

Email Marketing

Your Free Guide to Effective & Responsible Email Marketing

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Overview

This free guide is designed to help webmasters, small business owners, and marketing professionals use email marketing to successfully and responsibly promote their business, products, and services. Email is the oldest form of marketing on the Internet and it is the most cost-effective way to communicate with your target market, generate traffic to your website, and increase your sales. The goal of this guide is to provide you with real techniques you can use to successfully promote your business using email.

SPAM Notice

This guide is NOT a resource for SPAM (Unsolicited Commercial Emails). If you are looking for tips or resources related to SPAM you are wasting your time reading this guide.

Four Steps to an Effective Email Campaign

1. Building Opt-In Mailing Lists

Before you send a single email, you must have recipients to receive your message. Building a targeted list of potential customers is probably the hardest step involved in using email marketing, but it is also the most important. The quality and size of your Mailing List can make or break your email campaign and help your response rates dramatically rise or fall.

So how do you create a targeted mailing list?

The golden rule of building a targeted Opt-In Mailing list is provide your prospects something they value in exchange for their contact information and permission to send them messages. This can be done many ways and I have included a few examples below:

Building an Opt-In List Online

Assuming you have a website, there are several ways to collect user information directly from your site. The best part about collecting user information electronically is you can avoid timely data input because if you correctly collect information from your site it can be readily available for mailings and updates.

- Publish an e-Newsletter with information relevant to your industry or business.
- Offer your web users a discount or coupon in exchange for their contact information
- Make part of your website, or information on your website, exclusive to people that provide their contact information.

Building an Opt-In List Offline

If you own a retail business and have a store or physical location where customers come to purchase your products or services you have the opportunity to build your mailing list there too. A few examples are included below:

- A common marketing technique of restaurants is two offer a business card drawing for a free lunch or dinner.
- Each time someone makes a purchase at your store or restaurant you should offer them the choice of joining your newsletter to learn about future promotions and specials.

Be creative when thinking of ways to collect customer and prospect information from your place of business or website. Don't forget the golden rule of building an Opt-In list – provide something people will value in exchange for their information.

2. **Plan Your Email Marketing Campaign**

Once you have the tools and procedures in place to collect information from your prospects and customers, it is time to develop the campaign and messages you are going to send to them. Email marketing, like most marketing techniques, requires repetition to build awareness and increase sales. When embarking on email marketing make sure to develop a plan and think about the following things:

- *Campaign Objective*
What are you trying to accomplish with this campaign? Increased sales, brand awareness, more traffic to your website, etc.
- *Target Audience*
Is this campaign going to reach your entire mailing list or a subset? Remember, a message to a current customer and a message to a prospect should be very different and require separate campaigns.
- *Message Frequency*
How many messages are you going to send to accomplish the goals of your campaign? How often are you going to send your messages? Once a week, Once a month, or once a Quarter? Remember that repetition usually positively affects awareness and purchases so plan accordingly.
- *Email Messages*
When drafting the actual text for your email it is important to keep it concise and focused. A single email should contain no more than one core message. Anything more than that can become confusing and dilute the email. If your email is about the 4th of July Widget sale you are having keep the message focused on that. You can always send another email announcing the new store opening you will be having in the Fall.

I also recommend adding campaign projections to your plan. Things like click-through rates, # of undeliverable emails, # of sales / leads, etc can be helpful in planning future campaigns. If you are way off your projections in the beginning, don't worry, you'll get better after a few campaigns and a little practice.

3. **Delivery of Email**

While actually sending the email might seem like a procedural step, there are several things you can do when sending your email that will help increase it's effectiveness.

- *Send you message in HTML Format*
People have come to expect HTML emails and they offer several advantages over plain text messages. HTML format enables you to send graphics and hyperlinks in your message. While the content is the most important part of your email, a nice presentation definitely will help. It creates a more professional image of your company and will help your email stand out in your recipients already cluttered inbox.
- *Send Personalized Messages Whenever Possible*
When sending messages to a group of people do not put all the email addresses in the BCC line of the email, or even worse... the CC line of the email. People that subscribe to your Opt-In mailing list have given you permission to send them messages only and don't want their address shared with everyone on your list.

There are several inexpensive mailing programs available that allow you to send email to a large list at once using each person's email in the TO line of the email.

- *ALWAYS Include an Opt-Out Option*
This point cannot be stressed enough! The reality is that not all people will want to be on your list forever. Furthermore, if someone doesn't want to receive your message why would you want to continue wasting your time and resources sending them information. Make sure you make it easy for people to remove their email address from your list and make sure you honor ALL remove requests.

4. **Campaign Follow-Up & Tracking**

You've built your mailing list, created a comprehensive campaign plan, and sent your message. You're almost done! Now it's time to evaluate your results and "scrub" your mailing list. Without proper follow-up many of your efforts in the first three steps will be wasted.

- *Scrub Your Mailing List*
In a perfect world, every email address in your list would be valid and never change. Unfortunately, we don't live in a perfect world and having a completely valid mailing list is close to impossible. After sending your emails, collect all the "bounce back," and undeliverable emails you receive and make sure to remove them from your list or correct them if possible. It is much easier if you do this after each campaign versus waiting until you've sent many campaigns. You're inbox will thank you, and it's much more manageable to update 100 addresses than 1,000.
- *Track Your Results*
Now it's time to compare your actual results to those that you predicted in your campaign plan. Did you see the increase in traffic you expected? Did sales increase by 5%, 10%, or 20%? By tracking each email you send you can begin to understand what is working and what isn't. Maybe you will realize people respond greater to product A versus product B. Make sure to think about every variable in each campaign (i.e. pictures, length of text, day and time the email was sent, etc).

In Conclusion

I hope this guide helps you successfully implement Email Marketing as a tool for your business. All the information provided has been tested and used successfully to promote both products and services on the web for over 3 years.

Sincerely,

John Oswald
Founder
Streamline Direct

For More Information

Streamline Direct has created Direct Send, a self-serve email marketing tool designed specifically for small and home-based businesses that do not have the time or technical expertise, to execute all the techniques listed above. For more information on the Direct Send please click below:

[Direct Send](#)