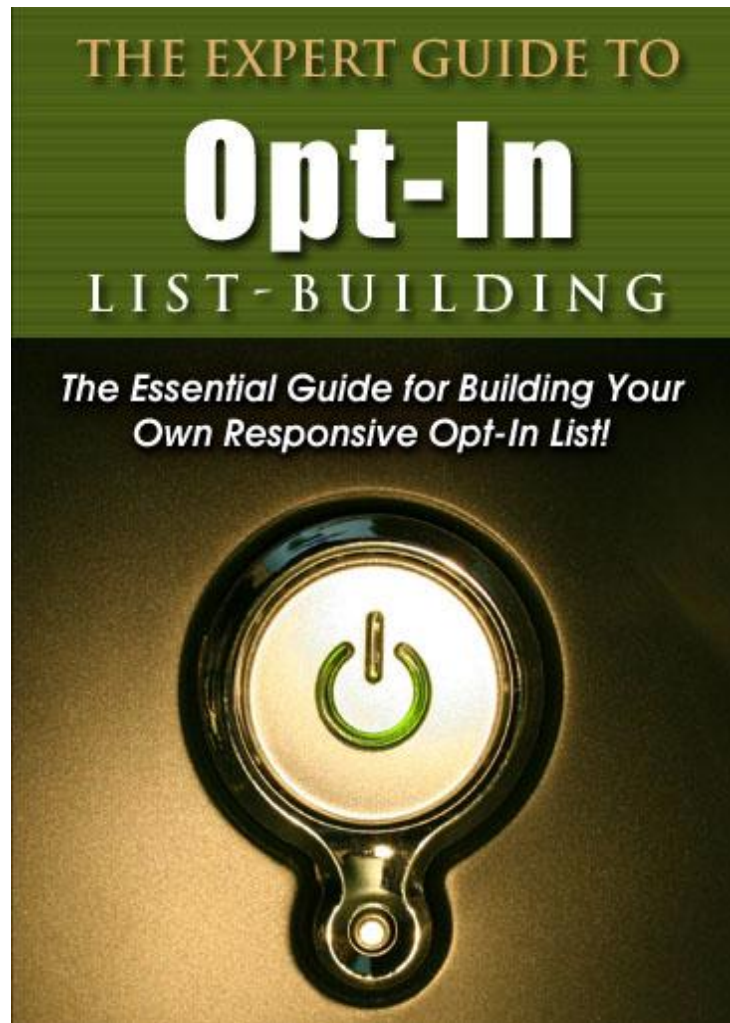


The Expert Guide to Opt-in List Building

“The Essential Step-by-Step Guide to Building Your Very Own Responsive Opt-In Mailing List!”

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Table of Contents

An Introduction To List Building	5
Building Your Business with an Opt-in Mailing List	11
Utilizing the Secrets Of Opt-in Mailing Lists	13
4 Crucial Things You Need To Do To Build your List	15
3 Quick And Easy Ways To Build A Profitable Opt In List	17
4 Ways To Get Your Opt In Subscribers To Trust You Quickly	18
How to Make Money Using Nothing More Than Your List	20
The 3 Things To Avoid When Emailing Your List	21
How To Build A List Of Eager Subscribers	23
BONUS 1	
List Building Mistakes To Avoid	25
BONUS 2	
Opt-In Email Marketing Tips	37
In Closing... And a Call to Action!	50

An Introduction To List Building

What is a List?

Unlike grocery lists or spare parts lists, in the marketing sense of the term, a 'list' refers to a list of customers. More specifically, in regards to internet marketing, it refers to a list of emails through which potential customers can be contacted.

If you've ever faced a situation where you needed to enter your details (especially your email) before you download something, then chances are that you are, or have been, part of a someone else's list.

Even large companies that are already very established use email lists of their own to keep track of their customers, and alert them to new developments, offers, and so forth. Of course, this ties in to yet another question at hand...

Why Build and Use a List?

Commonly, not having a list is said to be 'leaving money on the table', and that much is certainly true.

Take the example of a conventional clothes store. Customers come, browse around, maybe buy something, and then leave. Once they've left, the store has no way of getting in touch with them, and maybe convincing them to come back again.

On the other hand, if the store had their contact details, they could notify them when they have a new stock of clothes on the rack, or special discounts, and so on. By doing so, the customer would then feel compelled to perhaps come back, or at very least would *consider* doing so.

Similarly, in whatever niche that you're into, if you had a list of previous customers then whenever you have a new product, or some other offer, you'd just be able to shoot out emails and see if anyone is interested. Simple as it sounds, this is amazingly effective.

Think about it in terms of figures, if that helps. Let's say you have an 8,000 strong list, and you send out an email regarding your latest product that costs \$20. Even if only 10% of your list buys your product, that is 800 instant customers and you would have made \$16,000.

To sum it up, the reason to build and use a list is to establish a firm base of regular customers to which you can market your products and offers too with great ease.

How to Get Started Building a List

Merely inserting someplace where email addresses can be gathered and collected is already a first step towards building a list. In general, there are two choices that you'll be faced with when deciding exactly how and where you're going to be gathering emails:

1. Creating an Opt-in Page

Amongst those who are honestly going all-out to build up a list, this is the most commonly employed method, simply because of its effectiveness. By creating a separate opt-in page, all the attention on that page can be focused completely on the singular goal of getting a customer to subscribe to the list.

Essentially, the best opt-in pages are those that have no 'extras' that may distract from the goal, and so normal advertisements and other links (except at least one leading back to the main website) are removed.

Really, it is sort of like plugging up all the 'leaks' so that everything just flows towards gathering up emails.

Also, having a distinct opt-in page would allow traffic to be channeled directly to it, maybe even bypassing the main website entirely. By doing so, the possibility that visitors will be distracted on the way to the opt-in page is removed as well.

Thus, the opt-in page gives the customer a two-way decision: to subscribe or not to subscribe (with everything possible being done to ensure that the former option is picked!).

Remember: With an opt-in page, your form should always be 'above the fold' (so that visitors will not need to scroll down to see it).

2. Adding an Opt-in Form to the Main Website

Definitely less effective under normal circumstances, it is still an option that could be considered. In more some websites, especially blogs, which may not want to have their traffic leaving the main website to go off to a separate opt-in page, having the form as part of an easily located sidebar could even work just as well.

Of course, doing so does not have the added benefits of removing all other distractions from the equation, but it is still better than nothing.

Regardless of which option is chosen in order to build up a list, there's one other key ingredient that should not be overlooked:

Autoresponders

Firstly, it is actually *possible* to build and maintain a list without using autoresponders at all. That said, it would be monumentally difficult, inconveniencing, and get close to being downright impossible when the list reached a large size.

Today's generation of top-of-the-line autoresponders deal with a variety of functions. Not only do they store email addresses, but they also have the ability to send out scheduled automated emails.

Most autoresponders track a variety of statistics based not only on sign-up rates, but also on the click-through rates and open rates of emails. In short, they can do pretty much everything that you'd ever need done to help manage your list.

Just to get you started, here are the two best autoresponder services that are currently available:

1. [Aweber](#) – By far the most established autoresponder; it has a huge list of features, and also claims to be able to avoid junk mail filters the best.
2. [GetResponse](#) – Aweber's main rival, it is almost as good in terms of the number of features on offer, and a lot cheaper, especially for large lists.

Of course, seeing as you're just starting out with list building, you may not want to invest too much money right from the start. If this is the case, then go ahead and try [AutoBot](#). Unlike other free autoresponders, it does not include its own advertisements to emails that you may send out, making it a decent option.

Eventually though, you're definitely going to want to go with a paid option such as Aweber or GetResponse, just because they have so many additional features that will end up saving you a lot of time.

How to Get More Opt-Ins

Once you have your opt-in page (or box) sorted, and an autoresponder ready to go, there is still more that you can do in order to actually encourage a higher opt-in rate.

To put it simply: If you want more people to join your list, give them a *good* reason to *want* to join your list.

Incentives are the name of the game, and they can come in many shapes or sizes. Give your visitors something of value, and something that could even possibly assert your authority in the niche. For instance, a free report regarding some issue that is faced by many of your visitors would no doubt be of value to them, and at the same time, by writing one and helping them out, you'd be establishing your reputation as a trusted source of help and information.

If you don't just want to hand out reports, there are other ways to go about this too. Free newsletters, free one-month memberships (if you run a membership website), free PLR articles or software... the possibilities are pretty much endless.

As long as it is something that pertains to the niche that you're marketing to, then you're on the right track.

Another equally good way to build up lists is to make an affiliate program out of one of your products. If you are willing to give out a large proportion of the profits, and the product is one that is known to sell well, then you'll easily get tons of affiliate marketers to promote it for you. That way, all these affiliates will be sending you traffic and subscribing to your list as they buy your product.

Interesting Note: Building a list in this way is actually a very attractive option because it creates a list of already 'proven buyers', as opposed to people just opting in to get a free report.

Ways to Make a List More Responsive

In that note just above this, it was mentioned how a list of proven buyers is more valuable than just a list of people who want to get something 'free'. This is largely due to the fact that for anything 'free', there are bound to be people who are willing to sign up who would never actually dream of paying for anything online.

Still, even if you don't have a list of totally 'proven buyers' there are some ways in which you can make a list more responsive, and possibly even convince people to buy. After all, you're a marketer – that's what you do!

Regular Scheduled Emails

One thing that many people sometimes overlook is that a good list is like a relationship – it takes work to maintain it. If you stop having dealings with your list for a long period of time, they're likely to forget you, and then when they receive an email from you will be thinking, "Hey, who on earth is this guy and why is he emailing me?"

While you definitely want to avoid letting your list lapse into inactivity, you also want to avoid over-saturating your list with emails. Starting to send emails every couple of hours would be a very bad idea, especially if they're all mostly just sales pitches.

Important Advice: A good approach is to never send two sales pitches in a row. Space them out to maybe 1 sales pitch for every 4 to 5 emails, and in between, be sure to include freebies or information that is valuable.

If you develop a regular schedule of maybe emailing your list twice a week or so, and space out your sales pitches too, then you're on the right track. If the emails you send in between as 'fillers' contain great info and freebies, then you'll even find that your subscribers are actually eager and waiting to hear from you at your next scheduled time.

Thus, your relationship with your list can flourish, and they'll be much more open to any suggestions of purchases that you might make.

Catering to the Needs of Your Subscribers

Just now, we covered briefly how your 'filler' emails should be providing freebies and information that is of value to your subscribers. Truth is, this is just part of a much larger picture that revolves around the benefits of appealing to subscribers.

To be completely honest, everything that you send out to your list should cater to the needs of your subscribers as *much* as possible. Unfortunately, this is where a lot of people stumble, and end up not taking full advantage of their list.

Important Note: Although you might think that you know what your subscribers want, and need, there is nothing like actually *knowing* what your subscribers want, and need.

So the question is: How do you really find out what subscribers want? Well, apart from paying attention to any emails that you may get, it would not hurt to send out a survey.

Sure, it may be slightly tacky, but even if just a few people respond, it will still be a valuable insight into the type of people who are on your list.

If you can continuously be providing products that answer the needs and desires of your list, you'll find that you'll be making a lot of sales. While the sales are coming in though, you'll also develop your reputation and relationship with your list even further, so it's hard to say which is more valuable.

Long term – a little work spend finding out more about your list could go a long way towards helping your profits.

Reputation and Authority

Throughout this section, we've also touched on reputation, but why is that important?

When you're marketing online, your most valuable asset, prized possession, and biggest selling point can often be your reputation. Think about it, if Mr. X released a 'Killer Article Submission Software' and Mr. Y released a 'Super Article Submission Software', which would you choose?

As far as reputation goes, Mr. X is a fairly unknown marketer, but there do seem to be several complaints about him overly hyping up poor quality software before. On the other hand, Mr. Y is an upstanding marketer with a long track record of going out of his way to help people, and providing the highest of quality in any software that he attaches his name to.

Who would *you* buy from?

See, reputation is one of those things that can really make the difference, and everything that you send out to your list is part of that reputation. Admittedly, even the most reputable of marketers have some bad things said about them, but the trick is to have the good outweigh the bad considerably.

Being honest, clear, and helpful to your list is often enough. Also, be sure never to mislead, misguide, or be so engaged looking for a quick buck or two that you forget to think about the bigger picture.

Testing Out What Your List Responds To

More than anything else, testing and comparing the response from your list to various approaches should let you know what you should be doing, and what you should be avoiding.

Basically, just learn from your mistakes, and if something works – keep doing it (just not too much!). Some lists respond very well to reviews of products already in the market. Others simply would rather concentrate on what action can be taken within their niche, and then have a plan outlined.

There is no "one size fits all" as far as lists are concerned, and your testing could reveal what the 'best fit' for your niche is.

Maintenance, Pruning, and Sorting a List

As your list grows in size, it is going to need some work to be kept ship shape. Some of this is the kind of things that a good autoresponder could even take care of automatically, but it is worth the mention nonetheless.

One simple thing to keep doing is ensuring that 'bouncing' emails are removed from your list. At some time or other you must have encountered the 'Failure to deliver...' type response that you get right after you send an email, and can mean one of two things.

Either the email that you're sending to is full, or it no longer exists. Whichever the case, if after a few emails the problem keeps repeating, then there's no point keeping that email on your list. After all, why have a list of 10,000 people if 8,000 of the email addresses are outdated?

Yet another fairly simple step to help increase your lists responsiveness is to 'sort' subscribers based on their past buying patterns. For instance, if you have 2,000 or so subscribers that buy high-ticket items fairly regularly, then put them in one group and maybe even give them extra 'perks' for being the fantastic customers that they are.

But at the same time, every list surely has its fair share of people that have *never* bought anything advertised on the list. Some marketers just eventually exclude these people from their lists entirely, but instead, putting them in a separate group and targeting them with the cheapest items would maybe allow you to get some profit out of them.

All you need to decide is if the effort is worth it to market to this group.

Really, there are countless other ways in which to sort, or even subgroup your list. For example, if you have a very general 'make money through internet marketing' niche list, then you could sort them by subgroups according to their spending habits as far as products related to 'blogging', 'article marketing', 'list building', and so on.

Divide, and conquer.

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