

## Lesson 4: Email

### **The Software**

What email marketing provider will you use. I would start with the free software available for small subscription bases as is offered by MailChimp, iContact, Reachmail, and Constant Contact. These are just a few we are aware of and have seen clients use. There are endless email marketing providers so choosing yours may take a little research.

We use Mailchimp because it is cost effective and has very straight forward functionality. Dot Mailer is popular and is a higher end service good if you have time to make the most out of all it offers. Ultimately, the best course of action is to send some emails on a free trial basis and see how you find the process. This will increase your knowledge of design formatting, importing subscription bases, and how to test emails before sending. The best software is what makes that process as streamline and time efficient as possible.

The design tools are what can cause you the most pain when constructing your email. It may take you a couple of test emails to get to grips with these. The only advice here is that practise will make it easier. Keep looking at emails you receive and comparing the standard of yours to theirs. If you see something you like keep it in a folder in your emails for future reference.

Most email marketing providers give you everything you need to make a very slick and professional looking email campaign. If you struggle get in touch with them directly because they are used to guiding people through issues and will want you to get the most out of package. You really do not have to spend much to get some great looking templates and step by step instructions on how to construct your email. In fact Mail Chimp offers all of that for free!

So scope the following out and decide what is best for you:

[Mail Chimp](#)

[Dotmailer](#)

[Constant Contact](#)

[iContact](#)

[ReachMail](#)

## **The Legalities**

To make sure you are not spamming or breaking the law when you send email there are some specific requirements you have to fulfil. Follow this list to make sure you are delivering email professionally, morally and legally:

- Do I have prior explicit and verifiable permission (opt-in) from the recipient?

Does the message have:

- A clear and accurate sender identity?
- An accurate subject line?
- Clear and easy opt-out instructions?
- A physical postal address and company details?
- A valid return address?
- Have I tested that the subscription and unsubscription mechanism works?
- Have I checked the test messages carefully before sending? Did my colleagues do this too?
- Can I process replies and any subscriber requests promptly?

The above are legal requirements whereas the below are best practise recommendations:

- Obtain prior permission via a double opt-in subscription mechanism. Send an automated and well thought-out welcome message with key instructions and expectations.
- Test readability
- Check the HTML message design and readability. It must work with blocked images.
- Include a plain text alternative with any HTML message.
- Keep the subject line short and clear. 25 characters display in most clients.
- Test deliverability on multiple browsers and devices if possible

- Use email authentication. Check that SPF, Sender ID, DomainKeys and DNS records correctly verify the sender.
- Scan email messages to make sure that they are not identified as spam by common spam filtering applications before sending.
- Provide wanted, expected, relevant and interesting messages to each recipient.
- Provide clear instruction on how the subscribers can automatically unsubscribe (opt out). Send an automated and well thought-out farewell message. This works as a successful confirmation, gives an opportunity to ask for feedback and thank the subscriber.

## **Subscription**

How do you build an email list in the first place? Good question. Here are three ways we recommend:

1. When you hand your business card out and receive theirs mention your monthly newsletter or bi-weekly email campaign so that you can copy and paste their email address straight into your subscription base.
2. Have an opt-in box on the same page as your blog or any other content hub you decide to populate. Ask your web developer or add an email opt-in box plugin to the backend of your site to this end.
3. To use the email address of those who purchase from you and want that subsequent connection with your special offers via email – just add a tick box so they can choose to opt in or out. This enables you to follow up purchases with tailored emails. You could also split your email campaign so only certain groups get certain emails depending on their purchasing patterns. If they buy something regularly or they need something seasonally you could even send them a reminder.

Building your subscription base is relatively straight forward but optimising that process will stand you in good stead for the future. This means:

1. Making sure people opt in so you have their permission up front. If you have an existing list you can send an opt-in/out email to them, explain who you are and why you are emailing them, and ask them if they wish to receive your emails in the future.
2. Make sure you add Google Analytics tracking now so you can see who clicked on your email links, watch them land on particular pages, see where they go to next and if they make a purchase. You will be able to analyse the effectiveness of each email you send and see any common threads to the journeys people take when on your website. You will also be able to calculate exactly how much each email earns your company – this data should be the foundation of your marketing campaign and ensure it is continuously evaluated and enhanced.
3. Think about splitting your subscription base as you receive the information so you have lists linked to specific products. Doing this from the start will make it easy to maintain going forward. You could also set up an automated sequence for anyone who opts in after purchase. This will follow up their purchase with a thank you email and a bit about who you are and what else you do. Then you could follow that with a special email discount. The sequence could be refined based on the analytics data feedback you receive until you are sending out something that practically guarantees subsequent sales.

## **The Mechanics**

Module 6 will cover writing the perfect email but before that I would like to walk you through the mechanics of the entire process. Follow these stages to make sure you are not going to miss anything:

### **STAGE 1 - What are your competitors doing?**

Easily checked. Just visit their sites and get someone to opt-in to their subscription list if you do not want to yourself. That way you will see exactly what approach they are taking. You will not be able to tell how successful it is without data but it will give you a guide in terms of consistency, design and content.

## STAGE 2 - How do you craft an effective email?

This stage will be covered in detail in Module 6.

## STAGE 3 - How to improve your open rates

This will touch upon what you will learn in Module 6 but ultimately the open rate comes down to three factors.

1. Does your subject line capture the reader's attention – would you stop to read your email?
2. Are you emailing them at the right time of day? See stage 4
3. Are your emails sent too regularly, not regularly enough? The gauge here is to send no more than one a week and only do them this frequently if you are giving your readers something in return for their time. You have to add value to their lives and that needs to be apparent from their experience of previous emails and through your subject line alone.

## STAGE 4 - The best time to send an email is

Emails have the best results within the 1st hour after delivery. This is when 23.63% of all emails are opened. But 24 hours after delivery, the average open rate is close to zero. Almost 40% of all messages are sent between 6 a.m. and noon. This can result in inbox clutter, and significantly decrease results for these emails. You should also avoid Monday mornings for this reason because people had weekend email traffic to catch up with!

Messages sent in the early afternoon have a better chance of being noticed and consequently achieve better results: up to 10.61% open ratio and up to 2.38% click through rate (CTR). Subscribers' top engagement times are 8 a.m. – 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.- 4 p.m. with up to 6.8% average open rates and CTR.

So this gives you a rough idea of when the best time to send is. It is not an exact science because there are so many variables involved. After 5pm your recipient could be eating their tea, bathing their kids, going to an aerobics class or cleaning their house. They could

equally be sat watching TV browsing their inbox. We are all different so there is no perfect time to send an email. Use your analytics and monitor the click through rates at the times you send them. Try different times of day and different days and review your process constantly.

STAGE 5 -Have you integrated social media?

It should be as easy as linking them as part of the setup process. Each email will then contain your full suite of social media platforms depending on which ones you manage. These are essential to help that click through rate. People may not visit your site but they might check you out on Facebook so give them as many ways to connect to you as possible.

STAGE 6 -Does your email work for mobile and tablet?

Make sure you check this yourself and also get other people, friends or colleagues to check it on their phones. Using more than one make of phone is best practise.

STAGE 7 -Is your email list secure?

This comes under data protection so you are responsibility for keeping people's email addresses stored securely. If they are being stored virtually on a password protected site then you are covered. If you print off a manual copy at any point this needs to be kept under lock and key.

STAGE 8- Final email marketing checklist

Here is an excellent checklist I used when I started getting into the habit of sending emails.

It is as accurate today as it was when it was written:

<http://www.b2bemailmarketing.com/2008/01/things-to-check.html>

STAGE 9 - Metrics to track

Analysing email campaigns requires three important insights:

1. You must use metrics that are unique to the medium.
2. You can't track everything.
3. You need to think end-to-end, and not just your silo.

One of the core challenges with email is that you have to deal with multiple data sources.

There are three primary sources:

1. Your campaign data. How many emails went, to whom, what happened to them...
2. Your website data. What happened after someone clicked on your email links?
3. Your company cross-channel outcomes data. Multi-channel customer purchase behaviour, customer lifetime value.

The kinds of questions you need to be asking the data will become apparent when I give you the formula for the answers:

Delivery rate =  $(\# \text{ of emails sent} - \# \text{ of bounce backs}) / \# \text{ of emails sent}$

Open rate =  $\# \text{ of emails opened} / \# \text{ of emails delivered}$

Click-to-deliver rate (CTDR) =  $\# \text{ of clicks} / \# \text{ of emails delivered}$

Subscriber retention rate =  $\# \text{ subscribers} - \text{bounce backs} - \text{unsubscribes} / \# \text{ subscribers}$

You can go into even greater detail but these figures should give you enough to measure the success of your email marketing campaign and steer it in the right direction.

Now that you have a good idea of how to set up your email campaign you will be ready for Module 6 that covers how to write a successful email.