

Absolute Minimum Email Marketing for Software Companies

By Eric Davis | www.LittleStreamSoftware.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Email marketing benefits	7
A list	9
A subscriber offer	12
Incentive offer	13
Regular follow up	16
Integration with other marketing material	20
Your website	20
Landing pages	21
Social networks	22

The page features a light blue background with abstract geometric shapes in various shades of blue at the top and bottom corners. The title 'TABLE OF CONTENTS' is centered in the upper portion of the page.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Start Now 24

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Every business wants to survive. They don't want to close up and die.

This means that most businesses try to grow. They know they'll lose a few customers over time so it's best to increase their customer base over time to counteract that.

There are also businesses that want to grow so they can help and serve more people. They believe in their product or service and want to get it to as many people as possible. They also want people to use it as much as possible so the customer gets the best value.

Sales and marketing are the primary drivers of a business's growth. They get the word out there to potential customers, nurture those customers, sell the products and services to them, and with time turn those customers into fans.

EMAIL MARKETING BENEFITS

EMAIL MARKETING BENEFITS

Email and email marketing can help with every one of those goals.

- > emails are easily shareable and have a near 0 distribution cost
- > emails let you build up and nurture a relationship with your customers
- > emails let you promote and sell your products and services, without going through middlemen and distributors
- > and email lets you continue the relationship after the first sale.

In this guide I'll show you the absolute minimal amount of email marketing you need for your software company.

A LIST

A LIST

The first step to email marketing is to decide on a service to store your list of subscribers (called “a list” or even “the list”). Your list is your biggest asset in email marketing. It’s the connection to the people behind the email addresses – your prospects, leads, customers, and fans.

Don’t confuse where its value is though: the list has value only in that it’s the connection to your customers and prospects. If your list is full of fake addresses, unresponsive people, or people that don’t fit your customer profile, it has little value.

Picking a reputable company to store your email list is vital. A bad choice can destroy your list (your asset) and your brand name.

Imagine if the provider you used sold your list of customers to a spammer who sent spam from your company? Or if they sold your list to your competitor?

A LIST

There are a variety of email service providers I'd recommend but for the most minimal setup, most people should use either [Aweber](#), [Mailchimp](#), or [Drip](#).

You might think storing the list internally is best, using a free or inexpensive system. As someone who maintained this at another software company for years, I advise strongly against it. There are more considerations to email marketing than just having a list of people that you send email to. Considerations that a hosted email service provider handles that you won't be able to. Spam reports, blacklisted IPs, bounce rates, sender domain...

”

A SUBSCRIBER OFFER

A SUBSCRIBER OFFER

The next component to getting started with email marketing is a subscriber offer.

Basically, a subscriber offer is where you exchange something of value to a potential subscriber for joining your list.

This offer could take many forms:

- > a discount on your software
- > education about your software
- > education about the industry
- > a guide or whitepaper about a topic (like this guide)

The worst offer you can provide is “news about your company”. Let’s face it, most of your customers don’t care about your company. They care about their businesses, their problems, and how your company can help them with them. They might care about your software because they use and get value out of your

A SUBSCRIBER OFFER

Incentive offer

software, and they want to make sure it continues to be valuable to them.

But they don't care about your company.

The first three types of offers are a coupon and ongoing information. The coupon is easy to understand: people love discounts. The value of the offers for the second and third are in getting the emails from you.

The fourth example offer is an interesting one.

Incentive offer

Even if your offer includes information and news with each email, you can improve it by giving away something valuable right when they sign-up. In this case it's a guide or whitepaper about a topic.

A SUBSCRIBER OFFER

Incentive offer

Commonly called a bribe, ethical bribe, or an incentive, this is used to help your customer make the decision to subscribe and take the action you set up.

When done right, this incentive can dramatically improve how many people subscribe. This is not required and, since we're only focused on the minimum right now, I'll leave it at that. Contact me if you want to hear more details on this topic.

REGULAR FOLLOW UP

REGULAR FOLLOW UP

The next piece you need is the actual email marketing.

Building a mailing list of prospects or customers is good. But if you never email them, it's not a marketing tool, it's just a waste of time.

That doesn't mean you should blast your mailing list with ads and beg them to buy what you're selling. That approach could work for some companies but it's not going to be in your best interests.

Instead, what you should do is to regularly follow up with your mailing list and give them more offers. These don't have to be big offers like what you used in the previous section. Micro-sized offers can work:

- > Give this email your attention by reading it, and learn something useful. (Offer: Attention for education)

REGULAR FOLLOW UP

- > Click this link to our blog, and learn something useful.
(Offer: Click for education)
- > Order from our website with the coupon code DINOSAUR
and get 20% off. (Offer: Buy a product for a discount)

Notice how the first two offers aren't commercial or even that strong of an offer. These are you trying to help your customer by giving them something. The customer still has to give you something in return (like attention, clicking) to get the offer, but the price is small.

By regularly sending these offers, you'll get your mailing list used to seeing and accepting your offers. And if you're offering something with a lot more value than what you're asking of them (education for a click), you'll grow the relationship with them.

REGULAR FOLLOW UP

This relationship will become useful when you want to offer them something bigger, like a purchasing your software.

The relationship is key, and this is something many marketers overlook.

”

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER MARKETING MATERIAL

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER MARKETING ...

Now you're at the final step of setting up your email marketing.

You have a place for people to subscribe to, an offer to get them to subscribe, and a plan for regular follow up with them.

All you need is to integrate your email marketing with the rest of your marketing. Specifically, you need a way for people to find their way onto your mailing list.

Your website

The most common method is to use your existing website to direct visitors to your mailing list. This is called an opt-in form and it can take one of thousands of different forms.

For the most minimal case, using the opt-in forms from your mailing list provider is going to be the easiest to start with. Simply embed the form they give you onto your website or blog.

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER MARKETING ...

Landing pages

Commonly these forms are put into the sidebar, header, or on the homepage.

Don't fret about making it perfect right now. It's more important to get something minimal up now and tweak it later.

Landing pages

If you don't want to or can't change the design of your website to make the opt-in form fit, then you can create a dedicated page on your website for it. Commonly called a landing page, this page is designed to present your offer and get people to sign-up.

It can be as simple or as complex as you want. Just like your website, don't worry about making it perfect. You can change it later.

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER MARKETING ...

Social networks

Social networks

Another way to integrate your email marketing is to link to it from social networks. This is especially effective if you setup a dedicated landing page for your list. That way you can share a link to it directly.

Strong subscriber offers and incentives can also work really well on social networks.

START NOW

START NOW

That's the minimum you need to start email marketing.

- > A mailing list
- > A signup offer
- > Regular emails with offers
- > Integrating with your other marketing material

Everything else in email marketing builds on these four components.

The most important thing is that you take action now. This minimal setup shouldn't take you long to start and will reward you for years to come.

Eric Davis runs [Little Stream Software](#), a one-man Ruby on Rails and web development consultancy. He helps software compa-

START NOW

nies create custom email marketing to engage with their customer, automate their marketing, and grow their business. For more information and advice about email marketing (or to hire him to help you), contact edavis@littlestreamsoftware.com.