

INFORMER



Community
Papers of
Michigan

April 2021

Spring Virtual Conference

A time to focus on new growth
and opportunities for CPM Members
and their staff

Program Outline on Page 2

Spring Virtual Conference

PROGRAM OUTLINE



VIRTUAL EVENT PRESENTATIONS

These 55 minute virtual presentations will provide attendees information targeted at business improvements for the publishers. The program will run four consecutive Fridays beginning on April 9, 2021 and concluding on April 30, 2021. Each Friday there will be a session that begins at 12:00 PM EDT, a 5 minute break and then a second presentation that begins at 1:00 PM EDT. The specific order of these presentations will be determined and announced in a series of e-blasts to from ACP as well as next month's Publish Magazine, but here is the presentation lineup that will include improvement ideas for any and all publications.

- **8 things every publisher should track & share.**

Metrics are an excellent way to monitor the health of your business in many areas. Learn some simple calculations that will help you discover strengths and weaknesses and track performance improvements.

- **7 ways to engage your reader.**

Competition for your reader's time and attention gets greater all the time. Learn effective, affordable ways to up your reader engagement, from contests, in-paper promotions and more.

- **6 ways to improve your publication's brand.**

Your brand is the sum total of your customers' perceptions, notions and experience. It is the face, personality and the values espoused by your business – and everything in between. Some simple tips to move it in the right direction utilizing print, video, social media and more.

- **5 special sections that will work in any market.**

Special sections offer opportunities for revenue growth and advertiser excitement. Here are some that will work in any size market.

- **4 print & digital package ideas your reps will want to embrace.**

Combining print advertising and digital advertising can be difficult for your sales team. Here are some tips to increase acceptance and results.

- **3 R's of building your sales team (Recruiting / Rewards / Retention).**

Tips on finding and keeping sales professionals that will build your business with Elaine Buckley.

- **2 Approaches to virtual events.**

Learn how two companies have incorporated virtual events to support their local events during the pandemic. The virtual option can hold on to existing business when in-person options are not available.

- **1 great idea to share – idea exchange.**

The traditional "3-minute" idea exchange holds the key to a variety of business improvement opportunities. From cost savings to revenue growth, you are sure to find something to utilize right away.

VIRTUAL EVENT TLI CLASSES

In addition to the eight presentations listed above, The Leadership Institute will deliver four TLI classes on consecutive Thursdays beginning on April 8, 2021 at 11:00 AM EDT, and each of the next three Thursdays at the same time. These classes will be presented by the Dean of TLI, Rob Zarrilli who is sure to pack the sessions with sales building material and the energy to make the 55 minute sessions just fly by.

These class presentations will require pre-registration for anyone who wishes to earn TLI credits toward their CAE Certification and attendance will be monitored and recorded for verification. If you thought Tuesdays with Morrie was filled with lessons, wait until you try Thursdays with Rob! Here is the class lineup for April.

- **TLI 105 – Communicating Through Listening** – Discover the power of effective communication through a variety of listening concepts and techniques.
- **TLI 247 – Building and Delivering Effective Sales Scripts** – Without an effective sales script, your sales call can end up like a poorly told story. Learn to put together scripts that will engage your listener and keep your sales call on track.
- **TLI 103 – Answering Today's Sales Objections** – No good sale is ever won without a fight! Prepare yourself for sales combat by learning how to uncover, confront and overcome today's common sales objections.
- **TLI 248 – The Soul of the Team** – For most people, succeeding in life requires mastering the art of teamwork. Whether at work, school, church, or home, virtually everyone is part of a team—and when they work well, teams can accomplish more than individuals working by themselves. Learn the four simple yet highly effective principles that separate the truly great teams from the mediocre ones.

TOPICAL DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Following the TLI Classes on both April 15, 2021 and April 29, 2021, there will be presentations targeted to specific areas for your publication business. The program on April 15th will be circulation focused and the program for April 29th will be focused on the Affinity Suite of products. The first portion of the session will be a presentation and the second portion will be an opportunity for industry professionals to have an open discussion on issues and topics they will bring to the table. Each session will be limited to 90 information packed minutes.

- **April 15 – Circulation Session** – The opening presentation will be a case study of transitioning to requester publication status for potential postage savings. The second part of the program will be an opportunity for circulation professionals to ask questions, share ideas and common issues facing their operations.
- **April 29 – Graphics Session** – Are you tired of sending your hard earned money to Adobe each month for software? The solution is here now using the Affinity Suite of products. Learn how Publisher can replace InDesign, Design can replace Illustrator, and Photo can replace Photoshop. The best part is the price. It's only \$150 for the whole suite, period. Not \$150 per month, but a lifetime. See the products in action in this fast-paced demonstration by someone who uses it every day.

Check your email for sign-up information.



By John Foust
Raleigh, NC

Ad-Libs

12 Ad Campaign Tips



Want to get more eyes on your ads?

Let's take a quick look at some ad design tips:

1 – Keep things simple and uncluttered

The four basic elements of a print ad are (1) headline, (2) illustrative element, (3) body copy and (4) logo. When they are arranged in a way that is easy to follow – and when there are no unnecessary images – the ad is more likely to be noticed.

2 – Use easy-to-read line breaks in headlines.

A line break is where one line ends and the next line begins. Since readers naturally pause for a split second at the end of a line, the break should be placed to look visually correct -- and sound right in the mind. Here are two headlines. The second one works better.

**Save
big on ceiling
fans**

**Save big
on ceiling fans**

3 – Use a graphic hook

A dominant visual element stands out on the page or on the screen. If an ad features a number of illustrations or photos, make one considerably larger than the others. Don't hesitate to make the image so large that it bleeds off the edge.

4 – Use white space

Like a room with furniture which is placed too close together, a crowded ad doesn't provide enough room to navigate. In addition to giving readers some walking room, white space can be a powerful graphic hook.

5 – Don't use distracting borders

It's what's inside the border that counts. The border shouldn't become an extra element.

6 – Use all-caps sparingly

There are two times to use all upper-case characters: (1) in short words in a short headline or (2) in a proper name, like IBM, BMW or NHL. (Continued on page 4.

12 Tips... By John Foust continued from page 3

7 – Use readable fonts

Trendy styles can be difficult to read. It's best to stick with traditional fonts. Generally speaking, serif fonts are more legible in lengthy body copy and bolder sans serif fonts are fine for headlines.

8 – Put the logo at the bottom right or bottom center

Resist the temptation to place the logo at the top. Because we read from top to bottom and from left to right, an ad's logical ending point – the spot for the logo – is at the bottom right or center

9 – Use relevant illustrations and photos

Pictures must be meaningful and should clarify the headline. The best illustrations show the advertised product in use or demonstrate a benefit.

10 – Set body copy flush left

Ragged left text is nearly impossible to read, because readers are accustomed to starting each line at a consistent left margin. Justified copy blocks are problematic, as well, because they create wide spaces between some words."

11 – Use color with restraint

Research shows that color helps ads stand out. But don't overdo it. Too much color creates clutter. You've probably seen ads that look like an explosion in a crayon factory. That's no way to appeal to readers.

12 – Stay away from reverses

It's not a good idea to use white images and words on a dark background. Readers are accustomed to dark print on a light background. Make it easy for them.



MOW VALUE
Mowers to mulch, it's all on sale **starting Saturday!**

SPRING SALE
up to **40% Off**

PRICE HARDWARE

1234 Washington Street
Somerville Heights
000-000-0000
www.namewebsite.com

Everything for Your Lawn & Garden
planting & growing aids • mowers & tools • planters & accessories • & so much more

Sale Ends Friday, April 03, 2015.
List details, terms and conditions here. List details, terms and conditions here.

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April Showers Bring Spring Savings

Now even the rainy days will put a smile on your face!

Save 10% Off
Your Total Purchase Every Rainy Day This April!

(small print) List details, terms and conditions here.

Helix Kidswear

1234 Washington Street
Somerville Heights
000-000-0000
www.namewebsite.com

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(c) Copyright 2021 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. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com



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

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



Papers Can't Depend on Retail Advertisers to Survive

Publishers looking to reboot their markets following the pandemic need to recognize the retail sector is no longer their best revenue source.

The recent demise of one Minnesota newspaper, the Warroad Pioneer, is well documented in the April, issue of Reader's Digest magazine.

I have personal knowledge of the Pioneer story because I spent two days working with Warroad Pioneer publisher Rebecca Golden in 1999, speaking for her with the community on how she and local businesses might thrive.

Warroad, like much of America, is a small community. The region is known for its great fishing, internationally acclaimed hockey stars and an excellent high school hockey team.

The community has a decent number of small retail businesses for its size, but many of them depend on the tourist trade, not the local residents, to exist. The local supermarket distributes its weekly preprint in an out-of-town shopper and the only new car dealer, once a regular major advertiser, is investing most of its dollars into online advertising.

Golden published a good paper. It was well written and nicely designed. But her dependence on retail advertising was her Achilles' heel. It wasn't that the majority of local stores didn't want to support her, they just thought they didn't need to advertise to locals they believed were already "loyal" customers. Most didn't understand how important a local paper is to holding a community together. Warroad's local businesses either forgot, or were never taught, the importance of TOMA (Top of Mind Awareness) and the marketing axiom "Seventy-five percent of your customers live within 25 miles of your front door."

All across America newspapers and free circulation publications are facing the same situation. Most national and regional chain stores, once a lucrative source of revenue, have deserted smaller communities. The small, local boutiques that replaced them are often poorly informed regarding the reach of digital advertising, too tightly financed to afford traditional advertising and are more of a hobby for the owner than a business.

So where does today's publisher turn for new revenue? And what can a paper's ad manager do to increase the company's bottom line?

In our mostly rural communities, we've turned to the service providers, local manufacturing firms and once overlooked professionals as fresh revenue sources. Locally owned banks and credit unions as well as full-service insurance agencies are good examples of service providers that continue to be excellent potential advertisers.

Others include locally managed hospitals and medical facilities, home construction and sales organizations, privately owned colleges, universities and regional community colleges. The city itself, the local chamber of commerce, community celebrations and annual event organizations as well as the economic development director also are emerging sources for new advertising dollars.

These are major dollar advertisers who understand that the local newspaper is key to creating community and a spirit of consensus. Without a strong, united community those businesses have a limited future with a declining number of clients, students, employees and attendees. It also will lead to a diminishing tax base. These resources have the deep pockets and good reason to underwrite the future of their hometown paper. (Continued on page 6.)



Papers Can't Depend On Retail Advertisers...

by Peter Wagner Continued from page 5

But it doesn't stop there. Local, smaller professionals from the fancy-cuts men's barbershop to local CPA and law firms are becoming good community supports and local paper advertisers.

Still, harvesting those new dollars requires creativity and a commitment to more one-of-a-kind special sections and numerous weekly community support pages.

Special projects and sections which draw strong support from the first group of advertisers include tabloid or multi-page salutes to law enforcement officers, volunteer or city firefighters, health-care workers (including the EMT volunteers) in your area and even the members of your local FFA and 4-H chapters.

Other ideas include "(Town Name), An All-American City" and "All Roads Lead To (Town Name)."

The "All-American City" project features articles about nationally recognized people — military, political, religious, business leaders — born in your community as well as nationally known products, practices and cultural changes that originated in your town."



"All Roads Lead To" is a guide of exciting experiences that can be found by driving into your community via key highways located on each side of town.

Both sections, and many others like them, have been well received and supported by local-minded businesses that appreciate sections that promote the history, fun and value of living in their town.

We do a different approach to the annual summer series in our N'West Iowa REVIEW each year. The

multiweek series usually includes coverage of 12-14 communities in our four-county area.

The smaller businesses on the second list — as well as many traditional advertisers — are excellent prospects for regular monthly pages that provide a consistent, contracted advertising package at an economical predetermined cost. Some such pages include 6-pacs, 8-pacs, monthly professional page, our Home Improvement page, the "I believe in (your town)" sponsored page and our A to Z Business Directory.

Even more exceptional dollars are available by selling an unlimited number of once-a-year salute pages promoting everything from Easter Sunday church service schedules to homecoming courts to annual celebration ideas.

So, take a big breath and put a smile on your face. There continues to be a strong future for community papers. We simply need to direct our attention to the advertisers that believe in the community and the value of the hometown paper. It will require hard work and fresh thinking, but the survival of the printed paper is well worth the effort.

Peter W. Wagner is founder and publisher of the award winning Sheldon, IA, N'West Iowa REVIEW and 13 additional publications. This free monthly GET REAL newsletter is produced especially for publishers, editors and sales managers who still believe in the value and importance of the PRINTED paper. [CLICK HERE](#), to also receive Wagner's free PAPER DOLLARS email newsletter featuring a unique sales ideas and promotions. The two monthly email newsletters contain information completely different from each other. You can contact Wagner can be contacted at pww@iowainformation.com or (CELL) 712-348-355 for information regarding his convention programs and webinars on publishing better papers and enjoying greater profit.

Concerning Community Papers

There seems to be something in the air at newspapers right now

by Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

There's something in the air in the newspaper business, and it's not easy to put a finger on what that something is. You know me, however. I'm going to attempt to do just that.

I delayed the annual survey I've conducted of newspaper publishers and managers since 2017 because I wasn't sure it would be helpful to compare what happened over the past year to previous years. Let's face it, last year a lot of us were wondering if we'd be applying for a greeter's position at Walmart after the effects of the pandemic on advertising revenue.

However, if the calls, emails and messages I've been receiving over the past couple of months are any indication, it looks like Walmart will need to look elsewhere to fill their greeter positions. There's definitely something in the air.

I first noticed a change in attitudes around December. A few years ago I decided against offering webinars for newspapers during the last two months of the year because everyone seemed too busy getting holiday editions ready to attend classes online. That changed in late 2020. I was hearing from newspapers asking for training for new staff members, and from others who wanted to hone their skills or learn something new that would improve their products.

Online classes in November, December and January broke records, going all the way back to my first webinars in 2008. I'm not talking about end-of-the-year records. More people were attending my online classes than at any time previously. Hundreds of newspapers attended one or more session in those months. Not only that, I began hearing from vendors, associations and groups, interested in sponsoring webinars. That's not something that happened a lot before 2020.

And it's more than people showing up for online classes. I've had friends and former clients starting new papers, or purchasing papers being closed by ownership groups in other states. Many tell me their papers are doing well and there's obvious excitement about prospects for future growth.

Maybe it's because I'm getting older, but it seems like I hear from younger journalists more often than I used to. Most days, I receive multiple requests for advice or insights from young publishers, designers and editors.

A year ago, much like some of the folks reading this column, I questioned what I would be doing in the future. Let's face it, keynote speakers and consultants aren't in great demand during a pandemic. Like many of my newspaper friends, I began creating new streams of revenue. To my surprise, most of them have been success-



Kevin Slimp began to notice more papers asking about redesigns this year. When newspapers begin making long-term plans, redesigns are often on their "to do" lists.

ful and I'm busier than ever working with my staff on multiple projects.

A lot of folks would question why I'm still so committed to community newspapers with so many things demanding my attention these days. To me, the answer is obvious. The same optimism that radiates from so many of my newspaper friends has infected me.

I hear from newspaper associations almost daily who are making plans for upcoming conventions and training events. In addition, I've never had so many publishers contacting me about redesigns and staff training. Redesigns are major undertakings, normally embarked upon by folks with long-term plans to grow their papers. The fact that so many newspapers are planning redesigns suggests there is significant energy being given to making long-term investments.

What's to be

made of all of this? I'm not sure. My educated guess is that after surviving the past year, many of us feel like we have overcome obstacles we would never have imagined just two or three years ago. Guess what? We survived. At least most of us did.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying the future is totally rosy. When the pandemic is finally declared "over," we will continue to deal with the aftermath of COVID-19 for years to come. However, I continue to bear witness concerning community newspapers. There is definitely something in the air.

Maybe it's time to do that annual survey and find out just what that something is.

Kevin Slimp has been a popular speaker and consultant in the newspaper industry since developing the PDF remote printing method in the mid 1990s. He can be reached at kevin@kevinslimp.com.

Catch Kevin's upcoming webinar schedule at:
newspaperacademy.com



By **Bob Berting**
Berting Communications

The Real World of Advertising Sales

Beyond the First Meeting Magic Words Strategy

Let's take the first prospect meeting. This is not the time to high pressure a prospect. Recently we see a strategy to present options and recommendations in the first sales meeting. After a barrage of asking clever questions, presenting ideas on the spot, talking about the Corona Virus , developing the proposal, giving a variety of pricing options, giving testimonials, overcoming objections, attempting to close the prospect ...all these barrage of actions are on the first meeting.

Obviously not the way to sell the prospect on the first call. This approach could not only irritate the prospect but put the advertising salesperson making the presentation look very pushy and not an advertising sales professional and a trusted advisor.

Introducing the first call of a 3 call process-establishing credibility

Instead of doing everything on the first call, let's look at a more reasonable process to sell the prospect. Let's begin by examining a good first call on the prospect. According to most experts, after you have researched their website, now is the time to tell them what you know about their business—and how interested you are in what they are trying to achieve. This usually leads to questions you can ask about their business goals. The whole thrust of effort is designed to get them to open up and reveal everything about their business and their marketing goals plus hopefully their budget for advertising.

As a media buyer for my advertising agency of 30 years, I have been subjected to this approach. In a typical example, I'm sitting there with a media salesperson and I'm thinking "who is this person—can I trust them—why should I tell them all about my plans—if I've got goals I want to achieve why should I reveal them when I hardly know him or her?" The bottom line is that they have no credibility with me...I'm not ready to open up until I can thoroughly trust them, think they're reliable, and have confidence in them.

Identification

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

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

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

I don't know your company—what is the complete name of your publication—what other businesses do you have?

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

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

Once this information is presented- the prospect now is in a position to better trust

and to believe in your credibility. You'll notice there has been no mention of showing a media kit. It has all been verbal.

Building Rapport

There's always a likeability factor in selling. It's amazing what a smile can do to break down barriers between people. It's always important to find common ground and build rapport. How many times have we heard the phrase " build rapport" but even in today's world of selling it's amazing how many times we forget to do it. It still means something for a prospect to be complimented on their hobby or something they've done.

Creation of interest

At the conclusion of the first call —that is the time to do what I call "gravitational selling" This is where you want the prospect to gravitate to you in preparation for the second call. It also can be called "creation of interest". Now you tell the prospect that on the next visit, you want to learn more about their business and show them how you will create great custom designed ads for them in print and digital as well as formulating an advertising plan that will reach their target audience more effectively. Then you ask for permission to have a second visit.

The second call

Fact finding approach—do rough layout sketches incorporating the big idea—analyze why rough layouts are done—how to build their image—ask about their budget—ask permission to bring advertising plan and comprehensive layouts to third meeting. (Continued on page 9.)

The Real World of Advertising Sales...

by Bob Berting Continued from page 8

The third call

Presenting the comprehensive layout ideas, Presenting the advertising plan, Covering objections, Closing techniques, Creation of interest

At the conclusion of the first call—that is the time to do what I call “gravitational selling” This is where you want the prospect to gravitate to you in preparation for the second call. It also can be called “creation of interest”. Now you tell the prospect that on the next visit, you want to learn more about their business and show them how you will create great custom designed ads for them in print and digital as well as formulating an advertising plan that will reach their target audience more effectively. Then you ask for permission to have a second visit.

Retention—who is going to service the account?’

Hopefully the prospect is now the customer of the publication. Someone has to service the new account. I wonder who could that person be? Why it’s the person who sold the account of course. All of the ad sales training experts who promote selling everything on the first call never talk about what happens after the prospect becomes

a customer. Someone who knows the account quite well has to be a marketing partner with the new customer by preparing the ads, presenting more publication services like inserts, special promotions, etc. The customer expects this situation to happen the way I have described it.

High customer retention starts with the first contact with a prospect and continues throughout the lifetime of a relationship and successful retention effort takes this entire lifestyle into account. A publication’s ability to attract and retain new customers is related not only to its product and services, but also the way it services its existing customers. This service generates a reputation that creates a powerful image within and across the marketplace. Customer retention also has a direct impact on profitability.

Trust and believability

The bedrock of customer retention is also based on these factors:

- The image and reputation of the publication. How does it fit in the media mix of the customer? What is the strength of their readership?
- The trust and believability of the

salesperson.

• The plan of action for the customer will include the following promises:

1. I will design a compelling advertising campaign using my publication to present your products and services in the most creative way possible.
2. I will work with you as your marketing partner to fine tune your ad campaign and adjust it to changing market conditions.
3. I will treat your advertising dollars as if they were mine, giving you the best discounts available to control your costs.
4. I will keep you up to date with what is going on in the market from my communication with other business owners.

The final word on customer retention

The number one place publications can get revenue is through retention. They need to stop being so product oriented and work on establishing an effective strategy for their customers. That strategy will include a marketing plan which will commit the customers to a long range advertising program with the publication.

Bob’s newest e-book is “Smart Customer Connections For Advertising Salespeople”. You can order all 4 of Bob’s books on his website: 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 or 317-849-5408.



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Michael Angelo Caruso

Cooking Up a Great Sales Presentation

It's fun to draw comparisons between the art of selling and other disciplines such as cooking.

I recently read an article that offered tips for saving meals that don't pass the chef's early taste test. Here are three of the tips:

1) If the meal is too salty, add unseasoned liquid, mix in neutral vegetables such as lettuce, spinach or zucchini. You can also mask the saltiness with acid from lemon juice or white-wine vinegar.

2) Too spicy? Neutralize the zing with olive oil, butter, ghee or coconut oil. Milk, yogurt or sour cream do the trick, too. You can also use nondairy milk, such as cashew or coconut. Nut butters or avocado can also take the spiciness down a notch.

3) Is the dish too bitter? Add some salt. Sugar can work, too. Remember to add slowly and sample as you go.

Concocting a good talk

You can make similar real-time adjustments during your sales

presentations. Is the presentation too dry? Drop in a fun story or add some humor. Not serious enough? Fold in a thoughtful quotation or a cautionary tale.

Is the meeting too one-sided? Ask thought-provoking questions and let the prospect talk for a while.

The trick is to be good enough at presenting that you can monitor the prospect's reaction as you are working your way toward the close. Salespeople are not able to accomplish these types of micro-adjustments for many reasons, including:

1. Lack of empathy for the audience. Sellers are often too self-absorbed to realize what's going on during their presentation. I know this from doing ride alongs with salespeople. In the car, afterward, the seller often remembers things differently than I do. The reason? They were busy presenting and I was merely observing.

2. Not familiar enough with presentation content or selling strategies. If you've got your hands full with the mechanics of the presentation, it's difficult to focus on the psychology of selling.

3. Too self-conscious. Selling is about taking chances. Leading someone through a conversation and trying to close are a challenge if one is insecure or not self-assured. A lack of confidence causes sellers to be overly cautious and slows the sales cycle, sometimes to a grinding halt.

4. In the habit of "cooking to the recipe."

Rigid sales scripts and a lack of improvisation skills keep sellers from being more creative during presentations.

Want help with this?

All of the above issues are solvable. Get world class sales training for you and your team in Michael Angelo Caruso's [Zoom Your Sales](#) online course.



Group discounts are available. Just [reach out to Michael](#) and let him know what you need.

Michael Angelo Caruso teaches leaders and salespeople how to be better presenters. He's a valued communication consultant to companies and organizations all over the world. Michael has delivered over 2,000 presentations and keynote speeches on five continents and in 49 of the 50 states. He's an internationally recognized expert on the subjects of leadership, selling and improved customer service.

Michael Angelo Caruso, Edison House, Inc., 3543 Tremonte Circle South, Rochester, MI 48306, (248) 224-9667

Print publication has changed, there's no doubt, but it still exists. Transition to online viewing is more prevalent, but the ads on the pages are still pretty much the same as they were year's ago. There is a greater use of color, but it still comes down to...

Ad Talk

with Ellen Hanrahan

Gray Matters

Gray matters... can't get along without it in our job. We need gray matter—whether we're talking about our brain or the fact that we work in a black and white world filled with shades of gray—most of the time it's black ink on newsprint.

Color can add a lot of impact to the ad itself, but most customers will opt for the less expensive black and white version when it comes to printed materials. Nonetheless, our job is to create advertising that is effective—it informs, educates, persuades or even entertains. Mostly we try to inform and persuade.

Most papers run "Coupon Pages." There is a specific size, specific border and one item—usually! These are the established ad parameters and yet each of the products or services sold were different. This offered us an opportunity to compare the effective coupons with those that were not.

An effective ad will be organized, clear, readable and persuasive. Granted, as a designer I can not be solely responsible for decisions made by the advertiser, such as putting way too much information in the ad (remember it should be a coupon for one item or service) or offering 10% off (sorry, in today's world, 10% off is not perceived as a great value). I am, however, responsible to organize the information and present it to sell the product or service. So a side-by-side comparison of the use of the space within these coupons presented an ideal learning situation.

Aim for Maximum Contrast

Color is still not an option for most advertisers and since we print on newsprint our greatest contrast will be the use of black and white, or as close as we can come. Gray, used judiciously can create emphasis, but too often it can dilute the message or even add visual clutter to the information (see next column). It takes practice and time to learn to use gray effectively.

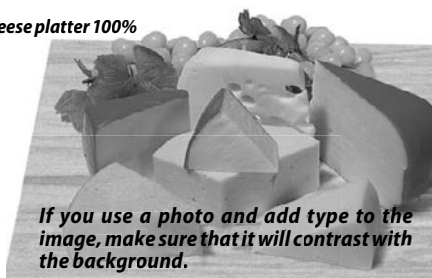
Something else we learned was the fact that even though some advertisers use a reverse

area for their identity in their regular ads, this was not effective in the coupons. In fact, the identity area with their name, address and other pertinent information was often not legible and in some cases, unreadable. We may have to drop the reverse or come up with other options as well as educate the business about the importance of legibility and readability in their advertising.

Text on Photos

My initial reaction is to say **don't** use text over photos... but if you must, bear in mind the following suggestion:

Cheese platter 100%

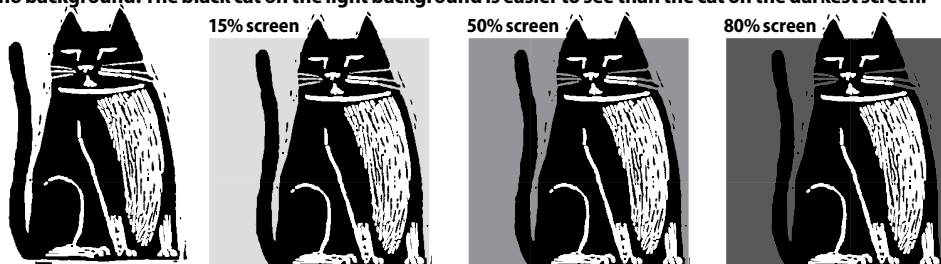


Cheese platter 65%



The text is easier to read in the bottom photo, but a photo with detail makes it difficult for the reader to discern the differences in the photo. Trying to figure out what the photo is should not be the focus of the ad. Even keeping the cheese platter at 100% and reversing the text is still not a good option.

SEE HOW THE CAT is affected by the change of gray in background. Focal points are created when one area differs from another. The ability to discern images and backgrounds or figure/ground relationships is a fundamental law of perception. Contrast brings images into focus. The greatest contrast is the black cat on no background. The black cat on the light background is easier to see than the cat on the darkest screen.



Design Element: Value

The elements of design, the "building blocks," help support the structure of any design and are a part of everything that is designed. These elements are **Line, Space, Shape, Texture, Size, Color** and **Value**.

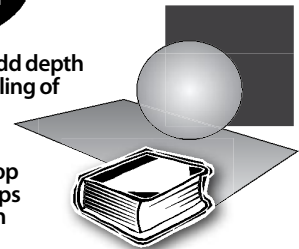
VALUE: The lightness or darkness of an area. Value helps to define shape and creates texture. Value can visually separate information. High contrast—black vs. white—is still one of the best ways to add impact or to highlight an item or idea. Contrast is one way to control the focus in our advertising.

Value changes from light to dark can direct attention or emphasize an element.



Value creates contrast to highlight an item

Value can also add depth to create the feeling of distance or dimension...



...and a grey drop shadow also helps create an illusion of depth.

Contrast is an effective way to create attention, if we are careless however, we can diminish the effectiveness of the message. Too much gray (or gradients), or a variety of grays within an ad can actually create confusion and definitely add "visual clutter."

Take into consideration that our ads appear on newsprint (in most cases) and that the contrast is slightly decreased. Add to that the fact that because of "dot gain" in the printing process, a simple 20% screen we've assigned to an item, can in fact look like a 30% gray or darker screen once it is printed.

Again, look at the printed product to see if your screen percentages work, and adjust accordingly...

Final Thoughts

Still haven't looked into *Affinity Publisher*... but it should be soon. Also have a number of *Adobe Cloud* products to upgrade, but will wait until articles and newsletters are done. Nothing worse than new upgrades (change!) and with all the virtual seminars, conferences and tutorials—I'm busier than ever!

Stay Safe until next time...

I was a student, an art teacher, a graphic designer, a writer and again a student. For info, PDFs of articles, or have ideas or comments, you can e-mail: hanrahan.ln@att.net Ellen Hanrahan ©2021



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