

30-Day Starter Plan for Email Marketing



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iContact

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30-Day Starter Plan for Email Marketing

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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30-Day Starter Plan for Email Marketing

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

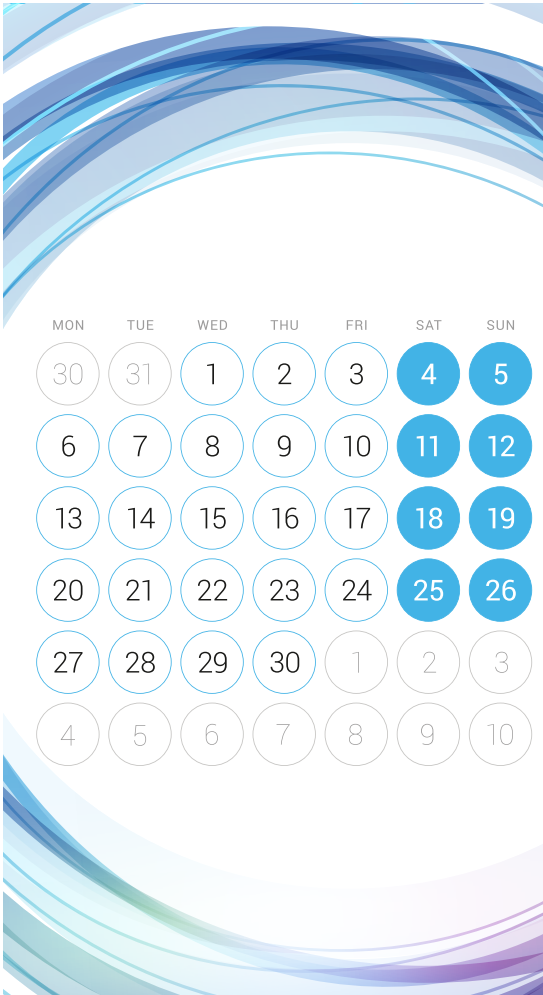
iContact is a cost-effective, and proven email marketing solution for entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations of all sizes.

iContact’s simplicity and reliability, matched with its low cost and comprehensive reporting, bring successful email marketing within easy reach of every marketer.

This guide helps you build successful email marketing campaigns using iContact. It features easy-to-follow strategies and best practices to drive engagement, increase conversions, and maximize profits. Use the guide in conjunction with iContact’s detailed FAQs, video tutorials, and webinars, which you can access via the Help section in your iContact account. Don’t worry if you need additional assistance — our award-winning support team is standing by and ready to help (also available via the Help section).

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

Use the 10-step checklist on the next page to plan your email marketing journey. Check off each step as you move forward, and you’ll soon find yourself on the path to email marketing success



Why Email Marketing?

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

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

iContact email marketing is a permission-based marketing solution. This means you should use it to target **only** individuals who have given their permission to receive marketing information from you.

Permission is granted normally via a subscription, a request for more information, or a purchase. Because of this, email marketing is often considered a retention marketing tool. As anyone who has been in business for any length of time will confirm, it is much cheaper—and therefore profitable—to retain and attract business from an existing client or contact than to acquire a new one.



You can use email marketing to deliver different types of marketing communications. These include:

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

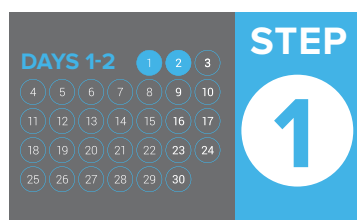
Email marketing is highly scalable and can grow with your business. With iContact, it may even be possible to run your initial (or test) campaigns at zero cost.

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

Signing up for iContact is the first step on the road to email marketing success. Over the next 30 days, we'll take you from "rookie" to "professional" with our 10-step guide to email marketing. Let's get started.

The 10-Step Checklist

30 Days of Email Marketing		
STEP	DAYS	TASKS
1	DAYS 1-2 1 2	Set your goals and build your plan
2	DAYS 3-5 3 4 5	Complete the big audit
3	DAY 6 6	Set up your account and build a recognizable profile
4	DAYS 7-8 7 8	Import, build, and manage your contact lists
5	DAYS 9-10 9 10	Design your email template
6	DAYS 11-13 11 12 13	Create the perfect email and landing page experience
7	DAY 14 14	Schedule and send
8	DAY 15 15	Pull reports
9	DAYS 16-25 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	Build autoresponders
10	DAYS 26-30 26 27 28 29 30	Test and improve



Set Your Goals and Build Your Plan

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

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

- **To drive incremental sales** from my existing client base and increase customer lifetime value
- **To deliver relevant and timely content** to my list of contacts, keeping them informed and enhancing my position as a thought leader in my particular industry
- **To drive repeat traffic to my website** and maximize the opportunities from advertising, commerce, and user engagement

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

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

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

- **The desired timing and frequency** of your email campaigns
- **The style of campaigns** you plan to send such as regular newsletters, ad hoc promotions, daily deals (Part of permission-based marketing is sending campaigns that match what your contacts expect to receive from you. It is best to clearly establish frequency and content expectation at the point of email address collection.)
- **The depth of any segmentation** (How targeted will your campaigns be?)
- **The individual or team** that will be responsible for creating, sending, and tracking the success of your campaigns.
- **The delivery schedule** for your first email marketing campaigns based on available products, service announcements, promotions, etc.
- **A list of campaign priorities** marked as essential, important, desirable, and nice-to-have (Concentrate on the most important deliverable first.)

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

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

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





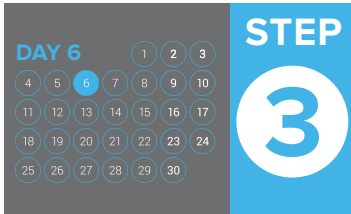
Complete the Big Audit

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

Review the following:

- **Your Current List:** Your list should contain the email addresses you are allowed to contact (i.e., people who have opted in to receive marketing communications from you via a subscription form on your website or who have made a purchase from you in the past). If you have built up a significant list over a number of years but have not contacted it recently, you may want to reengage your contacts with an email inviting them to rejoin your list.
- **List-Building Resources:** You can collect email addresses on your website, at your point-of-sale, during trade shows, and through tools such as your e-commerce, accounting, and customer relationship management software. iContact provides a number of solutions to help you build your lists and integrates with a wide range of software products via ready-built integrations and an open API.
- **Segmentation Details:** Review any relevant information to break down your lists into more targeted groups. For example, a fashion retailer could segment customers by gender, size, and purchase history. Segmentation allows you to send more relevant email marketing messages and improve open rates, clickthroughs, and conversions.
- **Content Resources:** Make a note of existing and potential sources of content to deliver via your email marketing campaigns. This could be blog content, news, press releases, reviews, white papers, etc. Having a usable bank of content will help you plan and build engaging and informative email campaigns and prevent that last-minute scramble for content when you want to send a campaign.
- **Design Resources:** Are you designing your email campaigns in-house using iContact's template library, or outsourcing the work to [iContact's Design Team](#)? Do you have all the logos, images, and design elements in place to produce engaging, mobile-responsive email campaigns?
- **Staffing Resources:** Who will be responsible for delivering your campaigns successfully? Are they capable of achieving your goals, or will they need additional training? Will they need help from other members of your staff, and will they have the time to deliver your campaigns alongside their existing tasks?
- **Campaign Calendar:** A simple calendar of events to build campaigns around (such as product launches, holidays, and peak shopping periods) is essential.
- **Your Previous Marketing Campaigns:** Compile a library of your previous marketing campaigns (both online and offline). Understanding how successful — or unsuccessful — these campaigns were helps you build strategies around future promotions and address factors such as seasonality, calls to action, and pricing.
- **Competitor Campaigns:** For obvious reasons, keeping an eye on your competitors' campaigns is very useful. Learn from what they do well, and learn from their mistakes. How do your campaigns compare? If you cannot compete on price, can you beat them on service?





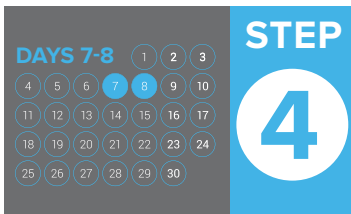
Set Up Your Account and Build a Recognizable Profile

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

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

 A screenshot of the 'My Contact Information' form. It includes a title 'My Contact Information' and a subtitle 'Your contact information is how we get in touch with you, and it also affects your sending options.' Below this are input fields for 'First Name' (with the example 'Mark') and 'Last Name' (with the example 'Rey').

→ **Sender Property Information:** Your sender property is the email address and name from which you deliver your campaigns. The email address should be a working and monitored address to which people can reply. You may occasionally receive unsubscribe requests in reply to your campaigns. Be sure to act on these requests in a timely and efficient manner. You can set up a separate email account to handle your email marketing campaigns so that automatic replies (such as out-of-office notifications) do not fill your personal inbox every time you send a campaign. The name you send emails from should be recognizable to your recipients. Use either your company name or the name of a prominent individual within your organization. Make sure you send from your company's registered domain rather than a public domain such as Yahoo or Gmail.



Import, Build, and Manage Your Contact Lists

The process of uploading your lists into your email marketing system is straightforward. It is important to make sure your naming convention (i.e., the name you give each list) is clear and concise, so you can easily organize and manage your lists and your campaigns. Make sure your Public List Name is customer-friendly since contacts can view this when managing their subscriptions.

iContact gives you the option to build your lists via sign-up forms placed on your website by directly importing details via spreadsheets, or by manually entering details either individually or by cutting and pasting in bulk.

iContact automatically handles unsubscribes and removes addresses that hard bounce (e.g., the recipient address does not exist).

Because the success of email marketing is largely due to the permission given by the subscriber to receive your email messages, you should never buy or use similarly acquired lists.

 A screenshot of the iContact 'Edit Sign-Up Form' interface. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Contacts', 'Email', 'Social', and 'Reports'. Below this is a sub-navigation bar with 'Lists', 'Add Contacts', 'Browse Contacts', 'Search Contacts', 'Segments', and 'Sign-up Forms'. The main content area is titled 'Edit Sign-Up Form' and has tabs for 'Builder', 'Settings', 'Code View', 'Social', and 'Reporting'. The 'Builder' tab is active, showing a preview of a sign-up form titled 'Travel Specials'. The form includes fields for 'Email', 'What is your dream destination?', 'First Name', and 'Last Name', along with a 'Submit' button. On the right side, there is a sidebar with a table for customizing the form's appearance, including options for Theme, Fonts, Container, Fields, Button, Header, Background, and Border.

If they have not given you permission to contact them, recipients may ignore your emails or even mark them as spam, thereby damaging your reputation and potentially putting your ability to send at risk.

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

- **Use Subscription Forms:** Place a subscription form in a prominent location on your website. Encourage subscriptions by offering incentives to sign up, such as discounts, prize drawings, email-only early-bird offers, or breaking news. Try not to hide your form away on a single page, as this will make it hard to attract traffic and may deter rapid list growth. iContact provides an easy-to-use form-building tool, which can be found by clicking on the Contacts tab in your iContact account.
- **Train Your Staff:** Encourage your staff to collect email subscriptions at the point-of-sale, networking events, and trade shows. This could be as simple as placing a goldfish bowl on your sales counter for business cards or installing a mobile app on your smartphone to collect names when on the move.
- **Promote via Social Networks:** Sell the benefits of your emails via your social networks by highlighting email-only offers and content. Do not forget to include an email subscription form on your Facebook page. Social networks provide a great environment to engage “socially” with your clients and prospects, but they do not provide a great sales environment. Selling is much better suited to the more formal environment of email.
- **Never Buy a List of Email Addresses:** Purchasing a list will only increase your spam complaints, damage your reputation, and potentially lead to the termination of your account.

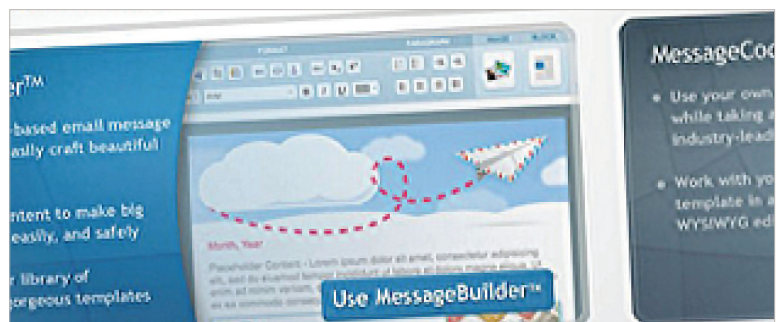


Design Your Email Template

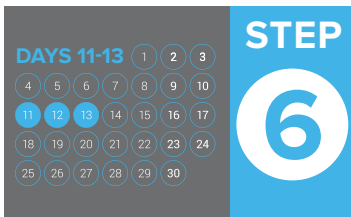
When designing your email template, your goal is to produce something that reflects your brand image and that you can easily edit, so you can quickly and efficiently create multiple campaigns. Your template should also work for recipients to

view on mobile devices, and encourage a quick and efficient transition from the email environment to your website. iContact provides a wide selection of simple, themed email marketing templates that are easily customizable to match your requirements. Alternatively, our professional Design Team can create a beautiful custom template to match your branding. Stick to the following rules, and you won't go wrong:

- **Keep It Simple:** Do not try to re-create your entire website in the email environment. You should stick to basic themes, colors, and navigation elements in your email campaigns to create a consistent flow of information throughout a subscriber's journey.
- **Forget Fancy Coding:** Use clean HTML and in-line CSS for responsive design, and lay your emails out using tables. Avoid using JavaScript elements as these may potentially trigger spam filters and cause your emails to break in certain email clients.
- **Use Text:** Make good use of HTML text in your emails, and include alt tags on images. Keep in mind that some email clients will not display graphics until the recipient selects to download images. Therefore, it is crucial to include alt text on your images.



- **Get Social:** Include social media elements, such as social sharing buttons and links to your social media networks. This encourages your subscribers to engage with you socially and to share your email marketing messages via their social networks. iContact provides easy tools to enable your subscribers to share your email marketing content and help you publish your emails and stand-alone posts to Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

**STEP****6**

Create the Perfect Email and Landing Page Experience

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

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

- **Subject Line:** This is perhaps the most important element of your campaign and could mean the difference between a subscriber opening, ignoring, or deleting your email. Your subject line should SCREAM benefits. Think of your subject line in the same way a newspaper editor does a headline— make it intriguing enough to entice subscribers to read more. Remember, don't give everything away in the subject line or the recipient will have no reason to open your message!
- **Body Text:** Your body text should support the benefits of your subject line and add additional detail. Keep your body text short and to the point. A single paragraph with bullet points to highlight important facts will be much more effective than a long-winded article.
- **Call to Action:** Your call to action should be clear and immediate. Encourage your subscriber to click through to your website as quickly as possible. Phrases like "Shop Now" and "Register Today" will prompt subscribers to act quickly.
- **Plain Text:** iContact allows you to send the same email as both an HTML and plain-text message. The system sends a plain-text email when a subscriber's email client (for example, certain mobile devices or wearables) does not accept HTML. iContact's software will simply copy text from your HTML version into the text-only window. You should take time to review this text and make changes as appropriate.
- **Spam Triggers:** iContact monitors all emails for words and phrases that can trigger spam filters and prevent your email campaigns from reaching your subscribers' inboxes. Excessive use of ALL CAPS, exclamation points (!!), dollar signs (\$\$), and words and phrases such as "FREE!" and "BUY NOW!" may trigger certain spam filters. In such cases, iContact will warn you and recommend that you make changes before sending.
- **Proofreading:** Always have someone look over your copy before you send your email. You can send test emails to colleagues via the iContact system. You can also use iContact to test your email in various email clients such as Outlook, Gmail, and mobile devices.
- **Landing Page Experience:** When creating the perfect email, also consider how well your landing pages perform. A poor experience after the click will adversely affect the success of your email campaigns.



Schedule and Send

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

- **Scheduling:** It is important that you reach your subscribers at a time that suits *them*. Testing your send times is a great way to ensure that contacts are engaging with your message. Your email messages may get a better response if sent early on a Friday versus your competitor who gets a better response on Wednesday afternoon. Make sure to incorporate send-time testing into your email plan.
- **Segmentation:** Your email marketing campaigns will always be more successful if you segment your lists and target individual groups of subscribers with relevant emails based on previous purchases or interactions. If you have a large list of diverse customers, do not blast them all with the same email marketing messages. Take your time to build separate campaigns for separate lists.
- **Managed Distribution:** If you have a sizable list and are concerned that it could potentially overwhelm your website or staffing resources, split your campaign into manageable chunks and send the campaign out over a period of time to match your level of resources.
- **List Size:** If your list is very small, do not let this put you off from sending. Instead, focus on growing your list (see Step 4), and use your initial campaigns to perfect your sending strategies for a smaller audience.

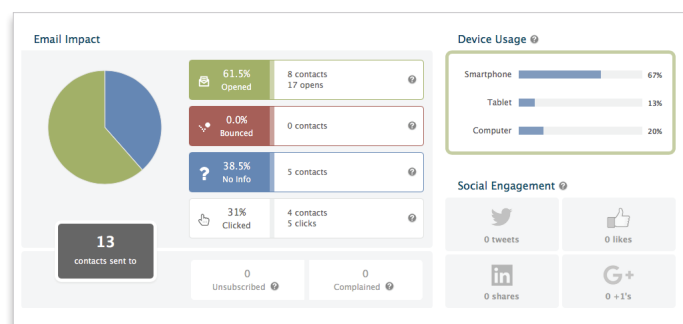
 A screenshot of the iContact scheduling interface. It shows a 'Date' section with dropdowns for 'December', '14', and '2016'. Below that is a 'Time' section with dropdowns for '03', '23', and 'PM'. At the bottom is a green button labeled 'Schedule Delivery'.


Pull Reports

Measuring and understanding campaign results is vital to the constant improvement and effectiveness of your email marketing efforts. iContact provides comprehensive and easy-to-use reporting tools to help you monitor campaign results.

Initially, focus on the following metrics:

- **Open rate:** The percentage of subscribers who opened your email. (You can also see this data by device type – smartphone, tablet, or computer – and you can use this data to tailor email layout for future sends)
- **Clickthrough rate:** The percentage of subscribers who clicked on one or more links in your email
- **Conversion rate:** How well your email performed in terms of the number of conversions (e.g., sales, requests for information, downloads)
- **Bounce rate:** The number of emails that didn't reach your subscribers' inboxes
- **Unsubscribe rate:** The number of people who unsubscribed and therefore left your list
- **Complaint (spam) rate:** The number of people who marked your email as spam (too many of these, and your reputation and ability to send could suffer)



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



Build Autoresponders

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

For example, you can schedule a series of emails following a subscription to your list. In its most basic form, this could be a simple welcome email. A more complex example could be a series of

educational emails offering bite-size chunks of information as part of an online course.

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

Message Name	Message ID	Sent Date	Edit	Copy	Remove
Tools for Your Success Subject: Tools for Your Success Editor: MessageCoder	1	October 23	Edit	Copy	Remove
FAQ: Creating and Sending Email Subject: FAQ: Creating and Sending Email Editor: MessageCoder	2	October 23	Edit	Copy	Remove
Tips For Building Your Contact List Subject: Tips For Building Your Contact List Editor: MessageCoder	3	October 23	Edit	Copy	Remove
... Should I Now To Know What You Think!	5	October 23	Edit	Copy	Remove



Test and Improve

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

A/B split testing* is a simple way to help improve a campaign's

success. Select just one area of your email to test—such as subject line, pre-header or call to action—and create two separate versions. Send one version to 10% of your list, and send the other to another 10%.

Then analyze the results. Hit the remaining 80% with the more successful email.

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

Split Test*			
Test A	Re-verification email - B	6% of contacts sent to	<div>100.0% Opened 10 contacts 10 opens</div> <div>70.0% Clicked 7 contacts 7 clicks</div>
Test B	Re-verification email	9% of contacts sent to	<div>100.0% Opened 15 contacts 15 opens</div> <div>26.7% Clicked 4 contacts 4 clicks</div>
Final	Re-verification email - B	84% of contacts sent to	<div>17.3% Opened 23 contacts 23 opens</div> <div>3.8% Clicked 5 contacts 5 clicks</div>

*Only available to Premier Accounts.



Rinse and Repeat

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

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

In addition to revisiting your plan, also consider cutting the deadwood from your lists. Email marketing might be a very cost-effective method of driving business, but there is little value in paying to send emails to people who never open them or who no longer access the email addresses to which you send.

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



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

Related Resources

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

→ Getting Started Webinar

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

→ Email Marketing Metrics Explained

Review our 5-step process and become an Email Marketing Pro in an hour or less.

ABOUT ICONTACT

Since 2003, iContact has been offering comprehensive email marketing solutions for businesses, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions of all sizes. All our email marketing products offer award-winning customer support, 600+ professional email templates, and a reliable 97% inbox delivery rate. iContact Pro, our answer to the growing demand for marketing automation, takes email marketing a huge step forward with workflows, lead scoring, landing pages, and more. It's the complete package to take your contacts on their journey from first interaction all the way through to marketing success.

iContact

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