Barrett Brooks

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SPEAKERS

Dave S, unknown speaker...., Barrett

Barrett 00:00

I've always said my wife made fun of me for years we've been together for over a decade now and for years she said, you know, you call yourself a fisherman. I'd never want to see you go out fishing.And I was like, but, but my whole life I did, like you don't know what I grew up doing. And she'd always laugh at me and make fun of me.

Dave S 00:17

That was very Brooks sharing one of his fly fishing struggles. If you haven't been focusing on your email list lately, this is the show for you. Welcome to today's session of the marketing podcast.

unknown speaker.... 00:29

This is outdoors online co the marketing podcast that helps you elevate your business through online marketing master sessions. Join Dave each week as he helps you grow your online influence via interviews with leading entrepreneurs from around the world.

Dave S 00:47

Here you go. Barry Brooks, CEO of ConvertKit shares a ton of great tips today on building

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your email list. We talked about how to segment your list to increase value for your audience. We discussed why Plain Text emails work great and how to get started. If email marketing is totally brand new to you, I've got we got a bunch of great info here on whether you're a newbie or been doing it a while Barrett breaks out some good stuff. So this one is going to be awesome. I'm excited. Let's let's just jump into it. Turn off the earbuds and enjoy the episode today with Barrett Brooks from convertkit.com. How's it going, Barrett?

Barrett 01:26

Hey, Dave, good to hear from you. It's been a long time since we caught up but I'm excited to chat.

Dave S 01:30

Yeah, yeah, this is fun. I was just looking at your I think it was on LinkedIn looking at your history I've ever, you know, fizzle. We were kinda we connected there. And then you've had a good chunk of time on with ConvertKit. Now so we're gonna, we're gonna dig into that, but maybe we can just start us off and tell us how you first got into online marketing and how you brought it up to where you are now?

Barrett 01:47

Yeah. Well, I'd have to take you back kind of to the beginning of my career started out as a management consultant, and through a variety of experiences just realized that that was not the industry. I want it to be in long term. had a lot of influences of, you know, Pat Flynn, Tim Ferriss, Chris guillebeau, a lot of the the kind of like long term players and the online world. And that combined with really wanting to do something meaningful for work led me to start my first business called living for Monday. And the thesis I had for that was that most college career centers were doing a poor job of actually helping students find the kinds of jobs that fit who they were and what they wanted from not only their careers, but really their lives. And instead, we're really just focused on how many people can we get employed as fast as possible by whatever means necessary. And so I wanted to build something that was a little bit more focused on individuals coming out of college and also those who are young professionals who find themselves in jobs that they were not big fans of, and give them kind of a curriculum and a process they could follow to find more meaningful work basically. Nice. So I did that for about three years in the middle got Lucky and got my name pulled out of a hat to do an internship with a guy named Seth Godin who some in your audience may have heard heard of marketing author, just like

towering presence in this kind of world that I occupy. And he was incredible. He was everything I hoped he would be. He's become a great mentor to me. But one of the biggest things he did for me at the time was helped me realize the ways in which I had made mistakes in starting that business and where I was off from my vision or, or maybe where there wasn't a market opportunity. And out of that, I kind of gained the confidence to say, all right, that was a great first go at this thing. I don't have to stay committed to it by any means necessary. I can actually call this a success and move on. And so I moved on from there to go to work at fizzle, which you mentioned earlier. We were making online education for small independent business owners who are running online businesses, and a kind of thing to think about it like lynda.com or skill share but very specific to running an online business and occupied a couple of roles there did a lot of coaching, podcasting, curriculum development, marketing, all kinds of stuff, because we were a small team. And then that led me here to ConvertKit. were one of my best friends Nathan Barry's the founder. We make email marketing software. Well, historically, we've made email marketing software. And we've really expanded that to be kind of a full service platform to help creators earn a living online. And we would definitely consider outdoor enthusiasts right right smack dab in the middle of our market of what we consider creators to be so yeah, at this point, I guess I've got eight or eight or nine years of experience in this kind of online world. And it really adds up fast You know, when you're when you're getting all these different angles on it.

Dave S   04:50

Yeah, yeah, it goes quick. It was interesting because I remember the physical time when you came in there, I think I was there and then you came in. You could just tell it felt like you were there. You were solid, but yeah, see? Like fizzles like this. I'm trying to think of some other people that have been through there. I guess Caleb seems like fizzles the transitional zone up to the next and maybe that's just the entrepreneurial kind of, you know, journey but you know you Steph, Caleb all went on to be successful people with you know their own thing. I'm curious with yours, you know the living for Monday, you mentioned making mistakes at Seth Godin and he is kind of a superstar for me too. But, you know, what were those mistakes? Is there one thing you could call it? That might be a good learning experience for others listening?

Barrett   05:30

Yeah, I think the two biggest ones were number one, the market I picked. I think I was specific. And that's something that I always tell people is be more specific than feels comfortable with the audience you pick, but I picked students and some early career professionals. There were two things wrong with students as a primary market. The first

and most important is that they don't have money of their own. So they're really it's really hard to get them to pay you and so you end up having to look for Other people to be the paying customer so that students can get the benefit. And that really obfuscates what your priority should be. So that was the first thing was picking the wrong market, or them not having money. The second thing about them is they had not yet felt the pain of having a bad job. And it turns out that the biggest motivator for someone to want to have a good job is having had a bad one. And so what I realized was that actually, maybe late, kind of like in that first decade of a career kind of late in that first decade through mid career, people are way more primed to hear that message of, hey, if you've had a really hard career, you're in a job where your manager is emotionally abusive, or it's a toxic work environment or you don't feel like you're fulfilling your potential. Let's go find you something where you can. They were just way more receptive to that. And so that was a mistake. The second thing was, I was really, I don't know that scared is the right word, but there's a A lot of different ways to kind of play business to feel like you're being productive to feel like you're making progress. But in reality, business is very simple. It's make a thing, sell a thing. That's it. That's the whole thing. And I went way too long. Not avoiding fully, but kind of avoiding entering into that interaction of Will you buy this from me. And it turns out that, especially online, that is the point of failure that you must learn from as fast as possible. If you don't make something for sale, you can convince yourself that you're making progress as long as you want. But the reality is, you're not going to earn a living from it. And so I took way too long to get to that point. And what I if I could do it over again, I would have very quickly gotten to the point of trying to sell something to individuals to see if I could get to what we refer to in the startup world as product market fit, so that I knew there was a path forward for me to actually earn a living versus just feeling like I was doing business.

Dave S 08:01

That's right. That's right. That's cool. And now they have a wildly successful success story because ConvertKit you know who I love? And I mean, it's been a crazy success story, right? I mean, a bootstrap company. And I don't know what you guys are making, you know, annually now, but it seems like you're almost one of the big boys. I mean, how do you guys feel like where are you at in the niche? Because you hear a lot of people talking about, you know, CRM, and all these all these words that come out. And maybe you can just start off describing what ConvertKit is to somebody who's never heard of it.

Barrett 08:30

Yeah. Well, let me I'm gonna start with talking about just like email in general. Because

one thing that I've learned, the more we've gotten, like deeper and deeper in the creator market is a lot of people don't even understand why email matters. And so if I take a step back, and I think okay, email marketing, to convince me this is important. Any platform almost any platform that a creator is on online today, whether it's Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, tik tok, whatever Almost any platform owns the relationship to your audience. They are lending you an audience. And at any time, they can make a change in algorithm and policy in pay gates that can cause you to no longer own that relationship or no longer have access to your audience. Right? Well, email is the one kind of like open platform. It's an it's an open protocol that many different businesses have been built on, you know, all the inbox providers, companies like ConvertKit, because it's open, there's no gatekeeper to email. It's individuals can choose what tools they use to access email, and those tools can change things. But fundamentally, it's just a protocol that allows you to send a message to a person who wants it. And what's magic about that is as a creator, everything that you need in your business to earn a living is about the relationship to that audience that you have. And so email gives you that direct connection. And if today you've built an audience on Twitter, and you're able to get more of those people on your email list, you could decide you're tired of Twitter and you want to move to another platform, let's say transition to YouTube tomorrow. And because you own the relationship in this database of contacts that you have email addresses for, you could say, Hey, I know normally I'll follow me on Twitter. I'm actually transitioning to YouTube because Twitter's become kind of toxic. So come follow me over there now. And you still have the same audience, because they're all in one place where you own that relationship, and they can go with you. So that's kind of the value. So what we did was Nathan, our founder, he used all the tools that were on the market at the time. MailChimp, Constant Contact, you know, there's always been a bunch. It's a very competitive market in terms of options. And there were these pain points that he had where those tools made it really hard for his specific needs to use the tool well, and he said, I'm going to go build one of my own that solves these problems. So an example of this, one of the best practices online for gaining new email subscribers is to give them something, maybe it's an ebook, maybe it's a worksheet, maybe it's a discount to buy your product. In most email providers make it really hard to give the person that thing or to specify which people should get which thing. So we built that right into the platform. When you create a form, which is a way to collect someone's name and email address, you can attach a download a PDF file of some kind, that automatically gets delivered to a person. And it's very, very simple to do that. Like you don't have to know really anything about tech in order to do it. And so there were just a lot of these little nitpicky things that we saw in the market that we needed to solve for and wanted to solve for and that was the foundation of the platform. Since then, we've grown into something more complex that serves more needs of creators. So a lot of what we'll see is People get started growing an audience on one of the platforms I mentioned before. So let's say today you're growing an audience through your podcasts just like the one that

we're on right now. Maybe you don't want to have a whole website and like, big old thing that you have to manage over time, you just want to publish your podcast, get email subscribers, sell them stuff over the long term. Well, one of the things that people struggle with is you still tend to need somewhere to send people in order to get their email information when you're in a medium like podcast. So we built this tool to create landing pages, you can think of a landing page is just a one page website. It gives a little bit of an elevator pitch about who you are, what you do, and the value you provide to people. And it gives them a forum to add their contact information so you can stay in touch and you have permission to do that. So we now have that as part of the product. And then on the other end, we just launched this tool to be able to sell digital products of any kind. So I think about that is like an album as book that you're selling. Maybe it's a new font that you've made, or a guide to fly fishing in the Pacific Northwest, you know, if you're more of an outdoor enthusiasts, enthusiasts like you are. And it makes it just super simple to upload a product, create a product page, accept payment details, get paid, and then get it deposited to your bank account. And we charge a fee of 3.5% for that, which is just barely over what you would have to pay on your own for credit card processing. So we've kind of got this suite of tools now that allows you to start with growing your audience on email, creating a relationship by sending the messages over time that are relatable, that helps you build the connection and then selling things. And we think that's kind of taking care of that full creator journey to allow you to really just focus on whatever content products or other art that you're creating out in the world basically.

Dave S 13:58

That's a That's amazing. Yeah. The Commerce the new feature you guys have, I've been excited about that. I think, you know, there's some other, you know, like gumroad, I think is one that's been in the past pretty easy to start up using and, and there's a few of them out there. But it makes sense doing it with your your thing, because it's all in one, right? Same thing, you're making it easy for that person. They don't they don't have to go to multiple places.

Barrett 14:20

That's exactly right. And we'll always, you know, support the integrations that we you know, we have these things called integrations where if you use another tool like a gumroad, and you want to be able to know who and your email list or your customers and only email those people that exists, we do that we'll always do that. Like, we're not trying to create a walled garden. We just want to make sure that for the people who are getting started and don't want a bunch of tools, you can do it all in one place.

Dave S 14:46

Yeah. And there are a number of people that are listening to this that are just there, right there. You know, nobody, everybody feels like you know, they don't have enough time and it's just there's there's just so much to learn. So anytime you can simplify, that's good. Maybe we could dig into a little bit on that. Just some general email marketing like a step by step you mentioned you know before about you know producing something a freebie to get an email Can you walk us through just like an A maybe I don't know if we want to start with an example of some product but what would you tell somebody if they're kind of new they're coming to you like where do I start? What what should be the first thing they do if they come to say they're using ConvertKit?

Barrett 15:21

Yeah, well let's let's use like a real example you know, I I you we left before we hopped on here that we always used to talk about a theoretical fly fishing business on the fizzle podcast. Yeah, that's awesome. But um, maybe what's what's like an example of someone in your audience that kind of business they're building Yeah,

Dave S 15:36

let's let's do this. This is me because we have a time we have fly shop owners we have you know, I was just talking to somebody who's a new he's basically a competitive flight angler. He teaches it there's there's actually you probably didn't know this. But you know, there's Team USA and there's actually a, you know, a national team for us for fly fishing. Right. So it's this whole a basic, you know, side niche but, but he's trying to produce He's pretty young, but he's got these products basically it's merged you know, he's got shirts, he's got fly fishing outerwear and things like that. So that's that's his product. So and that's what he's trying to sell on. It seems like he would be a good fit for this. so perfect that so he's got a hoodie. He's got the super SPF flyfishing hoodie, he's trying to sell.

Barrett 16:18

Great. Okay, so I'm gonna like almost assume that I'm actually his audience. And I'll just give like a little bit of why I say that. I've always said my wife made fun of me for years. We've been together for over a decade now and for years, she said, you know, you call yourself a fisherman. I'd never want to see you go out fishing. I was like, but but my whole life I did like you don't know what I grew up doing. And she'd always laugh at me and make fun of me. Well, finally, last year, I got I got out on the water with the guide and I got back into fly fishing out a few times now. And so, you know, I'm like, entering back into

that world that I've always pictured being a part of me, but that's been hard to get back to as an adult. So I imagined myself being the kind of person who would pay attention to this type of business. Getting back into it don't have all the gear yet. But I'm very much a gearhead and the other things that I do like I want minimalist but quality gear basically. So I want the I want everyone in the audience who's listening says to think about that, who is the person that you're designing for? And that's why I tell you about myself because then you can start to picture Okay, who do I imagine reading, listening, watching, paying attention to my business that would end up buying the thing eventually. One of the key tips before we even get into the tactical stuff that I love to tell people is picture one human being that you're writing to, or that you're talking to or that you're interviewing behalf on, on behalf of rather, in in a podcast interview like this, and make the content for them. Because if you can picture one real person with real needs in a real situation, it's going to be way more personal and relatable. If you have this theoretical conglomerate of people in your head, that's made up of a whole bunch of randoms. So that's the first thing. The second thing is you need a way for people to say to you, I want to hear from you on an ongoing basis. So for most people, whether it's a fly shop, a guide, or someone making March like this, you either need a landing page or a website, you need a place a home online where people go to find you. If you don't want to go that far, then the next best thing would be like a link in your profile. So a link in your Instagram profile that goes out to a landing page. Link tree is an example that Instagram users might might know. We have a very similar feature for landing pages for us where you can just list out all your links where people can find you. You need a place like that at a minimum that you can send people on that thing, whatever it is a website or a landing page. You want to have a form. And all the form is, is it's a couple of fields. The first one is what's your name? The second one is what's your email address? And then maybe you might ask another question like, what's your experience level with fly fishing? Or maybe how many times do you typically fish per year, just a little bit of information that you can kind of what we call segment your audience based on later, a segment and your audience is a group of people who share some characteristics that would allow you to send them a message that feels very personal. The fewer the fields on a forum, the better but you want to balance few fields with getting information that's useful to you. So you create a form right on this landing page or website. And ideally, what you do is you'd offer something in return like I mentioned earlier. So with an e commerce shop that's selling physical goods like this, maybe you just offer a one time discount, maybe you say join my email list and get a 15% 15% off your next purchase. It's very common for a lot of e commerce businesses. One of the drawbacks there is that often people will join your email list without wanting to hear from you just to get the discount. But you get another crack at them right you at least get the chance to stay in touch and see if they might want to hear from you. And so there's always going to be a little bit of that kind of gaming going on where people just want the free thing and they may or may not stay on your email list long term. So your job once you

give away this thing, let's say it's either a discount or the second option I'd give in this situation is like a guide to a complete guide to Yeah, the gear you need to get out fishing or something like that. And one of the items is your hoodie. Right But the other things are like your waders and your boots and your son hat and your whatever son gloves, whatever you feel like someone needs that would be another great option, especially for a beginner who's just getting into it, where they don't maybe know what the good brands are, and what's just buzz versus what's high quality. So those would be the two options I think of is either a discount or a guide to gear. And then from there, what you'd want to do is kind of follow up with a series of emails at ConvertKit. We call this a sequence. And I think of this as people join your email list to accomplish a specific thing, in this case, they want your discount or they want this guy to gear right. They don't really care about you, Dave yet know, what you want to make them do is care about you, Dave, and what you have to say and how you can help them and their fishing journey, right? That can seem a little like theoretical, so what I mean by that is starting off with delivering the value, give them the goods, give them exactly what they came for, but then follow it up really quickly with something personal, a story they can relate to. In this case, maybe it's a fishing story about what really made you an avid fly fisherman when you were Getting Started. And now you've gone from I just want the discount to if it's a good story in that first email. Okay, this guy's a pretty good writer, like I would like to hear more from him. And what you need to remember is yes, you're selling hoodies. But ultimately you're building a relationship so that the people on the other end will buy whatever you put out, because they know like, and trust you, that's your only job with email is to make people know like and trust you. And so being relatable and and where a story may not feel like it's related to selling hoodies. What you have to remember is the story is about building a relationship. You know, it's like the fondness we have for a grandparent who's a great nostalgic storyteller. It's because they do this engaging thing that pulls us in, and that's what you're trying to do. And so maybe you could follow up with a series of fishing stories, or maybe it's one fishing story and then a series of tips about getting started or outfitting yourself to be all seasons. Fly fishermen or something like that?

Dave S 23:01
Yeah, yeah.

B **Barrett** 23:04
So that would be what I do to get started. Yeah, is create a form, give something away and then follow it up with a series of emails that builds that connection early on.

Dave S 23:11

Yeah. And if we stay on this track this person I'm thinking of here, he, he's a specifically like I said, He's like Team USA. So euro nymphing is this really specific type of fishing, which is really popular now. And, you know, they could do all sorts of things, he could create a guide for, you know, 20 tips to start your own nipping or, you know, there's tons of things like, he, you know, any sorts of little products like that, that he could put together. So right, yeah, yeah. Okay, well, this is good. This gives them a starting point for somebody who's new to it. And, you know, I mean, there's a lot of questions that I think people probably have as far as the emails you send out, you know, I mean, say you're not a great writer, you're okay. I mean, how, how long should you be putting these things does i mean is, there's probably not a real general rule of thumb, but, you know, like short versus long. What would you say to that question?

Barrett 23:55

Yeah. So let's talk about a couple of things there. Let's talk about format length. And making sure that your email actually arrives in someone's inbox. So there's this concept called deliverability. And the email field, you don't need to know all that much about it other than that, there is this like, you can think of this pipeline of your email going from you hitting send to arriving in someone's inbox. And when you hit send our back end processes it, it turns it into code, and then it parses it out so that it can go to every person on your email list, right? Well, then in between, there's basically an email processor that physically sends the emails across the internet. On the other end is an inbox, right? So this would be like Gmail or Hotmail, or whatever. And they have a whole bunch of filters where they're trying to prevent their users from getting spam, or fraud attempts and things like that. And there's different things that can happen that trip those filters up that prevent your email from getting into someone's inbox. So one of the Things that we've seen. And we have maybe the highest, if not one of the highest delivery rates is what it's called when you get emails into inboxes. On behalf of your customers in the industry, one of the things that we've seen work really well for us is plain text emails, way more often landing inboxes than things that are highly designed almost like a website. So, you know, pick your poison, it's up to you. But we see that plain text is better. And so one of my first tips would be work on your writing, you know, it doesn't have you don't have to be an incredible writer, you just have to be relatable work on your writing so that you can be engaging, and that gets into the link thing. There is no rate link for an email, just like there's no rate link for a blog post or a YouTube video. What we do know is that people spend relatively little time on a piece of content to start with, unless you can really pull them in and get them interested and engaged. And so I would write The shortest possible email you can, while still making the point or telling the story so that you can keep people as engaged as possible. The

minute someone loses the stream of consciousness or they're not interested anymore, they're gonna hit archive or delete. And so shorter is better. But that doesn't mean it needs to be a 200 word email, it might be a 1500 word email, because that's how many it actually takes to tell the story. And it's really just about knowing what it is that your audience wants from you and a given email. So what I will add to that is fishing in outdoors in general, are highly visual activities, highly visual, some of what people want is just that connection to the lifestyle, that connection to the memories of them being outside or the hopes of getting outside as soon as possible. So some of I think what could work really well in this industry is using that imagery to your advantage that runs a little bit counter To my text only advice, you know if you can be a great verbal storyteller amazing. And the other thing I like to say is, an email oftentimes has a purpose of sending someone to your website, right because the website is probably where they're going to buy not in the email. And if you can make the email simple, and based on words and the website, pretty and based on imagery, that's usually a better combination than trying to cram all of that beauty and words and purchase decision into one message. But if you want to use emails for imagery, I'd say adding a couple images throughout that just kind of capture the experience of being out on the river or being out camping or hiking or whatever it can be a really effective way to pull people in and build that relationship to

Dave S   27:45

that's that's amazing. Yeah, that's exactly you're right on with the lifestyle because I think of some of the biggest brands and fly fishing and you know, I mean, there's brands like me, Patagonia is kind of a fly fishing brand. You know, that is a big focus. I mean, Yeti has become this Out door, but they're doing a great job. You've got some other smaller companies and they're all the lifestyle that's all a big, you know, I mean, they they're all that's basically what it's all about and the story, you know, obviously they have a cool story, but Okay, and then on the Gmail, that seems like a struggle too, because they do have all these things set up that if you you know, the deliverability, is there any way first, can you see your deliverability? through your through ConvertKit? And is there any way like, what is a good number there that, can you track that?

Barrett   28:26

Yeah, so our team can always do audits for people, if you write in and ask for a deliverability audit. We can do that for you. Typically, I would say don't worry about it until your audience reaches maybe 1000 people or something like that, okay. When you've got a small audience, you've got way more leverage by growing the audience than you do and optimizing. And so, you know, I only mentioned that to for a couple of reasons. One, just be aware that it's true. It's out there. If you're seeing super low open rates, like we

consider a good open rate to be 25 to 30%. A great open rate is between kind of 35 and 40%. And so if you're seeing anything south of, let's call it 15 to 18%, open rates on your emails, you may be encountering a problem that might be worth reaching out. But other than that early on, I wouldn't focus on it too much. Okay.

Dave S 29:21

So open rates are the key. Okay, that makes sense. And then, yeah, and I and I see that too, with the two different podcasts that you know, the bigger list. Yeah, they're lower than that the more niche down. It's more in the 40% range, which is which is cool. Okay. And then also, I want to, you know, hit on the segue, you mentioned segment, segmenting your audience. Can you just talk about that and the difference between because you hear the CRM, you know, a lot and also I just noticed it out there where, you know, you get somebody and they send you an email, just a random email, who knows where it comes from? They're like, man, I love the podcast, you know, they go into a big thing and they're obviously they're following you. How do you plug them in? Is that different with with what some of these other companies do versus the segmenting?

Barrett 30:04

Yeah, so to illustrate just kind of like the general concept, let's go back to the hoodie example for a minute. I want you to think about trying to sell a hoodie literally like standing in a store. Let's say you were working in Orvis store and someone walked in and you want to sell them a hoodie. So a beginner who's never been out on the river. Think about selling them that hoodie, well for them. They don't know what they need. Number one, they don't know whether a hoodie is necessary. They don't know how it might help them. They don't know that. You know, SPF matters, they don't know anything. And so you're gonna have to explain the basics like Hey, man, okay, look, there's a few key things you're gonna want while you're out on the river. You're gonna want boots, you're gonna want waders and you're gonna want sun protection. If you're going out in the summer or sunny weather. If it's in the winter, you know, you're going to want the same things, but you're going to want to optimize for warmth. dryness. So this hoodie, it helps with these things. But in advanced fisherman who's been out a million times, and he's buying his 15th hoodie, because he left the last one on the bank of some river that he can't remember. He doesn't need to hear all that stuff. He just needs to know, does it have this this in this? You know, does it have good sun protection? Is it warm? And I don't know, is it waterproof? That's all he wants to know. And if you tell him, you help him out, and you just help him get in and out of the store really quickly, perfect. That's the concept of segmenting your list. If you know you've got some beginners, you can talk to them differently about fishing in

general and about what you make versus if you know, you've got some pros on the list. You know, the kind of people who know that Team USA exists and they know what your own thing is, you're going to talk to them completely differently because they can they've got the lingo already. They know what they're there for. And the concept is giving people what they want within the confines of the same business. So that's the basics with someone like who's a big fan, for example, maybe you have an insider's list or somewhat like I might call it like true fans, where you've got this group of 20 people you know are diehard listeners, followers, they read everything you put out, they listen to every episode. And maybe you give them a little sneak peek for what's coming every once in a while, hey, I've got these five episodes lined up. Do you have any ideas of who you'd like to have me to have on the podcast? And you really involve them? Because a lot of times what an insider wants is they want to feel like they're part of something, you know, they want to feel like they're making this brand with you. They're making this podcast with you. And so that's those are a couple of examples. Hopefully that help in terms of like, how you communicate differently to different people but doesn't I just think of, you know, my list. It's a little messy because I've got a lot of tags in there that I haven't used. I mean, what would be a tip if you got you know, a list going. You got a lot of people tag I mean, is there a way? How do you start that process of putting them into buckets and organizing it? So you're really maybe sending out multiple emails as opposed to just one big one each week? Yeah. So I think about a couple of key things. In the software world, there's this idea of software architecture. And the idea behind it is very similar to real world architecture. You want to create a supporting system that creates structure, right? I mean, that's the fundamental purpose. And then on top of that, you can build beauty. With email, you just need the structure. So I think about a couple of different ways that I want to gather information. One is where did this person come from? If I know that they came from the podcast or they came from the blog, or they came from my Instagram feed that can be useful because it tells me a little bit about what's working in my business. The second thing I want to know is what do they want? What did they come here for? Like what what are they looking for and being Part of my audience. And the third thing is what have they bought. And what this allows you to do is you can imagine someone who comes to you because they want to go from fishing one time every couple years to once a quarter. And that's why they're paying attention to us to like build this momentum towards getting a fishing habit in place. Okay, so we know what they want. So maybe a product that you have is I don't know a guide to hatches on your local rivers or something like that for different times of year that make it easier to buy the right flies. And so it's just removing a pain point from getting out there on the water. Well, if you know you've got a group of 100 people who want to get out on the water more, and only three of them have bought your product on hatches and local fly development over the year. Then you've got another Seven people who potentially could buy that product. And there's one of two things that you want to happen either you want those people to buy it. And so that's what you're

focusing that targeted message on because you've got your tags, right, and you've got your segment down in difference between a tag and a segment as a tag is just a piece of information, a segment combines those pieces of information to define a group of people. So a tag would be they want to get on the water or they bought this thing. A segment would be people who want to get out in the out on the water and they have not bought this thing. Right. And so you might send them a message saying, hey, like one of the biggest leaps I made on my fishing journey was going from like feeling like I had to have a guide every time I went out to me just getting out there and figuring it out on my own. One of the things that was always hardest was feeling like an idiot walking into the fly shop and having no idea what I needed to buy in order to get out on the water. So I've made that really simple for you. You're going to feel like you're smart and intelligent and can have a conversation when you walk into a shop, and you're going to walk out having what you need and ready to get on out on the water the next day. And that's a really targeted message, knowing what the person wants, and therefore why they would buy this thing that you've built with a relatively small number of pieces of information about them.

Dave S 36:19

Yeah, yeah, that's, that's pretty cool. Yeah. And I was thinking there. I mean, there's obviously a bunch of different ways we can dig into, you know, go further than this. I did want to keep it fairly general, because I know we're not gonna have time to get into everything. But can you just, you know, maybe we can just kind of turn this a little bit and just think about, you know, I don't know if there are common mistakes and again, think about setting up your email list on ConvertKit. And that what would you tell you know, somebody in there would you see common things people are doing wrong with email marketing.

Barrett 36:49

The most common mistakes I see are what people are not doing. And when we talk to customers who finally kind of get it, and they and they really are a To make email a key part of how they earn a living, the first thing I hear from people is I wish I had started sooner. I wish I had started my email list sooner. And so if you're growing an audience on any platform, the first mistake you're making is you're not building an email list if you're not. And so I would say just start give people a way to say I want to hear from you. The second thing that I see is that people don't send emails. The thing about building a relationship, a connection, think about any friend in your life, any family member you care deeply about. When you go too long between talking with them, you start to there starts to be separation, it gets harder to stay connected harder to know what's going on in their life. It's the same thing with everyone in your audience. And so many people are so

hesitant to send an email because it's like, well, I don't know what to say. And that is way more damaging to your business than sending emails that aren't perfect. So that would be the second thing is start your email list. First of all, secondly, send emails regularly.

Dave S 38:06

And as regularly Is that pretty much once a week? Is that kind of the standard?

Barrett 38:10

So there's a balance and the balance that I want you to think about is, how often can I send, the more often you can send the better for your deliverability that topic we talked about earlier. But that's balanced by you don't want to send so often that people get tired of you. And so typically, what I see is most audiences and especially where it's more of like a recreational audience, like it would be for a lot of outdoor businesses. It's probably once a week once every couple weeks, once a month, unless you've got an audience of like diehards, those, those guys who are getting out there a couple times a week before they go to work and things like that. guys, gals, you know, whoever's in your audience. And so knowing what it is that people are there for should really drive the frequency But I think weekly is a really good cadence to aim for. You should not send less than monthly. If you're sending less than monthly, you're not doing email well, and you're gonna harm your business long term if you're if you're sending less frequently than that. That's it. Yeah. Okay. Good. Good. And, and then also, you know, I guess I'm just thinking American mistakes. I mean, I've done this before, you know, where you and it's interesting because I'm looking at my again, my list, I kind of have it segmented into, you know, kind of big buckets. Now, I've got the wet fly swing podcast, which is really where I teach fly fishing, more tips and tricks to companies and people that are just, you know, out there. And then the outdoors online is really focused more on teaching these businesses about I'm really focused on podcasting, helping some of these people get into podcasting and you know, doing some editing and services like that. So, so I've got him segments. So within ConvertKit, right, I've got this new email list, which is under its own segment, is there a Is there a good way to do that? I know you'd sometimes you recommend just starting a whole new conversion Can account right? If you have two different lists? How would you recommend I deal with that? Yeah. And so I think the thing that I always recommend to people who have a multiple different businesses going on is, is there a connection point between the audiences or not, in your case, they're very much is it's all related to fly fishing. It's just that some of those people are business owners, and some of them are recreational fly Fisher, people. In an alternative universe, maybe you were just offering podcast editing services for any entrepreneur. And in that situation, I might recommend

you start a different account. But I think because there's a relationship between all of it, there's actually probably some decent overlap between people listening to both of your shows. And I think there's a lot of value to having all those people in one account when that's true. So I think you're doing that well. And again, if there was no connection between the audience's that's when I would recommend maintaining different accounts because you run into issues where you start getting arrested. relevant to some people, and you lose the ability to send general information to the whole list when everyone's in one place. Another mistake I see is that people they like over optimize. So a lot of people will have hundreds of tags and hundreds of different forms are landing pages. And the reality is, I think a well segmented audience. There's maybe three to five segments total. And in a well segmented audience of three to five different types of people, you probably don't need many more landing pages or forms than that. And you might only need you know, in those three categories I talked about, where did they come from, what do they want, and what have they bought, maybe there's five to eight tags per those. So maybe you only need 15 to 20 tags total. And so what you would end up with in a clean, well architected email account, you'd end up with, let's say 15 to 20 tags three to five segments, and then let's say between five and 10 forms or landing pages. And if you use that as a template, you realize that you don't need to overcomplicate it, you know, if you're not growing your audience, it's probably not because you don't have another form, it's probably because the ones you have aren't working very well. But they're not very targeted. You know, if you're not engaging with people, it's probably not because you didn't gather enough information about them, you don't have enough tags, sometimes it might be but most often is that you don't really understand what they're there for. And you haven't spent enough time getting to know that audience well enough. So, you know, keeping it simple, is going to allow you to focus on the things that really create movement, whereas you could really busy yourself just over complicating the whole email marketing side of things. That's a,

Dave S   42:48

that's such a great tip because I think I've done a little bit of that, you know, where I do have a ton of tags, because there's a point there where you know, it's cool and ConvertKit you can click, you know, URL, you can click a button, or you know, add a link. So, you know, Like if they click this and it's steelhead related boom, they're in that tag, you know, you can tag everything. It's like to fault, right? Like you're saying, so how would you take if you got a mess of a big pile of, you know, 100 tags? You know, how do you start consolidating that down to just kind of try to put them in, like you said, into buckets of five to eight, put them all into those buckets or something like that? Find a good number.

Barrett 43:20

Yep. So I would think I would go through and I would look at my tags, and I would do almost like a sorting exercise. I just put them into categories. And I just run all the way down the list. So like if you've got steelhead Rainbows, you know, whatever sockeye like all these different fish, okay, well, that's that's like people fishing for different things over here. And then you've got your own nymphing, got dry flies, you've got whatever all these different methods of so I've got methods efficient

Dave S 43:48

to different areas, different areas of the world, the country.

Barrett 43:52

Exactly. And there may be once you categorize them, I think you'll see the structure that you've maybe accidentally created And there may be value in keeping some of that, right. But the question I would ask myself as I look at those categories is, what does knowing what type of fish this person is going after? Help me do for them? Am I doing anything with that information? And then if I'm not doing anything with it today, I'd asked myself one of two things. Do I plan to number one? Or is this just information that I like him keeping for a rainy day? and rainy day information I would get rid of, it's gonna feel scary, but I would get rid of it because it's clogging up your clarity. But I like to think in terms of like a product portfolio. To go back to the hoodie business. A hoodie is just an entry point into a physical goods business, right? It's a proving ground to see, do you have an audience who will trust you enough to buy physical goods from you? And the next step might be a lightweight sun cover shirt for summertime. And then the next step might be a hat. Yeah. And on and on, right?

Dave S 45:02

Yeah. And eventually, maybe, eventually maybe a guy trip, right? Maybe they are offering the regular guide as well. And now in the bigger thing is a $500, you know, thousand dollar trip.

Barrett 45:11

Exactly, exactly. And so what you want to ask yourself is, it's sometimes helpful to imagine what is that future product portfolio you're building towards, because one way might be build out all of your products, another might be have one physical product, have a service

and then have an information product. That's a different way of thinking about it. And then look at the information you have in your tags today and say, Well, what do I need to know in order to effectively sell this thing to people? So let's say you're gonna guide right? Or where are you going to guide what kind of fish are in that part of the world? Yeah, where where are the people in your audience like those might be useful at that point, so you know what people want. Similarly, if you know that steel had only run in the winter, then they Might be a useful piece of information for selling someone a warm weather piece of gear. That's cool, or a cold weather piece of gear either.

Dave S 46:07

When I'm thinking Barrett, as you're talking there, I've got another guy on coaching. I'm helping him start his own flight, his own podcast, and he's up in Nova Scotia. And it's Atlantic salmon, right? That's the big species in there. And, and the cool thing again, it's niching down that he's a guide. So if we can start this podcast the way I'm looking at that he has this really cool niche area that people are gonna listen to it, and he's gonna become the authority and be building his list. You know, just like we're talking. I mean, I think the stuff we talked about today could apply to him as well, right? Mm hmm.

Barrett 46:36

Yep, exactly. And so for him, you know, it might be useful for him to know all the different fish people want to catch. But really, all he needs to know is which people want to catch Atlantic salmon. Yep. Because those are the people who are in his core audience, you know, sure. You can find out if they want to catch brown trout and whitefish and all this other stuff, but he doesn't care actually about the knot. He doesn't care about them, but they're not the people that he's going to make money from. And so he really just needs the salmon tag, because that's the core audience. So I think that's some of the insight that will help you with cleaning up a messy account is what do you really need to get at selling the thing that allows you to earn a living?

Dave S 47:16

Yeah, yeah, that's good. These are this has been good. Anything else before you know, just before we get out of here, any general stuff we want to make sure to cover about, you know, ConvertKit or email marketing, anything else we missed?

Barrett 47:26

No, I think we've covered it pretty well. You know, I think the basics are there. Give people a way to allow you to stay in touch by email. Be in touch with them regularly. Give them something to look forward to from you and have something for sale. And the faster you can have all of those things available. I think the faster you can find out whether you're onto something in your business. And the beauty of that is it's not if people won't buy it, you shut down. It's the sooner you find out people won't buy you can build something else. And try again. And that's really the magic here is going through those cycles until you find the sweet spot of what people want from you.

Dave S 48:07

That's awesome. That's awesome. And, and how often do you this is another big topic, but just on selling, how often do you sell on the emails? You know, I think of myself, I've got a couple things going on. But I've also got a travel company that I've built on the side, where, you know, we're trying to sell trips around, and I kind of struggle with that. Right. Like, how often do you do you promote that? That? Yeah, you know what I mean? Yeah, so

Barrett 48:28

I think the best thing you can do is sell to the people who want to be sold to you. What do I mean by that? Well, trips, there's probably only a smaller portion of your audience who is even interested in trips. And so that would be a great piece of information to find out either through a link click like you mentioned earlier or in a form that they join early on. of, are you interested in fly fishing trips, yes or no? And if they are, just sell to those people, that's what they're there for. They want to have the chance to go on a trip with you. Perfect sell to them whenever you've got a trip. Yeah, on the other hand, I think with products that are more evergreen, so a trip is a one time thing, there's limited spots, it's on dates. That's a launch kind of thing. But with a digital product or a hoodie or something like that, you're trying to sell to a person at the right time. And it's really individualized, right? Because the right time is not necessarily universal across everyone. And so the best sales, it's not about frequency, it's about hitting someone with it at the right point in their journey. So I think about for example, let me jump out of the outdoor world, for example, and talk about my business. While my side thing, yeah, so I talk, I still talk about finding meaningful careers. And so I've got this series about the eight principles of meaningful work on my site. That's the welcome sequence like I talked about earlier, and it's just one principal a day and it's very story driven. Personal, I want to highlight these concepts that allow us to experience a sense of purpose at work. And on the back end, like I just launched a workshop to celebrate our launch of ConvertKit commerce. The workshop was titled How to find the most meaningful job of your career. And it's my best career search

advice in a two hour workshop. It's recorded, it's got a bunch of bonus interviews with other founders and hiring managers, you can kind of get the inside scoop on what they're looking on. We're looking for rather it's got example cover letters, example resumes, from people who we've really hired. Well, right at the end of that meaningful work series is a great time in an individual's progression to say, Hey, I just want you to know, if you're really into meaningful work, but you don't feel like your work right now is meaningful. I've got this workshop that can help you make a transition. And that's not the only time I'm going to sell that to people, but it's the perfect moment where someone's very engaged and might want that right. And so contract Selling i think is way more important than how often you're selling. Okay? Because if it feels relevant to someone, I don't think you're gonna annoy them that much. Yeah. It's when you've got these big blasts that go to everyone. And they're like, Oh, what is this? Why am I getting it that you kind of can fall out of sync with your audience?

Dave S   51:16

Yes, yes. And that's exactly what what what I'm feeling like, I think that's the struggle is that yeah, it's kind of it's just not again, the list isn't segmented enough. I don't have it into those buckets. So it's going out to more of a general thing. And, and obviously, I've got a big general audience out there. So that I think that's a good tip for everybody. Just try to, like you said that strategy of five to eight tags, and kind of what you mentioned before is good.

Barrett   51:39

So day, one tip for you that will be helpful for other people is related to your trips, I would send one small email out to people that just says hey, you know, I had these trips that I run and it would be really helpful for me to understand. Are you here because you're interested in those trips? Or are you just more interested in the general education about the outdoor industry and about fly fishing in particular And give them two links to click. And that's that. That's that binary kind of tagging system where that's all you really need from them for that purpose. It's perfect. And so now what you do is rather than selling them something right up front, you're asking them are you interested in that creates this little psychological trigger, where all you're doing is following up on their interest. You're not like harassing them to buy something. They just told you, I'm interested in trips with you. And next week, you say, here's my trip schedule for the next quarter. That's all and now it feels personal and relevant. And that's what they want from you anyway.

Dave S 52:33

So that's, thanks. That's a killer tip. So hey, we're also some of these tips that you're talking about here. Where else could somebody go and just is there are there blog posts, resources, webinars, anything that they can, like, take it further than than what we did today and get more of this good stuff?

Barrett 52:46

Yeah, I mean, we have built our company on educating creators. So we've got almost not too many resources, but it might feel a little overwhelming at first. So a couple of things. One is Nathan Berry. Our founder and I run a podcast. It's live on youtube every Monday and Friday. Also, in the podcast app for Apple, Spotify, all the normal places called the future belongs to creators. And there we talk about a wider variety of tips beyond just email, but largely focused on email for earning a living as a creator. Second thing is if you go to convertkit.com slash training, you'll see our upcoming webinar schedule. Angel Martin Johnson is our webinar teacher. She is fantastic. She's a great curriculum developer, a very energetic teacher, and you'll learn a ton from her. And then lastly, our blog, convertkit.com slash blog. We call it tradecraft as kind of a way to talk about the skills and trade you need to earn a living as a creator. You know, it's this portfolio of things you need to know. And from the beginning, we've developed it not just as specific to email, but what are all the topics and the essential topics you need to know about as a creator to earn a living and we've got Just great feedback on how valuable that's been. So that's a couple places you can check us out.

Dave S 54:04

And Baird, I know you got to get out, I just have one use remind me of one quick when I was trying to catch on, I'm cleaning a list. So you got this list, you got a thousands of emails and you got a bunch of people out there that I struggle with that too. Because you mean some of them are probably going to the spam folder or some of our people that maybe want to get you know, I mean, so what would you say to somebody who wants to clean up their list but doesn't want to delete a bunch of people that maybe aren't interested?

Barrett 54:26

Yeah, okay, this is great. This is a great thing to do. Number one, it saves you money, and that's great for you. But number two, it also helps you have a realistic view of how many active people are in your audience. Because if people aren't opening your emails, it might

feel good to say you have 1000 subscribers but 500 aren't opening emails, you have an audience of 500. So, in ConvertKit, I'll be specific to that because it's really the one I know the best. Obviously, we've got this little built in segment called cold subscribers. And the way we define a cold subscriber is In the 30 days after they join your list for the first time, if they open and click and or click on nothing, we consider them cold. Or if they've been on your list longer than 30 days, and they have gotten a 90 day period, so the past 90 days, so like at July 30, it would be July, June and May, if they've gone down those months, without opening or clicking on anything, we consider them cold as well. So that's the two ways we define it. And what that indicates to us is that that person is no longer really interested in what you have to say. they've they've kind of waned in their original intent and hearing from you. What we recommend in that situation is sending a series of emails just to that segment of people. And it typically looks like this. The first one is, you know, something like how are you doing in the subject line, or checking in on you or something that kind of grabs their attention to at least get them to open it? And it says something like, hey, I've noticed that you haven't opened an email of mine and quite some time, I just wanted to ask you a quick question Is it because A, you're no longer interested in what I have to say be you've just run out of time you've been really busy. Or see, I'm still really interested, I just haven't been good about email lately. And if they click that first option, I'm no longer interested, that is a concrete reason to delete them from your list, because they're actively saying, they're basically just haven't taken the action to unsubscribe. The other two buckets, though, are people who maybe you still want to engage with. And so if they click on one of those two links, you want to move them over to a different pool of people who now you want to keep sending email to. And so I would do a couple things like that. Maybe the second email is something like, I'll be removing you from my list if I don't hear from you. And the third one is, hey, last chance I'd love to get a reply. And all you're trying to do is to see your you're actually you want someone to take a positive action and affirmative action and response to that, as opposed to not doing anything in what I would do is I would keep the people on your list who take an affirmative action that says says they are still interested. And then everyone else who either does nothing or clicks on actively, I am not interested, I would go ahead and delete them.

Dave S 57:18

Alright, so anybody on that if you send about 1000, people basically don't do anything. You just get no response. They should be deleted as well. Yep.

Barrett 57:26
That's great.

Dave S 57:27

And is it possible on there is there there's probably some potential that some of those are going into spam right into Gmail or, you guys it is possible. Yeah. Yeah.

Barrett 57:37

We are not able to track which folder something lands in. We know whether it made it to the inbox, but we don't know which folder it landed in. Does that make sense?

Dave S 57:49

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. They have the spam. They have the the others like the four different folder folders, right on Gmail.

Barrett 57:56

Right, exactly. And then the other thing we know is if they marked it as spam We know that but we don't know if it was automatically filtered into spam.

Dave S 58:04

Yeah, that's right. Yeah. Because if you have some client that's just a spammer you can you cut them out, right? Or Yeah, they get flagged or whatever. Yeah. Okay. Well, Bear, there's a, you know, obviously a ton we're not getting into. We touched on a ton, which has been great. But if, if they want to follow up, I'll leave a link in the show notes. And, you know, convertkit.com is where you guys are doing, you're doing your, your gig, how is it? Like being the the CEO? What's that, like? Just a,

Barrett 58:31

it's been a ton of fun just to, you know, you mentioned earlier, we've been on kind of this fun journey. I joined when we were doing about $3.5 million a year in revenue. We're now approaching 24 million a year. I think I was employee like 15 or 17, or something at the time. We just hit our 60th employee. So we're having a ton of fun, you know, we don't have any investors. It's just as bootstrapping the thing, and really just trying to build Culture and a community around earning a living as a creator, you know, we're just we're never going to branch out of that. And that's our secret sauce is just being for a very specific group of people where so many competitors are trying to be for everyone. And it's been a ton of

fun. Yeah, it's it's, there's no shortage of challenges, for sure. And running a company of this size. But yeah, it just resonates deeply with both Nathan and I and a lot of the team so it makes it easy to keep going. That's cool.

Dave S 59:27

Keep up the good work. I'm definitely I've been promoting you guys out there. And you've had at least a few new customers from conversations I had. So yeah, thanks, Barry, for that a lot of fun.

Barrett 59:37

Yeah, that's awesome, Dave, appreciate you.

Dave S 59:39

All right. We'll talk to you later. Right. Today's takeaway segment your email list to just a few segments, maybe three to five in that range, so you can better serve your audience. again to get rid of all those distractions and get focused here. Hey, I wanted to check to see if you're interested in starting your own podcast if you are you can head over to outdoors online.co slash pod Add sheet to get the cheat sheet to get help you get started. So that's one way to do it a quick little cheat sheet. Also, if you already have a podcast and need some help with editing or production, I'd love to help you out. You can also go to outdoors online co slash work with Dave that's outdoors with an S work slash work with Dave, and leave a message there and I'll check back with you. So this has been fun. I can't wait to connect with you on the next show and help you elevate your business

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