



Communicating with your List

And

Selling to your List

Module Three

Of

James Gladwin's List Building Course

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In the last guide, we got into the basics of getting to know your subscribers, what they want to learn and what they want to buy. This guide includes more practical ideas on how to format your emails, what to send to your list and making offers your readers will act on.

But First, Your Guiding Thoughts for the Week: No Right or Wrong

Markets, UEPs and lists are not created equal. That's why there is no one-size fits-all solution for your marketing efforts. Where some things may work well with your list, others may not be as well received. This week includes a lot of ideas and strategies that have worked for me and my clients – but not all may work perfectly with you.

That's okay. The key is try things out, track your results and find the RIGHT way for you and your list.

But remember, you'll *never* know unless you try.

Email Formatting Tips

One of the best things you can do is to keep your emails simple. Keeping it simple means **less work for you and luckily enough, typically means a better response**. The reasons why will become clearer as we discuss formatting further.

- **Forget the Ezine:** The word ezine sounds kind of cool, so it may be tempting. If you're not familiar the term, it simply means electronic or email magazine. It's like a mini magazine with a variety of sections and regular departments.

But you know what? An ezine is simply **too much work** and given the attention span people have when it comes to email, a lot of your efforts may end up in vain.

Personally, I don't recommend the ezine format with one exception. If your main revenue focus with email is to sell advertising, the ezine format can serve you well. After all, the more content you send, the more space you have to fill with paid advertising.

But in most cases, I wouldn't recommend making advertising your biggest source of revenue. In the long run, **you will make more money by *selling your own products and affiliate products***. As you build a relationship with your list, they will come to trust you and want to buy from you...nurture that trust by recommending products yourself, instead of selling ads to just anyone.

In the end, it's your business and your decision, but I'd steer clear of the ezine and reliance on selling advertising. That doesn't mean you can't blend some paid advertising into your email marketing, but for maximum profit, don't put your focus there.

- **1 Focus at a Time:** Here's more good news for your busy schedule. For best results, just focus on one topic or offer in most of your emails.

These days, people are facing email overload and want to get through their inboxes as quickly as possible. Sure, there are exceptions and you may find what attracts your particular audience is long and detailed information, but if you don't have to work that hard, why would you?

Interesting Note: One interesting thing I've noted is that people seem to be in a real hurry when it comes to email, but they are willing to spend more time on a web page that you provide a link to. For that reason, I often keep the content in the email enticing, but short...so I can get them to the web page where they'll spend more time.

In my experience in publishing long multi-topic and short single topic email messages, the short has consistently given me more results. If I publish an email with multiple links and calls-to-action, typically, the first link receives the most clicks and it goes downhill from there. If people are only paying attention at the beginning of the email, why bother with the rest?

It all goes back to the general online marketing and copywriting principle of avoiding offering too many choices. People may like to say they like freedom of choice, but when it comes to things like making buying decisions, people are often overwhelmed by choice. And given too many choices, they might decide to make none.

Do yourself a favor and stick to one topic or offer in most of your emails. There will be exceptions, but generally speaking - just offer one thing at a time.

Possible Exception:

- **A product offer reminder** - When you make an offer for the first time, make sure it is a solo offer. For follow-ups, they can still be stand-alone offers, but if you're trying sneak in the opportunity to mention it again, you might add it to the beginning of an email on another topic.

Try something like this:

“As promised, I have those suggestions for those pesky dandelions on your lawn, but first I wanted to remind you that today is the last day to register for the Easy Lawn Care class and receive 25% off your registration fee....”

Of course you’ll include your link and other details. Then you’ll move onto the topic of the email. Always do these reminders at the beginning of the email as you’re more likely to get more people clicking through to check the offer.

- **Include a Call-to-Action in Each Email** – A call-to action is simply telling your reader what they should do next. The term is typically used for a sales message where the call-to-action is to direct your reader to buy. However, adding a call-to-action to each email doesn't mean you have to ask your subscribers to open their wallets each time. What you do want to do is train them to follow instructions and ***do something*** each email you send. A well-trained list is a very valuable thing. 😊

Your Calls to Action Might Include:

- An offer to buy a product
 - Download a report
 - Complete a survey
 - Read a blog post or article
 - Leave a comment on a blog post
 - Sign up for a freebie
 - Enter a sweepstakes
- **HTML or TEXT** – I know I said it before, but I'm a big fan of keeping it simple. Not only is it less work, but it gets the results I want. Whether you use HTML or text, keep simplicity in mind for a few reasons as both formats can be kept relatively simple.

Here are some things to consider:

- **HTML often allows for better tracking, including open rates, etc.** You can still use HTML and keep it simple. Just use the html option in your autoresponder, but format your email as usual.
- **HTML allows link text and testing of calls-to-action.** Instead of having to always type out a URL, you can test out a call-to-action like [Click here to download your report](#) or [Please leave your comments here](#), etc.

[I strongly recommend this FREE 26 part video course – no opt-in / sign up](#)

- **If you use text, include the full http://www version of the URL.** In some email programs leaving the http:// out of your email can cause your link not to be clickable. Always type the URL out in full.
- **If you do use HTML, send a text version of the email as well, so your text-only email subscribers will be able to view it as well.** Your autoresponder should include this feature.
- **How you design your email will likely have a lot to do with what type of relationship you are trying to build with your readers.**

If you're trying to establish one-on-one type of trust, text email will serve you well...after all, it's how friends write to friends and it can make your email appear more personal.

If you're trying to portray a more corporate image, highly-formatted emails complete with your logo and other branded elements could be more appropriate.

- **Let Them Know What to Expect Next** - A great way to keep your readers on their toes and ready to open your next emails is to give them hints on what's coming up.

For example, if I have a product I'm going to pitch, I often tell my readers when to look for my next email and why they should be excited about it. It could be a note at the beginning of my email if I want to ensure they don't miss it...or sometimes at the end of the email or in the P.S.

You might try something like this:

“P.S. Stay tuned for another email on Thursday. If you’ve been trying to figure out how to keep your teen from running up the monthly cell phone bill, you don’t want to miss this.”

Or at the beginning of your email:

“Since we’ve been talking about digital scrapbooking a lot lately, I decided to contact noted digital photography expert, Jane Smith, who has agreed to share some of her easy-to-follow techniques in an upcoming question and answer session. I’ll have all the details of this no-charge session soon, so keep your eye on your inbox this Thursday.”

- **Subject Lines** - There a couple of things to remember with subject lines:

1. They offer **limited space** for your message.
2. Their ***only* job** is to get people to open your email.

Create curiosity with your subject lines that makes your readers want to open them.

“Newsletter #12, Volume 3, Issue 4”

...***really*** doesn't cut it.

As I mentioned, the only job of a subject line is to get your reader to open the email...that's it, so I personally don't really recommend descriptive subject lines either.

For example, I'd likely never use a subject line like (but I might test it out at some point to see how my particular subscribers responded):

"Potty Training Guide"

Sure, it does mean that you're more likely to have those readers ALREADY interested in a potty training guide open your email, but most of your readers won't know (yet) that they really want a potty training guide...in particular this guide you're trying to sell.

It is the body of your email whose job it is to convince your readers they need a guide...*not* your subject line. Again, you only need your subject line to get your reader to open the email.

In a case like this, I'd more likely use a subject line like:

"This will help with the frustration..."

Now in this case, if your readers are parents of toddlers, they can very likely relate to frustration and the subject line is more likely to capture interest. Being a parent is a joy, but there are definitely frustrations with all kinds of things along the way.

So, they open the email and you talk about and relate to that frustration...and then they feel like someone understands them, knows what they need and are more likely to click through.

- **From Lines** - Consistency is important here and helps ensure your email hits its intended destination and is recognized by your subscriber.
There are two components to the from line of your email:

- **Email Address:** Use the same email address for all your subscriber communications. First, they will come to recognize this address. Second, in order to ensure your email gets through, many of your subscribers will whitelist your address (i.e. mark your email address in their email program as a wanted sender). If you change your address, you risk they might not recognize you or your email is more likely to get filtered by their email program.

In order to ensure more familiarity and subtle branding, always send email from a domain that your subscribers will recognize. Don't use a Gmail, Hotmail or an ISP-provided address.

- **From Name:** Your autoresponder should allow you to specify a "from name" for your emails. This is the name that will readily show in the from line in most email programs. This name should be consistent so your subscribers can instantly recognize your emails.

What should you choose for your from name? Should it be your personal name or company name? Generally speaking, people are more likely to relate to an individual, rather than a company. If they know you by name and enjoy your content, they are more likely to open your emails. If you are trying to portray a more corporate image, you might want to put your company name or you might try a combination of personal and company to maintain that connection, but also keep your company name out there.

Ex. Jean Bradford - Chevy's Cheesecake Factory

The important thing is, again, consistency. If your emails always go out from "Chevy's Cheesecake Factory" don't one day decide to send an email from "Jean Bradford" as it might confuse your readers and have them hitting the spam button. ☹

- **P.S.** - A post-script (P.S.) can be a handy tool in your emails. They don't have to be used in every email, but here are some potential uses of this piece of virtual real estate.
 - Giving a hint to your readers on what you will cover in your next email. We talked about this a little earlier in this lesson.
 - A quick promo in an otherwise informational email.
 - Another reason to take action on the offer in the email

In addition to being the last thing people see when they read your email, people who are in a hurry and scroll will come to your P.S. before they close your email. Having something useful there can help you get your message noticed.

- **Speak Directly to Your Reader** - It doesn't matter if you are going for a more corporate image or a personal one, you will get better results from your communication if you address your subscriber as though you're writing to her and her only. It's just like writing an email to a friend or even sending a printed letter to a prospect - you write directly to the recipient.

For example, avoid language like:

"As a thank you to all of my subscribers, I've included a link to a free gift.

Instead, say:

"As a thank you for being a valued subscriber, I've included a link to a free gift for you."

As another example, if you write:

"I know many of you are looking for a..."

As opposed to...

"I know you are looking for a..."

Which do you think is more powerful? In the first case, your reader can immediately exclude themselves from the offer because you said "many". You don't want your reader to just exclude herself...you want her to feel compelled to take you up on your offer. In the second instance, you are stating it directly to your intended audience.

You may be sending out your email to thousands of people, **but each of your subscribers is reading it one by one.** Address them that way.

- **Use Your Subscriber's Name, but Be Natural:** Personalizing your emails with your subscriber's name (or other data you have collected) can be a powerful thing, but don't overdo it. Repeating someone's name over and over can start to really feel like a sales pitch, as opposed to an informative, helpful email that might cause your reader to open his wallet.

You can test the use of names in subject lines, in the initial greeting and in the body. If you collect other data such as interests, location, etc. you can sprinkle that into your emails. Collecting extra relevant information and merging that info is often possible through an autoresponder service.

I personally use <http://www.quicksales.com> and I can create extra fields on my form to segment my subscribers and merge their responses into my emails.

Frequency of Your Emails

One of the most common questions people ask me about email marketing is, "How often should I email my subscribers?"

Well, for that there is definitely no one-size fits-all answer. Some publications are suitable for daily email, some will do well several times per week, once per week or even once per month. But in all honesty, I wouldn't recommend once per month as you're probably losing your marketing oomph. We already talked about it, but if you're doing a longer publication (and that may be one reason why you email less frequently), you're not keeping your reader focused on your message because your sending too many messages at once. As a general guideline, you can often get away with shorter, but more frequent emails and you're likely to boost your response. Test it out and see.

And even though I said there is no one-size fits-all answer, I do have some recommendations:

- **Write with some regularity:** Now I've never been one to say you must email on a precise schedule as is common advice in email marketing. Sure, you can keep your schedule rigid if you want, but it can just add unnecessary stress. If you don't have time to email on a particular day, don't lose sleep over it. Send it the next day or when you can.
- **Note which days your readers seem more responsive:** Your readers may be more responsive on some days than others. Do a little testing to see when they are more likely to open and act on your emails.

I don't keep a rigid schedule, but I do tend to email on certain days. I also give my readers a heads up when an important/useful email will be coming their way. This really helps me keep a conversational tone to my emails. I do what I can to mimic the way a friend would email a friend and friend's don't always email on a certain day. They email when they have something to say and may indicate when they'll email next time, but they rarely follow a rigid schedule.

Credibility

Your credibility is important in building and maintaining a good relationship with your subscribers. Avoid sacrificing that credibility in the simple quest for a quick buck or to satisfy a friend/colleague who asked you to promote his product. Everything you do has to be a nice combination of being in the best interest of **both** your subscriber and your bottom line.

A few ways to care for your credibility:

1. **Do Your Research:** Always do your due diligence on products you promote, information you provide, people you associate with, etc. Simple Google searches can be a wealth of information.
2. **Be Careful with Fads:** In many markets there are fads that gain popularity and then fade. If you focus on these, it could be tough to sustain a consistent business, but also can tarnish your reputation. Of course if you're in the teen fashion market, fads are likely a cornerstone to your business, so use your good judgment. 😊

As an example, the weight loss market is full of fads in the form of diets. Online marketing is also full of fads, particularly in the area of short-lived traffic methods. You want your subscribers to grow and develop through their experience with you and getting them on one fad after another isn't likely going to accomplish that.

3. **Be Honest in Your Reviews & Recommendations:** Let's be realistic. No matter what type of product you promote, not every subscriber (and not even a majority of them) are going to take you up on your offer. And it's probably good that they don't because one product is not good for everybody, so why not be honest about it?

When recommending a product, tell your readers the true benefits, who the product is good for and who the product isn't suitable for and why.

What to Send:

So what are you going to send your subscribers? Simply put - you're going to send offers and content. Offers are going to be the cornerstone of all your email marketing and you should plan your sending schedule around the offers you are going to make.

That doesn't mean I'm suggesting you pummel your list with offer after offer because that will likely diminish your lifetime subscriber value. Instead, I'm suggesting that you plan your content and emails based on what you're going to promote.

For example, if you're launching a household organizing coaching program, you'll want to start talking about the topic ahead of time, so your readers are warmed up to the idea and can see the true value of your offer when it comes time to make it.

So while this section is going to talk a lot about the CONTENT you're going to provide, it should be guided by the OFFERS you are making. If you're not sure what to offer your readers, review Lesson 2 on understanding your target market.

How to Write Your Offers:

As you perfect your ability to get to know your audience and understand what they respond best to, you'll know more about how to write your offers. What you write and how much you write will depend on the product and something that you learn over time.

To help you further, here are some general categories of offers you can make:

- **New Products:** Obviously, if you launch a new product, your list ought to know about it...so make sure you tell them.
- **Existing Products:** Don't forget about your existing products. Don't assume your readers know everything you sell. Sometimes you need to remind them or if you're writing about a certain topic, an older product might be the perfect fit.
- **Reviews:** We talked briefly about reviews in our section on credibility. A review can be a great way to get the appropriate buyers to take action.
- **Bundle Products:** Make a special offer by bundling up some products at a special price.
- **Bonuses:** Add a limited-quantity / limited-time bonus to a product to encourage some extra sales.
- **Coupons:** Treat your subscribers right and offer them a limited distribution coupon. Do this for your own products and strike up a deal with some of the companies you affiliate with.
- **In Content Context:** Even when you're giving away information, you can sell products that compliments it.

Our next section goes into more depth on what type of content you can give and how to monetize it. Well, we will get into that after a quick note on...

Treating Your Customers Right:

If you do little else with your email marketing, do make sure that you keep a list of your customers separate from your regular subscribers. Treat your customers like gold.

I'm sure you already know, but it's so much easier to get your current satisfied customers to buy again than it is to acquire a new customer.

Treat your customers even better than your regular subscribers by:

- Giving them extra content
- Offer them advanced notice of upcoming products
- Offer special customer appreciation discounts – try limited-time ones to get them to act fast.

- Create a rewards system where they can earn free products, etc.

Content to Send:

Recommendation: Always send your own content, but when sending someone else's - make it your own. For example:

- If you are sending a product offer through an affiliate link, don't simply send the canned promo text provided by the program. Even though pre-written promos are good as a starting point, you should rework them so they are suitable for your target audience. You know your audience best and why they would be interested in the product - speak to your audience directly. You also have a writing style that your readers are accustomed to, so stick with that.
- If you're sending your readers a report written by someone else, tell your reader's exactly why you think they should download it, possibly summarize some of the important points, etc.
- If you publish an article by someone else, add your own useful editorial commentary.

Stuff You Can Send Out:

- **Articles:** You can put articles inside your email or link to articles on your website. For monetization, your articles can include links to relevant products, bylines can include promotional links and if you send readers to a website to read the article, you can include AdSense ads and other possible monetization.
- **Blog Posts:** If you've made an interesting or helpful blog post, invite your subscribers to read it, leave commentary and ask questions. I like to send readers to my blog to engage them in discussions that benefit all my readers and to make my subscribers feel like they're involved. You can monetize blog posts much the same way you do articles.
- **Reports / Ebooks** - Not everything has to be for sale. In fact, giving away free and helpful information can be an incredible sales tool. You can include product promos at the beginning of your report/ebook, at the end and definitely in context, where appropriate.

It doesn't matter if you sell info products, consumer products or are an affiliate marketer, informing and teaching people is an excellent sales tool.

For example, if you sell cameras and camera accessories, you can giveaway a guide on digital photography. You can talk about different camera features, make recommendations for certain types of photography. If your guide includes

information on editing, talk about software recommendations. Be sure to recommend printers and paper as well, if applicable.

- **Workbooks/Worksheets** - Provide your readers something useful and practical like a workbook. For example, if you provide homeschool lessons, add a practical workbook to boost the value. You could also offer a workbook as a bonus to anyone who purchases a course/information product through your affiliate link. It's just something relatively easy to make and taking the time can produce great results.

You can promote other products at the beginning of the workbook (as an introduction), in the page footers and at the end of the workbook. In addition, if product links are appropriate with certain sections/questions, put them in.

- **Checklists:** Checklists are not only handy for your readers, but they're something they'll print out and use frequently if they find them valuable. Make a useful checklist with a product/website promo, so they'll see it each time they refer to your checklist.

For example, if you sell a environmentally-friendly cleaning supplies, make a household cleaning checklist.

- **Audios / Podcasts:** Audios are a great way for your readers to take your info and marketing messages on the go. Many will listen right on their computer, but others will load it to their iPod or even burn it to aCD. Encourage your readers to consume the content in the way they are most comfortable.

Audios and podcasts can be entertaining, informative or a combination of both. The best part is they can be used to recommend/sell a variety of products. Be sure to use memorable URLs as your listeners will have to type them in and give them a downloadable info sheet that includes any URLs mentioned.

- **Live Teleseminars / Webinars:** Much like a recorded audio, live teleseminars are also very useful. Being live also often makes it easier to build up excitement and get your listeners to take immediate action on an offer. An element of interactivity is also added if you allow listeners to ask questions.
- **Live Streaming or Recorded Video:** With increasing broadband speeds, video is much more accessible than it was a few years ago. It's a great way to add a visual element to what was previously limited to audio. You can use various software programs to get video onto your website or you can use services like YouTube.com to post recorded video or Justin.TV to stream live. You can talk about products in your video, include a watermark on your videos for promotion, etc.

- **Screen Capture Video:** A little different than live-action video, screen capture video allows you to demonstrate things on a computer. Whether it's to show how to use a particular website, some software or demonstrate a membership site, there are many possibilities for screen capture video.
- **Transcripts:** Realize that not all your readers will be able to or will want to watch video or listen to audio. You can provide transcripts or notes on the broadcasts to people who prefer to read. We do transcripts at <http://www.allcustomcontent.com>
- **Comment on news / blog posts:** Instead of completely coming up with your own topics and content, you can piggy-back on what's going on in the news or on other blogs and share your own viewpoints and commentary. Your readers will appreciate your perspective.
- **Patterns, Flowcharts, Spreadsheets:** Provide all kinds of practical tools for your readers. What you provide will depend on your topic and products you're promoting, but do think outside the box.

But Can You Give Too Much Away for Free?

It's a fear that many people have, particularly if they sell information. Can you give away too much information for free?

This concern is often based on two potential fears:

1. Giving away too much for free might cause you to attract freebie seekers, instead of buyers.
2. If you teach your readers or resolve all their problems, they may not need to buy anything.

These are only a concern if you give away free stuff and never teach or encourage your users to consume the paid stuff. In the preceding discussion on content, you'll notice that I constantly encourage you to include product promos and ensure your readers are accustomed to the great free stuff along with the pitch.

In addition, you might take the lead from Jimmy D. Brown who uses the phrase, "useful, but incomplete." This means your free content only tells part of the story. It might tell your reader what to do, but not how to do it. Or the tools to actually complete the job need to be purchased.

Anyway you slice it, information is an incredible trust and credibility builder. If you wow them with the free stuff, they're going to want to get your paid stuff. But again, it all comes down to offers. If you're not making them offers or the right offers...of course they won't buy.

Final Thoughts

We've covered a lot of ground in this guide to help you craft your emails and plenty of ideas of what to do deliver to your list. Take the time to absorb this information, complete your exercises before we wrap up in the next guide. In ***Guide 4: Growing with Your List & Keeping the Profits Momentum***, we'll tie it everything together so that you can continue get more out of your email marketing. Our final guide will include practical checklists and other tools to make it easier for you to keep this all going long after you finish reading this course.

This Week's Assignment

1. Choose an email you sent out recently to your subscribers. Based on what you learned in this lesson, what would you have done differently?
2. Craft an email making a product offer. Include your subject line, from line, etc.
3. Make a rough schedule of product offers you'll be making for the next 6 months.
4. What type of content could you send out to support those offers?