

# Communications Counselor

From Bray Communications

www.braycommunications.com

## Issues will feature hints on:

- Improving print or fax newsletters
- Improving email communications
- Communicating with your customers and employees
- Writing tips
- Becoming a better communicator

## Improving Your Communications!

Welcome to the first issue of *Communications Counselor*, from Bray Communications. Future issues will include useful information on how to improve communications, whether you're staying in touch with your customers and employees, or just wanting to improve your personal communications skills. If you wish to be removed from the mailing list, please send an email to [laurabray@braycommunications.com](mailto:laurabray@braycommunications.com)

Are you considering a new print or fax newsletter, or evaluating an existing publication? A solid plan is critical to your publication's success. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What's your goal? What are you trying to accomplish?
- Who's your audience?
- What format (print, fax, email) will best meet your goals and reach your target audience?



- Publications require three big resources: people, time, and money. What's your budget? Who will produce the newsletter? Do they have excellent writing skills? Does the designated editor have the time required to devote to regular production?
- How often will the newsletter be distributed?

Make sure you have clear answers to all these questions before embarking on your project.

## Get Your Emails the Attention They Deserve

Could you live without email today? Many people regularly receive over 100 emails daily. So how do you make sure your email gets noticed among all that other "noise"?

- Use a very specific subject line.
- Use spell check. You don't want your message to look sloppy.
- Don't overuse the "urgent" button.
- Use a signature line, so people know how to reach you.

- Update your virus protection, so you don't inadvertently propagate the latest virus problem.
- Sarcasm and ranting don't belong in an email; without "tone of voice," they are easily misunderstood.
- Remember, someone can always use the "forward" button to send your message to an unintended recipient.

For more details, contact Laura Bray for her article, "The Nightmare of Email Management: Getting Your Message Noticed."

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## Staying in Touch: Don't Forget Your Employees!

You already know you have to keep your customers informed about your products and services. But don't forget your employees! Employee newsletters can keep your staff informed about your company's activities by:

- Introducing details on new products and services.
- Providing information on timing and pricing for special promotions.
- Listing details on discontinued products or services.

In addition, you should keep employees up-to-date on HR and company policies. You can use an internal newsletter to keep your staff informed a variety of issues, such as:

- Upcoming enrollment periods for insurance programs, and where to go to find more details.
- Changes in the company's 401(k) plan or IRS changes.
- Updates to travel or other corporate policies.

Much of this information might be available in the HR office or on the corporate intranet, but those require your staff to go find the information. Whether distributed by print, fax, or email, a timely and periodic employee newsletter will help ensure your staff is "in the know."



## How Do You Know if it's "Affect" or "Effect"?

So what is the difference between "affect" and "effect"? The words are often confused and used incorrectly. Most commonly, "affect" is used as a verb, meaning "to influence," as in:

*"Secretary Annan's speech on world hunger affected me greatly."*

"Effect" can be used as either a noun or a verb, leading to even more confusion. As a noun, it means "a result," as in:

*"The effect of Secretary Annan's speech was a quick trip to the grocery store to purchase a food bank donation."*

"Effect" isn't used very often as a verb. In those rare cases, it means, "to bring about" or "to accomplish," as in:

*"I effected the transfer of the food by dropping it off at a local church."*

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**Affect (verb):**  
to influence

**Effect (noun):**  
a result

**Effect (verb):** to  
bring about, to  
accomplish

*"The Elements of Style," Strunk and White*

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## Crisis Communications

Recent events have a lot of us thinking, "If my company were involved in a crisis, how would I communicate with my customers or employees?" Here are some tips from Robert Berzok in his book, "Inside Organizational Communication."

- Assemble a small group of senior managers and subject matter experts to determine the effects of the crisis.
- Determine the best means to get the message out; use as many different outlets that you can find.

- Decide which audiences are most important.
- Designate one spokesperson.
- Try to avoid "no comment" to the press.
- Keep your eyes and ears open for audience feedback to your messages, and adjust accordingly.

You can order the book from the International Association of Business Communicators at [www.iabc.com](http://www.iabc.com) or by calling 415.544.4700.

### Web Site of the Day:

- [www.bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com)

*One of the best reference sites on the web. Includes online dictionaries, thesauri, quote compendiums, and more.*

### Quote of the Day:

- *"An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile—hoping it will eat him last."*

Winston Churchill