



ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN ON CLUB PUBLICATION

THE CLUB NEWSLETTER

Why does a club need a newsletter?

If your Kiwanis club doesn't publish a regular club newsletter, it should.

Your club is an organization, and its effectiveness depends on good communication. You simply cannot announce everything that is happening in the club at each meeting, even if every member attends every meeting. Further, a meeting should be devoted to good fellowship and an interesting program, not endless reports and announcements to a captive audience.

Newsletters deliver the same information to every member. The club newsletter is a meeting reminder, a calendar of upcoming events, and a reporter of club and board actions and plans. It also serves as a permanent record of your club's history and the lives of its members. It provides Kiwanis education and increases member satisfaction by recognizing individual contributions to the club's success.

How often should a club newsletter be published?

Ideally, a newsletter should be published as often as a club meets, either weekly or twice a month. A monthly newsletter is better than no newsletter at all. Because the purpose of the newsletter is communication, frequency is the most important consideration after content.

How should a club newsletter be distributed?

Regardless of the meeting schedule, the club newsletter should be mailed to every member. Newsletters distributed at meetings often are given a quick glance and left behind, and they do not reach members who did not attend the meeting.

The club newsletter delivered to a member's residence or office can be read at leisure and can be referred to again if some item of information needs to be recalled. Members who have been out of town will find that the club newsletter will bring them up to date.

For most clubs, postage will be the largest expense item in the newsletter budget. Very large clubs may be able to obtain and benefit from a reduced-rate postal permit. Postage costs can be underwritten by members or their businesses in return for a special credit line such as "Mailing costs for this issue were donated by John Smith Insurance Agency." The total yearly postage cost of a newsletter is large for clubs, but the cost of a single issue is small enough to appeal to the generosity of individuals when the donation is voluntary and properly acknowledged.

More and more clubs are sending their newsletters to members via fax or e-mail and posting them on the club Web site. A fax newsletter can be a black-and-white version of the mailed newsletter. An e-mail newsletter is predominantly text, so it's important to be as concise as possible. Distribution of both fax and e-mail newsletters to a selected member list can be handled very efficiently by computer. Newsletters posted on the club Web site can include color graphics and photos, as well as links to pertinent sites.

But Web newsletters don't reach readers automatically. Each time a new newsletter is posted on the club Web site, an e-mail announcement should be sent to every member with Internet access, calling attention to the new issue and providing a handy link.

Electronic distribution of club newsletters

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can reduce the cost of labor involved in mailing each issue. However, some members do not have fax machines or computers with Internet access. It will always be necessary to mail some newsletters to serve all the club's members.

What about paid advertising?

Some clubs, usually larger ones, sell advertising in their newsletter or include a directory for paid listings of members' businesses or professional services. The ads sometimes simply reproduce the members' business cards. This kind of paid support certainly can help defray expenses. However, if you have a special postal-permit, check the rules; paid ads may disqualify you for the special rate or require a different postal rate for that percentage of the newsletter used for advertising.

Of course, advertising also involves the editor in additional time-consuming tasks, such as selling, billing, collecting, and accounting. As with special-rate postal permits, be sure advertising returns enough to make the additional work worthwhile. Otherwise, the cost of publishing and mailing a club newsletter should be accepted as a normal and necessary administrative expense and be included in the club dues.

How should we print our newsletter?

Some clubs publish glossy, typeset newsletters with screened photos and stylish graphics (and some clubs maintain an office with a full-time administrative secretary). But for the average club, style has to take second place to economy. The vast majority of Kiwanis club newsletters are reproduced from typed copy and black-and-white "line" (not shaded) artwork.

The most important aspect of a good club newsletter is content. Inseparable from this prime concern is legibility. The newsletter does not need to be fancy, but it does need to be neat and easy to read. Offset printing, popularized by "instant printing" shops, and the new generation of photocopy machines provide clean, sharp reproduction if your original is clean and sharp. Some small clubs use color computer printers to run off limited numbers of newsletters with color photos and eye-catching graphics.

Printing and mailing is nothing compared to addressing all these newsletters!

You really only have two choices. You can address newsletters the hard way, by writing or typing each address on each copy, or the easy way, by computer. Ask your members if they have automatic addressing equipment at their office or home, and arrange to have a set of address labels run off for each issue. More and more Kiwanians have access to computers at home, work, or even in a local library. Place your club roster on a computer file, and print out adhesive labels.

What should be included in a good club newsletter?

As the club's primary means of communication, the newsletter needs to contain many different types of information. Here is a general list:

- Announcements of future club meeting programs and club activities
- A capsule report on the previous meeting
- Reports on committee and club achievements and any recognition of individual contributions and/or accomplishments
- Items of general interest about members, such as upcoming birthdays, anniversaries, trips, promotions, honors, hospital stays, etc.
- Information on forthcoming division, district, and International activities (club-level publicity helps their success)
- Any Kiwanis educational items

What is the best format for a club newsletter?

The "best" format is the one that does the job for your club. For example, one club in Colorado won a district award with a weekly newsletter printed on one-and-half sides of a postcard—the print was very small, but skillful editing packed in all the most vital information, and club members looked for and read each issue. At the other extreme, some clubs publish fairly elaborate monthly or bi-monthly "magazines."

A format between these extremes is recommended. For the maximum effect, a newsletter should contain more information than can be squeezed onto a postcard. And a monthly or even less frequent publication schedule delays communication and may provide more accumulated text and/or information than the members want to read.

Most club newsletters are printed on two sides of a standard sheet of paper with enough space to include all the necessary information, yet brief enough so members can read it thoroughly within a few minutes. Some use each side of the sheet as a page, and others turn the sheet sideways and fold it, producing a half-size, four-page publication. In choosing a format, consider convenience in assembling and addressing each copy. Some newsletters arrange the text in two vertical columns, and others use a "letter style." A two-column design helps break up text into short, easier-to-read lines, but requires more fitting and fiddling to make the columns equal in length.

A "cover sheet" often is used to convey permanent information such as officers, committees, a membership directory, or meeting times of neighboring clubs. This helps to stiffen the newsletter, because a single sheet can easily become mangled in the mail. It also provides a regular space for the address and postage, so these items will not reduce the space available in the actual newsletter. The cover sheet and the newsletter then can be folded in half or by thirds, stapled, and mailed without the additional expense of an envelope. For the sake of economy, cover sheets should be preprinted in quantity, enough to provide a three-or six-month supply. Printing a year's supply in advance will prevent making changes in the directory to reflect new members, new addresses, changes in committees or officers, or any significant change in the club.

What are the most common design problems in club newsletters?

Amateur editors often see their job as filling space rather than using space. As a result, many club newsletters simply are too cluttered and, therefore, can be unsightly and difficult to read. The print runs right to the edge of the page; headings and blocks of text are crammed together, and if any small slivers of space remain, they are filled with lines or artwork. The result is a graphic jungle that delays the reader's progress. The real secret of a good graphic design is space, not print. Space sets items apart more effectively than lines or boxes. Space beckons the reader's eyes. If an editor has too much text and too little space, it is better to edit and shorten the text than to cram too much onto the page. At least a half-inch margin should be maintained at the top, bottom, and both sides of each page. Headings should be set off by two lines of space above and one line below; paragraphs of text should be kept short and

separated by a line of space.

"Spot" artwork is a useful graphic ingredient, but don't use too much of a good thing. If you have more than three items of spot art on a page, you probably are overdoing it. The same advice applies to the use of second colors. A second color in the masthead can be used to brighten up the newsletter. But don't be tempted by the availability of a second color to use for headings, extra borders, and other graphic elements. Many clubs preprint paper with the newsletter masthead and title in quantity, thus providing a second color (often "Kiwaniis blue") to dress up each issue. But whatever color is used, remember to be consistent.

If the text of your newsletter is printed in any color but black, make it a very dark blue or very dark brown. Most other colors are too transparent for easy reading. If colored paper is used, make it a very light cream, yellow, pink, or a similar transparent color. Dark blues, greens, and reds do not provide good contrast for the printed text.

How can I prepare graphic elements economically?

One of the best ways to prepare the newsletter's text is with a laser printer rather than a carbon or cloth ribbon on a typewriter. Many editors now have a home or office computer with "desktop publishing" software. Some editors, however, continue to use the "cut and paste" method. Consult a local printer for assistance with this method or opt for a more convenient computer publishing system.

Newsletter template on CD-ROM

The Kiwanis International Public Relations and Marketing Resources CD-ROM includes newsletter templates, as well as other Kiwanis promotion tools.

A section titled "Publications" outlines criteria for judging club newsletters and brochures. These criteria have been approved by Kiwanis International Marketing and Public Relations Committee and have been recommended for district contests.

Options include:

- Two-color, single-sided newsletter with the

- Kiwanis oval logo (MSWord)
- Two-color, single-sided newsletter with Kiwanis child logo (MSWord)
- Two-color, double-sided newsletter with the Kiwanis oval logo (MSWord)
- Two-color, double-sided newsletter with the Kiwanis child logo (MSWord)
- Two-color, four-page newsletter with Kiwanis oval logo (MSWord)
- Two-color, four page newsletter with Kiwanis child logo (MSWord)
- Clip art photos and illustrations

Kiwanis International provides one PR and Marketing Resources CD-ROM to each club at no cost. (See below about ordering additional copies.)

A complete set of Kiwanis-family logos also is available on CD-ROM from Kiwanis International. These can be used to add graphic elements to a newsletter's pages.

Both the PR and Marketing Resources and logos CD-ROMs may be ordered from the Kiwanis Family Store at 800-549-2647, ext. 390 (North America); 317-875-8755, ext. 390 (worldwide) or online at: <https://stealth.onet.net/kicatalog/kiwanis/v30/>

CopyMax partnership helps publish newsletters

A Kiwanis partnership with OfficeMax can enhance your club's newsletters. OfficeMax offers Kiwanis-family members and clubs a 15 percent discount through the CopyMax department of its stores.

A club or its editor can open an account and e-mail a newsletter to the nearest OfficeMax location, place an order for the number of copies needed, and then have the order shipped directly to a member's home or office.

Because of the discounted price, a club may want to add color to its traditionally black-and-white newsletter.

To open an individual or business account, visit your local OfficeMax and inquire about the Kiwanis partnership. Or obtain a discount card online at: www.kiwanis.org/copymax/

Prospective editors in our club say they cannot write.

The goal of newsletter writing is not literature; it's communication. Of course, the newsletter editor should strive to keep the text simple and short. There is no need to write essays. Just the basic "who, what, where, how, when, and why" will do. At this level of simple reporting, most people who say they cannot write mean that they do not want to write. In looking for an editor, try not to search for "a writer." Look for a member who is enthusiastic about Kiwanis. Club boosters can become good newsletter editors even if their grammar and punctuation skills are modest, because they realize that a regular newsletter can make a significant contribution to club spirit and organizational success.

Aside from club members, should anyone else receive our newsletter?

A club newsletter also can serve some external public relations purposes. For example, you might want to send your newsletter to the presidents of other service clubs in your community. Your circulation list should include your lieutenant governor. You also could include the presidents of the other Kiwanis clubs in your division, or better yet, establish an exchange of newsletters so you can see how they produce theirs. Your district governor and your district public relations chairman certainly would like to see your club newsletter.

And be sure KIWANIS magazine is on your mailing list. Magazine editors routinely read club newsletters, looking for story ideas. The address is: KIWANIS magazine, 3636 Woodview Trace, Indianapolis, Indiana 46268-3196.

Should we enter the club newsletter in the district's newsletter contest?

Definitely! It doesn't cost anything; there's no penalty for not winning; and the judges may think your newsletter is one of the best. You will be competing against clubs of the same general size, not with clubs several times bigger than yours. And every club doesn't enter the contest. GOOD LUCK!

A complete newsletter editor's kit is available through the Public Relations Department at the International Office in Indianapolis.