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And How You Can Avoid Them

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Today the incredible effectiveness of ezine marketing in promoting online business is an open secret. It has also become extremely easy to publish an ezine. And so any self-respecting e-businessperson has one.

With literally thousands of email newsletters clamouring for readers' attention, it takes something extra-special to get your subscriber's interest - and retain it long enough to sell them your product or service. Mistakes won't be tolerated. And you won't often get a second chance to impress.

In this highly competitive online business environment, let's take a look at some common mistakes newbie ezine publishers make - and see how you can avoid falling into the same traps.

Mistake 1 - Not planning or setting goals

It's a mad rush right from the start. After reading so much about how important an ezine was in promoting her new Internet business - and discovering that publishing one is a piece of cake - Jane 'went right out and did it'. But after a month or two, she is drifting aimlessly.

The reason - she doesn't have any way to assess the success of her e-publishing efforts. Is 20 new subscribers a week good? Or bad? With 15 sales last month from her 1250 ezine readers, is her conversion rate average? Below? Or above? More importantly, where does she go from here?

Solution - Stop and plan before surging ahead. Decide what your aim in publishing an ezine is. If your primary goal is to sell to your readers, the numbers that are important are your sales conversion rates, profitability and responsiveness of your ezine's audience. If you want to extend your brand awareness, subscriber growth is the parameter to watch.

Lesson No.1 - Set goals and targets first.

Mistake 2 - Not selecting the right publishing frequency

In a fit of optimism John decided he would publish a weekly newsletter. It was fun and frolic for the first few issues. But then John found he was falling behind. He had underestimated the effort each ezine edition would involve.

Now that his business was growing, he couldn't devote as much time to his ezine. Soon he was forced to delay his weekly edition by a day or two. Or more.

Solution - Make a reasonable estimate of the time and effort you will put into your ezine. Try creating a few issues to get a feel for the process. Then choose a relaxing schedule. If you think you can publish a weekly ezine, go for a monthly or fortnightly one at first. If you think you're ready for daily editions, begin with a weekly.

Lesson No.2 - Make reasonable estimates - and begin with a convenient schedule.

Mistake 3 - Not insisting on double opt-in subscription methods

Jane wanted more subscribers. And she wanted them quickly. Surfing the 'Net, she found a service that offered to 'sell' her 1000 ezine subscribers for just 30 cents each - guaranteed. Jane leaped at the deal before looking into the details.

And got bitten. The email addresses that she was sold had been 'harvested' from websites and newsgroups - without the knowledge of the owners. Furious at being 'spammed', many sent her nasty email complaints. And one even reported to

her ISP, which threatened to shut down her email account!
Jane had a lot of explaining and apologizing to do.

Solution - Always get your reader's permission before sending them your ezine. To make absolutely sure you don't get blamed, ask them TWICE. This process, called 'double opt-in' is standard practice with ethical ezine publishers. When potential new subscribers sign-up for your ezine, they are sent a confirmation message. Only when they reply to this message - thereby accepting your offer - will their subscription commence. It is also good practice to keep a copy of this reply on record, in case of future problems.

Lesson No.3 - Insist on a 'double-opt in' subscribing process.
Keep all requests on file.

Mistake 4 - Publishing in 'HTML-only' format

John liked flashy, colorful email. With his always-on Internet connection and latest email programs, HTML-email looked great. So he published his ezine in HTML format.

The problem was that many of his readers lived outside the U.S. They had slow dial-up connections and old email clients. John's ezine took them ages to download - and they could only see meaningless HTML code in their email viewer. Not surprisingly, they asked to be removed from his ezine list. Hundreds of potential customers were lost.

Solution - Know your audience, their capacity and requirements. If most of your readers don't need - or want - HTML ezines, publish a 'text-only' version for them. And give them the option of selecting one.

Lesson No.4 - Publish in both 'text' and 'HTML' formats. Give customers a choice.

Mistake 5 - Not planning for explosive growth

A great ezine can grow very rapidly. Readers will recommend your ezine to friends. In an amazingly short time, you could have thousands of readers. By not planning for such growth, you will miss out on many opportunities.

Solution - Imagine a scenario where your ezine has 5000 readers. How will you market your business to them? Now imagine this number growing to 50,000 subscribers. What would you do differently? What tactics and strategies, offers and discounts, co-marketing and joint venture deals will you

put together?

Lesson No.5 - Set the substrate in place - so you can move fast when the time comes.

Mistake 6 - Not automating everything

When your ezine has a few hundred subscribers, handling administrative duties manually is easy. But once this number grows to thousands, you could get bogged down with these tasks. This leaves you with less time to do what matters - marketing and growing your business, launching new products.

Solution - Automate everything - right from the start. From the very first subscriber-contact (sign-up request) until the last (unsubscribe request), all administrative tasks can be set on auto-pilot using software and technology. Auto-responders, database mining, mail-merging and powerful software programs can leave you, the ezine publisher, free to concentrate on important issues.

Lesson No.6 - Take advantage of technology. Make things easier on yourself with automation.

Mistake 7 - Not optimizing ezine profitability

It is the rare ezine publisher who can look back a year after launching his/her ezine and say "There's nothing I would have done differently". And more often than not, the regrets are about not making the most profit out of their efforts.

Ezine publishing throws up numerous revenue streams. Advertising, sponsorships, direct and indirect sales, paid-subscriptions and joint venture partnerships are just a few of the ways ezine owners can make money. But in many cases, owners are unaware of the power of their ezine as a marketing and profiting tool.

Solution - Invest time and effort in learning about ezine promotion and profiting from the various online resources and books, like Newsletter Coach and Ezine Tactics.

Lesson - The more you learn, the better your leverage.

Make no mistake ! Your ezine's profitability will skyrocket.

Good luck.

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