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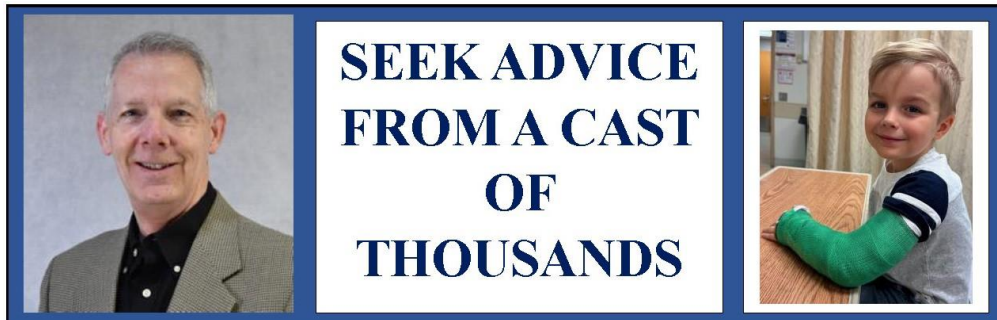
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# President's Corner



**Mike Kolbe**

We, in the free paper industry, are typically a bunch of Type A personalities who need little outside motivation or direction. This can be both a blessing and a curse. We are a determined, confident, take-charge lot who like to make things happen, and others can either get on board or get out of the way.

There are times, however, when a Holiday Inn Express stay is not enough to ensure a plan we have hatched will be successfully executed. We need to be open-minded enough to seek counsel from others who may be more experienced, or just plain smarter than we are.

I did not know it at the time, but I was surrounded by great mentors who provided fantastic oversight when I broke into the advertising business. I was able to move forward with most ideas, with constructive input along the way. Somewhere around age 40 I learned how beneficial it is to surround myself with others smarter than me ... and listen to them!

I was reminded of this (again) when my 5-year-old grandson fell off a balance beam and hurt his arm during his own birthday party at a gymnastics studio. I was sure he would be okay as soon as Mom & Dad finished consoling him and let him get back to running around with his friends. I kept my opinion to myself, and boy am I glad I did. You see, his dad and a few others in attendance are doctors. They evaluated his injury and did the right thing with a trip to the emergency room to cast his broken arm. It turns out those in the medical profession knew more than I did - who would have guessed!

Where can we find advice in areas where we may need help? Everywhere. The obvious place is our own workplaces where people hold special skills in a variety of areas; graphic design, sales, circulation, accounting, etc. Seasoned veterans have the experience to head off problems before they arise, and younger staffers have a good pulse on what today's consumers desire. We simply have to be willing to ask their opinions and then make informed decisions based on the information they provide.

However, our search for advice should not be limited by our own walls. Trade associations, education outlets, including universities and community colleges offer expertise in virtually every area of business and professional growth. In Iowa, we are fortunate to have Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, whose mission is to provide information and resources to anyone who needs it, regardless of where you live. They have a white paper on just about any topic you can imagine.

We can also reach out to local business associates who may have special insight, training and experience from which we can benefit. Those who work in other industries, such as insurance, banking, manufacturing, food service and more, have many of the same problems we in the publishing industry face. Supply chain issues, a tight labor market and rising costs of doing business affect every business, just in different ways.

Family and friends are another great resource as sounding boards. My wife is often my go-to when I need to be convinced of, or warned about my next great idea. I also have good friends who sometimes make a lot of sense when discussing business or community issues, and I respect their opinions. However, I would caution not to take advice from friends (or yourself) while sitting around a campfire on Saturday night.

One final thought regarding surrounding yourself with smart people. The new year will be upon us soon, and I would encourage everyone to pencil in at least one or two training sessions or conferences that MFCP will be hosting. Not only are they a great bunch of Type A people, but they have a collective intelligence in a variety of areas and are happy to share their experiences.

As 2024 draws to a close soon, be sure to book your next Holiday Inn Express stay, or better yet, surround yourself with high caliber people in 2025. You will be glad you did.

# From the Office



## Where Will You be in April?

*Plan on joining us to celebrate MFCP's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!*

### Lee Borkowski

Hello MFCP Members,

I hope this message finds you well as we transition into the busy holiday season! In the office, we're wrapping up some exciting projects and planning ahead for 2025.

First, I'd like to extend a big thank you to everyone who has been so supportive and active throughout 2024. Whether you attended our in-person conferences, roundtables, or training sessions for sales, graphics, or digital ad sales—we appreciate you. Your engagement is invaluable, and it's inspiring to see so many of you exchanging ideas, sharing best practices, and lifting each other up.

Remember, no matter what challenge you may be facing, others in the association have likely had similar experiences. So please don't hesitate to reach out or raise a question. We're stronger when we work together.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to share that plans for MFCP's **70th Anniversary celebration** are coming together. We'll be gathering on **April 2, 3, and 4 at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Sioux Falls, SD**. More details will be coming your way soon, and as we celebrate this milestone, we'd love to hear your ideas for session content, themes, and ways to make it a truly memorable event. So, please mark your calendars and plan to celebrate with us.

Lastly, speaking of calendars, if you haven't received your **2025 wall calendar** yet, please reach out to us at [director@mfc.org](mailto:director@mfc.org), and we'll be happy to send one your way.

As always, we're grateful for each of you and your dedication to our industry and each other. Thank you for making MFCP a supportive, thriving community. Here's to a wonderful close to the year and to a bright, collaborative 2025!

Warm regards,  
Lee Borkowski  
Executive Director

# MVP at Work



## Losing Our Focus

Ashley Huisman  
New Century Press, Rock Rapids, IA  
Graphic Designer

Welcome to November and all the busyness that comes along with this time of year. Preparing for the changes in the weather, gearing up for the holidays and family events, maybe putting together those holiday publications or getting in touch with your costumers about what they want to do/spend for the rest of the year are just a few.

When all the deadlines build up at once, it can make us feel very overwhelmed and scatterbrained. There are so many tasks to get done, to think about, to plan, to schedule that I often feel like I can never get caught up and/or never complete that one task that keeps gnawing at me.

A book on audible recently caught my attention and after reading the reviews it seemed like something I should listen to right now. With all the chaos of the holidays and the end of the year tasks, you may also feel like you're losing your focus. A couple things resonated with me that I wanted to share.

**The first concept the author points out is what we THINK we are going to accomplish and what we DO accomplish are two separate things.** Your thoughts can go in a million directions but the thing that matters is what we actually do. So if you are thinking you can't accomplish your laundry list of tasks, start by doing. A little here, a little there. I have found success with setting timers for tasks, an hour on one task, 20 minutes on another, then 40 minutes focusing on another task can get you a lot further than trying to simultaneously make progress on everything. Just do something! Doing is progress!

**When the struggle is real.** Sometimes we feel so overwhelmed with work that we have all but given up. Our negative thoughts on that one big project or that one failed sale lets negativity seep into our whole life. We now feel like we can't make progress at all.

**It may be time to embrace the "I got this" mentality.** However, that's easier said than done. When things get to be too much, step back and see the whole picture. Take time to think about all the things you've already accomplished this week, this year, this whole life, and everything that has gotten you to where you are today. Chances are whatever struggles you are facing now, you have probably faced in the past and made it through to the other side. You've got this!

As we go into this busy season, what is your focus? Have you lost it in the midst of the chaos? Are you putting off that big project or is thinking about all of your tasks at once overwhelming you?

It can be easy to allow our thoughts take approach on what we need to accomplish. But I encourage you to:

Take a step back.

Think of all the tasks you've already accomplished.

Put your thoughts to action and just **DO** the thing!

The end of the year goes by fast and there is much to get done but we can handle this, we always have and we've got this!

Ashley

# Member News

## 2025 MFCP Ad Award Contest



**Start stockpiling those winners!**  
**Deadline is January 8, 2025**  
**[Click here for rules and categories!](#)**

# Kevin Slimp



## Newspapers Turn Attention to Growth

*Many newspapers have shifted from worrying to planning growth*

**Kevin Slimp - [kevin@kevinslimp.com](mailto:kevin@kevinslimp.com)**

Upon returning to my office following a 2,700-mile journey (Bellingham, Washington, happens to be the furthest city in the contiguous 48 U.S. states from my home in Knoxville, Tennessee) this morning, I have three things on my mind. And I'm unsure which of the three I should write about in this column. I often tell my clients that people like subheads in stories, so I think I'll cover all three topics with subheads meant to entice my readers.

### **Grants for Newspapers**

I continue to hear from clients to share good news concerning their grant applications. Many of the newspapers I visit on-site have received grants – most often from their state Small Business Administration office – that allow them to retain training for their staff, among other things. Other grants are available from granting organizations that are not related to the government. I am convinced that if more newspapers knew there were grants for the taking, they would take advantage of these opportunities.

Most of my clients who have successfully followed this advice have received grants in the \$20-25,000 range. The smallest (I remember) was \$5,000, and the largest was \$100,000.

You don't have to hire anyone to apply for a grant. At the risk of violating Nike's trademark slogan, just do it. I advise contacting your county or state Small Business Administration office and asking about grants for small business staff training. Afterward, contact me if you want assistance completing the grant application process.

### **Focus Groups**

Most of my hours in October and November have been reserved for working with newspaper focus groups. I can't overemphasize the good that can be accomplished by hosting newspaper focus groups.

One of the first questions I get when talking with publishers about upcoming focus groups is, "How will we get enough people to volunteer to be a part of the group?" In the ten years I've worked with focus groups, that's never been an issue. Last week in Washington, 25 focus group participants were selected out of the larger group that requested to be part of the opportunity. In South Carolina, where I'll be next week, I understand hundreds have expressed an interest in being part of a focus group.

Whether you host focus groups on your own or get someone to plan them for you, focus groups are the best method I know of to determine where your newspaper should be headed.



## **Who's Who in Publishing**

See how a subhead can draw your attention? Research indicates readers are much more likely to read a long story if it contains subheads to break up the information. As I'm apt to do, I digress.

The third topic on my mind this morning involves my email inbox. When I opened my email, I immediately noticed the inbox was filled with messages from some of the most respected publishers in the newspaper business. If I had seen these names listed in a column, I would probably think it was the "Who's Who in American Newspapers."

The most requested topic of conversation involved discussing methods to increase readership (and revenue) in their papers. It pleases me to no end to hear publishers interested in growing their newspapers. It doesn't seem that long ago that many publishers were convinced they might not have a product in the future. In 2008, a respected leader in the journalism academic world told me he was convinced there wouldn't be a single printed newspaper available in the United States by 2018. He asked my opinion. I told him it might have been the "dumbest thing I'd ever heard." He seemed a bit dumbfounded and asked why I felt that way.

"Because," I answered, "if there's not one, I will start one and make a fortune. So, there will be at least one."

He disagreed. He thought I was naïve to think there would still be newspapers in ten years. I'm so glad he was wrong. I'm still waiting for someone to create a tee shirt that says "Kevin was right!" on the back.

I'm nearing my 800-word limit. One column, three topics. Like most newspapers, I always try to give readers their money's worth.

*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](http://newspaperacademy.com).*

*Kevin Slimp is former director of The University of Tennessee Newspaper Institute and founder of [NewspaperAcademy.com](http://NewspaperAcademy.com).*

# Ad-Libs



## The Power of a Pause

**John Foust, Greensboro, NC**

Lately I've been thinking about the well known television campaign for Wrangler jeans. This was the one with the tagline that was spoken as it appeared on the screen: "Real. Comfortable. Jeans." The narrator paused after each of the three words – to match the punctuation. The combination of the two packed a memorable punch, because it emphasized each word. Wrangler jeans weren't described as "real comfortable," they're "real" *and* "comfortable." Plus, Wrangler is synonymous with "jeans."

There's real power in a pause – whether it's in a TV spot, a sales presentation, a meeting or a conversation. While there are many points to make about pausing, let's take a look at three:

**1. Pause for emphasis.** Teresa, who is a marketing agency executive, once told me about her perspective on pausing. "When I'm pitching a new campaign, I create a little mystery – even if it's just for a few seconds," she said. "The new campaign won't seem as special if it casually appears on the screen or the flip chart. I keep it hidden until the right moment. After I do the set-up, I say something like: *And here (pause to change slides or remove the cover sheet on the flip chart) is the first ad in your new campaign.*

"It's a little like an entertainment awards presentation," she explained. "The presenter says: *And the winner of the Oscar for best picture is (pause to open envelope) and announce the name.* That puts the spotlight on the winner."

**2. Pause for clarity.** Maybe you've heard about sales conversations that began like the one I witnessed some years ago: *Hi thank you for meeting with me today I'm here to talk to you about your advertising we talked on the phone last week and you shared some of your concerns about your current marketing let's take a moment to explore that and look at some possible solutions how does that sound?*

Whoa. Slow down. Use some verbal punctuation. Otherwise, all the other person hears is an unintelligible mumble.

**3. Pause for control.** There's an old saying, "The kindest word in all the world is the unkind word un-said."

Control is especially important in tense group meetings and one-on-one conversations. If someone pushes one of your hot buttons, pause. Don't say anything, just pause for a moment. There are a lot of pitfalls in shooting from the hip with a negative comment. Instead of risking a response you may regret later, ask yourself: *What is the upside in being diplomatic right now?* By pausing you'll give yourself a chance to collect your thoughts and think logically, instead of emotionally.

Pausing is equally important when you're asked a question. Resist the temptation to jump in immediately with an answer. Simply pause, take a breath and give your answer. The result will probably be a better answer.

Countless conversations over countless years prove that silence is truly golden, even in small doses. In fact, you could say that a pause is a *Real. Effective. Technique.*

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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](mailto:john@johnfoust.com)

# Ryan Dohrn



## Selling Value to Price Driven Clients

This month Ryan shares his expertise in the concept of value-based selling to show how you can identify product features, create bridge statements, and use value rather than price to reach clients.

Check out his simple 3-step process and learn how this method works with price-driven clients.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5jSilJbTaI>

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](#)*.