

Twelve Classic Mistakes E-Newsletters Make

Confusing newsletters with promotions Many marketers don't make the distinction between an e-mail newsletter and e-mail promotions. The latter are action-oriented, designed to provoke some kind of (immediate) response with a click-through, a signup, and a purchase, whatever. They're what most people think of under the term opt-in e-mail marketing. E-newsletters may contain action-related elements, but their real potential is in building, over time, a lasting, long-term relationship with the reader, which means they may not try to induce any kind of immediate action at all. Instead, they create a climate, an environment, and a relationship, which predisposes the reader to taking such an action at some other time. You can think of promotions as transaction-oriented and newsletters as relationship-oriented. An e-mail promotion says, "Buy the new Brownlow Desk Chair 2006," the e-mail newsletter carries an article about avoiding back strain in the office. If you don't get the difference clear in your head, then you're likely to commit the following two mistakes as well.

Being too publisher-centric A successful newsletter delivers useful information, at the right time, and to the right people. With competition for inbox space growing, even that isn't always enough, though. The reader is actually interested in information that addresses a problem or need (for help, humor, marketing intelligence, industry insight, etc.) If you can work your products and services into addressing those needs and problems, and avoid sounding like a promotion, fine. But you'll generally need to be more innovative than that. For example, share a universal symptom the audience relates to, then offer the solution to that specific symptom. It's a classic form of productization and a sure way to not appear like you're trying to sell.

Content Good articles are fundamental to any good newsletter. The right content will be objective and targeted to your ideal reader. It'll fit their preferences and reading styles. Make sure that the majority of your content isn't about you at all, but don't be afraid to be a little promotional (make sure to link the newsletter to what you do). Include testimonials, case studies, links to recent press, and sales or special promotions. For best results, consider outsourcing this crucial newsletter function to a professional newsletter writer.

Using the wrong success metrics Calculating newsletter return on investment is a tough nut to crack, since newsletter costs are immediate and relatively easy to measure, while the benefits are long-term and difficult to measure. One approach is to measure the revenue produced by subscribers before and after they subscribed, and compare this with a control group of non-subscribers.

Nameplate The nameplate (the area where your newsletter's name appears, sometimes mistaken for the masthead) should be consistent from issue to issue and should give both your newsletter's name and your company name. For HTML newsletters, tie your nameplate to your company's image using the same colors, fonts, or a logo. All newsletters should work to establish a tie between each issue and your company.

Masthead All e-mail newsletters should have contact information. Make it as easy as possible to contact you and don't force readers to visit your website to do so because they won't. Make e-mail and website addresses clickable and maximize the masthead's impact by keeping it brief and consistent each issue. The masthead is a great place to include a brief section on what you do to familiarize prospects with your company.

Ignoring the value of the headers You hear a lot about subject lines in e-mail marketing, but not a lot about the other e-mail headers, particularly the "to" and "from" headers. Consider a newsletter which arrives thus: From: server11@someneletterservice.com To: list member e-mail address Subject: Brownlow Chairs Now compare it with this one: From: mark.brownlow@brownlowchairs.com To: Customer Name Subject: Brownlow Chairs A desktop health and safety tip... Use a combination of the three headers to:

- Maintain the impression that it's a one-to-one communication.
- Identify a recognizable sender (the relevant brand, person, website, or company).
- Identify the publication.
- Give recipients something they can use for filtering their e-mail (into a "chair newsletters" folder, for example) or encourage the recipients to open and read the mail.

Making it difficult for people to unsubscribe Some marketers still believe a disgruntled subscriber is better than no subscriber at all. So they make people jump through hoops to get off an address list, or they wait a few more newsletter issues until the unsubscribe request is properly honored. At best, the would-be ex-subscriber manages to get unsubscribed and leaves with a bad impression. At worst, he or she remains trapped in your distribution list. So you pay for e-mails to go unread, and suffer as the recipient complains to all and sundry about your poor administration, not to mention the spam accusations. Trapped subscribers also lower response rates to any advertisements and other offers in your newsletter, skewing the statistics and disappointing any third-party advertisers. So make your unsubscribe process quick and painless.

Not making the most of website traffic or customers for signups Obviously, the more targeted your subscribers, the better your results. That's why a list of 5000 subscribers can outperform one with 500,000. Where do you look for these perfect subscribers? Clearly, you'll want to encourage website visitors to sign up, but please, only require their name and e-mail address. If you require any more personal information that they don't feel comfortable sharing with you, you might lose the chance to get just their name and e-mail address. Also, consider the places this audience spends time and post helpful solutions related to your newsletter on discussion boards (using a brief signature to promote the newsletter) and advertise at selected websites. By filling your list with targeted subscribers, you'll improve your results exponentially. Think of the effort invested in persuading website visitors to become customers. Then compare this with the typical effort expended to persuade them to become newsletter subscribers. How many times have you seen a subscription box tagged on the bottom of a web page, with no indication of the newsletter's contents, frequency, privacy policies, etc.?

Give people the opportunity to sign up for a newsletter everywhere: web pages, confirmation messages, thank you pages, receipts, etc. At the least, let people know what will happen when they submit their address, what can they expect in their e-mail inboxes and how often they can expect it, and what you'll do or won't do with their e-mail address. (This means posting a prominent privacy policy.)

Tagline All newsletters should have a sentence that describes the newsletter's subject and audience. A line like, "Basic basket weaving for kids," tells potential subscribers at a glance whether or not your newsletter's what they're looking for. A good tagline will identify the audience, the subject matter, and the benefits. The tagline appears near the nameplate or in the masthead and can also be used as your e-mail signature. It should be brief yet memorable. Save the sales pitch for something else because the last thing you want is for potential readers to think the newsletter's "salesy."

Distribution From personalization, to the sender's

name, e-mail distribution requires making choices. Consider using a distribution service that allows the reader's name to be added to the subject line and body. Also, if you're using HTML, will you have two separate lists, or will you use multipart MIME? Set up the to and from fields so the newsletter comes from the editor and goes specifically to one reader's e-mail address. Of all the newsletter issues, distribution can easily become the most complicated; so don't just select the first provider you find. Some great choices include: Cooler E-mail, Constant Contact, Hart Creative Marketing, Inc. Ask In each issue, make sure you ask your readers for action, whether you want them to call and set up a consultation or place an order. You'll need to ask to get real results. A newsletter that delivers business isn't far off if you round up the usual suspects. Take care to establish a firm foundation, ask for what you want, and get ready to record the results. In no time, your newsletter will be one that attracts customers, builds loyalty, and increases profits.

About the Author

He has to cover the kids on his health insurance but not you. Child support whether it is crucial or not is needed for the kids, he should.

Source: <http://www.products herbal.com>