

PROJECT OF EMAIL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR VK VIETNAM

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I. Theoretical part

- Compile theoretical information of email marketing strategy.

II. Practical part

- Conduct analysis and assessment of current email marketing strategy of VK Vietnam.
- Develop project of new email marketing strategy for VK Vietnam in the year 2014.
- Identify cost and risk associated with the new email marketing strategy of VK Vietnam.

Conclusion

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ABSTRAKT

Czech abstract

Vietnamská socialistická republika je čtyřicátou nejlidnatější rozvojovou zemí , která potřebuje vysoké investice do stavebních prací . Tato země představuje atraktivní trh pro architekturu , strojírenství, stavebnictví a projektové řízení služeb . VK Architects & Engineers je společnosti zaměřená na poradenské služby v oblasti designu, založená v Belgii, kterou zřídil kancelář v Ho Chi Minh City koncem roku 2012. Cílem této diplomové práce je poskytnout podrobný návod o tom, jak vytvořit e-mailový marketing. To je považováno za nákladově efektivní metodu, kterou je snadné implementovat a měřit výsledky, které umožňují v rámci podnikání nejen prohloubit vztah se stávajícími a minulými zákazníky, ale také získat nové.

Klíčová slova: e-mail marketing, poskytovatel e-mailových služeb, poskytovatel internetových služeb , spam , architektura , inženýrství a stavebnictví , mailing list , HTML , dodávané množství , otevřený kurz a proklikne kurzu .

ABSTRACT

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is the 14th most populous developing country that needs high investment in construction activities. The country presents an attractive market for architecture, engineering, construction and project management services. VK Architect & Engineer, a design consultancy services based in Belgium has set up an office in Ho Chi Minh City by end of 2012. In order to increase brand awareness and promote its services to clients, the establishment of email marketing program is recommended. The purpose of this master thesis is to provide detailed guideline on how to establish email marketing. It is considered to be a cost effective method, easy to implement and measure results that enables business to not only deepen relationship with current and previous customers but also to acquire new customers.

Keywords: email marketing, email service provider, internet service provider, spam, architecture, engineering & construction, mailing list, HTML, delivery rate, open rate and click through rate.

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

In business environment, marketing is an important effort in gaining prospect attention to promote the flow of goods and services from business to consumers. Marketing investments in new channels are necessary as companies need to grow and they need people who understand how to do that. Small businesses and startup companies can grow their brand through smart marketing even when they do not have a huge budget. When looking to grow company, there are many marketing techniques that can be used such as advertising, sale promotion, social media, public relation, sponsorship and email marketing. With the development of Internet technology, marketers expect to shift budgets to other online channels, including social media and email marketing continues to account for a greater share of customer acquisition and customer retention than social media.

The purpose of this master thesis is to provide a guideline for business, in particular VK Vietnam to set up an email marketing strategy. VK Vietnam is a subsidiary of VK Architects & Engineers with head office based in Belgium specialize in provide architecture and engineering design consultancy for healthcare, building, infrastructure and industry clients. VK Architects & Engineers has set up an office in Vietnam by end of 2012 and at this period, it is crucial for the company to establish email marketing campaign which is considered to be an easy and inexpensive way of better improving relationship with current customers while also converting new prospects to bring more projects to the company that help to generate higher revenue. The project for establishing email marketing program for VK Vietnam consists of the followings parts:

Theoretical part will cover introduction to email marketing, basic knowledge of CAN-SPAM Act to avoid being marked as spammer, statistic information on email marketing and spam, what are the benefits of using email marketing that enable business to access to mass markets at a cost effective price as well as disadvantages, various types of email marketing, steps to establish email marketing program and how to measure the effectiveness of email marketing strategy.

The analysis part will introduce an overview of Vietnam macro-economic situation in 2011-2013 and PESTLE analysis to evaluate how economic conditions in the country will affect to current and future business operation. An outline of construction sector and outlook of Architecture, Engineering & Construction (AEC) industry in which VK Vietnam is operated are described to identify historic growth rate and predict future trends of the industry to seek for potential opportunities. This section of the analysis will also describe history of company establishment, a detailed of organizational structure, SWOT analysis and current marketing situation of the company.

Finally, the project of establishing email marketing program for VK Vietnam will be discussed in more detail, starting by define objectives of email marketing campaign, some recommendations on how to create a quality mailing list by online and offline methods. The next step is to employ a third party Email Marketing Provider to design all components of email newsletter with a standard style email using eye catching designs, colors and images of projects to grab attention from recipients. The chosen email marketing service will also issue a report to help company monitor the result of each email marketing campaign including open rate, bounce rate and click through rate. Properly executed, an email marketing campaign can reach thousands of potential customers without significant amount of company budget. Learning how to create a strong email marketing campaign requires continuous commitment from marketers that involves utilizing detailed knowledge of both the product or service business is offering and a deep understanding of customer based. When done effectively, a solid email campaign can bring a high rate of investment to the company.

I. THEORY

1 INTRODUCTION TO EMAIL MARKETING

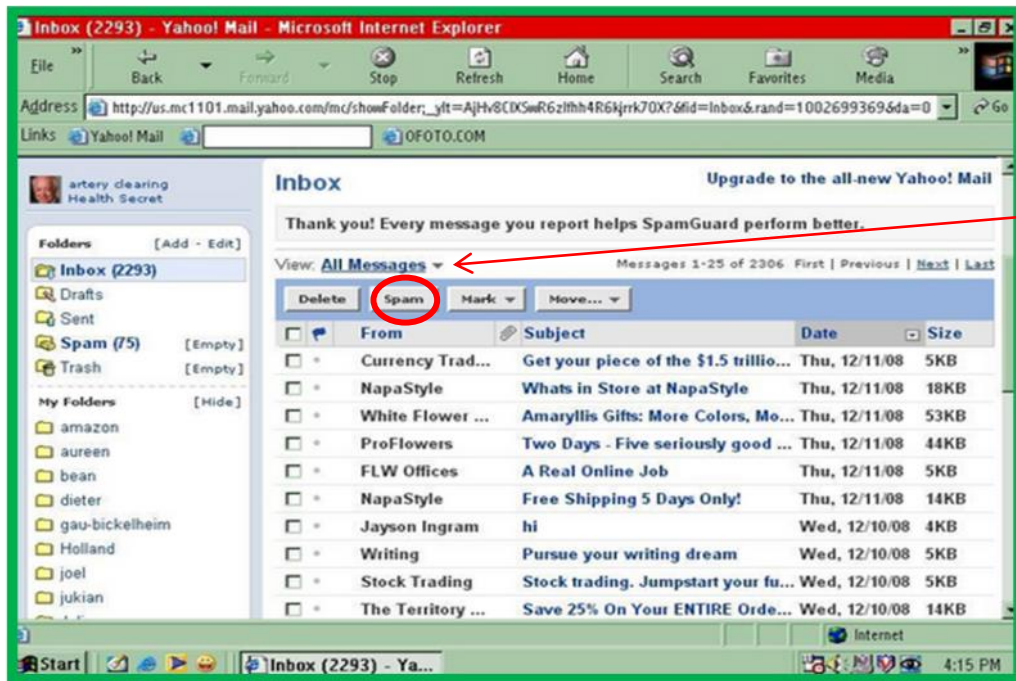
1.1 What is Email Marketing?

The Benchmark Email Quick Start Guide (2010) defined email marketing as a series of newsletter that a company sends to a list of customers. In contrast, Noman Rana (2009) described email marketing in a broader view in which email marketing is a powerful and flexible form of direct marketing that enable business to tailor message to promote their products or services quickly and cheaply. Shannon Kinnard (2002) explained email marketing is a collection of articles, commentary, special offers, tips, quotes and other types of information that is delivered to subscriber via email. In conclusion, email marketing is a form of direct marketing which use electronic mail as a mean of communicating messages to reach clients whose are interested in business's area of expertise. It is considered as a low cost method of building rapport with clients when compare to other forms of advertising exposure.

The primary objective of email marketing is to strengthen relationship between organization and its new and existing customers. Thanks to internet technology, email is now become a popular form of communication and everyone can have a free email account offered by Google or Yahoo.

1.2 Email Marketing versus Spam

John Arnold (2008) defined spam as “unsolicited commercial email send to many recipients”. Unlike legitimate commercial email, spam is sent without permission of the recipients, and then consumers can report your email as spam. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) including Yahoo, Hotmail, Gmail and AOL will automatically move suspected spam messages to Junk Mail folder and eventually block your email server from sending email to customers. However, sometimes the filter is not perfect, unsolicited emails may end up in Inbox folder; in that case, ISPs allow users to mark unwanted emails as spam by a click on “Spam” button as indicated on Figure 1 below.



Most ISPs allow customers to report email as spam

Figure 1: Anti-Spam toolbar on Yahoo Mail

Samuel, John. *Why Yahoo Mail is Still an Epic Catastrophe*. 2009. Photograph. Vatiablegzh.com. Web. 4th February 2014.

1.2.1 Complying with CAN_SPAM Laws

Companies considering the use of email marketing program must make sure that their campaign does not violate spam laws such as the United States' Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act 2003 (CAN-SPAM) or the European Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003. Bruce C. Brown (2007) described that **CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 establishes requirements and regulations to any individual or organization that send commercial email, sets penalties for spammers and companies who violated the law and gives consumers the right to ask mailers to stop spamming.** It applies to commercial electronic mail message and allows email to cover 2 different types of information:

- Commercial email – basically an email containing advertisement or promotion of a commercial product, service or content from business's website
- Transactional or relationship email – which facilitates an already agreed upon transaction or updates a customer about an ongoing transaction;

1.2.2 CAN-SPAM Act requirements

- **Collecting email address legally:** before sending a certain type of email, business is required to obtain “affirmative consent” which means to have explicit permission from subscriber
- **Don’t use false or misleading header information:** “From,” “To,” “Reply-To” and routing information, including the domain name and email address must be verified accurately and identify the person or business who initiated the message
- **Don’t use deceptive subject lines:** the subject line must straightforward to reflect the content of the message.
- **Email must include physical address:** if business has multiple location, they must include main address or physical address associated with each email
- **Allow audience to unsubscribe from receiving email:** email must include a clear explanation of how the recipient can opt out of getting future email from business. Business is required to remove permanently anyone who unsubscribes from their email list within 10 days after receiving the request and is not allowed to add that person back without his permission. The most professional practice is to use an Email Service Providers (ESPs) to automatically and permanently remove anyone who unsubscribe from all email lists in one click. Most ESPs will insert an unsubscribe hyperlink to your email and when subscriber click to the link, the ESPs will automatically remove the subscriber in database so that the subscriber stops receiving email immediately.

Violation of the CAN-SPAM Act is subject to penalties up to \$16,000 per violation according to Federal Trade Commission. It is vital to make sure that company’s email marketing is in compliance with the Law.

1.2.3 Statistics on Email Marketing and Spam

Statistics on Email Marketing

- According to Radicati Group - a technology market research firm, **as of 2013, the total number of worldwide email accounts is 3.6 billion email accounts.** Almost half of worldwide email users are in the Asia Pacific region, in particular to China and India, two of the largest Internet populations and Europe accounts for about 22% of worldwide email users.

- Consumer email accounts, which are freely available from large portals such as Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo Mail and AOL make up for the majority of worldwide email accounts. In 2012, it was estimated that **consumer email accounts represent 75% of worldwide mailboxes, while corporate email accounts represent 25% of worldwide mailboxes**. Over the next years, the number of corporate email accounts is expected to increase at a faster pace than consumer email accounts, as organizations continue to offer email services to employees who previously using consumer email account at work.
- Companies consider **email marketing as a better return on investment** than any type of social media, offline direct marketing, affiliate marketing, online display advertising and mobile marketing. Marketing Sherpa has done a research on email marketing and figure out that almost 60% of marketers believe email marketing produces positive ROI. To support this statement, Direct Marketing Association estimates that direct mail marketing has an ROI of around 4,300%.
- 66% of consumers have made a purchase online as a result of receiving an email marketing message (Direct Marketing Association)
- 76% of email opens occur in the first two days after an email is sent
- 59% of companies are integrating email and social channels together)
- 74% of consumers prefer to receive commercial communications via email
- 54% of emails sent by businesses are marketing messages
- 91% of consumers check their email daily

Statistics on Spam

- According to Spam Laws, a website that dedicated to provide accurate and up to date information on spam statistics, **spam email accounts for 14.5 billion messages globally per day and makes up 45% of all emails**. The most typical form of spam is advertising related email that accounts for approximately 36% of all spam messages. The second most common category of spam is adult related subject and makes up 31.7% of all spam and financial spam email matters is the third most popular form of spam, at 26.5%.

- Kaspersky Spam Statistics Report in 2013 also indicates that China is the number one generator of spam email while the US is in as the second largest contributor of unwanted email. In term of spam by region on a global scale, Asia remains the number one regional source of spam account for 56.3%, North America is 18.2%, Eastern Europe is 13.7% and Western Europe is low at 5.4% only.

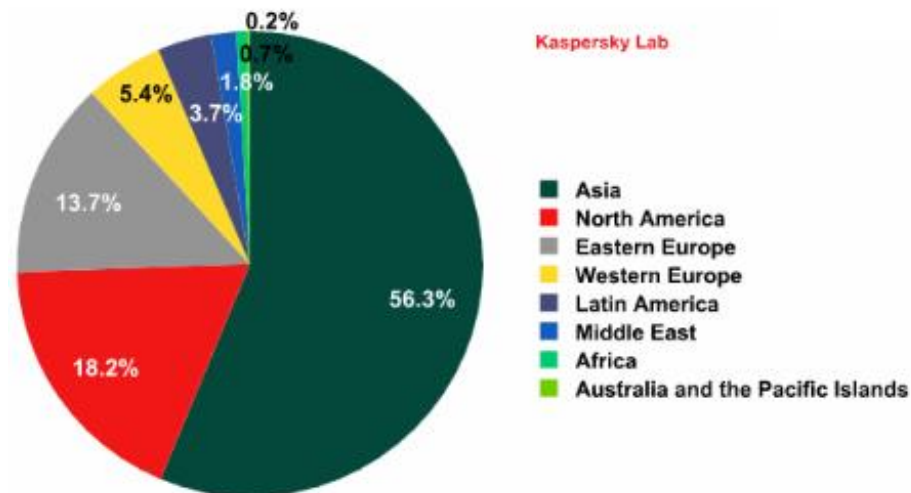


Figure 2: Source of Spam by Region Globally - Kaspersky Spam Statistics Report in 2013

Kaspersky Lab. *Spam Statistics Report Q2-2013*. 2013. Chart. USA.Kaspersky.com.

Web. 4th February 2014.

2 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF EMAIL MARKETING

Email marketing is one of the most powerful marketing tools available that allow the organization to reach wider audiences more effectively than other traditional marketing tools. Benefits of email marketing are described as following to explain why businesses are now using email marketing.

2.1 ADVANTAGES OF EMAIL MARKETING

2.1.1 Cost effectiveness

Dave Chaffey (2006) and Jerry Allocca (2011) both agreed that one of the key benefits of email marketing is the relatively low costs that incur no design, printing or postage costs. Dave Chaffey (2006) estimated that currently email cost range from \$5-\$7 per thousand compare to \$500-\$700 per thousand for direct mail. The process of sending an email is easy through the use of templates which require only limited amounts of preparation and message is distributed instantly and on a global scale with a simple mouse click.

2.1.2 High return on investment (ROI)

According to Direct Marketing Association (2011), email marketing typically returns £40 for every £1 invested. Another study by Message Systems has suggested that 63% of marketers refer email as the channel that offers the best ROI.

2.1.3 Measurability

Many businesses are unsure about how to track the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns. It can be difficult to measure the results of advertising or direct mail or sponsorship; in contrast, email marketing is totally measurable. Dave Chaffey (2006) outlined email marketing can be evaluated and measured precisely based on delivery rates, click through rates and subscriber retention rates. A high number of opened emails for a long period of time could indicate that recipients are interested with your email content and follow up on a regular basis. On the other hand, if potential clients are marking your emails as spam or unsubscribing from email list, then company need to revise their marketing strategy to improve the effectiveness of email marketing campaigns.

2.1.4 Segmentation and personalized approach

Email marketing enables business to target group of customers by segmenting company's contacts based on customer's age, income, location, purchase reference or any other data. Combining customer information and sales history to create personalized messages will allow company to target particular audiences more directly. Targeting emails ensures that customers receive content specifically suitable to their needs and it can lead to deeper relationship with customers and generating higher sales record.

2.1.5 Generate more sales

Jed Wylie (2012) expressed that emails marketing has demonstrated to be a highly effective method of generating sales based on research done by DoubleClick. The study discovered that 70% of online shoppers had made a purchase because of receiving an email inviting them to buy. The same study reported that 59% of email recipients had visited a retail store as a result of receiving promotional email from that business. It is more expensive and requires more efforts to acquire a new customer than to sell to an existing one. Hence, keeping in touch with existing customers via email on a regular basis allows business to generate a great number of repeat sales.

2.1.6 Increased interactivity

Unlike advertising on newspaper or direct mail, email marketing provides a platform for business to attach interactive music and videos into email marketing campaigns. Thanks to email marketing, business can engage their audience and give them greater involvement and control over their web experience in a more interesting solution.

2.1.7 Faster response rates

Being instant is one of benefits of email marketing. Within few minutes after sending emails, it can reach a high amount of email subscribers in a short amount of time and result in generating immediate responses. Dave Chaffey (2006) reported that it can take from 3 to 6 weeks to get a response from using direct mail, while email marketing has an average response time of 3 days.

2.1.8 Global reach

While traditional media costs limit the ability of business to reach customers on a global scale, email marketing open a new direction to access to potential customer from all over

the world on a much smaller budget thanks to the development of Internet technology. There are no boundaries with email marketing.

2.2 DISADVANTAGES OF EMAIL MARKETING

2.2.1 Deliverability issues:

Email delivery can be interrupted at many points during the delivery process, including:

- **Non existing email address:** when email marketing is sent to some email addresses, the destination email server will reply a message indicating that email address is invalid. These email addresses do not exist or have been deleted since the owner of that email has left the company or the address may contain a typo.
- **Undeliverable email:** email address that cannot be delivered to recipient's inbox due to server problem, overload or mailbox of recipient is full.
- **Filtering:** is a method of sorting email. One of the common problems for email marketing is the amount of emails which cannot reach the recipient's inbox but instead get filtered into a spam folder because Internet Service Providers filter email based on their content and some emails can be marked as spam. MailChimp estimates that 10-20% of emails get lost in cyberspace; mostly due to overzealous spam filters.

Companies cannot control all the delivery issues but understanding the challenges in the delivery process can allow business to maximize their email marketing delivery to better reach recipient's inbox.

2.2.2 Display and Resolution issues:

When company sent out an HTML email, it can't be absolutely 100% sure that it's displaying exactly the way marketer visualize it to all recipients. Unfortunately, due to the varying Email Service Providers, servers and computer settings, the design of email may not come through the way we hoped. For example, a person's computer may only allow text, blocking images from coming through or some text may be moved from one line to the next line. Particularly, more people now refer to read email on mobile devices which only support text based emails, therefore display and resolution issues will be a problem.

3 TYPES OF EMAIL MARKETING

Email marketing is an important digital marketing tool of keeping company name in the minds of customers. It allows the organizations to deliver relevant, targeted messages to their customers. Types of email marketing campaigns vary extensively from company newsletters to promotional offers or special invitation. Each type of email communication will deliver varied benefits and require different designs and planning processes. Below are some common types of email marketing that are likely to be sent out to clients:

3.1 Email Newsletters

John Arnold (2008) describes that email newsletters are widely used communications tool that help organizations build a stronger relationship with its clients to achieve brand awareness, customer acquisition and customer retention. The content of email newsletters should be relevant to your industry and your business which subscribers will find informative or educational. It could be latest company news, information about new product launch or industry events. The organization should set a schedule of sending newsletters on a timely basis of quarterly, monthly, every two weeks or weekly to regularly build awareness of your brand.

3.2 Email Press Release

Press releases are more public relations than sales. The most common goal of a press release is to gain free publicity. These are emails sent to members of the media such as newspapers and industry magazines to invite them to write articles about your company in regard to its latest news. Company can appoint a PR agency to distribute press releases but maintaining company's own list of media contacts can be a great way to send targeted press releases only to those contacts who will be interested.

3.3 Email Catalog

Email catalog is typically electronically delivered versions of print brochures listing particular products. It is similar to newsletter but focus on quality images of products with short descriptions, pricing and links underneath encouraging readers to click the link to learn more and purchase.

3.4 Email Invitation

Email invitation is sent to customers in occasion of special events that company is hosting or participating in or signing up for a demo account of an online service. It requests the recipients to take action in responding their presence to an event. Email invitation should clearly describe what the event is about and when it takes place. Highlight what would be beneficial for the recipient to participate will convince them to participate in the event or take any action.

3.5 Email Survey

Email survey is designed as a list of questionnaire where the recipients are encouraging to provide feedback, answers some questions that can be reviewed and used to define customer service satisfaction level. The respondents are generally rewarded in some form such as a coupon, voucher or point added to loyalty program.

3.6 Email Promotion

Email promotion simply discounts or special offers by email with an effort to encourage customers continue using company's services or to increase sales. This type of email marketing is extremely effective since the customers already experience with company's products or service and primary objective is to having them to stay with the company and not turn to any competitors. Hence, it is necessary to make it as easy as possible for the recipients to get the promotion with a hyperlink link that directly connect to company webpage with already inserted promo codes or registration forms.

4 STEPS TO ESTABLISH EMAIL MARKETING

4.1 Step 1 - Define Your Objectives

Stefan Tornquist (2009) suggests that *before* organization starts building up an email list or thinking about which group to send email to, it is crucial to develop objectives to help guide email content and how it fits into overall email marketing plans across the next year.

Be prepared to provide answers for the following questions:

- Why are you sending out an email? Do you want to introduce new offerings?
- What do you need to say? Do you want to inform and educate audiences?
- What results do you expect to achieve? Do you want more leads?

Defining objectives help business to determine:

- What types of content to put in emails
- How many emails you need to send
- How often you need to send emails
- To whom to send your emails

Objectives should be created using SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time related). Objectives are dependent on each business and it may include:

- Increase sales
- Launch a new product or service
- Convert website leads
- Improve customer loyalty
- Attract new customers
- Advertise special promotion or sales
- Send company updates and news
- Grow your contact list
- Conduct market research

4.2 Step 2 - Building a Quality Email List

The key success of email marketing campaign is to have a contact list. **The quality of email list depends greatly on where and how the company collects the information as well as how they keep and manage the data.** The challenge here is how to provide multi-

ple opportunities for prospects and customers to share their information. Jay Neuman (2007) advises that the best way to build a list is to start with people who have expressed their interest to company's products or services and have asked to receive email from that company. John Arnold (2008) also share the same idea and he suggests two different way of gathering contacts:

- **Collecting information online:** add sign-up form to company website and social media accounts to encourage subscribers to enter and submit information. It is necessary to make sure having your subscription form prominently displayed and easily recognized throughout website.
- **Collecting information in person:** communicate the benefits of joining your email list to potential customers and ask for their permission to add them into the list either by:
 - Swap business cards at networking or seminar events
 - Place a basket for business cards on table at trade shows and events
 - Train employees to take down customer information when they call to office

Offering incentive such as discount of products or service, coupons, special deals, free tips, are likely to increase the number of sign up to your email communications because people like to get something of value in return. In addition, incentive rewards can help to improve loyalty, repeat purchase and referrals. Keep in mind that it takes time to grow your contact list and the idea is to build email list over time.

4.2.1 Should company buy a list?

Shannon Kinnard (2002) recommends that if company purchase contact list from a 3rd party without knowing how the email addresses were collected and sending newsletter to these emails, it is likely that your email will be tagged as spam and the company could be identified as a spammer for sending unsolicited emails. This is violation of CAN-SPAM Act 2003. **Company should carefully consider buying email address from any third party** regardless how legitimate the seller's web site looks or how much the seller guarantees the addresses are 'opt-in', otherwise it can ruin company's names and lose internet accounts.

4.2.2 Deciding what information to collect

Essential information that needed to collect is **first name and email address plus any information that customers expect you to know in order to send personalize emails** such as what product lines or services that individual customer is interested. However, collecting information without asking for permission is illegal and subscribers could perceive you as spammer who abuses their privacy. Obtaining permission is necessary to ensure businesses are compliance with CAN-SPAM Act 2003. Adding a privacy policy to your data collection forms assure subscribers that their information is kept confidential.

4.2.3 Target your list

According to Michael Miller (2012), after building a contact list of people who want to receive email from you, the next thing is to match your message to tailor the needs and interests of different group of recipients. Segmenting contact list can help business to achieve better results. Many companies send emails to everyone on their list and not likely that all customers is interested in every message, they might stop opening email or unsubscribe. If you have sections within your list, you can ensure campaigns are only being sent to the relevant group.

4.3 Step 3 - Choose a Professional Email Service Provider

Here are some Email Service Providers that provide marketing solution that can help business to develop effective email marketing campaign include iContact, LinkLeads, FileVietnam, Bizmail and BlinkContact.. These email marketing services compromise special features such as:

- **Customization:** select a template from hundreds of templates and create customized messages using HTML format
- **Tracking:** identify the number of recipients who open and click to the link by tracking opens, responses and unsubscribe rate.
- **Deliverability:** a team of delivery specialists who make sure messages are delivered to recipients.
- **Social Sharing:** insert Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn icons in emails so recipients can share your email to their social networks.

- **List Management:** import contacts directly into your email campaigns from hard drive

4.4 Step 4 - Craft Compelling Content and Determine Proper Format

People subscribe to your email list with the expectation to receive valuable information. **The information must be interesting enough to read and compelling enough to generate a response.** Creating great content and creative design can be challenging tasks for marketers but it is essential to capture attention from audiences. Content of email marketing varies from company to company and it depends on what type of information that business wants to communicate with their recipients.

Beside the content of email, paying attention to the subject line is also important because email subject line is the line that gives audience a hint of the content of your email. This is the first thing that recipients will see and it can be a determining factor whether to open email or delete it. The most effective subject lines are those that prompt audience to open email immediately to look for further information. Keeping in mind that most email programs only display the first 30-50 characters, hence take time to come up with a short, specific and compelling texts to draw attention from recipients.

Dave Chaffey (2006) proposes **the next step is to determine how to design and layout email content using HTML, text format or both.** HTML formatted messages are web page that sent through email server, re-assembled and presented to the recipients in their web browser. HTML enables business to use customized fonts, colors, graphics, videos and other dynamic features which requires HTML coding. While text based message is straight text with no graphics, no colors or special font formatting and cannot insert hyperlinks in text. HTML formatted message allow business to create professional looking email compare to text format.

However, if you are not HTML programmer, check out any email templates that yours Email Service Provider (ESP) provides. **An ESP is a third party system that host email marketing service on their servers that makes it easier for business to create custom email messages, send targeted messages and track the results.** ESPs allow you to use some available email formats such as newsletter or promotion then customize the format

with your own layout design before inserting the content. There are four basic structures of email templates:

- **Newsletter format:** are emails containing information, valuable articles that interest a particular group such as members of an organization or customers. Newsletter is a popular format because it has multiple columns allow business to deliver messages in different blocks and more creative types of content than other formats. Emails newsletters need to be sent with regular frequency to be effective communicate with customers.
- **Promotional format:** email promotion offers sales and discounts that ask recipients to take specific actions such as immediate purchase or commitment. Promotional templates usually have a variety of designs and layouts that focus attention on image, headlines and link to company's webpage so the readers can easily recognize the message.
- **Announcement format:** contains a single message simply asks the audience to read the message. This type of template can be used for press releases, official notices, news bulletins or holiday greetings.
- **Invitation format:** business usually refers to deliver event invitations to customers via email due to the fact that people receive and respond to email invitations more quickly than direct mailing. Invitation formats are sent in occasion of customer appreciation events, seminars, workshops and networking events.

4.5 Step 5 - Measure Your Results

4.5.1 Bounce

Bounce is percentage of total emails that cannot be delivered to the recipient's inbox, known as bounce rate. Noman Rana (2009) defines that a bounce is classified as either "hard" or "soft". Soft bounces are the result of some temporary issues such as full inbox or a problem with the recipient's server. The recipient's server may hold these emails for delivery once the problem is fixed. Hard bounces are the result of an invalid or non-existent email address and these emails will never be successfully delivered. In practice, business should immediately remove hard bounce addresses from their email list because bounce

rates is one of the key factors to determine an email sender's reputation. Internet Service Providers can identify the organization as a spammer if having too many hard bounces.

4.5.2 Deliverability rate

Bruce C. Brown (2007) and John Arnold (2008) both agree that **delivery rate measures the percentage at which email marketing is delivered into subscribers' inboxes relative to the total number of emails sent**. If a message is rejected by the mailbox provider, it does not count as delivered. If company sent 1,000 emails to all recipients and 50 messages were undeliverable, email delivery rate percentage is 95%. Company wants their email deliverability rate to be as high as possible but in reality, no matter how frequently email list is updated, there is still existing some email addresses that are no longer exists or deactivated.

4.5.3 Open rate

Once you manage to get your email delivered to your recipients successfully, the next most important measure of email marketing is open rates. **The open rate is expressed in percentage representing the number of recipients who opened and read your email**. For example, a 60% open rate would mean that every 100 emails delivered to the inbox, 60 were actually opened. Stefan, Tornquist (2009) also notes that it is important to note that open rate is not a 100% accurate measure. When each email is sent out, ESPs automatically add a code that requests a tiny, invisible image from web servers, so when the recipients open email, the image is downloaded and we can record that download as an email open. This means that company may be experiencing emails that are opened but the open is not registered. In particular, any users who only receive or read the text only version of your email will not be included in the open rates tracking.

4.5.4 Total click through rate (TCTR)

The next step is to get users and subscribers to click through from your email template to your website. There are two versions of click through rate include total click through rate and unique click through rate.

- **Total click through rate measure the percentage of individuals who click on links embed in email messages divided by the number of delivered email messages in a campaign**. The higher the click through rate, the more successful the email marketing has been in generating interest from readers.

- **Unique click through rate (UCTR) takes into account all of the clicks from an email to a destination page even if those clicks were made by the same individual.** For example, if someone opened an email on his phone, clicked a link, then opened it later on desktop and clicked to the same link, his contribution to the Total click through rate would be 2 but to the unique click through rate would be 1 because he is one unique individual.
- According to John Arnold (2008), the final computation that matters when it comes to click through rates is **Click to Open Rate - CTOR**. Both TCTR and UCTR are measured as a percentage of all subscribers while CTOR calculate click through rates as a percentage of messages opened. Suppose that a company send a newsletter to 1,000 subscribers in which 500 subscribers open the message and 300 subscribers click on the links. The open rate is 50%, total click through rate is 30% and CTOR is 60%.

4.5.5 Response Rate

Response rate is also referred to as conversion rate or action rate. Overall, it is the number of desired responses divided by the number of messages delivered. The response rate is the best way to measure the effectiveness of an email campaign. The higher your response rate, the more compelling and attracting the offer was to your audience.

4.5.6 Email sharing/forwarding rate:

According to Michael Miller (2012), email sharing measure the percentage of recipients who clicked on a “share this” button to post email content to social network or who forward message to friends. If subscribers find your newsletters articles, promotional offers or events fascinating enough to share with their friends, you are likely to increase customer base by tapping into the network of your subscribers. Analyzing what type of articles and offers tend to get shared the most and use this information for future campaigns will help business reach more customers.

4.5.7 Unsubscribe Rate

The figure indicates the number of people who choose to opt out of or unsubscribe themselves from future messages. The unsubscribe rate is used to measure how well business can hold subscribers' interest over the long run. If subscribers do not interest in information received or feel that company is sending them too many emails, they will unsubscribe from email list. In general, unsubscribe rate should be very low, between 0.3 – 1%.

II. ANALYSIS

5 OVERVIEW OF VIETNAM CONSTRUCTION SECTOR IN 2011-2013

5.1 Vietnam Macro-Economic Indicators in 2011-2013

Key indicators	2011	2012	2013	2014 (Forecast)
GDP growth (%)	5.9	5.03	5.3	5.7
Inflation (%)	23	7	7	8
Foreign Direct Investment (USD billion)	14.7	13.0	20.0	25.0
Interest rate (%)	20 – 25	12 – 15	10 – 12	8 - 12

Table 1: Summary of Macro Economic Performance in 2011-2013 (Own Source)

In 2012, **economic growth** in Vietnam estimated at 5.03% which was the lowest figure in a decade. The slowdown of GDP growth rate was due to the impact of the global economic crisis and in the context of Vietnam to implement priority to control inflation stand at 23% in 2011 and stabilize the macro economy. Fiscal policy and monetary policy has been used effectively, inflation has fallen to 7% in 2012 and macroeconomic remain relatively stable in the short term. It reinforces the confidence of foreign investors with Vietnam economic.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) plays an important role in the Vietnam economy which contributed 13.3 % to GDP, 35% to the industrial output, 23% to export and 25% to total state budget revenues. Total foreign direct investment commitments was declined in 2012 to 13 billion USD compared to 14.7 billion USD last year which was attributable to the impact of the global economic and high inflation level in the country. Although it is no longer a top destination in the region, Vietnam still has a lot of opportunity for investors. Therefore, other countries will continue to strengthen their capital resources in this market account to 20 billion USD and 25 billion USD in 2013 and 2014 respectively. Much of the FDI inflows into Vietnam come from more developed Asian countries, including Japan, Singapore and Korea. Among the 18 sectors that draw foreign investments, construction industry ranked second with a total of 588.11 million USD, making up 4.7% of the coun-

try's total FDI. According to Savills Viet Nam – a global real estate service provider, the increasing FDI into property market is due to recovery signs in the economy in the first half of the year 2013, together with Government efforts to support the property market with tax incentives and preferential loans.

Interest rate for real estate sector was remains high between 15% in 2012. However, the interest rate has declined to 10 - 12% in 2013 with further decreases on the horizon. Lower interest rates will stimulate the purchasing power, especially in the real estate sector and help reduce business housing inventory levels.

5.2 Real Estate and Construction Industry from 2011 - 2013

Ho Chi Minh City is economic hub and people from other regions immigrate to the city for education and employment, thus the housing demand has increased rapidly. It is obvious that **many real estate developers have gained huge profit from their property investment**. The Ministry of Construction reports that average construction cost of an apartment is \$700 - \$900/sqm but real estate developers are selling at \$1,200 - \$2,000/sqm and making an **attractive profit margin of 70% - 90%**.

After enjoying impressive growth for a long period from 2000-2011, the construction sector faced a property bubble and a weak economy in 2011-2012. This resulted in a large oversupply of real estate assets, amounting to a \$4 to \$7 billion with some 70,000 condos sitting in inventory by the end of 2012. Factors that influence purchasing power of home buyers are income, price of housing, availability of credit, inflation also influence the demand. If disposable income increases faster than inflation, demand for housing will be high. However, during period of 2011 - 2013, property market was frozen due to unflavored macro-economic conditions with inflation hit 23% driven by higher cost of food and fuel. In order to cut down inflation, the government set higher lending interest rate at 20 - 25%. However, business operation of most of real estate developers are based mainly on bank loans and now banks have recently restricted providing loans for real estate projects. As a result of high inflation and difficulty access to credit from banks, many people cannot afford a house, therefore real estate enterprises, construction material producers and design consultancy firms continue to face difficulties as the property market remains stagnant. Firms unable to neither balance their debts and capital nor retain production would go bankrupt. A report showed that Vietnam had 55,000 enterprises in the real estate sector in 2012 in which 17,000 report making loss, while 2,637 went bankruptcy.

The first half of 2013 has seen the government become more proactive in recovering the economy and most obviously the real estate market, as the passing of the Resolution 02/NQ-CP, under which the State Bank of Vietnam will provide soft loans worth 428 million USD for real estate companies developing low cost homes or converting higher class apartments to a lower cost at a low annual rate of 6%. Furthermore, Vietnam has attracted a greater amount of FDI compared to 2012. The majority of FDI, 9.3 billion USD, has been poured into the processing and manufacturing industries and in turn this will, ultimately, create wealth and thus demand for greater amounts of real estate. FDI inflows positively influence economic growth and provides a boost for domestic investment. **With confidence returning to the Vietnam market, investment appetite for real estate appears to be growing in 2014.** Japan and Korea remain keen on Vietnam and look for opportunities to acquire existing assets, particularly residential, shopping mall and hotel. The year 2014 should see many more completed projects and further intensification of competition with newly launched units. In summary, there is more positive than negative news and the economy is in a much better position now.

5.3 Outlook of Architecture, Engineering and Construction Services

Competition is intense and many international architects and construction services companies have set their footholds in the market. A number of well-known firms such as Archetype, Delta Construction Management, Hill International, DWP, Turner International, AECOM and others have been active in construction and related services for a number of years. In the longer term, **Vietnam will continue to present opportunities as private developers and local governments address demand for infrastructure, housing and industrial facilities throughout the country.** Vietnam Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) estimates that Vietnam needs to invest \$200 billion for infrastructure development during 2010- 2020. Architecture services, concept design, construction management, project management and new building technologies represent the best opportunities for international architectural and engineering design firms. Specific prospects include high-end hotels and resorts, high-rise office towers, and mixed-use projects, many of which are foreign invested and require high quality design and construction.

6 COMPANY INTRODUCTION

6.1 Company History

6.1.1 VK Belgium

VK Belgium offers state of the art architectural & engineering services to its Healthcare customers. Real estate developers, architects, industrial clients and public authorities can rely on **VK** for its widely recognized engineering services for their Buildings, Industry and Infrastructure needs.

- In 1952, Hubert Van Kerckhove – CEO of VK Belgium starts his professional activities and becomes a reference in Europe for the construction of silo's
- In 1970, Hubert Van Kerckhove starts his professional activities and becomes a reference in Europe for the construction of silo's
- In 1998, VK cooperate with RRP and Arup - the two leading Architecture design consultancy companies to design the new Antwerp law courts
- In 2000, VK took over the Brussels engineering building services firm Coget and reinforced its positions on the Brussels office market
- In 2004, VK took over Ingènieurs Associes, a Brussels structural engineering firm
- In 2005, VK acquired the largest study contract in its history for the construction of the new NATO headquarters in Brussels
- In 2009, VK opened its first abroad office in Astana (Kazachstan)
- In 2012, VK opened its new office in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

With more than 50 years of experience, **VK** is a multi-disciplinary and multi-professional design consultancy firm, integrating all disciplines within the construction process, from architecture over engineering to infrastructure and landscaping. As such, **VK** can function as one unique point of contact, making the design and execution process remarkably more transparent and efficient.

VK is a leading agency in European Healthcare Design and a pioneer in sustainable buildings. **VK** employs over 230 professionals around the world.

VK Worldwide Offices



6.1.2 VK Vietnam

Vietnam is now in a so-called period of golden population structure (from 2008 to 2035), with about 66% of the population are in working age and each year more than 1.5 million people will be in working age, only 25% of the population are under 15 years old. This is a good opportunity for Vietnam to take advantage of a young labor force and push its economic growth, especially in the 2011 - 2020 periods, when it is striving to become an industrialized and middle income country. In addition, the construction sector still continues to present a promising market for building services. Hence, **VK opened its first office in Vietnam in November 2012 with the ambition to capture not only Vietnam market but also Southeast Asia region** to provide design consultancy services for emerging countries such as China, Thailand, Lao and Cambodia. Therefore the opening of Ho Chi Minh office is considered as the first footholds in the market for VK Belgium to enter to South-east Asia market.

Some projects in Vietnam

VinMec Hospital – Hanoi, Vietnam



VK Architects & Engineers. *VinMec International Hospital Vietnam*. 2012. Photograph. vkgroup.be. Web. 6th February 2014.

Binh Chanh Pediatric Hospital – Binh Chanh, Vietnam

VK Architects & Engineers. *Binh Chanh Pediatric Hospital Vietnam*. 2012. Photograph. vkgroup.be. Web. 6th February 2014.

6.2 Company Mission

Our passion is to understand the needs of our customers and our ambition is to be a strategic partner in achieving their objectives. To keep pace with continuing progress, we are continually updating our processes in order to give our customers the best possible professional advice at all times and offer the most innovative design solutions to

- Understanding our clients
- Satisfying their needs
- Passionate to improve

6.3 Company Services

	HEALTHCARE	BUILDINGS	INDUSTRY	INFRAS
<i>i</i> ACOUSTICAL ENGINEERING	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>i</i> ARCHITECTURE	✓		✓	
<i>i</i> AUDIT	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>i</i> BREEAM ASSESSMENT	✓	✓	✓	
<i>i</i> BUILDING SERVICES	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>i</i> CIVIL ENGINEERING	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>i</i> ENERGY CONCEPT	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>i</i> ENERGY ENGINEERING	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>i</i> ENERGY REPORTING	✓	✓	✓	
<i>i</i> FAÇADE ENGINEERING	✓	✓	✓	
<i>i</i> FIRE ENGINEERING	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>i</i> INTERIOR DESIGN	✓		✓	
<i>i</i> LANDSCAPE DESIGN	✓			✓
<i>i</i> MASTERPLANNING	✓		✓	
<i>i</i> PROGRAMMATION	✓		✓	
<i>i</i> STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING	✓	✓	✓	✓

6.4 Organizational Chart

VK Vietnam

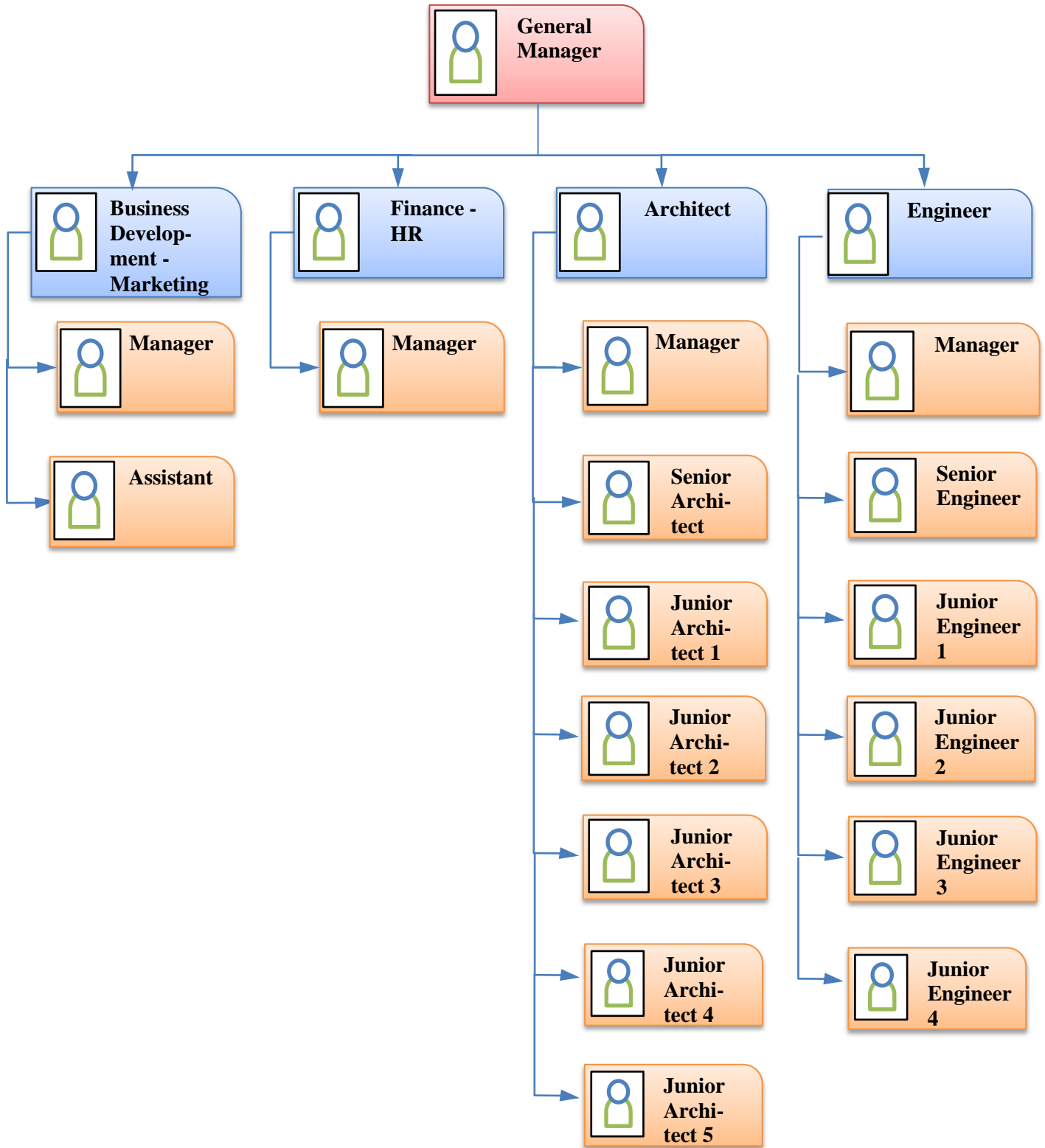


Figure 3: VK Vietnam Organizational Chart (Own Source)

Total number of professionals working at VK Vietnam as described below:

- General Director& Marketing Manager: 1
- Accountant & HR Manager: 1
- Marketing assistant: 1
- Architects: 7
- Civil & Engineers: 6

Being a small sized company with only 16 staffs, VK Vietnam does not establish a formal marketing department. **The General Director takes the role of managing the office and in charges of marketing and business development tasks as well.** The cross function department allows VK to be more effectively organize and synchronize marketing and business development activities by taking a multidisciplinary, team based approach to expand firm's client base and win more projects.

With limited number of employees, hiring a HR specialist is not necessary at this period of time. Primary roles and responsibilities of HR Manager include recruitment, selection, compensation and benefits, training and developments, employee relations can be performed by one senior staff who is also a chief accountant. All administrative matters will be handled with the support of marketing assistant to avoid overload at work for chief accountant.

7 COMPANY ANALYSIS

7.1 PESTLE Analysis

7.1.1 Political

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a single party state that operates under the leadership of the Communist Party. The ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) keeps a firm grip on power while the supreme party organ is the National Congress which is held every five years to determine the country's orientation, strategies and solutions for socio and economic development. The most recent election to the National Congress was in 2011. The party aims to achieve economic growth and also satisfy needs of the people.

Overall, Vietnam's political environment is generally stable due to its single, undisputed CPV political party. Vietnam has enjoyed over thirty years of political stability and has not experienced any major conflicts with its neighbor's countries. World Bank indicates political stability index of Vietnam rank well above most of its Asian neighbor countries, including China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Philippines.

7.1.2 Economic

The Vietnamese GDP grew at 7.06% on average during 2005-2011 thanks to its Government's open door policy. **Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2007** was the result of 12 years of negotiations. WTO membership has reduced tariffs and restrictions on Vietnam's exports to other countries. VN has now become part of the international economy.

The EU seeks to broaden and diversify its relationship with Vietnam. A Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed in June 2012 to further enhance bilateral ties. The agreement covered tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade, along with some issues such as regulation, public procurement, intellectual property rights and sustainable development. According to the Ministry of Industry and Trade, total financial transaction between the two parties was amounted to \$29.1 billion in 2012.

The Vietnamese Government will create favorable investment environment by continuing to revise Vietnam's legal system and introducing important incentives to foreign investors to attract more foreign direct investment opportunity to the country.

7.1.3 Social

Another major strength of the country lies in its human capital. Vietnam population was estimated to be 90 million people in 2013 with an annual growth rate of 1.6% and approximately 70% of the total population is under 40 years of age. The World Factbook estimates Vietnam had a median age of 28.7 years in 2013. While many developed nations are facing with the problem of an aging population and rising social expenditure, **Vietnam still enjoy its favorable demographic structure as there are regular additions to its labor force.**

Cheap labor and political stability makes Vietnam a favorite destination for global investors. The country has consistently maintained low unemployment levels with average rate of unemployment in 2013 was 2.28 %, Vietnam is still among the countries with the lowest unemployment rates across the globe. This low unemployment rate is a significant achievement for Vietnam.

7.1.4 Technology

With increasing globalization, **the development of science and technology involves major international cooperation to help the country develop technology skills.** The Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology have been cooperated with the National Center for Scientific Research of France during 30 years to transfer technology and exchanges of scientists to international forums. In 2013, Republic of Belarus has also agreed to continue its support for technology initiatives in Vietnam. Slovakia expressed its desire to share experience in atomic energy with Vietnam in order to help the country build its first nuclear power plant.

Vietnam is fast becoming a center for software development companies to set up their offshore operations. Vietnam technology industry comprises of high number of IT companies has strengthened its efforts to become an important destination for software outsourcing and other IT related works. Although Vietnam is facing strong competition from China, India and Philippines, the investor friendly business environment, government sup-

port and highly dedicated, technological skill workforce are likely to transform the country into a next emerging IT outsourcing destination after India.

7.1.5 Legal

Corruption is still a serious issue in Vietnam which has caused the Vietnamese Communist Party’s performance based legitimacy to decline. In 2012, the country was ranked 123th out of 176 countries in Corruption Perception Index conducted by Transparency International.



Figure 4: Corruption Perceptions Index 2012 in Asia Pacific

Doanh, Le. *Vietnamese Economy 2012-2013: Perspectives and Challenges*. 2012. Chart. mba-mci.edu.vn. Web. 10th February 2014.

Corruption occurs across many sectors including healthcare, education, construction and natural resources. The Government has recently made great efforts and strong commitment to fight against corruption. The National Assembly passed the revised law on anti-corruption in 2011 that provided a more feasible regulations regarding, transparency within state owned enterprises, public officials’ accountability, publicly disclose personal assets and the media’s right to access information.

In May 2013, the Ministry of Finance planned to reduce corporate income tax from 25% to 22% in 2014. The country aims to further cut the tax rate to 20% by 2020. In order to boost the property market, the government plans to lower value added tax (VAT) for developers of affordable housing. The reduction in tax rates aims to boost Vietnam's position for attracting more Foreign Direct Investment.

7.1.6 Environment

Population growth, rapid urbanization and changes in consumption behavior have an impact on the environment, contributing to water and air pollution in urban areas. Excessive greenhouse gas emission causes global warming and imbalances in the environment. Considering the severity of the situation, in April 2013, **Vietnam launched a project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in industrial production and encourage adopting environmental friendly technology.**

Vietnam has a big network of river and together with its long coast line; the country suffers mainly from floods, a consequence of rising sea levels during rainy season. Furthermore, wastewater discharge from industrial zones and factories have become worse and affect to the supply of clean water. The Government needs to invest more in building waste water treatment plan to reduce toxic chemical from waste disposal.

7.2 SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis is a detailed analysis of the company's strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. Gaining key insights into the company by understanding the company's core strengths and weaknesses equip the management board with information that enables them to define direction for the company, sharpen strategies and transform business operations profitably. Opportunities and threats from external environment that the company can explore are sized up and stay updated to foresee possible occurrences that can happen and influence company marketing objectives, and then formulate effective strategies to adapt to the environment. The main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that company have and faced are as follows:

7.2.1 Strengths

- Over 60 years of experiences with a team of experts comprising of skilled Architects, Engineers, Supervisors and Technicians
- Know-how of international standards and guidelines for architecture and engineering designs
- Experience in complex projects, knowledge in advanced design and construction technology and management ability.
- Unlike other firms that only focus on architecture and outsource engineering design to other companies, VK provides one stop shop solution for both architecture and engineering consultancy services
- Expertise available in many sectors, particularly in medical planning and healthcare design
- Strong support from head office in Belgium for outsourcing projects to ensure economic viability of VK Vietnam.
- Current General Director of VK Vietnam is an experienced architects with more than 48 years of experience

7.2.2 Weakness

- Lack of knowledge on local culture, design standards and regulations
- Lack of relationship with real estate agents, brokers, developers and contractors
- Not having many finished portfolio projects which have been under construction to prove design capability of VK
- Difficult to generate leads into real projects as VK only presence in Vietnam for 2 years, hence create no credit worthiness for real estate developers to assign projects to VK
- Few architects to dedicate on creative architectural building designs
- Human resource constraint with only 8 architects and 6 engineers compare to other design firms
- Lack of business networking and marketing strategies
- Having high consultancy fees due to difference salary structure between Belgium and Vietnam

7.2.3 Opportunities

- Being a developing country, in recent years, Vietnam has become a hot spot for many American and Western architects as it presents a promising market with huge demand for architecture, engineering and construction services
- Neighboring two latest international markets - China and India
- Vietnam is a member of WTO membership that attract more investment opportunities from international companies for real estate developments
- Increasing the use of consulting services by private real estate developers

7.2.4 Threats

- Unhealthy competition/corruption from other companies to win projects
- Existing presence of well-known international design consultancy firms such as Arup, Archetype, DWP, Meinhardt, HOK
- Different policies, guidelines, procedures, documents applied by the Government and different international aid agencies
- Unstable macro-economic conditions which negatively influenced to real estate and construction industry

7.3 Alternative strategies

Four sets of strategies firm's management board considers after analyzing of strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and matching each other are:

7.3.1 Strengths with opportunities strategy: more investment in human resources

Vietnam construction and building industries has become one of the most important industries in recent years. As being a developing country that has positive economic development with average GDP of 5.3% and rising high population of approximately 92 million people, rapid urbanization and growing standards of living, the need in construction activities such as hospitals, apartments, mix used projects, highway construction, power plants, metro and industrial zones have created a strong demand for construction & building. More foreign direct investment will continue to lure into the country. Therefore, **VK needs to develop its human resource management strategy to proactive thinking ahead and**

planning to better meet the needs of its employees and for the employees to better meet the needs of the company to handle more projects. The firm has already a qualified human resource workforce but in order to meet the firm's development and market expansion, this resource must be developed and trained to create competitive advantage.

On the other hand, being able to plan for the needs of employees can help to improve the rate of skilled employees who chose to continue working for company. For professional service firm as VK, which primary asset is a highly educated workforce and outputs are intangible services with complex knowledge and understanding of design a building, the major resource of this firm is expertise, knowledge and experience of their professionals. This suggests that the firm is highly dependent on their workforce as they have to convince clients of their competencies to gain trust that enable clients to give projects to them. Therefore, **it is necessary for professional service firms to attract and retain qualified personnel.** In addition, improving employee retention rate can reduce the money companies spend on recruiting and training new employees.

7.3.2 Weaknesses with opportunities strategy: establish collaboration with local design company

International firm can be successfully operated in another market by establishing partnership with reliable local companies. Successful outcomes for international projects often require a good understanding of cultural, political, environmental, societal and economic context. Hence, working with local partners in a foreign country is beneficial in easing regulatory, language and cultural barriers. Obviously, the cooperation is good for business in the short term, but more importantly, the long term benefits is to **gain deeper and more solid understanding of local construction laws, regulations and building codes.**

The scope of work for a design consultancy firm normally include design brief, concept design for planning license, schematic design for building license and technical design for construction. VK can provide its expertise service for concept design and schematic design while establish collaboration with local company to make technical drawings. This would speed up the process of completion and handle full drawings to clients at a lower cost since Vietnam architect salary per hour is much lower compare to Belgian architect salary. This

will eventually bring down the professional consultant fee and increase the chance for VK to win more projects.

7.3.3 Strengths with threats strategy: pay attention to business development strategy

Business development professionals obtain leads from potential clients, other consultants, existing clients, or influential contacts. They also use reference sources such as local construction newspapers which list requests for proposal. In real estate, the mantra is "Location. Location. Location." In architecture, it should be "Relationship. Relationship. Relationship." **Business development for architecture, engineering firm requires a very strong level of strategic ability in terms of relationship development with clients.** It is highly recommended to classify clients into 3 categories include current clients, dormant clients and prospective clients.

- **Current clients:** nurturing meaningful relationships with key account clients is the primary role for VK business development strategy. Since clients has known the company, has confidence in its capabilities and the working process has already carried out, so it is easy for them to keep doing business with VK. Clients who are happily engaged with VK will continue to assign projects to the company and recommend to other real estate developers. Enhancing broader and deeper relationships within current client is the fastest and easiest way to generate new business.
- **Dormant clients:** are clients VK haven't worked with in the past 2-3 years. Follow up phone call or meeting with this group of client is a crucial since VK already has relationships with people who are still working at the organization or that person has moved to a new organization, it is considered as a new potential client.
- **Prospective clients:** are those who are aware of VK in the industry. Approaching prospective customers with an attitude that the company genuinely want to help them not just trying to make a sale is a key to success. If we focus on helping client to design for their projects, then the first meeting is a time to find out whether VK has the skills and resources able to complete the projects. If not, then helping cli-

ents find another suitable company. It will create a long term reputation than simply walking away.

7.3.4 Weaknesses and threats: building a better marketing activities

VK is well known for healthcare and engineering design in Belgium but only presence in Vietnam for approximately 2 years. It also faces tough competition with well-known consultancy firms that has been active in Vietnam for a long time such as DWP, PTW, Aedas, NQH and Archetype. **It is vital for VK to organize more marketing activities to increase brand awareness.** Participation in industry events and attend conferences, seminars sponsored by industry associations are crucial. Most of these events offer great opportunity to meet new potential clients, industry experts and other key contacts.

Another effective way to get recognition at a seminar or conference is to present a paper or give a presentation. Giving a presentation to current and potential clients about an innovative practice that VK has developed or a case study can be extremely beneficial because prospective clients are often do not have deep knowledge understanding architecture and the building process which they are relying on the architects to educate them. This is considered as an excellent opportunity to introduce our services to clients in a most relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. In addition, VK needs to commit part of their marketing budgets to have booths at trade shows that serve their market sectors.

8 CURRENT MARKETING SITUATION

Marketing for architectural, engineering and construction (A/E/C) companies is very different than marketing for a fast moving consumer good that has a physical product. Due to the nature of business, A/E/C marketers target owners, managers of public or private construction projects. **The focus of marketing is building and maintaining good relationship with prospect and current clients to increase brand awareness and reputation that result in lead generation and winning projects.** In specific, marketing for architectural services aims at convincing prospect clients that professionals in the firm will offer creative, attention to detail and passion for the project because what clients actually buying is the professional expertise and ability of architects and engineers team members.

Construction Marketing Association has recently conducted a study to identify what types of marketing does A/E/C firm is using, what marketing initiatives are the most effective, what are the least effective and how companies can measure their marketing effectiveness. The result of the study is showed below:

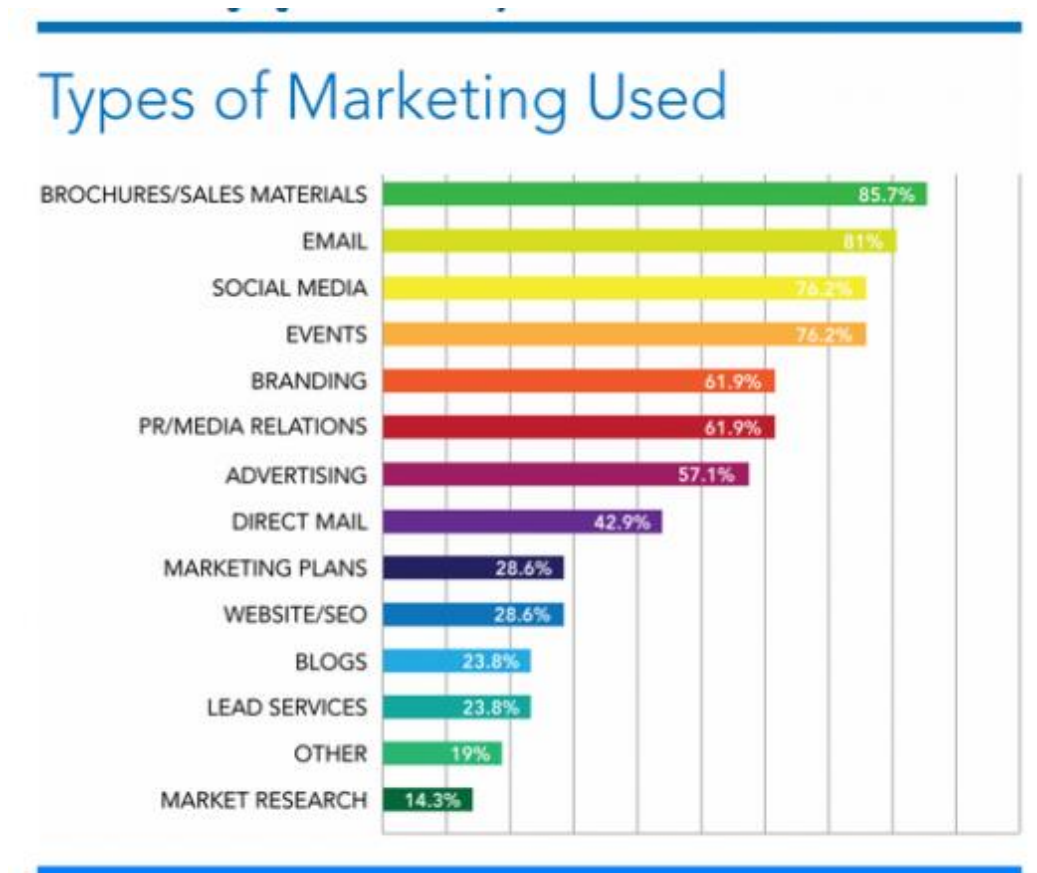


Figure 5: Types of Marketing Used by Architecture, Engineer & Construction

Brown, Neil. *Marketing Best Practices for Architectural/Engineering/Construction Firms*. 2012. Chart. constructionmarketingassociation.org. Web. 20th February 2014.

8.1 Brochures/sales materials:

Approximately 86% of firms participate in the research agreed that brochures play a significant role in marketing. It introduces to prospective client in order to **create favorable impression with high resolution photographs combined with color printing that present stunning recreations of existing buildings the firm has previously designed and is capable of doing it again.** Brochures serve as excellent marketing materials at trade shows, building fairs and industry exhibition and can be mailed directly to clients.

Aedas is one of VK's competitors that have been in Vietnam for 12 years. It is a leading international design practice offers services in architecture, interior design, master planning, landscape, urban design and building consultancy within Asia, the Middle East, Europe and America. This is an example of Aedas's brochure:

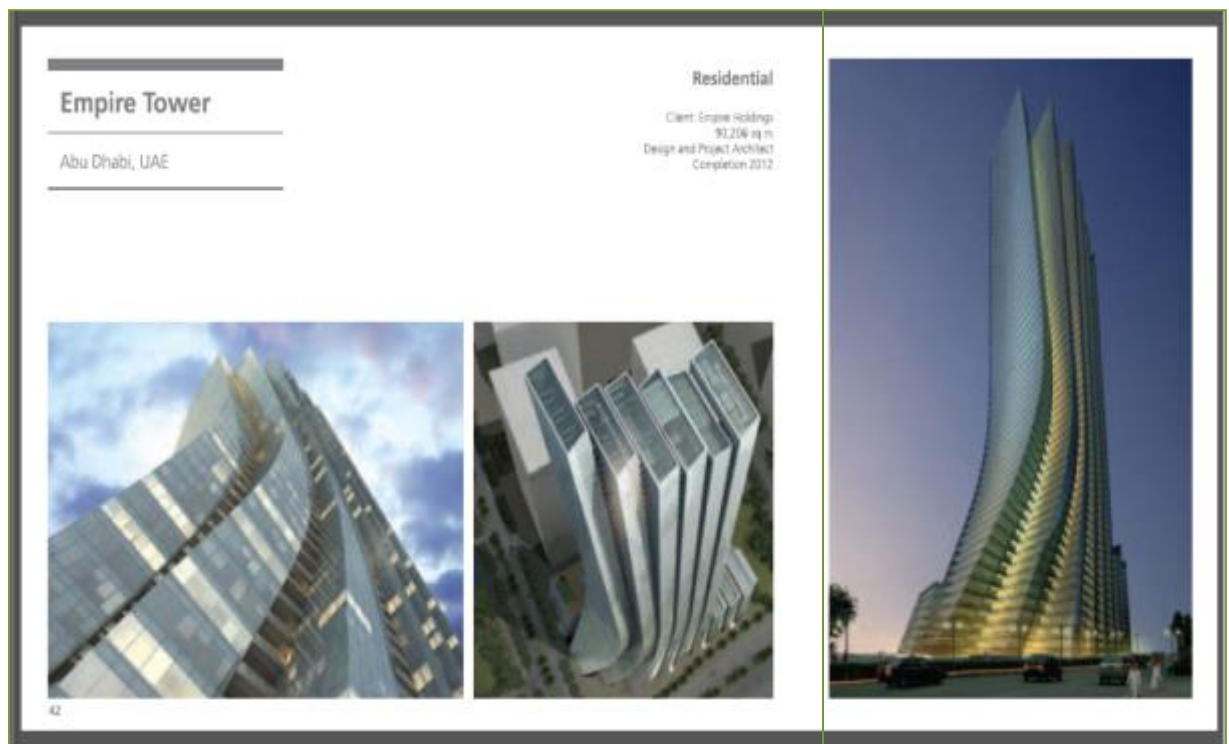


Figure 6: Example of Aedas Brochure

(Aedas. *Architecture Brochure*. 2012. Photograph. aedas.com. Web. 20th February 2014.)

In contrast to Aedas, VK's brochure is designed at a size of 210mm x 210mm square display color photographs include several examples of successful building and healthcare designs. The left hand shows images of projects while all text description is located on the

right hand. The proportion of photographs and texts is 50% - 50%. Developers and owners are always searching for a new approach to building design; hence text descriptions are used to demonstrate architect, structure and technical design specification of the building. However, having too many texts inside architecture brochure will not create impression to clients and in fact, not many prospective clients will spend time to read all the text. The company should consider re-design their brochure that focuses on the quality of photographs with less text description to make it looks professional and create significant impression to prospective clients.

8.2 Email marketing

VK Belgium officially opened its office in Vietnam by end of 2012 and during that time, the macroeconomic and construction industry was stagnant. The real estate market in the country was facing many difficulties to get loans from banks and many businesses operating in this sector were on a diminishing belief. Many real estate projects have been put on hold or delayed as investors run out of cash and we also has witnessed decreases in selling prices and large discounts from many projects. Therefore, **no marketing activity has been active since domestic market was frozen and marketing department certainly cover similar role as business development** and ultimately contribute to the growth of the company. The marketing manager focuses on developing partnerships and strategic relationships with other firms in order to bring in new clients.

Email marketing presents more opportunities for business to develop and maintain relationship with customers over time that hopefully results in increased sales and increased customer loyalty. Building up a good customer database is essential for email marketing campaign. It is obvious that tradeshows offers a great opportunity to meet new potential clients, collect sales leads, makes connections and arranges meetings with prospects and potential referral sources. **A list of email addresses from tradeshows has been collected by VK's Managing Director** and received permission to send email marketing to prospective customers. Each of the business card has been manually input to Microsoft Outlook which **enables the manager to email to prospect clients individually from his own company email address with general information about company and services provided follow by a link to VK website**. However, this type of marketing ation strategy can only be suitable when the company is in the position of start up their business. In the long run, thousands of business cards cannot be inputted manually which will take a huge

amount of time; hence the company must focus on searching for an effective email marketing software application to send newsletter to clients.

8.3 Direct Mail

Many AEC firms use direct mail to send brochure to potential clients to present its design capability and to be considered as a design consultant for client's next projects. Like all other forms of direct mail marketing, a bad mailing list contains a group of unlikely customers will not bring any benefits. VK need to carefully define target prospective audiences and use direct mail brochures to promote for company's services. It is necessary to attach an introduction letter with concise paragraphs as a warm welcome to clients. In addition, gallery image of projects can be sent to industry publications for awards submissions or article ideas via direct mail.

8.4 PR/Media Relation

Compared to its competitors, **VK had not widely penetrated media exposure and were not recognized outside of the architecture and engineering industry, except for healthcare design.** As being a leading healthcare design in Europe and has participated in concept design competition for new Pediatric Hospital organized by Vietnam Ministry of Health, VK sent this project to World Architecture Festival 2011 and become the winner for Future Projects category. To keep media's intense focus on healthcare design, VK has invited the press and journalists to write articles about this winning award and highlighted the firm's expertise in designing sustainable healthcare environments in both online and printed newspapers. Furthermore, submission of projects for various awards to local or national architecture and engineering association is a great way to get recognition from the industry and to show current and prospective clients that VK is an award-winning firm. This helps to draw attention from the press and having connections with media relation help VK to gain recognition for their work, increase brand awareness and hopefully generating new business opportunities.

8.5 Social media

Social media marketing is the integrated use of different social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest or YouTube for specific purposes, such as marketing individual professionals, marketing the firm and for employee recruitment. This type of marketing

communication is still very new to the architecture industry. Despite being slow, AEC firms have finally begun to increase their social media presence. Many companies including Aedas, HGA Architects & Engineers now starting to launch a business Facebook page, Twitter account, LinkedIn business group, upload video on YouTube. These are the top three social media platforms that are most relevant for AEC firms, including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter

➤ **Facebook**

Facebook involve creating online content that is interactive and frequently posting, hence it is the most time consuming actives and require significant personal involvement. A high number of people spend their working time to use Facebook and for legitimate business purposes, many companies block access to some social media sites as Facebook and YouTube. This creates a barrier for **VK firms to establish a Facebook profile and currently VK does not own any Facebook company's page.**

➤ **Twitter**

Twitter is a micro blog where business can interact with potential and current clients to inform of new projects, new services or update on company news in an informal way. It is relatively a new form of communication for AEC industry and **VK certainly is not realizing its business benefits at all.**

➤ **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn currently has over 100,000,000 users that are connected to the companies they work for and the people they work with. This is a great place to network, find leads, post jobs and more. Hence, **VK considers LinkedIn as a more business oriented site that offer a great channel to connect with clients and industry professionals.** It allows prospective clients looking for services provided or more information about the company. Having a comprehensive LinkedIn page and joining a few key relevant groups can boost lead generation and brand awareness efforts.

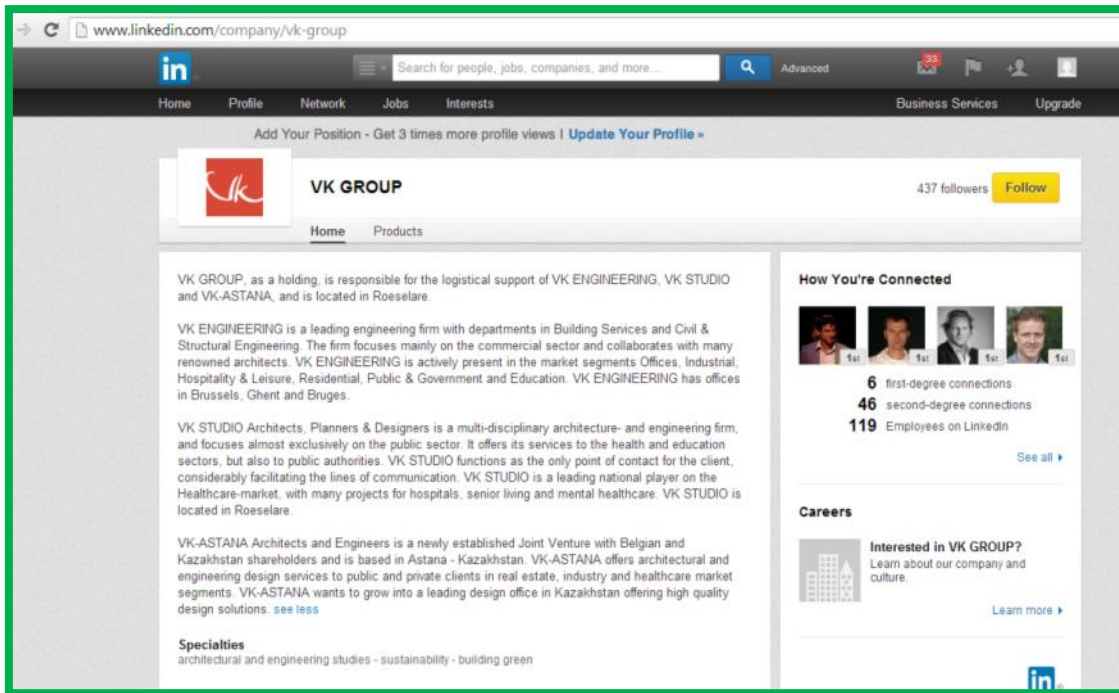


Figure 7: VK Belgium LinkedIn Site

(VK Architects & Engineers. *VK Group*. 2013. Screenshot. LinkedIn.com. Web. 20th February 2014)

To increase interaction with clients through social media, business should add social media icons to the header or footer of company's website that directly link to their social media profiles. Visitors may click on these icons and then follow you on different social media networks to receive your updates in the future.

8.6 Events

Networking is vital to the marketing success of architecture firms. A marketing executive/business development manager builds his network and contacts by participating in industry events, parties and seminars to find mutually beneficial relationship with real estate owners, brokers, developers or architects working for other firms to get insight industry information on upcoming projects.

VK's business development manager **attend networking not only industry events, seminars, exhibitions but also some events organized by CANCHAM, AMCHAM and EUROCHAM** to increase their connections and broaden relationship with current and prospective clients. Collecting business cards at these events to build up client's marketing database is also another important aspect of networking.

8.7 Website/SEO

One of the most important selling points for any business will be company's website that allows potential customers to learn about company and offers direct contact either by phone number, email or address. This is an online presence of business, so make sure that its design and content are professional and reflect to company's brand image. A visually appealing website that is well organized and user friendly will create a positive user experience to better enhance perception of prospective customers toward your company. **VK's website has a very clear structure, consistent and easy to understand.** Its services are categorized into four different groups making it much easier for clients to find information or projects related to Healthcare, Building, Industry or Infrastructure. Also, the design of each category stays consistent throughout the site.

Another most effective online marketing method for AEC firms is search engine optimization (SEO). Consumers nowadays use search engines, not telephone books to find contacts of professional service firms in the construction industry and SEO helps company's website get found online. Identifying keywords that potential clients are using to find your company and then optimizing your website content for those keywords will lead to a higher website ranking in search results. It aims to drive more traffic to your company's website and strengthen brand awareness. **Thanks to IT specialist that has optimized search engine, when someone type keywords "VK Architects & Engineers" into Google or Bing, company's website is ranked in the top.**

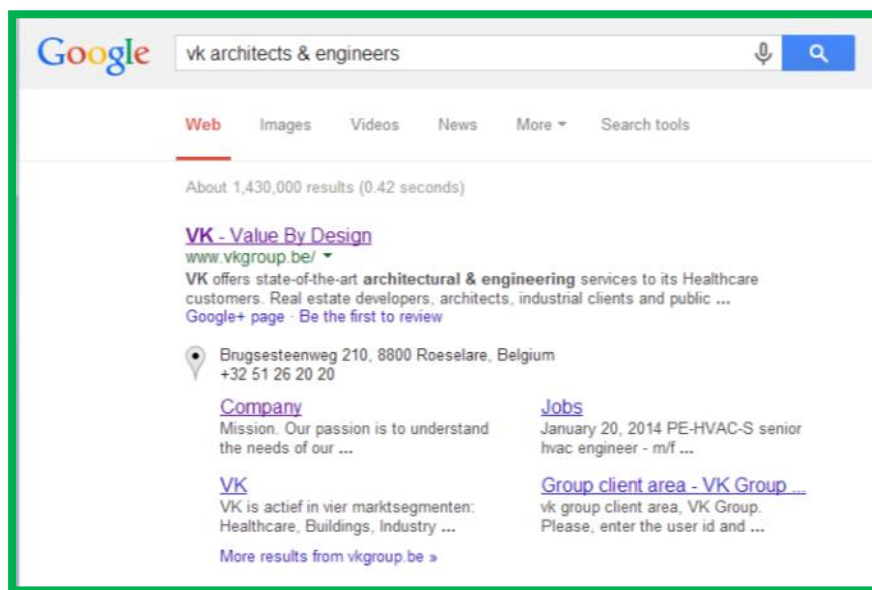


Figure 8: VK Belgium ranked 1st on Search Engine Optimization
(VK Architects & Engineers. Screenshot. Google.com. Web. 20th February 2014)

9 RECOMMENDATION

Construction industry in Vietnam has become increasingly competitive over the years because of unfavorable economic crisis that lead to fewer construction activities. During this difficult economic situation, the management board of VK Belgium has made a strategic decision to offshoring design work from Belgium to VN. Thanks to outsourcing work, VK VN still generate enough revenue to cover operating and overhead expenses to keep running business operation. However, with a long term objective to become an office hub of Southeast Asia market instead of being an offshoring office, it is the task of managing director of VK VN to generate quality leads and revenue for the office and become independent from head quarter. Getting new business is the key to the success of any organization and increasing brand awareness will let customers know the existence of business and services that the company offers. It is essential for VK to develop a comprehensive email marketing plan serve as the foundation for all of their marketing activities s to help company build market share. According to Construction Marketing Association, one of the most effective marketing initiatives for AEC firms is measured as following:



Figure 9: Most Effective Marketing Initiatives used by Architecture, Engineer & Construction Company

(Brown, Neil. *Marketing Best Practices for Architectural/Engineering/Construction Firms*. 2012. Chart. constructionmarketingassociation.org. Web. 20th February 2014)

9.1 Branding

The research estimates that the most effective marketing tool for AEC firms is branding which is accountable for 15%. Branding refers to giving careful consideration to identify an effective company name. Good brand name should contain key words that describe a company or product that is highly memorable by customers. The company's brand name is VK - a short abbreviation after the name of Chairman, Mr. Peter Van Kerckhove. VK is relatively a short brand name and when it is translated into Vietnamese which literally means "Overseas Vietnamese" refer to Vietnamese living in other foreign countries. Therefore, it is better and more meaningful to add the term "Architect and Engineers" after its name. **In every documents produced in VN office, it is named as "VK Architects and Engineers."**

9.2 Networking events

In the construction world, networking with people and other businesses in the industry is a must. Industry events can attract hundreds of current and prospects real estate developers, along with editors, partners, brokers and other important contacts. **Regularly attending trade shows, seminars, exhibitions and conferences are important marketing and business development activities.** VK business development manager should attend monthly networking events such as Lighthouse Construction Networking, Real Estate Networking Night organized by AMCHAM, EUROCHAM or CANCHAM.

9.3 Referral Programs

Referral is the 5th marketing tool to provide great opportunity for AEC firms to grow their business. Providing great customer service to meet their expectations will bring benefits to the company because **satisfied customers can become one of VK best sales people.** Not only will they return to do business with the company, but they will also help to bring more business. VK should encourage current clients to spread the word about its design capabilities to network of real estate developers, brokers, construction companies and other key account potential clients.

The company can develop a referral program that offer customers financial incentives in the form of gifts or even cash for providing VK with referrals that turn into more leads and projects. Start creating a list of clients that are willing to make referrals for VK and ask them to be a reference as part of the program.

9.4 Email marketing

Other effective marketing initiatives for AEC firms such as website, SEO, brochures and direct mail have been used widely by VK VN office but email marketing has not yet been utilized by the company. It is obvious that email marketing is one of the most powerful ways to help company build relationships and grow their business. It is a productive, efficient and low cost method to keep in touch with customers, informing them of new deals, promotions and company news. In fact, almost 97% of small businesses use email marketing to connect with customers. It is highly recommended VK to create an email marketing to strengthen relationship with prospective and current clients and hopefully generate new leads. The last section of this master thesis will describe a strategic plan for VK Vietnam to create an effective email marketing campaign. The process will begin by focusing on a few key elements, firstly to determine company's objective for email marketing, then to develop a quality mailing list of current and potential clients that has given permission for company to send email to. Next step is to choose a professional email service provider to distribute email and solve any technical problems incur during the delivery process and issue a report to measure the results of email marketing.

10 ESTABLISH EMAIL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR VK VIETNAM

Email marketing platform is the foundation of modern business marketing and one of the most effective digital marketing tools. Many ACE (Architecture, Construction & Engineer) firms have begun to put efforts developing email marketing, social media presence, advertising and public relations. VK is highly recommended to develop an email marketing strategy to increase company's brand awareness, strengthen position of the company in the construction industry and enhance relationship with prospective and existing clients.

Most emails are distributed by email software or an email service provider (ESP). Business has to decide whether to buy mass mailing software to be used on computer (as described in Plan A) or rely on an email marketing service provider (as described in Plan B). The choice will depend on company budget, feature requirements and the number of contacts in client's database. The managers need to find a solution best suited for VK that meets the needs of business in today marketing environment but also integrate future marketing goals.

Plan A: Using Email Marketing Software

The main difference between email marketing software and ESP is that company using an online service has to pay a fixed fee depending on the amount of email addresses that they plans to send out each month while with a software; the cost of monthly payment is zero since the license is purchased with a single payment, then download the software and use your own email server to send emails.

Email marketing software firstly requires an in house server with highly trained support staffs proficient of HTML programming, then purchases software license and install it on web server and desktop. The software provides a set of features that allow business to create their own graphic templates, list management, send newsletter and analyze statistics and report of email campaigns. There are multiple email marketing software companies available in the market but only few companies set itself apart from others specifically in term of user interface, variety of templates, SPAM protection and affordable pricing.

Plan B: Using Email Service Providers

An ESP is basically a company that offers software as a service that hosts client's email list on their servers and allow them to use their system and resources to create, send and track email marketing campaigns. ESP designs a web control panel that is very easy for users to navigate to add new subscribers, chooses different graphical template for newsletters or promotional offers and schedule when emails are sent out. Most ESPs charge a monthly fee based on the number of emails on your list, while others charge monthly fee based on the maximum number of emails send out per month.

Recommendation

After careful consideration of available resources at the company, **I recommend VK to go for ESP that offers hosted email marketing solution.** Here are some of the things that ESP offers which is hard to do with a desktop based software.

- **Using static internet protocol (IP) addresses and building reputation of the IP addresses and their domain names:** a lot of email programs such as Google, Yahoo, Hotmail or AOL do not allow any individual or company to send bulk emails through their servers, filter your email to Junk Box or eventually report you as a spammer and block your IP address.
- **Keeping an eye on the delivery rates and troubleshooting deliverability issues:** some problems that are related to current human constraint can be foreseen when choosing email marketing software. VK does not have any marketers or IT specialists that are technology savvy to handle installation of software and solve technical problems incur during the process of creating, sending and reporting email marketing campaign. The company may end up spending a lot of time using desktop based software. In addition, delivery issue can become a serious problem when using email software. It is quite possible that some emails will not reach inbox of subscribers, resulting in a loss of efforts, time and revenue. However, ESP is specializing in sending bulk emails and they have technical skills to ensure that your emails get delivered.
- **Participating in feedback loop programs:** most ESP establishes feedback loops for every client to recognize if email programs notify senders whenever someone

marks an email as spam by clicking on “This is Spam button”, so they can instantly remove that subscriber from the list.

- **Automatically handling bounce backs:** ESP will immediately stop sending email to some bad addresses if it is marked as hard bounce. Unless if it is considered as soft bounce, ESP will attempt another future deliveries to make sure emails are delivered to recipient’s inbox.
- **Automatically handling subscriptions and un-subscriptions:** ESPs always comply with the CAN SPAM Act regulations that automatically include an unsubscribe link in every email sent through their service and when readers click on the link, they will automatically remove these addresses from client’s lists.

That is why it’s important to send marketing emails through a reputable ESP rather than sending emails from company’s own email server.

11 STEPS TO ESTABLISH AN EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

11.1 Step 1 - Determine company's email marketing objectives

The first step in email marketing is to focus on setting clear objectives. Specific objectives are critical to the success of email marketing because they show how the organization will benefit from it and provide benchmarking guide to measure progress, helping organization to determine future marketing efforts. A set of criteria referred as SMART criteria are suggested to incorporate to each objective:

1. **Specific:** the objectives should clearly state what the company wants to achieve.
2. **Measurable:** they should be measurable to determine how far the organization has achieved its goals
3. **Achievable:** the company should have assessed its capabilities in which it is set to ensure the objectives are achievable
4. **Realistic:** the company should review its resources, employees and the availability of assets before setting the objectives
5. **Time Bound:** objectives should be set with a time frame and given specific deadlines

11.1.1 Goals for VK Vietnam's email marketing plan

Identifying email marketing objective for company requires a brainstorming process of both marketing team and ideas contribution from top management. The following questions are considered as guideline to draw a big picture of email marketing plan and help identify company's email marketing goals:

- Why do we send out an email?
- What do we want to accomplish with email marketing?
- What do audiences want to hear from us?
- What useful information can we provide to the audience?
- What results do we expect to achieve?

The answers are inputs to help draw final conclusions on objective setting. Always make sure that marketing objectives can support organization's overall mission and goals. Objective for company's email marketing as described as following:

- **Increase Request for Proposal:** one of the most important objectives for an AEC firm is to generate quality leads. Email newsletters can lead directly to a Request for Proposal or potential lead projects when recipients reply with a request for an appointment or additional information on VK's design capability.
- **Increase brand awareness and preference:** sending potential customers regular newsletters with consistent brand logo, message and theme enables the company to increase visibility and put company brand name in mind of recipients when VK's newsletters show up in their inbox
- **More traffic to web site:** recipients can click to the links in email to visit VK's company website and search for more project information.

11.1.2 KPI to measure objectives

Once business has decided clearly its objectives, the management board should also define how objective can be achieved and measured by using Key Performance Indicator (KPI). KPI is used for benchmarking that enables the organization to measure some aspects of the process compared against actual result to determine the level of success. Some possible KPI email statistics are as follow:

- **Increase sale:** VK can use the number of Request for Proposal as an indicator of how email marketing can help company to achieve higher revenue
- **Brand awareness:** open rate, click through rate or response rate can be utilized as a measurement how many prospect clients are aware of VK
- **More traffic to website:** could use recipient clicks/downloads company's website link embedded into each emails

Identifying objectives, setting KPI for monitoring will give purpose, clarity and drive direction for management board to better come up with effective email marketing strategy that lead to a success in any marketing program.

11.2 Step 2 - Building a quality email list

11.2.1 Make a list

When building contact list, the company needs to keep in mind that every person on the list must give us permission to send them marketing emails. If recipients have not given permission, then our email is likely to be ignored and the worst case is reported as a spammer that potentially causing your internet accounts to be closed. There are two typical methods of gathering email address:

- **Collecting information online:** one of the most common methods to utilize company website in generating contacts is to add a subscription form or sign up button where potential clients can sign up to receive marketing emails. It is necessary to make sure having your subscription form prominently displayed and easily recognized throughout website. VK's newsletter sign up form can be easily found on VK website. However, this sign up form is only available in Dutch and English version

Figure 10: VK Sign up Newsletter Form

(VK Architects & Engineers. *VK Newsletter Sign Up*. Screenshot. vkgroup.be. Web. 20th March 2014)

- **Collecting information offline:** another way to build VK marketing database list is networking. Regularly attending industry events, trade shows, exhibition and con-

ference to network with key influence contacts including real estate brokers, developers, industry experts and other important contacts to collect business cards. Keep in mind to ask for their permission to avoid violation of CAN-SPAM Act and opt in them to VK's potential client's list is crucial not only for marketing but also business development purposes.

11.2.2 Managing your list

- **Quality over quantity**

The foundation of any email campaign is the list. The bigger the list is, the higher the impact on business. However, when building contact list, we should ensure that we are building a quality list and quality always beats quantity. VK can buy list from any 3rd party but it would likely result in a fruitless outcome. It's better to have a smaller contact list of people interested in receiving company's emails rather than a bigger list of unqualified recipients who are not relevant to AEC industry. Also, we may actually find that we can have better results with a smaller list since that list is more targeted.

- **Cardscan 800c Executive**

What do we do with all business cards pick up at conferences, seminars and meetings? Originally, the idea was to gather names and emails for a newsletter database or use address for mailings or phone number for calling. VK has already started to build their own marketing database when data from every new contact and business card pick up is collected in an Excel file so that they can use this type of data to grow their business. However, entering contact information data manually from thousands of business cards into specific database is a tedious and distracting task to any marketing professionals. Sometime crucial contact information is often entered inaccurately or not entered at all. That partial or missing contact could have contributed to a lost on future sale or marketing effort. DYMO CardScan 800c Executive can automatically recognizing and reading the contact information on printed business cards and eliminates manual data entry.

CardScan Executive is an excellent choice for VK Vietnam to scan business cards due to the following reasons:

- Synchronizes database to Outlook, Windows Mobile, Mac Address Book, Lotus Notes, and other applications
- Easily categories contacts, search, sort, delete duplicated contacts, print labels, and map addresses
- Consolidate all contact data using drag-and-drop from email and web sites.
- Fast and accurate scanning in color, 3 seconds per card and create a digital address book.
- Scan both front and backside of a business card

CardScan Executive consists of a small scanning device which is dedicated to scanning business cards and software that not only reads the scanned information, but also lets users view scanned images of the fronts and backs of business cards, categorize data and add notes about individual cards. Within seconds of placing a card into the business card scanner, CardScan pulls the information off the card using Optical Character Recognition technology and imports the text fields of a new contact including name, title, phone number, etc., while also capturing an image file of the card. Set up and installation are simple, the CardScan Executive 800c simply link to computer via USB connection. After installing the software and opening the Dymo CardScan Executive program, plug in USB cable into computer. After starting the program, click on Scan, and then fed the first business card into the scanner. After the card had moved through the scanner, click on Process and the information from the card appeared as text with name, title, company, contact and address info into different categories with a photo scan of the card. Scanned info is saved into an easily accessible digital address book on hard drive.

CardScan Executive can scan business cards in either color or monochrome. Once the scan is finished, we can have the software process the card and drop the text into the appropriate fields as displayed in Figure 11.

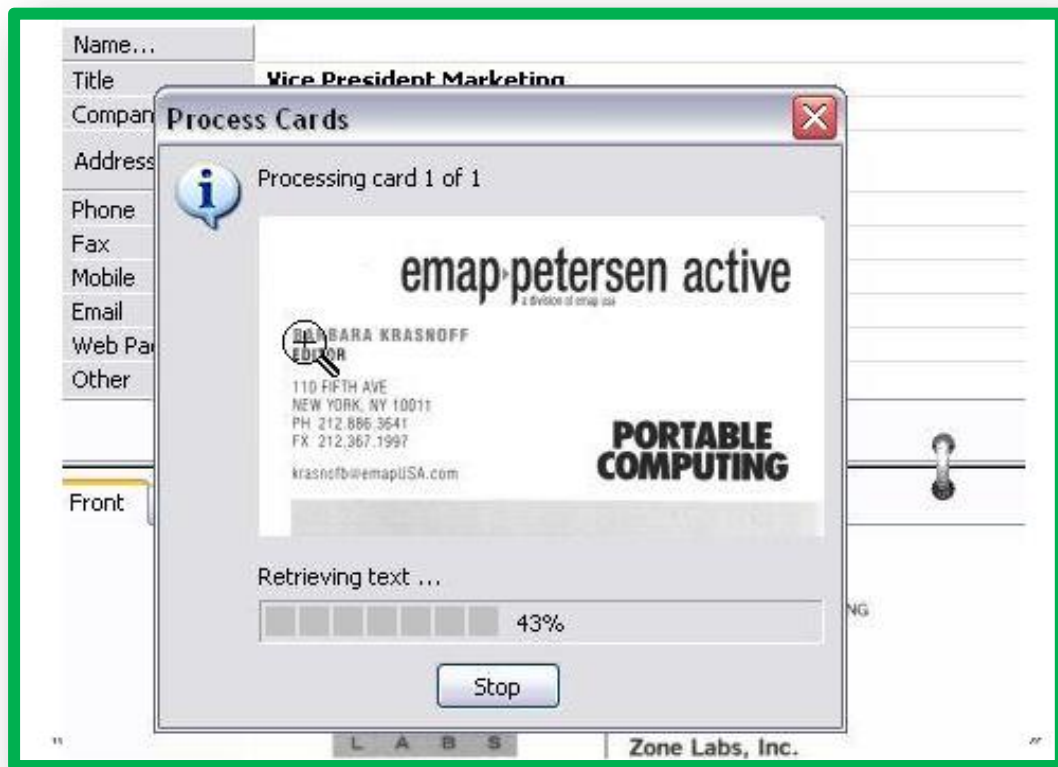


Figure 11: Example of scanning business card using CardScan Executive 800c (About.com. *Others Scanner Review*.2012. Photograph. printscan.about.com. Web. 4th March 2014)

Card scanning technology is very useful that enable people to convert business cards into an electronic form in order to easily collect and manage data. Follow some simple steps then we can export these data into a CSV file (Comma Separated Value) which is a file format that is often used to exchange data between different applications or export to an Excel file. Then we can use this CSV or Excel file as an input to ESP software. Figure 12 shows an example of CSV file exporting from CardScan technology.

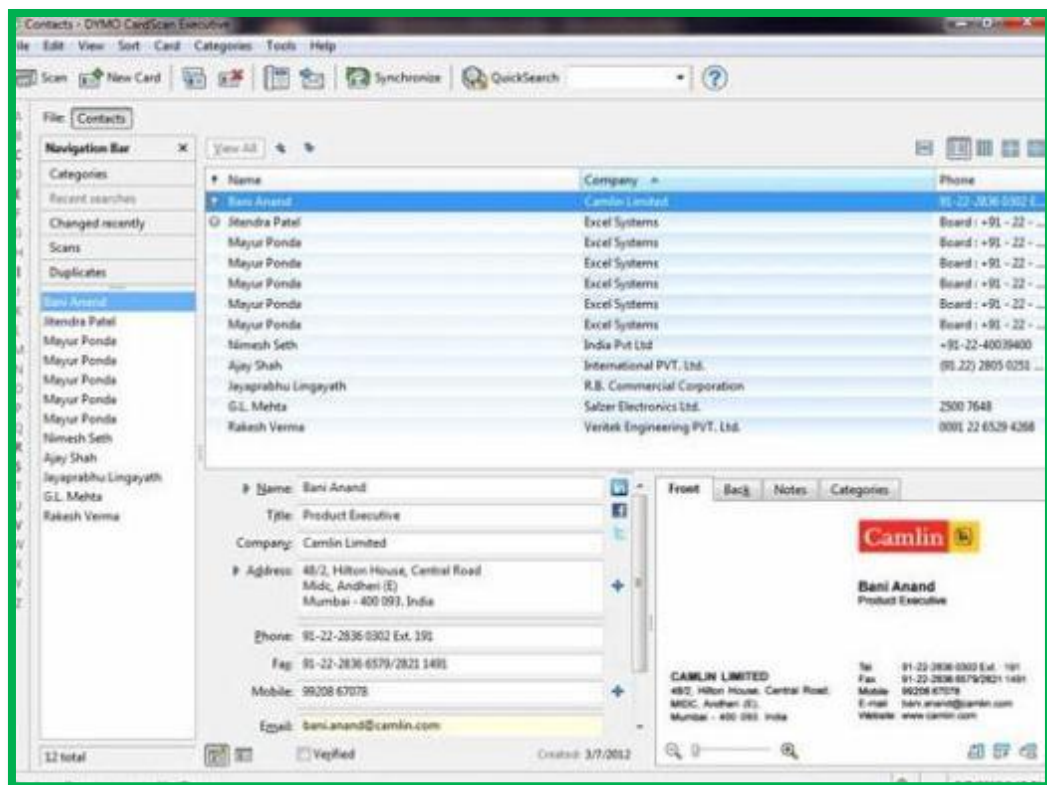


Figure 12: CSV File Exporting from CardScan Technology

(About.com. *Others Scanner Review*.2012. Photograph. printscan.about.com. Web. 4th March 2014)

The simple act of scanning a card is fast, **but it is very necessary to proof read the information that has been scanned before moving on to the next card.** Even though it scan with great accuracy but sometime the scanner would slightly misreading some cards, especially those with highly formatting fonts, logos, colors and designs. Double check on the information is time consuming but it is crucial to make sure that information is correct. Once the information is double checked, the users can upload either CSV file or Excel file contains a list of email subscribers into email marketing software provided by Email Marketing Provider. The process of uploading is designated in Figure 13.

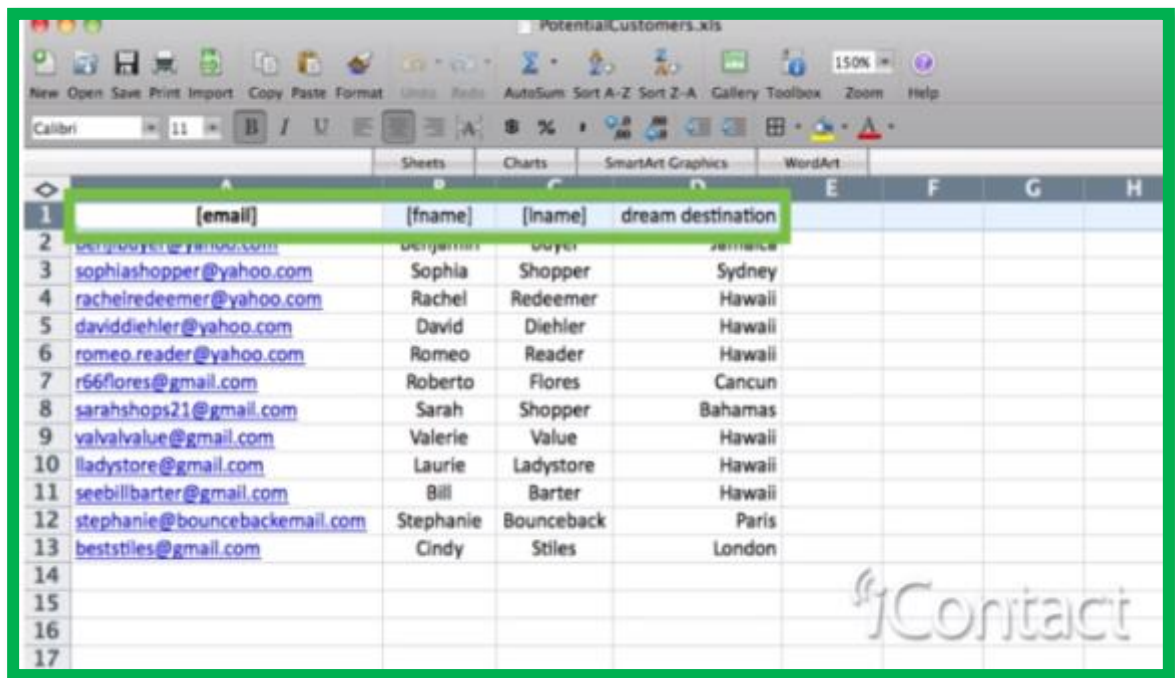


Figure 13: Uploading Email List using iContact Email Marketing Service (iContact. *Email Marketing Video Tutorials* .Screenshot. iContact.com. Web. 20th March 2014)

11.3 Step 3 - Choose a Professional Email Service Provider

Each ESP has their own niche and specializes in different aspects of email data and marketing, so which email marketing provider is right for VK?






					
Monthly Fee	\$50	\$48	\$60	\$50	\$60
Number of Contacts	50,000	30,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Number of email templates	150	150	130	170	200
List segmentation	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
A/B Testing	x	x	x	✓	x
Analyzing Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Website	http://www.icontact.v/	http://linkleads.vn/	http://filevietnam.com/	http://www.bizmail.vn/	http://blinkcontact.com/

Table 2: Chart Comparison among Best Professional Email Service Provider in VN (Own Source)

There are number of ESPs that provide email marketing service in Vietnam, including iContact, LinkLeads, FileVietnam, Bizmail and BlinkContact as described in Table 2. Most ESP charges a monthly fee of \$50-\$60 for sending 50,000 email contact to recipients and allow clients to choose from hundreds of beautiful email templates to get started creating their email. All email templates have been tested to work properly in all email pro-

grams such as Gmail, Yahoo, AOL and Microsoft Outlook which mean that recipients can see message exactly as sender intend it to be seen. Personalize email is possible using custom fields such as first name, last name or company name. ESP also produce a report to help clients track total number of email is delivered, how many people opened HTML email, how many recipients clicked on a link and how many people unsubscribed from this email campaign.

However, most of ESP in Vietnam, except for Bizmail does not offer A/B testing, also known as split testing. It is a method to determine which is the most effective in terms of encouraging opens or clicks between two campaign options. A/B testing divide your email campaigns randomly into two or more groups. Half of test group is sent Version A and the other half gets Version B. The result will be measured by the most opens rate or clicks rate to determine which layout, content or timing is more effective and that version will be sent to the remaining subscribers.

I propose VK to use email marketing service from iContact for 2 reasons:

- **iContact is known as a most recognized international outstanding player** in the email marketing world and their experience has encouraged them to keep things simple,
- Unlike other ESP, **iContact has created a collection of well-designed templates, tailored for specific industry, in particular construction industry.** The company has received good testimonials from some construction and real estate companies such as DQ Corporation, Creativity, CTGroup, Indochine Counsel, Unicons and IMG.

11.4 Step 4 - Craft Compelling Content and Determine Proper Format

11.4.1 HTML versus text only version

The very first thing that needs to determine is whether the company wants to send a multi-part message (an HTML and text email) or only a text email. The pros and cons of text only email and HTML email are discussing below. Text-only and HTML email does have several benefits and drawbacks that we may want to consider.

	Text-only	HTML
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No display or resolution issues: the main advantage of sending text emails is that everyone can read them. No matter what kind of browser, email programs recipients are using or what type of device, it will display properly without a problem. • Faster and easier to create: if business has limited in-house resources, a text only email is certainly faster and simple to create. The marketing manager only needs to write the content and hit the send button • Maximum inbox deliverability: one of the most common problems of email delivery is due to many different HTML components in email template. A text only email faces fewer challenges in getting into a recipient's inbox 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formatting: HTML email enables users to use table structures to organize text into blocks with different fonts, font sizes, colors, and bulleted list to make information easier for recipients to quickly scan and see the message. • Use of images and links: users can code text or images to link directly to company's website. • Full tracking capability: HTML email facilitates organization to have full access to measure how subscribers use and respond to email marketing by analyzing open rate, click through rate.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No images, no links • The downside of sending text emails is the limitation to include any formatting, images or links. The email might look boring with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display issues: it's a challenge to get emails template display correctly in all Email Service Providers including Microsoft Outlook Gmail, AOL, Yahoo! and Hotmail.

	<p>no colors, fonts, multiple columns or images except plain text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to track: a text-only email does not support tracking of email marketing. Because open rates are measured by using a pixelated image downloaded every time readers open mail and click through is tracked based on links clicked in email. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliverability issues: bad HTML code, too much bolded text, font colors, and images can direct email going to the spam or junk box instead of recipient's inbox. • Understanding of website programming: HTML email requires at least a basic understanding of coding the design but in reality, not many marketers have studied about HTML programming.
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Table 3: Comparison between HTML and Text version (Own Source)

What is the best solution for VK?

Being a design consultancy company that needs to use images of projects to convince clients design capabilities of VK team members, **a combination of both HTML and text based email is the best option.** In order to improve the performance of HTML and text email in terms of deliverability and display, the company should try to design a simple email marketing layout. Extraneous images, complex graphics and tables can increase the chance of improperly display which is also being marked as spam. Email clients only support limited HTML format, hence try not to use complicated formatting and set image dimension of 200x150 is good enough.

11.4.2 Structure of email

There are some important elements to be considered with each email design including subject line, layout, and offer or call-to-action (the call to action defines the action subscriber is supposed to take after they open up email).

- **"From" field:** avoid using "no-reply@company.com" or an individual's name, it's better to put company name in the "from" field so recipients instantly know who has

sent them the email. The company can set up “marketing@vkgroup.be” as an email account for all marketing activities.

- **Subject lines:** in fact, most of the recipients quickly scan the subject lines in their inbox before deciding which emails are worth their time and attention. Therefore, the subject line should clearly and concisely convey why it’s worth for recipients to use their precious time to read it. This can be a pressure task for marketing manager to do some brainstorming activities to come up with a compelling subject line that is likely to get your emails opened and the best email subject line is a short, descriptive sentence that provides the readers with a reason to explore the message further. Some effective email subject lines that the company can utilize:
 - VK Architects & Engineers reveals concept design for VinMec International Hospital
 - Chairman Van Kerckhove speaks at the official opening of VinMec International Hospital
 - Binh Chanh Pediatric Hospital won Future Healthcare Design Award
- **Email layout:** the layout of email marketing will direct audience’s eyes to specific area. Simple and brief is a good start. Using basic visual anchors with explanation below to draw readers’ attention to the email:
 - **Headline:** a headline draws attention to itself first then to the content below it. Using different font, color, or style will make headline noticeable and differentiate it from the text.
 - **Image:** After the reader opens email, the first thing that catches his attention is the layout or image because images and graphics draw attention to themselves then to adjacent text either to the left, right, or below the image.
 - **Lines and borders:** horizontal lines and borders draw attention to the content above them; vertical lines and borders draw attention to content on the left or right depending on the strength of the visual anchors. Boxed borders draw attention to the content within the box beginning in the upper left of the box.
 - **View option:** sometimes images and words don't appear in certain email applications. To ensure recipients can get our message, we should include a link that allows them to view an online version.

- **Header:** it's a good to include a logo and a navigation bar at the top of the email to reinforce company's brand name and encourage interaction.

- **Email design**

Most ESP allows users to choose either a list of available email templates (Message Builder) or easily add your own HTML codes and customize email as you wish which help to eliminate the need to hire a designer or HTML coder (Message Coder) as displayed in user interface in Figure 14.

- **Message Builder (email templates):** hundreds of templates are available through Message Builder applications that make it easy to customize colors, fonts and text. Users will be creating eye catching newsletters within minutes using the built-in drag and drop functionality
- **Message Coder (HTML editor):** this email marketing tool offers features like message builder toolbar for quick and easy email creation, message coders for custom HTML emails. Also, users can import HTML templates using the Message Coder feature instead of writing all the code from scratch.

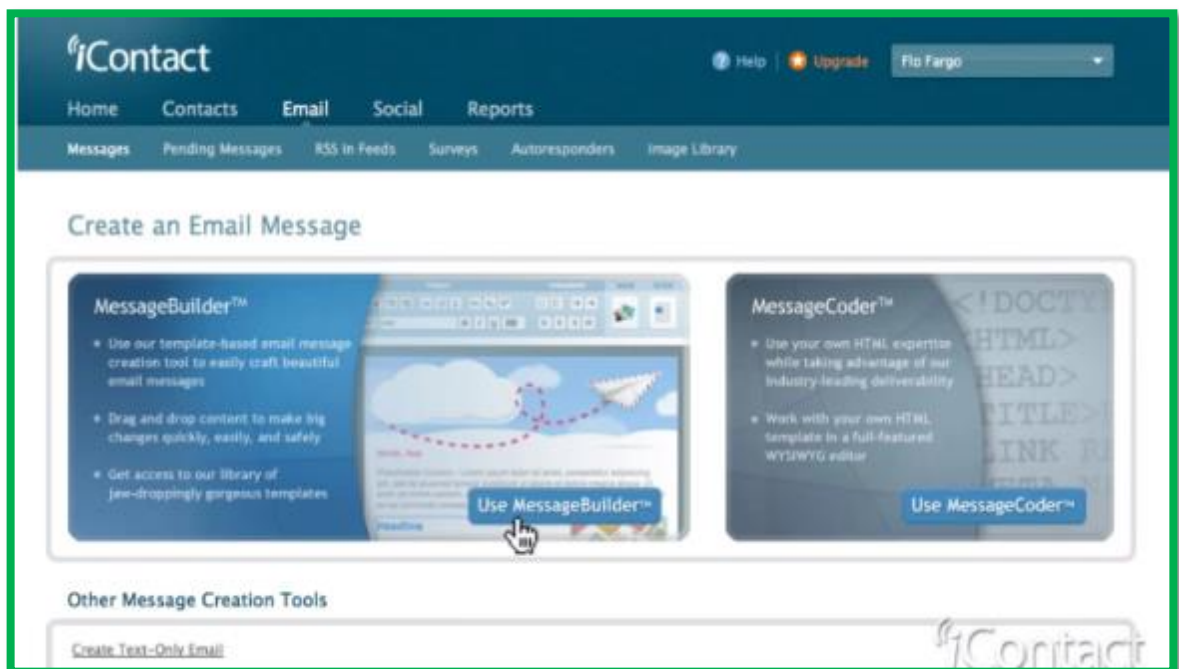


Figure 14: Creating an Email Message using iContact Email Marketing Service (iContact. *Email Marketing Video Tutorials .Screenshot*. iContact.com. Web. 25th March 2014)

- **Call to action**

Call to action is a clear and concise statement communicate what does business want their subscribers to do and why should they do it. Some examples of call to action for a physical product are “Order here”, “Start your trial now”, “Compare prices here”, “Finalize a purchase” or “Buy here”. In contrast, VK does not sell any physical products; they are selling expertise, knowledge and experience of architects and engineers in building design and it requires efforts, time and meetings to convince clients on design ability of VK team members. Hence, for AEC firm, a call to action is a graphic element incorporate into email to encourage recipients to click upon a link that opens a landing page where they can fill out a form or download a content offer such as “Click here”, “Watch now”, “Select this”, etc

11.4.3 Content matter

When a marketer compose an email, he needs to ask himself this question “What do my potential and current clients want to hear from me?”. Go back to the planning stages and recall the goals of VK email marketing is to increase Request for Proposal, enhance brand awareness, preferences and draw traffics to company website. Unlike other industries, AEC firms do not offer promotion newsletters to encourage purchase for a physical product; they offer professional design consultancy services to build apartments, shopping malls, healthcare facilities and complex projects. Therefore, what clients are looking to hear from ACE firms is the design of their current or upcoming projects and rely on these companies to provide helpful knowledge to help clients solve their problems. The most common items to include in email marketing for AEC firms are:

- **Update company news:** provide latest information on new signed projects, images of beautiful concept design, award winning projects, important company event and so on to keep company’s brand name in mind of customers.
- **Useful information:** the goal is educate clients to earn trust and position VK as an expert in Healthcare and Engineering design. The content of email must provide valuable articles addressing customers’ questions, concerns to convince clients that VK has the special expertise and in depth knowledge and capable of delivering good architectural and engineering drawings.

It is true that recipients are not likely to read email content that looks like it was copied and pasted from a magazine article. Trying to include too much information into an email message will cause it difficult to scan through the message which can possibly cause recipients to delete email or even worse report email as spam. Hence, when sending newsletters, remember that email content should always be kept as simple as possible by using short paragraphs and bullet points to make email easier to read.

11.4.4 Frequency option

The two questions every email marketer asked are:

- How often should we send emails?
- When is the best time to send emails?

Figuring out the right frequency and the best time to send out emails is a learning process. Since VK is just started to use email marketing, it is crucial to test different volumes of email and sending those volumes at different times. Here are some important guidelines to help increase the effectiveness of newsletters

- The frequency of newsletter depends upon the amount of useful information business can provide to their subscribers. At the moment, VK does not have much information to keep readers interested and also the company is facing a bit of human constraints due to lacking a marketing director. As a result of this, sending newsletter monthly or weekly will be a difficult task. In addition, the company offers professional consultancy services for building design, not a type of product or service consumed in mass volume, therefore **deliver newsletter one or twice per quarter makes more sense than sending monthly newsletters.**
- The most common recommendation amongst email marketers when asked, “When is the best time to send email?” and the answer has always been, “**Tuesday through Thursday morning, between 8 and 10am**” because people tend to open their email in the morning. The company can apply this advice for a few times and remember to keep track of the time they sent, then running some other tests to figure out what is the optimized time to send emails to receive a higher number of open rate and click through rate.

11.5 Step Five: Measure Your Results

Measuring the results of every email marketing campaign is vital to increase effectiveness of company's marketing efforts. **iContact provides users with comprehensive, detailed reports covering everything from bounces to open rates and click rates.** When interpreting these statistics, it's important to compare them to the previous data to figure out what are the necessary actions or strategies to apply for next time to get better results with each email message using constant and incremental improvements. ESP automatically issues a tracking report with interactive graphs and figures show users everything about their email marketing campaign includes:

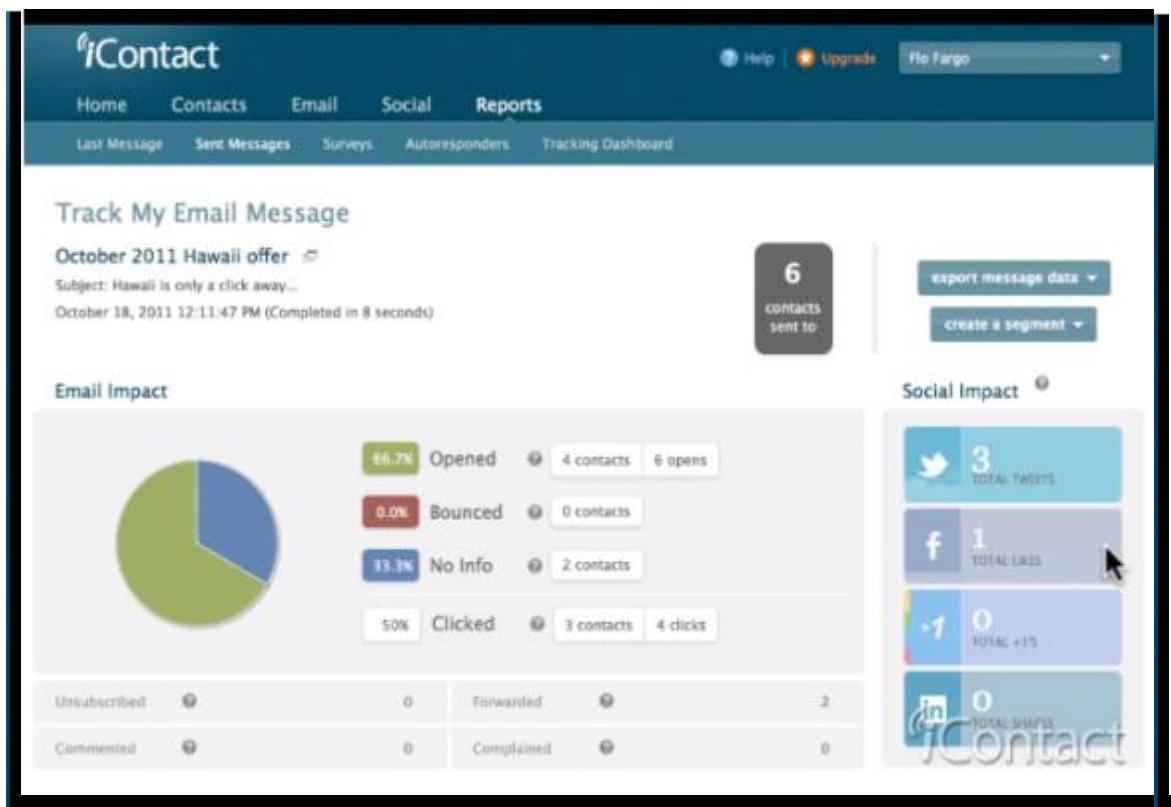


Figure 15: Email Marketing Report for Open Rate, Bounce Rate, Click through Rate by iContact Email Marketing Service

(iContact. *Email Marketing Video Tutorials* .Screenshot. iContact.com. Web. 25th March 2014)

11.5.1 Open rate

Open rate is a measure of how many recipients on an email list open or view a particular email. Most email marketers are trying hard to optimize their subject lines for higher open rates. However, it is important to understand that the open rate is not a 100% accurate measure to determine the success of email marketing. When each email is sent out, ESP automatically add a code that requests an invisible image from their web servers. Consequently, when the recipients opens email, the image is downloaded and ESP will record that download as an open. In contrast, if recipients open email using mobile or any email applications which support only text based message, we cannot record that open rates.

11.5.2 Clicked through rate

Email marketing should include calls to action and links to specific campaigns to measure click through rate which **demonstrates percentage when a URL link has been clicked to view the webpage it directs to** base on the number of contacts who actually opened the email. It is considered to be a real reporting indicator because a higher click through rate data shows exactly what information people are interested in and can be used to further segment contact list for better targeting of subscribers.

11.5.3 Bounced

Bounced measures the percentage of emails sent that could not be delivered to the recipient's inbox, including hard bounces and soft bounces. Soft bounces are the result of a temporary problem with a valid email address, such as a full inbox or a server problem. Hard bounces are the result of an invalid or non-existent email address and these emails will never be successfully delivered. ESP will remove hard bounce addresses from client's email list because too many hard bounces are likely to be considered as a spammer.

11.5.4 Unsubscribed

The unsubscribed data indicates total number of recipients that clicked the unsubscribe link in the campaign. In every HTML template and in the plain text version, there is a special unsubscribe tag. If clients don't add the link by themselves, one will be added automatically by ESP. When recipients click on unsubscribe link, the click is recorded, and the software works out which subscriber, list and campaign it is associated with. In the campaign report, users can also click through to see details of unsubscribed recipients.

11.5.5 Forwarded

ESP tracking report also measure the rate at which recipients forward or share email with others. This metric is significant for company to increase customer base because when recipients found the content useful and interesting, they will pass along that email to a group of their friends or colleague. Company should keep track on this figure to see how many new people we can add to your database.

11.5.6 Complaint

Complaint rates are monitored through ESP system and calculated as a percentage of all the delivered emails for a single campaign. The industry standard for an acceptable percentage of complaints per email campaign is 0.01%. A higher complaint rate can result in your account being closed temporarily or even permanently.

11.5.7 Social Sharing

Figure 16 displays a measurement of social sharing **that indicate the number of view your emails has generated across some of the most important social networks:** Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterests. To increase campaign visibility, ESP makes it easy for clients to insert social sharing button that allows subscribers to pass along insightful newsletters to prospective subscribers and expands email subscriber list.

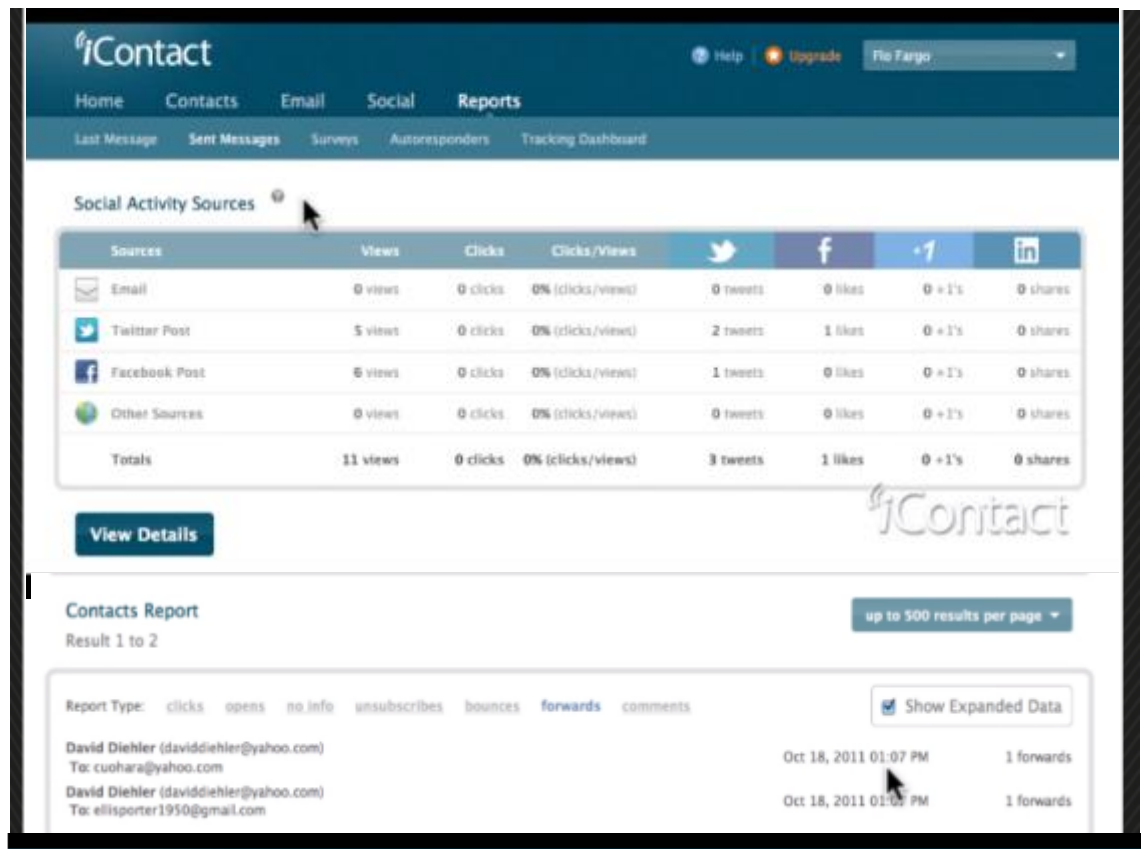


Figure 16: Email Marketing Report for Social Activity Sources by iContact Email Marketing Service

(icontact. *Email Marketing Video Tutorials* .Screenshot. iContact.com. Web. 25th March 2014)

Email marketing reports vary widely based on email content, contact list quality, timing and many other factors. Company should use information and figure generated by ESP to make some necessary modification as needed to improve quality and effectiveness of next marketing campaign.

12 COST ANALYSIS

To identify how effective is an email marketing campaign, it is vital to calculate the Return on Investment (ROI) against revenue generated from the campaign. Calculate ROI for any physical product is relative easy based on the number of online or offline sales that came directly from the email marketing campaign. However, due to the nature of Architecture, Engineer and Construction Company that provide design consultancy services, the measurement of ROI can be quite difficult. The return is measured based on the number of contract and the value of each design proposal. This is the mathematical formula of ROI:

$$\% \text{ ROI} = (\text{Revenue} - \text{Total Cost}) / \text{Total Cost}$$

The process of sending email communication comes at a cost. Here is some major cost components associated with email marketing:

Type of cost	Cost description	Calculation	Situation
Variable cost	Cost of employee working on email marketing	\$3.75*24	\$90
	Email template design pricing	\$50*2	\$100
	Email copywriting cost	\$50*2*2	\$200
	Photographer cost (image for each completed project)	\$500	\$500
Fixed cost	Cost of Cardscan Executive	1 piece	\$350
	Fee for email service provider	\$50	\$150
Total Cost			\$1390

Table 4: Quarterly cost analysis forecast for setting up email marketing for VK Vietnam (Own Source)

12.1 Variable cost:

- **Overhead cost**

We also need to factor in overhead cost of how much time employee has been working on email marketing, in particular the time to insert, manage and delete duplicated business card information into a CSV file. This CSV file is considered as a list of current and potential customers to send email newsletter to. Suppose that marketing executive spend 2 hours a week, then the time spend was 24 hours for the quarter. Next, calculate employee effective hourly rate (monthly salary / 160 working hours per month) and multiply that by the time spent on email. Our marketing employee earns \$600/month; their effective hourly rate is \$3.75/hour. If they spend 24 hours a quarter on email, they are spending \$90 on email.

- **Template design cost**

Most ESP provides a list of available templates for customers to choose as part of their subscription. However, I recommend the company to use email template design service because a custom designed email template give email marketing a branded and professional looking that better grab attention from recipients and improve brand recognition. Some ESP provides an additional cost for email template design prices ranging from \$30-\$50 per template.

- **Copywriting cost**

Marketing director can be responsibility for writing content of email marketing or hiring a professional email marketing copywriter can make email marketing campaign efforts more successful. A copywriter can assist in creating eye catching subject lines, interesting newsletter content to enhance readability, increase open rate, click through rate and conversions of emails. Many copywriter offers hourly cost range from \$40 - \$100 per hour.

- **Email image cost**

Sending information of new finished projects designed by VK Vietnam is one of major content of email newsletter that require the use of project's images. A professional photographer know how to use Photoshop Insider to adjust lighting, colors setting to produce great and attractive photos of VK's projects. Some photographers charge a professional fee per project and some charge hourly cost. Photos of VinMec International Hospital in Hanoi were taken by a professional photographer that the company hired at a fee of \$500 per pro-

ject. It is better to continue using photographer to take pictures for company's next projects.

12.2 Fixed cost

- **Cardcan Executive 800**

DYMO CardScan 800c Executive is an excellent choice for the company to scan business cards automatically into a soft copy that let the users view data such as contact name, phone number, company address and etc from both front and back images of business cards. The price of Cardscan is \$350 quoted on Amazon.com.

- **Monthly ESP fee**

Since the company is using an email marketing system like iContact that charge a fixed monthly cost of \$50 for sending 50,000 emails, fee for email service provider per quarter is \$150. Most email service provider is accountable for sending email to clients, tracking and providing a free analysis tools as part of their subscription, hence in this case, we do not calculate the cost of per email sent.

Any architecture, engineer company only target real estate developers, brokers, construction companies, is it important to develop a quality email list over time rather than purchase a list from third party; therefore the cost of rented email list is equal to 0.

13 TIME ANALYSIS

Setting up an email marketing campaign for any company comprises many tasks and requires a certain time period to complete email marketing. Critical Path Method (CPM) can be utilized to identify both critical and non-critical activities from the start to the end of the project, as well as to recognize the time duration that each activity will take and the dependencies between the activities. The following activities are the required predecessors that the company must finish.

Activities	Description	Predecessor	Time (week)
A	Analysis current email marketing situation for the company		2
B	Setting objectives of email marketing plan for the company	A	1
C	Setting KPI to measure objectives of email marketing plan for the company	B	1
D	Order Cardscan 800c Executive	B	1
E	Building quality email list	B	4
F	Choose a professional email service provider	B	2
G	Writing subject line, content of newsletter	F	1
H	Designing email template to send newsletter	G	1
I	Testing	E,F,G,H	1
J	Adjust email marketing plan, design and message content after testing.	I	1
K	Sending email marketing newsletter	J	1

L	Measuring the results	K	1
M	Writing report of email marketing and make recommendation for next time.	L	2

Table 5: Key activities for setting up email marketing campaign (Own Source)

04-02-2014 17:12:29	Activity Name	On Critical Path	Activity Time	Earliest Start	Earliest Finish	Latest Start	Latest Finish	Slack (LS-ES)
1	A	Yes	2	0	2	0	2	0
2	B	Yes	1	2	3	2	3	0
3	C	no	1	3	4	12	13	9
4	D	no	2	3	5	11	13	8
5	E	Yes	4	3	7	3	7	0
6	F	Yes	2	3	5	3	5	0
7	G	Yes	1	5	6	5	6	0
8	H	Yes	1	6	7	6	7	0
9	I	Yes	1	7	8	7	8	0
10	J	Yes	1	8	9	8	9	0
11	K	Yes	1	9	10	9	10	0
12	L	Yes	1	10	11	10	11	0
13	M	Yes	2	11	13	11	13	0
	Project	Completion	Time	=	13	weeks		
	Number of	Critical	Path(s)	=	4			

Figure 17: Possible completion times for each activity (in weeks) (Own Source)

Figure 17 presents which tasks are critical such as analysis of current email marketing situation, setting objectives, building quality email list, choosing a professional email service provider, write email content and etc. These activities must be started and finished on time to ensure that the project ends on schedule. A delay in any critical path activity will delay completion of the project. Based on WinQSP results, optimal solution to complete the project is 13 weeks and the earliest start, earliest finish, latest start and latest finish of all activities are also mentioned above.

14 RISK ANALYSIS

Risk analysis is used to determine the probabilities of various adverse events that likely to affect the success of email marketing. Identifying unexpected events at the start of project will help company prevent and mitigate risks.

14.1 Spam flitters affect deliverability

With the increasing of email accounts in recent years, many recipients are receiving many spam emails every day. To reduce spam complaints, most Internet Service Providers have to provide spam flitter methods that allow users to block unsolicited messages. Therefore, the biggest concerns for permission email marketers today are email bounces, spam filters and blacklists which affect email deliverability. Undeliverable emails could lead to the loss of customers and prospects. Below are some methods that the company can do to avoid being flagged as spam:

- **Start building a great email list**

The most important thing that we can do to enhance email deliverability and avoid being marked as spam is to build a quality email list. Purchasing a rented list from a third party cannot guaranteed the source of that list and increase the opportunity of being marked as spam because recipients might not actually opt in to receive emails from our company. Make sure that all emails in database are opted into our email marketing program and received permission to send emails to these clients.

- **Use a reputable email marketing service**

The email marketing services that we select must has high sender reputation, obey CAN-SPAM law and maintain strong permission policies according to Internet Service Providers regulations. iContact can help to deliver email to all recipients and when a problem arise, they will solve the problem on our behalf.

- **Manage subject line**

Subject line is also a determinant factor to be flagged as spam. Some primary rules that need to remembered are:

- Keep the subject line short but not less than five or six words
- Do not uses spam words such as “Congratulation”, “Click to email”, “Free offer”, “Don’t delete” and etc.

14.2 Touch frequency/Timing strategy

In the age of email overload, in some industries, especially construction industry, even sending email newsletter once per week can seem like it is too much. In addition, using a wrong timing strategy such as holiday or busy time can ruin the effectiveness of email marketing including a low percentage of open rates, click through rate and increase the probability of being marked as spam when recipients feel uncomfortable receiving email. However, there is no universal right time or wrong time to send an email. A good email frequency is about connecting on the days and times that generate the best engagement from consumer base. Experiment and test with different days and timings, then monitor the results to find the “right time” for your specific audience. MailChimp – an ESP observed a few summaries of their users’ send data and concluded that emails that are sent between 12-4pm on Wednesday and Thursday usually have the highest open rate.

CONCLUSION

The Vietnam economy has examined the stability of economic growth at a moderate rate of around 5.4% in 2014 and inflation is expected to increase to around 8.2% at the end of the year. Foreign investors still rank Vietnam as an attractive destination for future investments and the country still remains one of the most popular destinations for expansion within the Asian region. As being a developing country, Vietnam requires significant infrastructure investment to meet its development needs and to sustain strong economic growth into the future.

Construction and related services includes architecture, engineering services, technical consultancy, construction management and project management present attractive opportunities for both local and foreign business as the country still address a high demand for infrastructure, building and industrial facilities. The construction sector is a competitive market which many international architecture and engineers services firms already have a foothold in Vietnam. VK Architects & Engineers can compete to other firms in term of expertise and reputation toward new, innovative approach to design consultancy services. However, the company needs to spend more effort to improve its marketing activities to build brand awareness and help clients to recognize its outstanding architect and engineering design services. One of the most effective direct marketing strategies the company should rely on is email communication. It is considered to be a powerful and cost effective method enables company to proactively communicate with existing and previous customers to encourage loyalty and repeat business and at the same time to efficiently acquire new customers.

With the development of technology, an email marketing platform is the foundation of modern business marketing. To succeed with B2B email marketing, company should first determine objectives of email marketing program, decide email marketing frequency and how to collect customer's information for mailing list. Typing information on business card manually into mailing list can take lot of time; VK can utilize Cardscan Executive 800c to scan both fronts and backs side of business cards, then categorize data into different field. The next step is to draft a compelling email newsletter that deepens relationship with audience through effective subject line to get messages opened, interesting and specific content to get those messages read. Marketers may also need to choose an Email Service

Provider which is specifically optimized for the purpose of how to send messages, track responses, keep up with subscribes and handle any technical problems that might arise. I recommend the company to choose a well-known ESP - iContact to host email marketing services on their servers. iContact also make it very easy for business to comply with the CAN-SPAM Act regulations. They would automatically include an unsubscribe link in every email sent through their service and remove these addresses from your lists.

The total cost for email communication program is calculated at approximately \$1,400 for the first quarter and the cost will continue to decrease for next quarter as some fees are paid for a single installment such as cost for purchasing Cardscan Executive or cost for design corporate email template. WinQSP software is employed to evaluate total time needed to complete the project and time estimated to implement email marketing is 13 weeks. All necessary activities that need to be performed are listed and analyzed the earliest time and completion time of each activity to make sure project is completed on time. Risk analysis is also examined to identify potential events might happened that affect the effectiveness of email communication program including spam flitter and wrong timing strategy. Using reputable marketing service, building great opt in email list and writing good subject line without comprising any spam words are solutions to prevent and mitigate risks. In conclusion, email marketing is easy to implement and can get direct, measurable results and consistently provide a high return on investment. Clearly, email marketing will continue to remain a preferred marketing channel for business to communicate and build relationship with both current and potential customers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	Architecture, Engineering & Construction
AMCHAM	American Chamber of Commerce
CANCHAM	Canadian Chamber of Commerce
CPM	Critical Path Method
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
CSV	Comma Separated Value
ESP	Email Service Providers
EUROCHAM	European Chamber of Commerce
HTML	Hyper Text Markup Language
IP	Internet Protocol
ISP	Internet Service Providers
CAN-SPAM	United States' Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing
ROI	Return on Investment
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
TCTR	Total Click Through Rate
UCTR	Unique Click Through Rate
VK	VK Architects & Engineers
WTO	World Trade Organization

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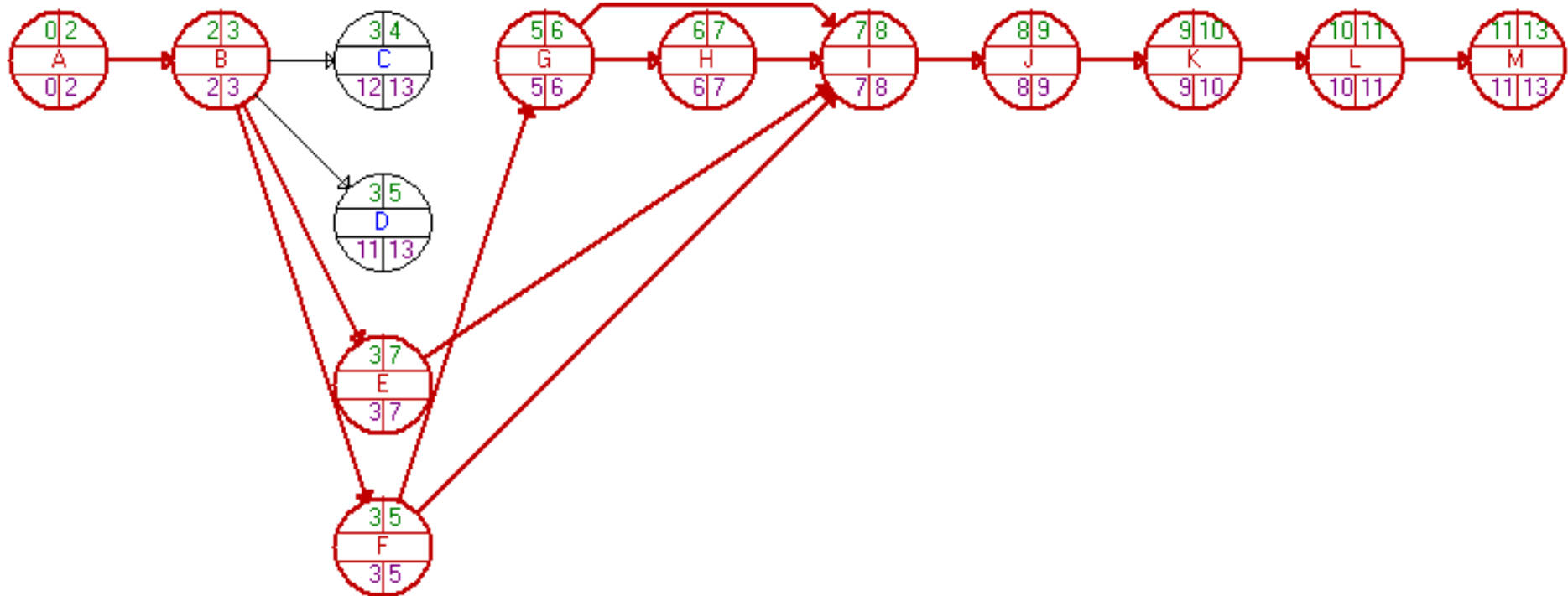
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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Graphic solution for email marketing campaign

Appendix II: Gantt chart solution for email marketing campaign

APPENDIX I: GRAPHIC SOLUTION FOR EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN



APPENDIX II: GANTT CHART SOLUTION FOR EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR VK VIETNAM

