
INFORMER

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**Community
Papers of
Michigan**



By Mark W. Rummel Fenton, MI

YOU'D BETTER SHOP AROUND: How did shopping guides and TMC papers begin in the first place?

They say history is written by the winners, and that's true.

It's also the reason that finding an official history of American shopping guide publications is difficult.

Since Total Market Coverage papers usually compete with established newspapers, and since newspapers record much of American history, those papers weren't going to publish much information about new competition.

BUT SHOPPING guides have endured, and many are actually thriving these days, compared with traditional newspapers. Here is the first issue of the "Shopping Guide" of Lincoln, Neb., which was started in 1933 by some really brave entrepreneurs. Can you imagine how the competing newspapers must have reacted that day, when 18,000 "Shopping Guide" copies were delivered all around that town 88 years ago?

Today, some shoppers own newspapers and some newspapers own shoppers. Like so many things now, lines have been blurred and stretched. We're all trying to survive.

I'VE WORKED for three newspaper groups in Michigan, and I've owned my own papers — PLUS I even helped start our own county-wide

shopper back in 1980. I was a proud member of Shopping Guides of Michigan before it became Community Papers of Michigan, and served as Treasurer and a Board member for about a decade. I've been there.

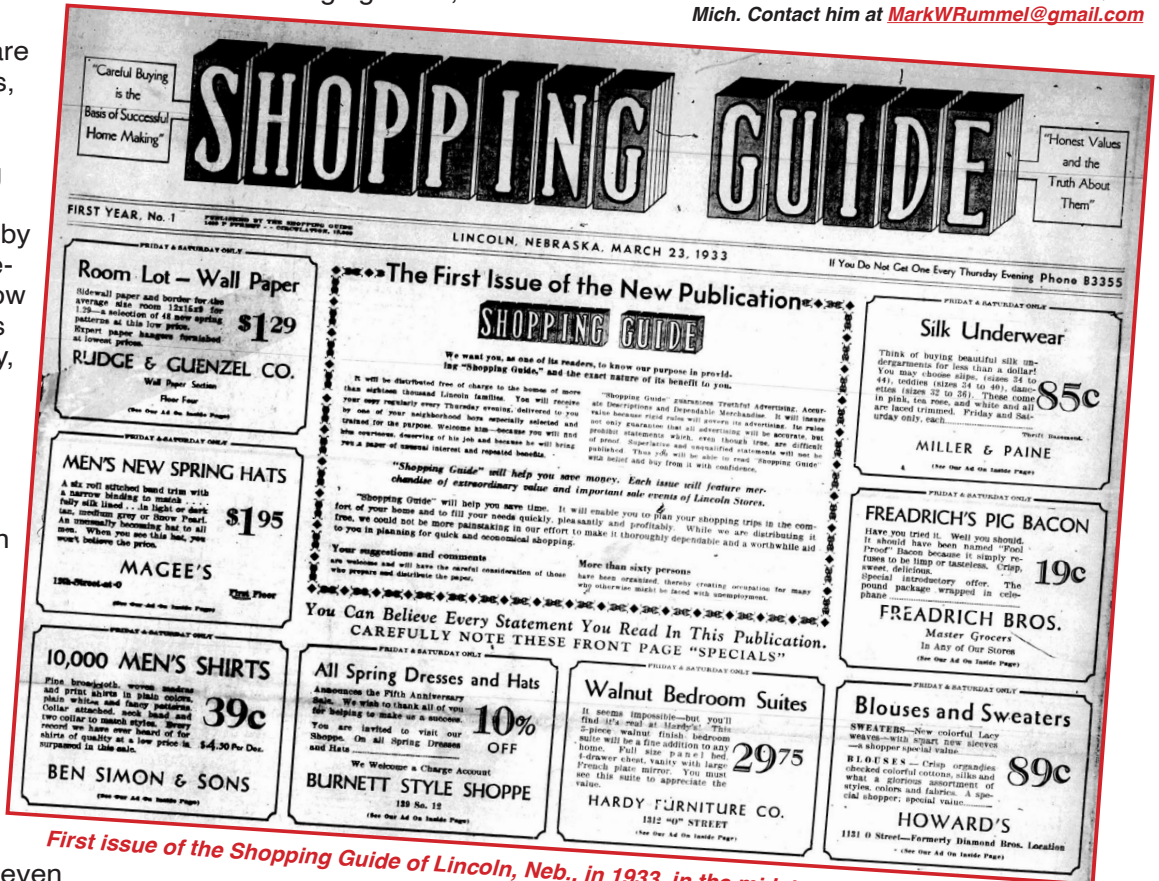
Even though I've worn several work hats, my heart is with the shopping guide industry — mostly because I usually root for the little guy.

I PLAN to use this space to take a look at this changing industry in these changing times, as we all

struggle to stay in business — or at least to keep our jobs for another month. And you can help me do that.

If you know details about early shoppers and community papers, please share them with me. I can't find details in any of the "usual" places...

Mark worked at papers in Saginaw, Port Huron and Michigan's Thumb Area, plus served on the CPM Board. He and wife Sally even worked for The Walt Disney Company after Disney bought Capital Cities-ABC. Truly jumping from the frying pan into the fire, he opened and ran a restaurant for 17 years and still does social media work for several businesses from his home in Fenton, Mich. Contact him at MarkWRummel@gmail.com



First issue of the Shopping Guide of Lincoln, Neb., in 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression



By John Foust
Raleigh, NC

Ad-Libs

A Simple Way to Develop Ad Campaign Ideas

Let's say you're meeting with a florist who has been running ads with the headline, "For all your floral needs." Of course, you and I know this is an empty headline that speaks to no one in particular. It's a terrible idea and a waste of the advertiser's budget.

What should you do?

1. Have a conversation. The first step is to diplomatically encourage the advertiser to consider something else. The headline – as weak as it is – may be near and dear to his or her heart. The florist has been spending money to run it, so don't criticize. Simply say something like, "Your idea opens the door to a lot of ad possibilities. How would you feel about seeing where those possibilities lead?"

Every word of your statement is true. "All of your floral needs" does open the door to other ideas. And you do want to encourage a look at other possibilities.

This approach sends a signal that you are not looking for a quick, hit-and-run sale. You're aiming for a low-pressure, collaborative effort to promote the florist shop.

2. Break it down. Like a technician who takes a machine apart to examine its inner workings, it's important to learn specifics. What does "all" really mean? Make a list of the needs which the florist meets. It's better to ask, "What do your customers need?" than, "What do you do?" That keeps the focus where it should



be – on the florist's customers.

As you go through the process, you'll probably learn that the florist provides flowers for all kinds of occasions: weddings, anniversaries, proms, funerals, Christmas, church events, Valentine's Day and birthdays, among many others. The point is to turn a generality into specifics. With the right details, you'll have plenty of raw material for new ideas.

3. Develop a strategy. The next step is to look at the yearly calendar and figure out the best times to promote flowers for

those occasions. While some are year-round and some are seasonal (Spring for wedding planning, for example), other occasions rely on the advertiser's records and industry trends for development of an ad schedule and a creative strategy.

4. Create continuity. How are you going to tie everything together? Each ad should look like – and sound like – it comes from the same advertiser. There are a number of elements to consider: typography, color, illustrative style, ad sizes, frequency, coordination between print and digital and ways to link to their web site.

This four-step formula can help you generate more sales for your paper and for your advertisers. The end result will be a series of targeted and consistent messages, instead of the same watered-down ad over and over again. And the good news is that you don't even have to start with a bad idea like, "for all your fill-in-the-blank needs." Just start by figuring out what specific things your advertiser can do for their customers – and you'll find that the future looks rosy.

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John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com



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POSTAL RATES

GOOD NEWS – BAD NEWS FOR PUBLISHERS THAT MAIL

On September 15, 2021, the Postal Service made an announcement and submitted a filing with the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) announcing its future schedule of “regular and predictable rate adjustments.”

The good news is that mailers will not see another postal increase until July, 2022. The Postal Service will wait until spring of next year to combine the rate authority it has to increase rates based on over the CPI, and will calculate the other authority it has under the Postal Regulatory Commission’s new ten-year order that gave the Service additional authority to increase rates over CPI, for one rate adjustment to take place during 2022.

The not so good news, is the Postal Service announced its intentions after 2022 to increase rates twice a year in January and July of each year, with the filings outlining the rates and the rate tables to occur in the preceding October and April, respectively.

In its filing the Postal Service wrote it “intends to be judicious in the use of available pricing authority depending on our financial condition, but anticipates the possibility that the price adjustment for each market dominant class may be

required to apply most or all pricing authority available at the time of filing.”

So what does this mean for mailers trying to figure out this “regular and predictable” schedule of Postal rates for 2023 and thereafter?

In April of next year, the Postal Service will be able to calculate the amount of an increase it is entitled to receive under the CPI for increases inflation. It will also have numbers that the PRC determines based on whether or not the service has made any contributions to its pre-funding obligations under current law to pay for retiree benefits. The PRC order gives the USPS an additional amount of approximately 1% of rate of authority (over the cpi) to correspond to actual prefunding payments made. If Postal Reform is accomplished as proposed in a pending House bill, that additional 1% authority could “go away”. As currently drafted, the proposed postal reform bill in the House would eliminate or vastly change the retiree pre-funding requirements.





POSTAL RATES

by Donna Hanbery Continued from page 4

A separate increase, known as the “density adder” allows the USPS to charge higher rates to make up for volume it loses. To businesses like publishers, it may sound perverse to be rewarded with additional pricing authority when the service loses business. But the PRC reasoned that some loss of mail to electronic diversion was outside of the Postal Service’s power to control, and that the Service needed to cover its fixed costs and obligations that are no longer covered as it loses mail volume and should be able to charge mailers for that “lost business/density”. During this last year (2021) with Covid mail volume losses being significant, the additional “density adder” allowed the service to increase its rates and prices by an additional 4.2%. That is why many mailers saw some of the highest increases in years in August, 2021.

It is always hard to make predictions, but at the present time it would seem next year’s loss of volume, when compared year over date, will not be as severe as it was 2021 and, based on a current projection from a Postal Service Pricing and Costing Official, it could be under 1%. (Continued on page 5.)

The Service gets its numbers for what it is permitted or allowed to do at different times during the year. Historically, the Service has filed its rate increases based on the CPI rate cap in October, for a January implementation. When the Postal Service files its Annual Compliance Report (ACR) of performance and volumes for the year, the PRC is able to do the calculations needed for its additional pricing/rate authority. That appears to be the reason

driving the Service’s announcement that it will do a filing in April, for a July increase every year. That timing allows the Service to get as much money as it can, as soon as it can, with the PRC’s release of its calculation of the lost density and prefunding payments additional rate of authority. Theoretically, there is nothing to stop the Service from switching to a once-a-year rate cycle, by postponing the filing of its CPI rate increase to coincide with the additional determination of additional rate authority after receipt of the PRC’s calculations. The potential confusion, and complexity, of different rate schedules and twice a year price increases for the mailing industry and advertising customers may lead some mailers, printers, publishers and customers to push back on the complexity and ‘bad pr’ of this proposed schedule. The additional costs it will add to the mail industry in changing forms, pricing schedules, software, etc. – to say nothing of having to talk to advertisers about an endless cycle of higher prices – will erode customer confidence and may further discourage businesses and advertisers with marketing choices from using the mail.

For free papers that use saturation mail or high-density mail to reach their advertisers, this type of mail is in the Marketing Mail class. This is one of the largest classes of mail within the market dominant postal products. There can be significant variations with individual product prices within this large class - where some categories of mail pay will pay higher prices, and others may see lower increases. Based on the competitive market conditions for saturation mail, and the unique

operations and service characteristics of this mail (usually drop shipped to the DDU to go right to the carrier), SMC and our members will continue to urge for “better-than-average” pricing to retain this profitable mail volume for the Service. This type of product is more price sensitive than other postal products and is very susceptible to electronic diversion and diversion to other media.

For periodicals and papers that have been using periodical rates, (sending their papers as subscription – requester papers), the annual rate increases must include an additional 2% to reflect that this class has not been carrying its costs according to PRC findings for several years. Any class or product of mail that is “underwater”, is required by PRC regulation to be assessed an additional 2%, over any other rate increase allowed with different formulas, at least once a year if there is a rate adjustment for that class.

What if anything could save mailers from this twice a year endless cycle of price increases? The mailing industry has been challenging the PRC order as contrary to the 2006 PAEA law and that case is under consideration in the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. If the mailers prevail, that could change the additional pricing and authority described in this article.

But for the short term, it appears that publishers that are using the mail, and have been fighting to build back business during this challenging year, will have a few months of breathing room before the next Postal rate increase is filed and announcement.

Using a graphic always requires pre-planning: is ad space large enough, what's appropriate for the space, how can I incorporate it into the design, etc. Never are these considerations more necessary than with...

Holiday Ads

Ad Talk with Ellen Hanrahan

Fall— my favorite time of the year! Except, when I was working it also signaled the beginning of holiday advertising. Columbus Day, Halloween, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving and all the Christmas and New Year's advertising—all grouped together in the last quarter of the year. Most advertiser's wanted an appropriate graphic—and that's when my dependence on vector art began. We filled our paper with small space ads, 2x2, 2x3, 2x4, etc. and the art or graphics we had usually required more space, so that's when I began to look at "parts" of the artwork and realized I could "dismantle" the art.

An Example

The ad at the bottom of this column is a simple 2x2 (granted it's not a typical ad, but will suit my purpose). It's been reduced to fit (74%), but it could very well have gotten lost on the page and I found some artwork that I thought would add visual interest and generic enough to be appropriate. I have included that artwork at a 43% reduction— no way would it fit, or even be that appropriate for my use in the 2x2.

I used the section on the left, but I also flipped and rotated that section until I got the look I wanted (sort of an "uplifting effect"). Now the ad stands out a bit more. This is not the only option, but it worked at the time.

Appropriate Graphic Use

I intend over the next few months to show you how to incorporate a graphic into the content, and not just fill up "empty" space.

I still see in print (and online) the use of artwork to fill the void without considering its impact on the content and purpose of the ad.

Even though it's October I refer you to the October 2020 issue of the **CPM INFORMER** where we covered Halloween (somewhat).

Plus November and December holidays usually have longer advertising cycles and will be here before we know it.



Thank you to the young lady who picked me up off my driveway when I had fallen at 555 Cedar Street. I would like to find out her name. Call 555-0090. I'm doing OK.

Before we get started I do want to point out that the **Adobe MAC Creativity Conference** will again be online and free again this year.

Click on the link in the next column to take you to the necessary registration page.

Thanksgiving Ads

Thanksgiving ads can be somewhat difficult because, although Thanksgiving itself is one day, various sales and events can last a week or two. Sometimes a business or service will also take the opportunity to thank the customers who have supported them the past year.


Artwork for ads during this time can be varied. Restaurants and supermarkets may request people dining or meal preparation but the best that I can do with the others is to use artwork that is generic and seasonal, such as pumpkins, autumn leaves or turkeys.

Below are a couple of graphics. I had the leaves and two are from storyblocks.com. I have a subscription (reasonably priced).



Even though the artwork is small (shown 50% or less) they are still too large for the 2x2 that I am going to create. I plan to create custom borders (and then put them in a library to use again!).

Pumpkin and leaves is my first sample to use for an ad that does not have a lot of text. There are other variations, but this is the easiest at this point.



The turkey graphic caught my eye because it was different. As I said earlier, turkey artwork is either real (on a plate) or cartoon ish. The one I selected, in my estimation, has a little more potential.

The other two examples are in the next column, but I have to confess that working in **Adobe Illustrator** sporadically (this column) was difficult. They have changed features and functions and I was a bit unnerved. I am going to have to do a review, or at least pay attention to the "What's New" when they upgrade!

Adobe MAX- The Creativity Conference: Oct. 26-28

Adobe MAX is **free** and online again this year and is geared toward all things Adobe

You can register for 20-30 minute sessions or even 60 minute labs. Click on the link below to register for this event.

<https://max.adobe.com/?promoid=JHDDWFMZ&mv=other>

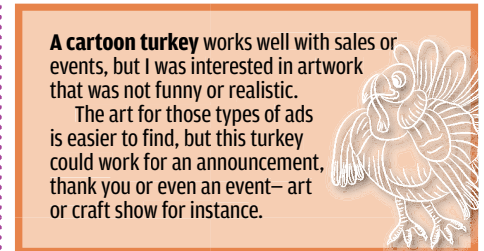
THANK YOU

Leaves present an easy way to get a sense of the season. I separated the leaves so I have the ability to place them where I want, tilt them or add transparency.



A cartoon turkey works well with sales or events, but I was interested in artwork that was not funny or realistic.

The art for those types of ads is easier to find, but this turkey could work for an announcement, thank you or even an event— art or craft show for instance.



The top ad would be just fine with one leaf if there was more content, or even screened in the background. The idea is to make the art a part of the advertising message and not just placed to fill the void.

The bottom ad was left pretty simple, but some other options for me are to make the white lines (or strokes) a darker color and to eliminate the shadow that was part of the vector file. I can always create a variety of drop shadows in **InDesign**, where I actually have greater control while I am working.

Again, the artwork or graphic (even a photo) helps to unify the space while supporting the advertising content.

Final Thoughts

Believe it or not, a page like this takes me the better part of a day. Coming up with a relevant subject, getting artwork and putting the words to virtual paper.

What I failed to count on this time was my Illustrator inexperience (in whatever version they are on)! Usually I have a lot of "deconstructed" vector art, but I thought this time I would get something new. Uh oh.

Anyway, my **InDesign Magazine** is changing to **Creative Pro Magazine** and will include topics on Photoshop, Illustrator, Acrobat, fonts, design, PowerPoint, Affinity software, automation, PDF, print, digital publishing, and more.

I will be paying attention...

Until next month.

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, e-mail:

hanrahan.ln@att.net Ellen Hanrahan ©2021

GROWING READERSHIP

“Just because you build it doesn’t mean they’ll come.”



by Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

I’m in a positive mood concerning the newspaper industry. After the past couple of weeks, I continue to see incredibly upbeat signs about things happening in our business.

For the first time in 18 months, I spoke at a live convention last week in Des Moines, Iowa. Meeting with community newspaper publishers and journalists from throughout the United States lifted my spirits. There wasn’t a lot of time for personal visits. I was scheduled to speak for 75 minutes seven times during the two-day event. However, I managed to squeeze in meetings with publishers from South Carolina, Minnesota, Iowa, New York, Idaho, and other places to discuss what’s happening at their papers.

There was no “doom and gloom” in these conversations. There were several “I’m starting a new paper and want your advice” and “I want to get more training for my staff” conversations. There were a few “I’m updating my newsroom and would like your thoughts” conversations. While I wasn’t crazy about stepping onto a plane and meeting in person with COVID-19 still hanging around, I left inspired by how these newspapers are moving forward.

Speaking of moving forward, redesign seems to be on a lot of papers’ minds these days. While working on a redesign for a friend’s paper in Tennessee in September, I received a phone call from another publisher friend whose paper I redesigned three years ago.

“I wanted to tell you,” he said, “we’ve grown in subscribers since doing the redesign three years ago. I waited for him to continue, “but counter sales have been dismal” or something along those lines. Instead, there was an “and” statement. “And we’ve had a healthy increase in counter sales, as well.”

“I know there’s a lot more to it than just the redesign,” he continued, “but the redesign has had a lot to do with our growth.”

Boom! Wow! Now that’s a phone call.

Tony Cox, the publisher who called, is constantly working to increase readership at his papers in Clinton and Farragut, Tennessee. He still does things papers used to do back in the heyday to increase readership. I’ve known Tony from his work with paid and free newspapers, and he’s always working on ways to gain new readers.

In a conversation a few days ago, he told me about using sampling to grow his readership base. “Old school sampling still works. We’ve added 31 new subscriptions in 35 days.” He went on to say, “The first weeks were done using good ole USPS delivery. The next week was done using saturation of a newspaper carrier route” (by a nearby metro paper). Each week has netted new subscribers the following day, meaning a person actually wrote a check and stuck it in the mail.”

Tony added they also received subscribers through their website after folks received a free paper. “I was really impressed,” he told me. “That’s an immediate return.”

I asked Tony if he had advice for other papers trying to grow circulation, and he had plenty.

“Circulation efforts require effort 52 weeks per year,” he told me.

\$2.50*

Per Month

That’s how much a new subscription to The Courier News costs.

My name is Tony Cox, and I am the publisher of **The Courier News**. For the next few weeks, you will be receiving a sample copy of **The Courier News**. It may have been awhile since you last saw one, or you may be new to the area and this is your first time seeing it.

For more than 132 years, **The Courier News** has been covering the news and happenings in Anderson County. **YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER** has never stopped providing you with **LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE** about government, schools, sports, community, and business.

The newspaper was behind you when you were shipped off to fight for our freedom, and it helped cheer for you when you came home. We **STILL REMEMBER** those who didn’t come home and honor them every Memorial Day by publishing their names for all to see.

Each week the newspaper provides you with sale information from local businesses, including grocery and

drug store inserts, and lots of coupons to help stretch your weekly shopping budget.

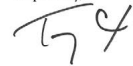
The newspaper was with you during the COVID-19 Stay-At-Home orders and we’re with you now.

Today, I am asking for your support.

I would love to have you as a new subscriber to Anderson County’s longest-running source for news. Simply complete the form below and return it to our office. Or, give us a call at 457-2515 to sign up by phone.

If you are already a subscriber, **THANK YOU**. It’s an honor **TO SERVE YOU** each week.

Respectfully,



THE COURIER NEWS

*Billed annually at \$30.00 for 52 issues.

Enclosed you will find my Check (No. _____) for the amount of \$30 to begin my subscription today!

Complete the form to the right and mail to:

THE COURIER NEWS
P.O. BOX 270
CLINTON, TN 37717
MASTERCARD / VISA / DISCOVER / AMEX
CALL (865) 457-2515

YES! SIGN ME UP TODAY.
I want to support MY LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER and be informed about MY COMMUNITY.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS (OPTIONAL): _____

To Purchase Online, visit www.mycouriernews.com/account/register and complete the form. Or, stop by our office at The Courier News, 233 N. Hicks St., Clinton, TN 37716

This is a sample of the promotion flyer sent with papers to homes by the Clinton (Tennessee) Courier News.

Something else he said brought back memories of the movie “Field of Dreams.” “If you build it,” he began, “it doesn’t necessarily mean they will come. You have to invite them.”

Amen to that, Tony.

Growing interest in Affinity

Another topic that doesn’t seem to be going away is interest in Affinity Publisher, the software giving Adobe InDesign a run for its money. While in Des Moines, several publishers asked if I thought moving from InDesign or QuarkXpress to Publisher was a good idea. Since returning home, I’ve heard from other publishers asking the same question at both

free and paid newspapers.

I’ll tell you what I’ve told them. If you have a relatively straightforward editorial/design process that doesn’t use XML tags (often used by third-party classified systems), it might be worth ordering a copy of Publisher for \$55 and having one of your designers give it a spin. If your composition is heavily dependent on XML tags and InDesign libraries, however, I’d suggest sticking with InDesign for the time being.

Kevin’s Upcoming Webinars at:
newspaperacademy.com

Oct 7 • Photoshop Tools
Oct 22 • Affinity Publisher
Nov 12 • Adobe Illustrator



Ryan Dohrn
President/Founder,
Brain Swell Media LLC

Stop Being Ghosted by Your Advertisers

6 ways to stop advertisers from simply disappearing after a sales call

Ghosting is a relatively new colloquialism that refers to the act of abruptly cutting off contact with someone, without giving that person any warning or explanation for doing so. Even when the person being ghosted reaches out to reinitiate contact or gain closure, they're met with silence.

Out here in sales land this phenomenon happens to all of us and, unfortunately, often at a higher frequency than we would like to admit.

Has this happened to you? You had a great meeting with a potential advertiser and they've asked you for a proposal. You go back to the office and you are excited. You create the proposal. You send over the requested proposal with the anticipation of hearing back soon. Then, everything goes dark. You hear nothing. Every day you play a game of what feels like hide and seek. You reach out by email or phone. You hear nothing. In some cases, you begin to stalk the advertiser by driving past their business. You hear

nothing. At a certain point, you become frustrated with yourself. You think maybe you did something wrong. Well, maybe you did.

Ghosting is not necessarily a new phenomenon for salespeople, it's just that now the behavior has an actual name associated with it. And since it's really nothing new for a salesperson to experience, why are we surprised when it happens yet again?

But it doesn't have to be like this, generally speaking. So let's look at six ways to avoid being ghosted by an advertiser.

STRATEGY #1: Acknowledge the ghost. At the beginning and end of every sales call with a client, I'm vividly clear about the expectations for the meeting and the expectations for the follow-up. Because typically, there are two awkward moments in every sales call. The beginning. And the end. So, why not just talk about it upfront?

For example, I might say, "Thank you so much for the time today, Bob. At the end of our conversation today I would love to set up a clear plan for follow-up. If your answer is yes ... wonderful. If your answer is no ... that's okay, we can always work together at some point in the future. Or, if your answer is that you need to think about it ... that's no problem. We'll set a very clear plan for following up together. A plan that meets your exact needs and decision-making timeline."

When you begin sales calls by setting yourself up for success, you normally end

the sales call with success. If you begin the sales call with a bunch of the normal bologna that accompanies the typical rapport-building, then you are destined to end the call with an equal amount of bologna.

STRATEGY #2: You must own the follow-up process or you will lose the deal. Very often salespeople will give control of the follow-up over to the advertiser. And very often the advertiser will say they will call you back. We all know this is a flat-out lie, in most cases. So, why do we allow the advertiser to control the follow-up? Because we don't know what else to do. But know this: there should always be a plan in place to control the follow-up with the advertiser.

Very often I will end the sales call by getting out my phone or looking at my calendar and creating a meeting invite for the follow-up. When I create that follow-up I create a short, 10-minute meeting on the calendar. That way when the follow-up meeting appears on the advertiser's calendar, it looks like a very short meeting and is less likely to be canceled.

STRATEGY #3: Agree on the best plan for follow-up. A lot of times when you end the sales call, there is not a clear plan nor an agreed-upon plan. Take ownership of the follow-up and be sure that both parties agree that the follow-up plan is crystal clear. You might even ask some questions like, "What is the best way for me to follow up with you? Do you prefer texts? Smoke signals? Carrier pigeon? Or email?" (Continued on page 9.)

Stop Being Ghosted By Your Advertisers

by Ryan Dohrn Continued from page 4

Now, all kidding aside, my follow-up preference would be by phone. But if you happen to be selling in a local sales environment, you could set the follow-up to be a quick drop-in. You might be thinking to yourself ... what if the advertiser wants to call me back and they refuse to set the follow-up? At that point, I believe you need to acknowledge the circumstance as it has been laid in front of you. I would ask this question: "If this is a marketing idea that you love I would think a follow-up would make a ton of sense, right? If this is not an idea that you love and you're just being kind to me, please let me know. My goal here is to help and not to be a waste of your time."

STRATEGY #4: Texting may be the best way to follow up. Ugh. Yes, I said it. I consider myself to be a technology expert. I absolutely love technology. I believe that technology has really helped salespeople increase our sales games and be more productive. But I admit that I am not a huge fan of texting advertisers.

The reason is because of the personal nature of texting. However, with that said, I have definitely seen a large majority of my clients move to texting as a quick way to follow up. To that end, at the close of a sales call, I want to make sure that I get the advertiser's permission to text them. Sure, you probably don't need to do this, but I just like to have someone's permission before I'm texting to their personal cell phone. Call me old-school if you want. I will wear it with a badge of honor. But please understand, I do recognize that texting is an important part of the sales process.

STRATEGY #5: Be safe, but recognize that face-to-face is still the best way to sell. My comments are not meant to be political

in any way. I want everybody to be safe, and as a survivor of COVID-19, I would never wish it upon my worst enemy. I'm finding that most advertisers I'm working with are fine with face-to-face meetings. But be safe out there. Because it is hard to ignore that face-to-face meetings are better than virtual meetings. And yet we know that virtual meetings are always better than phone meetings.

So whatever you need to do out there, be safe, but recognize that getting in front of advertisers is a very important part of being a professional in the sales business. It is harder for an advertiser to ghost you after they have a personal, face-to-face conversation and connect with you.

STRATEGY #6: Present ideas on the spot. I have preached about this for years. You are not selling a cure for cancer. You are selling and recommending marketing options. So why are you not going to the sales call armed with a proposal filled with great ideas? Because someone has convinced you that you cannot create a proposal until you know the advertiser's "needs." This is just not true. Any given advertiser in any given category is going to normally do three to six things to be successful. Period. So look at the past success other advertisers have had in a certain category and make educated recommendations. While on the sales call, tweak what you brought to better fit the advertiser's needs. There is truly no reason to leave to create a proposal. This is an invitation to be ghosted. Why give that invitation?

If you're a reader of my column on a regular basis, you'll know that I'm all about having an organized sales plan of attack. I do like to be a little unorthodox at times,



though, because breaking up consistent patterns of failure is very important to success. But still, never forget that failing to plan is planning to fail. And I believe that in the sales business, this quote is more accurate than ever.

In closing, ghosting is just something that's going to occur in the sales business. It's a part of the sales process. Be prepared for it. Any plan is better than no plan at all.

And never forget, if ad sales was easy everybody would be doing it. And they are not. We are the chosen few. We have found amazing media careers that will feed our families for a lifetime.

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By Bob Berting
Berting Communications

When A Publication Is Headed For Trouble

It's rare for a newspaper to head off a marketing strategy problem before a crisis is upon them. More often, at times, it takes the sudden entry of a new competitor in the market, a serious plunge in sales, or a similar emergency to get a strategy change. The answer is to evaluate the publication's marketing program on an objective on-going weekly basis.

Here are 6 ways that the publication is heading for trouble:

Cutting rates become the driving force to get sales

Deep discounting, constantly offering "special deals" is an indicator that the publication is using lower prices to beat competition. Customers see the publication as just a low cost medium, and don't see any other value in doing business.

The publication can't be differentiated from competition

It is vital that the publication maintain a unique identity that distinguishes it from the competition. This branding process is on-going and under constant review. The question is—how often is it reviewed?

Steady stream of sales gimmicks

When one special promotion runs into the

next, customers soon think that nothing is really special. Instead of getting customers on an ongoing campaign, the publication



floods the market with signature pages, national widget month, and other one-time fluff promotions that threaten the budgets of advertisers who want to put their money in campaigns that get response.

Sales management tactics change arbitrarily

Instead of a roller coaster of contests, trips, and bonus programs, the publication

needs a unified plan of rewards that will motivate the salespeople on an on-going basis. This can be an incentive plan based on increasing sales, any activity that helps dramatically the image of the publication in the marketplace, etc,

More and more leads come from the sales force

Of course salespeople should develop leads, but if salespeople are the primary source of new business, the publication has a marketing problem. Even the best salespeople can't be at the right place, at the right time, all the time. The publication needs a well developed marketing program to keep their name in front of prospects, so when they're ready to buy, the sales staff can enter the picture from a position of strength.

Customers start saying "I didn't know you did that"

Even when long-time customers don't have a clear picture of the publication's overall capabilities, it's a sign that marketing is failing. So many times, a booklet or brochure showing ALL the publication's services can be very effective because it clarifies and reinforces what the publication offers. Of course an effective website is another powerful tool. But that's another story.

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.



70% of Emails Now Track Consumers: *Yet Another Reason We Need Paper Options*

By **Jim Haigh**, *Keep Me Posted*

The data privacy and cybersecurity risks of email correspondence are finally getting the attention they deserve. There's a growing awareness that "phishing" – the digital exploit of sending emails that look and feel like real communications from known senders, but instead contain or link to a variety of harms – is the menace behind an estimated 90% of cybersecurity compromises.

Now, consumers are learning that 70% of emails they receive are tracking them in some way, thanks to groundbreaking analysis from Princeton computer scientist Steven Englehardt, PhD, and his research team. This is a very big deal for the millions of consumers who want the option to receive paper notices from their service providers. And it should ring alarm bells at companies that are removing paper choice, charging fees or switching customers to electronic delivery without express consent.

The mere act of opening an email often unknowingly shares the recipient's email address, triggering

unwanted interactions with numerous third parties, which in turn enables additional tracking across the web that can potentially link the email to online activities without consent. Third party data brokers are sophisticated in creating extensive behavioral profiles across devices and even offline channels, all linked to consumers' email addresses. And to make matters worse, popular free email services such as Google's Gmail scan messages to collect data on things like purchases, travel details, even what bills are coming due.

As consumers' email addresses are becoming their universal identity – bought, sold and uploaded for targeting by third parties and leaked in data breaches at an alarming rate – many companies are forcing their customers to switch from paper to email communications to save a few quarters.

Many major service providers across industries are no longer inviting their customers to opt in to electronic delivery of important notices, and are

instead switching from paper to electronic delivery of important correspondence without consent. This practice is not limited to potentially sensitive bills and statements. This questionable practice is now happening with retirement savings accounts, and even healthcare records detailed in Explanation of Benefits (EOBs) are being emailed by major insurers to consumers who never proactively opted in to receive them electronically.

Email poses more risks to privacy, identity, credit scores and overall cybersecurity with each day that passes. To protect all consumers, Keep Me Posted urges service providers, legislators and regulators to assure default access to critical notices and correspondence free of charge, using the most easily accessible and universally available option: paper delivered through the mail. Electronic delivery must be a voluntary option, and any first and third party tracking clearly disclosed. The costs to consumers for not doing so are far greater than the cost of a postage stamp.



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