

INFORMER



**Community
Papers of
Michigan**

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OUR DATA
SPEAKS VOLUMES



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Wes Smith
Group Publisher
View Newspaper Group
CPM Director

Why I Give a Damn About Community Newspapers

The timing could not have been better.

I got a call from CPM exec director Jack Guza on Thursday reminding me that it was my turn to write an essay on “Why I give a damn about community newspapers” for this month’s edition of the Informer. Jack’s voicemail explained he knew I had had a busy week and if I needed to defer to another CPM board member for this month, he understood.

Well, Jack, first of all, we’re all busy, all of the time. And not just my fellow CPM board members. Everyone I know in the community newspaper business – and I know quite a few – are busy people. Publishers, general managers, ad directors, controllers, brand managers, circulation managers, editors, reporters, ad reps, graphic artists have a full plate every day with many of those days spilling into the evenings and frequent weekends.

One could assume that our business is so strapped that we’re all wearing multiple hats and simply grinding it out until the end. Unfortunately, that has become the case for some of our brothers and sisters at papers owned by large, shareholder and hedge fund-driven corporations. I’ve seen more

than a few cases of burnout, disillusion and career-killing downsizing at those papers.

But the kind of busy I’m talking about among many of my peers and coworkers in the community newspaper business – particularly at papers owned and operated by independent, community-minded leaders – is the busy that comes from a desire to be part of something important and good, and a drive to contribute to the success of that organization.

In so many of the communities in which we work, the success of that organization – the local newspaper – is tied directly to the success of the community itself.

The opportunity to expound on that idea – the symbiosis of the local newspaper and the community it serves – is the other reason I did not want to miss my turn, Jack. Especially this week, a few days after announcing View Newspaper Group’s planned acquisition of the Daily News in Greenville, Mich.

The Daily News will be the 19th newspaper in our group, our first daily in the group, and located on the opposite side of the state from our home base in Lapeer. While the frequency and location make the Daily News unique in our group, that newspaper’s history of commitment to community perfectly matches our ethics and ideals. The Stafford family, who

owned and operated the Daily News for more than six decades spanning three generations of that family, understood that for a community newspaper to truly succeed, it’s owners, managers and team members must be committed to truly serve that community.

For us, and the Staffords, that means not just reporting the news and selling ads. It means being involved in the lifeblood of that community. It means reporting on and promoting the activities of the community’s service clubs, churches and non-profit organizations. It means being a member of those service clubs and serving on the board of those non-profits. It means showing up a school board meeting, not only as a reporter, but sometimes as a parent and taxpayer. It means supporting the business community and not just by working to design a great marketing campaign. But also by really listening to the business owners’ concerns as they relate to local government and economic development – and by spending our own dollars locally.

I think a good community newspaper also serves as a mirror for their community. When I hold up that mirror, I want to see our papers as part of the leadership that is helping that community to become a better place for all of its citizens. A local newspaper’s community involvement, and the community enrichment that results, is why I give a damn about community newspapers.



Donna Hanbery

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At a well-attended morning meeting at the AFCP annual conference, the Saturation Mailers Coalition (SMC) hosted its 23rd annual mailers breakout session. Two representatives from the United States Postal Service, Steve Mills, a repeat visitor to AFCP, and the Principle Product Management Specialist responsible for Saturation Mail, and Muhammad Palla, a person that works in Postal Service Pricing, came to answer questions from publishers and printers.

Mills and Palla had attended the AFCP opening ceremonies, and social events, the day before, and had a growing appreciation for the energy of free paper publishers and their special place in local communities connecting advertisers and consumers.

Carol Toomey led off the meeting, with a brief history of her years in the mail, her respect for the Postal Service, but

POSTAL PEOPLE COME TO VEGAS

regret that Postal Service rate increases had caused her to close a market after the last price change. Carol reiterated the request made by her, and numerous publishers, for different treatment for weekly free papers, that arrive at the postal stations at a predicted time each week. She stressed that every other business, vendor, and supplier, gave or expected frequency discounts. She described her frustration that the Postal Service has not done more to explore and implement different pricing treatment for high volume, predictable, free paper publications.

Several participants, including Jeffrey Healey from Colorado Community Media, and Greg Bruns from Arcadia News, asked the Postal Service about restrictions on marijuana/cannabis advertising, including information about providers that issue prescription cards for medical cannabis. Greg described ambiguous information he was given by his local Postmaster about whether or not publications with cannabis materials could be entered and delivered by the USPS. The local Postmaster could not, or would not, tell him "for sure" that cannabis mail advertising would be permitted.

Steve Mills stated that this would be a question for the USPS legal department and Postal legal was often conservative. He promised the group

that he would ask the question, and would share the information he received with publishers that gave him his cards, and with Donna Hanbery, Executive Director of SMC, to share with others.

A number of publishers complemented the Postal Service for an improved attitude and receptivity towards advertising mail and their papers and how this attitude has improved over the years. Several publishers thanked the Postal Service for bringing back Postal Service promotions. Dan Alexander and Steve Harrison both mentioned that the promotions were instrumental in helping them reduce some of their costs, particularly after the last Postal rate increase. They urged the Postal Service to continue with promotions and potentially offer them for a longer period of time.

Palla and Mills credited USPS Vice President of Innovation, Gary Reblin, for leading the way on promotions. They explained that pricing limits and Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) constraints would keep promotions from lasting too long. Palla pointed out that a promotion that continued for a lengthy period, would be treated as a price change, and not a limited promotion. Price changes require full PRC review and must be justified in relationship with other types of mail and prices. *(Continued on page 5)*

View Newspaper Group and Michigan Web Press to acquire the Daily News and Stafford Printing

– Emily Caswell, Brand Manager, View Newspaper Group



From left, Michigan Web Press General Manager Todd Hagerman, Michigan Web Press Plant Manager Cecil Batchelor, Stafford Printing and Publishing Vice President of Sales John Moy, View Newspaper Group Publisher Wes Smith, View Newspaper Group and Michigan Web Press owner Rick Burrough, Daily News Publisher Julie Stafford and Stafford Printing and Publishing Production Manager Jeff Morris celebrate the acquisition of the Daily News and Stafford Printing and Publishing by View Newspaper Group and Michigan Web Press at the Stafford Printing facility in Greenville Monday. — Daily News Photo | Cory Smith

LAPEER — View Newspaper Group and Michigan Web Press are pleased to announce the planned acquisition of the Daily News and Stafford Printing, both in Greenville, Mich. The acquisition is set to close on June 3.

Founded in 2003 by Rick Burrough, View Newspaper Group will now include 19 community newspapers and a staff totaling more than 115, covering Lapeer, Sanilac, Huron, Saginaw, Shiawassee, Genesee, Oakland, Livingston, Montcalm and Ionia counties. The Daily News will be the group's first daily newspaper.

Michigan Web Press, founded in 1979 and acquired by Burrough in 1999, serves more than 60 individual newspaper and publishing companies, printing more than 120 daily, weekly and monthly newspaper and periodical titles. The company prints about 3 million papers every week distributed throughout Michigan, Ohio and Indiana. Clients include The County Press, View Newspaper Group, C&G Newspapers, The (MSU) State News, the (UM) Michigan Daily and many others. Stafford Printing brings to the mix more than 160 customers including daily,

weekly and monthly publications covering the same geography. Its customers include The Detroit Jewish News, Michigan Farm News, Grand Rapids Business Journal, Woods-n-Water News, Rockford Squire and Grand Haven Tribune. Collectively, the printing operations will employ about 150.

"The acquisition of Stafford Printing strategically positions our company to more readily serve newspapers and other printing clients on the west side of the state," Michigan Web Press General Manager Todd Hagerman said. "We look forward to working with our new team members to provide the best quality, service and value to all of our clients."

Burrough said the acquisition includes the real estate for both the Greenville newspaper office and printing plant and that both will continue to operate.

"We are excited to grow both our newspaper company and our printing company with the addition of the Daily News and Stafford Printing," Burrough said. "The Stafford family is well-known and respected in the newspaper

publishing and printing business. We are pleased to welcome the Daily News into our family of papers and happy to report that Julie Stafford has agreed to stay on as publisher in Greenville. Retaining Julie was a key element of this deal coming together."

The Daily News, which has been in the Stafford family since 1951, has a circulation of about 4,500 and is published six days a week. The paper covers more than 1,000 square miles of Montcalm, Ionia and parts of Kent counties. For the past four years in a row, the Daily News has won Newspaper of the Year among Class D newspapers in the annual Michigan Press Association Better Newspaper Contest. The paper also earned first place for General Excellence for the second year in a row in the 2018 Michigan Associated Press Media Editors newspaper competition.

In addition to its daily, the Daily News also publishes The Gazette, which is a free weekly newspaper that covers much of the eastern part of Montcalm County and is direct mailed to about 5,200 homes every Saturday. (Continued on page 5)

View Newspaper Group and Michigan Web Press (Continued from page 4)

Printing has been a major part of the Stafford family's legacy, as well. In the 1960s, John Stafford started a heat-set offset web commercial print company called Printco, which was sold and is today Quad Graphics. With an expanding list of regular newspaper print customers, John Stafford eventually moved his presses from the building they shared with the Daily News to its own production facility in Greenville, where it then began to grow.

Rob Stafford, who joined the company in 1990, plans to pursue other interests. Julie, who became publisher of The Daily News in 2012, said while there are many emotions that come with ending a 68-year family ownership of the paper, there also are a lot of exciting opportunities this new direction offers.

"I am really grateful in this day and age to have found what I consider to be a fantastic partnership of like-minds dedicated not only to local journalism but also folks who have a print-first way of thinking," Julie said. "We gain an extended family of talented journalists, marketing minds and print experts who we can partner with to expand and improve what we do. Our readers will continue to see a daily focus on coverage of the news happening in our area."

With the addition of the Daily News and Stafford Printing, View Newspaper Group and Michigan Web now become one of the largest Michigan-owned and operated newspaper groups and commercial printers.

"We love shaking up the conventional wisdom about newspapers and print,"

View Newspaper Group publisher Wes Smith said. "The continued growth of our newspaper group and our sister printing company serves notice that local community newspapers are a viable and important part of the communities we serve, and print is still the favored media as a credible source of news, entertainment and advertising. With the addition of the Daily News and The Gazette, View Newspaper Group will have more than 310,000 copies in print every week, delivered directly to the homes of our readers by the U.S. Postal Service and our own carriers."

The Daily News website will remain at www.thedailynews.cc. View Newspaper Group's website is at www.mihomepaper.com.

Postal People Come to Vegas (Continued from page 3)

There was a very candid discussion during the meeting about frustrations with the Postal Service, and "wishes" publishers and SMC are pursuing for the Postal Service to create a different type of product class and pricing treatment for shared mail. Hanbery explained that she felt there was legal justification for treating mailings that go to every household in a given area as a different product type from all other types of Marketing Mail. She stressed that publishers, and her other SMC members, that were in the mail, routinely paid 30% to over 70% of every dollar of revenue received on the high fixed cost of postage. She stressed that

there was a "sweet spot", for the Postal Service to make its pricing more attractive to the type of mail that is sent on a stated frequency, whether six times a year or weekly, that may vary in weight, with different numbers of inserts and pages depending on advertiser interest and health of a particular market or geographic zone. Several publishers stressed that when a mailer left the mail, it did not return. The concern that the Postal Service may be at a "tipping point", of losing more mail programs and papers, and closing markets, was echoed by many in the room.

There was discussion about things the

Postal Service could do to improve its brand and its relationship with publishers. John Hemperly of Engle Printing & Publishing, gave an example of a mailing that was clearly "not delivered". He explained it was during the holiday season where the "reason" (excuse) he was given by his local Postal Station for non-delivery of his weekly papers, (John saw them sitting on the Post Office floor when he brought in the next weeks' edition of papers), was the need to get Amazon packages on the street "in time" for the holidays and to meet service standards for parcels. (Continued on page 15.)

Burton City Council Passes Litter Ordinance Aimed at Newspapers Tossed in Driveways – By Gary Gould



BURTON — City council members hope a new ordinance passed April 15 will reduce what it considers to be litter and a nuisance to many residents – solicited and unsolicited print materials tossed in driveways, yards and ditches.

The ordinance has been discussed for years, according to officials, but the council finally decided to act. A growing number of residents have complained to city hall about newspapers, handbills, posters and other unsolicited materials thrown in yards.

“I still get complaints,” said Councilman Dennis O’Keefe. “I had a nice snowblower repair bill, it ground up one of (the Flint Journal’s) papers and it was so entrenched in there I couldn’t get it out.”

The ordinance classifies any solicited or unsolicited materials thrown or deposited onto public streets, alleys,

public places or residential private property as litter.

It requires anyone depositing such material at a residence to do so by placing it on the porch nearest the front door, handing it personally to the property owner, occupant or lessee or by placing it in a door mail slot.

The ordinance also prohibits solicited and unsolicited materials to be left on sidewalks or streets, hung from mailboxes or apparatus that supports a mailbox. These materials can be placed into a receptacle by the sidewalk which the solicitor is authorized to place the materials in – i.e. a tube or box provided by the company.

The city also holds the person in control of private property to maintain the property free of litter and more than three days accumulation of unsolicited and unsolicited printed material.

Violation of the ordinance will be a civil infraction punishable by a civil fine of not less than \$200 and up to \$1,000, plus costs and all other remedies available by statute. Each day of violation shall be a separate violation.

“Per household, a \$200 fine,” said Council President Steve Heffner. “That can get expensive.”

The ordinance will go into effect 30 days after it is published.

Flint Journal Publisher Dan Gaydou was contacted by email for comment.

“We have not yet had an opportunity to review the ordinance, and look forward to doing so,” he said in his response.

View Newspapers mails its publications, including the Burton View, to households in Genesee County



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

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

Are we looking at what is becoming the United States of Amazon?

Being part of a community – be it a town, neighborhood, church or social/service organization - was just about everyone's desire when I was growing up as the youngest of two boys in a traditional family of four.

A dozen years later, when my wife and I were starting our first paper, I came to realize every town needed five things to exist: a locally owned and managed bank willing to support civic endeavors, a local school system with programs and sporting events that brought the people together, a community newspaper to create consensus, at least the semblance of retail stores offering a good selection of the everyday basics from groceries, clothing, auto parts to greeting cards and finally, because I live in Northwest Iowa, a locally owned and managed cooperative elevator.

But the times are changing. Everything is becoming multi-location and regional. Few small-town banks are still locally owned and managed. Most large corporate banking organizations are less interested in supporting local projects such as the rebuilding of the aging baseball field or the use of their lobby for a charity bake sale.

Local K to 12 schools have been

integrated with other nearby school districts and the "hometown" football team has disappeared. The excitement of Friday Night Lights has drifted down the road and so has the weekly gathering of fans and the exceptional local spending that went with it.

Entire main streets have gone the way of the earlier mentioned local school. In many small towns only a bar and a convenience store/gas station exist for the purchase of essentials such as milk, bread and a six-pack of beer. Many small communities are simply thankful that a new Dollar Store recently decided to build on the highway at the edge of town.

What were once local cooperative elevators have merged and remerged over the last 10 years to eliminate even the hint of competition.

And the nation's newspapers, with no community to support them, are disappearing. It is reported that 1,800 have closed in the last 15 years. Newspapers reflect the vitality of the community they serve.

The problem with all of this is the buyers, at least for the moment, depend more on the internet rather than local suppliers for everything from prepared boxed meals to on-line college degrees

to buying a new car. I can understand the magic and power in all this online buying, but it will surely lead to a smaller "community".

There was a time when shopping for groceries or a new dress was a social experience. Two shoppers would bump into each other while working their way down aisle three or headed for the dressing room and stop to catch up, share a recipe or two or plan to meet for coffee.

Just a few years ago there was a time when a trip to the elevator included a visit with the counterman about anything and everything from the weather to the upcoming election. Now everything is ordered from the elevator by email.

Once, when a family thought it was time to buy a new car it was the center of every conversation. They'd discuss the pros and cons with extended family or those gathered around the table at the local café. Now it's possible to order the car on the internet and have it delivered to your door just a few days later. In many cases this and other factors have left entire counties without a single car dealer to provide the follow-up care or service. *(Continued on page 8.)*

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

... the United States of Amazon?

(Continued from page 7)

Bookstores have all but disappeared and so have "record" shops.

The abundance of streaming services are cutting deeply into the working capital of bigger city television stations.

As for newspapers, they were the first writers of local history. Newspapers were, and still are, the original social media.

The local paper disseminated news of the happy and caring times from births to who had Sunday dinner at whose house to weddings. They were the source for the weekly update of who was ill, where the fund-raiser was going to be that weekend and what exciting new things there were to see, do and eat.

More importantly, the local paper delivers balanced, credible news and shopping opportunities to the majority of the community, not just the few that are friends on some store's Facebook list.

If we can bank on-line, order any piece of clothing on-line, get an education on-line, vote on-line, order our groceries, insurance and new car on-line what happens to our community?

Will we, as a society, all look back one day and see social media was the start of the decline of society and not beginning of a "brave, new world"?

So, what can we, the publishers of newspapers and shoppers do to change the trend locally?

Here in Sheldon we are publishing a series of 22 monthly process-color pages promoting the value of "community." Each ad features a local, highly visible, spokesperson sharing the featured firm's history, unique offerings and services, connection to and commitment to Sheldon.

The story is written by a staff writer and approved by the client before it is published. All 22 participating businesses are listed monthly on the strip along the left side of the page. All 22 pay \$60.00 as one of the sponsors. There is no additional charge the month the company is featured. The promotion, just one of many focused on community building that we currently have running in our various publications, has been well accepted. It will produce \$27,720 in revenue over the 22-month schedule.

Advertisement for 'BUILDING A BIGGER, better COMMUNITY' featuring 'SHOP SMALL, SHOP SMART, SHOP SHELDON.' Includes text about the history of the community and a list of sponsors like HyVee, Citizens Center, and Edward Jones.

Advertisement for 'BUILDING A BIGGER, better COMMUNITY' featuring 'SHOP SMALL, SHOP SMART, SHOP SHELDON.' Includes text about the history of the community and a list of sponsors like Rise Ministries, HyVee, and Citizens Center.



By Ryan Dohrn

*President/Founder,
Brain Swell Media LLC*

I have a number of business quotes I've found to be true and that I live by and share in my ad sales training. One of my favorites is, "Always be looking for repeatable patterns of sales success."

That advice most definitely applies to the art of building an ad sales proposal that works—time and time again.

So read on here are my top 10 ad sales proposal-building tips.

1-Use a template

Remember, what I'm looking for are repeatable patterns of success. So this is about taking a look at the things media company sales reps like us do, say, and present—that work. And how can we rinse and repeat those things? So my first point is to use templates. And they don't have to be all generic. You can customize them for people, but we have to make sure that we're presenting in the best way, where we have the best chance to repeat success. For you and me, we need to be looking at what we can reuse ... what can we say, what can we do, what can we rinse and repeat? That's very important on proposals.

We should not be leaving the meeting to create a proposal and come back to chase people down. Not when we can

10 Proposal Secrets for Success

use a template that's rockin' and rollin' and ready to go.

2-Focus on value and focus on outcomes

Most media sales people write proposals that are focused entirely on what they can provide to an advertiser. That misses the mark on where the value of the sale truly is. Prospects don't just pay for deliverables—they're paying for outcomes, for value. And we have to show them that value in pictures and in text. We have to showcase it.

What do I mean about "outcomes"? (I'm not asking you to promise outcomes.) But think about what picture of potential you can paint. For example, are there a certain number of leads that are typical? Are there a certain number of clicks that are typical? Are there a certain number of banner ad impressions that are typical? Are there a certain number of people that usually come to your events?

Those dynamics are important to include in the proposal. Because we don't want people to see us as money-takers, like we're just there to take money from them. A lot of people have impressions of us like that. And we want to fight that impression as hard as we can. That's not who we are. We're helpers, consultants on the front lines to help them solve their problems.

So we want "value" and "outcomes" in our proposals. (But be careful—we want to under promise and then OVER deliver.)

3-Give 3 options

Very often I see people not understanding basic science and basic math. If you give someone one choice, the answer is yes or no. It's 50/50. If you give somebody two choices, though, you're splitting the opportunity—you've got one or the other. But since choices typically drive decisions, three options are the way to go.

Consider this from Lucidchart.com: "By giving your prospective client multiple options within one proposal, they're less likely to shop around to your competitor."

So in my ad sales training, I suggest giving prospects three options in sales proposals: basic, competitive, and dominant. So they can choose which of the three best supports their goals within the marketplace. And I do this because of idea No. 4.

4-Structure the options

I call this popcorn pricing. Start at the smallest package. Think about the little guy at the movies. You're buying your popcorn and he says, "For only 25 cents more you can have the medium." And I'm thinking, popcorn sales guy, "You got me."

So popcorn pricing allows you to go from small to medium, medium to large, and the incremental pricing options are not that much—you want to pop your prospect up to the top. *(Continued on page 10)*

10 Proposal Secrets (Continued from page 9)

In your ad sales proposals then, make it so it's not a tremendous financial leap to go from option 1 to option 2 to option 3.

5-Keep it to a maximum of 3 pages

Keep this in mind: The proposal isn't the decision-making tool. It's supposed to be pretty high level and get into detail (facts, stats, some pricing options), but it's not supposed to give every single deliverable. Most sales proposals should be just three pages, and here's why.

Salesdriver.com says: "Beyond the fourth page, comprehension drops significantly."

So ask yourself this about your proposal, is it a regurgitation of the sales call or is it a proposal of services? You want to be really careful about that. My advice, based on science, math and experience, is try to keep most proposals at three pages max.

For me, I actually keep most of mine to about two pages—simply because comprehension begins to drop dramatically the more pages you have.

6-Always include an executive summary

The executive summary is the purpose of the proposal, like a CEO or CFO would read. They should be able to get the gist of the proposal from the executive summary. And it should be at the top.

I know this because I've sat in that CEO chair, and I didn't have time to read every detail of your proposal. Give me the summary—an easy paragraph at the top—and I want to know how much it costs. For example, something like, "The purpose of this proposal is to put the Franklin Engineering Brand in front of 75,000 perfect customers over the next 30 days. The expected outcome is affordable and it's effective, with digital advertising click-through rates well over the national averages...."

7-Eliminate fluff

You're not writing a PhD doctoral paper. Experts say people skip every third word. So your proposal should be a lot more like bullet points. I can go through most proposals and pull out 50% of just junk. Focus on bullet points.

8-Make it a contract

Make that proposal your agreement. If you have legalese you need them to agree to, put it in small print at the bottom or on the back. And make a spot for them to sign it ... so you don't have to go back, put it in your CRM, and then you've got to get approval and all. In my media sales training I stress this: use your CRM to build the proposal.

Personally, I use Magazine Manager. I build my proposal, show them the line items, kick it out to somebody, and get a digital signature. Use the digital signature tool and make it into a contract.

Here's the thinking: If they like the proposal, then make it an option for them to just go with it. Make it a contract. There's no reason that proposal shouldn't stand on its own.

9-Proofread everything

And you may be saying, "Ryan, is that 101 or what?" And yeah, it is 101. Do it.

Some of you need to buy stock in the company Grammarly. I know I do. I pay my subscription every month. And I ALWAYS have someone proofread my decks and proposals.

10-Don't negotiate against yourself

The way you avoid negotiating against yourself is by NOT going to the discount line too heavily, too quickly. A lot of sales reps out there in the media business hit the discount line too quickly.

If you go to the discount knife, and you chop out a huge amount, then you have

no room for negotiation at all. So offer discounts, but don't go there too quickly.

On the same front, avoid this kind of language in the contract conclusion: "If this doesn't fit your budget then let me know and we'll recalculate." Never say something like that. Do be flexible and leave yourself some room to negotiate, but if you hit the discount too hard, it leaves you no room to negotiate later. It's worth saying one more time: Do not negotiate against yourself.

There you have it, my 10 proposal secrets for success. Use them to drum up some of your own repeatable patterns of ad sales success.

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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HOLD YOUR HORSES!

Perhaps it's time to take a breath before getting carried away



by Kevin Slimp
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If you've heard me speak at a conference over the past two or three months, you've heard me discuss the differences between newspapers.

For someone as young as I am (no snickering, please), I have seen a lot of changes in our industry over the past 25 or so years. Aside from the technological changes, which are obviously numerous, much has altered the way we think about newspapers.

As a speaker, I remember it was just a couple of decades ago we saw the "great divide" as an imaginary line separating paid-circulation newspapers from free papers. In the "old" days (10 or more years ago), I was one of the few speakers you might find at both "paid" and "free" conventions. There was a general distrust between the two sides, and as a consultant/trainer/speaker, you had to choose a side. Somehow, I became a fixture at both types of conventions and built a consult-

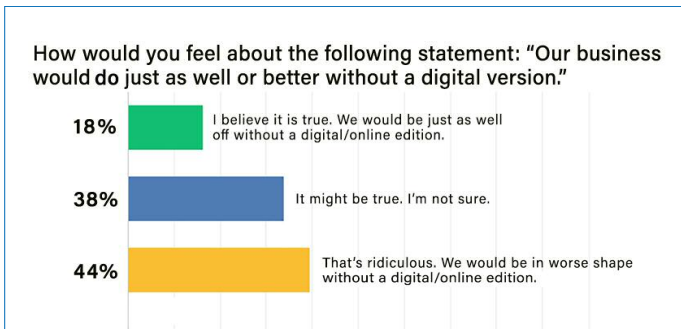
ing career working with both types of papers.

Today, newspaper ownership is more of an indicator of how and what a newspaper is doing. The differences between paid and free papers has become fuzzier. It's not unusual – it might even be more common – to see newspapers publishing both free and paid papers.

I often speak about my annual survey of U.S. and Canadian publishers, the most recent of which was just completed in April. At conferences, the thing that seems to surprise publishers more than anything else is how many things AREN'T changing at newspapers.

It's easy to read social media posts and headlines about buyouts, closings and mergers, believing the entire industry must be in a flux. As I mentioned in my previous column, most papers aren't going out of business any time soon. Interestingly, most publishers report their papers are doing just fine financially.

According to the 2019 survey of publishers, 85 percent of newspapers haven't changed hands since 2015. And a large majority of newspapers that did change hands, moved from one group to another group (5



percent of newspapers) or from one private owner to another private owner (4 percent of newspapers).

In similar numbers to previous surveys, 56 percent of publishers reported their papers are locally owned, not part of any group ... not even a small group.

56 percent.

I did not misspeak.

Only 15 percent of newspapers in the survey are part of large national (13 percent) or regional (2 percent) groups. So, while you might feel like every paper is being bought by Gatehouse or Gannett or Adams, it's just not the case. Sure, a few are. Maybe more than a few. But, statistically, they are a drop in the bucket compared to the number of newspapers remaining in local ownership.

Another area that continues to stir confusion among publishers is the benefit of digital efforts. While most respondents feel it is important to have a digital presence, 56 percent believe it either "is" or "might be true" that their papers would do just as well or better without a digital/online version.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying for a heartbeat that any newspaper should dump its digital presence. What I'm saying is digital is not "the goose that laid the golden eggs" yet, assuming it ever will be.

Here's how I see it. One of my businesses is a book publishing company. We've had

some pretty big hits lately, including a #1 best seller (*Where Do We Go From Here?*) in May. In the book business, we know that approximately 90 percent of our sales will come from printed books. Knowing that, we put the bulk of our efforts into producing the best printed books we can.

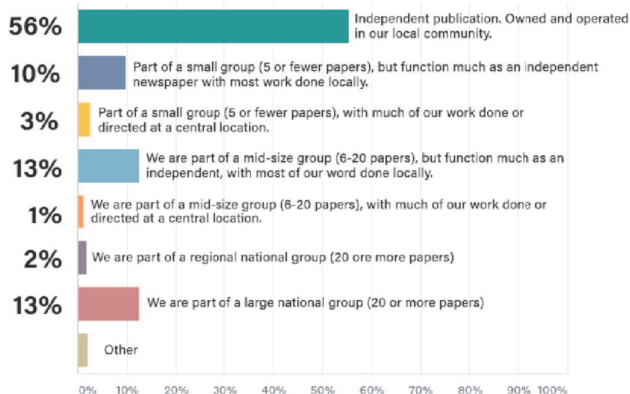
Still, the five to eight percent of revenue we receive from Kindle versions is worth the effort to create digital versions of our books. We would never, however, release a digital version first. The printed version comes first, then the digital, because that's where the readers are and the money is.

It appears, from questions related to income and profit, print – in newspapers – is still where the money is. Recent events at newspapers in New Orleans is perhaps even more confirmation that print is still king, when it comes to newspapers. That may or may not change ten years down the road, but for now it's true.

Okay, I'm off my soapbox. What's the moral of this column? Your paper probably isn't so different from most other papers.

Relax. Enjoy the view. Most papers are doing fine financially. Not all, but most. If you're like most, you're doing just fine. Don't feel like everybody else knows something you don't. Enjoy the experience and put out a good newspaper.

Which comes best to describing the ownership of your newspaper?





By Bob Berting
Berting Communications

The Third Call of a Three Call Selling System—Solidifying Belief

Throughout this 3 call selling system, we have been stressing that this is a process by which the customer is being led to the conclusion that they can believe in the credibility of the advertising salesperson, trust in what they say, and finally on the third call, solidify their belief in what the salesperson can do for them.

The third call is a critical call and should be done in a relaxed, confident manner. It is critical that the comprehensive spec layouts be shown at the outset—ahead of any plan being presented. The selling axiom is “sell with emotion, and justify with logic (or facts).” At this point, it is important to gauge the emotional reaction of the customer. Hopefully they will comment on how well the layouts reflect the image they want to project which translates into more potential business. Remember on the second call we wanted to do rough layouts with them and get their ego involved in the content of the ads.

Presenting the plan

The plan for their advertising program should be relatively simple and not pages of demographic figures, graphs, studies, etc. It should be a yearly program broken down into quarters showing all the ways you think they should be using your publication which will include weekly display ads, website banner ads, quarterly pre-print inserts, point of sale materials, and possibly sales promotion items. The only other item to be in the plan might be participation in a yearly

promotion schedule as part of a collective merchant program—either an area promotion or a subject promotion.

The bottom line total of this plan is the amount which was the portion of their yearly advertising budget you have allocated for your publication. The alternative to this yearly plan might be a highly seasonal business which may only settle for a 6 month plan.

Objections

It is my experience with proper research (history of the account) and earlier fact finding, most objections can be alleviated. Sales manuals devote tons of space about how to overcome objections. The key is to do such a good job with your spec layouts and plan that objections will be minimized.

Closing

The key elements in closing are: always finding ways to get the customer to say yes—and making decisions they will agree with.

Here are other key points to consider when you are entering a closing phase with the customer:

- Establish value before closing
- Don't make closing so obvious
- Study how to show empathy—problem solving and not be a sympathizer where you are responding and reacting to all their plights
- Talking pad—show answers to their problems by sketching or diagramming
- Testimonials—show what their competitors have said about their success in your publication

Power selling sentences

“Let's get started on this campaign in our next issue”

“Can we move forward on this?”

“I think this is the best program for you that money can buy...I think you ought to go with it”

“I understand what you want and this ad series, in my view, will solve many of your problems. I think we should go with it”

“After careful market research, we think this advertising plan will really build your image. Let's set it up today”

Conclusion—What is the purpose of this approach?

The whole purpose of this 3 part series on the 3 call selling system is to show how advertising salespeople can successfully walk through a proven process to close a prospect or customer by the third call. This system has resulted in my achievement of averaging 2 cold contracts a week for 15 years in the business. It has produced contracts that show a 90% record of 52 week contracts or 1000” at will contracts during a year. Finally the same application has been made to sell 10 regional shopping centers on a yearly contract basis.

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



By John Foust
Raleigh, NC

Ad-Libs

Full Load or Half-Load

Greg used to help his uncle sell and deliver firewood on weekends. No doubt, that influenced one of his first phone calls when he started selling advertising for his local newspaper. His prospect asked, "Why are you asking so many questions?" and he said, "I'm just trying to figure out if you need a full load or a half-load."

Greg's sales manager told me it was one of the most honest things she had ever heard a salesperson say. "He was doing the right thing by asking questions to discover needs," She explained. "When the prospect wondered what was going on, Greg admitted that, yes, he was calling to talk about a possible ad campaign, but he couldn't recommend anything until he learned about the prospect's business.

"Although he no longer talks about full loads and half-loads, he still does a great job of learning about his prospects and how they need to market their products," she said.

When you think about it, it's easy to see that firewood and advertising have a lot in common. Both serve specific purposes and both occupy measurable space. A full load of advertising is a big campaign splash with a sizable budget, while a half-load is something less than that.

Let's see where this firewood comparison leads:

1. What's in the truck? In other words, know your product. In order to help your

advertisers decide between full loads, half-loads, or other options, it's important to know as much as possible about what you're selling. If your prospects know more about your newspaper's advertising products than you, you won't have much credibility.



2. What do they want? It's a waste of time to try to sell firewood to someone who doesn't have a fireplace or a woodstove. And it's just as wasteful to try to sell advertising to someone who doesn't need it.

Know your prospect. Not everyone needs everything that is being sold. That is one of the biggest lessons of selling.

3. Deliver to the right place. At one time or another, everyone in the selling

profession has made the mistake of talking to the wrong contact. While that person may be perfectly willing to spend time on the phone or in an appointment, he or she may not be in a position to make – or influence – buying decisions.

In order to find the right contact, consider saying something like, "In order to save time for you, I wonder if you can tell me who makes decisions about your company's advertising?" Then... "What is the best way to get in touch with that person?"

4. Tell the truth. Don't try to sell a full load to someone who needs a half-load. If they find out later that they bought the wrong thing, they'll feel burned. Not only will they stop advertising in your paper, they'll tell all their friends about it.

Like the old saying goes, "Honesty is the best policy." That goes for selling firewood or advertising or anything else.

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CREDIT LINE

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

Back in March I showed some simple ad fixes for small ads. This time, let's increase the size of the ad. More space can create a different set of problems, so here's this month's . . .

Ad Check

It's been awhile since I did an ad comparison. These two ads offer a number of different examples of what to think about when doing any type of advertising.

The only thing I did to alter the two ads was to scale the size to fit onto this page. This ad originally ran as a 3 column by 4 inch ad in our paper. So, these ads were scaled and the appropriate means were taken to protect the customer's information. Let's breakdown the changes that were made to give this ad a little more excitement and impact.

THE PHOTO The first example that comes to mind is the use of this particular photo in the top ad. Unless the advertiser includes a photo with the copy, don't assume to know what the DJ will look like. The photo on top looks as if a member of the wedding party is having a little too much of a good time! **No art is better than the wrong art.** A photo will leave a more lasting impression than the words will. And since no photo was provided with the copy, I chose a microphone instead for the bottom ad. The addition of musical notes and "sound waves" behind the art help to tie the word "weddings" to the artwork.

PROXIMITY This simply means that I put like objects or information together. I moved the name of the DJ and his services toward the bottom—the signature area. There are times when the name can be at the top, but most of the time you want to keep it with the contact information to make it easier for the reader to find the pertinent information. It also made it easier for me to make the word "weddings" larger and have more impact than it had in the top ad.

THE TEXT I kept the name of the business large and even increased the impact. I also used all caps for the name "DORY'S"—the name itself is short and all caps for a short name does not impede readability, plus I could then move the "DJ & KARAOKE SERVICE" closer to the name, keeping the entire name of the business in all caps and easier to read as a unit. The letter "y" in the top ad was also problematic because it seems to separate "DORY'S" from the "DJ & KARAOKE SERVICE." Not a big deal, but the placement does disrupt the eye flow.

THE ANGLE I placed the coupon info in a triangle at the top of the ad—in a little more of a dominant position. And by placing the microphone at an angle, I continued with the dynamics in the ad space.

The upper ad tends to be a little more static, but I felt a DJ should have more movement and placing items at an angle can create tension or a sense of movement. Don't confuse text at an angle as a way to show movement... that's a whole 'nother matter!

I also made the coupon border heavier and added grey instead of white to increase a visual difference between this ad and the other ads that will surround it. When we create an ad, we sometimes forget that it will be surrounded by other ads that will fit on the page. So if I can somehow make this ad a little different by adding more impact, it has a better chance of being seen on the page.

Ad Talk with Ellen Hanrahan

Adding Color

When I worked at the paper, most of the ads I did were in black and white. Now color is being used more and more. However, in the ads below, color should still be kept to a minimum—the coupon border, the coupon text and the DJ's name. Too much color could lessen the ad's impact! Believe it!



Dory's

DJ & KARAOKE SERVICE

Weddings are our Specialty

Check out the rest
and then give us a call
...you'll be glad you did!

262-555-4321 262-555-1234
songman05@yahoo.com

USE THIS COUPON FOR 20% OFF



USE THIS COUPON FOR 20% OFF

Weddings

ARE OUR SPECIALTY

Check out the rest and then
give us a call—you'll be glad you did!

DORY'S

DJ & KARAOKE SERVICE

262-555-4321 • 262-555-1234
songman05@yahoo.com

InDesign Tip When you work with a lot of text boxes or picture boxes and they seem to hang over each other and it makes it hard to select the various text and picture boxes because of this overlap, use this: **Opt+Cmd+C (Ctrl+Alt+C)** to **Fit Frame to Content**—because it shortens the box to the last line of text or the bottom of the picture and that makes your life a whole lot easier.

I think Spring has finally come to Wisconsin, so until next time...

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

Postal People Come to Vegas (Continued from page 5)

John urged the Postal Service to take steps to correct this in the future. Jeff Ferrazzano of Ultimate Print Source also described circumstances where a mailing was not received, and he could prove it. Jeff stated he fully refunded his customer both the price of postage and print, but was getting nowhere to get any postage refund or credit from the USPS.

Steve Mills stated that there was a relatively new USPS, Chief Marketing Officer, Jakki Krage-Strako, Strako has created a new Vice President position to improve the customer experience. He said the Postal Service was working to get customers answers easier, and to better improve the handling of credits or refunds when mailings were lost or delayed.

Dan Alexander stated his paper had stepped in to fill the vacuum filled by declining daily newspaper subscription, and was often able to have advertiser inserts and mailed packages exceeding 10 or more ounces. He stated it would be nice if the Postal Service offered some

promotion or opportunity to have mailings divided and delivered into separate packages on consecutive days. This would make life easier for the carrier, and allow even heavier packages. But the Marketing Mail rate for two separate mailings did not make it worthwhile for his publication. He asked Mills to explore that idea further.

A final comment and discussion that was echoed by many in the room, was difficulty in getting accurate piece counts, or having local DDUs willing to distribute papers among different carrier routes if there were too many papers in one route, or too few papers on another. Dan Alexander, and Carol Toomey, both explained and gave examples of circumstances where they knew a route had changed, and perhaps had consolidated and needed more papers, but this change was not tracked in the counts for household that were available on the Postal Services EDDM site, or would be shared with the publisher from the postmaster of the local delivery office.

Donna emphasized what Carol and Dan were saying was a request she has and cards from many publishers that would like an easier way to simply enter their papers, "simplified"/EDDM, with the correct number by route or zip, at local DDUs, and not have too many, or too few, papers available for each carrier route.

During, and after, the meeting, many of the participants thanked the Postal Service for coming to the AFPP conference, and for listening. A common theme of publishers, and Donna, was that many free papers would like to use the mail, or were generally happy with the USPS and mail service, but struggled to pay the high fixed cost of postage, and to work with the USPS on getting counts right by households.

There was a unanimous sentiment that publishers wanted the Postal Service to participate in future free paper and AFPP conferences and considered the breakout session a valuable networking opportunity.



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