

Guerrillas Need An Optin List

By John Botscharow

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The most important marketing weapon any business needs is their own opt in mailing list. Why?

To answer that, first we must define what opt in means. An opt in list as I use the term is a list of people and their addresses (can be either snail mail and/or email addresses) that you built yourself. These are the contacts who have come to your web site and have requested information from you. Or they have responded to an ad you placed either on line or off line. The particular way they contacted you is not really important for this article but the fact that they requested your information is. They have given you consent to send them information.

Why is it important that they have requested that information? The answer is NOT what most of you are probably thinking right now. I'm not talking about Spam here. The importance lies in the subscriber's receptivity. If I request information I will be much more inclined, first, to read it and, secondly, to follow through with it.

A side bar here! The fact that some government agency or your ISP disapproves of my marketing tactics is not relevant. What is important is that, sending mail to someone who did not request it, that is, someone who did not show any interest in your information, is counter-productive for YOU and a waste of YOUR time, YOUR effort and YOUR money.

I want to stress the word "information" here. Your subscribers did not request to be bombarded with nothing but blatant advertising. If you use your list to send ONLY advertising, your list will disappear very quickly. Most people get enough pure advertising via their mail (and for this article "mail" includes both snail mail and e-mail) to last them a lifetime. They really are not asking for more.

What you need to provide for your list is important, valuable, and relevant content. The criteria you must use to determine if this content is valuable or important or relevant is not whether YOU think it is, but whether your subscribers think so.

How do you determine what your subscribers think is important or valuable or relevant?

First of all, the demographics of your list will give you some general ideas. When you set up your list, you must define a "target market." Who do you want on your list? Not specific names, but you need to pick some specific characteristic(s) you want all your subscribers to

have in common. Perhaps, they should all be dog owners or hot rod fanciers or people who raise bees.

This target market is defined first of all by what area of expertise you intend to specialize in. Are you going to be an expert in martial arts or marital relationships? Once you have defined your area of expertise, then you ask yourself, "Who will be interested in this information?" Try to narrow this group down as much as possible. But do not overdo it or you will have such a narrow target market that your list will never grow to a sufficient size to be profitable.

Once you have defined your area of expertise and your target market, then you can get a pretty fair idea of what your content should be, at least to begin with. It helps if you start subscribing to other newsletters that target the same subscribers you do. This will give you a more specific idea of the kind of content you need to develop. But, let me stress again, this is only the starting point.

-----A side bar here! If you've followed the seven steps of developing a guerrilla marketing plan that I laid out in an earlier article, these three questions should already be pretty much answered in that plan.

Now that you have decided on the area of expertise, the target market, and the type of content you want to provide, the question becomes: How do I provide that content? The most obvious answer is through your own newsletter. But there are other options as well.

for instance, you could publish a series of reports or a book. You could write a column for someone else's newsletter. You could do a radio or television show. You could do a series of audio or video tapes. Or you could do the on line equivalents of any of these. But there is one important factor common to any and all of these possible tactics.

Your content must include original material written and developed by YOU! It certainly will not hurt to have material by acknowledged experts in your field, especially if their advice corroborates yours. But you must include ORIGINAL material. The more original material you can develop, the better in the long run for you.

Why is original material so important? It goes back to the question we raised at the beginning about what an opt in list is and why an opt in list is so important, which we never finished answering.

Having your own list of people who requested YOUR information allows you to build credibility for yourself as an expert in your field. But that works only if your content is your own ORIGINAL content. If you provide too much content written by others, you only build THEIR credibility with your subscribers, not yours! It is YOUR reputation as an expert you want to develop, not mine or anybody else's.

Besides, it was YOUR information they were requesting, not mine, not anybody else's. Give them YOUR information - information which is valuable, important and relevant and original. This will build their trust and confidence in you!

That trust will be useful in two ways for you, but that's the subject of the next article!

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