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President's Corner



Do You Think “I Can”?



Mike Kolbe

The Clay County Fair in Spencer, IA houses a very large model railroad display, with 26 trains operating simultaneously on and around a mountain. In addition to the large mountain and trains, thousands of tiny pieces make up the impressive display. Surrounding the mountain are snow covered city streets, summer farming operations, an airport, a sea-side shipping port, lumber yards, etc. The smallest moving piece I found was a single person beside a campfire chopping wood with a hatchet. It is all of these tiny pieces that create a most impressive display.

Like the railroad display, MFCP is made up of dozens of publications of various sizes, and it is only as effective as its member publications will allow it to be. It is the participation of all members that is the strength of the group. No matter how large or small your operation is, your contributions matter. Do you attend and benefit from conferences? Do you participate in, and benefit from the classified and 2x2 display networks? Have you begun selling and benefiting from digital advertising offered through iPromote?

Keeping on the train theme, many of us remember the children's book, “The Little Engine That Could,” which taught us to keep moving forward with a positive attitude, even when obstacles seem insurmountable. The Little Engine took on the challenge of pulling a heavy load over a mountain when more powerful locomotives would not dare to try, all the while repeating over and over, “I think I can, I think I can”.

Lessons learned from the book written by Watty Piper include cooperation, hard work, self-confidence, persistence, courage and an unselfish care for others.

Today's publishing environment may be the most challenging ever, with rising insurance and postal rates, labor shortages, loss of local businesses and increased competition from digital media. While these are problems that create serious obstacles, they can be overcome with a strategic plan and pulling in resources from MFCP and its membership.

The MFCP Board offers money-making programs and training all members can benefit from, but any one publication may need help in an area not usually addressed by the Board. If that is you, please reach out to Executive Director Lee Borkowski. She has a wealth of knowledge in most areas of the publishing world, and is well connected with experts when outside counsel is needed.

MFCP cannot provide all of the virtues taught in “The Little Engine That Could,” but does facilitate cooperation and care of others among its members.

If we all say to ourselves, “I think I can, I think I can,” we will overcome our obstacles and continue to lead successful publishing operations far into the future.

Mike

From the Office



Lee Borkowski

MFCCP MeetUp

Your Industry - Your Conversation

We're making some exciting changes to our frequent Zoom calls, and we want *you* to be a part of it! What used to be the **Publisher's Roundtable** is getting a fresh new name: **MFCCP MeetUp!**

Why the change? We want to make sure everyone—whether you're a publisher, sales rep, graphic designer, circulation director, HR manager, or anyone in between—feels welcome to join these casual, roundtable-style discussions. Picture it like grabbing a coffee with industry friends and chatting about what matters most to you and your business. No formality, no pressure, just real conversations that help us all make more money and run our operations smoother.

What's on tap?

Our sessions vary month to month, but here's a sneak peek of potential topics:

- **Quarterly review of special sections – Seasonal Promotions** What's coming up and how can you get advertisers excited? Whether it's March Madness or football season, we'll talk about how to cash in.
- **Open Mic** – Got something on your mind? Share it with the group!
- **Circulation strategies** – Postal, bulk, carrier, requester... let's tackle the challenges together.
- **Sales compensation models** – What's working and what could be better?
- **Side businesses** – What are people trying outside their main gig, and is it paying off?
- **Incentives and rewards** – How to motivate employees, engage readers, and attract advertisers.
- **Inserts** – Who's in, whose out. How are you getting them back?
- **Co-op** – What's paying the best right now. Who should you be targeting.

But here's where *you* come in...

We want to know: What do *you* want to talk about? What topics do you need help with? We're all ears!

Take just a minute to fill out our quick survey, and let us know the kind of topics you'd like to see in our upcoming **MFCCP MeetUps**. These sessions are designed to help you be more successful—whether it's solving a problem, getting new ideas, or learning about what others in the industry are doing to make more money.

So, please, help us help you and take the survey. We promise it will be a good use of your time and will go a long way towards helping us help you make more money!

[Click Here for the Survey](#)

Members Helping Members

It's Almost Time to Vote!

Wow, 2024 is flying by, and it's already time to start looking ahead to 2025! One of the most important things we do at MFCP is elect our Board of Directors. These are the people who help guide us through challenges and make sure we're hitting the mark when it comes to supporting you - our members.

Again this year, we've got some fantastic nominees ready to step up and serve. The nominating committee is excited to recommend the following individuals for the board. Their term will start January 1, 2025 and run through December 31, 2028.

- **Christopher Hall**, Northeast Iowa Shopper, Charles City, Iowa
- **Jolene Goodman**, Iowa Living Magazines, Des Moines, Iowa
- **Lisa Miller**, New Century Press, Rock Rapids, Iowa
- **Peggy Loveless**, The Cresco Shopper, Cresco, Iowa

At the same time, we want to give a huge thank you to **Mona Garwood** (Vinton Livewire, Vinton, Iowa) and **Tiffany Gardner** (Grant, Iowa, Lafayette Shopping News, Platteville, Wisconsin) for their time and dedication on the board. We appreciate everything they've done for MFCP and know they've left a lasting impact.

Soon we will ask you to weigh in. We will hold our voting electronically this year. Soon, the Publisher or GM of each member publication will receive an email with a link to our online voting portal.

Your input is so important in helping us continue to move forward together. Please respond to the email when received, cast your vote before **October 31st** and help shape the future of MFCP.

Current MFCP board members:

Mike Kolbe

Greg Birkett

Lisa Miller

Joyce Frericks

Julia Thompson

Carrie Vander Weerd

Corey Regnier

Luke Perry

Tiffany Gardner

Mona Garwood

Peggy Loveless

Are YOU on the List?

Each month, we're shining a spotlight on the hardworking folks who are taking advantage of one of our amazing member benefits—the MFCP Ad Networks! It's a great way to recognize their efforts and, let's be honest, who doesn't love a little friendly competition?



Congrats to our September stars:

- **Peggy Loveless** – Cresco Shopper, Cresco, IA
- **Tom Hofmann** – Cedar Valley Saver, Waterloo, IA
- **Tami Schechinger** – The Rocket, Harlan, IA
 - **Mike Kolbe** – The Rocket, Harlan, IA

A special shoutout to Tami and Mike for also cashing in their FREE classified ad coupons! (Did you know that when you renew your membership, you get two FREE coupons to use in our networks?)

If you haven't made the list yet, don't worry—there's always next month! All it takes is placing an ad into our network, and your name could be up here too. We're here to help, so don't hesitate to reach out for training, guidance, or just to make sure you're all set.

Let's see who's next to join the ranks—will it be YOU?

Industry Pioneers

The free-paper industry has a rich history. And, many people from the Midwest played an important role in its development and growth. The caring, sharing and support members offer each other make this an industry like no other. In this section we will share features from people past and present who helped create the unusual dynamic we enjoy today.

If you know of a person or company that should be featured, please contact Lee at director@mfcf.org

This month we are featuring Gerald (Jerry) and Louise Johnson from the Fulda Free Press and Murray County ADvantage.



Jerry and Louise Johnson 2022

**“Because it was
for sale.”**

This was reason enough to start a continuing legacy spanning over 50 years.

Jerry and Louise Johnson share their story about the Fulda Free Press and Murray County ADvantage.



Left: Fulda Free Press building in 1973.

Center: Gerald (Jerry) Johnson at his induction in the Minnesota Newspaper Association’s Half Century Club at the 156th MNA Convention in Brooklyn Park, MN- January 26, 2023.

Right: Current Fulda Free Press building.

The story of Jerry and Louise and their 50+ year legacy is a joint effort. Norma Dittman, Fulda Free Press staff writer, wrote an article that was published in the Fulda Free Press on February 8, 2023. Louise adjusted the content to fit our needs. Their fascinating story is a must-read for those who remember our industry 50 years ago and also for those who now benefit from the sacrifices and struggles of Industry Pioneers like Jerry and Louise Johnson. Enjoy!

For more than 50 years, readers of the Fulda Free Press have garnered the news, sports, and events from the Fulda area due to the work of publisher, Gerald D. (Jerry) Johnson. He was inducted into the Minnesota Newspaper Association's Half Century Club on Thursday, January 26, 2023, during the 156th MNA Convention held in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota.

When asked why they had purchased the newspaper, Jerry smiled and responded, "Because it was for sale." But then he and Louise began sharing their story. Louise explained, "I was working part-time for the Fulda Free Press while Jim Frick was the owner. Connie Wordelman then purchased the business. She took out the large press that was in the building, remodeled the building, and installed the process camera for page negatives and plate burner. I worked part-time operating a Justewriter (an electric typewriter that made columns of news). Connie began talking about selling the Fulda Free Press and I told Jerry that it was for sale."

"At the time," Jerry added, "I was working for the State of Minnesota. We were building Interstate 90 near Worthington, Minnesota. When Louise told me that the Fulda Free Press was for sale, we talked about it and then we purchased it, and took possession on August 1st." Louise continued to work at the newspaper and Jerry continued working for the State of Minnesota until the following summer. "I was working on the interstate road. We were near Sherburn by then. I would come home to Fulda and work at the newspaper until midnight and then have to be back on the job at 6 a.m. the next morning," Jerry shared. "That wasn't working out too well, so I quit working for the State and began working full-time at the Fulda Free Press."

Jerry said that the linotype was the first machine that he worked with when he began working at the Fulda Free Press. He recalls the big arms of the machine working together in rhythm as they set the type that was needed. He also spoke of the belts and pulleys that were used to operate the machine, as well as talking about the longest belt that ran beneath the floor into the basement of the first Fulda Free Press building owned by the Johnson's. (That building now houses Main Street Tax.)

For a time, Jim Frick continued to operate the linotype for the Johnson's, teaching Jerry each function of the machine. (A linotype is a type of 19th century printing technique that printed an entire line instead of each character on the printing surface. The linotype process allowed the quick and easy printing in bulk of products such as newspapers, magazines and books.)

"When we took over the Fulda Free Press, Louise knew quite a bit about the newspaper, but I really knew nothing about it. I soon learned," Jerry commented.

During the first six years of ownership, Louise was working at the Fulda Free Press as well as caring for two little boys, Randy and Kirk, at home. She would spend long hours addressing each newspaper after they were printed on Wednesdays, preparing them for mailing through the United States Postal Service.

It wasn't long before the Johnson's hired a couple of girls to do the typing of the newspaper. Once the typing was waxed (using wax and specials rollers) onto the pages of the paper, then they could be photographed.

Jerry would make negatives of the paper in the process camera and burn plates in the plate burner at the office of the Fulda Free Press. Then on Wednesday mornings, he would head for the printer with those plates carefully packaged in a newspaper sized, thin cardboard container.

What wasn't seen by the subscribers to the Fulda Free Press were the many hours spent putting the paper together each week. Those hours would always go into the wee hours of the morning. "That was tough. We'd work until 2 or 3 a.m. and then I'd get up by 7 p.m. to take the plates to the printers," Jerry shared.

In 1978, Louise began working full-time for a law office in Worthington, Minnesota, and continues to be employed there today. For several years, Louise also did the bookkeeping for the newspaper. After a few years, employees were hired to do the bookkeeping, but she continued to do the accounts payable and other duties.

Jerry took over the full-time publishing duties after Louise began outside employment, with the help of their sons, Randy and Kirk, and several loyal employees.

The Fulda Free Press was located at 204 N. St. Paul Avenue in Fulda until 1988, when Jerry and Louise purchased the building at 118 N. St. Paul Avenue in Fulda from Larry Gielen and moved the offices of the Fulda Free Press to that location.

The Southwestern Peach, an advertising supplement in 16 area newspapers, has been part of the Fulda Free Press since 1973.

Sister publications owned and published by Jerry and Louise are the Tri County News in Heron Lake, purchased in 1985; the Murray County News in Slayton, started in 1987; and the Nobles County Review, purchased in 1991.

Publication of the Murray County ADvantage, was started in 1997, and is distributed free to over 8,000 homes and businesses in Murray County and the surrounding area.

Jerry and Louise have two sons, Randy (Nancy) and Kirk (Parnjai), two grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

MVP at Work



Change is Inevitable

By Julie Merten
Star Publications, Sauk Centre, MN
Territory Sales Representative

Change is inevitable

Leaves are starting to fall, and your local café is serving all things pumpkin spice; it can only mean one thing the changing of the seasons. As with the change of the season, we must be prepared to handle change in our personal life and businesses.

One attribute of a successful organization is an infinite mindset. This is a way of thinking that is adaptable and constantly changing. To be successful, one “stays in the game as long as possible” rather than “winning” and thus, succeeds in the long term.

Often as individuals and businesses we fear change and the uncertainty that it brings. Rather than jump headfirst and throw caution to the wind we tiptoe and prefer to make small, calculated changes. Embracing change and its uncertainty is important though.

There are often three types of reactions to change:

Trailblazers: Trailblazers consist of innovators and early adopters. This group consists of 16% of the population. They are likely to be the creators of change and the first to jump on board. Trailblazers can be described as fearless, curious and persistent. In order to make changes in the workplace it is important to get this portion of the population on board and then others will follow.

Healthy Skeptics: Healthy skeptics includes the early majority and the late majority. This group include the middle 68% of the population. These individuals are more comfortable watching others test out new changes before proceeding and often weigh risk management vs reward before deciding.

Cynics: Cynics include laggards, and this group makes up 16% of the population. Cynics can be described as pessimistic and generally have a distrust in the motives of others and a lack of faith in change.

How do you handle change and where do you fall along the bell-curve of change?

Within the workplace change is inevitable; whether it be a turnover in employees, change in sales territory, implementation of a new program or shifting of duties. It is important to carefully weigh and consider the risks vs rewards associated with a change. I encourage you to be rational but open-minded.

Some say, “print is dying”. I however choose to say, “print is alive”! Print media is a trusted source of information. With new ideas and an open-mindedness to change we will continue to evolve, thrive as an industry and be relevant with future generations to come.

Cheers to change and pumpkin spice!

Kevin Slimp



How Do We Get Our Readers Back?

A better question might be, "How do we grow new readers?"

Kevin Slimp - kevin@kevinslimp.com

Last night, I noticed several similar messages in my inbox:

“Hey, Kevin. Do you have a column for us?”

“Hi, Kevin. Just making sure you’ll have a column for this month.”

“Kevin: Did I miss your column?”

You guessed right. I was late getting my column written. But I have a good excuse (my friend, Brian, sent me a book titled “Excuses” because I always have a good reason). I was late with this column because I’ve been inundated by newspaper requests over the past few weeks, and time just got away from me.

Interestingly (at least to me) are the types of requests coming in lately. Sure, there are the usual requests to speak at conferences and help with technical issues. But since the end of summer, I’ve noticed a spike in three types of requests:

Holding focus groups to grow newspapers

Critiquing newspapers and suggesting changes

Helping newspapers reach younger audiences

There’s a definite trend brewing here. It appears that newspapers – and these requests have been coming from papers of all sizes – are looking for and investing in permanent growth. It does my heart good (for my non-American readers, I checked Merriam-Webster. That’s an actual saying) to see newspapers investing in ways to create solid growth. I’m declaring the days of “quick fixes” and “new gadgets” over. The only way I’ve seen newspapers grow – and I see it all the time – is to invest in creating quality products that people want to read.

I used to get depressed while walking through vendor areas at conventions and seeing “get rich quick” schemes. You know the ones I’m talking about. Thankfully, I haven’t seen as many of those lately. We may have learned that growing our papers takes more than a new scheme.

My question for you today is this: What are you doing to create permanent growth at your newspaper? For some, we may be spending a lot of time keeping our operations afloat, and that’s valid. But it’s possible to do two things at once. We can work at keeping our newspapers in business and plan for growth at the same time. I own three businesses, and I do both every day.

Here's an example. I spend about half of my time in the book publishing world. My company publishes books for well-known authors and has a solid base of customers. It's tempting to pump out book after book by established authors to meet the reading public's demand. So we do that. However, there's also a younger audience out there that's often ignored. That's why I spend a lot of effort finding younger authors who might not sell as many books as veteran writers but can serve as a foundation for our future. It's working; our younger authors will be the best-selling authors three or four years from now. I'm working to keep the company afloat while planning for permanent growth.

At the risk of being repetitive, I ask again: What are you doing to create permanent growth at your newspaper? If it feels like you're spending most of your time finding ways to cut expenses, you've got the "keep the company afloat" side of the business covered. But just as necessary are your steps to create a viable product well into the future. According to The National Boating Safety School, "As soon as mass is displaced or the density is changed, the boat will no longer be able to float. It will not be able to maintain its equilibrium or waterline because its density will become greater than that of the water, and the vessel will sink."

In simpler terms, our boats can only float so long. Then they'll sink. We've got to find or create a new current, which is what many newspapers are doing.

How do you get started? I'm shocked at the number of papers that look more like shoppers than newspapers. Take an honest look at your newspaper and ask yourself, "Would I read that?" Hold a focus group. Gather community members together to look at your product and offer honest suggestions. Look at newspapers attracting younger readers – they're out there – and see what they're doing that you're not doing.

These suggestions skim the surface but are proven ways to plan for growth. I don't know about you, but I'm tired of looking at the past and asking, "How do we go back?" We can't. It's time to invest in the future.

Kevin Slimp has been a popular consultant and speaker in the newspaper industry since developing the PDF remote printing method in 1994. His upcoming webinars on design, circulation, and software can be found at newspaperacademy.com.

Kevin Slimp is former director of The University of Tennessee Newspaper Institute and founder of NewspaperAcademy.com.

Ad-Libs



“I don’t know” Can Be a Great Answer

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

I remember talking about sales presentations with Edwin, who is the marketing director of a regional advertiser. “I’ve heard all kinds of presentations from media salespeople and I’ve asked plenty of questions during those conversations,” he said. “One of the best answers I’ve ever heard is, *I don’t know*. I’m not talking about *I don’t know* with a nonchalant shrug that says, ‘I don’t know and I don’t care’ or ‘That’s not my job.’ I’m talking about a sincere *I don’t know* that expresses regret that they honestly don’t know the answer to the question. That kind of response is usually followed by a commitment to find the answer. They’re not trying to fool me with information that may be incorrect and they’re not trying to gloss over the question in order to move on to another sales point.”

When said with unquestioned sincerity, *I don’t know* sends important messages. Let’s take a closer look.

1. Respect. First of all, *I don’t know* shows respect for everyone involved – the prospect, the prospect’s company, the salesperson’s company and the salesperson.

You may remember the famous song “Respect.” Otis Redding wrote and recorded it in 1965, and Aretha Franklin recorded it two years later. Aretha added these lyrics, which have rocked through the ages: “R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Find out what it means to me. R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Take care of it. TCB.”

TCB means, “Take care of business.” Believe me, there’s no better way to take care of business than to show genuine respect when meeting with prospects and clients.

2. Honesty. We all appreciate honesty. In fact, it’s safe to say that we require honesty in a relationship, whether it’s in our personal or professional lives. When a salesperson readily admits that they don’t know the answer to every question that could possibly be asked, it establishes a new level of trust between the two people. Along the way, the prospect is more likely to take the salesperson’s words more seriously.”

3. Opportunity. *I don’t know* is not a sign of weakness. In reality, it represents a wide range of opportunities and puts the salesperson in position to be a hero. They can say, “I don’t know right now, but I’ll find out,” or “I can’t answer your question, but I’ll refer you to someone who can help,” or “I don’t know, but give me a minute to call my manager (or creative department/research department/etc.) and see if there is some special information on that.”

4. Confidence. It takes inner strength to say *I don't know*. “When you express yourself with that kind of honesty and commitment to help,” Edwin said, “it’s an impressive thing. As an advertiser, I want to deal with media representatives who believe in their products and in themselves. And I want to them to have confidence in the people around them.”

The point is simple: There’s nothing wrong with saying *I don't know*. It can be open door to better client relationships.

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John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training DVDs to save time and get quick results from in-house training. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

Ryan Dohrn



Are Phone Calls DEAD in Sales?

This month Ryan answers the question from a viewer on why he spends so much time talking about emails and why not lots of phone calls.

Ryan explains just how the combination of emails and phone calls is a win/win and then gives you the right sequence to make it work.

Just follow his steps in the link below and you won't be disappointed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JP7s4txGFXc>

Listen to Ryan's ad sales podcast, [Ad Sales Nation](#), on [iTunes](#) or on [Soundcloud](#). Keep up to date with Ryan's ad sales training advice on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/RyanDohrnLIVE>

Ryan Dohrn is an award-winning [ad sales training coach](#), a nationally recognized [internet sales consultant](#), and an international [motivational speaker](#). He is the author of the best-selling ad sales book, *[Selling Backwards](#)*. Ryan is the President and founder of Brain Swell Media and 360 Ad Sales Training, a boutique [ad sales training](#) and [sales coaching](#) firm with a detailed focus on ad sales training, internet consulting, and media revenue generation. Ryan is also the Publisher of *[Sales Training World](#)*.