

PAPERCLIPS

MFCP the official newsletter of Midwest Free Community Papers
midwest free community papers

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President's Corner



Joyce Frericks

MFCP Members Never Walk Alone!

“Here I go again on my own. Going down the only road I’ve ever known. Like a drifter, I was born to walk alone.”

These lyrics have been stuck in my head for over a month. They were there when I wrote last month’s column, and here they are again. I really don’t know why my brain keeps replaying this as I don’t usually listen to Whitesnake. Maybe it was playing on the office speaker when I got to work one morning; some staff members occasionally listen to rock.

However, these lyrics got into my head, they certainly do not apply to our industry. None of us are meant to “walk alone.” Whether our papers are all advertising or part news, it takes a lot of people to publish every issue, and there are lot of people who depend on us to get it done.

Have you ever thought about how many people we affect with every issue? There are sales people and advertisers, employees of the advertisers, reporters and all the people they do stories on — the city councilors, school board members, students and athletes. Back in the office, there are creatives who design ads, the circulation staff that ensures papers get where they are supposed to go, bookkeepers who confirm we get paid for the ads and the receptionists who keep all of us in line.

The paper hasn’t even made it to the print yet.

At the printer, there are the press people, their office staff and inserters. The papers are bundled and sent off with delivery drivers, off to post office where it affects all the postal employees and finally the reader.

The reader is who we do it all for. We depend on our readers as much as they depend on us.

The readers depend on us to tell them who wants to do business with them, to tell their neighbor’s stories, who won and lost the games, what the city and school councils are doing, who was born and who passed away, and much, much more.

The roads we travel to get our publications to the reader are made smoother with the help of everyone at MFCP. My road as the president of MFCP is coming to an end, and I haven’t been like the drifter in the song. The staff, board and members at MFCP are the best and make our roads as publishers so much easier to walk. As I hand the baton off to Mike Kolbe who will be walking the road for the next year, one thing is evident — our industry is more important than ever.

It’s been an honor.

Joyce



Lee Borkowski

Lee's "what you need to know" List

*Calendars, New Membership Directory,
Postal Discounts 2024, and more...*

I have a few items to mention as we head into the last few weeks of the year:

#1) CALENDARS –the 2024 calendar order is one of those orders where whatever could go wrong has. Long story short...for those that ordered, the 2024 calendars are scheduled to arrive in the next week. Give me a day or two to get them repackaged and you should have them no later than the 29th. If you failed to order and would still like one just send me a message. I'll have a few extra and am happy to send them your way. As a reminder, we have large wall calendars and adhesive strip calendars for your laptop.

#2) NEW MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY – The newest directory is now live and on our website. Please check it out here. If you have any changes let me know. Sue and I make changes every day and upload a new copy continuously. So there is no reason to have outdated information.

#3) POSTAL DISCOUNTS 2024 - There are a couple of changes ahead for the Emerging Technology discount program we've used in the past.

First: to be eligible for any discount you will first need to register on the Business Customer Gateway.

Second: the Emerging Technology discount allows you to PICK 6 – meaning you chose which six month period of time you want to participate in. Your choices are January 15th through June 15th or April 1st through September 1st. Check your weights from previous years to figure out which six-month period will be most beneficial for your publication.

Lastly, you must pre-register for this program. Pre-registration is open this month. To the best of our knowledge, you can continue with the Paws for a Cause ad – but will need to resubmit it for approval. If we hear differently, we'll let you know.

And, remember that as of January 1st all postal forms must be submitted electronically. If you need help, let us know. We're just a phone call away.

Finally, please know how much Sue Pilla and I enjoy our positions with MFCP. It has been an absolute pleasure working with every single one of you during these past 12 months. Together let's make 2024 even better. Until then, rest up, celebrate your blessings, and enjoy your season!

Lee

MVPS at Work



You Win Some, You Lose Some

By, Dez Whalen, Account Executive, Woodward Communications, Wisconsin-Iowa Shopping News

As we, in our roles as publishers and human beings find ourselves wrapping up this 2023 year, there is one thought that comes to mind that sums up the entirety of the year. It is a quote from a scene of one of my favorite comedy movies I enjoyed in my early high school years which was originally released in 1995, *Friday*: “You win some, you lose some, but you live, you live to fight another day”.

In this scene of the motion picture, John Witherspoon playing Mr. Jones, who is the father to Craig, or better known as Ice Cube, has a heart-to-heart moment with his son on the topic of violence in their South-Central Los Angeles neighborhood after Mr. Jones catches his son trying to leave their home armed with a weapon to walk down the street. His message was for his son to put the gun down and put up his fists in the face of violence. The scene closes out with the quote, “You win some, you lose some, but you live, you live, to fight another day”. [See the movie clip here.](#)

Although we are not in South-Central L.A., nor is gun violence the topic at hand here, if we take the scene and words into a professional context, there is a practical message that can be applied to anything we pursue or encounter in work and life.

There are days and moments when things progress with ease and flow into successful moments, which we sure do appreciate. On the other hand, there are days, or moments, that are a bit rougher around the edges and don’t turn out the way we imagined or needed them to, as well. Through it all, it is important to *keep going*. The hard moments are just as necessary as the ones that come and go with ease and success. We learn something from it all. We grow through *it all*.

The last piece of dissection of this quote in a professional and personal motivational standpoint is that we will find when we are doing the things that we love to do, the “living to fight another day” comes a whole lot easier! We may have moments of anxiety, sadness, disappointment and doubt while doing what we love, but if we keep *just keep going*, we learn how to appreciate the wins and the losses. We grow further into what is for us, and lose what is not.

In professional and personal life in 2023, I felt these things to a new extreme. I have been challenged in more than one facet of work and life. I have won some. I have most definitely lost some, too. Yet, I am learning to continue on with ease and flow and keep working toward a better tomorrow, always. At the end of the day...and the year...and life...that is all that matters.

I hope moving into 2024 each person reading this article can take these thoughts as a reminder that whatever challenges you face in the upcoming year, embrace them with confidence and *just keep going*. We really do have everything to gain from every win...and every loss too! We all “win some, and lose some, but we live, we live to fight another day!” Make 2024 a great year, folks!

Dez Whalen is an account executive of advertising sales at the Wisconsin-Iowa Shopping News in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Dez has a background in graphic design as a 2010 graduate of Southwest Technical College as well as a being a recent undergrad in Communication and Marketing from Upper Iowa University in 2023. Dez has a passion for print and digital media in conjunction and enjoys supporting local businesses in our rural areas....keeping dreams alive. Dez also practices scenic photography and mixed media art in her own endeavor she calls “Rebel Heart Creatives” which is a great creative outlet outside of publishing for Dez. In the future, Dez would like to practice and share writing with some wider local audiences. She appreciates being able to get a taste of those skills sharing articles like this with people like you!

Kevin Slimp



Kevin's Top 10 Tips for 2024

As 2023 ends and 2024 begins, Kevin puts on his coaching cap

Kevin Slimp
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The end of one year and the beginning of a new year seem to make me a little reflective. In the past three weeks, I've found myself in 13 states. Traveling has allowed me to visit with many longtime newspaper friends and a few new ones. I'm often asked for advice in our conversations, especially as publishers contemplate plans for the new year.

Readers seem to like numbered lists – and it seems as if half the folks I know are “coaches” these days – so please humor me as I offer “Coach Kevin’s Top 10 Tips (please forgive the *superfluous* alliteration) for 2024.”

Tip 1: Watch for community members who could be valuable to your newspaper. A close friend recently retired and was quickly contacted by a community newspaper 20 miles away asking if he'd be interested in shooting pictures at ballgames a couple of times each week. He was surprised and thrilled. He's having a great time taking photos of high school wrestling matches and volleyball games, and the newspaper is getting a great deal. Like many new retirees, he was concerned about filling his time during retirement. It's a win/win.

Tip 2: Make it a habit to meet with reporters and designers to discuss ways to improve the content and design of your newspaper. Do you want to increase readership? The quickest way I know of is to improve the content and look of your newspaper.

Tip 3: Call the Small Business Bureau (in some states, grants come through the Economic and Community Development office) and ask about grants for small businesses. I've worked with papers in several states that have received grants to pay the entire bill for on-site training. These grants covered training costs and other expenses. A quick look at my state's website (Tennessee) states, “For the most part, the grants that go to small business owners generally fall in three areas: value-added agriculture, technology development and commercialization, and vocational rehabilitation.” Just about everything we do at newspapers can fit into the technology development category when applying for a grant. You can also find information about grants at [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

Tip 4: Replace your on-site backup drives every couple of years. They break down, and it can be a miserable experience when they do. Newspapers should also have off-site (cloud) backups in place. Your information can be safely stored off-site for just a few dollars each month.

Tip 5: Speaking of backups, most newspapers are Mac-based. Ensure every computer is set up to use Time Machine for automatic backups. Time Machine has saved me many times over the years. Just purchase an inexpensive SSD drive (usually around \$100) for each computer to be used only for Time Machine.

Tip 6: If you haven't already, create a master chart to track your sales calls. Be sure to include columns for "in-person," "phone," "text," and "email" calls. Look over your calls with your ad manager or publisher at the end of each week. A master chart is a straightforward method for increasing the number of calls, guaranteeing increased ad revenue. It is also an excellent reminder to make more in-person calls rather than relying too much on email or other contact methods.

Tip 7: Don't let the design of your newspaper become stale. If your newspaper looks the same as it did ten years ago, it's too late. But it's never too late to update the design.

Tip 8: Take advantage of training opportunities. Be aware of online and in-person training available through your press association and other organizations. It comes as no surprise that most successful newspapers make training a regular part of their routine.

Tip 9: Host a focus group of diverse community members annually to get opinions and share ideas about ways to improve your newspaper. People love being part of focus groups, and it's an effective way to get solid information to enhance your product.

Tip 10: Be a "hands-on" publisher. The most successful papers I've worked with in 2023 have publishers who are hands-on in the daily operation of the newspaper. Years ago, a young editor called me panicked when she had been offered the publisher's position at a nearby daily paper. "What does a publisher do?" she asked. "It's simple," I replied. "Either nothing...or everything." Successful papers have publishers who are involved in the paper and the community.

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.



Get More Mileage Out of Testimonials

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

Back in my ad agency days, I worked with a real estate client on a series of customer testimonials. We started with one, then added another and another. The final count was more than a dozen, which kept the campaign fresh and gave us a lot of flexibility.

The plan was to run smaller ads with one testimonial, and then to place three small testimonials at the top of weekly, full-page ads which featured descriptions of houses for sale. The ads attracted attention from prospective buyers and sellers (many of whom recognized their neighbors) and the company's agents (who were proud when their clients were featured). One testimonial photo and quote featured a South Korean couple who had relocated to the area, when one spouse's high tech employer moved a number of executives to North Carolina from that country. The quote appeared in Korean, which appealed to others who were relocating with the same company, in addition to attracting a lot of attention on the page.

This strategy gave us more mileage than a campaign with two or three testimonials, because there were so many different combinations. If you'd like to try something similar, here are the steps to take:

1. Select the right testimonial subjects. Your advertiser can make the choices. Go for variety: some individuals, some couples, and some international customers, if possible. In the case of real estate, balance testimonials between home buyers and sellers.

2. Get the right testimonial quotes. You can coach your advertiser on how to do this. Keep the quotes brief, with a target of 10 to 20 words. The quotes can be obtained by phone or email, or even in person. Make sure the subjects understand that their comments may be edited slightly for brevity.

3. Be specific. A testimonial ad is a way to convey selling points about the advertiser. As a result, it's important to ask questions to direct answers in the right direction – and to create a variety of statements. *"XYZ's service team responds quickly to calls. I can always count on them"* is more informative than *"The XYZ Company is great. I really like them."* The next quote can focus on something other than service – product selection, for example.

4. Photos are a must. Taking photographs has gotten simpler with each year. It's okay to use your phone. Headshots are best. Clean, uncluttered backgrounds provide better ad reproduction.

5. Get signed releases. Depending on the laws in your area, make sure you have the proper permission to use each testimonial. Release forms can be found online.

6. Establish a rotation. Be flexible. The more testimonials you have, the greater the possibilities – some ads with one testimonial, some with multiple testimonials.

7. Thank (but do not pay) your testimonial subjects. Unpaid testimonials from real customers have the ring of authenticity. Your advertiser should send a nice letter, along with their photo (preferably 5x7) and a copy of an ad in which they appeared. It's another chance for your advertiser to strengthen their relationships with clients.

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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. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

Ryan Dohrn



Creating Urgency with Your Clients

The end of 2023 is closing in fast. And as an ad salesperson who spends a lot of time in the media business and digital technology, this fact makes me pause and think: what am I going to do to get my clients and prospects to go ahead and sign on the dotted line?

This question is an important one to address in any type of media sales training, actually – whether it's magazine sales training, TV sales training, radio sales training or any kind of broadcast sales training. We have got to be thinking, what can I do to convert clients and prospects into sales? What kinds of urgency levers can I pull?

All throughout the year in my ad sales training and in my own ad sales, I've worked to put urgency triggers into place. And now it's time to act. It's time to pull those levers. It's time to help make our prospects take action.

If you've been to the Niche Media Conference you've probably learned to put these levers into place already. But here's a refresher to help you close out some sales before the end of the year.

These are proven sales tactics that work for me.

Lever No. 1: Instill FOMO, right on the spot.

A lot of salespeople like to present their goods and their value proposition and then leave to create a proposal for the prospect. And there are certain circumstances where you have to do that. A lot of my competitors definitely do that.

But I've realized this and I share it continually in my ad sales training: I don't need to leave to create a proposal. I'm not selling rocket science gear or brain surgery equipment. And even if I was, I'd still come with pricing ready to go.

This is why — I want somebody to consider my proposal while I'm right there in front of them.

Now, you may be thinking, "what about the customer needs assessment?" And this is something I've been talking about for years in media sales training. But shouldn't we truthfully be calling what most salespeople do a "customer wants" assessment? And if you give somebody what they want, you have a customer for a very short period of time.

But if you give somebody what they need or if you advise them, recommend and guide them towards what they need, then you've got a customer forever.

No matter what you're selling, think about it. You probably already have a really sound idea when you walk into a meeting what that customer needs to do. So I don't look at these meetings as though I'm starting from square one.

I look at these meetings as they're trusting me to come to them with ideas and recommendations, ready to go. And I'm asking questions to fine-tune my recommendations. (Are there circumstances where you've got to gather information, take it away and assess it before you can make sound recommendations as a salesperson? Of course, but as I remind people in my media sales training, those are exceptions.)

So, let's say that you're at the very end of the sales process and you need to give your prospect a price, and maybe you don't have it. Then ballpark it. And I say this from experience.

I consult with 15 different industries in my media sales training, and in some of them people are selling \$50 million planes, and still, they don't say, "Let's end this meeting and I'll go create a proposal for you." The price is what it is.

Ninety percent of the time, no matter what I'm advising on or selling, I need to get a level of excitement going on *that* sales call.

How I do that and how I keep the meeting going is this: I use the techniques of social proof or social stacking.

In social proof I may say, "We've worked with company A, company B and company C, and they've all seen great success with us." And right there, I've given them social proof of my product's ability to help customers succeed at whatever industry they're in.

A social stack looks like this. "We've got this great idea and we wanted to start with your company first. There's company A, B and C – and we think they would all benefit from this – but we're starting with you."

In either circumstance, with social proof or social stacking, you're banking on FOMO, the fear of missing out. And FOMO creates some sense of urgency.

FOMO is an extremely effective lever you can pull.

Lever No. 2: Create a penalty for waiting.

It looks like this: "If you sign today, this is the price. If you sign tomorrow, that is the price."

So, if they sign today the price is \$100. If they sign tomorrow, it's \$200. If they sign six months from now, it's going to be \$500.

Essentially, you're penalizing them for waiting.

Admittedly, most salespeople I run across in my ad sales training don't like this strategy because they can't handle the pressure.

Lever No. 3: Offer incentives – bonuses – for buying today.

Discounting or offering incentives for people to sign on the dotted line is super common. And it is also super expected by your clients. And yet, it works – the longer they wait, the more they lose.

Here's a basic example of what you might say. "If you can make this decision today or within the next 72 hours (or something similar, but be sure you give them a time frame), you're going to get these five additional things." And then you name off those five things that you have determined you can give.

Now, after the week is up or the 72 hours or whatever time frame you have put in place, you need at least 50% of those things to go away – or, you can take them all away if you want to do that.

You've got to be careful though, because people will call your bluff. It's actually a pretty common tendency because we, as salespeople, will likely hear some of our clients and prospects say, "Okay, I'm ready to make a decision." But they will say if AFTER the time frame we set has already passed. When that happens, some salespeople cave and out comes, "Yeah, that pricing expired two weeks ago, but I'll go ahead and give it to you."

Well guess what, friends? They know you're going to do it.

So, remember this: there's a certain point in time where I believe you've got to burn a client every now and then. You've got to let them know that you're serious, as I say in my media sales training.

However, in an effort to not burn them too badly or make them seriously angry, one of the things I like to say upfront is, "I know that with a lot of salespeople, after this two weeks is up, if you decide you want to go with the offer later they're still going to give you the discount. So I just want you to know that my boss (my owner or whatever the case may be, but blame it on someone else) is not going to honor it after this particular point in time."

So you want to give them some time incentive and then in the end, if they try to call your bluff, you actually stick to the deal. And you could say, "Oh man, that's expired. I mean, I guess I could go to my boss and see."

But when you come back, don't give them everything. For example, I may say, "We couldn't do everything that we had before, but we can at least give you 50% of the bonuses we had to offer originally."

Then they'll feel like they at least got something out of it. And maybe next time you come back to them, they won't sit on an offer and wait quite so long.

Lever No. 4: Entice with a rate protection scenario.

Rate protection is especially effective right now because everybody is raising rates on everything. So rate protection is a great lever to pull.

Drawing from what I tell my ad sales training crew, here's an example of what you might say to put this lever into play.

"If you sign by Christmastime, you can still take advantage of the 2023 rates, because we're going up 65% (or whatever the case may be) in 2024."

Now, keep in mind, you want to make sure that the rate increase you are citing is very, very clear. I generally don't talk to people in terms of percentages, for instance. I'm very concrete. If they would be able to save 25% or 28%, these percentages will need to be calculated into actual dollars for them to make sure they fully understand.

Rate protection is a very good, strong lever you can potentially pull, in my experience.

Parting words

In the grand scheme of the sales world, there are actually a lot of levers you can pull in addition to social proof and social stacking, fear of missing out, and — the most common levers — those that involve some form of financial incentive.

Hear this too, because this is really important and I share it all the time in media sales training that I conduct: whichever triggers you decide to create and urgency levers you decide to pull, don't wait until the last minute.

The old saying "failure to plan is planning to fail" comes to mind. Get your urgency levers figured out, test them, structure them, and make sure you're not repeatedly going to discounts to get somebody to a sense of urgency about the sale.

Before I close, there's one other thing that's critically important to add. A lot of times, your clients and prospects genuinely need some time to think about an offer. They've got to talk to the boss and run it up the flag pole. It's a big expenditure. They want to think about it. So I strive to always give someone at least 72 hours to think about things.

If you can get away with doing the deal in a day, rock on with your bad self — that's awesome. But waiting two weeks, that's way too long. Even one week is stretching it, actually.

So, for me as an ad sales rep, allowing my clients and prospects to come back to me within the next 72 hours, or a time frame very close to that, is an effective and realistic urgency lever, I've found.

But in the end, you've got to figure out the urgency levers you can pull that are truly going to impact your sales game. And then don't forget them — don't keep them hidden. They are powerful tools in your sales arsenal.

In closing, if sales was an easy job everybody would be doing it. And they're not. But this is a great career, one that I promise you will feed you for a lifetime. If you want more information about sales urgency levers, head over to Amazon and check out my book, *Selling Forward*. Subscribe to the podcast or the YouTube channel, as well, and share these resources with your friends.

And remember to use those urgency levers to move the needle forward and get some sales action out of your customers before the year closes out.

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*.