

## Newsletters: Informing Your Public



COMMUNICATIONS

Everything You Need To Know To Produce an Eye-Catching, Professional Newsletter

Launched in 1982 by Jim and Patty Rouse, The Enterprise Foundation is a national, nonprofit housing and community development organization dedicated to bringing lasting improvements to distressed communities.

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### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LIBRARY™**

This book is part of the Enterprise Community Development Library, an invaluable reference collection for nonprofit organizations dedicated to revitalizing and reconnecting neighborhoods to mainstream America. One of many resources available through Enterprise, it offers industry-proven information in simple, easy-to-read formats. From planning to governance, fund raising to money management, and program operations to communications, the Community Development Library will help your organization succeed.

### **ADDITIONAL ENTERPRISE RESOURCES**

The Enterprise Foundation provides nonprofit organizations with expert consultation and training as well as an extensive collection of print and online tools. For more information, please visit our Web site at [www.enterprisefoundation.org](http://www.enterprisefoundation.org).



# About This Manual

## What is a professional newsletter?

*A professional newsletter is valuable. You control the message, the audience and the budget. It is an effective tool for disseminating your nonprofit's message and showcasing your activities and accomplishments to your supporters, donors, friends and other important constituencies. Good newsletters give your organization credibility; a poorly written or designed newsletter can tarnish your good work.*

*Newsletters: Informing Your Public* is designed for board members and staff of nonprofit community development organizations who are interested in creating or improving their newsletters. To help your organization create a newsletter format that can be used for years to come, this manual covers topics such as:

- Following the 16 steps for success
- Setting guidelines for writing
- Designing your newsletter
- Using consultants
- Following a timeline
- Developing a realistic budget

This manual is part of the *Communication* series of The Enterprise Foundation's Community Development Library™. Other manuals provide definitive information on:

- Creating annual reports and brochures
- Developing action alerts
- Working effectively with the media
- Writing marketing sheets
- Organizing neighborhood tours
- Creating a message for your organization and identifying an audience

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# Introduction

Competition for funding dollars, publicity, political support and neighborhood commitment is fierce, making it vital that your nonprofit's message is visible. A regularly published newsletter is an ideal way to achieve this visibility.

By publishing a consistent message, you can shape and reinforce your nonprofit's mission as well as its image of professionalism and credibility. Through a newsletter, you can explain complicated issues as well as update constituents on your activities and achievements, and catalogue your successes. It can be handed out to news media and other organizations you wish to partner with. Furthermore, a newsletter can convince potential donors that your cause is worthy and that your organization is well managed.

But the chief attraction of a newsletter is its versatility and cost-effectiveness. A newsletter is your best vehicle for creating a sense of community among residents, employees or partners; for announcing upcoming events and presenting timely information on new programs or services, meeting or event results and completed projects. You can also use it for:

- Mailings
- Annual meetings
- Year-end donor pitches
- Donor, funding and grant proposals
- Media kits
- Media pitches
- Investor packets

# Creating a Newsletter — 16 Steps for Success

Regardless of length, number of pictures and colors, distribution or frequency, publishing a newsletter follows a standard process. Here are 16 steps with descriptions of each.

## STEP 1

### IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Whom do you want to reach? Community development nonprofits have two primary audiences: current and prospective clients (neighborhood residents) and current and prospective supporters (donors and partners). Very often small organizations will create one newsletter aimed at both audiences. This is perfectly acceptable, but keep in mind the different information each audience will need from each story and remember that not all stories will speak to both audiences. As you grow, you may decide to create two or more newsletters, each with its own specific purpose for its own specific audience. For more information about how to reach your audience, see *Communications: Getting the Word Out*, another manual in the Library's *Communication* series.

## STEP 2

### DEFINE THE PURPOSE

You should have a clear idea of what you want the newsletter to accomplish before you begin to develop it. Do you want to acknowledge and generate donations? Inform your residents? Promote your efforts among the community and policy-makers? A solid purpose will help you develop stories (and keep them focused) and make the newsletter more effective. Whatever your purpose, keep it in mind as you move through design and editorial decisions.

## STEP 3

### APPOINT AN EDITOR

An editor is responsible for the annual newsletter budget, determining the content, writing or assigning articles, selecting the pictures, meeting publication deadlines, recruiting help and overseeing all aspects of production. Assign this project to one person and give him or her overall authority. This person should be a conscientious staff member with good writing skills and an eye for creativity.

## STEP 4

### DETERMINE FREQUENCY

Try to distribute your newsletter at least two or three times a year. Newsletters work best as regular communications with your audience; your readers come to look forward to the latest news on your organization. But do not create a schedule you cannot keep up with. Newsletters are time and resource intensive. If you can do justice to only two issues a year, then stick with it. Do not create a bad newsletter just for the sake of meeting an arbitrary schedule. Newsletters can be sent out as frequently as monthly, but that schedule would require someone on staff dedicated to the newsletter full time.

## STEP 5

### ESTABLISH A BALLPARK BUDGET

In addition to the obvious costs related to publishing — any consulting fees, artwork, photography, printing, postage — a realistic budget should include staff expenses associated with interviewing, writing and designing, as well as time spent brainstorming ideas by the entire staff. See the section *Establishing a Budget* to get an estimate of such costs.

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## STEP 6

### NAME YOUR NEWSLETTER

Give this one-time task careful consideration. The name can be straightforward by simply using your nonprofit's name followed by the word "News," or it can be more creative and evocative of what you hope to accomplish: "Renewing Southeast." Brainstorm ideas with your board and staff. Remember that the name should reflect what you are trying to communicate — what you want the audience to remember you for and the purpose of your newsletter. Before selecting one, think how the name will sound five years from now.

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## STEP 7

### CREATE A BANNER

A banner is the identifier at the top of your newsletter with the publication's name, date and your nonprofit logo and name. Once designed and approved, your banner should remain the same. Because this is usually the most prominent element on the front page and sets the tone for the newsletter, it must be well designed. Unless you have a staff member who is talented in the field of design, you will want to hire a professional to design it and create the artwork. The design should be in keeping with your nonprofit's image: professional, helpful, successful, but not too high-tech.

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## STEP 8

### DESIGN THE LAYOUT

Desktop publishing has made computer design fun and economical, but it has also made it easy to design a newsletter that is too busy and unreadable. Examine newsletters that you find attractive and identify the design elements. Here are some helpful guidelines: Use a standard graphics software program to format headlines, subheads and body text (see *Selecting Fonts* on page 13 for guidance). Select type fonts that look relaxing and pleasing together, using fancy

fonts, bold, italic and underlining sparingly. Overused, they can make reading difficult. Do not fill every inch of the page with text. Give your readers breathing room by using blank space, called "white space," throughout the document. Choose art and photos that match the copy. At this stage, you can lay out a few "tester" or fake articles to get an accurate word count for the real articles you will be writing soon.

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## STEP 9

### CREATE A MASTHEAD

The most overlooked component of first newsletters is the lack of any contact information for the reader. That is why a masthead is so very important. A masthead is that little box that explains who publishes the newsletter, how often it's printed, and displays the logo, name, address, phone, fax, email and Web contact information for your organization. It also includes the names of the editor and other contributors. The masthead is where readers are accustomed to going to find out who is behind the newsletter. Do not miss this opportunity to tell your readers who you are. Often this box includes a short statement as to why you publish the newsletter and your policy on reprints of the articles in the newsletter.

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## STEP 10

### CHOOSE A PRINTER

Most nonprofit newsletters are printed in one or two colors of ink, so select a reliable printer who specializes in these kinds of jobs. Ask for recommendations or interview several printers in your neighborhood and compare price quotes, software compatibility and printing options. Some shops can even do your layout for you. Ask to see a proof (called a blueline) even if you are just printing your newsletter in one color of ink. Allow one to two weeks for printing.

## STEP 11

### IDENTIFY STORY IDEAS

Story ideas should be of interest to each segment of your audience. Ask your staff, volunteers or board members for suggestions. Solicit story ideas at meetings or by memo. Keep your audience in mind as you review various story ideas, which can include:

- New staff announcements
- Calendar of upcoming events
- Recent accomplishments
- New programs and services
- Loans, grants and awards your nonprofit received
- Loans, grants, awards and scholarships your nonprofit presented
- Events involving your neighborhood and local dignitaries
- New housing being developed
- Groundbreakings and dedications
- Anniversaries and annual meetings
- Contractors or employees needed
- How to become a volunteer
- Profiles of organizations you are partnering with
- Human interest stories
- Donations you received
- Donations your nonprofit needs (monetary, in-kind services and goods)
- Legislation news
- New board members
- Letter from your executive director
- Guest articles from local politicians, neighborhood leaders or residents who have benefited from or support your services (be sure to give them a byline)
- An ongoing list or box that names your supporters (This is extremely important if your primary audience is donors.)

## STEP 12

### KEEP A TICKLER FILE OF STORY IDEAS AND EVENTS

Trying to remember what happened months ago is often impossible. That is why you should keep track of events, activities and ideas as they occur. If you have an annual meeting, take photos and make notes about it right away. Identify the people in the photos sooner rather than later. Think of a story idea at home? Jot it down and file it in your tickler folder. See a graphic you like? File it! When it's time to write your next newsletter, you will be a step ahead with these ready-made prompts.

## STEP 13

### START WITH AN OUTLINE

Use an outline to develop the content. First, list all of the activities your nonprofit has participated in over the last few months. (Here is where your tickler file comes in handy.) Next, add story ideas, policy changes and upcoming events that might translate into a good article. Working with appropriate staff, such as the executive director, and keeping your audience in mind, prioritize your list by order of importance. Add notations if other people, such as a photographer, need to be involved. Pare your list down to the number of stories space will allow. Most newsletters have room for seven to 12 stories (approximately 300 words each) on four pages, more if they are longer. Check back on your layout and your “tester” articles to confirm word counts. If appropriate, save story ideas that do not fit in this issue for the next issue of your newsletter.

Here is a sample outline that has been prioritized:

#### 1. Groundbreaking (lead story)

*Who*— Governor, residents, dignitaries, partners attended

*What*— Dedication of 24 renovated apartments

*When*— August 8, 1999

*Where*— 2525 Joyce Avenue on the city's near east side

*How*— Banks, residents, social agencies joined forces with our nonprofit to finance renovation, organize block watches, start day camps for kids, improve neighborhood safety.

*Why*— To show that neighborhoods can be reclaimed when everyone works together

*Benefit*— For donors: Your organization is bringing together the partners necessary to turn the neighborhood around. For residents: Block watches will help reduce crime; new apartments will bring renewal to the neighborhood and make 24 affordable apartments available to residents.

## **2. Organization that is partnering with your nonprofit**

*Who*— Evergreen Stores

*What*— \$500,000 investment to build Truegreen Apartments

*Where*— 4456 Kenwell Crossing

*Why*— To provide affordable homes for employees in modest-paying jobs near store locations

*How*— Using tax credits

*Benefit*— Affordable homes near workplace for low-income workers

Note: Arrange for photo to be taken of Evergreen president and our executive director by next Tuesday.

## **3. New service**

*Who*— AmeriCorps workers

*What*— Providing day care to qualified families

*When*— Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

*Where*— Jewish Community Center, 678 Fair Avenue

*Why*— To provide welfare mothers with child care so they can take full-time jobs

*How*— Through a grant our nonprofit applied for and received from the federal government that pays salaries and building rent

*Benefit*— For donors: Reduces welfare rolls and gives single mothers pride in their ability to support their families; provides quality

care for young children. For residents: Affordable, quality day care will be available in the neighborhood.

## **4. Neighborhood events**

*What*— Neighborhood cleanup

*Who*— Local students and nearby affordable housing residents

*When*— Saturday, May 12, 1999

*Where*— Three-block area bounded by N. Fourth, Summit, High and Indianola

*Why*— To remove litter, trash, drug paraphernalia

*How*— Our nonprofit spearheaded efforts, contacted and received commitments from fraternities, sororities and civic leaders to supply volunteers and supplies.

*Benefit*— For donors and residents: Shows what working together can do, creates sense of neighborhood pride, introduces residents to students and vice versa, helps them learn about each other and show their respect for the living space they share.

Note: Hire photographer for a two-hour shoot.

## **5. Legislation news**

*What*— Congress threatens to cut funding for youth summer employment programs.

*Who*— All of our supporters should call their U.S. congressional representative at his or her office.

*When*— Before vote on February 12, 1999

*Why*— Tell them to vote no on Issue 23.

*Benefit*— Continues programs teaching youth leadership skills, self-esteem and office skills preparing them to get and keep jobs

## **6. Grant received**

*What*— Federal Home Loan Bank grant

*When*— March 1999

*Why*— To develop new affordable housing

*Benefit*— Our nonprofit met strict criteria to receive this grant and can now build more affordable homes for qualified working families.



## 7. Human interest stories

*Who*— Family with disabled father, nurse wife, two children

*What*— Bought first home

*Where*— Suburban location

*Why*— To own their own home, get more space, invest in their future and their neighborhood

*How*— Through our nonprofit's HOPE 3 program that provides down payment assistance

*Benefit*— For donors: Family that could not save a down payment after shouldering father's high medical bills discovered that with our nonprofit's help they could buy a home, even on their limited income. For residents: Down payment assistance is available from our nonprofit.

## 8. Become a volunteer

*Who*— Anyone over 18

*What*— Work special events, help in office

*When*— Events ongoing, office help needed Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

*Where*— Our nonprofit, 98 Neil Avenue

*Why*— Reward of helping our nonprofit help others less fortunate, give back to your community

*How*— Contact our volunteer coordinator at 555-0500.

*Benefit*— For donors and residents: Saves our nonprofit money that can be used for new services or to repair run-down homes

## STEP 14

### WRITE INTERESTING STORIES

Stories should highlight the benefits your nonprofit brings to the community. Recognize people who were instrumental in your story's subject, especially civic leaders and donors. This shows you have community support.

Before you start writing, know how long the story can be. Determine how much space one page of typewritten text is in its printed form.

Double-check facts, numbers and spelling. Use proper grammar and write in short sentences and brief paragraphs. Do not write too much — do not try to fit in everything you can think of. Too much information, so much that the reader soon forgets most of it, is a common problem with newsletters. Focus on the few things you want the reader to remember. Instead of listing all 10 of your programs, tell a good story about three of them.

## STEP 15

### EDIT, PROOF AND APPROVE

Your initial draft will need to be reworked several times before you are ready for final approval. Have at least two people proof the text before it goes to the printer, because fixing mistakes at the printer is costly. Check name spellings and titles, and dial every phone number to be sure it is accurate.

## STEP 16

### DISTRIBUTE IT!

A newsletter is not finished until it's in the hands of your audience. A major component of newsletter distribution is putting together a mailing or distribution list of your various audiences, from individuals to organizations and businesses. Initially, this can be time consuming, but think of it as a capital investment. A wide variety of inexpensive database-management software programs are available for most computer systems that will make the task easier. Ask other nonprofits what they use or ask several computer-store employees for recommendations.

Then, be sure to manage your investment. As you maintain your database, you will become very familiar with the acronym MAC — moves, adds, changes — as you update addresses, contact information and phone and fax numbers, and add names and addresses to your list. Many nonprofits find it is advisable to appoint an in-house database administrator. If this is not feasible, you can hire a company to manage your database for you.

# Establishing Writing Guidelines

Your newsletter should demonstrate that your nonprofit is a professional, viable organization deserving support. This section tells you how to write a newsletter that evokes a positive response from your readership.

## STYLE

A typical newsletter contains a lead story, several second-tier articles and a few brief stories. The lead story is the most important story and is placed on the front page under the banner. It should include photos and be the longest. If you have stories that are (or become) regular features, design a special look or icon for them.

Keep it simple. Use straightforward language, short sentences, brief paragraphs and correct grammar. Write strong headlines. Many readers scan a newsletter's headlines and read only those articles with headlines that catch their attention.

## CONTENT

Always start with the basics: who, what, when, where, why and how. Think about your audience and write about what is important to them. Include benefits your programs and initiatives provide the community.

## DOS AND DON'TS

- Do keep headlines short.
- Do use language anyone can understand.
- Do use photos and quotes from residents and civic, business and political leaders.
- Do use statistics and percentages, when possible, to justify your programs and projects.
- Do thank donors and volunteers to foster continued support and highlight your credibility.
- Do tally housing units you have built, scholarships you have awarded or neighborhoods you have revitalized.
- Don't use jargon.

- Don't use acronyms unless you spell them out at least once.
- Don't give staff writers or photographers bylines unless you are reprinting an article from another source or a widely known person, such as your board president, is writing the article.

## PAY ATTENTION TO THE CALENDAR

The time of year may dictate the nature of your articles. For example, at year's end, you may want to summarize your accomplishments and ask readers for tax-deductible holiday donations to your nonprofit. If you have annual events, you should plan to issue a newsletter just before they are held to help boost publicity and attendance.

## USE REFERENCE BOOKS

Consult your dictionary and thesaurus. Make sure they are relatively new. Check grammar and style books if you have questions. If you need more help, contact a local college or university English department. Public libraries are also great resources. Develop your own style guide for elements such as capitalization, numbers and punctuation like serial commas. There are published style guides available, such as *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* and *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

## QUOTE REAL PEOPLE

Quotes are very effective testimonials. If you would like a quote from a politician, a leading donor or CEO, call his or her office and ask for one. If you cannot get a direct quote, you can treat their comments as general conversation. For example: *Assemblyman Smith vowed to continue sponsoring legislation to help fund affordable housing.* While this is not an exact quote, it gets the point across. Take the time to talk directly with residents and quote them on how helpful and effective your programs are. Nothing speaks more eloquently than the real story of the people you help.

## BE ACCURATE

From spelling a name correctly to using proper grammar, accuracy is critical to your credibility and image. Dial phone numbers to be sure they are correct. Double-checking only takes a few minutes and avoids months of embarrassment. Ask the staff person in charge of the project or program you are writing about to verify your facts. Do not rely on your computer's spell-check program. Two people should always proofread.

## PHOTO CAPTIONS

If you do not know the names and titles of the people in the photo(s), write a general caption. For example: *Everyone thought the cleanup was worthwhile.* You may not need a caption at all if the photos are self-explanatory. Photo captions of dignitaries, such as the mayor or company officers, are a good idea so readers realize your nonprofit has a high level of community support. If you use a photo of a check presentation, get the names and titles of everyone in the picture so you can acknowledge the donor in the caption and in the article.

## CAPITALIZE ON OPPORTUNITIES

Take advantage of opportunities to make specific requests or suggestions. For example, if you have a story about a check presentation, end the story with a statement such as: "You too can support our efforts by sending a tax-deductible contribution to *(your nonprofit's name and mailing address)*."

## STANDARD ELEMENTS WITHIN A NEWSLETTER

Here are the standard elements you should include in your newsletter.

- **Banner** — Includes your newsletter name, nonprofit logo and name, and publication date, which can be as simple as Winter 2000. Often includes a tag line that describes the purpose of the publication. (For example: An update on the revitalization of Hillendale.)
- **Mission Statement** — One to two sentences describing your nonprofit's goal and purpose.
- **Board of Directors** — Include each board member's company or organization to show your broad base of support; update this list as board members change.
- **Contact Information** — Include your logo, address, phone and fax numbers and email address (logical places for this are in the masthead and the return address).
- **Mailing Information** — If your newsletter is a self-mailer (most are), leave a blank space on the back for your return address, postage and mailing address of the recipient; check with the post office to make sure it conforms to its standards.
- **Masthead** — Include your purpose and any reprint restrictions. For example: *(Newsletter name)* is published quarterly by *(nonprofit name)*, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and revitalizing Houston neighborhoods. This publication is not copyrighted, and we encourage you to reproduce it, reprint it and share it with others. Please credit *(newsletter name)*. Please direct inquiries to *(name)*, editor, *(nonprofit name, address and phone)*.

# Incorporating Design Elements

You want a newsletter that is inviting to read, and this comes from its design. Developing your first newsletter can be time consuming. But after this initial effort, you will have a template to follow. Then it is simply a matter of plugging in new text and images. Do not change the design for each new issue. Consistency is very important. This section contains suggestions for presenting a visually attractive newsletter.

## DETERMINE THE SIZE

Newsletters are usually printed directly on 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper or on 11 x 17-inch paper that is then folded in half to make 8 1/2 x 11 inches. These are then folded in half, or thirds, to mail. Your budget will dictate what size you can afford to produce. There are postal regulations for mailing newsletters; check with your printer or your local post office.

## DESIGN THE LAYOUT

Your design should be consistent and complementary. Lay out copy in digestible chunks using subheads, paragraphs and columns. Decide where you want to put the standard elements (see previous page) and leave them there. White space is a strong graphic element, so make use of it.

## SELECT TYPEFACES

Just because your computer offers a wide variety of type fonts, that does not mean you should use them all. Do not use more than three in your newsletter. Select fonts in keeping with your nonprofit's image and make them standard for each issue. Assign one font for headlines, one for photo captions and one for body text. Use italic, bold and underlining only for emphasis. Never use a font size smaller than 10 point; anything smaller is too hard to read. Maintain a size hierarchy, making headlines largest, subheads next largest, then body text. Make sure all headlines, subheads and body text are the same size and font from story-to-story and issue-to-issue.

## USE INTERESTING VISUALS

With the advent of desktop publishing, interesting visuals are now more readily available. Use photographs, logos, icons, symbols and illustrative art to serve a purpose, not just because you have them. When you are reading magazines, notice their layouts. Collect samples of visuals you like and use them for ideas. If you are doing a story that involves a business or organization, include its logo. Most graphic programs come with borders and boxes or allow you to draw your own. Use them sparingly.

*Use photographs, logos, icons, symbols and illustrative art to serve a purpose, not just because you have them.*

## DEVELOP THE PHOTO HABIT

There is no greater testimonial than showing people receiving awards, helping others or attending one of your events. Ask all staff and volunteers to get into the habit of taking snapshots of their work. This guarantees a steady stream of inexpensive images for your newsletter. All-purpose 35mm color film is best. Local politicians, keynote speakers and company executives attending your events are often accompanied by professional or staff photographers and may let your nonprofit use their photos for free. Recruiting photography students to cover your big events is another way to save costs.

### **SELECT AN APPROPRIATE PAPER STOCK**

In the printing industry, paper is called stock. Ask your printer to recommend stock samples and give you a price for each one. You want to choose one that will enhance your design, but not kill your budget. Ask to see printer's house stock; it is usually very affordable. Stock comes in a variety of colors, textures, finishes and weights. There are even recycled stocks. Choose an opaque stock, because you will be printing on both sides.

### **BE CAREFUL WITH COLORS**

If you can afford to print with black plus one other color, do so. Choose a second color you can use as an accent throughout your publication. To add interest, you can screen the color (reduce the percentage of ink on paper) to create various shades of the colors you choose. Check your color choices with your printer to be sure they will print well and will print well together. Some, like yellow, are too light. Without professional help, though, do not use your second color to print your photographs. Print your photos, called halftones, in black.

### **PRINT A SUFFICIENT QUANTITY**

If a newspaper printed only one copy, they would still have to set up the press, load the inks and run the equipment. This is true of any print job. The bulk of your costs are in setup. After the initial setup, you are paying pennies for increased quantities because you are only paying for additional stock, ink and press time. Print a sufficient quantity to cover your mailing list with extras for media kits and to give potential investors and donors.

### **SELECT A GOOD PRINTER**

Choose your printer ahead of time. Because you will deliver your newsletter to the printer as an electronic file, make certain your graphic programs and computer operating software are compatible with the printer's. Have your printer run a sample file to test compatibility before you arrive at your printing deadline. When you deliver your job, confirm the quantity, due date, inks, stock choice, mailing labels or delivery information and any special instructions. Some printers will give nonprofits a reduced price, especially if they support your mission or you agree to give them all your work.

# Designing Your Newsletter In-House

So you want to design your newsletter in-house? After all, computer software makes it so easy today. But beware — there is so much to choose from, it makes choosing difficult. You can start your decision process by answering these questions: What skills do you and your staff currently have? How much time do you or your staff have to devote to learning a new software program? What type of hardware and software do you currently have? How much can you afford to spend for any upgrades or more sophisticated capabilities? What is the image you want your nonprofit to project?

Depending on the answers, your choices of software programs will range from a powerful graphics-based desktop publishing program to a simple word processing program. Here are some points to consider to help you make your work easier.

## USING WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE

The most popular word processing programs for newsletter production are the latest versions of:

- Microsoft Word for Windows
- Microsoft Word for Macintosh
- WordPerfect for Windows

As word processing programs have become more sophisticated, many have added layout design capabilities and newsletter templates that enhance their complex editing features. The most popular programs allow you to import photos, graphic illustrations and clip art. And because they are word processing programs, you can write your newsletter in the same program and then place it into the preset templates.

Most templates are for 8 1/2 x 11-inch newsletters. They identify where your banner is placed and their preset parameters for columns, headlines and subheads make it easy to place your copy in the designed space. If you are just getting started, these templates are a great way to learn about the process and to produce an acceptable product very quickly.

While word processing software can create professional-looking newsletters, they do not allow for much individuality. For example, if you want to place your pictures in a circle instead of a square, it probably would be very difficult, if not impossible. If you are ready for a more polished, individualized look, you might want to explore using a desktop publishing program.

Word processing software will allow you to print a finished newsletter, then photocopy or quick print your copies. It will not support high-resolution printing, so your pictures may not be as sharp as you want.

## USING DESKTOP PUBLISHING SOFTWARE

The most popular desktop publishing programs for newsletter production are the latest versions of:

- Microsoft Publisher
- PageMaker for Windows
- PageMaker for Macintosh
- QuarkXPress for Macintosh
- QuarkXPress for Windows

These software programs deliver immense graphic capabilities and allow you to go directly from disk to printer. They can handle high-resolution pictures and deliver a clean, crisp finished product. However, they require a higher level of experience and skill (usually classroom training and hours and hours of practice) to become proficient, as well as sophisticated hardware. These programs demand high-speed computers that have plenty of RAM and hard drive space as well as a CD-ROM drive.

Microsoft Publisher offers a set of newsletter templates, making it the most user-friendly desktop publishing software. Publisher also offers a variety of template sizes and designs, giving you some versatility in customizing your newsletter. However, it is the least likely to be supported by your printer. Before you choose Publisher, check with your printer to be sure their hardware can read Publisher files.

PageMaker requires more skill than Publisher and asks you to create your own templates. It supports a variety of graphic effects and can easily accommodate photos, illustrations, charts and graphs. PageMaker is available for PC and Macintosh computers, as is QuarkXPress.

Of the software packages listed here, QuarkXPress is the most difficult software to use and probably requires the most training. However, it offers the most versatility and is generally preferred by professional graphic artists.

You may want to consider a painting or drawing program like Adobe Illustrator, Macromedia FreeHand, CorelDraw or Painter to create original art. Another option for the artist is to draw the image by hand and then scan it into your computer to use in your publication.

### DESKTOP PUBLISHING VERSUS WORD PROCESSING

A key advantage of a desktop publishing program is that it gives you added control over your document and a better finished product. Once you have learned the software, you can easily view and alter the size and shape of columns, photos and graphic elements, and the placement of headlines and text. It is also easier to edit your design and import photos and graphics. The finished product can deliver magazine-quality photos if your scans are done properly and the pre-press work is top-notch. These programs also let you set up your newsletter in multiple colors of ink.

Word processing programs are easy to use and create a finished product that is inexpensive to photocopy or to print. The quality of photos will not be as good as your local newspaper, but illustrations, simple charts and graphics will reproduce clearly. Large blocks of color or reversed type (a solid-color box with white type) may not reproduce well. Documents produced by word processing programs work best when they are printed in one color of ink.

### SELECTING FONTS

Although the fonts you use for your text and headlines will be consistent, you can use additional fonts sparingly for special effects. Both Windows and Macintosh systems come with preinstalled fonts, but you may need to purchase others to create special touches. To understand fonts, it is important to understand the following three terms:

- **Type** — Type is measured in point sizes. There is body type for the text, which in newsletters should not be smaller than 10 point, and display type for headlines. Display type should be 16- or 18-point type.
- **Leading** — Leading is the space between the lines of type and helps make your newsletter more readable. Body copy should be set 10 points over 12 points of leading. That means you are allowing 2 points of leading between each line. For example, the text in this book is set in 11-point type over 12-point leading. Do not set your type “solid,” meaning with no leading. It is far too hard on your readers’ eyes.
- **Serif and Sans Serif Fonts** — Serif fonts, like Times, are distinctive because their characters have feet (additional ornamentation) called serifs. The feet, or serifs, help guide the eye along, making the body text easier to read. Sans serif fonts, like Arial or Helvetica, do not have this extra ornamentation and are very plain. Generally, sans serif fonts are used for headlines and serif fonts for body text. You want both styles in your type collection.

## ENHANCING YOUR NEWSLETTER WITH CLIP ART

Clip art, when used well, will add visual interest to your newsletter. It is called clip art because, before the advent of computers and the Internet, a graphic artist would actually clip a drawing from a book and paste it onto the layout. Today, you can select from freeware, shareware and commercially produced artwork that is either line drawings without shading or artwork with shading. Freeware costs nothing on the Internet, and shareware is available for a modest fee. Commercially available clip art can also be found on the Internet, in stores that sell computer software and in national computer catalogues. It can be very expensive or very inexpensive. The cost of clip art often does not reflect its quality, so try to see what you are buying before you purchase it. Remember to use it sparingly, though; overused clip art, like too many fonts and too many colors, is distracting to the reader.

## USING PHOTOGRAPHY EFFECTIVELY

Photos always add interest, and the more powerful desktop graphic packages make it easy to add them to your newsletter. To import photos into your newsletter, you will need a scanner. Scanners usually come with software that allows you to save the image in a format that will work with your page layout software. Images can be scanned at varying levels of resolution. Remember this rule of thumb: the higher the resolution, the better the reproduction. But high-resolution images require a lot of your computer's memory, so it may not be practical. For photocopying or simple printing, scanning at 150 dots per inch (dpi) is sufficient. For high-quality images, scanning at 300 dpi or higher works best. Check with your printer to see what dpi setting is recommended.

## ADDITIONAL WAYS TO LEARN DESKTOP PUBLISHING

You can always expect a certain amount of trial and error when you first get started, but reading the manuals that come with your software and hardware will minimize them. A limited amount of free technical support usually comes with your purchases to help you through the more difficult scenarios. You can also attend a class at your local computer store or hire a computer consultant to teach you the program. Libraries have numerous books written in layman's terms that can help you get started. Asking other nonprofits for advice on what to buy and for staff to train your personnel is another option.

*Overused clip art, like too many fonts and too many colors, is distracting to the reader.*

## TYPESETTING — A WORD THAT WAS

Typesetting is a printing term that has essentially become obsolete, but you should be aware of it. Printers and designers sometimes still use the term when referring to layout. Before the electronic age, you used a typewriter to write your copy and a pen and ruler to design your newsletter. Then, you delivered copy and design to the printer to be typeset and pasted up. Today, you will send most documents to your printer electronically on disk, making typesetting an outdated term.



## Using Consultants

Nearly everyone has a computer, but producing a newsletter requires specialized hardware and software with graphics capabilities as well as staff trained to use them. It may not make sense for your nonprofit to invest in all of this equipment and training just to publish a quarterly newsletter. Also, your staff may be too small or too busy to handle the task. In such cases, you would be better served by giving the job to a consultant.

Here are some guidelines to help you identify what you need and the best person for the job. Remember that you can use consultants to write and design the entire newsletter or just those pieces you do not want to do in-house.

### COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANTS

An ad agency, public relations firm or freelance writer and designer can handle a newsletter from start to finish, or you can write the articles and supply the photographs and let the consultant take it from there. In selecting a consultant, look for creativity, knowledge of your industry and experience with nonprofits of your size and budget. Ask other nonprofits to recommend firms or freelancers. You want a big boost to your image, not a big nightmare, so take the time to do some checking.

### CHOOSING A CONSULTANT

Once you have identified two or three professional contacts, ask them for:

- Background, services, rates and the qualifications of their staff
- Samples of newsletters and small brochures they have produced
- Samples of work they have done for other nonprofits
- A quote so you can compare costs and services
- Current client list with phone numbers (make sure you call two or three)

### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH A CONSULTANT

- Provide a clear description of what you want and the division of responsibilities.
- Ask for an estimate or a not-to-exceed figure for each newsletter to get a sense of the hours needed to complete different tasks and help you stay in budget.
- Determine up front who will be your contact.
- For a simple project like a newsletter, you probably do not need to sign any contracts; just pay as you go for services rendered.
- Ask about out-of-pocket expenses. (Many firms mark them up as much as 20 percent, then bill you for them.)
- Consider hiring a consultant on a one-time basis to set up your initial design, then you take it from there.

### PRO BONO POSSIBILITIES

If you cannot publish your newsletter in-house and cannot afford a professional, look for graphic arts students at a local university to produce it as part of their course work. Another idea is to ask a corporate benefactor to donate the graphic services of their company. Some advertising agencies, public relations firms and design studios do pro bono work for nonprofits, so ask.

# Following a Timeline

Publishing a quality newsletter takes advance planning. Because it is not an activity that you do daily or even weekly, it has to fit into your nonprofit's schedule.

Knowing the newsletter's schedule, staff can keep your editor posted on upcoming story opportunities. Advance planning also allows you to work around travel, vacations and volunteers, and gives you time to recruit sponsors to help underwrite costs.

Here is a general guideline for what you need to do and when to produce a quarterly newsletter. After you have a newsletter template in place, your production time should be shorter.

## Quarterly Newsletter Production

Estimate budget	3 months out
Set deadlines	3 months out
Recruit sponsors	3 months out
Select consultants (if needed)	2 1/2 months out
Finalize story ideas	2 1/2 months out
Draft, edit, proofread copy	2 months out
Copy to designer	2 months out
Initial design concept	1 1/2 months out
Approve concept	1 1/2 months out
Lay out	1 month out
Select final images	1 month out
Get printer quotes	1 month out
Choose your printer	3 weeks out
Revise and proofread	2 1/2 weeks out
Prepare final art for printer	2 1/2 weeks out
Proofread final art	2 1/2 weeks out
Route for final approvals	2 1/2 weeks out
Send to printer	1–2 weeks out
Review blueline	1 week out
Deliver and mail	on deadline

# Establishing a Budget

A variety of items must be included in a newsletter's budget. Here is a sample you can use as a guide. It includes the tasks, the average time to complete them and a range of costs you can expect to produce 750 copies. The prices range from the cost of using internal staff to the cost of paying an outside agency. Costs will vary widely in different locations. In-house coordination, writing and even graphic layout will cost less than outside consultants. These prices are based on a four-page newsletter.

## BE ENTERPRISING

If these figures are daunting, do not be dismayed. Be enterprising! If you are involved in a nonprofit, you know that where there is a will, there is a way. For example:

- Try to find a newsletter sponsor to help underwrite costs. Ask your donors to sponsor the newsletter in place of, or in addition to, their donation. Sponsors can be credited in the newsletter for added publicity. (For more information see *The Fund-Raising Process* manual in the *Fund Raising* series of the Community Development Library.)
- Ask large corporations or vendors with whom you have relationships to print your newsletter in-house. Offer them a mention of thanks in the newsletter.
- Call on members of your board of trustees in search of volunteered talent or the pro bono services of writers, designers and printers.

## Sample Newsletter Budget

Task	Cost
<b>Coordination</b> Overseeing the process Time needed: 2 hours	\$130 to \$360
<b>Editorial</b> Write, edit, revise, proof Time needed: 15 hours	\$975 to \$2,700
<b>Design</b> Masthead, fonts, overall design (one-time expense) Time needed: 10 hours	\$800 to \$2,500
<b>Layout and Print Production</b> Place text, select and place all graphic elements and photos, vendor coordination, select color(s) and which elements will be in color, prepare electronic files for printer Time needed: 16 hours	\$880 to \$2,880
<b>Printing</b> 11 x 17-inch sheets, two-sided, two-color, self-mailer, photo scans Time needed: 3–5 business days	\$1,000
<b>Miscellaneous Costs</b> Color outputs, deliveries, film and processing	\$100
<b>Newsletter Distribution</b> Mail Services (import list from disk, print address labels, sort by ZIP code, bundle and mail at the federal nonprofit postage rate)	\$75
Postage (this figure is based on a nonprofit bulk rate of 13.8 cents for the first 3.3 ounces)	\$105
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,065 to \$9,720</b>

# Checklist for Successful Newsletters

The key to successful newsletter publishing is good planning. Use the following checklist to make sure you are aware of what needs to happen.

- Allocate budget dollars or recruit underwriter.
- Name newsletter (one time only).
- Initial design concept (one time only).
- Choose ink colors, paper stock.
- Assign newsletter responsibility.
- Plot rough deadlines on calendar.
- Hire outside writer and designer (if necessary and if budget permits).
- Start tickler file for newsletter visuals and content ideas.
- Develop list of story ideas.
- Prioritize stories.
- Get approval on story ideas.
- Draft outline.
- Write copy.
- Select photos.
- Edit copy as needed.
- Proofread.
- Receive printing quotes.
- Select printer.
- Prepare final copy for the printer.
- Deliver to the printer.
- Give the printer instructions and deadlines.
- Proof printer blueline.
- Take delivery of newsletters.
- Distribute newsletters.
- File extra copies to use later.
- Thank any guest contributors.
- Update mailing and distribution database frequently.

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# Sample Newsletter

2-PAGE NEWSLETTER — FRONT

Banner

A publication of The ABC Nonprofit, Inc. (ABC)

# Bringing People Home

Spring 1999

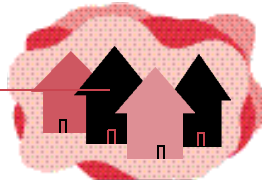
## ABC's Bringing People Home Celebration set for May 19

Lead story is placed below banner. Note size hierarchy of headlines.

Leave some white space.

The ABC Nonprofit will host its annual Bringing People Home Celebration at The Columbus Museum of Art on Tuesday, May 19. This special celebration, with a theme of "Framing Our Achievements," will provide an opportunity to highlight our success over the past year, to recognize those people responsible and to convey our appreciation to our sup-

porters and friends. Featuring the Bobby Floyd Trio, tours of the museum and exquisite foods from around the world, the event will be held from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm. ABC cordially extends an invitation to you and your colleagues.



Please call ABC at (523) 123-4567 for tickets. We look forward to your support of our mission to develop decent, safe and affordable housing for our community's low-income working families. 📍

## ABC CEO Appointed to Federal Home Loan Bank Advisory Council

This story demonstrates nonprofit leadership ability.

The Federal Home Loan Bank recently appointed Ralph Coffer, the chief executive officer of ABC Association, to its Advisory Council.

Recognize partner organizations in text.

Coffer has served as CEO for three years; during his tenure he has also been a member of the Chadwick Life Insurance board of directors.

Text promotes upcoming fund raiser and provides phone number for ticket purchase.

Earlier this year, Cofer won the Columbus Civic Award for Community Excellence, another indicator of his dedication to the community.

Use photos and graphic elements to create visual interest.

Use photos and graphic elements to create visual interest.

Use caption photos to emphasize their relation to the text.



ABC works to revitalize neighborhoods like this one throughout Columbus.

*Mission: To renovate and build homes in Columbus neighborhoods for low-income working families. These homes are then made available for sale or rent.*

Use columns for improved readability.

# Sample Newsletter

2-PAGE NEWSLETTER — BACK

Benefit-Oriented  
Headline

Bringing  
People **Home**

## Westowne Celebration a Success Despite Rain

Leave some  
white space.

Story shows  
community  
support,  
ability of  
nonprofit to  
form success-  
ful partner-  
ships with  
political and  
publicities.

The 7th annual Westowne Gala was held on October 1, at the Four Seasons Hotel.

The gala included a silent auction and the unveiling of a video documenting the accomplishments of the ABC Association.

Revenues from tickets to the event exceeded the initial fund-raising goal set by the ABC Association, indicating continued support of efforts to revitalize the Westowne community. Plans for new housing projects and structural repairs on existing housing should be underway soon, as a result of this recent success, thereby ensuring more housing opportunities for many in the community.

The association recognized the following corporations for sponsoring the celebration: Bank of USA, Chadwick

Insurance, Southwestern Co., Cola of Columbus, First Bank of Ohio, Hardware Chain, and Gateway.

Harry Awards, which honor an outstanding individual or organization who has made significant contributions to the development of the Westowne community, were given to Congressman George Linus, State Senator Greta Perez, the Sunrise Foundation and Carol Cello. The Harry Award is named in memory of Harold Walker, the Association's first executive director.

The 19th annual Westowne Street Parade and Festival was held on Saturday, October 2. The parade, one of the nation's largest, winds for more than three miles through the neighborhood. Governor Louise Baldrige served as Grand Marshall for the

parade, which was broadcast live over the Gateway television network. The festival, held at Westowne, provided lots of food, fun and live music. ▲

Recognize  
partner  
organizations  
in text.

### ABC Awarded FannieMaeFoundation Technology Grant

The ABC was awarded a Technology Bonus Grant from the Fannie Mae Foundation for \$20,000. The ABC will use the funds to purchase hardware and software for architectural design work. The grant will also support the creation of a Web site for the agency.

The ABC was one of 16 agencies selected for funding out of 113 applications.

Text recognizes  
donors, shows  
support for the  
nonprofit by  
prestigious  
grantmakers.

Point out  
community  
benefits  
in text.

## Bringing People **Home**

Return address  
information

ABC Association  
1234 Appleton Lane  
Columbus, Ohio 77777

Non-Profit  
Org.  
U.S.  
Postage  
PAID

Non-Profit  
postage  
permit

Board listing

**ABC Board of Trustees**  
CEO, Ralph Coffey  
President, Sarah Bandero  
Vice-President, Louis Reynolda

**Board Members**  
Landis Mark Joseph Leng  
Bobby Knox Regina Ross  
Christopher Huntley Carlotta Page  
Sherman DeRossett Henry Black

Space for  
recipient  
address

## THE ENTERPRISE FOUNDATION

The Foundation's mission is to see that all low-income people in the United States have access to fit and affordable housing and an opportunity to move out of poverty and into the mainstream of American life. To achieve that mission, we strive to:

- Build a national community revitalization movement.
- Demonstrate what is possible in low-income communities.
- Communicate and advocate what works in community development.

As the nation's leader in community development, Enterprise cultivates, collects and disseminates expertise and resources to help communities across America successfully improve the quality of life for low-income people.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Authors: Kathleen Murphy, MurphyEpson  
Contributors: Bill Batko, Carter Cosgrove + Company, Ben Hecht, Catherine Hyde, Jane Usero

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