

How E-letters Differ From Printed Newsletters

BY HENRY RUDDLE



he biggest differences come from the way readers interact with an electronic newsletter (e-letter). First, **readers don't flip through e-letters**, so all of the psychology about right-hand pages and back-to-front scanning is out the window. Online newsletter readers start at the top and work their way down. There is no left-right snaking or location-based hierarchy as with printed newsletters. So, although indexes are normally a waste of space in printed newsletters under eight pages, **indexes are an absolute necessity** in e-letters because whatever does not appear in the first window of content might as well not exist for the online reader. They won't scroll down just for fun. You have to make them.

Second, **it's harder to read text on a screen than on paper**, so most

readers won't read more than 25 words of an article unless the content is absolutely compelling. Also, although serif fonts are easier to read on paper, they are harder to read on screen, making **medium weight sans serif fonts such as Arial and Tahoma popular for online text**. In print, black text on a white background is the most legible combination overall, but on the screen black text on a light background such as beige is far superior because the brightness of most screens with a lot of white causes eye strain.

Third, no matter how much you refer to past issues or white papers, printed newsletters are self-contained. By contrast, the best e-letters are a **gateway** to an endless stream of information about the topics presented, ensuring that once you have a reader hooked, he or she is hooked but good. That

means links, both within the newsletter to help readers navigate, and to resources outside the newsletter to enhance the newsletter's value and allow for shorter articles.

Interestingly, the "read more" link concept coincides perfectly with research from the direct marketing industry about how you can raise a reader's commitment level by getting him or her to **act** in some way. Humans are very sensitive about feeling foolish, so once we make a decision to act, we have a strong interest in proving that our decision was correct. Done well, e-letters have more power to grab and hold readers than printed newsletters ever did. ■

Henry Ruddle owns Ruddle Creative, a San Jose-based marketing communications firm, www.ruddle.com, that specializes in printed and electronic newsletters and brochures.

**ARTS REACH
SUPERTeam**

*TRG is pleased to introduce its client of the month: **Houston Ballet***

Houston Ballet invested aggressively in marketing its annual holiday blockbuster *The Nutcracker*, exceeding its single ticket goal by \$529,000 and achieving the highest sales in thirty-four years of performing *The Nutcracker*.

In December 2006, Houston Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker*, which supplies 17% of the company's annual budget, faced a formidable competitor: the first perfor-

mances in Houston of The Rockettes, a touring franchise of the popular New York dance show.

TRG helped Houston Ballet craft an aggressive marketing plan that advanced the sales cycle. TRG counseled increasing rounds of direct mail from one to three. And Houston Ballet implemented demand-based pricing to maximize revenues from each ticket sold.

Because the Rockettes typically entered new markets with a television blitz, Houston Ballet more

than doubled its TV advertising budget. *Nutcracker* TV advertising began the first week of October (six weeks earlier than normal) and ran longer, through December 20.

The results: Houston Ballet exceeded its goal by 24%, bringing in just under \$2.8 million in sales. The company sold 8% more tickets at a higher average price (\$4.47 more) than it did in 2005.

Want to learn how you can take your holiday show to the next level? Call **TRG President Jill Robinson** at 719-651-5566 to set up your free day of consulting and to learn more about how these strategies can benefit your organization.

TRG | Target
Resource
Group

www.trgart.com