

12 Key Secrets to Email Newsletters that Get RESULTS!

How to Avoid Common Rookie Mistakes and
Send a Profit-Boosting E-Newsletter that
Grows Your Real Estate Business

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Key #1: Send Content that's Worth Reading

The first question to ask when it comes to your email newsletter is, "What information am I going to be sending?" Or, more specifically, "**Why should someone open this email?**"

This seems simplistic, but it's HUGE. Think about it; is there any one of your clients who's not already bombarded with marketing? People are extremely pressed for time these days, and every one of us has to sort through an email inbox that's cluttered with unwanted correspondence.

As agents, how many times can we expect clients to continue to open emails telling them that once again we have sold or listed a home?

On the flip side (and partly because people *are* so busy) **there's plenty of useful information that homeowners need and are not getting**. Things that YOU know, that can help them increase the value, safety and enjoyment they get from a current or future home.

This is how we structure the main content of all our done-for-you client e-newsletters at ToolsForRealEstate.com. After all, can you think of any current or future homeowner who *doesn't* want to increase the value, safety or enjoyment they get from their home?

Me neither. ☺ That means your clients will appreciate getting this kind of information.

So please let me say it again, because it's really important:

*People need information that helps them increase the **value, safety and enjoyment** they get from their real estate!*

Key #2: Don't Use Your Regular Email Program to Send Email Newsletters

Rookie Mistake Number One is using the email program that you use for normal mail to send out your email newsletter.

The problem is that it's not designed to send out bulk emails, even to smaller lists of thirty people. It looks unprofessional and you end up with all kinds of problems with bounced emails.

There are reputable online services that are specifically designed to let you send email newsletters to groups of people at one time. Even if your list is small you'll want to use one of these.

The great thing is that they typically have many different templates you can use to send your email out in html. 'Html format' means that while the newsletter opens up the same

way as a regular email, it shows up looking like a small web page, complete with color and graphics.

The service should also send out a text-only alternative, so that your e-newsletter can be easily read on Blackberries or PDAs.

Reputable email publishing services we recommend:

Constant Contact: Still the big workhorse, and still the simplest for a rookie to use, in our opinion.

www.constantcontact.com

IContact: Also a good service that's easy to use.

www.icontact.com

Vertical Response: A great system with many cool features.

www.verticalresponse.com

Key #3: Include Calls to Action Throughout Your Newsletter

Marketing through education, as I basically talked about in the Key #1 above, is highly effective. It demonstrates your competence, and even your character to some extent. (After all, you're taking the time to concentrate on your readers' needs, not your own.)

However, once you've positioned yourself as an expert and built up their confidence in your abilities with your newsletter content, now it's time to include calls to action in your e-newsletter, encouraging your readers to contact you.

Here's what we typically include in the done-for-you e-newsletters we provide for real estate agents:

- **Links to your website and or** blog if you have one. (If you don't have one, that's OK – you should still do an email newsletter.)
- **Links to your email address** (or better yet, a contact form like the kind you can get for free at www.formspring.com.)
- **Reminders to recommend you** to friends and colleagues.
- **Offer for a free market analysis** of their home.
- **Offer to find out the selling price** of a home they're curious about.
- **Reminder to contact you when they need a referral** to a good service provider.
- **Multiple opportunities to forward** your newsletter.

Some e-newsletters include quizzes that readers can send in the answers for, and even offer prizes. I think this is great - *if you're the kind of person who will actually keep track of it!*

What I hear from the agents who use our e-newsletter service is that the month rolls around so fast they don't even know where the time goes, and I know that from my own perspective as an agent it would only be a matter of weeks before I let the ball drop on the quiz thing.

Choose a format that gets done, consistently, even if you're swamped! Otherwise it doesn't matter if it's the best or worst marketing idea in the world. If it stays in your head or on your desk, it's useless to you.

Key #4: Don't Send Hefty Emails

Email newsletters should arrive small, ideally well under 100 kilobytes, even including the graphics.

That means that if you upload a photo of yourself or anything else you should resize it first if necessary. Make sure that the dimensions and file size are appropriate for email.

Here's an example:

A high resolution agent headshot can be over 2000 pixels wide (that's around twice as wide as the screen you're probably reading this on) and easily 2 megabytes.

For your email newsletter you'd typically resize it to around 100 to 150 pixels wide, and 25 kilobytes.

Key #5: Write Interesting Headlines

I can't tell you how often I get e-newsletters from other people – even newsletters that I *know* are probably interesting – for which the subject line is “So-and-So's Monthly E-News!”

This tells me nothing about what's inside the email, so I'm far less likely to click on it. Every click of a reader's mouse is an investment of their time, so not telling them what to expect in the email:

- a) **Lessens their initial interest**, and
- b) **Increases their perceived risk** of wasting time by clicking.

The best headlines are short and accurately represent what's in the email. For ideas on how to write great headlines, read Brian Clark's post on his Copyblogger blog:

[10 Sure-Fire Headline Formulas That Work](http://www.copyblogger.com/10-sure-fire-headline-formulas-that-work/)
(<http://www.copyblogger.com/10-sure-fire-headline-formulas-that-work/>)

It's a bit more of a sales-type format than you'll probably want for your email newsletter to your real estate clients, but there are some excellent points in there. (I recommend also reading the similar articles linked to at the bottom of the post.)

Key #6: Include More than One Type of Content

What if a reader isn't specifically tuned in to their real estate on the day they receive your e-newsletter? How do you make it worth their while to open your email anyway?

Well, here's an example. About a year or so ago I found myself consistently reading a paper newsletter that came to my home from a real estate agent couple whose geographic farm I happened to be in.

I wasn't interested in the recipes or much of the information, which was pretty canned. And obviously, as an agent myself, I'm not interested in these people as my potential real estate agents. So why did I always browse through it?

To find the article by humor columnist Dave Barry, who I think is a hoot! Knowing I would get a laugh out of it meant that it was worth an investment of my time.

What I learned from this was:

“People don't always want to learn, but they always want to laugh.”

These days in the email newsletters we write for agents we include two additional sections designed to appeal to your readers regardless of what frame of mind they're in.

One is a short list of helpful links that will save the reader time, money, or both. (These change with each issue, and they're not all real estate-related.)

The other is a lighter article, usually a short recap of an amusing or interesting news story – such as this 'Canine Quiz' from USATODAY.com:

http://www.usatoday.com/life/lifestyle/2008-06-24-dog-dna-quiz_N.htm

(Cute, diverting, and the kind of thing you would send to a friend.)

However, we never include questionable or overly 'fluffy' humor. The litmus test is, if I received this would I be glad I took the time to click on it?

Ultimately your newsletter has to reflect your personality and be something you can be proud of. The trick is to consistently come up with content that benefits your readers *regardless of what's on their mind at that moment.*

Key #7: Keep it Brief

One of the most common mistakes I see with email newsletters is that they're too LONG!

People read differently online than they do in print. They scan from heading to heading, looking for bits of information that interest them. They are not likely to plow through long paragraphs, and with one click on the 'Back' button they're gone.

Make your email newsletter reasonably concise. Write short paragraphs and eliminate words you don't need. Ask yourself, "Am I saying the same thing twice, but in two different ways?" Rewrite your article so that you make each point just once.

Tip: Make your newsletter visually interesting and easy to scan quickly, using bullet points, bold headlines and subheadings, indentations, and images where appropriate.

Key #8: Include an Unsubscribe Link

Email publishing systems like the ones we recommended in point #2 will automatically include a link in each e-newsletter issue that allows your readers to unsubscribe if they want to.

Regardless, it's your responsibility to make sure that there is an unsubscribe link in your e-newsletter, and also that people who reply to your email asking to be taken off of your list are immediately removed by you.

(If you sign up with our done-for-you newsletter service we can do this for you, by the way.) The point is, it needs to be done in order to comply with anti-SPAM regulation.

Key #9: Don't Email Too Frequently

For your real estate clients, sending them an email newsletter every three to four weeks is just about right. Our done-for-you service for agents sends out one each month, which allows some leeway in case agents want to use their account to send another update or personal note that they write themselves.

Every two weeks for real estate clients gets overwhelming, and on the flip side, if you send your e-newsletter less often than once a month you'll lose effectiveness.

If you're writing your own I suggest the once-a-month route. You'll probably find that this is a lot more to take on than you initially think! 😊

Key #10: Don't Email EVERYONE

Just because someone handed you their card at a business event 3 years ago doesn't mean that they should end up on your email list. Most email publishing services ask you to agree to specific guidelines, such as these ones used by Constant Contact:

1. My list is permission based - recipients have agreed to receive communication from me, or I have a relationship with the recipient.
2. My list is NOT a purchased list of any kind.
3. My list does not include distribution lists or mailing lists, i.e. any email addresses that mail to more than one email address.
4. My list does not contain captured email addresses, or any email addresses obtained by surfing the internet or "scraping" web pages.

A "relationship with the recipient" is generally intended to mean someone who knows who you are and wouldn't be completely surprised to receive an email from you. Typically, clients you've done real estate business with in the last couple of years fall into this category. This is also understood to apply to people who have asked you for information about real estate.

When in doubt, ask! People love to give feedback, so just call them, or email them from your personal account, and ask if you can send them your e-newsletter and get their opinion. Letting people know there's an easy unsubscribe link goes a long way. (I know I'm much more likely to be open to something if I don't feel like I'm getting badgered into it.)

Key #11: Double Check All of Your Facts

Not long ago I was researching an article for the newsletter we write for agents and needed to look up some information on FHA loan limits. *Do you know that the official government site had the wrong loan limit posted?*

The only reason I found this out was that I'm a bit neurotic by nature, and when I research articles I try to check as many different sources as possible.

Here are some tips on how to make sure your article information is accurate:

- **Check multiple sources** for each fact you're checking.
- **Evaluate the website providing the information.** Does it look professional? Could it be biased because they're trying to sell something? Does it show when it was last updated, or when the article was written?

- **Google:** “Problems with”, “Dangers of”, “New”, or “Homeowner reviews of”, followed by whatever topic you’re researching.

If there’s a predominant viewpoint that contradicts a point you’re making, it may be appropriate to at least mention it and explain the argument for and against it.

Key #12: Make Links Go Directly to the Right Pages

The other day we were having a winter storm and I clicked a link on the Seattle Times website that promised me a Seattle-specific weather update.

It took me to a generic weather page that didn’t even have an obvious search feature for me to get to the Seattle weather. *How lame is that?*

The point of any link in your email newsletter is to make life EASIER for your clients – to save them time, stress or money. It’s really frustrating for people to hear about some cool product or idea, click on a link in your email newsletter and then get taken to the home page of a website where they then have to spend their own precious time searching around trying to find the exact page you were talking about.

Make your links go directly to the exact page that you’ve created an interest in. It will be worth your time in the long run.

Important tip on linking:

Be careful where you link to! Even reputable websites sometimes have banner ads that are not ideal for all audiences, and I’ve seen great blog articles that I couldn’t link to in our e-newsletters because some of the comments left after the post were off-color. So again, double check *everything*.

Key #12.5: Include a Personal Note (But Only If You’ll Actually Do It!)

The email publishing systems we mentioned earlier make it easy for you to personalize your email newsletter. For example, you can use a greeting style such as “Dear” or “Hello” followed by your readers’ first or last names.

What I’m talking about here is actually sharing a bit more of ‘you’ in your newsletter. Not a huge blurb, but something that connects readers with your life.

(I’ve gone back and forth on this for years because I’m solidly anti-fluff when it comes to marketing. However, I’ve noticed that often I’ll read other peoples’ e-newsletters just because I’m wondering what they’re up to, and I know they’ll give a personal update in the introduction.)

Here’s an example of what I mean.

A recent issue of our done-for-you e-newsletter for agents was about preparing for winter. This is the standard introduction that went out in everyone's newsletter:

"Are you ready for winter? This month I'm passing on some tips that I'm sure will help you or someone you know **save on cold weather heating bills, and have a more eco-friendly home** at the same time.

It's not all about real estate though! Check out some of my favorite links in the 'Links that Make Life Easier' section, and be sure to read the last article for a good laugh."

Nice, short and friendly – this is a perfectly good introduction to a newsletter. However, I wanted to add a few things so I went in and tweaked it to read like this:

Are you ready for winter? Guess what - it's COMING!

I'm mentioning this because I talked with a friend yesterday who hadn't heard we're in for snow this weekend, so **be careful traveling Friday night through Sunday**.

Here's a [link to the latest local weather forecast](#).

As you can see I *finally* have a new photo people can actually recognize me from! It was a tandem shoot with Libby, and you might get a kick out of [Libby's glamour shots at the Cowbelly Studio blog](#) (just ignore the first pooch. :)

This month I'm passing on some tips that I'm sure will help you or someone you know save on cold weather heating bills, *and* have a more eco-friendly home at the same time.

It's not all about real estate though! Check out some of my favorite links in the 'Links that Make Life Easier' section, and **be sure to read the last article for a good laugh**.

It was a bit on the long side, but obviously a totally genuine note, and I got emails back from people telling me they liked my new photo and *loved* the shots of Libby (my dog) on the Cowbelly blog.

The plus side of the personal note is that it's interesting to a lot of people (as long as it doesn't drag on and on), and it really re-connects them with you.

The DOWN side, and it's a big one, is that if you're like most people – including me – you're likely to put off sending your email newsletter so that you can tweak the content and then it will end up not getting sent!

It's much better to send an email with the standard introduction than to not send one at all because you wanted to customize it. That's why our done-for-you newsletter service not only writes but also schedules and sends your email newsletter for you. The default is that it will be sent out unless the agent steps in to add content.

Which brings us to our very important bonus tip...

Bonus Tip: If Something Is Not Getting Done, AUTOMATE IT!

At ToolsForRealEstate.com we spend so much time writing and researching the email newsletters that we provide for agents that I can seriously say I would never consistently do it just for myself.

Maybe some people would – for example, if you have a great assistant who knows how to write, or if you love to put these things together yourself and have a lot of spare time.

The bottom line is that if you find you keep thinking of things you want to share with your readers but never do it, or more than a month or two passes without your newsletter going out, that is a big red flag.

(Trust me, I've been through this countless times when it comes to my own marketing!)

Every month that you don't communicate with your clients and prospects you are robbing yourself of future income!

That's why the service we provide for agents is completely 'done-for-you'. We write, create, schedule and send your email newsletter each month so that no matter how busy or distracted you get, you never have to worry about it.

(Of course you get to review the content before it goes out to make sure you're OK with it, but other than that you don't need to do anything except send us updates to your subscriber list.)

It's also super easy to get set up. We know that's where the road blocks often lie, and we do most of that for you – even down to helping you clean up your email list!

Here's the bottom line:

If you're going the do-it-yourself route, the tips in this report will go a long way towards helping you avoid common mistakes and put out a nice email newsletter.

However, if you'd like to skip the time, hassle and stress that go along with learning how to customize your account and create a great-looking email newsletter yourself (not to mention the big one – coming up with great content month after month) then there's good news - you can try our done-for-you service completely risk-free.

Yes, RISK-FREE! We just charge a small account setup fee because we do so much customization to the basic template to make your newsletter looks great. Once you sign up, you even get the first month of our service absolutely free.

You have 60 full days from the time you sign up to decide if our service is the right fit for you, and if you decide not to stay we'll refund you the setup fee AND any monthly fee you paid. That's how confident we are that you'll love our service and find it to be a great benefit to your business.

(By the way, there are no long-term contracts, so you can always leave at any time after the 60 day risk-free trial.)

So don't miss out! Go to www.ToolsForRealEstate.com/done-for-you-newsletters to learn more about our service and start your test drive.

Did you like these tips? Visit the [Tools For Real Estate Blog](#) for more smart marketing and technology tips for agents!



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