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**CREATING EFFECTIVE
EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTERS**

By
Linda M. Blair

A Thesis

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University
June 17, 1997**

Approved by _____
Dr. Don Bagin

Date Approved _____

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ABSTRACT

Linda M. Blair

Creating Effective
Employee Newsletters. 1997
Advisor: Dr. Don Bagin
Seminar in Public Relations,
Graduate Division of
Rowan University

The purpose was to produce a source of information and procedures for readers to create and maintain a high quality employee newsletter. Today it is difficult for companies, both small and large, to maintain good communication between management and employees. Lack of and poor communication are major problems in the workplace. It is necessary for companies to create and maintain a timely and well written newsletter to inform, communicate, recognize and motivate employees. The primary research performed for this study included a completed questionnaire from twenty professionals who had won an award in their professional society and five other noted professionals in publication related fields. The findings of this research provide the reader with information about creating high-quality employee newsletters showing techniques about article content, layout and design, audience, and publication evaluation.

Mini-Abstract

Linda M. Blair

Creating Effective
Employee Newsletters. 1997
Advisor: Dr. Don Bagin
Seminar in Public Relations,
Graduate Division of
Rowan University

Poor communication is a major problem in the workplace. It's necessary to create and maintain a timely and well-written newsletter to inform, communicate, recognize and motivate the employees. The findings detail information about creating high-quality newsletters and explain techniques related to article content, layout and design, audience, and publication evaluation.

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I owe tremendous thanks to many people who helped me complete this study:

- My parents, for their total and unconditional support, emotionally and financially, from beginning to end;
- My future husband, Joe, for always being there when I wanted to throw books across the room and pack up my things to head home;
- My future parents-in-law, for allowing me to blow off steam and helping me in anyway that I needed them to;
- My thesis advisor, Dr. Don Bagin, for not giving up on me and always "trying to make me perfect;"
- My friend Ben, who kept me in-line with both my graduate work and my personal life; without his support I may be slinging hamburgers at McDonald's.
- And finally, to Lin Moy Burchinow, for being my mom away from home and always being there when I needed to talk, cry or laugh.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is difficult enough to maintain communication in a small business, and when a company grows, it becomes even more difficult to have communication. "... There are so many companies now which are widely decentralized – with operations in twenty states or five countries – that even the most progressive internal communications network strains under the demand of getting timely information disseminated rapidly."¹ With this problem present, many companies need to create an internal employee newsletter to keep their employees informed.

It's proven that employees greatly prefer to hear business news face-to-face on any changes in their company's policies rather than by a newsletter.² Employees are demanding more personal and tailored information, but when a company has a broad employee base, say over 100 employees, there needs to be a consistent channel for management communication. If a publication does exist within a company, "employees want more timely, focused information in briefer publications that tells them more about how the corporation really operated, rather than a listing of special events."³

¹ Brown, Tom, "Leverage PR for Internal Communication," Industry Week February 6, 1995: 24.

² "Paperless companies? Reports of the newsletter's demise are greatly exaggerated," Management Today September 1995: 11+.

³ Weathersby, William Jr., "Family Ties: are corporate publications kith or kin?" Public Relations Journal April 1988: 20.

"For a lot of organizations, the newsletter remains a top information source ... Management sees it as efficient, uncomplicated, and easy to distribute" stated Susan Walker, head researcher for MORI.⁴ Since this attitude exists, the internal employee newsletter has become an important channel from management to employees; and being able to produce a newsletter has become an important skill needed by a public relations professional.

"What newsletters can do more effectively than any other means of communication is describe, in detail, your company's philosophy, goals, and objectives as well as enhance its existing marketing program."⁵ A well written and laid out employee newsletter can do these things, as well as have an effect on the employees' company morale. The newsletter provides employees with corporation information rather than gossip they hear around the coffee station.

"Until we started the publication (employee newsletter), we didn't have a formal device for communicating with all employees. The newsletter has greatly improved the communication flow between the main office and the branches."⁶ For companies concerned about poor internal communications, a newsletter can eliminate some of the barriers.

In any business, the employees are one of the most important assets, and because of this, it is important to keep them informed, satisfied and challenged. An employee newsletter can help maintain all three areas. Newsletters "can run the gamut from

⁴ "Paperless companies? Reports of the newsletter's demise are greatly exaggerated,"

11.

⁵ Brown, Tom, 24.

⁶ "Staff at N.Y. Bank Pens Low-Cost Newsletter," Bank Marketing February 1987: 38.

communicating new health care plans, to investment fund information to general news of health care reforms to enrollment dates. They can serve an amazing number of purposes." stated Marsha Murphy, a communications consultant with Foster Higgins in Princeton, New Jersey.⁷

Educating the readers should be the main goal in any good newsletter.⁸ "The "paternalistic" employer is a thing of the past. Employers today need to get information to employees to make their own informed decisions. More than ever there is a need to educate employees," concluded Tom Hoffman, a principal with consultant Kwasha Lipton in Fort Lee, New Jersey. It should explain the achievements and objectives of the business while providing meaningful corporation and business news to the employees. "... Companies time and again turn to publishing programs – employee newsletters, ... – to promote the corporate attributes of dependability, trustworthiness, and strength."⁹ People creating the newsletter need to "realize that personal credibility – not to mention the corporation's credibility – is on the line whenever anything is communicated in any context."¹⁰ This concept is extremely important when creating an employee newsletter since this information may be the first time employees are hearing this information and they need to feel secure believing in the publication.

Employees sometimes feel that "... a lot of what's published or presented inside companies is often sweetened so that corporate leaders come off looking like winners.

⁷ Roberts, Sally, "Newsletters can benefit from a new look: try as strategies to help employees get the message," Business Insurance August 15, 1994: 3.

⁸ Friedman, Steve, "12 Ways To Get The Most From Your Marketing Newsletter," Sales and Marketing Management March 1992: 91.

⁹ Weathersby, William Jr., 20.

¹⁰ Brown, Tom, 24.

Employees realize this and, therefore, discount most company communications."¹¹ It is important for management to disprove this idea in the employees' minds.

Another concern, besides publication credibility, is the lack of employee interest in reading the newsletters. "People don't have time to read, so you have to make (newsletters) look compelling," Hoffman said. "You've got to make the reader want to pick it up and read." Newsletters should be visually pleasing, short and to the point – using simple language. Hoffman calls this language "Peter Rabbit Language."¹²

Paul M. Sanchez, national communications practice director for The Wyatt Company in San Diego, agrees with Hoffman stating, "It's important that newsletters be simple and straightforward."¹³

It is very important for employers to realize the shelf life of these newsletters and the impact that they have on the employees and their families. "Employees take the newsletter home and give it to their spouses. Or they send the company magazine to relatives – or just leave it on their coffee table for visitors to peruse. It's impossible to control internal information once it's published."¹⁴ Management needs to realize that even though the bottom of the newsletters may say "For internal use only," this publication will escape the building and follow the employee home for at-home reading and to share with families.

¹¹ Brown, Tom, 24.

¹² Roberts, Sally, 7.

¹³ Roberts, Sally, 7.

¹⁴ Brown, Tom, 24.

Purpose

This thesis will show readers how important a professional internal employee newsletter is to any corporation. It will show that achieving a quality publication will help to inform employees, thereby improving their morale and communication between themselves and upper management.

In chapter 2, the literature review, readers will see important layout techniques such as paper size and orientation, type size and typeface, as well as when to use a color ink or standard black. Next they will see how to write body copy for the publication stressing simplicity and writing style. Last they will learn how to go about starting a newsletter and how they should choose an objective, frequency of distribution, and evaluation.

Chapter 3 outlines the procedures for this study.

Chapter 4 shows responses from surveys with newsletter winners and other experts in the publication field. They will answer questions on what they think makes a professional newsletter and what techniques they used to set their publications apart from others.

Finally, Chapter 5 shows the author's ideas and conclusions on what makes the ultimate newsletter and how to incorporate all that information into a first class employee newsletter.

The following terms are used throughout this thesis. To help the reader gain a full understanding of this thesis, it is necessary to read the below terms and become familiar with them before moving on.

Definition of Terms

Body Copy – text material set in blocks using 8 to 12 point type

Camera-ready - copy which is ready for photography

Caption – the information that appears below or next to photographs or other illustrations

Condensed Type – this typeface provides more characters per line, but is harder to read than others -- example: The cat jumped on the bed.

Crossheads – smaller, transitional heads within an article; useful in longer articles

Headline – larger type lines used to get attention in an ad or other document; usually located at the top of a publication

Flag - a banner across the top of the publication which includes the title, volume number and date of the publication

Font - a complete assortment of letters, numbers, punctuation marks, etc. of a given size and design.

Leading (pronounced ledding) – spacing between lines

Logotype or Nameplate - the name of a company in a special design used as a trademark

Masthead – the area of a newsletter where you place the basic information about the newsletter; i.e. name, address, phone number, etc.

Newsletter – a brief, printed publication distributed either vertically or horizontally; usually containing information of interest to a narrowly defined target audience.

Optical Center – about $\frac{1}{8}$ of the page length above the mathematical center

Pica – a unit of horizontal type measurement; six picas equal one inch

Point – a unit of vertical measurement of type; twelve points in a pica; 72 points to an inch

Pull Quotes – a device of “pulling” out quotations from the text, enlarging the point size, and setting them off from the text as a device to draw a reader’s attention to a point within an article

Sans Serif – in typography, a type that has no cross strokes or serifs at the tops and bottoms of characters – example: This is sans serif type.

Serif – the short cross strokes at top and bottom of characters in certain typefaces, especially those in Roman face – example: This is serif type.

Subhead – May be a display line enlarging on the main headline, usually in smaller size

Typesetting - consists of the characters seen upon output and the commands that make them look that way, ex. size, font, leading, etc.

White Space – the space in an ad or publication page not taken with any other element, type, pictures, etc.; an important design element in itself

The above definitions were taken from the Handbook for Public Relations

Writing by Thomas Bivins, Publishing Newsletters by Howard Penn Hudson, and from

Pocket Pal, a graphic arts production handbook, edited by Michael H. Bruno. If further

bibliographical information is necessary, please see bibliography section of thesis.

Chapter 2: Related Research

Relevant literature on employee newsletters was found through many sources and are indicated below.

A computer search of relevant and current literature was conducted to find material on the subject. The study was conducted at five libraries – The new library in Glassboro, New Jersey, at Rowan University, The Evelyn S. Field Library in Raritan, New Jersey at Raritan Valley Community College, The Alexander Library in New Brunswick, New Jersey at Rutgers, The State University, The Somerset County Library in Somerville, New Jersey, and The Roscoe West Library in Ewing, New Jersey at The College of New Jersey. In all computer searches the author used key words, including: “newsletters,” “employee relations,” “internal communication,” “employee newsletters,” “public relations,” and “publications.”

At the new library at Rowan University, the author used the Wilson Business Abstracts on-line magazine catalogue and the on-line catalog of periodicals. This search yielded 176 articles and journal listings and six books. Of these, 20 articles were pulled for use in this study.

At the Evelyn S. Field Library, the study used a search of the on-line catalog of periodicals. After removing duplicate articles from the search list, five articles were used.

At the Alexander Library, the study used a search of the on-line catalog of periodicals, and after removing duplicate entries it yielded three articles.

At the Somerset County Library, the study used the Magazine Index Plus on-line catalog and after deleting duplicate sources, two sources were used.

At the Roscoe West Library, the study used the on-line catalogue and found three books that were used in the study.

In addition, the author reviewed past *communication briefings* – an internationally circulated communications newsletter and found three articles that were used in this thesis.

Also, the author conducted a survey of winners of national competitions and other noted professionals. The winners were chosen from three communication societies, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). These competitions included PRSA's Bronze Anvil Awards, IABC's Gold Quill Awards and NSPRA's Gold Medallion Awards. The categories the winners were selected in were "Newsletter - Internal," "Newsletters - Up to Two Colors," "Newsletters - Three Colors or More," and "Newsletters."

There were two tiers of surveys mailed for this thesis. The first tier included thirty professionals; eleven responded with a completed survey. In addition, five noted professionals, recommended by thesis advisor Dr. Don Bagin and other professionals, were also sent the survey. All of the selected professionals are well-respected and informed professionals in various areas of communications such as publishing, internal

communications and corporate communications and they all returned a completed survey.

The first step to contacting these professionals was via an introduction letter and a self-addressed, self-stamped postcard returned via the United States Postal Service. The willing participants returned the postcard committing to complete the survey. After the author received the return postcard, the survey was sent to the individual along with a self-stamped, self-addressed envelope to return the completed surveys.

The second tier of surveys was mailed to 14 other professionals; nine responded with a completed survey. This tier did not include two mailings as in tier one. Instead, an introduction letter, the survey, and a self-addressed, self-stamped envelope was mailed via the United States Postal Service in one envelope.

The related research follows and is organized in subtopics:

Why start a newsletter – its purpose

“The primary goal of any newsletter should be to educate the readers.”¹⁵

“Companies concerned about their often dismal internal communication have generally turned to newsletters for answers.”¹⁶

The main reasons for creating an internal newsletter include building employee morale and educating employees with official information and not gossip. These newsletters provide functional information for the employees instead of their hearing bits

¹⁵ Friedman, Steve, 91.

¹⁶ “Paperless Companies, Reports of the newsletter’s demise are greatly exaggerated,”

of information around a coffee station. "Until we started the publication, we didn't have a formal device for communicating with all employees. The newsletter has greatly improved the communication flow between the main office and the branches."¹⁷

A newsletter is the most effective way to reach a specific audience. "It is the ultimate goal of the ... professional to effectively create and manage the working environment for the employees of his or her company so they can work at their optimum level."¹⁸ This can be accomplished with an employee newsletter.

In today's society, a newsletter gives information to people in an optimal way; it provides short, collected segments of timely information. It has a quick turnover rate for information so it is excellent for "disposable" news and allows employees to hole-punch the paper to keep on file for future reference.¹⁹

There are four distinctive functions of a newsletter and they include: 1) informing, 2) promoting, 3) guiding, and 4) coordinating. Newsletters inform employees by giving them information such as brief reports, workshop training schedules, and new services information. They also can be promotional material attempting to have its reading audience attend meetings and get involved in extra curricular activities the company provides.

Employees also look at their employee newsletter for guidance on new procedures; for example a new computer program or pension plan. And lastly, the

¹⁷ "Staff at NY Banks Pens Low-Cost Newsletter," 38.

¹⁸ Cooper, Richard B., "Giving Real Meaning to Customer Service." Managing Office Technology, May 1995: 44+.

¹⁹ Bivins, Thomas, Handbook for Public Relations Writing, (Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing Group, 1992) 97-98.

newsletter can organize its readers and bring employees located in different departments or even at different locations together to solve a common problem and reach a common goal.²⁰

In an ideal organization, communication flows vertically as well as horizontally. A newsletter is a good example of vertical communication because it provides downward information from management to the employees through a formal channel. A newsletter also allows upward communication with letters to the editor, articles written by employees and readership surveys.²¹

Marsha Murphy, a communication consultant with Foster Higgins in Princeton, New Jersey, stated that newsletters "can run the gamut from communicating new health care plans to investment fund information to general news of health care reforms to enrollment dates. They can serve an amazing number of purposes."²²

Typesetting

Body Copy

For body copy the best type of font to use is a serif font, such as Times Roman or Courier. Before choosing which font to use, look for two main characteristics; they are serif and they have a large family with many treatments available. For a font to be

²⁰ Burke, Virginia M., Newsletter Writing & Publishing: A Practical Guide. (New York, NY: Columbia University, 1958) 6-7.

²¹ Bivins, Thomas, 97.

²² Roberts, Sally, 3+.

excellent for body copy, make sure that the font has many treatments such as *italic*, **bold**, ***bold-italic***, etc.

The font size is measured in points and the smallest readable size for a newsletter body copy is 9 points and the largest is 12 points. For body copy, the leading should be the point size of the font plus 1 point. For example, if the font size is 11 points, the leading should be around 12 points. Usually body copy is justified within the article's columns.²³

Headlines and Subheads

Headlines and subheads can be created in the same font that was chosen for the body copy or it can be a different font to add accent. To differentiate between these and body copy, the author can make the point size larger, the font weight heavier and the leading larger. Normally headlines are centered at the top of the article and subheads are left aligned above the new section. The headline type size averages around 16-20 points and a subhead around 14 points.²⁴

Ink and Paper

It is a great idea to use color ink but unfortunately, if you use more than one color in a publication, the cost of your project will rise. (Note: if you are going to use color, remember that black ink counts as one color.) The most popular combinations for

²³ "Myths That Ruin Newsletters," communication briefings, October 1995: 5.

²⁴ Hudson, Howard Penn, Publishing Newsletters, (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), 30.

newsletters include black ink on colored paper or one color on white paper.

Psychological tests show that the following combinations work well for newsletters with number one being the best (**aesthetics not considered**):

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. black on yellow paper | 7. white on red paper |
| 2. green on white paper | 8. white on orange paper |
| 3. blue on white paper | 9. white on black paper |
| 4. white on blue paper | 10. red on yellow paper |
| 5. black on white paper | 11. green on red paper |
| 6. yellow on black paper | 12. red on green paper ²⁵ |

Paper Size

The first thing to look at is the size of the paper and how it will be folded. The most common paper sizes are 8¹/₂x11 and 11x17. A publication printed on 8¹/₂x11 is generally only one page printed on both sides, where a publication printed on 11x17 is one page, both sides and folded in half to create a booklet of four pages. The average length of a newsletter ranges from 2 to 4 pages so these two options are the most commonly used.²⁶ In these two cases, it is simple for the company to fold and secure the newsletter and then put the employees' home or inter-office mailing address on the back. Some companies will use 8¹/₂x14 size paper but the newsletters are generally not folded or mailed.

²⁵ Hudson, Howard Penn, 114-115.

²⁶ "Bivins, Thomas, 100.

Paper Weight

Paper size and orientation are determined by the publication's layout, and here it is necessary to determine which paper weight would be best for the publication. Two main characteristics of paper – weight and texture – need to be considered when creating a newsletter. Two types of paper weight are lightweight or heavyweight stock. Both have pros and cons. If you are using a lightweight stock, it folds easily and is less bulky. On the negative side, flimsy paper denotes project weakness and usually can only be printed on one side to avoid seeing the information through the paper.²⁷

If the publication is on a heavyweight stock, it can be printed on both sides and it projecting a strong image for the publication. Heavier paper may prove to be more economical even though the paper itself is more expensive; money is saved by producing on both sides. Unfortunately, heavy stock paper may be difficult to fold and is bulky. Heavy stock paper could also increase postage costs.

The second characteristic to be considered is the paper's texture. With creative advances, paper comes in many grain textures and patterns such as a speckled recycled stock.²⁸ Dull stocks are more popular with readers; if you are using a lot of photos or illustrations, a glossy stock might be better to maintain the graphic's image.²⁹ Paper treatments such as shellacking and spot glossing are also available for publications, but these techniques can greatly raise the cost of the publication.

²⁷ "Myths That Ruin Newsletters", 5.

²⁸ Jantz, Richard, "Publishing & Presentations: Expert advice for creating high-impact documents and presentations," PC World August 1992: 256.

²⁹ "What's your best marketing tool?" PR Journal May 1994: 12.

Newsletter Cost

The rule is: the fancier they are, the more expense they run. A newsletter with four-color inks, heavy-glossy stock paper, and full color photos is going to cost a lot more than a two-color, heavy-dull stock, gray-scale photo publication. Another factor in the price of a publication includes any design work. If the corporation needs to use an outside printer for every issue, the price for the newsletter is going to rise. If the corporation has the ability to have an in-house publication department where the department can create a camera-ready publication, the cost could fall tremendously depending on the cost of in-house production.

To give an idea of the cost of a newsletter, the example of Benjamin Moore & Company's newsletter is noted. Benjamin Moore & Company has a monthly employee newsletter that is distributed to about 1,600 U.S. employees to explain changes in their employee benefits. This publication is four pages, one-color with charts, graphics, and cartoons. This publication is done in-house on dull, heavy stock paper. The average cost for this publication is \$4,000 - \$6,000 an issue.³⁰

An excellent tip for having color in a low-cost publication is to have your flag designed and printed in color on a large quantity of your publication's paper. This way you can have a one-color publication printed on that paper to produce a two-color newsletter. An example would be to have your flag designed in red ink. The company can send this design to a printer and have it reproduced onto a year's supply of white paper (or whatever color chosen). By doing this, the company only has a one-color print

³⁰ Roberts, Sally, 3.

job, reducing the cost. When the publication is ready to be copied onto the pre-prepared stationary, it can be printed out on a plain white piece of paper leaving the areas for the flag and whatever else is in color, blank. Now take the special paper and the black and white copy to either a copy machine or the corporation's distribution center and have the text duplicated.

Newsletter Layout and Design

Newsletter's Flag

A newsletter's flag has an important function; it gives the publication a name. The name of a newsletter should help the readers identify with the publication as well as having it tell them what the publication is about.³¹ The title is the most important information; it gives the reader the publication's "mood" or tone.³² Even if it is planned to create the publication in-house, it is an excellent idea to have an outside design firm create the letterhead and the original layout of the newsletter.

It is necessary to design the flag the same as the company's letterhead and business cards; if possible try to incorporate the same exact design.³³ The rule is that "an attractive newsletter that reflects the corporation's identity can increase readership considerably."³⁴ It is really important not to skimp on this portion of the publication; it is

³¹ Sosnin, Betty, "Corporate Newsletters Improve Employee Morale," HR Magazine, June 1996: 107.

³² Brickely, David & Miller, Dan, "Publishing & Presentation Makeover," PC World, Jan. 1994: 114.

³³ "Myths that Ruin Newsletters," 5.

³⁴ Sosnin, Betty, 108.

what attracts the employee to pick it up and read it. A colorful and creatively designed flag will set this publication apart from the rest of the corporation's mail.

Graphic Design

Design elements can create an interesting layout for the newsletter and can also break up copy when the publication becomes text heavy. Such devices include boxes and pull-quotes that take an important idea from the text and put a frame around it off to the side of the article. This way when the readers see the page, they can read the pull-quote or box and get "pulled" into the article. Headlines, subheads, crossheads and captions are also other techniques that are used to help the reader quickly see what information is contained in the article.³⁵

Graphics are also attention-getters for publications that may have too much text. Two major rules when using graphics are: 1) choose simple graphics, especially line art or photographs because they are easily reproduced and 2) be sure that the graphics will not date the publication because "what looks modern today, won't tomorrow."³⁶

While mentioning design, this is a good place to advise to be careful and try not to "over-design" your publication with fancy type, layout, or colors. Even though making a publication look dramatic and colorful seem important to grab a reader's attention, these elements could decrease the publication's readability.³⁷

³⁵ Bivins, Thomas, 114-116.

³⁶ "Publications Tip," communication briefings, August 1996: 7.

³⁷ Hudson, Howard Penn, 47.

Column Size

A standard rule when trying to decide how many columns to have in a publication is to try to keep the column as short as possible horizontally. This is because if the line lengths are long, the reader's eyes could tire and will not continue with the article. A good rule of thumb to follow is to have 40 to 45 characters per line regardless of which type and type size you choose. Your left and right margins should be at least six picas with an in-between column space of two picas.³⁸

Most publications stick to a two-column format because it is easier to fit more words on a page and allows the layout the flexibility to include graphics almost anywhere in the layout. Three column layouts do allow even more words on a page than the two column format but the newsletter starts to take on a newspaper look with a lot of type, and unless this is the look you want, try to stick to two columns.³⁹ Remember, "readers react badly to crowded pages," so it is important to stay simple with a lot of white space.⁴⁰ "It (newsletter) should not be a summary plan description. We live in a visual world today. Don't make it look like (the newsletter) came from the IRS."⁴¹

Newsletter Elements

All newsletters have specific elements that appear in every issue. These include the following...

Address – usually in the front; try to avoid using post office boxes

³⁸ Hudson, Howard, 50.

³⁹ Hudson, Howard, 50-51.

⁴⁰ "What's your best marketing tool?" 94.

⁴¹ Roberts, Sally, 3+.

Descriptive Phrase – this can be worked into the company’s logo, sort of a slogan for the publication

Notice of Copyright – “©, date & name of publication”

Page Numbers – use these even on 4-page publications; this helps the reader locate articles quickly

Flag - a banner across the top of the publication; it includes the title, volume number and date of the publication

Masthead – includes basic information about the newsletter including the name, address, date of issue, volume number, issue number, copyright, editor, publisher, editorial staff, descriptive phrase, etc.⁴²

Table of Contents – usually located on the first page

Announcements – usually boxed, these include job placements and tidbits of information

Editorials – any article from management; ex. “President’s Column,”

Calendar – shows upcoming events

Mailer – place for mailing labels, postage, return address, etc.⁴³

Quizzes

Notices of Special Events

Zoning & Safety Announcements⁴⁴ – office ergonomics

Writing Style

An employee newsletter needs to be written and produced in a professional manner. Make sure that articles about bad news also include ways to solve the problem(s). This will improve the publication’s credibility.⁴⁵ It is important to try to have article writing done in-house. The best rule might be to go externally for layout &

⁴² Hudson, Howard Penn, 57.

⁴³ Bivins, Thomas, 110.

⁴⁴ “A Newsletter Pulls Employees Together,” Nation’s Business, February 1996: 10.

⁴⁵ Friedman, Steve, 91+.

design, but have all the writing done in-house to pick up the flavor of the way the company explains things.⁴⁶

“To be effective, a newsletter must be read,” and to achieve this, it is necessary for the newsletter to be written in a lively and interesting style containing meaningful news.⁴⁷ The editor needs to make sure that the articles are concise and are not talking down to the audience. A journalistic style that includes both straight news and feature stories creates an entertaining newsletter. The following are a few quick recommendations from James M. Jenks, chairman of the Alexander Hamilton Institute, NY who is the publisher of a number of business newsletters:⁴⁸

1. Readability must be high
2. Plunge right into your subject
3. Use short sentences
4. Use strong nouns and verbs
5. Write in the active voice
6. Do not use metaphors
7. Use “you” in the writing

Content

The content of your newsletter is defined by many different things ranging from the organization’s goals to its mission statement to the target audience. Once the content is defined, the publication can do many things including educating employees, motivating them, and improving their morale. Otis Baskin and Craig Aronoff, authors of

⁴⁶ Roberts, Sally, 3+.

⁴⁷ Sosain, Betty, 106.

⁴⁸ Hudson, Howard Penn, 37.

Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice, have these percentages of content for an internal publication:⁴⁹

- 50% - information on the organization on local, national and international levels
- 20% - employee information - benefits, quality of working, their personal life, etc.
- 20% - relevant non-company information such as the community
- 10% - small talk, personals and classifieds⁵⁰

(Note: These percentages do not have to match perfectly, but a close mixture is optimal.)

Avoid items in the content of articles that might make the newsletter seem as if management is “sugar-coating” information. Avoid terms such as “In an effort to...,” or using language to “soften the blow;” employees think that you are hiding a problem within the organization. Employees would rather have the facts up-front. Try not to “cheer on the team” by using words such as “Keep up the good work” and “We’re all in this together.” Also, do not run a letter from the chairman, instead concentrate on information about the employees, try to help them understand the company through the newsletter, not recognize the chairman.⁵¹ Lastly, avoid abusing buzzwords that are common in the workplace such as “empowerment,” “corporate culture,” and “win-win.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Bivins, Thomas, 98.

⁵⁰ Hudson, Howard Penn, 98.

⁵¹ “Newsletters: Spicing it up,” Inc. July 1996: 87.

⁵² “Words That Hurt Credibility,” communication briefings, November 1996, p. 6.

Column Recommendations

Below are the some categories that newsletters should address along with some column ideas:

- **Activities** - calendar of events, employee advancements and promotions
- **Ideas of Interest** - editorials, fillers, and short articles
- **Social News** - births, weddings, educational advancements
- **Affiliates and National Scene** - activities
- **Services** - job openings, classifieds and travel information
- **Classifieds and Want Ads**
- **Product Profile**
- **Customer Profiles**
- **Board Briefs** ⁵³

Getting Ideas

Now that the basics have been covered in determining what goes into a successful newsletter, an editor may ask the question, "What do I write about?" Getting ideas is one of the toughest and most recurring obstacles in running a successful publication.

One idea is to use materials that have been published in other publications. This generally can be done, but be sure to adhere to all copyright rules. If the publication breaks these rules it can be sued for libel. The safest way is to make sure is to have the editor gets permission from the information's owner or to just use the idea of the other story and create a new one.

Samuel Grafton, a New York newsletter publisher, has a few helpful hints to

⁵³ "What's your best marketing tool?" 94.

getting ideas rolling around.

- Read Sunday newspapers
- Look at sources from other parts of the country
- Use government agencies in Washington, DC
- Ask your readers for ideas
- Hold focus panels to brainstorm new ideas
- Hire stringers around the country to research other organizations⁵⁴

Distribution

“... if you ask any self respecting communications professional for the most effective means of reaching a primarily internal audience, the response will most likely be the newsletter.”⁵⁵

An internal publication is a unified one which encompasses an organization’s employee population, shareholders, volunteers, and others with an interest in the company. Because of this vast audience, it is important to have consistency. If a newsletter is delivered late or has a lot of errors, it loses credibility and no longer is considered a respected piece of literature.

To ensure a timely piece, it is recommended that the editor creates a “publications calendar.” This is a special calendar that helps everyone stay on track with time limits and deadlines. Making a publications calendar is important because most publications are completed a month in advance, and most likely there are two or three issues running simultaneously. Also a helpful hint is to plan a whole calendar year noting holidays and

⁵⁴ Hudson, Howard Penn,

⁵⁵ Bivins, Thomas, 95

vacations, so when the time comes, work is not delayed because of an employee's absence.

Distribution is divided into two categories, vertical and horizontal. Vertical distribution is within the corporation and is intended for everyone from the mailroom to the CEO. Horizontal distribution is a more narrowly defined a group of people in the organization with a common interest; for example, everyone located in a specific department.

Examples of vertical distribution: association news that helps profit and nonprofit organizations communicate with a scattered membership, a common interest, and to keep the members in touch. Another is a community news group that is used by civic organizations to keep in touch with their members and make announcements; for example, the YMCA. The last example is institutional news that is likely the most common type and distributed to all employees. It is designed to give its readers a feeling of belonging with a mixture of employee-related and company-related news.

Horizontal distribution includes publicity newsletters that create their own readers; for example, fan clubs, resorts and politicians. Another type of a horizontal distribution newsletter is a special interest newsletter that is developed by a special interest group. The last type of horizontal distribution includes a self-interest or "digest" newsletter that is designed to make a profit.⁵⁶

The purpose of your newsletter determines which type of distribution is used and how frequently it is published. The frequency of your newsletter can be determined by

⁵⁶ Bivins, Thomas, 95-96.

many things from the regular amount of information available to how much money is available to publish.⁵⁷

Evaluation

“If you really want to find out what your readers think of your newsletter, ask them.”⁵⁸ Doing a readership survey is one of the best ways to know how your reading audience feels about your publication and what selections they are actually reading. This is how you can determine what is working, what isn’t working and what needs to be added to your layout, including article ideas. A good rule to go by is to conduct your first readership survey one year after the publication is started.⁵⁹

Some editors fear doing surveys that ask the audience what they think because either they can’t handle the criticism or feel that if the reports were bad, they would lose their job. Walter Anderson of Anderson Press and author of *How to conduct a Readership Survey* stated that the results of 100 surveys showed that most of the responses were favorable and included suggestions on what they wanted to see in the publication.⁶⁰ It can be a very valuable tool.

Some people think that they can avoid an unprofessional newsletter if they send out pre-publication surveys to the potential target audiences. Robert Baker, author of *Impact*, cautions editors about doing this by saying that “readers don’t really know what

⁵⁷ Sosnin, Betty, 106-110.

⁵⁸ Hudson, Howard Penn, p 35.

⁵⁹ Sosnin, Betty, 110.

⁶⁰ Hudson, Howard Penn, 35.

they want anyway so do not waste your time.”⁶¹

Below are a few suggestions of questions to include in a readership survey:⁶²

- Do readers keep issues on file? (for future reference).
- Do they request back copies?
- Do they send copies to people outside of the organization?
- Do they use the newsletter’s name when talking about it?
- Do they talk about it and its contents?

Rules for Creating a Successful Newsletter

The following is a collection of helpful hints for creating a successful newsletter from Gillian Flynn in the article, “For Your Information” published in Personnel Journal, Steve Friedman in the article “12 Ways to get the most from your marketing newsletter” published in Sales & Marketing Management, and Ellyn Spragins in the article, “An employee newsletter with a zing” published in Inc.

Set goals for the newsletter by defining and getting to know the audience;

Make sure a professional communicator, either in-house or external, is charged with the responsibility for providing the newsletter;

Don’t preach to the readers;

Provide a forum for readers to respond;

Write to express - not impress;

Establish a recognizable format and stick to it so readers can be comfortable;

⁶¹ Hudson, Howard Penn, 35.

⁶² “What’s your best marketing tool?” 12-15.

Develop solid graphic design;

Keep in mind when designing pages that readers "process" pages right to left in a sideways U pattern, often skipping the middle of the page;

Don't wait until design stage to begin thinking about how to use graphic elements;

Use photo captions as a way to communicate key points in a story;

Don't cram too much information into a newsletter;

Newsletters can effectively support your overall communications plan; they shouldn't serve as the plan itself,⁶³

Be honest;

Require full participation from employees;

Commit your time to a quality publication,⁶⁴

Know the needs of the audience, ask employees to make suggestions and to participate in a focus panel;

Focus on the basics;

Each newsletter should have only one message, one topic;

Use simple terms;

Think visually, include charts, graphs and photographs;⁶⁵

⁶³ Friedman, Steve, 91+.

⁶⁴ Spragins, Ellyn E. "An employee newsletter with zing," Inc. April 1992: 121.

⁶⁵ Flynn, Gillian, "For your information," Personnel Journal, August 1994: 16.

Chapter 3: Procedures

Three methods were used to gather the research for this thesis: 1) library databases of appropriate periodicals, journals and books; 2) surveys of the winners of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), International Business and Communicators (IBAC) and the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA); 3) surveys with other noted professionals.

At the new library at Rowan University, the author used the Wilson Business Abstracts on-line magazine catalogue and the on-line catalog of periodicals. This search yielded 176 articles and journal listings and six books. Of these, 20 articles were pulled for use in this study.

At the Evelyn S. Field Library, the study used a search of the on-line catalog of periodicals. After removing duplicate articles from the search list, five articles were used.

At the Alexander Library, the study used a search of the on-line catalog of periodicals, and after removing duplicate entries; it yielded three articles.

At the Somerset County Library, the study used the Magazine Index Plus on-line catalog and after deleting duplicate sources, two sources were used.

At the Roscoe West Library, the study used the on-line catalogue and found three books that were used in the study.

In addition, the author reviewed past *communication briefings* – an internationally circulated communications newsletter and found three articles that were used in this thesis.

Also, the author conducted a survey of winners of national competitions and other noted professionals. The winners were chosen from three communication societies, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). These competitions included PRSA's Bronze Anvil Awards, IABC's Gold Quill Awards and NSPRA's Gold Medallion Awards. The categories the winners were selected in were "Newsletter - Internal," "Newsletters - Up to Two Colors," "Newsletters - Three Colors or More," and "Newsletters."

Two tiers of surveys were mailed for this thesis. The first tier included thirty professionals and eleven responded with a completed survey. In addition, five noted professionals, recommended by thesis advisor Dr. Don Bagin and other professionals were also sent the survey. All of the selected professionals are well-respected and informed professionals in various areas of communications such as publishing, internal communications, and corporate communications and they all returned a completed survey.

The first step to contacting these professionals was via an introduction letter and a self-addressed, self-stamped postcard via the United States Postal Service. The willing participants returned the postcard committing to complete the survey. After the author

received the return postcard, the survey was sent to the individual along with a self-stamped, self-addressed envelope to return the completed surveys.

The second tier of surveys was mailed to 14 other professionals, nine responded with a completed survey. This tier did not include two mailing as in tier one. Instead, an introduction letter, the survey, and a self-addressed, self-stamped envelope was mailed via the United States Postal Service in one envelope.

Chapter 4 shows responses from the above surveys with newsletter winners and experts. Their answers demonstrate what they use in their publications and will create a guideline for creating an employee newsletter

Finally, Chapter 5 shows the author's ideas and conclusions on what makes the ultimate newsletter and how to incorporate all that information into a first class employee newsletter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study concentrated on the opinions of noted professionals who won awards through their professional society as well as other professionals who were recommended by thesis advisor Dr. Don Bagin.

For this thesis, the author surveyed 1995 and 1996 professional society contest winners. The professional societies researched were; Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). The competitions included PRSA's Bronze Anvil Awards, IABC's Gold Quill Awards, and NSPRA's Gold Medallion Awards. The categories the winners were selected in were "Newsletter - Internal," "Newsletters - Up to Two Colors," "Newsletters - Three Colors or More," and "Newsletters."

In the first tier of research, of the thirty 1996 winners surveyed, eleven contest winners responded:

- Denise Hanchett, from Garden City Public Schools, Garden City, MI;
- Linda Wasserman, from Rhone-Poulenc, Inc., Princeton, NJ;
- Ray E. Willis, Director of the Public Information Office, from Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV;
- Mary Jane Kinkade, from Kraft Foods, White Plains, NY;

- Ken Frost, from School District 2, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada;
- Chris Gronkiewicz, from Ameritech, Chicago, IL;
- Sharon Turner, from Bayer Corporation, Pittsburgh, PA;
- Steve Knagg, Communications Director, from Garland Independent School District, Garland, TX;
- Donna Corno, Community Relations, from Ferguson-Florissant School District, Florissant, MO;
- Keri Kent, from Alberta Motor Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada;
- Angela Mendoza, from Bayer College of Medicine, Houston, TX.

Also from the first tier, five other professionals who were surveyed responded:

- Ida Walker, from Mobil Oil, Paulsboro, NJ,
- Ed Ziegler, from Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ,
- Lori Marshall, from Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ;
- Jennifer Johnston, from South Jersey Hospital, Bridgeton, NJ;
- Michele Carbone, from Johnson and Johnson, New Brunswick, NJ.

In the second tier, fourteen professionals from 1995 contest winners, nine professionals responded:

- Robert E. Kendall, Jr., Public Information Director, from Nash-Rocky Mount Schools, Nashville, NC;

- Steven W. Bolton, Editor-Writer, from Richmond Public Schools, Richmond, VA;
- Patti Caplan, ASPR, Public Information Officer, from Howard County Public School System, Ellicott City, MD;
- Michelle Dubay, Director of Public Information and Communication, from Shawnee Mission Public Schools, Shawnee Mission, KS;
- Rich Wood, Public Information Specialist, from Sumner School District, Sumner, WA;
- Christine May, Supervisor of Publications, from DeKalb County School System, Decatur, GA;
- Kris Shutt, Lead Information Specialist, from Vancouver Public Schools, Vancouver, WA;
- Patti Smith, Public Information Coordinator, from Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Virginia Beach, VA;
- Mary Pike Gover, from YMCA of the USA, Chicago, IL.

In summary, the questionnaires give the opinion of five respected professionals and twenty respected professionals who have won an award from their professional societies from the years 1995 and/or 1996.

The rest of this chapter summarizes the findings of the completed surveys from the above mentioned professionals. The responses were categorized into the following

five categories: 1) purpose, 2) audience, 3) content, 4) layout and design, and 5) miscellaneous information. (A sample of the questionnaire is located in Appendix A.)

Purpose

Question 1: What is the purpose of your publication?

Categories	Percentile
To inform employees	56%
To communicate with employees	24%
To motivate and inform employees	8%
To recognize employees	8%
To keep a record for the organization	4%

The majority of the respondents, 56%, stated that the purpose of their publication was to inform their employees. Some respondents specifically stated that they were geared to inform their employees about current corporation happenings.

Communicating with employees ranked second for the purpose of the publication; 24% respondents stated that they needed to mainly communicate with employees about anything they needed to know. Patti Smith from the Virginia Beach City Public Schools stated that her goal was “to communicate accurate and timely information about events, programs, and goals as well as initiatives of the school board and the superintendent.”

Only 8% of the respondents said that the purpose for their employee publication was to recognize employees for their achievements. Christine May from the DeKalb

County School System stated that her publication's purpose was "to recognize employees for honors and special accomplishments and to feature employees who have special talents in their jobs and in their lives."

Another 8% said that their publication was designed to motivate as well as inform their audience in an attempt to excite their employees about the organization.

The last 4% of the respondents stated that their sole purpose for their publication was to keep a record for their organization.

Question 2: How do you cater your publication to your purpose?

Categories	Percentage
Matches publication's purpose	88%
Does not match publication's purpose	0%
No response	12%

The primary reason for this question is to determine if the publication is organized to serve the purpose in which it is intended. The author compared the answers the respondents gave for question one with the responses for question two. After comparing, the results showed that 88% of the professionals catered the information in their publications to match its purpose. For example, Steve Bolton from Richmond Public Schools publication's purpose was "to highlight staff accomplishment and provide information" and he catered his publication to achieve this purpose by having "articles (that) usually emphasize an employee's contribution and/or award for achievement."

The rest of the participants, 12%, did not respond to this question.

Question 3: Do you feel that it helps to build employee morale; if so, how?

Categories	Percentile
Yes	76%
No	8%
No Response	16%

The majority of the respondents, 76 %, stated that the publication did improve employee morale. Mary Jane Kinkade from Kraft Foods stated that the publication did improve employee morale because, “employees can better connect to the big picture and feel part of our ‘one-company’ organization. *Kraft Works* helps people feel proud of being part of Kraft Foods.” Others felt that it improved morale because the employees could see how their roles or others in their department impact the organization on a whole.

The 8% of the respondents that stated that their publication did not improve employee morale stated that it was not the publication’s objective.

Question 4: Does the purpose of your publication go along with your company’s mission statement? If possible, please enclose your company’s mission statement.

Categories	Percentile
Yes	84%
No	12%
No response	4%

The majority of the newsletters, 84%, were in line with the organization's mission or vision statement. Lori Marshall from Rowan University agreed that their newsletter was in line with the university's vision and mission statements. "Lately we have been running a series of articles dealing with the Rowan University's vision and mission."

Only 12% of the respondents stated that their newsletter did not go along with the corporation's mission statement and 4% did not respond to the question.

Audience

Question 1: Is your employee audience the entire company population or do you gear towards specific departments or interests? If yes, which departments?

Categories	Percentile
Entire population	88%
Only certain departments	8%
Entire population and outside audience (retirees)	4%

The majority of the professionals, 88%, had the entire company population as their audience while 8% only serviced select departments. Michelle Carbone from Johnson & Johnson distributed the employee newsletter only to people in the Information Management Division while Sharon Turner from the Bayer Corporation serviced the entire employee population.

Only 4% of the respondents sent their newsletter to the organization's retirees.

Audience 2: Do you accept ideas from employees? If yes, what is your process?

Categories	Percentile
Yes	96%
Rarely	4%
No	0%

Almost all of the respondents accepted suggestions from employee, 96%; but most had constraints on either topic or the way the employees submitted their suggestions. Jennifer Johnston from South Jersey Hospital stated that they “accept employee ideas (and they) are submitted on a newsletter information form, called in, or sent via fax.”

Steven W. Bolton from Richmond Public Schools said that they rarely accepted ideas from employees and they were only considered if the idea came from a “direct lead or the administration.”

None of the respondents stated that they would flatly deny ideas from employees.

Question 3: Do you allow employees to write articles for the newsletters, with understanding that they will go through an editing process? If yes, are there any limitations?

Categories	Percentile
Yes	56%
No	44%

Articles written by employees were accepted by 56% of the professionals, but a lot of them did make the comments that all articles were subject to editing and editor preference.

Space limitations and allowing department only writing accounted for the 44% of the respondents that stated they did not accept articles from employees.

Question 4: How often do you evaluate your publication?

Categories	Percentile
Yearly	52%
Once a month	16%
Quarterly	8%
Never	4%
Every 6 months	0%
Other	20%

The majority of the respondents, 52%, evaluated their publication yearly while 16% evaluated the readers once a month. Quarterly evaluations were done by 8% of the professionals and 4% said that they never administered an evaluation. The "Other" category included corporations that evaluated every two or three years.

Question 5: What techniques do you use to evaluate your publication?

Categories	Percentile
Readership Survey	44%
More than one device	16%
Focus Groups	12%
Phone Calls	8%
Face-to-face	4%
Nothing set	4%

Readership surveys were the most common form of evaluation and accounted for 44% of the respondents. Only 12% of the professionals used focus groups as their prime evaluation technique while 8% used random phone calls to employees. Face-to-face questions with employees was the evaluation technique that 4% of the respondents used, and 4% had no set format. Using more than one format with combinations such as focus groups and a readership survey accounted for 16% of the respondents.

Question 6: Are you required to include articles from upper management, even if you feel that the article content does not match your publication?

Categories	Percentile
No	72%
Yes	28%

Most of the respondents, 72%, stated that they were not required to include articles from upper management in the publication. In these cases either the editor had the final say on the publication's content or there were other vehicles in which they could include upper management ideas and articles that are appropriate for that publication.

The rest of the professionals, 28%, stated that they were required to include upper management articles, but most of the editors worked closely with management and could work out a compromise.

Content

Question 1: How many regular articles do you include?

Categories	Percentile
0-3	20%
3-6	20%
6-9	20%
9-12	20%
other	8%
no response	12%

The answers for this question were divided into five categories to come up with a range showing how many regular articles appeared in the publications. Four categories came in with a tie of 20% in the ranges from 0-3 to 9-12. Only 12% of the professionals did not respond to the question and 8% had more than 12 regular articles.

Question 2: Please circle the columns you include, if they are not listed, please add them to the bottom of the list.

Categories	Tally
Employee Recognition	16
Employee Spotlight	15
Calendar of Business Events	8
Bits and Pieces	6
Corporate Charity Highlights	6
Cultural Happenings	6
Personal Facts	6
Workshop / Training Schedule	6
Diversity Article	4
Calendar of Personal Inf.	3
Question / Answer	3
None	2
How To...	1
Editor's Column	0

Layout & Design

Question 1: Which typeface and leading are used in your body copy?

Font	Quantity
Times	8
Palantino	3
Garamond	3
Goudey	2
Agfatype	1
Century Old Style	1
Galliard	1
Helvetica	1
New Baskerville	1
Optima	1
Sans Serif	1
Stone Sans	1
Various	2
N/A	1
Font Size	
10	8
11	6
9	1
N/A	2
Leading	
12	6
13	5
15	1
11.5	1
auto	1
N/A	2

The most common font and font size chosen from these professionals were Times with a point size of 10. The most common leading for a publication was 12 points.

Question 2: Which typeface and leading are used for your headlines?

Font	Quantity
Helvetica	7
Futura	3
Franklin Gothic	2
Sans Serif	2
Aufatype	1
Century Old Style	1
Frutigen	1
Galileo	1
Galliard	1
Palantino	1
Times	1
Various	5
N/A	1
Font Size	Quantity
24	3
18	3
11	1
13	1
15	1
19	1
48	1
22	1
36	1
20	1
42	1
auto	1

Leading	Quantity
26	2
15	1
13	1
21	1
22	1
50	1
24	1
18	1
43	1
auto	1

Helvetica was the most common font used and the results from the size and leading of a headline varied.

Question 3: What size is your newsletter printed on?

Categories	Percentage
11 x 17	52%
8 ¹ / ₂ x 11	16%
8 ¹ / ₂ x 14	16%
22 x 17	8%
16 ¹ / ₂ x 11	4%
11 ¹ / ₂ x 14 ¹ / ₂	4%

The majority of the respondents, 52%, printed their publications on 11 x 17 paper. The second two most common sizes were 8¹/₂ x 11 and 8¹/₂ x 14, both each taking 16% of the respondents.

Question 4: Is your newsletter text or graphic heavy?

Categories	Percentile
Text	52%
Balanced	44%
Graphic	4%

The majority of the professionals, 52%, stated that their publications were more text heavy than graphic heavy while 44% stated that there was a balance between the text and graphics in the publication's layout. Only 4% stated that their publication was graphic heavy.

Question 5: What is the stock weight and color of you publication's paper?

Color	Percentile
White	52%
Gray	12%
Cream	4%
Editor's Eggshell	4%
Gray-Speckled	4%
Passport Writing Talc	4%
Salmon	4%
Sand	4%
N/A	12%
Weight (lb)	Percentile
60	28%
70	16%
80	12%
20	8%
24	4%
50	4%
55	4%
100	4%
N/A	20%

White paper accounted for 52% of the professionals, while 12 % printed on *gray* paper. Another 12% did not respond to what type of paper they printed on. Salmon, Editor's Eggshell, Passport Writing Talc, Sand, Gray-Speckled and Cream were colors that only 4% of the professionals used.

Twenty-eight percent of the participants used 60 lb. paper for their publication and 16% used 70 lb. Of the respondents, 20% did not respond with the stock weight of their publication.

Question 6: Is your publication folded or sealed in any way, if so how?

Categories	Percentile
Folded	64%
Folded & Stapled	20%
None	16%

The data from the participants showed three ways to handle the newsletter once it was ready to be sent to its audiences. Folded was the most common way with 64% of the respondents stating that they folded their publication at least one time. 20% of the respondents folded and stapled their publication before distribution and 16% left their newsletter flat.

Question 7: What color(s) ink(s) are used in your publication?

Categories	Percentile
Black & One Color	52%
Just Black	20%
4 Color	16%
Black & Two Colors	8%
1 Color (not black)	4%

The majority of the professionals surveyed, 52%, used black and one other color for their publication while 20% only used black. Of the respondents, only 16% used four colors in their publication and 8% used black along with two other colors. The rest of the surveyed used only one color, 20% used only black, and 4% used only one color but it was not black.

**Question 8: How many columns do you include in the layout of a normal issue?
(2,3,4, etc.)**

Categories	Percentile
3	48%
4	24%
2	4%
5	4%
varies	20%

The three-column format was the most common with 48% of the respondents stating that they used a 3-column format in their publication. A four-column format was used by 24% of the respondents. Two-column (4%) and five-column (4%) formats were

the least popular with the surveyed professionals. Finally, 20% of the participants varied the amount of columns they used in each issue to match either layout design or the amount of information needed to publish.

Miscellaneous Information

Question 1: What is the distribution size of your newsletter?

Participant Number	Size	Participant Number	Size	Participant Number	Size
1	900	2	1,100	3	1,000+
4	17,000	5	40,000	6	66,000
7	1,800	8	25,000	9	4,500
10	N/A	11	1,500+	12	2,300
13	1,250	14	1,400	15	121,000
16	9,200	17	2,600	18	16,000
19	1,200	20	4,200	21	5,000
22	4,000	23	5,000	24	2,500
25	1,200	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX

The distribution size of the respondents ranged from 900 to 121,000 employees.

The above chart shows the exact audience size of each participant's publication.

Question 2: How many people in your distribution do you feel really read your publication?

Categories	Percentile
46-55%	32%
66-75%	20%
76-85%	20%
11-25%	8%
96-100%	8%
86-95%	4%
Under 10%	4%
26-35%	0%
36-45%	0%
56-65%	0%
N/A	4%

Most professionals indicated that their percentages were based on readership surveys; for example 32% of the participants felt that 46-55% of their audience read their newsletter. Also close to this percentile were those participants (20%) that felt that around 70% of their audiences read the newsletter while another 20% felt that about 80% of the employees read their publication. Only 8% of the respondents stated that their entire population read their newsletter and to the extreme, 4% stated that less than 10% of the company's employees read the publication. From the participants, 4% stated that they did not know how many people read the newsletter.

Question 3: How many people are on your staff? (Full-, part-time, and Volunteer)

Participant Number	F/T	P/T	Participant Number	F/T	P/T	Participant Number	F/T	P/T
1	1	0	2	0	1	3	2	1
4	1	1	5	0	2	6	4	0
7	0	2	8	-	-	9	4	0
10	3	1	11	4	5	12	3	1
13	0	1	14	4	1	15	1	0
16	10	0	17	2	1	18	4	1
19	1	0	20	1	0	21	-	-
22	1	0	23	1	0	24	3	0
25	2	0	XXXX		XXXX	XXXX		XX

This data shows the number of people that worked on the internal employee newsletter for that company. The number of people ranged from one part-time employee to ten full-time employees. Some participants noted that the newsletter was not their only job duty. None of the participants had volunteers working on their staff.

Question 4: As a result of your publication, do you feel the organization has improved? If yes, then how?

Categories	Percentile
Yes	76%
No	12%
N/A	12%

The majority of the respondents, 76%, stated that their publication did improve employee morale within the company. Patti Caplan, ASPR, from the Howard County Public School System, stated, "Staff are aware of the mission of the organization

(through the publication) and how different programs and initiatives support that mission.”

Some of the surveyed professionals (12%) did not feel that their publication improved employee morale within a company but they all did think that they have improved the channel that they give the employees information. One professional stated, “I don't think the organization has improved from our publication, but I do think we have improved the way we send information to the employees.”

The last 12% did not respond with an answer to the question.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

The first part of this chapter addressed the author's response to the four subtopics researched in this thesis on creating employee newsletters: 1) purpose, 2) audience, 3) content, and 4) miscellaneous information. Recommendations for further study from the author follow the four subtopics listed above.

Purpose

An employee newsletter's objective is mainly set by its organization's goals and mission statement. The important thing to remember is to work with management and together try to create a vehicle to reach the organization's objective.

The author's research shows that the majority of corporations use their employee newsletters as a vehicle to inform their employees. Within the findings, this answer appeared fourteen times from the survey respondents. Most of them felt that the purpose of their publication was to inform the employees about the company and its happenings.

The study also showed that employee newsletters also help to communicate with employees more than to motivate or recognize them. These companies agree that an employee newsletter is produced to communicate any information to the employees.

"To recognize employees" was another noted purpose in the respondents' completed surveys. The participants felt that the main purpose of the publication was to

recognize employees for their accomplishments and to show them that the corporation appreciates their contributions.

The author feels that all of the given responses are correct. An employee newsletter should inform employees of corporation happenings, motivate them to do a good job, communicate with them and recognize their accomplishments. Unfortunately, the most common situation is that upper management dictates what the newsletter's purpose is and its direction.

It is essential that the publication does stay in line with its original purpose. An editor can assure that this happens by either doing routine readership surveys and his or her own regular evaluation. The findings show that the majority of the survey respondents feel the same way, and prove this by having their publication inconsistent with its purpose.

The employee newsletter should inform, communicate, recognize, and motivate the employees to build employee morale. This is the main reason for this type of publication. The findings confirmed this by showing that 76% of the respondents stated that their publication helps to build employee morale. The newsletter tries to bring all of the employees together and help them become enthusiastic about the organization. The newsletter wants to instill a goal of making the company the best it can be to work, as well as creating the best product or service on the market.

Almost every strategy, goal, and decision should be based on the corporation's mission statement; the employee newsletter should not be excluded from the list. This company publication should reflect and follow the corporation's mission statement. It

can help the employees understand all aspects about the place they work and why the company even exists. Only a few respondents from the survey stated that they did not follow the company's mission statement, while 84% of them stated that they try to stay consistent with their company's mission.

Audience

An employee newsletter can be created for one specific department in a company, or it can address the entire corporation population; there is no set rule. From the findings of this thesis, the majority of the employee publications in companies today address the entire population in an attempt to bring together the entire staff. On the other hand, newsletters geared toward a specific audience can also be immensely successful; it all depends on the publication's purpose.

From the research, in those publications that were created to motivate and recognize employees, their distribution included the entire company population while many of those designed to inform employees were geared toward a specific department. Also, one of the newsletters also reached outside of the current employee audience and communicated with retired employees to keep them informed about company events.

Accepting ideas from employees is always a great source for article ideas. Trying to answer the old question, "What should I write about?" has a life saver: the employee suggestion box. By allowing the employees to submit ideas for the publication, two goals are being achieved at the same time. The first, coming up with ideas for articles and the second, coming up with ideas that interest the reading audience.

Employees always have suggestions about what should appear in their publication and an editor should use their suggestions to create a newsletter that includes both mandatory information and information that the audience feels is important.

The findings of this thesis showed that about half of the editors allowed employees to write articles for the newsletter (with the understanding of the editor's editing privileges), while the other half felt that employees should be limited to suggesting articles. The author feels that it is an asset if there are employees who want to write articles for the newsletter. Give them the chance to contribute their ideas to the publication. Many benefits exist when having co-writers for newsletter articles. The main benefit is that the employee more often than not has first-hand experience on the topic with some relationship to the situation. A common problem that occurs is that the newsletter editors can not be in all the places the stories take place, so they are not familiar with the situations. If they are able to have another person write the article and they spruce it up, then the story presents a deeper understanding of the situation.

Another benefit to having employees write articles is that it gives them a chance to receive recognition. To most people it is a wonderful feeling to see something they wrote in print, and having a byline with their name on it gives them that feeling. Another plus is that their colleagues will see and recognize their achievements and congratulate them on a job well done.

There is one major snag that can occur when an editor allows employees to write articles, and that's the writer's ego. People become very defensive and their feelings can become hurt whenever someone changes what they have written. A way to try to lessen

this occurrence is to include a clause at the bottom of the submission form stating that the editor reserves all editing rights for all information published in the publication. To compensate for any changes the editor may make, all final drafts of an article must be reviewed and signed-off on by the author.

Also along that note, it is extremely important to have the author sign a consent form before any information is published in any publication. This way, if later on an employee says that an article was misprinted, the editor has a safety net. Another good rule of thumb is to have any person who is quoted in an article sign-off on their quote before reproduction.

Another source of articles and article ideas can come from upper management. On occasion, upper management may feel that an important issue needs to be addressed in the publication. This is where a good relationship with management is key to having a successful publication. Sometimes a member of management would like to include an article that does not correspond with the purpose of the publication. A good relationship with upper management allows the editor to discuss the article and maybe suggest another vehicle for its publication.

Evaluation of an employee newsletter is vital to ensure that the publication's content, style, and purpose are in line with the company and the employees. The author has found it common that most companies conduct a readership survey on a yearly basis; this was verified through the findings of this study. These readership surveys can be included in the publication either as an insert or located somewhere within its pages.

Other forms of evaluation that are helpful and can be done more frequently are focus groups, phone calls, or face-to-face surveying. These types of evaluation techniques can occur every six months, every month or even every issue if the editor wishes. But, if the editor does decide to evaluate frequently, it may be a good idea not to survey the same people all the time; it may be best to choose different people, at random, in the company each time.

Content

The content of a newsletter is directly related to the publication's purpose and dictates the tone. The content of a publication can be constant by having regular columns such as "Editor's Corner," "Meet the New Faces," and "What's Now." These are articles that are run every issue with the current happenings plugged into the spots. This can create a familiar publication that has a constant and common flow of information.

On the other hand, a publication can have absolutely no consistency from one issue to another as far as article content (this does not include the consistency necessary in layout and design). The company can look at what is going on in the company that month and center the issue on that current event. For example, one month a company could be having a family day and the employees could have their children come in for "A Day at Work with Mom/Dad." The issue could include pictures, children's quotes, etc., from the week.

Another solution is to have a few regular columns in each issue and include special event features for the cover story, this is what most of the respondents stated they

used for their publication. When asked how many regular articles they included in each issue, the answers varied from none to nine regular columns.

Some of the most common regular articles included some type of employee recognition or employee spotlights. These types of columns can show outside of work accomplishments such as educational degrees earned or volunteer achievements, as well as work-related accomplishments such as quality service and a job well done. These types of happenings include engagements, weddings, and birth announcements. In this type of column it shows that the employees have a life outside of the corporation and what they feel is important to them.

Common business related, regular columns included those that showed cultural happenings in the community where the company was located. Here employees learn about local theater events or about a great new place to eat lunch. It is important to create a positive relationship with the employees and the surrounding community.

Having a schedule of some sort seems to also be a common occurrence in the publications surveyed. These schedules can range from business events and management training classes, to employee work anniversaries and their birthdays. This helps to get employees involved in workshops the company is promoting as well as help to recognize an employee's years of service to the company.

Types of columns that are not as common anymore include those in a "Question/Answer" format or "How To..." articles. It seems that employees really want to know about who they are working with and what is really going on with the company.

It is important to keep the articles of a newsletter at a high readability level; this determines how well the audience can read the information within a story. A good way to determine if your text has a high readability is to run either the Gunning Fog Index or the Flesch Formula. Both will determine how easily a publication's audience can read the content.

The Gunning Fog Index⁶⁶

1. Select a passage of 100 words from the middle of the article.
2. Count the number of sentences in that 100 word section and divide it into 100 to discover the average sentence length in your article.
3. Next, count the number of words that have three or more syllables; do not include proper nouns, compound words or ones ending with -ed or -es.
4. Finally, add together the totals from steps 2 and 3, then multiply by (.4).

The result is the amount of schooling the reader needs to be able to read and understand the passage. Try to figure out the average reading level of the audience and have the articles cater to that level.

The Flesch Formula⁶⁷

1. Select a sample from the middle of the article that is 100 words.
2. Count the number of sentences and divide by 100 to discover the average sentence length (ASL) of the passage.
3. Count the number of syllables in the passage and divide it by 100 to discover the average word length (AWL).

⁶⁶ Bivins, Thomas, 23.

⁶⁷ Bivins, Thomas, 23-24.

4. Take those two numbers and put them into the following equation

$$\text{Readability} = 206.835 - (84.6 \times \text{AWL}) - (1.015 \times \text{ASL})$$

The following is a chart to gauge the results:

- 70-80 = very easy (romance novels)
- 60-65 = standard (newspapers)
- 50-55 = "intellectual" magazines (Harper's)
- 30 and below = scholarly journals, technical papers

Layout & Design

Typeface and leading help to determine a newsletter's look and there doesn't seem to be a overall common one to use. The only thing that is important to remember is that for body copy, try to use a serif font between the sizes of 10 and 12 points with a leading about 1 point larger than the typeface size. Some typefaces that are used include Times, Garamond, and Goudey with a point size around 10 points and a leading of 12 points.

The typeface and leading for headline copy is even more diverse than that of the body copy. A headline can be almost any typeface, as long as it is readable, and any size, as long as it is at least 2 point sizes larger than the body copy. Usually the headline is a sans serif typeface and one of the most common typefaces is Helvetica with a typesize between 18 and 24 points.

Page size, weight, and orientation are other elements that help to create a look for the publication. A newsletter's paper size normally ranges from 8¹/₂x11 to 11x17. A newsletter printed on 8¹/₂x11 paper is normally one sheet of paper printed on both sides.

This type of newsletter probably would either contain many bits of information or one large article with some small bits of information placed around the main feature. This newsletter is normally not folded or stapled unless it is folded once and mailed to the employees. The weight of the paper for a single page newsletter also needs to be heavier than normal; it usually ranges from 50 lb. to 60 lb. This is so the printing on one side of the paper does not "bleed" through to the other side after printing. Also, heavier paper can give a smaller newsletter of one piece of paper a heavier look.

A newsletter that is printed on paper larger than $8\frac{1}{2}\times 11$, is normally folded in some way to create a booklet. For example, a newsletter printed on one piece of 11×17 paper can be folded in half to create a four-page booklet. This is the most common paper size for newsletters and other in-house publications. A newsletter printed on a 11×17 piece of paper should also be printed on heavier paper since the publication also includes two-sided printing like the $8\frac{1}{2}\times 11$ piece.

The color of the paper the publication is printed on can also impact the tone of the newsletter. It seems that the most common are white or off-white, probably because it is getting easier and cheaper to have the publication printed with only one ink color. Some companies do opt to use colors that are subtle such as sand, cream or a gray variation to distinguish the publication from other papers on an employee's desk; this is also acceptable, but may be limiting when trying to use a contrasting or four-color design.

Color ink can bring a little life into a publication and the most common use of color is to use two colors, black plus another color. It is acceptable to use only black ink for a publication, but this can be limiting and boring to a reader's eye. A good

suggestion is to use a color for the publication's flag and then only spot the color within the black text. This can emphasize an important article or make a the section jump off the page at readers. It seems that slowly companies are starting to use four-color in their publications, but unfortunately, even though it is the most interesting, it's still the most expensive.

In a newsletter's layout, the number of columns and whether it is graphic or text heavy can also communicate a tone for the publication. The rule of thumb to follow is to try to stay balanced with the text and graphics in a publication. The idea is to create a sense of balance between the two, leaving as much open area as possible (open area being area on the page with no text or graphics; often called white space). A quick test to do to determine if a publication is text-heavy is called, "The Dollar Bill Test." Take a one dollar bill and move it along the surface of the publication. If at any time, in any direction, the surface under the dollar bill is all text with no open space, it is text-heavy. Generally, the idea is to keep the page balanced with attention grabbing pictures and easy- to-read text.

The number of columns in the layout is one way to control the text flow of the publication. The most common layout is a three-column layout that is broken up by using headlines, subheads, and pull quotes. Another layout that is flexible is a four-column layout. What both a three- and a four-column layout provide is more open area on the page from all of the white space between the columns.

Miscellaneous Information

The distribution size of an employee newsletter can range from 50 to 50,000 people to even more; there is no set minimum or maximum. The goal of an editor is not to increase the newsletter's distribution size, but to increase its reading audience size. Most editors like to think that everyone who receives the newsletter sits right down and devours every word on the paper; unfortunately this does not happen. An editor is lucky if 25% of his/her audience reads the majority of the articles. (This number can be determined for any publication by conducting a readership survey.)

The main purpose of an employee newsletter is to improve the employee morale of the company. It is important to try to increase the publication's reading audience so that more employees are interested in the publication and will either be motivated, recognized, or informed about the company; leading to an improvement in their morale.

Unfortunately, the newsletter process does not represent a means of two-way communication between the employees and upper management. The main reason for this lack of two-way communication is the time lapse between the articles written and the actual distribution to the employees and the lack of an employee voice to management. In most cases this is a vehicle where management can send information to the employees to inform, motivate, or recognize them. Important and timely information needs to be handled in a different way such as a company Intranet or face-to-face communication.

Topics for Further Study

This thesis is a broad overview of the capabilities and purposes of an internal employee newsletter in today's corporate world. It shows the necessity of this vehicle in the workplace and how it plays an important role in the internal communication of the corporation.

Many studies have been done showing what the correct size paper to use for a newsletter, what color ink produces the correct responses from the readers, and how to write in a way that the reading audience can understand. What really needs to be studied is why people read the publication at all. Below are some suggestions for further study that would help to improve employee newsletters and then in turn, build employee morale.

1. Evaluate why the current readers of a newsletter read the publication. Is it because they are bored and have nothing else to do? Are they truly interested in what is going on in their company? What specific aspects of the newsletter entice the employees to read the publication?
2. Survey the current readership of five successful newsletters and five unsuccessful newsletters. Discover why the readers read the successful newsletter and what its strong qualities are and then do the same with the unsuccessful newsletter, discovering weak qualities that make it undesirable.

3. Ask employees why they do not contribute to the newsletter, either by writing an article or just submitting ideas. Would they be more interested in articles written by their peers than by an editor?
4. Survey the editors of successful newsletters and determine what sets their publication above others.

APPENDIX A

Sample Survey:

Publications Survey

Thank you for completing my survey. It will be a great help in my research. If you should have any questions, please call me.

Please attach another piece of paper if there is not enough space for you to answer the questions.

After you complete the survey, please return it in the pre-stamped and addressed envelope.

Thank You,

Linda Blair

Purpose:

1. What is the purpose of your publication?
2. How do you cater your publication to your purpose?
3. Do you feel that it helps to build employee morale; if so, how?
4. Does the purpose of your publication go along with your company's mission statement? If possible, enclose your company's mission statement.

Audience:

1. Is your employee audience the entire company population or do you gear towards specific departments or interests? If yes, which departments.
2. Do you accept ideas from employees? If yes, what is your process?
 3. Do you allow employees to write articles for the newsletters, with understanding that they will go through an editing process. If yes, are there any limitations?
4. How often do you evaluate your publication?
Once a month Quarterly every 6 months yearly other
5. What techniques do you use to evaluate your publication?

6. Are you required to include articles from upper management, even if you feel that the article content does not match your publication?

Content

- 2. How many regular articles do you include?
- 3. Please circle the columns you include, if they are not listed, please add them to the bottom of the list.

Question / Answer	Editor's Column	Workshop/Training Schedule
How To...	Bits and Pieces	Employee Spotlight
Diversity Article	Employee Recognition	Calendar of Business Events
Cultural Happenings, i.e., local theater reviews or announcements	Personal Facts i.e., service, birth and wedding announcements	Calendar of Personal Info., i.e., employee birthdays
Corporate Charity Highlights	(others) <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Layout & Design

- 1. Which typeface and leading are used in your body copy?
- 2. Which typeface and leading are used for your headlines?
- 3. What paper size is your newsletter printed on?
- 4. Is your newsletter text or graphic heavy?
- 5. What is the stock weight and color of your publication's paper?
- 6. Is your publication folded or sealed in any way, if so how?
- 7. What color(s) ink(s) are used in your publication?

8. How many columns do you include in a normal issue? (2,3,4, etc.)

Miscellaneous Information

1. What is the distribution size of your employee newsletter?

2. How many people in your distribution do you feel really read your publication?

3. How many people are on your staff?

Full-Time _____ Part-Time _____ Volunteer _____

4. As a result of your publication, do you feel the organization has improved? If yes, then how?

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