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FEBRUARY 2026

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# Publish

## PUBLISHED BY

Association of Community  
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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cassey Recore  
✉ Cassey@communitypublishers.com

## PUBLISH MAGAZINE PUBLISHER

Loren Colburn  
✉ Loren@communitypublishers.com

## OFFICE

🏡 877-203-2327  
📍 7719 Japine Drive  
Liverpool, NY 13090

## DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Design2Pro  
🏡 www.design2pro.com

Howard Barbanel  
📞 516-860-7440

Email: ✉ howard@design2pro.com

*Publish* is a monthly publication dedicated to covering the people, events and companies that are the community publishing industry.

Nothing may be reprinted in whole or in part without permission of the publisher. Publish is mailed free of charge to community publications all across North America. Other businesses may subscribe for \$20 annually. Publish is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. All letters and photos received become the property of the publisher.

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## COMING NEXT MONTH

*The March issue of Publish* will be looking at the current and future impacts of artificial intelligence on 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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*Star Publications*  
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Sauk Centre, MN 56378  
joyce@saukherald.com  
320-352-6577



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**Lisa Miller**  
*New Century Press*  
P. O. Box 28  
Rock Rapids, Iowa 51246  
lmiller@ncppub.com  
712-472-2525



**SECRETARY**  
**John Draper**  
*The Free Star*  
P. O. Box 277  
Pipestone, MN 56164  
jdraper@pipestonestar.com  
507-825-3333



**TREASURER**  
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*Dubuque Advertiser*  
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gbirkett@dubuquedvertiser.com  
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**PAST PRESIDENT**  
**Manuel Karam**  
*Featured Media*  
1471 Route 15  
Avon, NY 14414  
manuelk@featuredmedia.com  
585-226-8111



**AT-LARGE DIRECTORS**  
**John Buzzetta**  
*Van Zandt Newspapers, LLC*  
P.O. Box 797097  
Dallas, TX 75379  
john@vanzandtnews.com  
903-567-4000 ext 17



**Heather Eller**  
*Nickel's Worth*  
107 N 5th St.  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814  
heather@nickelsworth.com  
208-667-2408



**Jocelyn Engle**  
*Engle Printing & Publishing Co.*  
1100 Corporate Blvd.  
Lancaster, PA 17552  
JREngle@engleonline.com  
717-278-1349



**Scott Greene**  
*Reminder Publishing, LLC*  
443 Shaker Rd. - Ste B  
East Longmeadow, MA 01085  
sgreene@thereminder.com  
413-525-6695



**Carol Toomey**  
*Action Unlimited*  
100-1 Domino Drive  
Concord, MA 01742  
carolaction@aol.com  
978-371-2442



**Michael VanStry**  
*Coastal View News*  
4180 Via Real – Suite F  
Carpinteria, CA 93013  
News@coastalview.com



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Cassey Recore**  
*ACP*  
8119 Circuit Rider Path  
Cicero, NY 13039  
Cassey@communitypublishers.com  
877-203-2327



**Loren Colburn**  
*ACP*  
7719 Japine Dr.  
Liverpool, NY 13090  
Loren@communitypublishers.com  
877-203-2327

## About ACP rising stars

The ACP Rising Stars program is designed to honor individuals under the age of 36 who are emerging leaders in the publishing industry. This annual program will recognize up to 7 individuals who represent the best of our up and coming industry professionals. These individuals exemplify good character, leadership, and professionalism not only at work, but in the communities they serve.

### Nominee qualifications

These individuals should show the promise of and a commitment to impacting their publication and the industry in a positive manner through

professional achievement. Nominees must also show they not only perform their jobs to a high standard, but they also have a commitment to furthering their knowledge and abilities. Nominees must actively work in the community publishing industry for a member or associate of ACP and are required to have been employed for more than a year. Nominees must not be 36 prior to December 31, 2026.

### Recognition program

Award recipients will be recognized in *Publish Magazine*, the official publication of ACP.

An awards presentation program will be conducted during the next national in-person conference celebrating the participants and their contributions to the program. All of the individuals participating are awarded free room,

registration, meal plan, specialized training sessions and up to \$500 in travel reimbursements to the next in-person conference.

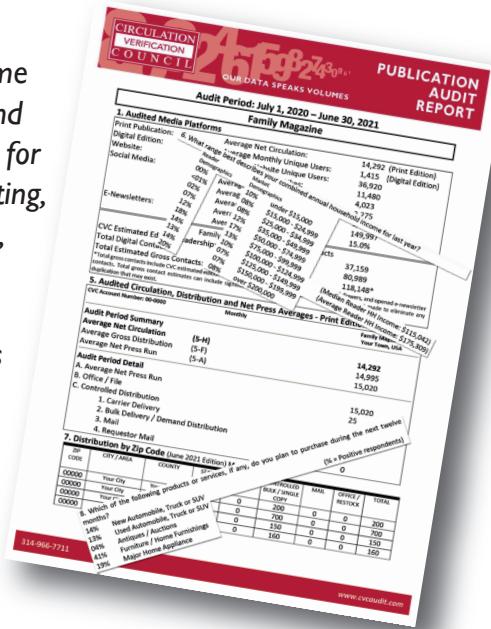
### Ongoing Opportunity

The ACP Rising Stars program does not end with the recognition program. Rising Stars will be asked to assist the various initiatives of the association on an ongoing basis for up to three years. ACP recognizes that we have much to learn from these talented young people and desires to use their skills to help us lead the publishing industry. In return for participation in regularly scheduled conference calls and for volunteering some time to assist with ACP initiatives, ACP will provide additional leadership development opportunities and the opportunity to attend future conferences for even more training.

To download the 2026 Rising Star nomination form, go to:  
<https://www.communitypublishers.com/rising-stars>

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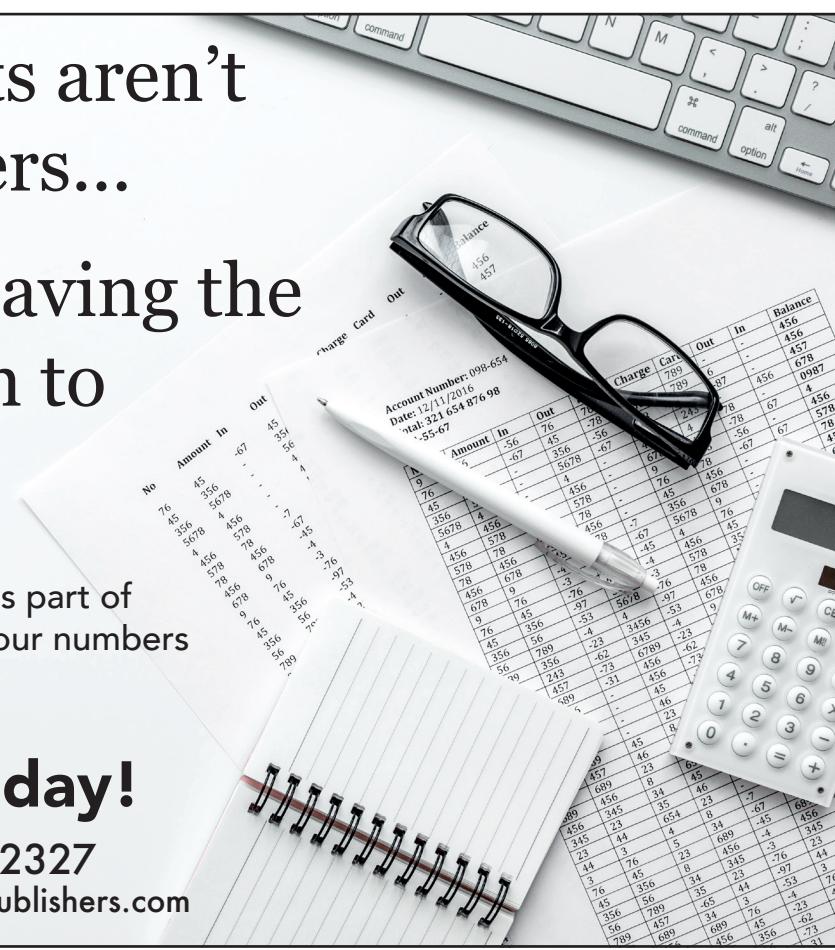
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# LAST YEAR, WHEN I WROTE MY COLUMN FOR OUR MEMBER BENEFITS ISSUE, I TALKED ABOUT NOT BEING SCARED OF CHANGE



BY JOYCE FRERICKS

**I** have been working at the local newspaper for 25 years. When I started here, we had one newspaper, a shopper and a small niche paper. In those 25 years, we have grown in so many ways. We purchased papers, merged two local papers, changed one to requester and even started a few new publications. We added employees, added circulation, cut circulation, put our entire local publication for free online and then put it behind a paywall and started websites. We try not to be scared of change. When we interview, I tell the interviewees if they don't like change, they should not work at Star Publications."

When I wrote the column, I was not anticipating a lot of change in 2025. However, shortly after writing the column, one of our sales representatives gave his resignation. He was moving and wouldn't be able to cover his assigned territory. Since he wasn't unhappy with his job or the company, I was able to have a very real conversation with him about working for us. One of the things he said was that he thought we needed new software. He wanted to be able to see what his customer's balances were, among other things. My immediate reaction was, "That's not going to happen." Although I talk big about change, in 25 years, I had never been acceptable to changing our accounts receivable system.

But, as often is the case with me, I quickly reconsidered.

A few days later, one of our most important member benefits — networking — started on an airplane ride to an

ACP event. I was sitting next to another member, and we talked about how things in her office worked. We talked about the sales and AR processes and how different her company's process is to ours. That conversation led to a few more conversations with others at the meeting, and, by the time I went back home, I was convinced we needed to finally move our billing to a new software system.

Within a few months, we made the decision to change our software. We chose an associate member of ACP and made the leap in June. We still use Quickbooks for our general ledger and payroll, but the new system manages sales and accounts receivable. The change was good for us, and we are happy we were brave enough to do it.

Networking, in this case, was invaluable to us. The other members didn't push us to make the change. They just gave us the confidence that the program worked and gave us some tips to help us out.

This issue of Publish is about networking and other ACP member benefits. Our website has a list of member benefits — ADS network, education, circulation audits, events and networking, Publish magazine, ACP awards, Rising Stars, USPS discounts, and more. ACP has a host of other benefits that will help you to build confidence.

If you aren't already a member, visit our website at [www.comunitypublishers.com](http://www.comunitypublishers.com). If you are a member, you may benefit from visiting the website to be sure you aren't missing out. ■

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They're your full back office support team, from initial pitches to sales to renewals. Offering group training programs for your team, enabling you to learn alongside peers for maximum support during the training phase.

*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](mailto:office@communitypublishers.com).



# WHY COMMUNITY PUBLISHERS SHOULD JOIN ACP



BY CASSEY RECORE

Running a successful community publication today requires more than strong editorial and local relationships — it takes smart revenue strategies, ongoing training, industry connections, and trusted resources. That's exactly where the **Association of Community Publishers (ACP)** delivers value. ACP is a trade association dedicated exclusively to the needs of community publishers, and membership provides tools, education, and connections that directly impact your bottom line.

## A COMMUNITY BUILT FOR COMMUNITY PUBLISHERS

ACP members are owners, publishers, sales leaders, managers and support staff who share the same challenges and successes unique to local media. Membership connects you with peers who understand your market and are willing to share real-world solutions and ideas. Through networking events, conferences, virtual sessions, and peer discussions, ACP creates an environ-

ment where members learn from one another and grow together.

## TRAINING THAT DRIVES REVENUE AND LEADERSHIP

One of ACP's strongest benefits is providing access to industry-specific training designed to help publishers and sales teams perform at a higher level.

### Members gain access to:

- **Leadership Institute (TLI)** classes that are sales focused and specific to the community publishing industry with several levels of certifications available
- **Power Sales University**, a proven sales training system built specifically for sales professionals of any level
- **On-demand training resources** available 24/7, perfect for onboarding new hires or reinforcing skills with existing staff
- **Live virtual sessions and in-person events** that cover emerging trends, AI, digital strategy, and revenue diversification, idea sharing and much more

This training alone can pay for membership many times over by improving performance, retention, and revenue.

## TOOLS THAT ADD CREDIBILITY AND REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

ACP membership also delivers tangible business tools that help

publishers compete and win:

- **Circulation audits** paid for by ACP, giving advertisers verified distribution numbers
- **National advertising opportunities** through ACP partnerships
- **Postal advocacy and coalition support**, helping protect and reduce mailing costs
- **Exclusive partnerships** with suppliers like PopMount and January Spring to help you boost revenues and compete in your market
- **Industry recognition programs**, including Best of the Best and Rising Stars, that elevate your brand and staff

These benefits strengthen advertiser confidence while positioning your publication as a trusted, professional media partner.

## GROW ACP AND SAVE ON YOUR OWN DUES

**ACP's Member Recruitment Discount Program** rewards existing members for helping grow the association.

### Here's how it works:

- Recruit **one new member** and receive **50% off your annual ACP dues**
- Recruit **two or more new members** and **ACP covers 100% of your annual dues**

### **AN EASY WAY TO GET STARTED: \$99 FIRST-YEAR MEMBERSHIP**

For publishers who are new to ACP, there's never been a better time to join. ACP is offering a **special first-year membership for just \$99** (the regular \$299 membership level) making it easy to experience the value of membership with minimal risk. This introductory rate allows new

members to explore ACP's training, networking, resources, and support to see firsthand how the association can help their business grow.

### **A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN YOUR FUTURE**

If you're serious about elevating your publication, look at joining ACP as an investment in education, revenue, leadership, and long-term

sustainability, as well as joining a community that is dedicated to your success. Whether you're looking to strengthen your sales team, expand your network, gain credibility, or simply connect with others who understand your challenges, ACP delivers meaningful value. There has never been a better time to join or to invite a fellow publisher to become part of the ACP community. ■

# **Save 5% on your publication postage?**



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**Member Benefits to build your business.**

# INFORMATION OR MISINFORMATION?



BY LOREN COLBURN

We live in an era of unprecedented access to information. At any moment, with a few taps on a phone, we can summon breaking news, expert opinions, historical archives, and eyewitness accounts from across the globe. That kind of access is extraordinary – and yet, it is also deeply unsettling. The same tools that give us instant knowledge also give us instant falsehoods, half-truths, and outright deception, all traveling at the speed of a swipe.

In the past, most of what we read, saw, or heard passed through a system of editorial safeguards. Newspapers had editors. Broadcasters had producers. Even early online media had standards and gatekeepers whose job it was to verify, contextualize, and, when necessary, stop bad information before it reached the public. That system was imperfect, but it provided a vital filter between rumor and reality.

Today, much of that filter has disappeared.

In our relentless drive to make everything faster, easier, and more efficient, we have pushed responsibility away from institutions and onto individuals. We assemble our own furniture. We install our own software. We troubleshoot our own technology. And now, we are expected to verify our own information.

The difference is this: a bedroom dresser won't collapse your worldview if you assemble it wrong. But misinformation can.

On social media and many digital platforms, information is shared instantly, without delay and without verification. A misleading headline, a doctored photo, or a fabricated quote can circle the globe before anyone stops to ask, "Is this actually true?" Unlike a grill that won't work until it's properly assembled, a piece of false information works immediately – it spreads, shapes opinions, and alters behavior, whether or not it is accurate.

This environment has created a perfect storm. Without editorial gatekeepers, anyone can present themselves as an authority. Opinions are packaged as facts. Conspiracy theories masquerade as research. Algorithms amplify whatever gets the most engagement, not what is the most reliable. As a result, people often end up trapped in ideological echo chambers, where they see only information that reinforces what they already believe. The more something aligns with our worldview, the less likely we are to question it – even if it's wrong.

And there are people who know this and exploit it.

Confusion, outrage, and division are powerful tools. They can be monetized through clicks and ad revenue. They can be weaponized

for political influence. They can be used to manipulate markets, reputations, and entire communities. Misinformation doesn't just happen accidentally; it is often designed, engineered, and strategically deployed.

Now, generative artificial intelligence has added another layer of complexity. We no longer have to rely only on just misleading text. AI can produce images, audio, and video that look convincingly real. A photo that never happened. A speech that was never given. A video of a person saying something they never said. When falsehood comes with what appears to be visual proof, our natural skepticism is disarmed. "Seeing is believing" no longer applies.

Ironically, the same internet that fuels misinformation is also the most powerful fact-checking tool ever created. We have access to multiple sources, original documents, expert analysis, and global perspectives. The problem is not access – it's discipline.

In this new digital reality, each of us has become our own editor.

Before we share, repost, like, or forward something, we need to pause. Where did this come from? Who published it? Can it be confirmed by a reliable source? Does it sound designed to inform – or to provoke?

It's one more responsibility in an already crowded day, but it may be one of the most important. Because in a world where anyone can publish anything at any time, truth only survives if enough people are willing to slow down long enough to protect it. In an effort to get you off on the right foot, let's start your new fact-checking routine with a fact that you can Google to verify..."Print's not dead, it's read!" ■

# \$99 Trial Membership

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\$299 Annual Value

# JOIN US



## It could be the most profitable decision you make for 2026!

The Association of Community Publishers (ACP) represents community publications from coast to coast, reaching millions of homes across the US and Canada. Our diverse membership ranges from small, independent community publications to major media companies, from subscription based to free distribution, and from weeklies to monthlies. What they 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.”*

**Call today or use this QR Code**  
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\* participation in the ADS Network required. All benefits of the Standard membership package included.

## NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

# NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

### **ANNUAL CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW — THE ULTIMATE NETWORKING EXPERIENCE**

The ACP Annual Conference & Trade Show is the largest gathering in the community publishing industry, bringing together a comprehensive trade show and a multi-day conference focused on education, collaboration, and—most importantly—connection. Each year, the event rotates to a new host city, expanding access for professionals from regional and local publications across North America. Typically held in September or October, the conference is intentionally timed to help publishers gather fresh ideas, insights, and partnerships as they plan budgets and strategies for the year ahead.

While the educational sessions and trade show floor provide tangible takeaways, many members agree that the true value of the conference lies in the relationships built with peers. Community publishing can often feel isolating—many leaders are solving complex challenges within small teams or independently. The ACP Conference creates a rare opportunity to step into a room filled with professionals who understand your business, your market pressures, and your day-to-day realities.

Networking at this event goes far beyond exchanging business cards. It is about candid conversations with peers who are navigating the same revenue shifts, staffing challenges, technology changes, and audience expectations. These interactions often lead to practical solutions, new partnerships, and trusted relationships that continue long after the

conference concludes. For many attendees, these peer connections become an informal advisory network they rely on throughout the year.

Members who have experienced the conference firsthand describe its impact best:

*“The Conference is a very productive event packed into 3 days. A short time away to learn and network. You will get ideas and contacts to carry you through the entire year.”*

*“The Learning Experience is really good. But, the conversations you have with other people in the business that are going through or have overcome the same business experiences and obstacles is really great.”*

*“It is a chance to get away from your business and gain a new perspective, learn new ideas from speakers, or networking with fellow attendees, a chance to sharpen your saw -- get training and knowledge in new areas of expertise. The fellowship is amazing!”*

*“This conference is not only packed with continuing education sessions specific to your daily operations, but you'll rub elbows with many of the best minds in our business who are incredibly generous in sharing their knowledge. I would add that it's always a tremendously enjoyable time.”*

*“This is a must attend conference! Not only do you have a chance to network in a comfortable atmosphere but the education is top notch and relevant.”*

*“You can generate great revenue making ideas to implement in your own paper from people who are currently proving they work. Everyone who attends has great ideas and they are willing to share!”*

This year's conference will take place in October in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Known as the “City of Lakes,” Minneapolis offers a welcoming blend of natural beauty, vibrant arts and culture, and economic strength. As part of the Twin Cities alongside St. Paul, it provides an ideal setting to connect, collaborate, and recharge with fellow community publishing professionals.

Many ACP members will tell you this conference is the most valuable benefit of membership. For countless publishers, the relationships formed through peer networking at this event have become a cornerstone of their professional growth and long-term success.

### **LEADERSHIP SUMMITS**

ACP's Leadership Summits are annual, invitation-style gatherings designed specifically for publishers and senior leaders within the community publishing industry. Unlike larger conferences, these summits are intentionally intimate, with attendance capped at approximately 50 participants. This smaller format creates an environment where meaningful dialogue, peer-to-peer learning, and candid discussion can thrive.



# NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Rather than relying solely on formal presentations, Leadership Summits blend focused, topical sessions with open conversation and shared problem-solving. Participants benefit from insights delivered by experienced presenters while also engaging directly with fellow publishers who are navigating similar challenges. The result is a highly interactive experience where ideas are tested, refined, and often improved through group discussion.

The value of the Leadership Summit is perhaps best expressed by those who have attended:

*The camaraderie! When you get that many publishers in one room, you're bound to come away with something that helps you or your business. OR—better yet—you're able to come to the aid of another*

*publisher and help them with an idea or best practice that they were unaware of.*

*Interactions with others in a close setting as well as the format of info sharing amongst the group and not solely relied upon by the presenter. Liked the social time and the outing to the ball game which provided good interaction time to talk to others about the day's topics as well as others.*

*The openness of all the participants and the great questions to everyone at the start & finish. Was impressed with not just a couple people comments, but with everyone's!*

*Getting new ideas and learning how other publishers operate is extremely important. The other publishers at ACP events are always willing to share.*

Beyond the sessions themselves, the relationships built during Leadership Summits often extend well beyond the event. Many attendees leave with a trusted network of peers they can turn to throughout the year for advice, perspective, and support—making the summit as valuable for long-term leadership growth as it is for immediate takeaways.

The upcoming **Revenue Summit**, scheduled for **February 26–27 in Orlando, Florida**, will focus on strategies to strengthen profitability and drive sustainable growth. Future Leadership Summits are typically held in February or March, often in warm-weather destinations that encourage connection, conversation, and collaboration—creating the ideal setting for focused learning and meaningful networking. ■

## ACP CONFERENCE ATTENDEE QUOTES

When asked what they would tell a fellow publisher about attending an ACP Conference...

There are lots of opportunity to learn more about the industry, both ideas or tactics to help build your business and vendors with products to help you expand and grow.



Whether you are a seasoned publisher or other role within the organization, you'll be able to share life experiences to benefit other attendees as well as gain knowledge and insight on what may work in other markets that are worth risking implementing in your market.

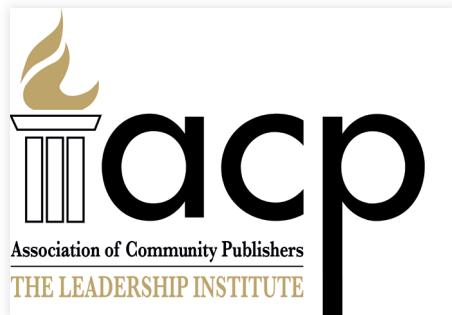
ACP

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## 2025 Mobile ACP Conference Attendees

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



The Leadership Institute (TLI) is ACP's flagship training initiative, offering a structured, comprehensive, and cost-effective approach to sales and leadership development tailored specifically for the community publishing industry. Designed exclusively for ACP members, TLI addresses the real-world challenges publishers and sales teams face every day.

Launched at the 2006 ACP Annual Conference in Miami, The Leadership Institute has been a cornerstone of ACP's educational offerings for nearly two decades. Since its debut, TLI has delivered industry-specific training at every ACP Annual Conference, continually evolving to reflect changes in media, advertising, and leadership best practices.

TLI training is accessible in multiple formats to meet members where they are. Sessions are offered at ACP Annual Conferences, through periodic virtual workshops, within the ACP On-Demand Training Center, and at select local and regional association meetings. Members interested in utilizing TLI materials for in-house staff training can contact the ACP office to request access to available resources.

TLI faculty members represent the very best of the community publishing industry. These experienced professionals bring proven track records of success, deep industry knowledge, and a strong commitment to

mentoring others. Their willingness to share insights, strategies, and lessons learned plays a vital role in shaping both the TLI curriculum and the future of the industry itself.

### ACP NEW HIRE SALES TRAINING PROGRAM

ACP's New Hire Sales Training Program is an eight-class online sequence designed to give incoming sales professionals a strong foundation in advertising sales. Delivered through the On-Demand Training Center, the program uses industry-specific terminology and real-world selling scenarios to prepare new hires for immediate success.

The training walks participants through the entire sales process—from prospecting to closing—ensuring they understand each step of a successful sales call and how those elements work together.

#### The eight-class sequence includes:

- TLI-102: Prospecting
- TLI-104: Opening a Sales Dialogue
- TLI-106: Effective Questioning
- TLI-105: Communicating Through Listening
- TLI-107: Making Recommendations Using Features & Benefits
- TLI-103: Answering the Classic Sales Objections
- TLI-101: Closing the Sale
- TLI-108: Four Essentials of an Effective Advertising Campaign

This structured sequence can be paired with additional Power Sales University training to target specific skill gaps or reinforce key concepts.

Together, these tools provide a comprehensive, professional sales training framework that supports both new hires and experienced sales staff.

Participation is simple. ACP members in good standing can contact the ACP office to initiate access to the On-Demand Training Center, complete personal registration, and begin the core sales training sequence. This member benefit is fully supported by ACP to ensure all members have access to high-quality, industry-specific education.

Beyond the New Hire program, the On-Demand Training Center includes eight additional TLI classes designed to help sales professionals at all stages keep their skills sharp. With training available anytime, anywhere, this resource remains one of ACP's most cost-effective and valuable member benefits.

### POWER SALES UNIVERSITY & ON-DEMAND TRAINING CENTER



ACP understands that consistent, high-quality training is essential to the success of any publication. In addition to The Leadership Institute, ACP provides members with access to a wide range of industry-specific and general sales training resources to support staff development at every level.

Many of these resources are available at no additional cost to ACP members and can be accessed through the ACP website. The majority of programs are offered on demand, allowing teams to learn at their own pace and on their own schedule.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The **ACP On-Demand Training Center** offers 24/7 access to training that can be completed individually or in group settings. The platform brings together industry-specific TLI courses and a world-class general sales training curriculum from **Power Sales University**, creating a centralized hub for ongoing professional development.

For a more detailed overview of the On-Demand Training Center, see the article on page 23.

## PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

Through The Leadership Institute, ACP offers formal professional certification programs that recognize excellence, growth, and commitment within the community publishing industry. Since the first graduating class in 2009, ACP has awarded **146 Associate Advertising Executive (AAE)** certificates and **eight Certified Advertising Executive (CAE)** certificates to industry professionals. This year we are launching a third level of certification, the **Senior Advertising Executive (SAE)** certificate for those who have completed their AAE and CAE certifications.

The **AAE certification** requires the completion of 15 credit hours in TLI classes. Credits may be earned through training sessions offered at ACP's Annual Conference, ACP Virtual Training Sessions, in-person state and regional events, and the ACP On-Demand Training Center. AAE coursework is primarily sales-focused and provides a strong foundation in industry-specific selling practices, culminating in a comprehensive sales knowledge assessment.



The **CAE certification** is designed for professionals who have already earned their AAE designation and are ready to advance into higher-level leadership and management development. CAE candidates must complete three ACP management-focused certificate programs, offered

at least once annually. Topics have included Effective Hands-on Management, Coaching Employees, and Creative Leadership, with at least one session held in conjunction with the ACP Annual Conference and Trade Show each year.



The **SAE certification** provides the highest level of certification through completion of the AAE, CAE and Power Sales University certifications.

ACP professional certifications are intended to recognize the highest standards of professionalism in community publishing. They allow participants to formally document their expertise in media, marketing, sales, and leadership, while also demonstrating an ongoing commitment to professional development and industry excellence. ■

## ACP TRADE SHOW TESTIMONIALS

I always tell my vendor friends that the ACP group is one of the best groups of people. They tend to view vendors as partners and are genuinely interested in the solutions we provide.



If you only do 5 or 6 shows a year, I would put this one on my list.



## 2025 Mobile Trade Show Participants

**acp**  
Association of  
Community  
Publishers

## INDUSTRY RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

# INDUSTRY RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT



### PUBLISH MAGAZINE

Publish Magazine serves as a trusted voice, resource, and connector for the community publishing industry. Produced by ACP, the magazine is dedicated to informing, educating, and inspiring publishers, sales professionals, and industry leaders who serve local communities across North America.

At its core, Publish Magazine delivers timely, relevant content that helps community publications operate more effectively and competitively. Each issue features practical insights on advertising sales, revenue development, audience engagement, design and production, digital innovation, leadership, and operational best practices—always with a focus on real-world application for community-based media organizations.

Beyond education, Publish Magazine plays an important role in highlighting the people and publications that make the industry strong. It showcases success stories, innovative ideas, and emerging leaders, while also recognizing excellence through industry awards, profiles, and case studies. By sharing what works, the magazine encourages collaboration and the exchange of ideas among peers.

Publish Magazine also helps publishers stay informed about broader industry trends and external forces that impact their businesses, including postal changes, legislative developments, technology shifts,

and evolving advertiser expectations. This perspective enables readers to anticipate challenges, identify opportunities, and make more informed decisions.

Equally important, the magazine reinforces the value and relevance of community publishing itself. By celebrating local media's role in connecting people, supporting small businesses, and strengthening local economies, Publish Magazine champions the essential work community publishers do every day.

In short, Publish Magazine exists to support the growth, sustainability, and continued success of the community publishing industry—providing knowledge, recognition, and connection that help local publications thrive.

### INDUSTRY ADVOCACY

The ACP office actively monitors the issues, developments, and trends that directly affect community publishers and their businesses. From rising material costs and postal regulations to proposed legislation impacting printers and publishers, ACP works to ensure members stay informed, engaged, and represented. Just as importantly, ACP serves as a collective voice—advocating on behalf of members when industry interests are at stake.

Over the past five years, ACP has focused on numerous advocacy efforts to keep members aware of critical issues, provide timely updates, and ensure the industry's concerns are heard by decision-makers. A few notable examples include:

#### Newsprint Tariffs

When proposed tariffs threatened Canadian newsprint suppliers, ACP joined and endorsed the STO

coalition (Stop Tariffs on Printers and Publishers). Through coordinated email communications, legislative outreach, and unified industry action, ACP helped amplify opposition to the countervailing duties. These efforts ultimately contributed to the International Trade Commission's decision to terminate the duties applied to uncoated groundwood paper.

#### USPS Rate Changes

ACP's partnership with the Saturation Mailers Coalition enables close monitoring of changes to USPS rates, policies, and operational procedures. Because many community publications rely heavily on postal delivery, staying ahead of these changes is essential. ACP ensures members are informed while also coordinating a stronger, unified industry voice to protect affordability and access—key factors in the economic health of community publishing.

#### USPS Available Discounts

ACP works to help members take full advantage of USPS promotional discounts. This includes coordinating guidance and materials for the Integrated Technology Promotion, which allows members using USPS Marketing Mail to qualify for a 5% postage discount during a selected six-month promotional period by incorporating eligible mobile shopping technologies into their advertising. A new advertising opportunity tied to the 2026 Mobile Shopping option is now available, continuing ACP's efforts to help members reduce costs and innovate.

#### Monitoring Industry-Related Legislation

Tracking federal and state legislation that affects community

# INDUSTRY RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

publishers is complex and ongoing. ACP closely monitors bills that could impact members positively or negatively and communicates relevant developments in a timely manner. Recent examples include federal legislation such as HR 4756, introduced in the 118th Congress by Representatives Claudia Tenney (NY-24) and Suzan DelBene (D-WA), proposing tax credits to support local news organizations and small businesses. At the state level, ACP has monitored proposals like Ohio's HB-33, which would alter public notice laws by allowing municipalities to publish notices on their own websites.

These examples represent just a portion of ACP's advocacy work. Through continuous monitoring, communication, and coalition-building, ACP connects community publishers to the broader national business and policy landscape—working to protect their interests, strengthen their economic viability, and reinforce the vital role they play in the communities they serve.

## INDIVIDUAL AWARD RECOGNITION

Annually ACP presents three individual awards to industry professionals who have performed at an outstanding level in specific areas of the business. This recognition provides our opportunity to acknowledge their contributions not only to them, but to their companies, their communities and the industry as a whole.

**Publisher of the Year Award –** ACP's highest honor is bestowed on a publisher who has made significant contributions to their community, their company, the association and the industry through their outstanding performance and dedication to excellence.

**Distinguished Service Award –** Awarded for an individual's consistently high level of outstanding performance throughout their career to enhance ACP and the entire community publication industry. This award

recognizes their selfless investment of time, talents, vision and efforts in an effort to benefit others.

**ACP Volunteer Award –** This award looks to recognize the contributions of an industry volunteer who has given significantly to the betterment of each of our businesses over the years, always without thought to personal gain as did the award's namesake for so many years. Typically, these award winners are the first to answer the call to duty and repeatedly do so, year after year.

## BEST OF THE BEST PUBLICATION AWARDS

This is your company's opportunity to get some recognition for all the exceptional efforts that go into producing the highest quality publications. Use your success story and individual awards to promote your company, your staff and your customers. These awards can help boost everything from employee job satisfaction to your company's reputation in your local market.

With over 35 different award categories to enter, regardless of your publication's style, you will be competing against like publications. Everything from editorial material, individual ad designs, cover designs, special sections, promotional materials and digital products can be entered and judged against other entries from across North America.

Award winners are typically announced at the annual fall conference! Each winning publication receives a presentation quality certificate detailing their awards for the current year for display in their office. Many of our winners have special celebrations to honor these accomplishments by their staff and recognize the extraordinary efforts that go into producing a quality publication.

The awards program is open to all ACP members and typically draws over 1,200 entries from a major portion of our membership. The entries are submitted through a specially designed online portal in the beginning of each year and represent work produced throughout the previous calendar year. For a list of categories and participation rules, check out the 2026 Best of the Best Entry Forms available at: <https://www.communitypublishers.com/awards>.

Remember – this is the perfect opportunity to... **Reward Your Customers, Reward Your Staff and Reward Yourself!**

## RISING STARS PROGRAM

The ACP Rising Stars Program recognizes and celebrates outstanding young professionals under the age of 36 who are emerging as future leaders in the community publishing industry. This ongoing

national program honors up to seven individuals each year, selected from nominations submitted by ACP member publications, who represent the very best of the industry's next generation.

Rising Stars are distinguished not only by their professional accomplishments, but also by their character, leadership, and commitment to the communities they serve. They consistently demonstrate initiative, integrity, and a passion for excellence—making meaningful contributions within their organizations while showing strong potential to positively influence the broader community publishing industry.

The Rising Stars Program extends well beyond initial recognition. Award recipients are invited to serve in an active role with ACP for up to



## INDUSTRY RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

two years, contributing to association initiatives and offering fresh perspectives that help shape the future of the industry. ACP values the insight, energy, and innovation these individuals bring and intentionally creates opportunities for them to engage through scheduled conference calls, volunteer service, and collaborative projects.

In return, ACP provides additional leadership development opportunities and meaningful peer connections with other emerging

professionals from across the country—fostering a strong network of future leaders dedicated to the continued success of community publishing.

### **SCOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

ACP presents The Bob Wright Memorial Scholarship annually in May. Any parent, grandparent or guardian who is working for a community paper that is a current member of

ACP is eligible to apply for one of our annual scholarships for their graduate. This endowment scholarship was created in memory of longtime publisher and friend of the industry, Bob Wright. To date, the program has distributed over \$146,950 in scholarships to ACP Member families. ■



## Need to expand your people network?



### We can make that happen!

*Annual Leadership Retreats*

*Annual Conference & Trade Show*

*Group Discussion Calls*



## Join people doing what you do!

For More Information: [www.communitypublishers.com](http://www.communitypublishers.com) / 877-203-2327

# TURN YOUR PUBLICATION INTO A DIGITAL AGENCY

for only \$199 a month.

**Success in digital advertising goes beyond getting by; it's about truly thriving**

- ✓ Create a digital revenue stream.
- ✓ Retain and grow print advertisers.
- ✓ Develop multi-channel marketing plans.
- ✓ 24/7 Real-time reporting.
- ✓ Full back-office support.

**Exclusively available to ACP members,** create a digital income source that complements your print services for your customers! January Spring handles the hard work while you enjoy the benefits.

We're your full back office support team, from initial pitches to sales to renewals. Custom, data-driven digital advertising for publishers and agencies. We work with niche media companies at every skill level to transform the way they do digital.

*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, email [mac@januaryspring.com](mailto:mac@januaryspring.com).

[Schedule a Quick Intro](#)



# PROFIT BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

## PROFIT BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

### JANUARY SPRING PARTNERSHIP



Exclusively available to ACP members, create a digital income source that complements your print services for your customers! With \$7 out \$10 advertising dollars being spent on digital, this expands your product offerings to cover more of your customer's advertising needs. Let January Spring handle the hard work while you enjoy the benefits. They're your full back-office support team, from initial pitches to sales to renewals. Offering group training programs for your team, this enables you to learn alongside peers for maximum support during the training phase.

ACP members can take advantage of a monthly fee 3-way split: The publisher is responsible for \$199, ACP pays \$199 and January Spring covers \$199 for the first year, keeping your fee as low as possible while you get started. In addition to that, January Spring provides group training programs that allow you to learn with your peers to maximize support throughout the training process.

### CIRCULATION AUDITS WITH CVC

Circulation audits play a vital role in strengthening the credibility of the community publication industry. Through ACP, qualifying members

receive third-party audits conducted by the Circulation Verification Council (CVC), an independent and highly respected audit firm that verifies thousands of publications nationwide.

These audits go far beyond print counts. CVC evaluates printing, distribution, circulation, websites, digital editions, mobile, email, social media, and readership studies—providing a complete and accurate picture of your publication's reach and market penetration. This valuable member benefit typically saves publishers between **\$1,500 and \$3,500**, depending on circulation size.



CVC audits are available to members who participate at the level that includes auditing. The audit covers the portion of your circulation that runs ADS Network advertising and is delivered as a combined, comprehensive report.

CVC puts publishers in control. In today's competitive media environment, it's more important than ever to leverage your audit as a powerful business tool—not just a report. Publishers who actively use and promote their audit see the greatest return on their investment.

With a CVC audit, publishers can:

- Gain a true, data-driven view of their market and confidently position themselves against competitors for both circulation and advertising revenue.

- Draw a clear line in the sand by proving their value to advertisers with verified data.
- Use built-in audit promotion programs to help advertisers understand the real impact of their advertising investment.
- Show advertisers exactly how many potential customers their publication can deliver.
- Use CVC data to demonstrate real-world results that grab attention and drive new ad sales.
- Build a competitive edge over other media through verified circulation and readership insights.
- Provide advertising decision-makers with the trusted data they need to confidently choose your publication.

In short, a CVC circulation audit doesn't just validate your numbers—it elevates your publication's standing in the marketplace and helps turn verified reach into real revenue.

### ADVERTISING NETWORK SALES PROGRAM

Advertising Distribution Services (ADS) is North America's largest classified and display advertising network, delivering affordable national exposure for advertisers. By participating in the ADS Network, member publications gain powerful revenue opportunities along with meaningful savings on membership and events.

#### DISPLAY & CLASSIFIED AD NETWORK



# PROFIT BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Best of all, members can sell national network advertising and keep the profit.

## **Benefits of ADS Participation include:**

- Lower Annual Membership Dues**

ADS participants pay just **\$299–\$599 per year**, compared to **\$549–\$1,299** for non-participating members.

- Discounted Conference Attendance**

Enjoy reduced registration fees for ACP conferences, along with access to specially negotiated hotel room rates for ADS members and their guests.

- Profitable Advertising Sales**

ADS participants can sell ads into the national network at margins they set. Suggested retail pricing is **\$895 for a national classified ad and \$1,595 for a display ad** reaching more than **5 million readers nationwide**.

Start selling today and turn national advertising into a steady new revenue stream for your publication.

## **THE POPMOUNT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**



In today's dynamic media landscape, protecting your content and maximizing revenue streams are paramount. That's why PopMount has created an exclusive partnership opportunity designed to empow-

er ACP members to monetize their existing content and expand the exposure of your brand with content keepsakes and award plaques. Our innovative Member Benefit Program directly confronts the challenge of unauthorized content distribution while unlocking significant financial and operational advantages.

There is opportunity in your content. The people featured in your publication want to preserve and cherish their stories. Our products offer a great alternative to the traditional concept of magazine and newspaper framing. Your customers will proudly display them for years to come. We know your resources are limited, which is why we make it easy to monetize your content so you can continue to work on the next big story.

Exclusive For ACP Members—Unlock New Revenue Streams and Operational Efficiencies. As a member of ACP, you gain access to a suite of exclusive benefits designed to boost your bottom line and streamline your operations:

- Launch Your Own Branded E-commerce Store:** Establish a professional online storefront, valued at \$300, at absolutely no cost. Expand your reach and generate revenue from your publications and products.

- Maximize Your Earnings:** Enjoy an ACP Exclusive revenue share of up to 45% on all e-commerce sales. Turn your content into a profitable asset.

- Reduce Operational Costs:** Benefit from reduced administrative and fulfillment fees,

advantageous wholesale pricing, and discounted or free domestic shipping.

- Gain a Competitive Edge:** Leverage priority order production and comprehensive customer support services, ensuring a seamless experience for your customers.

At PopMount, we're proud to partner with ACP Members across the country, both big and small, to help them increase their profits. We can reproduce your publication's content in gorgeous clarity, helping your customers display their news, your publication promote your brand and at the same time, help you build additional revenue and profits.

## **USPS DISCOUNT COMPLIANCE PROGRAM**

As a Member Benefit of ACP, you have access to an advertising promotion that will allow you to qualify your publications the 2026 USPS Enhanced Emerging Technology Promotion—Mobile Shopping Option. Any community publication that uses USPS Marketing Mail to deliver their publication can take advantage of participation in this program to save 5% off the total postage cost for a 6 consecutive month period with the flexibility to choose your own start date. All 6 months must be during the 2026 calendar year.

This program changes from year to year and as an ACP member, ACP will continue to make the necessary adjustments to provide members the opportunity to take full advantage of discounts as they become available. ■

# GET YOUR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS EXCITED ABOUT THIS INDUSTRY

One of the greatest challenges facing community publishing today isn't technology, print, or even revenue – it's people. Specifically, it's how we attract, develop, and retain the next generation of leaders who will carry this industry forward. That's exactly why the **ACP Rising Stars Program** exists.

This annual program shines a spotlight on the most promising young professionals in the community publication industry – those under the age of 36 who are already making a meaningful impact in their organizations and communities. Each year, up to **seven outstanding individuals** are selected to represent the best of what our industry's future looks like: innovative, motivated, community-minded, and driven to succeed.

These Rising Stars aren't just good at their jobs. They are the kind of people who raise the bar for everyone around them. They demonstrate professionalism, leadership, creativity, and a deep commitment to the local communities their publications serve. In short, they are the people who will shape what community media looks like in the years ahead.

## WHO SHOULD YOU NOMINATE?

The ACP Rising Stars Program is designed to identify young professionals who are already proving their value and showing long-term potential. Ideal nominees are those who:

- Consistently perform their job at a high level
- Show initiative, leadership, and professional growth

- Actively seek out learning opportunities and new skills
- Make a positive impact on their publication and the industry
- Demonstrate pride in serving their community

Nominees must be actively working in the community publishing industry for an ACP member or associate member publication and must have been employed for more than one year. To be eligible for the 2026 class, nominees must not turn 36 before **December 31, 2026**.

This program is not just about recognizing where someone is today – it's about recognizing where they are going.

## HOW RISING STARS ARE RECOGNIZED

Those selected as ACP Rising Stars receive far more than a plaque or a headline. Their achievements are cel-

brated in **Publish Magazine**, ACP's official publication, putting their success in front of peers, employers, and industry leaders nationwide.

They are also honored during a special awards presentation at ACP's next national, in-person conference. That event becomes a powerful moment – not just for the honorees, but for the entire industry – as we collectively recognize the talent and dedication shaping our future.

Even better, every Rising Star receives:

- **Free conference registration**
- **Hotel accommodations**
- **Meals**
- **Specialized training sessions**
- **Up to \$500 in travel reimbursement**

For many young professionals, this is their first opportunity to attend



Dr. Jeanne Maes, Professor of Management at the Mitchell College of Business at the University of South Alabama presents to the Rising Stars in Mobile in September 2025.

# RISING STAR ARTICLE

a national industry conference – opening the door to networking, professional growth, and a broader understanding of how community publishing works on a national scale.

## **AN OPPORTUNITY THAT DOESN'T END AFTER ONE YEAR**

What makes the ACP Rising Stars Program truly unique is that it's not a one-time award – it's a multi-year leadership journey.

After their selection, Rising Stars are invited to stay engaged with ACP for up to **three years**, contributing their ideas, energy, and perspective to association initiatives. In return, they gain:

- Additional leadership development opportunities
- Exposure to industry decision-making

- Ongoing professional mentoring
- Invitations to future conferences and training

ACP believes strongly that the future of the community publishing industry depends on empowering emerging leaders – and Rising Stars are given a seat at the table to help shape what comes next.

## **WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR PUBLICATION**

When you nominate a young professional for Rising Stars, you're doing more than recognizing good work – you're investing in your publication's future. Employees who feel seen, supported, and connected to a larger industry are more likely to stay, grow, and lead.

The Rising Stars Program boosts morale, builds loyalty, and helps create a clear pathway for young pro-

fessionals to build a long-term career in community publishing. It sends a powerful message: You matter. Your work matters. And your future in this industry is bright.

## **NOMINATE BEFORE APRIL 30, 2026**

The nomination deadline for the 2026 ACP Rising Stars Program is **April 30, 2026**.

Nomination forms are available online at:

<https://www.communitypublishers.com/rising-stars>

If you have a young professional on your team who deserves recognition – someone who goes above and beyond and shows real promise – now is the time to step forward and nominate them. Your Rising Star could be the leader who helps define the next chapter of community publishing. ■

## **Building educational opportunities for community publishing professionals.**

## **Bill Welsh Foundation**

### **Give a tax-deductible gift that will keep giving!**

*For more information or to contribute, go to:*

<https://www.communitypublishers.com/bill-welsh-foundation>



# The KPIs That Actually Drive Media Sales Performance

BY OPENAI

In media sales, one truth stands above all others: **what you measure is what your sales team will sell**. Too many organizations track activity for the sake of activity – calls made, emails sent, or meetings logged – yet still struggle with flat revenue, churned advertisers, and weak pipelines.

The highest-performing media companies take a different approach. They use KPIs that drive behavior, protect revenue, and build long-term advertiser value.

Here are the key performance indicators that truly separate average sales teams from elite ones.

## 1. Revenue Production KPIs

These are the most visible – and most important – metrics on any sales scoreboard.

Strong media sales organizations track more than just total dollars. They also monitor **how that revenue is created**.

- **Total Revenue Sold** shows overall productivity.
- **New Revenue** reveals whether a rep is growing or simply maintaining.
- **Existing Account Growth** measures upselling and relationship strength.
- **Average Deal Size** indicates selling skill and efficiency.
- **Digital Revenue Percentage** reflects how future-ready the salesperson is.

Healthy media operations typically expect **25–40% of a salesperson's annual revenue to come from new or expanded business**, not just renewals.

## 2. Account Quality KPIs

A large revenue total can be misleading if it comes from only a few advertisers. The strongest salespeople build **deep, diversified books of business**.

Key metrics include:

- **Number of Active Advertisers**
- **Top-10 Revenue Concentration**
- **Advertiser Retention Rate**
- **Category Penetration**

When one or two advertisers make up more than 40% of a rep's revenue, the account list becomes fragile. Losing just one client can cause a major revenue hit.

Balanced account portfolios create stability, predictable renewals, and long-term growth.

## 3. Sales Activity KPIs

Activity does not equal productivity – but the right activity predicts future revenue.

Effective sales teams track:

- New Prospect Meetings
- First Appointments
- Proposal Volume
- Close Rate
- Total Pipeline Value

A strong pipeline should equal **three to five times a rep's monthly revenue goal**. This ensures that deals falling out do not derail production.

## 4. Product Mix KPIs

Media is no longer just print, broadcast, or static ads. The most profitable salespeople sell **solutions across multiple platforms**.

Important product KPIs include:

- **Digital and Programmatic Revenue**
- **Multi-platform Advertisers**
- **Bundled Campaigns**
- **Upsell Ratios**

Advertisers using multiple products stay longer, spend more, and deliver higher lifetime value.

## 5. Churn and Risk KPIs

Revenue doesn't just disappear – it leaks slowly if no one is watching.

Sales leaders should track:

- **Advertiser Attrition Rate**
- **Cancelled or Reduced Contracts**
- **Dormant Accounts**

These metrics allow managers to intervene before revenue walks out the door.

## 6. Profitability KPIs

Not all revenue is created equal. High-discount, high-service accounts can damage margins even while boosting sales totals.

Elite organizations track:

- **Gross Margin by Salesperson**
- **Discount Rates**
- **Production Cost per Campaign**

This ensures sales growth is healthy, not hollow.

## The KPI Formula Used by Top Media Companies

Rather than drowning in data, high-performing media companies focus on just **seven core KPIs per rep**:

1. Total Revenue
2. New Revenue
3. Active Advertisers
4. Digital Revenue Percentage
5. Pipeline Value
6. Retention Rate
7. Average Deal Size

Together, these metrics create:

- Growth
- Stability
- Forecast accuracy
- Higher commissions
- Stronger advertiser relationships

## Bottom Line

The right KPIs do more than report numbers – they **shape sales behavior**.

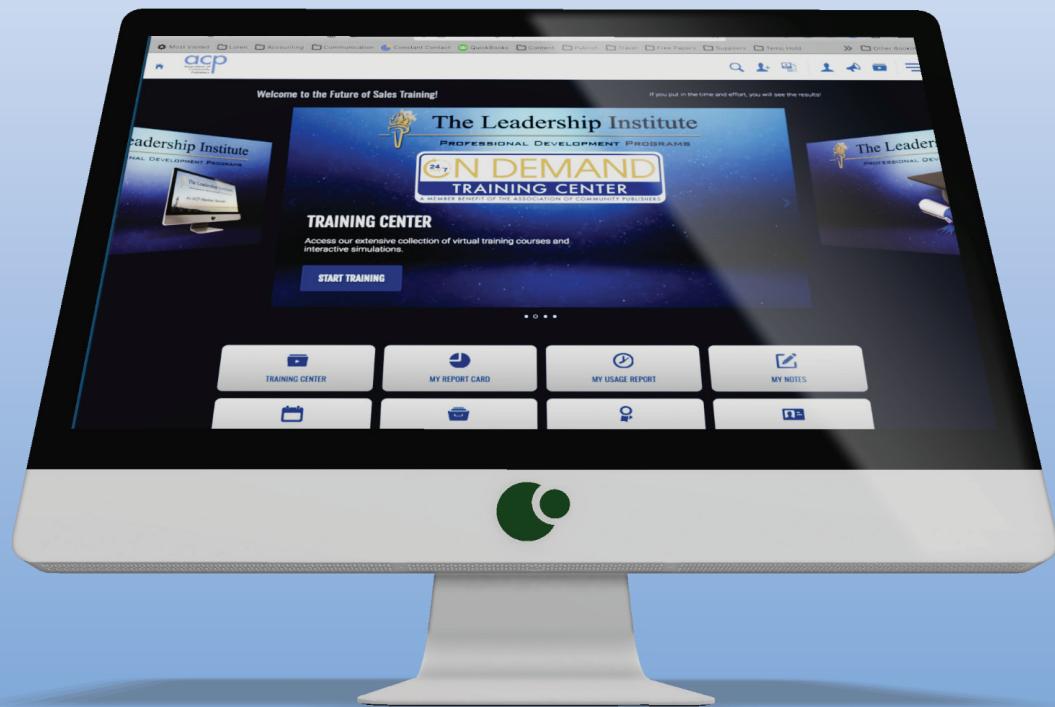
When media companies measure what matters, salespeople sell smarter, advertisers stay longer, and revenue becomes predictable instead of stressful.

In today's competitive media landscape, **your KPI strategy may be your most powerful growth tool**. ■

Generated through: OpenAI. (2026) ChatGPT-5 (Jan 8 version), <https://chatgpt.com/>

# SALES TRAINING

**Available Whenever  
Your Salespeople Are!**



## 140 Individual Training Modules

Over 28 hours of sales training on all aspects of the sales process, available free to ACP member's whenever they are ready to learn!



**MEMBER BENEFITS TO BUILD YOUR BUSINESS**

For more information go to:  
<https://www.communitypublishers.com/education>

# TELL THEM WHY – AND SELL MORE



BY JOHN FOUST  
GREENSBORO, NC

Like some other kids, I learned how to drive before taking the drivers' education class in high school. My father took me to the school's football stadium on weekends when the expansive parking lot was empty. The car was an old station wagon with a manual shift on the steering column. "Once you learn how to drive a manual shift, an automatic transmission will be a piece of cake," he said.

Dad was a great teacher. After he methodically explained the gas pedal, the brake, the clutch and other essentials, he assured me that it was okay to make mistakes, because I couldn't damage anything around us. Shifting gears was the number one topic. He carefully demonstrated the correct way to move from neutral to first, then let me try it. "Let the clutch out slowly," he said, "because the car will lurch and stall if you do it too quickly. Do it slowly and the car will ease into gear." At first, I struggled so much with that clutch that the poor

station wagon jumped around like a bucking bronco. But after a while, I developed a feel for it – and the car actually behaved.

One thing that made Dad such an effective communicator was that he told me why certain things should be done. He was a mechanical engineer who dealt with whys all the time. When the car bucked, I knew why, because he had told me why. When I shifted smoothly, I knew why, because he had explained it. And when I eventually drove on the road, I had more confidence than I would have had without his patient instruction.

One of the most important tech-

**“**Salespeople have a tendency to do a lot of telling, but not much explaining. It's important to realize that we all have a need to know why we are being told something or asked to do something. Even children need to know why. They are champions of 'why' questions.”

niques in communication – especially in persuasive communication – is to tell people "why." Steven, an ad manager who has observed countless sales presentations, told me, "Salespeople have a tendency to do a lot of telling, but not much explaining. It's important to realize that we all have a need to know why we are being told something or asked to do something. Even children need to know why. They are

champions of 'why' questions."

Steven is right. Give prospects reasons why. It helps to use a simple bridge like "because" or "the reason I say that is" or "this will provide you with." For example:

1. "Let's take a look at our publication's readership figures. This will show you how many prospective print and online customers you can reach with us."
2. "Here's a comparison between a couple of ads in the last campaign you ran and a couple from the new campaign we've been discussing. We're taking a look at these together, because this will help us see how the new ads build on the brand image you've established."
3. "Let's set an appointment to talk next Tuesday, after the first ad runs. This will give us a chance to make any needed tweaks to the offer."

Without a doubt, telling prospects why is a good way to keep your sales presentations in gear. ■

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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](mailto:john@johnfoust.com)

# WHAT MAKES PRINT ADS WORK IN 2026

## The Offers That Get Customers to Act

BY OPENAI

**A**s digital advertising becomes more crowded, print continues to prove its power—especially when it delivers the right offer. In 2026, successful print advertising isn't just about great design or clever copy. It's about presenting an offer that feels immediately valuable, low-risk, and urgent enough to motivate action.

Consumers are more selective than ever, and every purchasing decision is filtered through three questions: What do I get? What could I lose? And why should I act now? The best print ads are built to answer all three.

### MONETARY OFFERS THAT DRIVE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Clear, easy-to-understand savings are the strongest drivers in print advertising. With only a brief moment to grab attention, a print ad must make its value obvious right away. Readers want to instantly see what they're getting and how much it's worth—without doing math or searching for details.

That's why dollar-off offers consistently beat percentage discounts. Headlines like "\$25 off" or "Save \$50 today" deliver a clear, concrete benefit. Percentages take more effort to interpret and are often overlooked, while dollar amounts let readers quickly picture their savings.

BOGO deals tap into the powerful appeal of getting something free. Whether it's "Buy One, Get One Free" or "50% off the second," these offers reduce the risk of trying something new and often lead to bigger purchases—especially in food, retail, and personal services.

Bundles build on this by combining related products or services into one discounted package. Customers feel they're getting more for their money, while businesses increase the value of each sale and highlight multiple offerings.

Together, these offers do more than cut prices—they make buying easier. When savings are clear and compelling, print ads drive faster, more confident action.

### REDUCING RISK BUILDS TRUST

In print advertising, trust is currency. Shoppers are more likely to respond when they feel protected.

**Strong guarantees**, such as "100% satisfaction or your money back," remove the fear of making the wrong choice. For new customers especially, this reassurance can be the difference between flipping the page and picking up the phone.

**Warranties** also play a critical role, particularly for physical products. When a business clearly states that it stands behind what it sells, it sends a powerful message of confidence and credibility.

### ENGAGEMENT-DRIVEN OFFERS THAT SPARK ACTION

Beyond price, today's print ads must create engagement.

**Value-added gifts**—an extra item or service included for free—make offers feel more exciting and urgent, especially when tied to a deadline.

**Physical coupons and loyalty cards** remain highly effective because they live in the real world. A coupon on the fridge or a stamp card in a wallet becomes a con-

stant reminder to come back. These tangible tools help bridge the gap between interest and in-store action.

**Free samples, shipping, or returns** also remove common barriers to purchase, particularly for direct-mail campaigns. When there's nothing to lose, consumers are far more willing to try something new.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR HIGH-PERFORMING PRINT ADS

Even the best offer can fall flat without the right execution.

In 2026, **simplicity is key**. Print readers scan quickly, so ads should focus on one strong message and one compelling offer. Clutter and competing promotions only create confusion.

A **clear call to action** is essential. Whether it's a QR code, website, or phone number, readers should know exactly what to do next and how to redeem the offer.

Finally, **personalization is becoming a major advantage in print**. With today's advanced printing technology, advertisers can tailor offers by neighborhood, audience, or even individual household—making ads feel more relevant and dramatically improving response rates.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Print advertising in 2026 is thriving when it delivers real value, removes risk, and gives readers a compelling reason to act now. When these elements come together, print doesn't just compete with digital—it outperforms it. ■

Generated through: OpenAI. (2026) ChatGPT-5 (Jan 8 version), <https://chatgpt.com/>

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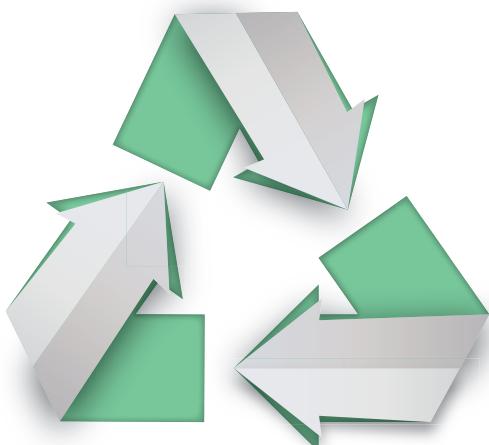
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Sources: American Forest and Paper Association, 2019  
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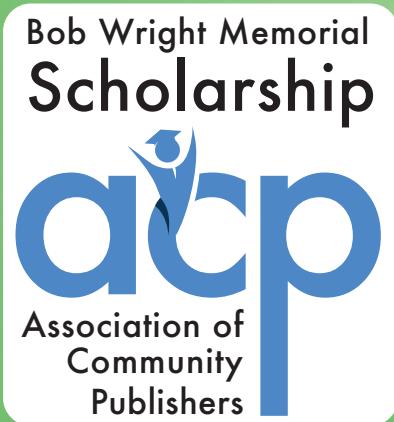
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