

How to Create a Successful E-Newsletter

A Special Report From Gianfagna Strategic Marketing, Inc.

As more and more companies embrace content marketing, customer relationship management, and lead nurturing, marketers are rediscovering the value of e-newsletters.

Here's why an e-newsletter is a powerful tool in a smart marketing strategy and 10 tips for creating a successful e-newsletter.



10 Steps of Creating an Effective E-Newsletter

1 Treat your newsletter like a real publication. Develop an editorial plan and schedule. Outline several months' worth of content. Appoint an editor who's a skilled writer. Create a professionally designed header and an appealing, reader-friendly format.

2 Choose the proper publication schedule. Should you publish daily, weekly, biweekly, monthly, bimonthly, quarterly? Select a frequency that offers visibility without being annoying. Consider the volume of content you want to share and the resources needed to consistently deliver it. Do you have enough news to warrant a weekly publication and the editorial team to create it? If not, be realistic and scale it back.

3 Develop content readers will value. What challenges do your customers face? What's changing in your industry? How are you helping customers stay a step ahead?

Create content that helps people solve or avoid problems or gain insight into trends impacting their businesses.

4 Create versions. If you have a very large and diverse customer base, you may need to create different versions of your e-newsletter or multiple publications to ensure the relevance of content to the audience.

5 Don't be overly self-focused. It's fine to share positive news about your company, but avoid turning your e-newsletter into a brag sheet about your business and your latest achievements.

6 Don't send your newsletter as an email attachment. Post e-newsletter content on your website, then send an HTML email with short, easy-to-scan teasers linking to the stories on your site. Large attachments can get your email blocked as spam.

7 Use an email distribution service. Services like Constant Contact, iContact, MailChimp, and MyEmma make it easy to send your publication and track open rates and click-throughs. This knowledge can help you plan future content.

The CRM module of your sales and marketing database also may offer e-mail distribution capabilities.

8 Encourage content sharing. Many third-party email distribution services let you add social and email sharing widgets to your layout. You not only can track who shared your content, but also how much traction your content gets on specific platforms. On some systems, you can post directly to Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn.

9 Design for mobile friendliness. Readers are increasingly likely to view your e-mail on a tablet or mobile device. Some email distribution services facilitate this better than others. Choose easily readable fonts with a minimum font size of 16 px. Call to action buttons and targets should be large enough and spaced far enough apart for easy selection by someone using their thumbs.

10 Invite people to subscribe. Use every opportunity to invite prospects, colleagues, and associates to join your subscriber list. Create a prominent, one-click opt-in on your website and extend invitations in other materials. Be sure your sales team invites prospects to subscribe; prospects may be willing to say yes to an e-newsletter while they're thinking about placing an order.

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► How Today's Marketers are Using E-Newsletters

When marketers first started publishing e-newsletters, the main objective was to promote their companies. But today's marketers are using e-newsletters to do much more:

- 1 Deliver high-value content.** An e-newsletter is an ideal channel for sharing solution-oriented content like case studies or "how-to" information.
- 2 Enhance the brand.** A quality e-newsletter with interesting, insightful content reflects positively on your brand and positions your company as an expert, which helps differentiate you from competitors.
- 3 Build customer relationships.** An e-newsletter helps connect your customers to your business. Providing information that enables people to do their jobs better increases your value as a supplier.
- 4 Nurture sales leads.** An e-newsletter is an easy way to make frequent, low-pressure contact with prospects and demonstrate why you're a qualified supplier.
- 5 Drive website traffic and enhance search rankings.** Most companies host e-newsletter content on their websites and send HTML emails with website links. Once a reader is on your site, you can use the opportunity to encourage deeper engagement with other site content. Also, frequently adding new content to your website is one of the best ways to positively impact your rankings on search engines.

6 Humanize the business. People do business with people they like. An e-newsletter can help you introduce the people who produce your products and services to your customers and prospects.

7 Reach busy executives not active on social media. Most executives are on LinkedIn, but few are actively using social media for business. If you're only using social media to share news and content about your business, you may be missing a lot of decision-makers.

► How to Sustain Success

An e-newsletter is a representation of your brand and business. When done well, an e-newsletter can deliver real value to customers who trust you and impress prospects considering doing business with you.

If an e-newsletter makes sense for your marketing strategy, it's essential to allocate the resources needed for success. Many e-newsletters launched with great enthusiasm fail because the marketer didn't support the ongoing development of well-written content. If you're not ready to do it right, you're better off waiting until you can.

Why E-newsletters are Thriving

When web technology created dynamic new channels for communications, e-mail newsletters seemed destined to fade away.

But e-newsletters didn't disappear. In fact, many are thriving.

One reason is the relationship between publisher and reader. People opt in to get an e-newsletter; even if they don't read it immediately, they want to receive it.

Also, as *The New York Times* recently observed, "people have grown tired of the endless stream of information on the Internet ... An email newsletter generally shows up in your inbox because you asked for it and it includes links to content you have deemed relevant. In other words, it's important content you want in list form, which seems like a suddenly modern approach."

About Gianfagna

Gianfagna Strategic Marketing, Inc. provides marketing strategy and marketing consulting services to FORTUNE® 500 companies and other market leaders.

We specialize in business-to-business marketing and have helped many businesses achieve a better return on their marketing investment. Find out how we can help you.

Visit our website at gianfagnamarketing.com or contact Jean Gianfagna at (440) 808-4700, ext. 201.

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