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Review of Current Newsletter Literature with Today's Novice Publisher in Mind

by
Tobias Bruhn

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 10, 1999

Approved by _____ Professor

Date Approved May 10, 1999

Abstract

Bruhn, Tobias

Review of Current Newsletter Literature with
Today's Novice Publisher in Mind, 1999

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Donald Bagin, Public Relations

The purpose of this project was to develop a comprehensive overview of current newsletter literature with the needs of novice publishers in mind. Just like any large organization or publishing house, first-time publishers use newsletters to communicate with their employees, club or church members, or customers.

However, in this booming industry, first-time publishers not only compete against each other, but also professional publishers with far greater resources and capabilities. No wonder that publishers go in and out of business on a daily basis. Therefore, this thesis limited the information to selected components of the newsletter production process appropriate for novice publishers. The information and expert advice can help them produce their publications and provide knowledge on how to overcome the odds of publishing a for-profit or not-for profit newsletter.

The thesis is presented in four chapters, which explore not only the most important newsletter components, but also give novice publishers expert advice, production costs, pitfalls and a brief historical newsletter overview.

In addition, chapter four includes a top ten newsletter tip list that summarizes the most important information found in the research. This list serves as a quick reference guide to first-time publishers who want information that they can use immediately for their publications.

The author compiled the research by reviewing books, trade publications, Internet newsletters and web sites, past theses and newsletter directories, and by searching several computer databases.

Mini-Abstract

Bruhn, Tobias

Review of Current Newsletter Literature with
Today's Novice Publisher in Mind, 1999

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Donald Bagin, Public Relations

The purpose of this project was to develop a comprehensive overview of newsletter literature with the needs of novice publishers in mind. Incorporating expert advice and information from the Internet, communication newsletters, and selected newsletter literature, the thesis offers first-time publishers practical advice for the most important newsletter components. In addition, a top-ten newsletter tip list serves as quick reference.

Acknowledgments

Believe or not, but this was probably the most difficult page to write because I did not want to forget thanking anybody. Well, I want to start by thanking my parents and my brother, who supported me, especially financially, and made my five-year stay in the United States possible. I hope I can repay you one day.

Next, I want to thank my girlfriend, future fiancée and wife, for supporting me and bearing my different moods. I know I was not always easy to get along with, especially when I had to work on this thesis despite a beautiful day outside. I love you. In addition, I want to thank her parents and Genie DeCou and her family for treating me like a family member. Thanks for everything.

I also want to thank my teachers for offering their advice and helping me write this thesis. First of all, Dr. Bagin -- I would probably still be writing chapter two if he had not pointed me in the right direction time after time. I thank him for always finding the time to meet with me, his interesting stories in class, his out-of-class advice, his compliments and criticisms, his challenges that helped me become a better PR practitioner, and especially for treating me to lunch at Joe's Sub Shop.

I also want to thank Dr. Sparks for providing me with lots of valuable advice for over four years, Dr. Penrod for convincing me to become a public relations major, and Tony Fulginiti for challenging me to become a better writer, thinker and communicator despite my lack of knowledge of Latin.

At last, I will forever cherish the memories of four great individuals, friends, and group members that not only helped each other pass the Comps, but also made sure that they completed their theses on time. You guys made this whole experience a lot more fun. Thanks.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines a newsletter as “a small newspaper containing news or information of interest chiefly to a specialized group.”¹ However, this definition misleads because a newspaper displays slightly different characteristics than a newsletter. A newspaper usually comes out daily or weekly and contains different stories and sections. In addition, it usually contains advertisements and appeals to the general audience. At last, several writers, artists, photographers, editors, and printers work on a single issue.

On the other hand, newsletters usually do not contain advertisements and have a flexible publication schedule. Also, technology allows a single person to produce a newsletter at home and with a minimum of resources.

A better definition reads, “A newsletter can be said to be any typically small-format, print publication that purports to deliver timely news and information to a limited target audience in a fairly perishable format, quickly, inexpensively, and with little effort.”²

According to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), more than 11,000 subscription, membership, and free newsletters circulate the country. Five-thousand of those newsletters are for-profit only, reports the Newsletter Publisher Association. Over the last ten years, newsletter production in North America increased by 80 percent.

The first-known example of a newsletter was introduced by Phillip Edward Fugger of Augsburg, Germany, in the late 1500s. He reported business

¹ *The Merriam Webster Dictionary*, Fifth Edition, Merriam-Webster, Inc., Springfield, Mass.

² Thomas, H.B. (1993). Fundamentals of Successful Newsletters. Lincolnwood, Il: NTC Publishing Group.

news gathered by trade centers around Europe and overseas. His publication included the basic characteristics of modern newsletters: specialized information prepared for a specific audience, stated author Barbara A. Fanson in her book, *Producing a First-Class Newsletter*.

The first modern newsletter, introduced in 1918, was the *Whaley-Eaton Report*. The first newsletter in North America, called *The Boston News-Letter*, was published from 1704 to 1774. The first business newsletter, called the *South Carolina Current*, started in 1774. Since colonial times, people published newsletters to communicate internally as well as externally.

The history of newsletters consists of successes and failures. While the newsletter business might seem overwhelming to a novice publisher, one can learn a great deal from its history. The *Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters* lists over 5,000 national and international newsletters that range in content from architecture to Zebra watching. However, lots of newsletters do not survive their first year of existence due to several reasons that range from lack of research to insufficient funding. Therefore, a historic look can help identify pitfalls to avoid common mistakes made by other publishers.

Literally thousands of clubs and small organizations nationwide look for ways to communicate with their members. Even though these organizations do not compare to national corporations, they still need to send out publications to inform their members and customers. Newsletters have become the communication tool that clubs and smaller organizations use more and more frequently.

Obviously, newsletters appear in various shapes and formats; distribution methods can also vary. People can choose between publishing for-profit or not-for-profit newsletters. Also, newsletters can be distributed within an organization, which is called a vertical publication, according to Thomas

Bivins. Horizontal publications involve a distribution to a more narrowly defined audience. Bivins breaks newsletters down into four categories:

- **Constituency newsletters** - covers any newsletter published to reach a special-interest audience to keep in touch.
- **Employee or member newsletters** - distributed among an internal audience. Used by both profit and non-profit organizations.
- **For-profit newsletters** - create their own audiences by appealing to special-interest groups. Content usually offers advice or presents solutions.
- **Advocacy newsletters** - usually produced in addition to other types of newsletters already being published by an organization. Published with an extremely narrow focus.

But why do people choose newsletters as their communications tool? According to Charlotte Preston's article in *Association Management*, members read newsletters for quick and brief access of information; therefore, newsletters may have become the communication vehicles of choice.

Also, with the introduction of desktop publishing almost anybody, with a computer and certain resources, can produce newsletters. James E. Grunig, journalism professor at the University of Maryland, said, "With desktop publishing, newsletters have become a flexible medium that can be customized for each public."

"A newsletter is special because it presents difficult-to-find information," said William Bond, author of *Home-Based Newsletter Publishing*.³ Lots of people look for ways to share their knowledge and interest in a certain subject or field with others. Newsletters can offer such a way and, therefore, remain popular with lots of people because of their flexible use. For example, an organization can publish up to five internal newsletters, each discussing different topics, that target specific sub-groups in the organization.

³ Bond, W.J. (1992). Home-Based Newsletter Publishing: A Success Guide for Entrepreneurs. New York: Liberty Hall Press/McGraw-Hill.

To please growing audiences, expert and novice publishers use newsletters to communicate to their publics in a brief but yet effective way. "Many people prefer their news in bite-size pieces."⁴ Austin Kiplinger, the original publisher of *The Kiplinger Letter*, once said, "Newsletters are in the business to help people adjust to the realities of life."⁵

Today, newsletters inform on thousands of subjects. Themes range from health issues to auto body repair; from Harley-Davidson to doll collecting. Almost anything you can think of, can or already does appear in some shape or form in a publication. Newsletters very often become the first publishing choice because of their production and distribution cost.

"One basic assumption has always held true in newsletters of every type - people have grown dependent on newsletters as a source of information pertinent to their special interests," said Peggy Nelson in her book *How to Create Powerful Newsletters*. "They're read fast; the content is usually thought of as superior to other sources of information."⁶

The advantages of newsletters basically lie in their versatility. People can make money with newsletters or use an informative approach for a non-profit cause. Even though newsletters can have two different purposes, production components usually bear some resemblance. However, without the basic knowledge of assembling a newsletter, more publishers will produce bad publications that will flood an already overcrowded market.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the large number of newsletters that flood the market year after year, it becomes inevitable that both good and bad publications reach

⁴ Fanson, B.A. (1994). Producing a First-Class Newsletter. Canada: International Self-Counsel Press Ltd.

⁵ Nelson, P. (1993). How To Create Powerful Newsletters: Easy ways to avoid the pitfalls 80 percent of all newsletters face. Chicago: Bonus Books, Inc.

⁶ Nelson 14

audiences. Bad newsletters usually get published when publishers suffer from a lack of knowledge. Today, more and more novice publishers start putting out newsletters for their clubs and organizations. However, a lack of knowledge, time constraints, and insufficient funding do not allow them to produce newsletters that can compete with better ones.

Reviewing several newsletter directories, it seems difficult to break into the market with a unique idea. However, newsletters that approach well defined audiences and present a good product stand a much better chance, even if the idea is not unique.

What people want to achieve is standing out from their competition. "People spend too much time comparing their ideas or newsletters with those of others," said Bond. "Focus instead on competing with yourself and do a little better each day."

Purpose of the Study

This thesis offers novice publishers suggestions on how to publish effective newsletters. Readers learn about the different stages of the production process, starting with defining the purpose and content, to surveying the audience and conducting follow-up research. In addition, first-time publishers familiarize themselves with the ingredients of successful newsletters and gather important tips from experienced publishers.

Besides outlining the components, the thesis gives some of the average costs of individual components, including printing, professional writing and editing, etc.

Newsletters usually fail because of certain pitfalls. Therefore, the thesis determines some of the pitfalls of newsletter publishing and offers suggestions on avoiding them.

The thesis also discusses the importance of public relations in newsletter

publishing. According to Augustine S. Ihator's article in *Public Relations Quarterly*, "What many small entrepreneurs fail to realize is that they can perform even better and compete more successfully with established companies through creative public relations."

Many first-time publishers focus their attention entirely on marketing their products, not realizing the capabilities and often lower costs of creating publicity through public relations techniques. Leslie Eicher, president of Eicher Communications in San Diego, describes public relations as a way to outsmart competitors rather than trying to outspend them. The thesis also explains some of the differences between public relations and marketing and their importance to novice publishers.

Importance of this Study

"A well-done newsletter makes clients (and potential ones) feel good about doing business with you."⁷ This, roughly, defines the purpose every newsletter publisher should keep in mind.

The thesis offers important information regarding planning, designing, budgeting, writing, printing and distributing newsletters. In addition, novice publishers can use the information to determine their newsletter intentions and if they want to publish for-profit or not-for-profit publications.

Based on the information, first-timers can decide on the newsletter's marketability, in terms of monetary gains, or profitability, in terms of informing the audience.

The thesis gives novice publishers different options and ideas for producing newsletters that target the needs of their audiences. Furthermore, it encourages people to go forth with their ideas by offering the necessary

⁷ Farrell, J. (1998). Newsletters that KISS and tell. Direct Marketing, v60, n12, 58-60.

guidance. The information assembled helps them determine if their newsletters would make the cut in this crowded industry.

Even more important, the thesis shows average production costs. Even though the costs change according to the newsletter's purpose, design, circulation and size, the thesis gives first-timers an idea of the overall expense of different ingredients. For example, hiring a professional writer could cost \$50 to \$100 per hour. Therefore, producing a four-page newsletter could cost \$1,000 just for the writing. Clearly, novice publishers can not afford that kind of money for producing their clubs' newsletters.

Once determined to publish, people can use all the information to create the best newsletters possible and still use their funds efficiently. They also understand the importance of surveying an audience to effectively tailor their newsletters to them.

Too often, novice publishers suffer from a lack of vision when producing newsletters. Their narrow mindedness can inhibit the newsletter production. For example, most publishers think that mailing the newsletters to their audiences remains the only way. However, recent technological advances, like the Internet, e-mail or fax services, allow distribution to an audience in more cost-efficient ways.

Topics of discussion, include:

- Market determination
- Content
- Writing
- Editing and proofreading
- Research and surveying audiences
- Desktop publishing
- Layout and design
- Color
- Printing and printing costs

- Distribution
- Public relations
- Marketing
- Pitfalls

Assumptions and Limitations

The thesis does not serve as a step-by-step, fool proof guide to novice publishers that guarantees a successful newsletter. In addition, the average costs provided offer only an estimate, according to current prices of today's economy, and not a fixed production cost.

Because the thesis was designed for novice publishers, it concentrates on only three kinds of newsletters:

- 1. Association publications** - distributed to members with news of meetings, profiles and how-to information.
- 2. Organization newsletters** - issued by the government, churches, clubs and citizen organizations. Objectives are awareness and education.
- 3. Subscription newsletters** - published regularly and sold to make profit. Usually contain industry news, tips, profiles and how-to information.

Depending on the prior experience, knowledge, and intent of newsletter publishers, some sections do not apply or only serve as a reminder.

Because the resources available to novice publishers remain rather limited, compared to professional designers and large organizations, the thesis discusses the topics under a cost-efficient theme.

Due to the widespread use of computers and availability of different design and word processing software, the thesis focuses on producing newsletters in the convenience of the home. However, no suggestions are made regarding specific software applications and the usage of these applications.

On the one hand, color can add a professional look to newsletters. On the other hand, color can double or triple the publications' printing cost.

Therefore, most novice publishers usually do not produce four-color newsletters and concentrate their efforts on one-color printing. Therefore, the thesis does not go into much detail on how to use color most effectively. The thesis only briefly discusses how color adds to the appearance.

The distribution section of this thesis discusses how to mail newsletters most effectively. Even though technological advances allow publishers to send their publications several different ways, including e-mail, the Internet, or the fax, the thesis does not discuss the latter options.

The thesis does not discuss specific copyright laws, special insurance policies that can help protect against lawsuits, and legal issues small business-owners can face. In addition, it does not discuss licensing requirements for newsletter businesses.

The research section of this thesis mentions its importance and offers suggestions on how to conduct research by using the publication. However, it does not go into detail regarding specific research techniques.

The government offers help to small-business owners to jump start their businesses. For example, state and federal funds support various publications, and seminars and workshops are offered by various organizations. However, the thesis does not mention these national organizations that support first-time business owners or offer a list of Internet web sites designed to address their concerns.

The marketing and public relations sections explain their importance and differences to first-time publishers. The thesis does not explain how to develop a detailed marketing or public relations plan. In addition, it refrains from explaining the different types of advertisements or providing guidelines on how to advertise.

Procedures

The first step in examining the topic of newsletters involved purchasing several books over the Internet.

A literature search, conducted at Rowan University's library in Glassboro, NJ, revealed several articles, from a variety of publications, and books on the topic. Articles and books were retrieved on subjects, such as home-based publishing, newsletter fundamentals and desktop publishing, to achieve a topic overview.

The Internet served mostly as an observation tool. It offered numerous web sites that displayed online newsletters.

These online newsletters served as references and examples when searching through the literature. The newsletters were compared and analyzed according to the guidelines found in the literature. However, these examples will not be referred to throughout the thesis.

Definition of Terms

- **Bleed** - when ink prints to the very edge of the page
- **Blueline** - a common form of a proof. A sample of your piece to be printed that shows all the pieces together and all the color breaks.
- **Caption** - also called cutline. Editorial material accompanying an illustration
- **Deck head** - introductory text line underneath the headline
- **Demographics** - characteristics that detail "what" the audience is like-- geography, age, sex, marital status, and ergraphic information -- their occupational profile
- **Descender** - that portion of the lower case letter that hangs below the baseline of the other letters.

- **Duotones** - making two half-tone plates from one-color illustration and etching them to produce a two-tone effect
- **Flush Left or Ragged Right Text** - the first letters of each line are lined up with each other, but the lines themselves are of irregular length.
- **Flush Right or Ragged Left Text** - the last letters of each line are lined up with each other, but the lines themselves are of irregular length.
- **Focus Group** - nonprobable, controlled questioning of six to eight carefully selected participants from a target audience to discover attitudes and opinion about certain issues
- **Font or Type Face** - a specific type design
- **Gunning-Mueller Fog Index** - a way to determine the grade level of your writing using the average sentence length, the number of tri-syllabic words and a mathematical formula
- **Halftones** - photograph, charcoals or other illustrations that contain graduated tones of black and white--ash or shades of gray
- **Headline** - used to invite readers to become involved. Headlines, the most basic text-organizing tool, help readers decide whether to read a document or article.
- **Justified Text** - produces lines of equal length. The type aligns to both the left and right margins. Word spacing is adjusted automatically to create the even line endings.
- **Kicker** - Small, secondary headline, placed above a primary headline.
- **Line Spacing or Leading** - the vertical distance from the baseline of one line of type to the baseline of the next line of type.
- **Masthead** - a listing of the staff that is involved in the preparation and distribution of a publication. This usually appears in a box on the editorial page

- **Nameplate** - also called flag. It appears on the front page of a newspaper or newsletter.
- **Pica** - Anglo-American unit measuring column width and line length. Six picas equal one inch and one pica has 12 points.
- **Pigmentation** - coloration with or deposition of pigment (a coloring matter)
- **Printer Measures** - measures given in points and picas
- **Psychographics** - characteristics that detail "who" the audience is -- likes or dislikes, preferences, inclinations, leaning on positions
- **Pull Quote** - Words or sentence from an article printed in large type and inserted in the page as a graphic. Serves as copy-breaking device
- **Random Sample** - a sample population, randomly selected from a universe, where each member of the universe has an equal chance to be selected
- **Reverse** - Text or art in light on a dark background, usually white on black
- **Running Fax Poll** - survey sent via fax. Encourages two-way communication between sender and receiver.
- **Sans-Serif** - type characters with no serifs. All parts of each character have the same thickness. Readers sometimes have trouble reading a full page of this variety of type.
- **Screen Tints** - Color created by dots instead of solid ink coverage.
- **Serif** - appendage or foot is added to or projects from the top and or bottom of the character. Used so reader can blend letters together into clusters of words.
- **Spot Color** - Color created by mixing pigments into ink, as compared to color created by four-color process printing.

- **Subhead or Secondary Headline** - a small heading placed between paragraphs in the body of a news story. It helps break up long copy blocks.
- **Survey** - study of a universe by sampling or census using a questionnaire instrument and administered in person, on the phone, over the Internet, by mail or in publications
- **Teaser** - Words or short phrase that tries to entice readers to read the publication's contents.
- **Thumbnail** - a small drawing that gives a rough idea of the layout of the page
- **Type size** - a measurement in points from the bottom of the descender to the top of the ascender, or the height of a capital letter

Chapter 2

Research Review

The author combed through books, periodicals and Internet web sites to research the topic of newsletters. In addition, several interviews with newsletter experts revealed information useful to novice publishers.

The research for this thesis began with the purchase of several books from the Internet web site *Amazon.com*. These books were purchased to gain a general overview of this topic and served as reference and provided examples throughout this thesis.

The author then accessed three of Rowan University's library databases to search for articles related to the topic. "Newsletter," "newsletter and design," "newsletter and publishing," "desktop-publishing and newsletter," "printing and newsletter," and "marketing and newsletter" were the keywords used to search the INFOTRAC Search Bank and the Lexis-Nexis online library database. These searches produced most of the research for this thesis. The keyword searches produced a total of 747 articles from which 26 articles were selected.

The Telnet search bank, which searches for library publications, was used to gather more literature related to the topic. This search found 23 publications related to the thesis from which six were selected.

The author also read two theses from former Rowan University graduate students. Brian C. McCallum's thesis, "Research Findings and Proven Techniques for Producing Effective Promotional Literature," and Jody Rettig's thesis, "Creating Effective and Attractive Promotional Literature," both contained useful information.

Jack Gillespie, editor of *communication briefings*, a newsletter for communicators, mailed the author 12 issues of the publication upon request. The issues provided quick tips that novice publishers can implement.

The Internet was used throughout this thesis to gather information from related web sites. However, the inability to effectively narrow the searches resulted in several hours wasted online. Only four web sites were found that contained useful information.

The research methods revealed a vast amount of information. After evaluating all the research, the author selected the information most important to novice publishers. This chapter was further divided into sections so that readers may read only the information pertinent to them. What follows is a collection of the most relevant information found in the selected literature.

Publishing a Newsletter and What to Look For

"Publishing a newsletter will appeal to anyone who believes passionately enough in a particular topic to want to invest their time and money in it," said Lisa Shaw in her book, *How To Make Money Publishing From Home*.⁸ Today, most new newsletter publications are designed to address a very targeted audience because it becomes easier and cheaper to understand their needs than it is to reach a mass audience, according to Cheryl Woodard, from the Publishing Business Group.⁹

First Step Communications, an Australian marketing company, believes that putting your information in a newsletter shows several things:

- **Expertise:** Your newsletter demonstrates your expertise in your field, reassuring current customers and attracting new ones.
- **Credibility:** Your newsletter shows that you have enough confidence to put your thoughts, ideas and suggestions into writing.
- **Prominence:** Your name is seen at regular intervals and associated with a

⁸ Shaw, L. (1997). How To Make Money Publishing From Home. California: Prima Publishing.

⁹ Woodard, C. (1998). How To Make Newsletters and Magazines That Will Last. The Publishing Business Group [On-line]. Available: http://www.publishingbiz.com/html/publishing_success.html, 1.

valuable service.¹⁰

Carole Hedden, writer and communications/planning consultant, said in *communication briefings* that there are several questions novice publishers should ask themselves before starting a newsletter. These questions help to determine a publication's image:

- When customers hear your product name, what do you want them to think?
- When customers see your product, what do you want them to notice?
- What is the product's personality?¹¹

Woodard also believed that novice publishers should ask themselves several questions before launching their newsletters. She offered a list of seven questions that publishers could use to rate themselves. If publishers score 25 points or better, using a scale of 1 to 5 for each attribute (1-extremely weak/5-extremely strong), chances are they will love being publishers. The questions were:

1. Do you have an entrepreneurial personality?
2. Are you moved by passion, a vision, a mission or a dream?
3. Do you have something valuable to say?
4. Can you convince other people to help you?
5. Do you (and also your readers) have a sustained interest in your subject?
6. How is your tolerance for financial risk?
7. Do you have connections?¹²

Despite all the expert advice offered in newsletter literature, first-time publishers need to realize that their publication could fail. But why do they

¹⁰ First Step Communication [On-line]. Available: http://www.firststep.com.au/solid_ground/email-newsletter1.html, 2-3.

¹¹ Hedden, C. As cited in Marketing Tools and communications briefings, Feb. 1997, 6.

¹² Woodard, C. (1998). A Self-Test: Is Newsletter or Magazine Publishing For You? The Publishing Business Group [On-line]. Available: <http://www.publishingbiz.com/html/self-test.html>, 1-2.

fail? According to Fanson, the ten most common reasons while readers do not read newsletters were:

1. Unattractive appearance
2. Boring headlines that don't offer benefits
3. Too much type and not enough art
4. Not distributed to the right audience
5. Typographical errors
6. Writing style does not suit readership; too much jargon or too simple
7. Articles do not interest the reader
8. Looks too amateurish and isn't taken seriously
9. Lacks "color" or graphics
10. Uninteresting or ineffective articles¹³

The *PHC Profit Report*, as cited in *communications briefings*, identified these three common newsletter mistakes:

1. Losing sight of your audience.
2. Getting carried away with design. Too many colors, boxes, fonts, or other graphic elements block readability.
3. Talking more about "us" than "you." Readers aren't interested in you. They are interested in what you can do for them.¹⁴

Woodard offered other deadly publishing mistakes:

- Underestimating your competition: When a field is hot, there will be lots of publishers jumping into it. Figure out how you can distinguish your publication from the others.
- Trying to do it all by yourself: That's a deadly mistake for two reasons: first, your ideas always improve when thoughtful people challenge them. And second, publications are too much work for one to handle alone.
- Thinking only about the next issue and not the future: Set some goals and then consider different ways to meet them.
- Taking money from the wrong people: Evaluate advertisers you consider taking for your publication and if they could influence the content of

¹³ Fanson 25

¹⁴ PHC Profit Report. As cited in communication briefings, June 1997, 5.

your publication.¹⁵

Nancy Olson, vice president of publications for the American Society for Training and Development, thought that the biggest mistake a publisher can make is think that they know the market better than the customer.¹⁶

Now, knowing how easy it is to make mistakes in the publishing business, what are some of the authors' hints included in the literature to avoid these mistakes? Jim Farrell, manager of public relations at *Dickinson Direct*, offered novice publishers an eight-step reminder on producing a good newsletter:

- Tell newsworthy stories
- Do not disguise advertising as news
- Develop a plan to produce the newsletter in a timely and professional manner
- Know who is going to write, produce and receive the newsletter
- Include a call for action and a means of response
- Be "response-friendly"¹⁷

Clobridge offered five ways to attract more readers including:

1. Let the headlines and subheads carry the basics of your message.
2. Use action photographs to support your copy.
3. Use creative graphics to convey complicated information.
4. Give your readers a means of giving you feedback.
5. Focus each newsletter issue on a single topic.¹⁸

Woodard offered 10 simple steps novice publishers can take to increase the chance that their own publishing ideas will succeed:

¹⁵ Woodard, C. (1998). Five Deadly-Publishing Mistakes (And How To Avoid Them). *The Publishing Business Group* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.publishingbiz.com/html/fiveerrors.html>, 1-4.

¹⁶ Porter 71

¹⁷ Farrell 58-60

¹⁸ Clobridge, A. (April 1997). Doing political newsletters: 5 ways to attract more readers. *Campaigns & Elections*, 18(4), 37-39.

1. Concentrate on markets that you know very well. You'll find it easier to manage your publishing business if you have a deep connection to your field.
2. Listen to your readers and advertisers and develop products responsive to their needs. Study the information habits of your audience before you design your publication.
3. Aim for readers who have continuing information needs.
4. Get help from experienced people. You can get excellent advice from your printer or banker. Also, hire people with publishing experience to advise you.
5. Adopt good ideas whenever you find them. One fast way to master the business is to study what's already working. For example, collect media kits from other magazines or renewal promotions from other newsletters and see if you can borrow some good tactics from them.
6. Befriend influential people in your market and ask them to support your publication.
7. Study the results of your actions.
8. Be prepared for change. Save some of your resources for the proverbial rainy day and always consider altering strategies ahead of time because the one thing you can count on is change.
9. Look for ancillary profit opportunities. Many publications make a good portion of their profits from special reports, seminars, books, videos and other ancillary products.
10. Plan well before you leap into print. Publications are relatively easy to launch but hard to maintain.¹⁹

When asked how publishers can stay ahead of the competition, John T. Adams III, vice president of the Society of Human Resource Management, said, "A lot of it is intuition. A lot of it is paying attention to what's going on. A lot of it is talking to your members and your advertisers and your suppliers and seeing what's happening in the world you're serving."²⁰

¹⁹ Woodard. Available: http://www.publishingbiz.com/html/hot_publishing_tips.html, 1-2.

²⁰ Porter 74

Determining a market

"Today, every person you want to reach wants proof of your promises as well as your loyalty to him or her as a customer," said Peggy Nelson, author of *How To Create Powerful Newsletter: Easy ways to avoid the pitfall 80 percent of all newsletters face*. "And today, you need to give that loyalty with a show of sincerity, if you're going to compete."²¹

According to Edward A. Hamilton, author of *Newsletter Design*, most newsletters target people with specialized needs and interests, because this "captive" audience has more than a casual interest in the publication's contents."²²

"Lots of would-be publishers forget to make sure there is an abiding need in the world for the information they want to provide," said Woodard. Therefore, "to find an audience, you have to understand what a group of potential readers want, locate them at a reasonable cost and determine how much they will pay to get your publication."²³ Henry Luce, founder of *Time-Life Magazine*, put it best when he said that lots of publishers underestimate their readers' intelligence or overestimate their interest.²⁴

Once an audience has been determined, the segmentation proves to be another challenge to publishers. "Research tells us that reaching the hard-core audience is extremely difficult and usually a waste of resources," said Thomas Bivins in his book, *Fundamentals of Successful Newsletters*. "Instead, try to reach those who haven't made up their minds yet. By convincing them, you will neutralize those opposed to you."²⁵

²¹ Nelson, P. (1993). How To Create Powerful NEWSLETTERS: Easy ways to avoid the pitfalls 80 percent of all newsletters face. Chicago: Bonus Books, Inc.

²² Hamilton, E.A. (1996). Newsletter Design: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creative Publications. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

²³ Woodard. Available: <http://www.publishingbiz.com/html/self-test.html>, 1.

²⁴ Hamilton 12

²⁵ Thomas, H.B. (1993). Fundamentals of Successful Newsletters. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing Group.

Nelson wants novice publishers to remember five things when selling their product:

1. You're selling your image.
2. You're selling promises.
3. You're making promises that come to life in your newsletter.
4. You're selling reliability.
5. You're selling expertise.²⁶

But what happens when the newsletter does not produce the expected income? Most novice publishers, investing their own money in the publication, expect immediate profits. Nelson advised publishers to give their newsletter two-years to establish itself, adding that customer drop-off is most significant during the first year.²⁷ According to Bond, many studies show that the average subscriber has a five-year life.²⁸

"The more often you send the newsletter to your customers, donors, or prospects, the more you'll bond your relationship," Nelson said.²⁹ However, more than two-thirds of new publications started by first-time publishers fail within a few months, according to Woodard.³⁰

Content

"Your topic has to be narrow enough so it has PR value and you have some kind of a niche, so pick your subject carefully and make sure you know where to find your prospective buyers," said Shaw.³¹

Fanson explained that when she got started, she created an annual

²⁶ Nelson 189

²⁷ Nelson 200

²⁸ Bond, W.J. (1992). Home-Based Newsletter Publishing: A Success Guide for Entrepreneurs. New York: Liberty Hall Press/McGraw-Hill.

²⁹ Nelson 192

³⁰ Woodard, C. (1998). 10 Hot Tips For First Time Publishers. The Publishing Business Group [On-line]. Excerpt from Starting and Running a Successful Newsletter or Magazine. Available: http://www.publishingbiz.com/html/hot_publishing_tips.html, 1.

³¹ Shaw 67

editorial plan at the beginning of each publishing year. Charlotte Preston agreed in her article, "Tips of the Trade for Newsletters."³²

Fanson further suggested including regular features in the newsletter to lessen the burden of coming up with completely new ideas for every issue. Another tip, speaking from experience, was to keep a file of story fillers in case publishers struggle to fill the newsletter. The file should include copyright-free cartoons, community information, sketches, photos, graphs, charts, etc.³³

Nelson also welcomed the idea of an annual editorial plan and regular features. She suggested columns that could regularly appear in a newsletter:

- Gripe or Opinion Panel: Invite readers to become part of the publication
- Letter from the editor
- Marketing or Industry trends
- New research reports and analyses
- This month's spotlight feature
- News hotline
- This month's call to action³⁴

"The more you know about your product, your newsletter topic, the easier it will be to choose the best possible content," said Bond.³⁵ "People like to feel they're part of an exclusive in-group," added Nelson. "They like to feel special and think that they're getting something not everyone can have, because they'd like to be the envy of others."³⁶

Obviously, novice publishers strive to select the best possible content for their subscribers. However, this task bears some danger. "Keep internal news to

³² Preston, C. (1995). Tips of the trade for newsletters. Association Management, 47(5), 95-100.

³³ Fanson, B.A. (1994). Producing a First-Class Newsletter. Canada: International Self-Counsel Press Ltd.

³⁴ Nelson 32

³⁵ Bond 13

³⁶ Nelson 20

about 25 percent of the total content," said Farrell.³⁷ Nelson said, "Pure promotionalism will turn your piece into a brochure, one giant space ad, or one giant mail-order piece."³⁸

Bond stated a rule-of-thumb for newsletter publishers that read, "You are being paid to find information for the customer that he or she cannot find." He then suggested several ways to get content for the publication:

industry magazines and newsletters, specialized libraries, a public reference library, books, associations, large companies, distributors' literature, executive speeches, television and radio, Internet, interviews with key people, personal observation and contacts.³⁹

"Variety makes it interesting," stated the *Managers Handbook*, as cited in *communication briefings*. The *Handbook* especially emphasized the importance of reader contributions saying, "Ask customers and outside specialists for input. If they won't write, get their ideas down on paper and write them yourself." Preston suggested, "To help encourage members to write, use their photos to garner recognition from peers."⁴⁰

Another technique publishers could use involved including bylines because they lend legitimacy, and writers are more likely to contribute again. Another tip mentioned in the *Handbook* suggested that readers will remember a helpful idea longer than an amusing story.⁴¹

Fanson also encouraged publishers to ask for contributors, because they provide new perspectives, new voices, and fresh air to a publication. "Treating contributors well means communicating with them so they know exactly what it is you want....," she said. However, publishers should never forget that these

³⁷ Farrell, J. (1998). Newsletters that KISS and tell. Direct Marketing, v60, n12, 58-60.

³⁸ Nelson 70

³⁹ Bond 58

⁴⁰ Preston 97

⁴¹ Managers Handbook. As cited in communication briefings, Nov. 1997, 2.

people are not expert writers.⁴²

Nelson reminded that the purpose of an article is to maintain your newsletter's goals and objectives.⁴³ Sherman agreed and suggested that short, strong content is better than forcing four full pages,⁴⁴

Another important aspect novice publishers need to decide upon related to using advertising in the publication. Throughout the research, authors and experts argued for and against advertisements. Porter suggested finding niches for newsletters big enough to attract enough advertising to support the publication.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Fanson claimed that lots of subscription newsletters do not accept advertisements, because subscribers pay for information and not advertising. In addition, some editors feared it could ruin the integrity or bias-free credibility of the publication.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the literature did not offer a definite answer novice publishers can refer to when faced with the choice. Most authors and experts agreed that it depends on the publication and how receptive audiences are to advertisements.

Throughout the research, authors advised first-time publishers to purchase a style manual, sold in any bookstore, to guarantee copy and content consistency. "Consistency is extremely important in a newsletter," said Fanson. "Readers tend to like and feel comfortable with what is familiar."⁴⁷

⁴² Fanson 73

⁴³ Nelson 36

⁴⁴ Sherman, S. (1997). Survival of the fittest: NEBA seminar stresses newsletter and Web site design, co-op money as competitive tools. Publishers Weekly, 244 (22), 27-29.

⁴⁵ Porter, M.V. (1997). Mastering the publishing mix. Association Management, 49 (9), 70-75.

⁴⁶ Fanson 23

⁴⁷ Fanson 10

Writing

"There is only one rule for successful writing: Write about a subject that you know well," said Bond. He believed that writing regularly sharpens skills and allows preparing newsletter drafts early enough to polish them for readers.⁴⁸ The biggest error novice publishers could make was to fill their newsletter with promotional copy like you would find in a brochure or advertisement, according to Elaine Floyd of *Newsletter Resources*.⁴⁹

"The average reader reads at a grade seven level," said Fanson. To determine the grade-level of your writing and check the readability of your copy, she suggested using the Gunning-Mueller Fog Index.⁵⁰ In addition, she characterized readers as scanners, looking at only 25% of the text and reading in depth no more than half of that.⁵¹

The *Medical Practice Communicator* said, "If you want at least 90% of the public to grasp your materials, you must write at the eighth-grade level,"⁵² According to Donald H. Cook, if you're writing to the general public, at least half of your words should contain five letters or less.⁵³

"Newsletters are meant to be read fast," said Nelson. "You don't have time to build anticipation in any article...and this rule is doubled in whatever appears on page one."⁵⁴ Therefore, Dr. Mary Ellen Guffey encouraged publishers to use bulleted lists to reduce reading time and errors. Bulleted lists split dense text into short chunks and one study claimed that this results in a

- 55 percent decrease in writing errors

⁴⁸ Bond 63

⁴⁹ Floyd, E., *Newsletter Resources*. As cited in communication briefings, Jan. 1997, 5.

⁵⁰ Fanson 72

⁵¹ Fanson 139

⁵² *Medical Practice Communicator*. As cited in communication briefings, May 1997, 4.

⁵³ Cook, D. (1986). *The School Newsletter: Effective K-12 Communicator*. School Library Media Quarterly, 14 (3), 131.

⁵⁴ Nelson 116

- 30 percent decrease in reading time
- 38 percent increase in the use of materials by those who received it.⁵⁵

Hamilton claimed that short, one- or two-paragraph stories often have your highest degree of readership. "It's possible that some of your readers may read only these short items," he said.⁵⁶ Nelson agreed saying, "Attracting your readers with many short, snappy articles breaks monotony and reader-fatigue and makes it easier for the readers to read everything in your newsletter at a faster pace."⁵⁷ Her book also offered a copy-guideline checklist:

- Does the newsletter copy grab your readers in one to three seconds?
- Does the newsletter copy lead your readers where you want them to go, forming the conclusions you want them to form?
- Is your newsletter copy both brief and interesting?
- Is your newsletter copy informative and pertinent?
- Does your newsletter copy offer readers an easy way to respond if you want them to?
- Does your newsletter copy convey reliability and engender trust in your product?

She continued, saying that novice publishers need to be aware of using the right tone to make their copy appeal to the audience. "The tone you choose will depend upon your intended relationship with your target reader," she said. "Your tone can be intimidating, humorous, conservative, personal and friendly, urgent, heroic, or tragic."⁵⁸

Besides paying attention to the tone of the copy, Bivins cautioned that novice publishers must also consider the denotative (dictionary) meaning of words and the connotative (emotional) association audiences have with

⁵⁵ Guffey, M.E. (1998). Did You Know That...[On-Line]. Available: <http://www.westwords.com/GUFFEY/bullets.html>.

⁵⁶ Hamilton 44

⁵⁷ Nelson 115

⁵⁸ Nelson 110-111

words.⁵⁹

Experts agreed that an effective way to start writing copy is to write in a conversational way. "Because we think and talk in a conversational way, it's the easiest form of expression for anyone to understand," said Weir.⁶⁰

Now, publishers can start writing their articles. "The most important sentence in any article is the first one, which lures readers to the second one and onward...," said Hamilton.⁶¹ "Using a quote as the first sentence of your lead-in paragraph is another time-honored device," said Fanson. "It gets attention and sets the theme for the article."⁶²

In her book, Fanson devoted two chapters to the art and science of writing, offering a variety of tips and hints useful to the beginning writer. The components of her successful-writing formula included:

- use clear, short and familiar words
- eliminate unnecessary words
- keep sentences short and simple; the average sentence length in newsletter writing is between 10 and 15 words. Another author agreed with that average⁶³
- use the active voice
- use bullet-point form; it reduces eye strain

Fanson also mentioned seven techniques that should make publishers' writing more captivating:

1. a startling fact
2. an intriguing question
3. a common myth
4. an interesting myth
5. new information

⁵⁹ Bivins 109

⁶⁰ Weir, K.L. (1993). PR Clinic-Tips for School PR Newcomers from a Veteran. Network, 9 (1), 7.

⁶¹ Hamilton 45

⁶² Fanson 95

⁶³ Cook 132

6. a slice-of life
7. an interesting comparisons⁶⁴

If necessary, Fanson said, you can begin sentences with "and" or "but" or end sentences with prepositions. In addition, use the same terms consistently and decrease the amount of punctuation. Other grammatical rules included:

- Avoid verbs ending in "ize"
- Avoid slang
- Omit meaningless words⁶⁵

The writing styles she wanted novice publishers to use, included:

1. Wall Street Journal: One large story is divided into three or four shorter stories, and sidebars tie the stories together.
2. First person point of view: A less formal style of writing, based on your opinion or experience.
3. Extended dialogue: Uses quotes from several sources or interviews to develop a story.
4. Quiz: Readers find it difficult to ignore a quiz, especially when answers give them information about themselves.
5. Practical tips
6. More articles, fewer columns: Rather than writing one long column, write several shorter articles with inviting headlines.
7. How-to information
8. Analysis: People like statistics, charts, graphs, and analysis of local conditions.
9. The great debate: Writers put their opposing thoughts on the same subject in articles of equal length.⁶⁶

Other writing styles included the inverted pyramid, which arguably is the most popular method of writing a story. This style puts the the most important facts first. From there, paragraphs are written in descending order of importance, according to Fraser P. Seitel, author of *The Practice of Public*

⁶⁴ Fanson 97-98

⁶⁵ Fanson 105

⁶⁶ Fanson 90-94

Relations.⁶⁷ In addition, not only does a Question and Answer format offer a solution to up long, boring articles, it also conveys information in an easy-to-follow format.⁶⁸

Doug Newsom and Bob Carrell, authors of *Public Relations Writing Form & Style*, recommended several styles. Publishers should use the "slice of life" style, which is a mini-drama that presents a personal experience people can identify with, if they want their audiences to contribute to their publications. Other styles featured the interview and testimonials, which both can add variety.⁶⁹

Nelson offered six key components for writing a professional story:

1. Unity: Create a theme for your readers to follow without either of you straying off track.
2. Consistency: Words, sentences, and paragraphs flow smoothly from idea to idea and tie together.
3. Accent: It stresses those ideas you want to stand out as key elements of your story.
4. Brevity
5. Clarity: The easiest road to clarity is to write the way people talk.
6. Conciseness: Try not to overwrite. Your copy has to be tight.⁷⁰

She continued by offering her can-not-miss technique for writing a newsletter lead:

Ask yourself: What's the most important newsworthy component of this article? What's the crux? Then reduce that element to a sentence. That's your lead.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Seitel, F.P. (1995). The Practice of Public Relations. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.

⁶⁸ Seitel 203

⁶⁹ Doug Newsom & Bob Carrell (1995). Public Relations Writing Form & Style. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

⁷⁰ Nelson 113

⁷¹ Nelson 117

Once publishers are equipped with the knowledge of writing good newsletter articles, newsletter readers demand a sense of completion when reading stories, claimed Fanson.⁷²

Besides all this helpful information, some publishers still fall into writing traps. For example, humor in a newsletter can be disastrous, according to Nelson's copy tactics. Using humor may be alienating prospective customers and existing customers. Other copy tactics suggested not using a lot of qualifiers. Qualifiers, such as mostly, sometimes and if, weaken the copy.⁷³

Writers block is probably one of the biggest problems first-time publishers and writers experience. John T. Moore, writing in *Writing That Works*, offered these techniques to erase writers block:

- Delete the last few words or sentence that you wrote and begin a new approach to that section.
- Find a face to write to, for example a co-worker or a visitor in your office. Even a picture from a newspaper or a magazine will do.
- Try to hit on the word you want by typing a series of "sound" words such as buzz, boom, hum, whir, zoom, ding, bark, clang and growl.
- Break the dry spell by contacting a source, a co-worker or your boss, and ask for more information on a key aspect of your story.
- Get the troublesome part of what you're working on out of sight by saving it as a separate file. Polish the other parts, and then return to the file you saved.⁷⁴

But no matter how many tips or cautions novice publishers receive about proper and successful newsletter writing, sometimes the copy will either run too long or too short. Nelson's tricks for long copy included:

- Reread every sentence. If you do not need it, even if it is good, take it out.

⁷² Fanson 95

⁷³ Nelson 130

⁷⁴ Moore, J.T., *Writing that Works*. As cited in *communications briefings*, Dec. 1997, 8.

- Condense wordy sentences.
- Do not repeat yourself to death with redundancies.
- Rid yourself of lesser points the reader will regard as inconsequential.
- If you have a sidebar, use it to replace dead space within the format.
- If you have art, consider reducing its size or eliminating non-pertinent, peripheral details.⁷⁵

Nelson also offered six little tricks for expanding short copy without adding "fat:"

1. Check the article for incomplete descriptions and make them more complete.
2. Whatever you do, do not add "fluff."
3. Add callouts to any illustration or art.
4. Include a "deck" (one element of the story, repeated and set larger within its own border inside the story), or a sidebar.
5. Make your artwork bigger.
6. Include a "teaser" or a call-to-action box.⁷⁶

Being able to write good copy also means that publishers are able to write bad copy. "The worst mistake people make is this: They concentrate on what they want to WRITE instead of what their audience wants to READ," Woodard said. She also claimed that many inexperienced publishers lock themselves into a single strategy and fail to change once circumstances change.⁷⁷

Outsourcing

A recent issue of a writers market book put the cost of producing a two-to four-page newsletter by a professional writer at \$200 to \$400; four-to eight-pages at \$500 to \$1,000. The hourly rate for a professional writer ranged from

⁷⁵ Nelson 116

⁷⁶ Nelson 116

⁷⁷ Woodard. Available: http://www.publishingbiz.com/html/hot_publishing_tips.html, 1.

\$20 to \$60. Fees varied according to location and the state of the economy.⁷⁸

Editing and Proofreading

"Editing keeps your newsletter bias free," said Bond.⁷⁹ "It is best not to have the writer or editor be the proofreader," said Bivins.⁸⁰ Bond suggested editors and writers look at the newsletter as a whole while proofreaders focus on details. He further suggested that someone other than the writer should edit the newsletter.⁸¹

"Consider design as an editorial tool," said Hamilton. "The editor's primary goal is to transmit ideas from the printed page to the eyes and minds of the reader." He believed that an editor should go through the following stages before publishing a newsletter:

- **Investigation:** Start by finding raw materials for each issue.
- **Preparation:** Make photo, art and writing assignments.
- **Manipulation:** Sort the finished materials in the right order.
- **Illumination:** Consider the layout because copy writing and layout conception go hand-in-hand.
- **Production:** Plan the final positioning of your stories.
- **Verification:** Ask other people for further input and ideas.
- **Realization:** Organize all parts and monitor copy fitting and proofing.
- **Appreciation**⁸²

Fanson included these tips for editors and proofreaders in her book:

- **Check over each page and reference number carefully.**
- **Double-check all numbers.**
- **Mistakes tend to be clustered, so if you find one, look for others around.**
- **Make sure the information is in the right sequence.**
- **Notice paragraph lengths (shorter is better).**

⁷⁸ Fanson 16

⁷⁹ Bond 75

⁸⁰ Bivins 123

⁸¹ Bond 80

⁸² Hamilton 34

- Check to see if writers' page and section references are accurate.
- Check spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Be sure that brackets, quotes and parentheses are used correctly.
- Watch for repeated words, like "the the."
- Look for missing words and check for proper hyphenation.
- Check if the editorial content is consistent
- Check if photographs and artwork have a cutline explaining the details.
- Read the headlines and determine if they reflect the articles.
- Check for style consistency.
- Check that italic or bold type is used consistently, but not overused.
- Recheck arithmetic in charts.
- Check telephone numbers, unusual or technical words, and names of people in photographs.
- Check that the style sheet has been followed.⁸³

Jean Buttecall, list manager of *communication briefings*, suggested that when you proofread copy, call each telephone number as you come across it to verify its accuracy.⁸⁴

According to Marie Glidewell, check sentences for "no" and "not" because structural linguists say these words are often omitted from text because of the way the brain processes negative statements. In addition, she suggested scanning the text for similar words used incorrectly, such as to, too and two; its and it's; there, their and they're; then and than; your and you're; through and though.⁸⁵

Outsourcing

According to Bond, editors charge an hourly rate ranging from \$12 to \$40 and some are paid a flat rate of \$60 per four-page issue. Fanson agreed and said that proofreaders charge \$7 to \$25 per hour.⁸⁶

⁸³ Fanson 159

⁸⁴ Buttecall, J. As cited in *communication briefings*, July 1997, 8.

⁸⁵ Glidewell, M. As cited in *communication briefings*, Volume 8, Number 5, 6.

⁸⁶ Fanson 16

Research

"Everything gets tested first so we don't waste a lot of time and energy on things that sound good but don't succeed," said Matthew J. Rowan, publisher of *Today's Realtor*.⁸⁷

Bond said that readers want to get their money's worth from your product and they will when you know what people want. Preston agreed but thought that understanding advertisers' needs is also key.⁸⁸

David Glass, CEO of Wal-Mart, said, "Listening to customers is why Wal-Mart thrives. We get letters, cards, and phone calls every week. We collect all of that and act on it. Not agonize over it, but act on it."

The literature offered different methods publishers can use to gather information about their readers and their publications.

"One of the most important records you keep will be the detailed information profiles of your subscribers," said Bond.⁸⁹ But how do you compile such a customer profile? Fanson suggested conducting yearly readership surveys to help maintain the focus of your publication by asking appropriate questions about the content, but also to get demographical information on your audience.⁹⁰ According to Preston, another way would be to plan regular phone contact with a random sample and use surveys and focus groups to garner additional feedback.⁹¹

One of the easiest methods for publishers to conduct research and improve their newsletters involved listing what they like and do not like about other newsletters and apply that knowledge to their publication.

There are other low-cost ways to study readers, according to Woodard.

⁸⁷ Porter 73

⁸⁸ Preston 96

⁸⁹ Bond 154

⁹⁰ Fanson 85

⁹¹ Preston 95

They included, interviewing people at trade shows, conducting mail and telephone surveys and running fax polls and surveys in the publication. Another important way to gain insight into the field, usually disregarded by novice publishers, is to study the competition. This method usually helps to identify a unique niche for the publication.⁹²

The editors of *communication briefings* also wrote about ways to conduct market research with minimal expenses, suggesting:

- Using the services of local public and college libraries.
- Getting information in the community and local organizations.
- Carefully analyzing the media in the area you're studying. They often provide critical insights into local trends.
- Checking with government agencies and regional development authorities. They often have helpful statistics on local matters.⁹³

Nelson suggested including a business reply card or panel in the newsletter. "If you can, make it even easier for the reader to respond by including a postage-free business reply card," she said. But once you decide to use this method, you need to code the business reply cards to ease the evaluation part of your research effort. According to Nelson, publishers should use a reply flap, which is an extra flap of paper that readers can tear out, fold up and mail. The downside of using this method is that readers may feel discouraged to respond, because they have a lot to do," she cautioned.⁹⁴

Farrell said that she preferred using mail-back postcards (with a business reply permit) that enable readers to return the cards to her at no cost to the sender. "The permit will cost \$85 per year and each card forwarded to you costs approximately \$0.79," she said.⁹⁵

⁹² Woodard. Available: <http://www.publishingbiz.com/html/fiveerrors.html>, 1.

⁹³ Mastering Marketing: Helping You and Your Employees Market Your Organization. As cited in communication briefings, Volume 8, Number 5, 2.

⁹⁴ Nelson 196

⁹⁵ Farrell 60

But to receive valuable data, publishers need to code the reply-cards to differentiate between their audiences and promotional methods. Nelson talked about how to effectively code response devices:

- Change the address for different offers. For instance, if you have a post office box, change it to a suite number or "lock box" number.
- Add a department to your return address.
- Use a different name for your return address.
- Put a tiny code number in coupons and reply cards to tell you the medium, the issue, and the product. For example, 0101-the zero stands for newsletter, the 10 signifies the month of the offer, and the 1 signifies the product.
- Telephone response: Give your readers an extension number to use or give them another name to ask for when they call.⁹⁶

"Reply envelopes invariably get a bigger response, possibly because the privacy of the reader is protected," said Nelson. She also suggested that using an 800 number increases responses by 300 to 500 percent.⁹⁷

Complimenting Nelson's comments, Beach and Floyd claimed that you must offer specific ways for the reader to respond. Besides the self-mailing reply card, there are other devices that encourage two-way communication:

- a money-saving coupon the respondent clips and returns
- a masthead or announcement telling where to write or call for information
- ordering information at the end of an article
- a contest where readers can send in stories or photographs
- a telephone number to call
- hours of operation when prospects can stop by
- an advertisement telling how to buy a specific product
- the date of an event
- a product list that includes an order form readers can use to order immediately

⁹⁶ Nelson 198

⁹⁷ Nelson 197

- reports available by fax⁹⁸

Nelson advised publishers to use coupons to solicit feedback, because readers instantly recognize them and regard them as non-threatening.⁹⁹

Suzanne D. Sparks' article, "Employee Newsletter Readability for a Large Public Utility," outlined a study which tried to determine how many people read a particular newsletter, its readability, etc. Her study offered guidance to novice publishers regarding which questions to ask in a survey, for example:

If people read the newsletter, how thoroughly they read it, the newsletter's readability, what main articles readers want to see, if readers believed the newsletter contained relevant information, overall suggestions, and certain demographics or psychographics.¹⁰⁰

Lots of experts advised novice publishers to conduct focus groups to tailor their publications to the audience. Because surveys usually require a longer turnaround time, focus groups become more and more popular with publishers because they can receive results more quickly. The article, appearing in *Marketing Planning: A Step-by-Step Guide*, included suggestions on how to get more reliable results when using focus groups:

Using only one group means you'll likely miss a direction a second group might take. Questioning two groups almost always leads you in a second direction. Bringing in a third group will tell you which of the two directions is most likely. However, don't conduct three focus groups and think you know how all your customers think, feel and act. Focus group research can help you understand "why" but tell you nothing about "how many."¹⁰¹

No matter which research tool publishers choose to solicit reader feedback, asking the right questions remains critical to a publication's success.

⁹⁸ Beach, M., & Floyd, E. (1998). NEWSLETTER SOURCEBOOK. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books.

⁹⁹ Nelson 196

¹⁰⁰ Sparks, S.D. (1997). Employee Newsletter Readability for a Large Public Utility. Public Relations Quarterly, 43(3), 37-41.

¹⁰¹ Taylor, J.W. Marketing Planning: A Step by Step Guide. As cited in communications briefings, Feb. 1997, 7.

In his book, *How to conduct a readership survey*, W. Charles Redding offered a list of questions publishers should consider while designing their research tools, including:

- Does the wording of the question accurately represent the objectives?
- Are all words likely to be within the working vocabularies of the respondents?
- Is the wording free of vagueness and ambiguity?
- Does the question make it it easy for the respondent to give an appropriate answer?
- Does each question make clear what is wanted?
- Are the questions bias free?
- Do any of the questions require introductory explanations?
- Do the questions appeal to all respondents or just to some?
- Are the questions likely to elicit a high proportion of stereotyped or superficial responses?¹⁰²

Fanson suggested that novice publishers should review their newsletter once or twice a year to make sure that it successfully reaches its objectives. "The goals of your newsletter should be more short-term, finite, and measurable," she said.¹⁰³

When Nelson was asked to explain to publishers why conducting research was so important, she responded, "By measuring the results of your newsletter and other promotions, you can determine the lifetime value of your customers and establish what you should focus on in upcoming issues."¹⁰⁴

Layout and Design

Because newsletters are often read on the run, novice publishers need a layout that is clear and appealing, but at the same time authoritative and

¹⁰² Redding, C.W. (1982). How to conduct a readership survey. Chicago: Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc.

¹⁰³ Fanson 6

¹⁰⁴ Nelson 200

worthwhile, according to Hamilton.¹⁰⁵ Bond said, "The design should enhance your newsletter content." According to him, newsletters contain these design elements:

Text and display, typefaces, alignment, of text type, masthead, logo, color and weight of stock (paper), size and number of pages, format (number of columns, indentations of paragraphs, spacing on page), number of colors of ink, line drawings, photographs and other halftones, self-mailer or insertion in envelope, stapled single sheets or folded paper.¹⁰⁶

Nelson also referred to the same design elements in her book.¹⁰⁷ She also mentioned two easy design rules each novice publisher should keep in mind:

1. Design should not contradict your message. Your message is your priority. The design works with your message to motivate your readers.
2. Don't use type, color, paper, photos, illustrations or construct a layout which hinders what you're trying to communicate.¹⁰⁸

Hamilton advised novice publishers to practice thumbnailing. "Simple, thumbnail sketches on paper can never be surpassed as an effective way to firm up a layout plan," he said.¹⁰⁹

In his article, "10 Dirty Secrets for Winning an Award in a Publication Contest...Plus Five Sure-Fire Ways to Lose," Dr. John H. Wherry suggested that publishers, not possessing the necessary artistic skills to lay out a publication, should let a professional designer produce the first newsletter issue. "Once a graphic artist gives you the model, you can imitate it from month to month...A design is not very expensive and will significantly boost our readership," he said.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Hamilton 67

¹⁰⁶ Bond 84

¹⁰⁷ Nelson 46

¹⁰⁸ Nelson 43

¹⁰⁹ Hamilton 72

¹¹⁰ Wherry, Dr. J.H. (1989). 10 Dirty Secrets for Winning an Award in a Publication Contest...Plus Five Sure-Fire Ways to Lose. Written for the NJ School Board Association Publications Contest, 1-2.

Beach and Floyd suggested keeping your nameplate, format and especially the colors you use the same, issue after issue, to ensure instant recognition."¹¹¹

With the evolution of desktop-publishing, many publishers now rely on their computers to design all kinds of publications. Desktop-publishing (DTP) can save publishers lots of time and money. All authors encouraged first-time publishers to produce their newsletters using the computer. Fanson believed that DTP could benefit publishers in the following way:

- It shortens several stages of the production process.
- You don't have to hire outside typesetters or film houses.
- One good designer can replace several key players.
- You don't have to re-key articles into the computer.
- Changes can be incorporated quickly and less expensively.
- Fewer supplies are needed for producing camera-ready artwork.¹¹²

Michael Antonoff, author of "The Desktop Publishing 100," described what he considers the five biggest eyesores in desktop publishing:

1. too many fonts on a page
2. insufficient linespacing or spacing between heads and copy
3. shading that is too dark, obscuring text
4. exaggerated spacing between words and characters
5. graphics that should be round (like pie charts and people's faces) but instead look distorted or squashed¹¹³

Hamilton cautioned that the following, popular design techniques can be a disadvantage to editorial layout and should be avoided:

- Tilting pictures at various angles and using different sizes.
- Creating wild abstract arrangements of words and graphics.
- Running typematter over photographs. Also, don't overlap photos.

¹¹¹ Beach and Floyd 6

¹¹² Fanson 126

¹¹³ Antonoff, M. (1988). The Desktop Publishing 100. Personal Computing, 12 (4), 47.

- Selecting a text typeface for its decorative quality.
- Positioning explanatory captions at points far away from a picture.
- Running caption or text type in reverse over black, photo, and four-color background.¹¹⁴

Dr. Wherry mentioned his "Dollar Bill Rule," which publishers should use on the finished publication. The rule stated that if you can lay a dollar bill any place on the page without touching some element of graphic interest (bullets, boldface type, a screen, rule, headline, photograph, chart or other illustration), the page is too dull to command the attention of most readers.¹¹⁵ Hamilton added, "If the pages appear gray overall, and this is a common problem, you are looking at an unsuccessful editorial product. The same is true for clutter."¹¹⁶

Finally, Preston urged publishers to enter their newsletters in design competitions to help obtain an objective evaluation.¹¹⁷

Format

"No fixed size makes a newsletter a newsletter," said Beach and Floyd. "Your news can appear on a postcard, U.S. letter, legal, tabloid or international A4 size."¹¹⁸ However, Fanson claimed that approximately 80 percent of newsletters are a standard letter size of 8 1/2" x 11". She believed that publishers choose this format for the following reasons:

1. Most readers are familiar and comfortable with this size of paper.
2. It is a standard size, which means printing costs will be less than if you chose an eccentric size.
3. Whether mailed flat or folded, it fits into standard envelopes.
4. Photocopiers handle this size as a matter of course.

¹¹⁴ Hamilton 75

¹¹⁵ Wherry 1

¹¹⁶ Hamilton 27

¹¹⁷ Preston 97

¹¹⁸ Beach and Floyd 36

5. You have more layout options with this size as opposed to a smaller size.¹¹⁹

Hamilton agreed and added, "You may think that a large format will give your publication a look of importance, but I believe it can be a deterrent because readers will resist juggling a clumsy page."¹²⁰

Elaine Floyd, author of "Marketing Your Bookstore with a Newsletter," had this to say in Steve Sherman's article in *Publishers Weekly*:

Newsletters should be designed with modern habits in mind...Today, busy people skim written material first so a front cover should contain four or five brief notices. When the reader opens a newsletter, the eye goes first to page three, not page two. Therefore, place the most important message on page three.¹²¹

Fanson claimed that people read a newsletter the following way: the front page is the most important and should be given the most consideration. Then, readers observe the right page first, the left page second in a sideways U-pattern and often skip the middle, because of the fold. "Design your pages with this in mind," said Fanson.¹²² Considering these statements, it seemed odd when she suggested that readers do not automatically look at the top-right hand position for the "lead" story. "They enter the page wherever the most eye-arresting element is."¹²³

According to Beach and Floyd, readers look at your newsletter in the following order: the front page, the back page, and, finally, the inside pages. Readers start reading at the upper left of a spread, but they glance at the right page first. Use the upper half for your important visual elements. "When readers look at a page, they see, in order: photos and illustrations; captions;

¹¹⁹ Fanson 12

¹²⁰ Hamilton 12

¹²¹ Sherman 29

¹²² Fanson 139

¹²³ Fanson 139

headlines; kickers and decks; pull quotes; subheads; and text."¹²⁴

Elaine Floyd, author of *Marketing with Newsletters*, suggested giving your newsletter a strong last page because an estimated 15 percent of readers start there, "An interesting back page will persuade them that they'll also find other pages worth reading," she said.¹²⁵

Now, that publishers know how their audiences read newsletters, publishers should next decide how many column grids they want to use to fit their copy. "The *One-Column Grid* is well suited to a very basic newsletter where straightforward verbal information is primary," said Hamilton. However, "a colorful logotype on the front page would obviously be a necessity amidst all that gray typematter."¹²⁶ But according to Fanson, one wide column does not lend itself to much layout creativity and for this reason is too monotonous for more than a one- or two-page newsletter.¹²⁷ In addition, "you may only want to consider this style if you're trying to imitate or be perceived as a well-established newsletter publisher such as *The Kiplinger Letter*," cautioned Nelson.¹²⁸

"The two-column format is often chosen when charts, graphs, and photographs are used," said Bond. "The three-column format is used in newsletters that include a variety of subjects and articles."¹²⁹ Fanson believed that a three-column grid is the most popular layout for newsletters.¹³⁰ Nelson agreed saying, "Three columns help us create articles the way they should be—short, snappy and to the point."¹³¹

¹²⁴ Beach and Floyd 22

¹²⁵ Floyd, E. Newsletter Resources. "Marketing with Newsletters." As cited in communication briefings, April 1997, 8.

¹²⁶ Hamilton 68

¹²⁷ Fanson 33

¹²⁸ Nelson 56

¹²⁹ Bond 86

¹³⁰ Fanson 33

¹³¹ Nelson 56

Hamilton remained one of the few experts who included the four-column grid in his book. However, he admitted its rare use and cautioned that if used, the grid results in three or four words on each line and can cause reader's eyes to dance back and forth. But Hamilton believed that this grid, suited most for large page formats, provides some intriguing layout and design variations.¹³²

Regarding the publication's column width, Fanson suggested trying a Scholar's Margin Grid #1 (one narrow column and one wide column) or a Scholar's Margin Grid #2 (one narrow column and two wider ones) to create unusual patterns on a page. However, Fanson warned: "avoid column widths of more than 42 picas, as the eye has difficulty following the resulting long lines of text across the page."¹³³ She added that many of the formatting decisions should be expressed in printers' measures rather than inches or centimeters.¹³⁴

Once novice publishers have made their format decisions, they can also make minor layout adjustments that best fit their individual publications.

For example, if publishers opt for a self-mailer, the mailing panel should pull double duty as space for messages as well as the address, according to Beach and Floyd. They suggested that every mailing panel should contain these elements: your company or organization name and logo, your return address, and how to reach you (phone, fax and/or e-mail).

Other features that can appear in the masthead or contents box include a location map, a teaser or a special notice. Regarding the content box, Beach and Floyd suggested producing a list of articles in the issue highlighted with bullets or boldface words.¹³⁵ "Potential contributors often look in your masthead to find out if you solicit articles and photographs," they said.¹³⁶

¹³² Hamilton 71

¹³³ Fanson 35

¹³⁴ Fanson 29

¹³⁵ Beach and Floyd 62

¹³⁶ Beach and Floyd 64

Typesize and Typeface

"Readability is something you can control because it's dependent on how you use type," said Hamilton. "The purpose of typography is to make type communicate information efficiently and look handsome on the printed page."¹³⁷

"Most newsletters use 9 to 12 point type for body text," said Fanson. "Display type or headline type is 14 points or larger."¹³⁸ Hamilton argued that two type sizes should take care of all text copy: 10 point or 9 point.¹³⁹

"Most text typefaces are normally Roman in style, meaning that letters are upright rather than leaning," said Fanson. "A typeface can project an image of confidence, elegance, boldness, casualness, novelty, romance, friendliness, stylishness..."¹⁴⁰

The one style more and more publishers use is typewriting. But even though this style implies "late-breaking" news and fresh copy, it could backfire because its look is not professional, according to Nelson.¹⁴¹

Fanson claimed that the seven most popular typefaces are Baskerville, Bodoni, Caslon, Times, Clarendon, Garamond, and Helvetica. She said that some excellent typefaces for body copy are New Century Schoolbook, Cheltenham, and Garamond.¹⁴² In addition, she recommended using serif type for newsletters because it increases readability. But if publishers want to use sans serif type, they can improve readability by increasing the leading between the lines of type. She said that legibility drops with fewer than 30 or more than 60 characters in line length.¹⁴³ Hamilton agreed, urging publishers to keep

¹³⁷ Hamilton 54

¹³⁸ Fanson 54

¹³⁹ Hamilton 60

¹⁴⁰ Fanson 56

¹⁴¹ Nelson 62

¹⁴² Fanson 58

¹⁴³ Fanson 58

sentences short because tests show that eyes scan about three or four words at a time and may tire reading a long sentence.¹⁴⁴

Fanson cited a study that found that type set in upper-and lowercase reads 13.4 percent faster than type set in all caps. Her other readership surveys indicated that readers prefer larger and more legible typefaces.¹⁴⁵ Another technique to keep type readable is using two point leading for the body copy, stated Hamilton.¹⁴⁶

Beach and Floyd said that eye-movement and reading-comprehension studies point to the following hallmarks of effective typography:

- **Consistency:** Good type design uses one or two type families for text, headlines, captions and all other elements.
- **Familiarity:** Familiar letterforms create words whose meanings readers perceive instantly.
- **Color:** Print copy in black. Color slows readers down.
- **Contrast:** Keep background colors light to ensure good contrast between type and paper or screen.
- **Type:** Use serif or sans serif and be consistent.
- **Alignment:** Readers understand text in justified type more easily than text set in ragged type.¹⁴⁷

Besides citing several studies, Fanson's tips for using type most effectively included:

- If a page appears too dark, lighten it by increasing the amount of space between lines.
- Place more space above headlines than below. That way, headlines "belong" to the article below instead of "tagging" along with the one above.
- Use more leading with typefaces featuring long descenders.
- If you use all-caps for something, be sure to visually space the letters

¹⁴⁴ Hamilton 62

¹⁴⁵ Fanson 59

¹⁴⁶ Hamilton 64

¹⁴⁷ Beach and Floyd 40

after typesetting. The automatic spacing given to typefaces assumes lowercase letters, so all-caps words or phrases may need some adjustment.

- Don't use a smaller point size to create a small cap. Most computer layout programs include small caps.
- Don't put space around em-dashes (the longer dashes used to punctuate sentences).
- Put spaces before and after ellipses.
- Leave thin space between a bullet and body text.
- Make punctuation match the typeface or style of the word which precedes it.¹⁴⁸

Headline

"Studies show that headlines are the second-strongest design element on a page," said Fanson.¹⁴⁹

"Only one out of five print readers read beyond the headlines," said Allen Clobridge in his article, "Doing Political Newsletters: 5 Ways to Attract More Readers." "If your message is buried in the copy, 80 percent of your readers will not get the message."¹⁵⁰

"Your headline is the loud, clear voice that states your theme and sets the tone of the copy that follows," said Hamilton. "If your message is buried in the copy, 80 percent of your readers will not get the message."¹⁵¹

Fanson said that the functions of a headline are:

- to attract attention to the article
- to tell the reader, "This is for you" or "This is not for you, read something else"
- to describe the context of the story or column
- to motivate and involve the reader. People need a reason or benefit to read on¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Fanson 69

¹⁴⁹ Fanson 108

¹⁵⁰ Clobridge 37

¹⁵¹ Hamilton 39

¹⁵² Fanson 108

In addition, Fanson claimed that there are different types of headlines, including:

- **Banner headline:** Generally typed flush right.
- **Deck:** A subhead or secondary headline below the main headline.
- **Kicker:** Uses a short lead-in phrase to catch the eye.
- **Hammer:** Catches attention with a large, bold phrase, then add a wordy deck below.
- **Slammer:** A two-part head uses a bold face word or phrase to lead into a contrasting main headline.
- **Tripod:** Consists of a bold word or phrase (often all caps) and two smaller lines of deck squaring off alongside.
- **Raw wrap:** Allows the text to wrap beside the headline. Also known as a Dutch wrap.
- **Sidesaddle head:** Headline set beside the story, rather than above.¹⁵³

Hamilton urged publishers to write headlines before the article. This will help the writer remain on target. Then, he offered a checklist to write effective headlines:

- **Completeness:** Does the head say as much as possible in a very few words?
- **Accuracy:** Does making your words bright and appealing sacrifice the headline's accuracy?
- **Specifics:** Generalization results in boring headlines.
- **Clarity:** Ambitious headlines are an easy pitfall.
- **Focus:** It is easy to stray from the central idea.¹⁵⁴

An article in *Fred Goss' What's Working*, as cited in *communication briefings*, described techniques to write headlines that grab:

- Explain a procedure, for example: "How to Expand a Business."
- Start with the words "how," "why," "which," "you" or "this."
- Quote a satisfied customer.
- Test your audience. For example, "What's the best way to save money?"

¹⁵³ Fanson 109

¹⁵⁴ Hamilton 41-43

- Target your audience. For example, "If you attend trade shows, you need this booklet."¹⁵⁵

"Good headlines set the tone for the issue, and ideally should be short, clear, and bold," said Bond.¹⁵⁶ Hamilton added, "A five-word headline is more likely to be read."¹⁵⁷ And Fanson said, "Headlines should never be hyphenated." She recommended that headlines be 18 to 30 points in size.¹⁵⁸

In addition, headlines should be set using a sans-serif typeface. "Headlines set in sans serif type are often used with text set in serif typeface - a popular font combination for documents such as advertisements, books, brochures, and newsletters," said Roger C. Parker and Patrick Berry's in their book, *Looking Good in Print*.¹⁵⁹

Fanson also suggested putting the subject first rather than the verb and write in the present tense to add punch to a headline. Other tips included:

- Promise readers a benefit: Don't worry about writing a longer headline to get the benefit across because people will read up to three lines of display type (14 points and up).
- Integrate news or announcement angle.
- Numbers: Attach a number to build readership and involvement.
- Use questions to lure readers into the article.
- Secondary headlines: They are readership promoters.¹⁶⁰

"The worst fate for a well-intentioned head is for it to leave the reader unsure what the article is all about," said Hamilton. Two-faced headlines do the disservice of giving your reader a choice of two different meanings. At last,

¹⁵⁵ Fred Goss' What's Working. As cited in communications briefings, Feb. 1997, 5.

¹⁵⁶ Bond 91

¹⁵⁷ Hamilton 74

¹⁵⁸ Fanson 39

¹⁵⁹ Parker, R.C., & Berry, P. (1998). Looking Good in Print. Scottsdale: The Coriolis Group, Inc.

¹⁶⁰ Fanson 59

he cautioned to avoid "headlinease." These are often amateurish imitations of city newspaper heads, using commas to replace "and," or use nouns in place of adjectives.¹⁶¹

Other common headline layout errors included:

- Avoid typefaces that appear too light
- Avoid insufficient leading
- Avoid letter spacing and word spacing that is too tight or too loose
- Avoid all cap headlines, outline or shadow typefaces
- Avoid script, cursive or decorative typefaces
- Avoid headlines of more than three stacked lines
- Avoid reversed headlines out of a screened background, unless it is more than 60 percent black screen
- Avoid surprising headlines over a screened background darker than 30 percent black
- Avoid surprinting over a photograph or surprinting it out of a photograph
- Avoid crowding a headline with text directly above or below
- Avoid setting a headline too close to the text above¹⁶²

Nameplate, Masthead and ISSN

"The name should immediately bring to mind the subject or the source of the newsletter," said Fanson. "Names...are often followed by a subtitle or tagline that helps define the source or subject matter of the newsletter."¹⁶³

Fanson claimed that a large nameplate demonstrates a confident, strong graphic appearance. "If you have the word 'the' in your nameplate, you may wish to downplay it in size, since it is less important," she said.¹⁶⁴

Hamilton agreed with Fanson, saying that the newsletter's name is an essential key to its visual appeal. "Resist the temptation to use an overworked name," he said. Hamilton further suggested composing your design in all

¹⁶¹ Hamilton 44

¹⁶² Fanson 110-112

¹⁶³ Fanson 8-9

¹⁶⁴ Fanson 42

capital letters and blow it up to a size that is impressive and commanding. At the same time, resist using typographic trickery, such as slants, stretches or bend type, because the best logos are simple, strong and clear.¹⁶⁵ He claimed that a publication with one or two words as its name makes an outstanding logotype possible, and with it, a more distinctive cover.¹⁶⁶

Shaw believed that competition for attention starts with your nameplate. To get the maximum value from your nameplate, design it following these guidelines:

- **Identity:** Let your name and subtitle tell who you are and why readers should pay attention.
- **Information:** Include the required information-name, subtitle and date-and optional information such as a logo, issue number and publisher or editor.
- **Impact:** Your nameplate design should help readers focus on your message.
- **Simplicity:** Delete every word and image that does not contribute to your message.
- **Image:** Make certain that your nameplate fits your newsletter's image.¹⁶⁷

"The masthead is the same issue after issue, and will help the reader identify your newsletter," said Bond.¹⁶⁸ "Mastheads are commonly placed on the first, second, or last page of a newsletter," said Fanson. "They are usually boxed or screened or set apart from regular text."¹⁶⁹

Beach and Floyd claimed that every issue needs to tell the following information in its masthead: your name and address, the editor's name, and how readers can reach you. "Your masthead can also tell frequency of publication and subscription costs (if any), and give names of key officers and

¹⁶⁵ Hamilton 23

¹⁶⁶ Hamilton 75

¹⁶⁷ Beach and Floyd 12

¹⁶⁸ Bond 86

¹⁶⁹ Fanson 42

contributors," they said. Also, if your newsletter is copyrighted, that notice belongs in your masthead.¹⁷⁰

The ISSN code identifies serial publications, regardless of language or country of origin, and should appear on the top right hand corner of the front page of the newsletter, according to Fanson.¹⁷¹ The value of this number is that newsletter buyers, researchers, and librarians can find your newsletter easier, said Bond.¹⁷²

Body Text

Earlier in this chapter, Beach and Floyd discussed effective typography and said that readers understand text in justified type more easily than text set in ragged. However, Nelson's research determined that readers favor flush-left and ragged-right body copy.¹⁷³ According to Bond, readers feel that ragged right text adds to the speed of reading.¹⁷⁴

Fanson agreed with Beach and Floyd arguing that justified text is the most popular style of body text because it is easiest to read. However, she cautioned about justifying text with less than 60 characters per line because of otherwise poor word spacing and increased hyphenation. She rejected flush right text because it is very difficult to read.¹⁷⁵

When you are going to pick the font for your body text, the long, gray, rambling part of the newsletter, you do not want anything too garish, according to Parker and Berry. Therefore, they strongly advise to use a serif typeface. "Because body text tends to be copious, readers need the additional recognizability of serif letters to get through long passages quickly," they

¹⁷⁰ Beach and Floyd 62

¹⁷¹ Fanson 78

¹⁷² Bond 86

¹⁷³ Nelson 62

¹⁷⁴ Bond 89

¹⁷⁵ Fanson 38

said.¹⁷⁶

White Space

White space simply means page space that is free of text or artwork, according to Parker and Berry. White space also provides a place for readers to rest their eyes. It can take many forms:

- Open areas surrounding a headline: Better way to attract attention to it than increasing the type size.
- Vertical space between columns of type: As columns get wider, more space is needed between them.
- Space created by ragged line endings of unjustified type: Justified text more formal than flush-left text, because it lacks these gaps.
- Paragraph indents and extra line space between paragraphs: Makes text look more inviting by breaking it into discrete chunks.
- Space associated with subheads: Larger breaks in the gray space indicate more dramatic topic changes.
- Leading between lines of type: Tightly-packed lines of type darken a publication page.¹⁷⁷

Creating extra white space between paragraphs increases readership by 12 percent, according to *Case Studies in School Communication*.¹⁷⁸

"White space makes your pages look calm, organized, uncluttered, and accessible," said Fanson. However, she cautioned publishers about using widows and orphans because they create uneven rivers of white space between paragraphs.¹⁷⁹

Other common mistakes include rivers of white space and trapped white space, according to Parker and Berry. Rivers are caused by gaps between words, which occur when large type is justified in narrow columns or double spaces

¹⁷⁶ Parker and Berry 55

¹⁷⁷ Parker and Berry 74-75

¹⁷⁸ *Case Studies in School Communication*. Austin: Texas Education Agency, 1984. ERIC , ED242075.

¹⁷⁹ Fanson 39

after periods. Trapped white space produces a visual hole in the layout. This confuses the reader and interrupts the flow of the copy and graphics.

"Solutions include increasing the size of display type, enlarging the illustration, or recomposing type," they said.¹⁸⁰

Graphics

"Every good newsletter needs at least one PIG per page," said Fanson. "That is, try to have at least one photograph, illustration, or graphic on each page."¹⁸¹ Hamilton said, "You want graphic features that are vivid, appealing, and colorful, and will express information clearly."¹⁸²

"Infographics are the most important form of illustration for newsletters," said Beach and Floyd. "Charts, maps and diagrams portray key data far more efficiently and memorably than when the same data is described using words."¹⁸³

Fanson suggested that novice publishers could access several sources to acquire graphics:

- A computer can be used for creating graphics by using dingbats or other characters to make a distinctive rule or box.
- Clip art is available and is copyright free. Art supply stores have several categories of clip art books.
- Click art is copyright-free artwork on a diskette or cd-rom.
- Custom illustrations can be produced by art students in schools or colleges. Or, pay a graphic designer to illustrate your message.¹⁸⁴

"Generally speaking, poor art is worse than none at all because it makes your publication look amateurish," said Donald Hymes in an article for the

¹⁸⁰ Parker and Berry 74-75

¹⁸¹ Fanson 140

¹⁸² Hamilton 96

¹⁸³ Beach and Floyd 112

¹⁸⁴ Fanson 52

Journal of Educational Public Relations.¹⁸⁵ Hamilton agreed saying, "Purely decorative spots as space fillers don't enhance the communication value on the page. They can appear trivial, or worse yet, betray a lack of ideas."¹⁸⁶ Bond cautioned that many new newsletter owners overdo graphic effects. Using too many may detract from the flow of the newsletter.¹⁸⁷

At last, Beach and Floyd suggested using graphic elements consistently so readers will recognize the graphics as visual cues, Publishers can find graphics on the Internet. However, these pictures are usually made to order or designed for the web; therefore, they have a low resolution.¹⁸⁸

Photographs

"Photographs are the most important visual you can have in your newsletter," said Fanson. "Studies show that when readers view your pages, they usually look at photographs first..."¹⁸⁹ Beach and Floyd claimed that readers prefer photos to illustrations because they think of photos as 'real' and illustrations as made up.¹⁹⁰

"Use photos to attract readers and communicate," said Hamilton. "A striking photo on the front page of a newsletter will give it identity and invite interest."¹⁹¹

Besides attracting readers' attention, photographs also help break up copy and illustrate an article, according to Fanson. She claimed that before-and-after photographs especially seem to fascinate readers.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ Hymes, D. (1993). Make your newsletter communicate, a subsection of an Almanac of low-tech communication ideas. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 14, (4), (1st Quarter 1992), 14-15.

¹⁸⁶ Hamilton 74

¹⁸⁷ Bond 89

¹⁸⁸ Beach and Floyd 96

¹⁸⁹ Fanson 113

¹⁹⁰ Beach and Floyd 112

¹⁹¹ Hamilton 79

¹⁹² Fanson 140

"Don't be afraid to use an especially good photograph across two columns of copy or to dominate the page," said Clobridge.¹⁹³

But where do publishers get good photographs? "Shoot your own photographs, if you can," said Hamilton. "Otherwise, you'll need to find a photographer who will understand your editorial needs." He suggested several ways to find a photographer:

- Try your local newspaper as a source and look at the credit lines for the photographer's name.
- Check the yellow pages for wedding/special occasion photographers. They are generally expert at shooting spontaneous pictures.
- Inquire about the availability of instructors or advanced students at your local college or art school.

In addition, "You will need to come to an understanding not only about fees but about your objectives and requirements," said Hamilton. "Freelance photographers own the negatives and copyrights unless you make other arrangements ahead of time."¹⁹⁴

No matter if you end up shooting your own photographs or you outsource this particular job, you must know what type of photographs work best for your particular newsletter.

"Although four-color photographs cost about 50% more than black-and-white, they are 100% more effective," said Fanson.¹⁹⁵ The cost for printing a newsletter, using either one-color, spot-color, or a four-color process, can be found in the printing section of this thesis. Her other suggestions on how to successfully use photographs included:

- Always add a caption.
- Treat your photographs and borders consistently.
- A good crop adds impact by making the central image as large and

¹⁹³ Clobridge 37

¹⁹⁴ Hamilton 88

¹⁹⁵ Fanson 113

powerful as possible.

- You need a caption and it is usually typeset with the same typeface as the body copy, but in bold or italics to visually separate it from the text. It may be placed beneath, above, or beside the artwork.
- Photos should be framed with thin, simple rules.
- Photographs can be altered digitally by using popular image-editing software.¹⁹⁶

Photographs generally print better on harder, less textured paper, according to *Case Studies in School Communication*. Its research also suggested that readers prefer photographs of people in action but that the number of subjects in a photograph should be kept to three or fewer.¹⁹⁷ Beach and Floyd suggested that designers should crop photos for drama and frame them to ensure that the message is highlighted.¹⁹⁸

Hamilton illustrated the importance of knowing how to use good photographs best, saying that a publisher can add strength to the lead stories when a dominant photo is positioned with the headline. The photo identifies with the headline for a unified visual/verbal effect.¹⁹⁹

Design Summary

Do-it-yourself publishers need to consider many different design elements when putting a newsletter together. Certainly, some publishers will experience a readership drop early in their publishing careers. However, one way not to handle this situation is changing the look of your entire newsletter. *Editor's Workshop* wanted publishers to consider four alternatives before changing the look of their publication:

1. Conduct focus groups and reader surveys to see what your audience thinks of the current format.

¹⁹⁶ Fanson 114

¹⁹⁷ Case Studies in School Communication 9

¹⁹⁸ Beach and Floyd 112

¹⁹⁹ Hamilton 74

2. Determine if you've presented the materials in an easy-to-read format.
3. Ask which information needs to be put in full-length articles and which can be summed up in brief paragraphs.
4. See if the type is readable.²⁰⁰

"When you've done everything you can to redesign your product, revitalize it, and rewrite it, and it's still not going anywhere, say good-bye to it," recommended Olson.²⁰¹

Outsourcing

"Graphic designers may charge \$50 to \$100 per hour for their efforts," said Farrell. "Full-service design firms will charge \$100 per hour or more, but many bring resources and experience that justifies the rate."²⁰² Fanson put the cost of a designer between \$20 to \$100 per hour and mentioned that outside supplies are usually marked up between 10 to 35 percent.²⁰³

"Most desktop-publishers charge an hourly rate of \$20 to \$100 per hour," Fanson said. "Like designers, desktop publishers mark-up outside expenses by 10 to 35 percent."²⁰⁴

Color

"Many newsletters are two or three colors (black for text plus one or two highlight colors)," said Jim Farrell, public relations manager at Dickinson Direct.²⁰⁵

But because of the extra cost, most novice publishers shy away from adding color to their newsletters. However, readers expect color, at least according to Beach and Floyd. They acknowledge that using color becomes a

²⁰⁰ Editor's Workshop. As cited in communication briefings, Oct. 1997, 5.

²⁰¹ Porter 75

²⁰² Farrell 59

²⁰³ Fanson 17

²⁰⁴ Fanson 18

²⁰⁵ Farrell 59

juggling act because while adding emphasis, color often detracts from readability. They also said that designers who use color most effectively apply it to the following purposes:

- identity, as in logos and nameplates
- organization, as with bullets or standing headlines
- highlights, as for pull quotes
- explanation, as in charts and graphs²⁰⁶

"Restrict color to 'hot spots'," said Nelson. "Examples: nameplate, key illustrations, content list, devices to direct readers. Keep text color screens light so type will stand out." She continued saying, "Colors can convey credibility, warmth, business tones,...." Nelson urged publishers to use color if the budget allows them to. However, publishers should carefully consider what color they choose. She offered this list of colors and the corresponding moods they create in readers:

- Blue communicates trust, quality, and stability.
- Green usually signifies healthfulness and relaxation.
- Red is urgent, fast or forceful.
- Yellow is usually a weak color, except as a background color for order forms.
- Orange will tend to make people uneasy.
- Pink is friendly.
- Black is conservative and serious.²⁰⁷

"Color is deeply rooted in human emotions," agreed Fanson. She then described some low-cost color ideas:

- Colored stock (paper) or ink
- Spot color: typically emphasizes a headline, logo or boxes
- Preprinting a spot color
- Achieve various colors or shades of black by using shades and having

²⁰⁶ Beach and Floyd 76

²⁰⁷ Nelson 54

gray heads²⁰⁸

"Many achieve the effect of several colors by using both black and a second ink in a variety of screen tints, as well as printing them at 100 percent," said Beach and Floyd. "Bright ink colors work best on coated stock; soft colors work best on uncoated sheets."²⁰⁹

Edmund C. Arnold, writing in *SNAP-SHOT*, described better ways to use color, including:

- Using black ink when printing on colored paper. Other colors: Dark blue on light blue paper, may appear pleasant but could reduce legibility if there's not enough contrast.
- Considering using black ink with a second color ink-known as "spot color," instead of colored paper. Color is usually best if used sparingly.
- When using full-color photos, be sure each picture has a large mass of primary color-red, yellow or blue. Large masses of bright secondary colors-orange, green or purple- may also do the job if they are on the light side.
- Don't be afraid to mix color photos and black-and-white ones.²¹⁰

Printing

"The material you prepare for printing originates in either of two categories: line copy or continuous-tone copy," said Hamilton. "Line copy is solid black such as a pen-and-ink drawing or the type you are now reading. Continuous-tone-copy, called halftone, has a full range of tone gradations such as in a photograph. Line copy prints successfully on a relatively rough surface such as newsprint pulp paper."²¹¹

"A typical print job will be viewed in three different stages: as typesetting

²⁰⁸ Fanson 64-65

²⁰⁹ Beach and Floyd 76

²¹⁰ Arnold, E.C. *SNAP-SHOT*. As cited in communication briefings, Volume 8, Number 5, 6.

²¹¹ Hamilton 103

and artwork, as film and as printing plates," said Fanson. "At each stage you can inspect a variety of products called proofs. Any production manager uses the 5-50-500 rule: It costs \$5 to correct a mistake on a computer, \$50 to correct the same mistake when discovered on a blueline, and \$500 when it's found on an overlay or laminated proof."²¹²

"Before sending your newsletter to the printer, read the headlines only and answer the question: 'What do I know now that I didn't know beforehand?'," suggested Clobridge.²¹³

Producing multiple copies for your readers sounds easier than it actually is. If you have a small quantity of newsletters to produce, a photocopying machine will do. However, if you require more than 1,000 copies, consider offset lithography. If you need more than 10,000 copies, use a web press, which prints on roll- or web-fed paper.²¹⁴ Other experts would chose a web press if they needed 50,000 or more copies. Bond disagreed with Fanson on the issue of photocopying, saying that photocopies should be the last alternative.²¹⁵

According to Fanson, image transfer can be accomplished by one of the four conventional printing processes:

- **Offset-lithography:** Seventy percent of printing today is done with offset-lithography. In lithography, ink is transferred from a flat-surfaced lithographic plate mounted around a cylinder to an intermediate, rubber-covered blanket cylinder.
- **Letterpress printing:** The biggest advantage of the letterpress is that corrections can be made easier and less expensively since individual letters, lines of type, or engravings can be removed and replaced.
- **Gravure printing:** It is not really suited for type or other linework, but it is excellent for reproducing art and color photographs. This press is uneconomical and impractical for short runs.

²¹² Fanson 152

²¹³ Clobridge 37

²¹⁴ Fanson 160

²¹⁵ Bond 95

- **Screen printing:** It is the the best process for printing in small quantities and on almost any surface. The biggest disadvantage is the inability to do long press runs. Also, it is not very good for producing halftones and process color projects.²¹⁶

"Process printing is an attempt to reproduce all the colors of the spectrum with just three colors-yellow (Y), magenta (M), cyan (C), plus black (K)," said Fanson. She cautioned that when working on the computer colors may appear different, because the screen is lit from behind, compared to when printed on a sheet of paper. Fanson also offered some printing tips when dealing with color:

- When using a photocopier for duplication, make sure you use a color that photocopies well.
- Be sure you specify the ink color by number.
- For maximum visibility, use colors that contrast.
- Look at colors that other publications use.
- Collect samples of ink colors you like in a folder.
- Consider having the spot color printed in advance.²¹⁷

Bivins explained how printers create an 8 1/2" by 11" format and how to add extra pages. He wrote:

The most commonly used format size for newsletters is the 8 1/2" x 11" page. This is usually accomplished by an 11" x 17" original, folded in half, thus giving you a four-page newsletter. Additional pages can be added in increments of two or four. If an extra page is needed, a loose insert or an attached page in an 11" x 25 1/2" format folded twice can be used.²¹⁸

Davis stressed the importance of giving printers clearly written instructions in case of a dispute or a finished product that looks different as requested. He provided a checklist, as cited in Rettig's thesis, publishers should use to specify their wishes to the printer:

²¹⁶ Fanson 161-162

²¹⁷ Fanson 66

²¹⁸ Bivins 4

- Name the exact stock you want, including weight, color and quality for the text cover.
- Specify page size, number of pages and quality of run.
- Name the number of ink colors, especially if you use something other than black, and where color is to be-on all pages, certain pages, etc.
- Specify print of copy and heads and what typefaces and head styles you want. Use the typefaces the printer has because if he or she jobs out the typesetting you pay more.
- Specify time requirements. Tell printers when you will deliver the copy and how long they have to complete the job.
- Specify number of halftones (photographs), duotones or color separations and where they will be used.
- Address all other services you want to be provided by the printer, such as artwork, composition, addressing, etc.
- Ask for your cost if you make changes after the blueline proof.
- Inquire about anything unusual the printer can do for you, like diecuts, embossing or fold outs.²¹⁹

Printers definitely will ask novice publishers what ink color they want to use for their newsletter. However, most publishers do not think much about ink choices, according to Hamilton. He suggested looking for a strong pigmentation and a proper degree of tack. In addition, Hamilton advised publishers to use a soy-based ink for environmental considerations. Black ink is best to use for photographs and he advised to use duotones if the printer has developed the skills.²²⁰

Fanson's suggestions on how to cut costs at the printer included:

- Buy paper in quantity.
- Use standard paper sizes, colors and weights.
- Obtain estimates from several designers, typesetters, printers and paper suppliers.
- If you have the same spot color for every issue, you can have it printed in

²¹⁹ Davis, B.R. (1986). School Public Relations: The Complete Book. A Source Book of Proven PR Practices. Arlington: NSPRA, 1986.

²²⁰ Hamilton 105

advance and stored at the print shop (For example, if you preprint a year's supply of your blue nameplate then you will just have to print the black ink for each issue).

- Obtain a contract for services for long periods. A printer may give you a better rate if you commit yourself for a year.
- Since most standard newsletters are printed on 11" x 17" paper and folded to create four pages, always think in groups of four.
- Use lighter-weight paper.
- Ask your printer if he or she has any paper in storage that can be used. You may get a better rate.
- Every change or correction after the printer has the artwork costs money, so proofread carefully before sending it to the printer.
- If a supplier offers a discount for prompt payment, take advantage of it.
- Deliver work on time to avoid overtime charges. Enforce deadlines because delays cost money.
- Don't pay for any artwork or printing that is inferior. If it's not what you asked for, have it redone.²²¹

Her other cost cutting tips read:

- Fewer pages, copies, or issues per year will reduce cost.
- If you know another publisher, pool supplies and services.
- Use photocopiers with enlargement and reduction features instead of sending material to a printing house for expensive reproduction services.
- Take your own photographs.
- "Gang" photographs. If all photographs are going to be the same size, they can be made into "halftones" at the same time to save money.
- Do your own paste-up or desktop publishing.
- Avoid bleeds, tight registrations, and other specialty printing problems.
- Talk to other editors or publishers. Perhaps they can suggest ideas on reducing cost or publishing newsletters efficiently.²²²

Depending on how many of these suggestions first-time publishers implement, printing costs depend on lots a factors, including time, quality and

²²¹ Fanson 167

²²² Fanson 25

quantity. Following is a list that gives publishers a basic idea of how much it costs to print a certain quantity of newsletters using a color or black and white printing process:

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Paper Size (11"x17")		1,000	5,000	10,000	20000*
2	2 color both sides		\$569	\$980	\$1335	\$2090
3	3 color/ 1 color		\$569	\$980	\$1335	\$2090
4	3 color / 2 color		\$676	\$1087	\$1526	\$2328
5	2 color / 1 color		\$503	\$823	\$1200	\$1972
6	1 color both sides		\$317	\$626	\$983	\$1715
7						
8			*each additional thousand-\$70			

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Paper Size (8.5"x11")		1,000	5,000	10,000	20000*
2	2 color both sides		\$355	\$561	\$808	\$1312
3	3 color/ 1 color		\$355	\$561	\$808	\$1312
4	3 color / 2 color		\$486	\$700	\$957	\$1481
5	2 color / 1 color		\$355	\$561	\$818	\$1185
6	1 color both sides		\$198	\$392	\$634	\$1012
7						
8			*each additional thousand-\$38			

All the prices given include 60-pound uncoated paper and single or double folding. Upgrading your paper to a recycled royal fiber would add \$20 per thousand (8.5"x11") or \$40 per thousand (11"x17") to your cost. Using 80-pound glossy or dull paper would add \$10 per thousand (8.5"x11") or \$20 per thousand (11"x17") to your cost. Also, publishers should check with printers on how much they charge to deliver the finished product.²²³

Now that the newsletter is printed, novice publishers must consider a way to bind their pages. "Any newsletter printed in multiples of four pages can be bound by saddle-wire binding, which staples through the fold," said Hamilton. "A tabloid-size newsletter of eight or twelve pages can have no binding at all and simply fold the sheets firmly and accurately."²²⁴

²²³ Express Color Printing, Inc. (1997) [On-line]. Available: <http://www.express-color.com/newsletter.html>.

²²⁴ Hamilton 105

Paper

"Paper should be of the highest affordable quality, suitable for multiple printing processes," said Donald Cook, author of *The School Newsletter: Effective K-12 Communicator*, as cited in Jody Rettig's thesis. Novice publishers that consider two-sided printing should use opaque or pastel paper.²²⁵ "Some newsletter owners use a gold or an off-white color to give their newsletters a different image," said Bond.²²⁶

According to B. Rodney Davis, paper texture, weight and color all contribute to the message publishers want to send.²²⁷

"If your print run is relatively small—say, 5000 or under—choice of paper isn't a significant budget item," said Hamilton. "It would be false economy to use anything but the best." He suggested five characteristics novice publishers must consider when specifying paper:

- **Weight:** It affects the thickness and firmness of your newsletter. Most newsletters are printed on a 60- or 70-pound stock. If you publish a simple four-pager, 80-pound stock could be desirable for firmness.
- **Size:** The printer will choose a sheet size appropriate for the size of your publication.
- **Finish:** If you run photographs and illustrations, coated stock is preferable because it will provide maximum contrast and vividness. Dull coating is considered best for comfortable reading of the text copy. Uncoated paper is excellent for text readability but is less satisfactory for pictures and illustrations.
- **Color:** If you have an all-type newsletter, colored ink printed on colored paper can be quite attractive if you choose colors that complement and a deeply muted color for type.²²⁸

²²⁵ Cook 131

²²⁶ Bond 96

²²⁷ Davis 114-115

²²⁸ Hamilton 104

Fanson mentioned in her book several tips on how novice publishers can use paper to their advantage. "Studies show that cream- or buff-colored paper reduces fatigue on readers," she said. "Printing on off-white paper, such as natural, cream, buff, or ivory, adds to the informality of communications." Her other paper suggestions included:

- Dark colored paper costs substantially more than white or light-colored paper and reduces the legibility of type.
- Glossy or coated stock may produce a glare that can cause eyestrain over a period of time and is more expensive.
- Printing on a colored stock with two colored inks can create the effect of a three-colored job without the expense.
- The more expensive the paper is, the better your color control will be.
- Changing paper does not significantly increase cost, but a second spot color does because it requires an additional printing plate.²²⁹

Distribution

The 1996 *Kleid Seasonality Report*, cited in *communication briefings*, listed the best times of the year to start mailing a particular publication. The *Kleid Report* considered the newsletter content followed by the best months to start mailing that kind of publication:

- Fund-raising.....November, October, August
- Business/finance.....December, June, September
- Cultural reading.....December, May, June
- General reading.....December, May, November
- Self-improvement.....September, December, July
- Health.....June, December, April
- Home interest.....May, December, June
- Parents and children.....August, April, October
- Hobbies.....December, June, March
- Entertainment.....December, June, March

²²⁹ Fanson 163-164

- Educational/technical/professional.....January, November, July²³⁰

According to Bond, sending your newsletters by presorted first-class mail is less expensive.²³¹ "Use first-class mail, despite the extra cost, if members' needs for timely information is great," said Preston.²³² According to Fanson, it would also be a good idea to use smaller, less-expensive No.10 envelopes for mailing your newsletter via first-class mail.²³³

According to a survey by PaperCom Alliance and Opinion Research Corp., published in *Sales and Marketing Strategies & News*, nearly 63 percent of the 787 respondents said they favor first-class mail over phone calls because they prefer communication they can touch. The respondents also said they feel first-class mail shows that the sender has invested some time and thought in the message.²³⁴

"Use third-class bulk rate for direct mail promotions," said Bond. "Presorted third-class bulk rate is half the cost of first-class mail, but delivery is slower. The bulk rate should be used only for non-timely material; never send newsletter or invoices by bulk rate," he said.²³⁵

According to Bond, most newsletters apply for second-class mail, which can be applied for at the local post office. Second-class mail gets delivered almost as quickly as first-class mail for less than half the cost.²³⁶ "Newsletters mailed second class must display either an ISSN or a post office identification number in their nameplate, masthead or return address," said Beach and

²³⁰ The 1996 Kleid Seasonality Report. As cited in Association Management and communication briefings, May 1997, 6.

²³¹ Bond 102

²³² Preston 99

²³³ Fanson 168

²³⁴ Sales And Marketing Strategies & News. As cited in communication briefings, Dec. 1997, 6.

²³⁵ Bond 102-103

²³⁶ Bond 103

Floyd.²³⁷

Case Studies in School Communication suggested that publishers follow these tips to improve their newsletter mailings:

- Check into computer produced labels if you are mailing to people more than once.
- Try presorting to speed up delivery.
- Communicate with the postal department to find out how to save money and time on delivery.²³⁸

Fanson also offered several tips to make distribution easier. For example, the mailing list can be printed onto self-adhesive address labels, or for larger distribution consider an automated address printer that prints an address directly on an envelope (about 3,000 pieces per hour). When it comes to postage, you can buy a postage machine that seals envelopes, stamps them, and stacks the mail at a rate of 40 per minute.²³⁹

"When your newsletter arrives in the mail, the first words most readers see are their names on the address label and your name in the return address," said Beach and Floyd. "Place colorful graphics, your masthead, a welcome message, an inspirational quote, event notices, a contents box or other news that invites readers into your newsletter in the area under your return address."²⁴⁰

Besides placing additional information on the envelope, the *PHC Profit Report*, cited in *communication briefings*, suggested enclosing a pencil, key ring, or other small giveaways in the mailing because research shows that lumpy envelopes get opened.²⁴¹

With the technological advancements made over time, novice publishers

²³⁷ Beach and Floyd 64

²³⁸ *Case Studies in School Communication* 10

²³⁹ Fanson 168

²⁴⁰ Beach and Floyd 73

²⁴¹ PHC Profit Report. As cited in communication briefings, Aug. 1997, 8.

no longer need to restrict their thinking to traditional mailing methods. "Realize significant reductions in printing and mailing costs by providing members with fax-on-demand, electronic mail and bulletin board systems," said Preston.²⁴²

Marketing

A lot of people simply define marketing as identifying a need and filling it. Shaw took this definition one step further and said, "Defining your ideal customers means that you can then narrow your choices of how to reach them."²⁴³

Most large organizations and established newsletters hire experienced marketing firms to develop a marketing plan for them. Obviously, novice publishers do not possess the financial assets to do that. But even if publishers do, "be wary of relying on an agency that specializes in only one thing...the agency may recommend what it knows best, not what's good for you," said Kevin Tynan in *Exposure! How to Market So your Message Is Unavoidable*.²⁴⁴

According to Jay Conrad Levinson's article in *Inc.*, first-time publishers can craft a clear and simple marketing plan by limiting it to seven sentences, that:

1. Describe the purpose of your marketing.
2. Explain clearly what customer benefits you'll stress.
3. Define your target audience.
4. List your marketing techniques.
5. Declare your marketplace niche-the position that you feel is yours in the eyes of your customers and prospective customers.
6. Describe your identity-the way you see your organization.

²⁴² Preston 96

²⁴³ Shaw 169

²⁴⁴ Tynan K. Exposure! How to Market So Your Message Is Unavoidable. As cited in communication briefings, Dec. 1997, 8.

7. State your marketing budget as a percentage of projected gross revenues.²⁴⁵

Lila Freilicher, president and creative director of LPF Marketing & Communications, suggested that novice publishers should ask themselves what contribution a particular news item can make toward the marketing effort. She listed five categories:

1. Build participation, loyalty and respect.
2. Encourage donations and contributions.
3. Keep lapsed members or former contributors within your extended family and encourage membership renewals.
4. Clarify, enhance and improve your image.
5. Attract new contributors or members.²⁴⁶

"It (Marketing) is an art because advertising and selling require creativity, awareness, and insight," said Bond. "It is a science because it includes research, planning, discipline, and analysis." Bond warned about pricing your newsletter too low, which happens when novice publishers consider only the cost of printing and postage. But this would exclude the cost of writing, printing the sales letter, order card, reply card, supplies, telephone, etc.²⁴⁷

Bond suggested using one of two methods to price a newsletter: maximum-profit pricing or cost-plus pricing. "Maximum-profits pricing results from a price low enough to look attractive to the market, and high enough to cover the expenses with a healthy profit." On the other hand, "the cost-plus pricing method is most commonly used by newsletter owners," Bond said. "The price is determined by taking a percentage for profits above the cost of the newsletter and the overhead."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Levinson J.C. Inc.. As cited in communication briefings, June 1997, 4.

²⁴⁶ Freilicher, L. (1996, May). Getting the most from newsletters. Fund Raising Management, 27(3), 49-51.

²⁴⁷ Bond 108

²⁴⁸ Bond 111

"While subscription rates will be your main source of income, ancillary products such as special reports, seminars, books, and tapes can reap great profits," said Shaw. "You can produce them yourself or buy them at a wholesale rate from other publishers..."²⁴⁹

And to get subscribers, publishers need a good sales letter. Most novice publishers choose to send out sales letters to acquire subscriptions from their audience. Even though the average return for a sales letter sent out using the direct mail method is 1/2 to 1 percent of the total mailed,²⁵⁰ According to Bond, a good sales letter uses AIDA. This sales process is designed to get Attention, create Interest and Desire, and solicit an Action.

The Business-to-Business Direct Marketing Handbook offered some tips on how to improve a sales letter, based on reader eye-movement studies:

Readers first look at the salutation. In a non-personalized sales letter, they focus on the headline. Most readers glance at the signature to see who sent the letter. Next, they scan the P.S. if one exists. Finally, they return to the salutation area and begin reading the first paragraph. You should include a P.S., especially in a sales letter, and make it a function like a headline-to entice, to promise, to sell, etc.²⁵¹

Herlihy agreed and added that testimonials also work really well. However, whenever you use one, you must include the full name, title and company when appropriate. Anonymous testimonials are simply not believable.²⁵²

The *Direct Response Specialist* stated that customers can sometimes read the wrong things into your direct mail letter. To prevent misunderstandings, avoid saying the following:

²⁴⁹ Shaw 64

²⁵⁰ Bond 115

²⁵¹ The Business-to-Business Direct Marketing Handbook. As cited in The Direct Response Specialist and communication briefings, Volume 8, Number 5, 4.

²⁵² Herlihy, B. (1997). 7 key questions you must answer to market to small businesses. Direct Marketing, 60 (7), 44-46.

- "Everyone reading this..." Even in direct mail, customers want to be treated as individuals. Try: "As you read this..."
- "Order now..." Try: "For faster service.."
- "You must respond..." or "All you have to do..." The customer will say "Don't tell me what to do, thank you," and throw away your letter. Try: "Please respond..." and "Here's how..."
- "Many of our customers enjoy..." "But not all of us," customers might think. Try: "You'll enjoy..."
- "Once your product arrives..." The word "once" makes it sound like it'll take a long time to ship the product. Try: "The minute the product arrives..."
- "We can't tell you how thrilled you'll be..." If you can't they won't be. Try: "You'll be thrilled by these features..."²⁵³

Direct Marketing Rules of Thumb's direct mail tips discussed the importance of ink color to enhance direct mail materials:

- Restrict the second color in a sales letter to a few lines or key words. It provides more of a visual appeal than one big splash of color. As a rule, red is your best choice for a sales letter.
- Consider gender preferences if you mail to all men or all women. Women usually prefer red ink and men prefer blue.²⁵⁴

Nelson suggested using an **URGENT** rubber stamp on direct-mail envelopes to provoke interest in readers. And besides offering free material whenever possible, novice publishers should ask their readers to recommend another person who could benefit from a free subscription.²⁵⁵ Bond encouraged including a free gift offer, because people are more apt to buy when publishers do. In addition, people will be more inclined to order when they know that they can get a refund if the publication fails to fulfill their needs.²⁵⁶ However, Edith

²⁵³ The Direct Response Specialist. As cited in communication briefings, April 1997, 5.

²⁵⁴ Bodian, N.G. Direct Marketing Rules of Thumb. As cited in communication briefings, June 1997, 6.

²⁵⁵ Nelson 198

²⁵⁶ Bond 115

Flowers Kilgo, publisher of *Creative Downscaling*, firmly believed that giving away samples is detrimental to any newsletter and to the industry. "It is our experience that the person who pays for a sample is far more likely to subscribe," she said.²⁵⁷

Another effective communication tool becomes a marketing brochure. Chip Eichelberger wrote in *10 Secrets of Marketing Sources* about the steps involved in creating a one-page, low-cost but effective marketing brochure. They included:

- A photo of you and your staff.
- Qualities that set you apart from competitors and what they mean to your customers and prospects. Examples: unusual hours, special financing.
- Testimonials from your "raving fans" that will counter the objections you most often hear from prospects.
- Where you are and how to reach you: street address, phone, fax and pager numbers and e-mail address.²⁵⁸

In addition, a blue or light-green background for the marketing brochure will put readers in a more accepting mood, according to Managing Office Technology.²⁵⁹

But the success of every sales letter and/or marketing brochure depends on the mailing list publishers rent. When publishers rent a list, they can use the names only one time unless people respond to the request. Then, publishers can add them to their mailing list.

Besides renting a mailing list, publishers can also compile a list

²⁵⁷ Newsletter Access [On-line]. How Newsletter Publisher Reach Their Target Markets. Available: <http://www.newsletteraccess.com/subscribe/marketing.html>, 3.

²⁵⁸ Eichelberger, C. Writing in *10 Secrets of Marketing Success: How to Jump-Start Your Marketing*. As cited in communication briefings, June 1997, 7.

²⁵⁹ Managing Office Technology. As cited in communication briefings, Oct. 1997, 8.

themselves by including names from directories, trade show lists, sales records, leasing records, business listings in magazines, newspaper articles, city and town directories and libraries. Fanson advised that publishers should use their mailing list to generate additional revenue by renting out the list.²⁶⁰ When renting a list, publishers can expect to pay between \$85 and \$130 per thousand names.

Shaw listed the basic materials a good direct mail package should contain:

- Letter: Experts say that the longer the letter, the higher the response.
- Order form: Make it easy for people to respond.
- Reply envelope: Usually use a #9 envelope with prepaid postage.
- An envelope to put it all in.²⁶¹

Besides using the sales letter or marketing brochure as an individual promotional piece, publishers can also use it as part of a media kit. But why should you have a media kit? Because it helps writers and producers decide to do a story on your publication. Usually, these are the components of a media kit, which is usually distributed in a folder:

- Cover letter
- News release
- Copy of your brochure and other promotional materials
- Bio sheet-in other words, information about you and your publication
- Press clippings
- Glossy black-and-white photo²⁶²

Shaw offered other ways to market a newsletter business:

- Promote your newest publication by personally delivering a compelling and related object to your most desired media contacts.

²⁶⁰ Fanson 21

²⁶¹ Shaw 185

²⁶² Shaw 182

- If you have written an article about some aspect of your business that has appeared in a local or national publication, send a copy to your 100 best customers.
- Call in to a live radio talk show that invites listener feedback.
- Write a letter to the editor to promote your business. You can respond to a recent article, citing your experience with your businesses to underscore the point you're making.
- Print up Rolodex cards listing your name, address, and other contact information, and send them off with your press materials. Include your area of specialty to enable a reporter to use as a source.
- Whenever you do something new for your business, contact the alumni association at any schools you've ever attended.²⁶³

Julia Busch, publisher of the *So Young* newsletter offered first-timers her marketing advice. "I send materials to massive mailing lists and work with organizations like Publishers Marketing Association using co-op mailers to book reviewers, libraries and bookstores, in order to stir editorial interest in my product." Jon Bard, from *Children's Book Insider*, used small classified ads in *Writer's Digest* and regular mailings to feature editors, columnist and writing magazines.²⁶⁴

Edith Flowers Kilgo, publisher of *Creative Downscaling*, advised novice publishers to target publications with a 20,000 to 100,000 circulation range. These circulation are hungry for good material but have little money to buy good articles with. In addition, these publications are more likely to offer endorsement for publishers' publication.²⁶⁵

At last, Walter Boomsma, publisher of *Eagle News*, offered this easy to use marketing tip. "When I stop at the local convenience store, I'll tack one (subscription card) on the community bulletin board."²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Shaw 191-192

²⁶⁴ Newsletter Access 1

²⁶⁵ Newsletter Access 3

²⁶⁶ Newsletter Access 4

In his article, "Effective Public Relations Techniques for the Small Business in a Competitive Market Environment," Augustine S. Ihator said, "Small businesses can use bulletins produced by local churches, non-profit groups, and community organizations to communicate to their various audiences."²⁶⁷

Nelson wanted publishers to realize the importance of spreading the word about their publications by handing out their newsletters at seminars. Another way is to send the newsletter to trade publications in the publishers' field, magazines which carry information for the target audience and the local newspaper(s).²⁶⁸ Shaw agreed saying that word-of-mouth is the most effective kind of marketing there is. He suggested asking current customers if they know of other people who would like to receive your newsletter. One way to do that is to include a separate form in your mailings and ask current customers for names and addresses of other prospects.²⁶⁹

"To generate word-of-mouth for products, aim at the 13.5 percent of consumers known as early 'adopters'-the ones who try new products and recommend them to others," said Crawford. "About 50 percent of people rely on what they hear about services."²⁷⁰

In case publishers need to market their newsletter to other small businesses, Bernie Herlihy, president of the Herlihy Marketing Group, offered advice in "7 Key Questions You Must Answer to Market to Small Businesses," as cited in *Direct Marketing*. "Make an in-person sales call and you can respond to a prospect's remarks after they are uttered," he said. Herlihy stressed the

²⁶⁷ Ihator, A.S. (Summer 1998). Effective public relations techniques for the small business in a competitive market environment. Public Relations Quarterly, 43(2), 28-33.

²⁶⁸ Nelson 194

²⁶⁹ Shaw 170

²⁷⁰ Herlihy, B. Direct Marketing. As cited in communication briefings, July 1997, 6.

importance to communicate the benefits of the publication; especially in what ways it can benefit the small-business owner.²⁷¹

"One way to make marketing your business tolerable and sometimes even enjoyable is to map out a specific plan for each month and year that won't let you off the hook so easily," said Shaw.²⁷² "People will hesitate to buy from you again if the experience they had during the transaction was unpleasant, even if you offer a product or service that is exclusive to your area or industry."²⁷³

According to Bond, marketing can consume between \$500 and \$1,000 in the first year. However, marketing can consume any amount of money depending on several factors, for example, it will cost more money to market a national newsletter than a local. Bond based his amount on marketing a local publication produced by a novice publisher for a small club or organization. But how can novice publishers check the result they get for the money they invested? Peter Sun offered a simple and inexpensive method for checking results of promotional activities:

- Label a three- or four-ring binder and insert a few dozen clear plastic pockets in it.
- Place a copy of every promotional ad, letter, brochure, flyer and so on in each of the pockets.
- Record the details of each promotion on a single sheet and slip it into the reverse side of the pocket. Include dates, quantities, target audiences, response percentages, number of sales, sale value minus cost, net profit or loss and the profit or loss per dollars spent on the promotion.
- Look at the results after six months and pick the two promotions that yielded the best profit. Then keep using those two and discard the rest.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Herlihy 45

²⁷² Shaw 170

²⁷³ Shaw 187

²⁷⁴ Sun, P. 17 Ways to Generate Leads and Get New Customers. As cited in communication briefings, Oct. 1997, 8.

Public Relations

A lot of people wonder what distinguishes marketing and public relations. "Maybe the simplest distinction is this: marketing focuses on identifying and meeting the needs, interests and aspirations of customers, whereas public relations embraces the concerns of a much wider range of stake holders including customers," said Samuel Coad Dyer in his article, "Public Relations Strategies for Small Business Growth," appearing in *Public Relations Quarterly*.²⁷⁵

"Often no importance is placed on the needs to equally know how to qualitatively and quantitatively relate to the publics on whom business success or failure depends," said Ihator. Many small businesses lump together marketing and public relation, but Ihator distinguishes the two. Public relations "clearly recognizes the various stake holders and undertakes a well-developed communication program with a view to maintaining a good relationship."²⁷⁶

"Many small businesses,...., often are not fully aware of the need for public relations for the growth of their enterprise," said Ihator.²⁷⁷

"Many newsletters can be sold by getting exposure from a magazine article or a review of your newsletter by a writer in your field," said Bond. He pointed to the opportunity of holding seminars or serving as a guest speaker. In addition, he claimed that easy public relations techniques include printing your newsletter logo on your business card, putting the publication name in a directory, or donating the newsletter to libraries, colleges/universities to gain exposure.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Dyer, S.C. (Fall 1996). "Public Relations Strategies for Small Business Growth." *Public Relations Quarterly*, 41 (3), 43-47.

²⁷⁶ Ihator 30

²⁷⁷ Ihator 28

²⁷⁸ Bond 141

"Don't let long periods go by without contacting customers in some way- in person, by phone, letter, greeting card, ad or brochure," according to *Customer Service: A Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*. "Reason: Customers forget organizations that forget them."²⁷⁹

"Send copies of your newsletter to the media," said Frank Grazian, executive editor of *communication briefings*. "They might find a story idea with news or feature value."²⁸⁰

According to a study by MacDonald & Co. Communications Inc., a Toronto based public relations firm, media relations is the most utilized and effective communications tool. "Mass media audiences tend to find reported stories by a third party more credible than advertising messages," said Ihator. "Reporters are always seeking stories of interest for local people."²⁸¹

John W. Elliot said:

Business stories written and published by reporters and editors are sometimes referred to as sales publicity. Its effectiveness is based on the power of an objective third party endorsement...Sales publicity is like having thousands of word-of-mouth messages happening at once.²⁸²

Ihator claimed that writing stories and receiving publicity becomes less difficult if publishers follow these basic rules:

Use short simple words, sentences, and paragraphs, active voice writing, avoidance of slang and jargon, and writing the story in order of importance, often referred to by journalists as the inverted pyramid writing.

In addition, he said, "There is interdependency between a business and a community. Activities such as sharing resources and information with community members, speech deliveries to groups, organizing tours, and

²⁷⁹ Customer Service: A Journal of Theory, Research and Practice. As cited in communication briefings, Aug. 1997, 8.

²⁸⁰ Grazian, F. communication briefings, Volume 8, Number 5, 3.

²⁸¹ Ihator 32

²⁸² Elliott, J.W. (Fall 1996). "The Best Kept Secret in the PR Business." Public Relations Quarterly, 41, 39-42.

assisting local economy are all productive public relations tools."²⁸³ Dyer agreed saying, "By being a responsible member of the community, small business can build goodwill, recognition and business that cannot be achieved with advertising."²⁸⁴

Levin's Public Relations Report suggested different ways you can use the Internet to enhance public relations efforts, They included:

- Pitch your materials to online newsletters and magazines.
- Monitor Internet mentions of your newsletter through E-watch (www.ewatch.com).
- Watch for queries from editors and respond to them on Profnet (www.vyne.com).
- Volunteer to add material to articles listed on editorial calendars.
- Use e-mail to send requested information to editors and reporters.
- Peruse news releases from competitors and prospects.²⁸⁵

Even though public relations counsel might become necessary, Dyer thinks that one of the greatest barriers for novice publishers is the integration of public relations into their management function. Most times, it is viewed as either such a specialized activity or something that is so esoteric that it cannot be planned.

²⁸³ Ihator 33

²⁸⁴ Dyer 47

²⁸⁵ Levin's Public Relations Report. As cited in communication briefings, July 1997, 5.

Chapter 3

Procedures

Several ways were used to acquire information on the subject of newsletters and the related sub-topics outlined in chapter one.

First, five books were purchased from Amazon.com Inc., a Delaware based company that sells books and music over the Internet.

The books served as a starting point for the secondary research and as quick reference throughout this thesis. In addition, the books were used to compile a list of sub-topics important to novice publishers. The book titles were, *Home-Based Newsletter Publishing*, *How to Make Money Publishing From Home*, *Producing a First-Class Newsletter*, *How to Create Powerful Newsletters* and *Newsletter Sourcebook*.

Next, the Internet was accessed several times to use the Netscape and Lycos search engines. Using the word "newsletter" in the keyword search, the search engines displayed 1,109 hits. However, most of the Internet sites found were business related.

When the author attempted to narrow the search by using the keywords, "newsletters and publishing," over two million hits were received. Every time keywords were combined, the search engines displayed more than two million hits. Because of the inability to narrow the search, the Internet was not used as the primary research engine.

Only two Internet sites contained information useful to the topic. The Publishing Business Group's web site featured a section called "Publishing Tips." This section discussed topics, such as how to prepare newsletters that last, 10 tips for first-time publishers and common publishing mistakes. In addition, First Step Communications, an Australian marketing company aimed

at helping small and medium-sized businesses to use the internet more effectively, offered its *Solid Ground* newsletter free on its web site. Five articles, discussing newsletter distribution, were retrieved.

The Internet proved useful in discovering a variety of online newsletters. Several web sites were discovered that offered newsletter subscriptions and, therefore, displayed back issues of newsletters for potential customers. This opportunity was used to evaluate newsletter topics, contents, designs, and overall qualities according to the research found in the literature review.

Next, Rowan University's library in Glassboro, NJ, provided most of the secondary research. The reference area contained several newsletter directories that list newsletter publishers and topics covered in the publications. Two directories were reviewed, including the *Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters*, a listing of over 5,000 newsletters published in North America, and the *International Directory of Little Magazines & Small Presses*.

A database search was also conducted via the Rowan library home page. First, the Expanded Academic ASAP option of the INFOTRAC Search Bank was used. This search bank contained journal and magazine articles published from 1995 to November 1998. In addition, back files existed from 1980 to 1994.

Using the keyword search engine, several articles were discovered related to the topic and the sub-topics outlined in chapter one. Using the keyword "newsletter," the search turned up 499 hits. However, the search discovered a large number of articles not relevant to the topic, most of which belonged to the *Oil and Gas Journal*. The journal contained a section called "Newsletter;" therefore, the search engine displayed every issue.

To ease the search, more specific keywords were used. "Newsletter and design," "newsletter and publishing," "desktop-publishing and newsletter," "printing and newsletter," and "marketing and small-business," were the

keywords used. This search turned up a total of 265 articles, from which 21 articles were selected.

The same keywords were used to search Lexis-Nexis, another Rowan online database. The keyword search produced a total of 482 articles from a variety of publications. Five articles were selected related to the thesis. The articles contained information regarding desktop-publishing, layout, and specific computer software designed for novice publishers.

Next, the Telnet search bank, cataloging most library publications, was used. Telnet allowed to search according to author, title, subject, or keyword. Both keyword and subject search engines were used to determine if different results would be found when searching for the word "newsletter."

Both search engines turned up 23 publications, 21 books and two slide presentations. Six books were used to complete the secondary research. The books discussed issues, such as how to conduct a readership survey, newsletter editing and design, and newsletter printing instructions.

The library also offered a small collection of instructional and movie videos. Two videos discussing the topics of research and customer communications, produced by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), were selected.

Dr. Donald Bagin, thesis adviser and professor at Rowan University, suggested to read past theses written by former Rowan graduate students. Brian C. McCallum's thesis, *Research Findings and Proven Techniques for Producing Effective Promotional Literature*, and Jody Rettig's thesis, *Creating Effective and Attractive School District Community Newsletters*, were read.

In addition, Edward H. Moore, a professor at Rowan University and former managing editor of *communication briefings*, a newsletter for communicators, referred the author to Jack Gillespie, editor of *communication*

briefings. Gillespie supplied 12 *briefings* issues from 1997 which were searched for articles related to writing and newsletter design.

At last, several textbooks were read in regard to the sub-topics outlined in Chapter one. Book titles included, *The Practice of Public Relations*, *How To Conduct Your Own Survey*, *Public Relations Writing Form & Style* and *Public*

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Relations Techniques.

Chapter 4

Summary

With newsletters being around since the 1500s, the industry's history lies full of interesting stories that novice publishers can learn from.

Unfortunately, lots of newsletters exit this crowded newsletter market as quickly as they enter it. In addition, there seems no end to this trend because thousands of organizations and clubs use newsletters to communicate with their employees and/or members.

This thesis examined current newsletter literature and extracted important information and studies necessary and most helpful to novice publishers. This information may help first-timers, who possess fewer resources than established publishers and organizations, to narrow their focus to an audience where they can compete and earn money, respect and experience.

Excluding Internet, e-mail, and fax newsletters, the thesis closely examined the most important parts of a desktop-published newsletter, backing its information with current industry prices and expert testimonials.

Even though lots of people rely on newsletters to gather information about their chosen profession, hobby or club, producing a newsletter can not only consume time, but also challenge and frustrate first-time publishers. Therefore, to lessen the challenge and avoid the frustrations, publishers can use the information compiled in this thesis to help produce their publications more effectively.

Top-Ten Newsletter Tip List

Besides all the expert advice, suggestions, and general information compiled in chapter two, novice publishers can use these top ten tips for quick reference:

1. Lots of publishers underestimate their readers' intelligence or overestimate their interest, said Henry Luce, founder of *Time-Life Magazine*. If publishers think they know what their readers want, they most likely miss important reader trends and probably lose subscribers for not paying them the proper attention.
2. Include regular features in the newsletter to lessen the burden of coming up with completely new ideas for every issue. In addition, publishers should publish regular features issue after issue and place them in a familiar position. Readers will expect a regular feature to appear consistently or distrust a publisher's publication. Another way to lessen the burden is to encourage readers to write stories for the publication. This especially helps when publishers experience deadline pressure or writers block. In addition, publishers should keep a file of story fillers to fill white space. This file could include copyright-free artwork, photographs, charts, etc.
3. Readers tend to feel more comfortable with what is familiar to them. Therefore, use a consistent design, layout, logo, typeface, paper, etc.
4. Conduct research to gain an advantage. Most first-time publishers disregard the importance of research whether it is initial, monitoring or evaluative. However, without research, publishers possess no way of knowing if their newsletters successfully reach their objectives. For example, publishers could conduct initial research simply by sending a newsletter demo to industry experts and ask for an evaluation in exchange for monetary compensation. However, publishers should not get discouraged by negative evaluations, but rather use the information to improve their publications. Monitoring research could involve conducting focus groups with readers to evaluate the publication's

success in regard to design, content, layout, etc. Sending out direct mail packages to attract new subscribers and evaluating their success qualifies as evaluative research. This tip comes back to knowing and not knowing what the reader thinks, feels and wants from the publication. Without research, a newsletter becomes less likely to succeed. Research allows publishers to be flexible to change once their subscribers' needs change. Publishers need to be aware that research is an on-going process.

5. This thesis offered detail information regarding layout, design, printing, distribution, marketing and public relations. However, writing the stories and establishing strong content become vital if publishers want to establish their publications in this industry. This means knowing how to appeal to an audience and omit promotional copy. Also, publishers need to check the grade-level at which they write their copy. Writing below or above that level may turn off subscribers. However, the most important tip this thesis can offer first-time publishers, and sometimes first-time writers, is to write for the audience and not for themselves. This directly ties into conducting research because without research publishers do not know their audience.

6. Design and readership studies revealed the following things that could improve a publisher's layout and design:

Type set in upper-and lowercase reads about 13 percent faster than type set in all caps. Headlines are the second-strongest design element on a page and publishers should use them to communicate their message. If they do not, 80 percent of readers will not get the message. Publishers should use sans-serif typefaces for headlines and serif ones for body copy. Creating extra white space between paragraphs increases

readership by 12 percent. When readers view the pages, they usually look first at photographs. Also, readers prefer photographs to illustrations because they think of photos as “real” and illustrations as contrived.

7. The 1996 *Kleid Seasonality Report* lists the best times of the year to start mailing a particular publication. for example, an educational/technical/professional newsletter would best be mailed in January, July or November. For a complete list displaying the newsletter content followed by the best months to start mailing, refer to chapter two of this thesis.
8. Most newsletters apply for second-class mail, which can be requested at the local post office. Second-class mail gets delivered almost as quickly as first-class mail for less than half the cost. Use first-class mail, despite the extra cost, if subscribers’ needs for timely information are great.
9. The success of every sales letter and/or direct mail piece depends on the mailing list publishers rent. Once publishers compiled their own lists, they an generate additional revenue by renting out their lists.
10. Publishers should consider adding public relations to the marketing mix. According to a study by MacDonald & Co. Communications Inc., a Toronto based public relations firm, media relations is the most effective communications tool. Audiences tend to find reported stories by a third party more credible than advertising or marketing messages.

Recommendations for Further Study

With the continued growth of the Internet, it will not be long until newsletters make more use of this medium and save some of the costs associated with printing and distributing a newsletter.

A study could identify the components of an Internet newsletter and what advantages and disadvantages this medium bears for publishers. For example, publishers would be challenged publicizing their web site and

evaluating their success. On the other hand, publishers could save money sending their newsletters to their subscribers, hence offering them a cheaper product by reducing their costs.

Another study could evaluate e-mail newsletters and their rising popularity. So far, most e-mail newsletter publishers choose to transmit their information as text only. However, improving technologies may soon allow pictures to be transferred regularly and help make this type of newsletter look more professional and enticing.

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