



Read all about it!

Simon Reynolds provides his top tips for creating an engaging email newsletter

Email newsletters are a great way to keep both existing and potential patients informed about what's going on at your practice. They are also an excellent reminder about your service in general, just seeing a newsletter fall into their inbox may be enough of a nudge to book that next check up or hygiene appointment, so they can also be excellent business boosters too.

Of course, with a newsletter you can tell people what's new at your practice, including any exciting treatments they may not know about, such as facial rejuvenation or dental implants, for example, as well as special offers that they may like to take advantage of. If you are actively collecting email addresses from your website and patient sign ups, then as long as you have a means of people opting in to hear your news, it's definitely worth using this data as a means to shout about what you're doing.

What to include

So, we've ascertained that newsletters can be helpful, but how do you ensure that you're creating something that your patients will want to read? The first rule of thumb is to aim to make it roughly 90% informative and 10% promotional. This can often be the hardest thing to get right, because you'll probably be brimming full of ideas about all the different treatments you want to tell people about, but if you do this all they'll see is a price list and eventually they'll either stop reading or unsubscribe completely.

Instead, aim to tell people something they don't already know so that when they open your newsletters they can expect to learn something new. This is a fundamental way of engaging with people and will make sure that they look forward to receiving your communications, too! Here are some great examples of what you could include:

- A 'top tips' feature – call upon a different team member each time to give their individual advice, this helps to keep the copy lively through the use of different voices
- 'Meet the team' – focus on one person each time and create a mixture of what they do inside and outside of work, so that patients can familiarise themselves with your staff

- Practice news – include any charity or community work carried out, details about new staff members joining, and any special offers that you may be running
- A funny section – tell people about team mishaps, jokes, etc. Making people laugh is a good way to engage and gives you a talking point during appointments, too!

I would advise having one primary article, two medium length ones, and a few shorter ones. Mixing it up in this way will not only create an interesting look to your newsletter, but it gives it a purpose through your main, longer story, while the others provide something a little lighter and easier to digest.

How should it sound?

The tone of your newsletter is always an important aspect to get right. Many people subscribe to regular email content so you don't want yours to be dry or dull in comparison, but on the other hand you are healthcare professionals and need to be a voice of authority. Try to find a happy medium between the two so that your content reads well and has credence, while also being warm, friendly and inviting in order to create reader engagement and enjoyment. I recommend steering away from the use of clinical terminology or dental jargon and use a chatty yet informative style.

How should it look?

I would always advise keeping your newsletters on brand, just as you would with any form of communication with patients. Not only does this provide brand continuity, it will also become something recognisable to the reader. This is a good thing because they'll know the newsletter is

from a trusted source, making them more likely to read it.

The next thing to bear in mind when it comes to design is to keep it minimal; you don't need to fill every scrap of space with images or words. In fact, doing this can often look unprofessional or amateur. White space is just as important as the content because it creates a visual balance and stops the page looking too cluttered, which can be overwhelming for the reader.

Before you press send

Give your newsletter to someone else to read before you send it out. Mistakes are easy to make and if you have created the content you will have become too close to it. This means that you'll almost know the wording by heart when it comes to checking it, so you'll often only see what should be there, which can mean missed errors – it's natural! Allowing others to take a look will give you the benefit of some fresh eyes on the copy, and they should be able to spot any oversights while also giving you valuable feedback on the content, too.

This might sound obvious, but always triple check your headings and subheadings. These are the places where mistakes are most often missed during proofreading, yet they'll be the first things your readers will see! **D**



Simon Reynolds is commercial director of Patient Plan Direct. Simon leads the Patient Plan Direct business development team – helping practices to run successful membership plans via expert advice, support and training.

Top tip!

Use engaging email subject lines to help entice people to open your newsletter. Email inboxes get full and an exciting subject can be enough to prevent your hard work going straight in the trash. Try making them funny, use a play on words, or even a clever one-liner to grab their attention.

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