Newsletter / information bulletin

CREATING AN INFORMATION PERIODICAL

Most of the information and advice given here applies to circular letters, bulletins, newsletters and magazines (print, electronic format), both internal and external. For convenience, we'll focus here on the "Newsletter."

Printed material has always been a popular communication tool. It is an object that is kept, that can be shared with colleagues, family, and friends, etc. It is considered a "serious" format. It can also be distributed in electronic form to reach more people and reduce costs.

Key Functions of Newsletter or Magazine

The newsletter can be destined for internal use for the organization's network of collaborators and partners, or external, for the general public, institutions, funders, media, etc. Depending on the intention, if can serve various functions, e.g.,

▶ **Information:** News of the organization, opinions, results, events, meetings.

▶ **Acknowledgement:** Recognition for people, including staff, by showcasing their work activities, daily life, experiences, etc.

▶ **Openness:** General interest topics, external news that has a link with the organization, overall general socio-economic aspects as well as entertainment.

Some general advice

▶ Make a quality product! Be professional, regardless of the scope of the newsletter. Even if it is produced completely in-house and intended for internal use, this is a form of journalism and the so the product must be attractive to readers. If possible, hire professional writers or for sure, individuals who have the necessary skills (credibility, knowledge of the organization) whether internal or external.

▶ Adopt an "Editorial line" (policy): Define the objectives (Inform, unite, pride in belonging, bringing a visions creating links); the topics that will (or will not) be addressed, in what form, from what angle, etc.

▶ The internal collaborators should hold meetings! It's not about creating a newsletter solely to please top management, even if it is management that has requested its creation. Avoid "overselling" the organization, doing propaganda. Try to be as objective as possible.

▶ Adopt a tone that is moderate and objective. Even if the newsletter is to help promote the organization, the tone should not be over the top in terms of flattery at the risk of tainting its credibility.

▶ Respect sensibilities. Pay attention when citing recognitions, i.e., awards, certificates, etc. to the amount of text devoted to one department, affiliate subsidiaries, staffer in comparison to others, etc.

▶ Provide several "levels" of reading, for example, text boxes, captions, etc. This will allow people who are in a hurry to not have to read the full document yet still get the basic information or technical details highlights in examples that are distinctly different from the main text and which non-specialists would not be obliged to read.

▶ If possible, address topics that could trigger controversy; avoid using stodgy, stilted language, and speech that that is too "institutional."

▶ Find a name for the newsletter and eventually, a "baseline" (signature). Ex: Contact/The In-house newsletter of…"

▶ Determine the different sections: Current Happenings, News, Personnel, Programs, Key Statistics, Notes, Spotlight, Portrait, etc.

▶ Make sure that the final draft layout model incorporates all the necessary technical aspects concerning the typography, font size, titles, category names, headings, placement of images, number of columns determined and the masthead. The designer should provide the sizing (size of the text) for each article/section taking into account the eventual addition of images. There is a lot of software available for making newsletter models, such as Adobe InDesign, Quark Express and Microsoft Publisher.

▶ Establish a publication schedule indicating all the steps involved and related required deadlines: Editorial Committee; Content Topics Validation by management; Assign writing topics; Verification (proofing); final draft; Print Approval (PA) order (confirming verification of the model); RFP (Ready for Printing) which validates the printmaking, the colors, etc. before sending it for printing; Printing; Distribution.

▶ Establish an Editorial Committee that will be charged with determining the different assignments: Who writes what? Who validates? Writing Assignments and angles? Text sizing? Who does the photography? Set up a network of correspondents who will contribute information and/or write articles. ATTENTION: The members of the editorial committee and the correspondents should be trained on the basics of producing a publication and writing techniques, at the risk of having to manage sensitivities, correct, and even rewrite the articles.

▶ Make a list of the content for the first issue and also for the next one and the future editions (plan ahead!).

▶ Create a flatplan (chemin de fer, page imposition) - A page plan of a publication that shows how all the content (text and images) are to be laid out, and in what order, page by page, once the document is printed.

▶ Photo, Images: Pay attention to quality; Make sure that Copyrights are respected. For quality sharpness, select images in 300 dpi for the publications intended to be printed.

▶ Writing; Validations.

▶ PA (Printing Approval): When preparing the final draft, be sure to provide the designer with all the text and images already approved. This will help eliminate any unnecessary back and forth and also help avoid having to make any author's corrections. Once all the corrections and changes have been made then Print Approval can be given to the designer who will then send the file to the printer.

▶ RFP (Ready for Printing): Prior to doing the actual print run, the printer prepares a sample proof, printed on photo paper, to do the final checking on the colors (Cromalin®, Iris®), which must be approved by the client before going to press. In theory, at this stage, it is no longer possible to make any corrections to the final draft, however, it is sometimes possible. First check with the graphics designer. The PA function is to validate the colorimetric aspects: Is there too much or not enough color, too much density, not enough?

▶ Printing: This can be done internally or externally. If it is done external, it would be a good idea for the client be present at the printer's when the machines are being set up verify that the colorimetry will meet what is desired. If not, ask the designer or the communications agency to this.

▶ Distribution: Internal and/or external. For external, use a distribution service, and if necessary, if mailing by post large quantities, a service that can handle that. If distributed internally, then rely on the internal mail services, correspondents, and support team network.

▶ Satisfaction Study: From time to time, to improve the quality of the publication, conduct a reader satisfaction study. The reader should be able to send you this feedback easily and anonymously.

◎ Questions to Ask

▶ What is the need?

▶ What are the goals, the main types of topics, the information, the messages to be addressed?

▶ Who are the targets ?

▶ What is the volume of information to be treated?

▶ What is the available budget?

▶ What are the human resources (internal/external) that will be involved in producing the publication?

▶ Who will be in charge of the writing? Who will be responsible for doing the layout and providing the draft models? Who will print it?

▶ What is the format size (standard A4 or a different one?) What layout model: Vertical/Portrait/French/horizontal/landscape/Italian?

▶ Will it be printed in Color? Black & White? Black + 1 color? 4-color printing?

▶ How often to be published? According to the amount of information available, mainly.