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8 counterintuitive marketing strategies that actually work:

**Add friction to boost sales:**

Boxed cake mixes used to require only water. But when Duncan Hines' cake mix required fresh eggs, sales soared. People liked the extra work.

Other examples:

Longer sign-up form → improves conversion

IKEA's store layout → inspires impulse buys

**Grow your community through unscalable interactions:**

Especially when it's early days, personally welcome all new members. Connect 1:1. Make note of people's interests and expertise. When relevant community discussions come up, tag them in. Everyone loves white-glove service.

**Give away valuable info to get paying customers:**

Marketers have been conditioned to tease value so that people buy. But freely giving that value - guides, calculators, templates, etc — helps people trust AND refer you. Eventually, they will buy.

**Narrow your focus to sustain healthier growth:**

Unless you have an established marketing team, it's unlikely you can create truly excellent blog posts, webinars, podcasts, newsletters, AND social media content. Master one channel, then scale. Anything worth doing takes time.

**Get greater ROI from smaller channels:**

Example: Sponsor niche newsletters. If a list has ~10K subs, open rate can be 50%+. Which means: High affinity and lower price tag than a mainstream newsletter. Hint: Find these by way of hidden gem social accounts in Spark Toro.

**Remind customers of recurring charges to foster loyalty:**

We've seen the subscription tricks: Hide the "cancel account" button to keep customers. But that only causes frustration. Send reminders or offer a "skip" option. It keeps customers happy and nurtures word-of mouth.

**Delete subscribers to improve your email program:**

Check who hasn't opened your emails in ~90 days. Send them a note: "We only want to email people who want to be on this list. Click here to stay." Remove those who don't click. Your open rates will thank you.

## **Give free PR to others to enhance your credibility:**

I call this "permissionless co-marketing." When you freely promote others' work, you become more trustworthy. It even unlocks doors for future collaboration. Align yourself with other brands by promoting them in your work. It's the inverse of earned media — where you're the one organically mentioning someone else.

The payoff? Earning goodwill and setting the foundation for potential collaboration. We do this all the time at Spark Toro:

- Our food & drink holiday gift guide links to small businesses.
- Our Office Hours presentations cite examples of other brands' marketing efforts.
- @randfish and I mention brands we admire when we appear on podcasts.

For marketers already doing this, permissionless co-marketing is obvious. It's just citing sources. But for marketers who have been trained to never give others free press, it's a hard sell. Mentioning another source dilutes branding, memorability, and click-throughs.

But what happens when you DON'T mention other brands? You risk:

- Sounding overly self promotional.
- Appearing untrustworthy within your field.
- Seeming ignorant of what's happening in your space.

And when you fail to mention others, they'll fail to mention you. So, when to do permissionless co marketing? There are at least 3 use cases:

1. Elevate your brand. @coreyhainesco is the master of this. He consults for @savvyca, and shouting out & linking to brands they admire is part of their content marketing strategy. The result? Several formalized co-marketing campaigns in the near future.
2. Demonstrate your product's value. Last fall, I spoke on a @businessbarista @GrowthTactics panel. I pulled research on @MorningBrew's audience in @sparktoro. The result? Highly relevant, valuable talking points that also promoted the event.
3. Define yourself as a category creator. Gong and AI listening; Zapier for web app automations. Category creators!

With permissionless co-marketing, you align with familiar names. You anchor yourself within the context of your industry.