The Basics of Starting Your Hotel's Email Marketing Campaign

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Of the various digital marketing strategies available, email has proven most effective for customer acquisition, awareness, retention and conversion. With over 70 percent of Internet users preferring email correspondence with businesses, it's not difficult to see how this marketing channel can benefit hoteliers. Add in the fact that hospitality emails show the highest open rates from consumers, and you've got a winning tactic for increased customer engagement. With that said, to reap optimal benefits, an email marketing campaign must be centered on fundamental strategies that stimulate interest and break down pre-purchase barriers.

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1. Build Your Email List

The foundation of an effective email marketing campaign centers on organically building a substantial, permission-based list of prospective customers. This means the contacts must request or opt-in to receive your messages. Purchased lists can be tempting; however, these people have not yet engaged with your brand. If you choose to "blast" these web users with intrusive, unsolicited emails, they are likely to unsubscribe or develop negative sentiment about your hotel.

There are a number of strategic ways for hoteliers to grow an organic email list. These include:

- Add a sign up form on every page of your website
- Create an incentive to opt-in (offers, vacation promotions, dining coupons)
- Add "forward to a friend" functionalities
- Ask for email addresses during check-in or check out
- Add "social sharing" functionalities
- Invite guests to subscribe in your post-stay thank you email
- Add an email newsletter signup checkbox to your contact form
- Add a prominent "opt-in" invitation into cancellation, reservation, promotional, pre-stay and post-stay emails

2. Design & Layout Your Template

Effective email design is especially relevant in the hospitality industry. To better stand out, make sure your template is specific to your brand and try to create the guest experience before potential visitors arrive at your property. Be sure to adhere to HTML email guidelines and keep the width to around 500 to 600 pixels. Always organize your content in sections, so recipients can easily scan the main points. Use bold headlines to outline key details and include clear calls-to-action. Make sure to include your major points in the top 200 pixels of the message, since many email clients include a preview pane that allows users to view content without opening.

Bear in mind an HTML email template is much different than a typical HTML webpage. There can be issues with CSS and images, due to different types of PC and mobile email clients. If your hotel doesn't have an experienced in-house design team, consider working with a professional service.

3. Develop Your Content Strategy

Effective content strategy walks the fine line between promotional messaging and customer value. When new or existing customers join your mailing list, they have perceived value in the action. Don't disappoint them by churning out standard promotional content. Generate campaigns that highlight your property through articles, interviews and newsworthy information. Offer special packages and consider sending out non-sales content from time to time to cultivate greater engagement and trust.
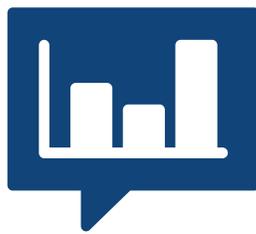
4. Create Compelling Subject Lines

While they may seem like a very small part of your email, subject lines are a marketer's ticket for standing out in a crowded inbox. To improve your open rate, adhere to the following best practices:

- **Keep your subject short and descriptive.**
- **Do not exceed 35 characters or between 5-8 words.**
- **Place the most important words at the very beginning.**
- **Eliminate filler words.**
- **Be clear and specific about the email content.**
- **Make sure the subject accurately describes the body content.**
- **Use logical keywords for filtering and searching.**
- **Use a fresh, unique subject line every time you send an email.**
- **Eliminate SPAMMY words that may send your email to a user's SPAM box.**

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5. Automate Your Marketing

Improve the timeliness and relevance of your emails by automating your campaign. This creates a more agile approach that will allow you to respond to the market immediately. With automation, hoteliers are able to segment guests, create and send targeted emails in under an hour. The right automation platform also allows hoteliers to evaluate ROI by tracking opened emails to directly booked revenue.
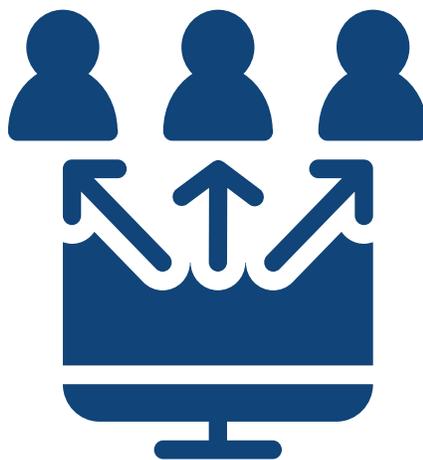
6. Measure Your Results & Refine Your Strategy

After you send out an email campaign, analyze the data and measure your results in relation to your goals. Look at the metrics to determine who opened, when they opened, what bounced, what got clicked and what got forwarded. Look at which links/ buttons were clicked the most. Assess which kinds of promotions proved most effective. Analyze which subject lines created more opens. Target the exact times of the day users viewed your email content.

Once you've looked at the data, use the information to shape future email promotions and better target your segments for increased conversions. Depending on your specific goals and the behavior of subscribers, you may wish to tweak certain elements before sending out your next campaign.

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7. Things to Consider

Email marketing is a powerful way to drive room bookings, improve guest retention, increase brand awareness and engage a highly targeted audience. That said, your results will depend on how much time and effort you put into your campaign. You should also utilize email marketing as part of an integrated cross channel strategy, aligning messages across multiple channels to reinforce each other and your overall ROI.

To learn more about how Revinate can
help you determine your guest CRM needs,
contact us at **info@revinate.com**.