

Email Market Without Getting Persecuted

By Stephen Bucaro

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Stephen Bucaro
bucarotechelp@earthlink.net

Bucaro TechHelp <http://bucarotechelp.com>

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You provide a Web service such as Web site design, Web site evaluation, search engine optimization, graphics design, or copy writing. You find a Web site that could sorely use your services. You send a friendly email message to the Web site's owner.

Your ISP disconnects your service, your Web host cancels your service, your affiliate membership gets terminated with loss of commissions, your business gets a bad reputation, and you are labeled SPAMMER.

All because you sent an "innocent" email. Spam has become such an invasive and revolting phenomenon today that people who receive any unsolicited email messages will make sure the sender pays dearly for the crime. Is there a way to send a friendly email message without getting persecuted?

Let's make one thing clear, improperly sending mass unsolicited email messages will result in big problems for you. Proper mass email marketing is done through opt-in lists or newsletter advertising. There is no effective way to mass email market for free. Safe lists and FAA sites are a waste of your valuable time.

But there is a safe way to send a small number of friendly

email messages to solicit customers. What makes this possible is your "signature" block. A signature block is a short paragraph, about six lines long, that you include at the bottom of every email message. The signature box includes information about your business and how to contact you.

Most email programs let you configure a signature block that automatically gets included in every email message that you send. To properly use a signature block, make sure that it is not personalized in any way to the individual that you are sending the message to. Make sure there is a dividing line that separates the signature block from the rest of the email message.

To put it another way, you are NOT sending a marketing message to the individual. You are sending a personal message that just happens to automatically include your signature block. Now all you need is an legitimate reason to send a personal message to the prospective customer. Below are five different scenarios for this.

1. Give a Compliment.

Find something you like about the prospective customer's website and send them a compliment. For example: "I'm writing to let you know that I found the information on your Web site about how to buy a new car very informative. I find your Web site very useful. Keep up the good work. Thank you". And of course, your signature block is automatically included at the bottom of your message.

Don't be too transparent or patronizing with your compliment. Don't send a general compliment. You must compliment something specific. If you honestly can't find something you like about the prospective customer's website, use one of the other methods described below.

Would you consider a message that compliments your web site to be spam? I don't think so. I can tell you that if you send me a compliment about my web site, it is going to be VERY difficult for me to report that message as spam. In fact, half the time I return a thank you note!

2. Ask a Question.

Send a question related to the topic area of the prospective customer's website. For example: "I find your cooking Web site very useful. I was wondering if you know of any good Chili pepper recipes. Thank you". And of course, your signature block is automatically included at the bottom of your message.

Would you consider a message that asks a question related to the subject of your web site to be spam? I don't think so. Most web site owners will be so happy to have the opportunity to answer your question that the thought of reporting your message as spam will be the furthest thing from their mind.

3. Send an FYI.

Find some information related to the subject area of the prospective customer's website and send a "for your information" message. For example: "I read your article about starting a catering service. I just wanted to let you know that there is an article on the FTC web site about the laws related to starting a food related business. The article is at the following URL ... Regards." And of course, your signature block is automatically included at the bottom of your message.

Would you consider a message that provides you with information related to the subject area of your web site to be spam? I don't think so. In fact, you are almost sure to send a thank you note!

4. Give Freebie Advice.

In your message, provide a free sample of your service. "When I visit your Web site, I find the text very difficult to read because of the dark background. I think you would get much better response from your Web site visitors if you used a lighter background. Regards." And of course, your signature block, indicating that you provide Web site evaluation service is automatically included at the bottom of your message.

Would you consider the above message to be spam? I don't think so. In fact, if you were smart, you would realize that you have just received a small sample of the senders service for free!

5. Ask Permission to Send Information.

Using this method, you do NOT include your signature block. For example: "May I send you information about my search engine optimization service? Thank you."

Would you consider this message to be spam? The message is just too darn courteous to warrant reporting it as spam. Most people will probably reply with the message "no, thank you". But a few people who are interested in purchasing search engine optimization service will reply "yes, thank you."

Improperly sending mass unsolicited email messages will result in big problems for you. But there is a safe way to send a small number of friendly email messages to solicit customers. The scenarios described above provide you with legitimate reasons to send a personal message that just happens to automatically include your signature block.

Resource Box:

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