# **EMAL MARKETING** FOR TRAVEL AGENTS & SITES





# **Email Marketing for Travel Agents and Sites**

Big-name online travel agencies like <u>Expedia</u> and <u>Orbitz</u> have created a new variety of do-it-yourself travelers looking for the best rates and travel deals.

If you're a traditional travel agency, how to you reach these DIY travelers? If you run a travel site or online agency, how do you bring their business to your site instead of these big travel brand names' sites? This is where email marketing comes in.

A study run by Epsilon shows that <u>63% of customers</u> who signed up for emails from a travel site are more likely to do business through them for future trips. An email marketing campaign puts you in direct contact with your site visitors, helping them recall your brand the next time they plan a vacation. If you're not using email, you're likely losing valuable business and site traffic. "63% of customers who sign up for emails from a travel site are more likely to do business through them for future trips."

The Epsilon study also shows that 86% of online consumers sign up for emails from travel sites in search of more special travel offers. 51% want to know more about vacation packages. Your customers and site visitors want information from you, and you have the deals and packages they're looking for. Email marketing helps build a relationship between you and your customers that will keep them coming back to you for their trip booking needs.

A permission-based email campaign also has a great return on investment. In 2011, the ROI for email marketing was <u>\$40.56 for every \$1 invested</u>. And on top of that, it's easy to measure your results. You can tell if your campaign is effective by looking at how many subscribers are opening your emails and clicking on your links to determine what kind of content resonates most with your customers.

Email marketing lets you proactively engage with your visitors and clients. Without an email campaign, you have to depend on your customers to remember your site and visit it when they want to book a trip or look for flights. Email marketing places you in your customers' inboxes where they'll see your name regularly and remember you.

Take advantage of the opportunity to connect with your clients through email marketing. This guide will walk you through the details for setting up your first campaign.



# **Building Your List**

Before you can launch an email campaign, you need people to send your emails to. The people who sign up to receive your emails are called subscribers. And as more subscribers join your list, you'll likely have a mix of current, new and long-time customers. You can target emails with specific information to each of these groups. More on that later.

Right now, let's focus on how to get names and email addresses on your list.

## **Build Your List Online**

Whether you're a brick and mortar travel agency or a net-based travel site, if you have a web site, a blog or social media profiles, you can build your list online. Connect with your customers and visitors by placing a web form on your site to collect their names and email addresses.

The web form generator in your AWeber account allows you to create forms with your own custom fields to gather as much information as you need to help your customers. Once you design your form and place it online, any visitor who fills out that form is automatically added to your list.

AWeber has tons of templates to choose from. Pick one that coordinates with your travel site and use the generator to customize it with your own logo.

Now that you've designed your form, it's time to place it on your site, blog or social pages.

#### Choose one or several of these places to put your web form.

#### Web Site

Place a web form on every page of your web site in a prominent place where visitors can see it. Don't make them hunt for your form if they want information.



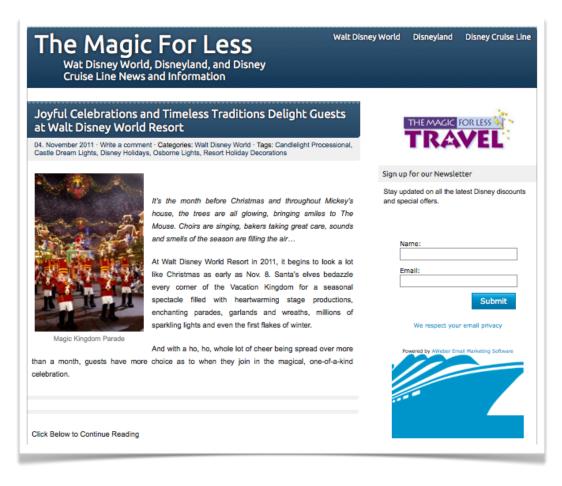
Liberty Travel places a web form at the top of the page so visitors can easily find it.



#### Blog

If you write a travel blog with tips or travel destinations, place a web form in the sidebar to let your readers subscribe to updates from your blog.

Your readers and customers won't have to remember to view your blog on their own when you push updates to their inbox.





#### Social Networks

Do you connect with customers on Facebook or other social networks? You can post a web form on your Facebook page so your fans can sign up without leaving the site.



The Mouse For Less - travel blog of <u>The Magic For Less</u> - explains the benefits of their newsletter on their Facebook page and includes a convenient web for for sign ups.

Don't forget to post samples of your newsletter on Facebook. You can also tweet your emails and get sign ups on Twitter with a hosted web form.

**Creating and Installing Web Forms in AWeber** 

Adding a Form to Your Blog or Web Site With the Web Form Generator Adding a Web Form to Your Facebook Page Using a Hosted Web Form



## **Building Your List Offline**

Your list-building efforts aren't restricted to online avenues only. You can build your list offline too, as you work with customers in person or advertise your travel site.

- · Include information about your newsletter or travel deals in your brochures.
- · Ask for permission to email your customers on any contact forms they fill out.
- If you attend travel expos, bring an email sign up sheet with you to get the names and email addresses of attendees. Bridal shows are another excellent list building opportunity you'll find brides-to-be who are looking for ways to save on their honeymoon expenses or destination wedding packages.

## Aren't Spam Complaints A Problem?

Sometimes computer scripts (or even people!) may find your web form and subscribe to your list with another person's email address.

Misspellings can pose a problem too, when your email ends up in the wrong inbox because someone spelled their email address wrong. The unintended recipient will consider your emails to be unrequested junk mail or spam. They'll report your email as spam to get you out of their inbox.

If you get too many of these complaints, ISPs (like Gmail, Hotmail or Yahoo) start to notice. Enough spam complaints against you could end up with your messages not getting delivered at all.

#### The Solution: Confirmed Opt-In

Confirmed opt-in works like traveler's insurance for your email campaign, protecting you from the consequences of mishaps during the sign up process.

This "spam insurance" works by asking new subscribers to click a link to confirm that they're interested in getting your emails. Their email address won't get added to your list until they click on the link to confirm.

This process assures you that every address on your list is legitimate. And your subscribers are likely to be more engaged with your emails and more responsive to your offers since they're actually interested in receiving your communications.





Con	firm your subscription to Nomadic Matt's Newsletter 👘 🗗
\$	Nomadic Matt nomadicm: show details 10:51 AM (4 hours ago) 5 Reply 7
Hi	
trav buo	anks for signing up for my newsletter. I'm glad to see you want to save money on vel just like I do. My newsletter will keep you informed of good travel deals and dget tips so you can travel cheaper, longer, and better. Simply click the link to firm you want to receive my newsletter.
	wever, if you just want to receive blog updates instead of my newsletter, simply a this URL: <u>http://feeds.feedburner.com/MattsTravelSite</u>
 CO	NFIRM BY VISITING THE LINK BELOW:
htt	o://www.aweber.com/z/c/?jzsjws7y03am1npnb9n5ralj0xva23c7q4576
info full	ck the link above to give us permission to send you ormation. It's fast and easy! If you cannot click the URL above, please copy and paste it into your web wser.
lf y	ou do not want to confirm, simply ignore this message.
Tha	ank you and travel well,
No	tt Kepnes madic Matt's Travel Site p://www.nomadicmatt.com
100	) Jane, New York City, NY 01004
IP: Da	quest generated by: 207.106.239.81 te: November 18, 2011 10:50 EST L: <u>http://www.nomadicmatt.com/</u>

Example of a confirmation email from <u>Nomadic Matt</u>, a site with travel tips for consumers.



# Types of Emails to Send

There's more to email marketing than adding names and addresses to a list. Connecting with your customers or site visitors in the inbox relies largely on the messages you send to them. Not every email will have the same content, but your messages should have some unifying factors to help subscribers recognize you in the inbox. Establishing this kind of consistency will help your customers trust you more.

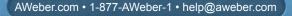
# Regardless of what you're sending, all of your emails should include the following information:

- A subject line that tells what the email is about. When you're honest in your subject lines, your subscribers will trust you more.
- Your name, your travel site's name, or the name of your travel agency. This goes in the from line. Use a name that your subscribers will recognize. Travel sites should probably stick with their web site's name. Travel agencies should use their agency's name. If you're a self-employed travel agent, use either your name or the name of your business or site.
- All of your contact information. Your customers should be able to get in touch with you easily if they need to. Include your full postal address, phone number, web site, social network profiles and any other contact information your customers can use.
- A call to action telling subscribers how to respond. If you're selling a vacation package or offering a limited-time special deal, include a link to a page where they can read more information or book their discounted vacation.
- **Pictures**. Include photos of destinations you're advertising. Feature images of hotel accommodations, show your customers exactly what they're getting for their money.

Your remaining message content varies based on the kind of message you're sending. The types of emails you can use in your campaign include:

- 1. An autoresponder (or "follow up") series for new subscribers
- 2. A regular newsletter with vacation stories, hot destinations and travel tips for your subscribers
- 3. Occasional announcements or special travel promotions
- 4. Articles and travel tips pulled from your blog





## Starting With Follow Ups

A follow up series is a great way to introduce new subscribers to your wealth of travel resources and tips.

Follow ups are a series of messages that automatically send to new subscribers. Your follow up series can include as many messages as you want and send at time intervals that you specify. Structure your series around information your new travelers will benefit from. We have some ideas below:

- · Tips for getting the best discounts on flights and hotels
- · Ways to travel light for longer trips
- · Cultural concerns for international travelers
- · Other money-saving travel ideas
- If you have a physical travel agency building, introduce your staff and office to new subscribers.

Welcome to Your Guide to Travel	Recommended Books
Thanks for signing up for my newsletter. On the 1st and 15th of every month but as I mentioned before, I wanted to send you some nformation on how to travel inexpensively right away.	25,000 miles guaranteed become a
Wy website designed around one philosophy "To travel first class on an economy class budget." The travel industry likes to tell us all about expensive vacations, flights, hotels, and cruises. The major reason beople don't travel is because of cost. They think it's expensive and he industry wants you to think that because it means you'll spend more money when you travel.	FREQUENT FLYER MASTER Get Free Flights!!!
But want to know a secret? Travel is really cheap. I couldn't afford to ravel for so long if it was. (Blogging doesn't lead to riches.) I have ound tons of ways to travel with little money without sacrificing costs.	How To TEACH ENGLISH OVERSEAS
t can be done and I am going to show you how. Below is a list of articles that I've written that will walk you through the process of planning your trip, finding deals, and traveling cheap.	How to teach English
P.S You might want to save this email for later!	HOW TO BRANEL
General Travel Tips How to Become the Ultimate Hacker <important article!<="" td=""><td>THE WORLD ON GEO DORLARSA DAY</td></important>	THE WORLD ON GEO DORLARSA DAY
Everyone says I'm Running Away Tips for new travelers Tips for Saving for Your Trip 15 Simple Travel Tips The Value of Tour Groups	SAVE \$1K EXCLUSIVE TRAVEL COUPONS IN SIDE
How to Make Your Money Last Saving Tips for a World Trip Five Destinations Under \$30 USD per day How to Avoid Bank Fees While Traveling 18 Lessons from 5 Years Around the World How to Represent Travel on Your Resume	

Nomadic Matt sends a bi-monthly follow up series packed with money-saving travel tips.

#### How To Use Follow Up Emails

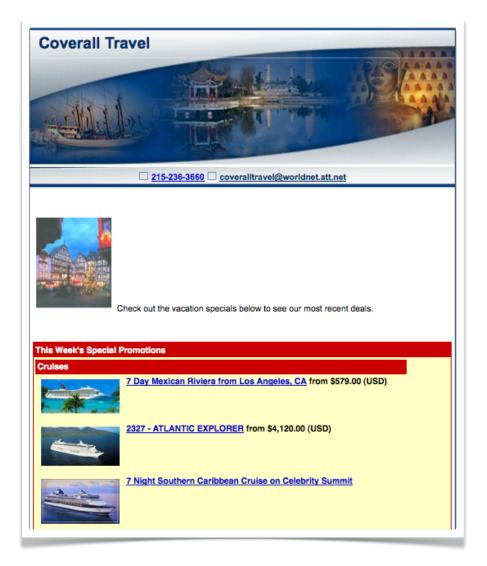
First, learn how to create follow up messages in AWeber. Next, schedule your follow ups to send at certain intervals - every day, several days apart, weekly, it's up to you! Use either intervals or send windows to schedule your messages. For more ideas on using follow ups, check out our blog post: <u>How To Sell A Service With Follow Ups</u>



## **Connecting With Regular Newsletters**

Newsletters are your ticket to steady communication with your customers and site visitors. Set a regular sending routine so your subscribers know when to expect you in their inbox.

Email newsletters are perfect for highlighting vacation spots, sharing customer travel stories and spilling special travel tips. A lot of travel sites and agencies send out daily deal newsletters as well.



Coverall Travel sends weekly newsletters with new travel deals every week.



#### Grand Palladium, Riviera Maya, Mexico

ATS owners Linda and Bill Cleveland, who is a member of Frederick Elks Lodge #684, recently returned from Riviera Maya, south of Cancun, Mexico, where they traveled with a large group of Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. Elks to raise funds for Elks Camp Barrett. The group stayed at the all-inclusive Grand Palladium Colonial and Kantenah Resort & Spa, rated 5 Golden Apples by Apple Vacations.

The Grand Palladium offers 24-hour food and beverage service, all meals and snacks, four a la carte restaurants, three buffet restaurants, unlimited imported drinks at thirteen bars, nightly entertainment, disco, four pools, six tennis courts, non-motorized watersports, spa, and much more. The 836 air-conditioned rooms feature two double beds or one king bed, most bathrooms with tub, shower, hair dryer, in-room safe, coffee maker, mini-bar, ceiling fan, and terrace or balcony.



Grand Palladium Colonial Beach



The Riviera Maya is among Linda and Bill's favorite resort areas anywhere in the world. The Grand Palladium is one of the best values in Riviera Maya for a 5 Golden Apple resort. The food and service were top-notch. The weather was superb - 86 degrees and breezy everyday. The Pina Coladas were always refreshing. And the beach and ocean were perfect. Who could ask for a better all-inclusive vacation?

ATS Travel features write-ups of a different vacation destination in their monthly newsletters.





## **Broadcasts For Special Announcements**

One-time broadcasts can announce special offers, limited-time deals or a new vacation package you're offering. Broadcasts are best for time-sensitive emails and occasional announcements.



Collette Vacations announces a special contest with a broadcast message.





#### **Broadcast From Your Blog**

Your travel blog is your customers' go-to destination for travel tips, vacation ideas and ways to save money. But in order to take advantage of your resources, your readers have to remember to visit your site for updates.

Make it easy on them with a blog broadcast. Blog broadcasts automatically convert your recent posts into email that pushes your content into your readers' inbox. You can control the number of articles and frequency for each broadcast and which subscribers they get sent to. Everything else is automatic.

If your blog and newsletters cover the same topics, start sending a blog broadcast in place of your newsletter to save yourself some time. Or supplement your newsletter with content from your blog.



An example of a blog broadcast from Travel Concepts Kansas City.

#### How to Create Blog Broadcasts

Blog broadcasts automatically populate from your blog's RSS feed. <u>Follow these step-by-step instructions</u> to set up your first broadcast.

You'll find new posts ready to email on the "Broadcasts" page (under the "Messages" tab in your AWeber account). Open the message, make any edits you want, and send it to your subscribers!



# When To Send Your Emails

Consistency is the key to email marketing, but hitting your sending stride can get challenging. Unless you're sending daily deals, you need to email your subscribers frequently enough so they don't forget you, but not so frequently that they feel overwhelmed. If you can't find the right balance, ask your subscribers and use their feedback to adjust your frequency.

Once you find the right frequency, stick to your schedule. Send newsletters or blog broadcasts frequently and consistently. Reserve one-time broadcast messages only for when you have important announcements to release.

You can also schedule your emails around holidays, seasons or events like:

- Holiday travel help. Holidays are high-volume travel times and often expensive travel times, too. Send your subscribers ways to save money or stay calm in the horde of other holiday travelers. Don't forget holiday travel packages and promotions!
- Seasonal tips. Advertise seasonal getaways or alert your customers to peak travel times when airfare and hotel rates will cost them more.
- **Industry news**. What kind of developments in travel regulations will affect your customers or site visitors? Give them a heads up before they travel or book their trip.

## **Targeting Subscribers**

Not all of your subscribers have the same destination in mind, or the same way of getting there. Some people like cruises. Others want a quick weekend getaway that's close to home. Still others are very budget-conscious. You wouldn't want to send information on a luxury cruise ship to a college student who wants to backpack across Europe on a shoestring budget.

Segmenting organizes your subscribers into groups based on their preferences to ensure that you're sending the right deals and packages to the right people. Group your subscribers by travel interest - send emails about airline discounts to subscribers who express an interest in flight information. Send emails about luxury resorts to subscribers who want top-notch accommodations. You can also use their geographic location to send emails about flight deals originating from their nearest airport or small weekend getaways near their hometown.

The next page shows examples of ways you can collect this kind of information about your subscribers.





## On Your Web Form

Use your web form to invite new subscribers to share more about themselves when they first join your list. Learning their preferences early on will help you send messages that matter to them from the start. Ask about their favorite vacation destinations, where they'd like to travel in the future, leisure activities they enjoy, whether they're more interested in budget travel or luxury accommodations and whatever else makes sense based on the travel services your site or agency offers.

Thanks for signing up for eDeals!
Now tell us what kind of traveler you are
Update your travel preferences so we can give you the best deals for the type of trips you're looking for. Fields marked with a (*) are required.
Last Name*:
First Name*:
Gender:
Male     Female
Date of Birth*:
MM/DD/YYYY
Status:
Mail Type:
O HTML ● Text
Preferred U.S. Departure City*:
Where do you want to go next?
What's your Travel Style?
:
Other Interests?
■ Music ■ Sports
■ Fashion ■ Food
Shopping
■ Festivals ■ Art
SUBMIT >

STA Travel uses an additional form after sign-up to get more information about their subscribers for more personalized emails.

#### How To Segment With AWeber's Web Forms

To start segmenting with your web form, you'll need to add some custom fields to collect more than a name and email address. This article explains how to add those custom fields.

You might want to add some radio buttons or drop-down menus too, like STA Travel's form above. Learn about radio buttons <u>here</u> and drop-down menus <u>here</u>.

You can use the information in these custom web form fields to segment your subscribers, like we describe in this post on our blog.



### In Your Emails

What about subscribers who are already on your list? How can you ask for their preferences if they've already filled out your web form? Send them an email!

Wanderfly uses their welcome message to invite subscribers to share their travel preferences:

V	wanderfly	
Hi	there and welcome to Wanderfly!	
	e so excited to have you join our community of travelers. Let's discover the most inspiring el experiences from around the world.	
To st	art:	
	Tell us a bit about yourself Where have you been? Where do you want to go? Are you a foodie, adrenaline junkie, beach bum, fashionista, art lover? Share your results with your friends to see how you match up!	
	Like and Tweet Some of your friends are sure to love travel as much as you. Spread the love by hitting Like or Tweet on the bottom left corner of our homepage!	
So, t	hanks again and happy travels!	
	GET GOING	
	· · · · · ·	
	to tweak your account? Visit you <mark>r settings</mark> page to change your contact info, email preferences, etc. Go stion? Talk to us at <mark>discuss@wanderfly.com</mark> .	

You can set up a simple email survey to send to your subscribers, too. Ask some simple yes or no questions - "Are you interested in flight discounts?" "Do you prefer luxury accommodations?" "Was this email relevant to you?" - and link the answers to a special page that <u>tracks who clicked on what</u>. Then you can separate your subscribers into segments <u>based on the links they clicked in your email survey</u>.

#### For More Help With Segmenting...

We have another free guide available for download that digs deeper into the ins and outs of segmenting your subscribers. Download the guide to <u>Segmenting Your Subscribers</u> for more ideas and ways to target.



# Improving Your Campaign

## **Split Testing**

Your campaign doesn't end once it launches. Building your list and sending emails are just the beginning. Once everything's running smoothly, it's time to think about optimizing your campaign.

Get better performance from your email campaign with split testing. Split testing is like setting up a controlled experiment for your campaign, allowing you to compare two or more versions of your web form, message content, subject line, calls to action and other variables to see which gets the best response from your subscribers.

Does your web form attract more sign ups with more or fewer required fields? At the top of your site or in the sidebar? Test different wording for your call to action button or try offering an incentive - like travel discount coupons - for sign ups.

Maybe not as many people are opening your emails as you hoped. Test different versions of your subject line to see which gets the most opens. Try asking your subscribers a question in the subject line or personalizing subjects with your subscribers' first names. Maybe your messages are just too long. Test different lengths and content to see which version your subscribers interact with most.

The testing doesn't end there! You can split test using buttons instead of links in your calls to action, how frequently you email your subscribers, the day of the week or time of day you send your messages, how many images you use - anything you think might improve your subscribers' experience with your campaign.

How to Split Test With AWeber From web forms to broadcast messages, here are some ideas to get you started with your own split testing:

How to Split Test a Web Form How to Split Test Broadcast Messages A Free Guide to Split Testing Your Web Forms Split Test the Wording on Your Web Forms Split Test Your Sign Up Process 3 Steps to More Sales by Split Testing





# About AWeber

What do leading sites such as Social Media Examiner, Copyblogger, Which Test Won, ProBlogger and Harvard Business Review all have in common?

They rely on AWeber for easy-to-use email and social media tools to cultivate relationships with their readers. Since 1998, AWeber has been the email engine powering the growth of organizations around the world.

Today, more than 110,000 small- and midsize-businesses, entrepreneurs, agencies and nonprofits are making the most of AWeber's sophisticated segmentation and analytics capabilities, social media and testing applications, extensive template libraries, and industry-leading deliverability and live support.

For marketing advice, examples and inspiration, please join us here:





