

Case Study



"What impressed me most was they made a real effort to understand our business and our customers."

Shannon Ambrose,
Marketing Coordinator

AT A GLANCE

Customer Name:

Farm Boy Inc.

Business Type:

Specialty grocer

Locations:

Four stores in Ottawa;
one in Cornwall, Ontario

Number of Employees:

500

Business Need:

- Personalized, graphically appealing email newsletter with weekly specials, e-coupons, recipes and more
- 93% subscriber approval
- 45% click-through rate to web site

Results:

- Elevated perceptions in customer service
- Over 45% click-through rate
- Enhanced perspectives on client interests
- Automated list management

As a niche player in a fiercely competitive industry, Farm Boy Inc. prides itself on finding innovative ways to connect with its customers. While some of its rivals in the Eastern Ontario retail grocery trade are forced to resort to loss-leader pricing to lure shoppers to their stores, Farm Boy nurtures customer loyalty through personal service, quality private-label products and community involvement. "There will always be a certain percentage of people who only care whether tomatoes are on sale this week," says Shannon Ambrose, marketing coordinator for Farm Boy. "But first and foremost we try to appeal to customers in ways where we can add more value."

A prime example of that approach is Farm Boy's use of e-marketing to reach out to consumers. In early 2002, Ambrose launched a weekly email newsletter as an experiment in customer communications. "It wasn't very fancy," Ambrose admits. "I just typed out a plain-text email every week, primarily to let regular customers know about our weekly specials." Over the following year, 800 shoppers visited the Farm Boy web site and signed up for the newsletter - proof, Ambrose felt, that the concept was worth taking to the next level. "Overall the response was positive, but we were missing a lot of things. For example, it was hard to measure the results. We really had no way of knowing who was reading it and what they wanted to read."

Although Ambrose had a general idea of the direction she wanted to go, she wasn't sure how to get there. Then, in February 2003, she contacted cardcommunications after reading about the company in Marketing Magazine. "What impressed me most was they made a real effort

to understand our business and our customers - not just the email campaign and our web site but all aspects of our marketing, and how we could achieve as much as possible within our budget for web marketing."

The new, enhanced e-bulletin debuted in April 2003, featuring strong, visually appealing graphics, a weekly quiz, a print-and-save e-coupon, and a recipe of the week intended to showcase Farm Boy's private label products. Ninety-three percent of the customers who responded to a poll in the first issue said they preferred it over the previous text-only bulletin.

Just as important from Ambrose's perspective is the data she's now collecting about Farm Boy's customers - information such as how many subscribers opened the newsletter, how many clicked through to the Farm Boy website for more information, and what sort of information they would like to receive in future. As well as creating the weekly newsletter, cardcommunications handles its distribution every Sunday morning and manages the list of subscribers, automating functions that Ambrose used to have to perform manually.

"I'm really impressed with cardcommunications," Ambrose says. "They are very responsive and they're constantly looking at ways we can improve what we're doing. It's a good relationship."

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Email: info@cardcommunications.com

Call: 613.592.7243

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