Tips for Improving Your Newsletters, E-Newsletters, and Websites

NEWSLETTERS

Every newsletter should include:

- a legislative column. Include a web address or link to the "Take Action" section of MOAA's website or MOAA's *Legislative Update*. Remember to cover state and local legislation. Many national MOAA members don't realize state and local issues only are addressed at the council and chapter level.
- an Editorial Policy statement that indicates national MOAA and the chapter or council are nonpartisan. Example: "The XYZ Newsletter is published by the XYZ Chapter/Council, which is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliated chapters and councils are non-partisan." If your affiliate accepts newsletters advertising, you may want to add a sentence that says, "The advertisements that appear in this publication also do not reflect an endorsement by MOAA or this affiliate."
- information on how to join your chapter. State who is eligible for membership, and include a membership application in your chapter newsletter, if possible.
- the time, date, and location of your next meeting. Don't assume a prospective member knows where your chapter meets and when — even if you've been meeting at the same place and time for years.
- information on how to contact the council or chapter or one of its officers.

Council newsletters also should contain information on upcoming events such as conventions and quarterly meetings, etc.

Additional tips

- Use the new MOAA logo (www.moaa.org/logos).
- Make your publication easy to browse. Add a Table of Contents on the front page. Or, put the most important news on the front and back pages, which are viewed first.
- Ask your readers if the type is big enough to read by conducting a reader survey.
- Break up large chunks of text by using graphics or photos. If you run photos, make sure each photo has caption.
- Sell the benefits of national MOAA and council/chapter membership. Publish a mission statement and list projects your council or chapter undertakes.

Keeping costs down

Printing and mailing the monthly newsletter often is the single largest line-item expense in the chapter's budget. To keep costs down:

- offer a membership discount to members who get the newsletter via email.
- don't mail your newsletter first-class. See if you qualify for a Nonprofit Standard mail rate.

- convert your print newsletter to an Adobe PDF file, and distribute it via email. Once you have members' email addresses, you can use them to distribute legislative alerts and other time-sensitive information. (Remember, members' email addresses should be treated as confidential information.) However, some people don't check their email often or lack email access. These folks should continue to receive a print newsletter.
- consider getting advertisers or sponsors for your print newsletter to generate non-dues revenue. (For more information, visit www.moaa.org/advertisingfaqs.)

E-NEWSLETTERS

Let's clear up a common misconception about e-newsletters. E-newsletters do not contain attachments of any kind. If you save your newsletter as an Adobe PDF file or Microsoft Word file, for example, and distribute that document via email to your members, **it is not an e-newsletter**. According to publishing industry experts, what you actually have is a print newsletter that's being distributed via email.

So what is an e-newsletter? There are two common types of e-newsletters. The first contains "teasers" or brief descriptions of articles in your newsletter at the top of the email body. Readers then link to the full article at the bottom of the email body.

The second does not include the entire story within the e-newsletter. It includes links to articles that may reside on your chapter or council Web site or another Web site.

Remember, an e-newsletter is not like a printed newsletter. Strive to be brief but still communicate effectively.

E-newsletters should include:
- legislative information and a link to the "Take Action" section of MOAA's website or MOAA's *Legislative Update*. Cover state and local legislative advocacy efforts whenever possible.
- an Editorial Policy statement that indicates national MOAA and the chapter or council are nonpartisan. Example: "The XYZ Newsletter is published by the XYZ Chapter/Council, which is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliated councils and chapters are non-partisan."
- information on how to join and the time, date, and location of your chapter's next meeting. Affiliates often include a link to their chapter's website, which contains this information.
- language that "sells" national MOAA and chapter/council membership to a prospective member.
- information on how to contact the council or chapter or one of its officers.

Additional tips for creating a successful e-newsletter include:
- use the new MOAA logo (www.moaa.org/logos).

- pick a standard font face and color, and use it throughout your e-newsletter. Good fonts to use are 12 point Times New Roman or 12 point Arial. Never use tiny or fancy fonts, or incorporate many different colors. Titles are an exception to the font color rule as this will make them stand out.
- send your e-newsletter only to people who request it. Include an "opt-out" link in every issue.
- double-check all hyperlinks to make sure they work.
- send your e-newsletter to a variety of email clients such as Outlook, Yahoo, Gmail, and AOL. You can avoid embarrassing mistakes by viewing your e-newsletter in different environments.

WEBSITES

Before launching a website, determine if you have a member who has the expertise needed to maintain and update it. A good website always should include:
- a link to the "Take Action" section of MOAA's website or the *Legislative Update*.
- an Editorial Policy statement that indicates national MOAA and the chapter or council are nonpartisan. Example: "The XYZ Chapter/Council is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliated councils and chapters are non-partisan."
- information that makes it clear the council or chapter is an affiliate of national MOAA.
- information on how to join the chapter and upcoming meeting times and locations.
- a "Contact Us" link or the email address of your affiliate. You want prospective members to contact you.

Councils also should post a list of affiliated chapters and their locations. In urban areas, a member may work in one city and live in another. Posting the location of every chapter in the state helps prospective members identify which chapters they could join.

You also should:
- use the new MOAA logo (www.moaa.org/logos).
- make your website easy to navigate by placing standard navigation buttons or links at the top of each webpage.
- use photos and graphics.
- update your website regularly.
- allow people to join online, if possible.
- impart a sense of purpose about what your council or chapter does.

Finally, be careful not to post anything you don't want to reside in a publicly accessed forum, such as your personal email address or unlisted phone number. Some chapters set up a dedicated chapter email address. Example: The Alamo (Texas) Chapter's email address is moaa-ac@sbcglobal.net.