



## How to get your message read before the delete button is pressed? Sounddelivery's tips to producing an E-newsletter

E-newsletters are a fantastic and cost effective way for third sector organisations to communicate what they do, but I feel it's an application that is both under used and often misused. They are a great opportunity to shout out about your achievements and keep stakeholders informed and engaged in what you do. They are also an ideal way to speak to a large number of people in a short amount of time. But in an age of email information overload how do you avoid people pressing the delete button before reading it in the first place?

As someone who writes a regular E-newsletter but is also is a recipient of (at the last count) over 40 different newsletters from various third sector organisations I have been doing my own exercise in what makes me read them as well as what doesn't.

Here are just some of my tips - in no particular order.

**DO you read E-newsletters from other organisations?** If not, your starting point would be to sign up to the E-newsletters of other organisations. This helps to get a sense of what they are writing about, what information they are trying to get across and how they are doing that. Think about the style and tone. Is the style personal or corporate? What is the approach and most importantly how relevant is the content? Think about whether this e-newsletter is helping an organisation get their message across? As a reader does it inspire you to keep reading? Have you learnt anything new from reading it?

**Have you signed up to your own organisations e-newsletter?** What do you think of the content and what is being said? Do you think it's communicating with the reader effectively?

### **Content, Content, Content**

Content is critical. If you don't think you have enough news for a monthly newsletter it is better to wait than to send out information for the sake of it. Do plan what you want to say. Ask your colleagues to provide ideas for the content and potential articles to give a broader voice for your organisation. Think about when you've got enough content and save stories for future newsletters.

**Who is your target audience? Supporters, donors, stakeholders, trustees - or all of the above.** In the not-too-distant future we will be communicating with different audiences in a more direct, targeted and personalised approach. They will decide how they want to receive your information and in what format. E-newsletters will be an important part of this mix. Getting it right will be crucial.

**Do keep it fresh and regular:** It's important to think about when you send out your E-newsletter and how often. A monthly or bi-monthly update is an achievable target. Anything more than that could be information overload and not sustainable. If there is a something of a major new story then take a view as to whether it's worth sending out a special E-news update to your list.

**Think about the time of day and day of the week it goes out.** In the last few months I've been noticing that I've been getting a lot of E-newsletters after 5.00 on a Friday afternoon and

even arriving at the weekend. I know all the hard work that would have gone into putting together the content for the newsletter and I would be surprised to see from the stats if there is a high open rate at these times. You should also consider holidays. Half term and other school holidays might mean that a high proportion of your target audience might never see that newsletter.

**And finally do think about what to write in the Subject Area:** This is one of the hardest things to do (and the thing I personally leave until the end). A phrase that teases the reader could at least get them opening up the newsletter.

**Happy Writing!**

**Jude Habib April 2008**

**For further useful tips take a look at the ICT Hub Knowledgebase**

<http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/bulkemail>

<http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/whydoenews>