



How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

LESSON 7

How to Keep Your Subscribers Tuned-In

When it comes right down to it, it's not terribly hard to get people to sign up to your list, but the real challenge is to keep subscribers interested and coming back for more so that you actually can build a relationship with them. One way to do this, as we've discussed in earlier lessons, is to offer real value. Real value in the mind of your subscriber.

But remember, your subscribers have *all kinds of messages* coming into their inboxes literally hour after hour. They may be subscribed to other lists much like yours, or as I've said before, any list that they're subscribed to. It's easy for them to click the delete or the unsubscribe button at any time.

Following are some ways that you can keep them tuned in.

Don't Mess Up

As I said in the last lesson, keep the value consistently good. One useless or unrelated message could be enough to get subscribers to leave. (Remember the physical fitness guy who sent an email about buying gold?) With each message that you load up into your autoresponder service, make sure it offers real, unique value.

How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

You don't want to alienate your readers by offering content that is:

- Irrelevant
- Useless
- Inappropriate
- Obscene
- Controversial



On this last point, content that's controversial, such as content that deals with politics and religion, is okay if that's what your list is about. For example, if your list is about a particular religion or faith, then religious content is obviously all right. If your list is focused on politics of any kind, then naturally you can be political.

But you should tread lightly on any subject that could potentially alienate people. These controversial topics are extremely emotional and a subscriber will leave if they feel like you're not on the same team as they are. I, for one, have many interests, but I typically keep those to myself.

You know what they say about when you get together with folks you don't really know: "Don't talk about religion, politics or sex." (It's what gets people shot at Thanksgiving.)

How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

Note: Sometimes people will misconstrue what you are saying because, as you likely have already learned the hard way, it is sometimes hard to convey the proper emotion when just using email. (Why do you think we have emoticons?) And misunderstandings can occur between you and your subscribers. Often, you don't get a chance to explain yourself either.

As an example, recently I sent out an email with the subject line "Kissing your boo-boo's." My assumption was, and I thought it was pretty clear from the opening of the email, that that is a term we are all used to using from the time we were kids and now use with our kids and grandchildren.

They get hurt and mommy will kiss the "boo boo" to make it all better. I was making the larger point that in business we don't have anyone to kiss it and make it all better when we screw up; we only have ourselves to make things better. It was the kick off to a series of year-end emails I did with information and advice for making the new year better for you and your business.

But one subscriber got mad and put in a spam complaint against me because I had offended her by referring to a woman's breasts as boo-boo's. What? She obviously did not read the email at all. These are the kinds of things you have to put up with from time to time when you put yourself out there with your email marketing. (Sigh.)

Keep It Reasonable

Don't flood your subscribers' inboxes. Proceed with caution when it comes to the frequency of your messages. If, from the beginning, you advertised your list as a 'daily tip,' of course you should send a message daily. I have been on some lists that would send 2 or 3 emails every day. Each one screaming about some deal that I am just about to miss. Yes, I unsubscribed.

However, exit surveys and other data consistently show that a major reason people leave lists is that there are too many messages, so there is some validity here. Although it's true that some readers love to get flooded with messages, most don't, and you should be cautious about emailing too much.

How do you know how many emails are too much? You don't want to make this call based on your own feelings about how much email you receive. You will remember (I hope) that I said more frequent contact with your list is better than fewer contacts. But you've got to find out if even that is reasonable for YOUR list.

You should be emailing your list a minimum of once a week with something good. If you think

How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

it's going to be difficult to have good material each week, you will probably want to create 4-6 weeks of material ahead of time before you launch into an email marketing program in earnest.

But then, if you do that, don't wait until you've used those messages up before creating more new ones. Keep going. Stay 4-6 weeks ahead if you can. This way you won't ever be having to wrack your brain at the last minute trying to come up with something to send.

Now, the **reality** for most of us is that we write the email about an hour before we hit the send button. And often it shows. But on the other hand, many of us work our best under the pressure of an imminent deadline. Whatever your style, work it.

You just have to experiment with your list and pay attention. It's the only way to find the best frequency for you.

But here's something I can guarantee you: once you start making sales from your marketing messages, you won't find it so hard to write and send those messages any longer.

Put the Most Important News at the Top

Put the shortest, most interesting or most timely information at the top of your message and mention it in the subject line. Use this juiciest part of the message to draw the reader in. This should be the part of the message that offers the greatest value. If you bury it under other text, your readers may not ever get to it.

Leverage Real-Time News and Events

We touched on this before, but if you can make use of real-time news and events that are important to your list, they'll stay tuned. Focus on things like big events, changes in the law, new products, holidays, or news stories that affect their lives. Timely content has a sense of urgency that will keep subscribers reading.

Scan the business section of your local newspaper for ideas for email messages that you can relate to the news. Pick up the phone and ask to interview someone you read about in the newspaper, a magazine, or a trade journal. You may be pleasantly surprised at how willing and accomodating people will be if they think they're going to get some good free publicity.

Subscribe to blogs that are in your field of interest and your niche. Since I'm a business to

How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

business marketing company, I look for interesting stuff on Inc. magazine's website, Smart Company, Wired, Success, Entrepreneur and the small business section of the Huffington Post.

What are some of the sites you could visit in your niche for ideas about trending and current topics?

Engage with Readers

As I've mentioned before, you should give your readers as many places as possible to interact with you, and use these channels of communication to talk with them. The more engaged your readers are, the more likely they'll be to keep opening your messages, which is the foundation of your relationship with them.

One way of engaging with them is to offer teleclasses and webinars or live workshop events where you are actually in the room with your readers. Nothing is more personal than live interaction, whether online, on the phone, or in a room together.

Offer a Series

A great way to keep subscribers engaged is to make your email messaging into a 'series.' You can do this by either taking a very large, complicated task like setting up your own business or creating a website, and break it down into steps. Each step can be a message. Like a TV show, your subscribers will be waiting for the next episode as they learn by doing.

In some cases, you can take all of your regular content and order it in such a way that it forms a course. If you're offering stress-busting tips, for example, you can put them in a logical order and call it a course. With each lesson, you teach another method.

This form of engagement — a series or a course — is becoming more popular with readers than enticing them with a free ebook or special report. These days, with overcrowded inboxes and time at a premium, reading a series of quick messages as a way of learning about something seems less daunting than facing a whole pdf document even if it is just a few pages.

Reward Loyalty

Constantly express your appreciation to your list for staying with you. You can do this by offering exclusives and specials. Keep the deals coming and make sure your readers understand that it's your way of saying thanks.

How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

You know how at certain sandwich shops you get a punch card and every time you buy a sandwich you get a punch and after so many you get a free sandwich? You could do the same thing with your business if you think creatively and reward your readers for clicking through to your blog site, or for commenting there, or for buying something.

Restaurants also use this to great effect, and perhaps you can too. I know of a burger place that rewards readers if they bring in their email offers to the store. Sometimes it's free fries, or a free shake, or an upgrade from a small to a large for no extra charge. Sometimes they give movie tickets with an order if you bring in their email promo.

In the little town where I grew up, there's a sandwich and pizza shop who rewards every 59th customer with a free sub of their choice. They give a number to each person as they pick up their orders until they get to number 59. Then it's a big deal. It's a small town with a small clientele, so it may take a few days to reach that magic number, but the patrons love it and keep coming back. They remind folks on their email list about being the "59th!" while offering other specials throughout the week.

You just need to think outside the box, look at what other businesses are doing not related to yours, and see if you can't come up with some fun ideas to garner more loyalty, and have people eager to open your messages. Everyone loves a bargain or a prize for sure.

Mobile and Social Friendly

From here on out, your messages must be mobile and social friendly. People are increasingly consuming content on mobile devices and sharing the content they love on social media. Your messages should be formatted so that they look good on mobile devices. Test them across every platform. Make sure they're socially sharable, likable, and so on. ASK your readers to share and make it easy for them to do so.

And remember, the less HTML you use the better. Fancy graphics look nice but these days they can be a huge detriment to people opening and reading your messages. One bad experience and they're done. Better to keep it simple.

Include Multimedia

One way to make your messages more interesting is to include multimedia in them. Break up your text messages with videos, images, slideshows, and so on — which will typically link to somewhere outside the email — **BUT as stated just above**, keep in mind the mobile user.

How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

Some people prefer these types of media to text and there are statistics that are now showing that emails with images and video can have a much higher open rate than straight text emails. The data is still to be gathered about how images and video effect mobile users.

But I also gotta tell you, the newer mobile phones are incredible! I just got a new Android device after years of being a faithful iPhone user (sorry Apple) and I am stunned by what I'm seeing on this phone. In a really good way!

A lot depends, too, on how much people are willing to spend on data access from their mobile devices along with the actual physical presentation of the material. So, again, pay attention, test, ask, and then respond appropriately.

Segment Your List

A good way to retain readers is to segment your list. This means that you split your list according to different demographics or some other relevant division, like interests. This way, you can offer more targeted, more relevant messages. You can send messages custom-tailored to each particular segment.

For example: I have several lists based on what people have shown me they are interested in. I have my regular main list, but I also have sub-lists for people who are interested particularly in email marketing, following up, and staying in touch, which is further sub-divided into people who are also interested in direct mail and printed materials.

How can you segment *your* list?

The Value of Unsubscribes

While it may upset you when people unsubscribe from your list, this is actually a form of valuable feedback. If one message gets a large number of unsubscribes, you need to analyze this message and figure out what caused it.

A cure for unsubsubscribe upset? Don't look at who unsubscribed.

In the email marketing business we say that when people unsubscribe they are self-qualifying — or dis-qualifying — themselves to be on your list. If someone unsubscribes, they are likely to never have bought anything from you anyway and so you can simply bless them and let them be on their way.

How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

But in addition to figuratively wishing them well (don't ever send a followup email to someone who unsubscribed) and good riddance, you also want to discover what are you doing or not doing in your email marketing that's failing to keep subscribers interested?

You can also offer an exit survey for readers to fill out when they leave the list. Make it very quick and simple, something like a drop down menu where the reader selects one simple reason for leaving. This is a feature that some email service providers provide. Asking the person unsubscribing their reason for doing so. These are important indicators so pay close attention if you get these messages.

Remember, the law proscribes that you provide a way for people to unsubscribe from your commercial email lists and your email service provider will insert an unsubscribe link into every email you send. But some folks will write you and ask you to take them off your list. Usually these folks could have just as easily unsubscribed themselves but they are usually trying to make a larger point. They want you to know they are somehow upset with you, and likely won't tell you why, or they just don't understand how unsubscribe works.

Regardless, don't let any unsubscribes bother you no matter what the reason is if any is given, and use these as a lesson to teach you something about your marketing.

Just know that a few unsubscribes each time you email is not a big deal and is to be expected. So don't go worrying about a problem when there is likely none. Just someone who doesn't want to engage with you any more. Only if you see larger numbers and distinct unsubscribe patterns develop should you worry that something is amiss.

Action Assignment:

- ▶ Review the lists you subscribed to as suggested in the previous action assignment (Lesson 6).
- ▶ Identify 10 different types of emails to send to your list that contain some of the ideas you found in others' emails.
- ▶ Write at least 2 additional emails you can add to your autoresponder series or broadcast schedule now.