



What Makes a Good Newsletter Article?

By Dana Kader Robb

Whether you've decided to start a newsletter of your own or you've been asked to contribute an article to someone else's publication, the whole point is to get people reading it. If you only remember one thing, remember this – answer the question that every reader is asking: What's in it for me?

Topic

- Choose a topic that will interest the reader, not one that you personally find fascinating.
- Feature coming events, not those in the past.
- Try to use real-life examples.
- Discuss benefits, not services. Identify your readers' problems and have the articles offer solutions.
- Educate and inform rather than sell.

Length

- Keep it short and clean. Imagine that you are being paid \$1 for every word you take out without changing the meaning of the piece. Make yourself rich!
- No more than one page for a feature, four to five paragraphs for an inside story.
- Use bullets, lists, Q&A format instead of paragraphs.
- Use subheads and a sidebar to break up a long story.

Author

- Avoid incomplete research. If you don't know enough about the topic, find out. If you can't find out, give the assignment to someone else.

- If your background/education/training is important to the story, say it in one or two sentences. If it can be left out, leave it out!

Content/Style

- Have a strong lead. Your first sentence or two should immediately draw in the reader and answer the question they're mentally asking, "Why should I bother to read this?"
- Avoid clichés. If it "goes without saying" then don't say it.
- Use adjectives, metaphors and similes. The more descriptive words you have, the more enjoyable, lively and participatory your writing will be. Use an active voice, not a passive one.
- When you are quoting facts or statistics or listing phone numbers and Web sites, make sure they're correct. Then make sure that you're sure.
- Avoid technical language unless you are positive that the readers will understand it.
- If you are going to use quotes, keep them short. Choose quotes that show emotion instead of repeating facts.
- Lead people to other sources, ie. Web sites or magazines, in case they want more information.
- Humor is never inappropriate. But be careful, there is inappropriate humor.

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