

leader justin pearse

justin.pearse@nma.co.uk

Email as good as any marketing channel when done right

The digital media industry is understandably so obsessed with the next big thing – step forward the iPad – that the basic building blocks of digital marketing can often get overshadowed. This is why it was great to see such a strong field of entries in the email category when judging next month's **nma Effectiveness Awards** last week.

Email marketing is being used powerfully by brands both to drive new business and to strengthen customer loyalty. However, for a marketing discipline that has been around for so long, email marketing often still feels like it still has a long way to go.

A recent report from e-Dialog found 39% of people believing the marketing emails they receive are less relevant than a year ago. While many of the marketing emails I receive – and I sign up for absolutely everything – are often creatively impressive and well targeted, too many are so far from the mark for me that I instantly label them as spam.

Marketers are obsessed with understanding the rules of how to communicate with people

via social media, with good reason – our Analyst Speak column on page 7 finds usage rocketing across all demographics, with just 6% of people saying they'd switched social media sites because of too much advertising. But marketers need to extend their obsession to all marketing channels, even the less glamorous and new, such as email.

The same rules apply to email as those so commonly espoused today by the ranks of social media 'gurus', as research on page 18 highlights: be straightforward, be interesting and be humorous. These factors ranked as the most likely to make consumers share email content in the first Direct Marketing Association Digital Tracker Survey.

In many ways, email is as personal a medium as social media. Perhaps the main difference is consumers' openness to receiving overt brand communications via email. But brands need to ensure they focus as hard on remaining relevant and interesting in this decades-old media as they're scrabbling to do in today's shiny new channels.