

## Permission Based Marketing In the Business to Business Arena

### **Definition**

Open any Direct Marketing publication at the moment and the concept of permission marketing will be widely discussed. But what exactly do we mean by "permission marketing"?

In his book "Permission Marketing – Turning Strangers into Friends & Friends into Customers"<sup>1</sup> Seth Godin defined it as marketing where individuals "volunteer to be marketed to".

In this context, permission based marketing has 2 key elements:

1. Giving the contact the **opportunity to volunteer**
2. Ensuring the marketing messages are **interesting & relevant** so that the contact does not withdraw their consent.

### **Benefits**

Permission based marketing can be more resource hungry than traditional techniques, but its cost effectiveness is likely to be much higher: Resources are more targeted and communications more adapted to the audience. Put simply, an efficient permission based marketing campaign will:

- Improve response rates
- Develop closer relationships with contacts

As such, it will increase the effectiveness of the marketing campaign. Although there is little supporting empirical data from the business to business (B2B) arena, research from consumer markets does back up the benefits. There are also numerous positive case studies on business to business email marketing campaigns. One such case study is available on the BSA website.

### **Securing Permission**

Looking at the aspects of permission marketing outlined above, the first consideration is how to obtain permission.

In the B2B arena, there is no legal requirement to obtain an opt-in before sending marketing messages by email as long as:

- The recipient is part of a limited company
- The source and subject of the email is clearly and unambiguously stated
- There is a free, and robust method by which recipients can opt out of future communications

This said, we would always advocate that careful research of lists and securing permission should always be seen as best practice.

This does raise the question of how permission can be sought. In B2C (Business to Consumer) markets, demographic data, and third party opt-in lists are becoming more widely available. In the B2B sector however, if you wish to target a specific function within a specific market segment, it is unlikely that good quality third party data will be available.

<sup>1</sup> 1999 Simon & Schuster Publishing

In our experience, the best solution in the B2B markets is to build a bespoke list using targeted telemarketing. Through this process it is possible to build a list that is:

- **Accurate & up to date**
- **Exactly targeted** to your specification
- **Fully opt-in**, as permission is sought directly from the relevant contact
- **Unique and available only to you**, and not to your competitors
- Fully profiled in order to allow **accurate message targeting**

Although initial costs will be higher than sourcing a third party list, experience shows that the above benefits easily justify the cost. Investing in building a good list will pay dividends by offering a long term, inexpensive route to communicate directly with your specific market.

### **Maintaining permission**

Having made a significant investment in securing permission & building an e-mail database, it is imperative that you maintain that permission, as permission is not permission for life.

Every communication you send out must by law include an option for the contact to opt out (withdraw their permission). This means that in the world of permission marketing:

## **CONTENT IS KING**

Each communication must be **relevant**, and **valued by the recipient**. It is not good enough to just send out online advertising telling contacts how wonderful you are.

When considering content for permission based e-mails, the following should be considered:

1. Is the message relevant to the recipient?
2. Does it contain information which will be valued by the recipient?
3. Is the message focused firmly on the reader rather than the sender?
4. Does it offer the recipient something of benefit? This may be an exclusive offer or a "white paper" for example.
5. Does the message strengthen your image with the recipient?

If all these considerations are fulfilled, then the recipient is likely to continue to grant you the privilege of communicating with him.

Ignore them, and you will have readers reaching for the "unsubscribe" link in droves, and your hard won list will quickly disappear.

### **Other considerations**

**Integration** – Often permission marketing is seen as synonymous with "on-line" marketing. In fact permission marketing should be seen as a philosophy covering all marketing communications.

By creating an integrated marketing strategy, you can ensure that you are delivering a joined up message to your marketplace.

**Frequency -** Although this process opens the way to regular high quality communication with your market, there is such a thing as too much communication: Don't swamp the recipients to the point where your messages become a nuisance.

Although there are no hard and fast rules, think carefully before sending messages more frequently than monthly, and ask the question: "Is the frequency justified?"

**List building -** It is always said that recommendation is the best route to business development: Always look to elicit recommendations from existing contacts, encourage them to pass on your message to others, and build in an option for new contacts to subscribe to your newsletter.

Permission based marketing is definitely a sound strategy, and one that is open to almost every organisation.

BSA Marketing are a specialist direct marketing company who have great experience in working with clients in the business to business arena, to develop **and IMPLEMENT** realistic, sustainable and effective marketing strategies.

If you would like to discuss how we may be able to assist you in developing a permission based marketing programme, give us a call, we would be delighted to talk to you.

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