

Getting Personal

Mastering one-to-one marketing online

WHEN MY SIBLINGS AND I WERE

growing up, we were an all-or-nothing package. My parents either did things with all of us, or hired a babysitter and went out without us. I remember feeling like my parents thought my younger sister and I (Irish twins) were just alike, which couldn't have been further from the truth. When it was my turn to parent, I spent time with each child on his or her own, away from the siblings and the group dynamic.

Customers benefit from the same one-to-one treatment in marketing.

Mass marketing is sometimes referred to as one-to-many marketing. A company sends out one message that is expected to be seen by and motivate many different

customers. It's an efficient approach to marketing, if you divide the total amount spent across the total number of people who experienced the ad or promotion. But mass marketing can also be very generic and impersonal.

Alternatively, there's one-to-one marketing, where messages are personalized for the recipient. I remember in the mid 1980s, when I was in the direct marketing business, we were able to inkjet a customer's actual name—"Dear John,"—on messages that were printed inside the six million catalogs we mailed. It was an amazing feat of personalization.

But one-to-one marketing has come a long way since those days. Today there are ways to communicate one-on-one

that we couldn't even imagine back then. However, don't make the mistake of thinking that just because you're on social media, you're marketing one-to-one. If you post a status, that's still one-to-many marketing. Only after you get into a conversation with a follower who responds to your status are you personalizing your message.

ONE-TO-ONE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

So, what are some of the other ways of communicating one-to-one? Let's start with direct messaging.

You can market right to your social media friends and fans using the messaging function present in each social media platform. Of course, you don't want to just send an e-mail "blast" through messaging—people would find that annoying. Instead, think of an offer you would like to share or a product that you're selling, and craft a simple, personal message about it. Write the initial message right in one of the messaging apps; this will help ensure that you communicate the way you normally would if you were just sending a personal note. Once you have the message right, test sending it to a small group of your friends and fans.

With direct messaging, you can be absolutely sure that the people you want to see your promotion actually see it, unlike posting something in a newsfeed,



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which will be seen only by a small percentage of your friends and followers.

Another way to do one-to-one marketing online is through a chat function on your website. These are easier and more affordable than ever to set up (available for as low as \$12/month), and there are chat apps for almost every type of website. Some companies hesitate to make chat available because they may not be able to support it all the time. But being available some of the time is a lot better than none of the time, and when you don't have a live agent available, website visitors can leave a message through the chat application. Online chat makes it easy for your website visitors to ask questions and receive information that will help them decide to buy—information they may have not ever received otherwise. We know people no longer like to pick up a phone and make a call, but they are surprisingly willing to initiate an online chat. A few live chat systems to check out include Olark, Front, LiveChat, and LiveAgent.

If you have a business where a conversation is the best way to guide someone to a sale, you can also offer free 15-minute phone consultations. We tend to think nobody wants to use the phone to discuss business anymore, but that's not quite true. Rather, nobody wants to dial a phone, navigate an automated system, get put on hold, and then have to wait for a call back from the "right" person. So advertising a book-your-own-free-15-minute-appointment-and-we'll-call-you promotion can be surprisingly successful. Use an appointment-booking application such as Omnify or AppointmentPlus to

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automate everything, from easy scheduling for your customer to putting the appointments into your calendar.

Of course, there are many other ways to do one-to-one marketing. With e-mail marketing, you can personalize more than a customer's first name. You can easily add last purchase or wish list information to your messages in most e-mail systems. You can use your smartphone to record individual 10-second videos for potential clients, addressing them by name. You

may not be able to get them to book a meeting with you, but you can bet they'll launch a video, sent via e-mail, that shows you holding up a little signboard with their first name on it! You can also curate e-mail messages to clients based on how they spend their time on your website.

There are so many ways to do one-to-one marketing—just search "one-to-one" or "personalized marketing" on Google and see where it leads you. ♦



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