

# *E-mail Newsletters*

**A Tutorial**

*By*

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MSI International, Inc.

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## Dedication

*This e-book is dedicated to my friend - and one of the World's foremost Internet marketing authorities - Karl Payne of Red Paper Clip Inc. Everything I have ever learned from Karl has helped my businesses. During the first 10 years of MSI's history, between 1992 and 2002 - and before I met Karl - our customer base had grown to approximately 4,000 customers. Since 2002 our customer base has grown from 4,000 to more than 16,000. I attribute much of that rapid growth to doing the things I have learned from Karl. I wrote this e-book but almost everything in here I learned from Karl. He deserves more credit for this e-book than I do.*

## **Introduction**

An e-mail newsletter is a fantastic marketing tool. A good e-mail newsletter will help you establish, build, and maintain business relationships. Not only is a good newsletter a great way to stay in touch with former clients and real estate agents, it will also attract potential future customers.

A good marketing tool is one that will help you build your identity in the marketplace and will help consumers remember you when they need an inspector. Aside from one-on-one contact with people, nothing can achieve that goal better than a good e-mail newsletter.

Newsletters can be more effective than most other marketing tools. They are not advertisements but they advertise you and your business. When a person subscribes to your newsletter, think of it as an invitation into that person's home. Treat your subscriber with the same respect that you would if you were visiting their homes.

## What should I Put in My Newsletter?

This is not always as easy as you might think it will be. You can subscribe to a service that will provide the content for you. Don't do it! The canned content may have already been sent out by one of your competitors. It may even be sent at the same time that yours is sent. Even if you are the first to send out a message, using the services with canned messages will do more harm than good in the long run. The only one who will benefit is the person who is selling you the canned messages.

Your content should be fresh and original. You can cover the same topics that other inspectors are covering but do it in your own words. Writing will reveal your personality. You want your subscribers to get to know you. To know you is to feel comfortable with you.

Make your content relevant to your local market. You wouldn't want to do an article on basements if you are in Miami or hurricanes in Ohio.

Keep your e-mail newsletters short. Try not to exceed 200 words. If you are going to have more than 200 or so words, you should put an introduction in the e-mail and link to the longer article on your website.

There are two reasons for keeping the e-mail messages short:

First - **people do not read long e-mails.** Remember, they haven't planned the time to read the newsletter that comes in e-mail. If they are checking their e-mail and there are long messages, they will glance at them and pass over them. The chances are that they will

not look closely enough to know that the content is something that might interested them. Give them a headline and a short introduction and they are much more likely not to delete the message. They will look at it and move on but they are more likely to come back to it when they have time.

Second - The more words you put in your e-mail messages, the more likely it is that it will be **blocked** by spam filters. Most large ISPs have aggressive junk mail filters that filter out e-mail **before** the mail gets to the recipient even though they have requested to be on your list! The majority of e-mail users are completely unaware of how e-mail works.

The ISPs are not blocking the mail to protect the consumers. They block the mail to protect themselves. They want to reduce the amount of bandwidth on their systems that is consumed by junk mail.

Keep you messages short **and** free of words such as "urgent", "beloved", "won", "home", "mortgages", "immediate", "please", "sorry", "apologize" and other spam-triggers. Use a mail service that will do a spam rating on every e-mail you send. The good services all have this feature. With practice, you can get your spam rating low enough that your e-mails will be delivered by most ISPs.

## **What Format Should I use for My E-mail Messages?**

You have two format choices - HTML or plain text. Using HTML is the better choice. Most recipients will have their e-mail clients set to accept and display HTML because most e-mail clients are set to accept and display HTML by default.

Try to limit your use of images. A common spam-prevention technique is to not allow e-mail clients to display images. Only a relatively small number of recipients will block images but if your e-mail newsletters rely too much on images, your subscribers who have image display turned off will not see the e-mail as you intended. Look at your e-mail both with and without images before you send it. It will always look better with the images but you want to make sure that it looks OK without the images too.

## Whom Can I Have on My List?

If you are in the United States, your list must be **100%** Opt-In. You cannot add subscribers to your list without their express permission.

The "Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act" of 1993 (The "Act"), also known as the "CAN-SPAM Act", severely restricts the legitimate use of e-mail by the good-guys while the bad-guys continue to do their thing. Sadly, it is not the act itself that causes most of the problems for the good-guys. It is the over zealous mail service providers who are afraid of being accused of participating in spam related activities who cause most of the real problems.

Most of the e-mail providers have implemented rules that go well beyond the requirements of the Act. For example - Most providers will not allow you to transfer your mailing list from another provider to them! As outrageous as that sounds, it is true. Major services such as Aweber and GetResponse (two of the largest and best) will **not** allow you to import your mailing list and start sending e-mails. You must **require** each person to sign-up to your newsletter again!

Be very careful with importing names into your mailing list. According to the Act, you can include subscribers who have asked to be on your mailing list regardless of how they asked. A common practice is to advertise your service and collect business cards at tradeshow. Even though the Act does not require it, the major e-mail services will still require you to force your subscribers to sign-up through their systems. They will allow you to send an invitation to potential subscribers but you cannot put them on your mailing list yourself.

## How Can I Get Subscribers?

Use any method you can think of to get subscribers but be sure to tell your potential subscribers that you cannot add them to the list directly. If you collect business cards on an individual basis with the intention of sending an invitation to subscribe to the newsletter, make a note on the back of the card where and when you collected the card. If you collect multiple cards such as you would do at a tradeshow, put the cards in an envelope along with the wording of the signage you used and the date of the tradeshow.

Even though people will leave business cards where you have placed a notice, you will have some people swear that they never asked to be on your subscriber list and will complain to your e-mail provider. You need to be able to demonstrate that you acquired the addresses legitimately.

The **BEST** way to build your subscriber list is to put a form on your website in a prominent location. People will sign-up for your newsletter. If it is good, they will stay on your list. If it is not good, they will leave. As I said before, you need to have fresh and original content in your newsletter. If it is stale stuff that your subscribers have seen before, they will leave your list.

## How Can I Distribute My Newsletter?

You are probably going to want to use an e-mail service called an Auto-Responder. I use the service called GetResponse that I mentioned in the preceding section. Here is a link to a page where you can subscribe to GetResponse: <http://www.inspectionworld.us/>

GetResponse is one of the top rated services of its type in the world. I know an Internet marketing consultant who recommended it. We have been using it for a little more than three years. They have dozens of templates that you can use for newsletters. They also maintain your mailing list. My Internet consultant recommended GetResponse over the other market leader because it is powerful but easy to use.

The reason the services are called auto-responders is that they will automatically respond to a request to be added to your subscriber list. They also automatically send all the follow-up messages for you.

## **Do I Need to Use a Mailing Service?**

You do not have to use a service but for all but very large businesses it is not practical or cost-effective not to use a service. Most ISPs will severely restrict the number of outgoing e-mails on a daily basis. Even a very small list can be a lot of work. Services such as GetResponse make it easy to manage even very large subscriber lists. You can also have multiple subscriber lists. You may, for example, want to have separate newsletter for your inspection customers, real estate agents, and mortgage brokers. You can easily tailor each newsletter to the interests of each subscriber group.

## **How Much Will It Cost?**

This is a big one that we can't ignore. Services are usually either priced by the number of messages sent or on a subscription basis. In the long run, subscription based services are almost always the better choice. If it were not so difficult to move your subscribers from one service to another, it might make more sense to start with a service that is priced based on the number of messages sent. Depending on the frequency of your newsletters and the size of your subscriber list, the break-even point at which a subscription service is more economical than a number-of-messages based service will be anywhere between one month and one year. If you have a good newsletter and your list grows quickly, you can outgrow a number-of-messages based service very quickly.

## When Should I Send My Newsletters?

The great thing about auto-responders is that you can write your newsletter messages days, weeks, or months in advance and have them sent at pre-defined intervals based on the date a person subscribes or you can send them to everyone all at once as a broadcast.

Many of my Tips in my "Tips for Success" newsletter are intended to be read in a certain order. Some of the Tips are follow-ups to earlier Tips. Other Tips do not need to be read in any particular order. Each subscriber starts with the first Tip and works through to the end over a period of approximately three years.

The tips that do not need to be read in any particular order are placed in between and after those that should be read in order. Tips that are time sensitive are sent as broadcasts to all subscribers at the same time.

Send your messages at irregular intervals. That may seem counterintuitive to you. I know, it did to me. I learned this, like almost everything else in this e-book, from Internet marketing consultant Karl Payne. In the years since I learned this technique from Karl, I have heard many other Internet marketing consultants give the same advice. Subscribers are more likely to open your e-mails when they arrive at irregular intervals.

You should send Newsletters at least twice each month but not more than 10 times in a month. Sending 10 e-mails in a month is really pushing the limit so if you have months in which you send 10 mailings, don't ever have a second consecutive month in which you do 10

mailings. If you send as many as ten newsletters in a month, make sure that most - or all - of the ten are very short.

When a person subscribes to your newsletter, they should immediately get an acknowledgement e-mail so they know that the subscription request was processed. The first follow-up should be sent within three days. After the first follow-up, the intervals should be irregular. You may want to send the third newsletter six or seven days after the second newsletter, then the fourth may follow the third in only two or three days.

After the subscriber has been receiving your newsletter for a few months, lengthen some of the intervals to between ten days and two weeks. They are less likely to grow tired of your e-mails if they are spaced a little further apart. Having the newsletter e-mails spaced at greater intervals also gives you more opportunities to send time sensitive broadcast messages.

## **Now That I Have Subscribers, How Can I Keep Them?**

The main thing to remember is that most people get more e-mail than they can deal with as it is. Your newsletters need to be interesting and relevant. Not every subscriber is going to read every newsletter. Not every subscriber is going to agree with the things you write in your newsletters. They will, however, stay with you as long as the information is good and you don't send them so many e-mails that it overburdens them.

Keep in mind that when you send broadcast messages, they are going to all your subscribers. The newer subscribers will be getting the broadcast messages in addition to the scheduled newsletter messages. If you have a sudden surge in subscriptions such as after a local tradeshow, don't send any broadcast newsletters unless there is a real need. If your newsletter focuses on maintenance tips and you learn that a 12" snowfall is expected within the next 48 hours, you would want to send an e-mail to remind people of the hazards of that much snow being allowed to accumulate on roofs. Even people who do not have flat or low-pitched roofs will appreciate the timeliness of the advice.

No matter what you do, you will eventually begin to lose subscribers every time you send an e-mail newsletter. There are lots of reasons for losing subscribers. In many cases, there is little or nothing you could have done to prevent losing a subscriber.

People change e-mail addresses. Sometimes they will send you an e-mail asking you to update their e-mail address in your records. Your mail service provider may not allow you to manually update the records. Even those that do allow manual updating may grow

suspicious of you if you manually update too many records. It is better to have a standard e-mail explaining to the subscribers that they need to register again using the new address because of restrictions that are the result of the CAN-SPAM Act.

Some people will leave your mailing list because they no longer view it as being relevant to them. Still others will leave because they are frustrated with the volume of mail they are receiving and they are looking for ways to manage their e-mail and their time more efficiently.

E-mail is a great communication medium but it is **not** perfect! Most mail services will automatically remove subscribers after their mail bounces more than a few times. There are lots of reasons a person's e-mail can bounce. It is not uncommon for e-mail to be reported to have bounced when in fact it had been delivered. Neither you nor your subscriber will know that the person was dropped off the subscriber list.

One thing you can count on is that when e-mail malfunctions, the majority of people will blame you. Most people have a need to blame someone for things not going right. There are very few people who will first assume that something just malfunctioned for no discernable reason. That is just something you have to get used to when dealing with anything related to computers and the Internet.

## What Should I Call My Newsletter?

I have long had a fascination with names of things. It is not easy to come up with a good name. It is not easy to build name recognition in the marketplace. I do not pretend to be an expert at naming things. In fact, I am rather unskilled at it. I have made some serious mistakes with names but I've also come up with a few that were not too bad. After all, even the dumbest squirrel occasionally finds a nut.

I have learned a few things about naming things. It is much less important to have a name that describes something than it is to have a name that is easy to remember, to say, and to spell. One of Karl Payne's companies is named Red Paper Clip, inc. That is a great name! It is very easy to remember, easy to say and easy to spell. It also creates a visual image. It doesn't matter what the business does - people are not going to forget the name!

It doesn't matter whether you are naming a newsletter, choosing a domain name, or naming a company - most of the same basic rules apply. One of my articles posted on the BestInspectors.Net website covers getting a great domain name. Many of the same principles apply to choosing a name for a newsletter. You can find the domain name article here:

[http://www.bestinspectors.net/tips\\_for\\_success\\_DomainName.htm](http://www.bestinspectors.net/tips_for_success_DomainName.htm)

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