



Best Practice: Editorial/Copywriting

Composing an Effective eNewsletter

Mailboxes are more and more cluttered and time is an ever-precious commodity. So how can you ensure that readers devote their attention to your eNewsletter? Here are some tips to keep them clicking time after time.

1. Hot Heads

In any kind of web-based applications, headers are crucial. Readers have grown accustomed to scanning the page, and it's the headline's job to stop them in their tracks.

Put the most interesting word as close to the beginning as possible:

“Win,” “Award,” “Renovation”

Don't back into it with a lot of unnecessary, boring words – readers might not even make it to the end.

Good: “Big Bonuses for Top Performers”

Not so Good: “Managers to Give Top Performers Bonuses.”

Don't be too specific. Time-crunched readers are looking for a reason not to read something, so try not to hand them one so easily by giving a lot of details that might not apply to them.

Instead of a headline like: “Boston Branch Open Employee Fitness Center,” which probably only Boston-based readers (or fitness nuts) will click

Try something more general like: “Staff Shapes Up.”

Also remember that if you give too much info in the headline, they may feel they don't need to read the full story.

Tell them what to do. Readers respond to imperatives in headlines.

Command them to “Tell Us What You Think,” or “Learn More About the New Regulations,” and it's more likely they will.



Consider using teasers to pique interest. Headlines don't always have to be straightforward or staid. They can also be mysterious, funny, or irreverent, i.e. "Shelf Medicated" for a story on over-the-counter drugs. Sure, this technique that can be overused, but if you have a series of no-nonsense headlines, it can be effective to mix things up.

2. Familiarity Breeds Contentment

Keep the style and format of your newsletter consistent, and include regular features so that readers know what to expect. Just like in a magazine, readers like to have something to look forward to in a newsletter - a funny quote of the day, a q&a column - and are more likely to open it up if they know their favorite section will always be there.

3. Give and Take

In successful eNewsletters, the most popular feature is often one that allows readers to interact. A contest or drawing is great - it's even better if readers have to answer a poll, play a game or take a quiz in order to enter. Also consider features that allow readers to write in with questions and comments. This gives you valuable feedback - and them a voice in your publication.

4. Detective Work

It might be tempting to sit back and relax once you've created what you think is an excellent eNewsletter. But your work isn't done! Employ a tracking program or software to find out what people are responding to in your newsletter. Are they clicking more on teasers or do they seem to prefer a simple, direct headline? Are they ignoring the executive Q&A and skipping straight to the quiz?

Consider this information very carefully, but don't be too quick to make major changes. Wait until you see distinct patterns, then make measured adjustments. But by all means, don't let this useful information go to waste. And never stop thinking about how you can better serve your readers.

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