

# Elements of a Successful Newsletter Campaign

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## **Introduction**

Why write a company newsletter or launch a newsletter campaign? Many companies produce a newsletter in the hopes of obtaining leads, increasing sales, or driving traffic to the company website. Some hope to keep customers informed or gain repeat business. Regardless of the motivation, creating a newsletter is not a simple task. Those who undertake the project for the first time soon realize it takes more time and effort than they realized. But the benefits may well be worth the effort.

## **Benefits of a Newsletter Campaign**

An effective newsletter campaign produces many benefits, including building brand awareness, improving reputation and credibility, and keeping customers informed. One of the best benefits is based upon the concept of *permission marketing*.

### ***Permission Marketing***

Permission-based marketing is usually associated with email newsletters, and is defined as marketing only to people who have chosen (“opted in”) to receive the messages. The strength of the concept is that marketing messages are targeted to those who have already expressed an interest, and not just sent to a random list. The benefit of sending a newsletter campaign based on permission marketing is that the message is more likely to be read, often yielding a better return on investment than other direct marketing efforts.

### ***Brand Awareness***

Building brand awareness is one of the key benefits of a newsletter campaign. While the initial launch of the campaign may not directly result in increased sales, the brand name is reaching potential customers through the newsletter. Over time, the improved brand awareness impacts sales and performance.

### ***Reputation and Credibility***

In addition to building brand awareness, a company newsletter adds credibility to the business reputation, especially if the newsletter is a quality piece. Newsletters are associated with established businesses that have the resources to stand behind their products and services.

### ***Keeping Customers Informed***

One obvious benefit to a company newsletter is informing customers about the products, services, and events your company has to offer. New products and services may appeal to existing customers, if they only knew about them. An informed customer is more likely to be a repeat customer.

## **Email vs. Print Newsletters**

A newsletter campaign may be offered via email or printed and mailed. It is less costly to send an email newsletter, as there are no printing or mailing costs associated with the issue. However, the chances of the email being deleted or treated as spam are risks

associated with email newsletters. Likewise, the chances of a printed newsletter hitting the trash before being read may be an expensive risk. But a printed newsletter is more likely to be passed around and read by more than one person. A good target market, accurate mailing list, and a quality newsletter will mitigate both risks.

### ***Managing Email Lists***

To effectively manage an email newsletter campaign, you must establish a permission-based list of email addresses. These can be obtained from your website or gathered from customers through forms or personal contact. Your list must be entered into a database, and should include names, contact information, and email addresses. This database becomes a valuable tool for future marketing efforts, as members of the database have already chosen to opt in to your company newsletter.

To avoid irritating customers, each email newsletter should contain an easy-to-use link to unsubscribe from your list. The database can be set up so that when the customer unsubscribes, the email address is automatically removed.

### ***Managing Print Mailing Lists***

As with any direct mail marketing effort, managing a mailing list can be a time consuming process. Your existing customer list is your most important list. Additional mailing lists can be purchased that are specifically targeted by criteria such as income, profession, interest, etc. A professional mail house can guide you in obtaining a targeted list. A good starting point for a newsletter campaign is to send it to your current customers.

## **Elements of the Newsletter**

This section covers many of the elements of a newsletter, including its mission, a campaign plan, layout, content, and illustrations.

### ***Mission***

What are your objectives? What are you trying to achieve with your newsletter? Be clear and to the point. Define your audience and focus on their needs. Business is always about meeting the customer's needs, and the newsletter is no exception.

### ***Campaign Plan***

Once you have defined your mission and before you create the first edition, get out the calendar and develop a plan. Determine article submission dates, mailing dates, and printing deadlines. Brainstorm with key staff and create a content calendar, identifying themes in advance. Be flexible in the future if circumstances change or if something generates a better response and you want to focus on the success. But do plan ahead or your efforts may fizzle after just a few editions.

### ***Layout & Format***

Determine your layout. For a print newsletter, will this be a one-page newsletter or longer? Will it contain a single or two columns? Will it include graphic design

elements? Are you creating and printing in house or using a professional printer? If using a professional printer, their graphics department can assist you in determining layout. For both print and email newsletters, you will need to create an initial layout and design template and follow a consistent style throughout the campaign.

## **Content**

There is a saying in journalism that “content is king.” Your newsletter content will determine the success or failure of your newsletter. Include relevant, informative, and interesting articles. If your organization does not have a talented writer, hire a freelancer. A poorly written newsletter will die a speedy death and reflect negatively on your organization.

## **Article Ideas**

Use your previously planned content calendar as a basis for your articles and theme. Include information about your products and services, particularly focusing on introducing new items. Inform your customers about industry news, and direct the viewpoint toward the customer and how the news directly affects the customer. Include personal profiles of your staff members with a human interest slant, and testimonials of happy customers.

## **Illustrations & Photographs**

Using illustrations and photographs attracts attention and keeps the reader’s interest. Some concepts are grasped more quickly using visual aids than relying only on printed materials. Find out from your printer or your technical staff what image format is required. A printed newsletter will require a different resolution and image format than an online newsletter. There are many online resources offering free clipart and royalty free photographs.

## **Proofreading & Editing**

An error-filled newsletter will definitely reflect negatively on your company. In the case of proofreading, three eyes are better than one. The first eye is the writer. The writer should never perform the proofreading. For best results, use two separate proofreaders; one to focus on typographical and spelling errors, and one to focus on content accuracy.

## **Printing Issues**

You may choose to self-produce your newsletter, using word processing or desktop publishing software and your laser printer. Be sure your final product looks professional and well designed. If you choose a professional printer, consult with your printer on what they expect. Can you email documents and images? Will they supply images? What format do they require? Finding a good printer and developing a working relationship is key to a successful newsletter campaign. Ask around, or track down the creator of a newsletter you enjoy receiving.

## **Emailing Issues**

In addition to the previously mentioned database of email addresses, your email newsletter campaign requires a certain level of technical expertise. If you do not have someone in house who can format and send your electronic newsletter, there are many companies available to outsource this function. And they do not necessarily have to be local companies, as content information is easily emailed back and forth.

Many electronic newsletters are sent in html, which means they are formatted with colors, graphics, and design. However, some recipients' email programs are not set up to receive html emails; they can only view basic text. Your html formatting will be lost and possibly skewed for those recipients. Sophisticated email campaigns offer recipients the choice to receive email in plain text or html. Some companies choose to use only plain text; however the visual look of plain text is boring and not at all compelling. The choice of format is yours; however being aware of the issues will help you make a more informed decision.