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The Basics of Email Marketing

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Interested in using email to market your business but don't know where to start?

Using your standard email client (e.g. Outlook®, Eudora®, Hotmail®, AOL MailSM, Yahoo® etc.) to send your email campaigns is not ideal. Why not? Because your standard email client is not designed for email marketing and therefore has limitations. A lack of formatting control, restrictions on mailing size, and no tracking or reporting are just some of the limitations that can undermine your efforts. But the good news is, you do not have to go it alone.

Look at Web-Based Email Providers

Web-based email marketing services are inexpensive and designed to make email marketing simple for the non-technical user. By using a trusted email marketing service, you can avoid common mistakes and truly get the most from your email marketing efforts.

How to Build Your Email List

Building a permission-based email list is much easier than you might think. The best place to start building your list is to go where you connect with your customers and prospects the most.

Do you have a website? Add a prominent link or button for visitors to sign up to receive your emails. If you're embarking on your first email marketing campaign, it's okay to send it to your pre-existing customers. Good marketing practice is to put a "permission reminder" at the top of your first email communication: "You received this email because you're a customer of Business XYZ. Click here to unsubscribe."

At the register or entrance to your business, have a guest book set out for visitors to leave their email addresses. Be sure to post a sign that says "Join my email list." It's also okay to verbally ask your customers for their email addresses.

Networking events and tradeshow are perfect venues to build your email list. And don't forget your personal email signature makes a great place to add a link to sign up for your email newsletter.

Build an Email Communication Strategy

To make email marketing work for you, you need to determine your strategy:

- **Set your objectives** – What do you want to gain from your email marketing efforts? Be sure your content and target audience can support your goals.
- **Collect contact information** – As noted above, there are countless contact points where you can collect email addresses from interested customers. Not only do returning customers spend 67% more on average than new customers, satisfied customers become your referral engine¹.

- **Determine message format** – Based on your business and recipient list, determine if you will send newsletters, promotions, or announcements/invitations. Be sure the communications you're sending are interesting and relevant to the recipient.
- **Create a schedule** – Don't let too much time lapse between your email communications or you risk your recipients losing interest or forgetting about you. It's important to maintain a consistent schedule of communications. Take the time to plan ahead.
- **Build professional communications** – Remember to comply with CAN-SPAM rules and create an email campaign that respects permission.
- **Analyze results** – By analyzing your results such as bounce backs, opens, clicks, unsubscribes and spam complaints you can make necessary corrections to your list and content to improve your next campaign.
- **Continuously refine your strategy!** – Over time, think about what's worked, what hasn't worked, and whether your goals have changed and refine your strategy accordingly.

5 Elements of Successful Email Marketing

Here are five elements of successful email marketing you should understand:

1. **Trust** – Trust is the most important element of your success. People open email from senders that they know and trust.
2. **Permission/explicit/implicit** – You should never add an email address to your distribution list without explicit permission.
3. **No permission = SPAM** – Enough said.
4. **Unsubscribe** – Email marketing must include an unsubscribe option. Make sure it is visible and actionable.
5. **CAN-SPAM** – Failure to include some specific information in each email violates the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003. At a minimum, you'll need a verified sender name in the "from" line, a clear "subject" line, a visible unsubscribe button, and a physical mailing address to adhere to current CAN-SPAM requirements.

Get Started

Email has become the preferred method of communication for millions of people. A web-based email marketing provider can be a smart way for businesses of any size to develop successful, professional, and affordable email marketing campaigns that deliver results.

Ready to get started? Sign up for a free 60 day trial at www.constantcontact.com and visit the Learning Center for tips, advice and more to help you reach your marketing potential.

¹ Harvard Business Review