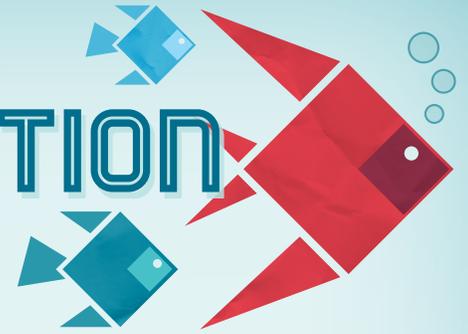


DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



SESSION 061

AVOIDING EMAIL MARKETING PITFALLS

WITH HEATHER SOLOS

Beth: Hello! This is Beth Brodovsky, and welcome to Driving Participation. Today I have with me Heather Solos. Heather is a director at FeedBlitz and FeedBlitz is an email marketing company. I had a chance to meet Heather recently while I was out at the NMX Conference and she did a fabulous, fabulous presentation on a lot of the core basics of email marketing, setting up a system and list building, and I thought she would be a perfect person to come on and talk to you all today. Thanks for joining me today, Heather.

Heather: Thank you for having me.

Beth: Before we get into the details of email marketing and what our audience can do with it and where the opportunities are, tell us a little bit about as I say how you wandered into this work. How did you end up doing the things that you do?

Heather: Well, if you'd asked me when I was in college that I'd end up writing and working with email for a living, I would have thought you were crazy. I majored in biochemistry and biology.

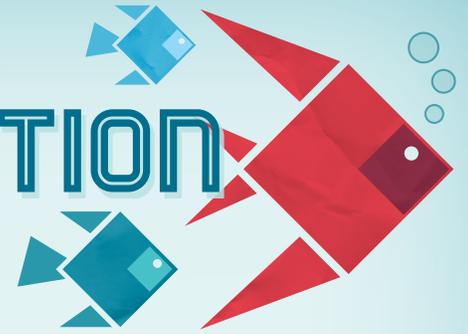
Beth: So that's a straight line.

Heather: Yeah, it's very different, and I was also working my way through school as a chef. I left school to have kids, and I was bored at home and I began blogging. I then started working for the local paper, covering the local blogs, and while I was there, I ended up having an idea for my own website, which I launched back in 2007 called "Home-Ec 101" and eventually became a published author and through blogging and learning more about blogging, became involved in conferences and helping to coordinate them and that is where I met the founder of the company I now work for and he asked if I'd be willing to work for FeedBlitz and that was two and a half years ago, and I haven't really looked back.

Beth: That is so interesting. I always find it so fascinating, especially as somebody with one

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kid still in college that what you major in and what you end up doing sometimes on paper they don't look like they have a lot to do with each other, but the thinking patterns and what you do always seems to fit in there somewhere.

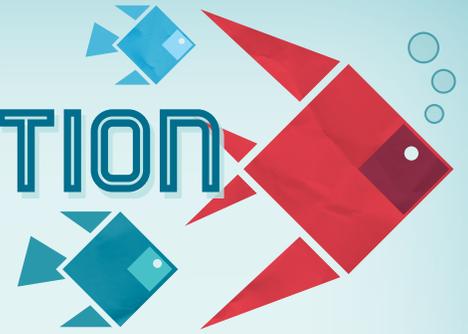
Heather: Absolutely! I learned in college when I was majoring in science that actually works with the website that I have as I learned to take chemistry and turn it into layman speak so I can explain why things work chemically the way they do, whether I'm talking about a recipe or talking about your laundry and that ability to translate very dense chemistry focused material into something enjoyable and kind of funny worked to the role that I now have in FeedBlitz in which I take engineering and computer lingo and marketing lingo and try to translate it to people who are trying to market their own websites and that's not their job. They want to continue creating their website and not have to worry about the email marketing and being overwhelmed with all of that language.

Beth: That is exactly what you did when I heard you speak and I thought, "Wow, you are the perfect person to come on and talk about email to our nonprofit community," because so many people in the nonprofit community are just like you. They came from completely different backgrounds. They may be on the fundraising side. They may be on the marketing side. They may be an executive director responsible for everything, and I always joke that everybody that works in a nonprofit has an ampersand in their title. You know, everybody has to do what they were hired to do and, and, and, a whole bunch of other things and a lot of people that end up picking up a communication role have no background in it, have no training and no experience. What we want to do here is help people get that experience, but translate everything into the cleanest, simplest language so that we remove those barriers and that feeling of "Oh my God, it's tech," or "It's too hard," and "I can't learn it," because we can. Everybody can learn stuff. You know, I have a bachelor's of fine arts, and I didn't even take a math class in college, and now I can figure out my business accounting system and in a million years I never would have done anything related to accounting, but when you need to do it you figure it out. Hopefully we can today make email and the tech aspect of that seem a little easier by focusing on the relationships and the goals of that project.

Heather: Absolutely, and email can be really technical, but a good email service provider will help you understand why they do things the way they do, why they have the rules that they

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have, things like why you have to have what is called a dual opted in list. That would mean that somebody has given you permission explicitly to join your list. These rules all matter because of things like what's referred to as CAN-SPAM. It's a law that was passed in 2003 and that is how we ensure that your company gets what it's paying for. By following CAN-SPAM, we protect what's known as deliverability and that's the ability for a bulk email provider to send out the mail and ensure that it actually shows up in your subscriber's in box. There are a lot of things that factor into this. It's not the same as sending out an email from your personal address and if you've ever even thought about trying to manage your bulk email from your own mail server, that gets really ugly really quickly and you have to make sure that you're paying attention to things like black list and making sure that you're not on one of those.

Beth: I think that's a really, really good point because I know a lot of people, especially people in smaller nonprofits or who are starting them up, that might be sending their emails out to a group in Outlook. Can you talk a little more specifically about the downsides of that from a deliverability standpoint?

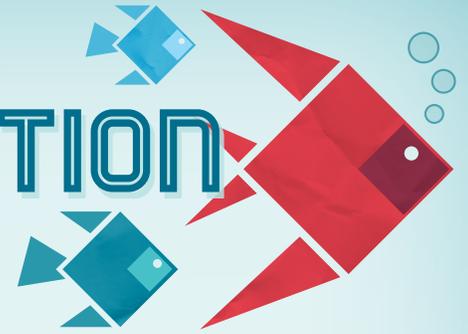
Heather: Any bulk email service is, you can check their score on something called SenderScore.org and you can type in the domain and it'll check or the server and you can check to see if it has what the deliverability rating is and if you're paying for the service, you want to make sure it's somewhere between like 90-99%. This ensures that your email isn't getting outright rejected by Gmail and HotMail, the people that you're trying to see. You hear a lot about landing in the spam folder, but there's even a rejection that can occur before that because if you think about Gmail and Google and how much resources they spend on the billions of emails sent every day, they're not going to waste their time and resources on somebody that's been marked as a spammer, and I'm sorry. I lost my train of thought.

Beth: That's OK. I think that's huge. So they're not going to waste their time on somebody that's been marked as a spammer so they might even block that person's email before it even hits your email box.

Heather: Correct and if when you are sending out your email blasts or news flashes or whatever you want to call it, it's not a black and white process. Even if you are known to be an OK sender, you can still have something that's called gray listing happen and what that is,

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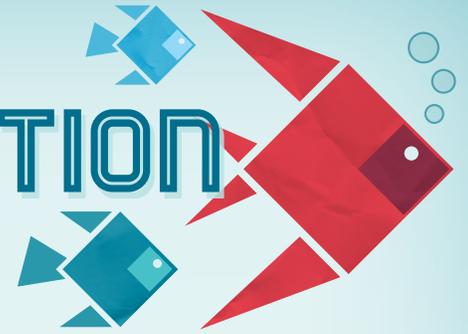
that's where they look, the email itself is analyzed. This all happens very quickly for key words or phrases or things that make it look like a spammer and the way you can test your own email marketing stuff is to open up your spam folder and take a look at the subject lines that are in there and at the content of the newsletters so that when you're sending out your own blast, even if you're doing it from your own Outlook, I recommend being very careful in not using words like "Dear friend," "I invite you," "free," "hot deal," and definitely no "enhancement drugs."

Beth: Absolutely, and I think that's a big surprise to people because you can send to a list of 100 people from Outlook. It will let it go out, but what you never really know is is it getting to people and what you might be losing by doing that. A lot of people may not even understand what a bulk mail is so can you talk a little bit about what that means and what general range of services are available to somebody by using this type of a system.

Heather: OK, a bulk emailer will handle, there's things called SPF records and it gets really technical really quickly and if you've ever seen an email from somebody you know that is very obviously spam that you know they didn't sent out, that is called email spoofing. When you send an email, a bulk email or send the email out on behalf of and that says that even though it says I'm going to use my website Heather@Home-Ec101, it's not my mail server actually sending out the message. It is my company sending out the message on behalf of and all of that stuff, if you ever open up your email headers and see send original, there's a whole lot of code and a whole lot of what looks like junk in there. That's just information saying who is allowed to send this email and who is not so that those don't end up on those black lists. The bulk email provider should provide all of this service. Transparently they should be willing to answer your questions on how do they handle this, how do they report things like soft bounces and hard bounces, all of those things so you know whether or not your emails are actually getting to your people. The industry average open rate is 20 percent, so every email, if your list is only 100 people, about 20 people should be opening your email. If you're only getting 5-10, something is going wrong somewhere. It doesn't necessarily mean your email service provider has a problem. It could be that you promised to send one thing, but aren't meeting those expectations or that you have a poorly targeted list. These people weren't actually interested in what you're doing to begin with.

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Beth: Let's talk specifically about that. Everybody, everybody wants to grow their email list. They want more people to sign up. What are some of the bad ways to do that? What are some things that people should keep an eye out for or watch out for, maybe avoid doing so that they don't grow lists that have these undeliverability, nondeliverability? I don't know what the right word is. So that their stuff gets there!

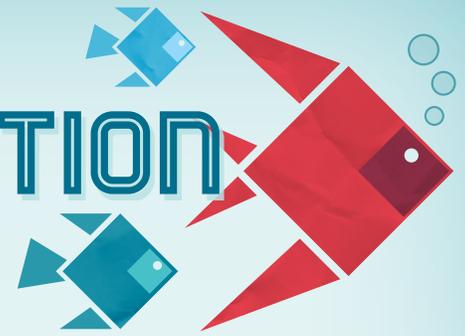
Heather: All right. Never buy a list. I don't care what the person who is selling the list says, "Oh these are targeted." They did not give you permission to mail them and whoever is on this list is going to be more likely to hit spam and register a complaint against your list. Secondly, many of these lists also have trap email addresses because as soon as bulk email service providers find out that a list is sold, we add it to what's called a honey pot and keep an eye out for these email addresses to show up. So we're going to know that you bought it, and we're never going to allow you to import the list again. If you are at an event and we meet and we say hello and how are you doing and we talk and at the end of our conversation we exchange business cards and I say "Feel free to ask me any questions or follow up if you need to," I have not told you "Hey, send me your latest offers and deals." I've invited you to contact me personally, not sign me up for your business list. That's breaking trust and trust really matters with you and your clients and your audience because if I'm not going to trust you with my email address, I am not going to trust you with my credit card.

Beth: Right. I think that's a really huge thing, especially in a nonprofit organization where people are often donating money and time and different things and the trust and the belief that the organization is going to do what they say they're going to do what they say with that money is huge.

Heather: Absolutely, and it doesn't just start at the initial email. It starts with their experience on your website and how you capture that email address to begin with. We as a service recommend strongly against what we call aggressive popups and an aggressive popup, everybody has seen them, you know what I'm talking about. It's when you first land on the page and it says "Hey, I want your email address," or whatever language they use. I don't know who you are. You don't know why I'm on your website yet. You don't know my intentions, and I'm not ready to give you my email address, much less my time or my money. I'm going to hit close or back out. Aggressive email pop ups also can be labeled as exit

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intent. Now that's ...

Beth: Explain what that means. That's a jargon term.

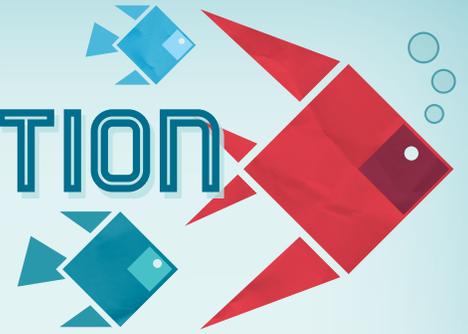
Heather: It is. Exit intent means when you've been on a web page and you're looking at it and you've read and you're done reading and you take your mouse and you go to head back towards the address bar, that directional move of the mouse can trigger a popup. Now if that popup is not aggressive, it will not block the exit. It will close immediately if you reject it, but an aggressive one would make it very difficult to leave the website and I'm sure you've seen these before. Are you sure you want to go? Before you go, one more time. Those kinds of things are the things you want to avoid when you choose a popup for your own website.

Beth: Right. I think that's a really good point because everybody you ever ask about popups will probably say "I hate popups, I hate popups," and everybody in marketing will say "but they work, but they work." It really captures email addresses. One of my questions would be statistically we know they work, meaning that if a popup shows up, people often put their email addresses in. Do you have any insight on is that really bringing a quality person in or is waiting and putting a delay on the popup in any way trigger a better relationship, a better quality lead than just gathering the first flush of people that hit your website?

Heather: Delays are an excellent tool to use for a popup because you want to make sure that the person has spent time on your website. Let's not have it show up until three pages in after 15 seconds on that third page. By then they've already shown that they're interested in what you're writing about, that they're looking to find more information and at that point it's OK to say "Hey, if you want to follow up with us, let's continue this conversation in email," you can gather the email address then. When you're measuring the results of how you're gathering your email addresses whether it's on a static form, which would be something like on a side bar or below a post or if you're just using a link, you need to know three terms: impressions, submissions and conversions. An impression just means that the opportunity to sign up was shown, either the pop up or somebody had the static form visible on their computer screen. It doesn't mean they actually saw it because people have what we call ad blindness meaning they're used to seeing side bars so they don't look at the side bars. It just means that the opportunity to be seen happened. That's an impression. A submission is when somebody types in an email address and clicks submit. Now sometimes if something is difficult to get to

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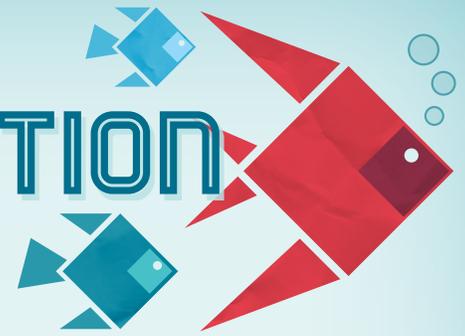
close, you'll type in "goaway@gmail.com." That's technically a submission, but it's not a real email address so it doesn't do anything for your list. The conversion actually happens when people go to their inbox and see the activation email that says "Hey, thank you for signing up. Please click here." This person has said "Yes, I want to be part of your email list. You're important enough for me to give my attention and my time." These people are valuable. The other stuff just lets you know whether or not what you're trying to do is working when it's compared to the conversion number.

Beth: Right, and I think that's really, really important, is that there's this constant desire to say "I want more people, I want more people to be aware of me. I want more people on my list," but growing people who aren't really interested in you, it is expensive.

Heather: Absolutely, because your email service provider is going to charge you for the number of people on your list. Some email service providers will only charge you for the ones that you're actively trying to email. Others will charge you to act as a database and store those emails whether or not you're attempting to email them at any given time. So one thing you need to pay attention to is the pricing structure of your email service provider and you also need to look at your metrics. If you can see that you have a 4-5% open rate, what you need to do then is we call it list hygiene and that means going through and either getting rid of people who haven't opened in a certain number of months or going through and saying "Hey, are you still interested? Click here to remain on," and paring down those email addresses feels painful, but there's no point in spending the money on people who aren't responsive. If you think about it, I once gave \$20 to some nonprofit somewhere and over the past ten years since I've done this, I have remained on their bulk mailing list, actual physical postal mailing list, and they have spent more on postage than I have ever donated. I've never shown any interest, and I have told them repeatedly to stop trying to chase me down because they broke the level of trust when they continued to make the ask when I wasn't interested. Don't be that company that wastes resources on the person who is not interested. You want to go after those people who keep your mailing list at that 20 percent rate. That's normal. Not everybody is going to open every email that you send because they all have lives outside of your company, your nonprofit, but every fifth email they will see. So when you have that mailing list and it's at 20 percent, it's OK to be slightly repetitive in what you send out because

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not everybody is going to see each one that you send.

Beth: Absolutely. I think that's so huge is that a smaller number of people who are really interested, it also lets you really target what you say and what you're talking about with people to what that group of people is really interested in. One of the things that I struggle with a lot with clients is I want to say everything to everyone and when you have a massive listing, you're trying to cover all your bases, a lot of times what you end up saying or sending is so broad and so generic that you can't really build that passion in any one group of people because a lot of organizations, they don't have the internal resources to send out segmented emails to their different audiences all the time. So it can often be one broad list to everyone. If your single email is trying to go out and hit every single one of your targets and a whole bunch of those people are barely listening, and you're just trying to hang on to them, you're really failing the people who love you.

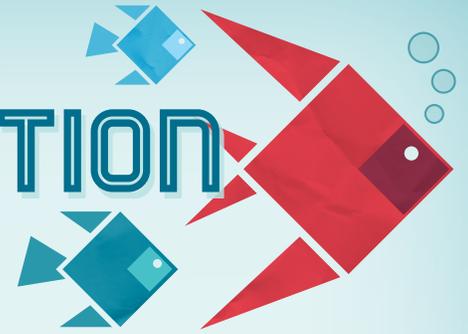
Heather: That makes a lot of sense and you could actually get around that because let's say you have a website to power all of these, to target each of these people so you have people who are interested in volunteering. You have people who actually want to donate money and people who like to spread awareness, yet all of these are written about on the same website. Some mailing service companies can handle that and only send out to the people who sign up by a different offer. So let's say you target the people who want to give you money and you tag them money. Let's just keep it easy and you tag the people time for those to let them know when volunteer opportunities show up and you tag the other people PR and so if you write a PR focused piece, you tag it PR and it would only go out to those people even though it's on your website, has the potential to pull in new people through SEO. We have a theory at our company that if it's good enough to go on your website, it's good enough to go out to your mailing list.

Beth: That's a great message and people spend so much time writing and writing content for their website or for different places and never think "Well I could pull that and put that into an email list."

Heather: Absolutely and you can do it automatically. You can do only 500 characters, read

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more on the website. If the impressions matter to you or if it's just the message that matters, then your email list is just one more way for them to stay in touch and keep you top of mind. You don't have to think of it as this completely separate endeavor where "Now I have to come up with my monthly newsletter." Not if you're updating your website regularly with the news. Just have that go out automatically.

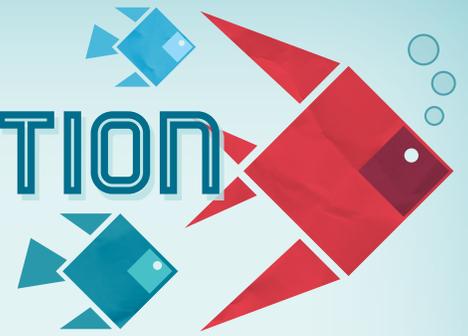
Beth: Right, and I think that's a huge thing for people to consider because there's often not enough people to do all the different tasks at an organization and the automated, the regular communications, we might call it stewardship or just ongoing contact is so valuable in building a relationship and it's so easy to let that drop when you get busy or you're doing your event that month and you just don't have time to write something or create something, but you're putting your event content up on your website. If that's getting pulled and it's going out automatically, consistency can be so much more valuable than perfection.

Heather: Absolutely. That's one of the big things that leads to a higher unsubscribe rate is if it is 30 days from the time I said "Yes, I want you to email me," to "Who are you?" then that's a problem. You can also use things called auto-responders in which after somebody says "Yes, I want to sign up for this mailing list," it will email them after a certain period of time that you set and set some expectations. We regularly write about this X number of days. We look forward to talking to you. In the meantime, check out our best of. That way it keeps people engaged. They know more about who you are and you don't lose that trust. You build up to the point that they were willing to give you their email address.

Beth: I think that's a really, really good tip. I want to ask you a very specific question about email design and set up. I was actually out to dinner last night with a friend who does a quarterly email newsletter and she asked me "I've had the same style for a long time. It's a traditional, a little more of the old fashioned email newsletter style with the side bar down the left and a long article and a couple of other articles in it." In today's market for emailing, is there one structure, one style, the short blurbs with the jumps, the one long article and a couple of short ones. Are you seeing in your organization with all of the millions of emails that you send out, that one type of organization or structure or design of an email is working better than another universally or not?

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Heather: Well, the most important thing if you learn nothing else from this is 65 percent of email is first opened on mobile. So whatever you do, it has to be responsive and responsive isn't just the fact that it re-sizes and shrinks down to fit on a small screen. You need to make sure that the user experience is OK on a small screen as well. Is that readable or a tiny itty bitty font that I can barely hit with my finger or is it a rectangular button that says "read more" and pulls me to your responsive website? You need to keep that in mind because the bulk of your people are going to be reading it mobily first and if your email is not an enjoyable experience on mobile, you're going to lose a lot of people who aren't willing to go back to the desktop experience to follow up with you again.

Beth: Yeah, that's definitely true and some of those two column formats or traditional formats are unless they're designed to work mobily can start to really inhibit people so it's not so much about the marketing thing of "Do I want people to go for my email and directly click over to my website and give them blurbs?" or "Should I have a long form email like a whole single story in the one email?" Are you saying that either one could work as long as you're recognizing a clean, simple, readable thing on a mobile device?

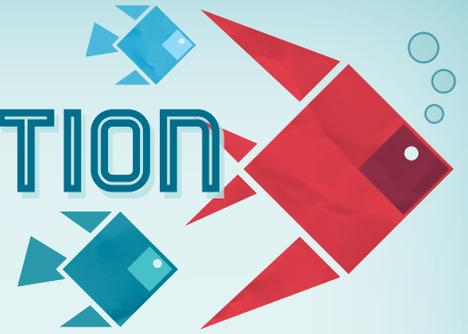
Heather: Right a clean, simple readable is the most important takeaway, and the second one I would consider is what is your purpose with that email? Is it just to remind people that you exist? If that's it, then the long form email is fine because you don't need them to go back to your website to remember that you exist. The email accomplishes that for you. If your purpose is for them to go to the website and take an action, then the blurb, the short, the sweet, the call to action immediately because I'm standing there in line at the grocery store checking email, it better be quick and easy for me to understand what I'm supposed to do. It depends on your goal.

Beth: I think that that's always something we need to mention is that there is rarely a this is the one perfect way that this always needs to be done. Everything that you do needs to be tied to your specific goal and what you're looking for people to do in that specific tactic that you're using.

Heather: Exactly. If you want somebody to sit down and read a story about why this is

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important, then you also want to think about when you send it. Who is your audience? When are they going to be reading? If your goal is for somebody to take time to read, but you are targeting professionals, don't send it on Monday morning. You want to send it on Friday afternoon when they're thinking about what they're going to be doing this weekend.

Beth: Right and testing, too. You know it's so easy to go onto Google and check. Well, Tuesday at 10:00 is the best time to send the email and then we've all read that for so long, that we're all now sending emails at 10:00 on Tuesday and because of all that volume, it probably on the law of averages boosts the open rate so it seems obviously. It only really matters what's the best time for your people. I've been doing some action-based emails lately with asking people to just answer some very, very short survey questions and I cannot believe the amount of survey responses I'm getting when I'm sending these things out on the weekend and I'm business to business. All of my people that I send to are nonprofit, executive directors, marketing people. You know, this is your job. I can't believe that everybody is looking at their stuff on the weekend and maybe because there's no press of work and all this crazy stuff when I'm asking somebody to take five minutes and fill out a survey. If I sent that out on Wednesday, they don't have time, but on Saturday or Sunday evening, you know sure I'm watching a show and hanging out and I'll spend five minutes and do something. There is no necessarily right answer in testing a few different things, especially things that require action is a really important practice to get into.

Heather: Right and for what you're mentioning specifically, if you think about it, I am going to enhance my own education about my industry on my own time because I want to succeed and that's why they're looking at you on their own time.

Beth: Interesting. It's funny. I didn't really think about it that way. The other thing that I always wonder about myself is the whole idea of segmenting. A lot of people have trouble even thinking that way or they think about it, but all I think is "Wow it's so much work." I want to talk about the value of doing it, but also how much do you need to do and how much is too much? I personally get into the fact that I sometimes probably have 10-15 different lists set up now in one of my emails and sometimes I even wonder. Should I be paring these down and putting them all into one list? Should I after they've gotten the deliverable or the thing that

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they asked for, do I shut down that list and move them all onto the main list? What are some best practices around segmenting an email?

Heather: Well, you don't want to have somebody get constant reminders to do something they've already done so that's when segmenting is important because then you're breaking that trust. You start out with this relationship of "Hey, I want to get to know you. Let's be friends," and now I'm going to tell you the exact same thing I told you yesterday even though you did the thing I told you to do. That's what you want to avoid because that breaks that trust. You no longer go from this perceived relationship, then once you no longer acknowledge that they have taken steps, then it becomes obvious this is automated and I'm only speaking to a robot, not another person.

Beth: Right, like I signed up for that class.

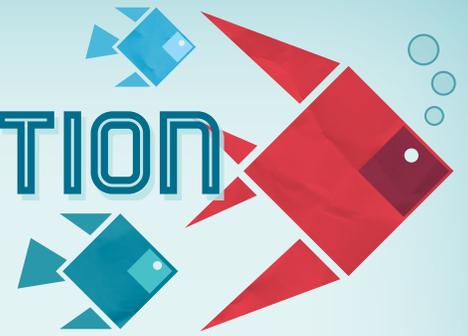
Heather: Right, I've already taken that class. Why are you telling me about it? That's where segmentation is important.

Beth: Right. On the flip side, the other thing that I wonder is if somebody signs up, like in your example. If somebody signs up for a list about volunteer opportunities, there's that feeling of wanting to say "Oh, but I have an opportunity now for them to donate money and then we have this general email. They signed up for this specific thing, but maybe they're interested in this other stuff, too." Where is that line between somebody signing up for one aspect and saying this is what I promised. I'm delivering information about volunteer activities, with also telling them other stuff or does that then break the trust and make things too general?

Heather: I don't think it's an either or situation. I think if you are to continue with the volunteer thing, you can also say "And by the way, we also have this going on," so if it's integrated into your template anyway, let's say you have an Instagram account for let's use an animal shelter for an example. Then in your notice to, in your volunteer newsletter, you can pull in that Instagram account and then something interesting that shows that you are doing, if you're featuring animals, you can say "and help Sadie the dog out by donating dog food," or things like that automatically and it's an add. It's not where you're making a direct ask,

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you're just showing that these opportunities to help in other ways exist as well by integrating it into the newsletter rather than having it solely be the purpose of the newsletter.

Beth: That's a great idea because I have to say even I struggle with that a little bit because I say "Oh I've got this other thing over here. Should I tell them about that or should I keep this list clean." It's hard to know because I really want to make sure that I'm delivering what the specific people asked for, but sometimes they might just sign up for a volunteer activity at that time because that's what they're interested in at the moment. It doesn't mean that they wouldn't be interested in the other things. That just was a thing that triggered them joining your list. I agree with you. There's a little bit of using your spider senses and watching what people do and really paying attention to the relationships that you're building and really paying attention to things like when your open rate drops if you're giving them stuff that they don't want to know. Sometimes I'll do that. I'll test out an email to a list of people that signed up for one thing and tell them about something else and see are they still opening that and treating their open rate like a vote for the content.

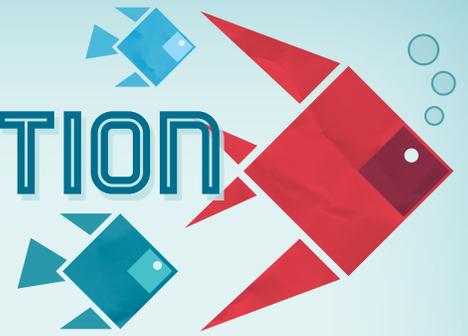
Heather: That is a very good way to think about it. Another thing is sometimes if you have like a drive that is seemingly important, it's OK to every once in awhile do that blast to everybody that says "Hey, we know that you care about us as a whole. Here is what is going on." You just can't abuse that. You can't push that too far.

Beth: Right. So what are some things that people can do specifically, everybody wants to increase, if the open rates are the key thing instead of just opening or have it sit there in your email, what are the things people can do to increase their open rates?

Heather: Well you want to make sure that your subject line is never misleading. You want to make sure that it varies and you want to make sure that it's 80 characters or less because if you're looking at it on your Gmail app on your phone, that's all you're going to see. So you want clear, concise subject lines that have a direct call to action and that's overwhelming and it's hard to think about, but again look at your in box. What emailed subject lines make you want to open it and then model it after that.

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Beth: Right, and there's a great little tool I like to play with sometimes called Headline Analyzer and I'll put a link to that in the show notes and it's a great way to type in what you're thinking about for the headline and it gives you a little score. Now of course it's not 100 percent or perfect, but it will tell you whether you're writing an emotional one or an educational one. It gives you a little bit of feedback and it's not the be all end all, but anything you can do to practice this and get some feedback and get better at writing headlines can really help and also to pay attention to what headlines are written.

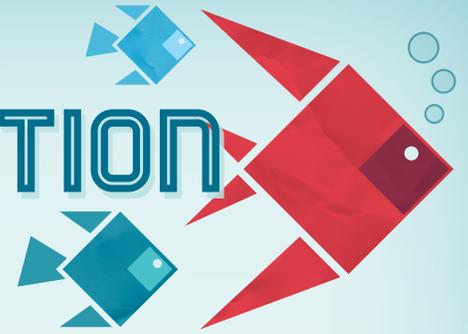
Heather: That's really cool!

Beth: I'll send you the link to it too. It's really cool and it's a lot of fun. It's like a game. Like you type things in and change the words around and your score goes up or down based on what it is to try that and then put that into your email and test that out and see if using Headline Analyzer actually helps you get a better open rate and if it does, then put all of your stuff through it before you send it out. If it doesn't, then you're obviously going to have to try some other ways, like keeping track of going back and looking at the headlines that you've written and seeing if that opens it up. Every once in awhile, like I have a segmented list and I sometimes will send the same email to different lists with only one change, like the headline differently. There's what's the word I'm looking for? Split testing! That's the word I'm looking for. Split testing, there you go. To be able to see when you get a little more sophisticated, as you get better at email, being able to do things where you're keeping everything the same, but only changing one thing like trying one email that says "September's newsletter" and another email that says "Here's what Johnny got out of volunteering with our organization." Something specific like that. Although there's one September newsletter, everybody knows it's September's newsletter. Is that the thing that makes everybody open it or is a little snippet or insight on a piece of a story the thing because I would generally say I would think that the story would be what would make people open it, but you don't really know anything until you've tested it.

Heather: Absolutely, and the other thing to remember as you do these kinds of analysis is not everything happens in a vacuum. Things that are happening outside of your business affect how people react to your business. If there's a huge natural disaster in Haiti, that's

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where people's focus is going to be and you need to keep that in mind. If you look at maybe they didn't open, if your newsletter wasn't opened as much, was there something else huge happening at that time that may have diverted attention?

Beth: That's a really good point, and it's easy to think about that. This happened 20 other times and it didn't work this time. What did I do wrong? I find that's one of the biggest mistakes that happens in marketing overall is that we tend to react to what 20 percent of people do as opposed to what 80 percent of people do.

Heather: Absolutely, and then things right now that we're dealing with is it's June and the summer slow down is a thing. Website traffic drops a little bit. Open rates drop a little bit. Signup rates drop. It's just because people are suddenly busy, at least in North America, with summer activities and things outside of their normal schedule and it causes a slight interruption, and it normally picks back up later.

Beth: Absolutely. I think that those are all really things to make sure people are paying attention to and sort of realize that we're talking about this. Another thing I wanted to talk about would be unsubscribes and why they're a great thing. I mean that's, I know that's a very big, bold, dramatic statement, but can you talk a little bit about someone unsubscribing may not necessarily be someone's personal failure?

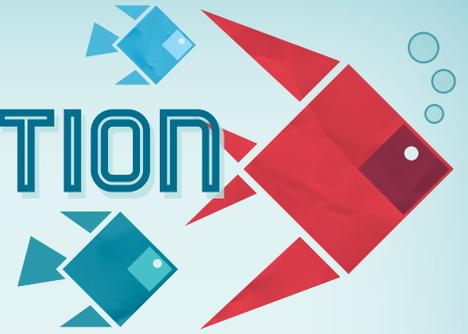
Heather: Right. It probably has absolutely nothing to do with you. Take a look at your own email in box and see the hundreds, if not thousands, of emails that you get every day. If something isn't something I'm specifically interested in right now, I'm going to unsubscribe. That's not about you. That's about me. It's not something to be taken personally and it's also doing you a favor because now you're no longer paying the email rate because I'm not interested in you. Now, things to watch out for.

Beth: There's always the flip side.

Heather: Right. There is an acceptable rate of turn. Every email that you send is going to result in an unsubscribe for some reason by somebody a certain amount. There's also going to be people who hit spam, instead of unsubscribing. We call that the people factor because

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they just don't understand that that actually has a ramification. They think it means the same as unsubscribe. If it happens a lot, if you notice a spike in your unsubscribes, something has changed. What? Have you changed your message? Have you changed your tone? Have you changed your focus?

Beth: Or your frequency?

Heather: Or your frequency is another big one. All of those matter.

Beth: I think what you mean by ramifications, that there's ramifications to somebody choosing spam over unsubscribe. People may not realize that there's a certain way to unsubscribe and people hit one or the other, but you get a lot of people tagging you as spam, it's going to affect your deliverability down the road and you might even get booted from your email system.

Heather: Absolutely so one thing that's actually very helpful and important to do is have an obvious unsubscribe link, not just the CAN-SPAM compulsory one in the footer. So make it easy for people to leave if they want to because that will protect your list and your investment over time.

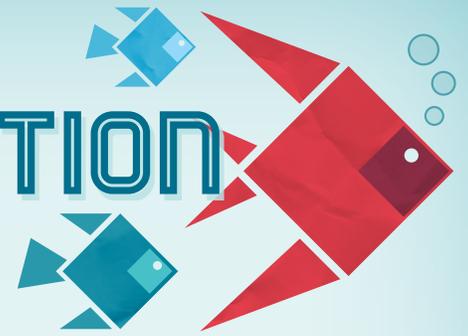
Beth: It's funny. I actually am on one email list that at the very, very top the first thing that she has at the beginning of the email says "If this isn't for you anymore, please unsubscribe. I only want to be sending to you if this is valuable, actionable content for you," and that's bold. I'm sure that would terrify most people, but I bet it keeps her list really clean and it sort of makes people feel like "No, no this is for me. I want this."

Heather: Absolutely. You have given me the choice to leave. I no longer feel like I'm held hostage.

Beth: Exactly, and people really feel that way about email. I was just telling someone the other day that a lot of the actual real spam emails that you get when you go in to unsubscribe from them, you've now just told that spammer that they've hit a live email address and personal email now for everyone listening, you have to be careful. You want so desperately

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to get off these junk, awful lists, but it seems like it's impossible and you're not wrong. It can be really, really hard so there's a lot of negativity built up about getting email. Anything that you can do as an email sender to make people feel that when your email hits their inbox that it's just the thing that they've been waiting for and then you actually deliver what they're expecting and then they forward it on to somebody else, that's gold. That's where you want to be and it's absolutely doable if you just follow some of these best practices.

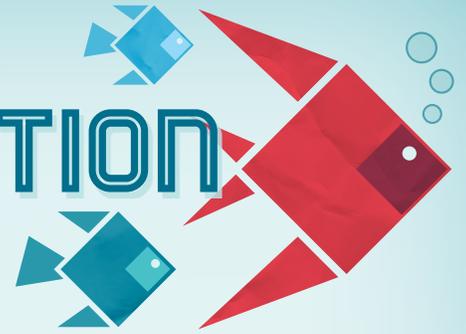
Heather: Absolutely. I built a customer service team at my company. Some of my favorite help tickets have been one where people go "I'm not receiving this. I don't know what happened." That's who you want. You want to be that person who has subscribers who say "Where are my newsletters?" and then we find out that they accidentally hit unsubscribe or it got filtered somewhere else in their Gmail. We love helping people with those kinds of problems because that means that our publishers are doing what they should be doing and delivering the kind of content that they promised when their readers expect it.

Beth: I think that's a perfect thing to begin to close out on. When you're choosing your email service provider, and what Heather means by bulk email system, I call it an email marketing system, the different companies that are available for you to do that, customer service is a factor and finding somebody that when you do have this kind of a problem or when your customers have a kind of a problem that they can pick up the phone and you can get help, they can get help and you can get help with building or where to find a template or what you want to do next or connecting into your database. You're not experts in this for the most part. I'm not even an expert in this. It's one of the many things that we do, but we often have to build templates for people in whatever system they're using so I have to know a little bit about five different email service providers and so even I rely on the experts at companies. Having somebody that has a customer service team that will be there and will answer you is a tremendous asset.

Heather: Thank you. That's one of our core beliefs is we want to make sure that matters and we talked to our customers about best practices. Not just because we're worried about our own deliverability. I mean that's important, but your success matters too because you're certainly not going to tell somebody else to use us if you haven't had a good experience and

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aren't getting what you need accomplished for what you feel is a fair price.

Beth: Heather, this was fabulous. I really appreciate all your insights. We could talk forever about this. I'll probably be doing a lot more shows about email over the course of the year. Where can people get in touch with you if they have more questions?

Heather: I'm available on Twitter a lot @HeatherSolos. If you have questions about my company or email best practices you can reach us at Support@FeedBlitz.com, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Beth: Thank you so much for sharing all of your knowledge with both me and the nonprofit community. I really appreciate it.

Heather: I really enjoyed it. Thank you.