

This isn't your grandmother's newsletter. Okay... maybe a little bit.

Tuesday September 12th, 2023



My grandmother loved sending newsletters. She loved sending them to old friends, former classmates, distant relatives, and more. For her, it was a way of communicating way before the internet.

She took the time to personalize each one. She would also omit or add things based on their relationship. For example, distant relatives already knew her family recipe for snickerdoodles. So, instead, she told them more about her kids.

According to my grandmother, her newsletter garnished personal, hand-written responses. I wasn't born at the time, so I couldn't challenge her claims. But it makes sense, doesn't it?

By segmenting her “audience” and personalizing a basic template, she could write *for* them instead of *at* them. That was her favorite part about newsletters: starting long-running letter-based conversations.

So yes, I want to be like my grandma’s newsletter. I’m not here to sell anything (maybe myself). My goal is to forge strong, honest relationships.

If you’re considering starting a newsletter for your business, take a note from my grandma.

Marketing Misadventures

For our first marketing misadventure, let’s start with the time Taco Bell tried to catch a falling satellite.

On March 19th, 2001, the Russian Space Agency announced their plans to deorbit a decommissioned space station. On the exact same day, Taco Bell released a press release.

“Taco Bell is offering a free taco to everyone in the United States if the core of the Mir space station hits a floating Taco Bell Target placed in the South Pacific.”

They clearly wanted to ride the publicity of the Mir Space Station. Taco Bell launched a small raft off the coast of Australia that said, “Free Taco Here.” They promoted a live feed of the raft on their website. They even took out a \$10 million insurance policy if it hit.

However, four days later, the Mir space station came crashing down—nowhere close to Taco Bell’s target. That did not deter Taco Bell. Instead, they offered a “consolation” prize—two tacos for 99 cents.

That was the real promotion since the actual chances of Mir hitting the raft were infinitesimally small. So why did they take out an insurance policy in case it did?

The average person probably did not know they had a higher likelihood of winning the lottery than Mir hitting Taco Bell’s Target. I suspect the insurance policy was a way to add legitimacy to their claims. “If they’re willing to get insurance, there must be a decent chance.”

Secondly, this stunt utilizes the **Von Restorff effect**. We’re more likely to remember odd things that stand out. Which one are you more likely to

remember? Two tacos for 99 cents? Or the time Taco Bell tried to catch a falling satellite.

Useless but amusing information

The words like bimonthly, biannually, or biweekly can both refer to something occurring twice or something that occurs every two periods. So, it's important to use context to clearly indicate whether you mean twice every month or every two months. This newsletter, for example, occurs twice every month. Once on the second Tuesday and again on the fourth Tuesday.

The bi- in bimonthly is the same as bi- in biscuit, bicycle, and bisexual since they all come from the Latin Prefix. Biscuit comes from the French word cuit, meaning to cook. You can deduce why the food is called biscuits and not unicuits.

sincerely,
Austin

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Notice in your Bottom Line."*

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