

Effective communication is an essential component of organizational success. It reinforces the organization's vision, connects neighbors to the "cause", fosters process improvement and facilitates change. No matter how you look at it, communication is an important part of the landscape and cannot be taken for granted.

There are now more than ever, more ways to reach your audience. Here at SE Uplift we can assist with developing e-newsletters, websites, print newsletters and more.

Email:

Perhaps the easiest way for neighbors to communicate is through email. However, it may not be the best way to reach a large audience.

An electronic mailing list (commonly referred to as Listserv¹ but perhaps more appropriately called an e-list), can go a long way to keeping your neighbors in the loop.

Wikipedia offers this explanation for the different types of e-lists:

Announcement list: Is used primarily as a one-way conduit of information and can only be "posted to" by selected people.

Discussion list: Is where any subscriber may post. On a discussion list, a subscriber uses the mailing list to send

¹ Listserv is a registered trademark

Six Rules:

- **KEEP IT SIMPLE:** Unfocused, run-on sentences filled with jargon and buzz words create confusion. Keep in mind that language is often an imprecise tool.
- **USE METAPHORS AND ANALOGY:** Metaphors, analogy, examples, or just plain colorful language helps communicate complex ideas simply and effectively.
- **USE MANY DIFFERENT FORUMS TO SPREAD THE WORD:** Spread the word in big meetings, informal one-on-one or group talks and formal presentations. When the same message comes at people from six different directions, it's going to be heard.
- **REPEAT KEY MESSAGES:** For the message to be repeated as often as possible, plan ongoing communication opportunities including developing your key messages.
- **LEAD BY EXAMPLE:** If you do the opposite of what you say, no one will listen to you. You have to "walk the talk".
- **LISTEN AND BE LISTENED TO:** Communication should be two-way. Explain the vision, and then listen to the feedback.

(source: Pony Express, March 1997, p. 24-25)

messages to all the other subscribers, who may answer in similar fashion. Thus, actual discussion and information exchanges can happen. Neighborhoods must be careful when using this type of e-list that they do not discuss or deliberate about any topic that they may be voted on in an upcoming meeting (see ONI Standards).

Some mailing lists are open to anyone who wants to join them, while others require an approval from the list owner before one can join. Joining a mailing list is called "subscribing" and leaving a list is called "unsubscribing".

Many companies offer electronic mailing list services for free so your neighborhood can decide what works best for them. Google Groups and Yahoo Groups are two common options.

E-newsletters:

E-newsletters are a simple way to proactively reach your neighbors. They allow you to build relationships by sharing a little about your neighborhood. They allow you to establish your reputation and keep you in your neighbors' minds. Best of all, they are relatively inexpensive and pretty easy to manage.

Getting subscribers is easy. You

Seven Reasons For E-Newsletters:

1. **It complements your website.** Most people spend more time reading and answering emails than surfing the web. With an e-newsletter you can get in front of them on a regular basis.
2. **Email newsletters are more cost-effective than print newsletters.** And environmentally friendly!
3. **E-newsletters are interactive.** In a printed newsletter you can refer to your website but you have to hope that your readers don't mistype the URL when they go to their browser. With an e-newsletter you can make sure your site is just a click away.
4. **You can test its effectiveness.** Depending on the sophistication of the program you're using to send out your newsletters you can track which links in your newsletter are being clicked on and which are being ignored.
5. **E-newsletters encourage word-of-mouth advertising.** It's easy for your subscribers to forward your email to a friend or associate, especially with a friendly reminder from you at the end of each issue.
6. **You're preaching to the choir.** Your subscribers have signed up to receive your e-newsletters, they want to know when your next event is.
7. **Starting today will help build your subscriber base.** Now that e-newsletters can contain formatted text, embedded images and even polls and surveys you're no longer limited to boring plain text to get your message across. Make it fun and creative!

can ask for people's email addresses on your website, at meetings and at events. Let them know you have a newsletter and they can get the latest information about the neighborhood, the city and your association.

Websites:

Another effective way to reach your neighbors is through the internet. Seventy-five percent of the American population has internet access. Websites allow organizations an opportunity to passively reach their audience. Websites can be "brochure"-like, meaning fairly static, with a minimum of information or they can be quite dynamic with new information changing all the time. Both are acceptable. Websites also allow neighbors access to your organization without attending meetings.

Southeast Uplift is now able to offer our 20 neighborhoods free, template-based websites. Using Drupal, an open source content management platform, SE Uplift is able to provide neighborhood's sites that allow for multiple user input, customizable navigation and new page creation. In addition, minutes, photos and files are easily uploaded through a fairly simple interface.

Print Newsletters:

It's easy to underestimate the value of a newsletter. But a newsletter allows you to connect with your neighbors on an ongoing basis and create a greater sense of community. Your neighbors like to know what is going on in the area and it is an effective way to invite them to upcoming events.

Print newsletters require time and effort and can be more expensive than other methods. In addition to the time it takes to develop content, you must consider layout and a delivery method at the very least.

For a newsletter to succeed it must provide accurate and current information. The information must be relevant to the recipient and the format must be pleasing and readable. Without these three requisites, the effectiveness of the newsletter is diminished.

A print newsletter can take many forms. They can be in the form of a brochure or pamphlet. These can be mailed but the cost of postage can be prohibitive for neighborhoods. Southeast Uplift neighborhoods can take advantage of our bulk-mailing rate. Contact SE Uplift for information.