

WARNER BREAKS

Warner homes in on 'silver surfers'

Brand Warner Breaks
Client Bourne Leisure Group
Brief To increase delivery rates and revenue from e-marketing, and to grow database
Target Holidaymakers aged 50+
Budget Undisclosed
Agencies RedEye and Sonaa

Challenge
 Older consumers have traditionally been seen as a difficult group to target online. However, in the past twelve months, internet use by people over 55, the so-called 'silver surfers', has increased by 11 per cent, according to online measurement service Hitwise (see box below). This group now makes up almost 16 per cent of the UK's online population, and is still growing.

To take advantage of this growth area, Warner Breaks, part of the Bourne Leisure Group which also runs Butlins, Haven and British Holiday, decided to revamp its email marketing. The company, which offers holidays for the over 50s, already produced an email newsletter in-house, but this was proving ineffective, with an inconsistent design and high rates of blockage by internet service providers (ISPs). "E-marketing has moved on so much recently and the tool we were using was very basic," says Matthew Finch, online sales and marketing manager at Warner Breaks. "This meant that we weren't bringing in significant revenue via email."

Warner also needed to increase its email database, as most of its contacts had not provided the company with their email details.

Strategy
 In February, Warner appointed RedEye (then E-RM) to manage its email campaigns and agency Sonaa to design the creative. The



company was also keen to raise its investment in other digital channels and acquire new customers through lists and third party channels.

Execution
 New email templates were designed, and these had a consistent, bright theme using bold lines and colours. RedEye also worked closely with ISPs to help improve delivery rates to customers' inboxes.

Who are the silver surfers?

- 'Silver surfers' is the term for internet users aged over 55.
- Users in this age group account for 16 per cent of all those online and this percentage is growing.
- The most popular UK websites for people aged 55+ mirror those of the rest of the population. Google tops the list, closely followed by MSN Hotmail and eBay.
- Travel and cruise websites attract the largest percentage of silver surfers. In May this year, 38 per cent of all visits to cruise websites were from visitors in this category.
- The second most popular category for this group is lifestyle and families, which includes websites such as Ancestry.co.uk.

Source: Hitwise

● **Data collection:** Warner collected email data from its existing customers for which it only had offline data. This was done through its hotels, resorts and call centres.
 ● **Other digital channels:** Warner increased its spend on search, online banner and affiliate advertising. The company uses four affiliate networks: Affiliate Sales, Deal Group Media, Paid on Results and Affilinet.

Results
 Since Warner began working on the new programme, it has seen a 2,000 per cent return on investment. Online bookings, which previously accounted for around 11 per cent of business, are now worth 20 per cent.

About a fifth of these online bookings comes directly from email marketing, with a trigger effect for bookings through other channels. Before, only around 1-2 per cent of bookings came through email.

Open rates have also increased from around 30 per cent to an average of 48 per cent with a 60 per cent click-through rate. In targeted drives, the open rate can be up to 60 per cent with a five per cent direct conversion to sale.

Warner's customer email database has also grown. Initially, only around 90,000 customers were contactable by email but now Warner has 260,000 verified email addresses consisting of a mixture of new and existing customers.

"Each month is beating the last in terms of revenue," says Finch. "And that will increase as long as our email database continues to grow. It has far exceeded my expectations."

Claire Foss

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