

# Be Their First Choice

How to Write and Publish a  
Powerful, Profitable E-Mail Newsletter

by Gihan Perera

**Sample**

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***Once you see how easy it is to do and what value you can derive from it, I'm sure you'll recognize how important it's going to be for your business.***

## Introduction

This book will show you how to create and publish a powerful and profitable e-mail newsletter. An e-mail newsletter is one of the most powerful marketing tools your business could have. It's certainly been the case for me and for many of my clients.

Here, for the first time, I get to share with you some of the tips, techniques, and secrets that I've learned over the last 10 years in publishing newsletters - not only for myself but for many of my clients in Australia and around the world. I'm sure you'll be able to take some of these ideas and apply them to your own business.

### Not quite sure?

Some people doubt the value of e-mail newsletters – and you might be one of those people. You might think:

- ⇒ It's too much work, or
- ⇒ It's too expensive, or
- ⇒ So many people don't read e-mail anymore.

If you do have your doubts or remain skeptical, I understand. I'm sure that by the end of this program, you'll be one of the converted. Once you see how easy it is to do and what value you can derive from it, I'm sure you'll recognize how important it's going to be for

your business. All I ask is that you put your doubt and skepticism aside for now and read this book with an open mind.

### **This is for beginners AND experts**

If you're just starting out with your newsletter, I recommend that you read this all the way through once. Then go back and re-read it, this time making specific notes so that you can decide how to apply it to your own business.

There's plenty of value here for you as well if you're already publishing a newsletter. Even if it's working for you, I'm sure you'll pick up a few things to make it work even better. For example, I'm going to show you some of my clients' e-mail newsletters and tell you what they do, why they do it and why it works for them. I believe you will be able to take some of those ideas and adapt them for your own business.

### **What is an e-mail newsletter?**

Let's be clear here about what an e-mail newsletter is. Briefly:

- ⇒ You send it out by e-mail (of course!)
- ⇒ You send it to a group of subscribers who have joined your mailing list by choice.
- ⇒ You send it to add value and keep people informed of what's happening in your world.
- ⇒ It's a newsletter – not just a “tip of the week” or an inspirational quotation.

It's different from a printed newsletter. That costs more to produce. So you would send it less frequently. You would select the subscriber list more carefully. You might pack more into each issue. You might invest more in layout and design.

Your e-mail newsletter is simpler. It's shorter. It's more frequent. It's probably more chatty and informal. It has a simple layout. You send it to *anybody* who asks for it.

## Overview

First let's look at the most common blocks and obstacles that stop people from publishing an e-mail newsletter. Then we'll look at the key benefits of doing it. So we'll get both sides of the argument out of the way!

Then, most of this book is about the three main components to your newsletter:

1. Your subscriber list: I'll show you how to *find* new subscribers, and then how to convince them to sign up.
2. The content that you write: I'll share with you **the sixteen key components** that must be in every issue of your newsletter. If you're looking for help with writing, I'll give you six different formats you can use to quickly write each issue.
3. The mechanism for sending it out to the list. We're also going to look at some of the issues around spam, so your newsletter won't be seen as spam. In fact, it will be something that people will read and act on.

## Excuses, Excuses!

When I consult with clients about their Web sites, I always encourage them to publish an e-mail newsletter as well. Some of them embrace the ideas; others don't. For those who don't, these are the six most common reasons they give.

### 1. "I don't have any readers."

When you start off, it's true - you don't have any subscribers. But you have to start somewhere! A simple way is to write to your existing clients, tell them that you're about to launch an e-mail newsletter, explain the value they will get from it, and ask for their permission to add them to the list.

Later in this book, I'll show you how to build the list easily and ethically. Once you get started, the list can build quickly. But it'll never grow if you never get started.

### 2. "I haven't got anything worth saying."

Some people say, "Well, I'm not really an expert and I don't have anything to write about".

My first reaction is that if you're not an expert in your business area, maybe you should get out of that business!

Too controversial? I think not.

Your customers and clients *expect* you to be an expert. You don't have to be *the* world's leading expert, but they do expect you to have some expertise. Whether you're selling real estate, dog food or professional services, you *are* an expert. And there *are* things of value you can share in your newsletter.

### 3. "I can't write."

I find it easy to write a newsletter every two weeks. But I know that I'm good at writing. I also enjoy it, and it's easy for me.

I know that's not true for everybody else. And it might not be true for you. That's why I'm going to give you six different templates – six different formulas – you can use for quickly organising your thoughts into writing. So if writing has been an obstacle for you in the past, pay special attention to that part of this book.

### 4. "It's too expensive."

Some people think it costs too much to publish an e-mail newsletter. Some newsletter software *is* expensive, but it doesn't have to be that way.

For example, the newsletter software we offer our clients is just \$50 per month. Other software is available for about the same investment. And when you're getting started,

you can just use your regular e-mail program (Microsoft Outlook, for example), which doesn't cost you anything extra at all.

Also, maybe you're not yet convinced of the *benefits* you'll get. In other words, if you say to me, "It's too expensive", I'll ask you, "Compared to what?" If I could convince you that the \$50 per month investment could generate thousands of dollars of extra profit, would you still think it's too expensive? Probably not!

## 5. "I don't have the time."

You're already working 25 hours a day doing everything else in your business – how can you possibly find *more* time for writing a newsletter?

If you're feeling like that, then again – I understand! That's fair enough, because part of the expense is your own time – and that can never be replaced.

The issue of time usually comes down to one of these things:

- ⇒ **It's a struggle.** See points (2) and (3) above.
- ⇒ **You're not convinced it's worth spending the time.** See point (6) below.
- ⇒ **You're aiming for perfection.** In this case, near enough *is* good enough. Deliver value, don't aim for an impossible standard of perfection.

Broadly, your newsletter should take you 30 to 60 minutes each time. Any more than that and you're *probably* putting too much work into it.

## 6. “It’s not worth the effort.”

Some people see their e-mail newsletter as a low return on investment. You might think:

- ⇒ People are too busy to read e-mail, or
- ⇒ They are getting bombarded with too much e-mail, or
- ⇒ Spam filters stop most of the mail getting through anyway, or
- ⇒ People don’t trust e-mail marketing any more

All of these are true to some extent, but *they don’t have to be true for you!*

With my newsletter, for example, many of my readers say it’s one of the few that they read. I’m not saying that to impress you, but to impress upon you that it *is* still possible to write an effective newsletter. Later in this book, I’m going to share with you the exact things I and my clients do to differentiate their newsletters.

Also keep in mind that even if only 1% of your subscribers read your newsletter and take action, if they are the *right* people, it’s worthwhile! That 1% response for half an hour’s effort every two weeks or every month is better than 0%!

### What now?

If you’re not already publishing your newsletter, is it for one of those six reasons? If so, that’s OK. They *have* been legitimate reasons for you. However, by the end of this book, you’ll see how easy it is to overcome those things.

## What's In It For You?

In this section, I'll share with you the four key benefits of publishing an e-mail newsletter.

### 1. Build a Relationship

This is the most important reason: Business is about relationships.

Whatever business you're in, it's important to build strong, trusted, valued relationships with the people who matter. By staying in regular, consistent communication with your clients and prospects (with their permission), you're building your relationship with them. An e-mail newsletter allows you to do that cost-effectively, easily and non-intrusively.

Most people won't trust you immediately - especially on the Internet. If they're coming to your Web site for the first time, start a relationship with them. Your newsletter does that.

For those who are already in relationship with you – including your current clients – the newsletter continues and strengthens that relationship.

### 2. Stay “Front of Mind”

The second reason is related: Most people won't buy from you on their first contact.

Dan Kennedy, one of the world's leading direct marketers, describes this as one of the best-kept secrets in marketing: One-time marketing almost never works.

In other words, most people who buy from you will do so on the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, contact with you – maybe even more. So if you market to them once, and it doesn't work, and you give up, you're losing most of your potential business. The customers are there, they just haven't yet moved from "interested" to "ready to buy".

Your newsletter helps. When they *are* ready to buy, you're there in front of them. If you publish every two weeks (which is what I recommend), somewhere in the last two weeks, they would have heard from you. It might seem almost magical to them! They're thinking about buying something and, sure enough, you pop up in their in-box with exactly what they require.

Don't underestimate this benefit. It's especially true when you're selling big ticket items or things that aren't impulse purchases.

For example, if you're a consultant or a professional speaker, you might come into contact with many people through the course of a month. But most of them aren't ready to book you as a speaker, to attend a training course, or to hire you as a consultant. When are they going to be ready? *You don't know*. But if you stay in touch with them, giving them value regularly, when they *are* ready, there's a good chance they'll think of you first.

As another example, consider real estate. Most real estate agents make their money from commissions on selling houses. However, most of the people they meet aren't ready to sell their house ... yet. Again, you don't know *when* they will be ready, but you can be there when they are.

### 3. Lead with Value

More and more people are no longer buying purely on price or on the quality of your product or service. Instead, they're buying the *value* that you offer. So the more you can be seen as an expert who offers value, the more likely that they are to buy from you.

After all, if you require heart surgery, you're not going to say, "Get me the cheapest heart surgeon around"!

A good e-mail newsletter delivers value. It demonstrates expertise. It builds trust. It establishes credibility. It positions you as an authority.

### 4. Express Your Ideas

The first three benefits are all about the client and the customer. The fourth is about you.

If you are an expert – for example, a professional speaker, trainer, consultant, coach, or author – an e-mail newsletter helps you to create your content. It forces you to put into written form the ideas in your head and the principles that you've been teaching.

For example, if you've been planning to write a book, start by writing it as a newsletter. It's a fast and effective way to get your material written and tested in the marketplace *before* it gets published in print.

Similarly, if you've got a vague idea in your head, give yourself the challenge of writing a newsletter article about it. This will force you to get clear.

My first book *Secrets of Internet Business Success* started life as an e-mail newsletter. I wrote myself an outline (in effect, the Table of Contents) and then set myself the task of writing about one idea every week. I asked for readers' comments on each newsletter, and used that feedback to improve the material. It gave me discipline, kept me focused, and improved the value of the published book.

## Finding Subscribers

The most important part of your newsletter is not the content, but the subscriber list. You're looking for a hungry market of people who are interested in your area of expertise.

Keep in mind that it's not about quantity, it's about quality. It's better to have 1,000 subscribers who are really interested in your material and are potentially going to buy from you than 100,000 random e-mail addresses.

This is why you should never, never, *never* respond to those spam messages offering you 100,000,000 e-mail addresses on a CD for \$29.95. For one reason, those addresses have probably been obtained by spammers without permission. And secondly, they're low-quality subscribers. The best subscribers are those who subscribe by choice.

In this section, I'm going to describe how to find new subscribers. Then, in the next section I'll show you how to convince them to join your list.

But first, where are you going to get your subscribers? Now, there are people out on the Internet who will give you hundreds of ways of building up your list. I'm going to give you seven. These are seven high-value ways that any business can use to build up their subscriber list.

## 1. Your E-Mail Signature

Whenever you send out any e-mail, you can choose some text to be inserted automatically at the bottom of each message. Most people put their name, their e-mail address, contact details, a Web site address, perhaps a brief positioning statement.

All of that is useful. In addition, advertise your e-mail newsletter there. Describe it briefly and tell people where they can sign up. Keep this brief – for example:

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Gihan Perera (gihan@firststep.com.au)  
First Step Communications

Turn your expertise into greater profits - subscribe to the  
Expert Gold newsletter at <http://gihanperera.com>

Help Desk (Support): 1300 791 780, e-mail [helpdesk@firststep.com.au](mailto:helpdesk@firststep.com.au)  
Sales: +61 8 9444 1225  
Fax: +61 8 9444 1384

<http://www.firststep.com.au>

Post: 8 Windich Place, Leederville WA 6007, Australia

## 2. Subscription Form

I'm amazed at how many people with Web sites and e-mail newsletters don't promote the e-mail newsletters prominently on their site. There should be a way for people to subscribe from practically *every* page of your Web site.

For example, [www.ThoughtLeaders.com.au](http://www.ThoughtLeaders.com.au) has a prominent link in the menu, which appears throughout the site:



That menu link takes the user to a sign-up form.

Even better, put the sign-up form itself on each page ([www.findre.com.au](http://www.findre.com.au)):

The screenshot shows the FINDRE website interface. The logo "FINDRE" is at the top left with the tagline "Own Your Financial Future". A navigation menu on the left includes links for Home, Corporate, Individual, Conferences & Events, Community Groups, Media, Members Only, and Contact Us. A "Free Newsletter" section is highlighted with a red circle, containing input fields for "First Name:", "Last Name:", and "E-Mail:", along with a "Sign Up" button. The main content area features a "Welcome" message and several paragraphs of text, including a link to "Read more..." and a section titled "What empowering solutions may we help you with today?".

And on the home page, it should be big, bold and impossible to miss ([www.GihanPerera.com](http://www.GihanPerera.com)):

**Resources**

- [FAQ \(Blog\)](#)
- [Newsletter](#)
- [Resource Library](#)
- [Audio Program](#)
- [Recommended Reading](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [All Products](#)

**About Gihan**

- [Profile](#)
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- [Home](#)

**Password:**

*"Congratulations on so many things - your*

Your ideas are the most important part of your business. If you're not leveraging your ideas through time, money, networks, people, tools and marketing ... You're losing money. Money that's just sitting there, waiting to be picked up. Make no mistake about it - if **you're** not getting that money, your competitors are!

**Expert's Gold: Leverage Nuggets for Information Experts**

Get your **free** subscription to my weekly e-zine, jam-packed with tips, ideas and processes for making more money from your speaking, training, coaching or consulting business.

**FREE BONUS:** Subscribe now and get two bonus e-books:

1. *"The Seven Fatal Mistakes That Most Web Site Owners Make - And How To Avoid Them."*
2. *"Spin: Turn One Idea Into Hundreds of Information Products".*

**First Name:**  **Last Name:**

**E-Mail Address:**

[Not sure? Read a sample issue here](#)

### 3. Face to Face Meetings

Whenever you meet somebody, ask them whether they would like to get your e-mail newsletter.

If you operate a retail shop, place a sign-up form at the counter or at the entrance.

When you attend a networking event, if somebody gives you their business card, mention your e-mail newsletter and ask whether they'd like you to put them on the list.

If you present to groups, you've got a huge opportunity to get people to sign up to your newsletter. During your presentation, pass around clipboards with forms asking them to fill in their first name, last name, and e-mail address. Explain that they're only going to get a limited amount of value from you today because you've only got a limited amount of time; but if they'd like to get on-going value, then the way to do it is to sign-up for your e-mail newsletter.

#### 4. Write Articles

Earlier, I mentioned Article City [www.articlecity.com](http://www.articlecity.com) as a place for you to find articles for your newsletters. You can use it to *publish* articles as well, for others to use in their newsletters.

Every time you publish an issue of your newsletter, take the feature article and submit it to Article City. It doesn't cost you anything, and it could get you a lot of new subscribers.

Make sure you include a "resource box", which promotes you and encourages people to visit your Web site to sign up to your newsletter, directly or indirectly.

Here is a general resource box I use for many articles:

Gihan Perera is the author of "Make More Money From Your Web Site". Visit <http://www.firststep.com.au> and get your free e-book "The Seven Fatal Mistakes That Almost Every Business Owner Makes on Their Web Site"

Notice that this doesn't specifically mention a newsletter, although visitors do have to sign up to the newsletter in order to get the e-book.

Here is a more specific example, which I wrote for an article about Google advertising:

Gihan Perera is a co-author of "Get Traffic Fast", a fast-track program to get started with Google advertising, avoiding the common traps and pitfalls. Sign up to his free mini-course "Google Kick Start" here: <http://GihanPerera.com/get-traffic-fast.html>

Notice how both examples have an immediate benefit and a clear call to action.

## 5. "Tell a Friend"

At the end of every newsletter, encourage your subscribers to pass the newsletter on to their friends. And encourage the friends to subscribe themselves. This is one way of getting newsletter subscribers through referrals. They are some of the best subscribers you'll get because a friend will have recommended your newsletter to their friends.

I'll describe this process later.

## 6. Cross-Promote

Promote your newsletter with other publishers who serve the same market as you, but don't compete with you.

For example, one of my clients, Matt Hern, [www.findre.com.au](http://www.findre.com.au), is a financial planner. Just before Christmas, he recorded an audio program with tips for making sure that you don't overspend on Christmas gifts. Matt made this program available free to his newsletter subscribers. Because I knew his information would be of value to *my* subscribers, I invited my readers to subscribe to his newsletter as well.

It was a win-win-win situation: Matt got new subscribers from my list, I offered something free to my subscribers, and the subscribers themselves got the benefits of these useful Christmas tips.

So think about ways that you can cross-promote. Look for other people serving the same market as you. Be careful, though. Most people with good newsletter lists are very selective of recommending other people's products and services. They've spent time building a relationship with their subscribers, and it's highly unlikely they will simply promote your newsletter just because you ask for it.

In my example, I was more than happy to recommend Matt because I knew him, trusted him, and had sampled his program – so I knew I could trust the referral. So don't approach strangers; approach people you already know.

## 7. Pay for Subscribers

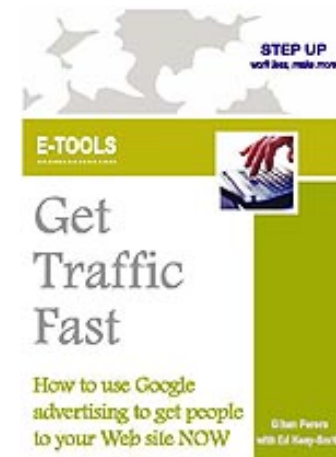
Finally, another way get new subscribers is to pay for them.

You can do this in a number of ways. One of the easiest – though not necessarily the cheapest – is to pay for Google advertising. This is an advanced technique, but one that can be very effective. If you know how to advertise cost-effectively in Google, you can bring people to your Web site in order to get them to join your mailing list.

This costs you money initially, but you're investing in the relationship. You're not just aiming for the one-shot "Let's hope they click on the ad and buy from me straight away". Rather, you're working on the idea that they only sign up initially, and buy from you *later*.

This is an advanced topic, but worth considering once you start getting a successful newsletter and you know that your newsletter is working for you. I wouldn't suggest this if you're just starting out. Use the other six free methods first, and then move to this one a bit later.

When you're ready to start using Google for traffic, you can get our CD/book program Get Traffic Fast, at [gihanperera.com/get-traffic-fast.html](http://gihanperera.com/get-traffic-fast.html).



## Final Words

I am truly excited about this topic, because I know the value an e-mail newsletter can give you. I hope that this book has provided you with valuable information and sufficient incentive to begin your own newsletter, because once you start doing it and see the results, you will wonder why you waited so long.

A number of clients of mine have said to me, "I'll start a newsletter later", or "I'll put it off", or "I might do it as a New Year's resolution". Yet once they started doing it and got into the habit of writing regularly, they have been amazed by the results. I'm certain you will be too.

At First Step Communications we build Web sites, and I tell my clients that their e-mail newsletter is going to be a more powerful tool than their Web site. You should have both. But if you have only a Web site without an e-mail newsletter, you are missing out on opportunities. You are missing out on the chance to build your business and to establish that relationship with potential clients. If you really had to choose between a Web site and a newsletter, if you only have the time, money, and energy to focus on one of them, write the newsletter.

I have clients who have a newsletter without a Web site. In fact, I confess that for many years, I had a very basic Web site. But I had a **red-hot** newsletter, and I created

significantly more business from my newsletter than from my Web site, investing only an hour to two hours every two weeks.

I could have spent the same amount of time on my Web site or on any other marketing medium, but I knew that the highest return would be from publishing my e-mail newsletter. I know that you will find the same. And if you already have a newsletter, I hope you take some of the ideas from this program, apply them to your business and to your newsletter in order to build your profits, increase your loyalty, and expand your business.

This is Gihan Perera. If you'd like to know more, sign up to my newsletter at [www.gihanperera.com](http://www.gihanperera.com).

Best wishes. Bye for now.

### Now it's up to you!

I hope you've learned something from this book. But more importantly, I'd like it to spur you into action – because, of course, what matters is not knowledge itself, but **applied knowledge**.

If you read this and do nothing, that's just as bad as not reading it at all. In fact, it's **worse**, because you've wasted your time!

So please **take action**, and start **now**.



## About Gihan Perera

Gihan Perera is a business consultant, speaker, author and entrepreneur – with clients throughout Australia, and in New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, the U.K. and Canada. He works with professional speakers and trainers, consultants, business owners, CEOs and strategic leadership teams to improve their marketing, sales and persuasion skills in one-on-one meetings, group presentations and on the Internet.

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