

INFORMER



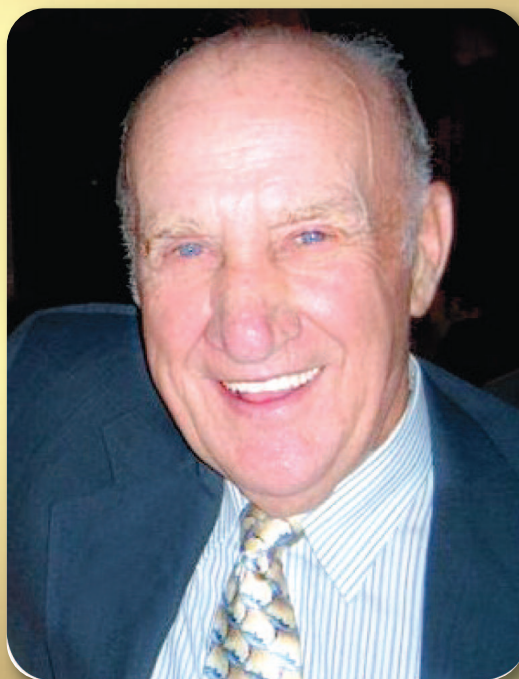
Community
Papers of
Michigan

March 2019

CIRCULATION
VERIFICATION
COUNCIL

OUR DATA
SPEAKS VOLUMES

In Memoriam



GILBERT DEMERS

11/22/1929 – 2/25/2019



In Memoriam

GILBERT DEMERS

11/22/1929 – 2/25/2019

FOUNDER C & G NEWSPAPERS

At the age of 47, Gil took a part-time job selling advertising for a local Shopper paper.

He immediately fell in love with the advertising business. Within four years, Gil and his wife, Charlotte, founded C & G Publishing in 1981.

What he loved most about advertising was helping local business owners grow their businesses. He always said, "If I can help them grow their business, they'll help me grow mine."

His family was always most important to Gil, and in 1989 he fulfilled his dream of working with all five of his children at C & G. His positive attitude and unbridled enthusiasm were the driving force behind the company's growth, making it Michigan's largest direct mail newspaper group, with 19 newspapers covering 46 communities.

Gil always attributed the success of C & G to all the wonderful people who have worked at the company over the years. He said, "They are the ones that make C & G successful." In his later years, Gil loved coming into the office and walking through the building, greeting everyone with a smile, a joke or even advice, if he felt you needed it.

He touched so many lives through his company and was so proud of its success.



Consider Yourself Told

How are newspapers doing? It depends on who you ask.



by Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

It was a lot like other experiences I've had at conventions over the past couple of years. In March, as I gathered my backpack to head out of the room where I'd just spoken in Madison, Wisconsin, a man approached and said, "I really appreciated what you had to say. May I ask a question?"

I was in no rush. Immediately ahead was a five-hour drive to Des Moines, where I was speaking to a newspaper conference the next day.

"Sure," I answered. "Of course. How can I help?"

His question was straightforward and deliberate. "What's really going on at newspapers across the country?"

Question: How are other newspapers doing?

I knew it wouldn't be a quick answer. I had been standing for two hours and there were a couple of chairs in the corner of the room, near the door. I suggested this was a conversation that required sitting.

As I began to answer his question, the area began to fill. Soon, there were a dozen or more publishers, editors and others standing in a semicircle, intently listening in on the conversation. I appreciated their interest. It's a bit humbling to know people sincerely care what I think about anything.

I shared my thoughts with the group. Heads nodded as I mentioned most locally-owned papers seemed to be doing fine. Big metros, not so much.

Someone spoke up, "My paper is part of a small local group. That's how it is with us."

I went into more detail about the state of newspapers of various sizes and types, then explained that I should get on my way to Des Moines. As I began to walk toward the hallway, I heard a familiar refrain, "Thank you for what you do for all of us."

You know, I hear that at every newspaper and convention I visit. I appreciate that people think that way. But the truth is I'm not really sure what I do. I study. I do research. I visit papers. I asked what's going on. Then I share the information. It seems a lot like what journalists at newspapers do every day.

As I was leaving the Concourse Hotel in Madison – one of the nicest I've stayed at, by the way – I glanced at my email and text messages. There was an email from a magazine reporter in New York, asking if I had five minutes to talk.

I recognized the name. He had interviewed me a week or two earlier for a story he was writing about the state of newspapers. During the interview, when he shared who he had spoken with while doing his research, he mentioned Iris Chyi, University of Texas, and other names that could fill a "Who's Who" list of researchers in the area of newspaper health.

In his brief email, he mentioned his editors were skeptical concerning the content of his story. Apparently the people he was interviewing were consistent in their findings. Most locally-owned newspapers are doing well. The same is not always true of other newspapers. The further



The view from my room in Madison during the WNA Convention.

the newspaper from the owner or ownership group, the more likely the paper isn't doing well. That has been a consistent finding of my research for the past few years.

A few days later, the reporter and I talked on the phone and he asked if I could point him to some data that he could show to his editors. I did, reluctantly. I was reluctant because I'm starting to feel outnumbered. There seems to be stories on social media and in national publications almost daily about how one large newspaper group after another is falling apart. As I reminded this reporter, most newspapers aren't part of large national groups. Most newspapers are still locally owned.

Consider yourself told

I didn't even mention the publishers who I've run into over the past few weeks who are starting or have just started new papers. Frankly, I really didn't care what the magazine ran, if anything.

Relaxing in the lobby of the hotel in Des Moines the next day, a publisher

approached and I invited him to visit. He told me his newspaper is enjoying significant growth. It has been growing, he told me, several years in a row. The past year has been the best yet. Then – you guessed it – he said, "Thank you so much for what you do for our industry."

I wanted to thank him. It's folks like him – like the publishers, editors and journalists I met in Wisconsin and Iowa over the weekend – who give me the energy to keep up the fight. They remind me of others I've met recently in Wyoming, Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Vermont, Kansas and places I've momentarily forgotten.

One publisher in Iowa came up to the podium to tell me something. "Remember ten years ago when the university dean told you he didn't think there would be a single newspaper left in America in ten years?"

"Yes," I answered, "I remember."

"You should mention that in every column you write. It's been over ten years and we're still here, and we're not going anywhere," he told me.

Consider yourself told.



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

GET REAL
THE PRINTED PAPER IS STILL A PUBLISHERS BEST ASSET!

Have you noticed that all the really successful online retailers offer free delivery?

Amazon sets the bar high with Amazon Prime two-day delivery of everything from A to Z. Their product inventory includes everything from a difficult-to-find book to necessary groceries for dinner that night.

Target has purchased a start-up delivery firm, Shipt, that recruits part-time workers to pull and fill a customer's order from shelves in the store and then deliver the items to the customer's home or business in their personal vehicle.

Want a new car? According to the television ads, there's no need to deal with a "pushy" dealership salesperson anymore. Carvana will process your new car or truck order over the phone or online. Within days a Carvana truck will deliver the exact brand, model, color and accessory package you want right to your door. They'll even offer a no obligation seven days to test the vehicle before you buy. Plus, they'll be happy to take your used car or truck in trade and pick it up when they deliver your new vehicle.

Women's fashion centers go one step further. Nordstrom and other leading

national retailers even enclose a pre-paid FedEx label so the customer can easily return the item if it doesn't fit or otherwise "just isn't right."

Here in Sheldon, IA, where we have our newspaper office, I have a shoe store owner who claims he's making more money selling shoes on the internet than in his main street brick and mortar store. The UPS truck stops every day to pick up two dozen or more pair of shoes to be delivered to buyers all over the country. Finally, there are a growing number of women's boutiques popping up all over the country. Most are working to build a mail-order business with their products delivered by UPS or Fed-Ex to the customer's home rather than sold out of a traditional showroom.

NEWSPAPERS AND SHOPPERS WERE THE FIRST TO "DELIVER"

Delivery to the home has always been a key part of our newspaper and shopper story. Local papers were delivering wonderfully designed ads promoting what was available to buy long before there was an internet. Paid circulation or free distribution, the local paper delivered all the important information local buyers needed to make wise and easy buying decisions.

Community papers have always been the preferred means of learning the

local news and business specials. The depth of coverage and design of the hometown paper has changed over the last 50 years, but the message has always been local. That local connection is the reason smaller community publications have thrived while many larger metro publications, with their attention to national and statehouse coverage, have declined.

I have a difficult time understanding why so many local businesses choose to advertise on the internet rather than in their hometown paper. Those small community stores and service firms simply can't compete online with the larger national firms favored by Google's marketing experts and analytical expertise. (Continued on page 5.)



GET REAL
THE PRINTED PAPER IS STILL A PUBLISHERS BEST ASSET!

Continued from page 4



Take the community automobile dealership for example. There is no way that traditionally family-owned dealership is going to have Google analytics place their message higher than the giant- inventory metro dealer down the road.

Community newspapers and shoppers offer a huge advantage to local new and used car dealerships. For one, and perhaps the most important reason, larger metro competitors aren't overpowering the local dealer's message with bigger display ads listing hundreds of vehicles at lower prices. Smaller local dealers can be easily overlooked when placing their deals online.

Here are more reasons the dealer should put his ads first in the hometown paper:

- The local printed advertisement is delivered right to the subscriber's front door where the family has a healthy respect for the paper's credibility. Many online sites lack that credibility.
- The printed paper still reaches more potential buyers within the dealer's sales and service area than any other form of electronic media.
- The hometown paper is desired and looked for by the immediate area car-buyer who knows and appreciates the no pressure, easy-to-understand deal the dealer offers every customer.

- Because the dealership is close by, often right in town, it is ready and able to provide quick service whenever it is needed.

Studies have shown that 75 percent of any businesses sales are to customers within 25 miles of the front door. Our smaller community auto dealerships exist because most of the dealership's customers don't want to drive 60 to 100 miles whenever they need to have something serviced on their car or truck. It seems ridiculous that community dealerships prefer to advertise on the world-wide web when their most important prospects are the ones reading the local paper.

PRINT SALES PEOPLE HAVE TO TELL THEIR STORY

Local print salespeople need to learn to clearly tell their unique and specific story. If they want to sell more print advertising, sales consultants must be coached and regularly reminded to share their paper's benefits, value and stories about how their publication can deliver results and increased sales. Print advertising salespeople need to tell ad buyers over and over again why their printed paper, delivered right into the home of the local family can truly deliver sales and success for them.

They need to explain the demographics and depth of their readership, the paper's impact on local buying

decisions, the reach of both their paper and website, the creative ability of their ad designers and an endless list of success stores from other local businesses.

Advertising sales people too often turn away from conflict and fail to stand up for their product. Those same salespeople often fail to make any effort to get to know the advertiser and the advertiser's business. Too often, they fail to bring the advertiser exciting new promotion and advertising ideas. Worst of all, they sell one-time ads instead of long-term advertising programs.

Local print advertising can out-perform online ads every time. But the publication's sales team needs to make it happen by becoming salespeople instead of simply order takers.

Peter W. Wagner is longtime newspaper and shopper publisher and an internationally recognized print advertising sales trainer. He will be one of the advertising sales presenters at the New York Press Association Spring Convention in Albany, NY, April 6th. You can contact him on the internet at pww@iowainformation.com or on his cell at 712-348-3550.



By Ryan Dohrn

*President/Founder,
Brain Swell Media LLC*

Winning Sales Conversations: Control, Command, Convert!

As advertising sales professionals, we all recognize we're selling in a media landscape that's tougher than ever before. So what are we going to do to control the conversation with advertisers? How will we command that conversation? And then, ultimately, convert the conversation to a sale?

In my media sales training, I focus on the three C's: control, command and convert. These three things allow you to cultivate a repeatable pattern of success.

Let's look at these three in the context of the sales conversation. It's a conversation you need to learn to control if you want to see results.

Control and command

We've all got a pitch, a sales sheet and demos. But making the sale is really all about a conversation, now more than ever. Consider that 86% of buyers report that they'd rather go to the dentist than talk to a sales professional, like us. So when we're actually talking to an advertiser—it's really all about having a great conversation.

How do we control the conversation? There are two ways: the use of silence and the use of cadence.

When you're talking with a potential advertiser, it's important to really understand the power of silence in a conversation—it's what some people in the good old days called a "pregnant pause," or "pause for effect." But most sales people today don't really understand what silence can do for them. When I'm having a conversation with somebody, and I want them to understand what I'm talking about—it's the pauses that give people a chance to understand. The silence allows absorption of the information. So I always stress this in my ad sales training: Use silence and pauses to aid in absorption, in retention, and in understanding.

This type of control isn't always easy, though. If you're like me, I operate at 198 mph all the time, non-stop. But I have to ask, am I getting good absorption from the person I'm trying to sell to? If I'm operating way too fast, the answer is no. That's why I have a post-it note stuck to my computer that says "Slow the heck down."

So what I have to understand is cadence—and how to control it. Cadence is that thing in the background that you hear in a marching band, in a metronome. But if the cadence is one steady beat, it might sound good overall, but it doesn't cause people to ebb and flow with you throughout a conversation.

So instead of one steady beat, your conversation with advertisers needs to follow a cadence that's a lot like a symphony. It's not like a military march, because that steady cadence doesn't work in sales.

And remember, your cadence in sales can not be going 90 miles an hour, either. So to get my conversation with a buyer to sound more like a symphony, what I like to do is speed up my cadence, and then slow it down. I'll speed up as I'm talking about certain things, and then I'll slow it down when I want deep understanding. So both silence and cadence are things I use to control the conversation with an advertiser or prospect. And these are tools I emphasize in my ad sales training.

The power of a whisper

Sometimes when I want to control and command the conversation, I'll actually whisper.

In an agency meeting not long ago I noticed that a lot of people were looking at their cell phones, and they weren't paying attention to me. So what I did was change the volume of my voice and I changed the cadence of the conversation, and I noticed they all looked back up. And once they did I sped back up again, kind of like a DJ on a dance floor.

You might say, "Seriously, Ryan. Do you really have to be this dramatic?" And the answer is yes, for effect.

You have to understand that great salespeople vary their cadence and volume instinctively. If you remember in the movie *Wall Street*, at one point Leonardo DiCaprio's character was trying to model proper sales. And he drove home the fear of missing out by whispering on the phone to the person he was talking to. (*Continued on page 7.*)

Control, Command, Convert! (Continued from page 6)

If you want to control and command the conversation in sales, you have to learn how to whisper, too ... because it's dramatic, and it drives effect.

As an aside, I stress this too in my ad sales training: A good story wrapped with data is going to sell better than stats that are flat. Remember that in your conversation with a buyer, as well.

So here's what all this looks like. When I'm in a sales conversation and I'm excited about an idea or a media product, I'm going to speed up my cadence and drive excitement about it. But when I need someone to understand what I'm saying, I'm going to slow down, lower my volume, and I might even whisper, and then I'm gonna pause—to really make sure they understand. I might even ask, "Is this making sense to you?" "Does that resonate with you?" "Do you have any questions?"

Know your product, inside and out

Controlling, commanding and converting the conversation is really a higher level, advanced selling strategy. It's difficult to teach this to someone who doesn't know anything about their product. If you don't know about your product, I can't really teach you cadence.

So I emphasize in my media sales training that you have to really understand your product set, so it becomes second nature. Then I can coach you on proper cadence to control, command and convert that conversation. Then once you understand your product well, you're going to have to rehearse to have great conversations. I know you're thinking, "Awww, Ryan. Are we talking about role playing again?" I'm talking

about practice. Tiger Woods is going to hit thousands of golf balls a week to stay the best. You're gonna have to practice, too, if you're going to learn to convert that conversation to a sale.

Control the follow up



Another thing you have to control is the follow up. You can have the best conversation with someone, but if they take control of the follow up, it's no good. We need to pull out our phone and set up the next follow up meeting.

And then if they don't show up for their sales follow up meeting, ask them what THEY want you to do. How do they want you to follow up? What works best for them?

Convert, the end goal

So to sum up, the 3 C's, control, command and convert, are about understanding cadence and realizing what you can do to control the conversation.

If you want to get better in sales, you're going to have to learn to control the next steps. If you're going to know how to

convert that conversation, you're going to have to know how to control that conversation.

Every day does not have to be a brand new day in sales land. It really doesn't have to be. You and I can be better because we look at—and we cultivate—repeatable patterns of success. If we're going to command the conversation, we have to control the conversation. If we're going to convert the conversation, we have to control the follow up. It's all about control and command—if we want to convert our conversations to sales.

Remember, if ad sales was easy, everyone would be doing it!
-Ryan

Listen to Ryan's ad sales podcast, Ad Sales Nation, on iTunes or on Soundcloud. Keep up to date with Ryan's ad sales training advice on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/brainswell/>

Ryan Dohrn is an award winning ad sales training coach, a nationally recognized internet sales consultant, and an international motivational speaker. He is the author of the best-selling ad sales book, Selling Backwards. Ryan is the President and founder of Brain Swell Media and 360 Ad Sales Training, a boutique ad sales training and sales coaching firm with a detailed focus on ad sales training, internet consulting, and media revenue generation. Ryan is also the Publisher of Sales Training World.

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Last year at this time I tentatively switched to the Adobe Cloud versions of my software programs and have been working with “the Cloud” to create these...

Simple Fixes



As I said, I switched to Adobe’s *Creative Cloud* a year ago and planned to work my way into the program. After three months, I realized that plan was not going to work, so I went “all in” so to speak. I started working in a slightly upgraded version of CS6, but realized that tools had been changed, moved and new features were making me more confused! I do know that I can save my files as *IDML* (InDesign CS4 or later), which is important if someone works in an older version of this program... or may return to an earlier version.

I also needed to make sure that *Suitcase Fusion* and other plug-ins were working correctly, so for a brief time, I worked in *Adobe InDesign CS6+*! However, after working in this version for the last nine months, I know that I will not return to anything less than the cloud version. It’s easier for me now, but *Adobe* can change features faster, so new “enhancements” don’t allow for complacency... so always learning!

Two Simple Ad Fixes

The two ads on this page are very typical of many of the smaller ads (in our papers that was a 2x2) that you see in many print publications! Funny thing, the “fix” is fairly easy and not time consuming. These ads are reproduced at 100%.

Again, I will repeat some basic design fundamentals: **Design with a purpose** — to support the message and enhance content. **Use a Simple Design** — simple does not mean boring. The reader’s eye should move in a logical sequence. **Have a Definite Focus** — use text or graphics to emphasize your message. **Unify the Design** — the relationship of graphics and text should combine to create a clear and concise message, and **Avoid Congestion** — don’t overcrowd the ad, but make sure there’s enough space for all the information to fit

The Importance of Art

The purpose of the first set of ads is to alert readers interested in gardening or flowers to an event. A perfect way to add artwork (flowers) to enhance the content. It still is a simple design, but a lot more eye-catching. Color helps, but if you use black and white, I would suggest using a simpler illustration.

So both the art and text have a focus and the artwork helps to unify the design. Notice also that I revamped the wording. I included the destination in the introduction because it’s not that important and doesn’t need to be on a line by itself (the people will be on a bus!).

I left-aligned the text so it actually reads more as a “chunk.” Otherwise the eye goes back and forth — kinda like watching a tennis match.

The text in the original ad changes size and typefaces too many times—very distracting! Even if the font is in the same family, use type contrast judiciously and thoughtfully.

Beware of Double Rules

In the second set, the ad is geared to a more specific reader, but the use of two rule lines does not help with the focus or help to unify the design. Yes, it does take up a lot of space and sometimes when you do not have a lot of text, that can make ad creation a little more difficult.

The “fixed” ad offers a lot more unity and focus. I also revamped the wording slightly in this ad as well by putting the address directly under downtown Hartford. The previous business is just a qualifier to the location.

To make the ad more striking I went to my *Library of Bursts*, put “For Lease” in the burst, made the background black, added a white box for the text and took advantage of where one of my “flower petals” came in to create a directional arrow to the text.

The use of greys works with this ad to create focus, visual interest, and organize the advertising. I used the typeface Myriad Pro because I had a lot of options with regular, semibold, extended, etc.

If you choose to add color to this ad, use monochromatic and follow the “grey format.” A solid color background and a medium tone where the grey is placed.

Both sets of the redone ads did not require a lot of time to make the changes. There were distracting elements in both of the original ads. The top original ad had too many font sizes and changes and the second original ad—double rule lines.

Look at the info and take a little time to plan the ad before you start and you won’t end up with just words in a box.

Join the
Hartford Flower and Garden Club
on a day tour to
HORNBAKER GARDENS
Princeton, Illinois
Saturday, June 8, 2019
Cost: \$25.00 plus meals on your own
Coach departs from K-Mart parking lot at 8:00am
Call: **262-555-5555**
for more details or to register for the tour.



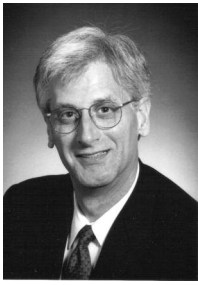
JOIN THE HARTFORD FLOWER AND GARDEN CLUB ON A DAY TOUR TO PRINCETON, ILLINOIS
Hornbaker Gardens
SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2019
\$25.00 plus meals on your own
Coach departs from K-Mart parking lot at 8:00am • Call 262-555-5555
for more details or to register for the tour.

FOR LEASE
4000+ sq. ft.
Downtown Hartford
(formerly GrandDad’s Bakery)
28 East Jackson Street
Call Bob 262-555-5555

FOR LEASE
4000+ SQ. FT.
DOWNTOWN HARTFORD
28 EAST JACKSON STREET
(formerly GrandDad’s Bakery)
CALL BOB 262-555-5555

Until next month...

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.ln@att.net Ellen Hanrahan ©2019



By John Foust
Raleigh, NC

Ad-Libs



Four Wins Are Better Than Two

Jodi is a sales manager with an interesting philosophy. “We’re all familiar with win-win,” she said. “It’s a common cliché these days. In business relationships – especially any kind of negotiation – each side should benefit. I help you win, and you help me win.

“Win-win is a noble objective, but I don’t think it covers all the bases in the advertising business. I’ve heard people say that we’re dealing with four wins, not two. We talk about this all the time in staff meetings. As long as we focus on winning in four areas, we’re on the right track.”

Let’s take a look at Jodi’s four wins:

1. The advertiser. “It all starts here,” she said. “Advertisers and prospective advertisers want results. The purpose of advertising is to generate sales and market awareness, so we go into every presentation with that in mind.

“After all, that’s how they judge the value of running ads with us. They constantly ask themselves, ‘Are the ads working?’ If they can’t answer ‘yes’ to that question, we have

a big problem. If there’s no win for the advertiser, the other wins don’t matter.”

2. The newspaper. “When we tell prospects we’re working for a win-win, they automatically think of their business and our newspaper,” Jodi explained.

“We work for the newspaper, and everybody understands that we’re expected to keep our employer’s interests at heart. When our advertisers get good results from their campaigns, they’ll naturally run more ads. That boosts our business as well as theirs. By helping them win, we win right along with them.”

3. The consumer. “This is the first of the additional wins,” Jodi said. “Even though it doesn’t apply to every industry, it’s a big part of what we do in advertising. In a lot of ways, you could say we’re a bridge between businesses and their customers. If it weren’t for advertising, a lot of people wouldn’t know what’s available in the marketplace.

“Around the office, we joke about being consumer advocates, but that’s our way of saying we work to take care of our audience. We’re obligated to help advertisers package their messages to help readers make good buying decisions. If an advertiser hands us a

bad idea, we don’t hesitate to say it’s a bad idea. Our ad team knows principles of effective advertising, and they do everything they can to steer clients away from weak ideas.”

4. The sales person. The fourth win hits close to home. “We want the people in our ad department to enjoy their work and celebrate their successes,” she said. “When someone lands a new client, renews a contract or sells a campaign, it gives their confidence a big lift. We believe each victory is a stepping stone to more accomplishments.

“The better our team members feel about their work, the more valuable they become – to the paper, to advertisers, to our readers and to themselves.

“In our business, two wins are not enough. We go for the win-win-win-win.”

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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



One Weekly Newspaper's Route to Survival: A Unique 'Membership Plan'

By Ron Reason



In charming tourist town, clean and clever nameplate sends a folksy signal

While its membership model and solid mix of small-town stories originally caught my eye

IDYLLWILD, Calif – It's been a tough few weeks of news about the news industry, with hundreds of jobs lost at large publishing companies like BuzzFeed, HuffPost and Gannett, whose ax will fall particularly hard on some smaller U.S. markets already scraping by for decent news coverage.

Thus, my interest was heightened this week during a visit to this idyllic mountain town, a little more than an hour uphill from Palm Springs, whose weekly newspaper I bought hot off the press, for the bargain price of \$1.

The Idyllwild Town Crier is serious California news done right, on a hyperlocal scale: residential and commercial growth, wildfire and forestry management, tourism, the pot

industry, water management districts. In all, the paper keeps its eye on eight public agency boards. Sure, it covers folks about town, but it takes its watchdog role seriously.

At 16 broadsheet pages this week, the paper struck me as healthier and more engaging than the Gannett dailies I've picked up in recent months, while visiting clients who publish in the same markets. (The shockingly anemic web width adopted by the chain's broadsheets does no favors toward assessing its papers' health.)

The Town Crier is not the only engaging or stable weekly paper out there, by a long stretch. But it may be the only one that has resorted to an innovative "membership" model to stay afloat.

In August of 2017, co-publishers Jack and Becky Clark (he's also the general counsel, she's also the editor) realized they weren't going to make it on subscription and ad

revenue alone, and put out a call to the community: "Either the paper retires when we do (and soon), or, you've got to help us out." They began selling "memberships" in the paper – similar, perhaps, to a public broadcasting fund drive – and quickly found solid footing. Membership tiers range from \$100 annually for Sustaining Readers (replacing the previous annual subscription fee of \$29 for 52 issues, including postage) up to \$1,000 or more for Heroes and Angels levels. (More on the membership plan and tiers: <https://idyllwildtowncrier.com/membership-signup/>)

I reached out to the Clarks via email to learn more about this strategy, which they say they are not aware of anywhere else in the country, and their hopes for the future of the paper. Jack also shared why he thinks his model would not be appropriate for every struggling newspaper out there. Following are my questions and Jack's responses: (Continued on page 11.)

'Membership Plan' (Continued from page 10)

Q. You regularly publish updates about the steady growth of your membership tally, but can you tell me where you stand today?

A. We are at 696 active members today, up a net 48 since the end of our first Membership year on Sept. 1, 2018. Of course, some of our original members did not renew (or have not renewed yet), but more than that number of brand new members have joined, hence the net gain. Believe it or not, most of our members (about 55%) don't have primary homes up here. They have second homes, or WANT to have second homes, or just want to retire here someday, or they just love to visit enough to take out a membership.

Q. Do you know of many other papers who have pursued a model like this?

A. No. We do know of nonprofits who have done this, and we know of a small-town paper that "went public," but we don't know of another small-town, "for-profit" paper that has tried this. We do not feel that a nonprofit newspaper would work well here — two many special interest factions would do what they could to occupy and control the Board of Directors.

Q. In addition to wanting to keep the newspaper going via the membership model, you are also looking for new owners, who presumably would need to keep that model going as well. What are your hopes and challenges for that search? Who's your ideal candidate?

A. Our first goal is to find someone who seriously wants to keep a real newspaper going for our community, and who are capable of doing that. As we've said several times in print: "A newspaper is a community

watchdog that publishes the bad with the good. It warns of danger, advises of opportunity, challenges authority, praises accomplishment, investigates irregularity, marvels at art, celebrates lives and publishes its readers' letters. If a publication doesn't do all of these things, it may be something else, but it's not a newspaper." We have eight local public agencies up here that nobody monitors but the Town Crier. We have had to do some tough, aggressive investigative reporting as to two of them in recent years. The new owner(s) would have to be ready and willing to take all that on.

Of course, we want people with some newspaper experience. Too many people out there "have always dreamed of owning their own newspaper." When they buy one and find out how much time, work and headache is involved, they have buyer's remorse and want out. We want people who know the business and are in a position take the Town Crier on to keep it rolling — we hope with their own improvements.

Also, new owners would have to have the wherewithal to be able to keep it operating during any down turns. The first three months of the year are pretty slow. But we haven't had to actually add capital to the paper for about three and a half years now — a vast improvement over the first two years of our ownership. And the membership model really gave us a major boost starting nearly 18 months ago, enabling us to meet expenses and pay the editor-in-chief (my wife, Becky) a bit over a minimum wage for the first time. We feel this was an essential point to being able to attract new ownership. We hear regularly that our readers are counting on us to find the right purchasers for the Town Crier.

Q. You open your weekly news meetings on Wednesday mornings to the public. Can you describe the interest, enthusiasm or attendance you've experienced?

A. There will be anywhere from 8-16 regular readers at any given news meeting. About 8-9 people seem never to miss. They were willing to attend Wednesday 8:30 a.m. news meetings even when we held them in the cramped quarters of our office. The Idyllwild Library has graciously allowed us to use their much more comfortable surroundings. They are all interested in discussing the current issue, which also comes out on Wednesday mornings (although it is dated Thursday), and they are very much interested in what we already plan to cover for the next issue.

Q. What do you get out of this public meeting that you might not otherwise get, say via email tips, chat around town, etc.?

A. We still get email tips and there is still chat around town, but most of that is unverifiable rumor. When someone brings something up face-to-face in a news meeting, we get instant response from the others present. Sometimes news stories develop out of these conversations. The news meetings are used as a vehicle by people who would really like us to look into something. They let us know what the folk in town are most interested in knowing about. We also get feedback on stories we have published as well as comment on stories we intend to publish. The better we know the people of the community, the better the paper can serve them, the better the paper will be appreciated by the people of the community. They speak of "our newspaper," and we think the public news meetings promote that feeling, that it is their newspaper. (Continued on page 12.)

‘Membership Plan’

(Continued from page 11)

Q. You’ve recently seen an uptick in advertising. To what might you attribute that?

A. We do a weekly column about our membership, often listing our members by name (if they haven’t requested anonymity). We think that advertisers are becoming more and more impressed with the number of people who are interested enough in our community to take out memberships. The uptick has been slow and gradual so far, not overwhelming

Q. In addition to your membership numbers, it’d be great to learn your current circulation as well as the population of the town (and if there’s a big bump in that number for the summer tourist season).

A. We print 2,100 papers each week. Our circulation runs around 1,900 - 2,000 each week. Idyllwild itself has about 3,300 people. But we also serve Pine Cove, Mountain Center and Garner Valley areas — a total of perhaps 5,000 people of all ages. (Perhaps only about two or three thousand families, although I haven’t seen a survey as to that.) We have heavy tourist weekends during the colder months, especially when it has just snowed. And holidays — Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, the big Fourth of July

community parade, and Labor Day — are big with tourists.

But we are mostly a summertime tourist community, so, yes, there is a big bump in the summertime. We have hiking trails of all degrees of difficulty, rock climbing, just walking in the great outdoors — or simply exploring the town of Idyllwild. Tourism has increased tremendously during the 33 years that I’ve been here. During spring-summer-fall, ordinary weekends are often swarming in the downtown areas. We have very few chain businesses, no chain restaurants, but well more than a dozen really good individual restaurants and coffee houses.

I think perhaps I should add that I doubt that our membership model would work for every community newspaper. The membership model was virtually a last resort for us after having tried a myriad of approaches to increase advertising, none of which worked. It turns out that we had people’s trust and good will well before we embarked on the membership model — we both were surprised at how much good will we apparently had with folk both on and off the Hill. Very gratifying. But I wouldn’t want to recommend this membership approach to a start-up community newspaper, for example. I think the

newspaper needs to have community trust, good will and interest first.

Ron Reason is a consultant in newspaper and magazine redesign and editorial and advertising strategy based in Portland, Oregon.

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www.ronreason.com/designwithreason/

NOTE: The Idyllwild Town Crier is not a client of Ron Reason

RELATED LINKS:

About the paper’s membership program and tiers:
<https://idyllwildtowncrier.com/membership-signup/>

Why they went to the membership model: <https://idyllwildtowncrier.com/2018/05/16/the-membership-model-why-did-we-go-there/>

An update: The model is working:
<https://idyllwildtowncrier.com/2018/04/12/membership-model-is-working/>

The ship is stable, but with retirement on the horizon, still needs new captains:
<https://idyllwildtowncrier.com/2018/06/13/seeing-the-right-new-owners/>





By **Bob Berting**
Berting Communications

“What Should a First Call on a Prospect Look Like?”

The first of a series of 3 articles about a three call selling/closing system. Let's take the first prospect call. This is not the time to pressure a prospect. Recently we see a Sales Call system to build trust fast by doing research on LinkedIn-- then sharing success stories-- then presenting ideas on the spot-- then talking about running one ad-- then making a presentation with data sheet, an offerings sheet, pricing grid-- then finally overcoming objections...all of this on the first call!

Introducing the first call of a 3 Call Selling Process...

Establishing Credibility

Probably one of the biggest waste of time in an advertising salesperson's life is the number of calls it takes to close a prospect. Over the years in a thousand sales manuals there is the consistent message that 80% of sales are made after the 5th call. This effort only happens because salespeople believe in follow through and dogged determination. So instead of first call pressure on a prospect, or 5-10 calls to wear them down, it is my belief a prospect can be processed and closed in 3 calls. Let's see how this will work.

Let's examine a good first call on the prospect.

According to most experts, after you have researched their website, now is the time to tell them what you know about their business—and how interested you are in what they are trying to achieve. This usually leads to questions you can ask about their business goals. The whole thrust of effort is designed to get them to open up and reveal everything about their business and their marketing goals plus hopefully their budget for advertising. As a media buyer for my advertising agency of 30 years, I have been subjected to this approach. In a typical example, I'm sitting there with a media salesperson and I'm thinking “who is this person—can I trust them—why should I tell them about my plans—if I've got goals I want to achieve why should I reveal them when I hardly know him or her?” The bottom line is that they have no credibility with me...I'm not ready to open up until I can thoroughly trust, think they're reliable, and have confidence in them.

Identification

So the answer is, you've got to strike a balance between building a relationship and at the same time have them trust and believe you. Here is a time tested strategy for identifying yourself to the prospect:

The advertising salesperson opens with the following “I'd like to talk to you about your business but I think it's very important that you know who we are” The prospect now has these questions and thoughts in their mind which needs to be addressed as to who you are:

I don't know who you are—what is your background experience —what are your qualifications?

I don't know your company—what is the

complete name of your publication—what other businesses do you have?

I don't know your company's product—tell me about your print and digital display ads—classified ads—website—local news—inserts

I don't know your company's customers—give me testimonials of people in my line of business.

I don't know your company's reputation—tell me about your awards, civic honors, and community involvement.

Once this information is processed-- the prospect now is in a position to better trust and to believe in your credibility. You'll notice there has been no mention of showing a media kit. It has all been verbal.

Building Rapport

There's always a likeability factor in selling. It's amazing what a smile can do to break down barriers between people. It's always important to find common ground and build rapport. How many times have we heard the phrase “ build rapport” but even in today's world of selling. It's amazing how many times we forget to do it. It still means something for a prospect to be complimented on their hobby or something they've done. I remember once having a real tough time with a prospect until I saw his bowling trophies and award certificates on his office wall. I was a bowler myself so I could relate to his accomplishments. I sincerely asked him about his bowling expertise and a huge change happened. He became far more friendly and ended up giving me quite a chunk of business. *(Continued on page 14.)*



Michael Angelo Caruso

Your Hero's Journey in Sales

I recently read the book, *Hit Makers: How to Succeed in an Age of Distraction* by Derek Thompson

The author writes about why people like what they like, why large groups of people do what they do and how popularity spreads. These are good topics for salespeople to understand.

One section of the book is about Joseph Campbell, author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), in which he discusses his theory of the journey of the archetypal hero.

1. The Hero With a Thousand Faces puts forth a universal formula for storytelling. Campbell reached back thousands of years to show that before human beings could write, we have been telling the same heroic story over and over, changing mostly the names and settings.
2. According to Campbell, the universal

hero, a seemingly ordinary man, goes on a journey, crossing over from the known world to the unknown. With help, he survives several key trials, only to face down an ultimate challenge. With this final victory, he returns to the known world as a hero.

3. There are three primary ingredients to the Hero's Journey: inspiration, relatability and suspense. The story is the threat of chaotic suspense grounded in empathy.

4. Campbell's ideas formed the basis of the 1988 PBS show *The Power of the Myth*, one of the most watched public television shows ever.

5. This philosophy of stories is basically deductive or "top-down." The typical audience member couldn't tell you explicitly what the rules are, but the formula of the hero's journey is tried and true.

All salespeople have their own "hero's journey." It's important for all of us to understand and expect the trials and tribulations of cold calls, getting past screeners, being invited to present, dealing with objections, closing deals and working the sequence over and over again.

Selling heroes know that hard work and dedication almost always delivers a happy ending.

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"What Should a First Call on a Prospect Look Like?" (Continued from page 13.)

Creation of interest

At the conclusion of the first call—that is the time to do what I call "gravitational selling" This is where you want the prospect to gravitate to you in preparation for the second call. It also can be called "creation of interest". In a sense, it's like the identification segment except it makes promises of what the prospect can expect from you in the way of service. Here are key points which can be discussed fairly briefly with the prospect:

- Professionalism—we show up on time—we do what we say we'll do.
- Custom designed ads in print and digital—use of great graphic art and copywriting
- Use of inserts—power of inserts
- Point of sale/printing—signage for your promotions (if you have the capability)

Finally—ask for permission to return for a second call to discuss their business and how you can help them with their advertising.

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 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



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