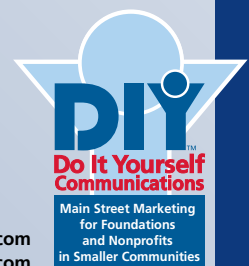


# E-Newsletters II

## How to get people to open and read your nonprofit e-newsletter



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## About this course:

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The Nonprofit Do-It-Yourself Store at [www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com](http://www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com) provides online training for philanthropic foundations and nonprofits in smaller communities who do most of their PR and communications work in-house.

The PR training and guidance you'll find here are geared specifically for nonprofit organizations serving their local communities. Our courses are written assuming that you do most of the communications in your organization yourself, or with minimal assistance. Thus, we offer practical, do-it-yourself solutions affordable for even the smallest nonprofit.

### Related course:

If you have already decided to create an e-newsletter or if you are already doing one, this course will help you get more people to actually open and respond to it.

HOWEVER, if you are not yet sure whether e-newsletters will be right for you, you might want to check out:

#### **E-Newsletters I: How to determine whether e-newsletters are right for your nonprofit**

Also, in our course on Communications Research, we have a module on doing online surveys, which is a lot like doing an online e-newsletter – a great, free do-it-yourself tool.

#### **Other courses related to online communications:**

- YouTube Your Site! • Double Duty E-mails
- Facebook? MySpace? Blogs?

*Details for all of these courses and others are available in the Do-It-Yourself Store at [www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com](http://www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com).*

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## Don't forget about these other resources:

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As a customer of the Nonprofit Do-It-Yourself store, you are eligible to use our free PR HelpDesk feature, which you'll find on our website at [www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com](http://www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com).

You can submit PR HelpDesk support requests on any topic related to the course material. The PR



HelpDesk is an extension of the course; we can't answer all questions, but we can support questions that relate directly to the course as you implement what you've learned, or if you have questions about a course you are considering purchasing. So, if we can clarify any

of the points in our course to keep you moving forward, let us help!

You can use PR HelpDesk at no cost whatsoever.

Because we realize that every nonprofit is unique, we offer the Personal Online Training Webinar. For about the same price as a good group webinar, you will connect one-on-one with your trainer, Steve Cebalt. The full session will be devoted to *you, your* questions, and *your* situation. We will focus on the course material *as it applies to your specific goals*; much like a consulting service.

Even better, you schedule the session *at your convenience!*

Similar to a webinar, we take advantage of technology to optimize learning and eliminate travel time and costs. But unlike a group webinar, your Personal Online Training Webinar is not a one-way, canned PowerPoint lecture; it is a consulting dialogue session based on your needs.



**We think this is simply a better way** to help you achieve your goals.

[www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com](http://www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com)

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# How to get people to open and read your nonprofit e-newsletter

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## The Situation:

Getting people to open and read your nonprofit's e-newsletter is potentially the most difficult part of creating and sending an e-newsletter. The technical part of creating an e-newsletter can be overcome with the proper information, but then, how do you ensure that your audience will open...and then read...your e-newsletter, and respond to your nonprofit's appeal?

## The Solution:

Nonprofits have some unique advantages when it comes to people actually opening an e-newsletter. If you have chosen your list to include people who are likely to have an affinity with your cause, your odds are much higher than, say, someone creating a newsletter to promote a software product or other commercial product. So now let's look at some steps that nonprofits can take to optimize that advantage and intrigue your audience into opening your e-newsletter and responding to your message.

# Steps:

## 1. What does your subject line say?

This is the most important field in your e-newsletter (or in any e-mail you send, for that matter!) It should give a brief explanation of your topic as it relates to the recipient, and reflect your nonprofit position. In a cluttered inbox, the subject line will determine whether or not your e-mail is ever opened. Make sure it is descriptive enough to let your audience know what the body of the e-mail contains; a teaser subject line is a risk that usually doesn't pay off. Also show your audience that you know who they are and that this message was sent specifically for them. For example, at **MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com** we've used the subject line: "Motivation & Momentum for Nonprofit & Foundation Leaders." Even better, use the subject line to express something proactive about your cause that your readers can do, such as: "Support ACME Nonprofit and save money when you shop at Target this weekend!"

## 2. Who is your e-newsletter from?

This may seem obvious, but it is a key feature of e-newsletters that's often overlooked, and in fact, other than the subject line, the "Sent from" field is the most crucial determining factor in whether people will open your e-mail. You can actually assign a specific name to your e-mail "from" address that is different from your day-to-day e-mail address. If your audience would recognize your nonprofit's name off-hand, then your organizational name works well. But if the audience is specific, you may want to go beyond that and create a narrower "from" field that they would be more inclined to open, such as, From: "ACME Nonprofit Volunteer Coordinator." You want to create a real connection with your audience in the "from" field. If, as in this example, your audience consists of your group of volunteers, they may be more likely to open an e-mail sent from the Volunteer Coordinator rather than an e-mail from the general name of the nonprofit.

If you have a highly respected, well-known individual who is the public face of your organization (good example: local chapters of Salvation Army), then you might send it using this person's name, i.e. From: "Major Tom Smith, Anytown Salvation Army." Likewise if you are sending a fundraising e-newsletter and you have a heavyweight pillar of the community chairing the committee, you might use his or her name, i.e. From: "John Smith." Some people have names that command such respect that any e-mail sent with their name in the "from" field will compel attention. As you can see, there are many thoughtful ways to use the "From" field; the point is to give this field some deep thought, because it will make all the difference.

## 3. Include a link to click if the e-newsletter is not viewable.

One limitation with e-newsletters is that some people, depending on their e-mail provider and their particular computer setup, may not be able to see parts of your e-newsletter. Newsletter programmers solve this problem by providing you with the means of including a link that redirects such readers to a version of your e-newsletter that everyone can read just fine. Provide this information at the top of your e-newsletter, so your audience will see it right away. They will likely click that one time to give your e-newsletter a chance, but if they don't see a link to click and they don't view your e-newsletter properly due to the limitations of their computer setup, they may just hit the delete key.

#### 4. Stay away from graphics.

This is a tough one, because images and graphics greatly enhance the appeal of an e-newsletter. But there are many e-mail servers out there that don't display graphics initially in e-mails. All your audience may see are boxes with red x's. While many e-mail programs provide a link to click and view the images, not everyone in your audience may be patient or technically savvy enough to notice this link or to even know it exists. If your audience only sees empty boxes in an e-mail, the first reaction is typically negative; they may just delete your e-newsletter. It's best, therefore, just to rely on colors and other design elements and avoid inserting graphics that may not function universally in every recipient's email system.

#### 5. Use colors to reinforce branding.

While it's preferable to stay away from graphics, colors are a good alternative. They will add visual interest and appeal to your e-newsletter. The advantage of colors is that they will not cause the empty boxes with red x's that graphics can cause, but they will make your e-newsletter stand out from all the other e-mails flooding the inboxes of your audience. At **MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com**, we use colors instead of graphics to make our e-newsletters stand out and show branding. This way, your e-newsletter can reinforce the image of your nonprofit. When people receive future e-newsletters from you, they'll begin to develop recognition of your brand, and when they recognize the sender, they'll be more likely to open and read your e-newsletters.

#### 6. Focus on your audience's involvement in your nonprofit's mission.

What's of interest to them? What engages them with your nonprofit? Events? Volunteer opportunities? Innovative ways to give? Your e-newsletter **MUST** have good content to ensure readers take the time to open and read it. Make the effort to really focus on your audience and discern what will be of the most interest to them. Don't trot out the statistics of how many people you have helped, etc.; instead, focus on how your nonprofit is solving problems, and, most especially, on how the reader can be a part of that solution.

#### 7. Focus intensely on the top 1.5" of your e-newsletter.

Many times, depending on the e-mail settings of your audience, the top inches are all they will see of your e-newsletter within their e-mail preview window. So, this top portion is extremely important in grabbing attention and enticing your reader to open the e-newsletter. Include topics of top interest and any other information that will peak the interest of your recipient. Many e-newsletter designers use this space for their branding. That is a bad idea; it's too easy for people to look at that and just hit "delete." Better to have a few well-written links to the most lively information in the newsletter, and place your branding elsewhere in the design.

# Advanced Tips:

## 1. Timing is key.

Think about when you send your e-newsletter. Consider the time of day and where your audience will be. At home? Just arriving to work? When will they be most receptive to your e-newsletter? A good time of day is 10 a.m. Many people have cleared out their morning e-mails by then and yours will be less likely to get lost or passed over in the morning routine. Also take into consideration the location of your audience and make any adjustments necessary based on time zones, perhaps splitting your list into time zones to send the newsletter to different time zones at the optimum time of day. Lastly, take some time in deciding which day of the week you send out your e-newsletter. Your audience may be overwhelmed with e-mails first thing Monday morning, and they may be less interested in reading new emails on Friday afternoon. Mid-week is best in most cases. And of course stay clear of holidays by several days before and after.

## 2. Spam-test your e-newsletter.

With the volume of spam that your inbox receives in a day, spam filters have become very sensitive. Words typed in all capital letters and other specific words may trigger these filters and could push your e-mail to the spam folder, which few people in your audience ever check. As a safeguard before sending your e-mail, run it through a spam checking filter, such as the SPAM analysis on [www.programmersheaven.com](http://www.programmersheaven.com). This free software will help you to refine your e-mail so you can avoid spam trigger words and ensure that your e-mail reaches its intended audience.

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## BONUS TIP

Before sending your e-newsletter to your entire list of 10,000 people, send out a test version to a smaller, select group of 10-100. This way, you can ensure they received your e-newsletter and you can solicit any feedback from this group that may be helpful as you make final adjustments. You can examine the "click-through" information from this select group and then tailor your e-newsletter before you send it out to the entire group. The "click-throughs" show which articles each person opened to read and thus reveal what your audience is most interested in. Based on this, if one particular article stands out, you can reposition it to be your lead story and rearrange the rest accordingly.

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## Related Courses:

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## Available Courses:

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**E-Newsletters I:** How to determine whether e-newsletters are right for your nonprofit

**E-Newsletters II:** How to get people to open and read your nonprofit e-newsletter

**Double-Duty E-mails:** How to double your communication efforts with every e-mail you send – for free

**Facebook? MySpace? Blogs?** Is social networking right for your small nonprofit?

**YouTube Your Site!** How to add multimedia to your nonprofit website for free using YouTube technology in 2 simple steps

**Communications Research:** Easy research and survey tools that work for do-it-yourself nonprofit communicators

**Breakthrough Branding** for foundations and nonprofits

**The 1-page Nonprofit Organization Marketing Plan:** A plan that you can complete today and use every day to make a difference

**How to Create a Blog:** A step-by-step tutorial on creating your blog in 20 minutes

### **Don't forget about these other resources!**

**FREE PR HelpDesk!** As a customer of the Nonprofit Do-It-Yourself Store at [www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com](http://www.MainStreetNonprofitTraining.com), you are eligible to use our free PR HelpDesk feature, which you'll find on the website.

**Personal Online Training:** For about the same price as a good group webinar, you will connect one-on-one with the author of these courses, Steve Cebalt. The full hour will be devoted to you, your questions, and your situation. You'll find the details on our website.