E-Mail Marketing

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Note*: So, I lead this session only to fill the gap in the program – I didn't really have a prepared talk. However, I've written on the subject before (in my ebook: Eleven and a Half Ways to Make Your Next Event a Huge Success) so I thought I'd share this with you; and besides, I don't recall a single thing I said about e-mail on Saturday so this is the best I've got. - Corwin Hiebert*

E-Mail Marketing

Email is the root of all evil, don't be an evil doer when it comes to your business.
Why is email evil you ask? First off it's a spoiled form of communication - over 88% of all email sent is unsolicited, that's a lot of garbage. Second, it's cold and impersonal - it's a convenient way to share information and nothing more, and it's not even the best way. Third, no one follows the rules and it can be a major irritation - late night emails, full of grammatical errors, the wrong person CC'd, an overflowing inbox is stressful or worse, the harassing "Did you get my email?" email. Fourth, people get misunderstood - insert your own awkward email exchange here. All this to say, don't spend too much sending and sorting email because in the end, the more you send the more you have to sort and you probably don't get paid to do email.

A quick tip for you: Read 4-Hour Work Week by Timothy Ferris. He's got a great perspective on efficiency verses effectiveness and email is a prime example of his. You may be very efficient with email (flagging, sub-inboxes, bla bla bla) but unless it's making your life simpler, and making you more money, making love to your inbox can be a colossal waste of energy. Focus on being an effective communicator not a prolific emailer.

Now, when it comes to email marketing… tread carefully. I'm a fan of well crafted emails that are full of content I want or need; everything else is crap. What a lot of people don't realize is that email marketing from your inbox is super scary. I won't get into the specifics but if your email blast offends the wrong person your email and Website server can be blacklisted and shutdown in the blink of an eye. If the people you're sending it to you don't want to receive your email you can lose friends and followers very quickly. And when sending email to a BCC (blind carbon-copy) list the chances of being caught in their junk filter go up exponentially, and most email programs put weird things in the TO line. It's just not worth it.
The best way to build a solid email distribution community is by hiring a monkey, a chimp really. I know a lot of people use ConstantContact, which is very similar, but I like the fun-loving services of MailChimp. Mailchimp is a full-featured email marketing service which makes it easy for anyone to create and send eye-catching and professional HTML emails - no coding or programming required! I've been using this system for about three years and I can't say enough about it. Email marketing, when properly scheduled, designed, and distributed can produce some really great results. Since using Mailchimp I've sent over 200 email campaigns on behalf of 14 different clients. Every single campaign received higher than average open rates and produced exceptional results for my clients.

Tip: From my experience, the best time to send an email campaign for a small business or creative endeavor is Tuesday. The reason is this: Monday, everyone is stressed out and their inboxes are full from the weekend; Wednesday, the week is half gone and there's too much work to do; Thursday is a gone show; Friday… no one works on Friday; and the weekend is a right-off because most people don't check their work email or secondary email accounts until Monday (when the clean out the junk). And the best time on Tuesday is in the morning between 9:30am-11:30am - they've already cleaned out their inbox of all the riffraff and they're still feeling optimistic about their week. Sip coffee, and click, click, click.

Here's a few of the reasons why I'm such a big fan of using an email marketing tool like Mailchimp:
- You can setup multiple subscriber lists where sign-ups, un-subscribes, and bounce-back are automatically managed.
- You can design groovy signup forms with your own colors and logos, then embed them into your website or blog.
- They've got some great templates but to be honest it's so simple to do up your own header graphics, fonts, and colors that you probably won't use the pre-fab ones.
- They track everything for you. Opens, clicks, bounces and forwarded campaigns.

So, all that to say is, if you're going to promote your photography using email, the size of your list doesn't matter, the quality of the email does. And, don't send email on a regular basis, like weekly or monthly, send it when you've got great content (stories, events, portfolio updates, and the like) - that's what people are looking for, something they can appreciate and consume. Remember, there's much more important things to do than send email but when you do, make it easy on yourself.

Action Item: Want to try Mailchimp for free? Simply click the affiliate link below to get started. Affiliate URL: http://eepurl.com/fB59

More About the Speaker: Corwin Hiebert specializes in strategic event design, marketing, and customized management services for creative professionals. With over 13 years of experience in the event and entertainment industry, Corwin has managed nearly every kind of event, from international road shows to local fundraisers. As an event planning instructor Corwin passionately supports emerging event professionals and the non-planner alike. Along with singer/songwriter and wife Eileen Rothe, Corwin owns and produces CREATIVEMIX - an ideation conference that takes place in Vancouver, BC. Corwin is a manager to a select group of creative professionals (like world-renowned humanitarian photographer/author David duChemin).