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ON THE BEAT - E-MAIL

Brand giveaways ignite email list growth

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For **Freshpair**, an e-commerce company that sells women's lingerie and men's underwear, building an email list is an ongoing priority. To help entice customers to add another email to their inboxes, the site is running regular contests including a "National Underwear Day" contest, which gives consumers the chance to win a free pair of underwear.

"List growth is a top goal for our email program, but it can be challenging," says Lindsay Massey, marketing director at Freshpair. "Everyone gets so many emails every day, and we have to convince them that the Freshpair emails are worth adding to their ever-growing inbox."

The company has email sign-up fields throughout its site — in the headers and footers, and in the shopping cart — as well as on its **Facebook** page. Email is an extremely effective channel once a customer is on a list, but one of the biggest challenges email marketers face is getting people on their lists. According to **Lyris**, annual list churn averages 20-30%.

"Even as new things like social and mobile become important, email list growth is fundamental," says Shawn Myers, product marketing manager at **Responsys**. "Because email has high ROI, it all comes back to your list. So you have to make it enticing and easy for people to sign up."

According to a **MarketingSherpa** study, 73% of email marketers are seeing list growth.

"Lists are still growing, but they are not necessarily growing at the same rate as a couple of years ago," says Ari Osur, principal analyst for interactive marketing at **Forrester Research**. "You may have fewer people signing up, but the value of the customer is better, so it doesn't mean that your list isn't as valuable."

Motherwear International, which sells clothes designed for nursing mothers, has an email sign-up on almost every page of its website. The call-to-action changes regularly. Customers who opt in are entered in a monthly drawing for either a \$50 gift certificate or the bra of their choice.

"The strategy is to get people to sign up and become customers. You can't market to them if you don't have their email address, at least not as well," says Jeanne Taylor, CEO of Motherwear, which stopped sending its catalog last year and now relies almost entirely on its e-commerce business.



Freshpair urges customers to provide their email addresses to win a free pair of underwear


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Still, marketers should be mindful to not spoil their customers with freebies. "It's not always good to offer an incentive to get people to share their email address with you. You might train them to expect it," says Jeanne Jennings, an email marketing strategy consultant at JeanneJennings.com.

"The goal isn't to have a really big email list; the goal is to have an active email list of people who interact a lot with your brand on the list," she adds.

Jennings recommends that the most effective kinds of incentives are those that ensure the offer aligns with the content in a brand's email program.

Freshpair recently ran an opt-in offer in which consumers who signed up for its email list were entered into a drawing to win a \$250 gift certificate to the site. Once a customer was subscribed to the program, Freshpair sent him or her emails with exclusive sales and promotions, new product information and fitness tips.

"The \$250 sign-up promotion has helped to grow our list," says Massey. "Since everyone gets so many emails every day, we wanted to provide an added incentive to join our email program. Providing the prize is also a way for us to show the customers the vast array of styles we carry and the expert advice and service we provide."