



# Community Papers of Michigan

# INFORMER

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OUR DATA  
SPEAKS VOLUMES



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**A Look Back –  
2018 Was a Year to Celebrate!**

As we near the end of 2018, here's a look back at some of the memorable moments featured in CPM's INFORMER e-newsletter during the year.

In January 2018, CPM provided a reader contest for those who completed an online survey regarding the auction industry. As you know, CPM has partnered with the Michigan Auctioneers Association (MAA) for many years and we are always looking for ways to make this partnership stronger and even more mutually beneficial for both associations. This readership survey was provided by CVC free of charge and very much appreciated. The survey provided information that was featured in a presentation to MAA members at their annual conference by CPM President Don Rush and CPM Board Member Wes Smith.



A \$100 MasterCard was awarded to Deanna Ladd of Bellevue, MI., who saw the promo ad for the contest in the Battle Creek Shopper News.

In the March edition, we acknowledged and celebrated the retirement of Lowell Ledger editor, Jeanne Boss, who worked at the Ledger for 27 years.

Also in March, we shared the honor bestowed upon Wes Smith, Group Publisher of The View Newspaper Group

on being named the City of Lapeer's Male Citizen of the Year, for his many contributions to the community.



In the same INFORMER edition, we also acknowledged the View Newspaper Group's 15 Year Anniversary!

In April, CPM joined dozens of associations and thousands of print professionals by joining STOPP (Stop Tariffs on Printers & Publishers). STOPP is a coalition formed to fight countervailing and anti-dumping duties on Canadian paper products, including newsprint. The printing, publishing and paper-producing industries collectively employ over 600,000 people. The well-coordinated efforts of STOPP, along with other groups, were instrumental in the International Trade Commission's decision to terminate duties of Canadian newsprint.

In June, we celebrated CPM President Don Rush who was honored as the recipient of Clarkston's 2018 Business Person of the Year!



In September, while we mourned the passing of James L. McLaughlin, we celebrated his many industry accomplishments, including being a former president of the NAAP (National



Association of Advertising Publishers), as well as president of the Michigan Association that preceded CPM.

In October, our members came to Lansing for CPM's Annual General Membership Meeting.



Wes Smith was the recipient of the 2018 John Gaedert Outstanding Community Paper Professional Award.



CPM Members listened intently to Tim Bingaman of CVC who provided a great presentation.

Everyone took part and enjoyed the roundtable discussions.

**Thank you for making 2018 a year to Celebrate! Please send any news items for your company or employees to: [jackguza@cpapersmi.com](mailto:jackguza@cpapersmi.com)**

# JOEY'S SECRETS

*Young Kansas publisher quickly learns secrets of success*

**By Kevin Slimp**  
The News Guru  
kevin@kevinslimp.com

When Tommy Thomason invited me to spend a couple of days at the Texas Center for Community Journalism a few months ago, I was quick to answer. I don't work in Texas nearly as much as I used to, and I was ready go back to my old home state. (I attended college in Texas back in the day.)

Housed in the Journalism Department at Texas Christian University, TCCJ reminds me a lot of the University of Tennessee Newspaper Institute, which I directed for 20 years. Working with Tommy and his group was like going home in more ways than one.

Tommy explained attendance would be limited. Thirty registrants, all from Texas newspapers, would be allowed into the session. Only one per newspaper



**Tommy Thomason (right) looks on as Kevin speaks to journalists in December at the Texas Center for Community Journalism.**

would be admitted. The group would be primarily publishers. I was pleased to learn the class filled the day it was announced.

Tommy explained that my assignment was to share as much information as possible in the time allotted, which would help these pub-

lishers grow their newspapers. With a limited number of class members, attendees would benefit by being full participants in the session. I wouldn't be the sole instructor. These students would learn from each other.

A few weeks before the December event, I heard from Tommy again. He wanted to offer an experience the attendees wouldn't soon forget. Who could be invited, he asked, to warm up the crowd and share some real-world experience? He wanted someone who was a walking success story in the community-newspaper business.

It took me about two seconds to respond, "Joey Young, from Kansas."

I remember when a 20-something-year-old Joey Young first approached me at a Midwest newspaper convention five years ago and asked if we could visit. He was concerned about the number of papers in his area being bought by venture capital groups and the impact it was having on quality journalism. He thought he had a better approach to community journalism.

On that Thursday at TCU, Joey shared his experience from that first paper. He went on to explain how he started additional papers and purchased a couple of others.

You have to understand where Joey comes from to really understand the magnitude of his accomplishments. He wasn't a newspaper heir. He didn't come from a family of newspaper owners.

During his presentation in Texas — his first for an out-of-state group — he used the term "shoestring" several times. In retrospect, he told the group, he would have had an easier time if he had "fifty thousand dollars in the bank" when he began, but he didn't.

Now, with six publications, Joey is a household name in the newspaper business in Kansas and surrounding states. He shared his secrets with the group in Texas.

Above all else, the secret to the success of Joey's papers is quality journalism. Joey knew he had to have rock-solid journalists to have a successful newspaper, and he shared how he hired his first away from a much larger paper and how that decision propelled the success that followed.

Joey doesn't heap praise upon himself; he spreads it among his staff. He was quick to share that much of his success is thanks to staff members from the community. There's no centralized editorial content. "Local" is everything to Joey's newspapers, and it shows.

He discussed the importance of having an advertising manager who is well-known and respected in the community. "That makes all the difference," Joey told the group.

Asked about his circulation staff, Joey turned a few heads when he answered, "Everyone at all of my papers is on the circulation staff. When one of us is at a restaurant and a subscriber complains that they didn't receive a paper this week, we ask them to wait and run back to the office to get one for them."

Joey explained that all staff members are connected to the circulation database on their phones and can check to see the status of a customer's subscription on-site when asked. They can also take subscriptions without forcing the reader to first call the office.

Speaking of calling the office, there are no auto-attended phones at Joey's papers. When readers call, they get a real, live person on the phone who can answer questions, take orders and handle any issues that come up.

My son, Zac, is in a popular rock band these days. A few weeks ago, he came home from a concert and I asked how things went.

"You know," he told me, "there are two kinds of warm-up bands. There's the kind that gets everybody energized and excited about the



**Joey Young speaks to journalists at the Texas Center for Community Journalism.**

main act, and there's the kind that puts people to sleep and makes them want to go home before the headliner even begins."

He went on to tell me, "Tonight, our warm-up band had everybody tired and ready to go home before we even took the stage."

I'm lucky. I speak at a few conferences most months, and can't remember the last time I had an uninterested audience.

Tommy is a wise man, and he knew the right "opening act" would make my follow-up go even better.

Joey Young was the right choice, and his advice was well received:

- Keep everything local, from writing and editing, to sales and circulation.
- Hire the right staff and treat them as partners.
- Put the bulk of your emphasis on quality journalism, and sales will follow.

Over the next few weeks, I'll be in places like Wisconsin, Wyoming and Kentucky. If things go as they usually do, regardless of the topics I'm asked to cover, publishers and other journalists will stop me to ask what secrets I have to help them grow their papers.

There are no secrets. It's the same recipe successful newspapers have always followed. Thanks, Tommy, for inviting me to Texas.



By Peter Wagner  
Founder and Publisher,  
The N'West Iowa REVIEW



## Closing the Deal

### Selling print advertising – or anything else – is as simple as 1, 2, 3!

One. Become the client's "business partner" and not just another salesperson. Create a solid one-on-one relationship with the buyer centered on mutual trust, caring about the client's needs and delivering valuable promotion and advertising ideas. Make an exceptional effort to understand the client's business from his side of the desk or counter. Learn all you can about the client's business and dreams and develop plans that will best benefit him. Have the "courage of your convictions" regarding your publication's reach, readership credibility and unique benefits. Tell your story.

Two. Study and master a variety of proven sales presentation closes and never make a sales call without making at least one effort to "make the deal."

Three. Always attempt a close. There are many ways to effectively close a sale. Unfortunately, there are also many inadequately trained and poorly managed salespeople who appear to only know one close - the GIRL SCOUT Close. The Girl Scout's "Hey, Mister, do you want to buy my cookies" is replicated time and again by well-meaning ad salespeople who begin every call with the same question: "Mr. Advertiser, do you want an ad."

Some better closing approaches would be the LITTLE DECISION close, The

SOUR GRAPES close, the NOW OR NEVER CLOSE, the BY THE WAY close and my all-time favorite, the ASSUMPTIVE CLOSE.

The LITTLE DECISION close is actually a series of questions or small closes that clarify exactly what the customer wants in an advertising program. Each question gives the prospect an opportunity to choose between two variables.

The SOUR GRAPES close is great for occasions when you find unable to negotiate with a prospect who sits in silence not making a decision. That's your clue to say, "Forgive me, I believe I've made a mistake coming here today, I apologize for wasting your time. I don't think this ad package is the right one for you."

This sudden change in approach will shock the advertiser into at least thinking about buying.

The BY THE WAY close. It can be used, like the above, when the customer won't buy, won't say why and won't even smile at you. The salesperson thanks the client for his time gathers his papers and heads for the door. Then, just before exiting, he turns to the potential buyer and blurts out "One question before I leave. Just why didn't you buy that package."

Caught off guard, the client will often respond with the truth. "I would have,"

he might say, "but I've already used all my budget for this year."

"Oh," the sale rep can respond, "we're already into November. Didn't I tell you I can defer the billing until after the first of the year?"

But I like the ASSUMPTIVE close best because the package is presented with the presumption the customer has already decided they're going to buy. Pretend, for example, your paper has decided to do a "Salute to Men in your Community" tabloid. If that were the case your sale approach might go like this.

"We're planning a special section next week". I'd say. "with Life magazine style layouts featuring stories and photo layouts on some of the regions outstanding male leaders. I can't tell you exactly who, but there will be individuals involved in government, business, education, religion, construction, agriculture, sports and recreation. We believe most men in the four-county area will read it cover-to-cover to compare themselves with those featured.

"What I have in mind for you, with your new men's store, is a full page in process color. On one side of the page we'll feature a photo of you in that new designer men's jeans line you just got in and wearing one of those leather jackets you showed me yesterday. (Continued on page 6.)

The end of the year already, but I often run into ideas that are really interesting and this month I have a few new ideas and a gift for you to wrap up 2018, so enjoy the...

# Tips & Tags

## Ad Talk with Ellen Hanrahan

The particular *InDesign Magazine* article in the issue I mentioned was titled "Patterned Shadows"... and that's what I did for the "Winter" sample, but I reversed it for the "Christmas" sample because I thought it created a more visual and interesting approach. That's why you experiment!

I have been looking at all the design books and magazines that I have collected over the years and I must say, I think 2019 will be the year of "the purge." While design doesn't change, the way to create our messages has and most of those books and articles are outdated and can go.

The following however, is definitely worth sharing...

### InDesign Magazine Idea

The October/November 2013 issue of *InDesign Magazine* focused on Typography. Most were articles that I have already addressed, but there was one article on a different type of drop shadow... a patterned drop shadow. **David Blatner** created some vector patterns and used them as his drop shadow. They were pretty cool, and I will show how you can create some of your own right in *InDesign*—thanks to David!

I created this drop shadow on "Winter" with the Japanese Dots line. You can create unique shadows in *InDesign* or develop your own patterns in *Illustrator*.



**Step 1:** Create display type. With the **Selection** tool select the text frame containing your display type. Hold the **Option/Alt** key and choose **Type > Create Outlines**. This creates a duplicate of the text frame and converts all the text in it to outlines (outlines are cannot be edited, so make copies if you aren't sure).

**Step 2:** With the **Line** tool, hold **Shift** and drag straight down to create a line to the left of your display type. Make sure that the line is taller than the tallest letter in your type. (I used a 1-point stroke.)

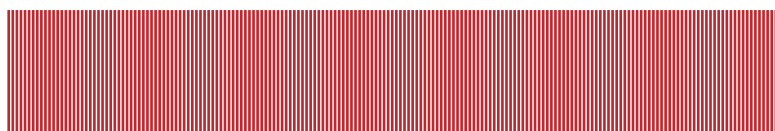
**Step 3:** Choose **Edit > Step and Repeat**. Make sure that **Preview** is selected and **Create as a grid** is deselected in the dialog box. Set vertical offset to zero. Set a small **Horizontal offset** as a starting value (I used 0pt1.5 horizontal offset). Increase the **Repeat Count** value until you have enough lines to cover your text. (Adjust the horizontal offset and repeat count until you're satisfied with the spacing of the lines. When you're happy with what you see, click OK.)

**Step 4:** With the newly-created lines still selected, **Shift-click** on the original line to select it too. Press **Command+G/Ctrl+G** to group all the lines together. (Use the **Stroke** and **Swatches** panels to adjust the look of your lines. Experiment with different stroke styles like **Dotted**, **Dashed**, and **Wavy**.)

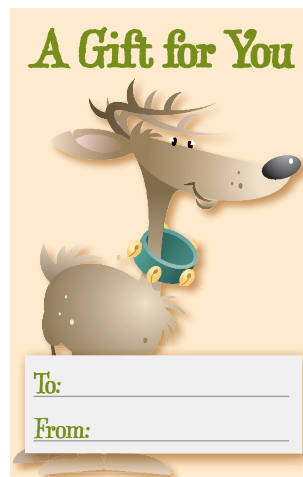
**Step 5:** Place the group of lines into the text outlines by cutting the group (**Edit > Cut**) to the **Clipboard** and choosing **Edit > Paste Into**.

**Step 6:** Move the outlines on top of the original text. Move the original text and use your keyboard arrow keys to nudge them into place to create a solid drop shadow (you could also reverse and have the "lined text" as the drop shadow... experiment).

# Christmas



# Christmas



**Merry Christmas...** I'm all about saving time, so to help wrap up your Christmas, here are some gift tags. Just copy and clip... no need to hunt down those package labels that you can never find when you need them! Or use as an idea starter and make your own. With the inexpensive color printers today, these are a snap to make.

These could also be used in your paper's special sections, tucked in with the gift guides or printed and given to your advertiser's as a promotion. Brainstorm to come up with ideas to help promote your publication. By the way, gift tags can be used for many different events!

'Til next time and next year...

Happy Holidays

I was an art teacher and changed to a graphic design career in the '80s. I write for IFPA TIP, and the CPM INFORMER. For info, PDFs of articles, or have ideas, e-mail: [hanrahan.in@att.net](mailto:hanrahan.in@att.net) Ellen Hanrahan ©2018

# Ten Resolutions



By Bob Berting  
*Berting Communications*

## Ten Advertising Sales Resolutions To Make Before The New Year

These resolutions will make every salesperson and their publication even better. This is the goal. The bottom line is to push every publication in front of their media competition and give it a stronger presence in their marketplace. The key thought is always “what is our top of mind awareness strategy?”

- Organize and track your leads. Make certain all leads are in the computer, rated, actively cultivated, and followed up.
- Be more visible in your market. Don't assume everyone knows you. Work on ways to be seen in your marketplace.
- Make sure your customers see you as their first choice. Every customer media mix needs to have your publication as the major player.
- Don't assume your customers are satisfied just because they're doing business with you. Look for ways to build your relationship with them even further.
- Continue to develop a definite road map to your sales goals.
- Think longer term—who will be your customers two or three years from now. Begin communicating with these prospects.

- Improve customer relations. Create new ways to communicate using the word “you” more than “we”.
- Let your customers know you appreciate their business. Don't assume that your customers know that you care.
- View advertising sales as the way to create a constant flow of new business that will help you and your publication have a more prosperous future.
- Create some excitement. What new big ideas do you have for your customers that will develop more effective advertising campaigns!

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*Bob Berting, Newspaper Marketing Consultant, is offering his new e-book for the newspaper industry “Power Selling Tools For The Advertising Sales Consultant”. The new e-book has valuable content for both the beginning and experienced advertising salesperson. Bob has 2 previous e-books for the newspaper industry: “Dynamic Sales and Image Power” and “Advanced Selling Skills For The Advertising Sales Pro”. Go to Bob's website [www.bobberting.com](http://www.bobberting.com) to order any one or bundle of 2 or all 3 books Bob Berting is a professional speaker, advertising sales trainer, publisher marketing consultant, and columnist in many national and regional newspaper trade association publications. He is President of Berting Communications, 6330 Woburn Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46250. 317-849-5408*

## Closing the Deal

*Continued from page 4*

“On the other side of the page we'll feature your brother-in-law business partner in a pair of dress slacks and one of those new crew neck sweaters you showed me last week.

“I'm thinking the headline should read ‘Finally the Men's Store You've Always Wanted here in Sheldon.’

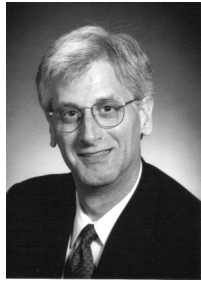
“We'll need to put four or five specials in the center area and of course use that logo we just created to match our sign.

“And I think we need to show the different credit cards you accept, your hours and the fact that you offer quick alterations next to the logo.” The close comes at the end with a simple “Is there anything else I can do for you today?”

Community newspaper are still the best means of reaching the greatest number of families in any market. It is time we all tell our story regarding why we're where to advertising. We've gone too long thinking advertisers will just walk in the door without our first getting in their face.

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Peter W. Wagner is founder and publisher of the award winning N'West Iowa REVIEW and 13 additional publications. This free monthly GET REAL newsletter is written exclusively for State and National Press Associations and distributed by them to their members. To get Wagner's free PAPER DOLLARS email newsletter for publishers, editors and sales managers email him at [pww@iowainformation.com](mailto:pww@iowainformation.com). The two monthly email newsletters contain information completely different than found in Wagner's monthly Publisher's Auxiliary column. Wagner can be contacted by emailing [pww@iowainformation.com](mailto:pww@iowainformation.com) or calling his cell at 712-348-3550.

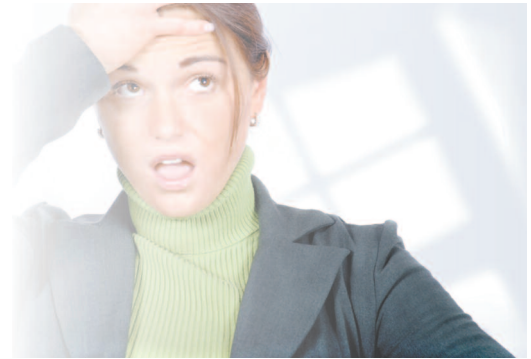




By John Foust  
Raleigh, NC

# Ad-Libs

## Too Many Opinions Spoil A Presentation



Back when I was in the ad agency business, I made a logo presentation that turned into a fiasco. It was an uncomfortable reminder of the importance of a presentation environment.

This particular client was a real estate development company which was on a fast growth track. They were going through a name change and needed a sleek new brand identity for their newspaper ads, stationery and signage. We had been through preliminary meetings and this was the unveiling of (what I thought was) the final version of the logo.

The meeting started innocently enough. Dan, the company president, and I were in his office. We reviewed our previous strategy conversations and I summarized their long-term corporate image plans. When I showed the logo design, his face lit up in a big smile. He said, "That's exactly what we need," and described the steps they could take to replace their existing logo. Then he said, "Let's get a second opinion," walked out of his office and returned a minute later with their office manager. When she frowned and said she liked the old logo better, I could see Dan's enthusiasm fading. She had not participated in our strategy meetings – and she had no knowledge of the reasoning behind a logo change – but all of a sudden, she had become a key influencer in the decision process.



Dan said, "Wait here. Let's get another opinion." He invited several more people into his office. Within minutes, a group was huddled around his desk, critiquing the logo that I had spent so much time designing. They seemed to be competing with each other to see who could make the most negative comments. It was a selling nightmare. They ignored my efforts to steer the conversation back on track.

The incident seems comical now, but it wasn't funny when it happened. One person said she didn't like the logo, because it had one of the colors in the Romanian flag. I checked later and learned that the Romanian flag is blue, yellow and red (I also learned that she was born in Romania, the only possible

explanation for such a strange comment.)

It was no surprise that Dan rejected the logo design. Although he was a corporate executive, he frequently struggled with decisions. His attempt to get objective input from others had created a chaotic decision-making environment. The only solution was for me to go back to the drawing board to tweak the idea. When I presented that one, I explained that he was the only one in the company who was in position to make a fair judgment. I truly believed that he was uniquely qualified to see the big picture and make the decision. Fortunately, he

took the compliment to heart and we had a positive one-to-one meeting which resulted in a sale.

The lesson was crystal clear. Too many opinions spoil a presentation. Do everything you can to limit the number of decision makers in the room.

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John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: [john@johnfoust.com](mailto:john@johnfoust.com)



Michael Angelo Caruso

# Presentation Check List

Let's face it. The ability to speak before groups is one of the most important skills you can ever develop.

Whether you're a salesperson, professional speaker, a team leader who holds weekly meetings or a job interviewee, you'll do well to follow a systemized routine when preparing and delivering your presentations.

I've given thousands of paid keynotes, seminars, and speeches. Through the years, I've developed the ultimate presentation checklist and I'd like to share it with you!

Incorporate the advice on this list and you'll be a better speaker for the rest of your life.

Good luck on your next presentation. I'd love to know what works for you. Contact me at <http://www.michaelangelocaruso.com>



## Before Your Presentation

- Find out about your audience
- Practice makes more perfect
- Promote presentation with "teaser" language
- Avoid negative self-talk
  
- Be clear about what you want your audience to do after your talk
- Imagine yourself being successful
- Prepare a physical handout
- Write your own introduction
- Visit the location of the presentation
- Move furniture to accommodate your presentation
  
- Sit in the "Power Seat"
- Meet people before you do your presentation (shake hands)
- Use exceptional photos and graphics when you can
- Stand near the door to meet and greet
- Ask the highest ranking person or effusive person to introduce you

## The First Six Minutes of Your Presentation

- The opening story should establish a theme or relate to the close
- Have a killer "elevator speech"
- Ask the audience to do something (raise hands, write this down. . .)
- Offer an incidental credential
- Teach 'em something they don't know
- Make 'em smile or even better, laugh
- Establish positive expectations
- Smile more than you think you should

## During Your Presentation

- Hands and body in control, reinforcing your verbal message
- No extra PowerPoint slides (maximum of 10 per hour)
  
- Wear clothes that stand out from background
- Two things motivate your audience (pain and pleasure)
- Use the "Power of 3" technique to stay organized
- Take questions as they come
- Tell signature stories that encourage action
  
- Sell benefits, not features
- Get buy in by asking "do you agree?" while nodding your head
- Practice "reading the audience," but don't acknowledge all the signals
- Use "predictive dialogue" to take the presentation where you want it
- Use the 15 most powerful words
- Be different than other presenters, be yourself
  
- Give advance notice of Q&A
- Always leave ample time for Q&A (prepare for "dead air")
- Share quotations from dead people
- Repeatedly emphasize your Unique Selling Point (USP)
- Trial close with phrases like "does this sound good so far?"
- Don't move around too much
  
- Don't stand too still
- Establish "home base" to deliver most important messages
- Be conscious of your NLP techniques like "the hug"
- Collect business cards or e-mail addresses to do a drawing
- Stop talking so you can listen

(Continued on page 9.)





## Presentation Check List *(Continued from page 8)*

### Audio/Visual and Power Point Tips

- Size headings to run to the edges of the slide (60 -72 pt.)
- Less is more
- No more than 5 bullet points per slide (min. 40 pt.)
- No more than 5 words per line (think t-shirt sayings)
- Use dark background with white/bright letters
- Always use drop shadows
- Only use PPT during middle third of presentation
- Try not to turn down the lights
- Use fancy slide transitions only in the last half of your PPT
- Make the last slide relate to your close, leave it on for Q&A
- Be ready to present without it
- Use "B" for black and "B" for back
- 1 .jpg is worth a thousand words

### The Last 6 Minutes of Your Presentation

- The closing story should drive the call to action
- Call audience to action (be clear about what you want listeners to do)
- Use "bookend" technique, end as you began

### Some Final Tips for Effective Presentations

Here are more tips to help you become a more effective presenter. In general, it's better to talk a little over the audience's head than be too basic. You can always clarify things with a strong Q&A segment, but you can never un-bore the audience.

Be a purveyor of original, quality information. Extra points for teaching people how to be happier, healthier, smarter, younger, sexier, and richer.

Audience involvement doesn't have to consist of trite group activities and corny role-playing. You can and should involve the people without making them feel uncomfortable.

Always repeat questions asked by audience members.

Maintain your personal style, but vary the pace and content of your presentation. Tell a story, then show a few slides. Move to another place

- "Big Finish" (extra volume and energy, eye contact)
- The call to action should have a time parameter
- Summarize
- Smile to exude confidence
- Do a drawing to give something away
- Solicit applause for the winner to guarantee an upbeat ending
- Use at least one of Caruso's 22 sales closes
- Think 5 moves ahead to deal with objections

### After Your Presentation

- Stand near the exit to receive positive feedback
- Always follow up to offer additional assistance
- Solicit referrals
- Upsell when appropriate
- Say "thank you"
- Immediately fix any PowerPoint or Prezi errors for next time
- Wait 24 hours before reviewing the video and audio recordings



in the room to ask a question. Raise your voice and pick up the pace for a few minutes.

Never read your notes or PowerPoint slides to an audience. It's the most insulting thing you can do. I didn't even read to the crowd when I spoke at a National Association of the Blind conference.

Be careful when using humor. All humor makes fun of somebody or something. Offended audiences tend to be quite unforgiving.

Finally, do your best to not introduce distractions to the group. Don't talk about the room temperature, noise from the hallway or a rude participant, especially if the issue can be handled privately. Never look at your watch or a clock while making a presentation.

Remember that reading a book about selling is like listening to the radio to learn how to dance.

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*Michael Angelo Caruso is one of America's premier keynote speakers. He is known as "the speakers' speaker." Mr. Caruso teaches presentation skills and is in demand for conventions, conferences, and annual events of all kinds. Michael specializes in working with leaders, salespeople, and the customer service industry. Mr. Caruso has spoken in South America, Africa, Australia, Asia, the Middle East, and 49 of the 50 states. He spends lots of time working and playing in California, Texas, Florida, and New York.*

Contact Michael, Edison House, 333 E. Parent Ave, #4, Royal Oak, MI 48067, Phone: (248) 224-9667



# 12 Employee Engagement Games & Activity Ideas

To get the best out of your staff, you need to have a true sense of camaraderie. That's certainly been the case here at Vetter. You can help the process along, with these staff engagement games ideas in order to create a stronger bond and spirit of cooperation at work. The next time you decide to hold a staff development session, consider planning a day that is broken up with fun and games. Everyone will get a chance to unwind, take a break from stress, and get to know one another better. Here are 12 employee engagement event ideas/game ideas to get the ball rolling.

## 1. Take a Lesson from the Cake Boss

People love to watch culinary artists as they create confectionery masterpieces in the kitchen. This game gives your employees a shot to design the best cake representation for your company. Break up into teams, including management, and provide the supplies. You will need an impartial judge when all is said and done. Don't forget to give everyone the chance to have their cake and eat it too.

## 2. Truths and Lies

This game – also known as Two Truths, One Lie – is an easy, fun and quick way for team members to get to know one

another. Invite everyone to sit in a circle facing the center. Instruct everyone to take a minute or two to come up with two truths and one lie about themselves. It's not necessary but you could have each individual write this information on a small sheet of paper making sure to label which was truth and which was a lie. Pick a random slip of paper or just choose someone to reveal the three pieces of information about themselves. Allow the rest of the group to confer and decide what is truth and what is a lie. Then reveal the lie and move on to the next person. (Continued on page 11.)



## 12 Employee Engagement Games & Activity Ideas *Continued from page 10*



### 3. Observation

This simple game is a great way to refresh and engage a team that is feeling drained or stressed. The nice thing about this activity is that it doesn't require much time or any extra equipment. Divide the group into two equal lines (or roughly equal if there are odd numbers) and have them face the opposite line. Choose a team to go first and either give them a minute to study the opposite line or make them turn around right away. Then give the other line a minute or so to change ten things about themselves. The changes can include swapping clothing or jewelry, removing or untying shoes, rolling sleeves, unbuttoning/untucking shirts, etc. When time runs out, instruct the first line to turn around and list the changes that have been made. Once all changes have been discovered, switch roles and go again.

### 4. Name that Staff Member

Divide your staff into teams and put everyone's name into a hat. Each side needs to take turns as they draw a name and use words to describe that particular employee. You can make this game get even tougher as you continue to play, narrowing it down to one word as a description.

### 5. Pairs

Pairs are one of the best employee engagement activities to help team

members get to know one another. You'll need to raid the office stationery room for a pen, paper, and tape to make this game run smoothly. Before the game begins, come up with as many pairs of things as you can. Items such as peanut butter and jelly, yin and yang, salt and pepper, dark and light, male and female, Minnie and Mickey, noise and silence, and hard and soft make excellent choices. Write each word on a separate piece of paper (yin on one piece, yang on another). Once you've gathered everyone together, tape a piece of paper on the back of each person. When the game begins, participants can only ask Yes or No questions (like Twenty Questions) in order to figure out what word is on their back. Once they have done so, they must find the other member of the pair and sit down together. When sitting together, they must learn three to five interesting facts about one another.

### 6. The Amazing Race Through Town

A really fun staff engagement activity to boost morale if its flagging. This is a crowning example of employee engagement games ideas when you really want to pump your office up with excitement. Break your staff members into pairs and send them off into the surrounding area from point to point, providing clues to get to each destination. The first to complete the race wins. Make the final destination a popular luncheon spot and treat your staff to a meal. Food will always earn points in the eyes of your staff.

### 7. Trivia

This activity can be as simple as a (short) game of Trivial Pursuit but can also take many other forms. Keep in mind that you can always make use of the Trivial Pursuit cards regardless of how you structure your game. One easy way to structure a Trivia game is to divide employees into teams and decide on three topics (Entertainment, Science, Art, etc.). The game consists of three rounds of five questions each dealing with the agreed-upon topics (first round is Entertainment, a second round is Science, third is Art). Groups are allowed to discuss amongst themselves and then each team writes their group name or number and their answer on a slip of paper and turns it into the moderator. Review the questions and answers at the end of each round so the teams can keep score. At the end of three rounds, the team with the most points wins. Don't be surprised if a tie-breaker is necessary. *(Continued on page 12.)*



# 12 Employee Engagement Games & Activity Ideas

Continued from page 11

## 8. Untangle

This game builds problem-solving, teamwork, and communication amongst its participants. This activity can take a bit longer than some depending on how well every staff member works together. Everyone stands shoulder to shoulder in a circle facing the center. Each player should put her right hand in the center of the circle and take the hand of someone standing across the circle. Next, each player should put his left hand in the center of the circle and take the hand of a different person. Make sure that no one is holding the hand of someone standing right next to them. It's now time for players to work together to untangle the knot without breaking the connections.

## 9. Improvisation

This game requires props so plan accordingly. The planning is worth it though as this is a great way to engage everyone in a relaxing, fun way. Divide participants into teams of 8 or less. Supply each team with a set of six random objects and give them five minutes to come up with a two-to-three-minute skit making use of all the objects provided. You can let the groups pick their topic or you can provide one for them. At the end of the activity, have everyone vote for their favorite skit.

## 10. A Case of Need

This game goes by many names but, at its heart, it is an excellent activity that facilitates team member familiarity and builds cohesion within the team. You will need a large collection of the same object (pencils, pens, pennies, some even use



toilet paper) for this game so plan ahead. Instruct everyone to sit in a circle facing the center. Without disclosing what it will be used for, pass the items around the circle and tell participants to take as much as they think they'll need. Inevitably, questions will follow so be prepared to repeat a stock answer (i.e., "Take as much as you think you'll need."). Once everyone has at least one item, go around the circle and have participants share a fact about themselves for every item they took (if someone took five items, they share five facts).

## 11. Dig for Buried Treasure

Everyone loves a treasure hunt and you're never too old to join in the fun. Set



up a treasure hunt game in the office with clues to guide your employees along the way. Break staff members up into teams and have something enticing at "X marks the spot."

## 12. Beach Ball

This game is a fun and easy way to help team members learn about their colleagues. It is also a great way for team members to stay current with each other's goals and activities. As the name of the game suggests, you will need a Beach Ball to make this work. Before the game begins, write random questions on the Beach Ball with a permanent marker. Questions can be simple (what is your dog's name, what is your favorite food) or complex (what are your weekly goals, where do you see yourself in five years) but a mix of both makes for a less taxing game. Have participants form a circle facing the center and toss the ball from person to person in a random order. After a period of time, say "Stop" and the person holding the ball will answer the question closest to her right pinky. Once the question is answered, begin tossing the ball and repeat the process.

## Summary

**Be creative and take the time to introduce these games to your staff members and see the effect on employee engagement games. You will find that your efforts will pay off as your staff truly becomes a team.**



**Don Rush**  
President  
Sherman Publications  
666 S. Lapeer Rd.  
Oxford, MI 48371  
Phone: (248)628-4801  
Fax: (248)628-9750  
Cell: (810)636-3798  
don@shermanpublications.org



**Bettie Watson**  
Director  
Salesman Publications  
102 N. Main Street - P.O. Box 205  
Concord, MI 49237-0205  
Phone: (517)524-8540  
Fax: (517)524-8570  
Cell: (517)740-9461  
ads@salesmanpublications.com



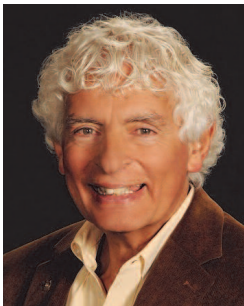
**Marty Bennett**  
Vice President  
Community Shoppers Guide  
117 N. Farmer - P.O. Box 168  
Otsego, MI 49078  
Phone: (269)694-9431  
Fax: (269)694-9145  
Cell: (269)370-9469  
shoppersguide@sbcglobal.net



**Elaine S. Myers**  
Director  
C&G Newspapers  
13650 11 Mile Road  
Warren, MI 48089  
Phone: (586)218-5012  
Fax: (586)498-9631  
Cell: (248)672-0998  
emyers@candgnews.com



**Jon Jacobs**  
Past President  
Buyers Guide  
P.O. Box 128  
Lowell, MI 49331  
Phone: (616)897-9555  
Cell: (269)208-9223  
Fax: (616)897-4809  
Jon@lowellbuyersguide.com



**George Moses**  
Director  
The Marketeer  
110 E. North St., Suite A  
Brighton, MI 48116  
Phone: (810)227-1575  
Fax: (810)227-8189  
Cell: (517)404-7807  
gmoses@georgemosesco.com



**Fred Jacobs**  
Sec./Treasurer  
J-Ad Graphics  
1351 North M-43 Highway  
Hastings, MI 49058-0188  
Phone: (269)945-9554  
Fax: (269)945-5522  
Cell: (269)838-0881  
fred@j-adgraphics.com



**Wes Smith**  
Director  
View Newspaper Group  
1521 Imlay City Rd.  
Lapeer, MI 48446  
Phone: (810)664-0811  
Fax: (810)667-6309  
Cell: (810)338-7888  
wsmith@mihomepaper.com



Jack Guza, Executive Director  
EMAIL [jackguza@cpapersmi.com](mailto:jackguza@cpapersmi.com)



5198 Windsor Hwy.  
Pottsville, MI 48876  
Phone/Fax: (800)783-0267  
[mifreeads.com](http://mifreeads.com)



Dana Risner, Business Manager  
EMAIL [danarisner@cpapersmi.com](mailto:danarisner@cpapersmi.com)