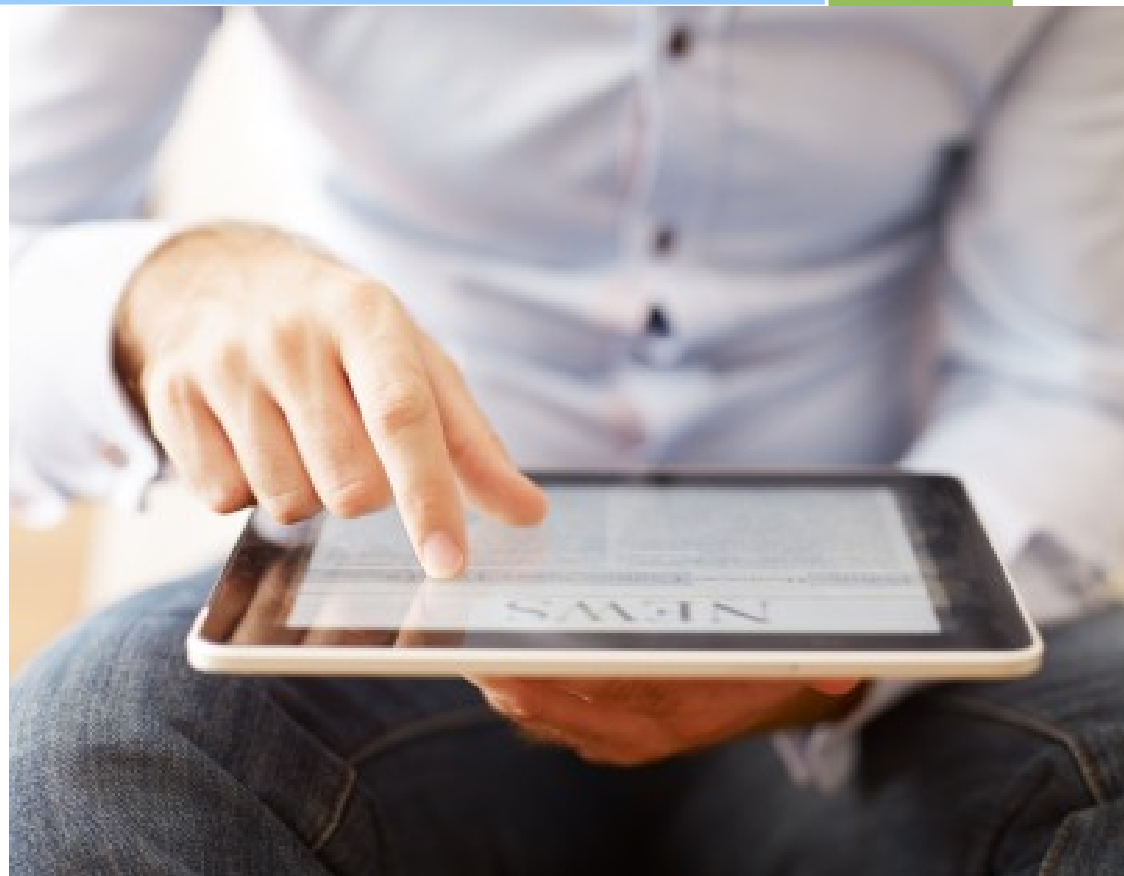


HOW TO WRITE AN ENEWSLETTER



by
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Word Formers Writing Services

HOW TO WRITE AN ENEWSLETTER

If you look over increases in your business's gross income, you'll probably see that it was preceded weeks earlier by an increase in your volume of promotion. While this underscores the importance of promoting, it also raises the question of how to get out promotion that doesn't eat up too much of your budget.

That's where eNewsletters come in. They are cost-effective, simple and help you build trust with your customers or clients by providing them with something they consider valuable.

If you're interested in writing your own but could use some help, read on. I'll show you how to write a successful eNewsletter based on several key marketing principles, give you some ideas on what to write about, and go over eNewsletter services. Plus I'll tell you about a service that is free and easy to use.



Marketing basics that will increase the effectiveness of your eNewsletter

There are several basic marketing principles that are key to creating an eNewsletter that communicates to your readers.

Permission based marketing

The first principle is based on a change in marketing brought about by the advent of technology and the Internet. Traditional marketing could be described as outbound: a company puts out radio, television and newspapers ads that praise its products or services and hopes someone gets the message.

But technology changed and marketing approaches have changed with it. Thanks to the Internet, people choose what news they read. They can record television shows and skip commercials. Their cell phones tell them who is calling so they know if they want to pick up or not. They can listen to commercial free radio. So a great deal of successful marketing today is what's called inbound: a business develops a relationship with potential customers who grant it permission

to give them information about what they consider relevant.

Here's an example. In the past, a nursery/ garden shop may have concentrated on advertising in local papers. Now, although it still may advertise, it also sends out regular eNewsletters that readers asked to receive. The eNewsletter includes an article with valuable information and perhaps a calendar of events and a coupon for a discount. Thanks to that eNewsletter, the store has become a trusted source for plant information and more gardeners will be heading there to buy plants and gardening supplies.

Who is it really about?

The second marketing principle concerns how you get your communication across to your audience. This one might be called: "It's not all about you." People want to be acknowledged and feel included. They want to know that you value the things that they consider important. So the correct way to communicate is by connecting with them before you start talking about yourself or your business.

That means you talk about benefits first – what's important to them and how your service or product relates to them. Then you can bring up features – information about your products and company.

Let's say you own a motorcycle shop and your customers are interested in racing. Don't send out an article bragging about how great you are. Instead, write an article about the top five ways to keep a motorcycle running smoother – something that demonstrates to them that you know what matters to them and provides useful information. As a result, they'll start thinking of you as an expert in the field of motorcycles. Now if you tell your readers something about your company, they will be more willing to listen to what you have to say.

Who is your audience?

This brings us to the last point I want to cover. Know your audience. When you market, you are talking to a specific group of people – your customers or potential customers. You aren't addressing "everyone." Write about what interests them and they'll continue subscribing to your eNewsletter.

Another related point concerns writing in a style that your readers will like. While a very conservative, scholarly style of writing may be fine for a group of professors, a more conversational tone may work better with other groups. How will you know? You probably talk to your customers or clients everyday. Use what you know about them.

What to include in your eNewsletter

Before you decide what to put in your eNewsletter, read what other companies

send out. Which of their articles and features appeal to you? Combine what you learn from reading these eNewsletters with your knowledge of your customers and you should have a good idea of what to include in yours.

Choosing topics and features

Some eNewsletter start off with a short personal letter and photo of the CEO or President. Whether or not you include something similar depends on what you feel is appropriate for your company and the image you want to create.

Here are some ideas for content:

- Top Five Tips (or however many you choose) for some aspect of a business related topic. For example, a dentist might give his top five tips for preventing tooth decay. A Realtor could write about upgrades that will get top dollar when a house is being sold. A bookstore may provide short reviews of the top summer reads.
- Interviews. An easy way to create content is to conduct an interview and transcribe it into an article. Perhaps the owner of an auto repair shop interviews his shop manager on how customers can choose the best oil for their cars.
- Case histories, success stories.
- Reviews of new products.
- Relevant news in your field.
- How-to articles.

- Photos, videos and graphics.
- Calendar of events that pertain to your type of business.
- Polls. People like to be included and interact. Ask them to vote on something and include the results in your next eNewsletter.
- Trivia questions related to your type of business. If you make them multiple choice, your subscriber can click a link that takes them to a page on your website with the correct answer.

Provide a contest of some sort. Readers can email you their answers so you can choose a winning entry at random. The prize doesn't have to be big. It's all about the fun of winning and, if you announce the winner in your next eNewsletter, they get to see their name in print.

Attracting interest

Your first challenge is getting subscribers to open the eNewsletter. Put something interesting in the eNewsletter's "Re" line about what's inside. Keep it short enough so they'll see the entire line when they preview their emails.

Once they open the eNewsletter, get and keep their interest by using headlines for each article or feature.

Depending on your topic and audience, I suggest you keep the eNewsletter and articles simple and short. I do receive a couple of longer eNewsletters but their length is totally appropriate to the topics. If in doubt, experiment and see what your readers prefer.

Provide the basics

Regardless of your articles and features, there are several basics to include in every issue: links to your website, a "Contact Us" link, your company's location, email address, the company url, and the business phone and fax numbers.

Also, your eNewsletter should attract people to your website. In addition to the links above, you can put a "Read more" link at the end of a partial article. The link takes them to a page on your website that contains the full article.

eNewsletter services

eNewsletter services make life easier. They eliminate several delivery problems, enable you to store and easily manage your email contact lists, offer templates, provide customer support and keep track of your eNewsletter results so you can continue to improve it.

You'll find several good services on the Internet. Most charge a monthly fee based on the size of your contact list. There is a free one that I like named MailChimp. Their service is free for mailing lists up to 2000 contacts.

Choosing a design

Although you can use html to design your eNewsletter, services offer basic templates that don't require programming skills. You can use your own logo and color scheme and thus maintain the same image as your website. Or you can choose a predesigned template so all you have to do is enter your content.

Keep the format simple. Make it pleasant for your readers and ensure the format draws their interest through the eNewsletter. As stated earlier, interesting headlines can help direct attention.

How do you know if your readers will find it interesting? Look at it from the viewpoint of your customers. Pretend you haven't seen it before. Do you like it? Do you want to continue reading? Does it reflect well on your business?

Plain text or html?

Many people open their emails in plain text instead of html. Fortunately eNewsletter services make it possible for subscribers to read it either way with very little effort on your part.

Keeping records will help you improve your content

You'll find eNewsletter services usually keep track of your open and click rates. By reviewing the results for each one you send, you can fine tune your eNewsletter, making each one better than the last.

Building your email list

How do you get a list of contacts for your eNewsletter?

- Ask people to sign up for it at your place of business, such as when they make a purchase. Collect their name and email address right there.
- Have a place on your website and Facebook page for people to join up.
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- Promote it and get sign-ups when you exhibit at fairs and events.
- Let people know about it in any mailings you do.
- Advertise.

You can increase the number of subscriptions by offering something for free at sign-up. Maybe it's a one-time-only discount or a free ebook or report. For example, a health food store might offer a booklet on how to eat healthier that includes 10 free recipes. A recording artist could give a free download of a song he wrote and recorded. (Remember to follow copyright laws.)

There are many other ways to grow your list. Just ensure it consists of people who really want your eNewsletter. Otherwise you're spamming and will create a poor image of your company.

Don't use purchased or rented email lists. Many eNewsletter services won't accept them. The people on these lists did not expressly agree to receive your email and there's a good possibility it contains old or incorrect addresses. Plus you don't know how the information was collected.

Double Opt-in

It's a good practice to use a double opt-in method when you sign people up. This means that the person lets you know twice that they want to receive your eNewsletter. The first time occurs when they sign up. The second time is when they are sent an email asking them to confirm their subscription. Using double opt-in will give you a strong list of interested subscribers.

Forms

The eNewsletter service provides forms you'll need such as welcoming new subscribers or acknowledging people if they decide to unsubscribe. You can easily tie the look of the form to your eNewsletter and website by including your logo and/or the same color scheme.

These are the basics you'll need to write and send out eNewsletters. The main thing to keep in mind is to make it something that your audience considers valuable. To make it even better, review the open and click statistics for each eNewsletter and you'll end up with a very powerful marketing tool.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Tinat is a freelance corporate writer who has more than 25 years experience in marketing, surveys, public relations and professional writing. In addition to newsletters, she also writes press releases, web content and ads as well as corporate letters and reports or manuals.

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