

## How to Sell to Teachers via Email

There are now five ways of emailing teachers. Unfortunately different names are being used by different companies for these, and it is getting confusing. So I have written a brief and hopefully simple guide to emailing schools which includes the options, the benefits and a rough guide to prices.

### Cost vs Response Rate

The general rule is: the more the list costs, the higher the response rate - which is at least reassuring. However this doesn't always seem to be the case (as with shared email mailings which seem to cost a lot but deliver modest response rates).

Also it should be noted that not all lists are complete - some reach every school, others don't. However reaching every school is not necessarily good. Some schools simply never pass on to the teacher any emails addressed to the school general email address - and so the fact that you reach all these schools might seem to be good (you are mailing more people) but might make no difference to your response rate.

### How schools treat email

There are three types of school when it comes to email:

- a) Those that ask for all email to go to the administrator, so it can be forwarded (about 40% of schools)
- b) Those that much prefer it if the email is sent directly to the teacher (about 55%) and who may not pass on email to the teacher if it is sent to the general address. (It is the existence of these schools that causes general email response rates to be low - your mail simply isn't getting through).
- c) Those that won't pass any emails on, and state that they prefer advertisements to be sent by post (about 5%)

Here are the options...

**1. Generic Mail.** This goes straight to the school's general address and is normally seen by the administrator. In the subject line is written "Attn: Head of Maths" or whatever.

Generic email is also often known as "Email schools" in that the email goes to the school's general address. But some suppliers now call this "Email teachers" and even "Email teachers direct". Their logic is that you are going to the teacher eventually. The "direct" bit is then justified by the fact that some firms have the names of headteachers and can slip this into the subject line (as in Attn: A J Bliss, Headteacher).

The specific problem with emailing the headteacher is that he/she gets mountains of mail and email, and very little of it ever gets to the head - the administrator will have the job of sorting it out. Thus the claim that this is somehow "direct" is a bit far-fetched, and if anyone says "direct" it is always worth asking exactly what this means.

It is also a good idea not to email the head unless you really have no choice - and normally you do have a choice. The Deputy Head is often a better bet.

Generic email lists are available from many sources at many prices. Two companies sell them on disk at prices around a quarter of a penny each, but I have yet to find someone who has found these lists to be of much use. It is also worth considering the background of such companies - one of the suppliers seems to have a link to the sex industry, which you may (or may not) want to be associated with. Another has been reported to have disks that can give virus alerts.

The problem with the generic lists on disk is that they can be out-of-date, can be badly researched and, because you send out the emails yourself, they can get your system blocked by all schools.

Thus suddenly you might find that you simply can't email any school in Surrey or Bolton or other places. Companies that are seriously involved in this type of work liaise closely with the authorities to ensure they are not blocked in this way. Some counties (NE Somerset is one) openly state that if there is a single complaint from one teacher they will block the sender for good.

Companies that send out your emails for you charge anything from 2p to 10p an address, and obviously you have to judge the quality of the list and the firm you are working with. You should be able to select by school age range, postcode, county, and other normal selections.

As noted above, the other problem with the generic lists is that they include not only those schools that want emails to go to the administrator (type a above) they also include those who prefer email to go to the teacher direct (type b). Many type b schools do not pass the mail on when it is for another teacher, so their inclusion can be wasted.

Selling a £20 report to deputy heads, the highest sales rate we have got on a generic list is around 1.6%. (Note that I am quoting an actual sales rate, not click through or open).

## **2. Preference lists**

These lists are just like the generic lists except that they have the name and title of the teacher slipped into the subject line - so instead of saying "Attn Head of Maths" they say "Attn A J Smith Head of Maths."

Additionally they exclude all the schools that state that they want emails to go straight to the teacher, not via the administrator, and all the schools that say they don't want any emails. So the success rate tends to be higher. They cost around 10p an address to mail. Because these lists are researched it is possible to mail only schools that do specific subjects such as "Business Studies" or to get to specific people in certain departments (such as the Head of Physics, as well as The Head of Science). Selection can be by subject, age range, area, size of school, etc.

## **3. Named lists**

These lists can be more responsive than preference lists since the emails go straight to the teacher's inbox and don't go via the administrator at all.

Any company owning such a list is likely to be restrictive in its use and limit the number of mailings that can go out to one a week per teacher. Rates are around 18p per teacher to mail – and as with the Preference List the option of knowing which school has which teacher also exists. Selection can be by subject, age range, area, size of school, etc.

#### **4. Subscription lists**

These are the top of the range lists - lists of teachers who have opted into a news service in order to get the news each week. Adverts are written in advertorial style, are strictly limited to one a week, and tend to get a very high response rate.

About 15 subscription lists exist at present - including not only the major subject areas (English, maths, etc) but also some specialist areas such as school trips, school marketing and fundraising, and behaviour & discipline. The price is around 20p per address, but regional selections are not available because every subscriber has to get every email. The highest response rate we have had in selling a £20 report is 3.5%.

#### **5. Shared mailings**

You might expect shared mailings to be a lot cheaper than others, but until now this has not been the case. In the shared mailing the teacher is sent four or five headlines and can then click on any of the headlines to get to the advert - which is often offered as something free to the teacher.

The current price from the one company offering shared mailings is around 15p, and the response rates reported tend to be as low as those from generic mailings. However it is expected that at least one new company will enter this field shortly, and will be quoting much lower prices.

#### **6. Reports**

Prior to any mailing with HHM you can send in a copy of your proposed email and we will then comment on it free of charge. You'll then have the choice of changing the text, as we suggest, or staying with your original - as you wish.

You'll have noticed above that we have quoted a couple of percentage sales rates for mailings - in both cases we had to experiment considerably to find out how to write the email - and we found a slight change in style and approach could make a huge difference. In fact the text is often more important than the product in convincing the reader that this is a genuine offer.

With all mailings you should be able to get two other reports if you are using an outside company: how many people opened the email, and how many people clicked through to your website. You should also be able to get reports on how the figures you get compare with the figures others have received of late, so that you know how well you have done.

Obviously, if you do the mailing yourself, you won't have access to these reports, and you will need to buy the software in yourself to undertake the analyses.

I hope you find this helpful. There's more about the Hamilton House email to schools services on <http://www.yesmail.org.uk/Schools.html> If you have any questions do give me a call on 01536 399 013.

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