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Introduction – Your List = Your Asset

You might wonder why it's a good idea to build a list. After all, it probably seems like a lot of work to find prospects, get them to accept emails from you, and find new things to send out to them on a regular basis.

You might also think it will take a lot of hard work to get people to buy. You know that you can't just send them low-grade content and expect them to buy simply because you sent them an email.

And if you think these things, you're right: building a list is very hard. And making sales from lists is also hard. It takes time and it takes attention to detail to do things right. And this is exactly why many marketers never do it.

But that is their mistake. You aren't going to make that same mistake. Building a list and marketing to it is one of the most profitable things you can do in IM; and this guide is going to show you how to do exactly how to go about it.

So why is building an email list a good idea? There are many reasons, but these five are probably the most important:

- i. Building lists allows you to reduce the cost of acquiring new customers. Contrary to what you might think, it is much, much cheaper (on a unique-sale basis) to presale and pitch to one person until she buys than it is to pitch to different people until one of them buys.
- ii. Building lists allows you to maximize the profit that you generate per customer.

- iii. Having a list means that you can participate in major launch events. Next time there's a big launch, you can benefit by being one of the first affiliates to offer the product.
- iv. Having a list allows you to test your copy. With a captive audience, you can run controlled experiments to test your copy's conversion rate before you pay to send the same advertisement out to a larger audience.
- v. Having a list allows you to bring more to the table in future joint venture partnerships. Rather than simply offering to do part of the product-creation work, you can now offer to market the completed product to your list.

For these five reasons and many, many others, list building is one of the most profitable things you can do as an Internet marketer. Not only will it help you to monetize your current sites better, but it will also open up new avenues for partnership and marketing.

With that said, let's get started.

The Bare Essentials – What you'll need to get started

List building requires attention to detail, careful thought, and, most importantly, action.

So, if you think the early stages of list building are boring and seemingly unproductive, don't give up. It takes time and effort, but you have to keep at it if you ever want to see progress.

So let's start with the dry, boring stuff. What are the bare essential tasks that you'll need to complete before you can start making money with your list?

There are roughly 3 things you'll need to do before you can get to the "fun" parts of list building.

Purchase a Domain and Get Hosting

Before you can do anything else, you'll need a working website. In short, this means purchasing a domain, purchasing hosting services, and using a page-builder to create your website.

When it comes to this, the best place to start is probably by determining the theme and URL for your website.

The Theme

Start by thinking about what niche your site will focus on. A good rule of thumb is to keep things narrow. For instance, if you're thinking about creating a niche site that markets retail products through affiliate links, drill down further and consider focusing only on one type of product, such as fishing gear.

If you grow out of your niche in the future, you can always create another site or expand your current site. But for now, keep things narrow to avoid confusing your visitors.

The URL

Once you've settled on a theme, you'll want to come up with potential URLs for your site, since your first choice may already be taken.

In the past, marketers used to select URLs that were actually the key phrase they were targeting (but with a dash between each word); however, if you plan to create memorable, credible business, you will want to avoid this and opt for a URL that is short and that visitors will remember.

Write Down Your Ideas

Before you move to the next step, write everything down. Take careful notes about the theme you wanted and the specific URLs that you believe will fit well with your business model and niche.

Once you've done this, you can continue on to the next step.

Comparison Shop for Your Domain and Hosting

Many hosting services will also allow you to purchase your domain when you purchase hosting. In general, this isn't a bad idea. It will make it easier to manage all information related to your site.

One good place to start on your search is www.findmyhosting.com. This site lists an exhaustive break-down of 10 popular hosting services, which includes important details, such as:

- The monthly price
- The setup fee
- Whether the domain registration is included at no additional cost
- Whether you can setup email accounts through the domain
- The plugins and features that come with the hosting service
- Whether or not the hosting comes with a website building tool

Spend some time comparing hosts and determine which hosting service will work best for your particular needs.

As a general rule of thumb, if you're new to Internet business, you'll want to look primarily at three items:

1. The "UpTime Guarantee," which will give you a rough idea of whether a particular host has problems keeping sites up.
2. The price, as well as the various deals offered for locking in a 6-month or 12-month contract.

3. The site builder and plugins offered. I recommend looking for a site that offers the Wordpress Plugin (which is fairly standard) and Fantastico. These two items will greatly simplify the site-creation process.

And there you have it. You're now ready to purchase a domain and hosting services. Once you're done with that, we can move on to the next step—creating your site.

Create a Marketable Website

Before you even think about marketing your website, you'll want to first spend the time to create a site that will sell itself well. It's not critical that this site be flawless and expensive to build, but if you want it to close sales, then you should put in the time to make sure it is attractive and will convert visitors into subscribers.

A good place to start is by obtaining a WYSIWYG editor. This will allow you to make changes to your site without learning a language like HTML. Additionally, it will allow you to make your site attractive and able to convert—even if you could never code such a website yourself.

Now, when it comes to getting a WYSIWYG editor, you have a number of options. If you're able to pay upfront in order to make your life easier down the line, you may want to purchase something like XSitePro: <http://www.xsitepro.com>

XSitePro is a favorite among Internet marketers for many reasons. Not only will it allow you to build an attractive site, but it will also allow you to tweak the site in order to optimize it for search engine traffic.

If you don't have the money to purchase XSitePro (or a different WYSIWYG editor), you still have a vast array of free editors you may use for the site. The categories of editors below are just a small sample of what you have available:

1. Wordpress Themes. Most hosting services will now allow you to install Wordpress on your site by simply clicking a button on your

- hosting control panel. Once you do this, you can simply login your Wordpress administrative panel and use it to create an appropriate theme for your website.
2. Fantastico Plugins. If your hosting service offers Fantastico, you can use this to search for an appropriate WYSIWYG for your site. You will have a large variety of choices in terms of the capabilities of the various programs and the usability of their interfaces.
 3. Open Source WYSIWYG editors. If you're not interested in using Wordpress or a Fantastico Plugin, you can select from one of the many open source editors. You can find one here <http://www.openwebware.com/> and <http://www.kompozer.net/> and <http://netobjects.com/html/essentials.html>. There are many others available.

Ultimately, the final decision will be a matter of taste. But at a minimum, you will want to select something that has a usable interface and allows you to easily manipulate your site, so that you can make it appear professional and fit the theme you've constructed in your own mind.

As far as the visual component of site building goes, there's considerable debate over what way is best for sales when it comes to structuring a site; however, most agree that using the color blue on your site will induce visitors to stay longer on average. Most also agree that using red will slightly elevate their blood pressure and induce them to make decisions quickly.

Setup an Autoresponder Account

Whatever else you do with your site, you will also use it to build lists (which is why you're reading this guide). This means you'll need an Autoresponder.

An autoresponder is a tool that will allow you to create mailing lists, manage member subscriptions, avoid spam complaints, and test and track campaign results.

Autoresponders are invaluable tools for all list owners; and as a new list-builder, you will want to become intimately familiar with how they work.

Let's start with the basics.

Selecting an Autoresponder Service

When it comes to selecting an autoresponder service, you have several choices. I personally recommend that you select <http://aweber.com/>. However, there are many other good options, including [GetResponse](#).

If you select AWeber, you can simply follow these steps to create your list:

1. Start by clicking “do this step” under “Enter a List Name.”
2. Fill in the list name, list description, and any other required information.
3. Create the list and then begin editing the confirmation email. When you first create the list, your confirmation email will say something generic. You should change this to say something reflective of your business.
4. If you have a sequence of presales or follow up emails, add each of these to the sequence for your new list, paying careful attention to the amount of days between each email.

Once you've finished setting up your autoresponder, you'll want to use AWeber to generate a form that you can use to capture information from visitors. At a minimum, you'll want your form to capture email addresses. You may also want it to capture first names, so that you can use a macro to insert names into email subject lines.

Summary

So far you've created your website theme, selected an appropriate URL, purchased a domain name and hosting, selected a WYSIWYG editor, and picked an autoresponder service. You've also created your first list,

updated the subscription confirmation email, and created a form for your website.

You've made a lot of progress so far, but you've still only covered the "bare essentials"—as the title of the chapter suggests. This means you'll need to do a lot more before you can expect to have a profitable list.

So what's next? It's time to create your squeeze page.

What is a Squeeze Page?

In the previous section, you created your first list. You may have even created an email sequence for your subscribers. It's now time to create a squeeze page to put on your website.

So what's a squeeze page? In short, it's just a tool you'll use to get prospective buyers to give you their email addresses. To be more specific, it's a specific type of opt-in page.

There are several things that characterize a good squeeze page. Yours should contain these items:

1. It should give visitors no other option than to either a) subscribe to your list; or b) exit the site. This will prevent them from wandering about your site aimlessly—and then leaving eventually.
2. It should be very, very brief. If your squeeze contains more than 2 short paragraphs of text, you should seriously consider reducing it further.
3. It should explicitly and truthfully state what visitors can expect from your list.
4. It should carefully and visibly state that you do not like spam and will never spam your list members or sell their email addresses to a third party.

5. It must clearly communicate that a membership to your list is completely free and will offer great rewards in the form of high-quality content and timely announcements of important events.
6. It must include an opt-in form that visitors can see without excessive scrolling. This means that visitors will know that they have the option to opt-in, even without going through all of the text.
7. It should include your signature and possibly a thumbnail photo of you.
8. It must be visually appealing.

And there you have it: eight simple rules to follow whenever you create a squeeze page. However, as you will find out, these items aren't necessarily a recipe for success. Rather, they're simply the minimum conditions you must satisfy if you want to have a viable squeeze page that has the potential to capture leads.

Make Your Squeeze Page Convert

Now that you've satisfied the basic requirements for success, it is time to hone in you the specifics. To do this, we will simply look at some examples and identify what makes them good.

Example #1:

Not surprisingly, one of the top paid results returned for "Internet marketing" is the successful site, PrWeb.com: <http://www.prweb.com/pr/get-started.php> . Simply knowing that this is a top paid result means that the advertiser is paying a lot for the slot; and has also probably spending a lot of time and money to test the format they use.

As you can see from the squeeze page, it sparingly uses text—and when it does, it uses bullet points to convey specific benefits. Additionally, it is attractive and provides an opt-in form in a place that is immediately visible.

Combined, all of these items make for a successful squeeze page.

Example #2:

Another good example of a high-quality squeeze page can be found here: <http://www.budgetlandingpage.com/>. It's not surprising that this is a good squeeze page, since that is what the company does to generate revenue. Nonetheless, it is a useful example of a good squeeze page.

Again, notice how it has an attractive background, displays the opt-in box in a place that is immediately visible to visitors, and is very text-light. These are all important features to include in your own squeeze page.

Final Note on Squeeze Pages

Squeeze pages are an important part of list building. They are the filter through which all of your subscribers must pass. If your squeeze page is improperly designed, you will weed out far too many prospects, making it hard to build your list and profit.

The most important thing to remember about squeeze pages is the following: keep it short, clear, and direct. The purpose of the page is to get the visitor to subscribe—and nothing else. So don't confuse him with unrelated offers or links to various products and content pages. Just get him to relinquish his email address. If you can do that, you've accomplished your goal.

Enhance Your Squeeze Page – Give Stuff Away for Free

One common element in all successful squeeze pages is that they offer considerable value upfront. They don't make hollow promises and hope that visitors will fall for it and sign up. Rather, they offer very specific items in exchange for the visitor's email address.

If you want to have a successful email list, you will do this, too. So what options do you have?

Create a Report and Give it away for Free

One of the most commonly used strategies for getting people to subscribe is simply offering them a free report. Generally, these reports are somewhere between 10 and 20 pages long and provide useful information about some facet of the niche in question.

For instance, let's say your niche is golf. You might create a guide that tells visitors how to shave 10 strokes off of their game using a specific training regimen. This is something that visitors will find enticing. And once you make it clear that the guide is free and that they can opt out if they're not satisfied, you'll have many people who are willing to subscribe.

Take this concept and apply it to your own niche. It doesn't matter what you sell; creating a guide and giving it away for free is virtually always a great way to build a large list.

To make things easier, you don't even need to create the guide yourself. If you're not an expert in your own niche, that's fine (maybe you're just good at marketing or administrative tasks). You can always hire someone else to research and write your short guide.

Using a site like Elance.com or Guru.com, you can hire someone to create a professional-quality PDF guide. If you're not sure what the topic should be, you can even ask them to come up with the topic for you.

And there you have it: using a free report, you can easily add value to your offer. This will help to reduce people's resistance to your offer; and once they read and appreciate the quality of your report, it will also make them more likely to listen to your follow-up emails.

Other Things You Can Give Away

While the free report is still one of the most frequently used strategies in list building, you have plenty of other options, too; and some of them have the potential to be more persuasive than a simple report.

Create and Give Away Video Content

One great thing to give away is video content. In comparison to a free report, it has a much higher perceived value. And in recent years, it has become increasingly cheaper to create.

If you're new to creating video content, I suggest that you check out <http://camstudio.org/> to create some test videos. This is a free tool that will allow you to capture your computer screen and some audio.

If you decide to go this route—and to create video content—I would suggest that you do it by creating a series of tutorials in your particular niche. For instance, if you're in Internet marketing and your list will tell people how to use AdWords, you might put together the following video series:

Video #1: A Quick Trick that Will Make Your AdWords Campaigns 50% More Profitable

Video #2: Increase Your Conversion Rate by Making this Tiny Change in Your Ad Copy

Video #3: How to Get Rid of Freebie Seekers and Draw in Profitable Customers by Changing Your Ad Copy

In the videos, you could open up your own AdWords account and demonstrate how the viewer could make all of the changes you suggest.

Again, this video tutorial series would have a very high perceived value—much higher than if you simply wrote a report saying (but not showing) them what to do.

If you decide to go this route and find out that video content works well for your particular target audience, you may eventually want to upgrade to Camtasia Studio, which you can find here:

<http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp>.

Give Away Free Software

If you think your customers will perceive video content as having a high value, just imagine what they'll think if you provide them with free software in exchange for joining your list.

In fact, creating software and giving it away for free to your customers is one of the best ways to lower their resistance to your marketing pitches. And, for this reason, if you're willing to do it, it holds the potential of generating very high conversion rates.

So how can you go about creating a software program? Fortunately, you don't need to know any programming languages. You can pay other people to do it for you.

The sites I mentioned earlier—Elance.com and Guru.com—also allow you to post software programming projects; however, this will be more complicated than posting a simple report-writing project.

When posting a software-creation project, there are a number of very important things to keep in mind:

- Be very clear about things the program must be able to do. If the goal of the program isn't clear, you can easily end up with a piece

of software that doesn't do anything useful for your visitors—or at least does something other than what you had intended.

- When you're not sure what you want, also make that clear. If you don't have any reason to impose restrictions on a certain part of the program, you will probably want to give your coder the freedom to do things as she sees fit.

And there you have it: giving away software can be a highly effective means of converting visitors into subscribers. You might not feel comfortable with the process just yet—but after you complete that first project, you'll understand why it's not as hard as it seems; and yet it has unbounded potential.

Other Strategies

Reports, video, audio, and software are not your only options when it comes to subscription incentives. List builders also offer audio content, eBooks, and a variety of other products. All of these present viable opportunities for offering potential subscribers significant value at minimal expense to you.

Summary – Give Stuff Away

In short, when you create a squeeze page or opt-in page, it is always a good idea to give stuff away for free. This will reduce visitors' resistance to opting-in; and it will also make you appear more credible to people who otherwise know very little about you.

There are several important things to keep in mind when giving away free stuff:

1. Make it valuable. Anyone can give away garbage products. But your goal should be to not only provide an enticing offer, but to actually deliver on that offer. By doing this, you will not only get people to opt-in, but you will also get them to trust you and to be willing to spend money in the future.

2. Be creative. Consider creating a report, creating an eBook, creating a video series, or creating a piece of software. The opportunities for providing unique value are boundless. Take advantage of them, rather than providing boring, re-hashed content.

3. Communicate clearly that the content is free and will be available as soon as they subscribe to your list.

And there you have it: a basic template for inducing visitors to subscribe to your list by offering inexpensive freebies that have very high perceived values.

How to Create a Killer Opt-In Page

Earlier, we talked about squeeze pages, what they are, and what minimum requirements you would have to satisfy in order to have a good one. We also discussed some good examples of squeeze pages.

An “opt-in page” is similar to a squeeze page, but takes a looser form. It might include more copy or a slightly different format. Either way, the purpose is the same: to get as many visitors as possible to subscribe to your list.

So let’s talk about how to make a killer opt-in page. But this time, let’s be more specific—and work through the process using a proven, 8-step method, rather than talking about what makes a good opt-in page.

Step #1: Open Up Your WYSIWYG Editor

There are many different editors you can select from when building your opt-in page. If you’ve been following this guide step-by-step, you may have downloaded one to create your website and your first squeeze page. If you don’t have one yet, you can use something like FrontPage, Dreamweaver, or <http://www.nvu.com> (which is free).

Step #2: Create a Table

Create and center a 600-pixel wide table. Some Internet marketers suggest that a table of this size will convert better than other formats. Additionally, wrapping your content and placing it in blocks will improve readability.

Step #3: Create a Headline

Create a headline for your opt-in page. Make sure the headline is a) inside of quotes; b) 18-24 size font; and c) red. This combination has a proven track record for converting visitors into subscribers.

Also, consider using the word “free” in your headline. Make it clear to visitors that you will give them a report, video content, an eBook, or software (depending on what you’re offering) for free.

Step #4: Add Bullet Points

Bullet points are the easiest and clearest way to explain how your free report will solve the problem you introduced. In this part, you will want to use 4-5 bullet points to highly important benefits—not features—of the free item.

If you're not familiar with the concept of a benefit (as opposed to a feature), think about the following two ways in which you could describe an Internet marketing eBook:

1. It contains a chapter about using AdSense.
2. After reading it, you will be able to increase your AdSense earnings by up to 50%.

The first item is a feature of the eBook. The second is a benefit. In your bullet points, you should use only benefits.

Step #5: Call to Action

Before your reader can think about something else, it is important that you direct her to your opt-in form. So make a clear transition from your bullet points by saying something like “All you have to do to get my report for free is add your name and email address to this form. You will immediately be emailed a link to download my report.”

Step #6: Generate the Code for Your Opt-In Form

If you've been following along to this point, you already know how to generate an opt-in form from Aweber.com. If you forget how to do this, refer back to chapter 3.

All you need to do now is generate the HTML form and then paste it into your page-creator. Also, remember to say that you will not use the email to spam and you will not sell it to a third party (as mentioned earlier).

Step #7: Upload Your Form

If you're using one of the page editors we discussed earlier, this process will be no different than it was for any other pages you created. If not, you may want to use something like <http://filezilla-project.org/> to upload your opt-in page.

Step #8: Track and Tweak Your Results

Use Google Website Optimizer (<http://google.com/websiteoptimizer>) together with Google Analytics (<http://google.com/analytics>) to track your website.

And there you have it: you've made an excellent first attempt at creating an opt-in page. It's now time to edit your first draft, send some traffic, evaluate your results, and then create another draft.

And that's exactly what we'll discuss in the next chapter.

Maximizing Your Opt-in Pages for Maximum Results

So far, we've talked about opt-in pages in two different chapters. And there's a very good reason for that: conversion rates vary significantly among opt-in pages. And if you want to have any success as a list builder, you have to figure out how to make a page that will convert well.

In chapter 3, you learned the basics of squeeze pages. In chapter 5, you learned exactly how to construct a squeeze page using a proven template that is likely to convert well. In this chapter, you will learn how to analyze your opt-in pages and make changes as needed.

Let's begin with your current opt-in page. For starters, it should satisfy all requirements in the previous chapter. But in addition to that, there are specific page elements you will want to optimize. Let's go through them element-by-element:

Creating a Strong Headline

A good place to start is the headline. This is the single most important piece of text on your page, as more visitors will read it than anything else on your page. If the headline is good, they'll get hooked and stick around. If the headline is weak, they'll quickly leave your site.

So what makes a good headline?

a. Psychological Triggers

One important element you will want to include in your headline is at least one psychological trigger. If you're not familiar with the term—it's basically any word or phrase that will compel many people to pay attention or take action.

Psychological triggers are useful because they stick out and because they draw in a reader before they have the chance to lose interest. As

mentioned earlier, “free” is a reliable psychological trigger that is frequently used to induce people to try products and join mailing lists.

There are also other psychological triggers. For instance, “unstoppable,” “scientifically proven,” “tested,” “powerful,” “explosive,” and “immediate” are all terms that will stick out when your prospects read your headline.

So, if your current headline seems flat, consider re-writing it to include some psychological triggers. And once you start sending traffic to your opt-in page, consider rotating the triggers to see how they affect your conversion rate.

b. Colors

Colors are also an important part of any opt-in page. Depending on the selection of colors you use, you will can: 1) subconsciously put pressure on your visitors to take action; 2) put your visitors at ease, increasing the probability that they’ll remain on your opt-in page for longer; or 3) chase your visitors off accidentally.

For starters, it is generally a good idea to use a red headline, a blue or black sub-headline, and a blue or white background.

As far as the opt-in form goes, you have many options for colors, but some evidence suggests that orange converts better than other colors. Good choices also include blue and white.

c. Layout

The layout of your opt-in form will also be a critical determinant of your conversion rate. In general, you have two options for the layout:

Option #1: Wide Format

Your first option is to create a “wide format” opt-in page. In general, this format will use only a little text in bullet points and will contain all of the

relevant information above the fold, so that the visitor does not have the option to scroll down.

If you use this method, it is critical that everything on your opt-in page is visible as soon as the visitor arrives. Otherwise, this will make for a poor, distracting format.

Additionally, if you use this format, the headline should be at the top, the sub-headline should be below, the opt-in form should be just right of the center, and the bullet points should be to the left.

Option #2: Long Format

Don't confuse this with "long copy." Whenever you create an opt-in page, you should always use short copy. Here, "long" simply means that the visitor will have to scroll before he or she can see the opt-in box.

The "long format" also frequently uses more text than the "short format," but this isn't necessary. The only necessary part is that it must include a single, long, thin table (600 pixels wide, as mentioned earlier) that contains the headline, the sub-headline, the bullet points, and the opt-in form.

Regardless of which format you use, you'll want to make sure that it is text-light and clearly communicates what you're offering to the visitor in exchange for his email address and name.

d. Bullets

Many novice copywriters make the mistake of using paragraphs, rather than bullet points. When it comes to Internet marketing, few readers will have the patience to work through a wordy opt-in page. They'll just leave instead.

Bullet points give you a good way to communicate powerful benefits of your product one-by-one, rather than lumping several into a paragraph.

If you're not sure whether your current bullet points are appealing enough, you may want to try some of the following ideas:

1. Use bold on every other bullet point. This switch from plain text to bold and to plain text again will catch the reader's attention and help the bullet points stand apart from each other.
2. Use psychological triggers. Repeat words like free, shocking, proven, and tested. Use them in ways that will entice the reader to continue and to eventually opt-in.
3. Bold words and phrases that are important. This will allow impatient visitors to get the gist of your message by simply scanning the bolded phrases.
4. Reduce the size of bullet points. No reader should ever get bored before she finishes reading a bullet point.
5. Clarify vague bullet points, so that they deliver a more specific and more compelling point.
6. Change the first word or phrase in each bullet point, so that each has a unique start.

Using those six tricks, you should be able to significantly improve your conversion rates.

e. Benefits vs. Features

As I mentioned earlier, it is critical to highlight benefits, rather than features. Features tell customers exactly what they get, but provide no additional mental picture of how it will help them in specific ways.

To the contrary, a benefit tells a visitor how she will gain or profit from a specific feature in your report or eBook. This is important because it will help the visitor visualize herself using your product become more successful. This mental image your "benefits" conjure up will reinforce her decision to relinquish her name and email address.

f. Call-to-Action

As with any pitch, your opt-in page must end with a powerful call-to-action. If you flounder here, all of the time you spend building a strong headline,

selecting the right colors, crafting clever bullet points, inserting psychological triggers, and communicating benefits will be for naught.

When it comes time to opt-in, the visitor won't feel sufficiently compelled. He might make note of your site and possibly even bookmark it, but he won't think it's necessary to opt-in now.

This is why the call-to-action is critical. So after you wrap up your bullet points, insert a call-to-action that:

1. Tells the reader to take action now—not later.
2. Explains how waiting translates into fewer profits or some other type of worse outcome.
3. Is brief and clear

Critical Elements – Summary

And there you have it: if you find that your conversion rate is lackluster, your best bet is to re-read your sales letter with a critical eye. Attempt to figure out where your colors might be less than optimal, whether your headline or sub-headline is weak, and whether your bullets don't do a good job of pulling in the reader.

Whatever you do, don't forget to communicate benefits—not features. The goal of your opt-in page should be to burn an image in the mind of the reader, so that she can visualize how your free product will improve her life in tangible ways. If you can do this, you can also convert visitors into subscribers.

How to Build a List of Thousands

We've now thoroughly exhausted all of the methods through which you can build an opt-in page and ensure that it converts. Unfortunately, while this is an important first step in the list building process, it is not sufficient

in itself. If you want to build a large, responsive list, you will also need effective means for driving traffic to your opt-in or squeeze page.

In this chapter, I'm going to cover popular and effective strategies you can employ to drive traffic to your opt-in page, where they will then be converted into subscribers.

Method #1: Forum Signatures

No matter what niche you sell in, it's always a good idea to spend some time interacting with your target buyer group. One of the best ways to do this is to frequent forums; and to spend some time figuring out what your customer base wants and what they're talking about.

One additional benefit of frequenting forums is that you can contribute to the discussion directly and can visibly demonstrate your expertise by being a helpful contributor to discussions.

If you prove to be a helpful member of a particular forum, there's a good chance that members will find you interesting and may be interested in the particular products you sell and services you offer. Creating a signature for your profile offers a great outlet through which you can capitalize on this.

If you're not familiar with the forums in your particular niche, you can check the following place to get an exhaustive list of all of the relevant sites: <http://www.big-boards.com>.

Of course, the more forums you can participate on, the better. But it's always a good idea to periodically think about how much time you're spending on forums to evaluate whether it is too much or too little.

Method #2: Driving Traffic via Twitter

Contrary to what many believe, Twitter isn't only for people who want to hear about what celebrities had for lunch. Rather, it's a micro-blogging medium that is highly viral, fosters discussion between many parties simultaneously, and is purposely restricted to short posts.

As a list builder, you can use Twitter to seek out high-quality prospects—and then drive them to your opt-in list. So how can you use Twitter for this end? It's simple. Just follow these steps...

Step #1: Create Your Account

Start by going to www.twitter.com and setting up an account. You'll need to create a username and a brief bio. The bio is where you'll want to include a link to your opt-in list. Other than that, you will want to limit the amount of references you make to your business.

Step #2: Follow a Lot of People

Once you've setup your account, the next step is to start "following" people. The best way to do this is to search for people who are talking about stuff in your niche. From there, check out the profile and then click "follow" if you believe the person will be a good prospect.

After you've opted to "follow" someone, they will have the choice of following you back or not. If they don't follow you back after a while, you may want to consider dropping them.

Step #3: Start Tweeting

As you build up your base of followers, you will want to start tweeting, too. The key to being successful here is that you must tweet things of value. If you're in IM, you could tweet relevant news about IM or daily tips or something equivalent.

If your approach is too obviously commercial, many will ignore your tweets and choose not to follow you. To the contrary, if you offer something of value, people will gain an interest in what you're saying and consider reading your opt-in pitch when they check out your profile.

And that's all. If you follow those steps, you'll soon have a constant stream of new followers, which will convert into a stream of opt-ins, which will convert into buyers.

Method #3: Blogging

Another useful way to drive traffic to your opt-in page is to create a blog. You can even do this on the same site by using the Wordpress Plugin mentioned earlier.

There are many virtues of owning a blog—all of which will help you as a list builder.

The first virtue of blogs is that they are relatively easy to optimize for search engines. This is especially true if you use the Wordpress Plugin, which will automatically optimize your blog for search engines.

Remember: the more traffic you have coming to your blog, the more people you can funnel into your list through your opt-in page.

Another virtue of a blog is that they provide you with a place where you can post short updates about your site and business. In particular, using a blog means that you can directly post about a new product you'll be giving away for free; and you can tell readers how they can obtain it by opting in to your list.

If you decide to use a blog as part of your traffic generation campaign, you will want to invest some time in determining what other blogs are large and well-followed in your niche. If you can usefully contribute to those blogs and provide a backlink to your own in a signature, this will provide an excellent means of obtaining inexpensive traffic.

Method #4: AdWords

Once you've optimized for search engine traffic and have built a large base of followers on Twitter, it's always a good idea to consider some paid methods of traffic generation, too. Among these methods, the best and most targeted is probably a Google AdWords campaign.

If you haven't used a Google AdWords campaign so far, you may be unaware of the many things that recommend them. In particular, one of the best features of using AdWords (and other CPC advertising services) is that you can create ads, get them well-circulated almost instantaneously, and only pay when someone actually clicks on them (not just when they view them).

Here's a short break-down of what's involved in a Google AdWords campaign:

Step #1: Create Your First AdWords Campaign

Start by going to www.adwords.com and setting up an account.

After that, the first step is to select a name for your campaign, select the countries in which your ad can be viewed, and setup a maximum cost-per-click (CPC) and daily budget.

The first part is self-explanatory. Simply pick a campaign name that makes sense to you. The second part entails deciding what countries you believe will be most profitable. In general, you'll want to pick the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia at a minimum.

For the third step, I highly suggest you enter a daily budget, but then select "enter bids manually." This will allow you to select the cost-per-click for individual keywords, rather than selecting the same CPC for every keyword used in the campaign.

On the next page, you'll be asked to fill in your ad, your keywords, and your maximum CPC for each keyword. Start by picking your keywords. You can do this by clicking on the link that says, "Help me choose effective

keywords.”

From here, it's a good idea to at least skim Google's directions on how to select keywords. In contrast to many advertising services, Google provides a wealth of useful information on using AdWords correctly, so take advantage of the free resources.

Once you've skimmed over Google's directions, take a look at the keyword selection tool by clicking “Keyword Tool.” Using this tool, you can generate a massive amount of potential keywords for your campaign. The best part is that Google will return a full break-down of the amount of traffic and advertising competition associated with each keyword.

In general, you'll want to look for keywords that receive a lot of searches on Google, but don't have a lot of competition. This means you'll be able to secure one of the top advertising spots without bidding much.

When you're finished compiling keywords (by clicking the “add” link every time you see a possibly relevant keyword), download them in Excel format and then return to page where you enter your keywords and ad copy.

Select the “enter spreadsheet mode” and copy-and-paste your keywords into the spreadsheet provided. For each keyword, enter a maximum amount that you are willing to pay.

Once you're finished with this phase, all that remains is creating your first ad. Start by entering your URL and displayed URL as requested. If the actual link to the opt-in page is long, then consider using something shorter in the display URL box. For instance, if the page relates to golf, you could simply use www.yoursite.com/golf.

Now, when it comes to writing ads, there are several tricks you can use to make your ads convert better. I've listed just a few of them below:

1. Use words in your ad that are also contained in many of the keywords you've bid on. For instance, if your site is about weight loss, then many of your keywords may contain “weight loss.” If you use this keyword in your ad, it will show up bolded when people search for it. This will set your ad apart from others.

2. Make specific claims. If, for instance, you're selling an IM product that has helped people to make as much as \$1000/wk, then state this specifically. Don't just say, "Increase your income." Say, "increase your income by as much as \$1000/wk."
3. Capitalize all words other than prepositions. Many AdWords experts suggest that this will always convert better.
4. Use the word free. After all, you're giving something away for free in order to get people to join your list. You may as well mention it in your headline, so that people know this immediately.

Once you've finished your first ad, you're virtually done with the first step. With a few button clicks, you'll be ready to run your first ad.

Step #2: Test and Track

I won't get into this too exhaustively, but one thing you absolutely must do if you want to use AdWords and other CPC advertisement effectively is to test and track your results.

Without analyzing your results, you have absolutely no means of determining whether or not your ad is converting well. You very well could be pulling in two or three times as much traffic each day at half the cost, but since you didn't bother to test alternatives, you have no way of knowing whether this is possible.

General Tips

If you're new to the idea of tracking and testing, there are roughly 4 important things you should keep in mind whenever you perform an experiment:

1. Don't confound your results by making too many changes at once. If you want to test which headline converts better, only change the headline and nothing else. If you change other elements, you cannot be sure which change caused the increase (or decrease) in the click-through rate.

2. If you're testing two different headlines, create two identical opt-in pages with the only difference being the opt-in form. This will allow you to not only determine how the change affected your click-through rate (by looking at AdWords statistics), but also whether there was any difference in the quality of the visitors sent to your site (by looking at your AWeber and site statistics).
3. Test your ads by having them rotate, rather than displaying one on a certain day—and another on a different day. This will ensure that your results aren't simply a product of when you showed each ad. Rather, your ads will be displayed to roughly the same demographic group.
4. Collect a large enough sample to draw valid inferences. In general, if your ads have only received a few views and click-throughs, this won't be a sufficient predictor of how they will perform in the long term. Allow at least two days of observation before you draw any conclusions.

With that, we'll conclude this subsection on AdWords. If you feel you need more in-depth information, you should first explore the documentation AdWords provides. There's a tremendous amount of information available and the best part is that it is completely free.

Method #5: Social Media – Other

We discussed Twitter, blogging, and forum-posting earlier. But there are many other forms of social media through which you can generate traffic. I won't cover them all exhaustively, but to name a few: Facebook, MySpace, and Squidoo, provide excellent mediums through which you can locate potential list members and pitch to them indirectly.

When it comes to social media, there are a few important things to keep in mind:

1. You're dealing with people—not bots. Keep this in mind when creating profiles on social media sites and interacting with prospects. The better you're able to minimize intrusive sales pitches

and instead focus on creating enjoyable content and engaging in mutually beneficial interactions, the better you'll be able to attract list members.

2. Create very, very large friends lists. The more people who can follow your feed or check your profile, the better. Additionally, as you add more people, you gain the possibility of more people mentioning your business to members of their own networks.
3. Avoid violating ToS agreements and ruining your reputation. This goes back to point #1. If you violate a ToS agreement or ruin your reputation, someone may report you and your account could get banned. This means you'll completely lose your investment and will need to start over elsewhere.

Overall, these social media outlets provide another means by which you may expose your list to wide variety of potential subscribers. Use them in conjunction with the suggestions I've made and you should experience success over time.

Summary – Getting Subscribers

No matter how good your opt-in page is, it won't matter if no one else it. And it also won't matter if only untargeted, low-quality traffic sees it. This leaves you with a problem: you have to figure out how to drive a great deal of high-quality traffic to your site.

Fortunately, there are many ways in which you can do this. The ways I've listed are by no means exhaustive, but for many, these channels are all they have needed in order to build large, successful, profitable lists. In chapter 9, I'll give you shorter descriptions of the many, many options you have.

How to Milk Your List for Everything It's Worth

Until now, we've focused entirely on list building, but we've said almost nothing about what to do once you have a list. And there's a reason for this: most campaigns fall apart at the list building stage, which is well in advance of the monetization stage. I wanted to make sure you got through the list building stage unscathed and with a significant amount of momentum.

But now that you have a growing list, it's time to start thinking about how to use it to make money. There are several different ways to do this. I will outline them in the order I think you should do them.

Step #1: Thank You Page

When someone subscribes to your list, they will be re-directed to the "thank you" page on your website. This page will probably contain a link to download a free report or some free software, as well as a brief "thank you" message for subscribing.

If you want to make a quick sale, the thank you page is a great place to do it. All you'll have to do is include a paragraph or two of text pitching a related product, as well as a link to the download page.

Step #2: Monetize Through a Course

In earlier chapters, we talked about growing your list by giving something away for free. One thing many list builders give away for free is an e-course related to their particular niche. This is something I highly suggest you do.

How can you do this? Start by thinking about 5-7 topics related to your niche that not everyone knows about. Next, start sketching an outline for a course that explains these 5-7 things.

Each lesson in this course should be brief (say, 300 to 500 words), but should clearly convey a specific, actionable message. At the end of each course lesson, you should include an affiliate link to a product, but in a way that isn't too pushy.

For instance, you might spend the entire lesson talking about search engine optimization. At the end, you could include an affiliate link to an effective SEO tool, which, as you'll explain, will greatly simplify the process.

When creating a course, there are a couple of things to keep in mind:

1. Clearly state how frequently subscribers will receive emails on the opt-in page.
2. Be thoughtful when deciding how to space the emails. At minimum, you will want to leave 1 day between emails; however, you may want to increase that time significantly.
3. Pitch your affiliate link as a solution to the problem the email poses, but don't do it in a way that is too overt. If your emails don't contain useful tips that are independent of the links, readers will become put off and unsubscribe.

After you've created your course, simply load it into your autoresponder. All new subscribers will immediately be enrolled and will be exposed to your product pitches.

If you're not satisfied with your results after a few weeks have passed, consider altering your course to improve your conversion rates.

Step #3: Offer Your Products

Once subscribers have gone through your course and have been a list member for a few weeks, consider sending a direct pitch to them. Rather than doing it in the form of a sales letter, write it as suggestion in a personal letter.

Mention that you have a product available that solves some problem that members of the list will have. Then offer it to all of your list members at an exclusive discount. These list-only discounts will build rapport with your readers; and also give you an opportunity to earn some money from direct sales.

Step #4: Sell Affiliate Products

In step #2, we talked about weaving affiliate product offers into your course. This is always a good way to make some quick cash. But there are other ways to promote products as an affiliate, too. One of the better ways is to find and try new products—and then to provide a review for you list with an affiliate link included.

If you're not sure what products you can use this method with, spend some time reviewing www.clickbank.com, <http://www.cj.com/> and <http://www.linkshare.com/>. Regardless of what you want to promote—be it physical products or electronic products—you can sell it as an affiliate through one of those sites.

Summary – Monetizing Your List

One of the most important parts of list building is figuring out how to squeeze money out of our list. Using the five methods I've listed above, you should be able to slowly amass a fortune by converting your subscribers into buyers.

30 Powerful Ways to Rapidly Build Your List

In chapter 7, we talked extensively about a few very effective methods for driving traffic to your opt-in list. Now, I'm going to talk very briefly about 30 different methods you can use to immediately start building your list. I will leave it to find out how each will interface with your particular business model.

Strategy #1: Create an account at squidoo.com and use it to talk about your niche, generate traffic, and then convert it into subscribers.

Strategy #2: Create a free report and pass it out on forums and post it in directories. In that report, repeatedly refer to your opt-in page.

Strategy #3: Similar to strategy 2, but use an eBook, rather than a report.

Strategy #4: Similar to strategies 2 and 3, but use video content. Create it using www.camstudio.com.

Strategy #5: Similar to strategies 2, 3, and 4, but use audio content instead. Create the audio content using <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>.

Strategy #6: Create an AdWords account and use it to drive traffic to your opt-in list. Refer back to chapter 7 for details.

Strategy #7: Create a CPC advertising account with Yahoo: <http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/ysm/sps/>.

Strategy #8: Create a CPC advertising account with Bing: https://adcenter.microsoft.com/customer/SignupPreview.aspx?adv_market=en-us&s_int=118

Strategy #9: Hire a professional marketing team on elance.com or guru.com and have them run your campaign.

Strategy #10: Hire a graphic designer on elance.com or guru.com to create a banner advertisement for your site. Purchase cost per view credits from banner advertising networks and test how well your banner converts.

Strategy #11: Buy banner advertising space on MySpace:
<https://advertise.myspace.com/>.

Strategy #12: Find relevant forums on www.big-boards.com, post on them frequently, and use a signature to direct traffic to your opt-in list.

Strategy #13: Write articles. Use <http://www.fridaytrafficreport.com/top-21-the-best-article-directory-list/> to find a list of relevant article directories. Post your articles there with a link back to your opt-in page.

Strategy #14: Create a Facebook account and use it to add friends who are likely to be interested in your list.

Strategy #15: Do the same thing, but for Myspace.com.

Strategy #16: Find relevant niche social networking sites and use them to sell your products.

Strategy #17: Find joint venture partners who are willing to promote your list in exchange for promoting them on your list.

Strategy #18: Create a contest with a large prize and require participants to join your list in order to get contest updates and information.

Strategy #19: Purchase high-quality, double opt-in leads for your list.

Strategy #20: Buy advertising space on other email lists and use them to promote your own.

Strategy #21: Refine your current traffic generation strategies through tracking and testing.

Strategy #22: Improve your conversion rate by tweaking your opt-in page and testing your results.

Strategy #23: Create a series of tutorial videos and post them on YouTube.com. In your profile and in each video, include a link to your opt-in page.

Strategy #24: Post insightful comments on blogs in your niche and provide a backlink to your opt-in page.

Strategy #25: Take all of your free products, update them to include links to your opt-in pages, and upload them to torrent sites like rapidshare.com.

Strategy #26: Use this site to locate relevant link directories: <http://www.web-directories.ws/>. Post your site in each of them to gain backlinks, so that you will get more organic search engine traffic.

Strategy #27: Pay to put your link on high PR sites. This has the potential to improve your organic search engine rankings and thus increase the traffic that is sent to your opt-in page.

Strategy #28: Use free sites, including traffic exchanges, to generate credits that you can use to send visitors to your opt-in page.

Strategy #29: Use Twitter to gain followers. Periodically, tweet something related to your site in an attempt to convert readers into subscribers.

Strategy #30: Offer to promote a successful marketer in the future if she's willing to review one of your products and include a link to your opt-in page in the review.

And there you have it: 30 strategies you can immediately put to use in building your list. Pick the ones you think will work best for you, learn more about them, and use them to build your business.

10 Different Types of Content You Can Send Out to Your List That Always Works

Following what we covered in the previous chapter, let's now take a look at 10 different types of content you can send out to your list.

Type #1: Send short articles to your list that contain “How To” instructions on a particular topic that they will find useful.

Type #2: Send out a free, 10-page report that contains a specific, focused strategy they can use. Consider including a link to one of your paid products in the report.

Type #3: Send out a long eBook; and use it to link to dozens of different affiliate products.

Type #4: Send your list news and updates about your niche. If there's a new product launch, let them know about it (and include an affiliate link, of course). If there's a newsworthy event, also let them know—even if there's no direct profit in it. It'll give them a reason to read your newsletter carefully.

Type #5: Periodically, review relevant products and include an affiliate link to them in your review.

Type #6: Offer exclusive, list-only discounts on your various products. This will build rapport with subscribers and also help you to generate quick sales.

Type #7: Offer links to free video content.

Type #8: Send out long-form sales letters to your list from your joint venture partners in exchange for a share in the profits.

Type #9: Offer links to free software that you pay a freelance coder from elance.com to create.

Type #10: Give away money or a free copy or a desirable product. Use this as a means to re-active your list and generate interest in your emails.

Summary

Throughout this book, we thoroughly broke-down the process of list building and monetization. We talked how to create a website, how to create setup an autoresponder, how to create squeeze pages, how to create opt-in lists, how to generate traffic and subscribers, and how to test and track your results.

You now have a truly complete list-building education. All you have to do now is act on it and make some money. So get out there, put this knowledge to work, build a huge list, and make some money.