



Starter Plan for Email Marketing

30-Day Starter Plan for Email Marketing

Thank you for registering for your FREE 30-day trial of iContact's email marketing software.

iContact is an established, cost-effective, and proven email marketing solution suited for entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations of all shapes and sizes.

iContact's simplicity and speed, matched with its low cost and concise reporting, bring successful email marketing within easy reach of most marketers.

This guide will help you build successful email marketing campaigns using the iContact system. It features easy-to-follow strategies and best practices, which will help you drive engagement, increase conversions, and maximize your profits. You should use the guide in conjunction with iContact's detailed FAQs, video tutorials, and webinars, which you can access via the Help tab in your iContact account. Don't worry if you need additional assistance: our award-winning support team (also available via the Help tab) would love to hear from you. Our product experts speak plain English and have experience helping iContact's one million global users—including all types of businesses—with all manner of problems.

We have set a suggested timescale for each of the steps in this guide to match your 30-day trial period. However, depending on your resources, available time, and experience, you may be able to get up and running much quicker.

On the next page, you will find a 10-step checklist. Tick off each step as you move along, and you'll soon find yourself on the path to email marketing success.

The 10-Step Checklist



Step	Day	Task
1	1 → 2	Set your goals and build your plan
2	3 → 5	Complete the big audit
3	6	Set up your account and build a recognizable profile
4	7 → 8	Import, build, and manage your contact lists
5	9 → 10	Design your email template
6	11 → 13	Create the perfect email and landing page experience
7	14	Schedule and send
8	15	Pull reports
9	16 → 25	Build autoresponders
10	26 → 30	Test and improve

Why Email Marketing?

Successful email marketing campaigns are built on a solid foundation of permission, relevancy, and trust.

Email marketing has been around for almost as long as the Internet itself, and although other online marketing techniques have come and gone, it remains a popular driver of business for successful marketers the world over. There is a very good reason for this—**EMAIL MARKETING WORKS!**

Email marketing is a permission-based marketing solution. This means you should use it to target only individuals who have given their permission to receive marketing information from you. Permission is granted normally via a subscription, a request for more information, or a purchase. Because of this, email marketing is often considered a retention marketing tool. As anyone who has been in business for any length of time will confirm, it is much cheaper—and therefore profitable—to retain and attract business from an existing client or contact than to acquire a new one.

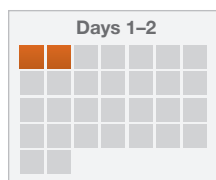
You can employ email marketing to deliver a number of different marketing communications. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Regular marketing newsletters (both customer facing and internal)
- Educational materials and courses
- Product or service updates and promotions
- Daily deals, coupons, voucher codes, and discounts
- Third-party advertising promotions
- Customer surveys
- Event promotions and follow-up marketing
- Competitions

Email marketing is highly scalable and can grow with your business. With iContact, it may even be possible to run your initial (or test) campaigns at zero cost.

You can set up your email marketing campaigns quickly and efficiently with little technical knowledge. You can also see your results almost instantly, so you can quickly gauge your success and optimize future campaigns.

Signing up for iContact is the first step on the road to email marketing success. Over the next 30 days, we'll take you from “rookie” to “pro” with our 10-step guide to email marketing.



Step 1

Set Your Goals and Build Your Plan

As with any business venture, you should set clear objectives prior to launching your email marketing strategy. The first question you should ask yourself is: **What do I want to achieve from my email marketing?**



There are many answers to this question, but perhaps the most common are the following:

- To drive incremental sales from my existing client base and increase customer lifetime value
- To deliver relevant and timely content to my list of contacts, keeping them informed and enhancing my position as the go-to person in my particular industry
- To drive repeat traffic to my website and maximize the opportunities from advertising, commerce, and user engagement
- To build an additional stream of revenue through the delivery of sponsored messaging to my list

Your answer may even be a mixture of some or all of the above.

The key is to understand the opportunity and build a workable plan to deliver the right content to the right audience at the right time. Failure to do this may result in rushed, ineffective, and ill-thought-out campaigns that do not deliver significant results.

When building your plan, you should consider which actions and strategies you need to adopt to achieve your goals. These include the following:

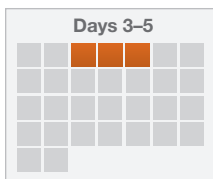
- The desired timing and frequency of your email campaigns.
- The style of campaigns you hope to exploit (e.g., regular newsletters, ad hoc promotions, daily deals). Part of permission-based marketing is sending campaigns that match what your contacts expect to receive from you. If you would like to change the frequency and/or content of your promotions, it is best to reseek your subscribers' permission.

- The depth of any segmentation (i.e., how targeted you intend your campaigns to be).
- The individual or team that will be responsible for creating, sending, and tracking the success of your campaigns.
- The delivery schedule for your first email marketing campaigns based on available products, service announcements, promotions, etc.
- A list of campaign priorities (marked: essential, important, desirable, and nice-to-have). Concentrate on the most important deliverable first.

When rolling out your plan, you should concentrate on the successful delivery of each individual goal before moving on to the next. Trying to keep too many balls in the air while learning a new craft could result in a lot of dropped balls.

Important! It is OK to send multiple emails to your list every month so long as you are sending targeted and relevant messages. A general monthly newsletter, for example, is fine if you complement it with a series of more focused campaigns. With this in mind, it is best to plan to send a greater number of emails to smaller (more defined) groups of subscribers.

As you work your way through the following steps in this guide, you may wish to revisit and revise your plan accordingly.



Step 2

Complete the Big Audit

Before you start your first email marketing campaign, you'll want to take stock of the resources available to you and ensure everything is in place to maximize your opportunity.

You'll want to review the following:

Your Current List: Your list should contain the email addresses you are allowed to contact (i.e., people who have registered interest to receive marketing communications from you via a subscription form on your website or who have made a purchase from you in the past). If you have built up a significant list over a number of years but have not contacted it recently,



you may want to reengage your contacts with a telephone call or single email inviting them to rejoin your list. You should also remember you can email someone who has purchased from you in the past only those marketing offers that are relevant or similar to the contact's previous transaction.

List-Building Resources: You can collect email addresses on your website; at your point-of-sale; during trade shows; and through tools such as your e-commerce, accounting, and customer relationship management software. iContact provides a number of solutions to help you build your lists as well as integrates with a wide range of software products via ready-built integrations and (for more advanced users) an open API.

Segmentation Details: You'll want to review any relevant information that will help you break down your lists into more targeted groups. For example, a fashion retailer may want to segment customers by gender, size, and age. Segmentation will help you send more relevant email marketing messages and improve your open rates, clickthroughs, and conversions.

Content Resources: You should make a note of existing and potential sources of content that you may deliver via your email marketing campaigns. This could be blog content, news, press releases, reviews, white papers, etc. Having a usable bank of content will help you plan and build engaging and informative email campaigns and prevent that last-minute scramble for content when you want to send a campaign.

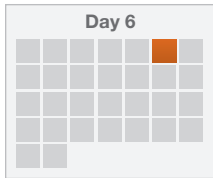
Design Resources: Will you be designing your email campaigns in-house, using iContact's template library, or outsourcing the work to a designer? Do you have all the logos, images, and design elements in place to produce engaging, highly clickable email campaigns?

Staffing Resources: Who will be responsible for delivering your campaigns successfully? Are they capable of achieving your goals, or will they need additional training? Will they need help from other members of your staff, and will they have the time to deliver your campaigns alongside their existing tasks?

Campaign Calendar: A simple calendar of events that you can build campaigns around (such as product launches, holidays, and peak shopping periods) is essential.

Your Previous Marketing Campaigns: You will want to compile a library of your previous marketing campaigns (both online and offline). Understanding how successful these campaigns have been will help you build strategies around your future promotions and address factors such as seasonality, calls to action, and pricing.

Competitor Campaigns: For obvious reasons, keeping an eye on your competitors' campaigns is very useful. Learn from what they do well, and learn from their mistakes. How do your campaigns compare? If you cannot compete on price, can you beat them on service?



Step 3

Set Up Your Account and Build a Recognizable Profile

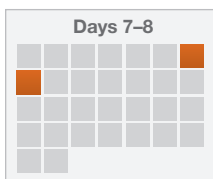
Setting up an account before your first send is very easy. Your main focus should be customizing your profile so email recipients can clearly identify your business or organization. To do that, you simply need to take a little time to ensure the following details are correct:

Account Information: All email marketing messages must include your company name and registered office address. This information should appear at the bottom of each email alongside the subscription management links (where people can unsubscribe if they no longer wish to receive your emails). Make sure this information is correct. It is not only a legal requirement of the CAN-SPAM ACT, but also a way for you to enhance your reputation by demonstrating you are a legitimate, contactable company or organization.

A screenshot of the 'My Contact Information' form in the iContact interface. The form includes fields for First Name (with 'Mark' entered), Last Name (with 'Rey' entered), Title, Phone, and Email Address (with 'mrey@company.com' entered). A message above the form states: 'Your contact information is how we get in touch with you, and it also your emails, you should edit your sending options.'

Campaign Information: Your campaign information is the email address and name from which you deliver your campaigns. The email address should be a working and monitored address to which people can reply. You may occasionally receive unsubscribe requests in reply to your campaigns. You should act on these requests in a timely and efficient manner. You may wish to set up a separate email account to handle your email marketing campaigns so that automatic replies (such as out-of-office notifications) do not fill your personal inbox every time you send a campaign. The name you send emails from should be recognizable to your recipients. Use either your company name or the name of a prominent individual within your organization.

Time Zone: It is important that you set your time zone correctly according to your geographic location. If you do not do this, your scheduled campaigns will send at the wrong time and miss their optimum delivery slots.

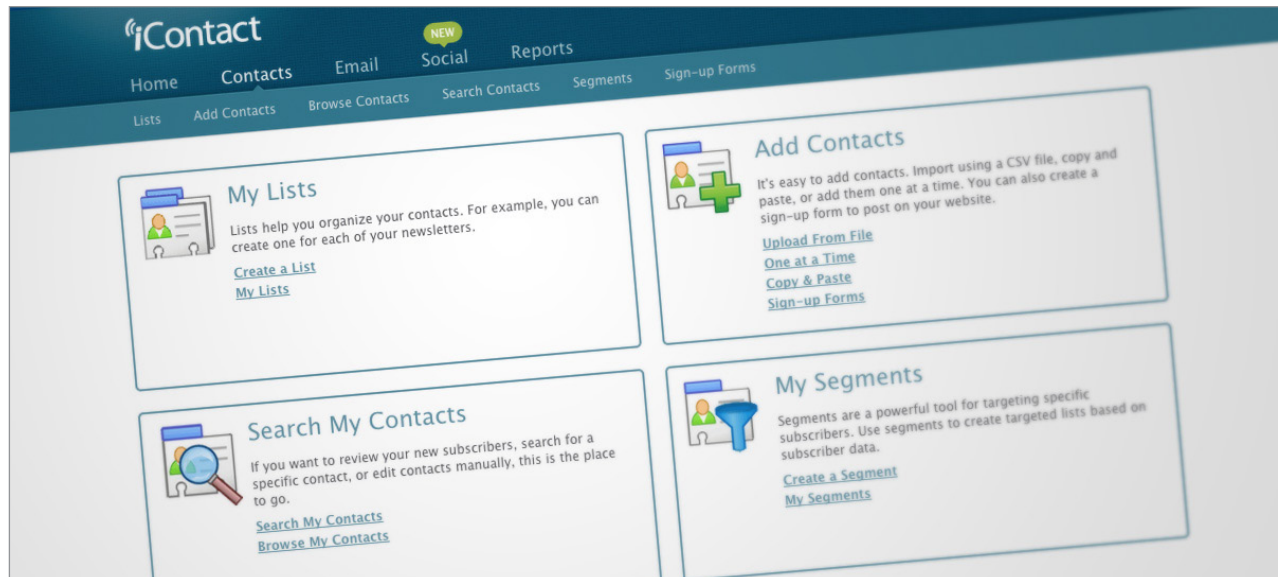


Step 4

Import, Build, and Manage Your Contact Lists

The process of importing your lists into your email marketing system is straightforward. It is important to make sure your naming convention (i.e., the name you give each list) is clear and concise, so you can easily organize and manage your lists alongside your campaigns.

iContact gives you the option to build your lists via sign-up forms placed on your website, by directly importing details via spreadsheets, or by manually entering details either individually or by cutting and pasting in bulk. It is also possible to collect contact details via your smartphone with iContact's iPhone and Android™ apps.



iContact will automatically handle unsubscribes and bounced messages (i.e., messages that do not reach the inbox).

Because the success of email marketing is largely due to the permission given by the subscriber to receive your email messages, you should never buy or use similarly acquired lists. If they have not given you permission to contact them, recipients may ignore your emails or even label them as spam, thereby damaging your reputation and potentially putting your ability to send at risk.

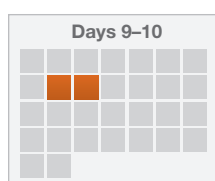
Whether you are starting from scratch or hoping to grow your existing subscriber list, the following strategies will help you maximize your efforts:

Use Subscription Forms: Place a subscription form on every page of your website. Encourage subscriptions by offering incentives to sign up, such as discounts, prize draws, email-only early-bird offers, or breaking news. Try not to hide your form away on a single page, as this will make it hard to attract traffic and may deter rapid list growth. iContact provides an easy-to-use form-building tool, which can be found by clicking on the Contacts tab in your iContact account.

Train Your Staff: Encourage your staff to collect email subscriptions at the point-of-sale, networking events, and trade shows. This could be as simple as placing a goldfish bowl on your sales counter for business cards or installing a mobile app on your smartphone to collect names when on the move.

Promote via Social Networks: Sell the benefits of email marketing subscription via your social networks by highlighting email-only offers and content. Do not forget to include an email subscription form on your Facebook page. Remember that social networks provide a great environment to engage “socially” with your clients and prospects, but they do not provide a great sales environment. Selling is much better suited to the more formal environment of email.

Never Buy a List of Email Addresses: Purchasing a list will only increase your spam complaints, damage your reputation, and potentially lead to the suspension of your account.



Step 5

Design Your Email Template

When designing your email template, you'll want to produce something that reflects your brand image and that you can easily edit, so you can quickly and efficiently create multiple campaigns. Your template should also work for recipients who do not download your graphics, and it should encourage a quick and efficient transition from the email environment to your website. iContact provides a wide selection of simple, themed email marketing templates that you can easily customize to match your requirements. Alternatively, you can design your own templates using your own website design software or iContact's MessageCoder™ tool. Stick to the following rules, and you won't go wrong:

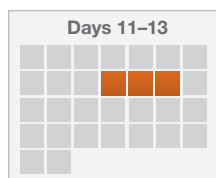


Keep It Simple: Do not try to re-create your entire website in the email environment. You should stick to basic themes, colors, and navigation elements in your email campaigns to create a consistent flow of information throughout your subscribers' journey.

Forget Fancy Coding: Use only clean HTML, and lay your emails out using tables. Avoid using CSS and JavaScript elements as these may potentially trigger spam filters and cause your emails to break in certain email clients.

Use Real Text: Make good use of real text in your emails. Try not to place large graphic elements at the top of your template, as these will not be visible until your subscriber selects to download the images. Use real text to encourage this engagement.

Get Social: Include social media elements, such as social sharing buttons and links to your social media networks. This will encourage your subscribers to engage with you socially and to share your email marketing messages via their social networks. iContact provides easy tools to not only enable your subscribers to share your email marketing content but also help you publish your emails and stand-alone posts to Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.



Step 6

Create the Perfect Email and Landing Page Experience

Now it's time to write your first email. This is often where many marketers become stuck. Before writing a word, take a look back at Step 1 of this guide and reexamine your goals.

There are several elements you will need to focus on when producing great copy for your email campaigns. Over time, you will want to test these elements and perfect your approach.

Subject Line: This is perhaps the most important element of your campaign and could mean the difference between a subscriber opening, ignoring, or deleting your email. Your subject line should SCREAM benefits. Think of your subject line in the same way a newspaper editor does a headline—it should tell the whole story and entice your subscriber to read more.

Body Text: Your body text should reemphasize the benefits of your subject line and add additional detail. Keep your body text short and to the point. A single paragraph with bullet points to highlight important facts will be much more effective than a long-winded article.

Call to Action: Your call to action should be clear and immediate. You should encourage your subscriber to click through to your website as quickly as possible. Phrases like “Learn More” and “Register Today” will prompt your subscribers to act quickly.

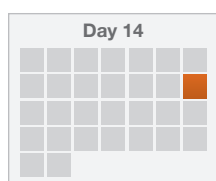
Plain Text: iContact allows you to send the same email as an HTML and plain-text message. The system sends a plain-text email when a subscriber's email client (for example, certain mobile devices or web-based email clients) does not accept HTML. iContact's software will simply copy text from your HTML version into the text-only window. You should take time to review this text and make changes as appropriate.

Spam Triggers: iContact monitors all emails for words and phrases that can trigger spam filters and prevent

your email campaigns from reaching your subscribers' inboxes. Excessive use of ALL CAPS, exclamation points (!!), dollar signs (\$\$), and words and phrases such as "FREE!" and "BUY NOW!" may trigger certain spam filters. In such cases, iContact will warn you and recommend that you make changes before sending.

Proofreading: Always have someone look over your copy before you send your email. You can send test emails to colleagues via the iContact system. You can also use iContact to test your email in various email clients such as Outlook, Gmail, and mobile devices.

Landing Page Experience: When creating the perfect email, you should also consider how well your landing pages (i.e., the pages on your website where people arrive after clicking links in your email) perform. A poor website experience will adversely affect the success of your email campaigns.



Step 7

Schedule and Send

It's now time to match your email campaign to a relevant list in your contacts folder, schedule a delivery time, and send. If this makes you feel a little nervous, don't worry: even experienced email marketers get a little nervous before hitting the send button.

Scheduling: It is important that you hit your subscribers at a time that suits them. For example, marketers targeting a business will have more success if they deliver their emails during working hours. Those hoping to target a list of young mothers with a consumer offer, however, might find more success sending their emails in the evening or on weekends. Your email is much more likely to be acted on if delivered at an appropriate time.

Date

June182012

Time

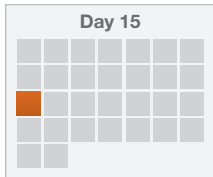
1027AM

Schedule Delivery

Segmentation: Your email marketing campaigns will always be more successful if you segment your lists and target individual groups of subscribers with relevant emails based on previous purchases or interactions. If you have a large list of diverse customers, do not blast them all with the same email marketing messages. You should take your time to build separate campaigns for separate lists.

Managed Distribution: If you have a sizable list and are concerned that it could potentially overwhelm your website or staffing resources, split your campaign into manageable chunks and send the campaign out over a period of time to suit your resources.

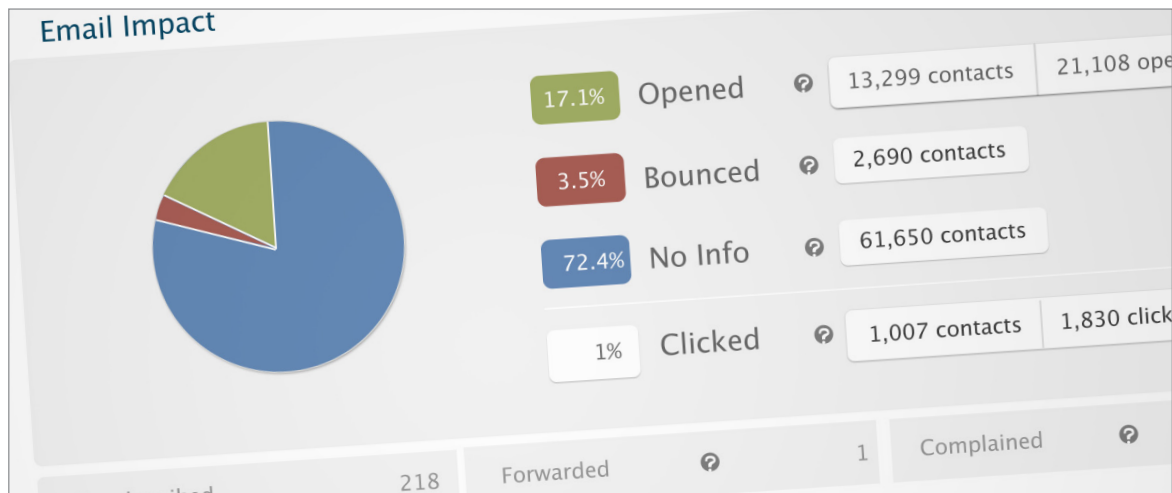
List Size: If your list is very small, do not let this put you off from sending. Instead, focus on growing your list (see Step 4), and use your initial campaigns to perfect your craft for a smaller audience.



Step 8

Pull Reports

Measuring and understanding your results is vital to the constant improvement and effectiveness of your email marketing efforts. iContact's software will provide you with comprehensive and easy-to-use reporting tools that will help you monitor the success of your campaigns.



Initially, you will want to focus on the following metrics:

Open rate: The percentage of subscribers who opened your email

Clickthrough rate: The percentage of subscribers who clicked on one or more links in your email

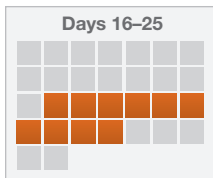
Conversion rate: How well your email performed in terms of the number of conversions (e.g., sales, requests for information, downloads)

Bounce rate: The number of emails that didn't reach your subscribers' inboxes

Unsubscribe rate: The number of people who unsubscribed and therefore left your list

Complaint (spam) rate: The number of people who marked your email as spam (too many of these, and your reputation and ability to send could suffer)

These metrics will provide your baseline key performance indicators (KPIs). Once these are in place, you can monitor your email metrics and start to analyze what works, what doesn't, and how to improve future campaigns.



Step 9

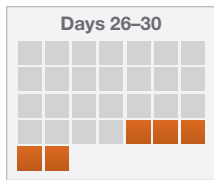
Build Autoresponders

Autoresponders enable you to deliver a sequence of automated emails over a set period time (often following an event).

Message Name	Interval		Edit Copy Remove
Tools for Your Success Subject: Tools for Your Success Editor: MessageCoder	1	October 23	Edit Copy Remove
FAQ: Creating and Sending Email Subject: FAQ: Creating and Sending Email Editor: MessageCoder	2	October 23	Edit Copy Remove
Tips For Building Your Contact List Subject: Tips For Building Your Contact List Editor: MessageCoder	3	October 23	Edit Copy Remove
We Would Love To Know What You Think! Subject: We Would Love To Know What You Think! Editor: MessageCoder	5	October 23	Edit Copy Remove

For example, you might want to schedule a series of emails following a subscription to your list. In its most basic form, this could be a simple welcome email following a subscription. A more complex example would be the delivery of a series of educational emails offering bite-size chunks of information as part of an online course.

The beauty of autoresponders is that you don't need to be sitting in front of a computer to deliver timely email campaigns. Autoresponders maximize the benefit of individual messages by delivering them as new subscribers join your list. This allows you to build up a bank of usable campaigns and ensures your email marketing is driving results even when you are focused on other areas of your business.

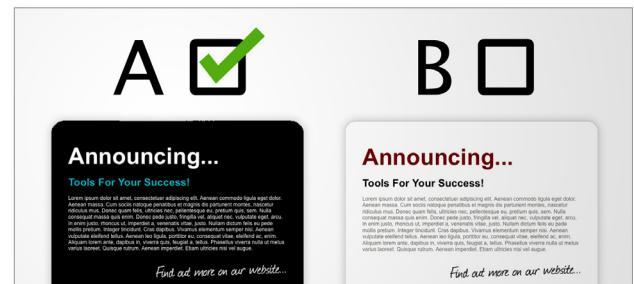


Step 10

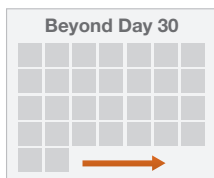
Test and Improve

Once you have sent a few emails and started to understand your KPIs, you can begin improving your email marketing performance through testing.

A/B split testing is a simple way to help you improve a campaign's success. Select just one area of your email to test—such as your subject line, template, body text, or call to action—and create two separate versions. Send one version to 10% of your list, and send the other to another 10%. Then analyze the results. Hit the remaining 80% with the more successful email.



This should go some way toward helping you build better email marketing strategies based on performance. Remember that there is no such thing as a bad idea when testing, but your reporting tools will quickly let you know which ideas are better than others.



Rinse and Repeat

The most important strategy in email marketing is to never become complacent. You might believe your campaigns are performing at their best, but there is always room for improvement.

At least once a year, you should revisit Step 1 of this guide and reexamine your goals and strategies. Are they still relevant to your business? How could you improve them? What steps should you take to ensure you stay ahead of the game?



In addition to revisiting your plan, you should also consider cutting the deadwood from your lists. Email marketing

might be a very cost-effective method of driving business, but there is little value in paying to send emails to people who never open them or who no longer access the email addresses to which you send.

Before you remove any email addresses from your list, try to reengage your subscribers. Send them an email asking if they would still like to receive your messages. Highlight the benefits of subscription and encourage them to engage with you. If they still don't respond, delete their email addresses from your list.

Online marketing is constantly evolving, and although email marketing has been a consistently successful element of the online marketing mix, it is also changing. Integrations with social media and analytics solutions are making it an even sharper tool in your marketing arsenal. Follow the steps in this guide, and you'll be on the path to building a successful, stable email marketing program for your business.

Related Resources

This guide is just one of the many resources iContact offers to help you get the most out of your email marketing efforts. To learn more, check out these resources:

- **Getting Started Webinar**

Take a short tour of the iContact application, and learn how to customize your account with your information and preferences.

Available at www.iContact.com/webinars

- **Email Marketing Metrics Explained**

Learn how to calculate key email marketing metrics and set goals for your email marketing program.

Available at www.iContact.com/whitepapers

About iContact

Since 2003, iContact has helped small and medium businesses share their stories, ideas, and products through email and social marketing. We take what we know about our favorite small and medium businesses—a trendy boutique hotel in South Beach, the online poster store that helps us decorate our cubicles, even the local coffee shop you’ll find us in on Saturday—and we build the online marketing features we know those businesses need to succeed. We then pair our tools with award-winning support and expertise, so our customers never have to go it alone. And we top it all off with great personality, energy, and a commitment to creating a positive wake in our community. For more information, visit us online at www.iContact.com, on [Twitter @iContact](#), at our [LinkedIn Group](#), and at our [Facebook page](#).

Connect with us:

