

Newsletters: Building Better Relationships

A newsletter keeps you in the minds of those you want to reach and can become the most welcomed tool in your communications arsenal. From design to content, printing to distribution, having a clear vision and consistent execution will put your newsletter in the hands of those most important to your business success.

Get started

Start with a goal. What is the purpose of the newsletter and who is the audience? The answers will determine the style, format and tone of your piece. A formal or casual look will set the stage for the type of information you include and the tone in which it is written. Your choice of paper, size and thickness also will influence how it is received.

Producing a newsletter takes time with researching, writing, editing, proofing, designing, typesetting and managing the printing, mailing and fulfillment process. Decide which tasks you can comfortably handle and hire professionals to do the rest.

You'll want an easy-to-read format, both in layout and text style. Graphics (photos, artwork and charts) draw the eye in and provide visual breaks. And as always, take the time to proofread carefully. Your hard work and key messages can be lost in a single typo.

Be credible

The key to a newsletter's effectiveness is in its credibility. Why? A newsletter is perceived as having real "news." Studies show that newsletters have four times the readership of a traditional ad, have a longer shelf life than other promotional materials and are more likely to be read by multiple people.

Inside and out

Internal newsletters provide a natural forum to introduce new staff, educate employees and promote camaraderie. Features with employee activities on and off the job promote goodwill and a sense of belonging that boost employee loyalty.

External or customer newsletters allow you to talk up the benefits of doing business with you, promote new products or services and recognize top clients by including feature stories about them. Customer newsletters should be readily identifiable as coming from you. Include your logo, other company branding elements, like a tagline, and contact information within the publication.

Ready to deliver

Have a set schedule for your newsletter. The goal is to build awareness and maintain your presence among customers, prospects or staff. Frequent delivery - once a month vs. quarterly - allows you to give up-to-the-minute information and shows you can respond to new developments in your industry or within your organization.

With the right planning and preparation, newsletters can be a valuable marketing tool. The key is paying attention to the details from start to finish - before it reaches the hands of your readers.