

# ClubRunner

## **Bulletin 3.0: Best Practices Guide**

April 2015

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## Better Bulletins Made Easy

Your club bulletin is an excellent tool for engagement with both your own membership and the world at large. A well-written and regularly scheduled bulletin becomes something your subscribers look forward to receiving. Yet, the work of constructing a new bulletin every few weeks can be daunting, especially for your volunteer editors and contributors. The purpose of this document is to provide you with tips and best practice advice for the planning and creation of your bulletins.

### 1. Work ahead of schedule

If your club intends to put out a regular bulletin on a set schedule, you have the chance to plan it out ahead of time and work on the content over several days. Take advantage of this time. Instead of entering all your bulletin articles at once, you can add stories or content as they become available. By doing this, you can ensure the bulk of your bulletin is complete well before the deadline falls. When a webmaster publishes a story, it gets listed in the story library. Your bulletin editor can check out this growing library of stories on a regular basis. And, once you save a story for the first time, a pop-up asks you were else you wish to include it. Your pre-made bulletin will appear on that list.



### 2. Create a re-usable template with copy

To reduce your work and help create a standardized look and feel for the bulletin, consider the creation of a permanent bulletin template, which you can be used and re-used as needed.

Listed below are step-by-step instructions on how to create a template. You can also view a 10-minute tutorial video by clicking on the link below:

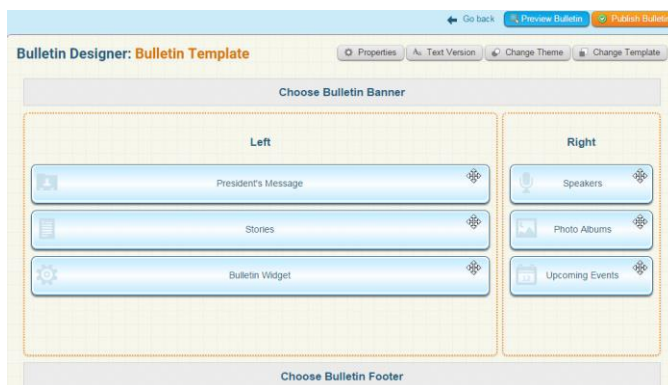
<http://clubrunner.helpserve.com/Knowledgebase/Article/View/1238/220/video-bulletin-design-basics-v30>

- a. Simply create your new template as you would an ordinary bulletin. Give it a clear and simple name, like "Bulletin Template".
- b. Uncheck the box labelled **Visible on Website**. Then, select either **Requires Login** or **Public** as the default Access Level:

Visible on Website:

Access Level:  Public  Requires Login

- c. Next, add all the recurring widgets that you include in all your bulletins into the designer area. If adding the stories widget, simply place the stories widget into the content area and don't select any individual stories to appear. We recommend also adding the Upcoming Speakers and Upcoming Events widgets. Those will automatically get populated with new information as they get added to your website.



- d. Now, **Publish** the template.
- e. When it comes time to create your next bulletin, find your template in the **Active Bulletin** list page and click on the **Copy** link under the Actions column.

**Bulletin List**

Click on Bulletin Name or Edit to access the bulletin designer.

Search:

[Create New Bulletin](#)

Date	Name	Last Sent	Published On	Visible on website	Actions
<b>Non-Member News</b>					
Feb 20, 2015	Bulletin Template		Feb 20, 2015	✓	Edit   Stories   Preview   Send   Archive   <b>Copy</b>   Delete
Dec 22, 2014	Green Town Rotary News - January 2015				Edit   Stories   Preview   Send   Archive   Copy   Delete
<b>General</b>					
Dec 11, 2014	Happy Holidays		Feb 27, 2015	✓	Edit   Stories   Preview   Send   Archive   Copy   Delete

- f. This takes you to the **Create New Bulletin** screen. Give the bulletin a new name, and make sure to modify the bulletin information such as name, date, editor, etc. as required. You'll need to set the bulletin to be visible on the website. If you want this bulletin to be available to be seen by the public, make sure to set the Access Level to 'Public'. Otherwise, select 'Requires Login' if you only want logged-in members to be able to view the contents.

**Create New Bulletin**

Bulletin Settings

Name:  \*

Date:  \*

Copy Bulletin From:


Bulletin Group:  or create new:

Visible on Website:

Access Level:  Public  Requires Login

Editor Name:

Editor Email:

Content Template: 

You can change this later by clicking the change template button in the Bulletin Designer.

- g. Now, adjust the content as needed for this issue. Dynamic widgets, such as ones listing upcoming events will automatically update the information they contain. For the remaining widgets such as custom content widgets, Presidents Message, etc., hover over the widget and select the **Pencil** icon to edit the content.
- h. To populate your stories, hover over the **Bulletin Stories** widget to select the **Pencil** icon. If you are creating stories from scratch, simply click on the **Create New Story** button and compose your articles. If you want to import stories from the website, click on the **Add Stories from the Story Library** button then simply select which stories to display.

### Stories for Weekly Gazette

Click on the Story Library Link below to access all of your stories, or click on one of the other links to access the stories for a specific section of your website or bulletin.

Go to:

Drag and drop story titles to change their sequence.

Title	Author	Date	Status	Actions
No stories added.				
<input type="button" value="Check All"/> <input type="button" value="Remove Selected"/>				

- i. When you're satisfied with your bulletin, you may **Preview** it, and then **Publish**. You can now send it out by selecting the **Send** link from the main list of bulletins.

Group	Date	Name	Last Sent	Published On	Visible on website	Actions
General	Apr 13, 2015	Bulletin Template		Apr 27, 2015		<a href="#">Edit</a>   <a href="#">Stories</a>   <a href="#">Preview</a>   <input type="button" value="Send"/>   <a href="#">Archive</a>   <a href="#">Copy</a>   <a href="#">Delete</a>

**Tip:** The **Copy** function can also be used to copy the most recently archived bulletin, which will copy over everything, including the selected stories. Click on the Archived Bulletins menu item to see your list of archived bulletins.

### 3. Be aware of the maximum bulletin width

The majority of email bulletins are now designed with a fixed width as opposed to a fluid layout. This is primarily because the majority of email clients and web-based email providers don't use the full width of your screen to display an email message. In fact, many email client preview panes are not suitable for emails exceeding 650px wide. Extra-wide emails (ex: exceeding 800px), either introduce awkward scroll bars to the preview pane, or are horizontally truncated.

As such, the practical width of a bulletin intended for email is 550-650px. ClubRunner has designed your Bulletin with a maximum width of 600 pixels, which is also the optimal width for viewing on a mobile device.



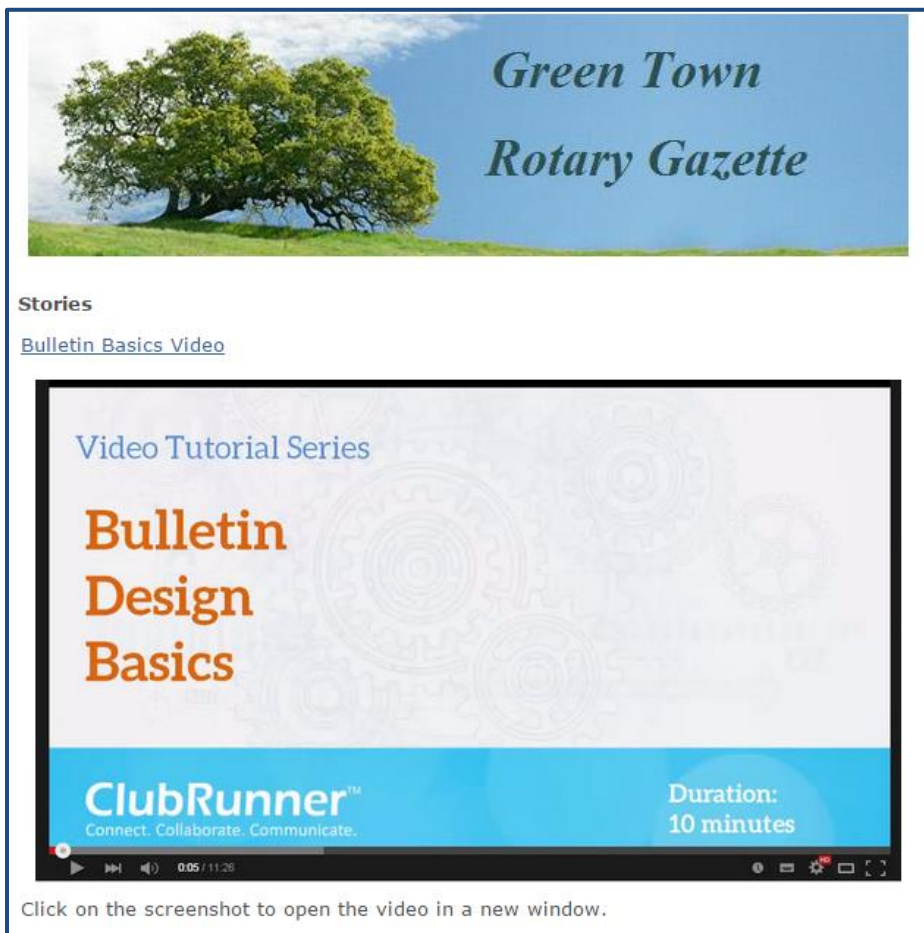
### 4. Don't embed videos or animations

Formerly, many desktop and web-based email clients supported the display of embedded video in email. However, as security tightened and spam and viruses became a bigger problem, video support became a thing of the past. So, while you can embed video in the web-based version of your bulletin, this is not possible for emailed version of the document. The following items will not display in the body of an email:

- Videos
- Flash
- QuickTime
- Windows Media
- Java Applet
- HTML5

Some options you **can** use instead of video include:

- Animated gifs
- Placing a screenshot of the video in your bulletin and making the image a clickable link directing readers to the video.



The screenshot shows a video player interface. At the top, there is a banner image of a large green tree on a grassy hill under a blue sky, with the text "Green Town Rotary Gazette" overlaid in a serif font. Below the banner, the word "Stories" is displayed, followed by a link "Bulletin Basics Video". The video player itself shows a title "Video Tutorial Series" and "Bulletin Design Basics" in large, bold, orange letters. The ClubRunner logo and tagline "Connect. Collaborate. Communicate." are visible in the bottom left corner of the video frame. In the bottom right corner of the video frame, it says "Duration: 10 minutes". The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, a progress bar at 0:05 / 11:26, and various icons for volume, settings, and full screen.

Click on the screenshot to open the video in a new window.

To find out how to embed a link within an image, refer to this article in our knowledgebase:  
<http://clubrunner.helpserve.com/Knowledgebase/Article/View/805/0/how-to-make-an-image-a-clickable-link>

## 5. Use clear and legible fonts

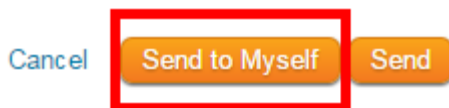
When you are sending an email message, it's important to use a font that is clear and easy to read. Be sure to make your font large enough so that the reader doesn't have to squint to read your message, but keep it compact enough to ensure the stories are contained in a reasonable space. A font size between 10 and 12 works best, as a general rule for legibility.

It's also important to use a commonly available font, such as Arial or Times New Roman, as some email clients and devices may have a limited selection of fonts. ClubRunner's default fonts are optimized for maximum legibility, however if you do decide to change it, keep these tips in mind:

- Avoid obscure fonts
- Avoid complicated fonts (such as scripts or calligraphy) as these may be difficult to read, especially on a portable device
- Opt for clean and simple fonts, such as Arial, Verdana, Times New Roman, etc.
- Keep your fonts between 10 – 12 point size for content and 14 – 18 point size for headers.
- Avoid the use of too many colours, especially red and green which trigger flag in spam software.

## 6. See it before you send it

The way a bulletin appears online can differ greatly from its emailed version due to changes in coding. To help ensure your bulletin is perfect, consider sending it to yourself first. When you are preparing to send a bulletin, you have the option to send a copy only to yourself. This is a good way to preview the bulletin and make final changes if you don't like the look of the newsletter.



## 7. Be sure to include a plain text version

Some of your members may make use of email clients that cannot render HTML messages. In instances like these, those readers will automatically display the plain text version of your newsletter, if one was made available. A plain text bulletin is a bulletin without images or text styles. A lot of people prefer to receive plain text versions of newsletters and in fact, have this enabled as a setting within their email clients. If there is no plain text version to go along with your newsletter, you run the risk of having readers see garbled HTML code rather than content.

Visually impaired members may also have trouble with a graphically intense bulletin, as it may present a challenge for the text reading software they may use to help them navigate the web. They will require a plain text bulletin, one that contains no images or text formatting.



Another reason to create this alternative text version is that email filters are more likely to identify a content heavy bulletin (with many images and links) as spam.

To create the plain text version of your bulletin simply click on the **Text Version** button at the top right of the bulletin editor. This will take you to the Bulletin Text Version editing page, from where you can copy in your text into the editor.

### Edit Bulletin Text Version for **Bulletin Template**

#### What is a Plain Text Bulletin?

When you are using the Bulletin Designer, you are creating an HTML version of your bulletin. However, not all browsers and email clients support an HTML version. You can use the space below to create a plain text version of your bulletin, which is recommended to improve deliverability.

Please note, this is optional and you do not have to create a text version when sending out your bulletin. If you choose to create one, it will be sent out at the same time you send your HTML bulletin. Your recipients will receive either the HTML or Text version based on their browser type and email settings.

#### Guidelines for a Readable Plain Text Bulletin

- Use lots of whitespace to avoid having a huge section of text
- Make your text easy to read by dividing it with clear headings
- Leave space between the paragraphs and after headings, and aim for paragraphs of four to five lines
- If adding a URL, use short URLs wherever possible. A longer URL can break up and become hard to click on, or copy and paste

For more information on creating a text version of your bulletin, click [here](#).

Text Version:

Consider following these general rules to create a legible plain text bulletin:

- a. While you cannot add colours or change the font size of your text in the plain version of the bulletin, you can still identify article headers by adding symbols to separate the headlines from the main content. For example:

Volunteers Needed for our Annual Fundraiser

-----

- b. Insert line breaks between paragraphs and articles to prevent creating hard to read blocks of text. In other words, use the white space!
- c. Keep URL links short. If need be, consider using an online URL shortening service, such as [bit.ly](#) or [Google URL builder](#).

## 8. Schedule your distribution

If you are already preparing your bulletin ahead of time, you may also schedule its distribution beforehand. When you have finished your bulletin, you can schedule the email to be sent out at a given date and time. This permits you to send the bulletin whenever you wish, without having to make time to do so on the date of delivery. It also gives you the ability to standardize bulletin delivery dates.

To go ahead and send a bulletin, go to the Active Bulletin list, then select the **Send** link.

### 3 Schedule

You can send the bulletin right now, or click on schedule to choose when you would like to send it.

- Send right now
- Schedule

Choose the date and time when this bulletin will be scheduled to be sent to the selected recipients. You still can use "Send to Myself" to preview the bulletin in email format.

The bulletin scheduler will send your bulletin with the content that is in place at the time the schedule was set. Once scheduled, any changes made to the bulletin will not be included. If your bulletin hasn't started sending, you can cancel it and set up a new schedule to include the changes to your bulletin. Please note, once the bulletin has been sent, it can't be stopped or recalled.

 at  

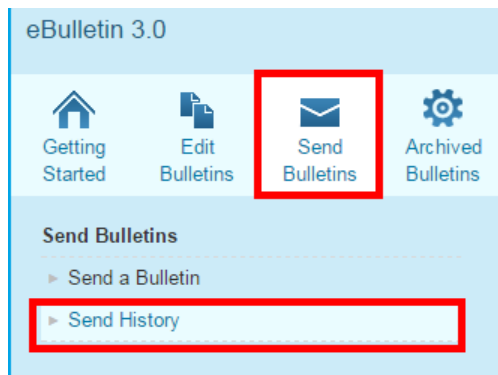
For step-by-step instructions on sending your bulletin, see this link:

<http://clubrunner.helpserve.com/Knowledgebase/Article/View/915/555/how-do-i-send-a-bulletin>

## 9. Get the inside track with email stats

Once you've sent out a bulletin, it helps to know who is getting it and who is reading it. ClubRunner's email service include the ability to track email statistics, such as who has received your bulletin, who has opened it and how many times, who marked it as spam, and who is not receiving your bulletin and why.

- a. Click on the **Send History** link on the Send Bulletins page to access statistics.



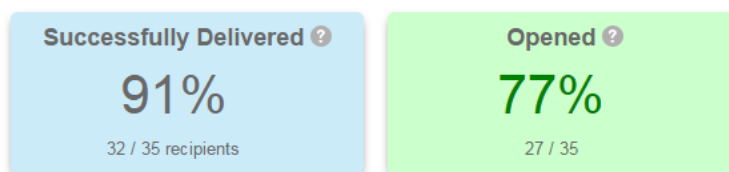
- b. At the right side of the screen under the **Actions** column, click on **Stats** for the bulletin you wish to review.

Group	Email Subject	Sent On	Sent By	Actions
<b>Happy Holidays (Dec 11, 2014)</b>				
General	Happy Holidays	Apr 08, 2015 at 1:01 PM	Edward Smith	View Bulletin   <b>Stats</b>
<b>Bulletin Migrated From V2 (Oct 27, 2014)</b>				
General	Club Bulletin	Dec 11, 2014 at 9:26 AM	Carlos Salvador	View Bulletin   Stats

- c. This brings you to the **Statistics** page, which presents you with the statistics noting the percentage of successful email deliveries, and the number of emails that have been opened, blocked, bounced and how many are queued for delivery

### Statistics

Subject: "Weekly Gazette"



Successfully Delivered ?	Opened ?	Queued for Delivery ?	Blocked ?	Bounced ?	Total Recipients ?
32	27	0	1	1	35

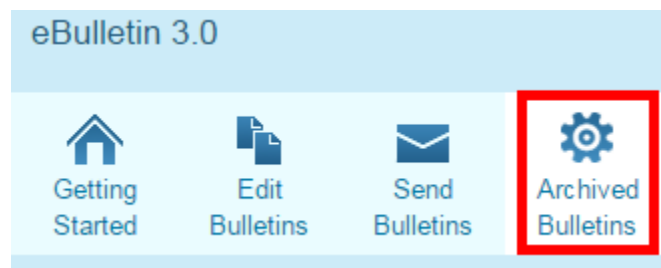
At the bottom of the page, you can also view the individual status of each email that has been sent. If your bulletin has been blocked or bounced, this will be indicated under the Status heading next to each individual email address. This permits you to identify which subscribers and users are receiving and reading your email. You can reach out to members or non-members whose accounts are blocking the bulletin.

For more details on delivery statuses and how to address blocked bulletins, see this link:  
<http://clubrunner.helpserve.com/Knowledgebase/Article/View/1242/590/how-do-i-handle-blocked-bulletins>

## 10. Archive your bulletins

Once you've finished and sent out a bulletin, make a point of archiving it. First of all, this saves this bulletin in its current state regardless of changes to shared content. Secondly, it automatically adds it to your Bulletins Archive page on your website, making it easy for your members and visitors (assuming a bulletin is marked as Public) to view the history of all bulletins.

Note that once a bulletin has been archived, it can no longer be edited or altered. However it can be re-sent and viewed. You can access these functions through your Bulletin Manager by clicking on the Archived Bulletins link under the eBulletin 3.0 header.



Once on that page, you can **Hide**, **View**, **Send** or **Delete** the archived bulletin using the relevant links under the **Actions** heading. Note that you can **Copy** the most recently archived bulletin from each group.

### Archived Bulletins

*Click on Hide/Show to make the bulletin visible or not visible on your website.*

Search:

Group	Date	Name	Last Sent On	Archived On	Visible on Website	Actions
General	Apr 13, 2015	April 13 Bulletin	Apr 15, 2015	Apr 15, 2015	✓	Hide   View   Copy   <b>Send</b>   Delete

You have the option to archive your bulletin at the time you send it, However, if you have not done so for past bulletins, you can do so by following the steps outlined here:

<http://clubrunner.helpserve.com/Knowledgebase/Article/View/1148/555/how-do-i-use-the-bulletin-archive>

## 11. Learn to avoid spam filters

Email clients now feature automatic spam filters that rate every incoming message according to certain criteria to determine whether or not they are spam. While it isn't possible to predict every factor a given email client uses to mark spam, it is possible adopt some best practices to help avoid having your organization's messages blocked or relegated to the junk folder. For example, avoid using excessively

sales-driven language with over use of upper case letters and exclamation points. These are often features of mass-mail ads or appeals for money, and using similar language or styles can cause your bulletin to be blocked as spam. Colorful fonts and embedded images without a great deal of supporting text (i.e.: ALT tags) can also trigger spam filters.

For more information on crafting filter-friendly bulletins, refer to the following article:  
<http://clubrunner.helpserve.com/Knowledgebase/Article/View/1244/673/how-to-avoid-spam-filters>

## Support and Training

Visit our **Support Center** at [www.ClubRunnerSupport.com](http://www.ClubRunnerSupport.com) to access all resources available, including submitting a support ticket, searching the knowledgebase, downloading helpful “how-to” documents and viewing on-demand demos. The following is a list of all the various resource guides available to you.

<p><b><u>Knowledgebase</u></b></p> <p>This is where you will find access to hundreds of articles answering frequently asked questions on how to do virtually everything on ClubRunner.</p>	<p><b><u>Downloads</u></b></p> <p>This area contains useful documents referenced within this guide, including the Member Cheat sheet, access rights matrix, presentation agenda, and more.</p>
<p><b><u>On-Demand Videos</u></b></p> <p>For frequently asked questions on how to do certain things on ClubRunner, we have recorded video tutorials and webinars available for you to view.</p>	<p><b><u>Webinar Training</u></b></p> <p>We hold several webinars every week on the various modules of ClubRunner. These are open to any member of your club, and we recommend that you send your board members to attend.</p>
<p><b><u>Submit a Ticket</u></b></p> <p>For technical support, use our Support Center to submit a ticket, or send an email to <a href="mailto:support@clubrunner.ca">support@clubrunner.ca</a>. Our turnaround time for email tickets is 2 business days.</p>	<p><b><u>Community</u></b></p> <p>Start a conversation with other ClubRunner customers on best practices, tips and tricks, feature enhancements and more. The discussion forum is a great place to learn how other customers are utilizing ClubRunner to manage their club website.</p>

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