

Newsletters

Newsletters are regular communications from an organization aimed at a specific audience using a mailing list. You probably receive traditional print newsletters in the mail as well as through email. What determines that you always read the newsletter from your local Humane Society when you don't read the monthly newsletter inserted in your water bill? The content must be timely, useful, and important to the specific users who subscribe to your newsletter. Some newsletters are unsolicited and offer little more than sales information. Unlike brochures, press releases, and other sales or marketing materials, newsletters for technical communication can offer specific information to a well-defined group of product users, company employees, or organization members. Technical communicators may be responsible for researching and writing the product updates, user profiles, expert tips, and other useful information that keeps readers interested and engaged. Along with good content, the layout and medium of the newsletter will also affect how likely users are to read it. Newsletters are still mailed on paper, but increasingly they appear on web sites or blogs, in email messages, or attached to an email as a fully formatted PDF document.

In this example of an electronic newsletter delivered by email, the software company TechSmith gives users updates about their main product, SnagIt (a popular screen capture program), as well as other software tools and helpful tips from users and experts.



■ Snagit user newsletter (electronic)

Features of the Electronic Newsletter

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| <p>1 Banner across the top of the page (also called a <i>flag</i>) includes the title “News You Can Use” and the company logo and name.</p> | <p>3 Contents of this issue are listed as links to the current issue articles.</p> | <p>5 Photographs of the editor and of featured users add familiarity and personality to the document.</p> |
| <p>2 The date and issue number appear at the far right of the flag.</p> | <p>4 Standard links lead to archives and company information.</p> | <p>6 Links provide more information or user interaction—“watch the screencast.”</p> |

The next example illustrates a more traditional print-based newsletter about medical research from the National Center for Contemporary and Alternative Medicine (NAC), which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Notice that this newsletter is available on the Internet in PDF format but could also be printed.