



Teabo's *TIPs*

TechnologyInPractice

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Creating an Effective E-Newsletter

An e-newsletter offers an effective way to stay in touch with your customers. A well designed and well written newsletter doesn't just keep your business fresh in the minds of your customers; it empowers them with tools and information they can use to build their own business. When your newsletter hits this mark, it strengthens your relationship with your existing customers and piques the interest of potential customers.

When people view information online, they lose interest quickly and have a low tolerance for long articles. As a result, an e-newsletter ought to be brief—typically no more than 1000 words in length. With this sort of limitation, it's very important to choose your content wisely and ensure that it is brief and to the point. Headlines should be short and clear, and each article should aim to make one major point. It might describe a new technology, highlight developing trends, or offer suggestions for building profitability. An article should communicate this major point in two to five sub-points that are easy to understand and are clearly beneficial to the reader. Each article should clarify, encourage, enthuse, provoke thought, and satisfy; it should elicit a positive response. Ideally, it will inspire your reader to decide that your products or services provide the best solutions.

An Article for Everyone

Who reads your newsletter, and what are their responsibilities? What segments of your industry are they concerned about? And do you have data to back up your



assumptions? Being able to answer these questions is critical, because only then will you be able to provide the kind of content that readers will be drawn to.

Each member of an industry has unique concerns and issues. By understanding these, you can ensure that every issue of your newsletter contains information that interests as many types of customers as possible. A newsletter

about technology in education might offer articles relevant to administrators that describe what they need to know to

get technology into their schools. It might also give teachers tips on integrating technology into their classrooms. Parents and students may also be interested in applying the concepts to the way they use technology at home.

The danger, of course, is that if you try to appeal to every type of audience, you may make the focus of your newsletter too broad. In our example, we would not want the newsletter to include articles about how to develop software for the education market. When you write articles that stray too far afield of the newsletter's core purpose or that are too broad in their intent, readers are not able to quickly determine whether the newsletter is of use to them, and they lose interest.

So the issue is of balance: Within the scope of your business and industry, you want to provide something in each newsletter that will be of interest to all the major players in your audience. By doing so, you will ensure that



all your readers will continue to return to your newsletter, edition after edition, to find that relevant article that they know is waiting for them.

The Structure of This Template

This template is designed as a two column table. It has a narrow column on the left with a colored background and a wide column on the right with no background color. The top portion of the newsletter before the first article consists of four rows that contain the masthead and date information.

Typically, tables have lines between the rows and columns. However, some tables in this template are formatted with hidden lines. To reveal the underlying rows and columns of a table, click **Show Gridlines** on the **Table** menu. This feature is especially helpful when you're not sure if your document has tables in it or not.

You can change the colors of rows and columns by clicking the area you want to change, clicking **Borders and Shading** on the **Format** menu, clicking the **Shading** tab, and then picking a color. At this point, you should specify whether you want the shading to apply to just the text, the selected paragraph(s), the whole cell, or the entire table.

The dark blue rule that appears over a headline is a characteristic of the headline's paragraph: It's formatted to have a dark blue rule above it. This and all the other characteristics of this paragraph are identified as a paragraph style named Heading 2. The first headline in this newsletter does not have a rule since it appears at the beginning of the newsletter. It's a style called Heading 1.