

Newsletters: Your Readers and You

By William Montgomery

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by "Wild Bill"

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One of the Hottest Commodities on or off the Internet is "Information". In this age of technology people, more than ever want to know, and they want to learn. I imagine you yourself are reading this in hopes of clicking away with more than you started with. My job as a writer, publisher and editor is to see that you do just that.

Newsletters provide you with an outlet to a specific group of people, who subscribe and read your publication because they want you to gain specific information. It could be Business, Technical or even Travel information, but nevertheless they are reading your words for a reason. Your job is to supply your readers with the information they are looking for. This my friend is sometimes a painstaking job with little or no pay, and long hours to boot!

Newsletters are not a venture to be entered into lightly. They're not overnight successes. It sometimes takes years to build a respectable subscriber base. Cash flow is almost non-existent at the beginning and for much of the time after that. Your newsletter is an investment in relationships, and of hard work. You must earn, gain and keep a certain amount of trust and loyalty from your readers.

Mistake:

If you think that you own your newsletter, I'm here to tell you that you're wrong. Although you really do own it, running a newsletter is much like being in a political office. You would not be there if you did not serve your constituents to their satisfaction. They will directly or indirectly dictate to you your requirements in serving them. If you fail to serve them accordingly, so shall your newsletter fail as well.

Hints:

Live up to the responsibility you have taken on. When your readers bestow that trust in you, there is no better way to condemn your newsletter than to violate that trust.

Your job is not necessarily to be liked, but to keep your content up to the standards that your subscribers have come to expect from you. Keep your information content high and your advertising and "noise" levels low. The subject of your newsletter will of course dictate the personality of your newsletter.

As for the Personality in your Newsletter, every newsletter will take on a life of its own. You must control the personality that it portrays. Be careful what personality traits you give your newsletter and how much personality you give it. Remember that your primary goal is to supply information. Save the bulk of your thoughts for welcome messages and editorials. Be careful how you convey your personal thoughts in your newsletter. What could be meant as an editorial thought could be a disastrous mistake that costs you subscribers.

You will find that your readers will write to you with questions, comments, and often complaints. Don't forget these are the same people that can control the fate of your newsletter. Treat them as you would any life giving force. Your subscribers are (99%) intelligent, well-mannered people seeking the wisdom of your print. They will express their own ideas and desires. They will ask you for your input and thoughts. Often this may be impossible, but one of your top priorities should be to respond to your readers with honest, informative information with a touch of "you" thrown in.

Keep in mind that for every one malcontented feedback message that you receive there are hundreds or thousands that are happy, but never write. Think about it. How many times do you write just to tell somebody they are doing a great job, as compared to how many times you have written to complain about a product or service?

In closing I would like to say that it's your job to get "their" newsletter out on schedule each and every time. Your

subscribers will come to expect and yes, even sometimes demand their newsletter on time and intact. Consider yourself a "Mailman". Neither rain nor shine, or sickness shall deter you from your duty. If you are publishing a serious newsletter and are the sole person doing this insurmountable job, do yourself a favor and get a laptop if you haven't already. I myself have published from bed with a fever and all over the country while on vacation, and you probably will too!

Happy Publishing!

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