

## **Email Marketing: Building Email Lists by Ron Evans**

Most companies are always looking for ways to build their email lists. Large companies are trying to get email addresses for their existing customers and prospects, while small or startup companies are just trying to create any list at all! This article talks about some of the ways you can use your interactions and marketing efforts in the real-world to help build your email marketing lists.

## **Networking Meetings**

From your local chamber of commerce, to specialized industry groups, the meetings of many organizations are great opportunities to make contact with new people. You are exchanging business cards with interested prospects or possible referral sources, so make sure that you send appropriate email communications to these people. Start with a personal email recapping your conversation with them, and letting them know that you will be adding them to your monthly email list. Don't just start sending a barrage of email to every person that you come in contact with, however. Make sure that the person indicated some interest in what you have to offer first, or your contact will become quickly unwanted.

## **Trade Shows**

Whether you have a booth, are one of the presenters, or are simply attending a trade show, you have an excellent potential opportunity similar to networking events, but at a much greater scale. Organizing the follow-ups to people you actually spoke to yourself, and then adding the person to your personal list is a given. The general information requests gathered by associates at your booth can be handled in a similar way. Lastly, you may have organized a giveaway or contest to gather more leads at the show. These people are frequently less interested in what you have to say, and more interested in whatever they might be getting or winning. As a result, it may require secondary contact to obtain the permission to add them to your regular communications. In general, hitting contest winners with a "hard sell" is not usually effective.

## **Seminars**

Organizing informational seminars is a great way to build a healthy relationship with prospects and potential referrers. One effective technique is to have advance registration, and to ask permission to send regular emails at that time. This way, even if the person is not able to attend the seminar, you still have an opportunity to stay in touch with them. After all, they were interested enough to register for the seminar.

## **Retail Locations**

Storefront and retail locations provide many great ways to build your email lists. Adding fishbowls or point of purchase displays are easy ways to take advantage of real-world traffic. In this case, where you have a relationship of some kind going, offering an incentive like a contest or a customer loyalty program (tenth visit free) is highly effective. You are giving them more of what they are already getting from you, as opposed to the trade show example above where they may or may not actually be interested in what you have to offer.

## Events

Concerts, parties, art openings, or any other occasion that gathers people together can provide an opportunity to build your email address lists. Having a registration or check in location, or associates with clipboards working the room are just two ways to make contact. In the case of events, it is a good idea to offer some kind of incentive to boost signups. However, make sure that the person can only receive the incentive via email. This way, you will improve the quality and accuracy of the lists you are collecting.

## Post Cards/Direct Mail

When a company has an existing database of postal addresses, direct mail may be the best way to get the email addresses for your existing customers and prospects. Again, offering an incentive always helps stimulate a greater response, and is particularly effective when there is a pre-existing relationship. This helps increase the typical response rate of converting postal address recipients to email recipients. Publish a specific, but simple, web site address on your mailing to direct people to a landing page with the list signup on your site ([www.yoursite.com/special](http://www.yoursite.com/special)), so you can repeat the offer from the direct mail piece. This can help increase the number of people who actually signup.

## Phone Calls

Using the telephone to get email addresses can be a time-consuming process, but isn't it time you gave your customers and prospects a call anyhow. In this case the call will both continue to kindle the relationship, as well as helping you establish an email based communication point. This will more than justify the cost of making the call. Inbound calls can be routed to a special voice mail box ("Dial 5 to receive more information via email") so you can receive subscriptions from people even when they are not near a computer, or after business hours.

Contacting people using the phone will likely result in a certain number of people asking to be "immediately taken off your list". However, remember that this is not a bad thing! Ultimately, the focal point of your marketing should be concentrated on only those people that want to be marketed to. The rest of your marketing efforts are just to determine who the correct people are.

## Conclusion

Email marketing, like any other form of marketing, is designed to make contact with people. Leveraging your real-world interactions with customers into well targeted and respectful email marketing can have a tremendous impact on the number of clients that you cultivate and referrals that you receive.