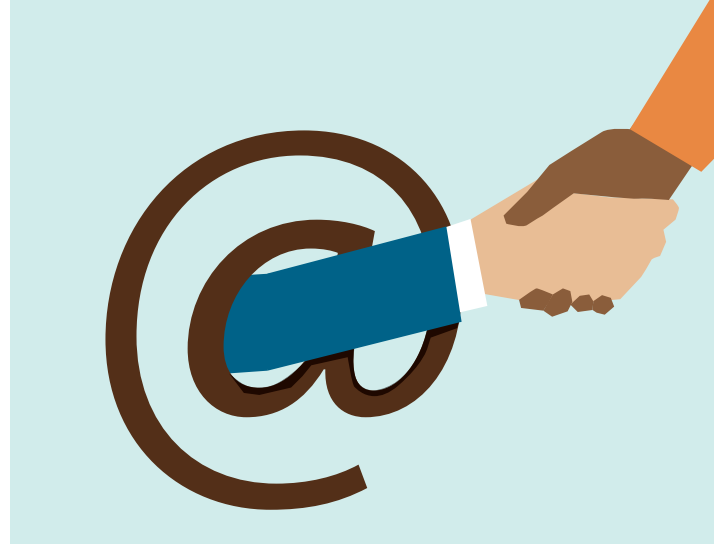


Connect through your E-Newsletter

Does your nonprofit send out an e-mail newsletter? If yes, feel free to give yourself a pat on the back. E-newsletters are among the best ways to connect with stakeholders – whether they are staff, valued donors or someone who showed enough interest to jot down their e-mail address at your last event. A few easy steps go a long way toward creating a quality newsletter that delivers both ROI and a meaningful connection.



Hook 'em

The first contact recipients have with e-mail is the subject line. Make yours descriptive and invitational, but keep it brief at less than 50 characters. Additionally, most e-mail programs display the top part of an e-mail in the preview pane. This offers 2" – 3" of space to lead with your best story or image. So, start with the most important information first.

Make it personal – and easy to read

Let's face it, people don't want to read corporate speak or nonprofit lingo. It's important to write your newsletter in a conversational tone that makes it accessible. Readers only fully read 19% of newsletters, according to usability expert Jakob Nielsen, so make sure to keep sentences and paragraphs short. Use bullets, bold headlines and chunks of text to increase readability. Don't be afraid to share testimonials featuring people involved with the organization and facts demonstrating your impact.

Compel with your content

As you write, continue to ask yourself: What emotion will this evoke in the reader? Is this relevant to their lives? Will they feel a connection with the story? Take time to think about what you want them to do when they are finished reading. Craft your stories to achieve that end.

Don't forget eye candy

Never underestimate the value of a pleasing layout or a colorful image. People respond to visuals, so don't hesitate to use eye-catching pictures to tell your story along with the text. Use captions and call-outs to highlight messages so that everyone can share in the story, even if they choose not to read every article.

Don't skimp on the proofing

Your newsletter may have compelling articles, but the process doesn't end there. If it has misspellings and grammatical errors, readers will notice and may think less of your organization. Value the details as much as you value your brand. Think of it as building credibility with every crossed "t" and dotted "i."

Offer real value

Creating quality content is the first step in creating value for readers. The next is to provide readers with something they didn't have before. Offer links to outside sources. Share dates for important events. And always include a call to action. Whether asking people to donate, register for an event or simply start a conversation, let them know how they can help. After all, readers care about your organization. Reward them for their time and commitment with a thoughtful and imaginative glimpse into your world, delivered straight to their inbox.