



***How to
Choose an
Email
Service
Provider***

Presented by
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How to Choose an Email Service Provider



Many websites, blogs and courses give advice on email marketing but most assume you already have a list. The problem is, there are many people out there (possibly you) who haven't started a list yet. You may still be trying to decide HOW to get started and which program to use. If that's you, keep reading to learn the fundamentals of starting an email list.

One of the most important decisions you will make in building your email list is the ESP or Email Service Provider. Your email service provider is the company you choose to host your email list. Having a company host your mailing list provides you with many advantages.

The thing that stalls most people in their tracks is that they don't really know what they should be looking for in an ESP. Here is a list of my must-have features:

- **High deliverability of emails.** There's no point in building a list if your emails won't get delivered. Make sure the program you choose has a very high deliverability rate.
- **Both broadcast and autoresponder options.** A *broadcast* is when you set up a message to be sent out immediately or at a certain day/time. A broadcast is going to go out to your full email list and won't be resent. Your ezine or newsletter is usually a broadcast.

Autoresponders are emails that are set up to be delivered automatically – usually in a timed sequence – after someone signs up to your list. For example, it works like this: Sally signs up for your cake decorating email list and on the first day she gets autoresponder #1, then four days later she gets #2, then four days

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later she gets #3, etc. As an email marketer, you want both options, as they'll be useful to you in many ways while you work to reach your market.

- **Top notch customer service.** When you need help it should be there, period.
- **Personalization of emails.** Adding personalization to your emails is a great way to increase interest and conversions. You can personalize emails with first name but you can also use other functions, such as where they live, what hobbies they have, birthdays, or other categories to identify your prospects.
- **Multiple email lists hosting.** Some programs only allow you to host one email list. You will likely want to keep several separate email lists for different websites, topics or even to separate customers from *potential* customers.
- **HTML and Text email creation.** Some people prefer to send plain text emails while others like to add images and hyperlinks through an HTML email. This is a personal preference here but I would always choose an ESP that offers both so if you change your mind down the road it's easy to switch from one to the other. It may be, too, that you will send some HTML emails and some text emails depending on different circumstances.
- **Easy and flexible sign up form creation.** Once you've done the initial list set-up you need to get people signing up! Having a user friendly sign-up form that you can customize to match your site and to collect all the information you want is essential.
- **Statistics tracking.** If you're sending out emails without knowing the results you're getting, then it's very difficult to measure your success. Proper tracking will allow you to see how many people open your emails, how many click-thru on various links, how many signed up per day, how many unsubscribes and bounces you get, etc.
- **Templates.** Email templates will be helpful to you if you don't have design skills. There are some companies that make it very quick and easy to get a professional looking email campaign going with ready-made HTML templates. You simply highlight and type, or cut and paste just as you would in a word processing program. Each ESP has a variety of templates to choose from and some are much better than others. If you want to send out great-looking HTML emails, you'll either need to find an ESP with great templates, or you'll need to hire someone skilled in HTML code-writing to create a template for you.

- **Ecommerce.** Make sure that your ecommerce solution — including your shopping cart — will interface in the way you want it with your email service provider. Some shopping carts provide an all-in-one solution that includes your ability to use it for both ecommerce and for your email marketing program. But an all-in-one solution may not be the best for your business.

The best way to figure out if an ESP is the right one for you is to do your research first, compare all the features they each offer, and how much they charge – especially as your mailing list grows – and then take advantage of a trial run if they offer it. Most do.

One caution about a trial program: The reason, of course, that they offer a trial is to get you hooked into their system. Once you start building a list in one place, it can be a challenging process to move it to another provider. The list you are moving to may require that you ask everyone on your list to re-opt-in before you can start sending them emails again.

The industry norm is that you stand to lose 50% or more of your list if you have to ask them to opt-in again.

So, choosing your email service provider wisely right from the beginning will save you a lot of time and possible headaches down the road..

Your email list is one of the biggest assets you will ever have in your online business. Take some time to set it up right from the beginning and that initial investment of time and effort will pay off in multiple ways for years and years to come.

Marty Marsh has been happily and successfully self-employed since 1995 creating marketing and promotional projects that have resulted in more sales and greater profits for his clients.



His marketing students and clients say he has a gentle, yet persuasive manner when it comes to helping them learn and implement new concepts and ideas. As a marketing coach, Marty has the ability to recognize areas that need improvement and to capitalize on the strengths of the owners of small businesses so they can spend more time doing what they love to do. Marty's students see immediate results by applying the principles they learn.

As a small business owner, he knows the trials, tribulations, joys and triumphs of running a successful business. A life-long student, Marty has an insatiable appetite for learning as much as he can in this lifetime — and not just about marketing. He says he teaches the things he most needs to learn about himself.

Marty's expertise in the world of small business marketing is balanced by his ability to connect deeply with people on an intuitive level, so that he can assist his clients and students in deliberately creating the kind of business they want.

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