

# myweeklymarketing.

**Janice Hostager** 0:28

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. How many email messages have you received this week? Now let me ask, how many of those do you actually remember? All of these emails are easy to send and easy to ignore and sadly easy to forget. But once in a while you get something different, a handwritten note. And you stop and you read it and you remember it and you might even keep it. So here's the question. In a world where everything is automated, how does being more human actually give you an advantage? That's what we're talking about today. I'm talking with David Wachs, founder of Handwrytten, a company that's helping businesses rethink how they connect in a very noisy, very digital world. And we're getting into what this actually looks like for small businesses. How to use something as simple as a handwritten note to build relationships, stand out, and yes, even drive sales. Here's my talk with David. Hey David, welcome to My Weekly Marketing.

**David Wachs** 1:26

Hi, Janice. Thanks so much for having me.

**Janice Hostager** 1:28

So handwritten notes are actually kind of near and dear to my heart for a couple of reasons. First, in marketing, a lot of people tend to follow the crowd. I think it's something we all learned in middle school, unfortunately. But that's not what gets you noticed in marketing, right? So I love that this is a little bit unusual or a little bit different than what the masses are doing. And the second reason I like this topic is because like a year or so ago, I started doing follow-up with handwritten notes to clients and potential clients and people that you know that I talked to that didn't end up buying from me. And it really made an impact. So why does something like that have such an impact, like a handwritten note? What happens psychologically when somebody receives a note?

**David Wachs** 2:16

Absolutely. So I think handwritten notes today are more valuable than ever because nobody's sending them. We've moved to this completely digital um world where everything from your photo album and your record collection, which used to sit proudly

on your bookshelf or under your stereo system, were real. Now everything is digital, and we are very much sensory deprived. And I think using the sense of feel in addition to the sense of sight, you've basically doubled your number of senses right there. But on top of that, I think so that that would have been my answer five years ago. But my answer today is nobody thinks electronic communications real anymore because they assume it was just done through ChatGPT or Claude or Copilot or whatever, Gemini, pick your poison. So, but they don't realize a handwritten note, or they don't think a handwritten note can be automated, let alone um have the content inside of it be automated too. So I think it really stands out from that perspective. If you think about your own email inbox and we're all getting 135 emails a day and spending 25% of our day just managing our inbox and all these other stats, uh when you get a handwritten note, you're only getting between one and three of those a month. So unlike the 135 emails a day, it's nice to stand out in the one to three a month. And before you, you might have said this before you were talking. Oh no, I said it on the show. Everybody goes along with the pack and does what everybody else does, but none of that stands out. I believe that's called the Van Rostorff effect, where it's the thing that stands out is the thing that gets remembered, which is like the most obvious thing out there, but handwritten notes very much are that. And then finally, if I had to wrap it up here, I'd say handwritten notes get so much value because they are durable. And what I mean by that is when you receive a handwritten note, even if you hated it, you probably threw it on your desk before and instead of because you were too lazy to throw it in the trash. So there it sits on your desk for weeks on end, receiving impression after impression. And more than likely you didn't hate it. More than likely you found it to be very thoughtful that somebody sent you a handwritten note. And that's what we see over and over again. Our client, I'll give you a small solopreneur example. We have a piano tuner in Pennsylvania. He's in your home only once a year. Your piano only needs to be tuned once a year. So he tunes your piano, then he has an automation set up through us to send out a handwritten note afterwards, thanking the client for the opportunity to enter their home and tune the piano. When he returns to that house a year later, that handwritten note is not only there, but it's sitting, standing on top of the piano. So it's been open, it's been read, and it's been put on display in an area that's typically reserved for graduation photos and that type of thing. So they in it it's just an incredibly powerful way to get in front of clients these days that really nobody's taking advantage of.

### **Janice Hostager 5:26**

Love it. Did you when did you discover that this was like such a superpower and start a business around it? Like what is your story of how you get to this point?

**David Wachs 5:36**

So prior to Handwrytten, which is H-A-N-D-W-R-Y-T-T-E-N, the company I run now, I ran a company called Sell It, which was a text messaging company, and we send out a million texts a day just for Abercrombie and Fitch or Toys R Us, some of these big brands. And I realized that while we were sending a million texts a day and they were working, and they were opt-in, they weren't spam. I don't want anybody to think I was spamming, but they were working. I realized everybody was also getting a million texts a day, or at least felt like they were. And I saw that at some point this would all become digital fatigue and they'd burn out from it. And I think that's really happening. So back in 2014, I sold that hand, that text messaging company. I wanted to say thank you to my clients and to my employees, and I sat down with pen and paper because I knew that when I received a handwritten note, I held on to it. So I sat down with best intentions of writing handwritten notes. And after about number five, my hand cramped and I ran out of stationery and I didn't have enough stamps and my pen, all the things, right? So that's where the idea came from. And I really built Handwrytten to be a product that I or a service that I would use. For example, we include gift cards. You can add a Starbucks gift card or an Amazon card or something like that to your order. You can even include your business card if we if you store them with us. So I really tried to design this as a service that I would use, and that's where we are 12 years later.

**Janice Hostager 7:08**

Very, very forward-thinking of you for sure, because I remember when texting became a thing and you you we would always say, Oh, the open rate is like 100%, you know, which it was at that time. Now I'm like I get I don't know how many a day around election time. And yeah, it's just it's just gotten ridiculous and and I hate I hate it, you know. I love that you kind of saw the light early on and kind of moved into it before the masses did. So where would this fit now? So I talk about something I call the trail to the sale. It's really like what you do every step of the way on your customer journey map, right? So how where does that fit in that? Where does it fit in the customer journey map? Is it like in the awareness stage or the consideration or where where is it that a handwritten note is really the most powerful?

**David Wachs 8:04**

Yeah, I'd say for B2B or even high-ticket B2C, it could be in the consideration step. You've met with this person, everybody else, but it's a real differentiator for you because everybody else that met with them might shoot them a text or an email and you sent them a handwritten note. So as long as there's enough time for a good old snail mail to

deliver, and in most cases there is, then yeah, I'd consider that because it creates a nice touch point in addition to an email or a text. It's always great because those are free. And you so you'd send the handwritten note there. It's also really very powerful post-purchase. So um, I love the trail to the sale, by the way. I hope you don't mind if I steal that from you. But maybe after the sale, we have to come up with a rhyme there too, because it's really valuable for ongoing lifetime value of that customer and building loyalty. And on our website, excuse me, you can request the consumer outreach survey. We we reached, we pulled 2,000 consumers, not handwritten users, just consumers, and we asked them a bunch of questions, such as, do you feel appreciated by brands? And they said, no. In fact, they said in 2025, only 12% of consumers feel appreciated by brands. And this was down from 2023, where it was 18%. So it went down actually by a third over that short time period. And then we said, okay, well, if you did feel appreciated by brands, what would you do? And they said they'd buy more, they'd rate and review more, they'd buy more frequently, and they'd tell their friends, like basically everything you'd want. And then we said, okay, how would you, what would make you feel appreciated? And I bet you could guess that the answer over a text and a phone call and a junk mail piece was a handwritten note, of course. So, you know, it's a really great way to build ongoing loyalty with your customers after the sale. It's sometimes too expensive to do on like you said awareness. It can be very expensive for awareness because the cost of a stamp alone is 78 cents. But for consideration, it's a great use point, use tactic. And then also post-purchase follow-up and loyalty, it's excellent.

**Janice Hostager** 10:19

Mm-hmm. Yeah, I would agree with both of those. And actually, I do include the post-sale in my framework for sure. I it's it's uh sale, sell, supersize, serve, and then send. It's a send mean referral. And I think in that serve stage, it's nice to do some sort of an outreach, probably not a maybe not a letter for that part of it because you're you're helping that customer adapt to what they just purchased, but just somewhere in that area to say, I'm gonna take the time to really thank you and show you that I really do appreciate your business because that really we all want to be appreciated, right?

## What To Write And Avoid

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**David Wachs** 10:54

Mm-hmm. Yeah, exactly. And uh people ask me, what do I put in that note? And they want to put QR codes and coupon codes and all that stuff. But as soon as you start layering all that in, it's not really a thank you note anymore, it's an advertisement.

**Janice Hostager** 11:10

Yeah.

**David Wachs** 11:11

And you're more than welcome to do that. This is I'm stealing this from Britney Hodak, if you know her. She wrote a book called Creating Superfans, and she basically says the best swag or the best thank you notes don't mention anything about the brand. And I really agree with that. I think I call it a full stop thank you. You're just saying thank you. You're not asking for anything, at least in that first one. Maybe follow up later and say ask for a rating and review or referral or whatever. But you're just simply saying thank you because everybody has a million choices these days and they chose you out of all those million choices. So I think there's a real place for just a genuine thank you. And just being genuine these days and saying thank you will set you way apart from everybody else. I mean, yeah, people have such an entitlement mentality where they're like, yeah, of course you chose me. Why wouldn't you choose me? Well, guess what? There's other options out there, whether it's another purchase that sells the same service, or I could go to Upwork and have that service made for me, or I could go to Claude and have that service vibe coded for me. There's a million options. So the fact that they chose you, you really need to recognize that.

**Janice Hostager** 12:18

Are there any other mistakes that you see people make when they when they try this out?

**David Wachs** 12:23

Yeah, I think getting too verbose. Um we are 12 years into the program and we just started allowing letters. Before that, it was all handwritten notes. Because handwritten notes are short and letters are long. We finally gave in and allow people to write these overly verbose letters, but I wouldn't. I'd keep it real short. We allow up to 500 characters, I'd say keep it at 300, 350. When people open, we live in the Twitter generation where everything is 160 characters or less. So I would say keep your notes short to so that you're not gonna overwhelm them with the novel that is 500 characters or whatever. It really doesn't need to be long, it just needs to be genuine. So I'd say keep

it short. I'd also say do it right away. Um, don't wait a month to send out that handwritten note. It makes a great touch point. And as soon as you wait a month, they're gonna forget about you. So do it right away.

## How Robots Write Real Notes

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**Janice Hostager** 13:18

Yeah, yeah. I think any kind of thank you has to be done right away. I've you know, it's amazing to me, even where I've interviewed a lot of people for jobs, and maybe one out of ten will even reach back out on LinkedIn and say thank you. I mean, so it really is kind of a forgotten art, the art of saying thank you, that I do appreciate you. So I love that you are like making a providing a path for that. So at a certain point, this becomes kind of hard to manage where they would contact someone like you, right? So how how is it that your business does this?

**David Wachs** 13:53

Yeah, so first of all, thank you for bringing that up because like I'm here really to talk about the value of a handwritten note. That's handwritten with an eye, something you sit down and write with pen and paper. But if you get to the point where you can't handwrite them anymore, after you see the value in them, then yeah, work with a company like Handwritten to do it. And there's a few of us a few different companies out there. But uh the way we do it is we have 200 robots that are they're sitting in a on shelves in a room. If you find me on Instagram, you can see many videos about this. They're sitting on shelves in a room and they're writing out notes 24-7. And then each of those robots, what's different about handwritten over our competition is we've built a whole process, not a robot. Yes, we built the robot, we built the best robot, we built the first robot, et cetera, et cetera. We have the most robots, we send the most notes. But on top of it, there's a process there. So after your note is written, we actually built our own computer vision system to look at the note and ensure that every I is dotted and every T is crossed and everything looks excellent. And then we we cut off the tracking code that we put on that note to track it through the process, and we're able to magically track it without getting into our secret sauce without any noticeable marks on the document into an envelope and then out of the through an automated insertion machine. And then we take that blank envelope, blank in quotes, and we write the address on the outside of the envelope so that there's never a miss stuff. We used to do it by writing on the card, writing on the envelope and stuffing, but you know, as you grow, you have to figure out

better ways. So we actually take the card, stuff it in a quote unquote blank envelope and then write on the blank envelope. So that's kind of how handwritten does it. We have our own process there. But everything goes out within 24 to 48 hours. You can go on our website and for no additional fee, create your own card design. So you can put your logo or a picture of your team or a picture of the customer, whatever that is, and then we just print it, write it, send it out on your behalf with a real stamp. So everything looks really, really very authentic.

**Janice Hostager** 16:08

Okay, that was going to be my question because we've all received those letters that look like they've been handwritten. Yeah. But then you look a little closer and you're like, oh, see that that E there looks just like the E there. And you know, is that it can is it discernible or or is it really just that it looks like somebody actually wrote it?

**David Wachs** 16:27

So I'll be honest. We vary the letters so E's throughout the document will be different. E's at the end of a word will be different than E's at the beginning of a word. We vary the left margin so that it doesn't look like you wrote down a hard edge because people don't do that. We vary the line spacing so it doesn't look like you wrote online paper when you didn't. We do all these little things. If I sent you one, and I should have before this podcast, I apologize. If I sent you one and I called you and I said, Did you receive the card I sent you? You'd say yes, thank you so much. If I sent you one and I say, Did you notice the card was written by a robot? you're then going to put it under a different level of scrutiny.

**Janice Hostager** 17:10

Right. Yeah.

**David Wachs** 17:11

The notes we have are so good that you really have to cue the person by asking them that question, and then maybe they'll get it. But a lot of the handwriting styles we have nowadays, you see them being written all day, every day, and I I don't know they're written by a robot. So there's it really just depends on the handwriting style and if your client knows you sent them an automated handwritten note, but they're not going to know that. So you should be there.

**Janice Hostager** 17:36

Oh, really, really interesting. Have you seen this actually I lead to revenue? Like do you have any like any case studies where where uh kind of over there was a before and after so you could measure the ROI of something like this?

**David Wachs** 17:51

Yeah. So um what I'll say is a lot of our clients do not share the unless they use a QR code on the card, we're kind of out of the loop because it's really like it's not like an email where you click it. So we don't get a lot of the data. That said, what I can tell you is we have been in like that example of the piano tuner that generates great brand recognition and repeat service calls year after year. We work with car dealerships, and there they do a lot of print mail, printed letters asking you to come in and trade in, trade up your car, come back to the dealership to do that. When they switch those with handwritten notes, they see a 27 times greater response rate. Not 27%, 27 times. So it's like 2,700% greater response rate. We work with a suit, bespoke online suit maker. So you go, you know, you get out your tape measure and you measure yourself, and then you upload your measurements on the website and have a suit made. And every year they send out a coupon code to their best clients, and those coupons have like an 18% redemption rate, which they say is about three times what they usually get. Now, granted, you're paying a lot more because you have to ship all those cards out, but it's really about the ongoing loyalty, not so much the coupon code. Um, we work with a lot of nonprofits, and they say absolutely with every campaign they do, they're able to generate a 30% ROI on additional donations. So they're seeing great results on nonprofits. So it really depends on your use case. Like with these car dealerships, okay, so after I buy a car, I get an automated hand-written note, thanking me for my purchase. Because I get that hand-written note, I'm not going to run out and buy another car. You're playing the long game, and people have to be aware of that in any sort of marketing they're doing, obviously.

**Janice Hostager** 19:46

Yeah, yeah, of course. Okay, a few rapid fire questions here. All right, one sentence that every note should include.

**David Wachs** 19:55

I'd say thank you.

**Janice Hostager** 19:56

Okay.

**David Wachs** 19:57

I think thank you so much, or I really appreciate your business, something like that. I think that appreciation is gone in today's society. And I could go. That's one thing. Everybody's asking me what's the ROI of a thank you note. I'm thinking, ROI of a thank you note. You need to take a look in the mirror. You know what I mean?

**Janice Hostager** 20:15

Well, some of us are have marketing in the brain. So, you know, it's like it's a constant question. Okay. Is there a situation where you should not send a handwritten note?

## When Digital Beats Mail

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**David Wachs** 20:26

We do a lot of list scrubbing, like for nonprofits. We'll invite people to conference or to fundraising events and that type of thing. And they'll right before the event, they'll send us a suppression list because that person died and you don't want to be seen as insensitive. Um, so there is that, but that goes for all forms of marketing. I think with handwritten notes, it's just a little bit more sensitive because they thought you actually sat down to to write it. So we have to be wary of that. I don't think we're talking, you don't want to overdo it with this channel. So unlike emails that you can pump out daily, handwritten notes you're talking like for a year. So you want to keep your cadence of like, thank you for your purchase or thank you for your donation, maybe one special offer or invite. We want to welcome you to a special sale or use this for free shipping, whatever that is. Maybe a birthday card and a holiday card. Those are really the four touch points. We don't think you should burn people out on handwritten notes, if that makes sense.

**Janice Hostager** 21:32

Is there a time when digital still wins?

**David Wachs** 21:35

Oh, absolutely. I think you need to have a holistic content strategy to cover all cases of the person. And I have this 4C thing that I created, but the contact you're trying to reach out to, the content you're trying to send them, then you have to determine the channel and the cadence. Um so you know, if you're sending a your order's just been. Mailed or let's go crazier, your flight's been delayed. I certainly wouldn't put a your flight been

delayed on a handwritten note and send in the mail. You might want to say, we're so sorry your flight was delayed and we hope your trip wasn't ruined, and then put that in the mail. But you have to be considerate of the delivery time and the urgency and all the rest. So I think absolutely there's opportunities for these transactional types of messages. I don't think a handwritten note is the way to go. But for that genuine loyalty-building experience or post-con post-customer service experience, I think it's a great, great touch point.

**Janice Hostager** 22:40

100% agree. All right. David, where can people find out more about you and handwritten?

**David Wachs** 22:46

Yeah, Handwrytten.com. It's H-A-N-D-W-R-Y-T-T-E-N dot com is the best place. Then if you want to see my ongoing rantings as well as the robots, you can follow them. Handwrytten notes, H-A-N D W R Y T T E N S or Handwrytten Notes on Instagram too. But I post pretty much daily on the topic.

**Janice Hostager** 23:08

Nice. I'll put those all in the show notes for today. All right. Thanks so much for joining me today, David. I love it. I love the topic, and I'm excited to get my pen and and my little crane's notes out to send some more.

**David Wachs** 23:23

Good. Good for you. Good for you. Thank you.

**Janice Hostager** 23:26

I hope this got you thinking about some ways that you can use handwritten notes in your business too. For more information about David and anything we talked about today, visit [myweeklymarketing.com](http://myweeklymarketing.com) forward slash one fifty four. Thanks so much for joining me today. I'll see you next time. Bye for now.