

Mailing List Mania



You Need a Mailing List

It's surprising to me that I often have to convince someone that they really do need to start and manage a mailing list.

You may have heard the often repeated internet marketing mantra: "The Money is in the List" and it really is true.

If you're *selling something, providing a service or managing a content website* – you do need a mailing list.

When it comes to your website, every web page has a Primary Function - it exists to entice your web visitor to do something. You want them to read an article, act on your recommendations, buy your products or hire you for a service that you provide.

Every web page should also have a Back Up Function - and the major back up function of every page should be to entice visitors to sign up for your newsletter.



Why?

Once you have their email address - you have the ability to market to them again and again. It is the start of a beautiful relationship!

Statistics show that very few people make purchases from a website on their first visit. But, the fact that they are there at all says that they are interested in what you have to offer so you need to make a way to keep in touch with these potential customers.

You Might Need Several Mailing Lists

Many businesses will benefit from using multiple mailing lists. The goal is to develop a unique relationship with your subscribers. If you offer a variety of products, services or information; it can be very helpful to create separate mailing lists that serve these different areas.

For example:

Your target market is made up of pet owners. One mailing list can only go so far to serve the needs of pet owners since there are so many different kinds of pets.

So you might set up and offer several sub lists: Dogs, Cats, Birds, Reptiles, etc. You can go even farther and split up several lists for dog owners. Small dogs, large dogs, show dogs, etc.

Another example:

You serve a home business market and you're teaching others how to grow their businesses. Because different businesses benefit from varied strategies, you can offer lists for the subgroups that you've identified: Direct Sales, Crafters, Consultants, etc.

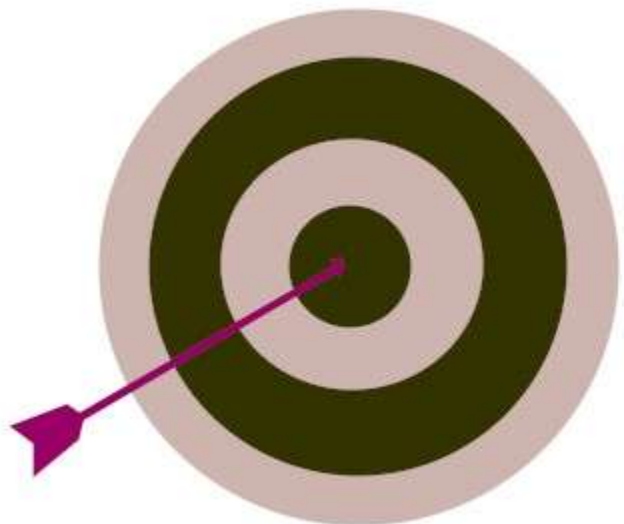
By breaking up your target market into these specific mailing lists you can create a more unique relationship and deliver information that meets their needs.

You Need a Goal for Each List

Take some time to think through what your goals are for your mailing list.

- What information will you deliver to your subscribers?
- What do you want subscribers to do?
- What do you want subscribers to learn about you?

It will help you to have a detailed 'manifesto' for your mailing list when it comes to coming up with content and offers over time.



You Need an Autoresponder System

If you're new to the idea of a mailing list you might not realize that it is not something that you can manage on your own.

Even though your Outlook email program or your Yahoo email account allows you to develop mailing lists that you can communicate with the click of a button, this is not a good option.

The main reason is that email servers have filters that detect when a user is sending email out to a large number of people and that alone can get your email address flagged as a spam source. Unfair but true.

You can familiarize yourself with US Spam laws here:

<http://www.ftc.gov/spam/>

When you read up on the rules, you realize that you are safer when you utilize a system that allows subscribers to opt in and out easily and tracks how and where they subscribed.

Another big reason to choose an autoresponder over running a list on your own is that you can easily schedule mailings with an autoresponder. You can also set up sequential email messages for eCourses.

It's 'set it and forget it' easy!

Choosing the Right System

You have two big choices to make first. Will you look for a mailing list management script that works on your own website server or will you look for a managed/hosted solution?

If you host your mailing list on your own server you may run into the same problems with being labeled as a spam source. Yet many business owners do so without a lot of trouble by taking care to set up their list scripts so that email is sent out at a rate that flies below spam filter radar.

It's my preference to use a hosted solution since list management system owners have specialized in staying up to date with email deliverability issues

and work very hard to stay in compliance so that more of your email reaches its intended destination. Another huge time saver!

Aweber – <http://www.aweber.com>

Aweber provides you with unlimited mailing lists. Aweber works in tandem with many popular internet marketing tools.

Email Aces – <http://www.emailaces.com>

Email Aces offers a plan for one single list which makes it a popular choice for business owners who only need one.

1 Shopping Cart - <http://www.1shoppingcart.com>

1Shopping Cart offers unlimited mailing lists as well as options to include Shopping Cart and Affiliate Management tools.

WAHM Cart – <http://www.wahmcart.com>

WAHM Cart is an Autoresponder system with a full featured Shopping Cart and Affiliate Management tool that allows you to set up unlimited lists.

Text or HTML



HTML Newsletters are attractive. They provide a way for you to incorporate the colors, fonts and images that you want your subscribers to see. They are very useful for branding your business. Seeing the same logo, colors and even your photograph on a regular schedule can influence feelings of trust which is so important in making your subscribers comfortable in spending money with you.

HTML newsletters on the other hand are more likely to get caught up in spam filters since a high percentage of spammers use graphical emails in an attempt to show words that would have triggered spam filters.

Another unfortunate strike against HTML newsletters is that many users have opted to block graphics in their emails.

Text emails can seem more personal since they look more like all of the other email that they get from friends and family. If you are careful with your choice of words, they will more easily pass through spam filters.

Tips List, Newsletter or Ezine Format

How do you decide what kind of mailing list to run?

Let's define three basic list types.

The Tips List is set up with 'evergreen content', which means that the emails are not date or season sensitive. You can load as many tips as you like into the autoresponder and set the delivery schedule according to your preference.

If you want subscribers to receive one tip from you each week – you only need to provide 52 tips and the list will run without interruption for a whole year. And each subscriber will always get every tip from the very beginning of the series.

You can add more tips as you desire. This is one of the easiest and most time savvy ways to run a mailing list. You can even outsource the tip writing to a ghostwriter and just add in personal remarks and P.S. messages to each one.

The Newsletter as I am defining it here is built around products or services and has as its primary purpose, the goal of promoting those products or services.

The Ezine is usually a more in depth publication offering a variety of articles and content centered on a topic of interest.

You could prepare your Newsletter or the Ezine with evergreen content and load it into an autoresponder just like the Tips List but most often you will want to provide the content in a date sensitive fashion.

Placing the Opt In

Have a newsletter sign up box on every single page of your site! Make an enticing invitation - do not just say 'Sign up for our mailing list!'



First Name:
Last Name:
Email:

Using Pop Ins Or Exit Pops

Pop up windows are most often blocked by user installed software but pop in windows can usually make it through because of how they are designed. You can program the window to appear upon entry or exit. You can also program it to only appear one time to a user, weekly, monthly or every time.

Pop windows may trigger an automatic 'close it' response from jaded web surfers but if the window appears when they exit, they may be more likely to opt in at that point after they've spent some time on the website.

Using a Graphic to Represent Your Ezine

There is evidence that having a visual representation for your publication can improve your opt in rate.

Don't skimp on creating the graphic. If you don't have graphic design skills, hire someone to create it for you. Ask yourself what a magazine would look like that would attract your target market – and describe this to your designer.

Get the graphic in a few sizes. A large view for a page that will tell web visitors all about your list and what it has to offer and a smaller view for using above the opt in box on your website.



Dangling Carrots & Other Bribes

Since an autoresponder will allow you to immediately deliver a digital gift, it's easy to offer a bribe to help visitors decide to opt into your mailing list.

Offer a special gift for subscribing that will attract your perfect customer. A tip sheet, a special report, a great

resource list, etc. Take some time and format this freebie professionally. It will show your subscribers what they can expect from you. If they are really impressed with your freebies, they'll have a high expectation of excellence for your products and services.

Just as it is a great idea to create a graphic to represent your newsletter, it is also great to have a graphic for the freebie. It creates a sense of tangible value in the minds of your visitor.

Using Squeeze Pages

A 'name squeeze' is a web page that has one purpose. It makes an offer and asks for a name and email address in exchange for what is offered. This tactic can be very useful when you're building a list to promote a specific product.

You will create something of value to offer that compliments your product – perhaps a special report or a useful check list. Offer it as a freebie and set it up to be delivered automatically when someone subscribes to your list. Drive traffic to the squeeze page and watch the subscriptions come in.

A squeeze page provides great stats since you can directly compare the number of visitors to the number of opt ins.

Thank You Pages

When it comes to making money with your mailing list, the process can start immediately. When someone puts their name and email into the opt in and presses the submit button, you can set the form up to take the subscriber to a confirmation page.

Use this page to thank your new subscriber and give them instructions to look for your first email. If your list is double opt in, tell them exactly how to confirm their subscription. The more detailed your instructions the better!

Since those who are viewing this page have just said yes to you about a mailing list, now is a great time to make another offer. Perhaps a 'one time offer' which could be a special deal on your services or products.

Confirmation Emails

Do not overlook the importance of this first email communication with your new subscriber.

Use your mailing list software codes to greet the reader by name and thank them for trusting you with their email. If your list is double opt in, tell them exactly what to do to confirm the email.

Always ask the subscriber to add your email to their address book as this helps to ensure that your mailings do not end up in their spam folders.

The confirmation email is also a great place to re-present the special offer you made on the thank you page. Make sure that you stress the time sensitivity of the offer.

If you promised a free gift, this is where you will deliver it. Give them a link to the resource you offered and tell them how to collect it.

Making Friends

Do not be afraid to be personable in your newsletter. It is not all about you - but it is partially about you. Let your readers get to know you. Share your likes, tell them about your pets, and give them a little peek into your life now and then. But don't tell long stories... it's important to respect their time.

I feel most loyal to those who I feel I have gotten to know something about. Your readers will feel the same way.

Making Content

Thinking of what to put in your mailings week after week can be challenging. One strategy is to introduce all new website content through your newsletter first. Always announce new products and services. If you have found a resource that you think will be useful for your readers, don't hesitate to make the recommendation.

If you struggle for fresh content there are two tools that will be invaluable to you. One is hiring a ghostwriter. Sometimes it just takes a fresh set of eyes to come up with new ideas.

Another excellent resource is to acquire private label rights articles. PLR articles are often offered in topic related bundles where you are paying a dollar or two for each individual article. You have permission to change whatever you want or use it as is.

Making Offers

Many ezine owners choke on the act of promoting. They either fail to promote at all for fear of turning off the reader - or they go overboard and try to sell them the farm.

There is a graceful and ungraceful way to promote a product.

First off, realize that if someone has subscribed to your newsletter they are at least a little bit interested in what you have to offer. They may just need to get to know you better or they may just want some time to think. So don't be afraid to include a product promotion in every newsletter.

If you are a product seller, do it simply. A featured product that changes with every issue is fine. New product introductions. New uses for familiar product. Product testimonials are a great way to promote so definitely share them!

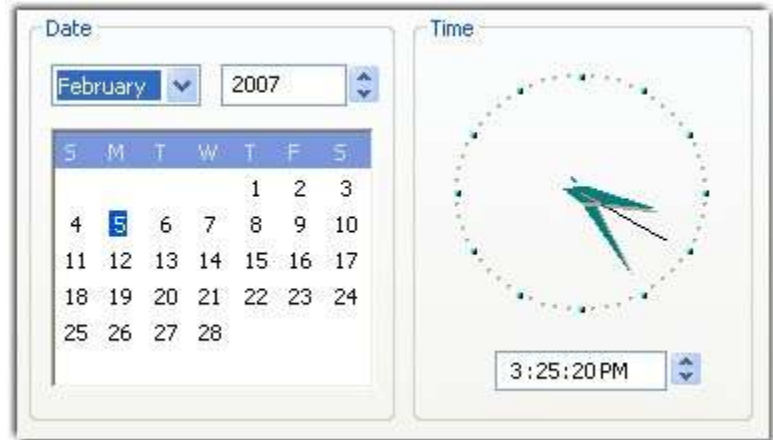
If you provide services, you can show off your recent work or share information and articles that highlight your expertise.

If you're an internet marketer who is using a content website or informational newsletter to earn affiliate income - you may feel particularly challenged with product recommendations. Just approach it naturally.

If I'm a Mom and I've subscribed to your Mom site newsletter, I want to receive great Mom related information with every issue and I'm a warm market for your Mom related product recommendations so the most important thing is to remain on topic.

Mailing Frequency

How often you communicate with your list depends a lot on the kind of list it is. If you're providing tips and content, I personally prefer a weekly schedule but bi-weekly is fine too. If you try for a monthly schedule, your subscribers may forget you in between and be more likely to hit the delete key when they see something from you.



On the other hand, if you sell products and your newsletter is product focused, a monthly schedule is probably just right. Share your monthly product specials and introduce what's new. You can always make special mailings when necessary.

If you want to run a monthly ezine, I think you can make it work if you really focus on providing such great content that the subscriber is looking forward to it. I would recommend providing the ezine in a PDF format that will encourage them to print it out and share with others.

Bringing Them Back to the Website

A favorite tactic for content site owners is to actually publish your newsletter or Ezine on your website – with affiliate recommendations or Google AdSense ads worked into the content.

You then send out a simple text email with teaser text and a link to the web based version of the newsletter.

Promoting Your List

Besides the tactics we've mentioned for enticing opt ins on your website, there are other ways to promote your mailing list.

Make sure that you create one page on your site that exists just to promote the newsletter. Whether this is a name squeeze page or just an information page with an opt in box is up to you. Give this page a simple URL – or even buy a domain to be redirected to this page for easy referrals.

Now you can direct visitors to this page. Include the URL in your email and forum signatures and add them to your Author Resource Box when you write articles for distribution.

You can also advertise your Ezine through Ezine Directories. Try a quick search in Google and you'll find several to choose from.

Co-promoting with other List Owners

Approach a complimentary business owner with a co-promotion offer. You can make a personal recommendation about their publication to your mailing list and they can do the same.

Visit the Resource Center and the Business Building Blog at www.foundationcoaching.com for awesome ideas to create a profitable business.

Lori Smith

Founder Foundation Coaching Group Inc