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Online Success Guide

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Ezine Strategies

**Tips, Tricks, and Tactics for Mastering
Ezine or Newsletter Marketing**



Online Success Guide

Ezine Strategies

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1. Introduction to Successful Ezine Marketing

1.1 Why Offer Your Own Ezine Newsletter?

Ezine Newsletters, delivered straight to a subscribers' email, are one of the fastest and most effective ways of providing relevant information to your audience. A good ezine will have many benefits for the publisher. It can target its audience, learn its preferences, and provide subscribers with what they need. An ezine can be a free (or low cost) method of increasing your revenues, and helping you to reach the right customers for your products. You can use your ezine to establish your credibility and earn free publicity. Besides, you can also sell advertising space in your ezine and earn additional profits.

An ezine offers what everyone needs – free useful information! You have the liberty of writing and publishing anything under the sun, anything that you feel passionate about, anything that you firmly believe in. You not only get others to listen to you, you also get them to click on the ads published within your ezine and earn a part of your advertisers' profit in return.

There are innumerable benefits of starting your own ezine. You can increase your business to multifold proportions if you utilize your options effectively. One major advantage is that you communicate

directly with your potential customers without the help of any mediator. This makes it easier for you to enhance your subscriber base. A large subscriber base implies that your publication and advertisements will reach more customers. This also means that you can increase your sales merely with the click of a button.

A few other benefits

An ezine is more widely read and more easily accessible compared to a webpage. Sometimes, webpage navigation, if not well-designed, can become monotonous. Plus, the convenience of having an ezine delivered straight to the subscribers' inbox, which they can read whenever they want, is a one-up for an ezine. Besides, you don't need to beat around the bush when you want your readers to get your point. You can convey your message directly without going through any clutter.

The key to improving your subscriber base is GREAT CONTENT. The number of active readers would multiply if you deliver high-quality information. You have to establish your reputation in the minds of your readers and prove incessantly that you really know what you are writing about. The more credible your content, the easier it would be for your readers to appreciate your work.

Ezines are great marketing tools for other products. However, to be successful at it, you need to carefully plan each of your strategies. First, you should do some research and find out what should be your target clientele. Once that is done, you need to find information like names and email addresses of targeted readers and feed it into your ezine database. All you have to do is simply write a few interesting and effective articles about the product. For example, if your product is a vacuum cleaner, search for customers interested in this and write articles that will arrest their attention.

You can write about “effective cleaning techniques,” “why vacuum cleaners are the best and most efficient cleaning device,” “what are the newest gadgets available in the market,” and so on. Your readers would surely appreciate unique as well as useful information – and, just when you know that you have convinced your clients to invest in a new vacuum cleaner, you can place your ad for the vacuum cleaner strategically in your ezine.

Through effective marketing techniques you can achieve a phenomenal increase in sales. You can not only minimize your total cost but also earn huge return on investments through ezine publishing. Compare it with other ways of advertising and you will realize how easy it is to

save money when you employ these tactics. If you use postal mail to send flyers, information brochures, etc., to your potential customers, your message might not reach the right person and it can cost you a lot of wasted money.

Similarly, billboards, sticking up flyers in public places and other offline marketing gimmicks cannot ensure that your ad will be noticed by the right people. Ezine marketing is one of the smartest advertising techniques, especially when you are just starting out.

Another advantage of the ezine is that you could also place ads from external parties and earn additional income through the revenues generated by these ads. Besides earning cash from ads, you could also increase traffic on your website as people who receive your ezine will probably want to check it out. By adding feedback forms and asking for input from your readers, you can even make relevant changes to your website, thus benefiting even more.

You should also make it a point to regularly seek feedback about your ezine as well. Feedback generates a sense of credibility amongst most people. They start thinking of you as a real person. It instills a feeling of security in their mind that your ezine is not spamming their system,

but is operated by a caring human being who makes an effort to improve the quality of the information provided.

As time goes on, and you get better acquainted with market trends and consumer behavior, you can introduce surveys, bulletin boards, questionnaires, and contests to encourage more reader participation. This is not just an interesting pastime for your readers, but it also helps in developing community spirit among them.

1.1.1 Getting Started

You may have many reasons for starting an ezine, but you cannot focus on all aspects at the same time. Keep all your reasons at the back of your mind, but focus on that *one reason* which motivated you to create your own ezine. Throughout your campaign, you must stick to that singular reason, come up with ways to be resourceful, and devise a plan that ultimately helps you reach your goal. Sounds easy doesn't it? But that's not necessarily so...

Ezine marketing requires considerable dedication and careful planning. There are numerous strategies, tips, and guidelines available out there on how to be successful in this business – some really good and some really not so good. That's where you will find this Online Success Guide

to be most useful. It clearly presents a number of proven tactics based on successful models. It goes beyond the haze and unsubstantiated claims of many “experts” and puts before you a plan that actually works. *So let’s get started!*

When you have your goal in mind, the first thing you must do is determine your target customers and their demographics (social characteristics). Most publishers tend to ignore this absolutely vital aspect, and they will suffer because of it. See if your ezine is for young people, middle-aged or older people. People of a variety of age groups use the internet so you must not restrict your mindset. Will your ezine be read by those who are experts or just plain amateurs? Are your readers going to be active shoppers? Bored housewives? Students looking for information that can be used in school projects? Freelancers? The range is almost boundless. Make sure that you are targeting the right age group and the right type of readers.

Once you’ve gathered enough information, you need a name for your ezine. The name must not be misleading or excessively flashy. It should give a clear idea to your readers about what to expect when they start reading your ezine.

An ezine that gives information about the stock market should not be titled "Tips and tricks on how to make big bucks!" Although, you might feel that you are giving them valuable tips about the stock market, it doesn't ensure that they will make big bucks – or any bucks at all, nowadays! The key is to have a title that justifies its claim. Simply put, your ezine can be titled "Tips and tricks for stock market investments."

When you send your ezine to various subscribers it is important to identify exactly whom your ezine will be from. This helps your readers relate better to your ezine since it will appeal to them on a more human level. Even if your ezine is from a company and not specifically from you, it still makes more sense to set a personal tone for your ezine as if you are talking directly with the readers.

These are just a few pointers to help you get into the ezine mode. We will be discussing each of these and many more in greater detail as we progress through this Online Success Guide.

1.2 Creating and Publishing Your Own Ezine

"Ezine" means "Electronic Magazine." It does what it says: It is a magazine in electronic format. Just like a standard magazine subscription through snail-mail, readers can opt to receive the ezine

regularly through their email. With ezines, spam is not acceptable. Readers are free to cancel their subscription at any time with a simple “unsubscribe” message to the ezine publisher.

You can publish an ezine on any topic you wish. Generally, an ezine consists of two or three articles on a particular subject, a few relevant advertisements or classifieds, some information about the website that publishes the ezine, and information on how to cancel a subscription.

Most ezines are free, but in order to pay the writers, the web space providers, and other expenses, you need to find out a way to balance out your expenses and earn desirable income to keep your ezine publishing business afloat.

There are plenty of ezine publishers all over the internet. An ezine acts as a platform for communicating with your readers, and how you utilize this platform depends on your foresight and the quality of information you provide.

The primary purpose of your ezine is to establish your credibility as a trustworthy writer/publisher over the net. Hence, it is advisable that you stick to writing effective articles that interest and amaze your

readers. You can also occasionally publish items from guest writers, freelancers, or include relevant articles that you can borrow straight from sites such as [EzineArticles](#) or [GoArticles](#), and publish for free. However, these must be used unedited, along with the author's information and website link.

One good strategy is to give a little bit of information about the author or subject matter just before the article begins. You may give your opinion about the topic which gives an impression to your readers that you are extremely thorough and professional.

You need to develop a reputation in the market, you need to establish in the minds of your readers that your ezine has good content and they will be able to enrich themselves if they subscribe to it. Flooding them with too much information too soon is a bad idea.

1.3 The Roadmap to Ezine Success

There are so many ezines written about every imaginable topic, what can you possibly do to stand out? You can start with positive thinking. It is important to believe that you will create a unique, extraordinary and highly informative ezine which will be truly outstanding – an ezine that will rise above all the ordinary run-of-the-mill ezines.

To create a worthwhile ezine, you should always feel confident and optimistic and never sway from your determination. But never forget, a successful ezine must be *profitable* to you – the costs of creating it, publishing it and sending it to hundreds, or thousands, of readers should not exceed what you earn from it.

Study your competition and see how they market their own ezines. Take a tip or two from them. You must figure out your niche market and your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) that sets it apart from the rest of the competition.

For instance, if you consider publishing an ezine on the wine industry, do your market research and narrow down the topic by choosing the right demographics, industry, country, and so on. In this case, think about what country/region you are going to focus on – France, Australia, Chile, California, Italy... Sure, you want to write about wine, but what exactly? Wine making, wine storing, selling wine barrels, cork making, wine glasses – the choices are virtually unlimited. You can be creative and choose a new topic for every issue of your ezine and make it an all-encompassing newsletter exclusively about wine. This will establish you as an expert in the minds of your readers.

There may be plenty of ezine publishers writing on the same topic. From a reader's point of view, if I am interested in the subject, I might subscribe for, let's say, 10 ezine issues. However, I might not read them all. I might just skim through them and read only those articles that really capture my attention. If you want me to really appreciate the content of your ezine, you must make it extra special.

The roadmap to success has 3 basic steps: The first step is to identify your strengths and weaknesses to determine your area of expertise; the second step is to learn about your target readers; and the final step is to figure out your real purpose behind creating an ezine. Once you find the answers to these questions, you are halfway there.

Let's discuss these 3 steps in some detail:

1. Determine your area of expertise

Everybody has at least one thing that they really, truly like. It can be something technical and professional like computers, real estate, and so on. It can also be recreational or some kind of hobby like sports, wine, video games, etc. You may feel strongly about issues like law, women's rights, or emotional and social

issues such as raising children. Then there are fringe areas like strong artificial intelligence, Ufology, or Remote Viewing.

Weave your ezine around the topic that you feel most strongly about. You will be able to pour out your heart and soul only when you truly enjoy the subject matter. Use your imagination, but don't go overboard. Make sure that you are not creating just another run-of-the-mill ezine that will be lost among many similar ones.

You need to be outstanding in order to shine more brightly than the rest. Even if you choose a subject that has already been covered by many others – but you feel you have something unique to say about it – then go ahead, challenge your imagination and get it out there.

2. Understand your target audience

This is a very important aspect of your ezine campaign. You must realize that it is essential for you to define your target readers. People are different and they need to be approached differently. Once you've identified your readers, you will be able

to decide on the content of your ezine. You may also decide what products or services you intend to market through your ezine.

The first thing you need to know is the general age of your target readership. That can help you set a tone for your ezine. It will be helpful if you have additional information such as their location, education, income and expenses, and basic family information – that way you can target specific advertisements.

You also need to determine your specific target market. Let's say your business is about online shopping, but that's a very broad topic since "shopping" can mean almost anything. You can narrow it down to "book shopping." To narrow it down even further, you can focus on "used books shopping."

If you would like to *really* target a niche market, you can go for "rare and used books shopping and collecting." That way, you are hitting a highly specific, narrow market with no room for ambiguity. Your website and ezine should be unique and clearly focused. The less competition you have, the better are your chances of achieving success.

3. What is your purpose behind creating an ezine?

Do not underestimate your readership. If they form a negative opinion about your ezine, it could ruin your chances for success. You need to find out what your readers expect. Do they want tips and tricks, constant and timely information and updates, recipes, data and reports, technical information...?

Work out a proper strategy to determine the behavior of your readers. Undertake sample surveys, tests, and research the net to see what *you* would do if you were the reader and wanted to subscribe to an ezine like yours. Study your competitors and see what they have to offer. Determine the USP of your ezine and stick to it. This will help you stay focused and not get swayed from your goal.

1.4 Best Practices for Publishing the Ideal Ezine

Ezines are primarily free information delivered to the inbox of subscribers. However, you can still make good money out of publishing and delivering free information. This is best done by generating advertising revenue. An ideal ezine should have great content, have a phenomenal reader base, generate advertising income, and have credibility over the internet.

One effective policy is "If you've got it, flaunt it!" If you have any article published in any reputable magazine elsewhere, either in paper or in the electronic medium, say so in your ezine. Suppose you are planning to write an article on the 10 best summer foods. You may have written an article on the benefits of fresh fruits which was published on the Food Network website. You can put a link to that article on your ezine with a line saying "Want more info? Check out my article about the benefits of fresh fruits on FoodNetwork.com." Your readers will be impressed that your articles are being published on such a well-known site, enhancing your credibility enormously. They will trust you more and look at your suggestions differently.

However, before you publish your first issue, you should decide whether or not you want to run advertisements. There are some pros and cons of running ads, especially at the beginning.

Advantages

- You generate revenue, which helps you recover the costs for publishing and delivering your ezine.
- You can market your own products by placing ads in your ezine, which is an added benefit.

- You can provide an additional service to your readers by giving them valuable information about related products and services that are featured in various issues of your ezine.

Disadvantages

- If you abuse your relationship with your readers by offering tons of unnecessary ads, they might be offended and consider your mail to be unwanted spam marketing.
- Your readers might question your sincerity if you focus on placing too many ads and not on writing creative and resourceful articles that enrich the quality of your ezine.
- Also, you are risking your trustworthiness and standing in the internet community if the ads you run are of poor taste, or the ads' products turn out to be ripoffs.

Ezine ads on the whole can be extremely beneficial. They can attract more readers as well as publishers, and provide a boost to your campaign. However, you may be better off by keeping away from ads for at least the first few issues of your ezine. Once you get the hang of

publishing newsletters and establish some sort of credibility, then you could start advertising.

Moving on, another good practice to follow is to respect your readers' time and not flood them with plenty of emails with exceedingly long articles. Keeping them short and snappy will be greatly appreciated. Pre-determine how often you should publish your ezine and study the behavior of your readers.

Timeliness is of great significance. If your ezine is published every two weeks, it should *always* be that way. No exceptions to the rule. You must understand that your readers will be pleased about your regularity and consistency. If you miss an issue, you lose your standing. "Out of sight, out of mind" is a maxim you should plaster on the walls of your workplace.

Don't forget to assess your progress at regular intervals. You should evaluate the number of subscribers to your ezine and find out how many people have opted to discontinue their membership and how many are actual recipients of your ezine. If you have an interactive ezine, or one that encourages participation from its readers, you can

also determine how many of your readers are active members of your ezine community.

Understand that frequent changes to your ezine will look wholly unprofessional. Do not go overboard in constantly changing the look, tone and content of your ezine.

1.5 Formatting Your Ezine

Getting a great idea to start an ezine is one thing; to actually create one and format it is totally different. You have to strictly follow the norms and not deter from your pre-set format, otherwise you risk your consistency in the eyes of your readers.

The following are some of the important features you need to keep in mind while formatting your ezine:

Subject Line

The subject line is very important as this is the first thing that will catch your readers' eyes when your ezine is delivered to their inbox. If a reader subscribes to your ezine, it does not necessarily mean that he/she will read all the issues of it without fail. Your subject of choice should be catchy, brief and relevant.

It should not be flashy or misleading, otherwise it may be deemed as a cheap marketing gimmick. Let's say that your ezine is targeted at contemporary young urban women between the ages of 25 and 40. Don't use a juvenile subject line such as "Funky Tips for Funky Babes!" A better option is "For today's woman of substance."

Cc/Bcc

It is generally advisable to make up a distribution list of your subscribers and send your ezine directly to that list. Then you won't need to type in the email addresses of your subscribers repeatedly. However, if you ever have to type the email addresses manually, never put the addresses of your readers in the "cc" (carbon copy) section, because that is open for all to see. If you must, use the "bcc" (blind carbon copy) section, as that will hide the email addresses of all the contacts you put under that field.

One more reason not to use the "cc" section is to avoid unsolicited mails to other readers. In case any of your readers click on the "reply all" button, all the contacts mentioned in the "to" and "cc" field will receive that email. Some might even steal the contact info of your subscribers and send illegal spam to all of them. Hence, be considerate and never misuse the information that you have collected.

Also, you can format the “reply-to” section of the email header in such a way that if a user clicks on “reply” in his/her email, the reply reaches the address pre-specified by you. This can come in handy if you want to use a specific address to send out the ezine, and another to receive the replies of your readers. You will find more about these details in chapter “4.3 Distributing Ezines Yourself.”

Many editors choose to take advantage of an automatic service that sends your ezine at regular intervals. This service is such that if the reader replies to the email address generated by that service, the message would bounce back, as it is just a gibberish address generated by the system. In order to avoid that, you can format the “reply-to” field. That way the chain of communication is not going to be lost in transition.

Characters and Fonts

Some email programs accept HTML, some don't – some have images turned off, and some don't run JavaScript. Preferably, use plain text in your ezine because your readers have a variety of email programs and they have set up those programs differently. However, HTML content with graphics has gained popularity recently. The best solution is to create the ezine using both – text and HTML.

Also, don't use **Bold** and *italics* unless your content really demands it, otherwise they can appear to be gibberish. If you need to emphasize your idea, you can use asterisks or quotation marks.

Don't use CAPITAL LETTERS in your text as it is considered to be YELLING in internet lingo. But it is permissible to use capital letters in headings and subtitles to divide your ezine into different sections. Use standard fonts like *Courier*, Times New Roman, or Verdana.

Divide your sections clearly so that each text-group can stand on its own. Use characters such as asterisks (*), equal to (=), hyphen (-) or straight-line (|). You can also use special characters like &, @, and so on, but only in moderation.

A few more tips to help you format your ezine

- Your ezine should be professional looking, carefully proofed (spell-checked and grammatically correct), and rich in content as well as pleasing to the eye in order for it to be successful.
- It should not be too garish and too heavy on the graphics; this is a major turn off. If your ezine takes forever to load, your readers will get exasperated and might decide to unsubscribe.

- Certain email providers even turn very large files into attachments, which don't always get to see the light of day. Don't force your ezine into becoming a mere attachment. Go easy on the size.
- Some email programs don't display long text lines correctly; they wrap your lines and show it in a format which is not exactly "fun" to read. Hence, use a desirable length for your text lines which will be accepted and displayed properly, let's say 65 characters, and stick to it.
- When providing additional URLs or links to other websites, verify the correct address. Also, use the prefix "http://" so that your readers can directly click on it and go to the website. For sending email directly from your ezine, use the "mailto:" prefix, such as "mailto:Sam@Sam.com."
- Before you send the first copy out, test the formatting of your ezine by sending a copy to yourself. If it works well and there are no formatting errors, then you are good-to-go!

1.6 Designing an Eye-Catching Ezine

As we discussed earlier, you need to come up with a catchy name for your ezine. The title should be appealing and memorable, but it should also be relevant to the content that you are providing. Don't mislead your readers. Bad publicity will only ruin your reputation, especially at a time when you need to build your credibility.

Also, since it is advisable to have a related website to support your ezine, find out if there is a relevant domain name available. If not, then try a variation. See if you can reserve ".net" or ".org" if it's appropriate. Also, see if you can tweak the name of your ezine if a useful domain name variation is available.

While naming your ezine, take into consideration how it will rank in the ezine directories. Most directories list ezines in alphabetical order. Try to take advantage of this fact, and if possible name it higher up in the alphabetical order. However, don't mess around too much and name your ezine "AAA Food Facts." Maybe you can use "ABCs of Food." Be creative, not blatantly amateurish.

It may not be an easy task to come up with a good, creative and unique title for your ezine, giving you all the more reason to spend

enough time and research on formulating a good title. A lot of thought has to go into this process. Your ezine title will be your unique brand and that is how you will be able to build your credibility. Hence, don't ignore this step; think outside the box, mix and match a lot of keywords and involve a lot of brainstorming before finally deciding upon your ezine title.

Now let's talk about the planning and layout of your ezine. Outwardly speaking, an ezine has 5 aspects: Header, Table of Contents, Subject Matter, Footer, and Advertisements.

Header

The Header is the first thing your reader will see when your ezine is loaded in their inbox. It should be equipped with all important information that the reader needs to know, but at the same time should not be cluttered. Ideally, it should have the title of your ezine along with the catchphrase/tagline you'd like to use, issue number, date, and your website's URL.

Instead of issue number, you can use words like volume number, digest number, and so on. When using a date, always use the most commonly accepted conventions, for instance mm/dd/yyyy in the U.S.

Be sure to double check the spelling of your website URL so that when anyone clicks on it, they are directed to your website instead of getting stuck on a link that doesn't work.

Table of Contents

The TOC for your ezine need not be elaborate like an eBook. Don't panic if you have only 2 articles to offer in your first ezine. Arrange whatever you have to offer tastefully. No matter how many articles you publish in a single ezine, you should always have a TOC at the beginning. This saves your readers time and effort by eliminating unnecessary browsing.

If you find your TOC too tiny, beef it up a bit by adding a few interesting tidbits such as an editorial, thought of the day, joke of the day, reviews of books/articles/movies, cartoon of the day, and so on. You might want to add a one- to two-line description of each section.

You can also put up subscription info, or information about you the author, at the end of the table of contents to make it seem more interesting.

Content

The main component of a successful ezine is the content. This is the singular most important factor determining the quality of your ezine and establishing your standing as an expert in a particular field. Later, we will discuss some key factors you need to keep in mind when writing a great article for your ezine.

Footer

This is the area at the end of your ezine where you may mention any additional information. When the reader sees the footer, it means that he/she has reached the end of your ezine and is about to close that window and move on. At this juncture, you want to remind your readers about a few things pertaining to your ezine before they shift their focus to something else.

You might give them a link to archives of previous issues, subscription info, feedback request, link to your website, or a link that enables them to send the article to someone else (“refer this to a friend” or “tell your friend how to get a free copy of this ezine”). It may also be a good place to remind your readers of any promotions or contests that you may be running.

Besides these, you can also provide legal, privacy, and copyright related information. Mention copyright information clearly and precisely. You can either use the word "Copyright" or the symbol © or just (c). Also include everything that is copyrighted, such as author, editor, company name, titles, and so on. If other rights such as reprinting, reproduction, etc., are reserved by you, it is probably safer to use the phrase "All Rights Reserved."

You may give some information about the author of the article (if you haven't already done so in the beginning), and if the author is a guest contributor, include a note of thanks along with their contact information/website link. If you have any announcements to make – for instance you may soon be coming up with a special holiday issue – then do so in your footer.

Clear instructions on how to subscribe or unsubscribe to your ezine can also be given in the footer. It may be a good idea to directly provide a link for unsubscription. Readers can click on the link and can automatically unsubscribe, which means that within a stipulated time, usually 48 hours, the request will be processed and the reader will no longer receive any more issues.

It is also advisable to put a link that leads to archives of your ezine, again if you have not already done so at some other location. This enables your readers to access back issues conveniently.

A "Disclaimer" is also generally provided towards the end. It is a fairly legal document that details the consequences if anyone uses any part of your article or ezine without your permission.

Other Information

Don't forget to include your own contact information in your ezine! Unsolicited email is considered as spam. If you have unspecified contact information, your ezine will appear to be suspicious. You will not be able to garner the trust of your readers unless you openly disclose your contact information. At the very least, mention your full name, email address, and website URL.

You can also try to bridge the gap between you and your readers by providing more personal information if you are comfortable with that. This can be your street address, phone number, fax number, and so on. But do that only if you are comfortable with the idea of sharing such information. You don't want to risk your own privacy, after all.

A Word on Advertising

Let's talk some more about running advertisements in your ezine and how to make sure that they are effective. As I said earlier, do not run too many ads in your ezine or you will lose your credibility. Readers don't want to see only ads; they have subscribed to your ezine because they like the articles and the content, not because of the ads. Hence, it is advisable that your ads are not more than 30% of the total content of your ezine.

The placement of your ads is also crucial. It is recommended that you scatter the ads evenly throughout the ezine. More on this will be covered later.

Clearly identify an ad so your readers don't confuse it with the content of your ezine. You can use specific words and phrases like "Paid Advertisement," "Sponsored by," or "Please support our sponsors" to visibly set it apart. Study the behavior of your readers so that you are able to provide them with ads that interest them. Do not bombard them with irrelevant ads.

If the majority of your readers are teenagers, then you are better off if you place ads related to teen magazines, cosmetics, higher education,

music and movies, etc. If your readers are “techno-geeks,” give them ads that market technical products or services. Determine your target readers and place ads that are designed to interest them.

Also, as mentioned earlier, consistency is very important. Do not change the number of ads that you usually run unless there is an unavoidable need for it.

1.7 Shape Up the Content for Your Ezine

Your readers will constantly critique your ezine and the articles published in it. Starting with the first issue, all the editions of your ezine will be under continuous scrutiny. Readers will judge all of your articles and if they don't like any aspect of the ezine, it may severely affect your reader base. If you provide consistent and effective content in your ezine, it will be a roaring success.

There are many types of content you can use for your ezine. Let's discuss them in some detail.

Editorials

When you are the editor of your ezine, it is your responsibility to deliver an effective editorial for the benefit of your readers. Your

readers will think of you as an expert in your field and will begin to trust your opinion and suggestions. You must take this responsibility maturely and diligently. You are given the freedom to express your opinion on any topic even if it is controversial. This would also encourage participation from your readers. They may respond to your editorial, either by agreeing with you or staunchly disagreeing with some of the views you've expressed. Their feedback is extremely valuable for improving the quality of your ezine.

If you use your editorial space to relate to your readers, with time they would look forward to what you have to write. Don't use your editorial space to write an entire article. You can probably give a little background info about a new guest author, a new product you are endorsing, or an opinion about an article in the current issue. You can write it in such a way that it feels very personal. Set the flow and tone of your editorial as if you are communicating directly to your readers.

Articles featured in your ezine

Without a doubt, your articles are the highlight of your ezine. They constitute a major chunk of your content and hence are to be written very tactfully. Make sure that you don't write really lengthy articles. Most readers would probably find long articles a drag and subsequently

lose their interest mid-way. Feature only those articles that are relevant to your ezine. For instance, if your ezine focuses on cuisines of the world, you should not feature an article on how to solve ordinary computer hardware problems. Your readers would appreciate it if you give them a concise and direct article that does not deter from its path.

Always, always, always write original articles. Do not use someone else's article and claim it as yours. Also, don't rework someone else's article you have read somewhere and dish it out to your readers. You can write an opinion on it, or borrow ideas from that article, but don't write the same article all over again.

If there is an article you feel will greatly benefit your readers you can choose to publish the entire article – however, you must get the author's explicit permission to do that. It is not always possible to get the entire article for your ezine because the authors might not be willing to let you reproduce their original work anywhere else. Always make sure that you do not "steal" articles – you can borrow them only after seeking permission.

You also need to give the required credit to the author and publish any additional information as required by the originator of the article. This depends on every author's discretion, so consult the writer well in advance.

Finally, you can either write the features yourselves, or get someone else to do it for you. If you do get someone's help on it, make sure that you own all copyrights and avoid unnecessary complications.

Invite guest authors to write in your ezine

Many publishers invite guest writers to contribute to their ezine. You could do the same. Also, it is a good practice to ask your readers to contribute content to your ezine by devoting an entire section, such as "The Readers' Corner." This will not only encourage reader involvement but also build a small internet community with your ezine at the center of it. You will also get good input from your readers that way and motivate them to contribute more and more. It is a smart trick to get good information for your ezine as well as to obtain some much-needed variety.

How do you encourage people to contribute articles to your ezine? It is not a difficult task; in fact, it's quite simple. Most people like to see

their names in print, just for a little bit of fame and for the sheer joy of getting other people to read their work. All you have to do is give your readers a topic and invite them to write a 500-word article on it. Skim through the submissions, and you will surely receive at least one article that can be featured in your ezine.

Now, some people might have great ideas, but not necessarily great writing skills. Consider their contribution, and you can do some extra research to weave your own article around the idea. Be courteous and give appropriate credit to the person who has given that basic idea, for example: "Thanks to Tamara Malone of Santa Monica, California, for the premise of this article."

You can also collaborate with freelancers who write mainly on the net and are in constant need of marketing their own website. In exchange for their service – that is, writing an article for your ezine – they will have their own name, contact information, and URL published in your ezine. It's free publicity for them, and it's good for you too.

In the ezine directories, you can research a variety of ezines that relate to your target market. Then you can subscribe to them and get

ideas for your articles. Some ezines will let you borrow their articles, and also provide information about freelancers and how to find them.

Negotiate with the freelancers. You can offer to provide them with a platform to voice their opinion, and also provide a link to their website at the end of their article for free.

News stories

You may also publish daily news headlines on your ezine. This offers dual benefits to your readers. They get news headlines along with their choice of articles on a topic they truly enjoy. You may provide local news headlines as well as international stories. Also, you may offer specialized news stories, such as industry reports about the subject of your ezine. For instance, if your ezine is about the textile industry, you may provide information on what's new in the textile business, new laws, breakthroughs, latest trends, upcoming tradeshow, and so on.

Go to various news websites and feature their links on your ezine.

There are various ways to present news stories: You may give a short headline and then provide a link that directs the reader to the news website to get the full story; you can publish a short story along with the headline, or you can bring a little variation by adding your own

style to it, sprinkling it with some wit. You may write your own opinion on the news story – very similar to an editorial.

The bottom line is that you must provide relevant and timely news to your readers. Stale news has no value in this ever-changing world.

Reviews

You may add variety to your ezine by reviewing some of the products available in the market and provide your own opinion on these. Writing a review is a relatively simple task. No matter what the subject of your ezine might be, you can always write a review on something related that will benefit your readers. For instance, in an ezine about the best eating places in New York City, you might feature a restaurant review every so often. You can rate the restaurant, ambience, food quality, service, location, variety of the menu, cuisine type, and so on.

Similarly, if your ezine is about parenting, you can review schools, toys, educational games, parenting or children's books, and websites.

Just ensure that whatever review you present should be relevant to the content of your ezine. You cannot review a recent pop album in an ezine about horticulture!

Here are a few useful tips on how to write a good review

- Be brief and precise. Write a short informative review, not a long rambling story.
- Don't stray from the topic and confuse your readers.
- Be relevant and choose your subject carefully so that it becomes a worthy part of your ezine.
- Set your standards high and select only the choicest products for reviewing in your ezine.
- Don't patronize. Give an honest opinion; your readers will greatly appreciate that.
- However, don't be overly critical – be tactful and write your reviews in good taste.
- View both sides of the coin and present an evenhanded review that reflects both the positives and negatives of the product under scrutiny.

- Advise your readers frankly about whether you recommend the product or not.

Links

Website links, or URLs (Uniform Resource Locators), that direct your readers to relevant information is one great way to polish your ezine and make it educational for your readers. Many net surfers find it difficult and often tedious to regularly update themselves with the latest websites related to their favorite topic. When they are presented with a list of websites that are of interest to them all in one place, it saves them time and energy.

One thing to note here is that not all links need to be relevant to the topic of your ezine. If there are additional links that you think will be useful to your readers, you can include them. For example, web-based email services, news websites, and so on.

Search Engine search box

Many websites and even ezines feature this service. ezine publishers establish an association with the search engine of their choice.

Consequently, publishers are encouraged to place a search engine textbox within the ezine. Readers can thus enjoy all benefits a search

engine provides right from the ezine itself. They don't have to open another browser and go to the search engine website and then search for their query.

The ezine will still be displayed in the background even though readers may have searched directly through it. The search engine script opens a new web page for every search generated so that the window that displays your ezine doesn't vanish.

This is an added service that you can provide to your readers, which may also benefit you.

Updates to your website

Your ezine is the perfect vehicle to launch your website and proclaim it to the internet community, and you can also regularly announce changes or updates to your webpages. All you have to do is remind your readers to visit your site. You will be amazed at the number of clicks you can get this way! When you encourage more traffic to your website, you will be able to generate more advertising revenue.

Additionally, you can also announce the launch of a new product, recent happenings, latest industry trends, and so on.

Interviews

Another addition to the content of your ezine could be interviews of experts in your field. This doesn't need to be a face-to-face interview, or even phone interview. You can conduct the interview over the net as an electronic interview. All you have to do is contact your guests and find out a time that's suitable to them. Once you have their approval you can email them a short list of questions, which they may answer in brief. Remember to devise the questions from your reader's point of view.

Do not ask too many questions to put off the expert. Respect the time that your interviewee is setting aside for you and ask only relevant and to-the-point questions. Don't hesitate to ask for clarifications if your interpretation is slightly unclear. When the interview is emailed back to you, you don't necessarily have to publish it as it is.

As the editor of the ezine, you can select what part of the interview should be published. However, you must not "edit" the content and twist the language, tone, or idea presented in the interview. For instance, you may have asked the expert about his opinion on the new suburban restaurant that specializes in Lebanese cuisine. If the expert gives biased or derogatory opinions using foul or unacceptable words

to describe the cuisine, you may choose to completely eliminate the question. You may include biased opinions – after all these are not *your* views – but you are much better off eliminating disagreeable language in the ezine. This way you get to maintain the expert’s opinion as well as be diplomatic so as to offend no one. However, it is a good practice to get an approval from the expert on the final version of the interview.

When introducing your expert, be precise and thoughtful. An intro would highlight the expert’s credentials, current profession, interests and operations. The tone of the interview should not be bookish or prose-like. It should feel that the interview has been carried out in person and should be interspersed with expressions and statements commonly used in conversations.

Interactive features that initiate reader involvement

There are plenty of ways through which you can motivate your readers to participate in some of the activities of your ezine. You can set up polls and surveys that entice and amuse your readers. Even simple polls like “what is your favorite pizza topping?” will be welcomed! Some of these polls and surveys are for fun, some for getting an idea about the consumer behavior, and some just to increase reader

participation. The key is to encourage reader involvement. This can only help you in improving your ezine.

You can have a blog or forum that encourages your readers to post their opinions about the articles and reviews published in the ezine. You can have a section such as “emails to the editor” in which you can publish a few of the most interesting letters. You can also publish a few comments or quotes from the email; you don’t have to put the entire message.

However, don’t go on printing only the good stuff about you and the ezine! Be sure to include some complaints or criticisms from your readers – your modesty and willingness to accept negative comments will not go unnoticed.

People love to see their names in print. You could include small perks like “reader of the day” or “opinion of the week.” Of course, ask your readers explicitly if you can publish their name and email address in your ezine, as some people are fiercely protective about their online identity. If your reader wants to be anonymous, let it be so. Always publish a privacy policy for your readers to access and understand. Assure your readers that your company adheres to such a policy.

Ask your readers for feedback and you can have a whole section dedicated to it. However, don't make it too lengthy. When you implement your reader's suggestion, it won't hurt you to say "Thanks to the excellent suggestion made by Samuel Hill of San Antonio, Texas, you are getting a whole new 'Free Downloads' section."

To sum up, most people will just "skim" through your ezine. Don't make skimming a daunting task for them. They don't want to read lengthy articles or really long sentences that use words lifted from the thesaurus. Make your paragraphs short and your sentences brief. Remember to use plenty of white space – this will make your ezine appear neat and less cluttered.

1.8 Finding Free Ezine Content and Articles

You don't have to write lengthy articles to have a successful ezine. In fact, as we discussed earlier, lengthy articles can only have a negative impact on the quality of your content. Your article should have words ranging from 500 to 750, not more than that. There are various resources available on the net that provide free articles which can be used for your ezine. You can find dozens of these sites if you do a search for "ezine articles."

Before you use any article described as free, make sure that you have asked for the author's permission. Do not assume that just because the article is mentioned as free, you can use it conveniently. Carefully read the disclaimer mentioned on all these websites just to get an idea of what kind of procedures you need to follow. Usually, you may have to mention the author name by giving due credit and provide a formal introduction.

1.9 Hiring Professional Writers for Your Ezine

You might be overwhelmed by the thought of writing all articles by yourself for every issue of your ezine. This is where professional writers can be so useful. The best way to find such writers is by subscribing to various ezines that are pretty similar to yours, or at least cater to the same kind of audience. There is every possibility that you may find a couple of great writers from these sources. You may contact these writers and ask them to contribute to your ezine as well.

You can also hire "ghostwriters" for your ezine articles. All you have to do is give them a fee for the articles they write. You can then pass off the final article as your own creation. In addition, you would also own all copyrights to the article. The point you should keep in mind here is

that the ghostwriter should be totally trustworthy and your mutual expectations should be clearly understood.

The writer must understand what you expect of him and how exactly he or she should word the article and set its tone so as to suit your ezine. Too much trust can backfire, unless you are absolutely confident about the quality of the articles. It is a safe practice to proofread the articles written by your writer and double-check the content, grammar and quality of the articles.

You don't have to stick to writing your own articles, or just using articles from hired professionals. One interesting option is writing a column of questions and answers, or helpful tips. Hence, instead of writing something in an article format, the question and answer technique is also very appealing. For example, for an ezine about parenting, you could hire a pediatrician/child specialist who has some spare time every couple of weeks to write an informative column in the form of a questionnaire that tackles common issues that affect young children's health.

Instead of asking the professional to write a dreary article, you can make it interesting by changing the format to a question/answer

session. You may also invite your readers to participate by encouraging them to ask a question of the expert.

1.10 Formulating Those Great New Ideas

The beauty of ezines, newsletters and blogs is that they can be written about anything and everything. There are innumerable subjects worth writing about. The key is to have an open mind and be aware of the situation around you. If you regularly study various ezines that are being published, you will have a fairly good idea on what to write about. The more you research and analyze, the easier it is for you to get inside a typical reader's mind. All you need is one ray of light and you can find your way out.

Following are some great ideas that you can use to add effective content in your ezine:

- Write a book or product review related to the topic of your ezine. Don't limit your review to only tangible books and products. Review net-based services, websites, eBooks – your choices are virtually limitless.
- Set up interviews of experts and professionals in your field.

- Write a troubleshooting guide or a “How to” article. For example, if your ezine is all about food, write an article on “How to whip up quick lunches in 10 minutes.”
- Write about a short real life incident that taught you a thing or two. You will come across as a “real” person with real problems in life. And how you dealt with such a situation shows your strength of character. Your readers will be able to relate to you more and will trust your opinions.
- Go to blogs and discussion forums on the net and see what people are talking about nowadays. Most of these groups have archives that go way back. That way you also learn how people and their thought processes evolved, and guess their next step.

Years ago, when you needed to do some research on any topic, you had to hit the local library. This meant searching through big books with tiny letters and digging up old newspapers to find content relevant to your article. That could take many hours, even days, and it used to be a demanding chore that required great patience and steady perseverance.

Thankfully, through the wonders of the internet you can get as much information as you need simply by clicking a button. One link leads to another, one site takes you to another site, one page is connected to another, and you have unlimited information at your disposal that can be used any way you want.

Whenever you are on the net – browsing, researching, or just plain surfing – make sure that when you find any webpage or any link relevant to the article you are contemplating, or that can be useful for your ezine, be sure to save it. That way you can look up the information at some other time.

Even if you find some information on an article you have already written and published, or about some article you are considering writing in future, save it anyway. If you need to update your existing article you will be able to do it easily. Also, saved information can be used at any time, so even in the future if you are planning on writing about a particular topic, you can do so immediately without having to go through the task of searching for it all over again.

Even if the topics you have researched are constantly updated, the basic premise remains the same and you can use that as the platform

of your article. For example, technical articles change as per the innovations that take place in the industry, but old information can be used to reflect on how the product has evolved. Also, historical information doesn't change – the harrowing stories of World War II stay the same.

So, when your ezine has such articles, it always helps when you save all the information that you've collected so you can sprinkle it tastefully into your articles.

1.11 Avoiding a Few Common Pitfalls

These are some of the mistakes that most publishers make while starting their first ezine campaign. Be tactful and you will be able to avoid them.

- Don't start an ezine about a topic you are not very familiar with. Make yourself an "expert" in that field before you think of publishing an ezine. Being an expert does not suggest knowing "everything." In this sense, it merely means someone who knows a lot of useful info about a particular topic, and in fact more about it than most people.

- Don't even think of starting an ezine if you don't plan it before hand. Good planning is a must and you need to determine your goals right from the start – then you can focus on how to achieve these goals. Don't dive right in while hoping to make it through midway; it just doesn't work like that. You have to carefully study your market, competition, resources and what you want to achieve with your ezine (brand/product awareness, advertising revenue, exchanging information, and so on).
- Don't be inconsistent in publishing your ezine. If you have started a bi-weekly edition, stick to it. Don't get overly enthusiast and start a weekly ezine, then cut down drastically to monthly or even bi-monthly issues. Make a reasonable estimate of the time and effort you want to put into your ezine. Assess your capabilities and don't be over-confident. If you think you can publish weekly, start with bi-weekly or monthly first, and then see how it goes.
- Don't change the format of your ezine constantly: It proves that you are not steady and coherent.

- Decide beforehand if you want ads published in your ezine. Don't throw surprises at your readers.
- Don't write lengthy, rambling, and repetitive articles.
- Don't pile up your ezine with too much information. Even if you have tons of excellent info to share, be patient and offer it in bits and pieces so that you don't bombard your readers.
- Maintain the quality of your ezine. Provide valuable information, otherwise your readership will dwindle.
- Give proper credit to contributors and guest authors. Include a link to their website from your ezine.
- Don't publish your ezine in HTML-only format. If you would like to publish an HTML ezine, also publish a text-only version along with it. Give your readers an option to choose between the two types.
- Avoid using animated graphics, flashing or blinking text, frames, advanced scripts like JavaScript, etc.

- Take advantage of the technology and automate the services of your ezine whenever possible, such as using an autoresponder for sending automated messages. The most popular one is AWeber Communications, and you can get a "Free Test Drive" here: <http://www.aweber.com/http://www.aweber.com/>
- Ask your readers twice if they really want to subscribe to your ezine to make certain that you are not spamming them. Insist on this process commonly known as "double opt-in," which is ethically followed by most ezine publishers. In this procedure, when you get a request to add an email address for your ezine issues, you can send an automatic email to that particular address.

Following a link provided in that email, your reader can click on it, and that click will be properly registered by you so that you can add that email address to your mailing list. That way you can ensure that your readers are not unnecessarily spammed, and unauthorized programs or persons are not signing up for your ezine on their behalf.

- Be courteous and polite to your readers, even if they are not. And please honor their request to unsubscribe if they want to discontinue their membership. Don't forget that unsolicited mails are considered spam. Don't push or force your readers to continue their subscription. That is not only rude, it is illegal.
- Do plan ahead for growth and development of your ezine. That way you will not be caught napping if your subscribers' ratio suddenly rises. There are a lot of dynamics involved when your ezine gains popularity and you have plenty of new subscribers – such as planning for advanced advertising, collaboration with other services, getting more web-space and so on.
- Lastly, don't get stuck in a rut. Be ready to take advantage of new ideas and profitable options. Expand and develop your ezine and make changes depending on the new trends and demands of your readers.

We have looked at most of the issues that you need to be aware of while starting out as an ezine publisher. In the next chapters, we look at how each of the objectives behind starting an ezine can be achieved. The next chapter talks in detail about various strategies to

build a subscription base for your readership.

2. How to Build and Manage Your Email Newsletter

2.1 Formatting for Compatibility with Email Programs

Today, most email programs allow all kinds of different formats.

Programs in the old days displayed only plain text messages, but this has changed dramatically. Users can now send and receive emails in their full glory that includes special fonts, colors, messages, pictures, sounds, and animation.

An ezine written in HTML should be compatible with most email clients. The good news is that these clients do not have any special formatting requirements. A newsletter would be displayed as-is in your subscriber's email program. However, it is always a good idea to have every newsletter in two formats – one HTML, and the other Plain Text, in case some subscribers have problems opening HTML mails.

You may want to keep the level of graphics down as it may take much longer for subscribers to open your ezine if it is loaded with big files. Prior to sending your ezine to subscribers, ensure that you test your formatting for compatibility with all kinds of email clients, especially Outlook Express, Microsoft Outlook, Eudora, Lotus Notes, and a few different web clients such as MSN Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail, and Gmail.

2.2 Frequency of Your Ezine

One of the main dilemmas for publishers is how often they should publish and send out their ezine. When you plan your ezine, especially initially, you might get so excited that you want to publish it as frequently as possible. Although this is an admirable goal, it would not work out so well for your subscribers. The best thing to do is to start off with a monthly ezine and then increase the frequency with time.

During the first few publications, you will also get an idea of how well you are able to manage your ezine and your subscribers. This may be harder than you think. If you feel comfortable with the process, you can then think of an ezine published bi-weekly (once every two weeks). Please note that it is not *necessary* for you to increase the frequency of your ezine to more than one per month. You should only do that if you feel comfortable. I have seen many cases of publishers hurrying up into publishing every two weeks only to be forced to revert back to the monthly cycle. Don't let that happen to *you*.

Do not publish your ezine *less* than once a month. This would greatly increase the risk of your subscribers forgetting who you are.

Conversely, do not go overboard by publishing every two or three days. Even if your content is timely or spectacular enough to warrant a

daily publication, it is very likely that your subscribers may not be able to keep up with them, and will eventually unsubscribe out of frustration. The maximum frequency should be once a week.

Determine how much information you have which you can share with your readers. Daily ezines are not advisable unless you have timely updated info such as news or stock market information.

Let's say you are hoping to start a great ezine that gives valuable tips on how to effectively use the Microsoft Office products. You think that you have too much information to share and you start a daily ezine that gives lengthy information on the subject matter... Your reader enjoys the first couple of issues, and then he gets overwhelmed by all that information. Maybe he prints out copies of your ezine so he can read it later when he has the time. Eventually the copies pile up on his desk, clutter and frustration builds, and even though he finds the ezine highly informative, he has no option but to unsubscribe. Whose loss is it? More than his, it is *your* loss. A weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly ezine is your best bet as a beginner.

Now, if you publish your ezine not very often, then your readers might just forget about you! They might not remember when they

subscribed, or they will disregard your ezine as one of the many spam messages they receive and send you straight to their junk folder. You need to start with a balanced frequency – not too often and not too sporadic. The key is to work out a schedule and stick to it. Publishing on a regular basis will establish your credibility and suggest to your readers that you are organized and can meet deadlines.

Finally, although you may avoid sending out your ezine during holidays or just before them, you should not worry about the particular day of the week to send it. Some experts suggest that the best days to send out ezines are Tuesday or Wednesday, but this might not really make a difference. Just pick a day that feels right to you and stick to it.

2.3 Strategies to Develop Your Customer Base

Ezines are most often aimed at developing a customer base for your other products. One of the first things you need to work out once you have a completed your ezine is to devise strategies to increase your customer base as much as possible and as quickly as possible.

Write attractive descriptions

Most ezine directories, forums, discussion boards, and websites allow you to advertise your ezine by listing them on their site and providing

a short description along with it. This is crucial – the first thing readers would look at is your subscription offer. Thus, it's a good strategy to have at least 3 or 4 descriptions about your ezine catering to different kinds of audiences. You also need an eye-catching heading.

While writing the description, remember to address the reader. Do not just describe your ezine or your company; explain how the ezine would be helpful to your readers. The key is to tell the reader what benefits he or she will gain by subscribing to your ezine.

List your ezine in directories and forums

Once you have the descriptions written, you should make an all-out effort to list your ezine with as many directories, websites, forums, and discussion boards as possible. You will start building a decent subscription base after listing your ezine with directories. Here you can find a list of the Top 20 Ezines: <http://ezines.nettop20.com/>

To hunt for more, simply search for "ezine directories" – there are a lot of them out there!

Use your competition to your advantage

Each of your ezines must be targeted to the right kind of readership. You cannot market your ezine to a very broad audience and expect

huge success. This would not only reduce your chances, but would also cost you considerable time, money, and effort. How do you list your ezine in the right directories? The simple answer to this is by studying your competition.

Your aim should be to list your ezine in places that also list your competitors' ezines. Of course, you need to make your subscription offer far more attractive than your competitors' to have a higher subscription rate. Finding places that list your competition's ezines requires significant research. Start with finding ezines that are related to yours by surfing the various directories and discussion forums.

Once you have the ezine listed, you should make a list of your competitors' subscription URLs and your competitors' subscription email addresses.

Having a list of URLs would make it easier for you to search for places that list these ezines. Doing a simple search on various search engines can get you the desired results. Ensure that you list your ezine in all directories that also list your competition.

There are other advantages of reviewing your competitors' ezine. You'll find many great resources and articles which you can use not only for your personal benefit, but also for the benefit of your future subscribers. These can be a great source for improving the content of your own ezine.

Use your website well

The easiest way to build a subscriber base is to invite people to subscribe on your website. That's pretty much a must and is probably where you'll get most of your readers. You could do that by devoting a little space on your home page, or by adding a little pop-up when a user logs in, or logs out.

But you could go further. There's no reason why you couldn't devote an entire site to recruiting readers which you could then promote in all the usual ways. You'd just need a homepage with good call-to-action copy, a free sample, and perhaps a secure area for subscribers to read back-copies. This requires very little effort and offers potentially large rewards. In fact, whenever you collect someone's email, for whatever reason, ask them if they want to see your newsletter.

Cross market your ezine

Cross marketing is a very effective way of spreading your ezine and building your subscription base. We will only touch on some of the strategies to cross market your ezine. These are explained in more detail in chapter "4. Advertising Your Own Ezine."

To cross market, as the name suggests, involves forming alliances with your competitors so that both parties can benefit. Some of the forms of cross marketing are providing endorsements, sharing content or articles, and exchanging ads.

One way to form an alliance is by having an agreement with your competitor that you would endorse his/her ezine in yours and he/she reciprocates by doing the same thing. However, ensure that you endorse an ezine that you think is worthwhile. Never endorse something just for the sake of building relationships. This can have negative effects on your campaign later on.

Secondly, you could swap your ads with other ezines. For instance, you could publish your ad in a competitor's ezine, allowing him to do the same in yours. By doing so you wouldn't have to pay for the ad.

Thirdly, you could exchange content with your competitor's ezine. For instance, you may request your competitor to publish one of your articles in every issue of their ezine. To reciprocate, you could publish one of theirs in your own ezine. Content exchange can yield great results for your campaign. However, you need to make sure that the article you submit is compelling and includes a signature at the end.

Word of mouth

"Word of mouth" advertising can be very effective. Besides, it is completely free. The net takes this ancient form of "buzz" and promotion and amplifies it with a global network of people connected digitally. "Word of mouth" now has an internet version called "word of mouse." With greatly increased speeds, people refer things to their friends and families by spreading the word through the web and to the far-reaching corners of the world. This can also be done for your ezine.

Many smart marketers and publicity people have learned to harness the power of viral publicity with internet "Tell-A-Friend" promotional techniques and tools.

Providing incentives as part of the Tell-A-Friend technique ensures higher success rates. How do you use this technique to leverage and

increase your subscription rate and “word of mouse” publicity? You can add Viral Tell-A-Friend forms to all of your web pages just below the subscription offer. This technique is simple and very effective.

Offer your ezine to all your customers, friends, relatives, and colleagues. Let them spread the word. Offer your ezine as a promotional tool to your affiliates if you have an affiliate program. These can drastically improve the subscriptions to your ezine.

2.4 Managing Subscriber Lists

Building a subscriber list requires some effort, and managing it requires even more. You have to ensure that the whole process of adding new subscribers and administering your list should be quick and efficient. I would highly recommend automating this process with the help of ezine software discussed later in this chapter. Apart from this, there are a few other recommendations that may help you manage your subscribers well.

- Always acknowledge all requests sent by existing subscribers as well as prospective ones. This includes any queries a subscriber may have as well as unsubscribe requests.

- Greet new subscribers with a Thank You/Welcome message that once again lists all the benefits of your newsletter. This would build confidence amongst your readers that they chose the right newsletter.
- Offer multiple options to sign up. Two of the most popular ones are through a sign up page on your website and through email.
- Update subscriber email addresses as often as possible. Many times publishers are faced with bad email addresses that will bounce back your ezine. You should try and keep such addresses to a minimum.
- Keep in mind that subscriber management is a never ending process.
- Always provide excellent and prompt customer service to your readers. Be polite even if the other person is rude.
- Automate most, if not all, the processes.

2.4.1 Paid Servers vs. Free Servers

As you build up your subscriber list, you're going to find yourself with a problem. Whichever email program you're using, whether it's Outlook or Eudora or something else, it's just not going to be set up to deal with the kind of mass mailing involved with newsletters.

If you have more than 50 people on your list – and that will probably take you less than a week – you'll need to use a listserv. Don't even *try* to do this by yourself!

Some hosting companies will organize this for you. They have a mail server that handles all the mail, and you simply send them the newsletter and they send it out. Also, you can use a professional list server such as [Microsoft's List Builder](#). There are a number of paid list servers found on the internet. Here are some of the best:

BigList

<http://www.biglist.com/>

Dundee Email List Services

<http://mailing-list-services.com/services/index.htm>

iContact

<http://www.icontact.com/>

Listbox

<http://www.listbox.com/listbox/>

There are free list servers available too. While you can use these if you're on a really tight budget, I don't recommend it. First, they stuff their own advertisements onto your newsletter. This doesn't just reduce the effectiveness of your brand, but it draws attention away from your own ads – provided you can persuade people to advertise on a newsletter like this.

2.4.2 Dealing with Unsubscribe Requests

Handling unsubscribe requests is as important as handling requests for new subscribers. At times it can be a time-consuming and tiring process. However, you must handle it regularly and attend to it without fail, as it is a part of your duty as ezine publisher.

The choice to join or leave your ezine is entirely your readers', hence if they choose to discontinue receiving your ezine in their inbox, you must honor that request. You can also automate this process of unsubscribe, but it also helps if you provide different options to your readers.

Here are some options that can be utilized for handling your unsubscribe requests:

1. Through website

Your readers can directly visit your website and click on the link which probably says 'unsubscribe from our ezine/newsletter.'

Then you can provide a box where they can enter their email address – or there are 'login' and 'password' boxes – and after entering this information, your readers can choose to unsubscribe from your ezine.

It is a good practice to send an email on the address the reader has provided to double check that the user has indeed opted to unsubscribe. Some publishers choose to keep the email address active on their mailing list and only if the user confirms that he/she has indeed decided to opt out, only then they will be unsubscribed. This is done to avoid any misuse of automatic programs to unsubscribe as well as to make sure that only the actual reader has decided to unsubscribe and not anyone else posing as the reader.

2. Providing a link

You can also provide a link at the footer of your ezine which directs your reader to your website. And then you can follow the procedure mentioned above to unsubscribe your readers.

3. Through email

Your readers can email you their unsubscribe requests on a specific email address you have allotted for handling this. You can make the task easier for you and them by suggesting that they type the word 'unsubscribe' in the subject line so that you can direct their email to the appropriate folder. You can automate this process by using the autoresponder to send an immediate reply to your reader that you have put their request under consideration, and the second time when you have actually removed their contact from the mailing list.

2.4.3 Handling Bounced Emails

Bounced or undeliverable emails are one of the main concerns of most publishers. Rarely would you find that out of all the email addresses that subscribed for your ezine, all work properly. Some of them are bound to be either temporarily unavailable or permanently discontinued.

Bounced emails can be divided into two categories – Soft Bounce and Hard Bounce. Soft Bounce is when the email is temporarily not working. This could be due to network slowdown or congestion, or other similar reasons. Hard Bounce is perhaps more of a concern due

to the fact that it deals with permanent issues such as a wrong email address, inactive or closed email address, or other similar cases.

You would think that whenever you face such a problem all you would need to do is to remove the email addresses that are wrong or closed. However, the actual difficulty lies in differentiating between soft and hard bounces. How do you know which email address is down temporarily and which one permanently? The solution to this is to make use of ezine distribution software or services discussed later on in this section. These would automatically delete hard bounced email addresses from your database. Manual handling of bounced emails can be extremely time consuming and difficult.

2.5 Double Opt-in

Ezines can be a great way to build a customer base. However, ezines can also give you a bad name if they are not created and distributed correctly. There have been many instances where ezine have only caused frustration with more customers ending up hitting the unsubscribe button. You wouldn't want this for your ezine. The sole purpose of ezines is to increase customers, not to decrease them.

Unforgiving customers are extremely less tolerant about poor design and administration of ezines. Besides, the subscription process is absolutely crucial when it comes to new customers. It is imperative that you adopt the safest and the most credible subscription option.

How many times have you found yourself being subscribed to unwanted newsletters only because you clicked a single button? Marketers using this strategy may boast of a rapid increase in the number of subscribers – but only temporarily. Such an approach may backfire easily, and I would not be surprised if the actual number of un-subscriptions is far greater than the number of subscriptions over a period of time.

This is where the Double Opt-in subscription method comes in. As compared to Single Opt-in wherein users are subscribed to a newsletter with a single click, Double Opt-in is far more credible and effective. With Double Opt-in, subscribers are not enrolled until they confirm the subscription by means of a reply to a confirmation email or message. Thus, only genuine readers would subscribe to your ezine.

Like every marketing tactic, Double Opt-in also has a few critics. Some say that readers may not confirm the subscription request and

eventually you would end up losing prospective customers. However, the chances of something like this happening are remote compared to the number of un-subscription requests with a Single Opt-in strategy.

The bottom line is that with Double Opt-in, you have a better chance of roping in targeted readers who are truly interested in your products. It gives you a high number of potential customers. Isn't this exactly what you expect from your ezine campaign? And if you are still not convinced, here are some more reasons to have a Double Opt-in subscription process.

- Double Opt-in may reduce the number of subscriptions – However, it certainly increases the prospect of targeting only receptive and interested readers.
- Double Opt-in increases the credibility and trustworthiness of your ezine – It portrays professionalism and reliability.
- Higher credibility ensures long-term relationships with potential customers.

- It opens up other avenues such as marketing your ezine to other publishers and advertisers.
- Provides documented proof of subscription, thus eliminating false claims by readers that they were illegitimately subscribed to your ezine.
- Save yourself time and money otherwise spent handling complaints and even legal claims from angry subscribers.

2.6 The Ezine ISSN

ISSN, as most of you would have guessed by now, is similar to the ISBN (International Standard Book Number) for books. ISSN, or International Standard Serial Number, is an 8-digit unique number given to ezines. This number is especially useful if you wish to submit your ezine to reputable libraries (online or offline) worldwide.

Like the ISBN, having an ISSN would uniquely identify your ezine.

However, there are certain guidelines that have to be followed in order to apply for, and subsequently get, an ISSN. First, you should depict an intention of continuing with your ezine publication regularly and

indefinitely. You may not get an ISSN if your ezine is only going to be published for a short period.

Second, each issue of an ezine must be uniquely identified by a number in addition to the ISSN. For instance, an ezine for the month of October 2011 could be identified as 102011, or something of this sort. You could also associate a unique number based on some other factor. The key is to have a unique, unduplicated designation for each issue of the ezine.

The advantages of having an ISSN are very similar to having an ISBN for an eBook. One of the biggest advantages is that ISSN would boost the credibility of your ezine. An ezine with an ISSN would be seen as much more professional when compared to an ezine without one.

Besides, you only get an ISSN if you have been publishing one for a long time and intend to do so in the future. This also contributes to the credibility factor. Another advantage is that copyright violations can be addressed more easily if you have an ISSN.

Applying for an ISSN is quick, simple and above all free of cost. The following sites can be accessed to apply for an ISSN. They also provide a load of other information related to ISSN issues.

- **The US Library of Congress**

<http://lcweb.loc.gov/issn/> (For North America Residents)

- **The ISSN International Centre**

<http://www.issn.org/> (For All Other Countries)

2.7 Creating a Website for Your Ezine

It is very likely that your ezine is created with an objective of promoting some of your products. It makes sense then to have a user friendly website that provides all information about your ezine as well as other products. Your website must take a very unique approach. You don't necessarily have to create a very elaborate site, but it still needs to be designed for success. First and foremost, it has to be functional. It should at least have a separate page that houses all your ezines along with a listing of all benefits that a potential customer might obtain by signing up for these ezines.

This section discusses in brief some of the basics of website designing and hosting. These basics hold true for all kinds of websites. Thus, you could follow these even if you intend to create a website to promote other products, and not necessarily just newsletters. However, I would

strongly recommend that you have a separate webpage for your ezine on your site that can serve as a convenient place to get information as well as sign up for them.

Every time a reader succeeds in executing a task on the website, your reputation is enhanced. Every time a reader is frustrated by the site, your reputation is diminished.

Standard tools and approaches that help marketers and advertisers succeed offline are often drawbacks on the web. A compelling, flashy image is slow to download and frustrates the impatient visitor. A snappy catchphrase is of little use to a reader hungry for information, which is especially true in the case of newsletters.

The conception about overly jazzed-up homepages has changed. When you arrive on a homepage and are met with a fancy Flash intro, you are no longer impressed. Waiting for a large image to download, your frustration grows. Your potential customers visit your website looking for something unique and important. Anything that slows them down is an annoyance. You should portray your ezine and other products that are promoted through these ezines with accurate, well-written, up-to-date content. Many marketers and advertisers still don't understand

the web. The key is to make your website as content-rich as possible. Make it as simple and direct as you possibly can.

If I were to list the top 2 things that are an absolute requirement for your website, they would be

- A very simple, clean, user-friendly design
- Reliable host and domain name

2.7.1 A Few Basics of Website Designing

Build It for Speed

It's a fact of modern life – people are in a hurry. This means that you have between 10 and 30 seconds to capture your potential customer's attention. To minimize your load time, you must keep graphics small. Compress them where possible. Use flashy technology (JavaScript, Flash, Streaming Audio/Video, animation) sparingly and only if it is important to your presentation.

Target Your Market

Know who your market is and make certain that your site caters to their needs. It is critical that your site reflect the values of your potential customers. You could have a separate page for each ezine if the subject varies. Is your market for a particular type of audience

that comprises mostly business professionals? If so, the page must be clean and professional. Are your newsletters and products aimed mostly at teenagers and young adults? Then your page could be more informal and relaxed. The key here is to know your market and build the site to their preferences.

Content is King

Good content will effectively market any product. Ask yourself the following questions. Does your copy convey the message you wish to get across to your visitors? Is it compelling? Does it lead your visitor through the ezine sign up process?

You should have others review, critique and edit your copy to ensure it is delivering the intended message. Relevant content is crucial. If your web copy is contradictory to what your newsletters portray, there is a good chance that prospective customers might leave without signing up. Always double check your spelling and grammar.

Website Layout and Site Map

When starting to design the layout of a site, it is often a good plan to step away from the computer and sketch a layout using good old paper and pencil.

Pages should be based on a grid, with space allocated for navigation, headers and footers, body text, and any other elements that will be repeated throughout the site. This sketch will serve as a pattern for the site's appearance and should not change very much, if at all, from page to page.

Taking this approach means you can essentially design your site by creating a single page that can be reused, with perhaps minor modifications, as a template for all the other pages in your site. You need to consider how the various parts of the site will be accommodated within the design and be sure that it meets the needs of all sections.

Consistency is at the heart of good website design, and this applies not just to layout but also to every aspect of a site. If there are major shifts in the appearance or color of any part of a site, it will be assumed by the user to have a significant meaning. This is fine if you are using it to highlight information or to indicate that the user is in a different part of the site; but it can be very confusing otherwise.

Besides consistency in color, positional consistency is important. Navigation bars, navigation text, location indicators, logos, footer

information, and so on, should be in the same place on each page. The width of margins, the positioning of images, the amount of space around text and images, the position and style of captions for images, etc., should also be consistent. All pages should be well-connected and navigation should be quick and simple.

The best websites today use a single template for all the pages of a section on the website, or for the entire website if the number of pages is few. Using a template offers the consistency to your site and helps to build an effective brand image. The template includes the graphic design and header of your page including the main menu bars. Content is thus positioned separately from the template. Besides, it will make your work much easier if you plan on having a separate page for each ezine. Ideally, if you promote different products through different ezines, you could have a page for each product along with information about the relevant ezine at the bottom of the page.

Use of a cascading style-sheet (CSS) for displaying the content is another useful mechanism to ensure consistency on all pages. The style-sheet stipulates the content layout, use of fonts and spaces, presentation of paragraph titles, margins on the page, and other common parameters.

Increase Response Rates

In the majority of cases your visitors want information and they want it NOW. The site should contain relevant information and a clear and well-defined action plan. For instance, instructions on how to sign up for newsletters should be clearly mentioned on each page. This will improve response rates. You must include a strong call to action theme that induces more people to sign up for your newsletters.

Design for Search Engine Optimization

When you are designing the layout, always ask yourself what impact anything on your site will have to the experience of your visitors and the capacity of search engines to efficiently index your pages. Add pages in proper order so that navigation through the website is consistent and progressive. Make your pages easily visible to Search Engines. A very useful resource for optimizing your site is available from Google: [Webmaster Guidelines – Wemasters/Site Owners Help](#).

Always Add a Site Map

A site map is just a simple list of web pages on your site. It gives your visitors a quick guide to what can be found there plus it's very useful to the search engine spiders. You can also use it to keep track of all the ezines and products on your site, and to see its structure and

content all in one place. If you don't have a site map, there is every possibility that some of your visitors might leave your website within 10 seconds, failing to find what they were looking for.

Navigation Structure

The aim of a website's navigation is simply to allow users to get to the particular ezine they are looking for. For sites that have a large number of ezines, products, and webpages, the navigation plan has to be properly researched and designed. You have to consider different types of visitors, and then simulate the most common steps they would take to find what they want, and then the navigation plan has to be optimized for this movement.

Site Usability and Convenience

There is no mystery to usability. It simply involves creating a site, which is accessible to the majority of people, is easy to use and get around, and delivers on its promises. You can have a site that meets the most important standards of usability by planning it well and always keeping the end user in mind. Remember that websites should not be designed for their owners – they must be designed to provide the best experience for their users.

While websites have become far more complex, web users have become less – rather than more – sophisticated as increasing numbers of people go online. It is a mistake to think that the majority of users will be web savvy and easily understand subtle clues about content. Most will not.

Building Interactivity and Personalization

Make your website interactive. Add feedback forms as well as email forms that allow your prospective customers to ask you any questions they might have pertaining to a specific newsletter or product.

Personalization of your website is another key element that can lead to customer delight and can increase response from visitors.

A consumer survey from the Personalization Consortium found that 56 percent of respondents say they are more likely to purchase from a site that allows personalization, and 63 percent are more likely to register at a site that allows it.

Personalization can lead to customer satisfaction, increase a customer base for your newsletters, and can ultimately increase your sales.

2.7.2 Domain Name Registration for the Website

In the physical world, you can distinguish a business because of its structure, window displays, or signs. You can tell that a bank is a bank, or a book store is indeed a book store.

On the internet, however, it is an entirely different story. Your domain name is the only clue to your online business. You do not have visual clues: no location, no look, and no store design. Instead, users have to type in a word or a set of words to reach your site. Your prospective visitor has no way of knowing what your site is all about until he/she finds it and reads its contents. With no prior knowledge of a particular site, who could ever guess that "Amazon" sells books? Or that "Google" is a search engine?

Your domain name can spell your success or failure on the internet. A good domain name is the best asset you can possibly have. It can make your business stand out in the crowd, or condemn it to just float aimlessly in space.

For best branding results, your domain name should be extremely memorable. Keep in mind the following tips when you are creating your domain name:

- The domain name should be short
- The domain name should be simple
- It should be suggestive of your business category
- It should be unique
- It should be easy to interpret and pronounce
- It should be personalized
- It should not be difficult to spell
- It should not be difficult to remember

Domain names can be registered through many different companies known as “registrars.” A listing of these companies is available at ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers): <http://www.icann.org>.

You can register for 1 to 10 years – prices can vary anywhere from \$10 to \$20 per year. Most web hosting companies will handle the registration process for you, but make sure that you are properly listed as the owner of the domain when it is registered. If you have registered a domain name for a specific period, make sure you renew it in time.

Finally, whatever you do, do not go for cheap or free domain names, even if the only thing your website does is to promote free ezines. There are many sites that offer free domain names, but these are generally over-long names. Besides, a surfer would instantly know whether you have your own domain name or a free one, and this can spell doom. Some investment is always essential for any business. Many people would not trust the credibility of your website if you have a free domain name.

2.7.3 Web Hosting

There are thousands of web hosting companies that claim to be the best. Choosing a web host for your website requires a lot of research. Your aim should be to select a host that offers you good value for your money – a host that is secure, reliable, and provides a range of tools for managing and maintaining your website.

The Web Hosting industry is incredibly competitive today, and they know that users are becoming increasingly sophisticated, so they have no choice but to provide their clients with better and better service, or else risk losing them to many other contenders.

The best way to proceed, then, is to make a list of what you require. This will most likely include the following: platform, speed, accessibility, reliability, support and service, and of course, price. Before you approach any web hosting company, you need to decide on what kind of services would you require.

Free Hosts – a Definite No-No

Many people who only promote newsletters through their websites often opt for free web hosting services. This is probably the greatest mistake you could make. Although, your sole purpose is only to promote a free product in the form of newsletters, it is still imperative that you do not pick a free hosting service. Like free domain names, this would give a bad impression to your customers. Besides, free hosts are not reliable, and they're often loaded down with annoying ads. Free accounts are not for anyone even half serious about doing business on the web, not when you can get a perfectly acceptable commercial host for \$10 per month, or even less.

Cost of Hosting

The cost of web hosting can range anywhere from free to thousands of dollars a month for a dedicated server. However, the vast majority of people fall into the category of needing an account that will run in the

ballpark of \$10 to \$50 per month, depending on the features you need and the options available on the particular package you choose. You could go for a \$10 host if you only promote ezines. However, you may want a much more elaborate hosting service if you sell a wide range of products, and ezine newsletters are just a means of advertising these products.

Whatever the cost, check if there is a money back guarantee and what their refund policies are; whether there is a requirement to sign up for a minimum period; and if your package is scalable, meaning that upgrades will not be a problem or burden for you when the time comes to ramp up your volume.

Web Space

Space and traffic are often the basis for many web hosting rates, whether or not this has any basis in reality. If you have a basic site that is not hundreds of pages in size, and is not going to be visited by thousands of people a day, these would not be a major consideration. However, be aware of the web hosts' fees and penalties for exceeding basic allocations. Check out all packages offered by various hosts and figure out which provides you with maximum benefit.

Email Accounts

This is an often underrated feature of web hosting packages since emails are essentially the lifeblood of any online business. Be sure that your package contains enough emails and aliases for your business, preferably an unlimited number of both. This is one way hosts make their money – that is, by charging a few dollars for each additional account when you realize that you need more than, say, 5 accounts.

Customer Support

One of the most frequent, and justified, complaints that many people have with their web host is lack of customer and technical support. Many web hosts offer both email and phone support, while others are available only via email. In most cases, email support is fine, but you should be wary if a potential web host has no telephone number available in case of an emergency, or in the event you need to speak with someone directly.

Response times for support questions vary widely from host to host. Some may take only a few minutes to get back to you while others take days, or even longer. It is important to find out what type of support any web host offers. Ask around. References are always a

good way to judge a host's performance. And send a test email asking them about any unresolved questions you may still have.

If at all possible, only choose a host that provides prompt and knowledgeable customer service. A competent host should offer 24/7 toll-free technical support provided by experienced, professionally trained technicians.

Statistics and Tracking

Most hosts will offer some type of statistics package. It is much easier to use the package they provide rather than trying to install one yourself – not to mention it's usually less expensive as well. Statistics show you the number of visitors that have accessed your site, showing where they came from (IP address), when, what pages they visited, duration of their stay at any page, and so on. These are extremely important in analyzing the success of your marketing campaigns. It is highly recommended that you chose a host that offers a comprehensive statistics package.

There are tons of choices out there, but I've found that one of the most popular web hosting services, with consistently positive customer feedback, is **Host Gator**: <http://www.hostgator.com/>

2.8 Ezines as a Viral Marketing Tool

A very popular method of marketing ezines and newsletters is by making them viral. If your newsletter contains information of value, such as tips, hints, news, or tutorials, you'll find that subscribers will forward it on to others.

Ezine advertising is one of the most powerful ways to market and promote your other products and/or services. There are literally thousands of electronic newsletters on the net with millions of people who subscribe to them. Placing ads in online newsletters is an inexpensive way to reach your target market quickly – especially when you compare it with other forms of advertising.

There are tens of thousands of ezines being published every month, with a collective audience of millions. And the editors of most of those ezines are all looking for quality content for their newsletters.

If you master this technique of making your ezine viral, you can get your name and your website URL in front of hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of readers.

Tips for Making Your Ezines Viral

- Pick a topic that you know something about and then go to the Search Engines and find as many websites as you can that deal with that subject.
- As well as collecting information for your article, make a note of any URLs that offer free resources dealing with the topic of your article. Include those URLs in your article.
- You should choose a topic very carefully. Once the topic is selected, doing enough research on the subject is vital. Organize the material and write in an interesting style. Make sure that you provide links to free resources.
- The content in your ezine should not be pure sales copy. There has to be valuable and genuine information. Promotion of your product or service should be subtle. Viral marketing using ezines is different than running an email marketing campaign that blasts millions of messages to unsuspecting readers.

- At the end of your article, attach a 5 or 6-line 'Resource Box' that includes your website URL and/or your email address.
- When you have finished your article, do NOT send it off straight away. Let it lie fallow for 2 or 3 days and then come back and read it again. You'll be amazed at the improvements you can make. Those final improvements can mean the difference between an article that gets published and one that doesn't.

2.9 Ezine Software – Automating the Ezine Process

The activity of creating and distributing ezines involves a number of crucial phases – from developing the content and format, to marketing and advertising, to delivery and distribution. Most ezine publishers, especially smaller companies and individuals, will deal with content creation and ezine marketing themselves. However, as many have found out, hiring professional third party ezine software vendors may be a good idea.

These vendors would take care of distributing and delivering your ezine to your customers at nominal rates. Doing so would save much of your time and effort – something that should be directed at creating informative content and developing marketing strategies.

You can do the distribution yourself as well. More on this is discussed in an upcoming chapter: "4. Advertising Your Own Ezine." However, if you decide to outsource this process to a third party, there are some considerations to keep in mind in order to determine the best solution provider.

The beauty of hiring firms that provide ezine software is that many of the other aspects – such as formatting, managing, administering, and tracking – are also automated by these vendors.

You could buy such software and manage the whole process yourself. However, I would recommend that you outsource the delivery process to a credible and reliable software vendor.

Here are some of the features to look for in ezine software and the service providers.

Content Management

Most ezine software offers tools to manage the content of your ezine. This includes content formatting functionality enabling content to be published with different kinds of pre-defined templates, and formats

such as text, HTML or a combination of both. This is an extremely handy tool.

Personalization

This tool allows ezines to be personalized for every reader. For instance, before sending an ezine to a particular reader this tool would fetch the name of the reader from the database and address it directly to that reader. Thus, instead of a "Dear Member..." you could have a "Dear George" or "Dear Samantha." We discussed earlier the importance of personalizing newsletters. This tool does just that.

Moreover, you could also personalize on the basis of interests, age groups, and so on. For instance, you could have pre-defined content from the same ezine for teenagers, and different pre-defined content for senior citizens.

Scheduling and Administration

Scheduling allows you to automatically send out the ezine at a particular frequency. You could automate when and how many times to send the ezine within every month. Apart from this, a content management system would also empower you with all kinds of

administrative tools such as managing the look and feel of the ezine, to managing subscriber lists.

Managing Subscriptions

Ezine software include tools that enable creating and managing subscriber lists for each ezine, automatically handling subscription as well as un-subscription requests, editing and updating your customer database, handling non-existent email addresses, and providing confirmation as well as welcome messages to new subscribers with the help of autoresponders.

Moreover, some software also provides tools to break up and analyze customer lists, which can be very useful.

Tracking

This is probably one of the most important aspects of any ezine software. You should always seek a software or service that provides a very reliable and comprehensive tracking and reporting package.

Ensure that detailed statistics about your readers, delivery, and circulation are provided. The more comprehensive the statistics are, the better it is for you to analyze the performance of your ezine campaign.

Reliable Method of Delivery

Before hiring a service provider or installing software, test the delivery process to ensure that it is timely and reliable. Do you want your email newsletter to go out at by specific time of the day or be delivered within a certain time period? If so, you'll need to determine the speed at which your email newsletter vendor can send out emails.

Most email newsletter software systems are set up so that once you click "send," your email is out the door. However, if this is important to you, look for a vendor that allows you to stop mailings in mid-stream to prevent any errors that might occur.

Other Features to Look For

Apart from the above mentioned, there are a few other things to keep in mind before you decide on a vendor. For instance, does the vendor implement very strict policies against spam? Do they have any mechanism to solve spam complaints? I would highly recommend a vendor that prevents spam since this is one of the most common complaints that readers lodge against ezine publishers.

Another thing to look for is the customer support provided by the vendor. You should ideally have a vendor that offers 24/7 customer support and is quick to respond to any of your queries or problems.

Always ask the vendor to provide a demo of how the software works. Do not hire anyone who is not willing to offer a free trial. There may be limitations in the software that could only be seen once you perform a test.

Lastly, do the required research to compare the prices of different vendors. You would be amazed to see the variation in costs. And remember, always ask the vendor for any discount they may provide.

It makes sense to negotiate with the email newsletter software vendors as you have significant negotiating leverage given how many competitors and alternatives exist. Read the agreement terms carefully to chalk out any hidden costs and expenses.

2.10 Acquiring Useful Subscriber Data

We've already discussed the importance of tracking your campaign, but in addition to this it is equally important that you track your subscribers as well. Acquiring demographic data from existing as well

as prospective subscribers can immensely improve the popularity of your ezine.

Demographic data can be used to tailor your ezine content to suit a specific audience. This can help improve your content. The most popular ways to gather such data is through a feedback form or a survey on your website. You may also post these forms through email to existing subscribers.

However, most subscribers may deem such information as private. Thus, you should proceed with great care ensuring that you do not endanger the trust of your customers.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

- Clearly mention the purpose of gathering such data.
- Have a strict privacy policy pertaining to subscriber data and convince subscribers that you would be abiding by the policy.
- Do not collect any data that is not required; collect only the most essential data.

- Do not provide your subscribers with lengthy surveys. Keep them as short as possible.
- Provide a strong guarantee that all data collected will be kept safe and confidential, especially from spammers.
- Do not force anyone to fill out the survey. Do not keep it as a pre-condition to signing up. Keep this process optional.
- Automate the feedback process. This will save you a lot of time and effort, and it will be much easier for you to collect data in the future.

2.11 Using Testimonials to Improve Credibility

Testimonials will boost the credibility of your ezine, and they improve the feeling of trustworthiness amongst prospective subscribers. In fact, testimonials have been known to increase the number of subscribers greatly!

The internet is a very impersonal medium. People trust people! The more you can do to “humanize” your ezine, the more likely potential

subscribers will want to enroll with you. Testimonials “speak” to potential subscribers in an honest, believable way.

Write a personalized email to every existing subscriber and request that they provide a review of your ezine. Ask them what they like best, and what they like least. Most readers would be happy to assist you. Here are some tips on how to approach subscribers for testimonials.

- Give a sample issue of the ezine to a group of users in your target market. Ask them if they found it useful, and how they would improve the product.
- Give a sample issue to an industry expert. Someone with a complete knowledge of your field is well-suited to judge how well your ezine works.
- Always get permission to use the testimonial. Have them sign a release form granting their permission to publish their testimonial in the ezine as well as on the website.
- Fully identify the person while quoting the testimonial. This includes the full name, occupation, and company name. You

could also include their city and age if you have permission from the person to do so.

- Testimonials can be used on a testimonials page on your website; they could be scattered throughout your website; they could be used in marketing and sales letters; in autoresponder messages; and in brochures.

The words of a satisfied reader are powerful tools for building trust, promoting your reputation, and increasing subscribers.

3. Making Money from Your Ezine

3.1 Paid Ezines – Do They Work?

Information is freely available on the internet. Do paid ezines work?

The answer is in most cases they don't. The magic word here is *most* cases – there are exceptions where paid ezines have been highly successful.

If you are just starting out with your ezine, forget about asking your subscribers to pay for it. Paid ezines can only work when you have established a name for yourself. Besides, if the main aim behind running an ezine campaign is to promote your other products, you must avoid paid subscriptions. You may charge for the ezines if you have been able to regularly publish them for a long period of time while constantly increasing your subscriber base.

What can make a successful transition from a free to a paid ezine is out-of-the-ordinary content. Your ezine should have extremely unique and informative content that would otherwise not be available freely on the internet. People are only going to pay if they find that your ezine actually helps readers. For instance, you could have an ezine about Search Engine Optimization wherein you provide tips and guidelines that are proven, and not readily available elsewhere.

Another aspect of paid ezines is the ability to accept credit card payments. There is no use having a paid ezine and only accepting the payment in terms of checks and money orders. Having a payment gateway such as [ClickBank](#) or [PayPal](#) would certainly help.

Paid ezines may work when administered and marketed in the right way. The key is to convince your readers that they would be getting their money's worth by paying for exceptional information.

3.1.1 Developing a Fee-Based Ezine

As soon as you start charging for your ezine, your readers will start expecting a higher standard from you as well as a good value for their money. You need a well thought out and balanced strategy so you can convince your readers that they are definitely getting valuable information. You also need to provide unique and exclusive information that your competitors do not provide. Here are a few strategies to be aware of if you want your fee-based model to be successful...

3.1.2 Provide Extra-Ordinary Content

You need to make sure that you provide exclusive content for your fee-based ezine. The information that you provide must be of great value and must intrigue your readers. Your readers must be compelled

to actually pay and obtain the content. Such information can be exclusive industry news, insider information on the stock market, question-answer sets for competitive exams such as GMAT or SAT, high-quality medical information, and so on.

Whenever you provide targeted information for such a niche market, make sure that you hire an expert to write the articles or provide credentials so that you can attach credibility to your ezine.

3.1.3 Employ 'Direct Response Marketing' for Your Ezine

Just like regular print newsletters, you need to employ direct response marketing to promote your ezine effectively. This means that you have to spend all your advertising money on media where you can measure the response that you receive. You can use telemarketing, internet marketing, or paper/electronic media to advertise your ezine. Use these strategies with trial and error methods to find out the right combination of marketing for your ezine that can help you build your paid subscribers' base.

3.1.4 Built-in Product Strategy

When you try and market your paid ezine just as an informative newsletter, it does not really attract the attention of your readers. Not

many people want to spend money on just “information.” But when you portray your ezine as part of a fuller package, then it clicks. For example, you can offer your readers a premium package wherein, with a few dollars every month, they can get the entire ezine, plus special reports and the opportunity to ask questions of the experts. This will catch their attention since you are giving them something extra apart from the basic information.

You can divide your ezine into different sections, and access to a particular section – such as archives or back issues, or articles written by experts – can be offered to premium members who choose to pay extra. You can also create different packages, or you can have different fees set up for different reports or articles. It may very well be that your paid ezine will probably not get a lot of new customers, but your existing customers will chose to renew or upgrade their membership, and hence you can get additional profits.

3.1.5 Put It All Together Effectively!

When you move from publishing free ezines to creating and selling paid ezine newsletters, you have to realize that you are changing your entire operational structure. There are many new additions to your system – such as managing paid customers, charging their credit

cards, generating invoices and billing issues, refunds and cancellations, providing discounts and incentives, and so on.

Make sure that there are no hitches in this part of your operation as you are dealing with people's money and things can get nasty if you make even one mistake. For instance, you would have to set up an extremely safe and secure payment system. You will need to ensure that you integrate this with your existing system so that you can guarantee effective customer service. All the technical and creative aspects should work in harmony with each other.

3.1.6 Encouraging Free Subscribers to Become Paid Subscribers

It will be hard for your subscribers to pay for your ezine if you have been publishing a free ezine all along. The obvious question in their minds would be "What is so special about your ezine now that you are charging a fee to read it, and what was it lacking in the past?" You need to come up with a plan to make this transition as smooth as possible for you as well as for your readers. It is not going to be easy to convince existing as well as new readers to enroll for a paid subscription when it has previously been free.

Here are some tips that might help you convert free subscribers to paid subscribers.

Suggest the change subtly to your readers

Don't just drop a bomb one fine day and announce that, starting with the next issue, you are going to demand that your readers pay a subscription fee, and if they don't pay up then you won't deliver the ezine to them. This is not only rude, it is also a bad move on your part. Your readers need to be motivated in order to pay for your ezine. Suggest it to your readers as delicately as possible by giving many reasons that have forced you to take this step. For example, you can't meet the production costs, the expert fees are too high, the web space provider has hiked the price because your subscription base has increased in the past month, and so on. I would recommend that instead of focusing too much on reasons, you should always try to highlight the exceptional benefits of your paid ezine. You must clearly justify the transition.

You can't just take away the free ezine from your existing members. If you want to get your readers to pay for your ezine, give them something to hold on to. Continue some sections of your ezine as free

sections, and just charge fees for exclusive interviews, special reports, archives, etc.

Offer them freebies

“Free” is one word that everyone loves. You can provide some incentives to your existing readers by offering them free customized reports, exclusive tips by an expert, a free one month membership, special discounts, or even tangible free gifts such as promotional coffee mugs, tee-shirts, posters, etc. You can collaborate with other websites to offer discount coupons that can be used for merchandise sold on that particular website, a conjoined trial membership to some other website, gift vouchers, and so on. The choices are nearly limitless; you just have to think it through.

Revamp your website/ezone

Give your website or ezine a face-lift and reveal a glimpse of it to your readers. Present a sense of what is in store for them if they choose to become paid members. If your readers see that your ezine and website looks just the same and has no apparent improvements, they might not find it promising enough. Before you get ready to launch your paid ezine, make sure that you have redone your website so that it looks and feels updated, more informative, and worth the cost.

3.2 Automating Your Ezine with Autoresponders

When you are a beginner, you have very limited subscribers. So, tasks such as adding new contact info, welcoming a new reader, sending regular issues, emailing official notices, answering feedback and responding to reader comments, unsubscribing clients, etc., can be boring if not difficult.

It becomes increasingly troublesome once you start growing your readers' base. Thankfully, you can automate this process, which makes life a lot easier for you. If you are using your own email program to send out regular ezines to your readers, you can tweak the options features in it so that it enables you to send out multiple emails, automatic replies to every email you receive, forwarding emails to respective folders so as to organize the clutter in your inbox, and so on.

An automatic email responder is a program that can set pre-formatted responses that can be sent automatically once it receives any email. There are simple autoresponders that merely send a specific reply to any email received by it and there are intricate autoresponders that require complicated programming and are programmed to do multiple

tasks. Complex autoresponders also send specific emails at regular intervals in response to that one email it receives.

The following are the uses of autoresponders:

- You can use it to send out information about your ezine and how to sign up to receive regular copies of your ezine.
- You can send out official notices or announcements about changes in your ezine, a preview of the next issue, if you are planning on publishing a special article on some topic or an exclusive interview of an expert, and so on.
- This program can be used to send out replies to user feedback. For example, the standard “thanks for sending your valuable feedback.” Later you can personally send out responses to specific comments or queries.
- You can send out automatic “thank you and goodbye” messages to the readers who are choosing to unsubscribe.

- You can also send out sample issues to new and potential subscribers.
- You can distribute news and notifications of archives on your website.
- You can also send promotional offers using this program.
- This program can help you distribute your advertising rate information and other media related info that can bring about more business for your ezine.

How can you go about signing up for autoresponders? The following are the basic steps that cover this process:

- Your first step is to sign up for an auto-responding service. There are various web-hosting programs that also offer this service as a part of the package. However, if you are to explicitly choose this type of service, then it is a good idea to select it. One advantage of this is that since you have the same domain name for your website and for your autoresponder owing to the

common web-space provider, there will be apparent consistency and your auto-replies will look more professional.

However, if your web host does not provide this additional service, then you can sign up for autoresponders through various commercial websites that are on the internet. Most of these services are free, while others charge a small fee.

- Secondly, choose a simple and easy-to-remember name for your auto-responding service. You can also choose different names that target different types of emails that you receive. For example, your ezine is "All about Mexico" – for new subscribers you can have "welcome@allaboutmexico.com," for unsubscribe requests, you have "goodbye@allaboutmexico.com," for news and notices you have "news@allaboutmexico.com," and so on. Always choose short and descriptive names.
- Next, decide upon the text you are planning to use in your autoresponder messages. Choose appropriate messages for appropriate responses.

- Now, configure the autoresponder so that it fits your requirements. Choose how often you want the autoresponder to send messages. You can also select if you want each copy of the message forwarded to you. You can also choose if you want only specific messages forwarded to you – for example, every feedback message received by your autoresponder, or every complaint received by it, should be forwarded to you on the email address specified by you.
- Lastly, test the autoresponder to make sure that it is fully functional and you can put it into practice. Send test emails to each address you have created using the autoresponder and check the replies you receive. See to it that you have not received garbled text or there are no missing words or info in your reply. Check how long it takes for you to receive the automatic message; it should not take more than a few minutes. Check the message format and, if you have provided any links in the message, see if they are functioning properly.

3.3 Selling Ad Space in Your Ezine

As we discussed, paid ezines are one way to generate an income from your campaign. One of the most popular ways of generating income with ezines, however, is through advertisements.

If you are a reputable and established ezine publisher with millions of readers, chances are that the advertisers will come running after you, trying to push you to publish their ads in your ezine. However, that is when you are an expert ezine publisher and have spent your time and effort in building your ezine to the state where it is today. Let's talk about how to deal with selling ad space in your ezine when you are just starting out in the ezine publishing sector.

The number one thing to keep in mind is that the amount of money you charge per advertisement depends on the kind of publication you have. If you have an ezine catering to a niche market, going out only to a specific group of readers, who are focused and who know what they want, you might wish to charge higher for the ads you publish in your ezine. This is because your advertisers know that their ads are going to reach the right strata of consumers and the people who will read their ads are actually potential purchasers of their products.

Similarly, if your ezine is about a common market or provides information that reaches a wide variety of people, like news stories, etc., then you might want to charge less per ad. This is done when the competition is too high in this field and there are many ezine publications dealing with the same product. For that reason, you might want to start with charging less per ad.

However, there are no fixed rules for how much you should charge for the ads that are published in your ezine. You have to consider the worth of your ezine by determining how valuable it is to your readers. Will they miss your ezine if you stop publishing? Do they enjoy reading every issue that you publish? When you determine the importance of your ezine in the lives of your readers, you can determine the value of ads you want to publish. The more popular your ezine is, the higher revenue can be earned through selling ad space.

Another thing you need to consider is the frequency of your publication – do you publish weekly, bi-weekly, monthly? If you publish a weekly ezine, your advertisers are divided into four slots per month; that is, they can get their ads published as often as four times a month if they want. This does not mean that the value of their advertising is decreased as they are published more often – it actually means that

the more active their ads are, the higher the chances they have of getting their ads noticed by readers.

Do not fall into the trap of providing as many ads as you can in your ezine just so that you can earn more advertising revenue. It is true that you might earn more revenue from your advertisers, but you will fall down in the eyes of your readers since they will not appreciate getting bombarded with so many ads. No one likes having to wade through plenty of advertisements in order to actually find the information they want. It is exasperating and frustrating, and they might decide to unsubscribe rather than having to go through this ordeal.

A typical ezine ad should be approximately 6 lines in length, 65 characters per line, and it should have an accompanying URL linking to the advertiser's website, or have the email address specified by the advertiser. You can also have ads as long as 8 lines and you can charge more for every line you add. The longer the ad is, the better the promotion for the advertiser. Subsequently, you can charge more for that.

You don't want to run ads and simply hope to get your readers to click on them when you first start out. Wait till you get a fairly decent number of subscribers before you can expect to get good response rates. Until that point, you can run your own ads or public service advertisements in your ezine. Make sure that you run at least a couple of these "not for profit" ads, so that when you do decide to run ads for profit, you do not take your readers by surprise. If your readers are used to seeing an ads-free ezine, they are not going to like the idea of seeing ads suddenly. So, do keep this point in mind when deciding your advertising strategy.

3.4 How to Place Ads in Your Ezine

As far as advertisers are concerned, if you want to please them, you must get good response rates. That is the fundamental rule for having a congenial relationship with your advertisers. If they like the response rate that their ads are generating, they are likely to place repeat ads in your ezine. If that is the case, you can be assured of the advertising revenue that you will generate as your repeat customers are going to give you unfailing business. The key here is how to strategically place your ads so that your readers notice them and are motivated to click on the ads and generate potential income for your advertisers.

You can place the ads in the 'most read' or 'most popular' section of your ezine. You can find this out by doing a reader survey and getting feedback from them. That way you can determine the most read section of your ezine and place the ads in or around that section which can draw potential customers for your advertisers. Another good strategy is to place ads right at the top of your ezine, just where it has begun, or right near the end of it.

Your readers are more likely to click ads before the content has begun, or after the content has ended. They will not be bothered by unsightly ads that spring up on them while they are reading an interesting section or article in your ezine. And they will actually have the time to read the ads and possibly click on them once they are done with the reading or have not yet started reading your ezine.

You have to strategically place ads in your ezine and not just scatter them randomly. This policy will be significant in deciding whether your advertisers will go to you or your competitors for placing their ads.

3.5 How to Get Advertisers' Attention for Your Ezine

You can get an advertisers' attention for your ezine by creating a comprehensive online media kit for them that has all the information they need to place an ad. You would be boosting your chances of catching the advertisers' attention by creating a catchy one-line link on your ezine. For instance, if you have an ezine on Real Estate you could place a link titled "Are you looking to reach 'x' number of prospective home-buyers?" that directs them to your website, which gives complete advertising information to real estate developers who are interested in placing ads in your realty ezine. Your one-line revelation will tell them that the niche market they are looking for is the one that you are targeting.

Your advertisers will love to find out all there is to know about your ezine and whether they should place their ads in your ezine or not. They would want to know the subscribers rate, the click through rates of ads placed in your ezine, testimonials from other advertisers, etc.

A good idea is to create a separate website or an email template with all-inclusive information that can be of benefit to your advertisers. This is known as a media kit. Your media kit is like your portfolio,

which has all the data and statistics about your previous works and what you have to offer.

The following pointers can help you come up with a great media kit.

- You can write about why it is a good idea to advertise with you. You can mention the perks and benefits and the competitive rates that you offer. It is basically a sales letter and you have to be professional and precise in writing it. Don't over-use marketing lingo – just give practical information to the advertisers.
- Also provide demographic information about your subscribers, such as their age groups, profession, locality, etc. Use percentages, plus charts and figures to describe your subscribers.
- Provide them with a rate card which has all the information about different prices that you charge for ads. You might want to have different rates for different sections, different dates, etc. For example, you might have different rates for ads that are placed in your ezine around Thanksgiving Day to New Years Day.

Mention it clearly so that it is easy for anyone to go through it and make their decision.

- Some of the most effective items you can place in your media kit are testimonials from other advertisers or subscribers who vouch for the effectiveness of the ads placed in your ezine. For example, real life experiences of an advertiser earning considerable revenue from placing ads in your ezine and getting benefit of your vast reader base. Or if a reader has emailed you about how the ads have helped them discover a great product, publish it here. This is highly effective as your potential advertisers will immediately relate to the experiences and it is much better if others talk about you rather than you blowing your own trumpet.

You can get the advertisers and readers to comment about the ads by specifically asking them for their feedback. You can encourage the readers to comment generously, and you can email the advertisers and ask them to email you about the responses they receive.

- Provide all the necessary information that can be utilized to contact the appropriate person for placing ads in your ezine. Give out the email address, phone number, fax number, postal address, etc.
- You can also have an online inquiry form which can be used for advertisers if they seek more information. This form can ask for info like name, email address, phone number and a suitable time to contact them. You can also have an online order form which has fields like name, contact details, ad copy, credit card details, and so on.

If you want to process advertising orders online, you must accept credit cards and you must have a very trustworthy web page secured by the acceptable security standards, such as PayPal.

Contact your existing advertisers regularly via email and inform them of the offers and deals in your advertising rates. The words and phrases that your advertisers will love are "improved," "competitive," "slashed down," "discounted," and of course "FREE."

4. Advertising Your Own Ezine

4.1 The Advertising Campaign

4.1.1 Setting Up Your Advertising Campaign

Newsletters are generally used as tools to market other products or services. You would hardly have a newsletter which itself is an end-product. For this reason, advertising is an integral part of building and publishing any newsletter or ezine.

Before you start your advertising campaign, you need to carefully plan it. Start by asking yourself what is the purpose of the campaign – what product would you be advertising through your ezine? There are many key aspects of a successful campaign. Let us discuss each one separately.

The timeframe

One of the first things you need to decide is how much time would you devote to your campaign. You cannot have an indefinite campaign. It is always advisable to fix a start date and an end date to your efforts. The reason for this is that within a specific timeframe it is easier to track the performance of your campaign as well as set up a budget. Besides, if at the end of this period you find your campaign to be successful, you could always continue with the same strategies.

Budget

Setting up a budget for your campaign is not as easy as it sounds. You may have a specific amount in mind but simply using up the whole amount, at least initially, may not be the wisest idea. Online advertising comes in many forms. You could run a series of 5 campaigns as well as a series of 50 campaigns. The key is to spend your money right.

Some campaigns are obviously more expensive than others. Some may even be free. This means that it is not simply a case of saying that you are going to run a series of five different campaigns covering a range of advertising media, and so you will split your budget equally between the five campaigns. You do not know what campaigns yield better results by simply knowing the costs.

Any successful campaign is formed of the right ingredients. The hardest part of your advertising campaign is not to set it up or maintain it but to find the right ingredients. This can only be done with time. I would suggest that you do not stretch your budget initially. Start with a few campaigns well within your budget and track their performance over a period of time. This will give you a better idea of what strategies work for you and what don't. In fact, it may not be a

bad idea to spend less than half of your budget initially. This way even if you lose all your money you would still have money left for other campaigns. On the other hand, if your initial campaign works, you could continue as planned, and also boost it up a notch.

Tracking your campaign

Tracking your advertisements, as discussed above, is essential for the success of the campaign. By employing some sort of a tracking system you would be able to determine which ads bring you the highest number of responses.

This is so very important, especially initially. It not only focuses your efforts on the right advertising strategies but also helps in achieving maximum ROI (Return On Investment). More information on ad tracking systems is given later in this chapter.

Analyzing your visitors

There are two phases involved in measuring the performance of your ads. One is tracking which ads get good responses. The second is to identify those visitors who actually go on to sign up for your newsletter from your website. You would probably have a text box to allow visitors to enter their email address and sign up for your ezine. In the

section on websites, I recommended that you have a separate page for each ezine. Apart from other benefits already discussed, this would also enable you to identify visitors who sign up for your ezine. This can be done by simply studying the traffic logs to track the hits on the sign up page.

You could also ask your web host to set up specific CGI scripts that can make tracking and analyzing visitors easier and less complicated.

Documenting tracking results

Tracking the performance of your advertising campaign means nothing if you do not have all results documented for later analysis. Results could be documented in an excel spreadsheet, a database, or any other system you are comfortable with. Given below is some of the data that you should record.

- Advertising medium
- Website address
- Email Address
- Number of visitors per day/week/month
- Date of advertisement
- Cost of advertisement

- Tracking tool
- Inquiries per ad
- Sales per ad

These are some of the guidelines that can help make your campaign successful. The next phase is to figure out exactly where to advertise your ezine.

4.1.2 Places to Advertise Your Ezine

Just like all advertising options, the net offers a range of advertising locations as well. There are many places where you could advertise your ezine successfully. Some locations can be expensive, whereas some are free of cost. The key is to figure out the right balance of places to advertise your ezine.

Given here are some of the popular avenues for advertising ezines.

Advertising in search engines

Listing your newsletters in popular search engines is probably the best way to spread your message to a wide, as well as focused, audience. Most marketers use search engines as their primary marketing tool.

There are plenty of search engines on the internet – some list your ad for free, whereas some are quite expensive. Some of the most popular search engines are:

- Google.com
- Yahoo.com
- MSN.com
- Ask.com

Every search engine has its own set of rules on how to submit ads. Apart from these, rankings in the search engine listing play a vital role in reaching targeted audiences. There are many guidelines to follow to improve your rankings without having to increase the cost of submission to various search engines. Apart from these, there are also paid programs such as Google AdWords that can get you a wide base of subscribers.

Setting up joint ventures

We saw earlier how you could earn money by selling ad spaces in your ezine. While earning income from advertisements is a good option, it may not hurt you to be a bit creative in your advertising. Instead of asking for cash in return for advertising space, you can ask for a reciprocal promotion on a partner's newsletter.

As long as you're not competing, setting up joint ventures with complementary businesses is a great way to increase your customer base — and boost your sales.

For example, you could trade articles or interview other "experts." Or offer special deals on your partner's goods.

In its simplest form you would select a complimentary product, take a good look at it and, if you are happy with it, make it the subject of a feature article in your newsletter recommending it to your readers. Your joint venture partner would do the same thing with one of your products or services. Giving a product an "independent" third party recommendation is an excellent way to increase sales with both parties benefiting.

Advertising in newsgroups, discussion forums, and announcement lists

Newsgroups are great sources to target your ezine to focused audiences. There are numerous free newsgroups catering to all kinds of subjects. You should start by listing out a few newsgroups that address your industry or subject. However, whenever submitting messages and ads to newsgroups, ensure that you follow their rules.

Responding to any messages that you may receive from readers is essential. It is imperative that you post a clear response to a message from all readers who show interest in your ad. This will add to your time and effort but it is certainly worth it.

Similarly, you could also post ads in discussion forums. Discussion forums are very similar to newsgroups. Like newsgroups you could find numerous forums on particular subjects.

Lastly, there are also lists known as announcement lists, which are a great way to announce your ezine to targeted audience.

Submitting your ezine to directories

This is one of the most popular forms of advertisement for ezines. There are many ezine directories that list several ezines by type and category. For instance, ezines are listed by Subject, Industry, etc.

All directories would ask you to provide a description of your ezine. This is where you have a chance to score above your competitors by writing an eye-catching description highlighting most benefits of your ezine and your product. Write in brief how your ezine could help a reader. Detail any offers or incentives that you may provide to your

subscribers. I would recommend that you study similar ezine descriptions before you submit your own.

4.1.3 Testing with Ad Tracking Programs

There are two main factors that make an ad effective: Content of the ad, and the sites where it is advertised. Most experts would agree that constant testing and experimenting is the only way to ensure that you get the right combination. However, the question arises, "How do you test your ads?" An integral part of any advertising campaign is in knowing which ads bring you the most visitors. After all, you may have banner ads, newsgroups ads, ads in other newsletters and articles, ads in autoresponders, or a simple classified ad on a website.

Every marketer can only benefit by knowing:

- which of the ads received the best response
- whether free classified sites are worth the effort
- what other ezines are the most profitable
- how a sponsored newsletter ad compares to the standard one
- whether animated banners are better than static ones
- how effective are your email ads
- does the ad at the start of newsletter or article outperform the one at the end

Ad tracking programs would answer all of these questions. They can help you analyze the effectiveness of every single ad – hence, they should be an integral part of every marketing campaign. There are many comprehensive ezine ad tracking programs available on the net for reasonable costs. Just enter “ad tracking” in a search engine to find lots of choices.

4.2 Advertising in Other Ezines

Just as you can sell advertising space in your ezine, you can also advertise your ezine in other newsletters. You can use those ads to promote your business or to invite people who read newsletters to read your own.

The key is to pick your partners carefully. There’s no point just picking a newsletter with the cheapest rates; you want to make sure you choose an outlet that appeals to the correct buyers. You also need to think about where your ad is going to be placed. In general, the higher the position the better. Besides, the more the merrier too! Don’t expect a huge response from a single ad. It’s always best to think of advertising in terms of a campaign. You’ll get a better deal – and better results – if you reserve an advertising slot for four or five issues than if you buy them one at a time.

4.2.1 Targeting Ezines That Cater to Your Kind of Audience

Unless you advertise in ezines that are read by your target audience, your advertising efforts would hardly yield any benefits. Think about it – wouldn't it be crazy to advertise in an ezine that caters to the business audience when your ezine talks about something completely unrelated, say horses.

The best way to go about finding ezines that are similar to yours, or even compliment yours, is to analyze some of the most popular listing directories, forums, and discussion boards. Make a list of all the ezines that seem similar, and get a subscription to receive a few issues of the newsletters to check out if they are worth advertising in.

Finally, remember you should look for ezines that are similar but certainly not your direct competitors. Your competitors would be very reluctant to advertise a competitor in their ezine. Besides, you would not want two different ads for the same product in the same newsletter, especially when the newsletter is your competitor's. This would vastly reduce your prospects of getting subscribers. With similar ezines, you would ensure that your ad would be read by the right audience, thereby immensely improving its success rate.

4.2.2 Distinguishing Between the Good and the Not-So-Good Ezines

With thousands of ezines being published on the internet, it is very likely that you would find innumerable ezines that cater to the right audience. You can surely not advertise in each and every ezine, unless you have an exorbitant budget. Besides, how do you know which ones are good and which ones are junk? After all, you would not want to spend money on advertising in an ezine that have an ill repute. Here are some guidelines that might help.

Let us examine some of the qualities you should look for in an ezine:

Always look for opt-in ezines

Ezines gain popularity if they are credible. The most important aspect of credibility is the process of subscription. We discussed earlier the difference between opt-in and opt-out and how important it is for your ezine to be an opt-in list. Other ezines that you look for should also be 100% opt-in.

An opt-out strategy would suggest that the ezine is published on an unsolicited basis. Readers are subscribed without their knowledge. This can very well result in a spam claim later.

If you advertise in such an ezine, you would become a part of spam as well. Your ISP could shut down your account, your website could be terminated, and it is likely that you could even see yourself in the middle of a legal battle. Therefore, avoid opt-out ezine at all costs.

Seek ezines that target a related audience

We discussed this in the earlier section. Let me say it again – all your advertising efforts would be negated if you advertise in ezines that are completely unrelated to yours. There have been many publishers who advertise in all kinds of ezines only to have their time, money and efforts absolutely wasted!

Look for ezines that have fewer ads

You should avoid ezine that have a big cluster of ads. This would reduce the impact of your ad significantly. Always look for ezines that only have a few ads. Besides, ensure that other advertisers are professional and have a credible image.

Look for ezines that deliver good content

Content is probably the most important ingredient of your ezine. Thus, you should look for ezines that have great content. Unique and high quality content will only attract more people, generating a higher

response rate for your ad. In fact, it may be a better idea to advertise in a quality ezine that has only a couple thousand subscribers as compared to an ezine that has common content with more than 20,000 subscribers.

The key is to look out for similar qualities in other ezines that you would want in yours. You may check out if the ezine has a website, if the host and domain name is free or paid, is the mail list provider free? How good is the layout and formatting of the ezine?

Apart from these, there are a few pitfalls to watch out for. These are some of the cheap tactics ezine publishers follow to get a higher subscriber base. However, you would be much better off avoiding ezines with questionable tactics such as these:

- Many publishers collect email addresses of various readers from sources such as FFA (Free-For-All) lists. These may not necessarily be termed as spam or opt-out, but they are certainly not 100% opt-in. Chances are that many of the readers who appear in such lists would not want to be subscribed to the ezine. Avoid all ezines that seek subscribers using such unscrupulous strategies.

- As I said earlier, avoid ezines that have clusters of ads. Some publishers try to incorporate as many ads as possible with the sole aim of earning more money.
- Avoid ezines that advertise your competitor's ads as well. Besides, if the publisher himself has a very similar ad it wouldn't make sense to advertise in that ezine.

These guidelines should help you in selecting great ezines for your advertising campaign. Trust your instincts – if you find something suspicious stay away from it!

4.2.3 The Ezine Ad Copy

The basic purpose of any ad is not to sell your product, but to attract potential subscribers. Your ezine and website are responsible for making sales of the product you may be promoting. The key is to have an eye-catching ad. This is where the ad headline is so crucial. Most people will only look at the headline of the ad.

Your headline should be attractive enough to make a potential subscriber read through the ad and eventually click on the link provided to go on and subscribe to your ezine.

List out all the unique features of your product or service. Think how these would benefit your subscribers. Examine each of the benefits and figure out which ones would be most effective. The potential subscriber should know what he/she will gain from your ezine. A very good strategy for doing this exercise is to write out the ad in a paragraph form.

Keep on reading the ad numerous times, gradually reducing and refining the content. Eventually, you will get a one-line heading that is both eye-catching and highlights the uniqueness of your ezine very well. You may also provide an incentive to encourage readers to sign up for your ezine. Make sure you mention the incentive in your ad.

Another important aspect is the size of the description. Every publisher or directory would have their own specifications. Some may allow a 10 to 15 word description, some 30 to 40, and some even 80 to 100. The best thing to do is have different versions of your ad with different lengths of description. Save each of these to a file for later use.

A few other tips:

- Study ads from your competitors. Look for unique features in these ads and employ them in your ad.
- Space is at a premium. Do not waste characters by using duplicates or other words that may be unnecessary. Some words that should be avoided are "the," "a," and "an." Use very common abbreviations where possible.
- Do not ridicule your competitor. Depict how your ezine is superior to others.
- Your aim is to have a maximum conversion ratio of successful subscribers. After all, you wouldn't want to pay for visitors who are unwilling to subscribe to your ezine. A very specific ad would target only those surfers who are actually interested in your particular offering.
- Use language that is personalized and motivational. The purpose of the ad is to elicit a strong desire in people.

- Use strong call-to-action words and phrases. These will generate a response from potential subscribers. Examples include “Sign up today and get a free eBook,” “Register Now and Win,” etc.

Ezine ads should include what most people refer to as “power” words.

These are words that many advertisers use in order to pull in

subscribers. Here is a list of some of the most useful power words:

- Fast
- Simple
- Secrets
- Stop
- Breakthrough
- Sale
- Act Now
- Superior
- Successful
- Valuable
- Limited
- Wealth
- Latest
- Delivers
- Win

- Announcing
- Discover
- Free Gift
- Incredible
- Amazing
- Exclusive
- Remarkable
- Boosts
- Don't Delay
- Effective
- Fast-Acting
- Affordable
- Bonus
- Increases
- Members-Only
- 100% Guaranteed
- Proven
- How To
- Timeless
- Top Ranking
- Exclusive
- Hurry

Your work is only half done once you finalize the ad copy. Testing your ad is as vital as designing it. Experimenting with different ads can immensely improve the success rate of your campaign. Design a set of ads containing different headlines and descriptions. The basic message of each ad should be the same. A detailed analysis of each of these ads will ascertain which ad gets the highest response rate. This way you can pinpoint successful ads and continue with them. Ads can be tested and analyzed using ad tracking programs and scripts.

4.2.4 Swapping Ads with Other Ezine Publishers

Swapping ads with other ezine publishers is a neat way to avoid paying for advertising. This strategy can work wonders for your ezine campaign. You could form an alliance with other ezine publishers wherein you could request them to let you advertise in their ezine for free. Of course, you would then have to return the favor by letting them advertise in your ezine for free.

This eliminates the cost of advertising in other ezines. However, you may also have to part with any income you would be generating by selling advertising space in your own ezine. The choice is yours. If you opt for ad swapping, ensure that you reciprocate with a publisher who

is credible and professional. You wouldn't want disreputable publishers to advertise in your ezine.

4.2.5 Submitting Articles to Other Ezines

Ezine publishers are always on the lookout for additional informative articles for their ezine. You should always take advantage of this.

Write a simple information-packed article (about 500 words in length) on a subject that you are knowledgeable about and submit it to other editors with a suggestion that they might like to use it in their next edition. These articles could be about anything. Of course, they have to be related to the topic of the ezine. If your article is informative and content rich, you stand a good chance of having it published in another ezine. There are some great advantages of having your articles published in other ezines.

- Such a strategy introduces you to a larger audience, which may very well be your target audience. Good articles can build your credibility and reputation as a source of great information. This would help you market your own ezine much better.

- It also allows you to use your signature link to advertise your own business.

Submitting articles to other ezines can be a great source of prospective readers for your own ezine. However, there are a few things that you should keep in mind when you write the article.

While your article may not be an effort to promote your business, your 4 to 6 line resource box should be an outright ad for you and your business. You are free to advertise your website, your products, your services, or any affiliate programs that you are a member of.

One of the most important ingredients of the article is the title itself. The title is what readers would look at and if that doesn't seem appealing, most readers would not give your article a second glance. The key is to have an attention-grabbing title, much like the heading of an ad. It may be a good idea to have a few titles in mind before selecting the final one.

Organize your article so that it flows perfectly. Divide it into four or five main sub-topics instead of having a continuous flow of text. Once you have the subsections, divide the article equally amongst them. For

instance if you have 5 subsections and decide to write an article of 500 words, allot around 100 words for each section. You may not follow this strictly but the idea is to have proportionate sections.

At the end of the article do not forget to insert your resource box. This is what will fetch subscribers to your own ezine. Include your name, website address, and ezine name. Along with this include a few benefits of your ezine. Bear in mind that your best chance of getting subscribers is when the article you write is similar to your ezine subject. There is no point in writing an article about sports when your ezine caters to the business audience.

Finally, proofread your article numerous times and spruce it up as you progress. Do not forget to check for grammar and spelling. Such mistakes can cost you dearly.

When you submit your article to the ezine publisher, write a short personalized cover paragraph at the top. Personalization is a major key since most ezine publishers receive hundreds of these emails every day. You need to make your emails stand out from the crowd.

4.3 Distributing Ezines Yourself

We discussed various strategies for creating, designing, marketing, and advertising ezines. We also discussed automated tools and services for distributing and delivering your ezine. However, there are a few tactics for delivering ezines yourself which are worth mentioning. Though I would recommend using a list server or an ezine distribution service for this purpose, you can also distribute the ezine yourself.

Before we discuss some of the ways to deliver ezines, here's what you would have to do manually:

For all new subscribers, send out a welcome email and add them to your subscriber database. For every "unsubscribe" request, you would have to send an acknowledgement email and manually remove the email address from your database. And finally, you would have to manually send out a copy of your ezine to each and every subscriber from your database.

This sounds easy, doesn't it? But wait until your list grows into hundreds and thousands. Handling such a massive amount would surely become a nightmare. Hence, I would absolutely recommend letting a list server or distribution service deal with these hassles. But

until your list grows to unmanageable proportions, you may want to handle these tasks yourself. Here are a few pointers that might help in carrying out the entire process efficiently.

Some people use a plain text editor for storing all addresses. However, you are much better off using a tool such as MS Excel or MS Access. This would make managing your subscriber list much easier. It would be easier to locate, edit and delete addresses compared to a text file.

Store your ezine in both text and HTML format in a good word processor such as MS Word. Whenever you need to send out the ezine, just copy and paste it onto your email client. Next, you need to enter all the addresses into the email address rows of the email client.

Please note that it is always advisable to paste all of the email addresses into the "bcc" row. Most email programs will have 3 outgoing fields: The "To" field (more about this in a minute), the "cc" or carbon copy field, and the "bcc" or blind carbon copy field. If you paste your list into the "bcc" field, then each address on the list will receive a copy of the newsletter but they will not be aware of the other addresses to which it has been sent.

If, however, you mistakenly paste it into the "cc" field, each address will again receive a copy of the newsletter but they will also see a full listing of all the other addresses to which it has been sent! The most professional ezines never let out email addresses of other subscribers. This can be done by pasting all email addresses into the "bcc" row.

You cannot send out the mail unless you enter a valid email address in the "To" field. This problem can be solved by having your own email address in the "To" field. Make sure that this email address is different than the one you use to send out the ezine, otherwise your ezine would again look unprofessional. The reader doesn't have to know that the email address in the "To" field is your own. You could sign up for a free email at Hotmail or Yahoo for this purpose.

Once you follow these procedures you can send out your ezine.

Managing a huge list can be a major problem. However, your worries don't end here. There are many other problems you are likely to face if you go the manual way.

- Your email program may not support "bcc." In this case each newsletter would have to be sent individually.

- Your ISP, or your own modem, may be slow, resulting in a posting which takes a very long time to complete.
- Your ISP connection may be unstable, resulting in a loss of your connection part-way through the mailing.
- Your mailing could result in a number of “undeliverable” messages. Some of these will come from email addresses that no longer exist, while others will simply have been returned because of a temporary connection problem somewhere along the line. How do you know which to delete from your mailing list and which to send again a day or so later?
- Your ISP may have an email policy which restricts the number of “bcc” recipients that can appear on an email message – a policy which is being adopted by an increasing number of ISPs.

Thus, you are best served by letting a professional service handle the distribution of your ezine.

5. Final Thoughts

5.1 The Next Level

Throughout this book we have discussed most of the proven strategies that should help you in succeeding with ezines. After experiencing a certain level of success with your ezine you can think of adopting newer tactics and consequently increase your budget. With time you would surely realize the potential of ezine publishing. This is when you should take your ezine campaign to the next level.

One thing you need to do is automate all, or at least most, of your procedures. Initially, you may not spend a lot of money on sophisticated tools, but with success you should definitely aim to do so. Once you have the hang of your ezine, you would find that most of your time should be ideally spent on marketing and advertising. Administrative functions should be completely automated.

Next, you should adopt more sophisticated and comprehensive tracking packages. All marketing efforts should be tracked and analyzed. This is where you should be spending your time – and not for managing subscriber lists!

Finally, after publishing at least 15 to 20 issues of your ezine, you can contemplate compiling these issues into a single eBook. Such an eBook can be a great source of content and can be easily sold to existing as well as new customers with a high rate of success. There are many other innovative ways of profiting from your ezine. With proper planning your ezine can be a great success.

5.2 Conclusion

All tactics, strategies, tips, and guidelines provided in this Online Success Guide may seem a bit overwhelming initially, but once you go through the process of coordinating an ezine campaign step-by-step, you will actually start enjoying your new venture.

One thing you should always bear in mind is that running an ezine campaign, like any other business, can only be successful with considerable persistence and dedication. You are mistaken if you expect substantial results immediately. It might be days or months before you start reaping your rewards – but your patience will pay off! Ezines are all about building credibility and trust among your subscribers. Most publishers lose patience only after a couple of months. You should give it more time – at least 10 to 12 months. I'm sure by then you would start achieving desired results. *Good luck!*