

Marketing With Autoresponders

By: Chip Cummings, CMC



‘I thought this technology stuff was supposed to make my life simpler!’ As we sift through stacks of refi files, it’s easy to see how far we’ve come in relying upon everyday use of indispensable techno tools such as LP, DO, DU, ePASS, MOAI, e-MITS, etc., etc., etc..... As you ponder life after the current refi wave, it will be critical that you embrace and adapt new marketing tools to capture new customers more efficiently.

In these series of MOM articles, we have been looking at ways of creatively utilizing technology to increase sales and improve the bottom line. This month we look at an automatic e-mail robot system known as the “autoresponder”.

What Is It?

You have probably been subject to an autoresponder already! E-mail autoresponders are set up to instantly and automatically respond to an e-mail inquiry or message. If you have ever ordered anything on-line and gotten an instant confirmation or “thank you” e-mail back, then you know what I’m referring to. The catch is, that few people have realized how this technology can be twisted and used to effectively market to our clients!

Marketing Tactics

A recent study conducted by Sales and Marketing International concluded that 81% of all major sales are conducted after the fifth contact! That means once people stop beating down your door begging for a refi (and they will...), not only will you have to actually go out and get new business, you will have to talk to them more than once – maybe two or three times before they even remember who you are!

That’s where the autoresponder approach comes in. In my overall technology marketing strategy, the website is the central focus. I drive people there for applications, questions, qualifying, rates, events, newsletters, etc. The main idea for new prospects is to at least capture a name and e-mail address. From there, I can electronically follow up on a systematic basis, depending on what they have indicated an interest in.

For example, when someone inquires (either by phone or electronically) about interest rates or a construction loan, e-mail message #1 would go out immediately with the basic information, and thanking them for their inquiry. E-mail message number two might go out 1-2 days later as a follow up touting my 15 years experience and credentials, and inviting them to call with any questions.

Message #3 might follow 3-5 days later, with a free report designed around the topic of their inquiry. Message #4 could then follow in another 2-3 days with references and comments from satisfied customers, etc. I set up a sequence of specifically timed messages that will inform

(yet not annoy) and provide them with value and a taste of my customer service. I will get them subscribed to my free consumer e-zine, provide local home market research data, Realtor and affiliate referrals, and give them an overall sense of individual importance.

The autoresponder strategies I have developed for new prospects include as many as 12-15 messages spaced out over 12-18 months. They are used for customer inquiries on rates, loan programs (conv, FHA, VA, ARM's, etc.), construction programs, HELOC's and home equities, bankruptcies, and first-time homebuyers. I use the same approach after a personal phone call for marketing to real estate agents, attorneys, CPA's, doctors, HR departments, and more.

Autoresponder lists should be divided into three categories, one for referral partners, one for customer prospects and one for customers. Once a prospect becomes a customer (and they will by the 4th or 5th contact), then they go into the customer sequencer, where I continually communicate with them until one of three things happen – they tell me to stop (unsubscribe mechanism), they die, or I die!

It is important to remember NOT to use this form of marketing (or any type for that matter) to create SPAM! Spam is unsolicited e-mail, and spamming people is not only unprofessional, rude and annoying, it is also becoming illegal in some states, and will get your e-mail privileges revoked quickly. Only respond to people that have requested information, or with whom you have developed a business relationship.

Where To Go

To set this type of system up, you will need help from e-mail marketing specialists. I use a great company called aWeber, and they can be found at <http://www.aweber.com/?101599>. The costs are reasonable, and the investment is pennies based upon the return. There are several other companies who specialize in this form of marketing, including www.autoresponders.com, www.autobots.net, and www.automailer.com to name just a few. For more info or tips, email me at chipcummings@northwindfinancial.com and reference MOM.

I have developed many scripts and timing sequences for different approaches, but always remember that you need to continually test and evaluate the response rate. Since I know that most customers have to be contacted several times before they sign, and it takes a few knocks to get inside the door of a new industry “partner”, autoresponders not only allow me to do this “hands-free”, but also create a more professional and recognizable image.

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