

Best Practices in Email Marketing

# Tips Building a Quality Email Marketing List



# Introduction

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In a recent report by ResearchCorp, the two top challenges that marketing managers reported were 'getting enough leads' and 'growing their email lists'. Because business email addresses change at a rate of 30 percent or more on most lists, marketers must adopt an aggressive approach to expand their list and yield a significant return on investment. 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.** Add your list contact information on every invoice. Are you sending electronic copies of invoices / sales receipts? If so – this is a perfect place to include a link to your sign up page.
- **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 honey-pot 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](http://www.pinpointe.com)) make it easy for to ask prospects to augment their profile later.

### BE A TEASE... USE 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 “FORWARD TO FRIEND” FORMS

Virtually every email service provider (“ESP”) includes a ‘forward to a friend’ option, where you can include a link for recipients to forward their email to a friend (or enemy). Forward to Friend forms can help you add 2-4% more contacts to your list.

## ADD SOCIAL SHARE LINKS IN EMAILS

Include social share links on every email (and on high value web pages on your site) so that recipients can easily share your great content (whitepapers, webinars etc). Though this won't directly add contacts to your list – if you include contact information within the body of the document, interested recipients / readers are more likely to come to your site and register for future resources.

## LEVERAGE YOUR TWITTER ACCOUNT

Assuming you already have a Twitter account (you do, don't you?) , use it. You can send emails to your twitter followers. Be cautious though; promotional emails are really highly frowned upon so be informational and informative vs. promotional when reaching out to Twitter contacts.

Another twitter tip – set up an auto-reply for people who follow you and include a link to your site or newsletter registration page.

## COLLECT SIGN UPS ON FACEBOOK

Facebook is becoming a single sign-on / authentication site for other applications and sites. As of early 2011, if you have a business page on Facebook, anyone who ‘likes’ you can receive emails.

## HOST WHITEPAPERS AND WEBINARS ON SLIDESHARE

Slideshare is quickly becoming the leading site for sharing documents like whitepapers, presentations and webinar events. Slideshare now has an option to add a registration page to any of your uploaded documents. Create a minimal registration form and collect contacts.

## USE YOUR SALES TEAM

In a 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 provide their personal contact lists. This may be a subset of their rolodex or business contacts or other lists they've developed over time. Stick to contacts that the sales rep knows and has done business with in the past.

Next, a short, 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:

```
Hello [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 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

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.

### *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. Check for some obvious signs within the database. For example, a spreadsheet exported from salesforce.com 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

ResearchCorp's recent email marketing 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 – AVOID TEMPTATION

In a 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), including Pinpointe, require that you only send correspondence to names that have been acquired via opt-in procedures. Therefore, we recommend avoiding a straight-out list acquisition.

However, where data providers can be very helpful is by augmenting and correcting your existing (opt-in) contacts to help you improve segmentation. For example if your sign up forms collect email, first + last name (and perhaps company), consider using a list vendor to augment additional information that can be used to improve segmentation and audience targeting. This might include basic demographic information like title, gender, company, Industry or number of employees in the company.

Database / list vendors can also help clean up and 'normalize' your data. For example, your registration forms might collect recipient's first + last name, and company. The name "Bill" may be entered as Bil, Bill, William, etc. Good list vendors can help clean up your list for consistency.

Other database vendors such as Hart-Hanks, can provide you with information about specific product interests, hardware and software infrastructure installed at a given company and much more – all of which can be used to better target your audience.

More recently, some database vendors can append social contact information. If you provide an email address, they will provide the LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook profile / page.

### *A Few Notes about List Quality*

As you grow your email marketing list, know that the list will go through natural attrition, and contacts will change or become obsolete.

How do you measure the quality of the new contacts you've added to your list? Tracking and measuring the open and click-through rates are of course two key metrics to track the 'engagement' level with your contact. However, you should also compare the following metrics to your existing contact lists:

**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% of your contact list become 'obsolete' or dead as a result of hard bounces.

**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 mailings to see if they are SPAM. Even with 100% double-opt-in emails you can expect complaints in the range of 1 per 1,000 emails sent to 1 in 5,000 email messages sent to be reported as SPAM. This can also happen automatically if for some reason you repeatedly send emails to a non-working email address. If

your Email Service Provider (ESP) is reporting a higher complaint rate than one per 1,000 – it's time to seriously re-evaluate your email marketing message, targeting and send frequency.

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 behavioral 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. Once or twice a month we'll send you a briefing with tips and tricks. We'll also include a link so you can op-out or update your preferences, any time.

<b>Pinpointe Site:</b>	<a href="http://www.pinpointe.com">www.pinpointe.com</a>
<b>Pinpointe support Blog:</b>	<a href="http://www.pinpointe.com/blog">www.pinpointe.com/blog</a>
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## CONTACTING PINPOINTE

Pinpointe sales and support are available from 8am to 8pm PST, M-F. We can be reached at:  
(800) 557-6584 or (408) 834-7577, Option #2

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Twitter (Daily Tips):	@Pinpointe ( <a href="http://www.twitter.com/pinpointe">www.twitter.com/pinpointe</a> )

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