

**Terry Telford Interviews  
Ian Herculson  
on Opt In List Building  
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**TERRY TELFORD:**

## **WHY IS BUILDING A LIST SO IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS?**

**IanHerculson:**

Well to 'my own' personal business it's important because it's the source of where most of my income comes from.

The 'advertising' aspect of Internet Marketing is actually not an easy process, even for some experienced marketers. I am almost 100% certain it's the one thing that most Internet Marketers have the most trouble with. It also happens to be the #1 most important thing to any business. Why?

**No/Bad Advertising = No traffic = No inquiries = No sales  
= No money = Get a JOB = NO FUN!**

Think of it this way; even to build your own opt in list requires that you must have to do some form of advertising to get your list out to the world. So it's best you get that step right first! But this interview isn't about how to advertise.

So once you have your own opt in list, that you have grown and nurtured and treated right, you also have access to the quickest and easiest way to drive a lot of good quality traffic to any program that you are trying to promote. Send a message to your list!

**Lots of traffic = Lots of hits = Many Inquiries = Some Sales =  
Money = Fun**

Another great advantage is that in building your own opt in list it becomes something that you always have once you got it, an asset for your business.

If you treat the people on your list well, they stay and they eventually start buying from your affiliate links and recommendations. You can advertise multiple products multiple times and it doesn't cost you a penny more but you keep on making profits. Of course every time a message is sent out to the entire list, a few people will leave, but if you are building your list right, then you can really help to keep your list numbers growing and the retention will stay high. As your list grows, your income will too.

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS TO BUILD A LIST?**

**IanHerculson:**

There are probably many ways to build an opt in list. I see literally hundreds of e-books, reports and mini courses that each teach different things about building opt-in lists. I think it's important to learn as many of those methods as you can and how each method can be most effectively utilized in list building.

Here are some of the ways I use of have used in the past to build my own opt in lists.

- Free Give Aways Using A Subscribe Form
- Joint Ventures
- Purchasing Solo Ads For List Building Purposes
- Co-Registration (Purchasing Leads)
- Lead Building Programs (YourLuckyList.com)

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO BUILD A LIST?**

**IanHerculson:**

The best way to build an opt in list is the way that it works the best for you and doesn't drive you up the wall or have you banging your head against it either.

I would suggest reading about a few different strategies from a few different people and trying things out for yourself. See what works and what you like doing the most. You'll notice some methods bring more subscribers but low sales within the list, other things bring less subscribers but more profits.

There really is no best way to build an opt in list.

But the best 'mind frame' to be in while building one is definitely of interest and curiosity. Try everything at least twice. If you can improve upon it on the second try, it's worth doing again.

For myself, I have always been a big fan of creating a mini-course, or e-book on a certain subject and then advertising the free giveaway. On

the page that explains what the free giveaway is, I simply place a subscribe form for them to fill out in order to get the gift and that is how I prefer to collect my list of names.

<http://smart.gurumarketer.com/am101/> is a website I use to build a list of “Affiliate Marketers.”

I like this method the best because it’s so controllable.

You can decide which “flavor” of list you want. If you want to sell “fishing” related items that you simply collect your subscribers by giving away fishing related information. For those golfers out there, you can give away a multitude of golf related items for those who subscribe to your list. You can build a list of virtually any type of market using this method.

I also find that advertising free give-aways is a really great way for beginners to start learning how to advertise in general. It’s a lot easier to advertise something that is free than something you have to pay for simply because of the fact that it’s free and will bring more results. And although you still have to craft the ad properly to increase the response there is much less risk even if your ads flop. It’s still likely that you will collect a few names and email addresses at your give away page and that means you can recover profits from bad ads later on with your list.

It’s also easy to track your advertising using the free give away method because it uses a webpage to collect names

You can track to see how many people are visiting your give away page versus signing up for your ecourse, which is called your site conversion. You can also see how effective you are at getting people to visit your website by writing advertisements about free give aways. The better you get at this, the better you will get at selling products to your own opt in lists later on!

I personally like to look at the whole thing like a big game, if you play the right moves, you are rewarded and you move forward, if not...uh oh!

**TERRY TELFORD:**

## **WHAT'S THE FASTEST WAY TO BUILD A LIST?**

**IanHerculson:**

Well the real answer is virally. If you can find a way for the people on your list to recommend your list to others, or advertise your list for you, then you'll have a virally growing monster. That's a pretty advanced strategy that often involves some sort of programming on your website.

But it can also just come from having a really good relationship with your subscribers and you give them lots. In turn they tell people about your list. You can even put a subscribe form up on a page with a bunch of testimonials from your subscribers. Then tell your list if they are happy with it, they can send their friends to that page to sign up as well!

However for most people just starting out, the answer to that question is simply the same as the answer to the last question.

Experiment and go with what works best.

For myself, using the free give away method has produced outstanding results for me. Something to note that I have noticed over time is that the better the quality of my freebie, the better the quality of my subscribers. I usually end up getting more subscribers this way and they stay longer with me.

Also, I find that if I'm really giving away something of value, real value, that the people who take me up on my offer will be more inclined to purchase tools, or products that I recommend.

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**HOW MANY LISTS DO YOU HAVE?**

**IanHerculson:**

I currently have 3 opt in email lists.

My main list is from my ezine, [GuruMarketer.com](http://GuruMarketer.com). This is the list that receives all the best goodies. Each e-book I read, tool that I use, or service that I am subscribed to that I enjoy, I tell this list about it. I test ads, products and more with my third list.

My second list is located over at [TheOptInStrategy.com](http://TheOptInStrategy.com). This was an e-book I wrote detailing how I build opt in lists with a clever viral sales force built into it. This e-book took off and thousands of people have it and also recommend it. You should give it a ready as well.

My third list is one that I built in co-operation with a partner, Henry Gold. It was a Christmas Joint Venture give away and that list grew to 26,000 subscribers in only 14 days.

We started a second website with the same idea, and I was able to add another 14,000 to that list so it totals somewhere around 40,000.

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**HOW MANY SUBSCRIBERS DO YOU HAVE?**

**IanHerculson:**

In total I have around 66,000+ subscribers on my three lists.

TheOptInStrategy.com – 6,000+

TheGuruMarketer.com – 20,000+

117FreeGifts.com List – 40,000+

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**HAVE YOU EVER PURCHASED LEADS TO BUILD A LIST? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

**IanHerculson:**

Yes and it's been quite a ride in doing so. I've learned a lot about this method. The first thing I learned is that these types of subscribers are typically called Co-Registration leads.

Before I say anything else, I want to say this. I'm in no way a pro about the methods of purchasing Co-Registration leads. So this is what I know, but I'd seek more qualified advice if you want to run with it.

You can buy quite a different number of lead types and each type is determined by the method that lead subscribed.

Mainly a lead company will use the same name and email capture method as I do, but many lead companies will advertise a page with 5 – 10 different ezine subscription ads. The soon-to-be-lead sees all the descriptions and can subscribe to any or all the ezines by simply giving his/her name and email address.

The problem is that some lead companies have all 10 boxes pre-checked so that the person must uncheck the ones they do not want to receive. You can imagine how many mistaken leads get into that list. Then there is the possibility that the same lead could be sold over and over again. That email address will quickly be abandoned and the lead rendered useless.

Mainly I prefer to stay away from purchasing leads because of all the possible problem situations that anyone can run into. So if you are buying leads you better know what your buying before you do or you

could end up with a bunch of pissed off people that are sending you emails asking why you are sending them anything at all, yep you could be quickly labeled as a Spammer!

If you are going to purchase leads, make sure you do it using a method in which the subscriber is actually subscribing to YOUR ezine and not just for generic information. Also make sure that they must take some sort of 'positive' action such as checking a box with your ad description on it. This is much better than negative qualifiers such as unchecking a box, to avoid subscribing to your list!

Basically the only lead that I think is worth buying is the lead that knows they are subscribing to your particular list. The only lead company that I know who can do this so far is LeadFactory.com. I have been testing them and so far they have had by far the best results with the least about of spam complaints.

I know a lot of people have great success with Co-Reg leads; I just am not one of them. But if you want to learn more about it, here's a great e-book on the subject. [Co-Reg Cash](#).

**TERRY TELFORD:**

**IF YOU'VE PURCHASED LEADS TO BUILD A LIST,  
HOW DID YOU MARKET TO THEM SO YOU AVOIDED  
GETTING SPAM COMPLAINTS?**

**IanHerculson:**

Before I get to that....

I think the whole spam issue has gotten way out of hand. Especially for the people who have now made a living out of falsely reporting spam. I can't even send a "real email" to some people without it getting reported, or of getting accused of spamming.

I had one guy, who subscribed to my list, just to start a law suit against me about spamming. It turns out that he's done this to others and won a few law suits against email marketers. Thankfully he had no case against me as I use double opt in and follow all the email law practices, but it's still scary that there are people like this.

Not everyone, but some people are way too quick to hit the “report as spam” button even though they may have subscribed to the particular list. If this is you, you are an a\$\$hole. That’s what the REMOVE links are for you guys and gals. Make sure you look for them in the emails before you report as spam. Responsible email marketers always include that link.

Ok, now that I’ve vented... ;o)

The way I avoid all the troubles is by first of all stopped purchasing leads that do not know what exact publication they are subscribing too. Then I use double opt in methods only. I never allow anyone to start receiving regular issues of my mailing list until they have confirmed their intent to be on my list.

I know a lot of people think that single opt in is better because you get more subscribers and some people don’t receive their first emails and blah, blah, blah. If a person can’t do something as simple as click on a link to confirm that they want a free gift, than they aren’t serious anyways. I do understand that some people don’t double confirm because they didn’t receive the first email because of filters and such but I also have methods to protect against that.

My first line of defense is that once they subscribe, they are immediately redirected to a page that explains about spam filters and junk mail folders. If you go subscribe to receive my “[Affiliate Marketing 101](#)” ecourse, you will see what I mean after you subscribe.

Then in the event that they still didn’t receive their first email from me, then I simply follow up with the people who aren’t confirmed and remind them that they haven’t done so. I can always send another confirmation email.

I have actually created a reminder system for all my unconfirmed leads that emails them every 7 days until they either confirm, or remove themselves from my list. It works quite well as either way, I am happy!

In using all those methods in I still do lose a chunk of my leads, but the ones that make it onto my list are always way more responsive and responsible marketers in general. They are a much higher quality lead and from that I find I have higher responses to my offers.

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**WHERE DID YOU BUY YOUR LEADS?**

**IanHerculson:**

I don't want to mention the companies that I bought from and was disappointed. I'm not into anti-marketing. But I can say that so far I am very happy with LeadFactory.com and the leads I bought from there.

But like I said, my experience is very limited so I'd also suggest reading [Co-Reg Cash](#) as a good source for not only where to purchase leads, but how to buy them correctly if you are really interested in this method.

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**WITH ALL THE SPAM FILTERS IN EFFECT NOW, HOW DO YOU KNOW YOUR LIST IS GETTING YOUR EMAIL?**

**IanHerculson:**

Well along with the methods I have described above, there are a few more things that I do.

First of all, I use a really reliable autoresponder hosted with a complimentary hosting company who really knows about email deliverability as well as the autoresponder script I use.

[Auto Response Plus v3](#) (ARP3), and [Third Sphere](#) hosting are the tag-team that I use for my email sending. ARP3 is an excellent autoresponder script with some spam protection built into it.

But more importantly, it my host that helps me keep my deliverability high.

Third Sphere Hosting was practically designed for people who are into Internet Marketing. They keep excellent relationships with the major Internet Service Providers (ISP's) such as AOL, Hotmail, Yahoo, Excite etc; so that I know the mail being sent from my server is not being blocked. They make sure all those techy details such as SPF records are intact for your sendings. I don't really know what that is, but I know that I get my best deliverability from Third Sphere.

I know this because I've left them for a better price or larger host, but I came back with my tail between my legs, licking my wounds from the crash in deliverability rates I suffered on a few other hosts.

I also have been using a new service called Delivery Monitor, owned and operated by [Aweber.com](http://Aweber.com) which monitors how many of my messages are being received by 16 of the top ISPs. Then if messages go missing, they tell me why and where.

Then whenever I write my messages, I run them through some spam score tests that check for Spam Assassin score, some generic trigger words as well as Blacklist and bounce test. I then make all the necessary adjustments to avoid possibly getting marked as spam. It works amazingly well. I use a really awesome service called [E-Filtrate](#) to do all that.

So I do quite a few things to avoid spam filters, but it's an on going battle.

I'm also now looking into desktop delivery methods, or blogging methods which are hitting the net pretty hard. I have yet to experience either so I won't comment too much other than saying that I've heard good things about both.

**TERRY TELFORD:**

**DO YOU BUILD LISTS OTHER THAN EMAIL LISTS, LIKE POSTAL MAIL LISTS? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

**IanHerculson:**

No. Internet Marketing is too easy, and I don't feel ready to tap the newspaper markets. Isn't that the dinosaur age anyways?

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**REALISTICALLY, WHAT DOES IT COST TO BUILD A LIST?**

**IanHerculson:**

Well it's not free!

Actually I shouldn't say that because I built my first lists using only free methods, but it was very slow and involved a lot of tedious methods. Free basically involves learning how to write excellent classified ads and posting about 300 of them per month, or 10 per day, and tracking the effectiveness of your ads, and the places your placing your ads. You keep the good ones, and drop the bad ones over and over and over again. It's a lot of work, but if you're up for it, it can produce results over time.

But in the real world where people are building a business, and understand that it takes a bit of money to make a bit of money, there are costs involved. The costs can also vary depending on the types of tools and services you employ, but that part is up to you. No matter what you do, it's probably going to cost a lot less than opening a "brick and mortar" store type business!

The two basic tools that you need to start are a website and an auto responder. A good web host, or the one I use costs \$25/month. A good auto responder costs about the same or you can purchase outright for about \$100.

From that point on the amount of money you spend depends on the amount of work you want to hire help for or learn how to do for yourself.

Things such as building websites, creating freebie products to give away, follow up messages, products creation, and such can cost anywhere from \$200 - \$5000. It depends how grand you want to go. You can learn how to write yourself, or hire someone to write for you. You can learn to build a website yourself, or pay someone to give you exactly what you want. Do you want to save money, or spend it?

There is no substitute for learning how to do things for yourself, but once you know what you want and need it quickly, it's a good idea to hire out help. But if you get to this level, you are probably already making a decent enough income to pay for the help.

I currently have a programmer and an editor hired to work on projects for me as they come up. I only pay them for the work they do! It's a great relationship for both me and them.

And once you have everything in place, I think the last cost you should encounter is advertising costs. This once again is up to you and your budget. \$100/month is not a bad advertising budget to start with, but if you are spending \$1000/month and you know what you are doing, you'll probably be raking in a lot of profits.

Some guys spend over \$100,000 per month on advertising!

For a someone just looking to break into this game, I would say that if you had a budget of about \$100/month for tools and about \$200 - \$300 starting cash, your business has a great change of making it BIG! Just keep working hard!

**TERRY TELFORD:**

**IF I DON'T OWN A WEBSITE CAN I STILL BUILD A LIST TO MARKET TO? HOW?**

**IanHerculson:**

Yes of course. But then again you can still pound a nail into a board if you don't have a hammer...but why not just get the hammer?

Many autoresponder services allow you to subscribe by email. So in your advertising you can include an email address to send away for the information you want to give away, and it works just fine.

But having a website just opens up so many more doors of opportunity that it's just silly not to spend the few bucks it costs to have one. So for that reason, I won't go into how to build a list without a website. If you don't want a website to build an email list with, you're probably not that serious anyway.

If you are going to get a website, host with [Third Sphere](#). Trust me on that one...they may seem more pricey than most hosts, but remember, you are running an email list and you'll want the right type of host for that which is usually a bit pricier.

**TERRY TELFORD:**

**IF I'M MARKETING AN AFFILIATE PROGRAM, IS THERE SOME WAY TO CAPTURE MY PROSPECT'S CONTACT DETAILS AND ADD THEM TO MY LIST BEFORE THEY GO ON TO THE PROGRAM'S HOME PAGE THAT I'M MARKETING? HOW DO I DO THAT?**

**IanHerculson:**

Yes and this is actually a very effective way of making more sales for any affiliate program that you are advertising.

Basically what you would want to do here is do a written review of the product or service you want to advertise. Write about what you liked, and disliked about it. Including what you didn't like shows that you are being honest and people really appreciate that, wouldn't you?

Include a subscribe box that allows the user to receive more information and a surprise bonus for signing up. Then include your tracked affiliate link to the actual sales website.

Not everyone is going to sign up on your list, but you will catch a few of the email addresses and for the ones you don't, they probably clicked on your affiliate link over the sales page anyway!

For the people who did subscribe to your list, you should simply be sending them more related information about that product or service. Tell them some tips on how to use it better, or tell them about how Joe Blow bought it and loved it for whatever reason.

Create like 5 – 10 of those types of emails and you'll not only see that you are building a relationship based opt in email list, but you are also increasing the amount of sales for that particular product!

[The Rich Jerk](#) wrote a great ebook that you can get for like ten bucks I think it is now. He talks about this strategy in great detail and even throws in a few more good ideas.

**TERRY TELFORD:**

## **HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEND MAIL TO YOUR LISTS?**

**IanHerculson:**

The amount I send to my list changes depending on what I am sending.

If I'm sending straight on ads for products, things like reviews, or endorsements or sales copy, then I don't like to send more than 1 – 2 per week unless it's in an email series form where I tell them I'll be emailing more. People absolutely hate getting sold to and too many ads can result in a lot of unsubscribes.

A good thing to do is if you have ads that you want a lot of people to see, post them to a blog or something like that.

Now if I'm writing to my list to teach them something new, or just to talk to them and tell them some non-chalant stuff like how I'm doing in my music life or my personal life, then I find I can email a bit more than ads. I like getting personal with my list.

I tell them a lot about myself and what I'm doing with my life. I even send pictures and tell stories. It makes the experience for them more real and they know that it's a real person talking to them and not just an autoresponder. They also get to see what the life of an Internet Marketer who is making a full time income can be like. I'm a real life example of that for them.

But between both hard and soft emails, I try to keep it to under 5 times a week. I don't want to bombard people either. It's the kind of thing you play around with and see what works best for you.

**TERRY TELFORD:**

**WHAT KIND OF MAIL DO YOU SEND TO YOUR LISTS? SALES LETTERS? EZINES? SOLO ADS?**

**IanHerculson:**

I kind of already answered this question up above.

Over time I have honestly learned that people prefer to receive real emails that I took the time to write myself. I also find that instead of trying to 'sell' people, I just have to tell them what I like or dislike about products and services that I'm advertising.

So I'm getting away from the traditional sales letters, or formatted ezine type ads. I try to make it an actual conversation and I'm finding that's what works best for me.

**TERRY TELFORD:**

**WHAT MAKES THE MOST SALES FOR YOU?**

**IanHerculson:**

The things that make the most sales for me by far are those that I have purchased myself and I absolutely love. My excitement for it usually finds its way into the emails I write about it and people can see it's genuine.

I also send more than just one email for the thing I'm endorsing and explain it from different points of view as I learn more about the product. I'll also give updates on how I'm doing with it if it's some sort of system, or tactic to try. Results based emails like those usually really help people to make their own decision to purchase.

What makes the least amount of sales is taking the same ad that everyone else has and using that for any type of product. If I do use their email, it's usually at the very end of a sequence and I've still edited it somewhat.

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE ON YOUR LIST?  
WEBMASTERS? ENTREPRENEURS?**

**IanHerculson:**

Well like I explained way up above, my lists are targeted so I have a pretty good grasp on who's on my lists.

I tend to target a more beginner audience who are interested in Internet Marketing or 'making money' which is quite a large audience. I then break it down into smaller sub-sections such as 'email list building' or 'affiliate marketing'. I have a few of those types of lists.

There are some more experienced people on my lists, but I think they are there just because they like me or because they want to know what I'm up to. I doubt I can teach them anything they don't already know, but I'm glad they are there nonetheless.

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**WHAT DO YOU THINK THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR  
EMAIL MARKETING?**

**IanHerculson:**

Oh man, I'm not much of a market analyst especially when it comes to something as fast moving as the Internet.

Email marketing has had many new innovations and challenges to overcome such as spam and deliverability, blogs, RSS feeds, Peer 2 Peer messaging. It's quite a jungle.

But one thing I can tell you is that the basic business principals of marketing haven't changed much at all. These are still 'people' you're dealing with and you can't forget that.

Integrity, honesty and ethics still play such a huge role in this business. Keep a clean conscious; it will serve you better in the long run.

**TERRY TELFORD:**  
**DO YOU HAVE ANY LAST HELPFUL COMMENTS TO SHARE?**

**IanHerculson:**

Sure I do. These are a few pieces of advice I often give out to a lot of my subscribers.

**1. Don't look at the Internet as a way to get yourself out of any sort of financial troubles quickly.**

I have so many people email me and tell me they lost their jobs, or had to pay a huge hospital bill, or need to support their children at school or whatever. Then they go on to say they need something that's going to work quickly. THIS IS STUPID.

If you are in this type of situation, go out and get a job, or get help from a real source. The Internet doesn't offer any get rich quick schemes no matter how many times you read it in a headline. It's a lot of work, especially for newbies; which brings me to my next point.

**2. Don't quit trying, ever! Only take breaks.**

When you first get online, it's a nightmare in a dream. It's a huge place with a lot of information as well as mis-information. You have to kinda learn to separate the good from the bad.

You also have a lot of new skills to learn that may seem like second nature to someone who's been online forever, but to you it's a first time experience.

HTML, Email, FTP, MySQL, CGI, Copy N Paste; ...all these things. What they heck are they? Well you'll learn as time goes on but at first it can be over whelming and if you don't get it, you might want to just give up and quit on everything.

Just because you don't know how to put up a webpage, doesn't mean your going to fail at Internet Marketing.

There's only ONE sure way to fail at Internet Marketing and that's to quit! So don't!