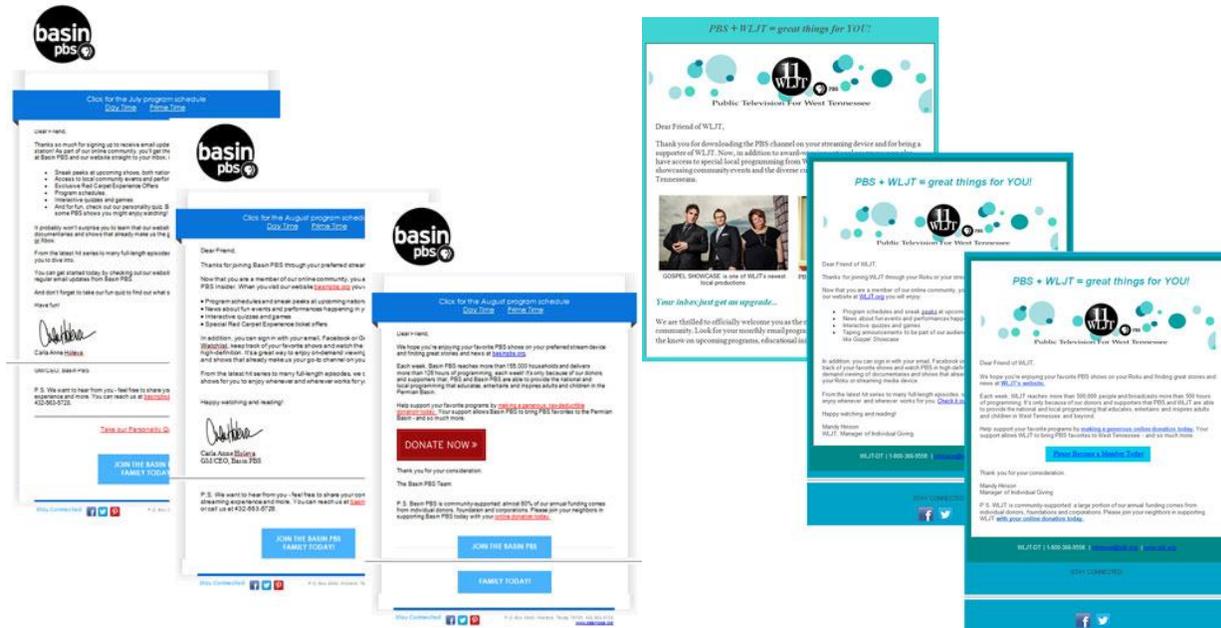




Case Study | September 2015

Building Warm Email Prospects

Basin PBS and WLJT Email Welcome Series



Overview

PBS worked with member stations, [Basin PBS](#) of Midland, Texas and [WLJT](#) of West Tennessee, to launch their first targeted welcome email campaign to subscribers downloaded from the PBS Prospect Portal¹. Other than the cobranded newsletters from PBS, this is the first (and only) email communication these subscribers have received from their local station.

The stations adopted the messaging template provided by PBS Digital and Development Services², and personalized the communication to increase relevance locally. Over a three-week period, Basin PBS and WLJT sent three emails to individuals who opted in to receive local station communications. Both stations saw open rates at or above (upwards of 26%) public television digital marketing and fundraising

¹ PBS collects and shares over-the-top (OTT) devices, newsletter sign ups, site registrations, and quizzes.

²The [2015 Digital Engagement & Cultivation Guide](#) provides stations with best practices, success stories and templates to engage supporters.

benchmarks³, and number of unsubscribes below industry averages, which is a positive indication to engagement opportunities and potentially long-term value of the names.

Situation Analysis

First impressions matter, so welcoming new supporters online is an important step to building a lasting relationship. Regardless if they are station members or prospects, how they are engaged at the beginning will impact the individual's overall performance and lifetime value. In fact, subscribers who receive welcome emails show a 33% increase in long-term brand engagement⁴.

However, many organizations don't introduce new subscribers to their online community. Approximately two-thirds of stations don't access the names available to them through the Prospect Portal⁵. These are missed opportunities to welcome subscribers online, engage them in the organization's work, and convert them to donors.

Objective

The goal of the welcome series was to showcase how two smaller stations with limited resources can adopt email marketing best practices to more effectively communicate, cultivate, and overtime, convert prospects to donors from the Prospect Portal. Specifically, the goal of the welcome series campaign was to connect new station emails to their local PBS stations and the value of their work. And from that point, establish regular ongoing email communication with these prospects by leveraging existing station email communications, e.g. program guides, newsletters, appeals, etc. The introductory email series also helped ease subscribers from an ongoing PBS communication pathway to a station communication pathway. Such a transition seeks to further educate subscribers on the impact of their local station and also secure support for their work through ongoing cultivation and engagement efforts.

Strategy

The email marketing strategy was similar for both stations. Basin PBS and WLJT had targeted lists of approximately 3,000 subscribers pulled from the Prospect Portal regardless if the prospects were active or not. Each station then sent out three emails from messaging copy provided by PBS over the course of

³ The [2015 Public Television Digital Marketing & Fundraising Benchmarks](#) represent \$16MM in revenue the largest number of stations on a single eCRM.

⁴ Emma email marketing blog, [How to create an effective email welcome series.](#)

⁵ In 2014, the Prospect Portal names equated to 2.4MM emails PBS delivered to stations.

three weeks (one email per week). Until the audience was properly welcomed, all other communication was suppressed. The only difference was customized messaging to reflect individual station offerings.

Results

Successful email marketing programs are never measured by individual messages, but by performance of emails over a period of time. Developing impactful email marketing strategies begin with how stations welcome new constituents and engage them relevant to their interests and desire to communicate with your station online.

Basin PBS and WLJT experienced open rates at or above (upwards of 26%) public television digital marketing and fundraising benchmarks, and an unsubscribe rate below the industry average of 2%, which is a positive indication to the long-term value of the names to stations.

Basin PBS

Email Number	Open %	Click %	Sent	Opened	Clicked	Unsubscribes
Email #1	22.0%	1.39%	3306	699	46	67
Email #2	19.0%	1%	3237	592	32	33
Email #3	15.0%	.09%	2303	463	20	31

WLJT

Email Series	Open %	Click %	Sent	Opened	Clicked	Unsubscribes
Email #1	26.1%	.07%	3692	721	28	35
Email #2	12.5%	.04%	3655	341	16	13
Email #3	15.3%	.01%	3640	414	5	18

[2014 PBS Benchmark Report](#)

Email open rate benchmark – 17%

Conclusion

Acquisition sources are becoming less reliable as audiences continue to make the transition from broadcast to digital streaming. Adopting email marketing strategies offer an immense opportunity for stations, allowing them to build, engage, and convert prospects to donors in a cheaper more targeted way.

Following the launch of the welcome series, Basin PBS and WLJT plan to further engage their audiences by adding them to their regular email newsletters/updates, as well as, making donation asks. This includes building out constituent profiles to send more targeted communication, which can be done through a variety of means, e.g. surveys, quizzes, appends, overlays, and web interactions.

By collecting profile data, member stations can more effectively engage audiences with programs, content, and email communication. And communicating early to new subscribers and targeting messaging by attributes attained at time of registration is an effective start to building a lasting relationship with supporters. To get started today:

- Digest the [Digital Fundraising Donor Engagement & Cultivation Guide](#)
- Download station emails from the Prospect Portal⁶.
- Adopt digital marketing strategies like a welcome series, or triggered emails, into the current marketing plan.
- Follow up with continued engagement pieces like PBS polls and surveys to build out member profiles and better target future communications.
- Regularly pull new prospects from Prospect Portal – every other week – to incorporate in segmented email communications for more targeted fundraising campaigns.

For questions or feedback, please contact [Alyson Trevino](#), Creative Director, Basin PBS; [Mandy Hinson](#), Manager of Individual Giving, WLJT; [Keith Brengle](#) Director, PBS Digital; or [Chas Offutt](#), Director, Development Services, Digital.

⁶ Email addresses are loaded into a secure station cloud-based portal (Prospect Portal). Email pbsi_stationservices@pbs.org to request login credentials.

