Email Newsletter Best Practices

June 2014

idealware

Introductions

Andrea Berry
Idealware Expert Trainer

Director of Development, Hardy Girls
Healthy Women

Are People Still Using Email?

Yes. It's critical channel for almost every web savvy organization…

For instance:
In 2012, "Most of the $690 million Obama
raised online came from fundraising e-mails."
http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-11-29/the-science-behind-those-obama-campaign-e-mails

…and will be for the foreseeable future.

eNewsletters Let You Keep in Touch

Think Through How Other Things Fit

Ideally, deliver your message through multiple channels at once.

Blog: Frequent Updates

Email: Newsletter

Website: More Info

Facebook: Outreach

Integrate Your Communication Schedule

Make sure all your communications make sense together.

March						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	eNews 5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13 New star direct mail hits	14	15	16
17	18 New star email appeal	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 New star email followup	26	27 New star phone calls	28	29	30
31						

But We're Focused Today on eNewsletters!

For an Effective eNews, You Need To…

Get It To Their Inbox

Get Them to Open It

Engage Them
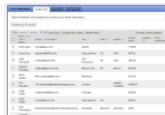
Track the Results
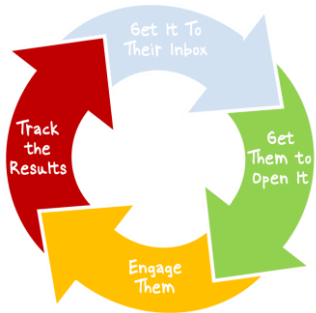
Get it To Their Inbox

idealware

Email Software in Brief

You create an email in an online tool

The tool also stores the list of subscribers

And you view the results in the tool

You choose the email and subscribers and send the email

But What About Personal Email Software?

Sending bulk email through your own email server risks getting all your email accounts blacklisted.

**Outlook is not a bulk email tool!
(Neither is Gmail)**

- No help managing subscriptions
- No help in targeting
- Format support is very iffy
- No help managing CAN-SPAM Act

Great Broadcast Email Tools for Nonprofits

VerticalResponse

MailChimp

Strong features. 10,000 emails per month FREE for 501c3s (after that, on the expensive side)

Strong features. Up to 12,000 emails per month for FREE for under 2,000 subscribers, then a significant nonprofit discount.

And Follow Regulations!

The CAN-SPAM Act provides guidelines for "commercial" emails

- Every email has a clear and functioning "unsubscribe" option
- Opt-outs are honored within 10 days
- "From" and "Subject" lines are not deceptive
- The email contains a physical address for the organization

They should be considered ethical principles for all emails

Get Them to Open It

idealware

Be A Good Correspondent

Send emails that your supporters want to open.

- Say interesting things
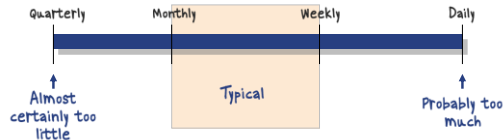- Do more than ask for money
- Be consistent and dependable

Try to Find the Right Email Frequency

Think through your overall email volume.

Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
↑ Almost certainly too little	Typical		↑ Probably too much

And consider the day and time you send it…

Segmentation is Your Friend

The perfect emails and frequency for one group may alienate another.

Monthly update with appeal summary → Weekly update and appeal

New subscribers start out with a monthly summary…

…but those who take frequent action are promoted to weekly appeals

Folks who unsubscribe are asked if they want to get monthly updates instead

---
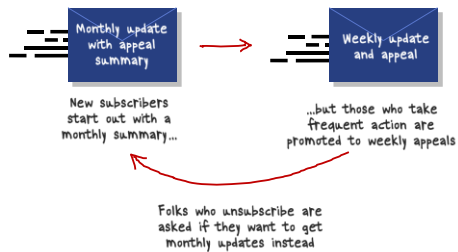
Craft Your Subject Line

The subject line is key to entice folks to open an email. It should be:

Intriguing
- Big News From Washington
- Got Plans For the Weekend?

Direct and Specific
- New Furry Friends Available Now
- Holiday Happenings at the Center

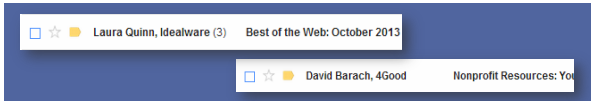Subject Oriented
- Living in Harmony with Backyard Wildlife
- 10 Ways to Eat More Veggies
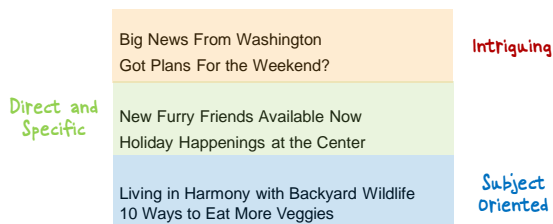
Tailor The From Line

The "from" line is also critical, as one of the few things that people see before opening.

| ☐ ☆ ▣ | Laura Quinn, Idealware (3) | Best of the Web: October 2013 |
| ☐ ☆ ▣ | David Barach, 4Good | Nonprofit Resources: You |

Consider using a name people know – but at least be clear.

Consider the Day and Time You Send It…

But not too carefully. In general…

- Morning is better (even early morning)
- Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays are generally good
- But it's best to send when others aren't
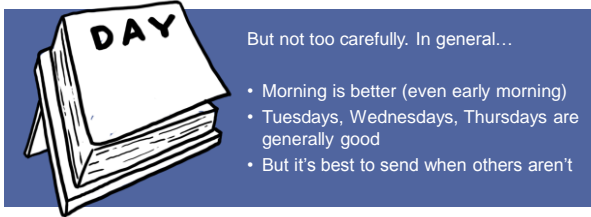
And this varies a lot by list.

Engage Them:
eNewsletters

idealware

An Example eNewsletter
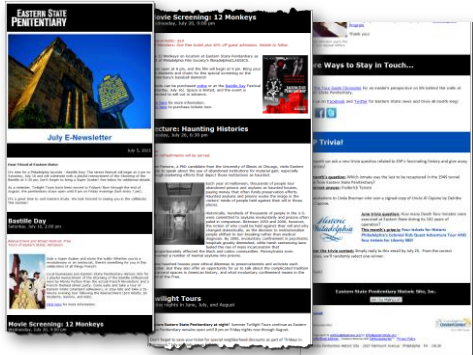
Define Your Format

- Each one of their eNews has this same format
- Include features that will engage (like the trivia or popular stories)
- But remember that you'll need to write all of this…

Provide Teasers to the Full Story or Event

Provide short blurbs that link back to your website.

HTML Or Text?

Text Email

HTML Email

No text formatting or images
Consistent for all recipients
Very limited reporting

More error prone
Some may have difficulty with images
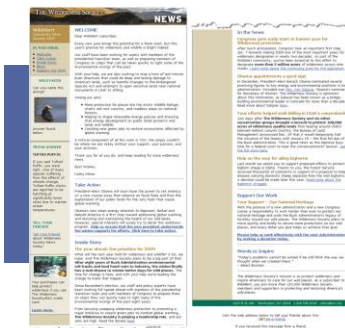Often has better response rate

Linking to a PDF newsletter is a bad idea.

Think Through Your Graphic Design

- It's useful to have a branded, polished graphic design
- But overly complex layouts can get you into trouble

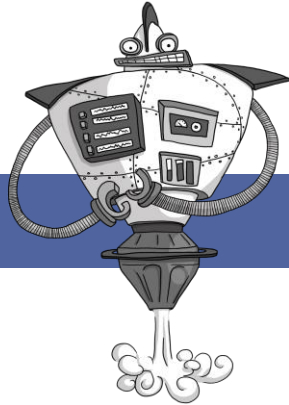---

How Long Should It Be?

The more value you provide, the more useful it is to your supporters

But the more links there are, the less likely readers are to click on any particular one.

This is quite long, targeted at a policy oriented audience.

Write Like a Human

Be personable, friendly and informal—but brief. Would you write it to a friend of yours in a personal email?
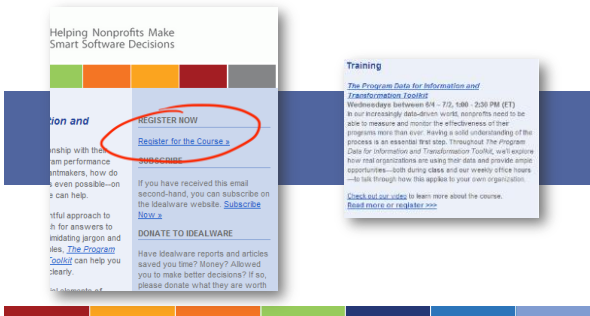
An eNewsletter Is Not a Call to Action

If you really want someone to do something, a single email that asks them only to do that will be far more effective.

Think Carefully About Where Links Go

Make sure that it's clear to the recipient where they will go and they have full context when they appear there.

Keep the medium in mind

	Email	Direct Mail
Overall Style	Casual and Personal	Formal
Salutation	Relaxed "Hello Andrea"	Formal "Dear Ms. Berry"
Body Text	Colloquial	Formal
Timing	Timely/Faster	Delayed

Building Your List

idealware

It is a three step process…

take a signup sheet to events!

send them a postcard

www.yourorganization.org

have people SIGN UP!!
…to see resources
…to get more info
…to affirm a pledge

#1 Recruit Your Current Supporters

#2 Make friends online

swap an email introduction with a partner

#3 Consider other people's lists

…or consider paying for one from a service.

But most importantly, have something worth subscribing to…
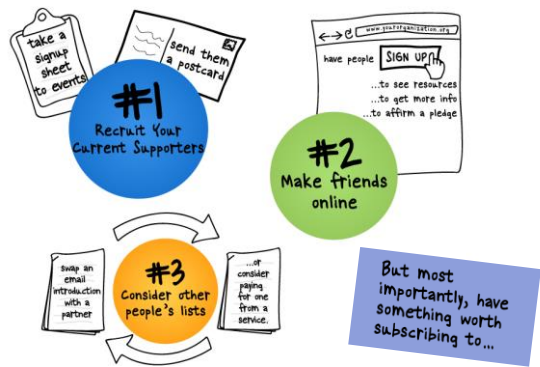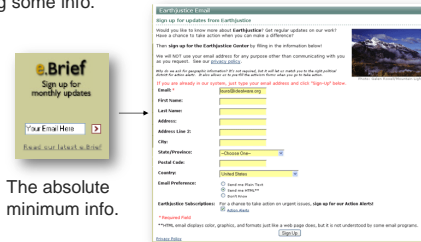
Have Something Worth Subscribing To

Make it compelling to THEM!

Make It Easy To Sign Up

A two-stage sign-up can maximize subscribers while still getting some info.

The absolute minimum info.
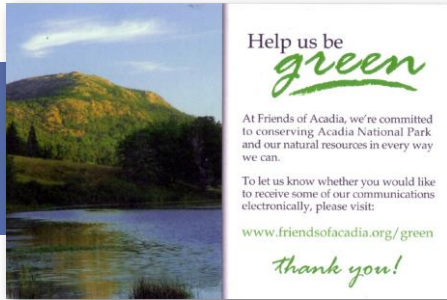
Subscribe them, then ask for a bit more detail.

The more info you ask for, the fewer people will fill out the form.

Ask on Your Website
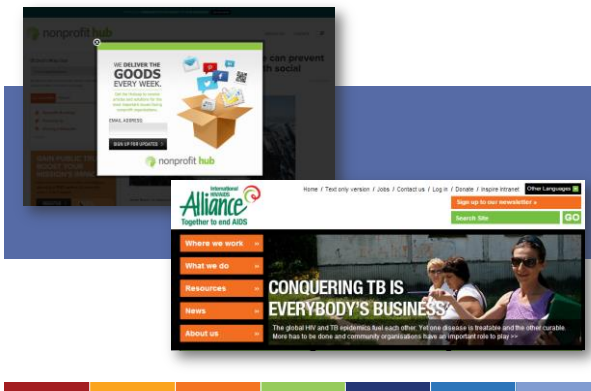
Ask Your Direct Mail List

Send them an invitation, with a way to sign up.

Help us be
green

At Friends of Acadia, we're committed to conserving Acadia National Park and our natural resources in every way we can.

To let us know whether you would like to receive some of our communications electronically, please visit:

www.friendsofacadia.org/green

thank you!

Ask on Your Paper Response Cards

Sign Up For Our Newsletter!

Our monthly newsletter features special savings, news updates from the farm, and even tips for your garden.

**Sign up is quick and easy.
Just scan the code!**

Unable to scan the code? Ask our staff how you can sign up.

_____ $500 provides a 4-day therapeutic retreat for a whole family
_____ $150 provides a 4-day therapeutic retreat for one child
_____ Other

Donations are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to **Children's Rainbow Mountain Retreat.** A matching gift from your employer may double or triple your gift.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email _____ Phone _____
☐ Check ☐ Amex ☐ MC ☐ Visa
Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____
Signature _____

Ask as a Follow-up to All Interactions

Ask everyone if you can add them to your list…

- At the end of phone calls
- At your events
- In casual conversations
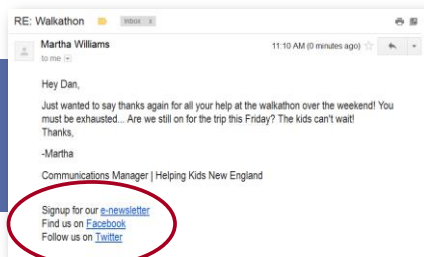- At conferences and networking opportunities

Make it a staff mandate to collect cards and email addresses.

Ask in All Automatic Emails

Someone who has just done something is a great candidate to sign up for your list.

Ask in Your Personal Emails
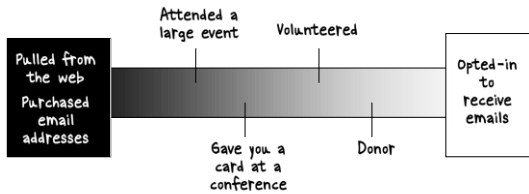

Go Where Your Constituents Are

Setting up tables or sign-up lists in your physical space can be very effective.

If you serve a small area, consider going door-to-door.

How Much Permission Do You Need?

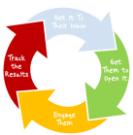There's a big gray area; you'll need to figure out your own organizational policy.

Pulled from the web
Purchased email addresses

Attended a large event

Volunteered

Gave you a card at a conference

Donor

Opted-in to receive emails

Track the Results

idealware

Some Rules of Thumb…

These vary widely based on organization and email

.05-1% Give

1-2% Act

0.5-3% Click

12-13% Open
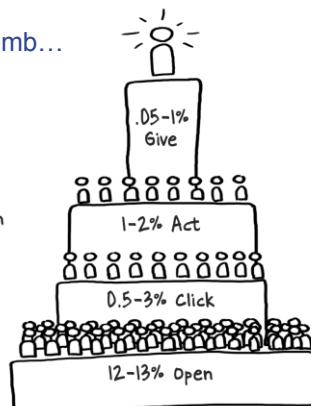
* Figures from eNonprofits 2014 Benchmark Report by M&R and NTEN

Tracking: Open Rate

The percentage of those who receive the email who actually open it.

What's typical?
12-13%

For technical reasons, open rates are a pretty iffy metric. Use with care!

How do you improve it?
• Make Subject and From line compelling
• Consider your email volume
• Consider the day and time

Tracking: Click Through Rate

The percentage of those who receive the email who click on a link.

What's typical?
1-10% – depending on the commitment implied by the click

How do you improve it?
• Make the subject line clear
• Make the link obvious
• Provide compelling descriptions

Tracking: Click Through Rate

The percentage of those who receive the email who take an action – ultimately, the best measure of appeal effectiveness.

What's typical?
0.5% for a fundraising appeal
3% for an action appeal

How do you improve it?
• Provide a compelling reason to act
• Optimize your landing page

Tracking: Unsubscribe Rate

The percentage of those who receive the email who unsubscribe from the list.

What's typical?
0.2% for a single email.

How do you improve it?
• Provide more value
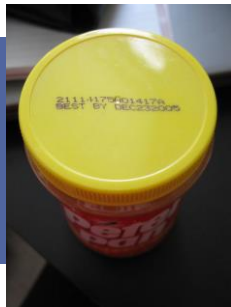• Email on a predictable schedule
• Reduce your volume

List Churn (Yearly Turnover)

Decreasing churn is very useful

About 8% **Unsubscribe**

About 5-6% go bad in other ways (discontinued email address, bounces, spam complaints)

* Figures from eNonprofits 2014 Benchmark Report by M&R and NTEN
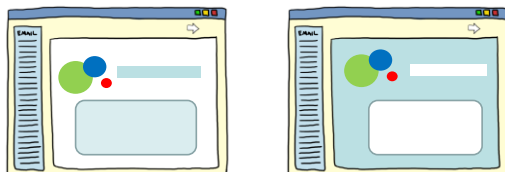
Testing Variations

A/B testing can provide useful data

And then compare the results!
Unless you have a huge list, you'll need to build data over time.

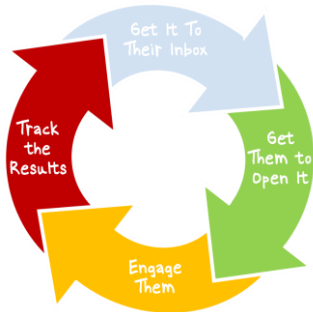## And Then Do More of What Works!

Don't Forget… Integration is Key

Ideally, deliver your message through multiple channels at once

Email: Newsletter

Website: More Info

Facebook: Outreach

Blog:
Frequent
Updates

Questions?