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I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the position of lodge editor! You have two primary responsibilities. The first will be to monitor newsworthy items within the lodge and report on them through your lodge newsletter. Your other responsibility is to oversee the creation and production of your lodge's newsletter.

As lodge editor you have the very important task of keeping lodge members informed of lodge news and events. The newsletter you create will inform and entertain, as well as give members a stronger sense of belonging.

The sections that follow will take you through all the major steps of creating an interesting and informative newsletter. Going forward, you will learn about:

- Planning for the newsletter
- Designing and laying out the newsletter
- Writing the newsletter
- Editing the newsletter
- Producing and distributing the newsletter

III. DESIGNING YOUR NEWSLETTER

While it might seem intuitive to write your newsletter first, and then determine the layout and design, it's actually more effective to do the opposite. Your layout will determine the amount of content you will need. Secondly, the design of your newsletter will set the tone of the content, be it serious and informative or humorous and entertaining.

Remember, your lodge newsletter is unique, reflecting the personality of your lodge. This can be done through your choice of layout, typefaces, size, use of images and format. It's a good idea to make decisions about these things first, in order to be as efficient as possible.

A. SIZE

There are two popular sizes of paper that work best for a lodge newsletter. The first is 8.5" x 11", which is standard office paper. If you need more space for your newsletter, there is a larger size that's commonly available, 11" x 17", which is often referred to as "tabloid" size paper. Both sizes should be set up as landscape, meaning they are wider than they are tall.

B. LAYOUT

Readability is the key when making decisions about the layout of your lodge newsletter. The information should be easy to read and shouldn't be confusing to the eye. Use columns and white space to create a newsletter is recommended.

Long lines of text can confuse the eye and make it hard for a reader to easily move from one line to the next. The reader may feel overwhelmed and important information may be hard to find. To make reading easier, split up the text into two or three columns on each page.

The correct use of white space is another good way to increase the level of readability. White space refers to the amount of "open" or unused space on your page. It keeps your newsletter from looking cluttered and appears more attractive to the eye.

Some tips for creating good white space include:

- Keeping articles short and concise.
- Saving surplus information for the next newsletter, rather than trying to squeeze it into the current edition.
- Giving information room to breathe by allowing for margins around the top, bottom and sides of text and images.

Consistency is the final layout issue you should address. Your lodge newsletter should have the same look and layout for every issue. Using the same colors and logos, as well as making sure that recurring sections are in relatively the same location for each issue, significantly aids the reader. Members will become very comfortable with the publication, because they will always know where to look for the information they want.

C. TYPEFACES

In recent years the number of typefaces available has exploded. Today there are literally hundreds of thousands of different typefaces from which to choose. For this reason it can be overwhelmingly difficult to decide what's best for your lodge newsletter. The following information will give you some ideas and tips about choosing the right typeface.

There are two general families of fonts for you to use in your newsletter: serif and sans serif. Serif fonts are those that have "feet" on them. Common serif fonts include Times New Roman, Palatino and Garamond. These are good fonts for body text because they increase the level of readability, especially when used in smaller fonts, size 14 or less. **Serif fonts should look like this.**

The other kind of font, called sans serif, are those without "feet." These are good for larger font sizes, 16 pt or larger, which you would use to create strong headlines for articles. A good example of sans serif is Arial, the font you are looking at right now, but there are others to choose from, including Avant Garde, Futura and Gill.

To make certain that your newsletter looks appealing to the reader, there are a few more guidelines regarding fonts to follow:

- Reserve CAPS for headlines only. Use of caps within body text is distracting and looks awkward.
- Avoid using frilly or script fonts because they are often hard to read.
- Use bold and italics sparingly and only when trying to emphasize a point.

Remember that a good newsletter maintains consistency in how it uses typefaces throughout the document. For example, the sans serif font you use in the headline of an article should be the same font used in every headline you write for every newsletter you create. The same goes for body text. If you do not maintain consistency in your newsletter and use multiple fonts, with no rhyme nor reason, the newsletter will look cluttered and unorganized.

D. IMAGES

Used sparingly, pictures or images can be a great way to break up large blocks of text and give your newsletter some personality. They can help draw attention to important topics or visually explain news stories. In both cases, their main purpose is to assist readers and encourage them to read further.

Good images to use within your newsletter include photos that are integral to the story you are writing, which include action, have an interesting perspective and are aesthetically pleasing. Examples of this are photos of children or adults taking part in a Barneløpet, members attending special lodge events, presentations of checks or awards and head shots of important subjects.

Because the human eye is often drawn to images before text, it's a good idea to write a short, descriptive caption to accompany the photo. The caption should mention the subject of the article it is attached to, as well as the names of the people or subjects within the photo.

IV. WRITING YOUR NEWSLETTER

The effort you put into writing your newsletter is just as important to its success as the design and layout. While the design and layout elements draw initial attention to your newsletter, the stories and articles hold the reader's attention. This means the content of your newsletter must be interesting and relevant to the members.

Your newsletter content can come from a number of different places, but it typically falls into one of two categories: original content or reprinted content. Original content describes the stories, profiles and articles written specifically for your lodge newsletter. Reprinted content, on the other hand, includes stories and articles that originally ran in another publication that you are reprinting for your newsletter (*with permission, of course*).

A. ORIGINAL CONTENT

While it may sometimes feel daunting, coming up with ideas for original newsletter content can be easy. As a Sons of Norway member you are connected to a lodge and an international organization full of interesting people and events. In the end, finding content won't be the hardest part, rather deciding what has to be left out will be.

To begin collecting story ideas and your writing process there are a couple of sources you can always look to: lodge meetings and your fellow lodge members.

LODGE MEETINGS: When looking for story ideas and content for your newsletter, lodge meetings can be the best place to start. Often, during your lodge meetings there will be a number of interesting topics, important dates and future events discussed. All of these will be of interest to your readers and should be included in your newsletter.

Consider working with your lodge president and publicity director. They will typically have some great ideas for stories and have important information that lodge members should know about. You can interview them or ask them to provide you with information to be printed in the newsletter.

MEMBERS: Many of our members are very interesting people with lots of stories to share about history and their lives. These stories can be of high interest to other members in your lodge and make for good newsletter content. Consider doing an interview with members who have information they'd like to share with the rest of the lodge.

B. REPRINTED CONTENT

There are a number of different places where you can get content to reprint in your newsletter. While they may vary in the types of information they provide, they are all reliable sources for good newsletter content.

SONS OF NORWAY NEWSLETTER SERVICE

The newsletter service is a bi-monthly publication mailed to all lodge editors. It is also available for download in the members section of www.sonsofnorway.com. The newsletter service was designed for a single purpose: to provide lodges with content for their newsletter. Some lodges use the newsletter service in its entirety, sending out copies to all lodge members. Other lodges copy individual articles from the newsletter service to augment the content created by the lodge editor. If you are not currently receiving the Sons of Norway Newsletter Service, call Headquarters at 800-945-8851 and request it, or download it from www.sonsofnorway.com. Articles from this service can be used without obtaining special permission.

VIKING RESOURCE

Viking Resource is a quarterly online publication created by Sons of Norway Headquarters staff. It's available to read and download in the members section of www.sonsofnorway.com. Content can be copied from the original document and pasted into your lodge's newsletter.

Topics covered by Viking Resource vary from one issue to the next, including special dates and deadlines, information about

changes to Sons of Norway forms and policies and tips on membership recruitment and retention. Articles from the Resource can be copied without asking permission.

OTHER MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

There are numerous online and print publications that carry newsworthy stories and information that may be of value and interest to your lodge members. As long as you have permission from the original publication and give credit to the original author you can reprint stories in your newsletter.

(Note: *On-line content and images, as with printed material, usually require permission in order to be copied. Some websites will provide instructions on how to secure permission and guidelines for using their material. If instructions are not provided, an e-mail to their webmaster or designated contact will be necessary.*)

Some sources of information that may be of interest to your members include:

- News of Norway (*a free publication from the Norwegian Embassy in Washington D.C.*)
- Sons of Norway website (www.sonsofnorway.com)
- Western Viking
- Norway Times
- Norwegian cultural websites
- Other lodge newsletters

C. SPECIAL SECTIONS

Many lodge newsletters include recurring or special sections of information. Having sections that repeat in each issue or some other regular schedule can be helpful to you when you are trying to plan your issues in advance. Some examples of special sections are:

- "From the President" which is a short letter from the lodge president that addresses topics of interest to the entire lodge.

- "Gratulerer med dagen!" (*Congratulations on the day!*) for announcing birthdays, anniversaries, and miscellaneous congratulations to members on special days.
- "Upcoming Events and Fundraisers" where you can list future events that your lodge or members are involved in.
- "Introduction of new members" where you welcome new members into the lodge by writing a short profile on them. This helps everyone get to know each other.
- "Financial Benefits Counselor Column" which is designed to allow your local Sons of Norway representative to share insurance information with the lodge.

D. REQUIRED INFORMATION

On the front page of your newsletter there are certain items that should always appear. Their purpose is to give the reader specific information about the lodge and to provide information for archiving the newsletter. At or near the top of the front page of your newsletter should be:

- Volume number that corresponds with the number of years the newsletter has been in print (*i.e. volume 5 would represent the 5th year of publication*)
- The publication date
- The name of your newsletter
- Your lodge logo or the Sons of Norway logo
- The name and number of your lodge, including district number (*i.e. Nidaros 1-001*)

Toward the bottom of the front page of the newsletter there are some other items that you should include. These pieces of information are to give the reader information about the contents of the current newsletter.

- Table of Contents, which names the various articles or sections within the newsletter and their corresponding page numbers.
- Newsletter deadlines and editor contact information
- Special announcements from the editor

V. EDITING YOUR NEWSLETTER

When you have all the content and imagery for the newsletter, it's time to proofread and edit the content. This step is crucial because it affects the readability of your newsletter, which directly affects its popularity within your lodge.

There are three main areas of which you should be mindful: Grammar, misspellings and factual errors. Each is as important as the next and should be given equal attention when you are proofing and editing your newsletter.

A. GRAMMAR

Always check your grammar, making sure that sentences flow correctly and paragraphs read well. When checking grammar, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does any sentence say something other than what you intend to say?
- Could any sentence be clearer or more concise?
- Does the voice change from one sentence, or paragraph, to the next (*i.e. change from I to we, or from us to them*)?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you should go back and edit your newsletter content. Make sure that the newsletter content expresses the intended information in a clear, consistent manner. Doing so will make your newsletter easier to read and more enjoyable for the reader.

Consulting the Associated Press Style Guide, available at most libraries and bookstores, as well as a grammar book, may prove helpful when proofreading. There are some excellent grammar guides available on-line, such as the American Heritage Book of English Usage (<http://www.bartleby.com/64/>).

B. MISSPELLINGS

Misspellings are easy to make and can ruin a good newsletter. Luckily they can be easy to catch and correct. Many computer programs, such as Microsoft Word, have a spell-checking program that will catch most, but not all, of

your misspellings. It's a good idea to start there to correct the majority of spelling errors.

However, since spell-check doesn't catch all spelling errors (*i.e. your intention was to use "too" instead of "to"*) you need to proofread the content yourself as well. Here are a few suggested tips that will make this process easier:

First, employ an extra set of eyes during the proofreading and editing stage. After reading the same articles multiple times, your eyes may not catch errors, because your mind knows what the content is supposed to say and overrides what the eye actually sees. To get around this, ask another lodge member to read through your content for grammar or spelling errors. Often, a "fresh" pair of eyes will catch errors that your own eyes overlooked.

Also, consulting a dictionary and thesaurus when in doubt is a good practice. These two resources are the best place to look for words that are commonly misspelled or used incorrectly. While a dictionary and thesaurus can be purchased at any bookstore, you can also find similar resources on the internet. For example, Merriam-Webster offers a free dictionary and thesaurus, online at <http://www.m-w.com/>. A good, quick reference of commonly misspelled words is available online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_common_misspellings.

C. FACTUAL ERRORS

Incorrect details can be a problem for a lodge newsletter. For example, if you give the wrong date for an event, or list the wrong person as a contact for a lodge committee, the error can have a serious negative effect on participation. That's why it's always a good idea to double-check your information and verify that you have the correct times, dates and locations in your articles.

VI. PRODUCING AND DISTRIBUTING YOUR NEWSLETTER

Congratulations! You are in the final steps of creating your newsletter. At this point, you should have all of your newsletter content laid out in MS Word, Quark Xpress or some other page layout program. You should also have proofread and edited your content for spelling, grammar and factual errors. Now it's time to produce and distribute your newsletter.

There are two types of distribution that you can take advantage of: digital and hard-copy. Both have their own benefits and your choice should depend on the budget, the needs of your lodge and the preferences of the readers.

A. HARD-COPY DISTRIBUTION

Hard-copy distribution is often the preferred form of distribution for lodges that have members without access to the internet or e-mail. A printed newsletter can make a great impression and reach the largest number of members since everyone has postal service of some kind. But there are some issues to keep in mind when producing a hard-copy newsletter.

First, the method of production needs to be considered. Depending on the number of newsletters you need to create, you can either print out the copies at home on your own printer, or use a business like Kinko's to produce your newsletter.

Second, postage costs are a factor. The size and weight of the newsletter, frequently of distribution and the size of the mailing list will all impact postage costs. Postage costs can add up significantly over the course of a year.

Also, with a hard-copy newsletter, you are often limited to a certain amount of information for each issue. This can be good or bad, depending on the situation. On one hand, it's a good thing in that it ensures all content is of the highest quality and importance. On the other hand it can be frustrating having to cut interesting stories or content due to space limitations.

Finally, a hard-copy newsletter can be cumbersome if you are creating the entire issue yourself. They often require folding, labeling, tabbing or

stapling, which can take up a lot of time during the distribution process. If you are producing a hard-copy newsletter, ask your lodge for help, or appoint a small committee to assist you and increase the efficiency of distribution.

B. DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

Digital distribution of your newsletter can be the most efficient method if you are comfortable using a computer and e-mail, and most, if not all of your members have internet access. By distributing your newsletter digitally you can reach your readers faster and cheaper.

It takes only seconds for someone to receive an e-mail. This means that it's better for newsletters that contain a lot of time-sensitive information, such as special events announcements, or changes to meeting times or dates. Hard-copy newsletters can take many days to get to the homes of the recipients and some information can be out of date before readers receive their newsletter.

Another issue is one of cost. Distributing your newsletter through digital channels is often cheaper because there is no printing or postage costs. By merely attaching your newsletter to an e-mail, you can have a positive impact on your lodge's budget, in turn allowing for more programming or events within your lodge.

In the end, it's always a good idea to find out which format your readers prefer. This can be done as easily as asking them at lodge meetings or conducting a short survey. Doing so will ensure that your newsletter receives the highest level of acceptance and will have the greatest readership possible.

