

# Manage Your Subscriber Lists Part I

By Alexandria K. Brown

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Boost Business With Your Own E-zine <http://www.ezinequeen.com>

If you're ready to begin publishing your own e-mail newsletter, or 'e-zine,' you basically have three options to manage your subscriber list:

1. Do it yourself with your current, everyday e-mail program.
2. Sign on with an online list service to manage it all for you.
3. Purchase list management software to use on your own computer.

Over the next few weeks, we'll cover the pros, cons, and how-tos of all three methods. Today, in part one of three, we'll talk about the seemingly easiest (but often deadliest) option of doing it yourself with your current, everyday e-mail software, such as AOL or Microsoft Outlook. PLEASE NOTE I DON'T RECOMMEND THIS METHOD, but if you insist on beginning your list this way, here are some tips to get started on the right foot and avoid embarrassing yourself.

### CREATE A \*GROUP\* IN YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS BOOK

As you invite people to subscribe to your e-zine, just tell them if they want to sign up, to send you a personal e-mail with 'subscribe' in the subject field. As each person subscribes, manually add them to that group list in your e-mail program. (And vice versa for unsubscribing.) To stay organized, set up your e-mail program to automatically sort these messages into a separate folder.

### BACK-UP YOUR LISTS -- EVERY DAY IF YOU CAN.

VERY IMPORTANT! Imagine working for months to first build up your e-zine readership to a few hundred subscribers, and then one day losing them all in a flash! Sadly, this could very well happen.

Your computer could get an nasty virus that kills all your data, your cat could trot over a dooming sequence of keys, a sudden power outage could fry your hard drive, etc.

If you choose to manage your list on your own computer, you're going to have to be EXTRA meticulous about this. Back up your list to a CD or disk EVERY DAY. There's all kinds of software out there that you can set up to automatically backup your files, and I'd highly recommend

purchasing some. That way you can cross it off your daily to-do list. (I use Outlook Express E-mail Saver by MazePath Software, available at <http://www.mazepath.com/ArchivePro.htm> )

## WHEN YOU SEND OUT YOUR E-ZINE, PASTE YOUR SUBSCRIBERS' E-MAIL ADDRESSES' IN THE \*BCC\* FIELD

NEVER place their addresses in the 'TO' field. If you do this, you'll tick off a lot of people and label yourself as an amateur! Two reasons why this is a BIG no-no:

1) You're ignoring your subscribers' privacy, as it allows everyone to see everyone else's e-mail address. An unscrupulous subscriber can easily copy all of them and use them for illicit purposes.

2) When readers open your message, they'll have to scroll down through all your subscriber addresses before they can even read any of your copy. Some of your readers may not bother to scan down that far and will abandon your message without reading it.

Instead, blind copy (BCC) your subscribers - but be aware of the pitfalls involved. Many spammers use the BCC field, so in turn many 'anti-spam' programs (and people who just want to weed out spam) set their e-mail programs to automatically delete any messages that do not have their own e-mail address in the 'TO' field.

Also, sending out bulk e-mail using the BCC field is very slow. While the message you send may look like it's gone out quickly on your end, it could take a long time once it reaches your ISP's (Internet service provider's) server - I've heard of some instances even taking over a day!

## SEND OUT YOUR E-ZINE WITH LESS THAN 10 NAMES PER MESSAGE

Yes, I said 10! I previously gave 30 names as a guideline, but to be safe, I now recommend 10. Based on statistics I've read, 10 is the safest number to play with, because some programs automatically delete any e-mails featuring more than 10 names in the BCC field. Plus, even if you send out an e-mail to only 50 subscribers, it will likely get bounced back to you from your ISP.

Again, this is unfortunately because of all the spam going around. This means you'll have to copy your e-zine several times into separate messages, and copy and paste groups of names into each.

## GET LIST HELP ONCE YOU'RE OVER 100 SUBSCRIBERS

Don't make the mistake that an associate of mine did. (I'll call her 'Sandy' here, otherwise she'll kill me!) Sandy began publishing an excellent e-zine over a year ago. She managed her list herself using her own Outlook e-mail program.

Then a few months ago, she called me in a panic. She'd reached the point that her list was growing too large to manage on her own - she had close to 800 names in her Outlook program! And because her ISP rejected any messages with more than 30 names, she had to send out 27 separate copies of each issue. Plus, Sandy was getting irritated with the mundane tasks of subscribing and unsubscribing people.

After I helped her decide on a list service to use, she then revealed she had no idea on how to

\*export\* all the names from Outlook and upload them to the service. Because I couldn't help her with that, she had to hire someone to personally come to her office and help her.

I also learned she hadn't been backing up her lists, so if for some reason her computer had crashed and lost the information, she would have lost her entire e-zine list that had taken over a year to build! She was very lucky to have not had a problem.

Don't be like Sandy! Do yourself and your subscribers a favor and automate your distribution ASAP. After all, don't you have enough to worry about every day?

NEXT ISSUE: Part 2 of 3, we'll discuss how to choose a reliable and simple online list service.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexandria K. Brown, 'The E-zine Queen,' is author of the award-winning manual, 'Boost Business With Your Own E-zine.' To learn more about her book and sign up for more FREE tips like these, visit her site at <http://www.ezinequeen.com/>

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