

TIP

THE INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER

SEPTEMBER
2019

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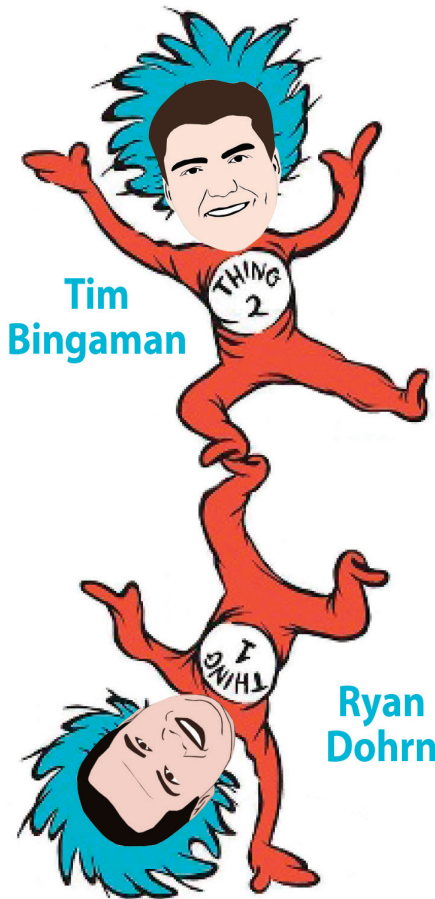


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Thing 1 & Thing 2



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**Ryan
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"...it can be independence forever for those who value it sufficiently... if they give their allegiance to an association such as this one, they will be dedicated to keeping the spirit alive, and they will be doing it by helping each other."

-- Victor R. Jose IFPA Founding Conference
September 20, 1980

THE INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER

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Advertising, Editorial & Production

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Gary's Gallery

Sometimes the shots taken at a long ago event are just too much fun to pass up. Can you name every person in these photos?



How To Get Rid Of Weeds In Your Organization

Ever since I was a little boy weeding the garden or the flower beds has been something that I got to do frequently but hated to do. I mean really, what is the point? You pull the weeds, turn around, and they have returned with all their friends. I remember working in the yard with my father pulling weeds one warm, summer day. I asked him why god created weeds. It seems to me they don't really do anything good except give object lessons for this issue of TIP. Dad said that dealing with adversity is a skill everyone needs. I didn't know what he meant but figured if he knew the answer he would have told me. I also don't think we were really out there to simply pull weeds because I didn't do a great job of it and the weeds always came back.



Fast forward to this past Spring. I noticed that our flower beds had a lot of interlopers along with the azaleas. Those pesky weeds were back. So, I dutifully pulled them being careful to discard the weeds in a bag to keep them from escaping the compost heap and finding their way back. But what I didn't do a great job of was pulling all of the weed out. That includes the roots. As a result, after a few weeks the weeds were back. This time they were angry.

My war with the weeds has continued throughout the summer. What I found is that in order to really get rid of them I have to take extra care to remove all the roots along with the top in order to keep them from returning. Lesson learned.

In each of our organizations weeds can creep in and take over. The weed could be an employee that doesn't pull their weight. It could be negative attitudes toward customers, advertisers, or readers. It might even be the way we treat each other. I'm pretty confident if you look around your organization you'll find weeds you need to remove.

When you do start pulling those weeds in your organization make sure you remove the entire weed, root and all, or it will come back. You can't simply dictate your desire to have better attitudes and expect that bad trend to reverse itself. You'll have to start at the bottom and remove all the roots of the bad attitude, sometimes that includes changing our own attitudes. Remove those weeds that have crept into your organization, roots and all and you'll enjoy a more productive garden. ■

The Editor's Letter
By Douglas Fry

Publications for Sale:

Multi-Generational Owned community shopping guide for sale in beautiful south central Lower Michigan. Family owned for over 70 years, The Salesman Publications' owner is ready to retire and is selling her weekly/Sunday publication that home delivers nearly 50,000 copies via independently contracted carriers in Jackson, Calhoun and Northern Lenawee Counties. Established advertiser base with room to grow. Send inquiries to P.O. Box 1765, Jackson, MI 49204.

Outstanding NY Monthly Free Distribution Regional Parents Publication. In business 15 years; fabulous profit margins. 80,000 circulation. Solid digital components have been created to help drive revenue. Best brand in area! Exclusive listing; info@kamengroup.com

Video Librarian is a highly respected, subscriber-based, advertiser-supported **video review magazine** for libraries. Now in its 34th year, Video Librarian and its digital components are the only publication that provides **comprehensive DVD/Blu-ray/digital reviews** for librarians building quality video collections. Ownership (founder of the business) seeks to retire. Exclusive listing; info@kamengroup.com

Newspapers • Magazines • Shoppers Book Publishing • Directories • Digital Media

Dear Kevin (Kamen & Co. Group Services),

Although you represented the sellers in this deal, I want to thank you, Kevin Kamen, for all that you did in brokering the sale of The Wave newspaper of the Rockaways in Queens, N.Y., to my family and me. Your leadership, negotiating skill-set and knowledge of the business, market and industry served as a most valuable tool throughout the entire process. When negotiations hit a bit of a snag you were able to masterfully get the two sides together to compromise. As the buyer of this wonderful legacy newspaper, The Wave of Rockaways, I want to personally thank you for everything you did to make the sale happen. You were always professional, reasonable and did a great job!

- Walter H. Sanchez - Queens Ledger News Group, NY

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When you're making a sales presentation, after 17 minutes, prospects start to lose interest. Boredom sets in: they remember things they could or should be doing, they stop listening attentively. When you start losing their attention, you start losing your chance to make a sale.

The answer is to pack more punch in that 17 minute period. How do you do that? Not by talking faster, but by presenting better. That means using your laptop more efficiently and effectively. Why are laptop visual aids so important and widely ignored by the very people who can profit most from them? I think ego comes into it. Advertising salespeople like to talk and they like to think they are persuasive.... and they are. But if they go into the presentation to wing it—after all, they know their stuff—the prospect will sit there and listen while they tell them the entire story about our publication. In effect, sometimes the advertising salesperson likes to hear his or her own words...to the detriment of reaching the ego hot buttons of the prospect.

HOW TO MAKE A LAPTOP VISUAL AID PAY OFF FOR YOU

They give you control and speed. Without control, you can't achieve speed, and without speed, you can't maintain control. If you aren't in control, you can't sell. Many times right at the beginning of an appointment, advertising salespeople lose control. They must take command of the selling situation to establish their professionalism, which

means they must know every page or slide of their visual aid completely at the start of the presentation, and not stumble over words or phrases. If the salesperson is not 100% totally prepared to give the presentation content in the right sequence and stumble over important benefits of advertising in the publication, the prospect could become irritated and begin to lose faith in the salesperson and their publication fast. The bottom line is that the salesperson doesn't want to look disorganized and inefficient.

3 VITAL AREAS OF GOOD VISUAL AIDS

Good visual aids employ psychological methods to convince prospects on both the emotional and logical levels that they should buy from you.

THE 3 VITAL AREAS ARE:

1. Visual aids tell them who you and your publication are. Many businesses feel all newspaper publications are the same. A strong visual aid gives you a chance to blow your publication's horn without seeming to brag.
2. Visual aids tell them what your publication has done to help other businesses in the marketplace (maybe even their competitors) and what good the publication has done for the community like United Way, etc.
3. Visual aids tell them what you're going to do for them, both specifically and graphically and what benefits they'll receive after they begin a creative advertising campaign in your publication. A

"Seventeen Minutes Is About All You've Got"

By Bob Berting

picture is worth a thousand words when it comes to conveying emotional impact.

WATCH THE PROSPECT'S REACTIONS

From their facial expressions and movements, you may discover what does and doesn't interest them. Make mental notes of these emotional markers as they may guide you to a successful sale.

See Bob's website at www.bobberting.com where you can opt-in to receive his *Advanced Advertising Sales Monthly Memo*, learn about his consulting service and see how he can become a columnist for your publication. You can also purchase his three e-book bundle for the newspaper industry, and learn more about all his training services including his tele-seminar and webinar programs. Bob is a professional speaker, sales trainer, and publisher consultant and has conducted over 1500 seminars for newspaper advertising salespeople, management, customers, and print media associations. Contact Bob at bob@bobberting.com or 317-849-5408.

Winning Decisions Are Sometimes Tough Decisions

By Shep Hyken

I enjoy going to a baseball game. I live in St. Louis, and the fans of the St. Louis Cardinals are known throughout the sports world as being some of the best fans in all of baseball.

Many fans remember Albert Pujols as one of the most skilled—not to mention beloved—members of the St. Louis Cardinals team. He was one of our best—and still is one of the best to ever play the game. The fans loved him, and he loved our city. But eight years ago, he left the Cardinals to play for the California Angels. Why did Pujols leave? The Angels offered him LOTS of money and the Cardinals wouldn't match the offer. It was a sad day when Albert left St. Louis.

Last month, the Angels came to St. Louis to compete against the Cardinals—and Pujols came with them, after eight years away. One might expect some tension surrounding his homecoming. But when Albert took the field, he was met with a prolonged standing ovation. What's more, when he hit a home run against the Cardinals, he received an even longer-standing ovation. What fans of any sport celebrate the opposition scoring against them in that way?!

I bring all this up because it was a difficult decision to let Albert leave. The Cardinals could have matched the offer but chose to invest in the team differently. It was a purely a business decision—a tough business decision. The Cardinal's leadership team knew how the fans would react—negatively—but as tough as the decision was to make, it was the right one for the team.

Yes, some decisions are tough. But no venture ever achieved success without facing tough decisions. For instance, if the wrong person is in a customer-facing position and they don't properly manage a customer's experience, it could create problems. What makes it extra tough is that this person has been with the company for a long time and is a loyal employee. Should they be fired? They're clearly not meant to be on the front line. Maybe there is a better opportunity that is more suited to that employee's personality. It may be time to move them to a different position. Regardless, the decision has to be made.

First, hope is not a strategy. You can't just "hope" it gets better. Nothing gets better without effort.

Consider this. Let's say you have 100 employees and 99 of them are amazing. But there's one person who doesn't understand the importance of being customer-focused. They don't return calls or emails quickly. They are sometimes a little curt or short-tempered with customers. Here's the really bad thing... their boss knows it—but won't do anything about it. Rather than deciding to move this person to a different position or out of the company permanently, it seems easier to hope they get better.

Two things. First, hope is not a strategy. You can't just "hope" it gets better. Nothing gets better without effort. Second, even though you have 99 out of 100 rock



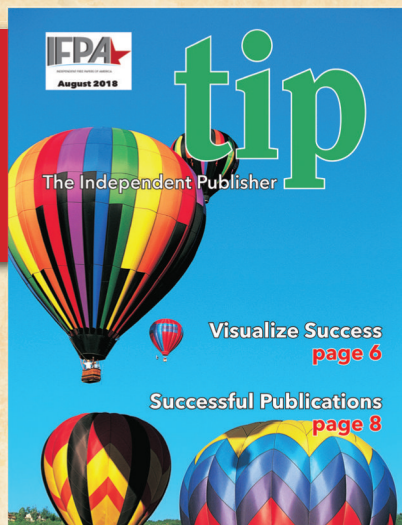


star employees, if your customer talks to the one that's less than stellar, that's the impression your customer will have of your entire company. When you understand the problem, the decision may not seem so tough after all.

If you want to compete in business, you must make good decisions—often tough decisions—that will put your organization in a position to win.

Shep Hyken is a customer service expert, keynote speaker, and New York Times bestselling business author. For information, contact 314-692-2200 or www.hyken.com. For information on The Customer Focus™ customer service training programs, go to www.thecustomerfocus.com. Follow on Twitter: @Hyken

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We are proud to print and mail the TIP Magazine for IFPA.

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HELMER PRINTING Print. Wise.

5 Tech Tools to Grow Your Publishing Business

Publishers continue to face new challenges in the evolving industry of print publishing. However, new technologies are now giving publishers opportunities they never had. Here are a few technologies and services that can help you grow your business beyond print.



SiteSwan Website Builder

What is it?

Super easy-to-use platform that lets you build beautiful, fully responsive websites for your advertisers and other local businesses.

How can it help you grow?

Open up a brand new revenue stream by offering affordable web design to your clients. Set your own prices and charge an upfront setup fee followed by a monthly service fee. Clients edit their sites themselves using a site editor branded for you. Sales training and marketing material is included, taking the guesswork out of how to sell digital. You even get your own marketing website to promote your services. Less than 50% of businesses have a website... you can change that and make money all at the same time.

How much does it cost: Plans start at \$149/mo
www.siteswan.com

Ideal Directories

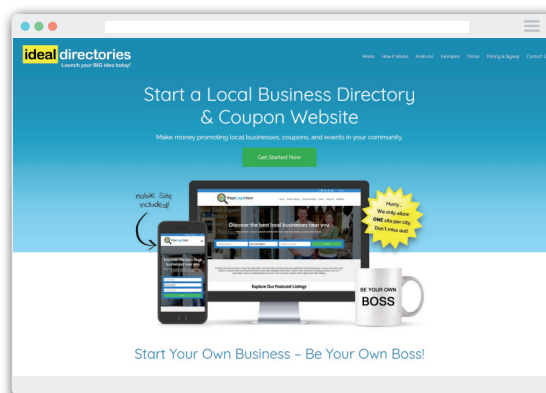
What is it?

Turn-key business directory and coupon website that can be branded for your publication and market. Can easily be "bolted-on" to your existing website or run independently.

How can it help you grow?

Offer your advertisers the best of both print and online with a listing on your local directory website. Businesses can even sign up and manage their listing themselves allowing you to generate a monthly revenue stream that is practically hands-off. You can create different pricing plans based on what features you want to offer, and money automatically gets deposited into your bank account.

How much does it cost: Plans start at \$99/mo
www.idealdirectories.com





PageFlip Pro

What is it?

A digital publishing platform that transforms your boring PDF's into high-definition, fully responsive interactive Page-Flip Digital Editions.

How can it help you grow?

PageFlip Pro allows your readers to view your publication wherever they are. Now featuring a new responsive design for tablet and mobile viewing with lightning fast page load speeds, your website is always up-to-date with the latest version of your print publication. It's hands-off for you and advertisers love the added exposure the digital edition offers... plus it's all branded for you. You can also extend the shelf life of special sections. Recent updates to the platform include subscription management and banner ad integration.

How much does it cost: Pricing starts at just \$1 per page (based on volume)
www.pageflippro.com

Exchange Classified Ads Platform

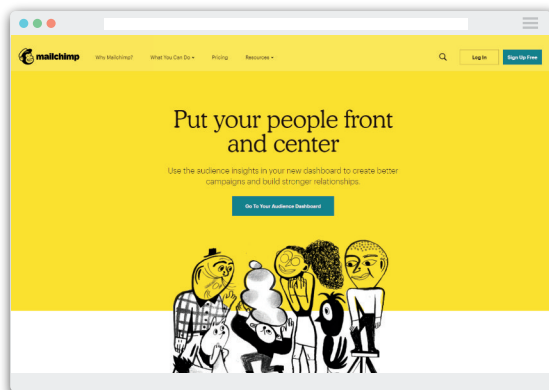
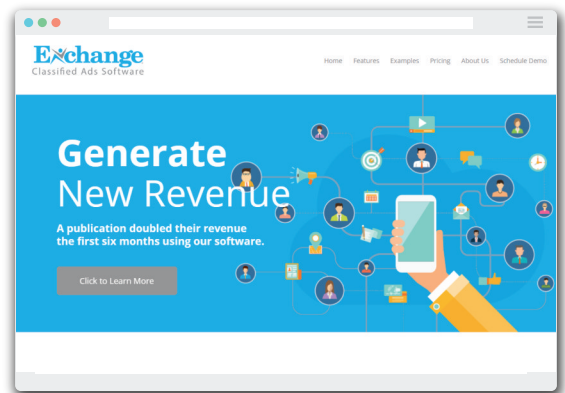
What is it?

An incredibly robust, but simple-to-use software platform that powers your publication's website and classifieds system that can instantly boost classified ad sales.

How can it help you grow?

This system will act like an additional classified salesperson! People who place Classified Ads get reminded to renew their ads before they expire and miss the deadline. Automated up-sell opportunities to add a photo to an ad significantly boost average ad cost. Your staff all have separate logins to proof incoming ads and customer credit cards are stored for more efficient renewals and re-orders. Save time, boost efficiencies, and put your publication's website & technology on par with major classified websites without making a huge investment.

How much does it cost: Contact vendor to request pricing
www.classifiedads.software



Mailchimp

What is it?

An easy-to-use email marketing system that lets you send out thousands of emails at once.

How can it help you grow?

With a few clicks you can put together great-looking emails and blast them out to your readers and/or advertisers. Announce the latest Digital Edition is online, or feature a seasonal print promotion. You can even sell sponsorships inside of the email blasts!

How much does it cost: Paid Plans starting at \$10/mo (based on subscriber list size)
www.mailchimp.com

IFPA Board Minutes

IFPA BOARD MEETING, THURSDAY AUGUST 15, 2019

VP Joyce Frericks called the meeting to order at 9:00am (EST) Board members present: Doug Fabian, Deborah Phillips, Manuel Karam, Eric McRoy, Shane Goodman, Joyce Frericks, Jane Quairol, Joe Nicastro and Executive Director: Douglas Fry

IFPA SURVEY RESULTS- JOYCE FRERICKS

Joyce read all the comments and stated definitely there are opinions on both sides. One focus is finding ways we can work together on TIP and INK perhaps combining the two publications and see how it works. Douglas said at this point we want to figure out the feasibility of each of the four areas and find the pros and cons of TIP, Classified network, conferences and Duplication for the September meeting.

TREASURER REPORT- DEBORAH PHILLIPS

Overall Jan 1st through August 2nd net income improved substantially. Nearly half of that is investment income. Membership dues down due to publications no longer being eligible after sale to a newspaper group, out of business, and difficult financial situations. Eric made a motion to approve. Joyce seconded. All in favor.

SEPTEMBER EVENT- DOUG FABIAN

We are at 32 signed up. Three more flyers/emails waiting to go out. Douglas and Doug have gone over the Buyers Intention Guide. The guide is the backbone of the event. Eric commented that he is putting together a fun ice breaker.

PUBLISHERS SUMMIT- MANUEL KARAM, SHANE GOODMAN

Had a meeting to discuss topics and have a lot of great ideas. All set with the hotel.

SHARE GROUPS

Sales Managers- Doug Fabian, Thirteen people on the last call with extensive topics.

Publishers- Joe Nicastro, Next call mid September. Been successful

Specialty Publications- Douglas Fry, No

call last month. Next one is August 21

SALES TRAINING- DOUGLAS FRY

Nothing changed. Looking for ways to make it more valuable.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE- MANUEL KARAM

Biggest project has been postcards for the September conference. Some have gone out and have a few more to go. Next is proposal to send to PR firms on how to increase membership and engagement.

ONLINE ADS- ERIC MCROY

Nothing new to report

AD AWARDS- DOUGLAS FRY

Judges have gone through the first five categories and should finish up the next group in the next two weeks. Have had a slight uptick in the number of entries

CADNET VERIFICATION- DOUGLAS FRY

Two thirds of the members have completed them. The deadline is August 16th.

WEBSITE- JOYCE FRERICKS

Nothing new, everything working properly

Old Business- Regarding the September conference. Doug asked the date to open it up to more than two people from each company. Joyce said each paper can bring two people excluding the board member. The deadline will be August 31st. Douglas will put that in his emails.

New Business- None

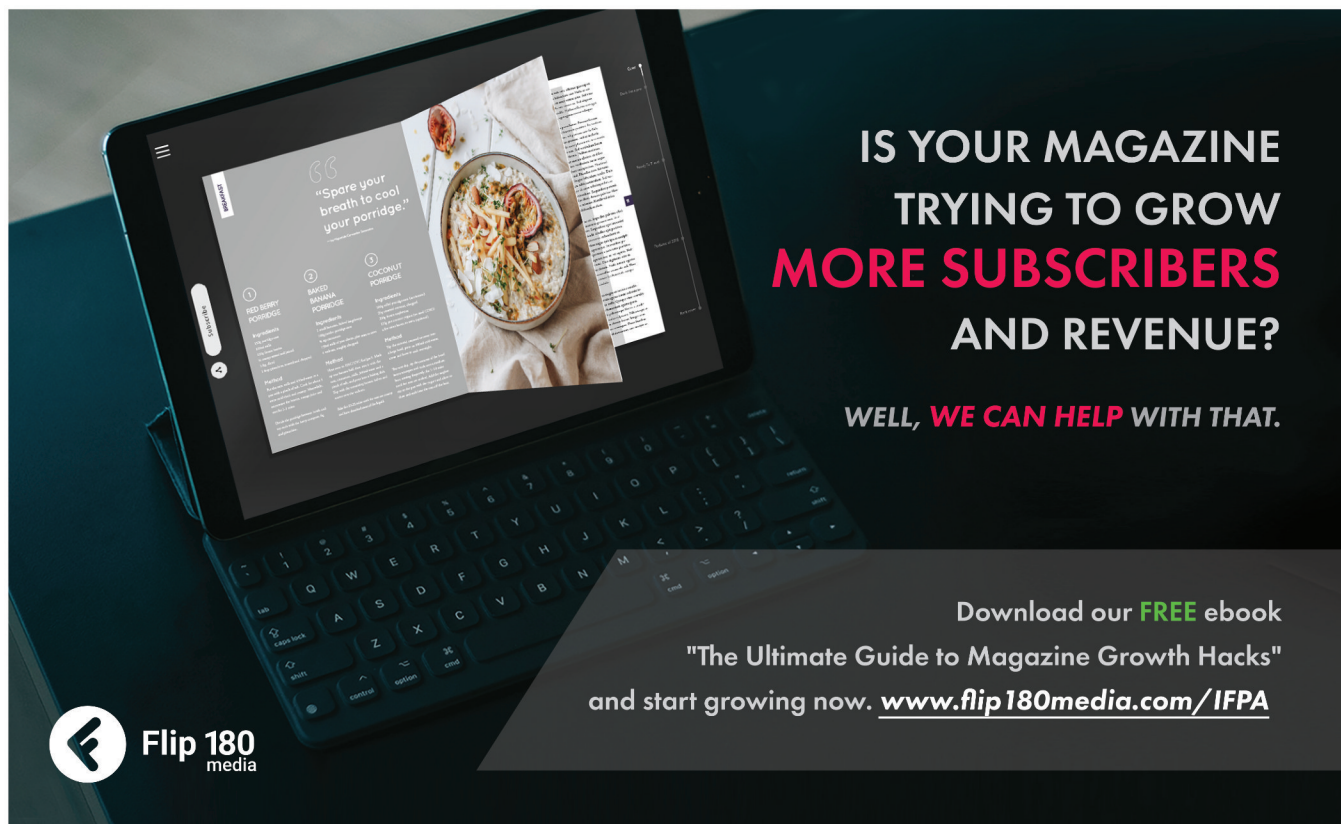
Motion to adjourn Joe Nicastro. Seconded by Shane Goodman. Meeting adjourned 9:56 am (EST)



Gary's Gallery

Sometimes the shots taken at a long ago event are just too much fun to pass up. Can you name every person in these photos?






IS YOUR MAGAZINE TRYING TO GROW MORE SUBSCRIBERS AND REVENUE?

WELL, WE CAN HELP WITH THAT.

Download our **FREE** ebook
"The Ultimate Guide to Magazine Growth Hacks"
 and start growing now. www.flip180media.com/IFPA

 **Flip 180 media**

Magazine Growth Hacks Social Media Taught Us

by **Vee Banionis**, flip180media.com

As a recent Forbes article points out, social media is becoming recognized for what it is: a bellwether for the media industry. Social media is propped up in a completely digital world with many separate moving parts and foundations. That said, it's social media that is driving the way media is consumed. Yes, even within the sacred print-originated magazine format.

7 Hacks You Should Be Using More Effectively:

Engaging headlines

If people don't find your headlines engaging, they're not going to click them. If they don't click, they won't see them.

If they don't see them, they obviously won't read them.

Engaging cover and layout design

Does your layout frame the content? Or distract from it? Poor design values typically derive from non-designers designing the periodical.

A deeper perspective

A lot has been said about online engagement, but too little has been revealed about what kind of content does well. Engrossing content that pours into the fine details gets curated. Getting curated is essential to get read by more prospects - free PR is more effective than ads!

Link out meaningfully

Reference online to authorities. Don't think that good SEO is about hoarding link juice. That's 90's stuff. Today's domain authority (DA) and page authority (PA) is about being interconnected to authority sites, even when from below.

Create defined customer avatars

If you're going on instinct, you're not in touch with audience traits, not including new ones as they emerge, and not tracking KPIs well. This is suicide. Define logical avatars. Then pursue.

Doing email right

If your brand isn't doing automation according to elaborated logic, you probably aren't thinking much about your customer journey.

Ask your demographic deep questions
 The sixth tip is about listening. Creating online reader polls can go a long way to knowing what people are looking for. These can start out via email or onsite. Use multiple channels for this.

We go deeper into many of these and many more in our exhaustive recent Ebook, *The Ultimate Guide to Magazine Growth Hacks*, **It's free to IFPA readers** when you subscribe to Flip180. ■

Ellen Hanrahan's Graphic Hooks

A blast from the past... at least that is what I am considering this article to be. In an effort to present something new—and not repeat myself—I look to past articles. That means I can go back to 1995 (well 1993, but I guess I took a year off in '94).

What I have found over the years though, is that design *is* repetition... applying the same elements, principles and skills over and over, but just in a more relevant way for the reader.

Twenty years ago in September of 1999, my article was all about our transition to electronic pagination. We did and it worked, however, that would make for a rather boring and non-relevant article. So I looked at the August article and decided that could work—but be prepared, you've heard a lot of this information before. I am just presenting it in a more relevant way!

Artwork

Design is not decoration... no matter where you apply it. The notion of "it's not done 'til it's overdone" certainly does not apply to communication. Too many decorations, whether bursts, artwork, dingbats, borders, etc., can make the ad confusing—and distracting. The sample ad to the right embodies a number of attention getting techniques that we've talked about before.

As you can see, that while none of them is wrong, trying to add too many devices in a small amount of space can make the ad more difficult to read and comprehend. Are they looking for bartenders or people to drink.

Remember too, that this is just one of many ads on the page and will not have the same impact—here it is surrounded by a lot of white space and text. On a typical page there will be similar ads surrounding it and a number of them will either be reverse or contain reverse or gray tint areas. How will the ad look on the page? This is so hard to gauge—the best bet is to check the printed pages after each issue to get a general idea of just how many boxes, how many reverses, and how many gray tints are on the page.

Artwork

This ad for bartenders to work at our county fair is an example of what happens when the art work is not appropriate for the information. The customer is looking for bartenders to work in a tent at a county fair, selling mostly beer (I would guess), but the art work used, the martini glasses, is much better suited for a cocktail hour ad. I'm not so sure that the first impression of the ad would get the response that the customer wants—namely to hire bartenders for a fast-paced casual event—especially with no experience necessary.

Reverse Areas

This technique is overused. I have mentioned the care that must be taken when using reverse areas (white text on a black background) but I still see many reverse ads that are very unreadable (I said this twenty years ago, and it's still true!). Either the text is too small or the typeface is inappropriate—serif typefaces in a small size on newsprint fill in and the letters disappear in most instances! Yes, contrast is a good way to add interest or focus to an ad, but it must be controlled. In our ad for bartenders, we have too many reverse and gray areas which only tends to separate the information even more—and we don't have a lot of space to start with. There is no unity.

Alignment and Proximity

Our top ad also suffers from fragmentation. In order for an ad to be successful, you must create a visual connection to something

else in the ad (alignment). Group related items together (proximity) to create a more cohesive and easier to read ad. Our top bartender ad lacks these qualities. Each text block is a different point size, has a different alignment or is contained in a different area—all can impede readability! Make it easy for the reader to discern the information at a glance. The revised ad is pretty straight forward...not a lot of distracting devices. Sometimes it's too easy to overdo ads. Don't just decorate... design.

Original Ad- More Specifics

The artwork is an attention getter, but the image is not appropriate for the type of bartender needed. Too many reverse areas in the ad also tend to "chop it up" or separate the message. The reader has to search to get to the information. Text is "bouncy"...big, little, big, etc. The word "Washington" is a larger point size than the rest of the text in that block. It's the "Washington County Fair," so type should be the same size, (all the words are of equal importance).

Phone numbers can use dots to replace the dash, but the feel is not correct. This is a simple, local ad... so stay traditional.

There is no unifying element in this ad, making it more difficult for readers to gather the information. Using alignment and proximity would help to pull the information together.

Final Thoughts

Less is more... and the ad above is simple, clear and more apt to generate the response intended. It works great in black also.

Don't over think! A lot more time went into creating the top ad, but the effectiveness was anything but!

So...not much has changed from my words from 20-years ago!

Until next time...

Ellen Hanrahan hanrahan.in@att.net ©2019

Be A Better Listener And Get Better Reception

By John Foust

When I was growing up, my father had an old shortwave radio. Although he didn't use it often, I enjoyed playing around with it. There were buttons to listen to different frequencies to find radio stations in North America and overseas.

It was a magical machine. I could hear people speaking in foreign languages. And when conditions were right, I could listen to the New York Yankees, my favorite baseball team. The strongest signal was usually WOWO – “1190 on your dial” – in Fort Wayne, Indiana, which broadcast a hockey team called the Fort Wayne Komets. Imagine the excitement of an eleven-year-old kid sitting in North Carolina, listening to a hockey game being played in a faraway place like Indiana.

The radio had two round knobs, one for volume and one for tuning. The tuning knob moved a red needle back and forth across the dial. As the needle approached a station, there was a lot of static and buzzing, but I learned how to hit the sweet spot by turning the knob ever so slightly.

I thought about that old radio recently – and the challenges of tuning in to a sta-

Karl said they've been focusing on three small adjustments that can improve in-the-moment listening: ask one question at a time, don't interrupt and rephrase what the other person says. Let's take a closer look:

1. Ask one question at a time. “Because sales people get revved up for appointments – and because they are conditioned to ask questions – there is a tendency to ask a string of questions without giving the other person enough time to answer thoroughly,” Karl said. “It's important to ask a question, listen carefully, then move on to the next question.”

There is a tendency to ask a string of questions without giving the other person enough time to answer

2. Don't interrupt. “This one is a matter of manners. It's a lot like asking too many questions at once. Not everyone formulates their thoughts at the same speed. While it doesn't make sense to let



What's Ahead?

ideas stated by another person, they're likely think of something else that is important. That's a big help."

Yes, sales conversations have a lot in common with that old radio. Improve your listening skills, and your ideas will get better reception.

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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

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America Needs Locally Owned Papers

By Peter Wagner

The once powerful Gannett media company — publishers of the Sioux Falls Argus-Leader, Des Moines Register, USA Today and 106 other mostly daily newspapers — has announced it will merge with GateHouse Media. GateHouse is reported to own 156 dailies across America.

Of course, it isn't really a merger, Gannett is being assumed by GateHouse. Both companies have seen steady growth through acquisitions during recent years, but neither is doing well financially. By combining into one company, the new organization should see huge savings in operational costs and possible increases in advertising revenue. GateHouse, traditionally, operates with less staff than Gannett and is known for cutting staff whenever it buys an additional publication.

Gannett moved mostly away from a focus on the printed newspaper a year and a half ago, putting emphasis on producing its digital products. Gannett and GateHouse, which is owned by New Media Investment Group, are believers in consolidated management and minimum local operating expenses.

With the new firm's emphasis on an information network dedicated to fewer locally printed pages and less publication days, the plan is to expand the company's overall digital presence. The hope is to reduce costs through centralized accounting, production and editorial centers and increase national advertising revenue through expanded multicity readership. But the digit content will most likely be built around general interest national news, sports and features — think CNN and USA Today — and reduced coverage of hometown news important to local voters and taxpayers.

The rumor is the new firm probably will shed itself of many of their small, less-profitable, weekly publications. That might be good news for those interested in investing in and upholding the local hometown newspaper. There is a need for locally managed community newspapers. But operating a small, local

weekly paper has become financially difficult. Many local communities no longer have a retail base large enough to support a local paper.

The national Democratic Party appears to be responding to this cultural change in a way that could be dangerous to the future of local and national media.

In a recent online article, David Uberti reported one of the Democratic Party's largest Super PACs, Priorities USA, is reported to be underwriting a \$100 million effort to boot President Donald Trump from office. The PAC hopes to do it with a flood of one-sided digital information messages in key swing states that have lost numerous local newspapers.

The rumor is the new firm probably will shed itself of many of their small, less-profitable, weekly publications.

Four "news" outlets staffed by Democratic operatives will publish state-specific information across social media in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Florida and Wisconsin. They also will boost content to independent sources. The message will be Trump's economy isn't working for them.

"This should be covered by local newspapers, but local news is dying," said Priorities USA communication director Josh Schwerin.

Between 2004 and 2018, an average of 130 newspapers closed each year across the country, according to Penelope Muse Abernathy, a University of North Carolina professor who studies "news deserts."

That number increased to about 200 last year, with affected areas tending to be "much poorer than average, less educated and much older," she said.

But news generated and reported by any source with an agenda is not a good thing for our nation or our individual rights and freedom. It is important that local community papers survive if we are going to keep balance and consensus in our communities and across our nation.

Let us hope those who still believe in the printed word, easy to post on the refrigerator and paste in a scrapbook, and capable of challenging wrong and encouraging right, will live long past the death rattle suggested by our competitors.

Want more information and motivation to help you tell your publication's story? Experience more GET REAL straight talk from one of America's leading newspaper and shopper publishers and sales trainers. Contact Peter Wagner at pww@iowainformation.com or CELL 712-348-3550. Or contact Peter direct for proven sales training for your staff.



September 2019

Andy Warhol once said, "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes."

I've experienced those fifteen minutes a few times, but it comes less often these days. So, I was surprised to get a call last week from a reporter for The Washington Post. It seems he had received a number of emails containing a blog post I had written for stateofnewspapers.com the day before.

We spoke for quite a while about the state of newspapers and the future of the new Gannett. It's no secret I've been predicting the merger/buyout for several years, as well as other industry events that seem to have surprised the general public.

I was surprised to get a call last week from a reporter for The Washington Post.

As I told Jonathan O'Connell, financial reporter for The Post, it's not rocket science. Anyone paying attention had to see the GateHouse-Gannett merger coming for years. Gannett has cut their staffs, pages and content, sold their buildings, and basically had no place to turn. GateHouse (New Media Investment Group) has been expanding their nameplates as quickly as possible, while watching its stock value continue to drop. Buying Gannett was a quick way to draw the attention of the media and, hopefully, draw attention away from the significant drop in stock prices which have lost approximately half their value in less than a year (from \$15.99 per share in August 2018, to \$8.08 as I write this column).

What did I say so revolutionary that it filled three paragraphs in The Washington Post? Trust me, nothing most of you didn't already know.

What's The Big Deal?

By Kevin Slimp

Problems began when newspapers began to believe their own headlines roughly a dozen years ago, over-investing in the digital side of the business, and cutting reporting, production values and customer service.

I still work with a lot of papers as a consultant. It holds true that most of the papers I visit who are doing very well financially didn't make that mistake. Sure, most invested in digital, but not to the detriment of their core product.

Like most folks who don't work for community newspapers, O'Connell was pleasantly surprised to learn there are thousands of locally-owned community papers out there. He, like most folks I visit with on the subject, seemed to think most papers were part of big groups.

I assured him, backed by data, that most papers aren't controlled by large national groups. According to my latest survey of newspaper managers, the number of papers owned by large groups is less than 20 percent of total newspapers.

So, what did I tell Jonathan that earned three paragraphs in The Post? I simply

told him that most, not all, but most papers are doing fine financially. Most aren't going out of business or planning to sell to a large national group.

Thankfully, he didn't take just my word for it. I was glad to see he interviewed Dr. Iris Chyi, University of Texas media-research expert, who concurred that much of the problems the large groups experience come down to over-reliance on digital revenue too soon.

Yes, I've gotten some things right over the years. I predicted years ago the Advocate would take over the New Orleans newspaper market, even before they had a paper there, which came to pass with the purchase of The Times-Picayune in May. Some journalists like to dig out my past columns, often long-forgotten, to remind me I had predicted something that has come to pass in the newspaper world.

I appreciate the attention but try to remind folks that it's not brain surgery. Years ago, I saw newspapers over-investing in the digital side of journalism at the expense of their main products. I used to keynote large newspaper conferences and beg the attendees to quit writing that print was dead, something


they effectively convinced their readers and advertisers. I would speak at newspaper conferences and note that most workshops had to do with converting products to digital, wondering where all these newspapers were going to get money once the print revenue disappeared.

Thankfully, as I told Jonathan O'Connell, most newspapers are doing alright. They're not going out of business any time soon. Some will go out of business, as has been the case as long as there have been newspapers, and new papers will appear.

As I told Jonathan, it didn't take a keen intellect to see what was happening. It only required taking a step back, refusing to believe popular culture, and studying what was really taking place. I haven't been alone. Folks like Dr. Chyi at The University of Texas, Al Cross at The University of Kentucky, Tommy Thomason at Texas Christian University, and others have been doing research and sharing their findings for more than a decade.

I simply paid attention.





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