

Create an Email Marketing Campaign for Libraries

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***Abstract - Purpose:** This paper aims to present mail marketing definition, advantages and disadvantages of email marketing. Then the author shows how to create a successful email marketing campaign and conducts an example by using Sendin Blue. Some indicators that should be measured in any email marketing campaign are also given in the article. An in-depth reading of the relevant documents has been applied to understand about email marketing. Tips to create an email marketing campaign are provided; therefore, library staff can follow it to build one campaign in order to market products and services for any library.*

Keywords: Email marketing, Libraries, SendinBlue, Email marketing services

Introduction

In recent years, email marketing is being known for a cost-effective marketing channel to market products and services of any organization. Email marketing is faster and more reliable than the postal service, email can also be more convenient than telephone communication. Traditionally, marketing was not considered an important subject in libraries. But nowadays, marketing activities are needed to improve the image of libraries, promote information resources, find user's needs and measure user's satisfaction in order to satisfy their needs effectively etc. Thus, libraries should undertake marketing, especially email marketing.

Discussion

1. Definition of Email Marketing

Email marketing is one segment of online marketing and can be understood as the process of distributing messages using email communication in order to establish and develop the relationship of a company with its potential or current customers. Among its goals are: attracting new customers, stimulating the business with valid customers, increasing their brand loyalty and trust, etc. [1]. The email marketing process is about understanding the competitive marketplace and ensuring an organization can tap into key trends, reaching consumers with the right product at the right price, place and time.

2. Pros and cons of Email Marketing

The main advantages of email marketing compared to traditional marketing are:

- *Low-cost:* the cost of distributing information via email vs. printed flyers and postage, email is less costly
- *Fast and efficient:* because of the immediacy of emails, marketers can see results within minutes of their emails being sent

- *Easy to measure*: it is easy to count the number of emails sent, number of emails which have been opened and who have opened those emails, who have clicked on links in emails etc.

Nevertheless, email marketing still has some limitations. Firstly, it is undelivered emails. Internet service providers use complex junk-mail filters so that there is no guarantee that emails are getting into recipient inbox. Secondly, if consumers don't like what marketers are sending, they will break contact and unsubscribe to the emails at any time.

3. Create an Email marketing campaign for libraries

The process of doing a campaign can be modeled in a sequence of steps:

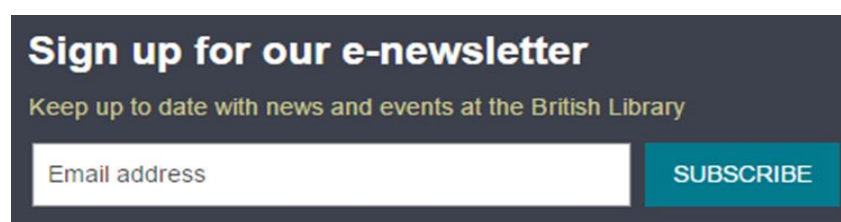
Establish library's goals

Libraries need to identify goals that they want to achieve and then stay focused on these goals. The objective of marketing can be [3]:

- Promote and market of library services and products are to achieve high level customer's satisfaction, ensure the survival of their respective institutions and enhance the perceived value of the products and services.
- Promote the use of the services and products but cannot make profit out of it because library is a social institution.

Build email list

Libraries have to collect and manage email addresses of library users. Users will give libraries their email addresses if they visit library website and have an interest in the information or content that libraries provide. Therefore, libraries should include an email sign-up box in each page of their website that allows users to join library mailing list. For example, libraries can create a box contains a call to action encouraging users to join as well as a form to input their email addresses as image below:



Source: The British Library home page <https://www.bl.uk/>

Libraries also can encourage users to sign-up for library email marketing program via social media outlets by putting subscribe forms on their blog page, Facebook fan page etc. Moreover, libraries can collect email addresses when users attend to the training classes or use library products and services. It is also important to maintain a qualitative email list because the email list is missing quality can be wasted library resources and have a negative impact on library reputation. Since email addresses can change frequently so that libraries need to manage library mailing list carefully.

Segment email lists

Segmenting the email lists helps libraries get better open and click rates. By sending messages to targeted users within library mailing lists, users will find more relevant information so that the email campaign can get better results. Moreover, libraries will measure sending emails easily and will reduce email unsubscribe rate from library mailing list. Libraries can segment the email list by age, gender, academic year, study fields or users who opened emails, clicked on the links and users who did not do that etc.

Design emails

A successful and carefully designed email marketing campaign can improve the overall marketing situation of the library. There are some elements in the email designing process such as subject line, preheader text, content of email and email format. Librarians should invest time and effort to consider each element.

Subject line

Subject line is a heading or line of text indicating the subject of a piece of the email. Users open emails base on the subject lines so that libraries have to give them a reason to check out content of emails. The subject line should show the benefits to users and be directly related to the message contained in the email. There are some ways to write an effective subject line:

- *Write simple and straightforward:* there are some examples of email subject lines that get straight to the point such as [Library Name] Newsletter, [Library Name] Invites You!
- *Use powerful words:* the announcement subject line should use words like “Introducing” and “New” in email subject line to give the reader a feeling that the email contains new information they haven’t know yet.
- *Keep it short:* email subject lines will get cut off if they’re too long, particularly on mobile devices. Therefore, subject lines should be less than 50 characters to make sure recipients can read the entire subject lines of emails from libraries.

Preheader text

A preheader text is the short summary text that follows the subject line when an email is viewed in the inbox. It is another element that users use to decide whether or not to open an email. The preheader character counts visible on some of those most popular email clients are from 35 to 140 characters [2]. Thus, libraries should keep their preheader text to between 35-50 characters. Besides, libraries should include a call to action or tell recipients to open the email in preheader text.



Content of emails

Emails should include short, direct sentences because recipients just scan for important points so they can glean the overall message and decide whether they want to take any action. Libraries need to find the way to summarize what users will get in a compelling way and let them click through to a page on library website for more information. Content of emails from libraries must be promo information resources, library products and services and invite users come to library events etc. Moreover, libraries have to personalize each message. At the very least, an email always includes the recipient's name.

Email format

Users choose email services from many email service providers (Outlook.com, Gmail and Yahoo) and they can check emails on different devices. Therefore, libraries have to preview what the emails will look like on any device such as desktop, tablet, mobile devices. Libraries can use Litmus to do that because this is a tool that tests and provides screen shots of and email in dozens of different email tools.

Measure an Email marketing campaign

It is very important to measure the performance of any email marketing campaign because libraries will find valuable information that will help libraries avoid future mistakes, learn what works well and help libraries to construct their future campaigns. Email marketing is easy to track and measure. Libraries should track and evaluate an email marketing campaign by the following indicators:

- *Open rate*: the percentage of received emails which were opened by recipients.
- *Click-Through rate*: the percentage of people who view and click on the links in the context of emails.
- *Response rate*: calculated as the number of desired responses divided by number of delivered messages.
- *Bounce rate*: the percentage of total number of emails that were not delivered to recipient's inbox.
- *Unsubscribe rate*: the percentage of recipients that unsubscribed from the email message. It shows how satisfied the recipients are with the content of sending emails.
- *List growth rate*: it represents the rate at which the email list is growing.
- *Email sharing (forwarding) rate*: the percentage of email recipients who posted the email content to a social network using "Share" button or forwarded the email.

These measurements are basic indicators that should be measured in any campaign. However, each campaign may have different objectives, therefore, based on different goals other factors will be evaluated as well.

4. Use SendinBlue to conduct a campaign

Launched in 2012, SendinBlue was created to become the simplest, most reliable and cost-effective marketing platform. At present, over 50,000 companies around the world are using SendinBlue for their marketing campaigns. They support SendinBlue in six languages, the platform integrates with the top ecommerce and CMS tools and system delivers over 30 million emails and text messages per day [3].

SendinBlue is suitable for library's email marketing campaigns because it is very easy to use. In addition, SendinBlue has most of the features needed to create an email campaign such as email designer, contact management, campaign report etc. SendinBlue also has a free plan that allows sending up to 300 emails a day. Libraries can follow below steps to start an email marketing campaign by using SendinBlue:

Step 1: Create an account at <https://www.sendinblue.com/users/signup/>

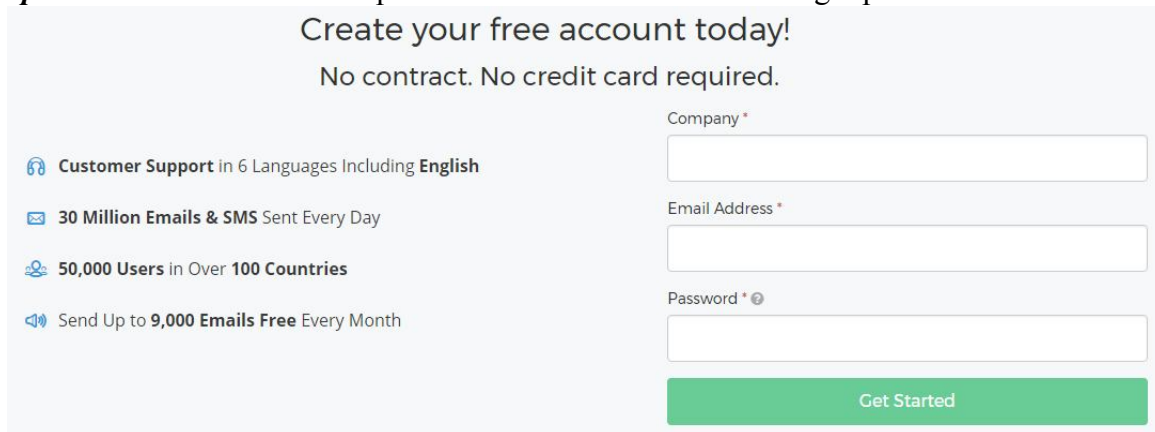


Figure 1: Account registration form

Step 2: Complete profile of library to show detail information that defines the library

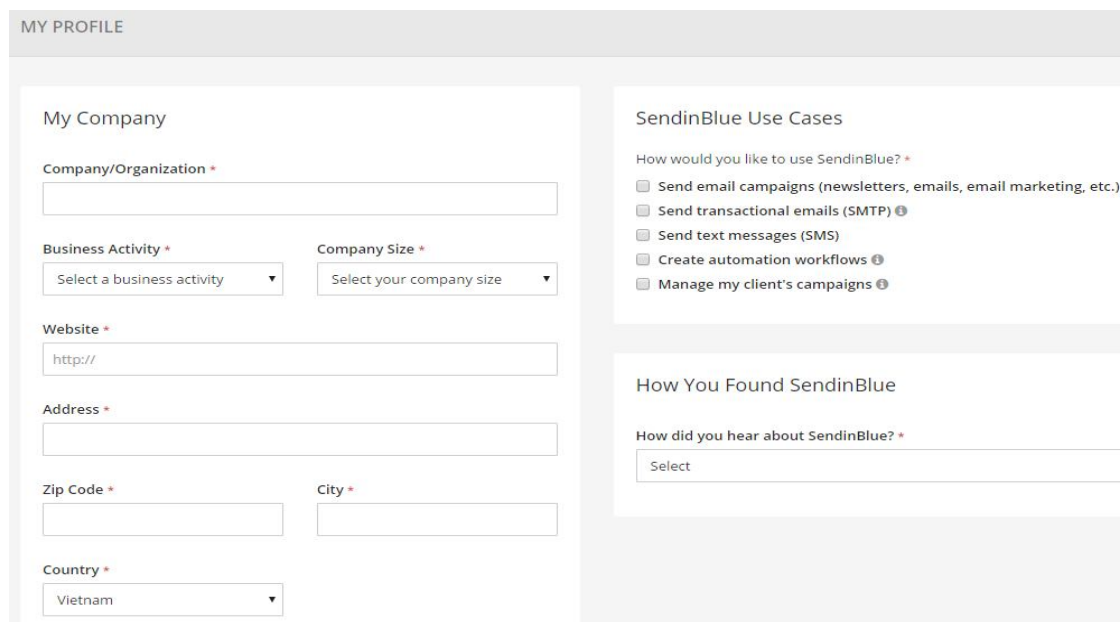


Figure 2: All fields should be confirmed to validate an account

Step 3: Create a campaign

Firstly, build list of email addresses of library users. Libraries can import their subscribers from .txt/.csv files, add manually or copy/paste their contacts as shown below.

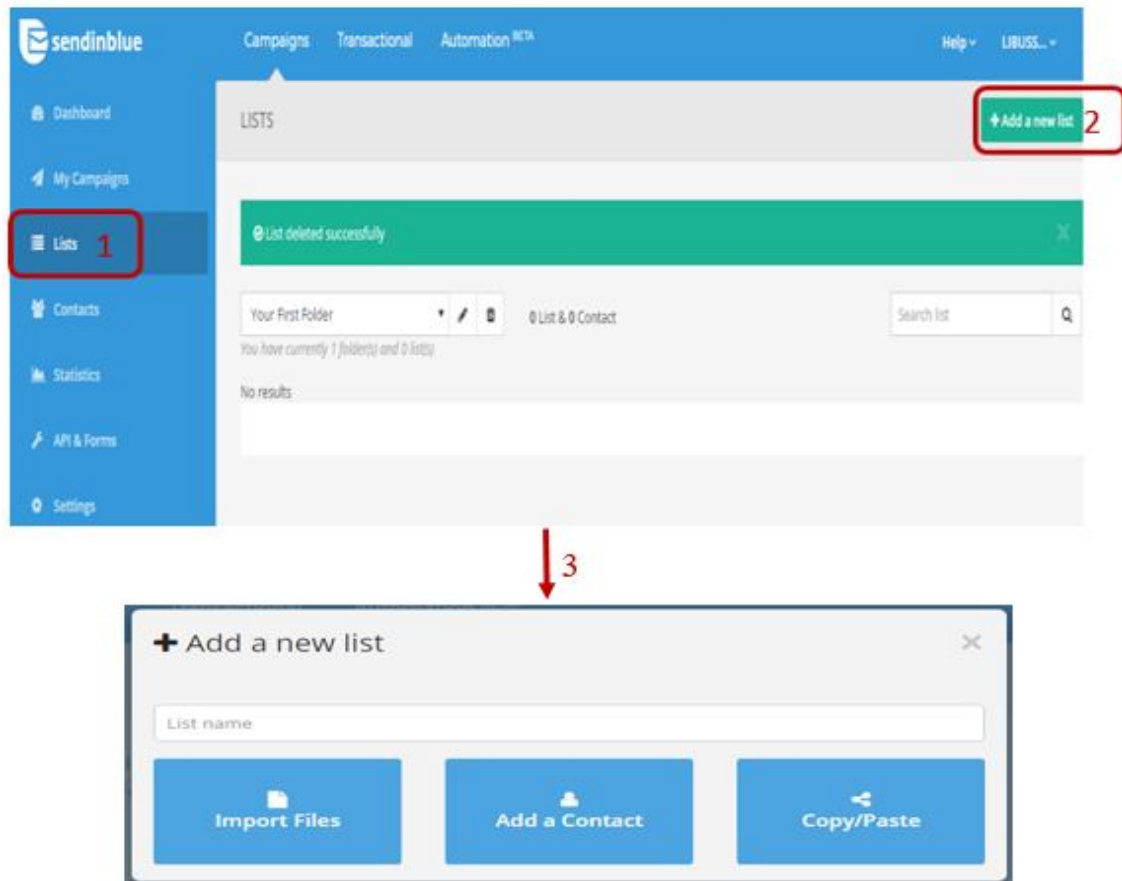


Figure 3: Built a contact list

Secondly, design an email campaign. Libraries need to give their campaign a name, write a subject that clearly describes email content and choose the name appears in recipient's inbox to identify them as the message sender [Figure 4]. Then libraries can build an email and send it to their users. However, libraries should include a way for users to unsubscribe in their email campaigns [Figure 5].

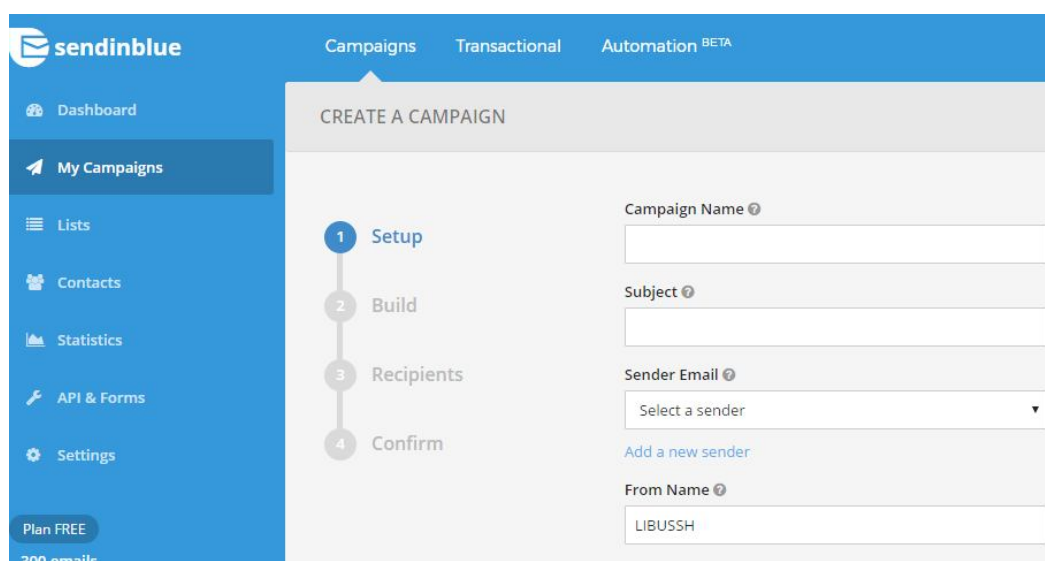


Figure 4: Configure a campaign settings

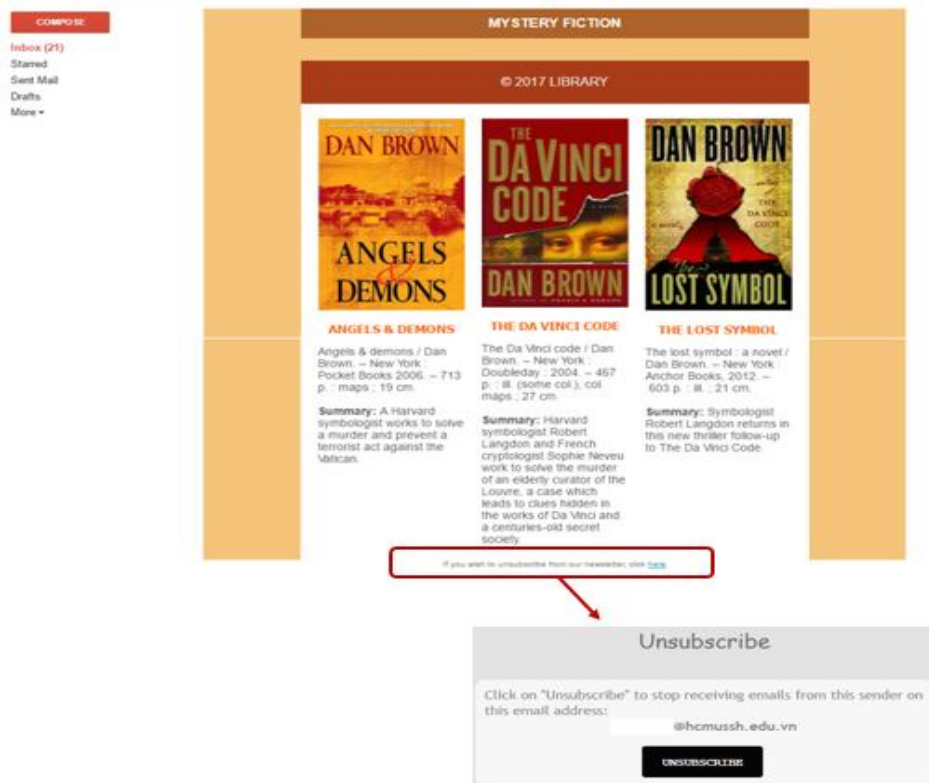


Figure 5: An example email has been sent in order to introduce library books

Finally, libraries can monitor the results by using Statistics tab. This feature will show up some important indicators such as total sent, total recipients, total opened, total clicked etc. [Figure 6].

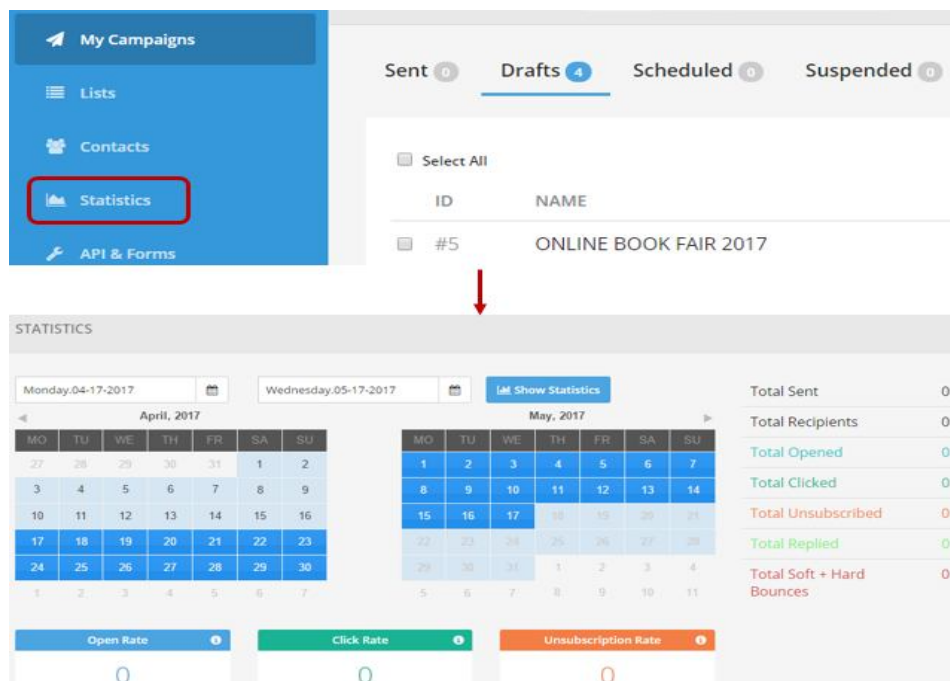


Figure 6: Campaign reports

Conclusion

The limited budget provision and the advent of new technology and its application in libraries have opened new vistas for marketing activities in libraries. Libraries need to enhance channels, tools, new models and concepts in order to improve the communication with users and increase awareness of library products and services. Although social media is a common marketing channel, email marketing is ranked as the best channel and must be have in marketing strategies of libraries.

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