

Eight ways to build up your email database fast

At some point along the line, you might have bought an email list, or at least been tempted to buy one. This is a bad idea for two reasons. Firstly, they are undoubtedly filled with inactive, non-existent email addresses and spam traps and secondly, it's borderline illegal, so forget that idea.

 By [Georgia Christian](#) 11 Feb 2011



The only way that you can truly ensure that you have a targeted email list is to build it up from scratch with people who have opted-in to receive your emails, which automatically means they're genuinely interested in what you have to say and offer. It's important to remember quality over quantity in terms of how big your list is and in this case bigger isn't necessarily better. You might have a huge list with low click-through-rates (CTR) and conversions, which means you're spending wasted money targeting inactive or disinterested subscribers.

Fear not! Building up a relevant and highly valuable email database isn't as daunting as it sounds and there are a number of ways you can do this for free or for very little money.

Firstly, you need to create a (short) subscription form so visitors to your site can sign up for your email offering:

This form needs to be highly visible and it's not a bad idea to have a version of it on each page of your website. At this stage only ask for the person's name, email address and company name so they can't be put off by too many questions. Be sure to follow it up with a confirmation email that they have to click to confirm their subscription - also known as double opt-in. Once they've signed up, follow up with a brief 'welcome' email that reiterates what they can expect to receive from you and give them the option of forwarding or sharing your email with friends, which will of course expand your email database even more. Remember to include the direct link to your sign up page in the message that gets forwarded.

Run a competition on your website. People are always interested in free goodies. The actual competition can be anything - best article, best photo, best design, best strategy, basically whatever is relevant to your industry. What can you put up for grabs? Tech products, software or a great programme always goes down a treat. The catch is that anyone who wants to enter has to give their email address, and sign up for your newsletter in the process.

Contribute your relevant industry articles to various online magazines and blog sites, thereby building a profile for you and your company and establishing yourself as an expert in the field. Almost all sites that accept freelance contributions allow you to have links to your website or email address for people to click on. Take it one step further and include a link to sign up for your newsletter, offering great insider information, updates, advice and promotions.

Seduce them with special offers on your sign up page. This isn't quite the same as a once off competition, but rather, an exchange for signing up to your newsletter and divulging their precious email address, they're getting a 'gift' so to speak. This could be a discount, coupon or voucher that they can use immediately, an interesting e-book that you've created or perhaps a month free premium membership for your website or one that you know is trending at the moment.

Use social media networks (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) to encourage people to sign up for your newsletter (or whatever it is that you want to promote), then include a direct link to that sign-up page so they can check it out straightaway.

Online and offline, use each point of contact you have with a customer as an opportunity to let them know about your newsletter. This means including links to sign-up on all invoices, business cards, brochures, advertising, feedback forms and surveys.

If you are in a position to, run a PPC campaign. Create a purposeful and hard to ignore landing page that encourages visitors to sign up when they click through on your PPC campaign. Once again, keep it simple and straightforward. Name, email address, company (if necessary) and a big bold button they can't miss.

Include an invite to sign up in all your email signatures and make sure the process is quick and painless. If you are already communicating with customers on a regular basis, then you probably have or are in the process of, developing a relationship with them, in which case inviting them to sign up should be a cinch.

It might sound like a lot that you have to do just to get people to sign up, but it really is the best way and you may find that only requires a minor adjustment to what you are currently doing now. It isn't necessary to immediately incorporate all of these suggestions, by all means start with two or three and see how that goes. You can develop your 'sign up' campaign and when you need and you'll soon find your (highly targeted) list growing at a healthy rate.

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