

November 2025 **INFORMER**

*Happy
Thanksgiving*



**Community
Papers of
Michigan**



Maybe It's Time For a Little Gratitude

From Executive Director Don Rush

In this topsy, turvy world of publishing community papers where newsprint, postage and every other cost seems to always increase, it may be hard to find something to be thankful for. I get it.

But, then again, it's the season for gratitude, so let's get to it!

Aside from the easy reasons to find thanks this season (family, friends, etc.), let's look at the business side of life. First off, as members of Community Papers of Michigan, you are not alone. The concerns or issues you face, other members have also faced. If you have a question or are looking for answers or suggestions, reach out to other members, or drop me a line. I'll reach out and look for answers.

Be grateful for having trusted and loyal people on your staff who perform their best for you and your community. Shake their hands and tell them, "Thank you."

Be grateful you're in and make a living in an industry you love! Many people "just" go to work every day for the paycheck. Being in the "paper" trade, while at times taxing, is a privilege. Being in the "community paper" trade is even more wonderful.

We in the community paper trade can be thankful in this age of global news overload, the demand for authentic, local connections and accountability remains strong in our communities. We have positioned ourselves as "essential" pillars of our towns and the local business economy.

Think about it, community papers have an indispensable role in their towns.

On the local business side of things think about these points:

Community Papers Are The Most Trusted Source for local, independent "Mom & Pop" businesses to market themselves. Because a community publication is viewed as a credible, community member, this trust extends to its advertisers. Readers are highly engaged with the local paper and actively look for deals and information on local services, making print ads a

powerful catalyst for purchasing decisions.

Community Papers Are Affordable And Offer Highly Targeted Advertising: Small, local businesses depend on their community publication for affordable advertising which reaches exactly the right, local audience—people who live within driving distance and are most likely to become loyal customers.

Community Papers Are Resilient Despite The Digital Age: While larger metro papers have struggled, many community papers are holding steady or even thriving. Their hyper-local focus provides unique content that cannot be easily replaced by national digital sources.

Community Papers Often Have Low Overhead and Adaptability: Many weeklies operate successfully with a small team and limited overhead. This lean structure allows them to pivot and adapt to new challenges or opportunities much faster than complex, bureaucratic media organizations.

If your publication offers editorial content, here's why your readers are grateful for you:

Community Papers Provide Essential Coverage—town council meetings, local school sports, and community events—that larger media outlets simply don't. This makes them a trusted and indispensable source of information on matters that directly impact their readers' daily lives.

Community Papers Foster a Sense of Community by spotlighting local heroes, covering milestones (births, weddings, obituaries), and providing a shared narrative, the paper builds a powerful sense of pride and belonging among residents.

Community Papers Are The Local Watchdog: They hold local officials (town councils, school boards) accountable, fostering transparency and civic engagement that is critical to a functioning local democracy.

Community Papers Have Deep Reader Trust and Loyalty: In a small community, the newspaper often has a direct, trusting

relationship with its readers. This reliability and commitment to factual, local reporting provides a stark contrast to the misinformation sometimes found on social media.

I'm grateful to be a part of this industry for over 40 years. I'm grateful to the board, for their involvement with CPM and I'm thankful for our Business Manager, Dana Risner. Thank you and to you and yours, **Happy Thanksgiving!**



Ad-Libs

ONE WAY TO END PRESENTATIONS SMOOTHLY



BY JOHN FOUST

I used to have a small Zuma sailboat, which I trailered to a nearby lake in the summer. With its 13-foot length and one sail, it was relatively easy to rig and handle on the water.

Interestingly, the most challenging thing about the boat was dealing with the trailer – making sure the tail lights were working, checking tires, and taking care of the tie-down straps.

One time after a day of sailing, I followed my regular procedure of taking the boat out of the water. First, I pulled the boat onto the sandy beach next to the boat ramp, lowered the sail and raised the centerboard and rudder. Then I backed the car down the ramp, so I could walk the boat back into the

water and position it between the two parallel rails of the trailer. Finally, I attached a line to the bow to pull it straight onto the rails. Just at that moment, the remains of a wake from a distant powerboat turned the boat sideways and pushed the starboard (right) side into one of the rails. I can still hear the crunch of the rail going through the hull.

After getting the hole repaired, I sailed the boat for several more years, until I decided to sell it – along with the trailer.

Although that incident happened years ago, it sticks in my mind, because it reminds me of the difficulty we often have in making a clean exit. Whether it's pulling a boat out of the water or ending a conversation, we want a smooth and professional conclusion.

Take sales calls, for example. If you're like me, you've experienced that awkward verbal shuffle when the conversation tapers off.

There are probably as many ways to successfully end a sales call as there are salespeople. But there's one old technique that I like more than any of the others. It starts with a simple question and quickly progresses to a friendly farewell. There are four steps:

1. Ask this question. "Thank you for meeting with me today. Are there any additional questions, before I go?" That's it. No fancy words, just a casual and non-threatening yes-or-no question.

This sends the message that – although the conversation is ending – you're committed to addressing any additional concerns.

2. Respond. There are only two answers: yes or no. If it's "yes," get right to your explanation. If it's "no," the meeting has covered the bases.

3. Make a final statement. After dealing with their answer to the yes-no question, it's time to restate the action you're going to take. It's best to limit this to one short sentence. For example, "I'll get that new marketing proposal to you by the end of the week."

4. Say, "Thanks again" and leave. That's all it takes to end on a note that's professional, efficient and respectful of their time.

This technique is worth a try. It can help you keep your next presentation afloat at the end.

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By
Mark W.
Rummel
Fenton, MI

YOU'D BETTER SHOP AROUND:

We need an Attitude of Gratitude this month... (and it's time to eat!)

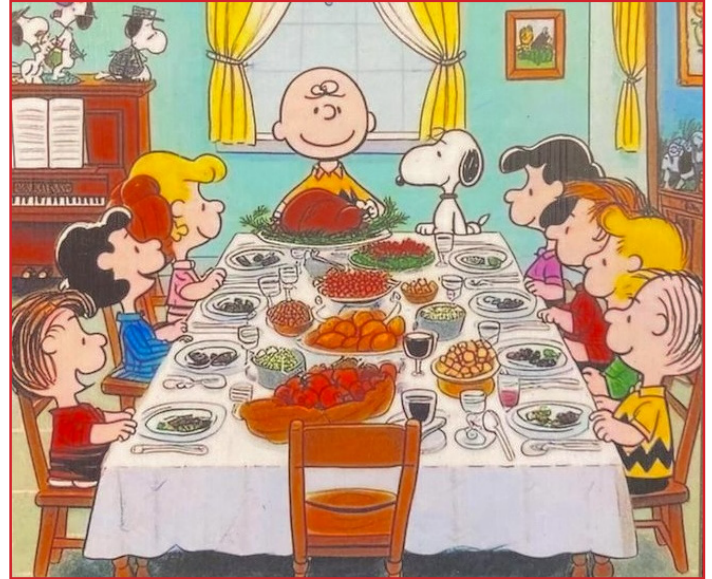
Search the internet for “reasons to be thankful” and you’ll literally get 40 million results. That helps explain why Thanksgiving is different from every other holiday we celebrate each year.

We expect something at Christmas (spending family time together and receiving gifts) and other holidays such as Halloween (dress-ing up and getting treats.) but Thanksgiving expects something from US.

Thanksgiving is the one day set aside to show gratitude — to give back. It’s when we’re supposed to GIVE something instead of GET something this one day each year. It sounds pretty simple, but it’s truly profound.

Most folks get a day off work when the dozen or so “big” national holidays come around. There often are special events, sports games and annual TV shows to help us celebrate most special days. And as Americans, we usually top off our holidays with lots of food and sometimes a little too much to drink in the beverage department. That’s how Americans celebrate most holidays.

But Thanksgiving IS the king of all eating events. It’s the one holiday we totally equate with food — usually lots of it shared on big plates and bowls with special people, whether prepared at home or served to us in restaurants. We make fun of the poor turkeys roasted or deep-fried for our enjoyment. We dream about mounds of mashed potatoes,



gravy, pumpkin pie and more each time the fourth Thursday of November rolls around.

One more thing: among those 40 million search results you’ll find for Thanksgiving is this overriding truth —

Thanksgiving is the day we should show true gratitude for what we have.

No one has everything they want. Many, many people could use more health, clean air, money, time, love or other necessities.

An attitude of gratitude for all that we DO have should be our first priority this Thursday, Nov. 27. Whether as a prayer or thinking good thoughts or by whatever method you choose, it’s a time to appreciate life as it is, imperfections and all.

Now, please pass the mashed potatoes — the Lions game starts at 1 p.m., lol...

Mark has worked at papers in Saginaw, Port Huron and the Thumb Area since 1972, plus served on the CPM Board. He and wife Sally even worked for The Walt Disney Company. They also opened and ran a successful restaurant for 17 years. He’s retired in Fenton, Mich. MarkWRummel@gmail.com

Is free as good as paid?

Kevin Slimp discusses design software, not subscription plans

By Kevin Slimp

Peter Coleman – managing editor at GXpress Magazine – an Australian-based publication focused on the newspaper industry – sent this email to me yesterday:

“Hi Kevin, I hope you are well and doing well! I see an announcement today that our Aussie heroes Canva are bundling Affinity together and making it free (all but the AI bits). As my worldwide expert on such things, I’d be grateful for a comment on how this will work, for publication.”

Peter, you sure know how to mess up a perfectly good schedule. Peter knows that this isn’t such a simple request. To provide a comment means I’d spend hours downloading the new software, reviewing its tools and functions, and seeing what other commentators say about the product. Peter also knows I’m a sucker for anything related to design software, so I have no choice but to acquiesce.

Why is everyone discussing Affinity?

For those not following the Affinity saga – probably most of you – Canva acquired the professional design company Serif, which makes the Affinity suite of creative software, in March 2024. Subsequently, Canva has relaunched Affinity as a free, all-in-one app called “Affinity by Canva” that combines Affinity Designer, Photo, and Publisher.

If you’ve been following my columns for a while, you might remember reviews I’ve

written on Affinity Publisher just before and after the world was turned upside down by COVID. One of the biggest crowds I’ve ever had for a webinar was an introduction to Affinity Publisher, which drew more than 400 newspaper professionals. At the time, my advice was to give Affinity time. While a worthwhile design app, it had shortcomings that made it less than optimum for our work publishing newspapers.

Over the years, I’ve upgraded Affinity Publisher and other products in the Affinity suite and watched it improve in many areas. Still, when asked, my advice to publishers was to stick with their Adobe products, if for no other reason than not to convert everything from InDesign (or even QuarkXpress) to Affinity Publisher. My other issue with the Affinity suite was Photo, Affinity’s photo-editing app. As hard as I tried, I couldn’t get reliable results with CMYK images for pages going to print. I missed the color settings, control of dot gain, and ink colors I rely on from Photoshop.

So why all the hubbub about Affinity now? Canva – best known for its online tools allowing design and illustration online – recently acquired Affinity and released it for free to any user. Yes, free. That’s mighty tempting for those of you who, like me, pay \$29 (US) or more each month for InDesign or \$69 for the entire Creative Cloud suite of applications. Why would Canva do this? Simply stated, they hope you’ll eventually upgrade to



Other than a text shift in the area above the main headline, the page designed in InDesign, left, opened almost identically in Affinity.

paid tools related to the Affinity line.

There’s nothing sinister going on here, at least as far as I know. Let’s face it, Canva wants to siphon users away from Adobe, now the 10th largest software company in the world (Adobe had as few as 64 employees when I worked with them back on projects in the 1990s). Giving away software seems like a good way to do this.

The nitty-gritty

Okay, let’s get to the nitty-gritty. I could spend pages writing a full-scale review of Affinity by Canva, but I have neither the time nor inclination to do that today. I’ve downloaded the new software, which works pretty much like the Affinity software I’ve taught and used (only for research) over the past ten years. It is impressive in its abilities and rivals Adobe InDesign in many ways. Users can open and edit InDesign files (saved in IDML format) and export PDF files. However,

the export capabilities of PDFs exported from InDesign aren’t as intricate, nor do they include all of the functions. Having written that, it should be noted that many InDesign users aren’t aware of these functions anyway.

How I use Affinity

Here’s how we use Affinity in my publishing company, Market Square Books. Affinity Publisher is very good, but it has never had all the functionality we need in designing and publishing books. That’s why I still spend \$69 each month for each license of Adobe Creative Cloud. It’s not worth the risk to save a few dollars. However, we do have staff members who don’t need the full capabilities of InDesign, but still need to edit InDesign files from time to time. A perfect example is the person who sends boxes of books to vendors. These require a label with information about the book title, ISBN code, quantity, etc., that has been cre-

ated in InDesign. Rather than purchase an Adobe license for this function, the staff member in the shipping department uses Affinity Publisher to open the InDesign file (previously created by a designer) and make the changes before printing the label.

I’m not in a hurry to upend our entire design process to save a few dollars each month. However, you might be. In that case, let me suggest you download a free version of Affinity by visiting:

canva.com/help/free-affinity-access/

After the holidays, I plan to do a detailed review of Affinity by Canva. In the meantime, let me know how you’re using it and how it works at your newspaper.



Kevin Slimp

“The News Guru”

kevin@kevinslimp.com





GOAL! 3 Proven Ways to Crush Q4 Sales

Media Sales Coach, Ryan Dohrn



It is time to score a sales training goal!

The end of the year always feels like controlled chaos. Projects are wrapping up, budgets are being finalized, and everyone seems distracted by Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's plans. But while some salespeople use that as an excuse to slow down, top performers know this is the time to step up.

In my world of media marketing and ad sales training, the fourth quarter is one of the best opportunities of the entire year. Companies are still making decisions. Budgets still need to be spent. Clients still want to end the year strong. I coach more than eighty sales professionals every month, and the ones who crush their goals do not let the calendar dictate their pace. They stay active, intentional, and value-driven.

Here are three strategies that will help you finish the year like a pro.

1. Bring Real Value to Every Meeting

Let's be honest. If a meeting only benefits you, it is not valuable for the client. This time of year, every conversation should have a purpose that serves them. Before you send a meeting invite, ask yourself: What am I bringing that they can actually use?

In my media world, that might mean bringing a publisher, general manager, or digital strategist into the renewal meeting. Suddenly, it is not just another sales check-in. It becomes a strategy session with multiple perspectives. You might bring data on audience engagement, examples of high-performing campaigns, or even a fresh marketing idea that helps them hit their own year-end targets.

The bottom line is simple. Valuable meetings get prioritized, remembered, and acted upon. Time is the one thing clients guard fiercely. Show them you respect it by delivering

insights, not just updates.

2. Get Loud When Others Go Quiet

Every year, I hear salespeople say, "Nobody is buying during the holidays." That is simply not true. What is really happening is that salespeople stop selling. When everyone else goes quiet, you have an incredible chance to stand out.

Thanksgiving week and the days leading up to Christmas can actually be powerful selling windows. Decision makers might be working from home, their schedules are lighter, and they are more likely to pick up the phone or respond to emails. It is also a fantastic time to deepen relationships. Send a thank you note, share a creative idea, or simply check in with a quick personal message.

This applies across the board, whether you are in media, corporate sales training, or digital marketing. Be the voice that stays consistent and confident while everyone else fades out. When others go quiet, you get loud, but do it with purpose and positivity.

3. Recognize the Renewal Rush

As the calendar winds down, every vendor your client works with is reaching out for renewals. Software companies, insurance providers, law firms, marketing groups, utilities, you name it. That means your customers are getting hit from every direction. To break through that noise, you have to show up differently.

Try acknowledging it right up front. Say, "I know every salesperson is trying to get time with you right now. What can I do to make this easy and worthwhile for you?" That simple shift instantly disarms people. It positions you as helpful, not pushy, and in a crowded inbox, that difference is everything.

This is also the perfect time to talk budgets. Many companies operate on a use it or lose it

system. If they do not spend those marketing or operations dollars before December 31st, they lose access to them. Do not be shy about asking, "Do you have any remaining dollars you need to allocate before year-end?" That one question can uncover opportunities you did not even know existed.

The Takeaway

Finishing the year strong is not about luck. It is about mindset, energy, and strategy.

- Bring value to every meeting. Make every conversation worth your client's time.
- Stay active when others go quiet. Visibility leads to opportunity.
- Be helpful when everyone else is pushy. Stand out by making things easy for your clients.

Sales is not for the faint of heart, especially in Q4. But if you bring value, stay visible, and lead with genuine intent, you will not only hit your year-end goals, you will set yourself up for a powerful start to next year.

You asked for it. It is done.

Finally. Daily sales advice and tips on your phone from your sales pal, Ryan Dohrn. Android and iPhone versions are up and running. The app is free to download. 14 free sales lessons included.



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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Marty Bennett
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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



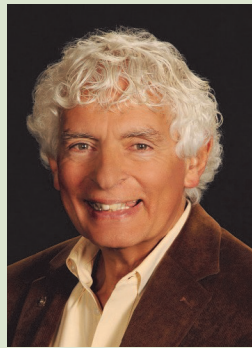
Cindy Gaedert-Gearhart
Vice President

County Journal, Flashes
Advertising & News
241 S. Cochran Ave.,
Charlotte, MI 48813
Office: 517-543-1099 Ext.225
Cell: 269-209-3532
Fax: 517-543-1993
CGWING@county-journal.com



Jeff Demers
Treasurer

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



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



Glen Head
Director

MailMax, Far Ahead Advertising
PO Box 860
Saint Joseph, MI 49085
Phone: 269-934-7522
Fax: 269-934-3297
Cell: 269-208-1552
Glen@MailMaxOnline.com



Don Rush, Executive Director
donrush@cpapersmi.com



**Community
Papers of
Michigan**

10120 Hegel Road, Goodrich, MI, 48438
Phone/Fax: (800)783-0267
mifreeads.com



Dana Risner, Business Manager
danarisner@cpapersmi.com