

What are you afraid of?

So what's holding your marketing efforts back? Lack of resources? Time? Support from others? Not quite enough info to make the decision and take things up a level?

Or is it fear?

There's a problem with email marketing. One I discovered today, though it's been staring me in the face for months.

Two problems really. The first is the obsession with numbers. Or rather a single number. There's a lot of talk about email marketing metrics and what you should measure. Open rates, click through rates, conversions and newer more mysterious concerns like "engagement."

But I suspect (correct me if not) that the main number we focus on **emotionally** is the simplest one: the size of our address list.

What number do you check up on most often? My money says it's your list size.

And we do this despite the fact that list size means little in terms of list value. Which is better? One thousand addresses that never respond, or one address that places an order every time you send them an email?

So we have this unhealthy obsession with list size.

Now throw in fear. Because what if we change things and it doesn't work? Much easier to do what we've been doing -- with adequate results -- than change things and risk a disaster. Scariest scenario of all: we do something and the size of our list drops. That hits us where the emotional hurt is greatest.

But logic tells us that it makes a lot of sense to do exactly that: take action and shrink our list.

Many moons ago I once [wrote](#), "It's quality, not quantity, that counts. If you lose 10% of your readership by changing your newsletter, but your impact and influence on the remaining 90% has improved tremendously, then the loss is a welcome one."

And we all know -- logically -- there's no point in mailing people who don't respond. In fact, it might even [be counterproductive](#). But we're afraid to delete an address. We just don't want to see that list get smaller. It seems so counterintuitive to what we're always trying to do: build our lists.

So maybe the best resolution for 2007 is to take that cathartic step. Let go of that list size number, bite the change bullet and stop living in fear of unsubscribes and shrinking list sizes.

Email marketers, reclaim your list!

(For those wondering where all that came from, I'm switching list hosts. This is the ideal time to get people to reconfirm their newsletter subscription. I keep putting it off.

Why?

I kidded myself all along that it was an issue of time and resources. But it was just fear of losing addresses (hey, it's a niche list and not so big to start with!)

The final push in the right direction came from today's [Kill your email list](#) article by Bryan Eisenberg. Great article on how to approach email marketing. Worth pinning up on your wall.

I know Bryan a little from the past. Him and his team are as hardnosed as they come. They understand human emotions and how that relates to converting prospects, readers and website visitors into customers. But they don't let emotions get in the way of business decisions like email list management.

Just to prove the point about Bryan understanding emotions: what a great article title, eh? Try not clicking on that title if you have anything to do with email marketing. Like a red rag to a bull. **Brilliant!**
