

How to Create an Effective Internal Newsletter: A Case Study of the Hemlock Printers Newsletter Redesign

by

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Abstract

In today's dynamic corporate landscape, fostering effective internal communication is essential for organizational success. Internal communication can lead to many outcomes such as employee engagement, job satisfaction, performance, motivation and commitment, and in turn, it can enhance organizational productivity, help with shaping company culture and boost corporate reputation and credibility. Internal communication happens constantly within organizations and there are many types, including newsletters. This report covers the redesign process of Hemlock Printer's newsletter. It analyzes its success by looking at the literature on the topics of internal corporate communications and internal newsletters and comparing these findings with the process of producing previous editions of the newsletter.

Keywords: Newsletter; Hemlock; Internal Communication; Employee Engagement

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Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Context.....	4
1.1. Introduction.....	4
1.2. Hemlock Printers.....	4
1.3. Internal Communications and the Role of Newsletters.....	5
1.3.1. Internal Communication Channels.....	7
1.3.2. Internal Communication Messages.....	8
1.3.3. Role of Newsletters.....	9
1.4. Hemlock’s Newsletter.....	10
1.5. Chapter Summary.....	13
Chapter 2: The Goal.....	14
2.1. Introduction.....	14
2.2. Defining a Successful Internal Newsletter.....	14
2.2.1. Content.....	15
2.2.2. Production.....	16
2.2.3. Distribution.....	16
2.3. What Did Not Work.....	17
2.3.1. Frequency/Schedule.....	18
2.3.2. Contribution/Compensation.....	18
2.3.3. Template/Design.....	19
2.3.4. Audience.....	19
2.4. What Could Be Improved.....	20

2.4.1.	Format	20
2.4.2.	Distribution.....	20
2.4.3.	Content Submission Process.....	21
2.5.	Chapter Summary	21
Chapter 3:	The Process.....	22
3.1.	Introduction	22
3.2.	Layout Design	22
3.2.1.	Masthead.....	22
3.2.2.	Format and Page Count.....	23
3.3.	The Production Process	25
3.3.1.	Publishing Schedule	25
3.3.2.	Content Categories	26
3.3.3.	Content Submission.....	26
3.3.4.	The Committee	28
3.3.5.	Planning.....	28
3.3.6.	Distribution Methods	31
3.4.	The Website	32
3.4.1.	Home Page	33
3.4.2.	About Page	34
3.4.3.	News Page.....	35
3.4.4.	The Archive.....	35
3.5.	The Archive	36
3.6.	Chapter Summary	37
	Conclusion	38
	References.....	41

List of Tables

Table 1. List of article types for Hemlock's Newsletter	26
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List of Figures

Figure 1. Internal corporate communication, one of four internal communication dimensions.	6
Figure 2. Conceptual model of employee questions to be addressed through line manager and corporate internal communication	8
Figure 3. The first edition of Hemlock’s newsletter, called The HP Saucy News (1987)	10
Figure 4. Beginning of Hemlock News (1994)	11
Figure 5. The New Hemlock News (1998)	12
Figure 6. Number of published newsletters between 1987 and 2019	12
Figure 7. Hemlock News (2019)	13
Figure 8. Hemlock’s newsletter masthead before (on the left) and after (on the right)	22
Figure 9. Initial mock-ups for the newsletter to demonstrate different layouts and page count options.	24
Figure 10. Asymmetrical geometric frames and sharp lines to create separation 11	24
Figure 11. Screenshot of the content submission form	27
Figure 12. Brainstorming sheet of the planning document 14	29
Figure 13. Issue plan sheet of the planning document	29
Figure 14. Flat plan sheet of the planning document	30
Figure 15. Holders offering additional copies of the newsletter	31
Figure 16. Home page of Hemlock Group News website	33
Figure 17. About page of Hemlock Group News website	34
Figure 18. News page of Hemlock Group News website 19	35
Figure 19. Archive page of Hemlock Group News	35

Introduction

When it comes to communications, to a certain extent more is better. Many studies have linked internal communication to outcomes such as employee engagement, job satisfaction, performance, motivation, and commitment, and in turn, it can enhance organizational productivity, help with shaping company culture and boost corporate reputation and credibility ([Tkalac Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017](#); [Nakra, 2006](#)). Consequently, it is reasonable for organizations to invest substantial resources, both financial and human, to develop efficient internal communications systems to achieve timely communication to all employees within the organization.

Internal communication happens constantly within organisations and “there are many types of internal communication from informal chat and office gossip to formal corporate communication to all employees from senior management” ([Welch, 2012](#)). There is a range of formal and informal communication between these that happens among individual employees in teams and project groups, as well as among staff and management. These could be categorized into “four internal communication dimensions: line management; team peer; project peer; and internal corporate communication” ([Welch, 2012](#)). Although all four dimensions hold challenges for practice and are all important within the internal communication sphere, for the purposes of this paper I focus on internal corporate communication which includes, but is not limited to, internal newsletters.

An internal newsletter can have a variety of objectives. It may be used primarily to convey information, but it can also be used to engage employees, celebrate accomplishments, contribute to company culture, connect remote employees, collect feedback, educate employees about policies and initiatives, etc., depending on the organization’s needs and goals. Additionally, an internal newsletter often complements other communication tools, such as intranet platforms, emails, and notice boards.

My experience with internal newsletters leading to this report was acquired during the 2023 summer-term professional placement for the Master of Publishing program at Simon Fraser University, when I worked as an internal communications project support at

Hemlock Printers Ltd., a commercial printer based in Burnaby, BC. The newsletter project, supervised by the company CEO & President, Richard Kouwenhoven, aims to bring all companies in the Hemlock Group (Hemlock Printers, Hemlock Harling, Hemlock Display, and Paper Chase Press) together, and to create a stronger sense of unity among employees as the go-to source for all things happening within the larger group.

The usefulness of internal newsletters as a solid organizational communication tool prompted my interest to describe in this report my experience researching, designing and helping restart Hemlock Printers' internal newsletter, which was published for more than 26 years, before a hiatus starting in 2019. I will examine and define what makes an effective and successful newsletter, looking specifically at communication strategies and content. Using Hemlock as a case study, I will analyze the previous newsletter's design and strategy and compare it to the redesigned version to form a guide for creating and improving the internal newsletter. The report is organized in the following manner:

In the [first chapter](#), to explain the context of the project, I will begin with an introduction to Hemlock Printers and its companies. I will then define internal communications and the strategic roles of newsletters and introduce Hemlock's newsletter by looking at its history.

The [second chapter](#) covers the goals of the project. To do so, it will compare the previous process of producing the newsletter with the literature on what makes newsletters successful and effective. It will cover the company's expectations for the redesigned newsletter to address what did not work in the previous process. It will also introduce considerations for improvement and successful communication, such as making the newsletter available and easily accessible in digital format and creating a straightforward content submission process.

In the [third chapter](#), I will discuss how the expectations and considerations mentioned in the previous section were addressed, by analyzing the redesign process. I will talk about design considerations for the new layout, the production game plan, the website that would host the newsletter, and the archive of previous issues of the newsletter.

Finally, I will [conclude](#) my project with a discussion of lessons learned as well as future directions for the project.

Ultimately, this project report could act as a guide for Hemlock to follow its plan and improve its newsletter.

Chapter 1: The Context

1.1. Introduction

To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and the project at hand, this chapter is specifically dedicated to providing the context. The first section of this chapter will focus on introducing Hemlock Printers. Moving forward, the concept of internal communications will be defined, along with an exploration of internal newsletters and their significance in organizational communications, drawing upon relevant literature on the subject. Additionally, Hemlock's newsletter will be introduced, delving into its historical background, and acknowledging the crucial role it plays in shaping the overall culture of the organization.

1.2. Hemlock Printers

“Hemlock was once a 600-square-foot Burnaby storefront that serviced local neighbourhoods, producing one- and two-colour stationary products with one A.B. Dick press and a manual platen letterpress. Incorporated in 1968 by Dick Kouwenhoven, a journeyman typographer with a passion for printing and a keen business sense, Hemlock had a reputation for quality and innovation” ([Hemlock Printers, 2015](#)).

During the 1970s, the company expanded with two large-format presses and began producing two-colour direct mail for multiple companies. Further expansion in the 1980s “made Hemlock a force in the Vancouver print market with the installation of more presses and the latest technological innovations.” In 1986, Hemlock moved to its current location at 7050 Buller Avenue, which expanded in 1993 to make room for Hemlock's full-service prepress department.

Hemlock was the first BC-based printer to begin serving clients in the U.S. After 55 years, Hemlock remains a privately-owned, family-run organization with sales offices in Seattle and San Francisco.

As a result of their ever-growing business, Hemlock has acquired and launched other companies to ensure that they can meet the needs of businesses across different sectors. Today, the Hemlock group of companies consists of Hemlock Printers for offset

and digital printing, Hemlock Harling (launched in 2017) for mailing, fulfilment, and distribution, Hemlock Display (acquired in 2020) for large format digital and screen-printing services, and Paper Chase Press (acquired in 2022) as an e-commerce sales channel based out of Los Angeles. Together they provide a comprehensive range of printing services, covering everything from prepress, to printing, binding, finishing, and fulfillment. Hemlock caters to various industries but has expertise in advertising, fine art printing, labels and packaging, publications, direct marketing, stationery, fulfillment services, and corporate communications.

Hemlock also advocates for environmental consciousness and sustainability. In 2004, a committee was established to prioritize enhancing environmental performance and fostering sustainable practices within the organization. In recognition of these efforts, Hemlock has been named the Most Environmentally Progressive Printer in Canada multiple times ([Canadian Printing Awards, n.d.](#)) Hemlock Printers is one of North America's most recognized and sustainable printing companies ([BlueLine Ranking, n.d.](#)), operating carbon neutral from its 80,000-square-foot facility in Burnaby, BC, Canada.

1.3. Internal Communications and the Role of Newsletters

Organizations regularly utilize several forms of internal communication. These forms of communication can be broadly classified into dimensions: internal corporate communication, team peer, project peer, and line management ([Welch & Jackson, 2007](#)). Although all four aspects are significant and present challenges, for the sake of this study I will concentrate on internal corporate communication.

“Internal corporate communication is a term that has been used in public relations and corporate communication for years” ([Welch, 2012](#)). It is defined as “communication between the organization's leaders and one of its key publics: the employees” (Richard R. Dolphin, as cited in [Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014](#)). It is “designed to promote commitment and a sense of belonging to the organization, to develop awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims” ([Welch, 2012](#)). The figure below makes it easier to understand this dimension of internal communication and what it aims to do.

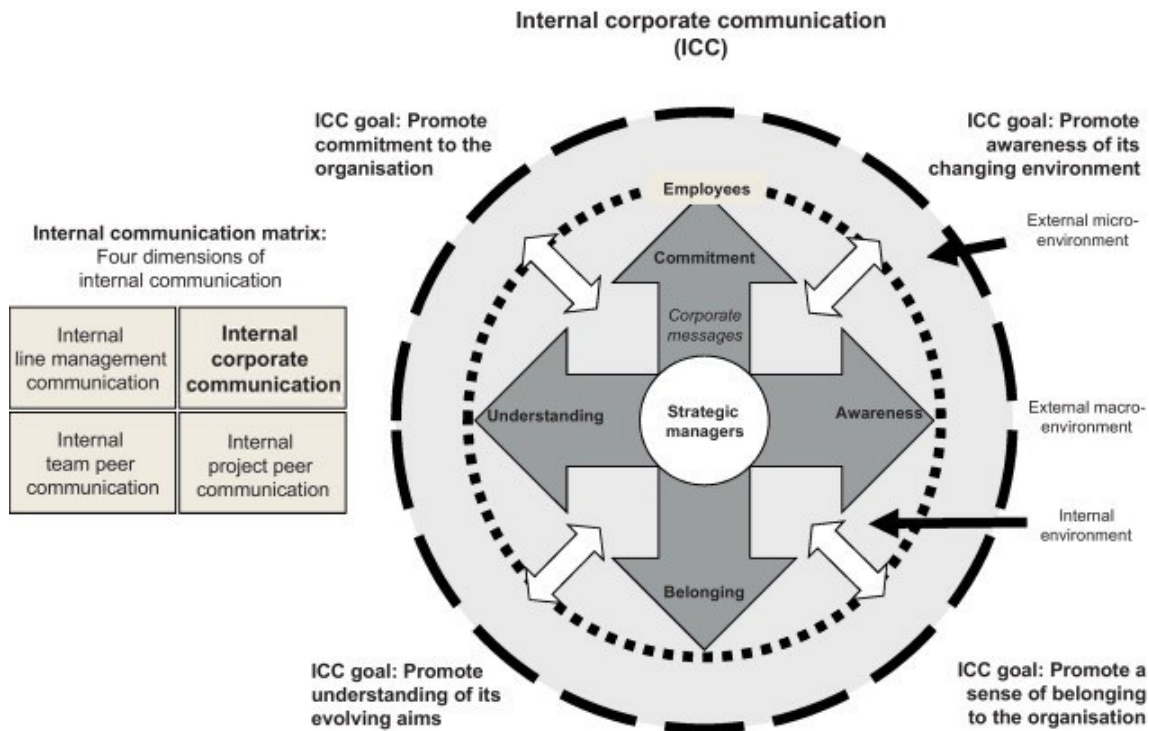


Figure 1. Internal corporate communication, one of four internal communication dimensions.¹

The four arrows emitting from the strategic management center circle in Figure 1 represent corporate messages and the arrow tips represent the goals of internal corporate communication. The dotted circle represents all employees in the organization. While Internal corporate communication may be criticized because the direction of the messages from strategic management to all employees is predominately one-way (Welch & Jackson, 2007), it is important to note that in a healthy system, this is only one, although a very important, dimension of the internal communications. This could be observed in the above graph by the double-ended arrows which indicate other dimensions of internal communications.

¹ Reprinted from *Public Relations Review*, Strategically Managing International Communication in the 21st Century, Volume 38, no. 2, Pages 246-254, Mary Welch, "Appropriateness and Acceptability: Employee Perspectives of Internal Communication," (June 1, 2012) with permission from Elsevier.

“Effective communication strategies are recognized as having a crucial role in the development of positive employee engagement” ([Tkalc Verčić & Pološki Vokić, 2017](#)) and it affects all aspects of organizational performance ([Tkalc Verčić & Men, 2023](#)). “Employee engagement is expressed via positive physical, cognitive, and emotional work role performance” ([Mazzei, Butera, & Quarantino, 2019](#)), and it enables organizations to innovate and compete ([Welch, 2011](#)). To contribute to engagement, the organizational internal corporate communication requires practical and thoughtful consideration so that employees perceive it as appropriate. Among these considerations, my focus for this report is internal communication *channels* and *messages* as these have the most impact on engagement.

1.3.1. Internal Communication Channels

In a 2020 study, [Tkalc Verčić and Špoljarić](#) surveyed 1524 employees from 10 large companies to determine how the choice of channels affects internal communication satisfaction. The study found a significant relationship between internal communication satisfaction and satisfaction with communication channels.

Communication channels can be grouped by different attributes, i.e., controllability (amount of control over message content, format, and channel), distribution (delivery mechanisms), usability (how easy it is to use) ([Welch, 2012](#)) and richness (amount of data transmitted) ([Tkalc Verčić & Špoljarić, 2020](#)). Exploring these attributes is beyond the scope of this report, and many studies have been done to analyze their effects. However, it is important to note that the findings of these studies suggest that “it would be dangerous for communicators to assume that employees share uniform preferences for internal communication media.” This suggests that while we might not have control over some attributes like richness and controllability as these are dictated by the content that needs to be communicated, the provision of alternative formats and distribution methods “is necessary to enable employees to choose the media they find most acceptable, appropriate, and usable” ([Welch, 2012](#)). I will explore this concept more in [chapter 2](#).

1.3.2. Internal Communication Messages

In a 2012 study ([Ruck & Welch, 2012](#)), an examination of 12 studies that audited internal communications indicated that internal communication assessment was focused on channels used, or volume of information generated, rather than the content of the communication itself, how well it is provided, or its understanding. However, a good grasp of what the employees need is of utmost importance since it is the content that dictates which communication channel is most appropriate. A conceptual model of employee questions to be addressed through the line manager and corporate internal communication is suggested by [Ruck & Welch](#) (Figure 2).

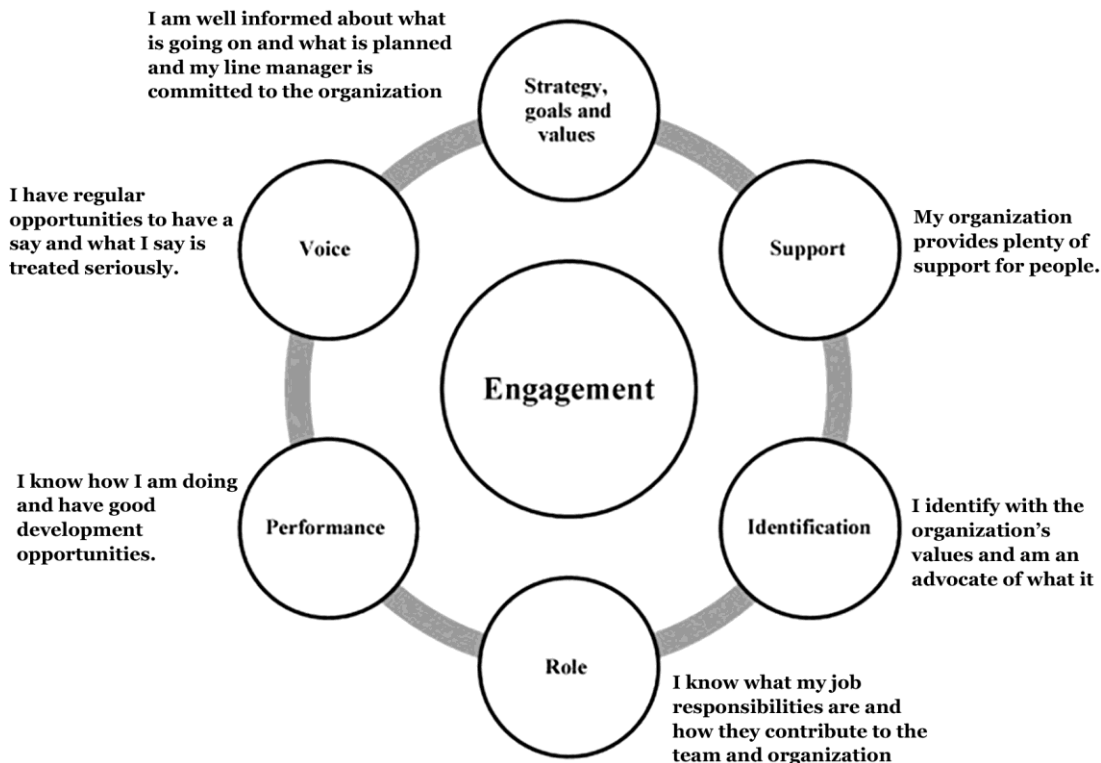


Figure 2. Conceptual model of employee questions to be addressed through line manager and corporate internal communication ²

² Reprinted from *Public Relations Review*, Strategically Managing International Communication in the 21st Century, Volume 38, no. 2, Pages 294-302, Kevin Ruck and Mary Welch, "Valuing Internal Communication; Management and Employee perspectives" (June 1, 2012) with permission from Elsevier.

This model indicates that to promote engagement, the following information must be provided to the employees: job responsibilities, performance feedback, individual needs, department objectives and results, vision, mission, and strategy. In addition, employees need to feel heard and supported.

1.3.3. Role of Newsletters

Now that we have examined channels and messages and the effect they have on engagement, we can focus on newsletters as a communication tool. “A newsletter is a printed or electronic report that is sent out to those with [a] specific interest. It contains analysis and news about information and activities within a certain business, institution, or organization [and] it is issued periodically to its subscribers” ([Gulbranson, Jacob, & Sakki, 2019](#)). The internal newsletter is created to provide specific information to a specific target audience. It is produced by members of the team and aimed at the entire organization. and it is a useful tool for most companies since it can become “a gathering place around which everyone in the company can come together with trust” ([Own Your Culture, n.d.](#)) and “participate in the process, bring forward their ideas, join committees and get involved in initiatives. Over time, employees really take ownership of their publication” ([Matshoba, Thembekile Phillinah, 2012](#)). They know when to expect it, and they know what to expect from it. This format is one more way to improve employees’ commitment. A regular newsletter brings positive qualities to the workplace, including:

- **Increasing employee engagement:** while “other communication methods can provide information just as well, knowing exactly when to expect a newsletter means employees can set aside time during their busy working hours to read it.” Newsletters become routine, and if you include interactive and interesting elements, they stay an engaging element of that routine.
- **Building trust:** if the newsletter is used for “honest and open communication, it can be a source of transparency and trust. Because of their longer-form nature, newsletters foster more trust.”
- **Improving company culture:** newsletters can be used to reinforce positive attitudes and guide readers toward common goals, as well as give readers a sense of belonging and inclusion.

- **Creating an archive for communications content:** because newsletters are published regularly and generally in a consistent manner, they create an accessible and searchable archive of internal communications content, especially if they are available in digital format ([Own Your Culture, n.d.](#))

Other qualities of a proper newsletter are: relaying important information in an interesting format, sharing safety reminders and other policy information, increasing wellness knowledge, spreading joy and de-stress, celebrating company and employee achievements, and collecting feedback and metrics.

1.4. Hemlock's Newsletter

Hemlock has a long-running newsletter with the first issue dating back to 1987. Since then, it has vastly improved and gone through multiple redesigns to keep up with the ever-expanding company and with new technologies, as well as to become visually more appealing.

The first issue of Hemlock's internal newsletter, called *The HP Saucy News*, was a letter-sized, double-sided, black-and-white newsletter, covering a range of stories and articles, both serious and fun, including industry news, leadership updates, social events, employee appreciation, and workplace tips and tricks.



Figure 3. The first edition of Hemlock's newsletter, called *The HP Saucy News* (1987)³

³ Images are property of Hemlock Printers Ltd and from Hemlock's Newsletter Archive, used with permission.

In 1994, Hemlock's newsletter experienced its first major redesign. It was rebranded as *Hemlock News*, a name that, except for a short period, stayed intact for 25 years and became what people know as Hemlock's newsletter. This is also when the use of additional colours was introduced in the production of the newsletter, as the first issue was printed with one additional colour and from the second issue on, the newsletter was printed in full colour.

This edition of the newsletter also had a completely new layout. To accommodate more content, it used a trifold layout. At the same time, it was redesigned completely to become more appealing, by using frames, generous white space and side panels.

In terms of content, story types from the previous edition can be seen here as well, but more are added, including birthdays, new faces, milestones, and contributions from employees.

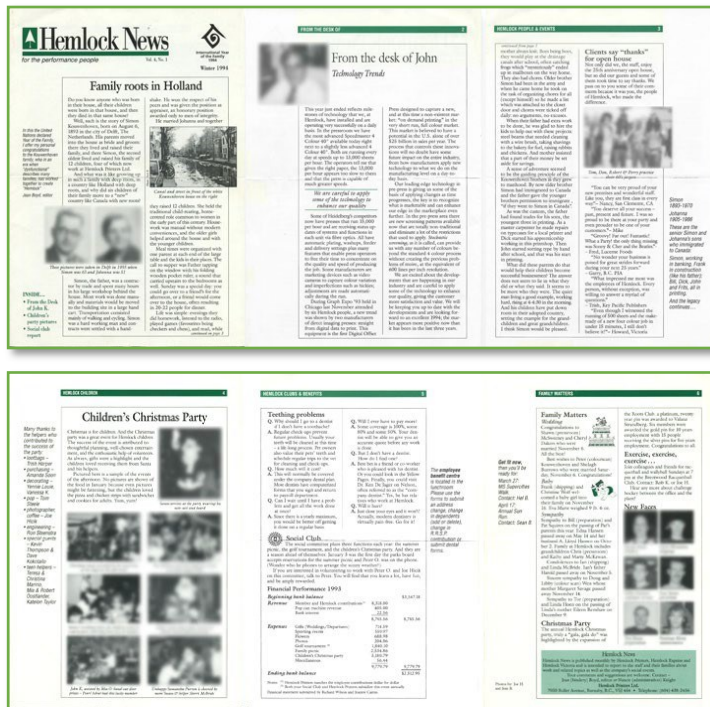


Figure 4. Beginning of Hemlock News (1994) ⁴

This layout was used until 1997, and during that time the newsletter was published intermittently.

⁴ Images are property of Hemlock Printers Ltd and from Hemlock's Newsletter Archive, used with permission.

In 1998 the newsletter was redesigned once more and to emphasize this, for a year the name was changed to “The New Hemlock News” where “The New” was playfully, and appropriately for a print company, inserted with a proofreading mark. The number of pages for this edition was variable, either 2 pages or 4 pages, a characteristic that stayed with the newsletter for the following years.



Figure 5. The New Hemlock News (1998) ⁵

An important change that happened with this redesign was the publishing frequency; the newsletter started to be published almost monthly as it was for the next 17 years.

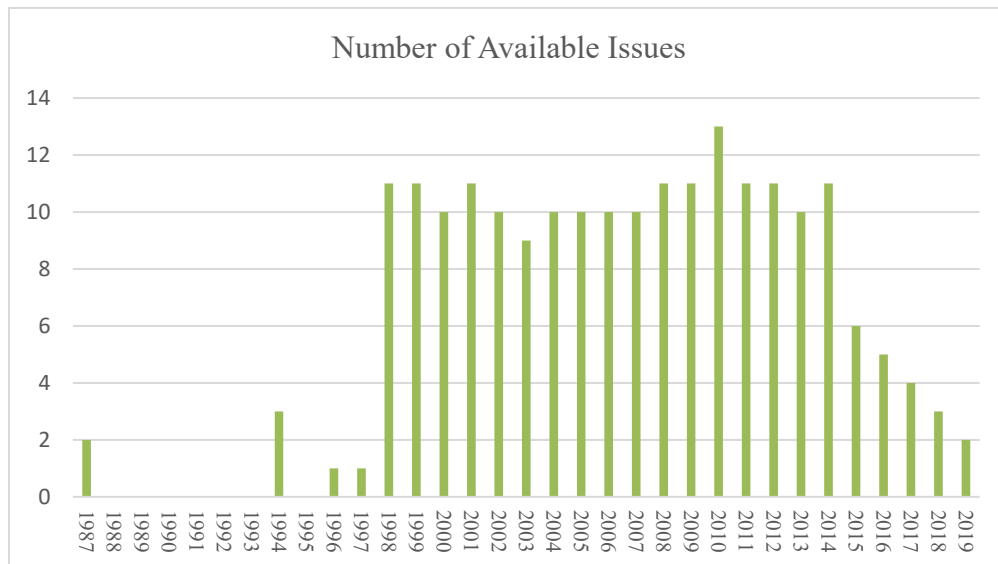


Figure 6. Number of published newsletters between 1987 and 2019 ⁶

⁵ Images are property of Hemlock Printers Ltd and from Hemlock’s Newsletter Archive, used with permission.

⁶ Chart is property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.

This was a great achievement, but at the same time introduced some problems as it is challenging to maintain such a schedule, especially since the newsletter is managed and produced by the employees who must handle their regular work responsibilities as well. I will explore this issue more in the [second chapter](#).

From this point on until a hiatus started in 2019, Hemlock News underwent only minor changes, to reflect the changes in the company branding, such as the logo, or to become visually more appealing by using new fonts or design treatments. The content also remained largely the same, with a few new reoccurring stories being introduced, such as kudos from customers and health and safety updates.



Figure 7. Hemlock News (2019) ⁷

1.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I introduced Hemlock Printers by looking at its history. I also defined internal communications and the role that newsletters play by looking at the literature on these subjects. Finally, I introduced Hemlock’s newsletter and its history. These introductions and definitions form the necessary foundation for the next chapters.

In the next chapter, I will compare the previous process of producing the newsletter with the literature on what makes newsletters successful and effective and explain what didn’t work and what could be improved.

⁷ Images are property of Hemlock Printers Ltd and from Hemlock’s Newsletter Archive, used with permission.

Chapter 2: The Goal

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will explain the goals of the newsletter redesign and relaunch project. To do so, I will first define a successful and effective internal newsletter by looking at the literature on this subject. I will then cover the company's expectations for the redesigned newsletter to address what did not work in the previous process. I will also introduce considerations for improvement and successful communication, such as making the newsletter available and easily accessible in digital format and creating a straightforward content submission process.

2.2. Defining a Successful Internal Newsletter

The purpose of an employee newsletter is not just to inform, but also to engage. "Through its design and content, a newsletter needs to capture the attention of readers and keep it. A newsletter won't get results if nobody reads it" ([Kandler, 2013](#)). An internal newsletter can improve employee morale, keep them informed, and let them know they are valued. Emphasizing the value of internal newsletters, [Matshoba](#) notes that "Internal newsletters encourage employees to participate in the process, bring forward their ideas, join committees and get involved in initiatives. Over time, employees really take ownership of their publication. They get to know their co-workers better and learn how different departments in the company function. This communication format is one more way to strengthen employees' commitment to the company" ([Matshoba, Thembekile Phillinah, 2012](#)).

An internal newsletter can become a valuable communication tool in the organization, and it can have many benefits and positive uses. But for that to happen and for a newsletter to be effective and successful, the key point is it must be done properly. We must keep this in mind in all aspects of the newsletter: content, production, and distribution. If the newsletter is not visually appealing with engaging content, or it is not produced and distributed regularly, its readership is affected, and it may not have the desired outcomes. In the following sections, I will explain each of these aspects.

2.2.1. Content

The content put in the newsletter depends on its goals and what the employees expect to read, but for a successful newsletter, it should be engaging. Some critical and important elements to have in the newsletter are ([Sociabble, 2022](#)):

- Messages from leadership
- Company updates
- Employee content
- Employee recognition
- Industry spotlight
- Important announcements
- Customer feedback and stories
- Staff surveys and results
- Best practices
- Health and wellness

The newsletter, and its content, must evolve and improve with time, as the needs and expectations of the employees might change, or be different from what was expected at the beginning. Employers can learn about the employees' expectations by conducting surveys to learn which articles are more popular, which are less interesting, and what else readers like to read in the newsletter ([Athiyaman, 2005](#)). If the newsletter is distributed digitally as well, it offers a valuable opportunity to capture insightful feedback about the newsletter and its audience. For example, most web statistics programs allow you to see the number of people who have viewed your newsletter, the most popular pages within it, and the average amount of time a viewer spends on each page.⁸

It is also important to note that an attractive and beautifully designed layout not only must speak to its audience and be well structured and flexible at the same time, but it also must be used to further enhance content engagement. The company's overall visual identity is enhanced by newsletters that use corporate logos, colour schemes, and management messages to create a cohesive whole ([Kandler, 2013](#)).

⁸ A good example of such a web statistics service is Adobe PDF Embed API. "How To Data | PDF Embed API | Adobe PDF Services," accessed May 31, 2023, <https://developer.adobe.com/document-services/docs/overview/pdf-embed-api/howtodata/>.

2.2.2. Production

Production might not seem to play an important role but considering that one of the main engagement factors of a newsletter is becoming a routine so that staff would expect and look forward to it, the newsletter needs to be published regularly and on time. Regular publication gives the newsletter credibility and predictability.

“If the company underestimates the time required of its employees to produce the newsletter, the publication will suffer” ([Kandler, 2013](#)). The editor might not be able to find enough time or feel motivated or compensated enough to do their everyday responsibilities as well as the newsletter duties, which could cause the company to experience delays in the production of each issue. This could lead to poor quality, the newsletter would then lose credibility, and eventually, it might be terminated. It is best to “build every foreseeable delay into your production schedule” ([PR News, 2007](#)).

Considering the staff’s schedule and foreseeing possible delays would help determine production aspects of the newsletter such as frequency and page count. Although a more frequent newsletter with fewer pages might seem more appealing, it is not always easy to maintain. In that case, a well-made but less-frequent newsletter, such as one that is published quarterly rather than monthly, would be much better.

2.2.3. Distribution

There are two main aspects to distribution: dissemination and format.

Dissemination

“The terms ‘push’ and ‘pull’ media have been used to describe different delivery mechanisms associated with communication methods and internal media, such as internal newsletters” ([Welch, 2012](#)). Push media are sent to employees (e.g., electronic or print newsletters sent directly to employees). Pull media require employees to collect or go to the media (e.g., collecting a printed newsletter from a central location or searching for information on an intranet). [White et al. \(2010\)](#) observed that employees in their study preferred push distribution to pull dissemination. Methods of dissemination can also be used “in conjunction, resulting in blended, dual or multiple dissemination” ([Welch, 2012](#)).

Format

Welch categorizes internal communication media “by format as: print (accessed on paper), electronic (accessed on a piece of technology) and face-to-face (interpersonal). Each category contains methods with potential for efficient communication. To be effective, the communication methods need to be appropriate and acceptable to internal stakeholders” ([Welch, 2012](#)).

By analyzing data gathered via a qualitative survey conducted in a company, [Welch \(2012\)](#) concludes that 47% of the respondents preferred electronic formats such as receiving the newsletter via email, by PDF files and via the organization’s intranet. 16% of participants expressed a dual preference for both electronic and print. These participants argued that print copies should be available to people who wanted them, alongside the electronic format. 3% of participants expressed a preference for print newsletters. The findings in this study suggest that “it would be dangerous for communicators to assume that employees share uniform preferences for internal communication media. The findings support a need to consider employees as a multi-dimensional set of diverse internal stakeholders rather than a single entity.” This suggests that to enable employees to choose the medium they find most acceptable, appropriate, and usable, it is necessary to provide alternative formats ([Welch, 2012](#)).

With these considerations in mind, to have a higher readership rate and to increase employee engagement, when possible, it is ideal to provide the newsletter in multiple formats and to use multiple delivery mechanisms to distribute it. It is important to note that doing so is not always possible. Offering the newsletter in printed format introduces extra costs that are not justifiable or practical for every organization.

2.3. What Did Not Work

By comparing Hemlock’s previous newsletters with the definitions provided in the previous section for a successful newsletter, I can see many similarities. This is mostly apparent in the content of the newsletter; from the very beginning, many of the article types mentioned previously were used in Hemlock’s newsletter, such as messages from leadership, company updates, content contributed by employees, employee recognition, and industry news. Additionally, surveys were conducted to learn more

about the content preferences of the employees. As a result of this observation, the redesign process focused more on other aspects of the newsletter rather than the content, such as production challenges and distribution improvements.

Hemlock's newsletter has been part of the company's internal communication strategy since 1987. Publishing at least 207 issues in 26 years⁹ is a great accomplishment, but some complications made maintaining it a challenge. The redesign process, which I will explain in [Chapter 3](#), needed to address the following issues as these would directly affect the effectiveness and feasibility of the newsletter.

2.3.1. Frequency/Schedule

For each issue of a newsletter, there is a lot of work that needs to be done, the most time-consuming ones being planning, writing articles, tracking contributions and staff stories, and editing. The editorial team needs to follow a tight schedule so that all stages of the process – layout and typesetting, prepress, production, distribution, and shipping – are on time. The more frequent the publication, the more pronounced this issue becomes. In the case of Hemlock's newsletter, which was, for the most part, a monthly publication for almost 17 years, this meant that before the current issue was published, the work on the next issue had already begun. Hold-ups in any of the stages would result in further delays in the following steps and eventually, this led to an inconsistent and irregular publishing frequency.

2.3.2. Contribution/Compensation

An engaging newsletter will not only make staff want to read it, but they should also be encouraged to take part in creating it and contributing stories to it. Although in essence, a newsletter is an organizational communication tool, the employees taking ownership of it is the goal of a successful newsletter. It is only then that it effectively informs and engages the employees, becoming an asset to create a positive company culture.

⁹ These numbers are based on the results of a company-wide call for past issues in order to create the archive for the newsletter, and the actual number could possibly be higher since there were still gaps in the archive. This will be covered with more detail in [Chapter 3](#).

This is how Hemlock published its newsletter and part of the reason it was successful. Issues arise when the staff in charge of the newsletter must do their everyday job duties in addition to newsletter duties, especially when, as was the case for Hemlock's newsletter, it is published very frequently. In this case, especially in a small team such as Hemlock's, the editors could not find enough time to perform the extra labour.

2.3.3. Template/Design

The newsletter's last layout design, which was used for almost 17 years, underwent only minor changes and for the most part stayed the same. This meant that the newsletter's design started to appear dated. Another issue with the previous design was brand alignment. Although the layout was periodically updated to reflect the changes to Hemlock's branding, changes that happened after the newsletter hiatus starting in 2019, namely an updated colour palette taking into account all companies, were not incorporated.

Finally, another issue that made the production of the newsletter harder, and potentially affected employee engagement, was a variable page count and page size. As explained in the previous chapter, an important factor in a newsletter becoming engaging and effective is its predictability. While the newsletter was originally an 8.5"×11" four-page document, it was sometimes reduced to a double-sided 8.5"×17" page, and sometimes an additional insert was added to accommodate the extra content. Not only was the predictability and familiarity lost, but this also made the design and typesetting stage harder and more time-consuming by not being able to use a template for layout.

2.3.4. Audience

Hemlock's newsletter was always published for, and included stories from, the main company. But Hemlock has grown a lot and there are multiple companies in the Hemlock group of companies. In addition, many of the staff, such as those on sales teams, work remotely and are rarely in the office. This makes it harder for remote staff, retirees and community members, as well as the employees of other companies, to feel connected and a part of the larger organization. To create a sense of unity in all companies and between all employees, Hemlock felt the need to have an all-encompassing newsletter covering all companies.

2.4. What Could Be Improved

In contrast to the issues that I mentioned in the previous section, which created challenges and affected the newsletter negatively, there are other aspects that previously either were not considered or could be improved. Addressing these issues and improving on them could greatly improve the employees' engagement and create a more effective newsletter.

2.4.1. Format

Hemlock's newsletter has always been a printed asset, which is an appropriate and fitting choice for a printing company. The office and plant employees received their copies from their supervisors and hard copies were mailed to remote workers, retirees, and community members. Occasionally, if they asked for it, they could also receive the PDF file of the newsletter in an email. Although the print format worked fine for Hemlock, with its redesign we decided to publish the newsletter in a digital format in addition to the print version. This decision has many positive outcomes.

First, it is a more effective newsletter, as it creates the opportunity for employees to choose which format and distribution method is more appropriate for them. This is in line with the results of studies mentioned in [section 2.2](#), which indicate that employees don't share uniform preferences for media. Second, hosting the newsletter on the company intranet drives traffic to it, which is a very important goal as there always is the need to encourage employees to use the company's intranet and to reinforce it as the official source of information and communication.

Lastly, publishing the newsletter in digital format also creates an opportunity to get indirect feedback on the content and its readers through web statistics, as explained in [section 2.2](#). These statistics complement surveys which are an important part of the feedback cycle.

2.4.2. Distribution

With the redesigned newsletter, we updated the distribution method as well. With the decision to provide the newsletter in digital format as well as printed, came the need for a platform to host the digital file. To have a centralized location for all communications and information, Hemlock decided to create a site on the company's intranet dedicated to

the newsletter. Although the digital newsletter could have been shared with the employees like other company notices on the intranet, having such a platform is beneficial as it allows for a cohesive collection of everything related to the newsletter and it can be where staff find all information related to the newsletter, such as publication schedule, team members, archive of past issues and the current issue, as well as ways to contribute to the newsletter.

Another addition to the newsletter distribution methods was the decision to have the printed copies accessible at central locations. This ties in with a broader internal communication project of the company to standardize the staff bulletin boards as a section of these boards will be dedicated to the newsletter.

In summary, the newsletter will be provided to staff in multiple formats, i.e., digital and printed, and it will be distributed using multiple methods, i.e., on the intranet, directly through the supervisors, additional copies at central locations, and either mailed or emailed to remote workers, retirees and community members. This allows the employees to choose which format and distribution method they prefer and helps increase the effectiveness of the newsletter and its readership.

2.4.3. Content Submission Process

Employee Contribution is an important aspect of any internal newsletter as it greatly improves engagement, and it has always been an integral part of Hemlock's newsletter. While submissions previously were done either in person or through email, having a streamlined method will facilitate and encourage more submissions. Having a central platform on the company's intranet, which is already used frequently, creates a good opportunity for this new process.

2.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I first explored the definition of a successful internal newsletter by looking at the literature on this subject. With these definitions in mind, I looked at the previous publishing process of Hemlock's newsletter and examined what did not work as well as what could be improved with the new process. These definitions and explanations bring us to the redesign process which I explain in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Process

3.1. Introduction

Analyzing [the context](#) of this project and considering [the goals](#), provides a solid and necessary foundation for this chapter, where I will discuss how Hemlock addressed the expectations and considerations discussed in [Chapter 2](#) by describing the redesign process. Here I will discuss design considerations for the new layout, the production game plan, the website that hosts the newsletter, and the archive of previous issues of the newsletter.

3.2. Layout Design

When it comes to designing the newsletter, general design principles, such as alignment, balance, hierarchy to aid focus, contrast to accentuate design elements, repetition, proximity to organize and establish connections, colour optimization, and effective use of negative space, must be considered first and foremost. While following these principles is necessary for good design and were considered in Hemlock's newsletter redesigning process, a detailed explanation of design principles is beyond the scope of this report. Here, instead, I will focus on aspects of the layout design that directly affect the effectiveness of the newsletter and aspects that enhance readership and engagement.

3.2.1. Masthead

The first thing that the reader notices in a newsletter is the masthead and as the logo of the publication, it becomes the symbol of the newsletter across other platforms. As such, it is vital to pay close attention to all the small details when creating it, to have several iterations done and to ask for feedback from team members and staff. We had to consider multiple aspects when designing Hemlock's newsletter masthead, such as:



Figure 8. Hemlock's newsletter masthead before (on the left) and after (on the right) ¹⁰

¹⁰ Images are property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.

Brand Alignment

Considering that the newsletter, as part of the internal communication strategy, is an internal publication, it is essential to align it well with the company's branding efforts. For that reason, we used the company typeface as the main font, and each of Hemlock's group of companies' brand colours are incorporated to create a unified look and a sense of belonging.

Newsletter Mission

The mission of the newsletter, which is to *Inform, Inspire, Explain, Recognize, and Report*, is clearly and distinctly displayed by giving it more room, using a larger point size, and using the Hemlock tree to separate them, to express what exactly the newsletter aims to do.

Consistency

Considering that Hemlock's newsletter has a long history and has always been a part of the company's communication strategy, it was important to keep the essence of the previous – and very famous – masthead, and at the same time make it different enough to mark a new beginning and to represent what it aims to achieve, which is to bring all the companies in the Hemlock group of companies together. To accomplish this, we decided to rebrand the newsletter as “Hemlock Group News” and use a proofreading mark to insert the “Group” in the previous title. This simple solution accomplishes many things. Firstly, by using the proofreading mark, which is relevant to the business, and by using a script font, it sets the tone of the newsletter as being formal yet playful. Secondly, it pays tribute to the previous title of the newsletter as *Hemlock News* is still the main part of the title. Lastly, it signifies the fact that the newsletter encompasses all companies and not just the main Hemlock office.

3.2.2. Format and Page Count

When deciding the page count and the newsletter format, we considered several aspects. First, and most important, is how much content is going to be published in each issue. This in turn depends on the frequency of the publication.

When designing the layout for the newsletter, we considered and mocked up multiple options for the format and page count, including 4- or 8-page half-fold layouts and a 6-page tri-fold layout.



Figure 9. Initial mock-ups for the newsletter to demonstrate different layouts and page count options.¹¹

After deciding on a quarterly publishing frequency and because this newsletter has to cover stories from four different companies, we decided to use an 8-page layout. With room for around 20 articles and approximately 5,000 words in total, this layout accommodates all articles¹² and helps avoid different page counts between different issues.

Layout

For the layout, we decided to continue using a mixed-column grid layout. Columns are essential tools to standardize the layout and they will help with finding order and structure. At the same time, to avoid repetition and dullness, to allow for more creativity and visual interest, and to create the desired content hierarchy, we used a mix of different numbers of columns as well as different column widths.

To promote the playful aspect of the newsletter and to align it with company branding, I used primary and secondary colours available in the company’s branding guidelines. I also used clean frames and sharp lines to create the needed separation

between articles and to give the newsletter a modern and clean look. Also, to help achieve this goal, I used asymmetrical geometric frames that are often extended into the bleed area.



Figure 10. Asymmetrical geometric frames and sharp lines to create separation ¹¹

¹¹ Images are property of Hemlock Printers, used with permission.

¹² Article types and categories will be explained in [section 3.3.2](#).

Fonts

For the fonts, we considered many options including the company typeface, which is also used in the logo, and after reviewing all the options we chose two main ones to keep the newsletter uniform and easy to follow and separate from other company communication methods. We selected a geometric modern sans-serif typeface (Avenir) for the heading that fits well with the choice of geometric frames. Moreover, we selected a geometric slab-serif font (Rockwell) for the body text. Rockwell font is mechanical, but it also feels friendly and warm. As a result, being playful yet scientific, this font fits well with the newsletter and its tone. Both these fonts offer good readability for both print and screen which is important for the newsletter as it will be offered in both formats.

3.3. The Production Process

Proper planning is essential for a successful internal newsletter because it helps deliver relevant, consistent, and well-crafted content to the employees, fostering engagement, communication, and alignment within the organization. Even more crucial than the issue-to-issue planning is the broader production process or the game plan of the newsletter. Figuring out the details ahead of time and establishing a well-thought-out structure is what would help keep the production of the newsletter consistent and sustainable.

3.3.1. Publishing Schedule

Considering the quarterly publishing frequency and the experience of previous newsletter members, we were able to determine how much time was needed to produce each issue. The standard schedule allows for 6 weeks for the content development, design/layout, and production of each newsletter. The schedule breaks down as follows:

- Determining articles, content sources, owners (1 week)
- Content Development (3 weeks)
- Prepress & Proofing (1 week)
- Production & Distribution (1 week)

This timeline allows the editorial team enough time to prepare the newsletter as well as do their daily job duties.

3.3.2. Content Categories

Establishing what types of stories will be published in each issue helps plan and track them more efficiently. While planning the production of the newsletter and as part of the production game plan, we established the general categories of articles that would be published in each issue, i.e., reoccurring sections, business stories, committee articles, and staff stories. We further itemized these categories to make a list of all the different articles we wanted to have in the newsletter.

Reoccurring	Business Stories	Committee Articles	Staff Stories
Feature Story	Company Update	DEI Committee	Recent Vacation
Milestones	Company Event	Sustainability Committee	Book/Movie/TV Review
Birthdays	Strategic Initiative	Social Club	Hobby Story
New Faces	Project Success Story	Hemlock Group News	Family Story
Meet the Team	Department/Team Profile	OHS Committee	
Kudos	New Technology		
	A Look Back (History Story)		

Table 1. List of article types for Hemlock's Newsletter

Some of these items were from the previous newsletter and have already proved engaging and some others are article types that Hemlock's management team, as well as the newsletter committee, thought necessary to have so that employees are more informed about different committees and company projects. It is worth mentioning that these article types are in line with content categories and elements I introduced in [section 2.2](#), that help raise engagement and improve the effectiveness of the newsletter.

3.3.3. Content Submission

Content from the employees has always been an important part of the company's newsletter. As such, it was important to have an easy-to-access-and-use content submission method. Having a platform on the company's intranet provided the opportunity for a method meeting these requirements as the intranet is an asset that employees already use and are familiar with. To achieve this, we created a simple "Microsoft Forms" questionnaire that provides guidelines and notes for submissions and lets staff select the type of story they want to submit, upload their content including text and images, and add additional notes or information.

Content Submission

Hi, Intern. When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

Guidelines and notes

- Before submitting your article, make sure a spell/grammar check is completed.
- Make sure the word count is within the range for the article type (if you're not sure, ask one of the HGN Editors)
- Make sure your photos are of sufficient resolution for printing.
- Remember, all article contributors are entered into a prize draw after each issue as a token of thanks for your contribution.

Next

1. Please provide a short description of your submission:

Enter your answer

2. What category does your submission fall into?

Select your answer

3. Please upload your text file and images below.
Note: See "4" below if you would like to submit your content within this form. (Non-anonymous question)

Upload file

File number limit: 10 Single file size limit: 10MB Allowed file types: Word, Image

4. If not uploading a text file using "3" above, you can provide your content below.

Enter your answer

Send me an email receipt of my responses

Back Submit

Figure 11. Screenshot of the content submission form ¹³

To further facilitate this submission method, and to help the editors access the submitted content easier, we created a Power Automate flow that automatically retrieves new submissions and attaches and sends them in an email containing all the information including the name of the person. Additionally, staff and community members who don't have access to the site can directly send their content to the newsletter's email address.

Emails generated by the Power Automate flow as well as emails sent directly by employees are accessed through the dedicated email address for the newsletter that is monitored by the editors. To encourage contributors to submit their content, they are entered into a prize draw, such as gift cards, after each issue as a token of thanks for their contribution.

¹³ Image is property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.

3.3.4. The Committee

Considering that one of the main issues faced in the production of the previous newsletter was editorial contributions, that is how much time staff spent on the newsletter duties and how they were compensated for that additional work (refer to [section 2.3.2](#)), it was important to pay special attention to this aspect in the new production game plan. We sent a company-wide email explaining the positions and asking for interested employees to get in touch with us. Accordingly, a committee was formed consisting of different roles, including editors, contributors, a prepress production member, and a leadership team member. From each of the companies, one editor is selected with the addition of an assistant editor from Hemlock Printers, who oversee all aspects of newsletter production, such as gathering newsletter content, working with prepress on the design and layout of each newsletter edition, and working with planning/production and IT departments on the final production and distribution of each newsletter. The editor and assistant editor roles are paid to compensate for the additional time they spend on the newsletter.

The committee holds regular meetings to plan each issue and ensure its timely production. Having these primary and support roles facilitates the production of the newsletter and guarantees none of the members are overworked.

3.3.5. Planning

For the committee to easily plan and track the progress of each issue, we prepared a master spreadsheet for brainstorming article ideas, managing submitted content, and planning the newsletter. Using this document, the committee would brainstorm ideas in the early stages of planning the next issue. All the ideas are written on the first sheet of the document and discussed in a meeting to decide which ideas would be used.

Name	Article Topic	Article Type	Content Category	Source	Possible Contributor	Note
Richard	Introducing Hemlock's New 100K Press	BusinessStory	Strategic Initiative	Hemlock		
Richard	Return of the Hemlock News/Meet the HGN Team	Committee	Hemlock Group News	All Companies		Feature story
Richard	Hemlock Summer Picnic (July 15), Social Club Update	Committee	Social Club	Hemlock		
Richard	DEI Committee Update	Committee	DEI Committee	Hemlock		
Richard	Social Club Committee Update	Committee	Social Club	Hemlock		
Richard	OHS Committee Update	Committee	OHS Committee	All Companies		Short intro, members from each company
Richard	Strategic Initiatives 2023 Progress Report	BusinessStory	Strategic Initiative	Hemlock		
Richard	New Faces - May to July 2023	Reoccurring	New Faces	All Companies		
Richard	Birthdays Aug to Oct 2023	Recurring	Birthdays	All Companies		
Richard	Milestones - Hemlock Group	Recurring	Milestones	All Companies		
Richard	HH Warehouse Expansion and Mailing Move	BusinessStory	Strategic Initiative	Hemlock Harling	Paul/Jo have been asked due July 20th	
Richard	PrismTech becomes Hemlock Display	BusinessStory	Strategic Initiative	Hemlock Display		
Richard	Project Success Story - PrismTech	BusinessStory	Project Success Story	Hemlock		Any project worth profiling? Ideally we have at least one project success story per issue
Richard	Project Success Story - Hemlock Harling	BusinessStory	Project Success Story	Hemlock		Any project worth profiling? Ideally we have at least one project success story per issue
Richard	Project Success Story - Hemlock	BusinessStory	Project Success Story	Hemlock		Any project worth profiling? Ideally we have at least one project success story per issue
Richard	Meet the Team Paper Chase Press	BusinessStory	Department/Team Profile	Hemlock		
Richard	Introduction to the staff story, request content	StaffStory		All Companies		
Richard	Possible staff story - single company	Staff Story				
Kasey	Photos / content from the archives!	BusinessStory	A Look Back (History Story)	Hemlock		Look at August issues from the past!
Helen	PH photo and other photos submitted by staff	Staff Story		Hemlock		Reoccurring section - photos submitted by staff

Figure 12. Brainstorming sheet of the planning document ¹⁴

The selected ideas are transferred to the second sheet which is used to plan the issue. Here, details of each article such as its category, editor in charge, contributor, target word count, submission deadline, and status are listed. This document is continuously updated and is used to make sure the deadlines are met, and production is on track.

Issue: Summer 2023		Submission Deadline: Friday, July 21, 2023			Layout Deadline: Friday, August 4, 2023		Distribution Deadline: Friday, August 11, 2023			
Number	Article Type	Article Topic	Content Category	Source	Editor	Contributor	Target Word Count	Content Received (Date)	Status (Please select from list)	Comments
1	Feature Story	Return of the Hemlock News, Meet The Team	Return of the Hemlock News, M	Hemlock	Neena	Neena	600	Tuesday, July 25, 2023	In Progress	
2	BusinessStory	Introducing Hemlock's New 100K Press	New Technology	Hemlock	Kasey	Rob	250	Friday, July 21, 2023	Done	
3	Committee	Hemlock Summer Picnic (July 15), Social Club Update	Social Club	Hemlock	Kasey	Graham	250	Friday, July 21, 2023	Done	introduction of committee and photos from July event
4	BusinessStory	HH Warehouse Expansion and Mailing Move	Strategic Initiative	Hemlock	Lorraine	Joe/Paul	250	Friday, July 21, 2023	Done	
5	BusinessStory	PrismTech becomes Hemlock Display	Strategic Initiative	Hemlock	Brady	Andrew H	250	Monday, July 24, 2023	In Progress	
6	BusinessStory	Meet the Team Paper Chase Press	Department/Team Profile	Hemlock	Kasey	Nicole	250	Monday, July 24, 2023	Done	Include individual photos
7	BusinessStory	Photos / content from the archives!	A Look Back (History Story)	Hemlock	Neena	Vanessa/Helen	100	Friday, July 21, 2023	Done	Minimal content, mostly photos - collage format
8	Committee	DEI Committee Update	DEI Committee	Hemlock	Kasey	Steph	200	Thursday, July 20, 2023	Done	
9	Committee	OHS Committee Update	OHS Committee	Hemlock	Kasey	Rob	200		Done	
10	StaffStory	Photos submitted by staff - pet focused?	Family Story	Hemlock	Neena	Hemlock Staff	100	Friday, July 21, 2023	In Progress	Minimal content, mostly photos
11	Committee	Choose Category		Hemlock					Waiting for Content	
12	Committee	Choose Category		Hemlock					Waiting for Content	
13	Committee	Choose Category		Hemlock					Waiting for Content	
14	Committee	Choose Category		Hemlock					Waiting for Content	
13	Milestones			Hemlock	All			Tuesday, July 11, 2023	Done	Completed through invitations for contributions by staff members
14	Birthdays			Hemlock	All			Tuesday, July 11, 2023	Done	Completed by editorial team
15	Kudos			Hemlock	All				Waiting for Content	Completed through invitations for contributions by staff members
16	New Faces (1 frame)			Hemlock	Neena			Tuesday, July 25, 2023	In Progress	Completed by editorial team
17	Meet the Team (1 Frame)			Hemlock	Neena			Wednesday, July 19, 2023	Done	Profile 1 staff member, standard set of questions? Keep it light...editorial team to determine who this will be...maybe start with Hemlock?
Total Word Count= 2,450										

Figure 13. Issue plan sheet of the planning document ¹⁴

¹⁴ Images are property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.



Figure 14. Flat plan sheet of the planning document ¹⁵

A third sheet in the document offers a flat plan for an easy-to-track visual representation of the status of the current issue. This plan shows the placement and word count of different articles in the template and is also designed to automatically display the status of each article using predefined colours, yellow for “Waiting for Content”, green for “In Progress” and gray for “Done”, based on the previous sheet.

This document is shared with, and accessed by, all newsletter committee members, especially the editors, as the central place for planning each issue.

¹⁵ Image is property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.

3.3.6. Distribution Methods

To enhance the distribution of the newsletter, additional methods were introduced with the redesigned version. While the newsletter is still partly distributed in person and



through the supervisors of each department for now, additional copies are provided at six key locations on the communication boards throughout the company. This method works as publicity for the newsletter as well.

Figure 15. Holders offering additional copies of the newsletter ¹⁶

Another additional method for the distribution of the newsletter is offering the digital edition through the site on the company intranet. This is an important aspect of the website and the archive, which I will explain in more detail in the next sections.

Collectively, these strategies provide a diverse array of formats and distribution methods, catering to a wide spectrum of preferences and allowing every reader to select the option that aligns best with their individual needs. By offering this flexibility, we intend to expand the readership, thereby boosting the overall engagement and effectiveness of the newsletter. In essence, the commitment to offering an array of choices isn't just about convenience; it's about facilitating a richer and more dynamic reader experience. By respecting and accommodating the diverse preferences of the audience, we hope to not only broaden the reach but also amplify the impact of the content the newsletter delivers.

¹⁶ Image is property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.

3.4. The Website

Hosting the newsletter on the company intranet offers several benefits:

- **Centralized Access:** By hosting the newsletter within the company's intranet, we aim to generate increased traffic to this platform. This objective is crucial because it aligns with the ongoing efforts to promote the utilization of the company's intranet among employees and establish it as the primary and authoritative hub for information and communication. This streamlines access to important updates and content.
- **Enhanced Communication:** Placing the newsletter on the intranet reinforces it as a primary channel for internal communication. This can lead to increased readership and engagement.
- **Analytics:** Hosting the newsletter on the intranet allows for tracking and analytics. Microsoft SharePoint offers basic analytical data on view counts and click-through rates, providing engagement insights. Further analysis is also possible by using other tools such as Adobe PDF Embed API.
- **Searchability:** Hemlock's intranet has robust search capabilities. Employees can easily search for and retrieve many resources and access a lot of information. Having the newsletter on the intranet not only makes searching through its content much easier, but also enriches the intranet and its search function, especially by uploading past newsletters, making it a valuable resource for referencing historical information. This function is explained in [section 3.5. The Archive](#).
- **Accessibility:** As mentioned previously, offering the newsletter in multiple formats is important to make sure everyone can access it the way they prefer.

Overall, hosting the digital newsletter on the intranet streamlines internal communications, strengthens company culture, and provides a secure and efficient means of delivering the newsletter to the employees in an additional format.

Hemlock Printers launched its intranet, called Hemlock Hub to centralize a lot of the information and resources stored in multiple locations (i.e., network files, physical bulletin board postings, etc.) and simplify how these resources are located and accessed. The intranet makes general Hemlock resources available to all staff, including company memos, job postings, staff directories, company-wide policies and procedures, company-

wide events calendar, and links to tools, such as ticketing portals for IT, maintenance and occupational health and safety. It hosts platforms of different Hemlock committees which now include the newsletter committee.

The intranet, and consecutively the Hemlock Group News website, is built using SharePoint in Microsoft 365, a cloud-based service hosted by Microsoft for businesses. Although the intranet was launched in 2022, it did not include a separate site for the newsletter and designing the website was the second part of the newsletter redesign project. This site is the main digital platform for the newsletter, has multiple sections and is managed by the main editor.

I started creating the website when the newsletter layout was mostly finalized. For the website design, I had to make sure it was in line with other parts of the intranet and ensure brand alignment to maintain consistency, professionalism, and a sense of unity. To achieve this, I created visuals such as mock-ups and used them on different pages. Whenever possible, I also applied the same design treatment as that of the newsletter to further unify the platform with it. This platform was first reviewed by the front-end designer of the company for visual and technical alignment and was later approved by the newsletter committee.

3.4.1. Home Page

The landing page for the newsletter committee (Figure 15) offers links to the About page to learn more about the Hemlock Group News and to the content submission form. It also displays the most recent news published on the site.

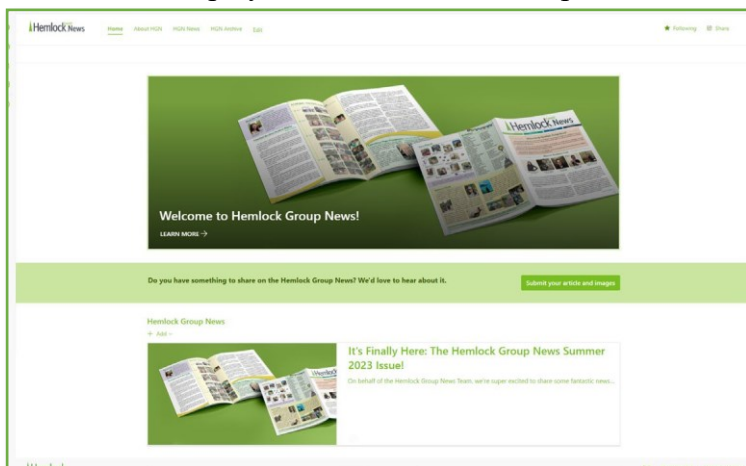


Figure 16. Home page of Hemlock Group News website¹⁷

¹⁷ Image is property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.

3.4.2. About Page

The about page offers all the essential information on the Hemlock Group News. It has a short description of the newsletter, and it is further split into sections providing information on the publication schedule, the distribution methods, the covered stories, the editorial team, and the committee team members and their contact information.

Also included on this page is a banner asking employees to contact any of the editorial team members if they are interested in contributing to the newsletter in any way. This is necessary because although all the positions are currently filled, it may not always be the case.



Figure 17. About page of Hemlock Group News website¹⁸

¹⁸ Image is property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.

3.4.3. News Page

The news page is a blog-style news page displaying all news published by the committee. This will include new issues, results of contribution gift draws, results of future surveys about the newsletter, and changes to the newsletter team such as new team members. Publishing news posts is important for the newsletter as they will also be displayed on the intranet's landing page to inform employees and encourage them to visit the newsletter site.

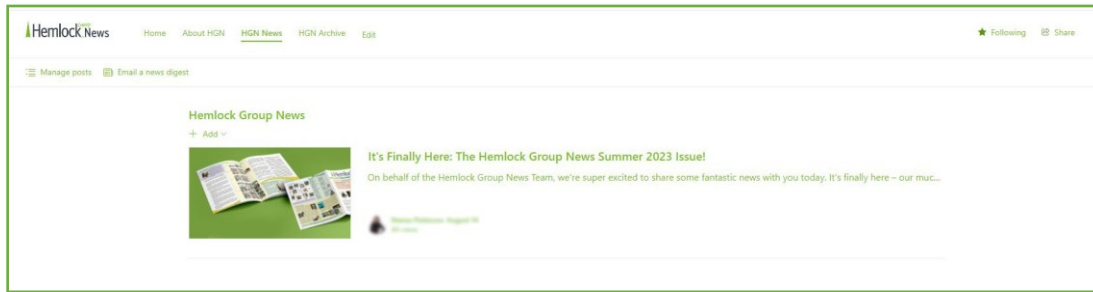


Figure 18. News page of Hemlock Group News website ¹⁹

3.4.4. The Archive

The archive page is a very important aspect of the newsletter website. It serves as an important asset, preserving a rich collection of newsletters from Hemlock's history. Here, employees can delve into the past, explore the evolution of the newsletter content, and stay connected with the journey the company has taken. This is also where the most recent issue of the newsletter can be accessed. For ease of access, I have used an



embedded PDF reader to allow readers to access the newsletters with just a few clicks, but they also have the option to download the files to view on their device or at a later time.

Figure 19. Archive page of Hemlock Group News ¹⁹

¹⁹ Image is property of Hemlock Printers Ltd, used with permission.

3.5. The Archive

Initially we planned to include the few issues of the previous newsletter we had at the time as an interesting feature for the website for employees to see and compare especially since it had been a while since the newsletter was last published. When considering the benefits of this feature, we decided to try and gather all of the previously published issues and create a comprehensive archive for the newsletter. By doing so, we would, most importantly, preserve a big part of Hemlock's history. Additionally, this archive serves as a source of information which would now be accessible to all employees through the website. This also enriches the intranet's search functionality.

To achieve this goal, I composed an initial email and sent it to everyone in the company explaining the project objectives and requesting any copies of the past newsletters they have kept. Following that email, many employees came forward and provided us with 328 copies. To keep track of all the copies we received and plan for the selection and scanning of the proper issues, I created an Excel document keeping track of the date and condition of each copy and the name of the person who provided it. I also identified issues of which we had duplicate copies. I then selected all the issues to be included in the archive based on the condition of the copies we had. This resulted in 207 distinct issues dating between 1987 and 2019. By analyzing the data we gathered in the Excel spreadsheet, and considering the gaps in the list of available copies, I suspect that 7 of the published newsletters are still missing in the archive.

The next step was to scan all of the selected copies. I scanned each copy, being mindful of the physicality of the copies and making sure to preserve the original condition of the printed copies which had to be given back to the original provider. To further enhance the scanned copies and to improve their accessibility, OCR (Optical Character Recognition) technology was used to recognize the text within the PDF files. To make sure the results are as accurate as possible, I reviewed and corrected each word or phrase that was flagged by the OCR software as indistinguishable. These files were then organized by year and uploaded to the website, where not only can they be accessed directly, but also their content is searchable through the search function of the website.

Past issues of the newsletter have been an interest of the employees which can also be observed by the impressive number of copies they kept and provided upon our request. Since it has always included personal content such as social event articles and staff biographies and stories, it could be interesting to check the issues their relatives or themselves were presented in the newsletter or see previous social events. As an example, in the first issue of the redesigned newsletter, a section was dedicated to past summer picnics hosted by Hemlock which showcased a selection of picnic pictures published in past issues going back to 1999.

3.6. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explained what we did to address the expectations and considerations mentioned in the previous sections by analyzing the redesign process. I described design considerations for the new layout and how it will help increase engagement and effectiveness of the newsletter. Another important aspect of the redesign project I covered in this chapter was the production process since it was a pain point for the previous newsletter. I also described the website we created to act as the main platform for the newsletter.

Conclusion

This project report could act as a guide for Hemlock to follow its plan and improve its newsletter. As such, it would be helpful to end it with a conclusion of what has been done, as well as possibilities going forward.

In this report, I introduced Hemlock Printers and its newsletter and defined internal communications and the strategic roles of newsletters in the communications sphere ([Chapter 1](#)). Next, I described the goals of the newsletter redesign project. To do that, I defined a successful internal newsletter by looking at the literature on this topic, I examined what aspects of the previous newsletter did not work, and explained aspects that could be improved with the redesigned newsletter ([Chapter 2](#)). Finally, I described the process of redesigning different aspects of the newsletter to address the shortcomings of the previous process, improve it where we saw room for improvement, and achieve a more successful and engaging newsletter ([Chapter 3](#)). Here I will discuss conclusions based on my experience working on Hemlock's newsletter redesign project.

Takeaways

When I started working on the newsletter redesign project at Hemlock Printers, my first impression, based on the fact that it was published for a very long time, was that it was already a successful newsletter. This was reinforced by the employees' feelings toward the newsletter and the enthusiasm and longing they expressed whenever we talked. This casual observation was then validated when I did more research on the topics of internal corporate communications, internal newsletters, and what makes an internal newsletter successful and effective. By comparing Hemlock's newsletter with the literature on the topic, I could see a lot of similarities, especially in the types of content used in the newsletter.

This leads to an important point: there is always room for improvement, even in an already successful newsletter. This is an important consideration for maintaining and improving any process or product.

Another takeaway from this project for me was that, although visual aspects of a newsletter and its content are very important for success, even more important is the

process of creating and planning it, for even the most well-designed and well-written newsletter would not reach its full potential in terms of engagement and effectiveness if not produced on time and distributed in the appropriate format.

Finally, this project showed me that finding a middle ground between what is considered best practices in general and what is best for a particular business is very important. For example, although a printed newsletter might not be financially viable for most companies, and while research done on the subject, such as the survey done by [Welch \(2012\)](#), shows that digital formats are preferred, the decision on this aspect requires consideration of the unique situation of each organization. This also means creating a newsletter that is both aesthetically pleasing and serves the business's objectives and goals.

For Hemlock, as it consists of multiple separate companies, having a print version which is distributed at the same time among all companies, helps create a sense of belonging and connection that could not be replicated by a PDF version only, especially since each company has its internal network and distributing the digital version would be internal for each. Additionally, being a print company, having a printed newsletter seems more fitting and at the same time providing multiple options, such as both a print version and a PDF version, helps employees choose what they prefer. A print version also has the possibility of showing employees new printing techniques. For example, in 2005 Hemlock printed a personalized newsletter for its employees to explain variable data printing and one-to-one marketing.

Looking Forward

As this report was being written, Hemlock published the first issue of the redesigned newsletter following the processes explained in previous pages, and I was told by the newsletter committee that it has been received well, especially by the company retirees who have been away from the company environment. This is excellent news and a good start, but to maintain and improve upon this success, it is important to have an efficient feedback loop to constantly receive and address concerns and suggestions from the readers.

For a newsletter, three main feedback procedures can be considered. First, feedback is received directly from the readers through channels such as email that are mentioned in the newsletter. The second way is conducting surveys and asking for feedback. The third option for gathering feedback is by indirect methods, such as collecting analytical data from the digital format of the newsletter. For Hemlock's newsletter, the first two procedures have already been used previously, and the company's website already provides basic analytical data for the files hosted on it. To get more detailed information from the platform, simple tools, such as Adobe PDF Embed API could be used in the future. These tools provide more in-depth data such as the amount of time spent on each page, the number of downloads and prints, hyperlinks opened and text searches or text copies. This could help the team in charge of the newsletter to learn more about the readers' preferences.

Another area for improvement is newsletter accessibility. Offering the newsletter content in a more accessible format, such as blog posts, that can be accessed by e-readers and text-to-speech technology, would be a good addition to the delivery methods of the newsletter.

Internal newsletters are powerful communication tools with many benefits for the organization, as discussed in this report. For this reason, it is important to maintain and improve the company newsletter to make sure it is an effective one.

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