

Electronic Newsletters Made Simple
by Vanessa Kier

So your first book is coming out, or maybe you have several books out, and you've decided that it's time you put together a newsletter. If it makes more economic sense for you to send an electronic newsletter, but you aren't very tech or marketing savvy, you're in luck. There are several companies that offer help with email marketing. Plus, they offer services such as trend reports that you wouldn't be able to get easily if you designed your own newsletter and emailed it to your mailing list. Don't have a mailing list yet? These services also provide buttons for your social media sites that people can click on to be added to your list.

Before you begin, check out the newsletters you receive from your favorite authors. See what you like and don't like about the format, content, and frequency. Notice if there's a reference at the bottom of the newsletter to an email marketing company. A couple of the well-known names in email and social marketing are Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) and iContact (www.icontact.com).

Some of the features these companies offer include:

1. *Easy formatting.* Either design your newsletter from scratch or use one of their customizable templates. The companies test their templates in a variety of email formats so your readers see your content in the same layout that you send it.
2. *Social media linking.* Link your newsletter to social media sites—blog, Twitter, Facebook. Post to your Facebook and Twitter accounts from within their software.
3. *Subscription**. Add a button to your social media sites that your readers can click on to be added to your mailing list. Provide a link within your newsletter for people to easily unsubscribe.
4. *Forwarding.* Links to allow your readers to forward your newsletter to their friends.
5. *Contact management.* Import your current contact database into their program. Sort your contacts into target groups that will receive specialized content. For example, maybe you want to send out updates to booksellers that will differ in tone from the updates you send out to your fans.
6. *Customizable timing.* Choose when your newsletter is sent out, so it reaches your readers at the optimal time of day for getting them to open your email.
7. *Anti-spam protection.* The companies run tests to make sure your email will make it past internet service provider filters.
8. *Accessibility.* These services generally work from any computer. Some companies have a feature to let you add contacts to your database from your iPhone.
9. *Reporting.* Get reports on the number of recipients who opened the email, clicked on the links, forwarded it, etc.

*Note: The companies I researched require that you use permission based mailing lists, not purchased or rented mailing lists. This means that everyone on your mailing list has to opt in to receive your email marketing.

Many of these companies offer a free trial period. After that, monthly and yearly prices are based on the number of email addresses on your mailing list.

So there you have it. An easy way to create and email an electronic newsletter, even if you're not tech or marketing savvy.

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