

10 Step E-newsletter Strategy Worksheet

Following are 10 questions that we submit to new clients before embarking on the launch of an e-newsletter. Treat this as a homework assignment but don't spend too long! Type the answers off the top of your head. You can refine them later. – Debbie Weil

1. What Is Your Business Objective?

A. State in a sentence or two your primary "business objective" for sending out a regular e-newsletter. What are you hoping to accomplish? Increase sales leads? Build credibility as an expert? Be specific.

B. Secondary objective:

2. Who Are Your Readers?

Describe your target audience. Be as specific as possible and think broadly about various constituencies (customers, prospects, partners, investors, etc.).

3. Why Will They Read Your Newsletter?

Briefly describe the value proposition of your newsletter. Why should anyone bother to read it? Bullet points are fine.

4. What Will You Tell Them? How Will You Say It?

CONTENT

From what you know about your audience, what topics are they interested in? Brainstorm here... bullets are fine. You can create a "content formula" later.

MESSAGING

What "face" do you want to put on your company or organization? What tone do you want to convey in your e-newsletter? What impression do you want to leave with your readers?

5. How Will You Get New Subscribers?

You want as many readers as possible in order to get the business results you've specified. How will you get them? A sign up box on every page of your site? A pop-up window? Other ideas?

INCENTIVE

Can you offer potential subscribers free downloadable information to get them to sign up? A calculator? A free guide? A white paper?

6. How Often Will You Publish?

What is the ideal frequency for you to publish? What is the ideal frequency for your audience to hear from you? Take a good, hard look at your internal resources as well as your budget. Start as a quarterly if you don't want to commit to monthly.

7. Who Will Manage Your List?

If publishing newsletters isn't your core competency, you'll want to consider a Web-based service to capture email addresses, deliver your e-pub, track click throughs and open rates, handle unsubscribes, etc. A few companies to consider: iMakeNews.com, ConstantContact.com, CoolerEmail.com, SubscriberMail.com, ExactTarget.com, SparkList.com.

8. Will You Publish in Text and/or HTML?

Or deliver as a PDF? It's almost twice as much work to publish an HTML version simultaneously with an attractively formatted text version. How important is it to offer your readers the choice?

9. Who Is Your Competition?

What is the competition for your e-newsletter? Think broadly. TV, magazines, print newsletters... what else is your target audience reading?

10. How Will You Measure Success?

Consider qualitative as well as quantitative metrics. Open rates, click throughs, number of unsubscribes, new subscribes, increase in new business leads. Less precisely measurable: growth in your credibility and status as an expert, press inquiries, positive feedback from readers.