

*August* **2025**  
**INFORMER**



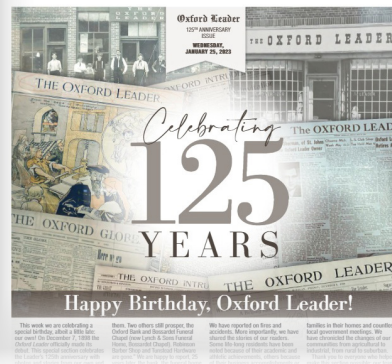
**Community  
Papers of  
Michigan**





# History \$ells

From The Executive Director, Don Rush



*During my nearly 40 years with a group of community papers, I had the privilege of being part of six different special sections focused on local history. Each one was a huge success. They weren't just well-read; they were also strongly supported by local businesses. I believe all our members at Community Papers of Michigan—whether you have editorial content or not—can find a way to produce a local history piece in your communities, build goodwill, and generate extra revenue.*

These sections can be about the community itself, a local business, a historic date (we did the state's Bicentennial in 1987), or even your publication's milestone anniversary. We created special sections for a 75th anniversary, a couple of 100th anniversaries, and a 125th anniversary.

I'd almost forgotten about these sections until I read an American Press Institute (API) article on this exact topic. This past July, API featured "essays from four attendees of the API Local News Summit on Local Identity, History and Sustainability on how they connect communities and find new sources of revenue by harnessing history and fostering local identity." I had to share some of that report with you!

The report starts by quoting Jason Dressel, CEO of the brand heritage and archives agency History Factory: "Local media's deep-rooted connection to the identities of the communities it serves offers a unique advantage in capitalizing on this widespread interest in history."

The report outlines these steps to follow:

## Step 1: Choose Topics with Legs

What major historical events have shaped your community? These might include the relocation of a corporation or a beloved sports team, a high-profile crime, or a landmark legal dispute. These are the kinds of stories

that feature compelling characters, dramatic settings, and moments of real conflict—the essential components of storytelling gold.

## Look for topics that are:

- Relevant to your audience and community.
- Rich in context and supported by archival or anecdotal material.
- Expandable, so they can be repurposed across formats and extended into multi-part series.

When you choose stories with depth and dimension, you're not just depicting history; you're helping your community understand itself. We used our own archives, our writers, and found contributing writers and photos from the community.

## Step 2: Mine for Storytelling Golden Nuggets

Golden nuggets are compelling and effective primary source materials that are essential for powerful, documentary-style storytelling. A golden nugget might be a photograph, a document, an old house, a historic business, or a community elder. These authentic icons help personalize a story, inspire creative direction, and elevate the emotional resonance of a narrative.

One of the richest sources for these nuggets is an organization's archives—its inventory of storytelling potential and institutional memory. In an era when credibility and authenticity are paramount, golden nuggets spark interest, deepen trust, and awaken nostalgia.

For media organizations, few assets are more valuable than well-maintained archives. But what if you don't have one, or your materials are scattered, incomplete, or hard to access? Start by inventorying what you do have, including old editions, photo negatives, or even

oral histories from long-serving staff. Partner with local libraries, universities, or historical societies to identify shared resources. Don't overlook funding, as grants can provide support to assess, digitize, or grow your archival holdings. Treat this work not as a side project but as a strategic investment.

## Step 3: Find the Hook to Productize and Monetize

The next step is to evaluate your options and determine the best path forward. One key question to ask is: What timely hook can make this story especially relevant right now?

**One answer:** Anniversaries are among the most effective editorial opportunities when dealing with history-based storytelling. Whether it's the anniversary of a major local event or a broader national or global milestone with local ties, such a moment offers a natural inflection point to explore the past, assess the present, and consider the future.

With a relevant topic, rich storytelling material, and a timely hook, you now have the raw ingredients to develop historical programming that resonates. From here, think about ways to repurpose content into multiple products, explore funding and distribution partnerships, and build monetization strategies.

*If you want to see a very well-done section, check out The Oxford Leader's website, a CPM member publication. Publisher and CPM Director Wes Smith's staff did a great job.*

You can view a flip-page PDF of their section at: <https://www.calameo.com/read/00532133090fb6280a90f>.

Or, just go to [OxfordLeader.com](https://OxfordLeader.com) and scroll down on the right side to find the 125th Anniversary section.

*If you have a history success story to share, please email it to [DonRush@CPapersMi.com](mailto:DonRush@CPapersMi.com)*



By  
Mark W.  
Rummel  
Fenton, MI

"Late Night With David Letterman" started at 11:30 pm on CBS-TV every weeknight from 1993 to 2015. It was "must-watching" at the Rummel house back then. As the owner and operator of several community papers at that time, I was usually up doing SOMETHING business-related at that time, often sitting on the couch at home. It was pretty normal to work a lot of hours then!

Each night, Letterman would present his "Top 10" list of some topic or another — countdown style — from number 10 to number one. The lists often were clever, often a little naughty... and usually very funny.

When I recently ran across this countdown list of "Top 10 Reasons to Advertise," I thought of Letterman's style. Thankfully, I've greatly shortened the length of this list, since most media professionals hear plenty of talk on these topics every day. This list is from the Outdoor Advertising Association of Georgia, but the points apply universally. So, without further ado, in true David Letterman TV style we present —

### **"HERE ARE THE TOP 10 REASONS TO ADVERTISE"**

**10. ADVERTISING GENERATES BRAND LOYALTY:** Ads allow for companies to target their customers and form a lasting connection with them. It instills a sense of familiarity and trust within the consumer, ensuring that they remain loyal to your business.

**9. ADS INCREASE BUSINESS TRAFFIC:** Many consumers are more likely to visit a business after viewing an ad. More consumers mean more sales and more business for you. A survey of more than 3,000 companies found that advertisers who maintained or expanded ads over a five-year period saw their sales increase an average of 100% — while companies that cut ads grew at a less than half the rate of those who advertised steadily. (You can't make this stuff up...)

**8. ADS GIVE YOUR COMPANY A POSITIVE IMAGE:** Ads tell your consumers and your competitors that you are open and ready for business, selling your goods and services.

**7. ADS ATTRACT NEW CUSTOMERS:** The market is constantly changing and new consumers are moving in and out of your area. New consumers mean a new target audience that your ads will reach.

**6. ADS PROMOTE REPEAT BUSINESS:** With all of the choices consumers are able to make, many once-loyal consumers have strayed from previous businesses in search of other options. Ads remind your consumers why they choose your business in the first place and why they should continue to choose you in the future.



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

# **Recalling the style of comedian David Letterman's "TOP 10 REASONS TO ADVERTISE"**

**5. ADS HELP YOUR BUSINESS COMPETE:** There are only so many consumers in any market that are willing to buy your product at any given time. Good ads help smart businesses stay ahead of the game.

**4. ADS PRODUCE CONTINUOUS BUSINESS:** Not every consumer is going to need your business's product or service today, but every day there will always be new consumers ready to buy. Ads make sure the consumer knows that when they are in need, your business will be there to help them promote — and sell — their goods and services.

**3. ADS KEEP YOU ON YOUR CUSTOMERS' MIND:** With so many options available to consumers, they often will want to shop around and compare different products. Good ads ensure that your company is always at the front of a consumer's mind.

**2. ADS KEEP YOUR CONSUMER UP TO DATE:** When a new product or event is ready to launch, ads allow your consumer to be informed and aware of the details.

**AND FINALLY, AS DAVID LETTERMAN WOULD SAY,**

### **"HERE'S THE NUMBER ONE REASON TO ADVERTISE"**

**1. ADS MAKE MONEY FOR YOUR COMPANY:** What it comes down to is this — Advertising works. Ads attract customers to your service or business and also increase your sales.



Mark lives in Fenton, MI, and has worked on all sides of papers since 1972. He and wife Sally even worked for The Walt Disney Co. Contact him at: [MarkWRummel@gmail.com](mailto:MarkWRummel@gmail.com)





# Ad-Libs

## A LESSON FROM LOCKWOOD'S FOLLY

BY JOHN FOUST

I remember a conversation with Brent, a long-time print and digital advertiser. "I enjoy meeting with advertising sales people and hearing their ideas, but I always cringe when they show up from out of the blue with a spec ad – before they've even talked to me. What that usually means is, 'I haven't learned enough about your business to base this idea on actual information, so I made it up.' More often than not, the idea consists of one-size-fits-all stock art and a headline so generic that it could apply to a number of businesses. If that kind of spec ad is the centerpiece of their presentation, the sale is a no-go."

Brent's comments remind me of Lockwood's Folly, a tiny spot on the map of coastal North Carolina. The river that shares the same name first appeared on a map which was created by John Ogilby in 1671, which makes it one of the oldest named rivers in North Carolina. There are a number of stories regarding how the area got its name. The one I like best is about a man named Lockwood, who set out to build the sailing ship of his dreams along the banks of the river. After many months of work, he launched the boat and quickly found that the draft (the depth of the boat from the waterline) was too deep to clear the sandbar at the inlet. With no way to sail the boat off the sandbar, he had to leave it to rot. According to legend, the boat was visible above water for years. Locals called it "Lockwood's Folly" and eventually the name was applied to both the river and the inlet.

If old Mr. Lockwood had done some research – if he had taken the time to row a small boat to the sandbar to check the river's depth – he could have changed his building plans and avoided the catastrophe. All he had to do was tie a weight – or even a rock – to the end of a rope, drop it into the water, mark the rope where it stopped



descending, and measure the distance. But for some reason, he skipped that important step and ended up with a stuck dream boat.

If the people calling on Brent would simply do some research before preparing spec ads, he might buy more advertising from them. "Those unresearched spec ads create a bad impression," he explained. "At worst, it makes them look lazy and, at best, it makes them look like they're in too much of a hurry. And to boot, it's a waste

of my time and a waste of the newspaper's resources."

There's a good chance that some of those rogue spec ads which Brent has rejected are being recycled to show to other prospective advertisers. But he doesn't give them much chance of success, unless there are big adjustments.

The lesson here is simple: Do your research, so your ideas won't get stuck in the mud with nowhere to go.

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*Media Sales Coach  
Ryan Dohrn*

# 3 Habits of Superstar Sellers That Drive Consistent Success

In my years of sales experience, I've seen firsthand that the best sellers don't just work hard—they work smart. It's not about luck; it's about building the right habits that set you up for success every single day. In this episode, I break down the three things that superstar sellers do each day to stay on top of their game.

## 1. TIME BLOCKING: OWN YOUR SCHEDULE

The first habit that sets superstar sellers apart is time blocking. This is something I do every day to ensure that I stay focused on high-priority tasks. By breaking my day into dedicated blocks of time for specific activities, I prevent distractions and avoid the temptation to jump between tasks. Time blocking lets me stay in the zone and be far more productive.

If you don't block out your time, your schedule will get hijacked by fires that need to be put out. Take control of your day, decide where to focus, and execute. It's one of the most powerful ways to increase your efficiency in ad sales training and beyond.

"The more intentional you are with your

time, the more successful you'll be."

## 2. USING A TASK APP: KEEP TRACK OF WHAT MATTERS

Superstar sellers understand the importance of staying organized, and that's where task apps come in. I use a task management app to keep track of all my to-dos, deadlines, and priorities. It's an essential tool for staying on top of everything, whether I'm engaged in broadcast sales training or planning the next big deal.

When you use a task app, you're not relying on memory—you have everything at your fingertips. Plus, task apps let you prioritize, so you can focus on what truly matters and not get lost in the weeds.

"Stay organized, stay ahead. Your app is your digital assistant, making sure you never miss a beat."

## 3. CLIENT RETENTION: FOCUS ON BUILDING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

Last but certainly not least, superstar sellers know that sales isn't just about closing deals—it's about building

relationships. That's why client retention is one of the most important things I focus on. Once you've made a sale, your job is far from over. You need to nurture those relationships, stay engaged, and continue to provide value.

Happy clients are loyal clients. When you invest in the long-term success of your clients, they'll reward you with repeat business and referrals. Client retention isn't just about keeping them happy—it's about creating partnerships that last. This is crucial in both radio sales training and media sales training, where long-term connections often lead to sustainable success.

*"People buy from those they trust. And people stay when they feel valued."*

-Ryan Dohrn

*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.*



# It's time for fresh ideas

Here's a list of ideas working in newspapers right now

By Kevin Slimp

There was a time when I kept track of how many newspapers I worked with on-site. After 1,200 or so, I stopped counting. Add to that the hundreds of newspaper staff who attended The University of Tennessee Newspaper Institute, which I directed for 21 years, and the hundreds of newspaper staff I've worked with online over the past twenty years or so, and the total gets almost ridiculous.

After working with so many newspapers, it would be impossible not to pick up a few ideas along the way. One of the favorite aspects of my work these days is helping newspapers develop new ideas for their pages. Sometimes, they come off the top of my head. Most of the time, however, these ideas come from newspapers I've visited.

Bullet lists seem to draw a lot of responses from my readers, so allow me to share my thoughts in the form of a list titled "Fresh Ideas to Draw Readers to Your Pages." These aren't all new ideas. Some are ideas that we've simply gotten out of the habit of including in our papers.

## Fresh Ideas to Draw Readers

### Present a page in the form of social media

Around 2000 or so, a Wall Street analyst specializing in media invited me to lunch to discuss an idea. Always one to accept a free lunch, I visited with him about an idea a group of investors developed using what's now called "social media" to create a website that would draw college students to post their thoughts and photos.

I was so busy traveling to speak at conferences that I turned down the opportunity to lead the effort. I just didn't see how money could be made on a free website (their idea was to make money selling academic books on the site). I consider that one of the three dumbest career decisions I've made.

I've since learned that people actually do love to share their

thoughts and photos, and – thanks to the suggestion of a young publisher in Colorado – "Photos of the week" are becoming popular in most of the papers I work with. I suggest a full page be set aside each week for submitted photos. Pick four or five and frame them, giving them the look of a photo album, and put them in the same location, on a color page, each week.

### Person on the street feature

About one-fourth of the newspapers I've worked with this year offer a "person on the street" feature each week. Often, these are found on the left half of page 2. It seems to work. While leading focus groups, I've learned that this is often one of the favorite parts of the newspaper for readers, whether they're reading in print or online. It's also a good way to get young adult faces in the paper.

### Feature a human-interest story each week

A few years ago, a young reporter in Canada wrote to me in a panic. "We have a weekly news meeting where I'm assigned a story. This week, they told me to come up with my own story. What do I do?"

I laughed (to myself) and answered her question. "Go out in your community and find someone older than 90 years. Ask them to share their life story."

You guessed it. A week later, she wrote me to report that readers were writing to tell her it was the best thing she'd ever written. The 20-year-old reporter was ecstatic.

Readers like knowing where to find things. Put your human-interest story on the same page each issue.

### Build reader rituals

Predictability brings loyalty. That's true in a lot of areas, especially newspaper readership. Find a few new weekly ideas to include in your newspapers. Some that I've seen work are:

- **Student journalism page:** Partner with schools to

June 19-25

Plaindealer

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## Through our readers' eyes

Each week, we showcase photos submitted by our readers. Whether it's a beautiful sunset, a funny pet moment, or a memorable family event, we love seeing the world through your lens. Send your favorite photo to [erin@ournews.com](mailto:erin@ournews.com).




**Top Left:** Text goes here to describe the photo located on the top left. Of course you can resize photos, change locations, etc. to fill the space that you have.

**Top Right:** You might not feature photos each week, so you would want to change the text at the top of the page to explain that.

**Bottom Left:** You place the photos on a frame by deleting the photo ahead there, creating a rectangle, then filling it with a photo. Resize the frame before placing the photo.

**Bottom Right:** You might want more photos. Just reduce the size of the frames. Some weeks, you might want to use just the top half of the page. That's okay. The layout allows for you to do whatever you need to do with it.

Submit your photo to [erin@ournews.com](mailto:erin@ournews.com)




publish student-created pages monthly.

- **Birthday shout-outs** (sent in via email by readers)
- **Historical photos:** Most newspapers have a history section that includes stories from the past. Consider adding an image from the past in each issue of the paper. Make it prominent to draw the reader.
- **Weekly polls** or "sound off" column. Print community-submitted responses to a weekly question, e.g., "What business we don't currently have would you like to see open in our community?"

### Redesign the Calendar

In focus groups, I often find the community calendar is one

of the two most-read parts of the newspaper. Rather than including a bland listing of events, make an effort to design an attractive community calendar area each week.

Perhaps you might find one or two ideas in my list that would work well in your newspaper. That's 800 words. My work is done.

**Kevin Slimp**  
"The News Guru"

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**Kevin Slimp** is a popular consultant, advisor and trainer in the newspaper industry. He currently serves as CEO of Market Square Publishing and Chief Guru at NewspaperAcademy.com.



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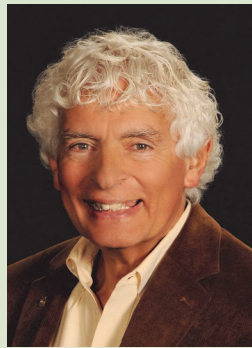
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