

25 ways

to improve your
print products in

2016

**We
believe in
print.**

The folks bringing you this white paper feel quite strongly that print is not dead — and that it's not dying anytime soon, despite what you hear from a lot of the “experts.”

Everyone predicted VCRs would kill movie theaters and that television would kill radio. Despite satellite radio, the iPod, tape decks and more, we still have radio. Mediums don't die. They adjust. And so we believe print is going to be a core part of what newspapers do for a long time to come.

There's no denying the overall smaller footprint for newspapers' printed products. But what we see and fear in our industry is a rush to abandon print — to speed its demise in a panic as we strive to develop other products and revenue sources. And that's where we draw the line.

It isn't time to abandon or undermine print. It's time to reinvent it, reshape it, even rebuild it in new and better forms.

The reality is that newspaper print penetration has been declining steadily since 1945. So print has needed an upgrade for a long time. Instead of bemoaning the loss of the good old days of print, we'd argue that all of us presided over the decades-long decline of print and never took the opportunity to look ourselves in the mirror and say, “Maybe it's our own fault.” Maybe it's not the Internet or TV or people not having as much time to read. Maybe we're just boring, or stuck in the past, or not connecting with people the way we should.

If you do an online search for “newspaper innovation in print,” the results aren't encouraging. Our industry doesn't seem to be coming up with great new ideas for print.

But we think the ideas are out there. And maybe if we take a good hard look at what's wrong with our printed products, we'll find ways to bring new life to what has been our most valuable product line.

We know one thing: There is plenty of room for improvement. Print can be better if we are willing to change the way we produce it. The ideas listed here are the tip of the iceberg. And we'll be doing everything we can to provide more ideas and resources to help newspapers evolve print into something we can all benefit from for many years to come.

In case you're wondering, our message isn't anti-digital. Some of the partners in this report are also digital vendors and can help you grow digital audience and revenue as well. Digital products are an essential part of our future, too. And many of the ideas in this idea book would improve our digital product lines as well.

We hope you will agree that there is much to do — and much that can be done — in print. Let's get on with it!

The SLP print solutions team

1

Market print
like you
believe in it!



Flickr / Sara Guastevi

Print is great!

Are you marketing your print product like you believe in it? Take a hard look and make sure you are sending the right message.

Oh sure, a few of us are talking about our great personalities. We have information people can't get anywhere else. That's OK. But we have to do better.

Take a look at the demographics of print.

Print is for smart people. Even as circulation has declined, one thing that hasn't changed is that print readers are likely to be well-educated.

Print is for successful people. We have very high readership among business leaders, managers, lawyers, university professors.

Print is for wealthy people. Our demographics remain outstanding. The wealthier a person is, the more likely he or she is to be reading our newspapers.

Print is for homeowners. In most markets, we still have strong penetration among homeowners.

We should be out there convincing people that, if they want to look smart, they should be seen carrying a newspaper! If they are going to a job interview, they should walk in with a newspaper sticking out of their briefcase. If they want to impress someone, start quoting the newspaper.

Need another approach?

Print is a change of pace. Print is quiet, relaxing. You work at a computer all day, so reading a paper is a treat. And a good break for your eyes. Staring at screens all day can dry your eyes, cause you to have trouble sleeping or give you a headache. Don't your eyes need a break?

Or how about this?

Print can help improve your life. One of our favorite campaigns was put together by *The Idaho Statesman* to promote one of our print redesigns at the paper. Can a newspaper save you money? Can a newspaper make you healthier? Can a newspaper help you get organized? Can a newspaper help save you time? We regularly publish articles about all these types of things! A newspaper regularly brings you information that can help you be safer or live your life better. Why don't we remind people of that?

Or this?

Print is engaging. Once a person starts reading, he or she is often hooked. Engaged readers often read multiple stories and scan dozens more, looking for more to read. And it's the only medium where advertising is welcome. People even BUY the paper for the ads. People invest in technology that helps them skip TV commercials. They switch stations when a radio ad comes on. Print ads work and get read.

Or this?

We're no fly-by-night operation. We didn't emerge as a startup 18 months ago. We're here for the long haul. We've been here. We're committed. We don't just care about today. We've invested in the community. How much promotion space do you give to local charities? Or money? Or time? Who on your staff volunteers in the community? How many families do your salaries support? Meanwhile, how many initiatives have you launched — or halted — through your coverage?

Identify your best assets

Sit down with a week of your papers and ask yourself: What's in here that is relevant? What are we publishing that makes people's lives better? What do we have that are must-reads? Not just for the city council members or the mayor but to real people. (Hint: It's almost never a government story.) Can you find five things...or ten? Can you find those things every week? If not, you've got bigger problems.

But if you find those things, it's time to tell people about them. Loud. And. Clear. And watch your language. This is about readers, not about you.

And remember that if this ad is in the paper rather than on a billboard or a TV commercial (which you should be running), then be sure you recognize that the vast majority of the people reading it already subscribe. So make sure it targets the non-reader or occasional reader of the paper, but also makes the regular reader feel good about the decision to support the paper, too.

And please don't use old clip art or photos. The people in our house ads have to look hip and contemporary, like those folks in the cell phone commercials. They have to look like the target audience.

TV is kicking our butt on this, by the way. "We're here for you!" "Our investigative team won't let up until we find the answers for you!" "Have a news tip? Call us and we'll get you the answers!"

It may sound corny but most surveys show people trust TV news more than they trust us. We always scoff and say that doesn't make sense. But maybe that's because we're not saying the right things. Or listening.

Marketing matters. Let's get it right.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

2

Write headlines for readers!

This isn't 1955

The rules we use to write headlines at newspapers were largely written from 1930 through about 1960 by editors to control linotype operators.

The linotype machine is long gone, but we haven't changed the way we write headlines at all.

None of our headline rules were written for the benefit of readers. In fact, they are very off-putting and probably have contributed significantly to our long declines in circulation and penetration.

We still talk to our readers like they are a disinterested third party: "Homeowners to see tax increase if council approves budget." And we keep using all these odd, short words just because they fit: fete, eyes, solons, urges, over. Nobody talks like we do. And that's bad.

Better headlines are essential to our success. Somewhere between 60 and 80 percent of headlines get read. This compares to only 25 percent of stories where any text is read (and only about 5 percent of stories that get read from beginning to end). Most readers skim headlines and form their impressions about our coverage and our value from those headlines.

Yet newsrooms spend almost no time brainstorming or even thinking about headlines. They are written at the end of the editing process by the people least familiar with the story.

No wonder bad heads are killing us.

the drive-up of the cash register at Wal-Mart...
 ...ing to the Federal Reserve Bank...
 ...44 percent of young bachelor's degree...
 ...s are employed in positions more typi...
 ...d by high school and college students...
 ...that makes sense, statistically. The BLS...
 ...only 27 percent of all U.S. jobs require a...
 ...e degree. Yet, 47 percent of the workforce...
 ...college degree.

added, "However, I...
 ...to be working at the same place that I...
 ...working at when I was 16. I'm praying that...
 ...someday soon I will get a regular 9 to 5 job...
 ...so [my husband and I] can start planning for...
 ...our future, rather than just living paycheck...
 ...to paycheck."
 ...In fairness, KCC does offer some programs

my own to...
 ...myself and my future after the...
 ...raised, but...
 ..."If I could go back, I wouldn't have sacri...
 ...ficed my personal and family time for schoo...
 ...All it did was create a great deal of debt."

Report shines light on education spending problems

Illinois News Network

Pensions eating up funds
A4

A new report on school spending in Illinois reveals pension and salary-heavy budgets for many Illinois districts.

The report, released by OpentheBooks.com, a group that advocates for government transparency, highlights the money 928 school districts across Illinois spend on salaries, vendors and pensions on a yearly basis.

educators receive annual pensions worth six figures. According to the group's founder, Adam Andrzejewski, these numbers indicate a systematic problem with public education spending.

"For most school districts, pension payments are one of the top given annual expenses," Andrzejewski said. "Are we going to educate children or provide lavish lifetime

BY THE NUMBERS

Retiree pensions over \$100,000:

Bourbonnais Elementary School District No. 53	2	Iroquois West Community Unit School District No. 5
Bradley School District No. 61	3	Manteno Community Unit School District No. 5
Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School	6	Momence Community Unit School District No. 1
Central Community Unit School District No. 4	1	

Salary spending 2012:

Bourbonnais Elementary School District No. 53	\$10,063,045	Average salary:
Bourbonnais Elementary School District No. 61	\$7,206,064	Average salary:
Bradley School District No. 61	\$8,330,119	Average salary:
Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School	\$4,121,865	Average salary:
Central Community Unit School District No. 4	\$3,954,306	Average salary:
Iroquois West Community Unit School District No. 5	\$9,290,868	Average salary:
Manteno Community Unit School District No. 1	\$5,058,686	Average salary:

* Data for Kankakee was n

Six ways to improve headlines

Work on headlines all day. Discuss them briefly during budget meetings and try to continuously improve them as the day goes on.

Use common language. Talk to me like a real person in the kind of informal way that my neighbor would use.

Make headlines about me. Stories aren't about council meetings or bills or buildings. They are about people and money and priorities. Headlines should connect with me and use words like we, you and our. So that homeowners story above could have said: "Our taxes will go up if new school construction is approved."

Forget who, when or why or even having a noun or a verb. Just make sure your headlines are interesting! That's what this is about. This headline: "New laws will affect your life if. . ." would flunk every j-school class in the country, but if it actually gets me to read a legislative story, USE IT!

Use lots of questions and quotes and ellipses. Mix it up. Have some fun. Engage me. Headline manuals hate question headlines but readers love them. So who do you want to please?

Get to the point. People are in a hurry. Respect their time. Start the headline with the most important words. Any headline that says "City council considers tax rates" should be scratched. Start it with taxes instead, and make it about me.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

Our goal in writing headlines should be to get the maximum amount of information into the maximum number of brains as quickly as possible.

3

Focus on subscribers that drive ad revenue

Calculate your best target subscribers

When planning a campaign to acquire or retain subscribers, it's important to consider value for the advertisers. Don't automatically think of expanding your circulation area — remote distribution may not be as valuable as core market distribution, and zip codes that generate the greatest number of preprint advertisers are the best areas to focus on.

How do you judge this? A good gauge is to calculate the value of a single subscriber over a year in terms of preprint insertion revenue. Take the insert rates, which are CPM-based, and calculate an individual value per zip code or zone. That number is evidence of advertiser preference, customer/audience usage of the advertising, and likely overall engagement with the newspaper. Building subscribers in these priority zones automatically generates great revenue.

Here's an example: Suppose you have 30 Sunday inserts at an average CPM of \$47. Multiply 4.7 cents per household by 30 to equal \$1.41 per Sunday paper delivered in preprint insert value alone. Adding another 20 pieces during the week at the same average rate gives \$0.94. The weekly total would be \$2.35 per daily subscriber, which translates to an annual value of \$122.20. It's not unusual for newspapers to generate more than \$3 per week per subscriber in peak zip codes.

Invest in data

Targeting subscribers has become more sophisticated with segmentation tools that contain consumer demographic, lifestyle and behavioral information. Publishing companies that invest in these type of data and match the information to their current subscriber database and other internal address-based lists can produce a powerful



Flickr / Jay Cox

picture and enhanced opportunities for acquisition and retention.

This deep consumer information is not only beneficial in gaining the subscriber audience, but can also support a number of advertiser-related revenue programs.

One additional opportunity might be to match subscriber data with customer lists of large advertisers. Customers who don't get a paper could be given a "sponsored" copy of the Sunday paper courtesy of the advertiser. The advertiser then is assured that the newspaper reached its primary audience, can cross-promote to the public that readers can see their "sale" ad insert in the newspaper, and may be able to reduce their mailing budget. This tactic works best with advertisers that appeal to a "baby boomer" audience.

Special coverage of high school sports or youth soccer leagues can generate enormous seasonal readership interest if promoted correctly. There is no better way to obtain sponsorships from alumni, or from those businesses that already actively support the school sports activities.

Clubs or fraternal groups such as Rotary and Kiwanis often include influential local business decision-makers in their ranks. The newspaper can offer subscription rebate donations to high-profile club activities for fund-raising. If the donations are significant, members of the organization will pressure their families to all make sure that they have a current subscription. Getting the paper into the right hands can make all the difference for an advertising sales opportunity.

**It's not unusual
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zip codes.**

Don't forget to deliver to advertisers

Newspaper subscriptions should automatically be included for all active advertisers supporting us. This seems obvious but is often overlooked. Are your advertisers seeing the paper every day? It is critical for retention that ads are visible to the organization advertising. Remember: Out of sight is out of mind.

— *MW Stange LLC*

4

Go TMC with the entire newspaper



Shutterstock

Make an impact on the entire market

To celebrate the launch of a redesign, one of our clients recently tried something that worked better than we had ever dreamed. They took one day and distributed the paper to everyone in their core market, essentially delivering the entire paper to households previously only getting their TMC product.

It served the intended purpose of exposing everyone to their great new design and enticing folks to subscribe, but the bigger payoff was in advertising revenue.

They created a campaign to get advertisers into this total market concept and gained the interest of a lot of advertisers who added or upsized ads in this single issue. They essentially sold out available ad positions and experienced a revenue pop that more than paid for the cost of the initiative.

It also gave their circulation figures a bump.

This isn't something you could do regularly, but once or twice a year, it's a great way to get attention of the entire market, remind everyone how good and important you are and goose your circulation and advertising numbers!

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

5

Switch to modular ad sizes

Why go modular?

There are so many advantages to modular ads that it's surprising more papers haven't adopted the concept already. A few highlights:

- **Cleaner, easier-to-read pages.** Modular advertising has an immediate impact on the impression you get of a page. Suddenly things are more orderly and inviting for both advertising and news content.

- **More efficient production.** With fewer, better designed sizes, there are fewer chances for errors in sizing ads and fewer moving parts in designing pages. Modular ads save time and money in both news and advertising layout because it's easier to put pages together with building blocks that square off.



- **A chance to right-size ad rates.** Modular advertising forces everyone to take a fresh look at advertising rates. Step back and do the calculations on revenue per inch at all your varying sizes and push odd pricing schemes out of your rate card.

- **A chance to rethink ads.** We see the same ad “picked up” month after month and even year after year. It's easy. But it isn't very good for our advertisers. Resizing every ad is an opportunity to rethink each ad's strategy. This can be the best thing about any change in ad sizes.

What's the problem?

Our ad departments are rife with misconceptions and myths. Among them are the notions that every ad needs to touch editorial content (hence, the ugly and dysfunctional pyramid ad layouts) and that smaller ads should be stacked on top of larger ones (which actually gives the smallest advertiser the best position).

It's a tough job to convince sales reps and their clients (who we have trained to believe in all our myths) that “burying” an ad doesn't matter, for example.

A long list of research shows that both advertisers and readers benefit from modular advertising. The cleaner, more organized pages

it produces make it easier to take in everything on the page, including the ads.

It can also allow editorial to switch to a much more legible five-column format (see tip #15).

That is a win-win.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

6

Foster creative thinking between departments

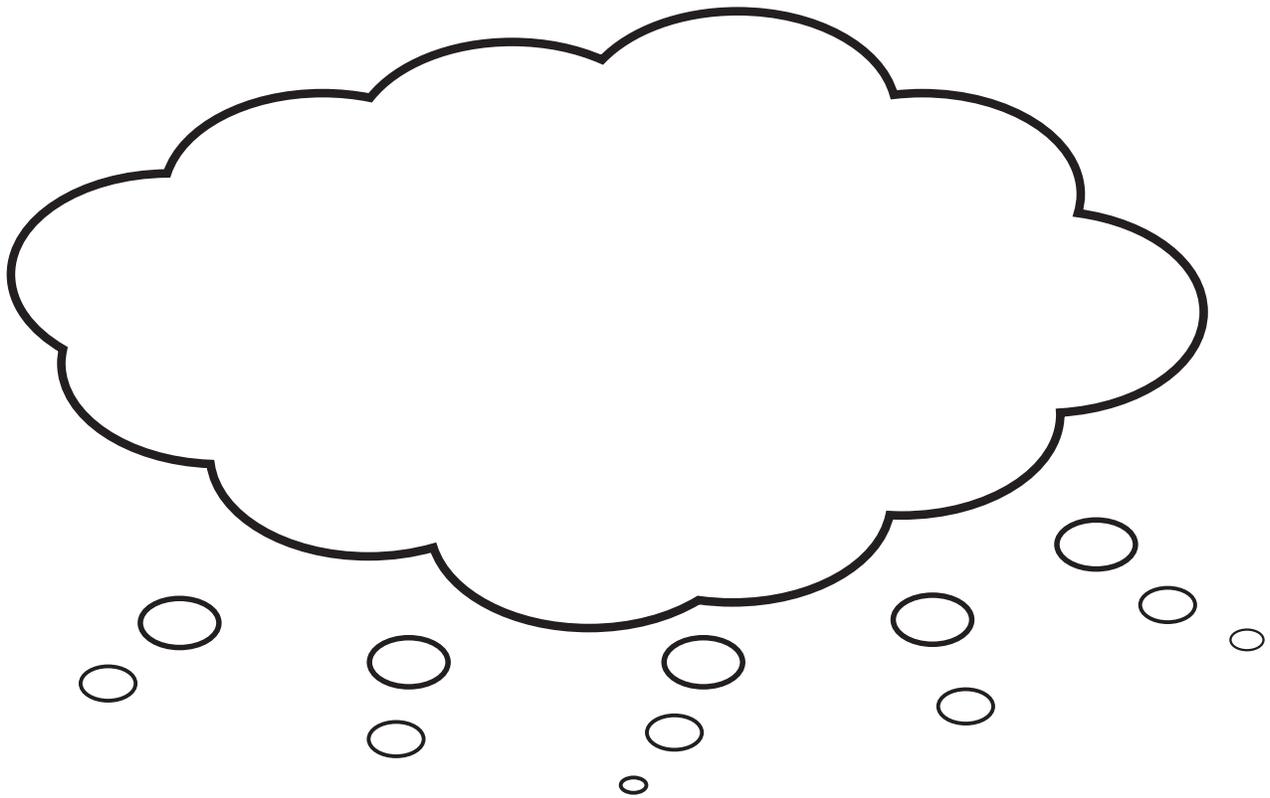
Great ideas come from everyone

Build a team of out-of-the-box thinkers that represent each major department to produce ideas that can drive new revenue initiatives.

Sponsorship of news content? It's always important to report the news responsibly, but it is common in a digital world to sponsor content in multiple ways. Consider extending sponsored content to print. For example, can automotive advertising sponsor sports coverage, as it does on television and on the web? Can a grocery chain sponsor the weekly food page? A cross-department team should consider ideas such as these, as well as ways to satisfy both the advertiser's need for promotion and the reader's desire for transparency.

Relationships with hospitals are great opportunities. Large healthcare providers have much in common with newspapers in terms of their consumers. Both want to develop relationships with young families that blossom into a long-term loyalty. Both are heavily dependent on their core baby-boomer (older) constituents. Both tend to be visible with most community organizations and causes.

Hospitals love to hear about current research and community insights. They want to be respected as an authority on healthcare, and often appreciate a relationship with the newsroom. Use a product redesign or review as an opportunity to invite healthcare and other organization execs to a reception. Also, many hospitals produce their own healthcare materials for distribution, and there are many potential synergies, such as opportunities for inserts or even custom publishing (see tip #22).



With **Production/Operations**, brainstorming advertising opportunities can provide great benefits, and help to keep production process quality at a suitable standard to retain and grow advertising and avoid credit adjustments or disputes. Primary consideration is in three areas for operations:

Product flexibility — We are a solution provider for sales. We can be creative with layouts, deadlines and product design. Other considerations: Color positions, pop-outs, spadeas, special packaging or wraps.

Precise execution — We want to get it right all the time. Consider quality measures with a compensation tie for operations/distribution personnel.

Predictability — We works *all the time* for advertisers. Build the business to deliver results.

Circulation/distribution integration to solve advertiser challenges is critical for pre-print distribution. Best practices have established that zip-code-level zones with delivery routes that match accepted advertiser preferences are needed.

Displaying the ad at the place of business drives revenues, but needs help from circulation to make it happen. For local car dealer and furniture advertising, nothing beats a copy of the full page ad mounted on a table top cardboard easel, printed with “As Seen in the Newspaper.” Very often, salespeople at the dealership or furniture store haven’t seen the actual ad that is bringing in new customers. The posted ad helps them sell, helps the customer to point and say, “show me that,” and automatically tells every shopper walking in to check the newspaper for ads for that business. It is also proven that sourcing credit recorded by shoppers or salespeople is influenced by the ad on display at the business, *regardless of whether or not that ad actually ran that week!*

— MW Stange LLC

7

Rethink your TV book and grids



Flickr / lastnightontelevision

Are TV listings a waste of space?

Americans watch more TV than any other nationality.

The average American adult spends less than 10 minutes a day reading a newspaper but more than 30 hours a week watching TV. A TV is on each day for an average of 7 hours and 40 minutes in the average home.

98 percent of American households have at least one TV, and 41 percent have three or more.

American children spend 900 hours per year in school, and watch TV an average of 1,023 hours per year.

The average American watches 17 days of TV commercials a year — that's about 20,000 commercials.

Older people, those who also read more newspapers, watch more TV than any other age group. Americans over 65 watch an average of 48 hours per week.

The average American will spend 15 years of their life watching TV. That's 141 hours per month, or 1,692 hours per year.

More people in your community spend more time watching TV than doing everything else you cover combined.

Still think TV coverage is a waste of newsprint?

The trick to TV coverage success is not doing what newspapers used to do. The world has changed.

How to score a TV win

The typical American household now gets 180 channels but routinely watches only about 16. Our own national research on TV coverage showed that as soon as they get digital cable and all those channels, people stop using TV grids because the online cable guides are much better at alerting them to “What’s on tonight?” So we have to get out of that mindset. The big problem viewers have with 500 digital channels isn’t “what’s on” — it’s “what’s good.” The cable guides don’t help solve that problem.

And that’s where newspapers come in.

Instead of a giant grid with no detail, newspapers should print only the core channels that most people watch — the networks and a handful of basic cable channels. (A lot of cable channels in your daily or weekly grid don’t even get 1 million viewers nationally, so the number of people watching any of them locally is tiny.)

Now give readers lots of detail on those 10 to 16 channels so the grid has real meaning.

Then take all the space you freed up from cutting the grid down and tell me what’s on tonight that’s worth watching. That is the kind of job we can do better than the online cable guide.

And after paying my \$150 cable bill and buying my \$2,500 flat screen TV plus my Apple TV device, surround-sound speakers and more, paying the newspaper \$1 to know what’s on tonight that’s GOOD is a worthwhile investment.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

Almost none of the decisions newspapers have made in the past decade had anything to do with our readers.

All our decisions are based on cost savings and most are anti-reader. I would argue that we caused much of our decline, not our platform.

8

Rethink your refers!



What's a refer?

No, this isn't about legalizing marijuana.

We're talking about top boxes or sky boxes or your page one rail, if you have one of those.

Years ago, newsrooms were told that readers like refers — elements telling readers what's in today's paper or what's coming tomorrow — and that every newsroom should be using them.

But no one taught newsrooms to do refers right, and that means we're wasting valuable opportunities to sell more papers every day.

Newspapers in general aren't very good at selling their content. But when it comes to things like picking stories for page one top-boxes or the left rail, the results are often downright terrible.

Most page one refers are very formatted and look about the same every day. At a typical newsroom budget meeting, when it's time to pick the refers, editors focus on stories that almost made page one or stories from key section fronts like sports or features. And of course, most smaller papers are manic about those refers being local, local, local.

All that, unfortunately, is a recipe for poor newsstand sales.

Strategies that work

The whole point of having top boxes or big refers in the left rail is to drive newsstand sales. You'll better serve that goal when you understand and follow guidelines like these:

- **Be flexible.** We're trying to catch people's attention so looking the same every day is deadly. Create a variety of templates for any fixture on A1 and mix things up. Make the page look different every day and more people will notice what you have to offer today.
- **Target newsstand buyers.** When the newsroom picks stories off the section fronts or stories that almost make page one or local high school sports for the refers, they are thinking only of regular subscribers, who like that kind of content.

But newsstand buyers are different. By not subscribing, they are indicating that those stories aren't for them. While the specifics of newsstand buyers may vary from market to market, they are more likely to be younger, poorer, renting and transient. They don't care about high school sports or city council meetings. They are interested in getting ahead, relationships, health care issues, work issues, education, entertainment, etc.

So when it's time to come up with top boxes, the newsroom should look for stories that are inside the paper — wire stories about health, work or relationship trends or issues, advice columns, the editorial page, TV or movie stories.

No one taught
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- **Make it clear.** Too many refers are cute or vague. That doesn't cut it when you are selling. To sell a story and the paper you have to tell prospects exactly what they are getting so if they plunk down \$1 to read that story they aren't disappointed or misled.
- **Make it about me.** Refers are no place for typical headline language. Use personal language and talk about "you" or "we" or "our." Use numbers like "10 tips" or "5 ways" or "3 solutions." These kinds of words imply value and tell me I'm going to get something I can use by buying this paper.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

9

Leverage e-editions for print ads

Better-than-ever e-editions

E-editions, or Digital Replica Editions, are a version of the completed print newspaper digitized for review on the web. They can take several forms, from the very simple PDF up to a sophisticated product with navigation, search, optional views, embedded links and videos, and expanded stories and features.

The explosion of smartphones and tablets, along with the digital subscriptions bundled with print, have stimulated steady growth of e-edition audience. In fact, the tablet screen is a very convenient way to read the newspaper page. Newspapers that have reduced print distribution on selected days have seen a rapid rise in e-edition viewing.

HTML 5 and other device-agnostic processes continue to improve the experience by enabling the same view of the e-edition regardless of device used to view, along with the ability to embed links, videos, elements, and digital ad calls. A newspaper viewed this way can easily use the standard design that many readers like, enhanced with links and videos. Photos can become videos, looking like the newspapers from the wizard world of the movies. Olive Software is an industry leader in the space. There is a wide open future for ad options in this area.



ROP — In all cases the ROP ad content that is printed with the newspaper will ride along and be visible on the screen in a smaller size. Here is an opportunity to improve the results performance for that ROP ad, by either:

- Avoiding small type in the print ad, in anticipation of the digital view, and including the web address in the ad; or
- Replacing the ad for the digital view with a version that includes embedded links. If HTML 5 enabled, the ad can be replaced with an ad call for a served and tracked web version.

Additional ad pages — An additional ad page can be inserted wherever desired, including between sections, or opposite a section front cover. Those ads should be designed for the small screen and include an embedded link. The ads should also be placed with multiple-day frequency to give the advertiser good exposure, as e-edition readers vary greatly from day to day depending on daily schedule, news and weather.

Inserts — Ad inserts that run with the full-run printed newspaper should also get the benefit of the e-edition. They can be inserted in the same position daily within the newspaper or at the end of the news pages. They should be called out in the navigation or contents description, and also promoted within the newspaper as being with the e-edition for those readers who like to go back to yesterday's paper to check the ad insert.

Readers expect that they can get to those inserts with the e-edition, and they are often disappointed. Inserts should also “ride along” for multiple days, in the best case mirroring the effective dates of the sale prices advertised.

Ad inserts that run with the full-run printed newspaper should also get the benefits of the e-edition.

Pricing — A conceptual pricing model is to use the monthly average unique visitors/users to determine a CPM approximation, similar to or the same as that used for printed inserts. Use that pricing as one charge for the full week of sales effective dates and insertions. Another model is to determine a low flat rate per page for “sponsorship” appearance within the e-edition. This approach is often useful for smaller or irregular e-edition audience numbers.

— *MW Stange LLC*

10

Practice sustainable printing



Flickr / Marion Doss

It starts with efficiency.

Sustainable printing practices that are both smart and stunning can go hand in hand. Sustainability involves how much ink, chemicals and paper you use, of course, but it also takes into consideration the whole process. It encompasses the vendors we choose, the amount of energy consumed to deliver a project and the way we conduct business on a day-to-day basis.

The *Lufkin (Texas) Daily News* has joined a growing number of newspaper companies switching to thermal computer-to-plate solutions that use no processing chemicals to print their daily paper, other area papers and commercial projects. (The *Daily News* opted for the CRON-ECRM TP36 plate recorder and Liberty NXP no-process thermal plate from Southern Lithoplate.)

Savings go right to the bottom line

“We wanted to adopt an ecologically responsible approach to production by eliminating the plate processor and chemical-development stage,” said Billy Ricks, production director who said the new technology gives them an edge. “We print a sharper and cleaner product. We also use less water to print. The entire process is fast, efficient and more environmentally friendly.”

The *Villages (Florida) Daily Sun* is also realizing the many advantages of process-free plate making. The award-winning newspaper switched to the NXP no-process plates because they make economic and environmental sense.

“The savings in water, power, production and chemistry costs were major factors in our decision to print with processless plates,” said Steve Infinger, director of operations. “Going no-process did away the plate processor and oven. Water consumption has dropped by 25 percent, and print quality has remained high. We’ve streamlined the overall process in our imaging department.”

An accessory product, NXP Tag It, a new printing plate inkjet identification system, offers a fast, affordable way to read the plate signature, color, sequence and direction for punching. It prints variable plate data extracted from plate files directly onto the reverse side of plates. Press operators know exactly where to hang each plate.

Green is good, too

People who read newspapers and the companies that publish them will always seek the best value, which might be tangible or intangible: selling a used car versus planning a wedding, saving money on paper waste as opposed to being viewed as a “green” operation.

Publishers and production managers face tough issues about machinery, workflow, throughput, delays and quality that can kill print profitability. The industry needs to work together to identify and quantify remedies to margin-robbing conditions, to assure compliance with OSHA and EPA regulations and to deliver high-value benefits like efficiency and environmental improvements. Southern Lithoplate’s “SLP Solutions” is dedicated to helping publishers discover these kinds of advantages.

Sustainability involves how much ink, chemicals and paper you use, but it also takes into consideration the whole process.

It’s important to push the needle further when it comes to equipment productivity, print quality and operational efficiency. Reducing our legacy costs and our environmental impact are important aspects of keeping print alive and well.

— *Southern Lithoplate*

11

Mix up
your writing
style



Flickr / Terry Feuerborn

Death to the inverted pyramid

The inverted pyramid style of news writing has been drilled into every journalist's brain in every j-school in the land. Let's put an end to that.

The inverted pyramid isn't a great writing style. Ironically, and maybe predictably, it was a cost-cutting move by newspapers. During the Civil War. It was expensive to telegraph stories back to the main office and newspapers paid as much as pennies per word – a hefty sum in those days.

So a style of writing stripped of prose that pushed a summary of the story to the top evolved as a way to reduce expenses.

But we're still at it 150 years later.

Mix up your writing style. Use question and answer formats, bullet points, pro-cons and other styles and methods of telling stories. There are dozens of alternatives, from quizzes to grids. Many are faster to produce and take up less space, too. It will make our stories more engaging and interesting and spice up our pages and layouts. Really. It's okay. Just let the inverted pyramid go.

Readers will love you for it.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

12

Bring the best of the web to print

Reader Comments

Posted: Thursday, February 18, 2016

Article comment by: **Anonymous88158**

Lawner is trying but he keeps getting road blocked by Th
his state, Start by getting rid of all incumbents. Nest ele

Posted: Thursday, February 18, 2016

Article comment by: **METALWORKER**

Has any one ever seen an audit of the state lottery and
If not, why not? as long as all proceeds from the games
Is there, I haven't seen one.
It seem the Gov. and his minions are out to bust union
for one do not wholly blame him.
four% margin.

A great source of content

Bringing the best of your web site to your print products is a great way to enhance print content while also helping your web site grow.

Taking your best five comments of the day from the web site and running them on your editorial page is a great example of how you can reverse-publish and win. Those five comments will provide interesting diversity — both in topics and in voices — to your paper. But it will also encourage a lot more people to comment — and comment thoughtfully — on your web site.

One thing we have learned from building user-contributed content platforms is that people still love to see their words in print. Yes, posting to your Facebook page is fine, but getting your views printed in the paper is still a big deal. Publishing the best of the web — whether it's user photos or calendar items — absolutely grows the volume of quality content you get online.

So printing the best of your web site in print is a very big win-win.

Finding and presenting in print other interesting stuff on the web — like a feature that lists the top five web search words each day or the hottest five videos — is more work and less of a win for your own web site, but will appeal to your readers.

Not only do these features do well with younger readers, older readers who are less web-savvy will appreciate learning more about what's going on out there on the World Wide Web.

— Creative Circle Media Solutions

13

Expand your print products!

Going weekly

While it might seem counterintuitive, launching new print products — especially niche products — still works.

Consider layering some weekly newspapers under your daily newspaper footprint. Move your community news, which has a real but limited audience, out of your daily product and into more targeted weeklies that deliver tight, town-oriented content. This frees up space and energy in your daily product to cover the broader issues, which is a better role for a daily. Too many dailies are filling their local pages with hyper-local content that is wasted on a broad audience. It's not a good use of space in a publication covering a broad area unless you are zoning.

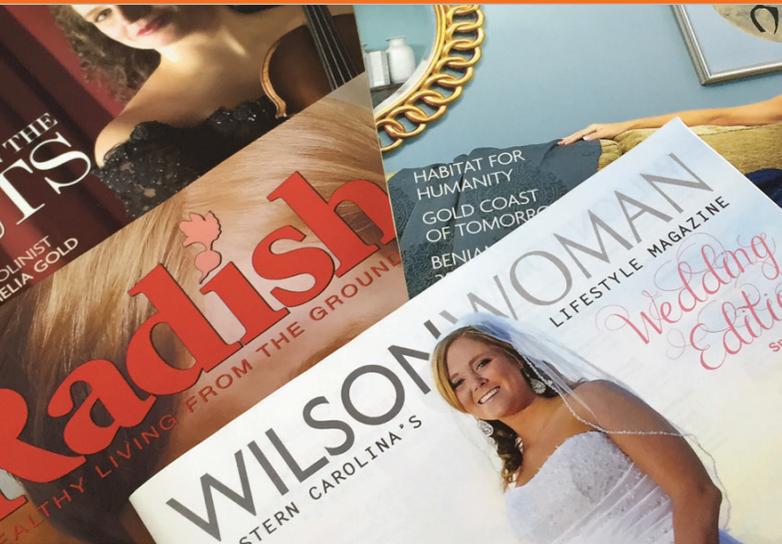
Weekly products can have lower ad rates that might appeal to advertisers who don't want your whole market but would advertise in a more targeted one that better meets their needs.

You can also use weeklies to extend your market. Add weekly publications where you have gaps in your coverage or to extend your reach to towns beyond your daily market. At least some of your daily content might apply to the weekly product and having a local brand might give you a footprint you can grow in the future.

Where you have daily readers in those outlying areas, consider inserting the weekly into your daily product, enhancing your brand in the area.

The magazine option

Niche magazine products, like a glossy magazine about your region that celebrates why it's great to live here, are often a big hit. Niche titles that focus on kids or parenting, the outdoors, business or even a very specific



area like boating can work in many markets. What demographics might be a good fit for the people you reach or don't reach through the newspaper?

A good way to find niche topics is to revisit your special section list and see if there is a topic among things you are already doing that could be elevated into a separate publication. Gardening, home improvement or entertainment might provide a bump in revenue if they were elevated into a magazine format and done once or twice each year.

An alt daily?

Taking this idea of more targeted print products further, what if you created another daily?

The *Chicago Tribune* successfully launched *Redeye*, a free, daily alternative paper aimed at younger readers and mass-transit commuters. It was a bold and expensive move, but perhaps the kind of thing more papers should consider. While a new daily is only plausible in a metro market, maybe a targeted weekly would work in yours. If our existing market is old (but wealthy) and we want to establish new markets, maybe a new print newspaper is the answer.

If your paper is known for its conservative slant on the editorial pages, it might be crimping your reach. What if you launched a liberal-leaning daily and offered an alternative?

This tactic may seem like a reach, but it works in most of the world. It's not uncommon in Europe or Latin America for one publishing company to publish multiple dailies. One might be a conservative paper while another is more mainstream or liberal.

A good way to find niche topics is to revisit your special section list and see if there is a topic that could be elevated into a separate publication.

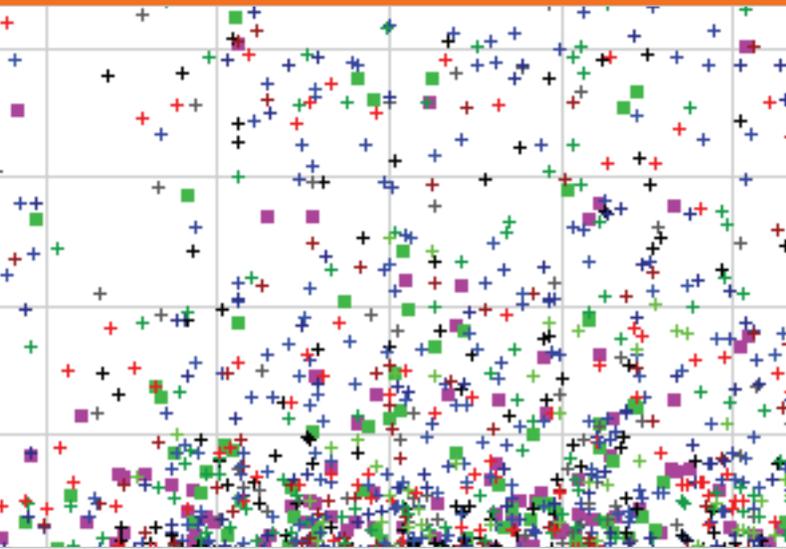
Think Fox News vs. MSNBC. They are like oil and water in terms of their viewership but they both would have strong proponents in your market. Fox News happened because Rupert Murdoch (who owns newspapers, too) brought European-style TV that wears its political affiliation on its sleeve to the U.S. That drove the already liberal MSNBC further to the left. Could that work here in print as well?

U.S. newspapers have a tradition of trying to be "objective" in everything we do, but too many people reject us because they think we are biased anyway. What if some of us adopted the European model where we took a one-sided perspective in everything we cover? Since papers in other parts of the world live and die by newsstand sales and in many cases have more loyal readers because of their political affiliation, it might not be that crazy.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

14

Use data for sales prospecting



Flickr / Michael Cramer

The ad sales situation

These are tough times for ad sales:

- Fewer advertisers are pre-sold on newspaper advertising value. Fewer in-bound ad orders, newspaper audience and brand strength has diminished.
- Sales staff and sales support staff reductions. Fewer sales conversations, less sales.
- Fewer IT resources to help in managing data to support sales.

Best tactic: Sell advertising to those most likely to buy it, “low hanging fruit” with good ROI.

Prioritize the best potential advertisers using industry average ad spending, and also targeting those types of advertisers that do well with newspaper advertising.

Create sales prospect lists that reference:

- current advertisers that should be spending more;
- former advertisers that could likely be re-sold; and
- non-advertisers with best potential that match up well with the newspaper audience.

How: Use a Data Analysis tool to produce the information and guide it with a CRM.

Most newspapers do not need expensive tools. The tools should be easy enough to use without adding labor, and the set up and ongoing cost should be covered by sales gains the first year.

The cost for both the analysis tools and the CRM (Customer Relationship Management system) should be less than an FTE, and offer a positive cash impact. Beware of systems that multiply charges with additional seats, and that are designed for selling everything under the sun. Look for tools that can offer

testimonials from newspapers that use them efficiently, particularly for mid-sized papers.

Reference for a good tool: Marketing Solutions Group has a good analysis tool, called CP-Ads. When coupled with their CRM option, business data can be matched to the newspaper's billing data, they have a reasonably priced option that is good for most newspapers.

Cost estimates for business data: 10 cents a record. Assume acquiring a number between 2% and 3% of the area population, or use a designated number of business establishments. A community with 100,000 people would generate a list of about 2,000 business records. Total business counts, which are dominated by the very small working out of homes usually approximate over 7% of population counts, or 7,000.

CP-Ads costs — Setup ranges from \$4,000 to \$10,000 for one-time set up, plus \$200 to \$1,000 per month based on circ size. \$500 to \$1,000 to append data to billing accounts. No added per seat costs. The CRM add-on is also \$200 to \$1,000 per month, per circulation.

ROI: Counting only ten advertisers that spend or increase spending by \$1,000 per month, (or 20 smaller advertisers spending or increasing \$500), would bring \$120,000 more in a year. Assuming 30% annual churn, the second year would total \$204,000 and the third year would be \$288,000. It is also realistic to target seasonal special sales opportunities that can return \$100,000 to \$200,000 annually.

— MW Stange LLC

The cost for both the analysis tools and the CRM should be less than an FTE, and offer a positive cash impact.

15

Switch to five columns

Narrow columns are destroying readability

As newspapers shifted to smaller pages to save newsprint costs, no one paid much attention to the column width of text. In fact, we promoted the idea that narrower pages were easier to read (or at least to hold).

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Text columns in U.S. newspapers are now so narrow — typically 9 or 10 picas wide with narrow gutters — that we've actually made newspapers very hard to read. That's because people don't read individual words. They read in 3-to-4-word phrases: "She went / to the store / to buy milk / for the cat / she found / on the porch." If you've ever tried speedreading, the trick is simply learning to take in more words at a time — five words or eight words. Most people who love to read (and still read newspapers) are good readers and take in three to six words at a time.

An ideal column width — something between 12 and 18 picas using typical newspaper text — holds two to three phrases per line, and a person can read that pretty quickly.

But when the column is too narrow, reading speed slows considerably. When lines are short, you can't develop a steady pace. More hyphenations and broken phrases increase the complexity of the type. Studies show this actually makes readers tense and causes them to just skip words that they can't put together into phrases.

A majority of U.S. newspapers also don't use a strong text font, and don't typeset it properly, either. Large spaces between words or words that are tracked out in justification also significantly slow reading speed.

The city attorney suggested that if the council was to move forward with the amended ordinance, it should go back a first-read to give sufficient time to review with the finance committee.

Davis suggested moving the vote to Oct. 1, which would bring it into the new budget year.

The amendment passed with a 5-2 vote, and the ordinance will

an application for additional funds for a NRCS/EWP project.

The council heard public participation from six different residents of the Lake Forest community about the lack of information given to them about the proposed DISC development.

Steve Sasser, president of the Lake Forest POA, said he felt there was a break down in communication between the council and the resi-

phase of a 1990 master planned development.

The area is on the south end of Highway 181, between the end of Davidson School and the community center.

DISC, in capacity, 461,000 square feet of high-end commercial space in the city.

A public hearing will be held on Oct. 1.

So we've made people who love to read actually feel tense when they read a newspaper and we've slowed their reading speed 30 to 60 percent.

Think about the implications of that. If a typical adult spends 10–15 minutes with their newspaper each day, that means that our narrow columns have them reading two to four fewer stories per issue. We've made the experience less enjoyable and we've set up a format that probably is causing them to skip several words per story.

It's time for a new format

A baby solution is to switch to ragged right text type. By getting rid of all the hyphenations, we can quickly make our text a little more legible. That will make stories 3–7% longer in some cases.

Of course, if you switched to a better font and set the type properly, you could probably regain that loss.

But the right move is to finally ditch the six-column format and go to five columns. Even this width is not ideal. Most broadsheet papers will end up with 12–13 pica columns at five columns.

At five columns, stories appear more inviting, reading speed increases and line breaks are greatly reduced. It's a dramatically better reading experience.

And there are other potential benefits. A one-column ad is pretty pointless in today's newspapers. The column is so narrow, it doesn't allow for a good headline (and as we all should know, an ad without a good headline is pretty worthless). The uneven balance of five columns can make the ads and the pages themselves more dynamic because there is no 50-50 split on the page.

What's the problem?

Designing an attractive five-column page is trickier. That's not a problem for a skilled designer, but we've done away with most of those in our newsrooms. What we're left with is a few tried and true formats and harried former copy editors pushing out too many pages. So some attention needs to be paid to the templates and libraries to keep them efficient, and the people doing layout may need some coaching.

The bigger barrier to this change is changing ad sizes. Some ad departments panic at the thought, without weighing the advantages and disadvantages.

The shift can actually be a big positive for the ad department, forcing a review of ad rates and sizes and a refocus on what's good for the advertiser. Resizing would offer an opportunity to rethink ads rather than simply picking up the same ad over and over, sometimes for years. At most newspapers, that would be a refreshing change.

An alternate strategy is to move to modular ad stacks and allow editorial to shift to five columns on all or most of their content. Of course, modular ad stacks can be another tough sell — but that's another story (see tip #5).

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

16

Modernize classifieds for a web-based world

Those were the days

Years ago, classified advertising was all about search. It was organized (or classified) into logical order to help you find what you wanted. It was its own content. If you ran more classifieds, you got more classified shoppers and ads. Many newspapers experienced that cycle of growth, and classified revenue became a huge boost to their bottom line.

As time passed, competition came in the form of photo books for auto and real estate, and from shopper publications. Employment advertising had little classified competition and evolved into the most profitable advertising that we carried. Our ads got smaller as the prices went up, and we printed agate (tiny) type rife with abbreviations. Our self-service was weak, and people had to call and wait on the phone, or fax their copy.

Here's when everything changed

Then the web came, and with it, instantaneous search, free ad postings, unlimited copy, photos, and immediate placement or cancellation. Self-service has evolved to full service. The only thing needed was a critical mass of local audience using the same search tool versus the local newspaper and bang, Google happened. Category leaders evolved including Monster, Craigslist, Autotrader, Cars, CareerBuilder, ForRent, Apartments, Realtor.com, etc. They all get direct traffic, but Google is the freeway to all.

We can still compete. The key is to engineer our classifieds to be competitive in this new world, and expand our digital offerings to get the best results for our advertisers.

Our primary competitive advantage is that we are local. Second, it is easy to comparison-shop printed pages. Third, the local newspaper provides a more trustworthy environment.



Ways to make print classifieds more friendly include wider columns, larger typography, photos and color.

National polling research by Creative Circle Media Solutions, which has led numerous classified redesigns, showed that adding photos and color are the best ways to increase classified readership. In their polls, 59 percent of adults said they would use the classifieds more if the ads had photos. That number jumped to 75 percent for those under age 34.

Creative Circle also found that 43 percent of adults said they would use classifieds more if the type was easier to read. That number jumped to 68 percent for those aged 55 and older.

Other keys to classified success include competitive pricing and limiting abbreviations and centered text. You should also consider increasing the minimum length of ads and running ads more days to build content. Also, consider including web addresses with contact info.

If the classified section is not stand-alone, place it with local news for the widest exposure. Use banners for major categories to bring attention. Remember that it is not a search product; everything has to stand out for browsing.

Real estate and automotive ads must have photos! Everything on the web in these categories has photos. Color photos invite browsing. Make them large and attractive.

Build low-cost classified display ad units for employment advertising that brand the employer, particularly for health care. Combine placement with news.

Everything should also run on your website, whether partnered with a national site or not. Packaging builds content on both sides,

**59 percent of adults
said they would
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That number jumped
to 75 percent for
those under age 34.**

particularly with better ads in print. If you have a national partner, leverage it by getting as much assistance as possible and also pitching print with a “partnership package” to their directly sold advertisers. Make your web-based self-service an advertiser preference.

Strong self-service is critical

A good self-service platform is very important and hard to find. There are a lot of vendors but each has drawbacks and advantages. Typically, the web order entry systems from print production platforms are the weakest but independent systems sometimes have trouble integrating with print systems.

The key is to try the process yourself. Is it easy and intuitive? Will users be confused? Ask about abandonment rates. Most web systems lose more than half the prospects that begin the ad placement process.

— MW Stange LLC

17

Manage obituaries for best potential

Our best-read content

Obituaries, paid and unpaid, are important to a newspaper audience. Their financial return has also become important. Modeling best practices to establish a strong market reputation for death records and obituaries should be a priority.

Goal: An objective is to get a death notice for almost all deaths in the core market, and to get a longer paid notice from more than 65% of those. Some markets get more than 85% of deaths running a paid notice.

Paid and unpaid: A good practice is to run submitted basic small death notices for no cost, and to sort them together alphabetically with paid longer versions. Often, the longer paid version is submitted later, and would replace the remaining scheduled dates for the free small version. The appearance of the smaller version often creates an incentive for elaboration and placing the longer version.

Location: Obituaries should be run in the local news section, alongside any newsroom-generated copy about deaths of newsworthy figures. They are local news of record, and should never be placed elsewhere.

Placement: Obituaries should only be placed through funeral homes, and sent via e-mail or submitted through a remote entry system. While some papers still accept obituaries via fax, this method of delivery should be discouraged. E-mail preserves a record, prevents re-keying errors and reduces labor. The e-mail address should have multiple back-up agents. Family-placed obituaries, if accepted, should be verified with the funeral home.



Flickr / Douglas Coulter

Some markets get more than 85% of deaths running a paid notice.

Font: Since older readers are a primary audience for obituaries, use a very readable font in at least 8 point size and preferably larger, although legibility is driven by both point size and font. A five-column broadsheet page is the ideal format, though a six-column page will work. Consider offering a two-column obit format if obituaries run particularly long.

Rate: The average price point is often weighed in comparison and as part of the cost of funeral services. Think in terms of the reasonableness of average cost for the obituary. In many markets, a \$200 to \$300 price point can work. In small community markets, the price should be more like \$100 to \$150.

Be aware that funeral homes will typically mark up your price, sometimes dramatically, and blame the cost on the expensive newspaper. Discuss with your funeral homes what their pass-along costs are, and discourage dramatic markup of your costs.

A positive redesign of obituaries with accompanying rate modifications should be reviewed with leading area funeral directors for feedback. In general, the rate should be lower than other insertion rates.

Many newspapers have gone through a conversion from fewer high-cost, hard-to-read obits to quality and size for a fair total price, and have had gains.

If you are moving from a fax or phone-placed process to e-mail or remote entry, or even from family-placed to funeral home-placed requirements, you might consider a service fee discount for the funeral home in exchange for typing in the copy.

Take care with local regulations regarding funeral home services and disclosure. Again, it's best to review plans with the local experts.

Online: All obits should be packaged with online placement, including optional social media extensions. The most popular vendor service for newspapers on this is Legacy.com. National searches through Legacy bring added audience, and they have revenue-sharing options on the results pages. Every local death should be reviewable through the newspaper website as a matter of public record.

— MW Stange LLC

18

Reinvest in strong visuals

What if photos are the answer?

Newspapers have been dumping their photo and graphics staffs, thinking those positions are luxuries from the past. We'll just let the reporters take their own pictures (and video) and get by with that.

But what if photos are part of the answer? That's not a crazy question. All kinds of research proves that good photos — and certainly large good photos — sell papers on the newsstand. We know photos are the first thing everyone looks at when they see a page. And here are other things research tells us:

- Stories with photos get read more than stories without photos, and the larger the photo, the more the readership goes up.
- People read deeper into stories with photos than those without images.
- Readers remember more detail about a story days later if it had a photo than if it didn't.

That's powerful stuff.

Remember, photos are local, too. And professional photographers get a lot of images no reporter could ever capture — from tight high school sports action to story-telling images that have humor and irony.

Photos literally bring newspaper pages to life. They provide energy and variety and drive readership. They help grab and hold attention and they are often what people talk about. They can bring humor and detail and personality to our pages that words just can't match.

Newspapers tend to feel comfortable doing what other newspapers do. We follow the leader.



Flickr / Nick Haskins

Did we get rid of photographers because readers don't like photos?

Nope. Quite the opposite. There are many fewer photographers because editors who don't understand or appreciate visuals are making the layoff decisions. It's somehow easier to justify getting rid of a photographer than a reporter. Reporters are much more important, right?

And once editors saw one paper cutting photographers, others were quick use that example to justify the same thing.

Well, when we redesign papers, we often urge our clients to upgrade their photography again. At one paper where they had eliminated the photo positions altogether, we told them we couldn't take on the project unless they committed to hiring a strong photographer. They thought we were kidding. But they did it and were reminded almost immediately why photographers are so vital. Suddenly the paper had energy again and people were talking about the photos in the paper. They would never go back.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

We would argue that when a lot of newspapers are doing something, it's more than likely a bad idea.

19

Focus on print and deliver programs

Don't just deliver inserts, print them, too!

“Ad Inserts and Circulation, our leading revenue segments.”

— *Mike Joseph, EVP Newspapers, Cox Media Group*

“40% of ad revenue is preprints. Manufacturing capacity unlocks optimum revenue.”

— *Ray Farris, Publisher, St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

The strongest competitive advantage that newspapers continue to leverage is in advertising preprint delivery. Many newspapers have not seen a reduction in numbers of active preprint advertisers.

Newspapers can deliver pre-packaged inserts for a fraction of the cost of direct mail, which is weight-rated. Paid subscriptions ensure that the material makes it into the home, and the audience value of ad inserts in the Sunday newspaper is a cultural norm. Inserts in other days have less competition, and are also highly valued.

Print and deliver adds the creative and printing elements to an already strong value. Non-subscriber or free options also work, depending on the value of the package to the consumer.

By producing everything from end to end, the newspaper can control the quality and quantity for best delivery, and not be at the mercy of outside printers not meeting standards for automated inserting. For standards, visit <http://www.naa.org/Topics-and-Tools/Advertising/Sales-Collateral/2011/Guidelines-for-Uniform-Advertising-Inserts.aspx>



Tips for creating your own print and deliver sales effort

- Bring together a cross-department team including advertising, production/operations, finance and circulation to build the best offering for what you can do.
- Examine print and deliver options offered by other newspapers of a similar size. Learn from them.
- Have a short-run press capable of printing full color at competitive cost. Each press option has its own sweet spot of lowest cost when considering quantity per run, paper options, and operating cost. Help to justify the expense by having the machine handle all other company print work, including rack cards and mail pieces for circulation. Justify also with short run work bids.
- If acquiring a short-run press is not possible, consider a partnership deal with a local printer.
- Build a sales kit that has prices for print and deliver with overrun options, and a minimum selection of variable options. Too many choices can kill a sale. Only sell what you can do well. (i.e., paper stock, standard colors). Build competitive deadlines and rates, minimum quantities that can ensure large enough geography, and always include waste and full draw numbers for single copy in package quotes. Include a creative charge for changes beyond one proof correction.
- Train sales staff using examples of delivered ad inserts. The program is very effectively sold over the phone to smaller advertisers. The pitch can be “print and deliver 10,000 color flyers to your part of town for only 7 cents per household, \$700 total cost.”

By producing everything from end to end, the newspaper can control the quality and quantity for best delivery.

— MW Stange LLC

20

Sell print advertising using the web

Use the web to help the sale staff and get your word out

Selling processes have evolved with the web and mobile devices. Communication that used to take place via U.S. mail and multiple in-person visits now happens on e-mail, social media, text and phones.

In addition, data about individuals and businesses is now available online, and that data can now be used to qualify a lead and get us to a conversation with a potential advertiser much sooner.

The conundrum is that while the web has provided us with tools that help us sell better, it has also enabled the competition that is taking away huge chunks of business. And the kicker is that many of us do not yet use these tools effectively, while our competitors most certainly do.

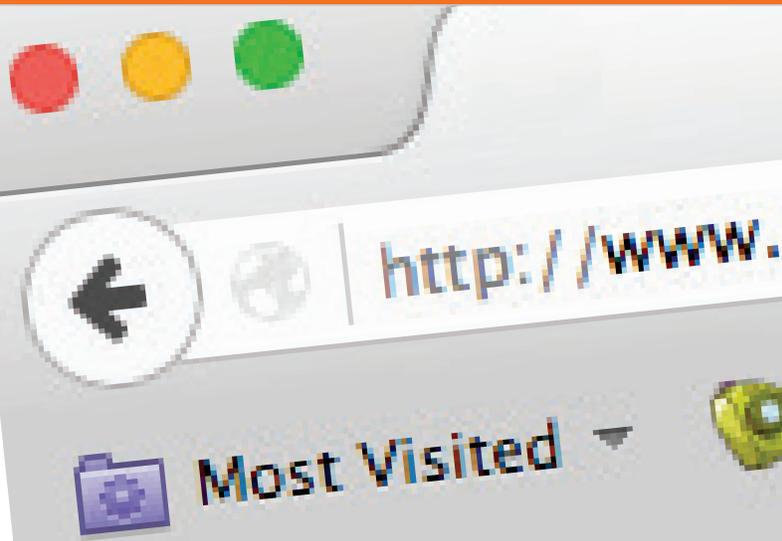
Though the value of in-person sales conversations, with the personal relationships and non-verbal communication they make possible, can never be replaced, we have come a long way from the basic cold call.

Leads can come from inbound calls and e-mails, outbound e-mail campaigns, contact via your website, database analysis tools, sales research on the web, promotion/advertising, personal contact.

Sales communication takes place through e-mail, phone, quick return phone calls from mobile phones, web demos, texts and personal visits.

Sales presentations can be e-mailed materials, web-based materials or links, or personal visits with hard copy.

Think about it — considering your busy schedule, how would you prefer that a salesperson communicate with you?



A sample sales sequence

1. Define and qualify lead.
2. E-mail lead to arrange follow-up phone call.
3. Exchange of e-mail, or phone call to describe basics and set a follow-up appointment to review.
4. Calendar invite for appointment possibly including a web demo link, or phone numbers for reference.
5. Presentation appointment via web demo or e-mailed document to walk through.
6. Follow-up e-mail to confirm changes or outcome from presentation appointment.
7. Follow-up to confirm order via e-mail. Follow-up questions via phone.

To enable your sales staff to use tools to their best advantage, sales materials need to be easily accessible via the newspaper website to generate leads and to link to for communications. Web demo accounts need to be available to sales staff. Custom presentation templates should be available for staff to quickly plug in customer-specific information. They should also be “light” enough to e-mail upon request, as most e-mail servers limit message sizes to 10 megs, some to 5.

Build and update a media kit online in linked pieces, so search engines can pick up the pieces that advertisers may be looking for. Include samples of creative ads with testimonials. Include price quotes for recommended ad campaigns. Give information every which way it could be looked at.

Train and test the staff on using the tools, and set an expectation for contacts, presentations, testimonials, and gathered objections/rejection information.

The conundrum is that while the web has provided us with tools that help us sell better, it has also enabled the competition that is taking away huge chunks of business.

21

Use a virtual advertising call center

How are you handling inbound calls?

If a local business owner calls your ad department, what happens? Do you have a quality person picking up the calls and handling them the best way possible? Can the caller get their questions handled right away, or do they need to wait for a call back from a rep that is “out in the field,” or maybe “out to lunch.”

Is there a clean process to handle business-oriented calls versus private party/consumer calls?

What happens when the weather is horrible or Suzy, the office know-it-all wizard, is out sick?

The most profitable advertising in the newspaper has historically been employment advertising. Do you have great people handling those calls to maximum effect and capturing that revenue right away?

Very often, your circulation department experts have to technologies for handling customer service calls that can be adapted by the advertising department for their purposes, and not just for inbound classified calls.

By using VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol), phones can be managed at a lower digital cost, and also distributed through an ACD system (Automated Call Distribution) to anybody at any location on demand.



Flickr / One Way Stock

Modern sales situations generally use a combination of e-mail, phone calls, and web tools that either let the rep show presentations remotely, or point to examples on the web.

Calls can be routed to a specific “phone tree” that will move along a pre-determined priority for call handling. Calls can also be forwarded to mobile phones based on a specific schedule along with the priority options. An ACD system can handle most custom options, and also track activity outbound as well as inbound.

Outbound call sales activity is a great way to maximize efficiency, as opposed to outside sales meetings that should be reserved for less typical situations, and should be tracked.

Modern sales situations generally use a combination of e-mail, phone calls, and web tools that either let the rep show presentations remotely, or point to examples on the web. With access to these tools, an ad department can be truly decentralized, while at the same time all linked together through their systems.

For papers or reps that require flexible work options, “softphone” software can be loaded into a laptop or tablet so the business phone rides along with the workstation computer and operates via the web. A sales rep can work from any location that has internet access, whether that’s in a bureau office across town, at home during bad weather, or with sick children.

Front desk personnel or distributed staff at any location can handling inbound or performing outbound activities. A company faced with reduction of office space can house sales staff anywhere, helping to reduce costs of maintaining a large office building while also offering employees a “work from home” option. There should always be controls on the work from home, and requiring regular get-togethers for staff that are distributed are needed for morale and consistency of training messages.

Take a look at the technologies already in your operation serving circulation. Also, many local phone services offer turn-key lower cost fee based systems that can be tried without capital investment. Setting up the right phone system can save on office space, improve time efficiency and advertiser services, and improve revenues.

— *MW Stange LLC*

22

Produce custom publications for local groups

Custom publishing is a big business

Do you have a local business or hospital celebrating a golden anniversary? That's an opportunity to provide a custom publication for the organization, and also to sell supporting advertising to that business's vendors.

As publishing experts, newspapers are well positioned to create an entirely new revenue stream — custom publishing. It can involve a hardcover book, annual report, magazine, special section or even a video or web site.

If you don't have the expertise or staffing to design and produce a magazine or hardcover book project, consider outsourcing that part of the project. Creative Circle Media Solutions offers "Creative Outsourcing" for just this kind of project.

Special products have recognized mergers and acquisitions, welcomed a new employer to the area, or celebrated the opening of a new hospital wing.

An annual report can be produced for locally headquartered companies, with different versions for the public in the newspaper and distributed at a stockholder's meeting.

Custom publications can also be produced for municipal governments, universities, and significant community institutions such as zoos or amusement parks.

When the project is a special section, the end result is that the organization gets a full special section under their name for the cost of one ad, the newspaper gets a revenue stream from non-traditional advertisers, and readers get special content for important local employers or institutions.

Revenues from custom publishing projects can range from tens to hundreds of thousands.

Celebrating a Century
July 2015

A look at Carus' past, present and future



CELEBRATING
100 YEARS
1915-2015

How it works

Here's an example — a golden anniversary celebration for a notable large business or employer. The special publication could be printed as a tabloid and inserted into the newspaper, as well as living on both the organization's and newspaper's websites. Of course, you'd print overrun copies for the business to distribute. You could also prepare an e-mail newsletter version that takes the form of a report to the community with historical notes and celebratory recognition of employees.

To accomplish a project like this, planning would need to be in partnership with the organization involved. They would generate content, and provide a list of their vendors with contacts and an introductory letter signed by their highest ranking officer asking for vendor support by advertising in the special publication. In many cases, you could require an "anchor ad" for the commitment to produce. Both parties would agree to a back-out schedule.

An assigned newspaper rep would solicit and track the vendor contacts via phone and e-mail. You should target the publication for 50% advertising ratio, based on sold ad counts. Ads should be sold in modular ad units, and limited to full-page, half-page, and possibly quarter-page options.

Revenues from these projects can range from tens to hundreds of thousands.

You would want to develop a pro-forma that shows the incremental contribution margin based on advertising sold and page counts. In the event of low ad lines, a section can be rolled into ROP as a pullout. Content supplied can be managed by an editor with contracted (i.e., variable) resources.

Vendors to be solicited for ad space could include: All suppliers of equipment or goods, power company, building services, legal service, CPA service, cleaning service, construction services, labor unions, ad agencies, temp service agency, tech support, digital (web) services — basically anybody who does business with that entity. In addition, many municipal or other large organizations may wish to express congratulatory messages.

— MW Stange LLC

23

Invest in quality ad design

It's results that count

It's sad but true: Too many sales reps are selling space, not results. And while sales training is one critical need (tip #24), another overlooked training area is ad design.

By design, we're not just talking fonts and colors. We're talking about the bedrock stuff like having a strong call to action, a good visual and well-edited text.

Between selling and managing all their clients' paperwork and deadlines, our ad sales teams have precious little time to actually make sure the ads we create are effective. Not good.

Meanwhile, some papers once had strong ad designers who could take the lead on content after consulting with the rep or even the advertiser directly. Sadly, a lot of that talent is gone, lost to outsourcing, staff reductions and low salaries in the ad production department.

A flip through most print newspapers today typically reveals a lot of the basics gone wrong: ads are cluttered, they have weak or no call to action, they aren't organized or attractive, they lead with the company name or logo. Badly crafted ads are not just common, they dominate. (And the situation's even worse when it comes to web display ads.)

If that's what you see in your newspaper, it's time to stop the slide. Nothing could be more critical to our long-term health than making sure the ads we do sell and print WORK.

Is it worth \$1 a day
to get a better night's sleep?

Up to 50% off
Floor Model Clearance

Largest selection of specialty mattresses
Memory Foam • Gel • Air Beds • Hybrid

Tempur-Pedic Cloud Prima
As low as \$28/month

iComfort Savant
As low as \$28/month

Tempur-Pedic
Contour Supreme
As low as \$37/month

48 months
0% interest

Free!

Three ways to address the issue

1. Just talk about the ads. We're so busy and so siloed in our jobs we rarely get together and talk about the work. If you can do that in a spirit of brainstorming it can be energizing and fruitful.

Try sponsoring a weekly brown bag lunch with small groups of ad sales reps, designers, production teams and managers. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. Just put three or four ads on the wall and talk about how to make them better. Brainstorming works wonders. Not everyone is good at this stuff, but typically even a small group has enough knowledge to make any ad better.

It's a small step, but if you just improved four ads a week, you'd upgrade more than 200 in a year. And that's real progress.

2. Get folks some training. Send them to workshops at the state press association and jump on an Inland Press Association webinar (they are free to members). Or bring someone in from outside. Invite someone from another paper or a school that teaches ad design to talk with your team. Creative Circle Media Solutions leads this kind of training and can include remakes of several ads to help show better answers. They can also lead training for advertisers on what makes a good ad, cutting out the sales rep as middleman in getting the message out.

3. Hit some home runs. You can raise the standards of everyone by just having a few big successes. You can tackle a particularly big advertiser or one who has not been receptive to new ideas in the past and is running

**Our ad sales teams
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little time to
actually make sure
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are effective.**

ineffective ads. So focus a little extra energy in trying to make sure that once each month or twice each quarter, you are creating truly powerful print ads. Consider getting the whole staff involved.

Again, consider bringing in an expert to get there. Is there an ad agency in town you can partner with or a previous employee who was the star of your team who would come in and help create big wins? That's the aim of Creative Circle's "Creative Outsourcing" programs, which offer up top designers to papers that don't have the resources for high end design challenges.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

24

Retrain your ad staff

Our sales teams are overwhelmed

In today's highly competitive marketplace, it is vital that a company's sales force maximize its time and resources. Sales executives need to know how to get a fundamental understanding of the needs of their customers and how best to mix product into the right solution for their clients.

We're asking our sales teams to sell an ever-widening array of products and too often don't give them the tools to succeed in selling them. Sending them to a workshop or two probably isn't enough, either. Most sales reps would benefit from more thorough training on how to sell in this competitive environment.

Investing in an in-depth on-site training program for your sales team can reap immediate rewards. Be sure your training program includes consultive selling techniques that help your sales team learn more about their clients. That's the key. Teach them how to pre-qualify leads to maximize their time and make sure they understand which print and web products to offer different types of advertisers.

For example, Virtanza uses a classroom workshop format and full-day field coaching and emphasizes customer-face time. This kind of highly interactive hands-on training includes work with real prospects to replicate real-world selling in role-plays and other exercises to provide targeted and highly relevant feedback. They promise to transform your sales process within four to six months — a change that will have a long-term impact on your bottom line.

"The Virtanza training and certification program has helped our sales teams better understand the current needs of our advertisers and how to fulfill those needs with a marketing mix of print and digital media. This educational program has helped us grow sales in local digital and print revenue from existing and new customers," said Chuck Dix, CEO and president of Dix Communications.

Most importantly, with better training, your customers will see better results from educated recommendations that translate into incremental revenue, lower churn and an expanded base of customers.

— Virtanza

With better training, your customers will see better results from educated recommendations.

25

Get off the bandwagons

Hot trends are bad for newsrooms

After years of expanding demands and decreased staffing, newsrooms need a new vision — one that makes sense, is truly cross-platform and is doable in today's 24/7, social network-driven environment.

Many “solutions” bandied about at conferences are simplistic at best and misguided at worst: We need to be digital first, video first, mobile first or local first. None of them are working. Why?

Proponents rarely offer financial, circulation or readership numbers to support their ideas. And why is it so many later declare bankruptcy or suffer dramatic print circulation and revenue declines?

If you dig deeper into the statistics behind things like the huge surge in time spent watching video, you'll learn that they have more to do with changing TV and movie-viewing habits than with anything relevant to news sites or consumption.

Being “all local” is another Big Myth that is killing newspapers. It sounds good, but has led newsrooms astray. Local doesn't mean all stories have to be written by a staff member. Readers certainly don't define local as staff-written. It was an easy “fix” that many small newspapers adopted but it was just too simplistic. Content is local when I can use it, when it's interesting, when it impacts my life. And that would include a lot of great wire or syndicated content.

That's not to say elements of video, mobile, local and digital aren't mission-critical. But taking our current approach to news and making it digital or — heaven forbid — video, is nothing short of a disaster for newspapers and our newsrooms.

How we might succeed

What we have to face up to is that we need a new definition of content. Rather than copying other newspapers, most of which are chasing their tails, maybe we could learn from companies like Google or Southwest Airlines or Apple. That might lead us to a completely different idea — like being customer-first.

That's a target you can sink your teeth into. Had we been thinking that way in the past decade, our industry might be a lot healthier today, because just about every move we made — from narrower pages to flimsy newsprint — was anti-customer.

Here are four realistic words you might consider in guiding your newsroom to new and better content: **interesting**, **relevant**, **diverse** and **useful**. Because whatever platform we're on, if we aren't those things, we're dead. And most newsrooms, if they looked at the matter objectively, would realize they have some work ahead before they're any of those key words.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

The SLP print solutions team

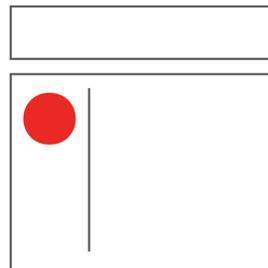


Southern Lithoplate is a leading provider of digital plate solutions and associated products for printers around the world.

Privately held, American owned and professionally operated, SLP is headquartered in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

The company's state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities are located in North Carolina and Michigan. SLP takes pride in a nationwide, expert service and support organization focused on consumables, hardware, software and more unmatched by any plate manufacturer in North America.

CONTACT: slp.com



Creative Circle
MEDIA SOLUTIONS

Creative Circle has a 30-year history as a leading print-oriented consulting, design and training firm. We've redesigned more than 550 newspapers and magazines, worked with more than 250 media companies on three continents and led a wide range of energizing media training in 23 countries. Our programs to rethink print products continue to drive readership, circulation and revenue growth.

We also offer "Creative Outsourcing" to provide top design and editing talent for special projects or to create high-end print products and advertising.

But we've also transitioned into a digital leader. Our software arm, launched in 2004, was the first to deploy user-contributed content, pay walls, reverse publishing, native content and more, often years before anyone else. Our dynamic web CMS and new revenue platforms are easy to run, were built to drive better engagement and offer a long list of features not available from any other vendor.

CONTACT: bill@creativecirclemedia.com or 401-455-1555



Virtanza™ Sales Training and Certification is a modern approach to revenue and client growth with a proven track record of success across markets of all sizes. Clients achieve \$200,000 to \$1.5 million in new and incremental customer sales. The Virtanza™ methodology instills a "cultural change" in the way sellers approach business customers and establishes a long-term lifestyle of selling.

And now, Virtanza™ Sales Education and Job Placement program focuses on individuals looking to transition into a new career with media companies.

Through a proven four-step process, we students low cost, high quality sales training and certification in a matter of weeks. After certification, students are then offered immediate job placement through open positions with our member companies are ready for students to fill.

CONTACT: hdspremierconsulting.com or 714-932-2284.

Newspaper Advertising Consultants

MW Stange, LLC

Mark Stange is an experienced newspaper advertising executive with special skills in local business development and classified verticals. He is also a retained advertising consultant for the Local Media Consortium, a strategic partnership of leading local media companies representing more than 1,600 daily newspapers.

Over 35 years in newspaper advertising with five companies, 20 years with Cox, last five in corporate roles.

Available for: Business Development brainstorming, special projects, vendor relations, initiative development and management.

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