

Money-Making...

Newsletter Publications

Introduction

If the value of a mailing list is gold, publishing a newsletter would have to fall into the platinum category.

Naturally, you can keep in touch with your mailing list members without a newsletter, but why pass up the opportunity to gain their respect and trust on a regular basis.

If you merely contact your list members on a random basis, you risk the possibility that they'll forget who you are. Or even worse, what your product or business is all about.

With a newsletter, you have the perfect opportunity to step into the privacy of their homes on any given day of any given week or month. You decide. And once you do - and you arrive at their inbox - you have their undivided attention.

At least, that's what you're hoping for. Their undivided attention.

The first thing you have to do, of course, is develop a newsletter that your readers will be hungry to devour, from top to bottom.

In all honesty, that's not an easy task. Especially when you consider how many emails the average viewer receives on a daily basis. Competing with tons of junk mail, carefully drafted solo ads by other marketers, and dozens of newsletters that have already been subscribed to can give anyone reason to pause.

In many cases, those types of obstacles have prompted webmasters to not only think twice about having their own newsletter but caused them to decide not to publish one at all. Ever.

But when you calculate the enormous benefit of publishing a newsletter, it's something that needs to be taken quite seriously. After all, a good deal of revenue is at stake.

- The more people you can contact on a regular basis, the more income you'll generate.
- The more information and advice you can provide, the more income you'll generate.
- The more respect and trust you establish between you and your subscribers, the more income you'll generate.

That's the good news.

The bad news is how much time and effort is involved in publishing a newsletter. All kidding aside, it's a lot of work. And you need to be prepared to handle that volume of work before you send out your first issue.

As long as you enter into this decision with your eyes wide open - and with a totally realistic

attitude - you can easily manage the burden (or reward, depending on how you look at things) of a scheduled publication.

Unless you have nothing else to do (which is highly unlikely), don't choose to send your newsletter every week. Instead, start with one that goes out every other week or possibly once a month.

That way, you'll have an opportunity to ease into things, get a feel for what you can do in the time that's available between issues. Then, if everything goes well and you decide to publish more frequently, you can do so without difficulty.

What helps the most is having content ready long before your start sending out the newsletter. That gives you a cache of articles, information, and features that can be quickly and easily inserted.

Or, if you don't include any features that require current dated information, you can create entire issues ahead of time (say three or four months in advance). You can even stockpile content that relates to different areas of your newsletter, like how-to tips, resources, and articles.

If your features do happen to rely on current information - such as reviews of products that have just been released - you can create the majority of the issues ahead of time and then add the final touches just prior to publication.

Either way, it cuts down the amount of pressure you would feel if you had to write everything from scratch within the small time frame that exists from one newsletter issue to the next.

As far as the focus of your newsletter is concerned, only you can decide. Depending on what type of business you're promoting and the customer audience you'll be reaching, you could base your content on tips and advice, in depth topic-related information, or simply a "joke of the week" concept.

You can publish in text, HTML, or online format. Or a combination of all three. But regardless of how or when you publish, you need to make certain you follow the most important success factor...

Above all else, your newsletter must provide interesting and valuable content.

If not, your readership and financial gain will be minimal, or worse, non-existent. If, on the other hand, you can secure the undivided attention of your subscribers, your newsletter (and subsequently your business) will be a resounding success.

Publishing A Newsletter



Once you've established the name and the frequency of your newsletter, you'll need to decide what type of format you'll be using. In that respect, you've got three primary choices.

Text versus HTML is and probably always will be a controversial subject. To add to the mix, more and more webmasters are publishing their newsletters online.

So which version is the best choice? Unfortunately, it's not as clear cut as simply choosing one over the other.

Text vs. HTML

Although text is probably the safest version you can publish, it's not necessarily the most popular. Nor is it the most effective.

For the most part, readers seem to prefer HTML versions, both via email and online. And when compared to the text counterpart, more links were clicked and acted upon in the HTML newsletter.

In other words, the HTML version prompted more positive response from readers.

From a webmaster's standpoint, HTML is far superior. Not only can you be more creative with regard to how your newsletter is formatted, you have many more options for its design and layout. Much like you would with a print newspaper.

Plus, you get the benefit of being able to brand your particular business. You can even give the newsletter the same look and feel as your website.

With text versions, all you can rely on for branding is the name of your newsletter and the type of symbols you use to separate and distinguish between segment features.

Last but not least, publishing an HTML newsletter means you'll have the ability to calculate how many members of your list actually open each issue that you send. That's not something you can do with text versions.

Text Version

Although using a plain text format is the easiest and least complicated, it produces a somewhat boring presentation.

The best you can do to "dress" it up is to use symbols or special characters. For example...

```
=====
EDITOR'S CORNER
=====
```

```
~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~
FEATURED ARTICLE
~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~
```

For emphasis, you can use *asterisks*, "quotes", or ALL CAPS. Be wary of the last one and use it sparingly. Some spam filters interpret all caps as a sign of junk mail.

In order to maintain a clean look, you need to restrict each and every line to a maximum of 55 to 60 characters. If you exceed that limit, some email programs will chop up the lines, giving your newsletters a rather disheveled appearance.

If you don't limit characters to 60 per line there's the possibility your newsletter could look something like this when it arrives at its destination.

Some email programs won't hyperlink a URL address unless it has the http:// prefix. Make certain you include it so your readers can click on any of your links just like they would on a web page.

The same concept applies to email addresses. If you don't precede them with the mailto: attribute, the reader won't have access to a live link.

For your subject line, it's best to simply insert the name of your publication and the current issue information. Something like, "Marketing Software Gazette - Monday June 7, 2006 Issue".

The first thing your subscriber should see in the body of the email is the name of your newsletter, the volume and/or issue number, and the current date. Place all that information at the very top of the newsletter. If you wish, you can also include your name, email address, and website URL.

Below that, place a brief statement that lets the reader know why they are receiving email from you. "You are receiving this newsletter because you signed up [insert how, when, where]..."

At the very bottom of the newsletter should be your signature which would generally include your name, your email address, and website URL.

Below your signature, you need to place two things. First, explain how to subscribe to your newsletter (in case the newsletter has been forwarded to someone who doesn't happen to be on your mailing list).

Secondly, you need to include clear and precise information about how to unsubscribe from your list. Don't make them jump through hoops. If they want out, let them do it without difficulty.

And make certain you send a test newsletter to yourself. That way you'll know if everything is correct prior to blasting it out to your entire mailing list.

HTML Email Version

There's no question an HTML email version is more attractive. But it's also the most difficult to deal with. At least, from a design perspective.

Here are some tips that should help in that respect...

It's important that you hand code your HTML newsletter. If you use a WYSIWYG type editor, there's a good chance your recipients won't be viewing the same clean attractive version that you originally created.

Be aware that every email program handles HTML differently. Keep your design, layout, and coding simple and there shouldn't be any problem when your newsletter arrives at its various destinations.

Use HTML tables rather than CSS for layout. This will allow your newsletter to be read by older email clients.

When using CSS attributes, make certain you embed it directly into the HTML code rather than link to a remote stylesheet. For example, between the opening and closing <HEAD> tags...

```
<style type="text/css">
<!--

[insert style attributes]

-->
</style>
```

Here are some additional tips for HTML formatting...

- A single-column layout is best.
- Try not to exceed anything more than the traditional two-column layout.
- Avoid using background images.
- Use the target="_blank" tag so links will open in a new browser window.
- Use the mailto: attribute so email links are live in all email clients.
- Don't ever include JavaScript in email versions of your newsletter.

Just like the text version, always send a copy of the finished newsletter to yourself before letting it go out to your entire subscriber list.

If possible, arrange for friends or associates who are using different email clients to also receive samples. Depending on their feedback, make any necessary changes or corrections.

Once you've established an HTML version that passes inspection, simply create a blank template that you can use for any and all future newsletter issues.

Online Version

Aside from archiving back issues of newsletters, most webmasters didn't really think about publishing online versions. At least, not until spam filters began to prevent newsletters from reaching their destination.

Currently, online versions have become more of a necessity than a novelty. But rather than choose only the web page publication, most webmaster still send their newsletters via email and then send a separate email message with just a link to the online version.

For example...

In case the filters kept you from receiving the email version of [insert newsletter name], you can access the online version at [insert URL address].

With a safe subject line (like your newsletter title and issue date), there's very little chance that type of message will be zapped by the spam filters. And sending it a day or two after the usual publication date ensures that one way or another every subscriber will have an opportunity to view all your newsletter issues.

Publishing Options

The overall best choices is to publish both an email and an online version.

Having an online version makes perfect sense, mainly because you'll be archiving past issues. Since that means you'll need to create an HTML version at some point, why not create it right from the start.

As far as the email version goes, you still have to decide whether to publish it in text or HTML format. Since both have their own pros and cons, it's merely a matter of choosing which one

better suits your needs and the needs of your subscribers.

Guidelines and Tips

In this day and age, there's no such thing as creating a newsletter and then expecting to automatically have viewers sign up left and right.

Nowadays, you have to work at getting people to subscribe to your newsletter. That's mainly because there are just so many of them already out there.

You have to "sell" it. And in order to do that properly, you'll need to create a separate and independent page on your website that is used exclusively to describe and promote your newsletter.

The overall content on that page would include things like:

- a description of the type of content and information they can expect to receive in every issue
- the different features you'll be including such as the editor's corner, featured article, tips and advice, questions and answers, and product reviews
- a description of any free sign-up bonuses and how they'll be delivered once the person signs up
- when and how often the newsletter will be delivered
- informing subscribers that they will also be receiving independent solo ads from time to time, in addition to the regular newsletter issues
- unsubscribe option - where the information is located and how they can remove themselves from your list
- privacy policy that explains the terms and conditions associated with their sign-up - most importantly that their information is safe and won't be shared with any third party
- newsletter sign-up form

It's also a good idea to present a brief sales pitch. Let them know why your particular newsletter will be valuable to them. There are so many of them out there, you definitely need to give potential subscribers the proper incentive and motivation to sign up for yours.

Establish A Solid Publishing Date

Set up a regular publishing schedule, one that you can adhere to over an extended period of time. Although some webmasters can easily produce a newsletter each and every week, it's not absolutely necessary in order to gain success.

If you don't feel comfortable publishing every week - or you just don't have the time to do so - consider sending out a newsletter every other week. Or, at the very least, once a month. Anything beyond that time frame and you'll lose a good deal of your subscriber base.

Remember... the whole idea behind a newsletter is to remain in touch with your subscribers, to keep you and your business fresh in their mind. Let too much time go by from one issue to another and the effectiveness of your contact will be seriously diminished.

Your subscribers will come to expect a certain degree of consistency, with regard to your content and your publication date. Don't let them down.

Delivering A Bonus

If you offer new subscribers a bonus for signing up, don't make them perform a ridiculous series of actions just to get it. And don't make them wait an extended period of time before handing over that bonus.

Most likely, you'll be using a double opt-in system. That means you'll be asking your subscriber to confirm their sign-up by clicking on a link in a confirmation email that is automatically sent when the form is submitted.

Once they confirm, there are two good choices for how they should receive their sign-up bonus.

1. Have the download information included on whatever web page you send them to after they click on the link in the confirmation email.
2. Have another email message automatically sent to their address which includes the download information.

The point is, everything about their initial sign-up and receiving their bonus should be handled automatically. If any of these tasks need to be performed manually, you're wasting valuable time and energy.

Show Them Who You Are

It's important to let your subscribers get to know you. Not just in a business sense, but on a personal level as well.

The more human you appear, the more easily you can establish a relationship of trust and respect. That can be accomplished by simply writing all your newsletters in an informal and conversational manner.

The best method of conveying who you are, though, is to include a casual and personal note at the beginning of every issue. Some call it the editor's note or letter from the editor, others don't bother to give the segment any title whatsoever.

Either way, it's simply a matter of getting the newsletter issue started in a way that's similar to writing a letter to a friend...

Hi Mark,

What a great week this has been. So many exciting things have happened, I don't really know where to begin. I guess the beginning would be as good a place as any. :-)

On Sunday, Suzy gave birth to four very healthy Beagle pups. Three girls and a boy. And wouldn't you know it, she waited until four o'clock in the morning to do it. Both mom and babies are doing just fine!

Now on to business...

Remember that software “genius” I told you about a couple of weeks ago? After some serious arm twisting, he finally agreed to let me offer a special subscriber only deal for his latest software product. You’ve find all the juicy details below.

The more natural your writing style, the more comfortable your subscribers will feel. Just don’t overdo the personal aspect. You want them to see you as a real person, but you always need to retain your status as a professional in your field of expertise.

The bottom line is, be yourself. Your subscribers will not only recognize your sincerity, they’ll reward you for it by making purchases based on your recommendations.

Always keep in mind...

People are much more likely to purchase from a friend than a virtual stranger. It’s your job to convince them that you fall into the former category.

Maintain A Comfortable Balance Between Info and Sales

Many a mailing list has gone down in flames simply because the owner chose to abuse it by sending out way too many solo ads.

Naturally, the ultimate goal of having a list (or, in this case, sending out a newsletter), is to generate revenue. But the primary focus should be on developing a solid and ongoing relationship with the people who are on the list.

Without that, you have little or no chance of realizing financial gains.

Yes, there will be occasions when you send out a separate mailing that’s associated with a particular product you’re promoting. But if you bombard your subscribers with ad after ad after ad, your credibility will plummet to the point that your list will be virtually useless.

Your first objective should be to provide valuable information. Woven throughout - in a much less in-your-face manner - should be your promotional messages.

For example...

Let’s say you’ve written an article that explains several proven and effective methods of increasing Google AdWords revenue. Within the article, you include mention of Ad Word Analyzer (<http://www.adwordanalyzer.com>), a valuable resource that will help accomplish that goal.

In fact, it’s always a good idea to choose topics (both for articles and general content) that can be associated with a specific product. It can be your own product or one that you’re promoting as an affiliate.

Either way, you get to kill two birds with one stone. You provide valuable content while at the same time using that opportunity to make a subtle, yet extremely effective, sales pitch.

Of course, once you’ve established a solid and trustworthy relationship with your subscribers, they’ll be much more receptive to any solo ads you send their way (separate and independent of your regular newsletter issues).

You just need to keep the number of solo ads to a minimum. That way, your subscribers will be

much more likely to take any and all of your recommendations seriously. In other words, they'll trust you.

Newsletter Content

First and foremost, it's important that any and all content within your newsletter is either directly or indirectly related to your business or business theme. For example, topics like search engine optimization, online marketing and promotion, publishing ebooks, health and fitness, or any other niche area.

What you need to supply is information that's targeted toward your subscriber audience. That way, you maximize your overall ability to make sales and therefore generate more revenue. You concentrate on a particular area of interest and then promote products that are associated with that area of interest.

The content you provide should exist on a highly professional level. Although it will most often be written in a casual and somewhat conversational manner, it should still be clean and error free with regard to spelling and grammar.

And make certain - whatever subject you've written about - that the facts are correct. If you've not sure about something (for example, a certain statistic), look it up. If you can't verify something, it's much better to leave that information out rather than guess or assume what it should be.

Another good practice is to make certain you provide a fairly large volume of new and unique content. This can be something you've written or something supplied by a "guest" writer.

What you don't want is to simply publish articles that countless other newsletter and website owners are using. It's fine once in a while, especially if there's a great deal of valuable information supplied.

Just don't make a habit of relying on what's commonly referred to as reprint right articles. That works great for web page content. But your newsletter needs to be something special, something different.

Accomplishing that task includes the following options...

- quality articles (and content) that haven't already been widely distributed throughout the internet
- original newsletter segments such as an editor's corner, questions and answers, weekly tips and advice, recommended resources, and product reviews
- a fresh and unique writing approach that comes from you personally and is therefore something that only you can provide

The more value your newsletter possesses, the more likely your subscription base will remain solid, both in terms of current members and those names and email addresses you gain from future sign-ups.

Articles

Writing your own articles is and always will be one of the best content solutions. Not only does it

provide new and interesting information, it helps brand you as an expert in whatever niche or subject area you're working with.

Plus, you have the benefit of using your articles to direct targeted traffic to your website, promote your newsletter, and to capture additional subscribers.

Articles can be submitted to other ezines and newsletters and offered as free content for website owners. Most importantly, they can be used to generate income by promoting products that are directly associated with the article subject matter.

To get the most benefit from your articles, include a highly effective resource box. That would include a link that leads to your website, your newsletter, your newsletter sign-up form, or a combination of these choices.

Keep in mind, however, that the two most important links will be your website and the page that gives the viewer all the necessary information about your newsletter.

Also, you'll want to make it clear that your articles are free to publish as long as the resource box remains in tact. You can include that information above or below the article, just so it's clearly visible to anyone who might be interested in publishing your content in their own newsletter or web pages.

When it comes to promoting your articles, you'll want to submit to as many online directories and announcement services as possible. For a current list and further information, go to the following website.

Net Pro Marketer
<http://netpromarketer.com/directoriesandlists.html>

Other Good Content Ideas

Aside from articles, you can include a variety of other content within your newsletter. For example...

1. Include tips and advice that's related to the products and niche market that you're involved with.
2. Write product reviews. You could select a new product each issue and then, if you already know beforehand, announce what product will be reviewed in the following newsletter issue.
3. Conduct customer surveys and then turn the results into descriptive paragraphs of information.
4. Write how-to instructions about individual products or practices. For example, how to set up an autoresponder system or how to most effectively use a program like Traffic Equalizer (<http://www.trafficequalizer.com>).
5. Conduct interviews with other webmasters or marketers and then publish the conversation in your newsletter. If it's a rather long interview, you can publish part of it and then link to a web page that contains the whole interview.
6. Provide resources that would be relevant and valuable to your subscribers and then write brief descriptions and reviews of each resource. Include your own affiliate link whenever possible.
7. Include a "guest" article. The best option would be to publish new articles rather than those which are found in online directories and are somewhat dated or already being published in other

newsletters. If that's your only option, however, you can use Article Equalizer (<http://www.articleequalizer.com>) to quickly and easily locate quality articles that are targeted toward specific keywords, niches, and areas of interest.

8. Include a syndicated column that carries content which is relevant to your particular niche.
9. Develop a question and answer feature whereby subscribers ask for information or problem solving techniques. Whatever question is asked, be thorough in providing an answer. The more helpful your information, the more anxious your subscribers will be to read that feature each and every issue.
10. Pick a timely or important topic and ask your readers one or more specific questions about that topic. Then publish the best responses you receive.

Reaching Your Destination

One of the biggest challenges facing anyone who sends their newsletter by email is making certain the publication does in fact reach its destination. In this case, that would equate to your individual subscribers.

Although there are numerous reasons a newsletter might not get to the intended recipient (full mail boxes, servers being down, incorrect email addresses), spam filters are most often at the very top of the list.

Whitelisting

When a subscriber signs up, it's important that you tell them to add your email address to what is referred to as their whitelist. This is the method by which a viewer can manually override any filter or block that happens to be in place.

In most instances, these blocks are geared toward preventing the arrival of junk mail, otherwise known as spam. They are also generally put into motion automatically by the email system or program.

In order to bypass this type of preventive measure, a viewer can simply add individual email addresses to their whitelist. That way, any and all messages from that sender will arrive without difficulty or interruption.

To make certain each subscriber does this, include a notification to either the final confirmation sign-up email or the web page they're taken to after confirming their desire to receive your newsletter.

Here's an example of this type of notification...

When you receive the newsletter, you'll see [insert name or email address] in the "From" field of your email message.

If you're using a spam filter, or suspect one might be in place, please add that information to your whitelist. That way you'll be sure to receive each and every newsletter issue.

Naturally, you can give them as much information or instructions as you like. Just make certain you include any and all names and email addresses that might appear during your correspondence with them.

Checking For Spam

Even though you've asked subscribers to add your name and email address to their whitelist, there's no guarantee they'll do it. For one thing, they might get distracted and simply forget. Or, they might not be familiar with how to access or alter their whitelist.

Regardless, it's your job to do everything in your power to see that spam filters don't prevent your newsletters from reaching their destination.

Here are several things you can do...

Your first and most productive line of defense would be to use a simple utility called SpamCheck (<http://spamcheck.sitesell.com>).

Once you've completed your newsletter, send it through this utility. It will analyze your content and then return an evaluation and score. This in turn will let you know the probability of whether or not your newsletter will be zapped by spam filter programs.

SpamCheck gives you two choices.

- You can input your newsletter into the online form.
- You can send your newsletter to an email address.

You'll then receive a score as well as any recommendations for how you can improve that score. That's assuming your newsletters doesn't pass with flying colors the first time around.

Another method you can use to prevent your newsletter from being blocked by spam filters is to publish an online version. This can be in addition to your email version or as an alternative.

If it's an alternative, all you need to do is send an email to your subscribers giving them the URL address to the web page where the current newsletter is located. For example...

This week's issue of [name of newsletter] has been posted at
[URL address].

You could also list what features or articles they'll find in that particular issue.

And here are some other things you can do to fight back against spam filters.

- Don't use all caps.
- Use the word Newsletter in your subject line.
- Don't use the words "to unsubscribe". These are commonly associated with junk mail. Instead, you can say things like "if you no longer wish to receive" or "to take yourself off this list".
- If there are "spam" words that you just can't avoid, use symbols such as carets to disguise them. For example, the word free would be displayed as fr^e, the word spam would be displayed as sp^m.

Of all the methods suggested, the only one that is foolproof is publishing your newsletter online.

The only problem is, not all subscribers want to call up a browser window. And certainly not right away.

Most often, they prefer to skim through the entire publication first. Then, if something really catches their eye or seems worthy enough, they'll be more inclined to head over to the web page.

Checklist



- Develop a newsletter that readers will be hungry to devour from top to bottom.
- The more people you contact on a regular basis, the more information and advice you provide, the more respect and trust you establish, the more income you'll generate.
- Start by publishing your newsletter every other week or once a month. If everything goes well, you can move up to weekly publications.
- Create several newsletter issues in advance.
- Stockpile information and content that relates to different areas of your newsletter.
- Above all else, your newsletter must provide interesting and valuable content.
- HTML email versions prompt more positive response from readers.
- HTML versions allow you the ability to calculate how many members of your list actually open each issue that you send.
- Plain text format is the easiest and least complicated newsletter version.
- Avoid using all caps. Spam filters often interpret it as a sign of junk mail.
- Limit plain text version line length to 55 to 60 characters.
- Include clear and precise information about how to unsubscribe from your list.
- Send a test newsletter to yourself prior to mailing it to your entire subscriber base.
- It's best to hand code your HTML email newsletter rather than use a WYSIWYG type of editor.
- Keep the design, layout, and coding of your HTML version newsletter simple.
- Once you've established an HTML version that works properly, create a blank template for future newsletter issues.
- Create a separate page on your website that is used exclusively to describe and promote your newsletter.
- Include things like a description of the newsletter content, features, sign-up bonus, delivery date and frequency, privacy policy, and sign-up form.

- Present a brief sales pitch, letting potential subscribers know why your particular newsletter will be valuable to them.
- Set up a regular publishing schedule, one that you can adhere to over an extended period of time.
- The more natural your writing style, the more comfortable your subscribers will feel.
- Be yourself. Your subscribers will recognize your sincerity and reward you by making purchases based on your recommendations.
- Your primary focus should be on developing a solid and ongoing relationship with the people on your list.
- If you bombard your subscribers with ad after ad, your credibility will plummet to the point that your list will be virtually useless.
- Choose content topics that can be associated with a specific product.
- Always try to provide a fairly large volume of news and unique content.
- The more value your newsletter possesses, the more likely your subscription base will remain solid.
- Write your own articles as often as you can.
- To get the most benefit from your articles, include a highly effective resource box with links that lead to your website and your newsletter page.
- Aside from articles, you can include tips and advice, write product reviews, create how-to instructions, conduct and publish interviews, include guest articles, and develop a question and answer feature.
- Your biggest challenge is to make certain your email publication reaches its final destination.
- Spam filters top the list of reasons why emails are not received by list members.
- When someone signs up, tell them to add your email address to their white list.
- Before mailing your newsletter, run it through SpamCheck, a free utility that is available at <http://spamcheck.sitesell.com>.
- The only foolproof method of getting past the spam filters is to publish an online version of your newsletter.

Resources

Ad Word Analyzer

<http://www.adwordanalyzer.com>

Net Pro Marketer

<http://netpromarketer.com/directoriesandlists.html>

Traffic Equalizer

<http://www.trafficequalizer.com>

Article Equalizer

<http://www.articleequalizer.com>

SpamCheck

<http://spamcheck.sitesell.com>