



Starting A Company Newsletter: Tips For Success

Company newsletters are an effective tool for communicating news and ideas; for keeping readers up-to-date on company policies and procedures; and for creating a sense of community. It can also be an overwhelming task to get one started. In this PDF library file we will provide a number of tips to help you achieve success in starting and publishing a company newsletter.

Anatomy of a newsletter

Regardless of its size, a newsletter consists of distinct parts:

- Nameplate (also called the banner)
- Masthead
- Headlines (and subheads)
- Body copy
- Graphics and/or photographs
- Advertising

The nameplate contains the name of the publication and the issue information. Its purpose is to introduce the reader to the publication; to visually suggest what the reader can expect; and to establish brand name recognition. Therefore, the nameplate needs to be carefully designed as a strong, independent visual element.

The masthead lists the publisher, the newsletter staff, the credits and contact information (phone, e-mail, address) for the publication. The masthead usually appears in the same place in each issue.

Headlines and subheads introduce and organize the body copy, while graphics and photographs illustrate or enhance the ideas in the body copy. In addition, typography can be used to create visual interest.

Advertising isn't always included in a

newsletter. When present, it may be either classified or display ads.

Getting Started

Before you can begin actual work on your newsletter, you will need to make several decisions, including the name; the page format; how often it will be published; and where you will obtain copy and graphics. You will also need to decide on the basic design and layout style to use.

When selecting a name for your newsletter, remember that the best name will quickly and distinctively convey what the newsletter is about and for whom it is intended. A common way to name is newsletter is after the name of the company. Other more creative ideas include a clever play on words such as The Mainline for a water company newsletter or The Quarterly for a coin club.

Associated concepts – Horizons for the Sunset Apartments newsletter – are also a creative possibility. Do remember to keep the name easy to pronounce and to avoid double entendres that may have a negative or pejorative meaning.

A popular size for a newsletter is 11x17 inches, folded in half to provide four 8 1/2 x 11 inch pages. Another size is 8 1/2 x 14 inches, either as a single sheet or folded in half to produce four 8 1/2 x 7 inch pages. A single 8 1/2 x 11 inch sheet produces a compact two-page newsletter.

To determine the best size for your newsletter, consider the amount of copy you want to include and how

often you want to publish. A page size of 8 1/2 x 11 inches can accommodate between 250 and 500 words of copy when formatted with headlines and graphics.

Most newsletters are published monthly, bimonthly or quarterly. The primary benefit of a monthly newsletter is the timeliness of the its content. However, it may be difficult to keep up a monthly schedule, particularly if you are filling four pages or are responsible for writing all the copy.

Although your newsletter will contain your company's news and stories, you may also need to include some filler articles on topics such as health, safety, sports, money-savers, holidays, trivia, humor or kids. There are services that provide this type of copy on a subscription basis. Two sources are Newsletter Fillers (www.newsletterfillers.com) and Pages (www.pagesmag.com). Sources for clip art include both subscription-based (www.clipart.com) or royalty-free (www.clipartconnection.com). When using royalty-free clip art, be sure to adhere to the terms of use.

Design and Layout

We could devote an entire guidebook to the topic of newsletter layout and design. Here we will just review some basics.

Use a grid system to organize the newsletter layout. To develop a grid, divide your page into columns (two, three or even four), remembering to leave a column gutter between columns. For interest, you can even

make the columns of uneven size. Now create geometric shapes by blocking areas across columns representing space for photographs, graphics, display ads and other visual elements. This will help keep the pages from becoming static.

Learn how to use typography well. Select a typeface for body copy and for headlines, then use them to establish a hierarchy of information. Overcome the temptation to use too many typefaces in your newsletter, as this will create visual clutter and lead to an amateurish look. Use varying point sizes to create contrast between the main headlines, the subheads and the body copy. If you decide to include display ads, change the typefaces so the ads will be clearly differentiated from the editorial copy.

Write interesting headlines. The purpose of a headline is to attract your readers' attention and get them to read the article. If you write a headline that brings forth an emotional response – laughter, curiosity, contemplation, provocation – you have a better chance of engaging the reader. Think about your audience when you are writing headlines and try to have some fun with them. Just remember to keep the headlines clear and simple.

Don't overuse clipart. The Internet has made the acquisition of clipart a very easy task – literally thousands of images can be found online, often for free. But resist the temptation to include too many in your newsletter. Not every article needs to have an illustration, especially since you can use typographic effects such as pull quotes or call outs to create visual interest. As a general rule, make the clip art you do use as large as possible for the space you have available, and be sure it is relevant to the article. Finally, be consistent in the style of the clipart illustrations. Avoid mixing realistic, cartoon and abstract

styles within one issue.

Create emphasis with color. If using two ink colors in your newsletter, remember that less is more. Color can create drama when used with restraint but can also create clutter if overused. One good use of color is to put a light screen behind text you wish to highlight in a sidebar.

Design with white space. You can eliminate clutter in your newsletter by using white space judiciously. For example, increase the size of a gutter and add space between paragraphs to make articles easier to read. Insert some space above and below headlines to frame the thought. Set off graphics with a buffer zone of white space.

We can help

We will be happy to help you launch your newsletter! We can review your design and layout, choice of typefaces, and style guide. We can suggest paper and ink combinations to fit your budget. And we can give you some real-world information on how much time you will need to devote to the project. Call us at 817-334-0521 and set up an appointment.

Helpful Vocabulary Words:

Alignment: The condition of type and or art materials as they level up on a horizontal or vertical line.

Balance: A term used to describe the aesthetic or harmony of elements, whether they are photos, art or copy, within a layout or design.

Banner: The primary headline usually spanning the entire width of a page.

BF: An abbreviation for boldface, used to determine where boldface copy is to be used.

Column Gutter: space between two or more columns of type on a

page.

Dummy: A term used to describe the preliminary assembly of copy and art elements to be reproduced in the desired finished product; also called a comp.

Font: The characters which make up a complete typeface and size.

Galley: A long column of composed text matter.

Italic: Text that is used to denote emphasis by slanting the type body forward.

Line Copy: Any copy that can be reproduced without the use of halftone screens.

Page Makeup: The assembly of all necessary elements required to complete a page.

Widow: A single word or two left at the end of a paragraph, or a part of a sentence ending a paragraph, which loops over to the next page and stands alone. Also, the last sentence of a paragraph that contains only one or two short words.