

Stop Guessing with Email Newsletters

Here are the Secrets to Doing it Right

Presented by ArcaMax Publishing

The Leader in News and Entertainment by Email

@ Engage Users

@ Get in the Inbox

@ Grow Revenue

@ Distribute Content

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Introduction

Users invest their time and attention when they visit your sites and open your apps. The goal is to engage them so they will give you permission to communicate with them (via email, text, phone, mail, etc.) to establish direct, personal connections. Too often, you are left hoping they will come back or you are spending marketing budgets trying to find them again.

In particular, email is an excellent platform to engage most audiences. It remains ubiquitous after decades as a staple of personal and business communication. An effective email strategy places your brand on their screen, provides a path back to your site/product, and generates a plethora of advertising opportunities; all at the customer's request.

For many sites, these are compelling reasons for deciding to publish a newsletter, yet very few sites actually achieve any of these goals.

Why? **Because email is tough!** It takes specialized knowledge and technical savvy that are different from those needed to develop a successful content site in the first place. Most don't execute that well. More often than not, either the email newsletter project is an afterthought, possibly delegated to a person who has other priorities, or the project is given resources and focus early but isn't sustainable due to technical missteps or deliverability challenges.

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Benefits of Email/Newsletters

Here's what the research shows:

- Email is everywhere: Over 90% of connected adults use email and over 60% use it daily.¹
- Email (should be) is permission-based communication/non-intrusive: 77% prefer to get promotional emails, provided they are permission-based.²
- Email increases engagement: US users interact with 11 brands per day through email. Compare to 9 through Facebook and 8 through Twitter.³
- Email is a one to one communication: Personalized emails deliver 6x higher transaction rates.⁴
- Email provides multiple monetization opportunities. Display, Native, Co-reg, Solo ads, merchandise.
- Emails generate return visits/purchases: 80% of retail professionals say that email marketing is their top source for customer retention.⁵

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Barriers to Success

Many publishers attempt to create and maintain an email newsletter program only to run in to a variety of challenges.

The first challenge is getting a user to opt-in to receive your messages. This involves placement of email collection promotions prominently to attract a significant volume of users. It's essentially a marketing message meant to connect the visitor to the content by satisfying some need for them. Why should the user opt to receive, open, read and click your emails? It's the **content**. "Content is King" and the quality, purpose and volume of your content is what keeps the user subscribed. Knowledge, entertainment and savings are a few reasons users opt to receive emails. Some publishers have difficulty creating or securing high quality, high quantity content. For this reason alone, many programs are doomed from the start.

Another obstacle is having a system in place to **manage subscriber data**. There is strict FTC guidance on how user data is to be stored and accessed. Furthermore, subscription products require certain language and functionality (unsubscribe) to meet standards; lest the mailing company be at risk of legal action and/or public humiliation. Building a system from the ground up is a worthy cause but many publishers don't have the resources to pull it off.

There are numerous service providers in the email industry who supply pieces of email newsletter processes; from subscriber management software to email service providers. Many of them are effective and safe. Research your partners carefully.

Perhaps the ultimate determining factor in whether or not you succeed with newsletters is **deliverability**. This refers to your ability to have your newsletters reach your users in a timely fashion, and in the inbox. If your deliverability is good, the receiving ISP's (Gmail, MSN, AOL, Yahoo, Comcast, etc.) will allow your message in the door and hopefully place it in the inbox. If not, they may block your mail altogether, or delay it, and put it in the bulk folder where your user will never see it. Your deliverability results are a reflection of your infrastructure along with your permission and sending practices.

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There is nothing more frustrating than doing all of the work and investing all of the money to set up a newsletter program, only to see your mail hit the spam folder, especially in Gmail. It happens every day. For many, it destines the newsletter program to failure. Bear in mind that each ISP has its own strategy for filtering mail. Their intent is to keep the bad mail out and the good mail in, and that's a worthy objective. Otherwise each of us would have inboxes constantly filled with spam.

Newsletters are commercial email, so they are at risk of being filtered. This risk increases when promotional or advertising content accompanies the newsletter. Consequently this issue will always be present.

For many, Gmail is the greatest concern because it is the leading ISP in terms of number of accounts in the US. Google's filtering is very advanced; it's based on an algorithm that is reported to consider more than seven hundred factors and updates every ten minutes. It views user engagement to mail from a given domain as an overriding factor in its decision-making. They are very good at determining if a user wants email from a given sender.

For your newsletter endeavor to succeed, you can't shortcut these implementation steps. The rewards are well-worth it, so we encourage you to invest the time and resources to make it work!

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4 Keys to a Successful Newsletter

Opt-in: We are all familiar with junk, spam, and promo folders. This is where email often goes to die when you send to it users who have not explicitly opted in. The reasons for hitting these folders mostly concern mailing domain reputation and ESP filtering, both which can be positively influenced by getting users to opt-in.

The single versus double opt-in debate has raged for decades. It's a debate that can't be won because email submissions are generated in different ways and marketers put varying levels of priority on their mailing domains and processes. However it is commonly held that double-opted in subscribers have taken the extra step to confirm their connection to your brand and are thus more likely to open your messages.

Provide Value: When subscribed properly, you can expect users to open a message at least once. You have one shot to give them a reason to open the next email. Providing something of real value (content, savings, and knowledge) builds a stronger bond between the reader and your brand. Providing it frequently keeps you top of mind and just a click away from the user re-visiting your site. Ask yourself, "Would I open and read this email?"

Balance: Now that you're building a dedicated user base, try not to push them away with overwhelming advertising and bad user experiences. Keep your templates simple and consistent with a good balance of content and ads. An even split is a safe place to start but more content than advertising is a better experience. Whenever possible, tune your advertising messages to your audience. When done properly, advertising can also add value for your users.

Execute: Building an email program in house can be difficult and many publishers start down this path only to shut it down due to inherent obstacles. In most cases, a consistent, profitable email newsletter product can be achieved with a handful of vendors; just make sure they are technically compatible. Consistency is key, so make sure the machine works every day. Inconsistent mailing can cause substantial loss of top-of-mind awareness. Incorrect treatment of data and poor processes can land you in legal trouble.

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Implementation Checklist: How to Successfully Publish Your Site's Newsletter

It's critical to remember that managing a successful newsletter program is an ongoing process and you can't just "set it and forget it."

Infrastructure

- Sending domains: Your sending domain(s) needs proper configuration, addressing issues such as Sender Policy Framework (SPF), DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM), and Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance (DMARC).
- Hardware
- Sending Platform: Will you send on your internal platform or externally with an email service provider (ESP)? Many choose to use an ESP because they take care of many of the items on this list – at a cost.
- Validation service: Be sure you're not mailing spam traps and bots.
- Content Management: Possibly your site's CMS is set up for this.
- Ad server, if you want to monetize with advertising.
- Subscription/unsubscribe processing: Process new subscribers efficiently to maximize engagement. Handle un-subscribers efficiently to minimize complaints and avoid legal CAN-SPAM issues.

Ongoing Management

- Circulation: This includes list growth strategies, mailing frequency and other strategic content considerations.
- List Hygiene: At what point should you remove unengaged users?

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ArcaMax Co-Branded Email

ArcaMax offers marketing partnerships wherein website publishers can promote co-branded, content-driven email newsletters and monetize from day one. ArcaMax provides a fully managed platform where the partner needs only to promote the newsletter on their sites. This service is free of charge and partnerships operate on a revenue share. This is a rare opportunity to have a robust newsletter platform without expensive contracts or licenses. All users are double opted-in, go through several hygiene filters and are periodically scrubbed if they do not engage with mailings. ArcaMax's in-house ESP and mailing domains are used to ensure top-notch deliverability and accountability. ArcaMax monetizes the users through traditional online advertising; co-reg, newsletter display, native and solo email. Revenue starts to accrue immediately and is shared monthly.

Integration is simple: Partners just need to promote newsletters and use the ArcaMax API to post email opt-ins. ArcaMax also provides JavaScript widgets for publishers who have no current form or data collection integrations. All content-based newsletters will carry the partner logo in the masthead and include links back to partner site to generate additional partner traffic. The rest of the content is nationally syndicated, high quality content provided by ArcaMax.

In short, all the headaches described in this report are non-existent when publishers allow ArcaMax to manage newsletters offerings on their site.

About ArcaMax

ArcaMax Publishing is a leading provider of news and syndicated features. ArcaMax distributes hundreds of features to millions of subscribers by email daily. ArcaMax earns revenue from advertising, which allows all content to be free for readers.

For more information about ArcaMax Co-Branded Newsletters, please visit:

<https://www.arcamax.com/cobra>

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