

Keep spam off your marketing menu

'Spamalat' is not only this year's hot ticket on Broadway, but a pretty good description of the problem with using e-mail for advertising.

Spending on e-mail ads is expected to hit nearly \$3 billion in 2005*, but spam as a percent of e-mail has exploded in the past two years: from 9% to 73%. That means 3 of every 4 e-mail messages are unwelcome, which is a lot of clutter to break through. But you can improve your odds by sending only to people who have 'opted in' to receive e-mail... trade magazine readers, for example.

On the average, 35% of opt-in readers will open an e-mail marketing message, while 7% to 9% of them

will click through to the advertiser's website. (Not bad, especially compared to the average sales letter response of 1.8%.)

Brewer's experience confirms those figures. For example, a client's ads in chemical and construction e-newsletters (for fairly specialized equipment) recently produced an open rate of 33%, with click-through rates of 8.0% and 6.6%. In a broader market, the response rate was lower, but the number of click-throughs doubled the reader service inquiries from recent print ads... at one-tenth the cost.

While we wouldn't suggest that e-mail ads have the same impact

as print ads (or purpose, in many cases), they can provide cost-effective exposure when aimed at the right audience. To use an analogy, e-mail ads are more like appetizers and print ads like entrées — and today's marketing menus should probably include both.

*Thanks to B2B magazine for the industry statistics, which were attributed to eMarketer (and in turn to other sources).

(The above first appeared in "Sudden Impact," a Design News e-newsletter, in June, 2005.)