



Top 10 Tips: Producing a Successful Newsletter

1. **Identify your goals and your audience.** Your newsletter exists to do something important for your group. Identifying that something and who your readers are will influence your decisions regarding content. Take time to answer questions such as these:

- Do you want to inform or educate your audience about specific topics?
- Do you want to persuade or open minds to new ways of thinking?
- Do you want to keep people connected to your group?
- Do you want to motivate them to action?

2. **Identify available financial resources and put together a budget.** Knowing what funds are available to you will help you determine what you can and cannot do in producing your newsletter. Factors that influence budget include the size of the publication, the design and printing method, the quantity you need to print, the publication's frequency, and the distribution method.

3. **Determine distribution.** Decide how you will get your newsletter to your readers. Will you mail it or deliver it house to house? Will you make it available to interested groups or organizations to share?

4. **Establish a publication and keep to a schedule.** Determine how often you will publish your newsletter and include that information in the masthead. If you intend only to print a newsletter periodically, say that also. Long-lasting readership rests, in part, on your publication's dependability. People need to know when they can expect to get meaningful information from you and that you will deliver it.

5. **Focus on topics of interest to your audience as a whole.** Depending on your group's focus, these could include human interest stories about leaders in your neighborhood or someone who has done something unusual or interesting. Let curiosity lead you to "hidden treasures" – stories, information, and new ideas people have not read before. Include timely and actionable information as long as it's not "old news" by the time you release it.

6. **Use well-written articles.** Interesting new or controversial topics and creative angles on old ones can make for good stories. But the words you choose and how you use them make good writing. The use of *active* verbs, rather than *inactive* verbs (like *is*,

are, was, and were), gives power to your message. Short words and short sentences help create clear and concise communications. Variations in sentence structure – combinations of shorter and longer sentences and phrases – create pleasing rhythms. As a rule of thumb, write to an 8th grade reading level or less. Keep articles short and easy to read. Once you finish a draft, edit it. See how many unneeded words you can remove and long sentences you can shorten.

7. **Engage your readers.** Offer ways for them to contact you, submit articles, share comments, or otherwise be involved.

8. **Employ an attractive, consistent and readable design.** Place the most important or interesting article on page one to draw in your readership.

9. **Honor the copyright.** Works that are created by individuals and owned either by them or the organization for which the work was written are protected by copyright law. Many times they appear with this symbol: ©. (Absence of a copyright symbol *does not* mean the piece is not copyrighted.) Unless you secure permission from the work's owner, you cannot reprint that article or story. Nor can you slightly alter it to try to make it your own. The best advice – write your own stuff. Give credit for any quotes, facts, or data to its proper source by name and date.

10. **Proofread carefully.** Always have at least one set of eyes review your product before it goes to press. The most obvious errors are usually the ones that appear after your newsletter is printed.