Choosing the Right Newsletter

What is important to your audiences and you?
Hi! I’m Emily Roseman.

ABOUT ME

● Research Director for the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN)

● Co-author of the Unpacking newsletter with Carrie unpacking.substack.com

● Newsletter research, Newsletter Guide, Newsletter Wizards blog
   ○ http://newsletterguide.org/
   ○ https://medium.com/the-newsletter-wizards-project
This video will cover:

- Overview
- Why newsletters matters
- Different types of newsletters
Why do newsletters matter again?
(aka why are we all here?)

NEWSLETTERS...

- Connect you with audiences
- Give you audience data + insight
- Let you provide specific content for specific audiences
- Build habit & loyalty
- Enable experimentation
- Inspire product thinking
- Make money
Plus
There's a lot going on here

Casey Newton on Leaving ‘The Verge’ for Substack and the Future of Tech Journalism
Sarah Jeong talks to Newton about the details of his deal, subscription journalism, and what makes email such a good media format

Twitter acquires newsletter platform Revue
Anthony Ha @anthonyha 7:00 AM EST • January 26, 2021

Facebook is said to be planning newsletter tools to court independent writers.
Facebook is working on newsletter tools for journalists and writers, according to three people familiar with the company’s plans, a move toward offering more services to independent writers as the social network jumps into the fast-growing newsletter space.
Stage 1: Double check

- What are your goals?
  - What are you trying to achieve with this newsletter?
- Does a newsletter make sense for the goal you’re trying to accomplish?
Newsletters aren’t always the solution
Different Newsletter Goals + Types
Publisher Goal: get audiences to your website.

Audience Goal: stay up to date on favorite publishers.
Publisher Goal: build reputation as expert or leader in subject.

Audience Goal: stay up to date on all developments across a field or topic.
Publisher Goal: build reputation, build loyalty in newsletter, and sometimes refer back to site.

Audience Goal: stay very up to date on a specific topic or field of work.
The briefing + Link Aggregator combo

Publisher Goal: build affinity with publisher, create habit + loyalty.

Reader Goal: Feel connected to publisher, stay up to date and get a “behind the scenes” look.

THIS WEEK IN THE SOUTH

1. Austin Will Use Money Cut From Police Budget to Buy Supportive Housing

Meg O'Connor, The Appeal

“In the wake of Black Lives Matter protests this summer, we made a significant cut to policing dollars and reinvested that in things like this,” said Council Member Gregor Cesar, who led the effort to cut police funding and sponsored an amendment last August that set aside $6.6 million in rescuing funding to be used for permanent supportive housing and services. “That’s how we’re paying for this. That’s the only reason we’re able to do this.”

Big Things. Poppin’! The Austin City Council voted this week to purchase one hotel and turn it into 60 units of permanent supportive housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness. Back in August, the council voted to immediately cut over $20 million from the police department’s budget, with most of that money coming from canceling cadet classes, reducing overtime spending, and eliminating contracts for things like license plate readers. About 2,500 people were experiencing homelessness in Austin at the start of last year, and nearly 1,600 of those people were unsheltered.

LETOVERS

We fixed you a plate!

- In South Carolina, health officials have identified the first U.S. cases of the COVID-19 variant that was initially detected in South Africa.
- The Fireworks: an authentic and eye-opening look into the lives of Black trans women.
- Union officials estimate as many as 14,500 postal employees are currently under quarantine.
- Biden’s immigration decisions open up new political terrain for Republicans.
- Slightly more than 6 percent of American adults have received at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine — but a disproportionate small number of them are Black and Hispanic adults.
- The uniquely American (and Texas) myth of Satan’s cults: how myths echo history and help us shape the future.
- It’s not something you have to do alone: Rural Alabama churches address food insecurity.
- New Democratic Senate majority appears open to democratic reforms.

YOUR QUOTE OF THE DAY

“We can’t play basketball in peace, we can’t do anything in peace. And then we have...”

-Johnnetta Cole, civil rights activist
"Our collective courage is flagging and there is no time for that."

Annie Helen Peterson  Nov 16  

There's been a lot of online talk these past weeks about the ways in which Substack is reproducing some of the worst tendencies of the existing for-profit media structure — how it's become a haven for white men with bad opinions who don't want to be edited and just want to shout into echo chambers. I agree with a lot of this, and think there's much, much more to say about how even a brief look at the top earners will tell you something about what readers have internalized about what sort of content is worth paying for (and how many writers, especially women, have also internalized the idea that they shouldn't ask for compensation for this sort of labor). (If you want to read more about this, the best of the genre thus far comes from Clio Chang at Columbia Journalism Review.)

At some point I’ll write more about why I like the newsletter as a platform, about the future plans for editing, about trying to build a community that’s in challenging conversation (if you’d like to part of that conversation, you can subscribe here) about why people crave that sort of online community when

Publisher

Goal: Keep reader in newsletter, build habit.

Reader goal: Enjoy a longer read.

I Don't Have a Love Language

My friend became my crush. How do I talk to them now?

John Paul Distefano  Jan 21  

¡Hola Papí! is the preeminent deranged advice column from writer and author John Paul Grammer, now living on Substack! If you've ever wanted advice from a Twitter-addicted gay Mexican with anxiety, here is your chance. Support this column by sharing it and subscribing below. Send Papí a letter at holappapители@gmail.com

¡Hola Papí!

I will be 21 in a few months, and I have just confessed a crush to a long-distance friend with extremely positive results. Why the hell are you writing in, then, you ask?

Because it's my first romantic fiasco. Ever! The high school bubble feeling is surfacing through the pandemic quarantine haze. I cried happy tears to my therapist! I'm super excited by the idea of living in a romantic relationship. But also, I have no idea what the hell to do next.

Setting aside a few things that might become issues down the road—we're thousands of miles apart even in Normal World, and semi-shacked on my part to avoid family drama—there's one thing that haunts me. I don't know how to switch from friend-language to crush-language.
- Link heavy vs. prose heavy
- Content blocks: purpose, number, order
- Length
- Voice, tone, point of view
- Design
- Frequency
- Send time

What are the variables here?
Next up:
Video Two
Audience research for launch
AUDIENCE RESEARCH FOR LAUNCH

How to conduct audience research when you’re getting started
This video will cover:

- Audience research to get started
- Internal and external assessments
What to do before jumping right into newsletter-land:

**Stage 1:** Define your goals, and double check that newsletters fit your goals.

**Stage 2:** Conduct an external, audience assessment with your target audiences.

**Stage 3:** Conduct an internal, bandwidth assessment with you and your team.
Stage 2a: External assessment

- **MACRO**: What problem can you solve for your audiences?
- **MICRO**: How and when do your audiences prefer to consume information?
Assessment methods available to you

- Audience metrics
- Census data or other existing data on target audiences
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups
Places where you can reach your audiences (current and future)

- Website or other products (podcasts)
- Social media
- Other newsletter lists, or partner newsletter lists
- Partners + community groups
- Events
- Get creative here!
Fishtown Neighborhood Survey

Thank you for your feedback! This is an updated version of a survey we sent back in December.

We want to understand how you’ve been discovering news and information about Fishtown over the past few months, if it’s been easy or difficult to access and if you’re satisfied with your experience.

We appreciate your time,
The Lenfest Local Lab

* Required

1/10. What is your age? *

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 45-64
- 55-64
- 65+

2/10. How many years have you lived in or near Fishtown? *

- Less than a year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- 20+ years

4/10. How have you been spending time in the neighborhood during the past few months? (Choose all that apply) *

- Picking up take-out
- Picking up groceries
- Spending time at a park/walking
- Exercising
- Volunteering
- Attending socially distanced events
- Attending virtual community events or workshops
- Attending virtual community organization meetings
- Attending demonstrations or protests
- None of the above
- Other: ____________________________

5/10. Have you supported local businesses during the past few months? (Choose all that apply) *

- Yes, I’ve ordered food from local restaurants
- Yes, I’ve purchased gift cards from local businesses
- Yes, I’ve donated to local businesses
- Yes, I’ve used a local vendor for an essential service
- Yes, I’ve shopped online from a local business
- No, I haven’t been able to support a local business
- Other: ____________________________

6/10. How do you see yourself spending time in the neighborhood in the fall while following public health guidelines? (Choose all that apply) *

- Going out to eat or drink
- Spending time at a park/walking
- Exercising
- Attending community meetings
Stage 2b: External assessment

- What are your peers / competitors doing?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outlet</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Timing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chalkbeat Detroit</td>
<td>Week in review</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>11 a.m. ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside Higher Ed</td>
<td>Weekly News Update</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>10 a.m. ET</td>
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<td>The Learning Network</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
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<td>Next: The Best in Higher</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>The Chronicle</td>
<td>Weekly Briefing</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>11 a.m. ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chronicle</td>
<td>Academe Today</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>4 a.m. ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdSource</td>
<td>EdSource Today</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>11 a.m. PT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 74</td>
<td>TopSheet</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>8-11 a.m. ET/ Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>7 a.m. ET</td>
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<td>Daily</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>8 a.m. MT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalkbeat Tennessee</td>
<td>Rise &amp; Shine</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>7:30 a.m. CT</td>
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<td>Inside Higher Ed</td>
<td>Daily News Update</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>4 a.m. ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SmartBrief</td>
<td>SmartBrief on EdTech</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>3 p.m. ET</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hechinger Report</td>
<td>Mississippi Learning</td>
<td>2x/month</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>2 p.m. ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hechinger Report</td>
<td>Weekly Update</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>2 p.m. ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdSource</td>
<td>This Week in California</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>8 a.m. PT</td>
</tr>
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<td>EdSurge</td>
<td>Instruct: News and Tips</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>7 a.m. ET</td>
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<td>The Hechinger Report</td>
<td>Future of Learning</td>
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<td>The Hechinger Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chalkbeat</td>
<td>Chalkbeat National</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>3 p.m. ET</td>
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<tr>
<td>EdSurge</td>
<td>Innovate: Market Trends</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>7 a.m. ET</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If not this:
- Phone calls
- Google
- Post-COVID: Bus stops, libraries, coffee shops
Stage 3: Internal assessment

- How much time or bandwidth do you and your team have for this newsletter?
- Who’s writing it?
- Who’s editing it?
- Who’s collecting and aggregating links?
- Who’s adding images and formatting?
- Who’s hitting send?
Which newsletter features are **both urgent and important** for your audiences?
The information you collect via audience research should inform and inspire action.

The actions you take (e.g. launching a newsletter) will lead to more information.
Next up: Video THREE
Best practices
How to keep learning about your audiences to improve your newsletter(s)
This video will cover:

- Audience research routines and best practices
Aspire for change

Let's do this thing.

by Ann Friedman

Marta Stewart's Best Lesson: Don't Give a Damn - NYMag.com
She doesn't care if you like her. That's why I love her. BONUS GIF.

Pie Chart: What Are We Leasing Into? - The Harpsin
Giving it 110%.

Making business and pleasure - GJR.org
Sadly this column contains no blind items about hot journo-on-journo action.

We're All Bystanders in the Sandberg-Mayer Mommy Wars - NYMag.com
Obligatory Sheryl Sandberg article.

Freelancing for free - GJR.org
Here I decide when to write for no compensation—a response to an ongoing debate in journo-world about how much our words are worth. Also read this from Alexia Madigan.

Dating App That's Worth a Woman's Time - NewYorker.com
You guys should see my inbox after publishing this article. Every developer bro who's ever emailed an app to try to get laid has messaged me. It is awful. And hilarious.

I'm reading:
Amanda Hess on leggings. An essay on the charms of West Texas. Deep thoughts on teen girls and Tumblr and young girls and nei...
Audience Research Tips For Newsletters

- Examining your email newsletter metrics (more on that in Module 2)

- Ask for reactions, and make replies easy

“More links!” - readers
Audience Research Tips For Newsletters

- Sending **surveys** to your newsletter list
  - Interviews

- **NPS surveys** at bottom of each newsletter

- Ask your unsubscribers - why?!
Example: Asking Unsubscribers

Unsubscribe Successful

You will no longer receive email marketing from this list. VTDigger Subscribers and Donors.

You will receive one final email to confirm that we unsubscribed you.

If you meant to update your preferences, you can do so here.

If you have a moment, please let us know why you unsubscribed:

- I no longer want to receive these emails
- I never signed up for this mailing list
- The emails are inappropriate
- The emails are spam and should be reported
- Other (fill in reason below)

Submit
Example: surveys

Review: Results from Audience Survey

We are considering removing the perspectives and sending them out via a separate email. Do you like that idea?

- 52% No
- 34% Unsure
- 14% Yes

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What else could the Daily Digest provide?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information on school leaders perspectives throughout the state</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always present the truth in your articles, with different perspectives.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More advocacy.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A first-person short piece on any subject by someone enrolled in K-16.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think it should be any longer. It’s almost too long now to have time to look at it every day.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue sharing information regarding legislation/lobbying efforts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listings of key conferences, seminars.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more information in the editor’s notes on what is going on in education in our state as well as more articles from across the state that can be emulated in other ways.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbiased stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy quick tidbits at the beginning from the bearing construct.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing long, maybe three sentences maximum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is helpful with the Daily Digest has a brief perspective section.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education NC is running a series. Adding a different perspective to why these issues are showing up in the news.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What I didn’t cover here

- Survey, interview and focus group design and best practices (see Audience Research chapter in the Membership Puzzle Project Guide)
- How to synthesize data (Ibid)
- A/B Testing (Module 4)
- Specific email metrics to watch (coming soon)
Next up:
Module 2
With Joseph Lichterman
What You Need to Know to Get Your Newsletter Off the Ground
Thank you!

Check out unpacking.substack.com for one example of an essay newsletter in practice!