



James: James Schramko here. Today's guest will be talking about a topic that everyone knows about, but hardly anyone does, and that is the subject of creating a killer autoresponder sequence for your opt ins so that you can actually build and nurture your email list. To cover this topic, I went out there and had a look around, see who's doing this well. I came across a fellow by the name of John McIntyre from DropDeadCopy.com. Welcome to the call, John.

John: Hi, James. Thank you.

James: John, I first became aware of you via another podcast that I listened to, Dan Andrews and Ian Schoen have LifestyleBusinessPodcast.com. One of the episodes I heard somewhere, maybe in the air or TropicalMBA, that they felt a need to build an autoresponder sequence for their email list, and I think they interviewed you about it, and you were the one who actually assembled it. Is that true?

John: Yeah, correct.

James: Right. So what I think would be really useful for our listeners is, we all know we should have Aweber or Office AutoPilot, or some kind of email capture on our website. And we know that we have to have a list, and we have to have a relationship with that list, and that's where our buyers come from. It's like an ATM. If you want to make some

money, you send out an email, you make an offer, and all that money comes into your bank account. You can buy a big, luxury ocean liner and retire for the rest of your life.

Now, the bit that they struggle with, from my experience, is what do you actually send people after they have given you their details? And I think that's where you could probably step in and help us out a little bit. Maybe we can workshop this through, if you have the steps that are involved in what it is that you do.

What to do when people opt in

John: Sure. So the main thing, the most important thing is, basically, like the offer, which really begins with the audience and figuring out the exact prospect that you want to attract, whether that's a beginner or someone who's at an intermediate level or an advanced person. Depending on the person that you are trying to attract is going to change the autoresponder that you write for them.

James: Well, that makes sense. When it comes to the offer, what sort of things can you offer someone in exchange for an email address? What things can you offer and which things work the best?

What to offer

John: OK. So number one, I think eBooks are really, really overdone. Everyone's doing them. It's the free report. It comes from kind of like direct response days. It's just, everyone's just doing it. So there's not much that's compelling about it anymore. So I would not even bother with an eBook. I would figure out whatever the main problems are of the target market or the target prospect. Brainstorm their problems. I would do instead 5 or 10 main pain points, and then you would write an autoresponder that solves those specific pain points or gets them on the path to solving them. You could work on an eBook in there that could be part of it, but the essential idea here is as that you're solving a problem, not that you're giving a report.

James: So it's more about the solution rather than the way you deliver it. Is that what I'm hearing?

John: Absolutely.

James: Right. So if you're doing this multi-step problem solving, what do you name that? Is it a training series, is it a mini-course?

John: We call it a crash course, with Tropical MBA and Lifestyle Business Podcast. So that was an easy way to digest the material. They were giving away 50 free podcast episodes but that sounds intimidating. No one wants to just download 50 MP3 files. Listening to them is kind of scary. So what we did is we took the 10 most interesting and most compelling ones, split them into 10 different emails, and called it a crash course. So it was exactly the same thing, but we made it positioned in a very different way that made it easier to consume.

James: Nice. So what actually happens when you implement something like this? And by the way, just from my own experience, when I switched from having a free report to a training sequence, that was getting me people continuing to open my emails, whereas I found with the free report, they would download the report and then they would never open another email again. So by having a multi-part promise, the commitment when someone gives the email address is that they're going to hear from you again and again. That actually seeds the rest of the relationship better, in my opinion, even if the opt ins were a little bit lower in percentage. The agreement is better off for you as the product provider. So that's consistent with my findings.

Changes in results

What sort of changes to results have you seen when you implement stuff like this for other clients?

John: So we use basically what you described there, it's like someone who downloads an eBook and then stops opening your emails after that, they're not very engaged and they're kind of like a waste of the slot on the list. In some cases, you get lower subscribers but the engagement level is so much higher that these people are opening the emails; they're more likely to buy stuff with the Tropical MBA when we did it. They

had a stock standard sidebar form. So they had a little “Sign up to receive the 50 free episodes. Put your email address here and hit the Submit button.”

And so what we did, that’s called a one-step opt in. So you take one step and then you’re on the list. So we turned it into what’s called a two-step opt in, which means that in the sidebar, there is a link which says, “Tropical MBA Crash Course.” So someone would click on that, they would go to another page, which had about a thousand words of copy that explained what we were trying to do and what the offer was. And then we hid the opt-in form at the bottom of the page, which is kind of like counterintuitive. People say make it as easy as possible for people to get on your list, but we actually made it harder. Email opt ins more than doubled. So we made a harder opt in and we started getting more subscribers than what we’re getting before, which is really interesting.

James: That is interesting. I have seen research; I think it was on Unbounce, about putting the opt-in in the most relevant position even if that is the counterintuitive below the fold. If you’ve done a mini sales letter to sell the opt-in and you have the opt-in right where you have the call to action; that is probably the most relevant place. So I can understand how you got that result. In fact, on SuperFastBusiness.com, I have a Free Training button, and that Free Training button gets more opt ins than the in-line form that’s at the top and the bottom of my page. Isn’t that interesting that we can use a two-step as something that I did actually, luckily, on one of my very first affiliate sites. I had a blue hyper lined link on the home page that said, “Get access to the free training course,” and that took people to a dedicated squeeze page, because I had learned that you have to sell an opt in now. It’s not enough just to ask for someone’s email, you have to actually sell it.

I’ve got a question about how good a free training course does it have to be? Should we have light content? Should it be amazing stuff that someone would normally pay for? Like how good? Is there a level of goodness?

How good should a free training course be?

John: I always come back to this idea of, like, solve problems. Like, I listened to one of your podcasts the other day and you talked about how when you start making videos, when you're a beginner, the quality is pretty low because you just don't know the right techniques or the right software or the right tools, and you get better. But the central idea here that drives the whole thing is that a problem is being solved.

I use text emails. I don't use HTML in my emails because it can be disabled. I don't use images either, so my emails are just straight up text. There's nothing else on them. You don't need to be a writer, either. You don't need to be anything special in the way that you write the emails. You just got to think like, "Am I solving a real problem?" If that's the case, then it doesn't really matter. You could be a really bad writer with bad grammar and have typos all through it. But the person, the subscriber, most of them, their primary objective is to solve that problem. So if you're helping them with that, it doesn't particularly matter how polished your delivery is.

James: Yeah, that is a great point. It is about solving the problem. And I think people will forgive the format or the delivery mechanism a little bit if it solves their problem. I guess the greatest autoresponder writers that I've ever seen; Andre Chaperon springs to mind, they just have a very conversational tone, and they really are good at addressing the situation and moving the reader to take action or to feel something.

Have you had a deep background in sales writing or copywriting to be able to do this?

John: I don't call myself a writer and I'm not planning on writing a book. But I've always been the type of person that writes stuff down. I only started writing copy earlier this year. Yeah, you said, like Andre does it, the conversational type of thing. That's what all it needs to be. Like just a conversation between you and the subscriber. I've done a little bit of study copywriting and advertising and that, but I don't find I use a lot of that in the emails. What's important in the emails is that you feel like you're writing from a personal perspective. So you're writing from James Schramko, or that's how you sound in emails as opposed to SuperFastBusiness. Just like Andre Chaperon does,

that its first person and it's conversational, just like you're writing a story. You're telling your friend about the lunch you had the other day, or whatever it is.

Good technique when recording

James: Yeah, this is a good point. In fact, one of my earlier interviews on Internet Marketing Speed was with John Carlton. In fact, I think I've had him on a couple of times. And he said a good technique for people who are struggling with this is just to record yourself. Just talk as if you're having a conversation with someone and literally hit the recorder. And then whatever you say is probably a good basis for the words that you might put in an email. Is that a useful technique?

John: Absolutely. So if a business owner, if they were to speak to a customer, if they'd get them on the phone, they'll probably going to know what to say. So one way to do it would be to get a handful of A4 sheets of paper and write down the 5 biggest problems on each, one problem to each piece of paper. And then get a tape recorder and just record yourself telling a customer. Have an imaginary customer in front of you, and tell them about how you're going to solve their problem or how they can solve their problem with the information that you have or whatever it is. That works really well.

James: Nice. Now, a technical question here, do you deliver the emails, are you sending the whole solution in the email itself? Would you have a call to action to drive them back to a blog or a Web page or some kind? What's your preferred strategy there?

Should you send the whole solution?

John: It depends on what sort of relationship you want to create with the list. Some people, they just want to blast the list. That's fine and it works depending on the strategy. But my preferred way of doing it is to, like I won't pitch, or offer, or sell anything for at least three or four emails. Mainly because that's sort of rare these days. Everyone's trying to sell stuff, especially online. Don't try and sell them anything. You just talk about cool stuff, help them solve their problems. You can hint at a solution.

That's another thing that we should talk about, open loops, Andre Chaperon talks about this.

So you can hint at a solution. But the main thing to focus on is just solve the problems. And then when it comes time to promote something, you promote it in the context of the value you're already providing. So it doesn't come across as a pitch anymore. It comes across as you're just trying to help them out.

James: Right. So you will put the email there and that might be it? There's no "click here" or further discovery required?

John: Right. Yeah, pretty much. So there's a text-based email, there might be no links in there at all. But then, sometimes I find it's really cool when you link out to, say, a YouTube video. So if you're on a list, I have kind of a list in the weight loss niche. So I'll sometimes send them aspirational kind of emails to try to get them, like a pep talk, and then I'll send them to a motivational YouTube video just for a bit of fun. I think that creates a really cool vibe because you stop taking yourself so seriously and it allows people to relate to you.

James: Yeah, absolutely. Well you know, I have two main types of emails I send. By far, the majority is the one that will send them to my blog, where I'll embed the video. I want to get all those views, I want Google to take notice of my site being active, and I want comments and social proof. So I would take that video and embed it on my site. And again, my very first successful autoresponder campaign was where I'd set up 7 or 8 different videos or screenshots on a website and I kept sending them back in each lesson, and I was training them to keep going back to my site and to consume the information there, and at the end of each of those modules was a call to action to buy the product.

And what I found was that more than half the people would buy the product before they got to the end of the sequence, which was handy, and I was able to log in to Aweber and check the effectiveness of each of the messages and see which ones got the unsubscribes and which ones got the opens, and then tailor my offer. And I note

with OfficeAutoPilot, now I can A B C D split test follow up sequences, which is kind of sexy stuff for anyone interested in testing. Do you go that far into it or do you find that most people just don't even have a sequence set up in the first place?

John: Yeah, I haven't gone that far down the rabbit hole yet, but most people just need to get something up there, so you're right. They're nowhere near that level yet.

James: So if I'm brand new to this whole concept of creating an autoresponder. Let's imagine I have a blog or a website, I've got an Aweber account or an Office AutoPilot account, and I go out and I get my embed code, and I've managed to paste that into my sidebar or wherever or into a dedicated page and it says, "Get my free training 7 - part series" or whatever, what can we do with a clean sheet of paper? We're looking at this clean sheet of paper thinking, OK, I know what the challenge is, I'm going to list those down. I'm going to just put down my best sort of ideas about what would solve those challenges, and then I'm going to craft them into the autoresponder sequence. Do we put these into a notepad or something first and then paste them into the autoresponder, or do we just type them straight in? And how far apart do we send the emails? All these questions we have. What's the steps?

Steps to create an autoresponder sequence

John: I usually start off by making an outline. So I'll write, email one is usually the introduction. Like I'll kind of set the stage. I'll tell them how often I'm going to send them emails, what emails are you going to see, the subject lines, that sort of thing. So once I have the outline, say it's 10 emails or 7 emails. So 1 to 7. First email, set the stage.

Number two becomes how to solve problem number 1. And then number three becomes how to solve problem number 2. And so on and on. And that's where it starts, and then I'll just split that into 7 different text files. I'd create like a template. I do my emails. So the first line on the text file will just say "Subject:" and then I'll write the subject line. So with the subject lines, you can also do a thing, a lot of people do this,

they put like a bracket around, like an abbreviation of the type. So it might be { SFB }, so SFB will be SuperFastBusiness. So that would be one way to do the subject lines.

I do the emails at 55 characters width. So if they get into a long email, they'll scroll down. It keeps the momentum going. Then I'll copy and paste that template into the 7 different emails. Basically, I'll just write it. I open the email with a hook. So write something interesting, like get their attention somehow. It's just like a headline. Well, the subject line is the headline and then the opening paragraph is the way to kind of get them. Like, "Oh wow, I have to read this."

Then there's content, where you're solving the problem. Maybe you're linking somewhere; maybe you're trying to sell them something. And at the end, and this is really crucial, and this is what Andre does, Andre talks about an ARM, is open loops. So when you watch like "Lost" or "24," any great TV show, movies do this as well, they use what's called open loops, where they will say like, "Next week, here's what you're going to see." Movies will do this where it'll set up this story, the story thread, and then right before you see what happens at the end of the story, it switches to a different scene. Now we're not aware of it at the time but subconsciously our mind's going to be, "What happens there?" And that's what keeps us interested as the movie goes on. So TV shows do this as well.

You can actually do this in your emails. At the end of it, they can probably, "Next week, I'm going to tell you about X." They can be enticing that, or "In a few days, this," or they can start to talk about, give an overview of the solution, an overview of the problem, and then hint at a solution, and say, "I'm going to tell you a bit more about that later."

What these things do is really create that engagement. And a lot of people won't be consciously aware of it as they read the emails, but it's going to make them want to open emails in the future.

James: Yeah. So people wanting to look this up could go to check out the Zeigarnik Effect, which is the research behind it. It's fascinating to use. And you can even use it

within the same piece of content just to hold people's attention for the entire email, even if you don't use it to join to the next one, but it is a great thing to understand.

All right. So we've got the ideas, we've done an introduction. If you were to outline the next sequences, what would it look like? Is it like content-content-sales offer-content-content? Do you have a set thing or does it change depending on what you're selling?

Autoresponder sequence

John: It can change on a number of things. Like who are the people, are these called prospects, like if they just found the website inside that. I recently did a member's autoresponder. So it was, paid members signed up and a client wanted an autoresponder that basically stopped him from cancelling. So he has a membership site, the idea was that, basically, keep people hooked on the value that the site is providing them. And with that, with an autoresponder, that's going to go out every month. And there's not going to be any, it's not really promotional. We drop a couple of hints about different things but we don't overtly sell. So it kind of depends on what you're writing it for.

But I usually go content-content-content, then email 4 or 5, I'll do a promo, but it's not a promo in the way that a classic guru Internet marketer would do a promo. It's more; you do the promo in the context of value. So you talk about a problem, and you start solving the problem with the content in the email. You do a video for them. And then you might say, like, "Here's what you've got to do, or you can just buy my product and I'll do it for you." So then you presenting the product is actually solving a real problem, as opposed to just trying to make some money off them.

James: Right. So you're actually nurturing that lifetime value.

John: Absolutely.

James: So John, what are the biggest challenges that people have? People pay you to come and install this for them probably because they've thought it might be a little bit difficult. What sort of challenges do you think caused that to happen?

Some challenges

John: I think, number one, a lot of people don't like writing. Or maybe they do like writing but when they sit down to write, they stare at the blinking cursor. No one really likes doing that. So I think that's one of the main challenges. People sit down and they just have no idea what to do. What do they write, what do they right about? That kind. But the way to solve that, because I get that same thing, I sit down and I don't know what I'm going to write, but once again, I always come back to this problem thing, it's all about solving a problem. It doesn't particularly matter how eloquent you are about doing it. Just solve a problem. And then that kind of helps people to get past the kind of barrier. That's what I remember. That would be the main one.

Another challenge would probably be the technical side of things. It can be intimidating to kind of think, "Oh, I just set up Aweber. How does this autoresponder thing work? How often do I send emails?" I used to do it 3 days, by the way, I forgot to mention. Every 3 days, I send out emails.

James: I was going to ask you the frequency. So 3 days. And what happens after the first 6 or 7, what happens to the sequence?

John: That's really open-ended. Like you can keep adding to the sequence, which is probably what I would do, so you might write the first 7 emails and then every week, just write 2 or 3 more emails because if you think about it, it's a bit like a blog or a website like that. Except that when people get to a blog, they see the latest 2 or 3 articles that are on the home page or in that category. Whereas, in an autoresponder, people see every single one, assuming that they open them. It's not going to work in every single one, but they effectively get every post that you've written. So you can be more confident about what they've seen or what they haven't seen, and where they can't position that.

So you can add more emails to it, you can do broadcasts, which is what you send one-off emails about, could be a time-sensitive offer, it could be an update or anything like that.

James: Nice. What is the most effective email you've ever sent?

Most effective email

John: The most effective, in what way?

James: Well, which one gets the most amazing result? So, I can think of one that I'd sent that had an amazing result, like it just generated sales like a cash machine and it was a short email, and it was somewhere in my auto responder sequence. I think I had about 50 or 60 queued up, and it was, the subject line was something along the lines of "When I first used this, I immediately thought it should be banned." And then I went into the body of it, something like "I'm not a big fan of software like this because I believe it gives people an unfair advantage, and I thought it would probably be best if no one could use it. But then after I started using it, the results were just impossible to ignore. And now I use it for myself." And then I linked off to some software that I reviewed, and I sold a lot of that software. So that was a really good email. So sometimes you just make one that works really well. That one always outperformed the other ones. Do you have one like that you could share with us?

John: I was just thinking of something different, like I have an email that I sent out, the very first email in the list. The subject line is, I stole this from Clay Collins, it says, "Welcome to the family. Please read your brackets." And then there are two questions in this. It says, "Hi, welcome to the newsletter or whatever you call it." And there are two questions: "What is your goal? What's your ideal transformation, first up, what are you trying to achieve? And, what's your biggest fear about that?"

It's amazing the responses you get from people. You get the most personal data on what they care about, what their problems are, what they need help with. I believe that that's extremely valuable stuff and that's one of the most helpful emails or valuable emails that I've written.

James: Yeah. I've got like a little Swiss army knife or a suite of emails that we set up for every new subscription, which is certainly a welcome email. The most important one, I

think, is when someone unsubscribes. It automatically sends somebody, “Hey John. Oops! Looks like your subscription just stopped. Hopefully it was just an accident. If it was, you can rejoin here. But if it wasn’t, I’d love it if you could hit ‘Reply’ and let me know why you’re leaving.”

A lot of the time, we can actually repair that subscription. And if we can’t, we can then go and make training to prevent that loss in the future from another person in the same situation. So those little catch-alls are essential, and they’ve definitely helped my business grow, and they are autoresponders that are pre-written, and they’re ready to go out at a certain trigger point.

All right, we’re going to wrap up in a sec. I think you’ve been really generous giving us an overview of how we might go about it, what we might do, and how often to schedule it, what format to use. The focus, of course, the big takeaway is to focus on solving the problem rather than all the tech stuff. If you can’t do this yourself, then you can hire people like John, DropDeadCopy.com, and John will write these for you if you don’t want to do it yourself.

John, I want you to give us the big takeaway for today’s session. What’s a golden nugget of advice that someone could implement and get a great amount of value for spending the time listening to us today?

Biggest takeaway

John: I would list the three biggest problems that the target has, and then I’d write three emails as fast as possible, so you don’t have time to wait at them and about how to solve those problems. And then we get the momentum going.

James: Right. So we’ll call this like a three-email challenge. So I challenge you, the listener, to implement this and to come back and post on Internet Marketing Speed what you’ve done and what results you got, and inspire other listeners. There’ll be thousands of people listening to this, so I expect quite a few responses. Let’s do the three-email challenge and see what we get.

John Macintyre, I just want to say thank you so much for educating us with this autoresponder information. It's been valuable.

John: It's been great to be here. Thanks for having me.

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