NEWSLETTER
STRATEGY FOR
PUBLIC MEDIA
Hi! I’m Emily Roseman.

ABOUT ME

- 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

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

**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.

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**Quartz Daily Brief**

Good morning, Quartz readers!

**HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Robinhood raised $1 billion from its investors. The fiercely anti-establishment online broker is protecting itself as it reopens trading on stocks of GameStop “in a responsible manner.” See more below.

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

Old people might not get the AstraZeneca jab in the EU. It 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-guzzling Corvettes for midlife crises.

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**Politico Playbook**

**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.
"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 piece 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

3. The Essay

**Effort:** high!

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

**Value for audience:** Enjoy a longer read.

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**I Don't Have a Love Language**
My friend became my crush. How do I talk to them now?

¡Hola Papel! 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-addicted gay Mexican with anxiety, here is your chance. Support this column by sharing it and subscribing below. Send Papel a letter at holapapelletters@gmail.com

¡Hola Papel!

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 to me, you ask?

Because it's my first romantic fawty. Ever! The high school bubblegum 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-drowned 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.
4. The ALL-IN-ONE

**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.

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**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 unfettered.

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**LEFTOVERS**

- 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 Trans Port is an authentic and eye-opening look into the lives of Black trans women.
- Union officials estimate as many as 14,000 Instacart employees are currently under quarantine.
- Biden’s immigration declarations open up new political terrain for organizers.
- Slightly more than 4 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 Texas) myth of Satanic cults: how much psychodrama helped pundits invent the Satanic Panic of the 1990s and 2000s.
- 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.

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*We can’t play basketball in peace. we can’t do anything in peace. And then we have*
# Poll & Discussion

1. The Link Aggregator
2. The Briefing
3. The Essay
4. The All-in-One
The GOALS!
Content blocks: purpose, number, order
Link heavy vs. prose heavy
Voice, tone, point of view
Send time
Frequency
Length
Design

What are the variables here?
MONETIZATION
TWO KEY WAYS TO MAKE MONEY WITH NEWSLETTERS

BUSINESSES

Advertising

Sponsorship

YOUR AUDIENCES

Gifts & Donations

Membership
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

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)
Finally, in The Times, Isabela 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 listen Sunday.

A better coffee alternative
Adaptogens for Focus & Energy, Cacao and Masala Chai for Taste No Downsides.
Exclusively Offer $40 for the Starter Kit + a Free Frother!

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
• **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

Would you rather…

- Spend a week on the beach (Reply "BEACH" in chat), OR
- Spend a week in the mountains? (Reply "MOUNTAINS" in chat)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Subscribe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland Security</td>
<td>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”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter for Power and Democracy</td>
<td>In my newsletter I provide you with background analyzes on political debates, populism, power and migration - rested and thoroughly researched, twice a month.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treat yourself!</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning and consumption</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life and everyday life</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Germany</td>
<td>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?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injustice and money</td>
<td>In my newsletter I explain the complex world of finance. And answer those money-related questions that nobody dares to ask.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Surveys to improve product

Unsubscribe Successful

You will no longer receive email marketing from us.

You will receive one final email to confirm that you have unsubscribed.

If you meant to update your preferences, you can do so here.

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 removed.
Other (fill in reason below)

Net Promoter Score (NPS) Template

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
The information you collect via metrics + audience research should inform and inspire 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 Dam - NYmag.com
She doesn’t care if you like her. That’s why I love her. BONUS GIRL!

Pie Chart: What Are We Learning Into? - The HyperF
giving it 110%

Mixing business and pleasure - CDR.org
Sadly this column contains no bland items about hot junior-on-junior action.

We’re All Bystanders in the Sandberg-Mayer Mommy Wars - NYmag.com
Obligatory Sheryl Sandberg article.

Freelancing for free - CDR.org
How I decided 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.

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 leggins: An essay on the chemo 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 gramps got so jucy 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 (-touch me!) and the future of zip codes. Also, Edison 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 mitters. 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 ‘spalaining 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. "Pandemics," 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
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)
● **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?
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.
One person should be “Responsible” for a scrappy newsletter team.

Invest time in initial layout (rooted in strategy) then don’t touch it.

Quality >> Quantity for content blocks.

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!

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by Slidesgo, including icons by Flaticon, and infographics & images by Freepik.