

# Email marketing for retailers.

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The ultimate guide to increasing subscribers and growing sales.



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# 01

## Introduction.

As a retailer, you have a lot on your plate. You're busy staying on top of inventory, taking care of customers, keeping your staff in line, and more.

**With so many to-dos**, it's not uncommon for a task like sending emails regularly to slip a few notches down your list of priorities. But as tempting as it may be to skip this week's newsletter or to forgo the email for "hipper" tools like social media, letting email marketing fall by the wayside is a big mistake.

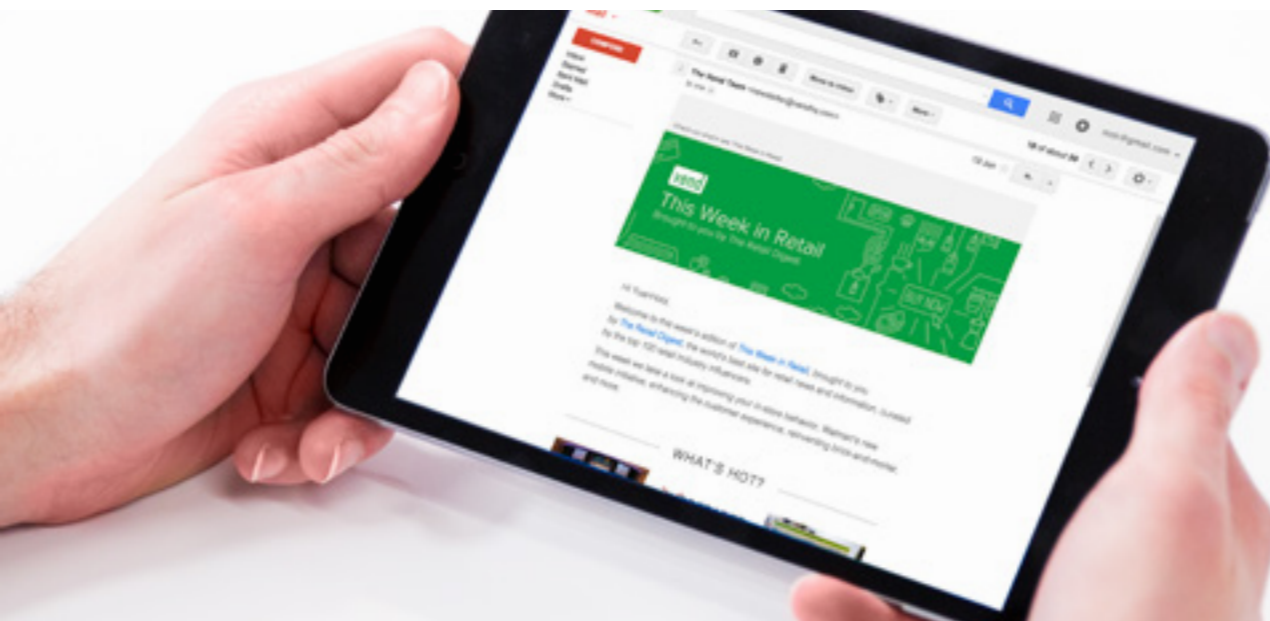
Studies have shown that email is still an essential ingredient in the retail marketing mix. A [survey by McKinsey & Company](#) found that “E-mail remains a significantly more effective way to acquire customers than social media—nearly 40 times that of Facebook and Twitter combined.” McKinsey also cites studies that have found email to be three times more effective in prompting purchases compared to social media, and the average order value is 17% higher.

Stats like that clearly indicate that email marketing isn’t something retailers should neglect. The good news is, staying on top of email isn’t as cumbersome or time consuming as you might think. With the right strategies and tools, you can streamline the process of growing your subscriber list and sending messages, so you can keep in touch with customers and drive sales.

This whitepaper, jointly presented by Vend and Collect, teaches you how to do all that and more. It will teach you how to effectively collect email addresses and grow your database, how to communicate with customers and keep them engaged, and finally, how to maximize deliverability and results.

Go through the points below, apply what you can in your business, and you’ll be well on your way to email marketing success.

**Let’s get started.**



# 02

## Collecting customer information.

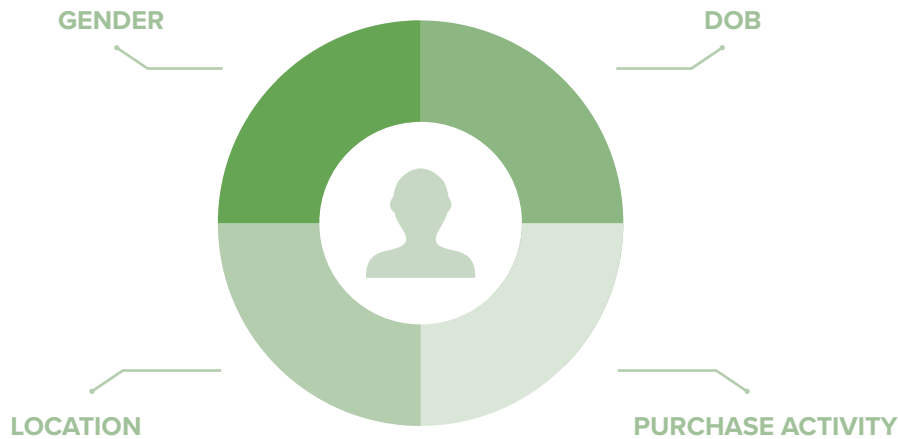
Collecting high quality customer data provides you with a wealth of information about who your customers are, and how they like to shop.

**With the probability of selling to an existing customer being 60-70% higher** [[Marketing Metrics](#)], you want to make sure you're focusing your efforts on building a mailing list of your actual customers.

Doing so gives you a more captive audience, higher open and click through rates, and most important, higher chances of conversion. In this chapter, we'll talk about what information to collect, how to collect it, and what tools to use.

## 1. What information to collect

Every retailer should collect the basics, which include your customers' names and email addresses. However, if you want to take things further and be more targeted and relevant with your emails, you'll also want to collect more detailed data, such as gender, birth date, purchase activity and location.



## 2. How to gather customer information

Once you've decided on what information to gather, you'll need to work on how you're going to collect them. There are generally three easy ways to do this: you can do it in-store, online, and on social media. We discuss these methods in more detail below.

### a. IN-STORE

The best time to capture your customers' details in-store is while they're finalizing their purchase. Instruct your employees to make friendly conversation at checkout, and have them ask shoppers if they would like to sign up for your mailing list.

Here are some recommendations:

- **Give customers a reason to give you their information.**

Most of your customers will be happy to hand over their details in return for an incentive such as a discount or an opportunity to join to your loyalty program.

One example of a retailer doing this well is [VapeMeet](#), a vape shop in Canada. According to co-founder Charlie Pisano, they incentivize their in-store customers to join their mailing list by enrolling them in their loyalty program in the process.

VapeMeet lets customers earn a certain dollar amount every time they spend money at the store, which they can then use for future purchases. The VapeMeet team makes it a point to tell their customers about this program when they invite them to join their list, and this has proven to be effective in getting people to sign up.

*“We explain how our loyalty program works and the benefits that come with it, and after that customers are usually more than happy to give us their information”*

Charlie Pisano, VapeMeet, Canada

- **Make sure associates are confident asking customers to sign up to your database.**

See to it that your employees are able to effectively explain the advantages of joining your newsletter. Make sure they mention benefits, such as being the first to know about new merchandise, getting exclusive discounts etc.

- **Make it fast and easy.**

Consumers these days are pressed for time and don't want to be held up by slow technology or processes. That's why you should make the signup process as quick and painless as possible. You can do this by eliminating handwritten forms and just entering the information straight into your POS as you're processing the sale. You should also make sure that your employees are well-trained so they don't hold any customers up.

- **Don't force it.**

The most important thing is for your customers to leave your store with a smile on their face. So if a customer isn't interested in signing up, don't sweat it; respect their decision and keep giving them a great in-store experience.

## b. ONLINE

If your customers are buying from you online, chances are you are already gathering their email addresses and basic details as they go through the checkout process. The only thing to do now is to ensure that they opt-in to your newsletter.

You can do this by adding a mailing list checkbox on the checkout page of your eCommerce site. That way, shoppers who want to join your list won't have to re-enter their details. They can just tick the checkbox and they'll automatically be added to your email database.

**TIP:**

Include a consent statement in your terms and conditions for email newsletters and marketing. It's a good idea to check your country's legal requirements around this and make sure you adhere to them.

- **Adding customers who haven't bought from you (yet)**

The above-mentioned tips are great for signing up people who are already buying from you, but what about those online window shoppers?

Well, you can effectively capture their information by adding a mailing list form to your site. Depending on what your eCommerce site looks like, you can usually add a form at the top part of your website, on the sidebar, or in the footer. Some e-tailers, such as Birchbox, are using pop-up boxes to make their mailing list sign-up form more prominent. Explore these options and see what works best for you and your site visitors.

## c. SOCIAL MEDIA

Having an email signup form on your Facebook page can be a great way to grow your list even further. Check with your email marketing solution and see if they offer any social media tools that you can use to grow your subscriber list.

Alternatively, you can add email signup forms on your Facebook Page through services such as [Woobox \(Free\)](#), [ShortStack](#) or [TabSite](#).



### 3. What tools to use

Need help deciding on what email marketing solution to use? Some of our favorites include:

- [MailChimp](#) - MailChimp is an acclaimed email marketing solution that's super customer-friendly, and easy to operate. It includes tools to customize your messaging easily, segment your customers, and address them personally. And you can make use of its integrations directory to add extra ways for your customers to subscribe to your newsletter with Facebook tabs, website forms and in-store iPad forms.
- [Campaign Monitor](#) - Campaign Monitor allows you to completely customize your emails, manage your customers, and add social buttons with ease. They also have a plethora of integrations including iPad sign-up forms, Facebook tabs, and website forms.
- [Vend and MailSync](#) - Using your point-of-sale and eCommerce store to collect email addresses can be quick and easy using MailSync. You can automate the process of exporting your Vend customer data and importing it into your email marketing tool, including MailChimp and Campaign Monitor. This means that once you've connected your accounts, your mailing list is kept up-to-date automatically. Not to mention, it includes more detailed customer data like gender, birthdate, loyalty balance, purchase activity and customer group.
- [SumoMe](#) - SumoMe is a great tool which creates url popups when your customers are leaving your site, so you can capture their information before they navigate away from the page.

# 03

## Communicating with subscribers.

You've worked hard to gather those email addresses, now it's time to put them to good use.

**In this chapter**, we're going to discuss the different types of email campaigns you can create and what you can do to optimize them for maximum open rates, clicks, and sales.

## 1. Determine the types of messages to send.

Your email marketing strategy should have a mix of different types of messages. You'll want to regularly touch base with your subscribers with updates on new products, promotions, and company news.

Here are some specific examples of what you can send:

### a. ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR SALES AND PROMOTIONS

Got a special sale going on in your store? Use email to spread the word. Remind your customers to swing by your shop (or site) as soon as the sale launches, and send them another reminder right before it ends. For best results, put your offer or hook in the subject line to entice people to click.

### b. NEW PRODUCTS / BACK IN STOCK ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sending out emails regarding new arrivals will not only generate buzz around your latest products, it can also help you keep up or stay ahead of your competitors, especially if you're in a fast-paced industry.

VapeMeet, for instance, sends product announcements as soon as the items are available. Doing this, according to Charlie, has helped them stay competitive.

*"This industry is very fast-moving. There are probably 20 vape shops within a 30 km radius, so if you don't get a new product in and get it advertised right away, that's a problem. That's why we always include new stuff in our emails and add product links to them directly. We'll then incentivize that with a small sale or offer and entice people to click."*

Charlie Pisano, VapeMeet, Canada

In addition to new products, you should also consider sending “back in stock” emails to customers who have tried to purchase items that weren’t in stock at the time.

Whenever a customer tries to purchase an item that isn’t in stock (whether online or in person), ask for their email address so you can notify them once the product is back in your shelves. That way, if they haven’t bought it from somewhere else yet, they can head back to your store and complete the purchase.

A great example of this in action can be seen in ModCloth. The e-tailer asks people for their email when they try to purchase an out-of-stock item, and it notifies shoppers the moment it becomes available.

**TIP:**

While “back in stock” emails can help you reel users back in, the best way to make sure you don’t lose a sale is avoid out-of-stocks in the first place. Vend can help you do this through our inventory management features. [Learn more here.](#)

**c. “WE MISS YOU” EMAILS**

Telling customers how much you miss them can be effective when you want to re-connect with shoppers who haven’t bought from you in a while.

**d. COMPANY UPDATES AND EVENTS**

It’s good to keep subscribers in the loop with what’s going in your company, so be sure to send them regular emails with updates and announcements (i.e. what’s new in the company, any policy changes, new store openings, events, and more.)

**e. BIRTHDAY EMAILS**

Show off your thoughtful side by sending customers an email on their birthday. And if you're feeling generous, throw in a special offer as well.

**f. FEEDBACK EMAILS**

Invite shoppers to review their recent purchases. On top of giving you more insights into what customers think about your products, customer reviews can add more user-generated content and social proof to your site, which as we all know, are two important ingredients when it comes to converting customers.

**g. GIFT GUIDES**

Boost sales around holidays and gift-centric events such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and Christmas by creating and sending gift guides to your customers.



## 2. Segment then personalize.

One of the keys to keeping your subscribers happy is to segment them into specific groups and send tailored emails to each segment. This helps you stay relevant and ensures that you're sending the right messages to the right people.

How exactly can you slice and dice your subscriber list? Here are some common ways:

### a. GENDER

Do you sell to both men and women? Group them according to their gender so you can send better product recommendations and offers. Say you're having a storewide sale. Instead of sending out one generic blast, you can create gender-specific campaigns and segment customers accordingly. Your female subscribers could get a sale alert featuring summer dresses, while the guys would get an email about neckties or men's trousers.

### b. LOCATION

Segmenting customers according to location is a must if you have multiple branches or are running location-specific offers. **VapeMeet, for example, groups customers into specific location segments so they can send more targeted messages.**

*"We separate customers into different collections," shares Charlie. "So if we wanted to target just our Ontario customers, we can. Or, if we wanted to do a special in Quebec and send emails in French, we can accomplish that easily as well."*

Charlie Pisano, VapeMeet, Canada

### c. PURCHASE HISTORY

Put customers' purchasing data into good use by segmenting them based on the items they previously bought. This will enable you to send customized product suggestions, refill alerts, and offers.

### 3. Leverage email marketing data and analytics.

Tracking your email campaign data enables you to measure campaign performance and results, so you can optimize them going forward. Below is a list of the email metrics you can track, and how they can be used to improve your efforts:

#### a. OPEN RATE

This pertains to the percentage of people who opened your email. It can be a good measure of how effective your subject lines are.

Email open rates can also give you insights into when people are reading your emails. Do you get higher open rates in the morning or afternoon? Which day of the week is most effective to send out messages? These are just some of the questions that your open rate can help answer.

#### b. CLICK-THROUGH RATE

Click through rate (CTR) is the percentage of subscribers who clicked on the links in your message. In other words, it answers the question: Out of the people who opened your message, how many of them actually clicked on the link or call to action?

CTR can be used to measure the effectiveness of your email copy, design, and call-to-action. Use this metric when you want to make improvements to the body of your email.

### c. SALES

One of the most powerful email marketing metrics you can measure is the amount of sales each campaign has generated. Aside from giving you a handle on your email marketing ROI, it also tells you how much money you've made from each message.

**VapeMeet's Charlie says that sales is one of the metrics that they closely monitor whenever they send out a message.**

*"Our email marketing platform reports how many sales were made based on each newsletter, and it always makes us say to each other, "Wow if we didn't send out that newsletter we wouldn't have made xx amount of dollars"*

Charlie Pisano, VapeMeet, Canada

### d. UNSUBSCRIBES

Your unsubscribe rate tells you how many people opted-out of your mailing list. It's not the most pleasant metric to look at, but you should definitely track it - especially if it's higher than 2%, because this means the number of unsubscribes that you're getting is higher than what the industry considers reasonable.

If this is the case, you may want to look into factors that could be sending your subscribers packing. Perhaps your messages are failing to connect with your audience. Or maybe you're sending emails too frequently. Whatever the case may be, drill down on the causes of unsubscribes and make the necessary changes to your campaigns.





#### 4. When and how often should you send emails?

Answer: As often as necessary.

This may not be the most concrete answer, but the fact is, email marketing schedules will vary depending on your business and audience. **Some retailers, such as VapeMeet, send out a regular monthly newsletter as well as product and promotion announcements as soon as they happen. According to Charlie, this usually totals to around seven emails a month.**

Now, that schedule may or may not work for your store. The best way to figure this out is to have a look at your email analytics. Track open rates, unsubscribes, and sales, and also pay attention to any feedback from customers, then use that data to craft an email marketing calendar.

# 04

## Keeping your email list clean and organized.

The success of your email marketing strategy doesn't just hinge on the email addresses that you collect and the messages you send. An equally important task is tidying up the data you have. Keeping your email list organized will help you manage it more efficiently.

**It's easier to track subscribers and glean insights** when your list is free from issues like duplicate, invalid, or stale email addresses. Additionally, sending to a “dirty” email list can increase your spam score, raise red flags with email service providers, and affect the deliverability of your messages.

Follow the tips in this section to keep your email list tidy.



## 1. Sync email addresses and customer information in one database.

If you're collecting email addresses both online and offline (and you totally should), see to it that the information you've gathered lives in just one database so you can prevent headaches such as admin errors and double entries.

There are several ways to sync your email marketing data. Some retailers choose exporting and importing their database whenever there are updates to their email lists. While this gets the job done, the task can be time-consuming, especially if you have a large list or are always adding new subscribers.

There are far more effective ways to sync your database. These include:

- **Using the same email marketing solution to collect email addresses across multiple channels.**

If you're using a particular email marketing solution to collect addresses on your eCommerce site, check if they offer any tools that would let you gather addresses offline.

For instance, MailChimp and Campaign Monitor have accompanying mobile apps called Chimpadeedoo and Enlist respectively, that run on the iPad, so you can collect email addresses in your store or during events. These apps automatically sync data to your email database so you don't have to worry about doing it yourself.

- **Opting for a third-party app to sync data for you.**

Another option is to use a third party app such as MailSync to automatically sync up customer data that's coming in from different sources. This solution allows you to sync your POS and eCommerce data to your email marketing tool automatically. Every time a customer's data is entered at point of sale, or whenever someone purchases from your online store, their information will be added to your mailing list, along with additional shopper data, including location, gender, birthday, and location.

The beauty of using a tool like MailSync is that it can also sync rich customer information, such as purchase history and loyalty program points. If you're using MailChimp's eCommerce360 tool, you'll be able to sync information such as order data, products purchased, order totals, and more. Having such information in your database enables you to segment users more effectively and send the most relevant messages to each subscriber.

## 2. Validate email addresses

Tidying up your subscriber list isn't just about syncing databases. It also entails making sure that your list is lean and active. In other words, you should see to it that the addresses in your list are valid, and that the people on it actually want to be there. Why? Because having stale or "dirty" subscriber list increases unsubscribes and complaints and could land your messages in people's spam folders - or worse - cause your account to get suspended.

Here are a few ways to prevent that:

- **Remove invalid addresses using your email marketing provider.**

Most email marketing solutions can generate reports on bounce rates and undeliverable emails, and this should surface any invalid addresses on your list, so you can remove them.

If you're not sure how to do this, get in touch with your email marketing provider and ask them about the best way to remove invalid and inactive email addresses from your list.

- **Use a third-party solution**

If you have a large subscriber list or would like to automate the maintenance process, you can look into third-party tools such as DataValidation and BriteVerify to handle your list clean-up needs.

These solutions can integrate with your email marketing provider or enable you to import your list for verification. They will then scan your list and remove invalid or undeliverable email addresses for you. Pricing for such services will depend on the size of your list and the volume of emails that you send.

## Note: Prevention is better than cure

It may be cliché, but prevention really is better than cure - especially in email marketing. While the above-mentioned tips can certainly help tidy up your list, the best way to keep your list squeaky clean is to proactively ensure that subscribers actually want to be on it.

Keep the following tips in mind to accomplish this:

- **Implement double opt-in**

Implementing double opt-in means requiring customers to re-confirm that they want to be a part of your list. You do this by sending users a follow-up email confirming their subscription right after they fill out your opt-in form. This not only weeds out bots or spammy accounts, but it helps preserve the integrity of your list by making users confirm that they want to subscribe.

- **Send out emails regularly**

Sending out messages sporadically is one of the top causes of stale subscriber lists. People get a tons of messages ([416 per month according to a study by Return Path](#)) in their inbox, so you need to stay on their radar by keeping a regular email schedule. Otherwise, your subscribers might forget who you are and mark your messages as spam when they receive them.

# 05

## Conclusion

A large part of retail success involves communicating with customers, and email marketing gives you an easy and affordable way to do that.

**We hope that the tips and examples** above gave you some ideas on how to carry out your email marketing strategy so you can be well on your way to increasing those subscribers, and in turn, make more sales.

Good luck!

# 06

## The Authors.

Learn from two of the world's top retail and email marketing experts.

## Meet Francesca Nicasio.

**Francesca Nicasio** is a retail expert and author of the Vend eBook, Retail Survival of the Fittest: 7 ways to future-proof your retail store. She is dedicated to writing about trends and tips that help retailers increase sales and serve customers better.

*“With the right strategies and tools, you can streamline the process of growing your subscriber list and sending messages, so you can keep in touch with customers and drive sales. This whitepaper teaches you how to do all that and more.”*

Francesca Nicasio, Retail Expert and B2B Content Strategist

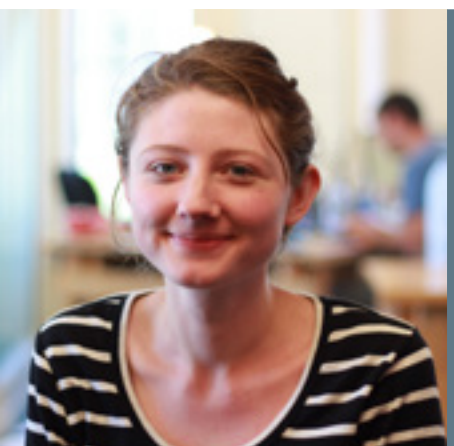


## Meet Elizabeth Beattie.

**Elizabeth Beattie** is Collect’s resident retail journalist. She’s passionate about enabling retailers to best connect with their customers. She’s also interested in discovering new customer service techniques, new technology practices, and new words.

*“This guide gives retailers the tools and information they need effectively collect email addresses, improve open and click through rates, and most importantly, increase engagement and sales.”*

Elizabeth Beattie, Retail Journalist





## About Collect.

[Collect](#) is a suite of powerful marketing apps, arming retailers with the tools to connect with customers, grow loyalty and increase sales. From loyalty programs, to email offers, to simple customer database syncing, Collect's apps are easy-to-use in-store and online.

The perfect Collect app to get started with email marketing is [MailSync](#). MailSync automatically syncs point-of sale and eCommerce customer data to the retailer's mailing list, keeping it up-to-date with rich customer data, like name, email, purchase activity, loyalty balance and more. With MailSync, retailers can save time and never have to worry about manually exporting and importing CSVs again. And armed with rich customer data, retailers can do more effective email marketing that is both timely and relevant.

# About Vend.

**Vend** is a cloud-based retail software platform that enables retailers to accept payments, manage their inventories, reward customer loyalty and garner insights into their business in real time. Vend is simple to set up, works with a wide range of point-of-sale devices and operates on any web-capable device with a browser.

Whether it's simplifying the inventory process, cutting 30 minutes from their end-of-day bookkeeping or making it simpler for them to sell their products on multiple channels, Vend's mission is to make retailers' lives easier.

With Vend, retailers are able to focus less on transaction and inventory concerns and more on creating that relationship with their customers. Vend aims to empower merchants by putting the right data and tools into retailers' hands and enabling them to do things themselves – and succeed



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