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THE PROBLEM WITH HTML EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

By windsong

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The recent trend towards HTML email really disturbs me. I, for one, do not like HTML email. If I want to see the glitz and color, I will go to your website, but send me plain text in your email. Do I receive HTML emails? Sure. But the delete key is right there and I use it. And so do a lot of other people. HTML belongs in web pages.

One major concern is bandwidth. HTML email files are much larger than plain text. I resent the fact that it takes longer to download the HTML email from my server. It also takes longer to load it into the email window. Then I have to scroll back and forth. Forget it. Deleting is easier.

Regular email done in HTML is rather pointless. My biggest concern are newsletters done in HTML. These are large emails anyway, and doing them in HTML is only compounding the problem. One must consider the recipient. Are we so egotistical to believe that ALL the people on the 'net are in the USA?? What about the millions of people in other countries who pay by the minute to download these extra large files of HTML emails? Some of these people prefer to download their email, and then go offline while they read them. This makes the images in HTML email rather useless. For the images to work, you must stay online.

Then there is the problem of some email programs that do not support HTML. Just because yours does, doesn't mean that mine does. DO NOT assume that everyone can read HTML e-mail just because you can. Consider, too, that not all

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email readers will display your HTML in the same way. It may not look the way you think it does.

Some newsletter publishers give their subscribers the option of receiving plain text or HTML. This is all well and good, however, it seems to me that it would be twice the work for the already overworked editor to format the same newsletter twice. Maintaining two lists of subscribers would also become a burden.

Whats the point in making your newsletter look just like your website? Why bother with the newsletter? Just send 'em

to your website and be done with it.

What makes a newsletter good? Simplicity, readability, full of content that the reader wants, and a lack of flashing glitz. Keep it simple, and keep your subscribers.

windsong is the editor/publisher of six newsletters. One of them is All About E-Zines:
<http://marketing-resources.com/EZzine.html>

Email Newsletter Format: HTML or Text

By Mario Sanchez

An email newsletter is probably the most effective way to communicate with your target audience. One of the main considerations before you create and deliver an email newsletter is what format to use: HTML or Text.

Until a few years ago, some email programs couldn't handle HTML. Nowadays that is not an issue, since most email programs are HTML compatible: AOL versions 6 and higher, Internet Explorer versions 4 and higher, Microsoft Outlook and Outlook Express, Eudora, Yahoo Mail, and Hotmail all support HTML. HTML email newsletters can easily be managed and sent using services like Constant Contact or Vertical Response.

Using HTML for your newsletter can be a plus from a usability perspective. Studies conducted by usability guru Jakob Nielsen show that most people prefer HTML newsletters because their enhanced layout makes articles easier to read (provided that the design of the HTML newsletter is clean and simple). The same design guidelines recommended for web pages also apply to HTML email newsletters.

However, HTML newsletters are often confused with unwanted advertising, since HTML is the format of choice for marketers trying to sell their wares and services through email messages. For this

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reason, text email newsletters are still popular, since their plain, no frills look helps differentiate them from advertising.

Text is also the format of choice for those who use a free service (like Topica or Yahoo! Groups) to administer their mailing lists and deliver their email newsletters, since these free services usually don't support HTML. If you use text, remember that you won't be able to use formatting tags, such as bold or underline, and that you must create hyperlinks by adding the prefix `http://` before the URL (or the prefix `mailto:` before the email address, if you want to create an email link).

The approach I prefer is a hybrid between HTML and text. I compose my email messages in HTML, but using only text. HTML allows me to use simple formatting tags like bold, underline and italics, and a nice, screen-friendly font. I use a lot of white space to facilitate scanning, and include only a summary of each article, with a link to the full article (which is hosted on my website), since most users don't like to read long articles in the body of email messages.

My email newsletters, therefore, are similar to the table of contents of a magazine, in the sense that they give readers a broad overview of the current edition's content, and tell them where to find it if they are inclined to read further.

This hybrid format is never mistaken for advertising, is easy to read and scan, and loads fast. Furthermore, by offering links to the full articles, your users will be encouraged to visit your website, where they can have access to more information and learn about your products and services.

Mario Sanchez is a Miami based freelance writer who focuses on Internet marketing and web design topics. He publishes The Internet Digest (

), a growing collection of

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Email Newsletter Format: HTML or Text

The Hidden Dangers of HTML Email

Plain Jane Email Equals Flat Results

The Lowdown: How To Create And Send HTML Email

Practical Tips for Designing HTML & Plain Text Newsletters

Ezine Filter and Format software

Instant Email Scramble

News Letter Genie Pro

Email Spider Software

Domain Alarm – Is your site working?



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