

# Growing an email list with newsletter swaps

I really enjoyed my recent conversation with Madison Michael about mailing lists and how she's been able to grow her mailing lists into the thousands.

She has a ton of great advice that's worth listening to.

One thing in particular that I loved was that she sends 2 newsletters per month, each with a different focus.

One newsletter is purely focused on promoting other authors she's doing newsletter swaps with.

The other newsletter is more about personal affairs and usually will include a couple of group promos.

If you're currently only sending one newsletter per month with everything packed into that single email, you might want to consider this option instead.

Why?

Connecting with readers twice per month (instead of just once) will usually get you higher open rate, click rates, and engagement.

And, the extra effort is minimal since it's all the same info, just across 2 newsletters instead.

There's lots more tips that she has though.

## How did you build your audience when starting out?

**Quote:** *I learned about StoryOrigin... and it was an exponential change to my email list. I went from about 600 people on my email list. I put about 1,500 new readers on in the first year about 1,000 in the second year and over 800 this year*

I frequently hear of authors taking a build-it-and-they-will-come mindset to publishing.

Unfortunately, taking that approach means you might end up waiting years for your books to be discovered even by a handful of readers.

To make money from writing, you need to be both an author and marketer.

Marketing can be daunting at the outset, but there's an easy and cheap way to get started.

[Learn to run newsletter swaps](#) with other authors to promote your work.

### **Takeaways:**

- Don't wait for readers. Reaching your audience requires marketing (2:41)
- Newsletter swaps can exponentially increase your mailing list (4:04)

## **How did you get started?**

**Quote:** *If I could get people to pick up the prequel, I could get them to move towards the series.*

It can be hard to get people to take a chance on a new author or series.

One way to combat that is by offering a prequel to your existing series for free.

This is great because it lets readers explore your writing and world without having to commit.

Readers feel more willing to try the freebie they're offered, and when the story hooks them, they'll pick up the other novels in the series.

**Quote:** *So I created two reader magnets and then I started my newsletter and I created my welcome sequence*

Madison does something very smart here to broaden her potential reader base.

Her free prequel appeals to readers that want to read about love, but might not reel in those that are more interested in steamy passion.

So, she also gives away a heated novella called "Studmuffin".

This enables her to reach and connect with both types of readers.

Another reason to offer multiple reader magnets is to learn more about your potential audience.

Madison learned that 80% of her readers were interested in the steamier stories.

Knowing what readers like helps you write directly for your audience and market your books more effectively.

She also created three different welcome sequences:

- One is for people who find her organically, without being drawn in by the reader magnets
- One is for those who join for the prequel
- One is for those interested in the novella

This allows her to tailor her welcome to the reader, and more importantly, promote the reader magnet(s) that they are not already receiving, so they're more likely to become a fan of her stories.

As a reader, Madison also knows that a lot of people may take a reader magnet, but never actually start it.

It's important to send emails encouraging readers to begin reading their free books, even after they have downloaded them.

### **Takeaways:**

- Write a prequel as a freebie for readers that join your mailing list (Time 4:50)
- Create multiple reader magnets to find what works best (Time 6:05)
- Setup welcome sequences for each subscriber source separately (Time 6:26)
- Share your other reader magnets in your welcome series (Time 7:01)
- Nudge people to start reading with plot points in your welcome sequence (Time 7:16)
- Assume people haven't read your freebie. Continue enticing them to start (Time 7:33)

## **How has your welcome sequence affected your engagement?**

**Quote:** *I originally just had a brief welcome sequence...I would send them the book and nothing would happen. I would see no traction in sales, I would see no interaction from readers*

Madison expanded on her welcome sequence after realizing that the shorter welcome didn't encourage sales.

Furthermore, she also noticed that people would unsubscribe from her mailing list.

So she decided to add two more emails to the welcome sequence.

Once she added these, she began to lose fewer subscribers and her book sales improved.

### **Takeaways:**

- Further enticing subscribers to start reading improves engagement (Time 8:19)

## What are the last 2 emails in your welcome sequence?

**Quote:** *The last one is a call to action to review the book...in the second the second to last one was a little bit about the plot of the book that they had received*

A reader magnet can be extremely useful, but it isn't effective if the reader never starts the book.

When Madison expanded on her welcome sequence, she included two additions to the initial download email.

Now, the second email that the reader receives encourages them to start reading their freebie by engaging them with plot points.

It's important that this grips the reader with more than the plot description that can be found on the website or back of the book, because the reader has probably already seen that.

After that, the third email is a call-to-action that asks the reader to leave a review.

### Takeaways:

- 3 email welcome sequence: 1) Download 2) Entice 3) Request review (Time 9:11)
- Your welcome sequence is your best opportunity to engage readers (Time 9:28)

## How do you find reviewers?

**Quote:** *The best resource for somebody else finding a book is finding out that somebody else loved that book*

Having your books positively rated is essential, but [getting book reviews](#) can be challenging.

One good strategy is to appeal to readers by encouraging them to help fellow readers out.

If you see that a book is well-loved by other people, you're more likely to give it a chance.

Madison asks readers to help share their thoughts and enthusiasm to help future readers discover her work.

It's also good to remember how valuable criticism is, as long as it is constructive, because this can help you improve.

**Takeaway:** Frame your request for reviews as a way to help other readers (Time 10:03)

## How frequently do you send your newsletter?

**Quote:** *Don't sign up for more than you can do consistently because consistency...is king*

Madison used to only send newsletters when she had something new to promote, however, she quickly learned that this is not the best tactic.

However, the solution is not to send newsletters constantly, but rather consistently.

You don't want to look unreliable to your readers, so you have to commit to an update schedule.

It's more important that you send a less frequent newsletter regularly (like once a month) than sending updates erratically.

Madison started with monthly newsletters, but now does them every other Tuesday.

She also notes that keeping her newsletters to a formula is useful to both herself and her audience, because it helps her know what to write, and lets readers know what to expect.

**Takeaway:** Send newsletters regularly, not just when you have something to sell (Time 11:36)

## How long does it take you to write a newsletter?

**Quote:** *It was already uploaded and gone. Less than thirty minutes, and I will get 50? 60? 150? new readers on my email list just for having done those four swaps*

Madison says it takes about four hours to write a newsletter.

More importantly, it's extremely worthwhile, as she can get up to 150 new email subscribers from doing four swaps.

Although some authors who don't know [how to run newsletter swaps](#), may be reluctant if they aren't able to 100% vouch for every book, but this issue can be resolved with good framing.

Remember not to recommend books to your email list, but rather present readers with the chance to explore other stories.

However, this does not mean that you shouldn't do some preliminary checks on a book before swapping.

Madison makes sure to see if existing reviews are generally positive, and she also reviews the landing page for a book, as she believes this quality of the summary is a good indicator of the quality of the writing.

### Takeaways:

- Frame books from swaps as “opportunities to explore” (Time 14:59)
- Vet a book’s reviews & description before agreeing to swap (Time 15:14)

## What do you recommend to authors just starting out?

**Quote:** *Build an email list, because when you launch that book want somebody there who's going to buy it - and you have to create that audience before the book comes out*

Madison’s chief piece of advice to those at the start of their career as authors is to [build a mailing list](#), even before their book is written or ready to be published.

Newsletters work well, but if they’re not your style, then blogs and social media are other great options for engaging with readers too.

Email lists are essential, however, because just like commercials promote new movies, authors have to drive excitement for their new books.

Once a book is out there, Madison recommends that new authors [start arranging newsletter swaps](#) for several reasons:

- They don’t cost anything
- They help build relationships with other authors
- They’re highly effective
- They work for any genre
- They are quick and simple to do (if you’re on StoryOrigin)

### Takeaways:

- Focus on 1 thing at a time, and start with a mailing list (Time 15:44)
- Start building your mailing list before you launch Book 1 (Time 16:21)
- Newsletter swaps work for many genres, are easy, and fast (Time 17:35)

**IMPORTANT:** This written material has been prepared based on sources that you provided or that the writer found. Neither Flocksy or the writer who wrote the copy makes any claims whatsoever as to the accuracy of the information contained within, and they are not

responsible for any legal or financial difficulty resulting from the use of this written material. We encourage you to review it thoroughly before disseminating it or using it in trade.

SOURCES USED:

Transcript

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_QHZ8CFjGs&ab\\_channel=EvanGow%2CindiedeveloperofStoryOrigin](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_QHZ8CFjGs&ab_channel=EvanGow%2CindiedeveloperofStoryOrigin)