



IN YOUR BEST INTERESTSM

Best Practices/Tips for Creating E-Newsletters

How to Create an E-Newsletter

- **Step 1:** Pick the audience that you want to target. This determines the content you include in the e-newsletter. You wouldn't send the same type of information to prospective customers that you would send to current customers.
- **Step 2:** Project a personal, informal and honest tone. The point of the electronic newsletter is to be inviting, not intimidating.
- **Step 3:** Build the electronic newsletter around a lead article. The main article should be the longest and most detailed in the issue and it should relate to some important aspect of your business, such as the announcement of a new product line, special sales or an upcoming trade show. The lead article also can report the latest company or organization news or offer problem-solving tips. Include links to your website for additional information.
- **Step 4:** Use secondary pieces to complete the email newsletter. Add product or service update information. Announce company or industry-related events, conferences or seminars.
- **Step 5:** Post customer service information to let subscribers know that support is available. Create interest in the upcoming issue by using teasers to reveal valuable news you plan to publish in the next issue.
- **Step 6:** Keep all of the e-newsletter articles brief. Post short teasers that link to in-depth articles on your website. Subscribers receiving electronic newsletters are typically looking for material that is quick and easy to read.
- **Step 7:** Give subscribers the ability to opt-out of the e-newsletter subscriber list in every issue. You are legally responsible to remove subscribers who request removal from the subscriber list

Source: by eHow Internet Editor, http://www.ehow.com/how_2079588_create-enewsletter.html

General Tips

- **Web Style Guide Online:** <http://www.webstyleguide.com/>
A style guide can save time, reinforce process, enhance tracking, and support the readers.
- **Use a Template:** A template gives structure by designing in the number of articles, navigation and graphics into the publication. A template saves time by having the outline in place to be used over and over. Most e-newsletter vendors offer a variety of templates you can choose for your e-newsletter or if you want to match corporate branding have a design group put together an approved corporate branded template for your publication.
- **Don't obscure Hyperlinks.** Underlined blue type has become the norm for hyperlinks. Any other format may obscure the fact that it is a hyperlink. Second is the mouse-over reversal of type that also signifies a clickable link. Be careful not to create a hyperlink style that confuses the reader. Also, the "click here" link is interpreted by most Web users as amateurish.
- **Don't add do-hickey graphics.** Readers may often look at an e-newsletter and determine that it needs some illustrations or little graphics to break up the monotony. Use subheads, bullets, and meaningful photos to break up the copy. Clipart graphics add little value and are a sign of a non-professional publication.
- **Good example:** New York Times daily e-newsletter - <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/todaysheadlines/> The New York Times daily HTML email is what you should try to emulate. The online style and the email match completely. The content is based on the user preferences and the use of graphics is purposeful and minimal.

Source: <http://www.comptond.com/articles/111228324311723.html>

Creating an Effective E-Newsletter

- **Keep It Short and Scannable.**

An e-newsletter is not just the same content you would put in a printed newsletter, then cut-and-pasted to an e-mail message. The Internet is a different communications environment and requires a different writing style. People do not read long documents online, they scan to find something relevant or interesting to them. Keep e-newsletters to three screens or less, and format them to be scannable. E-newsletters are like sound bites of the Internet allowing people to be “information snackers.” Provide multiple headers, bullets, short paragraphs and sentences, and links to further information. If you want to draw attention to longer documents, provide either brief summaries or the first few lines of the document with a link to the full document on your Web site.

- **Keep Content Substance/News Oriented – Not Self-Promotional.**

Readers want substance, not press releases, speeches and promotional material. If the e newsletter looks like a commercial, they'll hit delete, and probably not read future e-mails, even if they're not self-promotional. Focus on the news that affects your readers. What previous or upcoming news most affects them? Which past or future activities will they be most interested in knowing about? What services do they most need to know about?

- **Link to Your Web Site.**

Your e-newsletter is an excellent opportunity to bring people to your Web site. Not only can your Web site provide more detailed information about the stories in your e-newsletter, it can also draw people's attention to other items of interest. If you give people an opportunity to learn more about the things that interest them, they will also learn more about the things that interest you. Thus, the e-newsletter, combined with the Web site, can be a powerful tool for building and strengthening relationships with current and potential clients.

- **Grab Readers Attention with Great Subject Lines and Good Looking Content.**

Attention spans are short when it comes to e-mail. If subscribers don't open your e-newsletter as soon as they see it in their inbox, chances are they'll forget about it. Craft your subject line carefully, since it's the first – and often the only – thing they'll see. Put the most interesting and relevant information at the top, where it can be seen in a preview window. If you have the ability, consider sending e-newsletters in HTML format, which can be formatted like a Web page, with colors and graphics that get people's attention. (Just be sure they're not so big that they clog peoples' inboxes! It's best to keep e-mail messages under 100 KB). And do NOT send attachments, especially bulky files like video and audio. Link back to that kind of material on your Web site.

- **Keep Content Timely and Relevant.**

In order to capture readers' interest, e-newsletters must provide fresh information about topics on peoples' minds. If it's in the local news and Congress has something to do with it, it should be reflected in the e-newsletter.

- **Send the E-Newsletter Only When You Have Something to Say.**
There are no hard, fast rules about how often to send an e-newsletter, but the trick is to send it often enough that people don't forget they're subscribed to your list, but not so often that they get tired of hearing from you. Most e-newsletters are sent weekly, monthly or bi-monthly.
- **Give Readers an Opportunity to Do Something.**
Direct marketers and grassroots organizations have mastered the art of "the ask" in their e-mails, and they've received a great response. Various studies indicate that between 20-50% of recipients respond in some way to commercial e-mail, way beyond the traditional 2% of direct mail. People provide their e-mail addresses to organizations they want to hear from, and when the organizations ask them to do something, they often do.
- **Make It Easy to Subscribe and Unsubscribe.**
This is a long-standing and widely acknowledged point of e-mail etiquette. Every e-newsletter should include information about how to be added to or removed from the distribution list. The process should be painless – a click of a button or some other simple task – and, once a person has been added to or removed from the list, their status should remain the same until they request a change.
- **Provide an E-Newsletter Archive on Your Web Site.**
Archives not only enable reader to refer back to something they read before, they also provide prospective subscribers with information to convince them they want to be on your list. If they can see what kind of information they will receive from you, they can make a more informed decision about giving you their e-mail address.
- **Provide a Privacy Statement and Stick to It.**
You should establish a clear and comprehensive privacy policy about how you will and will not use personal information provided by subscribers and post an easy-to-understand privacy statement on your Web site. Then, stick to it. For example, if your privacy policy says that you will only use an e-mail address to send the e-newsletter, do not use it for other targeted mass e-mails. If the policy changes, notify subscribers and give them the opportunity to opt-out, if they choose. It's better to be clear and cautious than vague and opportunistic.

Source: http://www.cmfweb.org/storage/cmfweb/documents/CMF_Pubs/cmfspecialreport_e-newsletters.pdf