

What Does An Effective Newsletter Look Like? How Effective Is Yours



Association chapter newsletters are a highly effective way to disseminate a lot of information to your audience simultaneously. As good as they can be though, though, association chapter newsletters often get a bad rap.



Readers don't like emails with poor graphics, long scrolling or 15-page PDF attachments. When they get them, recipients, whether members, member guests, sponsors, vendors, etc. are less likely to open an association chapter newsletter. If they do open it, they rarely read the whole thing, instead ignoring it and/or deleting it. And when they hit "delete," they're also deleting their chance to learn about all the great things your association chapter is doing.

Getting your readers to open your association chapter newsletters, share them with others and learn as much as possible can be as simple as making a few shifts. If you're up for small changes that can add up to a big impact, try these five best practices for your association chapter newsletter:

1. **Make it readable.** Your association chapter newsletter readers are probably overwhelmed by the volume of emails they get every day. Make your email newsletter stand out by making it easy to read, with brief copy, short phrases and language that's clear and understandable by your audience. Combine similar pieces – membership, volunteering, advocacy, news and noteworthy,



etc. – under headers. Instead of posting the entire article, condense each to a picture or graphic with a caption or headline and a line or two of summary text or the first sentence of the piece, with a link to the full story on your website.

2. **Keep it short with lots of white space.** A newsletter isn't a newspaper. Newspapers include everything, and your readers don't want to page through page after page of a PDF with lots of text; they'll get frustrated, even if the content is strong, if it's in a format that's anything but great. Keep it short, with a simple, uncluttered design and images that make the reader interested and wanting to read and learn more. What sorts of images and graphics portray your membership and your organization?

3. Tell stories. Readers engage and relate to stories. Tell the stories of your members, sponsors, advocacy, etc. Why did they join? Why are they a sponsor? What causes are important to members? Highlighting different members, sponsors or both, link to a member stories section

4. on your website or a Sponsors page that provides this story and links to other similar pieces.

5. **Provide calls to action.** What do you want the reader to do once they're done reading?

Volunteer to plan an event? Register for an event? Make it easy for them to do that, with short phrases like "Become a volunteer," "Register here" and "Become a mentor." Make your calls to action (CTA) easy to find, with buttons or underlined and linked. But don't force things. If there's no need for a CTA, don't include one.

6. **Ask for feedback.** You'll know from your email open rate who is reading your newsletters. Ask those who are reading them —as well as those who aren't — what they think. Are you providing what they want to read, or are your pieces too marketing-focused and not human-focused?

A few more tips to keep readers reading

Here are a few other things important to getting a reader interested in reading the association chapter newsletter they received from you and continuing to read future newsletters.

1. **Keep a regular schedule.** One newsletter, whenever you get around to it, isn't going to keep your readers anticipating the next one. What is a realistic schedule you can stick to? Once a quarter? Once a month? Think about who and what you need to get it done and look to your members for help getting them written and sent out.

2. **Make sure it's appropriate for mobile devices.** Many readers will be reading your newsletter on their phones and between appointments. It should be easy for them to do that.

3. **Include a sender name.** Yes, it's fine to use your organization's name in the "from" line, but often people are more responsive when they see an association chapter email coming from a specific person, not a faceless association chapter.



Build a stronger newsletter for stronger member engagement

Newsletters are great for engaging with your members and other audiences when you can't see them in person or virtually as much as you'd like. Follow these pointers and you'll give members a newsletter they'll enjoy reading, reacting to and sharing with others.

