

# Creating Effective E-Newsletters

By *Barbara K. Mednick*

**Subtlety** - that's the key word to remember when promoting products/services via e-mail newsletters. No banners announcing product availability. No flashing red type. And, no shameless pitching. Just subtle promotion of your products/services through valuable, well-written and informative newsletter content.

## Newsletters That Sell

That's according to Paul Soltoff, CEO of SendTec, Inc., and columnist for Clickz.com. "Sales and new clients result when you credibly establish your expertise. Whether you're selling mortgages, beauty products, financial information or dog food, content is the driving force behind building relationships with customers and prospects via e-mail," said Soltoff, who has 20 years of direct marketing experience.

In its July 2003 issue, Business 2.0 published results of a survey of consumer attitudes toward media types. E-mail newsletters ranked number 3 of 12 (behind print and TV) as the most trustworthy and the least annoying. "The primary goal of an e-newsletter is to develop and maintain trusting relationships that build business with a key constituency," said Beth Fratzke, principal of Symmetry Communications and editor of the International Association of Business Communicators - Minnesota Chapter e-newsletter.

## Significant Cost Savings

The amount of money that can be saved producing an e-newsletter vs. a printed newsletter can be dramatic. "To reduce expenses, several of our clients transitioned from a printed newsletter to an e-newsletter. In March 2003 we studied three cases to see what the savings were," said Kendra Lee Myers, communications coordinator for Nonprofit Solutions, an association management company that provides a variety of administrative services to nonprofit organizations and associations in the

Twin Cities. "Each client experienced a significant decrease in dollars spent on office support time, printing/copying, and postage and delivery. One client reduced annual newsletter costs by 86 percent (\$17,730.28), another by 70 percent (\$3,833.74), and a third by 92 percent (\$12,795.60). The change also allowed for increased flexibility in production times, content length, reader interaction and use of color in text and images."

## Factors To Consider

According to Myers, there are several factors to consider when contemplating a switch to an e-newsletter:

- Poll your members/clients. Do they like the idea?
- Consider the technology level of your readership.
- Determine a way to track how many people open/read/forward your e-newsletter.
- Link your e-newsletter to your company Web site.
- Consider an opt-in approach rather than an opt-out approach.

## Launching A Successful E-Newsletter

Following are Fratzke's suggestions for launching a successful e-newsletter:

- Identify a target audience and key outcomes.
- Define objectives re: content value, brand recognition, and publication and distribution standards.
- Develop an elevator speech extolling the e-newsletter's benefits to the reader and the company.
- Grab attention with a standout subject line.
- Use short words and sentences - people don't read online; they scan. Short words and sentences make it easier to scan.
- Write descriptive headlines that accurately define the story.

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