ALL STARS in ACTION



6 BRILLIANT MARKETING IDEAS from Our 2012 All Star Winners

Constant Contact



What does it mean to be a Constant Contact All Star?

You work hard to connect with your customers; we see you do it every day. That's why, each year, we like to recognize our customers who excel at using our tools to engage and build relationships with customers of their own.

We look for customers who get the kind of results that reflect their hard work and stand out from the more than 500,000 organizations internationally who use our services. All Stars have consistently high open rates, contact their audience regularly, and take full advantage of our social and list growth tools. Only 10% of our customers are given the All Star Award. Every year, the competition gets tougher, as our best become even better!

Perks of Being an All Star

All Stars get the glory of the title, as well as some cool benefits like early access to our features, special content, the opportunity to be featured on our blog, and other prizes. Most importantly, they achieve great results for their business and get to share their expertise to others.

Here are the top tips from last year's winners. Read through their advice and start incorporating their ideas into your own marketing. By using these tips, we hope you too can achieve outstanding results and soon be on your way to becoming one of our All Star customers next year!

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IDEA 1: Adopt a customer state of mind

"I think of my customers as more than customers....I think of them as my friends. Then, I choose information that I want to share with my friends that I think would be helpful to them. Information that I would want someone to share with me. Sometimes it is helpful business information and sometimes it is something that they could use personally. Either way, they know that we care and are thinking about them. And that is a good thing!"

Couldn't have said it any better ourselves.

All Stars understand the importance of playing to your strengths. And as small businesses and organizations, the biggest advantage you have over large companies is strong customer relationships.

Investing time and energy in your customers will empower them to do the same for you.

By adopting a customer state of mind, these businesses found their winner's stride and grew their business through developing a team of dedicated customers.

SHANNON KUHRT

Vice President, M&M Wintergreens Inc.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

- When creating an email, keep their needs in mind
- Find out what makes your customers special
- See your customers as more than just "business"

IDEA 1: Adopt a customer state of mind

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"You have to get inside your customers' heads and think like they think. What do they like? What appeals to them in particular? Do they want to laugh or be entertained or do they prefer educational information or coupons? If you know what will affect them the most, you will know what to use in your communication."

JAMI HOUSTON

Director of Marketing and PR, Star Racing

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"Think about what specifically appeals to your target audience, and always include a word that would most likely grab their attention in the subject line. If you can get them to open it, you've accomplished the biggest hurdle. Second is eliminate the fluff, and cut to the chase. In this respect you are valuing your audience's time. And they appreciate that."

WENDY DENNEY

Product Specialist, Grodan, Inc.

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"Give them what they need and not everything you wish they wanted."

ORION BERRIDGE *Pastor, The Avenue Church*



"Before sending, always ask, 'is this email/newsletter a greater benefit to them, or to me?' If it's not them, then rewrite!"

FRAN SNYDER Owner, Listening Room Network



IDEA 1: Adopt a customer state of mind

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"It is all about knowing your customers and bringing them fresh, relevant content. If you are consistent with your email deliveries, your message, and do not oversell them, you will have sticky eyeballs for the long-term."

STEVE MINSKY *Owner, Nutritional Concepts, Inc.* "Make your content relevant and timely. If you are filling a need, your audience will grow naturally, easily, and organically. It's really that simple. Think service first. Are you serving your customers? Then your own success will follow."

ERIN GAFILL *Marketing Writer, Nepenthe Restaurant*

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"I don't believe there's a single 'silver bullet' for successfully connecting with our customers. It's a lot of hard work. Winners aren't lazy about their marketing campaigns, but instead put the necessary thought into answering key questions: 1. who's my audience, 2. what content do they want to see, 3. how can I deliver that content in the most concise, most professional way... It really comes down to who we're serving - our customers or ourselves? Serving customers—I mean REALLY serving them is a vital key for winning."

JOE KLINK

Director of Corporate Relations, ProVia Products



"We seek first to understand what our customer values and then align our conversation on how we can meet their needs."

MICHAEL BROWERS

Marketing Communications Manager, Lake Region Medical



IDEA 2: Let them get to know YOU

Engagement is a two way street. Of course you want to get to know your customers, but don't forget that they want to get to know you too!

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"I invite my readers get to know me, not just my business. In this world of electronic communication, what people crave is real connection."

MICHELLE PFENNIGHAUS *Owner, Find Your Balance Health* People like to do business with those they know, like and trust. So don't be afraid to show off some of your personality. By making your online marketing more people-friendly, you'll make it easier for your customers to connect with you. That connection will foster brand loyalty and make your customers more likely to recommend your business to their own network.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Humanize your business with images and stories
- Add a personal touch when possible
- Make your business stand out by adding some personality

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"I started my business when my daughter was eight months old. Every month for 4+ years our newsletter features 'Playground Perspectives'—a look at leadership and change management through my dad filter. It's the most read and commented on aspect of our newsletter, and has built real emotional loyalty among our readers! (And Thea gets recognized by strangers when we're out and about.)"

JOHN SARVAY *Owner, Floricane LLC*

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"We provide a variety of stories, including personal ones about our veterinarians, informative and educational pieces about health related issues, and community service outreach that we work with. The personal stories about our vets get the most attention; people seem to like to know more about the folks with whom they trust their pets."

HEATHER CUTCHIN EVANS

Marketing assistant, CareFirst Animal Hospital

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"The subject line is the first golden key: the message has to be direct but personal, i.e. 'Your Early Bird Tickets are here', but the second golden key is the content of the email itself: the writing, photos and graphics have to be as engaging as that subject line. Think of your patrons as though they are someone you just met at a party: you want them to have fun, but you want them to learn something real about you, as well."

MEREDITH MCMATH

Managing Director, Run Rabbit Run Theatre



IDEA 2: Let them get to know YOU

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"I am not afraid to be a little silly, to slip a fun pun or wacky rhyme into my subject line. I figure that with the amount of material flowing into inboxes, even if they just get a smile from seeing the subject line, I'm making good contact."

DANIEL SWENSON-KLATT *Owner, Butter Bakery Cafe*

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"Be Real! Authenticity is the first rule. Ask yourself, Do I just want to sell my product, or do I really care about solving the customers problems. If it's the former, then you need to realize that customers are the smartest people around and they will sniff you out if you aren't authentic. Give them something of yourself"

MARC ROLAND Owner, Roland Wines 15

"I like to make my newsletter a carefully balanced mix of personal updates, information I find to be cool, useful, or fascinating, and business updates so they are eager to open it. I always sandwich the business or marketing information in-between other content, but near the top, to invite my readers in and then keep them reading."

KATE SCIANDRA *Owner, KJ Skiandra Ltd.*

"Stories! We've seen the impact that a well-told story can have on our open rates. When accompanied by a great photo, it's a sure fire way to connect with our members."

CHERYL VOSS

Marketing and communications specialist, The Land Conservancy of McHenry County



IDEA 2: Let them get to know YOU

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"We always share some personal information about what's happening in our lives. Plus, we have a section of our newsletter called 'Time to Share. Create a Buzz.', where we share interesting tips, promote something happening in the community, a cool business or not-forprofit. We strive to create a two way conversation with our readers."

PAULA HARRIS

Co-Founder, WH Cornerstone Investments



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"I include a personal note at the beginning of each newsletter or event email. I have found a personal touch makes me relatable to readers. They do not want to continue reading if they feel that I see them as a dollar sign and the last thing I want my customers, clients and students to feel is that they are only valued for their money. The more personal I am, the more interaction I have with my contacts."

ROSE KRESS *Program manager, LifeForce Healing Institute*

"One of my primary goals as a small business owner is to create genuine connections with my customers. Because of this my marketing content reveals who I am as a business owner and artist, and encourages my customers to engage. My customers know they can immediately join in on the fun, whether it be through posting on my Facebook page, replying to my Constant Contact newsletters, or calling me. Despite the fact I am a fine artist, the vast majority of my customers are repeat customers. This is due to the relationship building methods I use."

ANNA KOON

Owner, A2N2



Want to make your email stand out in an already overflowing inbox? You have to make your emails valuable and worth your readers' time.

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"I ask the question, 'What's in it for me?' from the perspective of the customer before posting, emailing or otherwise communicating with my customers."

RAMONA BILLINGSLEA Marketing and education manager, Betsey's Health Foods Whether it's with a useful tips, an exclusive offer, or industry insight, these businesses know just how to create emails that go above and beyond ordinary email marketing.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Offer up your industry expertise
- Think of an email as more than a sales pitch
- Add an incentive to boost engagement

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"I focus on helping my retailers be successful. I share business tips on merchandising, staff management, inventory management, sales, etc. At trade shows, both customers and non-customers (e.g. future customers!) compliment me on my email content."

DELLA GLEIN *Owner, Della Q*



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"Our customers see us as a viable source of trustworthy, honest and relevant information. They respond very positively to any product we do feature, as we give them a solid non-sales-pitchy 'why' behind the product their purchasing. And one last piece, before any newsletter gets published we think to ourselves 'would I want to see this in my email box?' If the answer is no, then it's time for a re-write."

ROBYN WINNER Marketing specialist, Social Thinking "Make the newsletter informative and cover subjects that interest the reader. By doing this you advertise your company's expertise in your industry rather than just the products you sale.
Products and brands can change from day to day or year to year, but if your company is seen as knowledgeable and reputable by customers, they will seek you out, spend money, and tell their friends, family, and neighbors."

DAN WEAVER *Owner, Weaver Plant Nursery*

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"We're a jewelry making school that offers workshops and classes regularly. Each month, we have an instructor write a metalworking tip that we share with students, related to their class. Our community loves learning new tricks, especially when they are free & useful! At the end of the year we send a compilation to everyone as a thank you for their support and being part of our community. So many students write in to say how much they appreciate it. It doesn't cost us anything; our teachers provide the content, and often get registrations for their classes. Everybody wins!"

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LINDSAY MINIHAN

Executive Director, MetalWerx



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"It's so important to me to offer my contacts information they want and can use. I use my e-newsletter as a vehicle to connect people with research links, interesting analysis and stories that speak to their experiences. Secondarily, I let them know about upcoming classes, trainings and services. This has been a great strategy to boost our open rate and connects with our mission to make a living while also being of service."

JESSICA ENGLISH

Owner, Birth Kalamazoo

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"We send links to our upcoming event information and then afterwards send links to photos of those events for both those who attended and those who were not able to make it, so they can feel as if they were there!"

MER KRONISH

Office Manager, LakeView Day Camp

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"We have numerous competitors and wanted our communications with them to be positive, but not an endless sales pitch. We decided to make our newsletter entirely educational on current events and topics in our ever-changing industry. By not pushing our agenda to retain them as a client, but rather, helping them stay successful through white papers and industry news, we achieved our goal of client retention. We now have customers emailing us topics that they would like to see addressed in future newsletters, and have even scored some new clients who have found our published white papers on the web. At least once a week I get an email asking me to put them on our newsletter list, it is so amazing!"

AMY GAY

Director of Operations, Dominion Due Diligence Group

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"Supply your customers with relevant helpful information and not just a hard sell with information on your company/ product. Supply related information around your product without promoting the product itself."

RONNY BARENZ *Project Manager, Barenz Builders*

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"The best tip, I learned a long time ago to get customers to open your email is to always offer something free; truly free. Something a customer can simply click and download. It should always be relevant to what your company is offering. For example, our customers always need graphics they can use for commercial purposes. I have partnered with 13 graphic designers that supply us with graphics we can give away. In return, we make sure to promote them in our newsletter."

RYAN SAWYER

President, Wrapcandy

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"I think the most important part of growing your list is to engage your fans by offering incentives that inspire them to signup. Give them something special that is exclusive to your mailing list and above and beyond anything that is available on your Facebook or Twitter pages. For a few months, I ran a promotion offering free MP3s of monthly covers to anyone on the mailing list. I posted youtube videos of the covers everywhere, but the only people who would receive the download link were on the mailing list, and this motivated people to signup (and make my existing list happy). People love to feel like they're a part of something exclusive, so you make sure they are."

KATRINA PARKER

Singer/songwriter, Katrina Parker Music



IDEA 4: Keep it simple, keep it short, keep it consistent

No matter how exciting or useful your information is, you have to remember that we live in a time of information overload. Every email should be easy to read, have a clean design, and feel short enough for readers to understand the main points quickly.

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"I write everything, from subject line to main text, as though my customers are intelligent, passionate, and super busy people with good senses of humor. Authenticity and brevity are key."

JESSICA PROKUP

Owner, Yellow Devil Gear Exchange

STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Make your information more manageable by including links and pictures
- Design your emails with a goal in mind
- Only send emails when you have something new to share

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"We strive to keep our e-news brief but chock full of links to more information so they can read more about the topics they most want to learn about. We then use the click-through info to help us determine what kinds of stories have the most appeal to our readers for determining content in future e-newsletters."

LAURIE BERTKE

Reporter/web editor, Diocese of Toledo



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"I try to think about the emails that I actually open and read when designing mine. The subject line is to the point and says what we're in for in the email. The email has great pictures of people having fun engaging in our programs, and the body is kept short enough for people to read all the way through! There are always links to more information if people want it. And our emails are always positive!"

KATHLEEN NOLTE

Founder, Cherokee County Arts Council

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"Keep your group engaged but not oversaturated! 'Email fatigue' will result in too many messages sent too often. We typically refrain from sending more than 2 campaigns per month."

JOSHUA BLANDFORD Director of advancement, DeSales High School 35

"1. We determine the amount of time required and include a small 'clock' on the top to tell them how long it will take the read the newsletter. 2. We follow up QUICKLY after we put on an event and include our presentation and extra resources in PDF format for our readers to have. 3. We often use our email marketing to share prizes, sweepstakes and contests we are doing on our social media sites to increase engagement across platforms. As a result, we find our open rates, click-throughs and often social share numbers are great!"

KIM WALKER

Director of marketing, 5 Stones Media, LLC



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"I thought I was doing pretty well... until I went to a Constant Contact seminar! We were getting about a 25% open rate with absolutely no clicks. The weekly emails were the equivalent of 6 pages long! I had a sneaking feeling that the emails were too long, but there was so much information to share! By going to the seminar, the entire email world changed for me. I shortened the email to about a page and a half. I made links for EVERYTHING! I posted a video and pictures and our email open rate and click rate soared! The compliments from our congregation and their appreciation of the 'shortness' of the email made me smile!"

ELLEN BOTWIN

Executive director, Adath Israel Congregation



"Take every opportunity to have clickable links in your email. Links to your web site, tickets to your event, links to industry partners. Also, always include a personal note at the top and with your signature and include your email link so you customers and interface directly with you in a click. Give them a reason to to go investigate beyond the content in your letter."

DYANA HESSON

Owner, Paintings by Dyana Hesson



"We keep the same visual structure with each issue but change the graphics in each section as we change the content. So we look familiar enough for our guests to feel comfortable yet interesting enough to consistently keep their interest."

CAROL JEANOTILLA Owner, Big3D Productions, Inc.

IDEA 4: Keep it simple, keep it short, keep it consistent

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"Whenever I get a new client, I email them a 'subscribe' link and they choose if they'd like to subscribe to my newsletters & updates. Then I send them complimentary newsletter. If someone does not subscribe or show interest, they don't go on my Constant Contact list. In 2010, I sent Daily Inspirations, but since then I've decided not to clog up the Inboxes of clients & subscribers so much. Switching to Weekly & Monthly newsletters lowered my 'unsubscribe' rate. It also created more consistent contact w/my clients/ subscribers. Clients open my emails much quicker. And moving to weekly & monthly gives me more time to create content they value more. The feedback from subscribers has been phenomenal."

ROBIN KELLEY

Owner, Sedona Spirit Connection, LLC

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"Marketing people like me tend to love words. Especially our own thoughtful, clever, well-written words....By all means be complete—give them who, what, when, where, why and how with an adjective or two in the mix, but that's it. If your article about an event or award is too verbose, people won't take the time to read it, which means they won't respond to it or forward it. It can also mean they'll stop reading your emails all together, or worse, unsubscribe. Keep it tight. Keep it interesting. People will read poetry in their free time. During a busy work day, they just want the facts, ma'am."

JULIE PFADT

Executive director, Lake Erie Wine Country



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"Simplicity and focus. We layer our emails with three different views in mind. One group will simply look at the photos, so we focus one or two larger photos of what we are telling them about. The second group will look at the photos and headlines, so we put larger font headlines of the two or three things we are telling them. The third layer is the smaller font details for those who are interested to read the details, and we make this more personal and casual in form. By using this layering methodology, we connect with the maximum amount of viewers of the email on our client list."

SCOTT FRANKLIN

President, Franklin-Christoph, Ltd.

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"I try to make all outgoing communication short & sweet. People are short on time, so if my message is too long, it'll miss a majority of my audience. I also watch the number of emails I send a week. Working for a church, LOTS of groups want to get their message out. I try to get a 'whole picture' of what to communicate each week and combine messages so I don't inundate my readers with too many emails."

EMILY DAVENPORT

Director of Communication, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

IDEA 5: Make sure your news is on point

If you're focused on your customers, it won't take long for you to realize that all your customers are not the same. To reach your customers on a personal level, you have to do a little leg work to get them the information right for them.

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"It's all about targeting! Learn to work your database. Gone are the days of blanket lists - use the information you have about your customers to give them the best content you can. What they've purchased from you, what their interests are, what they need. We very rarely do large email lists—and it made us a Constant Contact All-Star!"

CAITLIN O'NEIL

Communications Coordinator, Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants Luckily, there are plenty of helpful tools to make it easier to reach your audience. Using your reports to see what's getting read, segmenting your contact list into smaller groups, and asking customers for feedback are valuable practices in making your emails on point from all angles.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Treat your customers as individuals
- Use reports to see what kind of information is most popular
- Ask for feedback to help guide your approach



IDEA 5: Make sure your news is on point

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"We connected to our customers by keeping a very close eye on our email reports. We studied everything from what time they were opening our emails to exactly who was clicking on our content. As we studied our reports we focused extremely hard on giving our customers content that they would be interested in rather than content we thought was important. It was really a process of finding out what our customers wanted to hear/learn vs. what we wanted to tell them."

ELKE MISCHKE

Owner, Fred Astaire Dance Studios

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"Let your customers 'choose their news'! Our clients select the information they want to receive from us (for example, product or event communications). We can then customize messages based on what they want to hear from us. But we don't miss the opportunity these requested messages provide us, and we often include 'advertisements' in our messages to cross-promote our other products and services."

JACKIE ALLDER

Senior communications and PR specialist, ATPCO



IDEA 5: Make sure your news is on point

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"I love giving my customers a way to give feedback, which helps me provide more of the information that they are looking for. I regularly include links to polls and surveys. My customers feel valued, because I do act on their suggestions and requests. By asking them what they think, they help make my business better."

BARBARA BAILEY Founder, By Women For Women

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"I connected with my customers by understanding what floats their boat there is no one size fits all so I try to glean (and ask!) how they best want to connect. E.g., short and sweet or more chatty; email or telephone; social media?; in person?; all of the above. I jokingly say, if all else fails talk to the customer!"

DEBORAH LEWIS Founder, Bredeson Outdoor Adventures



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IDEA 6: Push your limits

If you're serious about being successful, you have to serious about your strategy. Trying something new and connecting with customers in a fresh way can make a big impact.

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"We connect with customers in ANY way we can—in the tasting room, on the road at festivals and in-store tastings, online via Facebook and Twitter. Wherever we are we ALWAYS make sure we have a poster with our QR code so that customers can snap an image and sign up for our newsletter quickly and easily."

BRITTANY MORRIS

Advertising Director, Fulkerson Winery

You should always be looking for better ways to engage with your customers. Our All Stars aren't afraid to try something new to take their business to the next level.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Treat your customers as individuals
- Use reports to see what kind of information is most popular
- Ask for feedback to help guide your approach



IDEA 6: Push your limits

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"Using video has been a huge factor for our newsletter! It is SO shareable, and all our readers love to see themselves on the 'small' screen! We are known in our market for 'bringing things to life' in our newsletter."

CECILY LANCIT *President, Paradise Coast TV*

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"I read every article I can from Constant Contact and other social media organizations. Then I just try to in one new idea each newsletter. I also check the CC reports every time to see what works and what doesn't."

JEFF ATHERSTON

Director, Africa Renewal Christian College

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"In 2013 we wanted to improve the email capture process we used at the trade shows we attended. We researched and decided to use iCapture, an app available in the MarketPlace, installed on an iPad at our booth. This kiosk entry method helped reduce the inaccuracies in obtaining legible contact information at these shows. This increased the number of emails we captured at each show as well decrease the bounce rate of the followup emails we went after each show."

JAMEON RUSH

Marketing officer, Geneva State Bank

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"Experiment. Try different types of content—subject, style and form. Then also find the sweet spot of the day when your readers will be engaged. If you don't enjoy the capabilities newsletters offer, you won't find what resonates."

KYLE NIEDERPRUEM

President and CEO, Kyle Communications



IDEA 6: Push your limits

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"Keep trying. Seriously. There are (many) times when it might seem like no one is listening. Don't accept it. They are, but not all at once and not all the same way. Keep trying, keep thinking and planning and you will get there."

CAROLYN DORSEY Public information officer, City of Fairfax Schools Want more tips? Join over 465,000 people who get free marketing inspiration delivered straight to their inboxes each month with our <u>Hints and Tips</u> newsletter.

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