



## **Eclipse the competition with e-newsletters, the new marketing essential**

As a B2B company, when you have chosen to implement an e-newsletter program, you want it to be as effective as possible and, of course, you are looking for ROI from that program. In this ever-expanding web-based technology arena, it is important to establish and maintain relevant online tools to work in concert with your offline marketing materials. E-Newsletters are effective and cost-efficient tools to build prospect and customer relationships, reinforce industry “thought leader” positioning, generate leads, and close deals.

As with all marketing materials, achieving these goals really gets down to one key ingredient: CONTENT. It must be relevant and valuable to your readers. If you do not take the time to craft this, your clients, partners and prospects will probably not read your newsletter.

Focus on delivering valuable and instantly useable content that really matters to the reader. Well-crafted content includes: articles, lists, links, best practices, tips, trends, news and a point-of-view (this is most valuable as it establishes your differentiation from competitors.)

Major turn-off: Content that is bogged down with sales and marketing messages.

Construct your e-newsletter to deliver credible content that drives readers to take a desired and measurable action (i.e., visit your web site, fill out a form, call a sales person, download a case study, watch a video, request a meeting, etc.) This effort will be the start of a business relationship that can be taken to the next level.

To eclipse your competition, consider these top 10 tips to launch your e-newsletter program:

**1. Manage Expectations** - Time is precious, so if you want people to read the newsletter, make sure you describe the content of the newsletter in 1-2 sentences right at the start and how it will deliver value to them. That way, they are more apt to opt-in, if it is relevant to them. Once you have established a library of newsletters, provide a link back to those past issues.

**2. Become A “Must Read”** - Think of all the emails and newsletters people must get in their boxes every day. That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t implement this type of marketing program. It just means you have to cut through the clutter. To do this you must have a focus. Once you have a focus, choose an editorial approach and follow that path.

**3. Regularity Matters** - Readers like regular formats, columns and features and they expect it. Anything else is confusing. Remember, content value is what readers seek - not a new look every time. When it comes to this type of marketing tool, creativity without content does not sell.

**4. Time Is Precious, So Keep It Short** - The newsletters that can be read in 2-3 minutes and provide those nuggets of information feed the reader and keep their attention focused. Your reader feels smarter and loves the fact they have learned something useful in this nanosecond world. When you can't say it all in 1-2 paragraphs make your article a "teaser" with a click-through to your web site to allow the "full read." This will also allow you to gauge the interest of a featured article, case study, etc. as your web analytics will detail the click-throughs to the page the full content resides on.

**5. Sidebar, Please** - Sidebars are important design elements, which allow you to segment your newsletter and provide a bit of organizational hierarchy. Use this piece of real estate wisely for things like promotions, news, events, resource links, and links to downloadable materials. This is different than your editorial content – it is informational content, so keep it in sidebar format. Your readers will thank you.

**6. You've Got Personality** - Aren't you different than "that other company?" Show your brand differentiation through your personality. Just because it is a corporate communication doesn't mean you should lose that trait. People actually like to know that there is some human element behind all of this electronic transmission of information.

**7. Tips, Trends and Answers** - People love a good tip, an insight into the next trend, and expert answers to complex questions. If you can consistently deliver these three key elements in your newsletter, you have provided valuable information to your reader and they will come back for more.

**8. Prove It** - Besides your point of view that establishes you as a "thought leader", it is vital to prove to your reader the value of your offerings and subsequent benefit to the customer. Include client case studies, testimonials and classic 'before and after' examples. Let your current customers tell your story, as they are the true advocates of your brand promise. Everyone loves a success story.

**9. What's The Subject?** - Whatever your central focus is for that particular newsletter, should be the subject line in your email. Be crafty. . Entice people to open the email. When developing this, imagine you're a newspaper headline writer.

**10. It Is About You** - The whole purpose of your e-newsletter program is to build your business, so it is okay to talk about your company, but be subtle. Talk about your business in the context of your subject matter and the reader will not only enjoy the read, but won't feel the 'hard sell.'