



LAUGHING BEAR 141

NEWSLETTER

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The Surviving Small Press: Bare Bones Newsletter

Most of the newsletters published in the United States are company newsletters, church bulletins, PTA newsletters, care-giver newsletters, community newsletters, and newsletters for organizations.

What these all have in common is that they do not have the commercial concerns of subscription newsletters or magazines. They have a closed mailing list, so they don't have to attract new subscribers. The reader doesn't pay for the newsletter so there is no need to market for renewals. And the news published in these newsletters concerns only their immediate readership.

Consequently, most of what is written about newsletter publishing has nothing to do with them. Still editors of these newsletters ask for help. How do I put together a newsletter? Where do I come up with articles every month? Where do I begin?

The editor of this type of newsletter either volunteers or is volunteered for the job. Seldom do they have experience, but enthusiasm goes a long way when you are getting started.

The first consideration for a new editor is content. What is the purpose of the newsletter? Is it to let readers know about upcoming events? To report on events that

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Publishing On Demand vs. Print On Demand

In issue 140 I talked about Publish On Demand vs. Traditional Publishing, pointing out that Publish On Demand companies take over the publisher's role from the self-publishing author. The author has to buy copies of their own book at the wholesale price set by the Publish On Demand company to get copies.

Barry Hartman of Edwards Brothers, Inc., a book manufacturer, pointed out that in the graphic arts and printing world, the acronym POD means "Print On Demand", which is completely different than Publish On Demand.

Print On Demand is actually an attractive alternative for small publishers. It allows you to try out a very short run (25 to 300 copies) of a book. If the book is successful you can have a larger number of books printed on traditional printing presses.

The Print on Demand printer does not do anything beyond printing your book using similar technology to that used by Publish on Demand companies. The copies are delivered to you, the publisher, just like any other printing project.

Every book project has its risks. When a book is printed on printing presses, you have to have a thousand or more copies printed to get a reasonable price. If the book sells, great. If it doesn't, you'll have a garage filled with boxes for

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How to Approach a Potential Advertiser

When you are starting out with a new magazine, you are in the awkward position of needing advertisers to help pay for the magazine, but they want to place their ads with a magazine that fits their marketing plan, has a solid circulation, and has the track record to offer them assurance that if they enter into a contract, the magazine will indeed continue to be published for that period, on time.

In other words, they want everything you haven't got yet. To make up for your lack of experience, you need to show that you are sincere, capable, you have a plan, you know how to carry it out, and have the resources and commitment to do so.

Here are a few tips to help you deal with a prospective advertiser face to face:

- 1. Be professional in your look, in your demeanor, and in your preparation for the meeting.** Be self-assured, be personable, but mostly be prepared. The impression you give is the one they will associate with your magazine, for better or worse.
- 2. Have a sample issue of your magazine to show them.** This can be a mock-up, but make it as realistic as possible. If you can, insert one of their existing ads into the sample issue so they can see what it will look like. If they use a variety of sizes and types of ads (full page,

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have occurred since the last issue? To feature stories about members? To provide practical and helpful information to help readers in their jobs or hobbies? To provide inspiration for a particular way of life?

Will the newsletter sell advertising? Advertising is taboo in newsletters with paid subscribers, but they are part of the service of a community newsletter or church bulletin. Advertising in those kinds of newsletters helps build the sense of community and get business people involved, while covering the expenses of the newsletter.

The next consideration is format and length. A newsletter works best for the readers, and the editor, if it is consistent in how it looks and the information it contains.

Newsletter layout and design have been considerably simplified by word processing and desktop publishing software that contains templates for a variety of designs. If you are publishing a newsletter that needs to have a unique design, you can create it yourself or hire a graphic artist, but if this is just to get information out to the local model airplane club or homeowners association, a simple template will suffice.

Knowing the newsletter will always be four or eight pages, and that the back page will be filled with ads, helps the editor plan on exactly how much space they need to fill with articles and other material in each issue. It also helps to have ongoing features that will be in every issue: an events calendar, a column for birthdays, an editorial, a profile of a member, a message from the president, a how-to column, etc.

Basically, you want to have the bulk of the newsletter in an established format with regular features so that, format-wise, you don't have to reinvent the wheel with

every issue. You can just fill in the columns, and with luck, some of those you can assign to other volunteers. Then you can leave a block of space in each issue for something new – usually your lead article.

If you are familiar with the structure of the Catholic Mass, it has the same sort of format as a newsletter. You always have an opening prayer, a reading from the Old Testament (or New, depending on the time of year), a psalm, a reading from the New Testament, a gospel reading, a homily, and communion. Everything is specified in advance except the homily, which is like your lead article. The Mass is always the same length, covers the same material, but is still fresh every week.

Starting a newsletter is easy, the tough part is doing it every month without running out of things to say. The secret to success in newsletter publishing is to plan ahead. Keep a journal, tickler file, or index cards of ideas for future issues. Try to have three or four issues planned out in advance. Then if anything happens to you (sickness, personal emergency, breakdown, or vacation), someone else can step in and help.

Listen to your readers, and use their questions and suggestions as ideas for articles. Moving in the direction of your readers' concerns will keep the newsletter relevant to them. And it will help you feel less detached from your readers – which is exactly how you can feel if you work on the newsletter by yourself in a vacuum.

Here are some other concerns people starting newsletters that have a closed circulation may have:

Copyrighting your newsletter. It is probably not necessary to copyright your newsletter if it consists of minutes from your PTA meeting and a list of birthdays. Unless you actually register your

copyright with the Library of Congress Copyright Office, which involves paperwork, fees and sending them every issue, it doesn't matter whether you put the copyright notice (Copyright © 2004 by you) on your newsletter or not. The material is protected automatically under copyright law based on the date you can prove that you published it. Registering the copyright provides that proof in the most efficient manner.

Registering a copyright is important for a commercial newsletter, magazine or book, because there is a money-making product to protect. Doing it for a free newsletter is necessary only if you are short on peace of mind.

Copyrights on outside material. If you want to reprint an article in your newsletter, ask permission of the author of the article and notify the publisher. If it is from a magazine, in most cases the publisher has acquired first rights to the article, with the copyright reverting to the author. So you really only need permission of the author, but if this is a recent article it is a courtesy to let the publisher know as well. Usually you will have to contact the author in care of the publisher anyway.

If you want to reprint an article by someone dead, like Mark Twain, you will need to contact the author's estate in care of the publisher.

ISSN. You will need an International Standard Serial Number if you are going to register your copyrights, otherwise the ISSN is used by distributors, libraries, and bookstores to order magazines and newsletters. Having an ISSN also protects the name of your newsletter in that only one newsletter with your exact title can be assigned an ISSN. It does not, however stop anyone from using your title

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POD vs. POD *(continued)*

years or you may be able to sell them to a remainder company for pennies on the dollar.

Using the Print On Demand alternative, you can order a small number of books to test market without being penalized for not buying in bulk. If the book doesn't sell as fast as you think it should, you can re-write or edit it and try again. Or move on to the next project without having blown your whole life savings on one book.

Another big difference between Publish On Demand and Print On Demand is that with Print On Demand, you pay for the books up front. There are no strings attached. You are truly the publisher of the book, with all the benefits that come from being in business for yourself.

When you are looking for a POD printer, be sure you understand the distinction between Publish On Demand and Print On Demand. While it may sound like a great deal to have your book published for free, what you are really doing is giving your book away.

Find a printer who does Print On Demand and you'll have the advantage of putting less money out up front than you would for a traditional book manufacturing job, while maintaining control of your creation.

To sum up, Print On Demand is the advantageous POD for self-publishers. It can be a useful tool for trying out a new book without the expense or inventory concerns of traditional printing press publishing.

Publish On Demand has a place in the publishing world as a means of making out-of-print books available and for projects like a family history, that will not be of interest to readers outside your family and friends. It is not a good idea for a new book that you expect to find a wide market. 🐻

How to Approach an Advertiser *(continued)*

sidebar, classified, etc.), insert examples through out the issue.

3. Have your circulation data.

The amount companies will pay to advertise in your magazine depends on your circulation. The best proof of circulation is an audit by an organization like the Audit Bureau of Circulations (www.accessabc.com). They are a nonprofit organization that provides objective, third party auditing of periodical circulation. Membership for magazines in ABC is not cheap (several thousand dollars), so short of that you will need to be able to show the potential advertiser mailing lists, an agreement, a marketing plan, and anything else that may convince them that you have made a realistic estimate of your potential circulation.

4. Know your demographics.

The advertiser is going to want to know statistics on age groups, income, lifestyle (urban, suburban or rural for instance), level of education and any other data you can come up with that helps identify your target subscribers.

5. Know how large the potential pool of readers is for your publication,

and how many of those you expect to reach this year, the next, and the next. For instance, if you are going to do a magazine on fly fishing, you should find records on how many fishing licenses are bought in a year, how many fly fishing mail-order catalogs are sent out, and how many people belong to fly fishing associations. Compare and average those numbers to come up with a population size. Calculate how many of those people will subscribe the first year (5% would be outstanding) and how much growth in readership you can expect annually.

6. Show how the content of your magazine ties in with their product.

You need to convince the advertiser that your readers need

their product. For instance, a magazine on publishing would attract advertising from printers. The same magazine would not make sense for a company advertising snowshoes.

7. Cite similar magazines in which they already advertise.

Just because they are hitting the demographic with one magazine does not mean they should not go after it with another. Advertising in numerous magazines within a demographic gives the advertiser more complete coverage.

8. Show how you intend to grow your business.

Lay out your marketing plan showing the percentage of your marketing budget that will go to public relations, events, direct mail advertising, print advertising, internet advertising, etc. The purpose of this is to demonstrate that you are actively doing everything you can to build the magazine and provide more customers for the advertiser.

9. Have a solid business plan you can present to the advertiser.

It should show where you are now, where you want to be, and how you intend to get there. This is the most important document you can have. Not only does it provide a road map for you to follow toward your goals, but it is also a document you will need to get a bank loan, a small business loan, and a credit line with printers and other suppliers.

10. Most of all, listen to the potential advertiser.

Be sympathetic to their needs and concerns. Approach the sale of advertising as a service you are providing to help grow the advertiser's business, as well as a means of making your readers aware of a product that will be of interest to them. When a magazine can provide a means of bringing customers together with the right products, selling advertising can be a rewarding and enjoyable way to make a living. 🐻

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without an ISSN. Odds are, for a free newsletter you will have little use for an ISSN, but you can get one if you want.

Naming your newsletter. If you want to make sure that you are choosing a unique name for your newsletter there are several things you can do. Search the internet for the title. Go to the ISSN site at www.issn.org and search for the title. Go to the U.S. Patent and Trademark site (www.uspto.gov) and search for use of that name as a trademark. Check your state's records for a company with that name who has a tax permit. Check your county's lists of companies using DBA's (Doing Business As) or assumed names. If you are still concerned after all that, have a lawyer conduct a search.

Printing your newsletter.

Any method will do. If whatever entity you are publishing the newsletter for has a copier or printing department, so much the better. But you can take it to your local print shop, office supply store copy center, or anywhere else. If you are doing up to 100 copies, you can probably manage with an office photocopier. For up to 500 copies, you'll probably want to use a copy center rather than burning up your office machine. For over 500 copies, it'll be more economical to go to a printer.

Format tips. A good length for a newsletter is 4, 6, or 8 pages. Anything over 16 pages long may as well be called a magazine. The size is almost always 8 1/2" x 11" or 9" by 12".

Writing, editing, and publishing a newsletter, especially in a volunteer situation, can seem overwhelming and thankless at times, but you can make it easier on yourself if you learn to plan, delegate whenever possible, and listen to your readers. 🐻

Announcements

• **Free Writing-Publishing-Promoting InfoKits** (parapub.com/getpage.cfm?file=/infokit.html).

Go to the internet address above to get a free information kit from Dan Poynter of Para Publishing. There are three different versions depending on where you are in the self-publishing process: writing a book, ready to publish, and marketing and promoting. The infokit will be e-mailed to you immediately. The information is free, thorough, and very useful.

• **A Blue Moon Arts** (Kathy Piersall; 918-742-3136; www.abluemoonarts.com) is a graphic design and illustration firm targeted to newsletters, magazines, guides, and other publications. Besides publication design, they can do logos, t-shirt designs, flyers and sales sheets, marketing pieces and much more.

• **publishinghelp.com** is a web site that provides help for startup magazines and newsletters. It has a sister site, **Editors Only** (www.publishinghelp.com/editors) that provides help and resources specifically for editors of magazines and newsletters.

• **MJ DeVita Marketing, LLC** (Michael J. DeVita; P.O. Box 178, Matamoras, PA 18336; www.mjdevita.com) provides fulfillment, marketing, and other services for small and medium periodicals.

• **Edwards Brothers, Inc.** (2500 S. State Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104; www.edwardsbrothers.com) is a full service book and journal manufacturing company that also offers seminars on publishing.

• **India Mart** (www.indiamart.com) is a huge directory of Indian companies of all kinds, including printers, paper makers, and printing equipment.

• **Walt Vinson** has built an entertaining site (www.papapress.bonusweb.net) that features a full library of his work.

• **Battleground Printing & Publishing** (3712 Old Battleground Road, Greensboro, NC 27410; www.bgroundprinting.com) does book printing for small and large publishers, as well as promotional materials.

• **International Titles / Harry Smith** (Loris Essary, Harry Smith, directors; 931 E. 56th St., Austin, TX 78751; 512-451-2221 www.internationaltitles.com) is taking reservations for its exhibit services at the 2004 Frankfurt Book Fair, October 6-10. This is one of the most important book fairs in the publishing world. You can download more information about the fair and IT/HS services from their web site.

• **Publishers Association of Los Angeles** (Gary Young, president; 818-222-5554; www.pa-la.org) will have a meeting and panel July 21, "Does Your Book Inspire Side-lines". \$5/members, \$10/non-members.

• **Bookmasters** (PO Box 2139, Mansfield, OH 44905; www.bookmasters.com) is one of the leading book manufacturers in the country. Now they have some new services. **AtlasBooks.com** provides distribution and fulfillment services, as well as an online bookstore. Bookmasters also has a program called **iPub** that provides an impressive array of services that seem to fall between Publish On Demand and Print On Demand. The self-publisher retains all rights and profit, while iPub provides editorial services, design, printing, distribution and fulfillment, copyright application, LOC and ISBN, and much more.

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