

How to build A Responsive Mailing List

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SECRETS TO RESPONSIVE LISTS

Every online marketer understands that the best way to generate sales is to have a large email list of subscribers. After they build that list, however, many marketers begin to recognize that the list is large, but it doesn't function to create sales. That's because it wasn't built with the idea of creating a *responsive* list, and instead focused on quantity instead of quality.

The time to start building the right type of list is just as you get started, but even if you've already got a list, you can still tweak your business processes to get a better response after the fact.

PAY ATTENTION TO HOW YOU CREATE THAT LIST

The biggest secret isn't that you need a huge number of people on the list, but that you want a better conversion of subscribers to customers. You can do this by paying attention to how you are creating the list, how you are marketing it, and what is actually happening when you send out an offer. Here are some basic things you should know about a responsive mailing list.

- **Buying email addresses doesn't work**

For the most part, you can buy thousands of emails on another person's contact list and still generate very poor sales. The secret to creating a good list is to build one up naturally and organically so that people have a good relationship with you and your business.

- **Single opt-ins can be fooled**

You may put out an opt-in list and be congratulating yourself on the number of sign-ups, that is, until you find out many are fakes or generated by online bots. Learn how to use a double opt-in strategy to build a better list.

- **Targeted demographics are better than niches**

Demographics tell you the reasons *why* people buy, while niches just assume everyone on your list is interested. You will have better luck by understanding the psychology of your list, rather than just relying on categoric niches, for email marketing.

- **Automate what you can**

There are plenty of products and services to help streamline your online business. There's no reason why you should be struggling with responding to

each and every email, unless there is some reason for personally responding. Learning about the technologies and tools available can save you valuable time and increase your bottom line.

- **People do have a price**

It's up to you to figure out what that price is. It may be that they are willing to subscribe if you give them a free short report. It might be that they will do it to enter a contest. It might be that they will reply to an email when they see a savings in a product they like or when they get your personal attention. Pay attention and do what works for you.

ORGANIC IS BETTER

Organic, or naturally occurring lists, generally are quite a bit more responsive than lists created by buying email addresses from other marketers. The reasons for this are that bought lists can contain a number of bad email addresses or contain people on them who are getting so much email from other marketers, that they ignore everything as spam. One last reason, and the biggest reason, to use organic lists is that you can be liable for

sending email to an address that hasn't opted in to having their email published.

When you build your own organic lists, you know that the person has specifically requested to subscribe to your list and are genuinely interested in either you or your business.

WAYS TO CREATE ORGANIC LISTS

In this age of social networking, you will find that it isn't as hard as it used to be to create an organic list. People are networking more and more online, and all you need to figure out is how to put the power of the Internet at your fingertips. Don't just put an opt-in form on your website and expect that using that simple action will generate a large organic list for you. People will still have to find your site, and if your traffic is low, this can be a major stumbling block. The solution is to not just advertise your opt-in on your site, but to do it elsewhere where traffic that is interested in your niche congregates. That's where social networking comes into play.

Get in the habit of building an online presence on various social networking sites. You will have to post a profile and start networking with people on these sites to hook into potential customers. Once you have them interested in

either who you are or some common interests (related to what you market), you can start posting updates or links to things that you want to promote to get traffic from these sites back to your opt-in offers.

PLACES TO NETWORK ONLINE

- www.facebook.com
Facebook has a very crisp, business-like interface that helps you to maintain a more professional image for your profile. Join groups, network with like-minded people, or even advertise within Facebook. It's a great way to find demographics very quickly.
- www.twitter.com
For people who don't have enough time to put up a full profile, just hop onto Twitter. Using 140 characters in each update, you can build up a quick following without too much time involved.
- www.linkedin.com
This is more of a business directory, but also a great place to network.

DEMOGRAPHICS ARE KEY

Internet marketers will tell you that when you go to set up a website or online business, you have to pick a hot niche. That is completely true, as without a hot niche, you have less chance of generating enough traffic to make good sales.

However, when you go to market that niche via email lists, you will find that you will need to market to demographics more than to a niche. In other words, you will want to focus on getting up close and personal with your prospective buyers, instead of just assuming that they want to buy your products because they signed up to your list.

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

Demographics are typically segregated into a few marketing categories: gender, age, income bracket, ethnicity, and education level. Of course, you can set up any number of demographic variables to help you market to your niche, but these are pretty standard. Just knowing several of these demographics about who is visiting your site can substantially help you to increase the responsiveness of your list. How? The trick is to send

emails that talk personally to a specific group's needs and provides that demographic with solutions to the problems that they see day to day.

For instance, say you are marketing laptops. You want a demographic of college-aged students or business professionals who require this piece of equipment. You may also find that they need to be within a specific income bracket. You can put up surveys on your site and reward people for identifying who they are and what demographic they fall into. After that, you take that information and you set up different lists.

The one with college-aged students gets emails on how laptops can help them to complete assignments in between class or to take their studies with them anywhere. The email that goes to business people may target people who are in their cars (like real estate agents) or who spend a lot of time travelling for business. In that case, the biggest benefit is that it will increase their work productivity as they get the essentials of their business travel done.

SPLIT YOUR MAILING LISTS INTO DEMOGRAPHICS

Once you start to figure out why people are buying, you can start to separate people into different mailing lists,

according to their demographics. You can set up one list for 18- to 25-year olds and another for those over 30. Next time you want to send out a promotion for a particular product or service, you will have a good idea what psychological triggers work best with either list.

TECHNOLOGY TO TRACK RESPONSIVENESS

Once you start building mailing lists for marketing purposes, you will find that there are tools and services out there to help simplify the process. There's no reason why you have to learn how to build a responsive mailing list from scratch when you can use the tools and services provided by others. Just make sure that they are simplifying your life and not complicating it. Here are some tools or services that can help you do just that, while encouraging your subscribers to be more responsive.

TOOLS

- **The Double Opt-In List**

Instead of a single opt-in, you can choose to implement a double opt-in where the subscriber

must confirm his/her email address via a response link that gets sent there. This is a great way to keep out spammers and fake email addresses from ruining the quality of your list.

- **Check Open Rates**

You should be able to set an embedded image (sometimes it's even a blank) that pings a server to download the image when a person opens your emails. This gives you a good idea of how many people are opening your emails and whether you are getting a good response to the subject headlines.

- **Autoresponders**

Set up automatic responders to certain types of actions people take, like registration or ordering. They can be for thank-yous, for back-end offers, and for confirmation of the action. The point is to make sure that customers feel they are being interacted with, even if you know it's on automatic.

SERVICES

To get the types of tools above, many Internet marketers go to a service like AWeber.com that will provide email marketing support using some of these tools and more.

They will help people set up email campaigns using double opt-in lists and autoresponders and will give you a good idea of who and how many are opening your emails.

They charge by the number of people on your list with an initial 0 to 500 subscribers being just \$19 per month.

They even offer newsletter creation and email templates to help simplify your campaigns. They are a recognized quality subscriber of email marketing services and can easily scale to any number of people on your list.

BASIC EMAIL TIPS

How you write your email is just as important as the tools and services you use to run your email marketing campaigns. You want to implement good practices to tempt people to respond to the email and avoid practices that turn people off.

GOOD PRACTICES TO IMPLEMENT

- **Strong, Attention-Grabbing, Subject Headlines**
Sometimes, this is all anyone bothers to read, simply because they can't avoid it as they hit the delete key. You want a headline that pulls the reader in

enough to get him/her to open the email when it lands in his/her inbox.

- **Use A Personal Name, If Possible**

If you know the name of the person to whom you are sending the email from your list details, be sure to use that within the text. It adds a personal touch and makes the email more customized. There is coding you can use to pick up a first name in a database to add to the content of your emails so that it can be automated.

- **Keep It Short**

There just isn't enough time in the day to read long messages anymore. People will tend to skip large messages or skim them for the salient points. One way to get past the resistance to reading the email is just to keep it somewhat short.

- **Highlight Salient Points**

Use white space, bolding, subheadings, noticeable fonts, and bulleted lists to get your message across.

If a person can open your email and quickly determine what you want without too much fuss, you have a better chance of getting them to click your link offers.

- **Add Your Links/Offers**

Make sure your link is easy to spot and available to click. Tell the reader what you are offering them if they click on the link. Make sure to sell benefits.

- **Unsubscribe Information**

As a matter of courtesy, you should have unsubscribe information in every email you send. It's not because you actually want people to unsubscribe, but because you don't want to be accused of spamming them.

AVOID THIS

Do not spam people. This practice isn't just annoying; it can get you in trouble with Federal regulators.

HOW TO TEMPT THEM TO RESPOND

There are some offer strategies that can significantly increase the odds that people will click the link you provide in your emails and reply to your offer. Giving out some sort of reward or bonus for taking the action you requested is a good way to motivate people to respond. It

can also be a great way to introduce people to your products and services if you do it right.

The minute someone responds to an offer, they get entered into your sales funnel and you can market to them further down the line for a sale. While you do want to try to have regular sales emails, some emails to prospective customers are better set up to generate leads and introduce yourself to the potential customer. Keeping that in mind, here are a few strategies to get closer to people who may be seeing your emails, but haven't overcome their resistance to buy from you yet.

SPECIAL REPORTS

Writing up special reports that inform people about your niche or about different ways to solve their problems is a great way to introduce yourself to a prospective client. They are easy to send via an instant download and you can make subscribing to your email list a prerequisite for getting the free report. It costs nothing and it generates good rapport with your prospective clients.

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QUIZZES AND POLLS

People love to give out their opinions or to test their knowledge with online quizzes. Setting a link to a poll or quiz in an email is easy, and if the subject is interesting enough, you may find your email gets forwarded to others. Make it a condition to submit an email address to see the results of the poll or quiz, and this will also provide you with leads.

FREE 15-MINUTE CONSULTATIONS

If you are selling coaching services, a free 15-minute consultation can be the open door you need to get a larger contract. Whether you choose to do it via a phone number, chat, or show call-in, you can use this format to not only introduce yourself, but to sell your services too. It sets you up as the expert in a particular topic and is a way to get people to trust you enough to buy from you, someone they now know.

KNOW WHEN TO SEND

Responsive customers aren't just a function of technology and slick marketing offers. They can also be a function of

availability. Let's face it; most people are NOT available during holidays. That's the time they are spending face-to-face time with their families and relatives and are generally not online. If you create a stunning email marketing campaign and roll it out during a holiday, it is bound to flop. Therefore, knowing when to send and what times are best for what type of mailing action is crucial to getting better response rates.

THINK WORK WEEK

As an Internet marketer, you may not follow a standard workweek, but more than likely, your customers do. That's why it's important to understand the psychology of why some days are better than others for different actions, and mostly it's because people are following a standard workweek. Research has shown some clear trend on specific days for open rates.

FRIDAY IS FUN DAY

Friday rolls around and people are ready to relax and take in the weekend. They may hop online to see what's going on and what their friends are doing. That's why Friday has the highest open rates of any other day of the week. If

you want to have a better chance of people opening your emails, make sure you send them out before Friday.

TUESDAY

It seems Tuesday is the day Internet marketers send out most of their emails as it has the highest send rates. Realistically, Wednesday may be a better choice if you want to stand out from the crowd and get your emails in line for Friday. However, by Thursday, you will probably start to experience some drop-off in response rates.

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEND IT OUT?

Does this tell you when to send out your own email marketing campaigns. Yes and no. It's a good idea to try to use the standard workweek to make sure to avoid days when it definitely is not a good idea to send a campaign out, like Sunday. Other than that, you can pay attention to the open rates for your particular subscribers to be sure they follow similar trends. It may be that their business doesn't work on a standard workweek and that the general model won't be well suited for you. So, do some testing of your own.

GETTING MORE REFERRALS

Have you seen the “forward to a friend” request at the bottom of some emails? That's an attempt to get you to refer the offer to one of your friends. It's generally well known that referrals make the best lead-in to a sale because you are more likely to buy or trust something a friend has recommended than you are to just believe the marketer. In that view, referrals are really good for business, but are they good for email campaigns? They can contribute to helping you reach more people, but they shouldn't be your only email marketing strategy. Here is how to properly implement a referral-getting email program.

ASK FOR THE REFERRAL

Your reader won't know that you even want a referral if you don't ask for it. Make it a point to ask for a referral at the end of your email if you want to use this strategy. Try to offer some benefit for getting the word out about you or your products.

OFFER DISCOUNTS AND COUPONS

Offering discounts and coupons for sign-ups can also increase the probability that someone is going to take you up on your offer to forward the same thing to a friend. Friends know what other friends are shopping for and are always willing to forward discounts and coupons that can save their friends money. Some reward programs are specific to people who sign up, but when you offer the discount or coupon, you can tell them to forward to a friend who, when registering, will also get an additional coupon or bonus.

SWEEPSTAKES & CONTESTS

Everyone loves a sweepstakes and word-of-mouths on contests and sweepstakes rank right up there with coupons and discounts. With sweepstakes, the more chance people have to win, the more often people will enter. In order to increase their odds of winning or having someone they know win, people will forward sweepstakes to friends and family to sign up. Sweepstakes don't usually involve buying anything, just registering for the prize.

Contests, on the other hand, may require that you produce something to compete in a contest. The winner of the competition gets the prize. These are still forwarded to people who may be uniquely suited to compete, but they are not as open to every person unless the contest is not skill-specific, but more game-oriented.

TECHNIQUES TO INCREASE THE ODDS

What's better than sending out mailings to one email list? Sending out mailings to two email lists. This can definitely increase the odds that people will respond, just because there are more people seeing your offers. Where can you find more email lists without organically building them yourself or buying them? The answer may surprise you, but your competitors have lists that you can market to if you can convince them that doing so will benefit them also.

AD SWAPS

Ad swaps are a technique to offer a one-time promotion to another list as well as your own, typically a competitor's list. You offer to do the same for them and expose them

to your list for a one-time offer in exchange. If you both have similar-sized lists, it can be a reasonable way to generate more subscribers, even if you are giving your competitor some advertising exposure. There's no guarantee they can capture your subscribers; you are only allowing them an advertising spot to swap and it's up to them to convince people to sign up to their site or offers. The same goes for you too.

The advantage of an advertising swap is that it costs no upfront cash. If you have similar-sized lists and similar niches, you will instantly be exposed to just the target market you want and stand a good chance of gaining new subscribers. You pay by doing the same for your competitor, instead of fronting cash to advertise. In a tight economy, doing an ad swap can be a smart thing for your mailing list and for your budget.

PUT SIGN-UP INFORMATION EVERYWHERE

Even though you may be trying to market online, the fact is that you can offer your sign-up information in many different places. You can use the signature line in your emails to add a link to sign up for information for free offers, quizzes, or polls that entice people to register. If you have a retail storefront, you can also add a sign-up

sheet by the register to increase the odds that people will find out about your online services.

KEEP IN CONSTANT CONTACT

Research has shown that people have to see an advertisement several times before they actually make the decision to buy. In an email marketing campaign, that means that perseverance pays off. You may think that because you didn't get a good number of bites the first time you sent out an offer that it's not a good offer. It may simply need a bit more repetition to get the message across.

People tend to cozy up to things that they get more and more familiar with, so try to continue to market something a few more times before giving up on it. Also, try to keep in constant contact with the people on your mailing list. If you let many days go by without a word, you really do lose the attention of the people on your list. In the worst case, they may already be wooed by your competitors. To keep this from happening, follow some easy rules.

BE FREQUENT

You don't want to deluge people with emails that are just sales promotions; however, you do want to be in constant contact with your mailing list. If you send out an email on Monday about some hot tips you discovered that can help make your subscriber's life easier, they may be more willing to open the next one you send, which might be a product promotion. Be frequent, but don't overwhelm your readers with emails that are only to your own benefit. That's a sure way for them to unsubscribe from your list.

BE CONSISTENT

If you say you will send out a newsletter every first Tuesday of the month, try to keep to that schedule. The more your subscribers understand the schedule, the more they will anticipate your next email and be looking forward to what you have to offer. In a way, by being frequent and consistent and giving your customers things that appeal to them, you generate an enthusiasm for being on your email list.

BE RESPONSIVE TOO

Finally, the best way to generate a responsive email list is to also be responsive to your list's needs. When problems

arise, if you are there to provide solutions and generate good will, they will be there for you when you knock on their inbox to send them a marketing offer. Try to respond to people personally when they first contact you so that they have some human relationship with you before you start to market to them.

SEEK ALTERNATIVE METHODS

Email is not the only way to keep in contact with your mailing list. Offer them alternative ways to reach you and the other people participating on your site. This can be done through social networking sites, through online forums, and through informational seminars or courses offered online.

This can also be a great way to generate word-of-mouth for your business via referrals as friends tell other friends when some online event or interesting discussion is taking place online. If you host these areas for discussion and networking on your own site, your list can grow astronomically bigger overnight with very little effort on your part. The nicest benefit of all is that it won't just be a big list; it will also be a very responsive list that participates in the discussions and networking that are

happening on your website. It is a captive audience to which you can market your products and services.

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