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President's Corner



New Year...

New MFCP President!

Lisa Miller

Welcome to 2025!

Another year is upon us which means a new president has taken the reins of MFCP. Most of you do know me as a familiar face within the organization. For those of you that do not know me, I hope we can become acquaintances within 2025. I am excited for the new year and ready to see what 2025 has in store for our industry and publications.

As all of us know our industry is constantly changing. I am a solid believer that without change we wouldn't be where we are today. However, change does get my heart beating faster and put some fear into my thoughts.

Being a member of MFCP has eliminated some of my fears of change. I know as an organization, MFCP has worked hard to offer member benefits that allow us as publishers to change without the fear of doing it all alone.

Have you utilized all of the benefits MFCP offers? Are you holding back your publication due to not embracing change?

"If you want something you've never had, you must be willing to do something you've never done." -- *Thomas Jefferson*

Online training has been a huge factor for my organization. Obviously COVID made us face many changes, but a large positive was being forced to use programs that utilized online meetings. MFCP offered several webinars in 2024 for sales and graphics. These were 60-minute webinars from which any organization can benefit. Did you attend any of these webinars or even better have your staff attend them?

I just received the email from Circulation Verification Council that our audit numbers are due for the fourth quarter. CVC has been an amazing partner for MFCP. Audits are used by several publishers and are extremely beneficial. Have you completed an audit with CVC?

MFCP partnered with iPromote in 2024. Digital advertising no longer needs to be a fear. This program walks you through creating an online campaign. If you haven't brought your publication and clients into the digital world, now is the time. If you aren't willing to do it, someone else is already showing your clients the power of digital.

These are just a small fraction of what MFCP offers to you as members. I've seen the power of this organization's benefits for our industry countless times. If we stick together, positive change will happen.

We are at the beginning of 2025. Now more than ever we need to step out of our boxes and embrace change. We need to look for more ways to help our publications thrive. What that might be ... we shall wait and see what great minds come up with in 2025.

Lisa

From the Office



Networking: The Heart of MFCP

Lee Borkowski

In a recent membership survey, networking emerged as the #1 benefit that members value most about being part of MFCP. And it's no wonder! Networking is at the heart of everything we do, and we're committed to providing meaningful opportunities for our members to connect, learn, and grow.

From our Annual Conference to regular roundtables, the *Members Helping Members* eBlast program, *Paperclips*, and countless informal conversations sparked through our association, there are endless ways for you to connect with others in the industry. These opportunities for collaboration continue to ensure our members thrive.

The most prominent networking event we offer is our Annual Conference, which is fast approaching on April 3-4 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It's an excellent opportunity to meet peers, share insights, and build relationships that will last throughout the year. But the conference is just the beginning.

Throughout the year, we host *Member MeetUp!* Roundtables on a wide range of topics. Our next call is **Thursday, January 16th at 11AM**, and we'll be discussing the 2025 Postal Discounts. While this roundtable may not apply to everyone, for those of you with mailed publications, it's a key opportunity to stay informed about available discounts and learn how to take full advantage of them.

Recently, one of my favorite networking tools was put to great use: our *Members Helping Members* eBlast. A group from Nebraska reached out for help with a new website. They wondered if any members could assist. Knowing many of you build and host websites, I turned to the *Members Helping Members* eBlast. Within no time, several members offered advice and solutions. The Nebraska group ended up partnering with Standard International Publishing Group, one of our associate members, and the collaboration was a success. In fact, I received two very nice emails about this project! [Click here to read more.](#)

Just last month, a member reached out about a fraudulent classified ad. They wanted to know how others were handling this all-too-common challenge. Again, this was a perfect opportunity to turn to our *Members Helping Members* eBlast. The conversation that followed was filled with valuable insights. By sharing knowledge and experiences, we can help each other protect our businesses and provide the best services to our readers. [Click here to read more.](#)

These are just two examples of how networking through MFCP can solve real-world problems. Every day, we encounter challenges in our work. There's a good chance someone else in our association has faced the same issue and can offer guidance or support. And if you're tackling a brand-new problem, wouldn't it be great to tap into the collective wisdom of the industry's greatest minds to help you find a solution?

As we dive into the new year, I encourage you to get more involved in 2025. Whether it's participating in a roundtable, attending the conference, or contributing to the *Members Helping Members* program, your involvement strengthens the entire MFCP network. Remember, MFCP was founded on the strength of sharing and cooperation, a spirit that has stood the test of time for 70 years.

Let's continue to champion collaboration and make 2025 our most connected and successful year yet!

Lee

MVP at Work



What is Your Word of the Year?

Pause, pick a word, then let it be your inspiration in 2025!

By Amanda Thooft
Production Manager, Star Publications

New year, new goals.

With another year passing by, I feel the need to start a new goal. Every year I pick a word of the year; last year's word was balance. This year I have chosen the word pause. Pausing can mean many things in life. For me, I want to pause the chaos and take time to zone in and focus more on what is in the moment.

Family, work, faith, and life can all get so overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. If I pause all of the distractions and focus in on the task or moment at hand, I can be more productive and more purposeful with my time.

Here are some tricks to keep focused and pause the distractions of life:

- **Keep your phone on silent.** If you need to be contacted you will know. Checking every notification will not keep focus and will also pull you away from completing many tasks. Turn off notifications on your apps that you do not want to receive. Train people that are important to you to call twice if it's an emergency or have a code text to know if it requires immediate attention.
- **Set up a Google calendar.** The constant shuffle of trying to keep your schedule figured out within your work and family life can easily stress any person out. Google calendars offer the ability to toggle off and on work appointments and your family's schedule. You will be amazed how fast the anxiety of missing an event goes away when everyone is sharing the same calendar. You can share work events with coworkers and family events with just your family members.
- **Social media breaks.** You do not need to take a break from all social media, but maybe decide which apps are worth it first, then intentionally take time to scroll social media. Set a time limit or a break time to take it all in, then be done with it for the day. I have not seen many studies that show social media helps us in the long run so don't scroll for a long run.
- **Create a list.** Some of us are list makers and some of us are not. Creating a list gives me a sense of accomplishment. Give yourself three separate lists – things that must be done today, this week and this month. Break down tasks to the point where you do a little bit on it every day, so by the end of the week you can check it off with ease instead of feeling the rush to complete it.

Life never seems to slow down. Hopefully, these steps will help me to pause it and be productive, turn off distractions and also not be the distraction. Being intentional with my time and making sure at the end of the day I can feel more productive at work and be a present parent is how I will dedicate 2025. What word will get you through 2025?

Members Helping Members

You asked- Our members delivered...

Here we go again!

Earlier this month, we reached out with a request for help from one of our members—and, as always, you delivered!

A fellow member was grappling with an issue related to verifying classified line ads, and they turned to the group for advice. Here's the situation they were facing:

Their publication offers free line classifieds for items being given away. Unfortunately, they received an ad for "free puppies" that turned out to be a scam. These left readers upset and the publication searching for ways to prevent fraud.

But that's not all—recently, another troubling scam has surfaced. This one involves a classified ad placed by someone posing as a "single woman looking to meet someone." Upon contact, readers were pulled into deceptive schemes, often with financial motives.

Fraudulent ads like these can damage trust with readers, but together, we can stay vigilant. Thanks to your thoughtful responses, we've gathered some great tips to help everyone safeguard their publications.

Tips Shared by Members:

Verify Suspicious Ads: If an ad seems too good to be true (e.g., free or cheap puppies), call the number provided and request additional information such as a physical address or name.

Require Verified Accounts: Even for free classifieds, ensure all ads are tied to a verified account with first-party contact details.

Search Online: Use tools like Google to cross-check any suspicious information. Often, fraudulent details will appear in search results.

Ad Policies Matter: Consider refusing pet ads or sensitive personal ads unless they are called in, paid for, and verified.

Real Examples from Members:

One member noticed the scam when a supposed address led to their local high school football field. Another pressed the scammer for details, like an appointment to see the puppies, and the conversation ended quickly.

A publication flagged a fraudulent "single woman looking to meet someone" ad, noting it as a new scam targeting personal classifieds.

Update your Announcement Policy:

In an attempt to help protect your readers consider running a disclaimer like this one from The West Point News/Elkhorn Valley Shopper:

We do not accept any classified ads that we think may be fraudulent. However, we cannot control who contacts you about a classified ad. If you receive a suspicious call, use your best judgment before continuing the conversation.

Let's Keep the Collaboration Going!

If you've encountered similar issues or have tips to share, let us know! Together, we can protect our readers, maintain trust, and ensure our classifieds remain a valuable resource for our communities.

Thank you for embodying the spirit of collaboration and support that makes our association great. Let's keep helping each other succeed!

Kevin Slimp



A Few Words about AI

and skipping the parts you already know about

Kevin Slimp - kevin@kevinslimp.com

After over 30 years of writing columns for journalists, I'm flabbergasted that anyone is interested in what I have to say. But it seems there are few of you left, so I'll spend a little time this Saturday evening sharing my thoughts about artificial intelligence (AI) and its use by those of us in the news business.

Those who know me well know I'm not one to fall for the latest "gadgets" and "get rich quick" ideas. This probably comes from speaking at thousands of conferences over the years and seeing more "next big things" than I could count with a calculator. I remember being at a convention in Texas more than a decade ago when a publisher asked about a product being promoted by a "hot" vendor. I told the publisher, "They won't be in business a year from now," and they weren't.

So please don't lose patience when you don't see me getting overly excited about anything, including artificial intelligence. That doesn't mean I don't see incredible potential in using AI or that I don't think it's a major force right now. It only means I try not to let emotions get the best of me regarding new technology. Let's face it: I've spent most of my adult life developing, testing, using, and writing about technology. There was a time when my office looked like a computer store because of all the free software and hardware I received almost daily from companies hoping I would promote their products.

Yet here I am. Writing about artificial intelligence. I've even made a decent living – well, part of my living – speaking at conferences and leading workshops and webinars on the topic of AI. I acquiesced when universities and press associations began asking me to discuss artificial intelligence with publishers and university faculty. Let's face it: it's fun being considered an expert by professors who make a living from being experts.

When I speak with groups about AI, I generally break it down like this:

- The history of AI dating back to the 1940s
- Developments over the past 20 years that have sped up AI capabilities
- "Machine Learning" and how it forms the backbone of artificial intelligence
- Why artificial intelligence gets so much wrong
- Use of AI in the current business world
- Practical AI tools for possible use in communications and journalism
- Ethical considerations
- Creating an AI ethics policy

You probably have noticed I haven't spent time promoting particular AI software or tools. It's not because there aren't great AI tools available for newspapers and other media types. It's just that plenty of folks are writing and talking about these tools and how to use them. And remember, it's Saturday night while I'm writing this, so I have no desire to get wordy.

Listen, I've used Grammarly since it first came to the market. I wouldn't even think of letting one of my writers or editors send me their work without using Grammarly to go through it with a fine-tooth comb. I receive book manuscripts almost daily from authors, hoping I'll consider publishing their books. And yes, I often use ChatGPT to create an outline and summary of the manuscripts to help me decide whether or not I want to take the time to read 40,000 words. I admit it: I've used Downsub to transcribe videos and create outlines of meetings. I've even used the AI tools in Photoshop to create additional content for an image to be used in an ad.

I once asked my brother – a leader in the world of computer science, including AI – for a quote I could share with audiences concerning AI. He did a good job summarizing my thoughts when he said, “You really shouldn't be afraid of AI. Just like the internet (when it was new), we knew it could do good things, and we knew it could do bad things. There's no need to be afraid of it. We can't stop it. So, we might as well figure out what parts of AI to use and what parts of AI to leave alone.”

I don't need to tell you never to use AI to write newspaper stories. You already know that. I don't need to remind you that stories about high school ballgames written with AI almost always sound like a computer wrote them (and often get the details wrong). You know that.

I'll just give you a pat on the back for sticking to your ethics and, in my brother's words, “(figuring) out what parts of AI to use and what parts of AI to leave alone.”

That's 800 words. It seems my work is done.

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



Think Like an Interviewer

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

We've all heard and used the term "sales presentation." It has become a catch-all term to describe a wide range of meetings with existing and potential advertisers. Many salespeople have the idea that – if they're not presenting something in every conversation with prospects – they're not really selling. The result is a lot of meaningless blather which is of no interest to the other person.

Corey sees things differently. "As the manager of our ad team, I never use the word 'presentation' to refer to first-time meetings. In those meetings, we're there to listen, not present. Our objective is to learn about their businesses, so we can provide the services they need. I like to think of it as conducting interviews.

"The salespeople in our building have a lot in common with the reporters. They both need information in order to be at their best. Reporters spend a lot of time interviewing their subjects," he said. "There's no way for them to get their stories by doing all of the talking. They ask questions and learn along the way. It just makes sense for us to do the same thing with our prospects."

According to a number of web sites, salespeople do 65 to 75 percent of the talking during their sales calls. Corey wouldn't be surprised if those numbers are much higher for initial meetings: "Because salespeople talk way too much, it helps our team to see themselves as interviewers. We even encourage them to say at the beginning, 'In order to make the best use of your time, would it be okay for me to ask some questions to learn more about your business?' Since the other person has agreed to the meeting, there's a good chance they'll say 'yes.' That sets the tone for an interview format. Talk less, listen more."

What does it take to be a good interviewer?

1. Research. In order to ask relevant questions, the first step is to learn about the person you're interviewing. In addition to appreciating your thoroughness, he or she will be more likely to give helpful answers.

2. Ask the right questions. When a reporter calls the mayor, the questions are specific and on-topic. For example: "What are your thoughts on economic development in the next year?" Or "Where do you stand on the new budget proposal?"

3. Listen carefully. “By definition, a follow-up question follows something the interview subject just said,” Corey explained. “When you think like an interviewer and look for opportunities for follow-up questions, you become a better listener.”

4. Look for problems to solve. “This is where sales and news interviews differ. We work to uncover marketing challenges, so we can advance the sale to the next step. That’s how exploratory first meetings can lead to solution-focused second meetings.”

When a salesperson returns to the office, Corey’s first question is not something vague like, “How did it go?” Instead, he asks, “What did you learn?” After all, information is where good advertising starts.

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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



My Advertiser Wants to Cancel... What Do I Do?

This month Ryan stresses why being aware of timing, need, and price can help you achieve higher success in advertising.

His strategy consists of three steps:

- Advertise consistently so you hit them when they need your product or service.
- Use multiple ways and multiple days.
- When you don't advertise, you force people to google **generic**; when you advertise, they google **specific**.

Check it all out below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XQA5B11ISQ>

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](#)*.