

A Guide to Growing and Managing Your Mailing List





Designing a winning email marketing campaign is one thing, but all that hard work you've put into the design and message may be for naught if you haven't built your mailing list the right way. In this guide you'll learn the value of permission-based email marketing. We'll explore how to grow your mailing list online and off, how to manage your contacts to ensure you have the most recent and reliable lists, and how to set the right expectations to get the most out of your next campaign.

Using Permission-based Marketing

According to the Direct Marketing Association, email is still one of the most cost effective forms of online marketing, returning approximately \$40 for every dollar you spend. With that kind of return, it's vital you avoid getting tagged with email marketing's scarlet letter—S—for those guilty of sending spam email.

The most important way to do this is to send only to those who have asked to receive your messages. Sending unsolicited email promotions, otherwise known as spam, will quickly ruin your organization's reputation and subsequently, your bottom line profits.

When you know your prospects' and customers' email addresses, but they're not expecting to hear from you via email, you are taking their implicit permission and are assuming they want to receive future communications or promotions from you.

We recommend taking this a step further by asking if they'd like to receive occasional emails from you. By obtaining this explicit permission, they're telling you they want to hear from you and that they're interested in what you have to offer.

Only then will you be able to build relationships based on value and trust, and start turning your customers into evangelists. All while you stay in complete compliance with CAN-SPAM legislation in the United States and CASL in Canada.



Growing mailing lists online and off

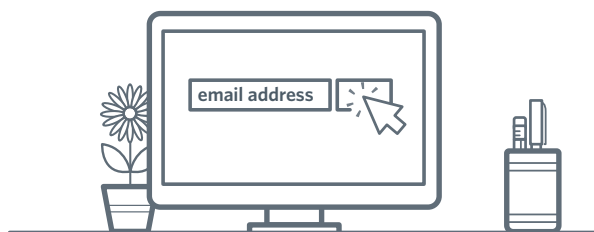
Now that you know how to send your next email campaign without incurring the wrath of its recipients, it's time to turn your attention to growing your mailing list effectively, both online and off.

Online

Start your online email list building efforts by setting up a landing page on your website to offer your customers something they will value, such as a giveaway or discount in exchange for their name and email address. Add the same offer to sidebars across the rest of your website, and add an email address opt-in form to the comment engine on your blog. The Elephant Walk, a Boston area restaurant, uses Constant Contact's 'Join My Mailing List' on their website to grow their opt-in mailing list, keeping their customers up-to-date on menus, specials, and events.

On your Facebook page, add an email list opt-in widget to keep your customers connected regardless of where they choose to interact with you and your business. 123contactform.com makes it easy to add such a widget to your business's Facebook page, and best of all, it automatically populates your Constant Contact mailing list.

If you're actively posting to a blog, provide your readers with mailing list sign up opportunities at the end of every blog post. Finally, be sure to incorporate a forward-to-a-friend button and social sharing tools into every email campaign you send to take advantage of every list building opportunity.



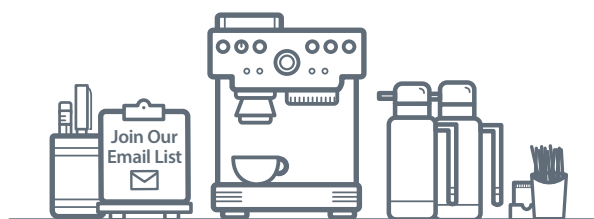
Offline

Start treating traditional face-to-face customer interactions as an opportunity to grow your email list. Place a sign-up book at check-out or even a tablet computer pointing to your registration page on your website. You can also set up a raffle with a card drop, as long as you make it clear that you'll be following up by email with those who enter to win. It's also important to train and/or incent your staff to ask customers for their address, be it in person, at checkout, or over the phone. Lastly, when sending direct mail or running a print ad, find an appropriate yet prominent spot to place a short form of your opt-in web address.



Tip

Online or off, give your customers reason to sign up by communicating the value of the emails you'll be sending. Achieve this by allowing your subscribers to add themselves to specific mailing lists based on their interests. When you make sure they know there's something in it for them, the bigger your list will become, more quickly than you can imagine.



Managing your contacts

If you have been compiling a permission-based list of email addresses with thoughts of eventually diving in to email marketing, there are a variety of available options for importing your list into Constant Contact.

Constant Contact's email tool supports files from Excel (.xls), comma separated value (.csv) files, and text (.txt) files. You can also import your contacts directly from your email client of choice including Google's Gmail®, Microsoft Outlook®, and Outlook Express®. Other business tools are also supported, including Quickbooks® by Intuit, Salesforce.com and Act!® by Sage®.

Constant Contact is always finding new ways to make it easier for you to add new contacts, from any device, no matter where you are. For example, you can add new contacts from your PC or Mac, and from your iPhone or iPod Touch. And if your business has a Facebook page, you can add new contacts using Constant Contact's 'Join My Mailing List' or QuickView.

To keep your email campaign messaging relevant to your subscribers, use Constant Contact to group your contacts based on any categorization you desire—be it a shared interest or characteristic. For example, you might want to send an offer to customers who live in a certain area, or to customers who have already purchased a particular product. Add the option for customers to "opt in" to different lists based on their preferences using Constant Contact's 'Join My Mailing List' application, or segment your list later using the contact details you've already uploaded into the system.

Now that you're gathering your customer email addresses from all the right places and you're doing it with their permission to email, it's important to perform regular maintenance on your list. Constant Contact gives you all the tools you need to maximize your ability to deliver relevant messages.



Give those who haven't engaged with your email campaigns in the last year one more chance with a custom email message containing a special offer, inviting them back as a customer. For those who don't respond, eliminate them from your list to optimize the open rates for future campaigns. Also, keep in mind that some bounce addresses might just be phony. Add both of these to your Do Not Mail list in Constant Contact.

There are many reasons why your email might not reach all of your subscribers. Some addresses may no longer be valid, while others may contain a typo. Some recipients might have turned on their out-of-office notification while others may have reached their inbox storage quota.

You can minimize the number of email addresses that bounce when you send a campaign by performing some email marketing list triage on a regular basis. Start by verifying that you have the right address, even if it means you have to follow up with that subscriber individually to check if they're receiving your message. Some firewalls may be flagging your messages, so you may have to ask some subscribers to add your send address to their 'white list'.

Conclusion

When building your email marketing lists, it's important to remember that you're not really building a list of emails, but a list of people who are interested in your business and are actively looking for solutions to their problems. These people are counting on you to deliver, so it's important you provide the kind of content and the kind of value they expect.