

Marketing services

There are so many free or inexpensive eMail marketing services on the Web that there would be no point listing them all. A quick Google for Email marketing will show the range available. We do know of brokers who have successfully used the following. There are many more.

- www.iflow.ie
- www.mailchimp.com
- www.jangomail.com
- www.icontact.com
- www.boomerang.com

A recent Marketing Institute of Ireland (MII) survey shows that email campaigns rank as the most popular online marketing channel amongst marketers, closely followed by SEO (Search Engine Optimisation).

Some useful tip on eMail marketing (with thanks to www.hal9000.ie)

Focus on One Message

If you're sending non-newsletter email blasts, stick to one primary message for each email sent out. The more information you pack into an email, the higher the chance the recipient's eyes will glaze over and they'll reach for delete. Keep it to one focus point and put it right in the subject and first lines of the message to make it easier for those just skimming to absorb your message.

Email newsletters are expected to provide bits and pieces of several messages, so this tip doesn't really apply to newsletters. But you should still keep your newsletter blurbs short and to the point, making the information easy to grasp.

Customize Your Message

Use the recipient's name in your message whenever possible. Something as simple as customizing the email in this way can make the recipient more likely to read through and act on your message.

Include a Call to Action

Each email you send should spell out exactly what you want the recipient to do. Make links obvious and call attention to any special directions you are providing. And it's okay to be repetitive when it comes to the call to action – include it toward the top of the message and mention it again at the end.

Use a Template

Instead of sending out a generic email, take time to customize your template to reflect the colors, fonts and other branding elements of your business. Using the same email template for your messages will help the recipient recognise your company and generate feelings of trust.

You'll also want to provide a plain text version that contains the same message but is stripped of all special formatting for recipients using email clients that cannot view messages in HTML. And don't forget to test out your final template in multiple email clients to make sure it looks how you want it to across the board.

Watch Your Stats

Most email marketing services provide campaign statistics so you can monitor the number of opens, clicks, bounces and unsubscribes. As you get started with email marketing, try a few different formats and link placements and then compare the stats to gauge your success. And don't be so quick to unsubscribe bounced addresses. An email can bounce for any number of

reasons, and it's best to wait to see if the address bounces more than once before scrubbing it from your list.

1. Keep it personal

Address the recipient by name in the body of the email, and give the sender's name in the sending email address ie. from *bill@yourcompany.com*. This can be done automatically. Perhaps the message can be tailored to a specific audience depending on how good the segmentation of your list is.

2. Grab them with a snappy 'Subject' line

Use a Subject line that is brief, catchy and to the point. If they don't like this, they probably won't go any further.

3. Content is critical

Give them something to do. An email without a clear '*call to action*' may be a lost opportunity. Keep the calls to action above the fold (in the top half of newsletter, visible without scrolling). Cut down the amount of content – less is more. People scan emails and want to be able to pick up on the key points quickly – **keywords** can be put in bold. Remember you've got about 3 seconds with them! Help them out here by using short sentences and bullet points. 'Teaser' lines can effectively engage recipients if they're relevant. Use clear links to bring them to more relevant content on your website or backpage.

4. Images and HTML

The default for many email clients, MS Outlook or Gmail for example, is to not display images. The user has to click to download the images to see what the email looks like. What if they don't do this? They'll have no idea what your message is. So try to have enough text displaying that the recipient 'gets' your message, without images. Keep text out of images (it can be formatted in Html). Add Alt tags to your images.

5. Style and formatting

Clarity is key, busy-ness is bad. Keep the style consistent and don't go overboard with fonts. Ensure your branding is prominent.

6. Frequency and timing

Pick a time you think your recipients will be receptive to your message (5pm on a Fri probably won't be good).

The thing about an optimal frequency. Pushing too many messages will alienate people. Better still; let them choose how often they want to hear from you. Do surveys to get feedback or ask on your blog if you have one.

7. Check in different Email Clients

View your email in all the email clients that you're recipients are likely to use. The most popular ones might be MS Outlook and Gmail, but also look at Lotus and web-based clients like Hotmail, Eircom, Yahoo, Mozilla's Thunderbird etc.

8. Build confidence with recipients

Privacy is important to just about everyone. Showing the email addresses of those on your list by leaving them on a 'CC' line is a big no-no. Most Email services will disallow this anyway.

- Also, provide a link to the *Privacy Policy* on your website.
- Give your *Contact* details – no-one wants to engage with an email engine!
- Don't send *attachments*, as recipients are wary of opening these in case they contain viruses.

9. Test

Test your success by sending different versions to different recipients. If you think you're happy with what you've got, but aren't sure, perhaps use a control group to send the existing version to and send a new version to another group. Then compare open rates, click through rates (CTR) and conversion rates. Then test again. Use the analytics available to gain insights about what's working and what isn't.

10. Unsubscribe

Let them go if they want! You can't force them to stay, so make it straightforward to *unsubscribe*. It's professional.

11. Keep your list clean of bounces. If your list has a high number of 'bounces' ie. undelivered mail due to email addresses no longer existing etc, you risk being designated as spam. Don't slip down this black hole.
12. Is your list up to date? If you haven't emailed them in a year, then you may need to re-introduce yourself. I got a bunch of mails recently from Eumom.com, who I *think* I subscribed to when I had a baby. My youngest is 6 next week – so I'm probably not a great prospect for them. I've unsubscribed.
13. Do you need to remind them of who you are? I got a mail today from SaySo and had no idea who they were, so I unsubscribed. Then I saw that they had re-branded from Truvo, who I had subscribed to. But I'm not going back now, so they've lost a contact.
14. Is your list all opted-in? Your list needs to be explicitly opted-in for *promotional* emails. *Transactional* emails are different. An example of a transactional email is one related to the purchase of an item. Remember, just because you have their email address doesn't mean you can mail them!
15. Be topical or seasonal. I just got a mail from Peppa Pig giving me an Advent Calendar. When I click on the calendar, it brings me back to content hosted by 'Peppa's' London digital agency, where I (or a 6-yr old) can get something different to do each day.