CASE STUDY

How Spartan used social sharing to grow their customer base

HIGHLIGHTS

28%

Data Axle developed a new acquisition campaign that generated a 28% higher open rate than standard emails.

7%

The acquisition campaign achieved a 7% higher average order value.

353%

With a single campaign, Spartan generated a 353% return on investment.

4.5x

The new customers Spartan accquired spent 4.5 times more than it cost to acquire them.

Spartan: a race to the top

Founded in 2010 by adventure racer Joe De Sena, Spartan, the world's largest obstacle race and endurance brand pushes the bodies and minds of competitors to the limit across miles of unforgiving terrain while they conquer signature obstacles such as the Spear Throw, Bucket Brigade and Barbed Wire Crawl. The first Spartan event brought more than 500 competitors to the woods of Burlington, VT, near the storied farm where the concept was born. An accomplished endurance athlete and entrepreneur, De Sena created the brand to motivate others to get fit and learn how to overcome obstacles both on and off the race course.

Like their ancient warrior namesake, the Spartan team overcame significant obstacles in those early days; obstacle course racing was still in its infancy and was not established as a competitive sport, which meant Spartan had to build awareness of not only the brand, but an entire industry. But through a fiercely dedicated staff, a community of passionate athletes and a boost from financial investors, Spartan grew into one of the top obstacle course races by 2013.

Today, Spartan holds more than 200 races in 30 counties and offers 5 different race types to appeal to a wide range of athletes. They also have a retail store with apparel and workout gear, training programs and a lifestyle website which have drawn large blue chip sponsors like Reebok.

A technology and service partner to grow with

Coming out of a year of intense growth which included the launch of a new reality TV show on NBC and expanding into Asia, Spartan needed a multichannel communications platform designed to support the brand's evolution as well as a dedicated service team that would be a full-time partner in helping them achieve their goals. Competing in a fast-moving industry and experiencing rapid growth, Spartan couldn't afford to waste time chasing down answers from various teams and individuals supporting a large number of other clients. They needed more than a robust email system; they wanted a true partner with a dedicated team they could rely on.

To address this need, Spartan chose Data Axle as their partner and started utilizing their multichannel communications platform. The Data Axle team was able to prove their worth right away, launching Spartan on their new platform in record time.

Acquiring new customers through the Spartan community

The most important factor powering the obstacle racing industry is its tight-knit, passionate and socially connected community. These athletes inspire one another and new recruits by sharing pride in their accomplishments with photos and race results they post on social media.

The savvy Spartan marketing team saw an opportunity to embrace the social advocacy of their customers to help boost Spartan's email subscriber base and bring in new customers using Data Axle's customer acquisition tool.

Email marketers today are constantly looking for unique solutions to acquire new customers while maintaining strong deliverability and sender reputation. Rather than turning to 3rd party email data offerings, Spartan leveraged Data Axle's proprietary customer acquisition solution to build their email list while avoiding the reputation risk that comes along with traditional forms of email acquisition.

" *In addition to helping us save money and precious resources by getting us up and running so quickly, Data Axle has also been an excellent strategic partner, giving us support with creative design and strategic help when we've needed extra resources. They've been incredibly responsive and reliable. We are so pleased with our decision to work with them."*

Christa Shorette
Sr Manager of Global Email Marketing
Spartan

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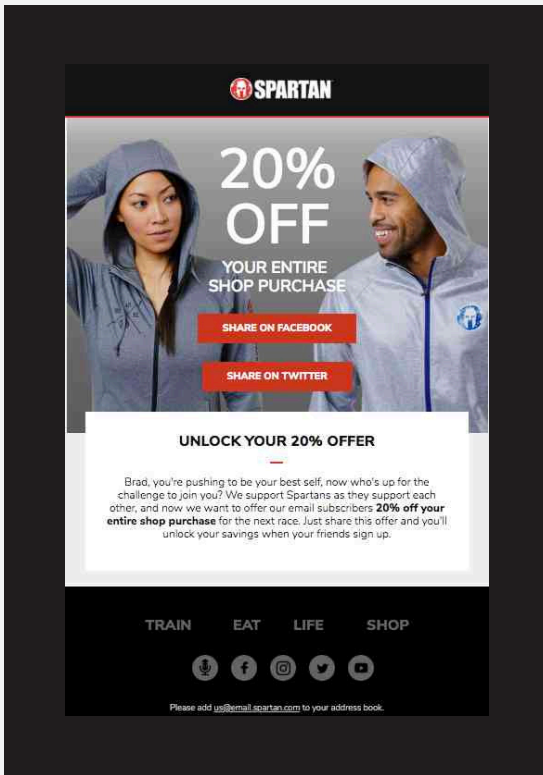
Word-of-mouth cross-channel marketing delivering organic growth

Spartan's and Data Axle's teams created an email campaign that would encourage social sharing and drive new customer acquisition. 400K Spartan subscribers received an email incentivizing them to share a 20% discount for Spartan shop items with friends and family on social media. The email promotion linked to a landing page with pre-populated sharable content for Facebook and Twitter which, once posted, directed followers to a unique landing page where new subscribers could create a Spartan account and redeem their offer. After a follower signed up for an account, the Spartan subscriber who shared the link would receive a follow-up email with a 20% off discount to use themselves.

The acquisition campaign generated 28% higher open rate than standard emails and a 7% higher average order value. Facebook shares outperformed Twitter with 11% of them generating a new subscription vs. 7% of Twitter shares.

Most importantly, the campaign drove a wealth of first-time orders. The new customers Spartan acquired through the innovative campaign spent 4.5 times more than it cost to acquire them. This number is particularly meaningful when taking into account that those customers will go on to spend significantly more over the lifetime of their relationship with the brand. Impressively, Spartan was able to generate a 353% return on their investment with a single campaign. With Data Axle's tool, Spartan was also able to tie back the landing page visits, shares, and subscriptions to each individual subscriber, allowing them to identify their most influential brand advocates and target them in future marketing initiatives.

Looking ahead

Spartan Race initiated their cross-channel customer advocacy program within their home territory (United States).

We've already seen an incredible return on our investment with our first customer advocacy campaign. We are looking forward to building upon this initial success and expanding the capabilities of our global marketing efforts in partnership with Data Axle."

Todd Leiser
Global Head CRM, Analytics and Marketing Tech | Spartan

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