



in this issue >>>

President's Corner- WD-40, Duct Tape, and Personnel

From the Office- A Road Map to Making Sure Your Voice is Heard

MVP at Work- What is Your Core Product?

Member in the News- ACP Publisher of the Year- Lisa Miller

Industry Pioneer- Trevor Slette- Citizen Publishing Company

Kevin Slimp- Artificial Intelligence

John Foust – Every Salesperson Needs a Parachute

Ryan Dohrn- Non-Salesy Subject Lines and Why They Work



2024 ACP Publisher of the Year

The ACP Publisher of the Year award is bestowed on an individual who has made significant contributions to the community publication industry within their market.

CONGRATULATIONS LISA MILLER!!

Read all about her accomplishments in this issue of Paperclips!

President's Corner



Mike Kolbe

WD-40, Duct Tape, and Personnel



We recently had a gear malfunction in our press folder when the teeth on a plastic cog became worn and no longer meshed with others. After asking ourselves why they would install one plastic cog among the other metal ones, we began to problem-solve.

We initially thought we were completely shut down, but our most experienced press hand, Dennis, was able to nurse it back into operation, with no guarantee of a fix lasting more than a few months (Weeks? Days? Hours?). In addition, we were uncertain if we would have only ½ fold capability, or the usual ¼ fold functionality required by several customers. That was Friday, and I'm happy to report that after a full day of printing Monday it's all systems "go".

The point here is that every mechanical and human cog is important to your operation. If not for the "farmer ingenuity" Dennis possesses, who knows what we would have done. From the owner and publisher on down, every person has a role to fill. If any of those cogs are missing or doesn't mesh with the others, you will have a problem on your hands.

Mechanical cogs are easier to maintain or replace than personnel; you simply repair or replace and move on. When the cog has a heart and head, diagnosis and repair/replacement can be a challenge. Perhaps the issue stems from job dissatisfaction, pay, hours, working conditions, a better offer, stress, problems at home or with their health, retirement... the list is endless.

Likewise, maintaining human cogs is easier than repairing or replacing them. While budget constraints and handbook policies often limit an obvious fix, addressing personnel issues once detected will save you both time and money in the long run. Communication is the WD-40 of personnel cogs. If applied regularly and liberally, you won't need to break out the duct tape and repair or bush-fix a personnel issue.

Sometimes averting a problem with communication is simple. A generous dose of "please" and "thank you" in the workplace can go a long way. Other times it's much more involved, needing to pull in two or more people to talk through an issue. While it can be uncomfortable, it's better than losing good people when it could be avoided. Along with communication, don't forget to document problems and potential solutions in case litigation looms.

Take care of your cogs. Customer service representatives, reporters, salespeople, management, bookkeepers, mail room workers, press operators, graphic designers, etc. all play a hand in producing a great product your customers will continue to read. The smoother they mesh, the better your operation will perform.

Mike

From the Office



A Road Map to Making Sure Your Voice is Heard

Lee Borkowski

As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of the publishing industry, it's essential to stay informed and equipped to tackle the challenges that lie ahead. In the spirit of supporting each other and ensuring the continued profitability of our publications, here are a few key updates and resources to help you navigate the road ahead:

#1) Postal rate increases – A proposed rate increase with a 7/14/24 effective date is on the table. First class and Marketing Mail rates are scheduled to increase 7.755%. The rate increase for periodicals is even worse – coming in at 9.754%. Below is a rate table that Peter Schultz of Woodward Printing Services shared with me.

CLASS	% CHANGE
First - Class Mail	7.755
USPS Marketing Mail	7.755
Periodicals	9.754
Package Services	7.755
Special Services	7.755

**Please note that these are average percentage increases. As each mailing scenario is different, you may see a higher or lower increase.*

#2) Some US Senators are not happy with the USPS. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and others recently wrote to express their concern regarding the Delivering For America plan and the future of the USPS. You can read their letter by clicking [HERE](#). Where does your Senator stand on this issue? Now would be a great time to give them a call and let them know where you stand!

#3) Minnesota publishers have another troubling issue to head off. A proposal to create a statewide recycling program financed by paper and packaging producers is included in the House & Senate Environment Omnibus bills (HF 3911/ SF 3887). The Minnesota Newspaper Association has worked to get newspapers exempt from SF3887. Any paper with a circulation over 20,000 would still be affected should HF3911 go through as written. The MNA provided more info and suggestions for publishers. You can read their info [HERE](#).

Now, some good news – MFCP has two important Zoom trainings coming up this week. Don't miss out on these valuable opportunities for professional development and networking within the industry!

Thursday, May 9th - Digital Ad Network Roundtable: Join us for a session filled with valuable insights into selling the Digital Ad Network. Hear from MFCP publishers who've successfully sold campaigns into the program and learn directly from their experiences. Login information has been sent via email, but if you haven't received it, please reach out to Director@mfcf.org for immediate assistance.

Friday, May 10th - "Get More Meetings Now! Research like a Pro!" with Ryan Dohrn: Elevate your skills in securing meetings and conducting effective research with this session led by Ryan Dohrn. Since it's open to all members and staff, it's an opportunity for everyone to benefit. [Remember, pre-registration is required, so don't forget to secure your spot by clicking here to register.](#)

MVP at Work



What is Your Core Product?

By Desiree Whalen
Wisconsin-Iowa Shopping News
Woodward Communications

We scurry about in our day-to-day calls to service and routines. It is what every person reading this does, I would bet on it. We keep going. With that, let us acknowledge the fact that most of us; as salespersons, designers, business owners, professionals, and roles within our personal lives and nuclear families; do not take enough time to recognize, foster and accept that which is our *core product*.

What is your core product? Is it the service you provide? If so, I challenge you to take a moment to identify what those specific services are that set you apart. What core values associate with that specific duty to service? Is it the tangible product you offer? In that case, identify the processes you had to go through to acquire those products for your clients that required perseverance and patience. Take time to identify and remind yourself of these foundations of values within your day-to-day actions.

By now, in reading this, you have been thoughtfully reminded that our core product is not all about the *things and services* we provide. *You are the core product* as much as your tangible and measurable product. Your advertisers are buying from *you*.

Consider all the different tangible and service-related products that you offer. Do you offer all the same products to all of your advertisers? Or, do *you* use the knowledge *you* have gained about your client to propose a custom plan that meets their needs and budget? *You* are a key component in which products you choose to offer in the best interest of your client being guided by *your core values*. And, it shows.

The beauty of embracing ourselves as the core product to our business relationships is that just by being ourselves, sharing our services and capabilities and providing great customer service, we earn trust. When we are ourselves, our clients see our passion shine. We make what we do look like it is easy for us and a pleasure. Maybe even make working with us and spending advertising dollars *fun!* We bring positive energy!

This article was inspired by different moments and presentations during our Spring conference in Mankato, Minnesota. Manuel Karam provided a very personable presentation and sales training session in which some inspiration for this article derived from. I truly believe “Putting the fun in sales *Fundamentals*” begins with remembering to be ourselves and that our roles in our daily work *is and should be fun*. It all begins with *you*.

Go out and have some fun this month!

Member in the News



2024 ACP Publisher of the Year

CONGRATULATIONS LISA MILLER FROM ALL OF US AT MFCP

The ACP Publisher of the Year award is bestowed on an individual who has made significant contributions to the community publication industry within their market. They lead an organization that has shown an ability to positively represent publications in their market through sales, innovation, respect, partnerships, and other means.

This year's Publisher of the Year recipient is the Chief Operations Officer who oversees 11 small independently owned weekly publications in four states including Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota. She is currently serving as the 2nd Vice President on the board of the Association of Community Publishers and was a board member of ACP prior to the merger with IFPA. She is also a current board member and former President of the Midwest Free Community Paper Association and serves on the board of the Iowa Newspaper Foundation.

Many of us on the boards of these organizations would tell you that she is not only the leader of her company, but she is also an exceptional leader to the entire industry. She is active on several committees for these organizations and is also serving as the chair of the 2024 ACP Conference! Not only does she serve on these committees but goes above and beyond to put in the work to make them thrive. She does not sit quietly when something needs to be done. "I can do that" is something she says often and then always follows through. We do not know how she does everything and manages to keep it all straight!

This year's Publisher of the Year is always willing to help other publishers and managers in the industry. One example that was recently written about in MFCP's Paperclips Newsletter mentions how she went out of her way to help a fellow publisher to ensure a print job would be delivered to the customer on time. Peggy Loveless from The Cresco Shopper wrote: "She dropped any plans she may have had for that Friday night, drove the hour to the terminal, picked up the job, and drove a few more hours to meet me!" She is a true leader to Community Publishers.

In addition to her work life, she is a loving wife and mother to her husband Ryan and two children Devin and KyLee. Her accomplishments and community partners are so numerous we could speak about her for another hour. Instead, please join me in congratulating **ACP's 2024 Publisher of the Year, Lisa Miller from New Century Press in Rock Rapids, Iowa.**

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.

If you know of a person or company that should be featured, please contact Lee at director@mfc.org

This month we are featuring Trevor Slette with Citizen Publishing Company and the Windom Shopper.

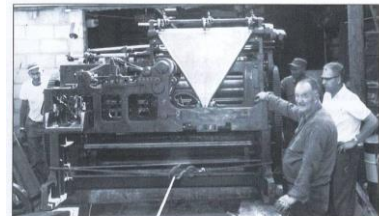


Meet the 3rd Generation of the Citizen Publishing Company

The Slette Family-Conner. Trevor. Katie. and Cullen



Like the building that housed the Citizen in 1966, the employees inside were also a little rundown and decrepit. That soon changed.



Two happy publishers watch 10,000 pounds of press go out the back of the old Citizen. Ken, far right, is happy to get rid of the old clunker. The publisher from Grackle (front) is happy to get the press.

Left: Like the building that housed the Citizen in 1966, the employees inside were also a little rundown and decrepit. That soon changed.

Center: The Citizen at its current location in Windom, MN

Right: Two happy publishers watch 10,000 pounds of press go out the back of the old Citizen. Ken, far right, is happy to get rid of the old clunker. The publisher from Grackle (front) is happy to get the press.

I'll start this journey with my grandparents, Ken and Gerrie Anderson. Ken grew up in Grand Rapids, ND, and Gerrie in Wahpeton, ND. Both of them were heavily involved in WWII; my grandma served with the WAVES (Women's Auxiliary Volunteer) and my grandpa, with most of his buddies already in the services, enlisted in the Air Force. He was stationed in Norwich, England, and served as a top turret gunner on a B-24 bomber. His squadron flew 11 bombing missions over Germany.

While volunteering for the auxiliary, my grandma obtained a journalism degree from the University of North Dakota.

When my grandparents met shortly after my grandpa returned from WWII, it was love at first sight. After dating for some time, they started planning their course of action. They hit upon a plan: they would both take printing courses at the State School of Science in Wahpeton, ND. This would prepare them with mechanical abilities so they could one day have their own newspaper.

There, they learned how to operate the linotype, which was the composition machine of the day. Printing presses, type drawers, and page forms soon became familiar to them. They also took classes in business law and other subjects that would prepare them for their goal of eventually owning their own newspaper.

In the spring of 1948, the Andersons heard of the death of Harry Thompson, publisher of the Cooperstown, ND Sentinel-Courier. My grandma had worked as an intern for Thompson for two weeks earlier in her college career. They contacted his widow, Genevieve, who badly needed someone to run the paper for her. They were hired at a wage of \$40 per week each. They were in the big money!

Genevieve tried to supervise her young employees by enacting such brilliant office rules as insisting that all 3-cent stamps be removed from the building each night "in case of fire." What she planned to do should she ever see flames licking away at expensive machinery and piles of newsprint was a mystery.

Six months in Cooperstown was all that the 26-year-old Andersons could endure. So they resigned their lucrative positions and returned to Wahpeton to make their home temporarily while they looked for a small newspaper to buy for their own.

Eldon Lum, an established Wahpeton publisher, and Gil Reeder, a kindly Wahpeton banker, took the penniless would-be publishers under their wings as the search began. In business and in debt, Lum knew of a family man operating his own paper in tiny Battle Lake, MN, population 706, called The Battle Lake Review.

The price? \$10,000. No quibbling was involved on the part of either the buyer or the seller.

From there, they went to Barnesville, MN, and eventually to Windom, MN, where they purchased The Cottonwood County Citizen in 1966. And we have been here since.

It was a motley crew that came with the Citizen. In the back shop were an ex-convict, an alcoholic, and a long-haired biker. The ex-con, also a linotype operator, carried a gun, and holes in the ceiling were mute evidence of former occasions when he had shot at some innocent bird that had flown in through an open front door. Tales of past incidents were hilarious but also frightening to the new owners.

Through the years, both my grandma and grandpa continued to write their columns. The office staff increased. Gramps assumed the stature of publisher, boss, and father adviser to upset employees (mainly his kids). Grandma's reportorial duties decreased, and she was able to spend more time at home, yet was always on hand to fill in as a line of editors and reporters came and went at the Citizen. "My Say" continued to garner both state and national awards.

In 1967, area publishers gathered together to form the Peach, a weekly agricultural supplement to each of the newspapers: Windom, Lakefield, Mt. Lake, St. James, Madelia, Jackson, and Trimont. The peach-colored advertising pages were printed in Madelia. The publishers and their spouses gathered monthly at a business (and some monkey-business) meeting. A great camaraderie was formed.

The Windom Shopper was started in 1969, which is our link to the Midwest Free Community Papers organization. We are coming up on our 55-year anniversary this summer!

In 1979, my grandpa became involved with two young fellows — Chuck Draper of Pipestone and Jim Keuhl of Jackson — in starting a printing plant centrally located in Slayton, about 25 miles from Windom. The three newspapermen built a new building and installed state-of-the-art equipment. Page One was the name chosen for the plant.

My Grandma and Grandpa continued to own a majority interest in the Citizen until 1991 when the newspaper was sold to Kim and Terry Anderson (my mom and dad).

I graduated from St. Cloud State University in the spring of 1996 with a degree in teaching. I taught for two years in the Eagan, Apple Valley, Rosemount school district, working with kids with special needs. I have always been a firm believer that college is there to help you grow up, not necessarily for the degree you earn. So when the opportunity arose to move back to my hometown to work for my parents, Katie and I were excited for the move.

Then, in June of 1997, my wife Katie and I came back to work for my parents at the Citizen. Positions became available when my parents purchased the Mt. Lake Observer and Butterfield Advocate.

I started in subscriptions, and Katie in sales. Unfortunately, Katie contracted Lyme disease shortly after starting and eventually had to quit because of the debilitating illness.

As is often the case, there is a silver lining in all setbacks. Katie's departure from the business allowed me to move into sales, giving me exposure to all facets of the Citizen.

On July 2, 2007, my Dad and I became partners as we inked a sales agreement that would allow us to buy the Citizen over the next ten years. The Citizen remains one of only five or six county seat weeklies to be independently owned. All the others are owned by newspaper chains.

I am forever grateful and proud to be a third-generation publisher and am excited for our future!

Trevor

Kevin Slimp



Artificial Intelligence

It's crucial to make a plan before you jump in too deep

Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

Almost daily, I hear from longtime readers of my column who write to tell me they've recently benefited from something I wrote months or years ago. I suppose it's why I keep writing these columns after all these years.

Just this morning, I heard from a publisher who wrote that he had begun using an application I wrote about three years ago and was finding it very helpful. Another wrote yesterday to tell me she had followed my advice about holding a focus group made up of community members, some newspaper readers, and some non-readers. She wanted me to know that it was incredibly beneficial to her paper, and they had made several changes based on the results of the focus group.

Recently, I've heard from a lot of folks asking for advice related to artificial intelligence. Press association directors have written to ask if I would lead a convention session or webinar on the topic (yes, I plan to offer a webinar on AI soon). I even responded to a request from an industry journal in Australia and Southeast Asia to get my thoughts concerning a photo that had run in a major publication there using AI. Every time I read a story from that part of the world, I'm convinced they have a knack for writing great headlines. The headline for that story was "Tummy tat a croptop giveaway, and Slimp says, 'Never in news.'"

I realize the use of AI is a fact of life in today's world. However, the use of artificial intelligence requires much the same scrutiny as was given to photo editing when applications like Photoshop and Photostyle became available almost 40 years ago.

In the early days of Photoshop, it was almost scary for me to face a crowd of veteran photographers. Even the use of tools we take for granted today, like adjusting levels or sharpening an image, was met with much deliberation among audiences. Longtime photographers, especially from major dailies, often protested that nothing could be adjusted in a photo. If that became the industry standard, my Photoshop classes wouldn't have lasted very long.

In the same way, we need to be very careful about the way we use AI. It would be simplistic to say that we not use it all. Much of the software we are already using had built-in AI features. However, I am suggesting that we give the use of AI even more scrutiny than we did Photoshop a few decades ago. I agree with writer Kelly McBride that every newspaper needs an ethics policy related to the use of artificial intelligence (poynter.org, March 25, 2024). Kelly's column includes a starter kit to give newspapers a starting point for addressing the use of AI.

Looking back at the early days of Photoshop, I would emphasize that the use of Photoshop shouldn't be to improve or alter an image. Instead, the goal was to make the image printed on the page appear as close to the original photo as possible. Knowing that dot gain, ink limits, quality of paper stock, and other variables affected the printed image, photo editing applications offered tools to offset distortions that would otherwise appear on the printed page.

Much has been written about the use of artificial intelligence in the workplace. In our industry, it's even more crucial that we give the use of AI serious thought before diving in too deep. It would be easy to ignore the issue altogether. That would be naive. On the other hand, it's easy – especially for those of us who have a bit of “tech nerd” built into our DNA – to get overly excited about the use of AI. Let me caution against both extremes.

We will be using AI in our work. You probably already are. However, be very careful when and how AI is used.

I was invited to speak at a local civic club in Knoxville a couple of weeks ago. They asked me to speak on the topic of artificial intelligence. I learned the audience was larger than usual and noticed that some of the folks brought pads and pens to write notes. Many were business owners, and they obviously had a lot of interest in the topic.

Before I spoke my first word, a hand went up. “Is AI going to put us all out of business?” a man in the third row asked.

I spoke to the group for about 30 minutes and spoke of the limitations and dangers of AI. I'm relatively sure everyone felt, by the time I finished, that their worlds wouldn't be crashing in any-time soon from the use of artificial intelligence.

This week, I'm part of an international conference made up of more than 1,000 participants in Charlotte, North Carolina. As attendees come by to meet me, they often tell me they're from “a little town you've never heard of.” In most cases, I'm pleased to tell them, “I've visited your town while working with the newspaper.” So far, every person has gone on to tell me how much they loved the community newspaper in their town.

Sometimes we forget how much people love and appreciate us. And sometimes we forget how important – and serious – our work is. Thank you for making a difference.

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



Every Salesperson Needs a Parachute

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

Anthony is a veteran ad salesperson with a common sense philosophy. “You’ve got to have a parachute,” he told me. “When you’re in the middle of a presentation, and you hit an unexpected glitch, your prospect throws you a curve or you can’t think of what to say next, that’s when you use your parachute.”

He explained that the purpose of his kind of parachute is to pull a salesperson out of trouble and keep the conversation moving in the right direction. “The beauty of a well-stated parachute is that the other person doesn’t know it’s a rescue technique. It seems like it is a continuation of the regular conversation. There are as many parachute possibilities as there are salespeople. The one I most rely on is benefits – not the benefits of running ads in my paper, but the benefits offered by that particular advertiser.”

Based on my conversation with Anthony, four points come to mind:

1. Start with benefits. “The way I see it, there are a couple of advantages in focusing on benefits,” he said. “First, it keeps the advertiser talking, and one topic that every advertiser loves to talk about is their products and services. The second advantage is that learning more about their benefits provides me with valuable details to use in their ads.

2. Bridge to the target audience. According to Anthony, target audiences and benefits are so closely connected that they can be mentioned together. “If you’re dealing with experienced prospects, it’s a simple shift between the two areas. A big key is to help them visualize a smaller part of a larger group of people.”

3. Ask questions. By asking questions, you can direct the discussion. In most cases, the person asking the questions is in control of the conversation – and that’s a welcome confidence builder. “When the other person does most of the talking, it relieves pressure on the salesperson,” he explained. “Plus, it provides you with a lot of information you can use. I might ask something like, ‘What are some ways that people can benefit from the XYZ Widget?’ Or – if benefits have already been discussed – ‘What are some *additional* ways that people can benefit?’

“From that point, it’s easy to expand the discussion to target audiences with a question like, ‘And what types of people are most likely to need or appreciate those benefits?’ That can put everything back on track again.”

4. It's okay to ask about audiences first. “Sometimes it’s more practical to start with audiences, then talk about meaningful benefits,” he said. “For example, I might ask, ‘What types of people are likely to be interested in this model of Widget?’ Then I can ask, ‘What are the benefits that will appeal to that group?’ Benefits and audiences provide such easy transitions that there’s no trouble going back and forth between the two.”

Anthony’s technique makes a lot of sense. When you feel like your sales presentation is losing altitude, the whole idea of a parachute is to give you a soft landing.

(c) Copyright 2024 by John Foust. All rights reserved.

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



Non-Salesy Subject Lines and Why They Work

This month Ryan shares how the brain reacts to suggestion. Short subject lines with a question mark can be a strategic way to engage a person's brain to want to open your email.

He encourages you to try a test and send out a number of emails with the same subject line such as "Would you consider this?" and see what your results are. Check out the link below to find out just why this works.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCUJ6-yjbQ>

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](#).