



Marketing Messages

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E-marketing opportunities continue to multiply in the brave new online world

The dot.com bust several years ago jaded even the most seasoned marketer on the promise of low cost and quick return e-marketing. So infatuated were we with the promise of this new medium that we scrambled to apply all the tried and true methods that had worked in traditional vehicles like print and broadcast. Static banner ads, brochure like websites and non-interactive broadcast commercials largely failed to inspire. Only recently have we begun to truly appreciate the potential of electronic marketing with new innovative applications.

First some facts: According to **Ipsos Reid**, 78% of Canadians have access to the internet and 72% have high-speed access at home. 85% of BC residents are online. 79% of Canadians voluntarily register with a website to receive permission based mail-outs, while the average Canadian will register with 9 websites to receive commercial email. The average Canadian receives 164 emails a week while spam accounts for at least 50% of these.

Clearly there is potential. The challenge of course is getting noticed and remembered. So where to begin?

Permission based email: It's time efficient, can save you money and offers a targeted message to a pre-qualified audience. You can segment your customer base and response is trackable. However, getting your message read amidst email clutter and spam filters can be a challenge, and opt in, out and bounced emails must be managed. But with an interested customer base, care to meet Canspam legislation and respect for the amount of contact, permission-based email can be extremely effective. Just ask the Vancouver Opera. E-marketing has enabled a dramatic change in their business. About a year ago the Opera embarked on an aggressive plan to collect email addresses of attendees. Motivated by attractive prize incentives and an altruistic understanding of the implied savings in communication costs 10,000 attendees now rank their email list. The Opera wanted to communicate in a fast easy way, give special offers, provide traffic warnings and parking advice, save money on printing and ultimately control their own ticketing. Not only have they succeeded in launching their own on-line box office, but they have been able to analyze a campaign and make adjustments. Jonathon Harrison, Marketing Director for Vancouver Opera notes, "When there's an offer, we get 6 times the click throughs."

E-newsletters: **Vancouver Opera** educates and fosters community interest through a monthly e-newsletter. Sent once a month the single page update is quick to read, comes in a graphically pleasing HTML format and offers numerous website links throughout for more detail.

Interactive website content: An interesting website innovation called "Media Viewer" allows the Opera to film behind the scenes footage, interviews with the cast, clips of rehearsals, audience feedback and post it immediately on site. They have also utilized this feature to offer customers audio previews of the coming season.

Over at the **Vancouver East Cultural Centre**, there is also success with e-marketing efforts. While converting their mailing list to a permission-based e-list, there has been little opt-out action of participants. "Once people have opted in and we give them desirable information in a respectful manner, we generally keep them", says Duncan Low, Executive Director. "Using email and our website has been a great way to get our message out. It's much cheaper and more efficient than print." They too have utilized Media Viewer clips of audience reviews and posted them to their website following a show opening. Not only does it create a buzz about the event, it offers non editorialized reviews, a bonus when short run shows close before print reviews are published. Real people with real opinions available the next day could relegate the print review to obscurity.

Blogs and viral marketing: The Vancouver East Cultural Centre has successfully harnessed the power of blogs as a positioning vehicle. To help grow their youth market they developed a youth panel, a group who met bi-weekly and kept in touch electronically. They encouraged youth to create blogs for their youth week. Youth had complete content control. Individual blogs and links between them created a viral marketing opportunity. The VECC effectively achieved an authentic voice to their target group by relinquishing control. The result was the most successful youth weeks ever with very low promotional costs. Viral marketing, essentially electronic word of mouth, harnesses the power of message pass along, but with an implied personal endorsement, which is key. Easy to forward e-newsletters and emails, incentives to share with a friend or reciprocal website links can all form powerful methods of multiplying a message. The Opera and the VECC have harnessed this in their e-marketing efforts. Both groups worked with **YaYah Studios**, a local design house with an affinity for the cultural arts, and creative e-marketing flare to design and implement their campaigns.

There's a whole lot more than email spam and pop-up banner ads going on out there. Smart marketers are harnessing the power of e-marketing and with it making the cash registers sing.

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