



7 Secrets to Creating a Successful Electronic Newsletter (Ezine) **By Lois Carter Fay, APR**

Electronic newsletters, or ezines, are one of the best ways to communicate on a regular basis with your customers and prospects...if these critical people have email capabilities. Ezines are succinct, do not take as much time as print newsletters, are very inexpensive to produce and distribute, and are delivered directly to your contact instead of having to get past the "gatekeeper."

Writing an electronic newsletter does not need to be burdensome or time-consuming for you. Once you develop the system, it should be easy to create your ezine in just a few hours. If you find that you would rather spend your time doing other things for your business, consider hiring an outside contractor to write and produce your newsletter. Here are six secrets to creating a successful electronic newsletter to get you started.

1. Plan the content.

Research and planning is the key to success when you are producing a newsletter, whether it is a printed newsletter or an electronic (ezine) version. Research your market and know who your customer is. Write down your goals for your publication. What do you want it to do? Generate leads? Enhance your reputation? Sell products? Develop your editorial schedule and content to meet those goals.

Try to plan the content for several months in advance and write as much of the copy as you can prior to your deadline. Speaking of deadlines, establish a publishing schedule and stick to it. You don't want your weekly ezine to become your "every-once-in-awhile" electronic newsletter!

2. Keep it simple...and accurate.



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Let your readers know what to expect. Keep the design, preparation, database management and automated delivery simple and easy.

A text newsletter, using 60 characters per line, with clear dividers between articles will transmit properly to just about anyone's email system. Keep the writing short, peppy and useful.

If you decide to offer it in an HTML style (formatted, with pictures), be sure to give your readers the option to receive a text version instead. Many readers are still on dial-up systems and HTML takes longer to download. There is also the threat of transmitting a computer virus with HTML email.

Proofread the newsletter thoroughly several times before sending it. Send a test message to a couple of helpers using different email systems to make sure everything is perfect before you hit "send" and distribute it to your complete list.

3. Make sure it can be read in ten minutes or less.

People's lives are very busy. Keep your newsletter short and to the point. Consider adding "Reading time: 10 minutes" to the top of your newsletter to encourage your readers to open the ezine and read it "cover to cover."

4. Produce it weekly.

Producing a weekly newsletter takes commitment and time. It's important to keep a reasonable issue frequency and adhere to the schedule. Daily is too frequent; monthly is generally not frequent enough. Most ezine producers find a weekly issue to be just right. Your readers will soon begin to look forward to receiving it each week, and you will not become overwhelmed by the workload.

If you keep the articles and your entire newsletter short, and focused on topics that you are extremely knowledgeable about, you will be able to put each issue together within a couple of hours. Determine which day works best to distribute it and stay with the schedule. For your information, in the United States, Tuesdays and Thursdays are considered the best delivery days for ezines, but experiment and see what works best for you.

5. Provide useful information.

If you are writing about interesting and helpful topics, your readers will look forward to receiving every issue you produce. Be sure you keep the quality of your writing and content high. Suggest that your readers forward your



publication to others, and be sure to ask them to forward it “without cutting” so that you get credit and these potential customers can find their way to your website to sign up for their own newsletter, as well as purchase your other products or services.

6. Add the fine print.

In every issue make sure you include how to subscribe (in case your newsletter is forwarded to others) and unsubscribe. Include your copyright notice, and all the details to contact you and your company—name, address, phone, fax, email address, and website address. You can even include a standard brief bio at the end of the newsletter if you want.

7. Build a good list.

You’ll need a good opt-in mailing list for your newsletter. Begin collecting email addresses months ahead of when you will publish your first issue. Add a sign-up box on your website to automatically subscribe new readers.

Ask your current customers if they would like to receive your ezine, and add others as you go. Send out an announcement to everyone you know, telling them you are starting a newsletter. Ask them to sign up and tell their friends, too.

Never add anyone to your list without their permission. In fact, it’s best to use a double opt-in method to build your list. It will minimize the risk of being considered or reported as a spammer. (Opt-in means the subscriber signed up to receive your ezine. Double opt-in means they signed up and then they confirmed that they want to be on your list.)

Here are a few more legitimate list-building techniques:

- Consider restricting access for an information-filled section of your website, requiring that people sign up for the newsletter to gain entrance.
- Co-market with other newsletter publishers to jointly build your ezine lists.
- Use exit pop-ups to encourage website visitors to sign up for your newsletter.
- Run ads in compatible ezines.



- Write articles for online and offline publications and always include a line about signing up for your ezine.

If your newsletter is good, it will be forwarded to prospects and your subscribers will begin to look to you for other advice.

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Self-employed since 1990, Lois Carter Fay is the owner of [Strategic Business Partners](#), a marketing consulting firm that develops ideas and strategies to grow your business, [Words For Websites](#), a website writing and strategy business, and the [Marketing Idea Shop](#), an online resource for marketers and small businesses. She works with small business owners and managers to help them with all of their marketing and public relations issues. Find out more at <http://www.marketingideashop.com> .

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