

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 136

THE SECRET TO HAPPY EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

While festive celebrations dominate our days as 2016 draws to a close, the new year will be here before we know it. Now's the time to map out a communications strategy that will keep your audience engaged the whole year through!

But as you tackle your communications calendar, don't fall into this all-too-common trap ...

Valleys of Silence

We see a lot of organizations and companies that make the same fatal mistake. They're so concerned about losing the subscribers they've worked so hard to get, they actually UNDER-communicate!

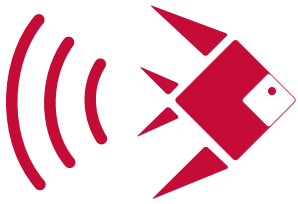
Here's how it happens.

Most organizations find they spend a lot of time asking their subscribers to take action (ahem, that is, give them money) leading up to pinnacle dates through out the year, whether it's an event, the final day of a membership drive, the conclusion of a fundraising campaign or the end of a big sale. We call this conversion marketing, and it's a necessary part of your overall strategy if you're going to stay afloat.

That's why, if you look closely, you'll likely find that your marketing calendar is full of peaks and valleys. And that's totally normal. There should be active selling time as well as down time.

The danger is when down time becomes dead time.





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As you ramp up to a campaign or an event you spend a lot of time communication about things you want people to do for you. Buy a ticket, renew membership, donate money. As you move toward the deadline the communications escalate so you can make your goals.

The problem is that once that event's over or that drive has ended, organizations tend to go on radio silence. Why? People tell us all the time — they're afraid their readers will unsubscribe if they get too many emails.

Most people feel guilty about all the emails they just sent and want to give their audience a break out of fear that they will lose them.

But the problem isn't over-communicating.

It's over-asking.

Last week I listened to a great [interview with Anne Samoilov on Amy Porterfield's Online Marketing Made Easy podcast](#). I loved Anne's description of your relationship with your subscribers. She compares it to a bank — if you keep making withdrawals without making any deposits, you'll eventually hit zero.

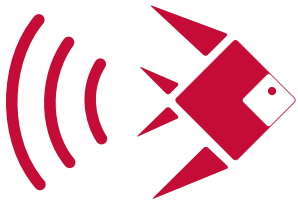
So What's the Solution? Relationship Building

Your subscribers joined your list because they want to hear from you. And people buy from people they know and like.

But when you market only to sell, you miss a critical opportunity to support, educate and bond with your community.

Instead, focus on balancing your conversion marketing with "relationship marketing," which (you guessed it!) focuses on building a relationship with your





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subscribers.

You can do this by using your valleys to schedule content that's fun, interesting, educational and personal — just because.

The key is to keep the heartbeat pulsing, even while at rest.

So here is a step-by-step plan for creating your plan:

1. Map out your peaks.
These are the key dates you need to lead up to every season — the events, the campaigns, the drives, the seasonal sales.

2. Chart your inclines.
This is your marketing plan leading toward your peak. It will include the schedule and content plan for your sales messages.

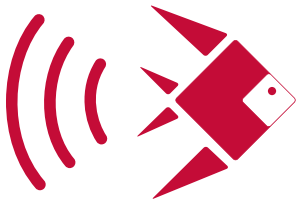
When you're done, look for the gaps. There should be some valleys when you're not pushing toward any goal. And if there aren't any valleys, go back and adjust your ramps to create some. Communications should feel like a conversation with an up and down flow and no long awkward pauses.

3. Fill in the valleys with relationship content.
Your valleys are the place for your relationship content. Think about what you can share that would delight and amaze your community and keep them glad they're involved.

At a loss for ideas to fill in the valleys? Here are six of my favorites:

1. Offer general gratitude.
A thank you for buying a ticket, making a donation or completing a purchase DOESN'T COUNT — you should already be sending a personal thank you for that anyway! In addition, you could say thank you at





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Thanksgiving. We love you on Valentine's Day. Send a random expression of gratitude. And whenever you can, work a thank you into any other content you create.

2. Demonstrate impact.

Tell a story about the child who's beating her disease because of your subscribers' support. Invite a student to talk about how he sees more beauty after taking one of your art classes. Describe the economic improvements in the village you source your product from. Your community wants to learn what happens next. Spend time collecting and telling those stories in different ways.

3. Share progress stories.

Are you constructing a new building? Working to solve an issue? Trying to eradicate a disease? Share updates on the progress you're making toward your goal.

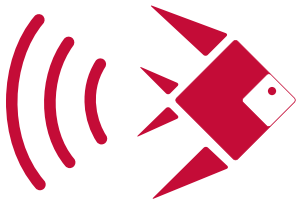
4. Educate your readers.

Whether you organize conferences, sell a product or work toward the common good, you have first-hand, inside knowledge about some subject or issue. Share some of it! Organize yoga retreats? Describe your latest go-to pose and its benefits. Offer life skills training, share an organizational tip. It's easy to think that your audience isn't the recipient of your services so you have nothing to share, but that is rarely true.

5. Engage your readers in advocacy.

Are you an issue-oriented organization? Let people know when they can take action on something that matters to them or when important legislation is on the table. You can report on the situation, share what you are doing to change it and highlight the different ways people are getting involved.





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6. Reveal your process.

People love to see behind the scenes. Do you run a successful school? Explain one of your teachers' effective teaching methods or walk through a typical day. Make exceptional products? Tell your readers how. Produce stellar shows? Take people behind the scenes of a rehearsal or explain the way you go about selecting your next production.

So now it's time to go get planning! And, as always, if you should need any help launching something like this, please give me a call.

If you are listening to this episode when it airs, have a wonderful holiday. Next week is our annual New Year's episode, and this year I ask our past guests what's one thing they did this year that really worked.

I hope your year closes out on a high note. January will be here before you know it, and it will be time to dive back in.

One of the things we are adding is a monthly Master Class on marketing. The classes will be delivered live and then the recordings will be available as Nonprofit Toolkit trainings. January's class will be on Finding your Audience. If you want to get on our list to receive an invitation, just text the word MASTERCLASS to 33444. This will be our list for all the classes so you can use that code no matter when you are listening.

Thank you so much for listening to this episode, and I hope to see you in class next year.

