

Email addresses have become more valuable

Email addresses have become so valuable to marketers that they are now offering discounts and other incentives to get them. Case in point: Ann Taylor is offering a 40% discount off your entire purchase simply for furnishing them with (any) email address. Another retailer, White House/Black Market makes it practically impossible to buy anything without getting an email address (which, the salesperson says, will be used to send you special offers only available via email).

Why are email addresses so important? Simple. It's because there are so many channels out there that it has become increasingly harder (and thus, more valuable) to target people. For retailers, fewer people are reading printed anything, a traditional place for special offers and sale notices. In general, media has become increasingly segmented. With DVRs, most people are fast-forwarding the commercials.

Email reaches people somewhere where they are likely to be—on their computer or other Internet-connected device. And because people can easily opt-out of receiving emails, marketers have to work harder to make it worth their while. And then there is the added benefit of not having to pay postage or printing costs, making email marketing a lot cheaper to produce.

What does this mean for marketing communications? It means that messaging has to be more targeted, more concise and centered around providing a very tangible benefit to the consumer. Email marketing maybe cheaper to snail mail marketing, but it also easier to stop.

The bottom line is that marketers want email addresses and consumers want real value for the intrusion.

Have you noticed more retailers asking for email addresses?

What incentives have you seen?