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E-newsletter content: Teasers or the whole article?

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Which content formula is the right one for your target audience - a teaser followed by a link to the full article on your site? Or inclusion of the complete article in your e-newsletter?

If you've launched an e-newsletter, you've already pondered this question. But you may not have the final answer. If you're planning an e-newsletter for the first time, this is a key consideration.

Here are five questions to help you decide how to handle this piece of your content formula:

1. What Is The Objective Of Your E-Newsletter?

Primarily Promotional

Be honest here. If your e-publication is primarily a promotional update on what's new with your products and services, then a promo blurb followed by a link back to your Web site may be most appropriate.

You want to drive readers back to your site to sign up for that special promotion or download a trial version of your latest software release or a sample chapter of a new book.

Standalone Editorial

If you're providing your readers with original, useful and thought-provoking content, with the objective of branding your company or organization as an expert, then including the full text of your articles makes sense.

2. What Do You Know About Your Target Audience's Reading Habits?

If you're like most publishers, you do an informal survey in your office to find out who likes to read on-screen and who prints out to read later.

One VP of Marketing Communications told me, " We made the conscious decision to do whole pieces in our e-newsletter, basically forcing us to write good copy and to write tight. That way people can read it on the train or in the loo ..." She admitted that her office survey showed a "propensity to print out our e-newsletters."

3. What Do You Know About Your Readers' Internet Connection?

In countries as diverse as Australia (which has a high penetration of Internet users and is hugely Web savvy) and Vietnam (where connecting to the Internet can be



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difficult and expensive) it's not uncommon to download your email and then shut off your Internet connection.

You'll need to know more about the demographics of your readership to answer this question. But even in the ever-wired U.S., you need to consider where and how your target audience will be reading your e-newsletter.

4. Are You Publishing In Text Or HTML - Or Both?

This is a topic unto itself. If you're currently publishing full articles in a text format, then you'll have to carefully consider what your HTML layout will look like. You may not want to have one endlessly long HTML page.

One approach that lets you incorporate full articles is to use anchor links at the top of the page or in a left-hand navigation bar so that readers can click on the title of an article and jump to it further down the page.

And you'll probably want to stick with HTML "lite," avoiding heavy graphics and other fancy visual elements. That way your readers can still print out your HTML e-newsletter and read it offline.

5. Are There Exceptions To These Rules?

Of course. Allen Weiss publishes a twice-monthly e-newsletter whose objective is to drive readers back to MarketingProfs.com, his site filled with hands-on marketing strategies and tactics provided by professional and professors.

Weiss feels strongly that he doesn't want to overwhelm his readers with content. His solution is to write intro copy that compels his readers to click through to the site for the complete article. His teaser formula: "I state a question or make a statement that challenges the reader to question his or her own assumptions."

BONUS TIP: if you're going to use teasers or blurbs, say enough that the reader can get the gist of your article without clicking through. This is a bit of an art, like writing a Subject Line for an email message.

USEFUL LINK:

[How to Write a Sexy Article Teaser](http://www.wordbiz.com/archive/writeteaser.shtml)

<http://www.wordbiz.com/archive/writeteaser.shtml>

Debbie Weil is an e-newsletter expert and publisher of WordBiz Report, winner of The Newsletter on Newsletter's 2002 Gold Award for Online Subscription Newsletter. Sign up FREE at www.wordbiz.com/signup.html and download instantly a mini guide to killer copywriting. WordBiz Report is powered by Emaillabs.com. Read current issue at www.wordbizreport.com.