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How to Grow Your Email List

A quality email list is a vital part of email marketing and can determine your campaign's success.



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What to avoid when building an email list

Amid the rise of social media marketing, some marketers are neglecting a tried-and-true vehicle: email marketing. Email is a highly effective way to nurture leads and inform, learn from, interact with and sell to existing customers.

Your email list's quality is crucial for an excellent [digital marketing campaign ROI](#). No matter how well-designed and crafted your message is, you won't succeed if you send it to people with no interest in your offerings. It takes time and care to nurture the right list, but the pay off of stronger customer relationships and higher sales revenue are always worth it.

Here are 25 tips for building a high-quality email list so you can ensure you're creating a strong digital marketing strategy.

Did You Know?

While email marketing is effective, it has challenges, including improving deliverability rates, enticing new subscribers, and keeping current subscribers engaged.

What is an email list?

What Is an Email List

A consent-based collection of subscriber emails that drives high-ROI marketing



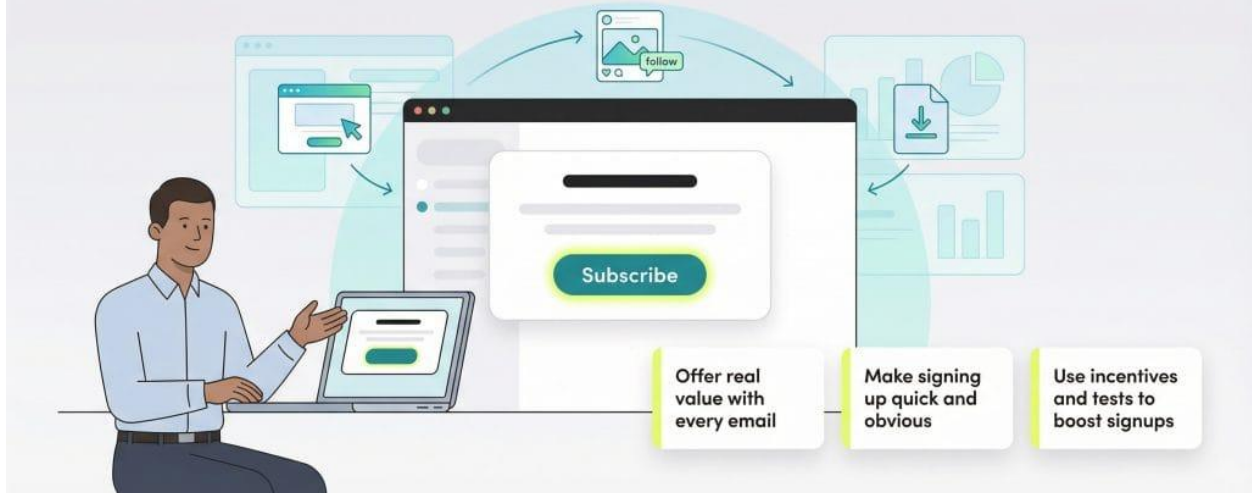
An email list, also called a mailing list or subscribers list, is a collection of email addresses from visitors and customers who consented to receive communications from a business, such as information, updates, or discounts. Your list may grow and shrink as followers unsubscribe or new ones join over time.

Email marketing is an enormous business asset and a highly [effective digital marketing strategy](#). Nearly every customer has an email address, so billions of potential customers are available with just a few clicks. According to [Litmus](#) data, email marketing has the highest ROI of all digital marketing channels, including social media, returning \$36 for every \$1 spent.

25 ways to grow your email list

Intelligent Ways to Grow Your Email List

Combine smart signup points, compelling content, and clear incentives to build a high-quality list over time.



There are many ways to grow your email list organically. Follow these 25 tips to grow your list the right way and [engage your email subscribers efficiently](#).

1. Create valuable content for your email subscribers.

Your followers signed up to receive emails from you for a reason. Your job is to make that signup worth their while by [providing relevant content](#). You will quickly lose subscribers if your content is boring or not applicable to your followers.

2. Know your email subscriber audience.

Knowing your audience will help you create content they like. You can [track email analytics](#) or information you've collected on your own to inform your content. Consider demographics, customer behavior, and clicks to better understand your audience and give them more of the content they like.

3. Make it easy for followers to share your emails.

Include buttons that link to your social media and "email a friend" links in all your emails to make your content easily shareable. You don't want your subscribers to have to work hard to send your content to another potential customer.

4. Segment your email lists.

Once you understand who your audience is, you can put them into groups via [market segmentation](#). For example, segment them by age, location, or buyer behavior and send

emails based on those groups. This makes your messages more targeted to each audience segment and more likely to be effective.

Tip

When you gain a new subscriber, add one or more tags to help you with segmentation. For example, one tag might be "Valentine's Day promo" or the name of a trade show where you met the person. Next, [personalize your emails](#) according to that person's interest.

5. Send an opt-in email campaign.

If you have an old email list that doesn't yield much engagement, send an email campaign with an opt-in message and a promise to remove any email addresses that don't respond. While removing contacts from your list might seem counterintuitive, it can give you better results by ensuring you only send emails to people who want to receive them.

Visit our story on [opt-in email marketing](#) to understand how to build a higher quality email marketing list.

FYI

Complying with [email marketing data privacy laws](#) is critical. For example, violating the CAN-SPAM Act can result in stiff fines for email marketers.

6. Include a link in employee signatures in your emails.

Adding a link to a landing page where people can sign up for emails in all your employees' email signatures is a quick and easy way to help build your email list.

7. Include gated offers on your website.

Say you have valuable content to offer, like whitepapers or business e-books. Host this content on your website with a pop-up requiring visitors to enter their email addresses and opt-in to receive your emails to download it.

8. Require an email address to get a quote or access a resource.

Similarly, you can require a customer to provide their email address if they want to contact you for a quote or access a unique resource your business offers on its website.

9. Host a contest to gain email subscribers.

You could [create a contest](#) and require an email address for entry. Post about the contest on your social media pages to drum up interest and awareness. Include a link directing viewers to where they can sign up on your website.

10. Have a pop-up on your website.

Website pop-ups can be effective for gaining subscribers. “The single best method I’ve used to grow email lists rapidly is via website pop-ups,” said Kent Lewis, president and founder of Anvil Media. “Add a pop-up to your site to ask for an email address to send updates. The strategy still works, especially if you cookie the visitor and only prompt them once instead of every time they refresh or visit a new page. Ensure the incentive is clearly articulated and relevant to your brand to maximize conversions.”

You can learn more about [the benefits of email pop-ups](#) to build a successful digital marketing campaign.

11. Put an email-signup call-to-action button on your social media.

Add a CTA to sign up for your email list on your social media pages to make it easy for interested customers to sign up to receive your emails.

12. Ask website visitors for their feedback.

Visitors enjoy providing customer feedback on a topic they’re interested in or that pertains to them. Provide a form on your website that asks them to leave their feedback on your business or website, and make their email address a required field.

13. Keep lead-capturing forms short.

When you ask customers to provide information, you don’t want to overwhelm them with lengthy forms that request extensive data upfront. Only ask for the basics, like their name and email address.

14. Use Facebook groups to gain email subscribers.

Facebook groups can yield engaged email recipients. “Over the years, I’ve added thousands to my email list by using Facebook groups,” said Rick Orford, author of *The Financially Independent Millennial*. “As part of the joining process, I ask for users’ email addresses in exchange for free information, such as a PDF. Facebook groups can be an invaluable way to increase engagement with your audience while allowing you the opportunity to keep in touch with everyone by email.”

15. Make subscribing easy on your website.

A customer who wants to subscribe to your emails shouldn’t have to hunt around your website to find the subscribe button. Make it straightforward and easy to find in several places on your website, such as your home page, About page and contact page.

Tip

On email subscriber forms, tell people what they can expect if they sign up for your list. This may include the content type, email frequency, and any freebies and [giveaway items](#) they'll receive.

16. Conduct A/B tests of your email content.

When you start out with email marketing, you're still determining what content will perform best. To find out (or at least better predict) what works, send out different versions of the same email — with various subject lines or images, for example — to sample groups to see which performs better with your audience.

17. Set expectations with your email subscribers.

Let your subscribers know precisely what to expect. "Set expectations so that a subscriber knows exactly what [they are] signing up for and how often [they] will receive email from you, and immediately send a welcome email upon sign-up that matches the expectations you just set," advised Katie Bonadies, content and social media strategist at Berxi.

Bottom Line

To improve your email marketing campaign, create a content calendar so you'll plan in advance most of what you'll include in your emails. This will make creating your email campaigns faster and more focused.

18. Create a blog to gain email subscribers.

[Starting a blog](#) is a great way to boost your online presence. Blogs can increase your ranking on search engines and go a long way toward [increasing brand awareness](#) and establishing brand credibility. You can also collect email addresses via [blog subscriptions](#) and deliver quality content right to subscribers' inboxes.

19. Allow customer reviews on your website.

Alongside a blog, providing a place for customers to leave reviews on your website can boost your image as a reputable business while giving you another opportunity to gather email addresses. Require an email address for users to leave reviews. [Good customer reviews](#) are a valuable form of [user-generated content](#) that bring credibility to your brand.

20. Be patient while building your email list.

Excellent email lists aren't built in a day. "Don't expect to have a massive email list overnight," said Shmuel Fogel, project manager at Talmudico. "It takes time to build email lists, but they can be extremely effective in marketing to your customers. By maintaining in-

store signage, website banners, and campaigns to grow your email addresses year-round, you will ultimately build up a large list over time that continues to grow.”

21. Collect email addresses at a trade show or conference.

There is always the old-fashioned way to collect emails: in person. Have a sign-up sheet readily available for anyone who stops by your booth or table, and create a welcome email that’s ready to go once you add the email addresses into your system.

22. Add QR codes to your promotional materials.

Another quick and easy way to collect email addresses and maximize your advertising materials is to add a QR code to your printed advertisements and direct mail pieces. This way, you can collect email addresses from posters or brochures and integrate direct mail with email marketing.

Direct mail is a proven tool when used in tandem with a comprehensive digital marketing strategy. You can learn more about how to [incorporate direct mail into your marketing strategy](#) to better set your business up for success.

23. Offer an incentive to grow your email list.

Free content can be a strong enticement to join your email list. “The best way to grow an email list is to offer some incentive for being on it,” advised Rex Freiburger, Co-CEO of Gadget Review. “Sometimes, if customers really want to know about an upcoming product or possible promotions, this is enough. Usually, they need enticement in the form of free content, trial services, or large discounts.”

24. Include timed pop-up surveys on your site.

You can create surveys that pop up only after a customer has spent a certain amount of time on your website. This works because the customer has demonstrated interest in your content and is more likely to sign up to receive emails if you make it quick and easy.

25. Leverage your social media to gain email subscribers.

Your social presence is another tool for building an email list. “You can set up Twitter and Facebook campaigns to boost your lead generation efforts,” said Anthony Mixides, CEO of Bond Media. “By giving links to your various offerings and resources on social media, you allow more users to find you, and this helps you tap into a newer sect of people. This is also a very useful technique for growing your target audience base.”

Tip

The [best email marketing services](#) guide you on your campaigns, offering email marketing templates and advice on where to place elements like headers and CTAs.

What to avoid when building an email list



Because solid email lists are such a vital part of the email marketing process, [email etiquette](#) and [email marketing best practices](#) matter. Here are 10 things not to do when building your email list.

1. Don't buy email lists.

Buying email lists is the No. 1 mistake marketers and business owners make when trying to amass subscribers. While buying a list is the fastest method of reaching users, it generally comes back to bite you because there's no way to guarantee the purchased email addresses are real or associated with users interested in your content. You could purchase a list with 1,000 addresses but discover that only a few engage with your content.

2. Don't add email addresses without permission.

Adding email addresses without permission is a huge mistake many marketers make — and could even get you in legal trouble. You should only send marketing emails to people who have given you permission in some form.

These are the two primary types of permission for email marketing:

- **Implied.** Implied permission covers recipients with whom you have an existing business relationship — like current customers, donors or website members.
- **Express.** Express permission is when someone gives you explicit permission to send them emails, such as by entering their information in a subscription form.

FYI

Periodically conduct "list hygiene," where you delete unsubscribes and emails that consistently hard bounce. This will boost your [email open rates](#), delivery rates and [click-through rates \(CTR\)](#) while [reducing your email bounce rate](#).

3. Don't ask for too much information.

When asking someone to provide personal information for your email campaign, you don't want to ask for too much and risk coming off as a spammer. Make subscribing quick and easy, and make the customer feel comfortable providing you with their contact information. Give the customer plenty of time to learn about your business and establish that you are a credible organization.

4. Don't offer a nonvaluable incentive.

Offering an incentive is a common way to get people to sign up for a targeted email list. However, it can backfire if the incentive isn't valuable to the customer. For example, you don't want to offer a coupon that expires the next day or a discount that can only be applied at one store at a specific time. Make your incentive valuable to — and usable by — as many customers as possible.

5. Don't use stolen email addresses.

Obtaining email addresses fraudulently is a huge mistake. "There are bots that can search the web and aggregate a list of found emails," explained Steffa Mantilla, founder of Money Tamer. "If you add these emails to your list, you'll likely get reported as spam, and your deliverability will go down drastically."

6. Don't skip the welcome email.

When a new subscriber signs up, send out a welcome email as soon as possible. This greeting makes the new subscriber feel valued and encourages them to become a repeat customer. Your welcome email should have a clear subject line, engaging visuals and content, and a link to whatever incentive you promised when they signed up.

7. Don't use paid advertising too soon.

“You don’t want to grow your email list with paid advertising until it’s proven,” according to Kelan and Brittany Kline, founders of The Savvy Couple. “You always want to focus on organic growth to find what actually works, then you can scale things up by running paid ads.”

8. Don’t send emails without a goal.

A clear goal for your overall email marketing campaign — as well as each email you send — will go a long way in making your emails worth your subscribers’ while. You don’t want to send out emails for the sake of sending emails; subscribers will likely be put off by content that isn’t valuable to them.

You should know what you want to accomplish with your emails before you send them. Are you [sending an email newsletter](#) to share updates about your company? Are you aiming to [reduce shopping cart abandonment](#)? Are you sending a discount code? Are you implementing an [email re-engagement strategy](#) to prompt inactive subscribers to get back on board?

Whatever your intention, shape your email marketing content around that goal.

9. Don’t be disingenuous in your emails.

“I’d stay away from anything disingenuous to the reader,” said Jakub Rudnik, head of content at Softr. “Ultimately, any bait-and-switch tactics will lead to the sign-ups that you earned unsubscribing more often than not. People are protective of their inboxes, so tell them exactly what types of content they’ll get and how often they’ll get it. You’ll gain their trust far better that way.”

10. Don’t send too many (or not enough) emails.

With email marketing, the best way to retain your customers is to be consistent in your sending habits and let subscribers know what to expect. If you send a burst of five emails every few months or three emails every day, your subscribers could get annoyed and unsubscribe.

Set and stick to a regular posting schedule. Many email marketing services have scheduling features to make this effortless, even allowing you to schedule emails months in advance.

Jennifer Dublino contributed to this article. Source interviews were conducted for a previous version of this article.



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Kiely Kuligowski is recognized for her expertise in project management and business software. With a strong background in project oversight, she excels in defining project scopes, monitoring timelines and ensuring high-quality deliverables for a diverse range of clients. In addition to her proficiency in project management, Kuligowski also possesses experience in product marketing and has made valuable contributions to business fundraising endeavors. At business.com, Kuligowski covers email marketing, social media marketing, as well as topics related to business management. In the realm of business software, Kuligowski has reviewed a number of modern digital tools, such as email marketing services and document management systems, and advised business owners on purchasing decisions and usage best practices. Recently, Kuligowski has focused on sustainability software and project management at IBM, further establishing her as a respected authority in her field.

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