**Newsletter By and For Seniors**

A Google search for “Senior Newsletter” serves up a veritable galaxy of publications by communities and org’s from California to Canberra.\* As for the total number of pages online, they would give Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* a run for its money.

Add the words “by seniors” to your search, and the results are nebulous at best. While senior communities might *not* be shouting “Seniors made this!” from the digital rafters — many of these newsletters appear written by management. No slight on managers, they provide many helpful services, but the content in these newsletters — not to mention their layouts — appears procedural and templatized, aka *not* very human.

Rather than encouraging seniors to share their rich and varied personal stories, perspectives, feats, travels, tastes, and human personalities — they’ve opted for glorified activity lists housed in convenient boxes.

This is why our beloved Heritage Happenings is a living-breathing (evolving!) document of rare beauty. Every month, for the last X years, Happenings has brimmed with lived experience, thoughts, and ideas. Not only do we highlight the invaluablecontributions of older adults, we foster a sense of belonging and purpose.

The fact that our “by seniors” model is not the standard has long disappointed me, so henceforth I’ll do something about it.

It’s time to share our editorial team’s learnings (amassed through trial, error, error, and finally some success) with other senior communities and org’s — especially those with fewer resources. Maybe those in Canberra will be the first to catch on, who knows.

While I could craft a treatise on what makes a great senior newsletter, our editorial team has agreed to, “keep articles short-ish” so *for now* I’ll just share these 3 helpful tips:

**Your (Senior) Team Makes the Dream Work**

Beyond the content itself, creating newsletters gives seniors a way of staying mentally active and engaged. Writing articles, conducting interviews, or managing the publication process sharpens cognitive skills and nurtures creativity.

Collaborating on such projects helps build social bonds and combats isolation, a common issue among older adults.

While the process of pulling together a team of senior contributors might seem intimidating, it’s much easier than you’d think.

* Start a group email and share this article. Follow up to see who’s interested in joining an editorial team.
* Utilize an existing “by management” newsletter, adding an “Open call for senior writers, editors, reporters, op-ed’ers, and photographers!”
* Once you’ve rallied some interested folks, set up a monthly editorial meeting to discuss a theme, possible articles, and accompanying images.

**Honor People’s Experience, Voice, and Abilities**

Not everyone’s Tolstoy, nor do they want to be. We’ve found that most seniors who are keen on sharing a story or crafting an article, *enjoy expressing themselves*. That’s why, as an editor, I always try to honor a person’s unique voice, as opposed to editing *out* their delightful quirks, digressions, and sometimes unpredictable grammar.

If seniors with a disability seem reluctant to share, ask how you might assist them in telling their story. You can conduct an interview or take notes while they talk, and then form their story. But always remember to run it by them for their fresh thoughts (and edits!) before you publish.

**Reminder: Your Newsletter is *for* Seniors**

While some claim seniors have more time and patience for longer content, I was recently told by our senior team to *trim down stories* so readers move through pages faster, actually making it to the end. Recently, we made a move to a two-column layout, just like you see in most newspapers and magazines. Narrow columns make for better readability and enhanced comprehension.

Speaking of readability, ensure your font choices and sizes make for easy, enjoyable perusing. Pro tip: Start with 14pt Verdana and go up from there for headlines and sub-headlines.

(Closing words from Theo here)