

Building a Quality Email Marketing List

A Pinpointe Paper
September, 2008



In ResearchCorp's September ['08 'Marketing Automation Survey - Q3 '08'](#), two top challenges that marketing managers reported were 'getting enough leads' and 'growing their email lists'. This paper provides specific strategies for extending B2B email prospect lists.

GROWING YOUR PROSPECT LIST - TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL "TOUCH POINTS"

First on the checklist is to consider all touch points with your prospects. At each touch point, you should be asking prospects to join your subscription list, subscribe to your service and/or register for a useful resource, like a whitepaper or webinar. Here is a checklist of places where you should be asking contacts to subscribe:

- **Email Signatures.** Create an email signature such as - "3 Reasons to Subscribe to our Marketing Tips Newsletter", with a link to the subscription landing page. Ask all employees to include it in their corporate signature.
- **All transactional emails.** If you're confirming an order, paper download or anything else, always ask people to join your subscription list or register.
- **Product warranty / registration forms.**
- **Invoices.**
- **Website.** Every page should have an invitation to subscribe and a link to your registration page.
- **Surveys,** customer satisfaction surveys.
- **Call center.** Ask support and sales staff to ask customers and prospects if they'd like to subscribe to your newsletters and correspondence.

REGISTRATION LANDING PAGE CONTENTS

We've seen many customers whose registration landing page is a lonely form with a dozen contact fields. Make sure the landing page has the following contents:

- Make your case - clearly summarize the benefits. It sounds easy but 3 out of 5 sites don't explain the benefits of signing up.
- Provide a link to a previous newsletter or two, or links to a few teaser pieces of content. This lets your potential subscribers review your newsletter before they sign up and determine if it is something they'd be interested in.
- Clearly state your **privacy policy** and include a link to the details.

- Include 1-2 customer testimonies
- *Do not* include a long list of links to other pages. This is distracting and your goal should be to drive prospects to signup - don't provide other distractions.
- Can you offer a relevant incentive? A free massage or T-shirt are nice options but you'll just get people who like free T-shirts and massages. If you offer reports or pay-for content, consider offering free access for subscribing.
- Use Double opt-in. Also indicate clearly on your registration page that a link will be sent to the person's email. This increases the likelihood that people enter a valid contact email address and reduces the likelihood of someone entering a spam honeypot address.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Ask for what's needed - email, first / last name, perhaps company and phone. Ideally include checkboxes or a memo field so people can state their specific interests (or provide a note). Most Email Service Providers (like www.pinpointe.com) make it easy for to ask prospects to augment their profile later.

TEASER CONTENT

A more viral approach is to make a limited amount of your content readily available without requiring registration. Then include information on the benefits of joining your list, along with subscription links. Chances are that your paper will be downloaded and passed around to many more people that you would have never otherwise reached - allowing greater 'visibility and influence'. You may have fewer direct registrations overall but you gain broader visibility. Try combining the viral pass-around approach with standard registration for other content.

If you are producing podcasts and webinars, be sure to include a plug with contact information, registration page access and benefits.

SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION

If you are creating contributed content, press releases or blogs, here are a few opportunities to work in a bit of shameless self-promotion. Just don't "over-message" or over-sell:

- **Include Information and a Link to Your Newsletter in Press Releases** – A good option for smaller companies. Include your company newsletter and other resources in press release copy.
- **Promote Your Email/Newsletter in Articles and Article Attribution** – Include a reference and link to your newsletter after the by-line on articles in trade publications.
- **Mention in your Blog(s)**. A link to your registration page is fair game.

USE YOUR SALES TEAM

In our recent survey on 'Lead Generation Practices' we discovered that 17% of the contacts in prospect databases are from sales teams. If you're going to do this, here are some tips to do it correctly - just approach with caution.

What to Do

Ask your sales team to send their appropriate contact lists. This may be a subset of their rolodex or business contacts or other lists they've developed over time. This is especially useful when a salesperson first joins your company.

Next, we have found that a short, candid introductory email sent from the sales rep (or 'on behalf of' the rep if you are using an Email Service Provider) that includes a useful resource (whitepaper, report or free evaluation for example) meets little resistance from recipients. Be sure the email clearly says where you got the contacts name. If you use the format below, you'll be CAN-SPAM compliant:

Dear [first_name] [last_name],

I am dropping you a note to let you know I've joined the Acme Widget Company as sales manager, and I will be servicing your territory. I am contacting you because we have done business together in the past, and I would like to introduce you to our products at Acme Widgets. Are you available for a brief introductory call to learn more about our product can benefit your business?

You can also learn more about Acme Widgets here: www.acme-widgets.com.

So that we can keep you abreast of our progress, can I have permission to add you to our company newsletter, where we provide bi-monthly updates on our business, product announcements and tips?

Here is an example newsletter: www.acme.com/newsletter-sample if you would like to check it out. You can confirm your interest by clicking here to update your contact information or to unsubscribe.

I look forward to hearing more about your Widget needs.

Joe SalesRep
Acme Widgets
Address
Phone
Contact

[Unsubscribe link](#)

Send the introductory note and 2 reminders or similar variants over the next 2 weeks, and combine that your email outreach with a telemarketing / inside sales outreach program in parallel. Afterwards, you should automatically remove anyone who does not respond.

Also - absolutely, positively use an email service provider that automates immediate unsubscribe handling, bounce management and bounce reporting.

Potential Risks

Be cautious. Don't just take the names and blindly start blasting to them. Here are a few possible risks to watch out for:

- Old List. Old lists will have high bounce rates - it's a fact of life. If you are going to try the list (we recommend against it but there's a 63% chance you'll do it anyway) - at least manually review the list first and clean / remove obvious contacts and old domains. If you are a B2B marketer, removing personal email addresses is a good idea too.
- It is time consuming, but scrub the contact lists before adding them to your database.
- Make sure the list is not a customer list from the sales rep's previous company. Bad. Dangerous. Illegal in most states. Ask the rep to swear on the bible. Then check for some obvious signs within the database. For example, a spreadsheet exported from salesforce.com (and probably any other SFA system), includes the company name, person who ran the export and the date it was run at the bottom. Pretty easy to spot.
- Be suspicious of any lists that include contact names like 'info@company.com', 'support@company.com', etc.

CHANNEL AND PARTNER MARKETING

Our upcoming survey report found that 17% of prospect names in company databases are from Partners. Most of your partners are likely offering newsletters, tips and general updates to their subscriber list. Consider the following programs:

Ask partners to include a short text 'ad' for your newsletter (or whitepaper or webinar promotion) in each of their email campaigns. Many partners will be happy to do this as a way to work more closely with you as a preferred vendor. Depending on your partner relationships, you can offer to include an excerpt / 'ad' in your correspondence in exchange. Do this on a regular basis.

Joint Partner Events / Seminars / Webinars

Running a webinar or seminar? Host the event and ask partners to drive prospect traffic to your registration page (hosted on your site) for the event(s) from their database. In return, you'll give them any leads that come from their efforts and optionally, consider providing leads you collect in their territory.

This works well with events - like Lunch 'n Learn or similar seminars that you might jointly create and run with one or more partners. Ask your partner promote the event from their database and share contact information for all registrants. Just be sure to properly disclose that both companies are sponsoring the event and that prospects may be added to multiple lists.

Importing cards collected for a drawing at an event is ok but only if you include a sign or indication that names will be added to subscription list (and never sell or re-distribute the contact names further).

CO-REGISTRATION

Partners and vendors that share a similar target market might consider co-registration relationship. Ask your partners if they would consider putting a co-registration offer on the "thank you" page of their own online offers, in exchange for you adding the same on your relevant registration pages.

For example, when new prospects sign up for a webinar, white paper or email newsletter or to attend a user conference, the page after they sign up might say, "Thank you, we have sent an email with a link to the requested paper. Would you also like to sign up for our partner's monthly newsletter?" Alternatively, consider offering a partner's paper, webinar etc on your sign-up page(s).

LIST ACQUISITION

In our recent survey of marketing professionals, 63% of respondents said that they have bought one or more lists to grow their prospect database. 'Buying lists' is a hotly debated topic. Most email marketers will strongly recommend against using anything other than a double opt-in name and most ESP's (Email Service providers) require that you only send correspondence to names that have been acquired via opt-in procedures.

We generally agree. However, that may not always be practical, especially in the B2B world where lead generation programs with targeted publications can run \$30 - \$60 per qualified name. We're not recommending that you run out and buy 100,000 names and start blasting away, but if 2 out of 3 companies are going to do this anyway, we'll at least share some tips to improve results and reduce risk.

Assuming your email service provider allows you to send to purchased lists, we recommend a 5 step process outlined below.

Start with a Quality Vendor

Ask the vendor how they develop and build their list and how often it is updated.

Never use lists developed by scraping names from websites. Besides being a bad idea, most websites include general contact points like 'pr@company.com', 'sales@company.com' 'support@company.com'. These general aliases can each go to dozens of completely unknown and unqualified contacts within the company. Also search for the word 'spam' in your list. Here are some more tips to check quality:

- Ask for guarantees on replacement of bad records. A good vendor will guarantee replacement of records that have hard bounces. This is inevitable since 2% - 3% of all contacts change every month.
- Does the list include a high concentration of students, government or consultants? Unless these are your specific target audience, you've probably acquired a low quality list. At a minimum, you should consider removing these.
- If you have acquired a B2B contact list, does the list include aol.com, yahoo.com or gmail.com contacts? If so, it is probably not a great quality list.
- Always ask the list vendor to include full details like title, role, company name industry and any company details - these can be used to further select a target audience.
- Run a small test. Start by importing and testing 1,000 or fewer random records. Send the first introductory letter (see below) and closely monitor statistics - especially the unsubscribe rates and bounce rates. If they are not in line with the numbers presented in the table below, then we highly recommend not moving forward.

Once you have your target audience segment and have run a test of the list, send a series of 2-3 emails to the list over a 2-3 week period. Use a similar approach to the introductory email example earlier.

Send this and at most 2 additional variations over a 2-3 week period. After sending the last introductory offer, remove any contacts that have not responded to any of your 3 requests. This reduces the risks of continuing to bombard people who clearly have no interest. Your mileage will vary of course, but you will generally find that the future response rate of the people who remain on your list may be comparable to your standard opt-in developed list.

What to Expect

There are too many variables to predict results with accuracy; however we have seen the following ranges from high quality lists. Your Email Service Provider can track and report on the statistics below (if not, you might consider finding a new ESP).

Metric	First Email	Total - 3 Messages
Hard bounce rate:	<10%	<15%
Open Rate: (expressed as % of the delivered messages)	8% -15%	15% -35% total
Click rate: Depends on many factors	0.5% - 2.5%	1.1% - 5%
Unsubscribe rate:	0.75% to 2.5%	1.5% - 4%
SPAM reports(*). Varies widely - but if done properly with a high quality list,	<1 in 1,000	<1 in 1,000 messages total

Notes

Hard Bounce Rate - Up to 3% of B2B contacts change every month, so even database that has been completely updated every quarter will see over 8% bounces. This is not unreasonable; however, if you start seeing bounce rates over 15%, you might consider punting on the list.

SPAM Reports - When a recipient believes your email is SPAM and clicks the 'Report SPAM' button, a flag is raised and the delivering ISP will start to monitor your future mailing s to see if they are SPAM. Even with 100% double-opt-in emails you can expect on the order of 1 on 1,000 to 1 in 5,000 email messages to be reported as SPAM. This can also happen automatically if for some reason you repeatedly send emails to a non-working email address.

EMAIL SERVICE PROVIDER REQUIREMENTS

If you decide to go the route of buying contacts, use a reputable ESP with the following services:

- Automatic bounce processing / removal
- Automatic and immediate unsubscribe handling
- Check terms of service to ensure your ESP allows you to send to contacts that have not opted in. For most ESPs, violating this policy means your account will be immediately suspended with no refund.

In summary, building and maintaining a solid prospect list, especially for B2B marketers, is challenging and expensive. That said, following the above techniques overall can help you grow your active prospect lists by 50% to 300% in a relatively short time period,

ABOUT PINPOINTE

Pinpointe is a leading provider of on-demand email marketing automation software based in the heart of Silicon Valley, California. As former High Tech B2B marketers, we've been in your shoes. Our team has a passion for helping B2B marketing professionals communicate with existing customers and target new prospects through behavioural targeting, improved segmentation and message personalization.

OTHER RESOURCES

If you're a Business to Business marketer and are want to stay on top of the latest marketing trends, tips and best practices, then please sign up for our twice-a-month Tips 'n Tricks notes. We also run surveys of marketing and sales professionals. We ask what you and your peers are doing and share the results with all participants at no charge. Watch for your invitation to participate and learn.

Pinpointe Tips: www.pinpointe.com/about/subscribe-to-pinpointe-tips

CONTACTING PINPOINTE

At present, we provide sales and support from 8am to 8pm PST, M-F. We can be reached 24x7 at:

Pinpointe Site: www.pinpointe.com

General Information: info@pinpointe.com

Sales: sales@pinointe.com

Please feel free to pass this handy pdf on to all your friends and enemies.