

MARKETING *for makers* **(and designers, crafters, and artists too)** *e-course*

Lesson 4: Email marketing

Building your list and creating compelling campaigns

Welcome to Lesson 4 of the Marketing for Makers e-course. Today's lesson is all about email. I believe that building an email list is one of the most important and most underutilized strategies you can use to market your business. So in this lesson, we'll talk about why email marketing matters, how to capture more email addresses for your list, and what to do with your list once you've got one.

So let's get started.

Why is email marketing important?

With the rise of social media, it seems like email tends to get neglected. But the truth is that it's still very important and can be one of the best ways to drive sales for your business. So why is email marketing important?

The first reason is that people still use email. It's still one of the first things people check in the mornings. The rise of smart phones has actually helped email, because now many people are constantly connected to it. It's often the first thing they do before even getting out of bed! So if you give people a compelling reason to open your emails, chances are they'll work wonders for you. But we'll talk more about getting them to open your emails later.

The other reason that email marketing still matters is because it puts you in control of the relationship with your customers.

Lesson 4: *Email marketing*

Picture a scenario where you've been featured on a blog. A wave of people visit your site. Based on what we know about conversion, you can expect maybe 1-2% of people to buy. So what happens to the other 98% of visitors you've received that day?

If you don't have a way for them to join your email list, they'll leave your site and may never come back. But many of those visitors probably really liked your products, but just aren't ready to buy "right now." Without capturing email addresses, you're leaving the responsibility up to them to remember that they liked your site, or to go back through their bookmarks, or find that scrawled note that says, "buy hat for cousin Suzy for Christmas."

But if you are capturing email addresses, you might grab another percentage of people who didn't choose to buy today. And now you have permission to contact them when you like. You now have the ability to remind them that your brand exists and that your product would make a great Christmas gift for cousin Suzy.

The general rule of thumb is that most people need to see someone at least seven times before they buy. Without an email list, you're leaving those seven times to chance.

(Sure, you can hope they'll engage with you via social media. But nothing puts you in the drivers seat quite like having someone's email address.)

Throughout this lesson, when I refer to your email list, what I'll be talking about is your opt-in email list. This is the list of customers and potential customers who have given you permission to add them to the list. Anti-spam laws prohibit you from emailing people without their consent. Plus, it's a good way to make people angry. So for lists that you email in bulk, make sure you have someone's permission before adding them.

We'll talk about building up a few other types of lists in other lessons, so just keep in mind that this lesson focuses on your opt-in list.

Part 1: Building your list

Choosing the right email list service

There are lots of online services available to use to manage your email list, but two stand out above the others. But before we even tackle which email list to use, let's talk about why it's important to use a service for your email communications.

Why you shouldn't just make a list in your Gmail

When you're just starting out, it's tempting to try to manage your list as a group through your Gmail or Yahoo account. And while this isn't too bad if you've only got a handful on your list, it can quickly become cumbersome. And transferring your list after it grows is

Lesson 4: *Email marketing*

no picnic either. So even if your list is small now, plan on future growth by signing up for an e-newsletter service.

The other advantage of using an email service is that you can create forms and templates to embed directly onto your site. These forms make it super simple for someone to join your mailing list, thus increasing your conversion rate.

So now that you know why you should use an email service, let's talk about which one to choose.

The double opt-in service

When picking an e-newsletter provider, go for one that utilizes double opt-in. What double opt-in means is that after someone enters their email list, they also have to confirm they've signed up by clicking on a link in your email.

Double opt-in lists mean far fewer spam complaints, which translates to a much higher deliverability rate. The other thing to keep in mind is that the deliverability of your emails is affected by the spam complaints from all users of an email service, not just you. Email services with a double opt-in mean fewer spam complaints across the board.

There are two stellar double opt-in services that are recommended time and time again, Aweber and MailChimp. I would highly recommend either service, but having used both, I will say that MailChimp's interface is easier to use. MailChimp is also free for up to 500 email addresses.

If you aren't already using an email service, your first homework from this lesson should be to head over to MailChimp or Aweber and sign-up immediately. Most of the others tasks in this lesson will be difficult to complete otherwise.

Getting people to join your list (online)

Once you've set up your email list, it's time to get people to join. Because email capture is so important, you will want to make sure signing up for your email list is a clear call to action when someone arrives on your website.

Whenever possible, you'll want to embed a sign-up form directly on the page itself, rather than having a link to a form on another page. One, this means less work on the part of the visitor, and two, a form is usually larger than just a link, which means it will have more prominence on your page.

Don't be afraid to give your form a place of prominence on your website. This is not the time to be discreet and hide it in a corner. (Just make sure that your form matches the aesthetic of your brand and your site.)

Lesson 4: *Email marketing*

One website that does this incredibly well is the bicycling bag company, Po Campo. When you visit their website, the two primary things on the front page are a stunning image of their product and a prominent email sign-up form. There's no doubt what you're supposed to do when you arrive on that website. (You can see for yourself at pocampo.com)

It's also not a bad idea to work a smaller sign-up form into the footer of other pages on your site. This way, if someone arrives at your site by bypassing your home page, you can still work on the email capture.

As you've probably guessed, the ability to add your own email form is another reason to choose an online home base that is fully customizable. Your email provider should have a space where you can generate a sign-up form, and then you or your web designer can embed the code directly into your site.

Another good location for a sign-up form is on the sidebar of your blog. Because you use your blog to regularly generate content, it's more of a search engine draw than your site or online store might be. A prominent email form can be useful to encourage people to shop who might only be familiar with your brand through your blog.

Most of these strategies are aimed at capturing the emails of people who haven't yet purchased your products. But it's also important to try to capture emails of people who have bought from you before. When it comes to the cost of doing business, it's much easier to convert an existing customer into a repeat customer than to try to convert someone who has never bought anything.

But keep in mind that you just can't start adding emails of previous customers to your list. But if you've had a lot of sales prior to starting your list, you can send a one time, mass email (using BCC to retain privacy) encouraging them to sign up for your new list.

If you're using MailChimp as your email service, they actually have an option where you can connect your MailChimp account to your PayPal account. This allows customers to opt-in to your email list while making a purchase.

Now that we've discussed the more technical aspects of getting people to sign up for your list, let's look at some of the more psychological aspects.

There will always be people who arrive at your site, love your products, and sign up for your email list with little to no prompting. In the case of those people, just having the form is enough. But there are other people who will need a little more convincing.

The easiest way to do this is to include a sentence or two as part of the form that let's people know what to expect from your list. Will they get discount codes? Info on upcoming shows? Previews of new products or a chance to buy early? People want to

Lesson 4: *Email marketing*

know what they're signing up for, and for many, a simple description will be all it takes to encourage them.

But there might be other people who are still hesitant. To encourage these people, it's a good idea to include a link to a previous newsletter. Some people just aren't willing to commit until they have a good idea of what they're signing up for. Of course, when you're first starting your e-newsletter, you won't have any to share. But after you've written a few and have started to find a groove, including a link to one you've already written may be just the ticket to encouraging those who are more hesitant.

Getting people to join your list (in person)

Obviously, online is the best place to focus on capturing emails. But don't neglect in person opportunities as well. Any time that you're out selling or promoting your products should be used as an opportunity to capture emails.

You should put together a sign-up sheet or book to display prominently at any craft shows or art openings you'll be at. Just make sure you're diligent about entering them in soon after returning from the show.

Another way to capture email addresses at a show is to ask someone if they'd like to be added to your list when they're making a purchase. Often times, someone who's buying won't think to sign up for your list because they're purchasing on the spot. But many people will give their email address when asked. Work the question of signing up for your list into your sales procedure, and be sure to explain what the email will be used for. ("Discounts and upcoming shows" are usually two enticements that work pretty well.) Capturing these email addresses is a great way to turn one time customers into repeat buyers.

So now that we've talked about building your list, it's time to talk about what to do with it.

Part 2: Creating compelling email campaigns

Once you've established your email list, you'll want to think about creating emails that encourage people to open them, read them, and take action.

Every email you send should have 3 key attributes:

1. A catchy subject line
2. Something of value
3. A call to action

So let's take a look at each of these in more detail.

Lesson 4: *Email marketing*

1. **Creating catchy subject lines**

The best email subjects lines will grab someone's attention while avoiding words that might get trapped in the spam filter.

You should also avoid generic, descriptive titles. "Suzy Crafter's October e-newsletter" probably isn't going to compel many people to open your email.

Instead, think about how you can get people curious about the contents. A good subject line references what's inside the email, without giving too much away. Subject lines that are directed at the reader are also stronger, as are questions to the reader.

Keep in mind that marketing is about creating value for the customer. If your email contains something of value (which it should), your subject line should allude to that.

2. **Creating something of value (otherwise known as useful content)**

When most people think of including something of value in their e-newsletter, they often think it needs to be something like coupon codes or free shipping or a free gift with purchase.

But in reality, you'll get far more return on your email list if you provide something of value for your customers in the form of useful content.

Regardless of the kind of product you make, you can come up with a content strategy for your e-newsletter. This is where your USP, your tag line, and your ideal customer come into play. The content you provide should be a reflection of your products, they way someone might use your products, and what makes your products unique. Even more than that, it should be written with the needs of your ideal customer in mind.

Let me give you a few examples:

If you produce eco-friendly fashion, your e-newsletter could include tips for greening your wardrobe.

If you create wedding invitations, your e-newsletter could have useful wedding planning tips.

If you produce home decor products, your e-newsletter might be about home decorating.

Do you get the idea?

Lesson 4: *Email marketing*

Use the worksheet from this lesson to brainstorm content ideas for your e-newsletter. Think about information your ideal customer would find useful, and then how you can relate that information to your overall branding and tag line.

When you're writing the content for your emails, you should always write with your ideal customer in mind. The best e-newsletters don't read like newsletters at all. They are generally more conversational, and read as if you've written them to just one person. That one person is your ideal customer. Picture her in your mind and write to her as if you're writing to a friend.

Now, a conversational style doesn't mean you can get away with bad grammar and spelling errors. Always be sure to proofread before hitting the send button.

The subtle sale

When you create emails like this, you won't overtly be selling a product. But that doesn't mean your email can't also include more subtle mentions of your products. You can work links to certain pieces into your content, as well as include an image or two. You can even include a mention to buy something at the end of your email.

Another strategy that works really well is to create (or have one created for you) a template for your emails with room for several images of your products in a sidebar. You can rotate these images for each newsletter, but each should link back to a place where someone can purchase the product.

By creating e-newsletters with useful content, you'll have an excuse to send them more often, people will look forward to them, and you'll build brand awareness at the same time.

3. Include a call to action

Every e-newsletter you send should include a call to action at the end. The call to action is the ONE thing you want someone to do after reading your email.

Sometimes it might be to buy something.

Sometimes it might be to respond to the email with the answer to a question or a comment.

Or it might be as simple as forwarding the email to a friend who might also appreciate it.

Just keep in mind that you should clearly state just one call to action at the end of each email, and that it will likely vary from email to email.

Lesson 4: *Email marketing*

How often should you email your list?

The number one question people always ask is, “how often should I email my list?”

In my experience, most people don’t email their lists enough. This is because the only things they can think to say are product pitches or upcoming events.

But if you’re sending an e-newsletter with useful content, you can, and should send it much more regularly. Every week isn’t a bad idea, but if you’re worried about generating that much content, then every other week is probably a good goal.

Keep in mind that this rule of thumb is for sending out your content driven emails. You’ll intersperse these with product launches and special sales and promos as needed.

The idea with the content driven emails is to keep your list warm. That way, when you are ready to sell them something, they’ll be nice and receptive.

Using auto responders

Auto responders are emails that you set up in advance that are automatically sent to subscribers of your list at a set period after they’ve signed up. Auto responders are a great way to welcome people to your list, and encourage them to stick around a little. (And maybe even make a purchase.) You could use auto responders to send out a coupon code to entice people to sign up, or simply to welcome them to the list.

Auto responders are also a great way to keep your list warm. You may want to set up a series of auto responders that go out once a week for the first month or two after someone has subscribed to your list.

Creating special lists

So far, we’ve talked about setting up a general email list for your business. But the beauty of using an email service is that you can actually create as many lists as you want. Which means you can create special lists to build buzz about certain products or programs.

For instance, if you’re gearing up for the launch of a new product line, you could start a pre-launch list. This is a list where you can send updates about the design of the new collection, teaser images, and other little tidbits to people who are incredibly excited to buy your products. Pre-launch lists are a great way to target a core group of people who are very interested in buying.

Lesson 4: *Email marketing*

You may also want to create a list specifically for weekly deals, for behind the scenes updates, or anything else that you think might be of interest to a small group of your customers.

As you can tell, there's a lot you can do with email marketing. But try not to feel too overwhelmed. Your homework for this lesson is actually pretty simple. Sign up for an email list service (if you aren't already using one) and embed the forms prominently on your website. From there, spend some time brainstorming content ideas for your e-newsletter so that you'll be ready to start sending out great emails full of useful content.

Next lesson, we'll be talking about inbound marketing, specifically blogging and SEO. And you'll find that the content ideas you're creating for your e-newsletter will come in pretty handy for the next lesson too.

And as always, if you want any feedback or have any questions on this lesson, head on over to the forums.