
INFORMER

July 2021

Happy Independence Day!



**Community
Papers of
Michigan**

How Much is Too Much?

Let's talk about investing in the future of your newspaper



by Kevin Slimp
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About 15 or so years ago, I received a call from a newspaper designer at a small weekly in Tennessee. She was panicked because of a technical issue that was causing a lot of complications at her paper.

"No problem," I told her. For less than \$100, the paper could purchase a software utility that would fix the problem.

A few minutes later, my phone rang again. "The publisher says we can't afford it."

My response worried the designer. "Walk into your publisher's office," I told her, "and remind her that I know what kind of car she drives."

She didn't want to follow my instructions, but I assured her she wouldn't get into any trouble.

You see, I knew what type of car the publisher drove. I'd known her for years. Just now, I checked, learning that a 2021 model of her car sells for more than \$100,000.

A few minutes later, my phone rang again. "We just ordered the software."

Since starting my own publishing company four years ago, I've gotten a feel for what it's like to be on the other side of the desk. As a consultant for 25 years, I often advised publishers about making long-term plans and investing in their companies.

This became especially apparent to me a few days ago when a staff member told me we needed to talk. She had a business proposal. We met for coffee – well, I had a diet coke – and discussed her ideas.

I came out of the meeting



a little poorer in the short term. These were her ideas:

- We should invest in a subscription-based software package, priced at \$500 per month, that would help ensure that we're making accurate payments to writers.
- We should hire more editors. There were a couple of reasons for this, but I was sold on the idea because years of consulting have taught me that quality is everything, and I agreed that we needed to "up" the quality of our editing. In addition, we're publishing a lot more books these days, and I've been working my editors too hard, which has resulted in a loss in quality.
- We need to invest in more office space. Yes, we could continue to work the way we have, but our tight spaces were resulting in short fuses, as well as storage and other issues.

I now know more than ever about what it means to be



a publisher. It means that every penny invested in the company comes directly out of my pocket. There's no salary from other owners. No group to pay my way. My income is based on the profit of the company. What I make is what's left over after all expenses are paid.

We discussed the pros and cons of each idea. I brought up a possibility that she could continue to work as hard as she has been, and I could pay her more money, but we both knew that wasn't the best option. The best option was to look toward the future of the business and do what is needed to help ensure continued growth in the long term.

One reason many community newspapers succeed is because their owners live in the communities they serve. In addition to their love for their communities, along with an understanding of the importance of journalism, they also realize every decision made at the paper affects their financial futures.

When I considered the three proposals presented to me, it didn't take long to realize our company had two choices: 1) Continue to go on as we were, which would

allow us to make a living, but keep us from significant growth in the long-term, or 2) We could invest in the future, meaning I could take home a little less money over the next few months, knowing our business would be poised to continue our growth well into the future.

I bet you can guess what I decided. We met and looked over the new office space this afternoon. I'll be signing the lease later this week, and I'm very excited about the new editors who will be working with us.

Speaking of Software

My friend Reed Anfinson, publisher in Minnesota, called in a bind last week. His paper wasn't going to press on time due to a technical error with the InDesign newspaper file. I asked him to send the file to me, I fixed it, then sent the new file back to him. Reed called again yesterday with the same problem, so I took the time to tell him how I repaired the file.

A few months ago, I wrote about a software app called IDMarkz, from Markzware (markzware.com), a European software company that creates plugins and applications related to InDesign. In my research, I learned that IDMarkz does a great job of fixing corrupt InDesign files. That's how I fixed Reed's problem file.

Now you know what Reed knows. If you use InDesign, go ahead and purchase IDMarkz. Get the full \$150us version. You can thank me later.

Kevin's webinar schedule is at:
newspaperacademy.com



By Bob Berting
Berting Communications

RATES ARE BEING CUT

Cutting Ad Rates Can be a Tricky Game

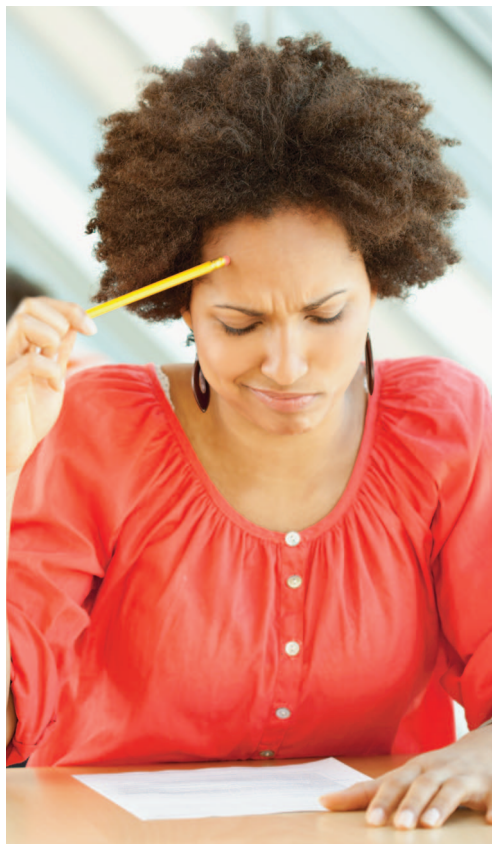
While many publishers don't believe in rate cutting, they feel forced to do it to stay competitive. However, rate cutting can be a tricky game. There are many financial, budgeting, managerial, and sales reasons to stay on the rate card. Let's take a look why:

Effect on the sales team

Rate cutting puts a lot of pressure on the sales team by creating ambiguity and confusion about how they are to conduct business and how far to go with cutting deals. On the other hand, publishers are sometimes frustrated by the demands of their salespeople who want to make easier sales by offering clients special rates.

Creating insecure salespeople

Forced into price-cutting and deal making, many salespeople perceive themselves and their publications as weak. No one can be convincing as an advertising salesperson if he or she is insecure about their product. Breaking the rate card is also viewed as unprofessional by many media buyers, as well as advertising agencies. Also how can a client trust your word if he or she discovers their competition got a better deal from you? On the other hand,



prospects who pressure salespeople to get a price break, often turn into difficult clients, who will desert you for the next better deal.

Salespeople get side-tracked

Instead of concentrating on building and selling the value of their publication, many

salespeople are busy worrying about how much to give away and when.

Negotiating rates encourages salespeople to focus too much on price. Instead of working as consultant-counselors, they must now operate as "deal-makers". Instead of building long range relationships, they are in danger of losing the confidence of their clients. For the new salesperson who is still learning sales skills and gaining confidence, they do not need to see experienced salespeople negotiating rates.

Rate cutting establishes a dangerous precedent

Many salespeople offer rate deals because they think once the advertiser is in their publication, they can get them back on regular rate card rates in the future. But the salesperson is setting a precedent that's on the record with their customer.

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.



Ryan Dohrn

President/Founder,
Brain Swell Media LLC

Handling objections is a skill that every media salesperson must master. Amidst selling during this global pandemic, objection-handling has taken a little bit of a different twist. Having worked with almost 30,000 salespeople around the globe, I've found that objection-handling is a skill that most salespeople think they have mastered, but that most fail at when put on the spot. Handling objections and not coming across as argumentative or arrogant has a lot to do with being well-practiced. If I've said it once I'll say it a 1,000 times ... professionals practice and amateurs wing it. Who do you want to be?

At face value, most objections from advertisers are best handled with a success story and not a fact or a statistic, based on my experience. Right now, Brain Swell Media's most recent data suggests that seven out of 10 of our advertisers are buying from an emotional perspective. We have to be very careful about using statistics and data in the sales process. Of course, using data does have its place. But I think you'll see below that when we dissect the six most common media sales objections, there are several ways we can handle them without having to give a fact or a stat. You will see here that I've

Overcoming the 6 Most Common Advertiser Objections

Media salespeople that can effectively handle objections close 40% more business

detailed the six most common objections that I encounter on a daily basis as I'm selling advertising media. You will also notice that these are written out much like a script. Please do not come across to your advertisers as a script-based sales executive, though. Rather, this is set up in such a way that you can practice by yourself—or better yet, with a peer—and get ready to roll.



Advertiser says: "We have enough business."

Media Sales Executive: "Great. Sounds like we need to move you from a new customer marketing plan to a thanking-your-current-customers plan. You do want to thank your current customers, right? Our marketing options cover more than just new customers. We help your customers engage more deeply with you, as well."

Common Media Objection #2:

Advertiser says: "We are cutting back on marketing until the pandemic is over."

Media Sales Executive: "I can certainly understand your concern. When you say, 'pandemic is over,' what does that mean to you?"

Advertiser says: "Well ... over. Dead. Etc."

Media Sales Executive: "My concern is that we are having a moving target date here that is very hard to predict. Advertising does not produce instantaneous results. People need to see your ad many times before they react. Other business owners like you are keeping their names out there so that when the customer is ready to engage, they think of them first. And that is the key—to keep your business top-of-mind." (Continued on page 5.)

Objections occur in three scenarios that are easy to replicate and practice around: 1.) When booking meetings. 2.) When you're face-to-face. 3.) When you are virtually hosting a sales call. And with any of these three, preparation is the key to overcoming objections.

Common Media Objection #1:

Advertiser says: "I'm good."

Media Sales Executive: "Good as in?" – (Be silent and listen.)

Overcoming the 6 Most Common Advertiser Objections

by Ryan Dohrn Continued from page 4

Common Media Objection #3:

Advertiser says: "I have no budget. It's all spent."

Media Sales Executive: "What about Advertiser A, B, and C?" – (You name three current advertisers.) -

Advertiser says: "What about 'em?"

Media Sales Executive: "I truly feel that your absence is their opportunity! They are all seeing results after a few months of marketing with us. How about I quickly show you some marketing ideas that are working?"

Common Media Objection #4:

Advertiser says: "My Facebook page works well for me."

Media Sales Executive: „I love to hear that you believe in marketing on social. We love social media, too. The issue is that nearly every business is competing for eyes on Facebook. So, what are you doing to stand out from your competitors?" – (Also, explain that social and digital are different.)

Common Media Objection #5:

Advertiser says: "No one reads the paper/magazine any more."

Media Sales Executive: "May I ask you a question? [OK] Whatever your answer is, please don't worry about hurting my feelings. [OK] Do you personally read our newspaper? [NO] It is not surprising at all for me to hear that no one reads the paper when you yourself do not read the paper. It's ok. The survey of one is totally normal.

What I can tell you is this ... if we published even one sentence of negativity about you, your feelings would be different about how many people read the paper. Your phone would ring off the hook. Traditional media is not a get-rich-quick plan. It is a tested and proven way to put your name in front of X number of readers every week so that when a customer is ready to buy you are the business they think of first."

Common Media Objection #6:

Advertiser says: "Word of mouth is my best marketing vehicle."

Media Sales Executive: "The problem with WOM is that you lose control of your marketing message. You are asking untrained people to carry your marketing message to the masses. Are you confident they will say what you want them to say about your business?"

Advertiser says: "Yes, I am."

Media Sales Executive: "What if they had a bad experience and did not tell you?"

Advertiser says: "What do you mean?"

Media Sales Executive: "In a word-of-mouth scenario, a bad experience can spiral out of control on social media."

Objection-handling is one of the most critical skill sets that every serious media sales executive should possess. And yet, were you aware that seven in 10 professional sales executives have never taken any type of formal sales training? I guess that's good for me being in the sales training business, but it's a bit scary to think about so many people selling without a

formal framework for sales success.

So wherever you fall on the spectrum of training, I encourage you to use these and other scenarios to create some type of flashcard system where you can practice with your peers. I'm not a big fan of role-playing, necessarily, but I do see how practice makes perfect. And serious practice will produce serious results. So I would find a practice partner—someone you trust—and practice these scenarios one-on-one until you are smooth and prepared. It's important because the worse thing you can do is practice when you are on a sales call. Your advertisers deserve better than that!

Remember, if sales was easy, everybody would be doing it. And they're not. So we're either a little bit crazy ... or we've found careers that will feed our families for a lifetime.

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

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My computer is getting a little bit cluttered. Oh, I still have plenty of space, but there are files that I will never touch again and some that may need just a little bit of work, so it would be great if I was able to send them somewhere to get “better,” like an...

Ad Clinic

Ad Talk with Ellen Hanrahan

I have been trying to clean up my electronic files (again!), so I am going through some of my older articles to either toss, revamp or update and this one, from an IFPA article from 2001, caught my eye.

The lesson is still good, but back then I was using **QuarkXPress**, but have since committed to **InDesign**. The changeover was painless, but I still save an .IDML file, you know, in case anything blows up on me and I can return to my CD version. I still don't totally trust the “Cloud.” Programs change, good design stays relevant!

Two by two

Below you see a 2 column by 2 inch business builder ad (reduced by 80% for space).

Ad #1 is pretty close to the original...which is the way that the customer wanted to keep the ad. The ad as it stands, however, becomes difficult to read. The types of jobs that he does, Home Improvements, Finish Carpentry and Home Additions are buried below the address. The specific projects that he works on, Siding, Decks, Garages, etc. are listed on the left side of the ad and separate from the types of jobs. Try to keep similar information together, it's easier for the reader to retain the info.

Ad #2 below shows the “buried” information as well as the “trapped” white space (the lighter area). There is no selling going on in this area and leaves a large, empty white whole in

the middle of the ad—not the best use of the space in this instance.

Ad improvements

Your advertising should reflect your business. In this case, Roder Carpentry does home improvements and yet his ad is hard to follow and not the least bit organized.

Ad #3 below shows a total revamping of the ad. A new graphic was added and all the pertinent information regarding the types of jobs and projects he's worked on are closer together and easier to find. The headline used in all ads, by the way, is **TFAvian (Treacyfaces)**; with the text in **Agenda** from **Font Bureau**. The greater use of the headline type required a little bit stronger border; the rounded corners helped emphasize the curve and sweep of the headline type. Quite a difference in the approach!

If that is a little too radical, I tried a more subdued, less drastic approach in **Ad #4**. I retained the original graphic but made it larger to direct the reader's eye to the name of the business.

While I cut back on the use of the headline typeface, I did keep the services provided and jobs performed in a more prominent place and close together. Without talking to the customer, it is difficult to know what they are thinking, or how much liberty I can take with the information that they give us. Unfortunately the ad that we ran was **Ad #1**. The customer gets to

choose the ad that suits them best and maybe this has worked in the past, but my personal feeling is that the unity helps bring clarity.

These small ads are the kind that filled our paper. We don't always have the opportunity to help the advertiser make the most effective use of their space and ad dollars... sigh.

New Faces (Type)

The large headline typeface at the beginning of this page is **KG Second Chances Sketch Regular**— actually it's not new, I've had it for about six years, but it reminds me of type wrapped in bandages (I no longer question how I think). So it seemed appropriate.

Anyway, I have purchased some new type faces (I am a push-over for scripts and glyphs) from sudtipos.com. Normally, not a place I shop, but they have beautiful fonts and special deals that are affordable to me. For instance:

Steak Family

with **Barbecue, Braised** and **Smoked**. Normally \$79.00 for the set, but \$27.65 for two days. This type foundry has fonts used for many commercial applications. It's worth checking out just to see some of the applications. I have recently purchased **Hipster Script Pro; Feel (Regular, bold and Black; and Gratitude Script Pro (words and Ornaments**.

Hipster Script Pro
Feel Script Pro
Gratitude

By the way, **Sudtipos** is in Argentina, so use a credit card with no foreign transaction fees if you purchase.

Unfortunately there isn't enough space to show how the typefaces can be used, but I will put together some different approaches to take with these fonts and their glyphs.

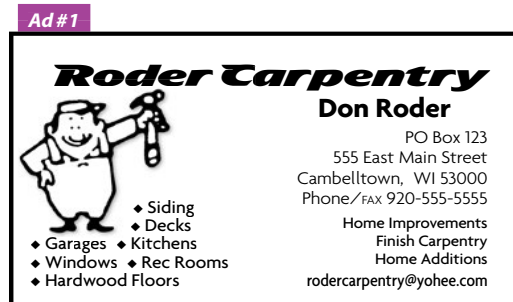
I still go to mightydeals.com, but you need to actually use the fonts you have, and I'm sure I need to go through those as well and purge some very old typefaces or those I never will use... it's always something!

Final Thoughts

As far as the 2x2 ad samples go, it was a long time ago and I am not sure that the customer even saw some of the other versions. We don't always have the time to create multi-versions of an ad. We just have to let the customer know that we are there to help them present the most effective way for them to get their information to as many readers as possible!

Until next month...

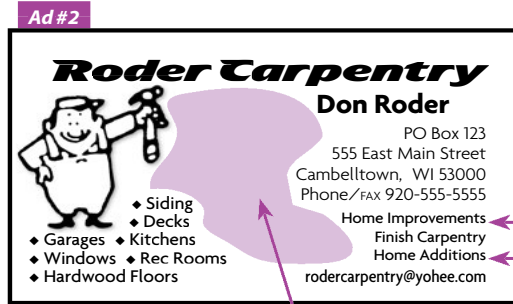
Ad #1



Ad #3



Ad #2



Ad #4



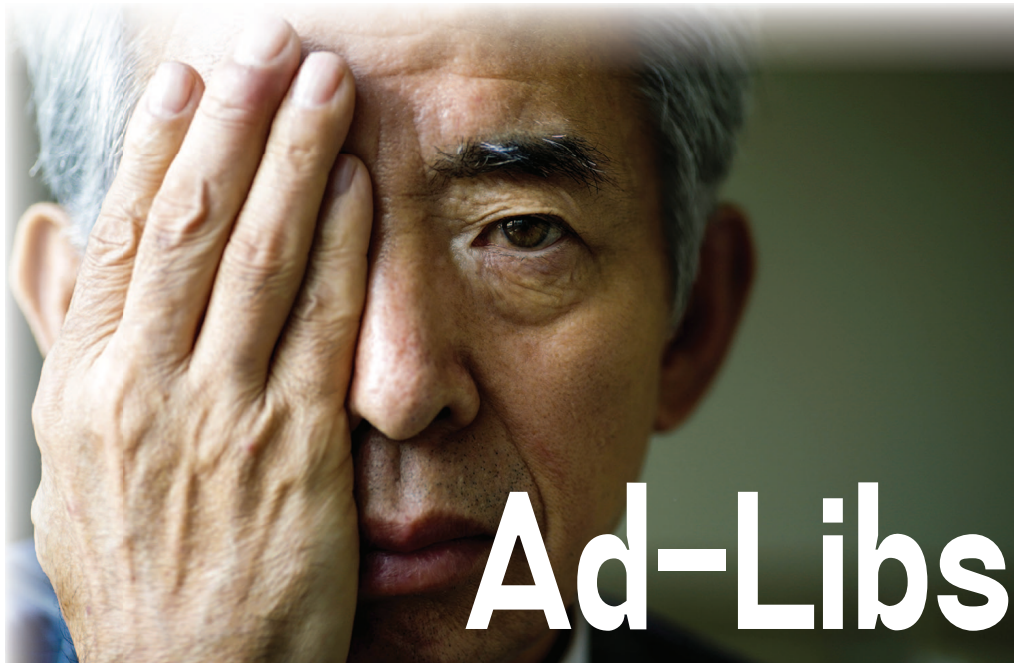
This is called “trapping the white space.” See example #1. The type of carpentry work that he does is lost below the address — it needs to be more prominent so move it under his name.

Ad #4 is closest to the original while creating much needed unity, clarity and readability...

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



By John Foust
Raleigh, NC



Advertisers' Blind Spots

When we learned how to drive, we heard about blind spots. Those are the areas which are not visible in our rear and side view mirrors. As a result, we have to be extra careful when we change lanes.

The term “blind spots” has become popular in today’s business environment. It refers to significant things that are not acknowledged or given fair consideration by management. Outside observers are often perplexed by the fact that certain obvious factors are always ignored.

Blind spots are common in the advertising business. Let’s take a look at a few examples:

1. Family. This can be a big blind spot in family-owned businesses. It’s a clear sign if you hear something like, “My grandfather wrote our ad slogan, and if it was good enough for him, it’s good enough for me.” Or, “My son just finished a marketing class, and he’s got some good ad ideas.” Or, “My niece says we

need to have a bigger presence on social media.”

2. Do-it-yourself mentality. A lot of entrepreneurs and Mom-and-Pop businesses are used to doing just about everything themselves. They don’t like to delegate tasks and they resist outside help. They hire and fire, they set office policies, they select inventories, and they keep their own books.

They also maintain tight control of their marketing. In their minds, no one could know more about promoting their businesses than they do.

3. Competitor distractions. Someone told me about his experience in working for a furniture manufacturer. His company suddenly started losing orders, because a competing company was dramatically cutting prices. His CEO called an all-staff meeting and announced that their new focus was to beat the competitor at their own game. “From that point on,” he said, “it was like Captain Ahab going after Moby Dick. But along the way, we lost our focus on quality, which had been our big selling point. It was like the CEO became blind to what we had going for us all along. It took a while to regain our balance in the market.”

Some advertisers make the same mistake. They spend so much time thinking about their competitors that they

lose sight of what differentiates them in the marketplace.

4. History. We’re all products of our past experiences. It should be no surprise when we encounter otherwise savvy business people who are wedded to old media choices – or old ad campaigns – even if those choices are no longer producing results. There may be long-standing relationships with those media outlets. Or there may be a bias against a particular newspaper or newspapers in general.

Blind spots are real, but not necessarily fatal for an ad campaign. After all, we have blind spots, too – and some of them involve our perspectives on advertising.

How should you handle an advertiser with a blind spot that is blocking the way? A good place to start is to look for common ground and bite your tongue if you are tempted to criticize.

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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

SiteSwan Website Builder Celebrates its 10 Year Anniversary

This month SiteSwan is celebrating 10 years of success as a white label website builder and web design business-in-a-box. This is a milestone that very few software companies can brag about. SiteSwan was launched in 2011 as a way for web designers to easily create and sell websites to their small business clients without any code. Over the past decade, SiteSwan has grown rapidly, establishing one of the most successful website reseller programs in the country, powering over 15,000 small business websites and used by thousands of agencies, designers and entrepreneurs all over the globe.

SiteSwan Website Builder is recognized as one the fastest and easiest ways to create a small business website. The easy-to-use website builder requires no coding or programming, and allows anyone with basic computer knowledge to create beautiful, professional, mobile-friendly websites in minutes. SiteSwan has over 150 professionally designed website themes and counting, which streamline the process for creating websites for just about any small business type. Each theme is 100% responsive and is fully customizable using SiteSwan's user-friendly site editor.

Justin Gerena, SiteSwan Co-Founder & CEO, reminisces about his early days as a web designer and how "building a website used to be so complex and take hours, days or even weeks to create a simple site for our clients. We knew there had to be a better way and that's why we created SiteSwan. Building a website with SiteSwan is fast and intuitive and only takes minutes. Using SiteSwan to build our client sites allowed us to drastically reduce the time it takes to build websites which in turn increased our profits as an agency. That's when we knew we should

offer SiteSwan to other agencies – and our reseller program was born."

Over the years, SiteSwan has evolved to become more than just a website builder. The SiteSwan Reseller Program differentiates itself from other website builders on the market by offering a complete "web design business-in-a-box." From on-boarding and training videos, to sample sales scripts and white label marketing materials, SiteSwan offers its partners everything they need to start, run and grow a successful web design agency. SiteSwan even created their own Local Prospecting Tool which helps their resellers generate leads and find clients by showing which businesses in their area do and don't have a website. Add to that a new Reputation Management solution, and SiteSwan Resellers can expand their services well beyond website design to create new revenue opportunities for their agency.

"I think what has really fueled the success of the SiteSwan Reseller Program is that we don't just provide you with the tools to build a website, but we actually show you how to use them and give you a blueprint for running a successful web design business," says Justin. "As a founder, one of the most gratifying things for me is to see everyday people with no prior web design experience join our reseller program and establish a successful business for themselves – we have resellers who went from never building a website in their lives to making six figures building websites with SiteSwan. That's incredible and extremely gratifying."

The SiteSwan Website Reseller Program has seen significant growth throughout 2020 and 2021 amid the recent COVID-19 pandemic. With small businesses

facing the challenges of forced lockdowns and social distancing, the need for a strong online presence has never been greater. COVID-19 has forced businesses to recognize the need to embrace technology and invest in a new website. Websites are no longer an exception; they are an expectation. Affordable website design is in high demand and SiteSwan Resellers are cashing in. This has led to greater interest in SiteSwan's reseller program, fueling unprecedented growth across the platform.

As SiteSwan marks its 10 year anniversary, it shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, the company has plans to double its reseller program over the next 24 months. "As we look back at our first 10 years and begin to map out our next 10 years," Justin said, "our focus is to continue to invest in our platform to support our current resellers while creating opportunities for new resellers who want to join our program." More features are being added, new themes are being released, and additional SiteSwan team members are being hired to keep up with the demand of its ever-growing network of resellers.

About SiteSwan Website Builder

The SiteSwan Website Reseller Program enables agencies, publishers, designers and entrepreneurs to create professional websites for small businesses in minutes, without any coding or technical skills required. Their white label platform includes everything needed to start building and selling websites to local businesses, all under a private brand. To learn more about SiteSwan or become a reseller, please visit <https://www.siteswan.com/> or call (800) 462-9814.





Michael Angelo Caruso

Salespeople know that time is money, so why do so many sellers squander a high percentage of face time on useless, empty topics like traffic and weather? Yes, small talk is an important segue into presentation content, but that doesn't mean you have to give it star billing. This article will inspire you to make the most of your sales presentation pre-roll in physical meetings, on phone calls and on Zoom.

This [virtual keynote](#) is jammed with strategies to help you master the art of first impressions.

Of course, it's a good idea to develop rapport, and yes, sometimes it may take ten minutes of a half-hour meeting to get the job done. So why not use the early part of the visit to advance your agenda and simultaneously serve the prospect?

Here are some "small-talk" topics that consume time, but don't do much to facilitate a sale:

- Weather
- Sports
- Politics
- Parking
- Traffic
- How busy you are
- How busy the customer is

Before covering nutritious alternatives to small talk, let's make sure you have solid strategies for avoiding empty conversation.

Make Small Talk "On Purpose" When Selling

If the prospect greets you with a comment about the weather, simply acknowledge her statement and quickly move on to more purposeful conversation. There's no need to put your own spin on how much it's been raining. Your reply will invite her to respond, then for you to react to what she says, and before you know it, the two of you are comparing this year's rainfall to past years, precipitation in other countries and so on. If you get to set the tone, you might skip talking about the weather completely and open with a friendly, but direct statement such as, "It's good to see you again! I wanted to chat with you about two new developments on our project."

"(Gasp!) But what if I can't talk about the weather?"

Of course, it's not a good idea to skip all of the preamble and launch right into the serious stuff. So what are good topics for the front part of your time with prospects? You might talk about:

- How impressed you are with the person you're talking to
- How impressive that person's company is
- Find out more about her passions and hobbies
- Ask about her family or next vacation
- Get her opinion on an industry trend (stay away from negative topics)

Changing an old habit can be hard. Hang in there as you find your way toward more direct, helpful communication.



A few seconds of small talk may be useful, but move toward purposeful conversation and your sales will improve. You can always talk about last night's big game after the person places an order.

[Here's a bit about my keynote: [Selling Through Conversation](#). This content is also available in a training and coaching format.] You have a finite amount of time to spend with prospects and customers. Make your small talk big. Make small talk on purpose.

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, and is available to speak with you and your team. Michael Angelo Caruso, Edison House, Inc., 3543 Tremonte Circle South, Rochester, MI 48306, (248) 224-9667



Two Sides Anti-Greenwashing Campaign Scores Big Wins, Builds Momentum for Strong Results in 2021

New Fact Sheet on Greenwashing Now Available

With pandemic lockdowns as a backdrop, banks, utilities, telecoms and other large service providers boosted their efforts to switch customers from paper to electronic communication over the last 15 months, and with those efforts came a new wave of misleading environmental claims about paper – greenwashing.

The Two Sides Anti-Greenwashing Campaign mobilized to push back against this tide of new claims in January after a 10-month pandemic-related interruption, and wins have been steadily increasing. Thanks to this renewed effort, 14 companies have changed or removed misleading environmental claims related to print and paper so far this year, including large banks, utilities and notably, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and

Medicaid Services, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, whose communications reach 44 million Americans or 15% of the U.S. population. This is in addition to seven wins in 2020 on greenwashing cases that were already in progress.

“We know that consumers are increasingly aware of the impact their choices have on the environment, and that environmental claims made by companies they trust can influence their decision making,” says Two Sides North America President Kathi Rowzie. “But those claims often are not based in fact. Many companies continue to encourage consumers to switch from paper to electronic communications using unsubstantiated claims that digital communication is green, saves trees and is better for the environment, and this activity has increased significantly during the pandemic.

“These are clear cases of

greenwashing that damage consumer perceptions of paper and put at risk the livelihoods of more than 7 million people in the North American print, paper and mail sector,” Rowzie adds. “That’s why Two Sides Anti-Greenwashing Campaign is needed now more than ever.”

The campaign has achieved a total of 148 wins in the U.S. and Canada (more than 700 globally) since its inception in 2012, bringing the North American success rate to 68%. (Continued on page 11.)



Two Sides Anti-Greenwashing Campaign

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The goal of the Anti-Greenwashing Campaign is to directly engage and encourage major North American corporations to adopt best practices for environmental marketing established by the [U.S. Federal Trade Commission \(FTC\)](#), the [Competition Bureau of Canada \(CBC\)](#), and the [International Organization for Standardization \(ISO 14021\)](#). These standards are quite detailed, but in a nutshell they say that environmental marketing claims should be accurate, substantiated by competent and reliable scientific evidence and should not suggest environmental benefits by using broad, vague terms like “green” and “environmentally friendly.”

One of the distinguishing features of the Two Sides Anti-Greenwashing Campaign is that we don’t push a ‘pixels versus paper’ scenario but instead recognize that both print and electronic communications have attractive benefits and environmental consequences,” Rowzie explains. “It’s a straightforward approach that simply says, ‘Hey Corporate CEO, your company is making

unsubstantiated marketing claims about the environmental attributes of print and paper. Here are the facts. We encourage you to follow best practices for environmental marketing from the FTC, CBC and others, and put an end to your misleading claims.”

Not only are greenwashing claims unacceptable under established environmental marketing standards, but they can also harm the companies making them. “Greenwashing distracts from a company’s legitimate environmental initiatives and can damage corporate reputations when misleading claims are exposed,” Rowzie explains. “And some consumers are skeptical that a commitment to environmental improvement is the underlying motive for companies’ push to go paperless. In a recent Two Sides survey, just over half of consumers said that when a company encourages them to switch from paper to digital communication because “it’s better for the environment,” they know the real reason is that the company is trying to

cut costs.”

To promote greater understanding of what greenwashing is and why it should be avoided, Two Sides has published a new four-page fact sheet titled [“Go Green, Go Paperless” Messages are Misleading: The Facts About Greenwashing](#).

“We use this fact sheet when we contact companies about their paper greenwashing claims, but it’s a great tool that anyone can download and share with employees, customers, investors and other stakeholders,” Rowzie explains. “It’s an effective tool to help explain what greenwashing is, the harm it causes and why paper is an inherently sustainable choice that contributes to a circular economy.”

If you see a greenwashing claim from one of your service providers – on a bill, statement, envelope, website or email – send a screenshot, scan or link to info@twosidesna.org.

For more facts about the sustainability of print, paper and paper-based packaging, [click here](#).

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