

# Spreading your message with newsletters

By Allan Leibowitz

Technology has made it easy for anyone to produce and distribute newsletters, but it has also increased the marketing clutter reaching businesses, making it so much harder to get noticed.

There are a number of off-the-shelf applications which make it relatively simple to produce a smart-looking digital publication, and digital photography means there's no excuse for not including decent pictures.

But it's not enough to bang out a few pages of glowing prose extolling the virtues of your business. If it looks self-serving, it will go straight to your clients' trash cans.

However, by following some basic principles, it is possible to use newsletters to build your market and raise your profile.

- 1) Real business information, not hype: To compete with all the free sources of information out there, newsletters must contain valuable advice or business insight which will be of value to readers.
- 2) External focus: Newsletter content should focus on customer needs rather than your service or product offering.
- 3) Case studies: Well documented case studies with client comments can clearly demonstrate the value of your goods and services. But make sure you get approval from your clients first!
- 4) Frequency: A one-off will not build your brand. Newsletters need to be regular. However, don't pump them out simply because they're due.
- 5) Incorporate newsletters into your arsenal: Make sure the newsletter is included in all your marketing efforts – especially with new clients.
- 6) Digital is the way. Electronic publishing and distribution is the way to go. It's cheaper than printing and allows recipients to forward valuable articles to their peers. Technology also allows you to track who reads your dispatches.
- 7) Avoid spamming: Seek opt-ins from clients and prospects. If you have a website, invite visitors to sign up for your newsletters.
- 8) Archive your back issues: If you have a website, post back issues online so that customers can search for previous articles.
- 9) Devote adequate resources: Newsletters take effort to produce. Budget for professional help or at least for enough staff time to write, edit, lay out and distribute.
- 10) Slick and professional: You wouldn't hesitate to use a signwriter for your business premises, so don't try and DIY your communication with the business community – unless you have the appropriate skills and talent. Your newsletter is competing for attention and has to stand out from the scores of relevant publications bombarding the business community.

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