The Best and Worst of Nonprofit Newsletters

And how to write emails that stand out from the rest!



I'm glad you're here!

Put a +1 in the chat if you have sent out a nonprofit newsletter in the last 6 weeks!

Hi, I'm Patty!





A few quick notes:

YES! Everyone will get a copy of the slides.

YES! I'm happy to meet with you one-on-one to go over *your* newsletter (for free): www.the-purpose-collective.com/free-office-hours

Let's get started...

Why send an email newsletter?

"Email lists and websites are the only two things you can own on the internet. **The rest is just rented.**"

- Pat Flynn

https://www.smartpassiveincome.com/learn/email-marketing/

An important note:

We'll be reviewing real nonprofit newsletters, because **concrete examples** make conversations like these really stick. The "what not to do" examples are presented here gently, **with kindness**.

Creating an email newsletter is difficult, and we're not trying to shame anyone. This advice is **meant to be helpful, not hurtful.** Every nonprofit organization is changing the world in wonderful ways.

We want to make sure your email newsletters are **doing your work justice**.

Tip #1: The worst emails...

Use too many big words.

They're very dry and professional. They're full of industry jargon. They use acronyms.

The impact of COVID-19 on rural [country name]'s education

Throughout the pandemic, COVID-19 has dramatically affected education around the world. Many schools had to adopt remote learning technologies to continue educating students through extended lockdowns. While this has been challenging for all schools, the situation has been really difficult for remote regions in [country name] that have less access to resources.

[Organization name] has been working with local governments and schools to best meet the educational needs of students in [Organization name] partner communities, which are extremely remote. The government has categorized students into five groups based on their access to resources, ranging from having a computer with the internet to having no access to any technology, including radios or televisions. Most students in [Organization name]'s working area fall under the latter group and do not have access to any type of technology.

Government support for this education group has so far consisted of distributing self-learning materials, textbooks, and audio-visual technology. These techniques can be effective but require a high level of teacher and volunteer engagement to support students and parents with their remote learning.



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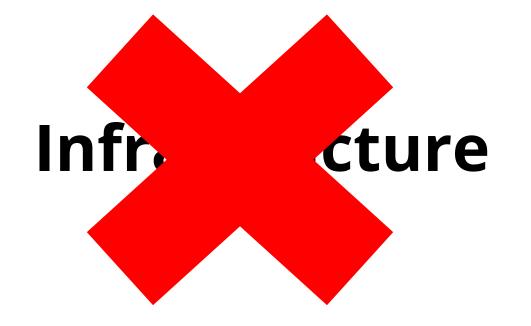
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textbooks, and audio-visual technology. These techniques can be effective but require a high level of teacher and volunteer engagement to support students and parents with their remote learning.

Raise your hand if you've used the phrase "self-learning materials" in a sentence in the last month.

We don't talk this way, so we shouldn't write this way!



A FREE tool to help us write more conversationally, from Bloomerang:

Free Comms Audit Tool

https://bloomerang.co/comms-audit-tool/

Tip #1: The best emails...

Use simple language.

Avoid industry jargon. Aim for a 6th grade reading level. Use a conversational tone.

'Tis the season to feed your neighbors

Rachael was forced to shut her business down when COVID-19 hit.

Thanks to your support, she took up farming.

Five months later, neighbors are lining up for her vegetables.

"I actually turn away traders from the market because I know my neighbors are waiting," says Rachael.

As hunger rates continue to rise in Kenya, your generosity could not come at a better time.

Thanks for all that you do to uplift others. We're grateful to have you on our team.



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Tip #2: The worst emails...

Don't tell a story.

They use too many statistics.

They assume you already know why your support is needed.



End 2020 on a Grateful Note

As the year comes to a close, we want to take a moment to thank you for your generosity this year.

Let's head into a new year as a stronger community than ever. Donate to [Organization name]'s operating fund today.



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Donate today.

Remember: you are not the only organization sending emails to this donor.

Don't assume they remember everything about you.

Tip #2: The best emails...

Tell a great story.

Focus on one individual.

Draw the reader in with a compelling tale.



MEET PATCHES

Dear friend,

For many of our donkeys, they've had it pretty rough by the time they arrive at our facility; Patches was no different. A few months before we got him, Patches was dumped at a kill pen, where he was neglected and mistreated. He was rescued by our partners at All Seated In a Barn and endured a 40-hour transport to Oscar's Place. When he arrived, he was literally dying of starvation and malnourishment. His body was destroying his organs for energy to stay alive. As a result, he had lost his vision and his skin was coming off.

We immediately rushed Patches to the UC Davis Veterinary Hospital for treatment. At first, no one thought he would make it. But with the team's expert care, they were able to convert his energy source back to carbs and begin his healing process. Our own team created a detailed, intentional plan to continue Patches' physical and emotional recovery at Oscar's Place, and he is progressing at a wonderful pace. I'm amazed by how resilient Patches has been.



Today, Patches is gaining weight and his hair has started to return. We believe he can see shadows, and he definitely knows the sound of our voices. He loves neck rubs and tasty treats. Little by little, we are integrating him into the herd. We want Patches to experience life outside of a medical treatment stall and to hopefully find a companion that will help guide him. **Because of you, Patches will enjoy a lifetime of all the love and care he deserves.** Thank you for saving Patches's life, friend. You are making his remarkable transformation possible.

With gratitude,

Ron King, Co-Founder & CEO Oscar's Place Adoption Center & Sanctuary www.oscarsplace.org

P.S. On one of my recent Sunday morning video tours of Oscar's Place, Patches made an appearance! Check it out to see how he's doing. Dear friend,

"For many of our donkeys, they've had it pretty rough by the time they arrive at our facility; Patches was no different.

A few months before we got him, Patches was dumped at a kill pen, where he was **neglected and mistreated.**

When he arrived, **he was literally dying of starvation and malnourishment**."

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Kon King, Co-Founder & CEC

Oscar's Place Adoption Center & Sanctuary

After reading this story, can you tell me what this organization does?

Do you feel compelled to give a gift?

Do you understand how a \$10 donation will **make a difference?**

This email about Patches has a **68.8% open rate.**

People love stories!

Tip #3: The worst emails...

Use WE-focused language.

Understandably, we want to highlight our successes – but this comes across very self-centered.

It can also make it seem like we don't need support.

Our mission is to educate, entertain and inspire a diverse audience through music and conversation, to create a socially responsible and environmentally sustainable world.

Hi Patty,

Thank you for joining us over the years at [Organization Name]!

All of us here are thrilled to share with you what makes this organization so special to our community -- and beyond.

We're a community treasure that manifests our town's values and spirit. As a nonprofit, we're a fan-supported resource that helps make our community what it is today through both its radio show programming and many community events.

For 28 years, we've enhanced our town's music scene through live radio program tapings and other live music events.

We consistently bring in an amazing variety of musicians from around the world, from the legendary **Mavis Staples** to the unforgettable show with **Rising Appalachia and Ramy Essam**. All of us here are thrilled to share with you what makes this organization so special to our community -- and beyond.

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We're a fan-supported resource that helps make our community what it is today through both its programming and many events."

Beware of tooting your own horn.

Too much WE-focused language can make it seem like you're bragging, and that **you don't need support.**

Tip #3: The best emails...

Use YOU-focused language.

Invite the reader into your story.

Show them there is a clear role for them here.



Happy New Year from Ignite!

Dear Igniter,

Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season filled with warmth, laughter, and memorable moments (and if you were lucky, some time on the slopes).

As we head into 2023 and our 48th season, I want to say THANK YOU — from the bottom of my heart — for being a part of our Ignite family. **This holiday season, we really felt the love from you.** We appreciate your donations, support, and words of encouragement. All of it makes a life-changing difference for our athletes.

Your support fuels us as we head into the season ahead. It's officially underway, and I can already feel that it will be an amazing one. We have an INCREDIBLE group of talented volunteers, passionate athletes, and dedicated families. I can't wait to see the magic that unfolds on the mountain this winter!

I'm so grateful for this strong, supportive, and FUN community that we've built together. **Thank you for being a part of it, Igniter.** Wishing you and your family a healthy, joyful, and inspiring 2023.

See you on the slopes!

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Tip #4: The worst emails...

Don't use images well.

Photos are too small to be impactful.

Images don't pull the reader in and tell a story.

Picture Superiority Effect

The human brain **processes images around 60,000 times faster than text**—it takes only 13 milliseconds for the human brain to process an image, and 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual.

Source: <u>https://medtechintelligence.com/column/the-power-of-visuals/</u>

"We are **incredible at remembering pictures**.

Hear a piece of information, and three days later you'll remember 10% of it.

Add a picture, and you'll remember 65%."

– <u>Brain Rules</u>, by John Medina



Keep Your Community Safe

June is Gun Violence Awareness Month, but it can feel daunting to take on such an emotionally charged issue. Revisit our 2023 webinar, <u>Keeping Our Communities Safe:</u> <u>Local Actions to Address Gun Violence</u>, for tips on getting started, then <u>mark your</u> <u>calendar for June 26</u>, when we'll hear from a panel of women leaders on how to take action for the betterment of your community.

Make Your Plan for Action





Dear Friend,

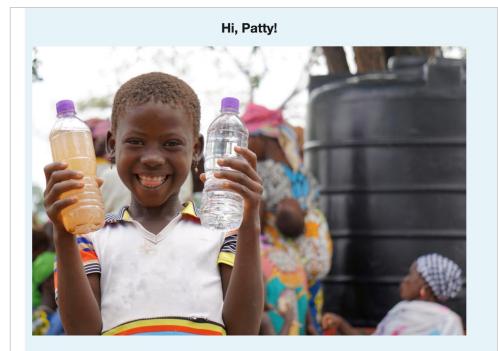
As we enter the holiday season, we wanted to take a moment to say thank YOU and to reflect on all the things we're grateful for this year.



Tip #4: The best emails...

Use powerful photos well.

Images take up 100% of the email body width. The imagery makes people feel something. Photos feature 1-2 people making eye contact with the camera.



Today is World Water Day, and we're announcing something special: <u>Our Ten Year Water Promise.</u>

The Water Promise is a 10-year commitment to the sustainability of the water projects you support. In addition to funding the incubation of new water businesses that employ local women, your support provides ten years of Customer Care to ensure water is flowing consistently for the next decade.

Your donations deserve to change lives for the long term.



Tip **#**5: The worst emails...

Try to convey too much information.

The content is overwhelming.

The reader may not absorb any of it.

Having trouble viewing this email? View it as a Web page. VOTER and election information

Presidential Primary Information

Final Reminders

- . It is too late to mail your ballot. Please drop it off. Find a 24-Hour Drop Box or Voter Service Center to return your ballot. All 24-hour ballot drop boxes are under camera surveillance. Ballots are due by 7 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, March 3, 2020.
- · If you need a replacement ballot or want to vote in-person, visit a Voter Service Center. Bring ID.
- · It is never too late to register to vote. If you know someone who still needs to register and vote, please have them visit a Voter Service Center with ID on or before 7 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, March 3, 2020.

SEND IN



· Unaffiliated voters: As noted in the voter instructions, you were mailed both party ballots but can only vote and return one. If two voted ballots are returned to us, none of the votes/ballots can be counted. Please tear and discard/recvcle the second unvoted ballot.

Election Videos

We have two excellent 60second election ads that tell you everything you need to know about the Presidential Primary.



Watch them both, subscribe to our channel, and share them with friends! Don't forget to tag us on social media!

Instagram: Twitter: Facebook:

available 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Ballots must be received by 7 p.m. to be counted.

register & vote. Tell a friend to visit a Voter Service Center to register & vote. Bring ID.

Know a 17-year-old?

17-year-olds who will turn 18-years-old by the General Election (November 3, 2020) can now VOTE in Primaries.

Have them visit a Voter Service Center to get registered and vote today! Check out valid forms of ID to bring before coming or call if if you have questions:

Important Dates: Now

 Voter Service and Polling Centers open.

Feb 28

 Drive-by Ballot Drop-off locations open.

 Ballot Processing Center Tours / Elections Open House 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. (RSVP)

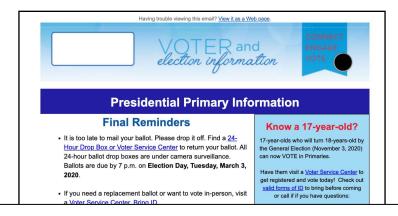
March 2

 Ballot Processing Center Tours / Elections Open House 4:30 p.m. -6 p.m. (RSVP)

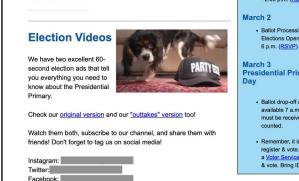
March 3

Presidential Primary Election Day

- · Ballot drop-off and voting services
- · Remember, it is never too late to



What do you think is the most important part of this email?



VUIE UN UNE

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Tip **#**5: The best emails...

Avoid information overload.

Aim for 2 to 4 pieces of information, not 24.

Tell one story.



Every girl has a right to own her future

VOW Supporter

You protect and empower tens of thousands of young girls.

Because of your support, they feel safe enough to just be a kid – without having to worry about the threats of child marriage.



You support girls like **Patricia**. Who at 13, had her school fees covered through one of the programs that donors like you made possible.

Her mom knew there was more for Patricia than child marriage.

"I was a child bride – married at 17 because *I didn't have options*," said Patricia's mother.

"I had four beautiful babies – all girls. Patricia's father left us because he was tired of having girls. He thought they wouldn't amount to anything. **He is wrong**. Patricia and her sisters are going to be something."

The education and mentorship she receives through her local program gives her opportunities for a bright and thriving future.

It's all thanks to our local partners and supporters like you.

And now, you can double your impact this season!

Every dollar you give before the end of the year will be **doubled by a** generous donor.

That means you can protect and empower twice as many girls, with your donation.

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

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The education and mentorship she receives through her local program gives her opportunities for **a bright and thriving future**.

It's all thanks to our local partners and supporters like you."



A note on subject lines...

This is a super important part of getting people to read your newsletter.

Avoid the word "newsletter" in the subject line.

Instead of: Spring 2025 newsletter

 This could be an email subject line from any organization. It doesn't stand out from the rest and doesn't tell you anything about the organization or email content.

Consider: Celebrating moms (on 4 legs and 2)!

Enthusiastic tone, piques curiosity, I know this will be about animals

Instead of: Happy Valentine's Day!

- Same thing here: super generic, doesn't distinguish your organization from others.
- **Consider:** Stories of love, made possible by you \heartsuit
- Feels more personal and emotional; lets me know that there will be a story that will make me feel good

Instead of: Sweetie and Burpee's story

- Doesn't give any important information or make me curious; I don't know these names
- **Consider:** Everything we could do still wasn't enough.
- Vulnerable subject line; makes the reader curious to find out what happened

Let's practice!

Would you categorize the following emails in the "best" category, or "needs improvement"?

Why?

Our email scorecard:

- 1. Uses simple language.
- 2. Tells a great story.
- 3. Uses YOU-focused language.
- 4. Uses engaging photos well.
- 5. Avoids information overload.

[Organization Name's] Winter 2022 Newsletter



An Exciting New Chapter for BCC!

In 2018, BCC adopted a strategic plan that set goals to diversify our revenue and expand services to children from birth to 5 years old. Over the last three years, we have been actively pursuing partnerships to achieve these goals and are proud to announce that BCC is now partnering with the County Office of Education (COE) to provide high-quality, inclusive infant, toddler and preschool programs through the Head Start/Early Head Start Program model.

As a COE delegate, BCC will be positioned to increase our enrollment to nearly 100 students per year, and to serve as a model for inclusion in early learning environments. COE, which is funded by the Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, and the state Department of Education, partners with 13 other delegates including nonprofit agencies and school districts to serve more than 10,000 children ages 0-5 in the county.

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For 84 years, we've evolved to meet the needs of the youngest children in our county facing blindness and other visual impairments. We are excited to enter this new chapter in our history as we strive to serve more families than ever before and expand our reach throughout the city.



Our email scorecard:

- **1**. Uses simple language.
- **2**. Tells a great story.
- 3. Uses YOU-focused language.
- **4. Uses engaging photos well.**
- **5.** Avoids information overload.



"I want you to know that you have changed my life and my children's lives." - Millicent K.

Millicent is a tailor by trade.

Her income increased from \$7 to \$12 per week when she started selling clean stoves in her shop in [name of town]. She earns \$1 commission from each sale.

[Now,] "I am able to make healthy meals for my husband and children. My neighbors and customers who use the stoves say they don't cough as much as they used to when they were using open fires. I want you to know that you have changed my life and my children's lives."

We're so grateful for you,

Your generosity is lightening loads, increasing incomes, and feeding so many people every day. We are so grateful you are part of our community. Thank you for sharing our values and giving with dignity.

Wishing you a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Warmly, [Organization Name]



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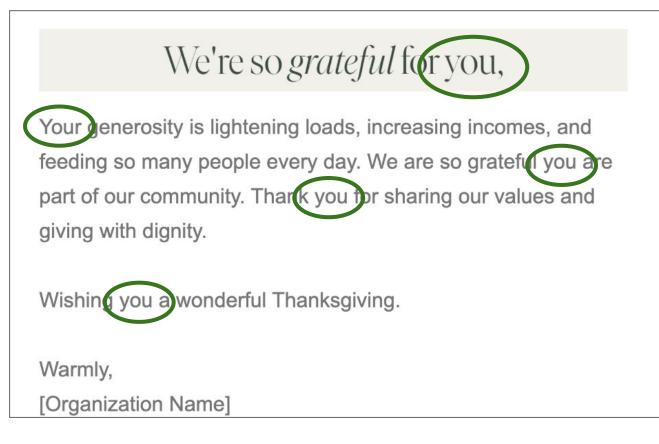
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- Millicent K.



4. Uses engaging photos well.

Her income increased from \$7 to \$12 per week when she started selling clean stoves in her shop in [name of town]. She earns \$1 commission from each sale.



Our email scorecard:





2. Tells a great story.



3. Uses YOU-focused language.



4. Uses engaging photos well.



5. Avoids information overload.

What questions can I answer for you?



Send me questions! I like them!

Patty Breech patty@the-purpose-collective.com

Please sign up for our free office hours! www.the-purpose-collective.com