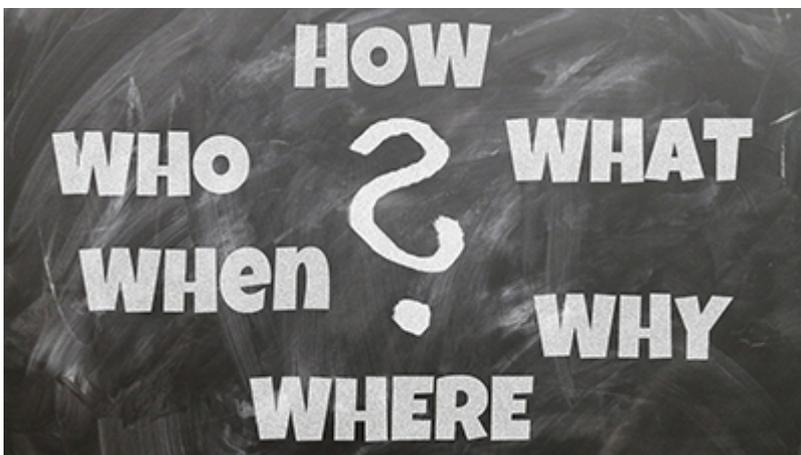




If your sports organization is like most, you have an online newsletter. Before that, you probably had a print newsletter. Of all the communications genres, newsletters often get the least amount of thought and planning simply because they've been around for so long. That's a shame because several studies show that email marketing gives businesses and non-profits a greater return on investment than social media or online ads. When done well, your newsletter can attract new members, support your fundraising efforts and help fans register for your events.

In this module, we've uncovered the top 10 ways to make your newsletter live up to its potential.

## 1. Ask yourself why you have an e-newsletter



Many organizations have a newsletter simply because they've always had one. Unfortunately, these newsletters often try to please multiple audiences and fulfill multiple goals, making them cluttered and unfocused.

Your newsletter should have one concrete goal. Maybe you want to drive traffic to your website. Maybe you want to engage people who don't use social media, fundraise or increase registration at your events. Whatever goal you choose, it should be related to your overall [communications plan](#) and you should be able to measure it using analytics.

## 2. Meet your reader's needs



This is true of all communications properties, but it's especially important for newsletters. Let's face it: the average Internet user gets flooded with emails. One study even found that we spend 13 hours a week responding to emails. If you want to avoid being sent to junk mail, you need to offer your reader something he or she wants instead of just promoting your own organization. In fact, marketing expert Ginny Soskey suggests that 90% of your newsletter should be informational and only 10% should promote your products and services.

Knowing exactly what your readers want from you will also help you create a focused goal. If you discover, however, that your members have no clear need for a newsletter, you might consider devoting your time elsewhere or replacing a general newsletter with focused e-blasts.

### **3. Create a connection**



In our [communications planning modules](#), we've told you that all of your communications properties should be linked to one another. Your newsletter is a great way to connect your communications properties. Articles in your newsletter should link to your website. Your newsletter should be promoted across your social media channels. Many email marketing services like Constant Contact also allow you to create sign-up forms to drive event registration through your newsletter. We'll discuss this topic in greater depth in our module about growing your email list.

## 4. Be consistent



To build an audience, consistency is key. Create a content calendar to schedule your newsletters and stick to this schedule. By planning ahead, you can ensure that you always have interesting content for your readers. During the off season, for example, you might write articles about what your members have to look forward to next season or how your athletes can stay in shape.

## 5. Use a great headline



Have you ever opened an email because it had a catchy headline? Harkening back from their print days, most newsletters are simply named 'Organization Name Newsletter - Winter Edition.' This, however, is a missed opportunity. Your title may be the only part of the email that your audience reads, so make it count by highlighting your newsletter's top call to action.

There are several different heading styles that email marketers consider to be effective, including:

- Asking a question: "What's the number one cause of hockey injuries?"
- Sparking curiosity: "You'll never guess what was going through Bob Smith's mind when he scored the winning goal."
- Describing a benefit: "We're offering 20% off registration fees for our newsletter subscribers."
- Asking "the reason why:" "One rugby team started doing yoga. The reason why will surprise you!"

## 6. Go Mobile



Up to 70% of readers will read your newsletter on their phones, so make sure that your newsletter is formatted for mobile. This is easy to do on a basic level if you use an email marketing service like Constant Contact or MailChimp. To make your newsletter even easier to read on mobile, test your newsletter by viewing it on your phone before you send it. Is the text too hard to read? Is it too difficult to click on a link? Does a long headline take up the full screen? Editing your newsletter with a mobile user's needs in mind will help them avoid frustration.

## 7. Keep it simple



The best newsletters are often the simplest. Did you know that many email marketers recommend that your newsletter contain no more than five stories? After all, you don't just want your readers to spend 20 minutes reading all of your content. You want them to do something, such as buying a ticket to your event or visiting your website. Too many newsletter articles can cause them to lose focus.

To meet your reader's needs, you should also keep your design simple. Use lots of white space, a large font and clear headlines.

## 8. Put your newsletter to the test



Every community has unique communication needs. To better tailor your newsletter to your audience, make sure to test elements frequently and question your assumptions. Test only one element at a time and use analytics such as open rates and click-through rates to evaluate that element's success. For example, you could try sending your email more frequently, using a unique headline, or adding more visuals. Some organizations even conduct A/B testing where half their newsletter list receives one version and the other half receives another.

## 9. Use great visuals



The jury is actually still out on the use of visuals. Some studies suggest that newsletter readers want to see great visuals of your organization in action. Other studies, however, suggest that readers only say that they want visuals and that text-based newsletters actually have a much higher click-through rate.

My own data suggests that members of sports organizations respond well to visuals as long as they do not clutter the newsletter. Choose just a few strong, compelling photos and stay away from clip art and stock photos. A little bit of testing should help you determine which strategy is right for you.

## 10. Take advantage of the preview



Most email clients offer a preview of the first few words of an email. Here is how Google displays emails.

To entice your readers to open the newsletter, make sure that you take advantage of these 10 - 12 words by including a clear call to action. Some email marketing services like Constant Contact allow you to fill in this field directly. With others, you must simply add your preview content to the top of your email.

In the next modules of our E-newsletter series, we'll help you write a successful e-blast and grow your email list. Got questions about these topics? Have a newsletter tip to share? Get in the conversation by tweeting @ViasportBC or emailing [info@viasportbc.ca](mailto:info@viasportbc.ca).

Miss the last module? Check out all eight modules in the [viaSport Communications Toolkit](#).

[Download PDF](#)

### RESOURCES:

<http://www.nptechforgood.com/2014/09/28/10-e-newsletter-best-practices-for-nonprofits/>

<http://webmarketingtoday.com/articles/115139-4-Email-Newsletter-Best-Practices-to-Drive-Conversions/>

<http://www.mailonthemark.com/2015/11/6-e-newsletter-best-practices-for-2016/>

<http://meetcontent.com/blog/best-practices-email-newsletter-content-planning/> **EXAMPLES OF BEST NEWSLETTERS:**

<http://webbyawards.com/winners/2015/websites/general-website/email-newsletters/>

<http://optinmonster.com/your-2015-guide-for-email-marketing-best-practices/>

<http://optinmonster.com/your-2015-guide-for-email-marketing-best-practices/>

Featured Image



## **Module 10: Top 10 ways to improve your sport organization's newsletter**

Dateline Wednesday, February 3, 2016 - 10:15am

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.viasport.ca/communications-toolkit/top-10-ways-improve-your-sport-organizations-newsletter>