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President's Corner



Why Should You Attend Conferences?

I just got back from the ACP conference in Nashville. Y'all missed out if you didn't attend. My Facebook page would tell a story of nights out on the town, enjoying the Grand Ole Opry, laughing with friends and listening to live music at every stop on Broadway. Yes, we did all of those things but what it didn't show was the days we spent in a conference room learning about CRM's, outsourcing, managing from a distance and much more. These sessions had amazing discussions with publishers offering solutions, tips and new ways of handling any issues you may be face in this ever-changing business.

You don't have to go all the way to Nashville to network and gain more insight about our industry. Life is better at the lake, so join us for the Publisher's Summit on July 13th and 14th at the Arrowwood Resort in Okoboji, Iowa. You will get fresh ideas and meet people that will open up your eyes to new ways of looking at opportunities. Who said you can't mix business and pleasure? Not me!

Julia Thompson

From the office



Don't Throw Your Free Money Away!

Hello,

Each year when you renew your membership in MFCP you receive coupons for two free MCN classified ads. The free ad offer is for a 30-word MCN ad which has a circulation of 1.9 million homes and a suggested retail price of \$249.

Normally a member publication would sell the ad for the full \$249, keep \$75 for themselves and forward the rest to MFCP. But, with coupons you keep it all!

Suggestions for use are to:

- #1) Use the coupon to reward one of your top customers.
- #2) Use the coupon to let a new business test the MCN ad program at a reduced (or no) cost.
- #3) Use the coupon to make a broader audience aware of an upcoming community event.

Whatever you choose to do – don't let this opportunity pass you by.

[Click here for a listing of publications that still have coupons to use](#)

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A FREE LUNCH?

Maybe your sales team would like to know a bit more about the ad network program...how to sell it, how to place the ad, etc. We're more than happy to help with that as well! **In fact, we have an offer right now where we will host a Zoom training for your team and once it's completed, we'll send you a \$50 check so that you can treat them to a pizza lunch – or coffee and donuts – or whatever else fits your market.**

The training takes less than 30 minutes. Members that have already taken the training say it works well. In fact, one person said, "I felt that the ad programs were too overwhelming and hard to understand. After the training it all made sense!"

Proof that the training works: An Iowa member took the training and then used one of their free coupons to place an ad for a trucking firm looking to hire drivers. The ad got great response and, as a result, the client extended their buy for another three weeks!

I'd love to help you and your team understand and sell the MFCP ad networks. You will find that they are a great way to expand your reach and help your clients achieve their goals. More importantly they are a great way for you to make more money. And, helping you make more money is our goal!

Lee

Member News

Hall Family Purchases NW Iowa Shopper

On Friday, April 1, Spencer native Gene Hall and his son Chris purchased the Spencer Daily Reporter and Northwest Iowa Shopper from Rust Communications of Cape Girardeau, Mo. The Halls also purchased the Dickinson County News and Blue Water Shopper in Spirit Lake, and the Le Mars Sentinel and Sentinel Shopper's Guide.

This purchase also included the Storm Lake Pilot-Tribune and Ad Guide, and the Cherokee Chronicle Times and Area Advertiser. The Storm Lake and Cherokee properties were immediately sold to John and Art Cullen of Storm Lake, owner-operators of the Storm Lake Times.

"We are happy to entrust the award-winning newspapers of Northwest Iowa to the Hall family," said Jon K. Rust, president of Rust Communications. "They are an Iowa family that knows Iowa well, and they know Spencer well. We are so appreciative of all our staff at each of the newspapers who have worked hard and with incredible dedication to serve their communities with great affection, high standards and care. I am especially appreciative of Paula Buenger and Monte Jost, who are good and longtime friends. With the Halls' ownership and Brad's leadership in Spencer, the future looks bright."

"Chris and I are tremendously excited for the opportunity to purchase our hometown newspaper. I'm grateful to Jon Rust, Monte Jost and Paula Buenger for their assistance," Gene Hall said.

Gene and his wife, Cathy, are Spencer natives. Gene is a 1968 graduate of Spencer High School and attended the University of South Dakota (and he is happy to tell you that he hit .397 for the Coyotes as a second-baseman). His father, John, founded the Northwest Iowa Shopper after working at the Spencer Reporter. Gene returned from college when his father suffered a heart attack and joined the business — selling ads, stuffing inserts, running routes in the rain. The family ultimately sold the Northwest Iowa Shopper to the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

Gene went on to work as an executive for a regional newspaper company when the opportunity arose to buy the Charles City Press. Gene and his son, Christopher, also purchased newspapers in New Hampton and Algona. Gene always wanted a chance to get involved in Spencer again. "I love Spencer, the Great Lakes and all Northwest Iowa," Hall said, "and we want to give it a great newspaper and shopper."

Chris Hall was born in Spencer and grew up in Charles City. He started working at the Charles City Press for his dad while he was in high school. He earned an MBA at Northwest Missouri State and returned to the press in 2013 in the pressroom. He became publisher in 2015 and then purchased the Charles City Press from Gene in 2016. In 2020, he purchased the New Hampton Tribune.

"I'm tremendously excited for the opportunity to purchase my hometown newspaper. I'm grateful to Jon Rust and Paula Buenger for their assistance," Gene Hall said. "I'm doubly excited that Brad Hicks has agreed to come over from Algona as publisher. I believe in Spencer, I believe in great journalism, and I believe that we will do our level best to give our readers and advertisers the greatest value possible."

"Spencer is a fantastic town and our singular goal is to make it stronger. Brad Hicks is just the person for the job," Hall said. "As they said in the Music Man, 'You gotta know the territory,' and Brad does."

Brad Hicks, publisher of the Algona Reminder and Kossuth County Advance in Algona, assumed duties as publisher of the Spencer publications and chief operating officer for that paper as well as those in LeMars, Spirit Lake and Algona. All other employees at those locations were retained. No other changes are foreseen. Subscription prices are unchanged.

Hicks is a graduate of Iowa State University with an extensive background at Iowa daily and weekly newspapers as a reporter, editor and publisher.

Hicks started as a reporter in Vinton, and worked his way through Mount Pleasant and Faribault, Minn. He landed for a 20-year stint at the Hampton Chronicle, where he served as publisher, and also worked at newspapers in Texas and Red Oak. His wife, Sue, is a journalism graduate of Drake University and did time at some newspaper stops with Brad.

"The Halls are a great Iowa newspaper family," Hicks said. "I've enjoyed working with them the last four years in Algona, and I'm excited to work with them and their newspaper staffs to produce the best newspapers and related products we possibly can."

Hicks said he is eager to help the staff and newspaper grow, and to get involved in the greater Spencer community. He is active in church and community affairs in Algona, and worked in economic development in Wright County.

Hall is eager to get back to Spencer and the Great Lakes for some golfing this summer, and maybe hit on some walleyes in June. He asks that you send your lunger photos to the Reporter. Don't forget to send your club news, letters to the editor, baby pictures and ads, and even photos of weird vegetables too!

Hall and Hicks will host an office open house soon. Watch the Reporter and Northwest Iowa Shoppers for details.

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Algona Publishing Company, Algona

Dickinson County News, Spirit Lake

Le Mars Daily Sentinel, Le Mars

Spencer Daily Reporter, Spencer

Special Rack Prices from Steel City

Rack distribution was a hot topic during the Circulation Summit held in conjunction with the spring conference in Ames this year. Recently the office received this pricing info from our Steel City Corporation – a longtime MFCP associate member

If you're looking for wire racks – check them out!

[Click here for MFCP Wire Rack Special Pricing](#)

Meet Our Newest MVP's!

The MFCP Most Valued Professionals program is designed to honor individuals who are emerging leaders in the free paper industry. Those selected into the program should exemplify good character, leadership and professionalism both at work and in the community.

Nominations for the 2022-2023 MVP class closed March 11th. The committee met and selected three new candidates to join the existing group. We are thrilled to welcome our new members to our program. Please read below to learn a little about each one.



MEGAN PUNT – New Century Press

Megan serves as the head of New Century Press' production department. In her role she works with the press, editorial and design staff members to ensure that all publications are to press on time and of the highest quality. Nominator Lisa Miller wrote that Megan has great graphic ability that shows in all of her publications. She is a team leader and takes the extra time to do the job right and still make deadline.

When she's not working Megan enjoys showing horses at a high level having competed and placed in local and national events.



**NANCY POWELL
– Star Publications/Dairy Star**

Nancy is the production manager for the Dairy Star and the IT person for Star Publications. She is a very talented designer and can always be counted on for creating ads that are eye catching and correct. She has taught herself computer IT. Nominator Joyce Frericks said that Nancy is the calm coworker that others depend on to get the job done and she does it without complaining.



EMILY ADCOCK - AdVenture

Emily is the creative director for multiple publications and websites. She is the lead designer for all of their commercial websites. Nominator Lloyd Uthe said that Emily puts her heart, soul and mind into every project until it is complete and that she is continuously looking for ways to better herself and procedures. She is always offering to help around the office. She is a great listener and is always looking for a solution.

MVP'S At Work



Learning New Tricks...

...and making them work!

By Kari Jurens

Man! Who else is completely rejuvenated after conference? For a one-day conference with so much information and entertainment packed in, we sure had a great time. It was an opportunity to not only catch up with acquaintances from previous conferences, but also to meet new people. Conference is a perfect reminder of how amazing our industry is and what direction we are heading in the future.

The MVP's had the honor of sharing time with the ACP Rising Stars. The interaction is always entertaining, enlightening, and empowering. So many passionate people coming together to push others in the same direction can be summed up in one word...brehtaking!

Sometimes we get in a rut; same thing, different year. If dealing with Covid has taught us anything, it is how to reach new limits outside of that "normal" box. Whether it's selling a new section or remembering to thank those that help us every day, we need to continue to push forward without looking back.

I was delighted to be able to attend classes by both speakers. Even when Ryan Dohrn uses what appears to be the same title, I promise you, you will leave having learned something new. My designer friends learned lots of new fun tricks in Russell Viers' classes and we put all those new things to into action when we returned to work. Who would have thought that we could all learn so much in just one day?

If you are someone who is afraid to go to conference and talk to new people, let me tell you, I was you! I was taken out of my shell when I was nominated to the MVP group and my confidence has grown. Our monthly meetings are a perfect time to share our successes and our concerns.

We, as an industry, must take time to not only teach ourselves, but teach those who may not be fortunate enough to attend these conferences. Our approaches might be different, but in the end, we are all looking for the same outcome ...success.

My favorite saying is "progress, not perfection". Try to remember that we are not perfect, but we continue to strive to make each day and publication better. Push yourself to try something new. Reach for those crazy limits. Take the time to show someone something they may not have known but will help them. And, if the opportunity presents itself, attend next year's conference. You won't be disappointed!

Kevin Slimp



Growing Readership

Keys to increase readership and revenue

*The True Cost
of Buying a Home*

Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

I had a great time in March, as I got out a little more to visit newspapers in multiple states. What I learned inspired, invigorated, and reminded me of much that is going well in our industry and some things that need to be done.

The request I hear most often is from community papers wanting to improve their overall products to draw more advertisers and readers in the “next” normal, a term I keep hearing from experts discussing the post-pandemic future. While headlines are filled with stories about national newspaper groups closing papers, these community papers are investing in future growth.

In addition to my work with newspapers, I do a good bit of speaking and training in the corporate communications world. One of the things I remind communicators of is that growth is easiest by appealing to and offering more products/content to current customers, then reaching out to potential new customers. While I was onsite with a wonderful community newspaper in Michigan in March, we discussed potential new markets for the newspaper. Upon my return home, I was thrilled to learn my new friends in Michigan are making plans to create two new products in addition to their current newspapers. We had discussed the possibility of these while I was with the staff. They took the initiative to go out in the community, do some research, and begin making plans immediately after I left.

Creating new content/products can happen in many ways. One is to schedule focus groups, hold discussions among the staff and community leaders, and find other ways to reach out to the community to learn what content could be included in your newspaper that is currently missing. Another is to discover what types of publications might be popular in your community that are now unavailable. I constantly remind clients to investigate monthly senior publications, providing significant potential revenue.

Want to increase the readership of your current newspaper? Let me suggest three steps that I stress most often with my clients:

- Increase the visual appeal of your publication. This means re-design regularly. Spend a little time and money to get help, if needed. Wondering why new readers aren't attracted to your newspaper? Just look at the front page in the eyes of a “newbie.”
- Make your stories more interesting. Covering a school board meeting? Don't report the minutes of the meeting. That's a snooze fest. Report the background stories. Why were decisions made? What difference will they make to the community, parents, and students? Are there questions about the decisions – or how they were made – that need answers?
- Write headlines that draw the reader to the story. If the headline is “School board meets Wednesday night,” go ahead and leave the story out of the paper. No one, except maybe the school board members, will read it. If the agenda includes a discussion about recent violence at the middle school, write a headline that reflects the importance of the story.

I did a little bit of research (actually, I just sent a few texts and emails) to learn how papers I've worked with over the past four years on redesigns have been doing. What did I learn? They've all experienced increased readership and advertising. Trust me. It's not because of me. It's just an indicator of the work these papers are continually doing to improve their products and draw more readers.

Apparently, newspapers are ramping up to meet the demands of a (hopefully soon-to-be) post-pandemic world. I've been receiving more requests for training than I have in several years,

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



Would You Mind Showing Me Around?

John Foust, Raleigh, NC

One of the most important questions you can ask an advertising client is, “Would you mind showing me around?”

Think about it. When you have a conversation in a client’s office, you get a filtered version of that person’s business. There’s a good chance that many of his or her comments have been rehearsed, because those same questions have been asked by other salespeople. Across-the-desk conversations are fine for gathering general advertising information, but when it comes to idea generation, it’s a good strategy to leave the office and take a tour. You’ll be surprised at the things you’ll see and hear that can spark ad ideas.

During my ad agency days, I remember talking to a residential real estate developer who repeatedly told me that his company’s greatest strength was “attention to details.” When I asked for examples, he talked in vague terms about good products, good design and good craftsmanship. There was nothing specific, nothing that provoked an idea for his advertising. Obviously, he was repeating the same talking points he had given dozens of times. So, I asked if he would mind showing me around the subdivision in which his crews were working. He eagerly agreed – and we made the short trip to a job site. When he was surrounded by specifics, he began to talk in specifics. He explained why his bannisters and kitchen cabinets and finish nails and hardwood floors were better than those in other houses. He showed me how they were marking certain trees for saving. He showed me why their energy efficient features exceeded the going standards for that time.

My head was swimming with ideas – ad concepts I couldn’t have gotten from a conversation in his office. The end result was a campaign which featured a lot of photographs, evidence of the “attention to detail” which meant so much to him. The tour made that claim come to life on the printed page.

“Would you mind showing me around?” That question can be worth its weight in ideas. If your schedule doesn’t allow time for lengthy tours, a simple walk-through can be helpful. Or you can ask to see photographs and product diagrams. Almost anything that gets clients away from their standard talking points can help you gain a better understanding of their businesses and their customers.

This strategy has a couple of important benefits. First – as long as you are completely sincere in your interest – you will provide your clients with the chance to talk about one of their favorite subjects: how their products are designed, made, stored, distributed or sold. This can strengthen your rapport and give you a solid foundation for future conversations. From then on, you’ll share some common knowledge about their business operation.

Second, you’ll find a ton of ad possibilities. Ideas are out there. This gives you a practical way to look for them.

Sometimes the right ad campaign starts with the right question. Just think of it as “attention to detail.”

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John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com

Ryan Dohrn



Ryan Dohrn

Helping Advertisers Prepare for the Buying Bump

10 Ideas to Update Your Media Sales Game

All research points to a buying bump that is set to occur. We see citizens getting back to some level of normalcy, signaling that many buying habits will soon come back into play. Yet, our advertisers are still throwing us the same COVID-based objections. Do they not want to get back to business? Why is it so hard for them to grasp that advertising starts the process to get customers back in the door?

I believe that business owners are suffering from a sort of PTSD over the massive shock to their businesses that the COVID pandemic dealt them over the last 12 months. So, how do we help them? The first step is to understand them.

As a media sales rep myself, I have the chance to speak to advertisers daily. I also have the unique opportunity to coach media sales reps around the globe. Sarah in Singapore, Peter and his team in Australia, John and his colleagues up in Toronto, and of course my teams here in the United States. They all report a distinct change in their advertisers over the last 12 months.

For the last three years, each Friday I have asked a group of my coaching clients to answer this multiple-choice question: What type of advertiser attitudes did you come across last week? Their response options have been 1.) advertisers making ego-driven advertising decisions, 2.) advertisers making logical-based ad buying decisions, and 3.) advertisers making decisions based on emotion and how they feel at the moment.

This past week when I asked the question, 5% of media sales reps reported that they met with ego-driven individuals last week, and this did not change much between 2019, 2020, and 2021. Interestingly enough, and sorry to all of the agency media buyers out there, reps reported that many clients in this 5% were agency buyers.

Now, let's look at the percentage of logical buyers. Down 9% from 2020, logical buyers represented 21% of the buyers that your fellow media sales warriors met with last week. These logical buyers typically want nothing but the facts, just the numbers.

And next, and what's really interesting, is the number of emotional buyers—up 9% last week and reported at 74%! You read that right. Seventy-four percent of the media sales warriors I'm regularly coaching are telling me that the buyers they're meeting with right now are highly emotional. This doesn't mean that they don't use any logic in the process of making decisions, but they're showing us that they're very emotional in the way that they're buying. It's a lot about how they feel, regardless of the facts that are being presented to them.

With the knowledge presented here, we have to change how we sell media. If we keep selling traditional media in traditional ways, we will keep getting traditional results. So here are 10 thoughts on changing your media sales approach to increase your close rate as you sell in a post-pandemic media sales world:

1. Emotional buyers do not respond well to data and stats. You will find your best success in selling with advertiser success stories or case studies. Talk up-front about the three advertisers that you love the most and the results they are seeing.
2. Do NOT ask the standard questions you have been asking for years. Why ask what their budget is and reinforce the fact that they have no money to spend? Instead, talk ethically about your other advertisers that are seeing results. Paint them a picture of potential. A better question to ask would be, "Tell me about a local business you feel does a good job of marketing?" Then, talk about what marketing success could look like.
3. Do not try to win the traditional vs. digital argument. Instead, talk about multi-media. Speak to five or six things that other business owners are doing to win. Traditional and digital. Digital is really kind of the bare minimum, actually. We've got to raise the bar or set the bar with our advertisers and prospects, and that's one of the things I want you to seriously consider. As ad sales pros, we've got to control the narrative. Digital-only advertisers limit themselves and their total ROI.
4. Talk about minimums required for ROI success. There is a reality to marketing. There is a dollar value attached to that reality. Show the reality. It might sound something like this, "If you're going to be competitive, there's a certain minimum number of marketing initiatives that you need to do in any given 30-day period just to be competitive." These minimums should be shown in your three pricing plans/packages that you present on every sales call.
5. Come with ideas ready to roll. Most people have lost patience for just about everything. The last thing they want to do is sit through a sales discovery interrogation session. You are 70% more likely to close business when you recommend what somebody needs to do as opposed to what they want to do. Sure, ask questions, but stop being a custom solution builder. There is no proof that custom advertising solutions sell more than recommending what will work for a tested category of your clients. Custom solutions require a higher level of knowledge. They take longer to close. And, they require the most customer support from your team.
6. In a time of crisis, most people want to be led. So lead. You are a Media Sales Advisor. Recommend media options based on what has worked for your other advertisers. I'll reiterate: it's not about budget. It's about what the advertiser's category demands. Identify what they NEED, get them results, and you'll have customers for a lifetime.
7. Social media is not the single answer to marketing. If Coke or Tide could get away with doing only social, they would. Yet, they collectively spend millions each year on traditional media. I might say this to my advertising clients right now, "Mr. or Mrs. Advertiser, so you love social media. Great. We do too. But, pretty much every business is on Facebook. Let's talk about what things are you doing to be different." Because everybody's on social media right now. Social media is really, really saturated. Digital as a whole, quite honestly, is saturated. So the question is, "What are you doing to stand out from the crowd in a digitally cluttered, digitally saturated marketing landscape?" I love digital. But it is not the single holy grail.
8. Digital and social are different. Show the difference. Social is intrusion-based advertising. The digital we sell as a media company is permission-based marketing. If you've watched the Netflix documentary "The Social Dilemma," we've got Apple, iOS, and Chrome about to block all cookies, and in fact, some of those things have already happened. From watching this documentary and from observing numerous other sources as well, I believe we're going to see a traditional media resurgence. Now, is it ever going to be the way that it was in the '80s? No. But neither is the music ever going to be the same.

9. Traditional media is a dominating marketing play. Not everyone can afford print or radio. Every business does social. Not every business does traditional. What's interesting, for those of you who sell traditional advertising, is that we're seeing in almost all of our research that one of the best drivers of social media activity—search activity, Google, etc.—comes from traditional media sources. Look no further than the NNA, Borrell, or the Association of Magazine Media for facts to back this up.
10. Sell the marketing triangle of success? Traditional, digital, and social. Because events aren't really in play right now, stick with these main three now. Yes, there are virtual events and they're working in B2B. But the trifecta right now is going to be social and digital, and then having traditional media in the mix as the differentiating factor. Because, if advertisers want to be dominant in their marketplace, they have to do what others either don't know how to do, or what others think they need to do but can't execute on because of budget or other circumstances.

Media sales warriors, people have been putting off significant buys for quite some time. COVID forced them into that scenario. Now with vaccinations rolling out, with restrictions being lifted, people are going to come back out and buy. The critical question is, "Mr. or Mrs. Business Owner, are you going to be ready?" It doesn't matter if they're local, national, or global. Are they going to be positioned ahead of time to take advantage of the buying bump that's going to occur? Demand for products is going up, and it's going to go up higher than it ever has before. Are they going to be positioned correctly? Think about it, friends. You're dealing with a lot of emotional people—74%, remember. So guide them. Lead them. Help them understand what they need to do to be successful.

You know what I always say, "If ad sales was easy, everybody would be doing it." And they're not. Is that because we're crazy? No. (Well, maybe we are a little bit.) The truth is that we've found careers that will feed our families for a lifetime. And there has never been a better time than now to sell media.

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*.

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