

How to Use Email Marketing to Nurture Your Leads and Customers

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A lot of money and effort is expended by small businesses on finding and attracting new leads. But what about your existing customers who keep coming back time and time again, or those prospects who are already interested in your product or services? Often it's easier to sell or upsell to these people, and **email marketing** is the perfect vehicle for keeping in touch with prospects or customers who might otherwise forget about you.

Email marketing doesn't mean just sending out a newsletter once a month with company news and offers. In fact, if it's all about you, then this might even turn them off. Your clients and prospects are more likely to be interested in your emails if you create messages that speak to them on their level, and send offers that are relevant to them.

Steps to developing your lead nurturing process

1) Consider the Email Client

Always test your email marketing template in different "email clients" as each of them renders HTML differently. Also make sure that most of your important content is at the beginning of the email, because many readers use their 'preview' function to read the initial part of the email to determine if the rest is worthwhile to read.

2) Best Content to Use

Content that adds value to your customer or prospect, either by educating them or entertaining them, tends to be popular. These include:

- Tactical "how to" articles
- Customer case studies
- Best practice lists, such as "Top 10 Ways..."
- Strategic articles and interviews

3) Subject Line and Title

The subject line of your email, along with the title inside the email, determines whether your email will be opened. Some tips for getting read:

- Use four to six words in your subject
- The "from" line tells them who it's from, so don't waste space saying "newsletter from XXX"... You only have two seconds to get their attention, so use action words such as "Download" or "Watch"
- Test to learn what types of subject lines work for you

4) Automate

Automating your email marketing lead nurturing process is a really great strategy. **Email Autoresponders**, available through a number of different email marketing software programmes and set in advance, make this easy.

The more small businesses transfer their manual email answering of questions or phone follow ups to pre-empting them with an automated responder, the more they free up their time - to spend on other profitable business activities.

5) Segment your lists

Because new leads and existing clients are at different stages of the buying cycle and often need different messages from you, it's wise to use the segmentation tools available within most online email marketing systems.

Different lists can easily be set up within one email account, with any number of web forms capturing details that are helpful to delineate product or topic interests.

6) Test content, timing and approach

We mentioned testing your subject lines. Always test your offers and the best times to send out emails to subscribers. Does Wednesday lunchtime see more of them opened (escape from boredom)? Or does a Tuesday morning see a lot of opens to a business related offer? With an online email marketing system you can check open rates, click throughs to your website, and open times, all very easily.

Do you use a lead nurturing process for your potential or existing customers? If so, how systemised is your process?