

21 Questions to Ask Before You Sign on With Any List Service

By Alexandria K. Brown

21 Questions to Ask Before You Sign on With Any List Service

Alexandria K. Brown
alexandria@ezinequeen.com

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

If you publish an e-mail newsletter, or "e-zine," you'll need to sign on with a list service (or "listserve") to manage your subscriber list. There are many types of listserves out there, so here are some guidelines to help you choose one that's right for you.

1. Do they use MULTI-PART MIME technology?

You'll need this if you want to publish an HTML newsletter. Otherwise you'll have to send out multiple versions for users who can read HTML, users who can't read HTML, and users on AOL.

2. Do they offer some type of ORIENTATION OR TUTORIAL?

If you're new to the game and/or technologically challenged then you'll appreciate any type of help they offer for new clients.

3. What's their CUSTOMER SERVICE like?

Are they prompt to get back to you via e-mail? Can you call them if you have a problem? Are they available more than standard business hours? What about weekends? Contact them and see how long they take to get back to you - if it's longer than 24 hours, definitely keep looking.

4. Do they NOTIFY list owners if there's a PROBLEM with their service?

If so, how, and how quickly?

5. Do they have CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS to share with you?

Or even better, client references? Contact some of these folks to see how their experiences have been.

6. Do other BUSINESSES LIKE YOURS use their service?

If most of their clients are large corporations, small businesses like yours may not get the attention they deserve.

7. Is their interface EASY TO USE?

Meaning is it easy for you to setup and launch each issue of your e-zine. They should offer a demo or let you access the 'mission control' area that you'll be using to test it out.

8. Can you MANUALLY ADD AND REMOVE people to and from your list if you want to?

Sometimes you'll need to do this, so you'll want the answer to be 'yes' -- especially if you're moving over a list you've already collected.

9. Can you access SUBSCRIBER REPORTS?

How and how often? You'll want to know on a regular basis how many subscribes and unsubscribes you've had since the last issue.

10. What appears in the 'FROM' field when subscribers get your e-zine?

You want it to be YOUR name if possible. Some spam filters screen out e-mail that does not appear to come from an individual person.

11. What appears in the 'TO' field when a subscriber gets your e-zine?

You want it to be the person's name if possible. Along the same lines, some spam filters screen out e-mail that does not appear to be addressed to the individual person.

12. Who has ACCESS to their servers and your list?

Anytime you hand over your customer list, you're taking a risk. You don't want your service or anyone else using your list for spamming purposes.

13. What happens if some addresses are UNDELIVERABLE?

These are also called 'bounces' or 'bounce-backs.' You don't want them to automatically remove names for 'soft bounces,' which are due to temporary conditions like full mailboxes.

14. How do users SUBSCRIBE AND UNSUBSCRIBE?

Do they have to visit a Web page or can they do it via e-mail (best if both options are available). Is the process single or double opt-in? (Double is better for more security - the user has to respond to a confirmation e-mail before she's added to your list.) Is the process kept simple?

15. Can you customize your LIST SERVER DOCUMENTS?

This means messages like your subscriber welcome and goodbye messages. (You'll definitely want to be able to do this, since the prewritten messages many list services use are horribly cold and confusing.)

16. Can your e-zine give PERSONALIZED GREETINGS AND MESSAGES?

Not necessary, but a very nice feature. For example, if your e-zine came to me, it would start off with something like, 'Hello Alexandria!'

17. How often do they BACK UP their servers?

It should be at least once every day. Also ask if you can download your lists to back them up on your own, as a backup to their backup!

18. Can you send a TEST MESSAGE out to yourself or another person before you send out each issue for real?

You'll definitely want this because it's the best way to see how your e-zine looks on the recipient's end, do a proofread, and check all your hyperlinks.

19. Can you see stats on your CLICK-THROUGH rates?

If you publish in HTML, you should be able to see how many people - and even exactly who - opens your messages.

20. Can they AUTOMATICALLY ARCHIVE your issues if you'd like them to?

Some services will archive your e-zines at their site, others can configure it so they're archived at your own site (which is better).

21. Are they currently BLOCKED anywhere on the Web?

If so, it may mean they've been reported for allowing spammers to use their network. You don't want to work with any list service that's been blocked anywhere, because it means that your e-zine won't reach all of your readers.

(c) 2002 Alexandria K. Brown

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/>

+++++

Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)