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Publish

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Loren Colburn



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COMING NEXT MONTH

The January issue of *Publish* will be looking into what consumer trends will impact businesses in 2026 along with the people, issues and events impacting the community publishing industry.

Are You Facing A Gray Tsunami?

Are many of your production people retiring or hoping to retire soon?

Are you keeping folks on staff who are having trouble keeping-up or are designing pages and ads that look like thirty years ago? Are your in-house people expensive relative to the work volume? Having challenges finding, hiring and training younger replacements? Even worse – are you stuck doing this work yourself?

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SHANE GOODMAN

A TIP OF THE HAT!

BY LOREN COLBURN

ful decisions and stronger outcomes.

At the end of this month, one of those rare individuals will be concluding two decades of dedicated service on the association's board of directors – **Shane Goodman**. From his first involvement with the AFCP Board in 2006, through the IFPA–AFCP merger, and on to the current ACP Board of Directors, Shane has consistently filled the invaluable – and often challenging role of chief thought provoker.

Shane's unwavering commitment to pursuing the best outcomes, for the right reasons, and in the most efficient and effective ways, has left a lasting mark on this organization. Many of the association's most successful initiatives and programs bear the imprint of his thoughtful

guidance and steady leadership. I'm confident that without his influence, many of those decisions might not have reached the positive conclusions they did.

On a personal level, Shane has had a profound impact on me as a manager, leader, and businessperson. His ability to sharpen my critical thinking and challenge my assumptions has changed the way I approach both business and life. For that, I will always be grateful.

On behalf of the members of the association, the current and past directors, and the entire industry you have helped guide through times of change – thank you, Shane. Your leadership has elevated the standard for all who follow, to the lasting benefit of our industry as a whole.

Every so often, you have the privilege of working alongside someone who truly challenges the way you think. Not just at a surface level, but in a deep, analytical way – someone who pushes you to examine a problem, idea, or solution from every possible angle. The result of that kind of collaboration is almost always better, more thought-

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BY JOYCE FRERICKS

WRAPPING UP THE YEAR: ACP 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

As we wrap up another busy and successful year, I'm pleased to remind everyone that the Annual Meeting of the ACP Membership will be held on Friday, December 12, 2025, at 2:00 PM Eastern Time. Part of the meeting will include a recap of what's been happening at ACP over the past year. For those who can't make it, here's a quick overview of some of the highlights we'll be sharing.

ACP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This spring, Heather Eller of Nickel's Worth in Coeur d'Alene, ID, joined the Board as an At-Large Director to fill an open seat through the remainder of the 2025 term. In the fall, Cory Regnier of Citizen Publishing in Windom, MN, moved into the Second Vice President role, setting him on course for the ACP Presidency for 2029-2031.

The membership also approved the slate for 2026–2028 At-Large Directors in October. Serving in those seats will be Heather Eller, Nickel's Worth (ID), Jocelyn Engle, Engle Printing & Publishing (PA), Carol Toomey, The Action (MA), Michael VanStry, Coastal View News (CA) and Scott Greene, Reminder Publishing (MA).

ADS NETWORK

As the association's primary funding source, the ADS Network remains a top priority for the Board. It supports the many benefits ACP provides to members and sustains our operations.

This past summer, we implemented major updates to the network to

create more flexibility for members. These changes make it easier to run ads that best fit each publication's needs and allow for more display ads, which often perform better. The update also addressed a common concern among prospective members who preferred not to run classified ads. The result? A smoother, more adaptable program and a wave of positive feedback from members who've appreciated the changes.

EVENTS

The Board, along with the Events and Professional Development Committees, work year-round to deliver top-notch speakers, training, and networking opportunities. In 2025, ACP partnered with MFCP to present the Summer Learning Series, a five-session virtual program in June that covered AI, Sales, Digital, Editorial, and Graphics topics.

In September, we gathered in Mobile, AL for our in-person Annual Conference & Trade Show – a high-energy event packed with speakers, TLI sessions, workshops, networking, and idea sharing... capped off with our very own Mardi Gras Parade!

Both events were incredibly well received, and we also hosted additional stand-alone webinars and roundtable discussions throughout the year. Looking ahead, don't miss the Revenue Summit in Orlando, FL, coming up this February 26-27. Also, stay tuned for details about the 2026 Annual Conference & Trade Show, coming next fall!

SOME ADDITIONAL 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

It's been a busy and rewarding year! Among the accomplishments we're proud to share:

- Awarded six Bob Wright Memorial Scholarships to students across the country.
- Welcomed several new participants into the January Spring Partnership Program, helping our members grow digital revenue.
- Launched a new PopMount partnership, exclusive to ACP members, adding yet another potential revenue stream.
- Saved members thousands of dollars through the USPS Emerging Technologies discount promotion.
- Added three new Rising Stars and raised over \$3,300 for the Bill Welsh Foundation.
- Announced a third certification level under the Leadership Institute (TLI) - the Senior Advertising Executive (SAE) Certification.

We also celebrated excellence through our annual Best of the Best Contest, which drew over 130 winning entries from more than 30 member publications. Exchange Media Group of Fayetteville, TN, took home the Best of Show Award.

And we proudly recognized three exceptional members for their contributions to the association and the industry:

- Sylvia Weinstein, Oyster Pointer – Publisher of the Year

FROM THE TOP

- Shane Goodman, Big Green Umbrella Media – Distinguished Service Award
- Greg Birkett, The Dubuque Advertiser – Volunteer of the Year

MEMBERSHIP & FINANCIALS

Our membership remains strong, with more than 100 publishing members and over 20 associate partners

and we continue to grow steadily, adding new members nearly every month. The more we grow, the stronger we are together!

Financially, ACP is in a solid position. Our investment account has performed very well, leaving us on firm footing as we head into 2026.

Additional details will be shared during the Annual Meeting. If you

haven't yet received your Zoom registration link, please contact the office at 877-203-2327 so we can be sure you're included.

Thank you for your continued membership, engagement, and support. We look forward to an exciting and prosperous 2026 - working with you, learning from you, and continuing to grow together as a community. ■

You're going to love this deal!

Our diverse membership ranges from small, independent community publications to larger media companies, from subscription based to free distribution, from printed to digital publications, and from weeklies to monthlies. What they all have in common is their publications serve local communities.

Our mission at ACP is to *"Help members enhance their viability and strengthen the community publishing industry."*

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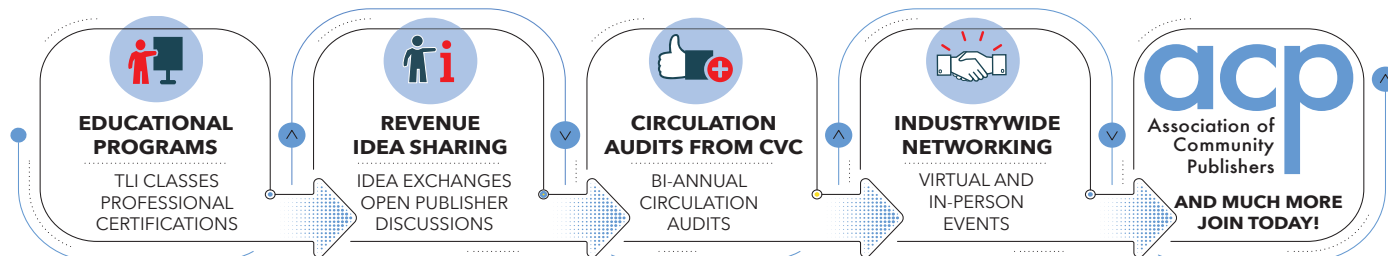
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BY CASSEY RECORE

Surveys tell us that networking is one of the most valued benefits within the ACP membership and community. The connections we make within the industry can be invaluable when you need advice, ideas or just someone who knows what you do every day to talk to. At ACP we continue to offer opportunities for you to grow your circle and make those contacts.

If you plan to take full advantage of this benefit then get ready to connect, collaborate, and grow your revenue strategies at the 2026 ACP Revenue Summit, taking place February 26–27, 2026 at the Westgate Lakes Resort & Spa in sunny Orlando, Florida. This event is designed for publishing professionals who want to build stronger networks, share proven ideas, and leave with actionable solutions to boost their bottom line.

This year's theme is all about revenue & cost savings, networking and real-world results – because the best ideas often start with great conversations. Whether you're looking to explore new revenue models, embrace AI in your operations, or simply

meet others who understand your challenges, the Revenue Summit is the place to be. The open-roundtable format allows for great conversation throughout the event.

WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND

The 2026 Revenue Summit is more than just a conference – it's a gathering of creative, forward-thinking leaders who are shaping the future of publishing. With a schedule packed full of interactive sessions, peer-to-peer discussions and great speakers and experts, you'll walk away with fresh insights, new connections, and practical strategies ready to implement the moment you return home.

Preliminary Schedule Highlights (subject to change)

Thursday, February 26

- 1:00 PM – Sessions Begin
 - ✓ AI – Practical Use Workshop
 - ✓ Opening Networking Activity
 - ✓ Open Forum Roundtable
- Evening Welcome Reception – Relax, mingle, and make new connections over drinks and conversation.

Friday, February 27

- AI – Learn How AI Can Help Improve Revenues
- Hiring – Modern Methods to Find New People to Save You Time & Money
- Alternative Revenue Streams

- Digital – Real Solutions to Help You Bundle & Price
- Save Money – Is Outsourcing the Answer?
- Taking Advantage of Grant Programs
- Revenue & Cost Savings Idea Exchange
- Open Forum Roundtable (Publishing Members)

Sessions run through 6:00 PM, with plenty of time to network, share, and collaborate throughout the day.

DON'T MISS OUT - REGISTER TODAY!

If you're an ACP member, registering before January 1st that means your registration fee is completely FREE - a great reason to secure your spot early. Space is limited to 50 attendees and 10 sponsors, and with so much interest already building, we encourage you to register now and be part of this energizing two-day experience. If you have interest in our sponsorship opportunities and would like more information on how to partner with us for this event, please reach out to me at Cassey@communitypublishers.com.

Join your peers in Orlando to learn, share, and build lasting connections that will drive success well into 2026 and beyond.

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Let's make revenue growth and great connections happen together at the 2026 ACP Revenue Summit! ■

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For ACP members, there's a special offer of a three-way split monthly fee for the first year, minimizing your costs to kickstart your journey.

For more information, call ACP at 877-203-2327 or email office@communitypublishers.com.





BY LOREN COLBURN

I don't know about you, but there are certain motivational speakers and authors that really resonate with me. To be fair, there are also some that can't hold my attention at all. My all-time favorite is Simon Sinek, who hopefully you have had the opportunity to be exposed to. YouTube contains hundreds of thousands of videos that include Simon and you can literally spend days or weeks watching what he has to say.

Simon is famous for his optimistic philosophies and his ability to clearly articulate his requirements for effective leadership. His 2009 TED Talk on the concept of "why" has been viewed on the TED site over 60 million times and remains in the top 5 all time TED talks. I believe it's his combination of clear messaging, impressive storytelling and smooth delivery that makes him rise above the rest.

There is one Simon Sinek presentation^[1] where he talks about his "5 Little Rules" to guide you through your life. With the season of making New Years resolutions well underway, it seems appropriate to consider some options for building resolutions that extend beyond the "regulars." The following is a summary of those rules to test your interest, but I highly recommend watching the video to truly appreciate their

[1] *Simon Sinek's "5 Little Rules"* - <https://youtu.be/mKJ9-OTbanE>

LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION?

value and get the "why" behind each. Simon has a unique "storytelling" ability that makes each point very memorable.

- 1. Go after the things that you want**, you just can't get in the way of somebody else getting what they want.
- 2. You get to take credit for what YOU accomplish, but you also must take accountability** – sometimes you're the problem.
- 3. Take care of each other** – who are you going to ask for help and be able to accept it when it's offered.
- 4. Hold your opinion until everyone else has spoken** – ask questions to understand but be the last to speak.
- 5. Always remember humility** – privileges are for positions, not the individual – stay humble, "you deserve a styrofoam cup!"

I'm a firm believer in all five of these, even though I may not always be good at doing each of them. I probably struggle the most with being able to ask for help and being able to accept it when offered. Helping the person to my left or my right isn't a problem, but admitting I need help from others is a bit more uncomfortable for me. I'm much better at this than I was at the start of my professional journey, but it still is something I need to constantly work on.

There are a bunch of other Simon Sinek videos that you might find worthwhile if you spend a couple minutes in your favorite search engine. I would highly recommend his TED talks, How Great Leaders Inspire Action and Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe if you like his messaging.

If Simon Sinek isn't for you, I invite you to try a few of the following videos as a means of finding some motivation, inspiration or maybe professional guidance. The important thing is to look for things that will resonate with you and there are literally thousands of options available. Here are just a few to prime the pump and hopefully help you gain a new perspective:

- Everyday Leadership – Drew Dudley (Lollypop Moments)
- University of Texas at Austin 2014 Commencement Address – Admiral William H. McRaven (If you want to change the world, start of by making your bed.)
- The Key to Success? Grit with Angela Lee Duckworth (The Power of Passion and Perseverance)
- Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address (3 Stories From My Life)
- Life Advice from Matthew McConaughey (10 Minutes for the Next 10 years)

Each of these has a message worth hearing and each was worthy of earning millions of YouTube views for the message they contain. They should provide a moment of reflection that will make you consider an action, a behavioral adjustment or a shift in perspective that might just change the way you approach tomorrow. All you need is an open mind and a few uninterrupted minutes!

Until next month, keep reminding the world that "Print's not dead...it's READ!" ■



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THE POWER OF CONNECTION: Why Industry Networking Matters for Community Publications

For community publishers, success has always been built on relationships – with readers, advertisers, and the people who make your publication possible. But there's another layer of connection that's just as important: the one you have with others in your industry.

Networking within the community publishing world isn't just about shaking hands or swapping business cards. It's about building meaningful relationships with peers who understand your challenges, celebrate your wins, and share your commitment to strengthening local journalism.

1. LEARNING FROM PEERS WHO UNDERSTAND YOUR WORLD

The beauty of the community publishing industry lies in its diversity – from small-town weeklies and lifestyle magazines to niche community guides and online platforms. Each publication operates differently, but the lessons learned are often universal.

Through networking – at conferences, in professional associations, or through informal collaborations – publishers can learn how others approach shared challenges. Maybe another publication found a successful new way to bundle print and digital advertising, or discovered a sponsorship model that supports special sections. These shared insights save time, spark ideas, and help you refine your own strategies without having to reinvent the wheel.

The most valuable lessons rarely come from textbooks or webinars; they come from real conversations

with those who have walked the same path.

2. STRENGTHENING CREDIBILITY AND VISIBILITY

Active participation in your professional network positions your publication as a leader in both your industry and your community. When you attend events, participate in panel discussions, or contribute to association resources, you're not just learning – you're showing that your publication is invested in growth, innovation, and collaboration.

Locally, this credibility carries weight. Advertisers and readers notice when you're part of something larger – when your publication is connected to a national organization like the Association of Community Publishers (ACP) or regional press associations. It reinforces that you're a professional operation committed to excellence, not just another local business.

3. BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS THAT DRIVE GROWTH

Networking can lead to new business opportunities in ways that are both practical and creative. Through connections with other publishers, you might uncover ways to share design or printing resources, partner on editorial features, or even co-sell advertising for broader regional exposure.

Within your local community, networking with businesses and organizations can result in joint events, sponsored content, or marketing collaborations that benefit both parties.

These partnerships build a stronger economic and social ecosystem – one where your publication plays a central role in connecting businesses to audiences.

In short: networking creates growth that goes beyond the bottom line. It fosters collaboration, visibility, and shared success.

4. SHARING RESOURCES AND IDEAS

One of the greatest strengths of community publishing is the willingness of publishers to help one another. Networking enables that culture of sharing.

By staying connected, you gain access to practical tools and insights:

- Recommendations for dependable freelance writers, photographers, or designers.
- Advice on affordable technology platforms for layout, ad management, or subscriptions.
- Strategies for boosting local advertising or improving distribution.

Many small and mid-sized publishers operate with lean teams. Networking fills in the gaps by creating an informal support network – a place to ask questions, exchange templates, or brainstorm solutions. When publishers share, everyone benefits.

5. STAYING AHEAD OF INDUSTRY SHIFTS

The publishing world is evolving rapidly – and community publishers must balance tradition with trans-

NETWORKING FEATURE

formation. Reader habits are changing, advertisers expect measurable results, and digital tools are reshaping how local media connects with audiences.

By networking within your industry, you can learn how others are adapting. What's working in terms of digital audience engagement? How are peers handling transitions to hybrid advertising models? What new revenue streams are emerging that still align with your community mission?

Being part of those conversations keeps you nimble. It helps you anticipate challenges, adopt best practices, and continue serving your readers in fresh, relevant ways.

6. FINDING SUPPORT AND INSPIRATION

Publishing can be a tough business – demanding, deadline-driven, and at times isolating. But networking reminds you that you're not alone. Whether you're facing distribution challenges, staff turnover, or industry uncertainty, others have been there too.

Many publishers say the most valuable part of attending conferences like the ACP Conference & Trade Show isn't just the sessions – it's the hallway conversations, the shared stories over coffee, and the new friendships formed with people who "get it." Those relationships often turn into long-term support systems that sustain you through both successes and setbacks.

MAKING NETWORKING WORK FOR YOU

You don't have to be an extrovert or attend every event to benefit from networking. Start where you are:

- **Join a professional organization** such as the Association of Community Publishers (ACP).
- **Participate in online forums or local press association discussions.**
- **Connect with other publishers in nearby markets** – sometimes your best allies are right down the road.
- **Follow up after conferences or webinars** to build relationships beyond the event itself.

Remember: networking isn't about collecting contacts – it's about cultivating genuine connections. When you share knowledge freely, show interest in others' success, and stay engaged, those relationships will naturally grow stronger and more valuable.

At its heart, community publishing is about connection – connecting readers to stories, businesses to audiences, and people to one another.

Networking simply extends that same spirit to the professional side of what you do. The stronger your connections within your industry, the stronger your publication becomes – not just as a business, but as a cornerstone of the community it serves. ■

This article was produced with the assistance of OpenAI. (2025) ChatGPT-5 and Rytr (2025)

ACP SUMMIT TESTIMONIAL

When asked, "What did you like most the Phoenix Leadership Summit?"



Interactions with others in a close setting. Info sharing amongst the group and not solely relied upon by the presenter. Liked the social time and the outing at the ball game provided good interaction time to talk to others about the topics and others as well.



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2024 Phoenix ACP Leadership Summit Attendee

WHY COMMUNITY PUBLISHERS MUST SPEND MORE TIME WORKING ON THEIR BUSINESS — NOT JUST IN IT

Community publishers wear many hats - editor, salesperson, designer, distribution coordinator, event planner, and sometimes even bookkeeper. The nature of local publishing demands agility and hands-on involvement, but too often publishers find themselves buried in daily tasks and production cycles, leaving little time to plan, innovate, and grow.

The challenge is real: when you're constantly working in your business, you risk losing sight of the strategic decisions needed to strengthen and sustain it. In today's competitive media landscape, community publishers must intentionally shift focus toward working on their business to ensure they remain relevant, profitable, and essential to their communities.

Understanding the Difference

Working IN your business means handling day-to-day operations:

- Editing and laying out content
- Managing advertising submissions
- Coordinating printing and distribution
- Responding to emails and client needs

These tasks are critical, but they are also consuming. When they dominate your week, there's little room left for growth activities.

Working ON your business means focusing on long-term success:

- Setting revenue and audience-growth goals
- Developing digital products and new revenue streams

- Building advertiser relationships and community partnerships
- Improving workflow efficiency and outsourcing where possible
- Investing in branding, content strategy, and technology

This strategic work builds resilience and positions your publication to thrive, not just survive.

Take Time to Build Industry Relationships

Another often-overlooked aspect of working on your business is prioritizing professional networking. In today's rapidly evolving media landscape, connecting with other publishers, industry partners, and media innovators is invaluable. These relationships provide fresh ideas, shared resources, and much-needed support from people who understand the unique challenges you face.

Attending industry events, participating in publisher roundtables, and

joining peer groups can offer critical insights into new revenue trends, digital tools, successful advertising programs, and operational best practices. These aren't just opportunities to learn—they're also gateways to collaboration. By networking with peers, publishers can tap into group advertising initiatives, share trusted freelancers for special projects, or even co-host community events that amplify reach while reducing costs.

Investing time in building these connections pays dividends far beyond your own organization. When publishers actively engage with their peers and partners across the industry, they help strengthen not only their individual businesses but also the entire ecosystem of local media. In an environment where innovation and resilience are key to survival and growth, making professional networking a priority is one of the smartest moves you can make.



INDUSTRY FEATURE

Why This Shift Matters Now

Community publications occupy a unique and valuable space: they inform, connect, and represent the voices of local communities. But the industry continues to evolve quickly. Advertising models are shifting, audiences demand multimedia engagement, and competition for attention has never been fiercer.

Publishers who pause long enough to plan—and innovate—are the ones who will lead.

Shifting time toward strategy allows publishers to:

- Diversify revenue beyond traditional ads
- Create stronger digital footprints
- Introduce sponsorships and value-added services
- Strengthen relationships with local businesses and civic leaders

- Adapt their content model to what readers want today

Practical Ways to Work More ON Your Business

You don't need large staffing resources to make progress. Start small:

- Block weekly time for strategic work—treat it like a non-negotiable meeting
- Automate distribution lists, invoicing, and scheduling tasks
- Outsource design, editing, or admin where possible
- Document repeat processes to save time and reduce errors
- Attend industry events or join publisher associations to learn and network
- Set quarterly goals—then track and measure them

Every hour you reclaim from production and reinvest into strategy

compounds long-term benefits.

Becoming a CEO, Not Just a Publisher

Community publishers are champions of local storytelling—but running a successful publication also means embracing the role of business leader.

That requires stepping back from the production grind and stepping into planning, development, and growth. When you devote time to working on your business, you build a stronger publication, a more sustainable revenue model, and a greater impact on the community you serve.

Your publication doesn't just exist to fill pages—it exists to build community. And that mission deserves strategic leadership. ■

This article was produced with the assistance of OpenAI.(2025) ChatGPT-5 and Rytr (2025)



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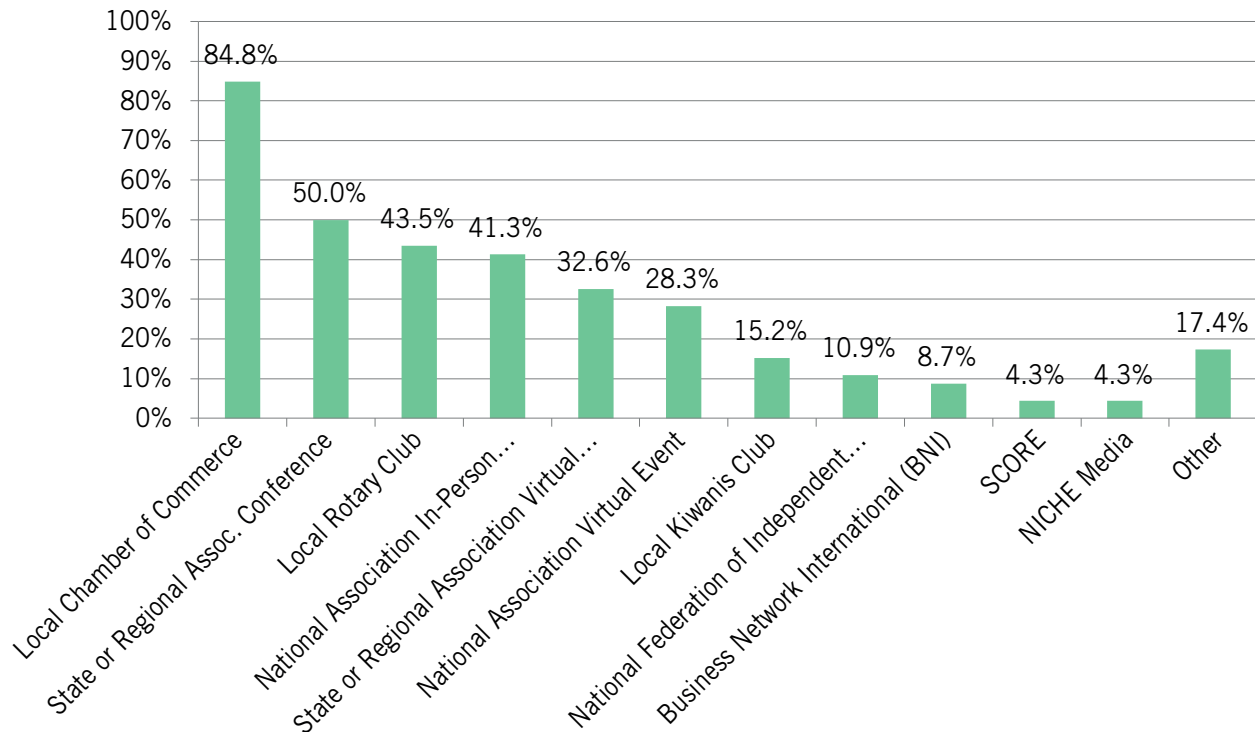
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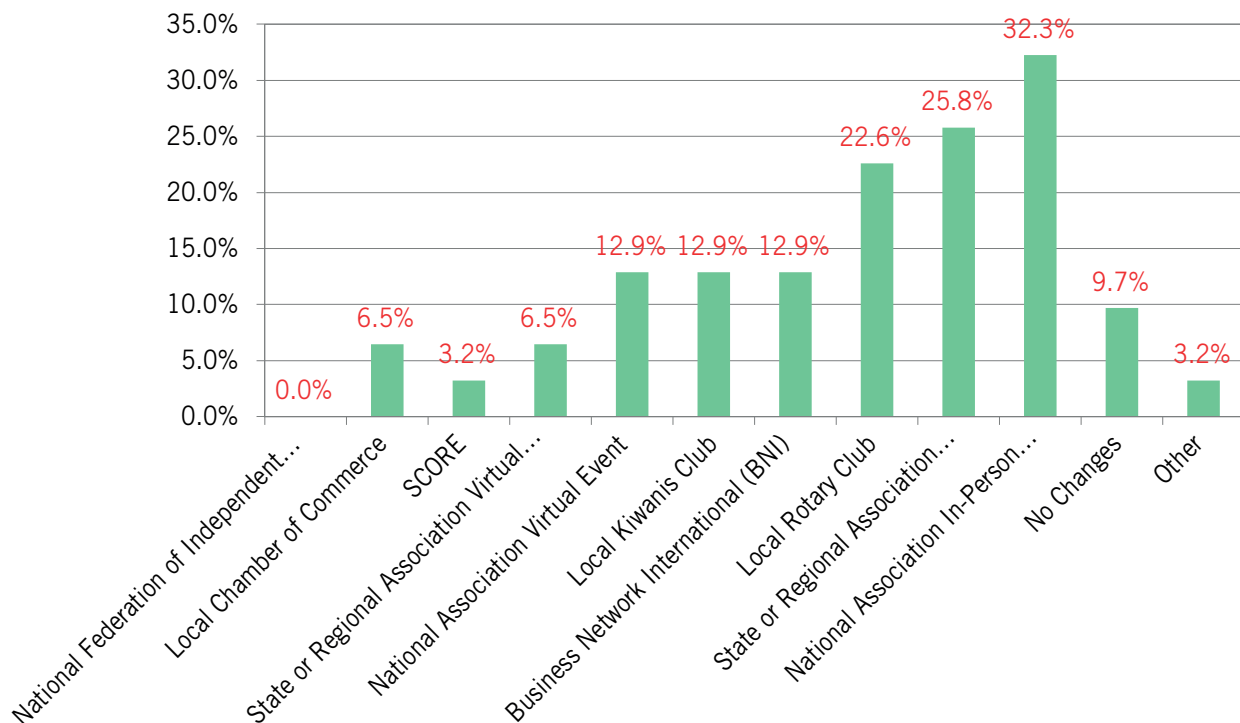
THE SURVEY SAYS...



Has your company participated in any of the following over the last 2 years?



Has your company participated in any of the following in the past but no longer participate?

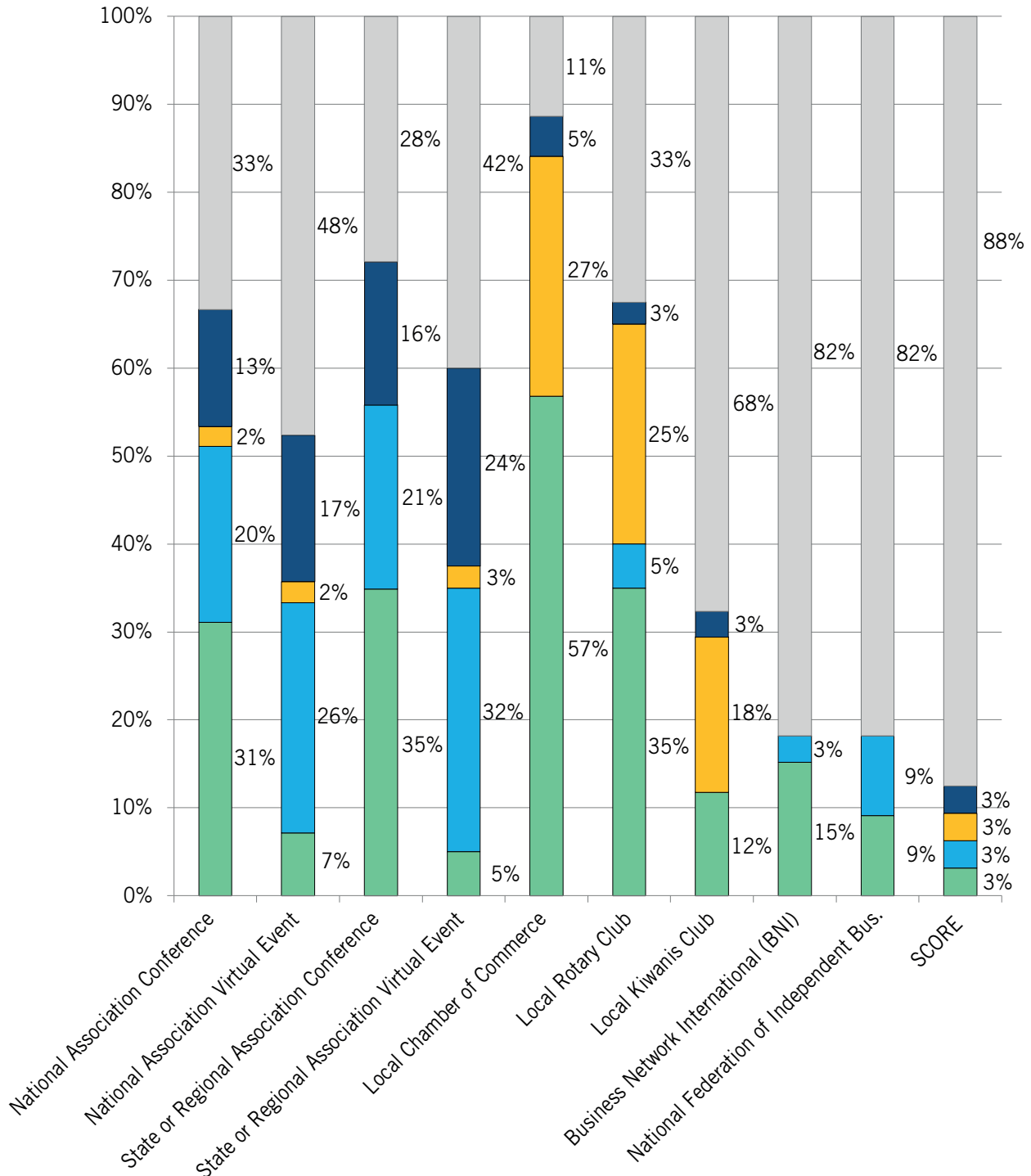


THE SURVEY SAYS...



What is the most important benefit you need from each to make participation worthwhile?

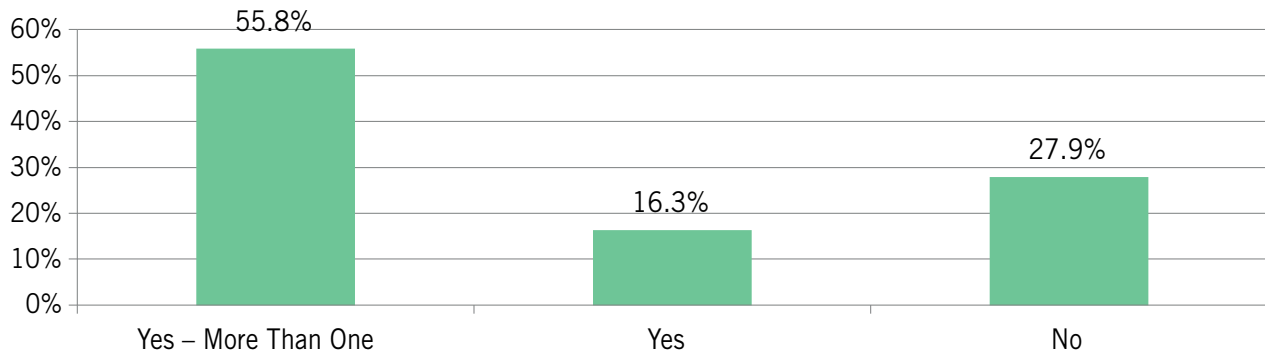
- Networking Opportunities
- Business Exposure
- Do Not Participate
- Industry Information
- Staff Development



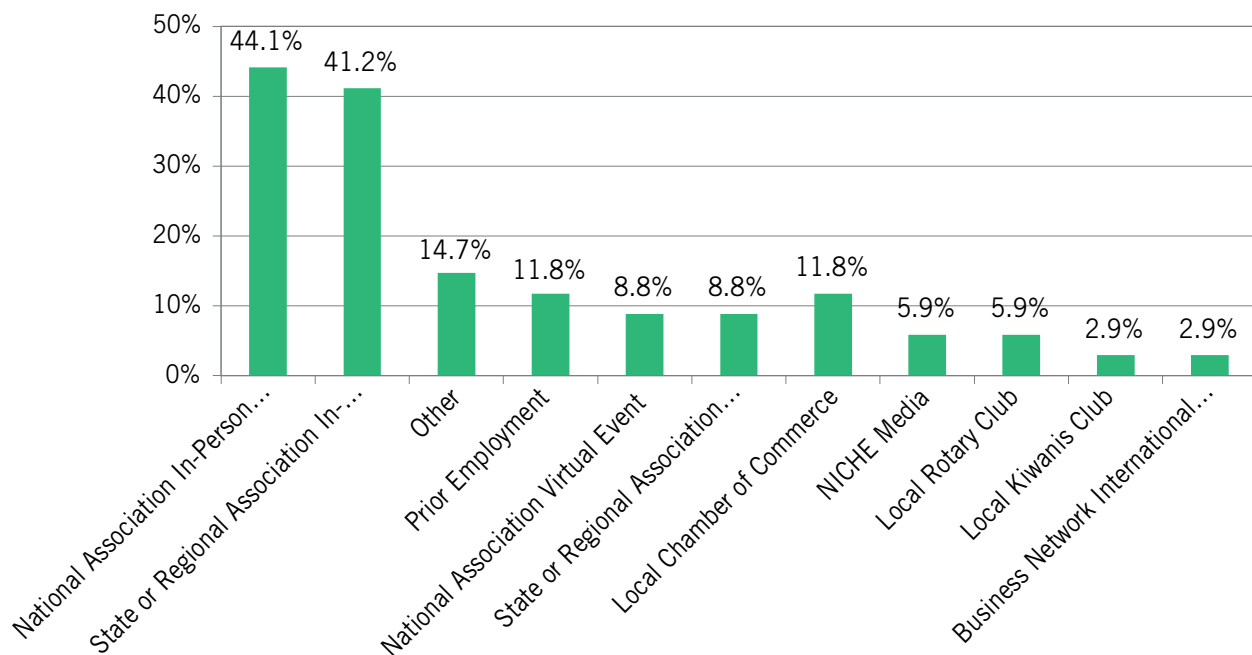
THE SURVEY SAYS...



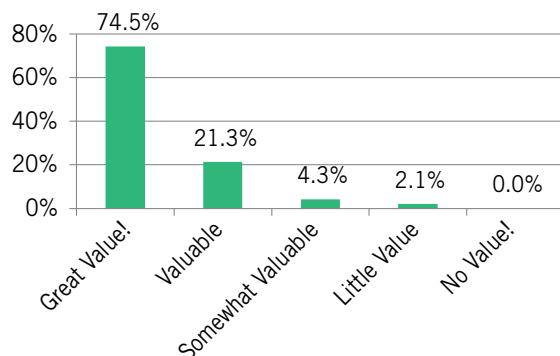
Do you have someone in your industry (but not in your company) that you use to bounce ideas off or seek advice from?



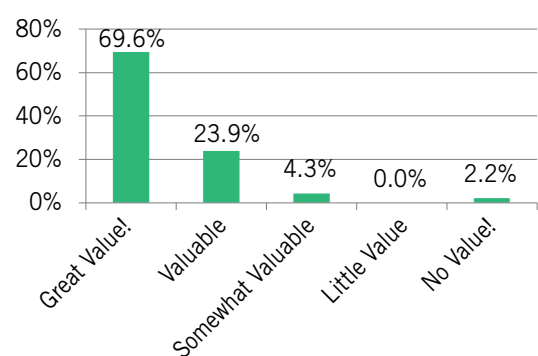
How did you meet that person or those people?



What value do you place on networking with people in your industry?



What value do you place on networking with business people in your community?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Legal Zoom – Article

Six Ways to Get Great Business Advice for Free

By Jane Haskins, Esq.

Simple guide to six sources of advice and education that help businesses succeed. This one only takes 3 minutes to read, but could point you in a direction to build your business.

🏠 <https://www.legalzoom.com/articles/six-ways-to-get-great-business-advice-for-free>



Buildfire – Article

8 Great Places To Get Free Small Business Advice

By accounts@curious.vc

This article expands on the basic approach from the Legal Zoom article above. With more specifics and some solid support for how you can locate free advice from people who've "been there, done that" near you.

🏠 <https://buildfire.com/great-places-free-small-business-advice/>



Quickbooks – Article

11 Small business networking groups every business owner should join

By Marshall Hargrave

Again, there are a couple repeats on this list, but it also adds a bunch of new networking sources. I like the "Best for..." lead in to identify the fit with your business and then the description of what is available.

🏠 <https://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/running-a-business/small-business-networking-groups/>



U.S. Chamber – Article

19 Free Resources for Small Businesses to Leverage Year-Round

By Miranda Fraraccio

This article is geared more towards where you can go for free resources to help businesses navigate the everyday ups and downs we all experience. There are also some excellent links to a variety of other topics available on this one.

🏠 <https://www.uschamber.com/co/start/strategy/free-resources-for-small-businesses>



Newest addition for your “Advertiser Help Page” Listings

Banner Boo – Blog Article

30 Great Banner Ads Examples (Why Do They Work?)

By Michael Heina

Everybody that is trying to figure out how to get the most out of a banner ad should read this one. It goes beyond concept to actually show you banner ads that work and more importantly the why behind the success.

🏠 <https://bannerboo.com/blog/great-banner-ads-examples/>



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CHALLENGE YOUR NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS



BY JAYDE VOGELER

Here's to your Improve-Finances-New-Skill-Eat-Healthy-Whatchamacallit Resolution!

Does this resolution sound a little familiar to you? It's that time of year people around the country start thinking of their resolution for the next year. According to a 2023 Forbes poll ^[1], improving finances, learning a new skill and improving diet are among the top resolutions people make. These resolutions are great to improve your personal life and feel more fulfilled. What about resolutions for your career?

Try adding a career-inspired resolution to your list. In an average week, over 30% of our waking hours is spent at our jobs. With that much spent at our jobs, it's good to find ways to boost our work life to it's fullest potential. Forbes reports only 3% of people prioritize performing better at work as a resolution.

I challenge you to create a work

[1] <https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/new-year-resolutions-survey-2024/>

resolution for 2026! If you need some inspiration, here are four different levels from individual to team resolutions:

1. DECLUTTER YOUR WORKSPACE

Resolutions don't have to be a big, grandiose change in your life. Starting with a small goal, such as keeping your workspace tidy, is a great start. Set a weekly goal to organize and file papers away, schedule monthly reminders to backup digital work files or clear out your inbox quarterly. Take a look around your office to see what can be refreshed to make a better working environment. A clean workspace can help reduce stress and boost your focus for a more productive work day.

“Happy New Year to everyone and cheers to your resolutions!”

2. LEARN OR BRUSH UP ON YOUR SKILLS

Learning or brushing up on your career skills is one of the best ways to stay competitive and confident in the community publishing industry. Continuously improving your knowledge opens new avenues for growth and opportunities. There are great resources to look for on the Internet; sign up for a newsletter, explore YouTube videos or free online courses or turn to ACP's continuing education tools for industry specific topics. Staying up to date with trends is key to our evolving industry.

3. FIND YOUR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Forbes' poll also shows 7% of people want to work toward a better

work-life balance. Signs of an imbalance can include constantly working after hours, avoiding taking time off of work and a lack of self care. Without a good work-life balance, the quality of work may decline and burnout is inevitable.

To start improving your work-life balance, begin by setting clear and realistic boundaries throughout your workday. Turn off notifications for a portion of the day, group similar tasks into focused time blocks and make sure to actually use your vacation time. These may sound simple, but these can be regularly forgotten. A reminder is never a bad thing.

4. CREATE NEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Take charge and join or create your company's team events team. Creating meaningful bonds can boost morale but also strengthens collaboration and communication. Try organizing team activities like volunteering together in the community, hosting a potluck or picnic lunch, or starting a fun wellness challenge like tracking water intake or daily steps. These simple yet engaging experiences help everyone feel more connected, supported, and motivated.

If you're feeling pressured to make a resolution but it doesn't truly resonate with you, take a step back and rethink your goal. Don't make a resolution for the sake of having one. Instead, focus on your values, ask why you want to make a resolution and create S.M.A.R.T. goals. Keeping these points in mind will help stay motivated and committed to your goals.

Happy New Year to everyone and cheers to your resolutions! ■

WHEN LEADERS TALK WITH THEIR HANDS

BY CAROL KINSEY GOMAN, PHD

THE POWER OF HAND GESTURES IN LEADERSHIP

Have you ever noticed that when people are passionate about what they're saying, their gestures automatically become more animated? Their hands and arms move about, emphasizing points and conveying enthusiasm.

You may not have been aware of this connection before, but you've instinctively felt it. Research shows that audiences tend to view people who use a greater variety of gestures in a more favorable light. Studies have found that people who communicate through active gesturing tend to be evaluated as warm, agreeable, and energetic, while those who remain still (or whose gestures seem mechanical or "wooden") are seen as logical, cold, and analytic.

WHY HAND GESTURES MATTER FOR LEADERS

Leaders should be mindful of hand gestures because:

- They are critical to connecting with an audience
- They demonstrate emotional investment in the message
- They impact how audiences interpret the message
- They influence perceptions of trustworthiness

BUILDING TRUST THROUGH NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Trust is established through congruence: that perfect alignment between what is being said and the body language that accompanies it. If a speaker's gestures are not in full agreement with the spoken words, the audience consciously or subcon-

sciously perceives duplicity, uncertainty, or internal conflict.

Although people may not be aware they are doing so, audience members are also evaluating a leader's sincerity by the timing of his or her gestures: Authentic gestures begin split seconds before the words that accompany them. They either will precede the words or will be coincident with the words, but will never come after the words.

TYPES OF HAND GESTURES AND THEIR MEANINGS

Emblematic Gestures

Emblematic gestures—Some gestures have an agree-upon meaning to a group and are consciously used instead of words. These are referred to as emblematic gestures, and, like the words they represent, they're processed in the left hemisphere of the brain. We learn emblematic gestures at home, in school, and in other social environments, so they generally differ from culture to culture. So remember that what may be effective communication in one culture can become ineffective or even offensive in another.

Emblematic gestures used in the U.S. include the thumbs-up sign that is commonly understood to mean "good job," "OK," or "everything's fine," and hand rocking—where the palm faces down and the fingers spread out and the hand rocks left and right—means "so-so" or "maybe."

Pacifying Gestures

Pacifying gestures—When nervous or stressed, people pacify themselves with a variety of self-touching gestures. They rub their legs, pull at their collars, and cross their arms to hold their upper arms in a kind of "self-hug." In a presentation, any

pacifying gesture (including hand wringing, rubbing the forehead, playing with jewelry or hair, etc.) makes a leader look tentative, unprepared, or insecure.

Illustrative Gestures

Illustrative gestures—Everyone produces gestures spontaneously and unwittingly as they speak. We may seldom think of our gestures consciously, but in practice we use them with great efficiency and sophistication to cover a surprisingly wide range of communicating.

Sometimes gestures are used to physically illustrate a point, as when pointing to a particular paragraph in a contract or moving your hand to the right when telling someone to turn in that direction. Other gestures are unconscious signals that give the viewer a glimpse into the speaker's emotions, motivations, or attitude. These include:

COMMON HAND GESTURES AND THEIR INTERPRETATIONS

Sometimes gestures are used to physically illustrate a point, as when pointing to a particular paragraph in a contract or moving your hand to the right when telling someone to turn in that direction. Other gestures are unconscious signals that give the viewer a glimpse into the speaker's emotions, motivations, or attitude. These include:

Open and Welcoming Gestures

- **Open palms at an angle**—Gestures with palms showing (tilted to a 45-degree angle) signal candor and openness. When being truthful or forthcoming, people tend to use open gestures, show-

ing their palms and wrists and spreading hands and arms away from their bodies, as if saying, “See, I have nothing to hide.”

- **Palms up**—When palms are rotated straight up and fingers are spread, in a prototypical pleading position), it communicates the lack of something that the speaker needs or is requesting.
- **Hand gestures of composure**—Arms held at waist height, and gestures within that horizontal plane, help you—and the audience—feel centered and composed. Arms at waist level and bent to a 45-degree angle (accompanied by a stance about shoulder-width wide) is also the posture I advise leaders to assume between gestures. It helps keep them grounded, energized, and focused.

Power and Authority Gestures

- **Palms down**—Speakers pronate their palms to signal power and certainty. This is also a controlling signal—as when trying to quiet an audience
- **Vertical palms**—Vertical palm gestures with a rigid hand are often used to demonstrate the need for precise measurement—or to beat out a rhythm that gives emphasis to certain words.
- **Steepling gestures**—It is common to see a speaker using a steepling gesture (palms separated slightly, fingers of both hands spread and finger tips touching) when feeling confident or comfortable about a subject she knows well. Politicians, executives, professors, and attorneys are very fond of using these gestures when they speak.
- **Hands on hips**—Whether in a stubborn toddler or an aggressive CEO, hands on hips is one

of the most common gestures used to communicate a defiant, super-confident, or independent attitude.

Gestures to Avoid

- **Clenched hands**—When a speaker clutches an object tightly, grips his hands behind his back, or curls his hands into fists, it signals anger, frustration, or a nonverbal way of saying, “I’m holding on to something and I’m not going to open up to you.” Depending on the context, the clenched-fist gesture can also communicate a warning that unwavering fortitude may be necessary to achieve an objective. I’ve often seen leaders use a fist to add the nonverbal equivalent of “with power,” “firm commitment,” or “by force” to their message.
- **Finger pointing**—Finger pointing and wagging are parental gestures of scolding, and I’ve often seen politicians and executives, in particular, use this gesture in meetings, negotiations, or interviews for emphasis or to show dominance. The problem is that rather than being a sign of authority, aggressive finger pointing suggests that the leader is losing control of the situation—and the gesture smacks of playground bullying.
- **Hidden hands**—Hidden hands make you look less trustworthy. This is one of the nonverbal signals that is deeply ingrained in our subconscious. Our ancestors made survival decisions based solely on bits of visual information they picked up from one another. In our prehistory, when someone approached with hands out of view, it was a clear signal of potential danger. Although today the threat of hidden hands is more symbolic than real, our

psychological discomfort remains.

- **Hand gestures of enthusiasm**—There is an interesting equation of hand and arm movement with energy. If a leader wanted to project more enthusiasm and drive, she could do so by increased gesturing. On the other hand, over-gesturing (especially when hands are raised above the shoulders) can make her appear erratic, less believable, and less powerful.

BEST PRACTICES FOR LEADERSHIP GESTURING

- Keep gestures between waist and shoulder height for optimal impact
- Maintain an open stance with arms at waist level between gestures
- Ensure gestures match and slightly precede your spoken message
- Use increased gesturing to project enthusiasm and energy
- Stay grounded with a shoulder-width stance when speaking ■

*Carol Kinsey Goman, PhD is an executive coach, leadership consultant, and international keynote speaker at corporate, government, and association events. She is the author of *The Nonverbal Advantage: Secrets and Science of Body Language at Work*, *The Silent Language of Leaders: How Body Language Can Help—or Hurt How You Lead*, and most recently, *The Truth About Lies in the Workplace: How to Spot Liars and What to Do About Them*. For more information, contact CGoman@CKG.com*

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TWO ADVERTISING GOALS: Attention and Retention



BY JOHN FOUST
GREENSBORO, NC

As mentioned in previous articles, there are two types of advertising: image and response. Image advertising – sometimes known as institutional advertising – is designed to give people a good impression of the advertiser. (“We’re the dealership that cares.”) The objective of response advertising is to generate immediate response to a specific offer. (“Take advantage of these special discounts.”)

These two ad types have something in common. Each one – whether image or response – should strive for attention and retention. In other words, the ad has to grab attention from the outset, then make the message memorable enough to stay in readers’ minds. It’s not an easy task, but it’s necessary for the ad to have any chance of success.

Because we are bombarded with thousands of commercial messages

every day – and because we can’t possibly notice or remember everything we see – we are instinctively selective. A number of factors influence attention and retention, including eye-catching illustrations, legible typography, uncluttered ad designs, plenty of white space, and reader-centered headlines. But the biggest factor is relevance. If an ad doesn’t communicate instant relevance, it will fail the attention test. And if doesn’t leave the reader with a sense of relevance, it is not likely to be retained.

“The objective of response advertising is to generate immediate response to a specific offer.”

Let’s say you run across an ad that attracts your eye, because it features a large, detailed photo of a new widget. The headline is a simple statement of the major benefit of owning this new model. The layout follows the rules of simple, easy-to-follow graphic design. As a result, you stop browsing through other ads long enough to read the copy, which is refreshingly free of exaggeration. You have owned a couple of widgets in the past, and now that you think about it, this might be a good time to consider a new one. This particular store looks like a good place to shop for one.

What just happened? In a matter of seconds, you made the jump from surface-level appeal (being attracted

by the looks of the ad) to a deeper level (seeing the personal relevance of the product). In other words, the widget ad has won your favorable attention.

What about retention? What would compel you to remember the widget and the store where it can be purchased? There are two primary elements: relevance (again) and repetition.

Relevance plus repetition equals retention. We remember the products which fill a specific need – or offer a solution to a problem we have. And we remember the things which we see and hear repeatedly. How did you learn the multiplication tables? (By reviewing them over and over.) How did you learn the lyrics to so many rock ‘n’ roll songs? (By hearing them – and singing along – countless times.)

What does all of this mean? Attention is important, for certain, but it is only the first of two goals. In order for an ad’s core message to work, it must also be retained.

Put these two together – and you have a winner. ■

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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

HOW GRAPHIC DESIGNERS INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BANNER ADS

In today's hyper-competitive digital landscape, banner ads must do far more than occupy screen space—they are tasked with capturing attention in mere seconds and inspiring meaningful action. A well-crafted marketing strategy can define the message, target audience, and campaign goals, but it is the graphic designer who translates these strategic objectives into visual experiences that engage and persuade. Whether an ad fades into the background or becomes a compelling touchpoint often hinges entirely on design execution.

MASTERING VISUAL HIERARCHY TO COMMUNICATE QUICKLY

A banner ad only has a fleeting window to convey its message, often just a few moments before a viewer scrolls past. Here, the mastery of visual hierarchy becomes indispensable. Designers strategically organize elements—typography, imagery, color, and spacing—to guide the eye naturally. Headlines grab immediate attention, subtext reinforces the value proposition, and calls-to-action (CTAs) are positioned and styled for maximum visibility. The effective use of contrast and focal points ensures that viewers instantly understand what the ad is promoting, why it matters, and what steps to take next—all without overwhelming them.

BALANCING CREATIVITY WITH BRAND CONSISTENCY

An effective banner ad must stand out visually while remaining unmistakably aligned with the brand. Designers achieve this by blending creative expression with brand consistency. This includes maintaining a

cohesive color palette, using recognizable fonts, and ensuring imagery aligns with the brand's tone and personality. At the same time, designers experiment with layouts, visual metaphors, or dynamic elements to break the monotony of digital feeds and make ads eye-catching. This careful balancing act ensures each ad is both memorable and authentic to its brand.

“Ultimately, graphic designers are not just creators of attractive visuals—they are visual strategists.”

OPTIMIZING FOR DIGITAL-FIRST ENVIRONMENTS

Unlike traditional print media, digital advertising comes with unique challenges. Banner ads must load quickly, scale gracefully across multiple devices, and communicate their message instantly. Designers take into account file size limitations, resolution requirements, and responsive layouts to ensure performance isn't compromised across platforms. Additionally, they may integrate animation or motion graphics for increased engagement—but always judiciously—to enhance rather than compete with core messaging.

DESIGNING COMPELLING CALLS-TO-ACTION

A banner ad's ultimate goal is often to drive action, whether it's clicking through to a landing page, making a purchase, or signing up for a newsletter. Designers play a crucial

role in making these CTAs irresistible. Through strategic placement, size, shape, color contrast, and visual emphasis, designers ensure that the CTA stands out and aligns naturally with the overall design. The result is an intuitive visual path that guides the user seamlessly toward conversion.

USING IMAGERY TO TELL STORIES INSTANTLY

Images are more than decoration—they are storytelling tools. Effective designers select visuals that convey meaning quickly, evoke emotions, or highlight product benefits. Whether it's a lifestyle photograph showing a product in use or an abstract graphic evoking a feeling, the right image communicates a narrative faster than words alone. Thoughtful image selection also prevents banner ads from feeling generic or recycled, increasing both engagement and memorability.

DATA-INFORMED DESIGN AND A/B TESTING

Modern digital marketing is highly data-driven, and designers are integral to the testing process. By producing multiple variations—changing layouts, color schemes, headlines, CTAs, or imagery—designers help marketers identify which combinations resonate most with audiences. This iterative approach improves click-through rates, conversions, and ROI, transforming design from a purely aesthetic exercise into a measurable performance driver.

SIMPLICITY AND FOCUS IN SMALL SPACES

Banner ads are inherently constrained by size; this demands disci-

pline in communication. Designers distill messages down to their essence using concise copywriting paired with clear visual cues and deliberate white space. Simplicity ensures that the core value proposition is immediately recognizable—even on small screens or amidst competing content—making it more likely for users to notice the ad and take action.

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

A well-designed banner ad must be readable and engaging for all viewers. Designers consider color contrast ratios for visibility; they choose legible fonts at appropriate sizes; they incorporate clear iconography so messages aren't lost on anyone—including those with varying visual abilities. Inclusive design not only broadens reach but also signals brand values of accessi-

bility and respect for every audience member—enhancing reputation as well as trustworthiness in potential customers' eyes.

THE DESIGNER AS A VISUAL STRATEGIST

Ultimately, graphic designers are not just creators of attractive visuals—they are visual strategists. By leveraging their expertise in composition, branding, consumer psychology, and digital behavior, designers can dramatically increase the effectiveness of banner ads. Every color choice, font selection, and layout decision is rooted in strategy aimed at capturing attention and guiding the viewer's eye toward a clear call-to-action.

Designers understand that a banner ad is more than just an image—it's a crucial touchpoint that can influence perception and behavior within seconds. Through thoughtful

design choices, they help brands stand out in crowded digital spaces while maintaining consistency with overall brand identity. This strategic approach ensures that every ad not only looks appealing but also resonates with the target audience on an emotional level.

By acting as visual strategists, designers transform fleeting digital impressions into meaningful customer interactions. Their ability to blend creativity with psychological insight results in banner ads that increase engagement rates and drive measurable business outcomes. Investing in skilled design isn't just about aesthetics; it's about empowering your brand to connect more deeply with customers and achieve lasting results. ■

This article was produced with the assistance of OpenAI.(2025) ChatGPT-5 and Rytr (2025)

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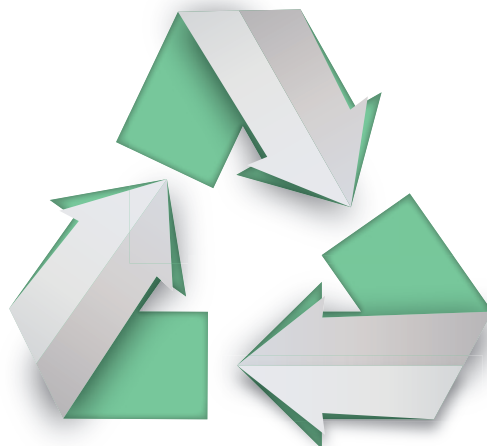
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