

Simplifying Home Search, One Email at a Time

Real estate platform nurtures customer engagement
over the home-buying lifecycle

OVERVIEW

A fast-growing real estate platform has set out to make real estate transactions easy for everyone, by rethinking home-buying, the largest financial decision most people will make in their lifetime. The company brings together the tools and information anyone needs to get started when buying or selling a house, such as customizable searches, neighborhood and market data tools, and big picture news in an engaging blog. These online tools are backed by the company's status as a licensed brokerage in over thirty states, allowing the company to make it easy for buyers to take the next step. By leveraging a network of vetted and engaged agents across the country, the business can give a hands-on touch to help buyers to arrange home tours, give on-the-ground expertise, and negotiate and close transactions..

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AN EMAIL STRATEGY TAILORED TO THE NEEDS OF HOME BUYERS

Email always had been a part of the firm's marketing efforts. But the company knew that improving the performance of its email marketing program would be a key leverage point for extending the role the service plays in the home-buying lifecycle. The company's email marketing manager embarked on a strategic initiative of transforming the existing email efforts into a program that truly reflected the company's mission of making it easy for people to engage in the home-buying process.

A key aspect of the strategy he developed has been a shift towards lifecycle marketing that is driven by contextual cues rather than only simple segmentation and basic transactional messages. For example, is a user new to the site? What ZIP codes is she searching? How long has it been since he last interacted with a particular tool? Has she or he contacted the company's live customer support team? Activities like these—as well as other data in the company's systems—are used to define a series of email messages that are tailored specifically to individual user's needs. These emails have the broad goals of answering questions at the right time, encouraging increased site engagement, and nurturing the customer relationship towards engaging with a partnered real estate agent—and an eventual transaction.

THE RIGHT MESSAGE AT THE RIGHT TIME

In a customer lifecycle that is oriented towards high-value transactions that may well occur only once every few years, every email message matters. So, naturally, deliverability to the inbox is a must-have for the company. In the real estate market, timing is crucial, too. Losing out on customer engagement because a message about upcoming open houses was late and missed the key inbox window, for example, means missing out on a critical moment in the home-buying process—and losing out on the substantial lifetime value of that customer.

Beyond these key deliverability issues, the business approaches its email strategy with a strongly customer-driven perspective. Overwhelming a customer with irrelevant information or gratuitous offers is never a good idea, but in a long, multi-step lifecycle like home-buying, getting it right is especially important. As the email marketing manager commented, “high-value customer

BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS

- Support for a business driven by a long-term, high-value customer lifecycle
- Reliably high inbox delivery rates
- Cost-effective, pay-as-you-go pricing model
- Knowledgeable and responsive customer support

FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- On-demand, not batch, email delivery model
 - High-performing APIs for message generation
 - Real-time message and performance data via API to tie back to internal customer records
 - Integration with the marketing team's preferred marketing campaign management and automation tool
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relationships require playing the long game.” That means sending just the right message at just the right time. The batch- and list-based model of traditional email service providers simply doesn't work in this context, and the ability to generate individual messages on demand, in response to events in a customer's lifecycle, is crucial.

DELIVERING HIGH-VALUE EMAIL WITH SPARKPOST

SparkPost's industry-leading deliverability first drew the attention of the company's email marketing team. As the team's leader observed, “SparkPost's long history in email infrastructure, and its performance with well-known, high-volume senders gives SparkPost a lot of credibility.” Moreover, he was pleased with the way that performance was backed by the responsiveness and expertise of SparkPost's knowledgeable support team. “My experience with some other providers was that their technology was fine, but they had pretty weak support. That made it hard to know why a problem was occurring—and how to fix it.”

SparkPost's service and pricing model also meets the program's business needs. “SparkPost is very reasonably priced and works with the way we send email. With a traditional email service provider, we'd wind up paying for services and features we don't need. SparkPost's pay-as-you-go approach is great for a company like ours.”

Before the company implemented the SparkPost service, the company had relied upon an internally-developed platform that suffered from scalability challenges, offered limited user engagement metrics, and no automated bounce handling. “Sending email sometimes felt like a roll of the dice. We would have to hope messages would get through and then guess at the results.” Those issues are a thing of the past today. The company's team is thrilled with SparkPost's deliverability, knowledgeable support team, and reasonable price. He comments that “SparkPost is built to scale. It can work for any volume, from a small startup operation to a very a large company.”

About SparkPost

SparkPost is the cloud platform for sending API-driven transactional and marketing email from the world's number one email infrastructure provider. Our customers — including Pinterest, Twitter, CareerBuilder, LinkedIn, Salesforce, Zillow, and Comcast — send over 3 trillion messages a year, over 25% of the world's legitimate email. SparkPost provides the industry-leading performance, deliverability, flexibility, and analytics they need to drive customer engagement for their business.

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