

*February* **2025**  
**INFORMER**



**Community  
Papers of  
Michigan**





## March is Around the Corner, and is 'Mad' with Promotional Ideas

From The Executive Director, Don Rush

As I type this month's column, it's Zero Degrees outside. To say it's cold is an understatement! Just because it's cold outside, doesn't mean your sales can't heat up!

Last month (January) the Community Papers of Michigan one-and-a-half-person staff sold \$21,198.53 in sales. Our sales revenue comes from our statewide classified network, MegaMarket, display ad sales and pre-print inserts. From those sales, \$15,875.09 was paid back to members of our trade association.

Next month (March) spring officially arrives. And with Spring comes a bunch of opportunities. A headline I saw sums it up nicely:

### "March is mad with promotional ideas"

#### Here's a list of what's up next month

- National Reading Month
- National Athletic Month
- National Craft Month
- American Red Cross Month
- National Mom and Pop Business Owner Day
- National Nutrition Month
- St. Patrick's Day (March 17)
- Girl Scout Day (March 12)
- First Day of Spring (March 20)
- March Madness Month (Mar 18 through Apr 7)
- International Women's Day (March 8)
- International Puppy Day (March 23)

#### SOME PROMOTIONAL IDEAS TO CONSIDER

Spring cleaning promotions – you could post or hold an event (online photo contest?) for any business related to homes or cleaning.

Discounts on green-colored items tied to **St. Patrick's Day**.

**Youth art contests** – it's easy to find copyright-free outline images online to use for kids to color.

#### Basketball-themed promotions.

**Tax preparation tips** – great for CPAs, accountants, and other financial services businesses.

**Prom ideas and tips** – especially for clothing, hair, makeup, limo services, florists.

Also, don't forget when publishing spring cleaning features to get folks pumped up for garage sales. In other words, don't forget your classified sections. Want some more ideas? Read on!

**EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION.** Speaking of employees, March 6 is Employee Appreciation Day! Share love for your team members and market the business with employee-driven content, such as a Facebook live interview with an employee.

**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME.** Daylight Savings Time occurs on March 10. Connect with customers by reminding them to "Spring Forward" -- set their clocks ahead one hour. This could be a simple social media post that relates to your customers and earns the business bonus points. Poll your readers about Daylight Savings Time – simple and well-read editorial content.

**NATIONAL PI DAY.** One of the most delicious holidays is National Pi Day, March 14. This is a fun and silly holiday which some people might not know of, but you can still use to your advantage in marketing. Have a pie back-off, ask for pie recipes, sell special pie ads to bakers and grocers.

**FIRST DAY OF SPRING.** As stated above, the first day of Spring is March 20. Consider how you can wrap the event into your marketing strategy. It could be anything from a small window sign

to a full-on email campaign, all centered around the new, fresh, happy first day of Spring.

**PUPPY DAY.** For this fun-filled and furry friend day, connect with your readers by asking them to share the puppy photos. I found an easy and quick way to get them is by posting an announcement on social media with a puppy picture. Run these photos on sponsored pages.

#### And finally . . .

Next month, CPM Business Manager Dana Risner will send out dues notifications to membership. Your dues are based on your circulation. For publication(s) with up to 65,000 circulation the cost of membership is \$200. Every thousand circulation over 65,000, the cost goes up \$1. It is important to report accurate numbers. This helps us when a potential advertiser wishes to market in your publication. The more we know about your publication, the easier it is to sell into your publication. As a side note, let us know if your publication has any social media you use and if you produce podcasts. Please include this information.



# Healthy, growing papers

The secret is making changes now, not later

By Kevin Slimp

Those of you who pay attention to such things – and I’m guessing that’s not too many of you – may have noticed I didn’t spend nearly as much time speaking at conventions in 2024. It wasn’t because I didn’t get invited. I just decided to see what would happen if I took a year away from speaking to focus on other things. I did several newspaper redesigns, which took a lot of time. I traveled from coast to coast and led focus groups for newspapers. I also spent more time at home, overseeing my businesses here.

After 30 years in the speaking business, I’ve learned a lot. Three times over those 30 years, I took a year away from speaking to focus on other things. I noticed two things that always seemed to happen after a year away from speaking. First, I saw the demand for my speaking increase significantly after a year off the road. I guess that makes sense. Secondly, it seemed like – not always on purpose – I reinvented myself after time away from the road. The focus of my speaking changed. New topics, along with new audiences, were often the result.

In the early days, I spoke almost exclusively about software. I would probably talk about it or teach related classes if it was a popular application.

Next, almost by accident, I traveled to major

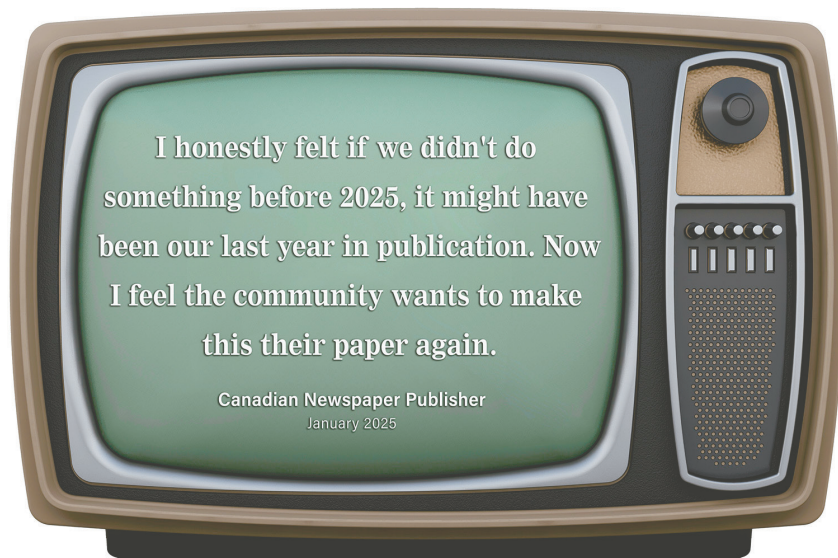
universities to talk to faculty members about this new thing called the Internet and how it would disrupt the journalism world. Because of my role at The University of Tennessee Newspaper Institute, I was a trusted voice by most schools of journalism faculty. A few of you might remember when Rob Curley, now executive editor of The Spokesman-Review in Spokane, and I spoke – not together, but independently – to newspaper audiences about the potential for online news. I think Rob would agree that we both got some things right and some wrong.

Following a break in the early 2000s, I

**I had an out-of-town subscriber sent us a note saying she didn’t think St. Paul deserved such a “metro” looking paper**

Nebraska publisher

found myself speaking a lot about the future of newspapers. Most folks had already decided there was no future, so I decided my role – at least for the next few years was to offer a dissenting view on the subject. I made a lot of friends and a lot of detractors during that period. Saying newspapers weren’t dead wasn’t a popular opinion at the time.



I find myself at the beginning of another year after a “break year.” I’ve already spoken at a few newspaper conferences, and my calendar is packed with upcoming conferences. Fascinating (to me, at least) is that I’m noticing the topics drawing the larger crowds are different than in previous years. I suppose that’s only natural.

Sure, I still get asked to teach software classes occasionally – photo editing classes are still a big draw – but most classes seem related to growing newspapers. People are especially interested in information about redesigning – which includes more than just the design – their newspapers and working with advertisers to create marketing campaigns. Sessions where I invite publishers to bring copies of their newspapers, which I critique in front of the audience, are especially popular. I’ve

had attendees write to me afterward and tell me they were about to close their papers before attending one of my critiquing sessions, and, yes, the paper turned around after they returned home and made changes based on what they learned.

Audiences seem to love learning about focus groups. Both what I’ve learned through leading focus groups throughout the U.S. and how they can conduct focus groups of their own.

Just to be clear, this isn’t a promotion for my work. I’ve never been busier and often wonder how I’ll finish everything. I hope readers understand from this column that newspapers evolve and grow continuously. I hear from publishers regularly who want me to know how their changes have revived – and sometimes, saved – their newspapers.

There’s no good rea-

son to delay innovation. Gather your staff together immediately and begin discussing steps your newspaper needs to take to start revitalization immediately.

I don’t know how many new versions of me lie ahead. Still, in this edition, I’m enjoying seeing newspapers renewed and resuscitated after making decisions to make changes rather than giving in to the “newspapers are dead” mentality.



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**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.





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## **YOU'D BETTER SHOP AROUND:**

# **These five tectonic shifts are set to reshape local media in 2025**

**As we dig into 2025, we shouldn't rely on A.I. predictions about what **MIGHT** happen this year. We should instead consider what **GUY TASAKA** sees at this time. He's a tech media watchdog who is facing the future of print with an informed view:**

By **GUY TASAKA** at [www.EditorAndPublisher.com/tech](http://www.EditorAndPublisher.com/tech)

As we barrel towards the midpoint of the 2020s, the local media landscape is poised for seismic changes that will redefine the industry as we know it. From the shedding of unprofitable properties to the rise of AI-powered autonomous media companies, here are FIVE INTERRELATED TRENDS that I believe will shape the future of local publishing in 2025 and beyond:

### **SHEDDING THE LOWER 90**

Roll-up companies that have been snapping up family-owned newspapers are starting to realize that 90% of their profits come from just 10% of their properties. As economic headwinds intensify, expect these companies to jettison their underperforming assets to streamline operations and boost profitability.

The downside? This trend will likely accelerate the creation of news deserts. But it will also unleash a wave of seasoned media operators onto the market — professionals with the skills and experience to build the next generation of local media companies from the ground up.

### **THE RISE OF MEDIA ENTREPRENEURS**

As roll-up companies shed their lower-performing properties, they'll also be shedding some of their best talent. Publishers, sales directors and other key personnel who understand the nuts and bolts of running profitable media businesses will suddenly find themselves unshackled from the relentless pressure of meeting quarterly targets for sinking ships.

These media entrepreneurs, steeped in the ethos of local publishing but liberated from legacy constraints, will be ideally positioned to build leaner, more innovative media companies laser-focused on solving the real-world problems of local businesses and communities.

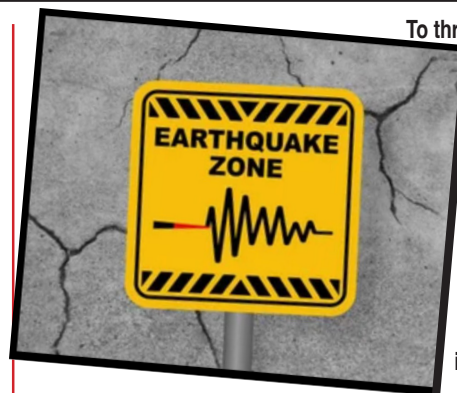
### **THE AGE OF AUTONOMOUS MEDIA**

In previous articles, I've explored how artificial intelligence (A.I.) will revolutionize far more than just headline writing and content SEO. The real game-changer will be A.I.'s ability to tackle complex tasks traditionally requiring human ingenuity — business development, media planning, subscriber acquisition and audience engagement.

Powered by sophisticated A.I. agents, the autonomous media companies of 2025 will give those displaced media entrepreneurs the leverage to rapidly build next-level publishing businesses, even in markets that could never previously sustain them. By automating many of the resource-intensive aspects of media operations, A.I. will dramatically lower the barriers to entry and success.

### **SOLVING BUSINESS MODEL PROBLEMS**

The industry has been fixated on getting readers to directly support local journalism for too long. But as I've argued before, the true lifeblood of local media has always been the small businesses that advertise on its pages. Media 1.0 and 2.0 worked because of the symbiotic relationship between local publishers and the businesses they served.



To thrive in 2025, media entrepreneurs will need to refocus on solving the existential problems of their advertisers — putting heads in beds, driving foot traffic and ringing the cash register. The most successful publishers will be those who see themselves not just as content creators, but as indispensable partners in the economic vitality of their communities.

### **NON-MEDIA COMPANIES OWNING MEDIA**

One trend already percolating but deserves far more attention and emulation is non-media companies' ownership of media properties. Take New England Living, which operates a city magazine, website and TV show. It is not a conventional media company; it is actually owned by the region's largest Sub-Zero refrigerator distributor.

For them, media isn't the product — it's the marketing channel. They're creating a pipeline for selling high-end appliances by building an audience of affluent homeowners. This gives them a very different ROI calculus than a traditional ad-supported or subscription-based media business.

Imagine a local news site owned by a real estate brokerage or an arts publication underwritten by a restaurant group. Diversified ownership structures could provide much-needed stability for local media entering a turbulent future. As one astute observer recently told me, the mission is high-quality journalism, but the business model is whatever keeps the lights on and the presses running.

### **EMBRACING THE FUTURE**

As local media approaches 2025, the only certainty is change. However, that disruption presents a tremendous opportunity for those willing to think differently about what a media company can be and how it can best serve its community.

The publishers who will thrive in this new era will not cling to the old ways of doing things. They will be entrepreneurs and innovators who understand that the core mission of local journalism is more important than any particular business model or distribution channel.

So, to all the editors and publishers reading this: Stay curious. Stay flexible. And most importantly, stay focused on the needs of your advertisers and your audience. Because if you can find new ways to create value for your community, you'll always have a bright future in local media.

**Guy Tasaka is a seasoned media professional with a 35-year track record of leading change in the publishing industry. He is a regular tech columnist in Editor & Publisher Magazine.**

# Ad-Libs



## I Shot an Ad Into the Air

BY JOHN FOUST

When I was a kid, my family went on a family vacation to the mountains of North Carolina. For a couple of nights, we stayed at a motel which had a play area with a few activities for children. The thing I most remember was a small archery range, which consisted of a couple of straw-filled targets, a bow and an arrow. One of the motel employees – probably a college student with a summer job – was there to make sure no one got hurt. Along the way, he taught a few basics about shooting a bow. The only advice I recall was to make a T-shape with the arm that is extended to hold the bow and the arm which is bent at the elbow to pull back the string. The bowstring arm should be straight back, not against the archer's side.

I think about that little archery range every now and then, because I've been relating advertising to archery for more than 30 years. Archery provides us with a good comparison – and an easily understood visual image – to share with advertisers. When you narrow the subject to three elements – the bow, the arrow and the target – you have the key ingredients of an advertising campaign. Use the bow to shoot the arrow at the target. It's that

simple.

Let's take a closer look at this comparison:

1. The target represents the target audience – a specific group of consumers who fit the profile of likely buyers of certain products or services. It would be ridiculous for an advertiser to try to aim an arrow at more than one target at a time. The object of archery is to hit the bullseye on one target.

Likewise, the object of advertising is to reach a clearly defined target audience.

2. The arrow represents the message. An arrow with a bent shaft will veer off course and probably fall to the ground. An arrow with a blunt end might hit the target, but won't stick. And an arrow with faulty fletching (the fin-like stabilizers at the back) will wobble its way into the ground.

Like an arrow needs to be straight and true in order to make its way to the target, an advertising message should exhibit the time-tested principles of effective advertising.

That means a compelling offer, a strong headlines, relevant illustrations, audience-centered copy, an identifiable logo, and specific purchasing information.

3. The bow represents the delivery system – in our case, print and digital newspapers. In order to function properly, the bow should be of the right design and construction, in the form of market coverage, creative guidance, high production standards, and superb customer service. From the advertiser's perspective, it's crucial to build in an adequate advertising budget, a solid media plan, and a consistent strategy.

Each of these elements is crucial to the success of an advertising effort. The good news is that you are in position to positively influence decisions on all three. Do that – and you're on your way to bullseye results.

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# 10 Ideas to Keep Your Media Sales Game Sharp!

*Media Sales Coach  
Ryan Dohrn*

With a buying bump on the horizon, it is important that we as media sales training seekers move advertisers beyond pre-election objections and help them embrace new opportunities. But, emotional decision-making still drives purchases, with 64% of my media sales coaching clients reporting that buyers still prioritize feelings over logic. As an ad sales training coach, success in this climate requires empathy and insight-driven strategies.

**1. Lead with Stories:** Real-world success stories resonate with emotionally driven buyers, building trust where data alone falls short.

**2. Rethink Your Questions:** Move beyond, "What's your budget?" and ask, "Are there any competitors of yours that excel in marketing?" to uncover their likes and goals.

**3. Promote Multi-Media Solutions:** End the digital-versus-traditional debate. Show how combining platforms, such as social ads and print, boosts results.

**4. Define Clear ROI Minimums:** It is not about what an advertiser "wants" to spend, it is our job to guide them toward what they "need" to spend.

**5. Offer Ready-to-Use Ideas:** Present proven, category-specific campaigns that advertisers can quickly implement.

**6. Position Yourself as an Advisor:** Be a problem solver, not just a seller, by offering data-driven strategies tailored to their needs.

**7. Debunk the Social-Only Myth:** Stress that relying solely on social platforms limits reach and engagement opportunities.

**8. Clarify Digital vs. Social:** Explain how permission-based digital ads from media partners drive more trusted engagement than intrusive social ads.

**9. Showcase Traditional Media's Impact:** Demonstrate how platforms like TV, radio, and print complement digital efforts, increasing conversions.

**10. Promote the Marketing Triangle:** Advocate for a balanced approach blending traditional, digital, and social strategies for maximum impact.

## **CHECK OUT THIS NEW APP!**

After six months of work, my SALES COACH app has launched on the Apple App Store. Daily sales tips and motivation! I would be grateful if you downloaded it and gave me a 5-star review. The first 7 days are free, and then you can cancel if you do not find it helpful.

Go to the Apple App Store on your iPhone and search for Ryan Dohrn or The Sales Coach. Google Play coming soon.

After you download the app, create an account and get started. Each week I will upload more sales tips and tricks for you.

**Thank you for ALL your support over the years.**

*Ryan Dohrn*

*Billion-Dollar Media Sales Performance Coach*

*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.*



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