How to Create an E-Newsletter: From Beginning to Send

Establish a Foundation for Success

Step 1: Set Your Goals

Before you do any of the other steps in this how-to manual, you need to determine what you and your group want to achieve by sending out an e-newsletter. What is its overall purpose? What are your specific, measurable goals? What does success look like?

Here are some typical goals for higher-education e-newsletters:
- Influence/improve perceptions of your university/school/dept.
- Demonstrate the value of the school.
- Raise awareness about an imminent or current effort, change, or issue that requires action on the part of the reader or may affect public perceptions.
- Increase alumni memberships and interaction.
- Increase corporate investment and partnerships.
- Increase commercialization of research discoveries.
- Increase donations.
- Increase event registrations.

Step 2: How to Measure Success

Your goal-setting process is not complete until you determine what success looks like for your e-newsletter. That means setting benchmarks for your goals. For example, if you want to use the e-newsletter to help increase event registrations, what percentage increase would be considered a success? The other success measurements you should use are discussed in the Close the Loop section below.

Step 3: Determine Your Target Audience

Now it's time to decide who should receive your e-newsletter. What is the scope of your audience? Is it narrowly focused on a particular segment, such as engineers? Or does it address a wide range of readers, such as business leaders, alumni, faculty, and hiring prospects? Developing an e-newsletter for a focused audience can be a great choice for a small department with relatively modest goals. But it isn't usually the best choice for bigger departments that need to reach more people. Here are more details to help you make your decision between targeting a focused audience or a broad audience.

Considerations for a focused audience:
Pros: Better overall e-newsletter performance, subscriber satisfaction, and advancement toward meeting your goals. Industry data* on e-newsletter performance have shown that:
- The smaller your subscriber base is, the higher your open rates will be.
- The more targeted your content is, the more likely your readers will be to engage with it and be satisfied with the e-newsletter.
- Higher levels of engagement and satisfaction lead to increased likelihood of readers responding to your calls to action and, as a result, helping you achieve your goals.

* Source: *MarketingSherpa's Email Marketing Benchmark Guide 2007*

Cons: Less cost-effective. Developing an e-newsletter for a focused audience takes almost as much and oftentimes equally as much time as one for a broad audience. Yet in the end, the e-newsletter reaches fewer people. Down the road, this fact will often cause an e-newsletter team to reconsider its earlier decision and make one of the following decisions, all of which will reduce the return on your initial investment of resources and time:

- **Expand the subscriber base**, which also means diluting it. Now your carefully targeted content is not as relevant and potentially less compelling to a segment of your readers, which will negatively impact the three Pros listed above.
- **Create additional e-newsletters** that target other specific audiences. For example, if your first e-newsletter was developed for alumni only, but you now want to reach business leaders as well, then you would create a second, separate e-newsletter for the business audience.
- **Scrap the original e-newsletter and rework it** to address a broader audience.
- **Offer subscribers personalized content:** Give them, in effect, access to an a la carte menu and let them choose which kinds of content they want to receive. This option is a great way to avoid ending up with a bunch of separate e-newsletters and is appealing because it gives the reader freedom of choice. However, given current technological limitations, this can be time-consuming for the e-newsletter team. But even more importantly, it usually requires action on the part of the subscriber that many won't bother to take. That's usually because:
    - They don't want to take the time to do it (no matter how easy you think you've made it for them).
    - They don't want to miss out on any information that might have interested them.
    - They already consider the e-newsletter to be personalized because it's coming from their alma mater/department/etc.
    - They feel that giving you information about their preferences is an invasion of their privacy.

  In short, more often than not, it is more trouble than it's worth.

  Important Note: Amazon.com is a clear exception to this rule. It is an industry leader in the development of technology that makes personalization seamless and painless for the customer and increases the level of automation the sender can use in generating e-newsletters or other e-communications that are tailored for a customer's specific preferences.

Considerations for a broad audience:

Pros: More cost-effective. You can reach more people with one e-newsletter. That benefits the readers because they're not getting overloaded with UW e-mail and it benefits you because you can spend your limited time and resources on one primary means of communicating via e-mail to your audience. Also, with good design and clear labeling, you can still address a narrow audience directly without alienating your other readers: Include a section (or sections)—such as an Alumni Corner—that includes content that is only relevant to them.

Cons:

- **Percentage-wise, you'll get lower overall e-newsletter performance**, subscriber satisfaction, and response to your calls-to-action. However, the true test will be whether you are still able to meet your goals.

- **You lose the opportunity to make a more personal connection with your readers.**

Step 4: Determine the Frequency

How often do you plan to send out your e-newsletter? Here are the factors to consider when making your decision:

- **Timeliness:** Will your content be news-driven (like *UWeek*) and/or deadline-driven (it includes event registration or application deadlines)? If so, then you should consider sending it out weekly. If your news has a longer shelf-life, consider going biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or biannually.
- **Other communications this audience is already receiving:** Are there other ways you are contacting this same audience? Do they receive a printed magazine or direct mail from you? Make sure the e-newsletter complements these pieces. Coordinate mail-out schedules and content planning for all of your communication vehicles, so your audience doesn't feel overwhelmed and your resources aren't overtaxed. Lastly, find out what else might be competing for your readers' attention. Is another department targeting the same audience? Is there a way to work together and send one combined e-newsletter? Are there competitors outside the university trying to reach your audience? If so, be sure to subscribe so you can know when and how often your readers are receiving those e-mail messages.
- **Resources:** Before you commit to a frequency, whether it's daily or biannually, make sure you have enough time and people to keep your promise. Consistency of contact helps you earn the trust of your readers and establish the long-term viability of your e-newsletter.

Step 5: Build Your Team

Your team should consist of the following two types of members:

- **Contributors:** These are the people who will do the hands-on work necessary to get the e-newsletter out the door. They can range from those who provide the story ideas to those to do technical support. For details on contributor roles, see the Assign Roles section.
- **Reviewers/Approvers:** These are the people who will make sure your e-newsletter is ready for primetime. They provide a fresh set of eyes to help you see what might be missing or causing confusion—and what just isn't working. This group also includes higher-ups who need to be aware of when and how you're contacting their constituents. In other words, make sure your dean, chair, or whoever else needs to know, doesn't get caught by surprise when someone remarks about something in your e-newsletter.

Step 6: Choose an E-mail Distribution Program

You should think of your e-mail distribution program as more than just a means of sending your e-newsletter to subscribers. It also should be able to provide you with data about what happened to your e-newsletter once you clicked Send (e.g. how many subscribers successfully received the e-newsletter, opened it, etc.).

If your e-newsletter will primarily go to an internal UW audience, please consult UW UW Technology's how-to guide "Bulk email at the UW."

If your e-newsletter will primarily go to an external audience and you have not already decided which software to use, we encourage you to consider using Convio's e-mail marketing software. This software is currently being heavily used by UW Marketing, University Advancement, and the UW Alumni Association, as well as several academic units, such as the Evans School and the College of Engineering. Getting as many departments as possible to use the same e-mail marketing and distribution system will save the University money, and doing so will provide benefits to the departments themselves: namely, its proven ability to import subscriber names from large databases (including Advance, UW's central donor database) and/or multiple databases, deliver large volumes of e-mail efficiently and successfully, provide useful performance data, and offer customizable templates and subscription management pages.

Launch the Project

Step 1: Develop a Content Plan

A successful content plan will clearly define the purpose of your e-newsletter and everything that will appear in it. A good way to kick off this step is to host a brainstorming meeting with people who will be contributing to the e-newsletter directly as well as those who have a vested interest in its success. You should have your goals at hand when you're doing this part to make sure everything you're planning to include helps you meet your goals.

This plan should capture:

- What kind of content you will include.
- A description of the overall tone of your e-newsletter.
- How many and what types of sections you'll need to organize your content.
- Definitions of the purpose of each content section.
- Determine which sections need to include visual elements and which should include only text and/or background colors. This will help you be well prepared to meet with your designer to figure out the look and feel of the e-newsletter.
- The name and frequency of the e-newsletter.
- A description of the audience or audiences you are targeting.
- The "sister" Web site that will serve as the primary repository for your e-newsletter archive and any new content generated by your e-newsletter.

Step 2: Assign Roles

Break up tasks and assign them to specific point persons. Make sure each person and his/her boss are aware of your requirements and include that person's name alongside his/her tasks in your project schedule. If you're kicking off a new e-newsletter, it is best to hold a meeting with these role-players and their bosses so that everyone on the team knows who's responsible for what.

It is a good idea to start this meeting by giving an overview of the steps you took during the Establishing a Foundation for Success phase (above). That will help ensure that everybody clearly understands what you're trying to achieve together and why. You can use this sample presentation to help you get started.

Important note: Most of these roles can be filled by two to four people. But for an e-newsletter to be successful it should *not* be a one-person show. Incorporating multiple viewpoints and skill sets significantly increases the effectiveness and quality of your e-newsletter.

E-newsletter roles are:

- **Project Manager:** In charge of the schedule and keeping all the participants on task; ensures that each participant remains clear about his/her responsibilities.
- **Writer:** Writes e-newsletter content and, in some cases, content for its sister Web site.
- **Contributing Writers:** E-newsletter content often will be submitted by outside contributors who have more direct knowledge of the subject matter. This helps ensure that the content is accurate and saves you time and resources. For example, if you've planned to include content about an engineering research project, ask a communications person or project participant from that department to submit a blurb about it. Just be sure you give that contributor clear guidelines about tone and word length.
- **Editor:** Makes sure the tone is consistent and the content is as tight and compelling as possible. This person is also in charge of quality assurance, which means ensuring that the experience for readers is consistently positive from the time they first open the e-newsletter to the time they land on a Web page after clicking a link in your e-newsletter. (For more on this topic, see "End-to-End Experience" in the content best practices document.)
- **Proofreader:** Reads the final version of the e-newsletter for typos and other content errors. This proofing pass should include a review of the subject line, the body content, and the alt text for all images.
- **Designer:** Develops an initial mockup of the e-newsletter, including the masthead, color scheme, and fonts, based on your content plan. Once the mockup is approved, the designer creates a template that will serve as the framework for each edition of the e-newsletter. The designer also helps find and adjust photos and graphics included in each issue. The University has preformatted, fully tested templates that can be customized and used by any UW unit. For more information, contact Elise Daniel at eperdan@u.washington.edu.
- **Producer:** Creates, modifies, and troubleshoots the HTML code and publishes all images in the e-newsletter to the Web.
- **Content Reviewers:** These are people with subject matter expertise, either about specific pieces of content or the audience you're targeting or both, who can help make sure your content is accurate and properly represents the department, school, etc., it discusses. They also should be your point persons for routing drafts of the e-newsletter to others in their departments who may need to review it and for vetting and compiling their feedback for you. It is important to keep this group as small as possible. E-newsletter content needs to be short and focused to be effective; so the more constituencies you include, the harder it will be to do that.
- **Content Approver:** This person makes the final decision about whether the e-newsletter is ready to send to subscribers.
- **Sister Web site liaison:** Most e-newsletters are closely associated with a particular Web site. Every edition of your e-newsletter will result in changes to that sister site. So, you need to assign someone the role of making the site updates and ensuring they get published before the e-newsletter goes out to subscribers.
- **Subscription List Manager:** Collects, vets, and updates the list of names and e-mail addresses on your list of subscribers. This person is responsible for ensuring that the information on the list is kept secure, so that subscribers' personally identifiable information remains private. Also this person works

with the Database Technical Support person to help ensure the database that contains the information is properly backed up and configured to upload information into the e-mail distribution program you use to send out the e-newsletter.

- **Subscriber Relationship Manager:** Collects subscriber feedback and shares it with the e-newsletter team and directly answers subscriber questions or requests.
- **Database Technical Support:** Supports the Subscription List Manager by ensuring that the database that contains the information is properly backed up and configured to upload information into the e-mail distribution program you use to send out the e-newsletter.
- **Testers:** This group tests all the links in the e-newsletter and views it in multiple e-mail programs and Web browsers as well as handheld devices. The group should include any or all of the role-players on the e-newsletter team, plus other technically astute colleagues who are willing to pitch in, especially when you first launch a new e-newsletter.
- **Publisher:** Uses the e-mail distribution software to send test copies of the e-newsletter to the test team (otherwise known as the seed list) and to send the final version out to all subscribers.
- **Metrics Analyst:** Gathers performance data about a week after the e-newsletter goes out to subscribers, analyses it to determine how well or poorly the e-newsletter performed, and recommends changes to help overcome any poor-performance indicators.

Step 3: Develop a Schedule

The list of role-players (above) and their tasks should serve as the basis for the schedule you create. Determine your delivery date, list all of the tasks and then work back from your delivery date to determine deadlines for each task. Keep in mind, the schedule for launching an e-newsletter is necessarily different and longer than your ongoing schedule should be. If you need a head-start, download this sample schedule.

Step 4: Get Training

Determine which of your team members will need to be familiar with the technical aspects of producing the e-newsletter. Then set up a training session with whomever is providing your technical support so everyone can familiarize themselves with the e-mail distribution software and the subscriber database, as well as what technical issues might need to be resolved before you can successfully send your e-newsletter. If you plan to use the UW's shared e-mail marketing and distribution system (described above), you can receive this training at one of the monthly sessions hosted by University Advancement.

Step 5: Prepare Your Subscriber List

Some subscriber information (primarily UW faculty and staff, donors, and alumni) is already in Convio and can be sorted according to degree, year of graduation, ZIP code, and other information. Some units will have their own lists of subscribers, which can be loaded into Convio. Also, UW Marketing and UWAA are in the process of developing a marketing plan to attract more people to provide their e-mail addresses as well as a centralized location on the Web where people can see what e-newsletters are available from the University and sign up for the ones they want to receive.

Development Phase

Step 1: Select or Create an E-Newsletter Template

This step needs to take place before you start drafting content because it will determine what the word-count limits will be for each content section. It also will give you a basis for determining how many graphics/photos you will need to gather. The University has preformatted, fully tested templates that can be customized and used by any UW unit. For more information, contact Elise Daniel at eperdan@u.washington.edu.

Step 2: Draft the Content

There are two types of content you will need to draft:

1. **E-Newsletter content**, which refers to the headlines, blurbs, alt text, and link text you will include in your e-newsletter. This content should be drafted in a word-processing program first, so you can check spelling and track edits. Make sure that the owners of the Web sites you'll be linking to are aware that you're doing so. This will prevent broken links from occurring because of a site update you might not know about.
2. **Sister Web site content**, which includes:
    a. Subscription page content, describing the e-newsletter and how to subscribe to it. (The University is working on a centralized subscription page solution.)
    b. An online version of your e-newsletter if you plan to archive past issues.
    c. A navigation page that allows people to access past versions of your e-newsletter.
    d. Links on your home page or other relevant pages on your Web site that give people access to your subscription page and your e-newsletter archive.
    e. Any original content you plan to link to from the e-newsletter that does not already exist somewhere on the Web, such as an article you've written that is too long to include in the e-newsletter itself.

Step 3: Send for First Review

This is the first opportunity for members of your immediate team and content contributors to give detailed feedback on the design and actual content of your e-newsletter. Therefore, it is the time for you to be the most flexible in terms of seeking and considering critical feedback. The more open-minded you are at this stage, the better prepared you'll be during the final review stage. That's when requests for changes should be only of the "stop-the-presses" variety. In this step, you should be sending two files for review:

- **A Word (or other word-processing program) document** with the Track Changes feature turned on.
- **A .jpg (or .pdf or other image file) of the e-newsletter design mocked up.** At this stage, it's not as efficient to send a fully functioning HTML version because, depending on the nature of the feedback, you may have to revisit the entire design. Plus, this will help keep your reviewers looking at the design as a whole and prevent them from interacting with the e-newsletter—e.g., clicking on links that don't work or asking about content or design elements that are just placeholders. You can choose to use fake text in the mock-up to demonstrate word-length in each section, but an

even better choice would be to include text that actually describes the purpose of that section—thus killing two birds with one stone.

Step 4: Create Feedback Mechanisms

Don't miss the opportunity to interact with your readers and gather their input. There are a variety of options for doing this:

1. **Create a designated e-mail address** readers can use to send you feedback and questions about the e-newsletter. You can obtain one by using an online form to request a Supplemental Account from UW Technology. The account should be owned by a permanent UW staff member, but multiple others can be added as registered users, even if they are temporary staff. If you decide to create an e-mail address to field reader responses, be sure to determine a process for vetting and taking action on reader responses. Ideally the e-mail address should be associated with more than one person on your team. Then the work can be divided up by task: requests to add a subscriber; technical errors; content questions; content or design critique; or praise, etc.
2. **Create a Quick Poll**, and link to it from your e-newsletter. You can find instructions for how to set up a poll on the Catalyst Web site.
3. **Survey your readers periodically**. Once a year is usually sufficient. You can find instructions for how to set up a WebQ survey on the Catalyst Web site.

No matter which mechanism you choose, **be sure to analyze and use the information you're receiving**. For example, if it's praise, share it with the boss and keep doing what you're doing; if it's criticism, address the problem. In other words, take advantage of this opportunity for direct interaction.

Step 5: Build the E-Newsletter

Depending on the software you're using and your level of technical knowledge, this step may require support from a tech-savvy person. Here are the basics of building the e-newsletter:

1. If your e-newsletter template was created in a format other than HTML, such as PageMaker or PhotoShop, it now needs to be built in HTML. Ideally, you will either be using a preformatted e-newsletter template available within the Convio software program or you have a designer with the technical skills to do the building him/herself.
2. Upload the HTML into Convio or whatever e-mail distribution program you're using.
3. Publish to the Web all graphics that will appear in the e-newsletter.
4. Copy and paste your text and links into the HTML.
5. Print a copy of the e-newsletter. Just because it looks good in e-mail doesn't mean it will look good on paper—and you'll want it to. Print versions are useful for planning and debrief meetings and for the segment of your readers that will prefer reading a printed version.

Step 6: Send for Second Review

On this round, your content reviewers and approvers should receive a fully functional test version of the e-newsletter via the same method your readers eventually will. Again, some technical support will probably be required for this step. To do this review:

1. **Alert your reviewers** that they are about to receive a test copy of the e-newsletter for review, and ask them to send their feedback directly to you, rather than replying to the e-newsletter From address.
2. **Create a "seed list"** (a list of the e-mail addresses of your reviewers) in your e-mail distribution program. You can create more than one seed list if you want. This allows you to do internal review with your immediate team before sending it out to the broader review team.
3. Append TEST to the beginning of your Subject line.
4. Send it out!
5. **Compile and incorporate the feedback.**
6. **Get the thumbs-up from your content approver.** This may require sending out another test version.

Step 7: Create a Text-Only Version

It is important to create a non-HTML version of your e-newsletter because some e-mail programs do note translate HTML very well (such as WebPine), and some subscribers prefer text-only files. Text-only e-newsletters should include the following bare essentials:

- **Full URLs only**, not embedded links. For example, this is an embedded link and this is a full URL: http://www.washington.edu/.
- **Unformatted text and simple characters.** That means no italics or bolding; no curly quotes and bullets. For example, even though style rules require that book titles be set off by italics, italics won't translate in plain text. So, you should consider using quote marks or title case to set off the text.
- Similarly, **you cannot define the font that will be displayed** in a text-only e-newsletter. It is most likely to display in something like `Courier`.

Important tip: While it's a good idea to compose your e-newsletter in a word-processing program to ensure that there are no spelling errors, you should place the final text in a program like Notepad, which gives you the closest approximation of what your text-only e-newsletter will look like in e-mail. That way you can find and fix any formatting problems ahead of time.

Before You Mail It

Your text is final, you've gotten approval. Now it's time to make sure everything is working properly. Here's what to do before you click the Send button:

- If your subscriber list includes 300 or more e-mail addresses that end in u.washington.edu or if you will be using UW networks to send your e-newsletter, **write an e-mail message to UW Techonolgy at help@u.washington.edu a couple of days before you plan to send your e-newsletter**, letting them know the date and time it is planned to go out. Jobs that large can bog down the University's e-mail servers, which could slow down e-mail service for the whole campus. So, they request that large e-mail jobs be sent after 11 p.m. and before 5 a.m. This will help you avoid your scheduled mailing shut down by UW Technology without warning.
- **Review the HTML version in the most commonly used e-mail programs**: Outlook, Outlook Express, Hotmail, Yahoo, G-mail, AOL, Mac: Entourage, Thunderbird (Mozilla Firefox), and a handheld device (such as a Blackberry). Your IT support team should be able to help you with this task; they usually have computers and e-mail addresses they use for their own testing purposes.

- **Send yourself a copy of the text-only version** to check for any special characters, strange line breaks, etc., you might have missed.
- **Print it out** to make sure any layout or code changes you've made along the way haven't negatively affected how it prints.
- **Test all links** in both the HTML and text-only versions.
- **Retest if you make change**s; if changes are design-related, test again on multiple e-mail programs.
- **Review your subscriber list for errors** such as extra spaces or missing information.
- **Import subscribers' e-mail addresses** from Advance (the UW's donor and alumni database) and other databases, if necessary, into Convio.

Send It Out

Step 1: Schedule the Job

The day before your e-newsletter is final and ready to go to subscribers, you will need to schedule the date and time of day in the e-mail distribution program you're using to send it.

In addition, UW Technology keeps a calendar of the email messages that are scheduled to go to a large number of internal (u.washington.edu) e-mail addresses. That helps them to avoid extreme congestion of their e-mail servers and helps you get your job out faster.

Step 2: Monitor the Progress

Once you hit the Send button, it's best not to pack up your things and head home, especially the first few times you send it. Schedule your job for a time of day when you or your technical support person can be available in case a glitch occurs that prevents the job from going out or causes it to stop before it's finished. In Convio, you can monitor your job by refreshing the Delivery Status page that appears once you've sent the message.

Close the Loop

Congratulations! You've sent out your first e-newsletter! It's time for a well-deserved pat on the back … and a few other things. Your project isn't actually complete yet. Just a few more steps to the finish line…

Step 1: Archive It

Once your e-newsletter is safely in your subscribers' inboxes, it's time to make it available on the Web (unless you've decided not to make past issues of your e-newsletter available). There are three parts to this step:

1. **Publish an online version of your e-newsletter.** You do this by:
    a. Creating and posting a .pdf version of it.
    b. Building it out as a Web page. Depending on the flexibility of your Web site templates, this may simply be a matter of copying and pasting the code for the body of your e-newsletter. In most cases, though, you will have to do some tweaking to the layout so that it will work in the context of a Web page.
2. **Create an e-newsletter archive navigation page.** Even though it will seem a little unnecessary at first, since it will only have one issue listed, it will

eventually become a helpful resource for your team and for current and potential subscribers.

3. **Link to that navigation page** from your e-newsletter subscription page and from other parts of the Web site where it's posted—for example, in the left navigation, masthead, or footer of the site. Also, consider asking other site owners to link to your e-newsletter archive if those sites attract an audience with similar interests to your target audience.

Step 2: Retrieve and Analyze Performance Metrics

At this point you're probably itching to know what readers though about your e-newsletter. Though some will tell you directly via your feedback mechanism, most will keep their thoughts to themselves. But actions often speak louder than words, and, thanks to technology, we *can* get that information by analyzing performance metrics. It's best to gather these metrics one week after you've sent you e-newsletter to subscribers. Here are the most common e-newsletter metrics you can retrieve from your e-mail distribution program and the corresponding industry standards (where available) for typical e-newsletter performance in each measurement area:

- **Open Rate:** The percentage of the recipients who opened the e-newsletter. (The education industry standard is 23%–26%)
- **Click-through Rate:** The number of individual headlines clicked, divided by total number of e-mails successfully sent. This gives you an indication of how effective your content was at compelling readers to want to learn more. (The education industry standard is 6%–8%)
- **Unique Click-throughs:** The number of times each individual link was clicked. This gives you an indication (but not the only indication) of which pieces of content were the most and least compelling to your readers.
- **Unsubscribes:** The number of people who opted to remove themselves from your subscriber list. If this number spikes for a particular issue of the e-newsletter, you should compare that issue with previous ones to determine the cause. Was it a technical glitch that, perhaps, rendered the message poorly? Was it the type or length of content you included? Then make adjustments, as appropriate, and monitor future unsubscribe levels to make sure they stay low.
- **Spam Reports:** When a recipient of your e-newsletter, a mail server, or an Internet service provider reports it as unwanted or deceptive e-mail to the Federal Trade Commission. As with unsubscribes, if these requests spike, you should contact the FTC to see if a particular Internet service provider has blacklisted your e-newsletter (AOL is one of the more vigilant spam blockers) and why they did so. Then make the necessary adjustments, as appropriate, to get reinstated as a whitelisted sender. Another reason to keep an eye on this metric is this: When e-mail goes out from the UW that is perceived as spam by ISPs or recipients, that can lead to other legitimate UW e-mail being rejected or discarded. So it's important to keep the greater UW communications community in mind and do your part to protect our reputation.
- **Bounce-backs:** E-newsletters that were not successfully delivered to some subscribers. This usually occurs because a subscriber's e-mail address has been recorded incorrectly (it might include a typo) or no longer exists. Be sure to correct that information or remove the subscriber from your list. That

will help keep your list "clean" and up to date, and it will help decrease the amount of time it takes to send out the e-newsletter.

- **Number of HTML versions sent and number of text versions sent.** This helps you prioritize which version to invest most of your time and effort. If more than 25% of your subscribers are receiving the text version, you might put more thought into how to maximize its readability and effectiveness.

Step 3: Act on Your Findings

Once you've had a chance to analyze the data and reader feedback, you must transform it into actions or else the time you spent on Step 2 will have been wasted. Here's how:

1. **Create a report about your findings** that is easy to understand, even for people who might not have been directly involved with the project. You can use this sample report to help you get started.
2. **Schedule a debriefing meeting** with your stakeholders to discuss:
    a. Your performance report
    b. What went well
    c. What didn't go well
    d. What you will do differently next time
3. **Create a list of tasks** based on the outcome of that meeting, assign them to team members and include those items in the schedule for the next issue of your e-newsletter. Typical tasks include:
    a. Updating your subscriber database.
    b. Correcting coding problems that did not emerge during testing.
    c. Addressing any problems readers might have encountered on the sister Web site to your e-newsletter.
    d. Revisiting content sections, layout, or tone if reader feedback is loud and clear on a certain point: for example, if readers may tell you, either directly or indirectly, through their click-through patterns, that a particular content section is really interesting to them, so you may want to consider including more of that kind of content. (You should not do too much tweaking at all when your e-newsletter is brand new. Give readers a chance to get to know it better first.)

Step 4: Develop an Editorial Calendar for Future Issues

Don't just create a schedule for the very next e-newsletter. You also should have at least a skeleton schedule for issues—and, when possible, upcoming themes or topics—that will come out in the next 12 months. That will help keep everyone who works on the project on track and will ensure that you earn your readers' trust by providing them a high-quality e-newsletter at predictable intervals of time.

Still Have Questions?

Contact Elise Daniel (eperdan@u.washington.edu) and/or Ryan Hagg (ryanth@u.washington.edu) for help with any of the steps outlined above—or to let us know if you think any steps are missing.