

How to Get an E-Newsletter Up & Running without Losing Your Mind!

By Kevin W. Brown, M.B.A.

E-newsletters can be an effective business development tool - but getting started can be a challenge. Here is an edited Q&A session with marketing guru Kevin W. Brown, M.B.A. exploring the issues:

Q. Some of our professionals think an e-newsletter would be a great idea, while others think no one will read it. Which view is correct?

A. As with other marketing efforts, it doesn't really matter so much what we think as what the market thinks. Some people tend to believe that everyone else thinks the way they do. Just because a partner may not personally read newsletters doesn't mean everyone else is that way. Some newsletter readers will read it in detail, others will scan it, while some will just see who it from and not have the time to read it. All are marketing opportunities in varying degrees.

Q. How can an e-newsletter be beneficial to my firm's marketing efforts?

A. Newsletters can be very beneficial to a firm's success if done correctly. However, due to their visual and textual impact, newsletters can hurt your firm's image if poorly designed and produced (as with a website). Here are some potential benefits:

- Build name and practice area awareness
- Demonstrate expertise
- Encourage repeat business
- Expand client base
- Establish a referral network
- Save time and money (vs. some marketing tools)
- Build trust
- Help position your firm in targeted markets
- Introduce new services
- Increase website traffic

There is likely no cheaper way for you to reach a large group of contacts on a consistent basis than an e-newsletter. Think of it this way: If you have only 250 contacts, will you take the time to call all of them or contact them otherwise on a monthly or quarterly basis? Of course not. However, you likely recognize the value of doing so. But the cost, even of your time alone, would likely be several thousand dollars. With an e-newsletter, you can maintain communication with your clients and other contacts on a regular basis, providing useful information and showing that you care.

Q. What must be done for my firm to create a successful newsletter?

A. Here are some important keys to success:

- **Design it around your goals.** It is important to identify your goals so that the newsletter can achieve them.
- **Make it look professional, not home-spun.** Follow "Brown's Rule of Image Building": Always maintain the same high quality in your image materials as is in your firm's rendering of services.
- **Make it informative, not "sales-y."** Write what your readers want to read, not what you want them to know. They won't read anything else.
- **Mesh it with your other firm marketing materials.** You want to have the same "branding" so that it looks professional. Your marketing firm can design the newsletter with the appropriate software so that it is customized to match.
- **Build and use a worthwhile database.** There's a reason why you attend gathering and collect cards.
- **Commit to doing it regularly.** Your newsletter should be distributed at least four times a year. Don't make the all-too-often mistake of sending the one-time "quarterly" newsletter. Outsourcing most of the newsletter details is generally a better way of insuring that it goes out regularly.

Q. What about the database?

A. This is another point at which many e-newsletter ideas die. Your database of clients, prospects and referral sources needs to be appropriately developed in order for the e-newsletter to be useful and read.

Important! Your e-newsletter must comply with federal CAN-SPAM requirements in e-mail distribution. Your marketing firm should be able to provide guidance in this regard.

Q. How does a newsletter fit into a firm's overall marketing strategy?

A. A newsletter should be part of the marketing plan, not all of it. For client relations, it should complement programs such as an overall client communications program, client surveys, etc. For new business generation, it should complement targeted marketing programs, involvement in organizations, advertising, etc.

Q. We're trying to do the newsletter internally but have made very little progress in almost a year. How can we get it done?

A. When looking outside for help from web designers or ad agencies, all too often the "designer" needs too much direction and the work product is still unsatisfactory. In the meantime, the firm finds out that deciding what to write, writing the text, and finishing the project is all just too difficult.

Some marketing firms have full-service capabilities, helping you with writing the content, then handling all aspects of design, distribution and internet marketing. For printed

versions, we can also arrange for printing, labeling, postage and distribution. For many smaller firms, this level of service is crucial if you are to publish the newsletter on a frequent basis, while limiting your time involvement.

Contact [Kevin Brown Marketing & Consulting](http://www.KEVINBrownMarketing.com) if you'd like an estimate for your e-newsletter project.

About the author: *Kevin W. Brown, M.B.A. is the founder of Kevin Brown Marketing & Consulting. He is known as a pioneer and leading-edge expert in the field of professional services marketing. From the beginning of his firm in 1991, Kevin developed many new, innovative concepts and techniques that are proprietary to his firm, including a unique the "Part-Time Director of Marketing™" service. Prior to forming his own firm, Kevin was the Director of Marketing for Deloitte, Orange County's largest professional services firm with over 400 employees, with responsibilities covering all aspects of marketing and sales. He also worked in investment banking for The Geneva Companies as a strategic consultant, and had several years of experience in commercial banking at Bank of America. Kevin received his Master of Business Administration degree in Marketing from California State University, Fullerton and a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics and Management from the University of California, Riverside. He is author of over 100 published articles and is a frequent speaker to many professional organizations.*

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