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# INFORMER

April 2022

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*Spring* a time for renewed growth  
in nature and business



CPM

**Community  
Papers of  
Michigan**



By  
Mark W.  
Rummel  
Fenton, MI



**SHOWN ABOVE** is an ultra-cool photo I found online recently. It shows six of my musical heroes — Phil and Don Everly, in front, as they met with Paul, Ringo, John and George of the Beatles. I had never seen this photo before, but it combines two generations of American music from the 1950s and '60s.

But it's not real. It's a fake photo. This musical meeting never happened.

For some reason, a very talented digital artist combined two real photos expertly, to create this fake one. I'm amazed someone would go to this much effort to create an image that the person probably WISHED had happened.

**OBVIOUSLY, TODAY'S** media leaders must be on guard constantly, in watching out for fake pictures, along with exaggerated statements and other lies.

**YOU'D BETTER SHOP AROUND:**  
**Today's fake photos  
are nothing new, starting  
with Honest Abe...**

And, a little research proves this is nothing new. Photos and other images have been manipulated for at least 150 years. Shown **BELOW RIGHT** is a post card view of Presidential widow Mary Todd Lincoln being comforted by the ghost of her late husband, Abe. It was created following his 1865 death, probably to comfort people who were saddened by the first murder of a President. And it was popular, selling several hundred thousand copies.

Recent national stories have revealed altered videos of famous Americans, including Presidents and actors, where they are "saying" things they never actually said. The public wants us to always provide believable messages that they can trust. Old Abe Lincoln would be proud if we are consistently known for doing that in all our publications.

*Mark worked at papers in Saginaw, Port Huron and the Thumb Area, plus served on the CPM Board. He and wife Sally even worked for The Walt Disney Company. He also opened and ran a successful restaurant for 17 years. He still does social media work from Fenton, Mich. [MarkWRummel@gmail.com](mailto:MarkWRummel@gmail.com)*



People who loved Lincoln were creating "fake news" even 157 years ago! So, maybe times really haven't changed much at all.

**WE ALL** will be dealing with questioning the validity and honesty of photos, videos, stories and certainly all types of ads in coming weeks, months and years. The skeptical public will want to rely on us in our industry to offer honest ads and news content. This will be an excellent opportunity for us to become known for presenting accurate messages at all times. Trust will be even more important in the future than it's been in the past.

# GROWING READERSHIP

*Kevin shares keys to increase readership & revenue*



by Kevin Slimp  
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I had a great time in March, as I got out a little more to visit newspapers in multiple states. What I learned inspired, invigorated, and reminded me of much that is going well in our industry and some things that need to be done.

The request I hear most often is from community papers wanting to improve their overall products to draw more advertisers and readers in the “next” normal, a term I keep hearing from experts discussing the post-pandemic future. While headlines are filled with stories about national newspaper groups closing papers, these community papers are investing in future growth.

In addition to my work with newspapers, I do a good bit of speaking and training in the corporate communications world. One of the things I remind communicators of is that growth is easiest by appealing to and offering more products/content to current customers, then reaching out to potential new customers.

While I was on site with a wonderful community newspaper in Michigan in March, we discussed potential new markets for the newspaper. Upon my return home, I was thrilled to learn my new friends in Michigan are making plans to create two new products in addition to their cur-



**If I had known someone was taking a pic, I would have combed my hair!** Kevin visits with a newspaper staff in West Branch, Michigan in March.

rent newspapers. We had discussed the possibility of these while I was with the staff. They took the initiative to go out in the community, do some research, and begin making plans immediately after I left.

Creating new content/products can happen in many ways. One is to schedule focus groups, hold discussions among the staff and community leaders, and find other ways to reach out to the community to learn what content could be included in your newspaper that is currently missing. Another is to discover what types of publications might be popular in your community that are now unavailable. I constantly remind clients to investigate monthly senior publications, providing significant potential revenue.

Want to increase the

readership of your current newspaper? Let me suggest three steps that I stress most often with my clients:

- **Increase the visual appeal of your publication.** This means re-design regularly. Spend a little time and money to get help, if needed. Wondering why new readers aren't attracted to your newspaper? Just look at the front page in the eyes of a “newbie.”
- **Make your stories more interesting.** Covering a school board meeting? Don't report the minutes of the meeting. That's a snooze-fest. Report the background stories. Why were decisions made? What difference will they make to the community, parents, and students? Are there questions about the decisions – or how they were made – that need answers?

- **Write headlines that draw the reader to the story.** If the headline is “School board meets Wednesday night,” go ahead and leave the story out of the paper. No one, except maybe the school board members, will read it. If the agenda includes a discussion about recent violence at the middle school, write a headline that reflects the importance of the story.

I did a little bit of research (actually, I just sent a few texts and emails) to learn how papers I've worked with over the past four years on redesigns have been doing. What did I learn? They've all experienced increased readership and advertising. Trust me. It's not because of me. It's just an indicator of the work these papers are continually doing to improve their products and draw more readers.

Apparently, newspapers are ramping up to meet the demands of a (hopefully soon-to-be) post-pandemic world. I've been receiving more requests for training than I have in several years, whether I have the time or not. If you look in the right places, you'll find newspapers dedicated to improving their products and increasing their readership. From what I'm hearing, that work is already paying off in significant ways.

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# Close 35% More with Recommendation-Based Selling Here's How

**Ryan Dohrn**

*President/Founder, Brain Swell Media LLC*

Things are just different right now in Sales Land. Understatement, right? The title of my new book, *Selling Forward*, is 100% committed to re-inventing your sales game in a pandemic fatigued world. While I was writing the new book, which was originally called *Post-Pandemic Sales Strategies*, I got COVID, and it was truly terrible. And we all began to realize that COVID wasn't completely going away. That instead, it would become a season going forward, like "COVID season". The business landscape is simply different than it used to be. As a result, we're dealing with so many buyers that are emotionally challenged, that are inbox-dazed, they're virtual meeting-bored, and they're not tolerant of a whole lot. And that's why my model of recommendation-based selling seems to really be resonating for a lot of salespeople that are out on the street selling right now. So let's talk briefly about it in this article. For full details, please buy *Selling Forward*. A lion share of the proceeds from the book will be donated to The Golden Harvest Food Bank.

I think you'll find that you can move to this model, no matter what you sell. I do a lot of advertising sales, event sales, and sponsorships. But whatever you're selling, I believe you'll find that recommendation selling is where it's at.

To better illustrate what I mean, let's take a look at the three types of selling that I'll mention in this blog.

No. 1 is transactional-based selling. This is where you're selling one-off, two-off kinds of things, and where you're calling somebody and they can make a decision

moderately quickly. This is a fast way to sell, but can feel a bit shallow feeling.

No. 2 is relationship selling. You go out on a sales call, do a discovery meeting and learn a prospect's needs, goals, and desires, and you go back to the office to create a proposal. Then you get ahold of the client and schedule a time to review the proposal with them, or present it, and then they have to take it to their boss to make a decision on it—in other words, they've got to think about it. Then, you have to go back and play the follow-up/ghosting game, and so on. This is a slower way to sell, but feels fulfilling.

No. 3 is what I call recommendation-based selling. It has similarities to transactional selling, but in this model we're trying take what we know from our past experiences from our successful clients, and in "relationship selling", and simply speed up the total sales process.

## Recommendation-Based Selling

The basis of recommendation-based selling is going to a client and saying, "We've worked with somebody like you before. Using that knowledge we can save you time and money by telling you what does and what does not work. Let's leverage that knowledge, marry it to your goals, and create some winning recommendations for you."

What I'm noticing with recommendation-based selling is it's just faster. But also, since we're dealing with people who are pandemic-fatigued, it doesn't require as much thought from them. It doesn't require a ton of logic. It doesn't require a long

discovery meeting. Prospects seem to appreciate the approach.

Monetate came out with a study showing that 70% of people make decisions based on recommendations. And universally, when you look at the most trusted form of advertising out there—Nielsen tracks it—the most trusted form of selling is recommendation-based.

So what that means is, more than likely, people are going to buy things more quickly if you move to a recommendation-based format.

So let's step up just one step closer on this idea. How do you propose something to a client if you don't know their needs, desires, and wants? Well, you're going to base your knowledge on past clients and past client scenarios. When you're meeting with somebody, it's highly likely you've had a customer like them before. It's rare to meet with a client and they tell you something that shocks you. Right? So, do we really need to ask them all the "normal" sales questions like what's your budget?

The idea behind recommendation-based selling is that, by nature, humans don't necessarily trust other humans. People just don't. We enter a conversation with them and our trust factor is zero. It's kind of our base. We name drop other companies that we have worked with. We talk about them positively and ethically. We increase client trust by using the social proof of our other successful customers to drive the sale and conversation forward. (Continued on page 5.)

## Close 35% More *by Ryan Dohm Continued from page 4*

So, one of the things I like about recommendation-based selling is that it's different from the old-school model, where you're building things in more of a custom format like, "What are your needs? What are your goals? What are your desires? Let me build you something."

And while that approach is fine, I'll restate it: I'm finding that it simply takes a long time. Whereas, when I'm meeting with someone and discovering their needs, their goals, and their desires and I'm recommending things based on other successes that we've had with other customers, there's a higher level of trust with our prospects and clients. And since there's a higher level of trust because others have gone before them, that higher level of trust tends to drive the decision faster.

Now, I recognize that some of you reading this aren't in the business that I'm in; I'm in advertising sales sector. So real estate sales, for instance, is going to be different. Insurance is going to be different. However, let's just say you're selling insurance, as an example. If I can say to John Smith, "Well, Suzy Brown did this insurance plan with me, and she's been very happy with this plan. It's worked for her family, her cousin, her mom," whatever, it makes the next person feel more comfortable because the trust factor is dramatically increased. So it makes it easier to sell her and to tweak a plan for her. And it makes it easier for her to buy it.

Remember, most people don't mind buying things, they just hate being sold.

So let's think this through, and let's go back to the role of media sales. And let's just say, for example, that you're meeting with a jeweler. And the jeweler says to you, "Oh, I don't know exactly what I need to do, but I'm trying to get this all figured

out." And you respond, "So we've worked with jewelers like you before, and this is what we've learned. Most jewelers do these 3-4 things with us, and they get good results from it. So let's build from there and use what we've learned so that you don't have to do a test with us."

You can build this type of relationship quickly—because it comes with trust that another business owner like them has already done something with you, and it has worked out well.

Recommendation-based selling is built on implied trust through social proof.

So, what's the rub in all this? I contend that there are really two kinds of salespeople out there—there are hunters and there are farmers. Are you a hunter? You like to go out and get the kill and bring deals back to the office and drop it off. Or are you a farmer, and you like to nurture the sale from seed to harvest?

By nature, recommendation-based selling is a little foreign to the farmer. It's a little foreign because farmers like to really take their time and nurture things and really build relationships. But here's the thing I've noticed during COVID: as we move into more of a post-pandemic situation, by degrees, we're dealing with pandemic-fatigued individuals. And I'm noticing that they're super emotional. They're not making decisions based on logic. They're making a lot of decisions based on how they feel about something. Recommending products and using people that have come before as a basis for a level of trust, then, plays into that emotional model. And when I can play into that emotional model, I'll almost always do better with recommendation-based selling.

So, if you're a hunter, it's almost like recommendation-based selling is where it's at. It's fast and you probably kind of

like it.

It's those of you out there who feel like you really have to have a relationship with somebody before you can sell them something that may balk at recommendation selling. SPARXiQ tells us that 40% of buyers will have already made a decision about what they're going to choose before they ever contact us. So we're not the sole resource for information anymore. And this means we've got to come to the conversation with recommendations ready to go.

Remember, if you're going to stay alive in this business and you're going to be vibrant in this business, you've got to grow. And part of growing is learning, trying, and testing things. And here's my promise to you: I will never, EVER ask you to do something that I'm not currently doing out there in Sales Land. And what I've done is I've shifted from relationship-based selling to recommendation-based selling. And what I'm learning is that I can actually build relationships faster under the recommendation model.

I'm talking about all this in my new book that I mentioned, *Selling Forward*, available on Amazon and other outlets.

Friends, never forget. If sales was easy, everybody would be doing it, and they're not. We are the chosen few. And we've found a career that will feed our families for a lifetime.

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About this author: Ryan Dohm is an award winning ad sales training coach, a nationally recognized internet sales consultant, and an international motivational speaker. Listen to Ryan's ad sales podcast, *Ad Sales Nation*, on iTunes or on Soundcloud. Keep up to date with Ryan's ad sales training advice on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/RyanDohmLIVE>



**By John Foust**  
Raleigh, NC

# Ad-Libs

## Do you have an eight-inch frying pan?

There's a story about an old man who was fishing from a pier. He was catching more fish than anyone else, so a crowd gathered to learn his secret. His behavior was unlike anything they had ever seen. Each time he caught a fish, he pulled a tape measure out of his pocket and took a measurement. He put the small fish into his cooler and tossed the big ones back into the ocean.

When one of the onlookers asked about his strange technique, he explained that he kept only the fish that were under eight inches long. "Why are you doing that?" he was asked. He said, "Because my frying pan is eight inches wide."

Imagine that. The old fellow was throwing away the fish that didn't fit his eight-inch frying pan. It didn't occur to him that he could get a bigger frying pan or cut large fish into smaller pieces.

We may laugh at this silly example, but there's a bit of that old fisherman in all of us. It's human nature to resist change. It's no surprise that we have a tendency to discard ideas that don't fit the way we've always done things. We all have eight-inch frying pans in our minds, and sometimes it takes discipline to break down those barriers.

Pablo Picasso once said, "Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction." While there is some debate about what this famous artist actually meant, I think it's safe to say he was talking about the need to let go of former – often stubborn – inclinations to do things in certain ways.

Eight-inch frying pans have no place in a creative profession like advertising. If we discard the ideas that don't fit the way we've always done things, we restrict our thinking and limit our potential. When that happens, we end up in a creative rut – and our advertisers get short-changed.

Abraham Maslow, the noted psychologist and philosopher, said, "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail." That's another way of saying, "Stop throwing away the big ideas. Instead, get rid of that old, eight-inch frying pan."

To refocus our thinking, it helps to recognize negative reactions we may have toward new ideas. When a new concept comes to mind – and our initial reaction is to measure it and throw it back – we should stop ourselves in our tracks. That's it. Just stop.

This reminds me of the old saying, "The mind is like a parachute. It only works when it's open." Once we open the door to possibilities, new ideas – big ideas – will be more welcome.

There is a lot to gain. In the right environment, the seeds of unrestricted creative thinking can blossom into great advertising.

If you want to measure something, measure campaign results. When you have great advertising, you'll have great results. And when you have great results, you'll create loyal advertisers.

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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](mailto:john@johnfoust.com)





## *“Building Main Street, not Wall Street”* **Hope is not a Viable Business Strategy!**

– John A. Newby

Pooja Agnihotri, said “Fighting a change and clinging to the same old ways of doing things have never proved to be productive for anyone - you or your customers. We have all known businesses that failed. They had big dreams, great work ethic and small budgets. They hadn’t budgeted marketing and hoped word of mouth would spur business growth. They hoped great customer service would set them apart. They hoped the affordable, out of the way business location would still attract customers. They had the passion and hoped hard work and a great attitude would overcome the expected obstacles normally encountered. In short, far too many hopes, poor planning and lack of community support.

When the dust settled, they learned through the school of hard knocks, hope really makes a poor business strategy. It takes far more than hope, hard work and perseverance to succeed. While every community with a truly local mindset will try and support local business, it isn’t only the community’s job to assure new businesses succeed. Many businesses lack many of the skillsets and funds needed before they even get started. That said, it is in a community’s best interest to provide a winning business climate, and support networks that increase the odds of success for new or expanding business owners.

Expanding and forward-thinking communities understand this very well. What are the best practices communities can employ to further create an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset throughout their community? First, and foremost, create a hyper-local state of mind throughout the community. Forward-thinking communities have embraced this

concept from the top down. They would never consider a government purchase outside of the boundaries of their community before exploring all hyper-local options. Every tax dollar kept local benefits the city many times over.

Secondly, they create networks that support local business development. The more unique the local business community is, the more it conveys the vibrancy needed to foster further growth. While we all want large employers or manufacturers to come to town, the reality is that communities can have equal results one new local business at a time. Ten new businesses with five employees opening each year will equal one 250 employee business moving to town every five years. Additionally, local businesses need fewer tax breaks, fewer amenities, and are more active in the community.

Thirdly, communities can work with businesses to meet some local demands not currently filled by local businesses. Helping to support local steakhouses, entertainment, various retailer services are great starts. Not every business idea make sense for every community, knowing the kinds of businesses needed can be helpful as you seek to expand your community. Often, community leaders court national chains with their track record of success to fill their needs. Doing this comes at the expense of your local entrepreneurs able to fulfill those needs with a little push and assistance to meet those same demands. Local restaurants, entertainment and retail with a unique flavor always draw better than chains.

Lastly, we’ve mentioned on more than one occasion developing a tourist mentality is

critical. Most communities can attract tourists through unique events or destination marketing. Communities must view each new tourist as \$1000 walking into your community to spend money now. View each hundred tourists as \$100,000 walking into your community. Communities often overlook this most basic and logical way to foster growth and development. Communities need not be New York, Chicago, Branson or a spring training site of MLB to draw tourism. Today, tourists are staying closer to home seeking unique attractions, unique events, unique downtowns, unique retail experiences and in short –something unique and outside the norm. Find your unique niche, build upon it and then let the world know. You will be amazed!

These certainly aren’t the only things a community can do to battle the economic woes so many small and mid-sized communities face. These are simply basic ideas every community can start building their foundation with. Communities doing all the above and those local things unique to their area will find a way. They will find a way because doing all the above, show they are willing to do what it takes to win. Make no mistake, this is a high stakes competition, there are winners and losers – which side will your community line up on?

John Newby, Pineville, MO. is a nationally recognized publisher, community, business & media consultant, and speaker. He authors “Building Main Street, not Wall Street,” a column appearing in 50+ communities. The founder of Truly-Local, dedicated to assisting communities create excitement, energy, and combining synergies with local media to become more vibrant and competitive. His email is: [info@Truly-Localllc.com](mailto:info@Truly-Localllc.com).

I'm still looking at past articles, and although I've presented info on creating visual communications, it's still up to the viewer to process that message, so we need to look at, and understand...

Ad Talk with Ellen Hanrahan

Visual Literacy

Graphic design, because of its visual nature, requires an understanding of pictures, letters and symbols. It seems so simple—"make it look good"—and yet, visual information is much more complex. The graphic designer must combine words and images to make visual statements that are to be read and understood. The words and images must reinforce each other in both intent and content to be readable, legible...and most of all, believable to the reader.

Visual literacy is a skill that helps to interpret, understand, and derive meaning from information presented in the form of an image, extending the meaning of literacy, which we most often think of written or printed text. Visual literacy is based on the idea that pictures can be "read" and that meaning can be communicated through a process of reading.

Prehistoric animal drawings in ancient caves, such as the ones in France and Spain, can be thought of as early forms of visual literacy—they relay information.

The concept of reading signs and symbols is certainly not new... we do it all the time with

the symbols for men's room or ladies room, red cross, railroad crossings, poison, etc. A simple symbol is substituted for words and in most cases, understood by many, even if they do not speak the same language.

There are also a lot of studies, theories, practices and books that delve deeper into visual literacy, but this is just to expand your design capabilities in understanding the tools you have available to you.

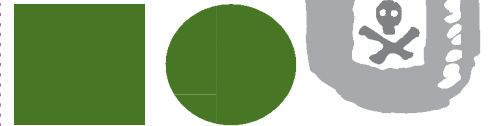
Sometimes images create illusions that put our visual awareness to the test. We can apply this same concept to the ads that we do. Since we also work with images—photo, illustration, text—all can be viewed as elements with similar characteristics. When we create an ad, we place all these elements into a visual representation. Remember contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity? These principles help organize the ad content and help the reader understand what the information is all about.

The following illusions, or at least the idea behind them, can be used to make our ads better—especially if we have to create the illusion that there is more space in the ad.

Visual perceptions are based on our own human behavior, experiences and memories. An image of food can trigger hunger. The experience of touching fire leads us to understand "hot." We respond to visual images based on what we know.

Different cultures may interpret some images differently. In Gestalt Theory this is called "Isomorphic Correspondence."

Uh oh, poison!



Simple geometric shapes can alter the way objects look and are perceived. Both the square and the circle are the same size from edge to edge. The circle only appears smaller because the white space that surrounds it seems to minimize its shape. Before language, information came primarily through visual representations.

As children we learned through images, but once we learned words, we no longer continued to develop our visual literacy.

Visual Literacy has three parts...

Visual thinking is the ability to transform thoughts, ideas, and information into all types of pictures, graphics, or other images that help communicate the associated and appropriate information.

Visual communication is when pictures, graphics, and other images are used to express ideas and to inform people. For visual communication to be effective, the reader must be able to construct meaning from seeing the visual image.

Visual learning is the process of learning from pictures and graphics. Visual learning includes the construction of knowledge by the learner as a result of seeing the visual image.

All parties involved have to understand the images that they are seeing. If someone does not understand a graph or chart, then that information is not useful.

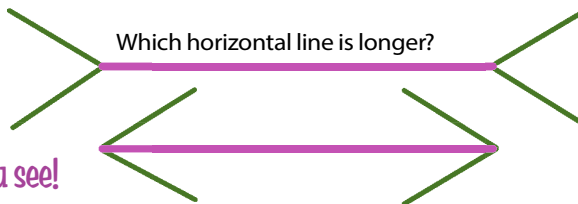
Final Thoughts:

Combine words and images carefully. Images must support the words, and as you can see, images can also deceive the viewer!

It's hard at times to think of words as being an "image," because they're, well, words. Think of text, or prices as shapes, then you may be able to come up with more options to organizing the ad space. Create the illusion that all pictures and words we need to fit into that ad space were specifically designed for it—whole, complete, organized... plus it must "sell" the product or service—that's our job!

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 ©2022

The Muller-Lyer Arrow produces an illusion that in itself is not distorted but produces the distortion when the two arrows are viewed together.



You can't always believe what you see!

We rely on familiar word shapes to help us read.

Lowercase letters have distinctive shapes and sometimes we are able to figure out what the words say just by their shapes alone. See if you can recognize the following two proverbs just by the shapes. Don't peek at the answers—you will be able to get it!

- 1. Beggars can't be choosers.
2. Easy come, easy go.

Another illusion is based on the premise that the brain is confused by ambiguity, and normally selects one image over the other, usually the more familiar, or recognizable, object or shape.

In this drawing based on the illustration designed by E.G. Boring, we see the profile of a young woman with her head tilted to the side...or do we? Look again and you may very well see the face of an old woman!

By the way the internet has many other "ambiguous" samples to check out.



ANSWERS
Muller-Lyer Arrow: The two lines are, in fact, equal in length.
Proverbs: 1. Beggars can't be choosers. 2. Easy come, easy go.





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