

PAPERCLIPS

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

[Find us on Facebook](#)

in this issue >>>

*President's Corner- Generational Differences are Good for Growth
From the Office- Don't Throw Free Money Away!*

MVP at Work- Generations in the Workplace

Member News- Farewell Old Friend

Members Helping Members- Enhance Your Team With Press Pass

Meet Your MFCP Board- Q&A With Some of the MFCP Board

Kevin Slimp- Determining How to Use (and Not Use) AI

John Foust – Sunshine in the Weather Forecast

Ryan Dohrn- Polishing your Pitch: Sales Presentation Mastery

MFCP presents a Russell Viers webinar

CHALLENGING IMAGES.....

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!!!

No designer wants to receive a crappy photo at deadline, but it does happen. We are going to learn how to adjust your most challenging images. Dig deep and get them ready. Russell will take them all on and demonstrate how to adjust properly.

Join MFCP on how to adjust challenging images.

LIVE on Zoom
JULY 11 @ 1:00PM CT

It's not too late! Don't miss out on this great webinar!

President's Corner



Mike Kolbe

Generational Differences are Good for Growth

Generational differences are interesting to study, and an important part of our continuing education to excel in business, interpersonal relations and society.

It's imperative for our youth to learn from their predecessors. Best business practices have developed over decades of trial and error, and most still hold true today. Those new to the publishing business, whether in sales, editorial or management, would do well to watch and seek the advice of those who came before them.

Likewise, those of us with years of experience should pay attention to the younger talent in our offices (or working from home). Rather than roll our eyes or feel threatened by new ideas, technology, social norms, etc., we should try to understand how they will help us remain sharp and in touch with today's employees, decision-makers, new businesses and consumers.

The MFCP MVPs (Most Valuable Professionals) are likely members of Generations "Y" & "Z/Millennials", and recently tasked the MFCP Board of Directors, mostly "Boomers" and "Gen X", to read "Eat That Frog!" by Brian Tracy. I'm not much of a reader, but accepted this as an invitation to learn something new. I'm glad I did.

For those who have not heard the phrase "eat the frog", it refers to eating a live frog the first thing in the morning. You will then have the satisfaction of knowing that is likely the worst thing that will happen to you all day. Tackle your ugliest, toughest task first, and the rest will be a piece of cake. Thank you, MVPs, for teaching (reminding) this old dog a valuable trick.

I caught the tail end of the "Boomer" Generation, and have watched the world change through my own children (New Math and the Internet), co-workers (flexible hours and business casual), and now grandchildren (tummy time and custom strollers).

Where do we go from "Gen Z", I wondered? Well, leave it to the Internet to tell me I almost missed the most recent generation. Please give a warm welcome to "Generation Alpha", of which my grandchildren are members. These are people born between 2010 and 2024 (told you I almost missed it). By next year, they will be the largest generation the world has ever known, and they will impact brand influence and purchasing power beyond their years. They will shape social media and cultural norms more than any generation before them.

I have attended seminars, webinars and discussions in bars, about the strengths and weaknesses of the current and coming generations. While we don't always understand those who came before or after us, we should continue to appreciate the differences each generation brings. It's vital to our ability to communicate and interact with friends, family and business associates every day.

Mike

From the Office



Don't Throw Free Money Away!

Check out your membership renewal specials

Lee Borkowski

Aloha, MFCP Members!

That's the classic island greeting that means "Hello" and so much more. It conveys love, peace, and compassion—values that resonate deeply within the free community paper industry. This year, "Aloha" is also the theme of our Summer Leadership Summit, where we will embrace these values in all our activities and discussions.

For those of you heading to our Summer Leadership Summit, you're in for a treat. The ideas you'll gather, along with the friendships you'll forge or strengthen, will serve you well for years to come.

This month, I have two great advertising specials to share with you:

Special 1: Each year, after paying their membership invoice, members receive two free classified ad coupons to use between July 1 and June 30th.

The MCN network classified ads have a 1.4 million reach and a suggested retail value of \$249. But, as a paid member, you get to use two of them per year for free! Other members have found that these coupons are perfect for enticing new advertisers to try something different, rewarding existing customers, or just strengthening a sale. The important thing is to make sure you use them and not let them go to waste!

Below is an actual FREE MCN ad that was submitted by Sarah Thelen, Freeborn County Shopper. How wise of her to put this free member benefit to use in a way that helps strengthen her relationship with one of her existing advertisers! What advertiser do you have that could benefit from reaching a broader audience?? Hint- use a coupon!

TRAILERS ALBERT LEA, MN - We Stock Trailers by ALUMA, HAULABOUT, LIGHTNING, MISSION, EZ-HAULER, QUALITY STEEL, and ALUMINUM. Knowledgeable Sales Staff - Competitive Prices. HI-TECH MOTORWERKS - 507-373-2464, hitechmotorwerks.com ALBERT LEA, MN - INTERSTATE 90-EXIT 157. (mcn)

Special 2: We're also offering a bonus for any advertiser that purchases our 2x2 display ad. With each 2x2 ad purchased, the advertiser will receive a free 30-word classified ad (with the same ad info as the 2x2).

The 2x2 ad network reaches over 1.1 million homes and businesses, providing a wide audience for your message. Additionally, the MCN classified ad reaches 1.4 million homes and businesses, ensuring your customers' ads get noticed. The suggested retail selling price of the 2x2 is \$600. There is no charge for the 30-word classified so I'm sure you will agree this is a great value for our advertisers. Note: this offer is valid through August 2024, so be sure to take advantage of it soon!

Greg Birkett from the Dubuque Advertiser took advantage of this benefit with the following ad. Here is a sample of his 2x2 and free classified.



THE BAT GUYS BAT REMOVAL: We offer harmless bat removal, bat proofing, clean up and full attic restoration. Includes 10-year warranty. Thebatguysbatremoval.com Give us a call today! 888-255-9950.

[Click here to review a copy of our summer special.](#) Encourage your sales team to leverage these offers—it's good for business!

Aloha and see you soon!

Lee

MVP at Work



Generations in the Workplace

By Desiree Whalen

Account Executive, Inside Sales

Wisconsin-Iowa Shopping News, Woodward Community Media

Our group of MVPs have had some great conversations in the last couple of months about topics that remind us of the many factors that contribute to individual values, communication styles and perspectives.

In last months MVP at Work clip, Amanda Thooft, of Star Publications, covered the conversation of different personalities and how being cognizant of individual differences of personalities can help improve communication and relationships with others, even ourselves; be it the workplace, business or personal relationships.

This month our group piggybacked off the topic of personalities and delve into the hot topic of generational differences. We have all either been a part of, or overheard conversations at some point about the silent generation, baby boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z and/or Gen Alpha.

There are a wider range of generations in the workforce than ever before. People are remaining in the work force and running their businesses into older age for a number of reasons; increased life expectancy being a major contributor. In order to effectively communicate and perform acts of service in the workplace and in business with our clients; even friends and family, we need to be aware of generational differences, perhaps, as much as personality differences.

One of the arguments about generations often heard is when individuals feel like they identify better with generations that are outside of their age range or don't understand generations outside of their own at all. While the list of descriptions below gives a good idea of the breakdown of current generations in our businesses, there are variables like experiences and different conditioning that create overlap into one or more of these categories. Keeping this in mind helps prevent rigid generalizations, which is also important in relationship building and communication.

The diagram below is from [Purdue Global](#) and gives an outline of each generation currently in the workforce with years for each generation, the events that shaped them, traits, motivations, communications styles and worldviews. Hopefully by having a better understanding of each generation, we can find on ground and/or a better perception of values and strengths that help us build better relationships with each other.

Not in this list is Gen Alpha. (2010-2025) Gen Alpha is not quite into our workforce yet, but they will be in the next decade! With individuals working longer before retirement, if they retire at all, we will experience working with a wide range of generations, now and into the future. Gen Alpha ranges from 2010-2024. Gen alphas are independent, self-sufficient, socialize virtually and have a lower learning curve for technical skills. This generation is shaped by the 2020 pandemic. We can start learning about this generations traits and values now to be better prepared to welcome and adapt this generation into the workforce in the future. Learn more about Gen Alpha [here](#).

Hopefully, this information serves as an informative reminder that we all come from different times and spaces. There are strong and challenging traits in each generation. As leaders, publishers and community allies, it is our job to foster the strengths each of us bring to the table. We can open up gates of perception and solve a lot of problems by better understanding each other and working together.



GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

TRADITIONALISTS Born: 1925 – 1945

Dependable | Straightforward | Tactful | Loyal

Shaped by: The Great Depression, World War II, radio, and movies	Motivated by: Respect, recognition, providing long-term value to the company	Communication style: Personal touch, handwritten notes instead of email	Worldview: Obedience over individualism; age equals seniority; advancing through the hierarchy
--	--	---	--



BABY BOOMERS Born: 1946 – 1964

Optimistic | Competitive | Workaholic | Team-Oriented

Shaped by: Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, Watergate	Motivated by: Company loyalty, teamwork, duty	Communication style: Whatever is most efficient, including phone calls and face-to-face	Worldview: Achievement comes after paying one's dues; sacrifice for success
--	---	---	---



49%
Baby Boomers who expect to or already are working past age 70 or do not plan to retire*



10,000
Baby Boomers reach retirement age every day*



GENERATION X Born: 1965 – 1980

Flexible | Informal | Skeptical | Independent

Shaped by: The AIDS epidemic, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dot-com boom	Motivated by: Diversity, work-life balance, their personal-professional interests rather than the company's interests	Communication style: Whatever is most efficient, including phone calls and face-to-face	Worldview: Favoring diversity; quick to move on if their employer fails to meet their needs; resistant to change at work if it affects their personal lives
---	---	---	---



55%
Startup founders who are Gen Xers—the highest percentage!

BY 2028
Gen Xers will outnumber Baby Boomers*



MILLENNIALS Born: 1981 – 2000

Competitive | Civic- and Open-Minded | Achievement-Oriented

Shaped by: Columbine, 9/11, the internet	Motivated by: Responsibility, the quality of their manager, unique work experiences	Communication style: IMs, texts, and email	Worldview: Seeking challenge, growth, and development; a fun work life and work-life balance; likely to leave an organization if they don't like change
--	---	--	---



75%
Percentage of global workforce to be made up of Millennials by 2025*



18% men
12% women
Millennials ages 25-34 living at home with their parents*



GENERATION Z Born: 2001 – 2020

Global | Entrepreneurial | Progressive | Less Focused

Shaped by: Life after 9/11, the Great Recession, access to technology from a young age	Motivated by: Diversity, personalization, individuality, creativity	Communication style: Social media, texts, IMs	Worldview: Self-identify as digital device addicts; value independence and individuality; prefer to work with Millennial managers, innovative coworkers, and new technologies
--	---	---	---



67%
Gen Zers who want to work at companies where they can learn skills to "advance their careers"



80%
Gen Zers who believe government and employers should subsidize, pay full tuition or provide direct training for students.*



1. Report: Almost Half of Baby Boomers Still Working Past Age 70. NRMILA. <https://www.nrmilaonline.org/2022/10/24/report-almost-half-of-baby-boomers-still-working-past-age-70>
 2. Aging. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/aging/index.html#~:text=More%20than%2019%2C000%20people%20turn,are%20living%20longer%2C%20the%20health%20and%20>
 3. Generation X: Connecting with Health Care's Next Big Consumer. Cosimano L. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/generation-x-connecting-health-care-next-big-consumer-apr-mba#~:text=Sixty%2Dfive%20million%20and%20>
 4. Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/#~:text=Generation%20>
 5. Millennials in the Workplace Statistics: Generational Disparities in 2023. TeamDage. <https://teamdage.com/millennials-in-the-workplace-statistics/#~:text=of%20the%20generation,Top%20Millennials%20in%20the%20Workplace%20>
 6. Millennials Are Living with Their Parents at Higher Rates than Past Generations, and They're Not Ashamed. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/millennials-living-at-home-as-an-adult-2023-1#~:text=Since%20the%20onset%20>
 7. Generation Z Workplace Statistics. Forage. <https://www.theforage.com/blog/basics/generation-z-statistics>. 8. Question the Quo. ECMC Group. <https://www.questionthequo.org/media/qj5p3gaz/question-the-quo-june-2023-report.pdf>.

Member News

Farewell, Old Friend

On Saturday, June 8th, a heartfelt Celebration of Life was held in Estes Park, Colorado, to honor the memory of our beloved former member, Gladys Van Drie. The gathering was graced by industry leaders Greg Birkett, Shane and Jolene Goodman, Cassey Recore, Lou Ann Sorenson, and Lee Borkowski, who unanimously agreed it was one of the most touching celebrations they had ever attended.



Left to right: Shane and Jolene Goodman, Karen Van Drie, Lee Borkowski, Greg Birkett, Cassey Recore, Lou Ann Sornson, Karla Van Drie.

For those who wish to view the service, it can be accessed [here](#).

You can also read her obituary [here](#).

Members Helping Members

Enhance Your Team with Press Pass

Unlock a Pipeline of New Talent!

I just finished the Press Pass course that you signed me up for. I think it was an amazing way to learn about the journalism world and get a lot of great advice for how to handle situations, and just cover the bases of working with a publication. I think this would be a great thing for any new writers that come on board with Star Publications.

I think the best part of it too was that it covered all topics around working for the press. It covered interviews, writing, editing, taking pictures, writing cutlines, legal aspects and it gave ideas about where to find stories. I'll be glad to answer any questions you would like to know about the course if you have any!

Thank you!

Emily

Are you facing challenges in finding qualified individuals to join your team? We understand that hiring can be tough, especially in today's competitive market. That's why we're excited to re-introduce you to an invaluable resource that could help alleviate your staffing concerns while nurturing fresh talent in your community.

The Press Pass program is designed to empower individuals with limited or no news experience to become effective community journalists. This program not only benefits aspiring reporters but also presents a unique opportunity for businesses like yours to tap into a pool of motivated and trained individuals ready to contribute to your organization.

Here's how Press Pass can benefit your business:

Access to Trained Talent: Press Pass graduates are equipped with the basic skills needed to excel in journalism roles, making them valuable additions to your team.

Cost-Effective Recruitment: Save time and resources by hiring individuals who have already received training and are passionate about local storytelling.

Addressing Staffing Challenges: Use Press Pass as a resource to fill entry-level positions or train interns who can grow into valuable assets for your company.

Community Engagement: Employing local reporters fosters stronger connections with your community and enhances your brand reputation.

By leveraging Press Pass, you not only support the development of budding journalists but also invest in the future of your business.

As a member of MFCP, you have the opportunity to offer Press Pass to your employees at a special discounted rate. It's a win-win situation for your organization and the aspiring journalists in your community.

Just contact me and I will help you find out how to [“Earn Your Press Pass”](#) !

Lee director@mfc.org

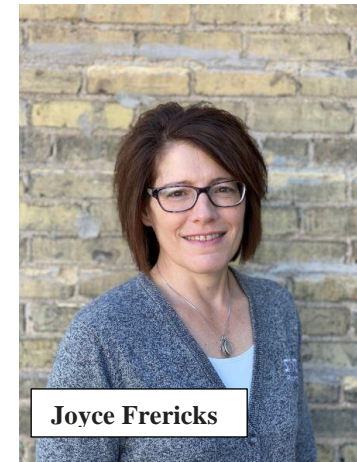
Q & A With Our MFCP Board

Who we are... What we think...Our vision for the future!

This month we are featuring a Q&A with some of our MFCP Board. It is the beginning of our fiscal year and the start of our 70th year as an organization. Their dedication is like none other and it comes through in their answers! Enjoy!



Mike Kolbe



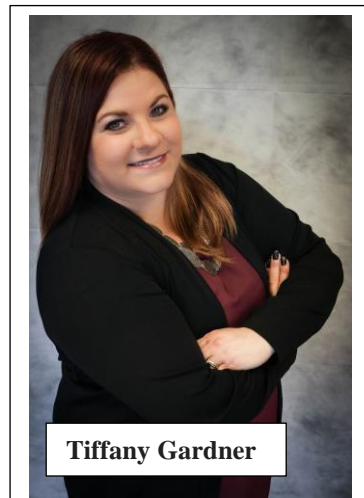
Joyce Frericks



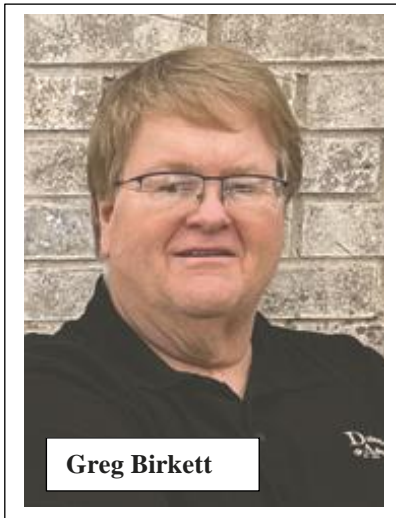
Corey Regnier



Julia Thompson



Tiffany Gardner



Greg Birkett



Carrie Vander Weerd



Mike Kolbe, MFCP President The Rocket, Harlan, IA

Can you tell us about your background in the publishing industry and your current role within your organization?

While earning my Journalism degree from Iowa State University in the early 80s, I began part-time gigs as a sports writer for the Ames (IA) Daily Tribune, and reporter and adv. salesperson for the Tri-County Times in Huxley/Slater. I joined the Harlan Newspapers as an adv. salesperson in '83. During a brief hiatus from Harlan, I sold adv. for the Iowa Farmer Today, published by the Cedar Rapids Gazette at the time. I am currently the General Manager of the Harlan Newspapers, including the Rocket shopper and twin weekly newspapers, the Tribune and News-Advertiser.

How did you get involved with Midwest Free Community Papers, and what motivated you to join the board?

I attended many training conferences in the early years of SGI, which later became MFCP. I gained much of my industry knowledge and many professional connections through those meetings, and was able to use the skills to improve my sales and management abilities. I was asked to join the Board of Directors several years ago, and am currently the President of the organization. It has been a rewarding experience to work with, and learn from so many talented, dedicated people.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the free community paper industry today, and how do you think we can address them?

Like most other industries, attracting young, skilled talent is crucial to our success. Our businesses and publications must remain relevant to employees and consumers, alike. Another challenge is distribution methods and costs. The unreliability of the US Postal Service and continued postal rate hikes make it increasingly difficult to keep advertising rates competitive with other media. Likewise, carriers seem to be less available and responsible than they used to be.

What opportunities do you see for growth and innovation in our industry?

Many publications have begun to offer digital advertising packages, either in combination with print, or in lieu of print. Like any new way of thinking, it is taking time to train salespeople and execute digital plans. The good news is consumers still turn to print for trusted news and advertising information, while radio, cable and broadcast outlets become less trusted and more fragmented.

What contributions are you most proud of during your time with the board?

Every publication and publisher is unique, and I hope I've brought new ideas, questions and perspectives to the organization.

What are your goals for the association in the next few years?

I would like to see increased participation during training conferences. With so many consolidations taking place within the publishing industry, we need to convince decision-makers that an investment in their employees' development is an investment toward their operation's success.

What advice would you give to someone new to the community paper publishing industry?

Watch what successful people do, and learn to emulate their actions. This can be done in-house, and through training and networking during conferences.

What are some of your hobbies or interests outside of work?

I head to a nearby state park to camp when time allows, and spend as much time as possible with my family. I have also been active in local government, including Harlan City Council, Mayor and soon-to-be Shelby County Supervisor.

What is the last book you read or the last movie you watched that you would recommend?

I read "Eat That Frog" lakeside the last two evenings (see pervious answer), as recommended by Cory Regnier and the MVPs. The last movie/series I watched (again) was Band of Brothers. Although completely different subject matters, there is much to be learned from both of those.

Who has been a significant influence or mentor in your life and career, and why?

My father taught me that persistence, hard work, dedication and treating people with respect will take you a long way in life. My career has been largely shaped by the late Leo Mores and his two sons, Steve and Alan, who hired me straight out of college. I was fortunate to have 39 years under their direction at the Harlan Newspapers.

Can you share a fun fact about yourself that people might not know?

I can recite the alphabet backward, and once had my hands on the steering wheel of the Navy's USS Eisenhower, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, in the Atlantic Ocean.

What's a personal motto or philosophy that you live by?

Life is short. Live for today and plan for tomorrow.

How do you believe free community papers impact local communities, and why is this important to you?

Connecting consumers with local businesses is imperative for our communities. Every dollar spent locally on goods and services is multiplied many times over, helping to bolster our business community, population and tax base. Without these components, it's impossible to sustain quality schools, health care facilities and other amenities that people want and need.

Where do you see the future of free community papers, and how can we prepare for it?

I believe hybrid print and online publications will be a fact of life for the next generation. Data collection and technology updates will be crucial to pull this off successfully.

Is there anything you would like to say to the members of Midwest Free Community Papers?

If you want the best, inexpensive training available to yourself and your employees, attend as many MFCP conferences as possible. The speakers and networking opportunities are virtually endless. Speaking of "virtually", if you are unable to attend in person, many training sessions are available via ZOOM. Open and read your notices from Lee and other MFCP personnel. You WILL miss something important if you don't.



Joyce Frericks Business Manager/Publisher Star Publications, LLC

Can you tell us about your background in the publishing industry and your current role within your organization?

I have been working at Star Publications since 1991. I started in accounts receivable and became a partner in 2007. I am currently the business manager/publisher.

How did you get involved with Midwest Free Community Papers, and what motivated you to join the board?

We became a member of MFCP when they merged with the Minnesota Free Paper Association. I went to a publisher's summit that summer and have been a fan of MFCP since. Everyone at that meeting was very welcoming and shared ideas that still benefit us today. I wanted to be able to give back to MFCP as they have given so much to us.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the free community paper industry today, and how do you think we can address them?

I think the biggest challenge is believing in ourselves and remembering that we have products that serve our customers and readers. We need to be our own advocates.

What opportunities do you see for growth and innovation in our industry?

I see opportunities of bringing the power of print back to our youth. There is research coming out that warns us of the dangers of the internet for our children. We need to continue to bring quality products to our readers and remind our advertisers of the results.

What contributions are you most proud of during your time with the board?

Serving on the MCN/MDN committee.

What are your goals for the association in the next few years?

I would like to continue to see MFCP be a resource for new publications and be a source of information for new owners.

What advice would you give to someone new to the community paper publishing industry?

My advice is to have your sales people walk in the door of the businesses you serve. A face-to-face sales call will almost always have better results.

What are some of your hobbies or interests outside of work?

I love spending time with my kids and grandchildren.

What is the last book you read or the last movie you watched that you would recommend?

Book - Perpetual Motivation by David Durand. Movie – I haven't seen one in a while.

Who has been a significant influence or mentor in your life and career, and why?

My business partners. There are seven of us. We all have different roles in our company and I have learned from every one of them.

What's a personal motto or philosophy that you live by?

Don't quit! Nobody who ever gave their best regretted it.

How do you believe free community papers impact local communities, and why is this important to you?

Absolutely our free papers impact our local communities. Our papers bring local information to our readers that they would have to search the internet for many hours to come even close to finding. They also give our advertisers an affordable way to reach their core customers. It is estimated that over 80% of people use their local business.

Where do you see the future of free community papers, and how can we prepare for it?

I see us being stronger if we can be our own advocates and remind our readers and advertisers of our benefits.

Is there anything you would like to say to the members of Midwest Free Community Papers?

Remember that what we do matters every day – to our readers – to our advertisers – to our employees and to our communities. On a down day read Theodore Roosevelt's Man in the Arena speech - "It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually **in the arena**, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

—Theodore Roosevelt

Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, April 23, 1910



Greg Birkett, MFCP Treasurer Publisher/Owner Dubuque Advertiser

Can you tell us about your background in the publishing industry and your current role within your organization?

I started with The Dubuque Advertiser when I was just a kid. I grew up across the street from the business and the owners, Jack and Marge Aird. I am currently the Publisher/Owner.

How did you get involved with Midwest Free Community Papers, and what motivated you to join the board?

In the 1980's when I was a young man in the industry, I learned of a state association for free papers then known as Shoppers Guides of Iowa. I attended a conference (we had quarterly conferences back then) and I was hooked. I learned so much from those networking sessions that when I was asked to join the board I agreed. I also had a stint as the Executive Director of the association, converting it to Midwest Free Community Papers to better reflect the membership.

What contributions are you most proud of during your time with the board?

During my time on the board, we had many initiatives started including the Midwest Display Network, 2x2 network and now the digital advertising network, all to help members and the association. Continuing with our great training and conference opportunities is very important, as well as seeking out more publications we can help and we can learn from.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the free community paper industry today, and how do you think we can address them?

The industry is going through many changes and challenges and the decline in traditional media has touched us all. Small businesses that still rely on the inexpensive advertising that works that we provide need us. What gets me out of bed in the morning is that our publications are still delivering great results for our clients. I think we need to change to adapt, using new marketing tactics and speaking for a pure shopper model, we probably need to adjust our content. With costs increasing all the time we need to control costs and that is getting tougher all the time with rising labor costs and distribution costs. Learning from each other and seeing what is working from others is really important. We need to make sure we are taking opportunities to help our customers. If we can deliver results with our publications and/or with digital advertising to help our clients they will keep hiring us.

What are your goals for the association in the next few years?

If MFCP can stay relevant in the operations of our member publications we will remain strong. A goal for me is to make sure we are listening to the needs of our membership.

What advice would you give to someone new to the community paper publishing industry?

I would recommend attending MFCP meetings for all members. They will not be disappointed.

What are some of your hobbies or interests outside of work?

I enjoy serving people in our community and I serve on several non-profit boards including the Knights of Columbus, Hospice of Dubuque, the Northeast Iowa Community College Graphics advisory board, Centennial Cross Incorporated and others. I also enjoy ATV riding, working around my acreage, stock car races and a good poker game.

Can you share a fun fact about yourself that people might not know?

Fun fact: I owned and drove a stock car for 7 years.

What is the last book you read or the last movie you watched that you would recommend?

I have enjoyed reading a series of mystery books in the past but lately have done more listening to podcasts.

Who has been a significant influence or mentor in your life and career, and why?

Jack Aird, the owner of The Dubuque Advertiser and his son Randy have both been great role models for me in business. They were always ethical and honest and you can't lose with those 2 traits

What's a personal motto or philosophy that you live by?

Honesty is the best policy - and work hard and play hard are both good mottos.

How do you believe free community papers impact local communities, and why is this important to you?

Free papers help local businesses to grow and help many area non-profits too, and that makes for a great community.

Where do you see the future of free community papers, and how can we prepare for it?

I see free papers continue to have great readership and by getting our papers/messaging out in traditional ways or in digital ways we can continue to evolve.

Is there anything you would like to say to the members of Midwest Free Community Papers?

I would suggest any members who are not attending meetings to let us know why not, and what can we do to get them to attend. I hope we are welcoming and provide great content and networking opportunities.



Corey Regnier Graphics/Composition Manager Windom Shopper, Windom MN.

Can you tell us about your background in the publishing industry and your current role within your organization?

Prior to entering the publishing industry, I worked primarily for theatre companies. I've now been with Citizen Publishing for about a decade and serve as the manager for the composition and graphics department.

How did you get involved with Midwest Free Community Papers, and what motivated you to join the board?

Our company has been members for a long time and my publisher has been on the board before. After my graduation from the ACP Rising Stars program, I wanted to remain involved in the industry and thought joining the board of directors would be a great way to do so.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the free community paper industry today, and how do you think we can address them?

Some of the biggest challenges are the shift that digital brings. To address it, we must face the fact that it is here to stay, and then, learn how to leverage it to our advantage.

What opportunities do you see for growth and innovation in our industry?

There are opportunities to harness digital sales and AI productivity to find a way to increase profits by marrying it with our main products.

What contributions are you most proud of during your time with the board?

I take pride in chairing the MVP program. The young professional group holds a place in my heart and I believe they are vital to the longevity of the association as a whole.

What are your goals for the association in the next few years?

I would love to grow the MVP program more as it is still fairly new for the association. Getting the MVPs excited, involved and integrated into the industry is the vision.

What advice would you give to someone new to the community paper publishing industry?

If they are a completely new publication the best advice I could give them would be to make sure to join MFCP. If they are new to a company who is already a member, then it would be to make sure they are using all their member benefits. The networking, ideas and training are undoubtedly the best way to stay connected and grow.

What are some of your hobbies or interests outside of work?

I enjoy puzzle and strategy games and fishing with my kids.

What is the last book you read or the last movie you watched that you would recommend?

Honestly, I couldn't even tell you the last thing I watched or read for pleasure. Typically, if I'm watching or reading something, it is a tutorial.

Who has been a significant influence or mentor in your life and career, and why?

My father has had a huge impact on my personal growth. I find every day I'm becoming more like him; and that's not a bad thing. As far as my career, my publisher, Trevor Slette, has given me opportunity after opportunity to grow and has been incredibly supportive and a great mentor and resource.

Can you share a fun fact about yourself that people might not know?

My family purchased, renovated and operated an art deco single-screen theatre where we showed classic films and live theatre and music. Our theatre was once featured in Midwest Living Magazine.

What's a personal motto or philosophy that you live by?

It may be cliché, but you can't go wrong with the golden rule.

How do you believe free community papers impact local communities, and why is this important to you?

Free publications absolutely impact local communities. It doesn't matter whether the publication has news or not. Especially in smaller markets, like my own, we are the information hub and voice of the community. We provide a vital service.

Where do you see the future of free community papers, and how can we prepare for it?

There will be more integration of digital products, but that is every industry. I think that there is inherent trust at the core of our products and I like to think there will be a sort of renaissance when people grow tired of always be tracked and manipulated. The best way to prepare for either, or both, scenarios is to attend the conferences, retreats, discussions and webinars provided by the association.

Is there anything you would like to say to the members of Midwest Free Community Papers?

MFCP is a healthy, vibrant association because of its members. I will say what I always tell the MVPs. Whatever you put into the association, you will get back and more. Join us and help both your business and our association flourish.



Tiffany Gardner Outside Sales Representative Grant, Iowa, Lafayette Shopping News

Can you tell us about your background in the publishing industry and your current role within your organization?

I have been with the Grant, Iowa, Lafayette Shopping News for 11 years. During that time, I have been in inside sales and covered for Distribution (back when we had carriers!). I have been an outside sales representative for around nine years.

How did you get involved with Midwest Free Community Papers, and what motivated you to join the board?

I became involved with MFCP by chairing the Most Valued Professionals program. As a rising star in the ACP program, I was asked to assist with the start-up of the MVP program MFCP offered to professionals in the field.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the free community paper industry today, and how do you think we can address them?

I see many new challenges that may seem like a threat to print, but I'm not scared! Technology is moving at an incredible pace, but that doesn't mean print products are out of style. We just need to be fearless. Have pride and belief in our products.

What opportunities do you see for growth and innovation in our industry?

MFCP offers its members numerous opportunities for growth through conferences and trainings. I have learned a lot through meeting others in this industry. Sharing ideas, networking, and training are truly what has been key to my personal growth in the paper industry.

What contributions are you most proud of during your time with the board?

I am proud and honored to have been the mentor for the Most Valued Professionals program.

What are your goals for the association in the next few years?

I want to see the association grow and thrive. It would be great to see an increase in memberships.

What advice would you give to someone new to the community paper publishing industry?

Attend conferences! Network! Learn from industry professionals who have seen the challenges print has faced. Their advice, knowledge, and expertise has been incredibly valuable.

What are some of your hobbies or interests outside of work?

With 3 kids and 2 dogs, we are always busy. Our favorite activities include salmon fishing, going on day trips, and trying new restaurants.

What is the last book you read or the last movie you watched that you would recommend?

In our house watch a lot of *Bluey* and we are currently reading *Alice in Wonderland* (the original Lewis Carroll book).

Who has been a significant influence or mentor in your life and career, and why?

I have drawn inspiration from some pretty amazing women. I look to my mom for her compassion and drive. I never realized how much work being a mom is, and I have a whole new appreciation. I look to Lee Borkowski for her tenacity and work ethic. If something needs to get done, Lee will do it (and probably have an Excel spreadsheet to accompany it). A woman who was a sales rep (now advertiser), has given me amazing advice about the industry. She told me “If you are ever offered training opportunities, for any career path, take it. Never turn away the chance to educate yourself”.

Can you share a fun fact about yourself that people might not know?

Nothing weirds me out more than a frog.

What’s a personal motto or philosophy that you live by?

Work smarter. Not harder.

How do you believe free community papers impact local communities, and why is this important to you?

Free community papers are just that. Free: There is no income barrier, and no subscription is needed. Community: They serve local information via ads and editorial about your geographic area. Papers: We are tangible, can be held, and have stood the test of time as the number one source to receive credible information. The impact free community papers have on our communities is major.

Where do you see the future of free community papers, and how can we prepare for it?

Message to Members:

Digital never feels as reliable as print. Always have faith in your products. If your customers know you believe, so will they!



Carrie Vander Weerd Advertising Director Jasper County Advisor & Newton News

Can you tell us about your background in the publishing industry and your current role within your organization?

I started working for a small local paper doing some ad sales and worked into ad design and paper layout. I then switched jobs (20 years ago) to be a district manager in circulation for the Newton Daily News and Jasper County Advertiser. I did that for 15 years, until we stopped having carriers. I am now Advertising Director at the Jasper County Advertiser, Newton News and a couple of small papers.

How did you get involved with Midwest Free Community Papers, and what motivated you to join the board?

I got involved a few years ago when I became part of our Advertising department. I always knew about MFCP but wasn't ever actively involved. Once I started in Advertising, I became interested in some of the training that was offered so I started going to the conferences. I was asked to be on the board last year and felt that it would be a great opportunity for me to learn more about leadership and have some different experience under my belt.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the free community paper industry today, and how do you think we can address them?

One of the biggest challenges I see are the ones where the advertisers say that no one reads the paper anymore so why advertise. We still need the printed editions of the paper, but if there are no advertisers then the printed paper will suffer. Somehow, we need to direct people and advertisers back to our print edition. We need to come up with ways to get our readers engaged and ultimately our advertisers advertising.

What advice would you give to someone new to the community paper publishing industry?

Take every opportunity to network with other people in the industry. Go to the conferences that are offered and take the trainings. Always have an open mind to learn from others!

What are some of your hobbies or interests outside of work?

My husband and I like to travel and take our side by side to various places to ride the trails. We also like to take a Sunday afternoon ride in our side by side with friends to get ice cream. We are also very passionate about our mission work that we do in the Bahamas.

We also love chasing after all 11 of our grandkids and all of their activities.

What is the last book you read or the last movie you watched that you would recommend?

My most recent movie that I have watched that I would recommend is "Unsung Hero". The whole story of Faith and Family resonates with me.

Who has been a significant influence or mentor in your life and career, and why?

My most significant influence in my life was my mom. She taught me so much and did it in the kindest, softest way. My best mentor that I have had in my career is Dan Goetz who used to be my publisher. He taught me a lot about myself and what I am capable of doing. He would take the time to explain things to me if I didn't know how to do them.

Can you share a fun fact about yourself that people might not know?

My older brother and I are both adopted, we do not have the same birth parents, and we have a brother 14 years younger than me that was born to my parents. I also searched and found my birth mom at 24 and have had a relationship with her, my step dad, sister and step brothers ever since.

What's a personal motto or philosophy that you live by?

Treat others as you want to be treated and God has a plan for all of our lives so we need to depend on him to guide us.

How do you believe free community papers impact local communities, and why is this important to you?

Helps people of the community get information about various things going on such as, garage sales, auctions, sales, birthday announcements and so much more. Some people don't have the money for a subscription to a paper so the free papers help both the advertiser and the reader.

Where do you see the future of free community papers, and how can we prepare for it?

I think we are going to have to figure out how to have a balance of the print edition as well as digital

Is there anything you would like to say to the members of Midwest Free Community Papers?

Take advantage of what Midwest Free Community Papers has to offer. You can learn so much from the trainings and the networking opportunities that are offered.



Julia Thompson President of Southern Minnesota Shoppers, Inc.

Can you tell us about your background in the publishing industry and your current role within your organization?

I started in sales many years ago and worked my way up to sale manager, general manager and now my current title is President of Southern Minnesota Shoppers, Inc. I oversee the Freeborn and Mower County Shoppers in Albert Lea and Austin, MN.

How did you get involved with Midwest Free Community Papers, and what motivated you to join the board?

When I started at the Shopper, my manager, Denny Raiche, was involved in MFCP. I would go to conferences and he would introduce me to all the movers and shakers. I knew that this was a group I wanted to be more involved with.

What contributions are you most proud of during your time with the board?

I am on a sub-committee called, “The Best Committee Ever”. We have promoted and educated publications about the MFCP classified and display network. It’s satisfying seeing new salespeople and publications selling into the network.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the free community paper industry today, and how do you think we can address them?

Keeping readers engaged in our products is getting more difficult because of the many options that are available. Focusing on local content and having a bigger on-line presence can not only keep longtime readers but attract the younger, digital savvy consumer.

What opportunities do you see for growth and innovation in our industry?

Embracing digital sales and technology.

What are your goals for the association in the next few years?

Having more members participate in training, discussions and selling networks ads.

What advice would you give to someone new to the community paper publishing industry? You will get out of it what you put into it.

What are some of your hobbies or interests outside of work?

I love to cook but hate washing dishes. I enjoy doing project on my house, laughing with friends and family, traveling, going to sporting events and shopping.

Can you share a fun fact about yourself that people might not know?

At my High School graduation breakfast, I was voted best dressed. My sister and father also received this coveted award. When my kids would challenge my fashion advise, I would bring up this hard-earned honor every chance I got. Unfortunately, my children didn't listen to my trend-setting suggestions and this long-standing family tradition ended.

What is the last book you read or the last movie you watched that you would recommend?

The last move I watched was King Richard, the Venus and Serena William's family story. It's definitely worth watching. Currently I'm reading "The Women". It was recommended by several people and so far, so good.

Who has been a significant influence or mentor in your life and career, and why?

My former boss, Denny Raiche. When he retired and I ran into an issue, I would ask myself, "WWDD?" (What would Denny do) The answers came easily when I looked at a problem through his eyes.

What's a personal motto or philosophy that you live by?

"A day without laughter is a day wasted" --- Charlie Chaplin

Is there anything you would like to say to the members of Midwest Free Community Papers?

Take advantage of the MFCP member benefits!

Kevin Slimp



Determining how to use (and not use) AI

Newspaper publishers share their feelings about artificial intelligence

Kevin Slimp - kevin@kevinslimp.com

My final stop after six straight weeks on the road – I drove 64 hours between conferences – was to visit with the members of the Arkansas Press Association as they met at Arkansas State University in late June. In addition to the travel, I spent most of my “free” time during mid/late June preparing to speak to this group on a topic that’s hard for many folks to wrap their heads around: artificial intelligence.

I understand people’s reluctance to discuss AI. There’s been a lot of misinformation floating around, and it’s challenging to know what’s real and what’s not when it comes to the subject. When talking with friends in the “high-tech” world, I often feel like they’re trying to sell me on AI, even though I know more than most folks about the topic.

Over four weeks, I listened to lectures by the world’s leading experts on AI. I held focus groups with folks of various ages, including one focus group of professionals in the 25-30 age range. I really wanted to find out what they know – living under the assumption that younger minds should know more than me about these things – that could help me understand what I’m missing. I surely didn’t want to be embarrassed in front of an audience in Arkansas. I even pestered my brother, who is one of America’s foremost experts in the area of high technology.

More than 100 newspaper publishers participated in a survey of community newspapers I distributed in early June. I primarily hoped to learn how newspapers currently use AI and whether publishers felt its use was advantageous to their papers.

As I stood in front of the audience in Arkansas, more seats were being added to accommodate several university faculty members who learned I would speak that day. Several of those same faculty members stayed long afterward to ask questions and discuss ways they could use the information I’d presented with their classes.

I began my discussion by learning about the group in front of me. Using a tool that allowed audience members to respond to questions on their phones while their responses appeared immediately on the large screen, I quickly learned that the group was very diverse in ages and job titles. Almost equal numbers of editors, reporters, publishers, and university faculty were represented. Although present, there were fewer designers, ad reps, and others.

Next, I asked the group to enter (on their phones) the first word that comes to mind when they hear the term “artificial intelligence.” Looking at the list on the screen, it felt like I was looking at the script of an 80s sci-fi movie. Words like “terminator,” “war games,” “robotic,” and “threat” appeared. Audience members were free to enter any word. There were no prompts. The three words that appeared most often were “fake,” “scary,” and “robot.”

Before getting into the specifics of AI and its origins, I shared some results of my June survey of community newspaper publishers. In a nutshell, we learned that 45 percent of publishers reported their newspapers had never used AI, at least as far as they knew. Fifty-five percent responded that their papers had used AI. And how were they using AI? Very sparingly, according to their responses. Respondents were allowed to expand on their answers and were quick to share how little or how much they were using AI tools. The most common tool mentioned was ChatGPT (29 percent responded that their newspaper had used ChatGPT), followed closely by newspapers that had used AI tools in Adobe Photoshop (20 percent).

Most of the respondents whose papers had used ChatGPT added notes in the essay area to be sure I knew that ChatGPT was not being used to write stories. ChatGPT was used for various reasons, including getting headline ideas and background research.

The space allotted for this column each month doesn’t allow me to share everything I shared with the group in Arkansas. You might be interested to know that the group left feeling much better about their knowledge of artificial intelligence, and some showed me the pages of notes they had taken during our time together.

My brother was hesitant to share too much with me. He plays an essential role in computing and high technology in the U.S. However, he did share a quote that summed up much of what I discussed with the group in Arkansas:

“We shouldn’t be afraid of AI. Just like the internet (when it was new), we knew it could do good things, and we knew it could do bad things. There’s no need to be afraid of it. We can’t stop it, so we might as well figure out what parts of AI to use and what parts of AI to leave alone.”

And that, my friends, concludes my 800 words for this column.

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



Sunshine in the Weather Forecast

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

I remember attending a graduation ceremony for a class of nursing students. One of the speakers – who was also one of their instructors – said, “You help create the atmosphere in the room – for your patients, their families, your coworkers, and the doctors and technicians with whom you work. Your feelings have an impact, whether those feelings are cheerful or sad, optimistic or fearful.” She referred to a speech she heard at a healthcare convention. That speaker compared the mood of healthcare workers to the weather. Is it sunny and cheerful? Or rainy and dreary?

Nursing is a noble profession. As my wife and I listened, we couldn’t help but think of the medical appointments we’ve had through the years, and the nurses who have lifted our spirits. The weather comparison is an accurate description – and a poignant challenge.

My former dentist (now retired) had a hygienist named Carolyn. In addition to being extraordinarily skilled, she had a joyful personality that immediately put people at ease. She greeted each patient with comments like, “Let’s see how good things are looking today.” Then she made positive comments about the patient’s dental health as she worked. Sometimes there were surprises. In one of my appointments, I noticed that she had pinned a large poster of a horse on the ceiling above the chair. “Since you’re going to stare at the ceiling while I check your teeth,” she said, “you might as well look at a nice picture.”

It was always sunny in Carolyn’s office. There’s an old saying that some people brighten the room by arriving and others brighten the room by leaving. In the years I went to that dentist, she always brightened the room.

The famous Li’l Abner comic strip had a character named Joe Btfsplk, who always had a dark cloud over his head. That cloud of negativity followed poor Joe everywhere he went. (Don’t ask how to pronounce Joe’s last name.)

We’ve all met salespeople who travel around with dark clouds over their heads. They just don’t realize that no one wants to do business with – much less, buy anything from – someone with a cloudy attitude.

Those salespeople need a strong dose of Carolyn’s cheerfulness. Her approach was simple: (1) Sincerely welcome each patient as though that person were her most important appointment of the day; (2) Find specific and positive things to say about the patient’s dental situation throughout the appointment; and (3) Send each person away with a good feeling about the outcome of the appointment. (Nothing was faked; she meant every word.)

The same goes for your advertising interactions, whether you're having a great day or whether you've just lost a big sale. Look at each conversation as a new start. (1) Open with a sincere smile and a word of cheer; (2) Be sure to point out the positives of the topic at hand along the way; and (3) Close the meeting with good news about the next step.

Try Carolyn's technique and bring good weather into your next sales conversation.

(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 DVDs to save time and get quick results from in-house training. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

Ryan Dohrn



Polishing Your Pitch: Sales Presentation Mastery

This month Ryan shares the 3 main components to every sales call starting with an agenda with, you guessed it, 3 agenda items.

- **Start with a success story**, add ideas, recommendations, and pricing and be sure to give them time to think it over.
- **Second- your very first slide should be Logo Soup-** showcase the companies you work with.
- **Third- always position yourself as an advisor-** you are there to give advice and help.

Check out how easy it is to “polish your pitch”!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6y7oer5iO20>

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>