

## **BLOCKING THE PLUGHOLE - EMAIL MARKETING UPDATE**

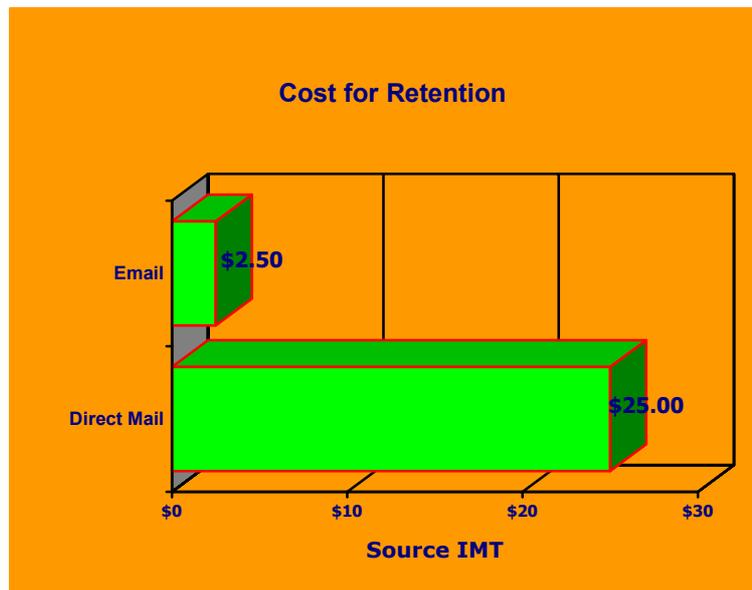
There is a big difference between Spam and email marketing and you shouldn't be put off using email to build and keep your relationship with your customers. Tony Kent, Managing Director of Options Strategy has created and run several very successful permission based email campaigns for his customers. Here Tony gives some compelling reasons to consider permission based emails to maintain and grow your customer base.

### **CUSTOMERS ARE THE LIFEBLOOD OF ANY BUSINESS, BIG OR SMALL**

Yet many businesses run their marketing like a bath with the taps on full and the plug out. The water is flooding in (lots of new customers) but the water is not rising – because current customers are going down the proverbial plughole! You need to maintain contact, build the relationship and take every opportunity you can to encourage long term loyalty to your business.

How does this relate to email marketing? Research from the USA has clearly shown that the key strength of email marketing is in retaining and growing current customers.

Email marketing is 10 times lower in cost than paper mail for current customers. This works in your favour because current customers trust you and are often interested to read what you say – if you keep it short and relevant.



At times you may be tempted to buy lists of email addresses sold cheaply through unsolicited email. The obvious problem with these is that there is no permission from the email owners. Response rates are very low, negative reactions are common and it is bad for your business. In fact, soon it will be illegal to send unsolicited, bulk commercial emails

as the Anti-Spam Bill has passed through the Senate and is due to become law by March 2004. Spammers watch out!

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**"IF MY TERRIBLE DATABASE CAN WORK, SO CAN YOURS!"**

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*Many people feel that their database is too poor to start doing permission email. Not always true. If your database is limited, here are four important things you can do to make it a more effective marketing tool.*

**THE KISS PRINCIPLE**

Keep it simple. You may have seen expensive-looking emails with lots of graphics and content and thought, how could you compete with your limited resources. The good news is - there is no evidence that high-graphic emails are more successful than text emails. A compelling, well-written text email can be just as successful and bring stronger response rates than high graphic emails.

**WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO OFFER?**

You may only be able to afford one direct mail shot about your latest offer, sale or promotion, but if you can remind even half your customers by email this is far better than reminding no-one. Remember, an email campaign takes less time to organize because you have less elements to think about, plus no printing costs and no postage. You can be more tactical and take advantage of getting your news out in the market, faster.

**STAY IN TOUCH**

If you are running a personal service business you'll know how hard in is to keep in touch with all your clients. A short monthly email giving simple hints or information increases awareness of your name and business.

**BUILD YOUR DATABASE**

Your database is your power base. Try to make email-gathering part of your business. If it is a standard system you can start to accumulate email addresses for the future.

It makes sense to consider broadcasting your emails through a professional service as they have the issues of automatic unsubscribe and privacy laws in hand.

Where do you start? Try the calculator on the Options web site for [email marketing](#). For example: you can get an instant ballpark estimate of the cost of running a campaign for your size of database.

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