

PLEASE NOTE: This is a machine transcription. Some punctuation and spelling weirdness are to be expected.

In December of 2017, the husband and I made the decision to make a huge business shift. We were going to go from full-time service providers to full-time course creators instead.

For six years I'd been helping clients with their websites, membership sites, email campaigns, content creation, and marketing, and I was going to release them all to chase a dream of working fully for myself and no one else.

There were a lot of changes to be made, but one of the biggest was in my marketing strategy. As a freelancer and VA, I didn't really have to do much marketing. I had loyal clients I'd worked with for years, and new clients came to me on a regular basis just through word of mouth.

But I knew as a course creator, I'd have to get really good at marketing, and for me, that meant leveraging my email list.

Unfortunately, my email list was pretty cold. I mean, I hadn't emailed them in months, so I had some work to do to bring them back.

This is episode 78 of the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, and today I'm answering a question that came up recently during a [Six-Figure Systems](#) call, and that's how to re-engage a list that's gone cold. Stick around, and I'll give you all my ideas about what you can do if you've been neglecting your email list and now you're ready to get back into the game.

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Hey, it's Cindy, and thank you for spending a few minutes of your day with me. I appreciate you!

If you're new here, be sure to hit the subscribe button so you don't miss any future episodes. Next week, I'm going to take you behind the scenes and share with you why I don't have — and don't WANT — a big team. Some of what I talk about in that episode will ruffle a few feathers, but some of it may just resonate with you and how you want your business to run. It might even make you think differently about what a business is supposed to look like, so I hope you'll tune in.

But that's next week. This week is all about re-engaging with your cold email list. You'll find the show notes, transcript, and recommended resources for this episode at TinyCourseEmpire.com/78.

And with that out of the way, let's dive in!

There are a lot of reasons why your list may be a little neglected, and I'm not here to judge you for it, or to make you feel guilty for not staying in touch with them. Remember I was in this same space just a few years ago, so you won't get the side-eye from me over it.

What we are here to do is to fix it, and that starts by finding out if it's even worth it to revive your list, or if you should simply start over.

So the first thing I want you to do is ask yourself a few questions.

Number one: How many subscribers do you have?

If it's only a handful, it may not be worth it to try to woo them back. Not because they don't want to hear from you, and not because they're not interested in what you have to say, but simply because the energy you spend on a re-engagement campaign might be better spent on promoting your list instead.

The second question you have to ask is, **“What's the interest level of your current list?”** Are they highly interested in your topic and business model? Or are they the wrong audience for you?

Be honest about this, because it's much better to have a small but interested list, than a large but disinterested one.

And there are a lot of reasons why you might have a disinterested list.

Maybe you participated in a few bundle or giveaway events just to grow your list, but the people who signed up weren't really your target audience. Or maybe your business model has changed and you don't know if the people who subscribed before will still be interested.

That's the situation I was in back in 2018 when I was trying to re-engage my list. Many of my subscribers had signed up because they were interested in working with me as a freelancer. When I changed business models, it was hard to know if they'd still want to hear from me as a course creator.

Think about why your subscribers signed up for your list in the first place, and if you'll be emailing them in the future about the same or a very similar topic. If not, it might be best to simply let them go and start from scratch.

Another question to ask is, **“When is the last time you emailed them?”**

If it's been two or three months, your list is a little chilly, but by no means is it dead. This is a list that's definitely worth reviving.

If it's been six months, they're pretty cold, but if you have a few hundred subscribers and they're mostly interested in your topic, it's worth re-engaging with them.

If it's been longer than six months, you can still revive your list, but it will take a little more work on your part to get them engaged with you again.

Finally, **“what was your email frequency before you lost focus?”** Were you consistent? For how long?

- more than weekly, very consistent for at least six months - this list can be revived. They've probably missed you, and you may have even received emails from them asking where you've been.
- twice each month, somewhat consistent for a short period of time - you'll need to work to get them back, but it's not impossible.
- Infrequent/sporadic mailings? It's going to take some work on your part to win them back, but if you follow my re-engagement steps, and if they're still a good fit for your message, you can do it.

Once you've asked yourself these questions, and you've determined that it's worth re-engaging with your existing list, the next thing I want you to do is to determine what your intentions are.

- How often will you commit to emailing? Will you email them once a week? Twice a month? Every day?
- It will look far worse to start and stop again than to stay paused while you create your game plan.
- It will help if you brainstorm some topic ideas so you can have them handy when you feel stuck. I have 49 things you can mail your list if you need a kickstart. I'll link to that in the show notes.

Make that commitment to yourself, and then it's time to start scheduling emails. There are three approaches you can take, and which one you use is entirely up to you, but I'll give you my thoughts on each one, and also tell you which one I personally chose when I was reviving my cold list a few years ago.

Options for those first few emails

1. Start emailing again as if you never left. If you've been gone a short time, chances are good most of the people on your list won't notice your absence—we are all super distracted, after all—and if they did notice, it's unlikely that

they'll think you're weird or a slacker or whatever. They'll most likely think something like, "Oh, I haven't heard from Cindy in a while," and then either open the email to see what's up, or not.

- Best if you've been absent only a short time, and your subscribers have a high interest level.
2. Ask them to opt-in again. Create a new freebie that's perfectly in alignment with your current business plans, and then send your subscribers the link to opt-in. Remember the three rules for lead magnets - it has to be easy to consume, actionable, and it has to lead your subscribers one step closer to paying you. In other words, solve a problem they have and make it clear you're the person to help them achieve their goals.
 - ONLY email the people who choose to opt-in
 - Best for really cold audiences or those with a low interest in your current business model
 3. Explain your absence, let them know what to expect going forward. A lot of email marketers seem to default to this option. They want to apologize for being absent, and I get that, but I think use this option with caution. While it can be beneficial to let your subscribers see your more human side, it can also lean towards sounding desperate and/or whiny. If you do go this route, be sure to explain to your subscribers:
 - How often you'll be mailing them going forward
 - What topics you'll be covering
 - This option is best for an interested but very cold list

Gotchas to watch out for

Higher unsubscribe rates

You will get more unsubscribes than normal when you first start emailing a cold list. This is perfectly normal. Some of your subscribers will have changed focus, and they may no longer be interested in your topic. Some of them will have forgotten who you are so they unsubscribe for that reason.

Higher spam complaints

You'll also notice a higher than normal spam complaints, and again, that's perfectly normal. Some of your subscribers will have forgotten who you are, and they will hit the spam button rather than unsubscribe. It will return to normal after your first couple of emails.

Higher bounce rates

Yep, higher bounce rates as well. A bounce is when an email is undeliverable, and there are a lot of different reasons that can happen. There's also a difference between types of bounces, but that's not really relevant here. What's happening when emails bounce when you re-engage with a cold list is simply that some of those email addresses are no longer active.

Will this harm my reputation as a sender?

You probably know that sender reputation is important in email marketing, and that sender reputation can be impacted by high unsubscribe numbers, bounce rates, and spam complaints. So is re-engaging a cold list going to cause a problem with your email host?

It's possible, but not likely.

What email providers are watching for here are things like scraped or purchased lists, and those will typically have much bigger red flags than your re-engagement campaign is going to have, so I don't want you to let the fear of that hold you back from reviving your list.

Remember, these higher spam and bounce rates are temporary. They'll level off again after the first couple of emails.

Are you wondering which of the three re-engagement strategies I chose for my cold list back in 2018? Well, I picked number one. I just dove right back in as if I never left, and I'm still here to tell the tale, so I guess it turned out ok.

Looking back though, and knowing what I know now, I would do it differently today. Remember I said I was changing business models, and my list was really cold. I think a better choice for me would have been to create a new freebie and ask them to opt-in again.

Now, the end result is the same. The people who were interested in my new direction stayed, and those who weren't didn't, and that's all as it should be. But it would have been cleaner to make it clear about the change I was making, and probably caused less confusion among my subscribers, too.

If you have a chilly or even completely abandoned list, remember the four questions to ask before you decide to revive it:

1. How many subscribers do you have, and would it be more efficient to just build from scratch?
2. What's their interest level? Have you changed business models, or did they sign up for something different than what you currently offer?
3. When was the last time you mailed them? Are they really cold or just a little chilly?
4. How frequently were you staying in touch prior to losing your focus? More frequent emails will likely mean an easier time re-engaging with your subscribers.

Then, if you do decide that a re-engagement campaign is in order, you get to choose how to go about it. You can simply start emailing again, or you can ask them to opt-in for a new freebie, or you can offer them an explanation if you prefer.

The choice really is up to you, but whatever you do, don't let your list stay cold. Either work to revive it, or start building something new, because your email list really is your biggest and potentially your most profitable business asset.

If you want to learn how to leverage your list for higher profits and better engagement, I'd love to invite you to join us inside [Six-Figure Systems](#). We talk about email marketing a lot, and this episode is just one tiny facet of building, managing, and maintaining a thriving email list.

You can join us for just \$7 for your first seven days, and get full access to the program, including all 50+ courses and toolkits, hundreds of hours of Q & A calls and workshop recordings, and an invitation to our upcoming live events. Go to tinycourseempire.com/join to get started.

Finally, if you're enjoying the show, would you do me a favor and leave a rating and review over at Apple podcasts or wherever you're listening? that helps others find

us. and of course, if you have a friend or colleague who would love to hear this episode, go ahead and send them the link. tinycourseempire.com/78.

Have a terrific day everyone, and I'll talk to you again next week!

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