



In our two previous modules, we learned how to create compelling [newsletters](#) and [e-blasts](#). While creating amazing content is the first step to email marketing success, even the most engaged email lists still lose 20 - 30% of subscribers per year. To maximize your email marketing return on investment, you will need to constantly attract new subscribers.

In this module, we'll share six tips to help you increase your email list and keep your subscribers hanging on your every word.

1) Meet your audience's needs



Meeting your audience's needs is the foundation of good business communications, but it's especially important for email marketing, since your audience can easily send you to the spam folder if they don't like your message. The more you know about your audience and what they want, the easier it will be to create compelling content.

It's not enough to just give your audience the content they want. Your emails lists should also provide them with at least some content that they can't get from another platform. Many sports organizations do this by publishing blog posts or behind-the-scene photos and videos exclusively through their newsletter.

To further meet your audience's needs:

- [Study analytics](#) to determine what content your audience responds positively to.
- Use a survey to get some feedback on your content.
- View communication as a two-way street. Ask your readers for their opinions.
- Read our modules on [newsletters](#) and [e-blasts](#) for more best practices.

2) Integrate, integrate, integrate



We've said it multiple times over the course of this toolkit, but it bears repeating: your communication properties should be linked to one another. Readers should be able to find your email sign-up form easily on all of your communication properties.

Put an email sign-up form link on:

- Your website. Make sure to include multiple sign-up calls to action.
- Your social media platforms. Email services like MailChimp or Constant Contact integrate easily with social media.
- YouTube. After you publish your video, Youtube makes it easy for you to add pop-up bubbles with links. Add a link to your email sign-up form.
- Your email signature.
- Your business cards.
- Brochures and other print material.
- Registration forms for programs, tournaments and events.
- Tournament programs and other event materials.

Though some people find them annoying, pop-overs or lightboxes (such as the one below) that ask website visitors to sign up for the email list have also been proven to dramatically increase the number of sign-ups.



To add a pop-over or lightbox to your website, try a service like [Many Contacts](#) or [Hello Bar](#). If your analytics suggest that your members are responding negatively to it, you can easily remove it.



3) Ask several times



Growing an email list takes more than putting a sign-up form on your website and hoping for the best. Some studies suggest that if you want someone to sign up for your website, you must ask them up to nine times. Luckily, if you have integrated your email sign-up links well, you can spread these asks out across multiple platforms.

To avoid annoying your members, try a variety of different requests and use concrete, persuasive language to show the benefits of subscribing to your email list. For example, instead of saying, "Subscribe to our email list!" you could say, "Be the first to register for our programs!" or "Get a behind-the-scenes look into our national team!"

4) Go offline



As a sports organization, you get to talk to potential email recipients face-to-face at programs and events. This is a huge advantage. In fact, many sports organizations report that their most popular email sign-up method is actually just a blank sheet of paper and a pen!

Bring an email sign-up sheet (or an Ipad) to tournaments, conferences, and other events and have your event staff ask fans, family members and athletes if they would like to sign up. Some sports organizations take it a step further by offering a fun incentive to the staff member who signs up the most email addresses.

5) Make your lists...smaller?



Right now, you probably have dozens—if not hundreds—of inactive email accounts on your mailing list. Sometimes an email address is no longer in use, but often these recipients have simply tuned out. They haven't bothered to unsubscribe, but they also don't read your emails.

Once or twice a year, clean your email list by asking inactive email accounts to opt in. While it may seem counterintuitive to remove email addresses when you're trying to grow your email list, some subscribers will be reengaged by a persuasive email asking them if they're still interested in your organization and suggesting that they might want to join a smaller, more targeted list that is more suited to their interests.

Even if only a small percentage of inactive email addresses opt back in, it's better to have a small list with a high open rate than a large, inactive list because a small list offers more useful analytics data. If you use an email service that charges based on the size of your membership list, you may even save some money. Out with the old and in with the new!

If you have one large email list, you should also consider sorting it into smaller, more focused lists. For example, many sports organizations have a separate list for members from different cities or for alumni. If you don't have enough data on your email list to sort it reliably, you might choose to give new contacts the option of signing up for targeted lists.

6) Offer an incentive



We've already discussed the importance of providing unique content to give your followers an incentive to sign up to your email list. Sometimes, however, your followers need a more tangible incentive.

Several different types of incentives have been proven to help increase email lists:

- **Contests:** Many organizations run contests requiring entrants to sign up for their email list. The only downside, however, is that some entrants will be more interested in the prize than they are in your organization and might not be engaged with your content after the contest ends. For more information on running contests, check out our [contests module](#).
- **Discounts:** Offer a discount on tickets, program registration or merchandise to newsletter recipients.
- **Early bird registration:** If you have a particularly popular program, tournament or event, offer early bird registration for email list recipients.
- **Giveaways:** Some sports organizations offer the first 50 or 100 people who sign up for their newsletter a small prize (such as a free hot dog or drink from the concession at a tournament). When budgeting for this giveaway, make sure to consider potential shipping costs
- **Downloadable Content:** If you have a particularly engaging piece of content, consider requiring readers to sign up for your newsletter before they can download or view it. For example, you might create a PDF of practice plans that coaches can download if they sign up for your newsletter.

Growing an email list takes time and patience, but by instituting these few easy tips, you can develop a robust, engaged email list. Have a question about this module? Have a tip not mentioned here? Get in the conversation by tweeting @viaSportBC or by emailing info@viasportbc.ca.

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Sources

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