

Proposal Re: Ending the Printed Newsletter: *On-line discussion printout*

William Scott

As an old guy who prefers to read from real printed material rather than look at a computer screen I think the idea of stopping printed newsletters really sucks. Or maybe this is just the heirarchy's way of saying the old guys who prefer to not be stuck on a computer screen should just leave ebcom!

I have always been in favor of raising the dues. \$70 or \$80 dues are still a great deal. And, the last time I saw an account statement I believe we had quite a lot of money in the account. Use some of that money to subsidize the newsletter.
my thoughts in these ten seconds, Wil Scott

Michael Burns

Speaking of old guys, being one, I don't remember if it has been stated how many are still preferring the hard copy over online. I think that if the percentage is big who want online newsletters, "overwhelming support of the men" rules.

Will, you do have a printer don't you? Rather than leave your ol buddies?
Took this old guy way more than 10 seconds to think of this.

Burnsie

Rafael Brinner

Will, Burnsie,

Bryan provided the following data in his email about electronic vs printed newsletters:

"Currently projections are we'll spend approximately \$1,500 or almost \$18 per man to provide a printed newsletter. This represents about 1/4 of the total membership expense and only 27 members receive the printed newsletter. The effort involved with printing, labeling, adding stamps and mailing these is not trivial for the responsible team, even with support from the newsletter wallah."

Based on the conversations I was a part of before leaving the council, this proposal is not motivated by any ill will toward any part of the circle membership.
Burnsie's on the right track: if you have access to a printer, the PDF version of the newsletter should offer a printer-ready solution for those who wish to enjoy the tactile approach to reading the men's written contributions.

Rafi, Man of (digital) Shorts

Peter J. Davis

My 2 cents or some obvious thoughts:

- charge higher dues for a printed copy
- what about the copies for new visitors

I myself prefer online though ...

Ben Stiegler

Dues seem super reasonable/low; perhaps a survey on who would feel pain if it was say \$25 more annually?

- a. I'm 67, and I really detest things that are deep – like our newsletter – having to be read on the screen. Prefer to cozy up with paper under a blanket, in the hammock, etc. But yes, I can take responsibility for self-printing.
- b. Copies for new guys – that's important.
- c. Maybe one solution is this: Those of us who want printed copy agree to pay extra dues (\$30? \$40?) / year for the privilege. Then we find a print/mail service that we can upload the PDF to along with a mailing list each month and poof! It gets done sans membership responsibility.

Fred Kohler

All:

I appreciate men's desire for a paper copy and I have a number of reasons why it is time for a change:

- Cost
- I love trees more than I love paper.
- I also don't love the idea of the newsletter laying around in open areas that can be read by any family member or visitor who doesn't know anything about us.
- I also think that it is a time suck for people to create, stamp, mail etc.

So, if you love it printed out, please print it out at your home. Should be fairly easy.

Thanks,
Fred

Jeff Randall

If the proposal to stop printing the newsletter passes, guests will still get a hard copy paid for by the organization.

Bruce King

I agree. Save trees and a ton of money in the bargain

Peter Gradjansky

Fred speaks my mind precisely. Any man who does not have a printer can get a teammate or other member to print it out for him.

One possible compromise: the newsletter wallah could print out enough copies for new men and for any man who strongly prefers to have a hard copy, to be delivered at the Saturday circle, either to the man or to a teammate who can pass it on to him.

Peter G

Bruce King

Excellent idea., lets enter the 21st century and go paperless.

The million dollar question is : How many printed copies to hand out is enough ? maybe 5, maybe 8 ?

Tom Taylor

I, for one, will miss the hard copy and find it more difficult to print out. I find that I lose some of the intimacy on the electronic screen. But I understand economics. I think that's part of the problem in this world. It's much more cost effective to minimize detail, but a lot of old ways get lost. And as we rely more heavily on electronics, we are more beholden to our electronic masters, like Facebook, instagram, now Twitter yuk, as well as the snippets of news parading as journalism. And we wonder why people get glued to the screen.

Peter Schowe

Hear, hear!

David Maloney

I would like a PDF or email copy delivered right into my inbox. I don't have a computer I only use my smart phone and for some reason it cannot access the newsletters. so I haven't been able to read any of the newsletters I did not even know we had hardcopies of them I just found that out by reading these emails I would like to read them The newsletters when they come out. So a PDF or email would suit me fine. Thanks.

Laughter is the best medicine

Bruce King

David. At every Saturday meeting. Pretend to be a new guy. You will get a free printed newsletter

Peter Gradjansky

Dave, Good idea, BUT...

the pdf would be very convenient for any of us, but it would not be password-protected, as is the website, and that matters to many of the men- even though we do not allow confidential material into the newsletter, or to be distributed in any form, digital or hard copy.

Ben Stiegler

I think confidential is a continuum ... a story I would share in the newsletter is not something I would want to share outside the circle, even if its not stamped "confidential". A PDF could be easily:

- Password protected (with the same credential as the website annual PW), and
- Sent out to every member in an automated fashion – by simply attaching to an email and sending to Essentials.

All this requires is a paid subscription to Acrobat in order to password protect. \$13/month. = \$156/year. Good value?

Bryan Weiss

This is a great discussion. There's been a number of helpful suggestions.

Some have said we should simply charge those members more who want a printed copy. Putting aside the impact on the trees, that will require the Membership Lead/Finance Lead to keep track of these dual level memberships, then communicate those to the teams putting together the Newsletter, and then the team has to track that. Or that falls on the Newsletter Wallah.

Some have said we should send certain members a copy of the Newsletter directly to their personal inboxes as a PDF. Again, that will require the newsletter team to track that each month and take that extra step. Or that falls on the Newsletter Wallah.

Some have suggested we bring a bunch of printed copies to the Saturday Meeting for those who want one. Again - killing trees, extra administrative/costs, etc.

Men - let's keep this simple. We are just a volunteer organization doing the best we can. We aren't the New York Times. We don't have a publications nerve center. We don't want to turn the simple act of producing a newsletter into a multi-faceted production. Everyone has access to the digital version. Most of us have printers or can otherwise ask for support from someone who does. You can print one out at FedEx or Staples at 18 cents per page. Let's keep this simple. We intend to continue the tradition of having printed copies available to new men who come to a Saturday Meeting.

Albert Rowe

Appreciating the conversation and since Tom and others covered the challenges, I'd like to add that we also have a long tradition of taking for granted the resources needed to support our preferences / privileges, namely, here, the trees and the waste, not to mention the inherent carbon footprint

Grateful for so much

Wei Wu Wei / Doing Not Doing

Non-Action as the purest form a Action

When nothing needs done, nothing is left undone

The doer has vanished into the deed

This nothing is

in fact everything

Sent from my record player :-) Please excuse any typos or autocorrects. . .

**'May every day of your life be filled
with ease and joy,
Love and abundance.'**

Bryan Weiss

Just to follow up on my previous email and in my role as Legacy Lead. In the "good old days," the men used to meet at Copy World in Berkeley to physically put together the newsletter. Sometimes men from other teams would join just to hang out. The Newsletter Wallah would meet us there with this tupperware bin from the 1970's filled with scraps of paper and other doo-dads. We had glue sticks, scissors, tape and other medieval devices. Each man had a designated role - some would screen articles for confidentiality; others would cut and paste comics and cartoons, some would literally be on the internet at Copy World downloading images to use for the cover, others would be literally setting and arranging the papers in the order they would appear in the final product, others would be preparing the envelopes for mailing hard copies to those members who requested one. And during that entire time, there would be laughter, teasing, camaraderie, fights, tears and sometimes blood. Somehow, some way, after an hour or so, we would have a completed product to hand into the folks at Copy World and then go have dinner as a team to celebrate. And that finished product, almost always in black and white, usually looked like crap. Images were blurry, text was cut off, things were off center, lots of empty white space. It looked like something some junior high school kids put together in someone's mom's basement. And it was absolutely and totally glorious and beautiful and perfect. It spoke to who we are, and more importantly, it was a total team effort.

Fast forward to today. Somehow it was decided that the Newsletter must be a slick production, proud to share a shelf with Time, Wired, Rolling Stone and other high class publications. No more blurry images, no more off-centered text, no more quirky defects. The goal became pure perfection. The price we paid for that goal was that instead of the entire team meeting as one to produce a junior high quality publication, now one man sits in front of a computer by himself, using some mysterious software program to populate the contents. Sure, other men on the team participate nominally, but it is nowhere near the "Copy World" experience.

And now we are talking about adding other layers of complexity - password protections, PDF subscriptions, multi-level memberships - language that is foreign to me. For me, I prefer keeping things as "old school" and as simple as possible.

William Scott

I agree with Bryan about keeping things as old school as possible. As EBCOM ages it has become a less fun and connected organization. I loved putting together the newsletter at copyworld for all the reasons he stated. I'm sure Harvey and Henry are up there looking down with a scowl over how truly wussified we have become and how we seem to be more interested in how we look to others than how we are really being "a safe place to be dangerous".

And I would be willing to bet that a lot of guys talking about saving a tree by not printing the newsletter are drinking water from single use bottles throwing away a lot of other plastic containers rather than recycling them.

Peter Schowe

Hear, Hear, trees grow back Dinosaurs don't. It's true! And how many men here are switching back to glass bottles as I have because it tastes better. No more chems leaching into my water from plastic sitting the heat?

Alan Wick

Bryan, good to hear that printed copies will be provided to new visitors at our monthly general meetings. Who will be responsible for printing those copies? Thanks.

David Block

As a guy who is fiscally conservative (AKA tight-wad), I am definitely for reducing unnecessary expenses. And for a guy who is lazy, I would be in favor of lessening the effort required to produce the newsletter. However, in this case, I don't see a clean solution to doing so. Seems at a minimum, we need to print a few hardcopies for first-timers to the Saturday meeting. This means the idea of going completely digital is not practical. From a financial point of view, while it's not nice to be running a deficit, I believe we still have a very healthy EBCOM account balance and can certainly absorb the cost of printing a couple dozen newsletters for a while (but since I stepped down as Finance Lead, that's not really for me to say). If and when the time comes that the organization is strapped for cash, then we can revisit this discussion about going all digital or raising dues, etc. This is not a forever decision.

At this point, I fall on the side of leaving the newsletter production as it is now: There is a digital version available and an option for a hard copy; membership fees remain as they are now. I would encourage members to elect to receive a hard copy only if it is really really important to them to have paper in hand, keeping in mind there is a cost to that privilege.

If we do decide to raise dues to pay for paper newsletters in some way, we already have multi-tier membership options. It is currently something like this (don't hold me to these numbers): (1) full membership \$60, (2) outlier paper newsletter \$30, (3) outlier digital newsletter \$15. So adding another category for full membership with paper newsletter for \$75 or something isn't a big stretch.

The production quality of the newsletter is a completely different topic. Any team now can choose to do a slick newsletter all in digital format or go old school and use scissors and kindergarten paste sticks to assemble. Back in those old days (or at least recent old days), we still scanned the paper original to provide an online version.

For the man who doesn't have a computer but has email access, maybe we can decide to send out a pdf copy of the newsletter on ebc.com business.

My two cents...

Robert Greenberg

This has honestly been such an interesting conversation for me to read. I don't think anyone has answered why they cannot print a copy from the PDF at home, except for David Maloney which is very understandable if you don't have a printer or access to one, and for the other men in a similar situation to him.

I think there's an aspect of service here I haven't read mentioned. If we do happen to go paperless, except for the copies for new visitors, I would be happy to print and mail a few copies to the men who want a hard copy. It will come after it's published, and I can only do it for a few men, but would be happy to. Maybe others would join me?

Thanks, and good to be in touch.
Robert (Kings of Heart, Boston, MA)

Adrian Levy

Robert, please put me on your mailing list. I simply prefer a hard copy. Perhaps it's because I stare at a computer all day at work, or maybe for some other reason. You guys can reason all you want, but it doesn't override my preferences. Oh, and by the way, I recycle all of the old newsletters. As I recall, I was the only sucker who volunteered to be the newsletter wallah. Giving that wallah more duties will make it more difficult to find one once I abdicate my duties.

Kurt Anderson

I would like a printed copy.

In terms of data: one 45 ft pine tree produces 10,000 sheets of paper.

Perhaps from the perspective of reciprocity and gratitude to our mother earth- what would happen if 80 men planted one pine tree, to make up for the one tree that gave us this choice?

With ease and joy,

Kurt Anderson

David. Maloney

It seems like saving trees and using computers is a sum zero outcome. The computer industry massively pollutes our earth. Using computers may save trees but it destroys a whole lot of other natural resources that we have

Bryan Weiss

And if we are telling the 25 men who currently get printed copies to print their own copies, how are we saving trees? It's really more about the costs to the organization and the extra burden on the teams to manage this.

William Scott

The extra burden argument is really silly. For 30 years teams have prepared the newsletter every month. Rather than a burden the time is usually a great collaboration of team members and others, celebrated by a dinner after.

And Kurt Anderson has a very good idea about planting trees - an excellent community service event.

I thought it might be valuable to get this discussion out there before we all vote on the proposal to terminate the hardcopy newsletter. The live discussion of the proposal will happen at the January Fire Circle; voting online will follow.

I plan to put forward an amendment that all current hardcopy subscribers shall continue to receive their newsletters in the mail, but that EBCOM will no longer offer that service to any other members (new or old). The idea being to allow the hardcopy version to fade away gradually and disappear.

If that amendment doesn't pass, all you men who enjoy getting the hardcopy mailed to you might want to vote "NO" on the proposal. There are 27 of you. Some of the remaining 81 members won't vote. Others may join you and vote "NO." So the 75% threshold for passage won't be reached. *If you snooze you will lose.*

I will also be making a new proposal to solve EBCOM's financial problems by having the amount of our dues be calculated to match what they were in 1992 (\$5.00 per month), in *current* dollars, as measured by the cost-of-living index.

John Timothy

Acting Chairman

Special Unsanctioned Committee to Keep Mailing Your Newsletter and Impede Poor Planning to Lessen Expenses