

Propelling Real-Time Commerce with Data-Driven Email

Major shopping portal drives transactions with real-time email offers and SparkPost's data integration

A BUSINESS NEED FOR REAL-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLEXIBILITY

A pioneer in the concept of online cash-back shopping has grown into a major consumer e-commerce platform. The site rewards shoppers at nearly 2,000 major-brand online retailers with rebates on purchases while also providing access to coupons, discounts, and other promotions. All that's required is a free membership and clicking on an offer to browse and shop at any of the company's partner merchants. The company has paid several hundred million in cash to its members since its founding—it's no wonder that the site's loyal members are enthusiastic about the service.

Email is an essential driver of revenue for the business, and the timing and content of offers are determined by real-time changes in user behavior and business metrics. These explicit and implicit cues drive email—and transactions—that are most profitable for the company.

The company needed a messaging platform that would provide unrivaled deliverability—revenue depends upon it, and email that doesn't arrive in the inbox represents real money left on the table. But crucially for its business model, the site also required a solution that could integrate with their data-driven business systems to generate and send personalized marketing offers on demand—and, in return, to directly feed response and engagement data in real-time to the company's data warehouse and empirical algorithms.

The company's team knew that the batched delivery approach of traditional, list-oriented email service providers wouldn't give them the flexibility and performance they required. "At one point, we even had to resort to using an in-house corporate mail server to deal with our ESP's chokepoint," said the company's email marketing manager. Moreover, the limited metrics available from these providers would hinder its ability to respond to update offers or make other business rule changes in real-time.

GETTING RESULTS WITH SPARKPOST

The company selected SparkPost Elite, citing its superb delivery to the inbox, ability to report data on message performance and user response in real-time, and experience at providing expertise and service to high volume senders. SparkPost's industry-topping deliverability, enabled by the Adaptive Email Network that optimizes delivery to more than 12,000 global ISPs and mailbox providers, wowed the team. As the company's email marketing manager described, "We were thrilled with SparkPost's performance on Cyber Monday—our single biggest day of the year. SparkPost's deliverability was fantastic."

Just as importantly, SparkPost's flexibility fits the way the business works. "We don't need marketing services. We don't look at SparkPost as a traditional ESP—SparkPost is a far different partner to us," he said. The company consolidated the sending of both commercial marketing emails and transactional messages such as password resets—together, accounting for millions of emails a month—onto SparkPost.

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BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS

- Support for a real-time, data-driven business model
- Experience handling very high email volume
- Reliably high inbox delivery rates
- Dedicated enterprise-class service

FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Transactional, not batch, email delivery model
 - High-performing APIs for message generation
 - Real-time message and offer performance data via API for data warehousing
 - Guaranteed burst rates, dynamic message throttling, and IP reputation management
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Crucially, the firm's analytics team has been able to incorporate message performance and user interaction data from SparkPost into its proprietary data models. These events are reported in real time from SparkPost to a data engine via API queries. "SparkPost's API-driven message generation and reporting opens up a world of flexibility to us," said the team leader. "SparkPost is a partner that enables us to build it." Data about email interactions are connected to e-commerce shopping sessions and analyzed to make sure that the content, offer, and frequency of future messages are optimized for maximum effectiveness—and revenue performance.

By integrating an easy-to-use shopping experience and the tangible incentives of cash-back offers with the empirical insight of its analytical models, this online shopping leader has found a sweet spot in data-driven marketing—one that drives a virtuous cycle of dramatic business growth. The on-demand message generation, real-time performance data, and high-performing deliverability of the SparkPost infrastructure is a key enabler of this success. In the email marketing manager's words, "The question is: how do we get even more emails onto SparkPost?"

 **Contact Us Today** to learn more about driving business value with your messaging platform. Follow us on Twitter [@sparkpost](#) or go to [sparkpost.com](#).

About SparkPost

SparkPost is the cloud platform for sending API-driven transactional and marketing email from the world's number one email infrastructure provider. Our customers — including Pinterest, Twitter, CareerBuilder, LinkedIn, Salesforce, Zillow, and Comcast — send over 3 trillion messages a year, over 25% of the world's legitimate email. SparkPost provides the industry-leading performance, deliverability, flexibility, and analytics they need to drive customer engagement for their business.

