



If your Festival or Event is not regularly communicating with your subscribers, you may be missing out on a great opportunity. We all have a variety of marketing tactics at our disposal, but the versatility of the e-newsletter cannot be denied. Deciding to incorporate an e-newsletter in your marketing plan may seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be.

By Erin Fortune



E-newsletters can be useful in driving traffic to your website, in growing website visitor loyalty, building brand equity, and increasing your brand's power through increased name recognition and affinity, which ultimately leads to more ticket sales and attendance at your events.

One of the best things about the e-newsletter is that it's flexible, from the frequency in which you send it and the type of content you feature, to the style you decide to use – there is no one set way to do it. The secret to success is to find what resonates best with your audience. These 10 tips can fast track you to landing on a formula that works for you.

## 1. Build Your Subscriber List

Step one is to make sure you are building a list to send your e-newsletters. A great place to start is with your current opt-in subscribers. You'll want to make sure that as always, there's a way for them to unsubscribe in any of your communications. (This is one of the basic requirements of the CAN-SPAM Act. If you aren't familiar with the requirements, make sure you research this first to make sure you are compliant in your email communications.) You might also consider building a particular segment for your e-newsletter, and send an email to your current subscribers allowing them to opt-in to receive your e-newsletter or keep their current subscription settings of receiving periodic emails. Building preference centers and allowing your current subscribers to choose how often and what types of email they would like to receive is a great way to keep subscribers who may be thinking about unsubscribing if they are receiving too many emails from you. Once you have decided how you are going to handle your current subscribers, you will also want to add a place on your website's homepage where people can sign up to receive your e-newsletter so you can gain additional subscribers. If you have a following on Facebook and Twitter, you might also consider running a promotion or offering something of value to those who click to sign-up for your e-newsletter on those platforms.

## 2. Determine Your Frequency

There's no one size fits all solution for e-newsletters, but you'll want to pick a frequency in which you will send your e-newsletter and stick to it. Some send their e-newsletters once per week, every other week, monthly, or quarterly. One thing to consider is how often you are sending any different types of emails to the

specific segment of your audience that will be receiving your e-newsletter. Looking at your email program as a whole is vital to making sure you aren't over-communicating or under-communicating with your audience. The decision on how frequently to send an e-newsletter is entirely up to you, but if you're looking for a suggestion to start, try monthly at first. The key will be to pick a frequency and then do some testing for a few months. Pay attention to the number of unsubscribes that are occurring, as well as your open rates to see how your audience is responding, and then once you find what works best for your audience, be consistent with when and how often you are sending your e-newsletter, so your subscribers know what to expect. It's always a good idea to keep an eye on the trends of your open rates and unsubscribes, even after your initial testing period. Overtime, the behavior of your audience may change, and monitoring your email analytics will enable you to be able to make changes as appropriate.

## 3. Repurpose. Repurpose. Repurpose

A great e-newsletter takes content that you already have produced and curates it all together to send out to your subscriber list. Do you have team members producing videos that you showcase on social media? Videos are great to include in e-newsletters. While some email service providers now allow you to embed a video directly into your HTML emails, it's still straightforward to incorporate video if you are using an email service provider without that capability. Just take a screenshot of your video (make sure it's an excellent thumbnail!) and then upload the image and link to your YouTube or Vimeo video. When I do this, I like to layer a play button on top of my video image, so it's clear to the reader at a glance that it's video content to click. Other great pieces of content that you can share in your e-newsletters are blogs that have been posted on your website over the last month.

## 4. Keep it Short and Sweet

It's no secret that our attention spans are shorter than ever. Make sure that any article you have in your e-newsletter is short and concise with the goal to get the reader to click to read more if interested. The e-newsletter should be set up for users to be able to skim to get a sense of what's going on with your Festival or Event, allowing them to click to read more of the articles and topics that genuinely interest them. Think of the e-newsletter as

the vehicle for your content to land in your subscribers' inbox, but the real goal is to hook them enough that they click through and read more on your website.

## 5. Optimize for Mobile

Every year the number of people reading emails from a mobile device gets higher, and these days it is necessary to make sure the templates you are using for any email communication, and particularly your e-newsletter, is optimized for the best mobile viewing experience. Are any call-to-action buttons easy to click on a phone or tablet? Are your photos displaying as beautifully in mobile as they do on the desktop? According to email analytics company, Litmus, 51% of emails were opened on a mobile device in 2017.

## 6. It's Not All About You

While an e-newsletter could be a great place to promote ticket sales, your e-newsletter should not be 100% promotional. People don't want to hang out with the friend who is continually trying to sell them something. Strike a right balance of at least 70-80% educational and informative articles/videos in your e-newsletter with only 30-20% focused on selling. The point of the e-newsletter isn't to sell, sell, sell. Think about your audience, what can you help them with? What would make them want to engage with you? Add value.

## 7. Sender Name

People like to connect with people. We have experienced success and increased open rates by having the e-newsletter (as well as other email communications) coming from an actual person at our organization rather than just our company name or generic marketing@ type email. Not only did I see the increased open rates when I made this switch, but it's also pretty fun to meet some of the subscribers at the event when they notice your name and then say "oh hey, you're the one who sends me all of those emails!"

## 8. Test. Test. Test... and Then Test Again

While these tips can help you get started with an e-newsletter, or help you breathe some new life into your existing one, not every tip will work for your audience. The best part about the e-newsletter is that you will know exactly what resonated with your audience, by making sure you are looking at the analytics of what they are clicking on. Try leading with different types of content, play with fun versus serious subject lines,

keep testing until you find what works best for your audience and your workflow.

## 9. Learn from Others

As crazy as my inbox can get, I like to sign up for e-newsletters from all different types of industries and companies because some of my best ideas and tweaks to our e-newsletter have been sparked by something I saw in an e-newsletter that hit my inbox. If it caught the attention of a marketing professional who gets more than 300 emails a day, I know that it's pretty effective. Retail giants spend a lot of time and money on their emails, so I always like to skim emails that I receive for inspiration. It only takes a few seconds to glance through any emails I receive, delete the ones that don't interest me and file away the ones that I love. I keep an entire folder of "email inspiration" from my inbox, and anytime I want to create a new template or tweak an existing template, I spend some time going back

through emails I saved that I liked.

## 10. Simple, Easy-To-Update Template

In my earlier days of creating e-newsletters, I had some awful templates to work with. I've lost track of how many hours of my life I've lost fighting with a three column layout having to cut words and make tweaks to try to get all of my columns in my template to align correctly. If your template is difficult to work with and making you miserable, take the time to change it! If you don't have great email templates built into the email client you are using, or don't have the technical knowledge to code one yourself, invest in hiring a designer who can help you – it will save you so much time in the long run to have a template that you don't have to fight with every time you want to add a new article or swap out an image.

No matter what type of Festival and Event you are – chances are an e-newsletter can help add value and build

a lasting connection with your audience, keeping the lines of communication open year round. Yes, getting an e-newsletter up and running is going to take a little time and planning in the beginning. But once you have a template, your subscribers, and a plan, it can be a really easy way to share content that you've already been producing and sharing through other mediums. Remember – the best part of the e-newsletter is its flexibility. So experiment and make it work for you!

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