Back to Basics: Journalism 101 for Associations

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Member-Generated Content for Your Association’s Publications
The Basics

• Know Your Authors’/Writers’ Background
• Establish a Good Relationship
• Understand Your Audience/Medium
• Article Soliciting and Written Guidelines
• Helpful Critique v. Harsh Criticism
• Peer Review Everything
• The Editing Process
• Helpful Resources
Know Your Authors’/Writers’ Background

- What’s Their Given Profession?
- What Type of Writer are They?
- Can You Work With Them?
- Get Insights from Coworkers
- Are They Responsive and Timely?
- Trial and Error
Establish a Good Relationship

• Maintain Open Lines of Communication From the Beginning
• Email is Great, but Don’t be Afraid to Get on the Phone
• Update, Update, Update!
Understand Your Audience/Medium

• Print, Digital, Podcast, or all of the Above?
• National, Regional, or Local
• Publication Timing: Monthly, Weekly, or Daily?
Article Soliciting and Written Guidelines

• Always Ask for an Outline
• Give Feedback Direction Before Greenlighting the Article
• Provide Written Guidelines re: Word Count, Style, Citations, Etc.
• Editorial Guidelines Should be on Your Website
• Send Them Previously Published Articles and Samples
Helpful Critique v. Harsh Criticism

• Most Professionals (Lawyers, Doctors, Accountants) do NOT Have Journalism Experience—Remember That!
• Start With the Positive Before Dumping on the Negative
• Be Honest But Never Use the Following Words: “Bad/Poor Writing”
• Your Goal is to Get a Good Article
Peer Review

• You Can Always Fix Poor Sentence Structure and Awkward Phrasing But You Cannot Fix Inaccurate Theories or Arguments
• Allow for Extra Time to Do This During Your Article Lifecycle
• Make it Anonymous
• Make it Easy
• Every Article Should Have 2 or 3 Reviewers
• Check for Plagiarized Content
The Editing Process

• Make it Readable (Nobody Wants Legalese)
• AP Style Rules (Except When it Doesn’t)
• Your Publications Should Have Their Own “Style”—and Always Follow it
• Don’t Send Them Tracked Changes
• Have Them Review a Clean Copy With Outstanding Questions
The Editing Nitty Gritty

- Grab Readers Attention With the Headline, Dek, and Lead
- Subheads Reduce the Grey But Keep Them Short
- Change Passive Voice to Active
- Put the Citations Where They Belong—in the Endnotes
- There’s a Reason for Word Counts
- Remove Their “Self-Promotion”—They’re Getting a Byline!
- Shorter Paragraphs are Better
Helpful Resources For Editors

• Again, AP Style Rules (Buy the Book or Subscribe)
  • https://www.apstylebook.com/
• Grammar Girl
  • https://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl