

Newsletter or E-Blast Guide

Social media is a great way to stay in touch with your community throughout the week. But email, even though it's "boring", is often more effective. The stats say so, too. A message emailed to your church could be seen by five times as many people as the same message posted on Facebook.

That's why email newsletters can be a great tool to use if you keep your people updated on what is going on in your church. Some of you may be experienced with newsletters--and some of you may shudder at the thought of having to create a regular newsletter.

That's why we created this guide and checklist for church email newsletters. Here are some pointers:

> WHAT YOU COULD INCLUDE

- A note from the pastor
- The most important thing you need to know is...
- This week's events
- Action Steps from Last Week's Message
- Preview of This Week's Message
- Testimonies or Life Change Stories
- Volunteer of the Week
- Volunteer Opportunity of the Week
- Bible Reading Plan
- Online giving information
- What we're reading/listening to

While your email newsletter could contain these segments, it doesn't always need to include all of them. In fact, email newsletters that are about ONE big thing may get better results than email newsletters about FIVE different things. Each week, decide what deserves 80% of the space.

> HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN A COMPELLING WAY

- The subject line is the most important thing. Don't use something like "Cross Church eNews" as a subject line. Make it different each week and it should have to do with whatever the issue is primarily about.
- Editors make the difference. Whenever you read a great book, you can bet an amazing editor removed a lot of unnecessary words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters or even characters. Make sure you have an editor (preferably not whoever is writing the newsletter) take a look at the e-mail newsletter before it goes out each week. This improves your professionalism and will show you care about excellence.
- Tell stories. Is your newsletter about dates and events or is it about people? Remember, while facts may inform stories will inspire.
- Write about them, not about you. When you're writing about an event, don't just share the start time and the guest speaker's name. Tell people why they should show up. Remind them what's in it for them. Make them the "hero".
- Check your stats. Open rates and click rates don't tell the whole story, but it's a great way to think about engagement. The goal is to truly communicate, not just push out one-way information.



> PERSONALIZATION

- Write from a person to a person. People don't connect with organizations, they connect with people at organizations. So don't make your newsletter corporate. Instead, keep it personal. You probably don't start conversations with "My dearest beloved" so don't start your newsletters that way.
- Make sure your email newsletter doesn't come from info or admin, but a real person with a real address at the church. Keep it consistent every week. It feels less automatic.
- Personalize the first name field. Your newsletter isn't going to your whole church, it's going to a person in your church. You can even personalize the subject line with something like "James, here's what's going on this week at church."
- Ask questions. From time to time, ask people to hit reply and share their feedback. It will make your people feel valued because you care about what they have to say.

> USING VISUALS

- Fancy templates might not get the engagement you're looking for. A simple, text-based email from a real person might have better open rates than the fancy template that comes as the default for your email program. Make sure you test and go with what works better, not just what looks better.
- Use pictures. Even simple text-based emails can have great photography. Look for opportunities to show, not just tell.

