NEWSLETTER STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC MEDIA

ABOUT ME

HI! I'M EMILY ROSEMAN.

- Research Director for the **Institute for Nonprofit News (INN)**
- Co-author of the **Unpacking** newsletter unpacking.substack.com
- Newsletter research, Newsletter Guide, Newsletter Wizards blog

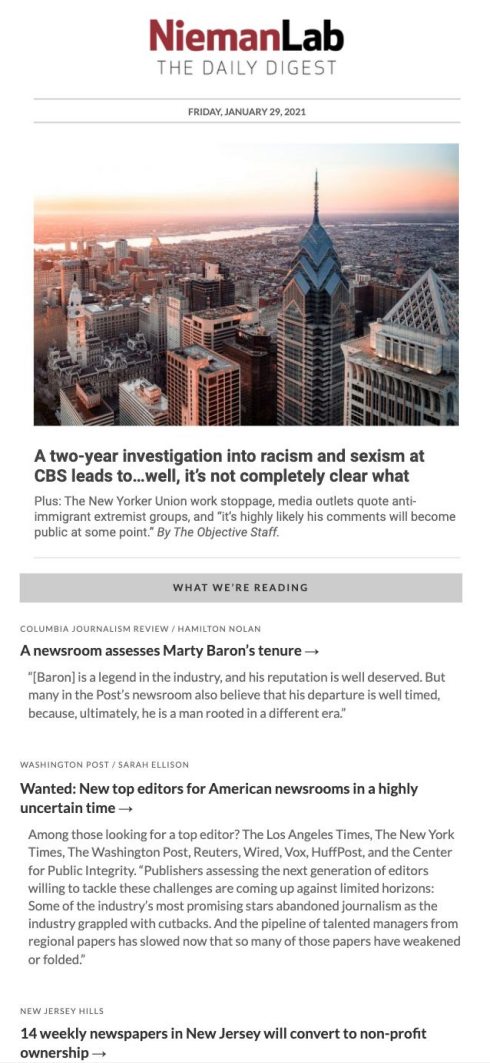
AGENDA

- Types of newsletter strategy
- Making money
- Engagement
- Metrics
- Workflows
- *Don’t have a NL? Here’s what to do.*

Pause: Take a moment to think about your newsletter(s)

TYPES OF NEWSLETTERS

1. The Link Aggregator



NiemanLab
THE DAILY DIGEST

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021

A two-year investigation into racism and sexism at CBS leads to…well, it's not completely clear what

Plus: The New Yorker Union work stoppage, media outlets quote anti-immigrant extremist groups, and "it's highly likely his comments will become public at some point." *By The Objective Staff.*

WHAT WE'RE READING

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW / HAMILTON NOLAN

A newsroom assesses Marty Baron's tenure →

"[Baron] is a legend in the industry, and his reputation is well deserved. But many in the Post's newsroom also believe that his departure is well timed, because, ultimately, he is a man rooted in a different era."

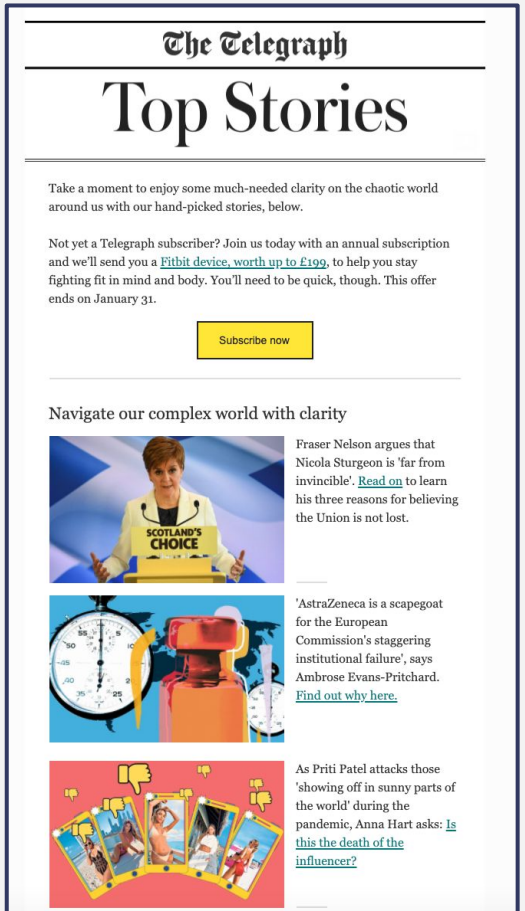
WASHINGTON POST / SARAH ELLISON

Wanted: New top editors for American newsrooms in a highly uncertain time →

Among those looking for a top editor? The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Reuters, Wired, Vox, HuffPost, and the Center for Public Integrity. "Publishers assessing the next generation of editors willing to tackle these challenges are coming up against limited horizons: Some of the industry's most promising stars abandoned journalism as the industry grappled with cutbacks. And the pipeline of talented managers from regional papers has slowed now that so many of those papers have weakened or folded."

NEW JERSEY HILLS

14 weekly newspapers in New Jersey will convert to non-profit ownership →



The Telegraph

Top Stories

Take a moment to enjoy some much-needed clarity on the chaotic world around us with our hand-picked stories, below.

Not yet a Telegraph subscriber? Join us today with an annual subscription and we'll send you a Fitbit device, worth up to £199, to help you stay fighting fit in mind and body. You'll need to be quick, though. This offer ends on January 31.

Subscribe now

Navigate our complex world with clarity

Fraser Nelson argues that Nicola Sturgeon is 'far from invincible'. Read on to learn his three reasons for believing the Union is not lost.

'AstraZeneca is a scapegoat for the European Commission's staggering institutional failure', says Ambrose Evans-Pritchard. Find out why here.

As Priti Patel attacks those 'showing off in sunny parts of the world' during the pandemic, Anna Hart asks: Is this the death of the influencer?

Effort: low

Value for publisher: reputation as expert in subject, site traffic.

Value for audience: get breaking news and top stories on subject or from specific publisher

2. The Briefing

QUARTZ DAILY BRIEF

SPONSORED BY citrix

Good morning, Quartz readers!

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Robinhood raised $1 billion from its investors. The fiercely
online broker is protecting itself as it reopens trading on stoc
GameStop "in a responsible manner." See more below.

Novavax said its vaccine is 89% effective. Just not agains
African variant. See more, um, below.

Old people might not get the AstraZeneca jab in the EU.
already has distribution problems, so this won't help.

General Motors will only make electric vehicles by 2035.
plenty of good things, this means no more powerful, gas-guz
Corvettes for midlife crises.

POLITICO
Playbook

BY ADAM CANCRYN

Presented by Google

DRIVING THE DAY

For months on the campaign trail, JOE BIDEN's case for the presidency boiled down to a central premise: I have the plan that will end the pandemic.

He may still. But if we've learned anything from Biden's opening days in office, it's that it's going to take the better part of his first critical year.

The White House is already grappling with a series of emerging problems as it tries to get its Covid response off the ground, from dangerous new virus strains to vaccination slowdowns and the enduring mystery of why, exactly, 20 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine remain unaccounted for.

Add on top of that the specter of roughly 4,000 deaths a day , and it's been a welcome-to-the-big-leagues moment for a Biden team that's long touted its Covid plan, but now faces the far trickier task of executing on it.

Effort: low - medium

Value for publisher: reputation, loyalty in newsletter, and sometimes site traffic.

Value for audience: stay very up to date on a specific topic or field of work.

3. The Essay

"Our collective courage is flagging and there is no time for that."

Anne Helen Petersen Nov 18

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

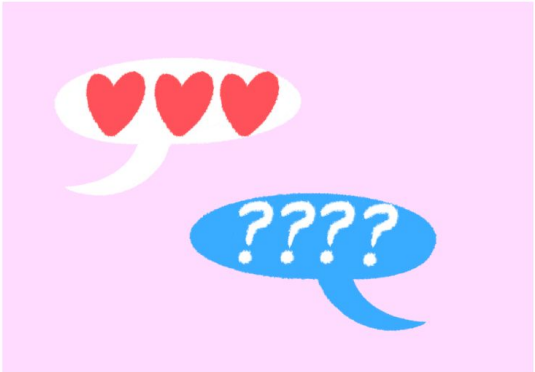
¡Hola Papi! Subscribe

I Don't Have a Love Language

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

John Paul Brammer
Jan 25 42

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



¡Hola Papi!

I will be 27 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 foray. Ever! The high school bubbly feeling is surfacing through the pandemic quarantine haze. I cried happy tears to my therapist! I'm super excited by the idea of being 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-closeted 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.

Effort: high!

Value for publisher: Build habit/loyalty, affinity with author, newsletter engagement.

Value for audience: Enjoy a longer read.

4. The All-In-One

SCALAWAG

THIS WEEK IN THE SOUTH

Blue Monday is the name given to the third or fourth Monday of January, claimed by many to be the most depressing day of the year—when the post-holiday slump meets a collective sense of impending doom.

It's only been a month, but 2021 is already proving even more confusing than last year. Fittingly, this week's national headlines read like a mad lib of American tragedy and politics.

Become a Scalawag member today.

States continued to flub COVID-19 vaccine rollouts, and South Carolina found the first U.S. cases of a new strain of the virus. Right after the Justice Department ended the Trump-era "zero tolerance" immigration policy that allowed the government to separate children from their parents, a judge in Texas blocked it. Just as Amazon warehouse workers gained traction in their battle for the company's first viable union in Bessemer, Alabama, a tornado hit just 20 minutes down the road in North Birmingham. And to top it all off, internet pranks to short sell stock in GameStop

THIS WEEK FROM SCALAWAG

Wake County promised to reconsider cops in schools. When they didn't, students took to the streets.
Courtney Napier, *Scalawag*

"We can't play basketball in peace, we can't do anything in peace. And then we have

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 Gregorio Casar, who led the effort to cut police funding and sponsored an amendment last August that set aside $6.5 million in recurring 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.

LEFTOVERS

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 Tranz Form is 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 declarations open up new political terrain for organizers.
- Slightly more than 6 percent of American adults have received at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine—but a disproportionately small number of them are Black and Hispanic people.
- The uniquely American (and Texan) myth of Satanic cults: How quack psychology helped pundits invent the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and '90s.
- 'It's not something you have to do alone': Rural Alabama churches address food insecurity.
- New Democratic Senate majority opens the path to democratic reforms.

Effort: medium/high

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

Reader Goal: Stay up to date and get a "behind the scenes" look at publisher.

Poll & Discussion

1. The Link Aggregator
2. The Briefing
3. The Essay
4. The All-in-One

What are the variables here?

- The GOALS!
- Content blocks: purpose, number, order
- Link heavy vs. prose heavy
- Voice, tone, point of view
- Send time
- Frequency
- Length
- Design

MONETIZATION

TWO KEY WAYS TO MAKE MONEY WITH NEWSLETTERS

BUSINESSES

ADVERTISING

SPONSORSHIP

YOUR AUDIENCES

GIFTS & DONATIONS

MEMBERSHIP

Gifts & Donations

Daily Bulletin

THE TRACE

DECEMBER 16, 2021

Good morning, Bulletin readers. *With two weeks to go, we're 2/3rds of the way toward our goal of raising $30,000 during this year's NewsMatch campaign. To help us get all the way there, a longstanding donor is offering to match every dollar (up to a total of $10,000) donated between now and December 31. If you've been waiting to give, here's your chance to have your contribution doubled.*

Give now

The Trace's journalism on gun violence is making a difference. Please give what you can to help sustain it. — James Burnett, managing director

Membership

"I support smart journalism."
— BP member Douglas M. ⭐

This newsletter is free and our site doesn't have a paywall. Instead, reader support powers our nonprofit newsroom. If you like what we do, a contribution of $5 or $10 per month means more than you'd think, and any amount helps us keep covering all things Philly.

I value Billy Penn!

Philly Quizzo Question of the Day 🎲

How many City Commissioners total does Philadelphia have?
(Answer below; take the most recent online quiz here)

Classifieds

THE CLASSIFIEDS

Are you a Type A done living their Plan B? Create the 2021 you want. Start by booking your free coaching consult with Possible Things.

Celebrate the holidays with your favorite teen dramas, like "Beverly Hills, 90 "Dawson's Creek," and "The O.C." XOXO, Gossip Girl

You made it to the end of 2020—congratulations! Now make 2021 a gift to yourself. Expert video therapy, feminist sensibility. Let's conspire.

Missing that vacation feeling this Christmas? Subscribe to Out Of Office, th weekly newsletter that feels like you're on a vacay with your BFF.

GHIA is a new spirits-free apéritif made for slow sipping and fast talking. B with a clean kick of citrus, it tastes like summer on the rocks. All botanicals added sugar + no booze = no hangover. Just in time for Dry January, wink Use the code HIANNFRIEDMAN for 15% off your first order.

The New Year is the perfect time to hit "refresh" on your life goals. The Cru help. We match circles of women who collaborate to realize their personal professional goals. In fact, 92% of members say that The Cru has helped t achieve their goals. Apply today.

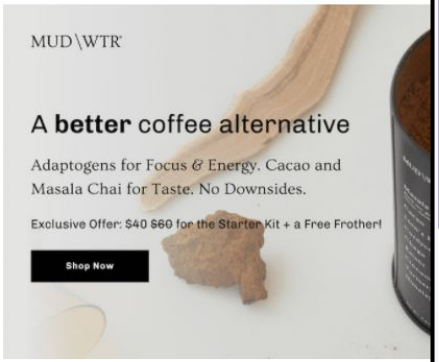
Snag yourself an ad here.

If you're not already, you can become a paying member of this newsletter here.

Advertising

Finally, in The Times, Isabelia Herrera wrote about Raveena's latest single, featuring Vince Staples: "Secret." (I could listen to Staples rapping "Pretty women on Sunset" about 10,000 times.) Give that a lis Sunday.

ADVERTISEMENT



David Malosh for The New York Times. Food Stylist:Simon Andrews.

Rigatoni Cauliflow Rabe

By David Tanis

1 1/2 hours

Makes 6 serving

Sponsorship

This week's newsletter is sponsored by University of Texas at Austin LBJ School.

THE 19th*

Friday, February 4, 2022

'You can no longer say you don't know any young people in this situation'

Gov. Kristi Noem of South Dakota inked SB 46 into law Thursday. The new bill looks a lot like other bills passed over the last two years that aim to block transgender kids, trans girls in particular, from playing sports.

Rate cards for newsletter ads

1. San Antonio Report

14,000 subs

15% open

$800/mo for daily; $400/mo for weekly

2. VDigger

46,000 subs

43% open

$250 per edition for takeover (all 3 ad spots)

3. Block Club Chicago

100,000 subs

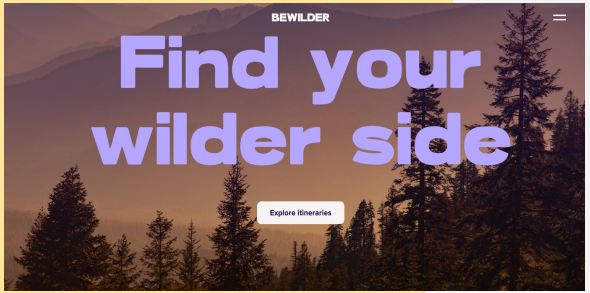
$1,200 for a single ad, $3,000 for 3 ads, $12,000 for 20 ads

Engagement

Engagement via newsletters TIPS

- **Consider:** what info do you need to take action?
- Ask for reactions, and **make replies easy**
- **Surveys = info + loyalty**
  - For audience research or story ideas
  - NPS
  - Ask your unsubs - why?!

Soliciting replies



Vote for more outdoor inspo!

The spot with the most votes becomes a Bewilder itinerary

Strap on your snow shoes because it's a winter wonderland at McCloud Falls in Shasta Trinity National Forest. If you're curious about winter camping, then these two trips are for you!

Reply **"MCCLOUD"** to vote for this itinerary.

California's Eastern Sierra is magical (and bug-free) this time of year. We're ready to design an intro to winter camping trip to Obsidian Dome in Inyo National Forest. Are you ready to roll?

Reply **"OBSIDIAN"** to vote for this itinerary.

Surveys for story ideas + help

Mental health
Martin Gomel

Newsletter? Another one? I promise: my newsletter is not boring. I write what moves me about mental health and link to texts that I find exceptionally good - and that's rare.

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

Homeland Security
Stephen Anpalagan

Home, Identity, Belonging. But also responsibility, solidarity and compassion. That's what my newsletter should be about. That's why this newsletter is also called "Heimatschutz".

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

Newsletter for Power and Democracy
Benjamin Hindrichs

In my newsletter I provide you with background analyzes on political debates, populism, power and migration - rested and thoroughly researched, twice a month.

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

treat yourself!
Gabriel Yoran

In my author's post "Treat yourself!" I'll take you on a journey of discovery into the world of pleasure. With the newsletter you will not miss an episode of my series.

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

meaning and consumption
Theresa Bauerlein

I write about the search for a better life, but without the self-actualization drivel. My newsletter is about the background, new ideas and news about it - and again and again about what I've learned from you.

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

life and everyday life
Susan mosquito

If you subscribe to my newsletter, you'll be among the first to know what topics I'm currently working on. You can vote on new questions and participate in my research.

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

East Germany
Tarek Barkouni

Once a week I will write you an email about my work in Saxony. And I ask you for ideas and topics. Do you have something we should write about?

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

injustice and money
Rebecca Kelber

In my newsletter I explain the complex world of finance. And answer those money-related questions that nobody dares to ask.

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

Surveys to improve product

What else could the Daily Digest provide?

RESPONSE
Information on school leaders perspectives throughout the state
Always present the truth in your articles, with different perspectives.
More advocacy.
Research
A first-person short piece on any subject by someone enrolled in K-16.
I don't think it should be any longer. It's almost too long now to have time to look at it every day.
Continue sharing information regarding legislation.
Listings of key conferences, seminiars.
more information in the editor's notes on what we must know
I think some of this may already be included, but I would enjoy articles about the history of public education in our state as well as more articles about innovative projects and initiatives taking place across the state that can be emulated in other schools.

Unsubscribe Successful

You will no longer receive email marketing fro
and Donors.

You will receive one final email to confirm that

If you meant to update your preferences, you

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 rep
Other (fill in reason below)

Submit

Net Promoter® Score (NPS) Template

PAGE TITLE

* 1. How likely is it that you would recommend this company to a friend or colleague?

NOT AT ALL LIKELY — EXTREMELY LIKELY

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

METRICS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

INFORMATION

The information you collect via metrics + audience research should inform and inspire action.

ACTION

The actions you take (e.g. launching a newsletter) will lead to more information.

Aspire for change

Let's do this thing.

by Ann Friedman

Martha 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 Leaning Into? - The Hairpin
Giving it 110%.

Mixing business and pleasure - CJR.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 - CJR.org
How 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 Alexis Madrigal.

A 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 created 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 selfies. A dialogue on *Thelma & Louise*. A spellbinding narrative about a con artist. An explanation of how your grapes got so juicy and why they matter to you so much. The first reported dispatch from California's death row in eight years. A tour of Jackie Treehorn's house. The history of emoji (❤) and the future of zip codes. Also, Ephron forever.

This week

The internet has settled into a predictable rhythm for me.

Monday - I see a Thing on TikTok or in a text, maybe Twitter or Instagram.
Tuesday - The Thing is *everywhere* on social media.
Wednesday - The Thing explainer articles start to roll out.
Thursday - Now the reported features and essays. (What happened when I tried The Thing, the strange guy behind The Thing, how The Thing explains capitalism).
Friday - I link to one of those essays, or maybe reference The Thing with a gif.
Weekend - A brief respite between Things.

The Thing can be serious or silly, political or cultural, brand-new or just newly recognized. But it's always *everywhere*. Some recent examples: Zoom dick. Thanking Stacey Abrams. Four Seasons Total Landscaping. The coup. Sea shanties. Impeachment. Bernie's mittens. GameStop. "*wow can you believe it's still January?*"

I understand that I'm describing my own digital world, and the Things might be different in your corner of the internet. But I suspect I'm not the only one who feels like the pattern is too locked-in these days, that we are caught in a loop of collective interest that quickly turns to boredom. As a weekly-newsletter elder stateswoman, I can tell you that it didn't used to feel this way. There have always been popular memes and big news stories in a given week, and explainers and essays that followed them. (I can hear you saying, with a gentle eyeroll, "Thanks for 'splaining *the internet,* Ann.") But lately as I sit down to write the newsletter, I find myself thinking, "How do I want to acknowledge this week's Thing?" Or "I am so annoyed by this week's Thing, I refuse to mention it." That's new.

A theory: The familiar algorithmic nudges feel more intense and also more boring under the conditions of this pandemic. My life has shrunk to what happens in my home and on my screens. Within those screens, it is spun and distilled even further, to just a few focal points at a time. And I am craving the opposite: spontaneity, difference, expansion. A new pattern.

I'm reading

The vaccinated class, and the high-risk groups shut out of vaccination. The architecture of mass vaccine distribution. I miss my friendly acquaintances. "Pandejos," and what happens when municipalities lift restrictions too soon. Middling white patriarchy is back. The Michael Scott theory of social class. How armed militias became increasingly common in America. "None of us is who he

Source: Newsletter archive – Ann Friedman

METRICS

- **IF GOAL IS GROWTH**
  - Track that list size grows while maintaining or growing open rate

- **IF GOAL IS BUILDING ENGAGEMENT or LOYALTY**
  - Track percentage of list with 4 - 5 star rating (MailChimp only); percentage of list with high opens
  - Track number and quality of replies (survey or otherwise)

METRICS

- **IF GOAL IS DRIVING TRAFFIC:** Track click through rates (and where folks are clicking)

- **IF GOAL IS MAINTENANCE:** Watch your list size + open rate; list cleaning is your friend
  - *Pause:* what's list cleaning?

WORKFLOWS

NEWSLETTER ROLES IN SMALL, SCRAPPY NEWS OUTLET

- **PERSON 1 (Newsletter owner)**
  - Collects, aggregates links and images
  - Writes copy
  - Gathers OR writes ads or any development copy
- **PERSON 2 (Editor)**
  - Edits it, sends back to Person 1
- **PERSON 1(Newsletter owner)**
  - Upload and format
  - Hits send
  - Audience research
  - List cleaning, etc.

WORKFLOW TIPS
for a small, scrappy newsletter team

- One person should be “Responsible”
- Invest time in initial layout (rooted in strategy) then don’t touch it
- Quality >>> Quantity for content blocks
- SKIP IMAGES
- Know metrics matter for 1) deliverability + health of list, 2) assessing your strategy, 3) advertisers

LAUNCHING ANY AUDIENCE-FIRST NEWSLETTER

What to do before jumping right into newsletter-land:

Stage 1: Define your goals + strategy, and double check that newsletters fit your goals

Stage 2: Quick external, audience assessment with your target audiences

Stage 3: Quick internal, bandwidth assessment with you and your team

Stage 2: External assessment

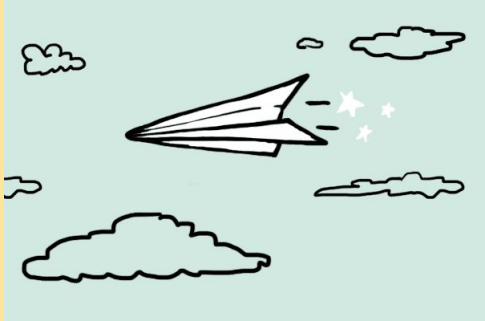
- What problem can you solve for your audiences? What can you do differently from your peers? → **TYPE, CONTENT**
- How and when do your audiences prefer to consume information? → **FREQUENCY/SEND TIME**

Assessment methods available to you

- Audience metrics
- Census data or other existing data on target audiences
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups

Stage 3: Quick Internal assessment

- How much time or bandwidth do you and your team have for this newsletter? → **TYPE, NUMBER OF BLOCKS**
- Who's writing or editing? Collecting and aggregating links? Who's adding images and formatting? Who's hitting send? → **WORKFLOW**



Thank you!

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

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