

Newsletters

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Scout
Information
Centre

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Magazines and newsletters

Magazines and newsletters are tools for Scout Groups and Districts to use for keeping Members in touch and holding their interest and enthusiasm for all that is happening in the Movement locally. They can also be an important means for keeping informed the many other supporters and potential supporters whose goodwill and backing is valuable to local Scouting.

Consider first for whom your publication is intended. You may want to reach any or, perhaps, all of the following people; parents, sponsors, religious bodies, schools, local authorities, community leaders and all your other principal supporters. How far you can extend the distribution will depend on how many copies you can afford to produce, and so you must decide which of all the potential readerships are the most important and be selective if distribution has to be restricted.

Contents

When you know who the principal readers are, you can plan the contents of your publication. If you are providing for Members only, you may only need to include basic details of events, social activities, training arrangements and other working information about what is happening in the Group or District.

As the distribution gets wider, so the contents will need to become broader too so as to inform and gain the interest of readers less directly involved. This could mean reports on past events, details of awards, news about fundraising, items on camps and expeditions and so on.

Think first of your readership and choose items for publications to suit.

Standards

People not closely involved are liable to form an opinion on the standards of local Scouting by the appearance of your magazine or newsletter.

A badly printed poorly laid-out and carelessly written production will suggest that if you do not set a high standard for your newsletter, your standards in other aspects of local Scouting may also be wanting, so aim for quality.

It is far more in your interests to have a modest, readable single sheet than an ambitious publication of several pages, produced on an ancient typewriter and printed on poor quality paper by imperfect duplicator.

Budget

Early in your considerations you must think of costs and set up a proper budget for producing your magazine or newsletter. You will need to take into account:

- The number of copies - to reach your proposed readership
- How often you intend to publish
- Page size and number of pages
- Paper quality
- How and by whom the printing will be done

Take expert advice from a local printer or duplicating agency when matters become technical. Ultimately you will need to balance the size of your print order, the amount and the cost of paper and all those other factors so that

you either provide an adequate budget to cover all considerations or you trim your ambitions to what budget you can afford. Whatever you sacrifice, don't let it be the quality.

Editor

Until you know what kind of publication you can afford, you will not need to appoint an editor but it will be helpful if someone with editorial capabilities is one of the team looking into the feasibility of having a newsletter or magazine.

The editor should be a person with a good command of English, grammar and spelling. The editor must not mind hard work, must be persistent in drumming up contributors and tactful in dealing with contributions which may need a certain amount of revision and amending before being used.

In return, the editor deserves the backing of the Executive Committee to ensure that the quality of the newsletter both in appearance and in content is maintained.

Contents

The biggest expense you will have will probably be the cost of paper. Do not waste it. Say exactly what needs to be said without needless padding (this does not necessarily mean it need be dull).

Jokes, cartoons and other embellishments may be in order but there is a major job of communication to be done before adding luxuries like these.

Use taste and discretion. Avoid jargon and initials that will mean nothing to readers not in the Movement.

Finally, check facts, figures, spelling and punctuation before going to print.

Design

Keep design and layout clean and simple with an easily identifiable title panel (which should include the Scout badge or symbol). Allow good margins and break up large sections of text with sub headings to help the reader. To assist with the design of your newsletter a CD Rom with Clipart, which contains cartoons and logos, is available from the Scout Information Centre. In addition the Public Relations Department have a design guide. Both these items can assist in creating your newsletter in a professional and interesting manner.

Develop a style for your publication and never forget that the aim is to make reading easy - not to satisfy the artistic aspirations of some untrained amateur design enthusiast.

In all things, aim to produce a newsletter or magazine that will not only help in communicating with the public but will add to Scouting's reputation in your neighbourhood.