

8 Essential Questions For Aspiring Ezine Editors

By Angela Wu

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Angela Wu
angela@onlinebusinessbasics.com

Online Business Basics <http://www.onlinebusinessbasics.com/>

Online business 'newbies' have no doubt heard that offering a free newsletter is one of the best ways available to build their business and their profits. Some of the benefits include:

- * Increased credibility
- * Leverage for profitable Joint Ventures
- * More exposure through article reprints, for example
- * An additional source of income through advertising sales

While publishing a newsletter can be a very profitable venture, the fact of the matter is, they're also a lot of work. Here are a few things to think about before you get started.

__1. What Type of Newsletter Do You Want to Write?

The type of material you include in your newsletter is as endless as your imagination. Some suggestions include:

- * Featured Article
- * Useful Website Pick
- * Reader Q&A
- * Letter to the Editor
- * Surveys or Polls
- * Product Reviews
- * Suggestion/Help Column for Subscriber Websites or Products
- * Tip of the Day
- * Inspirational Quote

__2. Where Will You Get Your Content?

Will you write all the content yourself, get others to write it for you (ghost-writers), or use 'recycled' articles from other writers?

Fresh, original content is best. It gets tiresome when you see the same article in 7 different newsletters! If you don't think you can manage writing *all* of your content, perhaps you can compromise: mostly your own writing, with the occasional third-party article thrown in.

__3. How Often Do You Plan to Publish?

One of the advantages of offering a free ezine is the opportunity to build a relationship with your readers. They come to know you and trust you, and you, in turn, learn what types of products or services they're interested in.

A newsletter that's published too infrequently runs the risk of being forgotten by its readers. On the other hand, one that's published too often may annoy its readers and cause them to unsubscribe or delete the message.

Many popular ezines are published once a week or once every two weeks. Use that as a *guideline* for determining your own publishing schedule.

__4. Can You Afford a Professional List Manager?

A list manager automates the tedious task of subscription management. In other words, it automatically handles subscribe and unsubscribe requests from your readers.

There are many good list managers available. Some are 'free'; that is, you may use them for free if you accept third-party advertising in your message or, alternatively, delivered to your mailbox.

Professional list managers will require an investment. They will allow you to send out ad-free messages (and keep your mailbox free of more advertising!) and typically offer a number of features not available in the 'free' version.

__5. Will You Accept Advertising?

New editors often choose to offer free ads to new subscribers. This is supposed to help them build their lists more quickly. On the other hand, you could end up with subscribers who join just to get a free ad, and who never bother to read your newsletter.

Most newsletters start to charge for advertising around the 1000 subscribers mark. If you choose to do so, take a look at similar ezines within your niche market to see what types of rates they charge.

__6. Should You Publish an Email or Web-Based Newsletter?

There are advantages and disadvantages to both. You could choose to do both: send an email newsletter and archive each issue on the web. Another alternative is to publish on the web, but send out an email notification with a brief blurb about each article. Include a tracking URL for each article and you'll be able to see which topics interest your visitors the most!

__7. How and Where Will You Promote?

There are many free ways to promote your ezine. The question is, Do you have time to do it? Free methods include:

- * Ezine directories
- * Message boards, where appropriate
- * Article submissions to websites and other editors
- * Ad swaps
- * Signature files
- * eBooks
- * ... and more.

Ezine promotion requires ongoing effort. If you don't have the time, desire, 'know-how' or traffic to build your subscription base on your own, you may have to consider using one or more of the 'pay-per-subscriber' services available online.

__8. How Much Time Do You Have to Devote to Your Newsletter?

This is the bottom line. How much time can you spare to produce a quality newsletter? Write a couple of sample issues to get a feel for how much time it takes. You may need to make adjustments; for example, you might decide to cut down on the number of articles you offer in each issue,

but publish more frequently.

Angela is the editor of Online Business Basics, an exclusive newsletter for eBusiness beginners. OBB features ongoing tutorials on how to build a profitable Internet business on a shoestring budget. You don't need a million-dollar budget to be successful! Find out how you too can join the thousands quietly earning a living online:
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