

Don't Fret the Newsletter. Here's How to Make It Right

BY HEIDI VOSS

Every month one staff member at the club is avoided like the plague. This person's responsibility is to collect an article from each department head for the newsletter. The horrible job is usually given to the membership director or administrative assistant.

Department heads have been known to use back entrances and hide out in the locker room to avoid being cornered. I would invariably turn my article in late. I always wished that someone would publish a book called, "Monthly Newsletter Articles That You May Plagiarize."

This monthly — or at some clubs, bi-monthly — ordeal has been the cause of a great deal of undue stress and drama. My challenge in this article is to try to guide you toward making the process better for all and creating something that your members will read. The very scary statistic is that the members actually read only about 20 percent of the newsletters. So after we have gone through all of the agony, it's getting pitched in the garbage.



First, the advice that I would like to give the person in charge of collecting the articles is to blatantly lie about

the date you actually need the articles. Give yourself a seven-day cushion. But don't let the others know about your cushion. Also, if you have a person on your staff who has difficulty writing

an article, step up and help out by writing something. It is easier to critique something that you have put together and for him to put his spin on it than starting from scratch. I'm sure he will pitch in and help you in the future. This is what we call good newsletter karma.

Second, use a professional printer to format your newsletter. Show him samples of newsletter formats that you like. This should include size, paper samples and colors. Then determine a layout that can be used each time for consistency. Clubs that buy color copiers and try to put this job on a staff person generally end up creating a newsletter that looks like it was made in house. The newsletter should be something that your members are proud of and that they leave on the coffee table or kitchen

counter where friends may peruse it. To increase the chance that they will show it off to friends, be sure to incorporate as many pictures as possible of members having fun. Make sure they are flattering photos and be sure to crop kindly for the best look.

To increase their reliance on the newsletter, publish a calendar of events that can easily be removed and placed on the sacred "refrigerator" shrine in each home. You may want to publish the calendar with hours of opera-

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tion in each dining room, aeration and topdressing schedules for the golf course, special outings or course closings, contact numbers for reservations and tee times, and other important items relevant to your club.

Third, publish a PDF version of your newsletter on your Web site each month to which members can continually refer. This is very easy for the printer to create and for your Webmaster to post. In the future, hopefully this

is where members will go to find out what is going on at the club. We are just beginning to gather positive data on how many members choose to view it online.

Finally, if you are a new club or in need of members, print an overrun of a particularly good newsletter and direct mail it to 5,000 of your closest neighbors that are not members with a cover letter telling them about the club and welcoming them to inquire. We have found, from a marketing dollar, this is the

largest generator of new inquiries for membership. The key is to be sure the newsletter is well written, has no typos and presents the right image.

I hope these tips will help alleviate some of your stress. If not, I recommend hiding out with the shoeshine folks. They can help you keep your shoes shiny and they generally have advice on how to make the world a better place.

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