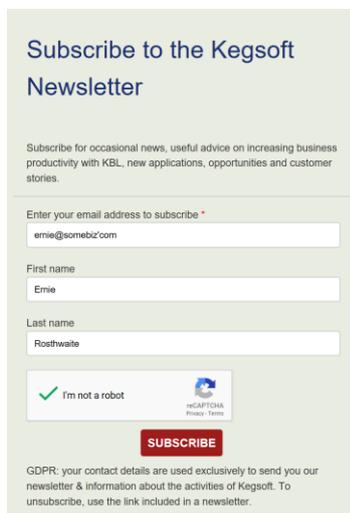


Creating a subscription-based Newsletter & acquiring opt-in contacts from your website

Why do it?

A really effective way of engaging with your website visitors and turning them into contacts, is to create a newsletter - for your news, advice, industry trends, product updates & offers. This should not be the 'hard sell' but provision of genuinely useful and interesting information. Acquiring and retaining contact details for contacts must be done by 'opt-in' subscription in which visitors grant you the privilege of holding their email address – and perhaps other details. GDPR (General Data Protection Rules) that apply in the UK from 25th May, requires that your organisation ensures that any contact details held have the expressed permission of their owners and that your use of them is clearly stated.



Once contacts email addresses and other details have been gathered, you have a great opportunity to build relationships with them and hopefully generate more business.

The good news is that there are now a number of excellent, off-the-shelf web-based subscription / contact management services available which handle all the functionality you'll need for gathering subscribers, constructing newsletters, questionnaires and marketing 'campaigns'. Some product providers offer services for free, either for an introductory period or 'forever' for a limited number of contacts and / or monthly emailing events. This is a fantastic opportunity for small businesses & start-ups to create and deploy easy-to-use but sophisticated 'contact management' for little, if any cost outlay.

What you need – the Basics

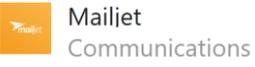
- Ability to design, create & edit a web form(s) to capture opt-in subscriber contact email addresses & other details to add to your contact list(s)
- The ability to embed or link the subscription form in your website (& social media pages)
- Ability to auto-send a customised welcome email to new subscribers
- Facility for your contacts to easily edit & unsubscribe
- Ability to manage one or more contact lists for emailing newsletter and perhaps other 'campaign management' purposes
- A composition tool to create your welcome email, newsletters and other communications
- A control 'dashboard' to manage your contact list(s) & emailing & campaign functions
- Ability to manage contacts, edit, move, block & delete them
- Ability schedule your emails to all or selected contacts
- Analysis tools to monitor the performance of your emails

Strategy First

Do your strategy before rushing to implement, identify your aims and objectives, your capabilities, numbers of contacts & anticipated mailings, your budget and an outline of how you will organise newsletters and other communications. Next, you'll need to select a product. Most provide all the basic functionality needed so even a cursory search of the web will pull up a confusing number of alternatives and it can be quite difficult to find a clear winner amongst the many providers.

How do I choose a mailing Product?

Contact management applications are the archetypal web applications – an essential piece of business functionality that's perfect for web-based and cloud services, Dozens of products and providers have sprung up in the past 3 years so the market is really competitive and prices are extremely keen and falling. The following list is by no means exhaustive and in no particular order:

For Kegsoft, selecting one was not easy - in the end it came down to functionality, costs, ease of use ...and recommendation. We chose Sendinblue because it suits our needs however, it's easy to switch products if we wanted because we can easily export and import our lists directly into different products. Here are some of the factors that helped us choose

- The functionality offered – will it cover your requirements?
- Check their service reputation for help, documentation, support & ease of use
- Costs: Are free facilities offered? If this is important to you, is it for a limited number of contacts / emails. Are more advanced functions charged for – how do monthly charges increase as contact & emails numbers rise - how do they compare.
- Simplicity & stability: look at industry & customer reviews – are users enthusiastic about their chosen service? Many other businesses will have taken the same journey
- What value-added functionality is offered? Look at what other features might be useful to you in the future.

- Where will your contacts held? Are the servers based in the US, EU or elsewhere? (you won't find many where your data will be stored in the UK). Do the product providers confirm they are fully GDPR compliant?
- Look at the star ratings in comparison reviews – make sure the reviews are independent and recent as prices & features change frequently. One of the leading and established brands for benchmark purposes is MailChimp so look at comparative costs and functionality
- Do they provide the ability to integrate with other products and services you are using.

DIY or do I need help?

Once you have selected a product and you are reasonably tech-minded or marketing savvy, it could take you as little as 2 to 3 hours to be up and running - including registering an account, creating a simple subscription application form, testing it and creating a welcome email. You should even be able to create a simple test newsletter and email it to a test list. However, a word of caution, it's very easy to rush into setting up this functionality BUT like any proposed new business activity, we would strongly recommend thinking through exactly what you want to achieve - particularly if this is going to be a significant part of your marketing effort.

How much will it cost?

Set-up: for DIY, costs will be £zero but you may want some help just to get going. Bear in mind set-up is a relatively simple process so don't overpay a 'marketing agency' for what may be no more a couple of hours work.

Running costs: When you do your service comparisons you will find some online companies offer a completely free service if the number of subscribed contacts and emails per month remain below a certain threshold. Thereafter, you can usually 'pay as you go' for actual emails sent or pay a monthly fee for inclusive volume package. You should certainly be able to send a number of thousand emails / newsletters for £15-30 per month and, of course, the more you send the lower the unit rate.

What else can you do?

In short, lots. For example, if you already use sales & marketing applications you should have the option to integrate with your web-based contact management system so look to see if your applications need to talk to each other via APIs or extract files. If you require such services, this 'scalability' and functionality will be a consideration for your service provider selection.

If **social media** is part of your company's marketing strategy, you may want to embed you subscription form(s) on your SM pages. You may also want the option of letting visitors subscribe automatically via, say their facebook account

List management: You may want to maintain multiple lists for different functions, for example you may ask customer contacts whether they would like to receive details of special offers, in which case contacts would be asked if they would like this form of email sent – again it would require opt-in so a different subscription form would be used and a different list maintained. List management functions are various but include copying, deleting, editing and 'banning' contacts.

Other forms of communication: some service providers also offer SMS texting – separately or in addition to emailing – this may suit your type of business – but beware, costs for SMS are considerably higher than just emailing.

Basic Principles of deploying a Newsletter subscription

1. Deploy a subscription web-form in your website (& elsewhere)

2. Contacts details submitted are captured into the product's on-line list database & a 'Welcome email' auto-sent.

Contacts

EMAIL	LASTNAME	FIRSTNAME	DOB	CHALLENGE1	CHALLENGE2	NOTE	HOMEPHONE	MOBILE	LAST CHANGED	DATE ADDED
james.mccormack@kegsoft.com	Thomas	James		Business	IT				14.05.2018	14.05.2018
peter.domancki@kegsoft.com	Domanski	Peter				I want to be the best in the world			14.05.2018	14.05.2018
colin@kegsoft.com	Colin	Pete		Build a planet	Build an app				14.05.2018	14.05.2018
peter.domancki@kegsoft.com	Peter	Domanski							14.05.2018	13.05.2018
peter.domancki@kegsoft.com									14.05.2018	13.05.2018
peter.domancki@kegsoft.com	John	John							14.05.2018	13.05.2018

3. First communication, all emails have an unsubscribe link



4. Subsequent communications. Create & send HTML-based newsletters etc. which can be displayed in web browsers



Conclusion

Setting up contact management and newsletter services to co-ordinate with your website is now easy to do and very affordable (even free if you have low numbers). If you need help Kegsoft can assist.

Peter Domanski May 2018