



NONPROFIT MARKETING GUIDE.COM
Training and tips for do-it-yourself nonprofit marketers



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Steps for Creating a Nonprofit Email Campaign or E-Newsletter



Whether your email campaign is about grassroots outreach, advocacy, or fundraising, the basic steps you need to take to pull it off are the same.

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1. Get an email newsletter service provider.

This is a must-do. There are several affordable services for nonprofits, including [Network for Good's EmailNow](#) by [Emma](#) and [iContact](#).

If you are sending mass email, the number doesn't matter. You still shouldn't do it from Outlook or your regular email account for many reasons (you could have your entire email account labeled as a spammer, you have no way to measure success, etc.) Providers will also save you tons of time (and thus money too) and give you lots of extras, like sign-up forms and open/click-through reports.

2. Get your current mailing list into shape.

First of all, do you know who's on it? Understanding the typical person on your list will help you develop content that works for them.

Are there any obvious ways you should be segmenting your list? For example, do you have two or three distinct audiences who really aren't interested in the same types of articles and info from you?

Do you have names collected offline that you can add to your email list? It's really best for those people to have said they definitely want email from you, but as long as you have an existing business relationship, you can email them. Just be sure to always make it easy to opt-out (more on that later).

If you have been emailing regularly using an email service provider, are you making sure that bounces are removed from the list? Don't keep emailing to bad addresses.

Carefully managing your list is the best way to avoid spam filters. Send what people want to the people who really want it.

3. Make it really easy for people to join your list and manage their own subscriptions.

Put your sign-up form on your website in a very obvious place - ideally in your template so it appears on every page.

Offer incentives to encourage people to sign-up (explain what goodies come in your newsletter, offer special downloads, auto-responder series, etc.)

Consider letting people segment themselves on the sign-up form by interest or how often they'd like to be emailed.

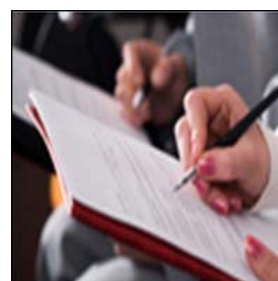
Shoot for a double-opt in system, or be prepared for more manual list management if you go with single opt-in.



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Include a link to your privacy policy, where you say you won't sell, rent, or trade their email addresses to others (and then don't!).

Encourage people to change their email addresses themselves (if your system allows it) and respect all opt-outs. It's better to lose a subscriber than to have that person tag you as a spammer.

Ask people to sign-up for your e-newsletter in offline forums (including various forms you ask people to fill out) and set up a system to regularly add them to your database.

4. Create an editorial calendar a few months at a time.

Think about what's going on in the next few months, not only in your organization, but in your community and on the calendar.

Pick a schedule that works for you and the people on your list based on past experience. Monthly, twice a month, weekly? If you aren't sure where to start, try every two weeks and adjust from there.

Plan out some topics, mixing good information with calls to action and fundraising appeals.

Be prepared to adjust your topics based on what's happening in the headlines (that shows you are timely and current, which are big bonuses in email marketing).

Consider an "evergreen" autoresponder series for new subscribers.

5. Write and design your email messages - always with your readers in mind.

Pay very close attention to your subject line - make it benefit-laden or intriguing for the reader.

Talk directly and personally to your readers. Write articles that are timely, helpful, and interesting to them.

Make sure readers understand how important they are to your success.

Include specific calls to action and links that make following through as simple as possible. Do you want them to donate, volunteer, register, tell a friend, learn more, write a email, make a call or what?

Your executive director and board ARE NOT your target audience.

If you aren't comfortable with HTML, start with a template from your service provider.

Design for the preview pane, and use mostly text with a few good images.

Appeal to skimmers: use headlines, subheads and short chunks of text.

Send in MIME - It's HTML by default, with a plain text version for those who can't read HTML.

Consider some split-testing.

6. Measure the results and track over time.

How many people are opening the email? Clicking on links and which ones? Following through on calls to action, like donating? Unsubscribing? Bouncing?

Adjust accordingly.

Get more tips here: ["10 Surprisingly Easy and Startlingly Effective Ways to Improve Your Nonprofit E-Newsletter"](#)

And check out our [weekly webinar schedule](#) for **real-world, affordable training** on a variety of nonprofit marketing topics.

Additional Studies

[2008 eNonprofit Benchmark Study](#) -- basic benchmarking stats for nonprofit email performance.

[2008 Convio Online Marketing Nonprofit Benchmark Index Study](#) -- more benchmarking stats for nonprofit email performance.

[The Wired Wealthy: Using the Internet to Connect with Your Middle and Major Donors \(2008\)](#) -- describes the different types of online donors and emphasizes that they want control over how much email they get. Also contains great advice on what kind of content people want to see.

["Rapid Donor Cultivation"](#) by Common Knowledge -- using a series of emails to move new subscribers toward making a donation.

[U.S. Federal Trade Commission's info on CAN-SPAM Act](#) (Nonprofits ARE considered commercial emailers.)

[Industry Canada's info on PIPEDA](#) (Canadian spam law) and the [OECD Task Force on Spam](#)

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