

"Nobody does a better job of showing how to use design to build relationships than Roger C. Parker!"

Jay Conrad Levinson
author, *Guerrilla Marketing*

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Roger C. Parker's

Guerrilla Marketing & Design

Put covering letters to work

Provide reasons for recipients to open, download, and read, your newsletter each month

It's not enough to prepare and distribute a monthly newsletter, one that offers information of genuine value to your market. You also have to make sure your newsletter gets *opened and read!*

Why?

Covering letters are "advertisements" for each issue of your newsletter.

In today's time-starved environment, you have to provide *good, solid reasons* for recipients to stop what they're doing and invest time reading your newsletter.

You should devote as much care to preparing your covering letters as you devote to the newsletters, themselves.

Function

Covering letters provide a *bridge*, between the recipient's self-interest and the contents of your newsletter.

Covering letters should describe *how recipients will benefit* from reading the

current issue of your newsletter. Otherwise, your newsletter may go unread.

Formats

There are two types of covering letters: those distributed by e-mail and those mailed in envelopes along with printed copies of your newsletter. Both types should begin with a "sales pitch:"

- *E-mail covering letters.* Use the subject line of text or HTML covering letters to encourage recipients to read attached copies or direct recipients to your web site where they can download the latest issue.

- *Mailed covering letters.* Include a "teaser" on the outside of the envelope containing your newsletter and covering letter. Like the subject line of an e-mail, the teaser should promise the benefits *described* in the covering letter and *delivered* in your newsletter.

Successful covering letter contain four essential elements:

1. Engagement

Engage recipients by *showing familiarity with their problems and goals*. Make it obvious that you understand their problems and can help solve them.

Make sure the newsletter actually delivers the promised benefits

A subject line or envelope teaser like: “June, 2004 newsletter” fails to provide recipients with a reason to read on.

“June Newsletter: Cutting Employee Absenteeism” does a better job of promoting newsletter content and encouraging readership.

The headline and first paragraphs of the e-mail or covering letter should *continue to engage* by describing, in increasing detail, the benefits recipients will gain from reading your newsletter:

- *What problems* does the current issue address and solve?
- *What goals* will the current issue help your readers achieve?

2. Proof

Next, use the covering letter to *prove* the value of reading your newsletter:

- *Case studies.* Summarize case studies mentioned in your newsletter.
- *Procedures.* If your newsletter shows how to do a task, list the number of steps or describe one step in detail.

Whenever possible, include testimonials from individuals or clients who have successfully benefited from the ideas described in the current issue.



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3. Next step

Show how to access your newsletter by:

- *Opening* the e-mail attachment.
- *Downloading* the newsletter from your website. (Make sure recipients can easily locate the specific website page.)
- *Clicking a link*, but also include a URL in case the link doesn't work.

4. Promotion

Encourage recipients to pass along your newsletter to associates and friends who might benefit from its content. Planting the “sharing seed” each month can play a big role in increasing the size of your opt-in mailing list.

Before distributing...

Review your newsletter after completing your covering letter. Ask yourself:

- *Headline.* “Does the headline develop the promise made in the letter?”
- *Content.* “Does my newsletter actually deliver the promised benefits?”

Edit and rewrite your newsletter until you can answer “yes” to both questions.

For more information

Call Roger C. Parker at 603-742-9673, or visit www.gmarketing-design.com for more ideas on marketing your expertise.