

## Keeping Up with Content *Generating a Steady Stream of Ideas for Your Newsletter*

Whether print or online, promotional newsletters are the single best way to keep in touch with your customers. But don't kid yourself — putting together an engaging publication on a regular basis can be a time-consuming process.

One smart way to stay ahead of the content game is by planning ahead. Rather than sitting down a week before your next mail drop with a blank pad and a panicked expression, here are some ways to make developing a well-crafted newsletter — one that customers will actually look forward to reading — just a little easier:

### Start with an editorial calendar

Every industry has some type of seasonality — that big annual trade show, tax-time push, or back-to-school rush. Use these predictable events as springboards for story ideas, such as a conference recap, financial checklist, or tips for staying stress free during crunch time. Once these are on the schedule, you're probably almost halfway home to filling your next issue.

Consider assigning a theme to each issue, connecting stories with a common thread such as productivity or profitability. Mapping out an editorial calendar then allows you to collect content that fits each theme as you come across it — a client case study or success story, industry trend, or new product announcement.

Production schedules go hand-in-hand with

editorial calendars, helping you avoid the last-minute deadline dash.

If you're producing a newsletter for the first time, keep track of how long each step in the process takes — gathering your ideas, writing copy, and laying out the pages — to create a realistic scheduling framework for future issues.

### Collecting content

Sure, syndicated content — whether free or paid — can help you fill the pages of your newsletter. But why risk running something your customer may have already seen elsewhere?

The most effective promotional newsletters are those that create a careful balance between useful content and self-promotion.

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## Need an Email Subject Line?

### Consider Telling, Not Selling

As any fan of *The Simpsons* knows, there's a fine line between stupid and clever. Very often, it involves a monkey. How apropos, then, that a study by an email marketing company named MailChimp discovered that the same fine line also applies to email subject lines.

After analyzing more than 40 million emails, MailChimp found those with the highest

open rates (we're talking 60-87%) had the most straightforward subject lines. Among the most effective subject lines were "XYZ Company Sales & Marketing Newsletter," "Upcoming Events at XYZ Company," and "Invitation from XYZ Company."

In comparison, emails with the lowest open rates (1-14%) featured subject lines like these: "Need More Advertising Value from Your Marketing Partner?" and "It's still summer in Tahoe!"

But don't pink-slip your copywriter just yet. Creativity doesn't automatically translate to low open rates. The difference, according to MailChimp, seems to be in the expectations of the recipient.

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*Media Matters*

## The Next Generation of the Press Release

Bicoastal PR agency SHIFT Communications has created the first-ever “social media” press release template, designed to facilitate journalists’ further research by incorporating the latest technology tools — social bookmarking, RSS, and more.

The new format (seen at right) was inspired by former *Financial Times* writer Tom Foremski, now at *Silicon Valley Watcher*. More à la carte menu than standard release, it ties together multimedia content, narrative, and quotes from stakeholders in one accessible spot for journalists and bloggers.

Use of the template is free, according to SHIFT. Download your copy and give it a go at [shiftcomm.com](http://shiftcomm.com).

Source: *BusinessWeek*



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## Premiums: Ramping Up Results

What do a rubber hammer, a light-up yo-yo, and a cheap travel mug have in common? Most likely, they were a complete waste of marketing dollars.

Walk around any conference or trade show and chances are you’ll spot them — ad specialties or premiums that were purchased for the “cute” factor rather than their brand reinforcement potential. With marketing dollars at a premium (pun intended), you’re missing out on a valuable opportunity to connect with your customer when you confuse cute with clever.

Here are six tips for making your premiums work as hard as you do:

**Tie into your branding strategy.** Even if you’re working with a limited budget, you can still create an impact. A local HR company used the familiar image of an orange construction cone to reinforce its market position as guiding your business “around any obstacle.” Booth graphics echoed this theme, as did an inexpensive yet highly effective giveaway — a squeezable stress reliever in the shape of a construction cone.

**Skip the business card bowl.** Trust us, by now everyone who wants one HAS an iPod. Unless the hot new must-have is one of your own products, why waste valuable eyeball time promoting Apple, Sony, or Microsoft? Taking the time to qualify prospects beats going through a useless stack of business cards while moaning about poor ROI.

**Consider a “freemium.”** Take a lesson from the publishing world and offer an informational booklet as a freebie. According to [marketingsource.com](http://marketingsource.com), their perceived value tends to attract higher quality prospects. Practical content on a topic that’s important to your customers will also heighten your credibility as an expert.

**Turn perceived negatives into playful positives.** Mary Gillen of Learn One Thing points to a chocolate saw that was created at the request of a major hotel in Tyson’s Corner, VA. Seems the marketing manager wanted to keep guests happy during a major construction project. Instead of the typical mints, guests were delighted with these little chocolate tools on their pillows, complete with a “Pardon Our Dust” note.

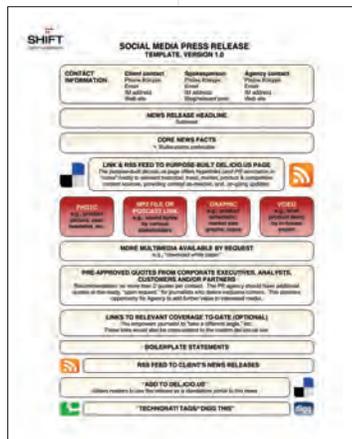
**Build momentum with a contest.** “Promotional products can be extremely effective publicity tools when used correctly and planned for well in advance,” says Thor Harris of Gift Fountain, a global distributor of promotional products. “We recently concluded a promotion with a client who gave away mini jukeboxes once a month for four months leading up to their main tradeshow of the year. The grand finale was a drawing at the show to win a life-size jukebox. Publicity drove waves of traffic to their booth; in fact, the client tripled their number of visitors, and more importantly, qualified leads, from the previous year. The ROI was tremendous — they are still getting feedback months later.”

(cont’d on p. 4)

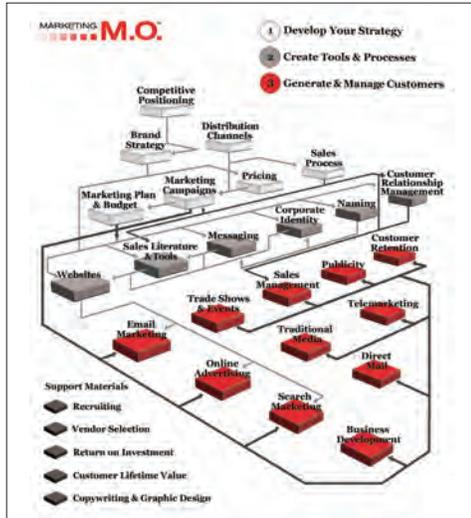
## Email Subject Lines (from p. 1)

For example, someone signing up for your email newsletter is likely expecting news and useful information rather than a hard sell “10% Discount! Open Now!” Conversely, for subscribers who’ve signed up to receive news of promotions and sales, this same bold declaration may result in much higher open rates.

The lesson? One size no longer fits all. Segment your subscribers by the type of messages they expect to receive from you (informational vs. promotional), and create that all-important subject line accordingly.



# Marketing M.O. Builds Your Marketing Mojo



These days, every marketer is stretched for resources. Often, we're being asked to spearhead projects that may be beyond our formal training or experience — CRM, search marketing, or developing a competitive positioning strategy. Yikes...now what?

Thanks to a nifty new product called the Marketing M.O., you've now got a plan — and the tools to put it into successful practice.

Jim and Nancy Sagar are the brother and sister team behind Scottsdale, AZ-based Moderandi Inc. In their former lives at a sales and marketing agency, they developed an internal methodology for developing and executing strategies for clients. Realizing they could broaden their reach by making these tools available to fellow marketers, the Sagars recruited experts in all phases of marketing and took the next four years to develop and refine their brainchild.

The result is the Marketing M.O., a comprehensive resource for B2B marketers to extend their knowledge and expand their marketing repertoire. This remarkable tool packs a one-two punch, combining a web-based software program (the Project Plan Wizard) to create detailed strategic plans with guided instructions for their execution in downloadable Microsoft Word & Excel templates.

## Online Media: What Matters Most

Surprise...media habits are shifting along with the American consumer's fast-paced, multitasking life. So say Steve Farella, CEO of TargetCast, and ACNielsen's Mark Green in their recent presentation, *Consumer Targeting in a Media-Driven World*.

Increasingly, Americans are turning to online media. What's the appeal? Its digital format, which makes it mobile and manageable, while empowering consumers who want to shape the information to suit their needs. Unlike print, radio, or broadcast, digital

media can be saved, blended, and shared with the click of a button.

Farella and Green both point to new media as the environment that will soon matter most to marketers. So if you're not yet up to speed on blogospheres, podcasts, synthetic worlds, and wikis, better get there fast, because the shift away from traditional media is happening sooner rather than later.

Recent data shows high percentages of consumers using the Internet for a host of acquisitions. Topping the list are music, video games, electronics, entertainment, technology, and health and medical information, according to the August 2005 Intelliseek Consumer-Generated Media Study.

In just three steps, the Project Plan Wizard acts as "virtual consultant" for areas that may not be your strong suit. Says CEO Jim Sagar, "With 360 project plans in 29 subject areas, you'll find information that is directly relevant to your situation."

Need to generate qualified leads in a hurry, for example? The Project Plan Wizard guides you through possible short- and longer-term lead generation options, from pay-per-click and telemarketing to channel partner programs and webinars. It also offers help with strategy, campaign management, and measuring ROI, and suggests additional resources for review.

Simply check the desired categories to generate a detailed action plan. Downloadable worksheet templates then offer step-by-step instructions to complete the individual tasks in a particular project.

Several versions of the Marketing M.O. are now available, with individualized project plans geared to the unique needs of service firms and agencies, entrepreneurs, executives, marketing directors, and "aspiring marketers," or students. Pricing options range from purchase of a single, specific project plan to two versions of unlimited access — via monthly subscription or a one-time access fee. Moderandi also offers a certification program to assist service providers in extending their product offerings.

### Special offer for *Compost* readers

The Marketing M.O. is nearing the end of beta and preparing for national launch. Mention *Creative Compost* and take advantage of beta pricing to save an additional \$150 on the one-time unlimited access fee. Readers can also save \$750 on the Certified Consultant Program. This offer is valid until August 25, 2006. To learn more, call (800) 220-2412 or email [sales@MarketingMO.com](mailto:sales@MarketingMO.com).

**Source:** [MarketingMO.com](http://MarketingMO.com)

So, how can a Luddite marketer avoid getting left behind? Farella and Green suggest looking for connection points between consumers around common product or media interests, and placing your emphasis on connecting, influencing and tactically engaging consumers.

Hey, sounds like simply good marketing to us.

**Source:** [factsfiguresfuture.com](http://factsfiguresfuture.com)

“Why not go out on a limb? Isn't that where the fruit is?”

Frank Scully  
American newspaper columnist



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**Need better ROI from your premiums? See page 2!**

## Premiums (from p. 2)

### **Choose even commodity items wisely.**

Everybody can use a pen, right? Not when it leaves a sloppy smear of ink whenever you use it. The message here, says Harris, is simple: “Don’t cut costs if it compromises quality. You’re not saving money if everyone is throwing away your product.”

Injecting a clever dose of brand building does take some time and thought, yes. But a little advance planning means, you’ll be ready to ditch the plastic doodads in favor of a giveaway that really turns heads by the time your next trade show rolls around.

## Newsletter Content

(from p. 1)

No syndicated content, no matter how expensive or well-written, can do that as effectively as you can.

Keep a steady stream of story ideas in your newsletter pipeline by:

**Creating a “swipe” file.** Set up both a physical folder and one in your email program. Toss into them anything that catches your eye — an interesting story from *BusinessWeek*, an industry announcement, or an intriguing letter to the editor on a timely topic.

**Scouring the trades.** Look for information on industry trends or hot-button issues. Don’t lift the content verbatim — that’s plagiarism. Instead, call the editor or reporter for a comment you can quote in your article to add value and make it truly one-of-a-kind.

**Setting online alerts.** Consider some of the topics your customers would be interested in reading about, and set Google alerts to notify you when new material is posted on a particular topic.

**Developing a “what’s newsworthy” list.** Chances are, your company is making bona fide news that’s worth publicizing. Keep track of newsworthy events like new product launches, awards, case studies, and

upcoming speaking engagements, and mix them in with product how-to’s, user tips, industry statistics, and even book reviews.

Once you have a clear idea of the type of content you want — and how to present it so the benefits to your reader are clear — you’ll see that great story ideas will often find you. By following these simple steps, you’ll have a treasure trove of content waiting for you when you’re ready to create your next issue.

## Gauging Greatness

Think you have a discerning eye when it comes to the effectiveness of direct mail creative? Put your skills to the test with a new monthly column from *Direct*. “Pick the Winner” showcases two creative packages, and provides a bit of background on the project. Readers can then visit [directmag.com/pickthewinner](http://directmag.com/pickthewinner) to discover which one pulled the best in the mail.

**Source:** *Direct* magazine