



Making an Impact with Traditional Newsletters

Add \$ to your Online Business with an Offline Winner!

By

Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

In the Internet age, we see traditional forms of print media falling by the wayside at what is, in relative terms, breakneck speed. The Internet has brought to us the onset of the ebook, which means we no longer need to buy traditional books in order to do any reading (and for the print media that remains, the advent of the Internet continues to destroy the market share of traditional bricks-and-mortar stores by providing low-cost retail alternatives like Amazon.com). However, it is not simply books that are now being transmitted in a paperless fashion through cyberspace, but magazines, newsletters, and basically anything that at one time was written on a piece of paper. With the Internet, it can all now be transmitted with great ease and efficiency, and that evolution has been generally well-received. Generally.

As it happens, not everyone is eager to read books and magazines on an electronic reader of some kind, be it an actual e-reader, tablet, laptop computer, desktop computer, whatever. Moreover, even people who are happy to read that way *some* of the time are not necessarily happy to read that way *all* of the time. The point is that while the day of electronic textual information is quite obviously here, it has yet to replace the inclination of so many to still gain their information from traditional books, newspapers, magazines, and newsletters. Accordingly, we want to spend

some time this month addressing the matter of developing your own offline newsletter as a way to shore up your bottom line.

The Relevance of an Offline Newsletter to an Internet Business

As alluded to earlier, people are embracing the Internet and all that it offers at different rates of speed; some have been fine with using the Internet to handle as many of their needs as possible from the moment it came on the scene, while there is still a not-insignificant number of people who rarely, if ever, use a personal computer or other similar device. So much of what we do, or have done, has found an alternative on the computer, but that does not mean that everyone is comfortable with that development. The bottom line is that as long as people enjoy, in some measure, receiving information through traditional means, then, even though your business is an Internet-based business, those people have to be considered in your product planning.

The other reason that an offline newsletter is relevant to you, and something we'll touch on again a little later, is that having a physical newsletter that is mailed gives your Internet business the look and feel of something more substantial. Internet businesses are everywhere, of course, precisely because

Making an Impact with Traditional Newsletters (cont. from Page 1)

they can be so easy (relatively) and cost-effective to set up and maintain. Let's be honest; that's part of the attraction. That said, even if your Internet presence and online product(s) are valuable, there is still a perceived benefit to having an offline presence, as well.

There are basically two ways you can use an offline newsletter. One is as a free mailer that you can send to your followers as a way to get them to "adhere" a little more to your online presence. The other, of course, is as a stand-alone product for which you charge a subscription fee. I've talked about this before in terms of ebooks, and how you have choices with the way in which you utilize the ebook mechanism; ebooks can be great free marketing tools, and can also be great saleable products, as well.

One of the things I particularly like about offline newsletters is that they can serve as the representative physical product that you present to the general public on behalf of your business. Your offline newsletter can actually become the product for which you are principally known and through which you chiefly market yourself. You can go from being "John Smith of Auto Repair.com" to "John Smith, Editor of *The Auto Repair Newsletter*." When I hear someone referred to as the editor of the thus-and-so magazine or newsletter, I, on an instinctual level, tend to give that person a little more credibility than when I hear that person referred to as the overseer of a given website; not that, of course, running a website does

not take a lot of work—we all know it does, but what I'm referring to are some of the *perceptions* of what is and isn't considered to be weighty by some. Now, in the case of some people, like Jim Paris, the credibility of your online presence might be further enhanced by having authored traditional-format books. Jim is the author of over 20 published books on personal finance, and so, as such, his role as the editor-in-chief of Christian Money.com was considered more substantial at the outset by that fact.

Here's the thing, though, that's great about establishing that offline *gravitas* through the use of a newsletter: it's relatively easy to do. Not that it's easy, per se, but what I mean is that you don't have to go through what you do to publish even one book when you get into the offline newsletter publishing business. With a newsletter, you set it up using the appropriate software, create content, send it to a printer, and voila, you have your hard-copy product. As I said, your role as the editor of that newsletter can be just the ticket that gets you booked on local or even national media.

Do I Really Need an Offline Newsletter?

The thing to remember is that the creation and maintenance of a monthly, offline newsletter is really for that person who wants to take his Internet business to the next level. The person who does this is someone who is not looking to dabble in Internet marketing and make a few dollars here and there (which, by the way, is perfectly fine); the person who chooses to do this will be some-

Jim Paris Internet Insider is published monthly by Premier Financial Communications, Inc. Known office of publication is 138 Palm Coast Pkwy NE, # 223, Palm Coast, FL 32137. Periodicals postage paid at Sanford, FL and other mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **Jim Paris Internet Insider**, 138 Palm Coast Pkwy NE, # 223, Palm Coast, FL 32137.

Editor-in-Chief: James L. Paris **Managing Editor:** Robert G. Yetman, Jr.
Copyright 2011 by Premier Financial Communications, Inc.—All rights reserved.

Making an Impact with Traditional Newsletters (cont. from Page 2)

one who envisions himself one day making his living exclusively from his online business, and so is willing to make a greater commitment to it by augmenting his product offerings in substantial, diverse ways.

By moving in the direction of an offline newsletter, then, you have the opportunity to do more than create another product that principally serves the purpose of offering more to your current, Internet-based customers; you then have the opportunity to actually develop a different sort of customer base that might come to your Internet presence *through* your newsletter. Remember what we said before, about how your newsletter could actually be the product that gains you access to interviews and appearances, and so becomes the product through which people find you first. Now, to some degree, that depends on your business theme; that is, with Jim Paris whose business *is* Internet marketing, it makes sense that the vast majority of his customers find him through his online presence. However, for someone whose business is not absolutely tied to the business of the Internet (like one with a theme on auto repair, or gardening, or family counseling, for example), an offline newsletter could certainly be a product that develops its own organic customer following. The result is a rather nice business symbiosis between your website and your newsletter; your newsletter customers would naturally find your website, and your website customers will certainly become exposed to your newsletter.

I guess the bottom line is that if all you're seeking are those miscellaneous, few dollars each month, then no, you would not *need* a newsletter. However, if you're really interested in seeing your business, as a whole, take on something more than a purely part-

time persona, then a newsletter might be a wise add-on for you.

The other thing I want to mention about this right now is the profit potential of a newsletter on even a small scale. We're going to talk about suggested subscription rates here in a bit, but if you have a newsletter that you sell for, say, \$10 per month, even with a subscriber base of as few as one hundred people, with total production costs of around \$350 per month (and we'll talk about production costs more in a bit, as well), you could make a profit of around \$650 per month with just a relatively limited number of subscribers. While certainly your goal, if you're approaching this very seriously, would be to have far more than 100 subscribers, my point in using that figure is to illustrate just how impactful a newsletter can be to your bottom line at even a relatively minor level. In other words, I want you to understand clearly that you do not have to have 1,000 or so subscribers to your newsletter in order for it to make a beneficial difference to your situation.

Offline vs. Online Newsletters

I want to spend some time addressing the issue of offline vs. online newsletters. One of the questions with which I'll be presented from time to time is, "Well what about an *online* newsletter?" After all, we write ebooks, there are ezines, or emagazines, now, and we're Internet marketers, so why not just have a newsletter, but have one that stays online?" It is by no means an inappropriate query. After all, we mentioned earlier how everything that exists in the written form can basically be found online as well as on hard copy, and that, of course, applies in reverse, as well. The answer, of course, is that you can certainly have an online newsletter as

Making an Impact with Traditional Newsletters (cont. from Page 3)

opposed to an offline newsletter, but remember that one of the chief reasons for even having an offline newsletter at all is because *it augments your online presence*; in other words, it is the physical nature of the offline newsletter that makes it so compelling.

Pros and Cons of Offline and Online Newsletters

Online Newsletter-

Pros: Lower cost; ease of delivery

Cons: Delivery issues; more difficult to stand out; lack of tangibility

Offline Newsletter-

Pros: Popularity of tangible products; credibility enhanced with tangible products

Cons: More work to create & administer; more expensive

To help better illustrate the issues that can arise with both online and offline newsletters, let's engage in a discussion of the pros and cons of each format, as noted in the box above.

If you like the idea of a newsletter, but you're not sold on the idea of going to the trouble of making it an offline product, two of the reasons for deciding that might well be the overall lower cost of keeping the product in a digital format, as well as the ease with which the product can be delivered. First, with respect to the matter of cost, the online product has no costs related to printing and mailing, because you're obviously not going to have to do either with the online newsletter. In truth, the ongoing costs of an online newsletter can be pretty close to zero. An associated issue that is resolved pretty well with a digital newsletter is the matter of *delivery*. Delivery is nothing more than a PDF

attachment in an email, sent out once each month to your subscriber list.

That said, looking at some of the *disadvantages* of going online with your newsletter, the matter of delivery can actually be a double-edged sword. In terms of the ease with which an online newsletter can be delivered in theory, then it's great. However, the reality of online delivery can be a lot different; frequently, people will change their email addresses and not do a good job of notifying everyone relevant to them that they done so. Additionally, a lot of people will set up their emails to reject, send to spam folders, or otherwise defer receipt of those that contain attachments.

However, problematic delivery issues are not among the chief disadvantages of going online with your newsletter. The real disadvantages are the inability to stand out, as well as the lack of tangibility. As for standing out, look at how much is delivered in an online format nowadays. I receive a lot of online periodicals, including newsletters, and although I certainly read them and consume the information, I must admit that they just don't stand out too much from one another. This ties in to the issue of tangibility, which, don't forget, is really the reason we want to go down this newsletter road in the first place. The physical newsletter makes the statement in that area that the digital edition never really can.

As for offline newsletters, the chief "pro" is...what else...the tangibility; the greater perceived value of the information because of how it's packaged, the greater level of credibility the newsletter lends to you because of the fact that it's a physical product, and all of the other benefits associated with offering a

Making an Impact with Traditional Newsletters (cont. from Page 4)

“hard copy” product accrue to you when you go offline. The primary “con” involves the greater amount of work and expense required to put it together.

In the end, while there’s certainly nothing that stops you from trying to offer your newsletter as a digital product, I personally think that doing so is a mistake. You can certainly save some money, but what you will ultimately lose in appeal and credibility is simply too great, in my opinion. Remember, too, that in terms of content development, you have to do the same work in creating your newsletter each month, whether it’s ultimately delivered in an online or offline format, so why not go that extra step and be sure you really stand out by making the offering a hard copy publication that customers look forward to receiving in the mail each month?

The Composition of Your Newsletter

Now it’s time to begin the process of creating your newsletter. In order to do this, you have to come to some decisions right away about some of the more “nuts and bolts” details that you need to know in order to bring your project to life.

Will your newsletter be a free giveaway, or will it be a saleable product? Although this question doesn’t specifically pertain to the makeup of the newsletter itself, how you answer it *can* affect how you structure your piece. In general, if you want the newsletter to be a free giveaway that’s used to do no more than help keep current followers and customers interested in your website, then you will probably opt to keep the product smaller in scope (small, fewer pages, etc.). If it is to be a bona fide product offering, then

you must commit to making it substantial enough that you can justify charging a competitive subscription price.

How large, or how many pages, should your newsletter be? To some degree, the answer to that depends upon whether you are creating the newsletter as a stand-alone, saleable product, or as a giveaway. Let’s talk about the newsletter as a product first. Select a standard page size of 8.5” x 11” and plan on making your newsletter eight pages long; that’s a pretty typical newsletter length for pages of those dimensions. You can certainly create a newsletter that has more pages, and also one that has fewer, but the eight-page standard has become so because, over time, it has come to represent the definition of “enough, but not too much.” You can charge a competitive subscription rate when your newsletter is at least eight pages long, but that’s more difficult if it’s any shorter. If you see your newsletter as a giveaway, I would keep it to no more than four pages, and would really suggest that you keep it to *two* pages (one physical page with text on both sides). You can even make your “newsletter” the size of a 4 x 6 card, at which point, of course, it becomes less a true newsletter and more a simple mailer.

Should the newsletter be heavy in graphics, or should it be all text? Your newsletter should impart information, and if it is a subscription newsletter, it should contain a solid amount of good information each month. If it does not, you cannot justify charging a competitive subscription rate for it. Now, if your subject area uniquely lends itself to the appropriate use of pictures and/or graphics, then their use might actually be essential in those cases, but if not, then try to stay clear of them. The other problem with the use of

Making an Impact with Traditional Newsletters (cont. from Page 5)

photos and other graphics is that they can make the printing costs *much* more expensive than they would be otherwise. Understand that from the perspective of the printer, meaning the professional printing service that you will likely use to prepare your newsletter each month, if you use any color at all on a particular page, that page now becomes a color page for pricing purposes; it doesn't matter if there's as little as a small dot of color on the page...it's still a color page. In some cases, color pages can cost 50% more per page than black-and-white pages, so that's something to certainly keep in mind if you're considering the use of color in your newsletter. That said, the use of some color on one or two of your pages over the course of an eight-page newsletter is not a bad idea (for example, color use in the title banner on the first page is appropriate), and won't too significantly impact your overall cost.

Should your newsletter be mailed as a self-mailer or as something that is contained in a separate envelope? A lot of newsletters are mailed to subscribers in the form of a self-mailer. Even if you don't subscribe to a newsletter like that, you're probably familiar with flyers and other circulars that arrive in your mailbox without an envelope but folded in half and with your name and address printed on a label that's affixed to a portion of the document purposely left blank for the mailing label. That's a self-mailer. With a newsletter, normally what happens is that the top half of the back page would be left blank, the return address and subscriber name and address would be printed there, and the

newsletter would then be folded in half, secured by tape or a staple, and mailed just like that.

As far as I'm concerned, self-mailers should be limited to lower-end newsletters and giveaways. Better quality newsletters should really be mailed in their own, separate envelopes. Once someone is spending an amount approaching \$100 per year for a subscription, that person has the right to expect the product to arrive in packaging that helps to keep it safe from the rigors of the mail process. We're all familiar with self-mailed items that arrive torn, mangled, and otherwise in poor condition, and it's simply not appropriate that a quality newsletter that is subscribed to for a substantial (relatively) price be one of those.

Should you create your newsletter with a template service that provides ready content? There is a type of business out there now that provides what is basically a "pre-fabricated" newsletter to other businesses that want to send out their own newsletters. They're easy to find—a Google search for "newsletter services" or "newsletter templates" will help you locate them quickly. Anyway, what you're doing in this case is basically private labeling a newsletter wherein the content is already provided. With a service like this, the chief advantage, of course, is that there's really nothing for you to do; other than paying for the service and providing an updated mailing list each month, there's nothing else you need to do and you get to have your own physical news-

Jim Paris Internet Insider is designed to provide the opinions and findings of its editors and contributing writers. These findings are based on research, experience, and analysis of the subject matter covered. Sources for information are believed to be reliable, but absolute accuracy cannot be guaranteed. This information is not provided for purposes of rendering financial, legal, accounting, or other professional advice. It is intended purely for educational purposes. The authors and publisher disclaim any responsibility for a liability or loss incurred as a consequence of the use and application, either directly or indirectly, of any information presented herein.

Making an Impact with Traditional Newsletters *(cont. from Page 6)*

letter that's sent to subscribers each month.

This is certainly one way to go, but there can be problems. First off, "pre-fab" newsletters come across pretty quickly as being just that. It doesn't take the reader long to recognize that you are not likely the actual writer of the newsletter he's reading. Another problem is that, depending on the specific nature of your topic or theme, there may not be a "pre-fab" newsletter with content that is relevant to your subject area. Again, these can be fine as lower-end offerings or even giveaways, but if you are looking to charge a premium subscription price for a quality newsletter, it really has to be something you create each month.

Pricing Your Newsletter

For this part of the discussion, we are going to assume that your newsletter is not a giveaway, but a stand-alone, saleable product. The pricing of your newsletter can depend upon a variety of considerations. As with any product that's offered for sale, there is an inherent battle between charging too much and charging too little; if you charge too much for your newsletter, no one will buy it...and if you charge too little, it may not be worth your while to create it. The other problem with charging too little is that such a price may convey the perception that the quality of the information is not that good.

Assuming you're planning to do an eight-page newsletter, I can tell you that, as a broad range, the annual pricing of most falls somewhere between \$80 and \$200. If you're charging more than \$200 per year, you really have to be putting out something pretty special, or should have some pretty outstanding credentials. A lot of newsletters are priced at

around \$100 per year, so you can look to that price point as a fair guideline.

Another issue you have to consider is the frequency with which you collect subscription monies. Some newsletters charge one time for an annual subscription, while other charge on a monthly basis. You need not choose, necessarily—you can do both. One thing I would suggest, if you decide to offer both, is to incentivize the one-time annual payment by making it a savings over what someone would pay if they subscribe monthly. For example, you could offer the option of paying \$15 per month, which comes out to \$180 annually, or \$120 if the customer pays for the year all at once...that sort of thing.

One thing to keep in mind is that if you're just starting out, and you're not yet entirely convinced that your newsletter will be viable, it's not a bad idea to make available at first a monthly subscription option only. The reason for this is that if you have collected some money up front for annual subscriptions, and then find that you're not making enough money to continue, you're faced with the uncomfortable choice of having to either return a pro rata share of the money you collected or continue generating the newsletter for the duration of the twelve months, perhaps at a loss, simply to satisfy those orders. If you stay with offering only monthly subscriptions at the outset and things ultimately don't work out, you need only fulfill the most recent month's orders for which you were paid, and that's that.

Getting the Newsletter from Concept to Finished Product

OK, let's create your newsletter. For start-

Making an Impact with Traditional Newsletters (cont. from Page 7)

ers, you will need a good newsletter software that allows you to easily create your publication in the format of a typical newsletter. I happen to like Microsoft Publisher. I've used it for many years to create many different kinds of newsletters, and I think it works just fine. Publisher comes as one of the applications provided through the Microsoft Office Professional product, which I think is now about \$500. However, you *can* purchase the Publisher application separately. The latest version is available, at this writing, for about \$140. You can download the product or receive a CD version of the product; to obtain either, just head on over to: www.office.microsoft.com/en-us/publisher.

Publisher is very easy to use. You don't need any particular skill or ability beyond that which is required for Microsoft Word. The only difficulty you will have is that which naturally comes at the outset, while you're becoming familiar with the program.

Once your newsletter edition for the month is complete, you obviously need to have the product printed and fulfilled, meaning mailed out to subscribers. Some people will try to save some money by printing the newsletter and mailing it out themselves. You can certainly do that, but I would advise against it. The resources available to professional printers are such that it really makes it worthwhile for you to avail yourself of those, especially now that the prices for these services are more reasonable than they once were—thank the continued evolution and efficiency of technology for that. There are a lot of issues that can arise when you try to process larger-scale print jobs on your own, and the time you would spend on those is better spent working on enhancing the marketing and sales efforts on behalf of your product.

Assuming you decide to outsource the processing of your newsletter, which, again, I heartily suggest, your next step is to find the best deal on those service that you can. I would query no fewer than three businesses in your area that can handle the jobs of both printing and mailing your product. Start by looking for “printers,” and in short order you'll find plenty that can do just what you need. Costs will vary, but I received a quote a few months back for another eight-page newsletter (one page to be color) that would cost \$180 for a run of 100 (before mailing costs). Including mailing costs, you should be able to keep a run like that to below \$300.

You will deliver the requisite files to the print shop by email; they will likely expect your newsletter file in the form of a PDF, and the subscriber mailing list as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. It's easy to convert your newsletter in Publisher to a PDF form; as you're creating the publication, it will exist as a “Publisher File.” When a given edition is finished and it's time to convert to a PDF, look under the “File” tab to see the option to “Save as;” you will be presented with several format options into which to convert the file, and you will simply select “PDF.” Easy. The other advantage of the PDF format is because it is considered “print-ready” by the printer, there's really nothing they have to do besides actually print and mail—no setup, formatting, or anything like that.

This is a great opportunity for you. The costs are reasonable, and the value can be phenomenal. Besides putting more money in your pocket, an offline newsletter can be something that helps to turn you into a real “player” in your chosen subject area, and makes you a true “go-to” person by helping you to realize valuable professional traction.