

## THE WORST E-MAIL MISTAKE

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By B.L. Ochman

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The approximately 200 daily, weekly and bi-weekly online newsletters and e-zines to which I subscribe arrive among the 5,600 or so emails I get every month. I zap 90 percent of them unread for one simple, maddening reason: the message is hidden. And that's the worst e-mail mistake you can make.

The fundamental mistake made in the vast majority of online publications has to do with the physical limitation of e-mail. At most, the recipient of an email sees 10 lines of text on the first screen of an email. If you don't get your message in the first 10 lines: it won't get read.

Why then, do so many e-publishers expect us to scroll through three and more screens just to find what's "In This Issue?"

I'm not talking about content. The content in the newsletters and e-zines listed below -- some of the best on the Internet -- tends to be consistently worth reading IF you have time to scroll through many screens to get to the actual content. Asking a reader to scroll through more than one screen just to find out what you want to say is not unlike taking five minutes to introduce yourself every time you call your sister. Neither practice is necessary or makes sense.

### Space wasters

Between glitzy HTML mastheads, lengthy letters from publishers, boilerplate about privacy policies and just plain garbage prose, it's the rare newsletter or e-zine that gives you a table of contents on the first screen.

Ways that e-zines waste space and time include:

oHaving an HTML masthead take up the entire first screen of the e-mail then expecting us to read through advertising to get to the table of contents. Among the many sites whose newsletters waste the first screen with a masthead are <http://www.emarketer.com> , <http://www.eZined.com> <http://www.i-advertising.com> , <http://www.silicon.com> , <http://www.redherring.com> , and <http://www.zdnet.com> While many of these newsletters are excellent when you finally get to them, I am willing to bet 90 percent of the issues go unread because people don't want to be bothered scrolling to

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see a table of content.

oTaking up the entire first screen, and sometimes as many as three screens, reminding us that we actually subscribed to this publication so we are not being spammed; that the mailing list will not be shared and that new subscribers are welcome. And only then, as many as 40 lines later – that's 4 screens in Outlook Express – are we told what the issue contains. Of course I'll never know, because I won't still be reading and I bet you won't either.

Among the otherwise very well done publications that waste screen after screen with this type of information are the newsletters published by <http://www.content-exchange.com> (Content Spotlight,) <http://www.healthscout.com> , <http://www.industryscoop.com> and <http://www.addme.com>

oUsing LOTS of white space between paragraphs introducing the issue, then making us plough through a 10-line ad, a few paragraphs about the newsletter and a privacy statement before we get to the beginning of the first article. Among the sites whose otherwise excellent newsletters provide this maddening entranceway are <http://www.lockergnome.com> , <http://www.atnewyork.com> , <http://List-Universe.com/> , <http://www.ecommercetimes.com> and <http://www.list-a-day.com>

The physical limitation of e-mail should be the factor that determines how you present your message. E-mail is not a printed page that the eye can scan at once. The screen on which the vast majority of people read e-mail – text or HTML -- can only hold 10 lines. If your message isn't in that first screen, it's likely – click – to be history.

B.L. Ochman <http://www.thebestwebideas.com>, is an award-winning marketer who has helped local, regional and multi-national corporations to increase awareness and sales of their products both online and off. Please subscribe to our Marketing Newsletter at <http://www.thebestwebideas.com/blform.htm>  
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### **Learn How to Fail**

**By Jude Wright**

#### **Learn How to Fail by Jude Wright**

Learn How to Fail  
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I bet you've heard the phrase, "Failure is not an option."  
But, let's think about it.

What would happen if no one ever failed – at anything? How would you learn? Learning from past failures, and successes, shows us how we can do it better next time. Without mistakes, we would never appreciate our accomplishments.

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There is a lesson to be learned from each mistake. Take that mistake and make it your challenge. Break it into pieces. What was the turning point to change it from success into failure?

Take the first step and analyze it. Did it work like you wanted? Good. Go to the next step. Keep going.

At each step, decide how you can improve the process, wording, product – whatever the problem is. Then, try again.

Even the Wright brothers' first flight failed, but they tried again. What if THEY had given up?

Persevere. Your challenges will lead the way to your successes.

In the middle of difficulty lies Opportunity.  
Albert Einstein

Each major success is made up of a series of smaller successes – and of many failures – yours or someone else's. Learn from the mistake. Make it your goal to find out WHY.

One reason for failure is setting goals that are difficult, even impossible, to achieve. Many baby steps add up to a whole success. Success is accomplished by setting one small, achievable, goal at a time.

We are our own worst critic. When we fail, we make it a reflection of our "self." It seems we usually identify our "self" with our mistakes instead of our achievements. That is one mistake you do NOT want to make. Your mistake is not YOU.

Don't overlook your successes. You need them to look back on when those nasty surprises pop up. Remember them when you think you're a failure.

So, in 2004, don't say, "Failure is not an option." Instead, say, "I can change it to a success by \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your own solution)!"

Jude Wright is a newly retired Internet Junkie. She has five websites of her own and designs sites for

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others. She caters to the Internet "Newbie." Visit her three main sites at: <http://aboutaffiliates.com>;  
<http://i-marketingorganizer.com>; <http://nutritious-cooking.com>.



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