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Broadcast lists, groups and channels: which reaches whom, and the rule nobody knows

WhatsApp Business App

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Broadcast lists, groups and channels: which reaches whom, and the rule nobody knows

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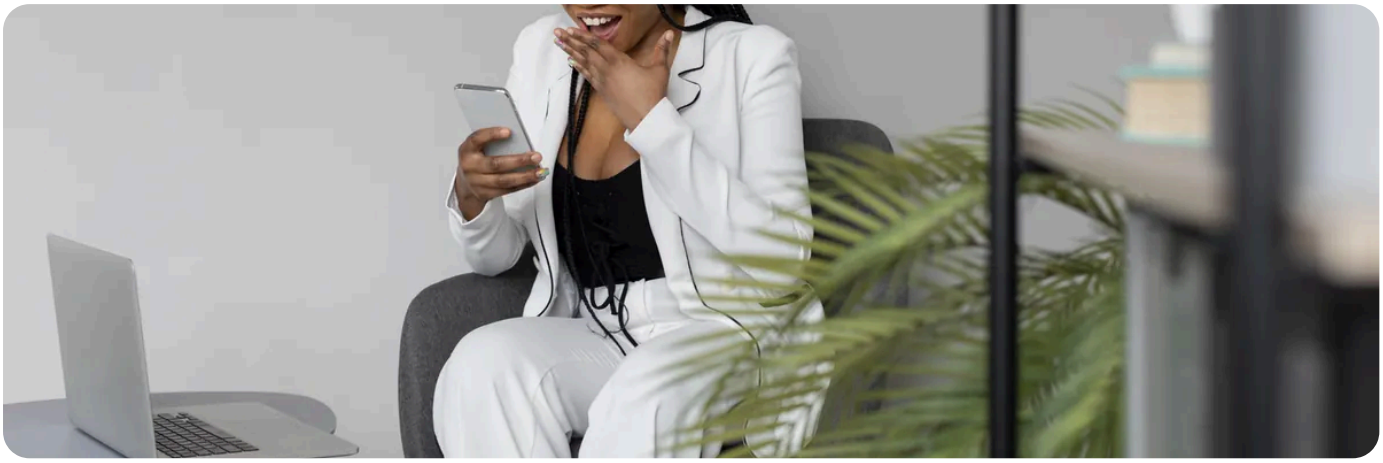

Inside WhatsApp there are three ways to speak to many people at once, and they are very different from each other. Choosing the wrong one is the commonest cause of campaigns that never arrive - and of lost numbers.

The three, and the difference that decides

Tool	The essentials
Broadcast list	Sends the same message to several people, each receiving it as if it were just for them. **Maximum 256** - and there is a rule that catches everybody, coming next.
Group	Everyone sees everyone and everyone can write. Good for a class or a team; bad for customers.
Channel	One-way, like an announcement. **No follower limit** - it is the only WhatsApp surface with no audience cap.

The rule almost nobody knows, and it ruins half the campaigns.
On a **broadcast list**, the message is only delivered to people who have **your number saved in their address book**. Anyone who does not simply never receives it - and you are not told. That is why so many people send to 256 contacts and get five replies: the message did not fail, the delivery never happened.

Broadcast list

For	Against
Free, and you already have it	It is in the app, ordinary or Business.
It arrives as a personal message	The recipient does not see the others, and replies to you privately.

For	Against
It only delivers to people who saved you	**The decisive limitation.** On a list of real customers, half typically do not have the number in their address book.
Maximum 256, and no reporting	You do not know how many received it or read it. You are in the dark.

Risk: using broadcast as if it were mass marketing - many messages, many reports, number blocked. **Who for:** notices to a small list of customers who *already talk to you* - and therefore have your number saved.

Group

For	Against
Conversation among everyone	It suits a team, a class, a building, a group of resellers.
Everyone sees everyone's number	**That is the problem.** Putting customers in a group hands their contact list to each other - and to your competitors.
A side conversation and nobody reads the rest	Two people arguing and the announcement is buried.
Leaving is public	Whoever leaves is seen leaving, which creates needless friction.

Risk: exposing customer data without permission - see **personal data protection** - and turning an announcement into an argument. **Who for:** teams and closed communities, not customers. If you need a large group and only want to announce, use the announcement group of a *community*, which bundles several groups and has a notice-only channel.

Channel

For	Against
No follower limit	It is the only WhatsApp option that grows without a ceiling.
Nobody sees anybody	Followers do not see each other, and you do not see their numbers.
It is not a conversation	One-way. Anyone wanting to talk to you has to do it somewhere else.
People have to follow you	You cannot add anyone: they have to join of their own accord, through a link.

Risk: few. It is the safest of the three, because nobody receives anything without having asked. The real risk is silence: a channel without posts loses followers. **Who for:** anyone publishing news regularly for an audience that wants to follow - weekly offers, new items, notices from an association.

How to choose, in three questions

1. **Do you need replies?** If yes, broadcast or a real conversation. A channel will not do.

2. **May the people see one another?** If they may not - and with customers, they may not - a group is out.

3. **Are there more than 256, or have they not saved you?** Then none of these works: it is a channel, if they come to you, or the API, if you have to start the conversation - see **the Cloud API**.

What is never done, on any of the three.

Unofficial auto-sending tools, browser extensions that «send to the whole list», and bought lists. They are prohibited by the platform rules and they are the fastest route to losing the number - see **the risks and the practices that avoid them**. If the goal is mass reach, the channels built for it are others: **e-mail marketing** and **SMS marketing**.

And the comparison across the three channels - WhatsApp, e-mail and SMS - with the advantages and risks of each, is in **WhatsApp, e-mail or SMS: which is for what**.

And if you would rather not handle the sending?

We do bulk e-mail sending and SMS with your own Sender ID, for Mozambique and Angola - with the domain authenticated, the list handled and delivery reporting. It is not an off-the-shelf product: it depends on volume, countries and frequency. Tell us what you need and we will come back with a proposal. See **e-mail marketing** and **SMS marketing**.

NEED A HAND?

Not sure whether your case calls for broadcast, a channel or something else?

Ask us →

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