You’re Leaving Money on the Table If You’re Not Using This Tool for Your Side Hustle

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Nearly 40% of Americans have a side hustle right now — and for many, it’s not just a way to earn a little extra cash. According to a recent LendingTree survey, 61% of people with a side hustle say they couldn’t afford to live without it.

While the number of side hustlers has decreased slightly since the pandemic’s peak, many still feel the everyday financial pressure. A third say they picked up a side gig to cover basic expenses, while 49% cite the current economy as the main reason for getting started.

Want to grow your side hustle into a business? Start with email

Many side hustles involve gigs like delivering groceries or driving for Uber, but some are the first step toward building an actual business. Whether you sell handmade products on Etsy or freelance your services, you could turn your passion project into a source of cash.

One of the best ways to do that on a tight budget? Use email from day one.

Why email works for side hustlers

Email costs almost nothing to send, but the return can be huge. Unlike social media, email lets you build deeper relationships, stay top of mind and drive repeat sales – all while you're working your day job, sleeping or fulfilling orders. When you're short on time and money, email helps take some pressure off and scale your side hustle like no other channel.

Think email's too complicated or time-consuming? Use these steps to make it easier on yourself – and see results faster.

Grow your email list from the beginning

Getting social media followers for your side hustle business is a good way to signal trust to potential customers. But if I were to start another business today, I'd work on getting those followers onto an email list as soon as possible.

Your followers can disappear overnight, and you may have no way to reach out to them again. Your list of contacts? That's something you'll always own.

Here are some proven ways to grow your email list:

- **Test a short free resource.** Check your social media metrics – what topics tend to spark a lot of interest? Use that data to create a concise guide or checklist. You shouldn't spend more than a few hours writing and designing it for free with tools like Canva. This is just a test to learn more about your audience's needs and tastes.
- **Expand your bank of resources.** Once you understand what your prospects respond to most, add more gated content to your website. You can test varied lengths and styles

– and later double down on your top performers.
- **Send exclusive content.** Aside from giving your audience a freebie, make your email content exclusive. Share useful tips they can't find anywhere else. Interview experts they care about. And of course, offer an unbeatable perk – discounts, free shipping or early access to new products.

Start emailing right away

Many side hustlers put off email marketing, thinking they need a large list to make it worthwhile. But that's a trap. Emailing your customers – even when you have just a few – benefits you in every way:

- Instead of keeping them waiting for your emails, you can start nurturing your subscribers and building engagement immediately.
- If your emails are good, more people will subscribe. Remember to include a subscription button in every email so anyone can opt in if your messages are forwarded.
- Emailing regularly also helps your email deliverability. Every email you send builds your reputation with mailbox providers, who need to trust you in order to deliver your emails to the inbox.

Do you have 10 customers on your list? That's more than enough to start – do it now.

Related: 5 Types of Email Addresses Ruining Your Email Marketing ROI

Verify every new email address you get

Eventually, you'll build your email list way beyond 10 customers, but here's what matters even more: making sure

those email addresses are accurate and real. Getting a bunch of misspelled or fake contacts means your emails will bounce, so what's the point in sending them?

Moreover, a high bounce rate can hurt your ability to reach the inbox again – even with real contacts. Email service providers have strong filters to weed out and block potential spam. Sending emails to invalid contacts signals spammy behavior, so you may kill your email marketing before it even gets off the ground

Checking an email for validity takes seconds. Most email validation services let you start for free, so if you only add a few contacts to your list every month, it won't cost you a thing and it'll save you a lot of headaches.

Ask for little, give a lot

Now that you've got things rolling, you may be tempted to blast your subscribers with sales emails. Refrain from this tactic – it turns people off. Instead, be generous and mindful of their time. Build trust and loyalty with helpful content.

Related: 5 Ways to Delight Your Customers With Email

Here are some topics you could approach in your emails:

- A mistake you made early on in your side hustle – and what you learned from it
- A quick tip that helped you save time, money, or stress
- A behind-the-scenes look at how you create your product or deliver your service
- A list of tools or resources you like and recommend

Keep it personal and worth your reader's time. That's how you build a list that sticks with you – and buys from you later.

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