Money-Making...

Opt-In Mailing Lists

Introduction

Everyone will tell you… the gold is in the list.

And the reason is simple. Once you have a mailing list, you automatically have your own personal cache of people you can pitch products to.

- Have you created a blockbuster ebook or developed some innovative software program? Blast an email to everyone on your mailing list.

- Have you found a hot membership website that pays a sizable affiliate commission? Blast an email to everyone on your mailing list.

- Have you launched another website and you're looking for immediate viewer traffic? Blast an email to everyone on your mailing list.

Of course, the bigger and more targeted the list, the better the results. And the result you're ultimately shooting for is more revenue.

Not that you're going to use your mailing list as a permanent and exclusive sales machine. That would be deadly.

What you have to do is keep a fair balance between sales pitches and quality information…

If you send out too many blatant "buy this now" messages, you'll lose the trust and support of your mailing list members.

If you send out too much free information over an extended period of time, you might just alienate your mailing list members when you do finally pitch any type of product to them.

That's where balance comes into play. You need to supply them with quality information and advice for free. But you also need to incorporate promotion messages that are related to that information.

For example…

Let's say your business is based on SEO information and products. In one of your mailings, you're explaining how to get the most benefit out of Google Adwords.

And in the midst of all that free information and advice, you let them know about this great software program that can increase their advertising profit margin… Adword Analyzer (http://www.adwordanalyzer.com).

Or maybe the information you're providing is based on different methods of generating website traffic. That would be the perfect opportunity to mention a product like Traffic Equalizer (

Overall, it's much more effective to include your sales pitch either within or associated with any free advice or information. It's the soft-sell approach that most customers find much less offensive.

But since the whole point of having a private mailing list is to enjoy the benefit of sending messages to an eager and receptive audience (and do it whenever you want), there will also be numerous occasions when you're simply promoting something. Without including any free information or advice.

And therein lies the gold.

Once you've established a solid and trustworthy relationship with your list members, you can pretty much call any shots you want or need.

As long as you maintain a comfortable balance between sales pitch and extended periods of no promotion whatsoever, you'll always have the ability to generate almost immediate volumes of revenue.

Of course, the first priority is to start building that mailing list. But not just any mailing list. You want - and need - only those individuals who fall into the following two categories…

      1. They have a strong interest in your particular niche or market.

      2. They are anxious and willing to receive promotional messages from you.

The first one is a no-brainer. If the people on your list have little or no interest in whatever niche or topic your business is based on, there's little or no chance you'll ever get them to buy anything.

The second category comes down to two different aspects…

First, you want your entire list to be totally and completely opt-in. In other words, every member has joined your list simply and solely because they want to be on it.

Second, you want to make certain each person who signs up for your mailing list knows that they will be receiving promotional messages, and not just free advice and information.

And you want them to know this before they sign up. That alone will minimize the number of disgruntled list members, mainly because they know exactly what to expect right from the start. No surprises down the road.

Anything and everything you can do to prevent someone from accusing you of sending them spam is worth the investment.

If you fully, completely, and honestly inform potential list members of the exact nature of your messages, you'll satisfy half the requirement of gaining a good quality list. The other half is the opt-in factor.

Rather than assume someone wanted to sign up for your mailing list, it's important that you make them confirm their decision. That way, there's no chance someone else filled in their name and email address, without their knowledge or approval.

Always remember…

The gold might be in the list. But without the benefit of quality list members, that gold will be

extremely hard to come by. No matter how many killer sales pitches or how much free information you send them.

Do it right the first time and you'll have your very own virtual gold mine.

Building A Profitable Opt-In Mailing List
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The operative word here is profitable. After all, there's not much good in owning a mailing list if it doesn't generate income.

And the first step in building a profitable mailing list lies within the tools of the trade. In this particular instance, that would be the method by which you capture names and email address.

Since we're talking about profitable lists, let's eliminate the usual bare-bones method right away.

That would be the method by which you slap a form on your website where people can input their name and email address. You receive their information via email notification and then manually add them to whatever program you plan to use in order to send out messages.

When it comes to online business, automation is and always will be an important ingredient. The more tasks you can set on auto-pilot, the more time you'll have available to invest in promotion and marketing.

Using automation for mailing lists is even more beneficial. A good system can easily subscribe and unsubscribe names and email addresses, organize and keep track of numerous independent lists, and send out messages at specific and assigned intervals (aka autoresponder messages).

Although you might be tempted to use a system that merely captures and manages names and email addresses, don't. Whether you plan to implement autoresponder messages right from the start or not, it's an extremely important aspect of generating income.

Without follow-up capability, you're leaving a good deal of potential revenue behind. Not everyone will purchase from you right away. In fact, a very small percentage of viewers will buy something the first time around.

The whole purpose of gathering names and email addresses is to have a database of people you can send information and promote offers to. Being able to keep in touch with those same people through autoresponder provides even more benefit.

So make certain you choose a system that can easily and effectively handle all your mailing list needs and ongoing maintenance. And that definitely includes unlimited autoresponder capability.

Get Automated

In order to perform any and all aspects of automated list management, you have two basic choices…

1. You can install an autoresponder script on your server.
2. You can sign up for an online autoresponder service.

Although either choice would provide a superior method of managing your mailing lists, installing

an autoresponder script has distinct disadvantages.

For one thing, you'll be responsible for maintaining a mailing list script once it's installed. If anything goes wrong, you or someone who's qualified to do so will have to troubleshoot the problem and get it fixed as quickly as possible.

Secondly, if you change web hosts, you'll have to re-install the program on your new server. That could be quite a chore, especially if you've already accumulated thousands of names and email addresses.

Not to mention the additional cost involved if you have to hire an independent person or company to handle the re-installation.

With an online autoresponder service, everything behind the scenes is taken care of. All you have to worry about is attracting more subscribers. And since your list will be remotely hosted on their server, there's no concern about ever having to move your operation.

Keep in mind, however, that you need to be certain about the autoresponder service you initially choose. Changing services somewhere down the road means that any and all of your autoresponder addresses will have to be changed as well.

That means whatever messages, ecourses, or reports are being automatically sent through the original service will no longer work. You could have dozens of online instances where your autoresponder emails would have to be updated.

But not to worry. Even if the unthinkable happens - if something forces you to change autoresponder services in mid-stream - there's one method you can use that will make it relatively simple to update your autoresponder email addresses.

Mind you, this only works for autoresponders you haven't yet created. If you already have addresses out there, there's no way to bring them back.

The first thing you need to do is set up your autoresponder service and establish one or more autoresponder addresses.

For example, let's say you've set up the following autoresponders…

> 1. emarketing
> This one is used for your generic mailing list signups.
>
> 2. marketing-ecourse
> This one is used to send a free marketing course.
>
> 3. product-info
> This one is used to send information about a specific product you're selling.
>
> 4. faq
> This one is used to send a list of your frequently asked questions.

Now go into your web hosting account and create email addresses with the same names…

> 1. emarketing@yourdomain.com
>
> 2. marketing-ecourse@yourdomain.com

3. product-info@yourdomain.com

4. faq@yourdomain.com

The last thing you need to do is have each of those web host email addresses forward to the corresponding autoresponder…

1. emarketing@yourdomain.com forwards to the "emarketing" autoresponder address

2. marketing-ecourse@yourdomain.com forwards to the "marketing-ecourse" autoresponder address

3. product-info@yourdomain.com forwards to the "product-info" autoresponder address

4. faq@yourdomain.com forwards to the "faq" autoresponder address

The email addresses you actually use (within your sign-up forms and published on your web pages, in ebooks, in ads, on forums, and so forth) would be the ones you created in your web hosting account.

With this type of system in place, you won't ever have to worry about orphan addresses in the event you have to change your online autoresponder service. If that happens, all you need to do is log into your web hosting account and change the forwarding addresses.

List Building Methods

Method # 1

The most obvious method for building your mailing list is to incorporate a subscription form on your website. The overall criteria is as follows:

- In addition to an email address, require at least their first name so you can personalize the messages that you send.

- The email address and name fields should be "required" (the form can't be submitted until both fields are filled in).

- Place the subscription form at or near the top of the web page, where it's clearly visible.

- Place the subscription form on all available pages of the website, not just the home page.

- If possible, place the subscription form in the same place on all pages. If not, place the form in as close proximity as you can.

- Include a brief description of your mailing list or newsletter along with a "more information" link.

- The more information link should lead to a separate page that explains in detail what the

viewer can expect by signing up for your mailing list or newsletter.

- Make it clear - in both the brief and detail descriptions - that you will not rent, distribute, or share their information with any third party.

Method # 2

The most popular method of gaining signups is to implement a pop-up window. The only problem is, more and more pop-up blockers are being implemented as well. So these days, the number of viewers who will even see your pop-up window is severely diminished.

A viable alternative is to use "fly-in" ads, mainly because they can't be blocked the way that pop-up windows can. Plus, they're not nearly as annoying to the viewer.

Just like pop-ups, fly-in ads can be customized. You can even set it so the ad appears at a designated time. For example, you could arrange to have it display approximately 30 seconds after the page is fully loaded.

One of the best and most advanced fly-in ad systems is called Impact Popup. You can read all about it at http://www.impactpopup.net.

Method # 3

The most enduring method of gaining subscribers is by writing articles and then including a link to your subscription sign-up in the author's resource box.

This link might be the only one in the resource box or there might be another important URL address (your affiliate link to a product you're promoting, your website home page, etc.). That's up to you depending on what type of publicity you want or need to achieve as a result of publishing any given article.

Don't rely on simply sending them to a regular page on your website. You need to send them directly to the "more information" page, where you explain in detail what your mailing list or newsletter is all about. And of course, where a subscription form is also located.

As soon as you've published an article on your website, make sure you submit it to article directory sites where other web and ezine owners will have easy and immediate access to it. That way, you'll begin receiving link backs and additional website traffic right away.

Naturally, the more articles you can distribute and the more places they're located and published, the more benefit you'll receive. First, in gaining traffic, which in turn will increase the number of subscribers and paying customers you ultimately receive.

Keep in mind, however, that in order to get maximum benefit from articles, they need to contain valuable content. Otherwise, web and ezine owners won't be interested in publishing them.

The other thing you're shooting for is to gain respect and recognition from viewers. By including articles in your own newsletter or on your own web pages, you're limited. If you can spread those articles throughout the entire internet world, you'll gain a much larger following of dedicated readers.

Anyone who thoroughly enjoys your articles - and recognizes the valuable information they provide - is going to be more than willing to sign up as one of your regular subscribers. Quite simply, they'll be hungry for whatever else you have to offer.

This is an extremely effective method of gaining mailing list members. Therefore…

If you can't write the articles yourself, it's well worth hiring someone to do it for you. There are many good writers available at places like Elance (http://www.elance.com). Just make certain that the person you hire has good English language skills.

Method # 4

The most common method of increasing your mailing list sign-ups is to bribe viewers with something free. For example, a report, an ebook, an ecourse, a software script or program.

As long as the report, ebook, ecourse, or program carries considerable value, you won't have any problem whatsoever getting people to relinquish their name and email address in return for that "gift".

That's the good news. The bad news is…

- People who trade their name and email address for a freebie can be much more resistant to buying something.

- Many people unsubscribe the moment they've received their freebie.

- There are countless other mailing list owners who are also using freebies as a means of increasing signups.

Even so, this method remains one of the best ways to build a large list (or increase an existing list) and in a relatively short period of time.

Method # 5

Here's a great idea that few people take advantage of. If you want to get the word out about your own publication, get your writing published in someone else's. The more subscribers they have, the better your results will be.

For example, most newsletters have some sort of editor's corner, space the owner reserves for their own input and comments. What most of them don't have, however, is an advice column.

If you can create one, geared toward a particular niche or topic, you can then syndicate that content. Just contact other publications and give them a sample of the type of column you'll supply weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. Whatever terms you and the other publisher agree upon.

Another idea is to conduct surveys and then convert those results into one or more paragraphs of text information.

Or, you can write reviews. It could be products, software programs, books, or even restaurants in and around the area where you live. Anything that fits into your particular niche.

Publishers - both website and ezine - are always looking for content. And the type of content most of them need is what's known as filler. If you can provide that, many of them will be more than happy to include it in their own publications. Either periodic or scheduled.

But whether it's survey results, an advice column, product reviews, or something else you've

come up with, your name and URL address will be included, leading additional viewers to your website and/or your subscription sign-up page.

You might be just starting out. But other publishers and website owners are already established, enjoying a vast number of targeted viewers and subscribers. Why not take full advantage of it.

Techniques You Should Implement

In addition to the basic methods already mentioned, there are also techniques you can use to increase signups.

The first one is to choose a very distinct and compelling title for your mailings. And no, you don't have to own a traditional newsletter. Just the fact that you keep in communication with your subscribers on a regular basis automatically qualifies your messages as a publication.

So whether you call it a newsletter, ezine, or mailing list, give it a good solid title, one that not only reflects the niche you're operating in but one that will also attract both publishers and potential subscribers.

If you do publish a newsletter, allow viewers to read back issues. If you don't publish a newsletter, give them easy access to the articles and other valuable content that you've included in past mailings. That way, they get to see firsthand the type of quality information they'll receive once they subscribe to your list.

Whatever type of signup advertising or promotion you do, make certain it stands out from the crowd. Remember, there are countless other list owners trying to attract the same subscribers. Anything you can do to make your offer appear more valuable than the others is definitely beneficial.

If you're using a pop-up or fly-in ad, don't just display a signup form. Include some killer sales copy that starts with a knock-out headline. If you don't already have one, create (or hire someone to make) a professional cover image that represents your publication. And then display it along with your sales copy.

Another sound technique is to encourage your current subscribers to pass your email publications along to a friend or associate. For your back issues or articles, anything that's published on your web pages, you should utilize the standard "tell a friend" or "send this page to a friend" script.

The easier you make it for someone to spread the word, the faster you'll increase your subscriber base.

You'll also want to submit your publication to ezine directories. But make certain you include an honest and accurate description and not some hyped up sales pitch. There's no benefit to gaining subscribers who aren't fully interested in the type of information - and ultimately products - that you have to offer.

Like most things that produce long-term benefit, it's not the quantity but rather the quality that really counts.

Using Autoresponders Effectively

The true value of quality autoresponders is their ability to send an unlimited number of follow-up messages. And the fact that you can pre-program the messages makes the entire system that

much more beneficial.

Naturally, there could be instances where you might only need one message sent. Most often, however, you'll want to send out a collection of messages, based on whatever action was initially performed.

If they signed up for your marketing ecourse, for example, they might receive a series of seven to ten lessons over the course of that same number of days.

If they purchased a product from you, you would want to follow up with them, sending out messages every few days or so. The first one could simply thank them, the second one could check up on whether or not they've had a chance to use the product, a third one might ask if they have any questions about the product, and so forth.

The point is, no matter what action is initially performed by the viewer, it's important to send follow up messages.

For one thing, you don't ever want to lose the connection with anyone who has become a subscriber. Once they're on your list, make certain you continue to provide them with valuable information, assistance, and whatever else you feel they might want or need.

Following are several ways in which you can use your autoresponders most effectively.

Publish Your Newsletter

The biggest problem most editors face with regard to newsletters is having to publish one each and every week. And that's exactly the reason many webmasters decide either not to publish one at all or choose to merely publish it once or twice a month.

With an autoresponder, you can preload several issues at once and arrange to have them sent out on a specific day each consecutive week. The publications will go out right on time, whether you're vacationing on the deck of a cruise ship or busy performing other webmaster tasks.

Affiliate Training

What better way to help your affiliates earn more revenue than sending them valuable marketing and promotion tips and information each and every week.

Once again, just preload all the messages and set the desired intervals for sending them. You create all the content once and then have the autoresponder system work on your behalf for months at a time.

Mini Ecourse

This is one of the most popular and effective uses for autoresponders. You create a series of lessons or segments of information and then have each of them sent to the subscriber one day at a time.

A very important aspect of these mini courses is the ability to keep people interested throughout all the messages. That's why you should always end each day's lesson or segment with a strong hook that hints at what they'll learn next.

For example…

> Well, that wraps things up for today. Tomorrow you'll discover how to implement one simple change that could more than double your existing Google Adsense revenue.

Whatever you do, don't miss it!

On the last day of the course, you can even direct the subscriber to yet another ecourse or free report. Again, sent out by autoresponder. Or, you can offer them a special discount or limited time offer that's only available to subscribers.

Ebook Sample

If you're selling your own ebook, you can use an autoresponder to send out sample chapters or select excerpts from the overall content.

Or, you can simply create a report based on part of what's included in the ebook. At the end of the report, let the subscriber know that the previous information was just a small sample of what they'll learn when they purchase the entire ebook.

And then, of course, pitch them on purchasing the ebook.

Product Information

This one can be sent either prior to someone making a purchase - whereby they just want additional information about a particular product - or it can include tips about using the product after it's been purchased.

For example, if you sold them a software program, you could send the buyer a series of messages that includes different ways in which they could implement the program. Or perhaps methods other buyers utilized that brought them success or additional revenue.

Notifications

Use an autoresponder to keep people informed. That could include software or ebook updates, changes on your website, current blog postings, or the hot topics being discussed on your forum.

Those are just a few of the ways you can use autoresponders effectively. You might implement one or two, you might implement them all. You might even come up with more creative ways to use autoresponders.

The thing that matters is that you do implement them whenever possible. Automation will not only save a great deal of time and hands-on effort, it will allow you to keep in constant touch with one of the most valuable assets you have… your mailing list subscribers.

Autoresponder Services

GetResponse
http://www.getresponse.com
Free and paid autoresponder service. Free version includes their signature line at the bottom of every email that's sent. Paid version is billed monthly.

ProAutoResponder
http://www.proautoresponder.com
Paid full-service autoresponder service. Billed monthly.

Aweber
http://www.aweber.com
Paid full-service autoresponder service. Billed monthly.

Send Free
http://www.sendfree.com
Paid full-service autoresponder service. Billed monthly.

Checklist

- Once you have a mailing list, you automatically have your own personal cache of people you can pitch products to.

- Keep a fair balance between sales pitches and quality information.

- If you send out too many "buy this now" messages, you'll lose the trust and support of your mailing list members.

- It's more effective to include your sales pitch either within or associated with any free advice or information - the soft-sell approach.

- As long as you maintain a comfortable balance between sales pitch and extended periods of no promotion whatsoever, you'll always have the ability to generate almost immediate volumes of revenue.

- You want individuals who have a strong interest in your niche market and are anxious and willing to receive promotional messages from you.

- Make certain each person who signs up for your mailing list knows they will be receiving promotional messages, and not just free advice and information.

- Rather than assume someone wanted to sign up for your mailing list, it's important that you make them confirm their decision.

- The more tasks you can set on auto-pilot, the more time you'll have available to invest in promotion and marketing.

- A good automated system can subscribe and unsubscribe names and email addresses, organize and keep track of numerous independent lists, and send out messages at specific and assigned intervals.

- Without follow-up capability, you're leaving a good deal of potential revenue behind.

- With an online autoresponder service, everything behind the scenes is taken care of. All you have to worry about is attracting more subscribers.

- Create email addresses through your web hosting account and then forward them to each of your autoresponders.

- In addition to an email address, require at least their first name so you can personalize the messages that you send.

- The email address and name fields should be "required" (the form can't be submitted until both fields are filled in).

- Place the subscription form at or near the top of the web page, where it's clearly visible.

- Place the subscription form on all available pages of the website, not just the home page.

- If possible, place the subscription form in the same place on all pages. If not, place the form in as close proximity as you can.

- Include a brief description of your mailing list or newsletter along with a "more information" link.

- The more information link should lead to a separate page that explains in detail what the viewer can expect by signing up for your mailing list or newsletter.

- Make it clear - in both the brief and detail descriptions - that you will not rent, distribute, or share their information with any third party.

- Use fly-in ads instead of pop-up windows. They can't be blocked by pop-up stoppers.

- Write articles and then include a link to your subscription sign-up page in the author's resource box.

- Offer viewers a free a report, an ebook, an ecourse, a software script or program in exchange for their name and email address.

- If you want to get the word out about your own publication, get your writing published in someone else's (for example, an advice column, product reviews, survey results).

- Choose a very distinct and compelling title for your publication.

- Give viewers easy access to back issues, articles, and information that you've published.

- Encourage your subscribers to pass your email publications along to friends and associates.

- The true value of quality autoresponders is their ability to send an unlimited number of follow-up messages.

- Make certain you continue to provide subscribers with valuable information, assistance, and whatever else you feel they might want or need.

- Use autoresponders to publish your newsletter, send marketing tips and information to your affiliates, distribute ecourses, offer sample content from your ebook, supply product information, and keep people informed.

Resources

Adword Analyzer
http://www.adwordanalyzer.com

Traffic Equalizer
http://www.trafficequalizer.com

Impact Popup
http://www.impactpopup.net

Elance
http://www.elance.com

GetResponse
http://www.getresponse.com

ProAutoResponder
http://www.proautoresponder.com

Aweber
http://www.aweber.com

Send Free
http://www.sendfree.com