

Tips for Developing A Chapter Newsletter

Why are chapter newsletters important?

Whether published as a print copy mailed to members or distributed electronically via web or e-mail, the purposes of regular member communications remain the same:

Consistency--every member receives the same information in a timely manner

Information--calendars, service tips, new product information, business development ideas, exam dates, classes, etc.

Recognition--new members, new RPTs, volunteer service, etc.

Documentation--the business of managing a chapter, elections, finances, organizational issues and concerns

Newsletter Contents

Chapter newsletters should match the needs of members. Publish the minimum number of pages you need to get your message out. Short and simple is always the rule. Publish only when you have important information to share. If you choose to distribute your newsletter electronically, make provisions to mail a print copy to anyone unable to receive electronic communications or view web pages.

Most newsletters, regardless of the size of the chapter or the publication, contain the following elements:

- A distinctive masthead (heading) at the top of the first page that includes the chapter name and PTG or Piano Technicians Guild
- An issue date at the top of the first page
- Information about the next meeting with time, date, address, directions and topic
- A calendar of other upcoming events with important deadlines
- A brief summary of the last chapter meeting or event with business meeting minutes
- Member notes that list new members, new RPTs and address changes
- A list of chapter officers
- Contact information for the newsletter editor
- PTG written publication disclaimer (see PTG Bylaws VIII.E.6)

You may also have room or occasional need to publish the following items:

- RPT exam information and schedules
- Technical and business tips
- New product information
- Special features on upcoming or past conferences/seminars/conventions
- Pictures, drawings, maps
- Advertisements
- Chapter financial reports
- Legal notices, bylaws changes, convention resolutions
- Editorials, letters to the editor

Design Tips

We read top-to-bottom, left-to-right. Put your most important information in the upper left hand corner.

If you use a photo or graphic as part of an article, place it right above the headline to draw the reader's eye down to the story.

Design your newsletter as a self-mailer. Put the return address with space for postage and a mailing label on the back of your newsletter and you won't need to use an envelope. Tab or tape the longest open side so that it will run smoothly through the post office sorting machines.

Use lots of white space around items. No crowding or touching! Putting a box around an item draws attention to it.

Don't use a font size less than 11 points for normal text. Headings and headlines should be in a larger, bold type. Save underlining for really important messages. Use bold or italic to emphasis other items.

Limit the number of different type styles (fonts) to three. Avoid hyphenation. Widen your columns. Don't center text unless it is an announcement, poem or invitation.

Don't go overboard with color and graphics. A little color and a few graphics can help break up long passages of text, but your goal is to publish an informative, easy-to-read newsletter.

Number and date each page.

Insert financial statements and other business items as separate pages inside your newsletter.

Use a style guide to avoid grammatical and punctuation errors. The Piano Technicians Journal has based on the "Associated Press Stylebook".

Desktop Publishing Software

You can purchase software especially developed to create all types of publications. Take advantage of templates to shorten the work of creating a design. Many office productivity suites include desktop publishing programs. You may also want to use photo or graphics editing software to edit pictures.

You can create effective newsletters in your current word processing software. Word has a Newsletter Wizard that walks you through the creation of a publication from start to finish. Visit your software publisher's website or enroll in a local community college class. Learn about using the most common desktop publishing tools: boxes, lines, columns and graphics.

Don't mail your newsletter until you check:

Spelling (especially names)

Dates, times and locations

The accuracy of your mailing list

Overall appearance (take a few steps back and look at your design)

Newsletter Template

Here is a sample layout used by some PTG chapters. You may want to include the past meeting minutes and financial report as a separate page. Design your newsletter as a self-mailer (with blank space for name and address) so that you don't have the extra cost of envelopes. Use heavier weight paper if your newsletter is only one or two pages so that it will survive the mail system.

If you are also distributing your newsletter via e-mail or through a website, save your newsletter as a PDF file to maintain your original design. If you are keeping your newsletter in a text format, it is best to cut-and-paste into the body of the e-mail. This avoids differences in word processing applications when someone opens your text document in their word processing application.

You can create newsletters in your word processing program or with any desktop publishing software. Jeannie Grassi wrote a very helpful article in the June, 1995 issue of the Piano Technicians Journal that offers more good advice on developing your newsletter

Consider subscribing to PTG's newsletter e-mail listserv. You will be able to swap article ideas and see other chapter newsletters when you join this group. Go to www.ptg.org to find out how to subscribe.

The sample newsletter was created in Microsoft Word. Headlines are 18 pt. Other elements used include columns, lines, and text box features. It was designed as a two-sided tri-fold.



**PIANO
TECHNICIANS
GUILD**
YOUR CHAPTER NAME

Name of Your Chapter Newsletter

Issue Date

**NEXT
MEETING**

Date

Time

Location

Topic

NEXT MEETING PREVIEW

Topic

Speaker

Map

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

ARTICLE

President's notes

Technical tips

Chapter Website
Address

PTG Website
Address

Your Chapter Name
Address
City, State Zip

Postage

Recipient Name
Address
City, State Zip

ARTICLE

Highlights from last meeting
Technical tips

MEMBER NEWS

**PUBLISHING & SUBSCRIPTION
INFORMATION**

Subscription rates
Newsletter editor contact info
Chapter officers
Disclaimer