

Zen and the Art of Ezine Maintenance

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Do I do all the things that I have written in this report? No, not all!

Do I know to do all these things that I have written here? Absolutely!

As in Zen, the trick is to become one with the activity, to engage in it fully, to see and appreciate all details - be it hiking in the woods, penning an essay, or tightening the chain on a motorcycle.

However, you will not find *'all the details'* here. Just enough to get you on your way. Enjoy the journey!

Why Do You Want An Ezine?

I want you to ask yourself a question:

Why do you want an Ezine?

This may seem like a stupid question, but its one you need to think about. Knowing *why* you want an ezine before you get started will really help you remain constant throughout your publication.

Look at it this way: define what you want to do now, so that later you're not scrambling around trying to find your identity (or the identity of your ezine). You can certainly change your goals as you go, but you'll likely stick pretty close to your original goals.

1. Why do I want to start this ezine?

My main goals are to ...

2. Why do I want to put out an ezine to ... ?

3. If I want to make money with my ezine, why?

I want this to be able to ...

4. How can I make this money?

See what I'm getting at?

If you want to keep people informed about the latest music, be sure to write down why you want to do this.

Are you just a music lover, or do you have a band that you want to promote through your ezine.

Maybe you're a DJ and want to promote your services at the end of each issue.

Just be sure to write it all down.

And don't skip that step.

Without defining what you want to do, you will get off-track – and perhaps need to start all over again at some later stage.

Your Website

Obviously, your website will be an integral part of your ezine. So its important that you put your website together before you start your ezine. You also can't expect to get by with one of those free websites. Basically, you'll be limited in what you can do and your visitors won't think you take yourself seriously.

You will also need some sort of structure to your website. I have seen websites that are just a bunch of banners - no structure at all, and there is no way to tell what the site is all about.

If your visitors can't tell what you want them to do, they'll leave. They don't have the time to decipher what it is they should do. Your website should be easy to navigate and clearly show what you want them to do.

The way I see it, you basically have two ways you can go with the website for your ezine: a mini site or a content site. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages, but each gets the job done.

Mini Site

This is short and to the point. It is very effective because it leaves the visitor with one choice – subscribe or leave.

The Sole Purpose of the Mini Site is to Gather Email Addresses!

That's it.

You want the visitor to arrive at your site, quickly and easily see what your ezine has to offer, and then decide to subscribe or to leave. There won't be anything to distract your visitor.

I'm a firm believer in keeping things simple, and having a mini site is a perfect fit. If you keep it simple, your visitors will know exactly what they should do and they can make their decision. I think giving them too many options will just distract them and they won't know what to do.

Simple may not be what you're looking for, so lets take a look at your other choice.

Content Site

A content site is just that: a site with a lot of content. Usually, content sites are meant for much more than just their ezine, but still focus on collecting email addresses. These content sites may have hundreds or thousands of pages with articles, stories, references, or other information their visitors might find useful.

Some people like this type of site because people like content, but more importantly, search engines like content. If your site has a lot of content, search engines will list your site higher, and you'll get more traffic.

To help you in your decision, I've put together a little chart with the pros and cons of each type of website.

	Pros	Cons
Mini Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Easy to set up and maintain.○ Visitors aren't distracted by a lot of links and information.○ Visitors have two choices: subscribe or leave!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Search Engines might not spider your site as often.
Content Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Search Engines love content!○ Visitors will keep coming back to you if you keep your content fresh and updated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Takes time to set up and even more time to maintain.○ It will be very easy for your visitors to get distracted. They may like what you have to offer, but forget to subscribe after they look through your site.

Your Home Page

Regardless of the type of web site you decide upon, you need to keep some things in mind when designing your homepage.

If you have a mini site, it works best to tell them what they will be getting on the home page, and then provide a link to your subscribe page.

If you decide to go with a larger content site, you'd be better off putting a subscription form on each page. This way, when your visitors start surfing through your site, they'll always be reminded to subscribe to your ezine. If you just have your subscription form on one page, chances are pretty good that you'll lose some subscribers after they start surfing around and simply forget that they wanted to subscribe.

As far as the actual text on your homepage goes, I think its always best just to keep it simple. I've seen more than a few ezines that have those long 5-page sites just to get your email address. I don't know about you, but I don't even like reading those long sales letters if I'm going to buy something, let alone just subscribe to an ezine.

I just want to be told what I'm getting, how it will help me, and what I need to do. I don't need to hear some long story – I don't have time for that. Just keep it simple and your subscription rate will be much higher.

What Program is Right For You?

Some people don't think it's important but I think its important to keep up the appearance of professionalism.

I used to use the Vertical Response iBuilder program <http://tinyurl.com/bs28p> It is free and you only pay when you wish to send mailings. This is also very low cost.

Currently I use <http://www.forwardsteps.com.au/AweberAutoresponder.html> because I now put my ezine up on a website and simply send my list a link to that site e.g. <http://www.forwardsteps.com.au/TriggersJuly2007.html>

What Features Should You Look For?

There are a few features that I think are important to have, so be sure to check for these when picking out your ezine program:

Double Opt-In Confirmation

Double opt-in simply means the subscriber has subscribed to your mailing list and then they confirm that they want to be on your list by clicking on a link in an email sent to them after subscribing.

There is a bit of debate going on about double opt-in confirmation. Some people say you shouldn't use it because not everybody will confirm their subscription. Therefore, you cannot send your ezine or advertisements to those people.

The other side of the argument sees it like this: “If they can't take a few minutes to confirm their subscription, why would I want them to receive my ezine anyway?”

I fall under the second category. To me, if they can't take the time to click on one link, I really don't want them on my list. This may seem a bit harsh, but I am looking to help people who really want to succeed, not people who are looking for a free handout.

Often times someone will subscribe to an ezine just to get the free bonuses that are offered and then unsubscribe themselves. By adding a second step to the process, this separates the gold-diggers from the people who actually want to receive your information.

Using double opt-in will give you a smaller mailing list, but will give you a much more responsive list. Despite what people may say to you, size does not matter! I would rather have a list of 1,000 people that know me, respect me, trust me, and want to learn from me than 10,000 people who really are not interested in what I have to offer.

In reality, the number of people who do not confirm their subscription is very small. Typically, about 10% will not confirm their subscription.

You can change the confirmation message so you can tell each person exactly what they will be receiving if they confirm their subscription and the information they will be missing out on if they don't confirm their subscription.

You can send these people an email reminding them to confirm their subscription. Doing this will increase the confirmation percentage dramatically.

It works surprisingly well. Sometimes the original confirmation email will slip through and they won't see it. They might even be wondering why they haven't heard from you in a while.

Personalization

The ability to personalize your emails is a feature you should always look for when picking your ezine program. Personalizing your confirmation email will make your subscribers feel like they are getting more attention – they will not feel like they are getting “canned” messages.

Personalizing your emails will help build trust between you and your subscribers. You should get in the habit of doing this on a regular basis.

If you read it out loud and it doesn't sound natural, then it will probably sound cheesy to the reader.

Accept Subscribers via Email

I don't really use email subscriptions, although there are some list building tools where this is necessary. Most of your subscriptions should come from your subscription forms on your website but you should make sure you have this feature.

I do provide a link to an opt in form in my email signature. This is the link to which I used to direct subscribers <http://tinyurl.com/dw96e> and this is the email signature program that I love to use <http://tinyurl.com/awqfn>

However, currently my opt in pages look like <http://www.forwardsteps.com.au/DailyFS.htm> and <http://www.forwardsteps.com.au/FSBlogs.htm> Plus I use Incredimail as my email provider so that I can create my own signature pages that are a more true reflection of my business and personality.

Back Up Files

I really can't tell you how important this is, but just imagine this. You spend months building and grooming your list and just when you're at a point where you've gained the trust of your subscribers the unimaginable happens – a server crashes, or your autoresponder services goes under, or some freak accident wipes out your entire database.

I know, I know – you really don't want to think about this. But it happens.

You need to have the ability to quickly and easily back up your database in the event this happens. I recommend doing this at least once per week but I know some people who back up their database at the end of each day.

Import/Export Your List

With my recommended program I can choose to import/export lists in Tab Delimited File or Comma Delimited File (csv) formats.

The Future of AutoResponders and Email Marketing?

There have been a few systems that have come out recently called 'Direct-to-Desktop' marketing systems. These systems work around email and deliver the messages directly to the desktop of your subscribers.

Most of these systems have a mail reader that your subscribers download and install it on their computers. When you send them a message, an icon blinks in their system tray in the lower right hand corner. This lets them read their messages whenever they want.

You don't have to worry about any SPAM filters, as everything completely by passes your subscribers email. This ensures delivery of your mail nearly 100% of the time.

So is this the future of email? I really don't know. It's too early to tell. While the creators of such programs are shouting that email is dead (it would seem obvious that they would say that, as making people believe email is dead will only increase their sales), there are still plenty of people who support email and will debate with anyone on the uses of email.

Personally, I think that email is alive and well if you know how to use it. If you publish quality information and earn the trust of your subscribers, they will make sure they receive your emails and will open them.

How Do SPAM Laws Affect Publishers?

At the beginning of 2004, the United States passed the CAN-SPAM Act - new laws to fight those annoying Spammers. Unfortunately, those laws affect us honest ezine publishers, too. The new laws can be a bit confusing, so I have broken them down into terms that are more understandable.

You must comply with these new laws. If you are found to be in violation, you can face prison time, and/or a fine. Don't let this deter you from starting an honest ezine. You can still run a successful ezine, but you do need to take some time to make sure everything is in compliance. Right now is the perfect time.

Important: What I am about to tell you is a summary. While I feel this is enough to satisfy the new laws, you are encouraged to seek further advice or legal counsel. I am not a lawyer, and will not be held responsible for any legal problems you may encounter.

Don't Falsify Information

This one should be a given, but there are still people out there who try to become successful by lying. I guess that's why we have these new laws.

For starters, you cannot falsify the header information to make it look like it came from somewhere, or someone, else. This is the part of the email that tells you who sent it and from where. You also must correctly identify the person who is sending the message in the 'From' line. You either need your name or company here. I have seen people use this section as a sort of second subject line, trying to hype-up their offer (it never works anyway). The name or company in that line must be the one who sent the message.

Subject Line

Basically, you cannot misrepresent the contents of your email through your subject line. Your subject line needs to be related to the subject of the email. I know some people like to use some intrigue in their subject line to get the email opened. You can still do this, but you need to be careful. A general rule of thumb should be if a reasonable person is confused by the subject line; thinking it is about one thing when it is really about another, you should find yourself a different subject line. Use common sense. Take a look at your subject line, and imagine what you would think if you received it. If you have any doubts, I would recommend changing your subject line.

Opt-Out Feature

You are now required to include a way for each recipient to stop all future mailings. This should be through either an email address, or an unsubscribe link.

This link or email address must remain functional for at least 30 days after your last mailing. If there is a technical problem, such as website down time, that is preventing this opt-out function from working, you won't get in trouble. Just make sure you take the necessary steps correct the problem.

Commercial Messages

Under the new laws, you must let the subscriber know before they subscribe if they will be receiving commercial advertisements. You should also tell them how frequently they can expect to receive them.

You must place this information close to your subscription form, not a separate policy page. You must also provide a way the recipient can opt-out of future emails.

Other Miscellaneous Info

One part of this law that I found to be interesting is you now have to include your physical postal mailing address in each email you send out. I guess this is to give the recipient another way to contact you. If you work out of your home, and do not want to give out your home address, you need to get a P.O. Box at your local Post Office.

It is also illegal to harvest email addresses from websites using automated programs. You should be staying away from it anyway, but now it is illegal to do.

What I have done to Comply

I use a program like the one I recommended at <http://tinyurl.com/bs28p> or <http://www.forwardsteps.com.au/AweberAutoresponder.html> Everything is taken care of by them.

I mentioned using double opt-in confirmation earlier. I think the next step in the SPAM laws will be making it a requirement to use double opt-in, so I highly recommend you get started using it now.

Further Reading

I greatly encourage you to look into these new laws more. I have told you what I understand the laws to be, but it is best to read for yourself. Here is one place to get started: http://www.wilsonweb.com/wmt9/canspam_comply.htm

What's on the Horizon?

There are a few things in the works to (hopefully) eliminate spam, and among them are Sender ID and something called Sender Policy Framework (SPF). I'm definitely not an expert on these areas (besides, these things change all the time, and they might not even be implemented).

I recommend reading an article by John Glube called *Who Pays And How To Survive The Email Transition* at <http://www.learnsteps4profit.com/emwp.html> or *The FTC Calls For Sender Authentication* at <http://www.learnsteps4profit.com/dne.html>.

There are a few things with Sender ID that I'm not clear on, so don't want to try explaining it and give you bad information. Instead, I'm going to refer you back to Mr. Glube again, as he stays on top of these developments. Here's a few of his articles:

For The Record Will Microsoft Own Email: <http://www.learnsteps4profit.com/wme.html>
Who Pays And How To Survive The Email Transition:
<http://www.learnsteps4profit.com/emwp.html>

Before We Begin

Before you actually start building your list, you need to have a solid system in place that will allow you to communicate with your list and allow them to get to know you and trust you. You obviously can't do this on an individual basis, because it would be nearly impossible as your list gets bigger.

Quality is more important than quantity, despite what other people say.

Yeah, I've been told to keep building my list – the bigger the list, the more sales you'll make. Makes sense, I guess. But you can get better results with a smaller list and a little bit of grooming.

That's what this chapter is all about. Spending time getting to know your subscribers instead of spending that time worrying about getting more and more subscribers. You'll have much better results this way.

Let Your Subscribers Know You

One of the biggest aspects of online business is trust, and how you are perceived. If you make a bad first impression, or come off as someone just in it for the money – people are smarter than that. They'll see it coming a mile away, especially with all of the scams and people getting ripped off today.

That's right, you have to let them get to know you – your subscribers are not going to do that part on their own. They won't go out of their way to do it.

This is very easy to do once your system is in place.

Instead of sales pitches, you'll be sending your new subscribers a series of ezines that include some talk about yourself – your likes & dislikes, your favorite hobby, what you do for a living, any websites you have, etc. You can even talk about your family and friends if you want.

You need to invite them to contact you. Your subscribers won't do this on their own either. A lot of people may feel intimidated contacting someone they consider an expert in a particular area, so you need to let them know its OK.

This is a great indicator as to how responsive your list will be.

I'm always sure to send them an email back in response thanking them and usually we continue the conversation over a course of several emails. This builds a pretty good rapport that really pays off in the long run.

If you ask me, the reason for this is because my new subscribers just got comfortable with me quicker. I showed them that I care, and they showed me that they trust me.

The key here is to let your subscribers know that you are available and are there to talk about anything – even if its not even related to what your ezine is about. After that first contact is made, it'll be that much easier to build that all-important relationship and earn their trust.

Keys to a Responsive List

Some of these can seem pretty obvious, but they're worth mentioning again. All of these will be useful when you put your system in place.

All of these keys to a responsive list center around the Trust Factor. If you have the trust of your subscribers, you will have much more success when it comes time to advertise to your list. Without the trust of your subscribers, they will be leery when it comes to pulling out their credit card to buy from you.

Keep these keys in mind when putting your follow up series together, and every time you send out an email to your subscribers.

Give Them What They Want

When your subscribers sign up to your ezine, they are doing so for a reason – they want the information you are telling them they will receive. Keep giving them that, and they'll be happy as can be. Deviate from that, and you could find yourself losing subscribers quicker than you can get them.

For example, if you start out as an ezine about classic cars and you decide to switch to an ezine about marketing, you'll probably lose quite a bit of subscribers. There may be some people that are interested in both, but you'll have just thrown out all of your hard work.

Of course, you could always just start a second ezine about marketing and just tell your classic car fans about it.

Don't be afraid to ask them what they want they want to learn about. You could hold a contest to pick the topic of your next issue – with the winner getting a special bonus of some kind. Getting your subscribers involved like this will also keep them interested in your emails – and help get more emails opened.

Be Careful With Your Advertising

One thing you really need to watch, as a publisher, is how much you send advertisements to your subscribers, and what you endorse. Nothing ticks off a subscriber more than thinking a publisher is only in it for the money. This will happen if you advertise too much, or if you advertise the wrong things.

You have everything to lose, and nothing at all to gain by stuffing your ezine with ads. I have one ad for my other business and I feature a V.I.P. guest each edition in my ezine. Anything further is placement advertising, where I may recommend something in my regular writings. This seems to be sufficient.

The ads in your ezine aren't the only things you have to worry about. This also includes any ads you send out that are separate from your regularly scheduled ezine. Sending out an ad each day is not the way to go if you want the trust and respect of your subscribers. It is the way to go if you want everyone to unsubscribe from your list. If something important, or something time-sensitive, comes up I may make an exception.

Another thing you need to be careful with is which products you decide to back. If you decide to advertise every little thing that comes through your inbox, your subscribers will quickly start to think that you're just trying to make a quick buck, and will probably be pretty upset with you for filling their inbox with junk.

Be sure to be selective in what you promote to your subscribers. If you suggest a product that turns out to be a scam, your subscribers will likely blame you first for recommending it to them. You really can't afford to take a hit like this to your reputation.

Get Personal

It's important that your subscribers see you as a real person, not just a computer. Because they will likely never meet you in person, you need to give them a good sense of who you are.

One thing every successful publisher does is just talk about whatever is on their mind in each issue of their ezine. They may talk about their family, their favorite sports team, politics, the weather – anything that's going on. They usually ask the reader to write back a few comments about it, or the reader will just write back without being asked to. This creates a bond between the publisher and the reader that could result in future sales and future partnerships.

Another thing you can do, and I mentioned this earlier, is personalize your messages. When the reader sees his name in the email, it can make him feel like he is getting special attention.

For example, if I type in {FIRSTNAME} in my message, my ezine program will insert the name of each subscriber.

Over Deliver

Nothing makes people happier than getting more than they bargained for. When you buy something or sign up for something online, doesn't it make you happy when you get a bonus or gift you weren't expecting to get?

You need to do the same thing. After they sign up for your ezine, give them a gift that wasn't advertised – in addition to any gifts you promised they would get. I'm not talking about the same ebooks that everybody else is giving away. If you can get something that only a few other people are giving away, your new subscribers will be thrilled.

You will also want to send out periodical free gifts – just for the heck of it. By continuously over delivering, your subscribers will realize that you are trying to help them learn what they need to know, and they will appreciate it when you give them the tools they need to succeed and further their knowledge on the topic of your ezine. This is obviously geared more towards internet business, but it can also work well with other areas of interest as well.

Don't Use Hype

I'm sure you've seen this before. It seems to be everywhere you look – people trying to hype-up their offer to make it sound better than it is. Most people just want you to be straight with them. If you feel that you need to add hype to a product in order to get people to buy it, then what's that saying about the product?

If you just stick to telling the truth about a product, without making it look like hype, I think your subscribers will have much more respect for you. Personally, I think it's refreshing when someone sends me a sales letter and outlines how I can benefit from it without trying to make it sound better than it is. Most people can tell the difference, and will probably be turned off by the hype.

Help Them Out

Besides giving your subscribers what they want, helping them with whatever they need help with is the best way to earn their trust. While this works on an individual basis, instead of taking care of all of your subscribers at once, the people you are able to help will be very grateful and will probably tell their friends and customers about you. Word of mouth is a very powerful trust builder.

If one of your subscribers sends you an email asking for help, help them out as much as you can. Don't just give them a quick, one word answer. They'll probably just be back asking for a little more information. Just go ahead and tell them what you can, and be nice about it.

This has happened to me several times, and it's probably happened to you somewhere along the line, too. I've emailed people asking for help, or if they can recommend somewhere I can go to for help. Sometimes I'm actually shocked at the response I get. I would consider myself lucky if I got a complete sentence, and even luckier if they started the email off with, "Hi Thea, thanks for the question!" or something like that.

Needless to say, I didn't buy anything from them, or even open any more emails from them – I lost a lot of respect for them. You want your subscribers to see you as someone who they can come to for help whenever they need it, and they'll get a quick and friendly response back.

Honesty

Obviously, being honest goes a long way towards earning the trust of your subscribers. I think that goes without saying. But being honest also goes with not hiding anything – especially your identity.

I've subscribed to quite a few ezines in my time. And for almost all of them, I get a real name. But for some, believe it or not, I still get a few publishers who give only a nickname. Never their real name.

I don't know about you, but that just doesn't sit well with me. Why would I want to do business with someone who doesn't even want me to know their real name? Bottom line – I don't want to do business with that kind of person. I don't even want to be on their list. So when I come across an ezine that doesn't give me a real name, I go straight for the unsubscribe link.

When publishing your ezine, always keep this in mind – be honest with your subscribers, they always know when you're not; and give your real name if you expect to see any results.

Humor

OK, this one may sound a bit strange at first, but humor really does go a long way towards trusting someone.

Think back to all of the ezines you've subscribed to. I'm sure there have been quite a few of them. Have you ever received any that were 'monotone' and 'flat' and just didn't hold your interest?

I know I have. There have been a few ezines that just didn't hold my attention because there was no personality in each issue. It was just 'here's the information, now get outta here.'

I know, that may be a little extreme, but you get the point. You have to let some of your personality shine through in your ezine. Be a little humorous sometimes. Nobody ever said you have to be serious all the time. Don't be afraid to crack a few jokes here and there – as long as they're appropriate, nobody will mind.

There is one ezine in particular that I can think of that I look forward to every month. Yes, it has great information, but is also breaks that information up nicely with some jokes and stories. That makes it very enjoyable to read, and I've actually built up a pretty good relationship with the publisher because of that. After reading a few issues, I thought to myself 'she seems pretty cool, maybe I'll send her an email to say hi.'

Since then, our relationship has grown and we have actually helped each other out on a few things. All because she broke up the everyday business with some humor and personality.

Think about how you can apply this to your own ezine.

Solid Info

Never underestimate the power of solid, original information. None of these keys to a responsive list will get the job done by itself, but having a solid information will make up for a lot of the other keys.

Having great content will get your emails opened on a consistent basis, and this will definitely help you when you send out endorsements or ads. Your subscribers will eventually just see emails from you and open them regardless of what the subject says.

The content doesn't only have to be solid, but it has to be original. Simply sending out articles by other people won't get the job done. You can't expect to send out the same articles and information that a hundred other people are sending out and expect people to stay on your list long enough to build a relationship with them.

Ask for Feedback

One of the best ways I have found to gain the trust of my subscribers is to ask them for feedback.

Doing this opens up a line of communication that is usually difficult to do. I have found that a lot of people just don't try to contact ezine publishers because they don't think the publishers will bother to respond. You have to let them know that you are willing to respond to them, and encourage the contact.

Because of doing this, I have been able to form relationships with many of my subscribers. Some of these relationships have turned into joint venture partners, and many future relationships will do the same. If nothing else, doing this shows that I'm a real person, am willing to help out, and will respond.

Start a Forum

This may not be possible for everyone, but having a forum really helps you build a relationship and trust with your subscribers. A forum provides a place for your subscribers to participate in a community and help each other.

Having a forum can also help you determine who the most desirable joint venture partners are. You can see who participates the most, and who helps out the most. These people will probably make the best partners, and they'll appreciate you approaching them about a JV.

Like I said, this may not be a possibility for everyone. It takes a lot of work to maintain, but the effort is well worth it.

Some great free tools including set up for a free forum, are at <http://tinyurl.com/7rb9k>

The Result?

When you combine all of these keys, you'll have a powerful money making system on your hands. All you need to do is find a way to include all of these keys into your follow up series, and you'll soon find yourself building relationships with your subscribers and gaining their trust.

Before You Start Building Your List

There are a few things you need to keep in mind before you actually start building your list of subscribers. These are important aspects that you need to be aware of now before you start building your list and possibly waste time and money. I know you don't want to do that, so be sure to take care of these.

Target Your Subscribers

I've mentioned this before, but I should take a minute to mention it again. If you advertise to the wrong people, or using the wrong media, you could be wasting money like crazy. You need to target the right group of people, and be sure to advertise where those people will see it.

For example, if you want to find people who are interested in crafts, you wouldn't go into an electronics store to post a flyer. You would want to post a flyer in a craft store, or in a place that caters to people who enjoy crafts.

Similarly, if you only want to advertise online, you wouldn't post an ad for your car e-zine on a site geared towards gardening. You would be wasting your time and money by advertising in the wrong place.

You might attract a few subscribers who may just be curious, but that's about where it would end.

Opt-In Means Opt-In!

It is called an opt-in list for a reason – your subscribers opt to receive emails from you because they are interested in what you have to offer. This should go without saying, but this means you can't spider websites and capture email addresses off those sites to add to your list.

Doing that is a good way to get yourself shut down, and have fines levied against you from the CAN SPAM Act I discussed earlier.

Just stick to gathering subscribers from the forms you place on your website or from people sending an email to your subscription address. I prefer to only accept subscriptions from my web forms because this way I can capture any information I want from subscribers.

You can still collect subscriptions via email, but instead of adding those directly to your main subscriber list, filter them back through your website so they can fill out the web form. If they don't take the extra step to do this – forget about them. They really didn't want to be on your list to begin with.

Track Your Ads

There is one more thing you need to do before you can start building your list of subscribers. When you begin advertising your ezine and website, you need to know what ads are working and what resources are working. This will help you determine if an ad you are using is not working very well. If you run multiple ads, you need to know which one works, and which one doesn't.

There are several ad trackers you can get to do this. They will track how many people click on your links. On top of this, it will track total hits, as well as unique hits. It is great for email campaigns because you will see how many of your subscribers click on the link. If a lot of people click on your link, then you know your ad is effective. If you don't get a lot of sign ups or sales from those clicks, then you know you have to change something on your website, or the offer isn't good enough.

Tracking where your subscribers come from is a little trickier. You can do this using click tracking programs, but it will not be as accurate. It really helps you pin down where your subscribers are coming from, and lets you know what the most effective resources are.

Once you know for sure that an ad works, you can then move on to more effective advertising resources. If you don't test and track your ads before you move on with your campaigns, you could spend your money on an ad that does not work.

You will also need to know if the resource works. If you have tested your ad and it works well, but you get poor results from a particular resource, you will know not to use that resource again. If you don't track your ads, you could be using an ad that doesn't work in a resource that doesn't work. This ineffective advertising can kill your business or ezine, not to mention your spirits.

Free List Building Resources

Thanks for being patient while I worked through all of the “boring” stuff. I know you’re anxious to get started learning how to build your opt-in list, so let’s get started here with some free list building resources.

When you can find some free list building resources that work, it doesn’t get much better than that.

Ezine Directories

The first thing you should do is get your ezine listed in all of the ezine directories. These directories will list your ezine for free, and will allow people to quickly and easily find you. Simply type “ezine directories” into Google.

You may not see an avalanche of results from directories, but it’s a good way to get started. Its also a good way to test your ads – if you get a lot of subscribers from these directories, you know you have a pretty good ad on your hands.

Before you submit to these directories, you should have some information ready so the submission goes quicker.

Long Description

Before you get started, take some time to look through the ezine listings. Notice what draws you to the descriptions, then write your own using the same format as the descriptions you were drawn to. You should also take notice of the ones that totally turned you away. Keep this in mind so you can avoid making the same mistakes.

Your description should emphasize how the subscriber will benefit. If they will save time, be sure to point that out. Remember, put yourself in their shoes and think “What’s in it for ME?” (with ‘me’ being your prospective subscriber). If you are giving any free bonuses to new subscribers, be sure to mention this if you have room. You should keep this description between 300 - 400 characters.

You should include as many keywords (more on this in a minute) in your description as possible. You may also need to include subscribe information, but most directories will have separate fields for this.

You may want to test your description before you start submitting it to the directories. Try some free ezine advertising to get your description to where you want it. Most free ads in ezines are small, so your description should be perfect. You can search through the ezines in the directories to find ezines that offer free ads. Don’t forget to track your ads to make sure they work.

Short Description

Some of the directories don't allow descriptions to be that long, so you should have a shorter description handy just in case. All you need to do is take your long description, and cut out as much filler as you can without taking the meat out. You should keep this description to about 50 characters. Be sure to emphasize what they will gain as a subscriber, and how they will benefit.

Keywords

You should have between 5 – 10 keywords ready that best describe the topic of your Ezine. These keywords will help people find you quicker in the directories. If your Ezine is about cars, your keywords could be “cars,” “automobiles,” “driving,” etc. You get the point. Using keywords that are in your description will get you better results.

Subscribe Info

This part is pretty easy. Just tell them how to subscribe to your ezine via email and via website. Some directories will require information on how to unsubscribe from your ezine also.

Archive URL

Many directories will require you to include a URL where visitors can view your archives. Because you should have one of these anyway, this shouldn't be a problem. If you don't have any issues yet because you just started, that's OK. Create the page, and put something like “Just Launched – Archives Coming Soon” on the page to let visitors know what's going on. Personally, I recently began to archive my ezine at a blog <http://triggers---monthly-coaching-ezine.blogspot.com> However, I shall be creating an archive page at my website and links to each of my ezines can then be accessed there.

Ad Swaps

Swapping ads with other ezines is one of the best ways to get targeted subscribers, and it's free. Here's how it works: you and another publisher agree to exchange ad space in your ezines. It's simple, but very effective.

You can find ad swap partners in the ezine directories I mentioned earlier. Just look for ezines that are similar to yours, but not in direct competition with you.

You can also visit some of the more popular forums to find ad swap partners. Forums are easily my favorite place to find JV partners. The trick is, you can't just show up to a forum and ask for a joint venture or ad swap. People in forums usually consider themselves a community, and don't take kindly to strangers jumping in and asking for something before giving. You can ask for help on something right away, but wait a few

weeks of participating before you ask for a joint venture. Besides, by this time you'll no doubt have built up a relationship with some of these people, and getting a JV will be that much easier.

Pop Ups

I know you probably don't want to admit it, but pop-ups do work. They work especially well for adding new subscribers to your opt-in list. Look at pop-ups as your last chance to get a lead – because it is your last chance!

The main focus of your pop-up should be getting subscribers. It is best to give something away so you can get their email address.

Write Articles

Writing articles can be one of the most effective ways to drive highly targeted traffic to your website, and guide those visitors into customers or subscribers. Its free, and if you can get your article in the hands of the right publishers, can be seen by thousands of targeted readers.

Let's assume you already have contacted publishers of related ezines to publish your article, and some of them have agreed. Right now, the readers of those ezines are opening their new ezine and begin reading through your article.

One of two things can happen now.

The first, and the one we want to avoid, goes something like this: The reader spends about 7 minutes trying to get through your article, only to give up half way through thinking, "Why the hell should I keep reading this garbage?"

The second possibility goes a little like this: The reader flies through your entire article drooling for more information about the subject. He continues down to the "About the Author" section and quickly sees that you have a website and an ezine related to the great article he just read. Without hesitation, he clicks through to your website and subscribes to your ezine.

Which scenario would you like to see?

If you answered the first scenario, quit reading this guide right now and seek psychological help immediately! Just kidding!

But really, doesn't the second possibility sound so much better? Your damn right it does! So, lets take a look at how you can start getting results like the lucky son of a gun in scenario two.

First, when you are writing your article, you need to keep one thing in mind: The reader is expecting quality information they can put to use now, without buying anything. Read that again – quality information, no buying.

Don't write your article like an ad. Give them quality information they can use. Just don't give them too much. You want to make the reader feel as if they have just learned a lot of useful information, but they can still learn more about it. So, give them enough information that they actually learn something, but leave enough curiosity hanging there to make them want to learn more and visit your site.

This is where your Resource Box comes into play.

Your Resource Box

Your Resource Box is the “About the Author” section I mentioned a few minutes ago. Its where you get to advertise your site to the reader, basically by telling a little about yourself and what you do.

You'll probably notice, if you've seen many of these, that they are all written in the third person. This makes it look like someone else wrote it besides the author. This has a sort of an “Authority Figure” effect, which will help guide the reader to your website and take the action you want them to take.

If you're not familiar with the ‘Authority Figure’ effect, it basically says that people have a greater tendency to listen to people who they perceive to have authority. You can use this effect for building your opt-in list, or while selling products.

Your Resource Box should follow this general mold - tell a bit about yourself, and what you have done, and what you can do to help the reader learn more about what they have just read. This will capitalize on their desire to learn more about the subject if you left just enough on the table for them to want to learn more.

Get Your Article Published

All of the work you just did writing your article is pointless if you don't get it published. Don't worry, this isn't as hard as you might think.

For starters, I recommend looking through the ezine directories. Yup, you should still be using those directories. You may as well bookmark my list of directories so you can keep coming back to them.

As with the other times you have used the directories, search for ezines that have readers that would like to read your article. You don't have to be as picky with your selection here. It never hurts to ask the publisher to run your article – the worst he can do

is say no. A lot of directories will even let you search for ezines that accept articles to make your search go quicker.

Making Contact

When you contact the publisher to have your article published, don't just send them an email saying, "here's an article for you to publish." This probably won't even get a second thought.

So what should you say in your email? Let's take a look at a few things for you to consider.

First, don't send what I like to call 'canned emails.' This is an email that is obviously generic and has no sense of personalization. It is a great advantage if you include the name of the publisher, and the name of the ezine. If you are a subscriber to that ezine, comment on the most recent issue, telling the publisher how much you enjoyed it.

After you introduce yourself, go ahead and tell the publisher you have an article that could be very beneficial to their subscribers. It is OK to tell them what your article is about, but keep it short. They probably don't want to read an entire summary, and then read your article.

Don't send your article as an attachment. A lot of people won't open attachments because of all of the viruses going around these days. Include your article in the body of your email so the publisher can easily read it and save it if they want to publish it in their Ezine.

Another tip for you – be sure to format your ad to 60 characters per line. This is the most widely accepted format, and will ensure your article will be published. The easier you can make it for the publisher, the better your chances are of getting your article published.

Articles Have A Viral Effect

You will probably discover this on your own, but articles do have a very nice viral effect when you get them published for the first time. I have talked to some people who haven't done any advertising in over a year, but still see their articles being spread around the internet.

And guess what happens when the article gets spread around. Yup – more sales and more subscribers. All for about an hour of work. Not too bad, if you ask me.

I hope you can see the power writing articles has. It is a very valuable tool to have at your disposal. You can write an article, spend a few minutes sending it out, see the results start coming in, and then start all over again!

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing will allow your ad to spread around the internet just like a cold virus spreads around your body. It has been used by the most successful internet marketers to build their opt-in lists into the hundreds of thousands.

When you use viral marketing, the number of people who will see your ad or visit your site will grow exponentially.

Create a Brandable Ebook or Report

One of the best ways to start off your viral marketing campaign is to create a free ebook or report to give away to your subscribers and visitors. If you can write a report that has great information, and people want to read it, there is a great chance they will give it away to their visitors, and so on.

The key to making this work is to allow your visitors to “brand” the ebook or report with their name and website information. This will give them an incentive to give your report away, and your virus will begin to spread. The best part is, your visitors can brand their copy themselves, so you just need to create the report, and let them do the rest of the work.

Writing a report or ebook is not as hard as you may think. All you need to do is write about what you know. If you have a marketing plan that has worked for you, write about it, and explain exactly how you do this. Make it easy to follow, and make sure it is quality information.

This works best for business related material, but could also work well for non-business information. Just use your imagination.

You have two formats to pick from: ebook or PDF. PDF may be your best option because everyone will be able to read your report in this format.

You will probably want to save a page towards the beginning of your report for a space to tell about your ezine or business. Explain what your ezine is about, and be sure to have a way for people to subscribe to your ezine or visit your website. By placing this as one of the first pages, everyone who receives your report will see your ezine. As your report starts to spread across the ‘Net, more and more people will see your website and ezine – giving you your viral traffic.

On the page after your ad space, have a page that is reserved for your visitors information. This is where they will brand their information, giving them incentive to give the report away. Here's an example of what you could place on the page:

Tell – A – Friend

Having a Tell - A - Friend feature on your website is a great way to get your visitors to do your advertising for you. This will allow your visitors to recommend your site to their friends simply by filling out a form and hitting submit. This will send an email to the people your visitor has entered, and they will receive a message from you that looks like it is coming from your visitor. This means the people receiving your message will be more likely to open it because it is coming from someone they know.

This email will be recommending your site or ezine, and why they should take the time to visit your site. Again, because the email will appear to be coming from a friend of theirs, the chances are very high they will click through to your site and have a look around.

Just in case that isn't enough to get them to click through to your website, be sure to offer these people something of real value. Don't just give them the same old reports and ebooks that are circulating all over the internet. Give them something they can really use, and need. If you have rights to any software, that is a great thing to give away.

Now, you need to understand something. People aren't going to just give you their friends email addresses for nothing. Usually. Its hard enough getting them to give up *their* email address, let alone their friends. You need to give them a reason to do this, and it has to be something of value.

I also need to make sure you understand something else. The email addresses submitted are **not** yours to do what you wish with them. The only thing you are allowed to do is send the recommendation email. Don't add those addresses to your opt-in list unless you get them to subscribe through that email. It may be a good idea to state this next to your Tell - A - Friend form on your website.

Joint Ventures

Joint ventures are the single most powerful marketing tool you can ever use. They can be used to take advantage of the power of other marketers to grow your opt-in list very quickly and cheaply. They are great to grow your opt-in list, increase sales, or increase traffic to your site – or even all three.

The widespread appeal of joint ventures is that everyone involved will benefit in some way. Everybody wins.

A Joint Venture (JV) is when two or more people team up to create a marketing strategy where all parties involved wins. This could be anything, the possibilities really are limitless – you just need to think of the ideas.

The absolute best way to find a joint venture partner is through previous contact and relationship building. Someone you know is much more likely to accept a joint venture if you have had previous contact with them.

When you are looking for a partner, you want to find someone who targets the same market, but is not in direct competition with you. This means if your ezine is about horse riding, you wouldn't want to approach another ezine about horse riding. A better idea would be to approach an ezine about keeping a horse healthy. Someone who is interested in riding horses is almost certainly concerned about keeping their horse healthy. This JV would have great success.

On the same note, if you publish an ezine on riding a horse, it wouldn't be a good idea to propose a JV to someone who publishes an ezine on fishing. It just doesn't mix, and the results would be terrible. If you can find an ezine that compliments yours, but does not compete with it, you will likely have a very successful joint venture.

Contacting a Potential Partner

First contact is very important. Your first email has to make sense, and it can't look like you don't know what you're talking about. For example, I once got a proposal for a joint venture (at least I think it was a proposal!) that made absolutely no sense at all. It looked like a third grader had written it, and I couldn't make out a single rational thought in the entire email.

The point is this: most publishers get JV proposals almost every day. With everything else they need to do, they just don't have the time to decipher what it is you want to do. If they can't take the time to write a decent proposal, what kind of time are they going to put into the actual joint venture?

One thing you want to keep in mind is you don't want to get stuck doing all of the work while the other person does nothing and benefits from your hard work. This is not the point of a joint venture. You also need to be careful because if you pick a partner like this, there is a good chance your credibility can be damaged. In this line of business, your credibility is everything.

One of my guidelines is making it as easy as possible on the other partner. This doesn't mean that I'll do all of the work, but I'll do most of it. When you initiate the joint venture, it is OK to do most of the work – it is even expected in most cases.

Tell your potential partner exactly what it is you want to do, and how it can benefit your partner. Be sure to clearly show this part. The first thing your partner will ask himself is “What’s in it for ME?” Tell them you will do most of the work involved in setting the JV up.

If the amount of work they need to do is minimal, and the reward is pretty good, you have an excellent chance of landing yourself a very successful joint venture. Just don’t expect your partner to do all of the work if you are the one to initiate contact.

Some Joint Venture Ideas

Here are some good ideas to get you started with your Joint Ventures.

Thank You Page JV

This JV is pretty easy to set up, but first let me show you how it works.

Basically, you and a few other publishers (usually 4-5 total) agree to recommend each others ezines on their thank you page new subscribers are sent to after they subscribe. This is a great way to fill the space on your thank you page, and its also a great way to get some highly targeted subscribers.

Some Other JVs

Here are a few other joint ventures for you to think about. They don’t necessarily involve getting new subscribers, but if you ever have your own product, or create a free viral ebook, these will be some good ideas for you to consider.

Offer Discounted Price to Other Publishers - One thing that can work very well for you is offering somebody with a large list the opportunity to give their subscribers something for free or at a discounted price. If you have a monthly membership site, you could offer their subscribers the first month free. Or if you have your own product, you could offer that product at a discounted price to their subscribers.

A lot of publishers like doing this type of deal because it makes them look good to their subscribers. If a publisher can offer a good product at a nice discount, the subscribers will appreciate the effort by the publisher to bring them a good deal. You’ve probably seen this type of thing before. If a publisher offers you a discount or a free membership, chances are good they have a joint venture with the owner of the product.

Recommend Ezines in Your Welcome Message – This is similar to the thank you page JV, but you recommend other ezines in your welcome message. You could do this with your thank you page partners, or you can go search for some new partners for this. I wouldn’t recommend including any more than three other publishers in this one, because including too many ezines in your welcome message could make for a pretty long email.

Product Endorsement – This may be the most basic form of JV, but it is still one of the most popular. A product owner may approach you asking you to recommend their product to your list. To do this, you should ask for at least 50% of the profit, if not more. I have seen people request up to 80% of the profit. This isn't unreasonable at all because they are not paying for the endorsement, and they are likely just trying to grow their customer base.

Signature Exchange – Your signature is what goes at the end of each email, sometimes with a short ad. You could exchange your signature with another publisher to promote your Ezine. This is similar to recommending other ezines in your welcome message, but it will only be with one other publisher, and it will be in all of the emails sent out.

These are just a few joint ventures I've seen done before. With a little imagination, you can probably think up a few other ones that you can use to grow your opt-in list.

Ezine Advertising

Advertising in other ezines will give you the best results in the shortest amount of time. If you find the right ezine, you can literally increase your profits over night. Before you pick your ezines to advertise in, you need to be aware of a few things. First, there are several different types of advertising available in ezines. Let's take a closer look at them.

If you don't want to pay for ads in other ezines, you always have the option of doing a joint venture with the publisher. This is what I was talking about in the previous section. Some of the larger, more responsive ezines may not accept joint ventures because it may not be as profitable for them, but it never hurts to ask.

Important: I just want to make one quick note before we start talking about this. If you do not track your ads you run in ezines, you will never know if you are throwing your money away, or if you have a real winner. Before you begin advertising in ezines, please be sure your ad tracking system is in place.

Classified Ad

This type of ad in an ezine will give you the lowest response, but is a good way to test the waters and see if the ezine is good for you to advertise in for the future. I do not recommend paying for classified ads because they will be mixed in with other ads of the same kind. Many ezines will offer free classified ads to new subscribers, so this is probably the best way to go about it. You can search for ezines related to yours in the ezine directories.

If your ad pulls extremely well, you know you have a winner. You're safe to move on to the next level of advertising in that ezine. If it does not produce any results at all, change your ad and try again if the ezine will let you have more than one free classified ad. Some ezines will only allow one free classified ad to new subscribers.

If you like the description you used for the ezine directories, try using that as your ad. They are both about the same length, so you shouldn't need to change much in your description. Just be sure you offer something for free to the visitor, and make it clear that they can get something for free. This will get them to click to your website, and then let your website do the talking.

Sponsor Ad

There are three types of sponsor ads, but only two that are worth paying for. Top and middle sponsor ads usually pull the best, while I consider bottom sponsor ads to be a waste of money.

Everyone always says that the top sponsor ad is the best, and you will get the best results. This makes sense if you think about it, but is not always true. Most people have been conditioned to ignore the ad we see before we read any of the content. Its kind of like banner ads. When was the last time you actually clicked on a banner? I bet its been a while.

It seems to me that a middle sponsor ad is much harder for people to ignore. It usually comes in the middle of the ezine, and sometimes will even be in the middle of the primary article. The reader is almost forced to read the ad before they move on to the rest of the article, or the next section of the ezine.

Solo Ad

This is the best, and most expensive, ezine advertising you can get. It is called a solo ad because it is sent out separate from the regular ezine, and the reader will only see your ad, not several different ads to draw their attention away from you. There are a few things you need to look for before you place an order for a solo ad. If you cannot find it on their website, email the publisher to find out.

The first thing you should find out is how many solo ads the ezine sends out per week. If they send out one every day, that's no good. You probably won't get very good results from that mailing. The fewer solo ads per week, the better. If the subscribers are bombarded with ads, they may not even open any emails from that publisher.

Next, you need to know if you can write the subject line, or if the publisher has a subject line used for solo ads. You always want to be able to write your own subject. I have received solo ads from ezines where the subject lines says it is a solo ad. If they can see it is obviously an ad, you have already lost half of the people in that mailing. If you

do not have complete control over the subject line, move on. Just remember, because of the new SPAM laws, your subject line can't be misleading in any way.

You also want to have complete control over what the subscriber will read when they open the email. Some solo ads I have seen will state before your actual ad that it is a solo ad. Sometimes they will also have other information. It is OK to have disclaimer info and unsubscribe info after your ad, but not before.

Before you place your order for any ezine ads, I highly recommend you subscribe to the ezine so you can see how often solo ads are sent, where the ads are arranged in the ezines, and how many ads are in each issue. You will also want to make sure your ad is sent out.

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