



Email Marketing Essentials

Reach Your Customers, Increase Loyalty, and Do More Business with Email Marketing



Email Marketing Works

You know that staying connected with your customers is crucial to growing your small business.

You work hard to build customer relationships and rely on repeat business and word-of-mouth referrals to reach your business goals.

You've probably tried tools like social media to build those relationships further.

Although social media is a great channel to accompany your marketing efforts you may have noticed that some network changes have made it more difficult for you to organically reach your target audience.

Email marketing is a cost-effective solution that gives you the power to reach customers in a place most people visit every day — their inbox.

When used in conjunction with the other channels available to you, email makes it easy to connect with contacts in a variety of ways without having to worry about the ever-changing social landscape.

Consider these statistics:

- **66 percent of online consumers have made a purchase as a result of an email marketing message.** (Direct Marketing Association, 2013)
- **Email outperforms direct mail with more than 4 times the return on investment.** (Direct Marketing Association, 2013)
- **Email is almost 40 times more effective than Facebook and Twitter combined in helping your business acquire new customers.** (McKinsey, 2014)

With over 600,000 customers, we've seen what works for our customers. In this guide, we'll show you 10 keys to achieving your goals with email marketing, as well as advice from some of our most successful small business, nonprofits, and association customers.

Let's get started!

10 Keys to Email Marketing that Works

Use these important email marketing fundamentals to create an email marketing plan for your small business:

1. Only send email to people who know you

People open email from people they know, and they delete or mark as spam email from people they don't recognize.

This is why it's critical that you always ask for permission before adding a new contact to your email list.

Permission-based email marketing is the best route to developing long-lasting customer relationships that drive repeat sales and valuable word-of-mouth for your business.

These practices also keep you in compliance with legislation such the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act (CAN-Spam) and the Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL).

Learn More:

- [Build an Email List That Loves Hearing From You](#)
- [How to Make People Hate Your Email Newsletter](#)
- [Understanding the Power of Email Marketing Relationships](#)



Tip

Using software like Constant Contact makes it easy to grow your email list the right way. You can use online sign-up tools to give people the ability to opt in online, or ask people offline and get permission to add them to your Constant Contact account. You can also take advantage of mobile list-building tools to grow your email list on a smartphone or tablet.

2. Don't treat your contacts like names on a list, treat them like people

When someone joins your email list, they are opting-in to learn more about your business.

Some of these people will be completely new to your business and want to learn more about what you have to offer. Others may be repeat customers who joined your list to make sure they're staying up-to-date with everything you have going on.

Don't miss the opportunity to build these relationships the right way.

For new customers, you could send emails with additional information about your business and the different products and services you have to offer. For long-time customers, you can focus on generating repeat sales and reward them with a special offer.

Learn More:

- [4 Ways to Segment Your List to Get the Right Message to the Right Audience](#)
- [3 Tips for Keeping Your Contacts Connected](#)
- [All Contacts On Your Email List Are Not the Same \(And Why Their Differences Matter\)](#)



Tip

If you're a Constant Contact customer, you can group contacts into separate lists and create emails that are unique to their specific needs and interests. You can also create a series of automated emails with our Autoresponder tool to send to specific lists with information and offers relevant to them.

3. Send relevant content that has value to your recipient

Remember that email marketing isn't just about getting your information in front of current and potential customers. It's also about listening to what your audience is interested in and providing an experience that's relevant and valuable to them.

When you provide content that's helpful to your readers, you'll have more people opening and acting on the content you send out.

One of the easiest ways to tell what type of content your audience is interested in is to look at your email reports. Within your email reports, you can see how many people are opening your emails and which pieces of content are generating the most clicks.

You can also use a tool like an online survey to collect feedback from your audience and see what they want to hear about.

Learn More:

- [Should I Survey My Email Contacts to Find Out If They Liked My Email?](#)
- [I Can't Find Enough to Say In My Email, Where Do I Turn for Email Content Ideas?](#)
- [How Your Click-Through Rates Can Help You Create More Effective Email Content](#)



Tip

If you're not sure what your email audience is interested in, consider sending an online survey. Constant Contact's survey campaign makes it easy to collect feedback from your email audience and can help you better understand what makes your customers tick.

4. Engage your audience with the content you write

Once you've figured out what your email contacts are looking for in your email marketing, you need to create content that they will find engaging.

Creating great content can be challenging, but it doesn't have to become a full-time job. Great content starts with having a well thought-out content plan, a list of reliable content sources, and a commitment to knowing your audience.

When creating a plan, it's helpful to look at the calendar and think about the different activities you have going on and the ways you can help your customers throughout the year.

Your customers will be your best source for content ideas. Pay attention to what they are saying and the questions they are asking in-person and online.

Learn More:

- [How Creating a Plan Can Change the Way You Think about Email Marketing](#)
- [How Do I Get My Customers' Attention with Content](#)
- [5 Ways to Create More Engaging Email Content](#)



Tip

People do business with people who they know, like, and trust. Use your email content to show some personality and let readers get to know you and your staff. With Constant Contact, you can easily upload photos to use in your email marketing and give customers a more personal look into your business.

5. Maximize your delivery rate

One of the biggest benefits of using email marketing software like Constant Contact is that we take the necessary steps to make sure your emails are safely delivered to your recipient's inbox.

But there are also steps you can take to maximize your email delivery and make sure your emails get to where they need to go.

One of the best ways to tell if your emails are getting delivered is to look at your bounce reports. Emails can bounce for a number of reasons, including invalid email addresses, a full inbox, or out of office statuses. Keeping an eye on your bounces will help you to remove any addresses with ongoing issues and maintain high deliverability rates.

In addition to bounces, you can also look at your spam reports. If an individual on your email list reports your email as unwanted or unsolicited, it will be marked as spam. If you consistently have a high number of spam reports it may be time to review the content you're sending.

Learn More:

- [Why are my emails being blocked or bounced?](#)
- [5 Tips to Increase Your Email Deliverability](#)
- [6 Reasons Your Emails Have Bounced \(And What to Do to Improve Your Bounce Rate\)](#)



Tip

Use the Constant Contact Spam Checker tool while creating your email to avoid issues before you send. If you still notice a high number of spam reports, consider reducing your email frequency.

6. Never share your email list

If you're a business that respects the trust and privacy of your customers, you should never share your email list.

Sharing your list could damage your reputation, hurt customer relationships, and ruin the trust you've worked hard to build.

You should also avoid purchasing a list from a third-party vendor. These lists are full of people who don't know your business, didn't sign up to receive updates from you, and will likely ignore your emails or mark them as spam when they show up in their inbox.

Rather than sharing or buying lists, look for ways to partner with other local businesses or organizations to extend your reach. You can ask a non-competitive business to help you promote an upcoming sale or event, and in exchange, you can feature them in a future email campaign. Look to partner with trusted businesses that can provide additional value to your customer base.

Learn More:

- [How to Make People Hate Your Email Newsletter](#)
- [6 Compliance Terms Every Email Marketer Should Know](#)
- [How to Create Fruitful Co-Marketing Relationships](#)



Constant Contact's contact management tools make it easy to protect your customer's information. In addition to email address, you can also collect important details like demographic data, location, and even past purchasing behavior.

7. Set expectations (and follow through)

When someone signs up to receive your email communications, they do so with the expectation of receiving something of value. If you don't communicate clearly what that value is, your audience might lose interest quickly.

The best way to set expectations for your audience is to use your email sign-up page. Make sure your audience understands the value of signing up right from the start.

What can they expect to receive? How often will they hear from you? What have other people enjoyed about receiving your emails? You can customize your sign-up form to demonstrate the value of joining your list.

Learn More:

- [Guide to Long Lasting Email Marketing Relationships](#)
- [4 Things Your Welcome Email Must Do \(and Probably Doesn't\)](#)
- [What is the sign-up form and how do I edit it?](#)



Once someone joins your list, you can send them an automated welcome email. This is a valuable opportunity to reaffirm their decision to join your list and remind them what to expect from future mailings.

8. Look professional whenever you communicate

You don't need to hire a designer or have any technical expertise to create professional-looking emails for your small business.

With software like Constant Contact, you can access professionally-designed email templates that can be customized to match your brand. You can easily add text, insert your logo, and choose colors and fonts that fit your brand.

You can also upload photos, insert video links, and add customizable buttons to make it easy for people to take action.

These templates are designed to work across multiple devices — including desktop, tablet, and mobile, ensuring that your emails look great no matter where people are reading them.

Learn More:

- [How to Choose the Perfect Email Template](#)
- [7 Design Mistakes That Make Readers Trash Your Emails](#)
- [5 Simple Tips for Mobile-Friendly Emails](#)



Tip

In addition to our customizable email templates, Constant Contact also offers services to help you get started with an email template that matches your brand.

9. Regularly review your results

Your open and click-through rates will be the most effective metrics to determine how your emails are performing. These metrics can be influenced by the content you include, the frequency that you send, and whether or not people recognize your emails in their inbox.

Along with opens and clicks, you should also pay attention to metrics like bounces and unsubscribes. These metrics allow you to determine potential problem areas. If you're consistently seeing a large number of people unsubscribe each time you send (it's normal to see some unsubscribes as your subscribers' interests change), you may need to revisit your email marketing strategy and look for ways to make improvements.

Beyond your basic email metrics, you should also pay attention to other business results including traffic to your website, sales, foot traffic, event registrations, coupon redemptions, donations, and more.

Learn More:

- [How to Approach Your Email Reports with Confidence](#)
- [How to Figure Out if Your Email Marketing Campaign is Working](#)
- [Do You Know Why People Are Unsubscribing From Your Emails?](#)



If you're sending email through Constant Contact, you have access to helpful reports that show you how your emails are performing, what's working for you, and where you can improve.

10. Go beyond the inbox

You're likely already using a number of other channels to market your small business. Email marketing works best when it's integrated with these other communication channels.

Use sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn to reach new customers and extend those relationships by encouraging them to join your email list. You can also use email to drive traffic to different social media platforms and generate engagement on these sites.

It's a great idea to add social media buttons in your emails so that people can connect with your social media pages.

You can also post your emails to all your social networks in just a few clicks, with Constant Contact's SimpleShare tool.

Learn More:

- [Social Media's Secret Weapon: Email Marketing](#)
- [4 Tools to Help You Integrate Your Social Media and Email Marketing](#)
- [3 Ways to Get Facebook Fans to Subscribe to Your Email List](#)



Make it easy for subscribers to share your email with their connections on social media. With Constant Contact, you can add a share bar to every email you send out, which readers can use to share your emails on sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Now that you've learned the keys to email marketing success, let's take a look at some expert tips from Constant Contact customers that have achieved their goals with email marketing.

Tips from Our All Stars

Each year, Constant Contact recognizes customers who excel at using our online marketing tools to engage their customers and build great relationships.

We look for customers who get the kind of results that reflect their hard work and stand out from the more than 600,000 small businesses and organizations internationally who use our services.

These All Star award winners have some great tips to help you achieve your goals!

Adopt a customer state of mind

"I think of my customers as more than customers...I think of them as my friends. Then, I choose information that I want to share with my friends that I think would be helpful to them. Information that I would want someone to share with me. Sometimes it is helpful business information and sometimes it is something that they could use personally. Either way, they know that we care and are thinking about them. And that is a good thing!"

Shannon Kuhrt, Vice President, M&M Wintergreens Inc.

"You have to get inside your customers' heads and think like they think. What do they like? What appeals to them in particular? Do they want to laugh or be entertained or do they prefer educational information or coupons? If you know what will affect them the most, you will know what to use in your communication."

Jami Houston, Director of Marketing and PR, Star Racing

"Think about what specifically appeals to your target audience, and always include a word that would most likely grab their attention in the subject line. If you can get them to open it, you've accomplished the biggest hurdle. Second is eliminate the fluff, and cut to the chase. In this respect you are valuing your audience's time. And they appreciate that."

Wendy Denney, Product Specialist, Grodan, Inc.



Investing time and energy in your customers will empower them to do the same for you.

By adopting a customer state of mind, these businesses found their winner's stride and grew their business through developing a team of dedicated customers.

Let them get to know you

“We provide a variety of stories, including personal ones about our veterinarians, informative and educational pieces about health related issues, and community service outreach that we work with. The personal stories about our vets get the most attention; people seem to like to know more about the folks with whom they trust their pets.”

Heather Cutchin Evans, Marketing Assistant, CareFirst Animal Hospital

“The subject line is the first golden key: the message has to be direct but personal, i.e. ‘Your Early Bird Tickets are here’, but the second golden key is the content of the email itself: the writing, photos and graphics have to be as engaging as that subject line. Think of your patrons as though they are someone you just met at a party: you want them to have fun, but you want them to learn something real about you, as well.”

Meredith McMath, Managing Director, Run Rabbit Run Theatre

“Be Real! Authenticity is the first rule. Ask yourself, do I just want to sell my product, or do I really care about solving the customer’s problems. If it’s the former, then you need to realize that customers are the smartest people around and they will sniff you out if you aren’t authentic. Give them something of yourself”

Marc Roland, Owner, Roland Wines

“One of my primary goals as a small business owner is to create genuine connections with my customers. Because of this my marketing content reveals who I am as a business owner and artist, and encourages my customers to engage. My customers know they can immediately join in on the fun, whether it is through posting on my Facebook page, replying to my Constant Contact newsletters, or calling me. Despite the fact I am a fine artist; the vast majority of my customers are repeat customers. This is due to the relationship building methods I use.”

Anna Koon, Owner, A2N2



By making your online marketing more people-friendly, you’ll make it easier for your customers to connect with you. That connection will foster brand loyalty and make your customers more likely to recommend your business to their own network.

Ask what's in it for them

"Ask the question, 'What's in it for me?' from the perspective of the customer before posting, emailing or otherwise communicating with my customers."

Ramona Billingslea, Marketing and Education Manager, Betsey's Health Foods

"Our customers see us as a viable source of trustworthy, honest and relevant information. They respond very positively to any product we do feature, as we give them a solid non-sales-pitchy 'why' behind the product their purchasing. And one last piece, before any newsletter gets published we think to ourselves 'would I want to see this in my email box?' If the answer is no, then it's time for a re-write."

Robyn Winner, Marketing Specialist, Social Thinking

"We're a jewelry making school that offers workshops and classes regularly. Each month, we have an instructor write a metalworking tip that we share with students, related to their class. Our community loves learning new tricks, especially when they are free & useful! At the end of the year we send a compilation to everyone as a thank you for their support and being part of our community. So many students write in to say how much they appreciate it. It doesn't cost us anything; our teachers provide the content, and often get registrations for their classes. Everybody wins!"

Lindsay Minihan, Executive Director, MetalWerx

"It's so important to me to offer my contacts information they want and can use. I use my e-newsletter as a vehicle to connect people with research links, interesting analysis and stories that speak to their experiences. Secondly, I let them know about upcoming classes, trainings, and services. This has been a great strategy to boost our open rate and connects with our mission to make a living while also being of service."

Jessica English, Owner, Birth Kalamazoo



Tip

Whether it's with a useful tips, an exclusive offer, or industry insight, go above and beyond ordinary email marketing.

Keep it simple, keep it short, and keep it consistent

“We strive to keep our e-news brief but chock full of links to more information so they can read more about the topics they most want to learn about. We then use the click-through info to help us determine what kinds of stories have the most appeal to our readers for determining content in future e-newsletters.”

Laurie Bertke, Web Editor, Diocese of Toledo

“I try to think about the emails that I actually open and read when designing mine. The subject line is to the point and says what we’re in for in the email. The email has great pictures of people having fun engaging in our programs, and the body is kept short enough for people to read all the way through! There are always links to more information if people want it. And our emails are always positive!”

Kathleen Nolte, Founder, Cherokee County Arts Council

“Take every opportunity to have clickable links in your email. Links to your website, tickets to your event, links to industry partners. Also, always include a personal note at the top and with your signature and include your email link so you customers and interface directly with you in a click. Give them a reason to go investigate beyond the content in your letter.”

Dyana Hesson, Owner, Paintings by Dyana Hesson

“1. We determine the amount of time required and include a small ‘clock’ on the top to tell them how long it will take the read the newsletter. 2. We follow up QUICKLY after we put on an event and include our presentation and extra resources in PDF format for our readers to have. 3. We often use our email marketing to share prizes, sweepstakes and contests we are doing on our social media sites to increase engagement across platforms. As a result, we find our open rates, click-throughs, and often social share numbers are great!”

Kim Walker, Director of Marketing, 5 Stones Media, LLC



No matter how exciting or useful your information is, you have to remember that we live in a time of information overload.

Every email should be easy-to-read, have a clean design, and feel short enough for readers to understand the main points quickly.

Make sure your news is on point

"It's all about targeting! Learn to work your database. Gone are the days of blanket lists — use the information you have about your customers to give them the best content you can. What they've purchased from you, what their interests are, what they need. We very rarely do large email lists — and it made us a Constant Contact All-Star!"

Caitlin O'Neil, Communications Coordinator, Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants

"We connected to our customers by keeping a very close eye on our email reports. We studied everything from what time they were opening our emails to exactly who was clicking on our content. As we studied our reports we focused extremely hard on giving our customers content that they would be interested in rather than content we thought was important. It was really a process of finding out what our customers wanted to hear/learn vs. what we wanted to tell them."

Elke Mischke, Owner, Fred Astaire Dance Studios

"Let your customers 'choose their news'! Our clients select the information they want to receive from us (for example, product or event communications). We can then customize messages based on what they want to hear from us. But we don't miss the opportunity these requested messages provide us, and we often include 'advertisements' in our messages to cross-promote our other products and services."

Jackie Alder, Senior Communications and PR Specialist, ATPCO

"I connected with my customers by understanding what floats their boat — there is no one size fits all so I try to glean (and ask!) how they best want to connect. E.g., short and sweet or more chatty; email or telephone; social media?; in person?; all of the above. I jokingly say, if all else fails talk to the customer!"

Deborah Lewis, Founder, Bredeson Outdoor Adventures



Tip

If you're focused on your customers, it won't take long for you to realize that all your customers are not the same.

To reach your customers on a personal level, you have to do a little leg work to get them the information right for them.

Push your limits

“We connect with customers in ANY way we can — in the tasting room, on the road at festivals and in-store tastings, online via Facebook and Twitter. Wherever we are we ALWAYS make sure we have a poster with our QR code so that customers can snap an image and sign up for our newsletter quickly and easily.”

Brittany Morris, Advertising Director, Fulkerson Winery

“Using video has been a huge factor for our newsletter! It is SO shareable, and all our readers love to see themselves on the ‘small’ screen! We are known in our market for ‘bringing things to life’ in our newsletter.”

Cecily Lancit, President, Paradise Coast TV

“I read every article I can from Constant Contact and other social media organizations. Then I just try one new idea each newsletter. I also check the CC reports every time to see what works and what doesn’t.”

Jeff Atherston, Director, Africa Renewal Christian College

“Experiment. Try different types of content—subject, style and form. Then also find the sweet spot of the day when your readers will be engaged. If you don’t enjoy the capabilities newsletters offer, you won’t find what resonates.”

Kyle Niederpruem, President and CEO, Kyle Communications

“Keep trying. Seriously. There are (many) times when it might seem like no one is listening. Don’t accept it. They are, but not all at once and not all the same way. Keep trying, keep thinking and planning and you will get there.”

Carolyn Dorsey, Public Information Officer, City of Fairfax Schools



Tip

If you’re serious about being successful, you have to be serious about your strategy.

Try something new to connect with customers in a fresh way to make a big impact.

Get started today!

You know what it takes to build customer relationships that deliver results.

If you're already using email marketing, choose three things you can do right away to improve your email marketing strategy. With a few simple tweaks, you'll be able to get better results from your next email campaign.

Not a Constant Contact customer?

Join the more than 600,000 small businesses, organizations, and associations that trust Constant Contact to help them do more business.

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