

PAPERCLIPS

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

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**Ad Award
COMPETITION**

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WEEK LEFT

The deadline for the 2024 MFCP Ad Awards Competition is fast approaching.

All entries must be postmarked no later than January 12, 2024.

President's Corner



Mike Kolbe

Cherish the Season of Taking!

As we exit a beautiful season of giving, I'm going to challenge myself to "take" more the rest of the year! I'm going to take other's ideas, constructive criticism and occasional complements, and use them to grow in my professional and personal life.

In general, I'm going to take from the talented publishers, salespeople, designers and writers (including our own staff) who crank out impressive shoppers and newspapers every week. In particular, I'm going to take from the MFCP Board members I've had the privilege to work with during the last few years. After attending MFCP conferences for years, I was given the opportunity to serve on the Board, and now find myself in the President's chair for 2024.

I also want to be more giving throughout the year. I'll begin by giving a big "THANK YOU" to our past president, Joyce Frerick, publisher of Star Publications in Sauk Centre, MN. Joyce's sharp business sense and steady hand will continue to be valued as the Board provides leadership to our member publications.

A shout-out also to past Board members Brad Hicks, Dan Juffer and Deb Weigel. Their contributions were greatly appreciated, and we look forward to seeing them online and in person during upcoming sessions.

Replacing these three on the Board are Cory Regnier, Luke Perry and Carrie Vander Weerd. I'm not saying the rest of us are fossils, but their youth, enthusiasm and new ideas will be a great addition to the Board.

As your new MFCP Board President, I hope to give more time and effort toward helping the Board provide new and effective training and member benefits for publishing novices and professionals alike. This is where you get to "take". By attending conferences and online training sessions you will have access to some of the best minds in sales, graphic design, motivation, time management and more. This will include a great spring conference in Mankato, MN April 4-5. Watch your in-box and visit MFCP.org for details. Better yet, add MFCP.org to your bookmarks and visit often for all kinds of valuable information!

I hope my 40 years in the publishing industry provides valuable ammunition to grace this space each month. My mentors at the Harlan (IA) Newspapers, publishers of a twice weekly newspaper and weekly shopper, provided a healthy dose of wisdom, fear and humility from which I've learned a great deal. My hope is to take that knowledge, add lessons yet to be learned from all of you, and continue to grow.

Mike

From the Office



On Your Mark- Get Set- Go!!! **Get Your Ad Award Entries Ready!**

Lee Borkowski

Can you believe it's that time of year already? Yep, the deadline for the 2024 Ad Awards competition is coming up quickly. All entries need to be postmarked by **Friday, January 12th** to be eligible for the competition.

You can access the [rules and categories here](#) – and you can [view last years' winners here](#). view last years' winners here.

Note: we want you to enter – but don't break the bank getting your entries to us. As long as your package is postmarked by the 12th we're going to accept them and present them for judging. So, package them up, give me a call and let me know they are on the way. I'll be sure to keep an eye out for them and get them sorted into the proper categories.

Last year one member sent their entries via overnight mail. That's just too costly. And, you work too hard for your money to give it the USPS!

Speaking of the USPS – they have more rate increases in store for us in 2024. To help offset that make sure you are taking advantage of every discount available to you.

There is a change in the Emerging Technology discount this year. The post office has opened up when you can take the discount in 2024. You have two time periods to choose from: January 15th through June 15th, **OR** April 1 thru September 1. Publishers are free to choose whichever dates work best for their publications. The registration portal is open now. So, be sure to get registered and save this 3%.

Lastly, our spring conferences will be held April 4th and 5th in Mankato, Minnesota. We have a good lineup of speakers as well as plenty of time for networking. Watch future emails for specific information and a link to registration.

If you have questions on any subject, please don't hesitate to reach out to MFCP. After all, we're here to serve you!

Lee

MVP at Work



Word of the Year

By Amanda Thooft, Graphic Designer, Star Publications, MN

What to pick?

A new year's resolution, word of the year, or bible verse of the year?

I typically pick a word of the year and it stays the same for years until I have successfully achieved it. It usually does not take me long to pick out a word because I want to encompass all aspects of my life — home, work, family and faith. There are online word generators and many websites that can help with this word-choosing process.

The thing that I struggle with the most is balance in my life, making sure I am not stealing time from my family while in the process of also trying to provide for them. In a stressful fast-paced industry where it sometimes is hard to remember to even take a lunch break, balance seems all the more important.

The Wall Street Journal has tips on this balance:

To improve your work-life balance, consider what times of day you work best, and factor in your personal needs.

Try scheduling your time in advance and having a conversation with your supervisor to ensure you are both on the same page.

Recognize the symptoms of burnout, and set boundaries for yourself around work. Try blocking out your time and communicating with your supervisor about expectations for when you should be working.

If you are struggling to find balance, have a conversation with your loved ones and take a closer look at the division of labor in your household.

The biggest factor I took from their tips is that the word “you” is used quite frequently. If we are not proactive in taking care of our work-life balance with ourselves and our employers, our mental health will also take a toll.

Life can be hard to balance. I enjoy what I do, I love my family dearly; that is why it is all the more important to find the right balance for happiness. What word is going to help you achieve the balance that you seek?

Members Helping Members

MFCP has all of the content you need to produce a quick special section in honor of President's Day. But you need to act fast!

On our website ([click here](#)) you will find a photo and bio for each of our nation's 46 Presidents. The info includes their name, birthdate, party of affiliation, years in office and much, much more. Each block has a space at the bottom where you can place a logo for a sponsoring business.

This is a section I ran for years. Prior to the pandemic we only printed enough copies for the local 5th grade classes. To do that, we contacted the local schools to determine how many students were in each of the 5th grade classrooms. We then printed enough so that each student would have their own copy.

The teachers welcomed having this book as a learning tool. We also created a quiz that was tied to the publication. The students read through the booklet and then answer the quiz questions. The teachers collected the responses and sent them to us. We held a random drawing to determine a winner. The winner received a free pizza party for their entire class.

This format worked for years. Then the pandemic came around. It forced us to change how we produced the section. We made the decision to print the profiles in the actual weekly paper (9 up on a tabloid page). It was our opinion that this worked just as well as the booklet for the classroom. In fact, we had several readers contact us to say they enjoyed having the info in an easy to read and compare format.

Whichever way you chose to run your promotion I think you will find it very easy to sell and a winner for your advertisers!

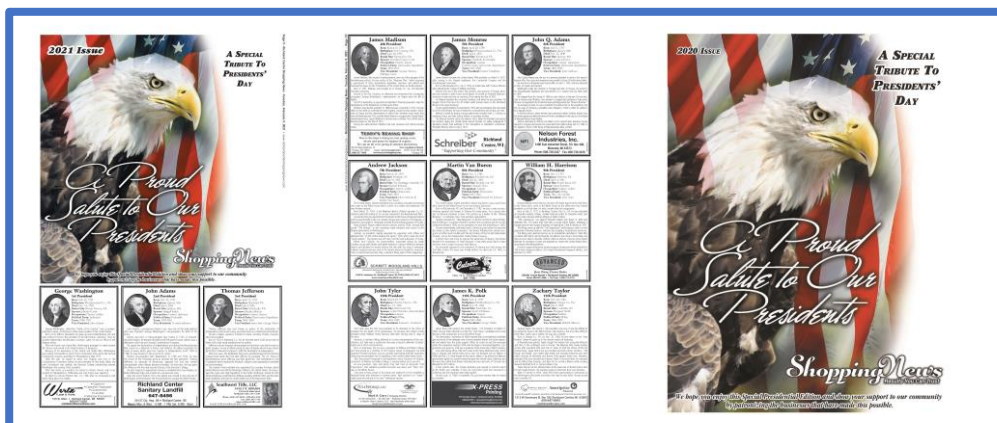
I've personally sold this in the past and found it very easy to do with just a phone call provided it was priced aggressively.

I hope you'll act quickly and give this section a try. If you have any questions, I'm just a phone call (715-340-9500) or email (director@mfcpl.org)

And, if you like this one – be sure to check out the info on the States tab as well!

Both are great examples of proving that MFCP is here to help you make more money!

Lee



Kevin Slimp



Beginning 2024 Right

Headlines from the past remind me that 2024 could be a great year

Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

Making bold predictions is easy. This year, I've paid close attention to forecasts by respected sports-writers in national print and online publications to see how my football bowl predictions match up against their predictions. Some of you probably did the same thing.

I was surprised that I correctly predicted the winners of the bowl games at a much higher rate than any of the national sportswriters I followed. There are still a few games remaining in the bowl season, so that could change. For now, however, I'm feeling pretty good about myself.

I think it's probably easier for someone like me to make predictions like these because I have nothing on the line. I can pick Missouri over Ohio State because I don't feel any pressure to pick the favorite. Let's face it: if I'm a respected sportswriter considering picking Ole Miss to beat Penn State, I know I will get hammered if my underdog pick loses. The safe bet is to choose the favorite. Then, if the favorite loses, most readers will understand because they picked the favorite, too.

I've made a career out of making good bets on the newspaper business. More times than not, my bets were not popular among "experts," but I somehow kept picking the right team.

My first bet was long ago, in the early 1990s. I was betting against big players like Adobe and others who were adamant that designing a newspaper in one location and then magically sending it to another location to print using a new technology called a PDF file was a crazy idea. For a lot of reasons, the idea couldn't work. Thankfully, a few folks placed their bet on my idea, and before long, the PDF file was the standard for printing newspapers and everything else. A few years later, the CEO of Adobe wrote to me, thanking me for possibly saving his company.

Fast-forward a few years, and I found myself once again making unpopular wagers. Most noted "experts" were convinced the printed newspaper was within just a few years of extinction. Even newspaper experts predicted the quick end of the printed word. Many leading journalism schools led the way by proclaiming the newspaper business "dead." I kept hearing the year 2018 knocked about as the year the final newspaper would turn off its press. I wonder when someone will print a tee shirt with "Kevin was right!" on the back.

A quick Google search just now – searching for headlines from the past week – uncovers a windfall of gloomy predictions, including:

Inroads: The Canadian Journal of Opinion

The Near-Death of Local News

Politico

No Stopping the Newspaper Death Spiral

Whenever I read headlines similar to those, I remember other headlines like this one from 2006:

The Economist

Who Killed the Newspaper?

I'm also reminded of this one from 2009:

Business Insider

The Year the Newspaper Died

Or this one from 2011:

The Guardian

British Newspaper to Die in 2019

Many of you are familiar with the *Newspaper Extinction Timeline* by Australian-based futurist Ross Dawson. I found the timeline from 2010, predicting that newspapers in the United States would be “insignificant” by 2017. According to the timeline, most other nations’ papers wouldn’t face extinction for another decade or two.

I’m not picking on Dawson or anyone else. Dawson has since backtracked on the extinction date in the U.S. and admitted it was much too early. That doesn’t, however, undo the damage that was done to newspapers who had to explain to their readers and advertisers that they weren’t dying.

Like football bowl predictions, it’s safer to agree with popular opinion than to make unpopular predictions. I suspect it also leads to more invitations to speak at conferences. I get it.

By now, you might be wondering if I will ever get to my point. Get ready. It’s coming now: It is the beginning of a new year. What if we agreed to pay less attention to experts declaring our demise and spend a little more time appreciating what we’ve created and investing in growing our newspapers?

I hear from publishers daily who are investing in the future of their newspapers. They’re investing in staff training, new designs, hardware & software, and marketing. They have not only not given up; they are investing in their futures.

If I were an expert who had predicted the death of newspapers a dozen years ago, I’d probably be saying something like, “I didn’t hit the exact date, but I was right. I was just a few years off.”

That seems like the safest way to keep getting speaking gigs. Thankfully, I’m not too concerned about that these days. So let me suggest you give my idea some consideration. It just might make for a much more enjoyable – as well as profitable – 2024.

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 Slippery Slope

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

I remember taking a day-long ski trip to Virginia. The charter bus was filled with skiers who had different levels of experience: a few were pretty good, most were average, and some were novices like me.

After a morning on the beginners' slope, I took a break to have a sandwich on the deck of the lodge. From my perch atop a picnic table, I could watch skiers on the trail in front of me. The ski lift lowered at a couple of places along the way, from which skiers could exit. The higher up the mountain the lift went, the steeper the slope. The last exit (which I never saw) was meant for expert skiers only.

As I munched on my turkey sandwich, I noticed a couple of dots way up on the mountain. Instead of gracefully zigzagging their way down like the others, they were travelling in a straight line. As they got closer, I could tell that they had fallen. All I could distinguish were two snow-covered lumps sliding down the mountain, elbows flying and skis dragging behind. As they got closer, one of the lumps shouted, "I can't stooooooop!"

Eventually – within about 30 seconds of each other – the lumps slid up against the deck, right in front of me. When they stood up, they looked like snow monsters, covered from head to toe with thick coatings of ice and snow. As they talked, it was obvious that neither had been skiing before. They had driven to the slope that morning, parked their car, rented skis, gotten into the first lift line they saw, rode it to the top, and immediately fell down. They didn't stand up again until they stopped at the bottom. One enthusiastically asked, "You gonna do it again?" His buddy shook his head and said, "No, I'll wait in the car."

We can easily agree that they were fortunate to escape injury, especially since – according to another spectator – they had traveled maybe a mile on their backsides. It was obvious that they needed some knowledge before they jumped into that lift line.

We're all guilty of that same thing. In our eagerness – or impatience – we've jumped into things that required more information than we were willing to seek. Like the old saying, "Sometimes, we don't know what we don't know."

In the advertising business, lack of information is a sales killer. When my wife was a communications director, a salesperson called on her to talk about promotional services. Talking is all he did. When his spiel was over, he asked, "So, what does this company do?" Only when he ran out of things to say did he express any interest in his prospect.

And what about salespeople who present spec ad ideas, before learning about their prospects' marketing needs? I've seen that happen too many times to count – usually with disastrous results. That's falling at the top of the mountain.

Knowledge is power. And lack of knowledge is a slippery slope.

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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



STOP.... It's All About Value

This month Ryan tells you to STOP and think about what value you bring to your customer with each and every interaction you propose. If it is not valuable to your customer, why would they respond back?

He shows how wording in a message can make all the difference.

Check the link below and find out why it is important to STOP and think about the value each interaction will provide before you send an email or pick up the phone.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2WT3EEqAcE

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](#).