Make your Renewal Series Sing
By Eithne McCredie
Co-founder, Abacus Circulation, 2010

Renewals are the most important (and profitable!) circulation source. For most publications, renewals represent approximately 70% of circulation revenue. Developing a sound renewal strategy and schedule can have a huge positive impact on your circulation and can be implemented fairly easily.

Renewal Analysis
Track your current renewal responses by expire issue and by effort. Do an expense/revenue (P&L) analysis for each effort and if your final effort is still profitable, consider adding another. If you’re still getting over 5% response on your last effort then you should also consider adding another effort. If you’re getting more than 10%, add two more efforts.

Renewal Series Template
Each effort should have a sense of urgency and a different pitch (include a letter, order form or perforated order form with the letter and a reply envelope), and ideally different creative. If you don’t have the budget for this, then simply use different coloured paper stock. The majority of magazines send at least four or five efforts, the first one going out at least four months before the subscription expires. The frequency of the magazine is irrelevant.

**Effort #1:** to be mailed four months before expire
Copy: “Early Renewal Savings” (One Time Only 2 Year Savings!)
Offer: 2 years $35, 1 year $20

**Effort #2:** three months before expire
Copy: “It’s Time to Renew” with an editorial sell
Offer: 2 years $39, 1 year $20

**Effort #3:** two months before expire
Copy: “Only 1 issue to go”
Offer: 2 years $39, 1 year $20

**Effort #4:** wrapper with expire issue
Copy: “Last Issue!”
Offer: 1 year $20

**Effort #5:** one month after expire
Copy: “Welcome back” (promote savings and editorial benefits)
Offer: 1 year $20

Renewal Don’ts
• don’t set a renewal price that’s lower than what the original order came on with
• don’t mail all your renewal efforts with the magazine (although you can do one or two)
• do not decrease your one-year subscription price at the end of the renewal series
• don’t let fulfillment dictate format/creative
• don’t beg/plead in renewal copy

Renewal Do’s
• promote the editorial benefits of the magazine including any annual or special issues
• add a two-year option on the first couple of efforts
• add a gift bucksip in fall mailings
• test emailed renewal effort one at a time
• include a bill-me option and a business reply envelope
• if mailing over 1,000 pieces, addressed admail postage rates are available
• always include subscription price savings over newsstand price
• seed yourself (i.e., send to yourself) on mailings

Sample Renewal Schedule 2010

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<tr>
<th>Select Date:</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
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<td>Mar 14</td>
<td>Apr 14</td>
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<td>Effort #5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Effort #1</td>
<td>Effort #2</td>
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