

RUNNING A CHALLENGE



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TO GROW YOUR FOLLOWING
& BOOST ENGAGEMENT

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Why Run a Challenge for Your Customers, Subscribers and Prospects?	5
Challenges Introduce and Connect You to Your Audience	6
Challenges Are Fun	6
Challenges Help Boost Your Creativity	7
Challenges Show Your Customers You Care	8
You Increase Sales	8
Challenges Are a Great Way to Quickly Grow Your Email List	9
Planning Your Challenge	10
Should You Charge a Fee or Not?	10
Figure Your Time-Frame	11
What is Your Challenge Going to Be About?	11
Creating Your Challenge	12
Content Creation	12
Be Specific, but Achievable as Well as Challenging	13
Video Challenges	13
Hire a Developer	13
There's an App for That	14
Getting Sign-Ups, Promoting & Marketing	15
Build a Challenge Squeeze Page	15
Social Media	15
Go to Your Email List	16
Blog Post Reminders	16
Offline Marketing	16
Delivering Your Challenge	17
Email	17
Live Delivery	17
Private Social Media Groups	17
Snail Mail	17
Your Challenge Is Over... What Next?	18
Challenges as Product Launch Precursors	18
Build Your Email List	20
Host a Challenge 2.0	20
Use Your Challenge to Get Better in the Future	21

Introduction

Some people are naturally competitive. No matter what they're doing, serious or not, they want to win. They can turn noncompetitive situations, such as folding clothes or washing their car, into a competition with themselves and others. Everyone, to some degree, has a competitive instinct. You just have to know what to do to trigger that response in those people to make it pay off in your business.

Other people are not quite so competitive. Sure, they would rather win than lose, but losing isn't always that big of a deal to them. However, these people and the natural-born competitors mentioned earlier most likely want to do one thing... socialize.

Just about everyone likes spending time with others who express similar interests and desires. This is a survival fact that has resulted in you and I being here today.

Our ancient ancestors learned it was easier to survive when they hung around in groups, rather than trying to go it alone. This led to the development of the first cities and societies. Loners who tried to brave the elements by themselves had a much higher mortality rate than people who chose to live in socialized groups.

Human beings who live get to pass on their traits and genetic hard-wiring, which is why most people enjoy socializing with others that express similar interests today.



You can use this combination of competitive nature and instinctive socialization to build your brand, grow your following and influence, build your email list and create a community of raving, engaged fans.

In this special report on using challenges to build your business, you'll discover exactly what challenges are, and why you should be using them. You'll learn how to plan your challenge properly for the best chance at success, different tools for creating challenges, and how to market your events to attract the biggest following. Options for delivering your challenge are included, as well as instructions for what you should be doing after the challenge is over to keep your prospects and customers engaged.

Let's get started growing your small business or blog with challenges by taking a look at the "why" of this effective business building tool.

Why Run a Challenge for Your Customers, Subscribers and Prospects?

First, let's take a look at exactly what challenges are.

Challenges are nothing more than timed events meant to deliver a specific set of results for its participants.

If you run a marathon, you're actually engaged in a challenge. You and others are challenged to finish the race. Virtual, online challenges can help your audience achieve goals they have set for themselves, and when you host those challenges, you can build your business and brand at the same time.

Did you know that competition of any kind actually triggers the "fight or flight" response in human beings?

This goes way back to the earliest humans. When they were presented with a life or death situation, which sometimes occurred on a daily basis or multiple times a day, their heart rate quickened. Their blood pressure shot up dramatically. A stress response started, their mental focus and clarity was increased, their respiratory capacity improved and they became physically as well as mentally prepared to fight a threat, or run away from it.

This response gets the body prepared to fight for your life. It alternately allows you the best physical condition for fleeing from some danger, if you perceive that this is the smarter tactic than attempting to fight.

When you run a challenge that helps improve the lives of the people in your market, you automatically trigger this fight or flight mentality to some degree. Your audience becomes more mentally attuned to what it is you're offering in your challenge, and when you use this marketing method to make the lives of your prospects better, they are more likely to engage with you in the process, rather than run away.

Challenges Introduce and Connect You to Your Audience

Running challenges and contests is difficult to do without your audience discovering who you are. In many cases, you'll be performing live webinars or other types of interaction where your prospects see your face, hear your voice and interact with you personally.

Regardless whether you believe you have a photogenic presence or not, some people will immediately respond to you in a positive fashion. Will everyone become your number one fan? Of course they won't, but plenty of people will "connect" with you consciously or unconsciously.

The more you put yourself out there and allow people to see you as a normal human being instead of just some website or blog, the better connectivity you achieve and maintain with your marketplace. This does nothing but good things for your blog or small business, website or e-commerce site.

When people purchase something, they are many times purchasing because of the individual that is selling or pitching a product or service. Challenges present you to your audience, allow you to connect with them better than when they don't know who you are and what you look like, and engage your prospective clients in a way that keeps them coming back for more.

Challenges Are Fun

When you challenge someone to achieve a certain set of results, as long as you keep the competition low-key and friendly, this is an enjoyable process for everyone. Your audience can connect with other challenge participants.

It's a lot more fun for you than other boring marketing practices, and your audience can enjoy the process as well. Make sure to include some type of fun or silly factor in your challenge, and everyone will have a much better time.



Challenges Help Boost Your Creativity

At any given day on the web, you can find dozens, if not hundreds, of weight loss challenges. They are all pretty much the same. They tell you that by eating certain things or doing certain exercises you can lose 'X' pounds in a certain time-frame. They all look and feel the same, and since they are always present, they don't drive engagement or get the number of participants they could have.

This is where you need to get creative.

Figure out a way to make your challenge different than similar offerings. You need only create one wonderfully unique type of challenge to ensure that your audience remembers you fondly. Consumers purchase products and services from people they know and like. When you get engaged in a creative challenge with your participants, you improve the odds that your audience will get to know you and like you.

Challenges Show Your Customers You Care

Business owners often think of challenges as a great way to generate leads. Challenges are also the perfect vehicle for building email lists. However, you should also realize that this is a great marketing tool for customer retention. Running challenges for your current customers and clients shows them you didn't forget about them once you got their money in your pocket. It lets them know they are still on your radar, and you value your relationship with them.



You Increase Sales

The fun factor of challenges combines with their socializing and competitive aspects to build relationships. This boost in engagement means you can turn a one-time purchase into a lifelong string of purchases and a happy customer who tells all of his friends and family members about your wonderful business. Host challenges regularly and you can move many of your single-purchase customers into repeat buyers.

Challenges Are a Great Way to Quickly Grow Your Email List

You should be building a list of prospects and customers. You constantly need to add new prospects to fill your sales funnel, and once someone purchases a product from you, that person is more likely than anyone else to buy something from you in the future. The easiest way to make money online is to build an email list. People join your email list or newsletter because they are interested in what you have to offer.

Autoresponders make it easy to talk to those people in an automatic way. You produce a series of emails one time, and email autoresponder software sends out those communications on whatever schedule you develop. Making the emails costs little to no money. Autoresponder services are available for free or a very low cost.

What other type of marketing method intimately connects you with your prospects and customers in their in-boxes, and requires a very small time or money investment? There are a lot of smart reasons to use challenges to build your email list.

Planning Your Challenge

You might be fired up about getting your challenge started. Before you act too soon, and end up sponsoring a challenge that does more damage to your business than good, there are a few things you should consider.

Should You Charge a Fee or Not?

The first consideration you need to make before hosting some type of challenge is whether it will be free, or whether you're going to charge for participation. Your participants will be challenged to reach some sort of personal or team results. Depending on the type of challenge you run, it may make sense to charge for participation, or it might be smarter to offer it for free.

One way to decide whether you should or should not charge an entry fee is to look at the proposed results a successful challenge will deliver.

If you can just about guarantee a person who gets through your challenge successfully will realize some significant financial or personal achievement, you can probably get away with having a participation fee. On the other hand, if there are challenges similar to yours going on all the time, and they are offered for free, you should probably host a free challenge as well.

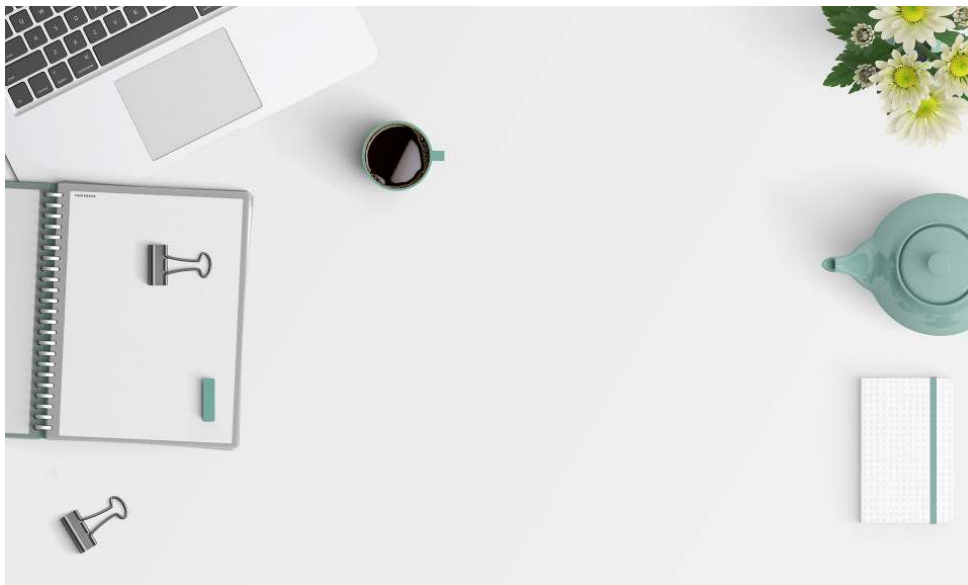


Figure Your Time-Frame

If you're hosting a challenge to lose 20 pounds, running a challenge for 7 days might not be the best idea. Then again, if you have created some type of safe but extremely effective way for people to lose approximately 3 pounds a day for a week, having that short of a time-frame could make you an overnight sensation in your industry. Long or short, you're going to have to find out the best amount of time for your challenge.

Think about the results you are trying to deliver, and choose a length of time for your challenge that allows your participants to achieve those results. You want it short enough to keep your audience engaged and thinking with a scarcity mindset, but long enough for your audience to see some real and positive changes in their lives.

What is Your Challenge Going to Be About?

This may sound silly. You may already have something in your mind for a challenge. However, before you automatically believe your challenge idea makes a lot of sense for your audience, do a little brainstorming first.

What are some of the frequently asked questions you get from your customers? What are your most popular blog posts about? What are other people in your industry making the focus of their challenges? It pays to take a little time to come up with a topic for your challenge, rather than just going with your first impulse.

And, if you have a paid product you want to promote, don't forget to link the challenge up to that in some way to make it easier to make sales. For example, if your paid product is all about how to create an email funnel for your business, your free challenge could be about how to create your first lead magnet – i.e. the first step of what they'll need if they choose to sign up for your paid product.

Creating Your Challenge

Now it's time to create your challenge. You have come up with a great idea for some way to improve the lives of your prospects or clients. Now it's actually time to get the thing done! Here are a few ideas and best practices you should consider when creating your challenge.

Content Creation

You're likely going to need a lot of content for your challenge. You're going to need some way to keep in touch, through emails or on social media, you should produce a challenge guide or rule book, and you should probably provide a collection of tips and best practices to give your participants the greatest chance at success.

You can handle your own content creation, purchase PLR licenses for content from PLR providers, or hire a freelancer at Fiverr.com or Freelancer.com to handle the job. Make a list of all the different pieces of text and video-based content you're going to need.



Be Specific, but Achievable as well as Challenging

The best-case scenario after your challenge is that your participants had a great time, while also achieving the results they were looking for. Additionally, you want to have met whatever business goals you have attached to your challenge. The best way to have both those things happen is to make sure your challenge isn't too easy, but not too hard either.

You want to push your participants out of their comfort zone, but not too far.

Also, be very specific with what is going to happen if someone makes it all the way through your challenge. A *"Get in Shape in 30 Days"* challenge isn't going to attract too much attention. If, however, you host a *"Lose 20 Pounds and Create Endless Energy in 30 Days as a Stay-At-Home Mom"* challenge, that specific title and achievable results are sure to get noticed.

Video Challenges

Much of the content consumed online is video these days. For this reason, delivering a video-based challenge makes a lot of sense. Video engages like text never can, and you can convey a lot of information in a very short video. You can use videos to provide motivation during your challenge, to deliver information, to explain processes and to keep your audience engaged.

Hire a Developer

You may want to turn to a software developer to create an application for your challenge. This will instantly help you stand out from your competition. Simple apps can be created for a relatively small amount of money, and they give your challenge a higher perceived value than similar offerings. At Fiverr.com and Freelancer.com you can hire app developers who can create an application that will improve the participants' experience, while simultaneously building your brand and keeping your name in front of your prospects.

There's an App for That

There are plenty of popular social media contest applications which can be used to run your challenge. Depending on how you structure your event, the following apps can help you through every step of the challenge process. This includes getting sign-ups (more about that in the next section), promoting your event, setting up and running your challenge.

- AgoraPulse
- Short Stack
- Votigo
- Wish Pond
- SnapApp
- WooBox
- Heyo
- PageModo
- Binkd

Getting Sign-Ups, Promoting & Marketing

The following list includes a few popular and proven methods to market your challenge so you get the most number of sign-ups, maximum engagement, and ongoing interaction.

Build a Challenge Squeeze Page

You should have a squeeze page where challenge participants can sign up. You funnel all your traffic there. You provide a course outline and challenge guidebook, as well as some valuable freebie, in return for someone signing up for the challenge. You integrate this squeeze page with your email autoresponder service so you can keep in touch with your audience throughout the entire process.

Social Media

The applications mentioned earlier for running contests and challenges on social media sites will be helpful here. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter are absolutely perfect for marketing your challenges and getting sign-ups.



Go to Your Email List

The easiest, fastest and least expensive (free) way to market your challenge is to hit up your email list. These are people who already care about what you have to say, so they are prime candidates for any challenges and contests you run. This allows you to promote your challenge well in advance, and to a warm audience.

Blog Post Reminders

You can write a short piece of content promoting your challenge and include it at the top and/or bottom of every one of your blog posts. This turns your site or blog into a challenge-promoting machine, and since your challenge is probably highly relative to the content on your site, this leads to more interested participants and a higher sign-up rate.

Offline Marketing

Billboards, flyers, postcards, handouts and other traditional, "real world" advertising methods shouldn't be ignored. Some people don't spend much time online, and are more likely to respond favorably to offline advertising.

Delivering Your Challenge

There are a few ways you can get your challenge material into the hands of your audience. Let's take a look at the most popular and effective methods for delivering your challenge.

Email

Email is one of the most popular methods for delivering online challenges. It's extremely inexpensive, and you're reaching your prospects in a one-on-one situation. When someone reads their email, they feel like you're speaking to them and them only. This provides for an intimacy that other delivery methods don't, but you must realize that there is also usually less engagement with email delivery than live interaction.

Live Delivery

YouTube, Twitter and Facebook all offer live streaming services. These free delivery methods engage your audience and have consistently delivered high challenge attendance rates. You may also record videos and deliver them on your website or a social media site.

Private Social Media Groups

If you're going to use a social media network like Facebook for challenge delivery, you should consider creating a private group. People like to be members of private clubs. It makes them feel important. It also limits the amount of trolling and harassment that might possibly occur if your challenge is made public.

Snail Mail

You may be offering some type of online challenge, but there are certain instances where snail mail delivery of challenge content makes a lot of sense. Especially if you're dealing with the over 50 crowd, your audience is used to receiving mail the old-fashioned way. When your participants receive a package in the mail with a lot of valuable challenge information, advice and other content, they feel like they are engaged in more of a real and valuable process than an online-only event.

Your Challenge Is Over... What Next?

Okay, your challenge is over. Everyone had a blast. You built your email list and met a lot of new people that engaged with your business. You' definitely going to be doing more challenges in the future, because this turned out so well. Even so, one big question remains...

...What now?

This is a common situation for a lot of bloggers, small business owners and Internet marketers. They have a great time running a successful challenge, their audience gets involved and a lot of people produce positive results in their lives. Then that marketer just goes back to the same old way of doing business, blogging, working on social media and performing other "normal" business tasks.

That is a shame, because you can use the end of a successful challenge to further build your business. Here are a few activities and best practices proven to take advantage of the engagement and connection a challenge delivers.

Challenges as Product Launch Precursors

As mentioned earlier, challenges can be free or paid. You can charge your prospects and customers a one time or monthly fee to engage in competition with themselves and others. The most popular type of challenge is offered for free, as this naturally boosts participation rates. Whether or not your challenge requires a purchase, you can use this engaging marketing tool to move directly into a product launch or paid promotion.

Towards the end of your challenge, tease your participants with an announcement that you have something big coming up in the near future. Tell them you will reveal exactly what you're going to be offering the next time you communicate with them. Then in that communication, offer a substantial discount in return for their help in developing a new product.

This way you can capture sales on a product you haven't even developed yet! This is an easy way to make a video course or product. You announce that you will be hosting a live video on certain dates. In the initial video, you comment about the overall topic you will be covering. Then you ask your participants to tell you exactly how they want you to help them. In a comments section or through email communication, you get some great feedback as to what problems and questions you cover in your second video.

Do this for 3 to 5 videos, and voilà, you have a video product for sale. You also have a group of appreciative fans and customers that love the fact they got to help you build this product. Use this system after you have launched and completed a successful challenge, and product development is a cinch.



Build Your Email List

You learned earlier that a challenge is a great way to build your email list. You shouldn't forget that after your challenge is over, you can continue to build your list a few different ways. Posting the results of your challenge on social media sites is a great way to show how much fun and positive results were created.

Include a link to your opt-in page for your next challenge or for some list-building freebie, and your list grows.

You can also use your completed challenge to build your list by giving it away in return for someone joining your email newsletter. You can keep any videos, webinars and challenges results private, only releasing them to people who sign up for your list.

Finally, you can build your list with a completed challenge by appealing to your participants. Reach out to the people who just completed your challenge, and ask them to share a link for an upcoming challenge with their friends and family members. If someone had a positive experience with your challenge, that person is highly likely to share that information with others.

Host a Challenge 2.0

Whether or not your participants got the results they were looking for from your challenge, they might be interested in Challenge: Part 2. Movie sequels work so well because they appeal to the people who liked the very first movie. You can continue to build your email list, drive your business, boost your brand and engage with your audience after one challenge is over, by offering a follow-up challenge. This keeps your audience engaged, and for those people who did or did not see positive results, you deliver a second chance at success.

And you don't even need to create a new challenge if you don't want to. It's perfectly acceptable to re-use the same challenge and run it again live in the future. Chances are you'll get new signups each time, and some of the previous participants may even sign up again if they didn't manage to complete the challenge the first time around.

Use Your Challenge to Get Better in the Future

No matter how madly successful your challenge may have gone, there is room for you to grow. You probably have an idea about some things you would've done differently, to provide a better experience for your prospects and more growth for your business. One simple way to get better at what you are doing in the future as regards your business is to simply ask your challenge participants what they would have you do differently.

This does several good things for your business.

Whether you're a blogger, small business owner, Internet marketer or kitchen table entrepreneur, it shows your challenge participants you really do care about what they think. You want to know how you can make their lives better, and you are doing this by asking them.

Ask direct questions about how you can change the challenge in the future. People love giving you their opinion. When you allow your challenge participants to help you become better as a challenge provider down the road, those people are highly engaged and more likely to become long-time customers and business fans.

