

December 2023
INFORMER



**Community
Papers of
Michigan**

Welcome Don Rush CPM's New Executive Director

As you know, I announced my retirement in September as CPM's Executive Director at the end of this calendar year. Since that time, so much has had to come together in preparation for our new Executive Director, Don Rush, to begin working with me in late November through December of this year.

Don is a 38-year newspaper professional and has done it all during that time and will keep CPM running smoothly and growing. Don is also our current CPM president, which ironically, I was president of this fine association when I accepted this position, too.

It's hard to believe that 15 years have passed since I began my tenure with CPM. It seems like yesterday, my wife and I packed up several Ryder trucks, my pickup and trailer loaded with our possessions to be placed in storage until we sold our home in Bad Axe, Mich. and found what we wanted somewhere in the Greater Lansing area. We placed our home on the market at what our realtor told us was the worst time in recent memory to sell real estate, the great recession of 2008-'09. We were fortunate to have sold our home in May of 2009 and found a property that we both really liked that was only 25 minutes from both of our offices in East Lansing yet was in a rural setting on acreage which we wanted.

My love for community papers and print advertising has only grown over the years as your executive director, as I was able to work with print professionals across Michigan within our membership and with agencies and non-member publishing groups. I have met so many wonderful people that make up our CPM membership and introduced several more to our association. Selling preprint, display and classified network advertising into our members' publications has been more rewarding than I ever imagined it could be. Also, my CPM clients have been fantastic to work with and I thank each of them for



Left to right: new Exec. Director, Don Rush, Jack Guza, and new CPM President, Marty Bennet

entrusting their advertising dollars with CPM and our members.

All good things must come to an end. After over 40 years in the community paper industry, it's time for me to spend more quality time with my wife, children, grandchildren, family, and friends than working life affords. I have no regrets and would take this journey again as Cher would say, "If I could turn back time." I plan to focus on health and fitness, playing my guitar and learning new music, and of course, some hunting, too. After I begin tackling an extremely large "honey do" list my wife has patiently been waiting on.

Of all the people that I have worked with during my time at Community Papers of Michigan, I have to acknowledge our dedicated board of directors. Your board has endured all that every business has over the years, including the horrible effects of the pandemic, all the while keeping CPM top of mind and never questioning our mission. That's the measure of quality people, and you can be proud of the job each of them has done and continues to do. With Don becoming your executive director, Marty Bennett has been nominated and elected to be CPM's president, effective immediately. Jon Jacobs is CPM's new Secretary/Treasurer. Also, Cindy Gaedert – Gearhart, owner/publisher of The County Journal and

Flashes Advertising & News in Eaton County, will be joining CPM's board in March of 2024. Please consider serving on CPM's board. No one has ever told me they regretted the time they served on our association's board, as all noted they learned much along the way.

I want to thank and acknowledge Dana Risner for her dedication and professionalism to CPM. Dana has certainly made my life easier and was always there when I needed her. I know she will do the same for Don,

who will come to depend on Dana for her amazing attention to detail. Our members and clients who work with Dana all think the world of her which is a testament to her quality of work and of herself as a genuinely nice person. Thank you again, Dana!

Finally, I also want to thank Cindy Seaver whose composition talent makes this monthly INFORMER e-newsletter as attractive as it is useful with the great variety of articles from our dedicated contributing writers. Cindy has patiently put up with me over the years to get each monthly newsletter just right, which for Cindy was not hard as she is truly a gifted graphic artist.

I am blessed to be able to retire from the position that I have loved, representing Community Papers of Michigan and our wonderful members. Thank you for working with me over the years and for your friendship along the way.

Wishing you continued success in the New Year and beyond!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!
JACK

Kevin's Top 10 Tips for 2024

As one year ends and another begins, Kevin puts on his coaching cap

By Kevin Slimp

The end of one year and the beginning of a new year seem to make me a little reflective. In the past three weeks, I've found myself in 13 states. Traveling has allowed me to visit with many longtime newspaper friends and a few new ones. I'm often asked for advice in our conversations, especially as publishers contemplate plans for the new year.

Readers seem to like numbered lists – and it seems as if half the folks I know are “coaches” these days – so please humor me as I offer “Coach Kevin’s Top 10 Tips (please forgive the superfluous alliteration) for 2024.”

Tip 1: Watch for community members who could be valuable to your newspaper. A close friend recently retired and was quickly contacted by a community newspaper 20 miles away asking if he'd be interested in shooting pictures at ballgames a couple of times each week. He was surprised and thrilled. He's having a great time taking photos of high school wrestling matches and volleyball games, and the newspaper is getting a great deal. Like many new retirees, he was concerned about filling his time during retirement. It's a win/win.

Tip 2: Make it a habit to meet with reporters and designers to discuss ways to improve the content and design of your newspaper. Do you want to increase readership? The quickest way I know of is to improve the content and look of your newspaper.

Tip 3: Call the Small Business

Bureau (in some states, grants come through the Economic and Community Development office) and ask about grants for small businesses. I've worked with papers in several states that have received grants to pay the entire bill for on-site training. These grants covered training costs and other expenses. A quick look at my state's website (Tennessee) states, “For the most part, the grants that go to small business owners generally fall in three areas: value-added agriculture, technology development and commercialization, and vocational rehabilitation.” Just about everything we do at newspapers can fit into the technology development category when applying for a grant. You can also find information about grants at grants.gov.

Tip 4: Replace your on-site backup drives every couple of years. They break down, and it can be a miserable experience when they do. Newspapers should also have off-site (cloud) backups in place. Your information can be safely stored off-site for just a few dollars each month.

Tip 5: Speaking of backups, most newspapers are Mac-based. Ensure every computer is set up to use Time Machine for automatic backups. Time Machine has saved me many times over the years. Just purchase an inexpensive SSD drive (usually around \$100) for each computer to be used only for Time Machine.

Tip 6: If you haven't already, cre-



ate a master chart to track your sales calls. Be sure to include columns for “in-person,” “phone,” “text,” and “email” calls. Look over your calls with your ad manager or publisher at the end of each week. A master chart is a straightforward method for increasing the number of calls, guaranteeing increased ad revenue. It is also an excellent reminder to make more in-person calls rather than relying too much on email or other contact methods.

Tip 7: Don't let the design of your newspaper become stale. If your newspaper looks the same as it did ten years ago, it's too late. But it's never too late to update the design.

Tip 8: Take advantage of training opportunities. Be aware of online and in-person training available through your press association and other organizations. It comes as no surprise that most successful newspapers make training a regular part of their routine.

Tip 9: Host a focus group of diverse community members

annually to get opinions and share ideas about ways to improve your newspaper. People love being part of focus groups, and it's an effective way to get solid information to enhance your product.

Tip 10: Be a “hands-on” publisher. The most successful papers I've worked with in 2023 have publishers who are hands-on in the daily operation of the newspaper. Years ago, a young editor called me panicked when she had been offered the publisher's position at a nearby daily paper. “What does a publisher do?” she asked. “It's simple,” I replied. “Either nothing... or everything.” Successful papers have publishers who are involved in the paper and the community.



Kevin Slimp is a popular consultant, advisor and trainer in the newspaper industry. From 1997-2018, Kevin directed The Newspaper Institute of The University of Tennessee. He currently serves as CEO of Market Square Publishing and Chief Guru at NewspaperAcademy.com.

Kevin Slimp, “The News Guru”
kevin@kevinslimp.com



BY JOHN FOUST

Ad - Libs

Get More Mileage Out of Testimonials

Back in my ad agency days, I worked with a real estate client on a series of customer testimonials. We started with one, then added another and another. The final count was more than a dozen, which kept the campaign fresh and gave us a lot of flexibility.

The plan was to run smaller ads with one testimonial, and then to place three small testimonials at the top of weekly, full-page ads which featured descriptions of houses for sale. The ads attracted attention from prospective buyers and sellers (many of whom recognized their neighbors) and the company's agents (who were proud when their clients were featured). One testimonial photo and quote featured a South Korean couple who had relocated to the area, when one spouse's high tech employer moved a number of executives to North Carolina from that country. The quote appeared in Korean, which appealed to others who were relocating with the same company, in addition to attracting a lot of attention on the page.

This strategy gave us more mileage than a campaign with two or three testimonials, because there were so many different combinations. If you'd like to try something similar, here are the steps to take:

1. Select the right testimonial subjects.

Your advertiser can make the choices. Go for variety: some individuals, some couples, and some international customers, if possible. In the case of real estate, balance testimonials between home buyers and sellers.

2. Get the right testimonial quotes.

You can coach your advertiser on how to do this. Keep the quotes brief, with a target of 10 to 20 words. The quotes can be obtained by phone or email, or even in person. Make sure the subjects understand that their comments may be edited slightly for brevity.

3. Be specific.

A testimonial ad is a way to convey selling points about the advertiser. As a result, it's important to ask questions to direct answers in the right direction – and to create a variety of statements. "XYZ's service team responds quickly to calls. I can always count on them" is more informative than "The XYZ Company is great. I really like them." The next quote can focus on something other than service – product selection, for example.

4. Photos are a must.

Taking photographs has gotten simpler with each year. It's okay to use your phone. Headshots are best.

Clean, uncluttered backgrounds provide better ad reproduction.

5. Get signed releases. Depending on the laws in your area, make sure you have the proper permission to use each testimonial. Release forms can be found online.

6. Establish a rotation.

Be flexible. The more testimonials you have, the greater the possibilities – some ads with one testimonial, some with multiple testimonials.

7. Thank (but do not pay) your testimonial subjects.

Unpaid testimonials from real customers have the ring of authenticity. Your advertiser should send a nice letter, along with their photo (preferably 5x7) and a copy of an ad in which they appeared. It's another chance for your advertiser to strengthen their relationships with clients.

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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. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com





A Walk Down Memory Lane SUCCESS RELIES ON BUILDING COMMUNITY

By Fred Jacobs

he success of my family's 80-year publishing business mirrors that of probably any newspaper that thrived during the turn-of-the-century Golden Age of Newspapers.

American soldiers came home to a proud nation following both World War I and World War II. Their communities embraced them and newspapers thrived amongst the country's longing to unite and to celebrate a shared gratitude and commitment to each other.

Though perspectives on dates vary, it's said that newspapers enjoyed a

"Golden Age" through nearly the entire 1900s. Nearly every community had some form of newspaper publication; major cities had multiple daily newspapers. Some, including our neighboring Grand Rapids, even had morning and evening editions.

Like many men of the day, my father, Mel Jacobs, left his small restaurant business in the 1940s to join the defense industry at machine company E.W. Bliss in Hastings, MI before assisting the Eaton Corp. in Battle Creek to draw up time and motion plans for more productive machine placement and output. Drawing on his early publishing days when he had printed an advertising bulletin for local businesses in Hastings, Mel was led to print a German language newspaper for World War II prisoners of war being held at Ft. Custer

in Battle Creek. He also published another paper for American GIs in training there.

After the war, Mel realized the vital work of newspapers in building community and, after purchasing the Hastings Reminder from the Swift family whose heir was killed in the war action, he and my mother, Alice, built a small garage beside the family home in downtown Hastings and put the entire family to work.

The Reminder was the area's first "shopper" publication and, over the years, it became one of the most successful community papers in the nation. It was honored 12 consecutive years by Circulation Verification Council with the Gold Standard Award as one of the top 1 percent in the nation for readership and readership. The Hastings Banner entered the Michigan Journalism

'Hall of Fa.me' by winning the Wade H. McCree Jr. Award for the Advancement of Justice with our coverage of "Family faces crisis under insurance reforms." These with numerous other acknowledgements have given us the satisfaction of knowing that our community news coverage is important to our readers.

The Jacobs children - Joyce, John, Steve, and I - quickly found our place in the business in those early days and developed a lifelong love for the publishing industry. When our parents purchased the Community Ad-

visor in Marshall in 1969, John served as publisher for over 40 years. Joyce stepped into a similar position when the company purchased a small paper in Battle Creek that it was instrumental in starting. In 1976, when the original owners decided to sell, we stepped in and positioned the Shopper News as a perfect geographic location between our Hastings and Marshall operations. All followed the successful "community newspaper" format with strong advertising carrying the opportunity to also carry positive community news.

With its publishing success, the company acknowledged the need for more space. In 1969, after 24 years of publishing from the home garage, the company moved production to a farm north of town and established an office in a downtown Hastings storefront. Eight years later, we combined all operations at the farm location just north of the city and officially christened ourselves with the present J-Ad Graphics name.

As we grew, so did the publishing industry. Thanks to a 17-unit Mercury Press and its state-of-the-art platemaking system, J-Ad Graphics is now the printing home of over 40 different publications including its own fleet of newspapers that reach 140,000 households each week. The company also provides custom printing, publishing, and graphic design services for both print and digital media. (Continued on pg. 6)

A Walk Down Memory Lane

By Fred Jacobs (Continued from page 5)

My dad understood newspapers and, in those first years, had to do it all. He'd sell the ads, set the pages, and print the paper. Most papers at that time were printed hot metal or mimeograph but Dad, with his flair for design, didn't want to face the awful problem of making an engraving for every cut in the ad, so he wanted to go offset. That was a new concept in printing, laying out the pages and shooting them graphically from which you could make plates to print.

Our mom, who was a full-time beauty operator, could see that Dad had great skills in production, but selling ads took too much of his time. She gave up her beauty business to take over advertising sales. If you knew Alice, you would know that she could sell ice to the Eskimos -she had a real knack for sales and together Mel and Alice built our future.

A rising tide lifts all boats, as the saying goes, and our success in helping retailers, non-profits, and our communities flourish quickly established our weekly publications at the center of our readers' hometowns.

Though our "shopper" publications added a number of community-related stories each week, our dad always had a keen eye for the "hard news" publication in our town, the Hastings Banner. In 1981, that newspaper was added to our fleet and we began to sink our teeth into the legal and hard news of the community.

Dad's basic newspapering principle -whether it be an advertising publication or a hard news publication -was that if we could sell a home, car, or a local service from the pages of our papers each week, we could also have an impact on the community and community events. Over the years, that became a tough line to walk. In fact, it took several years to determine how the Reminder and the

Banner would survive in the marketplace. Many experts at the time thought we should combine them into one paper. We never did and we're glad that we didn't, though it's been an interesting and sometimes amusing ride.

My feelings back then had always been that a hard news publication should carry an opinion column, something I provide each week now. While working for my father, though, my attempts to do so were always met by his quiet and persistent demeanor that we should not write columns that might create local controversy. I continued to write columns and hand them to my father. He would read them, maybe make a comment or two, and then file them in his desk drawer. He told me that I didn't realize the impact my words might have on a person or a community.

After our dad passed away in 1995 and I was going through 'his desk, I found a folder of all those columns I had submitted to him. It was marked, "Dangerous Material."

Perspectives today have certainly changed. Today we're bombarded with far more dangerous material coming from social media and a culture of narcissistic indulgence that's eroding traditional cultural values.

The world, including the newspaper industry, has changed and J-Ad Graphics like the publications it mirrored in the Golden Age of Newspapers is fighting to survive. We're doing it by staying true to the principles on which we were founded -family, devoted employees, and

a community that's devoted to us.

We're now in our third generation of leadership. Though my brother Steve passed away in 2013 and Joyce and John have retired, my three children, Jennifer, Carrie and Jon are now learning and helping me guide the business by the same principles on which Mel and Alice Jacobs stood.

We embrace the challenges and encourage every publisher in these buffeting winds to rely on community -communities which we help build.

"The world, including the newspaper industry, has changed and J-Ad Graphics like the publications it mirrored in the Golden Age of Newspapers is fighting to survive. We're doing it by staying true to the principles on which we were founded -family, devoted employees, and a community that's devoted to us."

Fred Jacobs is president and CEO of J-Ad Graphics, Inc. in Hastings, Michigan



Once again, we've come to the end of another year... and while effective design never gets "dated," our creative tools seem to always be changing. That will be for next year, but for this month, let's focus on these...

Holiday Ads

The ads presented here had appeared in our publications over the last twenty-plus years and are still effective today. The ads have been reduced to fit on the page, but that is the only change that has been made. I reduced all these ads to 63%–65% of the actual size and have left all the contact information intact.

In the early years, our advertising was black and white because color in advertising was pretty expensive—especially if you were doing the smaller ads. So most of the ads were in black and white and placed on a colored background for "Gift Guide" pages.

Some Common Practices

None of the artwork looks as if it was an afterthought. It is an integral part of the design. And you may also notice that the interior of the ad appears have its own grid system as well.

None of the text spans the width of the ad. That is for both readability purposes and to help incorporate the artwork into the ad. When the ad space is wider than the length, shortening the line length can go a long way in the readability of the information.

Glyphs and swash characters are not overdone, and information that goes together stays together. The information is unified and easier for the reader to understand. If a gradient is used, it is soft (low screen percentage) and relegated to the background... less distraction.

The silhouette in the "Gift Guide" ad helps eye flow into the ad from the bottom and point to the dates in the ad.

Our "Holiday Happenings" header, below, is very flexible (there are more stars on either side of the ad) to be able to fit a number of different column widths. This makes it easier to fit in a variety of spaces on the page.



Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and safe holiday season! Next year I hope to focus on tips and techniques that software changes have provided. And thanks for another year of Ad Talk. Remember, you can always give me suggestions, or even a problem ad to redo for next year... that would be a great gift!

DOWNTOWN HARTFORD BID
Parade Winners

<p>Religious</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. St. Aidan's 2. St. Killian's 3. Peace Lutheran Handbells <p>Bands/Musical</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slinger High School Marching Band 2. Central Middle School Marching Band 3. Tie - HUHS Marching Band and Hartford City Band <p>Theme</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Girl Scouts of Hartford/Slinger/Addison 2. Walmart 3. Broan Nutone LLC <p>Novelty</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hartford Parks & Recreation Dept. 2. Erin School Bands 3. Hartford Youth Football 	<p>Animals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cloverleaf Clydesdales of Erin 2. Alaskan Malamute Club of Wisconsin 3. Horses sponsored by Lake Street Inn Hustiford <p>Special Judges Award to Eastside Lumber for constructing the Gingerbread House on the Santa Float</p> <p><i>Thank you to all the participants!</i></p>
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Details

"Parade Winners" uses a background with a white box to show that not just a thicker border is your only alternative.

"Flowersmith" has a lot of info, but contrast in type size and color values helps unify the times and events.

Cropping art helps to keep it large and not just a "speck" in the ad.

Always review your ads to see what worked and what didn't.

SEE THE BOOSTER'S
Holiday Gift Guides
NOV 13-29
 ads@Booster-ads.com
 262 · 673-2900
 262 · 334-5899

Join us for holiday fun at *Perc Place*
Gingerbread House Day!
Wednesday, December 7
6:00-8:00pm

Children and a parent/caregiver can decorate their very own gingerbread house!
 \$35 per couple/house
 \$5 FOR EACH ADDITIONAL MEMBER IN GROUP

Chef Edward and some talented "elves" will provide assistance and everything needed to complete this sweet and charming holiday tradition.

Includes Christmas cookie and choice of coffee, hot chocolate or apple cider.

Advanced registration required. Limited to 30 houses.

262-670-6950 47 N. MAIN ST. DOWNTOWN HARTFORD
 MON-FRI 7AM to 7PM · SAT 7AM to 5PM · SUN 8AM to 2PM

It's coming!
Hartford Christmas Midnight Madness
Friday, December 15th
8pm-12 Midnight

Join in the fun, savings and activities all evening long—downtown and around town!

Holiday Open House Extravaganza

Thursday, November 17 9am-7pm
 Friday, November 18 9am-7pm
 Saturday, November 19 9am-5pm

20% off one item of your choice with this ad
 one discount per customer
 Valid Nov. 17-19, 2011 only

Dazzling Holiday Displays!
Featuring the 2011 Mark Roberts Fairy Collection
 and you'll Find Everything for your Holiday Decorating including Elegant Holiday Decor and Decorating Services.

The Flowersmith
 DESIGN WITH SIGNATURE STYLE

403 South Main Street, West Bend 262-306-0633
 Mon & Fri 9am-5pm; Tue, Wed, Thur 9am-6pm; Sat 9am-3pm www.flowersmith.net

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.in@att.net Ellen Hanrahan ©12/2023



PUBLIC POLICY MATTERS 2024: WHAT COMMUNITY PUBLISHERS NEED TO KNOW *By Jim Haigh*

Government happens to you, if you let it. And if you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu. This can often describe the situation faced by smaller rivals to historically dominant players in most industries when it comes to shaping public policy. Advancing the business interests of free community publishers is no exception. As an industry, we have achieved our share of success against overwhelming odds over the years, despite being outspent and outgunned by orders of magnitude. The threats and extraordinary opportunities already on the table for 2024 could truly be transformative in a media landscape evolving at unprecedented pace and scale.

Here is a public policy dive into the year ahead, with a focus on matters critical to publishers' revenue streams. Legal advertising has never been more up for grabs across the states, as the monopoly incumbent pay-to-read print newspapers face relentless challenges and mounting defeats. Government advertising for non-legal purposes, placed in media at the discretion of elected officials at all levels, has come into sharp focus as a prime opportunity to reinvest in small, local media outlets. In Congress, critical bipartisan momentum builds for tax policy prescriptions to hire and retain local journalists, and help small businesses advertise in their local media. And nonprofit institutions have been steadily boosting meaningful investment in sustaining local news, with a group of prominent players now forming a coalition that is pledging at least a half a billion dollars in funding starting in the new year.

The right to compete for "Legals" has always been a top policy priority for free community paper publishers. Over the years, we have achieved small but impactful changes in subset categories like bid notices, estate and bankruptcy notices, and announcements of liens, foreclosures and sheriff sales, in the vast tapestry of laws governing placement from municipal to the state level. Major victories creating completely level playing fields to compete have been rare, with recent success in Florida coming a decade after years-long process to win the same in Ohio. Unfortunately, Ohio legislators just launched a stealth attack inserting language into their massive omnibus budget bill that will effectively gut most publishing requirements for print. This fresh disaster comes after Florida did the same, however much more publicly in process, repealing their exemplary modernization last year before it had a chance to provide better notice at a better price for taxpayers.

Government efforts to "modernize" delivery of vast categories of this essential civic information mandated for publication to the masses are perennial, but they went into overdrive during the pandemic. In the last completed legislative sessions, there were a whopping 273 different bills introduced across 41 states proposing changes large and small. Justifications being made are no longer focused mainly on costs, however. Real disruptions to government caused by disruptions to their mandated legal instruments - aka pay-to-read newspapers - were pervasive during the pandemic. Public meetings, bond issues, resolutions, development plans and decisions of all manner

and sort of open, functioning and transparent government were thrown into chaos when official notice was not published timely and as legally required, as newspapers' operations faltered. And this keeps happening again and again to local governments as newspapers fold or go digital.

We can expect more legislation in more states in 2024. There will be bills seeking to follow the radical new precedents established by Ohio and Florida, along with scores more seeking reforms at the edges, such as those enacted with less resistance and fanfare the last few years in the face of stark realities. A prime example is expanding the use of free community newspapers - and even local online-only news outlets - across the growing number of counties across more states where pay-to-read print newspapers no longer publish, as well as where shrinking circulation is too small to justify exclusive monopoly on this critical taxpayer funded advertising.

It is time to fully appreciate that every significant bill introduced in any state is an opportunity to engage with legislators, local governments, our readers and local businesses who can also be captive to legal advertising mandates and monopoly rates. In recent years, free community publishers - those both in print and online only - have been pushing the ball uphill, mostly by themselves, and making some real noise. Working more closely, with coordinated leadership, strategy and support, there is tremendous opportunity to seize on in 2024. (Continued on pg. 9)

PUBLIC POLICY *Continued from page 8.*

DISCRETIONARY GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Government at every level has a budget for advertising matters of public interest, and for which elected officials have considerable discretion over the media outlets they can choose for their purposes. Most ACP member publishers are likely already receiving at least a sliver from some municipalities, and even counties and states where they publish. In bigger cities like Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., small, diverse local publishers have banded together for years to collectively demand their fair share. And over the last few years, independent publishers in cities like Chicago and New York, have advanced even further, achieving public policy victories cementing their seat at the procurement table by way of executive orders, resolutions and ordinances mandating significant percentages of government advertising be placed in small local media.

There is now incredible potential for publishers to make huge gains increasing their share of this massive category of advertising, as attention from a diverse coalition of local media, public interest groups, journalism schools and even governments, themselves, are now scrutinizing existing media spends for equity, inclusion and efficacy. Groundbreaking studies are beginning to tally the size, scope and distribution of public advertising expenditures, and in short: there's a fortune - and today it goes primarily to big media and big tech. Until now, the vast bounty of taxpayer funded government advertising has been placed by force of habit and ease of placement by governments and their agencies.

But with data showing that states like New York place less than 3% of their budgets in small media with unique audiences, while big media continues to consolidate and stripmine community coverage, and digital ad fraud surpasses \$85 billion, policymakers and shapers are galvanizing meaningfully around formally redirecting large portions of this existing advertising back to truly local news enterprises.

National nonprofit organizations are also lending invaluable support raising awareness, providing extensive research, best practices and model legislation. One such national alliance, Rebuilding Local News, spearheaded by the media veteran who lead the Federal Communications Commission inquiry and report on the Future of Media which our industry was involved with shaping, just released a robust and actionable policy toolkit to democratize government advertising back to truly local. The potential for ACP members is beyond extraordinary as critical forces are truly aligning in our favor, so much so that it would be professionally negligent not to engage in these efforts now underway for 2024.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT LOCAL MEDIA AND SMALL BUSINESS

While Congress is notorious for dysfunction on a good day, there are rare moments when bipartisan consensus legislation can actually grind through the sausage factory and into law. The optimal conditions for such happenings require stars aligning around agreed-to problems that are simultaneously local and universal, policy prescriptions that are bipartisan and not magnets for controversy, offer promise of meaningful impact back home with key constituencies - and have the full throated support and active, persistent championing of stakeholders most likely to benefit.

The bipartisan Community News and Small Business Support Act (H.R. 4756) introduced by Reps. Claudia Tenney, a Republican from upstate New York, and Suzan DelBene, a Democrat from Washington, is the unicorn of federal legislation that checks all the boxes described above. It is a simple, painstakingly crafted policy framework we had a voice in shaping that amends tax code to provide modest yet meaningful tax credits to legitimate, small local news enterprises to hire and retain staff dedicated to local news production - and tax credits to local small businesses to advertise in the same truly local media.

This legislation, if enacted in current form as introduced, would provide a tremendous reinvestment of our existing tax obligations back into community publisher operations - while simultaneously stimulating our small business communities to advertise and grow in local, circular economy efforts. H.R. 4756 is starting to build momentum, gaining cosponsors and public attention - even as it competes with proposals favored and lobbied hard by big media that do little to nothing to help the majority of small media. If our publishing peers engage with collective voice, and educate our small business advertisers into the gathering grassroots movement in support of regenerating local news and shopping small, we really can make public policy into law that serves local news, commerce and community happen in 2024 and beyond.

Government will always just happen to us if we don't even try to make a difference. Not attempting to claim our seats at the table of public policy ensures that we'll continue to be on the menu for others. What you have just read if you made it this far is a snapshot of most promising public policy developments advancing our industry's collective interests happening largely without our direct engagement as we look ahead to 2024. Each of us has every reason to at least do our individual parts in bigger efforts to capture local advertising dollars. Public policy matters more than ever in 2024.

Jim Haigh is a community publishing veteran, successfully growing hometown weeklies, serving leadership roles in industry association boards of directors, and for years lead public policy and advocacy efforts for community publishers before local, state, regional and federal government. He is open to connecting on LinkedIn, and can be reached for serious inquiries about community publisher efforts to advance meaningful public policy at: jimhaigh rcn.com



Creating Urgency With Your Clients

By Ryan Dohrn

The end of 2023 is closing in fast. And as an ad salesperson who spends a lot of time in the media business and digital technology, this fact makes me pause and think: what am I going to do to get my clients and prospects to go ahead and sign on the dotted line?

This question is an important one to address in any type of media sales training, actually – whether it’s magazine sales training, TV sales training, radio sales training or any kind of broadcast sales training. We have got to be thinking, what can I do to convert clients and prospects into sales? What kinds of urgency levers can I pull?

All throughout the year in my ad sales training and in my own ad sales, I’ve worked to put urgency triggers into place. And now it’s time to act. It’s time to pull those levers. It’s time to help make our prospects take action.

If you’ve been to the Niche Media Conference you’ve probably learned to put these levers into place already. But here’s a refresher to help you close out some sales before the end of the year.

These are proven sales tactics that work for me.

Lever No. 1: Instill FOMO, right on the spot.

A lot of salespeople like to present their goods and their value proposition and then leave to create a proposal for the prospect. And there are certain circumstances where you have to do that. A lot of my competitors definitely do that.

But I’ve realized this and I share it continually in my ad sales training: I don’t need to leave to create a proposal. I’m not selling rocket science gear or brain surgery equipment. And even if I was, I’d still come with pricing ready to go.

This is why — I want somebody to consider

my proposal while I’m right there in front of them.

Now, you may be thinking, “what about the customer needs assessment?” And this is something I’ve been talking about for years in media sales training. But shouldn’t we truthfully be calling what most salespeople do a “customer wants” assessment? And if you give somebody what they want, you have a customer for a very short period of time.

But if you give somebody what they need or if you advise them, recommend and guide them towards what they need, then you’ve got a customer forever.

No matter what you’re selling, think about it. You probably already have a really sound idea when you walk into a meeting what that customer needs to do. So I don’t look at these meetings as though I’m starting from square one.

I look at these meetings as they’re trusting me to come to them with ideas and recommendations, ready to go. And I’m asking questions to fine-tune my recommendations. (Are there circumstances where you’ve got to gather information, take it away and assess it before you can make sound recommendations as a salesperson? Of course, but as I remind people in my media sales training, those are exceptions.)

So, let’s say that you’re at the very end of the sales process and you need to give your prospect a price, and maybe you don’t have it. Then ballpark it. And I say this from experience.

I consult with 15 different industries in my media sales training, and in some of them people are selling \$50 million planes, and still, they don’t say, “Let’s end this meeting and I’ll go create a proposal for you.” The price is what it is.

Ninety percent of the time, no matter what I’m advising on or selling, I need to get a

level of excitement going on that sales call.

How I do that and how I keep the meeting going is this: I use the techniques of social proof or social stacking.

In social proof I may say, “We’ve worked with company A, company B and company C, and they’ve all seen great success with us.” And right there, I’ve given them social proof of my product’s ability to help customers succeed at whatever industry they’re in.

A social stack looks like this. “We’ve got this great idea and we wanted to start with your company first. There’s company A, B and C – and we think they would all benefit from this – but we’re starting with you.”

In either circumstance, with social proof or social stacking, you’re banking on FOMO, the fear of missing out. And FOMO creates some sense of urgency.

FOMO is an extremely effective lever you can pull.

Lever No. 2: Create a penalty for waiting.

It looks like this: “If you sign today, this is the price. If you sign tomorrow, that is the price.”

So, if they sign today the price is \$100. If they sign tomorrow, it’s \$200. If they sign six months from now, it’s going to be \$500.

Essentially, you’re penalizing them for waiting.

Admittedly, most salespeople I run across in my ad sales training don’t like this strategy because they can’t handle the pressure.

Lever No. 3: Offer incentives – bonuses – for buying today.

Discounting or offering incentives for people to sign on the dotted line is super common. And it is also super expected by your clients. And yet, it works – the longer they wait, the more they lose. (Continued on pg. 11)

Creating Urgency *By Ryan Dohrn Continued from page 10*

Here's a basic example of what you might say. "If you can make this decision today or within the next 72 hours (or something similar, but be sure you give them a time frame), you're going to get these five additional things." And then you name off those five things that you have determined you can give.

Now, after the week is up or the 72 hours or whatever time frame you have put in place, you need at least 50% of those things to go away – or, you can take them all away if you want to do that.

You've got to be careful though, because people will call your bluff. It's actually a pretty common tendency because we, as salespeople, will likely hear some of our clients and prospects say, "Okay, I'm ready to make a decision." But they will say if AFTER the time frame we set has already passed. When that happens, some salespeople cave and out comes, "Yeah, that pricing expired two weeks ago, but I'll go ahead and give it to you."

Well guess what, friends? They know you're going to do it.

So, remember this: there's a certain point in time where I believe you've got to burn a client every now and then. You've got to let them know that you're serious, as I say in my media sales training.

However, in an effort to not burn them too badly or make them seriously angry, one of the things I like to say upfront is, "I know that with a lot of salespeople, after this two weeks is up, if you decide you want to go with the offer later they're still going to give you the discount. So I just want you to know that my boss (my owner or whatever the case may be, but blame it on someone else) is not going to honor it after this particular point in time."

So you want to give them some time incentive and then in the end, if they try to call your bluff, you actually stick to the deal. And you could say, "Oh man, that's expired. I mean, I guess I could go to my boss and see."

But when you come back, don't give

them everything. For example, I may say, "We couldn't do everything that we had before, but we can at least give you 50% of the bonuses we had to offer originally."

Then they'll feel like they at least got something out of it. And maybe next time you come back to them, they won't sit on an offer and wait quite so long.

Lever No. 4: Entice with a rate protection scenario.

Rate protection is especially effective right now because everybody is raising rates on everything. So rate protection is a great lever to pull.

Drawing from what I tell my ad sales training crew, here's an example of what you might say to put this lever into play.

"If you sign by Christmastime, you can still take advantage of the 2023 rates, because we're going up 65% (or whatever the case may be) in 2024."

Now, keep in mind, you want to make sure that the rate increase you are citing is very, very clear. I generally don't talk to people in terms of percentages, for instance. I'm very concrete. If they would be able to save 25% or 28%, these percentages will need to be calculated into actual dollars for them to make sure they fully understand.

Rate protection is a very good, strong lever you can potentially pull, in my experience.

Parting words

In the grand scheme of the sales world, there are actually a lot of levers you can pull in addition to social proof and social stacking, fear of missing out, and — the most common levers – those that involve some form of financial incentive.

Hear this too, because this is really important and I share it all the time in media sales training that I conduct: whichever triggers you decide to create and urgency levers you decide to pull, don't wait until the last minute.

The old saying "failure to plan is planning to fail" comes to mind. Get your

urgency levers figured out, test them, structure them, and make sure you're not repeatedly going to discounts to get somebody to a sense of urgency about the sale.

Before I close, there's one other thing that's critically important to add. A lot of times, your clients and prospects genuinely need some time to think about an offer. They've got to talk to the boss and run it up the flag pole. It's a big expenditure. They want to think about it. So I strive to always give someone at least 72 hours to think about things.

If you can get away with doing the deal in a day, rock on with your bad self — that's awesome. But waiting two weeks, that's way too long. Even one week is stretching it, actually.

So, for me as an ad sales rep, allowing my clients and prospects to come back to me within the next 72 hours, or a time frame very close to that, is an effective and realistic urgency lever, I've found.

But in the end, you've got to figure out the urgency levers you can pull that are truly going to impact your sales game. And then don't forget them — don't keep them hidden. They are powerful tools in your sales arsenal.

In closing, if sales was an easy job everybody would be doing it. And they're not. But this is a great career, one that I promise you will feed you for a lifetime. If you want more information about sales urgency levers, head over to Amazon and check out my book, *Selling Forward*. Subscribe to the podcast or the YouTube channel, as well, and share these resources with your friends.

And remember to use those urgency levers to move the needle forward and get some sales action out of your customers before the year closes out.

Ryan Dohrn is the creator of the 360 Ad Sales Training system and is a globally recognized media revenue consultant. Ryan actively sells print, digital, broadcast, event sponsorships, exhibit space and radio.



By
Mark W.
Rummel
Fenton, MI

MarkWRummel@gmail.com

YOU'D BETTER SHOP AROUND:
What can we do to make 2024 a better growth year?
...and Best Wishes to our leader

This 2023 has been another crazy business year as inflation, high interest rates and general economic headwinds continued to constrain consumer behavior.

Still, this year has also revealed many bright spots across a variety of consumer-facing sectors — from retail to dining to entertainment — and certainly there are bright spots in the future of advertising in 2024 and beyond, too.

The research firm of Placer.ai says community papers should find and follow trends to shape the retail, dining, entertainment, real estate and advertising businesses in the coming year.

And many of these developments are likely to shape the wider consumer landscape in 2024, experts say, such as:

1. Retail stores got a great lift from Taylor Swift's Eras Tour, as millions of fans bought tons of clothes and accessories. Plus, her concert movie has been a huge success.

WHAT CAN SMALL BUSINESSES DO TO GET THEIR SHARE OF THAT? AND HOW CAN WE DEVELOP ADS TO HELP THEM GROW?

2. The sale of second-hand apparel is on the rise, as high clothing costs require stylish folks to stretch their budgets.

HOW CAN COMMUNITY PAPERS DEVELOP MARKETING PROGRAMS TO BRING MORE BUYERS AND SELLERS TOGETHER?

3. As malls evolve by adding new tenants such as libraries, gyms, spas, health clubs and movie theaters, experts



realize mall shoppers are spending more time there than in the past, Placer.ai analysts agree. That's opportunity!

WHAT CAN LOCAL PAPERS DO TO DEVELOP AD CAMPAIGNS AND PROMOTIONS TO GENERATE GREATER REVENUE — AND HELP SHOPPING CENTERS GROW EVEN MORE?

As you can see, we have more questions than answers. But the evolving world that seems to be totally online actually gives us more opportunities to promote, market and sell success to companies which might not have existed 10 years ago. We just have to dig harder to find them.

Many experts predict that growth in the global economy will be uneven in 2024, thanks to the strain of wars, election uncertainties, still-elevated inflation and continued high interest rates. Community papers can still deliver the goods to people who want to stretch their shopping dollars all year long... but that might require more brainpower to find.



All the best as you hit the road, Jack!

This dapper, smart-dressing, good-looking young guy is our own Jack Guza, back in 1980 as he helped me and my brother-in-law start The Thumb Blanket in Bad Axe, Mich. — “to cover the Thumb Area like a blanket covers a bed.”

Yes, our CPM Executive Director has spent a lifetime in the publications business, and now he's planning to retire, as you've read elsewhere in this issue. I couldn't be happier for Jack. He's set a standard for objective, quality, forward-thinking work in leading CPM. Jack is the personification of how the public perceives this organization, and we're all proud of his accomplishments here!

We hope he and wife Diane will enjoy more grandparenting and travel time... which they've definitely earned!



Circulation TIPS & INFO

National Newspaper Association Certified Platinum By Hillary Carroll

As 2023 draws to a close, we have a chance to reflect and celebrate surviving another year of postal rate hikes and policy changes. It's an opportunity to plan ahead for changes that will soon be implemented, including required electronic postage statements going into effect this January. Along with this, it's time to check off goals we've met and put new ones in place for 2024.

One of the goals I set for myself at the beginning of this year was to complete the National Newspaper Association's Periodicals training via the Max Heath Postal Institute. After many sessions of webinars, avid notes taking, and passing exams, I'm happy to share that Requester Pro is officially platinum certified! Check out the NNA article announcing recipients of the platinum certification. Completing this training deepened my intimate knowledge and understanding of this highly acclaimed mail class. As a result I'm more equipped than ever to provide expert guidance to publishers looking to make the switch to Periodical.

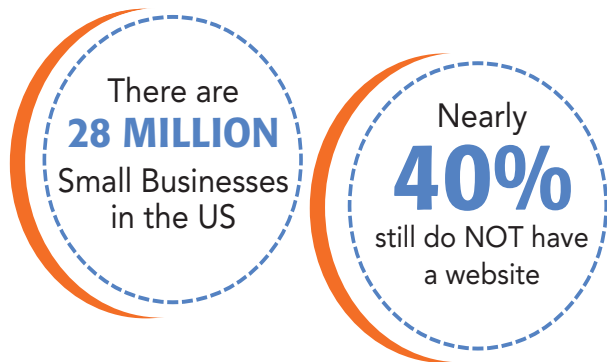
It's no secret that Periodical mail is the most affordable commercial mailing class. With postage as low as 13 - 15 cents per copy and guaranteed mailbox delivery, it's hard to argue with the advantages. Unfortunately the process to qualify remains elusive for most publishers.

Why is this? Simply put, the post office loses money on every qualifying Periodical title. Marketing mail and other mail classes are significantly more lucrative for the goliath that remains plagued by debt. It makes financial sense for USPS to keep the Periodicals mailing class close to the chest.

Despite this, establishing a Periodical permit is a great way for publishers to make the switch from carrier delivery to mailboxes. It can be used to expand market penetration, offer a new or improved product, and garner trust with advertisers. One major thing to point out, this mailing class is available to free circulation newspapers. There are stricter requirements for 'Requester' titles, but they are easily managed if you know what to look for. An example is that advertising percentage can not exceed 75% in more than 25% of a publication's issues. For a weekly, this amounts to 13 issues per year.

If making the switch to Periodical mail has been on the back burner for your organization, make it your goal to finally get that permit in 2024. The cost savings and other advantages are well worth it. As always, Requester Pro is here to help.

If you have questions about how a Periodical permit can benefit your operations, send an email to hillary@requesterpro.com. Let's do this together and keep print media alive and thriving!



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Don Rush
 CPM President
 38-Year Newspaper Professional
 Cell: 810-636-3798
 dontrushdon@gmail.com



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



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



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



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



Kara DeChalk
 Director
 Salesman Publications
 102 N. Main Street - P.O. Box 205
 Concord, MI 49237-0205
 Phone: 517-524-8540
 Fax: 517-524-8570
 ads@salesmanpublications.com



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



Jeff Demers
 Director
 C&G Newspapers
 13650 11 Mile Road
 Warren, MI 48089
 Cell: 586-291-1874
 Fax: 586-498-9631
 jdemers@candgnews.com



Jack Guza, Executive Director
 jackguza@cpapersmi.com



**Community
 Papers of
 Michigan**

Phone/Fax: (800)783-0267
 mifreads.com



Dana Risner, Business Manager
 danarisner@cpapersmi.com