

# HOW TO GIVE YOUR CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY REALLY WANT: THE SECRET TO SUCCESSFUL OPT-INS



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[The Unselfish Marketer](#)

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# INTRODUCTION

*“In marketing I've seen only one strategy that can't miss -- and that is to market to your best customers first, your best prospects second and the rest of the world last.”*

*John Romero*

Hi! Are you tired of spending hours trying to make your mailing list grow, only to find that the only thing you're getting is a bunch of uninterested customers? How would you like to turn that around, growing your mailing list exponentially in a matter of weeks?

Sound too good to be true? There are millions of marketing gurus out there who claim to be able to teach you what you need to grow to expand your mailing list, and they all want you to believe that they are the only ones who can show you how to make your business a success. The good news is that they aren't the only ones, which means that you don't have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to generate positive interest and convince people to sign on to your mailing list.



The secret to convincing visitors to your website is simple. You have to know what your clients *really* want, then you have to give it to them. That's it! That's not too hard, now is it? It's the secret to success in any industry. You undoubtedly want to give your clientele what they want. The problem is that in order to do that you have to first find out what it is!

I've had a lot of experience in the world of marketing, and I can tell you right now that a lot of what people would like you to believe is true really isn't. The "surefire, guaranteed" tricks that used to bring Internet consumers onboard with a mailing list are now guaranteed to make them suspicious and send them screaming away from your site before you've even had a chance to say hello-much less convince them that they should hand over their e-mail address so you can send them the information they need to know.

Because there is so much false information flying around on the market today I decided to sit down and put this book together. After all, I reasoned, doesn't everyone deserve the best chance possible to make their business a success? For the next couple of hours I'm going to show you the secrets to finding out what your clients *really want* and how you can use that information to convince them to opt-in to your mailing list. No tricks, no stunts and no under the table dealing. Just successful marketing.

## BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

As you read through the information I've written be sure that you take the time not only to see, but to ensure that you understand. You can see whatever you want to see, but if it doesn't make any sense to you it's not going to do you very much good! Take the time to go through and make notes, highlighting the opt-in secrets that you feel you will be able to implement most successfully. That way when you're sitting down putting your web page together you don't have to keep flipping through thinking, "Where was that again?" The best secret behind any well-planned marketing campaign is to stay organized. Now's a great place to get started!

If you find that there is something that you don't understand you should either make a note to go back to it later or *stop reading and do a little more research*. The secrets in this books are real opt-in techniques that will help you to exponentially grow your mailing list in a matter of weeks (literally!), but if you don't understand what they do or how to implement them into your own marketing campaign you're going to be right back where you started.

Also keep in mind as you go through this book that not all secrets are guaranteed to work the first time for every campaign. What successfully attracts one group of customers or clientele may do absolutely nothing for another, and unfortunately the only way to find out what's going to work for your particular campaign is through trial and error. For this reason it's important that you regularly track the success of your opt-in strategies, freshen up your landing page regularly and *don't be afraid to make changes if you find that something isn't working*. It won't take you long to figure out what your particular target group really wants, but until then you may find yourself playing a game of virtual poker; sooner or later you're going to have a winning hand, but you have to keep dealing until you get there!

*"Marketing is not an event, but a process . . . It has a beginning, a middle, but never an end, for it is a process. You improve it, perfect it, change it, even pause it. But you never stop it completely."*

*Jay Conrad Levinson*

## WHY IS A STRONG MAILING LIST IMPORTANT?

If you are an old hand to the marketing game you already understand how important a strong and growing mailing list is for the good of your business. You don't need me to tell you! If you are a newbie, however, you may be sitting here thinking, "What is all the fuss about? My properly optimized, beautifully formatted and easy to use website should be enough to keep my products or services going out. Why do I need to solicit a mailing list?"



There are multiple answers to that one. First and foremost, the best kind of customer is a repeat customer. Repeat customers will visit your business over and over again, be among the first to give your latest products or services a try and, most importantly, *they will refer their friends to you*. Repeat customers are an invaluable asset in the business world. The difficult part is turning a one time buyer into a full time customer.

Your mailing list is going to be the best tool you have to accomplish this. Your mailing list is the list of individuals that you can contact regularly with news concerning your business, which means that they are going to be the first to know when there is something unique going on with your business that might attract inspire them to pay you a visit. Through your mailing list people will hear about:

- New services
- New products
- Specials
- Sales
- Major events
- New locations
- Product recalls
- Staff changes
- ...and anything else related to your business.

You can see why having a strong mailing list would be a vital part to building a growing business. Let's say that you have a customer who signed up for your mailing list and made a purchase from your site, then never returned. Now let's also say that you come out with a new line of products that meet their needs perfectly.



Being the savvy businessperson that you are you have prepared a special bulleting for all the members of your mailing list telling them about the extent, purpose and availability of your new product line. This one-time customer happens to check their e-mail and sees this notice from you. They agree that your new product line will be perfect for them, and they come in and make a purchase. They are now a repeat customer-a repeat customer you wouldn't have had if they weren't on your mailing list.

Mailing lists are also an excellent opportunity to turn non-productive leads into productive ones. *Unless you know the secret to turning **every single browser** that comes to your site into a sale you are going to have far more visitors than you do customers.* (And if you know that secret you need to be the one writing this book instead of me!) The simple fact of the matter is that you cannot make everyone happy, all of the time. There are always going to be visitors to your site

that are looking for something in particular and simply do not find it. After all, no one's inventory is large enough to hold (literally) everything!

The good news is that if these people came to visit your site it was because there was something about it that appealed to them. Maybe they were looking for something in a specific genre. Maybe there is something that you carry that they want, but they were able to find it at a lower price somewhere else. Whatever the reason, there is something about your business that they liked and it's up to you to capitalize on that.

If you can convince these customers to opt-in to your mailing list, even if they don't make a purchase, you can send them news about your own products and services regularly. Sooner or later there's bound to be something that they're interested in, and boom! Suddenly that idle visitor is a customer, that can become a repeat customer, that can bring in other clients.

There are countless other reasons to grow your mailing list, but product promotion and your profit margin, generate interest in your products and services and turn your business into the raging success you want it to become!

## GETTING STARTED!

All right! Now that you know **why** you should grow your mailing list it's time to get down to actually **doing it**. Encouraging visitors to your online and offline locations to opt-in to your mailing list sounds like it should be simple. They're interested in what you have to offer, so they should be interested in your mailings and be willing to sign on the dotted line...right?

### *WHY GOOD CLIENTS SAY NO*

Unfortunately, thanks to the SPAM era it's not that simple. Mailing lists have been used and abused to drive consumers nuts, obtain their personal information to solicit business and sell that personal information for a profit to other companies who are trying to grow *their* mailing lists. Any visitors to your site are going to view opting in to your mailing list with a justifiable amount of skepticism. In their eyes, particularly if they have had problems with their personal information being violated before, opting in to a mailing list may feel like the equivalent to writing their name on the bathroom wall!



## *THE RULES OF OPT-IN LISTS*

As a marketing professional working with an opt-in mailing list you're going to find that SPAM is your most difficult adversary, and not because it's going to keep popping up in **your** e-mail! Many of your customers are going to be concerned that what you are going to send them is SPAM, a misconception that is going to send them running for the hills when you encourage them to opt-in to your mailing list-or calling the Better Business Bureau!

The single most important thing you need to know when it comes to your mailing list is how to ensure that you are **SPAM compliant** (meeting the guidelines of the CAN-SPAM Act passed in 2003). Failure to run a SPAM compliant mailing list can result in fines or, in extreme situations, jail time, neither one of which is going to be beneficial to helping your business grow and establish a good reputation.

The good news is that it is not difficult to run a SPAM compliant mailing list. Underneath are the key points established by the CAN SPAM Act for commercial e-mailers:

- 1) Your "From" header and routing information should allow the client to quickly recognize you as the sender.
- 2) The subject line should not be misleading; your clients and/or customers should be able to quickly recognize it as a mailing list mailing from your company, and it should accurately state what the mailing is for. For example, recipients of the monthly Borders Rewards newsletter generated by Borders Books may see the subject "10% of All Paperbacks" in their subject line if the store is running a 10% sale.
- 3) They **must** be able to opt-out of your mailing list, and you must be able to process their request to opt-out within 30 days. Note, this 30 days is only a formality. If you only send one or two e-mailings a month you may be able to get away with processing opt-outs after 30 days, but if you send four to five e-mails a week your customers are going to want to be removed much more quickly. If possible, remove them from your mailing list the moment they opt-out.



- 4) All commercial e-mails (e-mails pertaining to business rather than direct personal contact) must be identified as an advertisement, and you must include your **real, physical** postal address.

As I mentioned earlier, it's not hard to comply with the CAN SPAM Act. All you really have to do is be honest with your customers. If you're willing to deal above the table, follow the guidelines above and remember that your customers are not, under any circumstances obligated to sign up (and stay signed up) with your mailing list. Respect their right not to receive your mailings (and their intelligence) and you will never find yourself on the wrong side of a SPAM related lawsuit.

## GIVING YOUR CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY REALLY WANT: STRATEGIES THAT WORK

### *HOW TO DETERMINE WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS REALLY WANT*



Identifying your target audience is a key part of any marketing campaign, but when you're talking about building your opt-in mailing list it's only a small portion of it. You also need to consider what it is that your customers are looking for in visiting your website, and what is going to appeal to them enough that they will be willing to give you their contact information in order to receive it.

Like I mentioned earlier, there is no 100% guaranteed method of opt-in list building, and this is why. There is nothing that all of your customers are going to want, all at the same time—unless you're offering a million dollar giveaway, and we'll talk about why that's a bad idea in just a moment! Seriously though, your customers' diverse range of interests, ideas and desires are going to make finding that one special incentive that will appeal to them a challenge.

As a general rule there are two things that your clientele are going to be looking for: information and products. If you can provide them with one or the other you'll be well on your way not only to getting them to opt-in to your mailing list, but convincing them that they want to *stay* on your mailing list. We'll talk about the process of handing out products and samples as an incentive to opt-in in a little more detail when we get into our strategy session, so for the moment let's talk about wheeling and dealing in information.

Information is the most valuable, most widely accessible and most difficult to come by asset on the web. Why? Everyone wants it, and no one wants to take the time to get it.

What am I talking about? What happened the last time that you went looking for information on the Internet? I'll tell you what happened. You entered a query into a search engine box, then spent the next two or three hours reading website after website after website to walk away with the same information you read in the very first article-which really wasn't what you were looking for in the first place.



Thanks to the process of search engine optimization there are hundreds of websites out there at the top of the list in a search engine search for their subject that don't really have anything valuable to offer. Web surfers looking for quality information on a particular topic are doomed to spend hours of their time searching.

Imagine that you are one of those browsers. If someone offered you a way to get a large quantity of quality information without having to search site after site, what would you say to them? You'd probably ask them where you needed to sign! As an information marketer this is exactly what you want your clientele to do-sign up for your mailing list in exchange for the valuable information that you have to offer.

How do you determine what it is that your clients want from you? When considering the question of using information or product marketing you should consider your market and what they were looking for when they came to your site in the first place. A good tracker should show you the links that have been directing traffic to your site, so it should be easy to pinpoint what advertisements and keywords are working for you.

If the majority of your customers are directed to your site from an advertisement detailing your products and services you can almost guarantee that you are working with a product-oriented group of browsers that are going to be interested in information but aren't going to view it as a driving source. On the other hand, if your customers are repeatedly coming to you via the search engines and your alternate selection of keywords (other than your product name, that is) or if you find that your content pages are regularly being browsed you are sitting on a potential goldmine for wheeling and dealing in information.

You're never really going to know before you launch a campaign what's going to appeal to your clientele more, so you really need to just take a deep breath and take the plunge. If you're offering a product sample and your visitors aren't choosing to opt-in, switch over to a newsletter or other source of information. You can combine this information with special coupons and product offers to make it more appealing, combining the two to make it doubly appealing.

## **Never be afraid to make a change if something isn't working!**

Getting stuck in the repetitive rut of offering ineffective incentives, then wondering why more people aren't opting in to your mailing list, has been the downfall of many marketers. I've seen it happen over and over again. They find something they are comfortable with, something that "should" work, *something that would appeal to them*, and they don't bother to take action when they realize it doesn't work. Don't let this be you.

*"Never be afraid to try something new. Remember, amateurs built the ark; professionals built the Titanic. "*  
*Unknown*

## **STRATEGIES THAT WORK**

Are you ready to get started? From here on out we're going to leave behind all the "if's", "ands", "ors" and "whys" and concentrate on the "hows"-the how-to of building a great opt-in mailing list.

## **KEEP IT SIMPLE STUPID**

The first rule of building a successful mailing list is to employ the KISS method. Make signing up for your mailing list easy! If your site visitors have to search for the location of your opt-in, they're not going to sign up!



The bottom line is that web browsers are basically lazy. They want what they are looking for to be present in front of their face, yesterday, and they want it to do what it's supposed to do without much effort on their part. If you have hidden the sign-up for your mailing list so deep in your site that it's not immediately noticeable from your homepage you can guarantee that no one's going to come looking for it!

You have a couple of choices when it comes to choosing the location of your opt-in. You can place it right on your home page, which is what I usually encourage marketers to do. Many people drag their feet about doing this because they're afraid they are going to scare off their visitors; after all, who wants a demand for information to be the first thing they see when they go to a website?

They're absolutely right. No one wants the option to opt-in to a mailing list to be the first thing they see when they go to a site. They haven't even seen what the site and its developer have to offer, so how should they know whether or not they want to give you their personal contact information/ They don't!

What they do know, however, is where your homepage is. Most people aren't going to purchase a product the first time they come to a site, and most people aren't going to sign up for a mailing list the first time they come to a homepage. When they've had the chance to browse the extensive collection of quality products and/or information on your site, however, they'll be able to make an informed decision-and quickly find their way back to your homepage to sign up.

Where should you put your opt-in space so that it will be readily noticeable without being obnoxious? My best recommendation would be the upper left corner, followed by the upper right. People read a webpage from left to right and top to bottom, which means that what is at the top of the page on the left hand side is going to be the first thing that they see. Take a look at the sample webpage below:

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**Put Your Heading Here**

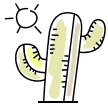


For the remainder of this page you are going to write endless amounts of successful sales content that is going to scintillate, titillate and excite your viewers. But what are they really going to see? Are they going to see the



high quality copy you're writing, or are they going to see the knick-knacks and do-dads that fill the corners of your screen?

So often we don't realize what it is that our readers are really paying attention to. We spend hours upon hours working on our webcopy and researching our options when what we really need to focus on is the layout of the copy already have. Location is everything when you're trying to appeal to your viewers.



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What was the first thing that you saw? The sun, followed closely by the sunglasses, right? Remember this exercise when you're attempting to decide where you want to place your opt-in option. You want it to be someplace clearly visible (and memorable!) so that your site visitors have the opportunity to see as soon as the page loads, take note of its cleverly subtle location (we'll talk about where NOT to put your opt-in in the next section!) and remember it was there when the time comes for them to leave

## *E-MAIL CONFIRMATION*

An e-mail confirmation opt-in is the process by which visitors come to your site, opt-in to your mailing list, and receive a letter in their e-mail Inbox asking them to confirm that they do, in fact, want to sign up for your mailing list. It's a great way to be sure that you are SPAM compliant **and** that the clientele you are attracting to your opt-in mailing list are the kind you are looking for-the kind that will still be interested months down the road.

Offering an e-mail confirmation on an opt-in mailing list is a 50/50 proposition. Some marketers choose to take advantage of it, some do not. It has a number of pros and cons:

### Pros

- There is absolutely, positively no way that anyone can accuse you of sending out unsolicited e-mails if your opt-ins have to confirm in an entirely separate e-mail that they want to be on your mailing list.
- This allows you to weed out those individuals who simply browse through the web, signing up for every free thing they can sign up for, then never do anything to help grow your business.

## Cons

- There is always the chance that an opt-in will take the time to consider and change their mind, rather than going with impulse.
- Some clients will consider it far too much trouble to confirm the message you send to their e-mail, deleting it without ever clicking on the link. (Because the thirty seconds it would take them to click on that confirmation link is far too much time out of their day.)
- This requires you to have an effective autosend and confirmation system so that you are not constantly forced to sit down and manually scroll through the lists of addresses you've received to ensure everyone has had the chance to opt in.

The bottom line is that an e-mail confirmation is a great way to gain your customers' trust, but it goes hand in hand with the chance that your customers may change their mind between their visit to your site and their e-mail and the possibility that a glitch in your system will cause you to lose a large amount of potential customers because their automated opt-in did not work like it was supposed to. The choice is entirely up to you.

## *ADVERTISING THROUGH YOUR AFFILIATES*

Regardless of how good your site is, you're never going to be able to reach *everyone* browsing on the web through a single location. It just doesn't happen! Making your mailing list grow means getting word about your company, your services and your products out to as many people as possible, and the best way to do that is through the process of affiliate marketing.



As a savvy Internet marketer you are probably already very familiar with the process of affiliate marketing. You don't need me to spell it out for you! Instead, let's look at how you can use affiliate marketing to spread the word about your opt-in mailing list.

When you place an ad or encourage your affiliates to do so, are you encouraging them to include a link to your website? Of course you are! Are you including a link that will take your visitors directly to the part of your site that will connect them to your newsletter? Ehhh...maybe not.

If you actively take part in affiliate marketing and have a great affiliate marketing network you are in a prime position to grow your mailing list. Your affiliates are already doing their part to get the word out to as wide an audience as possible. All you need to do is make sure that finding the link to sign up for your mailing list is as quick and easy as possible.

To do this, ensure that the opt-in is either on the very front page of your site or that it has its own link, complete with a brief introduction to you and your business. Your customers are going to need to know two things before they can sign up for your mailing list. The first is where they have to go to do it. The second is what they're going to get if they do. If you can provide both of those pieces of information in clear, concise language in a way that your clients are going to understand you'll be in a great position to increase your number of opt-ins exponentially-and enjoy the influx of business that comes with it.

## NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters have been proven to be the single best way to encourage people to sign up for your mailing list. People want to know that they're going to get something if they hand out their information, even if it's just their e-mail address. Remember, growing your opt-in mailing list is all about **giving your customers what they really want**. There are two things that your customers really want, regardless of what industry you're working in: information and value for their dollar. You can give them both through your newsletter.

A good newsletter won't read like a textbook or a newspaper article. If they wanted that your customers could take themselves out on the 'net and find it themselves! You want your newsletter to be both fun and informative so that your customers will look forward to reading it every month. Remember, getting them to sign up for your mailing list is only half the battle. The other half is *keeping* them signed up-and when the CAN SPAM Act requires that you make opting out of your mailing list as simple as opting in this can be a real challenge!

Most marketers send their newsletters out on a monthly basis, although whether that is because they are only interested in having them distributed that often or because they only have time to put together one each month varies! It is entirely up to you how often you want to distribute your newsletter, but bi-weekly to monthly tends to generate a more positive response. That way they're not being overloaded!



Newsletters can be a real challenge to your ingenuity and creativity, so you are going to have to work hard to make sure that yours stays fresh, informative and fun. What can you include in your newsletter to help keep the attention of your clients and keep them coming back for more?

- Informative topics related to you, your business and other related fields. You don't have to put together a newsletter that sounds like an academic journal, but its content should have something to do with your industry and other related fields. For example, if you specialize in body care products you may choose to include articles on massage, herbal

therapies and relaxation techniques. If you offer financial counseling services you could fill your newsletter with tricks and tidbits for building a portfolio and watching your bank account grow. The people who sign up for your newsletter already have a vested interest in you and what you do. All you have to do is appeal to that interest.

- Coupons and discounts. These will be discussed a little later on, but trust me-this is a great way to get people to sign on the dotted line to opt-in to your mailing list!
- Trivia and fun information. People have a natural superiority complex. They want to believe that they know more than the person sitting next to them, and if you include in your newsletter each month a piece of obscure, industry related trivia they will be able to enjoy that feeling knowing that they're right!
- Human interest stories. Information without personality becomes very boring, very quickly. In order to make your company more human to your customers you want to make sure to include plenty of human interest stories and features. This could range from a personal success testimony to a story that appeared in the news fifty years ago-if it yanks an emotional response out of your readers, you've already won.
- Jokes, quotes and funnies. There's a reason that the monthly edition of Reader's Digest is popular enough that people pay up to \$50 a year to get it, and it's not just because they have good features. Pieces such as "Humor in Uniform" appeal to the reader every bit as much. If you can make the people reading your newsletter laugh you'll have assured that they'll come back next month just to see what outrageous joke or story you've managed to come up with this month.

The same principle applies to motivational quotes. If you work one on one with people in your job you know that a mantra for success is a vital part of pushing past the roadblocks standing in your way and achieving true success. Providing your clientele with motivational quotes that they can put on their letterheads, stick to their mirrors and pull out when they need an extra little push to keep going will make your newsletter the highlight of their month.

- Contests and puzzles. Again, we'll get into the promotional aspect of this a little later; however, a newsletter is a great place to post a monthly contest or puzzle that will draw in your readers-particularly if you happen to offer a small prize to the winner.
- Information about your company. Last but not least, you want to tell your customers all about you! After all, the reason they're looking at your website is because they're interested in what you have to offer. You want to make sure they know what's going on in your company. Unless you run a major corporation this doesn't have to be a financial prospectus. Tell your readers about things that have gone right and things that have gone wrong, where it looks like the company will make some changes and what changes have



already occurred. By helping them keep up with what's going on in your company they'll be able to feel like they are a part of what you are trying to achieve.

*"If the circus is coming to town and you paint a sign saying "Circus Coming to the Fairground Saturday," that's advertising. If you put the sign on the back of an elephant and walk it into town, that's promotion. If the elephant walks through the mayor's flower bed, that's publicity. And if you get the mayor to laugh about it, that's public relations. If the town's citizens go the circus, you show them the many entertainment booths, explain how much fun they'll have spending money at the booths, answer their questions and ultimately, they spend a lot at the circus, that's sales."*

*Unknown*

## **SEPARATE NEWSLETTER LINKS**

The question of whether to establish a separate link for your newsletter or simply include the link on your home page is one that marketers have been debating for some time. The bottom line is that there really is no right or wrong answer to that; as long as your opt-in link is easy to find, easy to understand, easy to use and located someplace where your readers will have the chance to read about you, your company and your services before they opt-in than you have it in the right place.

That said, establishing a separate link for your newsletter can provide you with a wide variety of benefits. Your visitors will have the chance to browse through your site before making the determination as to whether or not they want to opt-in to your mailing list. This makes **you** look better, because you're not trying to go out of your way to solicit their contact information (and therefore look like your average, ordinary, everyday spammer). Your customers will be able opt-in to your mailing list with confidence.

Perhaps more importantly, if you establish a separate newsletter link you will have the chance to post copies of past newsletters so that your customers will know **exactly** what it is that they're getting. They'll be able to look over your past newsletters and see what kind of content you offer, whether it is entertaining and/or informative, how it is formatted and whether or not it is something they would care to read on a regular basis.

So how do you decide what's going to work best for you? Again, trial and error-although taking a good, hard look at your home page might be a good place to start. If your home page is so cluttered with assorted ads and pieces of information your opt-in link may very well find itself lost in the clutter. On the other hand, if your home page is bare and looks as though you desperately need to hire an interior decorator to jazz it up it could be a great place to stick your opt-in link-with all the fanfare you can find.



## *COUPONS/DISCOUNTS*

Okay, I mentioned the use of coupons and discounts to promote your opt-in list earlier. Coupons and discounts are a GREAT way to get people to sign on the dotted line to get your mailings. Think about it. Regardless of how often you shopped at a particular store, if you knew ahead of time that every time you got a piece of their junk mail you'd get a coupon too what would you say? Probably, "Where do I sign?"

Whether your customers are one time buyers who are satisfied with what you have to offer and might come back or regulars who come to your site daily, they are all going to be interested in saving money. If you're holding a coupon and you never get the chance to use it, but you know you're going to get another one next month, who cares? The point is that you got it, and there's another one coming.

Your newsletter is a great place to distribute your newsletter. Borders bookstore has made a fine art of this with their Borders Rewards newsletter. It's free to sign up for the Borders Rewards program, and every time one of their members gets a newsletter they're guaranteed to get a coupon they can use on their next visit to the store as well. This accomplishes two things; it grows their opt-in list, which lets them reach more individuals and grow their customer base, and it encourages people to pay a visit to their physical location (where they're more likely to make an impulse buy from one of the displays) rather than simply shopping online. Sneaky, aren't they?



Another thing that Borders has done right to encourage their clientele to opt-in to their Borders mailing list is incorporate it into their Borders Rewards discount program. I'll skip over the fine points of the program (if you're a book nut you can go online and check it out yourself), but the Borders Rewards program essentially rewards customers for coming back. If they spend a certain amount in the store they get a small portion of that amount back in store credit. That alone is enough to encourage people to keep coming back, and they have just taken what

might have been a one or two time buyer and made them a regular customer. In addition, they have also given people a reason to join their mailing list-they can take their coupons, come into the store, make a purchase of a product they were interested in anyway, and earn a small rebate that they can spend later. Where's the downside?

That doesn't mean you should run out and start a "**Your name here's** Rewards Program," but it's something to think about. You also want to consider the possibility of offering your customers a discount on the purchase they're at your site to make that day if they sign up for your mailing list. Your customer will be able to enjoy a little bit of instant gratification (and come on, let's be honest...who doesn't enjoy instant gratification when it comes to saving money?) and you'll get to rub your hands together in glee as you add yet another name to your opt-in list.

When you're deciding what kind of discounts and coupons you want to give away, keep the following points in mind:

- You rarely want to offer a discount specifically for your hottest selling item or a product that is going to be new on your shelves. These products are going to sell themselves! Instead, try to concentrate your discounts on lesser selling items that need a little help finding their way out into the mainstream.
- General coupons (i.e. 20% off any piece of merchandise for kids, or any purchase over \$20, or any of a particular brand of product) work great for encouraging your customers to come back because they feel like they're being given a choice in what they want to buy rather than thinking you're just out to unload all of the merchandise you couldn't sell.
- Don't give away more than you can afford. If you're just barely staying in the black, offering a 50% discount on everything in the store probably isn't the way to go! Consider the risks against the benefits, and do what you feel will help you bring in customers while still maintaining a respectable profit margin.
- Try to mix up your discounts. The last thing you want to do is become predictable. You want your customers to look forward to looking in their inbox each month! Mix up your coupons. Offer a \$5 off coupon for anything in the store one month, then 20% off any purchase of this season's swimwear the next month, then a "Buy One, Get One Free" discount the following month. This keeps it interesting and keeps your customers waiting anxiously for the coupon that's going to let them buy the exact thing they want for the price they're looking for.
- Don't offer a coupon for something that's already on sale. That's just tacky, and it makes you look cheap. The only exception to this is if you have a particularly expensive item that you have put on sale for a small discount and the coupon makes a noticeable difference.

For example, say that you specialize in selling a particular line of clothing. A top of the line coat from that particular line may normally cost your customers \$200. Now, assume that you're coming up on the end of winter and you need to move all of your excess stock. Since it's still early in the season you offer a 20% discount on the coats, bringing them down to \$160. That's \$40 in savings, but still very pricey for the average consumer. If you were to take an extra 30% off of the sales price with a special coupon available only to members of your opt-in mailing list you would accomplish three things:

- 1) You would reduce the price of the coat to \$112. This puts it into the range of those average, ordinary citizens living day to day on their average, ordinary paycheck, even though it's a far above average piece of clothing. This is going to appeal to your consumer base, and you will instantly make the purchase more attractive.
- 2) You have taken great strides in clearing the excess inventory from your back room so that you have room for the next season's hits.
- 3) Your opt-in list will grow via word of mouth as customers brag to other customers about the great price they got on their \$200 coat and other customers want to know what they can do to save money too. Customer A tells Customer B they get discounts in the mail, et voila! Customer B wants to know how they can sign up for the mailing list too. Everybody wins.

## *FREE TRIALS AND DOWNLOADS*

To get back to the fact that all consumers are basically misers at heart, another great way to promote your opt-in mailing list is to offer them a free trial of one of your products or services or a free download of a piece of software, e-book, ringtone, song or anything else associated with your business that your customers will be interested in.



Choose carefully when deciding what you're going to give away, because the appeal of your free trial or download is going to determine how successful your attempts to grow your mailing list are going to be when all is said and done. If you're trying to give away something that you couldn't even give away...well, you get the idea!

The whole principle behind this book is to help marketers give their customers what they really want, and here's a great place to start. What is it you are offering that your customers want? As there were with the coupons and discounts there are some basic rules that you're going to need to follow when making your decision:

- 1) This is a great time to forget the rule about not giving away pieces of your biggest sellers **if** you can offer them piecemeal; for example, if you run an online bookstore (Yes, I keep

coming back to the bookstore thing. What can I say? They've figured out how to do it right!) and there is a popular author who has a book that is due to be released soon you can offer a "teaser"-the first chapter or two, downloadable for free, to give your customers a feel for what the finished product is going to look like.

- 2) This is also a great time to unload some products that just aren't selling all that well if you happen to have them available in digital format. If you sell software and there's a particular program that's helpful but just doesn't seem to be pulling in the big bucks you could offer a simplified version free of charge. Not only is this a quick plug for your software, it's a great way to catch your customers' eye and encourage them to opt in to your mailing list.
- 3) Don't choose randomly. If you specialize in accounting software this isn't the time to try out your skills writing a dating e-book. Your customers are there because what you have to offer is what they want to see. Don't feel like you need to stretch yourself beyond your field of expertise to make your opt-in look more attractive. Stick to what you know and you can't go wrong.

## *CONTESTS/PRIZES*

Contests are another great way to make your clientele feel more involved in your business, your activities and your mailing list. Like the coupons, contests are a good thing to incorporate into your monthly newsletter. A monthly contest, complete with prize, is an instant attraction. Your clientele will come back month after month in the hope that this time they'll be the winner.



What kind of contest you choose to run is entirely up to you. You can run a trivia contest, pandering to the egos of your readers. (Remember the trivia section of your newsletter?) If you prefer to run things based entirely on chance you could offer an online, poker style game, or you could ask your clients to send in suggestions for your newsletters and judge the best one. You could ask for recipes, suggestions, jokes...anything

goes!

## *E-BOOKS*

If you are trying to come up with a download and you aren't sure where you should turn, consider including a free e-book along with your mailing list opt-in. This is a good one for people in specialized industries, since a free trial might not be easy to come up with. Specialized industries always have clients that are looking for more information, and that kind of information is usually not easy to come by. This is your chance to display yourself as the subject matter expert that you are!

If you aren't incredibly, creatively minded and the thought of actually having to *write* your own e-book is enough to leave you trembling in your shoes and waking up in cold sweats in the middle of the night you have options. You could choose to hire the job out to a professional ghostwriter, who is going to take your ideas and turn them into a well-formulated book. A ghostwriter is a great source of writing skill but isn't going to have the expertise in your subject that you do.

On that note, if you are working in a specialized field you are going to want to work with a writer that will work closely with you. Many of the ghostwriters in the business write based on a brief period of research into a field about which they know absolutely nothing about. These e-books are overpopulating the Internet, being distributed chock full of surface information that these readers could find on their own if they took the time to do a Google search.

I don't know about you, but I think that kind of defeats the purpose of dealing in information. I mean, why would you want to offer someone something they could find all on their own and try and convince them it was something special? If you're going to offer an e-book in your own specialized industry you need to reach out and work hand in hand with your writer. Your book should carry your own flair.

On that note, you can always take a deep breath, suck in your chest and try to write your e-book on your own. You might surprise yourself! If you've taken the time to build your website and your business then you have what it takes to reach out and teach another aspiring young professional how to get to where you are. You have a wealth of experience that no one else can ever hope to find on the pages of a website. Your experience is what's going to make your e-book unique, and a unique e-book is the key to success in the wide, over-exploited world of cyberspace.

Regardless of whether you choose to work hand in hand with a ghostwriter or take the leap and write your book yourself, know that your



e-book is going to be the driving force behind your site the moment you let it hit the airwaves. The most important thing is that it has the quality it needs to make it a success. If you've got the quality and the one of a kind information you've got your success sewn up in your pocket.

## **WELL DEVELOPED WEBSITE**

Believe it or not, stepping aside from the secret, sneaky, guerilla tactics, a well developed website is the most valuable weapon you've got in building your mailing list. Why? A well developed website is going to be the first thing that grabs your customer's attention. You undoubtedly learned at the very beginning of your marketing career that the best asset you have in encouraging new business is a carefully structured, detail oriented website that is both clear and concise, full of information, key graphics and as little pointless hype as you can get away with and still sound enthusiastic about your business.

The most important thing you can do to build a well developed website is remember that your clientele don't care how many great things you have to say about your product or service. They want to know:

- a) What it is
- b) What it does
- c) What it costs
- d) What it can do for them

*“Customers buy for their reasons, not yours.”*  
*Orvel Ray Wilson*

Far too many website designers become wrapped up in the process of hyping their business and completely and totally forget to mention what they do. It's kind of like all of those pyramid schemes floating around out there where the representatives are so eager to tell you about the money you can make and the potential you have to grow your base of business until you're making thousands of dollars of residual income a month that they conveniently forget to tell you *what*, exactly, it is that you are selling.

Perhaps this should have gone under the section of what **not** to do rather than what **to** do, but just as a poorly developed website can cost you customers (in today's SPAM filled world of Internet swindlers customers can't be too careful) a well developed website will seal the deal. Create your website with an eye to quality and you will have customers lined up at your door waiting to opt-in to your mailing list; after all, who could offer them anything better?

## **BRINGING OFFLINE CLIENTS ONLINE**





it!

If you are running your business from a physical location you are in a unique position to grow your opt-in list that not many people get to enjoy-you can blend the privileges of operating online with the convenience of being able to speak to your customers face to face. You can't beat

If you're looking into taking your offline customers online the only thing you have to do is ask them on their way out if they'd be interested in opting in to your mailing list-and be sure to stress the facts. Like we mentioned above when discussing websites, there are a few things that your clients are going to want to know about your mailing list. They want to know:

- a) What do they get out of it?
- b) What do you get out of it?
- c) Who else are you going to share their information with?
- d) How often are you going to be mailing/e-mailing them?
- e) How are you going to contact them?

A word of advice: Asking for a phone number when it comes to expanding your opt-in list offline will usually send them running for the hills, terrified, images of solicitation calls coming day after day after day from your company until they are forced to change their number or skip town. It's going to be up to you to reassure them.

When you're talking to your offline customers be sure to "casually mention" that you are also running a mailing list that offers them the chance for some great discounts and coupons, and you'll keep them up to date on new products and special events in the store. Be honest; the downside to operating offline, particularly if you live in a small town rather than an extremely urban area, is that everyone is going to know the truth about you and your opt-in list inside of three months.

Word of mouth is the single most powerful tool you are going to have when it comes to moving your offline





customers online; we discussed that briefly earlier in the section on discounts and coupons. Just as word of mouth can help grow your business, so too can it help to tear it apart. By being open with your customers up front, making sure that the mailings you send out are full of valuable “stuff” that they can’t live without and not placing any pressure on your clientele to hand over their contact information (particularly if they happen to be new customers) you’ll help establish their trust in you and ensure that they not only opt-in to your mailing list, they **stay** opted in.

### *EASY OPT-OUT OPTIONS*

Have you ever stumbled into a site online that looked great, had a great product, a great sales pitch and made promises of having a one of a kind, valuable newsletter for its patrons, only to find out that in the end it was all a bunch of hype and the only thing you had when the hype stopped was yet **another** piece of junk mail in your inbox? The answer to that is probably yes; we’ve all been there. What I hate are the ones that you find out are junk, attempt to unsubscribe from, then have to either spend the next thirty days deleting said junk from your inbox until they finally take you off their mailing list, spend thirty minutes digging through their e-mails and their site for a way to opt-out, because their opt-out link doesn’t work, or, my personal favorite, the ones you have to write to management to get you off their mailing list because there is no electronic recourse available to you.

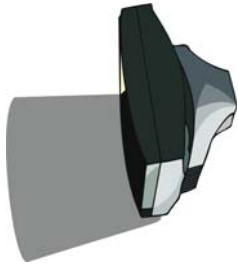
Guess what? You don’t want to be that person. When your first e-mail newsletter pops up in your customers’ inbox the first thing they are going to do, whether they like what you have to offer or not, is look for a way to opt-out of your list. They want to know whether or not you’re a fraud just out to load them up with useless propaganda.

You’re probably sick of hearing the doom and gloom warnings by this point, but it’s the fear of finding themselves the victim of hundreds of thousands of pieces of useless e-mail that’s going to send customers screaming away from your opt-in list. If you make your opt-out options easy to find, the directions easy to follow and the opt-out process as immediate as possible you’ll establish at least a small amount of credibility. That small amount of credibility is all that you need to keep them from opting out in the first five minutes. It’s up to your mailing list content to do the rest.

Which brings us to the last thing you need to do to guarantee your opt-in list goes through the roof...

### *QUALITY E-MAIL CONTENT*

I've said it twice, I've said it thrice and don't think I really *need* to say it again...but I'm going to anyway. If there's one thing I've learned in my marketing career it's that today's consumers are not the suckers they were fifty years ago. They are better educated about handling their money, shopping for bargains and, perhaps most importantly, spotting the red flags that mean they're going to get ripped off.



One of the first things that customers learn to look for is poor quality e-mail content that's filled with plenty of sales and very little quality information. Your customers don't want to read that, and they don't want you sending it to them. If they wanted to watch poor quality advertisements there's always late night television!

In for a penny, in for a pound. If you're going to run an opt-in mailing list it's up to you to make sure that it's filled with quality content that your customers are going to want to read. A good question to ask yourself is, "Would I want this to land in my inbox?" If the answer to that is no, take a day or two and go back to the drawing board. You'll be glad you did.

## WHAT YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT PARTNERING WITH OTHER SITES

Alongside the fear of being blessed with tons upon tons of junk mail is the fear that if they give you their contact information your customers are going to become mailing fodder for any other two-bit salesman on the web. It's a valid concern; there are companies out there that will pay and pay well for access to the client files and contact information of an established website, especially one with a solid reputation and a large list of opt-in clients. If you need an example, simply go to Google and type in "mailing list contact info". See those sponsored links? Every one of those links is a company that's selling contact information to marketers looking for a way to boost their sales, and the fact that they're still in business means that they're making a great deal of money doing it.

The best thing you could do for yourself and your credibility is to keep your client information 100% confidential; however, if you do choose to partner up with another site to share your client contact information there are a few things you must know.

- a. First, carefully investigate any company that approaches you or that you choose to approach before handing over a single name on your contact list. Giving your client information out to a company that is...shall we say, decidedly less scrupulous than you...will not only cut your bridges with your clients, it will ensure that you don't have any more in the near future. That's bad.
- b. Be up front with your clients about the companies with whom you are partnered. Provide them with a list of names and websites and allow them to check them out before they commit to allowing you to share their contact information. Just as you need to make a well informed decision regarding working hand in hand with a particular company, so too do your clients need to be able to check the company out before they give them access to information that could have potential consequences.
- c. Give them the option to **not** share their information with anyone but you. You're the one they are interested in, and if they choose to allow you and you alone to contact them who are you to argue?
- d. Ensure that the companies you are partnered with share your target audience in some way, shape or form. If you're a manufacturer of men's shoes you probably don't need to include a link to a site specializing in women's healthcare. On the other hand, parenting sites may come in handy. Be willing to open yourself up to some obscure possibilities if they are willing to share their client lists with you, but don't be too obscure.

There's nothing worse than opting in to receive mail from a specific company, only to have their second cousin's brother's aunt's sister's friend's boyfriend's half sister's uncle come knocking on their door. Be practical, and focus on partnering with sites that offer what your customers want.

## WHAT NOT TO DO

*"People don't want to be "marketed TO"; they want to be "communicated WITH.""*  
*Flint McGlaughlin*

Just as there are tried and true secrets to building your opt-in list, so too are there tried and true secrets to running it into the ground. We mentioned a couple of the “don’ts” earlier when we were talking about the “do’s”. Let’s into a few other techniques that you should avoid with a ten foot pole if you want to enjoy real success with your opt-in list. While this isn’t by any means everything you need to know (that would take days!) these are common downfalls of new marketers that can suck you in like quicksand if you aren’t careful. If you find yourself tempted to give any of them a try shut down your computer, grab a Snickers bar and give me a call in the morning. The disaster you will have averted will be well worth every wasted minute. (And be honest...do you really consider a few hours alone with milk chocolate and nougat to be wasted time?)

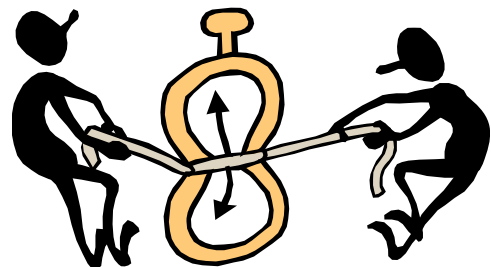
### ***DENYING THEM ENTRANCE-THE RISE AND FALL OF SQUEEZE PAGES***

If I could grab a big, red stamp and stamp the word NO across anything in the world of marketing it would be the practice of making squeeze pages. This popular yet ineffective method of encouraging your clients to opt-in to your mailing list will crash and burn your efforts faster than almost anything else you could do to sabotage your campaign. Just say no. Really.

If you aren’t familiar with the concept, squeeze pages are pages that are placed between a link and a webpage requiring clients to opt into a mailing list before they will be permitted to gain access to the site. On the surface this seems like a great idea. Everyone that wants to visit your site is guaranteed to opt-in to your mailing list. You’re an instant success!

The problem is, it doesn’t work like that. Why? Because web site designers are so anxious to encourage people to sign on to their mailing list that they fill their squeeze pages with way too much sizzle and not enough steak. They load the pages with so much hype that they forget to mention the kind of details about themselves, their company and their products or services that make the difference when it comes to success or failure in building their mailing lists.

A lot of people will argue with you that a squeeze page is still an effective way of building your mailing list. You just need to skip over the hype and put just enough information into it to catch their attention but not enough to give away the game. Take my advice and don’t listen.



Today's customers are tired of squeeze pages, tired of receiving mailings from sites for months because they didn't know what they were getting into and tired having to fill out their personal information every time they want to visit a website. There are trillions of websites on the web, and chances are good that yours isn't the only one dealing with your particular subject, product or field. They have hundreds of other options. The last thing you want to do is give you a reason to use one of them.

There is a difference between a squeeze page and a sales letter on the home page of your site, which is something you should be aware of right off the bat. Many marketers attempt to avoid the prospect of a sales letter altogether because they are afraid that it will look too much like a squeeze page and their customers will lose interest. The difference between these types of pages and a squeeze page is that a customer has the option to browse through the rest of your site when presented with a sales letter. A squeeze page cuts them off altogether until they have handed over that e-mail address. A rather poor arrangement, wouldn't you agree?

*"...your squeeze page is a barrier to what is behind it. It bars people from your website, and can possibly scare your customers away."*

*Ray Edwards*

## **PARTNERING WITH UNKNOWN COMPANIES**

This topic deserves its own headline, but since we've already talked about it back under the section of partnering with other companies I'll just say this. Tread carefully. Your customers and your opt-in mailing list are the most precious resources you have with regard to the survival of your business, and the last thing you want to do is lost either one of them. If you choose to partner with an unknown company and then misrepresent them to your clientele you're going to find yourself in the uncomfortable position of doing both-a position you certainly don't want to be in, and a position I don't want you to find yourself in.

To partner with a site safely, ensure that you have carefully researched them and that you are 100% honest with your customers about them and your relationship with them when they opt-in to your mailing list. This is the most important part of a good marketing strategy; once you have your customers' trust you can do anything. Don't abuse it.

## **MISREPRESENTING YOUR MAILING MATERIALS**

Misrepresentation of your mailing materials, whether it is through an online opt-in, an in store sign-up or anywhere else, is a serious offense and a major abuse of your customer's trust. Like I said before, don't hesitate for a moment to tell your customers the truth. They deserve to know what they're getting into, and you need to give them the opportunity.

### *How Much is Too Much?*

One major factor you're going to have to take into consideration with your mailing list is how much is too much? Whether you're emailing your customers or sending your materials via snail mail you're going to have to know when to draw the line. Yes, it's tempting to send out a mass e-mail every time something happens, or you get a new product in, or you branch out to a new service. The problem with that is that in a successful, growing business that happens **every day**.

It doesn't matter how much your customers like you, or how interested they are in your business. They don't want to get e-mail from you every day! The best thing you can do is to limit yourself to a regularly scheduled mailing, either on a monthly, weekly or bi-weekly basis, and save any extras for when they simply won't wait-like when you're having a once a year sale with everything in stock 75% off for one day only. Letting people know that you're launching a new product line, however, will wait until your regularly scheduled program.



Overloading your customers with information is as detrimental as giving them too little. They want to know about your company, but they want to know about it *as it applies to them*. That means that there's a lot you can leave out in the interest of keeping it personal. Customers are delightfully self-centered like that! The good news is that that makes your life much easier. If you can give them the bare bones facts about your business, what you do and what you can do for them you can rest assured that you've given them all they need to know.

## CONCLUSION

Congratulations! You now have the tools you need to go out there, put together your opt-in options and watch your mailing list grow. None of these strategies, tools, tips or techniques is going to cost you anything in dollars and cents, and if you have taken the time to go through and

take notes like I recommended in the beginning you should understand them well enough that implementing them will only cost you a couple of hours of your time.

Remember, the sooner the better. The sooner you can go out there and start making use of what I've taught you, the sooner you're going to start to see results. Used properly these techniques can start working for you exponentially in a matter of weeks, so sit back and hold on to your hat! You've finally got the tools you need to take your business out into the spotlight, grow your opt-in mailing list and enjoy the kind of success you've always dreamed of.

*Good luck!*

## **Here's THE Secret Membership No One Wants You To Know About**



**Forget All About Buying \$7 Products** Because That's Too Expensive - HUH...!

**Join A Club That PURCHASES PLR & MRR Products**

For You Every Second Day Thru A "Wish System" So You Decide What We Buy...

This Membership Has Open Records & Purchases Products For \$2000+ Every Month (**you read that right – TWO Thousand Dollars**) PLUS You Get PROhosting, 100 Autoresponders, Full Access To JVM2 Fantasos Hosted, 18+ More Memberships And So Much More: [See Everything Here](#)