



“You’ve got mail.”

A Beginner’s Guide to Successful Email Marketing

We believe that building successful email marketing campaigns has never been more important than it is now. But there’s a problem; most people don’t know how to do it right. So in the interest of furthering best practices and helping you succeed as a business owner, let’s get back to the basics and talk about how a great email campaign is built, from the ground up.

You’re in their house

People are inundated with interruption, pitches, and advertisements everywhere they look, and though you might think yours is special, there’s a high probability that to the reader, it looks the same as the rest. This is why it’s important to remember where you are, and use your good manners as a result.

Getting into someone’s inbox is like being invited to their home for dinner. If they ask you to take your shoes off, you respectfully do so. It’s the same with email marketing, so before we begin we need to remind you to be on your best behavior at all times and remember... you’re in their house.

Phase I: Getting Permission

Of course, no email campaign was ever built without getting permission to get started, so first we'll need to focus on building a sizable email list.

There are many ways you can do this of course. Some prefer to give something away for free while others simply offer a newsletter or product updates.

We can't tell you which is the right or wrong answer in this case, but we can tell you that it's important to have a clear purpose when asking for an address. This is where a strong call to action comes into play, and copywriting is super important.

- ▶ What do I get when I give you my email address?
- ▶ Are you going to spam me?
- ▶ How often will you email me?
- ▶ Will I get discounts?
- ▶ Will I get a first crack at your beta?
- ▶ Will you send me relevant offers or more junk?

These are the kinds of things you'll need to address if you want to be successful in phase 1. Simply posting "enter your email for updates" isn't going to get anyone excited to do so. Instead, consider sharing specifics:



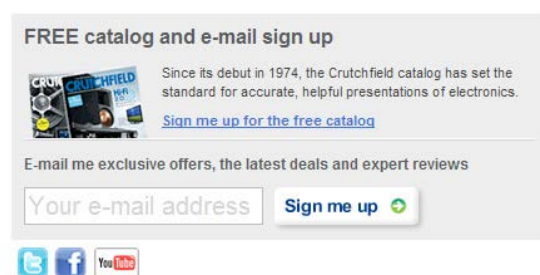
6 WAYS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

FREE EMAIL SERIES


You'll also receive updates when I post to the site every Monday and Thursday.

NAME: EMAIL: **SUBMIT**


Your email address will never be shared, and you can opt-out at the touch of a button.






FREE catalog and e-mail sign up

 Since its debut in 1974, the Crutchfield catalog has set the standard for accurate, helpful presentations of electronics.
[Sign me up for the free catalog](#)

E-mail me exclusive offers, the latest deals and expert reviews

Your e-mail address **Sign me up** 

Note the Clear and Concise Call to Action in the Examples Above

Take a look at the examples above and you'll see that the first tells you that you're getting a free catalogue and a series of reviews and special offers, while the 2nd tells you exactly when you'll receive the newsletter updates. This is a far more specific, and effective, way of doing business.

A quick look at our practices tells us that the offers we subscribe to most often are for:

- ▶ Email Series
- ▶ Free Downloads
- ▶ Free White Papers or eBooks
- ▶ Update Lists (New Issue Notifications, Product Updates, New Releases)

Lastly, and Amazon does this really well, your customers make great candidates, so don't forget to integrate some form of registration or email subscription as part of your purchasing process. Just remember to treat these addresses with special regard, which we'll talk about in phase 2.

Get Whitelisted

While almost all reputable email service providers work very hard to make sure that your emails are not blocked by major ISP's, they can't control whether or not your emails hit the inbox or the spam box. Although most will help you by providing a quality score to help you determine availability, getting whitelisted is the most effective way to ensure that your emails get delivered properly.

Essentially, getting whitelisted is equivalent to being marked as a friend, and the best way to achieve this is by being added to the recipient's address book. The best way to do this is by providing instructions to do so at the top of each email, especially on the initial thank you and first follow-up email.

Furthermore, here are instructions from some of the more popular online providers:

- ▶ [AWeber](#)
- ▶ [Mailchimp](#)
- ▶ [Constant Contact](#)
- ▶ [Campaign Monitor](#)

Phase II: Playing the Numbers Game

Manage Expectations with Follow-Up Efforts

Email marketing is all about expectations, and it's up to you to set them. If your call to action is strong, and your follow-up is consistent, then you can count on a positive campaign. However, if you promise to send one email per week and instead send them daily, then you're setting yourself up for failure. On the contrary, if someone is expecting daily updates or critical product updates and you don't deliver, then they are likely to be just as upset in that case too.



Fountain Pen



Because I asked, I expect [Hugh MacLeod](#) to email his cartoons daily.

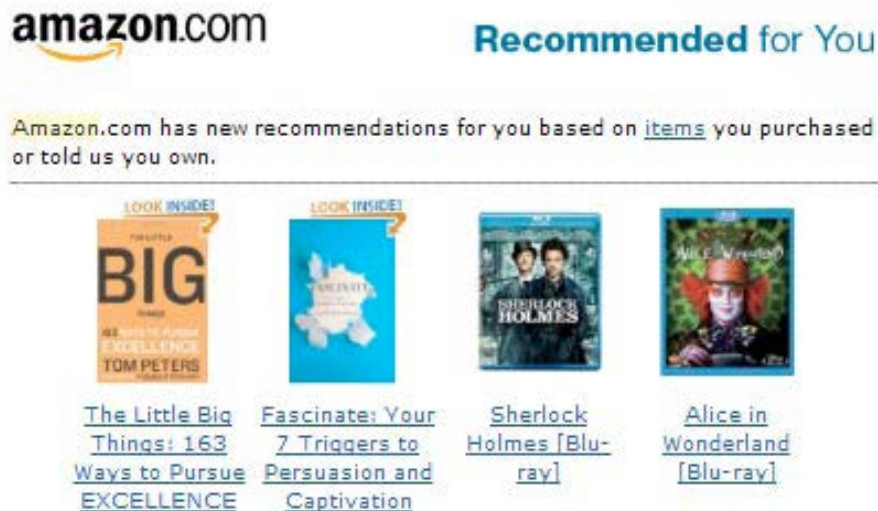
This is why the first follow-up email is so crucial to the success of your email marketing efforts. Almost all email service providers give you the option to create an autoresponder sequence, and it's imperative that you take advantage of it.

The initial follow-up email should be sent immediately as a way to introduce yourself and detail what you plan on doing with your new subscriber's email address. It's better to be long-winded and detailed than it is to be quick and unobtrusive, but if you can pull off quick and concise then more power to you.

From here, it's simply a matter of living up to their expectations.

When to Pitch

If you're going to get in the habit of pitching often, try to put yourself in the reader's shoes. Ask yourself if your messaging is consistent with the expectations you've set. As I said before, Amazon does this well because they send relevant offers based on my buying habits. Those that send blind offers are far more likely to lose permission to keep doing so.

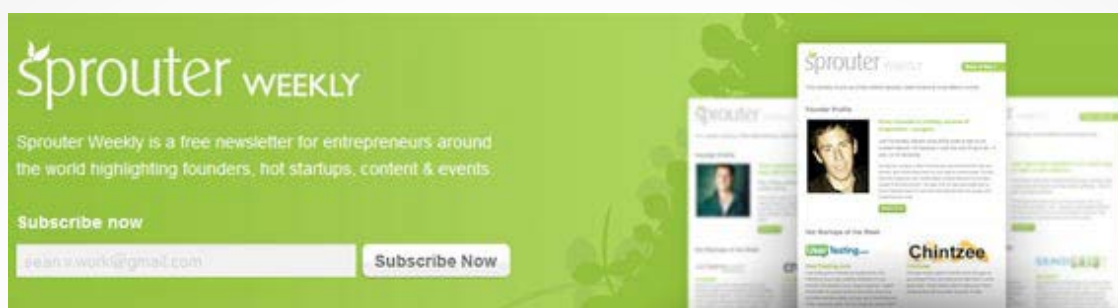


Notice how Amazon recommends products based on my prior buying habits.

Another option to consider is the value you're providing. While Amazon can provide value in an offer, you might have to provide it with a newsletter or in linking to blog posts or other forms of media content.

Again, each business has different needs, and there aren't any hard and fast rules as to how often you can pitch or provide content, but remember that an email list is a permission asset and it's better to err on the side of caution than to play it loose and reckless.

What's in a Newsletter



The Sprouter Newsletter is a good example because they provide value through insights, updates, and new content. Each email is prefaced with an introduction, and includes a list of great posts, local events, and hot start-ups.

While we're on the topic of content, let's talk about the difference between a good newsletter and a bad newsletter.

The first sign that you've received a bad newsletter is that you don't recall ever asking to receive it. Typically, this happens when a business either fails to maintain a regular email routine or uses poor form and manually adds me to their list after receiving a business card or personal email.

The most compelling newsletters are those that do a great job of mixing messaging and updates. For example, while the email might contain a list of product updates and images, it's balanced by a personal message or friendly update.

As a rule of thumb, try to use your newsletter as a way to further your relationship with the reader/customer rather than to pitch them. Save the pitch for unique updates, offers, and announcements.

Using the Autoresponder

As a marketer, forgetting to talk to your list until you have something to sell is not ideal.

This is where an autoresponder can save you, and why we recommend scheduling content to be delivered on a consistent basis over the course of several months.

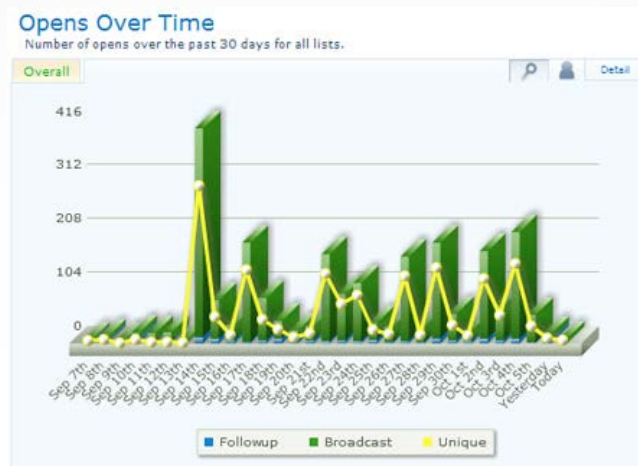
For example, Copyblogger offers a newsletter titled “Internet Marketing for Smart People,” and it contains a dozen plus great pieces on how to market better as an online entrepreneur. They ensure you’ll received an occasional email at least once per month over 6 months.

The benefit of that is when you do need to announce a new product or sale, you can count on the fact that you’ve already been in touch, having built a relationship over several weeks/months, and are much less likely to annoy your readers. Of course, it’s important to schedule your autoresponder sequence on specific days so that you know when you can afford to send an email. More than one per day and you’re probably mailing too much.

If you find yourself asking “will this email be one too many?” then it’s probably one too many.

Phase III: Segmentation and Analytics

Analytics



Notice the detailed daily statistics for open rate on a recent AWeber campaign.

We've talked before about the importance of analytics in web copy, and email is no different. Every service provider provides complimentary analytics.

Though they're all important, the 3 most important are; open rate, click through rate (CTR), and unsubscribes.

Your open rate will tell you how well you've built your relationship; if the number is low, it means that people have started to delete upon receipt, which means you need to work harder on providing value and/or managing expectations.

If your CTR is low, it means that your message is either not targeted enough, or simply not getting through. In this case, focus on improving your copy.

If your unsubscription rate is high in relation to your opt-in rate, then you've passed the point of building value and writing good copy...you've got some serious work to do. If this is you, try to examine when people are leaving and take action based on those leaks.

If they're leaving after a certain autoresponder email, then re-work it. If they're leaving after marketing messages, then re-work the way you present offers. If they're leaving early on in your funnel, then you need to fix your original call to action so that it's in harmony with what you're sending.

Email analytics are critical in that if you're paying attention, they'll give you very specific clues as to what you're doing wrong. Of course the key variable here is "paying attention."

Segmentation

If you're unfamiliar with the term, segmentation is the practice of splitting up your email list into more targeted groups.

For example, the following are ways to segment a larger, more unified list:

- ▶ Customer List (in comparison to leads)
- ▶ Product Updates (in comparison to a customer list)
- ▶ Newsletter
- ▶ Daily Email List (in comparison to weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc)
- ▶ HTML (yes, some people prefer the option for text)

In dividing your list in this manner, you give yourself the ability to send more targeted communication. Some customers want both product and sales updates, while others might only want to hear about new versions. If you don't give them the chance to choose, you risk losing them all-together. Since customers make the best buyers, it's fairly obvious why you want to keep them subscribed to your customer email list.

With segmentation, you can send a broadcast only to those that didn't open your last message (ask them why), or to those that showed interest (a 2nd pitch). You can also split test messaging amongst different groups in order to refine your best practices.

As you can see, segmentation isn't rocket science, but it is work, which is why most don't take the time to do it right. If you do, you'll immediately separate yourself from the pack.

The Value of Your List

In the future, we'll talk about more advanced techniques, such as measuring the cost of lead acquisition, but for now know this: your email list is one of your most valuable resources, and if you learn how to treat it right, the cost of doing so will pay for itself.

If you can imagine that each person on your list is worth a set value, then you can understand immediately how losing several hundred could be dangerous to your bottom line.