



Why Should We Consider a Monthly Team Newsletter?

By Tim Brown

If you have a puppet ministry in your local church or are on a traveling team, it's a great idea to publish a monthly newsletter. Here are 5 reasons to consider it.

1. Monthly newsletters keep your team and ministry partners informed. For church teams, it allows those who pray for you to see the results of their prayers and encourages them to continue praying. Each letter is a reminder that you are an active team and as people see what's being accomplished it can help increase their support.
2. They are a great promotional tool. If you use puppets in Children's Church, it's easy for the adults in the main service to forget about the team. A monthly newsletter is great reminder, especially to those who have children in your ministry. Also, as people read your letter, they may think of a church or organization looking for a puppet team. It's possible to get new bookings off of consistent newsletters.
3. They cause you to review your ministry and team monthly. To put together a newsletter, you need to look at what's happened over the past month to find highlights to include. Working on a newsletter is a great time to reflect on what your team is accomplishing, what is working well, and what can work better.
4. They provide a historical record of what your team does. When you have a great program at a particular location, you tend to think you'll remember it for a long time. Sometimes that happens, but most of the time it doesn't. I've forgotten most of the programs we've done in churches across New York and other states, but I have several years' worth of newsletters that I can review. During times of discouragement, it's a great help to review past meetings as a reminder that you really are making a difference.
5. By including a list of upcoming meetings, newsletters cause you to consistently review the coming months. It's easy to get focused on just the next meeting, especially if you minister weekly. Meetings set a month or two in advance are forgotten until the last minute and then you have to scramble to prepare for them. A consistent newsletter keeps you looking ahead and helps you better prepare for upcoming meetings.

What should I include in the newsletter?

When we had a traveling team, we put out a monthly newsletter to 100 families and individuals. It took some work, but was well worth it. Here are the things included in our newsletters.

1. Highlights from the past month. Share some of the exciting things that took place: a new skit that impacted the children, a record attendance at one of your meetings, commitments children made after your presentation, etc. Don't just include positive highlights. Include some of your struggles in general terms.

2. A specific story about the impact your team made during the month. People love stories, especially uplifting ones. I get a newsletter from a children's worker in Syracuse that is full of stories. It's usually at least three pages long, but when I sit down with it, I read it from cover to cover. There's something about a real life story that grabs your attention.
3. Answers to prayer from the last newsletter. When you include a prayer section in your letter, don't forget to share answers. If I know my prayers are accomplishing something, I'll keep praying. If I pray for a ministry for several months and have no clue how effective those prayers are I'll probably stop.
4. Prayer Requests for the coming month. We consider our prayer supporters vital team members. This is a specific way they can be a part of our puppet ministry even if they never see a single puppet show. Our traveling team was a huge success mostly, I believe, to the prayers of the people receiving our newsletter. As you give the requests, make them specific. In fact in our newsletter, we included a bookmark with the requests, so people could put it in their Bible as a consistent reminder.
5. A look ahead at upcoming meetings or events. List the scheduled meetings for the next month or so.
6. A thank you to the readers for their support.
7. Contact information. Include an email address or some other way for people to contact you. Some may send an encouraging card, a financial gift to your ministry, or want information on how to book your team.

How do I publish a monthly newsletter?

- Step 1: Create a basic letter and then save it as a template. Once done, you don't have to worry about it again unless you want to tweak it. When you open that template, it creates a new document. Any changes you make do not affect the template.
- Step 2: Determine your content. Make a list of all the topics or information you want to include in the letter and then prioritize the list. Turn each item on your list into a question.
- Step 3: Write the letter. Determine how much space you want the topic to cover. Answer the question or questions you posed for that topic. Write more than the amount of space you want to use. Read the article and determine an appropriate title and type it as the headline. Continue in the same manner with the other topics. Don't worry about fitting it all in at this point. You want to get all the content on first.
- Step 4: Edit the letter. Review and edit each section trimming it down to the allotted space. Look for words or phrases or even entire sentences to cut that won't affect the content.
- Step 5: Proofread the letter. Run it through the grammar and spell checker with your word processing program, but also have someone proof read it to catch things that are missed.
- Step 6: Print and pass out your letter. You can mail it, email it, post it, hand it out, etc.

A consistent newsletter has great benefit for your team. It not only gives additional promotion for your team but can provide a basis of prayer support that's invaluable.