

It's not always about the money (customer feedback part 1)

Going by the emails I receive, some companies think that I don't do business with them solely because I can't afford to.



Every few weeks, a yoga studio I used to attend until my favorite teacher left sends me a dollars-off promotion. Come back, they say, here's an \$8 discount.

Then there's the company that is always sending me discounts for handyman services.

And there's a cosmetics company that sends emails telling me how I can get a free something or other with purchase (Only today! Only friends and family!).

It's not about money.

None of these companies has any idea why I am not a return customer. They've never asked me, but I'll tell you my reasons.

I haven't been back to the yoga studio because I don't like the teacher that is currently teaching during the time slot that is convenient for me. Additionally, I hurt my shoulder and I can't do yoga right now.

I haven't used the handyman company because I don't have a

current need. That's not to say I won't in the future, but there's nothing (knocking on wood here) that needs fixing right now.

The cosmetics company just yesterday was offering me a free lash-extender mascara. I wear contact lenses and I never use mascaras that extend because it bothers my eyes, so even a free mascara is not an enticement.

But at least they are tracking.

To their credit, these companies have noticed that I haven't been a customer for a while and they want me back. But they err in thinking that doing business is simply about money.

Here's the thing: Getting customers back is not as easy as offering a discount or a gift with purchase. You have to understand what motivates your customer.

The decision to buy something or do business with a company is often about more than just price. There are other factors, both tangible (e.g., need, convenience, timing) and intangible (e.g., trust, satisfaction, appreciation) that affect whether you shop somewhere or buy a certain product.

Sometimes, you have to ask.

If you've lost business or aren't getting repeat business, you have to ask why. Don't assume that everything can be fixed with a dollars-off promotion. Companies are collecting emails to do marketing or to send reminders. Well, they can also send a survey or even a personalized email.

Imagine how much more effective it would be if the yoga studio owner sent me an email saying she's noticed I haven't been there in several months and she'd like to know if I am still living in town or doing yoga.

How do you track your clients or customers? How do you entice them to come back? Let me know what works for you in the

comments.

Do this one thing!

You have to do PR if you want to get new clients!

You have to have an optimized website if you want to get new customers!



number 1 by Jon Jordan on Flickr

You have to do content marketing if you want to get new leads!

And most recently,

You have to try Periscope to get some exposure!

In the new world of marketing communications, there is a

growing array of standard and innovative possibilities for getting the word out about your business.

From the pre-Internet era we have good old advertising/public relations/marketing, including the use of print materials, broadcast, outdoor, direct mail, etc.

From the Internet-era, we have websites and email marketing.

From the social media-era, we have content marketing, and a seemingly endless stream of networks (Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and so forth) and video in short format (Vine) and in long format (Periscope). And I am sure as I write this, something else is bubbling up to capture our short-attention span.

Here's the thing: all of these work. They work differently, with different audiences and with different levels of "engagement." But the uncomfortable truth is that no one thing will get you leads/customers.

Back in the old days, we had a concept called "integrated marketing communications." It posited that in order to be successful, you had to use a variety of marcomm tools and make sure they were playing nice with each other. For example, if you were using sponsorship and public relations, the PR folks would know what you were sponsoring and the sponsorship folks might in turn get a bit of PR for the sponsorship. You know, everybody working together toward a common goal.

Now it seems that people want a shortcut. They want to try the one thing that will "guarantee" results. Everybody seems to be lurching from one platform to the next, one tactic to another.

If you want to achieve results from your marketing communications efforts you are going to have **to stop being tactical and start being strategic**. Stop thinking in terms of doing one thing to get audiences interested today and start thinking in terms of objectives and actions you want from said

audience.

You can't do just one thing.

If you need help figuring out what your communications efforts should be, contact me today! Let's talk.

My business card is not a pass to your newsletter

This is a quick rant because I just received an newsletter from a woman I met at an event two or three years ago. I haven't heard from her since, but apparently she has just decided doing a newsletter is a good idea and that her list will include names from all the people from whom she has collected a business card. It didn't help that the newsletter was addressed to "Brody," not "Ms. Brody" or "Deborah."

I immediately unsubscribed, not only because the last thing I need is another newsletter, but because this woman apparently thinks that my giving her my business card is an invitation to be added to a list. It does not. Business cards provide contact information, yes, but they do not have any power to agree to anything. I did not agree to be added to a list, and I certainly did not ask to be added to a list.

Here's the thing: direct marketing that complies with the CAN-SPAM laws requires opt-in permission. Just having my business card in your possession is not permission to add me to your list.

The only way that having my business card gives you a pass to get me to be on your marketing list is if you use that contact information to get in touch with me first. For example, you might send me a personal, non-mass email asking me if I would be interested in your list, or perhaps asking me to visit your website where I would have the option to sign up for your newsletter, or you could call me (you know, on the phone) to set up a coffee date and talk to me.

A business card is a networking tool, nothing more. If you use the contact information on the business card to send me unsolicited material, then you are a spammer, plain and simple.

Rant over.

Thoughts?

Are you CAN-SPAM compliant?

A couple of weeks ago, I went to a networking event and met a public relations “professional.” We exchanged business cards. I sent him a follow up email (nice to meet you, etc.) to which he didn’t respond. Instead, he added me to his enewsletter list. I was peeved. This guy, who didn’t have the basic courtesy to respond to a personal email, just threw my email into his marketing list without asking me. I quickly opted-out.

Other than being rude, was this guy doing something illegal? Was he being compliant with the CAN-SPAM Act (the very good acronym for *Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited*

Pornography and Marketing)?

The CAN-SPAM Act aims to reduce unsolicited direct marketing email. There are several parts to making your business compliant (you can read the seven main requirements on the FTC website and you can download a PDF with all the pertinent information).

If you distribute an electronic newsletter, you need to be CAN-SPAM compliant. You can get booted off most of the email marketing platforms if you are not, and most of them make it easy to comply.

According to the Act, the main requirements for compliance are these:

- Don't use false or misleading header information
- Don't use deceptive subject lines
- Identify the message as an ad
- Provide a physical location address
- Provide a way to opt out of further mailings
- Honor opt-out requests within 10 days

It turns out that CAN-SPAM does not spell out who can be added to your email list (opt-in). In fact, the requirement is directed only at opting out. You must include a way to unsubscribe, and you must honor that request quickly. However, if you do business with Canada or the European Union, things are a bit stricter. Both Canada and the EU require people to OPT-IN by giving consent. If you have a newsletter, I suggest you familiarize yourself with the opt-in laws for North America and Europe.

So, it seems rude PR guy was, in fact, compliant with CAN-SPAM requirements since his newsletter did have an opt-out. Had I been Canadian though, he would have been in trouble.

Here's the thing, just because something is legal, does not mean it's right. Although the US does not have the same

stringent opt-in requirements as Canada or the EU, marketers should be aware of why those requirements may be a good idea. People don't want unsolicited email. It clogs up inboxes, which are already being inundated with real spam (somehow, these laws do not seem to inhibit the scammers and spammers).

Why not make sure you are asking people to opt-in to your newsletter instead of only asking them to opt-out? All you have to do is have a sign-up form on your website. You can also ask people if they want to be added. Seriously, don't you want to communicate with people who are interested in your message instead of annoying people and then forcing them to opt-out?

What are your thoughts? How do you handle subscribing people to your newsletter?

UPDATE

Upon further research, I came across a section in the FCC website that seems to imply marketers should get consent to send emails. It says:

Giving Your Consent

Under the FCC's rules, texts and commercial email messages may be sent to your mobile phone if you previously agreed to receive them. For texts that are commercial, your consent must be in writing (for example, in an email or letter); for non-commercial, informational texts (such as such as those by or on behalf of tax-exempt non-profit organizations, those for political purposes, and other noncommercial purposes, such as school closings) your consent may be oral.

For commercial email, your consent may be oral or written. Senders must tell you the name of the entity that will be sending the messages and, if different, the name of the entity advertising products or services. All commercial email

messages sent to you after you've given your authorization must allow you to revoke your authorization, or "opt out" of receiving future messages. You must be allowed to opt out the same way you "opted in," including by dialing a short code. Senders have 10 days to honor requests to opt out.

Notice it says your consent MAY be oral or written. It does not say it MUST be. So, it is unclear to me if as a marketer, you HAVE to ask for consent.

The best way not to get business

Friends, I got a spam email today that just has to be read to be believed. Here it is in its entirety, my comments below:

Dear business owner of deborahbrody.com

Your deborahbrody.com business is losing THOUSANDS of DOLLARS every year, maybe more!

Why? How?

Your credit card processor HIDES THEIR FEES. Don't believe it? Check your statement, I'm sure you will be just as confused as the next business owner.

☐ DO NOT WORRY – I have the solution as I just saved a similar to your business in your street about \$5700 in yearly credit card processing fees. The guy is so happy – I have the same offer for you!

I'm a business consultant specialist and this offer isn't available for everyone. Only for deborahbrody.com – FOR FREE.

Cost to you is NOTHING but 5 minutes of your time.

If you are interested, just let me know and I'll provide more information for you. I apologize if this email is an inconvenience, I just know what I have done for others in your business, and didn't want you to miss too good of an opportunity in.

There are only so many your type of business we can sign up though – so if you are going to do it, I'll need to hear from you now.

Oh yeah, I know the area where you are located, know it pretty well actually.

☐Thanks for your time!

Cheers!

Jessica

Business Consultant

This could be a textbook example of how not to send an query/pitch letter. Here's what's wrong:

1. **No personalization.** If "Jessica" can find my website, she can also find my name.
2. **Making (wrong) assumptions.** I am losing thousands in credit card fees? Do I even do any credit card processing? And would I be confused by fees?
3. **Poor grammar.** There aren't any spelling mistakes, but "Jessica" certainly did not get an A in her high school English class with this sentence "didn't want you to miss too good of an opportunity in."
4. **Being too informal.** "Oh yeah, I know the area where you are located, know it pretty well actually." (Also, what is that supposed to mean and why is it relevant?)

5. **Being shady.** Notice “Jessica” does not say what she actually does. She also doesn’t provide any contact information, business name or anything else.

6. **Insulting my intelligence.** Five minutes of my time is all I need to save thousands. I am sure she also has bridges in Brooklyn for sale for cheap.

The only reason I did not immediately delete this email is because I thought it would make a great blog post.

Have you received these types of emails? What makes you cringe? Please share!

Self-monitor or ...

Do you follow yourself? It’s not easy to do, but it’s essential. You should be monitoring your external communications efforts or else, you just won’t know what is going on.

I have followed my own blog (first on Google Reader, and now on Feedly, though that may change) for years. Why? Because I want to see how other people see my blog. I want to make sure it is showing up and how it appears when it does. This is how I knew there was a problem with Feedly and my blog feed (detailed in this post—read the comments please). I subscribe to my blog via email too, to make sure Feedburner is operating as it should.

When I send out email campaigns, I send it to two different emails of mine (one is Gmail and the other I monitor via Outlook). Again, I want to make sure everything looks OK. I

try to check them on my smartphone too.

Although you can't monitor for every iteration (for example, I don't own an iPad or Apple anything), you need to know how your communications are showing up in different environments, as best as possible. Perhaps you can recruit some volunteers to check for you (trusted friends or colleagues who don't mind giving you a hand). Imagine that you are not optimizing your email for smartphones, and most of your audience reads it on that platform. If you don't know you aren't optimized, you can't address it.

Too many marketers (agencies included) don't bother to monitor their own communications. There's a rather prominent PR agency whose blog is a disaster, but apparently, no one has thought to check it as an outside reader, or follow it or even try to share it on social media. Then there are the countless email marketing messages that are not only not optimized for mobile or for social sharing, but that are RIFE with mistakes (grammar, spelling, content).

You must monitor yourself or direct others to monitor on your behalf. If not, you risk not knowing how people actually see you.

Are you monitoring your communications? If so, how do you do it? If not, what are you waiting for?

Before you send that email...

In the past day alone, I have received four marketing/communications emails that are indicative of a huge

amount of carelessness or ignorance or both. In each case, spending a bit more time checking the following would result in a more effective email.

Check you spelling without depending on spell check

“Your invited to join us” was in the subject line of one email and in the the body of another. Depending on spell check without actually reading your email will let this type of ignorant email go through. In case you’re wondering what is wrong with that line, please read this sentence.

Check dates carefully

I got an invitation for an event taking place on Monday, September 20th. Except that September 20th is a Friday. And it turns out the event is actually on Monday, September 16th.

Be careful with automated replies

As you read yesterday, this blog’s feed was not appearing in Feedly. I wrote Feedly and I got an automated response (I didn’t realize it was automated at the time) telling me that it was due to a capacity issue. Feedly’s Twitter person told me this:

it is not a capacity issue. That is an old automated email. I have asked our dev lead to look into this. Expect and answer today. -Ed

I realize that sometimes it’s necessary for customer service to send an automated response due to volume or because of the need to acknowledge communication. But, email communications should not be misleading or just plain wrong.

The bottom line is check and then check again!

Email marketing may be very effective, but if you send out the wrong information, with incorrect spelling or grammar, you

will not only not achieve your communications goals, you will appear ignorant and/or careless.