e-Newsletters Get the Word Out

Showcase “Best Practice”

► **Process Improved:** When done well, e-newsletters can keep your constituents informed and engaged through brief, timely updates. They can be relatively easy to produce and very cost-effective.

► **Unit(s):** DoIT Communications and DoIT Customer Application Services

► **Customer Need:** E-newsletters are an efficient, environmental-friendly way to distribute information about your department’s work.

► **Key Decisions to Make Up Front:** Is a newsletter really necessary? What is your statement of purpose? Who is your target audience(s) and how will you obtain email addresses? What is your annual and/or per issue budget (staffing, graphics, technology, etc.)? What technology or distribution system will you use to dispense the newsletter? What will your subscription method be? Will this newsletter have “opt-in” or “opt-out” features? What newsletter format will you use (e.g., html, text, web-based, etc.)?

► **What You’ll Need:** 1) A project manager/editor to coordinate publication, meet deadlines, gather stories, write articles, etc. 2) A publication timeline (e.g., monthly, quarterly) and deadlines for article submission and editing. 3) Periodic editorial meetings with other department stakeholders to identify topics, other places the topics will be communicated (e.g., on a Web site), and timelines. 4) Short, succinct article summaries, with links to fuller articles, if applicable. 5) Depending on the format you choose, a design template (e.g., banner, inside and outside spreads, contact information, graphics, etc.). 6) Periodic assessments of e-newsletter content, solicitation of topic ideas and feedback from readers.

► **Distribution Options:**
  o **WiscList** is a self service e-mail distribution list system which allows University of Wisconsin-Madison faculty, staff and students to construct and maintain their own e-mail distribution lists using powerful list distribution software. Visit [www.doit.wisc.edu/lists/wisclist/](http://www.doit.wisc.edu/lists/wisclist/)
  
  o The **Wisconsin Alumni Associate** provides many services associated with publishing e-newsletters (e.g., copywriting, proofreading, graphics and design, mailing lists and actual distribution of the newsletter). They can meet with you to help determine your needs and develop a plan of action, if appropriate. Call Cheryl Porior-Mayhew, Vice President of Marketing and Communications, at 262-7545 or email cherlypm@uwalumni.com
Outside Vendors (e.g., Emma at www.myemma.com). Considerations: Some emails from outside vendors may be blocked from delivery to WiscMail addresses because they appear to be spam.

RSS Feeds. RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds are an increasingly popular method of distributing simplified Web content (generally in text form) to users through XML. Users can "subscribe" to different RSS feeds to automatically be notified and receive new news content when it is posted.

Do it yourself. Create groups using regular email programs (e.g., Entourage, Outlook).

Homegrown Tools. DoIT has also created an automated tool through our intranet, called DoIT Connection, which generates weekly e-newsletters for DoIT staff. For questions about how the tool works, contact Vince Rose at 261-1903.

► Other Tips and Tricks:

- “We ask patrons to opt in to our list by signing up on our web site or at a performance.” – Heather Good, Wisconsin Union Theater

- “Include something for everyone. Since International Studies cuts across all disciplines and many facets of campus life, we try to ensure that each reader will find something of interest in the newsletter." – Laura Pescatore, International Studies

- “My constant mantra is audience and relevance. Know your intended audience. (Don’t) push information that’s simply not relevant to your intended audience (or) choose to mass email all students, or all faculty, etc. (Make) all newsletters be opt-in, rather than opt-out.” – Tricia Dickinson, UW Communications

- “Test your message before sending. Double-check and triple-check all the hypertext links you use.” -- Paul Baker, WCER

- “Keep it short, relevant and use a font that is easily readable.” – Magpie Martinez, Witte Hall

- “Strive for accurate and consistent content, written succinctly and without “tech talk.” Always remember the makeup of your audience and their information needs.”-- Mike Roeder, ISIS

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