

INTERNET

Saks uses email to say sorry, promote free shipping and site relaunch

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By RACHEL LAMB

Department store chain Saks Fifth Avenue apologized for Web site malfunctions with an email offering free shipping and plugging the revamped site.



Because of some site tweaking, Saks.com had not been up to performance standards over the past few days. To make up for it, the retailer is offering free shipping through April 13.

“With e-retail, there’s always needs to be a balance between emotional emails, which are profitable, and informational emails, which are more interesting and sell less,” said Nick Heys, CEO of EmailVision, New York. “Luxury retailers are always trying to find the balance between community-building information and outright sales promotions.

“It’s an interesting situation because Saks is turning what could be perceived into a negative situation into a positive situation, and this kind of opportunity is always very profitable,” he said.

Saks could not respond by press deadline. Mr. Heys is not affiliated with the brand but agreed to comment as a third-party expert.

Saks, not sucks

Saks' email depicts the site changes and describes the free shipping offer.



Saks email

The retailer's new site includes bigger images, more comprehensive search options and the ability to sort by new arrivals and top-rated products.

Saks has included a message that says it apologizes for the delay in Saks.com's functionality over the past few days.

If consumers type the promotional code "Sorry" at checkout, they get free shipping on every order for a week.

Users can click through the email to get to the homepage of Saks.com, where they can see the new changes first-hand.

For instance, the search function is so precise that consumers can type in something as specific as "size four cocktail dress" and receive the correct results.

Email clicks

Saks' email is definitely a good option, but Mr. Heys recommends using split tests to see which kind of option is the best for a specific brand.

Even though luxury retailers have the same audience, their customers still vary and could respond to different things.

Seemingly insignificant things such as color, type of text, price discounts and free shipping resonate with different kinds of audiences.

Using tests can help a brand or retailer decipher which email format and types of offers work the best with their particular customers.

By doing this, the brand can also engage consumers in cross- and upsell opportunities, especially if the consumer is new to email messages.

Customer voice could be integrated into emails to cement brand achievement.

"Storytelling is a best practice," Mr. Heys said. "Especially getting customers to tell stories around brand experience which leads to a lot higher level of engagement with the customer."

“They’ve done a great job in providing a solid base of people on Facebook and it looks like they’ve got some real stories there,” he said. “Saks should promote these in the email campaigns or they could mix and match them with promotional offers.

“This will add more variety and more spice and will give them a more authentic image and will contribute to build a community.”

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