

A White Paper

## **10 Ways to Build Your Email List**

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# 10 Ways to Build Your Email List

One of the most challenging aspects of email marketing is mailing list development. There are two basic attributes most companies seek in a mailing list – size and quality, yet achieving even one of those traits, let alone both, can be a time consuming and daunting task.

As an alternative, many businesses rent or buy lists, but this approach can be problematic due to the expense involved, the liability (not all purchased lists are legitimate) and a lack of specificity. Here, then, is some advice you can use to build your own robust list of qualified recipients.

## 1. Plan Thoroughly

Many list building programs flounder due to a lack of planning and strategy. When conceptualizing your list, it's important to identify your target audience and its interests as precisely as possible. This will allow you to cater to your members' concerns, thereby improving receptiveness and limiting turnover among existing members.

## 2. Present a Value Proposition

Generally speaking, people don't subscribe to lists out of mere curiosity. That's increasingly true in an age when email overload makes people wary of giving their email addresses. If you make it clear what a subscriber could expect to gain from being part of your list, you'll collect a lot more addresses.

## 3. Don't Expect Something for Nothing

Focus on content, specifically providing something of demonstrable value to your readers. Otherwise, you'll lose members as soon as you get them and spend your time patching your list instead of building it. If you expect people to remain on your mailing list, you'll need to provide them with critical information, discounts, special offers or giveaways. Consider including a free opt-in form on your site advertising the promotion as a way to encourage registrations.

## 4. Keep it Simple

Make it easy for prospects to sign up for your list. It takes some convincing for most people to register and even the ones who are receptive to the idea generally won't go out of their way to join. As a result, you need to bring the information to the customer by placing a registration form in a prominent place on your website and referencing the newsletter in your other forms of communication.

## 5. Too Much Information

Don't scare away prospects with prying questions. Collect the information you need for registration and basic analysis and leave it at that until you've developed a relationship with your members. Requesting sensitive information such as age and phone numbers can deter people from completing the sign up process.

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## 6. Opt-out or Opt-in?

There are two common ways to take your existing customer list and sync it with email addresses gathered from a database: opt-out or opt-in email acquisition. In opt-out formats, an email asks recipients to reply if they don't want to receive future mailings from an organization. If they fail to do so, the mailings continue, a practice many people view as coercive.

In opt-in scenarios, a company sends a message asking the recipient to "opt-in" or reply only if they wish to remain on the list. Since VerticalResponse is opposed to spam and unwarranted mailings, we only deal with opt-in lists. It's a selective process that may cost a few registrants in the short-term, but results in a more engaged, more responsive membership in the long run – and reflects well on your company's business practices.

## 7. Guarantee Privacy

These days, people live in fear of Internet piracy. Assure prospects that you're not one of the predators stalking the Web and harvesting email addresses for unscrupulous purposes. Broadcasting your commitment to privacy and refusal to trade or sell information will help establish a level of trust and result in more registrations.

## 8. Micromanage

Building an email list requires attention. If you don't take steps to maintain your list, you'll lose more registrants than you add. Try monitoring your list growth at least once a week, if not more often. Some list managers run activity reports on a daily basis to track performance on daily basis and to establish benchmarks.

## 9. Leverage the Web

Once you've highlighted the newsletter on your corner of the Web, search for other places on the Internet where you can advertise your service. Identify web sites, pop-up windows, search engines, newsletters and other online spaces where you can promote your mailings.

## 10. Don't Forget the Real World

Because of its highly viral nature, the Web is an ideal place to advertise your mailing, but that doesn't mean you should forgo real world promotion. Brainstorm on offline methods of growing your list. Old ideas like placing a fishbowl on the counter for depositing business cards still work. There's a reason they've been around so long. Building a mailing list is like growing a plant, it requires time and care, but the results are priceless. If you employ these techniques, you'll be reaping the benefits for years.