

BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Marketing Checklist

2023



It's never been more difficult, nor important for marketers to build genuine, reciprocal relationships with consumers.

In this short, frenetic back-to-school selling season, those that win will be the ones that deliver Relationship Marketing strategies that put the customer at the center of everything.

Your month-by-month *Back-to-School Marketing Checklist* will empower you to prime your email, build your audience and deliver truly personalized messaging from acquisition to loyalty and retention.

June

The strategies you implement this month will determine whether or not you're set for a sales bonanza this back-to-school season. Getting your contacts list in order might not be exciting, but it's imperative that you do.

Clean up your email database to improve deliverability

Nobody wants to spend time and resources ideating the perfectly tantalizing campaign to simply end up in the spam folder. Conduct some spring(ish) cleaning of your contacts list, and suppress contacts who have never opened one of your marketing emails or who have a low-quality contact score to avert deliverability issues.

Review last year's campaign performance

Analyzing last year's data to see what moved the needle and what didn't will create a clear picture of your current efforts and show you the best way to improve results.

Leverage data-gathering interactive experiences to opt-in consumers

Questionnaires, polls, quizzes, contests and social stories can incorporate reward mechanics that give consumers a genuine reason to engage and submit their first- and zero-party data and opt-in to your upcoming back-to-school marketing campaigns.

Re-engage lapsed customers

The key to any successful business is a low customer churn rate. Win-back offers, sent via email or SMS, can offer a one-time value exchange that doesn't dilute your core value to mass markets. Segmenting by length of inactivity will help here, too.

The days of marketers casting and blasting one single message to their entire database are hopefully behind us. Customers' lives evolve, and learning about them is a perpetual process.

❑ Progressively profile your customers

Forward-thinking marketers are progressively profiling their customers' interests, preferences, motivations and desires: for back-to-school, marketers can find out factors such as how many children their customers have, their children's ages, studies in school, extra-curriculars, and more. New data gives new reasons to reach out with more relevant messages or offers.

❑ Tailor your value-exchange strategy

Irrespective of the economic climate, a discount will always be warmly received by your customers. However, you can also add value with the chance to win a prize, early or exclusive access to products, personalized product recommendations, loyalty rewards and unlocking content.

❑ Make sure your IP is ready for an uptick in email send volume

To establish your IP's credibility, you need to warm up your email lists. Start sending smaller batches to ascertain trust before gradually increasing the volume. Sudden and large increases in email sends will likely result in providers marking your emails as spam.

❑ Have you decided on the best time to email?

Almost a quarter of consumers (24%) have felt frustration with brands because of communications sent at the wrong time of day. Between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m., email send volume is low, and engagement metrics above baseline.

August

The last week before the first school bell chimes will undoubtedly be big days for email and SMS volume, transactions and revenue in the quarter. Here's where your hard-earned first- and zero-party data shines.

❑ Are you powering email personalization with zero-party data?

Subject-line length and CTA placement are, of course, important but will drive relatively modest gains. To win, the emails you send should offer products your customer has expressed an interest in, products which fit their declared budget, and should contain dynamic content that uses keywords you know will elicit engagement from customers—and that's just in the subject line and preview text.

❑ Does your SMS merely mimic your email?

Rather than just mirror email campaigns, use SMS as a follow-up to reinforce the message a day before an offer expires, serving as a time-sensitive reminder.

❑ Communicate last-chance shipping days

Let your customers know shipping cut-off dates in messaging as well as on your owned channels. Be ready to assist your customers with additional options for purchasing (*express delivery, click-and-collect, curbside pick-up, etc.*).

❑ Evaluate, replicate and elaborate

Keep analyzing what is working and what isn't and then optimize to improve other messaging this month. These learnings can also help with your upcoming holiday marketing campaigns.

Get the **Relationship Marketer's Guide for Back-to-School in 2023**

