



by Ken Baur

E-mail Marketing That Works

Should framers be using e-mail marketing? How much should they use it? Why should they use it? How is it done effectively?

These are all good questions, and all of them are being asked a lot these days. After using this type of marketing for about five years, the answers have started to become very clear to me.

First, should framers use e-mail marketing? Very definitely, yes. I'm sure of this because it works. It works partly because traditional marketing like direct mail, newspaper, cable TV, and radio are becoming less effective than ever before. And the truth is that marketing with these

methods to the general public has never produced the returns the industry has hoped for. More than that, however, it works because it is targeted toward your real audience.

For advertising to work, two things must exist. First, the

person you are trying to reach must desire to hear what you are talking about. And second, that person must be in a position to act upon that desire.

Marketing to "potential" customers by this industry just doesn't work well when you consider these two factors. Only a small percentage of the population is open to hearing about custom framing, and an even smaller percentage will ever act even if they do listen.



This promotion uses pictures of team members to make e-mail personal, which is important because social marketing is such a personal medium. Hosting a blog off a website and using Facebook to tie into a site can also improve search engine optimization.

When it comes to e-mail marketing, however, those same factors actually work in framers' favor. The concept is built upon the idea sending messages to those who have already said they want to hear what you have to say and have proven they have the ability to act. Why? Because, basically, they are your customers. They already know they want what you offer—and that's a great thing!

Why is that so great? These people are doing business with you already. It's just that they're not doing so to their fullest potential. And even if they are, the type of marketing you have done to them in the past has been far more expensive and less frequent than an effective e-mail program would be. The key is convincing yourself that using e-mail as the primary source of your marketing is a worthwhile endeavor. If you believe that, then you can get your staff to help make the transition.

To make this happen, understand that e-mail is just part of the program. What you are really developing is an e-marketing program. Part of the effectiveness of e-mail marketing is its ability to grow your website as a marketing tool at the same time. In return, your website should rein-

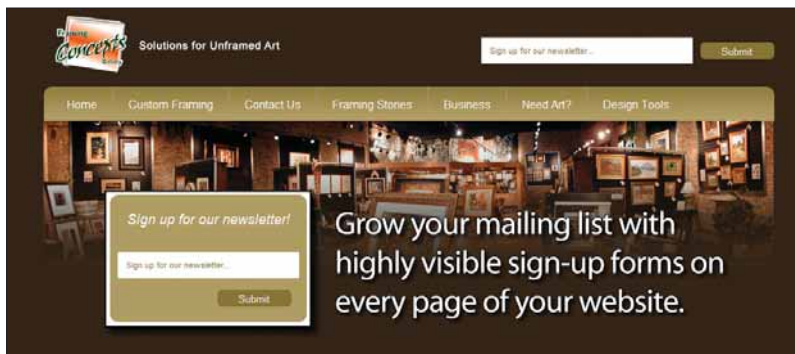
E-mail marketing works because it is targeted toward your real audience—those who already want to hear what you have to say

force the effectiveness of your e-mails, blog, company Facebook page, and all other social media you can use to grow e-marketing.

The most basic function of website support for your e-mail program is to sign up new clients who want to receive your e-mails. This is the core target group of your new e-marketing program—the people who want to get your messages.

To begin, you must convert all the clients in your POS system to e-mail clients. This takes work. It's not a good idea to take shortcuts and just enter them into your e-marketing database without permission. That will hurt your program. You need permission from each and every client because many may not want your e-mails. If they don't, you will experience a high amount of un-subscribes and resistance to your efforts. And that can even cause resistance to visiting your store.

The best route to signing up customers to your e-mail list is to have your sales team ask every client they talk to. This can be done as customers come in, but phoning them to explain your new marketing program and then verifying their correct e-mail addresses is the best method. Having correct e-mail addresses and their

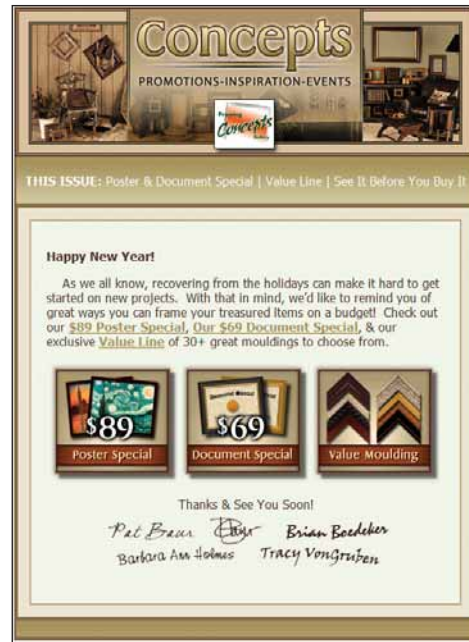


When you make e-marketing the primary focus of your marketing, providing easy ways for website visitors to join your e-mail list is very important.

permission really helps you avoid being put on e-mail blacklists by your customers and establishes a solid base for your program.

Give your team ammunition to make your new program exciting to those they are trying to sign up. Remember, if you can convert your clients to e-mail marketing, you will save thousands of dollars in traditional marketing costs, so you'll have some money to provide incentives to join.

Try giving out special savings to new signups. Offer



This promotional newsletter includes a call to action by promoting three options of framing that help customers save money. Doing cost-saving promotions can be an effective message in this economy. The signatures on the e-mail are used to personalize the message and make it seem a bit more like the e-mail was directed to an individual client instead of to a group.

discounts on services like delivery and installation. Try offering a \$5 bonus to each staff member who gets someone to sign up for the new program. Above all, make it policy that every new client sees the advantages of being part of this marketing program.

What kind of things should you talk about in your e-mails? First, make a plan. Decide what kind of e-mails you want to use. You can offer newsletters that give broad insight into several areas. You can offer postcard-type e-mails with coupons or promotions. You can also use e-mail to celebrate client birthdays.

Remember the idea of using each area of your program to reinforce the others' effectiveness? When using e-mail coupons or promotions, use a link to the actual printable version of the coupon on your website. This drives website traffic and gets clients used to visiting your site to save money.

Another very important part of effective e-mails is to focus on your clients. People don't really enjoy reading about your or your company. That may be hard to believe because it's natural to think you're really unique and special, but the truth is that people find talk about your business boring. Instead, talk about your customers. Tell stories about customers and their projects. Better yet, have them tell their own stories and include pictures of them.

Keep e-mails fresh and beneficial to the reader. This marketing works because clients want to hear what you

have to say, but they won't keep wanting to unless you provide some benefit to their lives.

How often do you send e-mails? The answer is way more often than the typical form of marketing. For one thing, you can afford to. For another, your e-mails benefit those who receive them. Keep track of your un-subscribers and the percentage of those who don't open your e-mails. If they are on the rise, you may be sending too many e-mails. More likely, your content isn't as beneficial as you think.


I recommend using an ESP (e-mail service provider) for your e-mail program. Such providers can help you avoid spam filters and provide an infrastructure that helps with firewalls, feedback loops, and bouncebacks. They also help you stay more current with your list and provide lots of good feedback about the effectiveness of your e-mails. And find an ESP that doesn't handle your e-mail separately from your website. That can cause double work with entering client sign-ups into two programs and makes it harder to use your social marketing programs to reinforce each other.

My company, Framing Concepts, uses a program

that allows us to make content changes and image updates to both our website and e-mails and connects the clients that sign up for e-mails on our website to our e-mail program. This is ideal and sets the stage for adding other platforms of social marketing like blogs and Facebook within the e-marketing program.

E-marketing is here to stay. Its ability to interact directly with people who want your message makes it a perfect opportunity for the framing industry. If you haven't created an e-marketing plan, there's no better time than now. It's a great way to save money and increase the number of times you can communicate with your clients. Remember to plan things out and commit to focusing on your clients. Provide tons of benefits for subscribers and get as many subscribers as you can. The results will be well worth it. ■

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