



E-Newsletters & Customer Engagement

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MRAA Member Len's Cove Marina Contributes to this Discussion About Using Your Dealership Newsletter for Brand Awareness and Customer Connection

You want to improve your team's follow-up and customer engagement and create a world-class customer experience at your dealership. But everyone is extremely busy handling day-to-day responsibilities during your most hectic season. Therefore, you need to create authentic touchpoints that connect with your customers both now and during slower times, too. Touchpoints may include texting,

interactions on your social feeds, phone calls and even snail-mail postcards. But your branded email newsletter is a proven way to reach your customers with promotions, ownership tips and reminders about your dealership and its upcoming events.

According to Hubspot.com, email ROI is \$36 for every buck you spend. Valued at nearly \$11 billion as of this year, the email marketing sector should



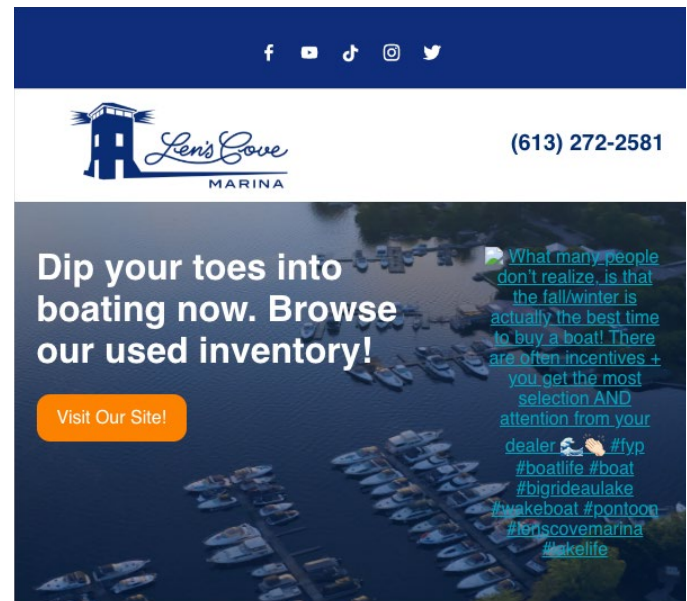
exceed \$17 billion over the next four years, according to Statista. It's clear email marketing remains a solid tactic to connect with your customers. That's why it's important to use it as a content marketing tool. If you're producing YouTube videos about boat operation and education, share those in your e-newsletter. And your newsletter can inform your customers – or certain segmented lists within your database – about boating community activities, new product lines and your new employees.

In this case study, we'll dissect a recent e-newsletter sent by MRAA Gold Member Len's Cove Marina, a boat dealer located in Portland, Ontario, Canada. But before we do that, we have to make it clear that General Manager and Owner Sean Horsfall has been finding great success with a variety of marketing tactics. This is especially true for the Len's Cove Lessons in Boating YouTube page. In fact, when MRAA interviewed Horsfall in 2020 for a case study within the MRAA "Keep Your Customers Boating Guide," he had just fully committed to addressing his boating customer's top questions on YouTube. At that time, Horsfall had built a small library of roughly 40 videos, producing nearly 1.5 million views and compiling 8,000 subscribers.

Those are impressive numbers, but Horsfall and his team have been dedicated to their craft for multiple years now. So much so, that in a 3-year span, they have made more than 130 videos that have amassed more than 7 million views! There are three important takeaways here. The first is that it took Horsfall hearing about the importance of these types of videos from "They Ask, You Answer" book author Marcus Sheridan a second time before he committed financially and emotionally. Second, since 2020, Len's Cove Marina has had a 370+ percent increase in viewership! Finally, this effort has contributed more than 32,000 additional new subscribers.

"The best part is the ad revenue it creates through Google/YouTube pays for the whole thing now (all the video shooting and editing), so it is zero-cost marketing," says Horsfall. As you can see, when Horsfall does something, he is determined to make it work. That's why taking a closer look at the Len's Cove newsletter will help you improve your own

newsletter or commit to doing one for yourself! We've also gathered some big-league advice from MRAA Lead MICD Program Consultant Bob McCann (see A "Certified" Evaluation sidebar) on things to consider that could make your company's newsletter — and the Len's Cove Marina newsletter — even stronger than it already is. Finally, we'll share some e-newsletter best practices from Discover Boating (see Discover Boating – Newsletter Insights sidebar) that will help you button up your newsletter even more.



Understanding the Content

Mailchimp, among the [many tips it provides](#), says a successful email starts with an attention-grabbing, descriptive subject line that make your recipients want to check it out.

Let's start with the email subject line from this specific Len's Cove newsletter. Sean chose to use "More Used Boat Inventory Than Ever!" as the subject line. It's great. Why? Because 80 percent of first-time boat buyers buy pre-owned vessels. Len's Cove also added a "hello wave" emoji within the subject line. According to HubSpot, adding an emoji to your subject line adds visual interest and increases recipient engagement.

The team's newsletter then follows that first-time boat buyer audience with its headline of "Dip your toes into boating now. Browse our used inventory!" This line is important as well because it addresses the audience






by letting them know they can freely browse, at their leisure, the pre-owned inventory with no strings attached. Horsfall also included a link directly to a TikTok video of him addressing a question about the best time to buy a boat. While this “get into boating” theme up front may not connect with every customer, it completes its mission to target new customers.

At this point, the messaging expands a bit to include current boat owners, who may also be looking to trade in their current boat or upgrade into something bigger/different. Len's Cove then makes it about the customer experience by providing them insights from three of its blogs. It addresses common consumer questions about buying used, choosing a boat that fits and things to look for when buying pre-owned.

Len's Cove Assurance Plan

How confident are we that we can help you get the RIGHT boat? Very! This is an industry first offer that demonstrates the passion we have for getting your boat RIGHT.

[Learn More](#)

		
Featured Used Pontoon: 2018 SYLVAN MIRAGE 8520	Featured Used Bowrider: 2013 SeaRay SDX 250	Featured Used Wakeboat: 2018 MasterCraft

The next portion — a customer testimonial — backs up Len's Cove Marina's customer experience efforts by demonstrating their mission and educational support. “They made the used boat buying experience not only easy but educational,” it states. And to add another layer of trust, Horsfall was smart to add the Len's Cove Assurance Plan, a program that “guarantees” the customer has selected the right boat for them or they have an opportunity to trade it back for an equivalent boat, different boat or the full purchase price (with certain restrictions).

Can you guess what's next in terms of content? If

you guessed “Featured Used Boats” you're absolutely correct! Know your audience, help educate it, build multiple layers of trust and then provide them direct access to browse your pre-owned inventory. It's great!

He follows that shopping experience with messages about boating tutorial videos and an online payment calculator so customers can get more questions answered. And if they already own a boat, Len's Cove adds a button and content for trade-in evaluation so current customers have a general idea of what the boat in their driveway is worth should they want a boat they saw in a previous link. Another educational piece shares with the audience three different boat categories (Pontoons, Bowriders/Deck Boats and Wake Boats) to help customers dial in their exact needs/wants.

GET FREE
Boating Tutorial Videos

[Subscribe Now](#)

YOUR RIGHT BOAT | YOUR BOAT RIGHT
What are you waiting for?

Two of the final three content areas within the newsletter talk about what customers will experience when they do business with the family-owned Len's Cove Marina, its “why” and an open invitation to connect.

The Process & Commitment

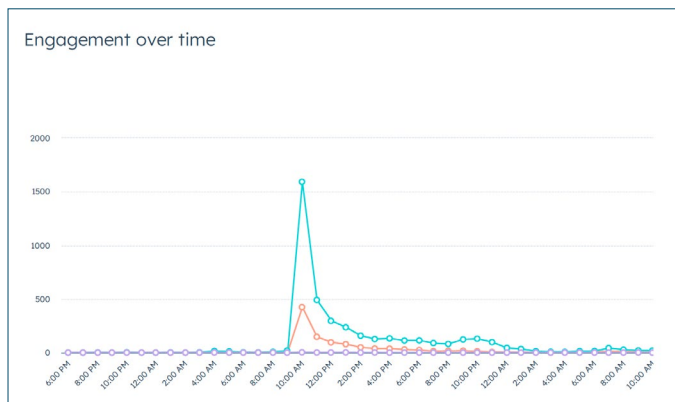
To have a successful newsletter, you have to understand you need both process and commitment. But dealerships vary in size in terms of workforce, budget and number of locations, so determining your team's ability to create a newsletter with consistency and direction is important. That's why Horsfall hired a firm to make the email newsletter template, one that can be cloned and customized for each send. Len's Cove has been using HubSpot for years, which Horsfall says has powerful Customer Relationship Management (CRM) functions.



While he works on the newsletter and reviews all of it, Horsfall has assigned it to the same employee who handles The Galley Restaurant, events and social marketing, calling the support a life saver. Frequency is six times per year for consistency and customer engagement. You know your audience best, so you have to understand how much messaging and email will overwhelm them vs. keep them informed. Currently, that is a bi-monthly schedule for Len's Cove, but during the COVID pandemic, they let the newsletter slide because there wasn't a need for it.

Once you dial in your frequency, it's also significant to figure out your audience for each send, from specific to broad. "It depends on the message," says Horsfall. "Some are just for dockage and storage customers and others are every human we can touch." Now that you've figured out a frequency and an audience, it's wise to determine the length, scope and messaging. This is where you need to factor in seasonality (winterization, summer season), your customers' frequently asked questions, service-related topics and more.

This strategy has helped Len's Cove Marina refine newsletter production. In fact, this very example — "Used Boat Marketing Email" — was part of its Spring Push and, this time, was sent to the entire contact list, even those who traditionally have low engagement. At the time, they had 9,711 successful deliveries for a 96 percent delivery rate. Their open rate was almost 47 percent and the click-through rate measured at 12 percent, with 1,184 of those being unique clicks. Their report also showed that 90 percent read the newsletter, about 8 percent skimmed it and 1 percent gave it a glance. The reader engagement spiked at 10 a.m. in the morning for both those who skimmed and those who read the email.



The main headline call-to-action button "Visit Our Site!" saw the most clicks, drawing 56 percent of total clicks. This link took customers to the Len's Cove Inventory page and produced nearly 800 clicks. The second and third highest amount of clicks went to two of the three featured used boats. A 2013 Sea Ray SDX 250 Bowrider nabbed more than 7 percent of the clicks, while a 2018 Sylvan Mirage 8520 Pontoon got just under 7 percent. All three featured pre-owned units had more than 430 clicks.

Featured Used Pontoon:	Featured Used Bowrider:	Featured Used Wakeboat:
2018 SYLVAN MIRAGE 8520	2013 SeaRay SDX 250	2018 MasterCraft XT21
Double bimini, full camper, on a trailer! Click below for more details	Big and beautiful, and pristine day boat! Ready for a large family or large water.	Have your pick of surf, wakeboard, ski, or tube in a package that will rock your families world!
3 6.7%	2 7.4%	3.5%
Check it out	Details here	Surf ready

Combined, the Len's Cove educational videos (choosing boats, boating tutorials, buying used boats, et al) tallied more than 6 percent of the clicks. The important thing to remember here is where your customers will land and what they see/read when they follow your link. To meet their customers where they are, Horsfall and his team did a good job of sharing various Len's Cove resources including their website, blog and social feeds like YouTube, Facebook and TikTok.

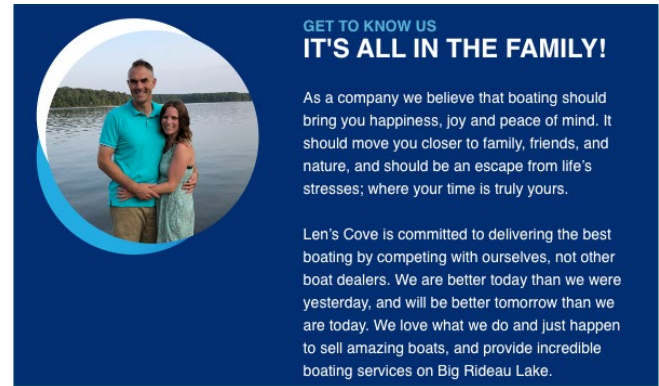
Len's Cove uses YouTube as its educational hub. In fact, Horsfall hinted that an upcoming newsletter might just highlight pontoon boats and some of his most popular YouTube videos about these vessels. This is a smart strategy because it will help to showcase both the transparency and trust he has established for himself and Len's Cove Marina, which has become an educational leader in boating and one potential buyers can count on.



In the Name of Boater Retention

If you're contemplating doing a newsletter or wonder if it's worth the return on investment, the best thing to do is just get started doing it! As Dealer Week speaker and brand expert Paul J Daly — in his MRAA Training course [“How To Build A Brand Everyone Wants to Connect To”](#) — says when you use consistent actions, communications and media, it creates a strong brand that aligns, attracts and brings people closer together.

“It is the lowest cost marketing you have access to,” Horsfall adds. “Build and maintain a clean database, provide value, stay away from fluffy and overly cheesy content.” For Horsfall, and for you, it's about providing a service and guiding your customers to success as a boat owner on and off the water. You do this with strong communication and follow-up that compliments



the trust you've built through your authenticity and transparency.

When you make your messaging about them, keeping your customers as the hero and your dealership as their guide, you can keep them more engaged and help create a more active boating community. When you do that, you can improve retention at your dealership and in the industry, which is critical to overall success and growth.

A “Certified” Evaluation

Bob McCann called the Len's Cove Marina newsletter a spot-on method of staying in front of customers until they are ready to engage. “This is a great way of keeping the dealership and their brands fresh in the customer's mind until they are ready to take the next step in sales or service,” says McCann. “Sean does a yeoman's job using video and does even a better job of describing those videos to the search engines, so people who haven't received their newsletter can find the videos as well.”

McCann works with dealers of all sizes within the Certification Program. He reviewed the newsletter and came up with four great tips to consider to improve your effectiveness when connecting with your customers with e-newsletters.



4 Tips to Improve your E-Newsletters

1. **Segment the database:** This particular example from Sean is a method of trying to serve up something for everyone. However, when a towboat customer reads a headline about pontoons or bowriders, they check out. It's best to segment your customers by category and send only content for that type of customer.
2. **Don't forget your salespeople:** Salespeople are hard to get and harder to keep! Include a salesperson's section in the email to promote the salesperson as well as the dealership. This requires segmentation again or merge codes. Dealers need to rely on salespeople to add every customer they meet to the database (CRM). Motivate them by including a salesperson's corner that will keep their name fresh in the minds of their customers as well.
3. **Speedy response:** For this type of drip marketing to be effective, the initial contact with the dealer needs to be notable. For instance, when a customer sends an email through the dealer's website inquiring about a boat for sale, the dealer needs to reply quickly, answering their questions fully. Inversely, if a dealer takes days to reply without answering the customer's questions, the recipient may choose to opt out of your emails.
4. **Frequency:** There is a fine line between Saturday night and Sunday morning! There is a fine line between being a spammer and absent. A schedule should be set up early in the year (or prior year) that includes events that need to be promoted, seasonal services, holidays and to time these newsletters.



Discover Boating – Newsletter Insights

As a pillar in your business and boating communities, you want to connect with your customers, and if you keep your newsletter recipients informed with effective communication, then you will improve their experience with your brand.

But your efforts to bond with customers isn't easy because they have crowded inboxes and a perceived lack of time to look at yet another email!

Therefore, by avoiding common newsletter mistakes like the ones identified by [Discover Boating](#), you can build more effective customer e-newsletter rather than cluttering their inbox and having them opt out of the communication and deeper conversations. That's why you should streamline your messages and be as clear and concise as possible when you're delivering your latest updates, news and information related to your business.

8 Tips to Build a More Productive E-newsletter:

1. **From & Subject Lines:** Always list your company name in the FROM line. The SUBJECT line is a critical feature of your newsletter, so remember to insert your call to action, deadline announcements, etc.
2. **Action Items Up Front:** Have important events and customer deadlines? List them first! Many recipients read their emails in a preview screen, so keep your top points up front.
3. **Brevity:** Whether it's your newsletter or customer follow-up emails brevity is better!
4. **Visuals:** People skim everything! It's important to use graphics, images, bullet points and pull quotes in your newsletter. They also make it more attractive and look less like a book report.
5. **Links:** You don't have to tell the whole story in the newsletter. Create a short summary and then hyperlink them to your website (landing page) or social feeds to learn more.
6. **Include Website:** You want them to be able to find you or revisit your site on their terms.
7. **Send Dates:** Like your team, customers are busier than ever with work and their personal lives. That's why it's important to send your newsletter earlier in the week.
8. **Avoid Spam Filters:** Depending on the email service provider you're using; you should always check your subject line and newsletter for spam-like language. It doesn't matter what your message is if your customers don't receive it.



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