6 STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL BEHAVIORAL-BASED TRIGGER MARKETING

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It's the marketer's dream -- delivering the most relevant message to the willing customer, at the right time, via the right channel. Achieving that dream requires a profound understanding of your customers and the capability to tailor marketing campaigns to fit their lives.

But it can be done -- through behavioral-based trigger marketing. Fundamentally, trigger marketing means communicating with customers at pre-planned points in time. These communications aren't driven by dates on the marketing calendar. Rather, the customer decides when a communication occurs through prompts captured in a data collection and analysis system.

The beauty of trigger marketing is its foundational properties. With the right up-front planning and data analysis, followed by on-going "pulse checks," it can serve as the very foundation to a marketing program. It's always there, continuously updated, and constantly paying for itself by maintaining contact with your best customers. The payback, of course, is measurable. Continuous improvement allows you to keep migrating customers into higher-return categories and ultimately into brand advocacy. How do you make it happen? Here are six steps:

Identify the business fundamentals

Establish the critical business needs and strategic imperatives, such as engagement, retention, revenue generation, and other essentials. So much is happening in the lives of our customers that we sometimes forget to step back and examine what we're trying to accomplish for them. What are their core challenges, and how can we alleviate them? That prompts some fundamental information gathering. By focusing on the customer, the marketer can't lose. Reduce guesswork by letting the customer tell you what they want and need.

Investigate the data

Collect and analyze the data compared to the strategic imperatives to see if and where clear thresholds exist. The key is to gather information to help answer the questions in the previous step. For example, if we have customer retention problems, can the data help us understand why? To acquire the needed information, bring your data acquisition and analysis people into play. Evaluate what is available within the nooks and crannies of the organization, and find data sources outside as well, such as government filings, registrations, or public data. Dig to get at the voice of customer data. After all, whenever customers interact with you -- even in the smallest way

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-- they're telling you something. After data collection, dig into the data analysis. Look for trends, letting customers guide you down the path of what they want, what they need, and when they need it.

Initiate the development

Create a plan to understand the trigger points or thresholds for your marketing communications. Once clear thresholds, or trigger points, are identified, you'll need a project plan for engaging the necessary resources to bring the campaign to reality. These elements -- creative, operations, deployment, channels -- will all be easier because you've got the data to guide you. In your planning, be sure to include testing and measurement options for copy, visuals, delivery method, offer elements, frequency, and other variables. The data will help you decide what works and where customers are in their decision-making process. It allows you to optimize when the communications should be triggered.

Install the campaigns

Establish your engagement framework, being sure to constantly evaluate the hierarchy of triggers. The customers themselves will guide you through the data clues they deliver to you. If you're listening, they'll tell you how often they want to be contacted, what channels they prefer, and what the best timing is. Composition engines will automate the process for you so that the right customer gets the right communication at the right time.

Inspect the results

It's critical to establish a control group for each individual campaign and maintain a constant, global control group as well. These benchmark groups reveal trend insights and help identify successes and ways to improve. Then, your job is to learn from the data and establish scores for revenue and response. In the bargain, you can test for various creative techniques, from copy to photos.

Infuse the theory

Because customer needs and attitudes change over time, an ongoing review of your trigger marketing program should be incorporated into the regular business process. Triggers aren't seasonal or one-off projects. They should be part of the company marketing culture.

Trigger marketing can be your constantly humming engine. Through the measurability of trigger marketing, your annual marketing budget can reflect how trigger-generated ROI can be the foundation of the marketing campaign. Resist the temptation to get caught up in new ideas or campaigns if they come at the cost of maintaining the trigger campaign.

For more information on Customer Engagement programs visit BI WORLDWIDE.com or email us at **information@biworldwide.com**.