

Newsletter Suggestions

The time and money needed to prepare a successful newsletter demand that editors pause periodically to determine how to improve the product. This list of suggestions is obviously not comprehensive. It does, however, zero in on the key ingredients of a successful newsletter. Despite the efforts of lists like these, your best evaluations will come from reader feedback.

PURPOSE

Finish this statement before beginning work on your next newsletter: “As a result of people reading this newsletter, I hope they...” Then keep your answer to this sentence in mind when planning the contents of your next newsletter.

CONTENT

Check every article to see if it will interest at least one segment of your readership. Ask yourself how it will be of consequence to members of that segment. If you were a member of that audience, would you read it?

Be sure you have a mix of articles that will give all segments of your readership a chance to find subjects of interest. Don't weight your content too heavily toward one or two subjects.

Look at each article to see if it's presented from the office's point of view or from the readers'. Articles are more effective when they focus on interviews or topics that are told from the readers' viewpoint.

Check to see if you have articles that smack of propaganda or that gloss over the truth. If readers perceive even one item as propagandizing, you'll lose credibility.

WRITING

Is the writing clear and concise? Have you used active verbs, concrete nouns, lots of quotes, and good rhythm (varied sentence lengths)?

Do you avoid jargon and “buzz” words (synergism, networking, paradigm, etc.) that might confuse a reader? Do you use analogies to explain concepts your reader might not understand?

Do your stories explain why something happened? They should or you'll frustrate readers.

Do your news leads get right to the point with crisp, compelling first sentences that are no more than two typewritten lines long? Do you avoid using long, complex words that the average reader can't understand? Do the leads give the gist of the story using vital, specific facts?

Are your stories organized so the reader has an easy time following them? Do the stories contain any “holes”—missing items a reader might want to know about?

Are your feature story leads punchy? Do you use striking statements, dramatic contrast, strong quotes, provocative questions, etc.?