



A message from the APA staff

Our newspapers work hard every day, in good times and bad, to keep the communities they serve informed and connected. In a year that has presented many challenges, that did not change. The APA staff is proud to work for the newspapers in Alabama. May this next year be happy, safe and prosperous for all.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

*Leticia
Walters*

High High

*Jaclyn
Brand*

AlaPressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2020

Important Dates

Dec. 28

Early Open Call
AMA Editorial Contest
Entries

Feb. 11-12

Virtual Winter
Media Summit
*Stay tuned for
more information!*

***America's Newspapers
Webinars***

Thurs., Dec. 17, 1-2 p.m.

[Classifieds 2021](#)

*Presented by: Janet
DeGeorge*

Fri., Dec. 18, 1-2 p.m.

[Rethinking Paywalls](#)

*Presented by: Matt Larson
of Our Hometown*

[Archived Webinars](#)

APA Conventions in 2021

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Stiefel named publisher in
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available for streaming

Public Notice: Some states
pushing for change

Puzzles make good content
for winter months

Grab those marketing
dollars!

Examining the difference
between weekly and daily
newspapers



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APA Conventions in 2021

APA will kick off 2021 with a virtual Media Summit, Feb. 11-12. The event will be half-day programming that will include a session with journalism students, as well as training and informal discussions for all attendees. Look for more information coming soon.

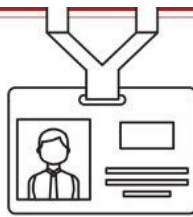
At this time APA is moving forward with plans to hold an in-person summer convention. The 2021 Summer Convention is scheduled to be June 24-26 at the Perdido Beach Resort. The hotel sustained significant damage from Hurricane Sally, but is schedule to reopen

in March.

Scheduled programs include:

- **Kelly Wirges**, a premier sales trainer for newspapers
 - Luncheon speaker **Sean Dietrich**, "Sean of the South"
 - Recognition of the **2021 Lifetime Achievement and Emerging Journalist awards**
 - **2021 APA Media Awards banquet**
 - **Open discussion roundtable breakfast**
- Watch for updates as the event gets closer.

2021 Press Cards Available



**NEED APA PRESS
CREDENTIALS
FOR 2021?**

APA is pleased to offer full color Press ID Cards for members again in 2021. The customized ID cards feature the card holder's photo, as well as the newspaper's name and phone number.

The press card is driver's license-sized and printed in full color on durable plastic so it will last all year without tearing or bending. Each member gets one card at no charge, and other can be ordered for only \$10 each. Cards can be ordered and paid for online via a secure server. To learn more and order, visit: <https://www.alabamapress.org/press-cards/>

Stiefel named publisher in Fort Payne

Steven Stiefel has been named the publisher of The Fort Payne Times-Journal. He has worked for The Times-Journal for a total of 13 years and brings a familiarity with the area, where he was born and raised. He most recently returned to the newsroom at the paper in November of last year.

Stiefel said he is particularly proud of the work The Times-Journal has done throughout 2020, providing accurate and reliable information to the community during a deadly pandemic.

"It just reinforces the importance of what we do here and the valuable public service we provide to the community. We want to tell the stories that convey the significance of this historic time," he said.

Stiefel, 52, succeeds Tricia Clinton-Dunne, who was publisher for just over five years and resigned Oct. 13 to accept a position as city treasurer at Fort Payne City Hall.

The 1986 graduate of Fort Payne High School attended Auburn University where he majored in communications with a minor in English and journalism. After

graduating, he landed his first job at The Times-Journal under then-Publisher Gary Gengozian and Managing Editor Dennis Benefield. He departed the company in 1993 to start a freelance photography business, but Stiefel returned in 1997 to work for then-Publisher Ben Shurett and Patrick Graham, who was managing editor and now owner of the paper.



In 2002, he accepted a promotion to editor at the Times-Journal's sister paper, The Sand Mountain Reporter in Albertville.

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Stiefel continued from page 2

He spent the following decade working as editor-in-chief for an Australian-based

online magazine, Savvy.com, and a Los Angeles-based national television network, MavTV. In 2013, Stiefel earned his Master's degree in strategic communications from Troy University, where he then served as an adjunct

instructor for Troy University. He spent the next six years working for a Chattanooga-based marketing firm, Riverworks, where he honed his skills helping brands to refine their digital marketing and advertising campaigns.

ArkLaMiss programs available for streaming

Did you miss ArkLaMiss? The conference was sponsored by the Mississippi Press Association in conjunction with associations in Alabama, Arkansas, and Tennessee.

All programs from the November conference are now streaming. See links below. Keynote presenter Peter Wagner's sessions and the Hot Ideas Exchange program are now available:

· [Part I: "1,2,3: Newspaper's Future Looks Good to Me" presented by Peter Wagner](#)

· [Part II: Hot Ideas Exchange moderated by Dennis Dunn of The Anniston \(AL\) Star](#)
· [Part III: "Twenty-Five Promotions and How to Sell Them" presented by Peter Wagner](#)

Karen Fioretti of The Star-Herald in Kosciusko was the winner of the Hot Ideas Exchange and the recipient of a \$250 grand prize gift card! Her idea offering corporate sponsorships for small business advertising during the pandemic was the grand prize-winner as voted by conference

participants.

Coming in a close second was Amanda Sexton Ferguson of The Winona Times with the newspaper's Easter Coloring Book promotion. She received a \$100 gift card.

Third prize went to Lori Freeze of the Stone County Leader in Mountain View, AR. Freeze told about her newspaper's efforts to make their entire newspaper archive available digitally as a value added for subscribers. She won a \$50 gift card.



Once a month, Army Europe's Journalist of 1993 offers analysis on military issues and intelligent, centered opinion columns, most on politics, education and life.

On 'Thank you for your service'

"Welcome Home is the weakest. Why? Because it is like saying 'Have a nice day'; it is rote and has lost any meaning. My concern with "Thank you for your service" is that it sounds like a cop-out. That is something you might say when a person, through no fault of their own, loses a job. Someone unfeeling might offer: "Thank you for your service—you worked great, but the store folded up just the same."

On Snowbirds in Alabama

"Two cartoons tell a lot about Snowbirds in a fun way. The first, by John O'Brien, has people leaving a plane and handing their coats to a man in a booth. Caption: Winter Coat Check at a Tropical Destination's Airport. The 2nd, by Ed Fischer, shows people at a bus stop in a snowstorm. A woman says to another: "Oh, sure, you could move to Arizona but you wouldn't have our wonderful change of seasons."

- Go to opelikaobserver.com/markley; select any two articles; use them in your newspaper until the end of December, for FREE.
- Starting January 1, you can access any of my new columns or military analysis, once a month.

For more information

gm.markley@charter.net or (334) 742-3041.

Puzzles make good content for winter months

By Robert Williams

If you're wondering what can you sell advertisers during the midst of a pandemic in winter, think about this. After months of being mostly homebound, millions of people are eagerly looking for safe, fun alternatives.

Add to that the fact many people love puzzles and word games and Mike Kolbe, ad director for Harlan Newspapers in Iowa, has just the solution!

Mike created an all-ad special section made up of nothing but half-page (tabloid) ads featuring unique word puzzles made up of the names and key words customized for a variety of local businesses. He had 23 businesses participate and they really looked like fun. I especially liked the one from the handyman service. Right next to his smiling photo was this selling statement: "Solve my puzzle and then let me solve yours!"



An example of a sponsored puzzle from a 1920s newspaper. Some advertising strategies are timeless!

A few dollars that makes customers concentrate on your business for an intense few minutes is money well spent!

This word puzzle section is only one of several good ideas Mike has either created, or adapted.

Another is his community's take on a popular idea he first encountered at a Great Idea Exchange a few years ago: First Friday! Here's how he describes it:

• Local merchants agree to run a 3 col. x 5" color ad the first Friday of each month

March through October.

• Sharing the color cost among advertisers each month creates a huge savings for the merchants, plus we offer one FREE 1/2 page to be placed any time during the promotion.

• Originally scheduled for one page each month, it turned into a pair of 3/4 page layouts due to the number of participants.

• The "And Beyond!" was added because merchant offers extend well beyond the first Friday.

If there is one idea I wish every newspaper could produce, it would be this one: A calendar featuring local photos contributed by the newspaper's readers. Again, let Mike tell how this masterful idea works:

• Readers are invited to submit high-resolution photos via email for consideration.

• Newspaper team selects 12-24 photos to fit seasonal months (including insets as photos and composition dictates)

• Photo above each monthly calendar below with two sponsors located along the top and side

• Sponsor fee is \$199, which includes 50 calendars, which the merchant may give away or sell for \$2 each (nearly all give away)

"This year will mark our 13th annual calendar," Mike continued. "The first 10 years, we accepted only Shelby-County-area photos, but the calendar began to look the same year after year (harvest, snow, sunset, flowers, birds, etc.). We now accept photos from anywhere around the world (most are still local scenes), as long as the photographer is from Shelby County, or has Shelby County ties. We do not generally allow photos of individuals that are identifiable.

Those who have photos selected for inclusion receive nothing except a by-line in the calendar, and one free calendar.

Mike also capitalizes on the community's eagerness to support their school kids by also featuring a number of activity posters that are non-newspaper revenue. As I mentioned in an earlier column, if a promotion occurs in your community in print, YOUR newspaper needs to be the one producing it. Mike produces both athletic and posters featuring other non-

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A more recent approach to sponsored puzzle content.

sports events.

Here's his info:

- Printed 500 18 x 24" glossy Posters
- Includes sports and fine-arts schedules
- Published seasonally: Fall, Winter, Spring/Summer
- Sponsorships alongside or bottom of poster
- 3 sponsor options: Single \$69, double \$119, triple \$149.
- Sell all 3 posters at once, charge each season.

Mike Kolbe's papers are about 3,000 circulation, printing Tuesday and Friday, plus two shoppers with four full-time sales people. Terrific ideas like these, however, will sell in any size market, from large to small, and the community will be better off for it! (Mike's sales flyers are also available on the NNA website.)

I am grateful to so many NNA newspaper friends around the country who have responded with tremendous ideas that can help any newspaper to grow. We have more ideas coming up to share with you from all around the country. If you haven't emailed or called me yet with your idea or your names of friends who have ideas worthy of sharing, I'm as close as the email or the phone. Please let me hear from you!

Robert M. Williams Jr. is a long-time community newspaper publisher from Blackshear, Georgia. He was NNA president in 2013-14 and is now acting as NNA director of creative resources. He is available for consultation on how to create more revenue, help you deal with inevitable newspaper issues or be a sympathetic ear for NNA members looking for an experienced publisher to listen. Email him at robert@nna.org or call at (912) 281-5438 from 10 a.m. -3 p.m. ET, Monday-Friday.

Industry

Public Notice: Some states pushing for change

from the Public Notice Resource Center

The newspaper industry has generally strived to maintain a low political profile on public notice issues. Even when notice laws become problematic -- fee provisions that haven't changed in 40 years, for instance -- most state press associations have been reluctant to push for change.

"Why poke the bear?" is the way South Dakota Newspaper Association (SDNA) Executive Director David Bordewyk describes the mindset. It's the defensive crouch of an industry that has a lot to lose if plans go awry.

At least three state press groups, including SDNA, have had enough with small ball. They've decided to "go big" in 2021.

Going big means something a little different in each state.

South Dakota

For SDNA, it means addressing statutory issues that have long frustrated newspapers in the state.

The most significant changes would streamline and modernize the way fees are calculated. SDNA wants to move from per-line to per-column-inch measurements, and to eliminate the convoluted administrative process by which the state is required to "annually review and adjust rates to reflect changes in economic conditions within the newspaper industry and the general economy." The press group wants to replace that review — Bordewyk says the state often fails to conduct it — with an annual rate adjustment based on the Consumer Price Index or another independent measure of inflation.

SDNA also hopes to convince legislators to amend a few provisions that define which publications are eligible to serve as public-notice newspapers. It wants lower circulation thresholds; "e-editions" to count towards distribution frequency requirements; and greater clarity about how school districts are required to select the newspapers that publish their notices.

SDNA's proposal would also place additional burdens on its own member newspapers. One provision would require them to post notices on their websites

and on SDNA's statewide public notice site (which we already do in Alabama). Another would require a minimum of eight-point type for all notices, eliminating a provision that allows some larger-circulation papers to publish them in six-point type.

Why poke the bear now?

"The pandemic intensified questions about the survival of newspapers," says Bordewyk, "and our board decided these issues could no longer wait." Bordewyk also hopes he has earned enough capital in the legislature during his 25 years as SDNA's registered lobbyist to make a difference, and he figures now is the time to spend it.

Bordewyk says the discussions they've had with legislators about the proposal have been positive, but he cautions that so far they've been talking mostly to supporters and allies.

Florida

For the Florida Press Association (FPA), going big doesn't mean pursuing changes in the state's public notice law. It means planning ahead for the annual legislative assault on newspapers' role in the public notice process.

Unlike South Dakota, where regular attempts to eliminate newspaper notice have stalled in committee, proposals in Florida to move notices to government websites have come uncomfortably close to passage the past two sessions, advancing in the House and dying in the Senate in both 2019 and 2020. Newspaper publishers in the state fear the Senate firewall won't hold much longer.

FPA President and CEO Jim Fogler joined the organization just in time to witness the close call in 2020. It convinced him there was no sense in waiting for the next session before pulling out all the stops.

"We don't want to be scrambling at the eleventh hour to corral our members and build relationships in the legislature when the next bill drops," says Fogler. So FPA created a public notice action team that has met regularly since it was formed after the 2020 session ended. The group is focused on three pillars:

- Building relationships in the legislature, with a primary focus on House and

Senate leadership and young, relatively inexperienced lawmakers

- Modernizing the association's statewide public notice website
- Educating lawmakers and the public about the importance of newspaper notice

"Building relationships" isn't a euphemism for lobbying. The Zoom meetings FPA members have held with legislators so far this year have literally been about establishing personal familiarity. "We're not making public notice a big issue at this point," Fogler says. "Our goal is to educate legislators about how newspapers work and ensure they are comfortable reaching out to us when they have something to say."

Fogler and his team are also working to bring their tech game up to speed. That means redesigning FloridaPublicNotices.com, improving its search functionality, making it more mobile-friendly, and adding a text-alert option to the site's email notification system. Florida is one of 14 states with a law requiring notices to be published at no extra cost on newspaper websites, and Fogler says the usefulness of the statewide public notice site has been a sore point with some legislators.

FPA is also planning to launch a marketing campaign that will run for several weeks before and after its annual Public Notice Day in mid-March. "In the past, we've gone up to the capitol for a day then left," says Fogler. "It needs to be more than just a day." The public notice team is working to get FPA member papers on board with the campaign since its effectiveness will largely rely on their willingness to run a print and digital marketing campaign created by the association. Other plans include a legislator luncheon and a "public notice" press conference in the rotunda.

Like South Dakota, FPA is also encouraging its members to run notices in at least eight-point type. However, Fogler's group has no plans to propose an amendment to the state's public notice statute, which calculates rates "on the basis of 6-point type."

public notice continued on page 6

Industry

public notice continued from page 5

Kentucky

No newspaper group has had a rougher time defending public notice than the Kentucky Press Association (KPA).

In 2005, the state legislature almost eliminated newspaper notice until Senate President David Williams was talked out of it with 15 minutes remaining in the session, according to KPA Executive Director David Thompson.

In 2016, a provision that would have allowed school districts and local governments to publish financial statements on their own websites was jammed into a budget bill in the waning hours of the session. It passed both houses of the legislature but was vetoed by Republican Governor Matt Bevin. Two years later another public notice bill was passed in the final hours of the session. It moved annual school district financial statements and report cards to school district websites and allowed the eight largest counties in the state to bypass newspapers by publishing audits, ordinances and bid solicitations on their own websites. But this time Bevin's veto

was overridden by majorities of his own party in both chambers.

This year's session in Frankfort featured another public notice donnybrook. It began with a bill to move all government notice out of newspapers -- it's a rare session when Kentucky doesn't see one of those -- and ended with a compromise that mostly maintained the status quo. Thompson was unnerved by the process, and after it ended, he told us he was no longer content to wait for the next shoe to drop. "We're going whole hog in 2021," he said. "We're going on the offensive."

KPA held a public notice "summit" via Zoom last month and about 40 newspaper owners and publishers were on the call, including several who had not participated in previous public notice battles. The organization is still formulating its plan for the session, but a few points of agreement emerged:

- Kentucky newspapers' strongest argument for maintaining their public notice franchise is the widespread lack of internet access throughout rural areas of the state. Sharon Burton, publisher of the Adair County Community Voice and KPA President Elect, said even those in her county (pop: 19,202) who have internet access often have trouble getting online

due to infrastructure issues. "Bottom line: Kentucky is not ready for this kind of information to go online," she said. "That should be enough for legislators."

- Local newspapers have earned respect with the public as a result of their COVID coverage, and they need to use that as leverage in the public notice fight. "Our stock value (with the public) is higher than it has been in my 30 years in the newspaper business," said Jeff Jobe, president of KPA and seven-paper chain Jobe Publishing. "People are listening to us, people are believing us. We need to find a way to use that."

- The biggest obstacle to maintaining newspaper notice is the opposition of the associations that represent cities and counties in the state. If KPA is going to move that needle, its member publishers will need to build relationships with the city and county managers who sit on the boards of those associations.

Next year is a short session in Kentucky, with only 25 days to conduct business before the legislature adjourns. That provides little comfort to Thompson, who notes that in the Bluegrass state lawmakers have a habit of jamming public notice provisions into budget bills late in the session. "It's never over in Kentucky until the fat lady sings," he says.

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Industry

APA welcomes Bettie Stagner

APA welcomes a new staff member, Bettie Stagner. Bettie replaces Meegan Maxwell, who has accepted a full-time position with a local landscaping company.

Bettie is a native of Birmingham and a graduate of the University of Alabama. She has worked previously in the travel industry and is also a certified loan signing agent.

Bettie will take over the sales and coordination of the ANAS networks, which consists of print and digital ad placement services. She will also handle business that comes from other state press associations.

Bettie will be in the office Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Please help us welcome Bettie to the APA family when you call the office.



Grab These Marketing Dollars

Looking to jumpstart your sponsored/branded content selling to find new revenue? Check out a new data-rich study -- "Sizing The Content Marketing

Opportunity" -- by The Branded Content Project and Borrell Associates that points to the latest trends, forecasts and 16 key business categories (out of 100 listed)

pegged as the biggest spenders. [Read this expanded overview with crisp context from The Relevance Project.](#)



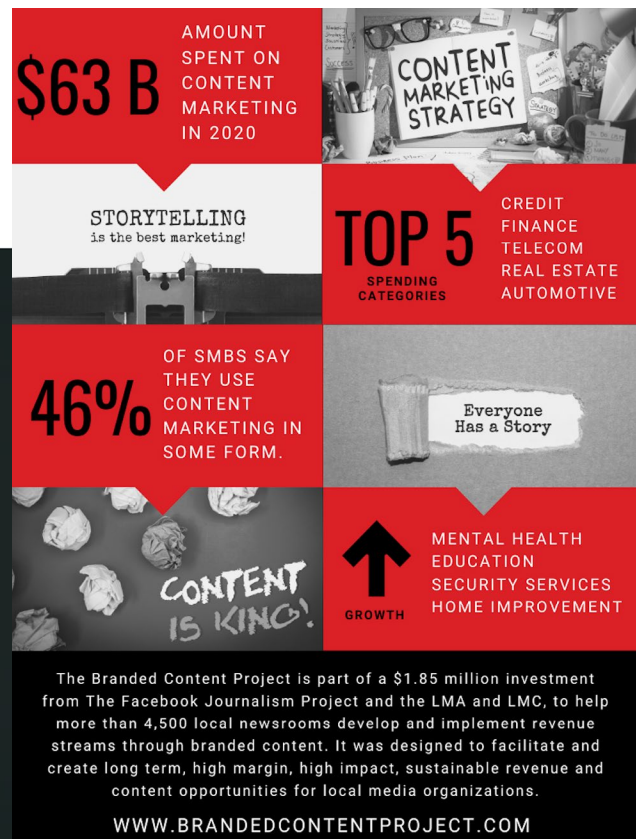
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U.S. businesses spent \$64.3 billion on Content Marketing in 2019. This year, despite the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Content Marketing remains remarkably resilient. It has become even more important for many types of businesses that have needed to shift marketing messages from direct sales pitches to education and support. Digital platforms are the biggest outlet, allowing brands to go deep on content without the added expense of buying more airtime or print space.



Please don't forget to update your publication's information for the 2021 listing in the Alabama Media Directory.

Email jaclyn@alabamapress.org with changes.

Thank you to all who have responded!

Columns

Execute your strength: Put names and faces behind the stories



by Jim Pumarlo

Nothing is more satisfying than looking at your product – whether it's the print or digital edition – and smiling in approval, "We've got it covered. We're connecting with our readers."

Developing relationships with subscribers and advertisers is imperative to success in today's fractured media landscape. The stakes are even higher as many newspapers navigate the economic impact of the pandemic.

So, play to your strengths. Connect the names and faces of those involved in and affected by items in your everyday news report. Tell their stories.

As a first step, collect a half-dozen copies of your newspaper and sit down for a brainstorming session. Go beyond your newsroom. Your entire newspaper family often represents a great cross-section of your community and can contribute valuable insights. Review the editions, and pay particular attention to the names and faces of the news makers. Circle them in red, and make a list.

The exercise is especially helpful when examining coverage of local government meetings. Do many of the same names appear over and over? As an editor friend points out: Are you giving more attention to the folks in the front of the room versus those in the back of the room? Are you writing for the sources or for those affected by government decisions?

Circumstances and deadlines may well dictate that you report just the facts in the next edition. Then, take the next steps.

Consider these examples. A school board raises extracurricular fees to help close the gap between expenses and revenues. A city council imposes plastic bag fees on local merchants, maybe even adopts an outright ban. A county board

establishes a grant program for businesses impacted by the coronavirus.

Each action presents possibilities for second-day stories and substantive content that can distinguish you from your competitors. The follow-up reports inevitably will include individuals not normally appearing in your newspaper.

There are opportunities beyond government meetings to broaden your portfolio of news makers. For example:

"Developing relationships with subscribers and advertisers is imperative to success in today's fractured media landscape. The stakes are even higher as many newspapers navigate the economic impact of the pandemic."

· Chambers of commerce have their annual awards banquet recognizing excellence in a variety of categories. At least a half-dozen businesses are often recognized. The list is ready-made news for the next edition. Don't stop there. Profile each of the honorees in successive editions, giving attention to additional names and faces.

· Election season is past us, but here's an idea for the next cycle. Coverage, for good reason, focuses on the candidates. How about profiling the chair of a campaign committee, the person who really drives the push for votes? Highlight some-

one in his or her first campaign; highlight a veteran of several campaigns.

· High school sports are the heart of many communities, and head coaches naturally receive a great deal of attention. What drives assistant coaches? How are they selected, and why do they cherish their supportive roles? You'll probably find interesting stories and new faces to highlight.

· Police blotters are another opportunity to link local residents to events. Consider this report. A bank foreclosed on a house, and a court order was issued to evict the family. Police surrounded the home for two hours, and all ended peacefully. It was the 35th eviction ordered that day. That fact prompts all sorts of questions and potential follow-up stories. Did the evicted families have a common profile? Where did they spend the next night, week, month? Are there community resources to assist these families? It's a sensitive story and one that will require extra effort to pursue. It also will result in a host of new voices on your pages.

Collecting and publishing the news is an imperfect endeavor at best. Connecting with individuals outside of the normal network of sources often demands more work. And everything is more challenging during the pandemic due to the combination of greater isolation among individuals and diminished newsroom resources.

All newspapers strive to consistently produce a report that reflects a living history of their communities. That necessarily should drive you to expand the catalog of news makers used to tell your stories.

News reports also don't want to be predictable. Broadening the menu of names and faces that appear in your products reflects journalism at its best and generates solid content. It's a win-win for your newspaper and your community.

Jim Pumarlo writes, speaks and provides training on community newsroom success strategies. He can be reached at jim@pumarlo.com.

Columns

Lessons from other advertising sources



Ad-libs
by John Foust

One of the basics of selling is to get the right kind of information from prospects. There is a big focus on asking about prospects' goals, target audiences, marketing budgets and previous campaign results. That's how we put ourselves in position to create effective ad campaigns.

Monica, a long-time sales manager for a publishing company, told me about a different kind of question. "Years ago, I heard about a technique to turn the process around and ask questions to ourselves," he said. "The objective is to create more interest in what you are selling. It all starts with the words, 'If I were in your position, I would want to know...'"

"For example," she explained, "let's say you're meeting with someone who doesn't talk much or someone who seems to be running down rabbit trails during your presentation. Simply say something like, 'If I were in your position I would want to know how The

Gazette's coverage compares to other media outlets in this market.' Then transfer ownership of the question from you to them, by asking if that is something they would like to know. That opens the door for you to answer the question and cover an important sales point. It's a way to keep everyone on the same path."

Let's take a closer look at this technique that works so well for Monica:

1. Prepare a list of questions in advance. "As you do research on your prospect, some questions will become obvious," Monica said. "Experienced advertisers will want more detailed information, while new business owners will be most interested in fundamentals."

2. Make sure the questions are specific. She advises to stay away from vague topics like "Why is The Gazette the right choice?" or "Can The Gazette stay within my budget?"

"I've learned that it's better to concentrate on specific areas, like audience numbers, procedures, and print and online options."

3. Avoid questions that are blatantly self-promotional. "It's not smart to ask, 'Why is advertising in The Gazette bet-

ter than running TV commercials?'" to someone who is advertising heavily on TV. In addition to killing your credibility, it might end the conversation."

4. Don't overdo it. "Moderation is a key," Monica said. "Resist the temptation to start every other sentence with 'If I were you.' In fact, you may not need to use this kind of question at all. Use your common sense."

5. But you can put questions in strategic groups. "This is a good way to establish a road map for your sales points. For instance, you can say, 'If I were in your position, I would want to know three things about any media choice: First, do they reach my target audience? Second, what kind of track record do they have in my industry? And third, can they produce the ads themselves?' Then you can add, 'Would you want to add anything to this list, or is this a good place to start?'"

Monica's approach makes a lot of sense. There's no question about it.

John Foust conducts training programs for newspaper advertising professionals. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com

2020 Newspaper Managers Survey: Examining the differences between weekly and daily newspapers

2020 Newspaper Managers Survey by Keven Slimp

Each year, I survey U.S. publishers and general managers about the health of their newspapers. During the late spring/early summer of 2020, I received completed surveys from participants representing 500 newspapers or groups. In my previous column, I discussed some of the overall results of the survey, especially those related to financial health. In this column, we're going to look at some of the differences noted between daily and weekly newspapers.

In some areas of the survey, there were little differences between weeklies and dailies. For instance, when compared to two years ago, both groups report similar health. While 58 percent of weekly newspapers indicate worse overall health than two years ago, 63 percent of dailies gave the same response. Most newspa-

pers in both groups answered "not bad" to "very healthy" when asked about their overall health, while 14 percent of weeklies and 19 percent of dailies indicated they were in poor health.

When it comes to page count, again we see some similarities. 68 percent of dailies answered they had reduced pages compared to two years ago, while 61 percent of weeklies responded similarly. Digging into other questions, we begin to see differences between dailies and weeklies:

- 71 percent of weekly newspapers are independent, with local owners, while only 27 percent of daily newspapers are owned and operated in their local communities.

- The primary source of revenue for 98 percent of weekly newspapers is print advertising. The same is true for 81 percent of dailies, with subscriptions and digital

advertising bringing in a higher percent of revenue than at weeklies.

- While only 7 percent of weekly newspapers answered that their digital efforts were financially profitable, 22 percent of daily papers see a financial profit on digital platforms. 30 percent of weeklies and 43 percent of dailies indicate they see other benefits besides financial profit from their digital efforts.

- 30 percent of daily newspapers report that more than 20 percent of their revenues come from "non-newspaper sources." Only 6 percent of weeklies responded the same way.

Speaking of digital, only 32 percent of daily newspaper publishers/managers responded that it "might be true" that they would be better off without a digital version of their newspaper.

survey continued on page 10

survey continued from page 9

That number jumps up to 44 percent for weekly papers, with an additional 15 percent indicating they believed they “would be better off” without a digital version. Add those together and 59 percent of weekly respondents answered they might, or would, be better off without a digital version of their newspaper.

One answer that has changed significantly since I began surveying news-

papers six years ago is “How long do you think you will continue to produce a printed newspaper?” In 2015 and 2016 surveys, more than 90 percent indicated they would be producing newspapers more than 20 years into the future. In this most recent survey, roughly 48 percent of weeklies and 39 percent of dailies expect to be printing papers more than 12 years from now.

What about all that “fake news” we keep hearing about? Fortunately, fake news is “fake news” in most places. While it is a problem for many daily newspapers

where 21 percent of respondents answered that more than 25 percent of the folks in their communities consider them to be fake news, weekly newspapers seem to be more trusted by their communities. Only 2 percent of weekly newspapers answered, “more than 25 percent,” while 39 percent of weeklies responded, “That’s silly. None. Zero.” 51 percent of weeklies answered, “Somewhere between 1 and 10 percent.”

I guess it just goes to show, there are always a few crabby readers out there.

Help Wanted

Sports/General Reporter - Athens, AL

The award-winning News Courier has an immediate opening for a sports/general reporter to join its newsroom. The News Courier prints Tuesday through Thursday and Saturday and maintains an active web and social media presence. We also produce a number of niche products, including six glossy magazines.

The reporter will write two or three bylined stories each day and will provide photos or graphic illustrations with stories as warranted. They may also be asked to assist with copy editing duties as needed, so attention to detail and familiarity with AP style are required.

The reporter’s beat will be sports and general assignment. The reporter must be able to work a flexible schedule including the occasional night and weekend and cover local games and evening meetings as assigned. The reporter will be expected to assist in frequent updates to our website and social media outlets. Experience with InDesign and Photoshop is preferred. The News Courier will train as necessary.

Ideal candidates will possess a degree in communications or related field from an accredited institution, but The News Courier will consider five years of experience at a daily news publication in lieu of a degree. Candidate must have a clean driving record and dependable transportation.

The News Courier offers insurance coverage (health, dental and vision), 401(k) and paid time off.

Please email resumes, three writing samples and three photography samples to lora@athensnews-courier.com.

Reporter - Mobile, AL

Lagniappe, Mobile’s largest independent weekly newspaper, seeks a news reporter to join our award-winning team of journalists. Ideal candidate would be familiar with the Mobile area (or willing to get up to speed quickly), not afraid to ask tough but fair questions and possess excellent writing skills. This position will have some assigned beats but enterprise, feature and investigative reporting are what

have made Lagniappe one of the best newspapers in Alabama and the Southeast. We are not looking to fill the typical cop shop, public meeting beat you might expect at a smaller newspaper. We believe in digging deep and going after big stories. We also believe in objectivity. We don’t back away from tough stories, and we tell them fairly without a political agenda. Social media, videography/editing, multimedia skills a plus. Please email resume and writing samples to publishers atrice@lagniappemobile.com and rhobert@lagniappemobile.com.

News Reporter/Editor - Grove Hill, AL

Weekly newspaper group in southwest Alabama seeking news reporter/editor to cover community news and sports. Requirements: A self-starter with a nose for news and an ability to write engaging and interesting stories with photo skills and computer pagination skills. Experience preferred. Competitive salary/benefits. Please send resume and work samples to Jim Cox, jimcox@tds.net, or mail to The Clarke County Democrat, P.O. Box 39, Grove Hill, AL 36451.

General Reporter - Fort Payne, AL

The Times-Journal, an award-winning newspaper in Fort Payne, Alabama, has an immediate opening for a general reporter.

We’re looking for someone who wants to do a little bit of everything — writing, editing, design, photography. We publish a daily newspaper and a monthly magazine, so one day you may cover a fatal car crash and the next day you’ll help organize a fashion shoot. If you’re a recent grad, this is the perfect place to gain better understanding of what community journalism is and how we serve our readers.

We’re nestled in the foothills of the Appalachians, so there are plenty of outdoor activities available — hiking, biking, kayaking. We’ve got state and national parks flush with rivers, waterfalls and caves. We’re also within driving distance of Birmingham, Huntsville, Chattanooga and Atlanta.

Experience with InDesign is preferred but not required. Send your resume and clips (and

cover letter explaining why you’re the best for the job) to Publisher Steven Stiefel at stiefel@times-journal.com. We offer a full benefits package and 401K. The Fort Payne Times-Journal is owned by Patrick Graham.

Managing Editor - East Central AL

If you are an experienced managing editor looking for a nationally recognized, progressive newspaper that has successfully blended print and social media, Tallapoosa Publishers, Inc. wants you.

You will lead the team that produces an award-winning twice-weekly newspaper and four community weekly newspapers located around Lake Martin in east-central Alabama near Auburn University. We are strong and growing and our properties produce quality local journalism, compelling design, and exceptional sports coverage for a dynamic and growing area. The Alexander City Outlook recently took home 65 awards in the Alabama Press Association convention, including General Excellence two years in a row.

Our properties include The Alexander City Outlook, a 3,500 circulation twice weekly; four weeklies, The Wetumpka Herald, the Tallahassee Tribune, The Eclectic Observer and The Dadeville Record and associated websites. We cover both rural and fast-growing suburban areas surrounding one of the largest recreational lakes in the South.

The successful candidate will help us move the organization forward with strong leadership skills, have a vision of our continued integration of print and social media, be able to identify and develop talent and be willing to become immersed in our communities. The ability to write, edit, and contribute to the daily product when needed is essential. Pagination skills are helpful but not required.

Salary and bonuses approx. \$50K, an excellent benefits package, bonus opportunities, and advancement based on performance.

Please a resume, samples of your work and a cover letter to Steve Baker at steve.baker@alexcityoutlook.com.