



BEST PRACTICES GUIDE | EMAIL MARKETING

Learn How to Get (and Keep) Email Permission

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Note: As a rule of thumb, if you are sending consumers promotional emails about products and services, you should be emailing no more frequently than three, maybe four times per month. A rule of thumb always has an exception, and every audience is different, so make your decisions based on your own unique business.

The increased focus on spam in email marketing also means an increased focus on permission. Sure, we're all waiting and hoping for a solution to the spam problem but a foolproof solution has not yet been created. So, in the meantime, as permission-based email marketers, we need to stay diligent in our efforts to earn and keep the permission of our subscribers to the best of our ability.

What are the best ways to earn and keep permission?

These 10 tips are guaranteed to help:

- 1. Be Straightforward** - Remind recipients why they are receiving an email from you. Whether they are a valued customer, a prospect who expressed interest, or a client you want to keep in touch with, the reminder will add credibility to your email and put it into context, thus differentiating your communications from unwanted email.
- 2. Be Specific** - When people sign up to be on your email list, allow them to select—precisely—their areas of interest (e.g. newsletters, sale notifications, new product or service announcements, event invitations etc.). You can make subscribers feel more comfortable by specifying what they will receive and when they will receive it (e.g. “Sign up for Our Weekly Concert Announcement”).
Also, you need to identify yourself to your subscribers in the “From:” line, and use the name they recognize most easily—yours, or your company.
- 3. Be Respectful** - Permission can be given, and it can be taken away. It is very important that every email you send has the option for the recipient to unsubscribe or “opt-out.” Interests may change over time and communications may no longer be valuable to a given subscriber. Those subscribers are entitled to withdraw their permission at will.
- 4. Be Trustworthy** - Your privacy policy should be clearly posted. It adds credibility to your company and your email even if recipients do not click on the link.
- 5. Be Interested** - Are your email communications of value? Is the frequency right? A survey is an inexpensive, easy and immediate way to find out how your customers really feel about your company and your email communications. So, when you do a survey, don't forget to ask how your customers feel about your emails.

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List buyer beware!

Many email marketers become accidental spammers by making the mistake of buying a list. Permission is not for sale and is not transferable.

6. Be Current - People change ISPs, jobs and email addresses at random. Often, you'll be the last to know. Ask for updated information and give subscribers an easy way to change their email address. This will ensure that your communications continue to be received if, and when, they make a change.

In addition, provide a way for your subscribers to change their interests and preferences. This will help you continue to provide the information most valuable to them, and target the right audience for each campaign.

7. Be Considerate - Respect the privilege of communicating with your customers and prospects by taking care not to communicate too often. Gratuitous emails are not met with gratitude. Think carefully and plan how many, and what kind of communications you send to your subscribers.

8. Be Diligent - Some subscribers will reply to an email to unsubscribe instead of using the automatic unsubscribe link. Monitor your inbox for unsubscribes, and complaints, then make sure you remove unsubscribe addresses right away and take action on any grievances.

9. Be Observant - Look at your reports! There's a wealth of information just waiting to be discovered. Always pay attention to your unsubscribe rate to ensure that your churn rate remains positive. If you are losing more than .5% of your subscribers per month, take a look at all of the elements of your campaigns, make sure you're following the other 10 tips in this issue, and make adjustments where you're falling short. Opens and click-throughs can also indicate where you might be missing the mark.

10. Beware - Beware of strangers bearing lists! Permission is not transferable. Today, subscribers want to receive email from those companies they have subscribed to, not an unknown third party.

When searching for a list, don't be fooled by offers of targeted, clean lists for sale on a CD or otherwise. If anyone claims you can "Blast your ad to over 1000 safe addresses for only \$5.00!" or "Buy a CD with 10,000,000 email addresses for only \$99!", this is too good to be true. These lists are not permission-based—they are spam lists.

Follow these 10 permission tips, and "Be" a part of the spam solution!