

CHAPTER 2

GETTING A NEWSLETTER STARTED

The club that communicates regularly with all of its members through a publication will improve its chances for success. So one can expect the newsletter to be the best money and time a club ever spends.

2.1 THOSE PRELIMINARY DECISIONS

2.1.1 FIRST DECISION IS MONEY, TIME AND PURPOSE

A great AACA newsletter can involve a large amount of the club's money and the club editor's time. The president and the rest of the club's leadership need to make sure that those club resources are well spent. So before a single word is printed, decide exactly what the newsletter is expected to do.

One idea would be to use the newsletter to get more folks out to regular meetings. It could be used to keep members informed on what everybody else is doing (for example: "new" old cars; babies; illnesses; graduations; restoration projects). It could become club advertisement to recruit new members. Maybe it could be used to provide a "permanent record" of the club's activities.

All of these are legitimate functions of a newsletter, and there are countless others. Deciding on which function(s) the newsletter is to accomplish is up to each individual club.

2.1.2 WHAT ARE THE RESOURCES IN A CLUB?

Take a look at possible resources already available. Some goods and services can be acquired for little or no money from within the membership. Is there an artist, cartoonist, computer specialist or printer in the club? Look for members with access to copiers, postage meters, or special tools or skills. Of course, having an editor with a computer does eliminate a great deal of time and effort, but it is not essential.

2.1.3 WHAT WILL THE FREQUENCY BE?

How frequent should a great AACA club publish its newsletter? Most clubs publish monthly. If one is looking to increase the turnout at club activities, a monthly newsletter is preferable.

2.1.4 NAME THE NEWSLETTER

If not already named, having a “name the newsletter” contest, could encourage ownership of the newsletter by the members. Get everyone involved! For ideas, look at some names currently in use in AACA regions and chapters across the country.

There are still a few parts of the automobile that haven't been spoken for, and some of the names listed here are in use by more than one club. A club may want to use a name that's suggestive of where you live; for example, Peachtree Parade or Tallahassee Chassis.

- * Clutch Chatter
- * Exhaust Pipe
- * Garage Gossip
- * Intake & Exhaust
- * Piston Popper
- * Sidelight
- * Spotlight
- * The Beam
- * The Fly Wheel
- * The Magneto
- * The Radiator
- * The Road Map
- * The Running Board
- * The Steering Wheel
- * Throttle Thoughts
- * Crank Journal
- * Footwarmer
- * Headlight
- * Nuts & Bolts
- * Running Board Ramblings
- * Spokes
- * Sputter N' Stutter
- * The Brass Lamp
- * The Gas Buggy Gazette
- * The Mudflap
- * The Rear View Mirror
- * The Rumble Sheet
- * The Sparkplug
- * Things You Auto Know
- * Yester Year News

2.2 SELECTING AN EDITOR

In a perfect world, a club would have several enthusiastic and highly skilled members all dying to be editor of the new newsletter. What kind of skills would they have? Here's a short list: writing, interviewing, reading, summarizing, rewriting, proofreading, researching, typing, photography, design, drawing, copy-fitting, folding, stapling, maintaining addresses, buying supplies, keeping records, selling ads, photocopying labels, finding artwork, checking printing prices, interpreting postal regulations, creating headlines, affixing stamps, mailing newsletters, and so on. We'd also recommend you find someone, if at all possible, who has the ability to use a computer, the proper computer software to produce a newsletter, as well as understanding how to use the various software packages available.

So, an editor should be dependable, outgoing, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.

But it's not a perfect world, and all of us involved in hobby organizations know that. Any club would be lucky to have one individual with all these skills, much less a choice of individuals. But there is probably someone in the club who at least partially fills the bill, and who in addition is willing. That means they've displayed that most important ability of all: Availability. In return for their commitment to serve as editor, promise them the board's full support and the backing of the whole club.

2.3 DETERMINING WHAT THE NEWSLETTER WILL COST

The cost of a publication will depend upon how many copies and what size pages you print ("production" costs) and how many copies are mailed (mailing costs).

2.3.1 COST DETERMINATION

A. Production Costs

Production costs could include copying, printing, collating, folding, stapling, and procuring supplies. To determine copying costs, figure up how many copies are needed to print each month and how many pages a typical issue will contain. For example, 50 copies of a 4-page issue would mean 200 pages of printing or copying for one month's issue.

Make a list of specifications: number and size of pages, number of copies, type of paper, any collating/folding/stapling services needed (unless these services will be done internally by volunteers). Take this list to local printers to get price quotes. Look within the membership for reproduction resources. A small publication with a small circulation could be produced on a member's office copier (if the member owns this business, that is) or home computer/printer for just the cost of the paper and supplies.

The cost for supplies will include some immediate purchases up front, and minor continuing costs to maintain supplies. A start-up list of supplies might include computer hardware/software, printer, printer cartridges, scanner, envelopes, stapler/staples, stamps, paper, camera supplies, (whether film or digital), or any other items that the club intends to pay for. The list will vary, depending upon the needs of your particular operation. For example, if the club's editor already has a computer with a desktop publishing program, some of these items will not be necessary. Later chapters will go into that in more detail.

B. Mailing Costs

Postage costs per copy will vary depending upon the size and weight of the newsletter. An 8½" x 11" publication weighing under one ounce, folded, with or without an envelope, can currently be mailed First Class for \$.39. Unfolded, the cost will be \$.63.

First Class is the most timely. When mailing 200 at a time, bulk mailing could be used at a much cheaper rate, but be aware of the time issue as it can take up to 2 weeks to deliver. See **Chapter 6** for more details.

The least expensive way to address the newsletter is to hand-write the member's name/address on each copy of the newsletter. However, unless the membership is small, this method is time consuming and inefficient. Printed stick-on labels are much better and can be easily produced with a computer and printer. Your editor may also have the ability to produce a mail-merge address list, which will address each newsletter automatically. You will find more details in **Chapter 6**.

2.3.2 HOW MANY SHOULD BE MAILED?

Obviously the mailing list should include one copy to each member family. Additional copies should also be available to for:

- * Guests and potential members
(print 5- 10 extra each month to have on hand for this)
- * Special contributors and advertisers (as needed).
- * Other newsletter editors (this is referred to as a newsletter "exchange;" or information sharing.)
- * Although it is optional, whether or not you enter your newsletter for the Newsletter Achievement Awards Program (**NAAP**), if you do enter, you will need to send a copy to each member of the Publications Committee whose name you will receive from National Headquarters. These people will review of your newsletter.
- * AACA National Headquarters.
- * AACA President

Addresses for the various national AACA individuals appear in each issue of the *Antique Automobile* and on the AACA website –<http://www.aaca.org/>. Addresses are also provided in the form you will receive from Headquarters, for members of the Publications Committee. This is the form you will use if you sign up to enter the **NAAP**.

2.4 PAYING FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER

2.4.1 HOW TO FIND THE FUNDS

Money for the club's newsletter comes from dues, fund-raising activities, and advertising revenue. The condition of the club's treasury will determine how much money, if any, needs to be raised. Some clubs raise money with an annual auction of member-donated parts, supplies, tools, baked goods, and handcrafts. Others hold swap meets or car shows and charge registration fees, or display member cars at malls or car dealerships in return for a donation to the club treasury.

Selling advertising space in the newsletter is another way to pay for it. Theoretically, if one sold enough ads, the newsletter would be self-sufficient. However, don't let advertising dominate your publication. Ideally, advertising should take up no more than 20-25% of your newsletter.

The number of advertisements needed and the actual rates charged to support the newsletter, can be worked out once the actual costs are determined. One AACA region sells business card ads (eight can comfortably fit on a page) at \$5/issue, or \$50 annually for 10 issues. A quarter-page ad is \$10/issue, half a page is \$20/issue, and a full page is \$40/issue. They print all ads on the last two or three pages, with a heading, "\$UPPORT OUR \$PONSORS." Occasional "incidental" ads are scattered throughout the issue as "fillers" at the end of articles. The region tries to solicit automobile-related advertising where possible. Paid ads from members are accepted regardless of the service or product advertised.

2.5 KEEPING AN EYE ON COSTS

Work with the club treasurer to prepare a budget to present to the club board. Be sure to get board approval before the newsletter gets started, and then stick to the budget.

The club treasurer will normally report newsletter expenses to the board each month; the editor can also provide additional information at the board's request. If the editor's position is not a board position in your club, consider making it one. The responsibilities of the job mean it certainly deserves board status, and the editor can be more effective when he or she is involved with board meetings personally.

2.6 DEVELOPING A PUBLICATIONS STAFF

The editor needs to be able to call on fellow club members for help. For

example, one member could be responsible for collecting material from contributors and then could assist with newsletter setup and/or errands; someone else could sell ads, collect payment, and keep records. Other members could get together to collate, fold, staple, label, stamp, and deliver the newsletters to the post office. There could be a typist who gets material into camera ready form or can e-mail material to the editor, and also a photographer to take pictures, and/or scan pictures for computer use.

It would be advisable to have a member chosen for this job. Example; Advertising Chairman. It is also a good idea to have the Membership Chairman, if your Region has one, that person can provide you the names of all new members, so you can publish a "Welcome New Members" column in your newsletter.

All these people constitute the "newsletter staff," and if you have space, it is a nice gesture to recognize their valuable participation by listing their names and titles (Example: "Assistant Editor," "Advertising Editor," "Mailing Staff," etc.) in a prominent spot in your newsletter at the beginning of the year. To list these people each month may consume more space than your budget allows; however if that is not a problem it is certainly an excellent way to extend your appreciation.

2.7 SCHEDULING THE NEWSLETTER

You should have the editor set up a mailing schedule for the whole year, then stick to it religiously. Once the mailing dates are set, work backward to establish the dates when the editor will need ads, contributor material, meeting information, and the like; set firm deadlines that will allow adequate time to get the newsletter typed, laid out/computer setup, delivered to the printer, picked up, and prepared for mailing. Be sure to take into account holidays that might affect other schedules or the post office. The newsletter needs to be mailed to reach the members 8-12 days before an upcoming club activity, but no later than 5 to 7 days before the monthly meeting. This way, members will be less likely to forget the meeting date.

Experience has shown this to increase membership meeting participation. When a club activity to be advertised in a specific newsletter will be less than 8-12 days away from your anticipated delivery date, advertise that activity the month before, if possible. Then place a reminder in the second month newsletter, closer to the activity. Activity notices need to be posted in time for members to be able to arrange their time in order to participate, yet close enough so that they won't forget.

The newsletter needs to be mailed to reach the members 8-12 days before the next club activity. Any earlier, and the information gets laid aside and forgotten; any later, and members may not be able to arrange their time in order to participate.

2.8 IS YOUR NEWSLETTER WORKING?

After the first couple of issues, enough feedback should be received from members to tell if the newsletter is doing what it was designed to do. It's a waste of valuable time, energy, and money to doggedly produce a publication every month that doesn't satisfy the club's needs. If the newsletter isn't working, try to figure out why, and revise the operation accordingly. Change the format or the content or the emphasis or the mailing date or the frequency of publication, whatever is necessary to meet the needs of the members.

This page intentionally left blank.