



How important is an email list, and how often should I be emailing the people on it?

When it comes to email marketing, two things are true. First, for most authors, an email list is crucial. And second, most authors do not compile an email list soon enough, if at all.

We cannot possibly overstate how valuable your email list is. It is far more valuable than your Facebook likes and LinkedIn connections, and it's far more potent than a book trailer or blog tour.

Only a fraction of your social media followers will see any given post. However, unless your message ends up in the spam folder, almost all the people on your email list will at least read the subject line.

Let's frame it another way: how many people do you know who either aren't on a certain social media platform, or don't use it much? We are guessing a large number. Now, how many people do you know who don't use email on a daily basis? We are guessing far fewer.

HOW IMPORTANT IS AN EMAIL LIST?

Email is one of the most effective ways you will engage your platform. This means you need to carefully cultivate this email list. Here's how you do that:

- **Use a service to manage your mail list.** We like MailChimp, but there are others. Yes, it's a big pain to transfer emails from your personal account to a service. However, sending emails from MailChimp is a breeze, looks very slick and professional, and gives people the chance to opt out. (It always stinks when someone opts out of receiving your emails, but it is better than angering them with unwanted emails.) You will also be able to manage your lists better, see how many people are opening and reading your emails, and determine how effective a certain campaign is.
- **Grow your list at events.** Bring an email signup sheet to every event you go to. Encourage people to sign up, and consider offering them a reward—such as a free chapter or a Jolly Rancher—for doing so.
- **Make it part of your sales routine.** Be diligent about adding people to your email list when they purchase directly from you.
- **Do not over-email.** Once per month is plenty. Make sure your content is relevant and interesting. Too many emails are the worst. Don't be spammy.
- **Don't make your emails about you.** Emails asking people to buy your book are not a good idea. Yes, you can send a monthly email that contains a cool promotion, updates about your latest events, or news about a partnership; however, free, reader-centric content works wonders. The less you sell your book and the more you inundate your reader with tips, tools, ideas, or a cool story, the more successful you will be at selling more books. Remember: quality over quantity.
- **Add an opt-in box to your website.** Usually, this is a pop-up box that you can add yourself (or have your web designer add).
- **Seek your readers, not everyone.** Not everyone belongs on your list, so don't force people who are not prospective buyers to opt in. Noisetrade and Netgalley are two

places where you can allow people to download your book (for free) in exchange for their email address and the potential for a review. This is a nice way of making sure that the emails you are collecting are from people who are genuinely interested in your work.

If you are emailing your list monthly, which is more than enough, that means you have twelve opportunities to engage people and market your book. Here are a few ways you can utilize your email list in productive (and not annoying) ways.

- **A monthly author newsletter.** Don't overthink this. A quick check-in about the events you have coming up, a few pictures from past events, and maybe any news surrounding the book is plenty. Incorporate something that's reader-centric, not you-centric—a fan photo favorite, an inspirational quote, or a free resource.
- **A favorite blog post or supplemental material.** Did you write a blog you'd like to share in an email? Did you create a Q&A that could be shared with your audience? An email is a useful way to share that.
- **A promotion.** Promotions should be timely and relevant. Before you get too caught up in making the perfect promotion, think about which promotions catch *your* eye. Free shipping? BOGO? A signed copy? A donation of an amount of proceeds to a favorite charity?
- **A holiday deal.** Sure, this is the same as a promotion. But if there is a holiday that is particularly relevant to your book, or you are partnering with other brands as part of a gift set, this is good news to share.
- **Recommended resources and links to other experts and authors.** We believe strongly that authors who see other authors in their genre as competition are putting themselves at a disadvantage. Sure, you are “competing” for readers, but readers of your genre are likely always on the hunt for new books in a similar vein. Make friends with other authors, and share their information in your newsletter if it is relevant to your readers. These are the types of partnerships that can lead to wonderful, intangible returns.

HOW IMPORTANT IS AN EMAIL LIST?

Brainstorm ideas for engaging your email list. Be specific and creative! If you can't think of more than a few items, that is okay. Consider a mailing every two months, or even once per quarter.
