

List Building Strategies They Don't Want You To Know

Building a mailing list is one of the very best things you can possibly do as a marketer or a business owner. Mailing lists are often hailed by bloggers and other well-known marketers as being the single most valuable tool for making sales and there are many great reasons for this.

Here are just a few of the unique advantages of mailing lists that no other tool can come close to emulating:

- Direct Access – With a mailing list, you have direct access to your audience and don't go through a third party. This is very different from using something like Facebook, where the policies can change at any time and undermine all your hard work.
- Two Way Communication – You can do so much with a mailing list that you just can't do with other platforms. In particular, it's key to recognize that a mailing list is a form of communication and that means that your list can talk *back* to you. This makes it incredibly valuable for conducting surveys, for crowdsourcing or for getting feedback. You can literally ask your market what they want to buy and then create the product to fit!
- Highly Targeted – Your mailing list *should* consist of people who have read your content and who have decided that they want to get more information from you. They have then given you permission to contact you and expressed an interest in engaging with your messages. This makes that audience *incredibly* targeted and makes them much more likely to buy from you.
- Precise and Flexible – E-mail gives you full flexibility over precisely how and when you communicate with your list. When you send your e-mail, *that* is when your recipients will receive it and engage with it. For marketing campaigns where time is a crucial factor, this can't be understated.
- Personal – E-mails are very personal. You'll be sending these messages to someone's inbox where they will sit alongside e-mails from friends and relatives. This is highly important and means that they will look at your promotions in an entirely different way from something they would see on Facebook.

This is only scratching the surface of what makes e-mail marketing so powerful and as you read through the rest of this mini-ebook, many more advantages and impressive features will come to light.

For now though, just know that this is one of the most persuasive and wide reaching tools available to you.

Doing Email Right

The problem is, that many people just don't know how to go about list building specifically or email marketing generally. This is why list building and emails remain so tragically underrated: simply because a lot of people don't appreciate the full value on offer here and don't know how to make the most of it.

Look at the list building strategy of a lot of marketers, blogs and businesses and you'll see that it amounts to having a small opt-in form in the corner of their website and hoping people sign up. When they *do* sign up, they'll then receive either no correspondence at all, or a slew of unwelcome marketing messages. How strange that this doesn't work...

So how *do* you make sure you've getting the most out of your emails? That's what we'll be covering in this mini eBook.

The Basics

Before we dive into the nitty gritty and go over the advanced strategies involved in effective list building, let's first focus on the basics that you need to know and the tools that you will need to set up and put in place.

Website and Blog

So first of all, you will need to have a website and a blog. Actually you don't *need* these things and there are methods you can use to build a mailing list without having either: such as guest posting, social media marketing and solo ads. That said though, it will be *much* easier to build your list and your audience will be far more engaged and targeted if you do have a blog. So we're going to set one up...

To do that, you'll need a hosting account to store your files and you'll need a domain name in order to set up an address that people will enter into their address bar when they're looking for your content. You can find both these things relatively easily and it shouldn't cost you more than a few hundred dollars a year maximum. Make sure your domain name is something catchy and easy to remember while at the same time being descriptive of your brand and the kinds of products you'll be promoting.

You also want to make sure that your hosting account gives you enough hosting space and enough bandwidth. You shouldn't need too much of either of these things though, so basic packages should suffice to begin with – just avoid free hosting. Having CPanel is another feature to look for if possible as it will make managing your site easier.

Once you have these tools set up, the next step is to create the actual website. To do this, log into CPanel and look for 'Fantastico'. If you run this, you'll be taken through the WordPress installation. If you don't have CPanel and Fantastico though, you can install WordPress manually with instructions available at WordPress.com. WordPress is a CMS meaning that it will help you to manage your content on your site, to upload and edit pages and posts and to change the theme and the features as well.

WordPress makes it incredibly simple to set up a website or blog and you can change the layout as easily as installing a free theme through the theme store (or using external sites like Theme Forest). Some of the top blogs in the world use WordPress, including TechCrunch, Mashable, some BBC websites, Forbes and more – there's no need to make this more complicated for yourself.

Creating Your Squeeze Page

Next you need a squeeze page. This is essentially a page that is entirely dedicated to selling your mailing list and that doesn't include links to anywhere else on the site. 'Optimize Press' provides a simple theme that is perfectly optimized for this very purpose and makes this incredibly easy to set up.

Your squeeze page should feature a vertical layout that encourages people to scroll down the page. It should also utilize a long sales pitch that grabs attention and then really sells people on your email list. This should start with a narrative structure to really reel your readers in and from there it should talk about the 'value proposition'. We'll discuss this more later, but essentially this is the 'promise' of your list and how it will make people's lives better.

Setting Up an Autoresponder and an Opt-In Form

Now comes your most important tool which is the autoresponder. An autoresponder is basically a service that allows your subscribers to sign up to your list and then which manages and stores all those e-mails.

Of course you might wonder why you can't create a form yourself without using an autoresponder and then just keep your messages in an excel file. You *can* do this if you're so inclined, but doing so would make life *much* more difficult and there are a large number of benefits to owning an autoresponder and a number of things that would be almost impossible to achieve without one.

Here are just some of the advanced features and advantages an autoresponder offers:

- Spam protection
- The ability to message your entire list at once without using 'BCC'
- The ability to protect your recipient's emails from others
- Backup for your list
- Simple management for people who want to unsubscribe from your list
- The ability to see useful data and information about your list – such as how many people are opening your messages
- Categorization for your contacts
- The ability to message specific groups within your list
- Easy creation of opt-in forms that look professional
- And more

There are numerous different autoresponder services available but two of the best which we recommend are ArpReach and SendLane. These are affordable solutions that are aimed specifically at internet marketers and have all the necessary tools you might need to reach your audience and to sell to them as a marketer.

Once you've chosen your autoresponder, you can then create your opt-in forms. These are the forms where people will enter their names and their e-mail addresses and once you've created these, you can then easily embed them into your web pages, your blog posts and even elsewhere by just copying and pasting a small amount of code.

The objective is to match your opt-in form to look like your web design. At the same time though, you will also be able to choose at this point whether you want to have a two-step opt-in. A double opt-in basically means that your audience will have to confirm that they do indeed want to sign up. It's a good idea to turn this feature on, as it makes sure people won't feel you're messaging without their permission. What's more, it protects you against spam and it helps you to avoid people who never check their e-mail or who give out *false* e-mails.

You may now also have the option to choose how many fields you want for your form. The more fields you have, the more your mailing list will be worth and the more you'll be able to charge for it/make from it. However, people can be protective over their personal details and may be unwilling to enter their age or gender. For most lists, just getting a name and e-mail will suffice.

The Strategy

The main strategy for effectively building your mailing list focusses on one word that should be the bedrock of *all* business: value.

Your aim is to provide value to an audience such that you build their trust and create fans who *want* to sign up to your mailing list. What's more, you want to provide plenty of value via the e-mails themselves. This way, they will be more likely to keep reading your messages and to actually *open* your e-mails. This also means that they're going to be more likely to want to buy from you in future.

All of this will help you to increase engagement and to ensure that your list is highly targeted and these are the things you really need to understand with your list building activities. You can have a list of 1,000,000,000 people but it won't be worth *anything* if you found those e-mails on other websites and just 'scraped' them into a list. In this case, you'll be essentially reaching out to your contacts 'cold' which in turn means that you'll have no pre-established relationship or authority.

On the other hand, if all the people on your list are fans who love your content, who are interested in your subject and who have given you permission to contact them,

then you can much more easily sell to them and as such they are worth a *lot* more money to you.

All of this is achieved through the consistent delivery of quality and that's what will get people to trust you and to subscribe.

Content Marketing

The main tool for accomplishing this is content marketing. When you create content for a website, we've already discussed how this can help you to promote yourself on social media and we've already seen how it can help you to climb the ranks of Google. But at the same time, your content essentially acts as a 'free taster' for the kind of information you'll be providing through your mailing list. The hope is that you impress your visitors so much, that they will then want to subscribe to you just so that they can get more similar information from you in future.

To do this, you simply have to post regularly to your website while at the same time focusing on delivering really great quality content. The recommended word count for this type of content is often 1,800 words as this lets you go really in-depth. At the same time, you should ensure your content is unique and different from everything else out there. Don't write generic content that everyone has seen before!

You should have your mailing list in a widget so it's ever-present on your website. At the same time, it's easy enough to embed your opt-in form at the bottom of your articles. But don't forget to actually *mention* your mailing list in the body of the text too and tell people why they should sign up. Don't expect people to just gravitate here – tell them why they should and really promote it. By adding calls to action to your articles, every article becomes a new opportunity to gain more followers and subscribers.

Marketing

Now your blog has become the best tool possible for converting people into subscribers and helping you to build your list. At the same time, you have your squeeze page that is going to be providing a much more direct approach to selling your mailing list and that should convert highly as a result.

This then means that in order to get more subscribers you should only need to focus on sending more people to your blog and to your squeeze page. There are numerous tools you can use to do that, most of which are essentially forms of internet marketing.

One example is social media marketing. By sharing your content to Facebook and Twitter you can directly attract new visitors to your website. At the same time, you will likely find your messages get shared a lot and you can build your contacts on here.

Make sure that you are providing good quality through your social media and that it is linked to your main website. At the same time, you should try to engage with your audience on social media and to spend time in communities. One of the very best things you can do is to spend time in discussions in Google+ communities or on Facebook pages – this way you can demonstrate your knowledge and you'll get new people adding you without even asking. Likewise, if you retweet people's messages and respond to them, they'll do the same for you, exposing your account to *their* audience.

Another tool is SEO. SEO is 'Search Engine Optimization' which essentially involves writing content with a few 'keywords' (search terms) included subtly, as well as building links pointing at your site. These two activities will help you to show up higher in Google searches meaning that people who are interested in the topics you write about will find your website much more readily. Don't overdo the use of keywords – generally a keyword 'density' of about 1-2% is what's recommended. Likewise, aim to build your links on high quality blogs that are relevant to your content – never 'spam' the web with links or you'll be penalized.

Of course you can also use advertising to promote your website. If you do this though, then you can end up spending a fair amount of money on your subscribers and you need to work out whether this is ultimately going to be profitable before you go ahead. The best form of advertising to use is Facebook CPA. CPA means 'Cost Per Action' and this means that you can set it up to only charge you when someone actually 'takes action' – for instance by signing up to your mailing list.

As a very rough guide, it is often said that a mailing list is worth about \$1 per subscriber – so as long as your campaign works out as that or lower, then you should be making a good profit. You just then have to make sure that you effectively

monetize the list in order to earn the money back. Another tip is to ensure your list is as targeted as possible which will make it *easier* to monetize.

More Ways to Get Subscribers

As well as marketing your blog, there are also a few things you can do directly to get more subscribers. We'll look at some of those here...

Incentivizing

One of the most important of these is to use some kind of incentive to encourage people to sign up to your mailing list. The most common example is to give away a free eBook to anyone who subscribes. This way, people are now getting something for free which makes it very tempting to sign up!

The risk here though, is that incentivizing your list too much can actually lead to people signing up 'just to get free stuff'. This results in a low quality list of people who don't like spending money and as you might imagine, this isn't the most profitable list to try and sell to!

On the other hand though, if your eBook is very similar to the products you're eventually going to be selling, then this can serve as a nice 'free taster' that will make them more interested in the items you promote later. Whether or not this is a good strategy is ultimately going to depend on your business model and on the approach you take – so you can make up your own mind as to whether it's a good approach for you.

Better yet is to incentivize your list in other ways, that actually lead to your having an even *more* targeted list. For instance, you can incentivize your list by making the list itself sound very exciting and high value. If you point out that the list will be filled with lots of exclusive information – and especially if you make your list into an 'ezine' – then you will only get subscribers who are interested in reading the emails and this should result in more of them getting opened.

Another similar method is to incentivize your list by offering ‘discounts and promotions’ which means that your subscribers are now *expecting* to buy from you. This is potentially the very best kind of list as they’re actively waiting to buy. You can also incentivize your list with news about an exciting upcoming product: use your squeeze page to sell the product and make it sound absolutely amazing and then at the end, reveal that the product isn’t out yet but that your audience can be the first to find out if they sign up to your list. Again, this creates a situation where your list is not only targeted in terms of their interest but also in terms of their *willingness* to potentially buy.

It’s when you use incentivization like this that CPA becomes more profitable – this way you’re now advertising specifically to people who *know* you’re going to be selling to them. This might be the kind of audience that is worth paying for, especially if they know the item is likely to be a ‘big ticket’ one in terms of price.

Ad Swaps and Solo Ads

Another way to gain more subscribers is to look at doing an ad swap. This means that you send out a message to the mailing list of another marketer and in exchange, they get to do the same thing through your list. A solo ad on the other hand means you *pay* that marketer to message their list.

Either of these can be useful tools for gaining new subscribers, especially because you’re messaging people that you *know* will be interested in reading e-mails and that have demonstrated that they actually open them and take action.

The problem is that you can end up paying for a message that falls on deaf ears – so you need to be very cautious when you select your platform. Make sure that you choose a mailing list that you can subscribe to yourself and ‘test’ to see if they’re building relationships well with their existing readers. Likewise, look for one where you can see the autoresponder data so that you know the e-mails are being opened. This is perhaps the most important factor to look for of all.

Buying Lists

Of course you can also just *buy* a readymade list but this is somewhat risky as you don't always know what you're getting. The other thing to bear in mind is that when you buy a list, you're essentially sending messages cold as the list has no experience with you and hasn't given you permission to contact them (they will have ticked a box saying it's alright for their details to be passed on). Lists lose almost all of their value as soon as you buy them, so make sure that you look for one that is highly targeted, with lots of data and that has been treated well. You are always better off building your own though.

Great Quality Emails

Once your subscribers are 'in' you should now continue to provide amazing quality content and this is where you will continue to build their trust and to ensure that they're a useful list of contacts to have.

The mistake that a lot of people make at this point is to use their list to simply start trying to sell. If you do this, then you'll very quickly lose the interest of your audience.

Think about your own inbox: most likely it is filled with messages from companies trying to sell you things and most likely you never click to open any of those messages. This is highly frustrating and most of us are very cynical about what comes into our accounts as a result.

So if you send another e-mail saying 'Money Off!' you're going to be ignored. What's more, your future e-mails will be ignored.

Instead then, your email needs to be thought of like a product in itself and needs to provide the same kind of value that you were trying to provide through your blog posts.

A good way to think of this is to consider the case of Brain Pickings. Brain Pickings is a massive website that no doubt turns over a lot of revenue but it began life as a mailing list. Specifically, this was the mailing list of Maria Popova who began sending out emails to her colleagues about whatever was on her mind at the time. These emails were very in-depth though and would often include quotes, links and images that made them very entertaining for her readers.

Quickly, word spread and eventually people were asking if they could be added to Maria's list. This then led to her setting up the website and soon her brand grew to what it is today.

This should hopefully demonstrate that if your mailing list is good enough quality – it can actually end up promoting itself, and especially if you encourage people to share it with their friends.

Subject Headings

One of the most important considerations when creating a mailing list is the subject headings. When you create your subjects, you need to make sure your email is going to stand out in a crowded inbox but at the same time you need to avoid using manipulative tactics to 'trick' people into opening your messages. Doing the latter will only frustrate people and prevent them from trusting your emails in future.

The best subject heading shouldn't be something that sounds at all promotional. Again, this is something we're all sick of seeing. Instead, it should promote the value that you're going to be offering and it should sound friendly and engaging.

More importantly, if you include 'businessy terms' in your email subject to make it sound promotional, then you will risk having your email blocked by spam filters. Spam filters look out for key words which can include things like 'free', 'buy', 'offer' etc. Keep these out of your emails if you want them to get read at all.

Often a good strategy is to incorporate the user's name which you can do through most autoresponder software. This way, you can make your email sound more personable and it will stand out more.

Some Standards

A few more things to consider when writing your e-mails include:

Length: Try not to make your e-mails too long. People tend not to want to read huge reams of text in their inboxes. While 1,800 words is a good length for a blog post, this is too much for an e-mail. Aim instead for something closer to 400 words for a short piece of information or 700 words for a 'newsletter'.

Frequency: As a rule you don't want your e-mails to be sent out too frequently. A good starting point is to send about one email a week which is fairly standard for any kind of regularly updated information. You can get more frequent gradually if you're selling some kind of product.

Tone: Emails should be more friendly in tone than say an article on an official website. Try to write as though you're speaking directly *to* your audience and use the words 'you' and 'I' a lot. This should sound almost like a friend giving another friend advice – though the extent to which your emails are personal sounding will vary depending on your niche/industry and various other factors.

Selling Through Your Emails

Once all that is done, you'll now have a slowly growing list of people who really trust you and who are eager to hear more from you. If you've done this well, this should be an ideal list for you to sell to and promote to.

So how do you go about converting those contacts into customers?

The first thing to ensure is that you don't go straight into a sales pitch. If the first thing you do once you get an e-mail is to promote a product to it, you're just going to frustrate that person and they'll likely unsubscribe (though some people do say that your first message is a good chance to upsell – you can try it but it's risky).

Instead, make sure you deliver value first to further increase your trust and authority. Send some useful tips, some exciting news and generally build your relationship. From there, you can then mention your product or tease that something will be announced in future.

Then, in a subsequent email somewhere down the line, you want to go into a little more detail about what your product is and who it will benefit – while continuing to remain somewhat vague. This will build anticipation and excitement.

Next, give the full scoop on your e-mail and sell the 'value proposition' – the lifestyle that will come from your product and the way that it can help people to live happier, healthier and more stress-free lives. Really focus on what your product can do for the

user and tell them why they should be excited. At the same time, let them know that you will be announcing where they can buy the product on X date.

The last email is going to be the link to where they can buy.

If you've done this well, then you should have built people up to a fever pitch, to the point where the time between the last two emails will feel as though it is really dragging. People want what they can't have, so the fact that they have to *wait* will only make your product that much more desirable and exciting.

Anyone who is already familiar with digital marketing might recognize that this is essentially a sales page, but spread out over several e-mails. And you're using the exact same structure as you would for the text in one of those: AIDA:

A – Awareness

I – Interest

D – Desire

A – Action

The best part of all this is that you can automate the entire system to work through an 'autoresponder sequence'. This means the e-mails will be sent automatically by your autoresponder whenever someone subscribes. This means they don't risk coming in halfway through your pitch and instead will go through the whole 'sales funnel' that will gradually make them more and more inclined to buy. This has the added benefit of being a 'passive model'. That means you can be building prospects and making sales while you sleep!

Other Ways to Profit

Of course there are other ways you can profit from your list to.

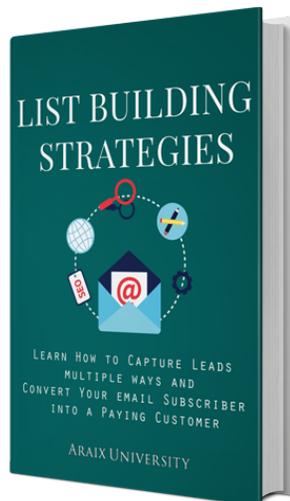
One is to try selling affiliate products. These are products that offer a commission and sometimes you can get as much as 75% profit for an affiliate product. The great thing about this is that all you need is a link to send people to a sales page that someone else has already set up. This means you can casually drop your affiliate link into the body of your email and you should get a few sales from it.

You can also get paid to advertise to your list. For instance, you might get paid by someone else to send out a solo ad, or you can get paid by a company to send out a survey. You can even get paid by a sponsor just to act as a spokesperson for a product. Don't do this too often though or you'll lose the trust of your audience.

You can also survey your audience yourself which can be very beneficial for you. Don't forget that an email list is a two way communication tool and you can use this to get ideas for products, or to ask questions about how you could improve your service or brand. In theory you can ask your audience what they would buy from you and then create that exact product for them!

Finally, you can sell your list – though to do this you will need to think carefully about whether it's worth the same to anyone else as it is to you.

Whatever you do, you undoubtedly have an incredible resource on your hands now and you should be able to build lists from scratch as you need them. Now you know how to take advantage of the power of list building and you can take your marketing to the next level!



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