



What Gazinta a Great Newsletter?

By Dana Kader Robb

Jethro Bodine from the Beverly Hillbillies TV show always called division equations “gazintas” – as in three gazinta twelve four times. Here are some tips for what gazinta creating a quality newsletter...

Newsletters are great marketing tools. Want proof? You’re reading one right now. But the task of creating a newsletter can seem daunting, especially the first couple of issues. It doesn’t have to be, though. You have many options, including hiring someone to write your newsletter for you.

Another time-saving suggestion is to keep a newsletter file and toss items of interest in it throughout the year. By the time you’re ready to put together the newsletter, your file will be full of great ideas that just need to be “cleaned up”.

The first issues of your newsletter will take some time to put together, including meeting with your desktop publisher (that would be me). After that, most of my clients find they can compile information, write one or two accompanying articles, fax or e-mail everything and proofread the finished product in a matter of hours. Not a big commitment considering how many people a newsletter can reach and influence. And, as one of my clients recently shared with me, “The great dividing line between success and failure can be expressed in five words: I did not have the time.”

When is the Right Time?

According to newsletter guru Elaine Floyd, newsletters work best when:

- Your product requires education before people can buy.
- Your market changes rapidly.
- The price of your product is high.
- You want a long term marketing tool.

Most small businesses find that quarterly newsletters – sent at the beginning of each season – are a good place to start. Frequency is much more important than size. A short newsletter four or six times a year is more effective than a

long, annual report-type newsletter once a year. A word of caution...if you can’t commit to a regularly-published newsletter, don’t start. Sending one or two issues and then quitting is worse than sending none at all.

Getting Down to the Gazintas

Your newsletter should serve as a resource to its audience. They will not read it if all you do is promote yourself. Instead, use the opportunity to teach new ideas and provide usable tips and techniques. Keep articles short, easy to read, and filled with helpful suggestions. Create regular features for each issue. Some newsletters are even 3-hole-punched to encourage readers to save the issues in a ring binder.

Having trouble coming up with great story ideas? This happens to everyone and shouldn’t deter you from publishing your newsletter. Some useful sources include:

- Any business-related issue that has come up more than three times in the last month. If that many people are talking about it, it’s important.
- Articles from your clients and strategic partners.
- Brief, educational pieces about new products or services and why they matter.
- Lists of resources, i.e. Web sites, toll-free numbers, catalogues.
- Articles or cartoons reprinted from magazines, newspapers or other sources. To avoid copyright infringement issues, be sure to get reprint permission in writing.
- Current events affecting your industry.
- Pats on the back for clients or employees who have done good work, won awards, etc.
- Explanations of technical jargon or industry terminology that customers might not understand.

Bottom line – help make your reader’s life easier. Think of this as a gift you give your client, prospect, member, employee or vendor. Spend less time marketing you and more time assisting them. I promise the rewards will come back to you. And the next thing you know, old Jed’s a millionaire!