

Profitable Email Marketing Basics

GeneaLabs

Profitable Email Marketing Basics

Build A List, Retain Subscribers, Get New Clients, Make Money

An email newsletter, is one best tools to convert leads into clients and make sales. I know it's hard to believe but every time I click send, I make new sales and receive new inquiries from prospects who want to work with me! And here's the best part — It's not hard! You can build a high-quality, responsive email list of consumers who want to hear from you, want to know what you're up to, and want to buy from you!

Just like every other business owner out there, I started with less than 10 people on my email list, and even though it was only going to friends and family, I was so scared to send my very first email blast. My stomach was flip-flopping like crazy. But then I hit send and within 30 minutes, I had two new referrals that turned into clients.

It was awesome! I was ready to do it all the time!

Email Marketing = Profits & Opportunities

Email marketing helps position you as an expert your industry, establish credibility and trust in your market, build relationships with your audience, and stay top of mind for prospects and referral sources.

Some marketing experts say email marketing is dead. But email is still the top communication tool successful marketers use on a daily basis! And, it works — not just for me, but for thousands of businesses around the globe.

Here's the bottom line — If you can write an email to a friend about a cool product, you can publish an e-zine that brings home the bacon.

How Email Marketing Can Help Your Business Grow

Email marketing is using email to get your marketing message in front of your audience. It is an essential tool to growing your business in the fast-paced world of internet business because it offers open, conversational, and interactive communications.

The most popular form of email marketing is the email newsletter or ezine. Permission-based email marketing also includes special email promotions, daily deals emails, solo blasts, advertising, follow up sequences and auto responders, email courses, and more.

Email marketing is popular because it is relatively easy, quick to get started, and inexpensive.

When done right, email marketing can also generate profit. The premise behind email marketing is that you as a business owner build a list of clients, customers, prospects, and subscribers who want to hear from you. You then market to them by email regularly to stay top of mind and make more sales.

You may be reading this thinking that email marketing has already hit its peak, that everyone's doing it, and that maybe you shouldn't even bother because all people seem to complain about these days is their overcrowded inboxes. But rest assured, email marketing is one strategy you shouldn't ignore.

Email newsletters that deliver real value still get read, saved, shared, and clicked. Plus, email marketing is a great way to stay in touch with your audience, increase brand exposure, continue to deliver value, and cement your authority status.

10 Ways Email Marketing Can Help Your Business Grow

No matter what type of business you have, a value-added email newsletter can be a great tool to help build your business. Publishing an ezine helps you stay in front of your

customers and prospects, increase your marketing touch points, and generate more leads and referrals.

1. Save Budget And Trees By Going Digital

Save on design fees, printing, postage, envelopes and mail handling, not to mention the fact that your ezine will get to your audience much faster than good old snail mail.

2. Increase Brand Recognition

Including your logo, tagline, color palette, brand graphics, and photo in every issue even will help build brand awareness even if they don't read your newsletter. Seeing your logo even for a split second, helps your audience remember you.

3. Connect With Your Target Market

Email marketing helps you stay in touch with your audience on a regular basis, keeping you at the top of their minds and the tip of their tongues, ensuring that when your services or products are needed they will buy from you or refer you to their friends, family, and business associates.

4. Increase Credibility

Consistent, quality email marketing with relevant and valuable content helps you gain the trust of your target market making it much easier for you to promote and sell your products or services.

5. Educate Your Audience About Your Business

Your email newsletter is a great place to keep your clients up to date on all of your services, products and talents, enticing them to expand their relationship with you and increase profits from your existing customer base with the "I didn't know you do that, can you do it for me?" response.

6. Create New Revenue Streams

Use your e-zine to recommend and refer products or services that earn you a commission (affiliate programs), to sell your own products or services, or to sell ad space in your newsletter.

7. Organize Your Industry Knowledge

Gather all of the articles you have written for your newsletter on a single topic and combine them into one single document to create an information product, a new learning program, a special report, a tips sheet, or an ebook.

8. Attract New Opportunities

Publishing an email newsletter can help you generate new opportunities such as strategic partnerships, joint ventures, media interviews, speaking engagements, and more. All it takes is the right person to see your message at the right time. The opportunity may not even come from a subscriber, but someone your email newsletter was forwarded to!

9. Expand Your Network

Email marketing helps you expand your network and build your list by allowing you to capture the email addresses of your website visitors with a subscribe box or opt-in box. This allows them to give you permission to market to them via email. Remember to promote your email newsletter or ezine in places like your email signature and on your business card to encourage prospects to visit your website and subscribe.

10. Reach A Wider Audience

Attract more prospects and new clients to your website by repurposing your email newsletter content on your blog or submitting your newsletter articles to news bureaus, public relations websites, and newsletter article directories.

5 Core Email Marketing Tactics Covered In This Guide

Every client we work with leverages email marketing in some way and over the years, I have noticed similarities in the processes and systems that successful marketers use to maximize their results.

The process for successful email marketing — email marketing that creates the results you want, like a growing list, loyal subscribers, new leads, new clients, and more sales — can be boiled down into five simple strategies.

In fact, the best practices of email marketing success are in direct alignment with the best practices of basic human communication. You just need to:

- Operate with high integrity and care
- Create a real connection and build relationships
- Deliver what you promise
- Be upfront about your communication
- Set clear expectations
- Provide amazing value and high-quality content
- Respect your subscribers and list members, and their inboxes
- Allow list members to leave the conversation at any time with ease

The 5 Strategies You Need To Know:

Five steps, done right, are all you need to knock it out of the park with your email marketing. And the best part is that while some of these strategies may seem new to you when it comes to email marketing, the core approach to all of them, and email marketing in general is super simple.

This handy guide on Profitable Email Marketing Basics, will cover:

1. **Creating a Solid Foundation**

- How To Choose The Right Email Marketing Service
 - Email Marketing Design Tips To Elevate Your Brand
 - Set A Publishing Schedule
2. **Getting Permission**
 - Why Permission Is Critical To Your Success
 - Single Opt-In Or Double Opt-In
 - Make Opting-In A No Brainer
 3. **Leveraging The Tools At Hand**
 - Make Unsubscribing From Your List As Easy As Possible
 - A Thank You Page Is The First Step To A Strong Relationship
 4. **Providing Undeniable Value**
 - How to Write Effective Email Subject Lines
 - Simple But Effective Copywriting Tips
 - Avoid Email Newsletter Writer's Block
 - Avoid Email Marketing Death By The Lazy Unsubscribe
 5. **Testing And Retaining Subscribers**
 - The One Critical Tactic To Make or Break Email Success
 - The Key to Understanding Your Subscribers
 - Ensure Subscribers Recognize Your Brand And Emails
 - Create A Lasting List Of Loyal Subscribers
 6. **BONUS: The Worst And Best Practices Lists**
 - 11 Email Marketing WORST Practices You Should Avoid Like the Plague
 - The Best Practices To Remember

Creating A Solid Foundation: How to Choose The Right Email Marketing Provider

If you want your email messages to reach your subscribers, you must sign up with a reputable, email marketing service provider (EMSP). If you try to send bulk email from your desktop email application like Outlook, you risk getting flagged as a spammer by your own Internet Service Provider, by your email service provider, and/or your recipient's email service providers, like Yahoo or Google.

If you get flagged as a spammer for sending bulk emails from your personal account or sending too many emails with the same or similar subject lines, you risk having EVERY email you send — not just your newsletter — get blocked as spam. And you risk them being blocked at the server level, meaning your emails won't even make it to your subscribers' spam folder.

Plus, not using a reputable, trusted email marketing service provider sends a message to consumers about you and your business. It tells them you're either:

- Too cheap to spend money on your business (so why would they spend money with you).
- Not confident in your abilities and afraid to invest in your business because you may not make it (so why would they spend money with you).
- Out of touch with current laws and regulations (and they'll question whether or not you really know what you're talking about).
- Not as successful as you portray yourself to be, maybe you can't afford professional email marketing services (so you must not be that good and I shouldn't hire you).

Cheaping Out = Missing Out.

Choosing to save a few bucks and email your list from your personal email account also means you don't get to take advantage of all the awesome features that an email marketing service provider offers, like:

- Automatic list management
- Automatic unsubscribes
- Tagging and reporting
- List segmentation for targeted marketing
- Email analytics and data

Plus, to be honest, it is COMPLETELY DISRESPECTFUL to your audience. It tells your subscribers that you don't really care about them. It sends the message that you'd rather save a few bucks than put their needs first — needs like the ability to easily unsubscribe automatically. Just don't do it.

Email Marketing Service Providers

It is critical that you use a reputable, high-quality email marketing service provider that provides you with the tools you need to easily and automatically manage your list, and your subscribers to easily join and leave your list whenever they want to.

There are a multitude of email marketing providers available, all with different features, different terms, and different benefits — and some are definitely better than others, but which you choose ultimately depends on your short-term business needs, long-term business goals, budget, and technical savvy.

Some email marketing providers we recommend you check out are:

- MailChimp (*This is who we use. Their templates are responsive and they're easy to customize.*)
- Get Response
- Active Campaign
- Convert Kit
- Aweber

- iContact
- Infusionsoft
- Office Autopilot
- Ontraport
- MyEmma
- Vertical Response

There are definitely more providers out there than those listed above, but these are the ones we have used ourselves or worked with in some way through our clients.

The email marketing service providers I mentioned above all:

- Enforce strict rules in accordance with email CAN-SPAM laws — which helps make sure your email marketing messages get delivered.
- Work tirelessly to keep their email services white listed (liked) by internet service providers and email service providers.
- Provide you with the ability to gather email subscribes or email opt-ins on your website automatically, as well as offer automatic unsubscribes.
- Provide the ability to track and measure your email marketing campaign results, opens, click-throughs, and more.
- Help you manage your email marketing list automatically

Which Email Marketing Provider Is Right For You?

The answer to that question comes with knowing what you intend to do with your email list, list size, broadcast frequency, and how you plan to use your list over time. Once you have the answers to these questions, you can dig in, do your homework, and select the best email marketing provider for your newsletter. Trust me, moving your list from one provider to another isn't fun or easy — if you can make the right choice now, you'll be grateful later.

Understand that features vary from provider to provider, and different features are available at different investment levels.

For example:

- Some require a setup fee of up to \$3,000 or more, some have no set up fee
- Some charge you a flat rate each month for unlimited emails, and some charge you based on the number of emails you send or the size of your list
- Some charge a monthly fee whether you send a newsletter or not, others only charge you when you send an email broadcast
- Some providers integrate social media and social sharing options, while others have no integration
- Some providers have WordPress plugins available for free that extend the capabilities of their services, and others barely integrate at all
- Some packages only include the ability to send your email newsletter, while other packages also include auto responder and follow up sequence support
- Some providers make it easy to use a custom email newsletter template design, and others make it really difficult
- Some providers offer behavioral tracking and behavioral marketing triggers, some don't
- Some providers offer advanced list segmentation for highly targeted marketing campaigns, others offer zero list segmentation
- Some providers allow you to only use a single email field for your opt-in, yet others allow you to create custom fields
- Some providers force you to use their branded Thank You pages, or lame and ugly Thank You pages, and others allow you to set a custom thank you page URL
- Some providers allow you to only have one list in your account, and others allow you have several different lists

When reviewing email marketing providers, look not only at what you need right now, but what you will also need in a year, three years, or even five years. I've witnessed too many clients moving their email lists from one provider they outgrew to a new provider — and the process is seriously painful!

Be smart about the provider you choose, and if possible choose one that can grow with you as you continue to grow.

Creating A Solid Foundation: Email Marketing Design Tips TO Elevate Your Brand

A lot of email marketing providers have free email templates preloaded and ready for you to use — and many of them pretty good as they are designed by professional designers. But a free email marketing template isn't going to get the job done to help you stand out from your competition and the sea of other business owners using the exact same free templates.

Think about it:

If your leads can't distinguish your email marketing template from your competitor's because you're using the same free template, they more than likely won't remember you when they are ready to make a purchase. Investing in professional email marketing template design will have an impact on the success of your email campaigns because every message you send will reinforce your brand through the design, colors, logo, and more.

Email marketing consists of much more than just an email newsletter.

While most business owners focus on their email newsletter, and invest in a custom, branded ezine template design — they forget about the other types of email marketing messages they will need to send and then end up scrambling at the last minute to create something in alignment with their brand.

When working with a designer, also consider creating branded templates for:

- Solo blasts
- Special announcements
- Media releases
- Special promotions and offers

- Auto responders and follow up sequences

Using Email Marketing Templates

Once you have professional email marketing templates designed for your business, the next step is to focus on the formatting of your content.

If your content appears unprofessional, contains broken links or missing images, or doesn't effectively use margins or spacing, you could be sending email messages no one wants to read! And trust me, no one is going to ask you to resend your newsletter. They are just going to hit delete.

Quality content formatting increases content consumption, click-throughs, and forwards.

Here are some simple design and formatting tips to help make your email newsletter and other email broadcasts easier and more enjoyable to read:

- **Newspaper Layout Rules Apply**

To make it easier for readers to absorb your information and perceive your email as a faster read, break content up into several 1-3 sentence paragraphs.

- **Use Bullet Or Number Lists**

If your readers are in a hurry, they will scan your newsletter first to see if anything looks interesting. In many cases they will stop to read bulleted lists. Get them hooked with an interesting list.

- **Keep Content Away From Edges**

Not only is it ugly to have your content touching the border of your email template, it also screams, "I don't know what I'm doing!" Plus, subconsciously your content will be more difficult to read because the text running into the border lines or edges will be visually distracting.

- **Make It Easy To Read**

Create a color palette for your ezine (1-3 colors, based on your brand) and stick to it. Don't go adding weird colors all willy-nilly. Use color to guide your readers through your ezine and to call attention to important elements like headlines, sub headlines, and calls to action.

- **Add ALT Tags To Images**

Alt tags are pieces of HTML attached to an image that describes what the images is. When images are turned off in email clients like Microsoft Outlook, the ALT text

will be displayed in place of the image. This is critical especially if your ezine or email blast uses an image header.

- **Add HTML Titles To Images**

Each image and link can also be assigned an HTML title. Adding an HTML title adds more scannable content for the email filters and bots, and can help your email marketing messages avoid getting caught in spam filters.

- **Beware Of The “Right-Click To Download Images” Warning**

Make sure you know what your email looks like when images are turned off. Is important content missing? Can subscribers still tell that it is from you or your company? Consider keeping all information at the very top of your template HTML so even if images are turned off, your template still displays properly and reflects your brand.

- **Understand The Text To Images Ratio**

Reduce chances of getting caught in spam filters by making sure you have more text than images in your newsletter or broadcast. We strive for a 70/30 split, with 70% (or more) of the content as text, and 30% (or less) of the content as images.

- **Use A Consistent Design**

Design your template and stick with it. Only slight updates should be done over time to keep your email marketing design current and to refine your layout.

Constantly changing your template design will confuse readers and compromise the brand recognition you are building — and brand recognition is one of the keys to achieving high open rates.

- **Always Include Contact Information**

It's the law that your complete contact information, including your mailing address be visible in all of your email marketing communications — especially in email messages that sell products, programs, events, or services. Plus it's smart to make it easy for your subscribers to be able to contact you.

- **Choose Fonts Wisely**

Remember that every computer is different and has slightly different fonts available. Make sure that the fonts you use are standard fonts available on all machines. If you're not HTML/tech/font savvy, consider sticking to fonts such as Arial, Courier, Verdana, Times, and Georgia.

- **Make Type Big**

With more and more high resolution devices hitting the market, it is becoming more

important than ever to increase the font size in your communications — and that goes for more than your website. Don't make your audience squint to read your emails on their phones! Use 16pt. at minimum but consider going with 18pt or even 20pt.

- **Keep It Simple**

The more complicated your email newsletter design, the more work it is going to be to produce each issue — and the more chances there are for something to go wrong.

Remember:

While a custom template is a great start, the content formatting and design is truly where the line in the sand is drawn between the amateurs and the professionals.

Creating A Solid Foundation: Set a Publishing Schedule

So you've decided to publish an email newsletter and capitalize on the number one electronic marketing tool available to you today other than your website and blog ... Now you need to decide how often you are going to publish your newsletter and set a publishing schedule.

Your e-zine Publishing Schedule Should Support Your Overall Marketing Calendar

Your email newsletter is an integral part of your overall marketing calendar or marketing schedule. It is used for follow up, continuity, education, positioning, sales, branding, and more. Not only does it need to stand on its own, but it also needs to support all of your other marketing efforts too.

It is a great place to include announcements, opportunities, and reminders for your subscribers to sign up, opt-in, register, click, or buy your teleclasses, webinars, events, products, programs, and more. These quick announcements and reminders are great support actions for your overall marketing strategy and individual launch strategies.

With a set publishing schedule, you can quickly and easily make decisions about whether or not you can squeeze in a JV solo blast, and when you should plan your next launch, because you will already know (and have planned) when you'll be communicating your subscribers by email.

You need to decide how often you are going to send your email newsletter:

- **Weekly:**

If you don't do a lot of launches and promotions, a weekly ezine is perfect for

follow up, continuity, and positioning. Publishing once a week will help keep your brand top of mind with your audience.

- **Every Other Week:**

If you have regular marketing launches or joint venture projects to promote, an every-other-week newsletter allows you to stay in touch with your audience and provide value, while giving you the “off-week” to send solo blasts and marketing emails to support your other marketing efforts.

- **Monthly:**

It used to be said that publishing your email newsletter once a month creates a large gap of space between marketing touches and reduces your chances of success. But with overcrowded, bulging inboxes and the rise of social media, things have changed. If you’re a highly active blogger and you’re highly active on social media, you may be able to reduce your email marketing frequency and still achieve your desired results.

- **When You Have Something to Say:**

You may reject the idea that something should be sent out just for the sake of sending something because it’s a specific day or it fits in the schedule. Instead, you may choose to not use a publishing schedule, and only email your list when you have massive value or something important to share.

Tips For Setting Your Email Newsletter Publishing Schedule

- **Decide on a publishing schedule and stick to it!**

It’s better to publish less frequently and publish consistently, than to promise a weekly ezine and skip weeks. If you fail to stick to the schedule you promised or meet the expectations you outlined when your subscribers opted-in, you risk losing credibility and trust with your audience.

- **When deciding on a publishing schedule, review your marketing calendar.**

If you launch new classes, programs, events, or products frequently, consider publishing your ezine every other week so you can use the “off weeks” to promote your launches and support your marketing efforts with solo emails. This will help

prevent “list overwhelm” and subscribers feeling like they get too many emails from you.

- **Choose a day of the week that works best for you.**

Some marketers say Tuesdays are the best days to send your newsletter, or that weekend ezines receive the highest open rates. Some will tell you to send your ezine in the morning for the best results — but you need to do what works best for you. Choose a day that fits best with your schedule and workflow. If your ezine fits easily into your schedule you’re more likely to get it done.

- **Resist Fake Warnings and Peer Pressure.**

It’s easy to feel like you’re not doing enough or that you should be publishing your email newsletter more often, especially when you read blogs, articles, and social media posts from marketers warning you that you’ll never be successful unless you publish a weekly email newsletter. Tune that out! Don’t listen to the hype, don’t get caught up in trying to make it too complicated. Just focus on providing value to your subscribers and delivering on the opt-in promises you made when they signed up originally.

- **Not sure? Ask your subscribers.**

If you’re not sure how often to publish your email newsletter, or you want to change the frequency or schedule you are currently using, and you’re not sure what to do, don’t be afraid to reach out and ask your subscribers. Simply ask them in an email what they would prefer, or send them a short survey to gather their preferences — then use their answers to help make your decision.

Getting Permission: Why Permission is Critical to Your Success

If your inbox is half as crowded as mine, you know how much time email eats up in your business, and I'll bet you're looking for ways to reduce the amount of time you spend on email. I'm guessing, you also can't stand it when random businesses market to you by email without your permission.

Permission based email marketing operates on the principle that you obtain email addresses through legitimate means only.

This means you always gain permission first, through a sign up form or opt-in box (single or double opt-in) of some kind — as long as you clearly communicate they will be receiving emails from you up front — or by registering for something for making a purchase.

Don't Be A Spammer (ICK!)

If a person doesn't opt-in on your website, sign up, or specifically ask to be added to your list, you may not add them and market to them by email — it's against the law! Email marketing is a permission-based marketing strategy. I understand that building your list is very important. In fact, it is the primary focus for many online entrepreneurs and marketers... But you cannot engage in list building practices that are disrespectful to your audience.

Here are some examples of what NOT to do:

- Meeting someone at a networking event and getting their business card does not give you the right to add them to your email list unless they specifically request to be added

- Telling someone you meet about your email newsletter and discussing it with them does not equal them requesting to be added to your list
- Adding every business contact you have to your email list and justifying it with an unsubscribe link is unacceptable. “Well, they do have the choice to unsubscribe,” is not a smart strategy.
- Offering a free gift, irresistible offer, or ethical bribe on your website is a great way to build your list IF you clearly explain and disclose up front that by opting-in they will also receive your email newsletter and other email marketing — otherwise you are misleading them on purpose!
- Adding a new contact to your email list and calling it “follow up” is a joke. Don’t do it.
- Buying, renting, or borrowing an email list and subscribing the names to your email newsletter is a frowned upon strategy by ethical business owners, will generate spam complaints, and may possibly violate spam laws! In some cases, you can email the list members once to invite them to subscribe to your list — but that’s it.

Build Your List The Right Way

The bottom line is that you **MUST ALWAYS** put your customers, clients, prospects, audience, etc. first. That means doing what is best for them, not what is best for you. That means never sending them email blasts, solo blasts, email newsletters, email promotions, or other forms of email marketing without permission.

It also means you must be crystal clear about what will happen next when someone opts-in, signs-up, or subscribes! Communicating how they will hear from you, and if possible, how often they will hear from you **BEFORE** they sign up. Then reinforce the same messages on your Thank You page.

Email Marketing Best Practices Examples:

SITUATION: You met Joe at a conference and you want to follow up with him to stay in touch. You know your content and newsletter would be great for Joe.

PREFERRED SOLUTION: Send Joe a personal email and tell him how much you enjoyed connecting with him. Mention something you spoke about to show him you were actually listening and really do care. Then share your Free gift with

him and invite him to visit your website to download it. Mention that if he signs up, he'll also receive your email newsletter, and that you think he would really benefit from the tips you share in it. Then leave it up to him to take action.

SITUATION: You have been in business a while and have made a lot of contacts but are just now starting an email newsletter. You are excited about it and want to share it with everybody.

PREFERRED SOLUTION: Send each professional contact a personal email to reconnect with them — send a few each day as too many in one day could get you locked in spam jail). Tell them a little about what is new with your business and share your excitement about your new email newsletter and what the benefits will be to subscribers. Then invite them to visit your website to subscribe, and let them know that if they do, you have a free gift for them too! Then leave it up to them to take action. For those you have mailing addresses for, also send them a warm letter inviting them to sign up.

SITUATION: You recently attended a networking event where you discussed your newsletter with a prospect who seemed really interested in it, but you never directly asked them if they were interested in subscribing.

PREFERRED SOLUTION: Send each person a direct email to follow up. Tell them you're reaching out because they seemed interested in your email newsletter or learning more about it — and that you would love to invite them to visit your website, check out XYZ (a resource or article that would be helpful for them), and while there, see if subscribing may be a good fit for them. Then let them decide whether it is a good fit.

Not one best practice approach forces someone to subscribe or subscribes someone without express permission. They all first make a personal connection, then make an invitation to see if it is a good fit, then let people be to make their own choice.

Getting Permission: Single Or Double Opt-In

Email marketing is permission-based marketing, which means you must have permission to add people to your marketing list, and permission to email them information. Every email newsletter, ezine, or email marketing communication should have a clear, straight-forward unsubscribe or opt-out link, and opt-out or unsubscribe requests should be handled immediately.

Email addresses should be obtained only by legitimate means like through opt-in boxes or subscribe boxes on your website, or by specific request. This is why email marketing lists are often called opt-in lists.

Single Opt-In Marketing Lists vs. Double Opt-In Marketing Lists

Single opt-ins are a simple one step process.

In this case, when a consumer subscribes, they are automatically added to your email marketing list right away and immediately taken to your Thank You page or Download page. There is just one simple, fast step. Put in your email to sign up, and you're done.

Single opt-in email marketing lists are usually larger due to the simple and fast one step sign up process. With this approach your list will likely be bloated with fake email addresses and spam email addresses — both from spam bots and people just trying to get your free gift without actually signing up.

Double opt-ins use a basic two step process.

In this case, when a consumer subscribes, a confirmation email is sent to their inbox containing a verification link. They **MUST** click on the verification link in the email

message, to confirm that they really do want to subscribe. Clicking the link, adds them to your email marketing list and takes them to your Thank You or Download page.

Double opt-in email marketing lists are usually a smaller and higher quality because consumers have to check their email, open your message, and take a second action to complete their sign up process. This weeds out spam bots, prevents people from using fake email addresses to sign up, and reduces the chance that you may get reported for sending spam.

We Use A Double Opt-In Email Process

To protect the integrity of our list, to avoid sending email to people who don't want to hear from us, and to keep our list from getting bloated, we ALWAYS a double opt-in list building approach — and we highly recommend that you do the same.

If you're actively testing email campaigns, measuring open rates, and tracking email marketing successes, it will be very difficult to ensure your numbers are accurate if your list is bloated with fake and spam email addresses. The higher quality your list, the better and more accurate results you will see from your measuring, testing, and tracking.

There is a lot of noise online about single opt-in list building and double opt-in list building.

Over time some experts who preached that single opt-ins are best, have not changed their tune and are saying double opt-ins are best — but their old blog posts are still available online! Other blog posts and articles will encourage you to use a single opt-in approach just to build a big list fast to be more attractive to potential JV partners. But in my mind, that approach just sets you up for disaster, when your list doesn't perform for your JV partner during a big launch.

Still other courses and articles online tell readers to use a single opt-in to get people on your list, then “hide” double opt-in verification links in the email content. Again, this sheisty technique feels misleading to me, and frankly I think it sets you up for increases in spam complaints.

While I can't tell you which approach is best for your business, I think by now you know which list building approach I think is best — DOUBLE OPT-IN!

Getting Permission: Make Opting-In A No Brainer

Now that we've covered some of the main email marketing strategies to avoid, here are some ethical (and highly effective) tips on how to build a great list:

Give Away Something Free, But Of Value

We live in the land of “free gifts with purchase.” This technique draws hundreds of thousands of shoppers to retail locations daily and it is just as effective when used online. While retail stores provide a gift or future discount in exchange for a sale, you can provide a free gift of value in exchange for an email address.

Giving away something that is relevant and valuable to your prospects and customers not only helps you build your list, but it gives people a taste of the products and services you and your company offer, and a feel for what it would be like doing business with you.

Add An Opt-In On Your Website

Adding a subscribe form or opt-in box to every page of your website (i.e. every blog page and every general page of your website) ensures that no matter what page a visitor may land on first, they will learn about your ezine and your special offer.

NOTE: This is not meant to be a blanket statement that overrides your website sales strategy.

There are some pages your opt-in box does not belong. If the primary action on that page is something other than getting visitors to opt-in — like buying from you or hiring you — do not include your general opt-in on the page.

Promote Your Ezine In Your Email Signature

At the end of your email signature, after all of your usual contact information, include a quick 2-3 line mini advertisement for your ezine. If you've got a special offer or free gift, let people know about it!

Announce Your Ezine To Your Network

Be sure to send out a promotional marketing piece to announce your ezine to your clients, prospects, business networks, and friends. You can send them a single sample issue to read with an invitation to opt-in to your list and continue receiving your ezine – but, make sure you are clear that they have NOT been automatically added to your list.

Also, if you belong to any professional organizations or associations, find out if you can place an advertisement in their newsletter or trade publication.

Use Social Media

You can promote your email newsletter across your social networks, but please never post an update to Facebook or Twitter that says, "Sign up for my ezine". It doesn't work, it will offend your audience, and it will seem pushy. Social media sites are definitely not the place for in-your-face sales and self promotion.

Instead say something like, "Phew! Just finished writing my latest newsletter about XYZ <link>. Now off to Starbucks for a latte!" Change up this formula and post it every time you write your newsletter.

Using this approach personalizes your social media posts, and if the topic of your newsletter that week strikes the right nerve with someone in your network, odds are they will check out your profile, learn more about you, and click through to your website to opt-in to your marketing list.

Use Your Business Card

If the back of your business card is blank, print new cards and include a mini ezine advertisement on the back. Include a call to action or irresistible offer that drives them to your website to get a free gift and complimentary ezine subscription.

Attend Live Networking Events

The people you meet in person will be your most loyal and valuable prospects and customers, and if they join your email list, the probability they will purchase skyrockets. After all, people do business with people they know, like, and trust. Taking time to connect with people in person accelerates the “know” and “like” factors, and a consistently well done ezine will help you build the “trust” factor.

When you are networking, be sure to mention your free opt-in offer. If you have time, or someone wants to know more, chat about the benefits and offer to send them a link to sign up.

Use Guest Blogging To Promote Your Ezine

Guest blogging and article marketing is the use of a written blog post or article for a website other than your own to market and promote your business, products, services, or programs. You can write value-added articles on your area of expertise and post them to article marketing websites or pitch them to influencers for publishing on their websites or blogs. Attached to your articles is an author resource box or author bio that contains more information about you! Here you can include a link back to your website, a plug your special offer.

To achieve the fastest success, you’ve got to put in effort and do some homework:

- Learn about their audience and readers
- See what content is popular on the site and look at the most current content to see what has already been covered and what hasn’t
- Create a post or article that fits the content on the site and is tailored to their readers
- Don’t just ask to have your article published. Make a connection, warm them up, then pitch your article with the reasons why you think it would be a fit, how it benefits the audience, and what other articles on the site you recommend linking to.

Start Speaking

Public speaking is a great opportunity to do some ethical, permission-based list building. And with an ezine, your post-event follow up can be easy and inexpensive. As a speaker at an event, you already have the audience's attention, now it is your responsibility to give them an easy way to sign up for your newsletter.

Here are three ways you can build your list as a speaker:

- Offer to send a free copy of your presentation notes or a copy of your PowerPoint slides to attendees who give you a business card and tell them they'll also receive your newsletter as an added bonus.
- If you have a table or booth at an event, hold a drawing for a free gift. To enter the drawing attendees simply have to drop their business card in a bowl. Be sure to clearly communicate that they will also receive a free subscription to your ezine, so they aren't surprised when it shows up in their inbox.
- Mention your free offer and send around a sign up sheet so people in the audience can opt-in to receive your gift. Include a reminder on your sign up sheet that they will also receive a subscription to your ezine, or include a checkbox to allow them to choose whether or not they want a subscription.

As you can see, there are several different ways to gain permission from your prospects and clients to market to them with email.

From an opt-in box on your website, to live networking, to speaking, you have the opportunity to build your list and grow your audience with the right message and high-value, high-quality content.

Just make sure you are always up front and crystal clear about how you'll be contacting or marketing to them by email in the future — this will prevent recipients from being surprised that your ezine showed up in their inbox and prevent spam complaints and unsubscribes.

Leverage The Tools At hand: Make Unsubscribing From Your List As Easy As Possible

Publishing a quality email newsletter regularly is a lot of work, and ideally, we would love for each person who opts-in to stay forever and open all of our emails, but that is simply not reality. It is inevitable that at some point a subscriber is going to want to leave your list and unsubscribe. At this point the question becomes, “How will you handle it?”

- **Will you make it easy** for email subscribers who no longer want to receive your emails to opt-out or unsubscribe?
- **Or will you make it difficult** and uncomfortable, forcing them to hunt and work to remove their name from your email marketing list — while they get frustrated and irritated, and more likely to just hit delete or mark it as spam? (Please don't choose the latter!)

Providing an easy, clear unsubscribe option and a commitment to permission will help build trust with your subscribers. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of articles online about growing your email list and building your database. But only a few actually address WANTING people to unsubscribe.

You must make it clear that you respect your email marketing leads' inboxes by providing an easy opt-out or unsubscribe link in every email campaign or newsletter you send, and you will actually retain more subscribers for longer periods of time. I know it sounds weird. But trust me it's true because they feel more comfortable.

At some point your subscribers WILL want to unsubscribe and leave your list and that's okay! In fact, it's what you want.

You Want People To Unsubscribe

- You want subscribers to opt-out when your services, products, or programs no longer serve them or fit their business.
- You want people to unsubscribe from your email list when they stop paying attention and stop opening your emails
- You want subscribers to unsubscribe when they just hit delete upon opening your email because they are too busy to read it.

If people don't care about what you are sending, and they aren't even looking at or reading your emails, it causes a phenomenon called list bloat. List bloat occurs when you have a large pumped-up list, with very low open rates and conversion rates.

List bloat misleads business owners into a false sense of security and unrealistic email performance expectations. Then it results in frustration and confusion — i.e. “I thought this would be more successful. I have such a big list.”

The Importance Of The Unsubscribe Link

By showing subscribers they can leave your list at any time, and that is just as easy, if not easier than signing up for your list, you help alleviate some of the potential fear of being spammed and bypass the anger that comes along with receiving unwanted email. Remember, successful email marketing is based on permission and trust. You must guarantee that you will never violate that trust by sharing, renting, selling, or trading their email address and personal information. And you must always give them an option to stop receiving email from you.

All reputable email marketing service providers require you to include an opt-out or unsubscribe link in your emails — and the awesome thing is that they automatically remove those who click the links from your list for you. This way you don't spam people and make them resent ever subscribing in the first place.

If your email marketing provider doesn't handle opt-outs automatically, I highly recommend you switch providers. If you're not using a professional email marketing company to send your email newsletter and email marketing blasts, signing up with one should be the first action you take after reading this post.

Leverage The Tools At hand: A Thank You Page Is The First Step To A Strong Relationship

Thank You pages are the final step of the sales, sign up, and opt-in conversion processes AND the first step in enhancing your relationship with your email subscribers.

Unfortunately Thank You pages are also the most forgotten, underutilized pages by website owners. In fact, when sending us their final website content, most clients provide us their content and forget to include the Thank You pages — even when we remind them to! The Thank You page for most site owners is an afterthought and is almost never included as a valuable part of their website strategy.

Thank You pages may be “after the fact” but they deserve your full attention and should be part of your overall website strategy. They play a much bigger role than you may realize in your big picture website success.

On many websites, Thank You pages are actually used to create even more conversions, start new conversations, strengthen relationships, make more sales, and create other amazing results!

Thank You Pages Are Critical To Your Success

So stop thinking about your Thank You pages as an afterthought and start thinking of Thank You pages as an opportunity to create a positive first experience for new customers, clients, or subscribers with your brand — Plus, those visitors who reach your Thank You page are the HOTTEST leads you have, as they already decided to take action on your site!

The worst thing that a visitor could experience after taking action on your website to hire you, buy from you, or learn from you is being shown a generic, impersonal, cold message like:

- Form Received
- Request Submitted
- You've been added to XYZ list
- Message Sent
- Action Complete
- Thank You, we'll be in touch soon

Or worse, you could show no message at all and not even use a Thank You page, leaving visitors confused and wondering if it even worked!

Know This: Every qualified subscriber/client/customer sees your Thank You page. You've already earned their trust because they took action — now it's up to you to decide what to do next!

Thank You Pages Set Expectations

A Thank You page is the perfect place to set clear expectations, reinforce that taking action was a good idea, and eliminate buyers' remorse. Use the page to immediately thank consumers and remind new clients, customers, and subscribers of:

- Exactly what they bought or signed up for
- Exactly what to expect and what's coming next
- Why they should be excited and happy they took action
- What they need to do next
- Who they can contact with questions

Thank You Pages Provide Upsells

By taking action, qualified visitors have shown you that they trust you and they have shown you exactly what they are interested in. As a result, the Thank You page can also be a really effective place to:

- Upsell another similar or complimentary item
- Ask for more information

- Invite them to connect with you on social networks
- Offer additional ways they can connect with you

Thank You Pages Keep People On Your Site Longer

Don't use a landing page template or an impersonal page provided by your email marketing provider for your Thank You page! With this approach, users have NO WHERE to go ... bummer!

Instead your Thank You pages should use your standard website template that includes your main navigation menu. This way, visitors have the option to continue to browse your site further, explore more of your content, and potentially take additional actions on your site to engage with you even further.

Your Homework: Review Your Thank You Pages And Identify Where You Can:

- Improve the experience on the page
- Make your communication more clear
- Set better expectations
- Add an upsell or another complimentary offer
- Invite readers to connect with you further
- Strengthen relationships

Provide Undeniable Value: How to Write Effective Email Subject Lines

As a business owner and marketer, you have a lot to say and a lot to share with your audience, prospects, and clients — and it is easy to get so focused on the content of your email newsletter or email marketing message, conversion goals, and click-through rates, that you lose sight of something as simple as the email subject line. But...

Your subject line is one of the most important parts of your email. The absolute best email subject lines are short, to the point, descriptive, and enticing. They have one purpose — getting you to open the email.

If your subject line stinks, is boring, or seems irrelevant, or worse, seems like spam — no one will open your email, and it won't matter how much time you spent creating the killer content inside, because no one will ever read it. That's why your email subject line needs to be interesting and relevant to the recipient. And while its job is to be so awesome that it gets them to open your email, you also need to avoid getting caught in spam filters.

So, do you write a killer email subject line that is practically guaranteed to get people to open your email, but may get caught in a lot of spam filters? Or do you play it safe and go with a slightly safer subject line that may not get as many opens, but avoid the spam filters?

Spam Sucks, But It Works

Yes, spam sucks. It is terrible. No one likes it. Everyone despises it and complains about it. Yet it is still here. Companies are still using it as a tactic, because on some level it works. If sending spam didn't work, it wouldn't be so prevalent.

Now I'm not telling you to start spamming people, or that sending spam is a good email marketing strategy. That would be ridiculous and totally absurd.

What I am telling you is that some of the email subject lines and compelling headlines typically considered spammy and used in spam-type email marketing, do work incredibly well at getting people to open your emails. And when they open the emails, they almost always scan the content right away.

Finding just the right balance between subject lines that work and subject lines that are too spammy, is a fine line to walk — and it's a decision you have to make for your brand.

Email subject line best practices

To help avoid your email marketing messages getting caught in spam folders, getting deleted, or getting ignored, follow these best practices:

- Keep your subject lines familiar. Consider adding a recognizable subject line prefix to the headline like [Newsletter]
- Avoid words commonly known to negatively affect open rates, like: help, reminder, percent off.
- Avoid words commonly known to trigger spam filters, like: make money, act now, limited time, test, and free
- Avoid cheesy, cutesy, clever subject lines — stick with clear, simple, easy to understand
- Avoid setting your subject line in all caps and using exclamation points
- Avoid using expletives (duh!)
- Avoid making too good to be true claims

Here are some tips to help you write great email subject lines:

- Make it relevant to the audience. If you're not sure what appeals to your audience or what they care about, ask them or do a survey
- Make it action-oriented. Use strong action verbs instead of weak adjectives
- Know why emails get opened. Understand why a subject line appeals to your list. Is it about them? Is it intriguing or interesting? Will they lose out if they don't open it?
- Make it personal. Personal emails are the most opened emails there are — which may explain the resurgence of the plain text email, or HTML email with no graphics

- Make it timely. Limited time, time-sensitive, or date specific emails have very high open rates because a lack of action may equal missing out or loss
- Make it obvious. Write the subject line so the recipient knows exactly what the email is about immediately
- Keep it short and simple. Try to keep your subject lines to 50 characters or less. If you go longer, part of it may be cut off by recipients' email clients. But don't stress about keeping it to exact 50 characters, if you need to go a little longer for clarity's sake, do it
- Track your open rates. Look at your emails with the highest open rates, study the subject lines used, and use more subject lines like those

Provide Undeniable Value: Simple But Effective Copywriting Tips

Like the subject line of your email, the copywriting in your email is also an important part of your email marketing success — and the approach needs to be personal.

When you're writing for email (and most types of marketing for that matter), you're not writing to a general audience. You're not writing to a big group. You're not writing to just anyone. You're writing to one person, one subscriber that has a connection to you.

Think of your email copywriting as creating a conversation between you and a single subscriber. You want them to read your email and feel like you are speaking right to them. Like they matter. Like they know you and you know them.

There are three factors you need to take into account in your email copywriting:

- **Get Their Attention**

The subject line needs to get the recipient to open the email from you. It needs to get their attention and be relevant, intriguing, of interest, or about them.

Remember, it doesn't matter how great your content is, if no one opens the email.

- **Keep Them Interested**

Now that they have opened the email, your content has to keep them interested so they don't hit delete or unsubscribe. The easiest way to do this is to make the email about them. Talk about their problems and offer solutions. Address their passions, needs, desires, dishes, struggles, etc. Remember, the job of your introduction is to get them to read the rest of the email.

- **Get Them to Take Action**

The goal of email marketing is to get recipients to take an action — This may be to click, reply, buy, etc. Just make sure you always include a call to action to get them to do something. Even if you're not selling anything (yet), get recipients used to taking action when they read your call to action, no matter how small it may be. While the action may now be a simple click or reply, in the future, it may be to make a purchase.

So, to ensure your email content is as effective as possible:

- Define the goal of the email — the action you want them to take
- Write a compelling subject line
- Craft the introduction to keep them interested and get them to keep reading
- Make sure your content is valuable no matter what — even if it is a solo blast to sell something, it must be valuable whether they buy or not.
- Apply the 80/20 rule to your content strategy and planning, meaning 80 percent of your email marketing should be all high-quality, value-added content with no sales, and 20 percent of your emails can make an offer.
- And to help avoid getting caught in spam filters:
 - Don't use traditional sales calls to action and spammy phrases in your content.
 - Make sure all URLs used in your email message are whitelisted and in good standing. Sending an email with a blacklisted URL can get your message blocked.
 - Don't send your email as one giant graphic without any text. Your email needs to have a good mix of images and text
 - Use properly written HTML code. Using sloppy code with broken links and images, and missing tags will make you look like a spammer.
 - Always send both an HTML version and a plain text version of your email and don't be lazy about the plain text version. Spam filters will compare your HTML and plain text messages and if 90% is HTML and 10% is plain text, you'll risk getting flagged.
 - Never use Microsoft Word to generate your HTML. Their code is horrendous and spam filters don't like it.

Provide Undeniable Value: Avoid Email Newsletter Writer's Block

For direct email marketing to work, you must send your leads a quality newsletter that adds value to their inbox. If you constantly send sales pitches or irrelevant information, your email marketing leads opt out rate will make your head spin.

Before every email blast you send, ask yourself: "If I got this in my inbox today, would I be glad I opened it and read it?" If you can't honestly say yes, rewrite your content before you hit send.

Besides providing valuable content to your subscribers, you can use your ezine to give something back to your clients who purchased from you. Create a section to display your most recent client work, or success story and put in a link back to their website, not yours.

This shows that you care about promoting our clients as well as yourself. It embraces the power of building expert status to your list and your clients will love the free promotion.

Adding a little personal information in your newsletter is a great way for your subscribers who haven't bought from you yet to get to know you, but don't share too much. Too often I get ezines that sound like I am reading someone's personal diary. It's great to give your readers a glimpse into what's going on with you ... but you don't need to give them all the details!

If you're like me, every once in a while, you probably find yourself sitting in front of your computer staring at the screen, wondering what to write about. That is an awful feeling ... one I call:

Email Newsletter Writers' Block

Email Newsletter Writers' Block comes from struggling to think of valuable content ideas, feeling pressured to write something fabulous, and being on a deadline to

produce content quickly. Because of these stressful feelings, many business owners secretly hate email marketing and view it as a necessary evil.

So, what do they do? They put it off, procrastinate, and do nothing!

Soon, it has been weeks, or even months and nothing has been sent. No announcements. No marketing. No helpful tips or information. No value. Nothing has been sent that could help build their brand, market their business, keep them top of mind, or accelerate the results they are so desperately looking for ... and their subscribers are starting to forget about them!

Unfortunately, their email list of warm leads is growing colder by the minute and their competition is swooping in — and even though they may not be better, they will win the subscriber simply because they are taking action.

Please don't let that happen to you. I want more for you!

To help you avoid Email Newsletter Writer's Block, I've put together a quick list of email newsletter topics or content ideas you can use:

- Publish an article from one of your clients or subscribers with links to their site.
- Publish a strategic partner's article about complimentary services.
- Comment on current events related to your industry.
- Include a personal note, updating your readers about what's going on with you
- Announce, but avoid hard selling, your new upcoming products.
- Write a case study about a client success story.
- Tell your list about any new services you are offering, with a "list only" special.
- Publish a calendar of upcoming events that your list may enjoy as well.
- Conduct a survey. The results may surprise you and provide valuable insights.
- Review a product that you have recently purchased.
- Provide a step-by-step how-to article
- Write about a study or statistic that your list subscribers would find interesting — and cite the source.
- Share a list and stick with an odd number — 3 ways, 5 steps, 7 techniques, or create a top 10 list.

- Answer your own Frequently Asked Questions.
- List some resources that you use to be effective in your industry.
- Run a contest for something of value. You can have them enter the contest by taking an action such as commenting on your blog or commenting on your Facebook business page.
- Summarize other blog posts or news articles you read online. Let readers know why the article or post is important and why they should care. Include a link to the original content in your article.
- Write a review about a book you have recently read.
- Re-cap an event you attended.
- Promote events or products you are an affiliate for (and follow all of the FTC disclosure guidelines).

Nothing is worse than feeling stuck with nothing to write ... I know because I've been there too!

I avoid Email Newsletter Writers' Block and get ideas for our email content with from the same lists I provided you today and when I'm really in need of more ideas, I head to the bookstore.

Find magazines on your niche/trade and see what they're writing about. (Hint: Look at the "In this issue box"). Also, look for books on the same topics you write on and glean ideas from their titles and focus topics. (Hint: Review the books' Tables of Contents for several topic ideas all in one place). Just remember to NEVER copy or plagiarize, but to note ideas, topics, and themes — then put your own twist on them.

Provide Undeniable Value: Avoid Email Marketing Death By The Lazy Unsubscribe

I've said it before and I'll say it again — you want people to unsubscribe from your email marketing list! You may be reading this, thinking I'm crazy, and it's okay. Most people do at first but let me explain.

Those people who are no longer reading your emails, who are on your list but not paying attention, who are skewing your measurement and tracking figures, need to leave your list. Your content is, for one reason or another, no longer a good fit for them — and that is okay! It's in their best interest to unsubscribe and reduce the number of emails they get. And, it is in your best interest because it will help you maintain a higher quality list.

There are two main reasons you want people to unsubscribe and leave your list:

1. Lazy Subscribers Just Hit Delete

A big email list doesn't do you any good if subscribers ignore your emails!

Unfortunately, you'll find that most people are lazy — and even though they no longer want to receive your emails or aren't interested in your content, they are too lazy to scroll to the bottom of the message click unsubscribe. It just takes way too much effort and they don't have time. Instead, they just delete it. One click and it's gone.

This creates a scenario called “list bloat.” List bloat occurs when you have a large pumped up list and a low open rate — i.e. your list is bloated with people who aren't paying attention. This leads business owners into unrealistic email performance expectations.

You need to make it as easy as possible to stop subscribers from hitting delete week after week, month after month, and just unsubscribe! But how do you do that? Consider adding a second unsubscribe link to the very top of your email newsletter.

2. The “Save For Later” Folder of Death

Subscribers who just delete your email newsletter and solo blasts over and over are just one problem you have to deal with as an email marketer and list builder. The other main problem you have is the “Save for Later” folder.

I’m talking about the email archive folder and “rules” your subscribers have set up in their email client to automatically move your newsletters and emails — even those they double opted-in to — into a special “Read Later” folder — a folder they will get to later, when they have time.

The problem is that they will probably NEVER have time.

Instead, the folder will sit there, filling up with newsletters and content they want to read, and wish they had time to read. As the fills up, they begin to feel guilty for not reading the stuff in it, and as more time goes by, they start to feel bad about themselves and frustrated because they don’t have time. And that sucks. So eventually they just delete everything in the folder, and the cycle starts over again.

Here are some tips to avoid getting stuck in the “Read Later” folder:

- Include timely offers in your email that expire — that won’t be available if they wait until later
- Stick with an email newsletter publishing schedule you audience knows
- Give away free or done-for-you resources, templates, checklists, and/or scripts in every issue — creating desire to see what’s inside
- Consistently provide simple yet high-value content that will help them
- Write killer email subject lines that get subscribers to open the email
- Provide content only available in your ezine and nowhere else — they have to read it if they want it.

Remember:

A smaller, quality email marketing list is better than a big, bloated list of people who aren't paying attention.

Test, Track, And Retain: The One Critical Tactic To Make or Break Email Success

Testing. It is one email marketing strategy that can make or break your email marketing efforts.

As a business owner engaging in email marketing, you must test everything — your opt-in, your Thank You page, and your follow up sequence, and every piece of email marketing you send out, including every email newsletter you send out to your list.

Most business owners remember to test their newsletter before they send it out — If you don't test your newsletter first, be sure that you do! Sending out a newsletter with broken links, typos, and other errors can tarnish your brand and frustrate recipients.

We've made mistakes before, and probably will do it again at some point because you just can't catch everything forever. The key is to do your best, edit and test as much as you can, and don't stress out too much when you make a mistake. It happens to everyone at some point, so forgive yourself.

You may get some nasty emails from one or two readers (we have), and that's okay. Those people are usually the ones taking no action in their business (and not investing in email marketing) because of fear and it makes them feel better to point out your mistakes.

So, always test your email newsletters, solo blasts, email messages, and promotional emails before sending them, and ask yourself ...

- When was the last time you tested your own opt-in, received your own follow up sequence, reviewed the content you're delivering?
- Have you ever tested your own process?

It is amazing to me just how many websites I visit when doing research that have broken opt-in boxes that don't work ... and the website owners have no idea! That means they have just assumed their opt-in has been working! Now this is a much bigger problem that I can fully address here because that also means:

- They have no idea how long it has been broken
- They have been receiving zero opt-ins from their website and they haven't noticed
- They clearly aren't tracking and testing anything
- Their list isn't growing very quickly (or at all)

Also, test your opt-in periodically. When you change page names, URLs, website code, and CSS, or you change hosting, your opt-in could be affected. Also, when you make changes to your email marketing account, follow up sequences, and lists/tags, your opt-in can be affected. Plus, as a small business owner, I'm sure you've noticed that over time your business shifts, evolves, and morphs a little — narrowing your niche, altering your services, shifting your focus, changing your direction, etc. — and when that happens, often your follow up sequences need to be adjusted as well.

You see, when done right, your follow up sequences promote, upsell, and call attention to your products, programs, and services — some of which may have changed as your business has evolved, so you may need to adjust the content in your follow up sequences.

Criteria you want to use when checking and testing your email marketing opt-in process:

- **Make Sure It Works.**

Test every part of your opt-in process. Test the actual on-site opt-in and confirmation email (for double opt-ins). Test the thank you page - both the content and making sure users reach the right thank you page. Test the follow up sequence to make sure all emails in it send correctly. Test all links in each follow up sequence email.

- **Make Sure It Is Visible.**

Your opt-in must stand out on your website and get noticed by your visitors. If it blends in with everything else in your sidebar or gets ignored because it's tucked up in your header, you won't get the opt-in results you want. Also, look at the design of your opt-in. Stay away from the boring standard grey "submit" button and use your own big, bold custom button.

- **Make Sure It Is Valuable.**

No one will sign up or opt-in if they can't see the value your free gift or ethical bribe delivers. Review the actual text and words you use to describe it in your website opt-in box. Is the headline interesting and compelling? Does it use keywords visitors would have used to find you via search engines (so they quickly see they are in the right place)? Is the description visual and written? Does it answer the question, "What's in it for me?"

- **Make Sure It Is Transparent.**

Your opt-in process must be trustworthy and transparent. Stay away from bait and switch tactics and sneaky promises. If you offer a free gift or ethical bribe and visitors will also get added to your email newsletter list, you **MUST** tell them before they opt-in in. Don't mislead visitors with promises of a free gift and hide your newsletter from them, sneaking it in after they have already signed up, or you risk losing their trust.

- **Make Sure It Is Inviting.**

Welcome new subscribers and community members after they have opted-in. Send them a special welcome message. Remind them what they signed up for, tell them what they can expect, outline their next steps, and invite them to continue to engage with you and your brand further.

- **Make Sure It Is Easy.**

It needs to be super easy for consumers to opt-in and sign up. It also needs to be super easy to change or update preferences and unsubscribe. Let your community members set their own preferences and join or leave your list at any time.

Test all of your email marketing messages before you send them. If possible, send the test to another person in addition to yourself who can test the links and check for typos. They aren't as close to the content as you are, so they'll notice things you don't.

Test, Track, And Retain: The Key to Understanding Your Subscribers

Tracking readers' actions is the next step after testing.

Tracking is the key to fully understanding your readers, what they are interested in, what they want, and even what motivates them to take action. Most reputable email marketing providers offer different levels and types of tracking. I am also a big fan of Google Analytics, which is used to track what happens on your website. You can track unique opens, total views, clicks, specific links, opt-ins, opt-outs, and more. And by taking action — opening an email, clicking a link, etc. your readers are showing you what interests them and what they want most.

Tracking will show you which email subject lines perform the best, which topics generate the most action, and which calls to action produce the most click-throughs. By tracking readers' actions and looking at the numbers, you can see exactly what readers want most — what compels them to take action — and you can do more of the same!

I'm giving you fair warning here ... this is some pretty technical, nerdy stuff.

Google Analytics allows you to track actions visitors take on your website and where your website traffic is coming from. You can use Google Analytics to track clicks from your ezine to your website, and see how much traffic, sales, or opt-ins your email marketing generates ... and it's not that difficult to implement!

All You Need Is One Small Piece Of Code!

You can track traffic to your website from your email marketing (and social media, direct mail, etc.) easily with one small piece of code! This code — Google UTM (Urchin Tracking Module) Code — is actually a combination of tags and extra information you can add to a link that you create. This extra information appears in the Google Analytics reports under Traffic Sources.

Here's How Email Marketing Link Tracking With The Google UTM Code Works:

Basic Google UTM Code:

```
?utm_source=X&utm_medium=X&utm_campaign=X
```

Sample Code For A Standard Link:

```
<a href="http://www.bourncreative.com">www.bourncreative.com</a>
```

Sample Code for A Link Using The Google UTM Code:

```
<a href="http://www.bourncreative.com?utm_source=ezone&utm_medium=email  
&utm_campaign=ezone08102017">www.bourncreative.com</a>
```

Let's break down the Basic Google UTM code example shown above.

In the example, there are three sections of code, each connected with the "&" symbol.

Here's an explanation of what each section of code means:

- **utm_source=X (Campaign Source)**

In this section of the code, X is the source of the link. (i.e. ezone, blog, advertisement, mailer, search engine, another domain, or name of email list, etc.)

- **utm_medium=X (Campaign Medium)**

In this section of the code, X is the medium or method of delivery. (i.e. email, postcard, follow up sequence, snail mail, web banner ad, pay-per-click ad, etc.)

- **utm_campaign=X (Campaign Name)**

In this section of the code, X is a name that helps you keep track of your different marketing efforts. (i.e. Christmas_Sale, Bootcamp_Postcards, ABC_JVPromos, or ezone04052012, etc.)

Let's look at the final link using the Google UTM code.

The UTM code is simply pasted/added to the end of the regular URL with no spaces.

- The source variable is labeled **ezone** — the source of the link
- The medium variable is labeled **email** — the medium or type of marketing
- The campaign variable is labeled **ezone08102017** — the specific newsletter the link was used in
- Does the thought of creating the code for these trackable links freak you out?

Don't worry!

Google Analytics has a free URL Builder you can use to create links tagged with the UTM code at <http://support.google.com/analytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1033867>. It's a simple tool to help you create trackable links — and all you have to do is copy and paste the final link into your site.

Quick Bonus Tips:

Here are two additional parameters you can add to your UTM code string (just remember to use the “&” symbol to connect them):

- **utm_term=X (Campaign Term)**

Add this section of code to identify keywords you are using in paid advertisements. (i.e. utm_term=skin+care+cream, utm_term=marketing+conference, etc.)

- **utm_content=X (Campaign Content)**

Add this section of code when split testing or using two pieces of marketing materials that go to the same URL (i.e. utm_content=bannerlink, utm_content=textlink, utm_content=logolink, etc.)

Once you start using your new trackable links, you can view the results in Google Analytics. Remember, as with all Google Analytics Reporting it can take several hours for the data to appear in your reports. Tagging your links with UTM values is a powerful and valuable tool that allows you to create unique links for different marketing campaigns. By simply adding the “UTM” code to the end of your links, you can track the links in your email newsletter with Google Analytics.

Test, Track, And Retain: Ensure Subscribers Recognize Your Brand And Emails

Do you subscribe to a lot of email newsletters?

I know I do! My inbox is always full — as I'm sure yours is, and one of my favorite email features is a super simple reminder of why I am receiving the email.

Remind Readers Why You Are Emailing Them and When/How They Gave Permission

Many of your email marketing leads probably subscribe to multiple online newsletters, so give your prospects a reminder why they are receiving your email blast. You should include a 1-2 sentence statement that reminds the recipient they did opt in to your list.

A quick reminder at the start of your email may be the difference in whether or not your email gets opened or gets deleted, or even worse-flagged as SPAM.

Here's a quick and simple example of a newsletter subscriber reminder:

"You are receiving this email message because you made a verbal or written request at an event, entered a drawing at an event, opted in on one of our websites, or purchased a product from us."

Also, subscribers may remember that they asked for your newsletter, but they know they didn't ask for additional marketing and sales emails. To help prevent your ezine from getting flagged as spam, put the title of your ezine in the subject line before a great headline.

This will help boost your brand visibility and help your subscribers remember that your ezine is actually worth their time to read.

Here are a couple quick and simple examples of a newsletter subject line:

- [News] Awesome Headline That Grabs Attention
- [Ezine] WordPress Tips & Website Danger
- Here are a few examples of other types of subject line reminders:
- [Announcement] Awesome Headline That Grabs Attention
- [Product Name] Headline from Follow Up Sequence Email
- [Clients] Awesome Headline That Grabs Attention
- [Affiliates] Awesome Headline That Grabs Attention
- [Course Name] Awesome Headline That Grabs Attention

When your subscribers are scanning their inboxes and deciding which emails they are actually going to open, seeing the title of your newsletter and a great headline will prompt them to read your ezine right now or at least save it to read later. And, including a simple reminder at the start of your ezine or other forms of email marketing like follow up sequences and special announcements, will help subscribers remember that they did ask to receive your ezine and help prevent spam complaints.

And there you have it!

Two simple tips to help your readers identify your emails and help keep them from getting flagged as spam.

1. Include a reminder at the start of your email message
2. Denote the type of email your sending in the subject line

Test, Track, And Retain: Create A Lasting List of Loyal Subscribers

Getting consumers on your list is the first step. Your opt-in box, free gift or ethical bribe, list building efforts, website traffic generation — it's all focused on getting people onto your list so you can stay in touch with them and continue to market to them with their permission. But...

- What happens after the conversion from consumer to subscriber?
- What happens AFTER they join your list, become a subscriber, and member of your community?

Once you have gained a subscriber, your goals shift from acquiring to retaining.

Your main focus once a consumer joins your list to keep them on your list and keep them engaged with your business and brand. You captured their attention and gained their trust once already when they were compelled to opt-in, and now you need to keep it up — keep them interested, keep them engaged, keep them wanting and even looking forward to hearing from you.

It sounds like a lot of work doesn't it? It is.

Email marketing can help you generate big paydays, but for that to happen you need a good quality, engaged, loyal, responsive list of people trained to take action when you make an offer — and that takes time and effort — time to build your relationship with them and build trust, and effort to continually produce valuable, relevant, personal, interesting, useful content that keeps readers wanting and looking forward to your emails.

Luckily there are other strategies you can put into play to help you retain subscribers and keep them interested in what you have to say (and send), so they read your emails and your newsletter instead of deleting them, unsubscribing, or banishing your email to the “read later” folder never to be seen again.

Luckily in my line of work, I get to peek into how a lot of other businesses do things — and get the inside track on some awesome stuff, including strategies that can help you retain subscribers and build a tribe of loyal readers:

How To Build A List Of Loyal Subscribers

- **Make Subscribers Feel Special**

Make your readers feel special, appreciated, and valued. Provide deals, offers, and opportunities no one else gets, like priority access, private content, and more. Give subscribers the VIP treatment.

- **Provide Subscribers Incentives To Open Your Emails**

Give subscribers incentives to open and read your email. Provide something special in each email that they want to see or access. Give them something that they don't want to miss out on.

- **Give Subscribers Extra Bonuses**

When subscribers get surprise bonuses, they'll stay a subscriber longer. Provide downloadable checklists, templates, charts, handouts, audios, reports, etc. as bonus goodies just for your subscribers in each newsletter issue.

- **Offer Subscribers First Or Priority Access**

If you launch new programs, workshops, courses, groups, services, etc. Launch it to your list and in your newsletter first. Give your existing community members first right of refusal on spots available and give them priority access — especially if it is something that will sell out.

- **Make It Easy For Subscribers To Stay Engaged**

Your subscribers have already done the work to join your list. They have already told you they want to hear from you. Don't make them do more work. When offering a tele class or webinar, don't make them opt-in again, give them the access details in the email (or a special trackable link to them) directly.

- **Share Exclusive Opportunities**

Offer exclusive opportunities to engage with you and your brand that is ONLY available to your subscribers. Don't share it in your newsletter and then publish it on your blog — keep it exclusive so the only way to access it is to be a subscriber.

- **Create Special Savings For Subscribers**

If you sell products, programs, or services on your website (and who doesn't sell at

least one of those!), create special reduced-price payment links for your email newsletter, or a discount code you can share with subscribers. This way the general public can buy from you at one price, and subscribers can buy the same thing for less.

- **Get Personal With Subscribers**

Share more personal stories, lessons, and photos with your subscribers. Share things that you don't want to post publicly for the world to see, but that you'll only share with them. Build on and strengthen your relationship by getting personal with your subscribers and creating opportunities for them to connect with and relate to you.

As you can see, the main thread that runs through all of these strategies is that they capitalize on the connection and the relationship you're building with your readers.

Each strategy is designed to make them feel special, give them exclusive access, and provide unique opportunities that they can ONLY get as a subscriber.

The Wrap-Up: What Not To Do

This guide has covered what you should do when it comes to email marketing — the best practices — but now it's time to flip the switch and talk about the email marketing worst practices.

When it comes to email marketing, if you do it right, you'll experience great success, you'll create strong relationships, you'll build a loyal and responsive list, and you'll gain more visibility and attract more new opportunities, and you'll see an increase in sales conversions.

But if you do it wrong, and you decide to use some of the email marketing worst practices — those frowned upon by savvy business owners, consumers, internet service providers, email marketing service providers, and the government — you might as well not even bother. It'll do you more harm than good.

12 Worst Email Marketing Practices To Avoid

1. **Not Using A Reputable Service Provider**

Do not use your personal email software — i.e. Outlook, Gmail, Hotmail, MacMail, etc. — to send your email marketing message to your list. Not only is it against the law because there isn't an automatic unsubscribe option, but it is also unprofessional. This makes you look cheap, inexperienced, and amateur. It also shows readers you don't have their best interests at heart and don't care about them like you should.

2. **Buying Email Lists**

Never buy an email list — even if they say they have been double-opted-in. The people on those lists don't know you, they don't know your business, they don't know why you would be contacting them. This tactic is guaranteed to result in a lot of spam complaints, angry consumers, and damage to your brand. More and more people are calling spammers out publicly on social media sites — and you don't want this to be you.

3. **Sending Email Without Permission**

Never add another person to your list, sign them up, or subscribe them without their express permission. If you do, you're sending spam. Adding people you meet at a networking event to your list and calling it follow up is a joke (and it is so lazy). Just don't do it period.

4. **Breaking The Law**

There are very strict spam laws in place and they are easy to break. Make sure you are familiar with the law, that you only send email after receiving permission, and that your emails are in compliance. Using a reputable provider will make a big difference as they often automatically add the required elements to your message, like a physical mailing address and unsubscribe link.

5. **Hiding The Unsubscribe Link**

Subscribers will despise you for this and they will instead simply mark your email as spam. Don't think for one second that hiding the unsubscribe link will help you retain subscribers. Why would you want people on your list who don't want to hear from you, ignore you, and don't open or read your emails? That just causes list bloat, inaccurate figures, and angry consumers.

6. **No Automatic Unsubscribe**

No matter what you hear, never ask your readers to email you to unsubscribe. This tactic makes consumers uncomfortable and regretful that they ever signed up in the first place. Plus, it makes it blatantly obvious that you don't really know what you're doing, you're not very professional, and you're cheap because you're clearly not using a reputable provider. This is sending the message that you either don't care or you're not very successful and can't afford professional email marketing services.

7. **Using A Bait And Switch Opt-In**

Don't sneak your newsletter in after the fact and trick new subscribers. If you're offering an ethical bribe or free offer to make opting-in for your list irresistible, and subscribers will also receive your email newsletter, tell them so up front. Set clear expectations from the start so they're no surprised and blindsided when your email starts showing up in their inbox.

8. **Alienating Readers**

Don't go crazy with your email. Emailing constant sales pitches, emailing too often, or emailing readers about things they aren't interested in and didn't sign up

to hear about will alienate your readers. Be careful with too many affiliate promotions and too many joint venture webinar series solo blasts. You don't want to alienate your list before you have a chance to provide great value.

9. Burning Out Your List

You should expect a certain amount of your list to churn/change each year with people unsubscribing and new people subscribing. But if you're experiencing a high volume of list churn, you'll want to take a closer look at your actions. Too many emails, emails sent too often, or too many sales emails can cause list burnout.

10. Wasting Readers' Time

Always make sure your readers feel like it was worth their time and energy to open and read your email. Always provide valuable, helpful, relevant information and well-done, high-quality content. Don't waste their time with something half-baked, thrown together, poorly written, and ill-planned.

11. Skipping the Test

Never skip the opportunity to test your email message. All reputable providers give you the chance to send tests before you send the final so you can catch any errors, broken links, and typos etc. Don't skip this opportunity — it almost never ends well.

12. Not Adhering to GDPR

If you do business or market to anyone living or residing in the EU, your email opt-ins and list management process need to be GDPR compliant.

The Bottom Line

If it's on this list don't do it. It's not worth the potential backlash — not just from your readers, but from the big guys — the internet service providers and email marketing service provider who could shut you down.

The WRap-Up: The Best Practices To Remember

Adding email marketing to your small business outreach efforts — especially an email newsletter — should be a stress-free strategy that you enjoy because it produces results!

Important Email Marketing Best Practices

- Use a professional email marketing service provider to manage your list and marketing efforts
- Set a publishing schedule and stick to it
- Always get permission before marketing by email and start with a website opt-in box
- Persuade visitors to opt-in by providing a free gift, ethical bribe or irresistible free offer
- Make it super easy for subscribers to opt-out or unsubscribe at any time
- Leverage your Thank You page to continue to build relationships with your subscribers
- Write subject lines that will get recipients to open the email, an intro that will get them to read your email, and compelling content to get them to take action
- Invest in quality design and programming
- Be constant and consistent in your actions to build trust and credibility
- Use follow up sequences / auto responders to set your ongoing marketing and follow up on autopilot
- Adhere to GDPR if it applies to your business

And That's It!

Hopefully this resource has provided you with some valuable insights, tips, tricks, and strategies you can use to get started or ramp up your email marketing efforts.