

# Creating Top-Notch Newsletters

## Tips for Animal Welfare Organizations



**Quick tip:**

Pictures of animals and humans are engaging.

### Wondering if this brief is for you?

Already have a newsletter, but want to make it even better?

**Read on.**

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Just getting started and want to get it right, right out of the gate? We've got you covered.

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Looking to improve retention and raise money?

**You're definitely in the right place.**

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### Let's get started!

Your donor newsletter is a critical part of your stewardship and fundraising plan. It reports back to donors to let them know their giving matters. It improves long-term donor retention and it raises immediate revenue.

While solicitations focus on the work that needs to be done with much-needed donations, newsletter is a place to celebrate all the good work that has happened. All the good work that donors have made possible.

And if you're working in an animal welfare organization, day in, day out, you see the incredible impact of donors' gifts.

Whether it's providing shelter and refuge, critical medical treatment, or compassionate care to animals who would otherwise suffer, you already have a treasure trove of "good news" stories to share with your donors.

**Now you just need to find the best way to share that impact through your donor newsletter.**

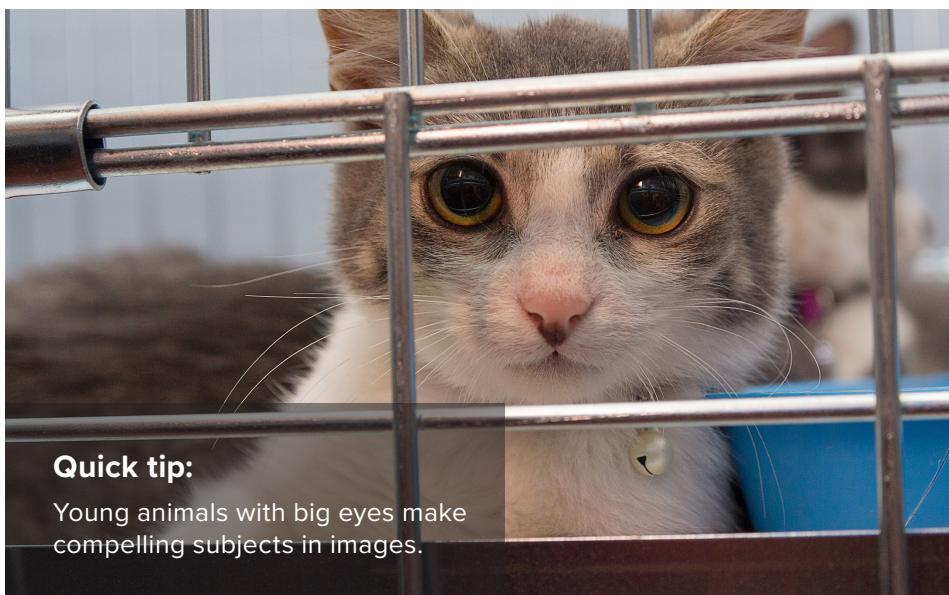
## Start strong with strong strategy

Does your newsletter strategy meet the needs and expectations of your donors?

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Does the timing, package pieces, and newsletter length boost donor engagement?

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## Our top recommendations

The primary goal for your donor newsletter should be donor stewardship and engagement, followed by raising additional revenue for your programs. To achieve all these things, you need to



ensure that your newsletter is targeting the right people, at the right time, with the right package and message.

We have some tried-and-tested approaches for your newsletter strategy:

**Audience:** Donors need to be your target audience. We've seen donor newsletters that try to be everything to everybody—volunteers, members, corporate sponsors. Resist the urge to expand your audience. Staying focused on donor stewardship will make for a stronger and more engaging newsletter.

**Timing:** Mail 2 to 4 times a year, with an emailed version for each.

**Length:** The optimal length for a newsletter is 4 to 6 pages. Our preference is 4. If you're starting out, start there. If you're currently doing a longer or shorter version, test!

**Package:** Send your newsletter in an envelope. Tests have shown that a newsletter in an envelope performs better than a self-mailer.

Always include a separate reply device in the mailed package. Stewardship might be the primary goal, but a newsletter done right will also generate significant revenue for your organization.



## Choose the right content, tell the right stories

Does your newsletter content tell your donor about their contributions and impact?

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Does your content make your donors feel good?  
Are you telling the right stories?

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**A strong donor newsletter should report back on impact, express gratitude, and keep donors involved in—and excited by—your work. And the best way to do that? Through stories.**

### Stories, stories, stories

We understand the world around us through stories. If you're working with animals, you probably have hundreds of them. Don't let them go to waste!

Always make use of the cover page with content that has strong emotional interest—like an animal success story.

Here are some ideas we've seen work well, stories with

emotional triggers that evoke responses like fear, anger, compassion, and the desire to act.

- ▶ Spotlights a senior pet who lost their guardian and found themselves without a caregiver or home. Show donors how they gave safe refuge and care by helping to provide a loving foster home.
- ▶ Surgeries and treatments to help animals get relief from

pain or live a full life—made possible because of donor support.

- ▶ Letters to the donors from animals in their own words! How a pet found a forever home and what it meant to them.

And remember, the donor should always see themselves in the story. How they helped make this success possible.



#### Quick tip:

Use pictures that demonstrate the excellent, loving care provided to animals.

## Other important content

Of course, a mix of content is important. Here are just a few of our other recommendations:

**Program spotlights**—Spotlight special programs that are made possible through donations. Learning about your veterinary services, a Kids Club, or an emergency after-hours clinic brings donors a little closer to your work.

**Donor spotlights**—Consider a specific type of donor to spotlight, like a monthly donor, bequest donor, or organizer of a community fundraising event. It's a way to spotlight your

heroes and promote different ways of giving to other donors.

**Tips and lists!** A great way to share information and break up design. For example: The top 5 ways you benefit from living with a pet, How to get ready for adopting a dog, or 3 things you can do to keep wildlife safe during the winter.

**Offers** to let donors know what else they can do to support the work they care deeply about. Monthly giving, bequests, or attending an event are all good examples.

**Short “ads”** to recruit Foster parents, highlight adoption details, or prompt an upcoming microchip clinic.

#### Pro tip:

Limit features about your organization. AGMs, staff updates, and CEO announcements can be important to include and often add credibility and transparency to the newsletter. But they aren't about the donor and they're likely not about what the donor really wants to read.



## Write copy that will get read... or at least scanned

Is your copy compelling, with emotional triggers that prompt readers to act?

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Is your copy easy for donors to read? Is it easy for donors to scan?

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### Quick tip:

If you haven't noticed, image captions are important! Use them!

**This seems like an easy one. Write content that your donors will want to read and they'll read it, right? Not necessarily.**

Copy not only needs to be written well, leaning into emotional triggers and connecting with donors by using a conversational tone, it also needs to be easy to read.

We've seen content that's compelling, but the copy was dense, too hard to skim, and was simply abandoned by readers. You need to make it easy for donors.

## Readability

Readability means shorter words and sentences, aiming

for a grade 6 (or lower) level.

Two tools to assess the readability of your copy include The Hemingway app (which assesses reading grade) and The Flesch Reading-Ease, which measures copy readability by looking at the length of sentences and words.

## Scannability

Only about a quarter of readers will actually read your copy. But most people will view images and photos, headers and call-outs.

This means you need to write copy that is easily skimmable. Your donor should be able to "get the gist" of the story

by reading only the headers, captions, and opening sentences. So start with them, and make them strong.

### Pro tip:

Don't forget to use "YOU" often! The word "you" pulls in the donor—it reminds them that the newsletter is about them. The more "yous" in your copy, the more donor-centric your copy.

Does the design of the newsletter make it easier for donors to consume your content?

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Are images and artwork used frequently to tell your stories?

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## Design your newsletter to inspire and drive conversions

Thoughtful, inspired design can make your newsletter shine. This is where strategy, content, and copy come together.

Let's look at what we call the 3 Cs of Good Newsletter Design—Clean, Concise, and Consistent.

### Clean Design

Newsletter design should include lots of whitespace. Don't overcrowd the newsletter with anything that doesn't need to be there.

We recommend a maximum of 4 colours in your newsletter template.

### Concise Design

Don't scare readers off with dense walls of copy—the optimal length for reading is typically 40-60 characters. Copy that runs the length of a page is just too hard to read.

Add visual interest by using bullets, pull quotes, text boxes, and images.

Take up-close pictures of the animals in your care and make sure they appear frequently. These photos are telling your story more than you think.

Again (and we can't stress this enough) make

it skimmable with large headers, subheaders, and font that's easy to read (on light backgrounds).

### Consistent Design

Keep the newsletter design consistent. You want donors to recognize your newsletter when it arrives in the mail. Stay true to your branding with consistent use of logos and brand colours.





## Need help with your newsletter?

Need help getting started?  
Want some advice on  
improving your existing  
newsletter?

Reach out to us online:  
**hello@give.agency** or  
**www.give.agency**.



We've been creating  
compelling, donor-focused  
newsletters for more than  
a decade. We understand  
how best-practice strategy,  
strong content and copy,  
and first-rate design can  
come together to create  
real magic.

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fundraising agency.**

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project management types  
who help nonprofits—just  
like yours—raise money  
and do more good.

