



Why You Need a Newsletter **And** **How I Turned a Disaster Into a Lucrative Marketing Tool**

It was October of 2002. I was just beginning my speaking business I joined a local business organization to network and get in front of the corporate meeting planners. Then I decided to send a newsletter to their members. By Thanksgiving I thought I was either going to be sued or thrown in jail for some sort of fraud.

Here's what happened: When I joined I paid my dues they gave me a directory with over 1,200 names, mailing addresses, phone numbers and email addresses in it. Normally they sell this to outsiders for a fee. Almost immediately I was receiving phone calls to clean my office (that would have been interesting at my existing job), sell me business insurance and provide benefits and payroll services for my "many employees." I was beginning my e-zine so I decided to add the members of this group to the list and send the first issue to them. It made sense with the calls and letters I was receiving from other members. This involved countless hours of copying the names from the directory one-by-one. After five days of monotonous hard work, I sent it out to the entire list. There is where it turned into a disaster.

Six people asked to be dropped off the list and I inadvertently forwarded their drop requests to all 1,200 members of the list. UGH! As if that wasn't enough, the organization called and demanded that I immediately cease all contact of other members. Turns out it is okay to send unsolicited mailings to physical addresses, place unsolicited phone calls for your business, but NOT to send unsolicited emails. Still I only lost 200 names off the list. This didn't satisfy the organization – or their attorney. They didn't want anyone sending mass emailings to their members. After several phone calls, emails and certified letters to and from attorneys I deleted the entire list. I started fresh with 20 names of friends and associates in January of 2003. As of January 2008 there were over 14,000 names on the list and still growing.

I learned something about permission-based marketing from that experience. I learned that if you have good content, it doesn't matter if you don't have permission to be in front of you clients. I learned that there is more to contacting people than just sending out unsolicited information. Today I talk to corporate executives, independent business leaders and account executives who ask me what is the best way to get in with their clients and customers. I tell them what to do and what to avoid. One of the most important things I always repeat is "You need to produce a content rich, permission-based newsletter." It has been very successful for me and has reaped many rewards. Yes, it takes a fair amount of work on a regular basis, but it more than pays for the time and expense of putting it together. Here is why I say that.

1. You need a newsletter to stay in touch with your clients and potential clients. Through it they will hear from you on a regular basis. You can include the latest news from your office. You can include messages on a regular basis to your subscribers that is earmarked for them and them alone. You can send it out weekly, bi-weekly, monthly or quarterly. My advice would be that the more often you send it out, the deeper the content needs to be or people will delete it and then drop off your list because the content isn't meeting their needs enough to hear from you that often. I send out my e-zine on the first Wednesday of each month. So if you are on my list, you will hear from me 12 times a year. It arrives often when a meeting planner is looking for a speaker and wouldn't

have considered bringing me on unless he/she had gotten this reminder of my expertise and existence. I regard my subscribers as “family” and treat the list as such. I don’t reveal names to anyone and would never sell them. You have to have a lot of integrity because as you have noticed in your Spam file, there isn’t a lot of it out there.

2. You need a newsletter to position yourself as a resource for your clients and prospects. This means you have to have great content in every issue. People don’t like to read fluff and pointless articles. The competition in the business world is too tough to spend your time reading mindless drivel. You should write articles that meet the needs of your readers and come from your heart as the resource person. You should write articles guaranteed to meet people’s needs in a realistic way. But you say, “Jim, I don’t know what to write about. I’m not an author.” Fine, then publish articles by other people (giving them appropriate credit, of course). You don’t have to be the authority – you become the resource (which positions you as an authority to people). You may even use my articles if they have value for your clientele. I met with an executive last month who wanted a way to position his territorial staff in front of his constituents at a minimal cost. “Have them send out a value-based, permission-based newsletter.” I told him. It costs almost nothing to produce and they can get ideas on the articles from the readers. How about that? A customer driven marketing piece. A newsletter whose content is driven by its readers. A friendly reminder that they have given you permission to send them on a regular basis. I told him the best customer service is determined by finding out what your customers want and then giving it to them like no one else can do. He is working on this plan as you read this.
3. You need a newsletter because you probably aren’t contacting your clients as often as you should. Your newsletter will help serve that purpose. Most sales people make one or two calls to a prospect and then give up. I was hired just this week by a customer who said that my persistence in contacting him both through the phone and e-zine reminded him of my expertise. He said that the continual contact got to him after a while. He knew I wanted his business. It is all in the way you view it. If you think you are being a “pest” to your clients you probably are. If you think you are adding value to people’s lives and businesses then you probably are. You are manifesting your self identity every time you contact (or don’t contact) your people. It is determined by the thoughts in your mind more than anything else. Think positive and you will write positive about what you have to offer. It will show through to your readers.
4. You need a newsletter as an economical way to stay in touch with all of your contacts. Mass mailings are pricey and deliver little results. When was the last time you stopped to read a mass mailing sent to you with your address pre-posted on label? Yes, you can argue that you are bombarded with emails on a daily basis, but a permission-based list gets attention. I built my list by asking people, over 14,000 of them so far, to subscribe to my newsletter. I use a service that charges under \$100 to send to them. The price will stay the same until the list reaches 25,000 people. Try mailing a card or letter to that many clients for that price. Remember, my list asked for it so they expect it. They can also forward it to friends who then subscribe at no extra cost to me. I give more valuable information than a post card or tri-fold brochure would give. A comparable sized hard copy newsletter would cost even more. Trust me, an e-zine is one of the most economical way to reach your client base.
5. You need a newsletter to position yourself as an authority with your clients. This is the information age. Knowledge is king. The person with the answers is the one people turn to with their problems. People who author articles become instant authorities (note the root word “author”). Through your articles you will show your clients what you know and how you have the solutions to their problems. I use my newsletter to write on specific solutions to the problems my clients encounter in business. I focus on improving productivity and increasing income in high-stress industries and environments. My readers know they can rely on me to help them dominate their market and get closer to their customers. Many times my articles are reprinted in trade publications, digests, journals, the general press and convention bulletins. When I speak to groups I am already seen as an authority in the area I am speaking on. I have been published and they have read the information they received from me. When you are seen as an authority, people will

want to do business with you. Your readers will come to rely on you for information that will benefit them and make them more money.

6. You need a newsletter to stay ahead of your competition. Think about it. Everyone is vying for your customers' business. They are inundated with cold phone calls, unsolicited mailings, and mass e-mailings. But only you have permission to send them information about your business and how it can benefit them. I almost always get business the day the newsletter goes out. Although it only goes out once a month, it puts me ahead of my competition. In fact the largest client I have ever signed for a speaking engagement contacted us the day the newsletter went out. They hit "reply" on the actual newsletter to say they wanted me. I know there are hundreds of speakers, trainers and consultants contacting my list every day. But receiving a content rich, permission based newsletter puts me on my prospect's mind like no other contact will. You need that kind of edge over your competition at least once a month.

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