

An abstract graphic on a yellow background. A large teal circle is centered. Overlaid on the circle and background are several elements: a red line graph with an upward trend, a black line graph with an upward trend, a dashed white line, a solid white line, and a large yellow arrow pointing towards the top right. In the bottom left, there is a bar chart with four bars of increasing height, colored orange, yellow, and teal.

CASE STUDY

How One Blogger Grew Her Email List
to 50,000 and Counting

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INTRODUCTION

For bloggers, the goal at the end of the day is the same as every other business owner: grow your audience and strengthen your relationships with readers.

With email marketing, you gain a surefire tool to help you do just that. Not only does email allow you to stay in touch with your most loyal readers, it also gives you a way to communicate and connect with new audiences. And the more you grow and engage your email list, the more dedicated your following will be.

If you've been using email marketing in your business, that's great! But how can you achieve the growth you've been dreaming of?

In this case study, you'll learn how one woman turned her homesteading hobby into a new lifestyle and successful brand with the help of email.

MEET JILL



Before Jill Winger started her blog The Prairie Homestead, her lifestyle was far from the self-sustaining, farm-animal-collecting, green-thumb-ing spokesperson she is today.

In fact, she didn't even grow up on a farm.

But after purchasing her first acre of land with her husband, she had an epiphany. It was a revelation that eventually led her to begin gardening, canning, taking care of animals and living off the land.

And so she did what many others do when they first get started with something new: she decided to blog about it to help her keep track of her journey.

As Jill continued to blog, writing her recipes, tips on how to make and grow things, and everything else related to “modern homesteading,” she realized how much she loved blogging. And so, The Prairie Homestead began to flourish.

When she discovered the business potential of her blog, it became a no-brainer to find ways to monetize the recipes, how-to articles and other lessons she had been accumulating for years.

However, she needed a way to get more eyes on her blog.

Blueberry Cheesecake Ice Cream Recipe

- 2 cups fresh blueberries, divided
- 3/4 cup organic evaporated cane juice sugar
- 8 oz cream cheese
- 1 cup buttermilk or sour cream
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- Pinch of sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon lemon zest
- 2 cups heavy cream or half n half





You're reading the story of how one blogger grew her audience with email marketing.

We're excited to share this case study with you, and it's our hope that you'll be able to take what you've learned and get started with email marketing as soon as you're done reading it.

Email marketing is our thing, and we want to make sure others understand its value to their businesses, too.

That's why we've created resources

like these, as well as a massive resource of informative blog posts, how-to articles, videos and webinars so business owners like you can continue learning about email and digital marketing. Not to mention, our supportive email marketing experts are here and ready to help you along the way.

To experience what simple email marketing and great support is really like, give us a try. Or, [contact one of our email marketing experts](#) to get the conversation started today.

Try AWeber Free for 30 Days



JILL'S CHALLENGE

Aside from simply writing posts about homesteading on her blog, Jill needed another way to connect with her fans and reach new ones. Although she spent an “astronomical” amount of time on social media, the algorithm changes last year to Facebook taught her that it’s not wise to “build on rented ground.”

While Jill had already set up an email marketing account, she had not focused a lot on her email list. Her main channel of acquiring new subscribers was through her RSS feed, which she connected to her email account.

Additionally, life as a homesteader is a busy one – and it was important for her to find a way to drive attention to her blog and grow her audience while also having time to take care of her family, the animals and the land.

THE SOLUTION

Once it became clear that social media was not a reliable way to grow an audience she could have guaranteed contact with, Jill decided to shift her focus to her email list. Jill recognized that unlike her followers on Facebook (which belonged to Facebook, not her), her email list is something she gets to keep. In other words, it's not subject to the whims of the latest social media updates.

To get things moving, she decided to go with AWeber as her trusted email marketing service provider. Although she had used several other providers, she wasn't happy with the results. After hearing about AWeber from the top blogging gurus, she decided to do a trial membership – and was instantly impressed.

Once Jill started focusing more on growing her email list and connecting with her fans through that medium, her growth began to snowball.

"Its ease of use instantly got my attention and helped me know it was the right program for me."



Now, she has over 50,000 subscribers. But how did she manage to grow her list to tremendous heights?

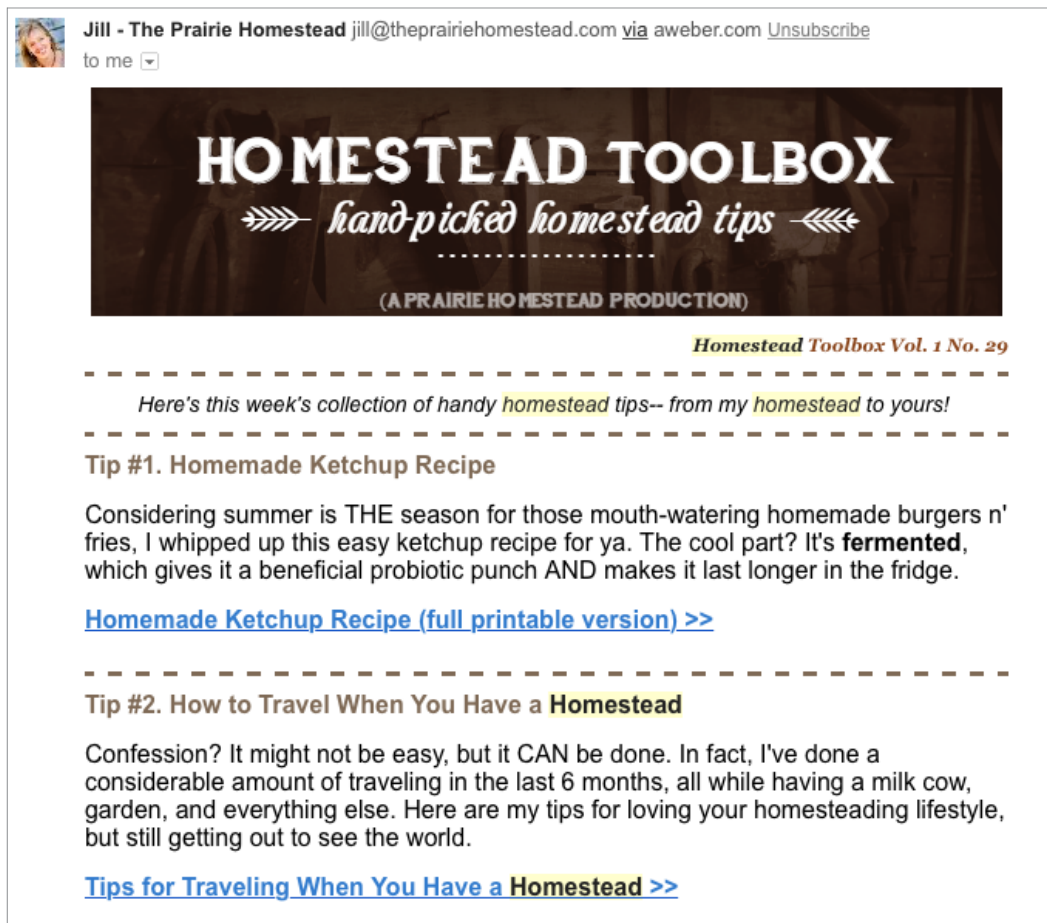
Here are three ways Jill grew her list and engaged subscribers:

Offered an eBook Incentive

According to Jill, her eBook on essential oils was “the kicker” to attracting new email sign ups. A popular trend, many were eager to learn more about the natural oils. And offering an online book that educates beginners on the basics of essential oils was the perfect incentive to encourage them to join her email list. Offering a content incentive also gave her the opportunity to showcase her expertise on the topic, and build trust among people who were new to her blog and her homesteading niche.

Sent Valuable Content

Once a week, Jill emails her subscribers a newsletter called The Homestead Toolbox. It's a short and sweet message that contains five bullet points with links to recent blog posts or other blogs that she feels might interest her readers.



While Jill finds this format works best for her audience, she also recognized the importance of trying out different ways of presenting content to her readers. Before the newsletter format she uses now, Jill used to email her subscribers the full-length of every blog post. However, they didn't get high open rates and the spam complaints were rolling in.

Since Jill writes about a wide variety of topics from cooking to animals to gardening, she decided to try the newsletter approach. And it's been very successful.

She also makes sure to write in a way that's personal to her subscribers, to deepen the connection.

Every so often, she'll send a more promotional type of email. But for the most part, her emails are intended to educate and delight her subscribers.

To gather new ideas for content, Jill remains immersed in the homesteading lifestyle. She reads everything she can get her hands on related to the lifestyle, from magazines to books to blogs.

With that to fuel her creativity, she's able to keep up on current trends and topics that might interest her readers as well.

By Jill Winger — 22 Comments

Homemade Herb Salt Recipe



Focused on Email

Jill isn't hesitant to admit that she was reluctant to abandon her Facebook business page. But the more time she spent trying to engage her audience and find loopholes in Facebook's new algorithm, the less fruitful her efforts in growing her audience.

By channeling her energy and time into her email list, however, Jill managed to grow her subscriber base to over 50,000.

To continue that growth, she consistently devotes a portion of her time to engaging her list – whether that's by writing a weekly newsletter or blog post to feature in an email or testing out new ideas to improve the open and click-through rates.

To engage your email list & boost open and click through rates, send a weekly newsletter or recent blog posts.

 [Tweet this](#)

THE RESULTS

In addition to having a stellar subscriber list, how has email marketing propelled The Prairie Homestead?

The average open rate of Jill's emails is around 24 percent (which is great). Plus, her website gets around 600,000 unique website visitors a month.

But as great as those numbers are, Jill also gained a loyal fanbase with which she can stay connected.

Increased Subscriber Engagement

With email marketing, she's able to create deeper relationships with readers. Not to mention, she has a solid channel for sharing products and services that she finds helpful as well. It's her number one avenue for promoting anything.

"By far, when I am promoting a product, sending an email to my list gets the best result."

Jill also finds that email allows for two-way communication between her and her fans. Many will send her emails or respond to newsletters, and she makes it a point to respond to them.

Time Saved

Email marketing also helps her get the most out of her content, which means it frees up time that she would otherwise have to spend writing new blogs.

With email, Jill can repurpose old blog posts by publishing links to them in her newsletter. Instead of letting them get buried under new posts, email allows her to breathe new life into them as they're just as relevant today as they were months ago.

Save time with email marketing by repurposing old blog posts into fresh content for your subscribers.

 [Tweet this](#)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

For each of the tactics Jill used to grow her email list for The Prairie Homestead, there are key takeaways you can implement today so you can get new subscribers. So dig in!

Offer Incentives

Take some time and think about your audience. What interests them? What challenges do they face? What do they want to learn more about? Answers to these questions can help you brainstorm topics for your own eBook or downloadable guide. You can use this as an incentive to encourage your website visitors to sign up to your email list.

Already doing this? Great! Maybe it's time to review your subscriber analytics to see if your content is still bringing in new email sign ups. Otherwise, it might be time to freshen up your content on a topic that's more relevant to your audience.

Send Valuable Content Regularly

A brief newsletter with curated content is perfect for Jill's audience (and it might be great for yours too!), but consider testing different types of content for your own subscribers.

Do they prefer short and sweet emails that link to your blog posts? Or are they more interested in hearing your perspective on recent industry news and trends? Consider the content approach you'd be comfortable with, and split test different content ideas to determine what gets the most engagement.

Remember, the goal of your emails is to educate and/or entertain your subscribers. The content you send them should be relevant to their interests and your niche.

To keep them engaged over a long period of time, it might be time to brainstorm new ways to provide value. Maybe it's time to connect with other influencers in your industry and run a co-branded webinar. Or, you should look into creating a fun and engaging infographic that you've been thinking of, but never got around to doing.

Just keep your content focused on your audience, and it'll be great!

If you find that they're not interested, don't fret. It's better to try something new in case they love it than not exploring new ideas at all.

Focus on Email

Make sure you set aside at least an hour a day or every other day to improving your email list. Maybe you can brainstorm email content ideas or fine-tune the messages in your follow up series. Or maybe it's time to consider changing the design of your sign up forms or testing your call-to-action buttons.

Consistently reviewing your sign up forms and emails is key to making sure they're optimized for engaging your audience – especially as their needs, interests and challenges may change over time.

Additionally, be sure to frequently check how your emails are performing. Your open rates and click-through rates, for example, can tell you a lot about your audience (such as what they're interested in) and the content you send them in your emails. Consider testing various subject lines (e.g., length, topics, emojis) and types of content (e.g., blog posts, videos, hyperlinks) to determine your subscribers' preferences.

CONCLUSION

Growing your subscriber list takes time, but if you put in the time and resources, you can continue to watch your audience soar.

Just as the work of a homesteader is never complete, neither is the work of an email marketer. Jill has committed to setting new goals for The Prairie Homestead, in the hopes of growing her subscriber list even more and raising awareness of her brand.

Continue to experiment with new ideas, and you'll find the one that sticks.

ARE YOU READY TO GROW YOUR EMAIL LIST LIKE JILL OF THE PRAIRIE HOMESTEAD?

Contact Patrick T. and John W. to find out how you can
connect with new customers using AWeber.

Start Your Free Trial Now

Already an AWeber customer? [Log in](#) now to start growing your business.

ABOUT AWEBER

AWeber is an easy-to-use email marketing tool that allows business owners and entrepreneurs to cultivate relationships with their customers. Since 1998, AWeber has been the email engine powering the growth of organizations around the world, including leading sites like Social Media Examiner and ProBlogger and industry influencers such as Peter Shankman and Ann Handley.

Today, more than 120,000 small- and midsize-businesses, entrepreneurs, agencies and nonprofits are making the most of AWeber's sophisticated segmentation and analytics capabilities, split testing applications, extensive template libraries and industry-leading deliverability and live support.

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