

I could tell you stories about what the New York Times or what the Washington Post are doing. But I don't think it will be relevant to you, and while they have figured out a few things, they're playing at a very different than anyone in the room here, and they still have a lot to figure out.

There is however a common theme, a path to success that was alluded to yesterday by Tara and Judith.

Rather I want to share best practices and stories from people and organization you can relate to, and hopefully you'll walk away feeling you understand this whole online marketing thing better and feel you can act on maybe doing things differently and more effectively.

First insight:

SUCCESS WITH ONLINE MARKETING COMES FROM OWNING AND NURTURING YOUR AUDIENCE OVER TIME

You probably know by now that there is no silver bullet with online marketing, no overnight success with this or that tactic. Online marketing will not solve all your problems. Social Media for instance didn't do much for anyone kind terms of driving tangible results even though expectations were pretty high. The main issue with social media is that you never owned the platform in the first place and they changed the rules, often.

Regardless of the complexity of all the jargon, the various platforms, and all the money you could spend on online advertising, there is one specific tactic you can use that worked 20 years ago, 10 years ago, and that still works today.

So what should you all be doing more of?

You should all be building your own audiences on your websites and with your newsletter subscriptions. Whether individually or collectively through the APMA.

If I simplified I'd say **you need to send more newsletters** but it's a little bit more complicated than that.

True, at first it's as simple as sending a thoughtful and personalized email to an interested reader about something she might be interested in.

Think about the handful of newsletters you religiously read. The ones that matter to you and that you would miss if they weren't there.

Think about the newsletters that you might be sending out consistently because you know they still work, or that you might have stopped sending out because you were too busy, or that you didn't think this practice could work.

Email marketing still works, it's still strong and here to stay. The Direct Marketing Association's latest benchmark on email marketing performance show an increasing effectiveness, regardless of the clutter.

It might not sound sexy, not be a buzz word. It's the oldest trick in the book and it as sure as hell works.

Drawn & Quarterly is a publishing company based in Montreal that specializes in comics founded 30 years. It publishes primarily comic books, graphic novels and comic strip collections. It also owns two retail stores one for grown ups, and one for kids in Montreal's Mile End neighbourhood.

I know the owners Peggy and Tom,, and they've been hustling for the past 15 years to build a brand and a following that has lead D&Q to publish some of the biggest names in graphic art and comics in North America.

In preparing for this session, I asked them, where they were at with marketing their books on the web, what worked, what didn't work.

The first thing they told me was that there were always working with a shoestring budget. No surprises there.

What has dramatically stopped working has been their blog and social media that used to attract readers, Twitter especially. With over 38K fans on Twitter, they used to get a lot of engagement, and people would read their witty blog posts. But conversations started dying 2 or 3 years ago, and nobody seems to want to read blogs anymore.

The fun people are on Instagram, where D&Q has attracted close to 70K fans. But they don't know if it generates sales, and well it's mostly pretty pictures, no links back to their blog content.

What does work is their weekly newsletter. It continues to grow at a hundred new subscribers a month, and it drives readers back to the website, and generates sales for them. Because it's such a useful resource, it has even inspired readers from overseas to plan their vacation in Canada to participate in events listed in the newsletter.

With over 15,000 subscribers since they started promoting it in 2014, it's the online medium that seems to keep their customers and fans loyal and engaged.

Second insights:

FOCUS ON YOUR NICHE, THE CLUTTER IS REAL AND FIGHTING IT IS A LOSING BATTLE,

10,000 books are published each year in Canada (50k ISBN registered). In the US it's close to 1 million of which roughly 50% are self-published. Wow!

The barriers of entry to do any creative work and publish it nowadays is extremely low. The economics have changed. It's a losing battle to want to compete with everyone. It has become exponentially more costly to cut through the clutter. All the money is with the platforms makers that enable and spread the clutter: Google, Facebook, Amazon, and the likes.

So in order to survive you need to change the lens through which you look at that clutter. Flip it on its head. Go for the valuable few, the niche, rather than try to get noticed by the masses that are more and more distracted.

Have you heard about [Kevin Kelly's essay on 1,000 true fans?](#)

Kevin Kelly is the founding executive editor of Wired magazine. Wired Magazine is a monthly American magazine. published in print and online editions. that focuses

on how emerging technologies affect culture, the economy, and politics. It was founded in 1993.

KK theorizes that an artist could make a decent living by building a following of a thousand true fans. True fans are fans that love the artist so much that they would go above and beyond to get access to the artist's content. True fans would easily spend \$100 / year on whatever an artist would produce of value to them. 1,000 true fans = \$100,000 in direct revenue. It doesn't sound crazy when you think about it.

True fans are also ambassadors for the artist, helping her grow her following. That following might spend less, but it would be growing nevertheless and the core base might expand.

Think about this rational for a second. Think about how many readers you have. Have you thought about finding and serving the hardcore fans first?

Here's an example of how this works:

Who has ever wondered why a lot of music artists, or even self publishers would give out their content for free? How do they make a living you might ask yourself?

What if their free content was a massive discovery mechanism to find their true fans?

And what if they could monetize their relationship with true fans with exclusive content or content format. Think limited edition pressed vinyl records for \$50 a pop. Think exclusive premium signed box sets for \$100. Think exclusive author readings in a venue on a tour for \$150.

You cast your net to find and capture your true fans, and then you find ways to delight them with your content in exclusive and personalized ways.

I'm not suggesting you give your book out for free. Or maybe, but that's not the point.

The point here is that if you fight the numbers game focus on your niche of true fans first, and build up from there. You don't need 100,000 fans on social media or 50,000 newsletter subscribers if that audience doesn't comprise your true fans. Vanity metrics don't pay the bills. If you want to monetize the relationship, it's easier with true fans.

If you've been doing this for a decade or so, your website might have attracted tens of thousands of visitors or your name has been shared with thousands of people. I'm suggesting you launch on a quest of find your true fans and send them newsletters with the awesome content, news, curated content, they're waiting for.

Find the ones that would jump on a plane to fly across the country to come and meet their favourite artist at a creative retreat or author reading here is St John's. That's more than \$100 spent. Think about how fast event organized by Judith sold out. I'm sure the Globe could have charged for that and still have sold out.

I Peggy and Tom from Dawn & Quarterly if they thought they had "true fans" in their mailing list and they told me they knew they did. The hard core fans they know and see over time at trade shows and in the store, the ones that spend hundreds of dollars every year on comics. They just don't have a way of knowing

how many, or even thought of segmenting and growing their subscriber list that way.

Third insights:

YOU ARE MORE EQUIPPED THAN YOU THINK YOU ARE AND IT DOES PAY OFF TO FIND & NURTURING YOUR AUDIENCE

Talented content creators have a unique advantage over everyone else. They usually have soul, personality, a unique voice. The challenge is connecting that voice with the audience who craves to hear it. Creators and publishers have to lean on marketing more than ever.

This is not a new concept. Artists, publishers, brands will keep on rising to their level of relevance with selected audiences or disappear to the level of their arrogance and irrelevance.

Finding out your niche audience requires a deliberate marketing approach. You have actively understand what that niche is, what they want, and how you can get them to sign up.

You're all good at nurturing relationships with your community, your publishers, and publicists. You can't afford to not go the extra mile and nurturing your community of readers.

Have you heard about the Sunday Long Read newsletter?

This is from their website:

The goal of The Sunday Long Read newsletter is simple: To put the past week's best journalism in your hands every Sunday morning—or, as a friend said, "to screw up my Sundays with far too much great stuff to read."

It was created by Don Van Natta Jr. and Jacob Feldman who do this on top of their daily jobs.

Don is a senior investigative reporter who has worked for 16 years for the NYT and now is a senior writer for ESPN. Don has been the member of three Pulitzer Prize-winning reporting teams and is also a New York Times bestselling author.

Jacob, a Harvard University graduate who is a staff writer at Sports Illustrated, where he primarily covers the intersection of sports, media, and the internet.

A friend of mine, a hardcore fan who scans through it religiously every Sunday, mentioned it to me, and I was very intrigued about knowing how well Don and Jacob were doing 5 years after launching their weekly newsletter. I reached out to

ly shared some numbers with me and gave ou.



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The Sunday Long Read newsletter has over 30,000 subscribers mostly from the USA but with representation from all over the world. While they initially kicked off their subscriber list with some of Don's followers on Twitter (of which he has 40K), it has grown organically ever since. Currently at a rhythm of over 100 subscribers a week.

OK not bad, but so what?

Well here is the most remarkable part: they've managed to cover all their costs, and even pay some of their regular contributors through their membership program. You can become a patron member on their website and support them

with monthly contributions of \$4 / month or \$32 / year.

Their newsletter is not fancy but it's content is super relevant to their audience. So much that it spreads and grows through word of mouth.

Surprisingly, the hard part is really not the technical part: setting up a signup form on your website, or designing the newsletter while maybe requiring some help is not costly or time consuming.

As for content, if you are talking to your true fans, well you're just naturally doing what you do best: share the stories, insights, relevant things that might interest them.

No, the hard part is being consistent.

Consistent in collecting those email addresses at events you go to, from fans that write to you, and promoting your newsletter regularly on social media and your promotional material.

Consistent in sending something out regularly. It doesn't have to be weekly, you can start quarterly, but do it thoughtfully, with care, commitment, and passion over time.



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