

1. What is the best format to send Newsletters via email?

From time to time we receive queries from SMEs, and SOHO businesses that wish to send out neat and glossy HTML newsletters via email as a way of communicating with customers and attracting new business.

Before you start, some questions to ponder –

- What is the purpose of the email list – Information? Sales pitch? Both?
- How big is your email list?
- Do you have current email addresses on file?
- Have your users “opted-in” to the newsletter list?
- How often will the newsletter be sent?
- Do you need a Table Of Contents?
- How many graphics will be in the email?
- Are they animated (ie; rotating pictures)?
- What quality are the graphics?
- What size are the graphics (size matters)?
- Are sponsors onboard?
- How will you handle bounced emails?
- How quickly will you respond to requests to “REMOVE ME”?
- What is your “call to action”?
- Do you have special time limited offers?
- Are you geared up to handle any influx of enquiries, should they come?
- Do you need HTML (web based) or text or some other format?
- Will your end user customers see the email as you see it prior to sending? ie; will the “experience” (look/shape/feel/gloss/presence) be the same for them as it is for you?

Here are a few tips based on current and emerging trends in technology that illustrate some things to be aware of that have an impact on the “delivery of your newsletter”.

At the end of the day, you need to assess several things which influence the style and type of newsletter that you need to use to get “your message to the market”.

Newsletters can be an effective marketing tool for your SME/SMB/SOHO business by following a few simple tips. The following are offered as key pointers to steer you in the right direction so that you can avoid some of the main pitfalls that many fall into with sending newsletters to prospects and customer database lists.

2. Beware the Junk Mail Trap

Be careful, your carefully crafted HTML newsletter might be filtered out as junk mail – this is quite common with some email filters!

3. Make it easy to find content

A Table Of Contents upfront is good as it leads the reader to chase up the feature article and if the content is right will probably read the whole newsletter – isn't that your aim?

4. Beware the HTML stripper

Stripped HTML emails - Some corporate systems (most large ones) will convert HTML to plain text AUTOMATICALLY as it comes through their firewall. This is their own corporate policy and the way they reduce their risk of viruses and malicious software (embedded inside HTML). Your fancily formatted HTML newsletter may be amended to look like text, which totally loses impact for you!

5. What is the impact of HTML stripping?

- › Makes your business look unprofessional
- › Reduces ALL visual impact you were trying to create
- › Blows away any sponsor logos & images as these are extracted
- › Kills all animated images
- › Any "call to action" and special offers that were highlighted in bold/colour text lose impact
- › Formatting isn't easy to read as stripped emails "lose format and shape"
- › Newsletter is usually sent to the trash bin on arrival as it doesn't look professional
- › Hard to read newsletters do not warrant the effort in sifting through garbled text

6. Printing HTML pitfalls

Sometimes HTML will NOT print well, 1st time around, as the page has been optimised on a large screen by a proofwriter/graphic designer. When it hits the printer the RHS of the page is often missing characters. This detracts from the impact that you were wanting to achieve with the newsletter. Some people like to read these newsletters "offline" on a bus or plane, or at home when they don't have access to the email or they may just want to file a hard copy for future reference.

To overcome this printing issue, the end user needs to realign the printer to print landscape or scale to fit the page and this is often forgotten, and much cursed!

7. Gain Consent

Allow people to opt-in to your list – ie; have a means to let the user subscribe OR get their consent 1st by another means.

8. Let them off the hook

Make it VERY easy for people to opt-out of your list. Not everyone wants to get your news, every week, month, quarter etc, no matter how useful it might be.

9. Echo the address back to the client

Repeat the user email address in full as freddydnurk@on.net within the newsletter address. - People forget - due to the HUGE amount of newsletters available on the WWW.... Plus the fact that many use different email addresses for different things..... It's often useful to "echo back" the actual correctly displayed email address registered by the user. This helps the user "unsubscribe" in the event they no longer wish to receive the newsletter.

10. HTML, what's under the cover?

HTML code! Why what did you expect to see?

Under the cover, there is "code" that can be used to Submit, Redirect key details of site address and contact and at the same time gather statistics and tracking details on clickthroughs. Many sites are becoming increasingly concerned about the amount of data gathering and harvesting taking place, as it puts clients systems at risk. Embedded Java code is one example to be wary of when creating HTML newsletters.

11. Embedded Java

Embedded Java (software code) is often used in HTML for formatting cascading style sheets. Using Embedded Java introduces significant risk due to the potential for malicious code as embedded Java can be used to;

- > probe a PC,
- > gather data,
- > harvest information (email addresses, credit card details etc) ,
- > install software,
- > trash a system etc

This is one of the key reasons why HTML newsletters are often stripped back to plain text, to render the java ineffective and minimise risk.

12. This newsletter is sponsored by.....

Sponsors - It's OK to have sponsors cover your newsletter BUT make sure that your news comes 1st! After all it is your products/services you want to sell or why are you bothering with a newsletter? OK, so you have bucketloads of money and are feeling benevolent.....

What does PCProfile recommend for email newsletters?

Either;



A well formatted and structured newsletter as clear text with links to offers, articles, web sites etc
GREAT text newsletters can be a significant boost to your business lead generation.

Nicely formatted, concise easy to read table of contents, well structured and easily read text newsletters can be as functional and effective as any HTML newsletter AND will be more readable, and easy to print, than any HTML newsletter stripped bare by corporate servers and firewalls.

OR



A PDF generated newsletter that has a "graphic, well designed and professional look and feel" will help you carry branding and sponsors messages as well as product images effectively to your prospects/customers.

Although PDF doesn't open inside the user email (it is an attachment) it WILL in most cases be able

to be read on almost all PCs that you send it to as most have a free AcrobatReader installed.

If they don't, then offer this link <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.HTML> to where it can be downloaded and installed, it's free.

BUT - if you must use HTML Newsletters

- › Scale down the width of your newsletter so it prints "as you expect in portrait mode"
- › Be aware that images will be blocked at most sites
- › Be aware that many corporate email systems will convert HTML to plain text
- › Your email newsletter may be blocked by spam/junk mail filters

NOTE: Bulk Emailers (email service groups) can be great way to professionalise your email newsletters.

These bulk email services can track statistics on responses, clickthroughs and all sorts of information. BUT if the newsletter is HTML (as an email) then the same principles still apply..... UNLESS you load up the HTML newsletter on to a web page and let the user click on the page and view it in their browser.

Composed, Spell checked, Ready to SEND?

Before you hit that SEND button, sit back have a coffee and read the newsletter. Check all the images, spellcheck closely, and check the grammar. If sending overseas keep in mind the spelling of certain words gives away your "country of residence". US sites often struggle with Australian spelling of certain words.

Keep in mind, some ISPS (your web hosting or email service provider) will BLOCK your BULK emails so if your list has 100, 200, 300, 500, 1,000, 10,000 emails in its database, and you plan to send emails out today/tomorrow, then you need to make sure that you can send this many emails in one pass to a client database. Our advice is to do this earlier rather than later or your sales pitch campaign (woven throughout your newsletter) will crash and burn!

You may need to break up the email distribution into small bites and send out over a period of say a week. This has an impact if you are offering Time Offered samples/freebies that expire, and so on.

You may need to adopt and pay for an email distribution service that can use your client list. Be sure though that the client list is NOT on-sold to other sites by picking a reputable email distribution service and read the fine print in the contract before handing over any client database lists.



Given all the above information you should be able to decide what format the newsletter should take, that suits your business goals and objectives.

Now it's time to hit the SEND key!
Good luck with your newsletter campaign!

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Tips and Tricks for email Newsletters



For more information purchase the complete tutorial which shows illustrated examples

"Tips and Tricks for email Newsletters" at www.pcprofile.com

About the Author - PCProfile is an Adelaide based company with over 30 years practical computing experience in small, medium and large enterprises and offers managers and business owners in SMEs, and SOHO businesses practical tips and advice on how to get the best out of the technology used by your SME/SOHO business.

Other Self Help "Tips and Tricks" Tutorials and feature articles are available on;

- Outlook Express,
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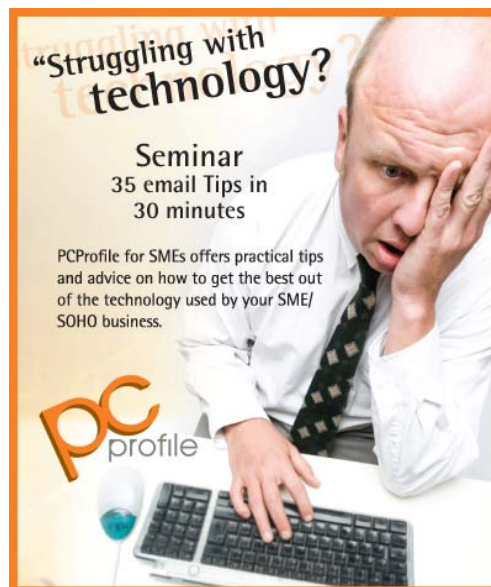
Tips and Tricks for email Newsletters

- ORDER FORM

ONLY 1 LICENSED set needed per SME/SOHO

ORDER PAYMENT DETAILS

For your security orders are only taken **VIA FAX** using credit card details we offer Visa, Mastercard & Amex facilities



Contact Name:..... Organisation:.....

Postal address for invoice mailing
City/Suburb.....Country.....PostCode.....

Phone.....Facsimile..... Order number to be quoted on Invoice_____

Payment - via Credit Card - Please circle one - Visa - Mastercard - American Express

Card Number _____ Expiry Date...../.....

Cardholders name..... Signature.....

Available in the FOLLOWING OPTIONS check the box to select with an **All prices include 10% GST**

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