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The Definitive Decision Guide to Autoresponders 2018

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Introduction to Autoresponders

An autoresponder is a tool or service that allows you to collect names and email addresses of individuals and automatically send out emails to those individuals or customers.

Think of it as an email-on-demand system.

Most of the time this involves getting an individual to sign up or fill out a form on your website or squeeze page to download a lead magnet or other type of “freebie” as a trade for their email. Once your autoresponder detects a request via this form, it sends out whatever preloaded sequence of emails you want it to send.

An autoresponder is the best way to keep in contact once you have built your list of contacts with whom you can follow up to generate sales. And of course these contacts can easily be converted again and again to become repeat customers if you treat them right. While autoresponders are mostly

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used to build lists, your business can also profit from them in many other ways.

For instance, you could arrange a series of already written emails to be delivered at specific times over a course of a set time to educate and provide an automated e-course or mini-course.

An autoresponder could be used to improve brand awareness by sending out a newsletter or e-zines to subscribers weekly or more often dependent on how you prepare your list for the amount of email that you plan to send them. Similarly, it could be used to send out a price list on request, or even send out special promo offers to your subscriber list. Basically, an autoresponder collates a list of emails and allows you to keep them informed of your business or to make them offers without having to manually send these out at the appropriate time.

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Beyond the ease of use, autoresponders are easily customizable.

They can be personalized to have them send each message using the name of the recipient, if you collect that email in your form during lead collection.

You can also track the open and click rates of each message you send and see how successful it is, this is an important metric that you will want to pay attention to.

Getting people to subscribe to your email list is the key to building a successful online business and maintaining communication with your customers and once you get them to sign up, the benefits to your business is indescribable.

[What is an SMTP Mail Provider](#)

This is and can be a bit technical but I think it is important to cover this here before we start talking about the different available autoresponders. It

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needs to be clear that they are not all equal when it comes to the technical know how when setting them up to deliver your email.

SMTP stands for Simple Mail Transfer Protocol, and this refers to put it simply is the procedure behind the flow of emails on the internet. The SMTP protocol is needed for the sending and receiving of emails between email servers to deliver the email to your customers. It is like a postman that ensures that your message is enveloped and safely delivered to your desired recipient.

There are many SMTP service providers around that offer a decentralized mail delivery service. To use them for your email marketing campaign, you would have to make a choice between these providers, but that would mean getting to know more about them and understand exactly what you are getting into before you choose.

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Self-Hosted vs Cloud Based vs Hybrid

When making a decision on which autoresponder to use for your email marketing campaign, you might run into the question of whether to go with a self-hosted platform or a cloud based one. You need to really think on this for a bit, and you might come to the conclusion you need both, read on to understand what I mean. With email marketing being a crucial role in your marketing and your business strategy, it is very important that your decision for email hosting is given some more thought than what WordPress theme you like the look of.

With all the options out there, it is best to study your options – get to know every possible hosting and delivery solution. Weigh their pros and cons. Only then will you be able to make an informed, final decision. This means comparing self-hosted solutions with the more traditional cloud based autoresponder software available. Amongst the most important factors to watch are cost and efficiency. Efficiency is highly important as an

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undelivered email will not allow you to stay in contact with your customers and prospects. So let's continue and analyze the three broad hosting options available to you for your email marketing and autoresponder.

Self-Hosted Autoresponders

Self-hosted email marketing software probably is a fairly new concept for most compared to the more traditional cloud based hosting. Self-hosted email marketing involves you installing the software on your private server, to which you alone have access. Using a self-hosted software, you personally take care of every detail involved in the management and running of your autoresponder.

Returning to our postman illustration, a self-hosted email marketing involves you buying your own trucks and hiring your own drivers to deliver your mails. This takes away the third-party delivery man. The one true beauty of this system is that it allows you completely seize control of your deliveries. Your business is evaluated by the number of mails your customers receive. When you send out your emails and they consistently

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go undelivered or move into the unseen junk folders, you put your business at risk.

A self-hosted platform can allow you to build your online reputation and this could ensure the security of your business given that you alone have access to the servers on which you store your business information.

Interestingly, it is less expensive (in dollar amounts paid in membership fees vs. your time for setup and administration) to run a self-hosted autoresponder in the long run. The one major drawback of this system is that it requires a lot of technical know-how to operate it smoothly.

Cloud-based Autoresponders

So I have consistently referred to cloud based solutions as the more traditional email solution. This is because they have been around for longer and are the most utilized form of autoresponder hosting. Cloud based email autoresponders take away what might be the most difficult part of

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marketing your business and managing your contact lists, the technical setup and maintenance.

With all of the technicalities involved, having to deal with unsubscribe requests, sending high volume emails to multiple client lists, and keeping in line with every regulation on the books, cloud based solutions keep your marketing campaign running with little worry on your end. It is an ideal solution if you prefer having experts manage the system on your behalf.

This is like having a third-party agency (think FedEx) handle your mail delivery instead of managing it yourself.

Due to their connection and expertise, cloud based providers have agreements in place with major ISPs to see through your delivery with

minimal risk of getting blocked. With this guarantee, you can focus on running your business and preparing your emails, certain that they will be

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delivered. They also provide you with metrics that you can use to assess the effectiveness of your campaign and adjust your strategy accordingly. You can set up your email marketing and autoresponder campaign within minutes, pay a fee based on the number of contacts you have or the number of emails you send, and relax as your agreement with your chosen vendor holds them to deliver. As your business grows and your contacts and emails increase, the cost of running a cloud based service might take you by surprise, so pay attention to the fees and at which level they will increase, i.e. number of subscribers and/or number of emails sent.

Another important limitation of this system over the other two (self-hosted and hybrid solutions) is its service restriction for such things as **affiliate marketing**, online trading tips, and much more. With many modern businesses involved in some form of affiliate marketing, this is a huge restriction you must keep in mind.

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Hybrid Autoresponders

Hybrid autoresponders are what I would call a mix of self-hosted and cloud based at times giving you the best of both worlds.

With a hybrid solution, you control your email database and will need to setup and control the technical details of sending emails either through you hosting services SMTP or getting an SMTP provider.

What a hybrid system can give you is full control over importing your contacts with no restrictions and the ability to control the sending of your emails. And more granular control over whether or not you wind up in SPAM and/or Promotional folders depending on the configuration of your SMTP email gateways.

At the same time, you enjoy the full power of cloud based autoresponder services with all of the tools it provides. You do not have to worry about all of the complex integrations involved with private self-hosting as the front end or web interface of the hybrid is provided for you as a service.

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Cloud based solutions are popular for the complete management tools they provide, as well as the innovative growth that comes with them. In that respect, as well as in the handling of message delivery and user experience, a hybrid solution is indistinguishable from a cloud-based solution. Meanwhile, you get to keep your customer data, plugging in the hybrid solution to your database rather than pushing your database out onto a third-party. It is like having your own private drivers delivering your mail using FedEx's fleet and management system.

Beyond the security of such a system, there is something about the up-to-date nature of customer data that gives it greater appeal. You do not have to bother about refreshing your cloud-based database as your private database and your cloud-based delivery operate in unison. You enjoy full control of your business and can make changes to your system in real time. This is a much cheaper long term marketing solution than either a self-hosted or cloud based system.

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Self-Hosted Options

If you decide to self-host your autoresponder, you have two major needs. The first is your private server to hold all of your customer database such as your email lists, and the second is a self-hosted email marketing software. Here are a few of the major self-hosted email marketing software solutions to choose from.

[MailPoet 3 \(New\)](#)

The new MailPoet has a free sending plan, you will be able to send unlimited emails to up to 2,000 subscribers, all without ever leaving WordPress. Some options are the new designer with responsive templates, ability to end your emails with MailPoet's Sending Service (optional), an improved user experience, easy configuration, solid reliability and Weekly releases. There is a premium version available, but MailPoet is fully featured in its free version and works up until you have 2000 subscribers. The Premium version adds the following features, for each newsletter you

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can see which subscribers opened it and which links they clicked, the ability to send Welcome Emails automatically; i.e. “Welcome to my

Newsletter” autoresponders or multi-email courses, you can remove the small MailPoet logo in the footer of your emails, get access to same day support (Monday to Friday), the ability to send to over 2000 subscribers with your own sending method.

[ActiveCampaign](#)

Traditionally a cloud-based software solution, ActiveCampaign also provides a self-hosted product. This software solution offers the same benefits and tools from the cloud-based solution including split testing, great reporting and autoresponder sequences. It also allows for list segmentation and “conditional email content.” Unfortunately, it brings the same subscriber-based price scale that sees your price increase with more subscribers. It also has some difficulties allowing repeat opt-ins by the same user.

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[Interspire](#)

Interspire is much like ActiveCampaign in terms of its functionality. Unlike ActiveCampaign, it has a much more reasonable license cost (with no size limits imposed to your marketing costs) while providing an equally solid service. It allows repeat opt-ins and multiple sign-ups without any issues and is simple to use. Interspire also allows multiple attachments embedded into an email during delivery. Generally, it is a smooth tool to use.

[arpReach](#)

arpReach is a fully developed self-hosted autoresponder designed to improve your marketing campaign. It has no monthly charges and does not place a cap to your subscriber list or your newsletter follow-ups. The ease of management allows multiple opt-ins and can have a contact in multiple lists without any need for contact data duplication. Contact segmentation is easy and customization is smooth. arpReach is another affordable and solid tool to consider for your self-hosted email marketing.

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[MailIt \(Plugin\)](#)

This is a trim autoresponder without most of the advanced tools you might need. It lacks segmentation, tagging, advanced reports, and automation. However, it is an extremely affordable option for a beginner or for one looking for something really simple. Your subscriber list is unlimited and so is your number of newsletters, ezines and the likes. It provides you with a very basic report, connects well with other services, and has good bounce feature.

[nuevoMailer](#)

Yet another self-hosted solution without monthly fees, nuevoMailer is a simple to use solution for beginners and a beast for experts. With real time tracking, you get reports on your newsletter's performance on-the-go. Reports are detailed and extensive, with charts to make things clearer. It offers list segmentation and filters, extensive newsletter personalization, SMTP rotation and load balancing, one-click follow-up campaigns, fully customizable landing and opt-in pages, custom list settings, and anti-spam

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compliance. nuevoMailer comes fully recommended to complement your email marketing campaign.

Cloud Based Options

With cloud based autoresponders, you have no need for a private server. You also have a larger pool of options to select from. However, pricing becomes more of a factor as you dive into this pool. Let us consider some of the top options available to you.

ConstantContact

Starting with a 60-day trial period, ConstantContact would cost you \$15 per month per 500 subscribers, which increases to \$75 per 5001 – 10,000 subscribers per month. This is an easy to use platform that makes the gathering of contacts very easy. With lots of available email templates, you can simply customize one to fit your needs. Amongst its other features are tracking and reporting, events management, social media sharing tools, automation, and mobile email marketing – thanks to its app.

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[Infusionsoft](#)

Infusionsoft would cost you \$199/month for up to 2,500 contacts and 12,500 emails/month; \$299/month for up to 5,000 contacts and 25,000 emails/month; \$379/month for up to 10,000 contacts and 50,000 emails per month. Infusionsoft is a total autoresponder package, complete with contact management, CRM, e-commerce, marketing automation (which keeps your message branding consistent), extensive reporting, and social sharing. Messages can also be personalized for each user.

[TrafficWave](#)

Simple flat rate pricing of \$17.95 per month regardless of your list size or number of emails. Trafficwave prides itself in letting you profit from your email marketing campaign by keeping prices cheap and affordable. You can have as much as 500 different lists, and an unlimited subscriber base. Data collection is easy, messages can be scheduled, create opt-in forms easily, personalize your messages and keep your brand professional.

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[Aweber](#)

Aweber would cost you \$19/month for up to 500 subscribers, and as much as \$149/month for between 10,000 and 25,000 subscribers. However, there is no limit to the number of emails you can send per month. Aweber boasts of many to level features of an email marketing tool. Amongst these are autoresponders, integrations, sign up forms, subscriber segmentation, email analytics, customizable newsletters, landing page usability, etc.

[GetResponse](#)

\$15/month for up to 1,000 subscribers and as much as \$1,199/month for 100,000 subscribers and above, with other packages between. Pricing varies with included features. Get the job done with GetResponse. There's a package in there for everyone, depending on your needs. Your email marketing kit is complete with responsive email design, analytics, forms, landing pages, newsletters, and more.

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[iContact](#)

iContact pricing begins at \$32/month. It is considered a very solid platform by many and can be deployed on cloud, SaaS and web. iContact supports campaign management and segmentation, content management, real time data, social network marketing, reporting and statistics, as well as third party app integrations. It is an easy to use tool for beginners and has multiple features for experts.

[MailChimp](#)

Mailchimp offers you a forever free version for up to 2,000 subscribers and 12,000 emails/month. Starting at \$20/month you can enjoy unlimited emails sent to 1,500 subscribers with an additional \$5/month for every additional 500 subscribers. This is a perfect plan for small businesses complete with automation, ecommerce integration, advanced analytics, social media marketing, etc.

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[ActiveCampaign](#)

\$23/month for 1,000 contacts and unlimited sending, or \$55/month for 1,000 contacts, unlimited sending and more “lite” features. ActiveCampaign allows you design and customize your newsletters, automate your marketing channels, sales and CRM tools, email segmentation, dynamic content, SMS marketing, and more.

[MailGet Bolt](#)

\$49/month for 50,000 emails to 5,000 subscribers. You can also choose other higher plans to suit your needs. This might seem like a fairly expensive platform compared to others on this list. However, it is an independent, hassle free email marketing service that lets you send trackable emails through its own SMTP service. Get your mail straight to your recipient’s inbox and track every relevant statistic. Enjoy advanced email marketing tools such as list cleaning, list segmentation, and responsive email templates.

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[SendGrid](#)

Send 12,000 emails free each month or pay \$9.95 per month for 40,000 emails or \$19.95 for 1,000,000 emails per month. SendGrid is a cloud-based SMTP service provider that allows you send or receive mass emails. Quickly integrate their API design with your app using their code libraries and get a reliable SMTP service that promises the best scalability and email deliverability. Get your transactional or marketing emails straight to the recipient's inbox and receive real time feedback for every mail you send.

[MailJet](#)

Send 6,000 emails per month for free or pay \$7.49 per 30,000 emails each month. MailJet is a secure SMTP service provider and email marketing solution. It allows you send, track and deliver emails for your campaign. Their API integration is seamless and you can create newsletters quickly. MailJet assures that your mail is delivered to the recipient's inbox rather

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than spam folder. Get detailed email reports of bounce, spam complaints, unsubscribes, etc.

[SendinBlue](#)

Enjoy up to 9,000 emails per month free of charge or \$7.37 for every 40,000 emails per month. SendinBlue is a top SMTP relay provider that can be used for sending marketing and transactional emails. No technical skills are required for its configuration and contacts can be managed quickly and efficiently. SendinBlue continuously monitors sending servers to ensure optimum deliverability. It also allows for tracking of email campaigns and provides extensive reports on open rate, bounce rate, etc.

Hybrid Options

Email Jeet 2

Costing a minimal one-time fee of \$47, Email Jeet 2 is your typical Hybrid email marketing software. It is a PC based autoresponder software that boasts of all the features you can expect of an autoresponder. Amongst its

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many features are list management, opt-in forms, unsubscribe management, and mail sequencing. You would have to connect it to an SMTP Mail Provider to begin, and it connects with multiple platforms, including SendGrid, mailjet, SMTP, Jango, etc. enjoy the benefits of complete control over your data while getting the best of email marketing, certain that your mail will arrive its destination.

[EasySendy](#)

Subscriber-based pricing - \$19/month for 10,000 subscribers, up to 5 emails per second, and 2 delivery servers, and as much as \$349/month for 1,000,000 subscribers, 30 emails per second, and 10 delivery servers. This automated email marketing software can be integrated with any SMTP relay server of your choice, with at least 12 options to select from. Connect to your blog, website, or ecommerce platform, and integrate easily with Google analytics. It supports subscriber segmentation, bounce handling, tracking, and extensive customization.

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[MyMailIt](#) (beta not yet for sale as of 4 December 2017)

SaaS based but need SMTP Mail Provided to send email

SMTP Mail Providers

Choosing the best SMTP service for your business is not a very simple task. Consider some of the top SMTP Mail Providers and their distinguishing features.

[MailGet SMTP](#)

Purchase the best plan for your needs, with \$10 per 30,000 emails or up to 300,000 emails per \$100. Great deliverability and affordable pricing, MailGet SMTP is an easy-to-use SMTP service provider and cloud-based email service that allows for bulk email sending. You can send your mails from multiple domains. Other provisions are email validation with SPF, DKIM signature embedding, and superfast email sending.

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[MailGun](#)

Send 10,000 emails per month free or pay \$15 for every 40,000 emails per month. MailGun is a two-in-one package of email automation and SMTP service. Send, track, receive, and store emails using this platform effortlessly. Simply install the plugin for WordPress and send notifications, newsletters, or any broadcast message. MailGun ensures your mail gets to the inbox and allows you track each email you send. You can access your data through multiple platforms.

[Postmark](#)

Send up to 25,000 emails free or pay \$1.5/1000 emails to 5,000,000 contacts or \$1/month for over 5,000,000 contacts. Postmark is a quality SMTP service provider that is designed with transactional emails in mind. Create and send transactional emails easily and enjoy 100% inbox rates on your delivery. Track and monitor your sent emails, discover the platform on which they were opened, and see how long your mail was read.

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[Amazon SES](#)

Send as much as 62,000 emails per month free as an EC2 user or pay \$0.1 for every 1,000 emails and \$1 per 10,000 emails. Amazon SES is an SMTP provider that allows you send transactional and marketing emails easily using their email addresses and domains. You do not have to configure and manage any mail servers and you can send thousands of emails with a single click. Enjoy guaranteed email deliverability, with emails filtered to prevent spam classification. Track your emails and get reports on bounce, delivery rates, rejected messages and complaint rate.

[Mandrill](#)

Send 2,000 emails free or pay \$9.95 per month for every 25,000 emails and a rough average cost of \$0.2 per 1,000 emails once you go above 25,000 emails. Mandrill can be used to send personalized emails, automated transactional emails, and can be integrated into ecommerce. This email platform from MailChimp has been designed for transactional purposes and is easily integrated into your platform. Ensure prime and

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secure deliverability while enjoying advanced email tracking features with a comprehensive review on your email campaign performance.

[SocketLabs](#)

Send 500 emails on a 15-day trial basis and pay \$15 per month for 5,000 emails without any setup fees. SocketLabs allows you create and send marketing and transactional emails, and can be set up in just a few minutes. It assures that your mails get to the inbox and reports blacklisted emails. Track the status of your outbound emails and get reports on sent, failed, clicked, as well as complaints.

[SMTP2GO](#)

Send 20,000 emails at \$14 per month or get a quote for up to 1,000,000 emails. SMTP2GO is a powerful API that allows sending of transactional emails with no monthly commitments. Upload and manage your contacts easily and receive high deliverability on your marketing campaigns.

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SMTP2GO lets you send emails to large groups of recipients with fully tracked email sending capabilities, with delivery reports and activity graphs on delivery rates, opens, bounces, clicks, spam analysis, unsubscribes, etc.

[SMTP.com](#)

Send 50,000 emails per month for \$70 or get a quote for 100,000 emails and above. SMTP.com lets you enjoy a scalable email infrastructure for email delivery or an all in one email marketing service solution that provides marketing automation. SMTP.com ensures that your transactional and marketing emails are sent efficiently and quickly. SMTP.com boasts of a high-touch support team, extensive email monitoring and high delivery rates.

[Dyn](#)

Three tier pricing of \$17/month, \$34/month and \$60/month with more features unlocked for each higher price level. Dyn Email Delivery is an

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SMTP relay service that works with the WordPress Newsletter Plugin for bulk mail sending. Configuration is easy with assurances of enterprise grade spam filtering and multi-tiered anti-virus filtering. Enjoy multiple delivery ports and a 30-day email backup should your servers fail. Keep in touch with your mails using real time activity logs. Dyn works with on premise servers or on hosted email systems.

Final Decision Time

There you have it.

Now that you have come this far, you should a clearer picture of what autoresponders are and what options you have when choosing one.

The perfect solution is probably not among even all these choices, just make it the right solution for your business and get started, do not over think it and not take action. Making a decision on which to go with will ultimately depend on your personal needs and those of your business, as well as its affordability to your business.

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It is always best to choose an autoresponder platform that lets you retain some level of control over your marketing campaign. If you are into affiliate marketing, for instance, you would need a platform that lets you send out emails without having to worry whether or not they approve or disapprove of your vendor or affiliate program. So make sure you read the term of conditions for using their service and if any doubts call and talk to sales and/or support before paying for a subscription.

Customization is also an important factor in your choice of an autoresponder. You should be able to determine how your emails look for your newsletter, e-zines, or transactional mails. Branding lets you remain consistent and gives you an identity with your customers. Think about the ease with which you can embed calls to action, images, and the likes in your messages.

Other important factors in your choice would be deliverability, reliability and scalability.

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You should find your chosen platform easy to use so you do not have to struggle with every action.

If you run an ecommerce website, you need a platform that integrates well with your store – Shopify, Magento, etc., and that lets you promote your products easily.

Set up and integration are top considerations for the beginning marketer, while the more advanced marketer might pay more attention to email marketing tools and other functionalities.

The cost of the platform must be such that you are able to profit from your email marketing campaign.

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Note that some good autoresponders did not find their way to our list. For some like [Office Auto Pilot](#), this is because they would require the services of a seasoned programmer for mail integration and customization via their rich API (Application Programming Interface) which is not a bad thing just out of the scope of this guide.

If uncertain, feel free to play around with platforms that offer free trials to find out if they have what you need.

Remember, the goal of your email marketing campaign is to get your mails into the inbox of your subscribers and get them to act. If it doesn't make it as far as the inbox, then your campaign efforts are all for naught and it all comes to a halt, before it even begins.

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