

Is Your Credit Union Newsletter Effective in this Ever-Evolving Medium?

Best practices and innovative offerings from Synergent

Newsletters can do much more than simply accompany your quarterly statements. A successful newsletter is a direct link to your members. Newsletters help members stay connected and engaged with your credit union, keep them informed of your latest offerings, and create loyalty that leads to life long membership. Read on to find out how to ensure your newsletter reaches its full potential.

→ Three Keys to Ensure Your Newsletter is Effective

1. Establish your newsletter objectives

- Increase credit union income through product promotion
- Educate members about credit union benefits
- Provide personal financial management information
- Increase overall membership or key target audience

2. Develop a masthead and newsletter name that will:

- Attract the attention of your members
- Include a slogan and/or benefit statement
- Reflect the culture of your credit union
- Set the tone and style for the rest of the newsletter

3. Grab attention throughout your newsletter

- Intriguing, emotional photographs that members can relate to
- Strong and concise headlines and subheads
- Charts, graphs and informative calendars
- Highlight important information

"Perhaps the most important goal of your newsletter is to encourage member interaction and engagement. If your entire newsletter can serve as a call to action for various niches in your membership, it can serve to help not only educate your members, but to guide them to the products and services you offer that help improve their financial lifestyles. The more members see your credit union as their go-to source for financial advice and assistance, the more likely they are to use you for a lifetime and to share that with their friends and family."

Mark Arnold, CCUE
President
On the Mark Strategies



Walloped by winter weather? We can help!

Old Man Winter can be brutal, dropping snow-laden tree limbs onto rooftops, sneaking under shingles to soak the ceiling below, driving furnaces into nervous breakdowns, and turning perfectly good cars into ice skates. Fortunately, you have a good way to cope with an unexpected winter expense; you're a member of our credit union!

Need help writing your newsletter? Every quarter Synergent supplies our credit union partners with fresh, new product articles, member education, and financial tips that can be used in newsletters. Synergent also offers copywriting and proofing services.

→ Content is King

Maximize your message and grab the reader's attention with interesting, informative, locally sourced articles.

- **Make your newsletter worth reading.** Carefully choose your content. Keep the message simple.
- **Keep writing brief and to the point.** Time how long it takes to read the article or marketing piece.
- **Focus on the member** and how the credit union can help them with their needs.
- **Use active nouns and verbs;** offer a benefit or new development in your headline.
- **Use subheads, short sentences, bullets, lists, charts, graphs, and paragraphs** to make copy "scannable" and easy to consume.
- **Lead with strong items that have broad appeal and organize your content based on significance.** For example, a message from the President should have a regular spot before or immediately following the lead article. Financial literacy tips, rates and staff listings should also have regular spots. Those familiar with your newsletter will always know where to find what they want.
- **Include timely articles** relating to happenings at the credit union and in the economy.
- **Combine educational and promotional articles.** An article about the importance of good credit and how it relates to loan rates, for example, serves not only to educate members but also spotlights loan services you offer.
- **Include a call to action**—something for the reader to follow-up on as a result of having read the article. To enhance the call to action, place a timeline on it.
- **Proofread.** The writing in your newsletter is a reflection of your credit union. If your newsletter has grammatical errors and typos, members will question the accuracy of its contents and its professional acumen.

→ Creating the Total Package

Make sure the design matches the look and feel of your brand

- **Stick to a format.** If you stick to a consistent format, readers will know where to find certain things.
- **Keep designs simple and clean.**
- **Consider a table of contents** which can sway customers who are not interested in front-page articles to open the newsletter for content they may wish to read.
- **Highlight important information** with bold type and quotes.
- **Substitute copy for more visuals,** photography, illustrations or charts to keep it interesting.
- **Incorporate member photos** with testimonials, and to promote credit union events and give-a-ways.

➔ Newsletter Channels

The most popular way to get information to members is by including newsletters in quarterly statements and e-Statements. However, there are other options, including email, to consider when determining how to reach your membership.

Statements and e-Statements

- Cost effective – statements are already going out, so there is no additional postage cost.
- Guarantees it reaches every member.

Self-mailers

- Can be mailed at your convenience any time of the year.
- Guarantees it is seen by those who may not open their statements.

Email

- Can be sent at your convenience.
- Cost-efficient because of the savings in time, printing and mailing costs.
- Offers trackable results on opens, clicks and readership.
- Provides a higher response rate with a more receptive audience who has opted-in to email communications.

Online

- Can be published on your schedule.
- Cost-efficient because of the savings in time, printing and mailing costs.
- Offers big benefits for Search Engine Optimization (SEO). The more often you upload new pages featuring fresh content to your website, the higher it will rank.



➔ Tracking Member Feedback

Is your newsletter meeting the needs of your members? You can find out by gathering feedback:



- Online using data tracking systems
- With focus groups
- With membership surveys
- With informal members surveys from your front-line staff

Tips for making Email Newsletters successful

Be consistent. Send it on the same day, whether it is every quarter, month, two weeks, or a Wednesday. Frequency builds familiarity, and members will look forward to newsletter day.

Keep copy brief. One main article plus one to two shorter articles, and perhaps a tip or fact of the month.

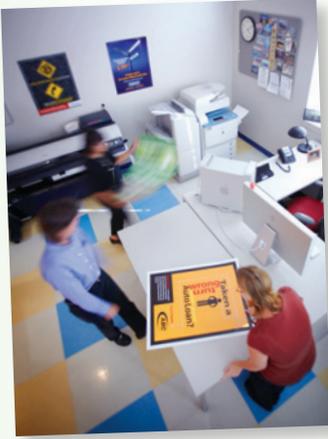
Use exciting language in the subject line to create excitement.

Highlight the most important piece of news and change it from issue to issue.

Link your newsletter to your website. In return, promote your newsletter on your website by including a sign-up form.

Archive back issues, with an index on your website.

Stimulate member action by including discount coupons for products and services; incorporating a contest (such as find "X" and win a prize); soliciting member testimonials and recommendations; including links or URLs to online loan applications or staff email.



→ Sample Newsletter Process

Creating a successful newsletter takes time and effort. The experienced team at Synergent will help you make the process easier.

The table below shows a sample newsletter production schedule from third quarter 2012. We will work with you to develop a custom schedule for your newsletter—this is for illustrative purposes only to show you the steps involved in production.

Sample Production Steps	Date Due
Copy and graphics submitted by credit union	8/30
Design and layout begins	8/31
Begin proof and review process	9/6
Final proof and credit union approval	9/17
Printing of newsletter for statement	9/18
Insert into statements	10/1

→ Why Use a Newsletter?

A valuable method of staying in touch with your members

Effective newsletters are extremely relevant! According to a recent Custom Publishing Council poll in *Denver Magazine*, consumers are interested in information sent to them if it is in the form of a custom publication such as a newsletter. The study indicated that these pieces are valued because they can help consumers make better decisions. Furthermore, 74% said getting information from an interesting collections of articles is more appealing than the same information in advertising!

From providing relevant articles, to design and mailing, Synergent is your one stop shop for your credit union newsletter. We can provide as much support as you need to make sure your message reaches your members when and how you want it to.

Considering a redesign? We can help! Like any other marketing or communications effort, your newsletters must help reinforce your credit union's brand. Newsletters must match the voice, look and feel of your brand, down to colors and photographs used. We will help you create a newsletter that reinforces that brand. Contact your Direct Marketing Service Representative for more information on how you can get started today.

**For more information,
contact your Direct
Marketing Services
Representative.**

1-800-341-0180, ext. 805
1-800-442 6715 in Maine
marketingservice@
synergentcorp.com

Newsletter Redesign for Maximum Member Impact

Acadia Federal Credit Union came to Synergent for assistance redesigning their newsletter to better align with a fresh and innovative brand.

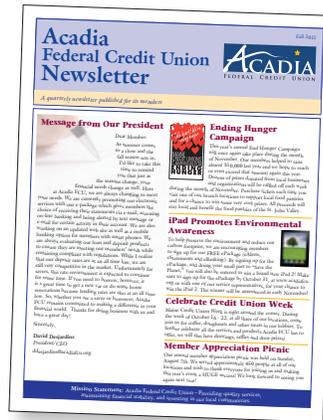
Kate Dumond, Marketing Manager for the credit union, explained, "With the redesign, we added new colors, more pictures and fresh content that is interesting and pertinent to our members. The redesigned four-page newsletter is delivered to each household two times a year as a separate mailing (the old two-page newsletter was sent quarterly and included with statements)."

Guidance for great results

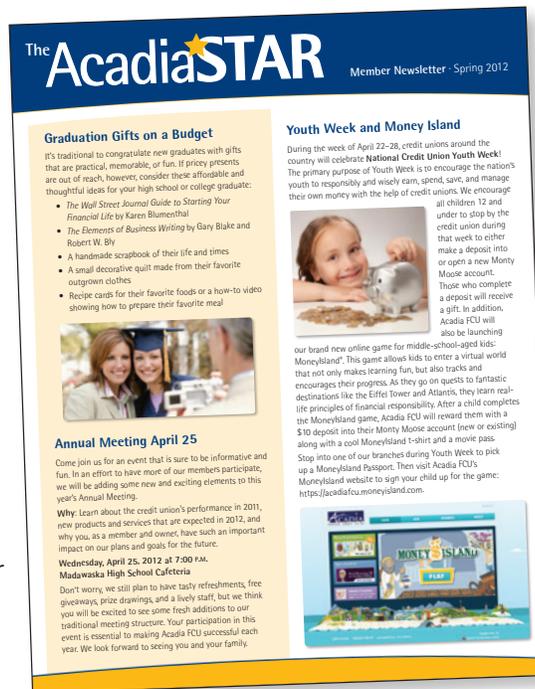
"We worked with Direct Marketing Services which was able to take our conceptual ideas and make them a reality. We approached them with some examples and discussed flashy design ideas and they were able to bring everything in our heads to life. They really gave our newsletter more of that "WOW factor" that we were looking for," said Dumond.

Maximum member impact

"Members seem to read the newsletter more now because it is being mailed as a separate piece. Also, because the news is fresh, pertaining to community events, and directly affecting our members, more members have commented on it and seem to be talking about it with friends and relatives!"



Before



After



BRANCHES: FORT KENT, MADAWASKA, ST. FRANCIS AND ST. AGATHA, MAINE

FIELD OF MEMBERSHIP: ELIGIBILITY FOR ACADIA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION IF YOU LIVE, WORK, WORSHIP OR ATTEND SCHOOL IN AROOSTOOK COUNTY, OR ARE AN IMMEDIATE RELATIVE OF AN EXISTING MEMBER

ASSETS: \$119,000,000

MEMBERS: 10,000

For more information, contact your Direct Marketing Services Representative.

1-800-341-0180, ext. 805
1-800-442 6715 in Maine
marketingservice@synergentcorp.com