PROVEN STRATEGIES ON STARTING AND MAINTAINING
A SUCCESSFUL EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR ANY BUSINESS

EMAIL NEWSLETTERS 101

Michael Griffin

A Small Business Reference Guide

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Introduction to the Book

This is a book about how to use email to deliver low cost but very effective newsletters to hundreds and perhaps thousands of prospects, clients, customers, and other interested subscribers. This book draws upon the wisdom and experiences of successful e-marketers. It includes additional resources such as an email newsletter glossary, checklists, and links to web sites. As an e-Book, the table of contents allows you to navigate to the subject that you want to read. Click on any item in the table of contents to jump to that topic.

A good email newsletter is a combination of relevant and high value-added content, interactive resources, and effective layout and design including HTML. The success of an email newsletter hinges upon a plan or program that includes not only great content development and design considerations but delivery systems and list management "engines" that are geared to meet the needs of readers. If you learn nothing else from this book, remember the importance of meeting the information needs of your subscribers. With that in mind and with the advice and lessons learned from this book, you should have a successful email newsletter program. The contributors to this book hope you enjoy, learn, and profit from this publication. If you have comments, suggestions, or corrections, please send them to the attention of Michael P. Griffin **mgriffin@kmt.com** or write to us at:

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Purpose of this Book

The purpose of this book is to help you prepare effective email newsletters and to devise an email newsletter program that will help you achieve your goals. By reading this book, you will avoid the mistakes that others have made. The contributors of this book have shared within these pages, advice, tips, and wisdom of successful e-marketers who have used email newsletters to great advantage. After reading this book you too will be able to create very effective email newsletters; dynamic e-marketing pieces that will:

- Effectively highlight your products and services.
- Provide value-added information to customers, clients, employees, stakeholders, and prospective stakeholders.
- Offer interactive marketing experiences based on your web resources or the resources of a partner or vendor.
- Provide competitive comparisons, interactive brochures, and invitations to seminars, workshops, and conventions.
- Detailed success stories, case studies, tips and advice that will actually help solve problems and satisfy information needs of prospective customers and existing customers.
- Increase response rates, generate leads and close sales by using an HTML newsletter with messages that will grab your customers' attention and promote effective interactions.
- Deliver a compelling message and present a professional image by publishing your own email newsletter.

Introduction to Email Newsletters

What is an Email Newsletter?

An email newsletter is a new twist on an old element in the marketing mix. Many organizations, large and small, use newsletters to help promote their organization, products and services, build relationships with customers and prospects, and provide valuable information to subscribers. Newsletters are also used to keep employees informed of organizational developments. Experts, consultants, and professionals of all sorts have used newsletters for many years to publish their advice, insights, and wisdom.

The email newsletter is an electronic version of the traditional printed newsletter that is physically mailed or distributed. Some may think that the email newsletter is simply an email version of the traditional paper newsletter. This is a common misconception. An email newsletter is more than copying and pasting your newsletter article into an email message and sending it to hundreds and perhaps thousands of subscribers. It takes advantage of the speed and low cost of the net. The sender can make use of precise and proper timing (the best days and times to deliver) to maximize subscriber interaction via click-throughs, inquiries, and ultimately purchases of goods and services.

A good email newsletter is a combination of relevant and high value-added content, interactive resources, and effective layout and design including HTML. The success of an email newsletter hinges upon a plan or program that includes not only great content development and design considerations but delivery systems and list management "engines" that are geared to meet the needs of readers while avoiding the use of spam.

Email Newsletters: Popular and Effective

The email newsletter is a popular way to get your company's message out. Companies, law firms, restaurants, CPAs, schools, churches, clubs, and government agencies are making effective use of this low cost but high tech means of mass communication. Since many organizations are starting email newsletters, it is now more important than ever to follow a consistent set of guidelines to succeed.

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Email is still the killer "app" that ultimately delivers the email newsletter to millions of inboxes everyday. Make no mistake about it, email is the preferred means of communication and therefore it only makes sense that newsletters, a potentially effective marketing tool, would get their high-tech makeover through email software. One recent survey noted that email is preferred by 48.5% as the primary business communication vehicle versus 39% for the telephone and 3.5% for traditional mail. [1] If you are not maximizing the use of email as a delivery option for your email newsletter, perhaps this book can help.

Part of the reason email newsletters are so popular is because email is cost effective. The major cost drivers of email are the activities of writing, design, setup, and list management. However, those are mostly fixed cost activities that are covered or justified by mass emailings and the returns on investment (ROI) they yield. In addition, design costs are typically one time costs since the newsletter templates can be created or acquired and used over and over again.

Once an email newsletter is created, you can send thousands of copies via email with little additional cost. For less than the cost of a business card, your reader can be provided with a useful publication that is not only informative but also helps you build customer relationships and sell products and services. According to experts, the cost of an email newsletter is typically, $30 to $50 per thousand, or between $0.03 and $0.05 per email. [2] This is significantly less than traditional newsletters with their paper, printing, handling, postage, return postage, and return mail handling costs. A typical cost of a mailed newsletter is between $.65 and $1.25. In addition, the content of email newsletters, because it is digital, may have a longer life since it can be archived on your web site or easily incorporated into other digital resources. [3]

Interactivity is another powerful feature and one that makes email newsletters an effective piece of digital marketing collateral. Unlike traditional paper based newsletters, email newsletters include links to web sites and email addresses. That puts the ability to investigate, inquire, respond, and perhaps purchase, just one click away.

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[1] According to Roper Starch Worldwide, New York, New York.
[2] Survey on the Commercial Use of Email, 2002, Association for Interactive Marketing,
[3] According to author Michael Katz (E-Newsletters that Work), a rule of thumb is that 75% of the work of preparing an email newsletter is the writing with 25% the other logistics. He also says that to assume that the email newsletter preparation will occupy about 1 day of work.

Interactivity goes a long way towards conversion - a goal of most e-marketers. Keep in mind that conversion can be many things:

- Exchange of information (name, address, email address, product information)
- Subscriptions
- Opting into an email marketing campaign
- Registration of a product
- Providing a referral

An important step on the way to conversion is persuasion. If you can persuade people to subscribe and read your email newsletter, you have a chance at conversion.

An email newsletter can offer your subscribers a similar level of information resources that are offered on your web site. Subscribers can click for more information, take virtual tours, download demos, view PowerPoint presentations, and communicate with a key person in your organization. The content of an email newsletter often triggers a customer or prospect to create a dialog with your organization. Dialogs develop relationships and good relationships lead to additional revenue. Your email newsletter will facilitate customer feedback, information requests, and exchanges or sharing of ideas. In short, email newsletters encourage information flows in both directions; from your organization to your customer/prospect and from your customer/prospect to your organization.

Over Saturation and Information Overload

The downside to email newsletters may stem from the fact that they are so popular. For every permissible (non-spam) newsletter that a person receives, they are blasted with unsolicited emails and email newsletters, many of which offer no value. Inundated with email newsletters, readers become frustrated with information overload and junk email.

Many people are writing and sending email newsletters. Large and small companies, professionals such as lawyers, accountants, physicians and others are sending email newsletters. Even families are sending newsletters to keep their members, relatives and friends up-to-date with family developments. With all this email newsletter activity, it is imperative that you make your newsletters stand out in the crowed inbox of the email program.

One way to make your email newsletter stand out is give it personality by using HTML formatting. Value-added content is an important goal of your email newsletter but it goes hand-in hand with good formatting, layout, and style. You can read more about those important issues in Chapter 9: Design and Layout

Characteristics of Good Email Newsletters

The next few sections introduce some of the characteristics of good email newsletters. How do you know when you have a good email newsletter? The ultimate test is whether your subscribers read it. However, there are other characteristics that we can target to increase the odds that your email newsletter will get read. A list of characteristics of good email newsletters will be covered in the next few sections.

To learn more about good email newsletters, do what the writers of this book have done. Take a look at the email newsletters that you read.

- What do you like about them?
- What do you do with them?
- Do you explore all their resources?
- Do you skim some articles and more carefully read others?
- Do you look forward to opening them when they are in your inbox?
- What do you like about their look and feel?
- What do you see in the "From:" line or the "Subject:" line that makes you want to open the email and read the newsletter?
- At least 80% of the content is useful information versus no more than 20% that is promotional (information about the company and its products/services).

Good email newsletters are read (or skimmed) by subscribers. Subscribers look forward to receiving the newsletter in the inbox and they "spend time" with their favorite newsletters. They interact with the newsletter. They explore links, request additional information, download free reports, worksheets, and white papers; they crunch numbers in calculators, look up stock quotes, scroll, and make purchases all through the gateway of the email newsletter.

You want your readers to "stick around" and explore – not only when they visit your web site but also when they read your newsletters. When your readers do stick around, it helps with an important web metric called "stickiness". Stickiness is important.

It's also important for the reader to feel that the newsletter is useful, a vibe you must provide. Usefulness (utility or value-added) can be best evaluated by answering the question: Would a subscriber forward a copy of the newsletter to a friend or colleague? If your subscribers truly believe that you are doing a good job as an information provider, they probably will spend the time to read and interact with the newsletter. They will also forward it to others — giving it "legs". If subscribers think your newsletter is a marketing puff piece, they will quickly delete it from the inbox.

More on Stickiness

Email newsletters promote an important e-marketing quality called stickiness. Usually discussed by web site administrators as a worthy goal, stickiness must be one of the goals of your email newsletter. You want subscribers to spend time reading (or skimming) the newsletter because that may also lead to website visits and eventually conversions (purchases).[4] Much like web sites, email newsletters can be full of resources – links to other information, pictures, diagrams, web site links, downloads, etc. Good email newsletters get readers to "poke around", "browse", and "kick the tires". Stickiness promotes responses, loyalty, and future purchases. The theory is that if your subscribers (and web site visitors) don't stick around long, they won't buy. So make a list of things you can include in your email newsletter that will promote stickiness.

Viral

Not only are good email newsletters "sticky", they spawn or better yet, they clone. Readers of your email newsletter should be able to easily forward copies of it to other interested parties by simply clicking the FORWARD button in their email software. This is what some folks call the "viral" benefit of email newsletters. In an act of the simplest form of viral marketing, subscribers will forward a copy of your e-publication to friends and colleagues. However, they will only click that "Forward" button if they believe that you have provided good newsletter.

The viral marketing possibility of email newsletters is another reason why you must work hard to provide enough useful information. What is enough? That's a difficult

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[4] Research studies show that readers of web site content, emails, and email newsletters tend to skim rather than read every word.

question to answer. One thing is for sure, if your email newsletter is 90% marketing/promotional material or mostly filler and puff, your subscribers will rarely forward it. Prepare a great email newsletter, full of value-added information and copies of it will multiply across the internet. Subscribers will mention your email newsletters in online discussions, chat rooms, and in emails, giving more exposure to your messages and opening doors for additional interactions and new subscribers.

Value-Added Information

For your email newsletter to be successful and well respected, you must think of yourself as an information provider. Information is the lifeblood of many organizations and people value information. For years, people have subscribed (and in some cases have paid lots of money) to traditional paper based newsletters. Some readers will pay hundreds of dollars per year to subscribe to investment advisory newsletters and they will continue to do so as long as they believe that the information in the newsletter is worth the subscription price.

Many readers look to newsletters to give them quick snippets of information that they can use in their businesses, professions, and everyday life to make a difference. Subscribers hope that you can provide them with the kind of information that they could only get by doing their own time consuming research. Since you probably have useful information or can get your hands on good information, you can share it with your customers and prospective customers through your email newsletter. That's great value. Your subscribers will appreciate your effort and you will build valuable and profitable customer relationships — relationships that may yield results for years to come.

As you read through this book and as you develop your email newsletter plan and program, keep reminding yourself of this simple assumption. ***You are an information provider!*** When you write and design a great email newsletter, you show your readers (customers and prospective customers) that you are more than a seller of product — you are a source of valuable information. Show your subscribers that your email newsletter is more than "brochureware".

There are so many possibilities for adding value through an email newsletter. Your email newsletter should add value so your readers can use it to:

- Make intelligent purchase decisions.

- Live better lives or do their job better.
- Lower costs.
- Save time.
- Use your product more effectively.
- Increase revenues.
- Promote their cause.
- Stay up-to-date.
- Improve careers.
- Improve standards of living.
- Shape the future.
- Enrich intellectual life.
- Enrich spiritual life.

Increase Customer Lifetime Value and Build Relationships

Many marketing experts talk about increasing customer lifetime value and the importance of building long-term relationships with customers. Any informative email newsletter helps build relationships and customer loyalty. Every well-done email newsletter builds stronger links between you and your customers (and prospects). One of the value-added functions of any good marketing program is to provide information that prospective customers can use to make purchase decisions. Remember the simple selling model? Persuasion leads to conversion which can lead to revenue. As you work this formula over and over (with the aid of your email newsletter) you are adding to customer lifetime value.

It's About Content

Content, Content, Content

Content is king! Great formatting, pictures, color, e-metrics and web tricks cannot save an email newsletter that was developed with poor content. All the tracking of clicks, all the innovative ways to build a database of email addresses, and fancy HTML formatting will not make an email newsletter with poor content successful. Most of the value of an email newsletter is in the information it provides. Period! Invest in content before you invest in anything else. You must have something to say that is interesting, useful, and compelling or the email newsletter will be a huge waste of time for everyone involved, especially for customers and prospects, who will see your email newsletter as just another piece of spam.

Choosing Content

Where will you get your content for your email newsletter? Will you write all the content yourself, get others to write it for you, or use 'recycled' articles from other writers? Fresh, original content is always the best. If you don't think you can manage writing all of the content, perhaps you can compromise: consider writing most of the articles with the occasional third-party article.

As you decide what content to put into your email newsletter, think about one of the basic goals of any newsletter – to build a relationship. Remember that your entry into the world of email newsletter publishing is not about replacing your direct mail pieces with a thinly disguised email newsletter sent cheaply via email. Your foray into this field is about building stronger customer relationships with current and prospective customers. It is in that light that you should gather and develop factual and solid content. People rationalize purchases (conversions) based on facts. Present the facts in your newsletter.

Also remember that you are an expert in your field and that as an expert, you have much information to offer. For example, if you are a mortgage broker who writes a newsletter, you can bet that most of the people who read your newsletter are not mortgage brokers. They want to know some of the tidbits, tips, advice, and trends that you know and that

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you clearly see and can explain. They want to know what you know about interest rate trends, closing costs, credit report errors, credit repair, and innovative loan programs. Why not share what you know via your email newsletter?

What is there about your industry, products, services, and your organization that your readers would like to know more about? There's probably a lot! Your subscribers don't work in your field nor do they have the richness of experiences that you have. ***Tell them a story!*** Think about how you share that in interesting, engaging, and interactive ways. For example, Eenie Meenie Records in Los Angeles doesn't just use their newsletter to promote their artists and advertise – they actively seek feedback and content from their customers with contests and exclusive offers, even private shows and chances to meet the bands they enjoy. If you can pull that off, you will be a long way towards your goal of creating a great email newsletter.

A newsletter adds value by offering relevant and truly useful articles your customers can't find anywhere else. And you write these articles by taking the intelligence and expertise you accumulate every day and packaging it for your customers in helpful, easily digested portions. Explain new technologies. Decipher relevant legislation. Forecast trends. Chime in on industry debates. *Give your customers the knowledge and understanding they need to become better customers*.[5]

Figure 2.1 shows an example of an email newsletter that is aimed at its target audience and engages them by not only telling a story, but telling it in a different way. Michael Katz's *E-Newsletter on E-Newsletters* gives readers suggestions for content and writing tips in an engaging manner. This example talks about how the writer became a fan of country music and uses it as a metaphor for finding your audience – a unique approach that does more than just give facts.

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[5] B2B E-Newsletters Done Right, Build relationships by Helping, not by Selling, by Mark Scapicchio. Mark has written advertising and marketing copy for some of the best-known companies and advertising agencies in the world, and for many successful smaller companies. To learn more about his background, his clients, and how he can improve your copy visit his Web site at **www.scapicchio.com**

Figure 2.1 Michael Katz's *E-Newsletter on E-Newsletters*

Keep Track of Ideas

Writer's block or even a lack of ideas can be a problem when writing any publication. However, if you are excited about your subject, then you probably won't have that problem. Perhaps the reverse will be true — you may have an abundance of ideas. However, if you are concerned that you will be tripped up by some form of writer's block, start keeping a list of content ideas in your planner, notebook or PDA. Or

maintain a word processing file of content ideas that you update once or twice a week. Ask your readers to suggest topics. The ideas will pile up. In the end, the challenge won't be in coming up with ideas — the biggest challenge will be how to filter and prioritize the information so that you can best serve the needs of your specific target market – the subscribers of your email newsletter.

Target Audience

Who would likely subscribe to your email newsletter? Good writing starts with knowing your reader. Can you think about the typical subscriber and what they might ask you about? For instance, Publishers Weekly sends emails to specific segments of the publishing market on a weekly basis – libraries get content dedicated to their portion of the industry, bookstores get content related to retail operations, etc.

The ultimate goal of your email newsletter is to engage readers who will eventually do business with your organization. Therefore, keep in mind that you are trying to attract readers who will eventually buy from you. For example, if you are a financial planner whose services are geared towards wealthy individuals, your estate planning articles might be focused on estates of greater than $2 million dollars. That group is quite different from the young couple struggling to buy their first home. Their information needs are quite different. The wealthy person might want to know how to shelter income from taxes and how to protect assets from estate taxes. On the other hand, the young couple might want information about how to buy and finance a home or how to start saving for retirement.

To really get to know your subscribers, you should develop a subscriber profile. This profile should be quite similar to the profile that marketers would develop for your customers. The profile might include:

- Where they live
- Gender
- Job title
- Job function
- Industry
- Company size
- Company sales volume

- Age
- Occupation
- Income range
- Cars they drive
- Children and what ages
- Hobbies
- Where they shop

If you do a good job identifying your subscribers and their needs and you work hard to develop appropriate content, your readers will eventually come to the conclusion that what you write about, helps. That direct link between what you write about and how you can help your subscribers is powerful. You need to develop that link to be successful over the long run.

Have you ever read a company's newsletter articles and then fail to see any link to the services and products of that company? That's a big no-no. Your articles should make your subscribers want to learn more about your offerings. Your content should make subscribers request additional information. Newsletter content should offer useful product and service related information, that's the critical link you want to have in every issue. There is an insurance agency that has a newsletter that includes food recipes. Recipes are popular tidbits of information but how do they help sell more insurance products and services? Unless you are the owner of a food service company, how will recipes contribute to the success of your business? Over the long run, content like that doesn't directly link to your business mission is more like filler or fluff. It does little to develop profitable relationships. Remember the simple model of selling – persuasion leads to conversion which leads to revenue. You need to "trace" how your content "works" the selling model.

Question Yourself as you Write

You need to perform a thorough analysis of your readers' needs before you write. That is a critical success factor of newsletter writing. Think about the information you need to convey and anticipate questions your reader might have after reading your email newsletter. The answers to those questions should then be incorporated into the first draft of the newsletter. Here are some more questions you might ask yourself as you rough out your first draft of the newsletter:

- How familiar are your readers with your topics? How much do you need to explain?
- What additional information, tables, pictures, diagrams, and charts will enhance your message and provide value to the customer/prospect?
- Are you overstating your case? When you overstate, the reader will be on guard and then you risk losing their confidence.
- Are you being objective? This is difficult to do when promoting your organization, services, and products.
- Have you weeded out subjective statements or superlative phrases? Most readers are skeptical of exaggeration or over-reaching wording. Do not reduce your credibility by using superlatives. Readers want facts and objectivity.
- Is your tone and content appropriate based on your target audience? Your choices of tone include:
- Casual
- Informal
- Personal
- Scholarly
- Formal
- Does the level of complexity or technical information in your newsletter match the level of your subscribers?
- Will your subscribers perceive your newsletter as a benefit?
- If your subscriber base is global or from diverse backgrounds, be careful in your use of jargon, slang, and clichés. Jargon, slang, and clichés are easily misunderstood. If you insist on using jargon, please explain the meaning of the word so that no-one feels left out.

More About Content

Style and Tone

Whatever style and tone you use in your email newsletter, avoid a promotional writing style. Don't make brash and subjective claims. For example, if you stated that your product is the "hottest ever" or that your service is the "ultimate", then you are likely using a style that is too promotional. Credibility suffers when subscribers think that you are exaggerating in your newsletter. An overly promotional writing style places an extra burden on subscribers as they work to filter out the hype and hyperbole to get to the facts.

Many readers like informal or conversational writing better than formal writing. Write like you talk. Think about what you would say if your goal was to provide clear and concise information, in conversation with a prospect or customer. For example, if you are a CPA – write using the same style and tone you would use if you were meeting to go over a tax return or if you were giving advice over the phone about a business acquisition.

Personality

Think about how you can give your newsletter personality. The development of the newsletter's personality starts with you — the editor. You should probably try to model the personality of the newsletter after your personality (unless you have an awful personality). If you have an interesting personality, then you might find a way to make it shine through in the email newsletter. One way to do that is to be genuine. Be yourself. Subscribers want genuineness within their communications; they want to know that a real person is behind the writing of the email newsletter. Some newsletter editors suggest that you share personal information in your articles so your subscribers get to know you – they see you are like them. You have hobbies, interests, kids, problems, and etc. Your genuiness makes the subscribers feel as though they know you; as though they can call upon you for valuable insights. Perhaps your hobbies, interests, and personal case histories, when relevant and appropriate can give your newsletter personality. Sometimes humor can do the trick. But be careful with humor. It is a

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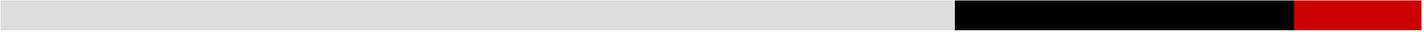
double-edge sword. Some subscribers will love your humor while others will be turned off by it. See the next section on email newsletter humor. However you develop your newsletter personality, always be sure that the information you provide is appropriate and relevant to your subscribers' information needs.

Email Newsletter Humor

Humor can help develop the personality of an email newsletter but you must be careful when using humor. Humor can also turn off subscribers. That is especially true if they are seeking information and find the humor to be inappropriate, irrelevant, or space filler. An email newsletter containing puns or jokes may be described as stupid. That will certainly detract from the serious points you want to make. Cynical humor may be thought of as judgmental or misplaced.

Humor in a widely distributed email newsletter might be hard to pull off because of the diversity of the subscribers. People of different cultures, education, and age may not "understand or get" your humor.

Sometimes cartoons are a good choice. However, just as with pictures and other images, you need to receive permission before you can use a cartoon. Shown in Figure 3.1 is one of the cartoons from CartoonBank.com

"We can conquer somebody with a bigger castle, or we can add on."

Figure 3.1 Cartoon from CartoonBank

Such a cartoon could be humorous and appropriate in a real estate email newsletter. It could be used in the context of an article about the merits of adding an addition to your home in an environment of low interest rates.

Cartoonbank.com is a New Yorker Magazine company. On their web site, they note the following compelling reasons for using the humor of these cartoons in a newsletter.

> *Sure, cartoons provide comic relief from articles that sometimes can be heavy going. But New Yorker cartoons will also help you:*
>
> *Increase your newsletter's circulation.*

Create a bond with your readership.

Illuminate, illustrate, reinforce, and explain points in unique ways.

Establish credibility by using material already vetted and published by the New Yorker.[6]

Titles of Articles

Use attention-getting headlines to introduce your articles and stories. Think about how newspapers do it. Newspapers title their stories in a way that makes it easy to determine the article content.

Writing titles for an article is a skill. Good headline writers for newspapers and magazines are valuable editors. To complicate matters, there are a variety of different headline styles. Some headline styles are straightforward and informational while others are written to tease the reader. Some are meant to be funny, clever or cute.

You need to decide what works for your subscribers. If a story is meant to cover a serious subject, then it is obvious that funny or cute won't work well for a headline. In that case, an informational title, that simply gives the reader an idea of what the articles is about, is your only choice. Here are a few examples:

- Informational: This is No Ordinary Product Release
- Teasing: **Will this New Service Save You Thousands?**
- Cute: **New Personal Finance Software will Pad Your Bank Account**

Writing a Great "Subject Line"

Give a great deal of thought to what you want the "Subject:" line to state. Just as with an important office memo, the "Subject:" line is an important headline for the content that follows. In addition, the "Subject:" line should be clear, honest, and never misleading. It also should motivate the subscriber to open the email. Your "Subject:"

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[6] Cartoonbank.com - Licensing Newsletter, January 2003, www.cartoonbank.com

line should get you in the ball game – give you a chance - keep the subscriber from clicking the "Delete" button.

The "Subject:" line must incorporate a specific benefit or some information that will interest subscribers and motivate them to open the issue. It must be more than just your company name or the name of your email newsletter. For example, if you are a CPA and your email newsletter issue is on retirement planning; use a subject like: "Do you want to retire early?" If your email newsletter discusses your activities at an upcoming trade show, why not write a "Subject:" line like: "Join us in Orlando; gourmet meal on us!"

The Length of the "Subject:" line is also an issue — it should be around 5-8 words and no more than 40 characters, including spaces. Keep in mind that dependent upon the type of email program and screen customizations, your subscribers could be seeing as little as the first four or five words in your "Subject:" line. Be careful when choosing words for the "Subject:" line. Some words are turn-offs. For example, some experts suggest that you not use the word "free" in the "Subject:" line. Some readers find the word "free" as an immediate indication of a gimmick or a marketing tease or ploy. However, if you do feel that the word "free" is an acceptable term to use in your "Subject:" line, consider the following ethical advice from the Direct Marketing Association (DMA). The DMA is the largest trade association for businesses that utilize direct, database, and interactive marketing.

> *If a product or service is offered as "free," all qualifications and conditions should be clearly and conspicuously disclosed, in close conjunction with the use of the term "free" or other similar phrase. When the term "free" or other similar representations are made (for example, 2-for-1, half-price or 1-cent offers), the product or service required to be purchased should not have been increased in price or decreased in quality or quantity. (DMA:* **http://www.the-dma.org/guidelines/dotherightthing.pdf***)*

You should also know that the word "free" in the "Subject:" line may not pass through certain spam filter programs and may result in your email newsletter be labeled as a spam. Don't get real fancy with the "Subject:" line. Perhaps the best bet is to use your newsletter name, followed by your lead article title. One school of thought says that you

should never personalize the "Subject:" line. Thanks to spammers, businesspeople are quick to delete anything that looks like spam or junk email — and nothing looks more like spam or junk email than a personalized message from an unknown sender. Eliminate all doubt by making the newsletter title — the thing to which they subscribed — the first thing they see.[7]

The Importance of the "From:" Line

In a survey conducted by Double Click, a provider of marketing analytical tools for web publishers, it was revealed that trust between the sender and the receiver of an email is paramount. Receivers of email cited the "From:" line as the number one motivator for opening an email message. About 60% of respondents noted the "From" line and 30% cited the "Subject:" line, as key variables when deciding whether to open the email. [8] There are some studies that show that as much as 80% of emails from unknown sources are never read; deleted from the in box without ever being opened.

The name or email address on the "From:" line should be from an identifiable person, preferably the editor of the email newsletter. And it is that person with whom the subscriber will eventually feel some connection or rapport. For example, there is an email newsletter published by a sports products company that includes information on sporting goods equipment and also provides tips for athletes and coaches. The "From" line shows not only the company name but also the web site address, and the editor's name — Coach Nick. The email newsletter begins with a personal message from Coach Nick.

In addition to identifying in the "From" line who the email newsletter is from, you should also provide specific contact information within the body of the newsletter. That information should include company name, street address, phone number, email link or at least a link to the to the newsletter's sponsoring Web site. This is one area you can go overboard – really make it easy for customers to get a hold of you – include an 800 number a fax number and more.

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[7] B2B E-Newsletters Done Right, Build relationships by Helping, not by Selling, by Mark Scapicchio. Mark , **www.scapicchio.com**

[8] Double Click Consumer Email Study, October 2002, **http://www.doubleclick.com/us/knowledge/documents/research/dc_consumer_e-mail_0210.pdf**

Never use fraudulent or fake information to make it appear as though the email newsletter originated from a different organization. Your use of invalid or non-existent domain names or any other deceptive addressing is inappropriate and will only hurt your credibility.

Credibility is very important in email newsletter marketing. Keep in mind that legitimate editors of email newsletters would never obscure the source of the email that delivers the email newsletter. Why would they? What is there to hide? On the other hand, if you have an effective pen name (alias or pseudonym), use it in the "From" line, but only use it if it adds value. One of my favorite newsletter personalities comes from a company called Constant Contact, a company that provides a comprehensive email marketing solution. The author identifies herself in the "From:" line as Michelle Keegan, Email Marketing Diva. Whenever you receive that newsletter, you know what to expect and look forward to reading it. Let your personality come through in every aspect of your newsletter, including who it comes from. A company called ePromos.com (a marketer of promotional products) has an informational newsletter that is written by the founder whose name is Jake. The "From:" line is "Jake from ePromos.com"

Whatever you decide to show in the "From:" line, stay with it. Don't change the contents of the "From:" line from one issue to the next. Consistency is very important. You want to get your subscribers accustomed to receiving this important email (email newsletter) from you. Your subscribers shouldn't have to guess who the message is from. If they start guessing; they will start deleting.

Be sure that the "From:" line contains an active return email address. Subscribers may click the "Reply" button and compose messages that they want to send to the email newsletter editor. When they click that reply button they are assuming that their comments will reach their intended recipient. If they receive a "bounce back" they will be disappointed for a variety of reasons. Subscribers need to believe that their replies reach the editor and get read.

Finally, keep in mind that the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 prohibits that false "transmission" information which includes the "From:" line. Be sure to read more about CAN-SPAM in a subsequent section of this e-Book.

Using Photographs, Images, Illustrations

Photographs, images, and illustrations are a critical component of today's HTML emails. Including image files in HTML email is important (users now expect images to be part of HTML enabled email) and, thankfully, including images in HTML email messages is relatively easy to do. As with anything, there are several rules of thumb that should be followed – below is an "Image Etiquette" list.

- Keep the size of any image file below 20Kb (and smaller, if possible) through optimization methods. You can make an occasional exception, but no one will put up with receiving an image greater than 100K.
- Stick to popular, industry standard image file formats.
- Upload the image files to an Internet server and refer to the file's web address – also known as its URL (Uniform Resource Locator). The URL identifies the location of the image to the email client, so that it knows where to go on the Internet to find the file and download it to the user's computer for viewing.
- If you send a message that refers to an image file URL, make sure you don't remove the image from that server, or else the user will see the "Red X" – see more below.

Optimizing Images for the Web

If the recipient of your email newsletter connects to the Internet on a dial-up 56k modem (and most people still do connect that way, according to research reports and our own anecdotal surveys), any email that exceeds 100Kb in size will take more than a couple of seconds to download and appear on screen. In today's short attention span environment, a scenario like that guarantees that some recipients will not have the patience to wait and will close out of your message. But, it doesn't have to be that way. There are techniques for slimming down the size of your images in your email. If you use High Impact eMail and the ReadyShare, all of these issues are automatically taken care of for the user.

Cropping an image is one of the best – and easiest – ways to reduce the size of an image file. If there is extra space around the meat and potatoes of the image, simply cut it out of the file by cropping. Most photo editor programs (such as Photoshop or ACD See) provide a simple way to crop images – you'll need to familiarize yourself with the crop tool of your photo editor and start using it right away.

Another useful way to reduce the weight of an image is by sizing it down. Images are typically measured in pixels – so you can have a small logo image that is 80 pixels wide by 80 pixels tall. Sizing that image down to 60 x 60 would reduce the total size of the file. There is a very close relationship between image size and file size. Lowering the dimensions of your image file will make it smaller to send and quicker to download.

There are also some more complex ways to lower the file size of your images. These techniques include adjusting brightness, contrast, hue, and saturation – all of which are properties of image files. It is also possible to use tools that will remove pixels from images – thereby lowering the total file size. These tools can be researched and found on the Internet and are also known as crunchers or compressors.

Stick with GIF and JPG

There's not too much to say about this – GIF and JPG formats monopolize the web image file space. Browsers and email clients have been built to support GIF and JPG, so you know those files will be received and displayed properly. Why take a chance that your images will not be seen when you know GIF and JPG will do the job? Furthermore, the GIF and JPG formats are easy to work with in resizing and editing.

Upload and Refer to Avoid the Red X

It is crucial that the images you include in your email newsletter are NOT embedded within the body of the email. Even if you size images down to a small size (say: 5- 10 Kb), you don't want to embed that image because the total size of the message will quickly get out of hand, *and more importantly cause compatibility problems*. For users who connect via dial-up, this will be a deal-breaker. What you need to do is upload your images to a folder on an Internet web server and then make reference to their URLs from within the HTML code.

When you refer to the image URL, the email will open almost instantaneously and then the email client will go out to the Internet and pull down the image from the URL address. So, even though the images might not appear instantaneously, the text of the message will come up right away.

Since you will be referencing the URL of the image instead of embedding the image in the message body, you will need to keep the image located on the web server for a period of time to ensure that recipients won't see the dreaded Red X on screen. A good
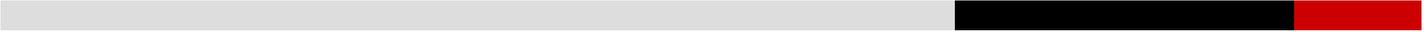
rule is to maintain the image at the same location for 6 months from the date of the email newsletter. If you plan to archive your newsletter (see more about the advantages of this in Chapter 12), plan to store your images indefinitely. The cost of doing this is so far outweighed by the potential benefits of adding life to your content.

Get with the Program

Developing an Email Newsletter Program

Successful email newsletters are the product of a well devised program. An email newsletter program consists of the plans and activities that you will need to create and deliver a high quality email newsletter. The first three requirements of the program should be issues of:

- Frequency
- Schedule
- Editorial agenda

Frequency

Frequency refers to how often you will send out the email newsletter. Will it be weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly? Many e-marketing experts believe that you should send out your email newsletter on a weekly or monthly frequency.

When you start distributing your email newsletter at intervals greater than a month (i.e., quarterly) your subscribers will likely begin to forget you, your mission, and what you can do for them. If that begins to happen, they won't open and read the email newsletter and eventually will take the time to unsubscribe. When your email newsletter doesn't add value, it's junk that clogs up their inbox.

Email Newsletter Production Schedule

Next you need to create a schedule and stick to it. The preparation and delivery of an email newsletter is an issue of production and operations management. Just as you might schedule a factory order for production and then work backwards to acquire resources, organize and control those resources, and ship the goods, you need to plan the production of every email newsletter by starting at the end: the delivery date.

Create a publication calendar then work backwards from the projected delivery date, setting dates for certain key deliverables. You will need dates for first drafts, final drafts, etc. Set a publication schedule and stick with it to create consistency.

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Look over your calendar. Think about dates that work well for you and your subscribers. What are good days for your subscribers to receive their email newsletter? What are good days leading up to the delivery date – that's important for you as you work towards your final goal. Do you want to set the first Tuesday of the month as your publication date? Is a Friday bad because of the weekend? Is the end of the month tough for you because of other business demands?

Pick dates and create a firm schedule. That eliminates procrastination and the feeling that your next email newsletter is always hanging over your head. When it's on a regular schedule and carefully plotted throughout your calendar, it becomes a regular part of your workload. Here's an example of a schedule for an email newsletter:

- October 1 - Review subscriber feedback since last issue and prepare outline for November issue.
- October 10 - First draft of email newsletter.
- October 11 - Distribute first draft to key personnel for feedback.
- October 15 - Incorporate feedback and produce revised draft.
- October 20 - Prepare any letters to editors and incorporate.
- October 25 - One last proof read.
- October 29 - Incorporate edits and deliver for deployment and testing.
- November 1 - Rollout (send issue via email).

Editorial Agenda

What are the objectives of your email newsletter? Will it, in addition to building relationships with your subscribers, do any of the following?

- Generate leads
- Raise funds
- Support a product or service

Your editorial agenda should be tied to helping you meet these objectives. The editorial agenda is your plan for upcoming issues of the email newsletter. It is impacted by your objectives and the topics you would like to cover in the months to come. For example, a simple editorial agenda for a CPA might look like this:

January – Organizing Your Data for Uncle Sam

February – Basics of Retirement Planning

March – Small Business Planning

April – Risk Management

May – New developments in GAAP

June – Budgeting for the Small Business

July – Using Information Technology in Your Office

August – Auditing Nonprofits

September – CPAs and Personal Financial Planning

October – Attestation Services in the New Millennium

November – The 21st Century Controller

December – Year End Tax Planning

Here's an example editorial agenda for a restaurant:

January – Coupons for certain nights – slow season; Comfort Food Issue

February – Valentines Day reservations

March – Spring Menu introduction

April – Special events; Guest chefs

May – Mother's Day; take-out specials

June – Planning a party for your graduate

July – Beat the heat issue and Bastilles Day Celebration

August – Celebrating the bounty of local farms (articles from local framers)

September – Introducing the Fall Menu

October – Apples, Pumpkins and more

November – Planning for Holiday Parties

December – Gift Certificates and Special Events

To carry out your editorial agenda, keep in mind that you must plan it according to the format or general outline that you have adopted. Below is a possible newsletter format:

- Introductory Note from Editor
- Case Study
- Educational Material
- Offers
- Web Links
- Contests

Your editorial agenda will affect each element. For example, using the above outline, you will need to develop a case study, educational materials, and offers that are relevant to each topic. Using our CPA as an example, the November issue should have a case study that describes how the firm helped a particular company's controller introduce 21st century information technology into his department, educational material about the new roles of a controller, and certifications that controllers are achieving (CMA, CPA, CFM, etc).

Getting Help from Others

As you think about your editorial agenda and put together a schedule, think about partnering with content providers. Look at your schedule and think about who might provide a source of content. For example, if you are writing a newsletter for a CPA firm, articles on financial planning, payroll, and software might be very appropriate. It could be that investment advisors, third party payroll service firms, and software vendors would be willing to provide articles that would both inform your clients and possible generate future leads.

Why should you get help from others? Here are a few great reasons:

- Articles from others will likely improve the credibility of the newsletter.

- It makes your job easier.

- And importantly it gives you an opportunity to write articles for their newsletters, thus giving you a new opportunity to promote yourself and your publication.

- For a realtor's email newsletter it might make sense to have a local banker write about refinancing, an engineer write about septic tank care, an inspector discuss the basic points of a home inspection, and a decorator write about the best ways to get your house ready for a showing.

Ready, Set, Go!

What to Accomplish with Your Email Newsletter

If you are ready to get started, slow down for a minute. What do you want to accomplish with the newsletter? Have you answered that question? Believe it or not, people write newsletters without being able to write a sentence or two about what the publication will accomplish. It is far to general to state that you want your newsletter to generate revenue, or leads, or increase traffic to your web site. You need to be more specific. Here are some examples:

- Promote the goodwill that the business or organization does in the community.
- Help raise funds for a foundation by keeping in contact with donors.
- Use it as a marketing or public relations tool by providing news items.
- Provide internal information to staff members including fringe benefit information.
- Inform your clients, customers, etc. of new product developments.
- Sell it as one of your organization's products (paid subscriptions).
- Provide authoritative information, advice, instruction.
- Create a community of interest (hobbyists, sportsman, professionals associations).

Defining what you want to accomplish is another critical success factor and a question that you need to answer before you start writing your first issue. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, take time to write a mission or purpose statement for your newsletter. Include it in at least the first issue and in the subscriber area of your web site. Make it clear to everyone (especially yourself) what you are going to try to accomplish with your email newsletter.

Selecting a Name for Your Email Newsletter

Choose a title that reflects your organization's mission and the email newsletter's content or goals. Make sure you don't use a title that's been trademarked by another organization or a title that readers could confuse with another publication. Notice how each of the following email newsletter names are simple and yet tell you what to expect:

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- Apple eNews
- Macromedia – The Edge Newsletter
- IT News
- Office Expert
- bCentral Bulletin
- WordBiz – by Debbie Weil

Mission or Purpose Statement

Include a statement about the newsletter's purpose and/or audience. This will be useful for new readers and it should be easy if you have given thought to what you want to accomplish with your newsletter. If you think the mission statement clutters your newsletter, then put it on your web site and include a link to it in your newsletter. Like the mission of your organization, periodically review the mission of your email newsletter and revise it, as conditions and subscriber needs change. The advantages of an email newsletter mission statement include:

- A guiding light for content development.
- A clear communication to prospective content providers as to what you are trying to do with your email newsletter.
- A clear communication to prospective and current subscribers of what your email newsletter is about.

Team Effort

Who you can get on your creative team? Like many business tasks, preparing your email newsletter should be a collaborative effort. In areas that you are an expert start gathering content for the newsletter and perhaps even start writing. For areas outside your expertise, call upon your key managers, colleagues and advisors to give you critical input and content. You may also consider an editorial board which could help set the agenda and review final drafts of the newsletter. An editorial board can be a great source of new ideas and content. In addition, think about using other outside contributors to get a diversity of opinion and other spheres of influence.

- If you are a realtor – use bankers, inspectors, septic experts, etc.
- If you are a CPA use business valuation consultants, enrolled agents, investment advisors, auditors, etc.

- If you are a software developer, have another developer write about how your product works well with theirs.
- If you are an insurance agent, solicit content from jewelers, alarm manufacturers, appraisers, and risk management experts.
- If you are an auto dealer, get some user testimonials from your service department.

A great team effort will not only produce a better newsletter but will bring key players together to endorse the common vision or mission of the newsletter.

You probably already have a substantial warehouse of information about your company and products and can incorporate that data into a newsletter program. However, don't ignore untapped sources of information such as outside advisors. For example, if your tax accountant or insurance agent has knowledge that might be relevant to your customers, ask those colleagues if they would be interested in contributing to the newsletter. A physician could utilize the expertise of an asthma specialist in a newsletter geared to patient needs. Why not ask these "experts" to provide you with an article or two. Many people are aspiring writers and will be flattered and very willing to contribute. Even this book was a collaborative effort with input from copywriters, entrepreneurs, software developers, and e-marketers.

You are the editor of the newsletter and that means using as many high quality sources of information you can find to meet the information needs of your readers. The attribution you decide to give to contributors (their name, phone, number, email address, web address, etc) in the newsletter may be the only form of advertising they need to compensate them for their writing. And if your email newsletter is sent to hundreds or perhaps thousands of subscribers, a contributor can get great exposure. In most cases, people will be enthusiastic about contributing.

Getting Ready to Write

Writing an email newsletter can be intimidating. Some people will procrastinate, stalling the process because they do not know where or how to start. There are ways to overcome this intimidation and procrastination. Begin by reviewing your email newsletter program or plan and your mission statement. As was mentioned in a previous chapter, it is always wise to take time to look at other email newsletters that you like to read or that you believe are effective. They may also get your creative juices flowing.

There is nothing wrong with emulating a successful formula. Look no further than other email newsletters with very loyal followings. They must be doing something right. Why not learn from them. They should not be too difficult to find. Talk to friends and colleagues and get their top email newsletter picks. And look at all types. Look at newsletters from professional associations, nonprofit organizations, investment firms, sports, and news. There are thousands to choice from. Subscribe to as many as you can handle— you can always unsubscribe after you learned their lessons.

Towards a Good Read

Prepare an Outline

You want your email newsletter to be a "good read". A "good read" is a newsletter you enjoy reading – that is clear, concise, and logical. There is no better compliment from subscribers. To be a "good read" you must do some work. Good writing is hard work; it doesn't come natural to most people. It involves spending the time to put together a good outline, writing, re-working the articles till they are clear and coherent, and providing a structure that is logical and easy to skim.

It is valuable to review several successful email newsletters to see what you can learn from the fruits of the struggles of other editors. Once you have reviewed a critical mass of great email newsletters then prepare a simple outline for yours. Think about the elements you want in the newsletter. Also keep in mind that consistency is important. And although it's probably unrealistic to think that you will arrive at the best format or outline with your first issue, strive to come up with an outline that you can live with for the long-term. You need a template that you can use over and over again. Remember that subscribers like consistency and templates promote consistency of format and style\. Subscribers want the newsletter to look the same, feel the same, have similar resources and provide comparable benefits each and every issue.

Below is an outline used by a software company for its email newsletter. It uses this simple but effective and consistent outline for each and every newsletter:

Introductory Note from Editor – personal observations from the editor. This is used to connect in a personal way with each reader.

Case Study – a summary of a recently completed project or new product introduction. This gives the editor the chance to not only inform and educate the reader but to also "sell" the capabilities of the company to the reader.

Educational Material – tips, statistics, metrics, news, how-to, and other useful information, relevant to the reader. It is this kind of information that may make the reader subscribe or to keep current subscribers reading the newsletter.

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Offers – such as workshops, seminars, webinars, online courses, and discounts on products.

Web links – to more useful information including partner web sites.

Contests – to promote a product or to gather new email addresses.

There is no secret success formula for an email newsletter outline. You will need to develop one that you are comfortable with. The reality is that you will choose a structure and then fine tune it as time goes by. Check out the alternative outlines used in the email newsletters you receive in your inbox. Here are some alternatives:

- Opinion feature
- Letter from the editor
- Trends/analyses
- Monthly spotlight feature
- Product/industry news
- How-to articles
- Reader involvement columns
- Book reviews
- News flashes
- Interviews
- Revenue opportunities – Monthly specials

And here's another one to consider:

- Featured Article
- Useful Website Pick
- Reader Q&A
- Letter to the Editor
- Surveys or Polls
- Product Reviews
- Tip of the Day
- Inspirational Quote

The format that you adopt and the type of material you include in your email newsletter is as endless as your imagination. The key is choosing a format that works for your subscribers as they are the final judges.

Go in Circles

The cliché: going in circles, usually speaks to some kind of inefficiency. But when it comes to writing, going in circles is a must. You can't write effectively without using a recursive (circular) process.

Before you prepare the final draft of your email newsletter, you will need to go in "circles" to make sure that your document is clear, logical, and compelling. The process of writing a newsletter is a circular one in that you write, edit, revise and re-write to the point where you may believe you'll never finish. Other than spelling and grammar check, no software can really help you through this circular process. It is basically you and the words. You must read and re-write and you must do good proofreading[9] (or have someone do it for you).

You need to recognize up front that writing the newsletter is work but there are a few short cuts to writing a good one. You must put in the time and effort to produce a polished and effective email newsletter. It will take many hours of thinking, analyzing, researching, writing, revising, editing, and re-writing till you get it right.

Hypertext Structure

A number of successful email newsletters use the Hypertext structure. This is a format with short text sections that serve as introductions to longer text passages or articles. Although short text sections are used and initially displayed, there is no sacrificing depth of content. All that is done with hypertext structure is a splitting of the information into multiple nodes or sections, all connected by hypertext links.

Each initial introductory text can be brief and yet the full hypertext version can contain much more information. Long and detailed background information can be linked to secondary sections – much like is done on retail web sites like Amazon.com where additional information links offer supplementary information. This makes it possible to allow readers to select those topics they care about and click to those sections where they want more information.

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[9] See the proofreading checklist in the Appendix.

Figure 6.1 shows the hyperlink structure used in the ACD email newsletter. It uses a form of the hypertext structure by giving only an introduction to its articles. The user can click "more" to read more text beyond the introduction.
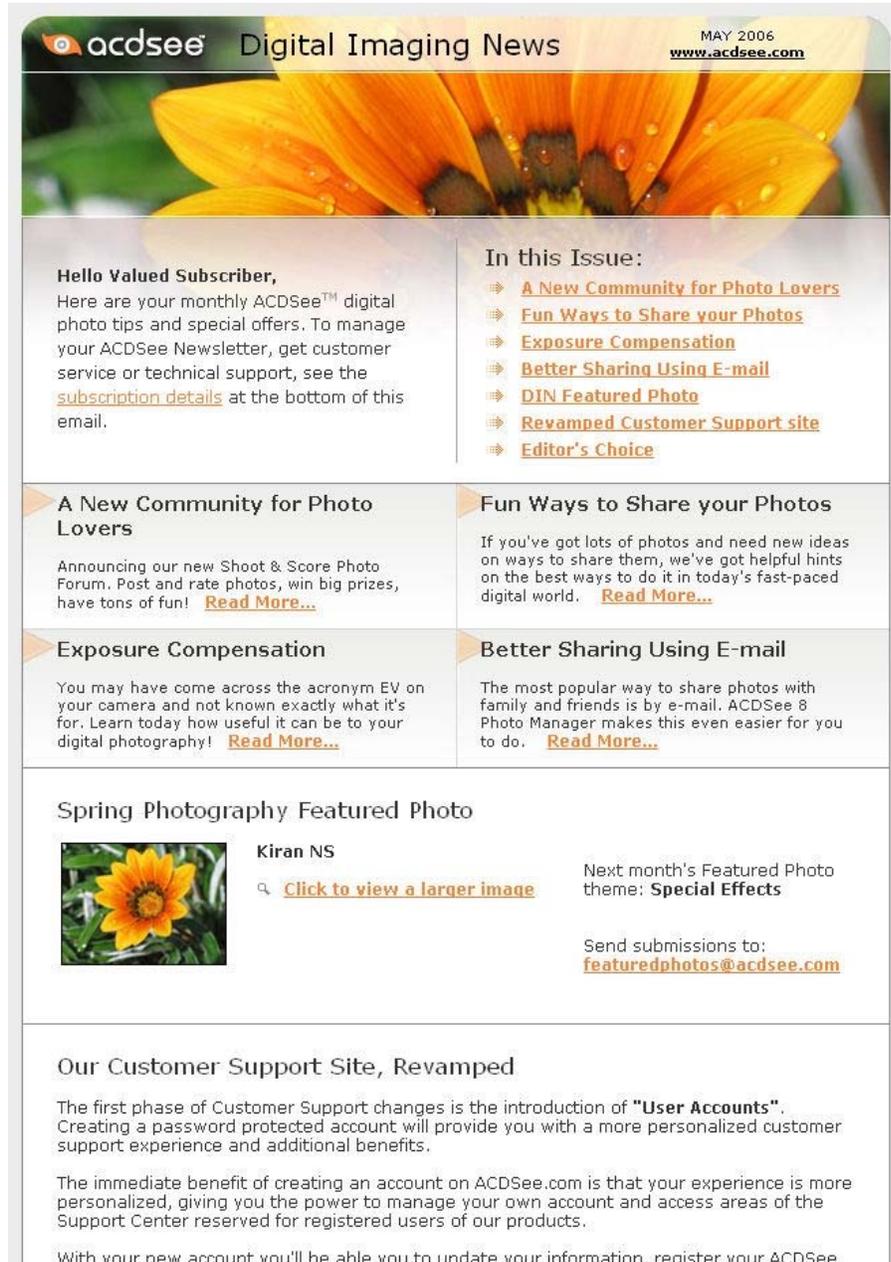
Figure 6.1 Hypertext Structure: ADC Digital Imaging Blast email newsletter

Nielsen//NetRatings
netREPORTER

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE OF NETREPORTER

Noteworthy
Switzerland Data Now Available!
Consumers Spend More Than $13.7 Billion Online During the 2002 Holiday Shopping Season
Ten Out of Twelve Global Markets See Time Spent Online Increase Over Past Six Months
New Year's Resolutions Boost Traffic to Diet and Fitness Sites
More Than 72 Percent of the U.S. Online Population Uses Internet Applications

News Room - Selected Nielsen//NetRatings quotes in the press

Switzerland Data Now Available!

We are pleased to announce that we have increased our global coverage to include Switzerland data through our recent acquisition of the MMXI Switzerland panel. We will have continuous data available for 2002. For more information contact sales@netratings.com.

Ten Out of Twelve Global Markets See Time Spent Online Increase

Ten out of 12 global markets measured by Nielsen//NetRatings saw the average time spent online increase significantly between May and October 2002.

Country	May	October	Change %
Germany	08:39:51	10:32:09	21.6
Sweden	06:36:12	08:02:07	21.6
Australia	08:26:17	09:47:26	16.0
France	08:05:03	09:01:54	11.7

Consumers Spend More Than $13.7 Billion Online During the 2002 Holiday Shopping Season

Wrapping up the 2002 online holiday shopping season, consumers spent nearly $13.7 billion, according to the eSpending Report from The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., Harris Interactive®, and Nielsen//NetRatings. Online spending jumped more than 24 percent year-over-year, up from $11 billion spent in 2001. Including travel, online spending grew nearly 22 percent to $15.7 billion.

Figure 6.2 netREPORTER email newsletter

Figure 6.2 shows another use of the hypertext structure with the netREPORTER email newsletter. This publication uses a slightly different hypertext format from the ACD example (Figure 6.1). Yet the netREPORTER hypertext structure is very effective with "noteworthy" headlines serving as links to the stories/articles.

Make it Skimmable

Studies show that people skim text (as oppose to reading every word) on the Web or in an email. The same holds true for email newsletters. To make your email newsletter a "good read" for your subscribers, you need to make it easy for them to skim it. The following techniques should help your subscribers be successful "skimmers":

- **Highlight keywords** that you want to emphasize. Bold or other typeface variations are helpful. Underlining is probably a no-no because it will confuse readers. They may think it is a hyperlink. Hyperlinks can serve as one form of highlighting and are useful when used sparingly.

- Give lots of thought to writing meaningful headings. It is better to be straightforward and clear than to be "clever" or cute.

- Put a benefit-oriented "deck" under your article title. A deck is a journalistic term for a sub headline. For example, if your headline is *10 Common Myths about Snow Tires*, your deck might be *Get the right advice now, and drive safely this winter.*

- Make use of bulleted lists. Bulleted lists are popular with readers and make it very easy for readers to move quickly through your thoughts. More on the use of bulleted lists in the next section.

- Package" your articles as lists tips, myths, tricks, stories, warnings… Readers can't resist what I call "text tools" — lists of facts or actions or insider tips they can put to work right away, or pin to their corkboards to have handy when needed. *10 Dangerous Myths about Snow Tires, Five Real-Life Investment Mistakes You Can Avoid* — these are article titles that say *read me or suffer the consequences.*

- Use principles of good writing such as one idea per paragraph. Layout your idea early in the paragraph. Readers will skip over additional ideas if you don't grab them early with the first sentence or two of a paragraph.

- Keep the word count down. Just as you would do when writing an editorial for your newspaper, keep the word count of your email newsletter down. One rule of thumb for newsletter writing states that you should "half the word count". In other words, write about 1/2 as much as you would write for a more conventional piece of writing, such as a business report. Some people like to adhere to a 500-to-1000-word limit. Articles of that size are perfect for the email medium.

- When a reader first opens your email newsletter, they should be able to quickly "get" what the page is about. That means the information should be visible without having to scroll too much.

Reading from computer monitor is tiring for the eyes. Some experts say that reading from a computer screen is about 25 percent slower than reading from paper. It is true that some people will print out your email newsletter to read at a later time. However, many people will choose to read it on their monitor the moment that they open it. Therefore, think of ways that you can write and design your email newsletter to make it easy to read – skimmable by your subscribers.

Using Bulleted Lists of Information

Readers like bulleted lists. Use lists for presenting groups of related information

- Short lines
- Easy to skim
- Organize related hyperlinks well

Lists are short lines, and easy to skim. Since they break up nicely into chunks (one chunk per list item) they work well for organizing links to web resources. For many situations, they will work better than links scattered in a paragraph that must be read in context. For example, if you wanted to mention three great online retailers, these might come to mind:

- Amazon.com **www.amazon.com**
- Lands End **www.landsend.com**
- Best Buy **www. bestbuy.com**

Keep the items short. To keep the list skimmable, try to keep the length of each item in the list short. No more than two or three sentences.

Writing Good Copy[10]

When you're creating a newsletter that hundreds or even thousands of people will read, it's easy to forget that you have to write your copy for just one person — your reader. Here are seven tips to help you connect with your reader through good newsletter copy.

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[10] This section was adapted from a piece written by Mark Scapicchio. Mark has written advertising and marketing copy for some of the best-known companies and advertising agencies in the world, and for many successful smaller companies. To learn more about his background, his clients, and how he can improve your copy visit his Web site at **www.scapicchio.com**

Use "You"

When your reader opens your email newsletter, it's just you your reader, one-on-one — like a private presentation without anyone else in the room. And you just can't give an effective private presentation without using the word you. Your copy should be crawling with the word you, with forms of the word you (you'll, your, you're), and with imperatives, in which you is understood (see below for more on imperatives). At the very least, find a way to work you into your headline, your first subhead, and the first sentence of your body copy. Replace weak generics such as one (as in: When one considers the options), businesses and the competition with you, your business and your competitors. Write as if no one else in the world matters but the one person reading at any given instant.

Emphasize Benefits over Features

Whatever you write should be organized around benefits — the ways your product or service or company will improve your reader's life. The features behind the benefits are exactly that: behind the benefits, playing a supporting role. Suppose you're writing an ad for your new laser printer, which is twice as fast as any other printer on the market. Your headline should tout the benefit of the speed, and not the speed itself:

Print any document in half the time.

Leave the feature to your body copy:

SuperPrint's new 50-page-per minute print engine cranks out your documents at least twice as fast as any printer you're using today.

Notice, by the way, that the "feature" sentence repeats the benefit. You can never repeat your benefits often enough. In fact, if you have extra space in your layout and have a choice between mentioning adding a lower-level feature or repeating an important benefit, repeat the benefit. Even on the back sides of your data sheets — where people expect to see bullet lists of features — group those features under benefits, repeated or otherwise. You'll be giving your reader what he or she really wants.

Write Imperative Headlines and Subheads

An imperative is a sentence in the form of a direct command, and in which the word you doesn't appear but is "understood." Get me a cup of coffee, Take off your shoes before you come in here, and Don't forget to call me — these are all examples of imperatives.

Imperatives are extremely powerful sentences — not because they're the way we give orders (who are you to boss around your customers?) but because they're the language of confident, expert, indispensable advice. We were raised on so much good advice given in the form of imperatives — Look both ways, Don't talk to strangers, Buckle your seatbelt — that we're practically hardwired to read them. That's why mass-market ads are full of imperatives like Ask your doctor, Compare, and Just Do It.

It's easy to write irresistible imperative headlines and subheads: Just write sentences that tell your reader to take advantage of what you have to offer. Surf the Web up to 100 times faster. Save thousands each year in maintenance costs. Email us TODAY for your free white paper. They don't have to be fancy or clever; in fact, the more direct and more specific, the better.

Replace Lone Nouns with Real Subheads.

Single nouns — like Overview, Background, Features, Benefits, Challenge, and Summary — don't cut it as subheads. These are the kinds of vague, emotionless words you'd expect from a court stenographer, not a copywriter. They may have helped your writer organize his or her thoughts, but they do absolutely nothing for your reader.

In any copy — and particularly in longer copy — your subheads are as important as your headline. They should be active and compelling (and ideally, imperative) sentences — complete thoughts — that make the body copy beneath them seem much too important to skip. And subheads should also be specific enough that a skimming reader can read only your headline and your subheads and still get a basic understanding of your primary benefits and your call to action.

Single, vague nouns can't do all this work; in fact they can't do anything but take up space. Never accept them from a copywriter.

Replace Can with Will and If with When

If you're not absolutely sure about your product or your offer, why should your reader believe you? In ad and marketing copy words like can and if signal doubt or qualifications or extenuating circumstances to your reader — and these are the last feelings you want to convey.

You'll make your copy confident and reassuring when you replace can with will and if with when. Consider the difference: We can install your new tires in one hour or less is a mere possibility; We will install your new tires in one hour or less is a promise (in fact, you almost expect it to be followed by a guarantee). Get a free gift if you call today implies that you have another option; Get a free gift when you call today assumes you've already decided to make the call.

Making these two simple replacements will take the doubt out of your copy — and the hesitation out of your reader's mind.

Avoid Jargon

For years businesspeople used the word access as a verb — even as writers complained (not entirely correctly) that the dictionary listed it as a noun only. Today most dictionaries, including the latest Webster's, list access as a verb.

But that doesn't mean you should use it in your copy. Like most bits of tech jargon that earn their way into accepted usage, access is about as colorful and emotional and inspiring as a wet gym towel. Most readers can't picture themselves accessing something; those that can don't see a very exciting or memorable picture.

Instead of access, why not write instantly find and use, or locate precisely, or put your finger on? These are things people actually want to do, activities that imply a reward or some success. That's why they make better copy.

Access is just one example, no worse than populate or format or support. Each has at least one emotional, evocative and specific alternative, like enrich or transform or work perfectly with. Use the alternative in your copy whenever you can.

Replace the word Leading

Want to torture a coworker? Tell her she can't go home until she finds ten corporate Web sites — including your own — that don't use the word leader or leading in its company description. (To be nice, have take-out delivered to her desk — she'll be hungry later on.)

Even before it became so completely overused, leader was a vague word that demanded qualification — and the equally overused qualifiers that emerged (market leader, industry-leader, value leader) aren't much more specific.

Now that practically everyone uses the word, calling yourself a leader makes you a follower; worse, it bores your reader to tears. Your copy needs to tell your reader why your company and products are different and better, and it can't do this using the same words everyone else uses. Try to describe your company in a truly original way, using the word "you" if possible. Then you'll be leading in the truest sense of the word.

Write a Complete Call to Action

There's a rumor out there that your call to action can be as simple as your phone number and Web address placed under your logo. The rumor is false. To get any response at all from your copy, your call to action must accomplish three things:

- It has to recapitulate the primary benefit of your product or your offer. See for yourself how MultiLube can add years to the life of your car.
- It has to tell your reader exactly how and when to respond. Call 1-800-123-4567 TODAY for more information.
- It should offer your reader an incentive for responding. An expert mechanic will answer all your questions. Or even better, The first 30 callers will get a FREE one-quart sample — a $79.95 value.

Omit one of these components and your response potential drops dramatically. Leave just a phone number, and you'll be lucky to get a single call.

Next time, write it right, right from the start. Making any of these changes will improve your copy — the more of them you make, the more dramatic the improvement.

But last-day fixes are no substitute for doing it right the first time. When you start with a solid command of the basics — and the preceding ten tips represent the very basics —

you have more time to try more creative options and to hone a razor-sharp message your readers can't ignore.

If you're determined to write your own copy in-house, invest the time, energy and money to teach yourself and your staff how to do it right. Read as many of the scores of good books on the topic as you can find. One of the best writers on this subject is Bob Bly who has written dozens of books – check out his web site at **www.bly.com**. See his books listed at **http://www.bly.com/newsite/Pages/publications.html**. Take copywriting courses at your local business college or branch of the Direct Marketing Association (DMA). Collect and study ads and marketing materials from competitors and companies you admire. Practice — rewriting older, disappointing ads and collateral is a great way to start.

Better yet, work with an experienced copywriter. A good copywriter knows all the basics in this report, plus untold numbers of other ways to help you get more response from everything you print, mail or post on-line. More important, a good copywriter gives you back the time you need to concentrate on creating the kinds of products and promotions that make better copy.

Steak or Sizzle

Proper Mix of Information and Promotions

About 15 years ago (many readers may not remember), the hamburger chain Wendy's ran a promotion that produced a new cliché in the form of a question: "Where's the beef?" The question was really a put down of the size of competitors' hamburger patties. Wendy's was making the point that their burgers were the right size for most people's appetites while McDonalds and Burger King were selling skimpy burgers. As often happens with overused phrases, the "where's the beef?" cliché took on another meaning. People would ask the question when they believe there was no substance in a debate, an article, or a discussion.

Make sure no one is asking "where's the beef?" in your email newsletter. Make sure you provide plenty of "beef"; preferable steak. Give your subscribers something they can really sink their teeth into (no pun intended). You must give plenty of thought to the mix of information (steak) and promotional/advertising (sizzle) that you want to achieve with your email newsletter. If your newsletter is 70% marketing material, 10% filler, and 20% useful content, then you're in trouble. Although you may be able to entice subscribers, you will likely see high turnover or churn. People unsubscribe after a few issues as they determine that you don't offer enough value-added information.

Some experts suggest the 80/20 rule. This rule states that at least 80% of the email newsletter's content be useful information and that no more than 20% be promotional. It is fine to make marketing pitches in your newsletter, but you must do in such a way as it does not overwhelm the valuable information that you provide or short circuits the relation building process of which your newsletter is an important element.

There are also legal aspects of dishonesty in e-publishing. According to the Direct Marketing Association, certain types of email including fraudulent and deceptive marketing messages are regulated by the Federal Trade Commission (and some states) and marketers who violate these laws can be held accountable and fined accordingly.

7

Case Studies

One powerful type of content is the case study. Case studies are an effective way to get your message across. People like stories and people learn a great deal from real life stories. Case studies are easy to assimilate and to remember. They also add a personal touch. There are also benefits of mentioning work that you have done with specific customers. Well known customers can lend some credibility to your work. Below in Figure 7.1 is an example of how TemplateZone.com used a case study in its Office Expert email newsletter to highlight how one of its client's, Legal Seafood, is using TemplateZone's High Impact email with ACT! to keep in touch with restaurant

customers.

Figure 7.1 Case Study from TemplateZone's email newsletter called the *Office Expert*

Case studies may also promote your client's business because the customer's name is usually disclosed in the case study. However, always get permission first before including a customer's name and be sure that you are not disclosing confidential

information. Keep in mind that your goal is not to tell secrets but to give your subscribers an interesting way, from a real world point of reference, to learn more about what your company can do for them.

Interviews

Interviews are very effective. Like case studies, they lend credibility. The Q & A format of interviews are also easy to read. They are very skimmable, a characteristic that subscribers like in email newsletters. Your interviews can be with insiders, with third-party experts, with clients, industry leaders or government officials. Think about whom your subscribers would like to hear from and get the interview. Also related to interviews is the FAQ section – frequently asked questions. From time to time, a FAQ might make for interesting reading – especially if it is derived from subscriber feedback. Those will be the questions that subscribers would like to read the answers to.

About Us Section

One content constant of many email newsletters is an "About Us Section" or at least a link to the "About Us Section" of the sponsoring organization's web site. If you do provide a landing page for your "About Us" section you can provide a variety of information there including:

- Publishing schedule for email newsletter
- Purpose
- Audience
- Disclaimer
- Copyright statement
- How to receive the newsletter by email or on paper
- How to contact the editor
- Information about the email newsletter archives

Privacy Statement

Since many subscribers to an email newsletter have concerns about privacy, a privacy statement at the time of sign-up and at the end of your email newsletter makes sense. Below is an example.

TemplateZone is committed to protecting the privacy of our members. In order to provide a safe, secure experience, we will make every effort to ensure that the information you give us remains private.

You can see an entire sample privacy statement in Exhibit 1 of the appendix.

You should provide a link to your complete privacy statement/policy on your website. You can also prepare a privacy statement using a model written by the Direct Marketing Association's (DMA). DMA has a Privacy Policy Generator (PPG) on their web site (**www.the-dma.org**)[11]. The Direct Marketing Association is the largest trade association for businesses that utilize direct, database, and interactive marketing. They have developed ethical standards in a number of direct marketing areas, including customer/prospect privacy issues.

Archiving Your Email Newsletters

A good practice that you need to incorporate into your email newsletter program is the archiving of past issues on your web site. Archiving offers several advantages.

- It adds more useful content to your web site; content that may be referenced by search engines and web crawlers. That will mean more potential hits to your web site.

- An archive contributes to stickiness. People will spend more time at your web site, poking around past issues.

- As you write new newsletters you might want to reference previous issues. If they are archived, your new subscribers can go back and read your references. You may even want to create a hyperlink back to the previous issue.

- An archive of past issues gives news subscribers the opportunity to look at your body of work. Solid past issues will only enhance your reputation as a value-added information provider.

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[11] The privacy generator can be found at: **www.the-dma.org/privacy/creating.shtml#form**

- Past issues allow prospects to decide if they want to subscribe, and possibly even do business with you.

A good example of a simple, yet effective way of archiving email newsletters can be seen at the web site of Spazio Interiors **www.spaziointeriors.com**. Spazio Interiors is the premier Austin, Texas showroom for contemporary art and furnishings. They use an email newsletter to keep in touch with its customers, boost traffic to its website, generate foot traffic to the showroom, increase newsletter subscribers and build out-of-town and word-of-mouth sales. The company discovered that email catalogs and newsletters offered a golden opportunity to open a dialogue with subscribers while meeting marketing and growth goals. Figure 7.2 shows how Spazio offers an archive of past email newsletters.
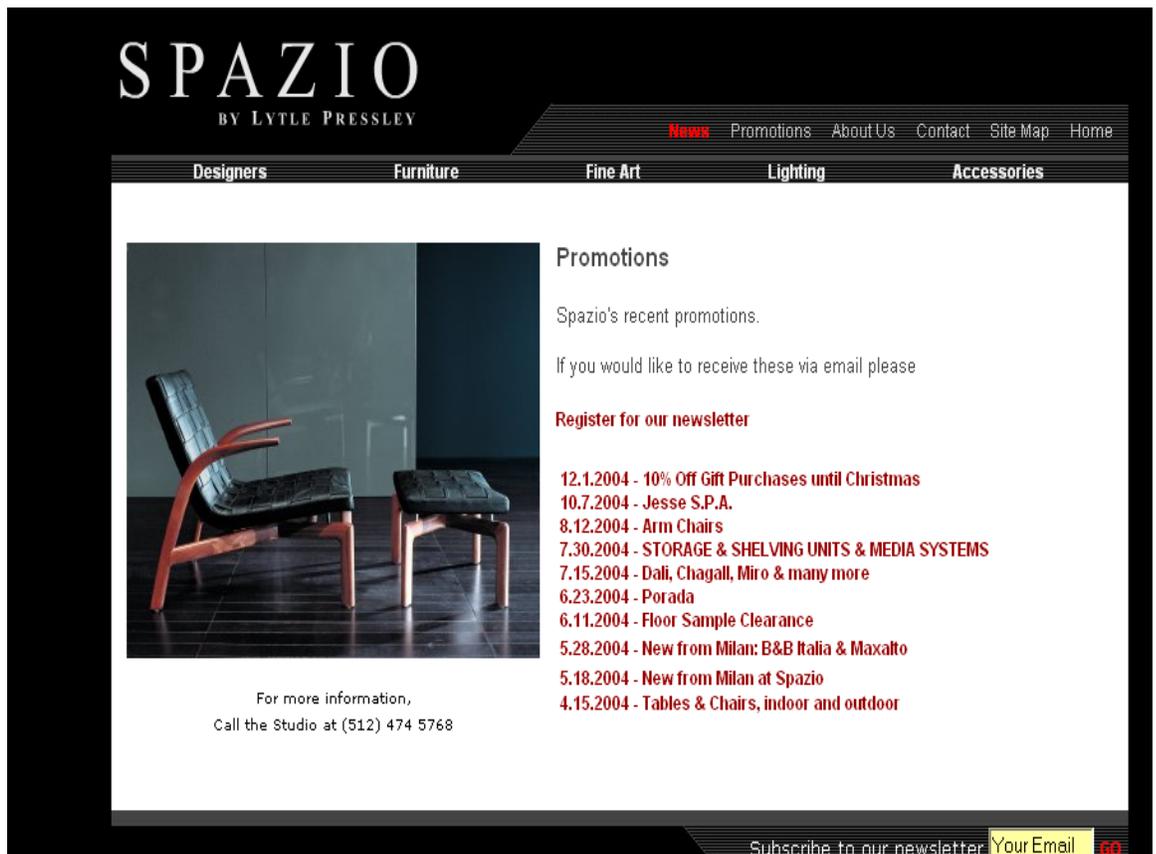
Figure 7.2 Spazio's Archive of email newsletters.

May 2006

SPAZIO : *CONTEMPORARY SPACE & DESIGN*

In This Issue

- Knoll Space Sale! May 5-12
- Spazio May Event: Jewelry by Hannah Dayagi
- Space and Light: How to Maximize the Potential of your Home
- Spazio Featured Design Project
- Home Solutions: Armchairs
- Straight from Milan...Molteni

Knoll Space Sale May 5–12

Don't miss 44% Off List Price during this once-a-year Sale

Define your home with Knoll.
Over 100 mid-century classics and modern designs on sale.

Spazio May Events

You are invited to an open house featuring Hannah Dayagi's Jewelry designs, **May 10th & 11th from 2-6:00 pm**.

Made in Italy: designs with pearls, pink and red coral, turquoise - and other precious stones - and all with diamonds.

Earrings, necklaces, and gorgeous rings - Come see this incredibly unique collection at Spazio.

Great Mother's Day ideas!

Spazio Featured Design Project

Nic Neumann Architecture & Development

Local Calendar of Events

- **Books: Eric Schlosser 'Chew On This'**
  Tue May 9, 7:00 pm, BookPeople. Free
  Information: (512) 472-5050
- **Dance: Ballet Austin's 'Romeo & Juliet'**
  May 12 & 13, 8 p.m. May 14, 2006. 2 p.m. Bass Concert Hall, $12- $66
  Information: (512) 471-5401
- **Lecture: Suzan-Lori Parks at SPARK: KLRU's Engaging Speaker Series**
  Mon May 15, 7:30 pm, Paramount Theatre, Information: (512) 472-5470
- **Theater: "Cowboy Noises" with Jaston Williams**
  May 31-June 18, 2006. 8 p.m. Wed-Sat and 2 p.m. Sun, State Theater $20-$45, Information: (512) 472-5143

International & National Calendar of Events

- **New York Design Week 2006**
  It's that time of year again! Our annual listing of must-see events, parties and exhibits that make up New York Design Week, this year taking place from May 18 - May 23. Check back often as we update the listing regularly with new events.
- **BKLYN Designs**
  May 12 - 14, 2006
  Brooklyn New York, NY
  BKLYN DESIGNS 2006 will run from May 12 - 14 at several DUMBO locations including St. Ann's Warehouse. The annual three-day show will feature Brooklyn-based designers and manufacturers of contemporary furnishings, including indoor and outdoor furniture, rugs, lighting and accessories. It will signal the start of Design Week in New York City, America's answer to Milan's Salone Del Mobile.
- **AIGA: ONCE MORE WITH FEELING**
  May 11, June 8, June 11, 2006
  Morgan Auditorium, San Francisco
  The San Francisco chapter of the AIGA, the professional association for design, presents the sixteenth (almost) annual Design Lecture Series. One of the oldest and most important lecture series dedicated to the convergence of technology, art and design, this year's series continues a tradition of bringing world-renowned professionals to one of the world's great creative capitals. This year's lineup explores the interweaving of craft and commerce, passion and

Figure 7.3 – a sample Spazio newsletter.

Outsourcing: Pros and Cons

There are a number of areas of email newsletter management that you can outsource. You can subcontract the writing of the email newsletter and also the list management and delivery functions. One of the arguments against outsourcing for small organizations is the cost. It can become expensive to write and manage these campaigns if your subscription base is small. In addition, if you have someone else write your email newsletter, how can you assure that it will have the personality and "genuineness" that you want to achieve? Outsourcing of the writing function could

provide a disconnect as the subcontracting writer will need to work very hard to understand your organization, your mission (and the mission of your newsletter) and the information needs of your subscribers. However as you grow the outsourcing of list and delivery management probably makes sense. With an outsourced solution, you don't have to worry about anything other than the content of your email newsletter. All the headaches of managing the list and the particulars of tracking results (e-metrics) are left to the third party outsource firm.

Here's a summary of what a typical an outsource firm can offer:

- **Help building your list** – a consultant can help you build your email database through your web site. They can add an effective "Join my List" sign and form to your website. The forms can collect site visitor information including not only the email address and interests of your subscribers.
- **Help you create your email newsletter** – subcontractors can provide you with easy to use templates or forms for HTML email.
- **List management** – a third party can help you keep track of subscribe/unsubscribe and "bounce backs" (undeliverable emails) so you can keep your subscriber base up-dated.
- **eMetrics** – a subcontractor can help you "see how you are doing: by track your results including subscription growth, opened emails, click-throughs, and then provide analysis and comparisons of current results with past results and your results with benchmarked results of other email newsletter publishers.

Hit the Links

When to Link

One benefit of an email newsletter is its capability to provide hyperlinks to additional resources such as web sites, demos, PDF reports, whitepapers, and worksheets. Give some thought to the types of links you want to provide. Links can be a waste of subscribers' time, especially if the information you are linking to is irrelevant to the subscribers needs. There is also a risk to providing links to outside resources. Your subscriber may follow that link and not come back.

If you provide several links, be sure to give the subscriber "advanced notice" of what they will see if they click the link. This sounds obvious but sometimes text is hyperlinked and it is very vague as to what is "behind" that link. For example, if the words "new product" were hyperlinked in an email newsletter article, what do you think you would see if you clicked the link? Is that a link to a picture, a press release, a written description? Subscribers don't like vague link descriptors or teasers. They want simple straightforward writing.

To Click or Not to Click

One effective way of using links (both to additional internal information or external web resources) is to provide a short descriptive title – like a headline; followed by a sentence or two that summarizes what you will see if you click the link – almost like an abstract. With that format, the subscriber usually has enough information to make a decision to click or not to click. For example, the following announcement allows the user to learn more by clicking the Read Press Release link.

> **November 15, 2005**
> TemplateZone.com today released a special holiday greetings
> edition of its flagship desktop email marketing program, High
> Impact eMail 3.0 Holiday Edition.
> **Read Press Release**

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Another way to provide the subscriber with enough information to decide whether to they should keep reading (click the link) is to provide a headline, a couple of summary sentences, and a "read more" link to additional information. Below is an example.

Custom email Stationery Design Services Offered

KMT has a team of expert HTML designers who are available for Web design services. Our team will work with you to complete all your Web needs.

read more...

Linking to Additional Resources

One of the advantages of email newsletters is the ability to link to other information resources. The ones you use and the way you point to those resources (links) is another critical success factor of great email newsletter publishing. Therefore, study the way other successful email newsletter publishers use links. Many will provide links to additional information resources as sidebars to their newsletters.

Below in Figure 8.1 is an example of how the Nedco Sports Company provides additional links in its email newsletter entitled: Hit2Win (**www.hit2win.com**). Nedco manufactures a variety of baseball and software training aids that help players become better hitters. Their email newsletter is geared towards players, parents of players, and coaches. Although the email newsletter contains a considerable amount of promotional material, its articles and additional links provide educational material that players and coaches might find useful. Their newsletter is a good example of how you should mix promotional material with a good mix of useful information.

**Quick Fastpitch
Softball Links...**

Visit Our #1 Sponsor –
Nedco Sports Products,
Inc.. "America's #1 Hit
Trainer Company!"

Fastpitch Softball
Coaching Tip Of The
Month

New Fastpitch Softball
Product Review –
Softball 2DAY Coaching
Journal

Fastpitch Softball
Parents Page

Top 10 INSTRUCTIONAL
Fastpitch Softball
Websites as ranked by
Softball 2Day Coaching
Journal

The Hit2win Fastpitch
Softball Trainer – Optic
Yellow Unit is world's
most advanced one-on-
one coaching and
practice tool!

Figure 8.1 Links to Outside Resources from the Hit2win.com Baseball Newsletter

Links such as this can provide an opportunity to link to affiliates with whom your organization does business. Companies with large audiences have also monetized these links by offering them to advertisers.

Forward to a Friend Message

Viral marketing makes use of ways to spread the benefits of a product or service in a fast and effective; almost self-sufficient way. If you go to a new restaurant and you think it is great; you will quickly share the experience with others who will go to the restaurant and also spread the news. Word-of-mouth is a very powerful form of viral marketing.

With email newsletter promotion, the most basic form of viral marketing is giving subscribers reasons to tell their friends about your newsletter. Use viral marketing to spread the message of your email newsletter and to grow your list of subscribers. To do this, make sure you include a "forward to a friend" link in each issue of your newsletter and equally important, a sign-up link for new subscribers. Be very explicit about this. Proactively encourage, through clear and persuasive wording, the forwarding of the newsletter. Getting subscribers to share the newsletter is another "call-to-action" that you must work to develop. Make it known that you want this type of viral marketing to happen. Here's some suggested wording.

> *If you find this newsletter helpful, and have a friend or colleague who you think might also enjoy it, please forward it. In addition, we welcome new subscribers. Sign up for a monthly subscription by clicking here.*

Sign Them Up

Make signing up easy. Don't hassle new subscribers with lots of questions. How many times have you gone to a site and decided to get more info then to only find out that you had to go through survey and data entry hell? Don't set up barriers – if you establish a relationship with the reader over time, they will be glad to share more information with you over time, as they get comfortable with the relationship.

No one should have to wrestle with trying to figure out how to subscribe. Make it clear and promote your sign-up offer at the bottom of your everyday email that you send in the normal course of business. Even if you're sending email to a friend or co-worker, include a link to your sign-up for a subscription form.

If You Let Them In, You Have to Let Them Out

You should do everything you can to encourage people and make it easy to subscribe to your newsletter. On the other hand, you also must make it easy to unsubscribe if they want out. Email newsletter publishers must offer you the ability to opt-out of their newsletters. The term opt-out means that you have notified the publisher that you no longer want to receive the newsletter. It is synonymous with unsubscribe. It can be very frustrating to keep receiving an email newsletter that you don't want if there isn't an easy way to unsubscribe.

Double Opt-in

Many email newsletter providers utilize the double opt-in method. Here's how that works. The user opt-ins in at the provider's web site by entering an email address and perhaps checking boxes (i.e., interests, type of newsletter, HTML versus text, etc.) Although the provider gathers emails from their website rather than add them immediately to the email newsletter subscriber list, it holds those email addresses and sends a secondary email requiring a response to opt-in to the list. Once the user receives the confirmation and responds to the confirmation message, they will be added to the subscriber list and will begin receiving the newsletter.

Here's an example. The Opt-in News requires that web site visitors who want to subscribe enter their email address.

Then they are required to enter additional information, as shown below, such as first name, last name, and company name.

Once that information is submitted, the subscriber receives the following email message:

> *Thanks for Subscribing to the Opt-in News email newsletter.*
> *To confirm your free subscription and start receiving the*
> *newsletter, simply **Click here***
>
> *By clicking to confirm, you are completing a double opt-in*
> *process. We know the importance of maintaining your*
> *privacy so we don't share or sell any of the information you*
> *give us. You will not receive any solicitations from any third*
> *party because of this subscription.*

By responding to the email message, the user has executed the "double opt-in" – having in effect asked for the subscription – twice: the initial sign-up and then by confirming the subscription. The email newsletter publisher confirms the subscription with as message like the one that follows:

Thank You for Confirmation.

Your e-mail **michael.griffin4@comcast.net** has been added to our list.

Close this Window

ClickZ reports that there is a downside to the double opt-in method of building a subscriber list: you can lose about 40-60% of those people who initially signed up.[12] The advantage of the double opt-in method is that it confirms, without a doubt, that your subscribers have requested to hear from you, suggesting they are truly interested in your company. Since it requires an extra step to opt-in to your newsletter, you know that your database list is comprised of interested readers.

Incorporate Feedback

If you are writing an email newsletter, you need to know what your readers are thinking. Think about how you can tap into the minds of your readers. What kinds of issues are important to your readers? What expertise, knowledge and experiences can you share with your subscribers? One way to get feedback is to consistently ask for it. Ask for comments in a variety of ways. Provide an email link to the editor. Provide a reader survey as a way to start up the conversation between you and your readers. An occasional poll would be useful, particularly when you share the feedback with your readers and show the results of the poll in a subsequent issue. Surveys and polls, promote the type of stickiness you are looking for, help develop loyalty and the results of your surveys and polls are more information that can become topics in future issues of your email newsletter.   And be sure to answer every feedback message – speak about the mail you get in your next newsletter – particularly if you get a lot of mail on a certain subject

Unfortunately, getting people to give you feedback is not an easy task. Academic researchers struggle with this constantly. How do you motivate prospects and current customers to provide you with comments and opinions? Motivation is the issue. Can you offer a free product or service to those who do respond? Would it be attractive to a reader who gives feedback to receive an attribution in a subsequent issue? Some people would greatly appreciate the recognition. Is there a real time poll or survey that you can link to your newsletter? Would the chance to see how their opinions mesh with other

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[12] Click Z is the ClickZ Network, a source of interactive marketing news, information, commentary, advice, opinion, and research. Their web site is **www.clickz.com**

subscribers be motivation for a subscriber to complete a poll or survey? Can you follow-up survey results with a briefing paper or whitepaper that can be offered to subscribers?

Beyond motivating people to help you define the content of your email newsletter, continue to pay attention to the information needs of the people you work with, those who email you in the course of your day, and the issues covered in the industry news that you read. Above all, make it easy for your readers to give you feedback. Here's a summary of the ways you can do that:

- Interactive surveys
- Interactive polls
- Ask questions – share the answers
- Feedback link in every issue of your email newsletter
- Feedback links on your website
- Email links to the editor
- Projected coverage of issues in future issues with invitation for comments and suggestions
- Electronic suggestion box
- Toll-free phone number in your email newsletter
- Reveal your editorial agenda or themes for upcoming issues

Design and Layout

HTML versus Text

One way to make your email newsletter stand out is give it a great look and feel by using HTML formatting. Value-added content is a critical success factor of an email newsletter but it goes hand-in hand with good formatting. A poorly designed newsletter may not get read, even if it has great content.

A blend of linkable web pages and regular email, HTML email has been growing in popularity for several years. HTML email lets you send and receive all kinds of messages (newsletters, picture postcards, and so on) with the look and feel of Web pages.

Listed below are the main advantages of using HTML email compared to ordinary text email. You can see why HTML email would be an ideal way of sending your email newsletter.

Fonts — With HTML, you can format your text using different typefaces and colors to complement your message. Use san-serif fonts because they are easier to read. Sans-serif fonts are fonts without "tick" marks. Examples of a commonly used san-serif fonts are Arial or Verdana. Never use more than 2 types of fonts – it's a design no-no.

Color — HTML email is more colorful than plain text email. It allows you to use blocks of color in tables and as backgrounds resulting in attractive and attention-getting layouts.

Images — It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Images add impact to email, lending clarity and excitement. Images bring a certain professionalism to your email newsletter.

Figure 9.1 shows a "before" and "after" comparison of text versus HTML email. The HTML is significantly more professional looking and pleasing to the eye.

9

Before" – This is an example of text based email

"After" – This is the same email in an HTML format

Figure 9.1 Text versus HTML email

You don't need a special email account to get started with HTML. If you are already using Microsoft Outlook or Outlook Express, you only need to enable the HTML feature in your email program (you then must create HTML files). If you don't use Outlook or Outlook Express, many other email programs are also compatible with HTML.

According to TemplateZone, a company that develops and sells HTML email software, recent market research indicates that the vast majority of email programs in use today can receive and display HTML messages and in time, all email clients will be able to send and receive HTML email. However, if your recipient's email program cannot display HTML email, then it will usually display just the plain text portion of your message. Occasionally, you may find that someone's email program displays the HTML source code. Fortunately, this represents only a small (and ever shrinking) percentage of email programs.

Here is a list of compatible email clients for HTML[13]:

- AOL 6, 7 , 8 and 9
- Eudora 4.0, 5.0, 6.0, 7.0
- ACT! 6, 2005, and 2006
- Google Gmail
- Hotmail
- iNotes for Web, iNotes for Outlook
- Juno 3.0 and higher
- Microsoft Outlook 98 and higher
- Microsoft Outlook Express 5 and higher
- Netscape Messenger
- Yahoo Mail

Some eNewletter publishers send their newsletter as an attachment. For example, their newsletter might be saved in a PDF format and the file might be attached to a text-based email that instructs the user to open the PDF newsletter file. [14] This approach has a few

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[13] This is a list according to KMT Software, Inc. developer of High Impact eMail, **www.templatezone.com**

[14] Short for Portable Document Format, a file format developed by Adobe Systems. PDF captures formatting information from a variety of desktop publishing applications, making it possible to send

disadvantages. If the user doesn't have a PDF reader installed, you have introduced an extra step: installation of a reader like the Adobe Acrobat Reader. In addition, many users are leery of attachments since they occupy memory and they sometimes carry viruses – two reasons why the attachment might be deleted before the user reads it.

To ensure that your audience is able to read your newsletters, you may want to create a version of the newsletter that is hosted on your organization's site as a separate page. Insert a link to that page at the top of each message and you'll make it easier for your readers to get to the material presented.

Length and Size of Email Newsletter

The length of your email newsletter is really up to you. But here are a few things to consider.

- Studies show that people don't like to read lengthy on-screen documents (email and Web pages). Most people skim the on-screen document and will read word-for-word when interest is peaked.
- Many people will print the article that they want to read word-for-word but that is usually a small percentage of the total email newsletter content.
- There is a limit to the amount of scrolling people will do.
- Lengthy articles (more than one window) should be broken into chunks by using hyperlinks to make skimming on the screen easier.

When in doubt, keep it short.

In terms of size – there are two elements to consider – what is actually sent to the user (text and HTML) and the images referenced in the email and sent only as the e-mail is read.

It is simply not advisable to embed images inside the email. For example, there is a popular HTML email add-on called High Impact eMail, includes a feature called: ReadyShare™ [15]. ReadyShare provides an easy way to upload images to the web and create compatible, HTML email. While the emails composed with High Impact eMail

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formatted documents and have them appear on the recipient's monitor or printer as they were intended. To view a file in PDF format, you need Adobe Reader, a free application distributed by Adobe Systems.
[15] ReadyShare is a trademark of KMT Software, Inc. **www.templatezone.com**

are rich in color and design, their transmission size is kept to a minimum since all the images are server-based and are not embedded or attached to each message.

As far as the file size of the email newsletter, keep in mind that HTML emails make for larger file size. However, even lengthy text based email newsletters can often approach 40-50 KB. As a rule of thumb, keep your email newsletter less than 75 KB. Most likely, you will be able to keep it in the 30 – 75 KB range. A helpful exercise is for you to notice the size of the email newsletters in your email program's inbox.

Copyright Notice

As a general rule, almost all things are copyrighted the moment they are written and no copyright notice is required. Therefore, as soon as you write your email newsletter, it is copyrighted. And although the copyright law does not require that you include a copyright notice on each email newsletter you write, a notice warns readers that you own the work (newsletter).

Copyright law also applies to images such as photographs. For example, you should not scan pictures from a book or magazines and insert them into your newsletter without permission from the owner of the copyright.

The use of a copyright notice is no longer required under U.S. law, although it is often beneficial as a warning. It also adds something to your publication; adding some value since many readers get the impression that if something is copyrighted, it must be valuable because you are attempting to protect it.

According to the US Copyright Office, the notice should contain three elements. They should appear together or in close proximity on the copies. .[16]   The elements are:

- The symbol © (the letter C in a circle), or the word "Copyright," or the abbreviation "Copr."
- The year of first publication.
- The name of the owner of copyright in the work.

Example: © 2006 Michael P. Griffin

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[16] Copyright Notice, Information Circular, United States Copyright Office. **http://www.loc.gov/copyright/circs/circ03.html**

It costs $30 to register a copyright with the U.S. Copyright Office (**www.loc.gov/copyright/**). Forms and instructions can be found at their web site. However, unless you have reason to believe that you will need to protect your copyright in a court of law, you probably do not need to copyright your publication. That could be a very time consuming and expensive exercise.

Advertisements in Your Newsletter

Many experts feel that advertisements in your email newsletter are not a good idea unless this is a critical part of your newsletter's mission. While most email newsletters are written to build customer relationships; not to help sell other companies products and services, it can be an opportunity to strengthen your relationships with affiliates and create a revenue stream.

If you do plan on running ads and affiliate links in your newsletter, relevancy should be your primary concern. For instance, if your company offers marketing services, link to businesses whose services are adjunct to your offerings, such as printers or photographers.

Distribution and Mail List Management

Gathering Email Addresses

As you start up your email newsletter, one of your first objectives will be to gather up as many email addresses as possible and to use every means possible to grow your list. As tempting as it may be to blast your email newsletter out to every email address that you can acquire, slow down and think about why email newsletters are successful.

One of the primary critical success factors of good email newsletter is that it is **not** unsolicited email. It is email sent to people who want your information and with whom you have already had at least one contact. These are people you have pre-qualified in some way. They have either purchased from you, requested additional information, been solicited through direct mail, answered one of your print ads, called you for information, or have been recommended by someone else. The further away you move from a "contact point", the lesser the impact of your email newsletter and the more it looks like spam. That's the point where you start to do damage to your reputation.

It is true that in direct marketing (and email newsletters are a form of direct marketing) numbers do matter. You certainly want to grow your list. But you must grow it the right way. You are looking for both quantity and quality. To get quality, you need to somehow pre-qualify the email addresses that you add to your email newsletter database.

Gathering good names and growing a solid list is more expensive than buying a CD full of email addresses or turning lose on the net an email harvesting program. Those methods will give you lots of names - many of which will be outdated and inappropriate to the target market you are trying to reach with your email newsletter. And this method is a sure method for failure. ***Don't even think about it.*** A minute lost thinking about using these name sources is a minute lost to starting your plan to acquire names in a legitimate manner

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Keep in mind as you devise your strategies, plans, and tactics for acquiring email addresses, opt-ins are the only type of subscribers that you want for your email newsletter. Opt-in means the recipients of your email newsletter has already requested to receive information from you or has actually signed up for your email newsletter. This means that the growth of your email newsletter subscription base must come from people who take positive actions to request information from you.

Here are just some examples of how to encourage name acquisition:

- Set up a guestbook "above the fold" (or above the "scroll") on your web site
- Short of making product registration mandatory, make it very attractive to do so
- Make your list sign-up incredibly easy - ask as few questions as possible - how many times did you want to sign up for something and got turned off by the number of questions? These are usually the companies that won't mail to you anyway
- Improve your SEO - search engine optimization, so that more users will find you
- Trade advertisements with other newsletters
- Find sources of cost per acquisition lists
- Utilize a fish bowl inside your store with an offer for a free subscription
- Write content / articles for other newsletters and encourage readers to subscribe to your list.
- Collaborate with someone else to provide an incentive and share the email name
- Work together with other local retailers
- Have reciprocal subscription entries with other non-competitive businesses
- Never miss an opportunity to ask for an email address - customer service, bill paying, subscription renewals, etc
- Offer a prize at trade shows for email acquisition
- Ask for email addresses at open houses
- Get the email address at point of purchase
- Ask for business cards - introduce these folks to your newsletter

Permission Based Email Newsletters

It is not appropriate to acquire emails addresses by just about any means and then blast out hundreds or thousands of copies of your email newsletter. You must question at what point is it okay for you to email a newsletter to a prospect or a customer without the email being perceived as spam? The short answer to that question is that you probably need some type of permission from your prospect before you can add them to the subscription base. The way you acquire your email addresses is important. If you acquire email addresses from a sign-up form on your web site, then clearly you have a situation where people have "opted into" your email distribution list. Sending an email newsletter to those folks is the ideal situation; what many people call permission based email.

What about email addresses you have acquired by other means? Perhaps you have acquired email addresses from order forms, business cards, or even other e-commerce companies. Have those folks given you permission to send them information – like an email newsletter? Probably not. The rule of thumb is this: before you can email to a new address, you should have some form of permission.

As has been noted several times before in this book; email without permission is spam. Spam annoys customers and prospects and if you are trying to build a solid subscription base, you don't want to annoy people. The powerful assumption behind permission based marketing is that when a prospective customer gives you permission to send them additional information, the likelihood is much greater that you can develop a relationship with that person and that there is a better chance of creating loyalty than if you make your contact via spam.

What about renting opt-in email lists? These are lists of people (and their email addresses) that at some point in the past have stated (or checked an option box) that they want information sent to them via email. Renting email addresses from third-party list providers is a route that some new newsletter owners choose because you're given quick access to a list of hundreds, if not thousands, of people who have "opted" to receive email on topics that interest them. You can usually expect to be charged 5 to 30 cents per deliverable message, and you should expect any email addresses that are "bad" or that "bounce" to be replaced by addresses that are current. Renting lists is very

expensive and unlikely to return results that will be acceptable. If the rental fee is much less than this, then the list is highly suspect and likely a harvested list.

If you decide to use a service like this, know that you are probably participating in spamming even though it's called opt-in. This is opt-in on the edge – quite different from a prospect going to your web site and signing up for your email newsletter.

If you go the rented opt-in list route, it's absolutely critical that you find out how the email addresses were originally obtained. You want email addresses that have been collected ethically and responsibly, and this means you want the email addresses of people who are **directly** interested in your product, industry or field of expertise, and have given their permission and "opted-in" to the list.

If you buy lists of email addresses that have been "harvested" from newsgroups, online classified ad sites, online services and other similar sources, you will be **rightly accused** of spamming. Any list that comes your way on a cd is obviously a spam list. These people have not given you permission to contact them, and you can get into a lot of trouble this way. Again, I can't overstate the importance of making sure the email addresses you rent have been collected ethically and responsibly!

Spam

What is it? Spam is slang for junk email. It is unsolicited email. If you receive an email newsletter that you never signed up for, you will think of that as spam. Spam can give you a bad reputation.

No one likes spam. Organizations hate spam because of the hits it causes on their mail servers. Parents hate spam because they don't want their kids getting unsolicited and inappropriate ads. Like junk snail mail and calls from telemarketers, spam is at best, an annoyance and at its worst, a poor use of server memory and electronic junk in your inbox. In addition, spam, like telemarketers, is a target for politicians. Many states have passed legislation governing spam (**www.spamlaws.com/state/**) and in 2003, the U.S. Congress passed the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003; the federal government's first major attempt to control spam.

There is more spamming than ever before. According to the *New York Times*, a study of the 3 million e-mail messages received each day at Indiana University, 45% are spam

and that AOL discards approximately 80% of the 2.5 billion e-mail messages sent daily to its subscribers. [17]Anti-spammers are complaining of bulk emailers who clog up inboxes with offers of pornography, get-rich-quick schemes and weight loss plans.

The ultimate question is what could happen if you are painted as a spammer? If reported to your Internet Service Provider (ISP) spamming could result in a shut down of your web site or email accounts and heavy damage to your reputation. In addition, if your spamming contains fraudulent information, you could be investigated by the Federal Trade Commission and state regulators. As a publisher of email newsletters, you should be familiar with the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003, which is discussed in the next section.

CAN-SPAM Act of 2003

The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 (CAN-SPAM) was an attempt by congress to put the breaks on spamming. It derives its name from "Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003". Its objective is to prevent the practice of Unsolicited Commercial Email (UCE), otherwise know to most people as: "Spam". CAN-SPAM is the federal government's first serious attempt at putting a framework in place to control Internet communications, particularly those of businesses in the promotion and solicitation of commerce.

The CAN-SPAM Act applies to all businesses in the US that use e-mail. It regulates "commercial electronic mail message" —any e-mail message "the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service (including content on an Internet website operated for a commercial purpose)"[18]. Just about any business e-mail is covered, including e-mail newsletters as well as standalone promotional e-mails.

The FTC or any state Attorney General is authorized to bring legal action under the Act. ISP's may also request action via either the FTC or the state Attorney General. Statutory damages can be stiff. A State Attorney General can sue for $250 per illegal e-mail message up to a maximum of $2 million -- more if the offense includes certain

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[17] Saul Hansell, Totaling Up the Bill for Spam: Wasted Time, Computer and Human, Is Only Part of the Cost, New York Times, July 28, 2003, at C1.
[18] Sec. 3(2)

aggravating violations.[19] Internet Service Providers can sue in federal district court for $100 per illegal e-mail message up to a maximum of $1 million or more.[20]

It is important that any company that uses email, including email newsletters, communicate with existing or potential customers understand the basics of CAN-SPAM. Keep in mind that the act does not apply to "transactional relationship messages". Transactional relationship messages are emails that are primarily noncommercial. For example, if your email newsletter announces product recalls, health and safety information, or provides primarily customer service information, then you most likely do not need to worry about the stipulations of CAN-SPAM.

As an email newsletter publisher, become familiar with CAN-SPAM. In short, if your email newsletters include promotional messages (messages with a primary purpose of promoting a good or service) then you must make sure that your "Subject:" line, your "From:" line, and your content are not misleading and that you not only include a street address (not a PO box) in your newsletter but you also provide a working opt-out link. Keep in mind that the working opt-out link is a key. The FTC has disclosed that in a study of a random sampling of 1,000 e-mail messages, 63% of those messages that had removal links were found to not work.[21]

Here is an executive summary of the basic practices that are prohibited under the CAN-SPAM Act:

- The act prohibits false information in the "From:" line. The "From:" line should include the name of your company or an actual person who works for the company. It must be clear who is sending your email newsletter.
- The act prohibits false and misleading "Subject:" lines. In writing your "Subject:" line, you need to be engaging and interesting, direct. concise, and also honest; don't use misleading statements.
- The act requires that your emails include a clear and prominently displayed mechanism for recipients to object to receiving emails. Your email must make it easy for the recipient to "opt-out". The act also requires that senders comply with objection requests within 10 days

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[19] Sec. 7(f)
[20] Sec. 7(g)(3)
[21] Prepared Statement of the Federal Trade Commission on "Unsolicited Commercial Email" Before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Science & Transportation, 108th Congress 13 (May 21, 2003).

of.the unsubscribe request. Therefore, if your subscriber wants to opt-out of future email newsletters, you must honor that request within 10 days or you are not in compliance with the act. Having an opt-out email address is the minimum. It is best to have a one-click link with a statement detailing when the request will be honored (hopefully immediately).

- The act requires clear identification that the email is a solicitation when applicable. In your email newsletter, this would be an issue for advertisements. For example, many email newsletters provide an advertisement heading to alert the user that the text that follows is an advertisement. Below is the way the Washingtonpost.com email newsletter *Personal Finance*, handles advertisements (including its own promotional material).[22]

Advertisement

<u>Get your news just the way you like it.</u> Add your favorite columnists and topics to a washingtonpost.com newsletter delivered to your in-box each morning. It's a free and easy way to make sure you never miss a thing**<u>. Personalize your e-mail today</u>** and enjoy customized articles tomorrow.

- The act requires the email to contain a valid postal address. One approach is to put the postal address in standard email footer like the one below.

You have received this email newsletter because you provided your email address to [COMPANY NAME] in the course of [BUSINESS ACTIVITY, MEETING, SEMINAR, ETC.] or by subscribing. To unsubscribe from the email newsletter mailing list, please click here or reply with the word "Unsubscribe" as the subject line. Your request will be honored within [1 to 10 days or immediately] business day(s) upon receipt. Our business address is [STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP]. Thank you.

- E-mail address harvesting is prohibited under the act. Harvesting is the practice of using software robots to "crawl" through web pages and capturing (harvesting) any e-mail addresses that appear on those pages. The Act states that it is unlawful to send -- or provide e-mail addresses for an e-mailing "if such person had actual knowledge, or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances that the electronic

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[22] *Personal Finance* is a newsletter distributed by washingtonpost.com. Michelle Singletary is the editor of *Personal Finance*.

mail address of the recipient was obtained using an automated means from an Internet website..."23

Dealing with Spam Complaints

When and if you receive a spam complaint, respond as soon as possible. Spam, like any other customer complaint should be thought of a serious and a deficiency that you need to clear up. It is essential that you maintain good records as to how you have acquired your email names. For example, if you know that the source of your email addresses is your sign-up box on your web site, then you will be able to communicate that to your subscriber and offer instructions on how to unsubscribe.

When people file spam complaints, they sometimes send the complaint notice to your Internet Service Provider (ISP). Therefore, be prepared to reply to ISP inquiries also. Keep a copy of all complaints and your responses indefinitely, just in case you ever need them.

List Management

Managing your list (database) of subscribers takes work. When you start out as an e-publisher, there will be many questions to which you need to find solutions. Some of the first questions to ask involve list management. How will you manage your list of email addresses? How will you keep your list up-to-date? How will you add email addresses when people want to subscribe? How will you delete unsubscribers? These are database management questions.

Just as if you were doing bulk mailings using snail mail, you need a non-hassle way to keep your list up-to-date and to merge your list of email addresses (subscribers) with your email newsletter copy (email) when you want to distribute a new issue. The sections that follow describe two general methods of list management: the manual method (only appropriate for very small subscriber lists) and the automated method (the route for most email newsletters).

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23 Sec. 5(b)(1)

Manual Method

If your subscription base is very small (100 or fewer), the "manual" list management system may work for you. In Outlook you can setup distribution lists. A distribution list is a collection or group of email addresses. Therefore, in Outlook you could create a distribution list of your email newsletter subscribers and send them the same message. You can easily add and delete names in a distribution list. By all means, never place this distribution list in the recipient field – always place the list in the bcc area [24] Otherwise the recipients will see their own names and the names of all other recipients on the "To line" of the message that delivers your email newsletter. If there is one certain recipe for failure, this is it. The bcc approach is also rife with problems. Many ISPs will not allow emails that contain a large bcc list and their individual delivery will oftentimes be marked as spam because of a "malformed email address."

The "manual method" is very labor intensive. Since there is no automation or integration between the activities of people subscribing and unsubscribing to your email newsletter, you must get the emails as they come in and make the changes to your database (distribution list) one-by-one or in batches.

Sooner or later however, your list will grow to a size where handling each subscribe/unsubscribe request takes too much time. When your list exceeds 100 names, it begins to make sense to let someone else manage this for you.

Automated Method

As you grow, you must automate the list management of your email newsletter. It will allow you to streamline the process of email list management and add a higher degree of automation. You have a choice on how automation will work. You can purchase your own email software or utilize an Application Service Provider (ASP). Many ASPs advertise their program as being three services in one:

- Email Database Management
- Email newsletter Builder (templates and forms)
- Campaign Manager (result tracking)

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[24] In Outlook, if you don't want a recipient to see their name in the "To:" box you can use Bcc. Bcc is an abbreviation for blind carbon copy. By adding a recipient's name to the Bcc box, a copy of the message is sent to that recipient, and the recipient's name is not visible to other recipients of the message. However, this too is a labor intensive method for distributing an email newsletter.

Therefore, a web service will provide a database and tools too keep track of your subscribers email addresses, templates and tools to prepare professional looking newsletters, and software that can track key metrics so you can evaluate the effectiveness of your email newsletter.

Whether you utilize an outsource solution like an ASP or use an in-house solution, subscribers to your email newsletter will either:

- Send an email to a specific email address with a request to "subscribe" or "unsubscribe." The emails come in and the new subscribers or unsubscribers' email addresses are automatically added or deleted to your list.

Or

- Go to your web site, enter their email address into a form and click a button to get on and off the list. If you use an ASP system, the list database will be automatically updated.

The advantages of the automated approach are obvious. It removes a great deal of human involvement with database management; it reduces errors, and is fast and efficient. An automated solution is the only way to go if you believe that subscriptions to your email newsletter will soon be above some critical mass – such as a rule of thumb of 100's of subscribers.

Today's email newsletter management software and web based services are quite sophisticated and can include features such as:

- Confirmed opt-in verification by email – often referred to as double opt-in.
- Automatic transmission of HTML and Text based newsletters.
- email newsletter signup forms for web site use.
- Facility to export subscriber information to Excel for further analysis.
- Ability to personalize your newsletters by including the subscriber's name, email and other demographic information.
- Ability to measure the effectiveness of an email campaign by tracking views, open rates, and clicks for each individual newsletter campaign.
- Ability to track views, open rate, and clicks for each individual subscriber.
- Based on recorded click-throughs, follow-up newsletters can be sent to those who clicked on a specific link(s).

- Built-in HTML editor.
- Automated tracking/filtering of bounced email addresses. Addresses can be removed after a certain number of user defined bounces.
- Ability to schedule email campaigns for future delivery, such as up to 60 days in advance.
- Includes option to forward newsletter to a friend.
- Option to target newsletters based on collected demographic data.
- Option to email most recent newsletter or a specific newsletter after a confirmed opt-in.
- Option to specify custom character sets for each newsletter list.

Welcome Message

When someone does subscribe to your email newsletter, send them a welcome message right away. Here's a list of welcome content you may find helpful:

- Include a description of what they will typically receive in their newsletter
- How frequently they will receive it
- Where they can read old issues (web address of the archive)
- How to unsubscribe
- You may also want to include your privacy statement or a link to your privacy statement

If possible, the first issue should include a welcome message. Your welcoming message should state something like: "Thank you for subscribing to our great email newsletter. Here is our latest issue…". Such a message like that, reminds the subscriber that they signed up for the email newsletter (as opposed to receiving something unsolicited).

Harvesting Email Addresses

No, no, no. In a nutshell – NO! The harvesting of email addresses is a practice that is against the law. It is a tool of spammers. Harvesting is defined as compiling or extracting email addresses through anonymous and usually automated collection procedures. For example, there are software packages that will "spider" through the Internet, visiting chat rooms, web sites, discussion lists, bulletin boards, company directories, and any other files that listing personal or business email addresses. The spider not only can recognize an email address when it "sees" one, but it can decide to

capture it into a database file. Then you can append or merge the email addresses into your database.

Most email harvesting is done to send bulk unsolicited email therefore, as was mentioned in a previous section of this e-book, harvesting is prohibited under the CAN-SPAM Act 2003. Keep in mind that regardless of its prohibition under CAN-SPAM, email address harvesting is not a good business practice. The use of email harvesting techniques means that some part of your database of "subscribers" will have not had a prior relationship with your or your organization. In this case, prior relationship means any previous correspondence, transaction, third party permission use, or offline contact (like a store visit). If you are foolish enough to use harvesting methods to build your email list, your email newsletter will be perceived as spam and your web site will likely be shut down. That's the last thing you want!

Timing of Distribution

One advantage of email newsletters is that they give you the ultimate flexibility when timing a delivery. When do you want readers to receive your email newsletter? This is a question that e-marketers also study. Think about the best time to catch people's attention. The time and day of appropriate distribution of your email newsletter may vary with the needs of your target audience. There maybe some group that enjoy receiving your email newsletter on the weekend, while others can't be bothered with email on the weekend because they are busy with recreational activities. Some editors believe that mid-day and mid-week are the best times to catch people's attention. Many studies reveal that email marketers think that the best time to send an email marketing campaign is between 8:00 am and 1:00 pm and that the best days of the week are Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

Monday mornings are tough for many people as they try to get back into the swing of things and emails received late Friday, over the weekend, and early on Monday will stack up and compete for attention with your Monday morning email newsletter. Fridays may not be a good delivery day because people are trying to wrap up their work, and look forward to rest, relaxation, and recreation for the weekend. Some newspaper editors save their best stories for mid week when they believe readership is up. Weekend reading habits are difficult to predict. Many people like to relax with their Sunday newspaper as they religiously cull through just about every interesting article on

Sunday morning or Sunday evening. There are sports fans who like to spend Saturday morning with the sports page. The point is that only you can answer the timing question after studying the wants and needs of your subscribers. For example, one of the most popular ecommerce sites, Circuit City (**www.circuitcity.com**), sends their emails during the day on Sunday. This time obviously works for them based on their results.

Identifying the best time to send out your email newsletter may not be easy. Rules of thumb (between 8:00 am and 1 pm and Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday) may be the best times to satisfy your readers needs, provide optimal open rates (the percentage of emails received that are read), and help to maximize your revenues. Every target market has different needs and therefore you must think about the best timing (day and time) for the distribution of your email newsletter. One idea is to experiment. That's another advantage of email newsletters. They are so cost effective that you can experiment with different timing plans. Try different days and times and track some relevant metric (responses, new subscriptions, orders, request for information, contest entries etc.). Eventually, you should arrive at an optimal time and delivery day.

Ready to Launch

When you are ready to launch an issue, there are a variety of quality issues to consider. A check list can help you resolve many quality issues before you click the send button. The check list below is a starting point. Revise it to meet your specific needs. A copy of this checklist is also included in the appendix of this book.

Proofread one last time. (see the next section on proofreading)

- The "From:" line includes your company name, brand name, and preferably the name or a real person (such as the editor).
- The "Subject:" line is the right length. It is 5-8 words, and no more than 40 characters including spaces.
- The "Subject:" line incorporates a specific benefit that will interest subscribers and motivate them to open the issue.
- The "Subject:" line includes your brand name if for some reason your "From:" line does not.
- The "Subject:" line accurately reflects the theme or basic message of the issue
- If possible, the email newsletter body is personalized with the recipient's first name last name or both, if appropriate.

- The email newsletter copy is well written, clear and concise.
- The email newsletter copy balances information and promotion (80/20 mix).
- The promotional copy of the email newsletter contains a strong or at least effective call to action.
- The issue focuses on benefits or value-added information.
- Appropriate graphics and a good use of white space.
- The issue has been effectively proofread including the body of the email newsletter, the "From:" line, and the "Subject:" line.
- Links have been double-checked to assure they work properly.
- The issue has been previewed and you have sent a test copy (to yourself) in HTML and text.

Proofreading Your Newsletter

Be sure to properly proofread your email newsletter by getting someone else to ensure the quality of your newsletter. Mistakes in your email newsletter will destroy your credibility and the effectiveness of your message.

It's always better to have someone else proofread your work because your own errors can often "fool your eye". However, even if you pass your work on to someone else to proof you should always do your best to proofread your own work. In general, your proofreading should be more than just re-reading your newsletter. You should ask yourself:

- Does the newsletter look right?
- Is it effective and complete?
- Does it sound right?
- Is it correct?

Proofreading needs to be done in multiple stages. Some experts believe that at least four rounds of proofreading are necessary. The first pass should involve a general read — simply looking to see if the newsletter "looks" right. Here's where you may catch mistakes such as lengthy paragraphs, poorly positioned graphics, and poorly placed hyperlinks. You may want to read the first pass aloud to let your ear catch grammar or awkward sentence construction. The "sound" of your newsletter is important. If it sounds stuffy or forced, people aren't going to read it. A subsequent pass should involve

reading one sentence at a time. Some experts also suggest you should do one pass from the end of the newsletter to the beginning.

Each proofreading pass brings the newsletter closer to perfection. In addition, a proofreading checklist is always a good idea. Here's one you may find helpful

Proofreading Checklist

- Newsletter has been spellchecked.
- Read the newsletter aloud to check for complete sentences and flow of thoughts. This also helps you find missing words.
- Ideas are organized in a logical order.
- Every sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with the correct punctuation mark.
- Periods and commas are used correctly.
- Apostrophes are used correctly for contractions.
- Quotations are punctuated correctly.
- Names of people and places have been capitalized.
- Each word in a title have been capitalized except: and, but, or, a, an, the, and prepositions that are less than five letters long (from, to, in, out, on, over, etc.).
- First word of a title is always capitalized.
- Use of common homonyms (there, their, they're; to, too, two, your, you're) is correct.
- Checked accuracy of numbers used in newsletter articles.
- The numbers one through ten are spelled with letters. Numbers over ten are written with numbers unless they begin a sentence.
- Accurate abbreviations and acronyms.
- Book titles are italicized.
- Quotes are in quotation marks or italicized.
- Eliminate the use of jargon and clichés.

Promoting Your Email Newsletter

Contacting Existing Customers

How do you get the word out that you have an email newsletter? The first obvious step is to let all your current customers know about the launch of your newsletter and how they can subscribe to it. With every correspondence that you send to your current base of customers, invoices, confirmations, invitations, thank you notes, etc., you need to include information about your email newsletter.

Some tactics are obvious. Have you offered your existing customers a subscription to your newsletter? If you haven't, you should email them an offer to subscribe. In addition to trying to motivate your current customers to subscribe by explaining the benefits of the email newsletter, consider a "special gift" like a free report, white paper, article or book if they subscribe. Perhaps you can do the same if a current subscriber refers a friend who registers as a subscriber.

Promoting Your Email Newsletter on Your Site

You should also promote your newsletter on your Web site. When you promote the email newsletter on your web site (and this is true in all your newsletter promotional pieces) you must give your prospective subscriber a reason to subscribe. Don't just put a banner on the site that says something like: "Click Here to Subscribe to our Free email newsletter". Find a way to communicate why they should subscribe. Answer the question: How will they benefit from subscribing and reading your email newsletter?

The idea that your email newsletter is free is not enough to get someone to subscribe. Unless you can persuade people to believe otherwise, for the most part, "free" means worthless. As a motivation to sign up, people must believe that they will get something of value from the free newsletter. There are thousands of free newsletters out there; how many of them offer really valuable information? What makes yours different or special from all the thousands of other free email newsletters?

You really need to "sell" your free newsletter to potential subscribers. In one or two sentences, make the benefits of subscribing clear. If your newsletter is about a coaching

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girl's basketball, say something like "Subscribe to the Ultimate Coaching Girls Basketball email newsletter. Receive monthly tips and advice from the best girls' basketball coaches in the U.S. - from youth, high school, and college." Doesn't that sound much more interesting and valuable than "Subscribe to my free newsletter"?

Another strategy for the web site is the positioning of the email newsletter subscription box on your site. Make sure it is above the "fold" – immediately visible in the first window.[25] In other words, don't make it difficult to find. If you believe that your email newsletter is an important tool in your marketing mix, make sure everyone who visits the site has an easy time finding the subscription box.

Promoting Email Newsletter in Everyday Emails

You probably write lots of emails in the course of your everyday business dealings. Each email is an opportunity to promote your email newsletter. One simple and almost effortless way (and potentially a viral way) is to add some type of tagline in your email signatures. An email signature (in an email message) is a three- to six-line message or footer that you can attach to the bottom of every one of your email messages. This is "free" digital real estate that you should use to plug your email newsletter.

Most people are not offended by email signatures so you should take advantage of this opportunity.

Here's an example of an email signature that encourages the reader to sign-up for the company's email newsletter.

> James Kinlan
> President
> TemplateZone.com
> **Subscribe to our Office Expert email newsletter**

Post to Publicize

You should actively promote your email newsletter in every appropriate electronic venue you can find. What better place to do that than in online resources that already have an audience. Think about the newsgroups, discussion lists and forum postings you

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[25] Web site writers refer to the area your first see when a web site opens as "above the scroll". This is a new twist on the term "above the fold" in a newspaper, which is what you see when the newspaper sits folded on your desk or at the newsstand.

can join to publicize your email newsletter. An editor who started up an email newsletter on the topic of personal finance, received thousands of new subscribers by posting helpful information on finance related newsgroups. He would give advice, tips, make comments, and contribute to discussion threads and he always informed the readers that he was the editor of a free personal finance newsletter.

If you can identify newsgroups, discussion lists and forums that relate directly to your industry, profession, and business niche, it makes sense to contribute to the dialog of those groups and to gently plug your email newsletter. Gently is the key word. Be careful not to blatantly advertise the newsletter within these forums. Like spam, blatant advertising in many of these venues annoys people. However, if you offer valuable advice or make good contributions to the dialog, you can also mention that you are the editor of a newsletter and how interested parties can subscribe.

You should also offer to write articles for local newspapers, trade journals, ezines and other periodicals. Writing articles will become more efficient for you once you start producing a few issues of your newsletter. You will have a "library" of good content that you can spin out into an article. Be sure to promote your newsletter in the article and include your web site address and email address in a tag line at the bottom of the piece.

When you launch your first issue, be sure to also issue a press release to the local papers and post the press release on the web – it's inexpensive. See how you can do this online at **www.prweb.com**. Some people who are familiar with your company or who have an interest in the types of products and services you offer will take the time to surf to your web site or email you for information on how to subscribe.

Email Newsletters and Search Engine Optimization[26]

Congratulations! You've been drafted. Either the owner of one of the 4.9 million small businesses in the United States has asked you to create a customer newsletter, or you are THE owner and you couldn't find any volunteers.

You are thrilled to find there are templates to help you create your first email newsletter in less time than it took you to write a term paper in college. You are becoming a believer in the power of the email newsletter when recipients of your initial effort start walking into the store, calling during business hours, or ordering online. But the initial glow will wane and the owner – or you – will naturally want to squeeze more value out of your efforts.

So, how can you get more value out of your email newsletter?

You might consider increasing the frequency of email newsletter from four to 12 times a year – IF you have two things: (1) enough "news" for a monthly newsletter, and (2) enough time, staff or money to publish on a more regular basis. But email newsletter publishing isn't your business focus. And increasing the frequency of your email newsletter by a factor of three may not increase your revenue by a factor of three.

You might try to find more subscribers for your email newsletter. This might be easier said than done. If you are publishing a free email newsletter, then more recipients don't generate additional subscription revenue. And your response rates will drop if you send your email newsletter to strangers who haven't opted in to receive it. Again, your business expertise is not email newsletter publishing. And the cost of renting email lists doesn't always translate into an equivalent boost in sales.

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[26] This chapter was written by Greg Jarboe, the President and co-founder of SEO-PR (**www.seo-pr.com**), a firm that combines search engine optimization and public relations to generate web traffic, sales leads and publicity.

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So, how can you get more value out of your email newsletter?

One of the easiest, smartest, and cheapest ways a small business can squeeze more value out of an email newsletter marketing campaign is by archiving email newsletters online and using the content in them to generate more search engine traffic to your web site. This is called search engine optimization. Repurposing the content of your email newsletter by positing it on your web site can generate qualified traffic to your web site, leads for your products and services, and sales revenue. It can also help you collect more email addresses for your email newsletter.

Of course, search engine optimization assumes that you have a web site. While many small businesses still don't have a web site, a majority do.

If your small business already has a web site, then there are a series of five inter-related steps that you can take to leverage the effort that you've already put into creating an email newsletter to launch a search engine optimization campaign.

Each of these five steps is important and it is risky to skip one. You may want to hire a firm to do this work for you, or you may be willing to invest the time to learn how to do it yourself. Either way, you will want to understand how to successfully take each step to ensure that the complete process produces results.

Develop a Segmentation Strategy

Any small business should target at least two key market segments. The first group is shoppers, prospects, or visitors to your web site. The second segment is existing buyers, customers, or subscribers who have opted-in to receive your email newsletter.

In a growing business, the first group is bigger than the second. In a healthy business, a significant percentage of the first segment will turn into members of the second.

When you create an email newsletter, it is generally targeted at the second audience. These are people you already know and who already know you. Your reason for sending it is to increase customer loyalty, prompt repeat purchases, or sell upgrades. Their reason for receiving it is to get practical and reliable information as well as early news.

If you repurpose your email newsletter by posting the content on your web site, it can also address the first segment. Visitors to your site will be able to read what you are sending to your newsletter subscribers, which may prompt them to make a purchase or opt-in to receive your newsletter themselves.

This sounds fairly straightforward, but you would be surprised by the number of companies that don't archive their email newsletters on their web sites. They can't imagine hitting two birds with one stone.

Once the content of your newsletter is posted on your web site, it can help an even larger group of shoppers and prospects find your site when they use search engines. This group is huge.

According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project (**www.pewinternet.org**), 63% of American adults go online. That's 128 million people.

Of these 128 million Internet users in the U.S., 84% use a search engine to find information. That's almost 108 million people.

How can you get even a fraction of this group to "beat a path to your door"?

Conduct Keyword Research

Think about the terms users would type to find pages on your web site, and then conduct your own keyword research to determine if you are right. To discover the most popular search terms your prospects might use, try Overture's Keyword Selector Tool. It can be found at **http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/** and it's free!

Start your keyword research by typing your company name into the box. Now, for comparison and contrast, type in: Google. In November 2004, there were 24,070,822 searches for this brand name. Not bad for a company that was incorporated on September 7, 1998.

If your company or brand name isn't as well known, look for a generic description that people actually search for. As a general rule, the best search terms for small businesses to use are at least two or three words long. Usually, too many web sites will be relevant for a single word, such as "restaurant", or even for a popular two-word term like

"Chicago restaurant." This increased competition means your odds of success at being found by search engine users are much lower. However, picking more specific phrases can increase your chance of success. According to the Overture Keyword Selector Tool, there were 13,679 searches done in November 2004 for "Chicago Italian restaurant".

Here's another suggestion: Use a different target term in each article of your email newsletter. Over the course of a year, this will enable your web site to be one of the most relevant matches for dozens of search terms.

At SEO-PR, we license and use more sophisticated tools and services to conduct keyword research for our clients. But, we have found that the tool or service you use is not as critical as how well you use them. To paraphrase David Ogilvy, what distinguishes great surgeons is not the scalpel they use — it's their knowledge, dexterity and experience.

Target Major Search Engines

To be successful, any small business needs to target the major search engines. How many are there and which ones should you target?

Some unethical firms will send you unsolicited email promising to submit your web site to "thousands of search engines." Of course, other unethical firms will offer you diet pills that "burn fat at night" or ask for your help transferring funds illegally from deposed dictators. If this all seems too good to be true, it probably is.

According to the comScore Media Metrix qSearch service, there are only four search engines with more than a 10% share of the searches conducted in the U.S. – Google (36.8%), Yahoo Search (26.6%), MSN Search (14.5%), and AOL Search (12.8%). And, since AOL's main search results are powered by Google, there is just one search engine that can literally make you – or break you.

Google has been called the 900-pound gorilla of search engines. It serves more than 59 million unique visitors each month and performs more than 200 million searches per day – referring more traffic than any other search engine. Google has also indexed the largest number of web pages of any of the search engines – more than eight billion. So,

if your web site can't be found when your shoppers or prospects conduct a search for a relevant term on Google, you are missing out on an extraordinary opportunity.

Google's dominance clarifies which search engine you need to help find, index, and rank your site. However, it doesn't simplify what you need to do, because Google's order of results is automatically determined by more than 100 factors, including its PageRank algorithm.

So what is the best way to ensure that your small business will be included in Google's results?

Follow Google's Guidelines

Google has acquired a reputation as a company that keeps trade secrets very close to its vest. Nevertheless, Google also posts resources that can be used for those who want to do it themselves. For example, Google's Webmaster Guidelines are posted online at: **http://www.google.com/webmasters/guidelines.html**. Several of these are technical guidelines for webmasters in big companies or professional search engine optimizers, like SEO-PR. But other guidelines cover content, design and quality issues that you or someone else in your small business should understand – and follow. Here are some of the more important ones:

Content Guidelines:

Think about the words users would type to find your pages, and make sure that your site actually includes those words within it.

Create a useful, information-rich site and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your content.

Make sure that your TITLE and ALT tags are descriptive and accurate.

Position Your Keywords

In addition to these guidelines, you should make sure that your keywords appear in important positions on your web site. Each page's HTML title tag is very important, as is the headline of each article from your email newsletter, which should be posted as a

separate page on your web site. Failure to include your keywords in these positions is one reason why perfectly relevant web pages may be poorly ranked.

While your titles and headlines need to include keywords, they also should be relatively clear and concise. Just as newspaper headlines help readers decide if they want to read a story, the titles or your articles need to help search engine users decide if they want to click through to your site.

Placing keywords in your titles and headlines is not necessarily going to help your page do well for relevant searches if the content of the article from your email newsletter has nothing to do with the topic. Your keywords need to be both relevant and reflected in the page's content – "high" in the body copy of a page.

You might need to expand a few text references, where appropriate. For example, you might substitute keyword phrases for one or two pronouns like "it" or "its" to increase their overall frequency in the article. This reinforces your strategic keywords in a legitimate and natural manner.

Design Guidelines

Try to use text instead of images to display important names, content, or links. The Google crawler doesn't recognize text contained in images. When you post articles from your email newsletter to your web site, make sure every page is reachable from at least one static text link.

Every major search engine uses link analysis as part of its ranking algorithms. This is done because it is very difficult for webmasters or search engine optimizers to "fake" good links, in the way they might try to spam search engines by manipulating the words on their web pages. As a result, link analysis gives search engines a useful means of determining which pages are good for particular topics.

Build Links

By building links, you can improve how well your pages do in link analysis systems. The key is understanding that link analysis is not about "popularity." In other words, it's not an issue of getting lots of links from anywhere. Instead, you want links from good web pages that are related to the topics you want to be found for.

For example, you can create a site map with links that point to the important pages of your site. If the site map is larger than 100 or so links, you may want to break the site map into separate pages.

You can also go to Google, search for your target keywords, and look at the pages that appear in the top results. Then visit those pages and ask the site owners if they will link to you. Not everyone will, especially sites that are extremely competitive with you. However, there will be non-competitive sites that will link to you – especially if you offer a reciprocal link back to them.

Quality Guidelines

However, don't participate in link schemes designed to increase your site's ranking or PageRank. In particular, avoid links to web spammers or "bad neighborhoods" on the web as your own ranking may be affected adversely by those links.

Make pages for users, not for search engines. Don't deceive your users, or present different content to search engines than you display to users. Avoid tricks intended to improve search engine rankings. A good rule of thumb is…to ask, "Does this help my users? Would I do this if search engines didn't exist?"

Specifically, don't use unethical tactics that Google and other search engines consider search engine spam. Search engine spam is as problematic as email spam. No one likes email spam, and companies that use it often face a backlash from those on the receiving end. Sites that spam search engines face the same backlash that email spam generates.

The content of most web pages ought to be enough for search engines to determine relevancy without webmasters or unethical search engine optimizers having to resort to repeating keywords for no reason other than to try and "beat" other web pages. The stakes will simply keep rising, and users will also begin to hate sites that undertake these measures.

If these ethical reasons aren't enough, how about some practical ones? Spam doesn't always work with search engines. It can also backfire. Search engines may detect your spam attempt and penalize or ban your page from their listings.

Google specifically recommends that you:

- Avoid hidden text or hidden links.
- Don't employ cloaking or sneaky redirects.
- Don't send automated queries to Google.
- Don't load pages with irrelevant words.
- Don't create multiple pages, sub-domains, or domains with substantially duplicate content.
- Avoid "doorway" pages created just for search engines or other "cookie cutter" approaches such as affiliate programs with little or no original content.

In addition, search engine spam attempts usually center on being top ranked for extremely popular keywords. You can try and fight that battle against other sites, but then be prepared to spend a lot of time each week, if not each day, defending your ranking. That effort usually would be better spent on other forms of free web site promotion.

Submit Key Pages

When you add new content from your email newsletter to your web site, submit key pages to Google at **http://www.google.com/addurl.html**. Whatever you do, don't trust the submission process to automated programs and services. Some of them are excellent, but the major search engines are too important. So submit pages manually to ensure there are no problems.

Also, don't bother submitting more than the top two or three pages. It doesn't speed up the process. Submitting alternative pages is just a form of insurance. In case a search engine has trouble reaching one of the new pages, you're covered by giving it another page from which to begin its crawl of your site.

Google also suggests that you:

- Make sure all the sites that should know about your pages are aware that they are now online.
- Submit key pages to relevant directories such as the Open Directory Project and Yahoo.
- Periodically review Google's Webmaster section for more information.

This approach requires a little patience. It can take up to a month to two months for your "non-submitted" pages to appear in a search engine, and some search engines may

not list every page from your site. However, it is a free web site promotion tactic that works – if you follow the guidelines.

Trust, But Verify

Finally, in the words of former President Ronald Reagan, "Trust, but verify" your search engine listing.

Check on your pages to be sure they get listed. Once your pages are listed in a search engine, monitor your listing every week or two. Strange things happen. Pages disappear from catalogs. Links go screwy. Watch for trouble, and resubmit if you spot it.

Google strongly cautions, "Don't use unauthorized computer programs to submit pages, check rankings, etc. Such programs consume computing resources and violate our terms of service. Google does not recommend the use of products such as WebPosition Gold™ that send automatic or programmatic queries to Google.*"*

Nevertheless, you should resubmit your site any time you make significant changes. Search engines should normally revisit it on a regular schedule. However, some search engines have grown smart enough to realize that some sites only change content once or twice a year, so they may visit less often. Resubmitting your site after making major changes or adding significant new content will help ensure that your site is indexed more frequently.

It's worth taking the time to make your site more search engine friendly, because some simple changes may pay off with big results. Even if you don't come up in the top 10 for your target keywords, you may find an improvement for target keywords you aren't anticipating. The addition of just one extra word can suddenly make a site appear more relevant, and it can be impossible to guess what that word will be.

And remember: While search engines are *a* primary way people look for web sites, they are not the *only* way. People also find sites through word-of-mouth, traditional media, and links from other sites. Use these alternative information sources to drive qualified prospects to your web site.

Finally, know when it's time to call it quits. A few changes may be enough to make you tops in one or two search engines. But you shouldn't invest more money than it is worth to create special pages or change your site to try and do better.

If you can't get top 10 results cost-effectively, SEO-PR will be the first to recommend that your marketing dollars be put to better use pursuing other web site promotion methods.

The Bottom Line

Search engine optimization can help you improve your ranking for key terms, increase the amount of qualified traffic to your site, as well as generate more leads and sales for your business. In addition, archiving your newsletter content on your web site can also help you collect more addresses for your next email marketing campaign.

How's it Going?

Email Newsletter Metrics

Developing information, writing and designing and delivering your email newsletter is a cost of doing business. As such, you will need to monitor those costs. However, the cost of an email newsletter should not be a significant issue. Unless you outsource much of the writing, cost control is probably not a big issue.

The real control focus with email newsletters is more about how well you are doing meeting the objectives you have set. Many people today refer to anything that attempts to measure effectiveness as a metric. And so, you should think about the metrics (measurements) you can use to determine if your newsletter is doing the job well.

How is the effectiveness of an email newsletter measured? What metrics are appropriate? As you might expect, e-metrics is an area that is still evolving. You may need to think carefully about your organization and your email newsletter and what you are trying to accomplish before you can define a good set of email newsletter metrics. Some basic metrics include:

- Number of subscriptions
- Growth rate in subscriptions
- Cost per subscription

In addition, since a number of subscriber interaction activities "triggered" by your email newsletters can be gathered and tracked, some other e-metrics can be generated and evaluated such as:

- Click-throughs
- Stickiness
- Conversion rates

And there are other possible e-metrics that should be monitored and trends should be analyzed over time. For example, taking a page from email marketers, you might want to track the following:

- Number of issues sent

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- Number of emails bounced (come back as no longer valid email addresses)
- Number of emails opened
- Click through rate

You might want to track these kinds of metrics in a matrix or worksheet like the following:

MONTH	NUMBER SENT	BOUNCED	OPENED	UNSUBSCRIBES	CLICK-THROUGH RATE
January	10,000	10%	65%	5%	8%
February	11,000	12%	67%	6%	7.5%
March	12,000	11%	70%	7%	8%

Perhaps a table and a chart would help you track your email newsletter's performance. Figure 13.1 shows some e-metrics that were prepared in an Excel worksheet using both a table and a three dimensional bar chart.

It is quite obvious why some metrics should be tracked. For example, click-through rates are important just as response rates to a snail mail promotion would be closely monitored. But what about something like bounces (also called bounce backs)? Bounces are undeliverable emails. They are becoming more and more important to

| Month	Number Sent	Bounced	Opened	Click-through Rate
January	100,000	10,000	65,000	8,000
February	101,000	12,120	67,670	7,575
March	102,000	11,220	71,400	8,160
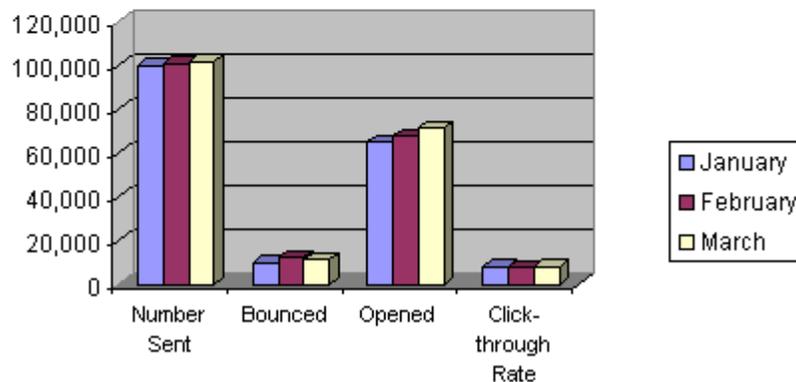
Figure 13.1 Tracking email newsletter performance

email marketers. According to a recent Association for Interactive Marketing (AIM) survey, 77% of respondents had bounce rates up to 10%, and 23% had rates greater than 10%. A high bounce rate should be of concern to you. Bounces can mean the loss of customers and prospects that cost you dollars to acquire (email addresses) as well as to maintain.

Whether your metrics include bounces, unsubscribes, or click throughs, the point is this: keep in mind that you should develop or adopt some control statistics. Develop a set of e-metrics that can help assure the success of your email newsletter program by monitoring how well you are doing.

The Revenue Generator

Since your email newsletter is primarily about communication and not a sales vehicle, it can and perhaps should have a call for action that will result in revenue. A call for action is anything that might spur a sale, request more information, or contribute to a fundraiser. All promotional specials (mentioned in the newsletter) require an action (purchase) within 48 hours by using a specified code word available only to newsletter subscribers. Within 24 hours of the email newsletter delivery, orders from that specific call for action pour in.

Detailed reports are generated so each marketing campaign launched through the email newsletter can be clearly tracked. This allows the company to refine newsletters and even to target specific customers on specific days.

It makes sense to link leads and sales generated by the email newsletter to additional revenue. Keep in mind that additional revenue can come from several sources including:

- Current customers who believe the email newsletter information prompted them to do additional business.
- Prospects that read the email newsletter and because of its information and decided to purchase.
- New prospects who saw the email newsletter or who have colleagues and friends who read the newsletter and decided to contact your organization to inquire about a product or service.

In addition, think about not only the incremental revenue of your email newsletter but the expenses that are reduced by the sending your newsletter by email. The email newsletter might make it possible for you to cut back on other marketing activities such as:

- Direct mail
- Advertising in multiple publications
- Paper based newsletters

Certainly, the cost of an email newsletter can be offset by the reduced expenses of several promotional activities.

Qualitative Benefits

Of course there will be benefits of your email newsletter that will be difficult to measure. There are some important outcomes that just can't be measured by e-metrics or by any quantitative method. However, those benefits, also know as qualitative benefits, are real and even if they can't be measured in dollars and sense they are valuable.

How can one measure the strength of relationships? That measurement is impossible yet, the building of relationships is critical in today's business world. How can one measure the value of having your name in front of prospects or on the mind of a customer? While it is difficult to measure that value, it is very important to remind your prospects and customers about who you are and what you can do.

Your email newsletter should be providing the following qualitative gains or benefits:

- **Increased feedback from customers and prospects**. Your email newsletter should help trigger additional questions, comments, and suggestions. While it is difficult to measure the revenue or expense impact of increased feedback, this information is mission critical information and is very valuable.
- **The growth of subscribers**. Each time an email newsletter is sent, some people will unsubscribe while new subscribers will be added to the list. The growth of the subscriber base increases leads that could be converted to future sales. In addition, more readers (subscribers) increase to the "buzz" about your organization's products and services. The value of the "buzz" is difficult to measure but everyone knows it has great value.

- **The growth of interested and engaged readers**. A subset of the item above (growth of subscribers), interested and engaged readers are leads that are closer to becoming sales.

What Can Go Wrong?

The email newsletter is a great idea and can be a very effective element of marketing mix. They must be executed properly to enhance an organization's image and to add-value. Most of this book will provide you with positive strategies and tactics to help you create really great email newsletters. But in an attempt to teach you the right things, we thought it would be helpful to show you a list of common errors to avoid:

- Make it difficult to subscribe. Have no effective program of collecting new email addresses. To grow an audience for your email newsletter, you need a way to gather new email addresses. Because your list will always be shrinking based on email address changes, unsubscribes and undeliverables.
- Send your email newsletter to readers without their permission. A sure way to ruin your newsletter is to follow this path and be accused of spam.
- Simply concentrate on selling. Use the email newsletter to sell, sell, and sell. If you provide nothing but offers, sales, discounts, and heavy sales pitches, your readers will be turned off, click-throughs will drop, and conversion rates will be so low your email newsletter won't be worth the trouble of writing it.
- Don't solicit feedback from readers. Readers should have any easy way to let you know their opinions.
- Ignore your readers' preferences. When they do tell you what they want, you need to work hard to provide it. Think of your email newsletter as a means of nurturing customer relationships. With that in mind, work towards meeting the formation needs of customers and prospects each time you design and write your publication.
- Ignore the importance of the "From:" line. Remember, an email newsletter is a form of email. If your reader sees a suspect "From:" line, then they may simply delete the email and never read your email newsletter.
- Ignore the importance of the "Subject:" line. Like number 7 above, the "Subject:" line gives the reader an important message. Just as the "Subject:" line of an interoffice memo may cause you to through away the memo without reading, a poorly written "Subject:" can kill an email newsletter.

- Don't worry about consistency. Newsletter readers want consistency. They want the newsletter to have the same look and feel, issue after issue and have it sent from the same "From:" line.

- Don't prepare a schedule of "press dates". Just like other periodicals, loyal readers want to be able to count on receiving the newsletter on some type of schedule (once a week, monthly, quarterly, etc). Readers of newsletters want a frequency they can count on. Many experts believe weekly or monthly frequency is best. Any more frequently, and they report that unsubscribe rates will go up.

- Don't proofread – If your newsletter has one spelling mistake it is one too many. If a single link doesn't work, what will your subscribers think of you?

Appendix

Exhibit 1 Example Privacy Statement

Privacy Policy

TemplateZone is committed to protecting the privacy of our members. In order to provide a safe, secure experience, we will make every effort to ensure that the information you give us remains private, and is used only for the purposes described below.

TemplateZone gathers collective information about members, such as which areas of the site are visited most often and what services are most valued. This aggregated and anonymous data helps us determine how we can create a better overall experience for our members. We may share this aggregated, anonymous information with our partners, so that they too may understand how to best serve our members.

The TemplateZone registration form requires members to give contact information (such as name and email address). We use this information to contact members when necessary (i.e., to send them product updates and offers), as well as to send members promotional material. To opt-out of receiving promotional emails, see the opt-out section below.

Security

This site has password security measures to protect against the loss, misuse and alteration of the information under our control.

Opt-Out

TemplateZone provides members with the opportunity to opt-out of receiving communications from our partners and us, as well as to unsubscribe from our service.
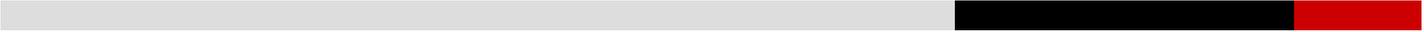
Contact Information

If you have any questions about our services or privacy statement, contact:

TemplateZone customer support
50 Mount Vernon Street
Cambridge MA 02140
privacy@TemplateZone.com

Exhibit 2 Email Newsletter Checklist

Use this checklist to provide quality control procedures before you send out an issue of your email newsletter.

- The "From:" line includes your company name, brand name, and preferably the name or a real person (such as the editor).
- The "Subject:" line is the right length. It is 5-8 words, and no more than 40 characters including spaces.
- The "Subject:" line incorporates a specific benefit that will interest subscribers and motivate them to open the issue.
- The "Subject:" line includes your brand name if for some reason your "From:" line does not.
- The "Subject:" line accurately reflects the theme or basic message of the issue
- If possible, the email newsletter body is personalized with the recipient's first name last name or both, if appropriate.
- The email newsletter copy is well written, clear and concise.
- The email newsletter copy balances information and promotion (80/20 mix).
- The promotional copy of the email newsletter contains a strong or at least effective call to action.
- The issue focuses on benefits or value-added information.
- Appropriate graphics and a good use of white space.
- The issue has been effectively proofread including the body of the email newsletter, the "From:" line, and the "Subject:" line.
- Links have been double-checked to assure they work properly.
- The issue has been previewed and you have sent a test copy (to yourself) in HTML and text.
- Check to make sure that you have included all of the ones from Constant Contact
- Should we make this more of a form – check list

Exhibit 3 Proofreading Checklist

- Newsletter has been spellchecked.
- Read the newsletter aloud to check for complete sentences and flow of thoughts. This also helps you find missing words.
- Ideas are organized in a logical order
- Every sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with the correct punctuation mark.
- Periods and commas are used correctly.
- Apostrophes are used correctly for contractions.
- Quotations are punctuated correctly.
- Names of people and places have been capitalized.
- Each word in a title have been capitalized except: and, but, or, a, an, the, and prepositions that are less than five letters long (from, to, in, out, on, over, etc.).
- First word of a title is always capitalized.
- Use of common homonyms (there, their, they're; to, too, two, your, you're) is correct.
- Checked accuracy of numbers used in newsletter articles.
- The numbers one through ten are spelled with letters; Numbers over ten are written with numbers unless they begin a sentence.
- Accurate abbreviations and acronyms.
- Book titles are italicized.
- Quotes are in quotation marks or italicized.
- Eliminate the use of jargon and clichés.

Email Newsletter Glossary

Bounces or Bounce backs — undeliverable emails. Like unsubscribes, the email addresses of bounces must be removed from your database and may represent lost prospects.

Call for action — anything that might spur a sale, request more information, or contribute to a fundraiser.

CAN-SPAM — Act passed by the U.S. Congress that controls spamming. The law gives the Federal Trade Commission power to enforce the law and attaches penalties to noncompliance.

Cost per thousand (CPM) — CPM commonly refers to the cost per 1000 names (email addresses). For example, a rental list of email addresses priced at $250 CPM would mean that the list owner charges $.25 per email address.

Click-through – When a reader of your email newsletter clicks on a link in your newsletter. Many times, the link leads to a visit at a particular "landing page" on your Web site.

Click-through rate (CTR) – the percentage of email newsletters mailed that result in a subscriber clicking on a particular hyperlink. For example, a click of a link in an email newsletter might result in a new lead for a for a product sale.

Conversion rate – An e-metric that measures the effectiveness of a converting a prospective customer into a customer. It is the percentage of people converted into buyers. In the case of an email newsletter, a conversion rate might measure the number of subscribers who become customers. For web sites, the conversion rate is the number of visitors who took buy the product or service divided by the total number of visitors in a given time period (typically, per month). In an email marketing campaign, the conversion rate is found by dividing the number of people buy the product or service divided by the total number of people who received the email.

Distribution list – is a collection or group of email addresses

Email append – the process of adding an individual's email address to that individual's record inside a marketer's existing database. This is accomplished via information technology by matching the marketer's database physical address information against a third-party database to produce a corresponding email address.

Email blocking – email blocking typically refers to blocking by Internet Service Providers (ISP). Emails that are blocked are not processed through the ISP and are essentially prevented from reaching their addressed destination. ISPs actively block email coming from suspected spammers.

Email list – a database of email addresses. In the case of an email newsletter, the email list is synonymous with subscriber list.

Email marketing – using email to inform customers and prospects about products and services. It is a more immediate and cost-effective way to communicate informational, promotional and advertising material.

Email newsletter ads or sponsorships – Buying ad space in an email newsletter or sponsoring a specific article or series of articles. Advertisers pay to have their ad (text, HTML or both depending on the publication) inserted into the body of the email.

eZine – another name for email newsletter. Email newsletter/magazine.

Harvest – the use of software to gather email addresses from web sites, email messages, web directories, bulletin boards, forums, chat rooms, and lists.

House list (or Retention List) – A permission-based list that you built yourself. Use it to market; offer email newsletter subscriptions, cross sell and up-sell, and to establish a relationship with customers over time.

HTML – HyperText Markup Language. Code used to format web pages and email messages. Allows for use of color, fonts, and images.

HTML email – Email, including email newsletters, prepared using HTML (HyperText Markup Language). HTML often results in a higher response rate or readership than plain text messages.

Hyperlink – Clickable text or image in email messages or web pages that allows you to visit another web page or another area of the page you are viewing. Hyperlinks help email newsletter to be interactive.

Hypertext – Clickable text in email messages or web pages that allows you to visit another web page or another area of the page you are viewing.

Open rate – The percentage of emails opened in any given email marketing campaign, or the percentage opened of the total number of emails sent. Open rates can be calculated for email newsletters since they are a form of email.

Opt-in – Opt-in is the action a person takes when actively agreeing, by email or other means, to receive communications, such as an email newsletter or email offers.

Opt-out – Opt-Out is the action that a person takes when they choose not to receive communications. Opt-out is also used when recipients receive unsolicited email promotions and are given the opportunity to opt-out (unsubscribe) of future promotions.

Landing page – a page on a web site that subscribers see when they click a link in the email newsletter. The landing page could be a subscription sign up form, a page with product information, or a survey.

Lead – a prospective customer. Email newsletters help generate leads when people read the articles and request further information.

List management – The process of updating and maintaining a roster of new or current customers who have selected to Opt-in for future mailings or to Unsubscribe from a given mailing list.

Permission-based email – email sent to recipients who have opted-in or subscribed to receive email communications from a particular company, website or individual.

Permission e-marketing – e-marketing focused on obtaining customer consent to receive information from a company.

Privacy policy – A clear description of an email newsletter, web site or company's policy on the use of information collected from and about website visitors and what they do, and do not do, with the data.

Rental list – A list of prospects or a targeted group of recipients who have opt-in to receive information about certain subjects. Using permission-based rental lists, marketers can send email messages to audiences targeted by interest category, profession, demographic information and more.

ROI – Return on Investment. The ROI is found by dividing the profit from a promotional campaign by the cost of that campaign. If you keep track of the profits generated by your email newsletter and divide that by the costs of the email newsletter, you will have your email newsletter's ROI.

Signature file (or sig file for short) – A tagline or short block of text at the end of an email message that identifies the sender and provides additional information such as company name and contact information.

Spam – Sending Persistent Annoying Email. Spam is any kind of unsolicited emails.

Spider – A program designed to visit web sites and to analyze the content of the site or files or to harvest information, such as email addresses.

Stickiness – an email newsletter's (or web site) ability to make the reader "stick around" and spend time reading, interacting, exploring links, making purchases, and requesting information.

Targeting – Selecting a target audience or group of individuals likely to be interested in a certain product or service or in the case of email newsletters, a group of people (prospects and customers) who would be interested in subscribing to the newsletter.

URL (or Universal Resource Locator) – A web site or web page address or location on the Internet.

Viral marketing – spreading a marketing message, often by use of information technology. Viral marketing has been facilitated by email messages, web addresses, and other information that gets forwarded to recipients. Viral marketing is an electronic version of word-of-mouth.

About the Authors and Contributors

Michael P. Griffin, CMA, ChFC, CFM, is primary author of this book. He is the former editor of an email newsletter, *The Internet Personal Finance Letter*. Griffin was also the editor of the *Third Wave,* a newsletter of the Charlton College of Business at the University of Massachusetts. In addition to being a full-time professor at the Charlton College of Business, Mr. Griffin is the Director of Academic Content Development for KMT Software, Inc. Mark Scapicchio was a contributor to this book. Mark has written advertising and marketing copy for some of the best-known companies and advertising agencies in the world, and for many successful smaller companies. To learn more about his background, his clients, and how he can improve your copy visit his Web site at **www.scapicchio.com**. Chapter 12 on the topic of search engine optimization was written by Greg Jarboe. Greg is co-founder of SEO-PR (**www.seo-pr.com**), which specializes in search engine optimization, public relations, and web site promotion. He has more than 20 years of experience in high tech marketing and corporate communications.

About KMT Software Inc. and Templatezone.com

Headquartered in Massachusetts, KMT Software was established in 1991. Since then, KMT has established itself as the leading supplier of content for Microsoft Office and other desktop applications, providing templates, applications, and add-ins. KMT has built up a user community of over a million users and the company has been increasingly profitable since its first year of existence.

KMT is best known for its TemplateZone web site, where KMT products are offered to end-users. However, a substantial part of KMT's business comes from OEM relationships, custom development projects, and corporate consulting. KMT is always seeking new clients for custom projects, large and small. KMT is highly focused on deadlines and is capable of delivering high-quality work with remarkable speed, at a reasonable cost.