



# Fricke & Associates, P.C.

## CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

2344 Perimeter Park Drive, Suite 100, Atlanta, GA 30341 Phone: 770-216-2226

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From Counting Transactions to Cultivating Relationships

**With technology at the forefront** of modern communication, more and more people are turning to the Internet to stay abreast of the latest news and information. Likewise, many people use the Internet to conduct research before deciding to donate money or volunteer their time.

What does this trend mean for your not-for-profit? The right technology can transition any organization from the outmoded idea of counting transactions to the modern strategy of cultivating relationships. If you haven't yet embraced modern communication as a significant part of your agency's overall marketing strategy, it may be time to do so.

Perhaps one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to meld technology and marketing is e-mail. E-mail campaigns, including e-Newsletters and promotions/special offers, can not only deliver big results, but are a more efficient and less intrusive option than snail mail.

### Seven Key Benefits of E-mail Marketing

- 1. Image.** A well-designed campaign casts a favorable impression of your not-for-profit on each e-mail recipient.
- 2. Relationship Building.** E-mail is an effective marketing tool for not only keeping your agency at the forefront with existing supporters, but for building awareness about the work you do with prospective donors. It is also useful for reconnecting with former volunteers and supporters.
- 3. Loyalty.** Staying in touch reminds your supporters why they give their time and money to the cause your agency serves.

### Should You Use an E-mail Auto Responder?

Even if the term "auto-responder" doesn't sound familiar, you've probably sent messages and gotten an automatic reply within a few minutes.

Some people look at the use of an auto-responder as a way to leverage time. Ideally you want to send a personal reply to every inquiry. But if business is going well, you probably get far more e-mails than you can answer in a reasonable amount of time. Meanwhile, consumers seeking information may have moved on to another provider. An auto-responder lets senders know right away that you are interested in their questions and will get back to them soon.

### Two Caveats:

- 1. Follow up.** There needs to be a real live person available to follow up on problems and inquiries fairly quickly. An auto-responder buys you a little time, but if you want to make the sale, send a personal reply as soon as you can.
- 2. Keep it fresh.** If your auto-responder includes a specific day or time when you will be at your desk, such as "I am out of my office until July 1 and will contact you as soon as I return," be sure not only to respond on time, but also to keep your message updated. If customers call on July 3 and hear an outdated message saying you will return on July 1,



**4. Greater Response Rate.** E-mail response rates, particularly for highly-targeted messages, are significantly higher than direct mail.

they may think that you are either disorganized or too busy to give them the service they need. Auto-responders can be great tools, but if you don't have time to keep the message fresh, it might be better to skip their use altogether.

**5. Better Return on Investment.**

Because there is nothing to print or mail, e-mail marketing is less expensive than direct mail. And, because it costs just a few cents per e-mail, as opposed to dollars per direct mail piece, you can afford to increase the size of your mailing list.

**6. Timing.** As the old saying goes, timing is everything. E-mail marketing allows your agency to select the exact moment your message will be delivered.

**7. Results Tracking.** E-mail marketing, when handled through a service that offers robust click-through reports enables you to track who is opening your e-mails. Imagine if you could see when a reader jumps from an article about the type of work your not-for-profit does, directly to your website. That information can be invaluable in helping you to develop a highly-targeted message.

## Best Practices in E-Mail Marketing

Whether you are new to the concept of e-mail marketing or already ingrained in the process, there are a number of best practices to keep in mind for optimal success.

- **Develop and Maintain a Good E-mail List.** Collecting and maintaining e-mail address information is essential to success. With this in mind, there should be a coordinated effort between the various departments within your organization to handle this endeavor.
- **Choose a Delivery Method.** Thinking about using your agency's e-mail server or CRM platform to send e-mails? Think again. Content filters used by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block SPAM decrease the odds of your e-mail reaching its intended recipient. To circumvent this, you must be added to each ISP's white list or use an e-mail marketing service.
- **Adhere to Spam Laws.** Be certain to follow the current spam laws, including offering the ability to opt-out of receiving future mailings. Federal Trade Commission fines for non-compliance can be hefty.
- **Add Value.** E-mail marketing is permission based, meaning that recipients have the right to "opt-out" of receiving your communications. In order to retain the right to send e-mail, you must provide something of value. For example, an animal rescue agency could send a list of seasonal tips for pet care. An organization that serves the elderly could provide a list of restaurants in town that offer senior discounts.
- **Have a Strong Subject Line.** Your target will decide in less than a second whether or not to open your e-mail based on several factors, including the subject matter, the quantity of e-mail already received, and his or her own time constraints. Eliminate competition at the inbox with a clear, concise subject line. Personalization is also effective when it comes to moving your e-mail from received to read.
- **Put Creative/ Branding into Perspective.** Recipients are more responsive to e-mail communications that are sent in a consistent format, so it is important to develop a template for your agency that will allow you to change the content, yet maintain brand identity. That said, it is also important to apply traditional direct marketing principles, which suggest that response opportunity comes from the list (40 percent) and the offer (40 percent), with only 20 percent attributable to the creative aspects. In addition, e-mail needs to be designed with the anticipation that many readers will view it with a mobile device.
- **Set a Delivery Schedule.** While it is important to keep your brand name at the forefront, too many messages can lead to opt-outs.
- **Follow-up.** Structure follow-up procedures for all lead types ahead of time since each one represents a possible sales opportunity.

- **Review Results.** Take the time to review the results of your e-mail campaigns on a regular basis and use that information to improve future communications.

In a technologically savvy culture where choices abound, keeping your not-for-profit agency in the forefront is essential. If you are not engaging in e-mail communications to do this, you are missing out on a tremendous opportunity to cultivate relationships in a cost-effective manner.

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