

Email marketing and increasing your subscribers

[by Shaun Letang, September 2014]

One of the best ways musicians can communicate with fans doesn't involve social media like Facebook and Twitter. Go old school with email marketing – and focus on growing your list.

Email marketing tips

This post on email marketing was adapted from an article on Music Industry How To.

Email marketing is still one of the top ways many of the world's biggest musical artists let fans know about new releases, shows they want to sell tickets for, and general communication.

Are you thinking “Is collecting newsletter subscribers necessary for an independent artist? Aren't Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube enough?”

Yes, it's necessary, because no, social media are not enough.

People are more focused when reading email. They're not browsing for a funny video, distracted by ads, or looking for pictures of their friends. Once they open your email, the attention is on you.

Plus, you can reach all your fans. When you send an email, it goes directly to their inbox. Most of your subscribers will see this email, whether they decide to open it or not. You're creating an opportunity to get in front of them. With social updates, only a small percentage of people will see your messages. If they're not on Twitter at the time, they'll miss your update. With Facebook, a huge percentage of your followers might not see your update unless you pay for them to.

Of course, most email marketing services charge you for their service, but it's not a high monthly fee, especially considering the benefits you'll get. And website hosting/building sites like HostBaby include email marketing and management as part of the platform.

Your email list is yours to keep. Social sites have come and gone or fallen out of favour over time. And social sites usually aren't as good at getting people to take action, so if you want ticket sales and CD purchases, you should start building your list.

Now that we know why you need a mailing list, let's look at six ways you can increase your subscriber count.

1. Give them an “ethical bribe”

In addition to offering news and updates, a good idea is to entice new fans with a freebie when they first subscribe to your list. You'll get a lot more people adding their contact details as they've got more of an incentive.

You can call this an ethical bribe, as you both get what you want. Offer a free EP download if they give you their name and email address. This is a win for both parties, so be sure to give away an incentive with some perceived value.

2. List the benefits of subscribing to potential fans

If you want someone to take action and sign up to your newsletter, you need to tell them how it will benefit them. When was the last time you gave your contact details to someone online for no good reason? Probably never.

If you don't make it clear how signing up to your list will benefit their life (e.g. good music, exclusive offers, the latest info, etc.), they won't sign up. If you're going to send them exclusive content and regular updates, let them know. If that's something they're interested in, chances are they'll sign up.

3. Add a light box to your page

I personally use lightboxes for all websites I want to collect subscribers from, and I always suggest my music industry clients do, too. By adding a lightbox, you should be able to measurably increase the amount of subscribers you collect from the same website traffic.

What's a lightbox, you ask? Lightboxes are the much less spammy cousins of the pop-up box. They appear to your reader while they're browsing the website and ask for an email address in exchange for something of yours (e.g. the 4-track EP).

I personally set my lightbox to go off once a week (you can change the frequency to suit your needs). So if they don't subscribe when they first see it, they won't see it again for another week. This is so it doesn't get annoying popping up after every page load.

The lightbox plug-in I use on Music Industry How To and on sites of musicians I've worked with is [Hybrid Connect](#). I've tried a lot of different options, and I've found this to be the best.

4. Don't ask for too many details

When you're still a relatively new act, it's harder to get people to sign up to your mailing list. It's because of this that you want to make it as easy as possible. I suggest you only initially have two fields in your sign up forms: name and email address.

If you'd ultimately like to gather more information, perhaps you can offer additional higher-value items to your list later in the cycle, at which point you can ask for more information. Build trust, deliver quality content, and they'll be more likely to give you more info. But start out with less.

Some mailing list services, like Aweber, automatically detect where your subscribers live (in terms of country and sometimes city), so you don't need to ask for that info to be able to target people in a specific place.

5. Split test different sign-up forms

Split testing (or A/B testing) is the practice of testing one design against another to see which one performs better. For all you know, your original sign up form is

making people not want to subscribe to you. When you test another version alongside it, you may find that you get double the amount of people signing up! That's double the subscribers and potentially double the money. It's worth testing to find the most effective design.

6. Give people multiple opportunities to sign up

Don't just have an opt-in form in your sidebar – though that's a good place to put one! Add a form at the bottom of all your posts, have a dedicated squeeze page, put one on your Facebook page and other relevant places. The more opportunities you give people to sign up, the more likely you'll get subscribers. Just make sure you don't over do it and make your website look spammy.

Having a email newsletter is one of the most effective ways of building relationship with fans, and it's also an effective way to make money from your communications with them. If you haven't got a mailing list up and running, I urge you to get one ASAP. If you've got one, be sure to use these tips to increase your list of subscribers.

This post was written by Shaun Letang of Music Industry How To. If you want more advice for forwarding your music career, you'll probably want to start with his free music promotion eBook.

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