

OCTOBER 2026

Tap&Turn



COVER STORY

Make it worth opening

Eight fixes for a magazine nobody reads. None of them involves writing more.

MONEY

Your first five advertiser conversations

NUMBERS

The 10-minute magazine audit

SPOTTED

The member magazine with 14 million copies an issue

Something for every stage

4	COVER STORY Make it worth opening	ALL LEVELS
6	START Your first issue on one page	STARTING OUT
7	CRAFT Headlines that earn the click	ALL LEVELS
8	MONEY Your first five advertiser conversations	GROWING
9	REACH Three places your readers already are	ALL LEVELS
10	NUMBERS The 10-minute magazine audit	ESTABLISHED
11	STEAL THIS A media kit on one page	TEMPLATE
12	SPOTTED How Costco Connection does it	CASE STUDY
14	FROM THE INBOX Nobody opens it. Where do we start?	Q&A
15	DO THIS WEEK One ten-minute job	ACTION

You make the magazine. We'll fight for it.

Welcome to the first Tap&Turn. We've waited ages to say that, and we're a bit giddy about it.

We build Zeanly, which turns a PDF into a magazine people want to open. But we spend more time thinking about you: the editor doing it on top of a day job, the comms manager handed the magazine in March, the publisher watching the open rate. Not enough hours, not enough budget, and the issue still goes out on time. That deserves a team in the trenches next to you.

So that's the deal, here and everywhere else we show up. Tools that make your week easier, prices that don't insult you, and every trick we can find for more readers and more revenue from the magazine you've already made. When somebody does it brilliantly, we'll say so loudly.

Every issue has something for every stage. Starting out? Page 6. Years in? Page 10 will sting a little, in a good way. Stuck on something? Page 14 is where your questions go, and we'd love yours.

See you in the trenches.

—Ed.

HOW TO READ THIS MAGAZINE

STARTING OUT

New to making a magazine, or about to launch.

GROWING

You publish regularly and want it to work harder.

ESTABLISHED

You have a track record and need sharper tools.

ALL LEVELS

Useful whatever stage you're at.



COVER STORY

Make it worth opening

Eight fixes for a magazine nobody reads. None of them involves writing more.



Most magazines don't have a content problem. They have an opening problem.

Members get the email, glance at it and move on, and nobody learns what was inside. The fixes are small, cheap and testable. Start with whichever one you can do this week. Before you change anything, find out how many people open the issue now, so you can see it move.

- 1 Name the best article in the subject line.** "Issue 4 is here" tells nobody anything. "The new reporting rules, in plain English" gives a reason to click.
- 2 Lead with one story.** A long list of contents is a lot to ask in the first second. Put your most useful piece first and say why.
- 3 Give every issue something to use.** A checklist, a template or a calendar gets saved. A news round-up gets skimmed.
- 4 Keep articles short enough to finish.** Most features work at 800 words with subheadings. If it needs more, say why.
- 5 Check it on a phone.** If the text is tiny or the page needs zooming, many readers will simply give up.
- 6 Pick a day and keep to it.** Readers open what they expect. A predictable date does more than a clever subject line.
- 7 Make it sound like a person.** A short note from the editor, a member's name, a reply to a letter.
- 8 Ask five readers.** After each issue ask what they read first and what they skipped. Five answers beat a committee debate.

IF YOU ONLY DO ONE THING

Rewrite the next subject line.

Write three versions. Send two to a small slice of your list and the winner to the rest. After three issues you'll know more about your readers than a year of guessing.

Your first issue on one page

For anyone who has been told "we should do a magazine", and is now the person doing it.

Editor's letter

200 to 300 words: who you are, why the magazine exists, what members will find.

A member profile

The easiest way to make readers feel it's theirs.

A short Q&A;

Three questions members keep asking staff, answered.

One main feature

800 to 1,200 words on the topic members care about this year.

Something to use

A checklist, a form guide or a calendar of deadlines.

Events and dates

The next two or three months on one page.



Headlines that earn the click

Readers decide in about two seconds. Spend ten minutes on the three things they see first.

- 1 Say what's in it for them.** "How to claim the new training rebate" beats "Rebate news".
- 2 Be specific.** A number, a name or a deadline gives it weight.
- 3 Write it last.** Once the piece is finished you know what it actually delivers.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Rebate news

How to claim the new training rebate before 30 June

An interview with a member

How one three-person firm halved its reporting time

Changes to renewals

Five changes to renewals from 1 July

AI CORNER

Proofread with AI, keep your voice. Ask for a list of errors rather than a rewrite, and tell it not to change the writer's wording. Check every name, figure and quote against your notes. Then read the piece aloud. Tools are good at typos and poor at tone.



MONEY

GROWING

Your first five advertiser conversations

You don't need a sales team. You need a list of twenty names, a one-page media kit and a few hours a week.

- 1 Start where the money already is.** Past event sponsors, exhibitors and suppliers that already sell to your members.
- 2 Lead with one number.** Opens per issue, or members in the profession they want to reach.
- 3 Make one small offer.** A full page or one sponsored article. Not a twelve-month package.
- 4 Follow up twice.** Day 5 to 7, then day 12 to 14.
- 5 Send a results report.** Opens, page views and clicks within a week. It makes the renewal easy.

THE MESSAGE, UNDER 150 WORDS

Hi [Name], I edit [Magazine], read by [number] [members] in [field]. About [number] open each issue. [Company] sells [what] to people like them, so a page in the [month] issue could put you in front of them. A full page is [price]; the media kit is attached. Would ten minutes this week be useful?

Three places your readers already are

Promotion is mostly putting the magazine where people already look.

1

Your events

A slide, a line from the chair, a QR code at registration. Members at an event are your warmest audience.

2

Your email signature

Every member of staff sends dozens of emails a day. Add one line and the link. It costs nothing and never stops working.

3

Your website front page

Not under "resources". If members have to hunt for the magazine, most won't.

TEST THIS MONTH

Change one of the three and write down the number of opens before and after. Small tests you can see beat big campaigns you can't.

The 10-minute magazine audit



Ten yes or no questions for a magazine that has been going a while. Answer from your last three issues.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Can you say in one sentence who it is for? ☐ | 2 Do you know how many people opened the last issue? ☐ |
| 3 Do you know which article was read most? ☐ | 4 Does the cover story answer a question members asked? ☐ |
| 5 Is there something in every issue a reader can use this week? ☐ | 6 Does it come out on a date readers can predict? ☐ |
| 7 Do at least three people outside staff contribute? ☐ | 8 Does every advertiser get a report with clicks? ☐ |
| 9 Is the archive easy to find and search? ☐ | 10 Have you asked a reader what they'd change in six months? ☐ |

8-10

HEALTHY

Pick one thing to improve.

5-7

TIDY UP

Start with the questions you answered no to.

0-4

RESET

Read "Make it worth opening" on page 4, then ask five readers what they read first.

A media kit on one page

Copy it into a document, fill in the brackets and send it. Two to four pages is the normal length. One page is a good start.

[Magazine name]: media kit [year]

[One sentence on what the magazine is and who it is for.]

AUDIENCE

Readers per issue (average opens): [number] | Members or subscribers: [number] | Who they are: [job titles, industries, regions] | Source and date: [member database, survey, analytics]

HOW IT'S READ

Format: [print, flipbook, both]. Published [how often]. [One line on what readers do with it.]

AD OPTIONS AND PRICES

Full page: [size] [price] | Half page: [size] [price] | Sponsored article: [words] [price] | Newsletter mention: [price] | Discount for [number] issues: [percentage]

DEADLINES

Booking: [date] | Artwork: [date] | Publication: [date] | File types: [PDF, JPG]

TO BOOK

[Name], [email], [phone]

Put real numbers in and say where each came from. If the magazine is new, say so, and promise a results report after the first ad runs.

How Costco Connection became one of America's biggest magazines

A free members' magazine from a warehouse retailer, mailed to millions. What is it doing that a small association could copy?



The short version. Costco Connection goes to Costco members as a benefit of membership. CNN reported a print run of about 14.3 million copies an issue, which put it fourth among US magazines by distribution. It is funded by advertising, and Costco does not publish the magazine's finances.

The editorial line, in the publisher's words, is service-oriented without being too self-serving: recipes, travel, product reviews and the occasional celebrity cover. It is also free online and in an app, so the print copy is one of several ways in.

BY THE NUMBERS

14.3m

copies per issue, per a CNN report

4th

largest US magazine by distribution

Free

to members, as a benefit of membership

WHAT A SMALL MAGAZINE CAN STEAL

- 1 Your members are already your circulation.** Delivery is built in. Reach isn't something to build, it's something to use well.
- 2 Advertisers pay for a defined audience.** Costco pitches its members' demographics. You can do the same with a one-page media kit and real numbers.
- 3 Your best advertisers already sell to your members.** Much of the advertising is reported to come from suppliers that already sell to Costco's members. Yours are your first call too.
- 4 Be useful before you are promotional.** Service content earns the right to the readers' attention. Ask what your members would use.
- 5 Treat print and digital as doors, not identities.** Readers get in however suits them. Make sure every door leads to the same good thing.

WHAT NOT TO COPY

The scale, the staffing and the retail relationship that funds it. A small association needs a few hundred readers who open it and one or two advertisers who can see that they do.

Based on public reporting; figures are estimates and vary by year. Tap&Turn is not affiliated with Costco. Sources: CNN via WRAL (wral.com/the-costco-connection-is-americas-fourth-biggest-magazine/18971646), Nieman Lab (niemanlab.org/reading/americas-fourth-biggest-magazine-is-the-costco-connection), Muller Martini (mullermartini.com/en/newsroom-en/stories/top-stories/costco-connection-a-key-element-in-building-customer-loyalty).



FROM THE INBOX

Q&A

Nobody opens it. Where do we start?

A QUESTION WE HEAR A LOT

"We email the magazine to all our members and I don't think anyone opens it. Where do we start?"

Count first, then fix the email, then fix the first page. That order matters. If you don't know how many members open an issue today, you can't tell whether anything you change has worked.

- 1 Get one real number.** How many opened the last issue? Your email tool or flipbook analytics will show it.
- 2 Rewrite the subject line.** Name the most useful article and say what the reader can do with it.
- 3 Check the first page a member sees.** Does it show them why to keep going, or open with a long list?

Got your own? Send it to the Editor's Inbox at zeanly.com/magazine/inbox. The best questions are answered in a later issue.

One ten-minute job



Open your last issue's email or flipbook stats and write down one number: how many people opened it.

Put it on a sticky note on your screen. That is your baseline. Every other change in this issue is measured against it.

NEXT ISSUE

Prove your value, and keep your sponsors

Advertiser reports that renew, a pricing worksheet and a new Spotted. Free by email at zeanly.com/magazine/subscribe.

This page is for sale.

Put your name in front of people who run magazines. Send a note through the Editor's Inbox at zeanly.com/magazine/inbox.

