

# Email Broadcasting

## *Introduction*

Promoting your products or services by email can be a powerful and flexible form of direct marketing. You can communicate your messages quickly and cheaply. You can also tailor your message to specific types of customer more cost-effectively than with paper-based marketing.

However, you should plan your email marketing with care to make it relevant and interesting to recipients. You also need to be aware that you must obtain their consent before sending them email marketing.

This guide shows how to get customers to agree to receive email from your business and how to ensure you reach the right people. It also covers how to monitor the effectiveness of email marketing and newsletters and the legal issues you need to be aware of.

## *Target the right people*

Focus on your **best prospects**. Even though it costs very little to send an email, it still pays to be economical with your email marketing.

Email marketing is more successful if it focuses on people you know are interested in what you're offering. For example, if you're running a special offer on computer hardware, it will be more effective if you promote it only to people responsible for buying IT.

Unsolicited marketing emails, or spam, are illegal, but because they continue to be a major problem, computer security software can be used to block them. People are easily annoyed when they receive an email that's irrelevant to them. And they're likely to delete unsolicited messages from your business without reading them.

But an email to an existing customer or contact, who has agreed to receive marketing from you about products or services, will be valuable to them. Even if they don't buy from you immediately, they're more likely to do so in the future.

## **Keeping it relevant**

If you've got a large database of customers and potential customers for your email marketing campaign, it's worth analysing what you know about them, so you can send a more relevant message. See our guide on how to [manage your customer database](#).

For example, you could send customers who have a high spend with you an email about your new loyalty discount. Customers who haven't bought anything from you for six months will be more likely to respond to an update on your products and services.

## **Get people to opt in to your email marketing**

It is illegal to send unsolicited email messages except in limited circumstances. If customers have consented to receiving information from you in the past, ie **opted in**, you can send them information on other things you think they might be interested in.

However, you must give these people the option to **opt out** of receiving any further messages from you. See the page in this guide on [legal issues](#).

Junk email or spam irritates many people who dislike an inbox full of messages they didn't request. Sending email indiscriminately will create a bad impression of your business.

However, email can be a very effective marketing tool if you can get customers and potential customers to request updates from you by email. See the page in this guide on how to [make your email newsletter engaging](#).

## Using incentives

People are more likely to opt in if you give them a useful incentive. For example, you can offer special services or discounts to customers who sign up for your email updates. It's even more effective when you make offers available exclusively through your email marketing. You can then be more confident that recipients will check for the latest email.

## *Building your email list*

If you're running an email marketing campaign, keep it in mind when creating your **other marketing material**. It's well worth putting opt-in tickboxes for email information on all your paper-based marketing material.

You can use your website as a powerful way of getting opt-ins too - it's always worth highlighting the benefits of subscribing to your email service and providing an online form to register immediately.

Don't ask for too much information at the registration stage - lots of boxes to fill in will discourage people. Name, email address and phone number should be enough to start with.

## *Create an email newsletter*

It is important to get the reader's interest. You could combine your marketing messages and news about your business into a **regular bulletin**, an email newsletter.

Make sure your email newsletter:

- is interesting and relevant so that recipients open and read it
- uses customised messages so people pay more attention - if you've won a contract in your area, you could focus on the location for local recipients, while those further away will concentrate on what the contract shows you could do for them
- gets recipients to phone you or click through to your website

Your **phone number** should be displayed prominently so people can easily find it.

**Direct links** to relevant parts of your website can sit alongside each story in the newsletter so users can click straight through.

## ***Build your mailing list***

It's worth promoting the newsletter in every way you can. Remember to put opt-in tickboxes for email information on website forms and all your marketing material.

Word of mouth, or viral marketing, is also a powerful form of promotion, so you might encourage recipients to forward your newsletter to a friend or colleague. They may not be directly interested in the newsletter content at that precise moment - but they may have a friend or colleague who is.

## **Opting out**

Remember that you're legally required to give recipients the opportunity to stop receiving your newsletter. You should have an "unsubscribe" option on every edition you send out. See the page in this guide on [legal issues](#).

## ***Make your email newsletter engaging***

**Keep it relevant** - use it to tell people about things they'll be interested in. For example, if you've extended your business premises, that's only interesting to you. But if it means you can offer a wider range of products, that's interesting to the reader.

**Tailor it to your audience** - you could consider sending different newsletters to different kinds of customer to make them more relevant to each type of reader.

**Attract attention with the subject line** - many people will choose whether to read an email by looking at the subject line in their inbox. Grab attention with a subject line such as "Exclusive benefits this month". Don't go overboard - messages with subject lines such as "The best products ever" are likely to be treated as junk mail or spam and deleted before being read.

**Get straight to the point** - don't waste people's time with long stories - get them interested and encourage them to click on a link to your website to find out more.

**Use simple language** - write simply and clearly so readers immediately understand what you're offering and the benefit to them.

**HTML, text only, or both?** - HTML can make your newsletters look like web pages, offering you the ability to use your logos, pictures and graphics. But some email programs won't read it correctly, so it's best to offer a text-only version too. Encourage recipients to choose the best format for them when opting in to your newsletter.

**Offer exclusive benefits** - offering special benefits that recipients can't get anywhere else can encourage them to read your newsletter more regularly.

**Get the frequency right** - only send newsletters when you've got something relevant and interesting to say.

## ***Monitor and follow up your campaign***

You should monitor the effectiveness of your email marketing to make sure you're getting value from the time and effort you're spending on it. This will help you to improve future campaigns. Ask yourself: is it working?

At the very least, it's valuable to keep a record of the **number of responses** you've received and from **what type of customer**. You can then assess which groups are more likely to respond to this marketing approach.

You could also keep track of the recipients who open your emails. Most email software can send you notification when the recipient opens a message. Alternatively, some Internet service providers (ISPs) can provide this information or you can buy software that gathers it for you.

Do the people who have opened your email have anything in common? This could help you to increase the effectiveness of your messages.

**Response rates** for email marketing are often slightly higher than for other direct-marketing methods. A 5 per cent response rate is generally accepted as strong for email marketing, while 3 or 4 per cent is the average.

If your response rates are below average, it's a good idea to check that you're focusing on the right type of customers and talking about their needs.

## **The right response**

It's important to consider how you're going to handle the response from an email marketing campaign. Have you got enough capacity to answer the phones and respond to emails if you get a 5 per cent response rate? Will you be able to offer your product or service to recipients within the promised time?

Email marketing may give you valuable contact with new customers, as well as reinforcing your contact with existing ones, so spend some time planning how you will handle the response, to ensure you don't let anyone down.

## ***Legal issues***

Email marketing is governed by laws on data protection, privacy and e-commerce, so you should plan your campaign carefully:

- The Data Protection Act regulates how you build and manage your customer database. You need to comply with the law when sending emails to people who aren't already customers. [Read about privacy laws affecting your email marketing on the Information Commissioners Office \(ICO\) website.](#)
- It is illegal to reveal recipients' details on any emails. Create a mailing group that sends a blind carbon copy (bcc) to each recipient.
- When sending email marketing messages, you must not conceal your identity.
- Under e-commerce regulations, marketing emails must include certain information about your business, including its full name, contact details and a clear indication of prices if you refer to them. [Download a guide to e-commerce laws from the Department of Trade and Industry \(DTI\) website \(PDF\).](#)
- There must be a valid address for people to opt out of receiving emails from you.
- You cannot send unsolicited marketing messages by email to individual subscribers unless you have their prior consent. There are exemptions if their address was collected in the course of a sale or if the recipient has expressed an interest in "similar" items and chose not to opt out when

the address was originally collected. "Individual subscribers" do not include companies or individuals within companies.

- E-commerce regulations require you to make all commercial email clearly identifiable as such, either in the header or the text of the email.

For more information, see our guide on [privacy and data protection in marketing](#).

## Respect people's preferences

Some people choose not to receive sales or marketing by email by registering with the Direct Marketing Association's Email Preference Service. Check you don't send marketing emails to anyone who has registered. [Read about the Email Preference Service on the Direct Marketing Association website](#). It isn't a legal requirement, but strongly recommended.

## Online selling rules

When sending sales messages by email, the rules covering distance selling and online trading apply. See our guide to [distance selling and online trading](#).

## Case Study

### *Here's how I used email marketing effectively*

In 1998 Chris Hall, along with Robert Hughes, started his web design business, ICO Solutions. Even though he knew that technology would play a big part in the way the business was run, he never appreciated how powerful email marketing and e-newsletters would be in promoting its services. This has helped ICO grow significantly and it now employs 14 people.

### *What I did*

#### Keep costs down

"At the outset I looked at all the ways in which we could promote our services. I considered advertising, brochures, newsletters, hiring sales people, building a website, using email, direct mail and PR. I then compared the cost of each and the likely success they'd have. By far the most attractive was using email - it's easy to create and cheap to send. I use some of the other sales methods as well, particularly our website, but email has become the key way in which we promote our services, arrange meetings and keep customers briefed about what's going on.

"When we meet potential customers on a face-to-face basis, we always seek permission for us to email them information about our services. We also direct them to our website where they can review our newsletters and sign-up to receive future issues."

#### Don't spam

"Over the years I've learnt that there are some common sense rules, as well as legal restrictions, about using email and e-newsletters in the sales process. None of us like our inbox clogged with unsolicited emails. One way to irritate an existing or potential customer is to keep sending emails they don't want. New EU rules seeking to prevent spam have been introduced that cover all marketing messages sent by email,

or text, picture or video messages. As a result I always make sure our emails say who they come from and allow people to opt-out from receiving them in the future."

### **Remember existing clients**

"In seeking new sales opportunities it's all too easy to forget existing or past clients. We also use email a lot to keep in touch with people we're currently working with or who we've worked with in the past. Once a month I send a short general update about what we do - particularly highlighting any new products or services we've launched. I find it's a great way of keeping our name in front of people we know and getting more business from existing clients."

### ***What I'd do differently***

#### **Think about what is being emailed**

"When I sent my first sales emails I didn't give enough thought to what I was trying to achieve. Now I don't even think about emailing potential customers unless I'm clear in my own mind about what I want to say. First impressions do count and a badly worded email or unclear message can turn people off. Before writing an email I always think about why I'm sending it, what I want to say and what reaction I want. Before pressing send I always review the email and try and put myself in the shoes of the recipient - if I received the email how would I respond? If I feel uncomfortable I re-write it or don't send it."

#### **Invest in broadband**

"Broadband has had a big impact on our business efficiency. If you have a dial-up connection the difference will amaze you. There's no more waiting for dial-up or failed connections, web pages are fast to load, and email messages are sent quicker, even with attachments. I'd recommend broadband to any business that uses the Internet or email a lot."