



## **Producing a Club Newsletter - 6 Steps for VPPRs**

Today, creating a newsletter is simple and cost-effective. If you have access to a computer and the Internet, you can create a professional-looking newsletter that will reflect current club news, lead viewers to the club's Web site, and promote the club, as well as offer inspiration and tips to members – all in a timely fashion and via e-mail.

By focusing your newsletter on events that have already occurred you will encourage people to return for more fun and educational experiences. You may also elect to promote an upcoming event such as a club contest, by mentioning it in the club's newsletter and Web site.

### **Newsletter Considerations**

Although your top priority is to publicise your club throughout the community, it's also important to keep your club members informed. You can promote upcoming club events and foster camaraderie by helping them share information with each other. This is best accomplished through a club newsletter with additional material provided in the Web site.

You can produce the club newsletter yourself or delegate the task. If you choose to delegate the task, bear in mind that it's your responsibility to see that any relevant information you receive from World Headquarters, or District 90, is published in the club newsletter. As the newsletter editor, you keep yourself informed of upcoming events or deadlines so they can be mentioned in the club newsletter for the benefit of all club members.

The editor might work with the Webmaster to create a newsletter with links to information presented on the Web site. This form of newsletter has the benefit of streamlining the e-mail and allows the club members to select what they want to read quickly.

If your newsletter contains contact information, you must keep written permission from the members for its use. The following disclaimer must be included in any publication (directory, newsletter, Web site) in which contact information appears:

**The information in this directory, newsletter, or Web site is for the sole use of Toastmasters members for Toastmasters business only. It is not to be used for solicitation and distribution of non-Toastmasters materials or information.**

The following information is important to consider when publishing any Toastmasters-related materials. The newsletter editor should keep these points in mind.

### **Step 1. Purpose: To Help Achieve the Club Mission**

The club president serves as the newsletter publisher and is responsible for its content. The editor's role is to support the goals of your Toastmasters club by publishing articles that show in practical terms how to implement them in your club. In order to be successful, the editor needs to work closely with your club's executive officers – especially you (VPPR) and the VPM – and keep the editorial focus on the club's mission:

**"We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth."**

The club's executive committee should meet to establish policies regarding editorial content, submissions, and production schedules. Once the policies are formalised, they should be strictly adhered to.

### **Step 2. Content: Build a Sense of Pride and Responsibility**

The primary functions of the newsletter are to educate, motivate, and inform its readers. It sets the tone for the club mission to provide a "supportive and positive learning experience." Therefore, the newsletter should always include specific tips for helping members achieve their goals and become better speakers and leaders. In fact, if articles are not in some way directed toward achieving the club mission, they probably should not be included in the newsletter.

### **Step 3. Editorial Balance: Create a Recipe for Club Success**

A successful newsletter will include the following key ingredients for helping to achieve the club mission:

- **Membership Programs.** Emphasise the importance of the club maintaining its charter strength of 20 members. A 20-member minimum prevents members from becoming overburdened with meeting and club responsibilities. Work with the VPM to promote the club's membership programs. Promote your club throughout the community and reprint membership-building ideas from the Toastmaster magazine. Encourage members to invite their



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friends and co-workers to club meetings, and explain the use of programs such as Speechcraft as a membership-building tool. Success 101 (Item 1620) is an excellent free resource.

- **Educational Material.** Think about any problems your club may be having. Has there been a sudden increase in dissembling evaluations lately? Are visitors not getting the treatment they deserve? Figure out a solution and write about it. Be positive. Don't mention any names. Make concrete suggestions. You can also generate articles on topics such as how to perform various jobs better, speech-making tips from senior club members, explanations of club officer roles, requirements for educational awards, advice on leadership and mentoring techniques, explanations of rules of grammar and parliamentary procedure, and brief reviews of the various Toastmasters programs. Basically, use any information that can help members meet their goals in terms of improving their communication and leadership skills. Be creative!
- **Recognition of Member Achievements.** The newsletter should also welcome guests, introduce new members, feature short biographical sketches of members and officers, and acknowledge members' educational achievements. The newsletter is a tool for building a sense of pride and responsibility in being a member of a world-class organisation. To accomplish this, articles need to recognise the efforts of outstanding individuals and try to stimulate others to follow their example. The newsletter can also encourage members to get involved in the various programs by sharing success stories and testimonials about personal growth through Toastmasters.
- **Administrative Information.** Include Reports on Club Progress in the DCP. A club's newsletter should report on how the club is doing in terms of meeting the goals outlined in the program. The newsletter also should report club business, including meetings of the executive committee, and area and district activities. Of course, no newsletter is complete without member activities, such as outside speaking engagements, job changes, weddings, childbirths, etc.
- **Schedule of Events.** Publish a brief summary of past meetings, as well as information and deadlines for upcoming district and club programs and events, such as elections, semi-annual dues, and contests. Encourage participation and attendance. Be sure to read the regular online newsletters from T.I. in order to keep club members informed about the goals and programs of the organisation.
- **Remember, your newsletter is not simply a historical record and a meeting schedule.** If it degenerates to that, it's failing to communicate. Never print an issue without ideas that relate to the mission of the club.
- **Note:** Be sure to include the club's name, meeting time, location, contact telephone number, e-mail address, and Web site address in each issue.

### Step 4. The Nuts and Bolts of Newsletters

#### Frequency of Publication

How often you publish your newsletter depends on several factors: How much time can you devote to the publication? How much help can you get from fellow club members? Your newsletter should follow a regular production schedule while still maintaining the high standards necessary to reflect the character of the club. Attracting Readers Study newsletters published by other clubs to gather ideas that will capture the attention of your readers. Here are just a few techniques:

- Publish unique and interesting educational articles.
- Call attention to items you want to emphasise by placing them at the top of the page, giving them a large and/or clever headline, and shading or boxing them.
- Use a lot of names; people love seeing their name in print.
- Keep articles brief and write simply and clearly.
- Make sure the text is distinct and easy to read.
- Keep the layout and appearance consistent from issue to issue.
- Logically organise news items and articles, giving prominent placement to items you want to make sure the reader will see.



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### Design and Layout Design

Your newsletter to make it visually attractive. The following are a few simple rules for creating an eye-appealing traditional newsletter. If you opt to create your newsletter using a word processing or other publishing program, these tips will help keep it visually appealing. You can attach this kind of newsletter to your e-mail. Be sure to include instructions in the body of the e-mail to open the attachment.

- Incorporate graphics in and around the text.
- However, don't clutter a page with too many graphics or graphics that are unrelated to the text.
- Try to achieve page balance – where each page looks interesting and inviting to read.
- Leave white space between copy – a “gray” page full of text is visually unappealing. Break up solid blocks of typed copy with boxes, borders, creative hand-lettering, and art work.
- Use a masthead or permanent heading on your newsletter. The main feature of the masthead is the name of the newsletter. It might also include a club logo. In addition, the masthead should contain:
  - club name, club number, district number, region number
  - area, division, state, country
  - publication date
- The name, e-mail address, and telephone number of the editor and club president (for last-minute schedule changes and as a contact for potential members). You should incorporate this in a separate box (a “staff box”) on the back cover or elsewhere. The club president is always the publisher.
- A streamlined alternative to the traditional style newsletter is an e-mail composed of short introductory paragraphs with links leading to the full stories posted on the club's Web site. Many modern newsletters opt for this style. It's a good idea to post a page on your club's Web site with the newsletter for those who can't access it through e-mail. Whichever style you select, be sure to include club contact information in the body of the e-mail.

### Editing

Carefully proofread your newsletter for errors or mistakes in grammar. Pay close attention to spelling and punctuation; use a dictionary and thesaurus. Replace long, multi-syllable words with short ones. Writing should be simple and easy to understand. Before the newsletter is e-mailed, it should be edited and proofread several times by different people.

### Circulation

Send your newsletter to anyone who might find it interesting and beneficial. In addition to club members, this includes guests, area and district officers, local newspapers, the local chamber of commerce, and community college speech and English departments.

### Step 5. Additional Benefits

Your club newsletter can lay the foundation for your overall publicity efforts. For example, your newsletter story announcing a forthcoming speech contest may be used instead of a news release in promoting your club to the community.

Many clubs have also found that their newsletter is a useful tool in attracting prospective members to the Toastmasters program. Always print a few extra copies to hand out and to have available at meetings for guests.

### Step 6. Personal Development

Probably the most frequently overlooked benefit of publishing a club newsletter is the opportunity for personal improvement in communication techniques. Editing the club newsletter or writing some of the materials for it requires essentially the same kind of skills that club members seek to improve in communicating ideas. Although emphasis is on the written word rather than the spoken message, there is still the need for organized thought, entertaining and/or interesting style, good phraseology and grammar, and getting and holding the attention of the audience. Many club members who have edited or contributed to their club publications have experienced an overall improvement in their communication skills.



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### **Maintaining Your Club Web Site**

A professional-looking Website is important for publicising your club and attracting new members.

Useful information to include on a Web page is:

- The club name, meeting time and location, and a contact telephone number and e-mail address
- The mission of the club
- The features and benefits of Toastmasters club membership
- Distinguished Club Program goals and progress
- Membership-promotion ideas for the club's members
- A calendar listing information about club and district events
- A date identifying the timeliness of the information
- A link to the Toastmasters International Web site
- A link to the district Web site

Club Web sites should only contain material that is relevant to achieving the mission of the club. Clubs may only place on their Web sites information about candidates for club, district, or International office who are members of that club.

While the VPPR or Webmaster designs and maintains the club Web page, the club president is the publisher and is ultimately responsible for its content.

Your club Web site must carry the Toastmasters International trademark acknowledgement statement provided by World Headquarters. As the trademark owner, Toastmasters International reserves the right to determine how clubs use trademarks in their domain names.

Clubs may include on their Web pages the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of club officers, the creator/maintainer of the page, club support personnel, and individual members after having received express written permission from each individual. Individual member information (such as member addresses, e-mail addresses, or telephone numbers) may be placed on club Web sites only if placed in a password protected area.

#### **Company Publications**

Promoting Toastmasters within your company or organisation opens another avenue for publicity opportunities. If your club is a corporate club, in-house publicity may be your best membership-building tool.

How can you get your club featured in your organisation's publication? Just follow these steps:

1. Contact the editor and "sell" your idea for an article
2. Invite top corporate management to your meeting
3. Have pictures taken to enliven the article
4. Mention names in the story. Employees will love the publicity and managers will be able to see who is participating
5. Explain the benefits of membership, and include meeting time and place

Members who belong to community clubs can also promote Toastmasters in their respective places of employment.

#### **Network Online**

Toastmasters around the world can now connect through several online social networking sites that are moderated by World Headquarters. These venues offer a great opportunity to practice the art of networking and can help you become more comfortable interacting in small groups and in one-on-one conversations. These online forums are designed to encourage you to participate in virtual discussions, give suggestions to fellow Toastmasters, and receive helpful hints on how to make the most of your Toastmasters experience.

Access official Toastmasters groups on the following social networks:

- Facebook.com, Key Word Search: The Official Toastmasters International Group
- LinkedIn.com Key Word Search: The Official Toastmasters International Group
- YouTube.com Channel Key Word Search: Toastmasters International
- Twitter.com Key Word Search: Toastmasters