

How To Build An Email Marketing List

By Evan Mangan

So you've discovered the golden egg of marketing- the email list. With conversion rates ranging anywhere from 2-20% , very low cost to implement and no trees killed in the process, it's hard to beat this form of advertising.

Business owners need to tread carefully, however. While people can easily recycle Direct Mail, sending an unwanted email to prospective clients can elicit a very negative response. Not only is it bad business, it's also illegal. Many people feel very personal about their in-box, so making sure you're advertising to people who have given you permission to do so is vital.

How do you get their permission in the first place? How do you keep growing your email list so that you've constantly got a fresh supply of potential customers?

Let's start with getting their permission. Say you're at a business or networking event and business cards are being handed out. Instead of going home and entering all that new information onto your list like a thief in the night, why not say, "You know, I occasionally send out email coupons for my dry cleaning business. Would you be interested in getting on my mailing list?" or "Thanks for the business card. Just to let you know, I put out a monthly e-newsletter full of articles and tips about choosing high-yield investments. If you want, I could put your email address down so you could start receiving it."

Simple as that. Most of the time, if you make sure to tell people what they're getting if they give you their information, they'll gladly say yes. Make sure there is a benefit involved for them. If you send out monthly emails just to tout your business, it's not going to be very effective.

You should also make it very easy for people to sign up on your website and in your physical store, shop or office. Again, advertise to them WHY they'll benefit from being on your mailing list.

Now, how are you going to grow your list? The answer: Promote, Promote, Promote!

- Make it fun- Keep a fishbowl on your front counter. Make a sign that lets people know that if they drop their business card in, not only will they get on your wonderfully beneficial mailing list, but they'll ALSO be in the running for a gift certificate towards your business (whatever it may be).
- If you attended a business or networking event, but didn't get a chance to ask all those business card owners personally if they want to be on your list, send them a letter or email. Introduce yourself again, remind them when you met and at what event, and then ask them if they'd like to join your list. Tout benefits to them. Make sure, however, that you don't wait too long after the event to send out communications. You've got maybe a week, tops, and after that those cards will be cold and the person is not likely to remember you.
- Offer your customers incentives- Get them involved. Start a promotion and tell your customers that for every 5 people they get to join your mailing list, they'll get a 20% off coupon (or some other incentive of your choosing). If you're providing enjoyable emails and good service, they're going to want to spread your name anyway. Use this to your advantage.
- Use direct mail to get people to sign up for your mailing list. Again, tout the benefits of signing up. Let people know what's in it for *them*.
- Make sure your employees are asking every customer if they would like to be on the list. If you put out a monthly e-newsletter, print out samples and have a stack on the check-out counter for people to take home.
- Tout your email list on every piece of literature your company puts out, from brochures, to ads, to business cards. The more people can see that you put out solid, enjoyable information, the more people will sign up. Make sure that EVERYONE can see you do this.
- Put a "Join Our Mailing List" link at the bottom of every email you send. Make sure the link takes people to the exact page they need to go to sign up.

Remember, having an email list is a goldmine of prospective customers, and keeping your name in their inbox once a month or every quarter is a great way to keep in their field of view. Just make sure they've given their permission for you to be there.

About The Author

Evan Mangan is a former Head of European Marketing for Yahoo! Mobile and was Head of International Operational Marketing for Orange. He is founder and Managing Director of The Marketing Crowd (www.TheMarketingCrowd.com), a full service marketing agency which makes the marketing techniques employed by major brands available and affordable to smaller companies.

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