

For Effective Communication Facility Newsletters

Writing a newsletter is easier than it seems if you have an objective and do a little planning to make sure you have the right content to interest the occupants.

Get Your Message Across

Effectively communicating with occupants in your building is critical, yet is often at the bottom of a long list of priorities you deal with on a daily basis.

A newsletter is an often-overlooked tool for communicating, and can support other customer service strategies you currently use.

A well-written newsletter informs the reader and delivers your message. It can be as simple as telling the occupant what you are doing for them – things they may take for granted – or reminding them about initiatives like new security arrangements or new procedures. This prevents calls and complaints by informing occupants about changes, issues and events in advance and creates good will.

Content

To develop content, determine your goals and actively seek articles that carry your message forward. Since the audience is the occupant, your prime contacts and the client, a careful balance is important. The content can be as simple as telling the reader about construction activity and events. It can also remind them what you have done for them and educate them about issues, such as how the building HVAC operates, your initiatives to ensure good indoor air quality, etc.

Make sure the content is interesting to the reader. Don't fill it with information not likely to be useful to the occupants or they simply won't bother to read it.

Producing a Newsletter

Newsletters are easily produced with MS Word. Readers are unlikely to read more than a page or two, so stick with a single sheet of 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Word has templates you can use.

Keep layout simple and professional, with enough 'white space' to make it easy to read. A traditional two or three column format provides flexibility and is easy to read. Stick with standard fonts and use them consistently. If you use clipart, choose them carefully and be professional.

The frequency of your newsletter is important. Don't plan a monthly newsletter if you can't fill it with useful content. To start out, avoid scheduling the release of your newsletters and simply publish them when there is something to say, or for specific communication purposes.

Newsletter Writing Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you are getting your message across.

- ☒ Will your headline catch the readers' attention?
(I.e. use 'Improving Your Comfort' instead of 'HVAC Project' for an article on an upcoming project that will improve control over temperature in their space.)
- ☒ Is the first sentence or paragraph of the article likely to entice the reader to continue reading?
- ☒ Does the article deliver your message?
- ☒ Is the article concise and to the point?
- ☒ Is your message repeated within the article or even throughout the newsletter?
- ☒ Are you speaking to the reader directly and making the article personal instead of using general language?
(I.e. use 'You will be more comfortable' instead of 'The building will be more comfortable')
- ☒ Do the photographs and graphics add to the article instead of just being filler?
- ☒ Does the article use active sentences instead of passive ones?
(I.e. use 'We are replacing..' instead of 'We will be replacing...')
- ☒ Are you avoiding technical terms and acronyms that the reader won't understand?

Distribution

How you distribute your newsletter will depend on your client and tenants. It can be electronic (via email and on your website), paper or both.

In any case, it's important to consult with the key tenants before distributing a newsletter.

Newsletter Writing Tips

The newsletter is meant to share information with the reader as well as sell a message. Every word must convey the message in a simple, positive, straightforward manner. Keep your message in mind. This message is usually to promote a positive image for your company by informing the occupants/tenants about what you are doing for them to improve their working environment. If you are doing your job well, most tenants won't notice us. You need to remind them that you are doing good things for them.

Here are a few tips to make your newsletter items more effective:

Write a Catchy Heading : *Use headings that actually say something and make the reader want to read more.*

<i>This catches your attention</i>	Better Heating This Winter
<i>This one doesn't</i>	Capital Projects

Write a strong Lead Paragraph : *Use a strong 'lead' paragraph when writing about anything. The 'lead' captures the readers attention and gets them to read the rest of the article.*

<i>Makes you want to read</i>	This winter, your heating comfort will be vastly improved due to a project initiated by FM Co.....
<i>Doesn't make you want to read more</i>	The boiler project, which was started February 1 st , was finally completed on March 4 th , 2001 by John Q. Construction Inc.....

Don't use terminology : *Remember who your audience is. Use terminology they are likely to understand and explain quickly and briefly when necessary. Don't include information that doesn't matter to them, such as a contractor's name, etc.*

<i>This Uses terminology</i>	The coal fired low-pressure boilers were replaced with a high-efficiency gas boiler with a new GUI interface BAS system and remote access through dial-up remote from a handheld PDA.
<i>This Doesn't use terminology</i>	The project includes a new boiler that supplies hot water to the radiators and a new system that separately controls each radiator to improve control over the temperature in each area.

Speak Directly to the Reader : *Speak directly to the reader by avoiding general references.*

<i>This speaks to the reader</i>	Your heating comfort will improve
<i>This doesn't</i>	Building comfort will improve

Show Action : *The text must show action. Use the 'active voice' instead of the 'passive voice'*

<i>This shows action</i>	FM Co. is replacing the boilers.....
<i>This one doesn't</i>	FM Co. will be initiating a project to replace the boilers.....

Frame your subject : *The reason for the newsletter is to get a message across. Repeat your message at least two times, perhaps even three times, depending on the length of the newsletter item. Within reason, use the old adage 'tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them'*

<i>The first Sentence</i>	This winter, your heating comfort will be vastly improved due to a project initiated by FM Co.
<i>The last Sentence</i>	With the new system, FM Co. is confident you will be more comfortable this winter

Tell the reader why it matters to them : *You need to figure out why they should care about what you say and tell them why. Focus your writing on the impact to the reader and how it will improve things for them.*

<i>This example tells them why it matters</i>	Your comfort will improve now that we can separately control each radiators to set your area to just the right temperature.
<i>This example doesn't</i>	The Controls project will improve our ability to separately control the radiators and regulate the temperature independently.