

# Communications

Extension Information • University of Missouri-Columbia • 1-98 Agriculture • Columbia, Missouri, 65211

## How to Do a Newsletter That Gets Read

Linda Benedict, Extension Communications Specialist

A newsletter can be a wonderful means of communication. Research consistently shows people like newsletters. People like to get timely information tailored to their interests — information that is quick and easy to read.

But, to communicate, a newsletter must get read. It can't get thrown away before being opened nor banished to the to-be-read pile.

You want your newsletter to be a vital piece of communication that people look forward to receiving. This only happens through planning and commitment.

### Know your audience

The first step in planning a newsletter is too often overlooked: Know your audience. Who are they exactly? What are they interested in? What do they have in common? What can your newsletter do for them?

The audience can be quite diverse demographically but they have to have some commonality that you're addressing with your newsletter.

For example, you might want to develop a newsletter for people who have to adopt a low-cholesterol diet or for farmers who want to learn to use computers. The audience for a newsletter distributed nationally called "The Sproutletter" is people who like to eat sprouts. That's how specialized an audience can be.

If your audience is already defined for you, such as clients for your business or members of a certain organization, then you need to make sure you know their interests. Find out. Meet with a

## the caring connection

News for Child Care Providers

February 1990

### Set up an infectious disease policy

by Gail Carlson

When developing a policy or reviewing an existing one for AIDS and other infectious diseases, consider the following recommendations. Procedures like these can protect you and the children you care for from many common illnesses, in addition to others that could exist in your center even when you are not aware of them.

- Follow standard infectious disease control procedures. Maintaining proper hygiene is critical especially when caring for infants. Pay particular attention to: proper handwashing, disposal of soiled diapers or clothes, and prompt disinfection of soiled surfaces (household disinfectant is adequate). Take extra care in treating bleeding sores and wounds or changing diapers that contain bloody stools or urine. If you have chapped hands or open cuts, use gloves when changing diapers or caring for wounds.
- The number of personnel aware

of a child's health condition should be kept to the minimum needed to assure proper care of the child. It is essential that the child's right to privacy be carefully guarded. Confidential records should be maintained.

- Children who bite may require a more restrictive environment. As a general rule, biting is inappropriate behavior and including a statement on biting in your policy makes a lot of sense. There are a number of bacterial illnesses that can be spread through biting.

- Policies should also tell parents and staff about required physical exams, screenings, and immunizations and provide guidance on medical records needed.

In addition, when caring for a known HIV positive child consider these recommendations:

- Children who are not completely toilet trained or capable of properly washing their hands should only attend day care when the caretaker

is aware of the HIV infection and can ensure that good hygiene practices will be enforced.

- Blood transfer, while remote, is a possible means of transmission in day care settings. Therefore, care should be taken to avoid skin or mucous membrane contact with blood or body fluids containing visible blood. Mucous membranes serve as protective coverings for many parts of our bodies including the eyes, ears, nose, throat and mouth

- To ensure that HIV-infected children are allowed access to quality care, policies should state that screening of children for the presence of HIV antibodies for the purpose of attendance at day care centers or school is not necessary or recommended.

- Children with few symptoms should be managed like healthy children. HIV infected children, like all children, need a nurturing

(See Follow, page 3)

### Protect children with employee screenings

by Bill Henderson

One of the most effective ways to protect the children in your day care program is to ensure that caregivers who work with them are appropriately qualified and well suited for work in a day care facility. All potential employees or volunteers should be carefully screened, references should be checked, and a thorough background and work

history review should be made before employees or volunteers are permitted to work with children.

As an additional safeguard for protecting children, the State Child Abuse Law was amended several years ago to permit licensed day care providers to voluntarily request child abuse/neglect screenings of current or prospective employees

(See DFS can, page 2)

### Inside:

There are resources and training opportunities for you. page 2

Use winter days for dress-up and props. page 3

Parents can help children learn without pressure. page 4

"The Caring Connection" is a newsletter with a specific audience and a well-defined purpose. It is written by university faculty members and state agency professionals for licensed child care providers in Missouri. It provides the audience with the latest information on managing a child care business as well as tips on the health and safety of children and on dealing with parents.

few of them or send out a short questionnaire.

## Define your purpose

After you have defined your audience, the next thing to do is define your purpose. The same rule applies: Be specific.

For example, your newsletter may be for people who do crafts for pay. The purpose might be to help them market those crafts. You will include information about upcoming craft shows and pass along tips from successful artisans.

Or your audience might be people who home-can food. Your purpose is to keep them informed of the latest research on safe home-canning procedures, new equipment and in recipes the experts consider safe.

The more specific your purpose, the easier it will be to prepare your newsletter. Your mind becomes tuned in to bits of information that could make good articles. Make note of these in a file. Each time you put the newsletter together, all you have to do is dig into that file for the material you need.

## Find out if anybody's reading

Even though you may be armed with your clear-cut audience and purpose, you're still not ready to launch a new newsletter until you've figured out an evaluation plan. You need to find out if anybody out there is reading you. Coming up with a plan before you start publishing will help assure that you stick to your audience and purpose without getting off track.

Use three levels of evaluation. Come up with a plan for all three.

### Level 1: Get feedback on a regular basis.

Write at least one article per issue that calls for some response from the reader. Examples might be:

- Include an order blank and ask readers to send in the names of ac-

quaintances who might like to receive the newsletter.

- Publicize a publication you have in quantity and see how many requests you get because of the article.

- Solicit questions from readers and include question-and-answer articles in the newsletter.

An enterprising extension family economics specialist in Missouri started a newsletter called "Beginnings" for newly married couples to help them get their financial feet on the ground.

In one issue she had this article:

**What do YOU do?**

How do the two of you handle money and bills? Are you happy with your present system? If you would like to share your system with others, drop me a line or call — I'll include it in next month's "Beginnings."

In an issue of the national newsletter "Communications Concepts," the author asked for readers to send in puns so he could give "fun in the pun awards" to the worst and best puns sent in.

### Level 2: Do a survey

Do this once a year. Ask what the readers read and don't read, like and don't like about your newsletter. Use this information to improve it.

You'll waste your time, though, if you don't design the survey the right way. There's an art to doing it. Here are a few tips:

- Ask only what you want to know and nothing extra.

- Keep the survey form as short as possible—no more than one 8-1/2-by-11-inch sheet. The back of a postcard is best.


- Make it easy for people to return. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. A self-addressed, stamped postcard has advantages because it can be inserted in one of your issues.

- People are turned off by questions on age and income. If this information is vital to you, don't ask it first. Let them warm up to your survey first. Then when you do ask it, provide ranges, such as an age between 30 and 39 or an income less than \$30,000 per year.

Another tip for a survey is that you don't have to ask everybody. If you have a random sample, you can ex-

<p>Overland Park, Kan. Darrin, son of Darrell Sailer, Elkville District, has been installed as master conductor of the Seneca Chapter Order of Demolay. Dennis, son of Bert Tokkovic, Mackinac District, has been named to the Dean's List at Southwest Missouri State University. Carl Henderson, General Counsel, was first place in the "Tall Tales Contest," sponsored annually by the South County Toastmasters. Jim Thompson, Secretary's, has been appointed president of the St. Louis chapter of the American Society of Corporate Secretaries. Mark, son of Theodore Barkey, was graduated with honors from the University of Missouri. Rella with a B.S. in engineering mechanics. He was named an Honors Scholar and is a member of Phi Kappa Phi honor society and Tau Beta Pi National Engineering Honor Society. Dennis Ottelme, St. Charles District has been elected chairman of the Board of Directors of Four County Mental Health Services, Inc. Four County Mental Health Services is the community mental health center for St. Charles, Lincoln, Warren and Franklin counties. Leo, husband of Cuzandra McGrader, Callaway Plant, won third place in the Missouri Backyard Chief Barbecue Cookoff at the Missouri State Fair in Sallisaw. He received a plaque and a cash award. Mary Knoll, daughter of Fred D. Bull, E&amp;C, was graduated with honors from Columbia College, with a B.S. in business administration. Meg, daughter of Richard H. Baudendistel, Energy Supply, won first place in six events at a swim meet in Louisville, Ky. and set a new U.S. national record in the 400 meter freestyle event in the women's 19-24</p>	<p>Expressing their dissatisfaction. Eventually, the rule was defeated.</p> <p><b>Slowpitch Softball</b></p> <p>This is the second year the UE Slowpitch Men's Softball League (Boleymakers II) has won the Division I and Division II playoffs at the UE employee club. Labadie Plant team members include Jim Dean, Ron Stufkens, Mark Hall, Dave Diet, Steve Darb, Ray Peterson, Dave Carter, Waller Jung, Dan Borgard, Keith Richardson, Jim Brilmaler, Steve Boland and Jeff Boland, and Steve Zaitz and Jim Collier, Morgan Plant.</p> <p><b>Safety Supervisors Represent Company</b></p> <p>Claude E. Hawkins, Regional West safety supervisor, has been chosen to represent the Company on the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission's Joint Work Zone Safety Task Force. The task force emphasizes a commitment to reducing accidents and injuries beyond company boundaries. The Edison Electric Institute Safety and Industrial Health Committee has appointed Tom Smith, T&amp;D safety supervisor, to serve as the accident review coordinator for the Accident Data Subcommittee.</p>	<p>Monitor Index "A funeral procession, containing many out-of-state people, traveled north on busy Marley Street. As we have come to expect in Moberly, area residents moved to the side of the street and stopped, creating a lane of respect. "What we hadn't come to expect: We passed a Union Electric line crew working. These men took off their</p> <p>ing, and for giving up your Sunday to contribute to our program."</p>
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# FEEDBACK



Have a comment on this issue of the UE News, or an item for an upcoming issue? Take a moment to complete this form, then send it to the UE News, Company Mail Code 100 Retirees, send to UE News, P.O. Box 149, St. Louis, Mo 63166

What did you like about this issue of the News? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you dislike? \_\_\_\_\_

Other comments, or suggestions for future items \_\_\_\_\_

October 1989

The editor of the "Union Electric News" makes it easy for readers to respond to her newsletter. She provides a "Feedback" feature with space provided for comments. The comments can be easily clipped and mailed back to her.

CM-450

trapolate the results to the whole population. Pick every tenth name from your mailing list, for example.

It's also essential to do a dry-run before committing your survey to the mail. Test the survey on a handful of people to make sure your questions are understandable.

### **Level 3: Find out if anybody is doing something differently because of your newsletter.**

This is the most difficult level of evaluation. It has to be carefully orchestrated. Figure out one thing you want to campaign for in your newsletter. And then quickly find out if your campaigning did any good. Here are the steps:

- Promote something. You may want to use two, three or more issues to do this.
- Find out if anybody is doing what you're promoting because of your newsletter.
- Remember to find out fast. They may start doing it. But they'll forget they got the idea from your newsletter unless you time your evaluation and the campaign close together. Ideally, the timing should be within 30 days of the end of your campaign—or certainly within three months.

For efficiency's sake you may want to include this evaluation with your yearly survey.

What you choose to campaign for depends on your audience and purpose. If your audience is the newly married and your purpose is to help them get off to a good start financially, you might want to campaign for them to set up a budget.

You might want to campaign to help weight watchers keep off weight, smokers stop smoking or farmers adopt certain soil conservation practices. A hospital employee newsletter conducted a campaign to promote courtesy in elevators. Whatever it is, if you find that people have changed their lives because of your newsletter, that's quite an accomplishment. Those kinds of results might help you get a raise or

more subscribers. Either way, you've set yourself up for newsletter stardom.

## **Market your newsletter**

The next plan you need to devise is how to market your newsletter. An effective way to do this is through direct mail marketing. Thus, you need mailing lists. If your chosen audience belongs to organizations who will share mailing lists with you, you are all set. But if you are trying to reach an audience whose members are not already organized in some manner, then you have your work cut out for you.

Here are some tips to help you get a mailing list started:

- Get publicity in publications that reach your audience. If you can get this free, great. If not, you might have to buy some advertising space. Classified advertisements are less expensive than display advertisements and may yield a substantial number of names for you.
- Put coupons in each issue of your newsletter asking readers to send names of friends or relatives who might be interested in subscribing.
- Check with key people who have contact with the audience you're after. See if they would be willing to help you come up with names and addresses. For example, for the "Beginnings" newsletter for young married couples, the author went to ministers requesting names.

Once you have a mailing list, then you can proceed to promote your newsletter and urge subscription. Design a direct mail flier and cover letter that explain to the reader what he or she will gain from your newsletter. Answer this age-old question for the reader, "What's in it for me?" Here's a formula you may want to follow as you write your copy:

- Promise a benefit.
- Tell readers what they will get. Tantalize them.
- Back up your statements with proof.
- Rephrase the strongest benefit in the closing.

- Incite action NOW.

Ideally, your direct mail marketing packet should include:

- A cover letter.
- A direct mail flyer.
- A postage-paid, self-addressed subscription card.
- A sample issue of the newsletter.

If your newsletter has been available for a while and you are seeking more subscribers with your direct mail campaign, then you can incorporate the technique of the testimonial. Find out from readers what they have gained from your newsletter. If you have done a good job of evaluating, you should have these kinds of quotes already in your files. Include these quotes in your direct mail flier design.

## **Start your newsletter**

Okay, you know your audience and have a clear-cut purpose. You have thought through an evaluation and marketing plan. Now, how do you organize the newsletter and write it?

The most efficient approach to the organization of a newsletter borrows from both the newspaper world and the magazine world. You borrow from the newspaper world the news approach to determine the prominence of your articles. Your best, most timely and important article goes first. The rest of the articles follow.

You borrow from the magazine world the technique of departmentalization. That is, you put certain kinds of information under pre-determined headings. For example, in "The Newsletter on Newsletters," the author has a department called "Newsletter Reviews." In it he tells of new newsletters, their audience, purpose, format and subscription information.

Other examples of departments might include question-and-answer columns, employee-of-the-month personality profiles or guest columnists. You will determine your departments based on the audience and purpose of your newsletter.



The department technique makes your newsletter easier and quicker to read. Departments also help you in putting out your newsletter. You know exactly where to put certain bits of information without having to reinvent the wheel each issue.

## Write about the right stuff

Write about what your audience wants and needs to know. Think about these five needs that everybody has:

**People like recognition.** Use names in your newsletter. People like to read about themselves first, then about people they know and finally about people who are famous. Take advantage of that need. Incorporate names whenever you can. Offer examples of how real people do the things you wish to promote in your newsletter.

For example, an extension textiles specialist in Missouri did a newsletter for professional seamstresses. In each issue she used the name of someone who had asked her a question or who had provided her with a valuable tip.

An extension livestock specialist in Missouri used the same technique. He would find farmers doing the kind of practices he wanted to promote and then used their names in his newsletter.

**People like to make and save money.** No matter what your audience or purpose, provide an economic angle to your newsletter. At least one reference in each issue should help people save or make money.

**People like security.** Include safety or health information in an article or have a department on tips. People seem to be more conscious of safety and health than ever.

**People like to save time.** Just about everyone has far more to do than hours in the day. This is true especially of newsletter audiences. That's why they subscribe to newsletters. Easy-to-read tips on

## He radiates expertise

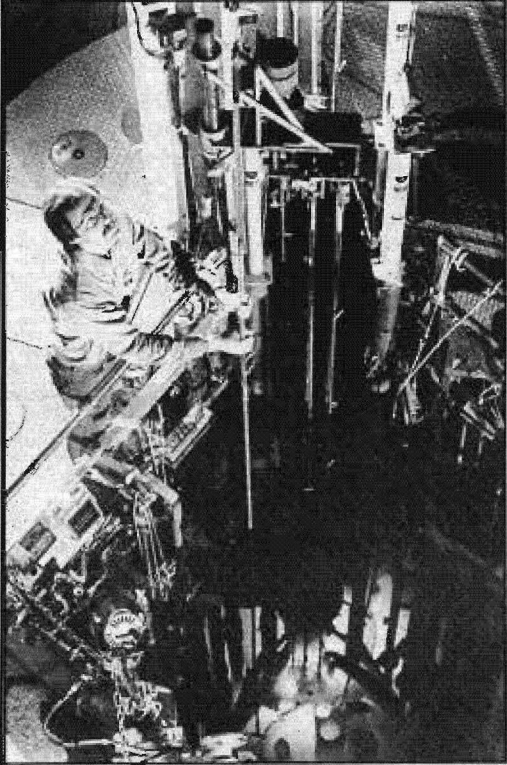
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One could make glowing remarks about Les Foyto's work, but that might cause a chain reaction of responses. After two years as an operator at the University's research reactor, Foyto has heard every nuclear energy pun known to man.

Foyto describes his duties at the largest academic research reactor in the country as helping with the "day-to-day operation and maintenance." Part of any day's activities includes exposing materials to radiation with the help of a series of long metal poles. The material must pass through about 30 feet of water, which serves a twofold purpose of cooling and shielding. About one foot of water shields as much radiation as a half-inch of lead.

Foyto received his formal nuclear training in the Navy while he was stationed on the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson. MU's reactor isn't near the size of the facility on an aircraft carrier, and the 30 feet of water isn't near the volume of water that a sailor is accustomed to. Just the same, Foyto enjoys being at the core of nuclear research in Columbia.

*Now he has heard every pun. — Text and photo by Jeff Adams*



Research reactor operator Les Foyto was trained in the Navy.

**"Mizzou Weekly,"** the employee newsletter at the University of Missouri-Columbia, provides recognition for readers. Outstanding employees are recognized with special features. In addition, a regular department, called "Mizzou People," lists various accomplishments of employees.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### FOR SALE

**HOUSE FOR SALE** Assume loan on 4-year-old, 2,100 sq. ft. home in Oakland Park area, with three bedrooms, two baths, family room, living room, dining room, spacious kitchen, double garage and fenced backyard. Low \$70s. Evenings 474-1320.

**FIVE-ACRE HOME SITES:** Woods and/or meadow, southern exposures, 4 miles southwest. \$14,000 & up, w/\$1,000 down, remainder over 10 years. All underground utilities; no trailers. 449-5620 before 6 p.m.

### FOR RENT

**ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT** for rent. Close to Stephens, MU campus. Quiet street, pets allowed, off-street parking. New job, must move. Available immediately. 443-2289, leave message.

The Classified Advertising Section is open only to faculty and staff members. A home phone number is required in all classified ads.

### Ads must be typed.

Rates: 30-word maximum \$3.

Publication deadlines:

Feb. 23 for March 6

March 2 for March 13

**Mizzou Weekly Classifieds:** Make your check payable to University of Missouri and send to Mizzou Weekly, 1100 University Place, Attention: Michelle Burke

**"Mizzou Weekly"** includes a **"Classifieds"** department as a way to save and make money for employees. This type of a department also provides a way to get regular response from readers.

saving time can endear your newsletter to your readers.

**People like to have fun.** When authors approach their newsletter as a means to communicate with a friend, they are more likely to write better copy and be read more. If you can bring a smile to someone's face, you've won a friend. Add a little humor to your newsletter. Write a clever headline. Include a poke-fun department. Pass on a funny situation that someone solved.

For example, an extension administrator in Missouri wrote a newsletter for his staff and always included a "Turkey of the Month" department in which he admitted some error or boo-boo he had made.

The name of the employee newsletter for San Diego's Sea World is "The Whale Street Journal." An extension dairy specialist titled his newsletter "No Bull—Udder Facts."

An extension livestock specialist would add a quote at the end of his newsletter as a filler. But instead of using one of those innocuous anonymous quotes, he always quoted a real person from a joke heard over coffee at the small town restaurant where he would frequently gather with farmers.

## Write to be read fast

People want newsletters to be a quick read. They want to be able to grasp the information you have presented quickly. Write your articles to help your reader read faster.

**Start off with a bang.** Don't beat around the bush. Get to the point. Newsletter articles don't need flowery introductions. So borrow the concise writing style of newspaper journalism.

Use the more familiar and shorter word.

Write to express, not impress. Why say "utilize" when "use" will do?

Write at a level slightly below what your audience is capable of reading.

Readers appreciate this because reading goes faster, and this saves

them time. Even such stellar publications as the Wall Street Journal don't exceed a high school reading level. Do what's called a "fog index" on your newsletter. This is a technique for checking the grade level it's written for. For a guide to how to do this, order "Clear Writing," CM201, from the University of Missouri-Columbia.


**Write the way you talk.** Keep your style informal. After all, this is a letter.

**Edit your copy.** Let it sit at least 24 hours and then go back and get rid of verbiage and clean up the text for clarity. If possible, have at least one

you'll find is that as you write the headline, you cut through to the essence of the article. Authors often go back and re-write the first part of their articles to match the good headlines. Headline writing helps you make the point as concisely as you can. Here are a few rules for good headline writing:

**Use action verbs.** Verbs like "grab," "strike," "stir" and "build" are all verbs that imply action. Stay away from static verbs like "is" and "are." A headline is even duller if it does not include a verb at all. These headlines are called "label headlines" and can be deadly unless

**SICKLE CELL SCREENING OFFERED**  
Free sickle cell screening, sponsored by the School of Medicine and University Hospital in observance of Black History Month, will be offered Feb. 28 at three Columbia locations.  
The screening will be conducted at the hospital's Health Information Center in Columbia Mall from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with blood pressure screening included. Other screening sites and times are the "Blind" Boone Center, 301 N. Providence Road, from 10 a.m. to noon, and MA223 Health Sciences Center, from 2 to 4 p.m.  
Free transportation can be arranged by calling 882-6565.



**Health and safety are primary concerns of readers.** This issue of "Mizzou Weekly" includes an article with information on sickle cell screening.

other person edit the copy for you. It's difficult to be your own editor.

The most important part of your article is the first sentence. After you have written the first draft of the article, go back and make sure the first sentence grabs attention.

Even more important than the first sentence is the headline. Headlines can make or break your newsletter. What do people do when they scan a publication? They read the headlines. That determines what they will read—if they read anything.

## Struggle for good headlines

Writing good headlines is a struggle. It often takes more time than writing the article. But what

they are used in combination with an accompanying headline, often in smaller type, that includes a verb.

*Poor:* Annual Meeting News

*Better:* Plot Your Way to Portland for Annual Meeting

**Use present tense.** Keep verbs in present tense. This is the style readers are used to in newspapers. Present tense usually takes up less precious space, too.

**Get to the point.** Tell what the article is about. Be clever if you can. But don't deceive the reader as to the point of the article. For example, the headline for an article on how to write a good resume was titled "Don't let a resume cramp your file." This is a clever play on words but still told what the article was about.

## Develop a style

To make your writing easier, you need to establish certain guidelines, known in the publishing business as style. This means that you always do certain things the same way so you don't have to re-think how to do them.

Your style includes such things as peoples' titles, for example. On first reference your source may be John Smith; and on second reference, Mr. Smith or Smith. You may want to refer to all women with the title of Ms. Or you may want to leave off titles altogether. There's no right or wrong about any of these choices. Just decide and then stick with it. This also makes your writing easier to read.

The reader subconsciously picks up on your style and doesn't get confused.

Besides titles you may also want to make decisions about how to write numerals and how to designate states.

If you don't want to make all these decisions yourself, just adopt the style of somebody else. A popular style guide is "The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual." Another popular one is "The Washington Post Deskbook on Style." Many newspapers use these style books. Both of these are readily available at bookstores or can easily be ordered for you.

**Other things** — particular to your newsletter — will not be covered in a

standard style book. So create your own supplement. In it might be such things as what acronyms you don't spell out and how you refer to an organization on second reference. For example, the University of Missouri-Columbia has a supplemental style book in which the rules on second reference to the university are clarified: Either use MU or Mizzou.

**Follow these tips** and you are on your way to a well-written, well-organized and, thus, well-read newsletter.

For additional information on newsletter production, see "Designing Your Newsletter," CM440, available through the University of Missouri-Columbia.

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