USING FREE NEWSLETTERS TO
NURTURE PROSPECTS
INTO CUSTOMERS

Part I

# Free Newsletter Subscriptions
Gain New Prospects

The value of a newsletter that is a free value-add to association members and prospective members is a trackable, measurable, strategic tool that marketers can use to engage members and convert leads. The newsletter is an opportunity to provide 1-to-1 customer experiences that reach the audience with the right timing, right content, and the right person. The free newsletter has the potential to deliver personalized dashboards of member status, curated content, and merging specific data points. Then, it goes one step further and opens the opportunity for strategically collecting email addresses, running campaigns that begin to build data points either through forms or email preference centers, sending personalized content, and finally retargeting on social media.

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With email at the center of the marketing world, we have the opportunity to move away from mass email newsletter sends and shift towards engaging, personalized content.

According to our 2017 State of Digital Marketing in Association report, the study shows associations use email newsletters 87% of the time in 2017, but the percentage that use an email preference center only reaches 45% (a 10% increase from 2016). From this we can deduct, that the usage of an email preference center as a tool for personalization is on a healthy upswing in associations.

STATE OF DIGITAL MARKETING
2017
IN ASSOCIATIONS

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Upswing of EPC Usage

■ Usage of EPC   ■ Usage of Email Newsletter
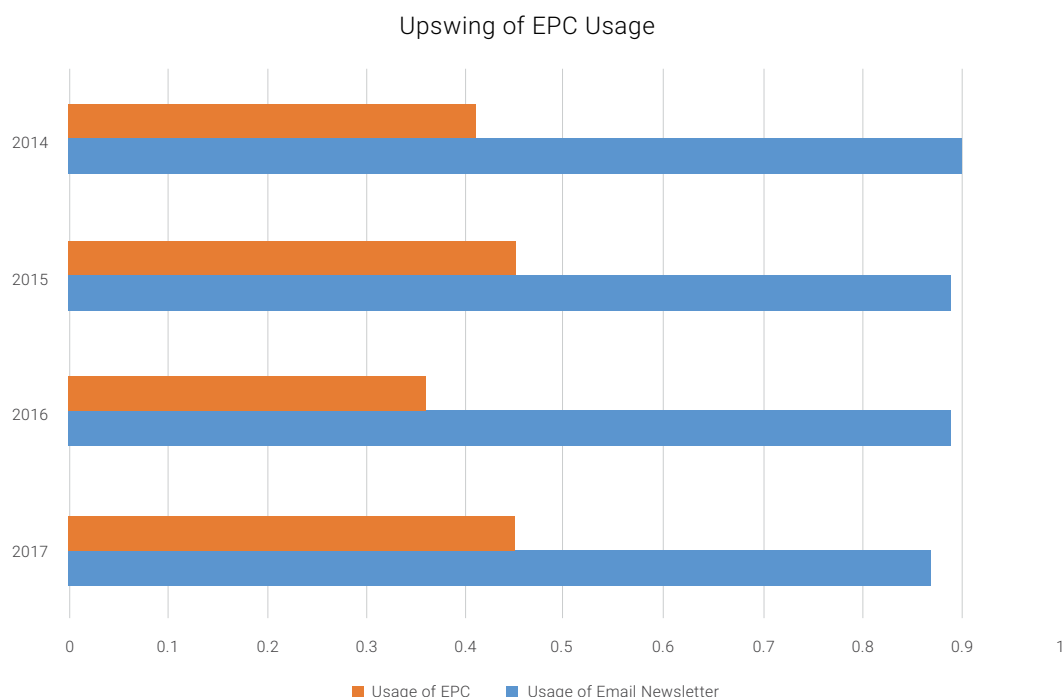
But, what happens when you don't have a prospect's email address?

Here is how you go about legally (and ethically) getting a prospect's email address so you can begin to build a personal connection.

How to Gain Email Addresses
of Prospects

One of the simplest methods to get the email address of an interested prospect is by adding a form to your website inviting visitors to subscribe to your free newsletter. This can be done by adding an opt-in form in the sidebar of your website, at the bottom of every blog post, or on social media. In a report conducted by Adestra, 70% of marketers reported using social media, but only 13% use it for personalization; another big opportunity for marketers who incorporate personalization and social media retargeting.

**Other methods to increase newsletter subscribers include:**

- Offering PDF downloads or e-books with valuable content in exchange for an email address.
- Offering to send them an email every time you publish a new post, for example, "Never miss an update! Sign up for our mailing list to be notified next time we publish a great post!"
- Use a pop-up that is triggered after they have been on your site for a certain period of time.
- Offer subscribers-only incentives - invites to VIP events, discounts, or additional content.

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Gaining newsletters subscribers is a great way to begin building a 1-on-1 relationship, so make sure you offer subscribers highly valuable content. Remember, your goal is to build a strong relationship, not badger them into buying or sharing. Respect the access you have been provided.

Why You Need a Signup Form on Your Website

You need to have a signup form on your website to continuously collect email addresses and leads. A signup form takes an unknown visitor to your website and makes them a known prospect that you can then segment and target towards. Once a contact is known, you can then attribute all of their online activity with your properties under one record and build their "digital footprint". With a known prospect you can begin to attribute lead scoring and place prospects along the lead funnel of marketing qualified leads (MQLs) and sales qualified leads (SQLs). As you build data about individuals you can begin to predict behavior, likely conversions, and ROI.
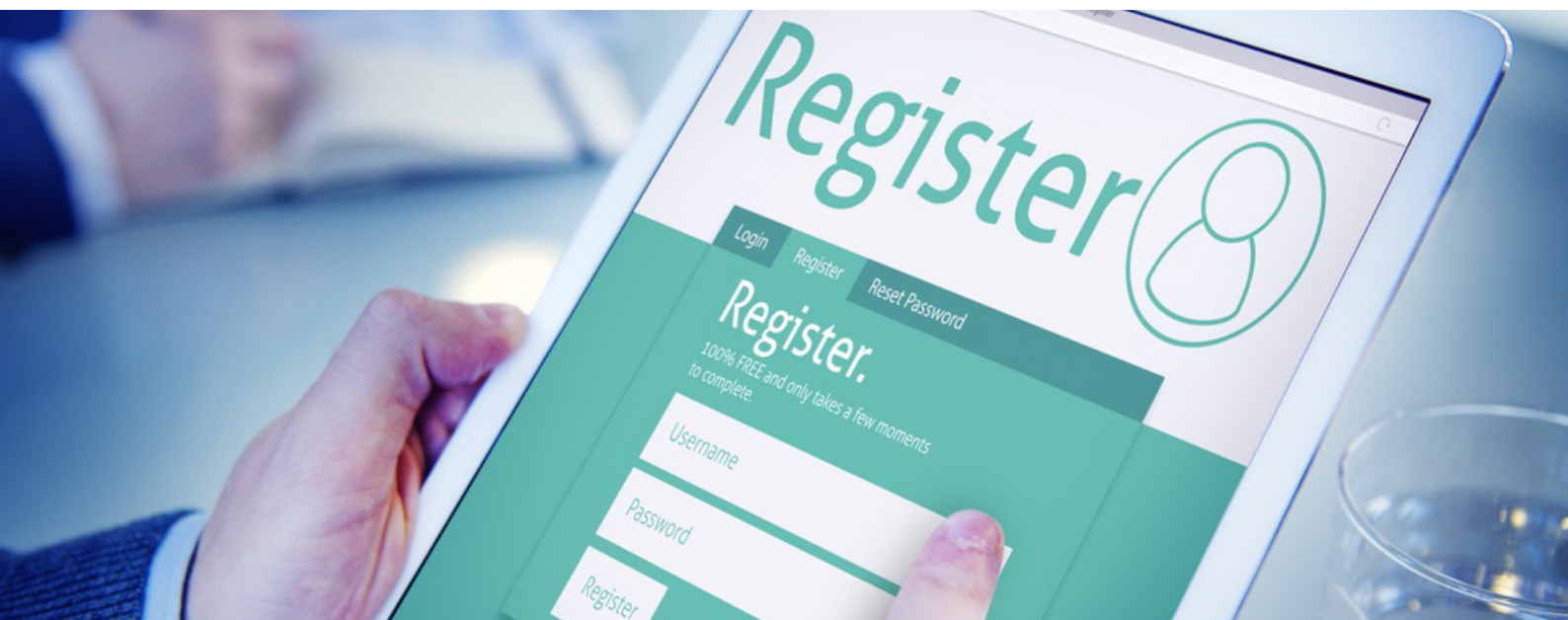
Leveraging Subscribers' Email Addresses

Once you have built up your subscriber base, you can implement personalized automation and personalization campaigns to begin building out your database. In the State of Personalization in Marketing 2016 report done by Adestra Message Focus, it found that 63% of marketers see personalization as effective. Due to personalization, marketers see the following as benefits: increased open rates (83%), higher clickthroughs (75%), increase in customer satisfaction (58%), and increase in sales (56%). However, less than half surveyed used personalization. There seems to be a gap of opportunity to implement personalization for greater results.

Create Highly Targeted Marketing Campaigns

Email addresses allow you to do more than just send emails - you can also use them to directly target your prospects wherever they go on the web.

Have you ever searched for a toy or shoes on Amazon, then gone to check Facebook and saw the exact same product in an ad? That is targeted marketing. You can use emails to retarget site visitors and remind them to make a purchase or even show them ads on Facebook. This type of advertising is highly effective - instead of showing your ad to 5,000 people that may or may not not care about your association, you can save money and show it to 50 people who visited your site recently.

Useful Content & a Personal Connection

In the past, marketing was all about who could spend the most to reach the most prospective customers. Today, marketing is about building real, authentic relationships - long before any money is exchanged.

Use email addresses to share targeted, personalized free email newsletters your audience is actually interested in. Then, implement strategies for gaining newsletter prescribers. Finally, go one step further with digital retargeting and advertising.

Part II

Personalizing Your User's
Website Journey

It is proven that 60% of shoppers say they are more engaged when an online store remembers their personal and payment information to speed up a purchase, according to Capgemini. The most obvious reason to implement personalization into your online content strategy is conversions and measurable results.

Personalized Content Creates
Long-Term Customers
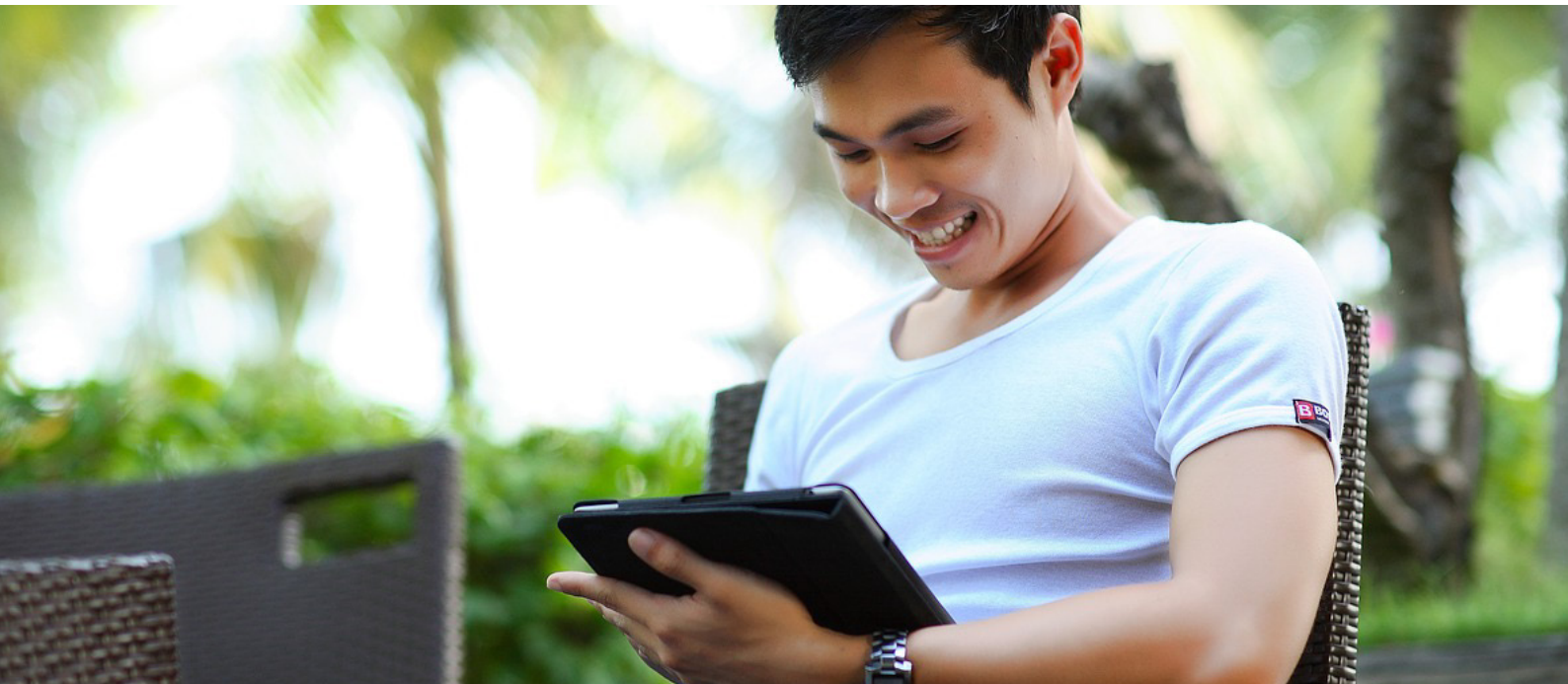
Consider this: You are searching for a gift for your father's birthday. Ties and collared shirts are boring; you want to find something unique. You head to Amazon and search for shirts from his favorite football team, a grill cover, a pair of slippers. You don't find anything that seems just right, so you close the website.

The next day, you get an email from Amazon with suggestions of items you might like — slippers with Dad's favorite football team logo and a grilling utensil set, perfect! You click and buy.
This is an example of how personalizing your user's website journey can increase sales.

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What to Track

There are multiple factors you can track to create a personalized website journey, including: **IP address:** Tracking an IP address allows you to see when the same customer visits your site and see what pages they view. Since not all users log in or use a current email address, this is another way to follow users across devices and browsers.

Referring Page: Being able to tell if the user came from social, an email newsletter, or a sponsored post can give you lots of information about their buying habits.

Previous Purchases/Previously Viewed Products: Past purchases and views give you an insight into what type of products appeal to your audience and can inform customer repurchase intention.

Time on Page: If a customer spent a lot of time looking at one product, they might need a push to make the purchase.

There are multiple ways to use this data, including:

- Sending related product offers
- Retargeting or social
- Sending abandoned cart emails
- Suggest educational information about a product they viewed
- Send a reminder to purchase a gift for specific holidays

As you can see, data is a large component of email marketing. According to the 2016 report by Adestra, there is opportunity where only 40% of marketers believe their organization's competence is merely basic when it comes to their skilled usage of data. Email marketers can bring quick wins by improving data competency.

Website Personalization Tools

Many of the tools you already use may be able to create the personalized experience your audience craves. Here are just a few products and services that HighRoad Solution offers to help associations do more with email and web personalization:

Email Marketing Platforms

Use data points to create automated programs and workflows that send based on a trigger or action taken by a contact. Create campaigns with personalized variables based on name, title, address, event registration, etc.

Newsletter Express

Curate content across multiple RSS feeds inside one interface to feed into your email platform.

Marketing Automation Platforms

Manage workflows, social campaigns, email sends, data queries, and list making all under one platform.

Facebook Custom Audiences

Use Facebook's ad platform to market to people in your email database who have recently visited your website.

Intelligent Contextual Email (ICE)™

Send hyper-personalized emails based on user profiles.

Paid Search

Implement text, display, or video ads across the web based on keyword targeting, email address lists, or retargeting based on who has visited your website.

Ad Retargeting

Target display ads at specific websites to retarget users with promotions who have recently visited your website.

Part III

Why Marketers Should Use Personalization in Email Marketing

If you've ever worked in the marketing department of an association, you know how challenging email marketing can be. There are many offers and information that you send out on a regular basis, but getting your recipients to engage, respond or convert is not always easy.

One of the reasons your email-marketing campaigns may not be seeing the results you expect or want is because you haven't yet used email automation. Essentially, this is where you personalize the emails that you send to your members, so they become much more relevant to your recipients.

What Is Personalization?

First off, let's define what personalization in email marketing is. It's not just addressing your recipients by their names, as in, "Dear Terry." Instead, personalization is a deeper, more fine-grained way of showing your recipient's info and offers that are very relevant to them, their tastes, and their browsing habits or behaviors, usually after they've performed a specific action.

Think of it as communicating with your audience in a 1-on-1 approach that's entirely unique to them.

As an example, let's say that a new member signs up to your association on you website, providing you with basic info about him. Immediately, your marketing-automation solution sends a welcome email to him with relevant calls to action (read our blog, sign up for our newsletter, etc.) based on his user profile that he filled out.

Getting the Data for Personalization

Personalized emails that you automatically send out to your recipients have to be based on accurate information about your members and site visitors, so that they are relevant and not ignored.

This data is available to you in various forms. Site visits and user behavior that you keep track of show what's of greater interest to users. For instance, if a visitor spent a lot of time on your "Join" or "Buy Membership" webpage, then there's a good chance that he's interested in joining your association.

Another example is with your CRM (customer relationship management) system. Everyone who's ever interacted with your association on your site will have a CRM profile. Let's say a visitor used Live Chat on your site, asked about a specific product, and then had a phone call with one of your representatives to find out even more information.

The next time he visits your site again, your marketing automation tool would send him an email asking him to follow up or even take the next step in the conversion funnel—based on his past interactions with your association.

At the heart of personalization, a staple is the subscriber's name, reported by 77% according to Adestra. For associations this leaves out huge opportunities to use transaction history on event registration, member renewals and sign up because only around half (49%) of email marketers are using transaction data.

Marketing Automation and Personalization for Greater Conversions

Studies show that personalization is the driver of engagement and conversions. That's why you need to understand what it is and implement it at your association. By sending these automated and personalized emails to the right leads and visitors, you're sending them offers and information that's very relevant to them. As a result, an email then becomes more than just an email; it becomes highly valuable, strategic, direct communication.

> **In this day and age, this modern approach to email marketing can be a big game changer at your organization.**

What to Personalize

- Personalize forms
- Titles
- Subject lines
- Personalize by birthdate with a special offer
- Send dynamic content that differs from the CEO to the Associate
- Collect new info on forms to help future personalization
- Offer a relevant additional product, service, or content offering

Optimizing for Conversions with Personalization

Marketers in charge of personalization and conversion tend to get overwhelmed due to not having all the data they need across all the fields. They need to first take a step back and follow the following steps/answer the following questions:

1. What do you want to personalize?
2. Why do you want to personalize and what is your end goal?
3. Aim to send out less email, but better quality messaging at the end of the day.
4. Once you have identified why you want to personalize a message, decide what you want to do and how you want to go about doing that.
5. Conduct an inventory assessment of what you want to do compared to the data you have.

> *The best personalization campaign to drive conversions will meet where your goals and your data points align*

It is important to simplify and clarify the conversion process to help with your conversion rate. This can be done through conducting a user experience audit with tools to gain insight into your checkout process. For example, Amazon offers one-click purchases, which dramatically cuts down on friction to conversion.

Conclusion

By not acting like a robot with mass email sends, and remembering a user's behavior and preferences, your team is cutting down on friction-building steps between you and the next click or conversion. Sending out the free newsletter and collecting users' email addresses is the first step in building up the data points to conduct personalized experiences. By following these best practices, your association will gain new email addresses that represent prospective members and customers. Use your free newsletter subscriptions to create a personalized journey that treats the subscriber with respect and provides valuable information along the way. Using free newsletters, email & web best practices as well as solid content marketing principles will increase the probability of subscribers converting to paid participation.