Hilltop-Mail

Powerful eMarketing Solutions
Just Add Content

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The Hilltop-Mail Guide to eMarketing

Increasing Your Sales Through Successful eMarketing

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Successful email marketing is more than setting up a distribution list in Outlook and sending a broadcast email to all your contacts asking them to buy something from you. Successful email marketing is a strategic process that can and will:

- Increase your sales
- Reduce your marketing costs
- Build customer loyalty
- Shorten your sales cycle
- Generate more referrals
- Save time by automating your marketing

Email marketing is the most immediate, flexible and cost effective marketing tool available in business today. That's why so many businesses are doing it. But very few of those businesses are doing it as well as they possibly could.

This document is an abridged version of the Hilltop-Mail Guide to eMarketing.

It has been developed by Hilltop-Mail to allow you to take full advantage of the power of Hilltop-Mail, a leading email marketing, database management system. There is not one "right way" to do email marketing. But there are better ways.

There are three steps to developing your email marketing program:

1   Create your customer database

2   Send your email campaigns

3   Measure your results

This brief guide will provide you with the essential information you need to get started with your eMarketing strategy.

Once you have set the ball in motion, you may wish to refer to the more detailed guide for more ideas, suggestions and tips.

The right strategy for your business will depend on your marketing objectives, your target markets and the nature of your business.

If at any time you need help working out what's best for your business, please don't hesitate to contact us.

The Hilltop-Mail team.
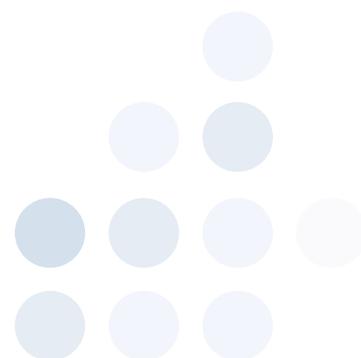
1 Creating Your Customer Database

The information you collect about your customers is what allows you to tailor your promotions and customise your offers so that you get the best possible return from your eMarketing effort.

What customer information you need depends on how you can use that information to tailor campaigns, to better target different groups of customers, and therefore get the best possible response from your eMarketing.

Some of the information that may be useful to you includes:

- Contact information (especially email)
- Client status (how this customer compares with your other customers)
- Lead source (where your customer first heard about you)
- Demographic information (age, sex etc)
- Personal information (children's names, hobbies etc)
- Personal & relationship information (notes on personal contact with the customer)
- Purchase history (what they have bought and when)
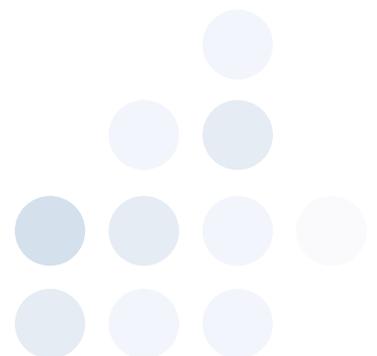
Why would you bother to collect such detailed information about your clients? Mostly so that you can sort your database into different groups to tailor campaigns to their specific needs.

Web Form   Email Database   Targeted Email Sent

Here are some examples for you to consider:

Contact Information

- Sort by post code to send offers in batches to different areas
- Multiple contact methods to increase the effectiveness of your campaigns (eg., phone, mail, and email)

Client Status

- Campaign targeting your least profitable customers to generate more sales from them
- Special "rewards" for your most profitable customers

Lead Source

- Identifying best ongoing promotional strategies
- Rewarding referrals

Demographic Information

- Campaigns targeting a male or female audience
- Family offers
- Targeting campaigns to different age groups

Personal & Relationship Information

- Notes to help you identify which campaign will be most relevant to each customer
- Notes to help you avoid unnecessarily overloading a customer with unnecessary information
- Contact history to track long term sales processes & relationship building

Purchase History

- Targeting users of a particular product from your range
- Targeting customers who have not bought a product from your range
- Scheduling re-order reminders

At this stage, the important thing to remember is some information is better than none. It is better to get started with basic contact details (name and email will do), and build from there.

Email surveys are a great way to start building customer profiles if all you start with is a name and email address.

Information equals flexibility. The more information you can collect about your customers, the more flexible, and more effective your eMarketing will be.

Your next step in developing your email marketing plan is to implement systems to ensure that your database of contacts is constantly growing in a way that complies with current privacy and anti-spam legislation.

Under the Australian Spam Act 2003, to send a commercial electronic message you must have direct or inferred consent from the recipient. There are other measures you must also take, and these are covered in later sections of this guide.

The good news is that compliance with the Spam Act is also a good marketing practice. Getting consent is relatively simple and it gives you a better chance of your email message actually being read, which is, after all, the whole point.

For more information about the Spam Act visit www.spam.aca.gov.au

The sooner you will start building your list, the sooner you will see results from your eMarketing campaigns.

Following is a brief outline of some of the ways you can grow your database:

A rule of thumb for consent is if someone is expecting your message (eg. subscription based) or would expect to receive a message from you (eg. relationship based), then you're on the right track.

1.1. Collecting Email Addresses via Your Website

Your website can be a lucrative source of email addresses from potential customers. You can do this in a number of ways, including email subscription forms, enquiries forms, order forms and feedback forms.

1.2 Collecting Email Addresses from Customers

New and existing customers are the easiest source of email addresses for your database. You should never let a customer leave your place of business without at least asking for their email address. Depending on the nature of your business, this can either be done at the point of sale, or through in store promotions.

Please note that sharing promotional lists is not a great idea, and, in some instances, may breach the Federal Privacy Act. If you're considering sponsoring a promotion where part of the sponsorship package is access to the list, be aware that the recipients may not respond well to being contacted if they're not expecting your message. This is typical where your business is not the primary organiser of the promotion.

1.3 Collecting Email Addresses from Potential New Customers

If you want to build a list of potential customers, you generally have to be a little bit more strategic, and be prepared to invest a little money to "buy" your list. As a rule, people will only be willing to give you access to their inbox if there is something in it for them.

Many options for collecting new contacts exist, from running small in store promotions to large scale advertising where entrants go onto your potential customers list.

As an example, a resort might run a promotional campaign in a newspaper, offering the chance to go into the draw for 3 nights accommodation simply by going to their website and signing up for their Accommodation Specials Newsletter.

1.4 Collecting Email Addresses - the Direct Approach

For some businesses, the best way to build your list is to go out and ask for email addresses one at a time.

No matter how you intend to collect customer details, it is important to have a privacy statement available at the point of collection explaining why you're collecting their information and how you intend to use it. For more information on privacy visit http://www.privacy.gov.au/act/index.html

This is particularly true for business-to-business (B2B) markets. Your emphasis here is on getting permission to send information through via email.

This can be done over the phone (either by yourself, sales staff, a professional telemarketer, or in person).

Next Steps

Getting started is the most important thing, and the best place to get started is setting up your databases:

1   Create a customer database in your Hilltop-Mail account

2   Upload all your current customer contact information

3   Start collecting contact details from all new customers

Once you have the ball rolling, the next step is to design and send your email promotions.
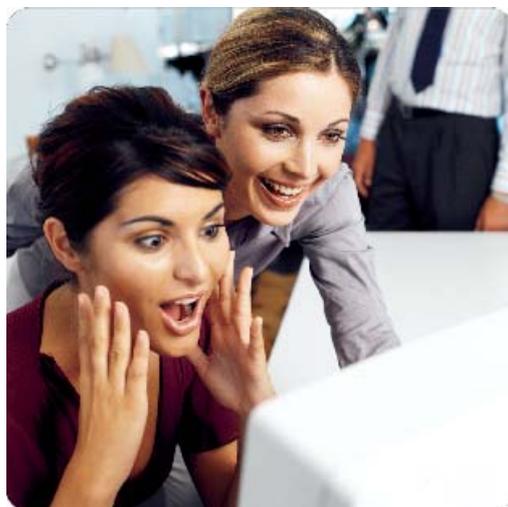
You can sign up for a free 30 day trial by visiting www.hilltop-mail.com

2 Creating Your Email Promotions

You are using email as a marketing medium because you want to increase your sales using a low cost, instant communication tool. Unfortunately, so too do a lot of other businesses. Your next challenge is getting through the clutter so that your emails are read by your intended audience.

The single best way to be read is for your customers to want and expect to receive your communications. Different customers will find varying levels of value in your communications and it's up to you to determine what that value is. The following sections will help you identify the best content strategy for delivering the most value to your customers.

Some of the most successful email content includes:

- Information relevant to their needs
- Special offers and discounts
- Information about product developments and new services
- Industry news
- Information specific to your area of expertise
- Case studies and examples of work you've done with other clients

Email marketing will work best for your business if you can offer something to your customers which has value to them, but does not hurt your profitability. Some examples include:

- Relevant information
- % Discount
- Free gift
- Free trial period
- Buy 2 get 1 free (or other variation)
- Increased/bonus rewards points
- Flexible payment terms (eg 90 days no repayments interest free)
- Free/discount refills
- Free/discount upgrade
- Free/discount audit or needs analysis
- Free reports or advice

Email can be used as an advertising medium, a direct marketing medium, a direct sales and loyalty tool or a combination of these. In all instances it works best when there is a direct response required or call to action. This way you can measure ROI, track responses and update customer profiles to deliver more specific and relevant information in your next campaign.

Following is a brief outline of some different types of email marketing campaigns you may wish to use.

2.1 Limited Offers
The immediacy of email allows you to get quick responses to your offers. By limiting the offer, you can enhance the speed of the response you get (and reduce the cost to your bottom line):

- Only 5 available
- This week only
- Today only
- Reply in the next 30 minutes (many on your list will get the email within minutes of you sending it)

You can also use limiting criteria to help fill off-peak times in your business:

- Valid only after 2pm
- Valid only before 11am
- Valid Monday nights only
- Offer available on weekdays/weekends only

2.2 Last Minute Offers
Email is a fantastic tool for disposing of distressed inventory - stock that must sell quickly before it can't ever be sold. You can send an email campaign to a small sub-set of your database with a special last minute offer to clear this distressed inventory. If you change the group you send this to each time, you will avoid "training" your customers to expect these offers, and to act quickly when they do come through.

Service businesses are especially well suited to this particular email strategy. Because email is instant, you can use it to fill the last remaining spots in your diary - spots that would otherwise produce no income at all.

Need bums on seats? You may own a restaurant / café or be running an event and the bookings are down. Shoot out a 2 for 1 offer or other promotion requiring an immediate response and watch those seats fill!

2.3 Email Newsletters

Email newsletters are the ideal tool for building and maintaining long-term relationships with your clients. Whereas special offers and promotions are usually designed to drive sales quickly, email newsletters are generally used to build customer loyalty and drive sales over time.

The objective of an email newsletter is to deliver worthwhile content into your customers' inboxes.

Some examples of worthwhile content include:

- Case studies
- Hints & tips
- Advice columns
- Frequently asked questions
- Technical issues explained in simple terms
- Expert analysis of current issues relevant to your customers

2.4 Product Updates & Information

Email is a great way to launch new products and services to a receptive audience, or to inform existing users of new features and upgrades:

- Product updates and upgrades
- New models
- New features
- New services

It's important to the success of your campaign that you stay focussed on providing value to the customer, and wherever possible, give them a reason to respond:

- Free test drives
- Introductory offers
- Promotional give-aways and/or discounts

2.5 Staff Newsletters

Remember to communicate with your staff. An email newsletter sent throughout your business, regardless of how big it is, provides you with an ideal way of making sure that everyone is kept up to date on important issues such as:

- Upcoming promotions (email and offline)
- Important notices and announcements
- Policies and procedures
- Achievements and results
- Staff events and activities

There's an added advantage to using Hilltop-Mail for staff newsletters - the Email Statistics function (see Section 4) allows you to check who is reading your correspondence, and who is ignoring you.

Automatically add customers to your events database as they register. Now you can send out a reminder or inform of last minute changes to the event in a matter of minutes. Quick, low cost customer service.

2.6 Invitations

Holding an event? Invite your customers to attend via email, and have them register via an online form.

Hilltop-Mail can be an excellent way of keeping costs down and attendance up when organising events such as:

- Product launches
- Information sessions
- Seminars and workshops
- Social events
- Charity & fund-raising events
- Special trading times
- Open houses
- Test drives

Invitations to events help create the feeling that you are a valued customer. The biggest cost with running an event is printing and mailing the invitations. Via email, that cost becomes far less of an obstacle.

2.7 After Sales Emails

You can automate some (or possibly all) of your after sales service using Hilltop-Mail. Your customers would like to know that they are not forgotten once the cheque has cleared, and a simple email can make a big difference. Some examples of after sales emails include:

- "Thank you for your business" emails
- Care and maintenance tips
- Help and frequently asked questions
- Post purchase satisfaction surveys

These emails can be set up as standard templates in your Hilltop-Mail account, and sent in batches to the relevant contacts each week.

2.8 Personal Greetings

There is a reason why you've been collecting birthday details for your customers, so you can send them a birthday e-card. Hilltop-Mail can be used to set up various standard (personalised) emails, which you can send to small segments of your database at appropriate times:

- Birthday e-cards
- Reminder emails ("Just a reminder that you are due to re-order soon")
- "We haven't seen you for a while" messages

By defining your form fields appropriately you can search for the right targets for these personal messages.

Oh, and don't forget that Christmas is coming.

Next Steps

You will learn more about what works for your business by conducting a few test campaigns:

- Outline 2 or 3 possible campaigns you can test
- Create the emails in your Hilltop-Mail account
- Send the test campaigns to a sub-set of your database
- Call selected customers for feedback

Once you have done this, the next step is to measure the results.

For more information on how to create, edit and send your emails please refer to the online User Guide, Wizard tutorials or contact Hilltop-Mail.

3 Tips for Creating Quality Email Campaigns

Cutting through the clutter of email is a challenging task, and one that can only be achieved by sending high quality, relevant, and valuable emails to your distribution list. In short, you have to make your contacts want to respond to your current email, and want to receive your next one.

Here are some steps to ensure your emails are as effective as possible:

3.1 Make it Look Good

Step 1

The design of your email template has a significant impact on the way in which your campaign is perceived, and the rate at which your audience will click through to your website. Some key factors to consider in your template design:

- Use high quality images and graphics
- Create a strong brand image with your email templates and stick to it
- Don't overload it with too much content or too many graphics
- Remember that only a small part of the email is viewable in the Preview Pane of many people's email browser - use this space for branding and to get your main message across (see headlines below)
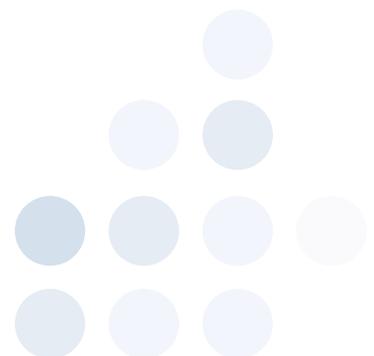
While Hilltop-Mail is designed to make and create your email template quick and easy to do yourself, you should consider having a professional designer create your initial design for you. Quality graphic design is a specialised skill, and the perception created by professionally designed templates is worth the small investment.

3.2 Make it Useful and Usable

Step 2
Stay focussed on your customers when creating your campaigns because email is easy and cheap to use. Many businesses fall into the trap of sending any old junk and expecting it to work. Remember, while email is very convenient, it is also very heavily used, and very easy to dispose of.

Some things to consider:

- Provide content that is relevant and valuable to your customers
- Use short paragraphs and lots of sub-headings
- Include links to all relevant sections of your website for more information
- Be specific, offer real solutions not generalisations
- Proof Read: there is no quicker way to damage your credibility than with typos and misinformations
- Test that all web links work and go to the correct page (broken links are embarrassing and highly unprofessional)

Hilltop-Mail allows you to add any content you want and in any way you want. This makes it even more important that you think about your customers and what they want when you are planning your campaigns.

3.3 Make it Relevant

Step 3

The most important part of getting email marketing right is to get the right information to the right people.

Ask yourself this question each time you plan a new campaign: "Would I be happy to receive this email".

Making your campaigns relevant is important for two reasons:

1   It will increase your response rate

2   It will increase the life-span of your email list by reducing your unsubscribers

Some things to consider when planning your campaigns:

- What's in it for the customer (benefit, offer, information)
- Is this useful for every customer, or specific customers?
- What's new?
- Has this approach worked in the past?
- How can I gather feedback about this campaign?

3.4 Make it Personal

Step 4

Bulk email can look like junk mail, or it can look like a personal message from you to your customer. It depends on how you use it.

Here's how you can personalise your email campaigns:

- Greet them by name: "Hello John,"
- Tailor offers to the needs of different customer groups
- Ask for feedback

Personalising your emails is simple with Hilltop-Mail. It may seem like a small thing, but greeting your customers by name, and sending them information that shows you understand their needs will make a big difference to the ongoing success of your campaigns.

3.5 Make it Sell

Step 5
Well that is the whole point isn't it? Even your relationship building emails should have an element of sell to them. This doesn't mean you should bombard your loyal customers with gimmicks and free steak knives. It means you should never be afraid to ask them to do business with you again, and you should do so confidently.

Here are some ways you can increase the "sell" in your emails:

From Line
The first thing most people look at when checking their email is the "From" column. If they don't know you, there's a good chance the next button they click will be the delete button. There are three options that work:

1   The name of a person they know and trust (Account manager, sales rep etc)

2   A group they belong to ("XYZ Rewards Club", "ABC Frequent Flyers" etc)

3   A company they trust ("DEF Accountants", "ROI Investments" etc)

Once you have chosen which approach you will take, you should stick to it so your recipients can recognise your emails, and so you have a better chance of avoiding Spam filters.

Subject Line
If they recognise the name in the "From" column, the next thing they look at is the subject. If the subject is of little or no interest, it will be ignored or deleted. If the subject seems interesting it has a better chance of being opened and read:

- Keep it short, only the first few words will be visible in many cases
- Focus on the benefit to the reader
- If it's a newsletter, focus on the benefits of reading the article ("Learn", "Discover" "Solve")
- If it's a promotional offer, focus on the benefits of buying ("Save", "Get", "Bonus", "Value")
- Keep the same subject line for each issue ("DEF News", "LKJ Monthly Update"), or keep the same title with details of the edition ("DEF News - June03", etc)
- Try using an open-ended question ("What are you doing for dinner tonight", "What's your favourite type of chocolate")
  note: no question marks
- Avoid using tricks or "bait & switch" techniques (it may work this time, but will reduce your chances of being opened next time round)

Content

- Use a headline that tells them what they can get by reading on
- Write the text with your customer in mind
- Make them an offer
- Have a strong call to action
- Use landing pages with database forms to capture the details of hot leads
- Open and close the email with your contact information

Hilltop-Mail is a marketing tool, and the main purpose of marketing is to drive sales. Sending emails just because it is cheap and simple is a recipe for lost customers and lost sales. Sending the right emails, with the right content set up in the right way is a recipe for increased sales, and many more happy customers.

3.6 Test Before You Send

Step 6
Errors can be embarrassing at best, and damaging at worst. Always test every email before you send it.

Here's the best way to avoid embarrassing mistakes:

- Set up a new Database called "Test Group"
- Include yourself and key staff in that database
- Send every email to the test group first
- Check the email details
- Check the text for typo's and wording
- Check if all links work
- Check if all images look good
- Make changes as required
- Test again

When you are sure that the email is ready to send, the final screen in the send process gives you one last chance to make sure everything is right.

- Check that you have selected the right email
- Check that you have selected the right database or distribution list
- Check that you have selected the right time and date for your send

If you have done everything listed here, including all the sections above, you have given yourself the best possible chance of a successful campaign.
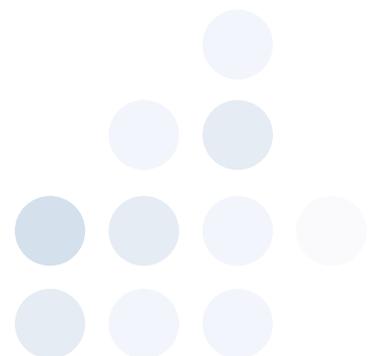
4 Company Information

Hilltop-Mail is associated with a global leader in email marketing and database management solutions. Its award winning product. Hilltop-Mail, offers a powerful on demand solution delivering automated marketing, marketing analytics, online surveys, email creation, sales lead generation and extensive list management all within an intuitive and spam compliant framework.

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