

# How Email Marketing Can Transform Your Business

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## **Sample of Content:**

Marketing by email, if done properly, can produce instant results, generate sales within minutes, and over time builds customer loyalty, brand awareness and increased web site traffic. This article shows you how.

## **Content:**

You might think it's a radical claim, but creating an email marketing program for your business can be a bit like installing your own cash machine! Marketing by email, if done properly, can produce instant results, generate sales within minutes, and over time builds customer loyalty, brand awareness and increased web site traffic.

Despite all the the Internet developments in the past decade, email still remains the single most important "killer app" online. Almost everybody reads their email (even when they may not look at web sites that often), and you can reach almost every decision maker in your target market within minutes, whenever you like.

It's cheap, too. If you've ever done a traditional direct mail campaign, you'll know that the cost can be between Â£1 and Â£5 per recipient. Yet email can cost just a few pence per prospect. Plus, an email campaign can be completed in a few hours, while with traditional Direct Mail it can be months before you can see results. With email, early responses can be measured in seconds, and within 3 days you'll have 80% of your orders in and processed! And it's measurable. With the resulting automatically-generated statistics you can work out who read your email and who responded. Live. Try that with traditional mail!

#### So What's The Catch?

There are two, actually, but both are easily overcome. First, you can't send out promotional emails randomly to people who've never heard of you (that's called spamming!). Second, your campaign MUST be carefully planned, created and executed. You can't just blast out any old "Buy this now" message and expect results. It must be carefully targeted, contain a truly great offer for the target audience, be relevant and interesting and of some value to the recipient, and the copy must be compelling. And just like any other marketing communications activity, it will only be truly successful if it forms part of your overall advertising and communications strategy, and is not just a one-off blast to raise some cash.

#### Where to Start

The golden rule for email success is to send out regular information that is of value to your audience. So your starting point must always be to think of what your potential market wants to receive from you. If you're lucky enough to have a thriving demand for what you sell, then sending out new product announcements may be OK, but generally, you will need to be more creative than this.

Some good examples are:

For a Lawyer's or Accountant's web site - a regular newsletter to clients updating them of the latest law, rules & regulation changes.

For a hobby web site - new product announcements, tips and advice

Clothing web site - fashion features and tips

Software web site - Information on updates/upgrades. Case studies and "how-to" guides

Bad Examples:

Isolated special offer announcements

Uninvited invitations to join mailing list (spamming)

"Visit our new web site" announcements

## How To Get Email Addresses

This is the catch that most companies have difficulty with. But with patience and a little hard work, you can build a good opt-in mailing list that will grow in value over time.

Step 1. Make sure there is a real incentive for people to join your mailing list. If you are offering valuable information (see above) this should be enough. But you can add incentives such as a member's discount scheme on a shopping web site or money-off coupons. You can also run competitions.

Step 2. Install a newsletter sign-up system on your web site. Make sure it is in a prominent position, and most importantly, make sure that the benefit to the user of signing up is clearly displayed. Make sure that the system is automatic, clear, sends a confirmation email to the customer, and comes with clear instructions on how to unsubscribe. And make sure it is very easy to unsubscribe - people get nervous when signing up for newsletters - they all hate spam - so if you make your unsubscribe system easy and clear, they'll feel more in control and be more likely to subscribe (and ironically, much less likely to unsubscribe!)

Step 3. Make sure you promote your newsletter on all stationery and communications with potential and current customers. If selling or communicating on the phone, always ask if they would like to sign-up for the newsletter, again clearly selling the benefit. Also ensure that a link and sales message for your newsletter is included at the bottom of all emails you send out. Create a web page especially for your newsletter sign-up form (as well as the prominent box on the front page). Promote this page on search engines.

Step 4. Consider partnerships with other newsletter publishers that complement your business. For example, a firm of solicitors could approach a firm of accountants and each could promote the other's newsletters to each other's lists. If your partner's list is significantly larger than yours, you may be forced to pay, but it's worth it where there is a good fit.

Step 5. If you are offering free, valuable information in your newsletter, offer articles based on your newsletter with sign-up links for more free-of-charge to web sites your audience frequently visit. For example, if you offer small business services (eg, Accountant, Solicitor etc), offer free advice articles and columns to small business editorial web sites and portals. This also applies to printed trade media and can be integrated into your current PR campaigns.

Step 6. If you're desperate, in a hurry, and have a decent promotional budget, you can buy advertising space on other people's well-established newsletters. You can also rent or buy email lists from established sources but be very careful to buy lists that have requested your type of material from the list provider. Never, ever buy cheap email lists you see advertised across the internet (eg: "1 million emails for your business for \$9.99!"). You'll get your 1 million emails alright, but they'll be harvested spam lists.

Finally, be persistent, consistent, and offer good quality information that your audience is pleased to get. In the early days it will be hard to motivate yourself to write something every week/month to your first 10 signups, but if you offer good value your list will grow quickly. And remember the viral effect of emails. If the information, offer or entertainment value is good, emails are passed on or forwarded to lots of other people who will sign up or at least visit your web site!

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