

Civic advocacy groups are created with one main purpose: to convince the public that their ideas are correct. Most of these groups have one thing working against them, time. This is especially true for one group, The River Alliance of Wisconsin. The River Alliance feels the rivers of Wisconsin are deteriorating and must be quickly restored back to their natural beauty. If they do not act quickly, the quality of Wisconsin's waterways will be lost forever. Therefore, in order to accomplish their goals, the River Alliance must efficiently use their time.

How does time relate to the organization's communication practices? Every sentence spoken, every word written, and every picture taken by this group should in some way move the organization closer towards its goal, otherwise they are a waste of the group's valuable time. One of the River Alliance's most effective pieces of communication is their quarterly newsletter, particularly the fall 2001 issue. Throughout this document almost every sentence and visual in some way portrays the goals of the group.

Since this document is targeted towards the group's members, in order to analyze the rhetorical quality of it we must first identify who the members of the River Alliance are. According to their website, the River Alliance of Wisconsin is composed of more than 1,600 members. Due to this small number of members and the goals of the organization, the group would probably express a friendly, family-oriented tone instead of a more serious, business-oriented tone expressed by larger organizations. Another trait

of the group's members would be their enjoyment of nature. Since the group is attempting to improve the quality of Wisconsin's waterways, many of its members probably use these waterways frequently. Indeed, this is true, evident by one of the main advantages of joining the organization: "a colorful decal to display on your car, canoe, or tackle/fly box." So, the members of the River Alliance appear to be friendly people who like to fish and canoe. Based on this, in order for the newsletter to be effective, it must have qualities that these people enjoy.

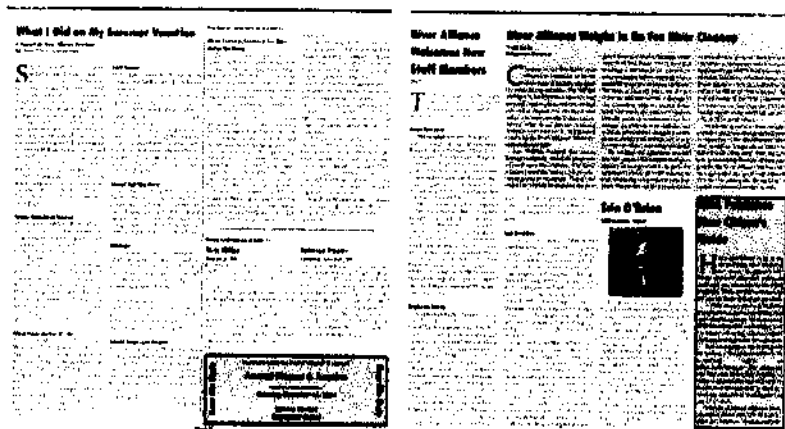
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The first step in addressing this type of audience would be to create a warm tone. This is so because of the type of group the River Alliance is: one where its members enjoy a friendly, non-business atmosphere. In the newsletter, this tone is set immediately on the first page. ^{It} The ~~first~~ page contains an introduction by the group's Executive Director. Centered on the page is a picture of the Director with a big smile, taken in black and white. Visually, the photo and (lighter font) of the text creates a warm tone on its own, eliminating the harsh tone of black font and the brightness of a color photo. But, the most important way the first page creates a warm tone is through the Director's language.

What do you
mean by
this?

Throughout the Director's article, he carefully uses his language to continue the warm tone. This is first seen right in the title, "Stream of Thought", a pun referring to the group's interest in rivers. Immediately, his use of humor creates a laid-back atmosphere in the reader's mind. In his very first sentence, he proclaims, "In the end, the will of the people prevailed," letting the members know how their hard work has paid off. As he continues his address, the Director gives his members a sense of pride in what they have accomplished. But, he does not stop at that. He also describes what they need to

the other sub headings on the same page. The main headings and sub headings each have capitalized beginning letters to them also. This makes them feel more like headings. The use of vertical lines in between articles also gives the reader the contrast between one article and another. This line pushes them apart. The darker article on the right page gives that certain piece of information a perspective that it was put in as a bonus to the original. It feels like the author is giving you additional information that would be



helpful to you. Contrast makes the over all communication that much easier for the reader to distinguish between certain parts.

The highlighting also seems to help separate information on a page with a lot of different subjects. Note the border added to the MEA section to further distinguish it.

Last, but far from least, Repetition is the last principle to be covered. I feel that repetition, especially in a newsletter, is of utmost importance. The author must make the newsletter feel as if it were a single page. By doing this, the author can keep the reader interested in the document as a whole instead of a certain section. If each section looked completely different, the reader might only be interested in a certain section based on the visuals and/or the reader would be confused and think there is more than one document here from different parties. There are many examples of repetition that are used in this newsletter. At the very top, save the cover and back page, there is a horizontal rule bar

it's also sign of professionalism w respect