

E- Newsletters that Work!

"The Small Business Owner's Guide to Creating, Writing and Publishing an Effective Electronic Newsletter."

What do I write about?

I met a man at a business conference the other day who described himself as, "a career coach." After learning what I did for a living, he quickly confessed to me that while he wanted to start an E-Newsletter, what kept him from doing it was that he, "had nothing to say."

We kept on talking - about careers, about life balance, about the meaning of work - and in the course of the next 15 minutes, he gave me three or four fantastic insights on these topics.

I suddenly stopped him in mid-sentence and said, "What do you mean you have 'nothing to say?!' In the last few minutes you've given me enough information to fill several newsletters!"

Michael J Kratz

We all know a lot more than we realize.

And although running out of material is one of the biggest fears people have - and one of the primary reasons that companies don't launch E-Newsletters in the first place - I have never come across anybody who knew enough about a particular industry or topic to start a business in it, who didn't also have a nearly endless supply of content to choose from.

Remember, your customers and others who have an interest in your area of specialty, don't work in it every day the way you do. The things that are second nature to you, whether it's how to purchase home insurance if you're a broker; how to write a press release if you're a marketing consultant; or how to balance work and play if you're a career coach; are all news to those of us on the outside your industry.

These brief, useful nuggets are the things you write about.

The people who are going to read your newsletter have questions. You on the other hand, have answers, opinions, experience, and perspective. When it comes to your industry, you understand what matters and what doesn't, and how all the pieces fit together.

Your challenge in selecting topics therefore, is not having enough to write about. It's identifying which things are the most useful, the most interesting and the most relevant.

Here's how you get to that:

Sit down with a blank piece of paper and write down as many questions as you can think of regarding your business. Write down the things that your customers, prospective customers, colleagues, friends and relatives ask you every day in relation to your work. When they come to you for an insider's perspective, what is it that they want to know?

- **"How do I . . .?"**
- **"Should I . . .?"**
- **"What do you think about. . .?"**
- **"How do I know if . . . ?"**
- **"Is it worth spending money on. . .?"**
- **"What would you recommend for. . .?"**
- **"What will happen if. . .?"**

All these individual nuggets of information that you work with and think about and pour over every day, are the content of your newsletter. And remember, if you publish your E-Newsletter monthly, you need just 12 good ideas to fill an entire year!

One more thing.

There's nothing worse than coming up with a great idea for a newsletter column while jogging one morning, only to forget what it was entirely when you sit down to write two weeks later.

Keep your list of column ideas in a place you can easily find (I have a Word file on my computer called, "Future Columns"), and every time you think of something interesting for a future issue, put it in there.

Not only does this prevent the "what do I write about" blues, you will be amazed at how quickly the good ideas pile up once you have a place to pile them. When it's time to write each month, you simply open the file, look around for the idea that's most compelling, and off you go.

Happy writing!