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Case Study: Response to Outbound Email

Client: DoOnGo Technologies, Inc.
Date: 6/30/2004

Email is a powerful communication channel. Most of us check our email before we check our voice mail. However, using outbound email effectively can be difficult. This case study examines an outbound email that generated impressive results and explores the elements that contributed to its success.

Recently one of our clients sent an email to 210 key contacts at prospect accounts, describing a successful field use of their product (see email on following page). We tracked each recipient's responses to the emails: when each recipient opened the email and how many times. This email generated an impressive response rate – 108 of the emails (51%) were opened at least once. Even more impressive, 34 of the emails were opened 5 or more times, and 11 of the emails were opened 10 or more times. Key measurements for this outbound email campaign are summarized in the table below:

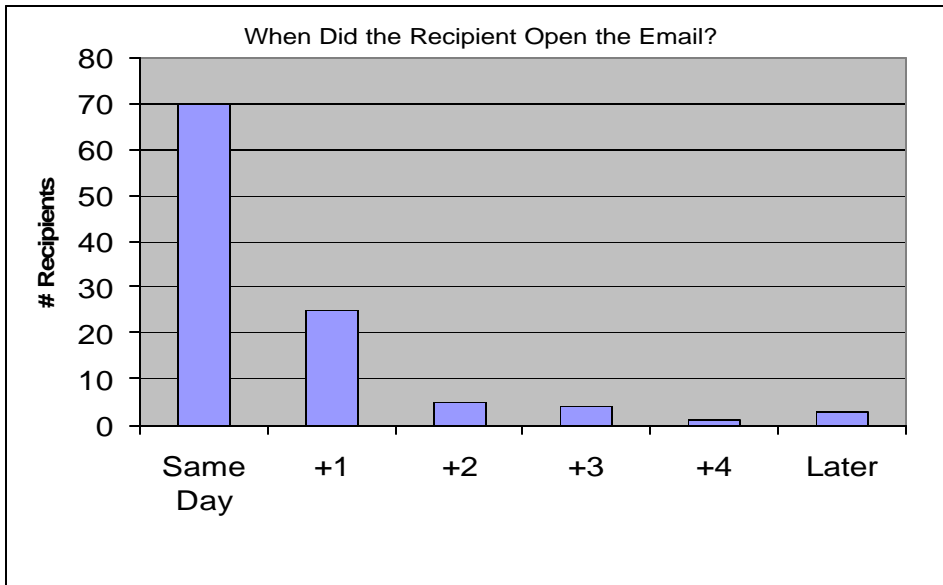
Email Campaign Box Scores		
Variable	Number	Percent
Emails Sent	210	100%
Emails Opened	108	51%
Email Responses	5	2%
Bounces	12	6%
Unsubscribes	1	0%

This case study addresses three critical questions regarding this specific email campaign:

- *When were the emails opened?*
- *Why were the emails opened?*
- *Why were the emails opened multiple times?*

When did Recipients open the emails?

This outbound email letter follows the common pattern for most email campaigns. Emails are opened quickly, or not at all. The chart below shows that, within the emails that were opened, 70 recipients (69%) first opened the email the same day it was sent. The open rate dropped off quickly, so that by the fourth day, 98% of the 108 readers who were going to open the email had already done it. Only three readers opened the email for the first time after the fourth day.



Email is an immediate communication. So, it is no surprise that recipients respond immediately, either by reading or deleting. This pattern is common to most email communications.

For business email communications, the day and time of receipt also has a noticeable effect on when the email is opened. An email will get more attention when it is received alone, rather than as one of many emails. When a person receives many emails simultaneously, as is typical in the mornings, the goal is often to dispose of as many emails as possible immediately, with deletion being the preferred disposal technique. So the preferred time window for maximum impact of the email is late morning to early afternoon local time, Monday-Friday. Many people tend to travel on Monday and leave early on Friday, so Tuesday-Thursday are the best days, which further narrows the window for sending emails. However, the Monday effect appears to be small and the Friday effect appears to be very sensitive to a holiday in the following week. These trends have been confirmed in previous studies with One-to-One clients.

Why did Recipients open the emails?

To answer this question we must first explore the recipient list. This list was very specific, targeted at CXO's, VP's, directors and managers at specific prospects. As a result the information's being highly targeted, it was appropriate and interesting to the recipients.

Rates for replies, bounces, and unsubscribes are good indicators of list quality. Bounce rates for email campaigns often run 20-30%, especially for newer email lists. Senior executives may have several email addresses, and change them occasionally as a spam defense. If the company has a pattern for email addresses, the senior executives may intentionally avoid that pattern, to foil email automatic address generators. Further, the turnover rate for senior executives is increasing. In this market the rate of turnover for senior executives at the CXO and VP level is about 1.5% per month, with average executive lifetime being 30 months. The 12% bounce rate and the 0.5% unsubscribe rate for this campaign is low, indicating good quality for the email list.

Recipients typically use six criteria to guide their decisions about opening any specific email:

- Email Title
- Recipient email address
- Sender Name
- Sender email
- Email size and attachments
- Email preview in preview pane

Email Title - We have developed good filters for email titles, from considerable training with spam emails. To survive computerized and personal spam filters, the title must be plain language, clear and relevant. The title of this email, "DoOnGo Uses OTA to Fix 470,000 Handsets," is direct, specific, and in plain language. The one acronym, "OTA," is well understood by the target audience and is a qualifier. Readers could quickly determine that the email was pertinent to their company, current, and relevant to their specific interests.

Recipient Email Address – Many, if not most, people have both personal and business email addresses. Companies and individuals typically guard their business email addresses carefully. Every one of these emails went to a business email address. For business communications, email addresses at AOL, MSN, Yahoo, or other free providers are useless.

Sender Name - The emails were sent from the CEO of DoOnGo and from the Executive Vice President of DoOnGo. The senders were real people, and clearly identified.

Sender Email Address – The email addresses used were pengl@doongo.com (for Luosheng Peng) and artims@doongo.com (for Steve Artim). The email title, sender name, and email address all matched. Nothing here aroused suspicion.

Email Size and Attachments – This email was small (17 kb), with no attachments. Both are critical parameters for spam filters.

Email Preview – Many email reader programs have preview panes. This email shows up well in a preview pane, and the internal message matches the title. Here again, nothing aroused suspicion.

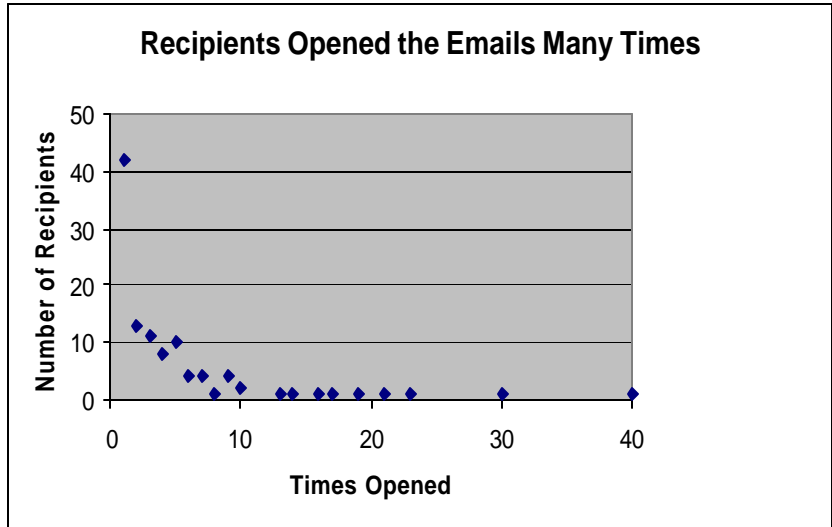
All these elements together accomplished the goal of getting the recipient to open the email. They created interest with relevant content and did not arouse suspicion with suspicious identifiers.

Why did Recipients open the emails so many times?

As shown in the table, many recipients opened these emails often. 66 recipients opened the email at least twice. Even more impressive, 34 of the emails were opened 5 or more times and 11 of the emails were opened 10 or more times. One recipient opened the email 30 times, and another recipient opened the email 40 times.

In follow-up calls we found that these recipients forwarded the email to others in their company, particularly members of their staff. These secondary recipients drove the opening rates much higher.

In summary this was a successful email campaign – high readership, significant handoff to others in the company, low bounces, and very low unsubscribes.



Lessons for Email Campaigns

Among the many elements of a successful email campaign demonstrated here, four elements stand out as critical:

Send to a qualified, targeted list.

Send emails only to the few people who may have a real interest. Know the characteristics of your target accounts, and know the appropriate contacts within your target accounts. Send only to qualified target accounts, and only to qualified, interested contacts at the account.

Personalize the message.

Use the information about the contact to personalize the message. Address the contact by name. Indicate why the email is appropriate to that person, as a CFO, VP of Sales, or Director of Operations.

Send a relevant message.

Send a message that is current, relevant, and of direct interest to the recipients. Do not send a sales message. Likewise, do not send press releases disguised as emails. Many contacts may not care that you have a new executive.

Be transparent and consistent.

The email title, sender name, sender email address, and content must all match. Any discrepancy will trigger the instinct to *delete before reading*.

In short, treat your customers and prospects with respect and they will return the favor.



Dear Richard,

In the past few years OTA software upgrades has matured from a concept technology to an operational reality. Today, the OTA software upgrade service provides direct and real benefits to carriers, handset manufacturers, and end users. On March 9th, NTT DoCoMo announced that it had identified a software bug in its NEC-manufactured FOMA N900i handsets and a second set of software bugs in the same handsets on April 26th.

Using software from DoOnGo, already embedded on the NEC phones, NTT DoCoMo was able to download a patch to fix a "reboot" bug in 160,000 phones and another set of software bugs in 470,000 phones, respectively, in a matter of minutes. By being able to update these phones seamlessly and quickly, sales and service for the N900i handsets were not affected, saving the company valuable time and money. NTT DoCoMo did not have to launch a potentially costly and complicated recall to fix the problem.

"However, DoCoMo did not have to launch a potentially costly and complicated recall to fix the problem. Instead, the carrier's users simply downloaded a software patch to fix the problem themselves—an event that was likely the world's first example of a full-blown, over-the-air repair service for mobile phones." RCR Wireless News, April 12, 2004

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As the provider of the OTA software that executed the repair for DoCoMo on the NEC handsets, we are delighted that our solution is so useful to our clients.

The benefits of OTA are compelling:

- **OTA dramatically increases customer satisfaction.** With OTA installed, the end users can choose to repair the handset at his convenience, without a trip to a service center.
- **OTA significantly reduces field maintenance, support, and repair costs.** OTA repair eliminates returned handsets, replacement inventory, and staff needed to handle the returns.
- **OTA fixes handsets in the production and distribution pipeline,** thus eliminating any need for a recall and the associated halt in immediate sales. With OTA, the carrier can continue ramping up a successful product and service.
- **In the future, OTA will generate new revenues** through the sale and distribution of new features and services.

The time for OTA is now, as its recent use by DoCoMo demonstrates. We are the market leader, with our solution deployed on over 30 million handsets, including Sharp, Panasonic, and NEC. I will be writing to you occasionally this year, with ideas, insights, and reports about OTA operating in the field. I'd like to hear your thoughts on OTA. Call me directly (408-678-2955) or send an email (pengl@doongo.com) with a question or comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luosheng Peng".

Luosheng Peng, CEO

[Click here to remove your name from our mailing list.](#)

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