10 Quick Tips to Improve your Ezine

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Assuming you've done your homework — identifying and thoroughly understanding your audience, building a clean and deep list, defining a purpose for the publication — you're now ready to write and send a regular ezine. Avoid costly mistakes from the get-go by incorporating these top 10 tips for an effective ezine.

1. **Grab readers with a strong subject line in the address pane.** Do NOT use "Volume 99, Issue 12, Your Organization's Newsletter Name." Instead, pose a question or offer a tip, anything to intrigue and get them to actually open the email. For example: *Who hasn't made this marketing blunder?* Or: *Top 10 ezine quick fixes.*

2. **Understand that content is king**. First and foremost, develop content <u>relevant to the audience.</u> Zero in on readers' interests and needs, and craft articles as information benefits they'll enjoy. Offer a variety of content, some connected specifically to your organization, some connected more broadly to what's happening in their world today. Mix it up —news, profiles, how-to's, quizzes and whatever else will keep it interesting.

3. **Invite interaction** via surveys, links to your site, and calls to action. This keeps things interesting and provides valuable data per #10!

4. **Keep things short**. Short sentences, short paragraphs, short articles. Remember that gazillions of other people and products are vying for your readers' attention. If an article is longer than 500 words, present only the first paragraph or two with a link to "read in full" at your web site. Make sure the link goes directly to the full article. And yes, that means you have to post the article online!

5. **Write conversationally and avoid jargon**. Think how you would say something in actual conversation. Aim for that in writing. Don't risk injuring your reader's comfort by using terminology he may not understand. Read what you've written aloud (before sending, of course) and see if it makes the grade.

6. **Make great use of formatting**. Everyone's in a hurry, accustomed to work and life at warp speed. Utilize **bold,** *italic*, <u>underscored</u>, • bullets, indents, numbers, section separators and more and to emphasize your key info so that skimmers can find it quickly. Use "white space" liberally.

7. **Link frequently to your web site** or appropriate landing page. <u>Link infrequently</u> to other sites — there's a fine line between providing a service or resource and losing your readers altogether.

8. **Use graphics and photo images strategically**. If your audience is high tech and high-wired, you can be less concerned about download speeds. If your audience is related to the arts and/or some kind of visual aesthetic, they're going to want gorgeous. Number crunchers will love your charts and graphs, but otherwise just the data please. If it doesn't fully support #2 above, ditch it.

9. **Deliver what's promised — consistently.** If you promise a monthly ezine, send one every month. If you promise to deliver valuable content, do so. If you promise to listen to what your readers say, listen. And then respond to them!

10. **Track, test, tune-up.** So you've been sending out an ezine. What's happening? Always track who's opening, how many are opening, what links they're clicking, etc. Your ezine host or in-house techie can show you how. Make note of what produces more and when. Make note of what doesn't and then try something different. Test different approaches with your subject header, links, content. Then fine tune things. Add more of what's working and eliminate what's not.

Want to take your ezine or other online content to a higher level? Susan McConnell assists businesses and nonprofits in producing ezines and other online writing. She also writes for print, and consults on marketing communications strategies and projects. Learn more at www.mcconnellcommunications.com.