

Campaigner: A High-Powered Email Marketing Application

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Abstract: Campaigner (<https://www.campaigner.com/>) is a web-based, email marketing application that can be used to send targeted email messages and newsletters to patrons. Patron contact information can easily be managed within the system. With features such as branded templates, automated sending, and detailed reporting of email data such as open and click rates, Campaigner is a powerful tool for libraries of all types.

Keywords: library marketing, email marketing, direct marketing, newsletters, web applications

Introduction

Campaigner is a web-based, email marketing application that can be used to send branded email messages to specific groups of patrons. The Campaigner software allows for the automated sending of newsletters and emails and provides reporting for these messages such as open rates and click rates. Lists of contacts can be uploaded to the site or added manually on an individual basis. Designed for novice users and expert marketers, Campaigner is a powerful marketing tool for organizations such as libraries.

Features

Campaigner offers a rich suite of email marketing tools. At the heart of the software are email campaigns, which are targeted emails sent by an organization to its customers or patrons. The organization's staff (hereafter referred to as the users) are able to develop their own email templates, although Campaigner staff will also develop branded templates on behalf of the organization. New email campaigns can be created using the "Smart Email Builder" or the "Full Email Editor". The smart builder allows the user to choose a template and fill in the blanks with their own content. With minimal options and simple editing, the Smart builder is ideal for the novice marketer. The full editor allows users who are more familiar with HTML to exercise their full creativity. Templates can still be used, and there are many more options available with the advanced editor. When the user builds an email campaign, they are creating the HTML version

of the message, adding text and images as desired. Campaigner can automatically create a plain text version of the same email campaign if desired. Once a draft has been created, users are able to preview the email as it would be displayed on both desktop and mobile screens. A test version of the email can also be sent to the user so that they can confirm the email displays correctly. This final testing step is highly recommended, as occasionally there are some formatting and display issues (such as line spacing), which are not immediately obvious within the Campaigner software preview. Email campaigns can be sent immediately or scheduled to be sent automatically at a later date.

Campaigner is highly useful when it comes to managing contact information. Campaigner makes a very clear distinction between contacts and lists: contacts are individual patrons, whereas lists are customized groups of contacts that the user creates. Contacts can appear on multiple lists simultaneously. They can also be added and managed individually, or in groups. Campaigner excels when it comes to uploading large batches of contacts. While a pre-designed Excel template for contact information is available, it is not necessary to use this template in order to successfully upload contact lists. As long as the Excel file is organized with one piece of information per cell (such as first name in one cell, last name in another, and email in another) then Campaigner is able to identify and import the information successfully. Contacts can be sorted into lists, or more conveniently, uploaded directly to a pre-existing list. Patrons can be included on multiple lists, and therefore receive multiple email campaigns on different subjects. For example, one list might feature patrons who have opted-in to receive a monthly newsletter, and another list might be patrons who have taken part in a program at the library.

Contacts and lists can also be managed at any time within Campaigner. Campaigner has a search feature which makes it simple to find individual contacts in order to edit their information or remove them from a list. Patrons are able to unsubscribe from emails using the forms feature, which manages the user's interaction with email campaigns. At our library, this was this aspect of Campaigner which we found the most difficult to use. Managing the forms is somewhat technical, and we made use of Campaigner's technical support team in order to correctly design our forms. Users who unsubscribe to email campaigns will no longer receive the emails, but their contact information does not automatically disappear from the Campaigner account. The user can "clean" the contacts to then delete any contacts that have unsubscribed.

Campaigner provides the option of creating and using autoresponders. These are automatic email messages that are sent to contacts if they reply to an email message sent from Campaigner. Additionally, the software has the ability to track replies from email campaigns before forwarding the messages on to the user's email address.

After an email campaign has been sent, Campaigner automatically creates reports that update as patrons interact with the campaign. Email activity is measured by open rate, link clicks, replies, and patrons subscribing or unsubscribing to the mailing list. The reports also offer insight into the type of device used by patrons to view the campaign (mobile or desktop). Reports are easily manipulated to compare up to five campaigns at once, so the progress of a targeted marketing plan can be tracked over time.

Limitations

Campaigner is a robust email marketing tool. Though for some libraries, Campaigner might have more features than are necessary or wanted. While the smart editors and technical support chat feature make building campaigns easy, the software can only be used to its full potential when paired with technical and marketing know-how. There are several useful features in Campaigner that are not immediately or obviously accessible. For example, creating fields within a campaign that automatically fill in the patron's first name to greet them in a more personalized manner. There are several email features like this one, which are all but hidden to novice users and require the user to search the help index for instructions. Time and practice with the software is required to gain familiarity, and helpful webinars on specific aspects of the software are available for users.

As with all mass email campaigns, it is critical that the organization and users of Campaigner are aware of relevant federal anti-spam legislation. Rules for email marketing, including signing up, unsubscribing, and sending behavior must be followed when using any software of this type.

Pricing

Campaigner account pricing is dictated by contacts. The more contacts an organization has, the more they will pay for the software. For example, an organization with 1000 contacts or less would pay \$19.95 per month. An organization with 10,000 contacts would pay \$79.95 per month. All price tiers include 24/7 support and all of the features described above. More costly tiers include additional features such as extra media hosting and 3rd party advertising.

How We Use Campaigner

At the NorQuest College Library, we use Campaigner as a way to conduct outreach with distance learners. Distance, regional, and online students receive regular emails as part of a personal librarian program, which aims to encourage distance learners to use library services and resources. The personal librarian serves as a first point of contact, and sends the students regular emails highlighting essential information literacy skills and online resources. Distance learners also receive a monthly newsletter from the Tutorial Centre, which has a close working relationship with the library. The Tutorial Centre newsletters highlight study skills and invite students to book online appointments with tutors.

When the personal librarian program was launched in 2015, we were originally using Mailout as our email marketing application. When Mailout was acquired by Campaigner, our account was transitioned to the new service. Despite initial difficulties in importing our existing emails to Campaigner, we have generally found this tool to be very useful. The ability to track the exact number of students opening emails, clicking on links, and sending us replies has helped us to target the specific needs of distance learners and to be more responsive to their needs.

Conclusion

For libraries aiming to improve their email marketing results, Campaigner can be a formidably useful tool. The Campaigner web application makes it easy to create branded email campaigns, organize patron email addresses, and track results from various campaigns.

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