

How to Write a Newsletter without Being a Writer

By Eileen Turtle Parzek

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One of the best ways to stay in touch with current and past clients, colleagues and fans, is to publish a regular newsletter. Whether you use a HTML template tool like Constant Contact, simply create a good looking text email to send out to your contacts, or publish something fancy with PDF, it can draw new business simply by making sure that no one forgets what your business does and can do for them. For every company that benefits from this form of marketing, many more feel they are not good enough writers, do not have the time, or are not comfortable enough with the computer to make the effort.

There are many ways a small business can develop a newsletter, when the full do-it-yourself route is not an option. First, keep in mind that it is acceptable that 20-30% of the newsletter is promotion and good news about the business, assuming the audience is primarily made of clients and prospective clients. To come up with the rest of the content, try these techniques:

1) People who know how to write well, but can't think of subject matter can visit one of the many article databases on the web, and browse for ideas. The idea is to use it for inspiration, and as a brainstorming tool for topics. Once an idea is established, start writing for the audience and put a unique spin on it.

Some of these databases include:

<http://www.goarticles.com>

<http://www.marketing-seek.com/articles/search.shtml>

<http://www.ezinearticles.com>

2) Anyone who doesn't like to write can reprint any of the articles in these databases. In other words, he might decide to do a feature article on, say, logo design, to provide some substance along with business news and other thoughts. This is perfectly acceptable. Just make sure the author's credits and bio are always included.

3) For those who know their subjects, and are willing to write but aren't confident in their ability, there is the option of arranging to have an editor. Many freelance writers would be pleased to have a steady monthly or bi-monthly arrangement, on retainer, to work on editing newsletter items. It is also possible to find someone who is willing to barter this service for products or services on a regular basis. You can also hire someone to handle the design and technical implementation of the content and manage your mailing list. Be creative and consider getting help if having a newsletter would

bring marketing and communication benefits to the company.

4) When the subject matter is not commonplace, and available in an article database, consider asking members of specific industries or disciplines to pen articles for the audience in exchange for credit. If it is a complementary service, or related product they sell, it will broaden the information provided your audience. These strategic alliances can bear fruit in many ways if we are confident about the quality of what we provide our clients to offer them knowledge they might not get otherwise.

5) Subscribe to industry newsletters and create a compilation of the best feature articles there. Your audience will appreciate the effort you take to discern and distill the most useful information for them, and bring it to them in one place.

The important thing is that the information is of use to the audience, and that they have the option at all times to stop receiving the newsletter if they request it.

Make a realistic monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly schedule. Create a plan for how you will accomplish this goal. Determine which route you will take to build your content, and which tools you will use. Set recurring deadlines. For example, put on the calendar that the newsletter feature article is due by the end of the second week of every month, and whether writing it, finding it, or submitting to an editor, it will be ready to go.

With good planning and taking advantage of the resources which are online, nearly any small business can develop a solid, informational newsletter to share with their customers.

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Eileen 'Turtle' Parzek is a veteran web designer and an online marketing & communications consultant who has been working from home and virtually since 1995. Her first business, Turtle's Web, was responsible for approximately 250 web projects. Her current business, SOHO It Goes! (<http://www.soho-it-goes.com>) specializes in providing technology driven design, marketing and communication services to small businesses and organizations.

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