

Checklist: Newsletter Preparation

Assessment:

This might be a good time to start a newsletter because:

- You need to get a lot of information to a lot of people on a regular basis.
- You want to educate or inform the community on important issues.
- You want to attract new members.
- You want to build a sense of common purpose, or motivation--or both -- among members.
- You want to get feedback from your members.
- You want to increase recognition for your organization or belief in its cause.
- You want the public to see you as a credible and significant group.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the primary purpose of the newsletter?
- What are the other purposes?
- Who is the audience?
- How frequently do you want the newsletter to appear?
- How many copies do you want to produce for each issue?
- How much will this cost?
- How much can you afford?
- Who will design and edit the newsletter?
- Who will write the articles?
- How will you distribute the newsletter to its audience? Electronically? Print? Both?
- How will you know if you have been successful?

Tips:

Before you start working on your newsletter:

- Decide whether you will publish the newsletter yourself or use professionals

If you want to produce the newsletter yourself, make sure you have the necessary tools at your disposal:

- A computer that includes a capacity for word processing, page design, and graphics;
- A high quality printer
- If not, computers that make layout and printing easier can sometimes be found at copy shops.

If you are having the newsletter done by a professional:

- Get your copy shop, professional printer, or graphic artist involved before going beyond the planning stage. Don't be afraid to talk to professionals; they may be willing to volunteer their services or offer them at a reduced rate for non-profit organisations.
- Graphic artists can make layout and printing more attractive and interesting, and help convey information better.
- Once designed, you can bring the file to a professional for printing on a pen drive or email .
- Confirm every aspect of the printing process ahead of time, including cost, time, what color is to be used, grade of paper, etc.

Steps for all newsletters:

- Decide what will be in the issue and how much of each will be included -- for example, articles, features, news notes, and opinion pieces.
- Design the layout for the newsletter.
- Write the articles for the newsletter -- or have them written.
- Edit the articles -- for content, for style, and for space.
- Edit them again. Ask someone with strong attention to detail and spelling/grammar skills to help you with proofreading.

- If you are having your newsletter professionally printed, take the final version to the printer.
- Check the final copy one last time for any errors in printing or editing.
- Email, mail, post on your website, or otherwise distribute the newsletter.
- Get as much feedback as you can about the newsletter issue and use the feedback to improve future issues.

If you want to get others to contribute to your newsletter, try the following:

- Find other staff members or volunteers to help plan the newsletter with you.
- Invite contribution of articles, features, and columns; a “guest columnist” can add luster.
 - Examples include: experts in fields relevant to your organisation’s work, a beneficiary, a beneficiary’s family or community member, various staff members, board members, or other supporters.
- Use your staff meetings as opportunities to collect announcements and story ideas.
- Reprint any external news coverage about the organisation.
- Borrow from other materials people send to you.

Words and graphics

- You understand that the masthead is the title on the front page of every newsletter.
- Keep the name of your newsletter short and catchy.
- Consider using your organization's logo or symbol as part of the title.
- Consider having a professional design this part of the newsletter, even if the rest is done in-house.
- You understand that the font is the style of typeface you use.
- For the text of your articles, it is best to use serif fonts instead of sans serif fonts.
- For the headlines, you're using sans serif fonts.
- Used fonts consistently and refraining from using many different fonts on a single page.
- You use italics sparingly -- words in italics are difficult to read.
- When you have two or more columns, justify your type to make it more readable.

- You understand that the headline is the short title or introduction summarizing the main ideas of an article.
- Print headlines in the same color as the article for easier reading.
- Set them like sentences without periods (i.e., capitalize only the first letter of each word).
- You understand that the articles are the stories and text that explain the different events, issues and plans that are important to your group.
- Unless it's a technical newsletter, your articles are written at approximately an eighth-grade reading level.
- The font size in articles is at 10 to 12 points.
- Choose a topic that's interesting to you and that others might enjoy.
- Organize your ideas before you begin; consider making an outline.
- Avoid complicated words and lengthy sentences.
- Use examples to back up your ideas.
- Always proofread your article for spelling and grammar errors as well as overall understanding.
- Whenever possible, have another person look over it before you turn in your final draft.

Checklist- before you print:

Layout basics

- ___ Use two to three columns per 8 1/2" x 11" page for easy reading.
- ___ Limit each page to no more than three or four articles.
- ___ Make effective use of white space.
- ___ Examine the page at arms-length to check balance.
- ___ Use graphics, clip art, or photographs to break up the text and give your newsletter a more polished appearance.
- ___ Consider keeping your newsletter at six pages or under (four is often ideal).
- ___ Consider using a consistent layout that will make your newsletter more familiar to your readers.



Production

___ Involve the printer from the very beginning.

___ Talk to the printer about every detail of your goals, your dreams, your budget, and your timeline.

___ When choosing paper, stick with neutral colors such as white, tan, or light gray that are not jarring to the eye.

___ Ask for the standard paper size that the print shop typically uses for other orders; it's usually the cheapest.

___ Learn some of the vocabulary of printing so there will be no confusion when you speak with your printer.

___ Listen carefully to the printer's advice, but remember, it's your newsletter, so it's up to you to make the final decisions.

Cost Saving Tips

___ Consider selling "advertising" to help cover the cost of your newsletter.

___ Determine if you qualify for non-profit status to lower your postage rates.

___ Consider other means of distributing your newsletter besides using the mail. Be creative!

___ Decide how often you really need the newsletter to go out.

___ Move through every step of the process of creating your newsletter carefully, and make sure to edit as you go along.

___ Have another person take a final look with you.