

Five Ways to Make Your Email Marketing Work Better

When I wrote a few weeks ago about making your email so good it can't be stopped, a few readers wrote to ask for more specifics.

It's an understandable request, given the percentage of permission-based messages that are being thrown away by email service providers.

So beyond providing killer content, what can we do to give our messages the best shot of getting through?

Build trust before you pitch.

Remember, the success of any email marketing program depends on genuinely compelling content. You want your readers to dig through spam filters, complain to their email providers, and do anything they can to make sure they're getting your content.

Most email newsletters are pitchfests, which makes them no fun to read. Make sure yours is nicely loaded with **cookie content**, so readers begin to be trained to open everything you send.

If you don't build this trust and credibility with great content, the rest of the techniques won't work very well. But there are a few practical things you can do to give your messages the best possible fighting chance.

1. Start every newsletter with a great autoresponder

The autoresponder feature of your email provider lets you create defined sequences to send to your readers. The millionth subscriber has the same experience that the first did.

This means that no matter how busy you get or what disasters you might be coping with this week, your new email subscribers are always well taken care of.

A great autoresponder builds a strong foundation for your relationship with your new subscriber. The old cliché is true: you never get a second chance to make a first impression. The warm, friendly feelings you'll establish with your first 10 or 15 messages will carry over throughout your relationship.

2. Use a single warm, personal message early on

This is a trick I learned from Product Launch Formula founder Jeff Walker, and it creates a really nice rapport with your list.

Early in your autoresponder sequence (I usually put it at message two), include a cheerful, warm, individual-sounding message. Something informal, like, "Hey, really good to see you here, hope you enjoy the content."

You're not trying to fool anyone that this was an individually typed message for that recipient, but you *are* trying to create the same feeling of personal relationship. Invite questions, comments, and feedback at this point, and let them know that you'd love to hear from them.

I typically create this message as text only, rather than HTML. This is also a good spot to use technique #3.

3. Ask them to white list you

No matter how good your email provider is, some messages end up in spam filters. The best defense against that is to convince your readers to add you to their list of "safe senders" or their "white list." And the best way to do *that* is simply to ask them.

I send a text message in one of my sequences right before a message with a few red flags in the content. (The message has the audacity to talk about making money. Shocking, I know.)

The message explains that the next email in the sequence is a little more likely to get trapped in a spam filter, so this would be a great time to add me to their safe senders list.

Some readers immediately white list me, which is great. Others don't, then the message is caught in a filter the next day and they see that adding me to their approved senders list would be a good idea.

Obviously, it's smart to get yourself onto the white list as soon as you can, so you'll want to bring the subject up early on.

But if you do have a message you can't reasonably lower the spam score on, this technique can give you a good reason to ask a second time.

4. Conversations have two sides

Make sure you've got a real human being monitoring any replies to your email marketing, and that that person is giving thoughtful, personal replies to each message they get.

It's also smart to use an individual person's name in the "From" field, rather than the name of a company. Anything you can do to capitalize on the intimate nature of email just makes sense.

When I started adding the words, "Just click reply to ask me a question, your message will come directly to my personal in-box," I noticed that more people felt comfortable doing just that. And not only do questions and feedback build nice rapport, they're also a fantastic window into what your customers want and need.

5. Pay attention to spam triggers, but don't obsess

Most good email providers will let you know if your content has certain hot buttons that are likely to be flagged as spam. Some of them are obvious, like pharmaceutical brand names.

Others are annoying, because they tend to be the words and phrases that have the most selling power. For example, links that say **click here** can make your content look a little spammier to the filters, precisely because savvy marketers know that explicit calls to *click here* get better results.

This is one good reason to put a long sales message onto a landing page, rather than an individual email message. The last thing you want to do is to use less persuasive language just to keep a spam filter happy.

Always remember that you're writing for people, not filters. When you make your readers happy and deliver the content they need and want, no spam filter can stop you.