

# Email Marketing Beginners Guide

How to Start, Maintain And  
Perfect your E-Mail Marketing



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## Introduction

Different businesses need different things, but one thing that every business has to concentrate on is advertising. E-mail marketing is a very cost-effective way of not only bringing in additional clients, but ensuring repeat business over the long term. That's why when we developed the Omnistar Mailer, we started using it ourselves from day one.

But effective e-mail marketing comes not only from the software solutions that make it happen, but also from the presentation of those marketing materials as well. That's why we at Omnistar Interactive have created this eBook: so that others can share in the tips and tricks we've learned over the years on how to make an e-mail campaign work well.

In this ebook, you will find not only how to create the perfect e-mail campaign, but how to steer clear of the pitfalls many first-time marketers fall in. We will guide you through the steps of e-mail marketing, with checklists, tips and tricks, and ideas that you can try from day one.

We hope you enjoy reading this ebook, and if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please don't hesitate to send it along! After all, the second edition will be coming out soon....

## Chapter 1: **Getting Started** *Collecting E-Mail Addresses*

Before you even think about starting an e-mail marketing campaign, you have to have a way of getting potential prospects' e-mail addresses. Thankfully, we have a few tips to get you started.

- *Place a subscription form on the website.*
  - Put a “sign-up” form on your website in a very accessible place. Ideally, every page on your site should include a link; common consensus usually says that the top right of your web pages is a good location.
  - Include a privacy declaration right next to the link—prospects are especially worried about privacy issues at the very moment that they consider signing up, so make sure a link to your privacy pledge is immediately available. Also make sure the link is to a new window, so that viewing it does not take them away from the sign-up link.
  - Make sure that your viewers know exactly what they will be subscribing to and how often they will receive it, and remember that in doing so you are setting up an expectation that you must commit to fulfilling.
  - Ask not just for the e-mail address, but for their ‘main’ e-mail address. It is incredible how many people will then be more likely to give out their main e-mail address.
  - Don’t use the word ‘subscribe’. There is a connotation of cost with the word ‘subscribe’, even if your newsletter is free, so it is preferable to instead use ‘sign up’.
  - Don’t ask for too much info at first; make it as easy as possible to subscribe. Just ask for name and main e-mail; other demographics can come on the landing page if you really need it, and even then nothing more should be required. You can always get more info on your prospects later on, after they’re used to receiving your newsletter.
  - Use code to double check that e-mail is entered correctly, but also consider forcing prospects to enter their e-mail twice; recent research suggests that double e-mail fields increases sign-ups overall, since you gain more that you would have lost to typos than you’ll lose to those that can’t be bothered with the inconvenience of typing it twice. (See [http://www.marketingprofs.com/ea/qst\\_question.asp?qstID=16074](http://www.marketingprofs.com/ea/qst_question.asp?qstID=16074) for a information on this data.) Also, consider that if they can’t even be bothered to do that much, they must not be very strong prospects in the first place.

- Create a landing page. After subscribing, recipients should be sent to a ‘welcome’ page that includes a number of important marketing elements. Remember that this moment is a natural high in your relationship with the client; this is the very moment that they are enamored enough with you to have actually signed up for your newsletter, so take advantage of this sales opportunity! The landing page must include a number of elements:
  - Thank them for signing up.
  - Confirm that they are on the newsletter list.
  - Ask them to add your ‘from’ address to their whitelist.
  - Ask for additional demographics if you did not already do so previously.
  - Let them know how to modify their subscription or access past newsletters.
  - Remind them of what they will get and how often. Setting expectations is very important.
  - Remind them of how they will benefit from receiving your newsletter.
  - Give them an option for sending you immediate feedback—remember that this is an optimal moment to get information from your prospects, so this may be the highest quality feedback response location you can set up.
  - Reward recipient for their interest by giving them access to subscriber-only content. You may also want to have a link to a ‘Best Content’ page from previous newsletters, or a coupon for use if they immediately purchase.
  - Make the page personal. Write the copy as if you were directly talking to them, so that they feel comfortable with what they’ve just committed to.
- If you decide to eschew a landing page (something that we at Omnistar do *not* recommend), then consider using ajax so the whole page doesn’t have to reload. (See <http://www.sitepoint.com/article/use-ajax-php-build-mailing-list> for one possible way to do this.)
- Categorize your prospects. Your database shouldn’t just be a list of e-mail addresses. Making each e-mail personalized is the best of way of converting prospects when it comes to e-mail marketing. Have each newsletter campaign aimed at a subset of your database, and send it only

to those recipients. You need a different kind of newsletter for previous customers than you will for people you've never met.

- *Place a survey on your website.*
  - Surveys are a great way to increase customer feedback. Don't be surprised if the simple act of creating a survey gains you more written feedback than if you directly ask for it.
  - This is an excellent time to get your customers' e-mail addresses, but be aware that you can't just fish for addresses without letting them know that they're signing up for a newsletter. Included near the end of the survey should be a highly visible block of text asking for permission to send your newsletter to survey respondents. Think of this as an upsell, not a prerequisite for filling out your form. Remember that it is against the law to surreptitiously gain prospects' addresses. To be safe, we recommend that the checkbox you use to ask for permission to send them your newsletter be turned off at default. Believe me when I say that if you sell the newsletter properly in the text block, you will get a very high percentage of new subscribers to survey respondents.
  - When creating the text block selling your newsletter, make sure the contrast on that block is the highest on the screen. Ideally, color contrast should be high enough at that checkbox to make users' eyes go first to this text block rather than to the "send" button to complete the survey.
  - Remember that all the rules that apply to getting addresses from your website still apply here: include a privacy statement, give an example of what they'd be getting, set expectations, etc.
- *Have a contest.*
  - Contests are a good way to increase your list of contacts at the expense of knowing that you have good quality prospects. Make sure contests are open to current subscribers as well, so as to create a sense of worthwhileness for all newsletter subscribers.
- *Do a giveaway.*
  - Like contests, giveaways can easily attract a large number of people who would otherwise skim right past your newsletter. Keep in mind that while this may increase your list of contacts, overall quality of prospects will generally be reduced.
  - Ideas of things you can give away include free reports, white papers, helpful information, or e-books. There are also programs available online that can allow your company to give away things like mp3s or ring tones for very little cost to you.

- *Post pop-ups.*
  - Pop-up ads won't work for every site, nor even for every browser, and prospect sign-ups are significantly lower for this method. But of those that *do* sign up, you can generally expect them to be higher quality prospects.
  
- *Ask people you know.*
  - The best place to get your newsletter started is with your current clients. Ask for permission to start sending out your newsletter whenever you send out physical letters, invoices, postcards, or anything else. Don't forget that the rules still apply: include a privacy statement, set expectations, etc.
  - Past clients are also a good source of newsletter prospects. Don't forget the general rule that it is always easier to get someone to buy something else than it is to buy something first.
  - Ask permission from your friends and family. Even if you don't ordinarily include them in your business prospects, they may be a good source of determining how well received your newsletter actually is.
  
- *Know the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003*
  - **Always get your prospects' permission before sending any e-mail.** Not only is it illegal to do otherwise, but do you really want to waste time sending e-mails to non-responsive prospects that will probably never buy anything from you anyway? Also, sending out e-mail without permission can quickly get you blacklisted by the people who maintain corporate servers; and once you're blacklisted, good luck trying to get your reputation back.
  - Don't let your permissions grow cold. If you have an older list of e-mail addresses of prospects who previously agreed to receive your e-mail, try re-inviting that list before sending your newsletter to them. It is better to lose some potential subscribers than to risk people hitting the spam button.
  - Don't buy lists of e-mail addresses. That's illegal.
  - Don't e-mail everyone who went to a tradeshow you attended, even if you are given the addresses by the tradeshow organizers. Those people may have signed up for e-mail from the tradeshow organizers, but they did not sign up for *your* newsletter.
  - Do not send your newsletter to a list of 'fellow members' of an organization you belong to. Just because the club posts contact info does not mean you can just e-mail them all your newsletter. However, it *is* okay to send individualized invitation e-mails to each of them, asking if

they'd like to receive your newsletter. After all, that is why they posted their e-mail to fellow members in the first place.

- Do not send your newsletter to people you swapped business cards with. They never agreed to receive a newsletter from you, and hence it would be illegal to send them one without asking for permission first.
- Beware of fish bowls. Using them to collect business cards in order to build your list of newsletter recipients is okay only if it is clearly posted that putting their business card in the bowl indicates their permission for you to send the newsletter to them. We recommend taking a picture of the bowl as it appears in your business, alongside the notification that it is for subscribers to your newsletter. Keep this picture in your files, as you will need it if you are later accused of spamming.
- The spam button is NOT your friend. Anytime someone hits the spam button on an e-mail that you sent out, you run the risk of being blacklisted. Make sure you follow all the rules, and you should be okay—but be aware that the spam button isn't just a 'delete' button; it informs server admins to the fact that someone was sending spam, and prosecution/blacklisting may result.
- See the official notice of the CAN-SPAM act at [<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/buspubs/canspam.shtm>].

## Chapter 2: Avoiding Spam Filters

Sun Tzu's *Art of War* clearly states that in order to defeat your enemy regularly, you must first know them very well. In the case of e-mail marketing, your enemy is the spam filter. Overzealous and overly discriminatory, modern e-mail filters stand in between you and potential customers. As powerful as they are, they suffer from the inability to know the difference between an honest guy like yourself and a sweepstakes offer from a hardcore spammer. While it is not possible to destroy that enemy, there are definitely ways to get around him.

Think back to the spam that you have received before. The subject line usually includes variations of the words 'free offer', 'urgent', 'now', 'amazing', 'buy', 'why', 'home opportunity', etc. with a combination of bad spacing, poor grammar, unnecessary CAPS and annoying punctuation. This is exactly what you *don't* want to do. Not only does this keep you legal (the CAN-SPAM act requires subject lines to be descriptive), but, perhaps amazingly, subject lines that get straight to the point actually have a better e-mail open rate than sales-pitch subject lines. A recent study on e-mail campaigns showed that phrases like "[COMPANYNAME] Sales and Marketing Newsletter" and "[COMPANYNAME] May 2007 Bulletin" consistently have better open rates than subject lines like "It's still Summer in Tahoe!", "Give a Gift Certificate this Holiday", and "[COMPANYNAME] for your next dream home". The results of the study indicated that better e-mail open rates are associated with subject lines that stick to describing the subject of the e-mail. This contrasts with most other advertising mediums, which require more pushy content. (See study at [<http://www.mailchimp.com/resources/subject-line-comparison.phtml>].)

When it comes to the subject line, the best rule of thumb is to simply write subject headers that describe the subject of the content of your e-mail.

But the subject line isn't the only thing to concentrate on. Your 'from' address must be immediately recognizable if you want the best open rate. Use an easily identifiable sending address instead of alphanumeric addresses. And a missing send-to field or subject line is as bad as multiple 'cc's, 'bcc's or 'to' addresses similar to the receivers. Also, be sure that none of the addresses on your recipient list gets forwarded to multiple locations. If you see a sales@[COMPANYNAME].com address, take it off your list. It is very unlikely that someone would subscribe to a newsletter on a sales@\*.com address; usually these e-mail accounts forward their mail to the entire sales team. (It may in fact be a malicious sign-up by your competitor. That's why you have to be careful with what you put into the content of your newsletters.)

The next thing to consider is that you should never use a e-mail template's copy. Using the formatting is okay, but content-wise, if your sales copy looks too similar to others who may have spammed in the past, then your e-mails may not go through at all. Also, the more genuine and personal the e-mail is the greater chance it has at being viewed as important by the recipient, and hence it also makes your conversion rate

increase. Though you can't personally write 10,000 e-mails you can still make a non-robotic one yourself without being too commercial.

But the best way to get past spam filters is to request your 'from' address to be added to the recipient's whitelist when they originally subscribe. This is of paramount importance, and should be taken care of even if you ignore everything else.

Modern spam filters have the capacity to evolve at the behest of readers who report spam on a regular basis. But with spammers trying to sound more like legitimate people and legitimate senders trying to sound less like spammers, it's becoming harder to distinguish the two. In the end, with ever-changing protocols and filters, there is no magic bullet that will increase the chances of your mail being delivered. But keeping to the ideas presented in this chapter will help to make your newsletter have the best chance of making it through.

## Chapter 3: **E-Mail Marketing Etiquette**

E-mail is a vital part of any business in this day and age. Just as it is with anything else, though, knowledge is power. It is important to know the ins and outs of e-mail communication in order for it to do any good for your business. The approach you take in e-mail marketing can mean life or death when it comes to your business.

First you should know that you need to be prepared. Once you start e-mail marketing you should be prepared for an influx of e-mails. This, however, is good in the long run for your business if you handle them with courtesy and you are efficient at taking care of them.

Second, you need to make sure that your e-mails match your audience. You want your e-mail marketing to reach the people who are likely to be interested in purchasing your products or services. So, first decide on the service or goods you would like to market, then determine who would most likely be the candidates to match your decision. For example, you need to take age and gender into consideration. You also need to take personal interests into consideration.

A third thing to consider is how to address your audience. You should utilize your php autoresponder software or your e-mail autoresponder software to personally address each and every customer on your mailing list software. Think about it, would you take the time to read an e-mail that was not personally addressed to you?

The fourth thing you ought to know when it comes to e-mail marketing etiquette is that you need to respect copyrights on materials that you add into your e-mail newsletters and advertisements. You should be sure to cite any references, sources and quotes that you use.

The final e-mail marketing etiquette tip is to use attachments that can be opened. If you are sending attachments use programs that your customers are likely to have. Otherwise you are wasting your time and your customer's time.

## Chapter 4: **Building Relations & Repeat Business with E-Mail Marketing**

One of the most popular, low cost methods of marketing today is e-mail marketing. There are several reasons for this trend. One is that it saves paper, which in turn saves money. Another reason is that it saves the time and effort of stuffing and sealing envelopes, as in the old method of mailing out newsletters. A third reason that companies have turned to e-mail marketing is that it is better than the old-fashioned snail mail newsletters. E-mail newsletters can actually be more informative and user friendly than the snail mail newsletters ever were. The fourth and most important reason that many companies are now using e-mail marketing is that they are better able to build relations with their customers as well as gain repeat business from them.

Here are a few tips for achieving the relations you want with your customers so that they will come back to you:

- *Build up your e-mail address list.*
  - This is often the hardest part of e-mail marketing, but it is also one of the most important. You want a good, solid list of e-mail addresses that you can send your newsletters and advertisements to. You can build this list in one of several ways. You can build up your own list by having informational sites set up where people can click to request more information, you can purchase a list from third party vendors, or you can build up your own list by having a link for customers to click for more information on your own website.
- *Do a giveaway.*
  - Like contests, giveaways can easily attract a large number of people who would otherwise skim right past your newsletter. Keep in mind that while this may increase your list of contacts, overall quality of prospects will generally be reduced.
- *Send e-mails to those on your list*
  - Use your list to send e-mails that are informative and catchy. These e-mails are meant to bring your e-mail customers to your website.
- *Keep a close eye on your progress.*
  - Be sure to utilize unsubscribe lists as well as bounce back e-mails to watch how well your e-mails are working. It helps to have a place where your customers can tell you where they found out about your business. This will help you to maintain relationships with your customers.

## Chapter 5: Using an Autoresponder

With more and more businesses turning to instant and automated communication and information to keep up with ever burgeoning mailing lists, autoresponders have become an important part of any e-mail marketing campaign. That's why Omnistar Mailer now includes an Autoresponder feature which allows you to continuously keep in touch with your mailing list without lifting a finger, stylus or pen. Schedule e-mails to go out minutes, hours, days or even weeks later maintaining presence, contact and relationship with your subscribers not only saving time but creating sales opportunities and increased customer appreciation with a minimum of fuss.

Omnistar Mailer's dynamic Autoresponder feature saves both time and resources by enabling you to send multiple timed e-mails to your mailing lists without ever physically composing each message. Imagine sending a customer an immediate follow up e-mail after a purchase, sending them a coupon or promotional code days later for a future purchase and finally reminding them to renew their product months later, all without having to do anything other than an initial setup. Autoresponder allows you to send any amount of e-mails at any time in the future. No longer will you forget to keep in touch with customers or subscribers nor will you spend hours composing individual response e-mails. The uses and possibilities of the Autoresponder are endless and it is now available in our Omnistar Mailer. The possibilities and uses are infinite from billing and marketing to sales and support, especially with your ability to specify preferences such as age, weight, location and gender allowing you to tailor make and send different campaigns to different groups. The autoresponder is a time and money-saving feature making it one of the most inexpensive marketing tools with its inclusion in the Omnistar Mailer. Marketing has never been so easy and affordable with the Omnistar Mailer.

- *Save time.*
  - No longer do you have to spend hours composing and sending e-mails or trying to remember when to follow up.
- *Save money.*
  - Mass e-mails save a trip to the post office and the bank.
- *Keep a close eye on your progress.*
  - Be sure to utilize unsubscribe lists as well as bounce back e-mails to watch how well your e-mails are working. It helps to have a place where your customers can tell you where they found out about your business. This will help you to maintain relationships with your customers.
- *Maintain important customer relations.*

- Be a constant, but non-annoying, presence in your customers' mailbox sending them news, reminders or any other information.
- *Boost your company's marketing opportunities..*
  - Enhance your marketing with recurring and now humane e-mails based on demographics.

The potential of our Autoresponder is no doubt endless and can be a very effective tool in your marketing and/or normal business operations. There is no one single use for autoresponders and if you imagine it, it can probably be done via autoresponder. A simple feature to keep your customers in the know or a powerful and profitable marketing tool, you decide. Utilize a lightning fast response or a recurring future response. Again, you decide.

A few uses of the Autoresponder:

- Send your employees a monthly newsletter or digest: the employee football game in November, an invitation to the Holiday Party in December, and a W-2 notice in January.
- Create a bi weekly online magazine or a twice daily news alert.
- Deliver timed press releases to your customer base.
- Send a site subscriber information about your services seconds after they click send.
- Send a testimonial the next day and a link to sales the next day.
- Send a confirmation e-mail to a customer, send an online receipt minutes later and a thank you message after that.
- Send your customers a promotional e-mail every Wednesday and a sales circular on Sunday.
- Send your students homework e-mail reminders each day at 5:00 p.m.
- Let your customers know you received their request.
- Or simply inform your list that you are on that long needed vacation.

## Chapter 6: **Using an E-Mail Marketing Company**

In this new age of technology we have to come up with better ways of reaching our customers than we ever had to before. Stopping by the house is out of the question because no one is home long enough to have a conversation with you about your services or products. Calling the house phone line is also a thing of the past due to the fact that land lines are few and far between. Postage stamps are rising every other day it seems, so mailing in bulk is getting more and more expensive. What is the answer then? E-mail marketing.

E-mail marketing is a fairly simple and fast way to reach all of your customers in one full sweep. Almost everyone has access to the internet and has an e-mail address. In fact, a good portion of people have some reason, such as school or work, for which they have to check their e-mail at least one time a day.

Not sure where to start? There are a few different ways to get started. First off you need to come up with an e-mail list manager. This can be a person or you can use a program, such as e-mail list manager software. The person or program will compile and keep track of all of the e-mail addresses of your customers.

The next step is composing your e-mail newsletters and other mass e-mails you would like to send out. There are a few ways to do this. You can get some software, such as e-mail marketing software or mass e-mail software. The software will aid you in creating your e-mails to your customers. Your other option, in fact your better option, is to hire an e-mail marketing company. The reason that you would want to choose this option over the software is that software has to be updated every so often and you have to pay for those updates. Your e-mail marketing company, on the other hand, stays updated without you having to pay for updates or new programs. Also, the software could get a virus off of your computer or it could crash if your computer crashes. E-mail marketing companies, on the other hand, do not depend on your computer.

## Chapter 7: **Minimizing E-Mail Complaints**

Your customers are the key to your company's success. They can also, however, be your toughest critics. That is why it is important to be sure that they are happy and satisfied with your services and products, which includes your e-mail newsletters and advertisements.

You may be wondering how it is possible for customers to have e-mail complaints. There are actually a few different areas in which customers can become unhappy when it comes to the e-mails that you send to them. First is the permission issue. If you send e-mails to customers without first gaining their permission, then they will complain. People now consider any e-mail that they did not subscribe to or give permission for receiving to be spam. Your customers want to have complete control over what comes into their e-mail box and when you send them e-mails that may be unwanted they have lost that control and will complain. Secondly, relevancy may be a complaint. If you are sending e-mails to their e-mail boxes that are not relevant to their needs or wants or that is not relevant to what they subscribed to then the customers will be unhappy and will definitely complain.

In order to minimize e-mail complaints you can do a few different things. First make sure that you get your customers' consent or permission to send them e-mails. You can do this by having them click a box on your site to receive e-mails, click a box on your site not to receive e-mails or by requesting e-mails. Therefore, everyone in your e-mail mailing list manager should have given you prior permission for your e-mails to come to him or her. Secondly, be sure that you send your customers only the e-mails that are relevant to what they gave you permission for. So if they requested or gave permission for you to send them e-mails about gardening supplies don't send them e-mails on computer supplies. A third way to minimize e-mail complaints is to always listen to what your customers have to say. Instead of waiting for them to come to you with complaints, go to them and find out what they like and what suggestions they have for changes.

## Chapter 8: **Common E-Mail Marketing Mistakes**

In the world of e-mail marketing, good e-mails and online advertising can lead to a substantial profit. On the other hand, making a single mistake in the e-mail marketing techniques can be devastating.

As an e-mail marketer you should know what the number one mistake is when it comes to this kind of business: not personalizing your e-mails. Treating your subscribers like a real person rather than just another name is extremely important. Not only is ignoring personalization the number one mistake, but can also be the most detrimental mistake you can make.

In order to treat your subscribers as a person you can do a couple of different things. First, utilize your e-mail autoresponder software in such a way that you address your subscribers by their first name, rather than addressing a general audience. Secondly, you can personalize the e-mails by writing to one person instead of a group. Invite that one person to view your website. Encourage that one person to try your newest product or service. Advertise your latest promotion to that one person. That way each person in your bulk e-mail program will feel as though you know him or her and you know what they want or need.

There are a few other very common e-mail marketing mistakes to steer clear of that can be extremely detrimental to your business. One is mailing too many sales ads and not e-mailing enough informational content and free product or service offers. Number two is not sending out e-mails often enough. If your e-mail newsletter goes out one time each month or less often than that, then people forget that your business exists and they will fail to open your e-mails. Number three is not having a theme for your list that you e-mail out. Number four is not having a clear purpose for the list you e-mail out.

Steer clear of these common e-mail marketing mistakes and e-mail marketing can be very profitable for you and your business.