



Building a Fanatical Following with Email



For many small businesses, email marketing is all about promotions and sales. But the most successful businesses know that an email list is more than just a sales tool—it’s a way to build relationships, create trust, and foster a sense of community without the concerns of a platform shutdown.

By shifting your focus from transactions to connections, you can turn one-time customers into long-term brand advocates.

Why Community Matters in Email Marketing

When people feel connected to your business, they’re more likely to stay engaged, refer others, and become repeat customers. A strong email strategy builds that connection by making subscribers feel valued and involved, rather than just being on the receiving end of sales pitches. They want to get to know you and get something in return. For a successful digital marketing relationship to be built, you must give both.

Here’s how you can use email to cultivate a loyal following:

1. Share Valuable, Relevant Content

Instead of only sending promotions, consider what information your audience would appreciate. Valuable content means “valuable” from their perspective, not yours. For instance:

- A retail store might send seasonal styling tips or product care guides.
- A restaurant could share behind-the-scenes stories, recipes, or pairing ideas.
- A professional service provider (like an accountant or consultant) might send bite-sized industry insights, checklists, or tips for success.

2. Create Exclusive Perks for Subscribers

Give people a reason to stay subscribed by offering benefits they can't get elsewhere. These could include:

- Early access to sales or new products
- Special "insider" updates about your business
- Exclusive events such as subscriber-only Q&A sessions or webinars

For example, a local fitness studio could send subscribers a free at-home workout video each month, while a bookstore could offer early-bird sign-ups for popular author events.

3. Make Emails Interactive

We've all read (or trashed) boring salesy emails. They aren't something we want to see in our inbox each week. Bad emails are a quick ride to Unsubscribeville.

Instead, encourage two-way communication so your emails feel like a conversation, not a broadcast. Keep in mind who you're writing to and personalize your conversation to them by:

- Asking for feedback through quick surveys or polls. A salon or spa, for instance, could ask customers to vote on a new service they'd love to see offered.
- Inviting replies with personal questions like, "What's your biggest challenge?"
- Running a contest or giveaway where participation requires a simple reply.
- Telling them you really want to hear from them, and you read every email.

4. Spotlight Your Customers & Community

People love seeing themselves recognized. Feature customer success stories, testimonials, or user-generated content about your product or service like a follower's post from social media. Other examples include:

- A real estate agent might highlight a happy homeowner's journey.
- A local café could showcase customer-submitted coffee art photos.
- A business consultant might feature a small business success story from their client list.

This approach makes customers feel valued and shows prospects that your business is trusted by others. Plus, in some cases, your customers will want to be showcased as well. So, they might share or post in the hopes you will highlight them in the future. It can be a great way to drive desired action.

5. Inject Personality & Authenticity

Your emails should reflect the human side of your business as well as your personality. Don't be afraid to share a story from your weekend—particularly if it's entertaining or educational. Always write in a conversational, relatable tone leaving a lot of white space.

You can also:

- Share personal insights or lessons learned.
- Give behind-the-scenes looks at your operations.

For instance, a boutique owner could share why they chose to stock a particular product, or a contractor could showcase a day-in-the-life video of their latest project.

The Long-Term Payoff of Email Marketing

When you use email to build relationships rather than just push sales, you create a community that trusts and supports your business. Plus, recipients are more apt to open your emails if they find value in them. This leads to higher engagement, stronger brand loyalty, and ultimately, more sustainable growth.

By making your emails feel more like a conversation and less like a commercial, you'll not only keep subscribers interested—you'll turn them into lifelong customers and advocates for your business.

And that sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

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