Increasing Website Traffic & Building Email Marketing Lists

33 Ways to Increase Targeted Website Traffic and Build Your Double Opt-in Email Marketing Lists

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Introduction

Are you currently working to build your email marketing lists and increase traffic to your website? If not, the strategies found in the following pages will help you begin the task.

If you are currently engaged in the process, this eBook will help you learn new ideas and ways to strengthen your current strategies.

Building email marketing lists and increasing website traffic are both incredibly important while dictating the health of your online business. Take the actionable insight from this eBook and make it work for you. The results will be well worth it.

Article Marketing Strategy 101

How to use your articles for increasing website traffic to keep people coming to your site from every corner of the web.

Article Marketing is essentially writing and distributing short articles to a variety of outlets, including article repositories, which are also called article directories and article banks, forums, and newsletter publishers. Article marketing is one of the most effective types of marketing that one can do – it is also one of the least expensive ways to market a business. In fact, it can even be free, costing you nothing more than your time.

There are many benefits to article marketing. Because articles become viral, your message literally travels far and wide, increasing traffic to your website and increasing newsletter signups. Article marketing is also used to make sales and to build credibility. Anyone who wants to establish themselves as an expert in their niche should take advantage of all that article marketing has to offer.

Distributing an article can be a very time consuming task. Many people outsource this work, and pay a fee for someone else to do the distribution work. Others do it themselves using software that automates the process. You should note, however, that a large number of the best article repositories do not allow or approve articles that are auto submitted – and they can tell when this is done. Manual submissions – whether done by you or someone else – is always best.

Article Marketing with Repositories

The article is distributed to the article repositories first. There are hundreds of these in existence, and some are better than others. For these repositories, you will need your article, the title, possibly a sub title, your author's resource box, your website URL, your email address, a short description of your article, and a list of keywords, separated by commas, for your article.

Essentially, you visit each article repository, either sign up for a new account or log in, and copy and paste all of the information into a form that is provided for article submissions. Most article repositories have a manual approval process, so it may take a week or more before your article appears on their website.

Article Marketing with Ezines

Once you have submitted to the article repositories, you will want to distribute your article to ezine publishers that cover topics within your niche. You can build your own database of these publishers. You find them by visiting the ezine directories.

Look first for ezines in your niche, and then check each ezine to see if they accept articles. Load those article submission email addresses into your autoresponder, and each time you write a new article, send it to these publishers, asking them to publish the article.

Article Marketing with Forums

Next, you visit forums that are of interest to your target market. If your niche is weight loss, you visit weight loss forums, and look to see if they have a place for articles. If so, submit your article there. If not, post the article on your own website, and then become an active member in the forum. If your article is about cellulite, look for posts concerning cellulite.

It is perfectly acceptable to make a post and say that you have an article about this on your website, and leave the link directly to the article. Just make sure that your post is relevant and on topic, and that your article provides useful information that is also relevant.

The Future of Article Marketing

As in the past, marketing methods will come and go. It's getting harder to send email. It's getting harder to get listed in the search engines. It's getting harder to use Pay-Per-Click search engines. The rules are constantly changing – and they change so incredibly fast that most marketers can't keep up with all of it.

But article marketing will remain. The changing rules that affect other methods of marketing will not affect article marketing, for the most part. There may come a time when it is no longer safe to email ezine publishers – but even if that happens, another method for getting your articles in the right hands will come along to replace that method.

For more information on article marketing, read David O'Connell's Article Writing Secrets book, which includes a copy of the "Quick and Easy Guide to Article Marketing" by Richard Driver.

If you're looking for a little help marketing your articles, check out ArticleMarketer.com.

Drive Website Traffic To An Article Now

Take a minute and try these three simple traffic-driving strategies you can use to attract more readers to your featured article of the day

When you're writing an article for your blog, or you're re-posting an article from your print archives to be viewed digitally, why are you doing it?

Sure, content is king, and the more content your website has, the more excited Google is to index it and the higher your blog ranks. But more importantly, you want someone to read it.

In fact, you probably want many people to read it.

So for starters, this new article you've posted will automatically be seen by:

  * Everyone who subscribes to your RSS feed,
  * Your email subscribers (if you're repurposing the content for email)
  * And web surfers (if you've done a good job at SEO)

But how else can you get your articles read and distributed with quickness? Unlike a new white paper or complimentary product, you can't distribute a press release for every article you write. So how might you tell others about your new article?

Here are a few ways that you can get your articles distributed to the masses with little to no effort:

  * Comments. Do a Google search and find blogs that are talking about a similar topic. In the comments, leave some valuable feedback on their article including a link to your own article. DON'T leave comments like "Great article, read mine!" (it's tacky), but DO offer a paragraph or two that adds to the existing discussion and offer your article as a secondary reference that compliments the article you are commenting on. This method builds an inbound link to your website and it also gets your article read by the blog owner and other readers of the blog.

  * Twitter. One of the fastest ways to spread your article around is to carefully construct an interesting teaser that describes the article, and post a link on Twitter. This can cause other people for re-tweet (forward) the link onto their own followers. Leave at least 20 characters in your tweet so that people have room to

add the re-tweet lingo. Twitter is our second largest driver of incoming traffic, and it didn't take anything more than posting valuable content and links.

   * Bookmarks. Add the article link to your social bookmarks. Digg, StumbleUpon, Reddit and Delicious are a good set for your starter pack. Submitting your articles to these sites is like distributing an online press release. Your article is live and people can choose to read it or not. If you want to have a more valuable following on these types of sites, try linking to sites other than just your own.

A more global approach (and not necessarily something you can get done today persay), is to include ways for people to share your articles. By adding buttons for people to Twitter, Digg or Facebook your article, you're leaving it up to your existing readers to spread the word. It's a hands-off approach but it works well for many publishers.

If you have something more important to pass along, like a free book, webinar or other type of product, you can try incorporating "Tweet This" buttons on your website.

Every third Friday we have something called Free Report Friday. We promote it via email and also in our Twitter feed. Not surprisingly, a good majority of our new email signups come from these Friday tweets that introduce our followers to a new white paper on our website.

It's no effort on our part, and many people click the button before they've even read the report because (1) they think the topic is interesting and of value to their followers and (2) it's easy.

Become an Instant Link-Building Expert with Free Reports

An affordable link-building strategy: Use downloadable content to increase inbound links, drive website traffic and build online friendships

Search engine optimized Rapid Conversion Landing Pages convert casual visitors into loyal email subscribers.

Unique visitors are counted as any arrival on any page of the Mequoda Website Network. The site visitor might enter through the Mequoda Daily, the Mequoda Summit, the "About" page — even one of the commercial sections. Unique visitors may or may not have encountered aggressive conversion architecture.

Essentially, your website's Email Conversion Rate (ECR) is analogous to a retailer calculating how many people signed up for the retailer's free postal newsletter divided by how many people entered the store.

So how does Mequoda Daily achieve such a high Email Conversion Rate? For the same reason we have so many incoming links. The secret is valuable downloadable content.

We offer a range of downloadable free reports, which we call white papers, using well-crafted Rapid Conversion Landing Pages.

Depending on the page at which they first enter the site, most first-time visitors to Mequoda.com are confronted with a floating order form that enables them to enter an email address and gain immediate access to a white paper.

The astonishing marketing power of free reports

Free downloadable content is a juggernaut that drives website traffic, encourages incoming links, and fuels our exceptional conversion rates. And the quality of our incoming links is high, because they originate at the websites of our publishing industry colleagues and friendly competitors.

Some website publishers run sweepstakes and offer unrelated incentives to sign up for a free email newsletter, but their results usually are disappointing. That's because offering a sweepstakes will get you links from other sweepstakes

websites, but generally will not result in quality subscribers from your affinity group.
The trickery and chicanery of sweepstakes and link farming sites are of little long-term value, can diminish your brand, and harm your reputation.

But offer a free report that matches your target audience's interests, and you can hit the jackpot with numerous qualified new subscribers who value your branded editorial content.

Three best practice examples of publishers offering valuable free downloads:

> * The World's Best Golf Destinations 2008-2009 offered by Golf Vacation Insider.
> * Five Free Sock Knitting Patterns offered by Knitting Daily.
> * Eleven Little-Known Strategies for Getting Discount Business Class Airfare   offered by First Class Flyer.

Like Mequoda, these publishers give away reports of eight, 12, or even 20 pages that could easily sell for as much as $50. Because the reports are relevant to their target market, the "right" people — potential paying customers — sign up. In turn, the new email subscribers frequently link to these websites, providing valuable, third party validation and endorsements.

Additionally, the links are from the "right" publishers, who are linking for the "right" reasons. The process is natural and endemic, and the endorsements are from other publishers within a respected circle of influence.

The more valuable, free reports you release to your existing readers and potential email subscribers, the better. In many instances, these can be created by combining, rewriting or recycling content that you have previously published in a different format.

Offering free downloads is fundamental to effective website marketing. It's the most productive strategy for harnessing the power of your brand and using your existing editorial content to build your customer database.

Six Ways to Improve Your Website Conversion Rates

Convert more website visitors into buyers or subscribers from any page on your site by using these 6 methods

To move the conversion process along on organic landing pages (pages that convert based on search traffic), website designers insert conversion architecture page elements called OFIEs, OFINs, floater order forms, display ads, text ads, and simple text links.

Don't worry about being the first person to raise your hand; here's a breakdown of this conversion architecture and landing page lingo:

OFIE (Order form in editorial): An OFIE is an embedded subscription form that appears on web pages either to order a product or service, or more likely to sign up for an email newsletter. This order form appears within editorial content on a website, most often found on Article Landing Pages. This is because it's easier for a publisher to get more subscribers or sales by placing OFIE's on a page that is indexed more by a search engine.

OFIEs for products or services are often fairly large, coupon-style ads, usually placed in unused space at the bottom of web pages and simply require a user to supply his or her name and address and click "submit".

A good example of an OFIE is at the top and bottom of the CeramicArtsDaily.com homepage. They also feature the top OFIE on all of their articles. These OFIEs at the top of the page collect an email address while the more direct OFIEs at the bottom sell their magazine.

OFIN (Order form in navigation): These online order forms appear in the navigation panels of a website. The customer/end user fills them out to order a product or service or to sign up for an email newsletter. While they are usually smaller in size than OFIEs, an OFIN's strategic intent is the same: to quickly capture your visitor's name and email address in order to grant access to a free special report or a free copy of a magazine or newsletter.

A good example of an OFIN is in the right nav at InvestmentU.com. By entering your email address you are automatically added to their investment email newsletter. The thank-you page upsells to their investment membership website.

FLOATERS: Named a floater because it appears to float onto a webpage. This was a method created in order to fight back against pop-up blockers. While it may

look like a pop-up, a floater does not open in a separate window and therefore cannot be blocked or banned.

The floater order form is a tactic for increasing landing page conversion rates and may be used at nearly every entry point on a website, though it's usually better to set a cookie to let the floater appear to the user only once upon entry to the site. Floaters on average have about an 8% conversion rate.

A good example of a Floater is on the homepage of FuelNet.com. This Floater only shows up upon first entry and offers a free marketing report in exchange for subscribing to their free email newsletter.

DISPLAY AD: An online advertisement that uses graphics. They are also called banners, skyscraper ads and rich media units. Publishers will sometimes use display ads to promote their free email newsletter.

A good example of a Display Ad that promotes a free email newsletter can be found in between articles on InvestmentU.com.

TEXT AD: An online advertisement block that uses text links, or text-based hyperlinks, without graphics. These are found within editorial content to sell a product or to obtain an email address.

A good example of a Text Ad can be found embedded within article content at HRDailyAdvisor.BLR.com. For SEO purposes, we'd recommend that they link the product name instead of "click here" or "read more".

TEXT LINKS: Hypertext links in editorial or navigation that lead to a Rapid Conversion Landing Page. These are the best form of persistent conversion architecture because they are subtle, yet very effective ways to drive traffic to a Rapid Conversion Landing Page with the ultimate goal of increasing email database circulation.

Text links can also be used to direct traffic to an advertiser's landing page. They can be used in a website's masthead area (near search bars or other advertising space), in a website's top navigation, or as part of the website's right or left panel navigation.

A good example of Text Links that lead to a Rapid Conversion Landing Page can be found at GolfVacationInsider.com, which lists links to 52 of their free golf vacation guides.

The ultimate goal for the website publisher is to quickly and easily add unknown site visitors to an email database. Using OFIEs, OFINs, floater order forms, display ads, text ads, and simple text links on a website are relatively simple ways to improve the conversion architecture across your website network.

Nine Ways to Drive Website Traffic to Freemiums

Link-building is like a popularity contest, the more inbound links you have from other websites, the higher your page will rank, and the more conversions you'll see

To get your special reports, white papers and freemiums listed on page-one in Google, one of the biggest influencers is inbound links. Next to keyword optimization, there's nothing more important. The more websites that link to your Rapid Conversion Landing Page (a.k.a. Name-Squeeze Page), the more validity Google will give your page.

Here are 9 ways to drive website traffic to your freemiums:

Link to your RCLP, not your home page: When leaving comments on external blogs, writing press releases and otherwise finding ways to build links to your RCLPs, don't sign your name with a link to your home page. The place you want to direct traffic to is your RCLP where a user can download a report, pattern or other freemium and opt-in to your email list. So when leaving comments externally, make sure your name links to a Rapid Conversion Landing Page that collects an email address and increases conversions.

Distribute press releases every time: Whenever you release a new freemium, there should be a press release attached to every one. This will get your freemium picked up by news blogs and other external linkers that are interested in your content.

Reach out to individual bloggers: First, build up a repertoire with bloggers by leaving useful comments or interacting with them on social networks like Twitter, Facebook and the like. Once you've built up this repertoire, you can send an informal email to them letting them know about your upcoming freemiums. Many self-employed bloggers are too busy and overloaded with press releases; a more informal approach works better.

Include links to your RCLPs in your bio: Anywhere you have a bio listed, whether it's on your site or on a site where you syndicate content, there should be a link to your freemium RCLP that lists you as the author. You can also position the freemium as a way for readers to learn more about what you do.

Drive traffic from print products: Any related content in your print products should include a link back to your RCLPs. In fact, you should have a freemium for

every print product you offer. No matter whether your product is a magazine, book, or newsletter, you should have at least one relevant freemium for every product you have or every topic you write about. This way, when you write an article on a topic, you have something free to give away if your readers "visit this URL". Offering irrelevant freemiums will not maximize traffic and inbound links.

Create a unique URL: This won't drive traffic directly, but it will certainly help promotion on your end. Creating a unique URL for your page makes it easy to link anywhere on the web or in print. A long URL is hard to remember and will lessen conversion rate when going from print to the web. A short and specific URL makes it easy for a user to remember when they have Internet access.

Use only one URL: If your RCLP lies on several URLs, say one that begins with your domain name and ends with .html, or you have purchased several unique URLs, it's better to stick with one. Using more than one divides your traffic and also takes away from your search engine ranking. By using separate URLs, you are driving inbound links to separate locations (according to search engines), and link-building only works if you're funneling traffic to one URL.

Leverage social networks: We're going to make this part simple by pointing you to an article we wrote about being a social networking evangelist, back in April. It shows you multiple places to set up shop and create links to your site from multiple domains, including Digg, MySpace, LinkedIn, Technorati and more.

Keep track of your success: There's nothing more rewarding than seeing your efforts succeed. To measure webpage count and inbound links, we use Yahoo! Site Explorer, a free service that provides the number of inbound links to any page on your website. We recommend you look at the number of web pages reported from all subdomains and links reported 'except from this domain' to 'entire site', which will show you the number of external inbound links coming from other publishers' websites.

Use Internal Links to Increase Google PageRank

Building an internal linking strategy with your downloadable products will increase visibility and conversions

Linking to pages within your own site is the best way to help Google define the pages you own, and properly designate pages that you consider top priority. In many cases you can get yourself into a page 1 or 2 rank just from internal linking.

Link-building should always be focused on something that can produce an outcome—a conversion—whether it be a new email subscriber or a lead.

Your most important internal link is the link to your free downloadable products or other type of freemium rapid conversion landing page (RCLP) that leads to an email collection or lead.

Where should internal links come from?

-Topic pages. If you have a topic page that is on point for the keywords related to your downloadable product, there should be a link to the RCLP from the top of your topic page. Your topic page is the page that lists all articles within a certain topic. A perfect place to put the link to the page offering the downloadable product (usually an RCLP) is right under the brief summary for the given topic.

-Related Posts. Isolate 35-50 posts that use your keyword phrase and insert a text ad somewhere within the top 300 words of the post (so Google understands it's a priority) that links to your RCLP.

-Author Pages. If you are using Author landing pages, anyone who is an author or creator of your downloadable product should have a link to the RCLP in their bio.

-Glossary Pages. On the 5-10 glossary terms that most closely relate to your free downloadable product, you should have "and for more information on XYZ, download our free report on XYZ" underneath the glossary definition.

Don't link the words "download here". Make sure when you refer to the page in your embedded ad, you use your styleguide phrase (guide book, special report, pattern, white paper, etc.) so that Google translates your link as an information product.

A better link would be: "Download our free Rose Gardening Book today!"

Ironically, Google places priority on things that can be downloaded. If Google thinks that the phrase a person is searching for reflects a product, it will give more priority to the site that is offering the product.

Whether you are a publisher, online marketer, editor, website designer, blogger or just need to learn how to sell information products more effectively online, Mequoda Pro will teach you how to gain a competitive advantage with our online seminars.

Your Mequoda Pro membership will train you and your staff on the best practices in search engine optimization, re-purposing print content online, internet advertising, social media marketing, converting website visitors into email subscribers and more!

These concepts are taught through a series of online video seminars, downloadable tools and spreadsheets, plus access to the Mequoda Research team to answer any questions you have about the strategy of your online business.

To learn more visit: **www.mequoda.com/mequoda-pro/**

Use Offline Methods to Drive Website Traffic

Publishers that are product-driven sometimes forget that they, themselves, are retailers; publishers do sell subscriptions, memberships, books, ancillary products, events, etc.

It's smart for a product-driven publisher to think like a retailer: Get people into your store, where they can become your customers. And when they become your customers, get them to come back for more. The "store," of course, is your website, your hub.

To drive website traffic via retail distribution:

* Find a third-party retail message channel and ride along on that medium with a product containing a great offer.
* Include a response mechanism on the product itself or in the packaging that entices readers, users, viewers, listeners, or buyers to visit your website and register for additional useful information or a free download.
* Install appropriate conversion architecture on your website to capture the registration data and also offer a free email newsletter or other regular contact device that allows you to begin a relationship with each new site visitor.

To build a successful retail distribution channel, however, you'll want to team up with a retail-marketing partner that will allow you to place your product in its store either for free or for a fee. The retail-marketing partner might be a retail store, a wholesaler, an e-commerce site, a mail-order catalog, a trade association -- there are a lot of ways to distribute products. For example:

* Sell consumer and business books, as well as videos and audiotapes, through brick and mortar and/or online bookstores.
* Offer special reports and white papers through affiliations with business groups and trade associations—at their events and expos and through their online stores.
* Market business tools such as kits, plans, software, CD-ROMs, and DVDs through brick and mortar and/or online office supply stores, computer stores, and stationers.
* Sell consumer merchandise—sports items, clothing, games, calendars, pet equipment, etc.—through retail shops or e-commerce sites that market similar or compatible products.
* Promote events through related but non-competitive websites.

The economics of retail distribution are quite different when the publisher assumes that the primary goal of selling products via the retail channel is to support a marketing strategy and build a robust customer database rather than turning a profit. For publishers—for anyone—that is often a tricky sell! Publishers might, for example, sell the product at a slightly lower price point, to lessen the blow to the bottom line, or push more units onto the market, or compromise product quality—paperback, say, instead of a hardcover book.

Using retail distribution channels for the purpose of driving traffic to your website is not much different from selling a product for profit through a brick and mortar retailer or selling it through a mail-order company or an online retail site. In any case, a physical product ends up in the hands of a user. The important element to recognize, however, is that the physical product also presents a unique opportunity to send an additional message directly to the customer: "Visit our website!"

URL Optimization for Search Engines

Why Google hates your question marks and ampersands

There are two types of URLs.

A dynamic URL is generally used on a PHP or Javascript based site and calls database content to fill a page template. The URL relies on the database and variable strings in order to form a complete URL. These are common on blogs, forums and e-commerce sites and may look like this:

http://www.yourdomain.com/category/thread.php?threadid=12345&sort=date

A static URL however, doesn't rely on variable strings, thus staying cohesive throughout the site and looks like this:

http://www.yourdomain.com/category/this-is-a-filename.html

The dynamic URL shown above is a fairly mild example of this type of link. Unfortunately, many of the dynamic links that you will find online, especially in e-commerce stores most likely have about eight question marks, thirty ampersands... and a whole lot of unidentifiable numbers.

Optimizing your URLs for search engines

Search engines tend to index dynamic URL's at a much slower pace than static URLs, and so do users. When looking at your page in a search engine, a user is more likely to click a link that has a recognizable URL string, such as one with the title of an article in the URL than one with question mark followed by some numbers.

Like users, search engines are not only bewildered by your missing keywords, but they also identify session tags and variables as "stop signs", pull on the reigns and yell "woahhhhh nelly". Or something to that effect.

Static URLs are quite easy to optimize, however, going overboard with the sub-categories is a little offensive as well, (darn those snobby search engines).

If you are interested in how to optimize your static URLs for search engines and user friendliness, Ross Dunn at SearchEngineGuide.com has a few classy pointers:

1. Don't have more than 3 subdirectories in any URL.
2. Try using keywords in your URLs if you can. The best place for a keyword is in a subdirectory (such as the category or topic).
3. If you want your page to be indexed by search engines, avoid session tags and variables because, like users, these are "stop signs" for search engine spiders.

Since we're all in this together (this being search engine and URL optimization), the folks SEOChat.com have made a URL Rewriting Tool that will restructure your dynamic URLs into static URLs so that you might take a gander, and if you're thinking about it, will offer ideas. AListApart has a more technical guide for restructuring them, that either you or your webmaster will most likely find useful.

Now, we know that restructuring your links isn't something you can snap your fingers and be done with. We're certainly not suggesting that you go out and break all your inbound links doing this. However... everyone needs a redesign once in a while, and some folks might be in the process right now.

With that said, it's very important to think about your URL strategy if you're depending on organic traffic from search engines. Using dynamic URLs with little to no keywords in them and multiple variables is not going to get you as highly indexed as a comparable site with an optimized URL. If you are in a highly competitive market, this could be tragic.

13 Link-Building Sources & Strategies

Increasing inbound links to your site with bloggers, competitors and social networking

If you want people to organically link to your site (as in, without you suggesting a link exchange or barter) here are a few things you should do:

1. Get found. Research highly searched phrases using a tool like Wordtracker, and SEO your articles using that phrase, so that reporters and researchers will find YOU when they are looking for references in their own articles.

2. Stay current. Whatever your target audience is, report with newsworthy articles and stay up to date on all the latest related gossip. Again, this is for outside references.

3. Promote shamelessly. Encourage readers to Digg and del.icio.us your articles. This puts links to your site on some very credible news feeds.

4. Let users generate content. Allow comments on articles and blogs; make your site the water cooler for search engines.

5. Make lists. There's nothing is more link-able than a good list.

6. Start controversy. That's right, don't be afraid to be controversial. Like they say... "any press is good press".

How to get bloggers to write about you

In the last few years, this technique has become the epitome of link building. It might seem like bloggers have their own clique when it comes to cross-linking, but much like any social gathering, it's all about taking a sip of wine and getting out there. If your list of blogger prospects isn't large enough, do some target shooting in Technorati, Google Blog Search and Ask.com's blog search engine.

Here are a few ways that you can get bloggers to notice you and link to your articles:

1. Contact the blogger. This is a bold move, but if you really think that something you've written will be of interest to the writer, then by all means, put yourself out there. Contact details can almost always be found on a bloggers site or contact page.

2. Comment on blogs. This has multiple benefits. First, if you are writing genuinely interesting comments, people will feel inclined to learn more about you. Most blogs link to your website if a user clicks on your comment name. The other benefit of this is that you immediately have a back-link to your site. However, steer clear of leaving obvious promotional comments, as they are likely to be frowned upon and removed.

3. Ask for a review. If you are product-based, offer relevant bloggers a chance to receive a free product in exchange for their review. The risk is certainly that they will not be immediate fans, but that doesn't mean that the back-link is any less valuable, especially if a user follows it and finds a different product they prefer.

With all that said... keep in mind that most bloggers don't get paid nearly enough, or at all, to do your profitable company a favor without getting something out of the deal. So you may want to remember this when you email them.

If you plan on emailing the blogger, start your email with a compliment. Talk about how much you enjoy their blog, and do your research beforehand. Make sure you provide them with all of the details they'll need to link to your site or article. For more tips, check out Ogilvy's Blogger Outreach Code of Ethics.

How to get your competitors to write about you

This is good old-fashioned business. Your competitors are not going to give you traffic without something in exchange, so you need to think of something good.

1. Exchange links. A non-threatening place to suggest a link-exchange would be in a blogroll or "partners" area of your competitor's site. It doesn't distract their readers but it's still a valuable placement.

2. Fill a void. It is also likely that you have a complimentary article or product in your arsenal that they do not cover and may find valuable to their readers. If this is the case, it might be the type of exchange you should be looking for and focusing on. Many bloggers rely on other bloggers to fulfill their editorial needs by cutting and pasting, or speed-linking (a post composed completely of links to interesting articles and sites) to fill some white space. Fill that space.

However, if your site mostly consists of a blog, and is hardly product-driven, I would use the term "competitor" very lightly because your "competition" in this realm is likely your biggest ally, since you can help each other out the most when it comes to link-building.

How to get other inbound links to your site

This is the fun part. Remember all those user-generated sites you've been hearing about? Well... go get 'em tiger! This is the easiest way to create your own external inbound links. Forums, online communities, social bookmarks, online reviews… these are all places where you have the opportunity to create a live link to your content, with the least amount of effort.

1. Social networks. We're going to make this part simple by pointing you to an article we wrote about being a social networking evangelist, back in April. It shows you multiple places to set up shop and create links to your site from multiple domains, including Digg, MySpace, LinkedIn, Technorati and more.

2. Online Press Releases. One last resort is the realm of online press releases, which will automatically generate multiple links to your site from all over the web. Not only from the PR sites themselves, but also from any browsing blogger looking to pick up a story (score!).

How to Start a Link-Building Campaign

Finding your external resources and discovering how they can help you get to page one in Google.

This week we're going to talk a little about link building. A great way to drive website traffic and the #1 way to get your pages listed on page one in any search engine is to have a substantial number of inbound and outbound links. A blog is clearly the best way to build both types of links, but how do you get people to link to your blog?

First, figure out who would benefit from linking to you.

Bloggers. You might be surprised to know that many bloggers rely on outside articles to supply their blog with updated, relevant information. Many blogs are a quick "copy & paste" of information with a link to the external source. However, even journalistic blogs will cite other blogs as references for their information.

Building relationships with bloggers isn't an exclusive party that you need to be invited to. Any time you get an email or a comment from someone on an article that you've written, make sure you follow up with them. If they are reading your content, they clearly think you are a reliable resource and this could be the start of a great business relationship.

Business Partners. These could be your blogger friends, your conference networking buddies, old colleagues, but they may also be your not-really-but-kind-of, competition. A strategic alliance is always beneficial to both parties (or it should be), and offering a link for a link isn't unheard of, even with your competitors and many times your customers, if the shoe fits.

Customers. Who better to spread the word about you than your loyal clientele? Offering links in your thank-you emails to related articles, and even outwardly asking them to link to you is a great way to invite traffic to your site. Many people won't even think about it until someone brings it to their attention. Remember, no matter how small, an incoming link is one more vote into Google presidency.

Suppliers. Bet you didn't think of this one. How about offering testimonials (closing with a link to your site) on the testimonial pages of your dealers? Most every business can use constantly updated testimonials, so a good deed for a good deed is good business. Also, see if you can get listed if they have a "Partners" page.

Friends. If all else fails, talk to your friends. In the digital age, almost everyone has a blog or is part of some social network. Tell your friends to link to your site in their forum signatures, blogrolls, MySpace profiles, anywhere they can think of.

Overall, in order to get valuable links to your website, your blog must have useful informative content that people consider link-worthy. A great way to get noticed, without outwardly asking for links, is to get out into the blogging community and start commenting on other blogs. Most blogging platforms will link to your website when someone clicks on your alias.

Building Email Circulation with Paid Search

See how the external source of pay per click (PPC) may benefit your online business

The Internet marketing model of pay per click can benefit publishers, especially if you have a very niche market.

To spread some light on the topic, PPC is a model used by advertisers on websites. The advertiser is charged a specific amount only when their ad is clicked on.

Associated with PPC is cost per click, or the CPC. This is the amount of money the advertiser pays search engines or online publishing hosts for a single click on the advertisement that in return brings the visitor to the advertiser's website.

For some, PPC has become a favored model since it provides the opportunity for purchases to be made, wherever people may be surfing the web.

Is PPC right for you?

PPC isn't a huge part of our marketing strategy. We rely heavier on organic forms of marketing that do not require the exchange of money, like organic search engine marketing and social media marketing.

However, PPC can be an added form of promotion when a special event or product is coming up. For instance, we have been promoting for our Content Marketing 2010 Seminars through internal and external promotions. We decided that PPC was worth utilizing for these promotional efforts, as the events are one-time opportunities.

Creating a PPC campaign

There are a number of PPC providers around the Internet. We felt Google AdWords was the best destination for our ads, since Google is the most popular search engine on the planet, and their AdWords program is one of the three largest PPC providers, along with Microsoft adCenter and Yahoo! Search Marketing.

After choosing the PPC provider, you will have to familiarize yourself with the specifics for the ads.

With Google AdWords, the ad's headline can be no longer than 25 total characters, including spaces. The body copy of the ad cannot be longer than 70 total characters, including spaces, and has to be broken up between two separate lines. The final component to the ad is the website URL, which will be below the body content and containing no more than 35 total characters including spaces.

Here is an example of an ad we created for the Content Marketing 2010 Seminars:

Content Marketing Seminar
See results by applying our 7-step
system to your online efforts
www.mequoda.com/seminars

After selecting the PPC provider and writing your advertisement according to their guidelines, you then have to select the keywords you want to target and set a limit on spending.

The keywords can be found easily with the help of the Google Keyword Tool. You can compile an extensive list with it, and then carefully select the words that resonate with the advertisement you will be running.

When it comes to a limit for spending, you can set a specific dollar amount for a specific time frame. For instance, if you have an event and want to run the PPC campaign for a period of six weeks and have a budget of $3,000, you could set the campaign up so no more than $500 worth of clicks can take place in the week. This way you can have the campaign last for your ideal amount of time.

Building email circulation with PPC

If you are using PPC to build email circulation, be sure to have the ad point to a data collection page of yours. One of your most popular free downloads could be a landing page you'd use.

Even if you are using PPC to drive traffic into a paid product, as we are doing with our Content Marketing Seminar noted above, you should include a pre-selected email newsletter offer on the first page of your order flow. This way, if the user abandons on the credit card ask, you've still collected that person's email address.

Using Podcasts for Building Email Circulation

Podcasts are an external source that can help build email circulation while delivering content through the desirable medium of audio

The vast world of audio communication has an amazing reach that we have all seen, from the popularity of iTunes to the emergence of online radio like Pandora. Audio, including podcasts and musical pieces, is finding an even easier way to reach eager listeners via the Internet.

As an admirer of the medium, I have spent time thinking about the power behind audio and the way it affects us physically, mentally and emotionally. I have seen varying statistics on the actual percentage of people who are auditory learners, but according to Three Rivers Community College, 30% of people fit into the category.

Why this is relevant to online publishers

A key characteristic of auditory learners is that they remember what they hear better than non-auditory learners. If you are producing great content, don't you want your audience members to remember it? If you are not offering content via auditory mediums like podcasts, those of us who are auditory learners may not be retaining your information, and because of it, may opt to look for content elsewhere, in a format they prefer.

Creating a podcast

With the amount of technology available today, it isn't incredibly hard to set up a podcast.

I personally use an Olympus LS10 to do my recording and Steinberg's Cubase LE to do production work on the podcast. I have prior knowledge of audio engineering as I worked as the production director for a radio station years before coming to Mequoda. If you do not have prior knowledge, don't worry; requirements for creating a podcast are minimal and can be done on free software that is fairly user-friendly. Audacity is one such free program.

Components of a podcast

When we release a podcast, they have been and will continue to be interviews or presentations with interesting individuals that have a lot of wisdom to share. The podcasts we have released thus far have all been long, at over an hour each.

You do not have to follow this same procedure. In fact, if you are looking to disseminate your own content, then shorter pieces may be the way to go. Capping information pieces at 10 minutes will make it manageable and discourage listeners from tuning out.

Begin the podcast with an introduction and explain right away what will be covered in the rest of the piece. While recording the podcast, imagine that you are giving a presentation or speaking with a group of friends.

A good content-based podcast should be produced with the musical characteristics in mind. Incorporate different rhythmic approaches while saying words. Emphasize important words while changing the delivery of them. Dynamic changes, which directly relate to the volume in which you speak, should be used as well. And whatever you do, avoid a monotone voice if you want your listeners to stay engaged.

Building email circulation with your newly created podcast

After your podcast is created, you have a few different options for promotion. These include:

Building Email Circulation Tip #1 – Create a rapid conversion landing page. A good RCLP will be keyword-rich and will discuss the information found in your podcast. It will also be the location where users can directly download the podcast. Also create an email about the podcast that will be sent to your list and pointing users to the RCLP.

Building Email Circulation Tip #2 – Use social media. If you are on Twitter, tweet about the podcast to your followers. If you're utilizing Facebook, include a post about it.

Building Email Circulation Tip #3 – Online PR campaign. Create a press release about the podcast and distribute it through free online distribution sites.

Building Email Circulation Tip #4 – Upload the content to YouTube. You can upload the audio content and an associated image to YouTube, and then

incorporate tags so users can find it. If you feel inspired, you could even promote for this "video" that you created with an additional press release.

In order to do this simply, you can use a free program from Muziic.com. Download their encoder, read the instructions on the page (or view the instructional video) and you can start uploading your content right away.

Adding audio components into your content mix isn't just about a love of music or podcasts, it's about reaching your audience members who learn better through auditory means.

Whether you are a publisher, online marketer, editor, website designer, blogger or just need to learn how to sell information products more effectively online, Mequoda Pro will teach you how to gain a competitive advantage with our online seminars.

Your Mequoda Pro membership will train you and your staff on the best practices in search engine optimization, re-purposing print content online, internet advertising, social media marketing, converting website visitors into email subscribers and more!

These concepts are taught through a series of online video seminars, downloadable tools and spreadsheets, plus access to the Mequoda Research team to answer any questions you have about the strategy of your online business.

To learn more visit: **www.mequoda.com/mequoda-pro/**

Three Offers for Building Email Circulation

These methods will help you add more registered members to your email lists

Online publishers are using a variety of methods to drive traffic to their websites in this digital world. Diversifying your approach to building email circulation will increase the rate of traffic that comes to your site.

To insure a better chance of success on your end, that additional traffic needs to be converted into email subscribers. This way, you can stay in touch with your audience, offer them free information products, and present them with additional opportunities to buy your products.

3 offers for building email circulation

In addition to great content, you will need to offer an array of free products to grow your email list. Consumers will want to know why they should give out their personal email address. The following three offers are answers to that question consumers may pose.

Building Email Circulation Offer #1 – Site Access

I have come across sites that offer special access many times. I typically begin reading an article about a topic that interests me. I finish the first few paragraphs and click on the button for "more information". I am then presented by what we at Mequoda would call an order form in editorial, or OFIE. This OFIE informs me that the article I am reading is available to registered users for free. So if I want to continue to the end of the article, it is necessary for me to enter my email address and become a registered member of the website.

Building Email Circulation Offer #2 – Email Updates

Imagine a user conducts a search, finds your website within Google's search results and enters your landing page. Informing the user that they can register with your site and be sent email updates on the topic of interest is a good way of building email circulation. This can be done with an OFIE, OFIN, Floater, or interrupter ad. A user is likely to do this if your content is strong and precisely what they are looking for.

Building Email Circulation Offer #3 – Free Downloads

Free downloads should be a big component of building email circulation. The first step is to create your free products. Whether you are using special reports, white papers or other downloadable items, these freemiums should be exchanged for the visitor's email address.

Each free download you offer should have its own rapid conversation landing page. This way you can easily collect visitor data and use the RCLP as an organic marketing component, optimized for the specific keyword phrases you are targeting with your free download.

"Free" is typically an offer that is hard to refuse. Promote for these free products through interrupter ads in related posts. Running SEO campaigns around these free products will also help to increase traffic to their rapid conversion page, and ultimately, will allow you to get more email subscribers.

Using Paid Media to Build Email Circulation

Paid media programs balance your Internet marketing system

While patience is a required virtue for earned media programs, paid media programs offer the Mequoda Marketing System operator the opportunity for quick results with a reasonable ROI (return on investment). Each of these programs involves finding and buying traffic by spending money to buy advertising, leads or lists.

The ability to use many sources to build circulation and repeat the same basic process over and over allows Mequoda system operators to become better and better at acquiring more and more customers (active email subscribers) at lower and lower costs per new subscriber.

For example, when we launched Blue Dolphin Magazines in 2001, our initial cost per new email subscriber was about $21 via direct mail. Over time, our marketing team drove that cost per new email subscriber down to $4.35. They also found many other sources of new subscribers, some of which produced new active email subscribers for 25 cents or less. While our 25 cent subscribers did not spend as much per subscriber as our direct mail subscribers, they did produce an average first year ROI (return on investment) of 900 percent, with an average spending of $2.25 per subscriber.

While there are more than a dozen paid sources that can be used to successfully drive website traffic, build email circulation and sell information products, we'll concentrate on four for this report.

Basic Paid Media Sources for Building Email Circulation

1. Pay Per Click Advertising (PPC)
2. Email Advertising
3. Website Advertising
4. Direct Mail

The Mequoda Source Analysis Model is shown above, with comparison source analysis for the four sources we're explaining in this section. They include PPC, Email Advertising, Website Advertising and Direct Mail. Full explanations follow below. Download the model to see our numbers, which includes a blank spreadsheet for you to fill in your own numbers.

Pay Per Click Advertising (PPC)

While most research shows that a top organic search ranking will generate about 50% more clicks than a paid listing, a paid listing can be bought today—assuming you have a relevant offer that gets clicked. (Google ranks paid listing based on their CTR (click-thru-rate and their maximum bid per click.) PPC advertising also offers the advantage of letting the publisher control where the click goes. This allows the publisher to have Google traffic enter the site on a Rapid Conversion Landing Page where conversion rates to email subscriptions are about 3X higher than traffic that enters on an organic conversion page (home, topic or article page).

Like all paid sources, cost per new email subscriber must meet your criteria for acceptable cost per new email subscriber. Assuming a $1.00 CPC and an 8 percent conversion rate to net email subscription, with an additional 8 percent of gross (unconfirmed) new email subscribers converting to a $97 paid offer, you'd be acquiring net new email subscribers for $12.50 and getting $9.70 of your $12.50 back almost immediately.

CPC Key Metrics

* 4,000 Clicks @ $1.00 per click = $4,000 in CPC advertising costs
* 320 new email subscribers at a cost of $12.50 per new subscriber
* 32 new $97 product buyers = $3,104 in immediate revenue (-27% ROI)
* $59 in first year spending per email subscriber = $13,369 (171% ROI)

Email Advertising

Not surprisingly, other publishers' email newsletters are a great source of new subscribers for your email newsletter. Before they subscribe to your email newsletter they've already demonstrated that they will subscribe to someone else's email newsletters and click on advertising in that newsletter.

Most email newsletter publishers charge a flat fee to run your advertisement in their newsletter that is based, at least roughly, on a CPM (Cost per M, or thousand). The real cost per M impressions you're paying is actually higher because only about half of emails sent will actually be opened and read if you have a high quality email newsletter (open rates for lower quality newsletters will be lower).

Still, the numbers may work well enough to meet your allowable cost per order. Let's assume 12 percent of the arrivals to your RCLP (Rapid Conversion Landing

Page) subscribe to your email newsletter and 8 percent of gross (unconfirmed) new subscribers immediately buy a $97 product.

Email Advertising Key Metrics:

> * 250,000 emails sent with about 50% opened and a 6% CTR to your RCLP
> * $25,000 advertising cost assuming $100 CPM emails sent
> * 1,800 new email subscribers at a cost of $13.89 per new subscriber
> * 180 new $97 product buyers = $17,460 in immediate revenue (-34% ROI)
> * $59 in first year spending per email subscriber = $75,200 (145% ROI)

Website Advertising

Website advertising also offers the ability for someone to click directly to your Rapid Conversion Landing Page (RCLP), subscribe to your email newsletter and then be up-sold to a paid product.

Again, most websites charge a flat fee for a period of time that is based on some implied number of impressions. Larger websites and website advertising networks will actually charge for the number of impressions delivered on a CPM basis.

Let's assume you can buy website advertising $20 CPM impressions with a 9.6 percent net conversion to email subscriber and 6 percent of gross new subscribers buy a $97 product.

Website Advertising Key Metrics:

> * 500,000 website impressions and a 1% CTR to your RCLP
> * $10,000 advertising cost assuming $20 CPM
> * 480 new email subscribers at a cost of $20.83 per new subscriber
> * 36 new $97 product buyers = $3,492 in immediate revenue (-67% ROI)
> * $42 in first year spending per email subscriber = $14,050 (17% ROI)

Direct Mail

While direct mail ROI may be less than other sources of new email subscribers, they are also often the most valuable in terms of annual spending per subscriber. Couple that with the ability to mail larger volumes to lists that may not be reachable thru online media and you have an interesting and little used method of driving website traffic, building email circulation, and selling information products.

Direct mail arrivals to your Rapid Conversion Landing Page (RCLP) will convert at the highest rate of any source we've measured ranging from 35 to 95 percent. For this example let's assume a 72 percent net conversion rate to the email newsletter with 12 percent of gross (unconfirmed) new subscribers buying a $97 product.

Direct Mail Advertising Key Metrics:

* 100,000 direct mail post cards sent with 5% coming to your RCLP
* $45,000 advertising cost assuming $450 CPM
* 3,600 new email subscribers at a cost of $12.50 per new subscriber
* 540 new $97 product buyers = $52,380 in immediate revenue (10% ROI)
* $52 in first year spending per email subscriber = $131,566 (137% ROI)

Phase 4: Monetizing Customer Relationships

Up until Phase 4 (some of which connects tightly to Phases 2 and 3 using the Up Sell Order Flow), we've been mostly spending money to set up our system and build email circulation. The real pay-off in a Mequoda Marketing System comes over time as system operators communicate with email subscribers about offers for paid information products that will help them solve their business and personal problems and live better lives.

The email newsletter and its visible staff become trusted advisors on the topic being covered and the website network becomes a first-choice resource for information that the user trusts. Sales efforts from the editors for many users are not viewed as advertising, but as additional valuable content on the topic.

The Mequoda Research Team has documented five primary channels of communication between the online publishing team and their users that result in information products being sold. We'll cover all five in this report.

Five Channels for Monetizing Customer Relationships

1. Editorial Email
2. Promotional Email
3. Direct Mail
4. Telemarketing
5. FAX Marketing

Editorial Email

Text and graphical "advertising" in editorial emails can generate $20 to $60 per M emails sent for consumer email newsletters and $50 to $200 per M for B2B newsletters. The email newsletters can feature a single story or multiple story summaries that lead back to the Internet Hub. Advertising for individual products link to Sales Letter Landing Pages and other ads link to bookstore or marketplace pages that list multiple information products by subject or media platform.

Promotional Email

Promotional emails will typically generate 60 to 80 percent of all Mequoda Marketing System revenues. Experienced online publishers recommend that no more than 40 to 50 percent of all emails be promotional in nature and that the remaining emails be editorial in nature and can include some "advertisements" for the publisher's relevant information products.

As with direct mail, longer email sales letter work best. University Health Publishing's CEO Rodney Friedman reported at a recent Mequoda gathering that they had doubled response with a 40-page email promotion versus the 4-page control. In cyber-space long copy costs little more than short and has the power to convince skeptical users that your product is worth the price.

Direct Mail

While many publishers report that they cannot mail profitably to email subscribers who are non-buyers, they universally agree that once an email subscriber buys a physical product and surrenders a postal address for delivery purposes, those customers become very profitable direct mail buyers.

Telemarketing

Like direct mail, many publishers report that a free email subscriber must take some action beyond subscribing to their email newsletter to warrant the cost of a telemarketing call. B2B publishers, in particular, report that telemarketing is a very productive source of sales for conferences, events and membership websites.

FAX Marketing

Some B2B publishers continue to find FAX marketing to known buyers an effective way to sell higher-priced products—event marketing being the most common usage.

Whether you are a publisher, online marketer, editor, website designer, blogger or just need to learn how to sell information products more effectively online, Mequoda Pro will teach you how to gain a competitive advantage with our online seminars.

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Email Marketing: What's a Subscriber Worth?

An important ratio to know in email marketing

Isn't it great when you can use an absolute single metric when going through your customer data? With this simple ratio you can figure out the amount of money you make per subscriber while engaging in email marketing. This is a ratio you will use often as the size of your email list changes. Hopefully each time you use this formula your total revenue per subscriber will increase. If you adhere to our Mequoda best practices, your chances of increasing revenue will be very possible, as we have seen the revenue per subscriber for clients double, and even triple, within 12 months.

The ratio

To calculate revenue per subscriber take your total email revenue and divide it by the average number of email subscribers. For the more visual readers out there, the equation may look like this:

Total email revenue / Average # of email subscribers

As an example, let's say your total email revenue is $100,000 and you have an average of 10,000 email subscribers. Our equation would look like this:

$100,000 / 10,000 = $10 per subscriber.

This example would make each subscriber worth $10.

Considerations

You now can actually see the value of a subscriber. Of course there are additional values to subscribers, such as the possibility of receiving word-of-mouth promotion from them as just one example, but the monetary value is worth noting. It is a simple way of expressing your growth, or lack there of, throughout different time periods of your company's life.

Ways to potentially increase your numbers

Look closely at your email strategy for email marketing. If you do not have a calendar for it in place, then take the measures to design one. Decide when and how often to promote for certain products and outline this on your calendar.

Play with your product mix. This step may entice you to offer new products if you so choose. Regardless, pay attention to the days you promote for a certain product. Try increasing or decreasing the frequency depending on how popular a product is. If you have a time sensitive product like a live webinar, you will most likely want to begin promotion 4-5 weeks in advance. Allow for more time if this is an in-person event where your audience would need to travel to the destination.

Often times the higher the price of your products, the higher your revenue per subscriber will be.

Finally, treat email marketing as a quarterly based initiative. Go through your data each quarter, decipher your revenue per subscriber and evaluate your email schedule to stay current with trends and statistics.

What's normal?

For B2B with special interest topics, it is normal to have revenue per subscriber that is one half the average product price. So if your average product price is $30, then the revenue per subscriber would most likely be $15 per year.

For B2C, 10% of your subscriber base will typically make a purchase. 20% of your subscribers will make two and a half purchases.

Hopefully this information will be of benefit to you. Use it while you build your email circulation and develop your publishing schedule. You will stay current with subscriber habits and the revenue you're generating by doing so.

Can Your Email Conversion Rate Be Higher?

Using floaters is just one (but very effective and powerful) way to increase the amount of website visitors you convert into email subscribers

Your email conversion rate (ECR) has control over revenue and profitability for your online business. Do you ever wonder what your ECR is, or what other publishers are doing to get better results?

Your ECR is a simple ratio: The number of unique visitors that come to your website during a 30-day period, divided into the number of visitors who join your database by signing up to receive your free email newsletter during that same 30-day period.

If during a given month you have 100,000 unique visitors that arrive at your website (according to Google Analytics or a comparable measurement tool) and 1,000 of these unique visitors become new email subscribers (according to your email management program or service), your ECR is one-percent (1,000/100,000 = .01 or 1.0%).

Do you have some work to do in order to get your ECR higher?

Properly designed website architecture is supposed to make email conversion rate its number one priority. It places great focus on capturing the email addresses of casual visitors and compiling them into your database.

Is your website working as efficiently as possible? Our Mequoda System websites have an average email conversion rate of 5%. If you aren't receiving an ECR of at least 5%, then some improvement can certainly be made to your approach.

Suggestions for increasing your email conversion rate

Irresistible offers make it hard for visitors to not sign up. It all starts with your content. After reaching a point of satisfaction with your content, make an offer that is worth the exchange of an email address. At the most basic level, we recommend giving away a free special report in exchange for your user's email address. One way to present your free report offer is via the use of floaters.

-Floaters: Floaters may look like pop-ups, but they aren't. In fact, they are simply a layer of HTML code, and because of this, cannot be blocked or banned. Users

may find floaters similar to magazine blow-in cards. However, floaters are almost cost-less, which gives them an advantage over magazine blow-in cards.

Website publishers we've talked with have reported a two to three times increase in conversion rates when floaters are used over pop-ups.

Be careful when using floaters as with any other type of promotional piece you use. Overuse of them can be annoying to website users, but thankfully their effectiveness in increasing email conversion rates is undeniable.

Using floaters will be helpful in increasing your email conversion rate. As a constantly evolving subject matter, increasing email conversion rates is always deserving of attention. Methods, like the topic itself, often evolve.

The Time Frame & Structure for Email Credibility

The longer you've been sending email, the better your reputation will be. This is so because with a history of email sends, it is possible to predict what your future actions will be

Do everything in your power to assure that this prediction is in your favor. Since the length in which you've been sending is important, make each email enhance the way email recipients view your pieces by supplying valuable content. This way, the length of time you've been sending email will not only grow, but it will also be incorporating the highest quality you can produce.

Sending consistently, and using the same domain name and IP address will improve your reputation. Consequently, if you change servers or IP addresses often, you may appear to be a spammer.

Technical Infrastructure

To be effective in your email newsletter or email marketing pursuits, your email program should comply with some basic technologies. These include:

-Automatic removal of bounces. Remember, a bounce rate of 30% or more will damage your reputation. Eliminating any undeliverable addresses will keep your rate low and assure that future emails will not go to an undeliverable address and receive another bounce.

-Subscription to ISP feedback loops. If your emails are being labeled as spam, you should be aware of it. This subscription will alert you when a complaint is made.

-Clean HTML code. Having clean HTML code can be the difference in getting delivered to the inbox and ending up in a spam folder.

Using email validation programs will clean your HTML code by removing unneeded tags, checking the article's spelling, and eliminating code errors that would result in page errors.

If you choose to clean the code yourself, edit with the same criteria in mind.

-Proper email headers. Avoid having your header look like a spam message. Also, make sure your article's content is expressed through the header. Misleading

a reader may result in them unsubscribing from your list. For further assistance in creating effective headers, and many more components of creating quality email newsletters, download our free white paper 10 Email Newsletter Design Best Practices.

Many ESPs typically comply with these practices, so if you already use an ESP, you are probably covered. In-house systems often have the aforementioned problems, so be sure to monitor accordingly.

To fully summarize, the six components that make of email reputation are:

-Volume of email sent
-Bounce rate
-Number of spam complaints
-Email sent to spam traps
-Length of time you've been sending email
-Technical infrastructure

Focus on these components as they are all ultimately in your control.

Two Components in Maintaining Good Email Reputation

Number of Spam Complaints.

Similar to bounces, with any volume of email, there will be spam complaints. Regardless of the effort you put into your mailings, it will happen. Don't worry too much about it if the number of complaints is low. People may forget they signed up to your list or may have not recognized the sender.

Each internet service provider has their own limit as to when spam complaints become an issue. Contact your ISP or do some research on the topic to be aware of their guidelines.

An email feedback loop is a device that can be provided to an email sender when a spam complaint is made about them. Using one can be helpful in knowing which subscribers want to be taken off your email list and what types of complaints are being made.

Eliminating those who do not want to be on the list will ensure that they will not complain again, thus potentially lowering your spam complaints. Also, understanding the complaints subscribers have will help you redesign the email methods you're using or the content involved within them.

If you are working with an ESP, they should monitor email marketing spam complaints for you.

The best defense against email marketing spam complaints is having users explicitly opt-in to receive mailings. Those who are interested in what you have to say are less likely to complain to an ISP.

Finally, having your own IP will help in the battle against being labeled as spam. All actions from this IP will be your own, so you cannot be blamed for someone else's emailing behavior. Treat it accordingly to the beginning.

-Email Sent to Spam Traps. Email addresses that are posted publically but don't act to engage actual communication are called spam traps. They are never used for opt-ins. Avoid stumbling upon these and emailing to them at all costs because anyone who sends to them repeatedly is typically a spammer. Thus, you would be lumped into the classification of being one yourself.

If you do fall into the trap by sending to them too often, your email reputation will be damaged.

The safest way to avoid sending to spam traps is to double opt-in. In this process you won't be immediately added to the list. Instead, a confirmation email will be sent, needing action in order to add the name to the list. If none is taken, then the address will not be added. This allows for a lower risk in being labeled as spam.

Are you feeling better about your email reputation yet? Hopefully you are one step closer to completely understanding what components make up your email reputation and how to keep it at a positive standing.

Master the "Targeted" Email Subject Line

Use targeted subject lines when you want to maximize email conversion rates

When writing a Targeted email subject line, the goal is to be as direct as possible to identify your intended audience.

There are pro's and con's to this type of email subject line. If you are deploying email campaigns to very targeted lists, this method will work very well for you. For example, if you are segmenting your email lists by geographic location, this subject line might work very well:

   * Attention Bostonians Who Need to Lose Weight

However, if your lists are segmented by health issues (for example, weight loss) and are using this subject line to promote a clinic or workshop in the Boston area, this isn't ideal.

Why? Because saying "Bostonians" tells your readers that this email doesn't apply to them if they aren't from Boston.

Other examples of Targeted email subject lines:

   * For Investors Who Hate Paying Commissions
   * Are You a Sales Pro Who Wants to Close More Deals?

Variations include:

   * What Every Investor Must Know about IBM
   * To the Road Warrior Who Hates to Travel
   * For Mature Women Only
   * Confidential to Corvette Owners

Be forewarned, the Targeted email subject line will have less clicks but a higher conversion rate. When you are looking to get more clicks, you would want to use a more broad subject line (take a look at our 13 Best Email Subject Lines) and use more Targeted subject lines when you want higher conversions.

Using Product Shots in Your Email Newsletter Marketing

Using the right product shot in your email newsletter can increase response rates by 20-30%

As humans, we are drawn to shiny things. You can have a 200-page book, but when you add pictures, examples and visual case studies to a page, you're keeping the readers' attention for longer, while they examine the image.

The same goes when you are selling a product. Someone recently asked us in our members-only Mequoda Pro Q&A forum:

"How important is it to have a product picture in your marketing emails?"

Let's start by answering a question with a question. What if you went to Amazon.com and there were no product shots? I'll show you exactly what would happen:

Now try adding images back in and you get a little more context. While you may be able to write some fantastic copy to sell your new handbook, product images give customers a visual description of the product you are selling.

Product shots, also known as hero shots or glamour shots, contribute to the success of email newsletters, email promotions and product landing pages. Testing indicates the right graphic image can lift response by 20 to 30 percent; the wrong image can depress results by almost as much.

In tests, the product photo ranks third in importance, behind the headline and the nameplate, in its ability to change response rates and RPM (revenue per thousand).

Even if you're not selling something, maybe you're promoting an item that you're giving away on your site to increase website traffic. Product images are standard visual aids in accomplishing both goals.

Look at these two email newsletters from Knitting Daily, promoting a knitting pattern from their new issue of PieceWork magazine.

These above product shots give away just enough to encourage the reader to peruse the article in hopes of finding a link to the full pattern. Instead, the reader will find that it tells them to buy the latest issue of PieceWork magazine, which is the source of this new pattern.

It could have been very easy for Knitting Daily to use the wrong product shot. A more literal editor might have shown a graphic of the black and white pattern,

surrounded by text, which is technically what the reader is going to receive if they sign up for PieceWork magazine to get the free pattern.

Instead, they've shown a product shot of the end-result—a beautiful scarf—which is much more enticing than showing the pattern itself.

Write Effective "How-To" Email Subject Lines

One part BENEFIT and one part HOW-TO equals an intriguing and persuasive email subject line

The average Internet user is bombarded with dozens if not hundreds of email subject lines every day. Most of us have developed an anti-headline defense and tune out when we sense an email subject line is trying to sell us something.

Is your email subject line sufficiently intriguing to prompt the recipient to open your email newsletter or sales letter? Or do you "give away" the entire message in the email subject line, diminishing the subscriber's incentive to read any further? The "how-to" email subject line

The how-to subject line is specific because it promises to reveal "how-to" achieve the benefit.

It is nearly impossible to write a bad how-to email subject line. Simply join a mouth-watering benefit to the words "how to."

   * How to Write a Hit Song and Sell It
   * How to Raise Venture Capital without Risk
   * How to Get 12 Hours Out of an 8-hour Day

Omitting the word "to" is also acceptable:

   * How Millionaires Buy and Sell Gold
   * How I Made a Fortune with a Fool Idea
   * How a New Discovery Made a Plain Girl Beautiful

Supporting your brand is Job #1. All other considerations, including the cleverness of email subject lines, are subordinate to the integrity of your brand.

In other words, the email subject line is not creative if it prompts the recipient to open your email message, but subsequently disappoints, confuses, or worse, alienates the recipient.

Achieve Higher Click-Through Rates

How to increase revenue per thousand emails sent
The Mequoda Email Performance Report measures your split tests to help maximize email revenue and profit

If you're a product-driven online publisher, you know there are numerous strategies for making money with email. The fun (and higher profits) comes with testing, tweaking and fine-tuning.

You can test the email sponsorship model versus the pay-per-click advertising model. Which is more profitable?

You can carry multiple advertisers who pay different amounts based on the position of their ads. Which produces more revenue per thousand subscribers?

Or you can test basic template design. Where should the featured product be introduced? Does an in-line text ad beat a banner ad? Or does a product review generate greater response?

Should you link into the sales letter landing page, or straight into the data collection page? Should you offer the reader an opportunity to "Read more" or "Buy now"?

Any experienced direct marketer, working with an online newsletter editor, can think of 10 variations of the email newsletter template to test. And because we're all so new at this, typically five or seven out of 10 changes will produce an improvement!

The master class in email publishing economics

The key to incremental improvement is having a formal test plan and using the right tools to track and measure your results.

If you're not absolutely clear about how to do this, we wish you would let us show you the procedures we've developed. This is the same process that we've taught hundreds of publishers, and that frankly, many others have helped me to refine.

In most instances, it enables publishers to improve their email performance rate by 30 – 50 percent or more. In a couple of cases, it has enabled us to improve email performance by more than 150 percent.

This proven plan of attack has generated millions of dollars of email publishing revenue from both product and advertising sales.

If you're not measuring your email publishing revenues for each campaign and test split in those campaigns, you're leaving money on the table. But it needn't be that way. There's a simple and economical solution.

In the Mequoda Email Performance Report, we have created an Excel spreadsheet template that you can use to track and analyze key data from your existing email marketing system manually. Or you can fully automate the report to be an integral part of your online marketing system.

The email marketing system portion measures how many emails were sent, the open rates, the click rates, etc. The ecommerce system portion measures how many units were sold (gross and net), revenue per thousand, etc.

Maximize Email Marketing Revenue by Reconsidering Your Contact Strategy

Online Marketing Tools: Using an Email Lifetime Value Calculator to measure the real lifetime value of an email name

The essence of the Mequoda System is to build a database of email newsletter subscribers, send them valuable free content, build your brand, earn trust, and eventually monetize these email subscribers by selling them paid products and services.

It's a simple strategy: Make online friends, give away tips and tools, achieve top-of-mind awareness, and ultimately make sales.

Even so, some print publishers just "don't get it."

I'm still appalled at the number of publishers who never send out valuable free content, preferring to use email solely to promote their paid magazines, newsletters, books and seminars.

They do little or no editorial support, brand building, or trust building by giving away useful content online. Instead, they rely entirely on consumer trust in a brand they have built in print, or established in a brick and mortar world, to credential their online sales promotion message.

This tactic can succeed, but only up to a point.

The Mequoda System offers publishers a much better, much more profitable online marketing strategy.

Little-known fact: If you send out an equal number of (1) content-rich email newsletters and (2) straight product promotions versus sending only promotions, the length of time you'll retain an active email name will almost double.

Again: The active lifetime of an email name almost doubles when you email an equal number of (1) free editorial newsletters and (2) product promotions instead of sending only promotions.

It's true. In testing we did over multiple years, the average term of an email newsletter subscriber was 2.7 years when the ratio of valuable free content and

promotional messages is 50/50, versus an average lifetime of 1.6 years for email names that were sent only promotional messages.

These results have been proven with long, expensive, time-consuming tests.

By doubling the contact frequency — provided that half the emails include valuable editorial content — the recipient will choose to remain active for almost twice as long before opting out.

Now consider the possibilities: In this hypothetical example for the fictitious American Woman magazine, you could send out three promos per week, for an average email name lifetime of 83 weeks, for a total of 249 email promotions mailed, with an average return of $75 per thousand names.

Alternatively, you could mail the average email subscriber three promos per week, for an average lifetime of 140 weeks, still averaging a return of $75 per thousand names.

Of course, in order to achieve that additional 57 weeks of contact, you need to commit to sending an additional three email newsletters each week, and generating another $50 per thousand names with the newsletters.

Sending only promotions results in email names that stay on the file for only an average of 83 weeks and generate an average of $18.68 per name.

But if you follow the Mequoda System, and commit to an email publishing strategy, sending three content-rich email newsletters each week, plus three promotions each week, the average subscriber name is worth $52.50 over their average 140-week lifetime.

How to triple your online revenue by sending email newsletters and promotions

Consider the economic considerations for using your email file for promotions only vs. using your email file to also send content rich newsletters.

Let's assume you have a large print subscriber list, which you can use to create an email subscriber file that will generate revenue. To create the file, you might use a data enhancement service such as Melissa DATA to append email addresses to the postal address database of your print subscribers.

What will you do with your new email subscriber file? Will you simply send out three promos per week for your own products? Or will you treat email as a separate publishing platform, sending three email newsletters and three promos per week to your active email database?

The economics are simple. In scenario #1, if you choose to send promos only, in our example above, you'll generate an average of $18.63 per email name over the 83-week average lifetime of a new email name and you're done.

In scenario #2, if you send both three email newsletters and three promos, in our example above, each new name on the file will be worth an average of $52.50 over their average 140-week lifetime.

Of course, scenario #2 requires greater resources. Sending email newsletters three times per week requires the skills of a talented online editor who skilled at both service journalism and direct response online copywriting.

For every new 10,000 names, scenario #1 generates $186,750 in lifetime revenue. Scenario #2 generates $525,000. The difference is $338,250. That's a tidy sum that can buy a great deal of copywriting and editing expertise, with money left over to turn a profit.

Note: The most successful Mequoda System operators almost always employ copywriters who earlier in their careers were journalists. This copywriter/journalist hybrid must understand "journalism with a motive," whose objective is to sell products and services.

Conclusion: Email newsletter publishing is far more profitable that simple email newsletter marketing.

Eight Steps for Growing Email Circulation with PDFs

Use PDF files to improve your site's landing page rankings with Google

For Internet users of every age, there's something about document ownership that implies higher value than the same content published on a web page.

We intrinsically perceive content that we can download and own to have more value, like the Kindle or PDF (Portable Document Format) books we buy and download from Amazon and hundreds of other online bookstores.

This creates an opportunity — a link-building loophole — that you can use to improve your site's landing page rankings with Google and other search engines.

Here's the simple procedure for using PDF files to create more links:

1. Create a valuable, informative white paper and save it as a PDF file using Adobe Acrobat or another PDF file creation tool.

2. Create a keyword-optimized Rapid Conversion Landing Page (RCLP) filled with mouth-watering benefits and features that describe the report.

3. Upload the document to your website behind the RCLP that offers the report as a free download for new users who sign up for your email newsletter (a free on free offer).

4. Send an announcement about the free white paper to your entire subscriber file using one of your regular email newsletter or promotion spots. Encourage your existing subscribers to both download the report and recommend it to their colleagues (viral marketing).

5. Write a SEO'd press release that describes the free downloadable white paper and includes a hypertext link to the RCLP. Post it on your website.

6. Email a personal note about the new white paper plus the official press release to online publishing colleagues who are predisposed to recommend your free white paper. Urge them to link to your RCLP (Rapid Conversion Landing Page).

7, Post the very same press release on the top press release websites to gain some immediate inbound links and gain a larger audience for your white paper announcement.

8. Use your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn social networks to spread the word about your cool, new "free report." (Note: While it's not always the best "netiquette" to do commercial posts, promoting a "free report" is generally acceptable.)

Within only a few days you could have dozens of incoming links from other websites, resulting in hundreds of downloads, a significantly larger subscriber file, and eventually, higher search engine rankings.

The foolish mistake many online publishers make

Most publishers are notoriously shortsighted about step #4 above — using one of their regularly scheduled email blasts to promote your own free report.

For reasons that defy my understanding, they don't recognize the real value of their own list. The fact is that many of the people most likely to write about and endorse their new free white paper are their email subscribers.

Why are so many publishers reluctant to use one of their "broadcast" slots to promote a free report? The usual reason is that most are unwilling to give up their inventory to build their own circulation.

If you look at the metrics, this attitude is tragically shortsighted and self-defeating.

Why do TV networks use up to 20 percent of their advertising inventory (commercial broadcast time slots) to promote their own televisions programs?

Because the result is much more than a 20 percent increase in viewers for the programs that are promoted. The result is a better return on investment.

That's a winning economic formula. The networks use some of their advertising inventory to promote their own programs because they make more money. You could do the same.

The best use of the first 10 to 20 percent of your advertising inventory is to promote your own free email newsletter and the white papers described n the above process. This is a Mequoda best practice, yet few online publishers comply.

At Mequoda Daily, every other Friday is circulation promotion day, so we are using just 10 percent of our inventory to promote our own free reports and increase our email circulation.

We have proven that every time we release a free white paper, Mequoda Daily experiences an increase in email circulation.

Bottom line: To get more incoming links, simply publish more great content. To further grow your subscriber file, simply promote free reports to your list.

Four Creative Ideas for Making an eBook

Listen to your audience when making an eBook by doing keyword research, tracking your user activity, observing your competitors and just flat out asking your audience what they need.

For maximum conversion rates to your email newsletter, you must offer your readers an incentive to "drink the kool-aid" (as they say). There are several sources of content for your eBooks, but deciding what content to use can be the trickiest part.

Here are four creative ideas for making an eBook based on what your audience is telling you:

Do keyword research: Possibly the most important step in making an eBook is finding out what users are searching for. Developing a fantastic product is not good enough, you need to title and optimize the email collection page for keywords that users are searching with. We can't stress this enough – don't launch an audience development campaign without doing your keyword research first. Otherwise, you're wasting valuable time creating a product that not many people will ever find or see!

* Use the free Google Keyword Tool to find keyword phrases that have a high search volume.
* Google the keyword phrase "in quotes" to find out your competition.
* If the ratio is good, you have yourself a winner.
* Read our tip on How to Choose Keywords for Your Blog Titles for more tips on how to use the Google Keyword Tool.

Identify your most popular content: With your analytics package, identify your online articles with the most number of clicks and length of time spent on them. This will help you determine the type of content on your site that's most useful to your users.

If the article is extensive, you may be able to use it as the whole eBook, or you may need to compile multiple articles. We recommend reports be at least 3 pages but can be as long as 30. When you're done, don't forget to do your keyword research before you title the eBook.

Ask your audience: Still not on the social media bandwagon? Well here's a great place to start. Join Twitter and other popular social media tools in your industry to

talk with your audience. Don't be shy, come right out and ask what topics they'd like to read about.

Don't underestimate how loyal of an audience you can build when you just ask them for feedback. As a bonus, you're guaranteed new subscribers when you let them know that an eBook was written based on their feedback, even if it's only the person who suggested it. Remember to do your keyword research before deciding on a title.

Start observing: There's a lot to gain by watching what other publishers in your niche are offering and writing about. While a newsy eBook may or may not have longevity, it certainly has curb appeal. Like we said, eBooks don't have to be that long, they just need to be fulfilling to the user.

So, if you're a fashion magazine and you see five or six email newsletters in your inbox about the new Jennifer Aniston haircut, it may be a good idea to create an eBook called "6 Steps to getting the Jennifer Aniston Haircut". Then promote it to your network and do keyword research before you title it.

When it comes down to it, making an eBook is all about listening to your audience, whether it's though search volume, user activity, social media or your competitors.

Email Marketing Tips: Conquer Email Blacklists

Complete these seven to-dos and get your IP removed from email blacklists

Being blacklisted refers to the ISP that your readers are using (like AOL, Yahoo!, etc.). One person marking your email message as spam in his or her email inbox won't get you blacklisted, but many spam complaints will. Once you are blacklisted, no one using that ISP will get your emails. This is very troublesome for B2C publishing companies because their users are more likely to use an AOL or Yahoo! account than B2B users.

ISPs are making it very easy for people to just hit a button that says "junk" or "spam" in their email client. The problem with this is that even though you are providing an unsubscribe link (you are, aren't you?) many users think that by hitting that button, they'll be automatically removed from your list. The more users hitting that button of email delivery doom, the more likely you are to be a part of email blacklists. This means that EVERYONE using that ISP will no longer receive your emails. That's a BIG problem.

Getting whitelisted by ISPs is a much more direct approach than getting whitelisted individually by your readers. It's not foolproof, as getting off of a blacklist doesn't mean that you're automatically delivered. Some users have their own rules set and you can't possibly adhere to them all. What you can guarantee though is that getting whitelisted at AOL, Gmail and Hotmail means that your users will see HTML-coded emails and graphics. Getting whitelisted in Hotmail will also put you on their safe-senders list, while getting whitelisted on Yahoo! will make sure you skip the bulk folder.

Here are some ways that you can get your domain off the email blacklist and back in business:

Check your email blacklist reputation: You've got to love Web 2.0, where your information is everyone's information. Our friend Jeanne S. Jennings, an email-marketing consultant recommends SenderBase.org as a free resource for checking on your domain or IP reputation. "It's not terribly detailed, but it's a good starting point to see if you are being blacklisted," she told us.yea

Pay for a SafeSender certification: There are a few companies online that you can use to build relationships with the top ISPs to increase your delivery rates and get

you off of their email blacklists. Habeas, GoodMail and Surety Mail are examples of these services. We have an upcoming research article comparing all three.

Subscribe to email feedback loops: An email feedback loop (FBL) is a service that many ISPs will provide to companies who send bulk mailings. On their end, it's beneficial because it identifies pro-active companies and reduces the amount of spam sent to their users. On your end, this is very beneficial because the #1 reason for poor deliverability is spam complaints. By subscribing to an email feedback loop, you will know who is marking you as such so that you can remove them from your list and get your domain whitelisted with the top ISPs. For more information on this, read 10 Email Feedback Loop Lists.

Call the ISP and apologize: You know the saying "Do it first, apologize later"? Well you have a few apology credits at many of the top ISPs. You'll find that your first time around, you'll likely be able to get whitelisted fairly easy, like a "get out of jail free" card. AOL has an online whitelist application you can fill out. Yahoo! also offers a bulk sender form that can help you get onto their whitelist.

Microsoft's Sender ID program can help you get whitelisted for Hotmail addresses. If the ISP you wish to contact doesn't have a web form (such as a non-major ISP or business domain), you should be able to find contact information on their website to work out the problem directly.

Conform to standard whitelist guidelines: Every ISP is different, but here are some of the most common whitelist guidelines for AOL from eNewsletterPro.com. By the way, pleasing AOL usually means pleasing the other ISPs (they're like the Google of email delivery).

   * Your list must be clean. Attempting to send to bad addresses will get you blocked. You should immediately unsubscribe any addresses that bounce.
   * The IP address of your sending server must have a reverse DNS record pointing back to the Fully Qualified Domain Name of the computer.
   * Your server must have a fixed IP address.
   * Clearly identify your company in all email messages, provide an opt-out method, and immediately remove people who opt-out.

Contact email blacklist administrators: A very popular service for manually tracking your blacklist status is BlackList Monitor. When you're blacklisted, they send you an email that includes who blacklisted you and how to contact them. It's $149 a year, but they offer a 14-day free trial.

Get off of spam filter lists: Many companies use spam filters to determine whether or not you get to a users inbox. Getting off these lists will certainly help you with ISP blocking as well. To do this, you should first make sure you conform to their guidelines. SpamAssassin, SpamCop, Spamhaus are all popular spam filters and offer guidelines to follow in order to get your emails delivered through them.

Let's be honest, it's not a walk in the park to get off of email blacklists, but it's well worth the trouble.

How to Get Whitelisted By Your Readers

If an email gets sent to an inbox and lands in the junkbox, does it make a sound?

In order for your email newsletters to get delivered to the people who sign up for them, your sending IP address must be whitelisted. AOL is a notorious Internet Service Provider (ISP) for blacklisting companies that send email newsletters, so those in the B2C industry with many consumers that use an AOL address have likely already come across this problem.

Next week, we're going to cover how to get companies like AOL to whitelist your address, but for today we're starting with step #1: getting your users to whitelist you.

What it means to be whitelisted: Being whitelisted means that your users or the ISP that they're using have deemed you a trustworthy sender. When whitelisted, you're much less likely to get automatically thrown in a user's junk folder. It's impossible to be whitelisted by everyone on your list and every ISP that you're delivering to, but it's honorable to aim for that goal.

What it means to be blacklisted: Being blacklisted refers to the ISP that your readers are using (like AOL, Yahoo!, etc.). One person marking you as spam in their email inbox won't get you blacklisted, but an abundance of spam complaints will. Once you are blacklisted, no one using that ISP will get your emails. This is very troublesome for B2C publishing companies because their users are more likely to use an AOL or Yahoo! account than B2B users.

Here are our best tips on how to get whitelisted so that your emails can get delivered and your users will receive what they signed up for:

Ask them to add your email address to their address book right away: Don't send an email asking them to whitelist you, use your subscription confirmation page instead. Why? Because they can't whitelist you if you're already blocked and they don't get that introductory email. Stress to your users that it's very important that they add your email address to their address book if they want to recieve what they've signed up for. Here is a bit of sample copy:

Dear [Name]

We don't want you to miss out on any of the GardensDaily information and offers you requested to receive by email.

However, your email service provider may use filters that prevent you from receiving or properly viewing GardensDaily emails in your inbox.

To prevent this from happening in the future, please add Mail@GardensDaily.com to your address book. Visit GardensDaily.com for more detailed information on your specific email service provider.

Thanks for being a valued customer.

It's important to give them the email address that they need to add, and it's also important that you do this right away while you have their attention.

Put the unsubscribe link at the top: It might seem risky to put an unsubscribe link at the top of the email, but you need to make it easy for the user to get off your list if they don't want to be on it. They're going to choose the easiest way to unsubscribe, so you need to make it easy for them. Remember, many users still think that hitting the "junk" button will get them off your list when in fact it could get you blacklisted across their entire ISP instead.

Create a whitelisting page: Not everyone loves his or her email client as much as an email marketer does. Make sure you provide ample instructions for your users to whitelist you. Create a how-to page on your site that you can point users to. On the page, include instructions like this site does or like this site's email whitelist instructions that explain how to add an email address to their address book. Remind them that if they don't whitelist you, they might not get your emails.

Keep reminding them: It might seem redundant, but you should include a blurb at the top of every email that says something like "To ensure receipt of our emails, please add Mail@GardensDaily.com to your Address Book."

Make it easy for them to change their email address: Sending emails to a dead email address won't do you any delivery favors either, especially if it's bouncing back. Provide a link at the bottom of every email that says something like "Change your email address" or "Update your email preferences".

Follow all of these precautions and you'll find that your blacklisting rank goes down and down.

13 Consumer Email Marketing Best Practices

Email copywriting best practices for effective consumer email marketing

Email copywriting can differ slightly when it comes to consumer marketing because consumers prefer a personal level of attention. The audience in B2C is also more relaxed and is digesting your information in a leisurely manner. They see your email newsletter as informational and as a service, while B2B readers are usually time-pressed and likely expecting to be sold in every email newsletter.

Here are 13 consumer email marketing best practices:

Send a welcome email: Remind your user that they signed up for your email newsletter. Thank them for signing up, remind them how often they'll receive emails from you, and make it personal. The welcome letter should use their name and might point them to helpful sections of your site. If you have a segmented list and your user chose "rose gardening", you might want to point her towards "rose gardening" tips, videos etc.

Include a product in your welcome email: While you have your reader's attention, don't waste the opportunity. Within your welcome letter, in your right navigation or at the bottom, provide a casual ad for a related bestselling product. The point of this email is NOT to sell a product, so it shouldn't be the topic of your welcome letter. A casual mention should suffice, remember, this is their first interaction with you so you want to make a good impression.

Ask them to whitelist you: Don't use the word "whitelist" in consumer emails, but do ask them to add your email address (and provide them with it) to their address book so that they don't miss a single email.

Be careful with images: While consumers are more likely to appreciate images in their email newsletters, consumers are also more likely to use webmail clients that automatically block images. If you plan on using images, make sure to let your user know that they need to click the option to "display images" in their email client. Also, provide a web-based version of your email.

Keep it personal: In the consumer market (as opposed to the business market) there's a shift for a user to want your information rather than need it to do their job. Being as transparent and casual in your copywriting as you can builds trust with

your readers and builds a personal relationship between your brand and your reader.

Don't pull any tricks in your subject line: Great open rates don't always lead to great conversions. Trying to pull a sneak attack on your users that have chosen to give up their valuable email address in exchange for your information does not build a healthy relationship. The moment a user starts seeing you as trying to sell them instead of trying to provide them with valuable information, you're gone.

Tell a story: This might be obvious when it comes to email copywriting, or any type of copywriting but it's most important when it comes to consumers. Telling a personal story of a friend from back home who used a certain type of seed and grew an incredible garden is going to sell seeds better than a block image that says "Save $0.25 per seed packet today!"

Personalize the "From" line: If your brand has a recognizable personality, use their name in the "from" line on your emails (or at least your email promotions).

Use names: When you tell a story, don't use the phrase "I had a friend once"; that depersonalizes the entire story. Say "my friend Jennifer has an adorable blonde little boy named Jared. The other day he said to me..."

Develop a unique voice: Building a relationship with your consumer email audience is not just about your brand.

For example, Chris Kimball from America's Test Kitchen doesn't sign his email newsletter but he does sign his email promotions. The email starts with something like "Dear Fellow Home Cook" includes a "From the desk of Christopher Kimball" stamp and ends with a "Thank you for your consideration, Sincerely, Christopher Kimball."

Put the call to action up front and be clear: Don't blast your reader with a sell, but do allude to the product you will promote later in the newsletter. Take the time to edit your email down so that there is less clutter and more key points.

Create a sense of continuity: When writing a series of emails, it's personable to say to your readers that the email is part of a larger structure. To say "in the email we sent on Monday, we talked about XXXXX... now I want to talk about how XXXXX works with XXXXX". By building this ongoing series of events, you're likely to increase open rates on past emails and build a more evolved relationship with your readers.

Don't tell them to "click here": This is pretty much a universal best practice not to use these two words. However, there are some consumer-friendly alternatives in consumer email marketing: "read the full story", "download this ebook", "save 10% right now" are ways to express your benefit within the link and increase clicks.

Whether you are a publisher, online marketer, editor, website designer, blogger or just need to learn how to sell information products more effectively online, Mequoda Pro will teach you how to gain a competitive advantage with our online seminars.

Your Mequoda Pro membership will train you and your staff on the best practices in search engine optimization, re-purposing print content online, internet advertising, social media marketing, converting website visitors into email subscribers and more!

These concepts are taught through a series of online video seminars, downloadable tools and spreadsheets, plus access to the Mequoda Research team to answer any questions you have about the strategy of your online business.

Four Steps for Building Email Circulation

How Golf Vacation Insider Manages 75 Complimentary Special Reports and a Page #1 Ranking in Google on Almost All of Them.

There are four components to building email circulation once you have your complimentary products. Your complimentary products are special reports, white papers or otherwise easily downloaded or viewed on the web in exchange for an email address.

Your rapid conversion landing page (aka name-squeeze page) is the page that describes your complimentary product. Every rapid conversion landing page deserves a unique campaign around it.

These four steps include:

 * Search Engine Optimization (read: Landing Page Keyword Research)
 * Link-Building (read: 13 Link-Building Sources and Strategies and How to Start a Link-Building Campaign)
 * PR (read: Quick Guide to Distributing Press Releases Online and Optimizing Press Releases for Search)
 * Conversion Architecture (read: Six Ways to Improve Your Conversion Rates)

We're going to use Golf Vacation Insider as a best-practice example for building email circulation. GVI has 75 rapid conversion landing pages for complimentary free reports that build email circulation—and in the end—sell a subscription to their monthly newsletter Golf Odyssey.

Search Engine Optimization: Almost all of the 75 rapid conversion landing pages built by GVI show up on page one for the name of the book. A more specific term like Eagle Ridge Resort Golf Vacation shows up as #1 in Google with 94,200 competing pages. The term "Eagle Ridge Resort" shows up 10 times on the page. Bandon Dunes Golf Vacation shows up as #2 with 12,700 competing pages and their keyword "Bandon Dunes Golf Vacation" shows up 8 times. In both cases, the keywords are in the title, URL, meta description and meta keywords. They're also in the URLs for every image on the page.

Link-Building: GVI partners with lots of other golf interest websites. Most importantly, they are trusted as an unbiased resource on the topic of golf vacations. Therefore, websites link to them frequently. That's not to say however, that they can't do link-building of their own. For example, on the Wikipedia page

for Pebble Beach, under the "External Links" section, you'll find a link called "Free travel tips and secrets to planning a Pebble Beach Golf Vacation" which links to their Pebble Beach topic page, and ultimately, their free report which is listed first on the page.

PR: New special reports from GVI are usually built up with an introductory press release like this one for the Equinox Resort. Releasing press releases drives traffic to their site and also encourages people to write and blog about the new report.

Conversion Architecture: All of this traffic wouldn't do GVI any good if they didn't have excellent conversion architecture. From any page on the site, you are offered a complimentary report in exchange for your email address. In the right navigation, you can also see the most current list of complimentary special reports. Even at the bottom of the page you can find these reports listed by country. When you land on the rapid conversion landing page, you are greeted with a large OFIE that offers you the report in exchange for your email address.

GVI's rapid conversion landing pages have some of the best conversion rates we've seen, and they're a Mequoda best practice example for driving website traffic and building email circulation.

Consistency Is Key for Email Delivery

How a publisher made one change that increased their delivery rates from 65% to 98% in days

If your email provider is not giving you a delivery report, and you are not registered with a service like Delivery Monitor, we seriously recommend that you pay attention.

A publisher friend of ours has been testing subject line delivery rates for the past few months. They followed our advice back in December to see how they might benefit from some of the suggested methods for increasing open rates and deliverability.

After subscribing to Delivery Monitor, they were finally able to take the blindfold off and see how their email newsletters were being delivered:

  * 65% were delivered with no issues
  * 20% got pushed into bulk
  * 15% turned up missing

This is not ideal; but don't be surprised if your email delivery report looks similar if you haven't been keeping track.

In the last two months, they tried a series of tests:

  * When linking externally, they moved it further down the post
  * They eliminated any taboo words from the subject line
  * They eliminated any taboo words from the content
  * They added taboo words to the subject line (to see the difference)

They also kept in mind best-practice tips from programs like Spam Assassin who locate and assign spam ratings to the following triggers:

  * The subject line is all capital letters
  * The message date is 12 to 24 hours before the receive date
  * The domain in the sender line doesn't match the domain in the "received" line in the headers
  * The subject contains "As Seen"
  * The subject starts with "Free"
  * The message has bad MIME encoding in the header

    * The message is 90 percent to 100 percent HTML
    * The HTML font size is large
    * The message mentions Oprah Winfrey with an exclamation mark
    * "Remove" appears in a URL (e.g., www.xyz.com/remove) or email address
(e.g., mailto:remove@xyz.com)

How they raised their delivery rate from 65% to 98%

After following all of the precautionary measures that they were encouraged to take by spam software, this publisher simply did not see much improvement. After all, how often did they quote Oprah or yell at their audience by typing IN ALL CAPS?

Finally, they decided that they would consistently start their email subject line with the name of their newsletter and follow it with the subject line, like this: "Publisher Daily: This Subject Line is Awesome" (not their real name, or subject line). This route is a best practice, but many publishers aren't too keen on the idea of pushing their subject line too far back with a max visibility rate of 55 characters in any given preview pane.

They jumped to 90% within days just by adding their newsletter name to the subject line. Now they're up to 98% and that extra 2% is in bulk. There has never been an email in the missing folder. The explanation is that spam software encourages consistency. They were already sending their emails out around the same time every day, so this was the next step.

As a bonus, this best practice was intended for increasing open rates, not delivery rates, but now they've discovered that's it's fun to multitask.

10 Email Feedback Loop Lists

Increase email delivery rates by finding out who's putting you in the junkbox

An email feedback loop (FBL) is a service that many ISPs will provide to companies who send bulk mailings. On their end, it's beneficial because it identifies pro-active companies and reduces the amount of spam sent to their users.

On your end, this is very beneficial because the #1 reason for poor deliverability is spam complaints. By subscribing to an email feedback loop, you will know who is marking you as such so that you can remove them from your list and get your domain white listed with the top ISPs.

What you'll need in order to register for email feedback loops:

* Access to accounts on your domain: abuse@ or postmaster@
* IP addresses that you want to receive feedback loop emails for

Email Feedback Loop Forms you can fill out online

AOL Feedback Loop – This page will give you access to the email feedback loop form, application information, amongst other requirements and info.

Comcast Feedback Loop – A very simple form from Comcast.net that includes an informative "terms of service" agreement and privacy policy.

Excite / Bluetie Feedback Loop - BlueTie offers a feedback loop service, operated by Return Path, free of charge, to parties sending large amounts of mail to BlueTie members.

MSN/Hotmail Feedback Loop – This Junk Email Reporting Program (JMRPP) encourages large senders to remove unwanted recipients from their email list. Click to read instructions on how to get accepted into the program.

NetZero/Juno Feedback Loop – This lengthy application form also acts as a white list request. You may need to consult your Email Service Provider or IT team to get the information needed for this form.

Road Runner Feedback Loop - A short application, recently re-launched, that will forward any mail reported as spam originating from the associated IP addresses back to the listed email address.

USA.net Feedback Loop – Another simple form that also gives you access to existing feedback loops.

Yahoo! Feedback Loop Form - Yahoo! offers a Complaint Feedback Loop service, free of charge, via this site operated by Return Path.

Email Feedback Loop Forms you can fill out through email

Common requirements for application:

  * Your IP range
  * Your domains
  * Your network's contact information: name, contact e-mail and phone
  * The e-mail to which the FBL will be sent

Earthlink Feedback Loop – (fblrequest@abuse.earthlink.net) Use the information list above to determine what to send to this email address.

Excite Feedback Loop: (fb-loop@bluetie.com and emailadmin@cs.excite.com) Use both of these email addresses, because as of June 2008, Excite moved over to BlueTie. Use the information list above to determine what information to send to these email addresses.

Outblaze (mail.com) Feedback Loop – (postmaster@outblaze.com) Request a feedback loop for your network by contacting this address and submitting the information from the list above.

Gmail Feedback Loop - Just as a note, Gmail doesn't accept white listing requests nor do they provide feedback loops. They use contact lists plus extensive filters to determine what gets delivered to an inbox.

In order to increase delivery rates, make sure to encourage your users to add your email address to their address book when you send them their first email.

Subject Line Spam Trigger Words

Put this list of no-no's next to your desk and check it often

Every email marketer should have a list of no-no's next to their desk. While we'd argue that a subject line trigger word thrown in every once in a while won't hurt your delivery rate (if you're already in good with the delivery gods), you still need to be practical about finding good synonyms.

According to SiteSell.com, who make the free email marketing tool, SpamCheck, you're not supposed to used obvious trigger words such as "free", but using them in combination with other trigger words such as "trial", "quote", "sample", "access" etc. can put your spam score through the roof.

In case you weren't aware, the way spam filters work is that they assign ratings to your email newsletter. Using the word "free" in the subject line with an otherwise perfectly harmless email might slide you through to home plate if you have a good delivery record.

However, do it again the next day or combine that subject line with an ALL CAPS subject line and use a * to disguise another trigger word within your email, it's off to the garbage can for you.

Spam Checking Tools:

http://spamcheck.sitesell.com/ameq.html
http://www.lyris.com/contentchecker
http://www.swiftpage.com/support/spamcheck.htm

THE WORST SPAM FILTER TRIGGERS

$$$
100% free
Ad
Affordable
Amazing stuff
Apply now
Auto email removal
Billion
Cash bonus
Cheap
Collect child support
Compare rates
Compete for your business
Credit
Credit bureaus
Dig up dirt on friends
Double your income
Earn $
Earn extra cash
Eliminate debt
Email marketing
Explode your business
Extra income
F r e e
Fast cash
Financial freedom
Financially independent
Free
Free gift
Free grant money
Free info
Free installation
Free investment
Free leads
Free membership
Free offer
Free preview

Guarantee
'Hidden' assets
Home based
Homebased business
Income from home
Increase sales
Increase traffic
Increase your sales
Incredible deal
Info you requested
Information you requested
Internet market
Leave
Limited time offer
Make $
Mortgage Rates
Multi level marketing
No investment
Obligation
Online marketing
Opportunity
Order Now
Prices
Promise you
Refinance
Remove
Reverses aging
Save $
Search engine listings
Serious cash
Stock disclaimer statement
Stop snoring
Thousands
Unsubscribe
Web traffic
Weight loss

THE NOT SO GREAT SPAM FILTER TRIGGERS

4U	Direct marketing	Laser printer	Opportunity
Accept credit cards	Discusses search engine	Limited time only	Opt in
Acceptance	listings	Long distance phone offer	Order now
Accordingly	Do it today	Lose weight spam	Order status
Act now! Don't hesitate!	Don't delete	Lower interest rates	Orders shipped by
Additional income	Dormant	Lower monthly payment	priority mail
Addresses on CD	Drastically reduced	Lowest price	Organization
All natural	Earn per week	Luxury car	Outstanding values
Amazing	Easy terms	Mail in order form	Paste
Apply Online	Eliminate bad credit	Maintained	Pennies a day
As seen on	Email harvest	Marketing solutions	Percent
Auto email removal	Email marketing	Mass email	Perpetual
Avoid bankruptcy	Expect to earn	Medium	Please read
Be amazed	Fantastic deal	Meet singles	Potential earnings
Be your own boss	Fast Viagra delivery	Member stuff	Presently
Being a member	Financial freedom	Message contains disclaimer	Print form signature
Beneficiary	Find out anything	MLM	Print out and fax
Beverage	For free	Money back	Produced and sent out
Big bucks	For instant access	Money making	Profits
Bill 1618	For just $ (some amt)	Month trial offer	Promise you ...!
Billing address	Free access	More Internet traffic	Pure profit
Billion dollars	Free cell phone	Mortgage rates	Real thing
Brand new pager	Free consultation	Multi level marketing	Reciprocal
Bulk email	Free DVD	Name brand	Refinance home
Buy direct	Free grant money	New customers only	Removal instructions
Buying judgments	Free hosting	New domain extensions	"Remove"
Cable converter	Free installation	Nigerian	Remove subject
Call free	Free investment	No age restrictions	Removes wrinkles
Call now	Free leads	No catch	Reply remove subject

Calling creditors	Free membership	No claim forms	Requires initial
Cancel at any time	Free money	No cost	investment
Cannot be combined with any	Free offer	No credit check	Reserves the right
other offer	Free preview	No disappointment	Reverses aging
Can't live without	Free priority mail	No experience	Risk free
Cash bonus	Free quote	No fees	Round the world
Cashcashcash	Free sample	No gimmick	S 1618
Casino	Free trial	No inventory	Safeguard notice
Cell phone cancer scam	Free website	No investment	Satisfaction guaranteed
Cents on the dollar	Full refund	No medical exams	Save $
Certified	get it now	No middleman	Save big money
Check or money order	Get paid	No obligation	Save up to
Click below	Get started now	No purchase necessary	Score with babes
Click here link	Gift certificate	No questions asked	Section 301
Click to remove	Great offer	No selling	Sincerely
Click to remove mailto	Guarantee	No strings attached	Somebody
Compare rates	Have you been turned	Not intended	Special promotion
Compete for your business	down?	Off shore	Statements
Confidentially on all orders	Hidden assets	Offer expires	Stop snoring
Congratulations	Home employment	Offers coupon	Urgent
Consolidate debt and credit	Human growth hormone	Offers extra cash	
Copy accurately	If only it were that easy	Offers free (often stolen)	
Copy DVDs	In accordance with laws	passwords	
Credit bureaus	Increase sales	Once in lifetime	
Credit card offers	Increase traffic	One hundred percent free	
Cures baldness	Insurance	One hundred percent	
Dainty	Investment decision	guaranteed	
Dear email	It's effective	One time mailing	
Dear friend	Join millions of	Online biz opportunity	
Dear somebody	Americans	Online pharmacy	
Diagnostics		Only $	
Different reply to			
Dig up dirt on friends			
Direct email			

Preview Pane Best Practices

8 best practices for effective email marketing in a preview-pane world

Have you tested your emails for preview pane optimization? If not, you're blindly assuming that everyone you send an email newsletter (or promotion) to either opens or doesn't open your daily beacon of light based only on your subject line. Right?

The preview pane is the juicy snippet that people see when they click on your email. Depending on how their email client is set up, they might see the top inch or two of your email, or if you're lucky, they have the preview pane set up on the left or right, enabling them to see the whole thing. Most email clients don't have that last feature as an option (and your users may or may not be informed enough to change it), so don't be too optimistic.

According to iMediaConnection, these are the 8 best practices for effective email marketing in a "preview-pane world":

1. Put the most important call to action in the upper left-hand corner, so it can be seen in either horizontal or vertical preview panes. For promotional emails, the offer or "shop now" call to action goes here. For newsletters, the table of contents or "In this issue" teaser goes here.

2. Do not embed copy in images or use single, large images. What happens if your headline, call to action or even the entire email is encapsulated in a graphic? The reader can't see it at all if that image is blocked. Make your most important points in words, as well as in graphics, and place descriptive copy under each image. Also, always link to a web version of your email with all graphics intact.

3. Use HTML instead of graphics. Many of the issues with image-blocking can be avoided simply by using HTML design choices. HTML background colors, font colors, font tags and font sizes can give you a great look, without the headache.

4. Reduce the size of masthead images and logos and move them out of the upper-left corner. Those pretty images may brand your email, but they don't spur the consumer to click through or convert, and they may not even be seen if blocked images are a factor. Again, devote the upper-left corner to driving desired actions.

5. Add text-based email navigation in case images are automatically blocked. For example, instead of relying solely on a "Shop Now" button that may never be seen (or clicked), also add a "Shop Now" text link.

6. For big impact, design small. In the early days of email marketing, most templates were 800 pixels wide. Today, 600 pixels wide is a widely accepted standard, and smart marketers may do well to start designing even narrower. Even when the user opens an email and views it in a full window, shrinking real estate can still be a factor. Many email clients now serve display ads on the right-hand side of the screen, taking that space away from the message window.

7. Use a third-party rendering tool to avoid surprises. Rendering tools show you exactly what your message will look like in all of the most popular email clients so you can improve your design before you click "Send." It's smarter than scratching your head post-launch at puzzlingly low open rates.

8. Use Alt Tags as teaser copy in case images are blocked. A short, well-written Alt Tag that says something like "Strategies for improving ROI" where your newsletter banner would be, or "50% off Wonderful Widget" where a product photo would be can boost your metrics, but only for Gmail users. All of the other email providers that block images also block Alt Tags.

There are several great tools that you can use to optimize your email newsletter:

EmailLabs has a great Email Preview Pane Quiz that you should try out on your own email newsletter. They also have a Email Marketing Usability Rating Calculator that will put the design of your emails to the test, and a "From" and "Subject Line" Tester you should check out.

Lyris has an Inbox Snapshot Tool that will tell you what your email looks like in 40 different email clients. They also have some other cool tools and offer a free audit, so check them out.

W3C is the ultimate in code validation. Their free instant Markup Validation Service should be used on all of your sites, but perhaps even more importantly on your emails. Your email code needs to be as tight as can be in order to pass through spam filters. Even the smallest error can trip up and get you sent into junkmail.

Conclusion

Using the information found in this special report will allow you to increase website traffic and build your email marketing list. More traffic and bigger email marketing lists will equate to greater revenue for your business.

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