. All it requires is plan that uses best practices to generate and deliver the content people want to receive. *31 Ways to Supercharge Your Email Marketing* is filled with proven tactics that make email the best way to attract prospects and keep customers coming back.

This mini-guide includes three of the thirty-one ways to get better results from your email marketing. For more information and to get the complete guide, click the link to go to http://www.multichannelmagic.com/supercharge-email-marketing/. It's guaranteed to pay for itself many times over. If you are unhappy with it for any reason, simply request a refund within 60 days of your purchase date and a full refund will be issued. That gives you two months to test the tips and tactics to see how well they work for your business.

If you prefer a Kindle version, click this link: http://www.amazon.com/Ways-Supercharge-Email-Marketing-ebook/dp/B00E9089ZA

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Introduction

The biggest challenge with email marketing is that it is so easy to be successful that marketers don't reach for the next level. After all, when something isn't broken, why invest time and energy in making it better? Most people won't make the effort to optimize their email marketing program. Good enough will serve them well enough.

Some marketers know that good enough doesn't serve company or customer well. If you are one of them, this guide is for you. The information in it will help you optimize your marketing strategy to maximize the effect and return. An optimized email program increases revenue, solidifies relationships, and expands horizons.

In 1996, I launched my first email campaign for a client. The experience continues to be one of the most exciting marketing times of my career. The many successes before and after rarely compete with the instant gratification of that first time.

The client wanted to know if emailing customers would generate revenue. Things were quite different then. Email service providers consisted of a few startups that wanted annual contracts and high monthly fees. It didn't make financial sense to jump in without testing the water. We decided to create our own email processer using Microsoft Office. The content was created in Word. Customer names and email addresses were exported to Excel. The two were combined and sent using mail merge and Outlook.

The process took time to run because each email had to be individually created and sent. The marketing team and I watched it run in an office with two computers. One had the email send process running. The other was connected to the website so we could watch customer activity.

There were approximately 11,000 email addresses in the file. Orders started arriving before we hit 500 sends. The email was very simple. It was text only and essentially said, "Hello. This is our first email and we are giving you 10% off everything in our web store." When the promotion was over, it had pulled a better response than every other marketing tool!

Almost twenty years later, marketers are still seeing phenomenal results from their email marketing efforts. Things have changed in that time making the process more challenging. The creation and send process is much simpler but getting emails to the inbox of recipients most likely to respond is harder.

Today, email marketing teams have to deal with deliverability, opt-in, spam, and over-saturation issues. Even so, email remains one of the most effective and economical marketing tools available. Once a company has a list of customers and prospects, sending an email almost guarantees a cash infusion.

Having a tool that generates sales with little effort and cost creates complacency. When marketers can send promotional emails that consistently make their numbers, they are less likely to look beyond high level metrics. Everything looks good on the surface but there is danger below. The incoming sales keep marketers from seeing that they are creating a base of discount buyers that will shift their loyalty at the first sighting of a lower price.

Email marketing can be much more. It is the only tool available at this time that can economically create one-to-one relationships with thousands of customers. People want to be valued and respected. Emails allow marketers to automatically generate highly personalized messages. Most people respond to the messages by acting, not replying. They shop and share the information with their friends. The ones that do reply usually have comments that help the company improve.

The purpose of this book is to inspire people to dig deeper and use their email marketing program to create long-term loyal customers. The tactics included are proven methods that have been used by companies to grow their lists, keep customers coming back, increase sales, and provide better service. It is my hope that this will become a go-to resource for making your email marketing program the best it can be.

Most of the tactics included can be used for both business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) companies. The sale of products and services is ultimately dependent on the buyer's trust of the offering company. Individuals and businesses selling services tend to do a better job at optimizing their email marketing program because discounting is rarely an option. Even so, there is

always room for improvement. The demands placed by our highly competitive marketplace require every effort to be made to maximize the return every time a customer or prospect is contacted.

All of the tips in this guide have been tested and proven successful for the companies using them. You can optimize your email marketing strategy best by choosing the greatest pain point and starting there. If revenue is slipping, start with the tips in the Sales section. If customers are leaving, go to the Retention area. Every tip works by itself so you can implement one without completely overhauling your email marketing strategy.

Why Invest in Optimizing Your Emails?

There are four reasons to send emails to customers and prospects: Acquisition, retention, sales, and service. Simply put, send emails when you want to acquire new customers, keep the ones you have, increase sales, and provide service.

Most companies are very good at delivering on the increase sales objective but fail miserably at the others. People miss opportunities to acquire new customers, improve relationships, and increase satisfaction because email marketing is so good at generating revenue.

Adding the other three objectives provides a competitive edge while increasing sales. It is a classic win-win scenario. Isn't it time for your company to take email marketing to the next level?

The first step is to complete a mini review of your email marketing program to see how effective it is at acquisition, retention, sales, and service. Make a list of the emails sent over the last year and place them into the appropriate category.

What percentage of the emails was designed to acquire new customers? This includes all emails sent to prospects and those that specifically ask customers to share the information with a friend. (Placing a "Tell a Friend" button in the email doesn't count.) How effective were the acquisition emails at generating new prospects and customers? What changes made them better? How much did it cost to acquire new people?

How many of the emails were specifically designed to keep customers coming back? This question is often met with the response, "our promotional emails keep customers coming back." If your company is Walmart or you can effectively compete with low price leaders, this response is right. If your company is like most, you don't have the margins to guarantee the lowest prices and need to create loyalty based customer relationships.

Do your sales emails consistently generate revenue or are you seeing peaks and valleys? Email promotional programs are very predictable once you have enough historical data. Peaks and valleys that are not seasonal suggest that there may be underlying issues affecting your revenue. Subscriber fatigue is one such issue. It happens when people receive the same type of emails over an extended period of time.

The first sign of subscriber fatigue is a decline in open rates. If there is nothing new, then why open the email? The second sign is a higher click-through rate on opened emails. When people are ready to make a purchase, they look for a discount. The combination of lower open rates and higher click-throughs indicate that your emails may have become a coupon mecca.

Are your service emails a statement of facts or a conversation with your customers? Order and shipping confirmation emails can be much more than "here's your information, thank you for your order" notices. They can be entertaining like the one from CD Baby that colorfully explains that the order has been shipped:

> *"Your CD has been gently taken from our CD Baby shelves with sterilized contamination-free gloves and placed onto a satin pillow.*
>
> *A team of 50 employees inspected your CD and polished it to make sure it was in the best possible condition before mailing.*
>
> *Our packing specialist from Japan lit a candle and a hush fell over the crowd as he put your CD into the finest gold-lined box that money can buy.*
>
> *We all had a wonderful celebration afterwards and the whole party marched down the street to the post office where the entire town of Portland waved "Bon Voyage!" to your package, on its way to you, in our private CD Baby jet on this day, Friday, June 6th.*
>
> *I hope you had a wonderful time shopping at CD Baby. We sure did. Your picture is on our wall as "Customer of the Year". We're all exhausted but can't wait for you to come back to CDBABY.COM!!"*

Derek Silvers, the founder of CD Baby, says this is the most successful email he has ever written. The recipients shared it with friends, posted it on blogs, and ultimately introduced thousands of new customers to the business. If the fun content doesn't fit your brand, find the words that keep your company's image and entertains your customers. They will share it too.

A good email marketing strategy increases sales. A great email marketing strategy increases sales, introduces the company to new people, and keeps customers' happily coming back for more. The only way to move from good to great is to optimize every email sent to customers and prospects.

Customize Emails to Buying Behavior

Blast methods are still being used to send emails to customers and prospects. This is where everyone on the list gets the same message. Buying behavior and relationships are ignored in this lazy man's approach to email marketing.

Despite the best efforts of email purists, blasts will never go away because they work. Email marketing is so economical that even the worst message will generate a profit if it is sent to enough people. The marketing process works so well, it can be challenging to convince people to invest more resources to make it work better.

There are three very good reasons to invest time and effort into modeling emails around buying behavior. They are response, revenue, and retention. Carefully crafting individually customized emails improves results.

You don't have to have the analytics chops of a large company to do this well. Even small changes can make a difference. The following case study is from an ecommerce company that historically sent sale or discount emails to customers every week. They conducted a test to see how discounts and segmentation affected sales.

Prior to the test, their email strategy was simple. Once a month, the promotions were planned for the next month. The offers varied based on the season, but they typically included free shipping, $5 off $25, or a discount of 15%, 20%, or 25% off the total order.

The test was simple. Customers who had purchased from the top four product categories were chosen to participate. They have comparable average orders and buying history. Each category group was split six ways into subgroups. Six different offers were sent to the subgroups:

1. 15% off any order
2. 20% off any order
3. 25% off any order
4. $5 off any order of $25 or more
5. Free shipping for any order of $50 or more

6. New items in specified category (no discounts or free shipping offers were included)

Here are the results for the discount offers that were sent to customers who previously purchased items from the best-selling categories:

Segmentation	Offer	Bounces	Opt-Outs	Opens	Clicks	Resp. Rate	Avg. Order	Gross Margin
None	Sale: 15% off any order	4.8%	0.3%	15.8%	25.7%	5.2%	$ 35.60	$ 15.13
None	Sale: 20% off any order	4.7%	0.4%	19.2%	40.8%	7.6%	$ 38.20	$ 15.28
None	Sale: 25% off any order	4.8%	0.5%	22.1%	34.3%	8.1%	$ 32.57	$ 12.21
None	Sale: $5 off $25 or more	4.6%	0.3%	13.8%	19.9%	6.3%	$ 27.32	$ 11.16
None	Free Shipping $50 +	4.5%	0.3%	16.4%	26.1%	3.4%	$ 54.62	$ 17.95

Looking only at the discount offers, 20% off any order was the winner. Free shipping had a higher gross margin and average order, but the increased response rate for the 20% discount offset them and generated the best return. (The return is not included in the chart at the company's request.)

The results for the four category emails are below. There were no discounts or promotional items included in the messaging. Each email featured new products from the specified category.

Segmentation	Offer	Bounces	Opt-Outs	Opens	Clicks	Resp. Rate	Avg. Order	Gross Margin
Best Selling Category	New Products	0.3%	0.0%	33.3%	39.7%	9.4%	$ 42.53	$ 21.27
Second Selling Category	New Products	2.2%	0.1%	23.0%	28.8%	8.9%	$ 39.73	$ 19.87
Third Selling Category	New Products	2.6%	0.6%	17.2%	34.7%	9.1%	$ 39.21	$ 19.61
Fourth Selling Category	New Products	3.1%	0.0%	21.8%	24.4%	8.8%	$ 36.84	$ 18.42

Interestingly, the categories performed exactly like the category ranking with the best results coming from the top selling category. All four category segments out-performed the discount tests.
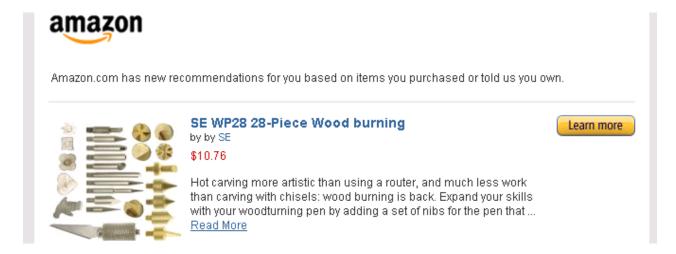
After the test, the cost of the additional resources needed to create the different emails and segment the customers was included in the return on investment

analysis. The segmented category mailings delivered 23% more profits than the discount ones.

To begin segmentation marketing, start with the five basic customer behaviors and build from there.

1. Hit and run shoppers are the ones who make a purchase or two and then never come back. Their behavior is need driven. Use your email marketing to help identify them early in the cycle so you don't invest unnecessary marketing dollars.

2. Discount buyers love a sales and promotions. The higher the discount the more they buy. Make sure that they get plenty of opportunities to buy. This segment is very valuable for inventory liquidation. Create fun events that encourage them to buy quickly.

3. Seasonal shoppers only buy certain times of the year. Anticipate their needs in advance to provide highly customized marketing. Seasonal shoppers have a tendency to be category shoppers too. Sending timely emails that include the right categories has good results.

4. Loyal buyers need special appreciation and rewards. Loyalty programs work because they provide benefits for being a loyal customer but they do not make people feel appreciated. Create special emails for your most loyal customers that show them how much you value their business.

5. Category shoppers are only interested in certain items. Sending them emails that have non-relevant categories reduces their open rates. If the majority of the messages miss the mark, they will opt-out or simply stop opening your emails.

Amazon allows people to review products they own, even if they didn't buy them from the company. The information is then used to send customized emails.

Companies that allow people who didn't purchase from them to participate in the review process receive more information that can be used to improve marketing.

Use Timely Ticklers for Discount and Seasonal Buyers

Discount and seasonal buyers have predictable behavioral patterns. Sending emails timed to correspond with historical purchasing activity puts your company in front of people when they are most likely to buy. Tests have shown that timely ticklers, emails timed to match buying patterns, increases response 10-24%.

Identifying discount customers is easy. All of their purchases are made with coupons or when there is an active sale. Some discount buyers can even be segmented by the amount of the discount. They won't buy until discounts reach a certain level. This suggests that a great sale price is more motivating than actual need.

Discount customers tend to be undervalued because they are compared to full price buyers. In a head to head competition, the discounters have lower lifetime values and provide fewer profit margins. This comparison fails to include the overstock factor. Bargain hunters make inventory liquidation easier and more profitable.

If you haven't identified the bargain hunters in your customer file, do it now. They never pay full price for anything and are the most likely to respond to your next sale or coupon. While analyzing the buying history, look for people that fall into category, seasonal, and price point subsets. This information can be used to personalize promotional emails.

Test sending emails designed to appeal to their need for a great deal. Personalize the messages by acknowledging their desire to save money and speak directly to specific needs using the subset information. Emails designed specifically for value minded customers receive higher opens and click-throughs than regular promotional messages. Be careful to avoid recipient fatigue. Test the quantity of messages so you will know when to stop.

Seasonal shoppers make their purchases at predictable times each year. The primary subtypes are gifters and casuals. Gifters buy for others at holidays and birthdays. They do not match your target profile and would never buy from your company if they didn't care for someone who loves your products and services. They tend to ship to alternate addresses and use gift services when available. Serve

them well by sending reminders two to three weeks prior to their normal purchase dates.

Casuals use your products or services periodically. They are much harder to identify than gift givers because they typically fit your customer profile but they only buy seasonally. Identify these customers by looking at order patterns. Some of these customers can be converted to high value active customers. In addition to sending reminders, create a conversion campaign for them. Making it easy for people to remember when they need to order moves your email strategy from pure play marketing to providing a service.

Capture Abandoned Carts with Creative Emails

Executives often ask me how they can eliminate cart abandonment. They receive reports that show thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars left sitting in online carts. The reports mislead them into thinking that if they stopped people from abandoning carts they would make more money.

It's easy to eliminate cart abandonment. Create a carting process so demanding that only the most committed customers will complete it and the problem will go away. A better approach is to focus on capturing abandoned carts instead of eliminating them.
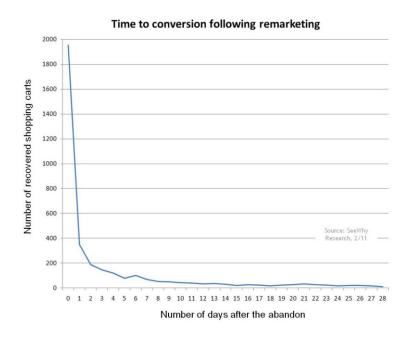
People abandon carts for a variety of reasons. The three that matter most to ecommerce companies are:

1. Distractions – Life happens and when it does carts are abandoned. People intend to come back to it when things settle down but the best intentions can be forgotten.

2. Wishful Thinking – People put items in carts that they would like to have but don't have the resources to purchase at this time. The cart becomes a working wish list. Offering an option to keep a running wish list reduces the abandoned cart rate and provides an opportunity to convert wishers into buyers.

3. Pricing – Your shoppers want to know that they are getting the best price possible. They populate carts and then shop around for better pricing or coupons. Abandoned cart programs that rely on discounts to capture sales have trained people to place items in the cart and wait for the coupon. Don't fall into this trap because most people who abandon carts for this reason fully intend to buy at any price.

Best practices for capturing abandoned carts begin with getting the email address. Try to get it as early as possible in the buying process without requiring people to create accounts. Forcing account creation increases cart abandonment. According
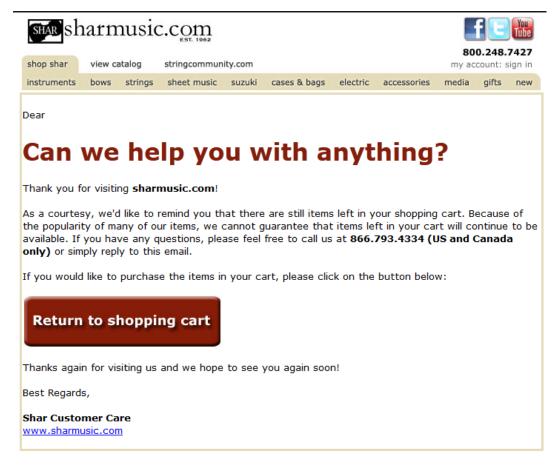
to Forrester, 14% of shoppers report abandoning carts because there isn't an option to checkout as a guest.

Start remarketing within 24 hours of the abandonment. A study by SeeWhy Research of 65,000 shopping carts sampled from a broad cross of ecommerce sites found that 54% of the shoppers who are going to buy do it within the first 24 hours. An additional 10% buy within 48 hours.

Time to conversion following remarketing

Source: SeeWhy Research, 2/11

Number of recovered shopping carts

Number of days after the abandon

Remarketing is a multiple level process. Like everything else in the marketing world, testing is the best way to find the optimal solution for your company. I recommend starting with a three email campaign that focuses on customer care with a sense of urgency. The data acquired from the test can then be used to expand your cart capture program.

Offering assistance in the first email helps foster trust while reminding recipients that they still have items in their cart. The following email from sharmusic.com leads with an offer to help and quickly follows with a sense of urgency. Noting that product availability cannot be guaranteed if the cart isn't completed encourages people to act now.
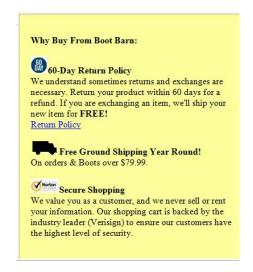
The email makes it easy to contact them by providing an 800 number or the option to reply to the email. One downside is that there are two different telephone numbers provided. Be sure to double-check your emails to insure that the number you want people to call is the only one presented.

Alloy's simple reminder has a sense of urgency too but it doesn't have the same emotional pull as the one from sharmusic.com. "Your shopping bag will expire in a few days" isn't as effective as telling people that someone else may get the items they want.

Emphasize why the customer should buy from your company in the second email. If customers are price shopping, they need to know the benefits of ordering from you to make an intelligent purchase decision. Boot Barn includes a highlighted sidebar to insure people don't miss it:

The third email is a final notice. Reiterate special benefits to ordering now like free shipping or fast delivery and provide another opportunity to contact customer service if there are questions.

When used wisely, offering discounts can help capture carts. Reducing prices should be a last resort, not a first offer. If discounting is part of your strategy randomly generate the offers so people don't receive them every time. This keeps people from being trained to wait for the best deal.

Send People to the Right Place

The Internet is a wonderland filled with rabbit holes that take people away from your marketing message. Your customers and prospects will become distracted and venture off to other activities if they do not have a clear path to follow. The emails they receive from your company are the starting point of a map to the final objective. Anything that isn't easily recognized as the next step or requires the traveler to stop and think is a diversion that needs to be eliminated.

The first step in creating an optimized email is mapping the path you want the recipients to follow. Start with the objective. What do you want them to do? Once you know the what, outline the how. How do people get from the email to the final objective? Sometimes the process is very simple. If the objective is to sell a particular item, the path looks like this:

Item Link in Email → Item Landing Page → Add to Cart → Checkout

If more information is required for recipients to make a buying decision, the path might look like this:

More Information Link in Email → Informtion Page → Item Landing Page → Add to Cart → Checkout

Always follow the Albert Einstein simplicity rule when mapping the path from email receipt to objective. The rule is, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler." If a step is needed to complete the process don't leave it out.

Use consistent visuals and messaging to keep people from being distracted. The right page with the wrong images and words makes people stop the process.

This email from build.com invites recipients to "Make your outdoors an oasis:"
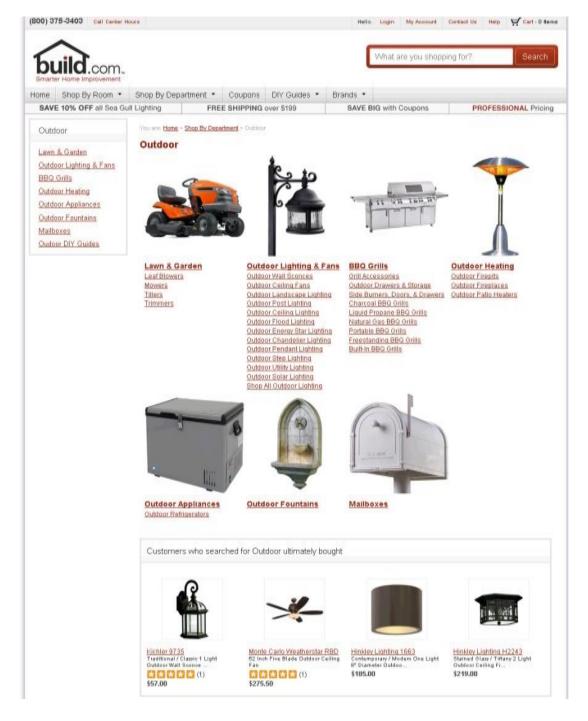
The lighting in the image is amazing. It implies that clicking "Get Started" will take you to the information needed to light up your home.

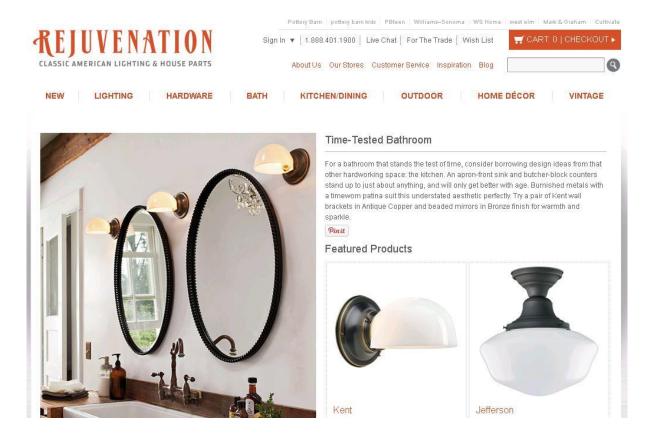Here is the landing page that is supposed to "Make your outdoors an oasis:"

There is nothing that ties the landing page to the email that sent the visitors. It confuses people and leads to high bounce rates instead of increased sales.

Rejuvenation does it better. The email is very similar to the Build.com oasis message. It promises that "a rustic bath will stand the test of time" with a link to "Shop Bathroom." The expectation is that clicking it will take you to bathroom fixtures.

Source: Who's Mailing What

Clicking the link opens this page:

The image from the email is the first thing visitors see. This lets people know that they are in the right place. The headline reads, "Time-Tested Bathroom" and the copy continues the consistency by starting with, "For a bathroom that stands the test of time." The featured products include the lights shown in the image leaving no doubt that you are on the right page.

Creating detailed paths and consistent content takes more time and effort than simply updating a promotional template. The additional expense is justified by the return. Optimizing emails becomes even more important as their life is extended by search. There is also a bonus – the content can be repurposed for other channels.

Rejuvenation used their email content and path for a Facebook post:

Imagine what you could do with your content!
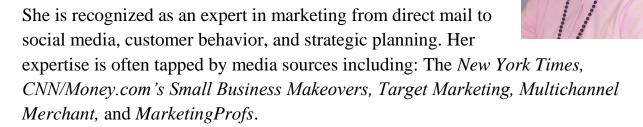
How to Get the Rest of the Guide

This mini-guide includes three of the thirty-one ways to get better results from your email marketing. For more information and to get the complete guide, click the link to go to http://www.multichannelmagic.com/supercharge-email-marketing/.

The guide is guaranteed to pay for itself many times over. If you are unhappy with it for any reason, simply request a refund within 60 days of your purchase date and a full refund will be issued. That gives you two months to test the tips and tactics to see how well they work for your business.

If you prefer a Kindle version, click this link: http://www.amazon.com/Ways-Supercharge-Email-Marketing-ebook/dp/B00E9089ZA

About the Author

Debra Ellis is a business consultant, author, and speaker. She specializes in showing companies how to improve customer acquisition and retention using integrated marketing and service strategies. Her engineering background provides statistical insight to finding actionable data that can be used to grow companies and reduce costs.

She is recognized as an expert in marketing from direct mail to social media, customer behavior, and strategic planning. Her expertise is often tapped by media sources including: The *New York Times, CNN/Money.com's Small Business Makeovers, Target Marketing, Multichannel Merchant,* and *MarketingProfs*.

Debra loves the art and science of multichannel marketing. She is a student and teacher of the methods that transform shoppers into buyers and buyers into lifelong customers. In 1995, she founded Wilson & Ellis Consulting, a boutique firm specializing in creating strategies that make channels and departments work together to optimize the customer experience. Since then, she has worked with over a hundred distinguished clients such as Costco, Edmund Scientifics, Jacuzzi, Ross-Simons Jewelry, and The Body Shop.

Prior to founding her firm, Debra was instrumental in the record growth of Ballard Designs, Inc. while serving as Chief Operating Officer. Today, she uses her experience and expertise to show executives how to successfully navigate marketing channels and integrate activities to profitably grow their business. Her practical approach maximizes the return on investment.

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