

MEMBERSHIP & SUBSCRIPTION **GROWTH** WEEKLY

**HOW TO GROW A NICHE
SUBSCRIPTION BUSINESS TO
THOUSANDS OF
SUBSCRIBERS IN JUST A
COUPLE OF YEARS
-A CONVERSATION WITH
JAMES ERICKSON OF
STRIDEBOX**

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Membership Services, Inc
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James Erickson is the founder and CEO of Stridebox, a subscription box for runners and endurance athletes. James has over 20 years of business creation, development and entrepreneurial experience. He describes himself as a husband, dad, entrepreneur, US Marine, soccer coach, speaker, and national champion. James started Stridebox in 2013. He is also the owner of Flattail LLC, a business development company with a focus on research, creation, and monetization of business goals.

How to Grow a Niche Subscription Business to Thousands of Subscribers in Just a Couple of Years

It's often a huge challenge to figure out what you should deliver to your subscriber members each month for maximum membership retention and renewal. Plus, you want to deliver something that'll create referrals and social buzz. This challenge is even more difficult when you are a subscription box trying

to negotiate with a company to deliver hundreds or thousands of items so you can ship them to your subscribers as part of their monthly subscription box. There must be a constant balance between getting your hands on products and investing the time and relationship capital to obtain the ones that'll generate a huge impact. This is the same for a SaaS company choosing which new features to develop or a publisher working with editors to create content.

In my recent interview with James Erickson, owner and CEO of Stridebox, a subscription box service for runners, we discussed his solutions to the problems of getting items for Stridebox that drive engagement, how to balance content that members would readily appreciate versus delighting them with new discoveries, as well as how to engage subscribers to create a community.

James came from a background in newsletter publishing and transitioned into subscription boxes. From the outside, it may appear that these are very different, but to James, fulfillment and the need for membership retention were similar. He said, "...if you look at a printed newsletter you have a package, a newsletter, different inserts for the package and a mailing list. It's really very similar [to subscription boxes.]”

The big difference with newsletters and subscription boxes are the products that ride in the box versus the articles in a newsletter. What does it take to get the hundreds or thousands of products to ship out to your subscription box subscribers? James answered, “I found out very quickly that it wasn't that difficult. It's one of those that if you ask, somebody is going to say yes eventually. It's just a matter of putting your head to the grindstone and doing your research on the products, and figuring out what's a good fit for your audience.”

But then there's a big question of which products will improve membership retention. Do you deliver products in your box that customers will recognize as valuable from brands that add to the prestige of your box, or do you focus on delighting your customers by helping them discover products they've never experienced before? James answered, “The first year, we tried to align ourselves with as many big companies as possible. We wanted the Power Bars in the box, because everybody knew about Power Bar. We wanted Gu in the box, because everybody knew what an energy gel was in our market. We tried to align ourselves with companies like Mizuno and Nike, and Adidas, and put their advertising or inserts in our boxes, or give discounts to our subscribers. We wanted to play ourselves as ‘We're that brand with those connections.’ Today a lot

of our product choices are based on things you don't see every day - The mom and pop shop in Idaho that's cooking gluten-free, vegan cookies that are full of protein - The place out of Washington called ZipFit that not everybody knows about that's like a powdered drink mix company. We don't want to give somebody the same thing, the same brand, the same flavors, two or three months in a row, because that doesn't lead to longevity of the customer. If you wrote the same article for your newsletter three months in a row, people would kind of get tired of it.”

And while including the best products is crucial for success, membership retention always comes down to the power of the community you build. For Stridebox, they put their subscribers into their box. James explains, “we started doing a monthly card photo submission. Each month, we have what's called the Stride Guide. On the back of the Stride Guide are all of the products that are in the box, as well as a couple of sentences about them, a retail cost if you were to go buy it at your local running store, and then, a website where you can go to find more about it and purchase more. On the other side of that card we used to just put these motivational stock photos of sweaty runner people. At some point, we got tired of that. We thought, “Well, let's just email the audience and see if we can get them to submit pictures. We'll give away prizes. They'll get to see themselves on this card that will go out to thousands and thousands of people. The first one, I believe, was we did medals. Like, take a picture of your favorite race medal that you've earned and send it to us. I think we got about 240 responses of medal pictures to page through and look through to pick out 24 that were going to go on the cover of the Stride Guide. That created a lot of work, but, it was a lot of fun. People started sharing that on social media, which was kind of the big, “Aha,” moment.”

From outside the subscription box industry it could look mysterious and challenging. In the end, it's very similar to any subscription business. It all comes down to creating great deliverables your members eagerly use, delighting your members with something new each month and engaging subscribers into your vibrant tribal community.

CONVERSATION WITH JAMES ERICKSON

Robert Skrob: Coming up on today's episode of Membership and Subscription Growth.

James Erickson: "It was hard sometimes to get up in the morning and say, "Oh, okay, I'm gonna go sell the best implant for this other doctor somewhere." I wanted something where I could wake up in the morning and be like, "Okay, I'm going to go find some cool products to give to these other people that like the same things I do."

"We have kind of a formula for our box. Our box includes five to seven different items each month. The first one says, "Oh no, you're not going to get your Stridebox!" The next month is kind of like a shocker, and just kind of explain to them that so and so bought them a three-month gift subscription and that has expired with their final box, if they want to continue, here's where they can sign up."

"The next one says, "This could be where it all ends." Then, it kind of explains it again. The third one gives them, finally, a discount code to go sign up for their first month at ... I believe right now, it's 50% off, which is kind of what we've had the best balance between conversion and keeping them around for any length of time."

Robert Skrob: Welcome to Membership and Subscription Growth Podcast. I'm Robert Skrob, your subscription and member growth expert. Today's show features James Erickson of Stridebox. James is a direct mail expert and came from that background and understanding all about creating a direct response from your marketing. His insights on the subscription business and what it takes in order to create that relationship is really insightful, and something that I think that you are really going to enjoy.

Some of the things you're going to want to listen for on today's episode are how to turn gift subscriptions into paid subscribers. Also, how he really focuses on creating a community and really going

beyond just sending a box to a subscriber, but, then also, getting the subscriber to connect back with him and other subscribers. As well as how he overcame all of the logistical challenges of getting into the subscription box field. So, a lot of great insights.

If you like today's show, subscribe on iTunes and post a review. I would love to hear your feedback and what you think of the program. Now, without any further ado, here is James Erickson of Stridebox.

Welcome, James. Glad that you're able to join me today, thank you.

James Erickson: Yes, thank you so much, Robert. It's a pleasure to be here. I'm glad that I could make it in to talk to you today.

Robert Skrob: Absolutely. For folks that don't know yet, what is Stridebox?

James Erickson: Well, four years ago this was a harder question to answer, because, it wasn't as big of a trend as it is today. Stridebox is a subscription box focused on running and endurance sports. The easiest way to describe it for somebody that's maybe not familiar is, it's like a magazine subscription, but instead of a magazine full of articles, you get a box full of energy bars, gels, small gear like ear buds, or reflective items that are safety gear. You get a different selection of products each month.

It's similar to a magazine, but, it's more of a box of products that allows you to test out and try different items throughout your own personal training schedule and see what works for you when go to do your marathon or your half marathon or your iron man, or things like that.

Robert Skrob: That's awesome. Yeah, I don't know if you know, but I subscribed my wife to Stridebox, I don't know, two years ago, three years ago? I don't even remember anymore. She loves it. It's like a little surprise every month. In fact, I try to go digging in her box for things, and she's like ... I gotta keep out! We've certainly enjoyed it as we were running little 5Ks in the local area. Then, also, trained and ran the Boston

Marathon, and have enjoyed having the opportunity to try new things.

James Erickson: Yeah, we have a lot of subscribers that are on kind of what we call the his and hers plan, that the wife subscribed at one point and was tired of her husband getting into her box, so she subscribed for him. So, they have to share it now or they each have their own box that shows up, which, fine with us. If somebody wants to subscribe twice per household. That's perfectly okay.

Robert Skrob: Yeah. Sharing is not allowed when it comes to the Stridebox, for sure.

James Erickson: Yes, that's for sure. That's for sure.

Robert Skrob: What was your background before creating this subscription business?

James Erickson: My background before. I owned a dental marketing company and was in cahoots with, I think, a mutual friend of ours named Jerry Jones.

Robert Skrob: Mm-hmm (affirmative). [inaudible 00:05:12].

James Erickson: I did a lot of direct mail. I did some internet marketing. This was kind of in the early days of social media, five, six, seven years ago, when it was just kind of becoming a thing, and decided my heart was kind of more in an athletic place. I tried to figure out how I could translate my success in the dental marketing realm into something more athletic and noticed the rise of Birch Box, which is a cosmetic subscription box, as well as things like Dollar Shave Club, and though that there may be a spot, a niche here for something like a running box or an outdoor box.

There were a couple of different niches I looked at that I was interested in that I wanted to create. In looking at it, I looked at running as an athletic venture that doesn't take a lot of money to get started. Basically, you need a pair of shoes, and your good. So, it was relatively recession proof, in that it was low cost to get into as a hobby. Then, I looked for the amount of products that you could

acquire to put in a box like this. There was tons of it. I mean, there still is tons of bars, gels, shoes, different accessories, and gear, and apparel that you can give to people that would be different each month.

That was about five years ago. We launched. Everything has been going well since then. I've got a direct mail background, which helps a lot, especially in the logistical part of it. It also helps to promote the service as well.

Robert Skrob: Yeah, Jerry Jones has been a friend for well over a decade and a half or so. Yeah, he's a great guy. It is really interesting to see how many successful subscription box CEOs and founders are from some sort of direct response marketing background, either from an ad agency or from some sort of marketing company. Certainly what you've learned in those fields help you here, but, man, you certainly look pretty darn smart having predicted both, the explosion of subscription boxes and their popularity, as well as the explosion in running and how it's gained in popularity over the past five years. Were you just that smart or lucky?

James Erickson: Well, I think, like I said, I looked at a lot of different niches that interested me. That was one of the important things, that it needed to be closer to me than, one may be dentistry. I'm not a dental guy, I'm not a dentist, so, it was hard sometimes to get up in the morning and say, "Oh, I'm gonna go sell the best implant for this other doctor somewhere," I wanted something where I could wake up in the morning and be like, "Okay, I'm going to go find some cool products to give to these other people that like the same things I do."

Running, to me, was ... I looked at the past trends in running and saw that even during the great recession of '07, '08, the amount of people that were running did not drop as much as the amount of people that were, say, going to a gym, or going camping. Those things take quite a big investment, as far as you have to get all your equipment. You have to have a gym membership. You have to do all those kinds of things. Like I said with running, you need a pair of shoes and a place to run, which is pretty much anywhere. I looked at that, and I guess the

growth of running over the past five years has just been, a little bit of luck, but also, a lot of that research that says, "Well, running survives the bad times, it's going to survive the good times for sure."

Robert Skrob: One of the questions that I receive all the time from my clients who are thinking about creating a subscription box, is certainly in the marketing field you were accustomed to fulfillment. You were a dentist, you were signing up as clients, and you were responsible for executing on some marketing function and providing them with stuff in order to help grow their practice. That, from the outside, looks really very different than collecting items and putting them in thousands of boxes.

You've got inbound shipments of stuff. First, you've gotta figure out what you're gonna ship in it. Then, you gotta source it. Then, you gotta have it delivered. Then, you gotta get it distributed amongst all these boxes. Then, labeled and shipped. Then, you gotta figure out who you're gonna ship it to. You gotta sign up customers for this thing. How did you get your head wrapped around the logistics of sourcing items and inbound shipping and packaging? 'Cause this was really a very different thing than what you had done before.

James Erickson: Well, from the outside looking in, yes, it is very different, but, if you look at a printed newsletter, for instance, and some we did for dozens of clients across the United States. I mean, you have the same kind of thing. You have a package, basically, which for the newsletter it was an envelope. Then, you have a newsletter. Then, you have different inserts for the newsletter, which, in this case, translates to products to put in the package. Then you have a mailing list that you need to have. Then, you know, the dentist would handle the patient list, but, I had a client list that I could sign up on a recurring basis.

In that case, it's really very similar. One of the things that helped me out early on was a knowledge of shipping and postage and the cost to send something UPS versus FedEx or how to get a price break on my USPS postage for bulk items. Those kind of things translated directly over. It really wasn't that different, if you look at it. The biggest question in my mind was, how am I going to get these companies ...

Now, granted, this was five years ago, Birch Box had been around for maybe a year. It was a relatively new concept in e-commerce to do this kind of recurring revenue subscription box. The biggest question in my mind was, "How am I going to get these companies to commit to give me ..." In the start it was hundreds, now it's thousands and tens of thousands of pieces of product to put in these boxes.

I found out real quickly that it wasn't that difficult. It's one of those that if you ask, somebody is going to say yes eventually. It's just a matter of kind of putting your head to the grindstone and doing your research on the products, and figuring out, what's a good fit for my audience? What's a good fit for how I want my brand to be perceived? Do I want to put really cheap stuff in there? Do I want to put really expensive stuff in there? Do I want to anoint myself or join myself up with a Power Bar or a Nike? Do I want to stick to more independent brands? These were the bigger questions for me. As far as the logistical part of it, it was relatively simple to make that switch. Again, it was just like a newsletter, but on maybe a little bit bigger scale.

Robert Skrob: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, rather than having to write articles, you were instead identifying items and putting that together. Now, so much is talked about within newsletters, you're trying to give the reader a certain feeling of when they read that. Certainly it's about education, but, it's also about creating an emotional connection, very similar with your subscription box.

When you're approaching, you're thinking about, okay, putting together a box and the types of items that you're putting in one box. Then, kind of planning out the next several months worth of what's going to go into which boxes, how do you approach that? What is the feeling that you're trying to give the subscriber? What are some of the decisions that you're trying to think through in order to make sure that that provides a great experience, a value, and that client goes, "Yeah, I'm not sharing this with my husband no matter what."?

James Erickson: Well, I'll give you a little difference. At the start, the first year, we tried to align ourselves with as many big companies as possible. We wanted the Power Bars in the box, because, everybody knew about

Power Bar. We wanted Gu in the box, because, everybody knew what an energy gel was in our market. We tried to align ourselves with companies like Mizuno and Nike, and Adidas and put kind of their advertising or inserts, or give discounts to our subscribers. We wanted to play ourselves as, we're that brand with those connections.

That still sticks around a little bit today, but, today a lot of our product choices are based on things you don't see every day. The mom and pop shop in Idaho that's cooking gluten-free, vegan cookies that are full of protein. The place out of Washington called ZipVit that not everybody knows about that's like a powdered drink mix company. Everybody has their Kool-Aids or whatever, even their Powerades or their Gatorades, but, something like a ZipVit, it's maybe a little in the middle of the market there. Not everybody sees them. When they come out with a new flavor, I always jump on that, because, people like new flavors and new things. Also, people like their normal flavors.

It goes with a lot of variety. We can put a Power Bar Energy Crunch bar in there and then have something like a ... I'm just trying to think of what we have. We have an all sports wipe that's like a giant wet nap that you're supposed to use after you work out. Maybe you don't have time for a shower and you basically open this thing up. It's about a two foot by two foot wet nap that you can wipe your body down with. Things like that that are really usable. They're consumable, so, when I go to a company, I can say, "Hey, look, we'll give them one of these and then we'll follow-up with an email and a link that will allow people to go back to your website and buy more."

That's the whole purpose of our service, but, really, variety and flavor choices are two of the main things. We don't want to give somebody the same thing, the same brand, the same flavors, two or three months in a row, because, that doesn't lead to longevity of the customer. If you wrote the same article for your newsletter three months in a row, people would kind of get tired of it.

Robert Skrob: Or about the same topic at least.

James Erickson: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Robert Skrob: The consumables certainly work. 'Cause, I don't know how long ago you had the PR Bar in the box, but, all summer ... I mean, my family went to Europe. We took five cases of PR Bars with us [crosstalk 00:16:33] in our luggage over there, so we'd have them for a snack. I'm sure we've bought 50 cases of that stuff. All of it was ... We had our first PR Bar and didn't even know it existed until it showed up in the Stridebox. Certainly that works for the companies that are sampled there.

You also have things that are not consumable. Bottles or shoelaces, that maybe are going to last a lot longer. Are you purposely trying to curate a mix of those sorts of things? Is there a slot every month for the energy gel and maybe drink additive that you're trying to fit every time? How do you kind of plan that so that it's a good feel for the users?

James Erickson: We have kind of a formula for our box. Our box includes five to seven different items each month. One of those slots is basically what we call a gear slot. We're not talking shoes or insoles, because, at \$15 a month, it's hard to include those kind of things. For instance, this month, and I don't think you've got your box yet, so I'm going to let the cat out of the bag, but, it's a pair of non-tangle ear buds that you would use for running. Everybody knows that if you shove your earphones in a bag somewhere, you're going to pull them out and there's going to be tons of knots in them. These ones have like a little zipper set up to where they won't tangle. We thought that was a cool little product.

We try to work with different manufacturers to get around having to pay big brand names for these things. We'll go directly to somebody and have them build these, or, if we find out where so and so makes their earbuds, can we get them directly from the source, rather than going through ... That gives us a little bit of wiggle room as far as cost goes. But, yeah, as far as bars, gels, shoes, we've got a formula that we tend to follow most months.

Some months we'll just go off the rails and just do all kinds of crazy snacks or things that are still healthy and still promoting the lifestyle, but you won't get an energy bar. Let's say, you would instead get coconut chips or instead of a drink additive, you would get a breakfast granola or a salad topper of some kind that just promotes a healthy lifestyle as well. Again, variety is a lot of it. Even if we include a bar, a gel, and a snack in each box, it's still going to be a different flavor, a different brand, a different type, everything from chia seed bars to compressed date bars to a banked breakfast bar. There's a lot of variety just in that category, as well. We just try to keep so we're not including two bars in a box or two gels in a box, 'cause, again, that's kind of like writing the same article twice in the same newsletter.

Just trying to keep it mixed up. The big items, we source those as we see fit, and those are pretty seasonal. In the winter months we'll do a reflective or a light up piece of gear. In the summer months we'll do kind of hot weather sunscreens and bigger stuff like that. A lot of times those aren't consumable, it's just as something fun that you can keep around, and it's not going to be the highest quality thing. At the same time, it's something that's going to last you a few months where, if you really like it, then you can go buy the high quality version of it and experience it that way as well.

Robert Skrob: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yep. My wife suggested that I wear the light up wrist thing, and I refused, so she wore it. It looked like a-

James Erickson: It's an acquired taste.

Robert Skrob: I didn't want to tell her that ... because, we had one red one and one green one, and I didn't want to tell her that she looked like a boat going down the river when she was running.

James Erickson: It's probably better you didn't tell her that.

Robert Skrob: One of the keys of the subscription boxes are these gift subscriptions, where somebody identifies a friend or a relative that is a runner, then they come across the Stridebox and they go, "Perfect gift!"

And they give them a subscription of three or six or 12 months, or whatever it is. One of the keys is trying to convert that gift subscription. Where the person's been receiving this as a gift and now they love it, but the idea of paying for something that you were getting for free is sometimes a challenge. As a direct response marketer, how do you approach converting those gift subscribers into paid subscribers?

James Erickson: Yeah, I'll preface this with saying it's something that we've experimented a lot with. Both, in the way that new subscribers are signed up as gift subscriptions, as well as follow-up sequences for those subscribers. As we have it right now, when somebody signs up for a gift subscription, the only thing we have for the gift subscription is an address. Basically, we get their name and address and that's where we send the box. Really, we don't have a lot of email opportunity with those people immediately. We don't have a phone number opportunity. We just have their name and address, which is great for a direct response marketer like myself.

I'd rather have the address than anything else. 'Cause, I think you can hit a mailbox and stand out easier in a mailbox. Especially if somebody's getting a nice box of goodies in the mail every month. We try to collect that information on the follow-up. When we send their first box, they have a little card that says, "Hey, make sure you get your email on our list as a gift subscriber, because, we do giveaways and other special VIP deals every month that we want you to be a part of."

Once their subscription expires, they get kind of a sequence of post cards. Right now, it's at three postcards that they get. The first one says, "Oh no, you're not going to get your Stridebox next month." It's kind of like a shocker, and just kind of explain to them that so and so bought them a three-month gift subscription and that has expired with their final box, if they want to continue, here's where they can sign up.

The next one says, "This could be where it all ends." Then, it kind of explains it again.

The third one gives them, finally, a discount code to go sign up for their first month at ... I believe right now it's 50% off, which is kind of what we've had the best balance between conversion and keeping them around for any length of time." We're kind of at a point where we're trying to figure out the best way.

We've tried something like sending gift cards, for instance. For three months it would be a \$45 gift card. You go sign up, you enter your gift code. We get your email, we get your mailing address, as the gift recipient. At the end of 45 days, it automatically will ask you for a credit card. We'll send, "If you want to keep going, you need to enter a payment method."

The problem with that is we didn't have a lot of people, once the gift card was bought, we didn't have a lot of people redeem those. We thought it was more important to get Stridebox in the mail to them than have unredeemed gift certificates, 'cause that looks bad for us. Also, at the end, it wasn't proving nearly as effective to try to get their credit card from them after the fact. It's still a very much a work in progress with the three post cards and the direct mail background. We're doing okay with that, but, it's something that we could always increase. It's something knowing, having spoken to people at Birch Box and Dollar Shave Club, it's one of those things that, how do we convert these people that didn't really ask for the service to start with, to people that really want it later?

Robert Skrob: I know, it's a great question. Having a follow-up direct mail sequence with a discount offer, that goes ahead and gets them, even if it's at a 50% discount, it gets them to give you their credit card information so that you can ... Making that purchase is the biggest hurdle and-

James Erickson: Yeah.

Robert Skrob: Really, the most important one to getting them to be a long-time subscriber. One of the things that is unique about your box versus probably 90% of the boxes that I see, is that you put in a lot of work and effort to get your subscribers to connect with you and each other.

What are some of the things that you do in order to build a community of Stridebox subscribers and why?

James Erickson: Well, one of the biggest things that has happened in the past two years, is we started doing kind of a monthly card photo submission. Each month, we have what's called the Stride Guide. On the back of the Stride Guide is all of the products that are in the guide, as well as a couple of sentences about them. A retail cost if you were to go buy it at your local running store, and then, a website where you can go to find more about it and purchase more.

On the other side of that card we used to just put these motivational stock photo, sweaty runner people on it. At some point, we got tired of that. We thought, "Well, let's just email the audience and see if we can get them to submit pictures. We'll give away prizes. They'll get to see themselves on this card that will go out to thousands and thousands of people."

The first one, I believe, was we did medals. Like, take a picture of your favorite race medal that you've earned and send it to us. I think we got about 240 responses of medal pictures to page through and look through to pick out 24 that were going to go on the cover of the Stride Guide. That created a lot of work, but, it was a lot of fun. People started sharing that on social media, which was kind of the big, "Aha," moment.

Stridebox has always been developed as a product that is made to be shared, but, that was just another way that, "Hey, if this person posts or emails us a picture of their favorite race medal, and they just happen to have 200,000 Instagram followers, that may sway our decision to put them on the front of the card, because, we know they're going to take a picture of that card and post it on their Instagram, which would be nice for us."

It's one of those little marketing things. I mean, you can call it a hack. You can call it whatever you want to. That's one way. We've tried to build relationships with larger, you call them influencers on social media in similar ways, as well, by sending them free boxes or free

gear, or doing things like a special giveaway with them. The pictures on the card was a big draw.

Then, it's been three years now that we've ran a summertime Stridebox marathon. The one thing we do differently with that is we give people two weeks to run a marathon. If you've never run a marathon before, you have 14 days to complete 26 miles, which ends up being 1.87 miles a day or something. We figure anybody can do it.

We do it as a fundraiser for one of our favorite charities called Warfighter Sports, which gives adaptive sports opportunities to wounded veterans. They do things like surfing trips and snowboarding trips. We get a lot of people sharing about that. We do the whole thing with like a free shirt, a medal, and people pay an entry free, and we do different challenges throughout the thing to get people to share this. That's been a big community builder for us.

We're considering doing another one maybe in the early spring to benefit another charity or take ideas, maybe crowdsource some charities. As far as our social groups, we definitely have other contests that we run, like, "Share this on social media to promote."

We've tried to hook up members in different cities. If you need a running group, we've got three subscribers that go to this running group. You maybe want to check it out. Things like that, too, to kind of build the community. That's one great thing about running, is people that are really passionate about running, they tend to like other people that are really passionate about running. Who ran the farthest the fastest is the best conversation that people have.

Robert Skrob: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, and improving and beating their personal best, it's an interesting ... Yeah, the running community is very different, because, it's really about being the best you. Even if you're not the fastest runner, very few of the runners are really particularly fast, it's just really all about going a little bit further or going a little bit faster than you've done before and encouraging each other. What I think is really interesting about your box is how you solicit the feedback, and solicit input, and solicit those photos, and

then publish them. I didn't necessarily know that the folks with the biggest Instagram followers would win, but ... Not that there's anything wrong with that.

James Erickson: Well, those people don't always win. I'll tell you that. If you have 50 followers or 20 followers, if you submit really cool pictures, like that will sway our decision a lot. If it comes down to like, well this one's going to make it, or this one's going to make it, we might take into consideration some other factors as well.

Robert Skrob: I'm not judging by any means. I think that was actually pretty darned smart. That's something that, in the newsletter business, getting feedback, getting folks to answer a quiz or tell us how they would review a particular case scenario and, you tell us, or letters to the editor. All those were very typical response devices and engagement devices that newsletters used. Most subscription boxes just send their box and hope that that does it. Whereas you take it to the next level by encouraging folks to engage. Of course, with technology, it's never been easier. Then, putting that back out.

Great kudos. I think that it was very, very smart what you do. Absolutely, I think, if anybody is looking to see how to succeed with subscription boxes, or even subscription business in general, whether you're a runner or not, get a subscription to Stridebox, because, it's absolutely a great case example of seeing your emails, seeing their box, seeing what you do over the course of three to six months, I think would be very informative for anybody looking to get into this business. James, thank you so much for your insights and information today. It's just, it's great to have the opportunity to connect with you.

James Erickson: Yeah, thank you so much for having me. It's been fun. I like to share about our success in hopes that somebody will use it and share their tweaks and different ideas that stem off of it. I think it's all like a big tree and it's whatever the next leaf grows, somebody will add to that as well. It's a lot of fun to share ideas.

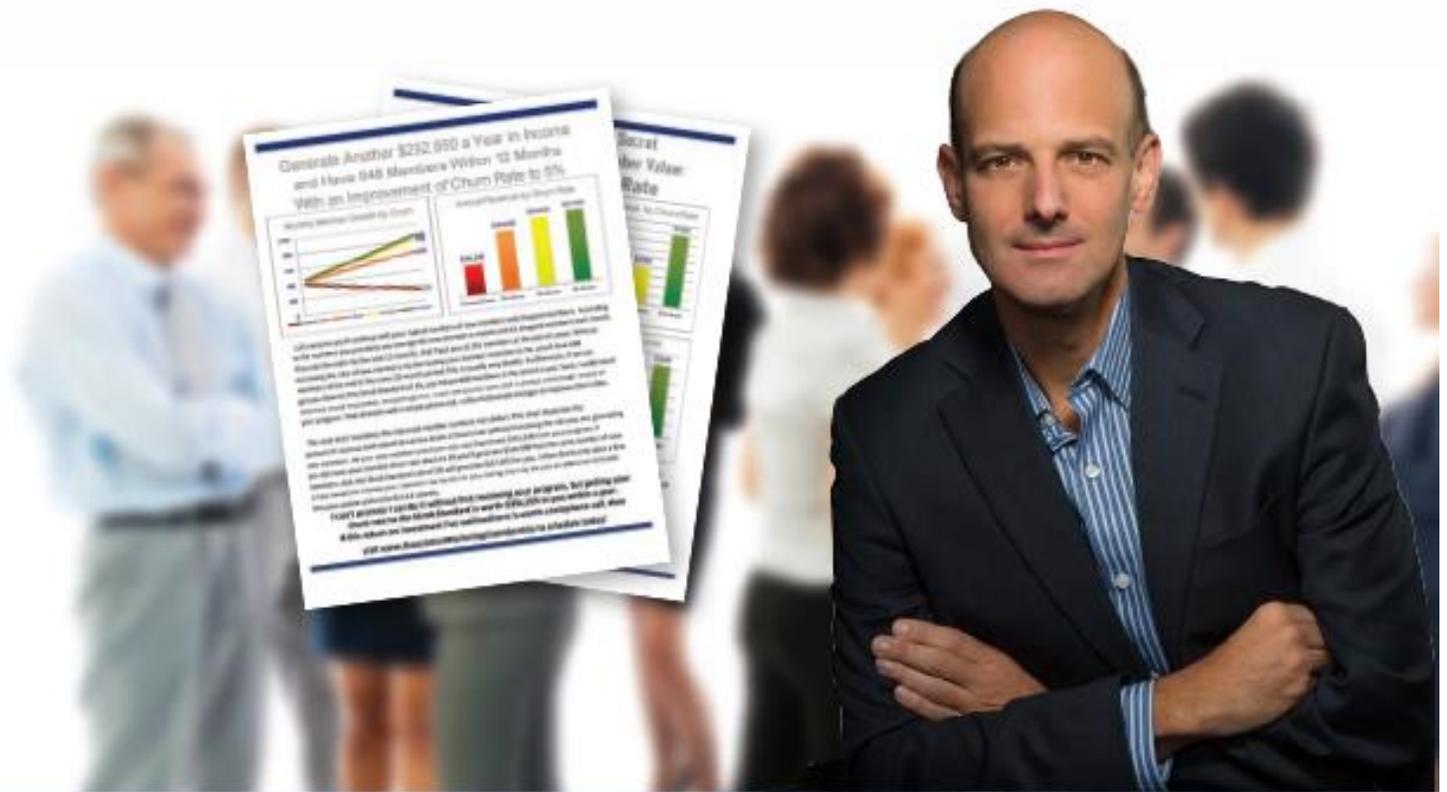
Robert Skrob: Awesome, well, thank you so much. We'll talk with you the next time we are on Membership and Subscription Growth Weekly. Thank you so much for listening to Membership and Subscription Growth. I'm glad to have you. If you enjoyed today's episode, give us a review and subscribe. Love to hear from you and get your feedback.

Coming up next week on Membership and Subscription Growth, my guest is Liz Cadman, the owner of My Subscription Addiction. Liz has more than 4,000 subscription boxes listed on her website. Thousands of subscription box openings and reviews and information. It has tens of thousands of customers who adamantly love the reviews that she posts. In fact, Liz is the largest affiliate for most subscription box companies. She is the real central hub of what's working in that industry.

We're going to talk a lot about the, kind of the social changes that are creating the subscription box industry growth. The reason why so many subscription box startups fail. We're going to really do a deep dive into the type of customer that are buying subscription boxes, so that you can understand how to target your marketing in order to attract these customers. And, a neat little treat, are Liz's recommendations for which boxes you should subscribe to in order to see, really, the best of the best, and learn how to create your own subscription program, and your own subscription box.

All that and more coming up next week on Membership and Subscription Growth. We'll talk with you then.

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Richard Meneg, President, Automotive Training Institute

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it wasn't even on my radar and that was being able to sell \$120,000 worth of product (@ \$297) in 240 minutes with a built-in monthly membership piece. UNBELEIVABLE!"

Michael Rozbruch, Roz Marketing Group

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"I spent the day with Robert Skrob to learn how to increase the retention in my membership program. During the time we spent together we created \$2-3 million dollars in revenue. If you have any intentions of increasing your membership retention, Robert is the guy. You better get ahold of him as soon as you can."

Ron LeGrand, Global Publishing



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