

# Postal Newsletter

## Press

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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The Meadows Events & Conference Center at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino Des Moines, Iowa site of the Biennial PPA Conference on August 3-5. Preceding the conference will be a full day of workshops on Wednesday, August 2. The room rate is \$129 per night, king or double queen occupancy. Room reservations can be made through the hotel's website, [www.prairiemeadows.com](http://www.prairiemeadows.com) using group code 08022017APW or call 1-800-325-9015. Prairie Meadows will provide free shuttle service from Des Moines International Airport, complimentary Internet access and no charge for parking a vehicle.

## Plans progress for August PPA Conference

On August 3-5, APWU editors, associate editors and officers will meet in Des Moines, Iowa for the 2017 biennial conference of the APWU National Postal Press Association. Preceding the conference will be a full day of workshops on Wednesday, August 2.

Established in 1967 and held every two years, the PPA Conference is not only for editors. It is an educational event specifically designed to help participants, whether novice or experienced sharpen their communication skills. Regardless of the office held in our union, learning about communication as a means to better represent the membership should be a part of every representative's educational development. This conference is also a must for local or state organizations that are interested in establishing (or re-establishing) a communications program for its membership.

Led by a group of talented instructors from the Labor Movement, the intensive four-day program will cover a variety of communication-related topics. In addition to eleven workshops, the gathering will include

three general sessions, four networking events and an awards banquet.

The conference will be held at The Meadows Events & Conference Center at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino Des Moines, Iowa. A guestroom rate of \$129.00 per day for king or double queen occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 12%. To make room reservations, please visit their website, [www.prairiemeadows.com](http://www.prairiemeadows.com) using group code 08022017APW or call 1-800-325-9015. Prairie Meadows will provide free shuttle service from Des Moines International Airport, complimentary Internet access and no charge for parking a vehicle.

For the eighth consecutive conference the registration fee will be \$160. This fee includes conference materials, workshops, refreshment breaks, buffet dinner reception, and awards banquet.

See pages 4-5 for a preview of PPA Conference workshops.

## Surveys: Tool for building an engaged membership

By Tony Carobine, President

One of the biggest challenges facing union leaders is building and maintaining an active and supportive membership. Without membership support and involvement, the union is less likely to achieve its goals and objectives. All possibilities for developing member participation should be considered.

A common denominator in building and maintaining an involved membership is **communication**. However, communication involves a lot more than passing down information from union officials to members. Psychologists that study groups who work together over a long period say that in order to keep people motivated and interested they must be included. This means they must be made part of what's going on, be included in the group, and not be made to feel like an outsider.

As union leaders we are very good at sharing with our members what's on our minds. But how often do we really listen to members and give them an opportunity to share their opinions and ideas? There are several ways to include members in the organization and thus sow the seeds for building an active local union. One way to foster a sense of inclusion is to ask for member's ideas and opinions, such as conducting membership surveys which is the focus of this article. (The following information about conducting surveys is adapted from the workshop program, *Building the Local Union*.)

Surveys can be used to find out how the members feel about the union; what services they would like their union to provide; to find out what kinds of social activities the

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**This publication is 100% union printer produced: Union typeset, Union layout, Union printed.**



# Surveys . . .

*Continued from page 1*

members might be interested in; to get their opinions on a variety of subjects and to recruit volunteers. In addition to gathering information, the survey has another important purpose. The simple act of asking a question communicates to the members their union cares about what they think. That alone is a powerful and important reason to consider doing a survey.

You don't need to be an expert to design a useful survey. Start by thinking about your own experience. When you get surveys in the mail – sometimes you fill them out immediately, sometimes you throw them away immediately, sometimes you put them in a pile and say to yourself, "I'll do it when I have time" which is usually never. What are the characteristics of the ones you fill out? Some of the following words might describe them . . .

- **Short** – Keep the questions short and to the point.
- **Easy** – It's faster to check off some answers than to have to provide written answers to every question.
- **Filling it out will make a difference** – The answers aren't going to be just thrown away or ignored. Whoever's asking the question really cares about the answer.
- **Explain** – A brief introductory paragraph explaining the purpose of the survey, stressing the importance of the individual's input and thanking them in advance for their time and effort.

### Topics

Following are some examples of topics for a membership survey: How do members view the union? Do they know much about it? Do they see the union helping them personally? Do they think their dues are well-spent? Do they think the union keeps them informed? What other services could the union provide to help in the members' work and everyday lives? What are their biggest concerns on the workroom floor?

The results will provide a rough idea of membership opinion and will demonstrate to members that the local cares. Armed with this information, the local will be in a better position to implement changes to better meet the needs and desires of the membership, a key to building a stronger local union.

### Design

There are two basic types of survey questions – open and closed. Determine the best survey question format for each point: **Open-ended questions** require people to write out their responses which can be quite useful because they allow for opinions. For example: *How can your local union better serve you? Besides normal union business, what other information would you like to see presented at union meetings? What do you see as the biggest issues facing postal workers?* The answers will be subjective but highly informative.

**Closed-format questions** generally ask people to select a specific answer, such as "yes/no," "check-the-box," etc. This type of question might also be in the form of multiple-choice, prioritizing a list, indicating a response within a range of choices, etc. These types of questions are much easier

to tabulate but can be limiting if people feel overly restricted in their responses. Some examples:

**Multiple choice** – *If you have not attended a membership meeting in the past six months, why not? \_\_\_conflicts with work schedule, \_\_\_family needs, \_\_\_child care, \_\_\_didn't know about them, \_\_\_no interest;*

**Rank Order** – *With 1 being the most and 5 being the least, please rank the following as to where you obtain information about what's going on in the local, \_\_\_union meetings, \_\_\_union publication, \_\_\_bulletin boards, \_\_\_talking with other members, \_\_\_stewards;*

**Yes/No (open-ended)** – *Did you vote in the last election of union officers? \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no. If not, what can your local union do to help you participate in the future?*

Most survey experts advise structuring a survey so that closed-format questions come first and open-ended questions last, because response rates tend to be greater if the more easily-answered questions are positioned early in the survey. Guide

*Continued on page 3*

## Help us Re

The local contains news completing the a publication t for your partic

1. Do you read  yes  no
2. If yes, do you  mostly he
3. If you don't r
4. Which subject  Grievance  Contract i  Safety/hea  Arbitration  Social acti  Economic  Benefits o  News abo
5. Other subjects
6. Check the sta tion:  Too few pa



# Surveys: Tool for building an engaged membership

*Continued from page 2*

the respondents through the survey by asking clear questions which flow logically from topic to topic, beginning with more general questions to more specific ones. Also include an area for additional comments. Some people like to have this added flexibility. Finally, test your questions in advance. Ask your friends or a few co-workers to do the survey before carrying it out on a large scale. The feedback you receive can help clear up ambiguities in advance.

### Readership surveys

Readership surveys are a useful way of finding out if your publication is delivering the type of information your readers want and need. Devising a survey as part of your publication or separately and circulating it at least every other year can keep you in touch with your readership. In addition to a writ-

ten survey, one-on-one interviews and small group meetings where members offer opinions and suggestions about the publication are extremely beneficial. Employing these types of information-gathering techniques will provide invaluable information for developing a publication that is more responsive to the needs of the membership and thus help build membership participation through the union publication. Furthermore, this is another way to make members realize they are part of the union and demonstrate the importance of their opinions.

### Distribution and incentives

There are three ways to distribute a readership survey. Included as an insert in the union publication with return instructions; hand delivered with a personal appeal for the member to complete it or mail it and include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

To increase the response to a survey, it helps to include an incentive. For instance, instead of the traditional "We'd Like Your Opinion," or "Your Suggestions are Important to Us," prompt readers to participate with such (incentives) headings as "Complete this Survey and You could Win a Dinner for two," or "Complete this Survey and You Could Win a \$100 Savings Bond."

Then, enter the names of survey participants in a drawing for the pre-determined prizes. The cost of such a venture is well worth the valuable information that will be obtained.

With the completed surveys in hand, you are on your way to being more responsive to the needs of the membership. Surveys also serve another purpose. They help members realize they are part of the union and their opinions and input are important.

### More than grievances

Representing the membership in the grievance procedure is important but is not the only purpose for unions. We can have the best contract in the world, make sure the members are well-represented in the grievance procedure and still end up with a weak organization if members aren't aware of what the union does and feel no particular loyalty or willingness to work for the union.

Most of the major victories in the labor movement came about because of the participation of rank and file members. The union's strength and vigor depend on the commitment and loyalty of members. An educated, committed, proud and supportive membership is the necessary foundation for success in everything the union does. To build such a union, we must make a serious commitment to **communication** and develop more opportunities for member participation. As the late labor leader Eugene Debs said: **"What can labor do for itself? The answer is not difficult. Labor can organize, it can unify, it can consolidate its forces. This done, it can demand and command!"**

*to improve your union publication . . .*

## Readership Survey

If your union wants to provide you with a publication that contains the type of information and news in which you are interested. By completing this questionnaire, you can help us develop a publication that is more responsive to your needs. Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Name of the (name of publication)? \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you read it? \_\_\_\_\_ Family members?  yes  no

How often do you read it? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many articles do you read?  some articles  all or most articles

Why do you read the (name of publication) why not? \_\_\_\_\_

What are you most interested in? (check as many as you like): \_\_\_\_\_

- Labor/management news
- Officer's reports
- Legislation
- Member profiles
- Meeting minutes
- Labor history
- Retirement information
- Member opinion column

What would you like to see in this paper: \_\_\_\_\_

Which statements below that you agree with about our publication: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Too many pages

- Attractive and easy to read
- Type is hard to read
- I would like shorter articles
- Takes too long to read
- Would be more attractive if there were more photographs
- I would like longer, more in-depth articles

7. What do you feel should be the main purpose of this publication? (Check as many statements as you agree with):

- Should have articles and information like consumer news and other helpful tips for members to use at home
- Should only discuss the activities of this organization
- Should cover the activities of many unions, not just the union that publishes it
- Should educate union members about labor issues and policies
- Should primarily contain views and reports from union leaders
- Should include the comments and opinions of members
- Should report on important political, legislative and business decisions that could affect working people in general
- Should include feature articles about members
- Should include articles about social and economic issues

8. What do you like about our union publication? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What don't you like about our union publication? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# 2017 Biennial PPA Conference

The four-day biennial PPA Conference workshop program consists of eleven workshops that will be helpful to all who attend; from novice to experienced, to local or state organizations interested in establishing or enhancing a communications program for its membership. The conference also includes three general sessions, four networking events and awards banquet. Below is a preview of conference workshops. Registration forms and additional conference information will be available in the near future.

## Pre-conference Workshops Wednesday, August 2

### Starting from Scratch

This session is primarily for individuals new to editing a union publication and for local or state organizations interested in establishing or reestablishing a publication for their members. Included will be an overview of the reasons an organization needs to communicate and the ABC's of how to get started. With an extensive record of involvement in labor communications, the workshop leaders will share their experiences with participants.

### Communicating to Win: Case Studies of Effective Communication in Recent Struggles and Victories

How are workers still winning against the odds, sometimes in the face of daunting challenges? This workshop will introduce selected case studies of recent struggles in which unions used highly effective internal and external communication strategies to help achieve bargaining goals or key policy changes. We will analyze real examples from contract and issue campaigns and ask what lessons we can learn and apply to our own contexts.

### Legal Issues: Who Pays for What I Say?

Who does a union publication belong to? Do libel and copyright laws affect your freedom of speech and freedom of the press? What are the benefits of establishing an editorial policy? How do union election laws apply to union publications and websites? *Legal Issues: Who Pays for What I Say?* will address these questions and others with a presentation on the issues of editorial policies, responsible journalism, libel, copyright and union elections.

## Conference Workshops Thursday, August 3 – Saturday, August 5

### Your Message and the Media, Improving Your Union's Image

Public support can help an organization achieve its objectives. *Your Message and the Media, Improving Your Union's Image* will help you build a positive public image for your local or state union by looking at: How to publicize your union's contributions to the community; ideas for regularly making the union visible to the public and why seeking media coverage only to publicize the union's problems could be disastrous. Also discussed will be the preparation of press releases, developing media contacts, interviews, and other tactics to use for establishing and maintaining a positive and progressive public image.

### Re-designing Your Publication

Is your newsletter in-tune with the times, or is it a relic? This workshop will help you modernize your paper, transforming it into a powerful communication that commands attention. Learn design techniques that will capture interest in the first few seconds; improve six key elements of your publication: format, nameplate, masthead, page layout, type choices, and graphics. Discover ways to use photos, headlines, outquotes, borders, and other design elements for maximum impact. *Re-designing Your Publication* will give you the specific "how-to's" for propelling your newsletter to a new level of quality and effectiveness. (*Note: Participants should bring their own publication to this workshop.*)

*A tradition of service*

AMERICAN NATIONAL POSTAL WORKERS UNION



POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

*since 1964*

### Labor Communicators – Linking the Past to the Present

This workshop will explore the relevance of labor history and the labor movement. By examining how our predecessors built and maintained their unions, we can learn what strategies and tactics might be effective today. As the labor movement increasingly becomes comprised of a new generation of members, it's important to pass on the lessons that the founders learned so well themselves. This session will help communicate the history of unions to new readers about the purpose of unions, inspire them to increase their participation, and encourage them to face up to the issues that lie ahead.



# Conference workshop preview

## Writing and Editing for the Union Communicator

At this valuable hands-on session, you will learn the elements of writing and editing. You will be taken through a host of exercises to help you write inspiring editorials, powerful news stories, attention-getting features, headlines that scream "Read Me" and more. This workshop is a must for anyone that communicates with the membership through the written word.

## Communications for Member Involvement and Union Building

In today's multi-media environment, union editors have the opportunity to make their publications the centerpiece of a strategic communications system that builds a stronger union. This highly interactive workshop will walk through the steps of assessing your local's communications needs and capacity, analyzing what messages and media best motivate members, considering pros and cons of print, electronic, and face-to-face formats, developing a distribution/communications network that reaches all members, and integrating the newsletter into an overall communications plan.

## Using Electronic Communication to Boost Your Message

To tweet or not to tweet? That is the question – indeed one of many questions – that union communicators face today. This fast-paced workshop will examine when and how electronic communication can broaden the reach of your print publication and reinforce important messages, as well as how to recognize situations where electronic communication might not be the right choice. Then we'll delve into "dos and don'ts" of member communication via e-mail, mass text, and social media platforms, and tips for establishing or improving your local union's on-line presence.

## Public Speaking: Becoming an Effective Spokesperson

To win at the media game there are two principles you need to master. You must develop a focused message and you must deliver your message in a believable way. This principle, along with others will be examined at this workshop, including tactics for getting our message across, regardless of the questions asked or whether the interview is on television, radio, or in print. Part of this hands-on workshop will include a role playing exercise whereby some of the participants are videotaped in an actual interview situation and critiqued on their presentation.

## Photojournalism: Capturing Visual Images of Your Union

This interactive session will examine the benefits of including the membership and activities of the union in your publication, website and Facebook page through the art of photojournalism. Learn the process of proper image taking; moving you beyond the traditional "grip-and-grin" photographs to capturing eye catching images like a pro! We will also cover the proper care of your camera equipment and shooting technique. A portion of this workshop will also include a "field trip" whereby attendees will take photos for a classroom critique. Yes, you will get to critique the instructor too! (*Note: Participants should bring their Point & Shoot, Single-lens Reflex, Digital Single Lens Reflex, or Cell Phone Camera.*)

## Conference Schedule

Following is a condensed tentative timetable of conference meetings and activities.

### Wednesday, August 2

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Registration

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Pre-conference workshops

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Reception

(Dinner from 6:30 – 8:00)

### Thursday, August 3

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Registration

9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

General Session

11:00 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Workshops

4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

General Session

### Friday, August 4

8:30 a.m. – 5:15 p.m.

Workshops

7:00 p.m.

Friday Night at the Movies

### Saturday, August 5

8:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Workshops

1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

General Session

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Reception

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Awards Banquet

7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Award presentations/installation of officers



# Editor's toolbox: Helpful ideas for APWU communicators

## Writing an exciting headline

People glance at the headlines to see what the articles are about. If headlines or pictures don't grab them, many will turn away, without reading another word.

Coming up with good, simple headlines are one of your biggest challenges. Don't just top each article with a label. Take the time to write headlines that lure people into eagerly reading one article after another.

Don't get your heart set on a particular headline right away. Let your imagination go, writing down all the possibilities you can think of, even if many turn out awful. Then pick the best and see if you can improve them further; or combine the better of two so-so headlines to get one great headline.

## Don't repeat words

Reading the same word over and over gets boring. When you're done writing, go back and see how many words you've used more than three times, maybe circling them in pencil. Try to change some without hurting the meaning, especially if the same word appears twice in a sentence.

## Readers are scanners

Remember that readers are essentially scanners and will skip through a publication before reading it in earnest. Therefore, try to attract readers to the important story or stories. Every page should have a strong graphic element, usually a large headline or photograph. This will stop readers and let them know where the page begins. A spread or a page in which all the graphic elements have equal values can be confusing and doesn't tell the reader where to start. Help the reader by presenting material in order of importance placing material in size place or in some priority order (usually from the top left to the bottom right of the page, since this is the way most people read a publication).

Check that all spacing (between headlines and the start of text, between photos and captions, etc.) is consistent throughout. Avoid "bumping" headlines, heads placed side by side; they compete for attention and can even be mistakenly read as one.

A well-designed publication will have a distinct personality, tell readers what to read first; indicate where the eye should go and emphasize what's important.

## Editorial goals: serving needs and wants

Every editor struggles with the question, "What do my readers want to know?" This question is different from the statement: "My readers need to know . . ."

Editors in organizations must provide information that readers need, which will help the organization move forward. Yet if the publication contains nothing but need-to-know information it is in danger of boring and patronizing readers.

*Remember:* Answer questions that readers are asking and you'll win the loyalty, even the affection of readers. The tension between need-to-know and want-to-know come with the territory. Use it to serve your organization well.

- According to research, the mind takes 48 percent longer to understand a negative statement than a positive one. If possible, change negatives to positives.

- When was the last time you revised your mailing list? Check often to see that you are reaching those who should receive your publication.

- Copy set in all capital letters makes reading more difficult. It slows readers by more than 13 percent.

## What should your newsletter look like?

Looks alone don't make or break a newsletter; however, a well-designed piece attracts readers.

To make your publication attractive review other newsletters and collect approaches that appeal to you. Go easy on the number of typefaces you use (one serif body type, and one sans serif headline type should do it). Add lots of white space and don't run text across the entire page (one column).

Use simple design elements throughout your pages: pulled quotes, subheads, drop caps, kickers, screens, reverses, color, boxes, relevant clip art and illustrations.

## Speed Writing

Want to speed up your writing and overcome those blocks that cut your productivity?

Try these tips:

- **Having trouble** coming up with a lead? Skip it for a while and work on another

section of the article or report. Often you'll find it easier to write the lead after you've warmed up to the subject. Also: Try writing a working title and subtitle first. They may provide an idea for the lead.

- **Can't get going** on an uncompleted writing assignment the next day? Retype a few previous paragraphs – even revise them slightly. This technique will crank up your brain and fingers.

- **Are you stuck** on a particular section? Take a short physical – tasks break – a walk or some light exercise.

- **Frustrated** by a tough sentence or paragraph? Talk it out. Pretend you're explaining it to your reader or dictate it into a tape recorder, transcribe and edit it later.

## Layout and design that works

- Remember that layout and design should always be functional. Their job is to enhance the message – not impede it. These concepts should also communicate instantly the relative importance of items on a page and create a personality for the publication in keeping with its types of messages and readers.

- Design publications for both legibility and suitability. Legibility is concerned with how easy it is for a reader to decipher the words. It is affected by such things as size of type, width of columns, amount of grayness, glare from paper, and so on. Suitability covers the overall impression conveyed by the design and whether the various parts of the layout blend well.

- Avoid large gray areas that make a publication uninviting. Readers are turned off by large blocks of printed copy that look difficult for the eye to handle. An easy way to determine if a page design is too gray is to place a dollar bill – both vertically and horizontally on the page. If it touches only body copy, that area should be redesigned. Use subheads, artwork, narrower columns or something else to overcome the grayness.

- Avoid a layout that looks busy. Today's harried reader wants simple designs with items that are easy to locate. Reduce the number of elements per page, use fewer but larger photos. And be sure that each major item stands out well and is easy to spot.



# Editing for quality – A standard of good writing

Successful editing lies in your ability to delete a phrase here and a sentence there with the ultimate goal of informing the reader in the quickest and most understandable manner possible. Editing other people's work requires care and honesty, respecting the writer's style, the editor's needs, and the newsletter's objectives. A good editor knows when to cut and does not fiddle with good writing.

In editing your own work, you will find it helpful to let the story "cool," giving it a rest before going back over it. It is easier to identify unnecessary words or phrases when the piece is a day or two old rather than when it is still smoking.

Writing is really rewriting, editing, proofing, and then more writing, editing, and rewriting. Even seasoned writers fine tune their manuscripts, sometimes completely changing what they wrote initially.

Effective editing involves these questions:

- Can I replace this clause with a phrase?
- Can I replace this phrase with one word?
- Can I replace this fancy word with a

simpler one more commonly known?

Review the major facts that apply to the idea outlined in the lead by asking:

- What is most significant?
- What is most interesting?
- What can I leave out without affecting the story?
- Is the action clearly stated?

Nouns and verbs tell the story. If you can "see" the story in your mind's eye, the words probably describe the action logically and clearly.

- Does a word look funny?

If anything seems inaccurate or misspelled, look it up.

- Does anything raise doubts?

Never assume anything . . . never take it on faith. When in doubt, question the facts and then verify them in your notes or source material.

- Are the addresses, dates, times, and names correct?

Many corrections run by newspapers are concerned with incorrect addresses, dates, times, and names and titles. Compare names and titles with another source that you know is correct.

- Can the story be read to mean several different things?

- Does the story say what it should say?

Make sure you understand each word and its meaning within the context of the story. Do not make changes in copy just for the sake of making changes. Consider what the copy may imply or what the reader is likely to infer.

- Does the headline accurately reflect the story?

- Does the cutline (caption with photos) correspond with the text and your notes?

You should always look at the photograph when writing or editing the cutline. Make sure you know everyone in the picture or that you have reliable resources that can identify them for you – including your own notes.

- Are names spelled correctly and consistent with your style?

- Are titles, positions, and other personal facts accurate?

Again, look to your notes and other reliable resources.

## How to beat your enemies: Stand united!

A farmer, who had a quarrelsome family, after trying in vain to reconcile their differences with words, thought he might more readily prevail by an example. So he called his sons and told them to lay a bunch of sticks before him. Then, having tied the sticks into a bundle, he told the lads, one after another, to take it up and break it. They all tried, but tried in vain. Then, untying the bundle, he gave them the sticks to break one by one. This they did with the greatest ease. Then said the farmer, "Thus, my sons, as long as you remain united, you are a match for all your enemies, but differ and separate, and you are undone."

— Aesop





# Techniques for answering questions

- Don't wait for the right question to make your point. It may never come and your interviewer will completely control the agenda of the interview.

- Evade the question slightly – a favorite political ploy. Answer the proposed question briefly, then go on to your own prepared answer with a remark like: “The real issue here is...”

- Put the question in your own perspective or create a new perspective. (“Let me answer your question this way...” or “You’re overlooking the most important fact, which is...”)

- Be positive. Approach each issue with a positive appeal. Make it seem that you are taking the initiative – even if you are on the defensive!

- Never repeat the negative in a question. Instead of “No, I don’t think the labor movement is a thing of the past,” say “I think our union offers a perfect example of the vitality of the labor movement.”

- Don’t be afraid not to answer a question. Phrase the response: “I don’t want to misrepresent myself or my union. I’ll be happy to do a bit of research and get back to you.” (But make sure you get back to that reporter!)

- During your interview, avoid jargon and abstract concepts. Use language everyone understands. Be brief, but be specific.

- Speak in complete sentences. Avoid answering with a simple “yes” or “no.”

- Short, to-the-point sentences are most powerful. Use succinct and graphic “sound-bite” sentences that sum up your point of view. Draw anecdotes and analogies to

illustrate your message.

- Remember that TV and radio “sound bites” usually run from seven to 25 seconds in length. Try out your answers while looking at your watch.

- Assume an intelligent audience. A patronizing tone will alienate your audience.

- Build credibility. Share your credentials and accomplishments. Explain why you are the right person to address the issue.

- When answering a tough question, stay cool. Attack the issue, not the reporter.

- Don’t lie. Don’t say “no comment.” And don’t go “off the record.”

# Ten ways to put together a publication that gets read

1. For maximum impact and readability, use a sans serif typeface for headlines and a serif typeface for body copy.

2. Avoid using all caps for headlines it hinders reading. Instead use initial caps.

3. Keep related words together when headlines run to two or more lines – and avoid breaking lines at awkward or misleading points.

4. Break up text with subheads to help readers scan material quickly and provide visual interest to your piece.

5. Sprinkle your articles with quotes from sources. If you don’t have the time to interview, ask three questions in a memo and provide spaces for your interviewee to write answers (make sure to give a response due date) – this makes the information gathering and writing process easier for you. Plus you give readers information from a real person with a real voice.

6. Use captions to link photographs and

illustrations to a story, but avoid stating the obvious. For maximum readability, place captions below the artwork. Include photo credits in small type to show appreciation for photos contributed by fellow members.

7. When wrapping text around a graphic, edit out excessive hyphenation and unsightly, irregular spacing between words.

8. Want two ink colors in your publication, but your budget doesn’t cover it? Preprint a year’s supply of your newsletter stock using your second color on the nameplate, headers and footers. Print the body copy for each issue in black.

9. When using graphics, keep in mind that a single, large illustration is generally more appealing than numerous, small illustrations placed randomly about the page.

10. Use verbs in the present tense, rather than in past or future, to give headlines a greater sense of immediacy and impact.