



## **New Rules for Growing Your Book of Business: Reach Clients and Prospects Through Their In-Boxes**

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E-mail marketing is no longer a new marketing channel, but if used effectively it can become a powerful marketing and relationship building tool for financial advisors. E-mail marketing offers a number of compelling benefits:

- **Extreme personalization:** Advisors can customize almost any element of an e-mail message, making each prospect and client touch-point more relevant.
- **Rapid turnaround:** E-mails can be developed and deployed within hours, allowing advisors to get in front of clients with important news quickly and efficiently
- **Total measurability:** Every aspect of an e-mail can be tracked. Are your clients and prospects opening your e-mails? Clicking on links? Forwarding your e-mails to others—even potential prospects? These elements and more can be effectively measured using standard e-mail solutions
- **Cost-effective and response-effective:** Developing and deploying e-mails will cost a fraction of sending a traditional direct mailer.
- **Easy integration with other marketing efforts:** When combined with offline communications, e-mail adds only an incremental cost and can provide a significant step-up in response rates! What's more, e-mail can be used to supplement other e-channels, including blogs and social networks, allowing advisors to further build their reputations/identities online.

The following tips will enable financial advisors to get the most from an e-mail marketing program:

### **The e-mail list – The most powerful asset**

In developing your e-mail strategy, one of your first considerations should be list segmentation. Start by dividing your list into two groups - existing clients and prospective clients:

**Existing clients:** Capture the e-mail addresses of your clients at every possible opportunity - starting with acquisition and orientation. Over time, you can ask your clients what kind of information they would like to receive through e-mail so that you can make your e-mails even more relevant.



**Prospective clients:** Divide your e-mail prospecting efforts into several tasks. First, be sure to capture e-mail addresses of prospects on your website or blog. Explore renting e-mail addresses for prospecting efforts. Consider sending your blog articles/perspectives to a list of prospects in your area (e.g. business owners, physicians) sold by companies like InfoUSA.com. These e-mail lists may not perform as well as the e-mail addresses you collect through your website or blog, but they will allow you to get your firm and your name in front of prospective clients. Consider advertising on highly targeted newsletters that are likely to be read by your prospective clients (e.g., alumni associations, local non-profit organizations, etc.)

**E-mail tip #1:** Set a weekly goal for the number of e-mail addresses (clients and prospects) you or someone in your firm should collect. Every new e-mail address represents an opportunity to win new business (directly or through referrals).

### **Develop an e-mail curriculum**

Once you've started to capture e-mail addresses at every opportunity, it's time to focus on messaging. Don't approach e-mail marketing as a series of one-off messages or newsletters; instead, think of it as a stream or curriculum of important communications. Once again, segment your communications into prospect and client streams.

**Prospect communications:** These communications might include newsletters, single intellectual capital pieces (repurpose the articles that you write for your blog, if you have one). Consider developing a series of e-mail communications that cater to a particular segment (e.g., succession planning for small business owners).

**Client communications:** A periodic e-newsletter will enable you to deliver content geared to your clients and can reinforce your expertise. Also consider developing and deploying a stream of periodic e-mails, which could include:

- **New client orientation e-mails:** Develop an e-mail that contains important information about your firm, key contact information, and the client experience (e.g., timing of monthly/quarterly meetings, where to go for account information, etc.).
- **Updates and service e-mails:** Send updates about your firm and economic news that may impact your clients' portfolios.
- **Newsletters and intellectual capital:** Send periodic (monthly or quarterly) client newsletters that address key topics of interest (e.g., estate planning, funding a college education, charitable giving). Send out research/ studies conducted by your firm or partners that might be of interest to your clients.



**E-mail tip #2:** Allow prospects who visit your site to sign up for a prospect newsletter to give them a taste of what it is like to work with you and your firm.

### **Think integration! OR “Mix It Up”**

E-mail is a distribution channel. Once you create content, you can send it through a number of channels and post it to a number of places. For example, many advisors develop blog articles and then e-mail their articles directly to clients and prospects. You can e-mail through social networks such as Linked In. You can post messages to group discussion boards (another form of e-mail) and reach out directly to your connections with your economic insights. If you decide to send out a direct mail piece or post card, think about how you might enhance your effort with an e-mail (e.g., send an e-mail in advance or shortly after sending a postcard invitation to a seminar that you are giving to clients and prospects).

**E-mail tip #3:** Don't think of e-mail in isolation—consider it as one of many marketing tools that can be used to bring your message to prospects and clients alike.

### **Select the right vendor**

If you are new to e-mail, I recommend that you consider working with a hosted-on-demand service provider (“software as a service”). This will keep your costs down and provide a suite of services to help you get your program up and running quickly (i.e., upload your lists and your e-mail creative into their solution, send out a test e-mail and deploy your campaign).

Here are two e-mail providers to consider that may cost as little as \$100/month:

- [Constant Contact](#)
- [VerticalResponse](#)

Some solutions, including Constant Contact, require that your email addresses are given to you directly by the recipient, and will not permit you to use purchased databases and lists.

**E-mail tip #4:** When evaluating vendors, consider whether they offer the following:

- A) **Customer Service:** Know what services are included in your basic deployment fees. If you are not technically savvy, you may need to factor in additional consulting fees.
- B) **E-mail Regulatory Compliance:** Make sure that your e-mail vendor understands CAN-SPAM requirements (e.g., placing an opt-out in the footer of your e-mail).



- C) **Deliverability:** Make sure that the vendor has the tools to ensure that your message is delivered to your prospects' or clients' in-boxes—not to a spam filter.

Great resources are available to can help you to learn more about e-mail marketing, such as the [Direct Marketing Association](#).

### **Define success**

As with all other marketing efforts, define your objectives in advance and be realistic - building an effective e-mail marketing program takes time. Here are some of the metrics you can monitor using most e-mail solutions:

**Open Rates:** How many recipients actually open your e-mails?

**Click-Through Rates:** Which specific links do your clients and prospects click on? If you can provide a few links to different places within your e-mail, you'll be able to determine quickly what content they find most valuable.

**Referrals/Forwards:** How many of your e-mails are forwarded to others? This helps you to determine whether your content is engaging enough to motivate your client or prospect to pass it along to others as an online referral.

### **Other key considerations**

**Frequency:** To avoid "list fatigue," don't send e-mails out more than once per week, unless you are sending an important service update to one of your clients.

**Compliance:** As with all other marketing communications, work with your legal and compliance departments to determine what you can and cannot send to prospects and clients. It's highly likely that your e-mail communications will require the same disclosure language as a publicly facing advertisement.

E-mail marketing is part art and part science. Be creative and test different approaches until you develop a program that works for you and your firm. Finally, consider applying the best practices below as you explore e-mail marketing.



## E-mail Best Practices

- **Apply the “three-second rule”:** Assume that you only have three seconds to get a recipient’s attention:
  - Less is more
  - Engage your audience
  - Place a clear call-to-action above “the fold”
  - Make all graphics clickable
- **Two little lines make a big difference** (From and Subject)
  - Always send your messages from a recognizable source (Your name or your firm’s name)
  - Make your subject line highly relevant and personalize it if possible (e.g., Important Service Update for My Clients). Here are a few additional tips:
    - Don’t tell the whole story – intrigue recipients into opening the e-mail
    - Don’t mislead or trick people into opening your e-mail
    - Keep subject lines under 45 characters
    - Beware of spam practices (e.g., Don’t use all CAPS!)
    - Personalize whenever possible
    - Test different subject lines on prospect mailings. Run with the winner!
- **Relevancy rules!**
  - Make sure your from address is recognizable
  - Use a short, inviting subject line
  - Write in a credible, conversational tone
  - Use multiple, strategically placed links (to learn which content is most relevant to your clients and prospects)
- **When in doubt, test it out**
  - One of the advantages of e-mail is that almost every element is testable. Consider testing the following:
    - Target audiences (e.g., physicians, attorneys, etc.)
    - Subject Line
    - Time of day
    - Day of week
    - Frequency
    - Creative
    - Calls to action
    - Short vs. long messaging
    - Levels of personalization



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