

Promotion - How to Send Group E-Mail

There are many reasons to send the same promotional e-mail message to a large number of people. Some of these reasons are listed in the separate module entitled “What to Include in an E-mail Campaign Mailing.” Along with deciding what you want to communicate, and how to do it so that people will read it and take action, you should consider the technical aspects of how to send e-mail to a large group.

The most important point is not to send spam. One definition of spam is “unwanted e-mail sent unsolicited to large numbers of recipients.” Don’t even think of renting a list of e-mail addresses of everyone who ever visited a crafts supply Web site, for example. Instead, develop your own list of e-mail addresses from people who gave them to you at a crafts show, gallery exhibition, workshop, course, or when they purchased one of your pieces. Sending e-mail to people who have expressed an interest in hearing from you is called “opt-in” or “permission e-mail” and keeps you from being accused of spamming. It’s also more effective, because acquaintances are more likely to respond to you than total strangers.

Over the years, your list of acquaintances’ e-mail addresses can become very large. When this happens, it will be convenient to create a group mailing list for them in your e-mail program, and you need to be sure to use the “Bcc.” field when mailing to them.

Here are the steps for creating a group mailing list in Outlook Express for Windows. If you’re using a Mac, the steps may be slightly different.

1. Realize that the e-mail address for each person must be listed in your Address Book.
2. On the Toolbar, click on Addresses.
3. Then click on New.
4. Click on New Group. Enter a group name for these recipients, for example, “Crafts Contacts.”
5. Click on Select Members. Your Address Book should appear, and you can click on each name you want in the group, and then click on Select. If you want everyone in your Address Book to be in your group, you can save time if you have the option of clicking Select All. If you don’t want to include everyone in your Address Book, you may be able to select a few names in a row by clicking and scrolling down the names, highlighting several. This doesn’t work, however, in the more basic e-mail programs.
6. When you have selected all the names, click on OK.
7. Click on OK to get out of this function. You should see the group name in your Address Book.

After you’ve created a group, you can add or delete names to it at any time. To do so, click on the group name in your Address Book. Then, on the Toolbar, click on Properties. Follow the instructions for adding a person to the group. To remove someone, click on the name and then click on Remove. Click on OK when you’ve finished adding and removing names from the group. Finally, close your Address Book by clicking on the X in the corner.

Be sure to use the “Bcc.” field when sending e-mail to a group. “Bcc.” stands for “blind carbon copy” and lets you send to large numbers of people without revealing their e-mail addresses. Even if privacy is not a concern, it’s highly annoying for recipients of your messages to see every address in your large group. If you don’t see the “Bcc.” field when you click on New Message, if you have Outlook Express, click on View and then on All Headers.

When you're ready to create your mass e-mail message, simply put the group name (Crafts Contacts) in the "Bcc." field. A nice touch is to put your own e-mail address in the "To" field. That way, recipients see something friendlier than "Recipient list suppressed," which is what appears by default.

You may, at times, want to send the same message to each person individually, as if it were written specifically to each one. Perhaps you're hosting an event or party and especially want to invite certain people. Messages that have the recipient's name in the "To" field stand out.

You can use Forward to send the same message to others without it looking like a mass mailing, as long as you delete the header information that appears. You do this by clicking on the message you want to use, so that it is highlighted in blue. Then click Forward on the Toolbar. Enter the recipient's name in the "To" field. In the Subject line, delete "Fw:". In the body of the message, delete "Original Message" and the header information "From," "To," "Sent," and "Subject." Stripping out the signs of a forwarded message leaves you with a message that looks specially created for the recipient.

At this point there are other changes you can make to give the impression that this message is specifically intended for the individual. You can put the person's name in the subject line, or add "Dear Bob" to the start of your message in the body of the e-mail. Nothing captures our attention as much as seeing our name. Just be sure to personalize the message each time you forward it to another person.

There are techniques to consider when creating the body of the e-mail message. There are three main options: Plain Text alone, Plain Text with an attachment, or Rich Text (HTML). Plain Text is the simplest, most basic form of e-mail. It does not permit colour or special fonts. It is black and white text only, and does not allow direct links to Web sites. The advantage of Plain Text is that anyone with e-mail service will be able to read your message clearly. Simple computer systems, e-mail programs and services may not permit anything more sophisticated than Plain Text.

Adding an attachment to your Plain Text message lets you send to people with all levels of e-mail service, and gives them the option of seeing your colourful, beautifully-designed flyer or invitation. You add an attachment to an open message by clicking on Attach, locating the file you want, clicking on it, and then clicking on the other Attach button. If your attachment is large, it's a good idea to compress the file first by using a compression utility like WinZip. This lets attachments download more quickly. It's important to remember that not everyone wants attachments to open automatically. It's a good idea to mention your attachment, and what it is, in the body of your message.

It's possible to use more sophisticated techniques with e-mail, such as attaching an actual Web page, or sending people directly to a site you want them to see, but it's recommended that you keep your e-mail messages simple. Many people don't appreciate being forced to go somewhere on the Internet that they don't want to go. People who prefer to work offline, and download files only when they want to, may find it annoying to have their system automatically go online when they read your message. People with dial-up service instead of high speed can also be irritated by attachments that take a long time to download.

For this reason, keep your attachments of "low bandwidth." Bandwidth refers to the amount of data in a file. The more data there is, the more time it takes to download. For more information on bandwidth and file compression, see the separate module on this topic.

The third possibility for the body of an e-mail message is Rich Text. This gives you the most options for formatting your message. You use Rich Text by clicking on New Mail, clicking Format on the Toolbar of the message, and then clicking on Rich Text (HTML). Another Toolbar will appear below the subject line, giving you font choices and sizes, and all sorts of formatting options like bullets, bolding, italics, underlines, and different font colours. Rich Text also permits HTML (Hyper-text mark-up language) which means you can add links to Web pages and e-mail addresses.

While designing messages with Rich Text can be fun and creative, remember that not everyone has software that can show HTML e-mail. To reach the widest audience, keep your messages technologically simple. Express your creativity in the words and layout of your message, and in the beauty of an attachment that readers open if and when they want to.

One final point to consider is the timing of your e-mail message. Business people tend to have the most spam in their Inboxes on Monday morning. They might delete your message if they receive it at this time. People at home might be more receptive to your message on a weekend morning. Experiment with sending messages at different times, and keep track of responses. You want to hit on the format and timing that brings the best results for your mass e-mail efforts.