



Marketing PowerBoost

e-Newsletters – a cost-effective marketing tool

Strategies for effective e-Communication

By Susan Baka

Could your business use a marketing powerboost? This article focuses on electronic newsletters – a cost-effective way to communicate directly with customers and prospects.

The e-Newsletter is a relatively new marketing tool so there is no single, clear definition of what it is and what it should look like. It can range from a simple one-page text e-mail with a couple of links to a multi-coloured dynamic piece with extensive use of images and links. Whatever style you choose, e-Newsletters are a cost-effective way to ensure you are top of mind with existing clients and to prospect for new ones.

There are some do's and don'ts to launching an e-Newsletter. Here are recommendations that I give clients when I help them launch this communication tool:

1. **Content is key.** Be reader-focused. Provide valuable information and tips for your clients based on your expertise in your market, rather than marketing pitches for your firm. Also, make the content digestible – a quick, interesting read with pushes to your web site.
2. **Hire experts.** If you lack writing skills or time, seek professional help. A good writer will understand what you are trying to achieve and present information in an exciting and interesting way, and a professional designer will create a template that presents the material in an inviting format.
3. **Invite feedback.** Be sure to include a response mechanism – i.e. asking your readers for feedback and ideas on other areas they would like to see covered in future issues.
4. **Maintain frequency.** Regular e-Newsletter distribution ensures that communication with customers doesn't fall through the cracks. It also reinforces your newsletter as a resource for your clients.
5. **Build a good, targeted distribution list.** In addition to your existing customers, be sure to add prospects. For first-time recipients, include an introductory paragraph stating what they are receiving and why. Also, be sure to remove recipients when requested to do so.
6. **Send a regular e-mail broadcast to your clients.** If you don't have the budget to produce a full-fledged e-Newsletter, you can still maintain regular client contact to keep your firm top-of-mind. Some financial advisory firms send their clients a weekly one-page bulletin about national and international developments that could affect financial portfolios. This is an idea you could adapt.

But whatever you do...

1. **Don't be a spammer.** e-Newsletters should be sent on a 'with-permission' basis. E-mail etiquette demands that you offer recipients a way to opt out of receiving future newsletters and an easy way to contact you with any comments they might have.



2. **Don't send mega-attachments.** e-Newsletters with high-resolution graphics can take a long time to download which can risk irritating your customers or prospects. If you want to send a large document that might clog up e-mails, post it on your web site and provide a link instead.
3. **Don't be a nuisance.** While maintaining a standard frequency of distribution is a good idea, sending too often is not. Produce weekly only if you deliver must-have, time-sensitive information. Monthly is fine; however, that, too, can be a big task to maintain. I often recommend to clients to start with a quarterly distribution; frequency can always be increased later, time and budget permitting.

e-Newsletters are a good way to keep your company top-of-mind with clients and, at the same time, you save on print and mailing costs. And if you make e-Newsletters part of your marketing plan, you'll notice a trickle-down effect – the stories and ideas generated for the newsletter will find their way to your web site, brochure and sales pitches.

Information specialist and marketing expert Susan Baka, President of Bay Communications & Marketing Inc., has been providing innovative marketing communication strategies and vehicles – including content-rich websites - for clients since 1991. Visit www.baycomm.ca to get free sure-fire tips on how to boost your marketing.

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