

*March* **2025**  
**INFORMER**



**Community  
Papers of  
Michigan**





# Welcoming Spring and a New CPM Board Member

*From The Executive Director, Don Rush*

**Much of the snow has melted. Robins are returning home to the Mitten State. Our first business quarter of 2025 is all but history. Now it's time to watch our gardens and businesses grow. For the first two months of this year Community Papers of Michigan increased revenues by 15.8 percent over the same period in 2024.**

Combined sales of our statewide classified network (MegaMarket), ROP display ads and pre-print inserts totaled \$42,172.33. Last year's total was \$36,416.68.

From our ROP and pre-print insert sales into member publications, CPM has given back \$28,373.22 to those publications – nearly a 41% increase over 2024. If you don't know, CPM acts as a sales representative for member publications. For display ads, CPM's commission is 15 percent; 10 percent on pre-print inserts. The revenue engine that drives our train is MegaMarket classifieds. CPM keeps all revenue generated from these sales, then at the end of the year publishers who run these weekly, receive a "publisher's rebate" based on their circulation.

## ***Just thought you'd like to know . . .***

### **Dues due**

This month, CPM Business Manager Dana Risner has sent 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.

## **Welcome Steve Horton to CPM's Board of Directors**

At their March Board of Directors meeting, Steve Horton, owner of H&H Publishing and publisher of Fowlerville News & Views in (you guessed it, Fowlerville) was unanimously voted as CPM's newest Board Director.

"Steve's a good man," Director George Moses (The Marketeer) said.

"He's very community minded," added View Newspaper Group Publisher and CPM Director Wes Smith.

Steve joins directors Moses and Smith, Treasurer Jeff Demers (C&G Publishing), Vice President Cindy Gaeedert-Gearhart (County Journal/Flashes Advertising & News) and President Mary Bennett (Community Shoppers Guide) to CPM's board. If you have a moment, send him a note of congratulations!

### **Who is Steve?**

Steve and his wife Dawn celebrated their 40th year of publishing the Fowlerville News & Views this past Dec. 31. They are parents to Jennifer, Kristine and Bradley. They have grandchildren "and now three great grand kids!"

Steven said their publication began as a four-page newsletter in January 1985. "And, less than two years later we were putting out a 12-page tabloid and soon after a 16-pager."

He's been in the community paper business since 1975, starting as a reporter, "Assisting a fledgling newspaper that didn't last long. But, then over the next few years I worked at the Livingston County Press and then at J-Ad Graphics' two Hastings papers as an assistant editor," he said. "I also did some freelance work during that time period. I had harbored aspirations of being a writer since high school and maybe even earlier. I also had interests in politics, current events and history and these became the topics I wrote about. While in college I occasionally published a newsletter focused on political and social issues. That path of choices and experiences eventually led to a career in journalism and as a publisher." *(Continued on next page)*







### Meet Steve Horton, CPM's new Director

(Cont.) Their circulation is now around 6,400.

Over the years, the changes in technology, he said, have changed the life of a publisher.

"Be it personal computers, copies that enlarge and reduce images and text, faxes, digital photographs, online bookkeeping and now smart phones – each and all of which have made it easier to write articles, create ads, produce photos, bill customers and produce a finished issue."

His biggest challenge is dealing with and adjusting to events "beyond my control."

"These have created a few bumps in the road, including bursting of the house bubble, the Great Recession, the bankruptcy of GM and Chrysler, COVID and the impact of the internet on advertising and reading habits. However, they have also inspired a more creative approach and hopefully a better understanding of what it takes to publish a newspaper week in and week out, come what may. It toughened my hide if nothing else!"

Like many in our community paper industry, the rewards (aside from being profitable) are the relationships we make in our communities. "Having people tell you how much they appreciate the paper, seeing someone walking

out of the store with a copy, being able to spotlight the accomplishments of students in their various endeavors, and doing what we can to instill pride in this place we call home. Also publishing the more controversial news stories, with the sustaining belief that people have the right to know what's going on with their government as well as the importance of presenting both sides of a contentious issue.

Steve is looking forward to being on the Community Papers of Michigan Board of Directors. "It will be nice to interact with others in the business, sharing ideas and just getting acquainted," he said. "With the Fowlerville News & Views being a small, mom-and-pop operation that requires much of our time and a need to stay close-to-home, I haven't had many opportunities to attend conventions or workshops. Hopefully, some of my experience will be of value in promoting community papers and perhaps encourage younger folks to carry on the tradition."

*Well, said Steve and welcome aboard!*

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

# **Community papers must adapt when businesses close or move away**



1940s photos  
from the U.S.  
Library of  
Congress  
(with great  
egg prices!)



All communities rely on businesses that are vital to the well-being of their citizens — such as grocery stores, restaurants, recreational facilities and pharmacies.

But what happens when these places are lost, especially in small-town areas where few alternatives exist?

**TWO NEW** studies by Penn State groups analyze what happened to residents in a rural Pennsylvania community, after the closure of a bunch of these essential places.

Closed businesses included a grocery store, pharmacy, bank, hardware store, two restaurants, medical clinic and church — some due to population loss and some as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a December, 2024 analysis by Penn State's Katie Bohn.

**NOT SURPRISINGLY**, loss of those community businesses had well-being and social impacts. For instance, losing the area's only grocery store severely limited access to healthy food... and decreased opportunities for daily social connection.

And, loss of the small-town's only pharmacy and medical clinic quickly impacted health, causing delays in receiving care and an over-reliance on local emergency medical services.

So, what does this have to do with Michigan's community papers and specialty publications?

Plenty.

**FIRST, MICHIGAN** and Pennsylvania are similar Midwest

states, where population loss in rural areas has been greater than in suburban or city regions in the past decade.

When important local stores close, people have fewer reasons to visit that community. Folks will travel to the nearest town where they can buy the food, prescriptions, medical care or even find religious services they need. Worse yet, a growing choice for many consumers is to buy products online, further reducing the need to visit ANY local town.

**LOCAL PAPERS** are directly affected when small towns shrink or shrivel in size, of course. When people start buying in larger towns further away, there are fewer reasons to care about the remaining rural stores nearby.

And this reality impacts community papers of all sizes, as many retailers today build huge "superstores" that are open long hours every day, to help draw customers to drive there.

For example, while grocery stores once were primary advertisers in community papers, one survey says half of all U.S. grocery businesses will close in the next 10 years, mostly in smaller towns. That's alarming, but it must be faced.

**TO SURVIVE** and profit, strong publications must keep offering unique marketing opportunities to non-traditional advertisers. Those surviving businesses should appreciate that their local paper is still telling the town's story to all who will read it... and come to do business there.





# Ad-Libs

## FOLLOWING THROUGH *Is The Thing To Do*



BY JOHN FOUST

Want to see something funny? Just watch me trying to hit a golf ball out of a sand trap. You've never before seen such an ugly, unathletic, uncoordinated golf swing. The Scottish pioneers of the game would be horrified.

The biggest of many problems is with my follow-through. Somehow, sand creates a faulty connection between my brain and the club, which results in stopping the swing right as I make contact. How else can you explain the fact that the ball often hits the lip of the trap and rolls right back to where it started? Sometimes I can make my second attempt without changing my position.

One time, one of the guys in my foursome ate a sandwich while I was trying to get out of a trap. That's only a slight exaggeration. He actually finished the sandwich while I was putting.

I mention my golf misadventures, because following through is just as important in selling. In fact, following through can make the difference between a completed sale and one that is hanging on the edge.

Following through is not the same as following up. Following up can refer to staying in touch after an appointment or conversation, or the start of a new ad

campaign. Following up gives both the salesperson and the advertiser a chance to tweak the advertising. Following up can happen any time, right now or months into the future.



Following through refers to things that can help the prospect finalize a buying decision or be happy with the decision they just made. For example, the creative director at an ad agency once told me about selling a print advertising campaign to a local development company. The two

owners of the company loved the ideas and called staff members into the board room to ooh and ahh over the proposed layouts. But over the weekend, one of the owners took the layouts home to show to his family. He put the boards next to the family's main television, where everyone in the house would see them each day. You can guess what happened: someone at home didn't like the ideas. On Monday, he said he was having second thoughts and suggested that they needed a different kind of campaign. His logical business brain had said "yes," but his emotional family brain said "no."

That business owner was dealing with a form of buyers' remorse – in which a buyer regrets a purchase shortly after paying for it or agreeing to buy it. It's happened to me, and it's probably happened to you (a pair of poor-fitting loafers comes to mind). Many times, it suggests that the buyer didn't have enough supporting facts before buying. That's why it's crucial for salespeople to follow through.

A golf shot isn't complete after the club makes that initial contact. And a sale isn't final after the prospect first agrees to buy. That just means the salesperson needs to follow through with reassuring and confirming information to fight off buyers' remorse.

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# Readers love their newspaper

## What I learned once again while visiting Colorado

By Kevin Slimp

I don't know why I'm surprised by anything anymore. As long as I've been traveling all over the map to work with newspapers, I still dread trips just before I leave. Then, like clockwork, I wish I didn't have to return home so soon.

This week, I traveled to Ouray County, Colorado (christened the "Outdoor Recreation Capitol of Colorado") to work with co-publishers Mike Wiggins and Erin McIntyre, and, like always, I almost didn't want to leave at the end of our week together.

My assignment was like other assignments I've had of late. For two days, I met with everyone on the Plaindealer staff to discuss various elements of running a newspaper. We covered design, photo editing, sales, and other aspects of newspaper production.

We took a break from the office on my second day in Ouray County to meet with local advertisers. We gathered in a local community center, where I led a presentation on creating effective marketing plans. Afterward, I met individually with attendees to review their marketing plans and ads and make suggestions. Before leaving, one advertiser said, "We should do this regularly!" Everyone seemed to agree.

While I was there, Mike asked if we could set up a photo server to house all their photos and make them easily accessible in the future. They seemed surprised and pleased

when we set up a photo server in less than an hour using software they already had on their computers (Adobe Bridge). Fortunately, they had recently purchased a NAS server (a small desktop server that works perfectly for small newspapers), allowing me to set up the photo server on a portion of its hard drive space.

We spent another day setting up a newspaper workflow for everyone involved in reporting, editing, and designing the newspaper. Using Adobe InCopy – another app already on everyone's computers – the staff learned how multiple users could edit an InDesign document simultaneously, allowing editors and reporters to change headlines, cutlines, photos, and stories. At the same time, a designer works on the same page.

My primary assignment, however, took place outside the newspaper office. In preparation for a total redesign – with a first issue this summer – I met with 23 community volunteers to hold a focus group to determine what steps we should take to create an even better newspaper in the future. For almost four hours, the focus group – divided into five subgroups – completed questionnaires and discussed every aspect of the Ouray County Plaindealer. This was one of the most serious-minded focus groups I've seen, holding in-depth discussions while answering each question.

After finishing our work, several focus group members stayed behind to tell me how much they loved their newspaper. One told me, "I haven't read the paper much since moving here, but I'm going to read it every week now." Several mentioned they didn't always agree with what was in the newspaper but loved their local paper anyway.

I won't know the focus group results until I've had the



A subgroup of the newspaper focus group that met in Ridgway, Colorado on March 1, 2025. The total group included 23 volunteers.

chance to review the questionnaires later this week. That's a process that generally takes about eight hours. After I've reviewed the questionnaires and sent the results to Erin and Mike, we'll determine how to incorporate what we've learned into the redesigned Plaindealer.

On my last day in Ouray County, I visited the United Church of the San Juans in Ridgway, the largest town in Ouray County. Steep forested mountains and cliffs surround Ridgway on the south, east, and northeast, and it is a pristine setting for this congregation that represents four different major denominations. I found the appeal of this unusual church too great to resist.

Upon entering the church, I was recognized by several folks who had participated in either the focus group or the advertisers' gathering earlier in the week. Before long, it seemed like everyone in the congregation of 80 knew who I was and what I was doing in town. Parishioners I hadn't met formed a line to tell me how much they loved their newspaper. I learned the folks living in Ouray County really do love their newspaper.

Mike and Erin moved to Ouray in 2019 to take over the weekly newspaper. They made international news when a

local man was arrested after stealing more than 200 newspapers from racks after a story about a reported sexual assault at the local police chief's house was published. Like many publishers, they've been threatened in their efforts to inform the public. I suppose it comes with the territory.

One thing I learned while in Colorado is that the people of Ouray County have some understanding of the efforts it takes to publish a community paper each week. They love their paper, and they admire and appreciate their newspaper publishers.

In just a few weeks, I'll be heading to Minnesota to work with two of my favorite publishers, Reed and Shelly Anfinson, beginning this process once again. I'll probably dread the trip beforehand, then have the time of my life with Reed and Shelly while meeting the readers who make up their community.



Kevin, Mike Wiggins, Erin McIntyre, and Walter Cronkite.

**Kevin Slimp**

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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.





# Warming Up the Cold Call for Better Results

*Media Sales Coach  
Ryan Dohrn*

It's important to recognize that selling in a post-pandemic world or to pandemic-fatigued customers is a challenge in and of itself. Many of us are told that we have to make X number of phone calls every day to new clients. I get it. I need to do it every day, as well. But, cold calling without warming up a client is sort of like attempting to run a 5K race without any training or pre-race stretching. Your chances of winning will greatly increase when you do some training and you properly stretch before you attempt the race. Another example would be marriage. When you go on a first date with someone do you ask them to marry you immediately? In most cases, the answer is no. Both of these examples prove that warming up works. So, why would sales be any different?

As a person that sells every single day, I realize that we are dealing with limited time to get things done. As most of you know, I sell every single day. I feel like it makes me a better sales trainer and sales coach. When I wrote my recent sales book, *Selling*

Forward, one of the areas that I focused on was the misunderstanding about cold calling prospective customers. There seems to be a pretty common misunderstanding that cold calling just doesn't work anymore. I've found that to be true, if you're actually cold calling potential customers. Meaning, they don't know you and you don't know them so you're calling them completely blind ... completely cold. Why is it that cold calling no longer yields the best results? Is it the pandemic? Is it that people no longer work in a brick-and-mortar office with a desk phone? Or, is it because of stranger danger? I would suggest to you that stranger danger is real and it is one of the reasons that we need to warm up our prospects before we cold call them. We need to do this to increase our chances of connecting and getting a meeting.

First and foremost, stranger danger is not simply something that we teach children. Stranger danger is also real as adults. You'll see it all the time at a reception or a party. An individual or couple will walk in the front

door and will immediately look around for people they know. Then, they move directly to those folks that are known to them to engage in conversation. It's completely normal. But for some reason in the business world, sales managers and oftentimes salespeople will underestimate how stranger danger impacts their sales process. Specifically, their cold calling sales process.  
(Continued on page 8.)



## Warming Up the Cold Call for Better Results *(Continued from page 7)*

**So, let me ask you this question:** why would a person that does not know you reply to an email or answer a voicemail from you? Like you, they have been trained to not engage or talk with strangers since birth. Because of this, I believe that we need to do a better job of warming up our prospects before we reach out to them with a phone call. With that said, many of you will now reply to me and say that is the marketing department's job. But is it? In many cases, the marketing department can be a big help. But, in the world of sales, you control yourself. If you wait for others to warm up your clients to make your cold calls more effective, you might be waiting quite a long time. Maybe even forever.

Let's look at six ways that you can warm up a prospective customer and increase your chances of booking a meeting or having a conversation as a part of your cold calling process. I think we can all agree that if we can get somebody on the phone, it's always easier to sell them.

**1. Buyers buy when they are ready to buy, not when you are ready to sell.** You have to plan in advance to be successful when cold calling. I believe it will take anywhere from 14 to 30 days of effort to warm up a client effectively. Sure, you can call people directly out of the blue. You might even have some success. But I have found that I am able to increase my chances of connecting by as much as 40% if I effectively warm up the client before I make that cold call.

**2. Quick trust is something that has to be built before a cold call will be effective.**

Quick trust is those small nuggets of information that you can share via email or even with a voicemail that lets your prospective customer know that you are relevant, researched, and ready to talk to them. Most of the time I find nuggets of quick trust on LinkedIn or by looking at somebody's social posts online. I'll also visit the client's company website to look for anything that is relevant and interesting that I can help with. Deep trust will be built once you have a meeting with someone. Quick trust is that small point that proves that you are worth their time.

**3. Not all outreaches should be about sales. If every time you contact someone you're trying to sell them something, you are a salesperson.** If at least 50% of your communications with a prospective client offer helpful information, like industry trends or tips and advice, you are now seen as a helper. What can you share with a client that will warm them up and make them feel like having a meeting with you is of value to them? Every industry is different. But typically, information that you can share that will help them better run their business or impact their life in a positive way is the direction to go.

**4. All digital all the time is not the best approach to warm someone up.** What are you doing to be different? Every salesperson is sending a barrage of emails to prospective customers. What about sending a handwritten thank-you note with a \$5 Starbucks card inside? What about sending somebody a small tin of popcorn that you can buy online for \$9? I had a very successful salesperson that would send plants in the mail to prospective

clients. He was a moderately funny fellow and would often include cards that said things like ... "Looking for ways to grow your business? I have three ideas and will call you next Tuesday."

**5. Do you effectively use LinkedIn to get yourself known to your prospects?** Do you participate and post in groups that they're a part of on LinkedIn? Do you follow their company LinkedIn profile? Do you like the things that they share on the platform? Do you comment on the things that they share? Are you connected with them on LinkedIn? Do you share information through the LinkedIn platform that might be helpful to their business? Remember, in warming up customers, it's really about you becoming a known entity to them and not a stranger. Again, this is why it often will take 30 days to effectively warm up a prospective customer.

**6. Once you are known to an individual it almost always makes it easier to connect.** But, one final trick involves what time you are cold calling them. What time you call them is almost as important as what you say. Meaning, what time of day do you call them? Is it at a time that's good for you? Or, should it be at a time that's good for the client? I would say in all cases you should adapt your schedule to the buyer's schedule. In almost all business situations, the majority of meetings are typically hosted between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. And, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., after lunch. So, use your email technology to make sure that your emails hit outside of those times. And, make sure your cold calls are made outside of those times, as well. Never build your schedule around you. Always build your schedule around the buyer. Every industry is slightly different. So, adjust accordingly.

I completely understand that altering your sales process can dramatically impact your time management goals. But, if we alter our sales process to increase our chances of getting a meeting with someone, it should be time well spent as that alteration may bring you results.

If nothing else, I hope that this blog will cause you to think a little bit more deeply about what you can do to be successful with cold calling. Cold calling should really be called warm calling, if you're doing it correctly.

**Friends, never forget ... if sales was easy everybody would be doing it.** And they are not. We are the Chosen Few that have found a career that will feed our families for a lifetime.



*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.*



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



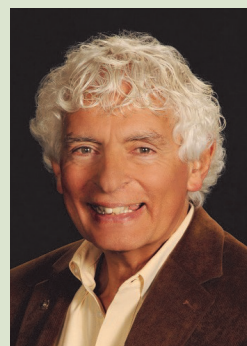
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