



Whitepaper

Introduction to Email Lists

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Introduction

With the rapid growth of the Internet, organizations are constantly finding new ways to leverage this technology as a means of achieving their objectives. These objectives vary and can include enhancing client relationships, promoting customer loyalty, streamlining internal communication and many other endeavors. Although the goals may differ, the Internet has become one of the most essential components of an organization's communication strategy.

The World Wide Web has long been considered the focal point of a successful Internet strategy. Organizations are, however, increasingly recognizing the necessity of electronic communication to efficiently reach their goals. The ability to interact and communicate with different audiences - such as customers, employees, partners and suppliers - via email, quickly and easily, is now just as vital for an organization's success.

This is where email lists come in. Email lists are a very successful tool for achieving a variety of objectives. Email lists enable fast, global and economical group communication. By using email lists, organizations can quickly deliver large numbers of email messages for a fraction of the cost that other communication channels require.

This introductory white paper discusses email lists and how to effectively use them to further your organization's goals. It explains what email lists are, how different types of email lists are set up, and most importantly, how to effectively use them and make them work for your organization.

About Email Lists

The widespread use of email in the modern world has supplied a convenient and economical way for people to communicate from different corners of the globe. While traditional email is ideal for one-on-one interaction, email lists advance the concept a step further by disseminating a single message simultaneously to a group of people.

With email lists, companies can quickly and cost-effectively deliver thousands, even millions, of messages simultaneously over the Internet. Through database integration, messages can be personalized according to each recipient's demographic information and preferences. Email newsletters can be conveniently distributed to a group of people, such as customers, constituents, distributors, or resellers. In addition, email discussion groups can be used for interaction among employees or departments for special projects, workgroups, and committees. Individuals can also form non-commercial discussion forums on just about any imaginable topic of interest. The possibilities on how email lists can be used for communication among groups of people are virtually endless.

Working with Email Lists

To make it easy and efficient to manage email lists, an email list management software solution such as LISTSERV® is required. LISTSERV performs many functions that would otherwise have to be managed manually as in the days before any email list management software existed. Manual list management almost led to the extinction of email lists because it required considerable human resource expenditure to perform tasks such as list creation, adding and removing subscribers, handling email delivery errors or bounces and so on. LISTSERV was actually the first software introduced to automate the administration of email lists in 1986.

In order to use LISTSERV, the software must be installed on a server with a dedicated connection to the Internet. When a list is created, its email address is then used to post messages to the list. Once a message is sent, it is delivered to the central server where the mailing list management software resides. The software then completes the operation by automatically distributing the message to the subscribers on the list.

All list modifications can be executed by accessing the list's Web Interface or by sending an email message to LISTSERV with the appropriate command. Each change request is delivered to the central server where LISTSERV resides. LISTSERV automatically updates the list's records and sends a confirmation message via email to the person who requested the changes.

Types of Email Lists

Email lists are typically configured for use in the following ways:

- **One-Way Distribution/Announcement Lists** – Used for sending send product announcements or monthly newsletters, for example. For details, see the [One-Way Distribution/Announcement Lists](#) section.
- **Discussion Lists** – Used when a large group or team wants to share information; or, provides a support forum and builds email communities. For details, see the [Discussion Lists](#) section.
- **Database-Generated Lists** – Used to create personalized messages with the use of recipient information stored in databases. For details, see the [Database-Generated Lists](#) section.

One-Way Distribution/Announcement Lists

Announcement lists or one-way distribution lists are types of lists where subscribers only receive information and do not interact with other list members. This type of list is most commonly used for delivering news and media publications, company newsletters and any other type of announcement. One-way lists are similar to newspaper subscriptions but cost much less to produce. The quick turnaround time of email allows for faster communication, communication that can be precisely timed and communication that is targeted to those who are truly interested. In addition, spontaneous one-time lists can be created for the occasional message that needs to be distributed to a certain group of people.

Figure 1: One-Way Distribution/Announcement List



One-Way Distribution/Announcement List Benefits

Use newsletters to build loyalty and recognition: A professional newsletter is one of the best and most efficient ways to enhance your image and build loyalty and recognition. An email list enables you to quickly, effectively, and economically distribute a newsletter without the headache and expense associated with distributing a hard-copy mailing. Electronic newsletters allow you to add interactivity such as polls and surveys to your communication. It is also possible to track whether your newsletter is being read and what sections are most popular among your subscribers. In addition, email is an environmentally friendly form of communication since it does not cause pollution or require trees as a resource. Online newsletters are suitable for everyone from public officials, political candidates and organizations communicating with their constituents to companies attempting to build brand recognition for their products.

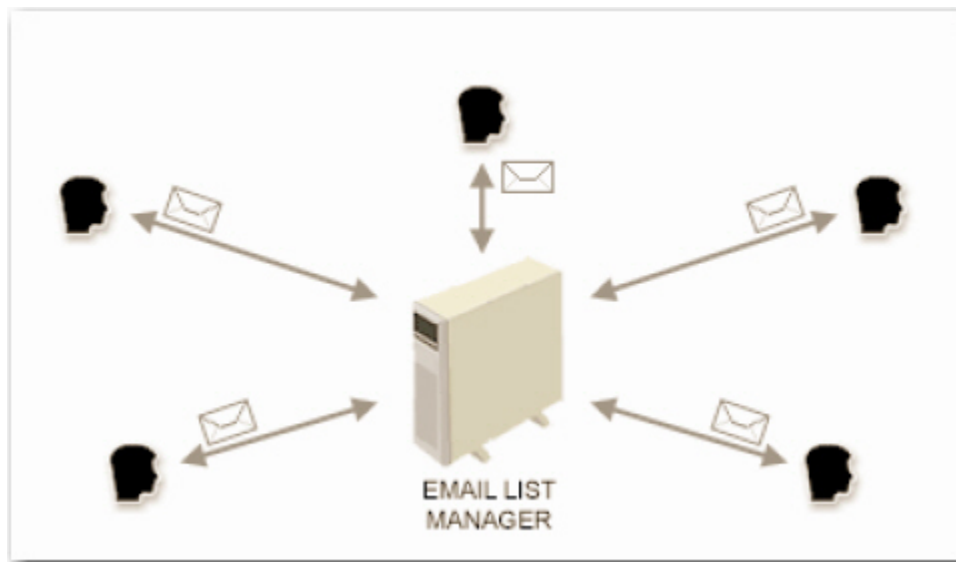
Enhance the power of your promotions: Email lists provide a great opportunity for companies to distribute product announcements, promotional offers and other discounts. In addition, it is possible to target your email communication through database integration using an existing customer database. This allows you to send messages that are customized according to each recipient's personal preferences and demographic data. Companies, large and small alike, can benefit from announcement lists to increase sales and acquire new customers.

Improve your organization's internal communication: Important company announcements, policy changes and other news can be quickly distributed via email. These documents are much more likely to be read than just another hard-copy memo buried in an employee's inbox.

Discussion Lists

Discussion forums allow for ongoing discussions among group members, with or without moderation. They are most commonly used for internal communication within an organization or group of people. Unlike a one-way list, a discussion list not only allows but encourages interaction between members who are part of the group. Everyone can write to the list, and in doing so, all members will receive a copy of the message. In this way, discussions can take place and views can be exchanged among a large number of people.

Figure 2: Discussion List



Discussion List Benefits

Empower employees by giving them stronger involvement in company activities: An email list allows you to create different electronic discussion groups for interactive involvement in, for example, special projects, committees, corporate reorganization, and major changes in management. Employees can participate in decision-making and provide feedback. This can make them more active participants, which can help boost employee morale.

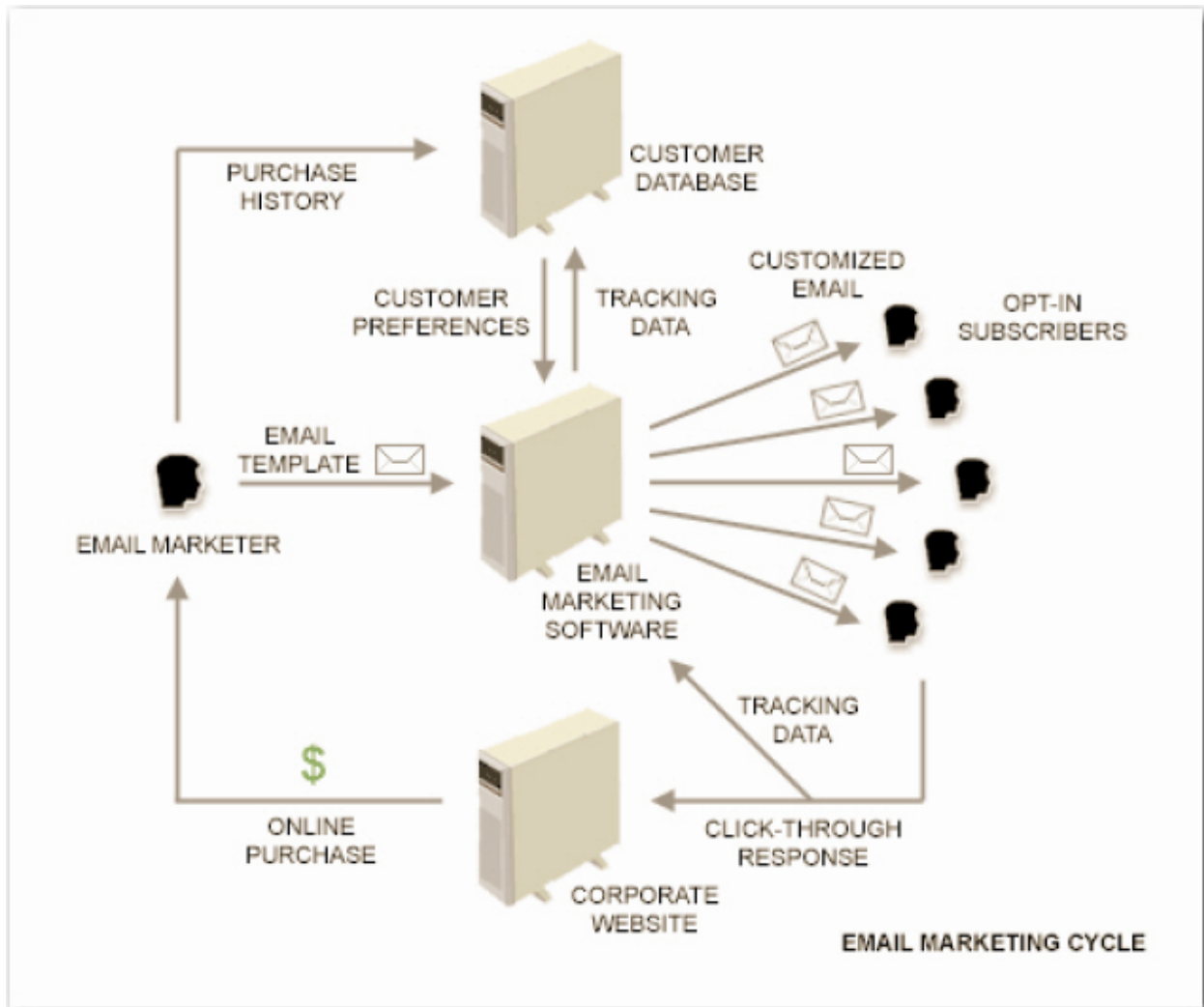
Create interactive discussion forums: Discussion forums can be used for interactive discussions among clients, distributors or students. For example, companies can create moderated or unmoderated discussion forums about their products. This is a cost-effective way to provide support to your customers, and it also fosters product and brand loyalty while maintaining good customer relations. Educational institutions, on the other hand, can create discussion lists for students of a specific course or program to discuss and help one another with educational material. Similarly, public officials, political candidates, and non-profit organizations can use discussion groups to build grassroots support, engage constituents, and promote their agendas.

Database-Generated Lists

Database-generated lists are simply announcement lists that allow for the creation of personalized, customized messages with the use of information stored in a customer database. These lists are commonly used for direct email marketing since companies can easily distribute targeted information to their customers based on their individual demographics, preferences and sales history. A sales or marketing department can effectively use this type of list to deliver announcements about upcoming sales promotions and products. For this type of operation, the email list management software is integrated with a customer database system. The email list manager creates an email message template. The template can contain database variables as well as conditional text blocks. Conditional text blocks are only inserted if certain conditions are met, for example if the recipient resides in a specific state or falls into a certain age segment. When executing the email job, the appropriate recipient information is extracted from the database and inserted into the template, after which it is delivered to each recipient.

Special email marketing software, such as L-Soft's LISTSERV® Maestro, makes this type of operation easy. This type of software simplifies the process of connecting to different databases, selecting a targeted list of recipients and preparing your messages for delivery. Email marketing software also has the added benefit of allowing the email list administrator to track the responses, for example measuring how many recipients opened the email message or clicked on a link within the email message. This data can be used to evaluate the success of your message and further tailor the content to what recipients are seeking.

Figure 3: Database-Generated List



Database-Generated List Benefits

Create targeted promotional offers: You can send targeted and relevant promotional offers to subscribers based on their demographic information and track the responses. By being able to track and analyze recipient responses, organizations can gain valuable insight into customer interests and the effectiveness of messages. These measurable results can be used to better tailor your communication platform, which can improve customer relations and increase customer acquisition and retention rates.

Make routine customer communication more efficient: Using your existing customer database, you can easily customize your client messages and send documents such as billing statements, order confirmation messages and account information to subscribers through email, saving time and resources.

Case Studies

Pearson Education

Pearson Education (NYSE: PSO), which provides an online resource for technology information, uses LISTSERV® to manage more than 20 newsletters to subscribers about topics ranging from

programming to networking. These newsletters have enabled Pearson Education to build a strong IT community that subscribers can depend on for up-to-date technology news.

United Way

United Way is a national volunteer organization dedicated to bringing together communities across America. The organization incorporated ListPlex® Maestro into its operations to improve communication with staff, donors, volunteers, and those interested in knowing more about their communities. A growing number of LISTSERV® lists have increased United Way's ability to gather available resources and improve communities across the country. Based on this successful foundation, the United Way is currently implementing L-Soft's email list services in its regional and local service centers.

"With L-Soft products, we will be able to better tailor our message to meet the interests not only of donors but of people who, through our network of Web sites, express an interest about knowing more. The United Way is uniquely capable of bringing together the resources in a community to address the needs of that community. The advanced products provided to us by L-Soft will increase United Way's capacity to bring together those resources to better serve the people in every community," Casey Cichowicz, United Way Online Manager, said.

Stockholm International Fairs

Stockholm International Fairs is the leading exhibition and congress center in Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea region. In 2002, the company started using LISTSERV® Maestro to provide conference announcements, tickets, and pre-registration opportunities to exhibitors and attendees using email. Stockholm International Fairs has achieved campaign cost savings and improved information distribution to exhibitors and visitors. The number of conference registrations has also increased thanks to the mailings.

Lifetime Television

In March 1999, Lifetime Television launched a campaign on its Website called the Lifetime Breast Self Examination Reminder Service to raise public awareness of breast cancer and the importance of early detection. Visitors to the site are given the opportunity to register for a free, monthly examination reminder through email. The company chose the LISTSERV® email list management software to deliver this very important health reminder to its subscribers. As Lifetime's needs have grown, today, the organization is using LISTSERV® Maestro. Its Breast Self Examination Reminder list has more than 77,000 subscribers. Since its launch, Lifetime TV has started nine other lists about topics ranging from its most popular television shows to special promotions and offers.

"We are very happy with the performance of LISTSERV® products," said Shobhit Kapoor, Director of Internet Technology at Lifetime TV. *"It remains easy to use regardless of how much the lists grow and has provided us with the ability to develop a more personalized relationship with our audience. Using LISTSERV®, we've been able to have a direct impact on their lives."*

L-Soft's Email List Products and Services

LISTSERV® Email List Management Software



L-Soft's flagship product, LISTSERV®, developed by L-Soft founder and CEO Eric Thomas in 1986, was the first email list management software. LISTSERV® enables users to administer email lists of any size - from as many as several million subscribers to as little as a few. LISTSERV® is currently used to manage more than 425,000 lists and delivers about 35 million messages per day. The software is available for Windows 2003/2000/XP; Unix: AIX (PowerPC), Solaris (SPARC), Tru64, Linux (32-bit, 64-bit and S/390), AIX (PowerPC), HP-UX, Mac

OS X; OpenVMS (Alpha) and VM.LISTSERV can connect to most ODBC-compliant (Windows and Unix) databases; Microsoft SQL Server; IBM DB2; ORACLE; and MySQL, allowing great flexibility with your choice of database.

LISTSERV® Maestro Email Marketing Software



LISTSERV® Maestro complements LISTSERV® and provides organizations with advanced software technology for conducting email marketing campaigns. LISTSERV® Maestro has an easy-to-use Web Interface that guides marketers through the steps of preparing email campaigns for delivery, including creating the message, assigning team responsibilities, selecting a targeted list of customers, testing and scheduling delivery, and tracking responses. LISTSERV® Maestro is available for Windows 2003/2000/XP; Unix (Linux 32-bit and Solaris on SPARC 32), and Mac OS X.

HDMail Email Delivery Software



HDMail is L-Soft's high deliverability mailer, providing unsurpassed reliability, performance and deliverability in today's fast-changing email industry. Thanks to features such as virtual routing, smart bounce management, real-time reporting and live domain policy updates, HDMail maximizes your delivery rate while streamlining and simplifying your email operations.

ListPlex® and EASESM Email List Hosting Services



ListPlex® and EASESM email list hosting services provide customers with access to L-Soft's expertise and technology without hardware, software, or personnel investments. Our outsourcing services can be tailored to meet the needs of the largest newsletters on the Internet, or simply help hobbyists keep in touch with others sharing the same interests.

Training and Consulting

L-Soft offers comprehensive training and consulting services to improve customers' effective and appropriate use of our electronic mail products and services. Our customized training services help you achieve your objectives quickly and efficiently by streamlining the learning process and eliminating the frustrating trial and error that often accompanies deployment of enterprise software. Training classes are hands-on courses that are tailored to meet the needs of your individual organization.

L-Soft also offers comprehensive consulting services, providing your organization with in-depth customized assistance throughout the implementation cycle. L-Soft's consultants can help integrate our products and services with your existing systems to more effectively address your email needs and to produce measurable business results. Through needs assessment, planning, implementation, testing, optimization and troubleshooting, L-Soft's consultants will guide you toward meeting your email objectives and achieving your business goals.

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Glossary of Terms

A

Above the Fold: The top part of an email message that is visible to the recipient without the need for scrolling. The term originally comes from print and refers to the top half of a folded newspaper.

Alias: A unique and usually shorter URL (link) that can be distinguished from other links even if they ultimately go to the same Web page. This makes it possible to track which message led viewers to click on the link.

ASP: Application Service Provider – A company that offers organizations access over the Internet to applications and related services that would otherwise have to be located on site at the organization's premises.

Attachment: An audio, video or other data file that is attached to an email message.

Auto-Responder: A computer program that automatically responds with a prewritten message to anyone who sends an email message to a particular email address or uses an online feedback form.

Authentication: A term that refers to standards, such as Sender ID, SPF, and DomainKeys/DKIM that serve to identify that an email is really sent from the domain name and individual listed as the sender. Authentication standards are used to fight spam and spoofing.

B

B2B: Business-to-Business – The exchange of information, products or services between two businesses – as opposed to between a business and a consumer (B2C).

B2C: Business-to-Consumer – The exchange of information, products or services between a business and a consumer – as opposed to between two businesses (B2B).

Bayesian Filter: A spam filter that evaluates email message content to determine the probability that it is spam. Bayesian filters are adaptable and can learn to identify new patterns of spam by analyzing incoming email.

Blacklist: A list containing email addresses or IP addresses of suspected spammers. Blacklists are sometimes used to reject incoming mail at the server level before the email reaches the recipient.

Block: An action by an Internet Service Provider to prevent email messages from being forwarded to the end recipient.

Bounces: Email messages that fail to reach their intended destination. "Hard" bounces are caused by invalid email addresses, whereas "soft" bounces are due to temporary conditions, such as full inboxes.

C

Challenge-Response: An authentication method that requires a human to respond to an email challenge message before the original email that triggered the challenge is delivered to the recipient. This method is sometimes used to cut down on spam since it requires an action by a human sender.

Click-Through Tracking: The process of tracking how many recipients clicked on a particular link in an email message. This is commonly done to measure the success of email marketing campaigns.

Click-Through Rate: In an email marketing campaign, the percentage of recipients who clicked on a particular link within the email message.

Conditional Blocks: A text fragment that is pasted into an email message only if certain conditions are met (for instance the recipient lives in a certain area). Conditional blocks allow email marketers to create more personalized mailings.

Conversion Rate: A measure of success for an email marketing campaign (for instance the number of recipients who completed a purchase). With email marketing, conversion rates are relatively easy to calculate because of the technology's measurable nature.

CPM: Cost Per Thousand – An industry standard measure for ad impressions. Email has a relatively low CPM compared to other marketing channels (Note: "M" represents thousand in Roman numerology).

D

Discussion Group: An email list community where members can obtain and share information. Every member can write to the list, and in doing so, everyone subscribed to the list will receive a copy of the message.

DNS: Domain Name Server (or system) – An Internet service that translates domain names into IP addresses.

DomainKeys/DKIM: DomainKeys/DomainKeys Identified Mail are cryptographic authentication solutions that add signatures to email messages, allowing recipient sites to verify that the message was sent by an authorized sender and was not altered in transit.

Domain Name: A name that identifies one or more IP addresses. Domain names always have at least two parts that are separated by dots (for instance, lsoft.com). The part on the left is the second-level domain (more specific), while the part on the right is the top-level domain (more general).

Domain Throttling: A technique that allows you to limit the number of email messages sent to a domain within a certain time frame. It is used to comply with ISPs and to avoid tripping spam filters. Many ISPs have their own policies and preferred limits.

Double Opt-In: The recommended procedure for subscribing email recipients to an email list or newsletter. Once a person requests to subscribe to a list, a confirmation email message is automatically sent to the supplied email address asking the person to verify that they have in fact requested to be included in future mailings.

E

Email Client: The software that recipients use to read email. Some email clients have better support for HTML email than others.

Email Harvesting: The disreputable and often illegal practice of using an automated program to scan Web pages and collect email addresses for use by spammers.

Email Header: The section of an email message that contains the sender's and recipient's email addresses as well as the routing information.

Email Marketing: The use of email (or email lists) to plan and deliver permission-based marketing campaigns.

F

False Positive: A legitimate email message that is mistakenly rejected or filtered by a spam filter.

Forward DNS Lookup: A Forward DNS Lookup, or just DNS Lookup, is the process of looking up and translating a domain name into its corresponding IP address. This can be compared to a Reverse DNS Lookup, which is the process of looking up and translating an IP address into a domain name.

FQDN: Fully Qualified Domain Name – A name consisting of both a host and a domain name. For example, www.lsoft.com is a fully qualified domain name (www is the host; lsoft is the second-level domain; and .com is the top-level domain).

G

H

Hard Bounces: Email messages that cannot be delivered to the recipient because of a permanent error, such as an invalid or non-existing email address.

Host Name: The name of a computer on the Internet (for example, www.lsoft.com).

HTML: Hyper Text Markup Language – The most commonly used coding language for creating Web pages. HTML can also be used in email messages.

I

In-House List: A list of email addresses that a company has gathered through previous customer contacts, Web sign-ups, or other permission-based methods. In-house lists typically generate higher conversion rates than rented lists.

IP Address: An IP (Internet Protocol) address is a unique identifier for a computer on the Internet. It is written as four numbers separated by periods. Each number can range from 0 to 255. Before connecting to a computer over the Internet, a Domain Name Server translates the domain name into its corresponding IP address.

J

K

L

List Broker: A company that sells or rents lists of email addresses. Some list brokers are not reputable and sell lists with unusable or unsubstantiated candidates. It is therefore advisable for email marketers to build their own internal lists.

List Owner: The owner of an email list defines the list's charter and policy (i.e. list description and general rules). The list owner is also responsible for administrative matters and for answering questions from the list subscribers.

M

Mail-Merge: A process that enables the delivery of personalized messages to large numbers of recipients. This is usually achieved using email list management software working in conjunction with a database.

Merge-Purge: The act of removing duplicate email addresses from a coalesced list that is composed of two or more existing lists.

MIME: Multi-Purpose Internet Mail Extensions – An extension of the original Internet email standard that allows users to exchange text, audio, or visual files.

Moderated List: Moderators must approve any message posted to an email list before it is delivered to all subscribers. It is also possible for the moderator to edit or delete messages. A moderated list puts the list owner in the equivalent position as an editor of a newspaper.

Multi-Threading: A process through which a mail server can perform multiple concurrent deliveries to different domains, which greatly speeds up the delivery of large volumes of email.

Multipart/Alternative: A message format that includes both text and HTML versions. Recipients can then open the message in their preferred format.

N

O

ODBC: Open Data Base Connectivity – A Microsoft standard for accessing different database systems from Windows, for instance Oracle or SQL.

Open-Relay: Open-relay is the third-party relaying of email messages through a mail server. Spammers looking to obscure or hide the source of large volume mailings often use mail servers with open-relay vulnerabilities to deliver their email messages.

Open-Up Tracking: The process of tracking how many recipients opened their email messages as part of an email marketing campaign. Open-up tracking is only possible using HTML mail.

Open-Up Rate: The percentage of recipients who have opened their email messages. The open-up rate is often used to measure the success of an email marketing campaign.

Opt-In: An approach to email marketing in which customers must explicitly request to be included in an email campaign or newsletter.

Opt-Out: An approach to email marketing in which customers are included in email campaigns or newsletters until they specifically request not to be subscribed any longer. This method is not recommended and may in some cases be illegal.

Out-of-Office Replies: Automatic email reply messages triggered by incoming email to a user's inbox, typically activated when users are on vacation or otherwise unavailable through email for an extended period.

Outsourcing: An arrangement where one company provides services to another company that would otherwise have been implemented in-house (See also "ASP").

P

Pass-Along: An email message that gets forwarded by a subscriber to another person who is not subscribed to the list (See also "Viral Marketing").

Personalization: The insertion of personal greetings in email messages (for instance "Dear John" rather than the generic "Dear Customer"). Personalization requires sophisticated email list management software that allows for so called mail-merge operations.

Plain Text: Text in an email message that contains no formatting elements.

POP: Post Office Protocol – A protocol used to retrieve email from a mail server. Most email clients use either the POP or the newer IMAP protocol.

Q

Query: A subset of records in a database. Queries may be used to create highly specified demographics in order to maximize the effectiveness of an email marketing campaign.

R

Reverse DNS Lookup: A Reverse DNS Lookup is the process of looking up and translating an IP address into a domain name. This can be compared to a Forward DNS Lookup, which is the process of looking up and translating a domain name into its corresponding IP address.

Rich Media: An Internet advertising term for a Web page that uses graphical technologies such as streaming video, audio files, or other similar technology to create an interactive atmosphere with viewers.

S

Scalability: The ability of a software program to continue to function smoothly as additional volume or work is required of it.

Sender ID: Sender ID is an authentication protocol used to verify that the originating IP address is authorized to send email for the domain name declared in the visible "From" or "Sender" lines of the email message. Sender ID is used to prevent spoofing and to identify messages with visible domain names that have been forged.

Server: A program that acts as central information source and provides services to programs in the same or other computers. The term can either refer to a particular piece of software, such as a WWW server, or to the machine on which the software is running.

Signature File: A short text file that email users can automatically append at the end of each message they send. Commonly, signature files list the user's name, phone number, company, company URL, etc.

SMTP: Simple Mail Transfer Protocol – A protocol used to send email on the Internet. SMTP is a set of rules regarding the interaction between a program sending email and a program receiving email.

Sniffing: A method of determining whether or not email recipients are capable of receiving HTML-formatted messages. This procedure is not recommended as it is flawed and may result in inaccurate findings.

Soft Bounces: Email messages that cannot be delivered to the recipient because of a temporary error, such as a full mailbox.

Spam: (Also known as unsolicited commercial email) – Unwanted, unsolicited junk email sent to a large number of recipients.

SPF: Sender Policy Framework – An authentication protocol used by recipient sites to verify that the originating IP address is authorized to send email for the domain name declared in the "MAIL FROM" line of the mail envelope. SPF is used to identify messages with forged "MAILFROM" addresses.

Spoofing: The disreputable and often illegal act of falsifying the sender email address to make it appear as if an email message came from somewhere else.

Streaming Media: Audio and video files transmitted on the Internet in a continuous fashion.

Subject Line: The part of an email message where senders can type what the email message is about. Subject lines are considered important by email marketers because they can often influence whether a recipient will open an email message.

T

Targeting: Using demographics and related information in a customer database to select the most appropriate recipients for a specific email campaign

Tracking: In an email marketing campaign, measuring behavioral activities such as click-throughs and open-ups.

U

URL: Uniform Resource Locator – The address of a file or Web page accessible on the Internet (for example, <http://www.lsoft.com>).

V

Viral Marketing: A marketing strategy that encourages email recipients to pass along messages to others in order to generate additional exposure.

Virtual Hosting: A Web server hosting service that replaces a company's need to purchase and maintain its own Web server and connections to the Internet.

Virus: A program, macro or fragment of code that causes damage and can be quickly spread through Web sites or email.

W

White List: A list of pre-authorized email addresses from which email messages can be delivered regardless of spam filters.

Worm: Malicious code that is often spread through an executable attachment in an email message.

X

XML: Extensible Markup Language – A flexible way to create standard information formats and share both the format and the data on the World Wide Web.

Y

Z