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Press

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You can't please everyone

By Tony Carobine, President

An old man, a boy and a donkey were going to town. The boy rode on the donkey and the old man walked. As they went along they passed some people who re-

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marked it was a shame the old man was walking and the boy was riding. The man and the boy thought maybe the critics were right, so they changed positions. Later they passed some people that remarked, “what a shame, he makes the little boy walk.” They decided they both would walk! Soon they passed some more people who thought they were stupid to walk when they had a decent donkey to ride. So, they both rode the donkey! Now they passed some people that shamed them saying how awful to put such a load on a poor donkey.

The boy and man said they were probably right so they decided to carry the donkey. As they crossed a bridge, they lost their grip on the animal and he fell into the river and drowned.

The moral of the story?...If you try to please everyone, you will eventually lose your ass.

In some ways, this fable is not unlike the situation occasionally faced by editors. We sometimes have to make tough deci-

sions in the course of our duties that will be condemned or ridiculed by others, but appropriate if our own integrity and credibility and that of the publication are to be upheld. While we may not be able to please everyone, there are some things that can be done to demonstrate a commitment of maintaining a publication of the highest ethical quality and honesty.

Anyone who undertakes the job of editor shoulders an awesome responsibility. In their quest to communicate with the membership, editors (and their associates) perform a variety of tasks; including: writer, copy editor, photographer, typesetter, printer, labeler, and administrator, to name a few.

The physical production of a paper is only part of an editor's responsibility, however. He or she must not only develop a knowledge about the “mechanics” of publishing, but also be familiar with various laws that affect a union publication; such as libel, copyright, internal union election laws and federal election regulations. And, as caretaker of the “voice of the union,” an editor must be fair and impartial to ensure the paper is serving all members.

One way an editor can maintain an atmosphere of fairness and credibility (plus avoid a lot of personal aggravation) is by instituting, with membership approval, various policies or constitutional language involving the union publication.

The most notable is an Editorial Policy governing the type of material that will or will not be accepted. The importance of an Editorial Policy and Editorial Policy Committee cannot be emphasized enough. Sooner or later material will be submitted for the paper that is questionable. Absent an Editorial Policy or Editorial Policy

Committee, it makes the job of editor much more difficult. As a result this often leads to unnecessary turmoil and perhaps the editor's credibility being called into question. Conversely, with an Editorial Policy and Editorial Policy Committee previously approved by the membership, the editor not only has a procedure to rely upon, but direction as to how the situation should be handled. (For more information on this subject, see *Editorial Administration* in the Member Resources section of the PPA website.)

An editor's job description in the organization's constitution, defining the editor's duties and responsibilities is another area that should be addressed. By doing so everyone in the organization will have an understanding of what the editor's position entails. This is yet another way to avoid future conflict that can work to harm the editor, publication and the union.

These two areas regarding the administration of local or state publications repeatedly cause the most contention. When you think about it, we have enough problems with the forces out to destroy our livelihood. We don't need conflict between each other. Taking the time to set procedures in place that can avoid such conflict is time well spent.

The moral of this story? It's not possible to always please everyone when making decisions regarding the administration of a union publication. However, ensuring there are procedures in place to address such matters will go a long way in maintaining your integrity as an editor and the credibility of the publication. Anything less and we are not serving the best interests of the owners of the union publication – the membership!

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Is this OK to publish?

“Nominations for local union office will take place at the January union meeting. I have served in my current position for the past three years and plan on running again. I would appreciate your support.” This wording is an excerpt from an officer’s report article in a local union newsletter.

Is this statement appropriate for an officer’s report article, or is it a potential election law violation? In many locals, union officer elections will occur at the beginning of the coming year. The following information is being provided as a reminder to help avoid election law violations, such as the hypothetical violation at the start of this article.

Title IV of the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959, as amended (LMRDA or the Act) establishes election procedures to be followed by all unions covered by this Act, regardless of whether their constitution and bylaws so provide. The Act does not spell out detailed procedures; rather, it sets minimum requirements. Beyond this, elections are to be conducted according to the constitution and bylaws of each union, as long as the union’s rules do not conflict with the provisions of the Act.

Under Section 1209 of the Postal Reorganization Act, unions of U.S. Postal Service employees are subject to the LMRDA.

Therefore, the LMRDA administered by the United States Department of Labor must be followed concerning internal union elections. In addition, sections of the Act contain provisions affecting the use of a labor union publication in internal union elections.

Section 401(g) of the LMRDA provides that: “No monies received by any labor organization by way of dues, assessment, or similar levy, and no monies of an employer shall be contributed or applied to promote the candidacy of any person in any election subject to the provisions of this title. Such monies of a labor organization may be utilized for notices, factual statements of issues not involving candidates, and other expenses necessary for holding an election.”

This means that since a union publica-

tion is funded by the union, it cannot be used for the purpose of promoting the candidacy of any individual running for union office. Also, a union website that involves the use of union resources to operate also cannot be used to promote (or attack) anyone’s candidacy. The same is true regarding the use of any union facilities and equipment. Such activity is an indirect expenditure of union funds which is prohibited under Section 401(g) of the LMRDA.

To avoid promoting the candidacy of any person, union publications should afford fair and equal treatment or publicity to candidates for union office and be fair and impartial in reporting the activities of candidates.

If it chooses, a union newspaper can make equal space available to each bona fide candidate running for any particular office, as long as the candidates are notified on an equal basis of the availability of the publication for this purpose. The law is specific in this regard. A union newspaper has the choice of all candidates for a particular office – or none. Once the publication decides to open the newspaper to candidates, it must offer space to all candidates for that particular office on an equal basis.

Paid political advertising is legal provided that all candidates for a particular office or offices are given an equal opportunity to purchase space for an ad. And, provided that all candidates are charged the same consistent with space used.

Also, a union may neither attack a candidate in a union-financed publication nor urge the nomination or election of a candidate in a union-financed letter to the members.

Newsletter articles should not be used for the purpose of advancing the candidacy of an individual or individuals nor should they be used to attack a candidate or candidates. Submissions for the newsletter should be closely monitored during the election period in order to avoid conflict with the intent of the law.

Further information concerning union elections as they pertain to union publications is available in the Member Resources section of the PPA website or by contacting the PPA.

Are all of your talents being used?

By Edward Brennan,
Secretary/Treasurer

After the Postal Press Association Awards Banquet in Orlando this past August, a relatively new editor asked me how to best prepare for the 2013 PPA Awards Program. I answered her that us-

rapher? Is there a member with medical training who could inform the members on health issues? Is there a skilled negotiator who could inform the members on contractual issues?

Anyone with these and other relevant talent should be sought out and used by

With these thoughts in mind an editor could even entice more members to contribute by literary events such as special months where the editor explains what a good editorial is made of and then asks members to submit editorials on relevant issues for the next paper.

This could also be done with other items such as feature stories, photos, cartoons, etc. When it comes to making the publication something members want to receive and something that keeps them informed, one of the best ways to make that happen is to get the members themselves involved.

People join an organization for the benefits they can get from it and their belief in the principals that the organization represents. They grow and prosper along with the organization when being accepted by that organization and by being given an active role in the workings of that group. By enlisting the knowledge and dedication of our members we strengthen the group as a whole and will even be the envy of nonmembers.

All of us have members in our local and state union bodies that possess unknown talents that have never been made available because they have never been sought out. Does your publication read like a phone book? Do members anxiously await your next issue? Are your members informed on the issues and active in your union? If not then the time to seek out their talents is now. Seek them out and make them part of your staff. Make your publication a source of pride. Then you can answer your own question – what is the best way to prepare for the next PPA Awards Program?



“Working together and having a part in the production of an educational and important part of unionism can fuse the members into a stronger and more informed and efficient organization.”

ing all of the talent available in her local is the key to producing a high quality publication.

Members working with their editor use their talents to help make the local or state publication the information forum which they are intended to become. Members with cartoonist talents can submit monthly labor cartoons on subjects relevant to current local or state postal issues. Members with photographic talent can enrich the publications with photos from meetings, installations, protests, etc. The union publication belongs to the members and the contributions of the members can make a publication great and possibly an award-winning journalistic gem.

Besides the supplemental support given by photos and cartoons, the officers and members can even greatly add to the meat of the newsletters with editorials, officer’s reports and actual editorials and feature stories that add substance to the events and issues that affect their office or the Postal Service in general.

Editors could use their publications to solicit the expertise of their members for the good of the local or state organization. Is there a member who has a degree in journalism or English, or public relations who could write for the paper? Is there a skilled cartoonist or a photog-

the editor. It shouldn’t be the job solely of editors to publish the newsletter by themselves. After all, the newsletter is the property of the members and they should all use their talents to make it the best looking and informative publication that it was created to become.

Once the editor has assembled a staff of qualified and highly skilled members who are willing to contribute to THEIR paper, that same editor will hear less complaining about the publication having nothing in it of value and more members looking forward to the next issue and more members being informed on issues that have an effect on their jobs. Working together and having a part in the production of an educational and important part of unionism can fuse the members into a stronger and more informed and efficient organization.

2012 dues notice mailed

A dues notice letter and membership application for 2012 was mailed to PPA members on October 25. Occasionally, we find that dues notices are laid aside which then requires additional notices or phone calls as reminders. Your help in making sure your dues for the coming year are paid in a timely fashion would be appreciated.

Upon receipt of your dues, a 2012 PPA Membership/Press Identification Card will be prepared and sent to you provided your digital photo is already on file with the PPA. If your digital photo is not on file (or you would like to submit an updated photo), please email the photo to ppa@apwupostalpress.org.

The art of interviewing (part one)

By Lance Coles, Editor-at-Large

We all ask questions; that is how you get to know someone, that is conversation, that is interviewing. We do interviews all the time, casual conversations, first dates, and hospitality rooms.

A good interview is a good conversation

It is important that you know exactly why you are conducting an interview and which goal(s) you are aiming for.

The success of the interview depends as much on what you do before you ask the first question as it does on the questions and writing.

Rewriting is more than editing. Giving it a local focus takes some work and research. Interview someone who can comment on the issue and how it affects them, their family or work.

The profile: This is for more like a feature article. This one requires a lot more

“A good interview is a good conversation written down. It’s an art form that requires more skill than just getting the answers to the 5 W’s. Good journalism interviews are designed to provide more than just information; they should help develop a story with personality and insight into the events in question.”

written down. It’s an art form that requires more skill than just getting the answers to the 5 W’s. Good journalism interviews are designed to provide more than just information; they should help develop a story with personality and insight into the events in question.

An interview is all about seeking information. You have all probably been in a conversation with someone where you kept asking questions or talking and the conversation was going nowhere. And you all have had conversations where the other person just would not shut up.

A good interviewer will get that first person to open up, and the second to talk as much as you let them to get the answers you are looking for, or more. A good interviewer will get a person to give information they do not know they are giving or do not even realize they are giving.

Interviews open doors about people. They liven up your newsletter.

Information is the merchandise of a journalist. Every editor and journalist needs to develop good interviewing skills.

Interviewing is an imperfect process. We can control some of the variables, but we cannot control two that count the most: the interview and the source.

As an interviewer you ask questions, digest responses, record answers, cajole the sources, gauge reactions and look for details. This is no work for the unprepared.

Most interviews seek to achieve one or more of the following goals:

1. Obtain the interviewees knowledge about a topic.
2. Obtain the interviewees opinion and/or feelings about the topic.
3. Feature the interviewee as the subject.

All stories and events have multiple angles from which one could view them. Brainstorm a number of these possibilities prior to the interview and attempt to ask questions that would allow for as many of those aspects to be covered as possible. Some of the best pieces of writing are produced by writers who do not determine which way the article is going to go, in terms of good guy/bad guy or positive/negative, until all interviews have been completed and he or she sits down to write.

Do your homework. Know a little about your subject. You don’t want to turn them off by them realizing you know nothing about them. Try to know as much as you can.

How you prepare for the interview depends on what kind of story you are writing; a feature, an editor question & answer, a news story, or a one line response.

Interviewing can be complex or basic and somewhere in between.

Types of interviews

News story: Do your homework. Gather your facts. Have the general story idea planned out; this way when you do interview people, you are prepared. Have a few questions in mind, and be prepared to counter with the facts you have gathered. This is also a good place where you can take a press release or APWU article, and add some local quotes with a couple interviews. All good news stories have quotes which require some kind of interview.

Adding some quotes from local members makes the release or story local not just a national issue. People love to read about themselves in the media. This is quick and easy.

homework. You need to know as much about the person you are writing about as you can. The person being interviewed will be more open if they know you know what you are talking about.

The investigative piece: An investigative reporter is like an attorney or arbitration advocate. Good ones usually know the answers to the questions prior to asking them. Preparation is essential. In the early stages of this kind of interview, you fish, to see how much they know. Gather as much as you can, then you can confront them with information you have that they have not given you.

The question: This is where you ask a person one question, the interviewer responds.

Depending on the type of story you are writing, you might have to do a lot of pre-research or post fact checking.

The prep: questions.

Have a list of questions: It may seem obvious but some people don’t think of it. While you should be prepared to improvise and adapt, it makes sense to have a firm list of questions which need to be asked. Don’t be pinned down to a preset list of questions as this could inhibit the source.

It is also a good idea to ask the source if there are any particular questions they would like you to ask. You don’t have to use them, but this does help build a relationship and trust and gets them to open up.

Phrasing the question: Just like in arbitration, you need to phrase the question, to get the answers you are hoping to get. You have to know how to ask the question. How you

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The lighter side

By Frank Antinone, Editor-at-Large

The life of a postal worker is not an easy one. Locally, we have management constantly violating our local and national agreement. It varies anywhere from overtime violations to harassment, not being treated with dignity and respect, management creating a toxic work environment, discrimination, workplace violence and the list goes on and on.

In recent months, AMP studies have been done at just about every mail processing facility across the country. We are in constant fear of losing our jobs, being exceded somewhere else and the facility that we have worked at for our entire postal career could very well be closed. This has forced union officials and members to hold meetings with their legislators as well as writing letters to the members of Congress and Senate; have informational pickets, constantly talking to the public who are our customers about the ramifications of the delivery of their mail if the mail processing plants close; circulating petitions protest-

ing the possible closure of the plants, contacting the news media and being harassed by management for trying to keep the mail facility open.

Nationally, the postmaster general wants nothing better than to cut and privatize the United States Postal Service. His agenda includes changing the delivery standard of first class mail from 1-3 days to 2-3 days which would affect thousands of letter carriers; restructuring postal healthcare and pension systems; reducing processing plants from 508 plants to approximately 200; the reduction of career employee complement by 35,000 positions; reviewing 15,000 post offices for possibly closure and expanding alternate sites for village post offices that would employ non-career workers.

Congressman Darrell Issa, the chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform introduced a bill, H.R. 2309 that has been called by the APWU a "reckless assault on postal services and postal employees." This bill, if passed

would lay off as many as 120,000 postal workers nationally, it would empower a new "solvency authority" by unilaterally cutting wages and abolish benefits, getting rid of our collective bargaining rights. The bill would also remove postal employees from the federal injury compensation program and would require the USPS to develop a separate program for hurt workers, as well as forcing disabled workers to retire once they reach retirement age.

The bill fails to address the problem for the Postal Service's real financial problem, the pre-funding of healthcare benefits for retirees, which amounts to approximately \$5.5 billion dollars yearly for 10 years. The bill also fails to address billions of dollars in USPS overpayments to federal pension accounts. "This legislation would destroy the Postal Service as we know it," President Cliff Guffey said. "It would lead to drastic cuts in service to the American people, and it would pave the way for privatization of this crucial public service."

As editors of union publications such as ours, it is very important that our members know what is going on at the USPS. It is our duty to inform the membership of legislation that affects the post office, which eventually will affect the membership. I also feel that it also our duty to inform the membership about different aspects of our local; if it's meeting times, meeting minutes, grievances, articles from officers and stewards, etc.

There is one thing that I do in my union publication besides the information that the membership should be aware of, and that is stress relief! I do an editorial column called "What's The Buzz", where I talk about the scoop or dirt that is going around our local post office. You know; satire, lampooning, parody. These are all forms of writing that can bring a smile to a member's face when read; along with the Huck/Konopacki labor cartoons or cartoons from other publications that give copyright permission, you can't go wrong!

With all of the problems that we face today at the United States Postal Service, locally or nationally; I feel that we owe it to our members to give them a little escape from the doom and gloom that we hear every day and show them the lighter side.

The art of interviewing

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ask the question may affect the response.

Listen: A common mistake is to be thinking about the next question while the subject is answering the previous one, to the point that the interviewer misses some important information.

Open ended questions: Opened ended questions allow the respondent some flexibility – it's not a yes or no reply. It is not threatening. With an open ended question the source often reveals more than they realize or intended to. Open ended are less direct, more exploratory and flexible. Open ended questions are designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the subjects own knowledge and/or feelings. They usually begin with "Why", "How" or "tell me" (example; "How did you decide who to vote for last week?")

Closed ended questions: At some point in the interview, you need to close in on a subject, flush out the detail, to get the source to be specific. Closed ended questions are designed to elicit specific responses. Asking a vague question invites a vague an-

swer. Asking a specific question will generally get you a specific answer. Closed ended questions encourage short or single word answers. (Example; "Did you vote in last week's election?")

Knowing exactly when to ask a closed ended question or when to be less specific is not something you can plan ahead of time. The type of information you are seeking and the chemistry between the interviewer and the source are the determining factors. You must make on the spot decisions.

Leading questions: A leading question is a question which subtly prompts the respondent to answer in a particular way. Leading questions are generally undesirable as they result in false or slanted information.

(Part two of this article will be published in the January-February 2012 issue of the PPA Newsletter.)

Resources: *University of Iowa Labor Center, Wikipedia, News Reporting and Writing, Media College.com, matadornetwork.com, about.com, associated content, ehow.com, edubook.com and interpretative reporting.*

By the time this is out

By Cathy Hanson, Editor-at-Large

By the time this issue is out, Veteran's Day will be past but I was reading the other day about one of the impacts of closing post offices and laying off workers will be to the detriment of veterans all across the country. Veterans make up nearly 30% of our workforce; I am a Veteran myself. I'm not sure where I would be today if I had not taken that test 27 years ago. I do know that I got a 5 point veteran's bonus because of the time period I served, and being a veteran most definitely played a part in my being hired when I was. The postmaster who interviewed me hired a 10 point veteran the year before he hired me, and he and the custodian were both 10 point veterans.

If Postmaster General Donahoe has his way, some of those jobs will be lost – one of those perks of military service will be lost: to get a job at the post office after you serve your country. It's a trade-off – you give your country 4 years of your life, they give you a chance at a good secure job with good benefits when you are done. Not a guarantee, but a CHANCE at a good secure job – we all have to test for this job, even if some veterans are preference eligible.

I don't think I'm alone when I say I don't want my post office to change. I want there to be mail flowing in and out of it, I want to see window clerks calling their customers by name, I want the community of my post office to remain a vital part of my community. Small towns love their post offices – I live in one and I've never encountered anyone upset or impatient with a short line or that the window clerk chatted a few extra seconds with the customer in front of them.

Closing small, unprofitable post offices is not a good thing for our country – isn't there any acceptance at all on a national level to support those post offices with more profitable ones? Even things out so to speak? Since postal profits come from all across the nation, why then shouldn't the support be spread that way as well? Universal service comes at that expense I think. Mandated by Congress back when Ben was in charge – the infrastructure of the post office links our country together in ways internet, telephone and fax lines will never do.

I recently read an editorial by a person who clearly had never received a letter as a child. Email, cell phone, iPod – he had all the tools of communication at his fingertips and didn't need mail for anything. He banked online, used his cell phone for coupons, barcodes, directions and couldn't remember the last time he had

he's gotten rid of the contract he signed so willingly just a few months ago – farm out the profitable routes and let the rest of the country fend for themselves. Contract out everything, it's cheaper! There will be nothing left of the post office but a shell. No service, that is quickly becoming a thing of the past.



“I don't think I'm alone when I say I don't want my post office to change. I want there to be mail flowing in and out of it, I want to see window clerks calling their customers by name, I want the community of my post office to remain a vital part of my community.”

been forced to use the post office. He was 30 something.

Fine. I don't care if HE doesn't want to use the post office – but I do. I still write letters, I still send cards. I have friends who simply don't do email, don't have cell phones and have no plans to buy a computer – their lives are fine without the intrusion of the World Wide Web.

I love sending my granddaughter a reminder about something we've planned – not so much so that she doesn't forget, but so she knows I'm thinking about her. I want to instill in her a love for the written word, the sentimentality of holding something in her hand that came from someone who loves her. The United States Postal Service plays a big part in connecting our country, our families and friends. I think a lot of people take that for granted.

I believe Darrell Issa and our postmaster general have something in mind for the post office that is going to take a lot of people by surprise – and that is that there isn't going to be a post office anymore. Not in the sense that it's part of the government – there will be private mail carriers once they break the contracts and end our monopoly on First Class mail but it's not going to be our well paid carriers with decent benefits. I believe that's where our postmaster general wants to take us once

I listened to his video today about taking us out of the Federal Employees Health Benefits program. He's serious – he doesn't want us to belong to our own government's health benefits program – he thinks he can get better rates on his own. That actually scares me – I do not want to have spent my entire career in the plan only to have something happen at the end of it to make it impossible for me to afford health insurance once I leave the service.

I keep calling my people in Congress. Michele Bachmann doesn't call back, doesn't read the mail I send her and responds with the most evasive comments she can get away with. She doesn't care about her constituents unless they line her pockets or agree with her politically. What good does it do to have representation that doesn't represent you?

Getting involved politically and legislatively is a requirement if we want to save our jobs, our livelihood and our post office – as a body, we've got to stand together, make the phone calls, go to the rallies, write the letters – and we all need to support our union, make it as strong as it can be or we're not going to have one.

Remember – everything we won through negotiation can be taken away by the stroke of a congressional pen.

Editor's toolbox: Helpful ideas for APWU communicators

Writing an exciting headline

People glance at the headlines to see what the articles are about. If headlines or pictures don't grab them, many will turn away, without reading another word.

Coming up with good, simple headlines are one of your biggest challenges. Don't just top each article with a label. Take the time to write headlines that lure people into eagerly reading one article after another.

Don't get your heart set on a particular headline right away. Let your imagination go, writing down all the possibilities you can think of, even if many turn out awful. Then pick the best and see if you can improve them further; or combine the better of two so-so headlines to get one great headline.

Don't repeat words

Reading the same word over and over gets boring. When you're done writing, go back and see how many words you've used more than three times, maybe circling them in pencil. Try to change some without hurting the meaning, especially if the same word appears twice in a sentence.

Readers are scanners

Remember that readers are essentially scanners and will skip through a publication before reading it in earnest. Therefore, try to attract readers to the important story or stories. Every page should have a strong graphic element, usually a large headline or photograph. This will stop readers and let them know where the page begins. A spread or a page in which all the graphic elements have equal values can be confusing and doesn't tell the reader where to start. Help the reader by presenting material in order of importance placing material in size place or in some priority order (usually from the top left to the bottom right of the page, since this is the way most people read a publication).

Check that all spacing (between headlines and the start of text, between photos and captions, etc.) is consistent throughout. Avoid "bumping" headlines, heads placed side by side; they compete for attention and can even be mistakenly read as one.

A well-designed publication will have a distinct personality, tell readers what to read

first; indicate where the eye should go and emphasize what's important.

Editorial goals: serving needs and wants

Every editor struggles with the question, "What do my readers want to know?" This question is different from the statement: "My readers need to know ..."

Editors in organizations must provide information that readers need, which will help the organization move forward. Yet if the publication contains nothing but need-to-know information it is in danger of boring and patronizing readers.

Remember: Answer questions that readers are asking and you'll win the loyalty, even the affection of readers. The tension between need-to-know and want-to-know come with the territory. Use it to serve your organization well.

- According to research, the mind takes 48 percent longer to understand a negative statement than a positive one. If possible, change negatives to positives.

- When was the last time you revised your mailing list? Check often to see that you are reaching those who should receive your publication.

- Copy set in all capital letters makes reading more difficult. It slows readers by more than 13 percent.

What should your newsletter look like?

Looks alone don't make or break a newsletter; however, a well-designed piece attracts readers.

To make your publication attractive review other newsletters and collect approaches that appeal to you. Go easy on the number of typefaces you use (one serif body type, and one sans serif – headlines should do it). Add lots of white space and don't run text across the entire page (one column).

Use simple design elements throughout your pages: pulled quotes, subheads, drop caps, kickers, screens, reverses, color, boxes, relevant clip art and illustrations.

Speed Writing

Want to speed up your writing and overcome those blocks that cut your productivity?

Try these tips:

- **Having trouble** coming up with a lead? Skip it for a while and work on another section of the article or report. Often you'll find it easier to write the lead after you've warmed up to the subject. Also: Try writing a working title and subtitle first. They may provide an idea for the lead.

- **Can't get going** on an uncompleted writing assignment the next day? Retype a few previous paragraphs – even revise them slightly. This technique will crank up your brain and fingers.

- **Are you stuck** on a particular section? Take a short physical - tasks break - a walk or some light exercise.

- **Frustrated by** a tough sentence or paragraph? Talk it out. Pretend you're explaining it to your reader or dictate it into a tape recorder and transcribe and edit it later.

Layout and design that works

- Remember that layout and design should always be functional. Their job is to enhance the message – not impede it. These concepts should also communicate instantly the relative importance of items on a page and create a personality for the publication in keeping with its types of messages and readers.

- Design publications for both legibility and suitability. Legibility is concerned with how easy it is for a reader to decipher the words. It is affected by such things as size of type, width of columns, amount of grayness, glare from paper, and so on. Suitability covers the overall impression conveyed by the design and whether the various parts of the layout blend well.

- Avoid large gray areas that make a publication uninviting. Readers are turned off by large blocks of printed copy that look difficult for the eye to handle. An easy way to determine if a page design is too gray is to place a dollar bill – both vertically and horizontally on the page. If it touches only body copy, that area should be redesigned. Use subheads, artwork, narrower columns or something else to overcome the grayness.

- Avoid a layout that looks busy. Today's harried reader wants simple designs with items that are easy to locate. Reduce the number of elements per page, use fewer but larger photos. And be sure that each major item stands out well and is easy to spot.

More than just a smile

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words, and in a publication's limited space that can be an important plus. But, if the photos that you print are blurred, cropped wrong or just downright dull, your effort may be wasted. And you may even lose some readers.

Photos also serve other functions. They break up blocks of type, they add a "face" to the story and they improve the publication's appearance. A picture of a new building, a new piece of equipment or the people involved in a project adds interest and helps readers relate to the words.

Here are a few simple, common-sense approaches for the use of photos:

Photo opportunities: They're the pre-arranged award ceremonies or planned events. And those pictures are important to your readers.

"Spur-of-the-moment" or candid shots: These make your newsletter really stand out. Be alert for possibilities in unusual and even routine situations, then shoot quickly before the chance vanishes.

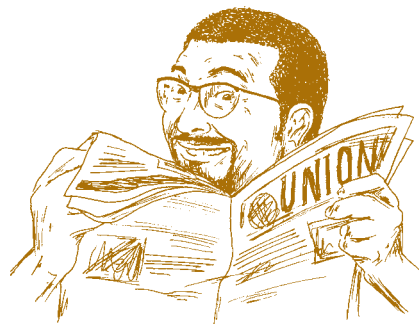
A simple axiom to remember about photos – and stories – is that if the subject interests you, it will probably interest your readers.

A word about people shots. Try to avoid the usual standing-face-front-and-displaying-a-plaque-type pose. Smiling people looking straight at the camera make for a boring shot. Put action in the picture if you possibly can. Photograph

the recipient showing the plaque to someone or hanging it on a wall, for example.

The right choice

Typically you'll be able to choose from several usable pictures of the same subject. Make sure the shot you pick is not blurred, that people aren't caught in unflattering positions and that shadows or sunlight don't distort the subjects.



Cropping and sizing

Once you have the picture, you have to decide how much of it you want to use. To keep your photos clean, sharp and to the point, crop out people or things not necessary to the intent of the picture.

Next, how large or small should the photo be? That calls for a delicate balance. In addition to the question of space available, you'll want to be sure that the photo isn't so small that you'll have your readers squinting – or so large that the photo overwhelms the story. Remember, the photo is there to complement the story, not overshadow it.

Photo layout

Photos positioned on a page in vertical and horizontal rows are deadly dull. If you want to run several photos on a page, arrange them to break up the type in an asymmetrical but eye-pleasing way. For guidance, study how newspapers and magazines display their pictures.

For a stand-alone photo – one that tells the story in the caption – keep the writing lively and to the point. If the photo was composed well and interestingly, it should convey the thrust of the story at a glance.

Credits

Somewhere in your publication, usually in small type under (or alongside) the photo, credit should be given to the photographer.

Photo files

How often at the last minute have you wanted a photo to make a story stronger or to fill a "hole" but found that it was too late for a shoot? You can eliminate that last minute scramble by keeping a photo file that can yield a suitable shot at a moment's notice.

If you haven't the time to take pictures yourself, ask for help from amateur photographers in your organization. For little or no cost you can usually get willing "shooters" whose work will add that extra pictorial dimension to your newsletter.