

Introduction

It's hard to describe how desperately most authors I know need this tutorial. I don't want to be overly dramatic, but for some authors, it could make or break their careers.

We're at a time where traditional publishers still have a weighty reputation, but they are doing horribly in the author support department. Authors are mostly responsible for their own marketing -- and when "the talent" has to pitch themselves to their audience, that's just not good. (If you've read my blog, you know how I feel about that...)

It forces the writers to dilute their writing efforts, since there are only so many hours in a day. Many of them resent how they're being squeezed into a job they never wanted to do. Even worse, they're ill-equipped to do it, so they look to the industry's traditional paths for guidance.

Unfortunately, the traditional methods are part of why fiction publishing is having so much trouble! Look at what is typical:

Book tours

PR

Trying to get on various lists with a wide readership

Counting on merchandising in stores, such as Barnes & Noble

These tactics *can* work, but they don't make sense for individuals on a small budget. They are unpredictable, expensive, and usually don't offer a good ROI (return on investment.)

A lot of the expenses of these tactics are paid *by the writer!* I was shocked to read on a forum that one fairly popular author spent \$40,000 per year promoting her books. Seems like a total conflict of interest to me. "We'll pick you up and maybe pay an advance, but only if you give us the money back by footing the bill for something we should be doing for you. That way, you pay the expensive promotional costs, and we make more money. Or don't lose as much, anyway."

It's getting to the point where publishers are more likely to take a mediocre writer who is a strong marketer because the publishers can't do their job. "Well, gee, at least we'll sell something this way." Unbelievable.

A publisher's job is to refine, package, and sell intellectual products. The way things are set up now is just wrong. Most of the burden is on the writer, and the publisher's contribution has become less and less, but they still take just as big a cut.

But it's the reality, isn't it?

While not every writer is self-published, almost all authors are *self-marketed*. There are many, many problems with this, and in my perfect world, writers would be able to just write, and publishers would be able to sell. But that's not the reality.

While I can't immediately change the need for self-marketing, I can help you market your writing better, starting right now with this white paper. It contains one of the most powerful, cost-effective small business tool you can use. (And you are a small business, even if you don't directly sell your products.)

You are familiar with this technique already, but you probably haven't leveraged its full power. It is building and selling to a list of interested prospects and customers. Since this is the internet age, I'm talking about building an email list.

Since you "know" this already, you may be tempted to discount it. If you already think you are building an email list, take this little self-test:

- *Do you use a professional email list manager?*
- *Do you write to your list at least once a month and tell them to do some kind of action?*
- *Is your email list signup visible on every page of your website or blog?*
- *Are people actually signing up for it every month?*

If the answer to all of these questions is "yes," then maybe you don't need to read this! But if you had at least one "no," read on... you just might learn something.

Affiliate Disclosure

In this paper, I provide links to several email list service providers, and some of them are affiliate links. I do earn a commission if you buy from them through me — it's the best way I can think of to write this stuff for no cost, but still recover the money I spent promoting this paper.

You don't have to use my affiliate links if you don't want to, of course — my primary purpose in writing this is not to profit, but to help you promote yourself and increase your readership by setting up a mailing list.

I believe in the ideas and services presented in this paper; they have certainly worked for me. While I'm not a millionaire by any means, I bring in a significant amount of money every year, just by using this simple principle.

For the first few years, I even made money using this technique in a half-assed manner. I did everything wrong, and I still made a small profit. I'm confident that it will work for you *if you do it!*

So, do it.

- Kat M.

How To Get More Fans, More Feedback, and More Book Sales — A Mailing List Tutorial For Reluctant Writers

Two bloggers, a mother and a daughter, both have websites. One day, the mother asks her daughter (you guessed it — me), “How come I don’t get any comments, and I have ten times as much traffic as you?” I reply, “I have a list, and I tell them to comment. They obey.”

Before I get into the actual tutorial, you may be wondering, “Who exactly are you to be teaching this stuff?” I am an ad writer and internet marketer in my other online life. I run a small digital press based around a nonfiction niche subject. Publishing and marketing are how I pay my bills, and I started from scratch as a self-published, self-marketing writer.

What’s important to know is that my little ebook venture has been profitable since launch. I made money on the first day because I knew and practiced basic smart marketing techniques. In this paper, I give you the most important technique of all: building your (email) list.

The good news is, this technique is simple, consistent, and reliable. You don’t need to be cutting edge or somehow convert your Twitter followers into buyers or “do SEO” on your site. It’s easy to learn, and it lets you make the most of what you already have -- you really don’t have time to do any of that advanced marketing stuff without it diluting the effort you put into your *real* work.

Keep an open mind.

I talk to a lot of writers, and I know from experience that you may be uncomfortable setting up a list. Authors often have a hard time promoting themselves and their work, but let’s face it: publishers aren’t stepping up, are they? It’s now *necessary* for writers to do at least the bare minimum, even though it’s not really fair.

And if you’re a romance or erotica writer looking to self-publish or self-market, you’ve really got to be smart to make yourself heard. I wouldn’t say that it’s directly competitive, but it’s certainly crowded.

And keep this in mind as you read -- even if you aren’t a professional writer or have any aspirations of going pro, there are very important reasons to set up a mailing lists that have nothing to do with money.

Why building a list is so important for any writer, both for-profit and amateur.

Business isn't just about making money. Ultimately, business is about finding your place in the world, finding your area of highest value, and contributing that to society in exchange for the means to survive. Behind every business is some kind of social purpose, whether it's "I want to help people live in a clean, sustainable world," or "I want to help people get high."

At least in the US, this value exchange means that people who value your contribution give you money in exchange — they "vote with their dollars." In another social context, it could mean that a village gives its elected storyteller a place to stay, food, and medicine in exchange for his dedicated services.

Most writers I know just want to be able to contribute in their area of highest value — writing — and ideally support themselves and their family with it.

But that contribution impulse comes first, doesn't it? When you were a kid, you may have thought, "I want to write stories and entertain people," even before you were aware of how the marketplace operated. The contribution is what motivates writers first, not just the money. And when you have proof that your contribution is worth something — when you get email, comments, money, and feedback — you want to contribute more.

Many writers have a hard time embracing both the social contribution and commercial aspects of their work. To add to the problem, "sales and marketing" imply a hostile environment because that's what we're used to from other people. You join an online newsletter only to get assaulted by "BUY THIS! BUY THAT! SPAM SPAM SPAM!"

Don't be afraid of marketing just because you've been burned by spammers.

We're often so wary about giving out our information to crappy marketers that we think there's no way anyone will give their contact information to us. We might even think that we're in with the crappy marketers simply because we have an email list.

But writing and promotion go hand in hand. They're both social impulses. Very few people write only for themselves and don't care if anyone reads it. We want to release our stuff into the wild, get as many readers as possible, and see changes in our world because of what we write. So, I want you to think about building your email list in the context of building your social network of fans and friends, not as a way to con people into giving you money. It's less scary that way.

Benefits of having a list that have nothing to do with money.

When you have an email list, something you can quantify, this will inspire you to write more. You can look at the growing number of people who are interested in what you have to say, and know that your contribution is valuable. This gives you confidence and motivation.

Even better, you can interact directly with your readers. The certainty that your writing matters becomes more real to you with every member who signs up for your list. When you're stuck, your list can keep you going when everything else is against you, because you have proof that people value your writing.

I know this, because I live it. Lists don't have to be seen as only faceless potential buyers; they are potential friends and supporters. I have a non-commercial list of around 600 die-hard fans in a particular niche. When I start getting into "my life sucks" mode, as even the most outwardly successful people do, I write to my list.

I contribute, and they respond with comments, quality feedback, and questions. Their response tells me that I am valuable, that what I'm doing makes a difference and matters. Sometimes, I sell them something, and when they vote with their dollars (and many of these people are dirt poor), I know that I'm really doing something right.

Benefits of being a member of a list.

I'm subscribed to lists, and I'm sure that you are, too. Some are good experiences, and some aren't. How do you feel about the good lists? Why did you subscribe? Make some notes.

Getting a handle on how you feel about being a member is important, because that's how you know to treat your own members the way you want to be treated as a member. Even if you have a noncommercial site and don't intend to sell anything, setting up a list is still important for your members.

People want to be part of an elite group. They want to feel special, and joining your list gives them two ways to do this: membership, and association with celebrity / leader (that's you.) Some of your visitors will be more casual, but a small percentage of them will resonate so much with you that they don't want to be like everyone else. They *want* the chance to distinguish themselves to you.

They want to feel like you — a celebrity or leader — value them. If you need to set up a list, and make sure that their list experience is good, you will demonstrate that you do

value them.

One blogger I talk with repeatedly resists setting up a mailing list. Her husband said, "She wants people to take away something from her site, not put something into it."

Yes, I know where she's coming from. The idea of being a central producer who is important enough to create outward ripples is very romantic and exciting. But most often, it's just a fantasy — a "beer commercial," as one of my teachers would say, used as an excuse for not asking people to take action.

Even if you're afraid of people not signing up for your list, it doesn't take away from your responsibility. It's your responsibility to give your readers the opportunity to deepen a relationship with you through your mailing list.

Everyone needs an army to make waves. You don't exist in a vacuum, but a society. Your list is your army, and only with their help will you be able to get the momentum you need to really make a difference.

Benefits of having a list that DO involve money.

Well, when you have a list of interested people who voluntarily joined your list so that they can hear more from you, you can sell them stuff. You can make money without having to use the current — and deeply messed up — publishing system. In a better system, writers could just focus on writing and not have to do their own promotion and marketing, but as it stands now, you're forced into doing a lot of the selling.

Did you know that the #1 reason people don't buy something they want is trust? There's that old advertising saying that it takes exposure to a product 7 times before a customer buys. There is a lot of truth in that.

It may not be exactly 7, and it varies from person to person, but it does take multiple "touches" to build a high enough trust between you and the customer before she buys. Cultivating your list gives you maximal opportunity to build that relationship — without a list, you won't be able to reach them enough times to give them the opportunity to buy.

I know this for a fact. In the four years since my digital press launched, there have been people who I've heard from over and over with questions. I responded every time, establishing trust with them, and only now are they buying from me. *Four years later!*

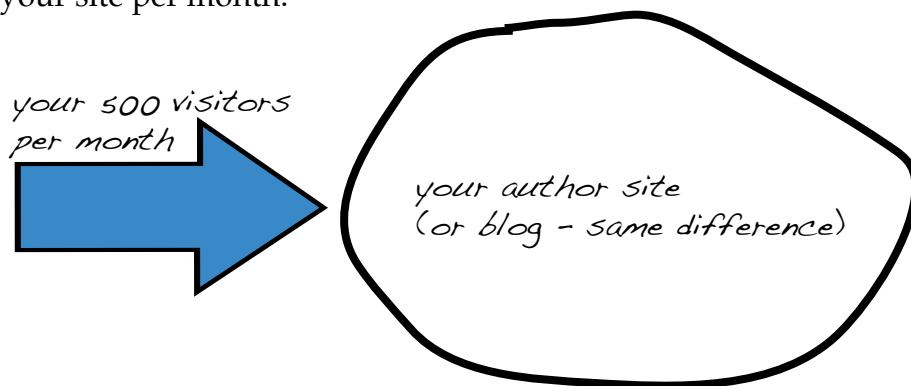
Now, let's do some math.

ADELE JOURNAL'S

Real tools for self-published & self-marketed authors.

List Math.

Let's say that you're a self-published author. You sell a \$5 ebook, and you only get 500 visitors to your site per month.



This is actually fine, to start with — with time and patience, you can get a large enough following to support you full time. But you have to be smart about it, and that means building a list, as you will see.

You already know (I hope) that only a small percentage of people who come to your site buy anything from you. Usually, the small percentage is just 1%, and that's considered to be pretty good!



This means, you may get 5 sales per month of your \$5 ebook — a whopping \$25! Again, that's considered to be a good conversion rate for first-time visitors. Obviously, that kind of sucks, and you have to have a ton of visitors to really pay off.

Worse, the other 495 visitors come and go without even saying hello. They only have two choices: buy right now, or leave. (Yes, a few will bookmark your site or subscribe by RSS, but those don't really count for reasons I will explain later.)

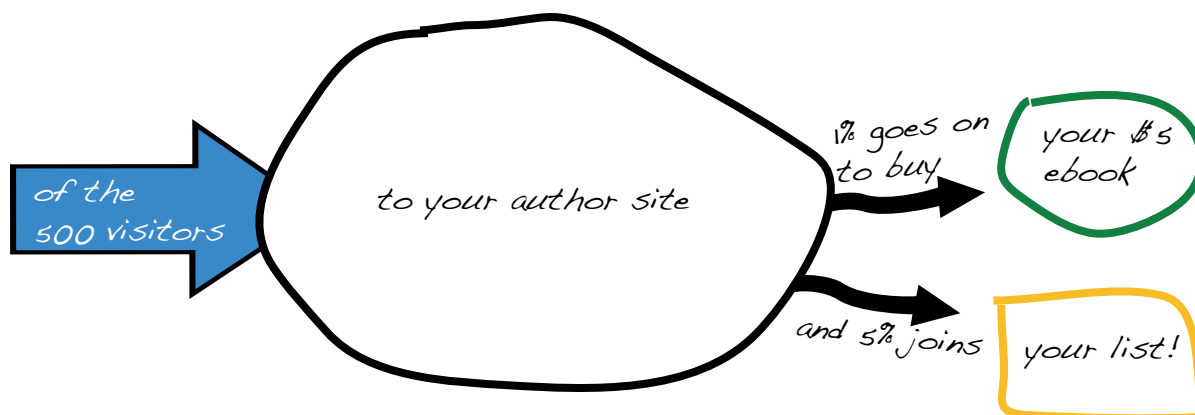
ADELE JOURNAL'S

Real tools for self-published & self-marketed authors.



In ten months, you will have sold 50 copies, and 4950 people will have dropped by your site and vanished without a trace. That's 4950 potential friends, comment and feedback givers, and book buyers.

But the number of people who will sign up for your list will be higher than the drive-by sales percentage. On the low end, 5% of visitors will sign up for your list. This means, with the same 500 visitors, you will get 25 signups per month, probably in addition to the 1% who buy. (There will be a little crossover -- some will do both.)



While this may not seem like a big deal, in ten months, you'll have 250 members. Yes, over 4000 people will still have come and gone, but at least you gave them all the chance to have further contact with you. Your visitors now have three choices: buy right now, give you their interest and future attention, or leave.

Even if you don't sell anything on your site, just from a reader's viewpoint, it's just good service. I've been frustrated by many writers' sites that don't have an email subscription. If I like the stories, I want to get a notice when they post more.

Some important differences between the drive-by visitors and members of your list.

- 1) You can contact them again and again.
- 2) They're no longer anonymous strangers, but people with a proven, active interest in being your friends and fans. They've given you an opportunity to build a high-trust, high-value relationship with them.
- 3) They will convert at a higher rate than drive-by visitors. A reasonable rate is 10%.

Let's say you now have a list of 250 people, and you just put another \$5 novel. What do you do? You tell your list! Chances are, 10% buy — that's 25 copies.



Big deal, you may say.

Ok, \$125 is not that exciting, but it's just the beginning. If you mail out again, maybe in a couple weeks or a month, 10% more may respond, and that's another 25 copies. You've sold the 50 copies in a month's time with the list method, when it would take you ten months to sell those same 50 copies with the no-list method.

Meanwhile, you're still building your list at a higher rate than drive-by buyers, getting new people "in the fence," as we say in the internet marketing business.

A look at the possible future.

4 years down the road, let's say that you have a list of 5000 members. When you come out with another \$5 ebook, you're pretty much guaranteed to sell 500 copies right away, just by letting your list members know it exists. That's \$2500!

10% response is just a guess based on a direct marketer rule of thumb. Different lists have different response rates. One of my lists get very low response rates because they're really poor and just don't have the money, even though they're raving fans. You'll have to see what your lists yield. The point is, list response is predictable, and that is incredibly valuable. Even if you only get 3% response from your list, it's still much better than relying on drive-by sales from anonymous visitors.

ADELE JOURNAL'S

Real tools for self-published & self-marketed authors.

You don't have to do these things.

- Trick people into giving you their contact information.
- Come up with any incentives to join your list, though it may definitely help response rate if you do.
- Do any kind of pitchy, salesy writing to get them to sign up.

Just be yourself, and be honest. A lot of people just say, "Hey, want to know when I come out with my next book? Sign up here, and I'll let you know as soon as it's out."

You're giving them the opportunity to demonstrate interest, but not have to buy right now. If you use a recommended list manager, your members can unsubscribe themselves anytime.

Think about writers and other people you want to hear from — it's the same situation. I'm on several authors' lists for this reason: I want to buy their books when they come out!

How to set up your list.

Setting a list up on your website is really easy, but there is one requirement. You have to be able to either paste a line of javascript on the site, or put up some raw HTML code for a form.

There are so many great tutorials on how to use Aweber that I won't put one here. I was going to, but I'll just put some links up instead.

Most writers either have Blogger, Livejournal / Insanejournal, a Wordpress-hosted domain, or a self-hosted site. Blogger allows you to put a web form on your site, but Livejournal and Wordpress don't. If you have a self-hosted site (Wordpress or otherwise), you can do whatever you want to it.

On your site, the signup form will look like just a basic form:

If you want to know when the paper is done, just subscribe to this blog by email here, and you'll get the link to the PDF when it's done:

Name

Email

When the user fills out the form, she'll be sent to a confirmation page and also send a confirmation email. In most cases, she'll have to click on the confirmation link before really being on your list.

This is the "double opt-in," and it's a total pain, but you have to do it.

Double Opt-In — Why?

- 1) It's to make sure your subscriber really wants your info.
- 2) It's to verify her identity. When I was young and stupid, I actually used to prank people by entering their names in mailing lists and sweepstakes. So it could happen.
- 3) It's the law, and it protects you from being called a spammer! People who buy from you don't have to opt-in — you can put them on your list automatically.

Anyway, a lot of people are used to it at this point. It's standard practice, so it probably won't scare anyone away.

Autoresponders.

These are so misunderstood. "Autoresponder" is one of those evil marketing spammy buzzwords, but really, it's just a way to send out timed messages that you set up in advance. Autoresponders can be used and abused however the sender sees fit. Here are some good ways you can use them that won't piss people off.

- When someone signs up for your email list, you should send them a automatic welcome message. I do this for every list.
- When you have a set sequence of educational material that you want to mail out at timed intervals. For example, you could set up a 7-part series on how to write a novella and release one lesson per week. This saves you the nuisance of remembering to send it out on time, and it gives your students time to complete each assignment or step. This is a very popular use of autoresponders, and although a lot of marketers use it, it's still effective.
- When you want to automatically send someone a file in an attachment (or a link to a file.) I do this with one of my free ebooks on my other site. I don't have to send them anything manually; they just trigger the autoresponder and get the file sent at any time of day or night.

Free vs. Paid Email List Managers

There is one free alternative: Feedburner. I don't recommend it unless you absolutely

can't afford a low monthly fee. Feedburner is a very stripped-down version of what an email list program should be — you can't even control the subject line of your emails!

I mention it here for people who simply can't afford anything else, but I absolutely do not recommend using it. I've tried, and it is just too frustrating.

Anyone serious about building a list needs the reliability, deliverability, and features that a paid program has. Surely you can find some way to cut \$10 - \$35 from your monthly budget. Most people spend more than that per week at Starbucks!

Okay, but which paid provider? There are a ton of them!

This is the question. I only recommend two services, but let's look at the issues, first.

You want to choose the right one because you can't simply export and re-import your contacts into a new program. If you do, your subscribers will have to go through the opt-in process again, which is a huge deterrent. Signing up the first time is okay, but having them bear the burden of switching programs will lose you a lot of subscribers — maybe even half of them.

Sometimes, it's inevitable that you have to change, but you want to choose right the first time, as best as you are able. I'm going to tell you about the most popular, most feature-rich, and most expandable programs at the time of this writing. Please note that they all have their problems; you just have to pick the best one for you.

The two most important issues to consider in an email list provider.

- Deliverability. Mailing out to your list won't do any good if it gets automatically caught in a spam folder. Some programs have better deliverability than others. The way I find out which is the best is to seek out peer reviews. In the world of internet marketing, I'm a very small fish in terms of the amount I mail out. My lists are all under 10,000, but there are some people who send out 100,000 to 1 million emails regularly! These are the folks who are very concerned about deliverability, so I listen in on their conversations.

- Ease of use. The people who need mailing lists the most don't have them, and one of the reasons is the fear of new technology. I know, from working with my own stuff, that ease of use is the next most important feature — how can you send an email out when the program is so @\$% confusing?! It's not my goal to make life more difficult and complicated for you. Setting up and managing your mailing list is new territory, but I'm trying to make it as painless as possible.

ADELE JOURNAL'S

Real tools for self-published & self-marketed authors.

If you don't have deliverability or ease of use, you probably won't set up a list. If you don't set up a list, you won't give people who want to read your stories and buy your books the opportunity to become part of your social world.

Cost.

Expect to pay from \$15 / month for 0 - 250 members, to \$50 and up per month for larger lists. Once you're in the \$50 / month range for thousands of members, you can usually find a way to make the list at least pay for itself. Even if your site is noncommercial, you can ask for donations to keep it running, or have some kind of 1-off seasonal sale with weird t-shirts or something.

Beware the "penny gap."

The penny gap describes the difficulty of moving from free to paid. If you only use free services, you think of yourself as a free service user, not a paid service user. Just this idea can block you from going with a paid list building service that would serve you so much better than Feedburner.

You probably already pay monthly internet fees for hosting, domains, cable modem, etc. This is no different, but because it's unfamiliar, many people don't want to do it. Trust me, though: the pain of learning how to do this and paying a monthly fee is worth it. Without doing this, you are leaving a lot of books unsold and a lot of friends frustrated.

My recommendation for "Best All Around."

Aweber is my #1 recommendation for so many reasons. It's not the absolute cheapest, but it is the most widely-used, most supported by both the official customer service and community of users (there are YouTube tutorials!), has the most features, and it's the simplest to use.

Logging in to Aweber is usually fast, which is more than I can say for the others I've looked at! They just do a lot of little things right, such as including the feature of attaching a file to an autoresponder message, which is great if you're giving away free ebooks. Only Aweber and Getresponse do that at this time (December 2009.) They're not perfect, but they are the best for ease of use and deliverability — the two most important factors.

Also, Aweber is industry standard. For software, I always want to go with the program is most likely to exist in 5 years. They're the ones to adopt new features first. When I was just getting started with autoresponders, Aweber had (and still has) the most positive peer reviews.

Cheaper Option

Contact is comparable, but just not as good. This may change, of course, but they're clearly the runner-up to Aweber. Their competitive point is that they have a cheaper entry-level fee to Aweber; however, as you get more and more contacts, the monthly fees are pretty much equal to each other.

Getresponse

Getresponse has good reviews, but most people choose Aweber over it for one feature or another. Getresponse costs the same as Aweber, but it does have a built-in polling feature, which is pretty cool. If you do choose GR over Aweber, I think you'll still be happy with it. The programs are usually neck-in-neck, but GR almost always comes in second, if only because Aweber's just more popular. Also, beginners report that they like Aweber's interface better, and that's probably a significant feature for you.

Shopping Cart Integration

For self-published authors or niche publishers, PayPal is often adequate. But there is another option, and that is 1ShoppingCart. If you want a slicker setup than what PayPal gives you, 1ShoppingCart is worth a look. They have a lot of shopping cart features combined with pretty powerful email list capabilities.

With 1ShoppingCart's highest tier (\$99/month, so not for the entry-level user), you can get reliable delivery of digital items. PayPal has a system for doing this too, but it doesn't always work. I personally use both Aweber and 1ShoppingCart, and you can integrate other programs into 1SC when you need to — many people end up doing this because they start with Aweber and don't want to move!

The only reason I'd recommend 1SC over Aweber is if you want that shopping cart option. Otherwise, Aweber is much simpler, easier, and better for list management.

Others

There are others, but I just don't think any of them are as good as Aweber for ease of use and deliverability, despite what their sales pages will claim. This may change in the future, of course.

ADELE JOURNAL'S

Real tools for self-published & self-marketed authors.

Best Practices.

- Be ethical about getting subscribers and delivering on promised content. Not that you aren't, but I'd be sleeping on the job if I didn't mention this first. If you feel uncomfortable about something you're doing, then don't do it — it's not worth the mental drama, and you'll sabotage yourself into failure.
- Explain the process of double opt-in to subscribers. Some of them won't get it unless you explain that they have to click the confirmation link in the email first.
- Make a custom confirmation page that users get forwarded to after they subscribe, and write a quick "welcome" message that gets emailed to them.
- Don't just send out an email update every time you do a blog post. I like to do a summary of the posts and mail out once a month (if that.)
- Give them a reason to become a member. If the newsletter is the same as your blog or website, there's no truly compelling reason except to get reminded when you update. Sometimes that works, but it's better to use your email list to deepen your relationship with your readers. They join in part because they want to become closer to you; they want to distinguish themselves from a casual site visitor, but you need to meet them half-way with a good reason to join.
- Separate, and better, email content is good. I think of a newsletter as "blog-plus," a summary of your blog, plus some other stuff. You can also give them a "signing bonus," like a tutorial or white paper. I do this a lot; I deliver some PDFs only to my subscribers. Yes, I could have them as download links on my site, but my whole purpose is to build a social network of friends who are interested in what I do, and who I'm likely to be interested in, in return. You treat your friends specially, right? You don't give birthday presents to random people on the street, but you probably give them to friends and family members.
- Give your emails a good title! This will help ensure that they get read. A little true story — my mom's a blogger, but she uses Feedburner and can't customize the titles of her emails. Even though I'm interested in her blog, which is really cool, I always skip over her emails. Her updates are always titled the same thing — the name of her site — and they just don't stand out.
- If using Wordpress, put your subscription form in a sidebar widget that's always present on your site. This makes it easy for people who are looking for it. You can have a dedicated page for it if you're not using WP, of course, and just link to it at the end of

your blog posts.

- Show and tell your subscribers that you value them. There are so many ways to do this, and everyone has their own style. Reply to their comments, do special stuff for them. They're your fan club who supports you.

- Ask your members to help you out with reviews, polls, surveys, and spreading the word. Fans love to be asked for help — don't you?

- Remember that membership has benefits for both you and the member. You get more people in your tribe, and more people to sell to. But your members also have a way to easily have a closer relationship with you, their leader. Even though it's a little thing, signing up for a mailing list, they have a way to differentiate themselves from commoners. If you have good stuff to offer, and you're not misleading, everyone wins.

- Don't use HTML mail. Use regular text mail, not fancy templates. Who uses those templates? As far as I know, people's grandmothers and marketers. You don't want to look like either the Jones Family Reunion Newsletter *or* Marketing Flyer from a Big Company. You want to send out personal communication with your friends.

Why RSS, bookmarking, Twitter following, etc. aren't good enough.

One of the most common arguments I hear is, "What about RSS? They can just subscribe that way, and I don't have to go through the bother, scariness, and responsibility of setting up an email list."

Nice try. First of all, if you offer valuable content that's only for your list, you have to have a list!

On a practical level, not everyone uses RSS (I don't!), and people forget. There are so many fascinating blogs; if you're a dedicated eavesdropper / voyeur like me, you could stay on Twitter all day and just waste away reading all the blog posts. Don't count on them remembering to come back; most people only have a little time on the computer, with a mental hierarchy of tasks. What's #1 on their list? Check email.

But more important to realize is: RSS, Twitter, and all that stuff is too passive. Email signup is an *active* demonstration of interest — a meaningful commitment. It's too easy to subscribe to RSS feeds, and they quickly become cluttered. I have about a thousand bookmarked sites, many of them for writers who didn't have an email list. I don't even visit 5% of them again.

What to expect when you first start out.

You're smart enough not to believe that people will come as soon as you put up your list opportunity, right? Unless you have a fair amount of visitors already, that won't happen.

You can expect that you'll get a steady trickle of subscribers, and you'll have to experiment to see what gets you the most high quality members. My own lists grow pretty slowly -- I get about 20 - 30 signups per day, but these are all from organic search and niche site referrals. It suits me fine -- usually, when I advertise on AdWords or by banner, I don't get as many *high quality* subscribers who will respond to my posts or buy stuff.

It is a percentage game — the more good traffic you get, the more subscribers you get, but your visitors have to be good quality. They have to be interested in what you have to offer. (Getting traffic is a whole other subject; this tutorial is intended to help you make the most of the traffic you already have.)

If you haven't already, it's a good idea to install a stats program on your blog — WordPress has one, and there's always the free and good [Google Analytics](#). Stats programs also take a while to learn, but they're part of the responsibility of having a website and building a following.

I hope that I've convinced you to do build a list. If I haven't, please tell me why. It seems like a lot of work, but half of that is your own discomfort. It's really not that hard -- if you haul ass, you can get it done in a couple hours.

- Kat M. (kat@adelejournal.com)

The End!

On the next pages, I've set up some additional information. The first is a directory and comparison of list management programs.

The second is some links to Aweber tutorials so you can see how it works. I was going to make one, but why reinvent the wheel?

The second is a "best practice" that deserves its own section, it's so important.

Appendix A - Email List Manager Comparison

Aweber

Aweber's base price:
\$19 / month, \$49 / quarter, or \$194 / year

Subscriber Count	Price
0 - 500	no extra charge
500 - 2500	\$10 extra / month
2501 - 5000	\$30 extra / month
5001 - 10,000	\$50 extra / month
10,001 - 25,000	\$130 extra / month

Outstanding features:

- Best interface, really easy to use.
- Best delivery rate, though others come close.
- Automatic file attachment -- really useful for writers if you want to auto-send PDFs.
- Great official support and a huge user base that provides its own support as well, including Youtube tutorials.
- Very informative articles about email marketing that really support their users and aren't just for beginners. I learn something every time.
- Feels like the friendliest professional tool, which is important to me. It doesn't feel like a spammer's toolbox, but a email management service used to send high-quality information.
- Integration with other software, such as shopping cart systems!
- They stay on the top of the features list, since this market is so competitive.

Problems:

- Clonky and slow-loading web form generator. It's still easy to use, but I really prefer the old one. It was a lot simpler, even if it had fewer options.
- They do upgrades often, and that can sometimes cause delays in email delivery. They're almost always up-front if they're having problems, which is cool.
- Not the cheapest to get started (no free trial or anything.)

<http://www.aweber.com>

Getresponse

Getresponse has no base price.

Subscriber Count	Price
0 - 10	free
11 - 500	\$18 / month
501 - 2500	\$28 / month
2501 - 5000	\$45 / month
5,001 - 10,000	\$65 / month
10,001 - 25,000	\$145 / month

Outstanding features:

- Integrated polling tool, which is pretty cool if you like polls.
- Great response rate, comparable with Aweber.
- Friendly interface with a “bubbly” style and large icons, similar to Blogger.
- Good official tutorials with support.
- Some really nice extra features, like sending video mail and storing media files.
- Also stay current with features, since they’re trying to compete directly with Aweber.
- File attachment to emails, such as PDFs.

<http://www.getresponse.com>

Getresponse vs. Aweber

They’re both good. GR is the major contender to Aweber, which is industry standard. GR has been around for almost as long, and the delivery rate is comparable. In my experience, people report more significant technical complaints than Aweber, such as “Getresponse blew up my entire contact database and it can’t be recovered!”

But these programs are always neck-in-neck, so my advice is to use the program that feels the most comfortable to you. Look at the “getting started” tutorial videos, look at their control panels. Aweber appeals to me because I like grid-and-text-based layouts, but the more design-friendly icons of Getresponse may appeal more to you.

ADELE JOURNAL'S

Real tools for self-published & self-marketed authors.

Mailchimp

Mailchimp is a newcomer on the scene, and I have to be honest -- I almost didn't put them on this list except for two good features (below.) They just don't have the network, clout, or resources that Aweber and Getresponse do, and I can't recommend them with confidence -- I simply don't know if they'll be around in 5 years.

They have two redeeming features over the others:

- 1) Free for lists under 500 members. You can start with a free account that's more than Getresponse's token 10 member list.
- 2) You can supposedly import existing lists *without* having your members go through the opt-in process again. I'm sure they do this to get converts from Aweber, Getresponse, and the others. To me, though, it implies that without this feature, they wouldn't be able to compete.

Mailchimp also have a sending limit, which I'm sure you won't hit. Still... it just says to me that they have to keep their bandwidth down to stay alive. Everything about them gives off the vibe of second-tier player. You have to decide if you're willing to risk them going under or (more likely) being acquired by a larger company.

<http://www.mailchimp.com>

1ShoppingCart

Like I mentioned, I only recommend 1SC if you're serious about selling digital products yourself -- truly being your own publisher. It's set up to be a shopping cart, not an easy-to-use email list system, so it's very clunky if you just want to send a newsletter.

Cost: \$35 / month for basic email newsletter package. More for shopping cart features. The digital delivery system is \$99 / month, which is very reasonable if you need it. The other great thing about using 1SC is that you can track how many people buy from an email promotion and put them easily on a separate buyers' list.

You can acquire a lot of data about your list members and see who has bought, like, everything you've put out. It's cool to do this because you can give them VIP treatment. But you have to be kind of advanced to do this, and marketing-minded to mine the data.

Most people use both an email program *and* 1ShoppingCart. 1SC know that, so they try to make it easy to integrate other mailing list services, especially Aweber.

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com>

<http://www.adelejournal.com>

ADELE JOURNAL'S

Real tools for self-published & self-marketed authors.

The Others

There are a ton of other services, such as: [iContact](#), [Constant Contact](#), and [Feedblitz](#), but you'll end up paying the same amounts for these programs as Getresponse and Aweber, and they aren't the best value.

Like I mentioned before, my recommendations don't just come from my own personal experience. I also get my data from places like the Warrior Forum, an internet marketing forum with posts from people who send email in astronomical amount. You always hear the same two companies recommended: Aweber and Getresponse.

It's something of a popularity contest, but for software, popularity really counts. I want my programs to be around for as long as I can imagine, since it's a real pain to switch.

Appendix B - Aweber and Getresponse Tutorials

<http://www.aweber.com/videos.htm>

Official video walkthroughs -- probably the best video quality, since they don't come from Youtube.

[You can also search Youtube for "Aweber Tutorial" and get just a ton of hits.](#) Most of these aren't professionally presented, but they do cover some useful information. I just think it's cool how big the user base is.

[Here are Getresponse's official videos.](#)

Appendix C - If you don't do this, your subscribers will wither like unwatered plants.

It's not enough to just get the subscribers -- you have to interact with them. In marketing jargon, it's called keeping your list warm, or warming up your leads. I prefer to think of it as staying in touch, because that's what you're doing.

Write to your fan base at least once a month. It's easy to do this if you use seasonal or holiday anchors, which I do all the time. Think of ways they can reach you, even if you're not selling anything. When they've volunteered to further their relationship with you, you have to do your part. It's an additional responsibility, even if you're already contributing with your writing and blog.

If you don't do this -- if you leave your members to languish like abandoned concubines in a forgotten palace -- they won't respond to you when you *do* want to sell something or solicit them for feedback.

You may think that the tie-in to seasons and holidays is trite, but humans are earthly creatures and are aware of the changes happening around them. Avoid talking about the weather, of course, but find a way to celebrate each month in your own way.

Set up a calendar in advance for "content in the bank," as they say.

It's a really good idea to come up with a simple editorial calendar. List ideas for each month about how to engage your members. How will you give them the chance to get to know you, and also to make themselves known to you? How can you make them feel valued and special?

Actions you can take:

- Ask your readers for comments.
- Ask your readers for their blogs, and comment on their sites.
- Interview someone from your list and post it.
- Set up polls and ask them to participate.
- Create simple surveys and ask your readers to take them.
- Sell them something.
- Create contests with prizes.
- Invite your members to donate to a cause with you.
- Give them free member-only stories.
- Put up a photo gallery on Flickr. I don't know why people like these, but they do!
- Get all their addresses and send them something in the mail. Expensive, but worth it.

ADELE JOURNAL'S

Real tools for self-published & self-marketed authors.

About Adele Journal

Adele Journal started as a site for my friends in my critique group. Our group is in a city, so it's big, with over 150 registered members. Many of them write some kind of mature-audience fiction, such as erotica, romance, or pulp. I started writing up the best output of our hive-mind as articles for everyone to read and think about.

But my profession is business. I started as an ad writer and went on to internet marketing. I opened a niche publishing business in late 2005 and have been profitable ever since.

Try as I might, the things I learn from my own publishing business keep creeping into my conversations with writers. It's terribly hard not to give out free advice, so I've started writing about the business side of writing -- especially self-marketing -- to release some of the pressure of keeping my mouth shut during critique sessions (it builds up fast, I tell you.)

This tutorial is free, and if you know people who need this information, feel free to send it to them. You can even put it on your own site for direct download, since it's a self-contained PDF. If you have suggestions or questions, you can always email me. I expect to make revisions, but "release early and release often" is my philosophy.

Naturally, I encourage you to join my email list to get the updates and more free tutorials. You can join here:

<http://www.adelejournal.com/get-updates/>

- Kat M.