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Creating The Perfect Newsletter

By Mitchell Harper

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Introduction

In this article I'm going to tell you the secrets to creating a great newsletter that will have your visitors coming back to your site in a shot! I'm going to discuss what type of content you should publish in your newsletter, how often you should send your newsletter out, and most importantly, how to "speak" to your visitors through your newsletter to have maximum impact and drive them back to your site in droves.

What do I publish?

A newsletter is one of the most cost effective and quickest ways to communicate with your sites visitor base. However, if you're sending your visitors newsletters that contain old, stale content, spelling errors, dead links or too much advertising, then what's the chance that they will return to your site? The number one purpose of sending a newsletter is to try and get each and every subscriber to come back to your site. How do I do that then, you ask? Through interesting, informative content, that's how.

Here are a couple of ideas for content that you can put in your newsletter:

Creating The Perfect Newsletter

A what's happening section that informs visitors of any new additions to your site since the last newsletter was sent out. In this section you can tell visitors about any new articles or interesting additions to your web site. Here's a snippet of what I published in my recent newsletter:

-- What's Happing @ devArticles.com? -----

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to the mid-January 2002 issue of DevXPress. It's been another extremely busy yet productive month over at devArticles.com, so let's take a look at some new features that both myself and

our entire team have helped add to the site:

...

Publish the results of your latest voting poll. What's that? You don't have a poll on your site? Naughty naughty. Head on over to <http://www.ballot-box.net> and get your free poll up and running in 5 minutes. Whenever you send out a newsletter, change the poll and include the results of the last poll in your newsletter.

Use something like this:

The last poll question was "What type of content would you like to see more of on devarticles.com?". There were a total of 149 votes. The results are shown below:

- Articles: 58 votes or 39%
- Book Reviews: 11 votes or 7%
- Product Reviews: 13 votes or 9%
- Interviews: 14 votes or 9%
- Case Studies: 33 votes or 22%
- Sample Books Chapters: 20 votes or 13%

The poll for the first half of February 2002 is sure to start some raving and ranting and is entitled "In the Netscape sues Microsoft case, who are you rallying for?". It's ready for your vote right now. Visit www.devarticles.com to vote.

Notice how I've mentioned the details of the current poll and have given the user a reason to re-visit my site to vote again? I do this in different ways throughout my entire newsletter.

Add your personality to the newsletter by addressing your readers

and letting them know that you're there if they ever need anything. In my newsletter I publish the first half, and my newsletter manager Todd publishes the rest. Here's what I usually write to cap off my half:

Well guys, that's my two cents worth for these past two weeks at devArticles.com. If you've got any questions or suggestions, please email mitchell@devarticles.com or post them in our forums.

I know it doesn't seem like much, but think about what would happen if I left it out. In my experiences, visitors like to know that there's a real person writing the newsletter and that it's not compiled by some super computer on the other side of the world. I also write the newsletter for my other site, TechBuy, where I always (without a doubt) include a personal message to our readers.

Include unique content that they can't find anywhere else. In my newsletter I always include a "hot tips" section that lists five hot tips that users can benefit from immediately. Depending on your target audience, you could include simple tips such as this (I run a programming related site, therefore I publish tips on how to program effectively):

In C# you can place code within a checked block to have the C# compiler throw an exception if any overflow occurs when casting one data type to another.

Or, you can include more advanced tips like this:

In ASP you can use the DateDiff function to work out the difference between dates in terms of either days, weeks, months, years, etc. To get the number of days between Jan 1st 2001 and Dec 31st 2002, use it like this:

```
Dim oldDate  
Dim newDate
```

```
oldDate = "01/01/2001"  
newDate = "31/12/2002"
```

```
Response.Write DateDiff("D", oldDate, newDate)
```

These tips are unique to my newsletter and I always sit down for at least an hour to plan these tips. Sure, they're only a couple

of lines long each, but when a visitor finds a tip that helps them out, then I can be guaranteed that they will be on my site quicker than I can say "boo".

Another great (although time consuming) method to add value to your newsletter is to include a "newsletter only" article with every issue. Take 2–3 hours a week and write a 1,000–2,000 word article that you include exclusively with your newsletter. Mention this on your newsletter signup form and watch your subscriptions soar.

What kind of content should you include in this article? Well, include content that relates to some of the more popular articles listed on your site, you know, the ones that visitors have emailed you about saying how they've helped them accomplish a certain task, etc. Your visitors will love this article because it's an additional bonus that no one gets but them.

Listing recent article and forum posts in your newsletter is a tried and trusted method of pulling visitors back to your site. Simply list the ten most recent articles and forum posts that

have been added to your site. If you don't have a forum on your site, then checkout VBulletin at <http://www.vbulletin.com>. In my newsletter, I show visitors the ten most recent article posts in a list, like this:

--- Latest Articles @ devArticles.com -----

There have been a total of 13 new articles posted in the last two weeks. They are shown below:

– Working With PHP Data Types
<http://www.devarticles.com/art/1/55>

...

If you have more than 1,000 newsletter subscribers, then you should be including sponsor ads with each issue sent out. I usually include two or three five lined (65 characters per line) ads in mine. The key to effectively marketing a brand or product in your newsletter is to choose those that interest your visitor. For example, if you run a shoe store, include a promo by a shoe company that links the visitor to their site to download a discount coupon.

One last thing I always include in my newsletter is an option for visitors to unsubscribe. I make it clear at both the top and bottom of my newsletter that they can unsubscribe at any time, like this:

This is the bi-monthly newsletter from www.devarticles.com. If you would like to un-subscribe at any time, please send an email to <mailto:newsletter@devarticles.com> with "unsubscribe" in the subject field.

How often should you send your newsletter?

It all depends on the amount of new content published on your site and how many visitors your site has. Let's say that Fred Black runs a site about tennis and receives 4,000 unique visitors per day. Fred also receives an average of fifty new newsletter subscribers each day. His site has been running for six months, so he has around nine thousand newsletter subscribers in his database.

Let's also say that Fred is a busy man and coach's tennis too. He coaches five people for one hour each every day, so he doesn't really have that much time to add new content to his site, which he updates once every 4-5 days.

In this scenario, Fred should send out a monthly newsletter that summarizes the new content posted on his site, any new messages in his forum, as well as a couple of paragraphs about the latest tennis news, such as the winner of the recent Australian Open.

How frequently should you send your article then? Well, as a good rule of thumb, the smaller your site, the less frequently you should send out your newsletter. If you're adding new articles to your site everyday and have a nicely populated subscriber list, then sending a newsletter every day is not uncommon. On the other hand, if you only receive a couple of hundred hits per day, then you'd be better of sending your newsletter monthly, and spending more time on promoting your site.

How should you "speak" to your visitors?

Notice in the title for this section that I have quoted the word speak, to indicate that I am referring to it an abstract sense? When you send your newsletter out, most of your visitors will assume that it's been compiled by a couple of guys that help run your site and that it's only going out to get them back to your site, or for them to click on the ads included in your newsletter.

You have to change their mind set so that they are receptive to your newsletter and its contents. Talk to your visitors like they're your friends, and you're just emailing them to catch up. As I mentioned earlier, I have another guy, Todd, who manages our newsletter. When Todd takes over the second half of writing the newsletter, here's the line he uses to introduce himself:

Hi guys, Todd here... how's everyone going?

See how he introduces himself and makes you feel like there's actually a person composing the newsletter? Too many newsletters are just marketing junk. If you want to create a healthy subscriber base, then make sure you address your visitors like Todd has, maybe even spare a paragraph or two to tell them about what's been going on in your life?

Whichever way you do it, the more comfortable your visitors feel when your "speaking" to them through your newsletter, the more likely they are to trust you, re-visit your site, and click on your sponsor ads.

In Closing

Well, there you have it... my list of secrets that I use whenever I send out the bi-monthly issue of my sites newsletter, devXPress. If you don't send out a newsletter because you don't have the faintest clue of what to include in it, then hopefully this article has given you some creative inspiration to start one.

If you already send out a newsletter, does it include everything I have mentioned in this article? If not, maybe you'd like to take some tips from this article and use them to better-equip your current newsletter?

Either way, a newsletter is the best way to communicate with your visitors and invite them back to your site by providing

them with useful, informative, free content that is sent to them on a regular basis.

If you'd like to see a sample of my newsletter, then you can subscribe for free by sending an email to newsletter@devarticles.com with the keyword "subscribe" in the subject field.

Mitchell Harper is the founder of <http://www.devarticles.com>. DevArticles provides its visitors with useful, informative articles and news on ASP, PHP, and .NET, as well as links to FREE EBOOKS, tips and tricks that you won't find anywhere else! To see what it's all about, visit devArticles right now at <http://www.devarticles.com>

7 Necessary Steps You Should Know When Building

By Nadeem

7 Necessary Steps You Should Know When Building by Nadeem

7 Necessary Steps You Should Know When Building A Newsletter Or Ezine

by Nadeem Qazalbash

I help my Subscribers in any way possible by listening to what they have to say and providing them with as much info as I can to help them build their Newsletter or Ezine and grow their Online Business Successfully.

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Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!