



# How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

## LESSON 6

### Finding Out What Your Subscribers Want

**T**he key to building a successful relationship with your list so they respond to what you ask them to do and remain loyal to you for a long time is to understand what your subscribers want and then give it to them. This is what keeps them tuned in and reading your messages.

What you think is interesting to your subscribers, however, may not be what they actually want. You need to use objective feedback from them to decide what content you're going to share.

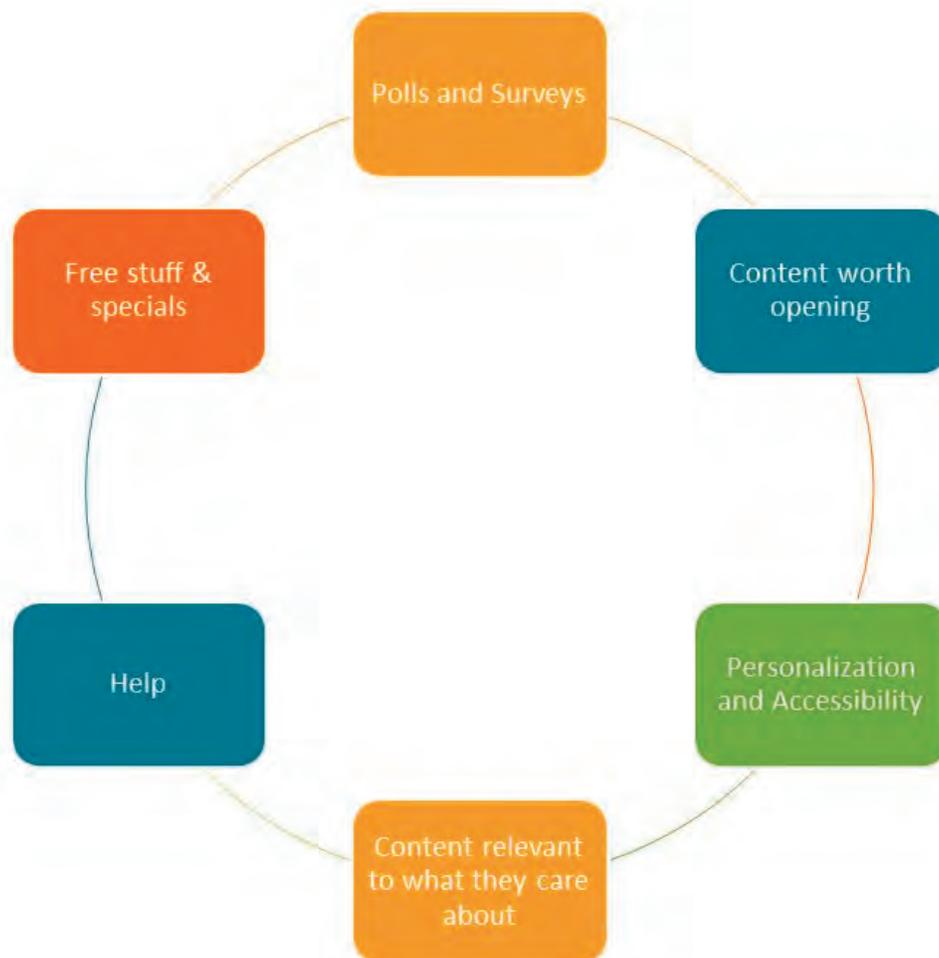
You really just need to ask them what they want.

#### **Polls and Surveys**

One way to understand your subscriber's tastes is to occasionally run a poll or a short survey. To boost your response rate, you may want to offer an incentive to make it more enticing to complete your survey.

Along with general preferences, you can just come right out and ask your subscribers what they want to gain from their subscription to your list.

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**A caution:** People who respond to surveys often do so by trying to please the person asking the questions, by trying to answer in a way that they think the questioner wants to hear. Also, survey respondents will often respond in a way that they see as “ideal” to the subject matter and may not be telling you the absolute truth. They may respond in ways of how they would like to be as opposed to their current reality. So you may not always get an accurate answer to a survey.

This is especially true when asking for demographic data, such as a range of income. Respondents will generally inflate their earnings. If you ask them how much they are willing to pay for something they will almost always indicate a higher sum than they would actually pay if given the actual choice to buy.

Most people who conduct surveys come up with a list of questions and a set of multiple-choice answers, which may or may not be an accurate reflection of the respondent either. At best, you are guessing at what you think the common answers might be and you may or may not guess right. And you may also be giving the answers that you want to receive based on your own agenda.

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**The very best question you can ask is one that requires a written answer by the respondent.** (Called an essay question, but not like the dreaded essay question when we were in school.) You'll get much more honest feedback that way so long as it is an open-ended question. Never ask questions that can be simply answered by a "yes" or a "no" unless, of course, that's the answer you are after.

A good use of the multiple-choice survey in determining what interests your list is to list titles for articles or list general topics of interest and either ask them to choose which articles appeal to them the most or ask them to rank the articles in the order of their importance to them. Ranking will likely give you a more accurate picture of what your subscribers want to read about.

There are any number of guides out there that will advise you in the best ways to word questions for a good and useful survey. I conduct surveys about 4 times a year, and I use **Survey Monkey**. They, too, offer some excellent advice, and will even give you sample questions.

### Autoresponder Analytics

Your Email Service Provider (ESP) or your Autoresponder program offers a variety of analytics for email marketers and we've discussed the importance of tracking certain analytical data to make decisions about best days and times to send, but if you also read this data well, it will tell you what your list likes and doesn't like.

This data includes open rates, which is the rate at which subscribers open your messages. If your open rates are low, this means that the subject lines of your emails probably aren't interesting enough. Your ESP program offers a wealth of other data to help you make decisions about content.

For instance, check the click-through rate on articles you publish. If you get a high number of click-through's you can bet that your readers are interested in that particular topic.

### Be Accessible

**Be as accessible to your readers as possible.** If you let your subscribers know that you value their feedback and give them opportunities to give it to you, they will.

One of the reasons that I put my phone number in every email I send is so that my readers will know that I am available to them if they should desire to call me. It's an unspoken invitation, always there.

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Additionally, in the welcome message that a new subscriber gets from me after joining my list is a request that they send me an email telling me about who they are, where they are from, and what they do and what their biggest business or marketing challenge is. I'm always delighted that I get so many responses to this query.

It sometimes takes me a day or two to respond but I always respond to those messages. As we create a dialog with each other back and forth, it solidifies our relationship a little more.

I keep track of these people that reach out to me and ask them other questions later about what kinds of things they desire to read about or to learn from you. Having responded to me once, they are a good source of information because I know when I ask, they are most likely to respond.

Keep the lines of communication open and always seize any opportunity for personal communication with a subscriber.

It also helps if you connect with your subscribers whenever you can *outside* of your list as well, such as on social media, at meet-ups, networking events, and so on.

### What Your Subscribers Care About

Pay especially close attention to the clues your subscribers leave about the things they care about. Pay attention and listen to them everywhere you can and keep an idea file where you take notes about their interests. You can then use this file to brainstorm content ideas or to give you an idea for an article or a theme.

Pay attention to what is going on out in your marketplace, your niche, beyond the people already on your list to keep abreast of what people are talking about and what they are interested in. That kind of research will directly apply to the people on your list, too.

### Help Your Subscribers

Every list is different in what it wants, but everyone can use a little help. If you approach your list from a place of helping, you can't go wrong. Figure out where your subscribers need help and provide it to them. Again, you can come right out and ask them if you don't know.

This is one of the reasons that, from time to time, I ask my subscribers to schedule a CoffeeChat with me. I love talking with the people on my list in my no-selling zone, getting to know them and what they need and want in the way of growing their business.

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The information I glean from them helps me to know what I should be writing about and where to put the emphasis in my business.

### Free Stuff and Specials

Another certainty is that your subscribers still enjoy getting freebies and specials after they've initially signed up. You enticed them with a valuable freebie and it worked to get them to sign up, so keep the freebies and specials coming. You can learn about their tastes and interests by seeing how they react to your freebie items. If one item in particular gets a great deal of downloads, this should give you a clue on content and promotion ideas for the future.

**NOTE:** Often a side benefit of creating something special and new is that you can repurpose that content as articles and news items and use for teleclasses and so on. And bear in mind that not everyone will read your report, although they are happy to get it, so using the content for future articles either will act as a reinforcement for those who did read it, or provide the info you want to share to those who didn't read the report in the first place.

We often think that once we've given something away when someone joins our list that that is it in the way of freebies. Even though the valuable content you share through your marketing can be considered a freebie every time you email, from time to time you will want to surprise your list with another freebie item.

You can do it at anytime simply as an expression of goodwill toward your subscribers, but you will especially want to do this when you are about to introduce something new, like a new product or a new program or service.

Plus, a freebie is a great way to promote a product or service in a very subtle manner.

And it is up to you whether or not you have someone opt-in to a new list to get the new freebie. The advantage of having them opt-in for any freebie you give away is that you now have a new, segmented list of subscribers who are interested in a particular topic.

If your new freebie is a gift to your list, with nothing attached to it and no desire for additional data, then simply directing them to a download page or making it downloadable from within your email is a good idea with no opt-in required.

You may find that you get more downloads this way, as people will think twice about putting themselves on yet another list, even if that list is yours, too.

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### Action Assignment:

- Create a poll or survey asking your readers what they want to see more of from you. You can use a free tool like *Survey Monkey* and send the link to your list.
- Review the results of your survey.
- Identify areas where you need to refocus the content of your emails (For example, more of X type of content, less of Y type of content, and so on).

Did you download your free bonus gift, *21 Email Marketing Strategies*? Go to the lessons page and look under BONUSSES.

**Want to join me for a CoffeeChat?** Just go here to schedule your appointment:

<http://timewithmarty.com>

I would love to get to know more about you and your business.