

proper project planning

TEN STEPS TO PRODUCING SUCCESSFUL PUBLICATIONS

STEP 1 what is your budget?

Develop a realistic budget before you begin any other work on a project. Include consultant fees, printing costs, mail-house charges and postage. And don't forget that staff time costs money too.

STEP 2 what are your goals for this project?

What do you want your newsletter to accomplish? Does your fundraising event need to raise visibility as well as money? Does your annual report need to thank donors while attracting new funders?

STEP 3 who is your target audience?

Is this document going to funders? clients? members? the general public? Each of your target audiences might require a very different approach—a brochure for potential clients may need to be prepared very differently than one for donors, for example.

STEP 4 what is the message?

You should be able to clearly and succinctly state the message behind your publication, and the entire document should support that message. It may be as simple as “we have made a positive impact on our community during our first ten years” or “we provide crucial services to homeless families.”

STEP 5 what is the desired tone?

Your publication can be edgy, conservative, serious, light-hearted—but decide before you start and stick to that tone consistently.

STEP 6 how will you distribute the material?

If you're going to distribute your new annual report at an event, make certain it will be ready in plenty of time. And if you're going to mail it, assemble your mailing list during production time so that you're ready to mail the day copies arrive from the printer.

STEP 7 do you need a response device?

The response device may need to be an integral part of your publication, such as one panel of a brochure, or it might be a separate remit envelope. Often separate response devices are forgotten until a project is nearly completed, which then limits your options. If your response device is an envelope, it's ideal to start printing it before the rest of your material, as envelopes can be more time-consuming to print.

STEP 8 what is the shelf life?

If you want your publication to last more than a year, keep an eye out for material that will quickly date it. Instead of printing financial figures or staff lists in a financial publication such as an annual report, include a folder pocket to hold up-to-date information. Avoid trumpeting exciting upcoming projects which might never come to fruition.

STEP 9 what is your deadline?

Setting and sticking to achievable deadlines is key to successful projects. Make sure your deadline supports your marketing or fundraising needs. Is there a special event coming up for which you need a new brochure, or an event that should be publicized in your newsletter? Be sure to respect your own deadlines—it's no good holding your staff or consultants to deadlines but not meeting them yourself.

STEP 10 what is your approval process?

In some agencies, just two or three staff members work on and approve a project, whereas others use a consensus model and all staff review a publication before it goes to press. Generally, the more staff members review a document the more changes will be made, and the more it will cost. Whatever your process is going to be, make sure it's clear from the outset.

WRAP UP

Once you've completed your project, take a few moments to thank your staff and debrief on what worked and what didn't.