

# My business card is not a pass to your enewsletter

This is a quick rant because I just received an enewsletter from a woman I met at an event two or three years ago. I haven't heard from her since, but apparently she has just decided doing a newsletter is a good idea and that her list will include names from all the people from whom she has collected a business card. It didn't help that the newsletter was addressed to "Brody," not "Ms. Brody" or "Deborah."

I immediately unsubscribed, not only because the last thing I need is another newsletter, but because this woman apparently thinks that my giving her my business card is an invitation to be added to a list. It does not. Business cards provide contact information, yes, but they do not have any power to agree to anything. I did not agree to be added to a list, and I certainly did not ask to be added to a list.

**Here's the thing: direct marketing that complies with the CAN-SPAM laws requires opt-in permission. Just having my business card in your possession is not permission to add me to your list.**

The only way that having my business card gives you a pass to get me to be on your marketing list is if you use that contact information to get in touch with me first. For example, you might send me a personal, non-mass email asking me if I would be interested in your list, or perhaps asking me to visit your website where I would have the option to sign up for your newsletter, or you could call me (you know, on the phone) to set up a coffee date and talk to me.

A business card is a networking tool, nothing more. If you use the contact information on the business card to send me unsolicited material, then you are a spammer, plain and

simple.

Rant over.

Thoughts?

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## Who should handle your newsletter?

If you have an organizational newsletter, who handles it? In my experience, it probably is one of the following:

- Administrative assistant
- Intern
- Volunteer/Development assistant or coordinator (for nonprofits)

And yet, an newsletter should be part of your communications and marketing efforts. At the very least, your communications/marketing people should take a look at the newsletter and check for the following:

- Consistency of message
- Use of logo and tagline
- How it fits into the overall messaging/communications campaign
- Timing (is it coming out too close to other communications?)

Of course, someone needs to be the final editor and proofreader. In the past couple of weeks, I have received an newsletter that has had date mistakes (saying an event is on

Wednesday instead of Tuesday, with Tuesday's date) or with location mistakes or even speaker name mistakes.

The best way to handle an enewsletter is to have an editorial calendar—created by your communications department—which can adjust for any special events or needs that arise each month. Your admin or intern can write the content, but it must be checked before sending out. Every single time.

An enewsletter is a valuable communications tool, which when done right, can help your organization. When done wrong, it can reflect badly on your organization and make people unsubscribe.

How do you handle your enewsletter? Do you have any good tips? Please share them in the comments.

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## **Improve your email marketing!**

Our inboxes are cluttered with hundreds of email messages—some from friends asking us to join for dinner and most from companies looking to sell us something. We may have signed up for a few enewsletters. We may have met some people at networking events. Regardless, our inboxes are overwhelmed with email.

In the past week, my company sent out its enewsletter. It got two unsubscribes, one report for spam (the person who did it may have had some sort of personal vendetta, not sure) and a fairly good open rate. I am going to call it a moderate success. The newsletter did not have a call to action, so it is hard to measure its effectiveness.

In the past couple of day, I got two emails from two sources.

Both caught my eye for different reasons. The first was from someone I met a while back who just started a new business venture. The subject line said "Hi Deborah." The body was the following (with identifying info cut out):

*Dear Mr. Sample:*

*Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is XXXX, Director of Media Services for XXXX and XXXX— two truly groundbreaking companies that have recently joined together to become one of Washington's newest and most innovative full-service production resources. If you're in the neighborhood, I hope you'll stop by for a tour of our facility, just off XX here in downtown D.C.*

*Our owner-operators are award-winning media professionals with more than 25 years of experience, and our list of long-term clients include companies like X, Y and Z, together with advertising and public relations agencies, corporations, associations and government agencies, both local and nationwide.*

*We'd like to show you exactly what we can do. By addressing your creatitve and technical needs with our deep expertise in all forms of broadcast and corporate production, creative editorial, 2-D and 3-D graphics, sound design and audio mixing. With our detailed approach to client service, we can easily guide your next project from concept through completion.*

*Feel free to look through our demo reels and check out the bios of our skilled artists, editors and producers. Just go to (website) and (website) to find out more. Or give me a call personally, at 999-999-9999 I'll be happy to answer your questions or set up a convenient time when you can pay us a visit. I look forward to the opportunity to meet you in person.*

*Warm Regards,*

**What is wrong with this email?** First, the personalization is not working. Second, the formatting was off. Third, there are several grammatical mistakes (and at least one typo). The first paragraph is a waste. The sender could have mentioned a reason that I would be interested in this email and new venture. Instead it is an “introduction” to someone I met already. The email was sent out in plain format—and this is a multimedia production company? Why not make it look pretty and professional? There is no signature from the sender. No way of opting out of the email. No permission. I could go on and on.

The other email I got was announcing a group trip. But guess what? No dates were listed for the trip on the email, forcing me to go to the website. Maybe this was on purpose, to get a click-through to the website. In my opinion, when you don't give people some basic information, you lose them at hello.

### **Lessons about email marketing:**

- Have a call to action.
- Mind your ps and qs—details like grammar are important.
- Include relevant information: dates, locations, contact information, pricing (don't make me work so hard to figure it out).
- If possible, personalize.
- Make it look nice (there are many enewsletter/email marketing companies out there at various price points).
- Be careful with SPAM laws. Give people a way to opt-out. Explain why they are receiving your email.

What drives you crazy when you get an email?

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# Enewsletters

How many of you use enewsletters? I bet a fair amount do, and a larger amount receive many enewsletters each day.

Certainly enewsletters are more environmentally-friendly than printed newsletters, and are more timely, since there is no lag time getting to a printer. And for sure, enewsletters are cost-effective, costing nothing to a few centers per newsletter. But, and this is a big but, are enewsletters effective in achieving their objective?

An newsletter intends to inform or to promote or both. There are internal and external enewsletters too. Some serve as employee communications, others as corporate communications.

What I am wondering is with the overwhelming amount of information (email, Twitter, Facebook, RSS feeds, blogs, news aggregators) that we are exposed to each day, are enewsletters serving their purpose? Or have they become one more piece of nuisance in our inboxes? I am not sure, but I sure would like to hear your opinions. Vote in the poll or send me thoughts in the comments.

[polldaddy poll=1714351]

