

Why have an Email Newsletter?

With so many marketing options available, it is important to make sure each element contributes to your campaign strategy. There are a few key advantages to email newsletters:

- 91% of Americans use email. It is the second most popular online activity behind social media
- Email is an effective cross-generational tool: 73% of Millennials say they prefer email communications from companies
- Email marketing has high return on investment. Some studies have shown a return of 38 dollars for each dollar invested.
- Platforms like MailChimp offer free or inexpensive ways to manage and track your email efforts

Email newsletters are cost effective and target a platform your donors already use. There are free (or affordable) options available for managing your email newsletters. This guide will show you how to choose a service that is right for you, develop your marketing list, and give best practice guidelines.

What Email Newsletter Service is for you?

The first step is to find the right platform. You don't want to use your own email service, as sending too many emails or being reported for spam too often can cause your service to shut down your account. Instead, consider one of the following platforms, all of which offer free options or trial periods, in addition to offering helpful design templates.

- **MailChimp:** Easy to use with excellent support and a free option that allows you to send up to 12,000 emails per month to as many as 2,000 subscribers. MailChimp is a perfect option for a nonprofit looking to use email marketing.
- **TinyLetter:** A completely free, more basic offshoot of MailChimp, TinyLetter is a great option if you're looking for a simple, clean email service. Tiny Letter is free but limits you to 5,000 total subscribers. This varies from Mailchimp, which is free up to 2,000 subscribers but whose paid services have a larger overall subscription capacity (5,000+).
- **Constant Contact:** A highly rated email service, Constant Contact is easy to use and offers robust design and management tools. However, the free trial period only lasts six months before switching to a priced model, starting at \$20/month.

How to Develop Your Email List

- **Have a sign-up form on your website:** This is the easiest method. Place a widget on your site for people to sign up for email updates.
- **Pin a link to your sign up form on social media:** Most social networks offer the ability to place or pin a specific post to the top of your profile. Create a post linking to your email newsletter sign-up form and then pin it to the top of your social pages.
- **Use Facebook's call-to-action button:** Facebook offers a 'call-to-action button' right beneath your cover photo. Link it to your sign-up form.
- **Facebook Lead Generation Ads:** Facebook's advertising platform offers Lead Generation ads that allow users to quickly and easily sign up for your newsletter using their Facebook information. These ads require you to upload the lead information into your email service, though the end result is extremely cost effective.

Email Marketing Best Practices

- **Maintain a regular schedule:** Whether weekly, monthly, or other, maintaining a regular schedule is key to ensuring your audience routinely opens and interacts with emails from your organization.
- **Subject lines matter:** The subject line is essential in convincing subscribers to open your email. Use the subject line to tease readers and keep it concise. If your subject line is too long, it may not show up properly in certain email platforms. In addition, use caution to not overuse words like "FREE." They can trigger spam filters, which will prevent your email from reaching your end user's inbox.
- **Avoid excessive content:** It's easy to give your readers too much information. The longer your newsletter, the easier it is for readers to miss key messages. Focus on a few key items to ensure readers interact with what is important.
- **Think mobile:** The vast majority of subscribers will read your email on their phone. Because of this, it's important to include visuals and keep text as minimal as possible.
- **Include calls to action:** If you would like to link to a specific URL (your site, the Pick.Click.Give. site, etc), use a button to create a brief (five words or less) call to action. This will bring more attention to your link.
- **Test before sending:** The last thing you want to do is send a subscriber an email that doesn't show up properly on their phone, tablet, or desktop computer. This will almost certainly result in an unsubscribe. All email services offer the ability to send test emails. Use that functionality to make sure everything shows up correctly before you send your email.