

---

# INFORMER

---



**Community  
Papers of  
Michigan**

December 2019



*Merry Christmas*



Photo by Mariana B. on Unsplash



By Jack Guza

## Because Sometimes The World is Right Where You Live...

### FREE Community Papers



Because sometimes the world...  
is right where you live.

The award-winning ad above was created by Cindy Seaver of the Community Shoppers Guide in Otsego, and is listed on the PaperChain website as a promotional ad for our industry. Cindy is also the talented artist that puts all of the content that I send to her for our monthly Informer e-newsletter, into a creative format each month. Thank you, Cindy, for each monthly edition; and thanks to her boss Marty Bennett, for sharing Cindy with us!

I'm particularly fond of the promo ad above, as for many of our members' readers, the world IS right where they live! These residents depend on their community publication to keep them informed of what is happening, sharing everything from birth announcements to obituaries and all of the wonderful and sometimes not-so wonderful happenings within each community. Local businesses know the power of print and need our members' services more than ever as retail continues to evolve and many businesses are challenged by the latest shiny online offering delivered to the shopper's door. The majority of a local businesses' customer base is within a 10-mile radius of their location, and in some more rural settings, even further. They know many of their customers by name as neighbors, friends and family.

You can be proud of each edition that you and your staff members put your heart and soul into. Our members on a weekly publishing schedule have 52 opportunities each year, and our members on a monthly schedule, 12 opportunities each year, to positively impact your communities. Within the pages of your publication.

If your company is already a strong supporter in your community with owners, managers and staff actively involved in local civic organizations, serving on boards and taking part in events within the community, a tip of the hat to you. If your participation has become less regular due to a myriad of reasons, it's never too late to make a commitment in the new year to become active again in a group you may still belong to, or join another that needs movers and shakers, like you. By actively serving, you not only help other businesses and residents, you also spotlight your company as one who deeply cares about the success of your community, because you do. A huge advantage your publications and employees have that the online retailers do not, is a real presence in your communities. You make a positive difference in people's lives every single week. And who has seen an online retail employee working a concession stand, sponsoring a parade, or contributing money or space in the paper to help raise funds for a local resident who is fighting a life-threatening illness. You won't - what you do matters.

We are fortunate to have a wonderful partnership with the Michigan Retailers Association (MRA). Known as one of the largest and most successful retail associations in the country, MRA has hundreds of members in the very same communities our members have publications. As I have told MRA, "Their members are our members' clients." One of

MRA's signature events is their Buy Nearby initiative conducted on the first weekend of October each year. Even if you feature other "Shop Local" pages or sections at various times throughout the year, I encourage you to consider adding Buy Nearby to your promo calendars for 2020. By showing MRA what our members can do to assist their members, it's a win-win for both associations' members, and keeps dollars in your communities.

As 2019 comes to an end, and we begin a new decade with new challenges and opportunities, I want to thank all CPM members for being a part of our association. Thank you for working with Dana and me throughout the year and allowing us to be a small part of your publication's success. This month marks my eleventh year serving as your executive director. Dana has already been with us four and half years! It doesn't seem possible. My Dad used to say, "The older you get, the faster the years go by." And he was right. Time goes by even faster in our deadline-driven industry. I am honored and humbled to be your executive director. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with print professionals across the state and introduce businesses in Michigan and beyond to the power of our members' publications through CPM's advertising networks.

I also want to recognize and thank our hard-working and dedicated board of directors, whose passion for the community paper industry is without measure. CPM wouldn't be as successful if not for your board members, who give so much of their time and talent for the good of all CPM members and our industry.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and Continued Success in the New Year!

Jack

# Introducing CPM's Newest Member... *Meridian Weekly*

## Meridian Weekly

Visit Us Online at:  
[meridianweekly.com](http://meridianweekly.com)  
*Christmas in Ovid*  
Friday, Dec. 13  
6-8pm Lions/VFW Hall

PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 3

December 8, 2019

VOLUME 27 • ISSUE 1502

20 PAGES



### Generous Community Gives Thanks

Successful Thanksgiving Dinner: Two hundred people enjoyed a traditional Thanksgiving at the Ovid Lions/VFW Hall on Thanksgiving Day. Donations from the community who enjoyed the meal totaled \$1,308.00 on the day. The money will go towards purchasing food and gift certificates for the Christmas Basket Program. "The turn out was awesome, people really stepped up to help and the community was extremely generous with their donations," said event organizer Suzanne Grubaugh. Donations of non-parishable food and paper products are still being accepted at Pivot Point, Ovid Library and The Meridian Weekly. Monetary donations are being accepted at Ovid Service Agency. Pictured here are the cooks and some of the volunteers who worked the Thanksgiving Day meal. (l-r) Randy Elwood, Suzanne Grubaugh, Chara Johnson, Robin Wood, Erica Jerome and John Garrison.

### Laingsburg City Council Meeting

*submitted by Karen Anderson, Laingsburg Correspondent*  
LAINGSBURG - On Monday, December 2, 2019, The Laingsburg City Council held their monthly regular meeting. Public Comments were requested by the Board. Dean Veith, President of the Laingsburg Friends of the Library suggested consideration of the Council to purchasing the building next to the current library for the purpose of expansion. At this time the Friends of the Library have a \$150,000 benevolent gift in their account towards the Library Building Fund. It is projected the cost of renovation and expansion would cost upwards to \$100,000. If the owner of the empty structure was approached by the City or the Friends of the Library for an offer within the budget or if they could request the donation of the structure, it could be a realistic venture. It was recommended some estimates and research be conducted and the matter be tabled until the next regular city council meeting.

General meeting resumed with approval of monthly routine business. The floor was opened regarding the adoption an ordinance to permit and regulate commercial Marijuana establishment within the City of Laingsburg. Discussion included the possible location in the C-1 District, below the hill to comply with State guidelines. The definition of "Commercial" would include product-related items for general sale. Tom Nemeth, Laingsburg resident and owner of a Medical Marijuana facility in Lansing offered recommendations to ensure the City be compliant with the Michigan Regulatory Agency (MRA). Discussion included the protocol for the selection process for the new establishment and the applications will be conducted with the approval of the City Council Board. There will be no outdoor or recreational use on-site. Financial, building zoning and

## Meridian Weekly

200 S. Main St., P.O. Box 11,  
Ovid, MI  
989.834.2264 Fax: 834.2066

Deborah Price  
Owner/Publisher

Free Online access:  
[meridianweekly.com](http://meridianweekly.com)

E-mail - News/General  
[news@meridianweekly.com](mailto:news@meridianweekly.com)

E-mail - Publisher  
[deb.price@meridianweekly.com](mailto:deb.price@meridianweekly.com)

E-mail - Display Advertising  
[ads@meridianweekly.com](mailto:ads@meridianweekly.com)

### SUNDAY DELIVERY TO 10,000 HOMES

Laingsburg 48848 - 2,700  
 Ovid 48866 - 1,694  
 Elsie 48831 - 1,395  
 Bannister 48807 - 400  
 Ashley 48806 - 600  
 St. Johns 48879 - 1,300  
 Owosso 48867 - 1,000  
 Henderson 48841 - 400  
 Oakley 48649 - 500

## Meridian Weekly

200 S. MAIN STREET  
P.O. BOX 11  
OVID, MICHIGAN 48866  
**(989) 834-2264**  
**Fax (989) 834-2066**

E-Mail Address List

Email: News/General  
[news@meridianweekly.com](mailto:news@meridianweekly.com)

Email: Publisher  
[deb.price@meridianweekly.com](mailto:deb.price@meridianweekly.com)

Email: Display Advertising  
[ads@meridianweekly.com](mailto:ads@meridianweekly.com)

Email: Front Office  
[customerservice@meridianweekly.com](mailto:customerservice@meridianweekly.com)

The Meridian Weekly circulates to 10,000 homes every Sunday. We completely cover three school districts. Laingsburg, Ovid-Elsie and Ashley. Our boundaries are: North of M-57 to include all of Ashley, South to US-27 in St Johns and East to Delaney Road (City Limits of Owosso) to include all of Ovid and Elsie. We also circulate to rural homes in St Johns, Owosso, Henderson and Oakley within our boundaries.

**Visit Us Online FREE**  
[meridianweekly.com](http://meridianweekly.com)



By John Foust  
Raleigh, NC

# Ad-Libs

## The Power of Restraint

On an out-of-state trip, I saw a billboard that compelled me to pull off the road to take a closer look. What was so unusual? It had more words than I had ever seen on a billboard – 45 words. “What in the world were they thinking?” I asked myself. “I’m probably the only driver who knows what the billboard says, and that’s because I stopped to count the words.”

The person who designed that sign hadn’t considered what it would look like on the side of that two-lane highway. He or she had created it on a screen or layout pad, with no awareness of the fact that drivers would have only a few seconds to read it. For years, I’ve heard that eight is the maximum word count for a readable billboard. That one had 45.

The billboard needed what a lot of ads need – restraint. Here are three areas that call for that special brand of discipline:

1. The sales call. This is where it starts. It’s understandable for advertisers to be excited about their products and services, but they shouldn’t be encouraged to put unsubstantiated claims and exaggerations in their ads. Salespeople who are close to closing a sale often have a tendency to accept anything their clients want to run. But this is the time to hold firm and gather

the raw material that is needed for an effective ad campaign. First, learn about the client’s audience. Then learn about what is being advertised – with a focus on features and benefits.

2. The ad copy. The next step is to translate that information into an idea, and then to transform that idea into convincing words and pictures. Even the best ad concept in the world will fall flat if it is not put together the right way.

It’s important to use restraint in writing copy. Readers don’t respond favorably to words like “unbelievable” and “fantastic” and “incredible.” They prefer to hear the truth, because that’s what they need to make informed buying decisions.



**Blue-Ribbon Taste**  
Presenting Our Favorite Desserts Baked Especially for National Blueberries Month...*Take your pick!*

Blueberry Cobbler	Blueberry Muffins	Blueberry Cheesecake	Blueberry-Lemon Bars
\$3.99	\$1.79	\$4.99	\$2.49

*Available for a limited time only!*

**Village Bakery Cafe**  
1234 Washington Street • Somersville Heights  
000-000-0000 • www.namewebsite.com

***Sometimes  
Less Is More!***

Specific language works better than generalities. “Save 40 percent on a new widget” is more effective than “save money

on a new widget.” “Three-year warranty” is better than “great warranty.” And “one-acre lot” is more descriptive than “large lot.”

3. The ad design. A store owner once told me about his philosophy of print advertising. “I think white space is wasted space,” he said. “I want my ads to be filled from corner to corner.” It was no surprise that his ads were bursting at the seams with illustrations and blocks of multiple colors. To make matters worse, he thought that all upper-case type made his copy more important.

Sadly, his ads looked like indecipherable blobs on the page. I don’t think anyone would make the effort to read them.

Poet Robert Browning is famous for writing, “Less is more.” Although architecture later adopted the phrase, it is just as appropriate for this business of advertising. Less is definitely more.

---

(c) Copyright 2019 by John Foust. All rights reserved.

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. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

# How do we reach Millennials?

*Focus groups lead to a better understanding of young adults*



by Kevin Slimp  
kevin@kevinslimp.com

Steve Andrist, executive director of North Dakota Newspaper Association, asked me an interesting question yesterday. It was related to my visit to Bismarck in October to work with a focus group of millennials from throughout the state who met together to spend a good part of a day looking at, and discussing, newspapers.

Prior to my trip to Bismarck, I did what I often do: I surveyed newspaper readers and non-readers throughout the U.S. and Canada to determine what differences there were, if any, between the general population and millennials related to interest in newspapers. After meeting with the focus group in Bismarck, I met with North Dakota publishers to discuss what we had learned during the day. A week or so later, I wrote a report for NDNA with the findings of the focus group.

Steve's question yesterday was simple, "Do you have any quick advice on what you'd suggest newspapers do with this information?"

We learned a lot about millennials prior to, and during, the day in Bismarck. We learned they're not quick to spend money on any type of news. If they do spend money, they'd prefer to spend it on their local newspaper than anywhere else. We also learned that most of the millennials who live away from home check their hometown newspaper website for local news now and then.



In answer to Steve's question, here are the main takeaways I would suggest community newspapers keep in mind:

- **Millennials**, like most other in the general population, aren't looking for national or international news in their community papers. Even when looking at papers from larger cities in the state, the group reported having no interest in reading news from outside the community.
- **Millennials** prefer print, as do most other newspaper readers. While they will check out their hometown paper online while away in college or after college, they indicate they would be more likely to spend money on a printed newspaper in the place they live than a digital version.
- **Millennials** have less interest in sports in their community papers than the general population. When ranking areas of interest, local sports came far down the list.
- **Millennials** are most interested in local news, especially news related to - and stories about - individuals. They are more likely to buy a newspaper if it includes stories about individuals in the millennial age group now and then. They are also interested in local government news.
- **Millennials** have a lot of interest in reading about local entertainment, even in a small town. This might mean the entertainment is taking place in a larger town up the road, but entertainment and music are of great interest to readers in this age group.
- **Millennials**, much like the general population, indicate they would read a

free paper if it arrived in their mailbox once a week. More than 50 percent (in the national survey and in the focus group) indicated they would read the paper every week, with another 35 percent indicating they likely read the free paper most weeks.

In answer to Steve's question, what would I take away from this information if I were a local newspaper publisher?

**First, I'd remember** that millennials of this generation aren't so different from most of us when we were in our 20s. They're busy and don't read newspapers as often as older groups, but most of them will likely be newspaper readers as they marry and have families.

**To promote readership among millennials**, keep in mind their interest in stories about individuals. Interview high school, college-age and young adults for stories on a regular basis.

**Include more news** about local entertainment and music.

**Finally, I'd keep the statistic** related to free weekly papers in mind. I'd begin the thinking about how to use the knowledge that most people report they would read a free newspaper if it ended up in their mailbox. Whether that means including more news in our free pubs or finding other ways to take advantage of this statistic, it's important information.

In my next column, I'll share some of what I've learned about newspaper websites - what works and what doesn't - as a result of research I did for the Texas Center for Community Journalism in November and December.



My intention was to discuss how to use Polygons in an ad... however, technology (or lack thereof) has forced me to fill in with some ideas for holiday...

# Ad Frames



Seriously... I'm not sure what happened, but I find myself back in *InDesign 6* because I am having trouble with internet, backup battery and my Adobe Cloud programs. I have a slow internet speed (will have to look into that in 2020) but right now I have to put something together. I have saved all of my recent *InDesign* files as ".idml" which is an exchange program, (and it works nicely), but my tabs, info, etc. are in different places! So here goes...

Instead of Polygons though, I am going to share some holiday ads with a twist. I've made a lot of ad frame (border) graphics over the years, so I have quite a variety—it helps speed up the process to "re-purpose" them. I will also be using the terms "ad frames" and "borders" but I consider them one and the same.

A successful border (for me) is one that's different from the standard rule line, yet not so large as to take up valuable text space.

The samples shown have been modified to fit the column width (14p7) and they all have the same depth (9p) for consistency and more accurate comparisons.

These ideas can also be altered depending on the season, size of the ad space and most don't take a lot of time to complete. These borders may be all the artwork that you need for smaller size ads, but they would also work well for larger ads, too.

Most of these holiday borders will give me the best use of the space without distracting from the information contained within the ad frame itself. Backgrounds were used in instances when I wanted to offset the text slightly—again, a lot of this depends on the amount of text, what is being sold and whether or not there is room for any other artwork—in most instances there isn't.

## Holiday Ad Frame Ideas

The artwork comes from a variety of sources—many from [storyblocks.com](http://storyblocks.com)—and others I've had for a very long time!


Personally, I am not fond of borders that repeat on all four sides because the space for the border is predetermined. I like a little more control over the amount of space that I can use in the ad. By shifting (or cropping) the art I have chosen, I can add or subtract space within the ad boundaries.

Choosing to use artwork in a corner, across the top or bottom of the ad also allows me to control more of the inside spacing—and this use of the art adds a bit more interest to the ad.

These sample ideas can be modified to fit a variety of sizes as well. Disclaimer: *Not all ad samples are the most effective!*



This art is flexible enough to be used for thank you ads, invitations, events, church events, even help wanted ads. The holiday art can still be offset more, cropped or even "flopped." The ad below shows a simpler border with the art.



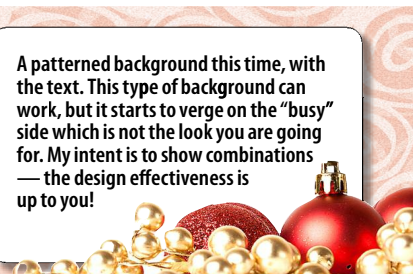
Same art, but a 3-point rule to give even more space for the message. The art can still be handled as above. Just remember—the wider the border, the more you have to keep the text away from the edges.



*Best Wishes for a Peaceful Holiday Season and Joy-filled New Year!*




**Best Wishes!** Holiday greetings from advertisers would work best for this combination!




A patterned background this time, with the text. This type of background can work, but it starts to verge on the "busy" side which is not the look you are going for. My intent is to show combinations—the design effectiveness is up to you!

*In the next column, I have one more 9p (depth) and then a couple samples that are 11p (depth).*



All of these small add samples can work on a larger scale as well. The artwork helps to call attention to, and frame, the information—and you get to control the interior spacing!



You can use any of this artwork (or graphic) in a coupon as well. There really is no restriction—other than size of the ad and the amount of text that needs to be included in the ad space. Again, build up a library of artwork... especially seasonal art because it seems to get here faster than you anticipated!



I've used these ornaments for a variety of publications, ads, promos, etc., so it's safe to say that this grouping is a "go-to" pick of mine. I gave the ad a little more depth because you don't want to make this art too small in an ad. Make art as large as you can or else don't use it in your ad.

## Final Thoughts

As I was writing about my measurements, it occurred to me that some may not know what I mean. I am "old school" so have used picas (p) and points (pt) as my measurement standards. Anyway, just thought I would clear that up.

Hopefully these few samples may get you to think of using artwork or graphics in a slightly different way. When I started in the 1980's, the sophistication of art was not what it is today—even early photos left a lot to be desired!

Most art services provide a variety of elements. I use "Storyblocks" for two reasons—1) it offers me a very good selection of photography and vector graphics and 2) it's in my price range (I think it's about \$100–\$129 a year!)

Now, excuse me while I figure out how to fix all my technological "ills," so I can continue to do this column in 2020.

In the meantime...

*Best wishes for a joy-filled Holiday season!*

*I was an art teacher and changed to a graphic design career in the '80s. I write for IFPA TIP, and the CPM INFORMER. For info, PDFs of articles, or have ideas, e-mail: [hanrahan.in@att.net](mailto:hanrahan.in@att.net) Ellen Hanrahan ©2019*



By Bob Berting  
*Berting Communications*



# Sausage Grinder, Stepping Stones, and Pro-Principle

## Sausage Grinder

This publication pushes immediate income and has their salespeople push one time promotions and bring ads in on a crash basis. Their salespeople are perceived as order takers. All activity is on a treadmill and there is a great deal of stress and turn over on the sales staff. The publication lives from week to week.

## Stepping Stone

This publication is obsessed with designing beautiful specialty tabloid covers and ads that are works of art. Since the emphasis is on ultra-creative ad design, there could be a lack of attention to content of campaigns and long range programs. Response to ads could be diminished.

## Pro-Principle

This sales staff is highly trained to be advertising professionals. Their customers are committed to long range programs because they perceive their salespeople as trusted advisors who want to tell the story of their business in a creative, thoughtful, and purposeful way. The customers are committed to the publication as a major player in their media mix strategy.

### How advertising salespeople can be pro-principle

Primarily they must be believed and trusted in the customer's eyes. They have to be a trusted advisor and counselor, not an interviewer who drones on and on with progressive questioning tactics. They must know competitive media. How can a contract or long range program be sold to a prospect if the prospect doesn't believe the paper is a key player in their media mix. The pro-principle salesperson has to know the advantages and disadvantages of all competing media and be able to make precise comparisons accordingly.

### Know layout and copy backwards and forwards

The pro salesperson must be able to explain type faces, headline selection, overall ad design, creative copy, and how the flow of ads are developed into a strong campaign.

They need to get their customers involved in the creative process of their ads by getting them to participate in the design of rough layout sketches to be submitted to the layout artist. In regard to creativity, there might be several meetings to go over a concept, to thoroughly understand, customer needs, and see how their ego will play a part in the process. Patience will win out and the happy ending will be a strong, comprehensive ad campaign... and a very happy customer.

### Sell long range programs

Finally, ask the customer for all the reasons why people buy from them. These reasons can be converted into headings for individual ads in an ongoing program.

---

*Bob is the author of 3 best-selling e-books for the newspaper industry "Dynamic Sales and Image Power"—"Advanced Selling Skills For The Advertising Sales Pro"—and his latest e-book "Power Selling Tools For The Advertising Sales Consultant". Any one book is 19.95...any two books is 35.00... all three books are bundled at 49.95. You can order Bob's books on his website: [www.bobberting.com](http://www.bobberting.com).*

*Read Bob's books and discover how his vast experience and know-how can help you achieve much more business for you and your publication. You'll greatly benefit from the wisdom of one of America's top advertising sales experts.*

*Bob is a professional speaker, advertising sales trainer, publisher marketing consultant, and leading columnist in many national and regional newspaper trade association publications. He is the President of Berting Communications and can be reached at [bob@bobberting.com](mailto:bob@bobberting.com) or 317-849-5408.*



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

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

## Christmas Catalogs Prove There is Value in Printed Advertising

Every once in a while, someone asks me what I plan to do now that “newspapers are dead.” But if print is dead, why are so many national companies still sending me their thick, slick, full-color catalogs?”

Connie and I usually get at least two or three catalogs every day. We’ve received catalogs this past month from L.L. Bean, J.Jill, Coldwater Creek, Nordstrom, Harry & David, Front Gate, Hammacher Schlemmer, Kansas City Steak Company, The Vermont Country Store, Pier 1, Artful House, Wine Enthusiasts, Crate & Barrel, Talbots, Pottery Barn, Chico’s and more. Many of the firms are ones we’ve never shopped.

We even got a catalog from American Girl, the doll company. We haven’t bought an American Girl doll or the company’s doll clothing since our granddaughters were in grade school. Zoey, the oldest, is a mature woman today working in Chicago and Katie, her cousin, is a sophomore at Iowa State University.

I’ve wondered how Katie would react if I mailed her the American Girl catalog at her sorority house and suggested she pick out which one she’d like for

Christmas. It has been at least seven years since we’ve been a customer and we’re still getting American Girl doll catalogs.

Many of the catalogs are the size of popular women’s magazines featuring nothing but advertising. From experience I would guess each one costs the company at least a dollar, often much more, to cover the design, printing and postage.

Clothing, food and home decor firms are not the only ones pitching their products and services with catalogs. Year around, nothing exceeds the number of direct-mail cards, letters and catalogs Connie and I get from various cruise lines.

We took a Viking River Cruise on the Danube at least four years ago. Ever since that time we seem to get at least one printed piece from Viking cruises each day. Sometimes we get two or three a single day. Usually one is a thick catalog promoting the various river cruises and a second one pushing the firm’s new, small ship ocean cruises. Some days the catalogs are accompanied by an oversized postcard promoting a limited time deal. (Continued on page 9.)





## Value in Printed Advertising (Continued)

Connie and I are convinced the Viking Company has reinvested all the money we spent with them for that one cruise attempting us get us to do it again.

Evidently the mailing companies share or sell each other their prospect mailing list. Along with Viking we also get promotional mailings from a dozen cruise lines even though we have booked cruises on only a limited few.

So, and I admit I am prejudiced, what does this tell me? It tells me print advertising is still an effective way to reach the most-desired, best-qualified buyer.

All the above firms also blast us with e-mail and Facebook advertising. Like many local merchants, these national giants are doing digital advertising at a

significant savings compared to print advertising.

National marketers have huge buyer research firms and heavily monitored result-to-spending budgets. They wouldn't be sending all that printed advertising if it wasn't getting significant results.

But here is the local difference. What those national catalog firms don't have is the easy reach of the local paper offering inexpensive, dependable, full-color print advertising. Since they can't enjoy the ease and savings offered by a local print publication, they have to turn to the more expensive direct mail.

Today's leading businesses are depending on a wide variety of media: radio, Facebook, e-mail, websites, cable

TV and direct mail as well as select local newspapers and shoppers.

But the leading firms never overlook the power of print. Local newspapers and shoppers can present a powerful message that features a combination of beautiful photographs or illustrations, original, highly-crafted copy and marvelous process color.

Locally published papers remain in a home for a full week or more. They are available to be read and reread any time and can be referred to as often the reader desires.

But most of all, local papers are a well-edited, creatively designed, credible and trusted information source. In the minds of the readers, that credibility often extends to cover the advertising, too.

---

*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. Ask your group or Press Association to schedule one or more of Peter W Wagner's seminars on selling, producing and growing your community paper. Contact him at [pww@iowainformation.com](mailto:pww@iowainformation.com) or CELL 712-348-3550. Or contact Peter direct for proven sales training for your staff.*



**siteSwan**  
WEBSITE BUILDER

**Learn how to profit from selling  
websites to your advertisers at:  
[SiteSwan.com](http://SiteSwan.com)**



## By Ryan Dohrn

President/Founder,  
Brain Swell Media LLC

# 10 Reasons to Open Your Ad Sales Ears—and Listen

Listen more to sell more. It's a premise that sounds so simple. And most ad salespeople will tell you they're really good listeners. But I've sat in on a great number of calls in my media sales training, and I know that's not actually the case.

So let me walk you through the sales call—and show you how to listen more to sell more. Here are 10 key ideas and tips to help you listen better and get strong ad sales results.

### 1 - Experts report that 80% of critical sales information is heard, not spoken.

Keep this in mind. If you want to be a great listener, be mindful not to talk 80% of the time in a conversation with your prospect or client. The real opportunity lies in listening.

### 2 - Active listening is extremely helpful in building rapport.

Active listening is about paying attention. It's about taking notes and repeating things that make sense back to people so they know you're listening.

You would be surprised at the number of times I hear people say, "Ryan, I don't like to take notes because it's distracting." Okay, so take note of the major things, and then occasionally stop to think back, after listening actively, and summarize with the

important things that were said.

For example, you might say, "Mr. Jones, as I'm taking a few notes here, I want to make sure I don't miss out on some things you say that are really important." Then you can say, "What I've heard you say is 1, 2, 3. I've got some great ways to help you with that."



### 3 - To prove you're listening, repeat back—but paraphrase.

Active listening involves repeating back to people what you've heard, but it's important to paraphrase it. Don't just read it back to them word for word, because that's annoying. Paraphrase it.

### 4 - Listen for adjectives that your client is using, and then use them yourself.

When I sit down with an ad sales client who's saying, "I'm looking for wise ideas," or "I'm trying to be very marketing-savvy," or "I'm looking for things that are really unique," I write down the words "wise," "savvy" and "unique."

So whether I'm talking back to the person on the phone, in person or on Zoom, I use words that resonate with them, like "savvy" and "wise." So I might say back to them, "I

think this will be a very wise solution, Mr. Jones," and "I think this will be a savvy solution for you."

The idea is to listen for the adjectives that are meaningful to your prospects and then use those adjectives back.

One word of caution, though: Be careful to steer clear of words that get over-used, like "awesome."

### 5 - Listen for tempo and mimic it.

Listen for the tempo of your client, and then mimic that tempo. So if you're a person who talks fast, like me, and you're dealing with somebody that talks quite slowly, make sure you're listening for their tempo—and then mirror that tempo to the best of your ability.

### 6 - Listen for volume and mimic it.

If your client is a quiet talker, you need to mirror their volume, as well. If they're a loud talker, mirror that. But keep in mind that there's nothing harder than listening to a person who's talking really fast and then they're at volume 10.

So as a listener, consider the tempo and volume that's comfortable to hear.

Now, what if you're a person who talks slowly and speaks softly, and they talk loudly and quickly? Just pay attention, listen to them, and mimic their speed and volume within reason.

A quick word of caution here, though: If you're talking to someone who has an accent, don't mimic that—just tempo and volume. (Continued on page 11.)

## 10 Reasons (Continued)

### 7 - Clarify your understanding by asking for specifics.

You can increase your comprehension all throughout the ad sales call by listening and asking for specifics. For example, “Mr. Jones, can you give me some specifics on that?” Or, “Mr. Jones, can you give me a few more specifics on A, B and C.”

Ask for specifics.

### 8 - Listen for clues to close the deal.

Phrases like the following signal that your prospect is ready to close the deal: “I need to do this really soon.” “My boss is upset, and I need to get something figured out.” “We’ve got a challenge that we’ve got to figure out in the next 30 days.”

So, be listening for clues—some people call them “buying signals.”

In my media sales training, when I listen to clients’ calls, though, I’m not always hearing them listen for these clues. For example, an ad salesperson I’ll call “Roman” sent me a call to listen through, and his prospect actually said, “Roman, I’m ready to go. This is great. Let’s close this deal.” And Roman was so caught up in his slide deck that he just kept going on.

I wish I’d been there so I could’ve stomped on his toe and said, “Hey, Roman, pay attention. He wants to buy now. You don’t need to sell him anymore.”

### 9 - Don’t interrupt.

There’s almost nothing more annoying than someone who interrupts.

So, as a listening skill, if you have an answer ready to give to a client, don’t be

sitting on the edge of your seat. Don’t be sitting there with your mouth open, ready to go. Don’t interrupt.

Now if you do need to interject something, wait for the appropriate time. You might raise your finger when it’s time to jump in. Signify that you have something to say.

But don’t interrupt. Interrupting is irritating on so many levels.

### 10 - Ask questions, but smart ones.

Ask questions that have a real purpose. Don’t ask questions just to ask questions.

Make sure they’re good questions, though, and be careful to avoid open-ended questions that are trite and overused. Here’s an example of what not to do: “So Bill, what keeps you up at night?” That’s not a good question—and it sounds kind of creepy.

Also avoid, “Tell me what’s working for you right now?” Because here you’re inviting your prospect or client to either say, “Nothing,” or to talk about your nearest competitor and what they’re doing for them.

Here are some great questions you can consider instead: “What would one new customer mean to you?” Or, “What can I do to save you money this month?”

Or this one: “When you took this meeting with me, was there a problem you were hoping that I could potentially solve?”

To sum up, listening is a skill that every salesperson says they’re good at. Yet when I evaluate sales strategy, most of the time I find that salespeople are preaching.

Remember this: When you’re preaching,

you’re not listening—and when you’re not listening, you’re not selling.

Listen more to sell more.

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

*Your coach, Ryan.*

---

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

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

Contact information:

Ryan R. Dohrn  
President/Founder  
360 Ad Sales Training and Strategy  
Brain Swell Media LLC  
[Ryan@BrainSwellMedia.com](mailto:Ryan@BrainSwellMedia.com)

<http://www.BrainSwellMedia.com>  
<http://RyanDohrn.com>  
<http://360adsales.com>  
<http://sellingbackwards.com>  
<http://SalesTrainingWorld.com>  
<http://AdSalesNation.com>

Follow him on [Twitter.com/ryandohrn](https://twitter.com/ryandohrn) for daily tips and advice.

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/ryandohrn>



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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