MARIGOLD™

Striking a Balance Between Hi {First_Name} and *Creeping Customers Out*

Of all the personalization tactics gone wrong, the Target incident takes the (diaper) cake. Back in 2012, **Target's in-house statistician** ran a statistical analysis that pinpointed several products that when bought together, indicated that an individual was pregnant. When a teenager started buying those products together, Target responded by sending ads with coupons related to pregnancy to the girl's house – which enraged her clueless father who thought Target was encouraging this behavior. Eventually, he discovered the reason – his daughter really was pregnant. Target had unknowingly outed her with their advanced personalization tactics.

That's, of course, the most egregious event. Bad personalization happens every day – the email addressed to {First_Name} or Amazon suddenly sending you lots of dog treat recommendations when you were only pet-sitting for one week. It happens, but it doesn't need to because there is a right way and a wrong way to do personalization.

Read on to learn how you can put a personalization strategy in place to avoid those "creepy" marketer moments.

First, understand your audience

We **surveyed consumers** to find out their opinions on a few topics, including personalization, and here's what they said:

Advertisements that follow consumers across devices

57% of consumers thought this was creepy
43% of consumers were okay with it

Advertisements that relate to something consumers talked about in front of a smart device

61% of consumers found this to be terribly creepy
39% of consumers thought it was okay

An email reminder about a product that had been abandoned in a digital cart

31% of consumers thought this was creepy
69% of consumers actually appreciated the reminder

Recommendations from brands based on past purchases

19% of consumers were bothered by this
81% of consumers were happy to get these

Consumers seem to be okay with personalization up to a point – when it helps them, it's very welcome. When it crosses the line into online stalking, that's when consumers start seeing it as creepy. Don't be the creepy marketer.

Personalization that serves the consumer

Consumers welcome the personalization that makes their lives and their purchase process easier. Surfacing a product they may be interested in, based on their purchase history, or the zero-party data they've voluntarily shared with you is very welcome. Here are several ways to make personalization personal.

Strive for zero-party data, not third-party data

Third-party data is problematic in many ways and oftentimes, it's not at all accurate. The types of data points you'll want to collect are directly from the consumers, i.e., zero-party data. Zero-party data empowers marketers to build direct relationships with consumers and better personalize their marketing efforts, services, offers and product recommendations. To gather zero-party data, you simply ask your consumers questions about their preferences – something that **Marigold Grow** makes easy to create and scale.

In addition to zero-party data, you can gather context from website visits, browsing and activity history, point of sale (POS) data and more to build out a full profile. In Target's case, maybe a well-timed survey emailed to their pregnant customer would have avoided exposing the customer private situation

Use your data to uncover trends and create journeys

As you gather data points and preferences over time, a complete picture of your consumer will start to emerge. You can start to group key findings into campaigns and send emails personalized to the data they've shared with you. This is your time to show exactly how well you know them – and even better because they've shared this data directly with you, there's less of a chance you'll be seen as "creepy."

Use technology that enables you to insert dynamic, personalized content within your emails

Email is one of the best channels to reach consumers today and that's exactly where your personalized campaigns will play out the best.

Look for a technology that enables you to personalize emails, even in real-time. For instance, maybe you alert a retail customer to a sale on their favorite sweater but it sells out before the customer opens it. That's a frustrating experience for the consumer, a case of personalization failing. But if you have technology that can dynamically swap out content elements, like **Marigold's LiveContent by Liveclicker**, you can be sure that what consumers are seeing is up-to-date and accurate.

Personalization can be incredibly effective

Personalization – when done correctly – can be incredibly effective, encouraging engagement and retention from customers. In fact, **personalized emails have a 5.7 higher revenue** than non-personalized emails, so it's something absolutely every marketer should be striving for. If you're looking for a better way to personalize your emails – and to move away from "creepy" marketing tactics – **reach out to our Marigold team today.**