
GROW YOUR HOUSE FILE WITH A LIST-BUILDING CAMPAIGN

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Your email list is the cornerstone of your marketing program. To keep your house file growing and offset naturally occurring attrition, you need to be steadily adding new email addresses.

Hopefully you're already incorporating some of these list-building best practices:

- Including a field for email address on donation, registration, and newsletter sign-up forms
- Asking site visitors on your home page to opt-in to email updates and e-newsletters
- Asking prospects and supporters to choose their communication preferences
- Gathering email addresses offline: include a sign-up at events, at membership drives and in renewal appeals
- Offering special benefits for site visitors who register as members with your organization
- Driving traffic to your site by providing your URL in offline communications

Those suggestions are all growing practices, but when you really need to get creative and grow your house file much more quickly and drastically than what everyday traffic can offer, we suggest taking it beyond the simple ask with the following campaigns:

1 Pledge And Petition Campaigns

A pledge or petition campaign asks current and potential constituents to show their support for your cause by signing and then forwarding information about the campaign to their family and friends to make the same pledge. Signing the pledge requires filling out a registration form online which provides your organization with the constituent's contact information, including an email address, and the opportunity to continue the dialog with that new constituent in the future.

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2 Incentive/Giveaway Campaigns

An incentive or giveaway campaign involves offering something related to your mission in exchange for a supporter's contact information. Supporters must complete an online registration form that captures their email address and other relevant information in order to be eligible for the incentive. In addition to initial registrations, the ability to track shared and forwarded messages promoting the campaign introduces a viral aspect to the campaign where entrants can "earn" additional incentives or giveaway entries by promoting the campaign to family and friends.

The best incentives or giveaways promote your brand and are related to your mission. The goal is to increase awareness about your organization and attract potential supporters who identify with the work you do.

3 Download Campaigns

An email with a downloadable offer, such as a tip sheet, research report, resource guide or case study, offers the reader something of value in exchange for their contact information. Copy in the email should give a clear idea of what the reader will learn when they enter their contact information and download the asset, usually a PDF.

Good Housekeeping

Building your house file is an accomplishment to be proud of, but keeping it clean and healthy is another feat altogether. With list attrition for most nonprofits averaging 17%, you are losing a significant portion of your list each year. Here are a few housekeeping tips for maintaining good list hygiene:

- **Enlist your supporters to help you keep it up to date.** Send periodic (about once a year) emails to your supporters asking them to update their contact information and communication preferences.
- **Supplement the basic data you have collected** from your constituents with more detailed demographic information, and information about their attitudes, interests and behaviors to help you create more targeted, personalized (and therefore relevant) communications.
- **Obtain explicit opt-in** from all individuals you add to your email list.
- **Review email addresses that are collected offline** and correct common mistakes, such as misspelling of domain names, prior to import.
- **Examine your hard bounces on a quarterly basis**, and consider using an email change of address service to recover working addresses for unreachable supporters. The delivery status of an email address should not be reset without evidence that a hard bounce was in error or spam-policy related.

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- **Let your supporters manage their subscriptions:**
 - Provide tools that enable self-serve subscription management.
 - Allow users to maintain profiles with their contact data and interest preferences.
 - Make it easier for subscribers to remove themselves from your email list than make spam complaints.
 - Ensure that your “remove me” procedures across all touch points are operational.
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About Blackbaud

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