

Recently a contact asked me if he should buy an email list? I gasped, and responded with a resounding, “NO!”



He seemed a little shocked. So, I told him why I felt so strongly about it.

Here's what he learned.

### The Ugly Truth

The site AWeber said it best when it published the blog post, "[The Ugly Truth About Buying Email Lists](#)." In short the article points out the pitfalls of buying a list, including how the companies prey on new marketers and their desire to take a shortcut.

What those companies don't talk about are the consequences and potential legal ramifications of buying an email list. The Federal Trade Commission is very clear about [CAN-SPAM regulations](#), and if caught you could face steep fines, be dropped by your email carrier, and/or be blacklisted, which could be more damaging to your brand than just about anything else.

### Start Here Instead

Attracting people to subscribe to your email list is a process—a deliberate one. It takes time, effort, and energy to create a solid list of people who want to receive your messages and engage with your products and services.

Here are some steps you can take before sending the first sign-up email, and to encourage people to opt-into your email list.

1. Identify goals for your email campaigns.
2. Research the right email service provider (ESP) for you, e.g., MailChimp, Constant Contact, etc.
3. Create a signup form that identifies three simple benefits for joining your list. Make the form simple (name and email address) to complete and attractive to visitors. And, create a killer call to action, e.g., if you own a restaurant, maybe the call to action would be “Send Me Tasty Updates!”

### Grow Subscribers

There are many ways to grow email subscriber lists. Here are just a few.

- Offer incentives on your website, with a link to join.
- Use social media to encourage people to subscribe to your email (share the benefits!)
- Run a contest that helps you collect email addresses and names
- Use landing pages for content downloads across your site; remember to ask people if they want to join your mailing list.
- Download a mobile email sign-up form to your phone that you can use at in-person networking events.
- Leverage LinkedIn's [Advanced Search](#) feature to find your target market. Once a search list is created, you can send them a mailer or connect with them. Remember, creating the relationship first is paramount. Avoid the hard sell out of the gate.

### *Example*

Let's say I work with a lot of CPAs and recently published a book. After doing an advanced search for Managing Partners / Accounting Firms / NJ 50+ mile radius, the search results provided seven pages of names. I will then go through that list (it cannot be downloaded), put all their names/addresses on labels, and send them a postcard about the book. Once they buy the book, they become a member of my email list due to terms and conditions on my site. I can then email them future communications. Once they opt-out I can no longer email them.

Growing your email list takes time and effort. However, the rewards for a good email list are priceless. Take the time to develop relationships with your clients to help increase your sales, and provide benefits to them.

In the end, you will have happy customers who enjoy getting the information you share.

### Resources

- [Grow Your Business With Email Marketing](#)
- [Easy-To-Implement Five-Step Email Drip Campaign Process](#)
- [Standardized Email Format Increases Client Engagement](#)
- [Email Isn't Dead - 10 Tips for Writing Great Subject Lines](#)
- [Email Marketing Service Provider Top 10 2016 List](#)