



**e-Newsletters with iMakeNews:**  
*Electronic Relationship Marketing*  
*Made Easy*

## Summary

Email newsletters are a fantastic marketing tool for building relationships with your customers, reinforcing brand awareness, and delivering timely, useful information.

The value of email hasn't gone unnoticed. In fact, newsletters are already the second most prevalent use for outbound marketing email, after promotions and discount offers, according to a Forrester Research report.

## The pain of publishing

But reaping the benefits of email newsletters requires a quality product. Your newsletter can build affinity with your customers, but only if it stands out from the crowd. As you build your list you must understand opt-in permission, spam, and privacy issues. Your newsletter must deliver useful information. You must publish on a regular, frequent schedule -- if you publish less frequently than once a month your subscribers will forget they gave you permission. And to succeed, you have to make maximum possible use of interactive technology to solicit feedback from subscribers, and use what they tell you to make your newsletter more useful.

A successful newsletter can require a great deal of effort and resources. Whether you build your publishing system in-house or assemble it from products and services provided by outside vendors, the technical and operational difficulties of designing and structuring the newsletter, creating content, managing the subscription list, and logging and reporting on subscriber activity can seem almost insurmountable, even for sizable companies.

---

*iMakeNews provides an alternative that removes the barriers to email newsletter publishing.*

## The iMakeNews solution

iMakeNews provides an alternative that removes the barriers to email newsletter publishing. iMakeNews is a Web-based system that is a complete solution for creating, distributing, and analyzing the effectiveness of email newsletters:

- **Organize and structure.** Design your newsletter, creating templates for the title page and other display pages, articles, and surveys.
- **Create content.** Articles can be written in iMakeNews, uploaded directly from Microsoft Word, or selected from libraries of pre-written material. Add photos and graphics. Manage edits and approvals. Administer access by authors and editors.
- **Publish.** Schedule articles for publication, assemble and post the newsletter pages to the Web, manage mailing lists, and trigger targeted mailings.
- **Monitor feedback.** Track each request for an article and response to a survey question and automatically compile reports on who read what.
- **Do it again.** Templates eliminate the hard work of rebuilding and recoding each issue of a newsletter. Old issues are kept and automatically assembled into an archive.
- **Syndicate your own content.** You can create your own libraries of content, so that your articles can be reused in customized newsletters targeted at multiple subsets of subscribers, or shared with other newsletter publishers.

## The Value of Newsletters

Email is the "killer app" of the Internet. In the United States alone there are almost 100 million email users -- 44% of the population 14 and older. They actually outnumber active users of the World Wide Web -- 97 million to 88 million, according to analyst Jonathan Miller, writing for the Web site <http://www.emarketer.com> in December of 2000. And the number of email users will grow rapidly, says Miller -- by 2003 there will be 140 million email users, a 44% increase in three years.

It's no wonder that email marketing is also growing exponentially. It's where the audience is. If you are not using permission-based email marketing you can be sure your competitors are. The growth of email newsletters demonstrates the value of using this new medium to communicate with customers and prospects.

According to a Forrester Research report cited by the Center for Media Research, newsletters are the second most prevalent use for outbound marketing email, after promotions and discount offers (<http://www.centerformediaresearch.com>, 12/5/00). The reason is that email newsletters are relationship builders. If you are a B2B or B2C company, the best way to reach out and touch your prospects and customers is email, according to Anne Holland, publisher of [www.marketingsherpa.com](http://www.marketingsherpa.com). Why publish a newsletter? First and foremost, says Holland, to maintain a relationship with your customers. To grow your brand's name, keep it top-of-mind.

Newsletters build business by giving prospects and new customers a valuable reason to "opt in," to choose to communicate with you using the very personal medium of email. And this channel of communication, once established, delivers information that keeps sales leads warm, and customers committed:

### Newsletters build affinity

The single greatest benefit of email newsletters is their ability to build relationships with customers. A Jupiter communications 2000 report on the goals of companies' e-mail marketing efforts found that building affinity with customers was the most widespread goal -- 61 percent of companies surveyed said they use email marketing to deepen the relationship with the customer.

This is true not only of B2B, but B2C as well. Tony Romeo, chairman, North American Interactive Brand Center for Unilever, told the marketing Web site [www.digitrends.com](http://www.digitrends.com): "For me, it's become even more clear that the real benefit of interactive media is its role in our effort of developing enriching relationships with consumers—particularly building relationships with our most valuable consumers, those who are major consumers or are potentially that. All consumers are not alike, and interactive media gives us the opportunity to target and work on relationships with the most valuable." ([http://www.digitrends.net/marketing/13638\\_15585.html](http://www.digitrends.net/marketing/13638_15585.html))

### Newsletters attract new customers

Newsletters are a friendly medium for establishing a relationship with a prospect. Opt-in email avoids the stigma of unwelcome "spam" mail, and delivering a regular newsletter to a prospect who has requested more information goes beyond a one-time introduction to bring the prospect closer to being a customer.

"Sales leads used to go cold after 10 days. Now it's five," cautions Anne Holland of [www.marketingsherpa.com](http://www.marketingsherpa.com). An email newsletter that speaks in a personal tone and delivers useful information is a great way to keep leads warm. Regular issues of the newsletter can introduce a broad range of topics, and with proper data-collection and reporting you can judge the prospect's interests and customize your communications accordingly.

## Newsletters build business

Email generates the highest response conversion rates of any direct marketing tool. "Compared to average click through rates of .65% for banner ads and average response rates of 1-2% for direct-mail pieces, opt-in email's average response rate is 5-15%," according to the Center for Media Research brief cited earlier.

Even if your business isn't based on e-commerce, you can benefit from the deeper involvement created by email. Too often business is lost to the competition due to a lack of communications. Any business of any size can compete as long as the customer remembers who they are.

## Technology that touches your best customers

Email newsletters bring the strengths of technology to bear on the problems and opportunities of communicating with your customers:

- They are quick, cheap and cost-effective, especially compared to print marketing. An email address collected from your Web site costs, by some estimates, 6 cents, compared to 20 cents or more per address for a print list. And the cost of creative, printing and mailing averages 50 cents to a dollar or more.
- They deliver better results than other forms of direct marketing. Not only are email response rates much higher than print, but an email newsletter can be a persistent resource, whether saved and reread by the subscriber, or archived on your Web site.
- They are great viral marketing tools. Automated "send-this-to-a-friend" forwarding and subscription tools can build your lists with no work on your part.
- They are unequalled tools for customer retention and prospect list building.

You can use the technologies of the Internet to deliver customized messages, and the unique data-collection and reporting capabilities of email-based newsletters can let you see who read your newsletter, what they read, and what follow-up they took. You can tailor with pinpoint accuracy not only the content of your newsletters but their frequency and their display (HTML or plain text) based on what subscribers tell you through surveys and *their actual behavior*. Email newsletters can help you reach your best customers -- the ones you've already got.

## The Challenge of Newsletters

While email newsletters can deliver great benefits, you won't reap those benefits unless you produce a quality newsletter product. And the standards of quality for electronic mail are very different from those for print. "Email is not direct mail minus the paper and postage," is the way Jim Nail, a Forrester Research senior analyst, put it in "The E-Mail Marketing Dialogue," a report released in 2000 and reported at

[http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/advertising/article/0,1323,5941\\_317871,00.html](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/advertising/article/0,1323,5941_317871,00.html).

Nail's report cites three distinct differences that, if not handled correctly, can diminish email's potential and damage customer relationships.

- Marketers must guard against merely broadcasting to customers. They must establish a dialogue on a one-to-one basis.
- Marketers must offer value instead of simply pushing products.

- Marketers need to change the way they think about their relationships with customers. They must begin to measure relationships by the amount of information shared, rather than frequency of mailing, responses, and dollars spent.

Anne Holland of [www.marketingsherpa.com](http://www.marketingsherpa.com) offers four steps to newsletter publishing success that put a practical spin on Nail's insights:

**Step 1** is gathering your list. You should understand the issues of opt-in permission, spam, privacy, and how to collect an address the right way. If you don't you may not only damage your relationship with your customers, but leave your company open to the mounting legal liabilities for misusing email. (To help, Holland offers a report on her site, "Spam and Privacy Information for B2B Marketers." at <http://www.b2bmarketingbiz.com/sample.cfm?contentID=1620>.)

**Step 2** is content. Make it useful information. Don't send pure marketing material or "Company X is proud to announce . . ." press releases. Make it personal -- write from one person to another person. Don't be formal. Avoid writing in a formal way, in AP style. Don't make it straight news. People have too many sources for that already. We can all go download a Yahoo story. Do make it personal. People do want a personal tone.

**Step 3** is distribution. Start out with a regular publication schedule. A newsletter is not worth doing if it's not monthly. If you publish less frequently your subscribers will forget they gave you permission. The technology you use for publishing and distribution should make it as easy as possible to process new subscriptions, bounces (copies sent to undeliverable addresses), and subscriber preferences (frequency, HTML vs. plain text, etc.) Distribution technology should include reporting capabilities to help you understand which subscribers opened your newsletter and what they looked at.

**Step 4** is surveying subscribers. Use the technology to solicit feedback from subscribers, and use what they tell you to make your newsletter more useful. Customize your newsletter by creating different versions for different subsets of your list. Test subject lines and content the same way you would test copy in a print campaign. You can tailor an email newsletter far more easily than a print newsletter, and using demographics and subscriber readership data to increase the usefulness and customization of your newsletter will build stronger relationships with your subscribers.

## The Pain of Publishing

Obviously, a successful email newsletter requires a major investment in both editorial and technical resources. For many companies, publishing a quality newsletter presents many obstacles. In large companies, the resources may be in separate departments, and coordinating them to meet a regular and frequent publication schedule can be a major challenge. For smaller companies, just coming up with the resources to mount a successful program can be a challenge. For companies of all sizes, the challenges of email newsletters, both technical and operational, fall into three areas:

- Design and Content -- creating high-quality content and managing its approval and publication. Finding authors and content sources and keeping track of the status of content can be a major headache for the newsletter editor. HTML newsletters are most effective, but good design that reflects well on the company is essential -- and may be expensive.
- Distribution -- building and maintaining the list, formatting and sending the emails. Coding the content and preparing the newsletter for distribution may require help from an already overburdened IT department that doesn't see marketing support as its first priority.

Maintaining the list is a key activity that should be carefully controlled and coordinated with the company Web site

- Feedback -- gathering and reporting on subscriber activity. Logging and reporting require major IT involvement to create and implement automated tools and regularly perform the tasks of analyzing and reporting on user activity.

The biggest challenge is not to publish an email newsletter, but to do it regularly, creating a smoothly functioning process that delivers a quality result.

There are three ways to create an email newsletter publishing capability:

### **Do it in-house**

Companies with extensive creative, marketing and technical resources can make the commitments to staff and infrastructure that newsletter publishing requires. In many companies, however, the responsibility for design, editorial and systems development will fall on already overburdened IT staff or Webmasters who might be able to get out a newsletter as a special project, but won't be able to support the analysis and feedback required to make it an ongoing, successful process.

### **Cobble together available services**

Outside consultants and services can be found to design the newsletter, create content, even to produce and publish it, track feedback, and provide reports. There are also vendors who provide software and systems to support parts of the process in-house. This approach has some advantages: it allows you to do what you can in-house and go outside for the rest. But you must identify and work with multiple vendors to assemble a solution.

### **Use a comprehensive solution**

iMakeNews offers a single-vendor solution that puts everything necessary -- design and formatting, content, distribution, and reporting tools -- on a single Web site. Using iMakeNews you can start an email newsletter from scratch and get it out the door in just a couple of hours. iMakeNews provides support for all aspects of the newsletter process -- design, content management, list handling, and feedback. And iMakeNews doesn't require coordination with other departments, ongoing support from IT, or negotiating with outside vendors.

## **The iMakeNews Solution**

iMakeNews is entirely Web-based. There is no software to buy, install or maintain. You create and manage your newsletter within the familiar interface of a Web browser:

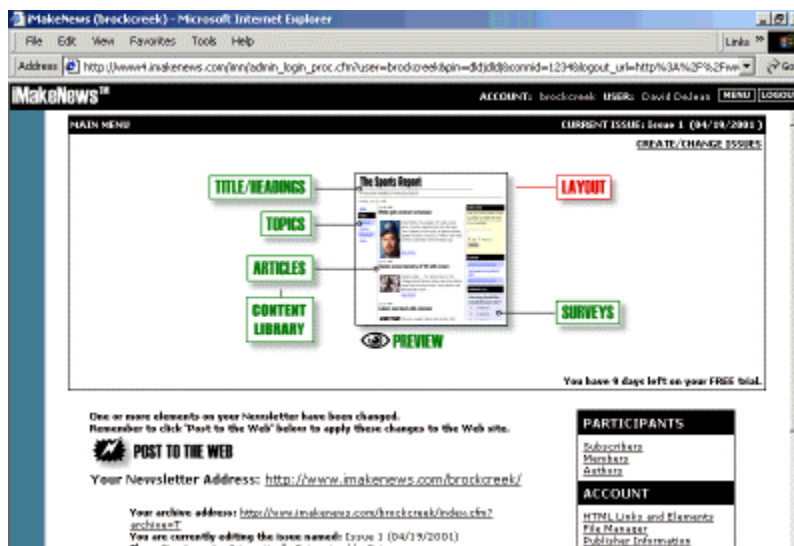
- **Organize and structure.** Design your newsletter, creating templates for the title page and other display pages, articles, and surveys. You can create a structure as simple or complex as you need.
- **Create content.** Articles can be written in iMakeNews or uploaded from Microsoft Word. Administer access by editors, approvers, and syndicators.
- **Publish.** Post to the Web and distribute by email. Plain text and HTML versions of your newsletter are derived from the same source material.

- **Monitor feedback.** iMakeNews automatically tracks each request for an article and response to a survey question, so that you know by name what your subscribers are interested in. Use this information as you adjust the editorial direction of your newsletter, or even use the lists themselves to modify your lists and create sublists to build customized mailings.
- **Do it again.** Open a new issue and all your design templates and mailing lists are instantly available for use. The hard work of rebuilding and recoding each issue of a newsletter is eliminated.
- **Syndicate your own content.** You can create your own libraries of content, so that your articles can be reused in customized newsletters targeted at multiple subsets of subscribers, or shared with other newsletter publishers -- a good way to distribute accurate information through your channel, and support the marketing efforts of distributors and resellers.

iMakeNews provides a range of services that can be tailored to suit your company's needs. If you're a large corporation, iMakeNews can provide custom development to allow you to syndicate content, consolidate and target customer lists, and promote branding across complex sales and distribution channels. If your organization is looking for an outsourced solution for newsletter management, iMakeNews can provide you with a complete hands-off implementation of your newsletter marketing/communication program. All you do is supply the content or approve the articles we locate or create for you. Our specialists take care of the rest. And if your business is just getting into the production of its own email newsletter iMakeNews offers several levels of service, from a Standard package that lets you publish easily and inexpensively, to Platinum, which includes demographic personalization features and survey tracking.

## Getting started

iMakeNews makes it easy to get hands-on experience with creating and sending a newsletter. Visit [www.imakenews.com](http://www.imakenews.com) and click on the "Try It Free" button on the home page. Sign up for a free 30-day trial and you'll see the main menu:



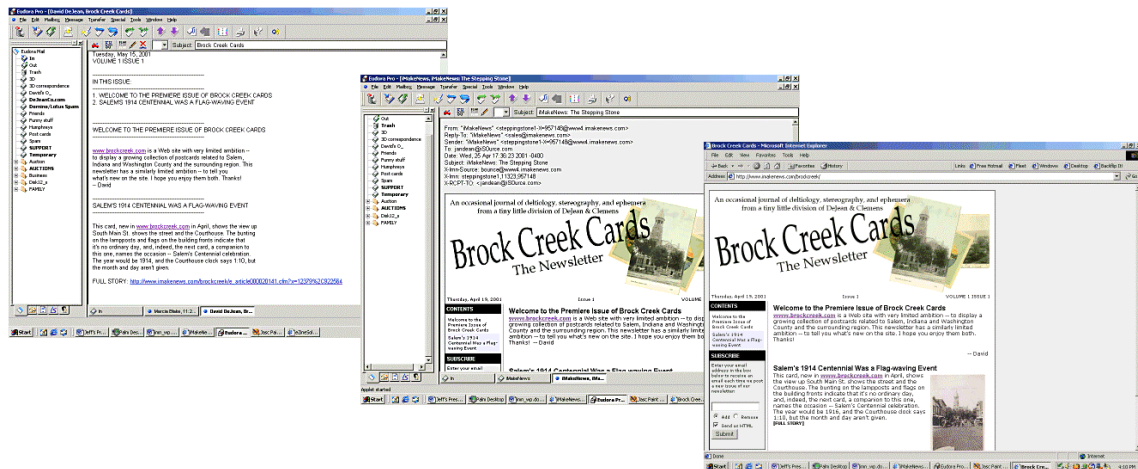
All of the configuration, editing, and management functions of iMakeNews are done from this graphical interface. From here you'll design your title page and article pages, create articles and surveys, administer the subscriber list, assign editor and author privileges and manage your account.

## Organize and structure

You start with iMakeNews by building the design templates you'll use for the title page, articles, and surveys. You'll set the style for the visuals and content, and the framework of the publication -- content elements, topics to cover, how you'll use surveys -- and assign permissions to authors and editors who will have access to your work area.

## Design

The most effective email newsletters are delivered in HTML format -- rich text and graphics just like a Web page. But not all email software can handle HTML. iMakeNews makes coping with the differences simple. You design and create an HTML newsletter, complete with photographs and graphics. iMakeNews automatically creates a text-only version, and a special version of HTML that works in the AOL mail client. Your articles are even reformatted automatically for printing.



Subscribers whose format preference are unknown receive an autosensing version of the newsletter that will display either in plain text (shown on the left above) or, if the software supports it, HTML (in the middle). Subscribers may also view your newsletter on the Web, as shown on the right.

The iMakeNews templates let you create HTML newsletters with multiple columns, graphics and links even if you don't know how to write HTML code. And if you do, you can include as much HTML as you want in your pages and articles. Many users find it easy to compose their articles and pictures on their desktop using Microsoft Word and then upload their DOC file, pictures and all, directly into their iMakeNews account.

## Create content

Useful information is the key to newsletter success. Using iMakeNews you can create or import article text, edit it, and hold it for approval. You can do the work of creating and editing your newsletter from anywhere -- any computer with a Web browser will do. Create a year's worth of issues at once, and add articles to any of them. iMakeNews also gives you a file storage area for material that isn't scheduled for a particular issue.

If your resources for creating your own content are limited, iMakeNews makes available a wide variety of content for you to include in your newsletter, some of it free, and some priced by the article.

iMakeNews will also help you find providers of custom content who can work with you to develop an editorial calendar and can write specific articles according to a publication schedule.

## Surveys

Surveys and polls are an important part of interactive publishing. iMakeNews provides two types of multiple-choice templates. The Quick Poll lets the subscriber answer a single question by selecting from multiple answers, then immediately view the updated results. Questionnaires allow you to administer a structured set of questions to subscribers, with no disclosure of the results.

## Publish

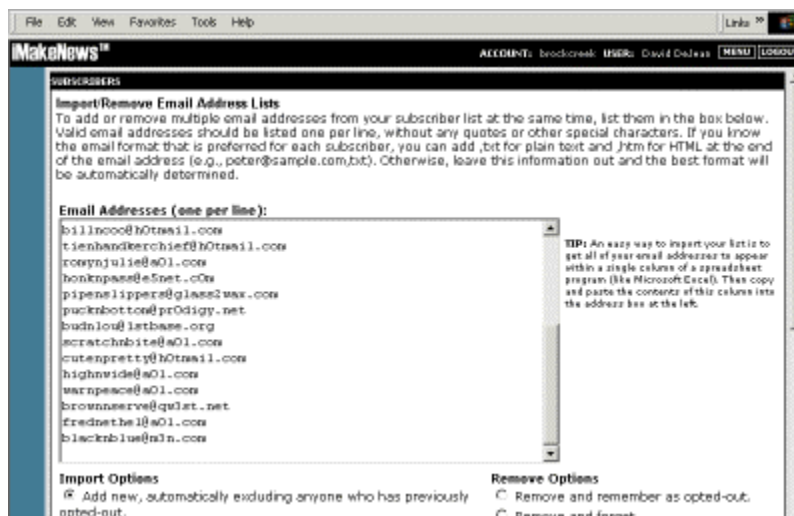
While many newsletter systems emphasize creating the newsletter content, there is an entirely separate, but equally important set of functions required to manage the business side of publishing -- managing subscribers, setting the publication schedule, and managing the people -- the writers and editors -- who need access to the publication. iMakeNews allows you to assign people to roles:

- Authors can only contribute articles.
- Editors can approve or reject articles that have been submitted.
- Publishers have complete access to all newsletter features and settings.

Only a publisher, for example, can change the layout of the newsletter, or add and delete subscribers.

## Managing subscriber lists

iMakeNews features for managing subscribers are just as complete and robust as those for creating content. iMakeNews supports multiple mailing lists, so that you can mail customized versions of your newsletter, or maintain separate mailing schedules for each list.



You may build your list by importing addresses or cutting and pasting them directly into your browser, as shown above. Once your list is created you have full management access. You can add, delete, and modify addresses, manage sublists and move subscribers among them. You can search for and group addresses -- all AOL addresses, all subscribers in a particular domain, and so forth. You can export your addresses as Excel files.

iMakeNews reports on new subscribers and removals, and advanced features include bounce management: undeliverable addresses may be automatically removed from the list after a configurable threshold (two bounces, three bounces, or more, to avoid "mailbox full" failures). A bounce report collects undeliverable addresses for examination and correction.

Users may remove themselves from the list, and iMakeNews provides "Opt Out Protection" – the system remembers who has unsubscribed, so that even if a list is re-uploaded, unsubscribed addresses will not be re-added and re-mailed.

### **Sending email**

Each issue of your newsletter is assigned a publication date. On that date the new issue replaces the previous one at [www.imakenews/<yourservername>](http://www.imakenews/<yourservername>). Mailing is completely under your control. You may send mail to all your subscribers at once, or use sublists to segment your mailings or support testing. When you click on "Send email" your newsletter and mailing list are submitted to a high-capacity email system that generates each message individually -- privacy is carefully preserved, and subscribers see only their own addresses.

### **Controlled-access subscriptions**

You can implement a controlled access model for newsletters with paid subscriptions or a need for tighter security by turning on password protection for your newsletter and requiring each subscriber to enter a username and password to access the newsletter.

### **Personalization**

Advanced users can also take advantage of personalization features that customize the content in the newsletter for each subscriber. Personalization begins with demographic information entered or imported into an expanded user record. This information can then be used to create sub-lists and can be made to appear within the titles and text of each message. Each newsletter delivered is then customized to include information that is known about the recipient. For example, if the subscriber's name is John, the subject of the email John receives could be "John, here is your newsletter". Likewise, the text within the newsletter could be "John, we hope to see you at the conference this fall."

### **Monitor feedback**

Feedback is one of the most valuable benefits of email newsletter publication, yet activity tracking and reporting systems are not easy to build. iMakeNews provides the detailed feedback you need without requiring a single man-hour of developer time or dollar invested in software and servers.

Each time a reader clicks on a link in your newsletter, that action, whether it is to request the full text of an article, send a response to a survey, go to a Web site, or switch from plain text to HTML, is logged by the iMakeNews Web servers. iMakeNews turns this data into a full range of reports on subscriber activity, and almost all reports are downloadable as Excel worksheet files for further analysis and merger with other corporate data. Reports include:

- **Survey results.** iMakeNews reports who submitted answers to each survey, and for each survey question provides a list of respondents grouped by answer, so that you can use the respondents as sublists in further e-mail marketing.

- **Activity reporting.** Reports track access to your newsletter by identified subscribers and by unidentified “tell-a-friend” readers.

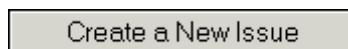
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1		Newsletter Activity Overview Report				
2		Issue: Issue 1 (04/19/2001)				
3		Report Period: 04/09/2001 - 05/10/2001				
4						
5		Content Tracking:				
6						
7		Total Page Views	3,038			
8		Identified Visitors	2,561			
9		Unidentified Visitors	271			
10						
11						
12		Email Statistics:				
13						
14		Emails Sent	4,323			
15		Emails Opened	2,245			
16		Clicks from Email	3,128			
17		Tell a Friend Email	156			
18						
19						
20		Subscribers Statistics:				
21						
22		Total Subscribers	4,756			
23		Subscribers Added	454			
24		Subscribers Removed	128			
25		Subscribers Bounced	78			
26						

- You can see the number of emails sent and the number of those that were opened to produce further interaction, as well as subscriber additions and deletions. You can use these numbers to assess the popularity of topic areas and articles, and measure readership trends.
- Activity is tracked on a per-article basis, so article reports present a list of subscribers who requested each article or submitted a response to each survey -- and again, you can download the list or use it as a sublist for further mailings.
- Bounce management reports give you a chance to inspect a list of all the addresses on undeliverable emails, so you can catch mistakes and reclaim subscribers that would otherwise be lost.

## Do it again

A newsletter should be published regularly and frequently, or it loses impact with the subscribers. But for most newsletter publishing systems, especially in-house publishing efforts, the pain of publishing isn't diminished by repetition. Finishing up one newsletter means you have to go back to “Square One” to start the next one -- code all the content just as if it were the first time, negotiate for priorities with IT and Webmasters. Push for activity reports.

With iMakeNews, you don't have to recreate the whole infrastructure of your newsletter each time you publish. Doing it again is as easy as pushing a button:



The design templates are ready to receive the content of the new issue. You can begin creating articles and populating them with content as it becomes available. iMakeNews controls keep you aware of the status of all the elements of your newsletter.

You can use iMakeNews not just to publish a single newsletter, but to plan your publication as well. Open six months' or a year's worth of issues. Add articles and their titles appear in the table of contents. Assign writers and add their bylines to the articles. Because issues with future publication dates are accessible only to authors, editors, and publishers, you can use your iMakeNews workspace as a self-documenting planning tool.

And when it's time to publish, select the mailing list you want to use and click "Send email." Email newsletter publishing doesn't get much easier.

## **Syndicate your own content**

You can share the content you create among multiple newsletters, using the same iMakeNews technology that supports the libraries of content provided by third parties. This has a couple of interesting applications:

- You can easily make content available to channel partners to use in their own newsletters. If your company is a manufacturer with distributors and resellers, you can support their marketing efforts by providing high-quality, accurate, timely content for their newsletters, and benefit from the relationships you help them build with their customers.
- It allows you to easily share and reuse content among a set of related but customized newsletters. If your company makes both hardware and software products, for example, you might get better readership by publishing multiple newsletters targeted at different subsets of your customer base. iMakeNews syndication allows you to publish newsletters that each give emphasis to some unique content but economically share much content in common.

## **Conclusion**

iMakeNews delivers a complete solution for email newsletter publishing, from the basics of designing a state-of-the art HTML newsletter to the advanced functionality of content syndication. iMakeNews removes the barriers to producing email newsletters. Small companies can publish sophisticated newsletters that make them look like big companies. Big companies can use advanced reporting and syndication functions to deliver customized newsletters to carefully selected subsets of their customer base. Any company can use iMakeNews to create high-quality email newsletters without burning through in-house resources or spending a fortune on outside consultants.