

Danger! Beware!

By Cathy Wagner

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You wouldn't think that using free advertising online could be dangerous, but it can. Email advertising is DANGEROUS! Don't be fooled into thinking you have to send hundreds of thousands of messages per day to be at risk.

THE FACTS

I know of three different cases recently where people have just lost their web sites due to SPAM related issues with no warning or notification. They have been given no way to argue the matter; as far as their ISPs are concerned they are done, out of business, with no appeal or refund for their prepaid service.

Case 1: The web site owner was mailing about 25,000 messages once per week with a 5% undeliverable rate. Sounds like a lot, but he was entitled to send those messages. As the owner of an FFA page, people who post ads to his site agree to receive email from him in return for placing their free ad.

Case 2: The web site owner was sending only about 1,000 messages once per week! He was entitled to mail to those people as part of a paid service he had joined and was averaging a 6% undeliverable rate.

Case 3: This web site owner was not sending out large mailings at all! She was, however, receiving a very large amount of safelist mail.

WHOA!

What is happening here?! Clearly, SPAM is reaching epidemic proportions and the result could well be the death of email advertising, which is widely regarded as THE most effective form of online advertising.

Host providers are under increasing pressure to control SPAM; too many complaints can get a host shut down. Also, the amount of resources it takes for servers to send large amounts of mail, handle undeliverable messages and even maintain accounts with a lot of mail can put an incredible drain on host providers. They have to be vigilant in controlling the amount of mail their clients send and receive.

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!

The days when you could buy a list of email addresses and send your ad to them with impunity are gone. It is far too risky today to send mass mailings from your own ISP. Even using another email

account can be risky; SPAM complaints can (and do) shut down advertised programs all the time. If ONE person complains to everyone they can think of about receiving your message, your offer can be taken offline with very little, if any, warning.

DO'S AND DON'TS

If you use any form of free advertising online, you will get mail in return. After all, there is no such thing as a free lunch; the mail you receive is the price you pay to advertise for free. Read the terms of service! Do not post to free ads to sites that allow all of their members to send you an email confirmation. This will cut down on the amount of mail you receive and it will eliminate the temptation to reply to all those messages, which would be SPAM. While you agree to receive mail by placing your ad, the people who send confirmations DO NOT agree to receive your mail. You may not like it, but that is how it is set up. If you do not wish to receive confirmation emails, do not use free advertising sites.

Do not use email address collecting software. I receive mail to accounts that are not published anywhere except on my web site for things like password retrieval. These messages usually say something like, "Thank you for posting your link to my site," but I know that this address was never used to post any ads. I also know that this person who sent the message will not be in business for long. While I am not crazy about SPAM, I generally do not complain; I use the delete button and for me, that's the end of it. But, there are so many people, especially newbies, who absolutely flip over SPAM and I know that one of these people will complain to everyone they can get a hold of and this SPAMMER's operation and perhaps even their opportunity will be shut down soon.

Even safelists are not totally safe anymore. In every one of the cases listed above, the site owner was receiving a huge amount of safelist mail from over 100 lists. While not nearly as effective as having your own opt-in list, safelists may seem like the ideal solution, but ISP's do not always agree. They know that no one could possibly read hundreds and hundreds of messages everyday and they are increasingly aware of the amount of resources being used to maintain full and nearly full mailboxes; they do not want to bear that burden. They ask why should they have to pay for your free advertising. If you use safelists, limit the number you use and do not send them to your primary mail account, send them to a free email account and empty that account regularly!

There are services out there that will mail your ad for you from their servers and they will even provide the addresses, but these are not free and there is still some danger. Generally, bulk email services will recommend that you do not include a URL for your offer in your message, they encourage you to provide a free email address in your message where people can write for more information. This, they say, insures that your ISP and your program or offer are safe: if someone complains the most that can happen is your free email account gets shut down.

BUT I THOUGHT...

Remember, when gurus tell you that email advertising is the most effective form of advertising online, they are talking about sending mail to your own opt-in list, that means to people who have specifically requested your INFORMATION. No one is signing up just to get ads, unless it is a safelist, and you don't get those addresses. The idea of email advertising is not to inundate the world with your advertisement, no one wants that and if you think about it, you don't want to be inundated with other people's ads either. You need to take the time to build your OWN opt-in list.

If you are looking for a shortcut to having your own email list by buying one, or if you are mailing to every address you can find everyday (or even every week), you are headed for serious trouble. You could lose your site, you could take down whatever it is you are promoting with you, AND you are contributing to a problem that is totally out of control.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The truth is beginners should forget about mass email advertising to begin with. Practice ad writing by using a few free safelists.

Create an autoresponder series that people can opt-in for. Be sure your topic is of interest to a wide group of people, you have an informative title and also, that you provide useful information. This is not as hard as it sounds, but it does take some effort. Presumably you are selling a wonderful product that answers an important need for the general population. Your title should project the single best benefit that your product offers and the message series should describe the problem and provide the solution via your offer. It doesn't have to be 10 messages (although at least seven is recommended); you could talk about one specific angle or benefit of your product in each message with an overall recap for the last.

Also, don't forget that there are lots of other ways to advertise online. I have heard many people complain that FFA's and free classified ads do not work, but I know that they do. I recommend an FFA page that has sent me 60 visitors within the 2 hours that my link was visible! The people who say these advertising forms are worthless are generally those who do not have the ad writing skills necessary to make surfers click or they are using automated submission services which allow your ad to slip off the page without ever being seen by human eyes. If you can't get people to click on your free ads, odds are people will not click through your email ads either. Do not pay for a mass emailing service before you are confident of your ad writing skills.

About the Author- Cathy Wagner has created ONE STOP Internet Business Services at <http://www.onestopinternetbusiness.com> for every internet marketer- beginner to advanced. She has grouped not just a few marketing recommendations, but an incredible list that is unmatched by any other single site. She offers a very comprehensive overview of internet marketing, along with the best and most cost effective marketing sites, tools and techniques for even the most advanced marketer.

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