Creating Your Contacts Database

How to Build Your Email List from Scratch

PLACESTER

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If someone asked you what the most important asset of any real estate business is, what would you say? Is it brand image? Tech tools and resources? Sales systems and processes?

While these are all important components of an agency, none of them should be deemed the most important. The real heart of any successful real estate business is its contacts database. In this guide, we'll explore why contacts databases are so valuable and how to build your database from the ground up.

“So, what exactly is a contacts database?”

Though you may not realize it, **you have contacts all over the place**. Your phone, email address(es), social media presence, and real estate portal accounts (e.g. Zillow, Trulia, Realtor.com) combined likely account for the overwhelming majority of your existing contacts.

Some of these individuals are certified leads you’ve either started nurturing or put on the back burner for now. Some of them are past clients with whom you maintain communication over time. Many, though, are untapped resources who can help you grow your business in the long run:

Local Community Connections

From area entrepreneurs and business leaders to housing-related vendors (lenders, contractors, and the like), chances are you know many noteworthy people in your community whose networks you could leverage for your own benefit.

Colleagues Outside Real Estate

If you’re like most agents, **real estate wasn’t the first industry in which you worked**. That means you have several contacts from past jobs — it’s just a matter of compiling a list of these contacts (hint: LinkedIn can help) and jotting down their phone and/or email info.

Other Agents in Your Market

Regardless of whether you’re a buyer’s or seller’s agent, swapping contact info with fellow sales reps and brokers in your community is always a good idea. After all, you could develop a mutually beneficial referral business with some other top pros in your market.

Distant Family and Old Friends

Few agents want to rely on earning business from significant others’ friends or long-lost cousins. Having said that, it's ideal to keep in touch with high school pals, aunts and uncles, and others in your large-scale inner circle, just to cover your bases.

Regional and National Associates

If you travel to the big real estate conferences, like the National Association of REALTORS® Conference & Expo or Inman Connect, you have an excellent opportunity to build relationships with agents, brokers, and industry minds — and keep padding your contacts database.

Think of all those people — all those email addresses — sitting in your email and social media accounts.

How many contacts do you have in your cell phone? That's a database, too.

A database by itself isn't valuable. It's the relationship with your database that's the most valuable asset you own. You need to consistently communicate with your database to keep your relationships alive and healthy.

And that's where most agents and brokers fall short.

“What are the consequences of not building a contacts database?”

Every successful real estate pro will tell you that nurturing a database will help you take control of your business and predict your sales pipeline.

The reasons most agents fail at this task fall into two camps:

1. **They haven’t taken the time to export all their contacts into one database.**
2. **Their communication was inconsistent and possibly non-existent — people stopped hearing from them, so they forgot about the agent or some other agent showed up to add more value.**

This is a competitive business, and there’s a battle going on for the attention of your clients, prospects, family, and friends.

If you don’t commit to building a database, you get trapped in the new-lead, next-deal treadmill.

You also become chained to buying leads or cold calling to generate new prospects — a move that rarely works for modern agents.

If . . .

- **You’ve been neglecting your database and you want to fix and build it**
- **Your databases are scattered around many different CRMs or systems**
- **You need a plan to reconnect and communicate consistently going forward**
- **You haven’t emailed your database because you don’t know what to send**

. . . this visual guide is for you.

"How do I build my contacts database?"

As mentioned earlier, your database is a list of clients, past clients, prospects, and referral partners.

You may not generate business from these folks for months (or even years). However, if there is even a remote possibility these connections could yield new clients for you at some point, it's more than worth it to add them to your contacts software.

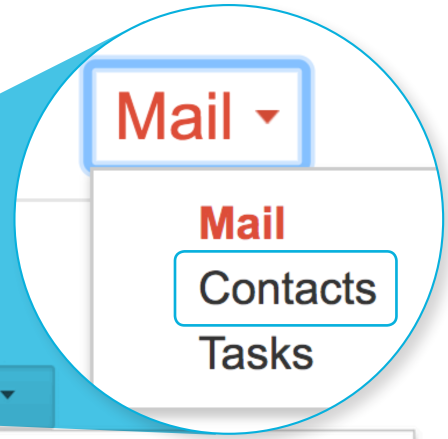
Here are the steps you need to follow:

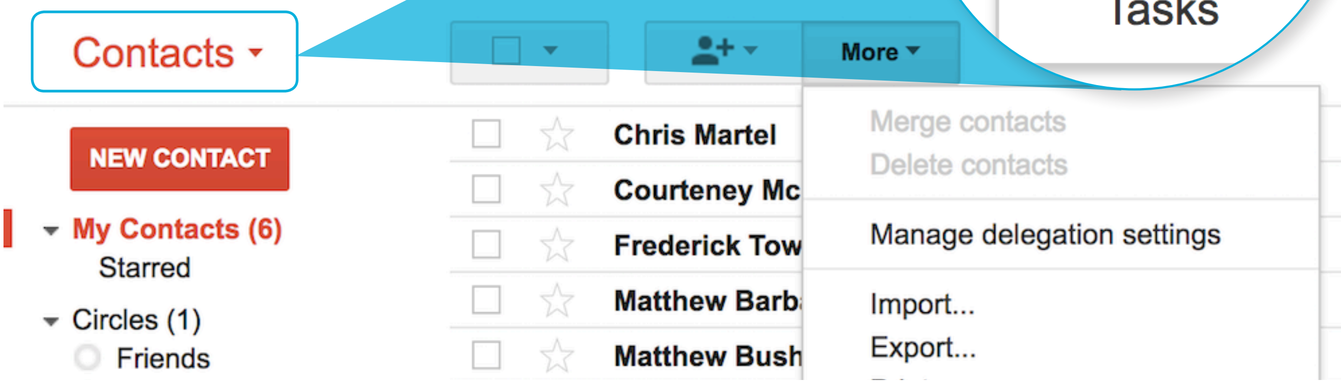
1. **Export your contacts** from Gmail, Facebook, LinkedIn, and any other sources you may have.
2. **Add** those names, email addresses, and phone numbers into a spreadsheet (like Microsoft Excel or Google Spreadsheets).
3. **Save** that master contacts list as a CSV file.
4. **Upload** it to Placester.

How To Export Contacts in Gmail

1. **Click the "Mail" icon** in the top-left corner of your inbox screen.

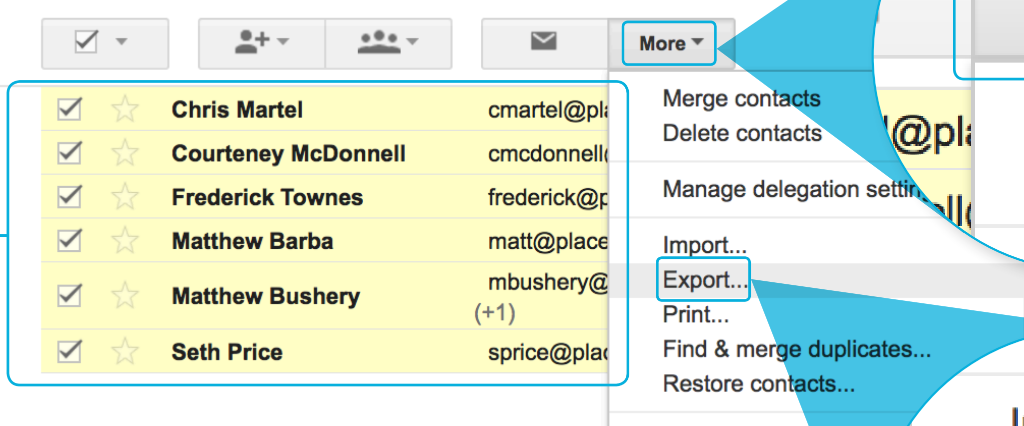
2. **Select "Contacts."**

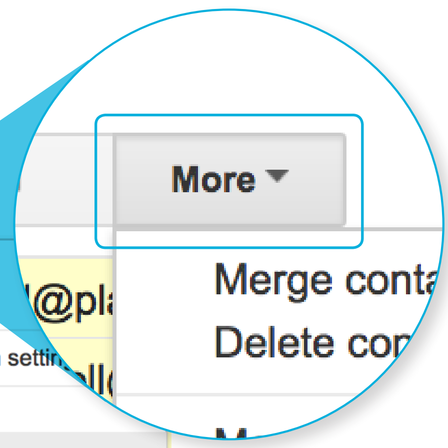


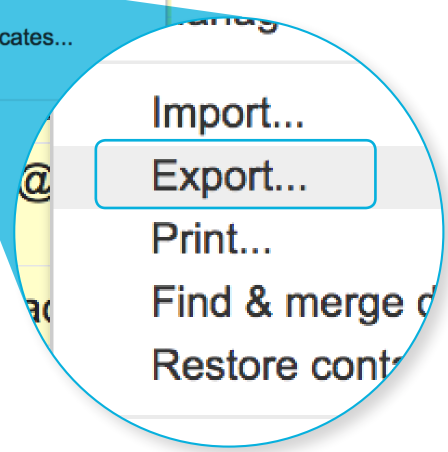


3. **Highlight the contacts** you want to export (ideally just the ones who aren't already in your database)

4. **Click "More,"**



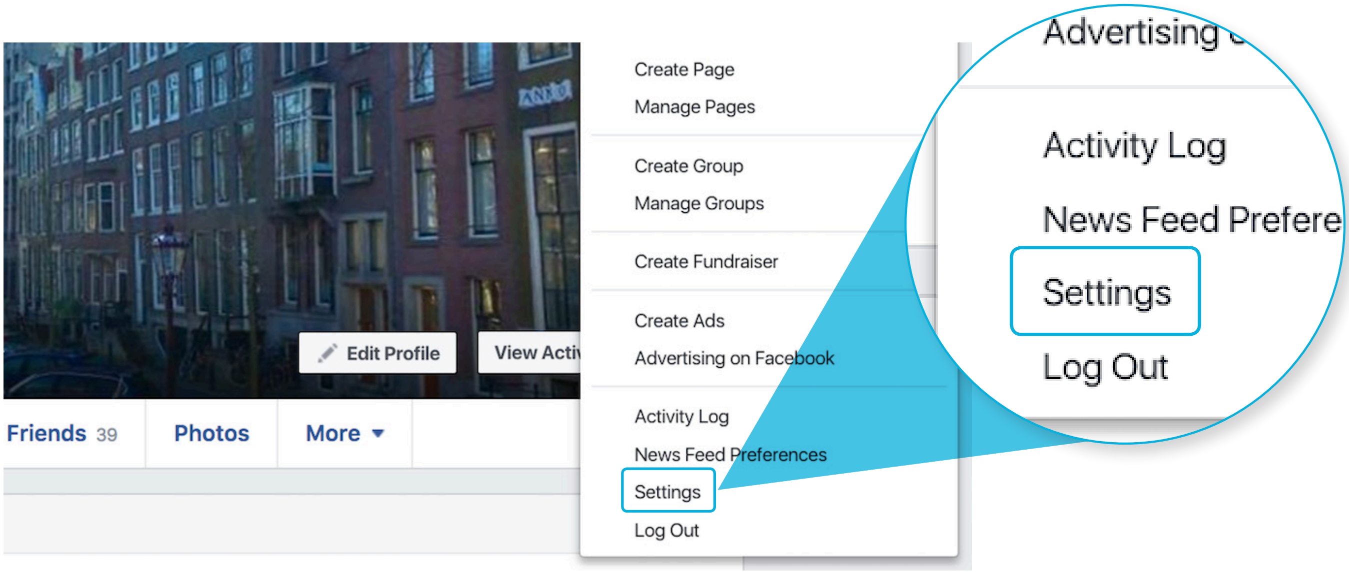




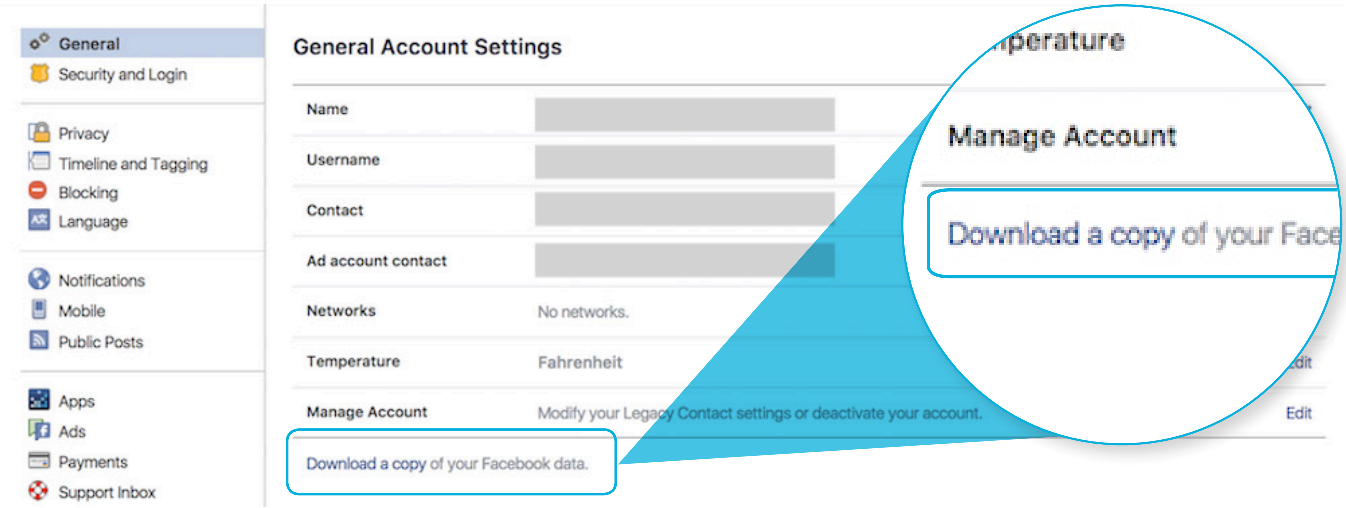
5. **Export the file** featuring their information.

How To Export Contacts in Facebook

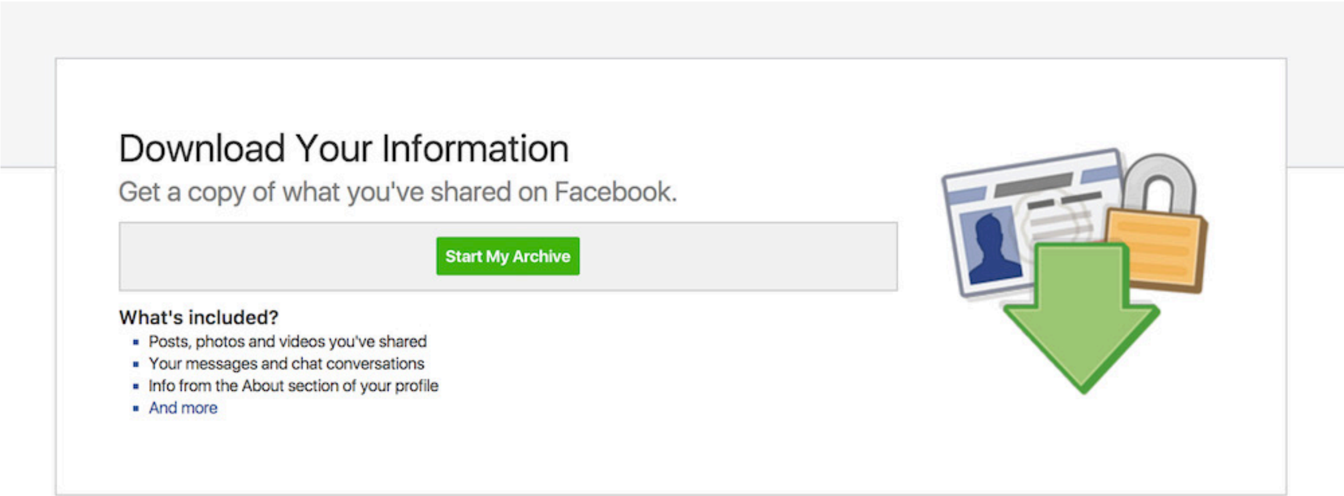
1. **Click on "Settings"** in the dropdown menu of your Page.



2. **Click the link** that reads "Download a copy of your Facebook data."



3. **Select what information** from your account you want to download, including names of Friends, others you've engaged with, and those who've engaged with you on the social network.



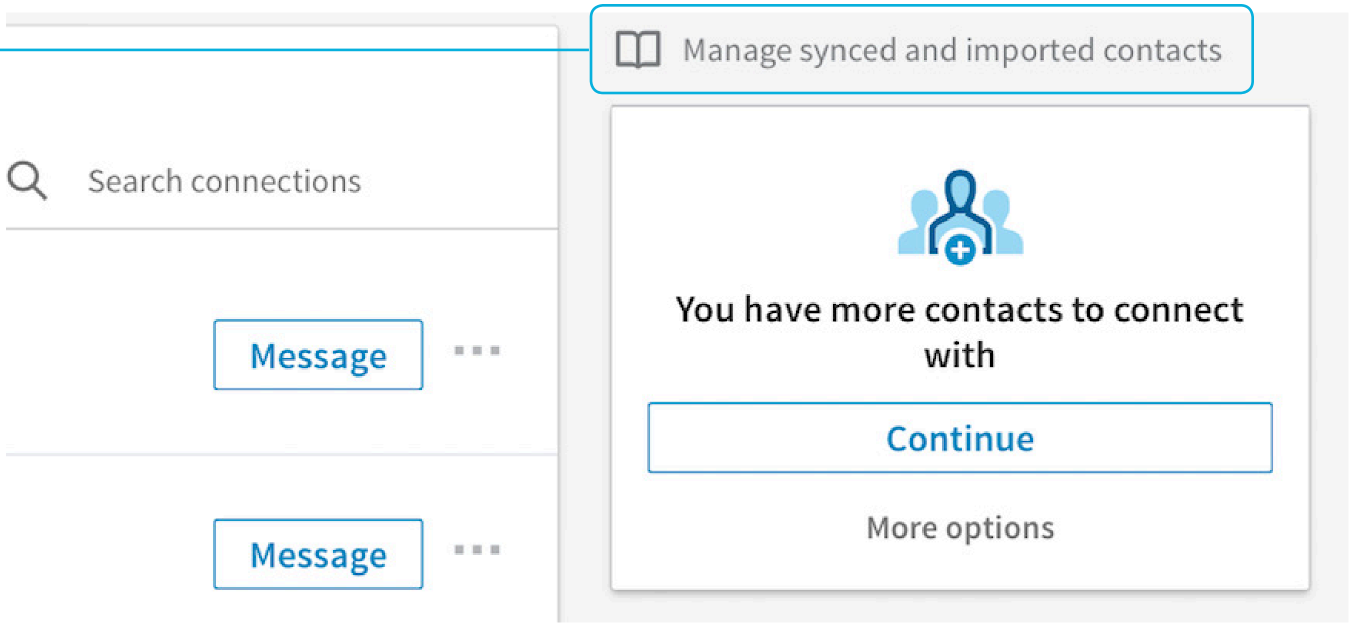
(***Note:*** Not every Facebook user feels comfortable sharing their email addresses on the social network, meaning if your connections don't include theirs in their profiles, you won't be able to get theirs in the ZIP file Facebook will share with you after registering to download your data. Having said that, even getting emails from a portion of your "Friends" can help you bolster your contacts database.)

How To Export Contacts in LinkedIn

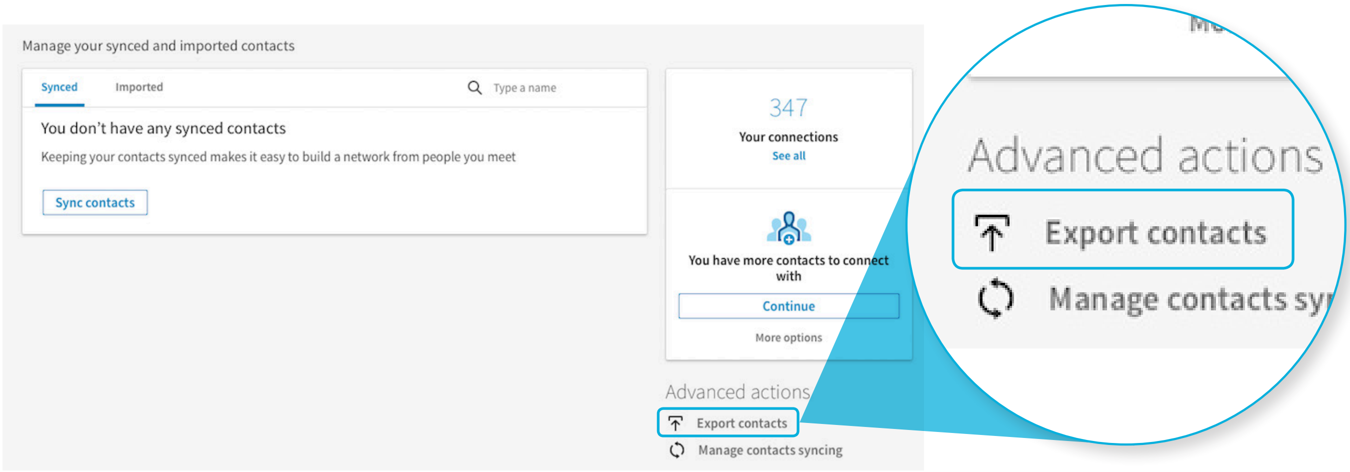
1. **Click on "My Network"** at the top of your LinkedIn homepage.

2. **Click "See all"** at the top-left corner of the screen beneath "Your connections."

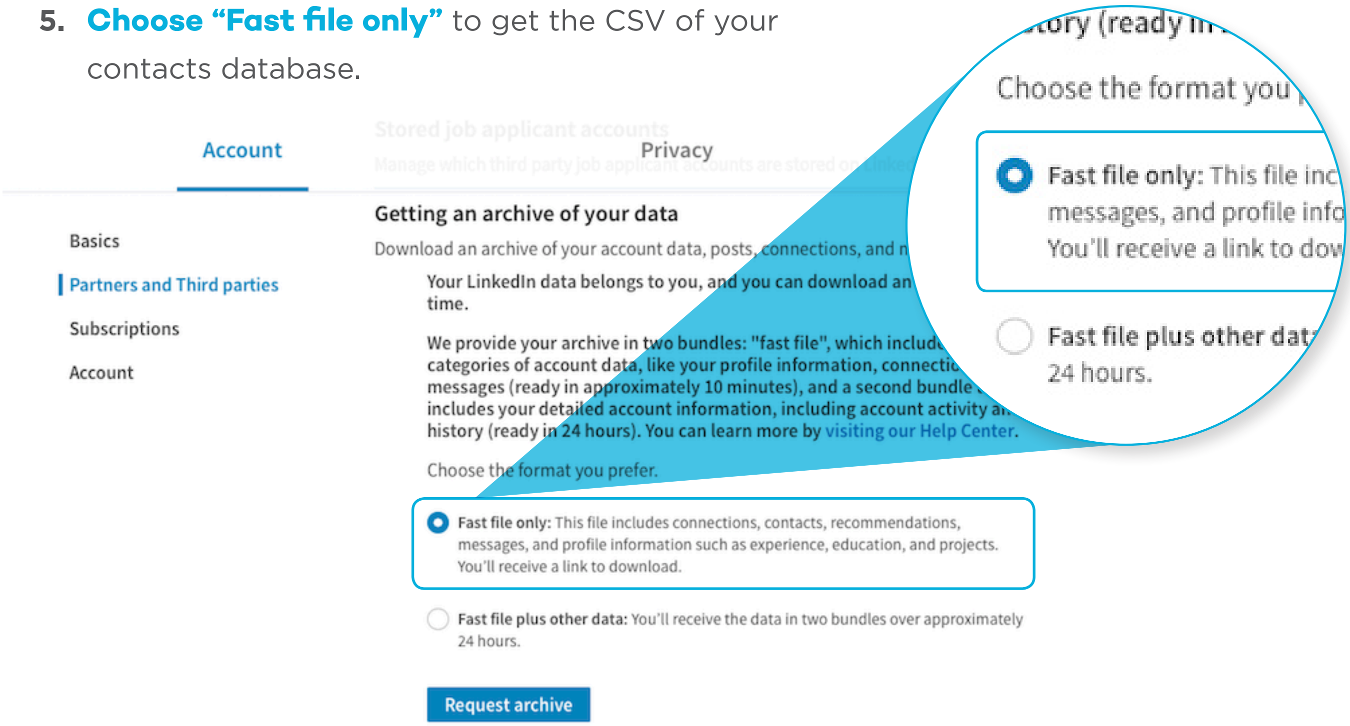
3. **Click "Manage synced and imported contacts"** at the top-right corner of the screen.



4. **Select "Export contacts"** at the bottom-right portion of this screen.



5. **Choose "Fast file only"** to get the CSV of your contacts database.



LinkedIn notes this usually takes about 10 minutes to complete.

“What should I do with all my exported contacts?”

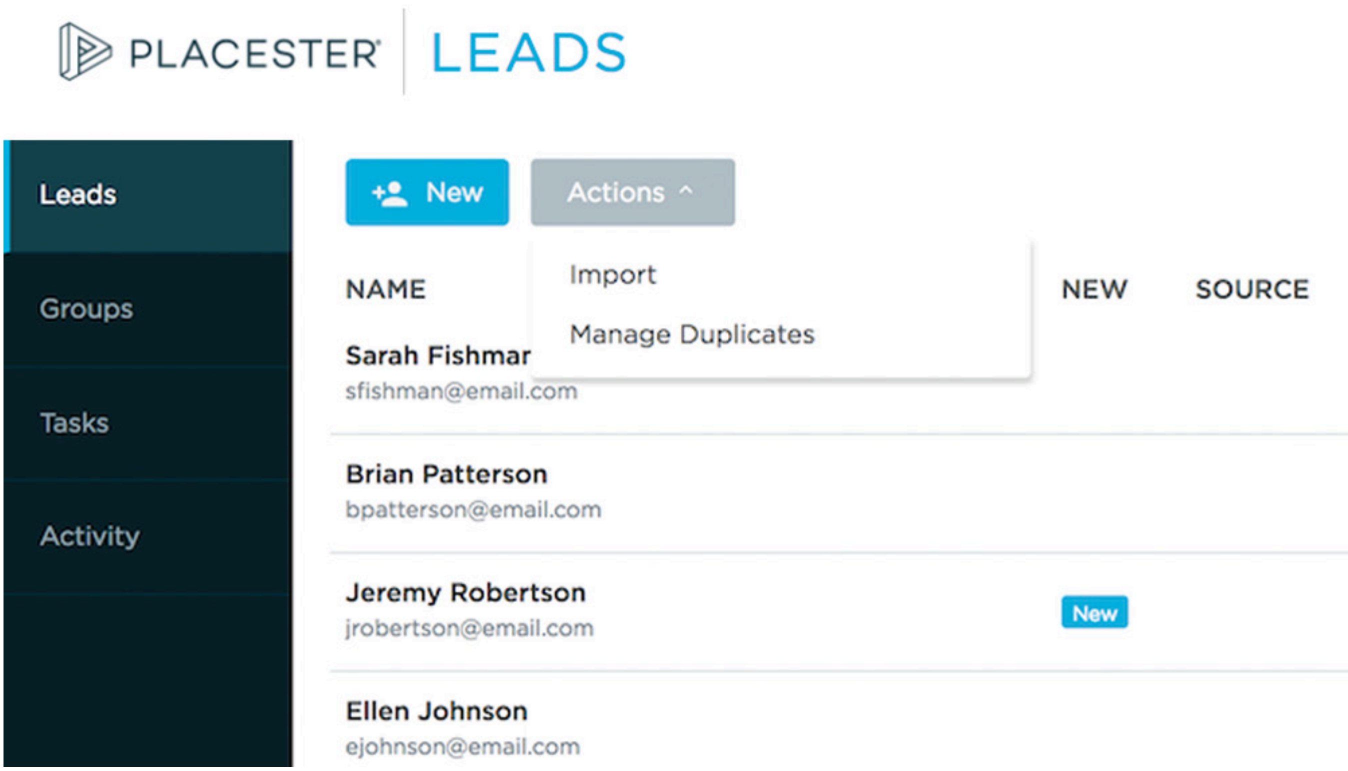
Once you’re done with the exercise above, you’ll have friends, family, customers, prospects, referral partners, and acquaintances — literally everyone you know — in separate files.

The next step is to create a single, master contact list in Microsoft Excel or Google Spreadsheets to copy/paste all that information into. Before you begin, ensure you have columns for “First Name,” “Last Name,” “Email,” and “Phone Number.”

After this, you’ll want to get all your contacts’ email addresses uploaded into professional email marketing software so you can send them all CAN-SPAM-compliant email.

Here’s How to Import Leads Into Placester

When you upload your lists, Placester will automatically “de-duplicate”: If you have several people across many different lists, they will only get one email.



Pro Tip: If there is anyone you absolutely do not want to email under any circumstances, you should manually “unsubscribe” them at this point.

Congratulations! Now you have a fully loaded email marketing program with all your contacts ready to receive your reconnect message.

"How should I nurture all leads in my contacts database?"

"Drip email" may sound like complicated marketing lingo, but it's actually not as intricate as it sounds. Really, it's just a means for agents like you to stay in touch with contacts and subtly promote your services to get them to further engage with your brand.

Here's one minor example of a drip email campaign you can set up to stay top of mind with your contacts — those you've had in your database for some time and those you've just added into your database:

Drip Email #1: Introduction to your agency and what contacts can expect in future emails

Drip Email #2: Digest featuring your latest blog posts and buyer/seller resources

Drip Email #3: A list of major events taking place soon in your local market

This type of nurture messaging is a premier form of relationship marketing: highly personalized, targeted messaging to your potential clients that doesn't overtly "sell" them on your business, but rather informs them about things they want to be informed about: local housing conditions, upcoming community events, buying and selling advice, and similar news, tips, and trends.

Leads who engage with you online — like those who open and click links in your previous drip emails — **should be sent more targeted email blasts** with more specific, time-sensitive. "offers" (e.g. "Check out my open house this Saturday!") that can help you better determine their buying or selling intentions and gauge when they may hire an agent.

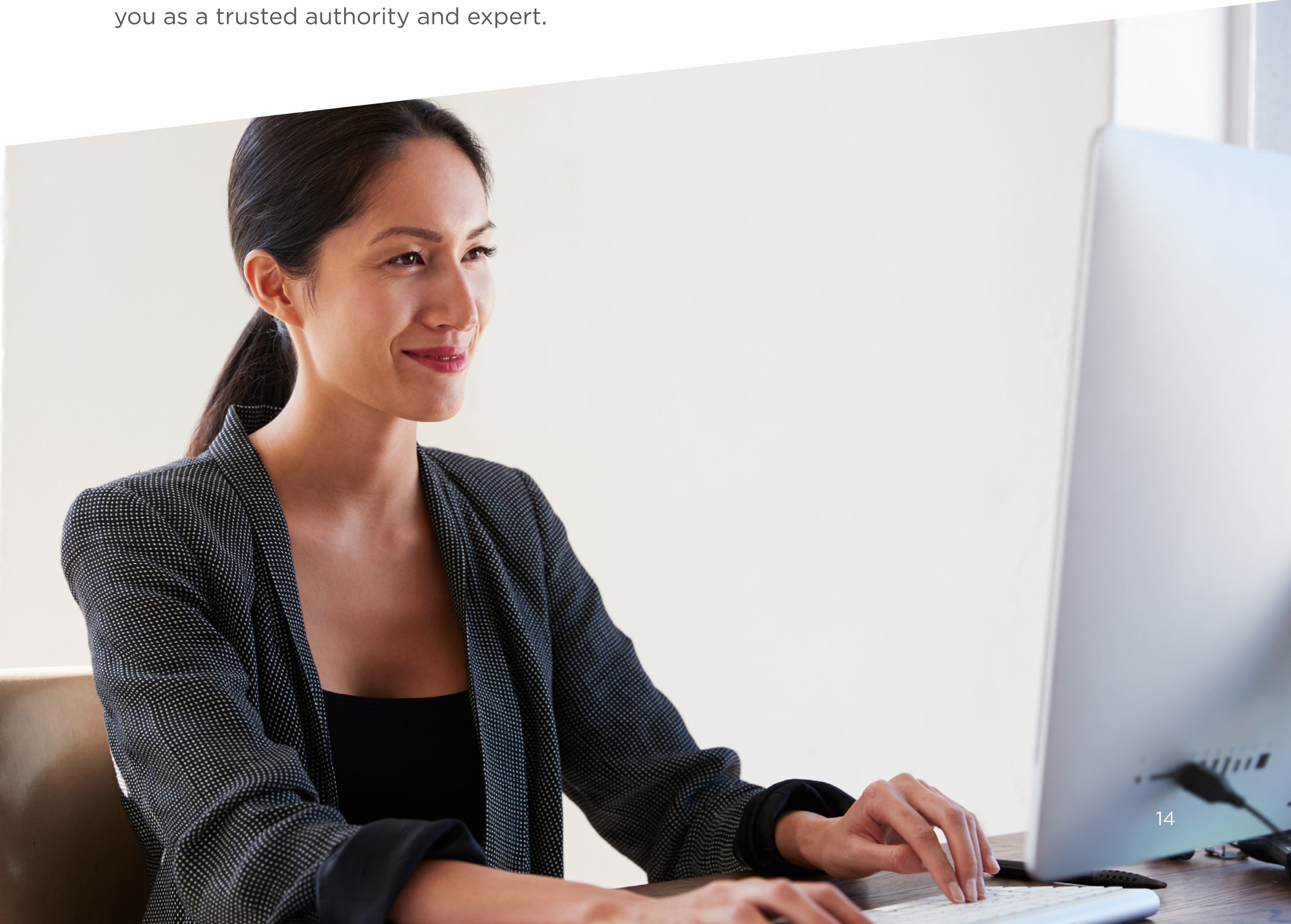
But it's only at this point in time when you should put on your sales hat and pitch your contacts. Promote yourself too much too early in the nurture process, and you'll end up with low email engagement — and even lower client conversion numbers.

“What type of email should I send out first to contacts?”

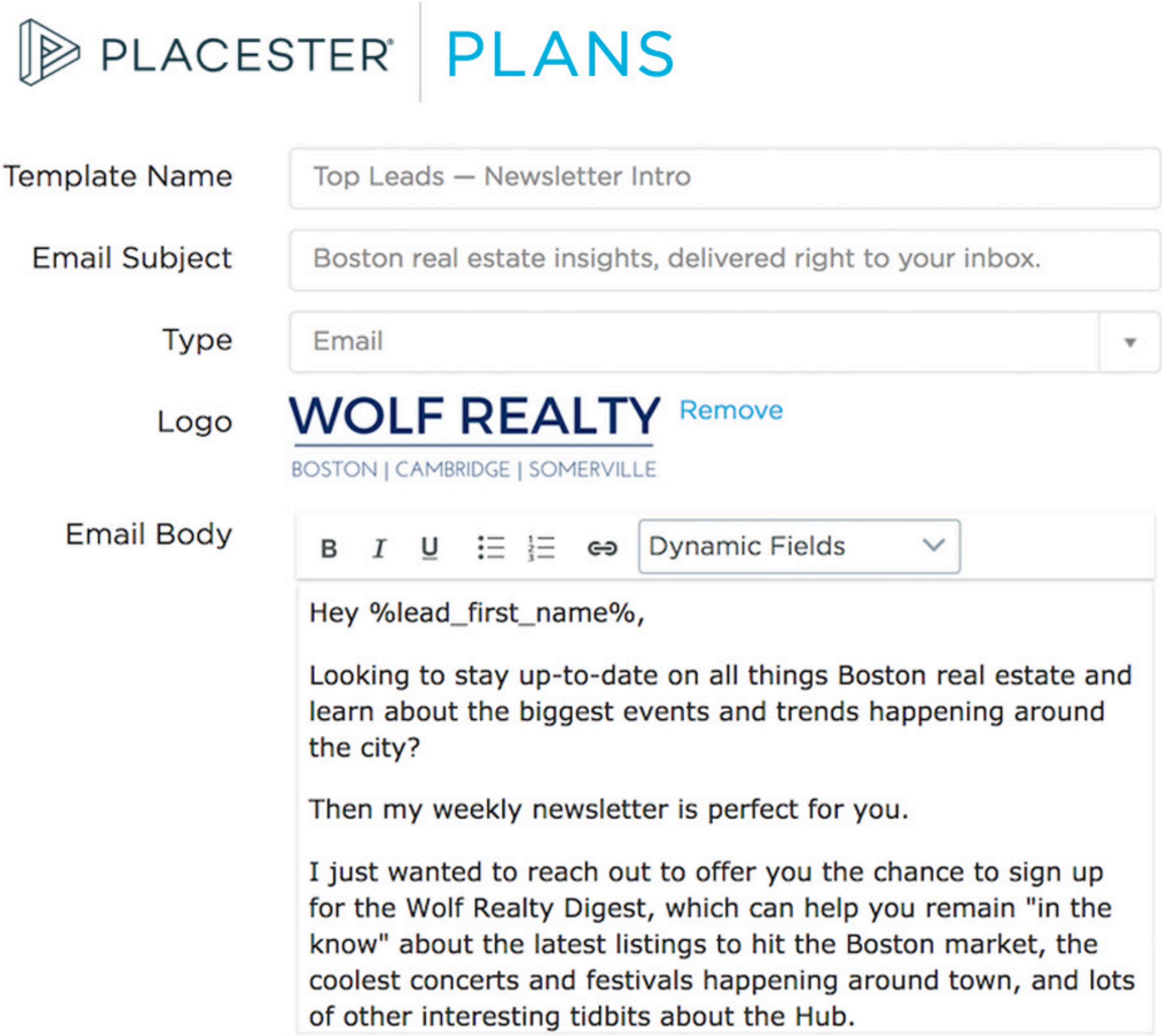
To get started, we recommend that you send a newsletter email to your entire Placester list so everyone knows what you do, you’re looking to help more people, and you want to educate them by answering questions commonly asked by your customers.

Remember: You’re not advertising anything in these messages. This is content marketing where you’re helping, not selling.

This “soft” selling approach attracts customers to you and positions you as a trusted authority and expert.



Here is an example of an introductory email that you can send out to your master contact list.



“What should I do once my newsletter has been sent out?”

Based on the responses you get from your initial email blast, you can easily break up your contacts in Placester by putting them into three manageable lead buckets:

1. **Those you think are looking to buy or sell a home in the near future**
2. **Contacts who would potentially refer your business to their networks**
3. **Everyone else: individuals who don’t seem like legitimate prospects**

Now that you have more specific lead lists to work with, you can **send automated emails that are tailored to buyers/sellers**, referrers, and the general public.

Make sure to add any new leads from your website to these lists and any new contacts you make offline. Once you have at least a few dozen contacts total in the first and second buckets, it’s time to start an email nurturing campaign!

A healthy contacts database and email list is the cornerstone of any successful real estate business.

By following this guide, you’ve taken the first step towards **nurturing your top prospects and staying in touch with general connections** who could aid your client conversion efforts — and revenue-building goals.

For additional resources around email marketing best practices, **check out our drip email marketing visual guide.**