

April 2023



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President's Corner



Joyce Frericks

'Weather' Winter By Anticipating July's Publisher/Manager Summit

The following are the definitions of anticipation and disappointment from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary.

Anticipation: the act of looking forward, especially pleasurable expectation.

Disappoint: to fail to meet a hope or expectation.

I'm pretty sure most people who live in the Upper Midwest are quite familiar with these two words. We have been anticipating the spring season for over a month only to be disappointed that winter is hanging on for dear life. Minnesota is now in its third snowiest winter on record.

MFCP had its "spring" conference in early March and spring officially started at 4:24 p.m. Central Standard Time March 20. But my definition of "spring," which is the season after winter and before summer, when the weather starts to warm up and the grass turns green, has not yet arrived.

I don't know how many times I have opened my weather app in the last month and have happily anticipated the 40-degree high it is teasing me with and have been disappointed a few days later when I open it again to find that prediction is gone and replaced with 30 degrees or even colder.

I have been tempted many times in the last month to get in my car and drive south until I find warmer weather, but family and work are more important than my comfort, so I've stayed put in Central Minnesota. I've been trying to do that without grumbling and complaining, but it is getting more difficult with every wintry day we receive.

In July, I will drive south to Dubuque, Iowa, for our Publisher/Manager Summit. I'm hoping, by then, summer will have arrived. Until then, I will wait in anticipation of seeing all of you July 12-13 at the Hotel Julien in beautiful Dubuque.

You may be tempted to bring your family and stay a day or two extra as Dubuque is a beautiful city with a lot to explore. Check it out at www.traveldubuque.com/explore/along-the-river.

Last check of my weather app shows lots of highs in the 40s and 50s, so chances are spring won't completely skip us in Central Minnesota. See you in summer.

Joyce

From the office



Going Postal

Lee Borkowski

Without a doubt product delivery is crucial to a publication's success. Our members use a wide range of delivery methods. Some are 100% mailed – using the Marketing Mail classification. Others qualify for the Requester Periodical rate. A large number of members have their own independent carrier force. And, others use a blend of USPS and private carrier. No matter the method, the concern is the same; how can we get our products delivered as efficiently and as cost effectively as possible.

Wherever you are with publication delivery we want to highlight a couple of things for you to review/participate in this month.

First up – There is an article in this month's newsletter that talks about the cost savings of changing to a requester periodical mailing rate. This is the most affordable commercial mailing class available. Hillary Carroll of our associate member Requester Pro has written an article that will provide you with some valuable information. [Check it out here.](#)

Next up –the 2023 USPS Mobile Shopping Promotion is set to launch May 1st. Publications that use USPS Marketing Mail to deliver their publications can take advantage of this program and save 3% off their total postage costs from May 1, 2023 through November 30, 2023. To qualify there is some paperwork that needs to be completed prior to claiming the discount.

At the spring conference I had one member say they had not participated in the program previously because it felt a bit overwhelming to get started. I assure you – it's not! And, to help you we are going to offer a Zoom training where we walk you through a live demonstration of qualifying a publication for the discount. Peter Schultz, Mailing/Delivery Specialist for Woodward Printing Services has agreed to chair the training. It will be held on Thursday, April 12th at 11AM via Zoom. [Click here for login info.](#)

Navigating postal rules and regulations can be a challenge. We're fortunate to have a strong organization with many resources to help you navigate through. Let me know how MFPC can help you.

Lee

Members Helping Members



It Pays to Become a 'Requester' Periodical

By Hillary Carroll

It's no secret that Periodical mail is the most affordable commercial mailing class. With postage as low as 13 - 15 cents per copy and guaranteed mailbox delivery, it's hard to argue with the advantages. Unfortunately, the process to qualify remains elusive for most Publishers.

Why is this? Simply put, the post office loses money on every qualifying Periodical title. Marketing mail and other classes are significantly more lucrative for the goliath that remains plagued by debt. It behooves USPS to keep the Periodicals mailing class close to the chest.

Despite this, entering a Periodical is a great way for Publishers to make the switch from carrier delivery to mailboxes. It can be used to expand market penetration, offer a new or improved product, and garner trust with advertisers.

One major thing to point out, this mailing class is available to *free* circulation newspapers. There are stricter requirements for 'Requester' titles, but they are easily managed if you know what to look for. An example is that advertising percentage cannot exceed 75% in more than 25% of a publication's issues. For a weekly, this is 13 issues per year.

More good news for Publishers, last year USPS updated a [postal ruling](#) to allow up to 50% of nonsubscriber / nonrequester copies to be mailed at the inside county rate. This means increased sampling and higher overall circulations are possible at very affordable rates.

While the specifics can be tricky if you're new to Periodicals, it's like learning to ride a bike. Once you're up and running, it definitely pays to become a Periodical.

For more information on how to qualify for this prestigious, albeit elusive, mail class contact hilary@requesterpro.com.

Member News



PAWS WITH A CAUSE

*The who, what, where, and why
behind a great cause*

Is your publication getting ready to participate in the USPS Promotion later this year for Paws with A Cause?

If so, you may want to know a little bit about this non-profit group. The attached article shows why this worthwhile group is one our members should support. The article doesn't include information about the USPS promotion- we will send that out in a later newsletter- but it is a story worth sharing as a feature with your readers. It would be perfect pairing with the ad when the promotion starts. Simply click on the link below and help get the information out.

[PAWS WITH A CAUSE](#)

Industry Pioneers

The free-paper industry has a rich history. And, many people from the Midwest played an important role in its development and growth. The caring, sharing and support members offer each other make this an industry like no other. In this section we will share features from people past and present who helped create the unusual dynamic we enjoy today.

This month our feature story is about Craig Trongaard. Craig shares an interesting story about the time he was called back to active duty and needed to sell his paper with only days to do so. It is a true testament to our earlier pioneers and the high level of honesty and integrity with which they operated.

We would like to feature many more pioneers. Do you have someone in mind? If so, please reach out via email to director@mfc.org with the appropriate contact information. We'll take it from there!



The Grapevine Story

By Craig Trongaard

A few weeks past, Lee Borkowski and I met for lunch as we both were past AFCP President's and enjoy reminiscing about the association back then, and its members. Somewhere in the conversation she asked how and when did my career in the shopper business begin. After telling her my story it was not too many days later, she called me and asked if I would write my story and be willing to share it. How do you say no to Lee?

Imagine if you will, trying to recall events and time lines from over 50 years ago! But in the end, my memory does accurately capture the time and place of how some of us got into this line of publishing and for a few that had to get out. Here it is:

Late 1966 or early '67, a want ad in the Sioux City Journal noted a shopper in western Iowa was for sale. Upon inquiry, the paper, a shopper, circulated in Onawa and several small towns south with roughly 3,000 to 4,000 circulation. Called The Grapevine, it was owned for an unknown period by the pastor of a small church in South Sioux City, Nebraska. Can you imagine?

After meeting with the pastor, my wife and I made an offer and bought the shopper for about \$5,000. Assets consisted of the paper, sheet fed press, box camera, strip printer with half dozen strip negative fonts, graphic illustration books, receivables and a jogger for the mail room. We had no legal paperwork done, just a check and hand shake.

We ran the shopper out of our home in Sioux City for the first half dozen issues. I pressed it on the 1250 Multilith sheet fed. It soon became evident this single sheet format was not going anywhere so we quickly jobbed the printing out to a web press printer in Vermillion, South Dakota. For better part of a year things were going well, the paper looked great, expanded the distribution and was being well received by the advertisers and readers. Business was growing! Then on January 28th, 1968, the US Navy Ship Pueblo was captured by the North Koreans and taken into their port. Shortly thereafter President Lyndon Johnson called to active duty several guard units of which the air guard unit I belonged to in Sioux City was one of them. I believe they gave a few of us that had a business a couple days to “what do I do now” with the business.

During these couple days’ time a local tv station interviewed me as to what was I going to do with my business now that I was recalled to active duty? Being Mary and I were the only employees and she was soon to have our first child my response was simply: I don’t know.

The same night as that broadcast John Holmes, owner of the Whiting Newspaper called me to extend help in any way he could while I was gone. He offered to literally run the shopper for us or was willing to buy it if that was what I would prefer. I had been thinking of having to sell and had a price range based on sales/profits and potential. After a few minutes on the phone, we agreed to a price with terms. Those being 12 monthly payments at an interest rate that was current at the time. He did not want the press equipment and said he would collect all the receivables at no cost, both current and aged, and send a monthly check on those collections. That was the extent of our agreement. Neither one of us ever brought up the need to having papers drawn up, for us there was no need to, our word was not negotiable and it played out exactly as John proposed. There was no ink to dry!

It made a lot of sense for John to acquire the Grapevine whose distribution was directly south of his area, and the cross-selling potential was a given. I saw John at one of our AFCP meetings and we both spoke on would that kind of verbal agreement fly today? No.

p.s. I often wished I would have kept the strip printer and fonts. It was unique and first generation in cold type composition.

MVPS At Work



Turnover... Not Always Bad

By Tiffany Gardner

Our MVP monthly discussion meeting is fast approaching. It is bittersweet as we congratulate our first class of MVPs on their graduation, and welcome in the third class.

To most, “turnover” is a scary word (unless we are talking about apple or cherry).

While I reflected on the recent conference and the MVP group, I realized that turnover in this case means opportunity. Although we will miss our first class of MVPs, turnover is what keeps our program rolling.

Meeting new professionals in our industry with a passion for their work is refreshing. The most crucial component to my success has been the people I have interacted with, the conferences I have attended, and the vast amount of knowledge all the professionals in our industry have to offer!

In this case, turnover is necessary to bring new MVPs on board and usher out MVPs who shared their time and talents with the Association. Turnover brings opportunity to new up-and-coming industry professionals.

That leads me to welcoming our third class of Most Valuable Professionals. We welcome: Taylor Smith, graphic designer with the Fillmore County Journal in Preston, Minnesota; Amanda Thooft, production manager with Star Publications in Sauk Centre, Minnesota; and Desiree Whalen, sales account executive in Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin. Congrats on your new appointments.

Because of turnover, these new MVP’s will enjoy growth through opportunities like conferences, monthly discussions, and the development of meaningful connections in our industry.

With pride, MFCP congratulates our first three MVPs on their graduation.

Many thanks to Carrie Hendricks, Kari Jurens, and Amanda Hoefler for kicking off the MVP group as our first inductees and blazing the MVP trail with me! It has been a true pleasure getting to know you a work with you.

As this group evolves, we will see turnover. Turnover is defined as “the rate at which employees leave a workforce and are replaced” (or a small pastry usually filled with something delicious).

Our MVPs are not leaving the workforce, but acquiring skills that make our workforce stronger. As an industry we are lucky to have professionals amongst us to bounce ideas, share successes and learn from. I hope to see the MVP group experience years of turnover to enrich key players in our industry and keep our passion for papers going strong.

Kevin Slimp



Kevin Slimp
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Questions Posed by New York Publishers

Small changes can make a big difference in how readers see your paper

Yesterday, I returned from a trip to New York, where I spoke at the New York Press Association (NYPA) Convention for two days. I was reminded that I spoke at my first NYPA convention 28 years ago. Time flies.

Unlike many conventions where I'm the only speaker – or maybe one of two – NYPA has four to six speakers making presentations during each time slot. That means not everyone makes it to one of my sessions during the convention. As a result, I often found myself involved in conversations with publishers and others who came by my room immediately after a session or approached me during a “meet and greet” to ask for my advice.

The conversations generally begin with something like, “I wasn’t able to attend any of your sessions,” as if the questioner felt the need to apologize. I tried to assure them that was fine. After all, you can’t be everywhere at once. I met with one publisher who runs a one-person shop. He writes the stories, sells the ads, designs the paper, and pays the bills. I met others who owned several large dailies and weeklies in the state.

Here are some of the things we discussed:

The publisher running a newspaper alone brought his paper and asked me to look it over, hoping I could offer a little advice. I suggested he use a different body font (I believe he was using Minion) and a larger text size. I recommended he use a 10-point Nimrod. I assured him if that was the only change he made, readers would be writing to praise him after the first issue. I also suggested he use smaller borders around photos. Probably a .3 or .4 frame rather than a 1-point border. I knew he had his hands full getting a paper out by himself. I figured that was enough advice for one day.

I met with another publisher – who attended my classes with her page designer – for about 30 minutes, and we looked over her newspaper. We discussed several potential improvements. The most important, in my opinion, was to put the flag on top of the front page to rest and create a new flag for her newspaper. Redesigning as many newspapers as I do, I’ve learned people can be protective of their flags, and rightly so. While newspapers should undergo a redesign every 5-7 years, the flag identifies the newspaper and shouldn’t be discarded at a whim. However, as was the case with this paper, sometimes a flag looks too outdated and can be a distraction – or even turn off – a reader. We also discussed the importance of creating a consistent look on each newspaper page. When our conversation ended, I felt confident they would go home after the conference to begin working on these changes.

Two owners of larger groups approached me separately. One asked about training for their papers. Where can they find training directed toward newspaper staff, and what training would be most helpful? Both asked about redesigns. One mentioned it had been a long time since her papers had gone through a redesign process. I suggested there's never a wrong time to begin redesigning a newspaper. You don't have to wait for an expert to guide the process, although that's always helpful when possible. Any newspaper can gather the staff together and begin discussing the most urgent redesign issues and develop ways to start upgrading a publication.

Perhaps my favorite conversation while in New York was with Chip Rowe, editor of The Highlands Current (THC), which was named co-winner of the 2023 "Best Newspaper Award." THC tied with The Times Union of Albany, winning 24 awards at the convention. I spent three days with Chip two years ago, holding focus groups and meeting with staff members of THC. Chip reminded me of the work we did while I was in his community, meeting with multiple focus groups and offering advice to his staff. He shared that he felt like those focus groups and minutes spent together contributed to the success THC is experiencing. I write a lot about focus groups in my columns and advise most clients to hold focus groups annually. It's always nice to hear that the information garnered from such gatherings leads to improvements at newspapers.

After leading seven sessions over two days, my body reminded me I'm not as young as I was before COVID, or maybe I'm just out of practice standing all day. I returned home, however, as I always seem to from newspaper conferences, refreshed and inspired by the work being done by newspapers of all sizes. Today's free press is just as important, if not more, than ever.

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



Advertising's Bill of Rights

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

In the advertising business, there are things which must be done in order to create an effective campaign. Think of it as Advertising's Bill of Rights: Send the right message...to the right audience...in the right medium...at the right time...about the right product (or service)...which sells for the right price...in the right environment.

Although some other rights might be added to the list, this covers the basics. Here's a closer look:

- 1. Send the right message:** In other words, watch your language. Instead of using empty claims and exaggerations like "fantastic," "incredible" and "best ever," stick to legitimate features and benefits. If you're putting together a response ad (as opposed to an image, or institutional, ad), make a compelling offer – discounts, time-sensitive offers, two-for-price of one, etc.
- 2. To the right audience:** There's no such thing as selling to "everyone." On any given day, only a small slice of the total audience is in the market for a new car or a refrigerator or a pair of jeans. Aim your message at the people who want/need/qualify to buy what your advertiser is selling.
- 3. In the right medium:** It's rare when a particular product is limited to only one possible media outlet. As a result, most of your advertisers are deciding between two or more choices. The first order of business is to learn as much as possible about the media product(s) you sell. Then learn all you can about the other choices in your market. That will put you in position to make fair – and convincing – comparisons between Choices A, B and C. Along the way, you will confirm ways to present your paper's print and online products as the right picks.
- 4. At the right time:** While some products and services are viable all year long, others are seasonal. Unless your publication is in a year-round cold climate, don't try to sell snow shovels in July.
- 5. About the right product (or service):** Likewise, it's not smart to advertise lawn furniture or residential termite services in a congested area with high-rise apartment buildings.
- 6. Which sells for the right price:** A car dealer told me about a salesperson who approached a man in the used car lot. When the man asked, "How much is this truck?" the salesperson replied, "\$19,900." The man said, "But the tag says \$15,000. Do you think I'm some kind of fool?" The salesman said, "No sir, I was just checking to make sure."

Encourage your advertisers to price their products fairly. If the price is wrong, no one will buy.

7. In the right environment: Measurements of success shouldn't stop when an ad runs. Sure, advertising can generate traffic, but if consumers encounter rude employees in the advertiser's place of business, they will leave. And you can say the same for poor parking, inconvenient hours, dirty floors, and complicated return policies.

True advertising success calls for the entire Bill of Rights, not just one or two.

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CREDIT LINE

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. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

Ryan Dohrn



Stop Checking In!

Ryan discusses good sales strategy this month. Find out how to add value to every interaction with your customers.

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

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](#)*.