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Publishing Your First E-Mail Newsletter

By Joanne Glasspoole

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I've been an "e-publisher" for a couple of years now. Publishing an e-mail newsletter (e.g., E-zine) is a fabulous way to market your Web site. But getting started takes planning, hard work and commitment.

First, you need to decide on the subject of your E-zine. The subject, ideally, should complement the subject of your Web site. Next, you need to establish a schedule for sending out your publication (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly), and then, more importantly, you need to meet your deadlines.

To ensure your E-zine gets read, it is crucial that you provide information that is original, informative and beneficial to your readers. You need to make your readers hungry for your content. Your content, however, is not your only consideration. You also have to consider the format you send your content in.

When I decided to publish my first E-zine in 1999, I copied ideas from the E-zines I liked and respected. There are thousands of E-zines on the Web, but the really good ones are rare gems, because they are formatted nicely, contain no spelling or grammar mistakes, are professionally written, provide original content that you won't find in ten other E-zines, and they are fun to read.

One of the first mistakes I made when I began contemplating the design of my E-zine's template was to use my word processor. Although the formatting stayed true in Outlook Express, when I viewed the newsletter in AOL, it was a mass of unformatted text that ran on forever with funky characters and was completely unreadable. I was aghast. With my "tail between my legs," I sent an apology to my subscribers and immediately scrapped my word processor for E-zine publishing.

For your E-zine to display correctly in e-mail, you cannot rely on word wrap. When I edit my e-mail newsletters, I manually insert line breaks at 65 characters. It's a pain, but it is the only way to ensure your e-mail is readable in all e-mail packages. Otherwise, your reader ends up getting a long, rambling e-mail message with no line breaks that makes no sense.

Although HTML newsletters are becoming more and more popular, I still opt for the good, old-fashioned text format. If you want to offer HTML newsletters to your subscribers, that's cool. Give

them the option. But if they're using an older e-mail client that doesn't support HTML, you might as well delete your message before you send it, because they won't be able to read it.

I recommend formatting your e-mail newsletter as a text file. Do not use word processing functions, such as bullets, bold face and italics, because the formatting is lost if your reader's e-mail software doesn't support rich text.

Instead of MS Word, I use a text editor called NoteTab Light to format my E-zine. It's a free download and works great because you can set your margins to 65 characters (or whatever you choose) and NoteTab Light does the line breaks for you with a few keystrokes.

To download NoteTab Light, visit

<http://www.zdnet.com/downloads/stories/info/0,10615,24530,00.html>

NoteTab Light is highly customizable. To change your user settings, click on View > Options >. Take a look at all of the settings and configure to your liking. To configure the column wrap, go to Documents, check "Wrap to Column" and put 65 in the box. Then when you close out of there, click Document > Update Column Wrap, and, poof, your document will be correctly formatted at 65 character per line. (Note: You may need to make minor revisions to your layout, but it's easier than retyping.)

Once you have a format that meets your specifications, I recommend that you set up a template to use in NoteTab Light for future issues. It'll make your job much easier and quicker. I use templates for everything, including my e-mail newsletters.

For more information about e-publishing, visit the following resources on the Web:

Email Publishing Digest
<http://epdigest.com/>

Ezine-Tips.com
<http://ezine-tips.com/>

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What A Newsletter Can Do For Your Business

By Claire Cunningham

Newsletters are often thought of as easy, do-it-yourself communications projects. The reality is different...and that can be discouraging.

Publishing Your First E-Mail Newsletter

Developing a good newsletter concept can be difficult and time-consuming. It takes market intelligence — and maybe research — to find out what people will read. Then it takes careful planning, discipline and skill to crank out something worthwhile on a schedule.

Why bother? Because the rewards are there for those who enter the newsletter game.

1. Build loyalty: Send out a regular newsletter to your customers to build loyalty. Better informed customers are better customers.

2. Educate: A regular newsletter can educate distributors, sales reps, or even prospects.

3. Boost credibility: Publishing a newsletter is a way to send out great information with your name on it.

4. Stay in touch: Advertising not in your budget? Exhausted your public relations options? A newsletter can keep your name in front of a small, well-defined audience.

5. Repeat your message: Repetition is an important facet of a successful communications program. A newsletter is another way to deliver your message.

6. Control. Control. Control: Audience. Message. Timing. You control it all with a newsletter.

7. Cost efficiency: Send out an electronic newsletter, and you can save on time, printing and postage. Plus you can use it as content on your web site.

Claire Cunningham, president of Clairvoyant Communications, Inc., has 20+ years' experience developing and implementing successful business-to-business marketing and communications programs. Sign up for Claire's monthly newsletter, *Communique*, at

. Claire can be reached at 763-479-3499 or e-mail to

What A Newsletter Can Do For Your Business

Interviews With Successful Ezine Publishers – Paul Becker

Is Your Ezine Being Zapped?

The Future Of Email Newsletter

Before Publishing a Newsletter, Ask These Questions

Mega-Wealth Audio Library

News Letter Genie Pro

Ezine Filter and Format software

Blogging Made Easy

Build Your Own Mail Order Empire



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