

LIST SERVERS – HOW THEY WORK

List Servers are software programs; typically they are part of a larger software program that manages email. We are not talking about software packages like Outlook and Eudora, we are talking about enterprise software packages that are most commonly used by large businesses, ISPs and hosting companies that manage email on behalf of thousands, if not tens of thousands of users.

List Servers provide automated email services to groups, or lists of email addresses. This is done with minimal user intervention.

Within a group hosted by a list server there are usually three categories of users. They are:

- Members,
- Moderators
- Administrators

Users of lists or newsgroups are usually able to send messages to all the people within the group; the messages submitted are usually moderated or OK'd before they are distributed. The administrator(s) of the group supervises the user permissions and sets the rules of use.

Sometimes businesses use list servers to distribute news to group members. In these instances members are not able to submit their own messages.

THE ADVANTAGES OF LIST SERVERS

List servers are favoured for handling large groups of members because they are largely self managing. People are able to subscribe and unsubscribe themselves through specialised web based forms. Additionally, they provide a central point of control or censorship to maintain quality control.

Using host based List Servers also reduces your bandwidth costs as you only ever send one email to the group. The list server generates the multiple emails outside of your business.

THE DISADVANTAGES

Most List Servers are unable to provide any form of personalisation and are therefore not the first choice for communicating marketing information