

that are fast-moving, current, need regular updating and which appeal to an international market – and information which would be difficult or expensive to publish and sell worldwide in a conventional paper format.

Three: Always test as you go. When you are selling information online it is very easy to market a product that is still in the course of preparation and see what interest it creates – before actually going ahead and producing the product. You can also change your sales literature, prices etc., at the touch of a button and find the best way to sell it too.

Four: Write it out first! Most online information products start out in exactly the same way as paper products ...with a good idea, an outline and a written manuscript. This manuscript then becomes the basis of your dynamic online product.

How To Create the Perfect Information Product

At the beginning of this section, we compared virtual information products to real, physical products like clothes, food and cars. Despite the many differences this is a good comparison to make when creating your own products to sell on the Internet. Think of it this way: Just as a physical product like a washing machine has key features – for example, keen price, easy to use, washes clothes effectively, and is reliable – so every good information product should have key features too. The reason is simple: It is these key features which make customers want to buy it!

When planning and creating your information product you need to make sure it has as many strong key features as possible. These strong key features are as follows, and you could use this section as a *checklist* when creating your own products:

- It Should Inform: Does your product tell your customer something they don't know? This really is the acid test of any information product. Base your product on lots of facts and pack it with 'I didn't know that!' appeal.
- It Should Enable: Knowing a particular piece of information is one thing, but what is the purpose of knowing that information? The best information products enable their users to do something with that information – such as to maintain, change or enhance their lives using knowledge.
- It Should Educate: The very best information products develop the pool of knowledge and understanding on a given subject – in other words they educate. And a good product should do it in a way that is interesting and practical.



An e-zine or newsletter can include some or all of the following: An editorial, news, a news digest, articles, features, product/service reviews, investigations, offers, freebies, surveys, resources and further contact information. You should also add your personality to your publication – this is what makes it special. Fun and motivational elements are good in most newsletters and e-zines. Create an editorial in your own distinctive style so your readers can get to know you and can interact with you. Guest writers also help to develop a strong identity for your publication.

The great thing with an e-zine is that you can experiment with new and unconventional ideas, and quickly see what the response is!

Tips for Writing Newsletters and E-Zines

- Start with a strong subject line. Make each customer want to read your bulletin immediately. For example, put ‘Property Hotspots Breaking NewsJust Released’. The words ‘Breaking News’ and ‘Just Released’ all create urgency.
- Give strong reasons for reading on, in the introduction or editorial. Hook your customer by bullet-pointing the topics you’re covering at the start of the publication. And make these topics sound so fascinating, exciting or downright intriguing that they’ve just got to read on. Remember, uninteresting e-mails are very easy to delete.
- Mix up the various elements you include in an interesting way – some short, some long pieces, some newsy snippets, some article style.
- Use a structured format for articles. Start each topic with a benefit-driven headline in bold letters. Follow this with the key details and the ‘how to’ of receiving the benefit. End each topic by encouraging your reader to take that ‘how to’ action now, whilst you’ve got their full attention and enthusiasm.
- Remember, successful newsletters or e-zines are a long term project for both publishers and readers. If you go for non-stop, hard-sell topics one after the other your customer may delete your bulletins straightaway. By using ‘soft sell’ the customer will really feel you’re giving them something worthwhile and valuable, and that puts them in a positive mood towards you.
- End with a warm and friendly sign-off. The most effective writing builds that one-to-one relationship between ‘you’ (the customer) and ‘I’ (the writer).
- Add a benefit-driven ‘PS’. These publications should close on a high note, leaving your subscriber wanting to discover more, order those special



information product. Opt-in means that these subscribers have signed up for or requested to receive your e-zine. Don't send it out to anyone and everyone, even by way of a 'freebie' to promote subscriptions. This will not only devalue the information you are providing but could result in 'spam' complaints.

If you are promoting or selling your publication on a website locate a 'subscribe now' button for it in a prominent part of your home page, where it is virtually impossible to miss. Pop-up boxes also work well for subscriptions, especially free ones.

When customers subscribe to your publication always send them a confirmatory e-mail. In the e-mail, tell the new subscriber how frequently you will be e-mailing them so that they come to look forward to your mailing – and also how they can unsubscribe. Don't be offended if someone unsubscribes, especially from a free product. It actually improves the quality of your subscription list!

If possible *automate* your subscribe and unsubscribe processes. Automating your subscriber process will make your site more professional and will also save you time, instead of having to manually add and remove subscribers. There are several ways you can mail out your newsletter or e-zine easily:

- Your Own E-Mail Server: When you first start out, using your e-mail server is an easy and inexpensive way to mail out your newsletter.
- Autoresponder Systems: This is a system that automatically sends out your product in response to a subscription request from new readers. An option that is easy and free for smaller start-up publications is to use the autoresponder that comes with many Internet access or e-mail packages, or to subscribe to a free autoresponder service such as SendFree or FreeAutoBot.
- Mailing List Management Software: Services like Yahoo and Topica etc. offer free mailing list management. These are a good way to get started on a tight budget, but lack advanced control functions and may result in your subscribers being sent unsolicited advertising.

Once your list grows, it is best to purchase an easy and effective mailing list management package. You can find these using a simple Internet search, and some possibilities are listed in the Appendix.

How To Make Money Selling E-Zine Adverts.

The sale of advertising space can be used to finance a free newsletter or e-zine, and make extra profits from a charged-for one. Advertisers find e-mail publications very attractive, not only because rates are low compared to other media, but also because, by choosing the right ones, they can target their chosen



The Periodical Publishers

www.ppa.co.uk

Association (PPA)

The PPA is the organisation of magazines and business-to-business (B2B) media in the UK. Their website contains much useful information, facts, figures and contacts relating to publishing.

The Publishers Association

www.publishers.org.uk

The leading trade organisation for book, journal and electronic publishers in the UK. Much useful information on books and the book and journal industry.

Topica

www.topica.com

Free mailing list management.

WebCompiler

<http://www.x2net.com/webcompiler/>

E-book publishing software to compress HTML and images into a single EXE.

Yahoo

groups.yahoo.com/group/

Announcement list good for promoting products.

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Please Note: Websites included in this appendix, or elsewhere within the course, are all operational at the time of writing and I do aim to check and update these listings on a regular basis. However, due to the nature of the Internet and the way in which websites can appear and disappear without notice it is always possible you may find some sites which have been renamed, moved or removed.