

The Five Deadly Fears of Email Newsletter Publishing (and how to overcome them)

by
Michael Katz

1 Fear of Having Nothing To Say

As a solo professional, you know a lot more than you may realize. And although running out of material is the number one reason cited by solos for not launching an E-Newsletter in the first place, I have never come across anyone 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 clients 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 life insurance if you're a broker; how to write a press release if you're a marketing consultant; or how to troubleshoot a light switch if you're an electrician; are all news to those of us on the outside of your industry.

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

2 Fear of Technology

An E-Newsletter has a lot of moving parts. There are mailing lists to manage; links to set up; images to lay out; responses to track; and dozens of other small pieces to coordinate and fine tune, all in the course of writing and publishing a newsletter on a regular basis. Managing this process efficiently requires a fair amount of technology churning away in the background. That's the bad news.

The good news is that there are dozens of vendors out there who, for a very small fee, will take care of most of this for you (I recommend both Constant Contact and MailChimp). So while it's true that you will have to go down a learning curve before you can switch your newsletter publishing to autopilot, you don't need technical skill to get there.

Managing the logistics of a monthly newsletter can be tedious at times, no question. But if you've ever successfully assembled a gas grill or changed a diaper, you're more than technically qualified to publish an E-Newsletter.

3 Fear of Publishing On A Regular Basis

Okay, this one is a reasonable fear. Because while you may be sold on the value of creating and publishing content on a regular, ongoing basis, you may be worried that once let out of its cage, this beast won't ever leave you alone. You're right to be concerned. If I had to point to one factor that plays the biggest role in the failure of solo professional E-Newsletters, it's that the people behind them stop publishing.

Like starting an exercise program, we all go great guns out of the gate: telling everybody we know, celebrating every issue. But (also like exercise), by month four or five the thrill is gone and many people start to wonder how to quietly put the thing out of its misery.

I'm happy to say that I've discovered two solutions to this potential problem.

First, publish monthly. Although it may seem that dropping back to a less frequent schedule will reduce the burden, in practice the opposite is true. The less often you publish, the bigger a deal it is and the more it seems to hang over your head. A monthly schedule, on the other hand, means that the next issue is never more than 30 days away and you will find yourself less concerned with achieving perfection each time. (You could publish more frequently too, but that may be biting off more than you're ready for – start monthly.)

Second, create a publishing schedule and stick to it. First Tuesday of the month, third Friday, whatever. The important thing is that you bake it into your monthly work schedule. An E-Newsletter will never be today's top priority and unless you explicitly determine when it will come out, you're more likely than not to keep pushing it to the back burner.

4 Fear of Writing

I hear it every day from the solo professionals I work with: "I can't put out an email newsletter, I'm a lousy writer." Well, you'll be happy to learn that writing an E-Newsletter – like email and social media in general – is a lot more like talking than writing.

The best newsletters don't read like stiff, business journal articles. After all, E-Newsletters are simply glorified emails, and email is fundamentally a two-way conversation. The more you can write in an authentic, friendly, spoken manner, the more it will feel to readers like somebody (i.e., you) is really on the other end. As a solo, that's one of your competitive advantages.

So don't worry about something that your high school English teacher would be proud of. Focus on turning out something that breaks down the walls between you and your potential clients. Something real.

5 Fear of Competition

As recently as 15 years ago, few people or companies published content. Today, we do it all day long across any number of platforms. That means your potential readers have a lot more to choose from and you have a lot more competition for whatever it is you write.

But do you know anybody who consumes less content than they did five years ago? Me neither. We all read more than ever before. A good E-Newsletter sent to your house list will still be opened by a quarter to a third of the people it's sent to. That's still way higher than the number of people who visit your blog, read your Tweets or pay attention to your LinkedIn updates.

The fact is, an E-Newsletter is still the single most cost-effective way to demonstrate your expertise, make a personal connection and stay top of mind with everyone you know. So sure, it's not as easy as it once was. But pound for pound, there is no better way to leverage your relationships (and build new ones) than with a monthly e-mail newsletter.

One Final Comment

You may be waiting to launch your E-Newsletter until everything is “just right.” Until your mailing list is large enough; until you’ve stockpiled enough columns so you’ll never run out; until you’ve hired that new virtual assistant; etc., etc.

I’ve got news for you. No matter how much you plan and prepare, something will probably go wrong when you launch. I’ve helped hundreds of people begin and yes, there’s often a hiccup. So don’t worry about it, just get in the game.

Three reasons: First, because the cost of error is exceedingly low. Nobody is paying close attention to you (I’m sorry to be the one to tell you that). If you make a mistake or write something that is less than perfect, it won’t result in catastrophe.

Second, because time is your enemy. Relationship marketing (of which, your E-Newsletter is a tactic) is a long term approach. The sooner you get started reaching out to your circle of contacts, the sooner you’ll see the results. With an E-Newsletter in particular, you lose much more by waiting than you gain by perfecting.

Third, because experience is your friend. You can do all the research in the world, but until you’ve got a living, breathing newsletter of your own, it’s just a theoretical exercise. There’s only so much insight to be gained intellectually; the real “A-ha’s” occur when you get behind the wheel and drive it yourself.

Bottom Line: These five fears are common among burgeoning E-Newsletter publishers, but on closer examination, not all that daunting. To quote author Julia Cameron in her terrific book, *The Artist’s Way*, “Leap, And The Net Will Appear.”

*Copyright © Michael Katz 2015. All rights reserved. Michael J. Katz is Founder and Chief Penguin of Blue Penguin Development, Inc., (www.BluePenguinDevelopment.com) a Boston area firm that specializes in helping solo professionals develop a niche. He is the author of the books, **E-Newsletters That Work** and **It Sure Beats Working**.*