

Double Opt Ins – Be Careful!

What the Great 'Double Opt In' debate means for you plus some vital issues to address when choosing an Autoresponder provider

Being able to collect email addresses, both of existing customers and prospective customers has become an increasingly essential part of growing any business.

But this task is also becoming an increasing challenge for some, because of what is rapidly becoming 'The Great Opt-In Debate'

This all revolves around the issues of Double Opt ins. A Double Opt in is when someone who agrees to accept emails from you has to confirm their agreement, usually by clicking on a link that you send them.

Here's how it works: Suppose somebody signs up to some free information you offer on your site. They fill in their name and email address and press 'submit' Then they immediately receive an email asking them to confirm their subscription. To do so, they need to click on a link.

In theory, this all sounds great. It's a way of guaranteeing that the person did sign up and avoids you sending unwanted emails on those rare occasions when someone signs up to your list using other peoples' email addresses.

But here's the problem. Even the best intentioned subscribers never get around to confirming their subscription. There are no set percentages because it will vary depending on your business, but it's not unusual for a double opt in process to reduce your sign ups by 50%. If email marketing is a big part of your business (and it should be) that's a massive and I would suggest unacceptable loss of profits.

Be Careful Who You Listen To

The positive side of double opt in, is that it reduces spam complaints and that you may end up with a more responsive list. The idea is that if someone is motivated enough to confirm their subscription, they are more likely to buy from you.

This thinking leads to the following type of quote that I discovered in one article on double opt ins;

"Maybe you'll lose a few names in the double opt-in process (only about 40 percent confirm), but you'll have a better list as a result."

This is the type of quote that was almost certainly written by a writer, not an entrepreneur whose financial future depends on their ability to market effectively.

First, you could only contemplate losing 60% of your future customers in such a matter of fact way, if you don't own a business.

Secondly, I don't buy into the concept that it gives you a much better list. It probably is true that the people who confirm their opt in may end up being some of your best buyers. However, there are likely to be many more great customers who never get around to confirming because they're distracted by something else, or the telephone rings, or in that moment they don't see the full benefit of having a relationship with you etc etc.

So, there's a big price to pay for double opt ins. In which case, why not just ignore the concept and just carry on as we've always done? Well, it's not quite that simple. There are three outside forces who may pressure you to use double opt ins. They are your country, your hosting company and your autoresponder company. Let's look at all three:

1 Your Country

As Internet Marketing progresses, where you live may play an important part in your email strategy. Different countries seem to be taking different approaches to email strategy.

Basically, the USA is the big challenge here. There are and continue to be many types of legislative moves to enforce regulations on the use of email in the USA and sometimes in specific states. These regulations may reduce spam but they may also make the entrepreneur's life harder.

If you're in the UK, the approach is (currently) more relaxed, although we should certainly expect the European Union to fill their days trying to dictate how you run your business.

So keep an eye on your country's legislative agenda and if in doubt, get legal advice.

2 Your Hosting Company

If you send your own emails, hosting companies may become increasingly concerned about the spam issue. This is because if you are perceived to be sending spam you can get blacklisted by the ISPs (who own the email accounts of the people you're emailing) and when that happens it's actually your server where the emails are coming from that can be affected. Your hosting company owns those servers, so they won't be impressed.

Fortunately, we haven't seen many hosting companies insisting on double opt ins but my advice is to have a back up plan in case your hosting company gets tough on this issue.

3 Your Autoresponder Company

This is where many business owners are having the biggest problems.

If you're at all serious about Email Marketing, you need to be using an autoresponder. An autoresponder is a piece of software that automates the entire email process. It sends out the emails for you, it personalises them and you can schedule emails weeks or months in advance.

So here's the problem: ***Most auto responder companies send your emails for you on their servers.*** With all these customers using their servers to send emails, it only takes one unscrupulous client and their entire servers can get blacklisted.

So to keep the ISPs from blacklisting them, many of the autoresponder companies are now promising to make their customers use double opt ins.

Some of them still allow single opt ins for new sign ups – but require double opt ins for any existing names that you’re importing into your list.

Whatever the current situation, the writing may well be on the wall. If you want to use third party autoresponders, it may well be a double opt in future.

The Solution

There is a solution. It involves a little more work and possibly you getting some technical help – but it may be well worth it.

The solution is to run the autoresponder on your own server (or your hosting company’s server.)

If you do this yourself, treat your email list with respect and always offer them an unsubscribe option, you should be able to proceed with single opt ins with virtually no complaints.

The company we recommend for this is List Mail Pro. You get their software installed on your server and you have your very own autoresponder. You can read more about them here:

[List Mail Pro](#)

The Future

It’s still too early to predict precisely where the world is going with this issue. While double opt in may eventually become standard, it’s also possible that we have already seen the peak of double opt in fever. Email delivery is actually improving as is the ability to deal with spam. If the ISPs move to a model where they end up charging you and I for each email we send that may signal the beginning of the end for spam.

People were initially horrified at the idea of paying to send email (if it happen’s it’s likely to be 1 cent or less per email) but I would sooner a world where we pay a small amount to email a single opt in list, than be able to email a list for free that’s been reduced by 50% because of double opt ins.

Watch this space!