OCTOBER 2025

PAPERCLIPS

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the official newsletter of Midwest Free Community Papers

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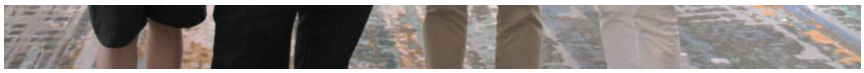
in this issue >>>

CONGRATULATIONS FROM ALL OF US AT MFCP!

GREG BIRKETT- ACP VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD
SHANE GOODMAN- ACP DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

President’s Corner

Left to right: Sherri Birkett, Greg Birkett, Shane Goodman, Jolene Goodman



It's always a proud moment when members of our MFCP family are recognized on the national stage. This year at the ACP National Conference in Mobile, AL, two of our own were honored with some of the highest distinctions in our industry. These awards don't just celebrate individual accomplishments—they shine a light on the spirit of service, leadership, and dedication that makes community publishing so special.

Volunteer of the Year – Greg Birkett, Dubuque, IA
Greg's journey in publishing began at just 10 years old, helping out at the paper across the street from his home. From those humble beginnings, he worked his way up through nearly every role imaginable—from circulation manager at 22, to general manager, vice president, publisher, and now owner of the Dubuque Advertiser and DA Printing.
Greg has been a tireless contributor not only to his own community but also to our industry. He's given decades of service on national, regional, and state boards, including serving as President of AFCP, MFCP, and numerous committees. Even beyond publishing, Greg has poured his time and energy into local charities, boards, and community projects. His work ethic, generosity, and dedication have left a lasting mark wherever he serves. It was only fitting that he was named ACP's 2025 Volunteer of the Year. Congratulations, Greg!

Distinguished Service Award – Shane Goodman, Des Moines, IA
Shane has built an impressive career that spans high school newspapers, weekly publications, lifestyle magazines, websites, and events. But perhaps even more inspiring than his professional success is the way he has shared his knowledge and leadership with others.
For nearly two decades, Shane has served on industry boards—including AFCP, IFPA, and ACP—taking on key roles such as President, Trade Show Chair, and Conference Chair. His leadership was especially critical during the merger that created today's ACP, where his willingness to ask hard questions and offer steady guidance helped ensure a strong future for our industry. In addition to board service, Shane has been a frequent presenter and mentor, always eager to help fellow publishers grow and succeed. This year, ACP honored him with the 2025 Distinguished Service Award—a well-deserved recognition of his lasting contributions.

We are so proud to count Greg and Shane among our members. Their achievements remind us of the strength, generosity, and leadership that exist within our association. Please join me in congratulating them both for these incredible honors. Their work continues to inspire all of us to give back, to innovate, and to keep our industry thriving for generations to come.

From the Office

Lee Borkowski
Executive Director

MEETING OF THE MINDS
October Member MeetUps!

Two great sessions on deck…

Last month's *Member MeetUp!* on real estate was a fantastic success. A big thank you to **David Tomasini** for leading the discussion and providing each participant with a personalized, in-depth market analysis. The insights he shared gave everyone on the call a clearer picture of what's happening in their real estate market and how it impacts their business. It was one of those sessions where you walked away with practical information you could use immediately.

This month, our *Member MeetUp!* will focus on a topic that affects all of us: **working with advertising agencies**. From identifying which agency actually controls the buy, to breaking through gatekeepers, to understanding budgets (and ensuring you get your fair share!), there are plenty of challenges—and opportunities—when it comes to agency business. The call will be held via Zoom on **Thursday, October 23rd at 3 PM Central**.

We're fortunate to have **Ryan Dohrn of Brain Swell Media** joining the call. Ryan brings unmatched expertise in sales and strategy, and he'll share his insights and help guide the conversation. This is a great opportunity to get answers to your questions, hear practical strategies, and learn from both Ryan and your peers.

I encourage you to join us for the October *Member MeetUp!* and bring your sales questions, challenges, and success stories. **Pre-registration is required** since Ryan will be hosting the call on his Zoom line. Click here to pre-register, and we'll send the Zoom link to all registrants a day or two before the call.

But that's not all! We also have a **Digital Ad Sales Users Group** meeting on **Wednesday, October 16th at 1:30 PM via Zoom**. Topics will include:

- How to explain the digital dashboard to your clients and provide them with industry metrics they can measure against
- Utilizing retargeting pixels to boost program results
- Getting in front of Google and Facebook authorizations prior to launching your program

There will be handouts and plenty of discussion. This session is a must-attend for anyone involved in digital ad sales—whether new or experienced.

Whether it's the Member MeetUp! or the Digital Users Group, **we want your whole team to benefit.** If you can't make it, make sure someone from your staff logs in and takes notes—these sessions are designed to help every member of your team grow and succeed.

MVP at Work

LESSONS LEARNED

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

When you have a moment, I hope you think of just how far you've come.

Ever sit back and look at your publication when it's out or a specialty product your company put together and just think about how many advances you've made, how many skills you've gained, or how many goals you've crushed? How many lessons learned?

It's difficult for myself and I'm sure anyone to look back and recognize all your accomplishments and once in a while give yourself a pat on the back for all those personal or companywide obstacles you've hurdled. There are so many things I can think of now that I use every day at my job that I wish I would have known when I started this career back in November 2017. I thought it might be helpful to list out some of my greatest lessons learned along the way. Maybe you have similar or seeing this will jolt your memory.

My number one - I think the best and most effective lesson I've learned in the newspaper layout world is styles. When I started newspaper layout, I honestly tried to avoid styles. They were intimidating, I wasn't sure when to use them and for what. And what if they didn't work right? I didn't feel quite comfortable trying to "fix" them or make them work better for me. Russell Viers is a big advocate of using styles and has taught many sessions where he explains how to best use them to your benefit; they've definitely become a huge benefit in my day-to-day work. I've learned how to be comfortable with my styles and how to manipulate them the way that works best for me.

Another thing I've learned on that same subject is to take the time to work on your styles and your templates. It might seem like you never have time as you're always working against deadlines but trust me, take the few minutes, the half hour, whatever, to make those small adjustments because they really do make a huge difference and usually makes for quicker, easier work in the long run.

Number two - don't procrastinate on projects that make you nervous. You know those projects that you've been asked to do and you've already been dreading it for a month's time? Ya, not worth it! I dreaded being asked to work on a big project or a special publication. What I've learned? Procrastination never helps, ever. Now when I'm asked to complete a task out of my comfort zone, I try to make the time to "research" so to say, look at past ideas, search for new trends, see if there is any inspiring art work out there that can get my gears going.

If I get an early start to a project I will, more than likely, have time to sit back and think on it and decide if I want to make changes or go a different route, much easier and usually end up with a better end product in the end! If you procrastinate and rush, you only have time to submit your one, quick, rushed idea and you have no time to think on it or make improvements. Maybe this project could be so much better?

My number three lesson learned - work smarter, not harder. In this case I'm referring to artwork, fonts, special sections and the like. The more time I've been doing design and layout the more I've learned how to reuse some ideas for other projects, or taking one idea for a special section in a publication and reusing that artwork and concept but making some tweaks and small changes to use in a similar project in another publication. I'm also a fan of downloading some of the free artwork on Adobe Stock and I will pull elements out of one ai file to use in multiple projects. I might pull a pattern design out of the background to use on a sports poster and then use the rest of the pieces in a customer's ad. If I remember an idea or specific artwork I liked I will go back to it and take pieces or manipulate it by changing the colors, shapes or elements to use in a new design or layout.

Those are three of my biggest lessons learned over the years and there are so many more that I can list out. Maybe this will help you to recognize all your lessons learned and see how far you've come!

Members Helping Members

EXCEL TRAINING RESOURCE

From time to time, members reach out with requests for training or resources that could make their work a little easier. Recently, one member asked if MFCP would consider offering Excel training. He wanted to sharpen his skills and discover new ways to use the program in his daily work.

When I took this idea to our Engagement Committee, we agreed that while Excel training is certainly valuable, it would be difficult to put together a program that fits everyone's needs. With 100 members at all different levels of ability—and each using Excel in different ways—one-size-fits-all training would be tough to deliver.

Instead, we'd like to point you toward a fantastic free training series we discovered on YouTube. This instructor offers a **10-module course** that's both practical and easy to follow. Here's what we like about it:

- **Downloadable workbooks** for each module, so you can follow along step by step.
- **Homework assignments** to help you apply what you've just learned.
- **PDF summaries** for each lesson—when you're done, you'll have a complete Excel training manual.
- **Playback speed controls** so you can breeze through the basics you already know and spend more time on the skills you want to strengthen.

I've sampled several of the modules myself, and even on topics I thought I already had down, I picked up at least one new tip or shortcut.

If you're looking to brush up your skills—or dive deeper into Excel—this is an excellent place to start. You can find the full training series here:

EXCEL TRAINING

We hope you find this resource helpful—and as always, keep sharing your ideas with us. Members helping members is what makes MFCP strong!

Members Helping Members

Good News from the USPS – No Price Increase in January 2026

We're starting the fall with some positive news for our industry: the U.S. Postal Service has announced there will be **no price increase for Market Dominant products in January 2026.** That means First-Class Mail, Marketing Mail, and Periodicals will hold steady until at least mid-year.

This is a welcome break after years of twice-a-year rate hikes that made planning and budgeting a challenge. Postmaster General David Steiner explained that the USPS is striving to balance revenue needs with affordability, and for now has chosen to forgo a January adjustment.

A big thank you goes to our associate member, the **Saturation Mailers Coalition (SMC),** for their tireless work in representing mailers' concerns in Washington. Their consistent advocacy, along with the efforts of other postal partners, has helped bring attention to the burden of frequent and unpredictable rate increases.

As SMC Executive Director Donna Hanbery put it:

"SMC – along with numerous other USPS associations, mailers and stakeholders – have been urging the USPS, the PRC and Congress to take steps to eliminate the punishing two-times-a-year pattern of Postal Price increases. It is encouraging to see that the new PMG may be listening."

This is good news to factor in as we all begin working on our 2026 budgets and planning for the year ahead.

And once again, a big thank-you to our friends at SMC for keeping these issues front and center. Their work makes a real difference for all of us.

Words of Wisdom

Advice from our members…

Last month, we asked members to share the best piece of advice they've ever received in their careers. The idea came from a lively discussion our MVP group had around that very question, and we thought it would be fun—and helpful—for all of us to join the conversation.

We received a couple of great responses, and here's where it gets interesting: each month, we'll be featuring two new pieces of advice in this space. Even better, the folks whose advice is featured will then nominate someone else to share *their* words of wisdom next month. That way, we'll keep the chain going—and over time we'll gather an amazing collection of insights, tips, and lessons learned from across our membership.

This month, we're kicking things off with two gems worth remembering:

From Julia Thompson: *Under-promise and over-deliver.* Julia explains how this simple approach has been the cornerstone of her advertising career, building client trust and credibility with every interaction.

One of the best pieces of advice I received early in my advertising career was to under-promise and over-deliver. This approach has guided me ever since. For example, if I tell a client they will have a proof by Wednesday but deliver it on Tuesday, it builds confidence and shows that I am reliable and proactive. On the other hand, if I promise Wednesday but deliver on Thursday, the client sees me as late and less dependable. Clients value consistency and follow-through. Many people make promises they cannot keep, which leads to disappointment. By managing expectations carefully and exceeding them when possible, you strengthen trust and credibility with every interaction.

From Sue Pilla: *Trying is the only option because to not try is a sure loss.* Sue shared how her son's experience applying for scholarships proved this out—and how sometimes the act of trying not only creates unexpected wins but also opens doors you didn't even know were there.

During the time one of my sons was applying for scholarships, we came across one offered by Herb Kohl. The application was complex and in-depth, and I realized it would take longer than most applications to complete. I asked my husband, who was a teacher, whether we should encourage our son to apply since the odds were small that he would be the one student sent on from our school to the area CESA- and then, actually be chosen for the scholarship. Seemed like pretty big odds and a lot of time. He said, " Trying is the only option because to not try is a sure loss." So, section by section, my son completed the application. Win #1- As he completed each section, he realized that because it was complex and covered so many areas of interest, the individual sections could be used for other scholarships as well, saving lots of time completing other applications. And, Win#2, he was chosen for the scholarship! Big lesson learned! If you don't try- you can't succeed.

We love the wisdom Sue and Julia have shared, and next month we'll hear from the people they've nominated to keep the advice flowing.

Stay tuned—it's going to be fun to see the lessons that have shaped our members' careers, one story at a time.

"Simple lessons. Big impact. From our members, for our members."

Ad-Libs

The Persuasive Power of Proof

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

Even though the majority of us in the advertising business have never practiced law, we should instinctively know the importance of evidence.

Imagine a courtroom scene in which the prosecuting attorney points to the defendant and says, "Your honor, this person is guilty." The judge asks, "What evidence do you have?" The prosecuting attorney shrugs and says, "There's no need for evidence. They just are. They're as guilty as anybody I've ever seen."

Ridiculous, isn't it? But isn't that what some advertisers ask of their readers – to accept their claims without any supporting evidence? Just because an advertiser says a product is good doesn't mean that consumers will automatically accept that as truth.

Advertisers – like attorneys – have to prove what they say. Many years ago I developed this simple **PROOF** acronym to help advertising folks remember five types of evidence. Although this memory tool doesn't include every type of evidence, it's designed to cover enough types to give us a good start when we're working with advertisers.

Pictures: There's a lot of truth to the old saying, "Seeing is believing." Photographs and illustrations can add important elements to ads. Let's say the XYZ Company runs an ad describing their sleek new widget, but there's no picture. Is that likely to generate any interest at all? No.

Don't just tell readers about the sleekness. Show them.

Reinforce (benefits): We're all aware of the importance of benefits. People don't buy features, they buy benefits.

Unfortunately, some things that advertisers think are benefits aren't really benefits. For example, "You'll find the handle on our widget to be convenient" is not a legitimate feature-benefit statement. The problem is with the word "convenient," a fine word, but one which doesn't identify a compelling consumer benefit.

Let's see if we can reinforce that weak benefit statement with something specific: "Our new widget has a reversible handle, which makes it easy to operate right or left-handed."

Our people: (In this case, “our” refers to the people who work for that specific advertiser.)

Some of the most effective ads feature members of an advertiser’s team. Consider the technician whose passion is keeping their customers’ office equipment running. Or the construction company CEO who regularly visits work sites to check on quality. Or the architect who has won numerous awards for their firm’s expertise.

Other people: This is usually a testimonial from a happy customer. This has more credibility with readers than a generic quote from an unknown source.

Facts: A fact is a bit of indisputable information that indicates something specific about a product or service.

“One-acre lot” is a fact, while “large lot” is not. “Buy one, get one free” is a fact and “big sale” is not. The length of a toaster warranty is a fact. Battery vs. electric power is a fact. The selection of colors in a new car interior is a fact.

The point is to provide the jury of consumers with the specific information they need to make the right verdict.

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

Why Sales Teams Miss Goals and How to Fix It

This month Ryan delves into the problem of why sales teams miss goals. His 4-step process identifies where the problem is so it can be corrected.

Click the link below to find out how Product, Price, People, and Process are a recipe for success in sales goals.

Ad Sales Training Podcast Episode 164 | 360 Ad Sales Training, Complete Integrated Ad Sales Training.

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*.

Kevin Slimp

Where Did the Time Go?

Tips on getting through your day, getting your work done, and not stressing

Kevin Slimp - kevin@kevinslimp.com

While I sit in front of my computer at 1:00 a.m., I ask myself, “Who am I to give anyone advice about time management?”

I suppose you should know a few things before you judge me too quickly. First, I’m most productive after 9:00 p.m., so I schedule my day knowing that. Secondly, I included a lot of tasks in my daily planner (yes, the computer version) for today, and this is the last thing on the list.

From time to time, I speak on the subject of time management. Talking to sales staff often involves managing your time to increase ad sales. When leading a class for CEOs, managers, or publishers, I tend to speak about how to get things done without working ourselves to death.

When it comes right down to it, we all have the same amount of time each day. Obviously, things happen to interfere with our plans. Phone calls, never-ending emails and text messages, and unexpected emergencies can throw a wrench in the best-made plans.

When leading a webinar or speaking at a conference about time management, I generally have a to-do list of things to remember when planning. A list like that might include putting long-term events on your calendar first, thinking weeks and months ahead, to be sure you get the most important tasks done. After that, I’d probably suggest laying out your plans for the next week, again keeping an eye on the overall picture, rather than the hour-to-hour activities. Finally, I recommend making daily plans last and making sure the most critical chores are already on the calendar.

In this column, however, I think I’ll just “shoot from the hip” and share some thoughts on how I get through my day and get done what needs to get done, without living in a constant state of stress. Thinking back on my day, it looked like this:

9:30 - 10:00: I bought and sold some stock, a daily routine for me each morning when the stock market opens.

10:00 - 10:45: Answered emails, phone calls, and texts that came in overnight. I get these out of the way, then don’t keep a constant eye on my phone and email the rest of the morning. Studies show that, on average, Americans lose 2.5 hours during the average workday due to these types of interruptions.

10:30 - 12:30: Worked on a design project that was on my calendar. I spent about an hour on the design project (a 170-page book), contacted the writer about changes, and had it finished by lunch. I finished a little earlier than expected.

1:15 - 2:30: Created two email blitz campaigns and studied the results of our latest marketing efforts. I also contacted a potential customer about a new product. I've found that daily time spent marketing my own products pays off considerably.

2:30 - 4:00: I've learned that I'm most productive at night. That's why I spend the morning on tasks that don't require as much focus. I generally spend my early afternoons dealing with marketing and sales. Most people don't focus as well after lunch, so I left my office and went to another room to "mark up" an Oregon newspaper whose staff I'll be meeting with later this week. I initially scheduled the work for later this week, but I was feeling sluggish and decided my time would be better spent going through the newspaper.

4:00 - 5:30: Finished work on a book cover and manuscript and sent the files to the printer. Another project finished ahead of time.

8:00 - 12:00: Redesigned two pages of a newspaper from New York. I'm currently redesigning four newspapers, and I know I can't get behind if they will be finished on schedule. I set aside time each day to redesign pages.

1:00 – 1:30: The last thing on my to-do list today was to write this column.

People often ask how I get so much done and why I never seem stressed. The truth is that I've always been good at doing things very quickly. I'm good at making quick decisions.

I don't attend or host meetings, even though I own three companies. I know that meetings are necessary, but I've learned – in my world – I can get my work done, oversee my businesses, and leave plenty of time for disk golf, volunteer efforts, and dinner with friends, if I don't invest too much time in group meetings. If not having meetings would cause more stress in your world, don't follow my example. I don't expect that what works for me would work for everyone. It's just how I get through my day.

The clock says 1:22 – once again, I'm ahead of schedule – and Microsoft Word tells me I'm at 792 words. It seems my work is finished, at least for today.

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.