Get Personal: Whether to Use a Personalized Email or Not?

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Article published on May 4th 2012 | Email Marketing

If you're actively emailing but aren't sure if it will improve your campaign to include personalized user information such as a name or a user name in your email, Comm100 explains in this article the pros and cons of both and the best times to use personalized emails for the best results.

Personalized Email or Not

These days, almost all third party email marketing platforms offer the option to send personalized email by including your client's user name or name. Is this a good idea and can it improve your email marketing results? The answer, of course, is both yes and no.

The Basic Conversion Fact on Personalized Email

Numerous studies have revealed that the more personalized you can make your email, the better it will convert. The simplest version of this would be to include your client's user name or name in the intro to the email. The most complex version of this would be to send multiple versions of your email with different offers and products displayed to users based on their on-site behaviors and purchasing patterns.

Let's assume that, for most of us, we will be operating on the "simple" end of this spectrum. Studies from multiple sources have revealed the following:

Using a name or user name in a subject line will improve open rates as users typically assume that this email has come from a trusted source.

Using a name or user name within the content of the email itself improves conversion rates and has the added benefit of creating brand loyalty with the user.

So, it would seem as though it would be an easy decision to have personalized email in your sendings, right? Unfortunately it's not that simple.

The Issue of Privacy in Personalized Email

Unfortunately, the issue of user's concerns about email privacy and the use of their information can throw a wrench in your belief that personalized email is the best move for you. Selecting a bad context to use as a piece of personal information in your email can result in the abandonment of users from not only your email list but also your brand. Here are some important elements to keep in mind when deciding whether to incorporate any form of personalized email in your email campaigns.

Would your users want other people to know that they use your product?

There are many numbers of industries out there where clients and users might not be comfortable with others knowing that they use the product or service. This can range from anything as salacious as gambling or adult sites to something as essentially harmless as dating sites, medical information sites and financial advice sites. While, in theory, a personalized email will only be seen by the person it was intended for, it can have the unfortunate side effect of creating uncertainty about the safety of their identity with a user. If you have reason to believe that any significant portion of your user base would be concerned with the security of their identity, veer away from personalized email in your email campaign.

Testâ€¦then test again! Are you tired of hearing this phrase yet? But it's true. If you're willing to take the hit that your test may result in some people leaving your list, run two separate a/b email testing. The first test should use a name or user name within the email, and one that test should use that information in the subject line. If there's any question, you'll certainly know after that test if your users like personalized email. Just remember, pay attention to all four key metrics when you do this: open rate, click-through rate, conversion AND unsub rate. It's one of the few tests where you may see a variation in unsubs that

NEVER use a last name! The one thing that Comm100 can tell you for sure is that you should never use a client or user's last name as a personalization field. By just about every study ever done that is one step over the line of what people are comfortable seeing being used in a piece of marketing collateral. No last names! We would recommend not even using last initials!

Name or User Name?

One of the larger questions of how to create a personalized email is whether to use a client's actual first name or their user name. Once again, there are arguments for each option.

First Name: Using a user's first name as your personalization element has the advantage of making the email, well, more personal! It takes the user out of being a nameless face or possibly randomized user name and into the area of having a relationship with you or your company. However, the downside is that it's less anonymous than using a user name, so clients who are uncomfortable about user privacy will have a more negative reaction to it. The other downside is that a first name is actually a more readily available piece of information to a spammer. Spammers regularly buy lists of emails and registered users from list brokers and include the first name field, and a first name is actually a relatively easy piece of information to phish for spammers who scour the internet stealing user information from insecure forums and registration sites, so it can, in some cases, have the opposite impact of creating company trust. However, at base, it's true that nothing makes a person feel more like they're in a personal relationship than the use of their name!

User Name: Using a user name counteracts some of the issues that you'll encounter with using a client's first names. For starters, it's a more anonymous piece of information, so clients or users may not experience the same concerns about privacy. Secondly, a user name isn't a field commonly used or even obtainable by spammers, so you'll overcome what may be an initial reaction by users to seeing a potentially spam-like message. However, the downside is fairly obvious, which is that a user name is not as friendly or personal as a first name.

Whether you use first name or user name, be careful about where you put that information in the personalized email! Because personalization is designed to improve your metrics, if you're not including it in the first two inches of the email, you've probably negated its positive impact already!

Personalization is an important tool in optimizing your email campaigns, but it needs to be approached with caution and a specific plan. Be sure to monitor your email performance closely once implementing it! And be prepared to test several different versions of it as well!

No matter what email marketing strategy you are taking, the first step to ensure a successful email campaign is to choose a reliable email sending partner. Comm100 , who provides this complimentary tutorial on email marketing, offers you powerful Email Marketing Software, which is both a great long-term and short-term solution to improving your email marketing program to a new level.

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Article Keywords:
Personalized Email,Email Marketing Software

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