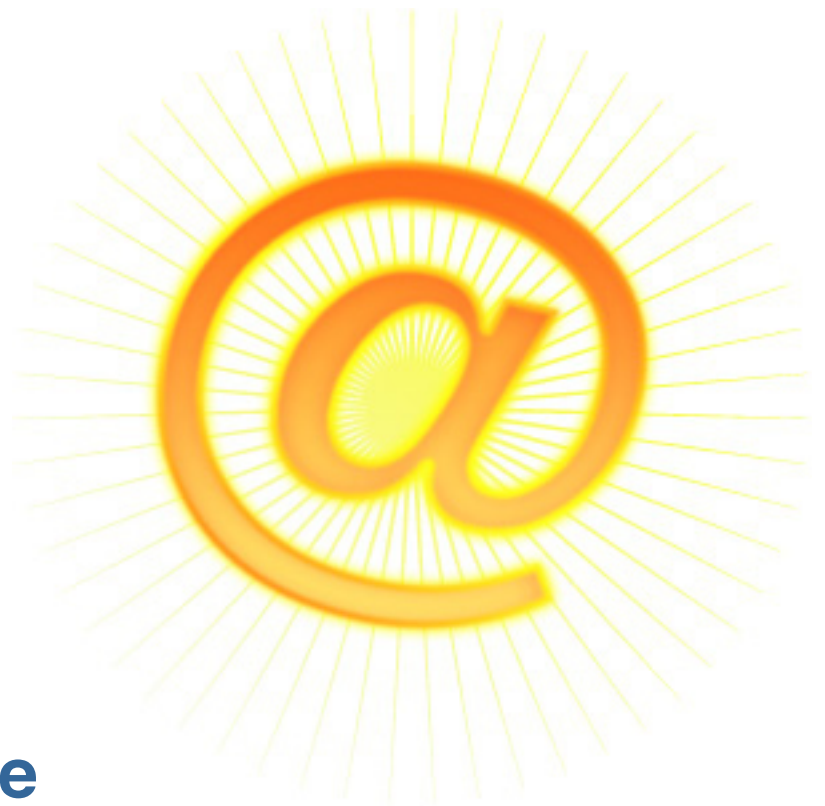


The Hotter Than Ever Guide to Sizzling Summer Marketing





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While summer can be a booming time for business if you're selling ice cream or fireworks, it can be a slow season for many other types of businesses. With people going away on vacations or simply taking time off, many businesses feel the challenges of slower activity and sales. But, just because lots of people are taking vacations, it doesn't mean your business has to go on vacation, too! Summer is an excellent time to solidify existing customer relationships, and take advantage of a slower pace to execute tried-and-true marketing techniques with **VerticalResponse**. Take a dip in this pool of ideas to boost your business for sizzling summer success.

1. Generate Word of Mouth Marketing and Go Viral

Chances are your happiest customers are the best and most affordable marketing resource you have. People who are already fanatical about your company's products or services will be the first to write a review on **Yelp**, post to **Facebook**, or tweet on **Twitter** about the quality of service they receive. Here are a few ideas to get your best customers talking more about you:

- 1. Ask Customers to Spread the Word:** It's OK to ask your most satisfied customers to tell their friends, colleagues, or family members about your business. Consider offering them exclusive services or benefits that they can brag about to their friends. Try a VIP email newsletter that puts customers "In the Know" about new products & features, sales, or promotions before anyone else. Then add a Forward-to-a-Friend link to every email you send that allows them to forward the message to a friend. Soon, their friends will want to get in on the action, your VIP email mailing list will grow, and so will your business.
- 2. Give Them Something to Talk About:** As the celebs say, any publicity is good publicity – right? Well, maybe not. But if you want to get people talking, give them something good to talk about! **Social media** is a great way to do this:
 - ✓ Randomly reward your fans and followers who are engaged with your social media program by giving away a free item or service on Facebook or Twitter.

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- ✓ Use **social sharing** to get your emails out to a larger audience – that way more people can talk about your business.
 - ✓ Run an **online community** to get your customers active and engaged with your business.
 - ✓ Poll your audience on a hot-topic to spark interesting conversions in your online community.
3. **Make It Easy:** If you're selling products by mail or in stores, consider including something memorable or noteworthy in the box or bag. It can be silly, inspirational, or whimsical, but it should remind them of who you are and what you have to offer. Better yet, include two items and ask them to give one to a friend.
 4. **Make Your Network Work for You:** Consider asking any business partners, vendors, and/or friends to help you get the word out. This can be as simple as placing postcards in the shop next door or asking a local hotel concierge to send people your way. Give them a free discount or service as a thank you.
 5. **Start an Affiliate Program:** Incentivize and compensate your customers who pass on referrals! Check out our **Affiliate Program** for examples.

2. Offer Financial Incentives

1. Consider summer promotions If summer tends to be a slow time for your business, consider promotions to generate a higher volume of sales activity.
 - ✓ **Straight Discount:** Test the market by offering a 10% discount on certain services in June, or discount a few dollars off your slower selling products. You can always extend the offer if the promotion is working, and if it's not yielding results, you've only risked one month.
 - ✓ **Package Deals:** Give customers a discount if they book more than one service or item.

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- ✓ **Shipping Deals:** If you're selling items online, increase your average order size by offering free shipping for orders over \$100, or a free shipping upgrade such as overnight delivery for the price of 3-day.
- 2. **Create a 'Buy One Get One' Offer:** This promotional tactic probably dates back to the dark ages, so you know the drill. Buy one drink, get one free or at a discount, etc. Note: This is one of our most successful promotional methods at VerticalResponse.
- 3. **Give a Gift with Purchase or Referral:** Almost every woman in America has spent \$25 in order to get the cute summer bag or cosmetics kit at the department store make-up counter. But giving a gift with purchase is not just for make-up. Think about what you could offer your customers for free when they buy your product or service — a lesson in something, your own list of tips, a booklet of recipes with wine club shipments, an upgrade in service level. And remember gift certificates or gift cards!

Here's a secret the big retailers have known for years - Gift certificates and gift cards work really well because:

- It gets the recipient in the store where they'll possibly spend more than the allotted gift card limit.
- They're not always redeemed, thus costing you nothing.
- This can also help your word of mouth marketing efforts.

Here are a few newer takes on this old technique:

- Spend \$200 online or in the store and get a \$25 gift card.
- Buy a \$100 gift card and get a \$10 gift card for yourself or to give to someone else.

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3. Encourage Customer Loyalty and Repeat Business

It's common knowledge that it costs more to get a new customer than to keep an existing one. So start rewarding your customers for their loyalty to keep them coming back (if you aren't already). Here are a few simple ideas to get you started:

1. **Frequent Customer Cards:** Reward repeat customers with free services after x amount of dollars are spent.
2. **Avoid the 'One and Done':** Encourage first time customers to come back by **sending them an email** offering them a discount off their next service or meal. You'll create another opportunity to provide them with a memorable experience and to build affinity with your business. Use an offer code or include a coupon in an email following their first service so that you can calculate the program's return on investment.
3. **Launch a Customer Win-Back Campaign:** Send an email telling customers who haven't purchased in a while that you miss them and want them back. Try these ideas:
 - ✓ **Send Lapsed Customers a Survey:** Find out why they've taken their business elsewhere. Was it a service or price issue? Is there something you can do to win them back? Just asking the question shows that you care and you'll probably learn something new about your business in the process. See how **VerticalResponse surveys** can help you.
 - ✓ **Offer an Incentive to Come Back:** **Send them an email** or postcard and offer them a discount off a product or service. It might be just the reminder that your customer needs to come back. Create an alert in your survey if someone answers a question reflecting a poor service experience. If they return, work extra hard to change their mind. The difference now is you know why they left in the first place.
4. **Get Personal:** This summer, try to improve your service level through personalization. Here are a few suggestions:
 - ✓ **Get to Know Your Frequent Customers:** Try to remember their first name when they walk in the door. Bonus: Use their name in your emails,

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too! You can now easily **test custom merge fields** in your email for better personalization.

- ✓ **Thank Your Customers for Their Business:** This can be anything from a handwritten note or phone call, to a personalized email or **postcard**. Thanking your customers is just another opportunity to remind them that you value their business.
- ✓ **Ask for feedback:** Create an **online survey** that automatically gets sent out to someone who buys something from you or submits a service request. Ask about the sales or service experience, the quality of the product, etc. You might uncover some opportunities to create memorable experiences for your customers in the future.



Get ready for the holidays! It may sound crazy, but it is never too early to start gearing up for the holidays. Here are a few ways to prepare for the madness in advance:

1. Launch a “Christmas in July” program to get people to start their holiday shopping! They can spread out their spending to avoid the January credit crunch.
2. Start thinking about what merchandise or services you can offer and how to market them. **Create your emails** in your VerticalResponse account now so you’ll be set for the busy holiday season come this fall.
3. If you typically purchase and send gifts to your clients at the holidays, why not shop for deals now? If you wait until October, you’ll be paying top dollar. Segment your list today into 3 categories; VIP customers, infrequent customers, and win-backs. Then get your gift purchased and set aside based on the customer. When the holiday rush hits, you’ve got time to focus on capturing new business and communicating your message.

Whatever your products or services this summer, we trust a few of these ideas will help you heat up your revenue.

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