
A Newsletter for Every Business

**Why every business (even a funeral home) needs a newsletter,
how to turn newsletter writing from chore to passion
and how to make your newsletter your best marketing tool...ever**

By Simon Payn

<http://www.ANewsletterForEveryBusiness.com>

Pass this guide along to anyone who thinks newsletters are a chore



This is not a “how-to” manual with lots of rigid rules about grammar and layouts.

Rather, it’s a “how you can” manual with ideas, tips and inspiration.

Why the difference?

Because every business needs a newsletter...

...but that newsletter must be your passion, not a chore.

The Newsletter Manifesto



**My name is
Simon Payn,
and I love
newsletters.**

**Here is what I
believe.**

Who am I? I'm a
recovering journalist and
owner of Ready to Go
Newsletters.

You can read my blog at
<http://www.simonpayn.com>

1. Every business needs a newsletter
(even a funeral home)
2. A newsletter's role is to build relationships
(which are the currency of business)
3. Newsletters are about sharing your passion for your business with
the world. (After all, you started your own business because you were passionate
about it, right? Why not share that with other passionate folks?)
4. Newsletters must be fun and never a chore.
(Stop trying to be like the New York Times)
5. Newsletters should be saturated with personality
(Because people do business with people, not organizations)

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- 1 Why Every Business (Even a Funeral Home) Needs a Newsletter
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Why Every Business (Even a Funeral Home) Needs a Newsletter

5 Really Good Reasons Why Your Business Needs a Newsletter Now

Every Business Needs a Newsletter.

No excuses.

Even funeral homes.

Here are 5 reasons why:

1

Monsters in the Dark (because, especially right now, people want to do business with people they know and trust)

Trust is at a premium these days. After all, who can we trust? Not the banks - they've shown how something apparently rock-solid can turn to dust. Not the investment industry - Bernie Madoff put pay to that. And not politicians - we've never felt able to trust them anyway.

So if you can build trust, you're a step ahead.

The thing is, no one trusts you right away. That's especially true if they've found you online. Trust needs to be earned by fulfilling promises and building relationships over the long term.

A newsletter works as a tool to build those relationships of trust. It gives you a track record of providing valuable client-centered information and opens up opportunities for two-way communication.

2

Forget-Me-Not Followers (because people are more forgetful than you can possibly imagine - so keep saying "hello")

You know how it is - we're bombarded with choices. It's hard to keep them all in your head. And it's also hard to remember who's who and what's where.

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Just think what it's like when you do a Google search - you visit scores of websites and they turn into a kind of website soup in your head.

So it's no surprise that people forget to come back.

It's not that people are ignoring you - it's that they are simply overwhelmed.

A newsletter helps by starting and then maintaining a relationship. If you can collect a prospect's information when they visit your website (or store), then you can contact them with a valuable newsletter to remind them that you're there. And if you collect a customer's information at time of purchase, you can keep in touch so that they won't forget you next time they need what you offer.

In a sea of choices, your newsletter is like a life raft. It's no wonder clients reach out to you.

3

The Go-To Guy or Gal (because people want to do business with an expert, not a salesman)

So here we are, with an ocean of choices but none of them to trust.

What to do?

You can build trust quickly by proving that you know what you are talking about and that you have your clients' best interests in mind (instead of just being out for a quick buck).

Sharing your knowledge in the form of articles, blog posts and videos quickly makes you stand out: you become to go-to-guy or gal.

A newsletter helps as a vehicle to distribute that knowledge to people who are interested in hearing what you have to say. And over time, articles build on articles, advice on advice, to prove to readers you know your stuff and that you can be trusted.

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4

The Elephant in the Balance Sheet (because most businesses are leaving thousands of dollars on the table by failing to sell to existing clients)

One of the truest (and saddest) facts of business is this: most profits are made from existing customers - not new ones - yet many businesses fail to get the second sale.

After all, how often do you buy something, have a very happy experience, and then never hear from that business again? Probably 99% of the time.

It's a giant waste, because it costs often hundreds of dollars to attract clients in the first place (they have to find you, trust you, contact you). So once you've got them in your sphere of influence, you can sell to them again without that massive up-front acquisition cost.

Indeed, I'd go further: failing to keep in touch borders on rudeness - like a one-night stand.

Newsletters help because they make it easy to keep in touch with past clients. Just collect their contact information and mail or email them with information that will make their lives better. And if you make offers that match their interests, they'll be back to buy from you again.

5

Soul Fuel (because when business becomes a relationship it's much for fun and fulfilling)

This is the part that no one ever talks about.

You went into business on your own for a reason, right? You know that you want to spend your day doing something you care about instead of whiling away your life in a cubicle. You have passion for what you do, you care about what you do - and you enjoy sharing all that with the world.

Isn't sharing all that stuff kinda fun?

A newsletter helps because it gives you a vehicle to share your passion, helping make your clients' and prospects lives better. You give (and that feels good) but you also get.

It makes your life that much more fulfilling.

The Long Tail of Newsletters

I often hear stories that clients consider amazing.

It goes something like this:

I sent my newsletter to this person six months ago. And today they called me!

Can you believe they kept the newsletter all that time and then got in touch?!

Well, yes, I can. If the newsletter is good.

Here's the thing:

A good newsletter provides valuable information that makes clients' lives better.

Because of that, clients see the newsletter not as an advertising vehicle but as an important resource.

And because of that, they keep it at home.

And because they've kept it at home, they pick it up again when they need you.

And because they don't always need you right away, that call you receive can come many months after you sent your newsletter.

That's the long tail of newsletters.



Picture by Tambako the Jaguar

The Independent Bookstore - and Your Newsletter

Running an independent bookstore is a difficult task these days: you're squeezed by the bookstore chains, the superstores and online retailers, all of which offer books (the bestsellers, at least) at a discount.

So I was interested to read an article in The Guardian newspaper about an independent bookstore in London, England.

Here's a quote from the article. (The bold text is mine.)

*"For us the idea of a bookshop is that your hard-core customers, the ones who keep you alive, who buy 50-100 books a year, **they want to come in, chat to us about books, see books they haven't seen before - they want to feel like their passion about books is being reciprocated.** A friend of ours, John, who runs a bookshop in Crystal Palace, had a great saying about Harry Potter. It's not a book - it's a book-shaped tin of beans."*

This attitude is, I believe, key to succeeding as a small, independent business. And what's more, I know a newsletter can act as a catalyst to multiply the results you get from the passion you put into your business.

Here's why:

- * It's better to have a small number of hard-core customers than it is to have many who buy only once. This is because the cost of acquiring a new customer is so high.
- * So you need to nurture your hard-core group of passionate customers.
- * One way to nurture them is by sharing your passion.

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Picture by Rosino

- * You can share this passion even when they are not in your premises by writing a newsletter.
- * Then you'll continue to build your relationship over time and over distance.
- * Indeed, you will build a community of hard-core customers who feel their passion is being reciprocated.
- * You'll then be able to share your new product discoveries with them. And it's likely, because they are part of your passionate community, that they will purchase those products.
- * And so the relationship deepens, and your success grows.

That's why every business (even a funeral home) should have a newsletter.

The Newsletter that Comes in a Box of Eggs

Here's a fascinating case study from a company that sends out a newsletter in every box of eggs it produces.

Yes, eggs that come with their own newsletter.

I'll give you what I see as the big takeaway first:

You might think that eggs is eggs. But, as we're told, some eggs are better than others - free range is better than battery, organic better than chemical. But with so many claims (many misleading) about eggs (what does "farm fresh" mean?), how do you make your eggs stand out? One way is by sending out a newsletter with each box of eggs to a) tell the story of the eggs and their producer, and b) build an unshakable bond with your customers.

The Country Hen claims to produce the best eggs in the United States. Here's what Kathy Moran from the sales department told me. (I'm telling the entire story, because it's important.)



Picture by themonnie

Our owner, George Bass, started The Country Hen in 1988. It was the first Organic, Omega-3 egg farm in The United States. The only product we produce is an Organic, Omega-3 Egg. However, I probably should mention, it is the best egg on the market. I guess if it the only thing you are going to produce, it better be!

George had a unique philosophy, in 1988, with regards to creating The Country Hen. He believed only the happiest, healthiest hens would produce "The World's Best Egg". George exceeded all standards for egg farming and organic certification laws. He was actu-

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ally responsible for organic certification with regards to egg farming to become much stricter in the industry. The Country Hens enjoy roaming freely through spacious, sunlit barns with outdoor porches attached. The outdoor porches allow for outdoor access, but maintain our ability to completely control the safety of our hens from predators and any risk of disease.

The next thing George did differently was work with top scientists to develop The Country Hen's proprietary feed formula. The over 10 organic ingredients in the feed formula is a very closely guarded secret. It is what gives the eggs their exceptional nutritional value, great taste, and also acts as a probiotic for our Hens. George, of course, insisted on milling the feed right here at The Country Hen farm. Although it is a very expensive undertaking for a single farm, it gave George the ability to control every aspect of the quality of the raw ingredients and milling process. Only recently, with all the human and animal grade food scares, do we truly appreciate the value of having our own feed mill.

Lastly, George took great care with The Country Hen packaging. He only produces a half dozen size carton. This is the way it was twenty years ago and it remains this way today. Also, case sizes are only 15 dozen eggs. This was so he could be sure his eggs remained fresh at store level and even in customer's refrigerators.

Finally, since the first egg carton, George also wanted his customers to feel a strong connection to The Country Hen Farm. For this reason, he produced newsletters for every 6-pack of eggs. The newsletters are printed every 4-6 weeks and have included many topics including: nutritional information regarding the eggs, funny farm stories, backgrounds of Country Hen employees, hot button farm topics in the news (ie. recently ethanol), farm poetry, customer letters, etc...

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Now, if you had a story like that, wouldn't you want to tell the world? Wouldn't that make your product different from every other product? Wouldn't it make customers warm towards you and develop a bond with your product?

Kathy told me that customers complain if their eggs arrive without the newsletter:

We receive many customer emails, from loyal customers and new customers. A high percentage of those are regarding our newsletters. Customers love them. The insert machine that puts the newsletters into the cartons was specially designed for The Country Hen. Occasionally, it will act up, as all machines do. We know instantly, if eggs got to the market without newsletters. When The Country Hen started in 1988, it supplied only to stores in Massachusetts. Now we supply stores from Maine to Florida and as far west as California. The newsletters have become increasingly important as we have increased our geographic customer base. This is because although we go from Massachusetts to all of these states, The Country Hen, still feels like the local egg farm to all of our customers. This is because the newsletters keep them up to date with all the information on and about the farm. Priceless!!

We often do a cost/benefit analysis of our marketing programs to evaluate whether they should be continued. Even though the newsletters are fairly substantial in cost, in twenty years, the discontinuation of the newsletters was never a consideration because of its obvious success and appeal with our customers.... When starting at The Country Hen, I would say that the success of this program was obvious in less than three weeks time. That is how many emails, letters, and calls we receive regarding the newsletter.

When I say that every company needs a newsletter (including funeral homes), this is what I mean. In a world of battery hens and commodity-crappy products, a great, personal story - well told - is going to win out. Don't you think?

How to Make It Easy (Turn Your Newsletter from a Chore to a Passion)

Why it's Okay if Your Newsletter is Rough Around the Edges

One of the great things about newsletters as a marketing tool is that they can cut through the noise of advertising that bombards your clients. They do this by providing useful content - being of service rather than simply selling.

They also help create a personal connection between you and your clients. And it's for that reason I tell people (particularly small businesses that rely on relationships) it usually doesn't matter if their newsletter is a little rough around the edges - if the layout isn't quite lined up or the fonts don't match.

As Seth Godin said with a couple of good examples: "If you want to get noticed, don't be so polished."

Take a look at what he says about the note on the UPS truck at this link:
http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2008/05/rough-edges-and.html

Find Newsletter Writing Daunting? How to Banish the Fear of the Blank Page

I had lunch the other week with an entrepreneur friend. She thought a newsletter would help one of her clients in the not-for-profit sector to communicate with its donors.

A good idea.

But she was daunted by the prospect of having to create one - designing it, finding pictures, writing headlines, making sure everything lined up and looked pretty. And that's not to mention the actual writing of the articles.

So, understandably, she'd procrastinated.

This is what I told her:

It's not about the form, it's what you say that counts.

The best newsletters are authentic communications between a business owner (or charity director) and readers. They're about sharing information and, most importantly, sharing the passion that brought the two of them together in the first place.

If she could write a heartfelt letter from the charity's directors, telling donors about how their support had changed the lives of the children who benefited, and if they could illustrate that with stories from the children themselves, then she would have a newsletter.

Today I received a draft of the newsletter, written on 2 pages of letter-sized paper in Arial font.

It was a triumph. It succeeded in sharing the charity directors' passion and enthusiasm for their work. It was an authentic, honest communication.

It was a successful newsletter.

How to Make Writing Your Newsletter Easier

For many people, writing a newsletter is somewhere down there with going to the dentist, washing the car and clearing out the eves troughs.

A right royal pain in the butt.

The thing is, you can't see it like that if you are going to continue with your newsletter for the long term.

So... it's a good idea to make writing your newsletter a little less of a chore.

Here are some ideas:

Don't put so much pressure on yourself: Your newsletter doesn't have to be like the New York Times or Vogue. The most important thing is that you express your ideas and your personality. I advised one person last year simply to write her newsletter in the form of a long letter. It worked wonderfully, because she was able to express exactly what she wanted to say without having to worry about layout, pictures and headlines.

Collect ideas as you go along: If you try to come up with all your ideas on "Newsletter Day" you're asking your brain for a sudden burst of creativity. Not easy. Instead, get into the habit of writing down newsletter ideas as soon as they occur. Then you can dip into your ideas when the time comes. I use my cellphone to take notes of ideas, or if I'm online I use Twitter as a kind of public notepad.

Don't worry about writing: The best newsletter writing is relaxed - it's how you speak. Don't feel you need to resort to some kind of formal, business-like writing for your newsletter. Just be yourself and type as fast as you can. You can go back and edit later.

Use the speech-to-text method: If you think you talk better than you write, record yourself talking to someone and then transcribe it. (You can find cheap transcription services online).

Use the Q&A method: An easy way to write an article is to create a list of common questions about a subject and then set about answering them. It's easier to write when you are addressing a single point.

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Use bullet points: It's easier to write articles in bullet points rather than as a great slab of text. Not only is it less daunting but it also makes it easier to organize your thoughts. It's also easier to read.

Use numbered lists: The "22 Ways..." or "11 Things..." articles are the easiest to write. By their nature they give you a structure to follow.

Collect links: Make part of your newsletter a set of useful links from around the web. Collect any links you think might be interesting to your readers and add them to your newsletter with a brief introduction.

Use a ready-made template: Buy newsletter templates online, either with content or without content. Customize them to your own liking. They give you a great starting point - often doing all the difficult work for you. (Hey, I have some of those! See <http://www.getreadynewsletters.com>)

How to Use Twitter for Your Newsletter

Gotta love Twitter. It's like a world-wide networking party - without holding a glass of orange juice in one hand.

Here's how I use it to make my newsletter.

I tweet (and link to) anything I find online that I think would be interesting to my Twitter followers and my newsletter readers. After all, networking - and Twittering - is about adding value to your community.

One of the great things about Twitter is that you can re-tweet other people's tweets that you think are worthwhile and want to share.

Then, when it comes to putting together my newsletter, I visit my Twitter profile and go through my recent tweets to find articles online worth mentioning in the newsletter. I also find some of my own tweets that might be expanded into newsletter articles in themselves.

So Twitter becomes like a notepad of good ideas - a notepad I'm happy to share with the world.

(You can follow me on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/simonpayn>)



Picture by magerleagues

2 Easy Ways to Write Newsletter Articles (Even if You Hate Writing)

Many people are put off sending out a customer newsletter because of the amount of writing they think is involved.

After all, a blank page can be pretty daunting.

So here are 2 ways to make article writing easier. These aren't new ideas - I've heard them mentioned several times before by several people - but I think they are worth sharing.

1. Ask and Answer Questions

You're able to answer a client's questions, right? That's not a problem.

Somehow, writing seems less daunting when you are given a start in the form of a question.

Imagine you want to write an article for a real estate newsletter on, for example, How to Improve Your Home's Curb Appeal.

Start by thinking of the questions a client might ask on this topic, such as:

- * Why is it important to have good curb appeal?
- * Should I paint my home to make it look fresh and new?
- * What colors are most attractive?
- * What can I do to make my entrance more attractive?

Then just set about answering those questions, so...

It is important to have good curb appeal because the exterior of your house is the first thing people see and people often form a judgment on a property in the first few minutes...

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If you can, paint your home to make it look fresh and new. It's amazing how easy and cheap it is to paint your home's exterior...

The most attractive colors are neutral, light shades that appeal to the greatest number of people and which make your home look bright and fresh...

You can make your entrance more attractive by placing container plants on either side of the doorway and by fitting a lamp....



Picture by julianrod

See? It seems a lot easier when you do it this way. Just join the answers together and, before you know it, you have an article.

2. Record your Conversations

You probably give out useful information to clients every day on the phone or when you meet them face to face. After all, you know your stuff, so it's easy to talk about what you are familiar with

So if setting fingers to keyboard is daunting, consider recording a conversation about the topic you want to write about. Ask a friend or colleague to pose as a client who wants to know about a particular topic.

You can then transcribe what you say and, with a few edits, you have an article.

Try using either or both these ideas next time you are faced with a blank page.

How Lists Provide Quick, Easy Content That Readers Love

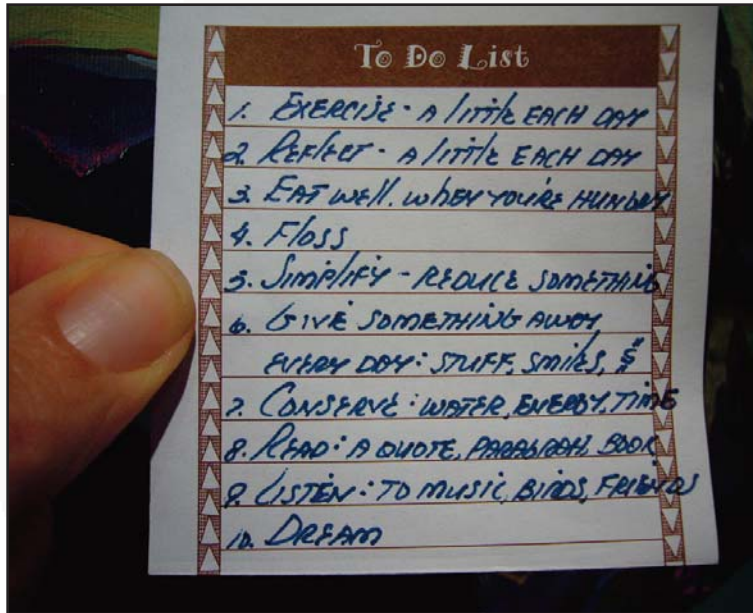
Lists are one of the easiest ways to provide interesting content for your newsletter.

You know the kind of thing:

- * 10 things you must do in your yard this November
- * 5 ways to wash red wine off the rug
- * 99 secrets to buying a used car

They're easy to write because you don't have to come up with a coherent article - just a list of things. And they're easy to read because they don't require the commitment that an article asks of a reader.

After all, magazines have been doing it for years - so it must work. You're just dying to know what those 10 things are, right?



Picture by Florian

Great Ideas for Interesting Newsletter Content

Off-the-shelf newsletters are a great place to start if you've never sent out a newsletter before or you don't have time to write or design one to a high enough standard. (After all, I make a whole bunch myself - see <http://www.getreadynewsletters.com>)

However, the more of your own content you can include, the better you'll be able to build your relationship with your list. That's because you will be able to include more content that is particularly relevant to them.

Here are some ideas for content:

Local news and events: Write a short report on a local sporting or charity event or include an agenda of interesting activities going on in your area in the next month. This will help make your newsletter extra useful.

Local guides: How about including a listing of important addresses, such as drugstores and pharmacies, doctors' and dentists' offices, schools, and community centers? You'll be able to use this article in every newsletter you produce, and it gives a reason for people to keep your newsletter in their homes as a valuable reference.

Success stories: Don't brag, but there's no harm in telling some encouraging stories about people who have used your products or services.

Testimonials: People love to hear from other people, so when you get a great compliment, ask if you can include it in your newsletter. Make sure you also get their full name (and ideally a picture) to prove your testimonial is authentic. (Don't make up testimonials, by the way.)

Great stories: Heard a great tale or joke recently? Heard one that relates to your community? Tell it in your newsletter. People will love it.

Pictures: You'll include your own picture in the newsletter, but how about including pictures (with permission) of happy clients?

Guest columnists: How about asking a trusted service provider in your community to write an article for your newsletter, in return for a plug? You'll get interesting, relevant content for free.

A Goldmine of Headline Inspiration

I've said many times before that headlines are one of the most important elements in your newsletter because they act as salesmen for your articles. Writing a good headline will increase the chances of your article being read.

Newspapers spend a lot of effort on headlines. They have editors who specialize in writing them.

The Newseum, the new museum of the news in Washington, D.C., allows you to search through an archive of past newspaper front pages. It's a great way to get ideas for headlines. Try choosing a headline and then substituting words in that headline for words relevant to your article to make a new headline that really sings.

Start searching here: <http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/archive.asp>



Picture by secretlondon123

How to Get Free Images

As you know, it's not a good idea to copy pictures from the internet and use them in your newsletter.

There's a good chance you'll be breaking copyright. And anyway, it's not cool to use other people's work in your newsletter without asking.

There are, however, many photographers who are happy for you to use their work, under certain conditions.

One way to find these content creators is through Creative Commons, a system set up to give writers and artists a standardized way to grant copyright permissions.

For example, many are happy for you to use their content if you give them attribution.

Content creators add a Creative Commons copyright license to their work. The type of license they choose depends on how they are willing for the content to be used. Some will allow it to be used in any way, as long as there is attribution; others don't want their work to be used for any commercial products.

You can search for Creative Commons work online through the Creative Commons website (<http://creativecommons.org>). Then, when you find content that you like, you can check which type of copyright license it carries. Alternatively, you can search through Compfight (<http://www.compfight.com>).

Of course, it relies on trust. But it's a two-way thing. After all, you might like to consider putting a Creative Commons notice on any articles you post online. If all you want is a link, for example, you could gain some web traffic from anyone who chooses to use your content.

How to Find and Hire Writers

I've always enjoyed working with freelance writers. I've done it pretty much all my career, and even now I use specialist freelancers for my ready-made newsletter products.

Here are some tips for finding talented people to write for your newsletter.

Where to find them

I've found it's something of a buyers' market when it comes to talented professionals. There are plenty around and, if you search well, you can get good work for a reasonable price. But it's important to search intelligently.

I use Elance (<http://www.elance.com>) and Guru.com (<http://www.guru.com>) as my main sources of writers. There's a broad range of talent on these sites, so it's important to screen carefully. You'll find people who do re-writes of existing material all the way to specialists who can provide truly original content.

Those sites include many working journalists, who can usually be relied upon to produce work that is accurate. They also include people who claim they are writers but produce poor quality work. Buyer beware.

To find journalists only, try Media Bistro. You'll pay more, but you'll have top quality work.

How to find the good ones

Before you start looking, it's vital to know exactly what you want. Consider whether you want original reporting or whether you are happy with a re-write of existing information. Try to have in mind your ideal finished article, because that will make it easier to find and instruct a writer.

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Picture: TheGiantVermin

It's always worth looking for specialist writers, because you will usually get better quality work from someone who has written on that subject before. This is particularly important if you aren't an expert yourself. Some specialists aren't the best writers, so sometimes it's a trade-off between specialist skills and writing flair.

Sites such as Guru and Elance allow you to post a project on which providers can bid. Be very clear in your requirements so that the writer knows what she is bidding on. You're more likely to get results you are pleased with if you create a clear, concrete project from the beginning.

You can also search the website for providers and then invite them to bid on a project. I find this is the best way to find specialist writers.

When reviewing search results on one of the freelance talent websites, consider:

- * Previous experience: have they written on that topic before?
- * Samples: do they have relevant samples? Do you like the writing style and depth of content?
- * Ratings: what do other people think of their work? (It's not necessarily a bad thing if the person is a new provider and has new ratings. Just watch out for red flags among people's comments.)
- * Specialties: If they say they are a specialist, are they really a specialist at that subject or do they just happened to have written on that subject?

One thing I like to do is communicate with the person before I hire them. Are they quick, clear communicators? Do you think it would be easy to work with them? Do they provide helpful answers? Are there any red flags?

These websites contain writers from all over the world. I've found, however, that the best work comes from writers in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Their command of English is usually better (something that's important in a writer!) and their cultural knowledge is greater - their writing just feels right. You might have to pay more, but the difference in fee is not as great as you might imagine it to be.

Working with a writer

It's wise always to clearly state what you would like the writer to do. Avoid ambiguity. Be clear about length, audience, style and deadline. I find that if I act openly and honestly, the writer acts the same way and we have a good working relationship. I try to always respect their opinions - sometimes specialist writers provide useful input that can improve the

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final result.

The most important thing is to keep communication open. Ask questions if anything is unclear and be prepared to answer questions from your writer.

Sites such as Elance and Guru allow you to pay by escrow - you don't release the money until you are satisfied. They have an arbitration system to help solve disputes.

With new writers, it's always wise to check that what they have delivered to you is original material. I use Copyscape to check that the article (or chunks of it) haven't been lifted from somewhere on the web.)

I always try to pay quickly. Writers appreciate it and are more willing to go the extra mile next time you work with them.

Once the processes is complete, you can leave feedback on each other. I try to leave honest feedback - if you have positive feedback it will be appreciated by the writer.

One final thing

Once you find a writer you are happy to work with, keep with them. A good working relationship is worth its weight in gold.

How to Sign Up People for Your Newsletter on Your Website

I'm continually surprised by how few people, even those who use my real estate newsletters and mortgage newsletters, fail to use their website effectively to sign up newsletter readers.

This is the thing: Most people go to a website, take a look around...and leave. Don't fool yourself - they're not adding your site to their favorites and they're not making a note to visit every day. So you often have only once chance to attract people into your sphere of influence when they visit your website.

That's why it's essential to give yourself the greatest chance of starting the relationship-building process. The way to do that is to encourage people to give you their contact details to receive either a print or email newsletter (or both).

An Effective Way to Encourage Them to Sign Up

People guard their personal details very closely. After all, they don't want to get spammed. And they don't want to get junk mail.

That's why you have to sell them on the benefits of signing up for your newsletter.

And it's why you often have to give them something extra - something with high perceived value - to encourage them to sign up.

So I advise the following:

* Tell them what's in it for them to sign up for your newsletter. Tell them how they will benefit by reading your newsletter. Assure them that you are offering

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value and will not be wasting their time. Indicate that your newsletter contains unique information that will improve their lives...and by not signing up for your newsletter they will be missing out on something important. (After all, your newsletter does all this, right?)

* Give them something extra for signing up for your newsletters. Members of my real estate newsletter service, for example, get four special reports (e.g. "50 Essential Tips to Prepare Your Home for a Speedy, Top-Price Sale") they can send to newsletter subscribers. You can send a report like this out by email or mail.

* Put a sentence on your site assuring people that their email address won't be sold and that they won't be spammed. Link to your privacy policy. (You have one, right?)

The Technical Bit: How to Collect Names on Your Website

There are two ways to collect names. One way is OK if you are collecting just a few names or if you are only sending print newsletters; the other is the best way if you are serious about building a large list of contacts that you wish to contact by email.

a) Put a form on your website that automatically sends the information your subscriber has entered to your email or puts it on a spreadsheet. If you don't have a programmer, you can find one using a service such as RentACoder (<http://www.rentacoder.com>) who will do it for you cheaply. Alternatively, use one of the third-party form-building services, such as Wufoo (<http://www.wufoo.com>) You can also try using Google Docs (<http://docs.google.com>) - my favorite method right now. With Google Docs, you create a form, paste some code into your website, and then the responses appear in a spreadsheet.

However, I only recommend these methods for collecting a small number of addresses or if you are only sending a print newsletter. If you are sending an email newsletter, I highly recommend...

b) Using an email-sending service. These services specialize in collecting names
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and allowing you to send emails to these names. They have several benefits:

- * They make it easy to collect names by giving you code for forms you can paste into on your site.
- * They help you avoid your email getting caught in spam filters because they are careful to manage the sending process, using as many methods as possible to ensure your emails are delivered.
- * They help you comply with email best practices, including the United States CAN-SPAM law. (There's a danger, for example, that if you don't include a method for people to unsubscribe from your list that you will be breaking the CAN-SPAM law.)
- * They provide templates that you can use to send attractive HTML/graphical emails.
- * They make the whole process a whole lot easier.

The email sending services I recommend are Vertical Response (<http://www.verticalresponse.com>) and aWeber (<http://www.aweber.com>) but there are many others, including Constant Contact (<http://www.constantcontact.com>), Get Response (<http://www.getresponse.com>), MailChimp (<http://www.mailchimp.com>) and InfusionSoft (<http://www.infusionsoft.com>).

If you are sending a newsletter by email, I sincerely recommend you use one of these services.

But aside from the technical stuff, the most important thing to do is send a newsletter that contains valuable information that meets the needs of your clients and prospects - and to promote that newsletter effectively on your website.

How to Make Your Content Work Hard for You

If you've written articles for your newsletter, don't waste them.

You can use them again in a variety of formats.

Then you'll get much more mileage out of everything you write.

Try using them...

On your website: you'll add several search-engine friendly pages to your website that will attract more viewers and keep them sticking around longer. You'll be able to display your expertise to website visitors.

On your blog: if you have a blog (and, by the way, they're a great way of marketing yourself, if you have an online presence), you can use some of the articles on your blog.

On article syndication websites: article marketing, as it is called, is a great way to get yourself noticed. You place a 'resource box' at the bottom of your article that links back to your own website. One site I use is <http://ezinearticles.com>

Contributing to other newsletters: if you know another (non-competing) business with a newsletter, maybe they would value your content. Just make sure you get a mention at the end of the article.

Collect articles and turn them into a book or ebook: after a few editions of your newsletter, you'll build a library of valuable content that can be recycled into another product that is either given away free or sold.

How to Make a Ridiculously Successful Newsletter (And Have Fun at the Same Time)

The #1 Secret to a Successful Newsletter

I was involved in an interesting discussion about newsletter marketing the other week. Some of the entrepreneurs I was talking with used newsletters - or at least believed in their value.

Two questions were raised: What should a newsletter contain? And how often should you send it?

Of course, there are no easy answers to that. (Although I do give some guidelines here.)

This is the thing (and it's what I said during the conversation):

Your newsletter should contain content that makes your clients' lives better.

At first glance, that statement might seem banal. But consider this:

- * The products or services you offer must make your customers' lives better in some way - otherwise, you probably shouldn't be offering them.

- * If it's true that your products and services improve lives, then there's no shame in using your newsletter to offer these products and services, providing that you target your offer to your readership and that you are able to demonstrate that your offer provides a positive return on investment (that the cost is justified by the benefits the product brings).

- * The way to build a relationship with your clients and prospects through your newsletter is to include articles that make their lives better. If your articles achieve that aim, your readers will read them, act on them and see the results. That will strengthen your bond with them.

This, I believe, comes at the core of your newsletter marketing efforts. Know your readership, understand what they want and deliver content - and products - that make their lives better.

They'll love you for it.

How to Avoid Sending People to Sleep with Your Newsletter (Clue: What do you really talk about with your dentist?)



Picture by aeu04117

I went to my dentist the other week. Great guy. Excellent dentist. Super team.

He makes me want to floss.

He also has a newsletter - at least he used to. I didn't see it this time.

I didn't get to ask if it was working for him, but I suspect it wasn't too well.

Why?

Two reasons:

It was a cut-and paste job. Standard content with just his picture stuck on the front page. No personality. No offers. No engagement devices. No quizzes. No puzzles.

Second, it was all about teeth. Whitening. Flossing. Gum disease. Implants.

Nothing else.

Now, I'm not against having good teeth (despite being British.)

But my business relationship with my dentist isn't just about my pearly whites.

In fact, I'd say that only 49% of the reason I go to this particular dentist is because

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[How to Make a Ridiculously Successful Newsletter \(and Have Fun at the Same Time\)](#)

he's good at his job.

The other 51% is because I have a good personal relationship with him. He's a nice, funny guy. I enjoy chatting with his hygienist and the front desk staff.

And guess what? When we're chatting, we don't chat about teeth. That would get boring.

Instead, we chat about Halloween costumes, litters of puppies, condominiums, cottages.

This is the thing: most businesses make the mistake of believing that their business is about dentistry, accountancy, insurance...or whatever.

But that's only 49% of it.

The rest is a relationship business.

So if you have a good relationship with your clients (and you should) put that relationship into your newsletter.

Be personal, tell stories, be yourself.

You'll strengthen your personal and business relationships by doing that. And you'll make more money.

How to Cut Through the Noise

If you send out a newsletter, take a good look at the content.

- * What are the themes of your articles?
- * Who is the focus of your articles?
- * What are you trying to achieve with your articles?
- * Are you providing value in your articles that will improve your subscribers' lives?

That final question is the most important. Indeed, it's the answer to having a newsletter that connects with your customers.

Think about this: how many ads do we get in the mail every day? How many do we see on TV or pass by on the street?

How many of them really add value to our lives? Would we be any worse off if we hadn't seen them?

Probably not.

And that's what makes them less effective than communications that aim to make readers' lives better; that add value to subscribers' lives.

Why it's important to add value

- * Customers are selfish; they are interested only in what helps them. Communications that don't obviously benefit the reader are discarded.
- * Customers are skeptical. They've seen too many false claims to believe most pitches. They want to know that you stand by what you claim.
- * Communications with value are kept and passed around; the rest go straight into the trash.
- * Communications with value build a relationship over the long term. Keep showing up and helping people and their trust in you will grow.
- * Communications with value turn you into the trusted expert, not just another salesman. That ensures your product or service isn't seen as a commodity.

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How to add value with your newsletter

* Remember the golden rule of newsletter publishing: think of your reader. What are they interested in? What do they want to read about? What kind of information will make their lives better? What is it about what you do that will make their lives better?

* Give away most of your knowledge...but sell the implementation. Show that you are a real expert; that you know what you are talking about.

* Inform first, then sell. Stay away from the temptation to pitch your products or services right away. Focus on building the relationship, and continually drip-feed your readers with new offers about products and services that will make their lives better.

It's good to sell. But it's better to build a relationship that adds value to your clients' lives. Because when you do that over time, you'll find the selling comes much easier.

Your Clients Want Smiles not Frowns

An Antidote to CNN's Doom and Gloom

A request from a new member of my real estate newsletters service came in the other day.

(As he's new, he doesn't know I do this already...but it's always good to be reminded.)

He said he is looking for newsletter articles as an antidote to his clients. For example, the headlines in the newspapers show doom and gloom, where in fact 95% of people with mortgages are doing just fine.

He said he would like to see positive spins on pricing declines, foreclosure issues, staging, etc. He wants to bring optimism to his clients, showing them another perspective -- how real estate can benefit them and that it is a wealth builder.

He's absolutely right - because:

- 1) The media right now is enjoying scaring us as it wallows in the negativity of a down economy. There isn't much of an antidote to that available right now.
- 2) Vendors (real estate agents, mortgage brokers, or whoever) are still operating - still having success stories, still helping people. Why not share that?
- 3) For some people - smart businesses, for example - there are things to take advantage of in this economy.
- 4) With all the negativity around, if your newsletter is a source of some positive (truthful) inspiration, you will strengthen the relationship with your clients.

After all, no one wants to hang out with a misery.

How to Use Newsletters to Bring in New Business

Newsletters are most famously used to keep in contact with past clients. That remains an important role.

Less well understood is why they work to bring in new business.

Newsletters' success is down to two factors: platform and relationship building.

Success in business these days is more about being perceived as a trusted expert rather than a salesman. People are jaded with the old model of cold calls, persuasive closing techniques and the general push push push of the old style of sales.

It's much better to be seen as an expert in what you sell. Instead of just being someone who sells stuff, you are instead is a trusted adviser.

Most of your competitors haven't grasped this yet, so it puts you ahead of them all.

After all, who would you rather do business with: a salesman or an expert?

Newsletters act as a platform to prove your expertise because they allow you to write about what you know - to serve your readers by sharing your expertise.

On top of that, newsletters build a relationship with your prospects over time. And, as you know, relationships are at the core of most business transactions - especially in tough economic times. People want to do business with people they know. It's safer and more rewarding that way.

By providing them useful information as a trusted adviser, you are growing a relationship of trust. That relationship will pay off when the client is ready to buy.

Finding New Prospects

So, what you are doing with your newsletter is using it to build relationships with prospects by using it as a platform to distinguish yourself as a trusted expert.

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As there is a cost involved to producing and sending newsletters, it's important to make sure you go where the customers are and make sure your newsletter meets their needs.

It's wise therefore to make a profile of your ideal customer: Where do they live? What do they read? Where do they hang out? Who do they do business with? What are they wanting? How can I serve them? What issue (about what I offer) keeps them up at night - with either excitement or fear?

When you have done that you are better positioned to know what to write about and how you can best serve them with your newsletter. You will also be a better position to make them aware of you (and your newsletter) in the first place.

The bottom line is this: you need to be where customers are with information that answers the questions and concerns in their heads.

Bringing Prospects into Your Realm

It is seldom cost effective to mail your newsletter right away to prospects - either by direct mail or by a door-drop. (The exception to this might be a real estate agent or local merchant who is using newsletter to farm a very small neighborhood - after all, he knows where is prospects are!)

A better way is to give prospects a reason to raise their hands - a reason to say "OK, I'm open to what you offer. I might even buy one day!"

By doing that, you'll be using your newsletter budget effectively - marketing to those who want to hear from you.

So how do you bring them into your realm? How do you get them to sign up and receive your newsletter? Here are some ways:

Go where your clients are: It's better to distribute your newsletter with a rifle rather than a shotgun. It's more efficient that way. So think of all the places your client is likely to hang out. And think off other (non-competing) vendors with the same clients. Leave your newsletter in their offices and stores; do reciprocal advertising in their
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newsletters. Distribute your newsletter in the "social nodes" - the daycare centers, social centers, sports clubs - in your community where your clients are likely to be.

Always be signing up: You've heard the motto - always be closing. Instead, always be encouraging people to sign up to receive your newsletter. When you have a good conversation on the phone or meet them face-to-face, ask them if you can put them on your distribution list. Put a sign-up box on your website. Put a link to your newsletter on your email footer.

Add "bait" to encourage them to sign up: It's not always enough to "just" sell your newsletter; you often need to give them an extra reason to sign up. That reason might be a special report on a subject they will find interesting and that is relevant to what you offer, or it might be the promise of discounts on future purchases. Always tell them how useful and entertaining your newsletter will be. Also assure them that they won't be spammed, either my email or postal mail.

Turning Prospects into Clients

The idea, of course, is to grow a large list of high-quality prospects. So how do you turn those prospects into customers?

For many businesses, customers only come "into heat" once in a while. If you're a real estate agent, for example, the average family moves home only every seven years. That can mean a long cycle between them joining your newsletter and hiring you. (Of course, keeping in touch throughout that times pays for itself - it's justified by the commission you will receive.)

Other clients will come into heat more frequently. Indeed, they might already be shopping for what you offer, so you just need something to push them over the edge.

In most cases, this means you need to give them an offer - *a reason to buy something or contact you today.*

Never send a newsletter out without an offer, even if that offer is just to receive further information.

The reason for this is that people are - to be frank - lazy. They need something to push them to take action and they need to be led to do what (in many cases) is good for them.

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Most advertising doesn't have an offer (just leaf through the Yellow Pages to demonstrate that), so you will put yourself ahead of the competition by including one.

Also give them reasons to contact you - to have a conversation; create a dialog. The more person-to-person dialog you can have, the better. Often it's just this contact that tips them over into buying.

Finally, don't give up. If you are contacting good prospects, don't give up too early. It would be a shame to contact them four times when they were ready to buy on the fifth.

How to Encourage Readers to Contact You

One of the main reasons for having a newsletter is to build a relationship with your clients and prospects.

A way to deepen that relationship is to encourage readers to interact with your content.

Increasing the amount of interaction has several benefits:

- * People spend longer with your newsletter - and hence with you
- * People change from passive consumers to active participants, developing a more substantial relationship with the newsletter and with you
- * People have reason to interact with you in multiple ways, such as visiting your website, asking for information or calling your office, giving you a further chance to deepen the relationship and make a sale
- * You get to test the success of each edition of your newsletter by evaluating the level of interaction it creates

So how can you encourage clients to interact with your newsletter?

Special reports and free gifts

Use your newsletter to promote some free, relevant information you can offer to prospects and clients. For example, if you are a real estate agent, offer a guide on staging your house to help it sell more quickly.

Offering free information reinforces your position as an expert - not a salesperson, helping develop trust and respect among your prospects and clients.

Encourage readers to contact you to request this guide. This will give you the chance to talk directly with prospects and clients and further develop the relationship. Perhaps even make a sale!

Quizzes and puzzles

Include a fun quiz or puzzle in your newsletter. People love this kind of stuff and will keep your newsletter around the house until they have a minute to complete the quiz or puzzle.

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Put solutions to the games on your website so that people are encouraged to visit your site.

You can count the number of visitors to the solutions page of your website to evaluate the effectiveness of that month's newsletter.

Competitions

Give away a prize in return for reader interaction. Launch a competition and then publish the winners in the next edition. Books or gift certificates make great prizes.

Reader contributions

Give space to your clients to tell their own stories. You'll add powerful proof that your product or service works, helping encourage further sales.

The idea behind all this is to keep people engaged with you, keep them coming back to you, and to keep your product or service at the front of prospects' and clients' minds. And the aim of all that, of course, is to increase your number of active, regular clients.

How to Get Your Stuff Read

Here are 7 guidelines to follow if you want to give your writing the best chance of getting read.

1) Obvious, but important: write stuff your readers want to read. Put yourself in your reader's shoes and think: would I be interested in this?

2) Get to the point quickly. News reporters use what's called the "inverted pyramid" to tell the story. In other words, they put the most important and most interesting stuff first, then fill out the details later on. That's how they manage to grab a busy reader. Take a look at your own writing and ask if the first part of your article is really necessary, or is it just "throat clearing"?

3) Cut out unnecessary words. Take another tip from news writing, where there's no space wasted on words that don't earn their keep. Use the right word in the right place and delete any that aren't pulling their weight. You'll make your writing much snappier, easier to read and more engaging.

4) Spend a lot of time on your headline. It's your headline that sells the article underneath, so don't rush writing it. Make sure your headline gives people a reason to read. If your article is there to help the reader, use the headline to telegraph how it helps. If you are writing about something unusual or fascinating, put this tidbit of information out there in the headline. Choose words that arouse interest, that make people say, "I've got to read that."

5) Break your text up with subheads. A page full of text is intimidating. So break it up into sections, with each section having its own mini-headline. If you think about the structure of your sections carefully, you'll be able to tell the story of the article with the subheads alone, giving busy readers an overview of the content in a few seconds. See also some great tips here - they're about blogs but relate also to newsletter articles.

6) Use bullets and sidebars or panels. An article doesn't have to be just linear text. If some aspects of the article stand alone, pull them out and put them in a panel. If something is better presented in list form (like this article), then use bullets or a numbered list.

7) Write like you speak. Don't think you need to write formally once you commit finger to keyboard. Use the kind of language you'd use when talking to a friend and don't be afraid to break rules of grammar if these rules get in the way of clarity (which they sometimes do).

This Ain't the Corporate Newsletter

(or How to Add Personality to Your Newsletter and Connect with Your Readers)

Not far from where I live in Toronto there's a bookstore called This Ain't the Rosedale Library. (Rosedale, for those who aren't from here, is the city's most upscale neighborhood.) This Ain't the Rosedale Library is an alternative bookstore - some of its titles wouldn't sit comfortably in Rosedale drawing rooms.

So think of this:

Your newsletter ain't the corporate newsletter, either.

Here's the thing about most corporate newsletters: they are edited, and vetted, and lawyered, and edited again, and checked again, and lawyered again... until all the personality has been squeezed out of them. What you get in the end is, to be frank, a bland corporate document which doesn't excite, doesn't create interest and doesn't create action.

So, no, your newsletter ain't the corporate newsletter - for good reason. Instead, you want a newsletter that will build a relationship with your readers, that will engage them, and that will keep them within your circle. You want to bond with your readers.

So here's some ways to add personality to your newsletter:

1) Don't put on your corporate head when you write. Instead, write in a way that shows your personality. Easier said than done, perhaps, but try to convey your enthusiasm for what you do and your in-person personality in your writing. For example, if you are relaxed and informal in person, be so in your newsletter. (See my post on HARO for a good example.)

2) Tell your story - the good and the bad. It's said that good product pitches include a "damaging admission" - a fact about the product that admits the product is not perfect. For example, my newsletters will take a few min-

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utes to customize. A damaging omission helps because it aids credibility. After all, nothing's perfect, is it? The same works for your own brand - you as your own product. If you've made mistakes in the past, admit them and share them. You'll appear more human and better able to connect with your readers who, after all, have made their own share of mistakes. Just be sure to learn from those mistakes - you did this then but now you know better. (Customers these days like and expect transparency in the companies and people they deal with - they know no-one's perfect, that people sometimes we screw up, so don't try to fool them otherwise.)

3) Use "I" instead of "We". People don't easily connect with "we", with organizations. The plural is too sterile. Instead, write your newsletter as if it's from one person to help make a person-to-person connection.

4) Tell then what you did last week, what you're doing this week, and what you plan next week. Back to the transparency thing - share what you are doing in your business to make it better (or fix mistakes). Bring your readers inside the circle - they'll feel like they are part of what is going on. Give them an opportunity to comment on what you did and what you're planning. You'll probably get some good feedback you can use to improve your product or service.

5) Stand for something. Decide in advance what you believe in. What are your personal beliefs? What do you believe as a business? What do you stand for? What is your mission? Share this vision and allow it to permeate everything you write.

6) Don't be afraid to offend. I'm not saying you should go out and deliberately offend your clients, but don't be afraid to have strong opinions if those opinions are in the best interests of your clients. No one likes blandness. Even though you risk offending a few people, you'll win many more friends from those who agree with you.

7) Be yourself. It's just a newsletter - not a PhD. A newsletter is simply there to continue the relationship you build face-to-face with clients. If they like you in person, be the same person in your newsletter. They'll like you there too.

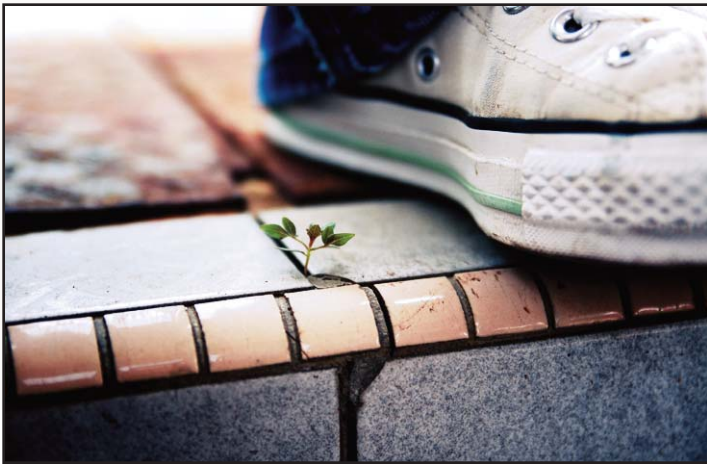
It's Not Size that Matters

When it comes to the size of your mail (or email) list, it's quality that counts, not quantity.

It's better to have 250 active, interested recipients of your newsletter than 1,000 who don't care.

Why? Several reasons:

1. It's response that counts, not the total size of your list. If your aim is to get customers and purchases, then the only people who really count are those who act - not necessarily buying something (not everyone is ready to buy right away) but at least opening your email and clicking on your links.
2. If you are sending a lot of newsletters to people who aren't really interested, then you're spending money unnecessarily. This is particularly the case for print newsletters, of course, which cost money to print and mail, but it's also true for email newsletters - most email service providers raise the price you pay the more emails you send or the bigger your list.
3. With email marketing, in order to build a reputation as a responsible email sender, it's good to have a significant proportion of your subscriber list opening your emails - it shows you are providing something valuable instead of spamming.



Picture by Shermeee

Newsletters and the Stench of Canned Meat

At least twice a week I have a conversation with a client or potential client about who they can sign up to receive their email newsletter. This conversation most often occurs with people who are new Realtors, insurance agents or mortgage brokers because they don't yet have a list of past clients.

Can they sign up every person who has given them a business card? Can they buy a list of their neighbors' email addresses? What about uploading the contact list of the local board of trade into their own contact list?

I tell them no.

I tell them it's not the smart thing to do.

While contacting these people might not be spam in the strictest sense, it still carries the whiff of canned meat.

This is the thing: it's not about building the biggest list you can. And it's not about what you can get away with.

It's about building a trusted relationship with clients and prospects by sending them information that they want to receive.

It's about being the go-to guy rather than the pest at the party.

The term Permission Marketing - marketing only to those who have given you permission to keep in contact - was coined by Seth Godin several years ago in his book of the same title. Permission Marketing has become accepted practice for most organizations - because it works better than spam.

In a recent blog post, Seth said: *A spam campaign feels like a smart idea, but over time, the more you use it, the less your brand is worth. A permission campaign, on the other hand, only grows in value, until it gets big enough that you can build an entire business around it.*

Earning permission is a long-term, profitable, scalable strategy that pays for itself. Think about how much better off a brand would be if it took the time to make promises, keep them and be transparent about its communications.

An Excellent Email Newsletter to Model

I've been on the mailing list of Printing for Less for some time and have always been impressed by their monthly email newsletters. January's is perhaps one of the best, so I thought it would be interesting to talk about why it's so good. You can see a copy of it here.



1. The newsletter starts with a topical comment that "enters the conversation going on in the customer's head." Yes, it's about the economy - and it gives a quick tip on how a business can survive during the recession. This makes the newsletter immediately relevant and useful.
2. The company has been running an "Economic Stimulus Contest" (top marks for being topical - riding on the back of one of the biggest themes in the news.). The January issue clicks through to the results, highlighting companies that have invested in printed marketing to bring more business during tough times. Of course, each company has used Printing for Less to produce its marketing material - a subtle promotion for the company's services.
3. A neat table of contents, making it easy for readers to find an article they might enjoy.
4. Product of the Month offer. Printing for Less has slipped some promotion in here - that's fine. But it's not just promoting the existence of the product, it's making an offer too - free business cards with the order.
5. Feature article - Internet Marketing Tips for 2009. Good choice of topic for a January newsletter - one sure to interest a lot of readers. The link clicks through to a third-party site, which is fine - Printing for Less has shown it is a provider of useful, interesting information that is targeted to the needs of its readers.

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6. Another feature article - on Photoshop. Links to Printing for Less's sister site, CreativePro.com, which is a content-rich site which helps designers do their jobs better. This site not only provides lots of inbound links (because of its rich content) but it strengthens the relationship between the company and one of its main sources of business - designers.

7. Surveys. The results of last month's poll - a great engagement device which turns passive readers into active participants, further strengthening their ties with the company.

8. Another engagement device, which asks readers to vote and comment on an economic proposal by the company's CEO. The link goes to a page on Forbes.com - a great way to link Printing for Less with one of the biggest brands in business.

9. Some company news. This is sensibly hidden fairly low down the newsletter - Printing for Less recognizes that most readers aren't really interested in developments at the company unless they directly affect them. The news they've chosen to share is about a green initiative, which gets the company points anyway.

10. A customer testimonial. Comments from clients are a powerful marketing technique, providing proof that the company provides a good service.

11. The newsletter has all the usual widgets you would expect, including an unsubscribe link, a forward to a friend feature and a view online feature.

This is probably one of the best newsletters that has entered my inbox (or mailbox). It's worth emulating.

The Best Way to Send Out Email Newsletters

A common question I receive from people interested in my ready-made customer newsletters (<http://www.getreadynewsletters.com>) is whether they can send them using their own email software rather than the hosted service I offer.

(With a hosted service, you upload your email list to a website, which looks after the design, list management and sending of your email newsletters.)

I strongly believe that anyone serious about sending email newsletters needs to use a professional email service.

The main reason is that you will comply with anti-spam regulations and protect your own email address from being added to spam blacklists.

But there are also several advantages to using a hosted service.

Avoiding spam problems: The U.S. CAN-SPAM regulations state that you need an easy way for people to unsubscribe from your list. A hosted service will provide links on each mail for people to use to unsubscribe - without this you will have to do it yourself. A hosted service will also help to protect you against false accusations of spam; hosted services have a good relationship with ISPs and between them they work to distinguish between erroneous spam allegations and true instances of spam. This will help protect your messages, helping more of them get delivered. And, because you are using a hosted domain to send messages from, your own email address will be protected from ending up on a spam blacklist (and you'll also avoid complaints from your own ISP for sending out bulk emails using your account).

Easier to design: Sending HTML emails using your own email software isn't as

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mf fl qd bp puom ot vk si po
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fypp xi ze ki qz lwgy
in pt xq gevq bq ke at zj
hp ym mh pq pe ur kik
tc lj ptecon lt iq iui
nr qq nm it lo cw bt bo ly qt
rlpn is ii pk nteynd fa wpti
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rv lg pa dn gt jj hu wu
vf ju gfmp xlj bh bifl fp ly
bfr wq ij xgnbzk xo kp aqx
tiu ffrdpe btzppp cbisjv lus
os pa fq re vq zdh zq lq au ac
ov db oh el od nj qa qs ll mb
```

[Click HERE](#)

Wed, 4 Nov 2006 17:02:57 -0060 ZK2JML2

Picture by Yandle

easy as just pasting in an HTML file. One reason is that you will need to host images if you are sending the email yourself - the images will need to be saved to your website, then your email will need to link to these images so that the recipients of your email can see them. A hosted service handles all this for you, and will allow you to add, subtract and move images without having to fuss with HTML code or having to contact your webmaster. A hosted service will also help ensure that your email design appears as it should on everyone's computer. (The thing about sending HTML in email is that, unless you design it very carefully, it doesn't always show up as you expect it to.)

Easier to manage your contacts: Hosted email services provide many tools for managing your contacts. These include flagging bad emails, duplicate emails and bounced emails to ensure your email list is kept clean and to make sure you don't send more than one email to your recipients. Hosted services can also tell you which of your recipients has opened the email and which links within that email they have clicked. This will help improve the content of messages in the future.

Easy way for people to join your list: Hosted services provide sign-up boxes you can place on your website so that people can join your list to receive your newsletter. An important success factor in online marketing is capturing the email addresses of people who visit your website so that you can start building a relationship with them. Hosted services make it easy to do that. (See the home page of my site for an example.)

More emails delivered: It's a fact of life that email newsletters are harder to deliver than they were in the past, mainly due to the quantity of spam and the sensitivity of filters designed to combat that spam. The result is that many genuine emails - particularly if they are designed in HTML - get blocked. Hosted services have a good track record of getting emails delivered because that's their main job - they work very hard at working with every party in the process to distinguish their emails from spam.

Track the performance of your campaign: Most email service providers allow you to track email open rates, bounce rates, unsubscribe stats as well as which links were clicked. This allows you to see how each newsletter performed.

I have personally been using a hosted service for many years and would never return to sending these kind of emails from my own email account.

I believe that anyone who is serious about email marketing should follow this route.

How to Lose Friends and Alienate People with Your Email Newsletter

Email newsletters can be a powerful way to build a relationship with your clients and prospects by communicating with them right there on their computer.

But if you abuse the easy access, low cost and immediacy of email, you run the risk of losing trust in the marketplace. Here's a tongue-in-cheek look at how to do it wrong:

1. Send your newsletter as a 10MB attachment, explaining it's got beautiful graphics...that's why it's so large.
2. Send your newsletter to people who don't even know you.
3. Send your newsletter out every six months so people don't remember who you are.
4. Don't put unsubscribe links in your newsletter. After all, people might actually leave if you do that!
5. Make people log in to your website (using a username they can't remember) to unsubscribe from your newsletter.
6. Fill your newsletter with promotions instead of useful information.
7. Send your newsletter to a list of names you bought from some website somewhere.
8. Keep sending newsletters even to people who don't want them. You'll make them change their mind, right?
9. Send your newsletter to people who likely have no interest in knowing you at all.
10. Send your newsletter with just any old content in it. After all, it doesn't matter what you send as long as you send something, right?

(With a nod to Toby Young's very funny book, How to Lose Friends and Alienate People)

A Marketing Lesson from Hazel Wheeler's 67-Year Diary

Hazel Wheeler found a diary at the age of 14. She went on to write entries in that diary every day for the next 67 years.

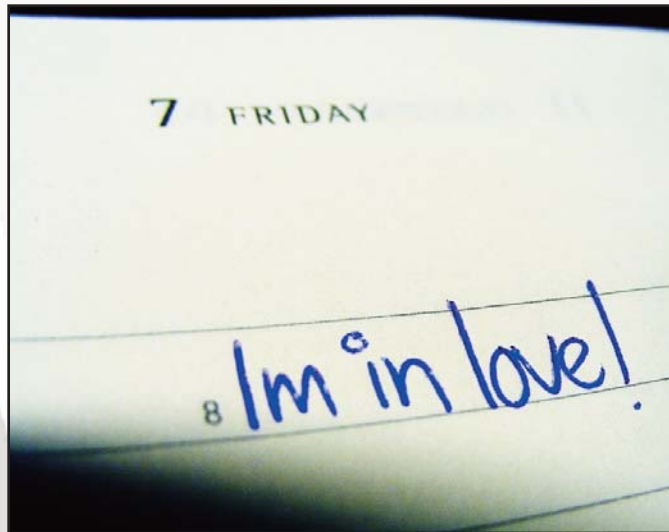
That fact, while astonishing, isn't the most interesting thing to be found in Hazel's diary, however. Instead, it's the nature of the entries.

For example:

"John Lennon of The Beatles shot dead in New York. Got first Christmas card, from Roy and Vera."

and

"President Kennedy was assassinated as he drove through Dallas today. Shot through the head. Baked macaroons and scones. Did knitting."



Picture by Y0si

Hazel has noted the biggest events of the past 67 years, but what is interesting is the equal prominence of the details of her everyday life.

Why is this important to anyone writing a newsletter?

Because Hazel demonstrates that the activities going on in her life are just as important as world events.

And that means your readers' daily lives are just as important - and often more important - than anything else you will communicate with them about.

So if you are going to connect deeply with your reader, you need to write about topics that relate to what is going on in your reader's life. Something isn't important just because you think it is. It has to be important to your newsletter reader too.

How to Make a Ridiculously Successful Newsletter (and Have Fun at the Same Time)

Forget the Pulitzer. Does Your Newsletter Pass the Bathroom Jury?

This page contains a concept some readers might find distasteful. Reader discretion is advised.

Frankly, I don't care how many awards your newsletter might win for its design or its writing.

This is the thing: there's one criterion that is far more important: is it bathroomable? Do your customers take your newsletter into the bathroom?

It's said that the original Sears catalog was printed with a hole at the corner of each page so it could be hung in the bathroom. People would read it and when...err...done, they would tear off a page and use it instead of bathroom paper.

Hope the ink didn't come off.

If you can make your newsletter bathroomable, you've created a successful relationship-building tool.

Because....

- * People consider its content worth reading.
- * They consider it worthwhile keeping your newsletter in the house (instead of quickly passing it from mailbox to trash).
- * The content is interesting enough - the newsletter is engaging enough - to keep the reader interested in those...special moments.



Picture by nexfordy

So how can you make your newsletter bathroomable?

- * Make sure the content is about what interests your readers.
- * Make the language easy to read.
- * Include a mix of articles - informative, entertaining, intriguing.
- * Include a puzzle or quizzes.
- * Be certain your newsletter adds value to people's lives.

What Not to Put in a Newsletter

Ding! Here arrives a new email.

Ooh, a newsletter! I like those!

It's from a software company - A Letter from the CEO, no less.

And that's where things start to go wrong.

Let me give you some quotes:

"A New Corporate Strategy"

"We have established a new corporate strategy designed to meet the continuously evolving needs of the marketplace and enable our customers to achieve success."

"Aligning Our Structure to the Strategy"

"We are re-aligning our business units to have their full attention and focus on product development."

And finally, in closing:

"We believe it is important that our customers and business partners have a clear picture of where [company name] is headed in the future. We appreciate your business and look forward to helping you achieve great success in the world of digital media."

Still with me?

Let's see where this newsletter is going wrong.

[continued...](#)



Picture by Katherine Squier

1. It's about the company, not the customer. Yes, they believe the changes to their company will benefit the customer, but the content of the message is about us, us, us. Not you, you, you.

2. It fails the "so what?" test. Do customers really care about the new hires and new corporate structure? Probably not. And certainly not when the newsletter has already failed at point 1.

3. It's boring. People are busy. They want to be informed and entertained. They don't have the time (or desire) to read something that appears dull and not particularly helpful.

You know what it's like to be cornered at a party by someone who won't stop talking about their job, their kids or their hobby?

Please, don't publish newsletters like this. Instead, remember the golden rules.

- * Make it about your customers
- * Provide value - information your customers can use
- * Make it fun and interesting to read

Respect your customers' time and meet their needs. It's that simple.

Printed Newsletters and the Internet: Friends or Foes?

The other day I heard someone say, “Printed newsletters? That’s so 90s.”

Let's face it, when you compare them to email and blogs, printed newsletters do have - shall we say - a vintage feel.

Dead trees and ink are hardly sexy in green-tinged, e-everything 2008.

But this is the thing (actually, several things):

- 1) What’s popular or new isn’t always the same as what’s successful. Just because Facebook is the new thing, it doesn’t mean it automatically replaces older keep-in-touch methods. Beware of being distracted by bright, shiny objects.
- 2) What works, works. If printed newsletters are working for you, then use them. If they’re not, then try something else.
- 3) ROI is what counts. Printed newsletters are more expensive than, for example, email to deliver. But count the results: which gives you the most bang for your buck?

And, most importantly, it’s not a question of either/or.

It’s AND.

It’s not the 90s anymore. And that’s a very good thing, because we have so many more ways to reach clients.

Businesses should be using multiple media – and integrating multiple media. Why? People like to be contacted in different ways and like to interact with your company in different ways. (Some like to call, some go to the Web for more information, some prefer to receive a brochure through the mail.)

If you’re using printed newsletters, keep these points in mind:

- 1) Use your newsletter content in multiple ways: on your blog, in e-newsletters, on sites such as Squidoo. Then you’ll get more bangs for your content buck.

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- 2) Put your printed newsletter online, perhaps using a service like Issuu (<http://www.issuu.com>).
- 3) Use your newsletter to encourage people to visit your website or email you, employing devices such as offers and quizzes. (In my real estate newsletter, for example, I include a quick quiz, with clients encouraged to contact their Realtor for the answer.)
- 4) Put a sign-up box on your website for your printed newsletter. Consider using a special report as “bait” to encourage them to raise their hands as good prospects.

Friends or foes? Most definitely friends. They work better together than alone.

Use Coupons to Boost Response

A subscriber to my newsletter for mortgage brokers sent me her version of the newsletter. She'd customized it to include a coupon that gives \$100 off closing costs to any clients that conclude financing with her.

Great idea.

Not only do coupons make it more likely your client will keep the newsletter but they also increase the chances he or she will buy from you.

A newsletter is an effective way to distribute coupons: it's more likely your coupon will be saved and used because it is packaged with something of value - the content in your newsletter.



Picture by Skrewtape

A Smart, Timely Hook for an Offer in a Newsletter

Taking something that's in the news and putting your own twist on it to make an offer to your customers is a great way to stand out from the crowd. By attaching your offer to something in the news you give the impression of immediacy, timeliness and relevance to your offer.

Here's an example I received in a newsletter from A2 Hosting, the company that hosts some of my websites (and which, by the way, I recommend for its good service.)

Its newsletter offers the "A2 Hosting Economic Stimulus Plan".

"The U.S. government has called for economic stimulus, and we at A2 Hosting have an economic stimulus plan of our own. Use your government economic stimulus check and tax refund to pay up front for your web hosting and save some dough! By pre-paying for your hosting, your monthly hosting fees will drop significantly..."

Could you use a current event as a hook for an offer in your newsletter?

Is Your Newsletter Hanging Out With the Right People?

If you've got children, you're no doubt anxious to make sure they aren't hanging out with a bad crowd.

And if you are buying a house, you want to be certain it's not in a bad neighborhood.

The same goes for your newsletter: is it hanging out with the right people?

When every newsletter costs a few cents to print, it's worth making sure you are spending your money wisely. And that means if you are using your newsletter as a prospecting tool, it's wise to do your best to ensure your newsletter is in the hands of the people most likely to buy from you.

So don't randomly leave piles of your newsletter just anywhere - leave it in places where your potential clients are likely to hang out.

And don't mail your newsletter to just anyone - mail it to people who are proven to be good prospects.

A newsletter is a powerful tool for building a trusted relationship. But that someone has to be the right someone.



Picture by AH!Photography

Why Even Funeral Homes Need a Newsletter

Every business needs a newsletter.

Even funeral homes.

There are always eyebrows raised when I say that. What, for heaven's sake, can a funeral home put in a newsletter? Why would they need one?

Imagine this:

In town there are two funeral homes. Let's call them Dyer and Co. and Restinpeez Brothers.

They're both as good as each other. Indeed, they share business in town 50:50. Traditionally, people have chosen one or the other based on family tradition.

But the Restinpeez Brothers want more business - without opening up in another town.

They can't create more business (killing people is wrong), so they must take business away from Dyer.

This is the strategy I would suggest, using newsletters.

Restinpeez's strategy would be to position itself as the hub of the community. After all, a funeral home is well connected within the community anyway, so it's a natural step to develop those connections.

The funeral home would produce a monthly newsletter that serves the commu-

[continued...](#)

[How to Make a Ridiculously Successful Newsletter \(and Have Fun at the Same Time\)](#)



nity. The newsletter would include news of community events, "good news" stories of positive things happening in the community, useful information to help new residents settle in, a way for people to include their own stories of life in the community, and plenty of articles that help people live life to the fullest in that town.

The newsletter would be distributed free to "nodes" within the town - places where people hang out.

People would also be able to subscribe to the newsletter and receive it (for free) in the mail or by email.

Over time, the newsletter becomes almost like a mini-newspaper. One that really serves the community at a grassroots level.

Restinpeez will become the funeral home of choice because it is so integrated into the community and touches the community so frequently with useful, entertaining, interesting information.

Information that helps people live their lives better.

Restinpeez might be in the business of death, but their newsletter will be about life.

Free Tools

NEWSLETTER SET-UP GUIDE

Although this isn't a how-to-guide, I thought it would be useful to give you some tools you can use when planning your newsletter.

Like a way through the maze for your brain.

To get them, please visit: <http://www.ANewsletterForEveryBusiness.com>

FREE ONE-MONTH TRIAL OF MY READY-MADE NEWSLETTERS

Get a free "test drive" of one of my ready-made - print and email - newsletters.

They're great because you can customize everything in them. You have your own newsletter ready-made...but then you can add your own content and personality.

To find out if there's one for you, visit
<http://www.ANewsletterForEveryBusiness.com>