

# Work those contacts with digital

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**The most valuable tool any business can have is a healthy mailing list.**

According to research email is 40x more effective at acquiring new clients than Facebook or Twitter <sup>1</sup> and every \$1 spent on email marketing generates a whacking 4,300% return on that investment <sup>2</sup>.

These figures of course are averages meaning that many companies sit at both ends of the spectrum, and it would be fair to say that most businesses don't generate anything like these results. The reason is two-fold; firstly, they gather email addresses in a haphazard way and secondly they do the occasional blasting out of a standard message to every email.

And they wonder why it doesn't work!

The reason they do this is because they think that email marketing is hard and yet it's one of the easiest ways to increase productivity there is. After all, the formula for successful email marketing is simple

## Email + Trust = £

What this formula translates into is that it's all very well having someone's email address, but until they trust you they are unlikely to part with any hard cash.

### The perfect mailing list

It's a simple 4 step process:

1. Gather email addresses, not just any email addresses but the right email addresses. The easiest way to do this is to have a sign up form on your website. You need to tempt people in with something juicy or useful. Just asking them to sign up for The Newsletter is not going to generate much in the way of sign-ups.
2. Use an email marketing service like MailChimp, Constant Contact or Aweber to manage your list. Firstly, they keep you legal and secondly, they make it much easier to create and send your messages.
3. Send regular, useful information designed to build trust for the recipient. By regular we're looking at monthly at the very least, preferably weekly or even more frequently depending on the audience. It's worth remembering that an email list will be stale in 6 months if you aren't sending out regular information.
4. Measure the results so you can send more of what works and less of what doesn't.

### Knowing your audience.

The biggest mistake most businesses make when it comes to email marketing is to send out *The Newsletter*.

There are two common elements to *The Newsletter*: the first is that it goes to everyone, regardless of who they are and what they're interested in; the second is that the news is almost always about the business, and to be honest I'm not really interested in the latest events you've attended or awards you've won. I'm interested in solving the problem I have the easiest way I know how.

Getting out of the mindset of *The Newsletter* is easy, it just requires you to think about your customers instead of your business. But understanding your audience is about more than just knowing what they might buy. It's also important to understand the characteristics that make groups of them appear or behave differently.

Every business has multiple groups of customers. Some might be interested in Product A because it has a particular set of features, others might be interested in Product A because they have customers who could use it. Some might want to do things themselves and others have it done for them. Making an assumption that everyone is the same is like your hope marketing strategy, you hope it's going to work.

When you break your email list down into distinct groups with a particular set of characteristics you are starting a process which will allow you to send the right email message to the right person.

And it's even possible to segment groups even further. For example, I could send everyone who has **bought a product** (they are in my Customers group) in the **last month** who is also **on Facebook or Twitter** a message about sharing their photos with said product in strange locations for the chance to win a valuable prize.

Or I could send a message to everyone who is a **good contact** (they've opened all my emails so far) and **located in Dorchester** to tell them about a course I'm running.

Did you know that 53% of all emails are opened on a mobile device? And that emails opened in this way are often opened more than once? <sup>3</sup>

You may be wondering why knowing how many people open an email on a mobile is important. Well, think about it. If you include a link to your site in the email and your site is not responsive then what is the most likely thing to happen? Yep, people will get out of there pretty quickly and you may have lost a possible customer.

## Marketing Automation

Perhaps the most powerful of the email marketing techniques is one called Marketing Automation.

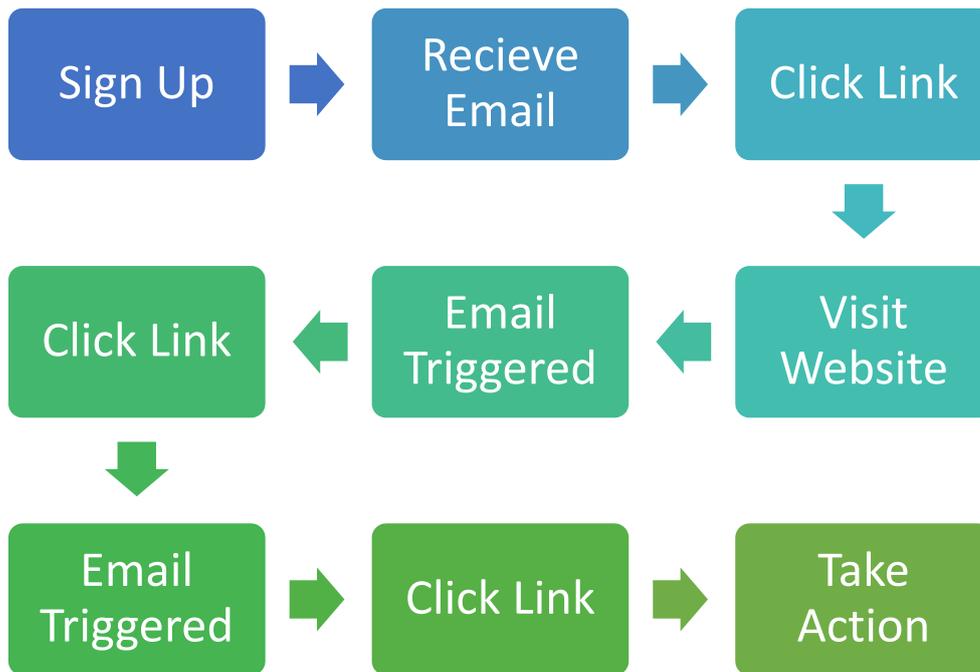
There are two types of marketing automation.

The first is relatively simple: you send out the same email to a group of people based on the date (usually, but the parameters can be different) they signed up. So they get the first email on day 1, the second on day 2 and so on.

The second is more complex and is dependent on the actions taken by individuals in your list to trigger campaigns.

Let's get one thing clear though, marketing automation is not possible with a free mailing list account. You are going to have to pay for this service, but it could be as low as \$20 a month for up to 1,500 subscribers so shouldn't break the bank.

Complex marketing automation works like this:



This is called a Work Flow and how it flows around the system you set up depends on the actions each individual takes and not a pre-programmed ‘auto deliver on this date’ bot.

It allows you to create fairly complex systems that allow you to deliver the right information to the right recipient at exactly the right time, because they have given you all the clues you need to determine if they are ready to ‘buy’ whatever it is you are ‘selling’.

You can also use Marketing Automation so that actions taken on a website trigger email campaigns to people who are signed in to the list. They don’t need to start from clicking a link in an email, they can start simply because they visit a particular page on a website!

Each of these are ways of ‘nurturing’ your email list through a marketing and sales process. Each ‘click’ or action they take or don’t take indicates interest or indifference giving us a classic way of qualifying your potential customers.

Whatever you are doing with email marketing taking some time to gather the right contacts and send the right information to the right person will reap dividends for your business.

## How to set up your first email campaign

Now, let’s imagine Jane Green is setting up an email marketing campaign for Greens Garden Services based near Sherborne.

Greens Garden Services has been in business for 3 years and now has a solid group of customers. So far, adverts in the local press, posters in windows and leafletting housing estates has been the sum total of their marketing efforts. These have proved effective for getting started but they now want to build the business. In order to grow the business they need to do one or more of three things: sell more to their existing customers, get more customers or increase profitability and preferably they want to do all three. Email marketing could be the way to start this process off.

They already have their current customers contact details and email addresses. Any they don’t have they will ask for on their next visit. This is the first group they are going to work with.

The first thing Jane is going to do is set her goals for marketing to this group.

1. Remind customers that Greens Garden Service is around during the growing seasons.
2. Reward existing customers with promotions and deals.
3. Encourage customers to refer their friends and families in exchange for a discount or free offer.
4. Build better relationships with customers.

Her next task is to add her contacts to an email marketing service. Jane is going to use MailChimp, but there are lots of other out there. The reason she's choosing Mailchimp is because it's free if you have less than 2,000 subscribers and send fewer than 12,000 emails monthly; it's also very easy to use.

Before you can send a single email you need a list of people to send it to. Because Jane already has her customers email addresses and information she's starting with this group. She's also remembered that she can only send messages to people who have asked to receive them, so she filters out anyone in her spreadsheet who has said NO, before importing the rest to MailChimp.

She logs in heads for the Lists section in MailChimp and creates a new list for Greens Garden Services and group called Customers. She then selects the Import option and copies and pastes her customer's first name, last name and email address from her spreadsheet.

The first thing Jane needs to decide is whether she's going to send the same message to everyone or whether she's going to segment them even further. For example she might have customers who only have their lawns mowed and others who only have their hedges trimmed. She can use this knowledge to make sure she sends the right email to the right person.

MailChimp allows you to create segments as well as groups. So Jane adds information to her spreadsheet about which service each customer uses. And then reloads it to MailChimp which creates the extra fields necessary to hold this type of information. Each customer will have their records updated.

## Create and Name Your Campaign

The next step is to create you campaign and give it a name that allows you to find it easily later. Jane decides to send an initial email out to all her customers to let them know about the new hints and tips emails she'll be sending over the coming months as well as the exclusive offers they will get. She might also use this as an opportunity to solicit information about what her customers would like to learn about.

Taking this action does two things:

1. It will clean the list. Just because someone said yes to receiving marketing material 6 months ago doesn't mean they still want it. This way they get a chance to opt out if they want to.
2. She'll find out which email addresses are still valid and haven't been changed.

Naming a campaign and creating a subject line are not the same thing.

The Name of the campaign is how you will find it in your list of sent campaigns at a later date and it will also allow you to find it in your Google Analytics reports.

The subject line is what the recipient will see and it pays to spend a bit of time on it. As far as Jane is concerned it needs to incorporate one or more of these top tips

- Be specific about the topic so recipient don't just delete it
- Be intriguing so that people open it
- Be witty in some way
- Offer answers to common questions
- Have between 61 – 70 characters as these have a higher read rate than other subject line lengths! (<https://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/chart/subject-line-length-success>)

MailChimp saw open rates as high as 93% when clients spent more time developing engaging subject lines.

## Track the emails

Jane wants as much information as possible about what happens to her email. For example, how many people open it, how many people click a link and how many people unsubscribe. To get this information she is turning on tracking and has also linked it to her website's Google Analytics account.

## Choose a template

Jane needs to choose a template for her first email. MailChimp has lots of templates you can use but simple is always best. A header, a main body and a footer is easy to open in Outlook and on a mobile phone.

She makes some changes to the template that includes her logo, links to her website, Facebook and Twitter accounts and then saves it so she can use it quickly in the future.

## Write the message

This is often the hardest part of the email campaign process. But it's made easier when you have clear goals in mind. Jane thinks back to the goals she set and decides that as its autumn how to rake a lawn correctly as this meets the needs of all her customers.

Remembering that it shouldn't be about her business she decides to make it a short how to guide so her customers can do it themselves. Writing in this way has the effect of demonstrating expertise AND encouraging those who would rather do something else to book her to do it for them. She's also going to include a special offer (10% off throughout October for lawn care), and will add a link to a post on her website where there is a video about lawn care that she's embedded from YouTube.

## Sending the message

The next step is to send the message. But, before Jane does that she needs to check it so she sends a copy to herself and to her private Gmail account so she can check it on a mobile phone too.

Doing this gives her the chance to make sure it's readable, the links work and doesn't have any spelling or grammatical errors.

When Jane is happy that everything will work she's ready to send her message. But is midday on Sunday really the best time for it to go? Probably not, according to MailChimp the best open rates for messages sent to businesses occur on Wednesday and Thursday during the day.

Jane decides to schedule this message to go out on Wednesday morning at 10.00am and will then monitor what happens. Over time she'll find out the best open times for her particular list and she can adjust accordingly.

## Analysing the data

Once the mail has been sent you can begin analysing its performance. It's best to wait at least 24 hours to get anything meaningful out of the data. This is your opportunity to see what worked and what didn't. Of course, a single email isn't going to be of much use, but the more you send the better the information and analysis.

For example, is it always links at the top of the email that get clicked? Do certain words in a subject line trigger more opens, does the time or day have a noticeable effect. And remember that these may be different for each of your groups.

## Resending the message

You can skip this step if you want to.

When analysing the results of her first email Jane notices that 70% of the recipients didn't open it. At this point she can do one of two things:

1. Wait for her next one and compare results between multiple lists to see if there are common factors
2. Resend the email with DIFFERENT SUBJECT LINE to everyone that didn't open it! This is because almost everyone opens emails based on the subject line.

This is similar to what's called A/B testing but instead of being at the same time it's after the event.

## Increase subscribers

Now that Jane has some experience of email marketing under her belt she can think about other groups of subscribers. For example, what about her Facebook fans or Twitter followers. Do they like her hints and tips enough to share their email address? What about her suppliers or other local businesses?

Adding a sign up form to your website is often the starting point. Getting people to that page though is a whole other story.

## References:

1. [McKinsey & Company](#)
2. 2015 DMA Analytics Journal
3. [Litmus](#)