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# Promoting Your Organization

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By Lori Jamieson

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The job of keeping your organization in the public eye is a big responsibility, and can be an intimidating task. But if nothing is known about your group, your activities or opinions on an issue will be of little interest to others, and so you face the necessity of spreading the word, as far and as thickly as possible.

We can take the first lesson from the experts, whose work you can easily find in the last issue of your favorite magazine or newspaper. Pick it up and take a close look, both at the articles and at the ads. Which ones do you want to read immediately, which would you look at later, which would you ignore altogether? Why? Is it because of the subject matter, the type of print, the color, style or design, the models used if there is a photograph, a catchy slogan or phrase? If you close the magazine and think about it, which articles/ads do you remember?

It should help your promotional efforts to apply this whole picture approach to the materials that you are going to prepare. Of course, your purpose is not to sell pop or suntan oil - you're probably trying to encourage new members, announce activities, fundraising events, or just to remind the world that your group exists, is working hard and having fun! But like the writers and the advertisers, you must decide who you want your information to reach, and how best to present it so that your audience gets your message and pays attention to it.

Again, the purpose of your message dictates in a large way what promotional form you'll use. Newspapers and magazines offer the most opportunities on a local level for most organizations. For beginners at news writing, it's best to begin by writing down everything that could possibly be said - even the dullest details. The second step is to choose from all of these facts those that answer the who, what, where, when, why and how of your subject - and the most interesting of these should become the first paragraph. Here are two examples

adapted from recent submissions to Home and Country; their message is clear and straightforward, written to develop the reader's interest in the organization and its cause.

"The future of our local community hall has been at the forefront of our concern for the past three years. Representatives of the Nassagaweya WI served actively on a special committee of the town of Milton and local groups to ascertain its fate. The Nassagaweya WI would like to feel it was because of their persistence and strong leadership that 1987 saw the sod turning for a brand new community hall to serve our rural area. The Nassagaweya WI was also able to present a cheque of \$500 toward this project. We feel that the local hall is the nucleus of a "community" and that our efforts for Brookville Hall go towards preserving one more community in Ontario."

"As the busy spring season draws ever closer, we must be extra cautious to ensure that our families make it safely through this time of year. With that in mind, Oxford Women for the Support of Agriculture met at Vincent's Farm Equipment to learn more about safety. For those not mechanically inclined, we had a lesson on basic tractor mechanics and how to stop a tractor if you can't reach the normal shut off mechanism. Cold weather and strong winds were braved to learn how to properly use a fire extinguisher when putting out a fire. Along with some other very useful information, the evening culminated with a lasting impression. We watched as a mannequin got tangled in a PTO - in a matter of seconds it was completely wrapped around the shaft, illustrating very clearly how quickly a tragedy can happen - a sobering, but effective ending to an informative evening."

It's a good policy to only write something that you would read yourself, and to ask yourself, "If I were not part of this organization, what impression would this article make? Would it be interesting and provide all of the important details?" Don't just confine your

reporting to meetings; broadcast the news if a member of your group wins an award or attends a conference, or if you are planning or have run an activity or event. Pictures will really direct attention to your story; photos of people working and involved have more impact than those of subjects staring back at the camera. Black and white are best for publication, and the self-developing pictures are the worst. Never write directly on the back of a photograph - put the information on a label and then attach the label to the photo.

When your story has been typed (double spaced) and the spelling (especially of names) and grammar have been checked, you are ready to mail or deliver it to the editors who you feel will be interested in your story. Their names and the addresses of their offices appear on the editorial page. If you don't exactly know who you should be dealing with, call the editorial offices and ask. You don't want all of your hard work to end up sitting, unread, on the wrong desk. Always put your name, address and phone number prominently on any stories you submit so that the editors can contact you for additional information if they need it. A thank you note or call is definitely in order for any coverage that you receive - and will help to establish a good working relationship.

Trying to put together a poster or newsletter opens a whole new world of opportunities in promotion, a voyage into the waters of graphic design. The design should make the flow of information as smooth and easy for the reader as the text does. As a brief example, consider the logo designed for the OMAF Centennial; every element conveys some part of the Centennial message: the style of the lettering, the forward movement of the trillium from historical times to the present, and the trillium itself as a symbol of Ontario. Don't expect that your work will be as complete as that of a professional artist, but try to keep style and substance in mind as a total picture as you are working. Remember that the reader's eye will flow from the upper left to the lower right of a poster or advertisement, and

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