Seminar: Name to a face: using e-marketing to collect data and build relationships

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This session focused on how to use your website and e-mail campaigns to collect valuable data on attenders and potential attenders without the need for a ticketing system. The session explored some of the latest ideas for e-marketing to really get to know your customers, find out who they are, what they're interested in, which events/exhibitions they're attending, which they would like to attend and what they really think about your organisation.

The session was primarily aimed at those from non-ticketed organisations who wanted to learn how to capture data online.

Key issues to address in terms of 'Getting to know our attenders' are:
- Who are they?
- What are they interested in?
- Which events/exhibitions are they attending?
- Which would they like to attend?
- Getting feedback
- Using e-mail and websites to provide relevant content in exchange

These questions were addressed under three main areas, using extensive examples in each case to illustrate her answers:
Simple creative ideas to gradually build information
Websites designed for relationship marketing
Effective use of e-mail to build data

1. Simple creative ideas to gradually build information
There are some excellent samples of websites in the arts, which capture a lot of interest from attenders and potential attenders, but they don't often capture data about these 'hot prospect' customers.
　　The first part of this session looked at simple ideas that can all be implemented quickly. They won't provide detailed statistical analysis, but will help to gradually build contact lists and information about your visitors.

- Voucher systems
- Adding printable vouchers to your site, which can be collected in exchange for a free item (e.g. a visitors guide or a drink in the café). These can be used to track people who have visited the site and may then be convinced to attend. Tip: ask for a little more detail e.g. name and e-mail address to get consent to contact them again.
- An example of this creative idea can be found at www.localsecrets.com.

- Added-value initiatives

- Add extra features to your site which encourage people to visit it in-between visiting your venue.
- For example, the Natural History Museum currently offer the opportunity for visitors to construct their own calendar from a choice of images available online from their collection: www.nhm.ac.uk/shop/calendar.html.
- Again this simple idea could enable data to be collected when downloading or sending off for the feature that you have introduced.

- Questionnaires
- Online questionnaires can be used to give both quantitative and qualitative data on those hot prospects who visit your website, without the need for a mailing list upfront.
- Tip: offer an incentive for completion e.g. a prize draw.
- An example of a very simple online questionnaire can currently be found on the Museum of London site at www.museumoflondon.org.uk.

- Online communities
- A website should not just be about promoting your organisation, but can also offer services itself, adding value and broadening access for those who are unable to visit your venue regularly.
- These interactive discussion areas can be very popular and offer valuable qualitative information.
- A word of warning though, they need huge amounts of time to facilitate and keep active. Critical success factors include human input / facilitation (as with any offline discussions you would run), regularly seeking contributions, and a large subscriber base.
- An example of this kind of approach can be found on the Science Museum site at www.danacentre.org.uk .

- Online planning of visits
- The Tate website has introduced an exciting new initiative where visitors to the site can plan their tour of the museum prior to their actual visit and then print off their personalised map.
- The Tate will then be able to track which areas are most popular, how many people then attend and use their maps and get contact details when people sign up to use the service for the first time.
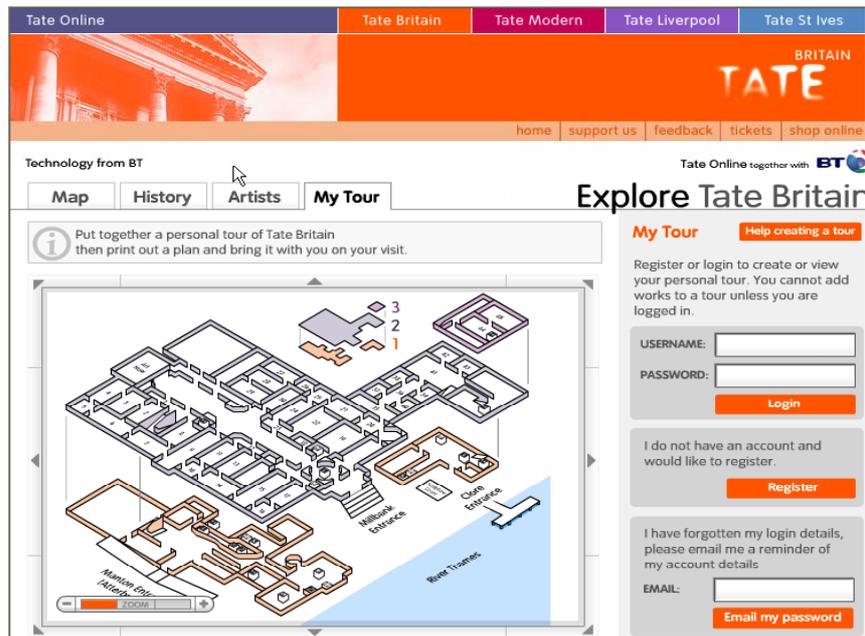
All of the above ideas are simple, creative campaigns designed to add-value and build data.   The suggestion is not to copy these ideas, but to use them to spark off your own creative ideas.

2. Websites designed for relationship marketing

The next step is to build a site that is database driven. These sites have the benefit of being very straightforward to use and update with content management systems that present forms for us to drop in text and they then do the rest of the work for us automatically.

Examples of this approach include:

The Lowry at http://thelowry.com/ – here incentives are offered to encourage customers to register with their website.

V & A at www.vam.ac.uk – customers are encouraged to subscribe to their e-mail bulletin and a sample is given to demonstrate the quality of what you can expect. They have kept the sign up very simple, asking for a name and an e-mail address.

The National Gallery at www.nationalgallery.co.uk – here information is collected on what the customer is interested in.

The contact details are stored in the website and can then be used to send relevant mailings. Don't forget to ask for permission to contact them again and get the correct data protection opt-in (for more information on data protection, please see www.ticketing.org.uk).

The next step is to become more interactive. Examples of this approach are:

AMA – new developments of the AMA website will shortly offer visitors the option to select which parts of the site they are most interested in to personalise their home page.
BBC at www.bbc.co.uk – this site also offers the opportunity to personalise your home page e.g. selecting to view local weather and news.

This is a useful method of aiding navigation since research has shown that visitors need to find what they want in 2 to 3 clicks before they give up. This becomes increasingly important as the site gets bigger. It also enables you to track which areas of the site people are most interested in and to build a database of visitor preferences, which can then be used to send them targeted mailings.

Taking this idea a step further, arts organisations could adopt the level of interaction offered by sites such as www.lovefilm.com. Here visitors sign up to a monthly payment for DVD home delivery, selecting a list of films they would like to see. The site has a real community feel with people encouraged to provide ratings, reviews, and recommendations.

Relevant recommendations are also automatically produced by looking at the film ratings you have entered, identifying people with similar ratings, seeing what else they've seen and then suggesting you might like those films as well. This clearly would need a large number of exhibitions for it to work, but think about how the idea of automatic recommendations could be adapted – you might not want to suggest people 'rate' artists work, telling you which they are most interested in might be a better way of tracking preferences!

www.amazon.co.uk uses a similar approach adding wish lists and data of previous purchases to select recommendations pages based on 'people like you.'

These database driven sites are not necessarily expensive. The first stage of the AMA's site cost about seven thousand pounds. Compared to the cost of print, this is very affordable. Database driven sites will become more valuable over time as more information is gathered about each visitor – e-mail, name, preferences, wish lists, recommendations, things that interest them etc.

3. Effective use of e-mail to build data
Examples of these were:
- The National Gallery's e-poster:
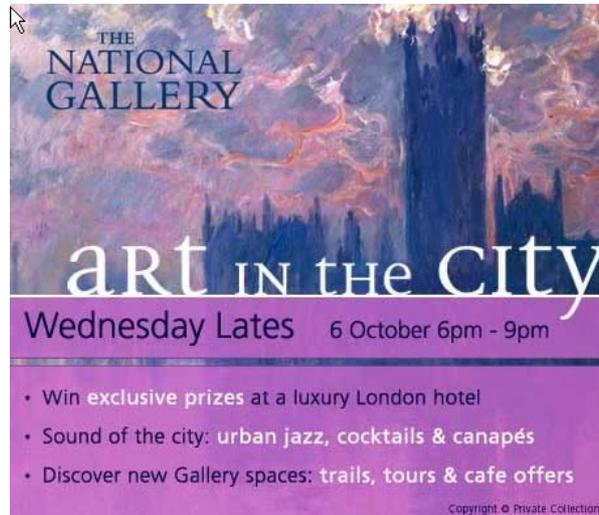
- E-mail bulletins from the AMA, which use dark text on a white background to ensure readability. (See Pump Up Your Website report for further information on web and e-mail accessibility).
- White Company e-mails which have a familiar feel to their website by using the same buttons across the top as links to pages of their site, good incentives to clickthrough and to forward on.

All the examples shown were created in html which offers museums and galleries great opportunities to show visually what they are trying to communicate.

E-mail marketing software
Careful research in this area is important to ensure that you get the right software for your organisation. The following checklist should be used when getting software that can vary considerably in cost and functionality.

- Ability to design the content simply in html with little need for any training
- Automatically detecting if the computer you send it to needs to see plain text or html versions and serving them the correct one
- Ability to link to specialist web pages, surveys, other websites
- Ability to segment data
- Ability to create dynamic content in e-mail e.g. show different offers to different people depending on how they are coded
- Ability to be highly personalised
- Inbox management (e.g. removing from the list those with incorrect e-mail addresses, sending replies to appropriate addresses e.g. 'education' in

reply title sent to education manager, deleting out of office and bounce backs etc.)
- Ability to import data from your website or ticketing database into this new e-mail database, check carefully how this will be managed
- Ability to track responses – this is crucial for checking success of e-mail campaigns. Statistics from the USA indicate between 35 – 65% are opened. The AMA gets figures of between 55 – 60%.   You can also track the links that are most popular, how many people have clicked through to the site etc.

The following companies provide software:
- Powershot: http://powershot.colony101.uk.com
- Ascent: http://ascenttechnology.asp
- Group Mail Pro: http://www.infacia.com/gm.asp
- Patron Mail: http://www.patrontechnology.com
- Cheetah Mail: http://www.cheetahmail.com/
- KB Group: http://kbgroupuk.com/emailsuite.htm

They are not necessarily companies, which I can recommend, because I haven't used them all, but should prove a good start to your research.

Benchmark your website against other arts organisations:
It's not just e-mail where you can track success. A report on the effectiveness of arts organisations e-marketing activity (web and e-mail) can be found on the AMA website at: www.a-m-a.uk/bench.asp and will enable you to consider questions like:
- How effective are you at attracting visitors to your site?
- How effective are you at keeping visitors on your site?
- How effective are you at bringing visitors back?
- How effective are you at converting visitors?
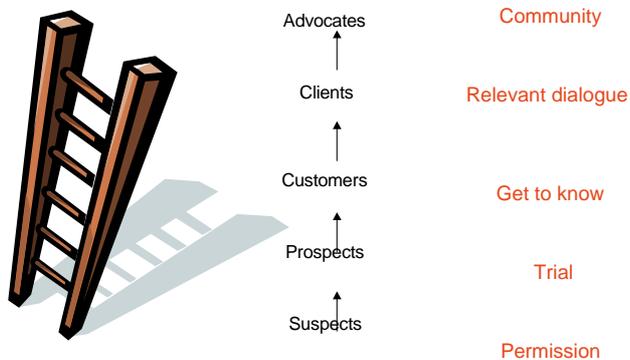- What is the return on your investment?

The report shows benchmarks, or typical ranges of responses, for arts organisations of all art forms across the UK. The AMA are now developing the facility for members to enter their own organisations data online to automatically compare your results to others and filter against e.g. same art form, geographic area, size of company etc.

Conclusions
Research has shown visitors want to know more when they've seen your brochure or advertising. Effective websites and e-mail campaigns therefore offer customers something that's not available elsewhere.

It's essential to consider how the different mediums work alongside one another to support your overall marketing campaign.

E-marketing is relevant to each stage of the loyalty ladder:

Advocates	Community
Clients	Relevant dialogue
Customers	Get to know
Prospects	Trial
Suspects	Permission

- It can enable you to get to know your *suspects,* people who visit the site, but you don't know much about them. The critical issue here is to get their permission to contact them again.
- It offers a range of techniques that can be offered to *prospects* to encourage them to try things out.
- It enables you to get to know *customers* preferences so that contact with them can be personalised.
- It offers the opportunity to have relevant dialogue with *clients.*
- And finally it means that *advocates* can contribute to your marketing activity by recommending you to other people.

Relevant reports:
Word of mouse: (practical e-marketing)
        www.a-m-a.co.uk/publications_category.asp?id=5

Pump up your Website:
        www.a-m-a.co.uk/publications_category.asp?id=5

Data protection guidance available at www.ticketing.org.uk