

Goal-Setting and Solid Execution Fuel Email Campaigns that Drive More Business

By David Gould, Staff Editor

Crafting a promotional email as a “blast” to your full database was always such a satisfying act. But if the feel-good moment after sending full-list emails is fading of late, it could be common sense talking. Among marketing professionals, the term “blast” is less commonly used than in the past. That’s because new importance has been placed on list segmentation and customizing of messages to clients and prospects. It’s time for golf instructors to ponder the segmented email “volley” as the building block of online marketing. To really get sophisticated, the email “drip” is a best-practices approach worth taking.

Jeff Boulton advises golf-instructor clients to rethink any email program that uses a one-size-fits-all concept or hits the recipient with a repeated call to action—and little else. As president of the Tempe-based Square It Up, a sponsor of Proponent Group, he is continually advising golf instructors on better ways to build their businesses. Hearing Boulton describe those programs and strategies, one notes a clear set of priorities. They add up to a more complex relationship between you as the teaching professional and the golfer or student to whom you are offering your services.

The priorities go something like this:

- Use the Internet to build your database—don’t use it merely for “outbound” messaging.
- When a new name is added, email this person frequently for a while, then ease off
- Make it a “give-and-ask” relationship: Some emails provide help and advice, some are sales promos asking for a purchase
- Segment your lists to match your program groups: Beginners get the beginner emails, etc.
- Use social media as an even richer way to present yourself, engage the audience and get feedback
- Study your results—and that means actual business revenue, not just “opens” and “clicks”

In consultations with Bill Abrams for his 15-year-old Golf Solutions Academy south of Chicago, Square It Up has leveraged

Facebook aggressively. Product giveaway contests are the pivotal tool in that effort. In part because Abrams has branded himself strongly into the clubfitting segment of game-improvement, he is well positioned to do the giveaway promos. “Bill has been doing these quite often,” says Boulton. “It’s a tool that has helped push his Facebook page up to nearly 5,000 Likes. Golfers who want to win a pair of Foot-Joy shoes or a Titleist wedge are willing to fill out forms and provide their email addresses.” The size of the Golf Solutions Academy audience on the Internet actually induces major manufacturers to “partner with Bill and provide the gear at no charge,” Boulton says.

When a Square It Up client attracts a new database name, the first response that person gets is a thank-you for filling out the form and a quick note about being on the list. “You want to tell people what they can expect as a recipient of your emails,” says Boulton, stressing the importance of avoiding a buildup of impatience or fatigue on the part of that recipient. Following the welcome email, a “drip” cycle ensues. The term is increasingly popular because repetition—of the right sort—is considered essential if you want

your digital effort to move the revenue needle. “In the first few months, they should be hearing from you quite often and receiving messages that draw their interest—hopefully creating engagement,” Boulton counsels. In his experience very few golf-instruction businesses have an “email solutions” vendor or source that can “create the automation to deploy an email campaign that has a correct and effective pacing to it,” he says.

Drawing the target consumer’s interest and getting them to engage is all about having interesting content. That’s the firm belief of Zach Miller, Director of Golf Business Development at Imavex, also a Proponent Group sponsor company. Like all specialists in digital marketing, he keeps his focus on the value of what is distributed. So much of what hits the email inbox is tolerated, not desired, Miller notes, while vast amounts of social media content produces fatigue instead of stimulation.

“One trend that really favors teaching professionals is how strongly short video



Carefully target your emails to specific sub-groups in your database to minimize message fatigue.



New email solutions allow for precise automation so your database isn’t overloaded with too many messages.

is being accepted and consumed on the Internet,” says Miller. “Right now short video is the most popular form of content. The golf tip is one of the purest forms of a desirable, helpful piece of short-length video.” A rule of thumb for Miller involves paying attention to the content that caused people to join your database. “Whatever drew them to you in the first place is what you probably want to give them more of,” Miller says.

Behind all this communication is the issue of branding—those simple few characteristics that identify you, describe your business and set you apart. Consider the instructor who brings students on lots of golf trips and will frequently host a couples golf school with wine experts who supervise tastings. That teacher’s emails shouldn’t have a space-age or heavily “tech” look to them, even if there is plenty of high-tech swing analysis and clubfitting equipment at his or her academy.

On a purely practical level, Imavex’s Miller suggests email tactics like sending out the message in mid-week, during work hours but not at the top of the hour, more in the :45 or :50 slot. Studies show that people check email at this portion of the hour very heavily, as they’re waiting for a scheduled meeting to start and some open time presents itself. He also recommends that the names and pictures of students be part of a regular newsletter email, as often as possible with congratulations for their recent improvement. “It’s the Internet, it’s very modern and digital, but we’re still not that far from the values of a small-town weekly,” says Miller. “People want to see their names in the newspaper, and in the emails they get from their golf teacher, too.”

It’s a Mobile World

Catching Lesson-Takers on Mobile Devices: Email is yesterday’s news—that’s the latest wisdom around the digital water cooler. Jeers aimed at email arise from the idea that younger consumers seldom use it—instead they connect

via social media with their mobile device as a platform. Take all of that with a lump of salt, advises the digital marketing expert Simms Jenkins. Writing in the Click-Z newsletter

published by New York City-based Incisive Media, Jenkins recently quoted an eyebrow-raising trend.

“According to Pew Research,” Jenkins writes, “email is the most popular activity on smartphones and tablets—not Facebook or search.” Calling email the “good old-fashioned warhorse of digital communications,” he acknowledges that smartphone use crosses all age demographics, and that older users may be more email-oriented on their devices than 20-somethings. That’s fine for golf instructors, anyway, given that few of their young students get recruited through email campaigns, anyway.

What’s important in the digital marketing of a service like golf instruction—especially if you believe that a lot of customers and prospects are checking email on their smartphone—is to build the email message so that it appears in a useful, readable configuration on the phone’s small screen. That’s easily executed, by making sure all messages, newsletter emails and other communications are tested on a couple of mobile platforms before the Send button gets hit. -D.G.



Make sure your messages are readable on mobile devices as more and more emails are read on these small screens every day, especially by younger golfers.

Designs and Concepts that Break through and Engage

In the top box at right, we see a Zander Golf email message with many advantageous elements to it. Its design clearly benefits from the abstract yet visually “readable” graphic, a collage of overlapping rectangles with their Earth-from-outer-space imagery. The email’s gunmetal blue color theme in general works extremely well. In the branding of Zander Golf, including its big ‘Z’ at upper left, a strong identification is made. Next are two lines of oversize text that are well-worded and state their case perfectly. Note: The upper block of this email is safely “above the fold” on most screens, including mobile-device screens.

Two possible improvements suggest themselves, lower down. One, the block of text under “Join the Club” could be shorter, include bullets or sub-heads, or otherwise be broken up. Two, we could use an ID of the instructor, himself: Josh Zander. A caption inside the photo would provide that simply. His Northern California location is also something desirable by the reader of this email—especially if it is passed along, which any email sender hopes will happen. That info is available when you scroll down, but it doesn’t hurt to double up on such basic facts. -D.G.

ZANDER GOLF

BECOME PART OF THE ZANDER GOLF CLUB

GET YOUR EXCLUSIVE TIPS, VIDEOS AND ONLINE ANALYSIS

SIGN UP TODAY!

JOIN THE CLUB

The ZanderGo!Club idea came to me as I received feedback from golfers all over the world who have improved by watching my instructional videos and reading my Golf Digest articles. My passion is helping golfers play better golf. I know I love my golf I can't walk by a golfer without the temptation to go over and help them smash that next ball.

The ZanderGo!Club is a place to go to get help on all aspects of the game. It is all about instruction and improvement. As a member of the ZanderGo!Club, you will have access to instructional videos on all aspects of the game. You will receive an instructional monthly newsletter that focuses on full swing, short game, putting, fitness, strategy, and the mental game. There will also be a feature story on what's going on in the world of golf. I will also have a blog that will come out every two weeks. As a member, you will also get discounts on online lessons. No matter where you are in the world, you can send me videos of your swing and I will analyze them and recommend the appropriate fix. The ZanderGo!Club is a one stop shop for your golf instruction needs and entertaining as well. Just go to <http://www.zandergolf.com/> to sign up and get on the road to playing your best golf.