



PRINTtips



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Printing

Mailing

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Expand Your Marketing... Reach Out with a Newsletter

Every company or organization has an arsenal of marketing tools that share common characteristics: to introduce the company or organization to prospective customers; to describe the products and services offered and how they benefit the prospect; to show how your company or organization differs from the competition; and to create a favorable impression. Brochures, direct mail, a web site, press releases, and a newsletter are all examples of common marketing tools. Of these, a newsletter has the added benefit of demonstrating your expertise and establishing you as an authority.

Readers expect marketing newsletters to be informative, easy to read, and to contain useful tips. This is the basis for establishing credibility in the mind of the reader and inspires trust and understanding that is the basis of a business relationship. When distributed at trade shows, networking groups, meetings, and seminars, newsletters lend their credibility to brochures and other marketing materials.

Newsletters are also a great way to establish regular contact with customers. The same helpful information and useful tips that prospects appreciate are also valued by customers. In addition, the newsletter reminds customers about your company or organization and provides a way to announce coming events, activities, or new products and services.

Considering all the benefits of publishing a newsletter, it is surprising that so few businesses do so. This leads to another benefit: publishing a newsletter separates you from your competition.



Types of newsletters

In his book *Do It Yourself Newsletters*, designer Chuck Green delineates three types of newsletters.

- *Promotional or marketing newsletters* are sent by businesses to prospects and customers free of charge and are intended to turn prospects into customers and customers into repeat customers.
- *Relationship newsletters* are published for members of an organization (such as a club, a church or an alumni association) or for employees. Typically sent free of charge, they focus on the shared interests of the group.
- *Expert newsletters* are written on a specific topic and offered by subscription to those interested in the topic.

Expand Your Marketing Outreach with a Newsletter

“...relationship newsletters contain information about the company or organization...”

“When you evaluate the pros and cons of printed and e-mail newsletters, neither emerges as a clearly better choice.”

The content of each type of newsletters differs. Since a marketing newsletter is aimed at prospects and customers, it contains information of interest to businesses – explanations, tips and tricks, “how-to” articles, relevant industry trends, product and service information that translates features into benefits and answers the question “What’s in it for me?” Marketing newsletters may also contain coupons, special offers, and a call to action. Some mention company milestones (such as a significant business anniversary or an achievement award) but rarely include personal information about individuals who work for the company.

In contrast, relationship newsletters contain information about the company or organization, its internal environment, and its employees or members. For example: company or organization goals and plans; local, state, or national business developments that have a bearing on the company or organization; community involvement; department or division news, financial results, career or job opportunities, benefits and other HR topics; staff changes and promotions, employee milestones (birthdays, marriages, anniversaries, births).

Publishing the newsletter: print or e-mail?

While the value of a newsletter is clear, the debate continues over whether it is best to publish a print version or use e-mail. Both require a writer, a designer, and a mailing list, but there the similarity ends.

E-mail newsletters can be inexpensively produced in full color and distributed at a fraction of the cost of a printed version – though they can also be blocked as spam or easily deleted without being opened. E-mail newsletters can also be configured to capture reader metrics: how many people have read the newsletter and who they are; which articles got the most hits, who clicked on links, who forwarded information. Past issues with key word search capability can be easily archived on a web site for instant access.

Printed newsletters offer portability – they can be read anywhere and don’t require a computer.

Someone who doesn’t have time to read a printed newsletter when it arrives can set it aside to be read later in the day or even at home. A printed newsletter better accommodates long articles or articles that contain a lot of information. And unlike an e-mail newsletter whose display is a function of the recipient’s e-mail program, a printed newsletter looks the same to everyone – color palette, typefaces, and graphics.

Assembling a mailing list for a printed newsletter is an easier task than assembling an e-mail list, particularly if you want to include prospects. Whereas it is easy to obtain a mailing list of prospects that conform to a set of demographics, it is much harder to obtain comparable e-mail addresses. By convention, e-mail is considered permission-based marketing, meaning you must have the consent of the recipient to send the newsletter. A printed newsletter does not have this restriction.

The answer: use both

When you evaluate the pros and cons of printed and e-mail newsletters, neither emerges as a clearly better choice. Each has its unique virtues, so it is a good idea to publish both. The e-mail newsletter can be a shorter derivative of the print version, published more frequently (perhaps weekly, while the printed version is published monthly). Or it can be used to alert readers to a special article or offer in the upcoming newsletter.

Post PDFs of past issues of the print newsletter on the web site for your company or organization, and include a way to sign up for both the printed and e-mail version of the newsletter. When you use the power of both e-mail and print newsletters together, you’ll be doubling up on one of the most powerful ways to build a relationship with your customers and prospects.

How often to publish

The choices for distribution of a newsletter are daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, and quarterly. The most popular cycle for a printed newsletter is monthly, as this gives sufficient time for writing, design, printing, and mailing.

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Remember this rule of thumb when deciding how often to publish: it takes between 500 and 600 words to fill an 8 ½ x 11 page unless the page contains lots of graphics or photographs. Most adults write between 200 and 300 words per hour, so it will take between one and two hours to write enough copy for one page. A typical newsletter cycle would be one week for gathering information and generating copy; one week for design, layout, proofing and approval; one week for printing and mailing; one week for mail list maintenance.

In between the printed newsletter, use e-mail or direct mail to send additional content based on the newsletter, or to generate more customer

and prospect contact during key selling times, for renewal dates, seasonal activities or holiday.

Just send it

Newsletters are a great way for businesses and organizations to keep in touch with their customers or members and to reach out to prospects. Newsletters demonstrate the competence and expertise of the company or organization and build credibility.

If you want to begin using this powerful marketing tool for your company or organization, call 513-248-2121. We have many years of experience and can help you launch an effective newsletter.

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Suggestions for Topics for Your Newsletter

If you're finding it difficult to find topics for your newsletter, we offer these suggestions:

- *Interview an expert.* Find someone within your company or from the outside to provide an expert opinion on a topic of interest.
- *Use guest articles.* Ask an expert in a complementary field to write an article.
- *Share your knowledge in “how-to” articles.* Newsletters are a great way for businesses and organizations to keep in touch with their customers or members and to reach out to prospects.
- *Generate a numbered list.* Everyone loves a numbered list. Use any number you want, from small to large.
- *Answer reader questions:* Invite readers to submit questions or topics of interest.
- *Simplify a technical issue.* Explain a technical topic in simpler terms so it is easily understood by the reader.
- *Case study:* describe a customer problem and show how your product or service solved the problem.
- *Community service:* Describe a community project or donation made by the company or organization and its staff and members.
- *Employee profile:* Provide information about an employee that shows why he or she is outstanding in their job performance.



“Newsletters are a great way for businesses and organizations to keep in touch with their customers or members and to reach out to prospects.”

Lend Credibility to Your Company



“One purpose of a newsletter is to lend credibility to your company...”

The content of your newsletter is what attracts and keeps reader interest by providing relevant, informative, entertaining, and useful information. One purpose of a newsletter is to lend credibility to your company and to establish your expertise; this can only be accomplished if the newsletter is mainly information, with little or no advertising.

- *Relevant information:* To provide relevant information in your newsletter, you must know the target audience. If your audience is diverse, it may be better to publish more than one version of your newsletter so the content can be fully tailored
- *Useful information:* Factual articles based on research, or “how-to” tips based on experience both qualify as useful

information. To encourage readers to trust the information, keep sales hype, including superlatives and over-the-top claims, out of the articles.

- *Writing style:* A good writing style to adopt for your newsletter is the same one used by a newspaper journalist – objective, factual, and well-researched. Focus on news that is relevant to your audience, and present it without bias. Keep the language easy-to-read and the sentence structure simple and conversational.
- *Call to action:* Even though your newsletter isn’t directly selling, it should include a call to action. Emphasize current offers, discounts, or other specials of interest to customers and prospects, and make it easy for them to act on the information by providing instructions for what to do if interested.



“ Use templates and style sheets to control headlines, subheads and body copy.”

Q. *What do I need to know about newsletter design?*

A. A newsletter’s design has a big impact on reader reaction. To be sure your design is successful, remember these three Cs: consistent, conservative and contrast.

Consistency addresses the format of your newsletter. If printing in black with an accent color, select a color palette and maintain it throughout each issue. Use an underlying grid to organize each page. If your newsletter is short (4 pages or less), use the same grid for each

page. Use templates and style sheets to control headlines, subheads, and body copy.

Be *conservative* in the use of fonts and graphic elements, especially in a short newsletter. A good rule of thumb is to limit the number of photos, graphic accents, or clip art to one or two per page. Select one font for body copy and another for headlines, and use these exclusively. Stylize the two fonts with italics, bold, and condensed, but do not introduce additional fonts.

Use *contrast* to direct the reader’s eye and to establish the hierarchy of importance. Headlines should contrast with body copy and with subheads. Drop caps, extra-large initial caps, or an illustrated capital will draw the reader’s eye and create graphic interest. Use white space in the form of gutters and margins to lighten up dense body copy.

Improving the design of your newsletter will pay dividends in reader interest and accessibility.