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Autoresponder Basics

By John Calder

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New webmasters, following advice that's often repeated (for good reason), frequently want to set up an email list ("the money's in the list") and an autoresponder ("potential customers must see your message an average of 7 times before they act"). But the marketing forums are still full of questions from new marketers about autoresponders, so perhaps it's time to revisit that topic.

First, we need to make a distinction. Many hosting providers include unlimited autoresponders as part of their hosting plans. These however, are usually one-time autoresponders, meaning a user sends an email to that address, and they get one email back. These have their place – to send download instructions, answer standard support questions, provide additional company information, and so on.

Generally, the forum discussions center around "follow-up" autoresponders, which not only send a single email in response to a user email, but also send additional email to that user at designated time intervals that the marketer can set. No matter when the user sends the original email, they will receive each email from the autoresponder in sequence. Therefore, on the same day, some users may receive email number 3, while others receive email no 6.

Most autoresponder software will also function as email list software, meaning that you can send an email to your entire list at any time. If you only want a mailing list without followup capabilities, other software is available that serves only that purpose. However, it often makes more sense to choose full autoresponder software anyway. If you want, you can use the autoresponder only to send occasional email to your list, but you'll have autoresponder capability should you need it in the future.

You'll need to choose between autoresponder software that you buy and install on your own site or a third-party hosted autoresponder service that has a monthly fee. Both have their advantages, so you'll need to review the features of each to see which best meets your needs. For example, if you install software on your own site, then the initial email the user sends will go to your domain, rather than the

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domain of a third party service. This can be good for marketing and branding purposes. But, you'll also then have to spend time or money to deal with installation, technical support, upgrades, and so on.

If you choose a third-party hosted autoresponder service, there are free and paid services available. The free services may or may not be stable and reliable, and sometimes they add a one-line advertisement to your outgoing email. You have no control over which ads are shown, so think very carefully before using a free service. In the long run, it's probably better to pay a small monthly charge for the peace of mind one of the major paid autoresponder services can bring.

We should also mention that some software is available that will let you run an autoresponder from your home computer. If you have an always-on internet connection like cable or DSL, this may be an option if you have relatively few subscribers. However, such software may violate your Internet

provider's terms of service, so be sure to check first.

Whichever autoresponder option you choose, be sure to understand if there are limitations on how many followup emails you can send, how many members can be on your list without incurring extra monthly fees, deliverability and customer service record of the service or software provider, whether double opt-in subscriptions are available and required, your level of comfort with the user interface, and if there's a limit on the total number of separate autoresponders you can have under your account. Weigh all features, pick the ones that are most important to you in your business, then make your choice.

The one I use and recommend is the autoresponders run by Email Aces at <http://theezine.emailaces.com>

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7 Cheap & Easy Ways To Get Prospects

By Mike Burstein

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Here are some quick techniques you can put into place on your web site or in your advertising to

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gather new prospects. There is practically no cost for most of these strategies yet they have proven to be extremely effective in any number of different venues. Use one, two or all of these strategies for a quick shot in the arm.

1. Offer a free report or article that's sent by email from your autoresponder.
2. Give people a contact web form or autoresponder email address to send in their questions.
3. Have a media kit, price list, pictures, catalog, FAQ, etc. that are all available by email from your autoresponder.
4. Make a sample of your product available from your autoresponder. (i.e. If you're selling an eBook have a chapter available for free.)
5. Deliver a free informational eCourse by email through your autoresponder.
6. Create an outline of your site for visitors in a hurry to have the information emailed to them by autoresponder.
7. Run a free drawing and have visitors email their entry to your autoresponder.

The key to all of these strategies is the autoresponder. Don't fail to utilize this tool no matter what type of business you own.

Mike Burstein has been writing for the SOHO and Small Business market for over 10 years. He has helped countless small business owners solve start up problems, create best practices, automate their offices, get free publicity and dramatically increase traffic and sales. Visit <http://www.SOHOWiz.com> for the latest FREE business tips. Email the Wiz at: SOHOWiz@SOHOWiz.com



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