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# Steal This Trick for Higher Sales

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January's column was about connecting your tech to get more out of all of the tech. This month, we're going to deep dive into a specific type of customer communication that you can easily create when you connect your tech: automatic emails to customers after they purchase or meet specific criteria.

## Take It From Deb: It's Easy

In March, Deb Foisy, owner of Deb's Greenhouse, and I presented a free webinar showing you how to do this (see the QR code). Deb uses Square for her point-of-sale (POS) and MailChimp for email marketing. Those two pieces of tech integrate seamlessly with each other, as do many other POS/email combos. If your systems don't, you may be able to use a third-party connector like Zapier to make them talk.

During our webinar someone asked, "What happens if you can't get your POS and your email program to connect?"

"Change one," she replied. "We're not going back, guys. This type of communication is the future."

Of course you can't/shouldn't change everything right in the middle of busy season, but you can make a change during the summer.

## Take It From Me: It's Profitable

Have you noticed that after you visit a website, put some things in your online shopping cart and then close the window without purchasing you get an email four hours (or maybe a day) later saying, "We saved your cart!"? Or maybe a month after you buy a new pair of pants online you get an email saying, "These tops would look great with your pants."

When you have your POS and your email connected you can steal this trick from e-commerce merchants, who've already done the heavy lifting to work with email service providers to develop automated email journey or "flow" templates.

Every. Single. E-commerce. Store. Does. This. Why? Because it makes them money. But also … it's a form of customer service, which also helps make money.

## Automatic Emails: Hands-off Personalization

Automatic customer emails are different from your weekly newsletter or weekly availability because they use your connected tech to pull relevant customer data such as:

- Date of last purchase

- Items last purchased

-  Items purchased at a similar time last year

- Birthday month (if collected)

- Date of first purchase (if email is collected)

- Self-identified interests (preferences form)

And send your customers emails that:

- Remind them to make a complementary purchase (fertilizer for hanging baskets, cages for tomatoes, etc.)

- Invite them in to celebrate their birthday or anniversary of their first visit

- Teach them how to keep XYZ plant alive or to bring in their clay pots for the winter

- Update them on seasonal hours changes

And more!

I buy all my clothes from J. Jill and they send me a coupon for my birthday month every year: 20% off. You'd better believe I go in and use that sucker even if I don't technically "need" anything. If the place that makes the watercolors I really like sent me a note saying, "Celebrate two years of making art with XYZ watercolors. We'll pop a surprise in your box with your next order," well OF COURSE I would order. If that same place sent me an email with a painting prompt three or four times a year, you can believe I'm doing it and telling my friends about it.

Automated flows are a way to use data to personalize communications and to make your email program a little more like the algorithms behind social media platforms. In other words: to serve up content and info your customers want. As there's more noise, more people will tune out general messaging and double down on information and inspiration targeting their specific interests.

## How Automatic Email Flows Work

All automatic email flows start with a trigger. This trigger is what starts the flow. Think of it as the first domino that gets pushed over.

Garden center email triggers include:

- Added to an email list

- Changed their preferences

- Purchased a specific item

- Signed up for an event

- No recorded purchase for a specific amount of time (six months, one year)

- Birthday month

- Back in stock/now in stock/new in (specific categories)

From that trigger, an automatic email workflow starts. Deb and I recommend that the first step in an automatic workflow is to add a tag or profile property to the customer in relation to that trigger so that once the automated flow is complete, that customer can be found again and added to other relevant workflows based on that tag.

For example, here's what those steps would look like:

Customer purchases tomato plants > that data is automatically sent to the email service provider > customer profile receives a tag for "edibles." Now, if you want to email to a segment of people who purchased edibles, that customer will show up in the list.

The next part of the journey would be to send an email or two. Here's what that might look like:

Time delay of two hours > customer gets an email with planting instructions > time delay of two weeks > customer gets an email explaining how to pinch tomatoes and reminding them to pick up fertilizer > time delay of one year > customer receives email: "It's time to buy tomatoes! Look at our new varieties. Which one will you try this year?"

By building that journey you just created a year-long cycle of staying in touch with that customer that's highly personalized based on what they purchased and when they purchased it without you having to do anything other than set up the journey. And you've created a system to talk to every customer who purchases tomatoes and gives you their email so you can do the same thing.

Multiply that times your top 10 or 20 items or categories, and you're making your job easier, making your customers feel cared for and inspiring repeat visits.

What are you waiting for? Pull up your email program and look for "flows," "automations" or "journeys" and get started! If you have questions, drop me a line. **GP**

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Watch a webinar about the automated email process with Katie and Deb's Greenhouse Owner Deb Foisy.