



## **Trout Unlimited Communications Best Practices**

*The key to a healthy organization is communications. Not only communications among leaders but probably more important is the communication by leaders to membership. In order to recruit new members and maintain retention, the benefits and accomplishments of the organization should be marketed to the public. Many Councils and Chapters accomplish this through use of Council websites, Chapter websites, Social Media Presence (i.e., Insta-gram, Facebook and Twitter) also mass membership emails, newsletters, and a presence on local angler forums. As the evolution of media, advertising and public interaction continues, it will be important to update these “best practices” to reflect changes in popular culture and how it all fits into our organization across the entire spectrum.*

### **Newsletters**

Probably the oldest and most developed form of communication used is the newsletters that are produced by Chapters and Councils. It is critical to keep a position of Editor filled. This is a tough and typically thankless job. Chapters should go out of their way to recognize the efforts of their Editors. One way that everyone can participate in thanking their Editor is by providing articles. It is difficult to put together a newsletter when you have to prod and poke volunteers to write articles.

As a general guideline, an article should fall into one of these categories:

1. Contain updates on what Chapters and/or Council have done in recent months. This is the tool for updating membership on why it matters to support TU.
2. Contain history of the Chapter/Council for perspective.
3. Discuss plans for future activities or calendar updates.
4. Contain topics relevant to trout conservation or policy the impacts coldwater fisheries. (USE CAUTION REGARDING SPECIFIC ENDORSEMENT OR OPPOSITION OF SPECIFIC POLITICAL FIGURES/CANDIDATES! This can affect our tax-exempt status and would violate TU National Policy.)
5. Contain stories (fiction or non-fiction) about fishing, preparation of fishing gear, etc. This fosters the sportsman’s appeal for the organization – the common bond that brings us together.

Obviously, there may be times that articles vary from these topics to some degree. It is important to maintain the scope of the organization though. TU should not be perceived as a comprehensive organization via articles endorsing or opposing activity

that has nothing to do with our coldwater fisheries. Newsletters are not a sounding board for personal agendas.

Newsletter Editors should develop “how-to” guides on how they use their software, adopt header/masthead guidelines for continuity, advertising rates & policy, printing information, etc. That way when new Editors are recruited there is a turnkey operation ready for them to start up quickly.

## **Websites**

The development and maintenance of websites has never been easier. Many chapters and councils have transitioned from an expensive software-maintained website using FTP (File Transfer Protocol) moving to a web-based WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor. This makes quick updates from any online computer possible and allows for multiple administrators and helps new Webmasters to transition easily.

As a goal, Chapter & Council Websites should at a minimum accomplish the following:

1. Market your activity to potential new members. List accomplishments and achievements, planned activities and an invitation to the public to provide input for future activity.
2. Be a professional looking design. Multiple online templates (i.e., Weebly.com, Wix.com, Google Sites, WordPress, etc.) have great looking templates ready for customization.
3. Be easily linked to. Long web addresses are not visited as regularly as short, direct URL's.
4. Optimize your search engine presence.

## **Social Media**

The Social Media interactions at the time of the development of these “best practices” are dramatically different than what existed 5 years ago and will likely be dramatically different in another 5 years. Currently, Insta-gram, Facebook and Twitter are the most commonly used Social Media sites. Trout Unlimited National maintains a presence each of the sites.

What to post:

1. Seasonal Updates (what's hatching, what's biting and where, meeting reminders, event/activity reminders)
2. Trivia about fishing/trout management
3. Photos of activities
4. Fishing tips
5. Links to blogs, YouTube videos, etc.
6. Recruitment & Fundraising info
7. Photos of meetings

8. Photos of fishing
9. Quizzes
10. Contests
11. Recognize Conservation Volunteers and special local friends of trout
12. Humorous anecdotes

What not to post:

1. Comments about religious or political issues unless it is a specific policy action alert that has been agreed on by your chapter or council leaders
2. Profanity
3. Anything in poor taste
4. Criticisms
5. Anything negative, this is a surefire way to keep people from joining TU.

### **Mass Email**

Complaints get fielded often concerning the spamming of any non-profit organization. Emails sent to Chapter-wide or Council-wide membership should be used, but used sparingly and only when approved by Council Chairs or Chapter Presidents. All new Council Chairs and Chapter Presidents must review the TU National documents on mass emails prior to sending (Spam Compliance, Email Deliverability, Email Marketing Best Practices, Checklist for Successful Email Marketing Campaigns and Sample National Email Content).

### **Writing Style Best Practices**

Trout Unlimited staff uses the *Associated Press Style Guide* for all communications. For uniformity of style, it's suggested that this be used for all written communications. [https://www.bu.edu/com/files/2021/04/WC\\_apstyle.pdf](https://www.bu.edu/com/files/2021/04/WC_apstyle.pdf)

**NOTE:** The 2022 NLC Communications Work Group wishes to acknowledge the West Virginia Council for setting the stage with an original and now revised template of **Communications Best Practices** for all Councils and Chapters.

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