

25

more

ways

to improve your
print products in

2017

**We
believe in
print.**

For more information about improving print, the SLP Print Solutions Team or to join our efforts to promote and educate the industry about print, contact:
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We hear the drumbeat at every conference: Print is dead. Speaker after speaker repeats the mantra. It is treated as fact. It's obvious. It is imminent. Run from print before it drags you under!

This notion is so pervasive that people are afraid to confront it for fear of looking silly. It is never challenged. An entire industry of publishers and journalists has failed to check the facts and consider the alternatives. Shame on us.

There is absolutely no evidence that print is dead. It's fiction. But a decade of treating our print products like a disease is killing us.

What if this mantra is just a myth?

Radio was dead. Everyone said so. In fact, radio has been "dying" for 90 years. Television would kill radio. Absolutely. Everyone knew that. More recently, Sony's Walkman would kill radio. Then the iPod. And the cell phone. And satellite radio. But radio is still a significant medium.

By the way, Beta tapes and VCRs were sure to kill movie theaters and cable was death to broadcast television. Mediums don't die. Good grief, even record albums are making a comeback.

Look at the companies that have followed the "digital first" drumbeat. As a business model, it has been pretty effective at driving newspaper companies into bankruptcy. We've been killing print for a decade and there isn't much evidence that strategy is working.

Today, for many newspapers, the declines in print circulation have leveled off – a miracle considering how hard we have worked to gut print resources and mismanage everything about it.

Some recent research indicates that a majority of remaining print subscribers strongly

prefer print and are not interested in getting their news online or elsewhere.

And how do you explain the move of web-based companies like Digital Daily, CNET, Tablet, WebMD and Politico to launch print products? Or the launch of 204 new print magazines in 2015. There must be something good about print.

So, if we can consider the possibility that print isn't dying, that brings us to the real question: At this point, do we give up on print or fix it? If you knew print would continue for another 20 or 30 or 50 years, what would you do?

Many experts had predicted print would already be dead by now. And there is no question that print newspaper circulation is a train wreck. But that damage may be largely self-inflicted. We've done everything to kill print – from flimsy, downsized newsprint to ridiculous price increases.

What if we began nurturing print instead? Can print be resuscitated? Can it even thrive in some new form? We think so. In fact, we'd argue that there are hundreds of steps – often small and inexpensive ones – that can begin to turn that tide.

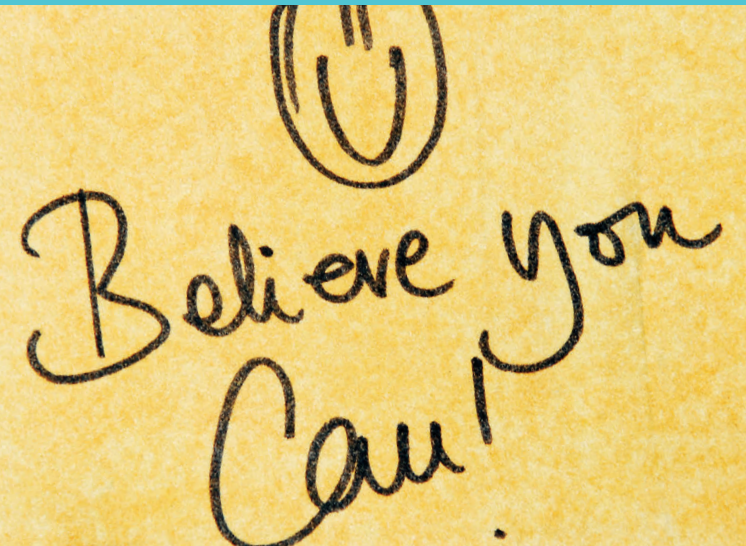
This can and should be done even while we as an industry rightly explores other revenue streams and publishing channels. It doesn't have to be one or the other.

From production and marketing to editorial and advertising, there are a thousand ways we can make print better. Here are 25 more small steps you can take to start that process in 2017.

Bill Ostendorf, president and founder of Creative Circle Media Solutions, for the SLP Print Solutions Team

1

**You can't sell
print unless
you believe!**



Shutterstock

What is your local advertiser churn rate?

How much does it cost you to acquire a new advertising customer if you don't retain them?

Those numbers have inevitably gone up in the past decade. The advertising environment has become more challenging for the newspaper business. The competition is intense and more varied, and we have lost the dominant penetration and readership we once had. We can't sell ourselves as easily as a mass media when our "mass" has lost some of its luster. Web-based searches and shopping has diminished our role as a local comparative shopping destination.

But rather than simply abandoning print and turning to shiny new web-based offerings, these conditions require a different and more efficient approach to selling and retaining advertisers.

And it starts by believing in your print products as an advertising vehicle.

Take a fresh look at your market, advertisers, and audience, and create new sales approaches for salespeople and employees. Create an "elevator briefing" for potential advertisers that is easily quoted by everyone who works there, particularly execs who mingle with community business leaders. Make sure it involves both print and web advantages.

Start by reaching out to regular advertisers and let them tell you why print advertising still works for them. Ask questions about results – both positives and negatives. You will find that many newspaper employees, partic-

ularly new ones, do not have an appreciation for the power of print. Many are given fresh energy by hearing the truth from advertisers. Print still works!

Then have the courage and conviction to go back to the long list of advertisers who have left your print vehicles and work on bringing them back to print.

Confront the issues:

Determine your local advertiser churn rate. As an annual percentage, is it 10% who leave? Or is it 50%?

Review the list of advertisers who leave or have reduced their print spending dramatically, and categorize their business type and a best-guess on why they left.

Hard to buy? Service or sales issues? Policies? Is it lack of results or ROI? Cost?

Experimenting with the latest shiny object, either yours or the competition's?

How is your newspaper perceived by advertisers?

Strategize solutions for preventing or reversing churn.

Renew/resell former advertisers.

Target best potential newspaper customers for best, quickest revenue source.

Prioritize by business type and potential.

Create attractive special offers and packages for a renewal sales blitz.

Sales strategy and assignment logic; assign to a manager or "hero rep" to the effort.

Many staffers are
given fresh energy
by hearing the truth
from advertisers.
Print still works!

Create a "sales pipeline" track. Everyone should have at least a top 12 prospect list with values to get advertisers to take a fresh look at print.

Categories with best potential:

- Furniture (7.8% of annual sales for advertising)
- Automotive
- Home Health Care / Hospitals (Boomers)
- Jewelry, seasonal targets

— Mark Stange, MWStange LLC

2

Get serious about legal ads

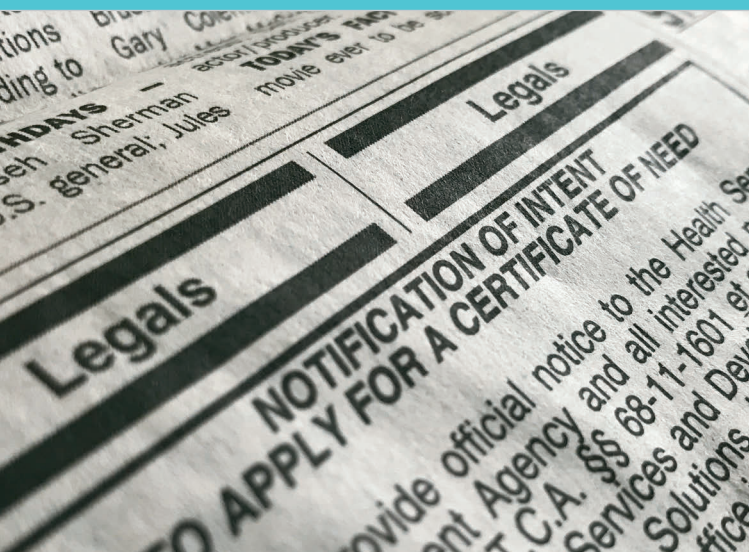
Publishers have been milking legal ads as a cash cow for an eternity. Lately, they have been wringing their hands about losing this Golden Goose. They are battling back via legislative lobbying to protect the print portion that provides so much money to support local newspapers around the country.

Here is the problem: We have never addressed the core issue. No one is reading the legals anyway.

We often treat legal advertising as filler, moving it around the paper to wherever we have space and jumping legal ads from page to page. We give it no respect or emphasis.

How can we expect advertisers to spend money with us if we don't add any value? It's lazy. It's stupid. It's an entitlement issue. It's the kind of thinking and attitude that will kill print if we don't do something about it.

I would certainly agree that municipal efforts to cut costs by putting the legals online somewhere is probably a bad idea. Online, people only read what they know, what they are familiar with, what they like. Online, legal ads and public notices would never be seen by the vast majority of the public. Burying legal notices on a municipal web site or some statewide public site that ONLY lists public notices, would make them even more invisible and impenetrable. It would indeed defeat the reason we have legal notices in the first place – to make sure the general public is aware of the spending and actions of public entities.



How can newspapers turn the tide? By doing with public notices what any good reporter would do with this kind of information: cover them, highlight them, make them understandable, expose their inconsistencies.

Here are six ways you can do the right thing with legal ads:

Run them in bigger type without charging more. Yes, the legislature sets the point size but look at that as a minimum. Make a commitment to make them legible.

Write a common-language summary of each press release (as news content) at the top of each press release.

Write a headline (as news content) on each legal notice.

Illustrate them with photos, maps, or graphics.

Run house ads or news stories explaining what legal notices are, and the kind of useful information readers can find there – auctions, business opportunities, sales, etc.

Promote this valuable content. Anchor them somewhere in the paper and make them a feature readers can count on. Refer to legal notices from news stories, section flags, or page one.

And while you are at it, let's use our lobbying efforts to promote that officials do the same six things.

Lobby to make legal notices legible with larger type and readable with language and

...cover them,
highlight them,
make them
understandable,
expose their
inconsistencies.

formats that make sense and foster understanding and easy reading.

What if the legislature mandated that each legal notice had to have a brief summary, written in common language, that described what it was about? What if all legal notices needed to highlight, in bold, in the body of the notice, how much money was at stake for each notice? What if legal notices had to have headlines, visuals and/or graphics? OMG, people might actually READ them!

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

3

Focus your news meetings

Almost all news budget meetings suffer from the same fatal flaw: The point of the meeting is entirely lost.

Most news planning meetings end with the wrong result – a list of stories for page one (or other section fronts). Here is the problem: We don't publish lists. We publish pages (and web sites, of course, but this is a print manual!). And pages – our end product for print – should be a core focus of every budget meeting.

This may seem like a technicality or some minor difference, but it isn't. All day and in every meeting or discussion, editors should be thinking about the pages they will produce. This immediately puts more attention on things that are critical to our print success:

- **What are the headlines?**

- **How big is the photo?** And which photo should we run? Is that photo good enough?

- **Where and how do we play stories?**

More importantly, how to we package and present them? How do they play off each other?

- **Is there enough space?** Should we cut a story or hold one? Should we drop the photo or cut the story?

- **Can a story hold or will it jump?** Is there enough space on the jump page to present this story (and visuals) appropriately?

WEEKEND POSTBULLETIN

The money numbers you need to know C2

Gophers coach 'here to change the culture' D1, D6

Are you ready for smart stores? C1

TODAY'S COUPONS Save more than \$151

POSTBULLETIN.COM | ROCHESTER, MINN. | JANUARY 7, 2017 | SEVEN SECTIONS | \$2

Gunman kills 5 at airport



Suspect had connecting flight at Minneapolis-St. Paul

BY DAVID FISCHER
Associated Press

PORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — An Army veteran who complained the government was controlling his mind drew a gun from his checked luggage on arrival at the Fort Lauderdale airport and opened fire in the baggage claim area Friday, killing five people and wounding eight, authorities said.

He was taken into custody after throwing his empty weapon down and being spread-eagle on the ground, one witness said.

"People started kind of screaming and trying to get out of any door they could or hide under the chairs," the witness, Mark Lee, told MSNBC. "He just kind of continued coming in, just randomly shooting at people, no rhyme or reason to it."

The gunman was identified as 26-year-old Esteban Santiago, of Anchorage, Alaska, who served in Iraq with the National Guard but was demoted and discharged last year for unsatisfactory performance. His brother said he had been receiving psychological treatment recently.

A law enforcement official told the Associated Press that Santiago had walked into the FBI office in Anchorage in November to say the U.S. government

him watch Islamic State videos. Agents questioned an agitated and disoriented Santiago and then called police, who took him for a mental health evaluation, according to the official, who was not authorized to discuss the case and spoke on condition of anonymity. The official said Santiago did not appear intent on hurting anyone.

Jesse Davis, chief of police at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, said Santiago flew out of Anchorage on a 3:30 p.m. Delta flight Thursday, and a firearm was his only piece of checked luggage. Davis noted it's not usual for travelers at the Alaska airport to check firearms because many people hint.

Davis said Santiago flew from Anchorage to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and then on to Fort Lauderdale.

Without law / Associated Press
Law enforcement officers protect civilians Friday outside a baggage area at Fort Lauderdale - Hollywood International Airport.

• **What does the caption say?** How can we improve that?

• **Have we assigned too much to this page?** Or too little?

It's actually a big advancement to focus not just on what content we are publishing, but how we are publishing it? These are things that should be discussed, brainstormed and challenged while more people who are familiar with the content are around and not left to an overtaxed copy editor late in their shift.

And it opens the door to even more important questions that more newsrooms should be asking, like "Is this page interesting? Is this the best presentation we can create? Will this page sell? Would I pay \$1.50 to read these stories?" Too often, the answer – if we are honest about it – is no. And if we can actually get to that kind of realization the day before we publish and not the next morning, that might give us a shot at being a better newspaper tomorrow.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

We don't publish lists. We publish pages. And pages – our end product for print – should be a core focus of every budget meeting.

4

Don't let ads get stale

Print advertising is stuck in a rut and it's time to change that.

What does an auto dealer ad look like? How about a Realtor's ad with lots of houses?

Print advertising in newspapers is often poorly designed, predictable and ineffective. Worse, we pick up the same ads and the same concepts over and over. And we see papers that have run the same ad for an advertiser for years without updating or refreshing.

We KNOW what works in advertising and what doesn't. Yet we continue to create ads for our customers that we know won't work. How is that a business strategy? (The same is true of digital advertising, by the way.)

Most advertisers should run campaigns, not ads. And while those campaigns may have an over arching theme, the individual ads should be different and rotating. We should

be regularly re-visiting the ad design for all our customers on some kind of regular, rotating basis.

And we regularly bring new ideas to our advertisers to hold both their interest in our products and their customers interest in our advertisers.

We were asked recently to come up with new ideas for auto dealers and, after talking to some auto dealers about how they sell (by monthly payment, not price) and where they make the most money (their auto repair shops) and who their customers are (they fall into a handful of groups like first time buyers, trucks, families, luxury, eco cars, etc.), we developed campaigns that looked nothing like the kind of existing auto dealer ads we see in newspapers.

They featured only a few, larger images of cars or people. For example, rather than a shot-gun blast with 40 cars, some new concepts were targeted to those key buying groups – with just a couple sample cars for first time buyers and an image of a person. There were native ads offering help or tips on buying a truck or an electric car. There were ads with cars grouped by monthly payment saying “We have 500 cars you can buy for \$350/month” with two or three sample cars run larger. Some of the ads looked more like magazine ads with cars in a specific, local setting.

It's not that hard to get out of this rut. Don't let advertisers get stuck on one concept that they recycle over and over. And talk to advertisers enough to learn their business and come up with concepts just for them. It's legwork, but it builds credibility, relationships and revenue.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

5

Run a press test



When was the last time you ran a real press test?

It should be a regular occurrence. It can improve not only the quality of your printing but also open up opportunities to discuss quality control, design, color selection, typography and more. Basically, a whole bunch of things we almost never discuss or pay attention to!

Things change in production environments – new plates, processors, staffers, or inks can have a dramatic impact on reproduction. By running regular press tests, you can see the impact of some of these kinds of changes and correct for them.

Include a grid for the range of colors you commonly use at varying densities and screens. Include gray scale screens to show what a 10% black and an 80% black look like on your press.

This will allow you to show advertisers and designers what screens and colors work best and to develop better standards for both news and advertising.

Experiment with some of your smaller type elements: body type, agate, type used for graphics or captions. Try these elements a bit larger or set differently or in different fonts to see if they can be improved.

— Creative Circle Media Solutions

6

When advertisers call, offer solutions that work

Advertisers still call us, especially for classified ads. But it's important to handle those calls carefully. What kind of experience are advertisers having with your staff? Every caller is motivated to spend money with us, and should get a good enough experience to come back and tell their friends. The days are long gone where we can handle such calls with disinterest. Every advertiser is more precious than ever.

Consider calling your own ad staff, or listen in when someone else calls, to gauge training needs. Check in on multiple calls at different points during the day, with different advertising in mind. Be careful with this. Your goal is to learn the truth. Don't use it as entrapment, only as a baseline for improvement. Also, in some states, recordings require notice to callers and advance notice to staff. Consultants can also be a resource for secret shopper calls, with them reporting their experience back to you.

Judge the customer experience and rep readiness. No business caller should wait on hold, or wait for someone to return from lunch. Someone should always be available during business hours to help an advertiser, make sure that your "phone tree" routes the calls to available people.

Training should be about the selling process more than just training about our products. Training on our advertising solutions should include size and frequency recommendations for each significant advertiser category.

Failure is not knowing what to sell or recommend – or offering products that aren't effective. Conversations that start with the advertiser describing his business and the



newspaper rep describing his audience statistics often devolve into a game of “What can I get that is right for me?” versus “How much do you want to spend?”

What do you do during the call to increase results, revenue, and customer satisfaction?

Can your staff that answers the inbound calls easily sell and order display ads? Do they need help with art and logos? Can they quote preprint delivery or print and deliver? Yes, they can refer to a specialist for follow up, but they should have some minimal ability to answer questions and quote the sales messages you want them to use.

And this is a good time to examine your standard offerings as well.

When it comes to classifieds, our minimum size orders have historically been too small to do a decent job – especially in recruitment and other classified verticals, so why do we sell them? Why sell something that doesn’t work?

“Three lines for three days for ten bucks” leads to abbreviations and short length of schedule, making ads less effective and further alienating our advertisers. Why quote classified rates that drive advertisers to bad decisions – weak ads with fewer insertions?

Hundreds of inbound callers seek the “best deal,” usually interpreted as “cheapest.” Our people have been trained by that experience, and go right to the minimum quote and to avoid the debate.

**Advertiser
perceptions
of value have
lowered.
Our halo is gone.**

When business was booming, and print display and classifieds were king, tiny type for high rates worked. The advertisers came back even if the ads were awful. No longer. Now, it’s about standing out for casual readers and classified browsers, and ads must have adequate copy and frequency. Advertiser perceptions of value have lowered. Our halo is gone.

We must define a new recommended size and order schedule for each category of local advertising that works and over-delivers in today’s market. And we have to do it at a competitive price, with a self-service package or customer service that brings those advertisers – and their friends – back again and again.

— Mark Stange, MWStange LLC

7

Guarantee results for print ads!

Do you have car dealers or other businesses in your market that have abandoned print?

Do they say that you can't give them accountable or attribution ROI for their ad dollars?

Many newspapers have found that using the customer's sales data to track sales activity against newspaper subscriber records can demonstrate performance for print advertising. This works particularly well for large ticket sellers such as car dealers.

Proven Performance Media, a division of Belo, can help. Example: A large Southeast market newspaper recently contracted with Proven Performance Media, sold 10 dealerships in six months, and are adding new non-running dealers monthly.

The process included using measured dealer sales for prior six months, determining an average sales volume, and then negotiating a price the dealer would pay per added sale above that average per month to matched subscribers (\$225 to \$450).

The newspaper then runs a strong print and online schedule of their creation, proving value.

Example dealership spending: Month 1-\$6K, Month 2-\$10K, Month 3-\$18K, Month 4-\$24K



With success, dealers convert to a traditional rate agreement.

The amount paid per car sold is determined using averages developed based on car make/value/market size. Proven Performance can offer guidance.

This program also works in furniture, flooring, roofers, carpet, new business, and includes call tracking.

Some insights from Richard Jones – president of Proven Performance:

- **Print newspapers still work.** We run campaigns and see data from clients across platforms, and the newspaper is still a top producer in many categories.
- **Cross media is a must!** When an advertiser runs a cross-media campaign, they improve their overall results. For ex-

ample, when an advertiser runs a search campaign with a print campaign, we see a lift in call volume and site traffic. A true $1+1=3$.

• **Frequency matters.** We know it's true in most media, but for some reason, print is expected to carry the weight of success with one ad. Over the past several years, we have seen optimal results when running three ads or more in one week. Which days are effective depends on the business.

— Mark Stange, MWStange LLC

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8

Combine native with classifieds

Native advertising has been popular online, but newspapers have been slow to embrace it in print, which is a huge missed opportunity.

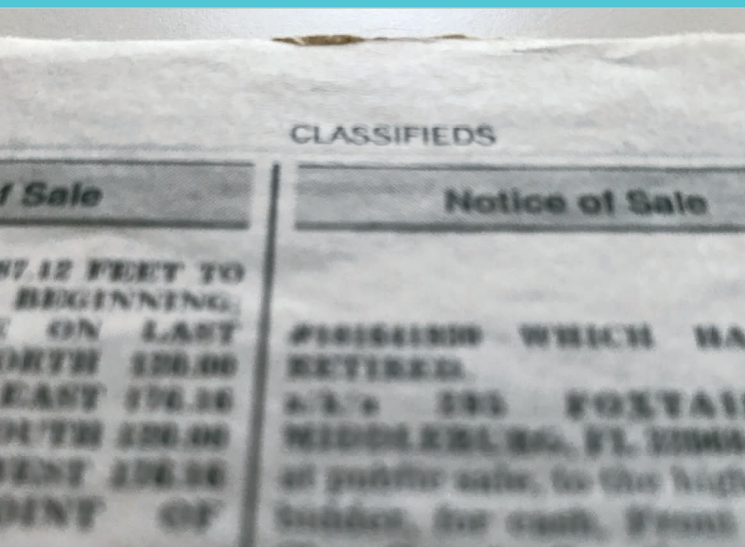
There are a dozen ways newspapers could do a better job of delivering native content in print. But one of the best concepts we've developed focuses on native as a way to re-energize classifieds.

Like print, we believe classifieds not only can be saved but can once again thrive in newspapers. You've got to take your blinders off and learn how to think differently about this incredible, valuable ad type for newspapers.

We've had success creating new classified categories for food, health, business, pets, outdoors, sports, travel, and more and packaging those with related content in sections throughout the paper. Using native-like adjacencies, food ads go in the food section; outdoors ads in the outdoors section; business ads in the business section.

Here are a few of the secrets to success with this new kind of classifieds:

- **Don't call them classifieds!** Our classified sections are ugly, poorly managed and poorly designed. Our market research shows SBAs don't want to be in the classified section. Classifieds are associated with cheap, used, and unprofessional. Instead, echo Google AdSense or Facebook Ads and call them "targeted text ads" or anything but classifieds!



You've got to take your blinders off and learn how to think differently about this incredible, valuable ad type for newspapers.

- **Think broadly** about these categories. Food isn't just where to buy food, it's also where to carry out food, learning how to cook food, and buying the right tools to make food. We've created more than 40 new classified categories for food. So targeted food ads can include appliance sales, kitchen remodeling, game butchers, carry out restaurants, cooking classes, and coupon book sales.

- **Forget 100 upsells.** Every classified department is obsessed with silly and unproductive upsells and limited word counts that are crippling our classified efforts (see tip #1). Every ad should START with a headline, visual and 30-50 words. Forget the ugly borders and reverses and colored type that have junked up your classified section. Think classy and sophisticated. That's what SMBs are looking for.

- **Stick with flat rate pricing.** Keep it simple and uncomplicated.

- **Don't skimp on typography.** Use normal, legible type, standard column widths and full column width images and logos.

- **Whatever native classified categories you create in print should also be found online.** Native classifieds need to find their way across all your digital brands – newsletters, web site, apps, etc.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

9

Cut out more chemicals from your pre-press process

If your operation is like most, you have a thermal or violet platesetter and a processor. Which probably means your prepress staff spends a lot of time purchasing, storing and disposing of chemicals, dealing with clean-up, with leaks, with heat and humidity, with slip sheets and ever increasing energy costs. And that doesn't even include device maintenance.

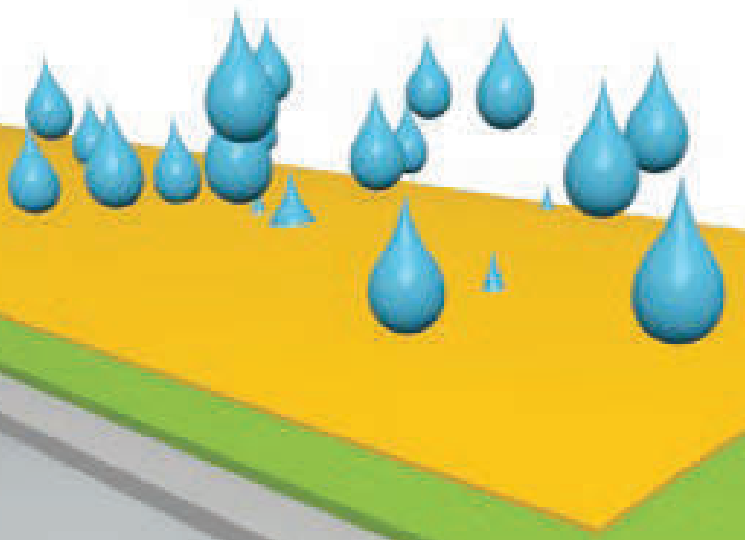
That's because conventional imaging of plates is more than imaging. It's pretreating, it's processing, it's all the issues associated with maintaining a processor that seems to be down more than it is up, with time and money spent on service calls, parts... and on more and more chemicals. Or... spent on replacing old processors with new processors.

That's a big reason why prepress can make or break your profit margins. But is there an alternative? Yes. No-Process printing plates.

Granted, as recently as 6-8 years ago, no-process plates had still been an emerging technology. During that period, early adopters of no-process plates realized after a short time that their reproduction quality wasn't quite up to par, conditions for use and storage were cumbersome and compatibility with prepress devices were unproven.

But today, no-process has fully emerged as the preferred plate solution.

It's faster. It's easier. It's cleaner. And less expensive! Today's no-process printing plates deliver outstanding print quality, precision, consistency, excellent resolution, repeatability and surprising run lengths. And importantly, you don't need a processor. Plus, no-process plates can be run on virtually any thermal CtP device!



Southern Lithoplate

How do no-process plates work such that they can achieve the performance you need but also save money in your prepress department?

The best no-process plates today, “process” on press, which is “True no process”. When fountain solution is applied on press, the top (finish) coating of the plate is dampened. This softens the coating. As ink is applied, the tack of the ink literally pulls the coating out of the non-imaged areas during initial makeready, effectively transferring the coating material from the non-image areas to the blanket and onto the paper.

This means the effluent travels on the makeready paper waste out of the press – completely preventing contamination of the fountain solution and ink train. Within a handful of sheets, the effluent is gone and you are printing good, saleable copies.

The benefit? Faster makeready. Faster, saleable copy. Crisp dependable dots. Reduced paper waste. No fountain or ink train contamination. Less energy used, less time spent, lower environmental impact and better profit margins.

— *Southern Lithoplate*

The benefit?
Faster makeready.
Faster, saleable copy.
Crisp dependable
dots. Reduced
paper waste.

10

Stop wasting ink

One way to keep print costs down is using technology to minimize ink consumption.

Ink optimization software and ink presetting are two solutions that can make that happen—drastically saving time and decreasing consumable costs (paper and ink) behind the scenes.

Ink optimization software lets you achieve significant ink savings by replacing the grey component of cyan, magenta, and yellow with equivalent amounts of black. When looking at such systems, here are some buying tips:

Software should be independent of prepress workflow and be able to integrate with any prepress system.

Ask vendors for trial period to ensure you are seeing a savings in ink costs.

Software should improve quality of printed products.

Be cognizant of on-going support fees or use SAAS model if available.

Ink presetting software automatically calculates ink density values. It saves time and money that is normally wasted at the start of each press run, waiting for a quality page to print. It utilizes the same data to make plates. When looking at such systems, here are some buying tips:

Software should be independent of workflow and be able to integrate with any prepress system.

A good system will allow you to send ink values directly to the press so there's no human intervention.

— Prestelligence

11

Stop promoting social networks in print

Drop the social network icons!

Is Facebook *paying* you to run their logo all over your pages? Or Twitter? Or Instagram? Of course not! (They should, but that's a different article.)

At best, these social networks are frenemies. At worse, they are ruthless, local competitors. Facebook wants your advertisers to spend with THEM, and they sell intensely local ads. Meanwhile, they keep tweaking their metrics to de-emphasize our content and posts in their feeds.

Yet papers everywhere are putting Facebook, Twitter and other social network logos on page one – sometimes above the fold!

It's INSANE!

No one can click on those logos.

They don't help your newspaper in the least. Get rid of them!

It's not news anymore that you have a Facebook page. If you are going to put anything in your paper about these networks, use your handle – your actual URL or address. That's promoting YOUR brand, not the social network.

Every piece of junk on your pages is a negative. Unnecessary colors, logos, typography – everything that distracts takes space and attention away from your brand and content.

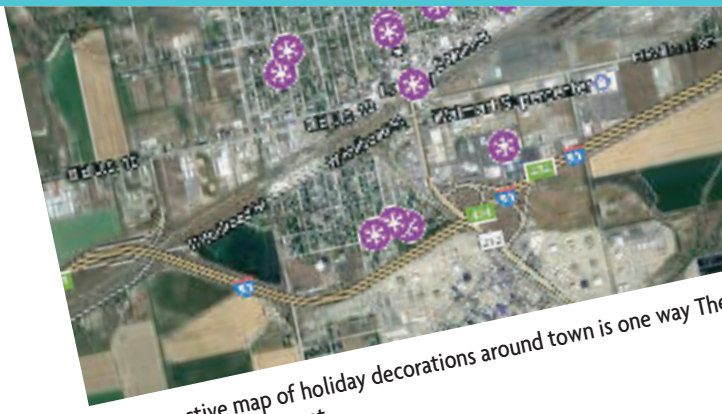
Take a look at your printed pages and get rid of the junk!

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

**At best, these social networks are frenemies.
At worse, they are ruthless, local competitors.**

12

Stop wasting captions!



This interactive map of holiday decorations around town is one way The drives digital engagement.

Photo captions are among of the highest read content in your newspaper

And they represent the worst writing almost every newspaper produces.

Between 60 and 80 percent of captions get read. That compares to less than 25 percent of stories that are read at all and about five percent of stories that are read from beginning to end.

In our print redesigns, we re-direct newsroom resources to the content that is more highly read – captions, headlines, breakouts and refers are all read at a much higher clip than text. Just increasing the attention we pay to these elements a little can make a big difference. By making these elements much better, we can quickly change readers' view of the quality and value of print our products.

Step one to improving your captions would be to abandon AP style for captions. This formatted, boring, style is death to both good writing and strong readership: "Person X (left) and person Z (right) from town Y stare at the camera holding the widget they produce."

Newspapers didn't adopt AP style for captions because it was good. They adopted it because it was easy. Like so many things that have gone wrong in newspapers, newsrooms don't act in the interests of readers but in the interests of expediency.

The AP doesn't publish newspapers. They don't have design or layout or context for their images. They don't have print readers or individual subscribers for that matter. Their style is designed to provide consistency and conformity across a wide range of images they process, not creativity. So their style is inappropriate for newspapers.

We encourage our clients to use quotes in

their captions to bring them to life. And to mix up caption writing to make captions more varied, creative and interesting. We would also argue that the best quote, stat or information from the story – whenever possible – should be pulled from the story and used the caption. Why? Because that would dramatically increase the readership of the very best information you have for every story by a factor of five or six.

Most readers who pick up a paper spend much of their time skimming it – looking at headlines, photos, captions and other display elements. They look at the short stuff first and they take all these elements in before reading the stories. Many readers don't go any further – in fact most stories are never read even though the headline, photo and caption are. Readers are gathering data, deciding what interests them and then moving on. If the headline, photo and caption are engaging, they are more likely to read the story. If they aren't, readership of the story suffers.

In this environment, having a generic list of names and a bland description as a caption is deadly and dumb.

In the past ten years, newspapers got rid of photographers, copy editors and designers – diminishing readership dramatically – and that has fed the slide in circulation of our print products. The editors and accountants decided these functions weren't part of a newspaper's core product. Somehow ENGAGING READERS was optional. That was about as insightful as it would be for Apple to decide the design of its products didn't matter.

If anyone had read the research and thought about readers, we would have made very different choices about newsroom staffing, even in the face of significant cutbacks.

Meanwhile, here are some tips for improving your captions:

- **Vary the writing of captions.** Don't always start with the "who."

- **Make sure captions are interesting and engaging.** Use quotes and infuse captions with some of the best content from the story, where appropriate, to gain the highest readership for your most important information.

- **Use an informal, casual style,** like you are talking to a friend.

- **Don't just list names of subjects** in a photo. Gather some more detail about those people and who they are. Our research shows that readers want and expect a parenthetical phrase – like everyone uses to describe the people they know – to describe people in photos. "Joe Smith is a retired police officer who loves to garden . . ." Make people in photos three-dimensional, not just names in a list.

- **Don't describe what the photo already shows.** Remember, the reader has already read the photo before reading the caption.

- **Encourage photographers** (if you still have any) to interview people they photograph, not just get their names.

- **Don't gang lots of captions together.** That leads to more navigation (counterclockwise from left) than information. Each photo deserves a caption. If you do combine captions, only combine two and make sure the caption touches both photos so readers quickly see and understand where to find them.

- **Write captions earlier in the day** so more than one person has an opportunity to read and edit them. Leaving them as the last thing we do is one of the reasons they are so bad now. Remember, every caption probably has higher readership than any story you publish.

— Creative Circle Media Solutions

13

Get back to taking ads!

or cut & paste directly below, or use our help

	Hours/Shift	Job Duties
Skills Needed	Educational Requirements	Attributes Y
on Potential	Name of Company	What Type
Environment	Company Web Site	Salary
	Equal Opportunity Reference	How to Ap

Handling inbound ad placement correctly takes skill and work.

Doing it right can generate 20% to 50% more revenue, and increase repeat customers. Unfortunately, many newspapers have given up on inbound classified calls (and are surprised by accelerating losses). Web competition wasn't enough, we had to guarantee failure by ignoring the fundamentals!

How not to handle calls

A: Hi this is Sam at xyz furnishings, and I'd like a help wanted ad?

S: Ok, do you have your copy ready to read?

A: I'm not sure, I think the one I ran last time said "sales." I really need a good person right away.

S: Ok, can you email it to me when you are ready?

A: I will try. Have to think about it. How much is an ad?

S: Well, the minimum is five lines on Sunday for \$\$\$\$. You can add our web site for \$\$\$ more.

A: Ah, okay. Not sure about that.

A Better Way

A: Hi this is Sam at xyz furnishings, and I'd like a help wanted ad?

S: What position are you hiring for?

A: Furniture sales in our main store. I really need a good person for this job right away.

S: Any specialties or experience needed? Salary and commission? Benefits?

A: High end XXX brand. Experience preferred. Yes, competitive salary plus commission. We do have health insurance.

S: What is the best email address and phone number that they can respond to? They should have a name to contact for best impact.

A: That would be me. Sam@xyzfurnishings.com and use this number.

S: Store website and Facebook page?

A: Oh yes! Thanks for reminding me, we have the job posted there also.

S: I see on your site that you have a few more openings?

A: Yes, but I am not sure that I need help there, but am open to suggestions.

S: My proposal is (reads ad text) with a strong headline in larger type, and the ad will run for a week in print starting tomorrow, and online for 30 days. I will also email this quote to you.

Web competition
wasn't enough, we
had to guarantee
failure by ignoring
the fundamentals!

(In this case, the salesperson has already assembled the copy from questions, and will quote a full package, then trim if required).

Details, experience and training really matter in sales and sales are what drive your revenue. Don't skimp on making sure your team is delivering maximum revenue. You can get training referrals for classified, web and print sales or design training from press associations, like the Inland Press Association, or through SLP Partners like Mark Stange or Creative Circle.

— Mark Stange, MWStange LLC

14

Refresh your real estate advertising



It's about the photos!

Your newspaper no doubt has had a long history of Real Estate advertising, perhaps up and down, with some more recent shifts downward as the internet use has evolved, particularly on mobile.

If you haven't recently, your real estate market could use a refreshed strategy that can be developed in print.

Print listings of homes for sale have diminished as the internet has evolved into the preferred and most efficient search mechanism for homes. The primary advantage that print media still offers is the ability to display pictures and copy to a mass audience, beyond the destination searchers. The attractiveness of the photo displayed drives the attention, particularly in the company of other homes' photos. There is also a strong curiosity to know the home price that goes along with a photo and location. This is the content that drives audience from those interested in either selling or buying a home.

Generating content with some quality photos of homes for sale showing strong curb-appeal along with other features are often the most read features in a newspaper. Building an anchored location of that content will stimulate ad placement.

Home photo submissions from brokers should be accepted based on photo quality, and should be ideally arranged neutrally through a local Board of Realtors. Getting good photos and running them larger and in color are all important aspects of generating more energy in real estate advertising.

New home photos of models and floorplans are also immensely popular.

It's time to end the ineffective and neutralizing impact of row upon row of tiny photos crammed with agate type.

If you want to win in real estate, it's time to go for quality over quantity.

Homes should look good and invite readers to browse. Attractive interior as well as exterior photography is compelling for many reasons and can make some homes stand out, so don't be locked into an exterior view and offer options with multiple photos.

A key result is that having quality photo coverage of homes for sale will drive interest from consumers who will want their own homes featured. Adjacent photo blocks for sale can be sold to capture that opportunity.

Open houses add immediacy

Print newspapers can deliver quick mass audience for Open House advertising, particularly when combined with color photos

and geographically sorted. This is a particular advantage that deserves a development plan. With a well prepared and "salted" regular anchored appearance, consumers who are selling will want to make sure that their homes are included, and shoppers will look to it as a guide.

Brainstorm the creation of a much improved color photo display with a good anchored location and day. Friday or Saturday is good for Open House planning, though some markets let tradition point to Sunday. A Friday or Saturday can provide opportunities for a live press run, and give you a late deadline, which is also important for gathering open house ads and photos.

— Mark Stange, MWStange LLC

The primary advantage that print media still offers is the ability to display pictures and copy to a mass audience, beyond the destination searchers

15

Refocus your attention on newsstand sales



We think single copy sales offer an excellent chance for circulation growth for newspapers.

Unfortunately, most newspapers have devalued single copy, cutting back on boxes and outlets, getting rid of staffers who might have once refreshed sold out locations, reducing their marketing efforts to get better locations within stores and to reward clerks for recommending the paper with every purchase.

This is a big missed opportunity. Why? Because we've lost a LOT of our home delivery subscribers and most aren't likely to sign up again without an expensive, high-churn discounting program.

But looking at the other side of this, that means there are a LOT more potential single copy buyers in the market. All those people who were once subscribers like reading a newspaper, they just didn't want to do it every day and suffer guilt from stacks of unread papers around the house.

These same people can be enticed to read you occasionally.

So it's time to refocus and reinvest in newsstand sales. This is a multi-department effort and there are a lot of steps but it certainly can be done.

Let's start with the newsroom.

Publishers can justifiably complain that the news folks aren't very good marketers. It's not their thing. But we often don't give them the tools or training to get them on board.

We work with newsrooms to help them understand why their content has to sell, too.

It starts with the refers or top boxes on page one. Most newsroom write these elements like they are headlines. There is often too much text and poor illustrations.

Those almost certainly need a refresh:

1. **Adopt a flexible format.** Too many papers use the same template every day for their A1 refers. You need a variety of formats – maybe a dozen, pre-designed layouts with one to three elements; with and without images; above or below the nameplate.

2. **Pick the right stories.** Editors tend to pick stories that didn't make page one or are on section fronts rather than focusing on the demographics of a newsstand buyer. The city council and the local high school team are lousy refers. Stories about saving money, relationships, raising kids, education, workplace issues and health care are better.

3. **Write like a refer!** These refers aren't headlines. They are sales pitches. Make them about me (How you can save . . .) and use numbers (10 tips for buying a . . .) and imply value (Learn how . . .). They have to be accurate and specific, not cute or vague. Remember you are trying to get me to spend money! (For more about this, check out "Rethink your refers!" from our 2016 idea book.)

Meanwhile, in circulation this gets down to basic block and tackling.

Where are you selling? Take a hard look at your single copy outlets. Are there enough of them? Are they in the right places? Are they diverse enough?

How are you positioned? Within stores, where are your racks? Eye level near the cashier is best. On the floor in the back of the store is pretty worthless. What can you do, outlet by outlet, to get the position you need?

How are you promoting? Are your rack cards and sales materials current? Rack cards are a good place to involve the newsroom. Can you get them to create rack cards that are off today's news? Maybe the newsroom could even design them using their news content. Get a sheet fed press for pressroom and print them while you are printing papers so they are fresh every day.

What does your brand say? Are your boxes and branding up to date at your outlets? Or are your boxes an embarrassment? Does your display look modern and interesting? Are you using digital or sound to draw buyers to today's news?

Are you restocking? Is someone checking your outlets before and after lunch to make sure you aren't selling out and missing opportunities?

Are you varying the draw? If there is big news or and big sports event, are you increasing that day's draw to maximize sales?

These are things many papers stopped doing – or never did well – but with more potential readers out there than ever before, now is the time to try again.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

16

Selling with Creative

When it comes to advertising, compelling copy and visuals make a difference.

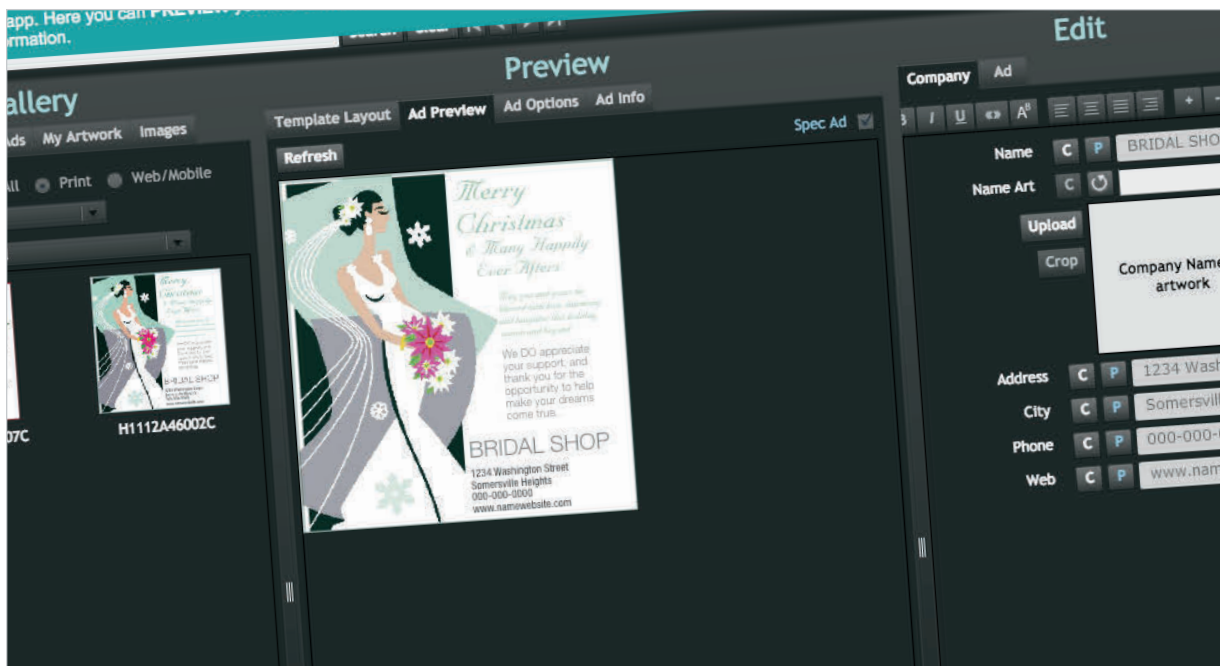
There is a perception that people who produce newspapers know what is best for the advertiser. Do we? Do we volunteer or suggest design or copy changes? Do we do enough to upgrade our print ads on a regular basis?

Sadly, it's so easy to just "pick up" previous ads that we often publish the same ad over and over, which we know doesn't work. And too often, that ad wasn't very good in the first place.

Many advertisers become "at risk" simply because their approach has become stale, and with diminishing returns, they perceive that they need to try some different media. There are many occasions where the personal relationship has been strong with the newspaper rep and other staff at the newspaper, and the advertiser stayed simply based on habit and that relationship. Eventually, without a refresh, the stale advertising returns less results and the advertiser reduces budget or leaves.

Good creative is an instant conversation starter for sales, and the best creative includes examples of what works in other markets and has been successful for similar advertisers.

If you use e-tearsheets, your e-tearsheet vendor may be a great resource to upgrade your



advertising. Several vendors provide access to their vast resource of tearsheets from hundreds of newspapers to help you find inspiration and new ideas (like Adinfinitem from SLP Partner Prestelligence).

Also of use, low-cost online art resources, like the MiAD Spec Ad Library from The Metro Creative Graphics, which includes thousands of sample ad layouts with seasonal and category themes. Templates for bridal, home, automotive, health, pets, and more are easy to customize and deliver to prospects.

— Mark Stange, MWStange LLC

Good creative is an
instant conversation
starter for sales,

17

Schedule your specials

A significant frustration for many advertisers and marketers is the lack of advance notice and information regarding special coverage that is planned during the year. Too often, we approach advertisers about these opportunities after their budgets have been committed to other things.

Some teams don't have a clear special section plan. Others make up a calendar, but don't promote it early enough or throughout the year.

Try something new

Special sections can be a way to attract new advertisers, especially if you explore some new ideas. You don't have to commit to a section. Set new ideas up as special coverage that can be done within one of your regular sections. If ad support is minimal, there is very little risk. Ad support will justify adding to the page count, it can be separated out into its own section.

Special coverage of local popular college or high school sports playoffs and previews when the community is really engaged is a great place to get something on the calendar with advance notice.

Travel special sections for a popular destination can get new ad budgets allocated. Visitors and Convention bureaus have funds to spend.

Themed opportunities work well, such as Prom Guide, Resource/Energy Conservation, Heart Health, Halloween, Kid Safety, Tax Guide, Estate and Preplanning Guide (really), Pet Care, Senior, Education, Weddings. These can take the form of a special edition, or a dedicated section enabled by ad orders. Election coverage, managed well, can offer special opportunities for advocacy or campaign ads.



Shutterstock

Special sections can be a way to attract new advertisers, especially if you explore some new ideas.

Special sections should continue to live online, promoted as such for extra value for advertisers.

Promote charitable causes

Papers have done well with Breast Cancer awareness campaigns and special editions or sections. Veterans' causes have been very popular in recent years as sections honoring "first responders." A corresponding contribution or benefit that goes to recognized charities helps assure these kinds of sections will be well supported.

Talk to the newsroom

Brainstorm opportunities to leverage special coverage for advertising. Determine areas of common ground and plan dates ahead. What kinds of events or themes do they know about? Do they have people on staff with expertise in some area that could lead to some new ideas?

Sample Calendar

Calendars don't have to be fancy, but should be actively promoted through house ads and other marketing channels throughout the

year. Here is a basic special section calendar with some tried and true special section options:

January: Business Outlook, Wedding Planning

February: Heart Health Month, Vacation planning

March: Home improvement (local shows), March Madness

April: Prom guide, local coverage/calendar

May: Baseball, Home improvement

June: Family day trips

July: Festivals and fairs

August: Football, Back to school

September: Cruise deals

October: Breast cancer awareness, Halloween

November: Holiday festivals, Cooking

December: Basketball, Holiday themes

— Mark Stange, MWStange LLC

18

Try sponsorships

g game, in particular. The Bears ran for 242
ds last week and had 388 total yards. Run-
g back Caden Blazing led the ground attack
n 132 yards and three touchdowns, includ-
the game winner in the final minute.
We know they'll keep the clock rolling and
t our possessions," Meyer said of Byron's
ense.

Bears' first-year starting quarterback Michael
le was also impressive in the opener, run-
g for 91 yards and completing 12 of 17 pass
mpts for 146 yards and two touchdowns.
Michael is a really good athlete and he's
edibly intelligent," Halder said. "He makes
art decisions and really grasps what we
nt to do offensively. He makes the right
ds and spreads the ball around really well."

Follow along with Jason Feldman as he
covers Stewartville at Byron in the Game
of the Week sponsored by Home Federal.
Tweet at Feldman (@pbfeldy) and use
#PBGOTW with your pictures from the
game.

Stewartville had 115 rushing yards in its
opener, but its offense was pass-heavy, pri-
marily because Chatfield was playing to stop
the run. That allowed Quandt to throw for a
school-record 363 yards and five touchdowns.
Senior receiver Nik Thiel caught all five of those
TDs, tying a state record for receiving TDs in a
game, set by three other players, most recently
Evan Guffey of Nicollet in 2012.

"Friday Ni
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the run. That
school-recor
Senior receiv
TDs, tying a
game, set by
Evan Guffey

"I say this
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decide what
6-2 front at t

Sponsorships have a bad rap, especially in the newsroom.

How can we compromise the integrity of content with advertising sponsors? We don't want to be like television or radio or pay for play websites!

But "native advertising," "special advertising section," or real unfettered content with adjacent advertising is not that different from a sponsorship.

Lots of papers sell sponsorships online but don't do the same in print. Why not?

A great story from the golden era of the 90's talks about a large sporting goods retailer that wanted to spend six figures locally to help sponsor sports coverage of high school sports. It could have been accomplished with a skybox ear, perhaps a Sports front strip ad, and something inside the section, but it was turned down.

We have many pieces of specialized content that are suitable for sponsorship, and never in conflict with investigative or hard news reporting. If there are concerns about reader perception, run a disclaimer with the ad explaining this sponsor has no influence on coverage.

Syndicated elements can be categorized and matched up with potential advertising sponsor options in advance of a sales effort by an assigned specialist or manager for careful handling. Content elements with a small but devoted readership that normally generate no ads could be priced very low with long frequency with a sponsorship.

HOME
FEDERAL

High School Football Game of the Week is sponsored by Home Federal

WHAT IS A SPONSOR? A sponsor is an advertiser who supports a spe
The sponsor has no editorial control over the content of the feature.

Some options to consider:

- Gardening or home improvement columns – local home improvement stores, contractors
- Bridge or Crossword – local game stores or venues, bingo, bookstores
- Book reviews, lists – local book stores
- Fishing/hunting reports – outdoor gear retailers, fishing charters, game clubs
- Better Business Bureau column – local bank/home improvement loans
- Television grid – Cable or satellite TV, casinos
- Lottery results – Convenience stores, bingo
- Astrology – New Age book stores
- Local sports coverage – almost anyone who sponsors local sports teams, sporting goods stores, a local bank or medical group
- Business calendar – Banks, Commercial Real Estate, Business Caterers
- Wedding Announcements- Caterers, Wedding vendors
- Sports agate – Sporting goods stores, big screen TV outlets, sports teams
- Right rail position in Sports – Automotive
- Homes Sold record – Real Estate Broker
- Health care column – Hospital group, doctors

— Mark Stange, MWStange LLC

Lots of papers sell sponsorships online but don't do the same in print. Why not?

Don't let a mere machine stop you

Newspaper deliveries
be delayed this morning

?? :(

Today 6:47 AM

Newspaper deliveries
delayed due to
production problem

Count your blessings if you've never had to post a paper delivery delay announcement to your web site or email subscribers due to production snags. Or worse, hit your readers with a "No newspaper today" bulletin.

As one of the 1,350 US newspapers that prints papers every, or most days of the week, your chances of facing this money-draining, profit-robbing and embarrassing circumstance is high enough to warrant a closer look at some prevention.

Sometimes your weakest link is the press, sometimes it's the software, but frequently, it's in prepress.

And because prepress typically includes both a platesetter and a processor, the odds are at least double that one of them goes down. Spent laser diodes/laser heads, clamp sets, power supplies, motherboards, pumps, filters, blower motors and more. Lots of parts...lots of opportunities for downtime. And most downtime events last upwards of 8 hours to 24 hours or more, depending on parts availability from your supplier, or other factors.

Even if you are fortunate enough to maintain a full inventory of replacement parts for such occasions, has your crew (if you are fortunate enough to have an adequately staffed crew) been trained on all the intricacies of removing and installing components in your prepress, and can they get the device back up and running quickly?

The obvious solution is to have dual sets of imagesetters and processors so that if one device takes the day off, you can still a resource to feed the press. But...anywhere from

40 to 50 percent of newspapers, according to commonly reported industry statistics, do not have a backup for their prepress devices. Certainly not surprising given tight or non-existent capital equipment budgets among many newspaper operations today.

Given all that, what are your options? Just take your chances and hope that the baling wire and chewing gum will hold up? Start attending church services regularly?

The smart money is on establishing a relationship with a dependable service organization. And with many newspapers' prepress devices facing end-of-life status, or manufacturers discontinuing their support of your device, it makes even more sense to find this life support, pronto.

Okay, so what do you look for in a service supplier? Here is a partial list of capabilities/services your supplier may offer which you'll need to prioritize:

- **Technicians available 24/7:** You may never need it, but, with older equipment, it may be priority #1.
- **Remote device access:** Depending on the CtP this can provide virtually instant relief from your issues.
- **Parts for your device are in stock:** Waiting for parts is the biggest contributor to long downtimes.
- **High rate of successful resolution of service problems:** Look for a supplier whose rate is at least 85%.
- **Video camera installation:** This inexpensive option at your device, speeds diagnostics, helps identify parts, and can cut your downtime big time.

The smart money[•] is on establishing a relationship with a dependable service organization.

Service or maintenance options: Preventive maintenance, service on call, phone support and more. The greater the number of options, the more likely you will find something to meet your needs and budget.

Certainly, there are many other considerations such as, does the supplier also service printing presses, can they install software, and are their technicians certified? But perhaps the most important option is preventive maintenance provided by a dependable service provider.

Because when you add up the cost of downtime, the cost of parts and the cost of last minute service at 3:00 in the morning, you won't have to ask, "Who am I gonna call?"

— *Southern Lithoplate*

20

Put puzzles in their place

Readers love puzzles and for many readers, puzzles are a main reason they buy the paper.

But I don't think many people who work at newspapers bother with the puzzles. Otherwise we wouldn't see so many crossword puzzles stuck in the wrong places on pages.

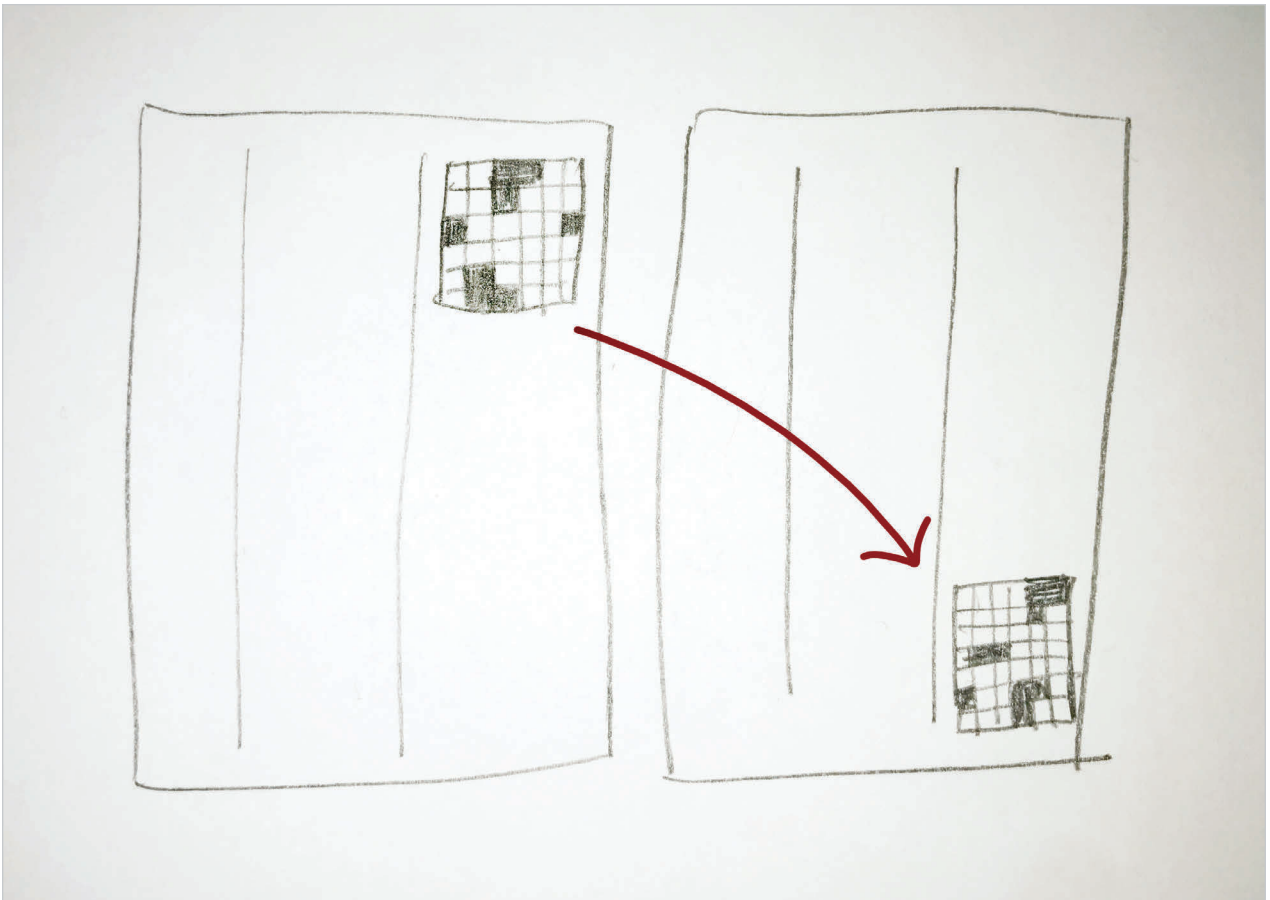
We often see crosswords at the very top of a page or in the middle. We see them along the gutter on the inside of pages. All bad.

The very best place for a crossword puzzle is the lower right-hand corner of a right-hand page. The puzzle hints or text can be above or to the left of the puzzle grid itself.

Why? Because if you are doing the crosswords and the puzzle is anywhere else, you have to fold the page up to get to it or risk getting ink all over your sleeve. When the puzzle is at the bottom and outside edge of the page, you can just lay the paper down and get to work and never worry about getting ink on your sleeve.

It sounds like a small thing but it's pretty important if you do that puzzle every day. And small things add up. When we think like consumers, we make smart decisions that make our products easier to use and enjoy.

That same positioning is true for all puzzles – better at the bottom or on the right edge of a right-hand page for the majority of right-handed people. It's just more important for the crossword because people spend much more time doing them.



And while you are improving the crosswords, consider increasing the size of the grid. That will go over big with readers. And don't just use the PDF of the puzzle many syndicates supply. You'll get better legibility (and we can often save space) by downloading the text for the hints and typesetting them in your fonts. (Most puzzles come in both formats. They can be used as PDFs or the pieces can be downloaded online.)

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

**When we think like
consumers, we make
smart decisions
that make
our products easier
to use and enjoy.**

21

Enhance your comics



The comics page doesn't get enough love.

We set it up and forget it. And we don't put much thought into setting it up, either.

As newspapers moved to narrower web sizes, making pages much narrower, the comics got squeezed. Too many papers didn't take the time to rethink their comics pages to display effectively on a narrower page. Instead, most papers just kept their layout the same and shrunk the comic.

That's pretty short sighted thinking for a popular (and expensive) type of content that some readers love.

The result of all this is comics that are hard to read, especially for older readers. By shrinking the panels, we were shrinking the type and some comics have lots of dialogue. Sadly, some of the comics with the most type are favored by older readers who can no longer even read their favorite newspaper features.

Pretty smart, eh?

The first mistake newspapers made was not realizing that there was no reason for the comics to have to fit on a six-column grid. Few comics pages contain advertising – the thing that drives our standard grids.

In our redesigns, we often go off the grid, making comic strips wider than the standard three columns. Adding just a couple picas of width to these strips makes a huge difference in legibility. Then we use other features

It's a bad idea to take short cuts with legibility and proportion.

– puzzles, astrology columns, single panel comics – on the resulting bastard columns. It becomes a bit of a jigsaw puzzle to make it all work, but we've always been able to make it much better. Whenever we redesign a paper with comics, we strive to make the comics and puzzles bigger and more legible. It's typically possible without dropping any comics.

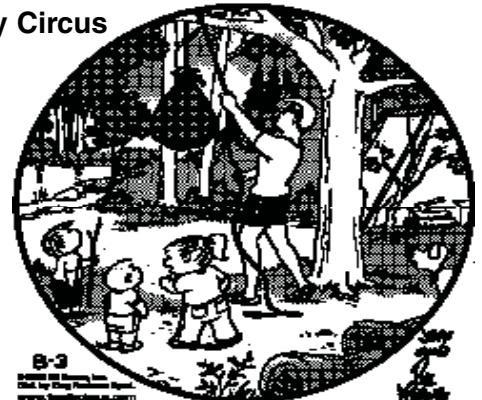
Another good way to enhance your comics is to run them in color, which readers love.

One more tip about rethinking your comics page: Don't distort the comics or puzzles by shrinking them more in one direction than in the other. We've seen comics pages where the Family Circle is an oval! It's a bad idea to take short cuts with legibility and proportion. Yet this is something we find on almost every comics page. (Go find out the percentage reductions on the comics in your paper and we bet you'll find some bad distortions being used! Then put a stop to it!)

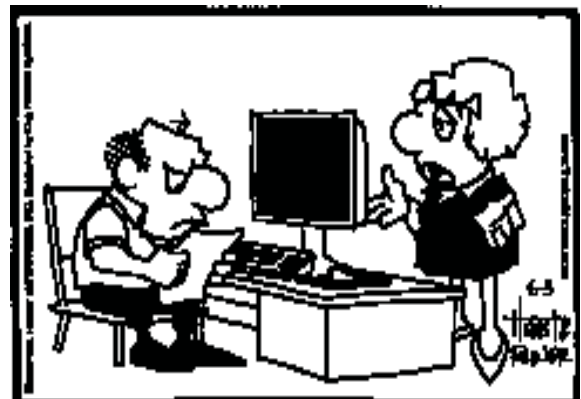
— Creative Circle Media Solutions



Family Circus



The Lockhorns



22

Rally around your brand



Every newspaper has an outstanding brand.

It has history. It is well known. It is quickly recognizable.

Newspapers also have amazing brand exposure. Your brand is on your trucks and news boxes. It might be on a building. And it's on every paper you print.

But in the flurry of efforts to diversify revenue and grow digital products, we often don't leverage the strength of our brand.

When web sites were first launched, many publishers didn't take those brands seriously. They even feared using their newspaper brand online, resulting in lots of cute newspaper URL names.

Now that many newspapers have ad agencies, event marketing, podcasts, apps and more going on, there is often total brand chaos. And that is very bad for your business.

It usually starts at the department level

The circulation director decides to try a "membership" strategy and he or she assigns someone to come up with a name and logo. Now you have a staff or freelance graphic artist defining your brand. And it's unlikely they are sophisticated enough to understand the big picture.

Next, an enterprising reporter decides to launch a food podcast. She wants it to be hip and different and again comes up with a cool name and logo for her podcast. And now another brand is born.

In the ad department, they hear that glossy magazines are a hot trend and they go off and design a niche magazine that has no relationship to the mother brand – the one that is so

powerful and positive and well-known in the community.

While there are very good reasons to create new brands when you enter a marketplace and there may be times you want to separate yourself from the parent brand – or even compete with it – most of the efforts described above probably would have been better off leveraging that original newspaper brand.

That doesn't mean all these efforts would have used the newspaper's name in their name. There are many more subtle ways to tie brands together, from a common tag line – “More about you” – to a color or type font or common word or acronym or symbol. Even geography or a sense of place can work.

For example, we led a project for a newspaper company with 52 weekly brands scattered over a large but overlapping region. The papers were acquired from a variety of previous owners. There was no brand unity so the group was hard to sell to advertisers as a group. But they couldn't do one brand because many of the titles competed with each other in those overlapping markets. We redesigned all the papers – each with different nameplates but all using the same core typography and a single color. When you looked at any two papers side-by-side, they looked completely different. But when you gathered them all up you could immediately tell they were cousins – you could see the common thread between them. To consumers, they were all different. To advertisers, they were now a group.

Here is a quick branding chaos test: Gather up all your brands and print them out and lay them all on the table. Do they look related? Are they cousins or don't they seem to know one another? If they are all different, is there

**Gather up all your
brands and print
them out and lay
them all on the table.
Do they look related?**

a good (competitive) reason for that? Or did this all just evolve badly? (Hint: There is rarely a good reason for having a lot of brands that don't play off one another.)

If you want to take the test to the next level, gather all the things on which these brands appear – business cards, contracts, web sites, marketing materials, single copy racks. Are you consistent in how you use these secondary brands? Are they tied together even within their own world?

The scene on the table before you look pretty scary at this point. It almost always is. But at least now you know you have a problem and can begin to deal with it!

Consider making someone at the company the branding czar. No one creates new brands without that person's approval. Then go to work unifying your brands. If you don't have someone in house who can handle it (and it is unlikely you do), hire a professional to help you refresh, strategize and unify your brands.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

23

Help readers find what they want

Our print products would benefit from more indexing.

Readers often can't find what they want or tell us they aren't seeing some of the content we publish.

There are many layers to this.

First, take a look at your index on page one (or two). Are the right things in there? Can we add more? Or is the list already too long.

Next, take a look at your section fronts. Do they tell me what's inside? When I pick up the sports section, is it clear on the cover that Business or Classifieds are inside? If not, that would be a good change to make.

Are there teasers throughout the paper telling me about other stuff in that edition – on

section fronts or in related stories? That's another good thing to do.

Highlighting key advertisers inside on the cover of classifieds is another good option.

But we can take it much further.

How about a list on page two – or somewhere – listing all the display advertisers in this issue? Magazines often do this but it's often not hard for a newspaper to do the same. It's a significant benefit for the advertiser as well as the reader. Your advertising or pagination system likely can generate an index for you each day that could be plugged into the page.

Taking that a step further, how about an index of all the people or companies mentioned in your news columns that day? This is a bit harder, but InDesign, Quark and potentially your print CMS system can be programmed to generate such a list, although it's likely those names would have to be tagged by someone along the way. This is something that we should be doing anyway so those same names are tagged online as well.

Another approach would be a category index of stories in today's paper, listing headlines by key categories by page number. Again, this is a little tricky, but increasingly our production technology is making this easier and since you may be tagging stories for your web site anyway, those same tags could be applied to such a print index.

Helping make sure people find what they want is a good strategy any time but this is something print can steal from what we've learned about indexing on the web.

— Creative Circle Media Solutions

24

Get distractions off page one

Newspaper page ones are cluttered with things that don't matter, are too big or out of place.

When we redesign print products, we pick away at things that distract or waste space in dozens of little ways that add up to big improvements on page after page.

Here is one tip for cleaning up this most critical page so readers can concentrate on what's important — your best content: **Crop the bar code!**

Bar codes for newsstand sales are big, more than an inch tall and often more than an inch wide. But it's important to know bar codes are read horizontally, not vertically. The depth of a bar code can be cropped dramatically and still work fine. We typically reduce bar codes to less than a half inch high, saving valuable page one space.

Bar codes don't need to be right-side up, either. You can turn them on their side and run them vertically. All tabloid newspapers should do this and run their bar codes in the spine, not in the content image area.

This seems like a small thing, but every inch of space on page one — and every page — is precious and everything that isn't working hard on your print pages should go or be made as efficient as possible.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*



Public domain

25

Make print your premium product



Shutterstock

Everyone is stressing the importance of slashing print costs to buy more time for us to develop new and different revenue streams. All the big chains have adopted this strategy, although some are more ruthless about wrecking print than others.

But at Creative Circle, we've found that when newspapers are all jumping on a bandwagon, it's almost always a bad idea. That's because our industry is notorious for doing little research and making bottom-line decisions that are never customer friendly. We've got a long history for not listening to our customers. Meanwhile, companies that are wildly successful these days pretty much do just the opposite: Apple, Google, Amazon and the like are customer-centric and overspend on R&D.

Lacking any empirical sense of direction, newspapers basically follow the leader – jumping on any trend or publicized move by other newspapers. But when everyone in our industry is chasing their tails, following other newspapers is pure folly.

Whenever Creative Circle has invested in consumer research, we always find that newspapers consistently are doing the opposite of what they should be doing. For example, our national polling shows there are clear answers available to grow classifieds (lots more photos, bigger type, better design) or what to do about TV listings (tell me what's good, not just what's on) that are just the opposite of current newspaper behavior.

This pattern of behavior by newspapers is so pervasive that we often recommend our clients do the exact opposite of what all the other newspapers are doing. You'd be surprised how often that works.

So, since everyone else is gutting print, what if you did the opposite? What if you made print your premium product? What if print was the place where we showcased only our best content and presentation?

It would be a radical departure. No more briefs or run-of-the-mill wire stories. No more sports or business agate. No dull photos of people with their things. No long listings of calendar events. No more squeezing things in.

Just print the very best stuff we have and throw the rest online.

Of course, we'd have to HAVE really good stuff. That would mean investing in strong photography, smart design and much better writing.

We could certainly make the paper much smaller and fewer pages might save enough money to pay for higher quality. It could be worth a shot, especially with all those lemmings running as fast as they can in the other direction.

— *Creative Circle Media Solutions*

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in our industry is
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is pure folly.

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

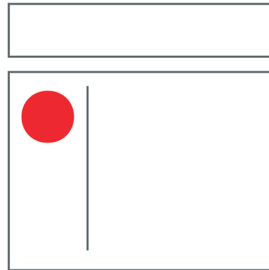


An industry leading software developer and innovator, Presteligionce transforms concepts into cost-effective and revenue generating solutions scaled to fit newspapers of all sizes.

With more than 1100 installations, Presteligionce offers a suite of digital solutions including mobile app solutions, web cms, e-edition, and a high school sports platform for scores and stats.

Other flagship solutions include prepress production management, ink optimization, e-tearsheets & invoice delivery, color calibrated hard and soft proofing. These cost-effective and time efficient solutions, combined with the responsive support team make Presteligionce a best-in-class partner for media companies.

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Creative Circle
MEDIA SOLUTIONS

Creative Circle, with its strong foundation in print design and journalistic content, has transformed into the industry's most innovative developer of digital software solutions. We were the first media software developer to create an integrated pay wall, user-contributed content, native content platforms, variable web page templates, reverse publishing and more – often years before any other vendor.

Our dynamic web CMS and new revenue platforms are engineered to be easy to run, were built to drive user engagement and provide a better showcase for content. In addition to web software, we now offer a modern replacement for your legacy editorial print production systems that works with any recent version of Quark or InDesign.

But we never gave up on print. Creative Circle has a 30-year history as a leading print consulting, design and training firm. We've redesigned nearly 600 print publications, worked with more than 250 media companies on three continents and led energizing training programs in 23 countries. Our efforts 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.

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

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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