

Table of Contents

Introduction: Why Email Marketing?2
The Email Campaign Rulebook: Your cheat sheet to getting started.2
Newsletter Planning: What do I need to be thinking about?.3
Building an Email List: How to reach the right audience..4
List Segmentation: Stop! Are you using targeting and personalization the right way?5
Unlocking the Email Content Formula6
Testing: What are the key ingredients to your unique success strategy?7
Measuring Results: Establishing Benchmarks to Measure Success9
Facing Obstacles: What’s preventing you from success?	11
How to Deal with Common Challenges	11
Ideas for Effective Email Marketing!	12

Introduction: Why Email Marketing?

Business owners and marketers alike have a multitude of options when it comes to communicating with their target audiences. From internet marketing to social media, from direct mail to personalized URL's, the platforms and possibilities are endless. With innovative software and cutting edge internet technologies, marketers are being offered a sea of cost-effective and revolutionary applications. Getting started with even one specific platform can be overwhelming. That's why learning from the experts and paying attention to trends can often help establish a no-fail communications formula.

Since the success in each marketing platform is dependent on a vast amount of variables like timing, application and measurement, consistency, content, community etc., it is hard to say which one can undoubtedly give you the highest ROI. What we know for sure is that email has become one of the most successful communications platforms of our time. According to the Direct Marketers Association, email marketing has an average return on investment of \$43.52 for every dollar spent which is expected to reach \$44.25 by the end of 2011. According to Econsultancy's "Email Marketing Census 2011," the vast majority of responding companies (72%) rate email as 'excellent' or 'good' for return on investment.

According to the Direct Marketing Association's study "Power of Direct" (2011), commercial email is expected to drive \$63.1 billion in sales in 2011, compared to \$57.8 billion in 2010. Across the board from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies, email marketing is used to build relationships with existing clients, connect with potential customers, acquire new leads, manage affordable advertising campaigns, launch promotions, support sales and of course, brand the company. Just as with any marketing application, success is highly dependent on your ability to generate powerful messages that reach the right audiences.

Connect one on one with your opt-in e mail list at work, at home or on their mobile and increase sales and awareness and build customer loyalty.

Don't launch your email marketing campaign without reading these invaluable key points!

The Email Campaign Rulebook: Your cheat sheet to getting started.

Before you launch into the campaign planning process, make sure you are clear on the primary rule of email marketing. Spam is much more than a four letter word; it can actually determine critical outcomes from losing clients to tarnishing the company's professional reputation. The definition of spam is simple, it means sending an email to someone with the motive of promoting your product without getting permission from them first. You have unlimited potential with your email marketing as long as you comply with the CAN-SPAM of 2003 requirements for commercial email that state,

You must receive permission from your email recipient in order to send commercial or bulk email.

(1) AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT - The term 'affirmative consent', when used with respect to a commercial electronic mail message, means that – (A) The recipient expressly consented to receive the message, either in response to a clear and conspicuous request for such consent or at the recipient's own initiative. **CAN-SPAM ACT of 2003

Tailoring opt-in acquisition is covered in the section titled, "Building an Email List: How to reach the right Audience", but the first stop is a plan of attack.

Email Newsletter versus Email Marketing

While both the newsletter and ongoing email drip campaigns impact critical stages of the sales cycle in different ways, it is still appropriate to have a blueprint strategy for each. The newsletter is used to deliver articles, content, promotions and aims at building a community for your customer base, where drip campaigns require a much more targeted, purchase and trigger-based planning strategy. Either way, a subscriber will open only that which applies to them regardless if it's an automated trigger or the newsletter.

Newsletter Planning: What do I need to be thinking about?

Your planning process is highly dependent on your subscriber list. Armed with demographics and trend data, including industry, purchase history, sales status and any other relevant background stats you should be able to compile defined communication goals such as the type of content and how many templates you will be deploying. You should have a final list of about 2-4 newsletter templates that can later be set up for A/B testing (see “Testing: What are the key ingredients to your unique success strategy”). It is likely that you will find a higher return from generating industry specific, or status specific templates.

Once you have outlined an appropriate plan, which may include,

- Date
- Department
- Campaign
- Format
- List and List Size
- Segmentation (clients, transactional etc.)
- Tracking or Source Code

Scheduling the newsletter and preparing an editorial schedule are your next stop!

Based on your diagnosis prepare the email distribution outline. Do you want to deploy email newsletters once a month, when a product launches, when there is a new whitepaper to download, when you have a promotion, a special event or on a weekly basis with your most recent blog posts? There is a multitude of content and resources which you could be sending your subscriber based on their relationship to you as well as on what you think is exciting and relevant to them.

Next, consider your email distribution schedule. The day of the week and the time of day can highly affect your rate of opens and click through rate. While scheduling is intimately related to targeting (see also Section 3 “Building an Email List: How to reach the right audience” and “Section 4 List Segmentation: Stop! Are you using targeting and personalization the right way?”), there are particular benchmarks you can follow when setting a tentative schedule.

For example, according to Smith-Harmon in a study titled “Retail Email Unsubscribe Benchmark Study,” Friday is the most popular day of the week to send out promotional emails. About 42% of the US Online Retailers send at least one promotional email on every Friday.

Determine when your audience is most likely to be receptive. Consider when you will have low competition from other marketers and when are you most likely to command the full attention of your subscriber base. Once you begin testing the templates and the content on your various target/subscriber groups you will be able to finalize a timing formula that works for your unique audience base.

Purchase behavior and preferences are great indicators of content for both email drip campaigns and the email newsletter. If you have a list of customers that bought a version of your software that now has a brand new upgrade with expanded features, they will be much more likely to open an email that discusses the benefits, applications and new features of the software than those who do not use it. Sending out coupons for lunch specials late morning versus in the evening are also a great example of applying timing techniques. Who your subscribers are and the type of content you will be generating should give you a clear roadmap to appropriate timing techniques to your content.

Building an Email List: How to reach the right audience.

Building a solid email list can be a marketing campaign in its own. While much of the contacts flow into your email pipeline organically i.e., existing customers, new customers and prospects it is in your best interest to keep funneling new contacts in. The more touch points that you syndicate the more credible and committed your email subscriber base will be. Consider which mediums you are already using that can be subscriber touch points. For example, if you have a contact list which you send direct mail to regularly, design an incentive like a special offer or whitepaper download, and require an email address for the eligibility or download. You may want to adapt SEO or PPC internet marketing campaigns to include specific requirements like an email address for any free trials, downloads, offers, promotions and discounts. Your website is also a powerful tool and should have a clear and designated email newsletter sign up plug in accessible to every visitor. But remember, you must have a user opt in before you make them an actual subscriber!

Best practices for opt-in campaigns from the site or through direct marketing include:

Opt-in Acquisition

You give your incoming traffic (or include in outgoing messages) the option to check a box and opt in to a subscription.

Confirmed Opt-in Acquisition

Confirming an opt-in allows your visitors the ability to register to receive any email messages and includes a follow up email that confirms the customers' subscription.

Double Opt-in Acquisition

A double opt in includes the customer opting in, receiving an email confirmation and also requires an additional confirmation that they indeed registered for the email marketing. Double opt in acquisition is often believed to have a much higher retention rate as well as the best mode of list growth.

Setting up autoresponders so that your community knows what they have subscribed to is an excellent way to manage the list you are building and also helps to keep the list up to date.

The second part of offering an opt in to the email subscription is an “easy join” promo. Be ready to include a value proposition or quick benefits pitch and an easy join option. The more efficient and seamless the sign up is the quicker your list will grow. Decide what the minimum requirements for data input are and set them up. Remember, online opt ins aren't the only way to acquire subscribers! Create an easy form to be completed by shoppers, customers or tradeshow attendees and create an offer or incentive such as “Join our email community and receive a FREE demo, free shipping, \$5 off your purchase etc...” Beware that often times a prospect may only opt in in order to receive an offer and will be a less likely candidate for retention and engagement. Therefore, consider promoting the benefits of your marketing campaigns.

Additional touch points for acquiring contacts include:

- Website Traffic
- Paid Search
- SEO/Blogging
- Online Advertising
- Email/Site Sponsorships
- Print Advertising
- Transactional Messages
- Telemarketing

Always be respectful with your acquisition methods, you wouldn't want to force someone to communicate with you and non-compliance will put you at a high risk for being reported.

Quality over Quantity

With a results oriented campaign, the emphasis is on the quality, not the quantity, of the list. “Spray and Pray” tactics typically result in lower returns and poor results. A solid list of qualified recipients can produce better results than a larger list, if the list was grown organically and nurtured. Email marketers are advised not to buy or rent lists for multiple reasons, but primarily because they do not have a relationship with the audience. Essentially, your website is your most powerful tool for building a solid and responsive subscriber community.

List Segmentation: Stop! Are you using targeting and personalization the right way?

Once you’ve built an email list, what do you do with the data? The next step is segmentation. Creating groups based on contact profile data that you’ve collected allows you to target specific groups. Segmentation is critical for improving open and click rates as well as lowering opt-out rates, by sending messages only to the people who will find their content relevant versus sending a single and broad message to everyone. Segmentation enables you to touch base with your customers based on their expressed interests and needs.

Consider segmenting your list by:

- Industry
- Demographics
- By purchase activity
- Email Response

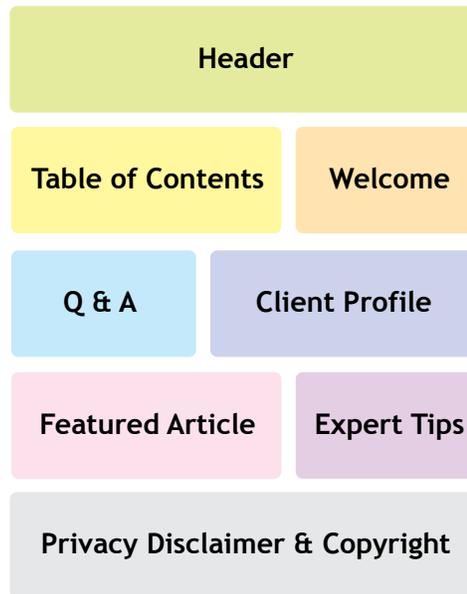
By tracking reads and click behavior and segmenting your list by interest to customize messages to your subscribers you position yourself as relevant and resourceful, and you also make it clear to your customers that you are listening to them and that you know what type of information they are looking for. Some email marketing providers like, GreenRope, offer hot prospects functionalities that do scoring based on interaction with email campaigns. You may want to consider email programs that include such features.

- Decrease opt-out rates and increase response rates
- Never send the same message to different segments
- Apply A/B testing to your segmented lists by adding more specific content

Consumers are driven to purchases by brands that take the effort to communicate effectively and personalize their relationships. Personalization establishes more than just relevance, it builds trust. So, take the time to analyze the various components of your customer data and generate segmentation based on their industry challenges, specific business applications and purchase history.

Unlocking the Email Content Formula

The first step in creating the content of your email newsletter is to decide which departments, sections or columns you will deliver consistently. An example of content building blocks can include,



Each of your segments (and possibly departments) should have such a blueprint to work off of. Departments may also help with the segmentation as you will have an expert to cover each particular topic.

Copywriting: Simplify Your Search for Content

Keeping your content fresh and relevant for readers will require a consistent collection of ideas as well as an ongoing generation of resources.

- Write your content in house. This is often times the most economical approach. If you have a blog or already generate articles and other content, you should have a good foundation to work off of.
- Solicit materials from clients and vendors. For them, it's free advertising. You have the infrastructure ready to go and all you need is the content. Investigate who is ready to provide you with informative, valuable content that is in line with your mission statement and present the opportunity! Clients can help your audience in their industry by writing about their experience with your company or by commenting on an issue of importance in their industry. Vendors can be expected to write about how their products or services and events apply to parallel issues in the field.
- Hire freelance writers. If you simply do not have the team and the in house resources to generate solid, ongoing content, hire a professional copywriter that can work in the confines of your budget. There are also many online companies that will send subscribers copyright-free articles for general business and living audiences to use in your newsletter.
- Run a discussion list. While many discussion lists are informal and stray off topic, newsletters allow you to be more organized. If you choose to run a discussion list in conjunction with your email newsletter you could simply tag interesting posts and use them to form articles

Content Takeaways

- • Content length will depend on the type of email that you are sending, but the general rule of thumb is

to keep it as simple as possible.

- It is a good practice to generate a teaser paragraph and then give the reader the option to read the rest of the article on your site.
- Short paragraphs and bullet points are also successful approaches as they make your content scannable and easy to read.
- Once you've gotten someone to open your email, remember to reward your readers with interesting content that supports the personality of your brand. Shy away from using any insider keywords and compose the message as though you are speaking to one person.

Design Takeaways

- Effective email design plays a critical role and has a direct correlation to click through and conversion rates. It is important not to overlook the effect that design can have on deliverability.
- An estimated 9 out of every 10 emails are not compliant with W3C HTML and cause rendering and delivery issues. For those that use HTML in the email messages, ensure that your code is error free and follows the W3C HTML guidelines.
- Remember to stay clear of scripting as security risks arise due to script vulnerabilities in email browsers; JavaScript and VBScript messages are likely to result in stripped messages and some email systems will reject the messages when these scripts are detected. If you are interested in dynamic components, drive your readers to your website.
- In terms of cascading style sheets, be mindful. For more readability, use inline styles that are tied to individual HTML tags and don't embed CSS in the head tags. Many email clients will strip those tags from the email and some will combine them with their own, breaking down the appearance of your email message.

In any case, designers should keep the designs simple. There are many various types of email clients and the way that they display messages will vary, unlike with web browsers. As a best practice, keep your message and HTML code as clean as possible to ensure reliable results.

Additional Design Bits:

- Keep formatting in mind when designing email, excessive table tags can risk deliverability
- Stay away from flash as it will not work consistently with most email clients. Your success formula is more about: concise and relevant copy, a compelling call to action and a clean, simple design. If you simply must add a video then do a screen-shot and include it on an adjoining landing page rather than embedding it in the email.

Testing: What are the key ingredients to your unique success strategy?

Every marketing campaign relies on flexibility. You should be able to see all of your campaign ideas and applications as malleable, until you are getting the results that you are looking for. There is a lot of relativity to content and data. While one of your segments feels comfortable reading an article, the other segment may want a video. Feed your segments variables and track the response rates to them.

The very first test you should perform is an actual test of the email. Test the way your email appears in several additional email service providers and not just your own. You should conduct tests for the main ISPs like Outlook, AOL, Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc. and also test the readability of messages in different browsers Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari to ensure that your copy and images translate successfully throughout each platform. Test all the links in your email, the graphics and pictures. While pictures are a wonderful way to garner attention, they do not always show up in email messages, so test how effective your email is by covering the images and making sure your message is still appealing and clear. Finally, don't forget to spam check and review the content of your email to see what may set off a spam filter.

Is A/B Testing Necessary?

While you've passed all the tests and the email looks good, all the links work, the images are placed properly and a call to action is apparent, you may not be getting the open rates you had expected. This is why A/B testing is critical. Use your segments to test:

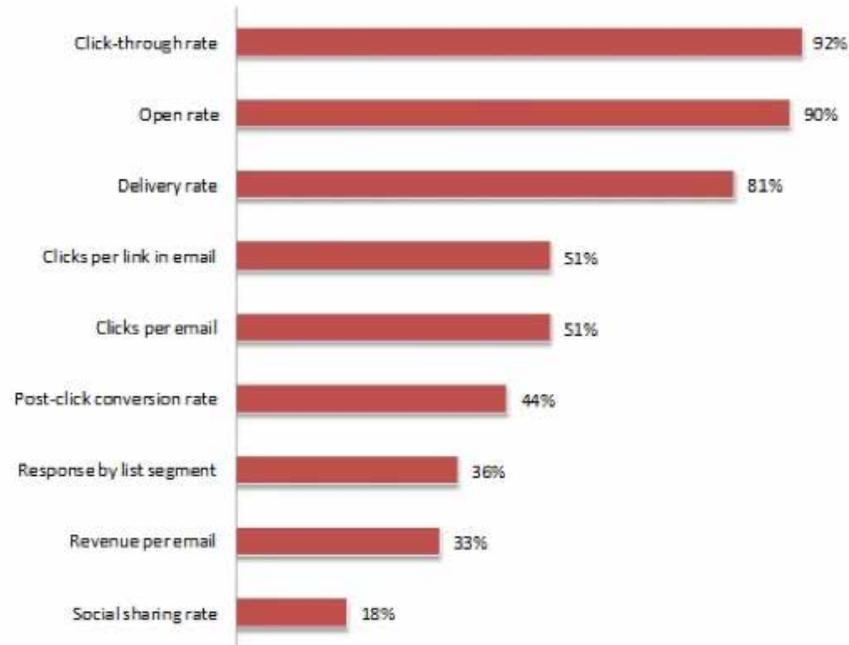
- The time of day (Many studies have shown that the start of the day and the middle of the afternoon are the best times of the day to send emails. Does this work for you?)
- Day of the Week
- Frequency of Email
- Subject Lines
- Amount/Type of Graphics
- Amount/Type of Text
- Call to Action
- Call to Action Positioning
- Length of Email
- Headers
- Source, Sent From
- Format
- Response Mechanisms

You will find that continual changes and adjustments are being made to your newsletter, get used to this! Many variables will affect the success of your email so continue testing and don't settle for one formula.

Measuring Results: Establishing Benchmarks to Measure Success

If you do not have a system set in place to measure your results before you send the email, you will not be able to gauge why you received the response you did. Unless you find a way to track and evaluate the marketing efforts it will be impossible to conclude what is efficient from a time and cost perspective. According to ClickZ, 44% of email marketers measure their email program using “customer engagement” as a yardstick, but there are a multitude of valuable metrics to track.

Chart: Email marketing metrics tracked by percentage of organizations tracking them



marketing **sherpa** © 2010

Source: MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded Sep 2010, N=1,115

Begin by having a control group. This is the first step in having a trackable and measureable e-mail marketing program. The control group is your core group of recipients that are interested in your general marketing offers. You might consider sending them a regular monthly broadcast with a promotional offer to build brand awareness. Within this control group are subsets that have their own interests. Find these subsets of customers and tailor special offers to increase the relevance of your marketing material and communicate with them between the monthly deployments.

Tracking users is an instant way to gauge the success of the campaign as it allows you, the marketer, to use your efforts most effectively by focusing on the best performing lists. URL tracking programs allow email marketers to follow recipients from click through all the way to the sale. Most systems will automatically generate dynamic URLs that are inserted into an email message that is sent out. The clicks and the sales produced by the campaign are then tracked and recorded by the servers. Other tracking programs detail how many recipients clicked on the message, when they clicked, whether they made a purchase and more. Many tracking systems offer intuitive features like sending follow-up messages to certain parts of their recipient pool based on who made a click and who didn't. Get clear on what your email management system can do so that you can leverage its full potential.

Another way to track responses is to set up aliases. An email alias is an email address that points to an active email account. Mail that is addressed to such an alias is automatically forwarded to a specific email account, allowing one email address (the alias) to be sent to different email accounts and assists you in filtering sales requests, demo requests or any other pertinent communications. Aliases are a good way to test the effectiveness of any marketing tactic as they allow you to test various executions.

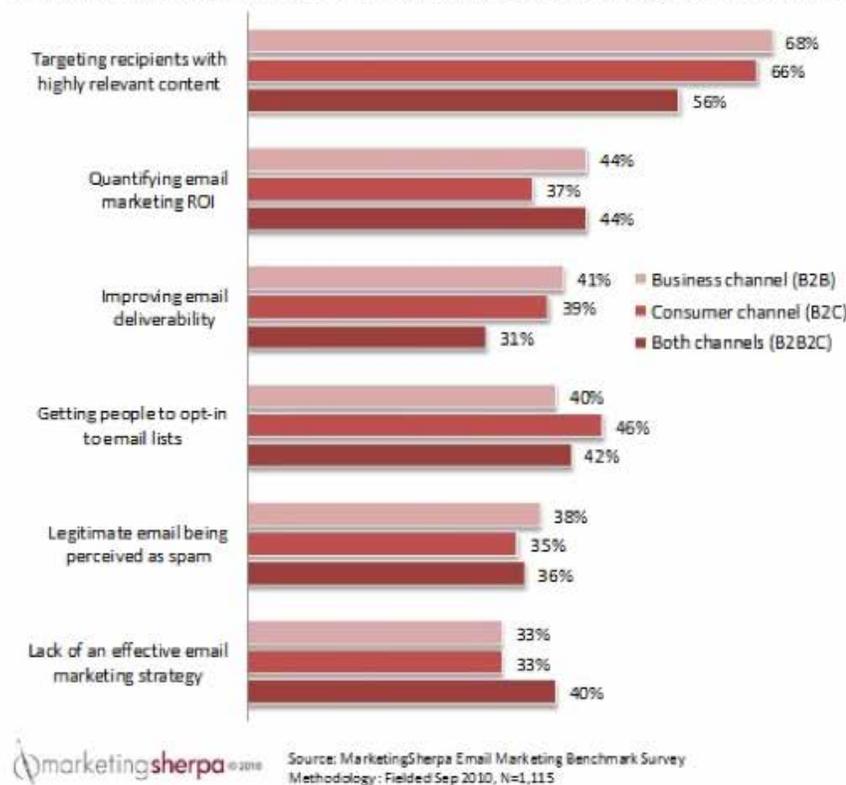
The Cheat Sheet to Measuring Your Success

- Set up a measurement system for each tactic included in your email marketing plan
- Set up measurement tactics for each email message that goes out
- Use your systems to test variables against a control group
- Use URLs, aliases, subscriber data and inbound traffic to track
- Optimize your actions based on measurements

Facing Obstacles: What's preventing you from success?

You could be facing more than one road block to achieving the email marketing formula that works best for you.

Chart: Most significant challenges to email marketing effectiveness, by primary channel



After your first few drop cycles you should have a pretty good idea whether or not you are meeting your goals; identifying the roadblocks to achieving success is the beginning of another end. It is important to tackle the issue at hand with a clear action plan. Once you've identified a pattern, address it holistically. For example, your email newsletter design may be incompatible with many of the browsers or ISP's, by changing the design to a simplified outline, you not only improve deliverability but also decrease list attrition (or the number of subscribers who leave your list). Often times, you will find that one roadblock is connected to something else as well.

If you find yourself struggling with finding relevant content for your audience, develop and manage an editorial calendar that touches upon each of the relevant platforms. Align your content with the target markets and you will see a big improvement in the level of engagement. Quantifying the ROI of email marketing shouldn't be challenging, if you continually implement multivariate testing and syndicate the results to the metrics you will be able to shift your email marketing strategy based on the campaign performance. If you are struggling with building an email list, consider if you're really making your value proposition clear and whether it offers your targets a good enough reason to give you entryway into their inboxes. The subject line is an extremely powerful tool, if not the most powerful tool. Always opt for clear, non-sales subjects that will not be viewed as spam.

How to Deal with Common Challenges

How Can I Increase Engagement?

If you have a small email list, start by expanding your web presence. A greater online visibility will not only help you to grow your reach, but it will also show your followers that you are in tune to them and offer great insights. Join as a guest blogger for various online industry publications, continue to develop robust social media campaigns and lastly, consider offering incentives to your subscribers for sharing your offers with others.

Is A/B testing applicable to me?

Anyone in the online marketing platform should be experimenting. A/B testing is simple and begins with splitting your list and testing a minimum of 2 variables. With multivariate testing, you are applying dynamic HTML (not text only) variables. Start with testing offer formats and topics, make small changes on your landing pages and adjust subject lines and signatures.

How do I prevent getting repetitive in the emails?

Make a commitment to continually deliver fresh and exciting, remarkable content. Repackage your content as to entice people to want to engage with it. Apply customer surveys, industry trends and any other insights which you may have access to, to develop creative content. Always ask for feedback from the audience!

Ideas for Effective Email Marketing!

Autoresponder Programs

These drip campaign ideas are a great way for you to have perfect triggers set in place so that you never miss an opportunity with a customer!

- Welcome programs that incorporate trigger-based email messages from: download, purchase, sales inquiry, or registration.
- Cross -Sell/Up-Sell programs using trigger-based actions based on your customers purchase profiles.
- Nurture leads by applying email triggers for your prospects based on their interests and their website behavior.
- Launch customer satisfaction programs by triggering automated messages that gauge their satisfaction with the process
- Abandonment programs trigger messages that offer an incentive for individuals to complete their purchase
- Win-Back programs allow you to automate a message after a period of time and give you the opportunity to strike up and personalize a relationship with a special note and offer.

Taking Marketing with Email to Another Level

- Build demand for a new product/services category by becoming an expert voice in the industry and educating your audience
- Boost a flat or continual decline in sales by sending urgent specials
- Increase the user base for your products and services by collecting demographic and preference data and customizing the email newsletter
- Drive traffic to your website by participating in discussions and online forums and offering free sign up in your signature file
- Encourage complimentary companies to send leads by participating in discussion lists and offering frequent posts about what you've learned as best practices
- Create loyalty among your user base by having a members only newsletter, and offer valuable consulting advice and insider tips
- Encourage repeat purchases by tracking the activities of your clients and sending incentives
- Encourage customers to spend more by offering volume discounts and service packages

- Fight new competition by running a sweepstakes or contest and sending industry news and product briefs
- Increase awareness by sending an incentive to visit your site
- Improve or change the company image by setting up new media that encourages a free trial of a new product and service
- Announce new products by advertising in other email publications
- Increase sales during off-peak hours by working with partners that will offer guest commentary to your newsletter and vice versa.

My Resources

When researching an email service application to assist you in managing your email marketing you must be mindful of key components like: metrics capabilities, tracking features, drip campaign management and also templates. A good platform considers the importance of these email features but also enables additional capabilities like syndication. The GreenRope CRM automatically combines email, website traffic (following individuals on your site), social networks, events, and more to seamlessly integrate all activity that occurs on ALL your platforms, while other premier features allow you to easily target your messages on an individual basis. Other benefits include much more than the ability to send and track professional email messages. You can also manage your leads and opportunities, bounces and unsubscribes as well as design email templates and surveys.

Make sure you choose a solution that gives you more features at an affordable cost. Many email software packages include extra add ons that could make a big dent in your budget. GreenRope was founded and designed specifically to offer cutting edge marketing technology at an affordable cost. To view a demo of GreenRope CRM and see what it can do for your sales, visit www.GreenRope.com

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