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## Truths and Myths of E-Newsletter Marketing

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It should not be surprising that so many churches today have or are considering an e-newsletter. Some are professionally prepared, while others are little more than an e-mail announcing the next service's topic.

Although we are all swamped with e-mail—much of it unwanted—the simple truth is that e-newsletters work. Study after study indicates that e-newsletters can be an effective way to sell a product or a service or even to promote a church.

If you now have or are considering starting an e-newsletter, the following truths and myths of e-newsletter marketing may prove helpful.

### The best time to send out an e-newsletter is Wednesdays or Thursdays, early in the morning.

False, although this is a commonly held belief. Studies indicate that e-newsletters are most powerful if sent out Saturdays mornings or Sundays. The reason, it is believed, is that people are less rushed and more willing to at least scan the newsletter.

### Newsletters sent out on Saturdays have the lowest unsubscribe rates.

True. People tend to unsubscribe from newsletters most often on Tuesdays and then Mondays.

### It is best to send out an e-newsletter only when there is something special to announce.

False. The most effective newsletters are those that are sent out regularly.

### Sending out a newsletter once a month is a good frequency.

True, but studies do indicate monthly newsletters have the highest click-through rates (readers actually read what is sent and then click through to a Web site to read the rest). However, a little trial and error is called for. Some companies have great success sending out e-newsletters every day to promote a product or service or announce a sale. Most of the church newsletters I receive are sent out weekly. Try sending yours out weekly. If there are too many unsubscribes, try sending it out every other week or monthly.

### Having lots of links is okay in a newsletter.

True. Online newspapers try to restrict links to about two to four per article; however, in a newsletter, having several links is fine. In fact, if a link takes readers to the sender's Web site, it can make the newsletter an even more powerful marketing tool.

### It is always best to have readers subscribe to the newsletter.

True again, and there are laws that enforce this now. But we should take this a step further. Try to make your subscribers think they are special—that this is an exclusive group—by inviting them to sign up to become "a member of our newsletter family." Members stick around longer and are less likely to unsubscribe.

### Always include a "send to a friend" link in your newsletter.

False. Studies indicate these are rarely used. It can be far more effective to request newsletter subscribers to "Like us on Facebook" or "Follow us on Twitter."

### Always post the name of the church or organization in the "From" section.

True, but you can do even better. Often it is best to personalize who is sending out the newsletter. For instance, it can have more impact to indicate the newsletter is coming directly from the minister by using the minister's name rather than just the name of the church.

### It is important to see how your newsletter looks on a PC format as well as a Mac format.

True, but less so now than it was a few years ago. Today there is often little difference between how a newsletter looks on a PC vs. on a Mac. Of greater importance is how it looks on a mobile device or tablet. If predictions hold true, computers as we know them will be used less and less for communications purposes, replaced by iPhone and iPad devices.

### Your newsletter title is the best subject line.

False. Using words such as "Weekly Bulletin" or "Daily Diges" may tell what the newsletter is but are not enticing. For a church facility, it may work better to name the week's sermon, bring in a short quote that ties in to that specific newsletter or label it in some way that draws people in.

However, be cautious about the words used in the subject line. Some Internet service providers use spam filters that look for keywords such as "you won," "just for you," "raffle," and "prize." Sometimes even the name of a sender if it is a company or political organization may be considered spam by the Internet provider with the result the newsletter is blocked or sent to the subscriber's "junk box." To avoid this, simply test the subject line on your own system first to see if it passes through without a hitch.

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