



Sierra Trading Post Grows Email List By 14% Using A Free Trial Strategy To Light A Fire Under Their Existing Subscribers.



And these new subscribers spend 53% more

Sierra Trading Post is a major Internet and catalog retailer of apparel, outdoor gear and home goods. The company sells their name brand products at 35-70% off retail prices by stocking high quality overstocks and closeouts.

Industry: Apparel and outdoor gear retailer

Product: Response Consulting

Project: Develop a successful list growth strategy for daily email alert program

Challenge

Sierra Trading Post launched an innovative new email program for buyers called BarnBurners. The BarnBurners program offers one product per day, showcased by a video description, at a very low price. BarnBurners products are available at a that special low price for that day only making them a great way to drive sales for select products in their inventory and increase overall sales by inducing impulse buys.

To encourage customers to take full advantage of the program and stimulate purchasing activity, they developed a daily morning email alert program to allow subscribers to receive first dibs on the products that were being offered that same day. To launch the program, Sierra Trading Post sent a dedicated promotional email blast to their loyal base of subscribers and mentioned the program in several other regular promotional emails. Despite these efforts, the email list for the daily BarnBurners alerts experienced little growth activity and no significant revenue upticks. As a result, Sierra Trading Post enlisted the help of Return Path to develop an email list growth solution that would increase their BarnBurners file and subsequently drive revenue for the program.

Solution

The Return Path Professional Services team reviewed their program goals and recommended launching a “free trial” program to a smaller group of existing subscribers that would introduce the program and build a buzz while respecting their permission preferences.

First, Return Path selected a test group of 50,000 subscribers. This group would receive daily BarnBurners emails for two weeks only. This strategy was employed to see if opting them in on a temporary basis would entice them to sign-up to continue receiving daily alerts once the two-week trial period was over.

In addition to explaining the benefits of the program, the first email included very clear wording about how they were selected, how frequently they would receive these emails and how to opt out of the trial subscription. Since subscribers

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did not give specific permission to receive BarnBurners promotions, they needed to be as transparent as possible with this campaign. More to that point, subsequent trial emails included very visible links to the unsubscribe, subscribe and feedback links. Return Path closely monitored their deliverability, paying special attention to the complaint and unsubscribe rates as well as analyzing the feedback comments to monitor and manage any negative reactions to the trial. After two weeks, the final email clearly signified the end of the trial period but also encouraged recipients to subscribe to receive future daily BarnBurners alerts.

Results

The free trial strategy was a huge success. After the two-week period, Sierra Trading Post grew their BarnBurners email list by 14%. Overall, the trial model brought in new subscribers at a rate 10 times that of their initial email blast. What's more, these trial emails had an average order value 53% higher than previous issues of the BarnBurners alert. And, their deliverability remained healthy as they experienced no spikes in complaint or unsubscribe rates. As a result, Sierra Trading Post plans to use the trial format as an effective method for converting their house list to the BarnBurners program and driving additional revenue for the channel.

Customer Feedback

Growing our specialty email list for our BarnBurners program proved to be a challenge until Return Path provided us with a solid, non-conventional strategy that was custom tailored to our revenue goals and our customer interests. The free trial format was a great way to exponentially grow our list by 14% and stimulate purchasing. We will continue to use this tactic as an effective acquisition strategy and find these subscribers to be some of our most active buyers that spend an average of 50% more.

—Wendy Croissant, Email Marketing Manager

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