



## The Socialized Newsletter

### *A Better Way to Engage Your Audience*

By Drew Zagorski  
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When you ask someone, "Is it OK if I add you to my newsletter list?," odds are it's a 50-50 proposition whether they take you up on your offer. On the other hand, if you're a client of a business or consultant and you receive their newsletter as part of their extended service to you, it's a virtual certainty that, while you may not open the email often, you won't opt out. Because of this, e-mail newsletters are a great tool to reach and stay in touch with your audience.

From where I sit, I believe there is a right way and a, well, not so right way to produce and deliver an email newsletter. First, let me say that any tool you have that will keep you in front of your audience on a regular basis is a worthwhile pursuit. So, whether you have a newsletter that goes out via snail mail or your into the online thing, you're doing something good for your business. Now...

When you're going to commit to a newsletter or blog, think about how you can leverage it to:

- ☛ Position you as a thought leader
- ☛ Remain in front of your audience
- ☛ Drive traffic to your web site
- ☛ Enhance your relevance in search engines
- ☛ Increase your presence in the social network space
- ☛ Promote not only your business but the businesses of the people who you do business with
- ☛ Oh yeah, and you can present offers to drive sales

### POSITION YOU AS A THOUGHT LEADER

Don't use your newsletter as a coupon delivery system. Yes, you can place offers in the newsletter, but above all else, be relevant and offer something of value beyond a discount on goods and services. Provide an article in each issue that offers useful

advice or information to your subscribers. Make the newsletter or blog about them, not your platform for talking about the fact you've been in business for X years and highlighting your service offerings. You don't need to sweat writing an article each time either. Find an article online and use it, but be sure there are no 'by permission only' statements on it and do not forget to reference the source of the article. When you deliver this type of content, over time, your audience will begin to think of you as a 'go to' expert.

### REMAIN IN FRONT OF YOUR AUDIENCE

Don't go into your newsletter or blog thinking that you'll measure its success based on how many people actually open and read it. That's not the real value here. The real value is in the fact that once a month (or however often you're going to publish) the people on your list will see your business' name in their inbox. You're etching yourself on their brains. And by the way, when you'll likely be pleasantly surprised by how many people actually do open and click through (see the section below on driving traffic) to your web site. Why? You're a trusted source because the audience knows you and has some past experience with you. On this note, do not buy an email list and begin sending to total strangers. Sure you may get a lead or two out of it, but you're more likely to be reported as a spammer.

### DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE

A big opportunity is missed in emailed newsletters when the entire contents of the newsletter is contained in the email. And it can be an issue. First, the opportunity... Create a newsletter section on your web site where you can place the full contents of the newsletter. Place only a teaser with a "Read More" link in the newsletter. This way, you'll be able to see who clicks through and get a gauge on the issues that are important to your audience. Also, when the reader comes to your site, they may navigate around it to learn more about what you do and offer. Traffic to a web site is a beautiful thing. One other thing you can do is to create a printable version of your newsletter that people can download from your site. Sometimes, when printing a web page, type may run off the edge, so the article may not be very readable. Plus, with a print version, you can also include offers and other information.



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### ENHANCE YOUR RELEVANCE IN SEARCH ENGINES

Each time you send out a newsletter and create that new page on your web site, you're adding content. Be sure that you optimize the page well and present content that's relevant to what you do, even if only tangentially so. The more content you present to search engines, the better off you'll be. If you're blogging, be sure you use all the tools available to you to optimize your piece, from titles, to excerpts, to keyword and categories.

### INCREASE YOUR PRESENCE IN THE SOCIAL NETWORK SPACE

Whenever you send out a newsletter or put up a new post, be sure that you ping the social networks you belong to. And be sure to include a link to the article on your web site. If the site has a long URL, you can use bit.ly (<http://bit.ly/>) to shorten it - this is a very slick tool created exclusively for social networking. As services like twitter limit the number of characters you can place in a tweet, this tool allows you enough room to put some context ahead of the link. Every time you send one of these pings out via a social network, it will be picked up by search engines. Another idea is to do a talking head video, where you present the topic, and post it to YouTube.

### PROMOTE NOT ONLY YOUR BUSINESS BUT THE BUSINESSES OF THE PEOPLE WHO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH

A bit of goodwill goes a long way. Put in a "Someone you should know" type plug for one of your business partners or clients. If they're successful, so are you!

Oh yeah, and you can present offers to drive sales. Keep your coupons or offers in their place by presenting them at the end of the email or in a side channel. If your audience sees only the offer and it dominates the top of your newsletter, they may never go any further, and worse, they may unsubscribe because the perception is that you're only blasting them with sales offers.

So, what to use? My personal favorite is Vertical Response, for its ease of use. It has a much easier editor that allows you to edit all the content in one place. Constant Contact requires you to open each article separately to edit it.

If you're doing a newsletter or blogging, keep it up! If you're not using these tips to help extend its reach, make the commitment to implementing them as soon as you can. If you're not doing either, you're missing a huge opportunity to grow awareness of yourself and your business!

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