Newsletter Best Practices

This document is designed to walk you through best practices for the development of an email newsletter.

How to plan and define success for your email newsletter

1. Define your newsletter goals and objectives.
    a. Define what the newsletter is trying to accomplish.
    b. Is this already being done by another unit/department?
    c. Define frequency and consider how often you have news.
2. Define your audience.
    a. Scientists and physicians in the medical field
    b. Students and trainees interested in our programs
    c. General population interested in medical research
    d. Northwestern alumni and former residents
3. Think through what is newsworthy for this group. What do they want to hear from you that they're not getting elsewhere?

Review key parts of a strong newsletter

- **Subject Line:** The first thing recipients see. It should be compelling, concise, and informative to entice the reader to open the email.
- **Header Image:** The top part of the newsletter, often containing the logo or branding. It sets the tone and reinforces brand identity.
- **Body:** The core of the newsletter, which includes articles, updates, images, and promotions. It's where most of the content is located.
- **CTA:** Buttons or links that guide readers to take specific actions, such as "Read More," "Register," or "Sign Up." They are crucial for driving web traffic.
- **Footer:** This section usually contains details like contact information, social media links, and legal information (e.g., unsubscribe links or privacy policies).

Tips for creating accurate, digestible, concise content

- Ensure the subject line aligns with the most important content featured in the newsletter.
- Highlight the most important information at the top and place key links early in the email.
- Keep text brief—most readers skim. Use bullet points and links to detailed content for further reading.
- Proof emails before sending by reviewing formatting, links, typos and overall flow.
- Test emails before mass sending to help catch formatting errors.

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Tips for creating eye-catching, easy to read and on-brand designs

- Keep the layout clean and simple for easy readability.
- Maintain brand consistency—avoid using too many fonts and colors from our typical palette.
- Add alt text to make the email more accessible and clearly communicate if an image fails to load.
- Use photos featuring people when possible. Scientific images are also acceptable.
- Create promo designs for your newsletters that you can also distribute to stakeholders.
- Find the full design guidelines for color, graphics, and photography on the [Brand SharePoint](#).

How to track, analyze and improve your newsletter

- Set performance benchmarks for email newsletters (e.g., industry averages, prior campaigns, or year-over-year.
- A/B test subject lines, visuals, and call-to-action (CTA) placements to optimize engagement.
- Evaluate the performance of embedded links to understand what content resonates most with readers.
- Segment performance data by audience groups to identify trends and preferences.
- Keep a clean listserv. Monitor bounce rates to identify deliverability issues and improve email list quality.
- Use analysis to make data-driven cases for change

Email metrics to review
- Opens - The number of times recipients have opened a marketing email.
- Engagements - Interactions with emails, such as opens, clicks, or replies.
- Subscribers - Sign-ups to receive newsletters or updates via email regularly.
- Open Rate - The percentage of recipients who opened the email compared to the total number of emails delivered.
- Click-through Rate (CTR) - The percentage of recipients who clicked on links or buttons within the email
- Bounce Rate - The percentage of emails that couldn't be delivered to recipients' inboxes.

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