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# President's Corner



## Are You Ready for Some Changes?

*By Lisa Miller*

Recently, I was reading the ACP president's column in Publish. It was change within her publications and what it did for them in 2025. Frericks wrote, "The change was good for us, and we are happy we were brave enough to do it."

This holds true for times at MFCP. We have several changes happening right now. Our new executive director, Cory Regnier, has fully taken over the organization and is doing amazing.

You will notice that sign-up for conference is updated and more user-friendly than in the past. In the sign-up, you will see you can now pay directly with a click of your mouse for any add-ons at conference.

Another change you will see coming is emailed statements. We have the ability to send invoices directly out of our QuickBooks, making payment much easier for everyone involved. Make sure to note our new mailing address, which is: **29846 State Hwy 87, Akeley, MN 56433**.

You also may have noticed updated emails that are coming to your inbox. They have been set to be a quick read with limited graphics. Also, be on the lookout for an updated Paperclips coming soon!

We have done some changes for conference including adding a sales and graphics roundtable. Make sure to check out the registration link for more information.

One of the biggest changes for MFCP is the potential bylaw change that will be voted on at conference. Be sure to check out Cory's column for more information and make sure you are informed before voting.

We would love your feedback on the changes that have happened or are in the works. Please let us know your thoughts. MFCP is the member publications' company, and I am positive we are brave enough to endure changes! We are here to work for you!

**Register for conference here:** <https://www.mfcp.org/news-events>

**Read Cory's column here:** <https://www.mfcp.org/from-the-office>

# From the Office



## What's in a Name?

*By Cory Regnier*

Founded in 1955 and now known as the Midwest Free Community Papers Association (MFCP), our association exists to support members in every aspect of their publishing business. Our mission remains the same: help our members make money, grow their businesses, and connect with others in the industry. What has changed, however, is the industry itself.

As recently as a decade ago, we were widely known as “the shopper group,” and to some, that title still sticks. While we continue to represent many shopper-type publications, more than half of our current membership now consists of newspapers, magazines, niche publications, and other community-based media. That diversity strengthens us. It allows us to learn from one another and grow together.

The platforms we use have evolved as well. With the rise of digital media, advertisers are spreading their budgets across more channels than ever before. Our association is committed to helping you compete in this shifting landscape. That's why we offer the easy-to-use iPromote platform, so you can reclaim your share of the market. Many members are also building websites, publishing newsletters, partnering with digital providers, and exploring AI tools to expand their reach.

Another significant shift is the decline in the number of publications overall. Some have closed due to financial hardship or retirement; others have consolidated. Fewer new publications are launching. This trend affects all of us. While we value our strong membership, our numbers are not what they once were. To address this reality and position our association for the future, the board has proposed an important change.

This proposal was introduced at last year's conference and will be voted on at this year's annual meeting in Cedar Falls. The proposed bylaw changes would allow us to expand membership to include paid and digital-only publications. By opening our doors more widely, we can welcome publishers who may not yet have access to a network as strong and supportive as ours. This expansion would create new learning opportunities, strengthen our advertising network, and grow our membership base.

Alongside these bylaw updates, we are considering a name change from Midwest Free Community Papers to Midwest Community Publications to better reflect who we are today and who we aim to serve tomorrow.

More information, including the full bylaw language, will be shared with members as we approach the conference.

So, what's in a name? For our association, it represents the future — a renewed vision, a broader community, and a strong foundation for the next generation of publishers.

# MVP at Work



## Reflecting and Setting Goals

*By Julia Merten, Star Publications*

Recently, during the week of Christmas, I underwent ankle surgery. Initially, it was “all fun and games,” being pampered at each family Christmas and spending countless hours binge watching tv series I’ve always wanted to watch. However, since getting through the holidays, things have begun to slow down, and now my extra couch time has become mundane. This extra time has allowed me the perfect opportunity to reflect, prepare and set achievable goals for the new year. Here are some of my observations.

**Communication:** Being a sales representative, I firmly believe that the best form of communication with my customers is a face-to-face interaction. However, since I am unable to meet in person as I recover from surgery, having a complete and accurate list of phone numbers and emails in my CRM for each customer has been imperative. Some customers prefer a more formal email or phone call, while others respond best to a quick text message with a photo of their most recent ad. I encourage you to periodically go through your CRM, update contact information and enter important notes.

**Relationships:** Building solid relationships with your customers or news sources is important. Everyone will have a personal conflict when it comes to their work, whether it be an illness, a family emergency or a vacation. I have been overwhelmed by the number of customers who have been willing to work around a change in an ad deadline or have sent a message wishing me luck with my recovery.

**Motivation:** It can be hard to stay motivated when working from a remote location or a flexible schedule. Find a routine that works for you. Personally, I like to schedule time blocks for tasks I would like to accomplish. Take a periodic break to get up from your desk (or couch in my current state), get fresh air and come back with a clear mind. A call from a colleague can also brighten your day and give you the motivation you need to keep going.

**Plan Ahead:** During times of slower workflow, I encourage you to plan ahead and set SMART Goals. This spring, I am working on several special sections for farm trade shows. I have made lists, developed goals for each section and have begun my sales pursuit of these businesses. A SMART goal should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.

As you reflect on your successes and set goals for 2026, I hope you keep Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP) and the MCN/MDN ad network top of mind. All employees have something to learn and gain from participating in this organization. I look forward to seeing you at the Spring Conference on April 16-17 in Cedar Falls, Iowa!

# Ad-Libs



## What's fogging your view?

*By John Foust, Greensboro, NC*

On our honeymoon, my wife and I went to Ogunquit, Maine, which we used as a home base to explore towns along Maine's southern coast. Years before we met, we had each been to that area, but this was our first trip to Maine together. One of the places we visited was Cape Neddick, where one of the most recognized lighthouses in North America is located.

The Nubble Light is situated on a rock island about 100 yards off the tip of the cape (depending on the tides), in view of York Beach. When we arrived, the light was completely fogged in. "The lighthouse is right there," I said. "Are you sure? I don't see a thing," she said.

"Yep," I encouraged her, "it's right there."

When it was time for lunch, we went to Fox's Restaurant at the edge of the parking lot. We settled in at our table at a window facing the direction of the lighthouse. Still fogged in.

As we dined on lobster rolls, fries and Pepsis – the best lunch we've ever had – she glanced out the window and said, "There it is! It's right there!" Sure enough, the fog had lifted in an instant, and the glorious Nubble was "right there" at the end of the parking lot.

That's one of our favorite memories and we still talk about it as a special honeymoon gift. Sometimes, if we're looking for something around the house or searching for a street sign, one of us will say, "It's right there!"

The question to consider today is: What's blocking the view? For us it was ocean fog. For you it may be something else.

Let's think about the advertising industry. What are the things that prevent us from seeing clearly? Is it the routine processes that are in place, because "we've always done it that way"? Is it the get-it-done-now crush of deadlines? Is it the insistence of a client who is not open to new ideas?

Whatever the case, this is something we have to deal with if we want to be more effective. First of all, it helps to know what's behind the fog. When my wife and I visited the Nubble Light, I knew from experience that there was a lighthouse inside all that fog. Then she was a first-hand witness when the fog lifted. We left with the certainty that there was, indeed, a lighthouse right there.

We need to step away from the fog every now and then, and do some thinking about what's causing the rut of routines, the deadlines that negatively impact creativity, or the client who resists new ideas.

Once we identify a specific problem area, we can focus on possible answers. It's important to think in specifics, not vague impressions. For example, "The current way of processing orders is delaying some ad placements," is better than "Our processing system is bad."

That's a step in the right direction – one way to cut through the fog and see the light.

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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:

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# Ryan Dohrn



## Get the Latest Sales Tips at the Tips of Your Fingers

Ryan just uploaded 5 brand new sales tips to the Sales Coach app, and they are ready for you right now. You will find them inside the Daily Motivation tab, exclusively for Pro Members. If you have not upgraded yet, now is the perfect time, so you can unlock every new video the moment it drops.

New topics just added: How to price more effectively, how to be more proactive today, should you be experimenting more in sales, the secret sauce from my perspective on sales, and a deeper breakdown of the Rule of Three.

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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](#).



**80 Prospecting Calls Per Day? Should You Really Make 80 Calls a Day? You Won't Believe This Answer**

# Kevin Slimp



## Taking Your Office With You

*Relocating for the winter meant making plans for a mobile office*

*By Kevin Slimp*

This column is for my friends who enjoy reading about technology. There was a time, before some of you were born, when I wrote almost exclusively about technology. Many of the big software companies would send me everything they had to offer. That was in a time when software came on disks, then CDs. I anticipated the UPS delivery person's arrival every day, hoping they would have goodies for me.

About six months ago, I made a significant life decision. I decided to move to the beach during the winter months. That decision is paying off as I write this, as friends throughout North America are writing or calling to tell me how cold it is. As a sidenote, Ken Waddell, publisher in Manitoba, wins the coldest prize at -40 Fahrenheit.

During 2025, I spent so much time traveling to work with newspapers that I decided it was time to take a few months off from travel and stay in one place. The beach seemed as good a place as any. I planned no consulting visits. No convention speeches. No newspaper redesigns. I would catch up on several design projects on my calendar – which included eight books – and consult with newspaper clients online.

An advantage of moving to the beach is that friends come to see you ... a lot. I've enjoyed hosting friends from all over the U.S. this winter, many longtime newspaper friends. While on the phone with a publisher friend in Colorado yesterday, I was asked what he would need to bring so he could design his newspaper while at my winter home. I gave him a list.

That made me think about everything I had prepared before my winter move. I had several projects to complete, I would be working with quite a few newspaper clients, and I would need access to much of what is available in my Knoxville office.

My home office workspace consists of four computers, connected to three monitors. I rarely use two of these computers, but I've found it helpful to have them around when I'm searching for an old file or need a password for a vital website stored in a web browser's cache on one of them.

I know everyone doesn't need to back up as much as I do, but, like you, I'm working with important files. Often, I have irreplaceable client files stored. Imagine getting the dreaded "corrupt file" message while working on one of these files. The following is my backup setup:

All of my computers are connected to at least two external drives used by Apple Time Machine to back up everything. My main computer backs up hourly. The others back up daily.

I have an account with Backblaze ([backblaze.com](http://backblaze.com)) that performs an offline backup of my computers every hour.

I have an additional physical 6TB external SSD drive that I use to regularly copy all my computers to. This is the drive I brought to the beach so I could access anything on my office computers.

I have a large Dropbox account that stores my essential files. This also allows clients to access their files.

When my publisher friend from Colorado asked what he should bring during his visit (so he could lay out his newspaper), I told him to:

Set up a Google Drive (he already had), so he could access his files as necessary from his office.

Copy his entire computer to an external SSD drive, which he could work off (using my computer) to lay out his paper here.

Upload the last issue of his newspaper and the newspaper template to a Dropbox, just in case.

While working on a project earlier this week, I realized I needed an InDesign file from 2016. That was five computers ago. I hadn't copied files from that computer to the portable drive I brought to the beach, and I don't have access to it through Google Drive. 2016 was also before I began using BackBlaze. I crossed my fingers and checked my fourth option, Dropbox. Imagine the relief when I found the file.

These precautions may sound like overkill, but I've learned you really can't back up too much. Our files are too important to lose, and I sleep soundly knowing I always have access to the files I need.

That's 800 words. I believe my work, at least for the moment, 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](http://newspaperacademy.com).*

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

