

Email, forget acquisition it's now purely a relationship tool.

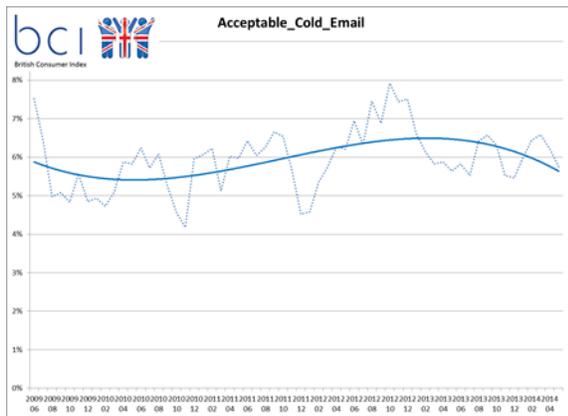
Email has now been around for a while as a marketing communication channel so can be considered as having achieved a degree of maturity. This maturity allows us to look at trend data and see how consumers perceive what they receive every day.

Many statistics exist showing the huge increase in the volume of emails the marketing industry send out suggesting a parallel with what happened when technology enabled direct mail personalisation many years ago. Back then the term 'junk mail' emerged now it is 'spam'.

What is emerging is a definite shift in how consumers want email to be used. Looking at the trend data on the acceptability of email a clear picture is emerging.

Cold Email

Taking 'Cold Email' or emails from an organisation with which the recipient had no existing relationship. The chart on the left shows the initial 'novelty' wearing off and being replaced with irritation from late 2012.



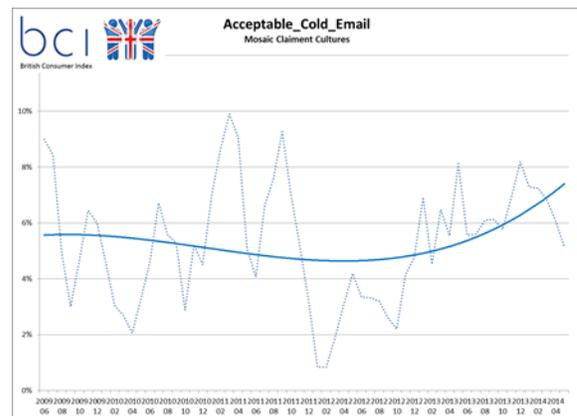
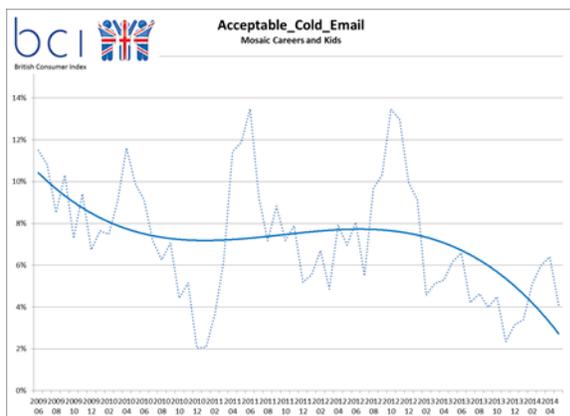
the left shows the initial 'novelty' wearing off and being replaced with irritation from late 2012.

One hypothesis is that this is due to a combination of the volume of emails and concerns about data privacy which causes people to question how an organisation obtained their email address.

Whatever the reason it is clear that marketers need to take note and adapt their strategy.

The flip side of acceptability is unacceptability, so, the effect of cold email can damage a brand. Common sense really but the data provides a useful warning sign.

As with any data the 'devil is in the detail'. Looking just at the overall picture provides a good indication of the overall trend but, different sections of the population will be at different positions on the curve. As an example the charts below contrast Mosaic Group; Careers and Kids with Claimant Cultures. The problem is that many organisations email prospect lists are devoid of any demographic information to enable this type of segmented targeting.



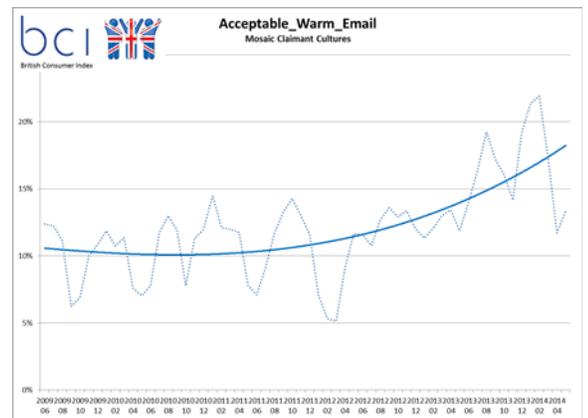
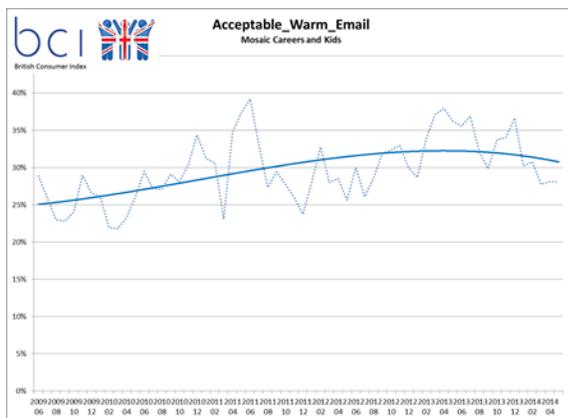
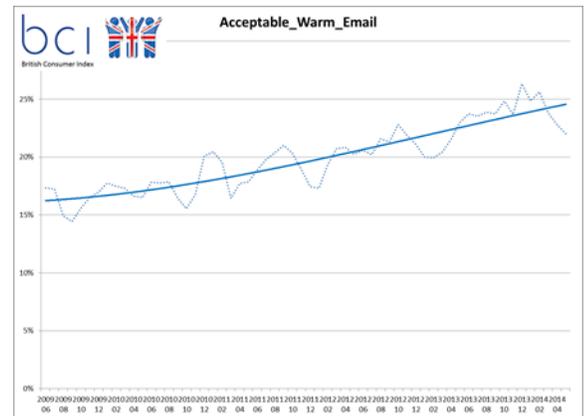
Warm Email

There is a distinct contrast between cold and warm email. Warm email is defined as emails from organisations which the recipient has a relationship, either as a customer or having opted in to receiving emails.

The chart (right) illustrates the continued rise in acceptability of email as a means of organisations keeping in touch with those people who are interested in hearing from them.

The message seems to be clear at an overall level but, here again, the detail reveals that there are significant differences between sections of the population.

There is a suggestion that the Mosaic 'Careers and Kids' group are becoming a little disenchanted with the channel. Perhaps as a function of better targeting leading to greater volume of purely 'sales' driven content.



By contrast the Mosaic 'Claimant Cultures' group are still trending up, seeming to just lag the 'Careers and Kids' group.

It is also interesting to look at email in comparison to other channels. The striking thing here is that it would appear that the trend for email is no different than the trend for Direct Mail. Here again 'Warm' is on the up and 'Cold' is on the way down.

Physical mail has, however, another category which email does not have, Unaddressed Mail (mail addressed to the Householder or Occupier). The interesting thing here is that this channel is showing a rising trend in acceptability. One explanation could be the lack of 'personalisation' means that the sender has not obtained 'personal' details and it does not have to be shredded before going into the recycling bin.

The same rising trend is also in evidence in other 'non-personal' channels such as the more broadcast channels such as TV, Radio and Outdoor.

Conclusion

The message seems to be clear; if you are addressing something to me then you had better have a good reason to do so. Otherwise use a Non-Personal channel and I will let you know if I want a 'dialogue' with you.

Cold email is not an acquisition channel anymore and warm email is a CRM channel. The alternative is not only a waste of time money an effort but also potentially damaging to the brand.

Just as marketers had to learn how to use the new 'personalisation' which technology enabled back in the 80's marketers have to learn how to use the current slew of new technology enabled channels in conjunction with the more established or 'old' channels.

Steve Abbott 2 June 2014

All data from The British Consumer Index, the only source of trend data on consumers attitudes to marketing channels.

See; www.bcindex.co.uk for details or contact:

Steve Abbott;

E; stevea@thebps.co.uk

T; 0203 286 1981