

Managing Your In-House Mailing List

It takes time, patience and careful strategy to build an organic in-house mailing list of potential patients and other people who are vital to the running and growth of your practice. They have opted to receive regular updates about your practice, general information about aesthetic plastic surgery, and notifications of special offers and promotions. Their time is as valuable as their trust in you, and you want to make the most of your marketing without alienating these important contacts.

How do plastic surgeons build organic (as opposed to purchased or rented) mailing lists?

- Offer patients the chance to “opt in” when they visit your office — a simple question on the in-take paperwork or sign-in sheet will suffice, asking, “Would you like to sign up to receive regular updates and information about special promotions?”
- Make sure your practice’s website encourages visitors to opt in to receive emails and newsletters. In addition to appearing on your Contact page, you can also include this information in a pop-up on the landing page. Your practice’s email account(s) should all include the invitation to opt-in to the mailing list as well.
- Collect emails through your business interactions — in many countries you may legally contact anyone with whom you have a business relationship.

The legal definition of a “business relationship” may vary according to the country in which you practice, but your list will probably consist of people in one of two broad categories: your patients (past, present and hopefully future) and vendors. But patients probably aren’t interested in emails that target vendors, and vice-versa. That’s why it’s so important to separate your list into sub-lists. This is where a working knowledge of web analytics can be helpful. Your marketing team can customize emails according to each audience: patients will be far more interested in aesthetic procedures and special promotions, while vendors will want to know about your practice’s successes, challenges and goals.

Keep marketing emails short — less is more. Don’t make the mistake of overwhelming your recipients with frequent emails, as this may confuse those who want to go back later to find specific information, only to be unable to find it. Even worse is the likelihood of annoying your recipients and causing them to unsubscribe from your list altogether. While there really is no clear rule about email frequency, it’s better to err on the side of fewer rather than more. A monthly newsletter, plus two to four marketing emails per month, seems to be the most common practice.

And, even though you hate to see them go, you must always, always offer the option to unsubscribe. Make it a clear and easy process; no one likes having to click through pages asking “Are you sure?” “We’re sorry to see you go!” A simple auto-reply stating, “You are now

unsubscribed,” perhaps followed by information on how to re-subscribe in the future, is all you need.

Choose your content wisely. Avoid wordiness; be brief. The tone of your marketing emails should always be informative and professional, pleasant (though not overly cheerful or humorous) and never create sense of “pressure”. Remember, you are building relationships, which takes hard work and patience, but which eventually will benefit everyone over time.