

# How to Start an E-newsletter to Market your Business



By Christine Auda

Most of us are feeling the effects of this challenging economy. However, savvy businesses of all sizes, realize that communicating with customers and prospects with a professional email newsletter (a.k.a. e-newsletter) is one of the most economical forms of relationship marketing.

By offering helpful information, an e-newsletter can help position you as an expert in your field. Your readers will come to look forward to your messages. Eventually, some might convert to customers, and others may refer your services or business. Not sure how to begin? Here are six steps to help you get started.

## **COLLECT YOUR EMAIL LIST**

Before beginning an email newsletter, you will need to have a permission-based list. This is a list of names and email addresses that you've acquired on your own, from customers and prospects, with their permission. If you don't have a list, you'll need to begin collecting email addresses. Email service providers don't allow you to use third-party lists, and doing so can get you banned from their service. The

people in third-party lists don't know you and aren't expecting email from you. Unsolicited email is considered "spam," and there are federal regulations that prohibit it.

### CHOOSE AN EMAIL DISTRIBUTER

For an e-newsletter, you do not use your own email program, such as Outlook or Yahoo. Instead, choose one of the many email distributors available. Such services allow you to design and send your e-newsletter, and to manage your lists. I use ConstantContact.com for my clients, but there are other reputable choices including Mailchimp.com, Aweber.com and Myemma.com. Each email distributor offers slightly different products and fee structures, so do a comparison to see which one suits your needs.

You can start your e-newsletter program for as little as \$15 per month. Your provider may have monthly, pay-as-you-go or yearly pre-pay discount fee plans. In some cases image storage and e-newsletter archiving fees are separate charges.

### DESIGN YOUR E-NEWSLETTER

Most e-newsletter services allow you to choose a design that is closely related to your type of business. For example, Constant Contact has over 300 templates to choose from in a variety of industries, including: retail, real estate, restaurants, travel and tourism and

more. You can customize the look for your business and even upload your logo. Basic design and photo editing skills are helpful, but not always essential.

### PROVIDE HELPFUL CONTENT

Your e-newsletter is not a sales letter. Therefore, you need to offer your readers useful information and not hit them over the head with a sales pitch. Certainly you may include some "soft-sell" promotional material, but always strike a balance. For example, a jewelry store e-newsletter might include information about an upcoming event, tips on how to keep jewelry organized, fashion trends and highlight a piece of jewelry each month. This is a balanced approach.

Using images along with your content adds more impact and visual interest to your e-newsletter. You can find images for as little as \$1 each at royalty-free stock websites online. I use istockphoto.com.

### E-BLASTS

Some e-newsletter service providers offer templates for promotions, sales, invitations and cards. These "e-blasts" can supplement your e-newsletter during other times of the month. Retailers can especially benefit from these options. Say you've decided to put your line of widgets on sale — now you can send the promotion to your email list. But schedule your e-blasts

wisely; people won't necessarily want to hear from you too often each month.

### HOW OFTEN TO SEND

I strongly recommend sending a monthly e-newsletter. Any more than that and your readers may get annoyed and unsubscribe. Any less and readers may forget about your services. A more powerful combination is to send your e-newsletter at the beginning of each month and follow up with one short e-blast later that same month.

Each e-newsletter service provider offers reports with statistics that are accessible after you send your email newsletter. You can find valuable statistics on tracking open rates, returned emails (bounces), who has subscribed or unsubscribed to your e-newsletter, and website activity. Remember to include a link to your website in your email newsletter. You should also add a subscriber sign-up form on your website.

Quality is key. If your e-newsletter or e-blasts are poorly written or have an unprofessional look, they will not reflect well on you or your business. Hiring a professional writer can help ensure the success of your e-newsletter.

**Christine Auda is a freelance business writer specializing in email newsletters and promotions. To learn more about e-newsletters and email marketing, please call her at 973-949-5187 or visit [christineauda.com](http://christineauda.com)**