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**Tackle a Newsletter and Come out on Top**

**By Beth Brodovsky**

**Tackle a Newsletter and Come out on Top**

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Unlike any other marketing vehicle, newsletters give you the opportunity to contact your audience and convey your expertise in a way that offers value and information. Newsletters provide a reason — and a structure — to maintain ongoing contact. One of our clients has even said that recipients call if her newsletter is a few days late.

A newsletter can include all kinds of information you might otherwise have to develop multiple vehicles to communicate.

Provide Information :: new phone numbers, address changes, new hires, additional services.

Get feedback :: announce a contest, run a survey, promote a hotline.

Brag :: share recent successes, a case study, announce staff speaking and publishing efforts.

It's very important to provide some non-self-serving information too. Educating your audience about your field can only enhance your image and the value of your relationships.

If gathering all this information on a regular basis seems daunting, it doesn't have to be. There are ways to manage the task and develop a valuable piece in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Schedule :: Seriously think about how often people want to hear from you, as well as how much time you have to devote to a newsletter. Time does cost money, whether you do it yourself, delegate it to a staff member or contract with an outside creative firm. Develop a schedule you can sustain. Size :: How long should it be? Look at others in your field, ask good clients, and think about how much time you want yourself, your staff or your service provider to invest in this project. Scope :: What is it going to be about? One way to tame content is to choose a few areas to cover and write articles within those areas. For each section, have a list of topics. When building each issue, fill each "slot". You can also expand and re-purpose content you already have. Create a "news" section to re-purpose press

releases, a "question of the month" that draws from the FAQs on your website. What to include depends on your audience. Longtime clients may connect with knowing that Mary Jones had twins last month, but will the CEO of your hottest prospect? Send :: Choose your mailing list according to the goals of the project. Is the main purpose client contact, prospecting, education or something else? You can pull names from your own database, build a new list from research, or rent lists from a variety of list brokers. Style :: Are you going for a casual note or a professional communiqué? The answer lies in your brand. This piece, as in all good marketing development, should not be developed in a vacuum. Your newsletter should be an integrated element of your corporate positioning.

### Maximizing a budget

After managing schedule, size, scope, sending, and style of a newsletter, the last "S" in the list could easily be "Spend." If launching a newsletter still feels time consuming, expensive and beyond your experience consider these ideas for getting a professional look while watching the budget: Existing

content :: Just about every industry has resources to buy, rent or republish (with permission) everything from articles to complete newsletters. Stock design :: Want a professional look, but custom creative is out of the question? Try using templates from simple publishing programs, preprinted papers, or have a designer create a template that you can fill in every issue. Preprinting :: Have your designer develop a shell that can be printed in color. You or your designer can typeset each issue, then copy or digitally print in black. Email :: Skip the printing. Eliminate printing and postage costs by sending an e-newsletter. From a simple email to a fully designed interface linked to your website, the options are rapidly expanding for digital communication.

### Maximizing your effort

Newsletters are a bonus, as articles can be multi-purposed to become a section on your website, a submission to other online and off-line publications, the basis for other marketing tools and the outline for seminars and speaking engagements. That's four potential uses from one effort.

### Maximizing your ability

Most professionals are not trained designers, marketers or desk-top-publishers. Think carefully about the cost/benefit ratio here. If you are putting in extra hours struggling with details and the results don't reflect the style and quality of your business.

The most important thing to remember when developing any tool is to think about the why. If you haven't spent the time to develop you message, position, brand and strategy you are on a path with no destination. If you know where you're headed, a newsletter can help make it an easier journey.

Beth Brodovsky is the president and principal of Iris Creative Group, LLC. Brodovsky earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Communication Design from Pratt Institute, New York. Before launching her own firm in 1996, she spent eight years as a corporate Art Director and Graphic Designer, providing a sound foundation in management and organizational standards and structure. Iris Creative specializes in providing marketing and strategic communication services to clients in service industries

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## **Seven Deadly Newsletter Sins (and How to Cure Them)**

**By Claire Cunningham**

### **Seven Deadly Newsletter Sins (and How to Cure Them) by Claire Cunningham**

Newsletters can be great communication tools, but they take work. Here's a quick list of common problems newsletters run into and how to fix them.

1. The snooze-letter — a newsletter so boring it puts readers to sleep.

Cure: Find out what your readers want to know and write about it. Keep the tone lively. Don't know what readers want? Ask!

2. Audience too broad – a newsletter with a broad audience (customers, employees and distributors, for example) may meet no one's needs very well or might meet one group's needs while ignoring the others.

Cure: Different audiences = different information needs = different newsletters. Your newsletter will be better read if it provides information that's relevant to the specific audience.

3. Too long – Most folks are strapped for time. They won't tackle a long newsletter.

Cure: Keep your newsletter short. (1-2 pages an issue )

4. I have a friend... – Everyone has a friend, relative, spouse, or whatever who knows something about marketing and/or communication. Doesn't mean they know anything about newsletters. The results include poor writing, poor design, poor targeting, and poor performance.

Cure: Use people with newsletter experience.

5. Published once in a blue moon - Infrequent publication builds a reputation for poor follow-through. Probably not a good thing for your business.

Cure: Identify the problem. Is it your procrastination? Hire a pro to drive the project. Is it a complicated design? Hire a designer to help you simplify. Keeping your newsletter short will make it easier to publish more frequently.

6. Delegatophobia - Fear of delegating has killed quite a few newsletters, and many business people suffer from this disease. If you've been accused of being too "controlling," you're probably infected.

## Tackle a Newsletter and Come out on Top

Cure: Be honest! Do you REALLY have time to write this newsletter? Do you have a writer on staff who can take on this project? If you don't have the internal resources, hire a project manager and writer. Then let them do their jobs.

7. The disappearing act - One issue followed by...nothing. Maybe that initial issue took more effort than expected. Maybe content wasn't planned in advance. Whatever the reason, a disappearing act

doesn't say good things about your company.

Cure: Make the newsletter a top priority. Plan ahead. Stick to your schedule. Hire help if you need it.

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