

CHAPTER 3

Getting Attention

Let's dig into awareness! I'm going to talk about something that's a little different than what you might think of as awareness. I'm going to go a little deeper. If you look at what most people traditionally think of as awareness, it's actually reach. When you buy radio or TV, they're going to tell you how many people you'll reach. They're going to tell you how many impressions you make, or at least the opportunity to do so. What "mass media" thinks "reach" is, is a whole different story. If it's billboards, it's how many people have the opportunity to "see" your billboard. Direct mail will talk about the HUGE number of people who were sent something in the mail or how many mailboxes you landed in.

I want you to ask yourself one question: Are you making people aware, or are you simply reaching people? I may be in my car listening to the radio when your commercial comes on, but that doesn't mean that I actually heard it or that I'm actually aware of your brand. I may be on Facebook, scrolling through my timeline, when I see your Facebook post three, four, five times, and by marketing standards, those are impressions. But am I aware of your ad? More importantly, am I aware of the message within it? I may see your restaurant's name and logo, I may see a giant steak that looks amazing, but is the message impacting me?

Is it causing me to take action?

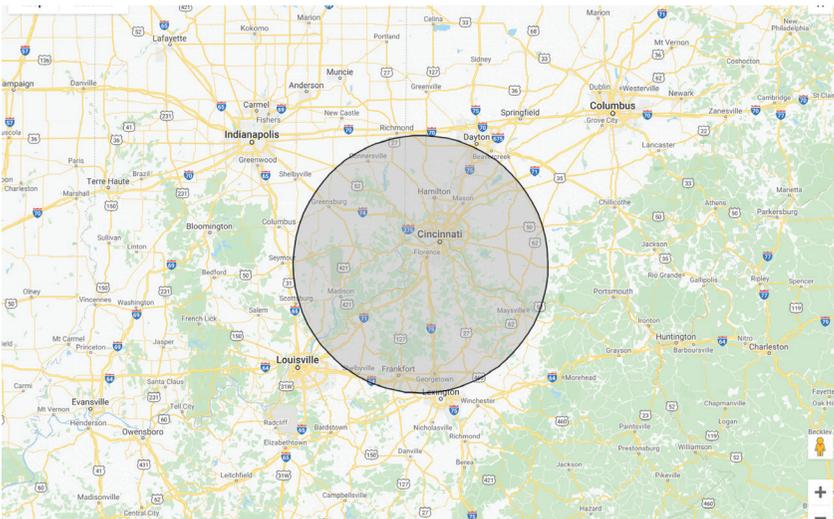
And that is a huge, huge mystery in most marketing.

In this chapter, we'll discuss understanding how you can take people from a simple reach to gaining their attention to leading them down a path of engagement. We'll also talk about the power of engagement marketing. Before we get into that, I want to cover a couple of things. First, are the people you're trying to reach with your message and the people you're trying to make an impact on ... the *right* people?

When I sold radio advertising back in the late '90s and early 2000s, we bragged about our audience — their age and income, their homeownership stats, number of kids, and how often they ate out. At the end of the day, we honestly didn't know any of that. Radio stations and mass media outlets don't actually have this hard data! The number is extrapolated out among a very small sample of diaries, so you really don't know if you're reaching the right people.

You can assume that if you're advertising on a Bengals Radio Network pregame show that you're probably reaching Bengals fans, and the Bengals probably have a pretty good understanding of who their audience is based on knowing their fan base, but they don't know exactly. You also have to consider if those people are even the right people, because a lot of times your marketing message is wasted on people who aren't your ideal target.

In my past two books, I've talked about my concept of "Create Your Own Radio Station." What I mean by that and where that came from is the idea for you to build your own audience — in essence, your own radio station. Look at a 60-mile radius around your restaurant. Imagine, just for this example, that you have one location in Northern Kentucky — in fact, it's in Union, Kentucky.



That's where I'm located right now. The image above shows what a 60-mile radius looks like. That's where the audience is for most marketing.

I look at that 60-mile radius and pinpoint my audience in Northern Kentucky, and then I think about the number of people that I can impact in that 60 miles. Media companies are selling you the appeal of reaching this big audience across a large geographic area, when, in fact, the majority of people in your restaurant's reach are within a couple of miles.

So think of it this way when looking at a radio commercial as an example:

- The commercial reaches 200,000 people per week.
- Every 15 minutes, they really reach closer to 10,000 people.
- Of those 10,000 people, how many heard your commercial? Let's guess high: 50% or 5,000 people.
- Now, of those 5,000 people, how many are within a few miles of your restaurant? Maybe 5%, so now we're down to 250 people.
- How many actually heard your commercial (you know, didn't change the station or have kids screaming)? 100?

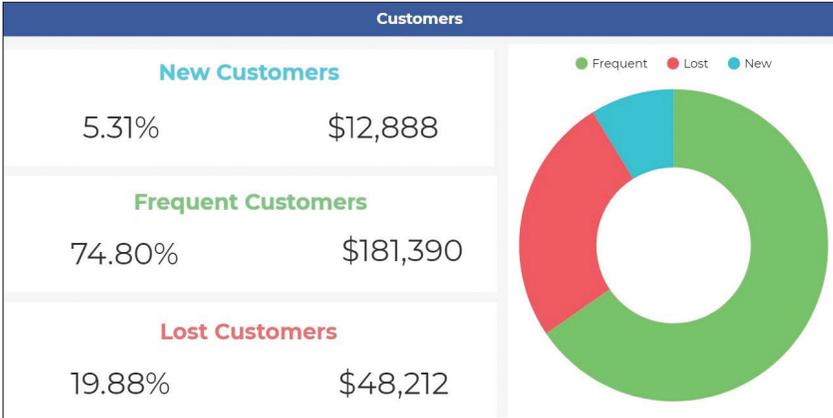
You just spent all that money to reach 100 people!

Now, add up the number of people you know — your social media following, your email list, your cell phone list, etc. I can PROMISE you that it's over 100. It's probably over 5,000.

That's where "Create Your Own Radio Station" came from. If you do the right things with your marketing and you build an email, text, and retargeting list from your online content, online social media, and a direct mail list, you can build your own audience and have a larger reach than any radio station ever could imagine.

When I first thought of this concept years ago, I was speaking on behalf of Constant Contact at a local marketing seminar in Cincinnati. I pulled a guy out of a crowd and used him as an example. I asked him about his personal Facebook reach, his personal LinkedIn reach, his email list, and the phone numbers in his phone. We did the math, and he reached about 2,500 unduplicated people who knew who he and his business were, whom he could personally reach out to.

We're going to get into messaging down the road, because messaging really plays into that, but it also comes down to three categories: new, frequent, and lost customers.



The goal of your marketing should be to identify your current customers, ideal new customers, frequent customers, and lost customers.

Regarding engagement, if you have marketing that gets reach (as we discussed in Step 1) and can make an impression, thereby gaining consumers' awareness, then you can successfully engage and reach the right audience.

Let's talk about the types of marketing you can use:

1st — Mass Marketing

2nd — Grassroots Marketing

3rd — Four-Walls Marketing

4th — Social Media Marketing

5th — Direct Marketing (Email, Text, and Mail)

Obviously, we're all familiar with mass media, radio, and TV. I'll put direct mail in there, too, because there's a lot of mass mailing out there. Billboards, professional sports marketing, and similar marketing is also included. For most of my readers, mass media is not the opportunity for you unless you have a deep enough marketing budget that you can spend at great levels on all the normal parts of what you should invest in — what I call the bases.

Like my dad always says, you shouldn't build a house on sand because it'll eventually sink. You shouldn't build a marketing plan on sand, either. If you build a marketing plan based on mass media, most of you will

never see success because you just don't have the budget. You must build a marketing plan based on *Creating Your Own Radio Station* — your database! You must focus on reaching people who know, like, and trust you. You must focus on finding your ideal new customers, your frequent customers, and the people who haven't come back in a while, otherwise known as your lost customers. That is where you start the foundation. If you're not doing these things already, you should ignore the mass media.

The next step is grassroots marketing. This is one that's near and dear to my heart because it's one of the biggest opportunities out there. You must dominate grassroots marketing! Grassroots marketing is shaking hands and kissing babies of people who should be doing business with you. There's a restaurant called Flipdaddy's that went out of business recently (pre-pandemic), just down the street from my house. In between us is a school campus that includes Ryle High School, Gray Middle School, and two elementary schools.

I can't even count the number of times I saw Flipdaddy's utilizing grassroots marketing at sporting events on the school campus. Why? Because it's zero times. My daughter cheered, my son plays football, they both swam. I went to many other sporting events as well, and I've never seen them. In fact, at dinner one night, a bunch of the parents were talking about how no one ever went there. When I asked why, they all said, "I don't know, I guess they never came to mind." The fact is, they were nowhere to be seen in our community. This is a restaurant that thrives on families coming to eat there, and they never made the effort to walk out their door, go down to the school, and market. It made complete sense when they closed up because they didn't do one of the most important things, which is connecting with their community through grassroots marketing.

Grassroots marketing is an amazing way to reach the right people and make an impression — an impression that most businesses are not taking the time to make. Now it's your turn to give them a reason to come to the restaurant. You can play this a few ways. The *easiest* route is to shake hands, kiss babies, and hand out promotional items. The *best* way is to find a way to BRIBE them! Do you know how many times we've ended up at a restaurant due to a free appetizer card given to us at an event? MANY! And guess what, that bill far outweighed the cost of the appetizer. If you want to take this further, put in place a way to get

their information. After all, most people will give you something of value when you do the same.

Some of the tools we're going to talk about later in the book will do just that. Instead of handing out free appetizer cards at a football game, for instance, you could have customers scan a QR code and enter to win a \$100 gift card, or enroll in a VIP program, etc. You could have them text a number to enter to win a contest or text in to get the free appetizer. There are a lot of things you can do to deliver what you want to deliver to them but also, more importantly, to get their information.

Four-Walls Marketing is another avenue to gain attention. This is easily the number one opportunity you can use to reach the exact customer you desire. They've already taken the hardest step: walking into your restaurant. You've already earned enough trust to get them to visit. Now is the best time to get their info. All you have to do is to give them a great meal, service, and experience. Once you do that, and get their information, a return visit is guaranteed.

Four-Walls is your opportunity to take grassroots marketing to the next level, because it is grassroots. It's just within your four walls, on your turf, **SO PROTECT IT!**

You have the opportunity to get your customer's information and find out who they are. Are they a new customer visiting for the first time? Are they frequent? Are they a customer who's visiting for the first time in a while — a lost customer? We'll dig deeper into data-gathering later on, but the biggest missed opportunity for building a database is right inside your restaurant.

Next on the list is social media. Social media is an amazing place to reach customers and to make impressions. The number one opportunity on social media is engagement. We're going to talk about the value of engagement and how to gain it next chapter, so let's jump into the last tactic: **DIRECT MARKETING.**

One of the most ignored opportunities is actually **INVITING** your customers to dine with you.

We're talking about direct contact — you know, reaching out to people via email, text, or mail and saying, "Matt, come see us!"

It's that simple! I once told a restaurant owner, "I love your restaurant, but you never invite me. Your restaurant isn't on my way home, I don't live near it, and I never see your marketing. That only leaves you calling,

emailing, or texting me, and you don't have my information, so you're losing many visits and thousands in revenue every year.”

If you have a customer database, you can easily do this, and if you have MORE than just a name and number, you can target that message at a very high level.

Email is a great medium. It's not used enough by businesses, while the people who do use it do so incorrectly many times, including my company. We're constantly evolving how we can become better at using email marketing because the biggest missed opportunity is called segmentation.

There's nothing worse than a restaurant emailing a 20,000-person email list a “kids eat free” promotion. Why? Because 10,000 people on your list don't have kids. They don't care about kids eating free, so you're offering them something that does not benefit them. They tune you out.

Text messaging is another great one. It has a 99% open rate.

There are also messenger apps, such as Facebook Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Remember AOL Messenger? Man, they were ahead of their time! Messenger's services are great. There are many different platforms that have Messenger, and it's going to be a big medium in the near future.

Last but not least, there's good ol' mail. I'm not talking about direct mail and mass mail, though. I'm talking about a mailing that goes to Matt Plapp for a specific reason because I gave you my information. And it's a thing that a lot of restaurants don't collect right now.

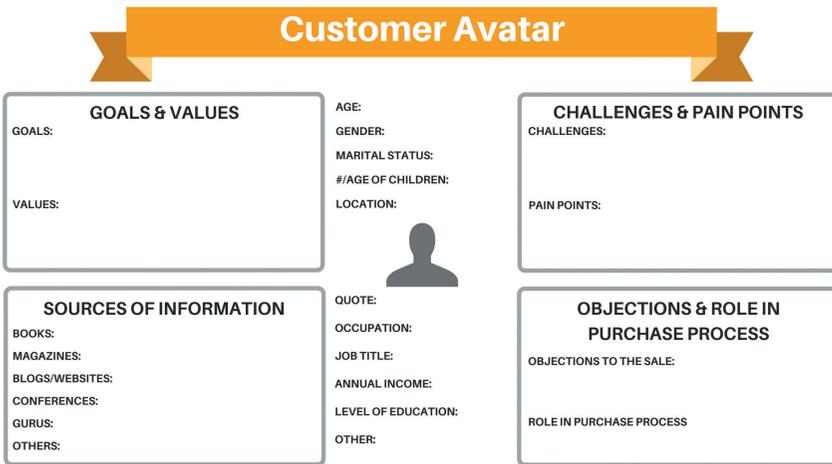
We've talked about the types of marketing. Now I want to talk about the right audiences. Awareness is not the only thing we are looking for; we want the right audience. Engagement marketing is a great way to help you identify the right audience.

You're going to build out a profile in your marketing and have a message that you narrow down to try and talk to people. In the marketing world, they call that an avatar. Oftentimes, businesses try to be too broad. I want you to imagine that you're building an ad for that kids-eat-free day, for lunch with the kids, with moms, moms and dads, whatever the audience is. You're building a very specific message. What is the opportunity here? You should build the ad around that opportunity. Who is the 100% most likely customer to take advantage of this?

You need to profile the heck out of this. You need to get so specific that you're thinking, "I'm only talking to one person."

Example: Her name is Linda. She lives on 5th Street. She has two kids. She's married. She drives an SUV. Her kids play sports. GET THAT SPECIFIC!

When you get that specific, your message resonates. And when your message resonates in marketing, that awareness we talked about turns into engagement.



Envision that we're trying to attract a crowd of women with kids to come to the restaurant on family nights, after high school football games, on the weekends, for birthday parties, whatever. We're trying to get that 35-to-45-year-old female who's also married with two kids, and the other families. So you build out your messaging. You build out your call to action. You build out your profile in, let's say, Facebook and Instagram, as an example. You create an audience with specific demographics: married, a certain age, kids; you might build out a couple of profiles. Now, you don't necessarily have to do that — we're going to get into that down the road — but you can put them in there. You can put some different things you think that that person might follow as well.

With this, all of a sudden, you've got a picture that resonates with that. So you find some good ad creative. Don't get too "ad-sy." Keep it organic. Don't get too fancy with the camera. Regarding content, we're not going to go down that rabbit hole completely, but the stuff that gets the best

engagement is things that are created by your customers, things you can get for free, user-generated content. There's going to be information on that later in the book as well. But you've got that picture that really speaks to a mom. You've got the headline that grabs the mom's attention. You've got a call to action that she can't pass up.

The next step to all of this is figuring out how to get her to engage. It comes down to your pitch. I'm going to paint a picture for you. You've got a picture of a seven-year-old blond-haired, blue-eyed little boy who's got a rib bone up to his face. He's got barbecue sauce on his cheek. He's pulling the meat off of the bone. Behind him, you can see mom cracking up laughing, because we've all seen that.

We all have pictures in our phones of our friends and family at one of our favorite restaurants. And the headline is something like, "Whose kids get more food on their faces than in their stomachs?" Or in this case, "who else loves maple bacon donuts"



The next line: "We want to treat you and your family to an amazing meal. Comment below if you've got a kid in your family who seems to get more sauce on their face and shirt than they do in their stomach. When you comment below, we'll send you a great message and a great offer, through Facebook Messenger, to get you enrolled in our VIP program." Or maybe it's, "Click below to enter to win a contest for a \$100 gift card." Maybe it's, "Click below to enter," or "Text to enter." Whatever it is, you're trying to get them to engage. What you're trying to do is to get them to raise their hand.

You put a message in front of the right audience, catch their attention, and keep their attention by having them engage and raise their hands, saying, “That’s me. That’s my family. That’s my kid.” Once you get people to engage at that level, then you take them somewhere else. You’re able to do the very last step of this whole entire chapter, and that is optimize off of engagement. As I talked about earlier, awareness is great. That’s what reach is; that’s what impressions are. But are people really aware when you reach them with a commercial or with a Facebook ad, with an Instagram ad, with a video on YouTube? No, they’re not.

When they engage, they become aware. When you get them to engage and get them to do what you want them to do (raise their hands), you get more data to go back to Facebook and Instagram and other places. Now you can optimize your future marketing off of engagement. In this book, we’re going to talk about some tactics, specifically on Facebook and Instagram, that allow you to not only do that, but also to find out if they’ve been to the restaurant before. Yes or no. No? Well, guess what. You’ve just identified people who engage, got their awareness, reached them, got them to engage, got them to raise their hands, and now you know they’re a new customer.

For the ones who say, “Yes, I have been,” you ask them a couple of questions, or maybe just a simple question of “Are you a frequent customer, or do you come occasionally?” Now you can find your frequent and lost customers, because an occasional customer, in my mind, is lost, because you haven’t gotten them to become frequent yet. You’re able to get people again to raise their hands, and you can identify new, frequent, and lost customers. From there, you can throw gasoline on the fire, as they say, and optimize the heck out of your upfront marketing by feeding data back there and saying, “Hey, Facebook. Hey, Instagram, all of these people engaged in my ad. So, let’s say 1,000 people engaged in this ad and this post. Of these 1,000, 700 took the next step and opted in. They raised their hands at the highest level. They said, ‘Here’s who I am. Take my info. Give me something of value.’”

Of that audience, let’s say 700 people out of 1,000 responded: 100 said they were new, another 250 said they were frequent, and another 350 said they were lost. Guess what. Now you can target the right people, because now you can find new people on the front end who look identical to your frequent customers. When you do that, you trim the fat from your

ad campaigns. But at the same time, now you're able to build awareness campaigns and say, "Okay, Facebook, these people raised their hands. They told us all their information. They identified themselves as new customers."

I'm going to have a different level awareness campaign go to them, which is going to make them really aware, because they've already gone through one part of the funnel, and you'll see that a little later in diagrams. For lost customers, this is your chance to woo them back. That's deeper awareness to the right people.

To recap, think about awareness with your marketing not as simply reaching somebody, not as simply getting in front of somebody, but as getting them to raise their hand. If they raise their hand and engage in your marketing, you can capitalize off of that engagement and optimize the front end of your marketing funnel at a very high level.

That's all I got for this chapter. See you next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Gaining Engagement

Okay, in the last chapter, we talked about getting attention with your marketing. Now, what I love the most about online marketing is the fact that you can take that attention to the next level.

What I mean by that is that you can gain engagement and, more importantly, you can gain meaningful engagement. I've always said that all marketing works. If you're a restaurant, you could run radio and get results. You could run a TV commercial, send a direct mail piece, put up an eye-catching billboard, invest in bus billboards, or sponsor a sporting event at a stadium. But the one thing that lacks in the majority of these marketing efforts is actually knowing that some kind of engagement occurred. I could be in the car with two of my friends, and I hear a commercial for a pizza place and say, "Man, Coconut Kenny's sounds amazing. We got to go by there." Or, "Coconut Kenny's is my favorite. Can't wait to hit there next time."

Let's be honest, that probably happens, but not at a huge level or with a measurable result. More importantly, it doesn't happen at a level that you can capitalize on, since 99.9% of these ads aren't doing anything to build a database. One of the best ways to build a database is through marketing engagement. Rather than normal engagement, I'm talking about driving that engagement online. Whether it's from a radio spot or billboard, you don't have to use only online ads to drive online engagement.

You see, a lot of marketing either has no call to action (CTA) or has shifted to what everybody thinks is pretty, looks perfect, and gains attention.

Yes, maybe it does get them to stop, but does it get them to do something that leads them down a path? When I look at engagement, the number one thing I'm looking for is *meaningful* engagement. Examples would be scanning a code, going to a specific URL, commenting on a

social media post, sharing a post, and getting a reaction.

Let's talk about the different types of engagements you can get. All engagements work. If somebody clicks within your Facebook or Instagram post or if they do something within your YouTube video, online engagement will always help you to some extent, because behind that platform is what they call machine learning. There's an algorithm built. Let's just use Facebook as an example. They look at what happened in that post or in an ad, look at who completed the action, cross-reference that data, and find people who look and feel just like the people who engaged. This is one of the biggest reasons I tell people to, whenever possible, drive their offline traffic to online platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Google, and YouTube. It allows you to use their AI (artificial intelligence) to build profiles for ads.

There are many different types of engagements that you can get online. But without a doubt, the number one type of engagement in 2021 is a social media comment. A close second would be a social share and third would be some type of post reaction. This goes for YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. It is the same for any other social platforms that arise now as well. Reviews are a great engagement, too, but for now, they don't allow for the backend AI for advertising, which is what I want to dig into next. You may notice a form of engagement missing from here, and that's filling out a form. Since that engagement is viewed as getting data, we will cover that in the next chapter.

Let's dig into HOW to gain the right type of engagement. I think of this like parenting. Too many times in marketing, we aren't specific enough. I know from 18 years as a dad that the more wide-open you leave the instructions, the more the likelihood of getting your desired result decreases.

When you think about gaining online engagement, think about the best opportunity and BE SPECIFIC. Let's talk about a very specific example using Facebook post comments. The goal is to elicit a comment. Oftentimes, people don't do that. They'll have a post that says something like, "What are your dinner plans tonight?" And you might get some people to comment, but you've got to figure out a way to get a little deeper than that.

I've seen people do posts that are "controversial" — well, as controversial as you can get in the restaurant business, like:

“Hey, do you love pineapple on pizza?”

“Pineapple belongs on pizza, yes or no?”

“Wings, boneless or bone-in?”

These work great, and there are a lot of ways to create posts like this that also serve another purpose: to drive traffic to your call to action. You have to think about what’s going to get somebody to comment, because a lot of businesses don’t do enough to get the comment. One of the best ways to get a response is to “bribe” them. Think about what you can give them as an incentive or added motivation.

Over the years, we’ve helped restaurants build a database from what we call a VIP program. Many of the best attention-grabbing headlines we’ve done are what you think might work best: something FREE! With regard to social platforms such as Facebook, you have to follow some rules, because there are a couple of things that happen there that will lead you down the wrong path.



First, a lot of the algorithms and social platforms do not like “baiting engagement,” such as “comment below the word win or free.” Why? Because it’s not gaining something meaningful for the platform. When you think about how to do this right, you want to think about gaining valuable data. Something like, “For a free pizza, comment below your favorite pizza topping.” And then lay out what’s going to happen next, as in how you will give them the item for free.

Another great thing about posts like this is the many ways you can use the responses. These post comments are just like reviews, and you can take that text and use it with images for your marketing. You can also use this tactic with your online reviews. It works great for menu content, in-store marketing, and online marketing.

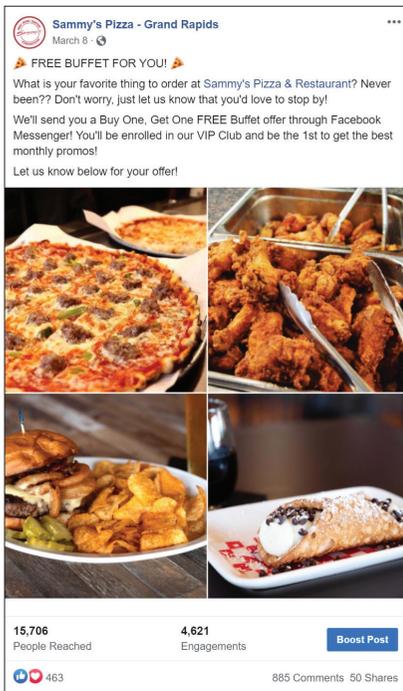
Now, I know what you’re thinking, “Matt, I don’t want to give away something free. There are food costs. There’s this, there’s that. Blah, blah, blah.” It’s a small price to pay for a huge opportunity. I have seen restaurants do a promotion like this that gets 500-1,000 people joining

monthly, and those customers end up spending \$50,000 annually. I'm going to guess that you would give away a few hundred free orders of jalapeño poppers to get that, especially when you look at the annual value down the road, year over year. People don't just come to your restaurant for a year and leave. If you get their information correctly, they come, and they keep coming, as long as you provide a great product.

The next type of engagement we'll talk about is people clicking to do something, because that is an opportunity a lot of people leave out that helps optimize your marketing. If you've seen a Facebook post, for example, where the button says, "See more." If you have a long enough piece of content, people are forced to click the "see more" button. When they click this button, it expands the post. That is a positive attribution that helps Facebook know that somebody took an action, and it gives them more ways and data points to find more people. Also within there, if you have links, the see-more button opens up: "Click here to go to our website and enter your information to join the VIP club." There are many ways you can use online platform CTA buttons, including "send message" or "get offer,"

to get people to do exactly what you want them to do. You won't gain the content from the post comments, but sometimes the fastest way to your end result is a straight path.

You're trying to get them to go somewhere, which is the next level of engagement: getting them to click and go somewhere. A couple other ways that we're going to highlight on the download you can go online and visit and get engagement are giveaways. People love giveaways. Comment below your favorite pizza topping to get a \$25 gift card or a chance to win a \$25 gift card. People love giveaways because they have a chance to win. We've actually had better results



with contests having lower prizes than those with bigger ones. We had prizes that I thought would do better, such as a lifetime of free wings, but, oddly enough, a contest offering a \$10 gift card did better.

This information blew me away. When I reached out to customers and asked them, “Why did so many people enter this, versus the other one?” It was because it looked more attainable. In their mind, the odds of them winning wings for a year were less than the chance of them winning the \$10 gift card.

Another way to get engagement is a post that highlights your team. This is so easy to do, yet very few do it, especially multi-location or franchise units that simply use the same picture across many locations.

By using your ACTUAL employees, you gain some viral momentum because friends and family start to chime in: “Oh my gosh, there’s Kelly and Mike.” Now you gain the eyes and keyboards of mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle, best friend, sisters, brothers, and neighbors. That picture needs to be local. For this reason, one of the better pieces of content you can use is one highlighting your employees. Whether it’s a video or a picture, it will get people to stop more often because they recognize that person. local attention because people know that person. That’s going to get a lot of attention. It’s going to get a lot of meaningful engagements, which, as we’ve talked about, lead to better conversations online. I encourage you to click the link, go check out the guide, and look at some of our most powerful pieces of online content that have gotten engagement, because in the next chapter, we’re going to talk about using that engagement to build a database.

<https://americasbestrestaurants.live/content>



What are some of the things you can do that allow people to take the next step? This book is about helping you find long-term success in marketing your restaurant. You should be looking for DATA. What helps you best long-term is having a database that you own. A database that knows, likes, and trusts your restaurant. The best way to build that database is not only by getting customers to raise their

hands by engaging in your marketing, but also by getting them to give you their information so you can communicate with them down the road in meaningful ways.