

Title:

Employee Newsletters for Small Companies

Word Count:

536

Summary:

Smaller companies can make employee newsletters work for them by using some special strategies and by taking advantage of the Hawthorne Effect.

Keywords:

employee newsletter, small company, small companies, Hawthorne Effect

Article Body:

A newsletter for 60 employees?

A visitor to the Manager's Guide Web site asked for about buying content for a newsletter that would serve a group of 60 professionals; the department responsible would not have time to write a complete newsletter.

I emailed the following response (slightly edited):

You have asked a good question. With 60 employees, your staff is big enough to need a newsletter, but not big enough to make a major spending commitment. On that basis, let me share a few observations with you.

First, while I'm not sure why you want to communicate with these employees, I assume it is to maintain their loyalty and to increase their productivity (both common objectives for employee newsletters).

To maintain (and perhaps increase) loyalty, I would recommend that you or some other appropriate person sit down once a month and simply write a letter. Think of it as a letter to a friend or colleague, and report any news of interest to them. You might report on hiring, about changes in policy, how to apply for benefits, or any other information they would find useful. Again, I would stress the need for an informal approach, perhaps something mirroring this letter to you. Avoid making it sound like a memo, if possible. And, I would laser print or copy and mail it, rather than use electronic mail.

Turning to productivity, I would not buy articles from third parties unless you come across something that really impresses you. You say these are people are

professionals, which suggests to me they will have access to the Net, and probably no end of information already.

Instead, I would prepare a modest budget and then offer to pay the employees for providing useful tips and articles that their colleagues can use to be more productive. For example, \$20 per employee per issue would give you a budget of about \$1,200; offer to buy two articles of 500 to 1,000 words for \$500 each, and four tips of 100 to 200 words for \$50 each. Or if you want to spend \$10 per employee, then you could buy one article and two tips. Once you have the material in hand, print and distribute it to the employees. It can be sent with, or separately from, the letter about internal issues.

Finally, you may wish to consider the Hawthorne experiments, which took place in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Researchers set out to find which internal environment changes (such as lighting, etc) increased productivity the most.

They found, to their great surprise, was that productivity went up regardless of the type of change that was made. For example, productivity went up when they increased the amount of light, as expected. But, it also went up when the amount of light was decreased; that was not expected.

All of that led researchers to realize that it was the attention the employees received, not the changes, that made a difference. We now refer to this phenomenon, in which employees respond to the attention they receive, as the Hawthorne Effect.

All of which is a roundabout way of saying that the act of communication is often more important than content or style. As long as you do something, it may be better than nothing.