

Member Newsletter Growth

How EAPA-SA created a newsletter that attracted 380 new subscribers in the last year and has an average open rate of 18% without paid advertising

Employee Assistance Professionals
Association of Southern Africa



ASSOCIATION SUCCESS STORY



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PROJECT

EAPA-SA Member Newsletter



SUCCESS ACHIEVED

How EAPA-SA created a newsletter that attracted 380 new subscribers in the last year and has a yearly average open rate of 18% without paid advertising.



ORGANISATION

Employee Assistance Professionals Association of Southern Africa



DATES

August 2018 and July 2019



MEMBERSHIP PROFILE

Individuals, service provider and EAP related providers in the employee assistance industry, who are geographically located across South Africa and the SADC region



CATEGORIES

Newsletter, member benefits, social media, Facebook



Project Team at the association

- ≡ Ms. Radhi Vandayar, President Elect
- ≡ Mr. Jimmy Lenong, Marketing Director
- ≡ Ms. Theresa Vika, Office Manager
- ≡ Ms. Nicole Rollings, Service Provider



Introduction

The EAPA-SA newsletter is distributed on a monthly basis to the EAPA-SA database of members, previous conference attendees, service providers and stakeholders. This form of communication was created in order to reduce the number of phone calls and email the EAPA-SA admin office received, as well as to disseminate important information very quickly and to increase member numbers.



Partners

- ≡ EnOv8 - Gathering information; research; interviewing Board Members and Chapter Chairpersons; compiling, editing and proof reading content in conjunction with the Marketing Director, as well as uploading content to the EAPA-SA website; designing and distribution of the mailer; distributing content on EAPA-SA's social media channels and reporting on a quarterly basis to EAPA-SA



Discovery

A detailed analysis was done of the existing market and trends, through an integrated online campaign to communicate to members and the public cohesively across multiple online channels simultaneously.

Database surveys have been conducted:

- ≡ **Quantitative:** delegate surveys, industry research – reinforcing
- ≡ **Quantitative:** delegate and online member surveys

We followed an integrated approach in an effort to:

- ≡ **Raise awareness** of the organisation through online channels
- ≡ **Create Interest** - Publish articles online that create interest in the organisation and drive web traffic back to the parent website.
- ≡ **Provide pertinent information** about the organisation and membership benefits in order to become the leading authority on relevant industry themes and current trends.
- ≡ **Drive Demand** - Encourage demand for membership and encourage the broader target audience to engage with the organisation.



Tools & systems

- ≡ **Mailchimp** – Creation of emails that were sent to the database
- ≡ **Website** – to house all content and restrict access to members only for certain articles and resources.
- ≡ **Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn** – to promote newsletter sign ups and further distribute content with links back to the website. We also feature our articles across all these platforms.
- ≡ **MobileApp** – provides easy access and communication between members and the Association

Objectives

The purpose of the newsletter is to provide useful and relevant content to our database, as well as exclusive content to our members (members have to log into the www.eapasa.co.za website to read full articles).

This is part of our membership benefits and allows members to stay in touch with and be closer to our board members and the activities that they are involved in.

Timeline

- ≡ The first newsletter was sent on the 26th of May from Mailchimp to a database of 513 recipients. There has since been a 380% increase in subscribers to 2,459 as of 15 August 2019.
- ≡ Last month's newsletter marked EAPA-SA's 100th newsletter to their growing database.

Activities

The EAPA-SA newsletter is distributed on a monthly basis to the EAPA-SA database of members, previous conference attendees, service providers and stakeholders.

The content includes:

- ≡ News and Announcements from the Board
- ≡ Industry spotlight articles
- ≡ Back to basics – educational content for EA Practitioners
- ≡ Thought leader industry article

Chapters around the country host regular events, which we promote via the newsletter and digital channels.

To build the reputation and EAPA-SA brand we profile the board members and the chapters around the country; and the industry relevant articles position EAPA-SA as the thought leader and expert in their industry.

The exclusive member content is an incentive to non-members to join the association, therefore increasing revenue for the association.



2. June 2019 Complete

- a. EAPA-SA Board: Strategic Insights from Board member, Dr Marion Borchers
- b. How to calculate the ROI of your EAP
- c. Six Simple Ways to Create a Mentally Healthier Workplace
- d. Back to Basics: Soft skills as a focus of EA programmes in the workplace

Figure 1: Newsletter content screenshot

The process for creating a newsletter involves:

- ≡ Briefing our copywriter on the theme for this month's newsletter based on industry trends
- ≡ The copywriter then provides us with custom articles centred around the EAP industry and industry trends.
- ≡ We will select a Service Provider or Board Member to interview, our copywriter will interview them and

then provide us with a final written version for the interviewee to approve before publishing.

- ≡ Images are sourced that link to each article, and it is added to the website and the newsletter.
- ≡ The Newsletter is then sent to the Marketing Portfolio Holder Jimmy Lenong for input and approval.
- ≡ Finally, it is sent out to our database.

One of the reasons for the success of the newsletter is that we have linked it to our annual conference, so the newsletter will often include some information on the upcoming conference thereby increasing attendance as well as bring conference attendees into the loop on what EAPA-SA offers through their newsletter. We are therefore linking our members & our conference together, so they have one place to receive all the information they could need.



Innovation

We make sure the newsletter looks different every week so that it's something refreshing and new for the recipient to look at.

Our newsletters are also merged with our member information, so as a new member is added to our system, they will receive an automated welcome email with their username and password which will allow them to access the member only articles.

Each newsletter is personalized, so the newsletter will start with greeting the person by their name.

Our most creative approach is that all the content is custom created for our audience, they will not be able to find the articles contained in our members only area anywhere else which makes the content incredibly valuable. This also allows us to truly tailor our content to our audience as we are not relying on content that is already created.



Marketing

Online:

EAPA-SA has its own website and mobile app and uses multiple social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) to communicate relevant and industry-related content.

The Newsletter is distributed to our database, made up of members, previous delegates, speakers, exhibitors and sponsors as well as any individuals who opt in to receiving our communication.

We sent out monthly general newsletters in which we market our program and events such as the annual Eduweek to our members on a regular basis.

Offline:

- ≡ EAPA-SA consist of 9 regional branches, which we refer to as Chapters.
- ≡ Each chapter meeting dedicates time to share and discuss interesting bits from articles in the Newsletter and well as encourage members to give input to the distribution.



Challenges

- ≡ Obtaining content within plenty of time.
- ≡ As many of the interviewees are busy people, we need to set up times to meet with them. That may be difficult to stick to, so sometimes deadlines get missed, but we always ensure that nothing gets in the way of us getting a newsletter to our audience before the end of the month.
- ≡ Availability of subject matter experts for interviews



Achievements

The database was used primarily in the past to communicate news and updates about the annual conference, which we now refer to as the Eduweek. Members expressed a need to hear from the Board more consistently and not just about the conference.

There is now consistent news and relevant content going to the database every month and this content links back to the EAPA-SA website. This communication to members has proven to be a great incentive and a benefit member derive most value from.

EAPA-SA's social media pages are also filled with relevant content linking back to the website and creating more incentive for members to sign up to read the exclusive content.

The EAPA-SA Board's objective is to stay in touch with our delegation, grow membership figures and grow engagement with the database. Specific figures were not put in place as goals, but these are the figures to show the growth.



Statistics & Targets

Our newsletter database has grown by 380 subscribers this past year. Our database was at 1300 subscribers in August 2018 to 1604 subscribers in July 2019 with no paid advertising. This is purely organic growth.

On average for the past year we have had a 17.99% open rate and a 22.15% click rate. The previous year we had a 6.7% click rate so this shows growth on our engagement levels of 15.45%.

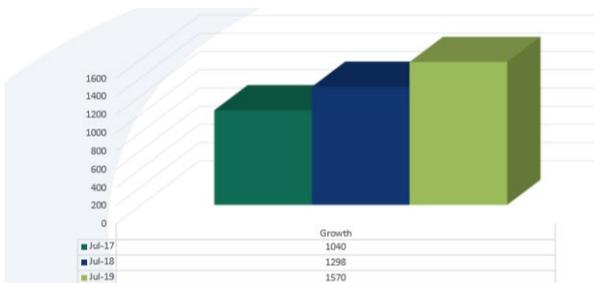


Figure 2: Number of subscribers over a three year period

The Facebook page followers have grown organically from 1084 in September 2017 to 1358 in August 2018 and 1639 in July 2019. On average for the past year we have had a 17.99% open rate and a 22.15% click rate. The previous year we had a 6.7% click rate so this shows growth on our engagement levels of 15.45%.

The growth of the database and the increasing engagement figures show that the members are enjoying the content and more and more people want to receive the information. EAPA-SA is part of the global EAP Association, and our newsletters are also gaining traction and attention overseas.



Financials

EAPA-SA is membership driven association – in order to retain our members as well as achieve growth, it is critical that we provide value adding benefits. Our newsletter is one benefit that members appreciate most due to the easily accessible learnings it provides.

Investment into the newsletter generates currently no profit, and is purely a member benefit and marketing tool, where our sponsors and service providers are given a platform to showcase their products.



What we would do differently

Market trends continue to evolve, and it is therefore critical for us to stay up to date with the market and anticipate and tackle any potential threats.

At the beginning we would use custom content rather than pre-created content in our newsletters.



Advice

Ensure that you engage with your target market. Effective engagement activities create emotional attachments that draw customers closer to protect them from competitors; encourage loyalty; gather insights to refine strategy; and ultimately promote evangelism.



Feedback & Testimonials

“Eye opening article that highlights need for true holistic interventions within the context of the patients’ culture and spirituality.”

- Mabhelandile Nyati, November 2018



Wider impact

Our newsletter targets corporations for membership very strongly and is a major pull for corporations to be exposed to the organization's benefits of membership and the value of our annual event, Eduweek.

It is important that EAPA-SA is seen as the industry leader and authority in EAP, an output that is more easily achieved through our Newsletter.

The corporate participation elements feeds into our online campaign, with the enhanced exhibition packages and CPD and CEU certification being a strong drawcard for corporates.

