**Think Twice Before Incentivizing Your Mailing List**

A lot of bloggers and marketers will tell you that the single most important tool for growing an audience is a mailing list. With a mailing list, you reach people without relying on Facebook, you can avoid a scenario where your account gets deleted on a whim and you can communicate in a manner that is very personal and very engaging with your audience.

The question though is how you get someone to give you their email address when they know you’re likely to use it for marketing purposes. The answer that is very often put forward is to use an incentive. This usually means offering a free ebook, a free newsletter or some other kind of freebie in exchange for the person’s address. By doing this, you can thereby encourage people who might be ‘on the fence’ to sign up.

But think twice before you go this route…

**The Problem With Incentives**

The problem with an incentive is that in some ways, it undermines the inherent value of being on your mailing list. You want people to sign up to your mailing list because they love your brand so much and because they’re eager to hear from you in future. Being on your mailing list should make them feel like VIPs and it should even be *sought after*.

But if you’re offering an incentive to get them to sign up, then you are calling into question whether this is really the case. Suddenly, you’re very transparently trying to ‘buy’ their address off of them. And that’s unlikely to swell them with confidence.

Another issue is that an incentive can actually encourage people to sign up who wouldn’t have done otherwise.

That’s a great thing right? Wrong! Because the only reason you want a follower is so that they become a customer or a fan. It is 100% more desirable to have a small list of people who love your brand than a massive list of people who consider you a pest.

**How to Get People Involved**

So how do you get people to sign up then if you don’t use an incentive?

Step one is to be incredible. Have an amazing blog or social media account that people are excited to follow and that people want more of.

Step two is to talk about your mailing list in positive terms around your site. Mention that you have it and refer to your subscribers as VIPs or similar. Make it so that the mailing list *itself* sounds like the reward.