



how to:
**Create an Email
Marketing Plan**

a guide by:
MailChimp

Hello.

You know you want to do some email marketing. Or, perhaps more accurately, you feel like you're *supposed to do* some email marketing. Where to start? An "email marketing plan" sounds complicated, intimidating, and time-consuming. Besides, you're too busy running your business to deal with such a thing, right? This guide's for you.

You're smart to explore email marketing for your business. For some perspective, email marketing has [three times as many user accounts as Twitter and Facebook combined](#). Combined with social media, that impact is even greater. Done smartly, [email marketing drives conversions](#), increases ROI, and gives you a way to [speak to your customers interests specifically](#).

An email-marketing plan isn't as hard to put together as you might think. In this guide, we'll walk you through the most important steps, highlight real-life case studies along the way, and give you everything you need to know to get started.

Step One: Define Your Readers

Before you start designing, writing, and sending campaigns, you should define your audience. Once you get a grasp on the people reading your emails, it'll be much easier to decide what to say to them.

If you have subscribers on your list already, who are they? One way to determine this is how they signed up. If they subscribed during checkout, they're customers. But if they found you through your website or in public (fairs, trade shows, etc.), they're more of a general audience.

If you don't have subscribers yet, who is your target audience? How will you find these people, and what do you envision they'll want to read in your emails?

Perhaps you're a publisher or blogger. In that case, your subscribers are going to be interested in your written content. If you're a retailer, subscribers will want to know about your new products or how they can better use products they've already purchase from you. If you're somewhere in between, your audience is likely made up of enthusiasts of your brand.

[Rooftop Comedy](#) lands somewhere in that third category. The San Francisco-based company sells comedy albums, produces festivals, and record stand up all over the United States. With their "[Clip of the Week](#)" [emails](#), Rooftop has found an entertaining, kind-of-sneaky way to delight their customers with the humorous brand they've come to know and love while also reminding them that they've got things for sale.

Step Two: Determine Your Content

Now that you know who you're talking to, it's time to think about what you're going to say to them. This is your content. Think about why this audience signed up, then focus on delivering that to them. It can be helpful to outline general content types that you might include in each email campaign. Later, as you're putting together your newsletter, this outline will be a handy reference to make sure you're staying on track.

[The Atlanta Rollergirls](#) keep a content list:

- Upcoming events
- Recaps/photos from past events
- Popular posts on Facebook, Twitter, blog
- News coverage
- Derby 101 (an in-depth look at rules/strategy)
- Player profiles

Each month, they choose 1-4 pieces of content from the list to [create a campaign](#).

Think about what content you're already creating that you might want to share to make sure your subscribers don't miss it. A popular tweet, a Facebook post, an article about your company—these are things your readers will likely find interesting. Think also about what content you'd like to create exclusively for this audience. Reward them for caring about what you do.

MonkeyWrench is [MailChimp's quarterly newsletter](#) that showcases app updates, user case studies, and relevant email-marketing news. We also include funny links, videos we've made about our customers, and more.

Tips for creating and gathering content

Your content is the most important part of your newsletters. Here are some tips for making and gathering compelling content that will speak to your readers:

1. Treat your readers like VIPs.

People who subscribe to your email list are so into you that they've given you permission to their inboxes. Honor this permission and dedicated fandom by letting them be the first to know about new products or sales. Give them access to special benefits as subscribers. Clothing retailer Billy Reid goes one step further, sending exclusive sales to its readers with the [highest member-activity ratings](#).

2. Keep it useful.

Think about which emails you open and which you delete right away. You don't open an email that doesn't benefit you in some way. Make sure the content of your newsletters are giving your subscribers something they didn't have before. "The reader comes first," [Peter Cooper told MailChimp](#). "Without happy and loyal readers, you have a weak publication, whether it's a magazine, newspaper, or an email list. The majority of email newsletters are all about linking to a company's own projects, products and news. I think it's pretty rare that they delight their readers."

3. Show some personality.

No one wants to read a dry, boring newsletter that drones on and on and doesn't even say anything about [zzzzzzzzzz](#).. Inject some personality. Chances are, your voice, tone, and sense of humor are all important reasons why your customers signed up in the first place. Try to write the same way you'd speak to one of these customers. And who knows? Maybe your lighthearted, humorous emails will help you [raise a whole bunch of money](#).

4. Keep it short.

Most people are bombarded with emails every day. Keep your newsletters short, easy to digest, and to the point. If you'd like to include a longer piece, feature the first paragraph or so and link away to the rest. Allow your readers the opportunity to scan quickly, if necessary.

5. Get inspired.

Apps like [Pocket](#), [Evernote](#), and [Pinterest](#) are great for saving, organizing, and accessing content to use in your campaigns later. Additionally, our [inspiration board](#) features hundreds of elegant, thoughtful email examples from MailChimp customers who are great at email marketing.

Step Three: Determine Your Sending Frequency and Goals

Not all sending frequencies are created equal. Some users, like [Dave Pell](#) or [Quartz](#), send on a daily basis because that's the point of their content. Others, like [Longreads](#) or [Rooftop](#), send on Fridays, like a little e-gift for the weekend.

Ultimately, you have to decide what works best for you and your customers. We recommend you email at least monthly, but don't feel the need to commit to that immediately. Feel free to skip a month if you have anything truly useful to say. Remember, [content first](#). Be careful not to skip more than a couple months in a row, however, as some subscribers may forget they opted in and may report you for spam. Remember also to look ahead and plan accordingly for holidays, events, and the like.

From there, decide what you'd like to get out of your email marketing. Are you looking to send traffic to your website? Help promote sales? Increase traffic at events? Set goals like these for your campaigns, then keep track of your progress over time.

Step Four: Make a Schedule

Not everyone is going to send on a regular schedule, but for a lot of senders, having a timeline is helpful, if only because it gives writers, designers, and managers a deadline to work toward. If you have several people working on your team, consider MailChimp's [Multi-User Accounts feature](#) and other [collaboration tools](#).

Your email-marketing schedule will vary, of course, depending on industry, type of content, sending frequency, and so on. But here's an example of how you might plan out your campaigns:

Day 1: Jot down content topics, art ideas, basics for your upcoming newsletter.

Day 2: Write out what you'd like to say about each topic, pull photos or art into a folder.

Day 3: Log in to MailChimp and create your campaign. Proofread for errors and grammar. Send a test campaign to yourself and at least one co-worker.

Day 4: Send your campaign.

Resources

We hope this guide has helped you create a comprehensive email-marketing plan for your business. If you have questions about our application, feel free to contact [MailChimp's support team](#). Meanwhile, here are some more resources:

[MailChimp at Work](#)

We love what we do, and we have some amazing customers who love their jobs, too. That's why we've taken the time to get to know them and share their stories with you.

[MarketingProfs](#)

An editorial team that "cuts through marketing noise," delivering nice case studies and articles. Premium membership is actually worth it, too.

[MailChimp's blog](#)

We update our blog every week with posts about engagement, integrations, feature case studies, industry data, and so much more.

[Be Relevant! Email Marketing Blog](#)

Tamara Gielen is "EXTREMELY passionate about email marketing." Her blog is chock full of best practices, tips, tricks, and webinars.

[Look What You Can Do](#)

MailChimp's inspiration board features hundreds of smart, gorgeous newsletters from people who are great at email. Go on, get inspired.