

Mining The Gold From Your Opt-In List (*revised*)

Once you're well on your way to growing your own opt-in mailing list, you really should start thinking about exactly how you're going to "work" your list. Ideally, your goal is to provide offers that as many people on your list will like, benefit from and ultimately buy -- without going overboard. A fine line indeed.

We always suggest weekly mailings. This seems to work best online because it's frequent enough to keep your list fresh and remind them who you are. Anything more than that is usually overkill, and can easily result in your emails being ignored or deleted without being read -- unless of course the subject matter of your mailings demand more frequent updates (i.e. daily stock quotes etc.).

The last thing you want to do is bombard your subscribers. Once a subscriber gets in the habit of deleting your e-publication, they will usually continue to do so without opening your messages. And eventually they'll unsubscribe.

Remember, including valuable and original information with each mailing will help you keep happy and attentive subscribers. The best strategy -- especially early on -- is to establish a track record of always putting your reader first. Each and every issue that you send out must be done with your readers' best interests in mind.

Adhering to this policy will help you to establish a great relationship with your readers. They will look up to you as someone who is willing to help them, instead of someone who is just trying to sell them something. Don't get me wrong, each and every issue should contain plenty of references to your site, but rather than saying "Buy X product at this URL ...", a better tact is "For more information about X, visit this URL ..." Once you have the person at your site, let your effective web copy do the "gentle selling."

Once you've established a rapport with your readers (you'll know when, based on the feedback you get after each issue), it's time to figure out how to "work" your list. And unfortunately, most e-publishers totally miss the boat on this one.

I can't even believe how many people I've talked to who have extremely successful web sites, and access to their clients email addresses (many who use their web site on a regular basis), but do nothing with them. Don't make the same mistake. If you don't work your list, it's like passing up on literally hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in extra profits -- literally!

Listen, a quality opt-in list is a virtual gold mine -- as long as you know how to extract the gold from it. For example, do you realize that one of the best ways to test new ads is to simply run them in your own e-publication? There's no need to pay other publishers to test

your new ads -- just run the ads in your own ezine and see how they do. That should give you an overall idea of how one ad will pull compared to the next. It's a quick, easy, and FREE way to test your headlines, offers, etc.

On a related note, you can also run your own ads to introduce new products, services, or maybe even to recruit affiliates for your affiliate program. But let's talk about the real gold - - and how to mine it from your opt-in list using what we call "special mailings."

Going a step beyond regular mailings, a planned schedule of "special mailings" is a quick and easy way to increase your profits. These special mailings will promote your top products and services. When done correctly, these single messages can produce heavy sales periods. The best part is that YOU control the flow as you release your special mailings when YOU want. Here's how to best utilize this strategy...

1. Carefully select a few key items to promote to your list.

Sit down and figure out what your top products and services are. Since you'll only be sending a very small number of "special mailings" to your list, you'll want to promote only the best quality stuff you have to offer. Be sure to give consideration to your top income generating products and services, assuming they are related somehow.

If you don't have additional high margin products or services to promote, be sure to read the material on joint venture marketing. Then, once you have decided on a few high value, high margin items, rotate them in your special mailings.

2. Write your special mailing.

This is the part that makes or breaks you. It is also where the relationship that you've established with your readers comes into play. And if there is one thing that I have learned from the special mailings I've sent to my own list it is this...

Don't try to sell your subscribers anything via email. Instead, put your offer up at your web site. This gives it more credibility than any offer designed to sell by email alone. (Especially with the amount of spam bouncing around the net these days!)

At your site you can post a full sales letter and complete details of your offer, including FAQs on the product or service that you are promoting. You'll also provide a secure order form for safe online ordering. (A component you should never overlook.)

Here's a sample of what an effective special mailing looks like...

Dear [name] or subscriber,

Although I rarely email anything but regular issues to my newsletter subscribers, this special situation was too important NOT to tell you about.

Last month a subscriber contacted me about a new software program his company has developed. Since I've tried many similar programs, at first I was hesitant to try his. When he explained how his was different, I decided to give it a quick look.

That quick look turned into six hours! I was convinced that my subscribers would be as excited as I was with this program, so I hashed out a special offer for you. Rather than tell you all about this powerful new program and the special offer here, I have posted all of the juicy details at <http://www.yourwebsite.com/special.html>. If you're interested in growing your business online, you may be surprised at how much it will help you.

Regards,

[Your Name]
Editor, [Your Publication]

P.S. I also managed to get a special price, exclusively for my subscribers who order before midnight, May 31. After that, the only way to get this awesome new program is by paying full retail price. I am quite convinced you could benefit from this program so don't wait, get the details now at www.yourwebsite.com/special.html

3. Filter your special message.

Spam is now a household name as you know. Nobody likes it but unfortunately there are still many companies that refuse to obey the laws of permission based emailing. This has caused many web-based email programs like Hotmail and computer based programs like Outlook to incorporate a tool dubbed the "Junk Mail Filter". This filter works by flagging specific words that are notoriously used in conjunction with unsolicited advertising via email.

Unfortunately, a junk mail filter catches all emails alike without any regard of it's status -- spam or a legitimate opt-in mailing. This of course will cause many of your special mailings to go right into the junk mail folder before ever reaching the viewers eyes -- thus limiting the response of your special mailing and possibly costing you lots of money. Fortunately, we have obtained a list of commonly filtered words to avoid using in your special message in order to bypass the filter. This should increase the coverage of your special mailings instantly.

Here is a list of filter words to avoid using and also points within your special messages to stop using them in...

| Words / Phrases NOT to use | Where NOT to use it |
|--|----------------------------|
| "money back" | message body |
| "cards accepted" | message body |
| "removal instructions" | message body |
| "extra income" | message body |
| "for free?" | message body |
| "for free!" | message body |
| "special promotion" | message body |
| "one-time mail" | message body |
| "\$\$\$" | message body |
| "order today" | message body |
| "money-back guarantee" | message body |
| "order now!" | message body |
| "100% satisfied" | message body |
| "check or money order" | message body |
| "mlm" | message body |
| "@mlm" | message body |
| "order now!" | message body |
| "guarantee" + ("satisfaction" or "absolute") (used in combination) | message body |
| ",000" + "!!" + "\$" (used in combination) | message body |
| "advertisement" | message subject |
| "\$\$" | message subject |
| "!" + "\$" (used in combination) | message subject |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| "!" + "free" (used in combination) | message subject |
| "sales@" | message from address |
| "success" | message from address |
| "success@" | message from address |
| "mail@" | message from address |
| "@public" | message from address |
| "@savvy" | message from address |
| "profits@" | message from address |
| "hello@" | message from address |
| "friend@" | message to address |
| "public@" | message to address |
| "success@" | message to address |

4. Test, test and test.

In order to yield the best results from your special mailings, the best thing you could ever do for a special mailing is test it. If your list is large enough that you could break it into smaller test groups, you should be doing it. Through these smaller test groups, you'll be able to gauge just how well your special mailing will perform before launching the offer to all of your subscribers. This will also prevent you from exhausting your list before being able to gain the optimal return.

5. Schedule your releases.

How often should you send out these special mailings? Two words: Not very.

I recommend 4-6 "special mailings" per year. After all, if you want these messages to be looked upon as special, they have to be just that -- special. A monthly "special mailing" isn't all that special. Especially after the 4th or 5th one comes rolling in.

However, because you need to limit the amount of special mailings that go out every year, planning the release dates of these mailings is also crucial to their success. In my experience, I've noticed that there is definitely certain months that are stronger for sales than others. In order to yield the best return, you'll want to schedule your special mailings

according to stronger sale months. Of course, these trends vary from market to market, but here's a sample chart that sums up the sales strength of each month according to our trend analysis...

| Month | Sales Strength |
|---|-----------------------|
| January | Weak |
| February | Weak-Moderate |
| March | Strong |
| April | Strong |
| May | Strong |
| June | Moderate-Strong |
| July | Weak-Moderate |
| August | Weak |
| September | Weak-Moderate |
| October | Strong |
| November | Moderate-Strong |
| December | Strong |
| *This is used for sample purposes only. Results may vary depending on market. | |

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About This IMC Contributor

Boris Chow is a seasoned Internet marketer and member of the IMC Think Tank, the team of Internet marketing professionals who gather in the IMC Private Site to spill the beans about Web marketing breakthroughs -- as they happen!

To learn their profitable secrets (and avoid the costly mistakes) so you'll have more time to grow your business, visit <http://www.marketingchallenge.com> for instant access.