



How to Build a List of Responsive and Loyal Email Subscribers

LESSON 8

Reaching Your Subscribers Outside of Your List

You email and you email and you email. And that's a good thing.

But it's equally important to make contact with your subscribers in other places that fall outside of your email list. This builds a stronger bond with them because they get to see you as a real person and not just a faceless someone who sends them email messages.

If you take advantage of opportunities to share additional content with them outside of your list, you will further brand yourself as an authority and cement your relationship with your subscribers.

Even more important, finding your subscribers elsewhere creates another opportunity for two-way communication. You might, for example, comment on their social media posts or their blog posts. They have more chances to communicate with you, which again just further solidifies your relationship and gives you more valuable feedback.

Following are a few ways to reach your subscribers outside of your email list.

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Surveys and Polls

Online surveys offer a great way for you to get your subscribers engaged. A survey, done well, also offers you feedback on their tastes and opinions. You can give them an incentive such as a freebie or discount to get more of them to respond.

A good way to do this is to offer a link to your survey in an email message. The survey itself can be placed on your website, where they have the opportunity to also see your blog, social media presence, and other content and promotions that you offer.

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Print Newsletter

A print newsletter is a longer and more involved version of your email content, and consequently a more expensive option. Where an email is short and focused (typically) on just one topic, a newsletter, sent through the postal service, is more like a magazine that has various elements and features.

You might have articles, news stories, and images interspersed with calls to action on promotions. A newsletter might also include links to recent content you've published. In fact, a print newsletter is a great way to get people to visit your website.

A shift from email to newsletter subscriptions can also be a way of further qualifying your prospects. You can use your email list to promote your print newsletter and vice versa. Those who are interested will sign up for the newsletter, where you can offer higher-ticket promotions and exclusive 'newsletter-only' offers.

Blogging

Blog regularly and tell your email subscribers when you have new content posted. This is a great touch point and a further chance for communication between the two of you.

I suggest that you whenever you send an article to your subscriber email list, that you also post that email article at your blog, revising it as necessary so it doesn't sound like it's from an email.

This way you can invite people to comment at your blog as your call to action. Of course, you need to get the blog posted first, and published, before you ask people to comment there in your email message.

As I mentioned before, once you get your readers back to your blog or website, they can see everything else you've got there, too, and your chances for doing business with them go way up.

You should also seek out your subscribers' blogs and become a reader of theirs, leaving comments, sharing, and interacting with them in other ways. You could do the same with their email lists and whatever other marketing they are doing. I guarantee your subscribers will be thrilled and feel very special if you engage with them at their own sites and/or get on their lists.

They'll be much more apt to open and read your own messages when they arrive. This will also create an unspoken bond and loyalty to you.

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Social Media

Seek out your subscribers on social media and connect with them there. Find out what social media sites they use and join or invite them as friends so you can post comments when they post. Follow them on Twitter and connect with them on LinkedIn.

Get into a routine of interacting with subscribers on social media, commenting, and sharing on their posts.

However, be very careful with any promotional activity. People are mainly on social media to socialize, not read your promotions. But there is great value in this social interaction. If they see you around a lot and know that you are paying attention it will create an even tighter bond with you and they are likely to share you with their friends.

Conduct Webinars

Webinars are online seminars where you share information, teach attendees how to do things, answer questions, carry out focus groups, and so on. Your webinars can be invite-only for your highly valued list members. You can also hold webinars and record them, and then offer this recording to your subscribers as a free gift.

A webinar is a great opportunity for your subscribers to experience who you are and it helps them to know you and like you quicker and then your job of creating trust just gets easier from there.

You can do the same with teleclasses, too, if a webinar is not your style, or is too much trouble or too complex.

You should schedule webinars or teleclasses often — once a month is not too much — so that you have the opportunity to engage with any new subscribers that have come along since your last webinar.

You may also want to do a webinar or teleclass just to brand new people who have joined your list recently. Your email service provider will let you segment out people who have joined your list after a certain date, so you can send your invites only to them if you like.

This is a great way to cement a relationship with a newcomer and they get to experience the real you in a way like no other. I cannot stress enough the importance of teaching classes.

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Set Up Alerts

Sign up to receive Google Alerts on the names of some of your loyal subscribers. Google Alerts tells you whenever the keyword (like their name) has been posted somewhere online. This is how you can find your subscribers whenever they post something or when there's an article with their name in it.

This may sound like spying, but it's not! This is a legitimate way to find opportunities for connecting with your subscribers. This way you can always go and comment on what they've published.

And be sure that your comments have value. Don't just go and say "great article" and leave it at that. Actually read the article then comment accordingly. A thoughtful response goes a long way in building a relationship.

Offer to Recommend

Some websites like LinkedIn have a recommendation system where you can recommend members you're connected with. Offer to recommend your subscribers there at LinkedIn or anywhere else as a way of saying thanks for their continued loyalty. See if there is any way you can help your subscribers with testimonials or reviews.

Face to Face Interactions

The best kind of interaction with your subscribers is, of course, face to face.

However, it's not always easy to facilitate this especially if your list is scattered around the world. One thing you can do is to announce offline events you're hosting and attending, and encourage your subscribers to come and see you there.

Be sure to let your subscribers know if you are attending a conference and arrange to have coffee or a drink with them. It is amazing what this kind of connection will do.

A couple of years ago I became part of a coaching program that had about 300 people in it. The second day of the event we all had to cross the stage, go to the microphone and introduce ourselves. I had two people come up to me afterward who said they had been on my list for years and introduced themselves, and we've been fast friends — and become professional colleagues — ever since.

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Another way of connecting with your subscribers is to speak at events. Host your own events, or if you are speaking to a local (or distant) group, be sure to let your subscribers know, invite them to come, and tell them to be sure to connect with you while you're both there.

If you have any chance to meet subscribers face to face, take it, because this is a very powerful way to build a long-lasting relationship.

Pick Up the Phone

The same goes for calling your subscribers. If you're creative you can seek out opportunities to call them. You could simply call a subscriber to follow up on something they commented on, or to answer a question from them. You can even just say thanks and ask them if there's any way you could make the content more valuable for them.

In order to call your subscribers, naturally, you need their phone numbers. I typically advise against asking for this when they opt in to your list because most people, especially if they don't know you yet, are too squeamish to give you their number because — wait for it — they're afraid you're going to call them and try to sell them something!

You really should only ask for name and email address at most, unless the other information is essential, especially when someone is new to your list and just signing up.

However, as part of a survey you can ask for more information from your subscribers, including telephone number, their geographic location, buying habits, and whatever other demographic information you could use.

This is why I suggest that at about 3 or 4 messages into your autoresponder series you let your subscribers know that you have a gift for them that you'd like to mail to them. Yes, in an envelope with a stamp on it. You'll need to create something that you can mail to them and that could be as simple as printing a copy of one of your ebooks or reports, or sending along a CD or DVD of one of your presentations.

So you'll need to ask them for their complete mailing address and ask for their phone number, too. You can make that optional, but most folks, when they see it, will just think it's required and put it in.

This works especially well if you set up your offer as a shopping cart item. People are used to giving phone numbers when they place an order, even if they aren't paying for anything.

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Most folks will be very receptive to this since they tend to value physical things much higher than digital items and will happily give you their mailing address and phone number.

Another way of collecting phone numbers from subscribers is to ask for it when they are signing up for a course or teleclass or webinar. A colleague of mine has started doing this and I asked her if it diminished the number of participants she got and her response to me was that if they aren't willing to put in a phone number then she figures they are not a good client prospect for her. This is something you'll have to decide whether you are comfortable in doing or not.

But being able to reach out to a specific subscriber when you'd like to talk to them is priceless. They'll actually be impressed and thrilled that you took the time to call. Believe it or not, your subscribers put you on a pedestal, and when you reach out to them they are flattered and pleased.

Direct Mail

Direct mail can be costly and can use a great deal of resources, but is still a highly effective way to communicate with your list members. While it appears that email is the best way to reach prospects, in reality, direct mail still has a higher return on investment than email does. So you would be wise to add some direct mail, say, once a quarter, into your marketing budget.

Like the print newsletter mentioned above, you can qualify list members by offering to sign them up to your direct mail list. Make it a 'gold member' or 'VIP' type exclusive club and offer your highest ticket offers there.

You can keep your direct mail costs down if you don't mail to everyone on your list. Just mail to those you believe are your most likely prospects.

Another way of keeping your direct mail costs down is to mail postcards. You can put a newsletter on an oversize post card — something I call a NewsCard — and mail it for the price of a first class letter (at least in the U.S.). The beauty of a postcard is that they get noticed because there's no envelope to open and they are a fast read. Something that busy consumers will appreciate.

And because of their low printing and mailing costs, you can afford to mail postcard promotions more often. And the more often for any kind of mailing — both email and direct — is the best way to go.

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Action Assignment:

- List 3 alternative ways that you will interact with your subscribers.
- What action(s) can you take to introduce these alternative ways into your email marketing plans?
- Find out from Marty (and get samples) just how affordable publishing a NewsCard can be. Visit martymarsh.com/newscards

Coming up in Lesson 9:

Earning Passive and Active Income from Your List