We are all so focused on what we should be doing that we often end up ignoring the things we shouldn't.

When you begin email marketing for your nonprofit, there are many things that you'll learn to do, but you also need to know the things you absolutely shouldn't be doing.

As nonprofit organizations, you continuously need the support of people who value your cause, donors, volunteers, and others who may be able to drive your efforts further. Implementing an email marketing is a great way to get in touch with all these supporters, so keep an eye out for these bad practices and make sure to replace them with something good:

1. **Don't buy email lists.** This is a big one and can not only result in poor email performance but could also destroy your nonprofit's reputation. Imagine someone who received your email saying, "I didn't sign up for this email distribution." The next step would be to mark you as SPAM. You could even get blacklisted.

   DO:
   - Organically build your email list through permission-based methods, which means customers are opting in to receive your emails and giving their email addresses.
   - Always include an option to voluntarily opt-in to receiving your emails and an option to unsubscribe at any given point in time.

2. **Don't spam your subscribers.** Sending emails and staying connected to your supporters is certainly a great idea, but issues arise when you start sending irrelevant information. This is another way to get flagged into the SPAM folder. Also, using a no-reply address will lead to driving away your subscribers, as it prevents your audience from communicating back which leads to frustration.

   DO:
   - Always use a registered domain ID that subscribers and email recipients can reply to or contact. It will work even better if the email address is from a person in your organization, instead of the business name or acronym.

- Build out an email marketing plan to know how many emails you will be sending in a month. We suggest 3-4 emails if you have enough valuable content to share, or 1-2 if it's email newsletters or promotional emails.
- Measure email marketing metrics to know how your email campaigns are doing and how you can make them better. Most importantly, know your subscribers and send relevant content to their inbox.

3. **Don't waste a subscriber's time**
Every email you send must have a goal that is valuable to your customer, otherwise, you are wasting their time. This could be as simple as making them feel appreciated or providing an incentive. But if you don't add value, along with a clear call-to-action and links, no one will understand the goal of the email.

DO:
- Always add a clear <u>call-to-action</u> button so subscribers know what action you want them to take.
- If you are making a promise, be sure to keep it.
- Set a goal for every email you send and plan your design, text, images, links, and buttons accordingly.

4. **Don't overlook design elements** Even the most compelling donation asks, like seeking support for moving causes or requests to become a volunteer, can go straight to the trash if your design is overwhelming. Don't go overboard, consider every design element carefully when creating your emails.

The colors, theme, fonts, text, images–everything plays a vital role in compelling your subscribers to take the action you want them too. Long and cramped emails with no images or too many images with no supporting text, a font that's hardly legible, or too many colors make a jarring visual, and can all be labeled "don'ts."

DO:

- Create branded <u>email templates</u> that captures your brand's colors and logo. The design and template should both be mobile responsive
- Use no more than two fonts that are easy to read.
- Use 1-2 images with clear and concise text. Make the call-to-action button pop and easy to locate.

5. **Don't hit send without previewing and testing**
Everyone makes errors but you have a chance to rectify them if you don't impulsively send the first email draft you create. Also, don't ignore <u>A/B testing</u> and miss out on understanding what works best with your subscribers.

DO:
- Even after proofreading, send the email to a colleague to see how it looks and get a second opinion. Also, open the email on a mobile device to ensure it works just as well.
- Try A/B testing different elements like images, subject lines, and reply addresses to know what resonates most with your subscribers.
- Use automated systems to check for errors before sending.

Grow with nonprofit email marketing
Nonprofit email marketing helps you take your efforts to the next level. You spread the word about your initiative, welcome people to hop in and make a difference, drive real change, and make this world a better place.
Keeping in mind the factors that can hinder your growth allows you to grow even further. Here's a quick recap of what you should be doing:

- Keep your emails simple but powerful
- Always add relevant links and a compelling call-to-action
- Seek permission before sending emails
- Measure email marketing metrics
- Understand what your subscribers want
- Use effective designs and text
- Deliver on your promises
- Test, create, experiment and don't stop
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It's a wonderful feeling to grow and achieve your goals, but it's even better when there's nothing pulling you back. Knowing what you should be doing is as important as knowing what you shouldn't. It's okay if you make a few mistakes if you are willing to rectify these and move ahead stronger than ever.

The final and most important 'don't' to add to this list is: **DON'T** give up on email marketing.

Sources for Free e-marketing:
Constant Contact
Sendinblue
MailChimp
Benchmark