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Targeting SMBs: 6 Steps to Effectively Reaching SMBs with Email Marketing

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In most markets globally, small-to-midsize businesses (SMBs) make up over 90% of all businesses, and in the U.S. alone, it's estimated there are about 28 million small businesses. For any marketer targeting this broad and complex market, that's a lot of ground to cover.

SMBs have very different challenges and needs compared to larger companies. They are often less mature, faster moving and show greater differentiation in their behavior. What's the best way to reach this important sector when it comes to email marketing? Here are six proven tips to keep in mind when targeting SMBs:

1. Build Shared Values and Strong Relationships:

SMBs often act more impulsively than larger businesses. Their size and often their nature (e.g. a family-run business) means they are more likely to purchase from local or long-term suppliers who they believe have their best interests at heart and for whom they feel they are an important customer. Strong relationships are important to them; it's often how they survive against their bigger competitors – and it's what they expect from their vendors, so marketers need to go the extra mile to demonstrate a commitment to their success.

3. Take a Consultative Approach: With individuals taking on multiple roles, SMB buyers often lack deep business discipline expertise. As a result, they rely on vendors to educate them on the business case for a particular product or service, and will likely require more hand holding. This creates an opportunity for email marketers to tailor a more specific message to pique their interest, and a more advisory, consultative marketing approach. This might include, for example, a stronger emphasis on educational insight, case studies, industry research, or “how to” content.

2. Be Sure Who the Buyer Is: The organizational makeup of SMBs can vary wildly, depending on which functions they view as crucial to their businesses. As such, it's not uncommon to find owners or other senior employees wearing multiple hats as part of their roles, often, for example, combining finance, IT and HR, or sales, partnerships and marketing. This makes it challenging for B2B marketers to determine who the buyer of their product or service might be, and underscores the importance of investing the time to get to know their B2B prospects individually.

4. Focus on More Immediate Gratification: SMBs likely have less capital, are more focused on the short-term, and need a quicker return on their investment, making it necessary for marketers to clearly communicate a strong ROI for their offerings. Key drivers for SMB investment in a new product or service are the potential for increased sales, increased efficiencies, employee productivity and reduction of cost or improved customer service. If marketers spell out these benefits clearly in their email messages, their customers and targets will take notice.

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5. Help Them One-Up Their Competition: SMBs face a constant battle for survival, both against other similar-sized businesses and from larger competitors. To encourage SMB investment, a product or service will look more attractive being shown to offer a strong competitive advantage, and put them a few steps ahead of their rivals. Omitting this competitive aspect may make it more difficult to persuade SMBs to part with their valuable capital.

6. Keep It Clean: Lastly, remember that SMBs change their email addresses more frequently than their larger competitors – and that’s why email data quality is key. Add to this the fact that there is so much ground to cover in the SMB space, and it’s no surprise many marketers look to email data providers to expand their reach or zero in on their ideal SMB audience with pinpoint accuracy. Reputable email data providers will not hesitate to provide a written guarantee of 90 percent or higher data accuracy. On top of that, they’ll also offer the use of their data for ongoing campaigns, as opposed to a one-off effort.

To effectively target SMBs with email marketing, it’s clearly vital to have a detailed understanding of the SMB prospects’ needs, values and buying behaviors, as well as how they approach purchase decisions. As with other markets, it’s also important to segment the overall email audience based on their stage in the buying cycle and on their relationship with your organization, along with their expressed interests, goals and preferences. But, as outlined in the tips above, don’t treat them like Fortune 500 firms: they might have champagne tastes, but they know their budgetary limits -- and they know what they need from their vendors.



Outward Media, Inc. (OMI) is in business to help organizations expand their reach, find new customers and enter new markets. OMI wrote the book on multi-channel marketing data, and provides fresh, accurate email data to drive business growth and success for Fortune 2000 firms and mid-sized companies worldwide. With data that spans B2B, B2C, domestic and international markets, OMI stands behind the industry’s only email data quality guarantee. In partnership with Data-Graphix LLC, OMI also offers BizFACTZ, a fresh, accurate B2B database containing more than 33 million full business records, 40 million business contacts and 25 million email addresses. OMI also offers PeopleFACTZ, a powerful B2C database containing more than 220 million consumer records with full demographics and 120 million verified email addresses.

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