The Self Publisher's Newsletter

Contents

Welcome!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Self Publisher's Newsletter*! You are in on the ground floor of an exciting new venture for self publishers and home publishers of all descriptions. Our intent is to share with you the tricks of the trade — the secrets that spell the difference between success and failure. You will find no snake oil here, no magic potions, no mindless cheerleading, just sound advice.

Please note that anything in this PDF document that is colored blue is an anchor. That means you can click on it and go somewhere else. Clickable anchors are of course very common in html documents like web pages. So why didn't we use html? There are four reasons:

- A PDF document allows us as authors far greater control over the appearance of what the reader sees.
- We can create precision typesetting that is far superior to anyone's html code.
- By using the same tools we use for creating books etc. we can work much faster.
- We can illustrate the very tools and techniques we will be talking about in future issues.

Creating good html code by hand is very tedious. Creating *bad* html via a package such as Microsoft(tm) FrontPage(tm) is all too easy, but unsatisfactory in many ways. And html embedded in an email is not desirable (see discussion below.)

Those E-MAIL Blues

Time to Change Strategies?

Email is an important part of our lives, and a vital tool for publishers and authors. So it is worth our time and yours to look at some email strategies.

We read a lot of mailing lists and newsgroups. All too frequently the subject of unsatisfactory email service comes up. Over the years we have cobbled up an email system that suits our needs. So let us pass on the details.

The Online Strategy

Email is just part of the total package of our internet presence. We begin with an internet domain called `wexfordpress.com`. We bought the domain name from a domain registrar called `register.com`. We then transferred it to `doteasy.com` who is our web host. It costs us a fee (about $35.00) to buy the domain name and update it annually. It cost us a one-time charge of a similar amount to transfer the domain to doteasy.com. (`Doteasy.com` also sells domain names, which can simplify things a bit.) `Doteasy.com` provides us with a better-than average mail hosting system in return for the privilege of putting a little flyer on the foot of anything we send through them. With `doteasy.com` we also get a free website with NO banners or popup ads. We hold no brief for that particular webhost but we are well satisfied with the value received.

We have one master mailbox and several subordinate ones. However we can have as many "fake" mailboxes as we want. Anything directed to any wexfordpress.com mailbox, even nonexistent ones, is collected in a single mailbox. Our single exception is the mailbox for selfpub.wexfordpress.com. We want to keep everything related to that name totally spearate from our other operations. So we created that mailbox on our website but we don't forward those receipts to the common mailbox.

What are the advantages so far? Well all our mail goes out under our company name. We can make up additional names for new functions without lifting a finger. If we use it it becomes a feeder for our common mailbox. Try it and see. Write a letter to:

`anyoldname@wexfordpress.com`

and we will get it here. We even bypass the mail server on our cable ISP and download directly from `mail.wexfordpress.com`. As it happens our ISP has an unstable server and is always having growing pains. Since we don't use the free mailbox from the cable company we don't have to bother with their unreliable server.

The Local Strategy

Having set up our remote mail system it was time to go local. Years ago we decided to take the "road less chosen" and use Linux instead of the more common Microsoft Windows operating system. With our particular flavor of Linux comes a desktop interface called KDE and with KDE comes Kmail. All of this is free of course. For those using MSWindows there are several free or low cost choices as well, such as Eudora and Pegasus. The important thing is to get a mail client that allows you to set up various mail folders and also to establish mail filters.

Our mail client comes equipped with mail folders for Inbox, Outbox, Trash, Drafts and Sent-Mail. We added some folders for special purposes. For example instead of subscribing to busy mail lists in digest form we simply route the incoming from that list to its own folder. For very busy lists we review the folder daily and clear the folder daily. We use the folder index just like we formerly used the digest's index with this important difference: the folder list is clickable! If we see a letter that looks interesting one click brings it up. Responding to an individual email from a mailing list is easier without the digest format, and there is no danger of inadvertently mailing the whole digest back to the list!

We also have a special folder for the bad boys of the internet — those who insist on using html code in an email. We filter all mail with the string "html" in the body of the message to our html folder. Most of the porn and other spam lands here. Now and then legitimate mail lands here too so we look at the headers at least before emptying this folder.

Email Filters

How does all this internal routing take place? Email filters created with your email browser are the key.

Kmail allows us to set up a test to search a selected part of an incoming message and take action when it is found. This is called a filter. For example if the From: line contains "pub-forum" then that letter goes automatically to the pub-forum folder. If the body contains "html" it goes to the html folder. If the Subject: line contains triple ! or $ then another filter sends it directly to Trash — do not pass go, do not collect $200! Either string is a sure indicator for spam. Over

the years We have developed filters for specific senders and/or domains that also churn out spam.

Viruses

There is an important added advantage to using one of the alternative mail clients like Eudora or Pegasus. Many viruses and internet worms target the users of Microsoft's flagship products Outlook Express and/or Internet Explorer. By avoiding them you neutralize the viruses. Other viruses use the capabilities of html embedded in an email message. Filtering those messages to a special folder helps minimize this risk also. For those who are vulnerable to most viruses a good virus checker like McAfee(tm) properly updated is still a necessity.

A major part of our mail strategy is freedom of movement. If we need to change our ISP, our mail host or even our domain registrar we can do so without changing our email identity. All we have to do is renew the domain name every year.

Moving to a new email address is a bit of a wrench. So we recommend a parallel run, in which a free email forwarding web service is employed to forward mail from the old address to the new one. It is after all a once-in-a-lifetime move.

Let's summarize the steps toward email independence:

- Acquire domain name
- Select website/email host
- Establish mailbox(es)
- Select/obtain email client
- Set up mail download
- Set up folders
- Set up filters
- Arrange for forwarding from old address
- publicize new address
- Enjoy!

Final Thoughts

We need your input on many things. Was this first issue helpful? Did you like the PDF format? What other topics are of major importance to you? We have lots of information to share, and you get a say in the priorities we set!

Also, we solicit your letters for the list. Just write:
selfpub@wexfordpress.com

and share your experiences, problems, hopes and dreams with the rest of us!

Take care.

John Culleton, Editor
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