




Dynamic Content: Why the Days of Batch and Blast Email are Over

**Featuring Case Studies with
Scotts Lawn Care,
Nexus Energy Group,
and Ice Miller Law Firm**



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Introduction

What happened to the days of simplistic email? When an email message promoting a \$5 discount generated open rates of 70% and click-through rates of 50%? Back in the “old days,” organizations using email as a marketing and / or communication tool were coasting. A generic email message sent to thousands of subscribers resulted in response rates that no other medium had achieved. And then...

Email became too easy. Everyone began to “batch and blast” emails to their customers and prospects – and in an age where over 62% of email is spam (source: BrightMail), speaking to each customer in a relevant and personalized manner has never been more important. Finding the correct tools to do so is essential.

Any organization familiar with email and email marketing has heard the endless benefits of relevancy and personalization: stronger customer and prospect relationships, higher email open rates and click-through rates, increased sales and ROI. But how are organizations successfully following through on their mission to provide subscribers with relevant email content? And what are the upcoming challenges marketers must be ready to adapt to when managing and developing targeted messages?

This whitepaper will take an in-depth look into the world of Dynamic Content, with special focus on organizations who are capitalizing on its benefits to reach success. From Scott’s Lawn Care to Nexus Energy Group, organizations are mastering one-to-one relationships with their clients and prospects. The following will explain how Dynamic Content has been instrumental in their success.

Part I: Batch ‘n Blast is Behind Us

Relevancy Beats Frequency

Email is unique. Unlike other traditional mediums, email – when used properly – is primarily about permission. And when the agreement between a customer or prospect and an organization is present, value and relevancy outweigh all other elements. Including frequency.

Organizations that send their subscribers dozens of irrelevant messages in attempt to “keep in front of them” are missing the big picture. Regardless of whether a subscriber is expecting special discounts, information, or advice, the point is that they are expecting something of **value** to them. Given the choice of a daily communication promoting products and services of little relevance to a subscriber’s needs and preferences, or a weekly, highly targeted newsletter including content related to a subscriber’s personal profile, which will most choose? The answer is obvious.

Successful organizations do not push the information or products that *they* want to convey onto their subscribers. Instead, they pay attention to their subscriber’s needs, preferences, and behavior – and send messages in tune with what their *subscribers* want.

Subscribers Want Personalization...And Will Help Organizations Provide It

Increasingly, subscribers are willing to share the information necessary to send them relevant content. In a recent study conducted by ChoiceStream, 80% of consumers said they were interested in receiving personalized content. 64% of those surveyed said that they would be willing to share preference data in order to help a company do so (eMarketer July 22, 2004).

Many organizations choose to gather such subscriber data at the time of newsletter registration via web collect forms. Others supply a simple registration form and follow-up with periodic surveys to deepen their subscriber. Both are highly effective ways to build a database that may then be used to target and personalize messages.

Adopting such a **personalized approach** to e-mail has been wildly successful, with companies reporting results that are **four times to eight times** better than results of static campaigns.

-Jupiter Research
2003

Relevancy is Becoming Complicated

Despite this good news, the abundance of customer data available to marketers has made targeting more complex than ever before. According to a recent report compiled by Forrester Research, most marketers have evolved beyond a simple one-message-fits-all-customers strategy and have adopted some form of dynamic content. However, when asked what their biggest email challenges would be in the next two years, these same marketers responded that creating and managing content was their second highest concern (Forrester, "The Best Email Marketing Service Providers Report", June 2004).

This indicates that as marketers become more complex in their need to develop and deliver dynamic email, technology must be robust and user-friendly enough to allow them to efficiently do so. According to a study conducted by Jupiter Research, 76% of organizations personalize email messages to five or fewer segments. This illustrates that although marketers are delivering some form of targeted messages, many are not yet leveraging their vast customer data to its fullest potential.

A key finding by Jupiter Research shows that although the complexity of a dynamically targeted email may take more time for deployment, this personalized approach can generate results that are four times to eight times better than results of a static campaign.

Given this opportunity for drastic increases in revenue and response rates, using relevant content to create and deliver Dynamic Content messages is absolutely worth the extra time and effort.

Part II: Case Studies

Relevant messages *and* fully satisfied subscribers are absolutely possible – and the case studies below are proof. These featured cases span a variety of industry verticals, yet contain the following in common: each company has mastered the development and organization of content, each engage in careful data mining, and each utilizes robust email software to make successful campaigns a reality.

Ice Miller Law Firm Establishing Credibility with Relevancy

Founded in 1910, Ice Miller is the largest law firm in Indianapolis, with a nationally recognized reputation in many of its practice areas. With additional offices in Chicago and Washington D.C., the Firm has over 225 lawyers, 40 paraprofessionals and 250 support staff members. For the fourth consecutive year, Ice Miller was ranked as a top corporate law firm by *Corporate Board Member* magazine.

In an industry where credibility is everything, Ice Miller is able to establish itself with customized newsletters driven by individual attributes such as location and industry. For example, when the state of Indiana makes modifications to articles and laws, the only subscribers receiving such information are those who reside in Indiana.

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In this Issue...

ARTICLES **JUNE 04**

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SARBANES-OXLEY AND PRIVATE COMPANIES: Why Private Companies Should Consider Complying With Sarbanes-Oxley And What To Do About It

Over the past two years, the media has made us painfully aware of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (the "Act") and its effects on public companies. While Congress enacted Sarbanes-Oxley in response to accounting and corporate governance scandals at some of the largest public companies, its ramifications have begun to trickle down to private companies as well. In this third installment of a four-part series on the Act, we explore why forward-looking private companies need to understand the requirements of the Act and why they should consider voluntarily adopting the key reforms and compliance procedures in the Act. [Learn more.](#)

Small Business Tools to Retirement

Like any organization, small businesses face a myriad of tax requirements upon formation and during operation. Recently, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) introduced several helpful tools on its website to assist small businesses with general compliance issues, particularly with respect to retirement plans. [Learn more.](#)

Emergency, Emergency... Where Should the Patient Go?

OSHA: Easing the Burden on Small Businesses

Example:

Subscribers coded as "private companies" and "small businesses" received this targeted version containing legal updates pertinent to them.

Other businesses received a version with different content.

Using Dynamic Content, the firm is able to simply create a content area which contains this information, then set a "rule" that causes the content area to render only when a subscriber is marked "Indiana" for his demographic data. This demographic data may be modified at any time by Ice Miller or by the subscriber via a "subscriber profile" link at the bottom of each newsletter.

Ice Miller has recently taken the complexity of their targeting one step further, with rules containing "and / or" statements. For example, if Florida enacts a state-wide law concerning colleges and universities, Ice Miller is able to easily create one rule that displays this content to only those subscribers who live in Florida and are associated with the college / university sector.

Ice Miller's efforts have been nationally recognized and awarded by the Legal Marketing Association.

Nexus Energy Software Encouraging Cost-Savings with Fully Customized Messages

Nexus Energy Software, Inc. provides unique software solutions that improve communications between utilities and their customers. Nexus offers web-based self-service tools to consumers and small businesses, as well as contact center tools, to help the energy customer better understand and manage their energy costs. More than 75 integrated utilities, unregulated energy suppliers, market operators, and other related companies rely on Nexus' solutions to support customer and enterprise energy-related transactions and decision making.

"In order to promote energy efficiency, we know that the message must pertain directly to each consumer's uses and types of energy," says Karissa Bernardo, E-mail Marketing Coordinator. "Consumers are always looking for ways to reduce energy costs, and our utility clients rely on us to deliver the personalized advice necessary to help them do so, along with targeted promotions for other products and services."

Energy Use Profile

ZIP Code:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	Example: Website visitors are able to provide personal data that will then be used to customize content.
House Type:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="Select from list"/>	
Age of House:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="Select from list"/>	
Number of Rooms:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="Select from list"/>	
Primary Heating Fuel:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="Select from list"/>	
Hot Water Fuel:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="Select from list"/>	
Central AC:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="Select from list"/>	
Number of People:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="Select from list"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would like to receive Savings Email Alerts that will provide updates on new utility deals, special product promotions, and new energy supply offers.		
Email address:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	

One of the ways Nexus communicates on behalf of its utility clients is through an electronic newsletter program called ENERGYgrams[®]. Each ENERGYgram is tailored to the individual customer (residential or business) based on specific information gathered through the Nexus tools. The ENERGYgram provides useful information, resources and measures for consumers to reduce their costs and maximize their energy usage.

With Dynamic Content Tools and customer provided data, the Nexus application is able to generate unique e-mail versions for each consumer, with customization based on his or her profile, usage history, and more.

For example, a consumer utilizing gas to heat his home may receive a different version of the newsletter than a consumer that heats with electricity or propane. Frequently, Nexus creates multiple versions of a single email based on various factors, such as geographic location or level of usage, and can include promotions for different products based on the consumer profile. Nexus' applications even make it possible to tell each customer individually how much they would save from a particular action. Creating Dynamic Content versions of a single newsletter is simple due to the ability to modify content and set up "rules-based" commands within the application.

With client customer lists spanning anywhere from several hundred to over 65,000 people, Nexus relies on various tools and Boolean Logic to organize consumers into segments using the information provided in their data profile. This helps mitigate the number of versions that must be created.

"Using the customer profiles and our ENERGYgram product, our clients have found that relevant, customized messages work," says Malini Biswas, Nexus Product Marketing Manager. "The Nexus ENERGYgram is increasingly recognized as among the most cost-effective forms of customer communication for energy companies, for both acquisition and decision motivation, and has achieved click-through rates well beyond what our clients believed possible."

Scotts Delivering Emails Automatically Tailored to Match Customer Geographic and Horticultural Profile

Scotts, the world's leading supplier of consumer products for lawn and garden care, knows the importance of delivering custom lawn and garden care advice to its nearly 750,000 customers based on individual geographic and horticultural needs.

With Dynamic Content, Scotts is able to dynamically generate hundreds or even thousands of individualized recommendations from a single email template. These recommendations are based on the customer's zip code, grass and garden type, and continually changing variables such as weather and other local growing conditions. Rose gardeners receive different advice than vegetable gardeners, and residents of Beverly Hills receive different information than residents of Detroit, and so on.



Example:

Subscribers with St. Augustine grass receive different care recommendations than those with Kentucky bluegrass.

Rose gardeners receive different advice than vegetable gardeners, etc.

In addition to prompting customers to fertilize, plant, and perform other maintenance activities at the appropriate time for their geographic location and their lawn and garden type, the company also issues special email alerts with treatment advice regarding pests, drought or other problems reported in a specific area.

Scotts' email marketing program is based on its extensive agronomic expertise coupled with information submitted by customers when they sign up for the services on the company website, www.scotts.com. Through integration with those customer-created profiles and sophisticated dynamic content functionality, Scotts' email software seamlessly changes information in each message to correspond to each customer's particular requirements.

All processes are automated and implemented with point-and-click procedures, reducing Scotts' reliance on technical resources to implement its email marketing initiatives. Rather than creating hundreds of versions of each message, Scotts uses its email software to automatically customize each email to fit the customer's profile.

Scotts' email marketing program reinforces the company's efforts to use its website as a resource for information on lawn and garden care and a customer relationship-building vehicle rather than as a pure advertisement for its products. Named the "Best General Interest Web Site" by the Web Marketing Association in 2003, the Scotts site includes extensive general information on lawn and garden maintenance, seasonal tips and problem solving. The company's email reminder services complement and advance their strategy by supplying advice that is relevant to the individual gardener without directly promoting Scotts and affiliated brands.

Conclusion: Commit to Relevant Content, Reap Rewards

The bottom line is that the simplistic days of email have passed. The benefits of "batch and blast" are gone, and only those organizations who are committed to providing relevant, targeted messages to their subscribers will continue to reap the advantages of email marketing and communication. With the proper tools, careful organization of data and content, and customer knowledge, any business can become a Dynamic Content success story.