MAY 2025

PAPERCLIPS

the official newsletter of Midwest Free Community Papers

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in this issue >>>

Start practicing:
CHARMANT HOTEL
LACROSSE, WISCONSIN

Where is the best place to be on July 24 & 25 to network, brainstorm, and play MFCP JEOPARDY?

IT IS TIME TO PLAY MFCP-STYLE!
Plan to meet us in LaCrosse, Wisconsin July 24 & 25 and learn while you play!

Click here to register!

President's Corner

Lisa Miller

MFCP JEOPARDY

Brought to you at the Summer Leadership Conference

Even though Spring Conference just ended, the conference committee is in the heart of planning the Summer Managers' Summit. This year the summit will be held in La Crosse, WI, July 24-25. We will be meeting at the beautiful Charmant.

The Charmant is a beautiful unique boutique hotel located right in downtown La Crosse.

According to thecharmanthotel.com, the building was originally constructed in 1898 for the FUNKE Candy Factory. Today, with its landmark water tower, the Charmant pays homage to its rich history by celebrating the golden era of fine candy manufacturing. Architectural details of the original structure — now a historic landmark — have been preserved and reimagined, including maple wood flooring, wood beams and exposed brick.

We will be within walking distance of several area activities which includes galleries, specialty shops, breweries, bars and local restaurants.

We are going to encourage all managers to not only enjoy activities at night, but also a good game of fun during the day. Our theme for the summit is MFCP Jeopardy. We have a custom-built board with categories pertaining to everything within the business. The game will have a spin on it that encourages discussion after the question is answered correctly.

The game will begin at 2 pm Thursday, July 24. We will continue with fun at Moon Tunes only two blocks away. Friday morning will be full of discussion with a leadership round table. We will wrap it all up by noon and you can enjoy the beautiful Friday summer afternoon out of the office.

Be sure to check out the flyer attached and register today. You won't want to miss our Leadership Summit this year — especially since you could be the one to hit the daily double!

Click here to Register

Click here for the Flyer

From the Office

A Picture That is Worth Much More Than a Thousand Words

Lee Borkowski

Late last month Sue and I had the privilege of participating in what might be the most rewarding community outreach project I've ever been involved in—and I think it's something publishers could easily replicate with lasting impact.

My sister who is from Colorado was in town for a visit. She got a crazy idea that we should hold a photo shoot at the local nursing home where our mother lives. With a portable backdrop, studio lights, and a simple setup, we offered to take portraits of any resident who wanted one. Some came dressed in their Sunday best. Others simply brought their smiles. We printed proofs at Wal-Mart for just 14 cents a copy and delivered them, along with order forms, so families could purchase prints if they wanted. For those who could pay, we made prints available at cost. For those who couldn't, we quietly covered the expense.

The cost? Negligible.
The reward? Immeasurable.

As publishers, we're constantly supporting youth sports, 4-H, school fundraisers—you name it. But how often do we extend that same generosity to our senior citizens? This generation, full of wisdom and rich stories, is too often overlooked.

What made the day special wasn't just the photos—it was the care that went into the experience. Here are a few tips if you're inspired to try something similar:

- **Make a roster** as folks arrive. Memory challenges are common, and having a list helps keep the process smooth, orderly and respectful.
- **Use a comfy chair** with pillows for support. Many seniors are in wheelchairs, so a movable setup is key.
- **Honor veterans** by adding an American flag into the frame. It was a small gesture that meant a great deal.
- **End on a sweet note.** We handed out candy bars as a thank-you—an unexpected treat that brought lots of smiles.

It doesn’t take much—a photographer, a few staff or volunteers, and a little time. But the result is something truly special: a moment of dignity, recognition, and joy for someone who might not have had their photo taken in years.

Our senior citizens deserve to be seen, celebrated, and remembered. I hope this is an idea you will take and run with. It’s a simple act of kindness that reminds us all of the power of community—and the privilege we have to serve it.

If you're thinking about offering this kind of outreach in your area and would like tips, resources, or just someone to brainstorm with, feel free to reach out. I'd be happy to share what we learned!

MVP at Work

Staying on Track

How to cut those unnecessary steps

By Rachel Sajban
Graphic Designer, Citizen Publishing
Windom, MN

If you had the opportunity to go to the MFCP 70th anniversary conference banquet you would have had the pleasure of hearing Holly Hoffman speak on her Three Step Stride idea. This idea originated when she did hurdles in high school track. She found herself taking five steps in between each hurdle, which was slowing her down, and her coach told her she needed to cut out some of those extra steps.

Do you ever experience that in your personal or professional life? Are there any steps you think you could cut out that would benefit you? In her speech, Holly talked about three steps that she suggested you keep in your routine and two that she found do more harm than good.

The steps that are beneficial are momentum, consistency and teamwork. The steps that are harmful are complacency and comparison.

Momentum is the driving force that keeps you making progress. It is a positive forward movement that helps you on the right track to being motivated and productive. Losing momentum can take you off the course and leads to complacency.

When you are complacent you aren't striving to do better, and you don't risk making bold decisions because what's familiar is easier. Fear of change and the unknown can be a huge hurdle, but it's beneficial for your growth to take that leap and do hard things.

Throw aside complacency and strive to be consistent. This doesn't mean that you won't have hard days, but if you are consistently aiming for excellence and putting your best foot forward you can only benefit both personally and professionally.

Unfortunately, along our journeys we can fall into negative comparisons, this is when we compare ourselves to others to the point that we are afraid to even start. Comparison can be good if you are comparing your current self to your past self and seeing your growth, but outside comparison can be the thief of joy.

Rather than comparing yourself harshly to others, work as a team and grow together. Teamwork brings you more of a sense of community; more minds mean more input and more opportunity to improve together.

Eliminating the unnecessary steps of complacency and comparison (and any others that you may be dealing with) is not an easy thing to do but with time, practice and consistent effort it's possible to get there!

Rachel

Members Helping Members

Member MeetUps!
Let’s Talk Real Estate and Postal Updates!

Member MeetUps! | Real Estate & Postal Updates

One of MFCP’s greatest strengths is the way we share ideas and learn from one another — and this spring, we’re doing just that with **two great Member MeetUps!**

May 7th at 11 AM (CT) – Talking Real Estate
Join us for an open conversation about current trends, creative ideas, and advertising opportunities in the real estate market. We’ll cover what’s working, what buyers and sellers are asking for, and how to boost engagement with real estate content.

June 11th at 11 AM (CT) – Postal Rates & Incentives
Get the latest on **postal rate increases coming in July** and learn how to take advantage of **current USPS incentive programs** while they last. We’ll break down what’s available, how members are using them, and answer your questions about navigating postal changes.

These casual, member-driven calls are a great way to swap ideas, ask questions, and pick up practical tips from your fellow publishers and industry experts. Join us for one or both — we’d love to see you there!

Zoom Login for Both MeetUps:

Join Here

Ad-Libs

Avoid Jumping to Conclusions

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

There's a story going around about a new CEO who was on a tour of one of the company's facilities. As he was talking to the assembled group, he noticed a young fellow leaning against the wall. The CEO was angry at such disrespect while he was delivering an important speech. He pointed to the guy and asked, "How much money do you make?"

The guy said, "About $400 a week."

The CEO reached for his checkbook, wrote a check to cash for $1,600, handed it to the guy and said, "Here's a check for four weeks' pay. Now get out of here and don't come back."

After the guy pocketed the check and walked out, the CEO turned to the group and asked, "Does anyone want to tell me the meaning of that little event?"

A voice in the back said, "Yeah, you just tipped the pizza delivery guy $1,600."

True or not, this story usually generates a chuckle – and it illustrates the pitfall of making assumptions. Imagine the problems the CEO created for himself in just a couple of minutes: In addition to embarrassing himself, he made a terrible first impression by showing a careless lack of judgment. How would they look at him in the future? How could they trust his decisions or his leadership? Or to take it to the extreme, would the board of directors allow him to keep his job?

We've all jumped to conclusions at one time or another, especially in sales situations. It happens when our perceptions don't match reality. We jump ahead in our thinking, without taking the time to examine the situation. Let's just hope that our conclusion-blunders have been less severe than that CEO's.

There's a lesson here. How could this real or imagined CEO have handled things differently?

First of all, he could have asked for the right kind of information, instead of assuming the guy worked there and asking how much money he made. He might have asked – with a smile, not with anger – "Excuse me, what's your department?" If the man had answered that he worked in a particular department (human resources, for example), the CEO could have used that opportunity to create a welcoming environment: "It's great to see human resources represented here today. You don't have to stand. Please feel free to find a seat. There are some good spots right there on the second row."

On the other hand, if the guy had replied that he was delivering pizza – and if the CEO wanted to be a superstar – he could have offered to pay for the pizza order on the spot. Then he could have stated that he would like to treat the entire company to pizza next week. Of course, the pizza delivery guy would get credit for the order.

In either case, everybody wins.

The next time you find yourself forming a hasty opinion, take a moment to dig a little deeper. You might find an opportunity to be a hero.

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

Client Retention Strategies

Keeping Business Relationships Strong Beyond Key Contacts

This month Ryan shares proven strategies to STOP losing clients—even when your main contact leaves the company. Utilizing some of the following steps can expand your contact base:

- One up- one down -Know who is above your contact and below your contact.
- Back up- get to know sales people – they are a great resource.
- Note if contact cc's your emails

Check out his video below and never be left in a bind!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MM8JhJTIme0Relevant

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.face-book.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*.

Kevin Slimp

Newspaper Growth Impossible?

Don't even get me started

Kevin Slimp - kevin@kevinslimp.com

I love seeing newspapers thrive.

The more people tell me things aren't possible, the more I enjoy it. I guess it comes from years of being told things were impossible. Take the PDF printing method. In the early '90s, when I started tinkering with the idea of creating a system to allow people to transmit files for printing over this new thing called the Internet, people called me crazy. Even the folks at Adobe – except Gary Cosimini, my "secret ally" on the inside – said it wasn't possible and to give up on the idea. Utilizing a new technology that Adobe had pretty much given up on – and making adjustments to get it to do what I wanted it to do – by 1995, the entire printing world was shifting to printing via PDFs.

Ten years later, Bruce Chizen, CEO of Adobe, wrote to thank me for "possibly saving our company."

Over the years, many of the biggest names in the business world called for my assistance after reading about my work with PDFs. I received job offers from all over the world, but I always liked working independently. My favorite shirt ever was worn was by a young man at a convention in Iowa many years ago. It said, "I met PDF'n Kevin Slimp!" The rest is history.

These days, a good bit of my time is spent visiting one-on-one with publishers, advising them on ideas to grow their newspapers. As much as I sometimes get tired of looking at a screen, I'm thankful that I don't have to jump on a plane to do this nearly as often as I used to.

Just this week, I received an email from a publisher to tell me his newspaper – which we redesigned just over a year ago – won the "general excellence" award from his state press association. I get this kind of message from publishers regularly these days – and since there are no awards for my work, I love seeing clients benefit from our work together. At a convention in the western U.S. earlier this year, a publisher – while accepting the top award from his association – gave me a "shout out" from the stage. I laughed but felt like I was winning the award myself.

What are the things I discuss with publishers when we meet? What happens when we redesign a newspaper? Why do so many of these newspapers win the top awards from their associations after we work together?

Trust me, I'm no psychic. I can't predict the future. It's nothing I do. I don't have the final say when I work with a newspaper. The customer always does. So, they rightly deserve the awards they receive. I just talk with them about what they're doing and suggest things I see work in other places that might benefit them.

The list of suggestions is never the same, but might include things like:

Focus groups consistently tell us readers won't read longer stories, so including 2,500-word stories might seem like a good idea, but most readers won't take the time to read more than two or three paragraphs.

Readers love sidebars, so instead of placing news briefs throughout the paper, consider putting a sidebar on the left edge of the front page with short news briefs. Most readers will actually read these.

You'll probably want to get rid of the weather report. Focus groups consistently tell us readers don't understand why newspapers would carry weather predictions.

Don't be afraid to change the look and content of your newspaper. Almost everything goes out of style – cars, clothes, colors, and even newspaper designs. Change that front page flag now and then. Remove content that readers don't read. Add new content that might just attract a few younger readers.

Get rid of anything color in your newspaper other than photos and ads. I learned this from design guru Ed Henninger, and he was right. Ed used to say to me, "Good design never goes out of style, but ugly sticks around forever."

I have a few newspaper conventions to visit over the summer but will spend the majority of my time redesigning five newspapers (from Colorado, Minnesota, and New York) and designing six books (Yes, I even design books now and then. They're much easier to design than newspapers and take about one-tenth the time).

So before you spend all your time getting carried away about AI (artificial intelligence) and how it will transform your world (yes, that's sarcasm, in case you missed it), take a few minutes and look over your newspaper. What noticeable potential changes that could create significant growth are staring you right in the face?

Okay, that's 800 words. My work is finished.

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.