



[Find us on Facebook](#)

in this issue >>>

President's Corner- Don't Blink!

From the Office- Making a List- Checking it Twice!

MVP at Work- Preparing for the New Year

Member News- MVP Nomination Time

Members Helping Members- Your Perfect Advertising Mix

Print is Powerful- New Promotional Materials for You

Kevin Slimp- Plan to Grow in 2025

John Foust- Two Things That Will Never Change

Ryan Dohrn- Perfect Follow-Up Plan

2025 MFCP Ad Award Contest

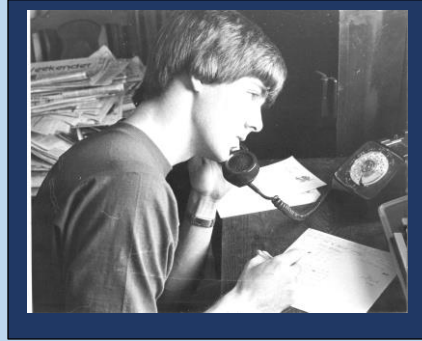


Start stockpiling those winners!

Deadline is January 8, 2025

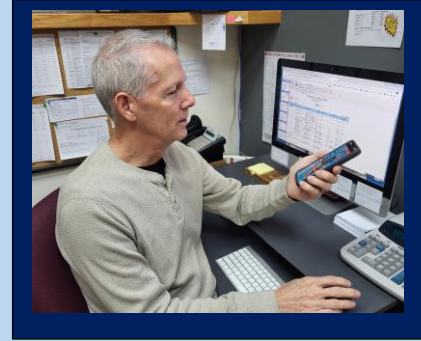
[Click here for rules and categories!](#)

President's Corner



**THEN: Mike at the
Tri-County Times circa 1980**

Don't Blink!



**NOW: Mike at the
Harlan Newspapers 2024**

It seems like only yesterday I was thinking how many columns I would be composing in the coming 12 months, a task undertaken by all MFCP Presidents. Yet here we are, a year down the road and posting my final thoughts. I've tried to share my experiences from over four decades in the publishing world, the last 41 with the Rocket/Harlan Newspapers in Harlan, IA. I hope you found a nugget or two that made you think.

The December MFCP Board meeting will be my last as President, just one of many "lasts" I've experienced this year. I will be retiring from my publishing career at the end of January, so every special section sold, every spaghetti supper ad updated and every advertising schedule renewed along the way has been my last.

I'm stepping away from a career that has provided me with a wonderful livelihood and so many great memories, mentors, friends, and business associates. What began as a sports reporter for the Tri-County Times in Slater, IA while working on my Journalism degree at Iowa State University is ending as General Manager of the Harlan Rocket/Harlan Newspapers. Some days have seemed to last forever, but the years have flown by quickly.

I hope the seasoned veterans reading this have enjoyed their publishing careers as much as I have, and I wish the same joy and success for the next crop of publishing professionals.

Kenny Chesney's "Don't Blink" has hit home over and over in my life. Outside of the office, watching my kids grow and leave home, preparing to celebrate 40 years of marriage in the spring, and seeing my parents age and wondering how many years I have left with them reminds me to appreciate every day.

As Kenny sings it,

"Cause when your hourglass runs out of sand
You can't flip it over and start again
Take every breathe God gives you for what it's worth
Don't blink"

I will not be bored in the coming years, as my days will be filled with public service as a County Supervisor, spending time with family and enjoying the great outdoors as much as possible.

One "last" thing on my list is to attend the spring conference in Sioux Falls, celebrating MFCPs 70th Anniversary. I hope to see many of you there.

- Mike

From the Office



Making a List- Checking it Twice!

Lee Borkowski

As 2024 winds down, I wanted to take a moment to reflect and look ahead—kind of like Santa double-checking his list before the big day! Here are a few important things to keep on your radar as we gear up for a fantastic 2025:

- **Ad Award Entries:** Start prepping those stellar submissions! The deadline is **January 8, 2025**. Let's show off the creativity and innovation that make our members shine. [Click here for a link to our contest packet.](#)
- **MVP Nominations:** Know a rising star on your team? Nominate them for the MVP Program by January 31st. Our MVP program is a valuable tool for mentoring the next generation of industry leaders. You can learn more about this program and review a list of topics covered in 2024 in the Member News section of this newsletter. [Click here for an application.](#)
- **Spring Conference:** Mark your calendars for **April 3-4, 2025**. We'll be gathering in **Sioux Falls, SD**, to celebrate **our 70th anniversary**—a platinum milestone we couldn't have reached without you! Our conference is shaping up nicely, with something for everyone—sales, graphics, editorial, and management. We'd love to have you there to learn, grow, and celebrate with us.
- **Print Is Powerful:** Have you seen the incredible data and creative resources we're rolling out to prove the impact of print? You'll find all the details in the [Print Is Powerful](#) section of this newsletter, including links to the survey results and professionally designed promo materials. These resources are here to help you tell the story of print's value to advertisers and readers in your community. Don't miss it!

As we mark this incredible year, I want to thank you for your commitment to our association and for allowing me to play a part in your success. Your hard work, creativity, and resilience are what keep our industry strong, and I'm so grateful to be on this journey with you.

Here's to a joyful holiday season and an amazing year ahead! May 2025 bring you exciting opportunities, new connections, and a continued love for what we do.

Cheers,

Lee

MVP at Work



Preparing for the New Year

Melissa Bomkamp
Richland Center Shopping News
Richland Center, WI
Print and Digital Marketing Consultant

As the year comes to an end, it's a time when everyone reflects on their achievements, understands lessons learned from challenges, and looks forward to the new opportunities that the upcoming year brings.

Celebrate your wins! Whether it was exceeding your sales targets, landing key clients, or improving your skills, take the time to celebrate your successes. These accomplishments reflect your hard work and dedication and help you to strive to become better.

Identify your challenges. Not every deal goes through, and we can't beat ourselves up over it. Reflect on the challenges you faced, and consider what you can learn from them. Did you need to adjust your approach? What can you do differently next time? Can I ask for someone else's perspective to help?

Build your relationships. Strong client relationships are the backbone of sales. Think about how you engaged with your clients. Were you proactive in solving their problems and adding value? Did you gain their trust enough that if they do need something, they know they can reach out? Strengthening these connections is key to repeat business and long-term success.

Set New Goals. The new year offers a fresh start. Set clear, achievable goals for the next 12 months, whether it's boosting sales numbers, gaining more clients, or expanding into new markets. Come up with a plan that works for you!

Be Flexible! Businesses and turn around can change quickly. Be ready to adapt by staying informed on new trends and technologies that can improve your sales strategy. Flexibility will help you stay competitive. Stay up to date on any new products that we can offer and how it would benefit our clients.

Become more efficient. Look for ways to work smarter, not harder. Automate routine tasks, refine your sales process, and find tools that can help you manage your time more effectively. Set aside time each week to reflect on the past week and if you had any wins or losses. If it's something you can improve on, maybe try a different approach or ask for help. Don't forget to take time out for yourself. Sometimes a simple reset is the best thing we can do to clear our mind and walk into a new day with a new perspective.

Using the lessons of the past year to fuel our growth in the new year. With clear goals, a commitment to adapting to change, and a focus on strengthening client relationships, the new year holds endless possibilities for success. Stay motivated and ready for the opportunities ahead! **The sky is the limit!**

Member News - MVP Nomination Time

The Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP) association is proud to announce that we are now accepting nominations for the 2025 class of our Most Valued Professionals (MVP) program. This initiative is dedicated to recognizing and nurturing the rising stars of our industry, offering a platform for young professionals to grow their skills, network, and contribute meaningfully to our field.

What is the MVP Program?

The MVP program is a two-year professional development opportunity for emerging leaders under 40 years of age. Candidates must have at least six months of industry experience and be employed by a member or associate member of MFCP. Each year, up to five exceptional individuals are selected to participate.

What Do MVPs Gain?

Development of communication and organizational skills through tailored workshops and assignments.

- A network of peers to rely on for advice, collaboration, and support on industry challenges.
- Access to exclusive leadership development and training sessions.
- Complimentary registration and accommodations at the annual MFCP Conference and Trade Show.
- Opportunities to assist with MFCP initiatives and shape the future of our industry.
- Recognition in Paperclips, the official MFCP newsletter.

What Was Covered in 2024?

This year's MVPs explored diverse and impactful topics, including:

- Ethics Case Studies presented at the MFCP Conference.
- Enneagram Personality Assessments to foster self-awareness and team dynamics.
- Emotional Intelligence training for better interpersonal skills.
- Generational Differences in the Workplace, equipping them to navigate a multigenerational workforce.
- A deep dive into "Eat That Frog", a guide to overcoming procrastination and boosting productivity.

These sessions not only provided practical knowledge but also encouraged collaboration and the sharing of ideas among peers, reinforcing the value of their growing network.

Join Us for an Informative Call

To recap 2024 and preview what's planned for 2025, we're hosting an informational call on Friday, December 13th, at 10 AM. This is an excellent opportunity for publishers to ask questions, learn more about the program, and understand how it can benefit their nominees. We encourage you to join and discover why the MVP program is a transformative experience for young professionals

Nominate Your MVP Today

Do you know someone who exemplifies leadership, dedication, and a commitment to excellence in our industry? Nominate them to join the MVP program and invest in their future success. The nomination process is straightforward, and the **deadline to submit nominations is Friday, January 31, 2025.**

For more information or to submit a nomination, visit [MFCP.org](https://mfcpc.org) or contact us directly at director@mfcpc.org. Help us build the next generation of industry leaders!

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89536727860?pwd=bjVzTlpKWj84b1dwTXdjbE4vb05lQT09>

[CLICK HERE FOR AN APPLICATION](#)

Members Helping Members

**YOUR PERFECT ADVERTISING MIX
PRINT AND DIGITAL WORKING TOGETHER!**

Advertising is about balance. While digital platforms put your business right in front of customers searching online, print ads provide a trusted and tangible way to connect with your local audience. Think of it as the perfect combination: digital ads drive immediate results and trackable engagement, while print builds trust and long-term brand awareness. Research shows that advertisers that combine print and digital experience an increase in ad effectiveness of up to 400%.

PRECISE TARGETING
Reach the right audience. High quality content. Places that matter. Focus on search results.

FLEXIBLE BUDGETS
Start small, scale fast. Begin with a budget you're comfortable with and grow as you see results.

MEASURABLE RESULTS
See their time. Track every dollar spent and measure the success of your campaign in real time.

QUICK SETUP
From idea to live ads in days. Not weeks or months!

Your Comprehensive ad Campaign

Web/Mobile Display
Banner ads that appear on popular websites and mobile apps, keeping your business visible wherever your audience browses online.

Print Advertising:
Reach your local community through our trusted print products. Print ads are ideal for building relationships and showcasing your brand in a tangible, lasting way.

Video
Short video ads that play before online videos or live streams, grabbing attention in seconds.

Search
Text ads that show up in Google search results when customers look for businesses like yours.

Social
Eye-catching image ads shown on Facebook and Instagram, driving engagement on platforms where your customers spend their time.

Native Display Ads
Ads seamlessly integrated into websites, matching their style and format to engage users without disrupting their experience.

Monthly Digital Advertising Rates

Good \$275/month Impressions - 15,750	Better \$525/month Impressions - 31,500	Best \$1025/month Impressions - 63,250
--	--	---

All about bundled packages that combine print and digital for maximum reach and effectiveness!

The Perfect Combination! Digital + Print = Success

We're excited to share a new promotional flyer designed to help you boost your digital advertising sales! This flyer was created by industry professionals who are successfully selling digital ads right now, and it highlights all the key points to educate your customers on the value of a comprehensive advertising package.

We believe this piece covers all the essentials, but it's also fully customizable to suit your company's unique needs. Feel free to adapt it however you see fit to align with your branding and sales approach. This is just one more way we're supporting your efforts to grow revenue and demonstrate the value of digital advertising to your clients.

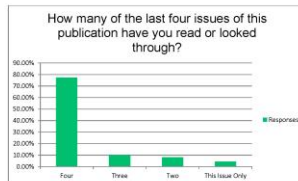
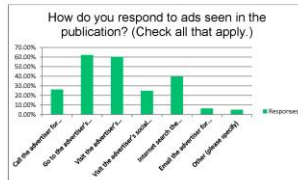
Please let me know if you have any questions.

Lee

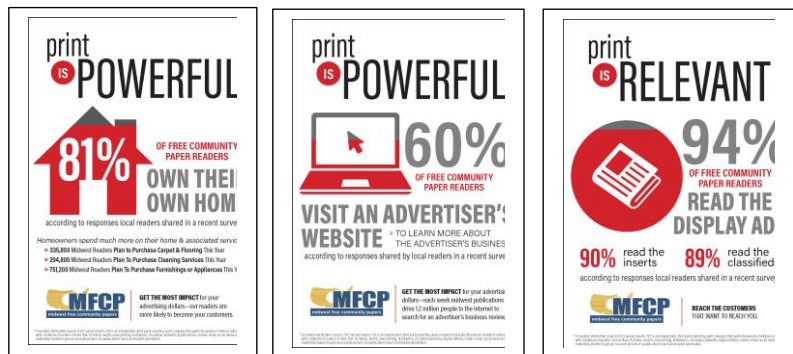
[Click here to download this new promotional flyer.](#)

Print is Powerful!

PRINT IS POWERFUL – SURVEY RESULTS 2024 - MFCP



New Promo Materials Available for You!



Prove the Power of Print in Your Community

We've always known it: Print Is Powerful! And now, thanks to the incredible readership data gathered by our members earlier this year, we have the numbers to back it up.

The survey results, conducted by the trusted Circulation Verification Council (CVC), reveal just how engaged our readers are with their community papers:

94% of readers engage with display ads.

89% read the classifieds.

81% of readers are homeowners, and they're planning big purchases like flooring, cleaning services, and appliances.

These results prove that print is not dead—it's thriving. In fact, it remains one of the most effective ways to connect businesses with their audience.

To help you spread this message and highlight the value of your publication, we've created professionally designed marketing pieces branded with our "Print Is Powerful" message.

These promo sheets are available now for your use—whether in print or digital campaigns.

[Download the Promo Materials Here](#)

But why stop there? We encourage you to take it a step further by creating your own promotional materials tailored to your audience and community. To help you get started, you can [download the full survey results here](#) and use the data to craft messaging that resonates with your advertisers and readers.

Once you've created something, we'd love to see it! Sharing creative ideas and materials is a cornerstone of our association, and we'd be thrilled to distribute your work to inspire and assist other members.

Let's stand proud of the impact we have in our communities and use these tools to showcase why print remains a cornerstone of success for advertisers and readers alike.

Together, we can continue to tell the story of how Print Is Powerful—because the numbers don't lie, and neither does the trust of our loyal readers.

Kevin Slimp



Plan to Grow in 2025

The new year is a perfect time to make plans to grow

Kevin Slimp - kevin@kevinslimp.com

I always receive a lot of “fan mail” when I write a “ten tips” or “five best” column. In this digital age, I suppose we’ve all become accustomed to quick bites of information. With that in mind – and in honor of the final days of 2024 and the early part of 2025 – I’ve composed a list of tips for my newspaper friends and readers. I’m calling it:

Kevin’s Tips to Grow Your Newspaper in 2025

Tip 1: Make your customers feel special. Whether it’s your paid subscribers or advertisers, find ways to make them feel special in the coming year. Send hand-written notes to say “thanks” for supporting your local business. Make your subscribers feel special by adding a note with each subscription reminder. Make it a group effort. At many newspapers, staff take turns writing “thank you” notes with each subscription reminder. Personally deliver simple gifts to advertisers this year. I remember how much I always loved it when a vendor would drop by my office with a box of cookies or another small gift. I teach classes in communications and customer service. I often remind students that gaining a new customer takes 20 times more effort than keeping an existing customer. Job #1 is keeping our current customers happy.

Tip 2: Replace outdated equipment. Before you start yelling, I ask you to remember that I don’t get hardware and software for free either. I purchased a new M4 Mac Mini in November, and I’ve not looked back. The speed at which I get my work done sometimes amazes me. I don’t have time to wait on slow equipment, and I don’t want to spend more on payroll so others can work on slow equipment. As the new year begins, look around your newsroom and make a list of outdated computers. Replace (or add to) your on-site backup drives each year. External drives tend to last two or three years. Page designers should not be working on five-year-old computers. The larger the monitor, the less time it takes to design a page. Time really is money.

Tip 3: If you haven't already, create a master chart to track your sales calls. This tip is so important that I'm including it for a second straight year. Be sure to include columns for "in-person," "phone," "text," and "email" calls. Look over your calls with your ad manager or publisher at the end of each week. A master chart is a straightforward method for increasing the number of calls, guaranteeing increased ad revenue. It is also an excellent reminder to make more in-person calls rather than relying too much on email or other contact methods. My publisher friends tell me this step often makes a significant difference in sales.

Tip 4: Research and apply for grants. I spent an hour with a publisher who recently received a \$100,000 grant this morning. Two newspapers I work with have received six-figure grants over the past few months. One publisher said they started applying for grants after hearing me speak about them at a newspaper association convention. Several other clients received grants in 2024 for \$15-25k. Call the Small Business Bureau (in some states, grants come through the Economic and Community Development office) and ask about grants for small businesses. You can also find information about grants at [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

Tip 5: Redesign your newspaper. I can't think of anything that will kick-start excitement about a community newspaper more than a total redesign. If you've redesigned your paper in the past five years, feel free to skip the rest of this paragraph. If, however, it's been more than five years since you've redesigned your paper, you are losing an excellent opportunity to keep existing readers and win over new readers and advertisers. A common theme among papers I've redesigned (no, you don't have to hire me to redesign your newspaper) is growth in readership, subscribers, and ad revenue afterward.

Tip 6: Hold a staff brainstorming session. Schedule a time in advance so everyone can begin formulating ideas. There's no better time than the beginning of a new year to gather your staff and ask, "What can we do to be better?" Get everyone away from their desks and hold the meeting in a conference room, or leave the office and meet in a restaurant meeting space. Have a whiteboard and marker handy. I've been around for many of these sessions, and the results are often remarkable. Ideas flow. Plans are made. Improvements happen almost immediately.

Tip 7: Get a high school reporter. Find a high school student – or a group of high school students – to provide weekly stories for your paper. Hold these stories to the same guidelines as other stories in your newspaper. At focus groups, I often hear readers speak out about their desire to learn more about what's happening at the local high school. Plus, you might just attract younger readers.

I had planned to include ten tips for newspapers in 2025. However, I passed my 800-word limit around the end of the sixth tip, and I learned long ago that most readers will never make it past 800 words. Let me take a personal moment for those who made it to the end of this column. I have been swamped with work in 2024, and 2025 doesn't appear less busy. There are a lot of newspapers making serious plans to grow their papers. I'm noticing younger publishers and staff. I'm seeing a return to local ownership. Something good is happening in our industry, and I'm thankful to be a part of it.

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](https://www.newspaperacademy.com).

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

Ad-Libs



Two Things That Will Never Change

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

Luke told me about a business panel discussion in which he participated. He represented the ad department of the local newspaper, and others represented industries like banking, accounting, and various office services.

The moderator asked each panelist to introduce themselves, identify their company and position, then give a brief, one or two sentence statement of one thing they would like the audience to know about their specialty.

The brevity requirement was broken immediately. The accountant's statement was several minutes long and, according to Luke, completely forgettable. The banker rambled for a minute or two and ended up saying how much she liked her job. The other panelists were equally vague and unmemorable, until it was Luke's turn. After introducing himself, he said, "*People don't buy features, they buy benefits.*"

That was it: *People don't buy features, they buy benefits.* In one sentence, he summed up the most important thing that a salesperson needs to know – whether it's selling through advertising or selling in a one-to-one conversation.

Luke's strategy was right on target. "My kickoff statement was easy to remember," he said. "Some of the people in the audience had never considered the concept of seeing products in terms of features and benefits. As the meeting progressed, their interest gave me a chance to cover important details about advertising. Some of them even wanted to set appointments."

His experience reminds me of the story about the old sea captain who was famous for his years of success in always delivering the ship's cargoes on time. In the face of countless storms and dangerous high seas, he never lost a ship, a crew member or a passenger.

Every morning, the old captain went through a strange ritual. He opened the safe in his quarters, opened an envelope and pulled out a small piece of paper. After staring at the paper for a few minutes, he locked it up again and went about the day.

When he retired, the first mate said, "Captain, we feel the secret to your success is on the piece of paper in your safe. May we see it?" The captain smiled and handed the key to him. A few minutes later, the first mate opened the envelope in front of the entire crew.

They were stunned when they learned that the paper read, “Port left. Starboard right.”

The old captain’s focus was on the most basic of sailing basics. From a canoe to a battleship, port is always the left side and starboard is the right side. That will never change.

In advertising – as in any kind of selling - people don’t buy product features, they buy what those products can do for them. That’s the most basic of advertising basics. And that, too, will never change.

As long as advertising people remember that in every sales presentation – and as long as they remember that in every ad they create – they’ll stay on course.

(c) Copyright 2024 by John Foust. All rights reserved.

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



Perfect Follow-Up Plan

This month Ryan shares his formula for a perfect follow-up plan. His rule of 3 plus the right combination of phone calls and emails sets the pace for successfully closing the deal.

Check out what he has to say about what tag line to use, what to include in your email, why to start a fresh email, and why you should not mention what you are following up about.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoMhYXVUL7I>

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](#).