

myweeklymarketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:02

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business, and life in between. Welcome to my Weekly Marketing. Hey, welcome to another episode of my Weekly Marketing. By the time this episode drops, it's early 2024, so I want to wish you a happy new year and because it's the new year, I like to refocus on a few things that I personally neglected last year to improve on it for 2024. Building your email list is one of those things that can be easy to neglect. I'm as guilty of this as anyone. I get so busy working with clients on their marketing that I sometimes forget that it needs to be a priority of my own in business too. But right now, since it's the beginning of 2024, it's the perfect time to work on building your email list too, not just because it's the beginning of a new year, but in February, google is going to introduce some new email guidelines that you're going to want to implement. That's something we're going to talk about next week on the episode, but for this week, I just want to talk about list building, because how cool would it be to have a list that just grew on autopilot right? There's a saying that's absolutely true: money is on the list. Simply put, your email list is made up of people who are interested in the product or service that you're offering and you have direct access to them through email. So if you're new to list building or just need a refresher or some new ideas, we're going to cover why you need a strong, healthy email list and when to start it, what not to do in list building, and a few list building ideas and how-tos. So let's dive in. So why do you need a list? In short, if you want to sell anything online or offline, a list is one of the most valuable tools in your marketing arsenal. Why? Because if you build your email list correctly, your list will be full of warm leads, people that you know are already interested in what you're selling or sharing in your emails. Unlike social media, you own your list. You can have 10,000 to 100,000 followers on social media but that platform. If that platform goes away or the algorithm becomes unpredictable, as it usually is, you don't know who you're going to be able to connect with. Both have their place in marketing, but I always, always, prioritize email list growth over social media growth. You have a valuable product or service to share, but to find those people who want to buy it can be challenging. By providing something of value for that customer, you'll pull them into your business or you can build a relationship with them. That word relationship is an important one. You need to continue to offer your list value and show your unique brand personality so they will get to know, like, and trust you. Email is still the most cost-effective way to do that. Let me tell you if you think email is dead, it's far from it. In fact, in 2023, 99% of email users check their email every day, and some as many as 20 times a day, and 58% of users check their email before they check out social

media or even the news. And the average expected return on investment is \$42 for every dollar you spend on email trading. I don't know about you, but I trade a dollar for \$42 any day of the week. So you may be thinking about a question. I get asked a lot. That all sounds great, but building an email list takes time. Can't I just buy an email list? The short answer is no. Here's the truth. In the US, it's technically legal to buy a list. However, it's not true in other countries, such as Canada and the European Union, and even in California, it's—which has its own anti-spam laws. Even if it is legal, it's still considered bad practice. Why Emailing people who don't opt into your list is an invasion of their privacy and it makes you look smarmy. At best, you're missing an opportunity to develop a loyal, long-term fan. At worst, you're damaging your brand's reputation and it puts you in danger of being flagged as a spammer because email providers such as Google pay attention to relevancy when your emails are sent out. If people are flagging your emails as spam, they'll send more of the emails to the spam folder and Google will take note and deliver those emails to fewer inboxes. And if enough people flag it as spam, you can get blacklisted and your email service provider will get in trouble too. Nobody wants to be spammed, right? So we want to focus on ethically building a list of people who want to hear from you. So pinky swear to me, I will not buy a list. So when should you build it? So you might be starting out your business and wonder if it's too early to build your email list. Well, you know that old quote: the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago and the second best time is now. Well, that, even if you don't have a website, even if you don't have a service, it's not too early to be offering a free download and start paying attention to what free offers people are interested in. By doing that, even if you don't have an offer ready to go, you can get feedback on what people are interested in. There's nothing worse for a business than developing a product or service that people don't want. A free download is a perfect litmus test to gauge the interest of the market. So how do you do it? The first step is to set up an email service provider. I use ConvertKit and they have a free plan that's perfect for small business owners. I started out using them years earlier after they were just coming on the market, and I still use them for my own business. I've used a lot of different email service providers or ESPs, and many of them are really good for certain types of businesses or sizes of businesses. But if you're just starting out and have a small list, you can't go wrong with ConvertKit. I'll put a link for them in the show notes at myweeklymarketing.com forward slash 39. The next step is to do some research on what your potential customer wants. Adding a Get My Newsletter banner on your website is pretty ineffective since most of us really don't want more random emails. So determine the type of lead magnet your potential customer is most interested in and offer that instead. Just so we're clear. A lead magnet is also called a freebie, an opt-in, a signup offer, a content upgrade opt-in, and bribe lots of different names. Basically, it's something to pull people into your list who have an interest in what you're doing and selling. It needs to be something that

moves them to share their name and email address to get it. You could offer something really amazing, like a contest for a free iPad, but unless you're selling an iPad-related product, you'll have a list of irrelevant people. I had a client who did this once. It needs to be something of value. They need to know, believe, or understand before they're ready to buy your product or service. Bonus points if it also excites your audience, saves them time, saves them money, or makes them money. Those are some huge psychological motivators for people. If you're struggling with ideas, I'd recommend doing some brainstorming using chat GPT Before you do that. Make sure chat GPT knows about your business and your ideal customer. There's a section on chat GPT called Custom Instructions that carries over to all your queries. It's at the bottom left-hand corner of the screen in chat GPT. That's where you can add information about your business, your target customer, and anything that you think is relevant to your results. Once that information is added, then ask it something like give me 20 ideas for lead magnets for my ideal customer around blank, blank being whatever it is the topic is of your product or service. Or you could say what is my ideal customer is struggling with the most around blank. It'll give you some great ideas that you can act as a launch pad and kind of do some brainstorming of your own. On a side note, if you're just starting out and aren't especially clear about who your ideal customer is, I've got your back. Go to janicehostager.com, forward slash customer, and download your free ideal customer profile so you know exactly who you're talking to. It'll make your marketing and your lead magnets so much more powerful and effective. Of course, if you have an existing business, you probably already know what they struggle with. If not, think about the questions you get asked most often from your customers or the struggles that keep people from being ready to buy your product or service. Another tip I've been putting together lead magnets for myself and my clients for many years and I've noticed that people now are getting a little more selective about what they'll download. A simple checklist might not be enough. Here's my advice: go the extra mile and offer more. This hit home for me this week when my husband and I were in San Antonio celebrating our wedding anniversary. We had booked a moderately priced hotel that had good reviews. When we checked in, we were wowed when they asked us why we were in town and then offered us a free bottle of wine to celebrate our anniversary. Then we were told that the hotel had a free order bar for all their guests each evening, definitely more than we were expecting from a mid-tier hotel. When we got there, we were surprised to find out that the same day as our anniversary was the Alamo Bowl and the city was packed with college football fans. So when we tried to make dinner reservations in a restaurant for our anniversary dinner, everything was booked. We walked around in the crowds for a long time and tried to find a restaurant that took walk-ins, but we were faced with either hours-long waits or dinner fast-food at a burger place. We decided to check out the order bar. I was getting hungry and a little bit crabby, but let me tell you the order

bar was amazing. It was equivalent to a free dinner and in fact, for us, it was a free dinner, not the quiet, romantic dinner on the riverwalk, we imagined, but it was really good and it was free. They had a buffet that was equally amazing for breakfast the next morning, too. This hotel knew what it was to go above and beyond, and on our next trip there we will definitely be back. That is the type of experience it takes to stand out in a competitive market, even with your free content. People will think if this is what they offer for free, I can only imagine that their paid content is even better. So, with that in mind, here are a few ideas of things you can create. First off, a free download that shares a process to make something of value, for example, plans for building something, or a book of recipes. Again, think about things your customers need to know before they're ready to buy. If you sell bicycles, you may want to create a publication for something like 10 physical benefits of biking. Or for one of my clients who had an investment firm, we offered a book called How to Invest. If You're Just Starting Out and Don't Make Much Money For a physical product, a discount code for free shipping or a percentage off or something that'll save them money. Remember, saving money is a universal motivator. An exclusive bed of content is a good idea, such as for a free book chapter or a free course module, so they get drawn into a purchase for the entire book or the entire course. Perhaps you want to offer a quiz that'll help them identify their own situation or their own tendencies. That's a good way to find out more about your ideal customer in the process, too, based on the questions that you ask. A free giveaway for this, because there are a lot of laws governing giveaways. I'd recommend some software. There's something called Kingsumu that has a free version that you can use. I'll put the link to that in the show notes, too. You might want to create a giveaway that will explain or utilize emerging technology. Chat GPT is a perfect example of something people don't know a lot about and how to use it well, so in-depth training for something like that might be really valuable to your target audience. You can create a webinar. These have been some of the best list builders I've done both for myself and my clients, especially if your subject area is complex or involves demonstrations. You can also share something that you already use with clients in your business, for example, templates, google Sheets, et cetera. You don't need to go and create something extra for yourself. If you've already got these ready to go, you can make a mini course, something that'll help them prepare for a larger course you may be offering down the road, and you can even go ahead and promote a small paid offer. You can add someone to your list when they make a very small purchase, like a \$7 mini-course, and when they buy. That puts that subscriber into a different category, from just someone who's kicking the tires, so to speak, to someone who's willing to pay for what you offer, and that's an important distinction. After you've figured out what you want to do, then it's time to put it all together. You don't need to hire a designer. You can use Canva or my new favorite free tool, adobe Express and I'll drop the link to that in the show notes as well and you can

just put your list or your offer or whatever it is, into a template that they provide free of charge and save it as a PDF or even as a Word doc. The look isn't nearly as important as the value it brings, but do make sure it has your name, website, and contact information somewhere on it, and if it's original information, you probably want to get it copyrighted too. So the next step, number four, is to create a goal of how many people you'd like to add to your list. As I always say, if you don't know where you're headed, how will you know when you get there? So either a small goal or a large one will help you determine the effectiveness of your free offering and how you market it. Step number five create a landing page and a form for each of your freebies. A landing page is an optimized page that tells a little more about what you're offering and gives him only one call to action To subscribe. Don't send people to your homepage to get a free download. They'll get distracted and not follow through. If you do use ConvertKit, They have a drag-and-drop landing page template that you can create right on their site, on your landing page. It's important to do a few things. First off, nail your headline. I'd get some feedback from a few other people on this, or ask chatGPT for ideas. Second, identify the promise of what will they gain with this freebie and how will they benefit from downloading it. Third, include a form for their name and email. That's really all that's needed for a small freebie. And fourth, optimize that page for search engine optimization or SEO. So go to maz.com or ubersuggest.com Both have free plans and do a little SEO research. You want people to be able to find this page in search engines. You should include your keyword or key phrase, if that's the case, in the headline, in the meta description, in the meta title so those are the back end texts of the page and in the body copy of the page. So step number six you've got all that done now. So next thing you want to do is create a thank you page. Having a thank you page allows you to use your Google Analytics to track when people complete the process, or, if you decide to run paid ads later, it helps determine when they've completed the entire process and downloaded the thing. All your thank you page needs to contain is a note saying thank you, maybe a video, and a link to the download. You can include more on this page if you want, but that's really all that's needed. If you have a personal brand, a video or a photo of yourself is going to be valuable to include there as well. So step number seven if you have Google Analytics set up and are comfortable doing it, create an event on Google Analytics. By doing this, you can tell, by looking at your analytics, how many people completed the event or met your goal and how many people didn't. The reason that's important is that we can see where people fall off if they decide not to download it, so you can basically see where they fell out of the funnel. You can also attach a dollar amount to that event to measure your return on investment. If you don't have Google Analytics or if you're not comfortable with the technology side of it, this step is optional. It's better to skip it than to get derailed from doing this project altogether. So, step number eight create an email automation after the freebie is delivered and send them a series of welcome emails to

let them know that you appreciate that they're there, tell them all about you, what you do, and how you can help them and what they can expect going forward. And that is it. You've now set up an entire email list and it's time to share it. Share it far and wide. I know it can feel a little awkward, but be brave, you've worked hard on this and there are a few places that you should share it to. You can share it on a popup on your homepage and, again, if you have ConvertKit, they make that really easy to do. Also in ConvertKit, they have a creators network to cross-promote your freebies to other people in their network, which is a really nice bonus for ConvertKit. You can also share it on social media any social media platform you have. I would definitely share it, and you can share something weekly for a free download if you're comfortable. You can also run ads to the freebie, but keep an eye on your ad spend since you're not gonna see a one-on-one return on investment for list building. But ads for free downloads do convert a lot better than ads for paid products. On social media, you can be a guest on other people's podcasts to promote it along with the topic for the freebie. You can ask to write guest blog posts for others on other websites to promote it. You can share it with individual people who are struggling with that issue. I like going into Facebook groups or on Reddit, as long as it doesn't violate the group's terms. So make sure you check that out before you put a link in there, and you can schedule an online event to promote it like a Facebook Live. There are many ways to promote your freebie with a free offer. The secret to list building is to keep the process going. So get used to telling people about your opt-ins at networking events, anytime you appear in a podcast, or anywhere that you can, then I highly recommend emailing them some content of value at least once a week. This could be your blog post, a podcast episode, a video, or any number of other things you wanna stay top of mind for your customer. Of course, you can sell them too, but selling to them constantly will just create a lot of unsubscribers, so make sure they see the value of remaining on your list each week. Okay, deep breath. I know this is a lot. If this all sounds daunting, I've created an email list challenge for you that will make the whole process a whole lot easier. I know how important list building is, but I also know how overwhelming it can be with all the tech, with the information, and all the moving pieces of getting it done. So I've created a simple, day-by-day challenge that will help you through all of it, with videos to help you out, and it will keep you accountable for getting it done. This challenge covers a lot of what we did here today, but it goes into much greater detail and shows you how to do each of these steps. Visit janicehostager.com forward slash list to sign up and get started, or visit my show notes for today at myweeklymarketing.com, forward slash 39. So that's it for today. I hope you found this all very helpful. If you did, I'd appreciate a review on Apple Podcast. Then be sure to tune in next week when we'll be talking about all the changes that will be taking place in email marketing in 2024. So if you do any email marketing at all, you'll

want to tune in next week for sure. Thanks for joining me today. I'll see you next time.
Bye for now.