

LESSON 12: EMAIL LIST MAINTENANCE

EMAIL LIST SECRETS



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MAINTENANCE

How is your email list hygiene? What's that? You didn't know that an email list could be *unhygienic*?

Email list hygiene essentially means making sure that your email list is not only 'clean' but also targeted, engaged and effective. What you need to realize is that a mailing list's value is not *at all* based on its size. You can have a huge mailing list but it can still be worth very little to you if it is filled with people who don't read your messages and who don't really want to be there.

A list with 'bad hygiene' is one that you have fought tooth and nail to build but while focusing *purely* on the numbers without giving any thought to whether those recipients are targeted and whether they actually want to be on your list at all.

What's going to happen when you send that list a message? Probably the same thing that happens when you get unsolicited in your own inbox – it gets ignored. Some of these emails meanwhile are likely to be completely abandoned, meaning that the messages will simply bounce. Some users will complain, or they'll send your email to trash. And generally, it will be a waste of your time.

But it's actually much more destructive for you than that even...

Why Email Hygiene is So Important

Not only will poor email hygiene not work in the short term, but it can also lead to serious damage in the long term. We touched on this in a previous report where we discussed the issue of trying to avoid getting your messages sent to spam.

‘Sender reputation’ is a score that is shared between email providers and that works very similarly to a credit score. The idea is that email providers and clients share your details and how your emails are performing. If it is found that emails from your IP or domain name are consistently being blocked and consistently being ignored, then this will result in a bad sender reputation. It may even lead to you getting completely blacklisted by some providers.

And guess what? This now renders your email list almost entirely useless as *none* of your messages are now going to reach their recipients. If you’ve been building your mailing list up over a long time, then you will lose all that hard work because now you’re not going to be able to reach any of the contacts *on* said list.

Even when you do get through, if most of the people who receive your messages simply ignore them, then this will ultimately amount to a waste of your time.

Then there's the fact that poor hygiene will damage your statistics and metrics. A big part of succeeding in email marketing – or any form of marketing for that matter – is being able to reflect on the numbers that you see when you send your messages. Ideally, you should be able to see what percentage of your messages are getting through, which types of message are most successful etc.

But if your messages aren't getting through at all, or they're getting through in very small numbers, then you won't have the data to crunch. It might be that women don't respond as well to your messages, or it might be that the women you added to your list never had any interest in your brand.

If you ever come to sell your mailing list as an exit strategy, then you'll find that smart buyers will always want to see details like open rate etc. This means that poor email hygiene will render your mailing list effectively worthless and ultimately prevent you from getting any profit from it.

So, with all that in mind, quality is *much* more important than quantity when it comes to your list. And that means watching your hygiene.

So how do you go about maintaining your mailing list and keeping the quality there? Read on and let's find out!

Top Ways to Maintain Email Hygiene

Never Buy Emails

The first and most important rule for good email hygiene is that you must *never* buy your emails. This is crucial because buying emails is always going to render them completely worthless to you.

If you buy a mailing list that someone else has collected, then chances are that the list will have been built using bad practices, resulting in something that won't be effective and that is likely to already contain lots of defunct or abandoned email addresses.

But even if the mailing list you buy has been built with the utmost care and attention, the fact remains that it's not *your* mailing list. This is *not* a mailing list filled with people who love your brand and who were won over by your amazing content. And that matters because that is the kind of list that is ultimately going to result in conversions.

If you signed up to a mailing list called 'Health Forever' then you are going to *ignore* messages from 'Fitness Planet' because you have no reason to trust that brand. You might even be offended at the fact that you are receiving messages from someone you never invited to contact you.

So, rule one is *never* buy emails.

Use Double Opt-In

A double opt-in is a two-step process for getting people to sign up to your mailing list. This essentially means that all new users will need to first sign up and then respond to a confirmation email.

Many people will initially balk at this idea. Of course, by introducing an extra step during the sign-up process, you are actually going to deter some people from signing up who otherwise might have.

But at the same time, having a double opt-in process means that you will only get people who are really committed to your brand. It means that if someone never checks their email, or if they are only in it to get your freebie, they will be filtered out by the process.

More importantly, double opt-in prevents people from accidentally miss-typing their emails when they sign up and it ensures that they don't use fake addresses. It also means that you won't get robots signing up and then responding to your messages with spam.

All of this results in a mailing list with a significantly higher open-rate and much lower bounce rate.

Avoid Overly Tempting Incentives

One of the primary strategies that many marketers use in order to grow their mailing lists, is to offer some kind of incentive. Usually, this will be a free ebook or possibly a free report, and that in turn will provide some kind of value in exchange for the member signing up.

However, if you make this incentive *too* tempting, then you will get a situation where people are signing up purely because they want to get the free stuff and who have zero interest in the messages you send subsequently.

The best incentive is one designed to simply encourage someone to sign up who might otherwise have been on the fence. The idea is to provide a slight nudge to get someone to come to the right decision when they were *already* considering it.

Better yet, is to use some kind of incentive that encourages the recipients to answer their emails. For example, this might mean that your new signees sign up for a mailing list with useful and interesting news. Or it might mean that your subscribers sign up to enter some kind of raffle. Or perhaps it's an online course?

Whichever of these options you pick, you have now created a situation where people will be eager to sign up and will then be

motivated to look out for every message you send – creating a much more engaged list.

Look at Your Stats

If you log into your Autoresponder of choice, you'll find that you have the option to look at specific stats for your messages. These will include stats about your most recent messages and will let you see such things as the number of messages that got delivered and the stats that you received about that.

This will show you the open rates as well as which users are clicking on your links etc.

This is important firstly because it will let you see which of your subscribers are never clicking on anything and never opening your messages. These are your least engaged subscribers and the easy solution is just to remove those members from your list.

It's also important because it will allow you to see which of your emails worked best. Which kinds of headlines grab attention the best? What times are your emails most successful?

Once you've figured this out, the next step of course is to do *more of that*.

Re-Engage Your Subscribers

Before you go ahead and delete all of those unengaged subscribers though, it can be a good idea to *first* try and win them back however you can. See if you can ‘re-engage’ those disconnected subscribers and get them to sit up and pay attention to your mailing list again.

One excellent way to do this is to do a giveaway. This means offering your subscribers something for free and making that very apparent right in the subject line. Mention in that heading that you have a free gift they can download and direct them to where they can find that – it’s a great way to get people to wake up and to win over good will.

Another tip is to just try switching tack with your mailing list. That means trying a different approach from what you usually use, as this will help to make your recipients see you in a different way. For example, if your emails are usually very ‘newsletter like’ with lots of images and links, then why not try something a little more simple and casual? Likewise, if your messages are normally brief updates, then how about sending something that’s a bit more formal? This can help your message to stand out and grab attention, potentially re-awakening interest in what you’re doing.

Target Your List Building Activities

When building your list, it’s important to think about how you’re marketing it, how you’re presenting it and how you’re selling it to

your audience. In other words, you need to ensure that your list marketing is targeting to the right *kind* of recipient so that the people who sign up are the right age, right sex and have the right interests. If you use Facebook ads for instance, then this is a very easy way to think about that.

Be Consistent

Be consistent with your messaging and make sure that you are sending your messages weekly or monthly and with a similar style. This will ensure that your audience knows what to expect from you and when and it will help you to keep your audience engaged and more effectively weed out the people who aren't at all interested.

Provide Value

As with most things in internet marketing, the most important tip is simply to ensure you are providing value. Make sure that the content in your emails is *good* and that people really want to read it.

This will ensure that people sign up for the right reasons. It will ensure that they *keep* reading and it will generally help you to keep growing and avoid stagnation.

What you mustn't do is to ignore your email list for long periods of time, to send out spam or to consistently market toward your audience. This is a quick way to lose the contacts that would otherwise have been high value subscribers and it can completely destroy your email marketing efforts.

Follow all these tips and you'll keep a clean list, filled with people who are excited and grateful to receive your messages. It is MUCH better to have an email list with 10 people who love your site than it is to have a mailing list with 1,000,000 people who don't care about it at all!