

7 Tips to Create a Must-Read Newsletter

By Claudia Temple

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The daily grind starts with a cuppa Joe and a quick scan of the email inbox. As your brain starts to kick in, you recognize a few 'from' addresses and a slew of e-newsletters. Wait...here's one of your favorites. Click on it and settle in for a good read as you sip your steaming coffee.

Have you ever noticed that you open certain e-newsletters as soon as they pop into your email box? Others languish unopened until you finally clean everything out weeks or months later. Wonder why?

It's the content.

If your e-newsletter is well-written and full of relevant content, it stands a good chance of being opened. If your personality shines through and your voice is heard, well then, your e-newsletter might well be on your subscribers' must-read list.

After the excitement of launching your first edition ebbs and subscriber growth flattens, the grind of regularly publishing a top-quality e-newsletter sets in. You want fresh, unique, quality content - usually by the end of the day. Help!

Here are seven tips to make writing your e-newsletters easier.

Tip No. 1: Build a system to collect and organize content ideas as they occur to you.

Your system might be a file folder where you dump paper scraps scribbled with ideas, a wall covered with sticky notes, or a word document you leave open every day to jot down inspiration. Get in the habit of recording content ideas as they occur and you won't draw a blank when you sit down to write.

Tip No. 2: Create an editorial calendar to plan future editions.

Borrow this technique from magazine publishers. Create a simple table with content sections as column headings and rows for each upcoming issue date. Draw from your content organization system and fill in the table cells with article ideas. When zero hour is close, you'll find writing is easier with a plan on paper in front of you. Forecast about 4-6 issues in advance and allow flexibility for changing market conditions.

Tip No. 3: Find co-authors in advance.

You may not be ready to accept guest authors when you first start out, but potential writing talent probably exists in your own company. Find in-house authors in the customer service or sales

departments. Talk through your topic ideas and give them a word count. Finish with lavish praise, even if you have to edit heavily.

Free content is readily available through many article syndicators, like www.marketing-seek.com or www.ideamarketers.com . Use your discretion when choosing articles from these sources. Many are rehashes of over-done topics and will dilute your efforts to position yourself as a content expert in the minds of your subscribers.

Tip No. 4: Carve out some quiet time and write several content sections in one sitting.

You can often get on a roll when you're writing. Take advantage of this phenomenon and write 3 FAQ's and 4 Tips. Use one of each and save the rest for future issues. Writing two feature articles at once means you can skip the chore next month. Plan to write your first draft a day or two (at least) before scheduled publication. Let the content set a while, then review for errors, omissions or changes to improve the quality.

Tip No. 5: Follow Web writing conventions.

Speak directly to your reader. Use 'you' instead of 'I' or the ubiquitous 'we'. Avoid speaking passively with sentences starting with 'It is...' or 'There are...' Keep a list of your favorite verbs next to the keyboard and use them liberally. Tell your readers you won't pummel them with e-mail...and that you will delight them with future product releases.

Tip No. 6: Let the real you show in your writing.

Who you are as a person has as much to do with long-term reader loyalty as does the content you disseminate. Blend anecdotes, bits of personal information, and stories of the people behind your company into each issue. Remember that people do business with other people - not Web sites or corporations. The real people in your business should be reflected in your e-newsletter.

Tip No. 7: Avoid content overkill.

Less is often more in e-newsletter authoring. Remove superfluous words (most adjectives and adverbs) for succinct writing, and keep your sentences short. Reading on a monitor is hard on the eyes, so add frequent paragraph breaks in long articles on a Web page. Consider a shorter e-newsletter with links to your Web site for continued articles. Remember that people just won't read big slabs of text unless they're being paid to do so.

As your e-newsletter rolls on, your readers will grow attached to your reliability and quality. Stay on schedule and you'll give you readers good reason to open your e-newsletter with that first cuppa Joe every day.

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