

STRONGVIEW SUCCESS GUIDE  
TO CROSS-CHANNEL MARKETING

# 14 CROSS-CHANNEL MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR 2014

Boost your marketing program results with these innovative and actionable tips designed for today's cross-channel, constantly connected world

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## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	4
<b>STRATEGY 1</b> CAPTURE, KEEP AND UNDERSTAND ALL CUSTOMER DATA .....	4
<b>STRATEGY 2</b> CUSTOMER CONTEXT IS KEY TO CONVERSION .....	5
<b>STRATEGY 3</b> MOBILE-FRIENDLY EMAIL EXTENDS PAST THE CLICK.....	6
<b>STRATEGY 4</b> DATA IS KING, CONTENT IS QUEEN .....	6
<b>STRATEGY 5</b> THINK INTERACTION FLOWS, NOT STANDALONE MESSAGES .....	7
<b>STRATEGY 6</b> ATTRIBUTION MODELING IS INTEGRAL TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS .....	8
<b>STRATEGY 7</b> BE PREPARED TO ADDRESS AUTO INBOX FOLDERING.....	8
<b>STRATEGY 8</b> SERVE UP A RELEVANT EXPERIENCE AT THE OPEN .....	9
<b>STRATEGY 9</b> BRING GEOGRAPHIC RELEVANCE TO YOUR MESSAGING.....	9
<b>STRATEGY 10</b> USE MOBILE & DISPLAY TO REINFORCE MESSAGES & IMPROVE RESULTS .....	10
<b>STRATEGY 11</b> BUILD PERMISSION TO ENGAGE ACROSS MULTIPLE CHANNELS.....	11
<b>STRATEGY 12</b> USE THE CUSTOMER BUYING CYCLE TO ACHIEVE TIMELY RELEVANCE .....	11
<b>STRATEGY 13</b> MAKE TESTING CORE TO YOUR CAPABILITIES .....	12
<b>STRATEGY 14</b> LEARN ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMERS OVER TIME.....	12
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	13
<b>ABOUT STRONGVIEW</b> .....	14

## INTRODUCTION

Email remains one of the most effective channels at a marketer's disposal, but maintaining – and increasing – its effectiveness requires evolving your programs to take advantage of the latest trends and best practices. In today's multichannel world, email needs to break out of its silo and become integrated with other relevant channels. The 14 cross-channel strategies provided in this Success Guide will help you break into the world of integrated cross-channel marketing.

From mobile and social media to the rise of big data, learn how you can take advantage of the current trends to deliver more effective engagements that properly reflect the relationships you have with your customers and how they spend their time online. Read on to find out how real-time relevance can help you generate significant performance increases that enable you to outpace your competition.

### 1

## Capture, Keep and Understand All Customer Data

Data and relevance are the keys to creating an engaging experience for your customers. Most marketers crave data – they thrive on what they can extract from the information and how they can make the data actionable to creatively market with a better understanding of their customers. Yet most marketers are challenged with data accessibility. The richest customer data often lives elsewhere within the organization, making it difficult to access, understand and use to improve marketing programs.

With today's constantly connected consumers, marketers have the added challenge of making sense of more data than ever before – and the current explosive growth in customer data will only continue. The key is to be able to capture, store, understand and leverage data from every customer interaction – and combine that with traditional CRM data to drive more relevant, real-time communications.

To date, many marketers have been forced to purge or discard valuable data to make room for new information due to the limitations of existing solutions. Instead of dumping potentially valuable data, marketers should leverage new cloud-based marketing insight solutions that allow them to store and make sense of all the data, unconstrained by untenable economics or slow system performance.

Data has become the newest and most important weapon in the never-ending quest to build more relevant and engaging communications. It's no longer acceptable to be forced to pick and choose what data you might think is most important today, only to learn tomorrow that a critical piece is missing. Capturing and leveraging all available customer data regardless of the channel, time frame or type is the key to building competitive advantages for the future.

## 2

## Customer Context is Key to Conversion

One of the big advantages of gaining access to historical cross-channel interaction data is the ability to understand the context of an individual customer and what their needs are within your business lifecycle at any moment in time. By understanding customer context in real time, marketers can effectively engage customers in a manner that aligns with their current needs and lifecycle stage. This ability to be customer context-aware is what we call Present Tense Marketing. Leading enterprises are leveraging best-of-breed marketing solutions that enable the level of analytic insight and automated campaign management that brands need to become true present tense marketers.

Siloed customer data can only show snippets of customer context, not the whole picture. Only through analyzing all customer interactions and external factors can a marketer understand what messaging will best serve each individual customer at any given moment of time.

The first step in achieving a deep understanding of customer context is to centralize all of your customer information and make it easily accessible to your marketing organization. Centralizing information streams such as demographic and profile data, as well as interaction data like website, email or product catalog click-and-browse behavior data, all play a critical role in enabling a marketer to develop a richer and more useful picture of each individual's current context.

Of course, gaining access to and centralizing all of these data streams is just the first challenge. You also need to have the right technologies in place to analyze and act on the data. Careful consideration should be given to analytics tools (for the web, search and email) and business tools (CRM, call center, marketing automation tools, etc.) – systems that allow you to collect, consolidate, interact with and act on behavioral and other types of data. Combined, these tools will enable a 360-degree view of your customer. Having the right tools and solutions in place allows you to go from big data to big results, driving better marketing and increasing your ROI.

### 3

## Mobile-Friendly Email Extends Past the Click

More than half of all Americans own smartphones<sup>1</sup>, which has now led to more than half of all email opens happening on mobile devices.<sup>2</sup> These days, subscribers have the opportunity to open your email on one of almost 100 different screen sizes. You can't afford to ignore subscribers' desires to engage with your emails on their device of choice.

The best solution to this daunting situation is to create a responsive email template that automatically adjusts to the best user experience for the screen that your subscriber is currently using to view your email. While it is impractical to develop an independent design for every device, you can start by designing with different platform types in mind. For instance, a desktop user probably has more time than someone reading an email on a smartphone. Smartphone users are more likely to be on the go and under a time crunch while thumbing through their emails. Bringing the most relevant information to their fingertips will provoke action – and reward you with their attention. Mobile optimization helps do this by hiding the secondary information and emphasizing what's most relevant and likely to engage an on-the-go customer.

Making your email easy to engage with on a mobile device is just the beginning. Don't forget to extend the mobile experience to your website, so your customers have a seamless and positive experience once they do engage.

Email remains the leading consumer touch point for brands online, but it exists in a world of multichannel interactions and an increasingly divided customer attention span. Customers now demand the best experience possible regardless of the device or channel they choose to interact on. Businesses that fail to live up to this expectation will find their customers leaving for better alternatives.

### 4

## Data is King, Content is Queen

Capturing customer data across channels and over long periods of time is becoming a core aspect to successful digital marketing. Data is critical to developing relevant communications, but leveraging data alone does not ensure relevant communications. If data is king, content is queen, and that means you need to pair the contextual insights derived from your data with content that will resonate with your audience. Be sure that you don't spend so much time on data analysis that you short-change your content. To truly achieve the relevance that marketers strive for today, you need the King and the Queen to be getting along harmoniously. Make sure you are investing in both.

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<sup>1</sup> Nielsen, Blog "Smartphone Switch," September, 2013

<sup>2</sup> Experian, "Q2 Email Benchmark Study," September 2013

## 5

### Think Interaction Flows, Not Standalone Messages

Your customers have a continuous relationship with your business, and as a successful marketer you must think beyond the next message you plan on sending them. Your approach and thinking must evolve to develop successful customer journeys that guide individuals down the path to long-term lifetime value. Doing this effectively requires deep contextual understanding and tools for scalable automation.

Establishing communications in a series rather than just as individual points allows you to improve your customer experiences and deliver better value to each person. Ensuring that these communications are updated to reflect the latest customer interactions is the key to long-term success. For example, designing a successful welcome campaign may happen in many discrete steps and across multiple channels of communication. Having the steps change and branch based on how customers interact with the prior step gives each branch a greater degree of relevancy and a higher value for each person.

In order to accomplish this, you need to use solutions that can design, execute and manage these types of complex cross-channel communications at scale. With the right solution in place, you can put the right rules and branches in place to direct your customers to the next best communication for them – and not just based on their interactions with the previous message, but also leveraging other real-time learnings about their context. By doing so, you can create engagements which that improve over time and drive better customer lifetime value.

Marketers who have moved beyond the campaign and into interaction flow design are seeing much higher degrees of customer engagement and improved business results.

## 6

### Attribution Modeling is Integral to Long-Term Success

Unfortunately, digital marketing channels have evolved over time as separate and distinct silos. In order to truly achieve long-term success with marketing programs, you must understand the contribution that each channel is making to drive customer engagement and deliver bottom-line results. Recognizing how channels interact and complement each other to drive positive outcomes has become a core challenge for many marketers.

Achieving this insight can be a daunting task; even knowing where to start can be a complicated decision. The data you have available to you will determine your ability to truly understand how your channels are interacting and contributing to the end results you care about. One of the easiest and best ways to begin to understand channel contribution is to set up various tests and measure how different cross-channel interaction flows drive actual results. Using split or multivariate testing and measuring how the results vary across different combinations of cross-channel interactions will quickly start to uncover what combinations outperform others and the overall ROI of each alternative.

## 7

### Be Prepared to Address Auto Inbox Foldering

The past few years have brought massive changes to our email inboxes. The rise of auto-foldering for managing inbox clutter and the roll-out of Gmail Tabs and other services like OtherInBox and Sane Box have caused a good portion of email messages to route out of the inbox and into secondary promotional folders or tabs that are less noticeable, less accessible and crowded with other promotional messages.

Addressing these changes requires knowing how they are impacting your results. You need to start by understanding how your results are varying over time down to the level of the individual domain. Only then will you have insight on how these changes are impacting your marketing.

If you find that your results are slipping, you have a few options for addressing the issue. For starters, you can send a direct communication to affected customers showing them how they can again receive your communications in their main email inbox. Beyond that, you should remember that relevance will rule the day. Communications that are relevant and valuable will always be sought out by consumers and will continue to do well in a world where the inbox is undergoing significant change.

## 8

### Serve Up a Relevant Experience at the Open

Being a successful Present Tense Marketer means not just understanding your customer's context at every moment in time, but also delivering the most relevant content and experience possible for that person. Optimizing your communications for the moment of open is a great way to ensure your message is in sync with your subscriber's state in that present moment. There are many ways to create these Present Tense Marketing experiences. Device detection, countdown clocks, weather-driven offers and offer optimization can all work together to present the most relevant content to your recipient.

Using solutions to personalize your messages in real time to match specific customer needs shows not only that you are being attentive, it also shows that you understand and can respond to their needs in the here and now.

## 9

### Bring Geographic Relevance to Your Messaging

What use is an email about Tucson when you're in San Francisco? Delivering relevant content based on the location of your subscribers can be a very effective way to increase engagement, and it's very likely that you can leverage existing tools and customer data to make it happen.

Location is a key aspect of context for any person. Good examples of location-based messages include weather information, local deals, event times or local shipping offers. The traditional way to accomplish this is through stored IP address or physical location data, but new tools and solutions are available to automatically sniff out each customer's location, allowing you to craft the most relevant message for that person.

And geographic relevance doesn't stop with recording their place of residence. Today's customers are constantly connected and on the go. Understanding not just where they spend much of their time, but where they are when you are trying to engage with them becomes an important means to increase your relevance and results. Marketers who can successfully leverage location data can stand out in a crowd of other messages that are competing for your customer's attention.

## 10

### Use Mobile & Display to Reinforce Messages & Improve Results

Integrating mobile and display into your email marketing programs doesn't have to be a daunting task and can play an important role in reinforcing your messaging and improving overall results. Engaging with consumers who have opted into an SMS communication can complement your email communication if done in a targeted and intelligent fashion. Don't just try to send the same message twice.

SMS is an interrupt-driven communication channel, causing people to drop what they are doing to view what's happening on their phone. Make sure you respect that interruption and only deliver content that is time sensitive or where the customer has an explicit understanding of what they are getting. For example, highlighting limited-time offers or flash sales across both email and mobile creates customer value, as people want to receive the offer before it expires. Similarly, certain types of notifications or alerts can be very successful when done across multiple channels. Alerts such as back-in-stock alerts for items of interest to a customer are very well received when sent via both email and mobile channels.

Individually targeted display advertising offers up another great opportunity to orchestrate your communications across different channels of engagement to improve results. Display ads can be used to target individuals, whether or not they engaged with your emails. For example, for consumers who open your emails but have not yet purchased, you can reach them with display ads that reinforce the great offer that got them to open your message in the first place. For customers who have not yet opened your email, new technologies allow you to reach this disengaged segment, perhaps with an alternative offer or even with a great visual from your email that they did not have the chance to view.

Lastly, display retargeting gives you new ways to reach consumers who you may know a lot about from your data, but for whom you do not have permission to email. For these, display gives you the opportunity to send out great offers and content to reach these customers wherever they might be on the web, drawing them back to your website where you have another opportunity to engage them.

Consumers don't think of mobile, display, email and social as different silos – for them, it's all just communication with your business. Each channel has its pros and cons as a means of creating customer connection, and it's our jobs as marketers to understand how they interact and complement each as we strive to better engage our customers and drive great business results.

## 11

### Build Permission to Engage Across Multiple Channels

To date, most organizations have approached cross-channel marketing as a series of silos. Each silo has its own permissions and data, which is why it's rare to find marketers successfully leveraging data across their various touch points or using one channel as a means of building permissions to engage in another.

Make sure you capture multichannel communication preferences at every customer touchpoint (e.g. on your Facebook page, in the store, via the call center, etc.). On top of that, make sure you have a preference center available online for your subscribers to clearly indicate and/or modify their desire to receive your messages across multiple channels. And don't hesitate to occasionally remind your subscribers to update their preferences via an easy to use preference center..

As you think about your own business and engagements, look for new ways to expand your communication permissions. For example, mobile can be a key way to acquire email subscribers. If you have a retail store, airline counter or other physical presence where customers might be waiting in line and still engaged, an SMS can give your customers the opportunity to opt into email communications while their mobile devices are out and in hand. Setting up an SMS campaign that allows consumers to text in their email address to subscribe to your promotional emails is an easy way for customers to provide you with permission and begin receiving relevant communications from you brand.

## 12

### Use the Customer Buying Cycle to Achieve Timely Relevance

We've known for a long time that consumers need different information at different times in their customer lifecycle as they move from product consideration, to completing a purchase, to interacting with your products or services. Creating the most relevant communications requires understanding where each individual is within the lifecycle and delivering a relevant message that provides value and helps them towards the next stage.

Customers can provide both explicit and implicit clues to their lifecycle stage. You must gather all of these context clues, centralize them, understand them, and then craft your communications to best address what you have come to understand.

## 13 Make Testing Core to Your Capabilities

Testing: it's easy, cost effective, immediate and a "must have" for marketing success. As the size of your audience grows, testing becomes more important for each interaction you design. Testing helps understand performance at a moment in time, and continual testing is a requirement for continual improvement in your marketing campaigns. Over time, you should be able to identify trends and opportunities for future messages and leverage those trends to make constant adjustments and improvements. The small improvements implemented from the results of your testing programs can add up to significant benefits in both consumer engagement and marketing ROI.

Testing must move beyond a one-time test, learn, adjust and execute cycle. It must be a central part of your marketing processes and part of how you optimize for performance over the long haul. For instance, just because you've tested a subject line and it performed well last year doesn't mean that the same subject line will perform equally well today. This is why you should test elements of your campaigns with every email you send. Rather than taking your learnings and automatically applying them to all of your customer touch points, test with a subset of your audience in real time to determine the right combination of elements for one specific message and channel, and then send the winning result to the remainder of your audience.

Successful marketers make every day a new opportunity to test and learn. Advancing your own testing capabilities from the basics of straight A/B testing to more advanced path or multivariate testing is the fastest way to improving your results both in the short and long run.

## 14 Learn About Your Customers Over Time

As with any type of relationship, you don't learn everything about your customers overnight - it can take months or years of gathering preference and behavioral information. Progressive profiling means making the extra effort to constantly expand upon your base of customer knowledge, building richer data and deeper customer profiles. This can be accomplished by both explicit and implicit data about each consumer's preferences. A simple follow-up, such as a preference survey or post-purchase questionnaire, allows your customers to tell you more about their interests and needs. For example, after a customer purchases a CD, asking them about other artists they regularly listen to gives you valuable insight and context for that individual and a better path for creating relevant content.

A person's interactions with your brand can also generate highly valuable insight to infer their interests and deepen their customer profile. A customer who spends most of their time browsing jazz music on your site tells you a lot about their interests. You can show you understand that interest by ensuring that any emails you send to that person relate to artists in the jazz genre. A focus on building this profile data over time gives you the greatest degree of learning and context for your customers. It is only through truly deep interactions that you can gain the context necessary to deliver relevant content and deepen customer relationships.

## CONCLUSION

Marketing is not a static discipline. Rapid consumer adoption of emerging channels like mobile and social, as well as the explosion of available data sources, has led to a revolution in digital marketing. Successful marketers must continually evolve and advance their strategies to understand their customers and deliver the best engagements possible. These 14 strategies can help you evolve and improve your marketing campaigns, but you also need to consider the tools, resources and strategies required to keep pace with the continual changes in digital marketing.

Picking the right solutions and partnering with the best companies will give you the foundation for becoming a true Present Tense Marketer, which is the path successful marketers are on today. A top-tier, enterprise-level marketing service provider should provide you with the technology to access all customer data and leverage the channels you require to reach and engage your customers. Equally importantly, they should provide a full breadth of marketing services to help design and implement the most effective strategies for staying at the cutting edge of digital marketing. To learn more about what it takes to become a Present Tense Marketer, visit [www.presenttensemarketing.com](http://www.presenttensemarketing.com). For more information about marketing best practices or how our solutions can keep you at the cutting edge, we encourage you to visit StrongView's website ([www.StrongView.com](http://www.StrongView.com)), or give us a call at **800-971-0380**.

## ABOUT STRONGVIEW

StrongView's cross-channel marketing solutions provide enterprise marketers with the tools, services and insights required to effectively engage today's constantly connected customers. Combining a powerful cross-channel campaign management solution with market-leading data access and analysis, StrongView's Marketing Cloud enables marketers to understand the current context of each customer and respond in real time with relevant messages across email, mobile, social, display and web.

A champion of "**Present Tense Marketing**," StrongView is committed to delivering solutions that reflect the new reality of the technology-empowered customer. Based in Redwood City, CA and backed by leading venture capital investors, StrongView has been helping global brands in retail, travel, finance, entertainment and online services overcome the limitations of other marketing platform providers for more than a decade.

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