



Bulletin

Creating a Readable Corporate Newsletter

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a must for a modern business. Staying in touch regularly with customers, employees and others who may be interested in your company's products and/or services, upcoming events, or other business developments is critical to your company's growth and success.

Thanks to the availability of myriad print and electronic media, the Internet and social media, companies have many options for connecting with their internal and external audiences. This bulletin focuses on one option—newsletters.

WHAT IS A NEWSLETTER?

A newsletter is a collection of brief articles that interest a defined group of people, such as a company's customers or employees. Most newsletters contain photos or other graphics related to these stories to help visually break up the text.

Newsletters are published regularly (typically weekly, monthly, bimonthly or semi-annually) and may be printed and mailed or created and sent electronically.

A newsletter serves several purposes:

- Informs
- Educates
- Alerts
- Entertains (sometimes)

BACK TO BASICS

Whether you're starting from scratch or rethinking an existing publication, it's always a good idea to consider the basic elements of your publication because they tend to change over time.

Assess the Audience

Is the newsletter strictly an in-house publication for staff or is it shared with customers, equipment suppliers or others? Is your audience older, younger, middle-aged or of mixed generations?

There may be other questions that will help you define the newsletter's audience. Answering them accurately and completely will help you set the newsletter's content and style to build interest in the publication.

Develop a Mission Statement

Your company's newsletter has a purpose, so write it down. Keep it simple—one or two sentences will do. The mission statement will help you maintain control over the content and avoid straying into areas that are inappropriate and uninteresting to the newsletter's audience.

Consider the Content

Defining the newsletter's purpose and audience will help you determine its content. If the newsletter's audience is narrowly defined, the articles should be confined to the information that will

interest and appeal to that audience. For example, a newsletter for your sales team might include fast-read articles with selling tips, sales projections and goals and information about upcoming meetings. A more general audience, such as your entire staff, might be interested in articles about staff changes, benefits policies, programs and other corporate developments. And, your customers may be interested in articles about staff changes, new products and services, incentive programs and discounts, and your company's other projects.

When choosing the subjects for the newsletter articles, be careful not to stray from its purpose. For example, if the publication's purpose is to inform customers about new products, it is not appropriate to include announcements about upcoming internal meetings.

Develop a Budget

A newsletter's budget will be influenced by a number of factors, including whether the work will be done by staff or external vendors. The company's preferred distribution method (print and mail versus electronic) also plays a role in budgeting. Consider the following questions to see the impact various options will have on your bottom line.

- **Who will create the initial design?** Is there someone on staff who is willing and able to take on this task, or will the assistance of an outside designer be needed?
- **Who will write the content?** Do staff members have the time and expertise needed to write for a newsletter, or will a professional writer be needed to assist?
- **Who will proofread the content?** It is best to have someone with excellent proofreading skills check your newsletter for typographical and

grammatical errors. Never rely solely on automatic spell-checking programs. Content should also be checked for accuracy by those who are closest to the content area (i.e., a sales manager in the case of a sales-related article). This is especially important if you are working with an outside writer who is not familiar with the mechanical contracting industry.

- **Who will select images/charts that complement the content and lay out each issue?** This may be the same person who creates the initial design, or this task may be passed along to someone else in the form of a template with built-in styles.
- **How will the newsletter be distributed?** While electronic transmission is cost-effective, efficient and saves resources, many people still prefer printed publications. Survey your readers to determine their preferences. If they prefer a printed publication and your company does not have high-resolution photos, you would do well to invest in a digital camera. Lower-resolution images will, in most cases, be adequate for an electronic newsletter.

It is important that these decisions be made during the planning phase and evaluated on a regular basis.

Look at How it Looks

Even the best written and most interesting newsletter can turn off a reader if it looks cluttered and/or visually flat. A clean layout, a dash of color and well-placed graphics can do wonders for a publication.

There are many reasons for thinking about the look of your newsletters as well as its content. When doing so, consider the following items.

- **Type style and size** should be comfortable for your audience to read. Most publication experts recommend sans serif typefaces such as Arial and Calibri for headings because they are more attention-getting. These same experts recommend serif-style type (letters with a tail on their end, such as Garamond or Times Roman) for text because they are easier to read. Type size and the amount of space between lines (also called leading) will vary depending on the age of your audience. In general, the older the audience, the larger the typeface or, when smaller typefaces are used, the larger the leading. Smaller fonts (anything under 9 for a younger audience, 11 for an older audience) can be exhausting to read.
- **Consistent typeface**—use one typeface for text and one for headers and subheads. Most typefaces come in “families” that include options like bold, italics, or condensed versions of the type, so you can achieve a number of different looks within the typefaces you select. Using a variety of typefaces for each article makes your newsletter look disorganized, confusing and hard to read. When choosing typefaces, make sure to keep your mission in mind. If your mission states that you publish only business news to keep your clients informed, for example, you will want to avoid casual typefaces like Comic Sans.
- **Color**—even just one color plus black—gives your publication some zing and catches the eye.
- **Graphics**—such as photos, graphs and charts—break up the text and make articles more interesting and readable. Keep in mind when

selecting or developing graphics that, in order to be successful they must work within the context of the story. For example, a story about your company’s recent uptick in sales would benefit from a graph or chart that visually illustrates the information. A story about a current project, however, would be better served with photos of the project.

Keep in mind that your newsletter is not the only publication that your audience reads. Give your newsletter a distinctive look and your audience will want read its content—and look forward to doing so.

The Nameplate

The nameplate is the top area of the newsletter’s front page that presents its name, date, volume or issue number and the company name and/or logo. It sets the tone for the publication, and it’s the first thing readers see when they receive the publication.

It’s okay—in fact, it’s highly recommended—that you choose a clever name for your newsletter. For example, if you are in the pipe welding business, something like *The Pipeline*—rather than *ABC, Inc. Piping News*—is catchy and clever and will spark the attention of your reader.

Be creative when designing the nameplate. Choose a typeface that’s consistent with the typeface you’ve chosen for your headers and subheads. Consider using color and/or reversing out the name (white letters on a dark background). Organize the other information appropriately in the area underneath the name.

The Masthead

The masthead is a list of your company’s owners, departments, or officers and the company’s contact information (address, phone, fax, e-mail and website). It generally includes the

name of the person responsible for the newsletter (the editor) and their contact information, as well as the newsletter's mission statement.

The Format

The format or structure of the newsletter is also important to how well it reads. Important points to consider include:

- **Dimension**—Most printed newsletters are 8 1/2 inches x 11 inches. Electronic newsletters generally follow a standard size designed to work well with a variety of devices.
- **Number of Pages**—The number of pages will vary depending on your audience and the type of news you plan to share. Four to eight pages is a good start. You can always add pages later. If your newsletter will be printed in a booklet format, pages must be added in multiples of four.
- **Columns**—Newsletters are usually one, two or three columns. More than three columns will crowd the page.
- **Margins**—Decide how wide your newsletter's page margins should be, and how much space there will be between the columns. For example, page margins of one inch on all sides and a column margin of 1/2 inch.
- **Justification**—Choose whether your columns are even on the right (justified) or ragged. Justified columns may look neater than ragged right ones, but they tend to spread out the words in the lines, which can become difficult to read.
- **Paragraphs**—Decide whether your paragraphs will start flush left or with an indent. Either is fine, as long as they're consistent.

- **Design Elements**—These include the symbols at the end of articles (wingdings or dingbats), headers and subheads, page numbers (folios), ruled lines, charts and photographs.

Create a Style Sheet

Once you've decided on type, format, nameplate and all the other elements in your newsletter, write them down so others who work with you will have a guide. You may also want to create a template to keep these elements stored for the next edition of the newsletter.

GOING TO "PRESS"

Whether you print and mail your newsletter or send it electronically, keep in mind the following before you publish.

Sweat the Details

No matter how many times you read through the newsletter text, you will miss something. Have someone with a fresh pair of eyes read through it for grammar, typographical and spelling errors. The newsletter is a reflection of your company and the quality of work and/or service it provides. Make sure the publication looks good and reads well.

To Print or Not to Print

Once your newsletter is finalized, it will be reproduced and distributed according to the decision made during budgeting.

If your newsletter will be printed

either in-house on a color copier or outside with a commercial printing press, consider the following:

- Draw up a schedule with deadlines for copy, graphics, proofs and delivery. This schedule should be made in collaboration with the person who will be designing the newsletter (whether a member of your staff, a design firm or your printer's design services). A typical newsletter includes 2–3 rounds of

design proofs for review. These let you check the content for accuracy and completeness. The printer will provide a final proof of the processed files, called a blueline or digital blueline. This is your last chance to make sure that everything is in place and represents your company well. Changes are still possible at this stage; once you sign off on these proofs, printing will begin.

- Submit your newsletter materials to your printer. Each printer's requirements will vary, so it's best to work out the details with your vendor.
- Consider using recycled paper, particularly if your company is highlighting its "green" projects. There are many varieties of paper and the costs vary widely. The "greenest" papers sometimes involve complex chain of custody issues that add to their costs and require additional labeling and approval of your materials. Your printer can provide guidance on the options available in your area. If you choose to use a recycled paper that does not require specific labelling, consider including the recycled logo and text indicating that the newsletter was printed on recycled paper.

If you choose to distribute your newsletter electronically, there are two basic options for distribution.

- 1) Convert the document to a format such as Adobe Acrobat PDF and send it via e-mail.
- 2) Use an online e-mail marketing service such as Constant Contact to design and send the newsletter.

Both options allow your newsletter to be

viewed and navigated on a wide range of devices, including tablets and smartphones, and printed from any computer.

PDF requires that you first design your newsletter using another program, whether standard office software or design-specific software. The document is then easily converted into a PDF file for e-mailing, generally at the touch of a button or two. Keep in mind that some of your readers' companies may have e-mail size restrictions, so your PDF file should be no larger than 2MB.

E-mail marketing services offer a selection of design templates that can be adapted to create the look of your newsletter. These services generally include a "safe unsubscribe" feature that lets users change their subscription options and tracking reports so that you can tell which stories are of most interest to your readers (and which aren't being read at all.)

Regardless of the option you choose, consider sending your newsletter from an e-mail address such as `news@yourcompany.com`, which shows the name of your newsletter or company as the sender rather than an individual's name. This will help differentiate your newsletter from everyday business correspondence.

A consistent subject line will make it easy for readers who like to sort their incoming e-mails into folders. For example, you might use "Your Newsletter's Name for MM, DD, YYYY" where MM, DD and YYYY are replaced with the month, date and year on which the newsletter is distributed.



ABC Pipe Services, 1234 Anywhere Street, My Town, Anystate 01234
Web site address www.abc.com, Phone number 102-555-1234

ABC Wins New Refinery Job

By John Doe

ABC Pipe Services won the pipe welding subcontract for the new Worldwide Petroleum Refinery (WPR) that will be located just outside My Town. ABC CEO Mike Someone received notification of the award at 5:00 p.m. on June 1.

The pre-job conference will take place on July 1 at the office of Jones General Contractors. A meeting of ABC project estimators and managers will take place this week, so watch for the memo.

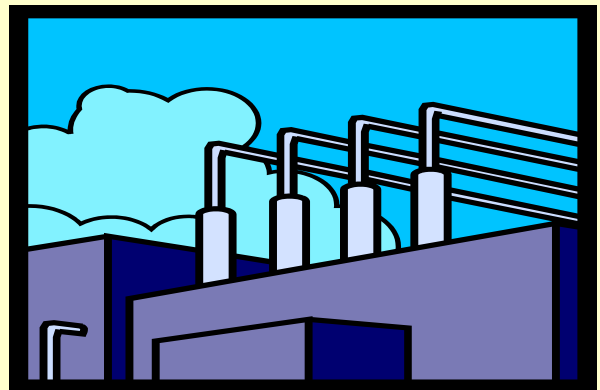
The new refinery will feature state-of-the-art piping systems that will produce approximately 100 barrels of refined petroleum products per day. WPR and Jones GC estimate the project will take three years to complete. The plant will supply WPR customers along the eastern U.S.

The project calls for up to six welders during peak work periods. Project managers and ABC Safety Director Mike Smith will be on hand to keep work flowing smoothly. Foreman Bill Legree will supervise the pipe installation crew.

“Thanks and congratulations to the proposal team for a job well done,” said Someone. ■

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

ABC Wins New Refinery Job	1
ABC Breaks Ground on New Pre-Fab Facility	1
ABC Welcomes New Staff	2
Benefits Meeting Scheduled	2
IPads Ordered	3
Employee of the Month	3
Calendar	4



Artist's drawing of new WPR refinery

ABC Breaks Ground on New Pre-Fab Facility

By Chuck Something

ABC started work on the construction of its new pre-fabrication shop last week. The new 10,000 square-foot structure will be located adjacent to the company's main offices.

The new facility will feature the articulating weld boom which won the MCAA 2008 E. Robert Kent Award. The device allows welders to move around the floor while keeping cords off the floor and includes an exhaust hood for venting welding gases. The boom's

features will make the facility a safer and healthier workplace for pipe fabricators.

Construction of the pre-fab shop is estimated to be completed by November 1 of this year. ABC contracted with General Supply Fabricators to design and construct the facility.

For more information, contact Chuck at cs@abc.com. ■



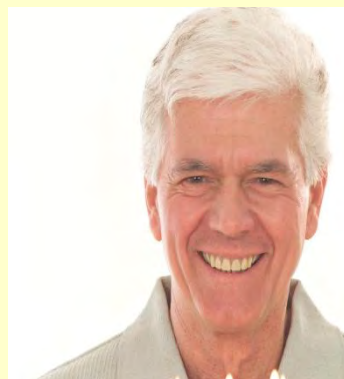
ABC Welcomes New Staff

ABC has just hired two new senior project managers for upcoming projects.

Joe Smith is an 18-year veteran of pipe installation projects for a variety of commercial and industrial facilities. Joe is relocating from the Chicago, IL area. He will join ABC on September 1.

Carl Jones has been a project manager for over 10 years with two Indiana companies. He will also join ABC on September 1.

Please welcome Joe and Carl. ■



Joe Smith



Carl Jones

Benefits Meeting Scheduled

[Note: For employees' newsletter only]

A meeting about changes to employee benefits is scheduled for August 15, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. in the main conference room. All employees must attend.

The main subject of the federal Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare), which will take effect on January 4, 2014. ABC employees are subject to the requirements of this law, and its provisions will be explained during the meeting.

Other benefits to be discussed include sick leave, vacation leave, per diem policies and educational reimbursement policies. Briefing materials will be provided and questions will be encouraged.

The meeting is expected to take about two hours, so be sure not to schedule any meetings in or outside the office during this time. ■



“Mandatory meeting scheduled for all employees on August 15, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm.”



iPads Ordered for Project Managers

All ABC project managers will carry the latest version of Apple's iPads while in the field to stay in touch with ABC management, office staff, customers and owners.

These devices are a convenient way to stay connected with critical personnel for consulting purposes and to check invoices, permit filings, and more without returning to the office. The devices are also handy for reviewing project documents, CAD files, email, the status of equipment deliveries, schedules and upcoming meetings.

ABC management decided to purchase the devices because project managers were using too much time returning to the office on inquiries and other matters that could be handled with an iPad.

The order has been placed and all project managers will receive their iPads in two weeks.



A brief training session has been scheduled for August 10 in the conference room at 1:00 p.m.

Please direct questions to HR Director Joan Smith (js@abc.com). ■

ABC's Employee of the Month – Gary Speshal

Project Foreman Gary Speshal is the ABC Employee of the Month. ABC CEO Mike Someone announced the selection during a meeting of top managers.

Speshal was selected for his overall excellent performance supervising craft workers on projects and continued loyalty to ABC during his 15-year tenure with the company. Mr. Someone noted that, "Gary works hard to ensure craft workers are productive and efficient while they're on the job. He also makes sure they follow safety protocols and hazard avoidance procedures."

Speshal will receive a \$100 American Express Gift Card and one day extra leave.

Congratulations Gary! ■



Gary Speshal (r) examines blue print on a job site.



ABC Pipe Services
CEO and Owner: Mike Someone

The Pipeline
Editor: Joan Smith
js@abc.com

Phone:
111-555-1234 x23

Fax:
111-555-5678

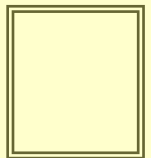
*Your source for ABC Pipe Services
news and information.*

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Pre-Job Meeting	July 1
Benefits Meeting	August 15
New Staff Arrives	September 1
Labor Day	September 2

Company Name
Street Address
City, ST ZIP Code

Note: Mailing Panel is unnecessary for internal newsletters.



Customer Name
Street Address
City, ST ZIP Code