

PAPERCLIPS

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

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[You had to be there! But if you couldn't, click here to check out what you missed!](#)



President's Corner

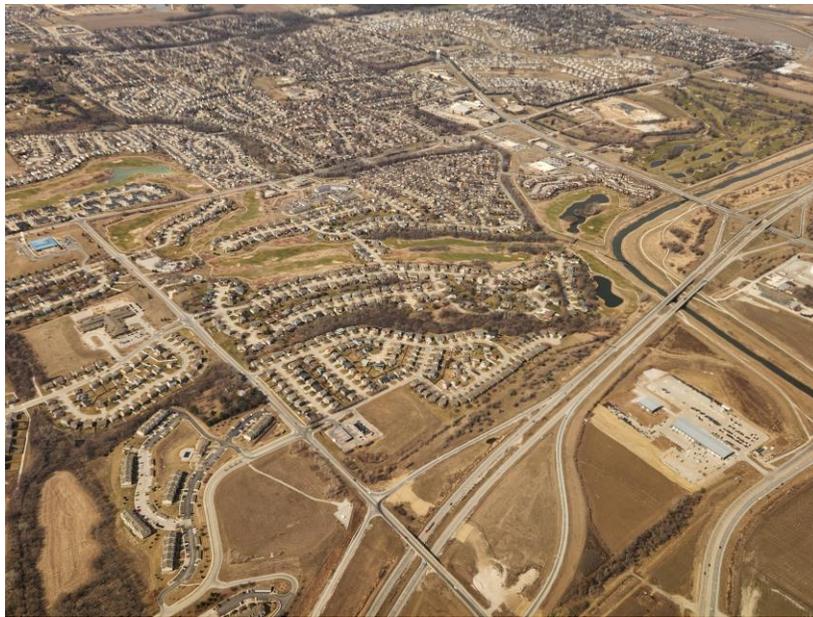


Mike Kolbe

What Does Your 30,000 ft. View Look Like?

Do you take time to reflect on your career goals and objectives occasionally? Like you, perhaps, it's not something I consciously do on a regular basis. Perhaps we all should.

The term "30,000-foot view" popped into my head during a recent trip to see family, and I began comparing the literal 30,000 ft. view to the coined phrase so often used to reflect on various professional goals and objectives. These are the analogies scratched into my mental notebook.



TAKE-OFF

We usually experience great anticipation during take-off, even though the landscape around us becomes unclear. We sit back as momentum builds and wait for that comforting feeling when lift-off finally occurs. My publishing career took off in college with part-time gigs at two Iowa newspapers, the Ames Daily Tribune and Tri-County Times in Slater. I truly took flight professionally when I landed a job at the Harlan Newspapers in 1983, selling advertising for the Tribune, News-Advertiser, Penny-Saver and Rocket.

ASCENT

The ascent is where we learn a great deal about life in the working world, and have likely experienced a bit of turbulence along the way. It is during this time that we make mistakes, learn from them, and then make some more. I was fortunate to have tremendous on-the-job mentors, regular training through association conferences, and lessons from the school of hard knocks. Although we continue to learn throughout our careers, we acquired a great deal of knowledge about our jobs, people and ourselves during the ascent.

CRUISING ALTITUDE

Life takes on more order and structure when cruising altitude is reached after years of experience. This is when we are able to loosen the seatbelt and “move about the cabin” without fear of falling. When I reached “cruising altitude”, goals and objectives were realized in my professional and personal life, including a steady income, a house without wheels and a beautiful family. Don’t confuse the word “cruising” with “resting”. We must continue to stretch ourselves and take on new challenges with gusto. While we become more comfortable in our roles, we will occasionally need to return to our seats, buckle up and work through a few bumps.

PREPARE FOR LANDING

While still cruising (and experiencing bumps along the way), we may begin to prepare for our professional landing. Depending upon your age, health and devotion to the profession, you may be cleared for landing soon, or you may be in a holding pattern for a few years. Until that time, continue to appreciate the challenges and opportunities that come your way in the publishing industry, and enjoy the camaraderie of your co-workers and MFPC Association members.

The next time you fly, take a look at your career and life from 30,000 ft. above the ground. I’ll bet it will appear much clearer and less hectic from there.

Mike

From the Office



Seeking the Next Leader: MFCP's Journey Towards a Bright Future

Lee Borkowski

I just finished reading Mike Kolbe's article in which he compares our professional journey to an airplane flight. Toward the end of the article Mike mentions the need to plan for and execute a "professional landing".

Lately I find myself looking to the future and wanting more than anything to be assured MFCP has a bright future. Sue and I recently suggested to the Board of Directors that they begin a search to replace us in our roles as Office Manager and Executive Director.

This is an important decision—and is one that reflects our commitment to growth, continuity, and excellence. It is most certainly not a forced retirement; rather, it's a deliberate step toward ensuring the organization's continued success.

The Vision

MFCP has thrived under our leadership, but we firmly believe that every chapter has its season. As we prepare to pass the torch, we are filled with optimism. The right leader—one who embodies MFCP's values, understands its mission, and possesses the vision to propel the association forward—is out there. Together, they and the Board of Directors will shape the next phase of MFCP's journey.

Why Now?

This transition is not about stepping back; it's about stepping aside. We are committed to ensuring a seamless handover. Our organization deserves fresh perspectives, innovative strategies, and renewed energy. By actively seeking the next Executive Director and Office Manager we honor MFCP's legacy while embracing its future.

The Search

Our search will be deliberate and thorough. We seek someone who can:

- **Champion Our Mission:** The next leader must be passionate about the free community paper industry. They will carry the torch, amplifying our voice and impact.
- **Craft Strategic Blueprints:** Just as I've steered our plane, the new director will create a blueprint—a 30,000-foot view—mapping out our trajectory. Short-term goals and long-term vision will guide their decisions.
- **Build and Inspire Teams:** Leadership isn't solitary; it's about empowering others. Our new Executive Director will foster collaboration, mentorship, and growth.
- **Navigate Challenges:** Turbulence is part of any journey. Our leader will weather storms, adapt, and keep us on course.

What Can You Do?

As stakeholders, your support is invaluable. Please spread the word. Encourage potential candidates to apply. Share our story. Together, we'll find the right fit—the person who will lead us into the future.

We must all remember that change is not a threat; it's an opportunity. Our organization's legacy is secure, and our flight continues. Let's welcome the dawn of a new era—one where our next leadership team will continue to soar.

Lee

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[EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR](#)

[OFFICE MANAGER](#)

MVP at Work



The Importance of Setting Goals

By Nancy Powell
Ad Production Manager
Dairy Star / Star Publications

At our last MVP we discussed SMART goals, and how to set them (If you are not familiar with the concept, it is worth a search online.) This discussion got me thinking about how important goals really are both professionally and personally.

The main purpose of goals is to motivate, develop strategies and to improve performance. Goals can be big or small and cover any length of time, but the purpose and motivation they provide can create meaning and productivity.

In researching for this column, I came across a quote “You can’t manage what you don’t measure and you can’t improve upon something that you don’t properly manage. Setting goals can help you do all of that and more.” (Source: <https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-goal-setting/>)

Goal setting increases motivation, provides a sense of responsibility, allows tracking of progress. How many times have we said it might be nice to improve upon something, but then nothing was ever set into motion? Goals can help with that.

The next time you have a task you need to accomplish, try setting a goal, or a series of goals, and use the SMART goal guidelines:

Specific – Be clear what goal you want to accomplish.

Measurable – Make sure you have a clear and measurable way to know when you have achieved your goal.

Achievable – Make sure the goal pushes the limits but is not so difficult that it can’t be achieved.

Relevant – Make sure the goal makes sense with your values and matters to you.

Time Bound – Set a specific time frame for the goal to create urgency.

Nancy

Members Helping Members

Spring Conference: Learning From... Sharing With!

Following the Spring Conference, I had a publisher reach out because they had noticed that a flag was featured in one of the winning entries. And, that flag had an image placed over it. They had been taught that this was not allowed. So, they did some research on the subject and this is what they found in the United States Flag Code (<https://www.legion.org/flag/code>)

(g) The flag should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, nor attached to it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature.

(i) The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever.

I know we all have great reverence for our flag and would never intentionally do anything to disrespect it. Please keep the above in mind when planning your ads and special sections.

Members Helping Members

TELL US YOUR SECRETS

A run-down of favorite apps/websites your fellow publishers are using.

The theme of our Spring Conference was Mission Possible. In keeping with a spy theme, we asked our members to share the productivity tools they use to keep their espionage skills sharp. Here are a few of the favorites that were shared with the group:

First up is a favorite from **Dez Whalen of the Wisconsin-Iowa Shopping News**. Dez shared the following:

Adobe Stock <https://stock.adobe.com/>

Crunch time for me often comes down to being able to efficiently put together a nice ad at the last minute without being able to do it myself. This requires that I supply our design team with the proper elements I need to get things put together in a way that meets my vision for the ad.

Metro is go-to for most ads, but when I am looking for something a bit fresher with cutting edge graphics, images and fonts, I turn to Adobe Stock. Adobe stock offers a library of free and licensed graphics, images, videos, sounds and so much more that can easily be implemented into print layouts and digital projects, alike. There are also ad templates that are available. This is a great resource for stock images or just to find some inspiration as well.

Adobe Stock allows you to download working files in .eps, .ai, .indd, .pdf or .jpeg file format for most layout items. As I mentioned there is an extensive free database as well as licensed stock content.

Deb Patterson of The Land, Mankato, MN shared the following:

*At The Land we used a **Google doc to keep track of weekly revenue**. This helps us with forecasting and helps us make sure all ads are accounted for when we go to dummy the paper.*

Amanda Thooft, of Star Publications had two hot tips to share:

<https://coolors.co> helps with picking a color palette for a design and pretty fun to play with.

<https://newspagedesigner.org> and pinterest helps when I am having a creative mental block to see different layouts to keep us graphically entertaining.

Kelly Balvanz of iPromote shared her favorite password keeper:

*Here is a tool I like to use. It's called **LastPass**. It's a secure site where you can keep all your passwords gathered in one place. You can separate them out into work sites/passwords, social, personal, etc. Comes in handy when you can never remember those special passwords that require all the letters, numbers and special characters. It will even help you generate passwords for sites if needed.*

Joyce Frericks, Star Publications shared the details about a book she's used for years. You can read all about it here:

*The name of the book is: **Lifescrpts: What to Say to Get What You Want in Life's Toughest Situations.***

Using two-color flowcharts, Lifescrpts maps out 109 difficult conversations, guiding you through discussion openers and effective responses reach the desired result. This completely revised and updated edition includes nearly 50 new business-focused scripts covering everything from apologizing for a misdirected email to requesting better meeting manners.

Amazon offers a new copy for just under \$25.00. Used copies are available for less than \$5.00. Check it out!

So, there you have it! Some great tools that are being used every day by your fellow publishers.

Do you have a favorite that's not featured above? Let me know the details and I will share it with the rest of the membership.

Kevin Slimp



Pick it up or put it down?

The area above the fold determines which choice potential readers will make

Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

Hardly a week goes by that I don't meet with one or two publishers to review their newspapers and make recommendations to increase their readership and overall business. Obviously, some papers require more attention than others, but it's rare I don't have at least a few dozen recommendations concerning potential changes.

The most apparent changes usually center around design elements: headlines, fonts, spacing, etc. Other recommendations often relate to content, frequently centering on regular features, stories, and photos.

In all my years working with newspapers, I don't remember having a negative experience with a publisher. It makes sense that when a publisher contacts me for advice, they're sincere about improving their newspaper. Earlier in my career, I expected some backlash concerning suggested changes. Still, over time, I've learned that most newspaper publishers and editors are sincere about finding ways to inspire more potential readers to pick up the paper.

Just this week, I met with the publisher of a Midwest newspaper looking for ideas to grow readership. In the emails and phone calls leading up to our meeting, the publisher clearly wanted any advice I could offer. There had been a slow but steady decline in circulation, and he wanted advice on reversing the trend.

During our online meeting, we discussed the three issues of his printed newspaper that I had received in the mail before our discussion. We analyzed the more than 100 suggestions I noted in the weekly 20-page publication. The majority of our discussion, however, centered on the top of the front page, commonly referred to as the area "above the fold."

We all know how important it is to draw potential readers to this area of our newspaper. I still have the clipping Dale Gentry sent me from the Letters to the Editor section of his newspaper after a redesign two years ago. The writer noted that when she visited her local convenience store, a stack of newspapers would always be on a rack in front of the register. She would ask the cashier about the papers, and the response was that people rarely bought one of the papers. Something changed, however. She noticed the rack was empty or nearly empty during several consecutive trips to the store. When she asked the cashier why there were no papers, she was told that people had started buying the paper, and the store usually ran out of copies.

What had changed? Dale's paper had recently gone through a total redesign. As part of the new design, Dale and his staff made great efforts to make the area above the fold as inviting as possible. Apparently, their efforts paid off.

While looking over the three issues of the midwestern newspaper before meeting with the publisher this week, something became very apparent. In all three issues, the area above the fold was filled with mugshots from the local jail, along with stories about arrested drug dealers and users. I sent pictures of the front pages to friends in various states and asked, "Would you read his paper?" My friends all answered, "No."

In my conversation with the paper's publisher, I clarified that I wasn't suggesting a "feel good" publication. Every focus group I've led of newspaper readers indicates readers want hard news. That doesn't mean that the front page should be filled with endless negative stories.

The area above the fold does one of two things. It either invites potential readers to pick up the newspaper or causes them to put it down. That doesn't mean the front page always leads with a feel-good story. It does mean that weekly mugshots of young drug users will eventually wear down potential readers.

My meeting this week went exceptionally well. Before signing off, the publisher said he planned to make several changes immediately based on our conversation. He planned to change the fonts he used for body text and headlines. He would ask his designers to remove unnecessary color elements on pages, allowing readers to focus on the pictures and stories. The change I'm most excited about, however, is moving the weekly mugshots and crime stories away from the area above the fold. I'm confident he will receive positive feedback from his community right away, and more potential readers will begin picking up his newspaper.

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



Know When to Stop Talking

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

Jonathan told me about his friend Dave's sports car. They rode around in it in high school, and although it was old even then, they loved the car and didn't let its mechanical eccentricities bother them. Through the years, after they had started families and relocated through their work, they stayed in touch. One evening, Dave called and said he was planning to sell the car and asked if Jonathan was interested.

What a great opportunity, Jonathan thought. I'd love to restore that beauty. After preparing a list of all the things he could say to convince his wife that buying the car was a good idea, he walked into the kitchen and said, "Honey, Dave called. He's selling his Triumph." Without hesitation, she said, "I think you should buy it." "I was shocked," Jonathan remembered. "There I was with a thoroughly rehearsed presentation, and she bought the idea right away. To be honest, I almost said, 'Wait a minute. Don't you want to hear all the reasons?' But that would have killed the idea."

Jonathan bought the car, took it to his home in North Carolina, worked on it, and drove it for many years. To this day, he talks about it with a feeling of nostalgia.

There's an important sales lesson in Jonathan's story. He was wise enough to know that he should stop talking as soon as his wife said "yes" to the car. Sadly, there are too many salespeople who keep talking after their prospects indicate they're ready to buy. Those indications are called "buying signals," and they tell us to know when to S-T-O-P talking and bring the sale in for a landing.

Buying signals can be verbal or non-verbal. If a prospect asks when the ad campaign can start, requests an adjustment in the body copy, or refers to the proposed ads as "my ads," that's your cue to move immediately to closing language. Other positive cues include nodding in agreement with your sales points, leaning forward, or asking to see the advertising contract or approval form.

Thomas manages an ad sales team. "It's all about meeting people where they are," he said. "We encourage our team to put a lot of work into their presentations. But we don't want them to feel like saying, 'Wait, I haven't gotten to the good part yet.' They know they should be ready to shift gears at any time. The last thing we need is for them to talk themselves out of a sale."

"We all know it's important to listen to what the other person is saying," Thomas explained. "It's also important to look for unspoken clues that the other person is close to a buying decision. They are sending you a message to: 'Get on with it.' Paying attention to that will help both sides – the salesperson and the advertiser."

Whether you're driving a sports car or a sales presentation, it's smart to read the signs and keep things moving in the right direction.

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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



Boost Sales Email Replies

This month Ryan answers a question from a listener about the best times to send sales emails to get the best response.

His recommendation is to first start out looking at what your customer's day is like. That way you are able to adjust to their schedule and align your emails for their convenience.

In a capsule his strategy is that by watching the customer's schedule you will be able to be:

- At the top of the inbox
- At the appropriate time
- For the person you are sending the email to

Be sure to click the link below to hear more about his strategy for success!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gws85PA6KFY>

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](#).