

## **Wait, I thought e-mail was free!**

by Brendan Kiel, Top Shelf Design ([www.topshelfdesign.net](http://www.topshelfdesign.net))

This was the reply from one of our longstanding clients when we introduced our new eMarketing product to him. It's an understandable sentiment-after all, e-mail has been free since the internet reached mainstream, and should continue to be free for decades to come.

As Top Shelf Design introduces its new eMarketing product to our clients, colleagues, networking partners, friends, and family, it should not be without an explanation of the value this can product bring to their businesses. After all, we're charging two-and-a-half cents per eMarketing message.

It comes down to two factors: DELIVERABILITY and TRACKING. Most e-mail communications are between two people. These messages almost always get through to the intended recipient, and we can usually tell whether the e-mail reached its destination from the response that we receive.

Broadcast eMarketing-defined as a message sent to a list of recipients-follows a different set of rules. Because we all hate to receive Spam, most Internet Service Providers have installed programs designed to filter these messages out of our Inbox. In fact, AOL filters out 2.7 billion messages per day. These messages are never received by the recipient, and no notice is provided to the sender. If you have tried sending messages to a list of your clients or prospects, and received no response, perhaps the right eMarketing software would have ensured deliverability.

Top Shelf Design has selected Intellicontact 4.0 eMarketing software because it sends from IP addresses that have been *whitelisted* by all of the major e-mail providers. What is a *whitelist*? Think of it as the opposite of a *blacklist*. All e-mail messages sent through Intellicontact 4.0 are inherently trusted by your recipients' Internet Service Providers, and are delivered to their Inboxes.

The second major factor is your ability to track your broadcast message. Those of us who invest time and money in marketing often contemplate the connection between marketing and sales. The overall question is, "what is my return on investment (ROI)?" More specifically, we may wonder what aspects of our marketing are appealing to certain segments of our prospect list.

The right eMarketing software provides detailed tracking statistics showing not only which recipients received the message, but how many times they opened it, and which links were most appealing. This information not only guides our future eMarketing, but provides valuable insight into other forms of marketing as well.

Finally, a word of caution about eMarketing. Like any form of communication with your clients or prospects, eMarketing done incorrectly can have disastrous effects. Make sure

that you speak with a professional before beginning a campaign. Top Shelf Design is always willing to discuss your marketing strategy and provide expert advice.

*Top Shelf Design is a graphic design and marketing firm located in Washington, DC. They offer web and print design, as well as eMarketing services. They are located on the Web at <http://www.topshelfdesign.net>.*