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# EMAIL MARKETING FOR MUSICIANS:

*6 Steps to Growing & Monetizing Your Email List*

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## 6 Steps to Growing and Monetizing Your Email List

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Email has been around for a while and really hasn't changed much in that time. Why? It works.

And yet...

If you're like most musicians, you neglect your email list.

Here's why email should be a top priority for musicians:

**For every one subscriber on your list, you could be making one to two dollars per month. Got 1000 people on your list? That's \$1000 to \$2000 per month.**

And this statistic isn't just for digital marketing agencies; it applies to the music industry too. For the few musicians who are doing email the right way, they know it's #truth.

This guide is designed to make this a truth for you too – to turn each subscriber into a long-term fan. When you do that, your email list will become a reliable way to:

- Grow your Patreon subscribers
- Fan-fund your next release
- Sell your CDs, vinyl, and cassettes
- Sell merch
- Partner with fans' companies and brands via sponsorship
- Drive ticket sales
- Book house concerts
- And much more

## The S.T.A.G.E.S.™ of Email Marketing:

- Strategy
- Technology
- Awareness
- Gathering
- Engagement
- Selling

In this guide we'll look at each one of these stages, and how each one serves the overall goal of using email to deepen your connection with fans and generate money. But first...

## Why Email?

**Your email list is a gold mine, and here's why:**

- It's measurable - you can see how many opens and clicks your emails receive. You can get a ton of data and then replicate what works.
- You can test everything.
- It's a focused way to engage.
- EVERYONE has an email address!
- It provides you with true connection (through your content).
- Your fans give you accountability (because they want to see you succeed).
- Your list is the only way to truly reveal your superfans (they will show themselves, from supporting your crowdfunding efforts to donating their airline points so you can save on touring costs.)
- Your list WILL help you achieve your goals (but only if you know what those goals are and can communicate them clearly).

**In short, your email list can:**

- Make you serious money.
- Save you serious time.
- Give you serious clarity. Clarity results in motivation.

## Email Mistakes

Before we get into the six strategies, we should acknowledge how the music industry and most indie musicians tend to treat email. Then we can change course.



### **Musicians generally:**

- Meekly ask friends, family, and (maybe) audience members to “join my list.”
- Post the list sign-up link on social media one time.
- Wonder why their list isn’t growing and people aren’t engaging, buying, or coming to shows.
- Say “Screw it, this email list is a pain in the butt.”
- Send a newsletter when they think of some stuff.
- Look to build a “team” and spend money on people, when really, their team is in their email list.

If you’ve made one or more of these mistakes, don’t despair; you are not alone, and you are taking a great step in making email marketing headway.

## **Why Newsletters Don’t Work Anymore**

**Here are the reasons why newsletters (emails packed with lots of information and links) are ineffective:**

- There are usually multiple calls to action, which means people are distracted and confused, so they don’t click on anything.
- They take too much time to read. The average email gets 15-20 seconds of attention.
- Newsletters dilute your desires. You appear unclear on what you want, so your fans don’t know the ONE thing they should do to help out.
- There’s a lack of consistency. You only send one when “stuff is happening.”
- Newsletters are like billboards. In today’s online world, we subconsciously expect email to be like social media – topic-focused, with the ability to reply. Newsletters are a one-way street and rarely encourage engagement.
- People don’t sign up for newsletters anymore!

**The point of email is to create a long-term relationship with your fans.**

It’s your job, through your email content, to take them from being mere subscribers all the way to advocates. In between, they’ll become fans, then customers, then superfans (no one goes from fan to superfan without buying something, so we have to make sure we make it easy for them to purchase from us!), then to advocate.

An advocate is not just a superfan who buys all your music and merch and comes to your shows. An advocate is someone who tells other people about you. They are booking you gigs at their business. They are doing what they can to help your career move forward.

This journey is why we want to invest in getting our email list set up, optimized, and ready to roll.

Let’s get started on examining the six S.T.A.G.E.S.™ of email.

# 1. Strategy

Strategy is all about knowing what you want, and choosing the actions that will get you there.

## Understanding Your Ideal Fan

*What does your ideal career look like?*

If you're clear on what you want for your career, the next question to ask is *"how can my email list support this ideal career?"*

You will also want to know who your ideal fan is – *who are you trying to attract?*

If you were at a show with 1000 clones of the same exact fan, what would their story be? How old are they? Where did they go to school? Where do they hang out, online, and off? What makes them the perfect fan?

The marketing world calls this your "Avatar." This is the person you want to be making decisions for. The person you are speaking to when you write your emails. The person you want to get vulnerable with so they stick around for the long haul. **You are in a relationship with your Avatar.**

In addition to knowing who you are aiming to attract, you need to know your when. Create measurable results for yourself and write them down. Remind yourself of them every morning and evening. Get into musician groups online and declare these goals. Stay focused on what you truly want and the fans who are aligned with you will show up.

### Actions to Take

Ask yourself the following questions and write them down. The answers are your email list strategy:

- Who are you trying to attract?
- What do you want to accomplish? What are your 2 and 6-month, 1, 5, and 10-year goals?
- Where will you be connecting with your fans? (More about this in the Technology section).
- When will you have accomplished some of your immediate goals?
- Why are these goals important to you?

If you can answer these questions, you'll be on your way to clear communication with your list.

## 2. Technology

Technology can be a huge block.

**Email marketing technology can be broken down into three areas:**

1. **Choosing the right platform for you.**
2. **Setting up your email content.**
3. **Developing an email flow pattern.**

### Email Marketing Platforms:

#### BASIC

These email platforms are usually offered through website hosts like **HostGator, Wix, etc.**

**Advantages:**

Simple, streamlined, built-in and drag/drop usability, cheap or free (with your hosting plan). Easy to use and learn.

**Disadvantages:**

No bells & whistles, no ability to automate.

#### DESIGNATED

These are mid-level services designed to solely operate as email-marketing platforms, like **Mailchimp, Active Campaign, Constant Contact, and Awebber.**

**Advantages:**

Low cost up front, exponential costs as list grows. Some bells & whistles, ability to automate.

**Disadvantages:**

Some are not intuitive. Costs tend to get high as your list grows.

#### ADVANCED

These are expert CRM (Customer Relationship Management) services. They provide you with a LOT of bells and whistles. **Infusionsoft, Kartra, Kajabi, Maropost, and Hubspot** are a few.

**Advantages:**

Great if you plan to have someone else helping you. (These services often have certified partners.) You can really target your emails based on user behavior for a more authentic and catered experience.

**Disadvantages:**

Some are not intuitive. Costs tend to get high as your list grows.

You should choose yours based on your list size, intended growth, budget, and your “tech tolerance.” How much time and effort do you want to put into learning a new platform?

No matter what platform you choose, you want to make sure that you get yourself familiar with it. **Watch all of their welcome tutorial videos. Look up a few user videos on YouTube.** Get to know your platform and become an expert in it. Take one to two days to do this, and you’ll feel confident with your choice.

Once inside your platform, you will want to set up your welcome series, as well as your first Nurture series (more on these in the “Engagement” Section.) You’ll want to automate those.

## Email Automation

**Automation** happens without you having to do anything (other than set it up). Automated emails are emails that are pre-written and sent out when a user action triggers it. For example, when someone signs up for your email list, they are automatically sent a welcome series in the form of four or five emails sent over a period of two weeks, giving great content and letting them get to know you.

Another example of a triggered email is one where someone went to purchase something but didn't (this is called cart abandonment.) Depending on what platform you use to sell your merch, your email system can get notified that the shopper left, and then the shopper is sent an email inviting them to take a second look.

## Beyond the Welcome Series

Other triggered or automated emails could include:

- **Nurture series**, where you share stories and information about yourself once a subscriber finishes the welcome series
- **Re-engagement**, sent to a subscriber if they haven't engaged - opened or clicked any links - in a certain period of time
- **Tour follow up**, sent as a thank you to a subscriber if they purchased a ticket to a show

You can even determine if a subscriber clicked on a video in one of your emails, and if so, you can send them to a series sharing more content like that video. If they purchased a CD, you can send them through a Thank You and Share series so they can continue to engage with you and spread the word.

## Some Important Email Terms You Should Know

**Campaign or Broadcast:** a one-time email sent to the current list. These are great if you have a time-sensitive event coming up like a tour or CD release. If you send out a broadcast today and someone signs up for your list tomorrow, they won't receive this communication.

Automation is based on *their* timing, broadcasts are based on your timing.

There are other tech things that you'll want to learn about like `*|Merge|*` tags, A/B testing, click rate data, and deliverability. Here's a quick rundown of them, and if you want a deeper dive into the tech, plus strategies and templates, consider registering yourself in the email marketing course developed specifically for musicians, [Rock Your Email List](#).

**\*|Merge|\* Tags:** The ability to use someone's data (that they filled out when they signed up) to personalize emails. Instead of the email reading "Hey friend," it will say "Hey Mark" if the subscriber's name is Mark. Even though we know this is a "mass email," personalization adds an extra touch of effort and connection.

**A/B Testing:** You should test everything. Send an email with subject line A to 1/3 of your list, and subject line B to another third. Wait a few hours to see which one gets more opens, then send the winner as the subject line to the final third of your email list and know that you optimized your subject line. Many platforms allow you to test email copy, subject lines, time of delivery, and more.

**Click Rate Data:** using data can help inform future decisions. If a post with lots of images didn't get any clicks, and one with less images got a ton of clicks, you have new information to use in the future.

**Deliverability:** simply put, deliverability is how well the internet likes your emails, meaning: how well they are getting delivered to people's inboxes. Essentially, it's about your mailer reputation.

Things that increase your emails' deliverability are:

- Being consistent with how much email you send. It looks fishy if you don't send anything for years, then are sending one email every two days.
- Getting replies. When someone replies to your email and you write back, you're telling the internet that you're human, not a bot spammer.
- Avoiding spammy words like "free" in your subject lines.
- Keeping your list "clean," meaning that every 6 months, you send unengaged people (those who haven't opened or clicked in your emails) a series to try to get them to engage, but if not, you remove them from your list. Those unengaged subscribers will eventually contribute to possibly getting your email blacklisted. The more engaged your subscribers, the higher your deliverability.

#### **Actions to Take:**

- Pick an email platform.
- Once you have, watch all of the videos on it so you can truly master this tool.
- Start writing content that you can automate.

### 3. Awareness

Awareness is all about letting people know you have an email list in the first place. If they don't know, they can't subscribe.

You need to set up your welcome series content before people can know about your list. As soon as someone signs up to get a free bundle of songs or a PDF to print out of your hand-written lyrics, they're going to want to get that free thing delivered. If your email platform and welcome series isn't ready to roll, you're going to miss out on a great first impression. More on content soon!

Once you're set up with your content, you want to make sure the world knows about your list. The best way to do that is to let them know you have something you want to give them: a free download, a hand-written lyric photo, a discount code for your merch store.

They're interested? Great! You'd love to know where to send it.

Take this approach, rather than asking them to sign up for your newsletter.



## Online:

Put the link to your sign-up page (which could just be your webpage's home page) in all of your social media "about" sections: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter.

Try out [linktr.ee](https://linktr.ee) for Instagram - it's one link in your bio, but it takes the user to a page with multiple links. This allows you to talk about different things and not have to keep changing your #linkinbio link.

You can also put the link in your email signature.

## Offline:

Make sure you're announcing your email list in your live shows. Not just as an afterthought, but as part of the show.

Have a fan be the person collecting emails at your shows. They will want to impress you and would probably do it for a free ticket or T-shirt.

You can tell your live audience that there's a sign-up sheet being passed around and before the last song you're going to randomly pick a name off the list and invite them up for a prize (merch or perhaps to sing along?)

When you meet people at conferences, networking events, or anywhere people seem interested in your music, ask their permission to add them to your list.

Your email list is the way to continue the relationship after a show, so make sure you get as many as you can. 75% of the audience is a good sign-up goal.

### Actions to take:

- Populate your online bios with your sign-up link.
- Plan your on-stage email list announcements.
- Make sure your Welcomes Series is ready to roll.

## 4. Gathering

What do you do once your friends and family have signed up?

And even worse... what if some of your friends haven't signed up yet?

There are repeatable steps to address how to attract three different demographics of potential subscribers and to continue to grow your list:

## A. People You Know Who Haven't Yet Signed Up.

This is a personal approach. The easiest way can be through Facebook Messenger: send individual messages to people requesting they subscribe.

**Here's how:** Write an opener line that's personal, like "Your kid looks good on skis! How's winter going?" and then use your own template, such as "I'm finally taking the right steps to boost this music career I've got going on, and one of those steps is really getting connected over email. Would you be interested in me sending you a free tune in exchange for your email? If yes, just click here [link to your sign-up page], or shoot me your email and I'll subscribe you myself!" Give yourself 1 minute per person. Do this an hour a day for 5 days and you'll reach out to 300 people and significantly grow your list. You can also use this approach over text, email or phone calls.

## B. People you're connected to but don't know and are very likely to sign up because of a connection to someone you both know.

**Essentially:** cross promote with another artist or a brand you support.

- How to find the artist: Maybe the other artist is a friend, someone on the bill with you, or someone you've admired who runs in the same circles. It doesn't even matter if they're in the same genre. Offer to send an email to your list pointing your subscribers to their email list sign-up link, and request that they do the same.
- You can cross promote with a local brand. Love your corner coffee shop? See if you could take over their Instagram for a day, giving them great content from a local artist, giving you access to a whole new audience.
- You can also ask fans to post on social about your freebie and sign up list on your behalf.

## C. People you don't know and who don't know you.

Performing live, playlists, and paid advertising are three of the best ways to reach people who've never heard of you before.

- Performing live: Make sure you're letting people know about your email list. Your show is an opportunity to connect and bring that connection beyond the show. Make sure to work your email list invitation into the show! (See section 3!)
- Playlists: Getting on Spotify playlists as well as radio and Pandora stations, allows you to show up in front of new audiences. [Perfect your pitch](#) and start reaching out to curators.
- Advertising: You can create an audio ad to invite people to download a song for free and post it to Spotify and iHeart Radio through [Show.co](#). You can run Facebook ads as well as Instagram ads targeting people who like your music, or who like music similar to yours.

### Actions to take:

- Do A-C!
- Give yourself a week for each one to get some serious growth in under a month.

## 5. Engagement

This section is all about content. You want to be sending valuable content consistently.

Let's first talk about the different kinds of series you can create now to set yourself up for the long term. Meaning, even if you take time off, your list will still be getting valuable content from you.

Each series below contains 4-6 emails. For some series (Welcome, Promotion), the emails are sent out in short intervals – every 3-4 days for 2 weeks while others (Nurture, Re-engagement) are sent out once every week or two weeks.

### Welcome Series:

The most important series of emails! These set your subscriber up with expectations from you as well as set your first impression, your brand, and your voice. This is where they will decide if they want to move forward as a fan, rather than just a subscriber.

In the very first email, you'll want to share a little about yourself (just 1-2 sentences), tell them you're going to be sending regular communications with cool content and opportunities to purchase your bestest things, and then deliver the thing you promised. (An MP3 bundle or PDF of hand-written lyrics.)

In the following few emails (for example, four emails sent over two weeks), you will want to give your new subscribers your greatest content while letting them get to know you and your story. Sharing your "best of," whether your most viewed music video, most shared blog post, or most licensed song is a great place to start. Giving your subscribers awesome content right off the bat will help bring them along the path from subscriber to fan.

### Nurture Series:

This series provides your subscribers with information and insights into who you are. If you want to really master this and set yourself up with regular content so you don't need to worry about sitting down and writing, start by writing 30 emails, then group them into 4-6 emails.

You will then have multiple nurture series ready to go. You'll break up sending nurture series with other series (see below).

### Here's how to break up those 30 emails:

- Write **10 emails** – Tell your story (key transitions & decisions).
- Write **10 more** – Anecdotes about specific songs.
- Write **5 emails** – Profiles on bandmates, other artists, shining a light on someone else.
- Last **5 emails** – Ask fans something. Run a poll, ask for opinions on next album cover, etc.

The point of the nurture series is to constantly drip out valuable content, share your story, some great stuff you've made (without a hard sell or promotion), and engage with your subscribers so they turn into fans.

### Promotion Series:

This is where you're promoting or selling something. Only ever sell ONE thing at a time. If your album is available for digital download, on vinyl and on CD, pick ONE format to sell in this 5 email series. If your music is on multiple platforms, ask for follows on one (or be sure to have ONE call to action and a smartlink that brings the subscriber to their preferred digital music platform). Then write five emails that:

1. **Tell** what the thing is, how it was made, why it's cool.
2. **Invite** your subscriber to purchase (or do) the thing.
3. **Get personal:** communicate why it's important that your subscriber do the thing you're asking.
4. **Share testimonials** or reviews from past customers.
5. **Handle objections.** Why hasn't this person purchased your vinyl record yet? Do they not have a record player? Share an Amazon link to your favorite player. Might they think it's too expensive? Share with them some of the cost of making the music. Figure out what is stopping them from taking action, then handle it in this email.

There are dozens of other series you could create, including:

- Holiday series
- Re-engagement series
- Sharing series
- Record release series

This guide would be 100 pages long if we got into each one. But the gist is this: break a topic down into 3-5 specific emails, asking for the same thing, and providing different things the subscriber may need in order to take the request action. Make sure to alternate between asking and giving. Stagger your selling series with engagement series that provide valuable content without any hard sell.

Some subscribers take action when they feel a tug on their heart strings. Others may have FOMO. Others like to be entertained. Others feel it adds value to their life. Address **ALL** of these and you'll have a successful series.

### **Actions to take:**

- Start with simply writing an outline for your welcome series and nurture series in a Word or Google document.
- Then start writing emails.
- Next, format them in your email platform and set up your automation.

## 6. Selling

Musicians notoriously don't love selling their music. But what you now know is that without a purchase, a fan does not ascend to superfan status.

### **Using a promotion series in conjunction with one-off broadcasts, you can:**

- Sell records, downloads, and singles.
- Invite people to your Patreon or crowd-funding campaign.
- Encourage playlist creation (Spotify, Pandora, Amazon).
- Let people know about your shows, and offer ticket pre-sales.
- Cross-promote with other brands/products. Essentially, affiliate partnerships with products you use, love, and trust.
- Create a membership site for VIP show access. (You can also use the Patreon platform to accomplish this.)

### **Some Hints About Effectively Selling:**

**Make sure people are clear on HOW to do the thing** you're asking of them. Make a video. Explain how Patreon works. Tell them why buying your digital bundle is important to you.

**Make sure the link to do the thing works** and is in the email at least four times. Near the top, in an image, in the body and in the "P.S." It should be the same link every time.

Even in your non-selling series, if you add a P.S. with a link for something for them to check out, you can sell without being sale-sy and the rest of the email can be story, value, and conversation.

**Follow up with people who clicked the link** but did not buy. They were interested in your thing. So find out why they didn't go all the way. You can automate this with most email platforms. Send a "I saw you were considering this" email, and get some good feedback on what's stopping them from buying.



**Coordinate your broadcasts** about your sale with your social media posts that week. The more often people are reminded of your offer, and in a variety of ways and on a variety of platforms, the more likely they'll head back to that email to purchase it.

Most of all, **be straightforward**.

**Send these “selling” emails more regularly** than you would a nurture series. Four emails over two weeks sends the message that there is urgency here.

**Don't always be sending selling emails.** Send a promotional or selling series every few months. Plan your year out around when you have a big release or tour so that you don't oversaturate your audience. If you send a sales series once every two or three months with great free content (nurture series) in between, your subscribers will experience a balance between content, growing the relationship, and being able to contribute.

#### **Actions to take:**

- Make a list of everything you have to sell.
- Choose one item to start with.
- Write five emails sharing information on the item, inviting them to purchase, sharing why it's important, displaying reviews, and handling any objection. (Why wouldn't they purchase? Too expensive?)

## Conclusion

Take a look – you now have actions to take in each of these areas:

- Strategy
- Technology
- Awareness
- Gathering
- Engagement
- Selling

Which area do you feel you need to do more work? Are you fully set up to start promoting your email list? Is your content set up? Have you mastered the technology? Do you have merch, CD's or other products or services to sell?

You've got work to do, but remember: It's a long game. Don't feel like it all has to happen now or never. Start with your strategy and follow the S.T.A.G.E.S. steps. Your email list is your gold mine. It's time you access it!

## About the Author:

Cheryl B. Engelhardt is a composer and singer/songwriter with dozens of film and ad scores, 4 piano-pop albums, 20 tours, and 40+ TV placements under her belt. You can dig into her music projects at [CBEmusic.com](http://CBEmusic.com). She supports musicians in crafting their ideal careers through resources on her site [In The Key Of Success](#), and is a self-proclaimed email marketing dork. For more tips on effective email marketing, [download her free workbook](#).

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