

## 7 Steps to Shine Brighter through Electronic Newsletters

*By Barb Sawyers*

1. Examine your expertise and objectives.....	3
2. Think about your important people.....	5
3. Pick the right partners.....	12
4. Create your newsletter brand.....	13
5. Plan your issues.....	20
6. Budget your time.....	27
7. Evaluate your success.....	29
Help!.....	31

### **About Stickemail**

**Stickemail** takes the time and frustration out of creating electronic newsletters that are opened, read and advance business objectives. We'll match you with writers or editors who have experience in your field, to plan and produce newsletters that demonstrate your expertise.

### **About Barb Sawyers, MA**

After 25 years of writing and editing newsletters for a broad range of clients, Barb met their electronic offspring. She loved the great leap forward in time, money and flexibility. And she saw their enormous potential for building reputations and relationships.

## ***From frustration to celebration***

You're a respected expert among your clients and colleagues. But you want more people to share this awareness, so you can build your reputation – and your business.

You are frustrated because raising your profile as an expert takes time, which you just don't have. You are already spending too many hours on the phone, email and many other draining but necessary tasks.

You know newsletters are a time-tested way to demonstrate your expertise to a broader range of people. But you don't enjoy writing. You agonize over the right words and worry about making mistakes that will make you look unprofessional. You're smart enough to know that, even though you can be an effective communicator, writing is not the best use of your time.

You understand that your important people are pressed for time too, with longer lists of new email messages and shorter attention spans.

So what do you do? Read this book. Through a combination of practical advice from us and work sheets for you to fill in, you'll take the seven easy steps to launching a newsletter that will raise your profile as an expert.

## 1. *Examine your expertise and objectives*

### *Your expertise*

Your knowledge and wisdom will power your newsletter. So let's explore your expertise and the objectives you'd like to achieve.

You may need to revisit this section later, to sharpen your focus and ensure your newsletter supports your objectives. Clear thinking leads to clear writing, which leads to clear understanding for the people with whom you want to share your expertise.

### *Your expertise*

1. What is your expertise?

2. Why are other people interested in your expertise?

### ***Your objectives***

Before you can begin, you need to closely examine your business or professional objectives and how your newsletter fits in with them.

1. What are your business objectives?

*Short-term*

*Medium-term*

*Long-term*

2. What would you like to accomplish through your newsletter?

3. What is your marketing strategy?

4. How does your newsletter fit into it?

5. How will you measure your ability to achieve these objectives?

## 2. *Think about your important people*

Despite the importance of your expertise and objectives, it's not just about you. It's about linking your expertise and objectives to the needs and interests of the people who are important to you. The better you know them, the more likely you are to succeed.

Many smaller organizations know their people well, which gives them a huge advantage over mass marketers. However, it's still a good idea to start with a quick survey to determine what your readers want to hear about and how often.

### ***Listen***

You can conduct a simple survey through economical survey services such as [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). Or pick up the phone and pose a few quick, consistent questions to potential subscribers. As your newsletter rolls on, you can continue to obtain feedback through surveys, blogs, conversations and email metrics.

In addition to this objective research, you need to take a subjective approach. Reflect on the motivations and frustrations of your important people until you can truly understand them. Some of the questions on the next work sheet will help you put yourself in their shoes.

### ***Why people subscribe***

You need to deliver information that responds to why people subscribe to newsletters.

The main reasons are to:

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire a competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money
- learn more about personal interests.

### ***How they read***

You also have to tailor your information to the unique way people read electronic newsletters. Most people skim newsletters, with only about 10 per cent reading them fully. That's why your content has to be short and to the point and the design has to help people quickly find what they want.

You also need to think about how different kinds of people best absorb information. This will help you determine your content mix. Your typical reader will likely fall into one or more of these categories: big-picture people, detailed dons, brown-eyed puppies and good lookers. Most people will combine characteristics of more than one of these stereotypes, but one will predominate.

### ***Big picture people***

These people want your basic message in 25 words or less. They want to immediately know how the information you're providing will affect them or the issues and people that unite you. They like quick tips, memorable quotes and other backup related to your main point.

### ***Detailed dons***

These people are more interested in the data behind your message. These are the people most likely to click the links that take them to longer versions of your articles and sources you've featured. They will also find any typos or inaccuracies.

### ***Brown-eyed puppies***

These people are most responsive to emotional messages. They love personal photos, quotes from grateful people and inspiring words. Story-telling is especially effective with them.

### ***Good lookers***

These people learn best from visual cues, so use lots of charts, diagrams and easily identifiable regular sections to help them navigate your newsletter and understand your content.

### ***The right mix***

Although one stereotype may be the most common to your readers, don't forget you'll probably see a mix throughout the group. The challenge is to come up with a content mix that reflects your readers.

Even if you're providing highly technical information for the detailed dons, you'll need to personalize your newsletter, a strategy loved by the brown-eyed puppies but appreciated by almost everyone. After all, people buy from people, not organizations. So personalize your newsletter by using your name, not your company's, in the "from" on your email and use your photo.

If, for example, you're a non-profit trying to raise funds for a good cause, you may focus on the brown-eyed puppies. However, don't forget the detail dons, who want you to explain how every penny of donations is spent, or the good lookers, who would like a chart to demonstrate how close you are to your fundraising goal.

Conversely, if your audience is made up of investors, you'll need to offer lots of details, likely through links to longer content. Graphs will be appreciated by the good lookers. A quick summary of how your advice fits in with economic trends and investment portfolios will be expected by the big picture people. For the brown-eyed puppy people, you may need to explain why your recommendations will give nice people peace of mind or a better life.

### ***The right words***

You also need to understand the language your readers speak. I don't mean English, but the sublanguages in which many people are fluent. For example, if you're a lawyer sending a newsletter to corporate clients, you may need to replace some legal eloquence with the business jargon your executives speak.

However, if you're a medical researcher writing for other researchers, there's no need to adjust your language. It's all a question of using the words that are the most appropriate for your readers.

In most cases, it's safer to write in plain language that everyone will understand. Few readers, especially those scanning online, will trudge through difficult phrasing or patronizing terminology.

### ***Polished, professional***

If your newsletter is going to educated people who value the fine points of grammar and punctuation, it's extremely important to make sure the language is polished and correct. You don't want to undermine your reputation and credibility with spelling and grammar errors or typos.

Effective writing can involve sentence fragments, dangling participles and other rule breakers. But you have to understand the rules before you can know how to break them. And you have to understand your audience well enough to evaluate the risks and rewards of taking liberties with language.

### *Your important people*

1. Who are your readers?

2. What interests do you share?

3. Which problems of theirs can you solve?

4. How does this problem make them feel?

5. How will your expertise, services or solutions make them feel?

6. What kinds of specialized terminology do they use?

7. As a result of reading your newsletter, how do you want them to

feel

think

act?

8. What's your approximate percentage of

Big picture people

Detailed dons

Brown-eyed puppies

Good lookers

9. Are one or more of these groups more important to achieving your objectives?

### ***Their addresses***

You also need the email addresses of the individuals to whom you're planning to send your newsletter. Before you can use these addresses, it's vital to have their permission. It's also important to check with people who give you their business cards or other contact information before you add them to your list.

If uncertain, simply send an email or make a telephone call asking for their permission. Most people do not like receiving email newsletters from untrusted sources or on subjects that are not of keen interest. So check first.

The worst possible fate is to be mistaken for spam. Not only will this harm your reputation, but it could also lead your email service provider to refuse to distribute your newsletter.

### ***Easy permission***

On the other hand, keep the permission process simple. Email service providers that demand repeated permissions risk losing subscribers who simply don't have time to go through the process again and again.

Be very cautious if you are thinking of renting or buying lists. It's against Canada's privacy laws and similar regulations in other jurisdictions to send to email addresses that have not granted permission. You can often purchase permission-based lists from chambers of commerce, associations, directories and other sources. However, because these people don't have a direct relationship with you, you may experience low open and click-through rates.

People may unsubscribe or, worse still, report you as spam. In fact, more recipients are reporting unwelcome e-newsletters as spam, rather than unsubscribing. On top of that, you'll likely find many addresses on rented lists are out of date.

### ***Regular maintenance***

Even the best lists will require maintenance, to stay up to date. email service providers will list the addresses that cannot receive your newsletter. You'll need to delete addresses that didn't work because of address changes, called hard bounces. You'll also need to check this list for misspelled addresses, which you can correct.

Soft bounces, which your email service provider will also report on, come from people

who are on holidays, have a full mailbox or other legitimate reason for not receiving your newsletter. Keep these people on your list initially, but check them for repeated problems that suggest they should be removed. Remember, it's all about quality, not quantity.

### ***Growth***

A good newsletter will grow organically, as people forward it to friends and colleagues who then subscribe. But you'll have to be prepared to take the time and effort to build your list, especially at the start.

You may need to advertise in publications or web sites used by your target group. It's also wise to talk about your newsletter and solicit business cards for new subscribers at association or networking events.

You can include a link to your signup on your email signature. To extend your reach to like-minded people around the world, you can blog, including a newsletter signup link, and comment on others' blogs. And you'll want to have newsletters for web site visitors to scan, accompanied by a prominent signup.

### ***Your list***

1. How many addresses are on your list?
  
2. Do you have permission to send an email newsletter to them?

If not, how are you going to obtain their permission?

3. Are your addresses up to date or do you need to do some checking?
  
4. What kind of people would you like to add to your list?

5. How will you obtain their addresses and permissions?

6. How will you grow your list?

### ***3. Pick the right partners***

The composition and size of your team will likely be determined by how much time you want to spend on your newsletter, what you enjoy doing, what you want to accomplish and the effectiveness of partners in improving your results.

Before you launch your newsletter, you may need to bring on board an expert like **Stickemail**, to provide the initial planning that will lead to smooth sailing later on.

We can also act as your content writers or editors, transforming your knowledge into newsletters that your important people will open, read and act on. As we demonstrate through our high open rates, professionally packaged content does make a difference.

Another vital partner is an email service provider, who will provide several services at a very affordable price. This company will ensure your newsletter will look pretty much the same in any browser and solve technical problems. It will also provide easy subscribe/unsubscribe capabilities, automated tools to help keep your mailing list clean and metrics to measure your success. Probably the most popular, which we use extensively, is [www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com).

If your newsletter is just one part of a comprehensive Internet strategy, you may need other marketing experts. Remember it's all about fit: partners who can tailor their services and solutions to your expertise and objectives.

### ***What help do you need?***

- Email service provider
- Newsletter planner
- Writer
- Editor
- Internet marketing strategist

## ***4. Create your newsletter brand***

As people fly through their inbox, they need the ability to instantly recognize your newsletter so they can decide whether to open it. If it's at all challenging for them, your newsletter will end up in their delete bin.

Your newsletter branding creates that critical first impression. It also tells people what to expect from you.

So think about what you're trying to accomplish and how it relates to the people for whom you're producing the newsletter.

Most people will already have a branding statement and visuals. But it's good to review these in the context of your newsletter.

Your newsletter brand will build from a template, the visual shell that you'll use for every issue. It will include your standard branding elements, such as your logo, colors and tagline or slogan, that summarize what makes you special, how you help others or what you consistently promise. You should also use your brand as a guide to your content, a unifying concept to hold everything together.

### ***A lot's in a name***

Your template will start with a name for your newsletter that goes in the banner. If you can come up with a catchy title that also clearly explains the point of your newsletter, that's great. Otherwise, it's best to stick with a clear and simple description.

Write out possible names and discuss them with trusted friends, advisors and potential readers. This can be a time-consuming but vital process.

Along with the banner, your template will feature your logo and other branding visuals. Remember that they need to be in formats compatible with HTML, the main language of the Internet. Visuals meant for print will distort in different browsers. The best is JPEG (joint photographic experts group), followed by GIF (graphic interchange format).

If you have a design that looks nice in print, you should also remember that it may need some tweaking to look as good on a computer screen.

Some novice publishers try to get around the requirements of HTML by producing their newsletter as an attachment. But email service providers won't work with attachments, because they're notorious virus spreaders. Besides, recipients are far less likely to open and read them.

Some people are happy with plain text. In fact, some researchers are suggesting that certain readers tire of colorful publications and prefer text. Text can also be read on hand-held devices and before images are activated in Outlook.

Consider the preferences of your audience before you decide. And check your open rates. If you're sensing fatigue, test a text alternative to see if that helps. Or use both.

## Typical template

subscribe

big F

unsubscribe

banner

slogan

photo

email

your name

privacy statement

web link

You're receiving this email because of your relationship with Barb Sawyers. Please [confirm](#) your continued interest in receiving email from us. You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.

**STICKemail**  
NEWSLETTERS THAT STICK

**Get to the point**  
Why do hit movies start with an exciting scene?  
Why do news anchors plunge right into what's just happened?  
To grab the audience's attention.  
Yet, in newsletters, presentations and other business communication, many people feel they should first build up to their point. So their electronic newsletter doesn't get read. Or people pay more attention to their BlackBerries than their talk.  
Stickemail takes the time and pain out of writing and packaging newsletters that demonstrate your expertise. What's more, we can help you achieve a much higher than average open rate. For more information on how we can help you, drop me a line at [barb@stickycommunication.ca](mailto:barb@stickycommunication.ca).

*Barb Sawyers*

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**Electronic newsletters that stick to the target**

**Our winning formula**

Based on extensive research and experience, we believe that electronic newsletters should be:

- easy to scan
- quick to read
- to the point
- a great way to build relationships
- attention grabbing
- easy to distinguish from spam

At the top is the banner, which contains the name of your newsletter.

Usually templates have two columns, a narrow one that holds the consistent information and a wide one that will feature your changing content.

Because people read left to right, it's best to choose or have designed a template that places the consistent information on the right side. Reserve the left side of the screen for the changing content that will encourage people to open and read.

### ***More about you***

When you're planning a newsletter, you'll need to first focus on the consistent information column. Near the top should be your photo, to personalize the newsletter and add credibility. It doesn't have to be a big glamour shot, just a small, flattering, recent head and shoulders. If you're in a creative field, you may want to consider an illustration or artsier image of you.

The consistent information column will also include your contact information, such as telephone number, addresses, email and web site, as well as a brief branding statement or sales slogan.

When you're planning your wider, left-side content column, it's important to remember that people read online in an "F" pattern. They read the first line, scan down to the next head, then scan down again.

### ***Scanning guides***

Because most people scan more than they actually read, you'll need to have designed regular headings that readers will use as a guide to find what they're looking for. These should be based on your mix of big people picture, detailed dons, brown-eyed puppy people and good lookers. For example, some people will go straight to *This month's tip*, others to *Customer story* and some to graphs under *Metrics with meaning*.

You'll also need to use lots of subheads, bullets and numbers to help them quickly navigate through the newsletter.

### ***Preview pane***

When you're designing a template, you also have to consider what it will look like in your subscribers' inboxes.

Because the most popular browser Outlook disables the graphics until people click on them, you have to design a template with room for enough compelling text to grab attention. In the split second your people are seeing the preview pane, they will decide whether to open, ignore or delete.

In the preview pane, they will also see "from". Use your full name to distinguish you from other people with the same first name. Don't use your company name. You want to keep it personal.

The big trigger in the preview pane is the subject line. If you are going to attract the reader, the subject line must give them a good reason to open. It can't just tell them it's your October newsletter. And it has to be short, so it will instantly capture attention and fit into the character limits of different browsers.

You need to ensure your subject line is not confused with spam and automatically deleted. But as long as you use a spam check, provided by many email service providers and web sites like [www.spamcheck.sitesell.com](http://www.spamcheck.sitesell.com), you don't need to worry.

Because graphic banners will appear as blank slates to Outlook users in the preview pane, it's wise to use shallow ones that don't take up too many of these precious first few inches. Alternatively, you can create your banner in text. You can still tart it up with color, fonts and sizes. Here's how we changed our **Stickemail** banner from a graphic to text.



Graphic



Text

If your banner incorporates a tag line, make sure it's in text, not a graphic, so everyone can read it in the preview pane.

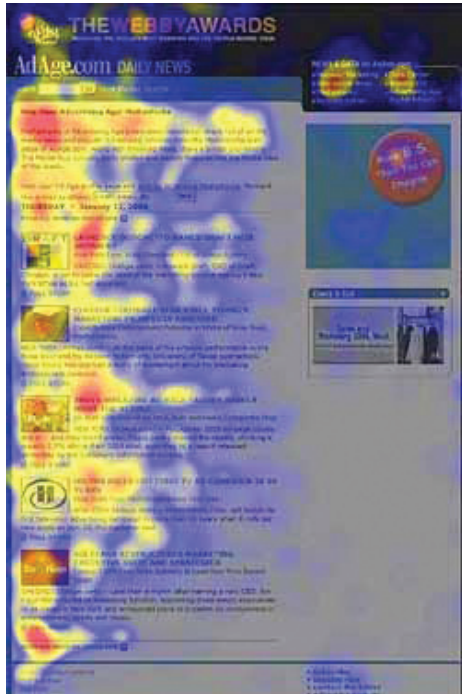
In their inboxes, most people will also see the head for your first article or the first part of your list of contents for longer newsletters. Depending on the strength of the open trigger in your subject line, you can repeat and reinforce your subject line in the first line or build on it.

### ***F'ing reading patterns***

Once people open your newsletter, you need to encourage them to read. So it's vital to provide an immediate reward, a quick summary of what the newsletter contains. This can be a 25-word opening paragraph that captures the who-what-when-where-and-why of your main message. For longer newsletters, it can be a concise, precise list of contents.

Another reason the space at the top of your newsletter is so important is the tendency of people to read online in an "F" shape, which has been confirmed by eye-tracking studies. Most of their attention will be focused on the content on the top line of the "F". They'll then skim downward, focusing next on the middle horizontal line of the "F".

If you are offering an important link to your web site, the most effective locations are the horizontal lines of the "F."



Skip the chatty "from the editor" section that many newsletters start with and dive right into the short article of highest value to your reader. Unless they are guaranteed to create an irresistible urge to continue reading your newsletter, your comments belong in less valuable real estate later in the newsletter.

***Brand: you***

1. What is your branding statement?
  
2. What is your logo?

3. Which colors do you use in your branding visuals?

Which fonts?

Other graphics

4. What will be the name of your newsletter?

5. How will it appear in the banner?

6. What will appear in each issue in the narrower consistent information column?

Slogan

Phone number

Email address

Address

Website

Other

7. What are the recurring sections in your wider changing content column?

8. What will your preview pane look like?

## ***5. Plan your issues***

Most people start newsletters brimming over with ideas, then lose momentum as they sail on. In many cases, they've used up most of their most compelling topics in the first few issues. That's why you need a plan.

Because people are more likely to open and read short newsletters, there's no need to cram all your best ideas into the first few issues. Keep them short. Spread out your topics to build interest and loyalty.

Your newsletter frequency will depend on the time you want to spend. More importantly, it will depend on how often your readers want to hear from you.

Frequency builds recognition. But if the high quality of content is not maintained, too many low-value newsletters will turn off readers. As with your contact lists, quality trumps quantity.

The most popular frequency is once a month. You can add issues if urgent news arises. For example, investment advisors can pump out a newsletter when the market tanks, sparing themselves hours on the phone repeating the same advice and assurances. You can also use special issues to promote a seminar, product launch or other specific need.

### ***How to develop an editorial calendar***

To allow room for urgent issues or ideas that arise as your newsletter continues, you need to plan for 10 issues only in the first year. The work sheet on the next page will help.

Start with themes that are calendar-related. For example, if you're a financial planner, reserve the month or months preceding the deadline for contributions to individual retirement savings plans. Then, using the regular recurring sections you planned with your template, add additional information or perspectives on the same or related topics.

After you have slotted in seasonal themes, return to your business objectives and list your most important goals for your newsletter. For the remaining issues, base the theme on your strategic objectives and reader interests.

If your issue is especially big, or if one of your regular sections does not relate, you may consider temporarily dropping it.

Remember that each regular feature should provide a bite-sized chunk of information that matches your readers' attention spans. The word count for your entire newsletter should range from about 200 to 900 words, with each feature very short or linked to a site outside the newsletter. Make sure all your important information precedes it, as most readers will not follow the link.

As ideas or events arise, don't hesitate to add to your 10-issue plan. And be prepared to adjust your course as you discover what's most effective with your readers or developments in your field.

Almost everyone goes through busy times when newsletters are not the priority. So it's wise to put a few in the can, so you can simply send them when you're pressed for time.

## ***Editorial calendar***

### **Month 1**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

### **Month 2**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

**Month 3**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

**Month 4**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

**Month 5**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

**Month 6**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

**Month 7**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

**Month 8**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

**Month 9**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

**Month 10**

*Theme: seasonal topic or strategic goal*

Regular feature 1

Regular feature 2

Regular feature 3

Regular feature 4

Will this issue help your important people

- stay up-to-date in their field
- acquire competitive edge
- become more productive
- save money or
- learn more about personal interests?

Why should they open it?

How would you like them to respond to reading it?

## 6. Budget your time

### *First issue*

Newsletter publishers need to budget their time. You have to estimate how much time you think a newsletter will take, then maybe double it. Even when you outsource many of the services, the expertise that provides the foundation of the newsletters is yours. The relationship with the readers is yours. However, as demonstrated by the results confirmed by many researchers, it's worth the effort.

Because the first issue involves planning, tailoring or creating a design template and mapping your editorial schedule, it will take the biggest chunk of your time. Fortunately, that's when your expertise and objectives are of highest value and your enthusiasm roars. Partners like **Stickemail** can make it easy.

### *Checklist*

Here's what you can expect to do for the first issue:

- Business and newsletter objectives
- Reader analysis
- Compile and check mailing lists
- Budget for and select the partners you need (i.e. email service provider, content writer or editor, Internet marketing strategist)
- Name for the newsletter
- Graphics that work in HTML
- Design template--customized or unique?
- Recurring themes and editorial mix, i.e.
  - News
  - Stories
  - Testimonials
  - Tips
  - Metrics
  - Question & Answer
- Design for banner, recurring heads
- Consistent brand and contact information
- Digital photo of you
- Editorial calendar
- Privacy statement-the promise that you will not share your subscribers' names or other information
- Web site page for signup and posting newsletters

- ❑ How the newsletter will integrate with other marketing initiatives
- ❑ Results measurement

### ***Regular issues***

Subsequent issues of a well-planned newsletter, with support from an email service provider and content experts like **Stickemail**, should not usually take more than a few hours.

Here are the typical steps.

1. Check your editorial calendar to decide if you're on track or other priorities have emerged.
2. Think about what you want to discuss, what you want your readers to do and what they have asked about.
3. Talk to us on the telephone. From that conversation, we write the content. Or we can edit content you provide.
4. Review the content and talk to us about revisions.
5. Preview and approve the final content in the template.
6. Check that your lists are clean and up to date.
7. Give us the go-ahead to distribute.
8. Read and follow up on the reports.
9. Enjoy the feedback and recognition

Once you have attracted a loyal subscriber list, you'll find that your readers have formed a personal attachment with your newsletter. That was one of the surprises for electronic communication researcher Jakob Nielsen in his seminal studies of electronic newsletters.

### ***The commitment***

The world is littered with newsletters that started off splendidly, then faded away. If people are attached to your newsletter, they may be upset if you skip issues or cease publication. So realize it's a commitment that you have to be able to sustain.

Then again, having an audience that hangs on your every word? Isn't that the stuff most people dream of?

## **7. Evaluate your success**

Email service providers produce metrics so you can track how many people opened your email, clicked to your site and, in some cases, made a purchase. They will also give the addresses of people who opened your newsletter and clicked on the links. Valuable information, indeed.

### ***Email metrics***

These metrics aren't perfect. For example, if people using Outlook do not click to activate the images in your newsletter, they aren't counted as opens. Neither are users of BlackBerries and some other hand-held devices who will view your newsletter as text.

To complicate matters further, people who open your newsletter more than once or forward it through their email program may be counted multiple times.

Click-through rates, when a reader clicks on a link in your content, are the most meaningful if they result in actions that serve your objectives. So think strategically, again emphasizing quality over quantity. For more sophisticated intelligence, combine them with web analytical tools.

### ***Big picture***

Despite these weaknesses, email metrics are a great guide, to help you understand what works with your important people. However, you have to look at them in the context of the broader objectives you set before you started your newsletter. That's why your planning should include a means of tracking the calls, sales or other desired actions that result from your newsletter.

Reviewing your metrics against the broader context will help you evaluate what your readers like in your newsletter. So keep a close eye on the numbers and addresses – and respond accordingly.

Although the industry average for b-to-b newsletters is only around 25 per cent, and trending downward, our open rates at **Stickemail** are consistently much higher. The main reason, we feel, is the fact that we are communicating to people on a very targeted, well-maintained list, providing bite-sized chunks of high-value information and paying attention to the preview pane.

## ***Work sheet***

How will you measure and evaluate your success?

### **Newsletter metrics**

- Opens
- Click-throughs
- Online sales
- New subscribers
- Other

### **Marketing measurements**

- Traffic to your web site
- Telephone calls
- Referrals
- Sales
- Other

## ***Help!***

Please contact me to discuss a possible newsletter.  
barb@stickycommunication.ca

Name

Organization

Web site

Email

Phone

Best time to call

Or you can call us at 416-690-0968