



# Driving Direct Sales With Effective E-Marketing

By Dixie Huey: Proprietor of Trellis Wine Consulting, LLC

**C**reating an email marketing campaign for your winery is easier and more cost effective than ever before.

Popular sites such as Constant Contact, IContact, and Interspire offer customizable templates, list management and reporting metrics. Best of all, they provide the ability to drive traffic to your site and increase sales -- all at very competitive prices.

There are some distinct advantages to e-marketing versus print marketing: 1) lower cost, 2) quicker production, and 3) the ability to easily track your efforts. A brochure or mailer will necessarily incur design and printing costs. It will also require waiting for completion of each step of production. And after it's mailed, there is no way to know if it was opened or simply tossed aside. While email marketing does not guarantee that your customers will read or buy, it allows a winery manager to track some key metrics: opens, forwards, bounces, etc., and capture valuable updates to customer information.

Even with the entry of low-cost providers, continual technological advancements, and obvious advantages to e-marketing,

many small wineries are still missing sales opportunities. Some make costly mistakes by investing in unneeded software. Others suffer from opportunity cost because they planned a campaign but never committed the time to implement it. And then there are a few which shun e-marketing altogether with excuses like "no time", "no budget", "afraid to spam", or "hate writing".

A small winery need not invest in software to start creating e-marketing campaigns. There can be benefits to doing so-- especially when sales and production reach a point where it's the most cost efficient strategy linking to your order processing, but it is not a requirement. Joining one of the aforementioned e-marketing sites or another provider for a small monthly or annual fee is all that's necessary.

The time required is vastly decreased after you send the first email -- good news for busy owners. Initially, an e-campaign requires you to select a provider, import your contacts, choose a template and create a compelling message. This usually takes a couple of hours. Subsequent emails only require that



you edit the copy and add any new pictures or logos you'd like to use. The format and template can remain the same, and your contact information, including any newly captured subscriptions from forwards or your website, is already there.

As for the e-fears and excuses, I offer you the following advice: "no time" – put it on your calendar like you would a doctor's appointment and stick to it; "no budget" – Constant Contact offers a \$15 per month plan for up to 500 contacts and a 10% discount for annual pre-payment; "afraid to spam" – e-marketing providers require you to verify your contacts and ensure that new subscribers adhere to a double opt-in policy (i.e., they sign up, then receive an email confirming the transaction and leading them to a confirmation link; and "hate writing" – view it as a necessary evil for selling wine or hire someone who doesn't share your sentiment!

Once a winery owner has committed to e-marketing, there are still important remaining questions. How often is appropriate – i.e., how do I strike a balance between being a well-received email and getting blocked as annoying "spam"? What are the most important messages to convey? How do I reach my ultimate goal of increasing sales? Does this replace print marketing?

### Here are some quick tips to making your next email campaign shine:

**1. Make sure signing up is easy to do!** In a 2007 study of over 1200 wineries, ZinMarketing, a California-based consultancy, revealed that only about 50% of wineries made sign up possible on their websites! So trade, press, or potential consumers who have taken the time to seek more information are either asked to take another step (call or email) or are lost because their information isn't captured.

**2. Make it personal:** Address it to a specific person (not "Dear wine club member" but "Greetings, Dixie"). And send it from a specific person (Dixie@trelliswineconsulting.com versus "info@trelliswineconsulting.com").

**3. Use a compelling title:** "Dixie's News" is a lot less interesting than "Eight Ways to Increase your Account Sales", "New Winery, XYZ, Receives Top Acclaim!" or "Special Discount For Loyal XYZ Customers".

**4. Offer a call to action:** Perhaps it's a discount for a limited time, a chance to win a bottle or case (where legal), free shipping, or the first X number of buyers receive an invitation to a future event.

**5. Report news of interest, but don't go overboard on copy:** This is not your website's "About Us" section — the main purpose of an email marketing campaign is to sell wine. E-marketing does provide a great opportunity to report on any new press, interesting developments, or compelling offers.

**6. Make sure your brand shines through:** Your communica-

tion should look and feel like that of your brand. Make sure your logo is high-resolution and is prominently displayed. Be sure to include your unique selling propositions and convey your wine brand's personality using consistent tone, style and color.

**7. Make e-marketing a habit:** Instead of waiting until it's time to publish to add new contact information collected in between emails, update your list weekly, or each time you receive a new address after networking events, wine tastings, conferences, etc. Just be sure to ask permission.

Similarly, if you receive press or have an idea for content, record it immediately. That way, you're not scrambling for copy at the last minute. (I keep these notes on my Outlook "newsletter" task bar.) Effective e-marketing doesn't just happen on the day you send an email — it's a constant process.

**8. Focus on driving traffic to the point of sale:** The primary and most visible link should be to your online store. Don't make it difficult to buy wine by sending potential customers to your winery's main page and asking them to find it! You want the valuable click-throughs going to the right page.

Commit the time and energy and use the eight tips above, and you'll be well on your way to increasing your online sales with effective e-marketing.

Dixie Huey, Proprietor of Trellis Wine Consulting, LLC, provides Strategic Guidance from the Ground Up – expert branding, strategy and communications solutions for wine businesses. She is instructor of wine marketing at the Northwest Viticultural Center and holds a MBA in finance, the Wine & Spirits Education Trust Advanced Certificate and a certification from the Court of Master Sommeliers.

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