✉ EMAIL MARKETING

This information sheet is one in a series of nine sheets that were developed to assist seafood producers (fishermen and growers) with using specific tools and platforms to enhance marketing of their products. They are part of an educational publication entitled *Digital Marketing: A Guide for Seafood Producers.*

Each sheet provides an overview of a specific platform, information about using the platform and examples of how it could be used for seafood direct marketing. They are intended for educational purposes only. Prior to getting started with a specific tool/platform, current information - including the costs, requirements and included components - should be reviewed on the tool/platform website.

Email marketing refers to a type of direct marketing where you provide information and promote and/or sell your product via email to a list of subscribers who have opted in to receive these updates. This is a low effort way to engage with your customer base regularly and build a community of engaged subscribers who are more likely to become loyal customers. Email marketing includes both **email blasts** and **email newsletters**.

Email blasts are short emails sent directly from an email account. They typically only include text and are not stylized. These are best for short text-only updates.

Email newsletters are sent through an email marketing software platform, such as MailChimp or Constant Contact (See below for information about selecting a software platform). These platforms offer stylized templates that you enter your information into and often include images and other media as well for a professional "newsletter" looking email. They are designed to be beginner-friendly and help limit the time it takes to create and maintain your newsletter. Email newsletters are a common method of

communication for Fishermen's markets and associations.

It is easiest to create these emails from a computer and neither takes very long. Depending on how much content you add, email blasts can take as little as 10 minutes to create and email newsletters can take as little as 20 minutes. For both, consider setting up an email address for your business (if you don't have one already) instead of using your personal email. Both types of emails can be written ahead of time and scheduled to be sent later, on a certain day and time.

Email newsletters take the burden of remembering and searching for your product information off of the customers by sending them this information directly. You can use this type of marketing to advertise your products and when and where you will be selling them and/or allow customers to pre-order products if you sell at in-person markets or purchase online.

Content Types and Platform Features:
Text, photos, videos, links, online sales, customer reviews and blog posts.

AUDIENCE

There is no target age range or age limit for email marketing. Email blasts/newsletters are opt-in, which means customers need to sign up to be included on mailing lists. You can grow your email list by including a subscription box on your website and/or displaying a QR code to a sign-up form at your markets and other in-person events.

Email Blasts: If your list consists of less than 500 recipients, you can send these email blasts for free directly from your email account as long as you don't exceed the limit of 500 emails per day offered by most free email services. If you have a larger mailing list, email marketing software may be helpful.

Email Newsletters: Email newsletters don't have a limit on the number of recipients you can reach with your email. With email newsletters, you can either send your email to your entire subscriber list or you can **segment** them into smaller groups based on subscriber interests or activity for more effective marketing.

Email segmentation is a marketing technique that involves dividing an email list into smaller groups, or segments, based on specific criteria. The goal is to send more relevant and personalized content to each group, which can lead to higher open rates and more effective email marketing. You can segment your email list based on the markets they attend, the products they buy, their purchase frequency, geography, etc.

Example: If you sell your product in both San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties and you have geographical information about your subscribers, then you can send an email only to the subscribers in a specific county to avoid sending irrelevant information to a segment of your customers.

COST

Email marketing costs are dependent on the software platform and plan you choose to use. These prices are typically determined by the number of subscribers to your email list and the number of emails you send per month. Most software platforms have free plans that allow at least 500 emails per month and at least 250-500+ subscribers.

ONLINE SALES

You can sell your product directly through email marketing by including a link to your online sales page in your email blast/newsletter or allowing customers to reserve products in advance of an in-person market.

MONETIZATION

Additionally, if you promote affiliate products in your newsletter by linking to them, you can earn a commission when your audience buys those products from your affiliate links.

Example: You could partner with a company that sells spices for cooking seafood. You include a link to their online store in your email newsletter and for every person that buys something from their company by clicking on the link in your newsletter, you get a percentage of the profit from that sale.

CONTENT PLANNING

Email blasts/newsletters can include both written and visual components. Emails should be easy to read and worthwhile for subscribers to open, and include no more than 2-3 topics (have a sale, highlights from the week, behind-the-scenes photos or stories). When creating content for your email, it is important to focus the messaging on your audience, keep your writing short and simple, avoid jargon, use clear and concise subject lines that convey value, humanize the email, and include a clear call to action (ex. "Stop by our booth…", "Try our recipe…", etc.). If you have a website and/or social media as well, make sure to include links to those platforms in your email.

Email Blasts: Ideas for email blast content include weekly product availability and pricing, upcoming events, important updates or changes to your business, etc.

Email Newsletters: The email marketing platform you use should have an email template gallery with several options to choose from. Pick one based on your needs and edit it to match your brand - logo, colors, fonts. You might also have the option to create the design from scratch using a drag-and-drop template builder. Ideas for newsletter content include product availability and pricing, upcoming events or event recaps, educational information, news stories, recipes, and featured restaurants using your products.

It's often a good idea to have a set, regular day that you send out your email (but not more than once a week) to interact with your customers and inform them of what products are available. If you have little or no product because it's been a rough weather week or you needed to attend management meetings, let them know. It will help your customers understand the challenges you face and what it takes to bring seafood to them.

Avoiding the Spam Filter

Email marketing runs the risk of being flagged as spam and filtered out of your subscribers inboxes reducing its visibility and effectiveness. To reduce the chances of your email landing in spam, avoid using phrases that could be flagged by spam filters, like "free," "guaranteed," or overly capitalized words, in your subject line. You should also regularly remove inactive subscribers and only send emails to people who have explicitly opted-in to your email list.

REVIEWING PERFORMANCE ANALYTICS

Tracking your email marketing metrics helps you understand your marketing campaign's success. There are several ways to evaluate how well your email marketing is being received:

- **Open Rate:** *The percentage of recipients who opened your email.* Don't be discouraged if less than 25% of recipients open your email, as open rates for email marketing are often low.

- **Click-through Rate (CTR):** *The percentage of recipients who clicked on any link within your email.* A good CTR is around 2% to 5%.

- **Conversion Rate:** *The percentage of recipients who completed a call to action, such as purchasing or signing up.* You should aim for a conversion rate of 2% to 5%.

- **List Growth Rate:** *The rate at which your number of subscribers increases.* An ideal email list growth rate, on average, is 2.5% per month.

- **Unsubscribe Rate:** *The percentage of recipients who unsubscribe from your mailing list.* A low unsubscribe rate of 1-2% is considered ideal.

For a successful email marketing campaign, you want to be continuously increasing your subscriber list, keeping your subscribers engaged by opening and reading your emails and converting subscribers into customers.

MANAGING YOUR SUBSCRIBER LIST

When starting a subscriber list, you must have individuals opt-in to your email marketing. Many email marketing software platforms include opt-in forms as part of their service. If you choose not to use software, consider setting up a Google Form to collect subscriber emails. (Google Forms are helpful because responses will automatically populate in a spreadsheet for easy collection).

Your form should have an "opt-in" section in which subscribers explicitly provide their consent to join your subscriber list, along with a statement notifying them of their ability to unsubscribe from your list at any time. Include a privacy statement that explains how their information will be collected and used, and, if possible, include a link to your business' privacy policy.

Example: This mailing list is only used for announcements from [Company Name Here]. We will not sell or distribute your email address to any third-party at any time. You may unsubscribe at any time by clicking 'Unsubscribe'. For more information view our Privacy Policy [include link to Privacy Policy].

In addition to collecting your subscriber's name and email address, you may also collect optional audience segmentation information. For example, you can include an optional section that asks what types of notifications they're most interested in receiving (product availability updates, upcoming market alerts, etc.) and/or what products they are most interested in.

To build your list, ask your regular customers to subscribe, add a form on your website or social media for people to opt-in to your list and/or pay for ads on social media to advertise your business and encourage people to sign-up for your listserv. Set up a QR code for your Google Form and display it at Fishermen's markets and other events to solicit in-person sign-ups.

Your contact list should be updated regularly as you receive new subscribers and others unsubscribe. If you're using Google Forms, each new subscriber will automatically be added to your spreadsheet, but you will need to manually remove subscribers that have unsubscribed. If you're using an email newsletter service, unsubscribes may be automatically removed from your email list.

Protecting Customer Privacy

You are responsible for protecting your customers' privacy when sending an email blast. The BCC field, or blind carbon copy, allows you to send an email to multiple recipients without them seeing each other's email addresses.

Most email marketing software platforms instinctively add your subscribers' email addresses to the BCC field. If you choose not to use software, you must manually enter all of the email addresses to the BCC field to ensure that customers' email addresses are not shared to your entire mailing list. Separate each email address with a comma, space, or by pressing the enter key.

CHOOSING AN EMAIL MARKETING SOFTWARE PLATFORM

When choosing an email marketing platform, ask yourself - what elements/components are most important to you?

- Low cost
- Ease of use
- Templates/Customization abilities
- **Built-in analytics** - evaluates certain aspects (metrics) of your email marketing such as opening rates
- **Segmentation** - making subgroups within your larger list of recipients
- **Automation** - the use of predefined rules to trigger email messages and personalize your messages based on specific actions customers take. For example, if you'd like to send a follow-up email to every person that clicked a link in your last email, that click would be your trigger.
- Ability to incorporate **online sales**

Email Marketing Opt-In Form (Template)

This mailing list is only used for announcements from [BUSINESS NAME HERE]. We will not sell or distribute your email address to any third-party at any time. You may unsubscribe at any time by clicking "Unsubscribe." For more information view our Privacy Policy [include link to Privacy Policy].

m1bills@ucsd.edu Switch account

Not shared

* Indicates required question

First Name *

Your answer

Last Name *

Your answer

Zip/Postal Code *

Your answer

Email Address *

Your answer

I am interested in receiving the following emails from [BUSINESS NAME HERE] (select all that apply).

☐ Product availability updates

☐ Notification of market dates and times (including real-time updates)

☐ Promotional offers

☐ [Business-specific product] availabilty

☐ [Business-specific product] availability

☐ Other:

Sign up for email notifications *

☐ By checking this box, I agree to receive email notifications from [BUSINESS NAME HERE].

Submit   Clear form

Comparing email marketing software free plans...

This comparison chart points out key differences across free plans offered by 5 email marketing software platforms.

Sea Grant CALIFORNIA	# of Email Marketing Subscribers	# of Email Sends	Access to Email Templates	Analytics/ Reporting	Customer Support
Mailchimp Free Plan	Up to 500	2,500 per month	✓	✓	Email, first 30 days
MailerLite Free Plan	Up to 1,000	12,000 per month	✓	✓	Email
Sendinblue Free Plan	Unlimited (Limited for automated workflows)	300 per day	✓	X	Email
ConvertKit Free Plan	Up to 300	Unlimited	✓	Has list growth reporting but not other types	Chat, Email
HubSpot Free CRM Plan	Up to 1,000,000	500 per day	✓	✓	In-app, Live chat, Phone, Email

Note: There are many other email marketing softwares out there. This is by no means a comprehensive list. When selecting an email marketing software, consider which of the following elements are most important to you and your business: low cost, ease of use, templates/customization abilities, automation, segmentation, built-in analytics, ability to incorporate online sales.

In summary...

Email marketing is best for keeping customers informed, engaged, and connected with your business through regular updates, promotions, and personalized content.

BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
• Relatively inexpensive to create and distribute • Can be tailored to individual customer preferences	• May be filtered into spam folder, reducing visibility and effectiveness • Can be difficult to initially build your email subscriber list