Guide to B2B Email Marketing Strategy



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Welcome to our latest guide – this one focuses on email marketing strategies and advice for B2B Marketers.

In this guide email marketing expert and trainer Maria Khoury will take you through three of the most successful strategies that you can implement, without trouble, to improve your B2B email marketing activities.

1. Optimise your data capture strategy

Why? To grow your email marketing database with engaged and opted in subscribers.

Purchasing data lists

Thought leaders in the email marketing industry are just about unanimous on the subject of randomly purchased lists and it isn't great. It is getting much harder to find high quality lists that are out there that are fully opted in by the subscribers and adhering to best practice.

You may, however, still encounter those who push the buying of email lists as a perfectly legal alternative to building lists through opt-in subscription. If you are going down the purchased list route then ask the providers the following:

- How are the subscribers opted in?
- How often is the email data updated?
- Are they individual contact emails or generic business ones? What is the split?
- What is your policy on refunds/replacements for gone aways or incorrect addresses?
- Could I have a test list to check the quality of data before purchasing?
- Is the list purchase for a one off usage or multiple?
- If multiple usage, will I get an update to it and when?

Our advice to marketers? There are better ways to grow your database and you should investigate them before looking at purchasing data – which may be quicker to implement in the short term but is likely to damage your brand reputation, delivery rate and place you in the 'spammer' category with recipients.

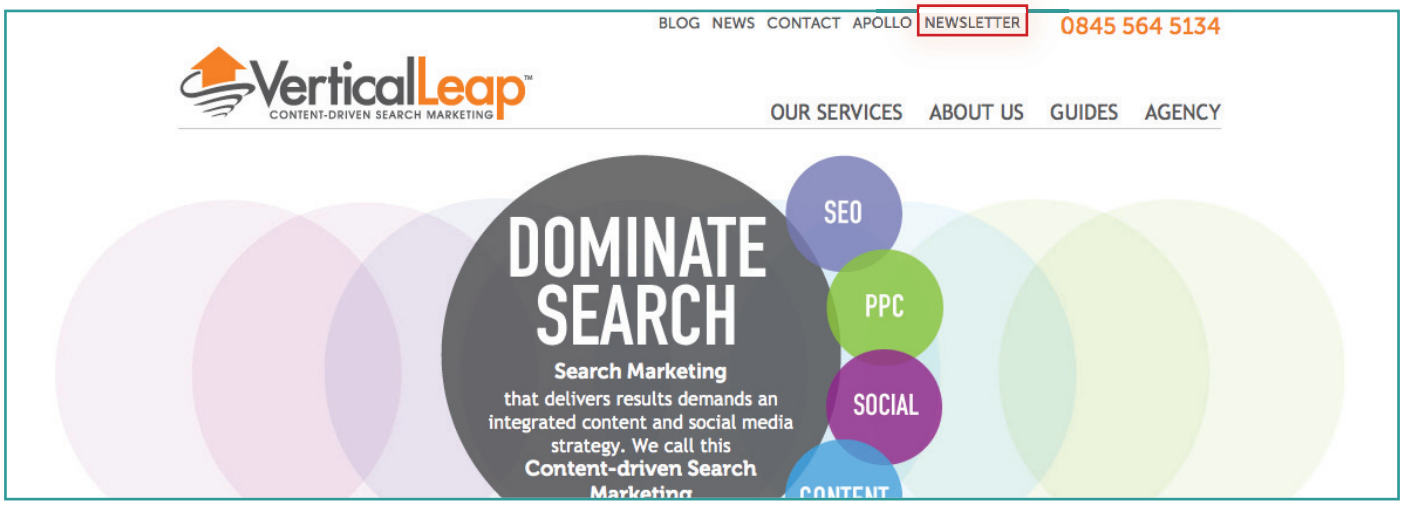
You may be able to legally email B2B without them having opted in (remember you must have an opt out option on your email though), but here's the catch: your recipients won't debate the legal merits of your bought list before hitting the spam button. And it only takes a few complaints to attract the stern attention of ISPs that can bring your "legitimate" email campaign to a screeching halt.

Get your web sign up right

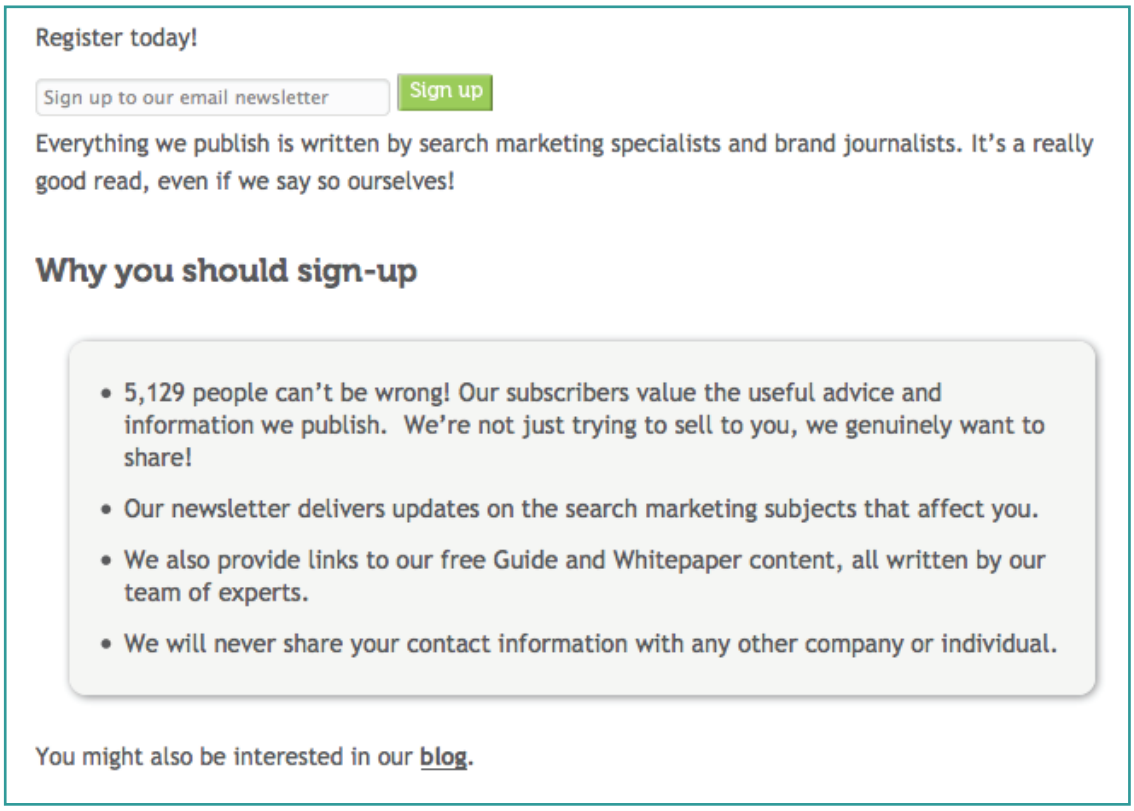
In Submit Now by Andrew Chak, we learn that there is a hierarchy of needs that must be met before a user on your website will act –availability, usability, confidence & desire. Before you can start to get the conversions (read email sign ups) on your website, you need to make sure that you've addressed each of these.

You have roughly 8-10 seconds to get a conversion on your website (that's not scientific by any means, but it's a widely accepted metric amongst web designers). So the moment of signup is the most critical to get right.

Make sure your sign up form is visible. Before I train a new client, I like to have a look at their website and check the sign up form. It amazes me how hidden away the sign up form can be sometimes. Display your money maker! Make sure it's clearly visible and available on every page.



The Vertical Leap newsletter sign up link on the previous page is great because it's at the top of the homepage and, it's very clear once you click through, what you're is signing up for. Not only that Vertical Leap also tell you exactly what you can expect to receive following the sign up.

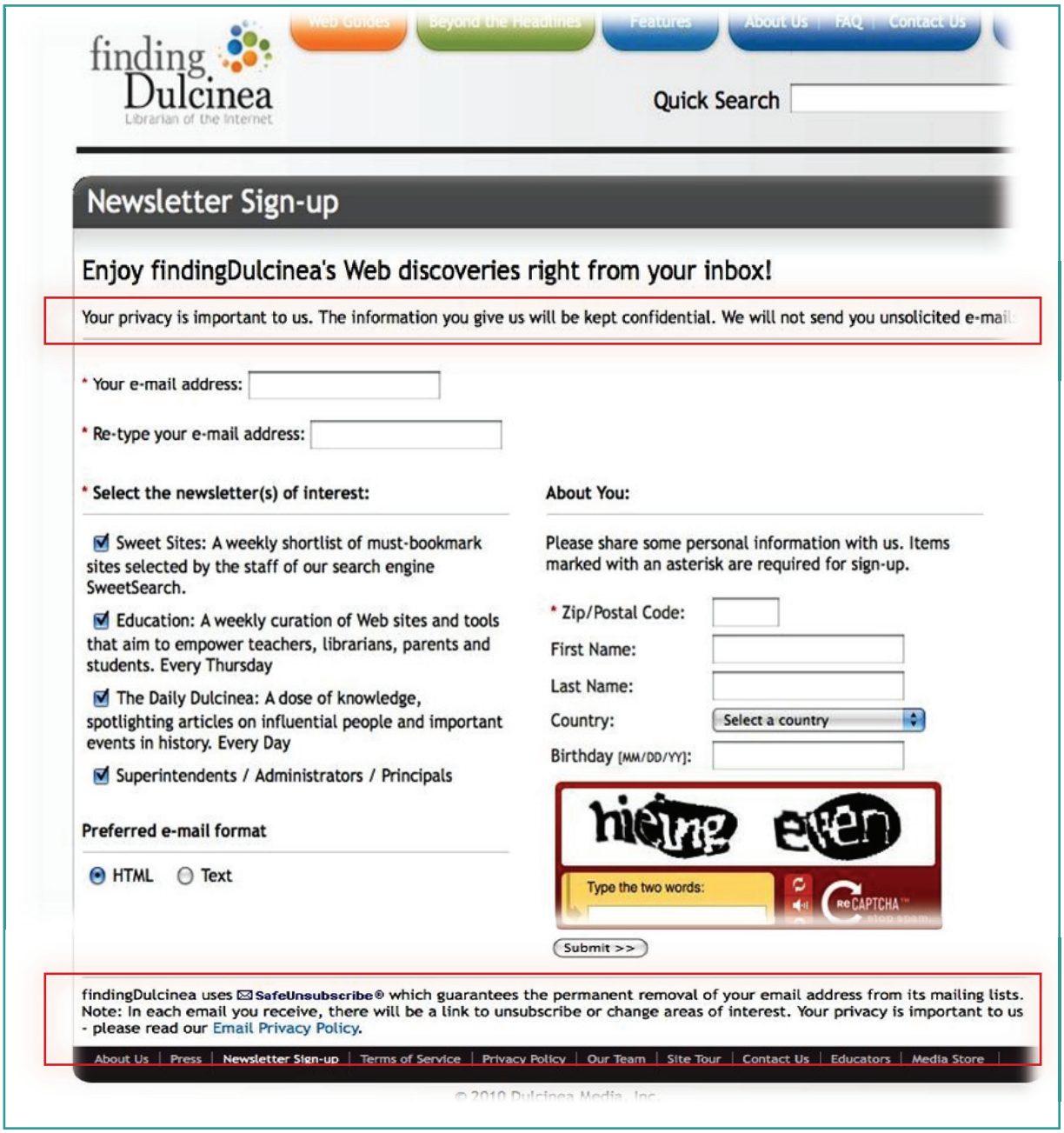


Bear in mind that this is not all the information you can collect, by using a two page opt in process you are making it look simple for the user to just input their email and then you can ask for a couple more bits such as name, title, email preferences on the next page. By telling them that the information is to better target their interests and giving them control over what they're receiving it's a double win – they getter more relevant content and you get your data for personalising and targeting your campaigns!

Show you respect their privacy

Which leads me on to my next point... if people don't trust you, they won't submit their details.

Make your privacy policy clear and easy to read like this:



It's all about trust

Now this next bit is worth remembering...more and more people have created a second or third emailaddress which they're not so worried about entering into a sign up form, but they're less likely to check it or regularly interact with your emails.

You want to capture their primary address and their full attention so make sure you're offering highsecurity and top value in exchange.

Make sure your recipients know what they're getting. You can do this by not only confirming what they've sign up for at submitting stage but also why not show them an example of the email they'd receive?

An email address is worth more than money and potential subscribers want to know they're getting full value for giving you their email address.

Content equals currency

Want newcomers to join your list? Lure them in with worthwhile content that they can get only by subscribing - for free of course. I see this quite often when I'm searching for information online. I get to a website with lots of useful information, and then I'm told that there's even more available to members who sign up.

I'm not saying put all of your precious content behind a registration form, as you need to show potential subscribers what they'll be missing out of if they don't. So keep your top quality, highest demand items behind a registration form and produce solid pieces of content such as blogs that are freely available for consumption.

I'll usually only sign up if I like what I see already, and they can assure me I'm not going to get spammed.

Lots of marketers I speak to can sometimes be put off by the production of content - where does it come from? Won't it cost a lot to produce? I just don't have the time to be writing content when I could be generating leads...This will generate you leads is my answer and we're not saying that each piece of content needs to be war and peace – plan in a few of the bigger items per year and provide useful tips, case studies and industry observations for the rest of the year.

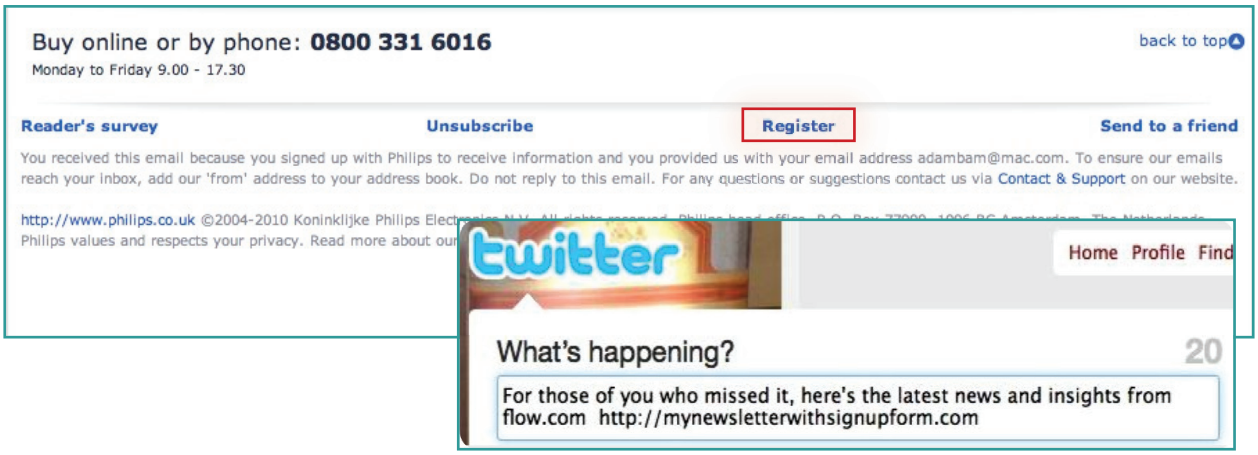
Ask your support team what is topical with them this month?
What are the common questions being asked of sales?
What trends have marketing seen this month?

All of these answers will give you a piece of content. Make sure it's relevant to your audience and of course your business, then off you go!

Turn recipients into distributors

So we already know that social sharing can drive website traffic, we can also make it work to continually grow our database.

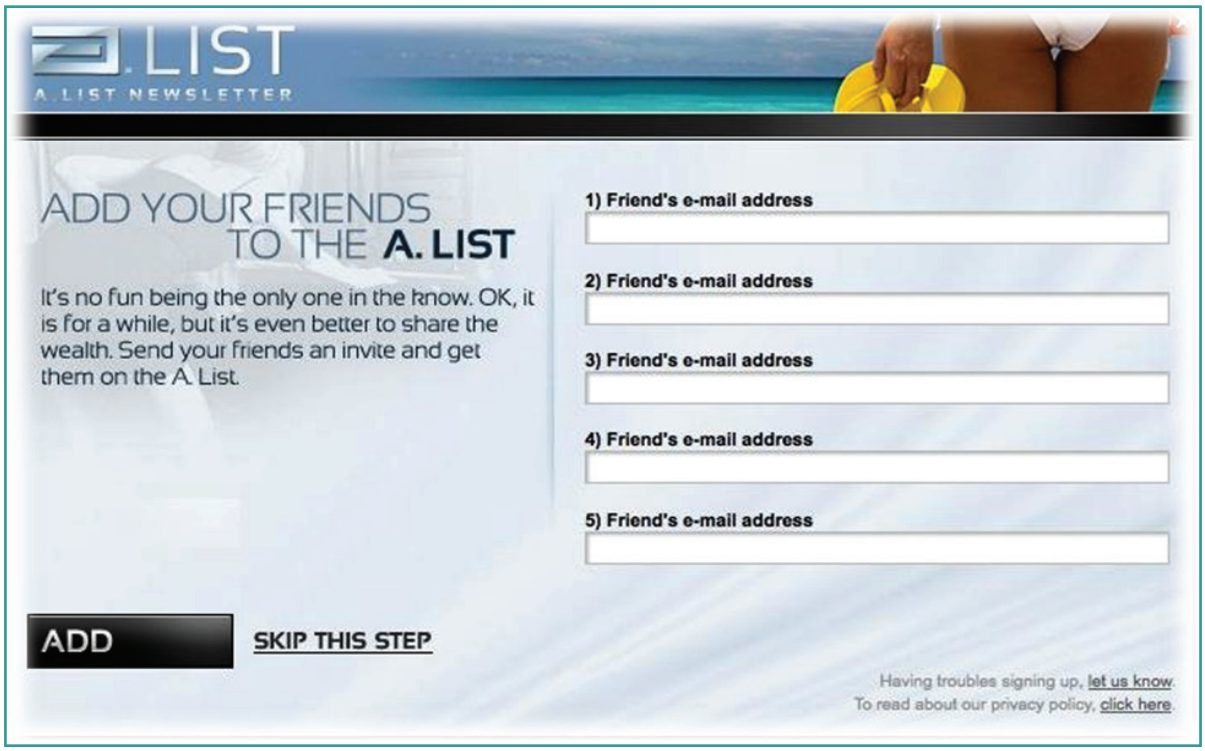
Include a sign up link in your email newsletter and also post a link to a hosted version of your newsletter to your social networking sites. Anyone who clicks through to either will be given the option to sign up to your email newsletter...a little something like this...



So they're ready to click submit, but why stop there? Here's a great example from AskMen.com

During the sign up process you are given the option to share with a friend (well 5 if you have them - if you don't ask, you don't get).

I like the sentence 'it's no fun being the only one in the know' it encourages them to share their experience and knowledge.



2. Use education as a tool

Why? Because if you can make your prospect feel like an expert, they are more likely to buy than if they feel confused or that they don't have enough information.

Business professionals want to feel smart, competent and in charge of the transaction. If a business prospect feels like they're being pushed, their likely to walk away because they view a purchase as a rational decision based on information.

Marketing is all about having a relationship with your prospects, customers and clients. Developing this relationship is based on educating them and not "selling" them.

Robert Allen, a famous real estate investor said,

> *"No matter what your product is, you are ultimately in the education business. Your customers need to be constantly educated about the many advantages of doing business withyou, trained to use your products more effectively, and taught how to make never ending improvements in their lives"*

Idea 1

Offer an advice column via email that users can subscribe to – you're not just limited to advising on your own products/service but share useful reports and blogs on other websites that are related to your industry.

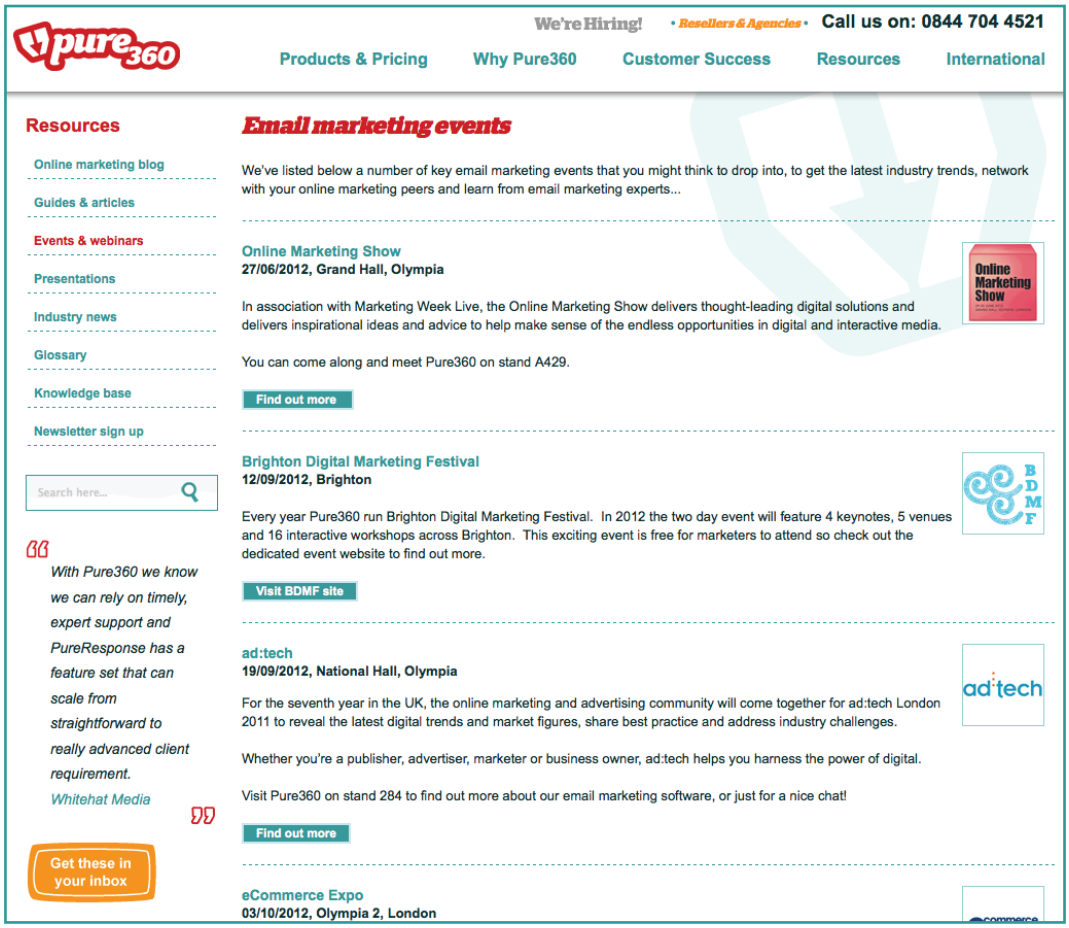


Idea 2

Set up a blog on your website and ask customers if they would like to contribute an article to it – with eight customers you could publish relevant articles each week for two months! Always encourage comments on your blog as this introduces a two way element and for each blog ask readers if they'd like to receive related articles into their inbox – it saves them having to remember to come back and keep checking the website and is giving you a subscriber.

Idea 3

Events and Webinars are a great way of educating your prospects – again you don't have to limit yourself to your own hosted events or even events that you're attending – the idea is to educate your prospects so that they have the confidence to make an informed decision on suppliers and if you've been there giving them unbiased advice, it's much more likely to be yours.



When it comes to educating your prospect, talk their language

Different people within a company have different functional positions.

The Finance Director of a company will often focus on price, capital expenditures and measurable return on investment. So if you are a company that offers an outsourced product, your email message to the FD should explain how your solution avoids hefty upfront costs, and has a built in system for measuring the effectiveness of marketing expenditures.

To the Technical Director, they may be more concerned with how the product may use up scarce IT resources or how well the product integrates with the company's existing technology.

The Head of Marketing will have different concerns altogether...I think you're getting the picture.

This isn't as time-consuming a strategy as you may think, but relies on one key factor - you will need to have your recipients' role or job type in your database. If you don't have this information already, seriously consider collecting it in the future.

Then using the software provided by your ESP, segment your lists to create relevant sub filters. You can either create separate messages to send to each list, or use dynamic Html content to capture the relevant text or html in the same email, depending on the recipient's job type.

The great thing about segmenting your lists and campaigns in this way is the more detailed analysis you will be able to collect from your campaign results.

3. Create referral business

Why? Referral business is one of highest converting of all leads.

Now that your customer is a fully educated and loyal customer, they will be the perfect advocates of your product/services.

We all know that the most cost effective form of marketing is referral, according to consumer reports, 57.7% of all products purchased online in the year 2009 were because of word of mouth. This goes to show you that if people like a product, not only will they buy it - they will talk about it and encourage other people to do the same.

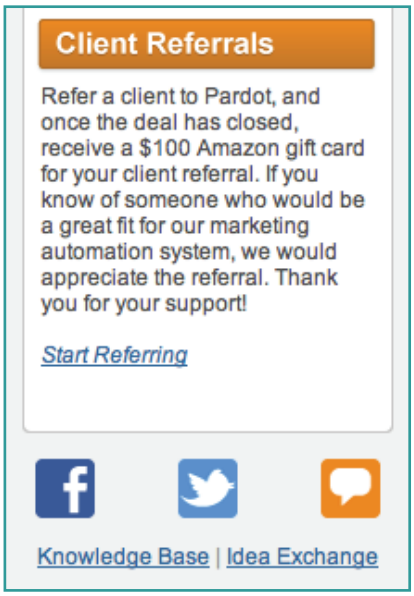
Stay focussed on your stars

Now let's be honest, not all customers are good customers.

Every business has those who spend a little and demand a lot. Don't spend your time and effort on these customers, the likelihood is, they'll attract more of the same. Instead, spend some time working out who your stars are. This can be done using simple customer satisfaction surveys, these don't have to be costly in money or resource, your email marketing provider should be able to provide the capability to set up these surveys using a list builder. Alternatively there are plenty of free or small charge websites that you can do your surveys on if you don't want to host on your own site. Another source of customer knowledge will be your Account Managers or Customer Service team – they're speaking to these people every day and will quickly build up a picture of who your stars are.

Once you have found your stars, segmented your list and ask for referrals...

Here's an example from Pardot where they've asked for referrals in their newsletter.



What you offer per referral is up to you but bear in mind that whoever is referring you will be motivated by not just business benefits but also personal benefits aswell.

You don't have to just operate a customer referral scheme, staff will be happy to refer business and also if you're working with suppliers, channel partners or consultants – if they like your business then why not become an advocate of it.

Whenever someone in your business is talking to a customer, see if you can get them to ask for one (if not all!) of the following:

- A case study
- A glowing quote
- Permission to use as a client reference on your marketing/sales collateral
- An article for your blog (if they don't like writing then how about a Q&A interview with you?
- A logo (eps format is always nice as you can resize for any collateral)

All of these will add power to your email marketing and help build your content library.

Who has sent to a friend already?

Finally don't forget the plain and simple send to a friend option. On your email campaign reports you will be able to see exactly who has sent your email on to a friend. Why not encourage them to do the same again by exporting that list of referees and sending them an email to say thank you with a special discount for their troubles. This will encourage them to do the same again...and also gets them back in the shopping mood.



Author of this guide, Maria Khoury is one of the many talented and experienced people who make up the team at Pure360.

Pure360 is an email & SMS marketing provider who specialise in helping businesses get the best results from their campaigns. Pure360 work with over 1000 organisations including brands such as Rightmove, Virgin and innocent drinks. Our customers stay with us through choice, not contract, and they tell their friends about us – but never their competitors!

We'll work with you to improve your email marketing and SMS results.

You'll get the best from your campaigns without being tied into a long contract, because your success is our success. You'll get full training, support and regular free advice supported by email marketing and SMS software that's developed in-line with customer feedback.

Pure360 customers have access to the largest UK-based customer support team of all email marketing providers because our whole focus is on improving your results by working together.

Members of the DMA, we've recorded a 10% higher open rate for our customers than the DMA average, leading to higher clicks and conversions for your email marketing campaigns.

You can find the team working to improve our customers' email campaigns, down in Brighton, pop in or give us a call on 0844 586 0001 to discuss how we can help you get excellent results from your email & SMS campaigns. Or email us at contact@pure360.com

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