

## How to be the Best Newsletter Editor...

Tips on editing and writing:

1. Keep your audience in mind, always. What is relevant to them? What is important?
2. Effective management is achieved through planning and influence. Develop a publication structure, an editorial calendar and written writers' guidelines.
3. A newsletter must be sustainable. Be realistic about the amount of content you can consistently produce.
4. Begin with a good basics and build on solid ground. The most basic newsletter should have a few lead stories, shorter news items and a message from your leader. A more developed publication might include features, columns, an editorial, cartoon, news tidbits, etc.
5. Deadlines are sacred. Build in a safety cushion to allow for unexpected delays.
6. An editor, like a captain, needs to know where the ship is going. When dealing with writers, negotiate topic, length, treatment and deadline before assigning an article. Include important sources and the key questions which the story will address.
7. Be concerned about how your newsletter READS before you worry about how it LOOKS. Attractive graphics can obscure important content. Relevant and well-written content should be able to stand on its own, even as plain text.
8. If you're doing an emailed newsletter, "clean and simple" is most effective. Keep it to plain text. Be concise and put an "in-this-issue" guide on the front page. It might be good to provide "subscribe" and "unsubscribe" information in your email message. You should archive back issues, with an annotated index, on your website.
9. Good editing and good writing require direction and hard work. Your copy should sing rather than drone. Write compact copy in the active voice. Edit for clarity, conciseness, jargon, length, correctness. The bottom line is your readership; give them top priority.
10. Lead with strong items that have broad appeal. Learn from the best daily newspapers; People decide within seconds whether or not to read. An editorial or a message from your leader should have a regular column in the newsletter. In-house news should have a regular spot somewhere inside the newsletter. This gives you the best chance of competing for attention, while those familiar with your newsletter know where to find what they want.
11. Learn the distinction between simple information and a story. Information comes to life as a story when someone talks about it. Try to cite sources as part of the way you do things.
12. Any successful newsletter depends on plentiful and reliable contributors. Consider an acknowledgment box that lists everyone who contributed to an issue. This will reward people for helping and encourage others to participate.

A good newsletter has good content that meets the needs and expectations of the reader. On the design and page layout side, a good newsletter design creates interest and maintains readability through consistency, conservation, and contrast. Use these basic guidelines to help construct your publications.

Be consistent in your newsletter design:

- Use grids for page to page consistency
- Use templates and styles for consistent formatting
- Use repeating elements such as footers, header, department headers

Be conservative in your newsletter design:

- Use no more than 3 or 4 typefaces
- Use frames and boxes sparingly
- Use no more than 1 or 2 pieces of clip art, photos or graphic accents per page, if possible

Use contrast in your newsletter design:

- Use high contrast typefaces such as a bold sans serif type for headlines and a serif for body text
- Make a point with something big, really big. Use an exaggerated drop cap or enlarge a single piece of clip art to make a statement.
- Use white space (extra wide gutters or margins) to counteract dense text

What to include:

- Include a calendar of events and important dates
- Article from the chapter, district, or state leader
- Meeting minutes - or let members know where they can be found
- Reports from board members
- Reports from programming managers
- Spotlights on members
- Upcoming events and activities – who to contact
- Personals from and to members – a way to let each other know they are appreciated
- Add some fun items, maybe a contest to draw interest to the newsletter
- Some editors include upcoming meeting agenda or financial information