

AlaPressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 2021

Important Dates

Online Media Campus

[The Latest Developments in First Amendment Law](#)

Friday, September 10, 1-2 p.m.

In this interactive webinar, we will review recent legal decisions to identify key takeaways for working journalists. We'll end with a discussion on the state of the First Amendment and how to increase understanding among citizens.

[The Value of an Integrated Media Plan](#)

Friday, September 23, 2-3 p.m.

In this workshop, Korena Keys will share data on the impact it can deliver and provide you tools that will help you deepen your client relationships through a holistic approach to selling your products.

APA members can register [HERE](#) (deadline is 3 days before webinar) at no charge using the code, **ALTraining**.

AL.com investigative reporter awarded \$35,000 grant

Boost ad sales with Latest 'Relevant' Research

Internship proves valuable to Auburn senior

Wisconsin executive named president of newspaper association group

Legacy.com's new platform sends 15k readers to local obit placement desks

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AL.com investigative reporter awarded \$35,000 grant

Connor Sheets, an investigative reporter at AL.com, has received a grant from the Ira A. Lipman Center for Journalism and Civil and Human Rights at the Columbia Journalism School. The grant amounts to \$35,000 and provides financial assistance to pursue major projects on law enforcement, prosecutorial, judicial, incarceration, racial and human rights abuses.

"I'm so thankful that the Lipman Center put its faith in me and AL.com by awarding us one of its inaugural grants supporting investigations at the intersection of systemic racism and criminal justice," Sheets said.

In addition to the reporting projects that are supported by the grant, it will cover costs for reporting needs including data acquisition, additional staff and FOIA requests.

"The funding this grant provides will allow us to pursue impactful work examining the criminalization of poverty and the many ways Alabama's justice system traps people of color and low-income people in cycles of debt, incarceration and despair," he said.

Sheets intends on using the grant to spend six months investigating the criminalization of poverty in Alabama and its impact on people of color and people with little means. He and his colleagues at Reckon South and AL.com will also have the opportunity to create a mini-documentary.

"Our goal is for this work to raise awareness about longstanding inequities and abuses in this state's criminal justice system and ultimately spur systemic change," he said.

Internship proves valuable to Auburn senior

Editor's note: Emma Kirkemier participated in the APA Journalism Foundation Summer Internship Program with The Messenger in Gadsden. Here is her report.

My Alabama Press Association internship at The Messenger has once again taught me a lot. This is my second and final summer at The Messenger through this program, and that said, I have a lot to reflect on. I have gained confidence since I first stepped foot in this building, growing as a writer, reporter and young professional. My second summer went a lot differently than my first because I walked in the door knowing what I was capable of and ready to be back to work.

After my first stint at The Messenger in 2020, I became the campus reporter for the student newspaper at Auburn University, The Auburn Plainsman, something I would not have had the confidence or skill to do before my internship. This position allowed me to put into practice the lessons I had learned in my first APA internship, including localizing my writing to focus on people, events and organizations rooted in my community - or campus - and getting a few more quality quotes by asking, "Is there anything else you'd like to add?" at the end of interviews.

Between my student journalism experience and my APA internship experiences, both my writing skills and

comfort level have expanded. I still get nervous before interviews, but my professional manner has improved. I have learned to have my next question ready as soon as my interviewee is finished speaking, but also to listen well and to connect, not just firing questions. My confidence has continued to grow with more practice. It is becoming more natural and less intimidating for me to write leads, structure articles and pick out quotes. I like to think that I have even gotten more efficient at transcribing.

One of my favorite experiences this summer was a story I wrote after attending an Etowah County Commission meeting, where Probate Judge Scott Hassell asked the commission to help fund a mental health crisis response team. The program, which he called "MCATs," would send a two-person team of one mental healthcare professional and one medic to the scene of mental-health-related 911 calls instead of police officers or firefighters. He cited similar programs that had been successfully implemented in other cities with the goal of reducing potentially dangerous police confrontations with mentally ill citizens suffering from lack of long-term care and off their medication.

Mental health is something that is important to me, and as a journalist, I began to realize the power of the press to bring public awareness to issues and

internship continued on page 3

even affect policy. It was a revelation to me that writing an article about the good being done in my community, whether in a small business or in county government, could potentially help it along. I wrote a little on this for my reflection last year, but looking back, I see how much that awareness has grown, along with a

driving desire to see good things thriving in my community.

The mere possibility that my writing could make a difference in my community, just by bringing awareness to something such as the "MCATs," potentially feeding a public conversation about the county's mental healthcare issues, is incredible. I

am incredibly grateful to APA and to The Messenger for the opportunity to write about not only local leaders but the issues they are working to ameliorate in the community.

I still have a lot to learn, but thanks to my APA internships, I have gained the experience to make myself a stronger writer and journalist.

Boost ad sales with Latest 'Relevant' Research

A new six-part promotional series is available to local publishers eager to tout how newspapers' multigenerational readership is a lucrative target for advertisers.

The promotions are free to use from The Relevance Project, which teamed up with the research firm Coda Ventures, seven newspaper trade associations, and Metro Creative Graphics to produce them.

Series I of the "All!!! Ages Read Newspapers" presents research pinpointing impressive use of newspaper content by three generations: Millennials, Gen Xers and Baby Boomers.

Series II offers another three promotions, specifically for social media use, that link eye-opening income, education and



homeownership factors to newspaper readership.

The new series is part of The Relevance Project's mission of helping community newspapers and their trade associations tell valuable stories about the power of newspapers to provide print, digital and social solutions to advertisers, marketers and sponsors. For a full explanation of the series check out this [Relevant Point](#) by Executive Director Tom Silvestri.

You can download the six promotions via BamaNet [HERE](#):

Promotion 1: Focus on Millennials

Promotion 2: Focus on GenXers

Promotion 3: Focus on Boomers

Promotion 4: Focus on Income

Promotion 5: Focus on Education

Industry

Wisconsin executive named president of newspaper association group



Beth Bennett

Beth Bennett, executive director of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, was elected president of Newspaper Association Managers (NAM) during the group's 98th annual summer conference in Madison, Wis.

Bennett, who has led her state's trade group since 2010, was previously director of government relations for the Illinois Press Association. She also currently serves on the Board of Directors for the National Newspaper Association.

Bennett earned a bachelor's degree in history from St. Joseph's College in Indiana and a master's degree in political studies from the University of Illinois. Her family published four newspapers in central Illinois, introducing her to the industry. She becomes the first person to succeed her spouse as a president of NAM. David Bennett is the former executive director of the Illinois Press Association and served as NAM president in 1996.

Others elected to leadership positions during the NAM conference were Vice President Laurie Hieb, executive director of the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association, and Secretary Mark Maassen, executive director of the Missouri Press

Association. Phil Lucey, executive director of the North Carolina Press Association, was elected to serve a three-year term on the NAM Board. Continuing directors are Brian Allfrey, executive director of the Utah Press Association and Susan Patterson Plank, executive director of the Iowa Newspaper Association.

Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association Executive Director Steve Nixon becomes immediate past president. Layne Bruce, executive director of the Mississippi Press Association, serves as the organization's clerk.

Founded in 1923, NAM is a coalition of state, provincial, regional and national trade associations serving North American newspaper media.

Industry

Legacy.com's new platform sends 15k readers to local obit placement desks

By Tracie Martin, Legacy

Longtime local news partner Legacy.com is pleased to share the first performance analysis results for its new obituary platform. Launched in test stages starting in mid-2020, the new system combines a streamlined cobranded obituary listing page and search experience with a re-architected obituary design. The goal: to improve page performance and organize the reader experience in ways that drive newspaper growth and reinforce Legacy's role as the go-to destination for local deaths news.

The company reports that load times for both the obituary and cobranded obituary homepage improved dramatically. Readers accessing a partner's cobranded obituary listing page will now have notices to scroll 2x faster, with a load time change from 1.0 seconds to 0.6 seconds or less. On individual obituaries,

content appears 33% faster, with a load time change from 1.2 seconds to 0.80 seconds or less.

Legacy.com®

As hoped, these improvements, combined with page design changes, encouraged readers to access more content and resources. A 36% increase in obituaries read per session indicates that readers are reinvesting the performance time savings on the newspaper's website. They're also engaging more with local funeral homes, a key obituary category stakeholder, with a 20% increase in clicks to access a funeral home's website from an online obituary.

The company is most encouraged by the impact of a key design update: a new,

prominent link to place an obituary with their local newspaper. Thirteen thousand readers now access that link per month. With an average obituary price of \$500, this provides local newspapers with \$6 million in potential obituary placement revenue. This result reinforces the company's longstanding position that online notices are key to keeping readers engaged with local news obituaries.

"A better online experience can drive a newspaper's engagement with its community and positively impact both online and print readership," says Legacy CEO Stopher Bartol. "Legacy is making this happen for its partners in new and better ways through its continued innovation in the obituary category."

The platform updates join other locally-focused initiatives as part of the company's strategy to increase reader traffic to newspaper websites.

People

Jamie Browder has been named editor of the St. Clair News-Aegis in Pell City. She is a native of Andalusia and a 2020 graduate of the University of Montevallo.

Browder was the content editor for The Alabamian, Montevallo's student newspaper, and also a reporter for the Shelby County Reporter.

Stephanie Rebman has been promoted to editor-in-chief at the Birmingham Business Journal. She succeeds Ty West who was named senior editor of national content with BBJ's parent company, American City Business Journals. Redman has been with the BBJ since 2016.

Angel Coker, a graduate of the University of Alabama, succeeds Redman as managing editor. She joined BBJ in 2017 as the finance and legal reporter.

Kandis Snyder is the new editor at the Pickens County Herald in Carrollton. She was 2016 Salutatorian from Pickens County High School and is also a 2020 graduate of the University of Alabama,

where she studied Journalism and Creative Media.



Kandis Snyder

Snyder began working as a news correspondent for the Herald in August 2020, where she began covering local council meetings and high school football games. "I welcome Kandis to our staff as Editor at the Herald. She is a Pickens's County native and I know she will do the Herald a great job," said Mid-South Newspapers General Manager Mike Moore. "Local news is what our communities need and are interested in. Kandis will be the Editor, along with Donna Bain, who is also a Pickens County native that is new to the Herald."

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Obituaries

Max Heath



Max Heath, 75, died July 29, 2021. Heath is a native of Campbellsville, KY and the son of the late Harry Heath, a Kentucky newspaperman, and Virginia Allen Heath. His brother, Harold Heath, preceded him in death.

He is survived by his wife, the former Ruth Ann Sullivan, also of Campbellsville, a son Jason, of Louisville and nephews Ricky Heath of Chicago and Chad Heath of Greensburg.

He retired in 2008 as vice president, postal/acquisitions of Landmark Community Newspapers, Shelbyville, KY, where he had resided since 1980.

For 22 years he was executive editor responsible for recruiting, training, and news quality improvement for 54 paid weekly and daily newspapers in 13 states with over 300,000 paid circulation. For 23 years he was circulation director as well, helping grow paid circulation and training circulation managers.

He was a self-styled "country editor" who edited and managed non-daily newspapers in KY and IN and served as regional manager for numerous LCNi properties.

Heath served 35 years as chair of the Postal Committee of the National Newspaper Association and wrote a monthly Postal Tips column for Publisher's Auxiliary. He was named to the Postal Service Mailer's Technical Advisory Committee representing NNA from 1989 to 2017.

He received the NNA President's Award in 1989 and 1997, Ambassador Award in 1992, and coveted Amos Award for service to community newspapers in

1994. He conducted seminars on "Maximizing Postal Savings and Delivery" for newspaper associations and groups for 25 years.

He was general manager of News Publishing Company, Tell City, Indiana, and editor of The Perry County News from 1975-80. In 1978 The News was awarded "Blue Ribbon Weekly" for best non-daily in Indiana by the Hoosier State Press Association.

Heath worked more than 10 years as a journalist in his hometown of Campbellsville. He was managing editor of the semi-weekly Central Kentucky News-Journal in 1974-75, and editor & general manager of The News-Journal from 1971-74 and part of 1969.

From 1969-71, he served in the Army as an information specialist in Alabama and Thailand, where he was editor of the newspaper for U.S. Army Support Thailand.

From 1965-69, he worked his way through Campbellsville University (which gave him a Distinguished Alumnus award in 1987). He was sports editor and news editor of the Central Kentucky News. In 1968, KPA awarded him Best Sports Page in KY. Prior to that, he was a sportswriter for The News-Journal in high school. He also edited his high school newspaper. He free-lanced for The Courier-Journal from 1969-75.

Heath has served as president of the Kentucky Press Association; Louisville chapter of Society of Professional Journalists; the United Way of Perry County, IN; the Perry County Unit, American Cancer Society; director of the Tell City Kiwanis Club; and the Hoosier State Press Association.

He was named to the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame in 1996. He was given LCNi's first President's Award for Outstanding Service in 1990. He received the Edwards M. Templin award from KPA in 1992 for service to the community. He was named KPA's Most Valuable Member in 1985 and 1988 and earned a 110% Award in 1983. He was also a Kentucky Colonel.

The Hoosier State Press Association gave him its Distinguished Service Award in January 2006, as did the Wisconsin Newspaper Association in 2010 and the Ohio News Media Association in 2019. The Institute for Rural Journalism and the Bluegrass Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists in Lexington KY presented Heath with the Al Smith Award for public service through community journalism in July 2012.

Heath was a member of Southeast Christian Church, where he volunteered as an usher for over 20 years and served on the operating and publishing boards of The Southeast Outlook, a weekly newspaper.

He enjoyed the sport of harness racing since his days as sports editor and partnered on KY Sire Stakes winners on both the pace and trot gaits. He and Ruth Ann enjoyed traveling, and visited 21 Caribbean islands, Hawaii and Taiwan, and many states with NNA conventions. They enjoyed country music from the 60s, 70s, and 80s, and attended many concerts. He was a University of Louisville and Cincinnati Reds fan. A life highlight was attending every major league baseball park with Jason, and pride in him being an Eagle Scout.

Expressions of sympathy may be made to NNA Foundation, PO Box 13323, Pensacola FL 32591.

Columns

Special projects energize staff, community



by Jim
Pumarlo

I fondly characterize newsrooms as organized chaos. That definition has aptly described operations for the past 18 months with the impact of COVID-19. The story has demanded constant atten-

tion, and there are likely fewer reporters to handle the task due to the economic toll of the pandemic.

As we begin to return to some level of normalcy, it's a great time to recharge – to brainstorm special projects that have unfortunately gone by the wayside. The initiatives are a great way to energize your staffs and simultaneously deliver great content.

Special projects, you say? We are

barely treading water handling daily chores.

The reaction is understandable. Mention big projects and the mind-set often focuses on in-depth series that can take weeks to plan, research and write, and then will be published over multiple days. Newsrooms, no matter their size, should strive to do those enterprises, even if produced only once a year.

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But special projects also can mean generating more substantive reports in everyday news. These reports can be just as “big” in terms of providing expanded coverage. And they can be done without overwhelming newsrooms strapped for time and resources.

Broadening your definition of big projects also presents opportunities for fresh approaches to stories done year in and year out.

A few examples:

Annual reports on a variety of topics are regularly presented at meetings. Statistics are often regurgitated with little interpretation. As an alternative, review reports for the most compelling highlights. Tell a story by putting names and faces behind the representative data. It’s a great way to introduce individuals not regularly showcased in your news columns. A side-

bar can detail the overall statistics.

Pursue second-day coverage. How many times do you cover spot news, and then drop a story? There’s often more to be told by probing beneath the surface. These stories are also a great way to distinguish your newspaper from outside media that sweep into a community for the big story and then are rarely seen again. Supplementary and complementary coverage is especially worthwhile and effective when reporting on sensitive and challenging stories that may initially prompt reader complaints of sensationalism.

Local governments pore months over data preparing annual budgets. Newsrooms too often simply give blow-by-blow meeting reports. Instead, connect early with the appropriate folks at city hall, the courthouse and the school district to develop a series of stories that offers mean-

ingful analysis of numbers.

By all means, newsrooms still should take the time and initiative to pursue the once-a-year projects. Remember, if you’re going to devote the time and effort, you want to identify those packages that will strike a chord with readers. Solicit citizen comments and suggestions on topics that will resonate with your audience. Your newspaper can play a valuable role in researching and advancing conversation on challenges facing the community.

Jim Pumarlo is former editor of the Red Wing (Minn.) Republican Eagle. He writes, speaks and provides training on community newsroom success strategies. He can be reached at www.pumarlo.com and welcomes comments and questions at jim@pumarlo.com.

Lessons from a failed advertiser



*Ad-libs
by John Foust*

I remember talking to Clark about his early days in advertising. When he started his then-small marketing business, one of his first clients was a fast-food establishment that needed help with an introductory campaign. Although the store manager knew almost nothing about advertising, he understood that it was important.

According to Clark, three factors drove the advertising strategy: (1) the budget was severely limited, (2) although it was a national brand, the business was new to the market, and (3) a large university was about two miles away.

“In those pre-Internet days, the college market was the store manager’s best option,” Clark said, “and I figured the surest way to reach those students was through the college newspaper. The challenge was to give them a reason to travel two miles for fast-food. I decided to run a series of quarter-page ads, with discount coupons. The price fit the manager’s budget, and the coupons would give him a way to measure results. Each ad had a code number on the coupon, so he would know which days of the week drew more responses.”

When Clark dropped by the store after a few ads ran, the store manager

held up a big paper grocery bag which was overflowing with coupons. There was no organization at all, and it was obvious that coupons had been mixed together in the bag. The ads had pulled in some customers, but – even though they had discussed the significance of measuring results – the manager clearly had no interest in following through.

“The ultimate goal is for the customer to see the store (product, restaurant, service) as worth a second, third and tenth visit. Experience, not advertising, is the determining factor in customer loyalty.”

“Unfortunately, that fast-food place didn’t stay open very long,” Clark explained. “For several years after it closed, I wondered if I could have provided more help. But eventually I came

to realize that advertising alone can’t keep a business going. People were willing to try the restaurant once, but the food simply wasn’t good enough to bring them back. The store manager had a gruff personality that may have turned off customers. I also heard that there were staffing problems and issues with state restaurant inspections.”

Although that was a painful experience, it taught Clark some lessons which benefited him in later campaigns. “The first lesson was the importance of a system for clients to track ad responses,” he said. “That can be as simple as a box with folders to organize coupons. Or it can be as sophisticated as a spreadsheet or tracking software.”

“The second lesson was to develop a way to capture customer information – at least a name and email address. That can be done with some kind of loyalty program, a requirement to provide information before downloading an online coupon, or an in-person sign-up for future deals.

“The biggest lesson of all,” Clark said, “was the first-hand observation of the power of the consumer’s in-store experience. The ultimate goal is for the customer to see the store as worth a second, third and tenth visit. Experience, not advertising, is the determining factor in customer loyalty.”

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

Columns

Self-Care and Sales: Exploring the intersection of mental health and sales fatigue



by Ryan Dohrn

Mental health is a very important subject for us to discuss as it relates to our work and our sales. Please understand that I am not a clinically trained therapist in any way shape or form, but I do hold an ACC certification from the International Coach Federation. My intention of this column is to try to provide inspiration to those of you that might have found yourself in a sales rut or mentally fatigued at work or in life as we're getting back to some level of normal sales business across America. If you are experiencing significant mental fatigue or issues related to your mental well-being, please seek professional advice.

The National Institute of Mental Health reports that 31 percent of respondents reported symptoms of anxiety or depression; 13 percent reported having started or increased substance use; 26 percent reported stress-related symptoms; and 11 percent reported having serious thoughts of suicide in the past 30 days. These numbers are nearly double the rates expected before the pandemic.

This is more than a revenue issue. This is a human issue.

Ad sales has literally been a part of my life for 30 years, but over that period of time there have been many days, weeks, and months when I didn't feel like selling anything. Here are seven things that I often do when I find myself in a sales rut or mentally exhausted from the business of sales.

1. Connect with others in the sales business. It's important also to surround yourself with other people that understand where you're coming from. Often, those around you can't sympathize very much because they don't really know what it's like to be in the sales business. While it's always good to get other people's outside perspective, it's also equally as important to surround yourself with other people that completely and utterly understand what you're going through. In every major city there are groups of sales professionals that gather together on a regular basis. Here is a link to several groups that you can join: [jobstars.com/sales-professional-associations-](https://www.jobstars.com/sales-professional-associations-)

organizations. If you're unable to find a networking group, seek out professional sales coaching. Finding a coach that's also in the sales business can be extremely helpful to you as they will be able to better sympathize with your current situation and provide guidance.

2. Change your frequency. There is a universal understanding that when you continue to do something the same way and expect a different result, you are defining or trying to redefine the non-clinical version of insanity. Many salespeople that I personally coach will find themselves on the wrong frequency. They have been doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result and just can't see why things aren't going in their direction.



Recently, I was working with a sales professional that found herself in a sales rut. I encouraged her to change things up. To leave home at a different time for work. To drive a new direction to the office. To listen to a different style of music on her way to work. To change her coffee. To park in a different parking spot. To wear a different type of outfit to work. All of these little factors contribute to you looking at things from a different perspective. After just 48 hours of doing things completely different than she normally would, she closed a big dollar sales deal. Was it the coffee, or the new parking spot? No, I don't think that this is a conspiracy theory by any means. A lot of times it's about retraining your brain to see things from a different perspective.

3. Call a client who loves you. There are people that I often call when I'm having a bad day. I do not usually tell them that I'm having a bad day, but I will engage in conversation with them knowing that

they are not going to beat me up about price or frequency or Facebook. There are three things that can come from this. The first is that you might just find a sales opportunity. The second is that you are actually doing yourself a favor by retaining that customer. The third is that you created a positive conversation that will probably lead to another one.

4. Work list of clients. Within any competent Customer Relationship Management system (CRM), you are able to form a list of customers. I have three lists that I work on a daily basis. The first is a standard prospecting list that we all have in front of us. The second are those clients that I've already met with that I consider "in progress" towards a sale. The third are my active clients that I am looking to retain for a lifetime. When I'm having a bad sales day, I focus on my lists.

My lists are a living breathing document. My goal is not to work a list from 10 to 0. My goal is to have a list that is always growing and changing. From a pipeline sales management perspective, I never want any of my list to get to 0. If your CRM system can't create a list, I would suggest you find a new CRM.

5. Work new categories. In addition to the list that I work on a daily basis, I also will often change my sales approach on categories that I sell. Personally, I like to trade accounts with other sales professionals on my team. The reason for this is because when I give someone an account that I've worked hard and they trade with me, we almost always will close a deal one way or the other. Many times, customers just need to hear a different tone of voice or a different approach.

6. Get some sleep. According to sleep experts from the Mayo Clinic, a lack of focus or mental fatigue can often be linked to a lack of sleep. Most adults need seven or more hours of sleep each night to function at a high-capacity level. One of the things I noticed when I was diagnosed with sleep apnea is that I was definitely not getting enough sleep. I'm an eight-hour of sleep kind of guy. Can I function on seven hours of sleep? Absolutely, but if I want to be at my prime, I need eight hours.

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7. Get back to the basics. When things aren't going well, it is a common practice for us to take random sales approaches to see what might stick against the wall. This is an absolutely bad sales strategy whether you're new or old in the business. There are fundamental pieces to the sales game that have to be achieved in order for you to be successful. Are your emails short and simple and to the point? Are your emails and voicemails relevant to the exact needs of the customer? Are you contacting your customers at the opti-

mal time of day? Are you selling strictly on the phone or are you trying to get in front of people to have face-to-face meetings? These are just a few of the basics that you need to wrap your head around if you're going to be successful and get back on the sales horse for a long ride to victory.

If you're in a sales rut, choose just one of the seven ideas listed in this column and put it into action. Getting out of a rut is not about giving it half your effort. It's going to take everything you got to get the train back on the tracks and rolling in the

right direction.

Finally, don't be afraid to ask for help. I dedicate this column to my fellow media sales warrior Chris Atkins who took his life amidst a vibrant media sales career. Chris, you are missed.

Ryan Dohrn is a 30-year veteran media sales pro and marketer. He is an Emmy Award winning motivational speaker and is a sales coach to more than 200 media companies. Find him at 360AdSales.com.

Put me in coach: Unfortunately, "negative recruiting" isn't just confined to football



by Brad English
ANAS

It's been said that recruiting is the life-blood of college football. The better the recruit, the better the coach. And everyone knows to be a successful recruiter, a coach better be a great salesman. There's an old coaching adage about winning, "It's not about the x's and o's but the Jimmies and Joes." And in the South, if you want to keep your job, you better win. A New York Times article published a few years ago indicated that 85% of the people in the Birmingham market follow college football. I doubt that's changed much. We're number one. And it's not even close.

The top teams generally pride themselves on selling the attributes of their own school and team, and tend to rarely mention the competition. On the other hand, you consistently hear reports of negative recruiting by the lesser teams trying to reach the top. The comments can range from half-truths to outright lies. If an opposing coach doesn't address those comments head-on, he stands to lose out on the recruiting trail.

Which brings me to a lunch I had with a couple of ad agency buddies a few weeks ago. They shared a story of a recent response to a prospective client's RFP. Seems they had decided to include print in their proposal before learning the reason the business was being shopped - the old agency believed in heavy print. And according to the client, "Everyone knows newspapers are dying."

We proceeded to have a spirited discussion about the difference between

perception and reality, fact vs. myth. I later wondered how many times newspaper reps, in responding to questions about declining circulation - stories printed on the front page of their own newspaper - simply just shrugged their shoulders instead of answering the questions head-on.

Let's face it. The competition has "negatively recruited" against us for years. And I'm afraid too many times instead of responding to the comments we've tried to simply deflect a client's attention back to a topic with which we were comfortable.



Truth is, there are more newspapers around today than there were five years ago. Declines in circulation are mainly attributable to a tightening of a newspaper's footprint - eliminating some routes beyond the primary trading area - and a gravitation of the occasional reader to the web, with most of those landing on the newspaper's web site. In fact, I don't know of a single newspaper in Alabama who's combined readership - print and online - is not greater than it was "back in the good old days."

Our core print reader remains largely

intact. And that's the one who was most likely to respond to an ad message five and ten years ago. Selling stuff is what we do better than anyone. We may not be sexy and slick, but we produce results.

Newspapers aren't dying. Truth is, our broadcast brethren are having a much harder time holding on to their viewers and listeners as the Internet continues to fragment the market. TV and radio always have and always will be entertainment vehicles. The web just brings more entertainment options to the table. Can newspapers be entertaining? Absolutely. Look no further than the letters to the editor and sound off columns during football season. But hyper-local news and information still remains our bread and butter specialty.

Do we need to be more creative in both our sales presentations and advertising proposals? Absolutely. Our competition is, so we have to answer. Perhaps suggest a tri-fold preprint instead of a traditional single sheet. Maybe recommend an adscape layout instead of a bland, quarter-page ad with too much copy inside the borders. And simply charge for the space used, not an up-charge or premium rate for something "out of the ordinary." Talk about thinking outside the box.

Bottom line, we can change. We can change the way we do things. We can change the way we respond to those negative recruiters and the way we do business. We can show our products can be platforms for creativity.

We can change the perception of our industry into the reality we know it can be.

After all, we're number one.

Help Wanted

Senior Reporter - Anniston, AL

The Anniston Star seeks a senior reporter to join its award-winning newsroom.

Building on a distinguished legacy of more than 100 years of family ownership, the newspaper is looking for reporter who feels comfortable breaking news and producing quality enterprise.

Applicants should have a degree in journalism, communications or a similar field. Recent graduates will be considered, but this job might be best suited for candidates looking who've been in the business for at least five years.

The Anniston Star is guided by the principle highlighted on its masthead: "The duty of a newspaper is to be the attorney for the most defenseless among its subscribers."

Please send your resume in Word format and three clips as online links to Executive Editor James Bennett at jbennett@anniston-star.com.

The Anniston Star is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages diversity in applications. The salary is negotiable, based on experience.

Press Operator- Florence, AL

The TimesDaily is seeking a printing press operator to join our northwestern Alabama printing facility. Hands-on experience with a Goss Urbanite or DGM 850 is a plus, but not required. Qualified candidates will be available to work nights, weekends. For more information on this position click [HERE](#) or visit the Help Wanted section of the APA website.

Editor - Athens, AL

The Athens News Courier, an award-winning daily newspaper published in Athens, Alabama, covering Limestone County, is seeking an editor who has a strong sense of

community journalism, attention to detail and a desire to lead a dedicated, enthusiastic newsroom.

The News Courier publishes four days a week and maintains an active digital presence every day. In addition to our newspaper, we publish several magazines and niche publications throughout the year.

We are looking for someone who wants to be part of a growing community, isn't afraid to hold others accountable and can work as part of a local and regional team within the CNHI network of community newspapers.

If you have the following:

News reporting, photography and design/presentation skills as they relate to print and digital platforms;

Understanding of how to manage a staff and direct a newsroom;

Strong news judgment as it relates to marketing and presentation of newspapers;

Strong leadership skills;

Experience in overseeing a newsroom or as a section editor of a newspaper,

Please send your resume and cover letter to Amy Henderson, Editor, The Cullman Times, at ahenderson@cullmantimes.com.

Reporter - Fort Payne, AL

Times-Journal is seeking an individual who has a heart for our community. If you desire to use your words to help inform others, we would like to hear from you.

The qualified candidate will have a working knowledge of Word, and be able to cover stories when they happen. We offer a competitive wage and benefit package including 401K, BC/BS Insurance, Sick Days and more. If you are ready to start your career as a writer with Times-Journal, send your resume to publisher Steven Stiefel at: stiefel@times-journal.com.

Sales - Clanton, AL

Clanton Newspapers, Inc., producers of the ClantonAdvertiser.com, The Clanton Advertiser, North Chilton Advertiser, Peach Living and related digital products, has an immediate need for a Business Growth Strategist to fill a sales position in an established territory. This position will have a strong focus on prospecting and new business development.

- Meet with local business owners and decision-makers to uncover and understand their business needs and goals so that you can advise clients on our comprehensive product mix including print, digital, search, video and mobile solutions
- Work with colleagues to design custom advertising and marketing solutions that fit your clients' needs

For this position we're looking for candidates with:

- Bachelor's degree or a combination of education with related experience
- Proven success of increasing sales in a competitive marketplace, using a needs-based selling approach
- Experience in digital advertising would give you a head start

We offer competitive pay that is a mix of salary, commission and bonuses. We also offer a comprehensive benefits package including generous paid time off, 401k, and options for your healthcare. Applicants should email a résumé, cover letter and earnings expectations to careers@clantonadvertiser.com. No phone calls, faxes or walk-ins, please. Qualified applicants will be contacted directly for interviews

For more information on the above listed positions and others [CLICK HERE](#) to view the APA Help Wanted page- updated frequently.

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