

HARNESS THE POWER OF AN E-NEWSLETTER FOR YOUR NONPROFIT

Many not for profit organizations today have an e-newsletter or an email news update of some type, but few if any have succeeded in transforming it into a truly productive development tool. Those who have attempted to do so have relied primarily on using it as another tool to appeal for contributions. This approach simply substitutes email appeals for traditional postal mail appeals, and aside from the savings in postage, are likely to achieve no better results. Because emails are easier to delete and can be filtered easily, I suspect the results become less satisfactory in the long run.

So the question becomes, how do we effectively use this medium to increase support? Here are four suggestions that should help:

- 1) **CONTENT IS KING.** Remember these words above all others. No one opens an email because they wish to be solicited for a donation. They will, on the other hand, open an email because they anticipate relevant information concerning their interests or their needs, either physical or emotional. If you want your email newsletters to be opened you must remember this, and they cannot be effective without first being opened. Forget this and your email newsletter simply gets deleted or filtered into the spam box.
- 2) **DON'T OVERDO IT.** Your email subscribers will quickly tire of weekly and perhaps bi-weekly communication. They don't want to be reminded that you need money every week or every two weeks. Even the most devoted follower of your cause probably doesn't want a blow by blow description of every program you're conducting on a weekly or even bi-weekly basis. Unless something phenomenal is going on that they absolutely will be ecstatic to hear about, monthly is probably the best way to go... It is far better to publish monthly and then increase frequency if demand calls for it, than to publish too frequently and irritate your subscribers. Remember the old stage axiom: "Always leave them begging for more", and use it to your advantage.
- 3) **BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.** Use your e-newsletter to build relationships with your readers. Ask any performer why they perform and those that are honest will tell you in one word..."applause". Everyone has an emotional need for recognition. To incorporate this into your newsletter you may recognize contributors, solicit ideas from your readers, or invite "letters to the editor". Make it THEIR newsletter. Your staff should be recognized in a staff newsletter, your supporters should be paramount in their e-newsletter.
- 4) **MONETIZE YOUR e-NEWSLETTER** – Ask yourself this question: Is your not for profit organization willing to accept corporate donations? If the answer is yes then there is no reason not to accept corporate sponsors in your newsletter. As long as advertising is kept "family friendly", and is balanced with the content in such a manner so as not to take on the appearance of a "sale paper" there is no reason to forego tasteful corporate advertising in your organization's newsletter. One company who offers [free e-newsletter services](#) to Nonprofit Organizations projects that, in their program, each subscriber represents a potential of approximately three dollars per year in shared advertising revenue for their clients. That works out to \$3,000 for every 1000 free subscribers to your e-

newsletter. Even in tough economic times, the 75% of Americans online can support their favorite nonprofit organizations by simply subscribing free to a monthly e-newsletter.

In today's economy, those not for profit organizations who embrace new methods, new ideas and new technology intelligently and creatively will survive and perhaps even flourish. Those who bury their heads in the sand of traditional media and methodology will find themselves increasingly falling behind. In an atmosphere where demand for charitable services is increasing and financial support is shrinking, adhering to a strategy or tactics simply because they are familiar is almost guaranteed to be a formula for failure. If what you're doing is not working, change it.

Technology and social media are not magic wands. Simply employing them will not open the floodgates of financial support. Technology and social media simply provide more efficient ways of connecting with people. Give people relevant content, build relationships and without overdoing it provide them with a simple means to support you, and the support you seek will come naturally.

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