

3 Ways to Keep Your Growing Email List Fresh

All lists need a little maintenance to keep communications relevant

How is a permission-based email list like a vegetable garden? You want both to grow in size and continue providing sustenance. And, like a vegetable garden, a growing email list needs some care and maintenance along the way to ensure healthy growth continues. Giving a little TLC to your newsletter subscriber list also helps reinforce that you're continuing to send relevant information to each of your diners and prospects.



Here are three surefire ways for maintaining a healthy email list:

1. Segment your list

When you have a larger list and send everything to everyone, you're basically doing what some in the marketing business call "spraying and praying." You're playing a numbers game and hoping that more people will open your establishment's messages. In reality, creating smaller, targeted lists gets you better results. Letting subscribers choose which list they want to be on allows them to tell you what they want to hear, and it means you can send more relevant emails to those who want to receive them.

Here are a few ways your establishment could segment your list to target customers and diners interested in different things your restaurant might offer:

- Create a list specifically for lunch specials. Doing so allows the weekday lunch crowd that may not be interested in dinner and weekend deals to get just the info they want.
- Offer live music? Make a list of upcoming acts for those customers interested more in music than dinner.
- Want to boost sales on a slow night? Create a list of local customers (maybe using their zip code, if you have it) to send out a "last minute specials" notice to fill seats on those less-than-stellar nights.

With Constant Contact, you can choose which lists are available for subscribers on your Join My Mailing List and email preference page (e.g., if you offer an exclusive VIP Diners club, you won't want that list available for anyone to join). Other options include segmenting your subscriber list by birthday month to offer special deals to those celebrating, or by how often subscribers want to hear from you (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly).

If you've already got a big list (good for you!) that you want to segment, you can let subscribers know about the new options in upcoming campaigns and ask them to click the Update Profile/Email Address link at the bottom of your message to see and select which available lists they'd like to be added to. You can also put a copy of the Update Profile link in the body of your email to make it a more obvious call to action.

2. Prune the bounces

Every time you send a message, there are going to be a few that get bounced back because the email address is no longer valid, has a typo in it, the recipient's inbox could be full, or the person has an out-of-office responder activated. Take a look at your bounce report to see why the message is being returned. For the vacationers, you can ignore the reported bounce. But for hard bounces such as a non-existent addresses, you should:

- Verify the address is correct. If it is and you think the report is a false positive, you can always follow-up with the subscriber individually to see if she is actually receiving your message.
- For those that are truly non-existent, move them to your Do Not Mail list. Doing so will eliminate the subscriber from future mailings, help lower your bounce rate, and improve your open rate. You may also save a few dollars since you won't be paying for a contact that isn't getting your emails in the first place.

3. Trim those who don't engage

There are two schools of thought on trimming your list. Some say if a subscriber hasn't opened your email in over a year, delete him from your list and watch as your open rates rise.

However, there are those who believe that if people don't ask to be taken off your list, you should leave them where they are as you never know when they are going to re-engage and potentially drop in or order a meal. You can also conduct a specific re-engagement campaign to encourage those quiet subscribers to become active again. The decision to trim or not to trim is yours.

The goals of pruning, segmenting, and trimming are to keep your list clean and to enable you to keep sending relevant content to those subscribers who are interested in specific categories or types of information. No matter which route you take, delivering winning content to your subscribers will keep them on your list and engaged with your messages longer.

Get started today!

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