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President's Corner



New Year's #1 Resolution- Spring Conference

The weather outside is frightful but the spring conference is so delightful...

Since retailers are marketing Christmas earlier every year, I'm jumping on the bandwagon. I may not be displaying Christmas trees next to Halloween decorations, but I'm dreaming of a phenomenal MFCP spring conference instead of a white Christmas. It's going to be hard to beat last year's conference, but the committee is working diligently like little elves to make it happen. The 2023 conference will be held in Des Moines on March 2nd and 3rd at the Holiday Inn and room rates are as low as \$89 per night.

Without a doubt, one of the highlights of MFCP Spring Conference is the presentation of the Ad Award Winners. You won't want to miss it.

Remember to pull those award-winning ads as they are published in your paper so you can enter them in the ad contest. Last year's winners are on the MFCP website. Take a look and get those creative juices flowing. www.mfcp.org

I'll be home for Christmas

And conference in the spring.

There won't be snow, or mis-tle-toe

But your presence will mean a lot to me.

Julia Thompson

From the office



Lee Borkowski

The Free Paper Industry Growing up in a World Like No Other

I have a surprise for you this month. I have been interviewing some of our longtime members and they have agreed to share their stories with us. I hope you will find them as insightful, inspiring, and entertaining as I do. The links to “No Ink to Dry” by Craig Trongaard and “An Unusual Beginning” by Karen Van Drie about Gladys Van Drie are included in this article. I figure it’s only fair that I start with my story. So, here I go....

Growing Up as a “Free Paper Kid”

Like many of you I was raised in the free paper industry.

My grandparents started a shopper in August of 1949. Their office was the dining room table of the multi-generational family home. Grandma handled sales and layout. Grandpa, who worked as a tool and die maker by trade, was in charge of pressing the paper when he came home from work. The paper was collated and then bundled for delivery by the USPS. My Mom still remembers being lulled to sleep by the sound of the mimeograph machine running the single pages one at a time late into the night.

It didn’t take too long before the business outgrew the dining room table. The family moved to a new home and the paper was run from the basement. It stayed in that location for about 10 years and was then moved to a remodeled home located just off Main Street.

Like so many shoppers this was a family business and everyone got to play a part. At about 12 years of age, I got my first delivery route. Our town was very long and narrow. I was assigned the North side of Main Street and delivered about 225 papers each week. Remember I said the town was long and narrow....my route was 2 miles long! Delivery wasn’t too bad in the good weather but when the snow was deep, I hated it! And, there was no one to help me. Mom and Dad were both working and it was my job to deliver the papers... period!

Our carrier guidelines required that I rubber band the paper to the door knobs of every home and I was to make sure I used the door that they used the most. That meant having to walk down the side of most houses to deliver to the back door. Added steps, more snow!

As I recall I earned \$2.65 every two weeks for carrying the papers. This would have been in 1970. My Dad offered to cash my checks on his way home from work. He strongly recommended that I save a good portion of the check. And, he said that if I were to save the whole check, he would round up the deposit for me. I agreed and he made the deposit for \$5.00. I thought I was rich! I loved looking at my saving book and seeing how much the account was growing. Between the paper route and babysitting I amassed a small fortune. I used some of the money to buy a record player (because I was cool!) and a registered Quarter Horse (because I was not too smart!).

During the summers I would volunteer my time at the paper. Usually, I was answering phones and taking classified ads or delivering papers. What meant the most to me was that I was getting to spend time with my grandparents.

In 1976 I graduated high school and headed to college. My course of study was in Pre-Veterinary Science. I did okay in my studies but my heart just wasn't in becoming a veterinarian. Toward the end of my junior year while home for a weekend I told my grandma that I wished to join her in the business. She was thrilled! Turns out my timing was pretty good, too. As this conversation took place on a Friday night, I discovered that she was meeting with a man from upper Michigan on Saturday morning who was going to present her with an offer to buy the paper.

I returned to college and began taking as many business/marketing classes as I could while still staying on track to graduate in four years with my Bachelor of Science degree.

Though Grandma welcomed me into the business she didn't just hand over the reins. I started work in June of 1980 and was earning a whopping \$3.10 per hour (which happened to be the national minimum wage). Too bad my dad wasn't still alive at that time. I could have benefited from his rounding up my deposits!

Grandma's plan was to have me learn the business from the ground up. My first assignment was to learn typesetting and layout. From there I was assigned to the distribution department, then accounting and finally sales and sales management. My training through all of the departments took over five years.

During this time, I was also encouraged to become active in the state and national associations. I served on the board of directors for Shopping Guides of Michigan (later renamed Community Papers of Michigan) and the National Association of Advertising Publishers (which is known today as ACP). My employment took me from Michigan to Wisconsin where I joined the Community Papers of Wisconsin. No matter the association, my time served was invaluable. I learned so much from the people I met while serving and made many lifelong friends along the way.

Today I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of the Midwest Free Community Papers association. I still stay in touch with many of the "old timers" and they all have interesting stories to tell.

It is my intention to help them share their stories with you through this section of our newsletter.

I'll start off this month featuring two of my absolute favorite people - Gladys Van Drie and Craig Trongaard. Craig and I were having lunch a few months ago and we were trying to figure out how old Gladys was. I did a google search when I got back to my office and among other things, I found a document written by Karen Van Drie in 1995. She was honoring her mother with a brick on the Plaza of Heroines at Iowa State University. I found it very interesting to read and think you will too. Here's a link: [Gladys Van Drie - An Unusual Beginning](#)

One thing I know about Craig Trongaard is that he is a man of his word. Many in our industry are. In learning about Craig's journey into the industry he shared a fascinating story that speaks to being a "Man of Your Word". I ask that he write out his story so that I could share it with all of you. You can find that story here: [No Ink to Dry](#)

Next month I will share stories from two MFCP past presidents.... you won't want to miss either one! I firmly believe the Free Paper Industry is like no other. It's had the distinction of being built from the ground up by good people that are willing to share and help others grow.

If you'd like to share your story or know someone I should interview, please let me know. With your help I look forward to keeping our history alive!!

Member News

Fill Ads and Statement Stuffers

You asked.... we made it easy! We have designed fill ads and statement stuffers ready for you to print and promote the MCN and MDN Ad Networks. Help your customers expand into a bigger market.

Take advantage of being able to reach 1.9 million households with one ad. And, if you just renewed your membership, you can reach them for free. Just ask to use one of two free coupons available on renewal if you participate in our network ad programs.

Reach out to Sue at office@mfcf.org or Lee at director@mfcf.org for help in taking advantage of this membership benefit.

[Click here for fill ads](#)

[Click here for Statement Stuffers](#)

[Click here for a MCN/MDN Sell sheet](#)

Member News

Nominations are now being accepted for our incoming MVP class

The MFCP Most Valued Professionals program is designed to honor individuals who are emerging leaders in the free paper industry and 40 years old or younger. This annual program will recognize up to 5 individuals who represent the best of our up-and-coming industry professionals. These individuals exemplify good character, leadership, and professionalism not only at work, but in the communities they serve.

Nominee Qualifications

These individuals should show the promise of and a commitment to impacting their publication and the industry in a positive manner through professional achievement. Nominees must also show they not only perform their jobs to a high standard, but they also have a commitment to furthering their knowledge and abilities. Nominees must actively work in the free paper industry for a member MFCP and are required to have been employed for more than a year.

Recognition Program

The Most Valued Professional award recipients will be recognized in PaperClips, the official newsletter of MFCP, as well as participate in the annual MFCP Conference and Trade Show. MVP award winners receive free registration and hotel accommodations at the Conference as part of their award.

Ongoing Opportunity

MFCP Most Valued Professionals will be asked to assist the various initiatives of the association on an ongoing basis for up to two years. MFCP recognizes that we have much to learn from these talented young people and hopes to use their skills to help us lead the free paper industry. In return for participation in regularly scheduled conference calls and for volunteering some time to assist with various MFCP initiatives, MFCP will provide additional leadership development opportunities and the opportunity to attend future conferences for even more training.

Nominate your MVP today!

Deadline for nominations is January 20th, 2023.

[Click below for the nomination form](#)

MVP'S At Work



Kari Jurens

Looking Back While Looking Ahead

As the Holidays are approaching, I decided to self-reflect on the past year.

Covid has changed the outlook of our business in so many ways and not all bad. We now realize we can work from anywhere and still be involved with our co-workers, friends within the industry, and clients. It has strengthened our bond with others within our industry; some companies did not fair so well.

We rise to the challenge each day in a world clique of "newspapers are dead!" HA! I say to them. I have made some of the best relationships and friendships in this business that is supposedly "DEAD" and continue to rise to new challenges each day.

Another thing we've learned from dealing with the Covid pandemic is- "that's the way it has always been done"- doesn't always work. Don't be afraid to try that new special section or reach back out to someone who shot you down in the past. We are living in a new era of things and what we need to do is TRY! Zoom is a perfect example. I had never heard of it before Covid and now I am on at least 4-6 Zoom meetings a week. Am I right?

We are ready to rise above challenges that present themselves and prove just how much we are NOT DEAD! When you have some time over these next few weeks, take a moment to reflect on how things have changed for you. Good, bad or indifferent. Use it as a base to move forward. And, do NOT be afraid to try something new.

If it doesn't work, that's okay. Not everything is going to be right all the time and that's okay too. Self-reflect on your personal life and how far you have come since Covid as well. Take this life, grab it by the horns, and GO. Run and do something amazing with it and be proud of the things you have done. It doesn't matter how big or small, we are rising to the challenge and shining through.

Kevin Slimp



Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

Kevin's To-Do List For 2023

Tips to get a good start to the new year

There's no better time than the first of the year to take steps to improve your newspaper. I visit several newspapers each month, both online and in-person, offering advice on ways to increase readership and ad revenue. It's becoming more common for me to work with everyone from the publisher to the front desk person when I visit a newspaper.

As we get set to begin 2023, here are some steps I often recommend when visiting with community papers:

Advertising Reps:

Create a master chart to track your calls to customers. Be sure to include columns for "in-person," "phone," "text," and "email" calls. Look over your calls with your ad manager or publisher at the end of each week. I've found this is a straightforward method for increasing the number of calls, guaranteeing an increase in ad revenue. It is also an excellent reminder to make more in-person calls rather than relying too much on email or other contact methods.

Designers:

Keep abreast of Pantone's list of popular colors. The list changes each year, and using the right color is a good way to increase the effectiveness of an ad. Also, keep an eye on popular font styles. Especially in ad design, these change about as often as clothing styles.

Editors:

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

Front Desk:

I don't know why it surprises me that most newspapers I visit still have friendly faces welcoming folks into the building. I guess my surprise comes from the disappearance of helpers in department stores and other businesses. More often than not, the front desk staff is in charge of calls for classifieds and contacting customers with expired subscriptions. I used to wonder how I would fill an hour with the front desk staff at a newspaper, but it never fails that we spend more time than scheduled to discuss the layout of the classifieds, methods for increasing classified ad sales, retaining subscribers, and more. As we enter a new year, I suggest not overlooking the folks who take calls for classifieds and ensuring that your methods are as efficient as possible to increase classified sales and retain subscribers.

Press Staff:

Most newspapers don't have presses anymore, but I visit many papers that have presses. When I was younger, I noticed the folks who run presses were often wary when I showed up. I soon learned the words, "What can I do to make your job better?" led to conversations that improved the printing quality of their papers. Don't overlook the press staff if you have a press at your paper. Take time to ask what you can do to make their work go more smoothly and improve the paper's quality.

Publishers:

The most successful papers I've worked with in 2022 – and there have been a lot of them – have publishers that are "hands-on" in the daily operation of the newspaper. Years ago, a young editor called me panicked when she had been offered the publisher's position at a nearby daily paper. "What does a publisher do?" she asked. "It's simple," I replied. "Either nothing...or everything." Successful papers have publishers who are involved in the paper and the community.

Reporters:

Seasoned reporters know that the "hook" makes or breaks a story. Those first few words invite the reader into the story or tell them to look elsewhere. Be sure to hook your readers with the first paragraph of every story. It might seem like nothing happened in the school board meeting that excites the reader. If there's not, skip the story and write something that will interest your readers.

Newspaper staffs come in all sizes. Some newspapers I visit have staff persons who oversee technology, accounting, and other areas. Other papers might have just three or four persons on staff. No matter the size of your team, my best advice is to involve everyone in finding ways to improve every aspect of your newspaper. Although I appreciate the work, you don't always have to bring in an "expert" to make significant improvements to your paper.

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



Tell Them Why – And Sell More

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

Like some other kids, I learned how to drive before taking the drivers' education class in high school. My father took me to the school's football stadium on weekends when the expansive parking lot was empty. The car was an old station wagon with a manual shift on the steering column. "Once you learn how to drive a manual shift, an automatic transmission will be a piece of cake," he said.

Dad was a great teacher. After he methodically explained the gas pedal, the brake, the clutch and other essentials, he assured me that it was okay to make mistakes, because I couldn't damage anything around us. Shifting gears was the number one topic. He carefully demonstrated the correct way to move from neutral to first, then let me try it. "Let the clutch out slowly," he said, "because the car will lurch and stall if you do it too quickly. Do it slowly and the car will ease into gear." At first, I struggled so much with that clutch that the poor station wagon jumped around like a bucking bronco. But after a while, I developed a feel for it – and the car actually behaved.

One thing that made Dad such an effective communicator was that he told me *why* certain things should be done. He was a mechanical engineer who dealt with *whys* all the time. When the car bucked, I knew why, because he had told me why. When I shifted smoothly, I knew why, because he had explained it. And when I eventually drove on the road, I had more confidence than I would have had without his patient instruction.

One of the most important techniques in communication – especially in persuasive communication – is to tell people "why." Steven, an ad manager who has observed countless sales presentations, told me, "Salespeople have a tendency to do a lot of telling, but not much explaining. It's important to realize that we all have a need to know why we are being told something or asked to do something. Even children need to know why. They are champions of 'why' questions."

Steven is right. Give prospects reasons why. It helps to use a simple bridge like "because" or "the reason I say that is" or "this will provide you with." For example:

- 1) "Let's take a look at our publication's readership figures. *This will show you* how many prospective print and online customers you can reach with us."
- 2) "Here's a comparison between a couple of ads in the last campaign you ran and a couple from the new campaign we've been discussing. We're taking a look at these together, *because* this will help us see how the new ads build on the brand image you've established."
- 3) "Let's set an appointment to talk next Tuesday, after the first ad runs. *This will give us* a chance to make any needed tweaks to the offer."

Without a doubt, telling prospects why is a good way to keep your sales presentations in gear.

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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. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com

Ryan Dohrn



Tricks to Insure Email Response

Ryan shares 3 easy ideas to increase response to emails.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYFMwiDuo8w>

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](#).