HOT TOPICS
Minnesota Newspaper Association annual meeting, January 2019
Moderator is Matt McMillan, contributors are Pete Mohs, Al Edenloff, Steve Ammermann, Roger Lee, Bill Ostendorf, Aaron Becher

HOT TOPIC NO. 1: Promoting our value to readers and advertisers – messages, videos, events, testimonials, other strategies to grow your brand and counter the negative news about our industry

REINTRODUCING THE OKLAHOMAN
Speaker presentation: 
http://cdn2.creativecirclemedia.com/inland/files/7fa48ac20.pdf

Example video testimonial: 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1jgHggQhiY

The Oklahoman won the top newspaper marketing award with the campaign above.
PROMOTING OUR VALUE CONTINUED …

National Newspaper Association

A nationwide newspaper readership survey, commissioned by NNA, was conducted by Susquehanna Polling and Research of Harrisburg, PA, in 2017. The company completed telephone surveys with 1,000 households across the country. (These materials are for NNA members ONLY)

Materials touting the survey results have been created that you can use to promote your newspaper and support your advertising sales efforts.

The materials include:

• Four 6.6”x10” ads (color and b&w)
• Four 2 col. ads (color and b&w)
• Four digital ads (300x250 and 728x90)
• Three ad sales fliers
• A website as a landing place for the digital ads (www.knowlocal.news)

We encourage you to use these promotional and marketing materials, which can be found here. Blank space was deliberately built into the larger ads so that you can incorporate your newspaper flag, contact information, etc. The same is true for the sales fliers.

A key takeaway from the readership survey is that the community newspaper remains the No. 1 source for local news and information as well as local advertising and shopping information. Sometimes, we take that fact for granted and tend to gloss over it. We need to do more to promote the strong local brand that we maintain.

These materials have been created around the theme of #knowlocal. We all are familiar with trends about shop local, stay local or eat local. Well, the community newspaper is the No. 1 source when you need to know local.

We encourage you to incorporate the #knowlocal theme into your newspaper’s social media and digital products. Here is just one example of a tweet that incorporates the #knowlocal hashtag:

When you need to know what’s happening in our community, turn to the No. 1 source for all things local—(your newspaper name). #knowlocal

Look for ways to incorporate the #knowlocal theme into your own newspaper promotions and products. Add it to your business cards, your email signatures, your newspaper pages, etc.

http://www.nnaweb.org/article?page=/article&articleTitle=promotion-marketing-materials-available-for-nna-members--1508188859--1695--
PROMOTING OUR VALUE CONTINUED …

MNA Ad Design Contest library of winners

MNA’a convention is home to the annual MNA Ad Design Contest. Designers from across the state compete for first, second and third place prizes for best self-promotion ad.

Convention attendees are judges. You should vote today. Ad designs receiving the most votes win money.

All ads submitted are available to MNA members to use. The library of past winners can be found at MNA’s online home.

• Find ads at mna.org
• Go to the ‘member services’ tab
• Click on ‘Readership House Ads”

Are your designers participating? Prizes this year are …
First Place: $300
Second Place: $200
Third Place: $150

What promotions have you seen that are effective?

Did you participate in MNA’s white out? What feedback did you get?

What ideas do you have to promote community newspapers?

Should we have a coordinated campaign?

Idea sharing …
Tribune’s holiday edition is coming Wednesday — Steve Ammermann

WILLMAR — The West Central Tribune’s holiday paper will hit the streets Wednesday morning just in time for our readers’ Thanksgiving Day planning and shopping through the weekend. The Tribune’s holiday edition provides a great opportunity for readers/consumers to find the deals they want and advertisers to reach their target markets. "The convergence of holiday advertisements in one issue makes the newspaper a virtual shopping center and gives readers an experience they’ll have a hard time duplicating elsewhere," said Steve Ammermann, Tribune publisher. The overall newspaper Wednesday, including advertising circulars, will weigh about two pounds, said Nate Schueller, circulation manager.

Newspaper advertising — ads in printed issues of newspapers, newspaper inserts/circulars, or ads on newspaper websites, apps, social media sites — is the most relied upon advertising platform when consumers shop for retail sales and deals, according to the 2016 Brand Impact Study. Among users of specific ad platforms, more than six out of 10 newspaper readers are "very likely" to rely on newspaper advertising when shopping, followed by point-of-sale circulars, according to the study.

"The abundance of advertising in our holiday newspaper Wednesday is a testament to the continued power of our attractive reading clientele," Ammermann said.

There will be local advertisers with displays ads and national advertisers with inserts in the holiday edition, according to Kevin Smith, advertising director. "Our largest insert will have 98 pages, while the smallest is an 8.5-by-11-inch single-sheet insert," Smith said. The mailroom staff — the daytime team from West Central Industries and the nightshift Tribune staff — began working nearly two weeks ago on assembling the 18 insert circulars that will be part of the 2016 holiday newspaper, according to Rick Buddy, mailroom supervisor. Readers will use the holiday paper packed with ads, inserts and coupons to help set their plan of action to score the best deals on Black Friday. More than 55 percent of shoppers have already started buying holiday gifts, according to the latest consumer survey from the National Retail Federation.

Nearly six in 10 Americans — an estimated 137.4 million people — plan to or are considering shopping during the Thanksgiving weekend, according to the NRF’s study. Black Friday will remain the busiest day of the holiday weekend with 74 percent planning to shop that day, the same as in 2015, said the NRF. The numbers, which cover Thanksgiving Day, Black Friday and Small Business Saturday plus Sunday, include both in-store and online shopping and are up from 58.7 percent or 135.8 million people last year. The Tribune’s holiday edition will go to press one hour early Tuesday night. The press room, distribution center
and our independent carriers will work through the night to get the holiday edition delivered directly to our subscribers' residences.

The holiday edition is available to non-subscribers or to purchase extra copies for $3 via counter sales at all local newspaper dealers in west central Minnesota. The holiday edition will not be available in newspaper racks. Counter sales in Willmar include the following locations: Barney's On Eagle Lake, Casey's (East and West), Cash Wise Foods, CLC Plaza, Cub Foods, SuperAmerica, Thrifty White, Walt's, Walgreen's and Willmar Auto Plaza.

What a superb Carrier/Distributor thank you ad in this morning’s Toronto Globe and Mail. Well done!
2018 was a busy year for employees of Forum Communications Company.

We’ve given our ALL this year...

- We’ve published 3,825 news articles about what’s happening in our community.
- We’ve written 3,428 sports stories covering athletes in our community.
- We’ve sent out 1,518 news alerts spreading awareness in our community.
- We’ve aired 1,560 news broadcasts telling the stories of our community.
- We’ve given over 6,000 volunteer hours to our employees to help people in our community.

But what we’re most PROUD of this past year, is that we’ve donated:

7,465,416 Digital Impressions 158,000 Print Inserts 11,276 Inches of Ad Space 10,000 TV & Radio Commercials 100,000+ Print Pages

and, between Forum Communications Company’s 1,500 employees and the Marceil Family Foundation, more than $2 million to non-profit organizations and charitable causes in our community.

When you read The Forum, listen to and watch WDAY or browse InForum, you’re not just supporting local journalism. You’re supporting our community.
HOT TOPIC NO. 2: Paid letters to the editor – Al Edenloff, Echo Press, Alexandria

It's back - and a little earlier this year.
The filing period to run for public office opens May 18 this year and runs through June 1.
Douglas County has a number of key positions that are up for election this year, including three commissioner spots (districts 2, 4 and 5), county attorney, recorder, auditor/treasurer and sheriff.
If more than two candidates file for one position, a primary election will take place on Tuesday, August 10. That's a month earlier than normal. The Legislature approved the change so military personnel and other Americans overseas have plenty of time to cast their ballots.
The newspaper will once again serve as a valuable source of information for all the local races. To make sure everyone is on the same page with how the newspaper handles letters, here's a review of our policy:
As in the past, letters to the editor that endorse a particular candidate or political party will be charged. The rate is 10 cents per word. The newspaper started this policy several years ago because there is a limited amount of space available on the Opinion page.
The letters are printed on the Opinion page under the heading "Paid Political Letters" and are paid for in advance by the person writing the letter. There is a 200-word limit on endorsement letters.
All letters must be signed and include an address and phone number for verification purposes. Letters submitted by a group or organization must still contain at least one individual's name that represents the group and an address. If a letter contains several signatures, only the first five names will be printed.
The Echo Press will try to print every letter it receives as long as it meets the guidelines (contains a signature, is under the word limit, isn't libelous, etc.). The newspaper does not selectively put some letters in and leave others out.
Deadlines for paid political letters are the same as regular letters to the editor - noon on Monday for consideration in Wednesday's newspaper and noon on Wednesday for the Friday edition.
The last batch of endorsement letters before the primary will be printed in the Wednesday, August 4 issue and they can't be controversial or raise new issues. No paid letters will be printed in the Friday, August 6 issue right before the election.
We encourage all residents to get involved in the political process getting to know the candidates and finding out where candidates stand on the issues. The quality of the candidates selected for office depends mightily on how informed, active and involved voters are.
Echo Press editorials are the position of the newspaper’s editorial board, which includes Jody Hanson, publisher; Al Edenloff, editor; and reporter Celeste Beam.
Paid Political Letter: Viking Sportsmen support Stratton

To the editor:

I am writing on behalf of Jim Stratton. He has been a member of the Viking Sportsmen's club for more than 40 years. During that time he has been very involved with the countless projects the sportsmen undertake. He has been on the board of directors for most of this time, being president twice and treasurer multiple years. He was concerned about the environment long before he was a Commissioner. His involvement in the AIS committee, the land and resource committee, youth groups such as our Junior Viking Sportsmen, and currently a coach for the National Archery in the Schools as our independent provider representative proves this. Do not be fooled by the "come lately" people running against Jim. He has proven over and over again of his commitment to the outdoors and clean water.

The Viking Sportsmen urge you to write in Jim Stratton for County Commissioner District 2.

Gene Sullivan

Viking Sportsmen president

(Paid political letter)

Additional paid political letters links/examples

Alexandria, Minn.: Editor Al Edenloff has been charging for 30 years

Fargo: Editor Matt Von Pinnon’s explanation to readers
http://www.inforum.com/opinion/letters/4422478-five-nd-newspapers-will-charge-fee-publish-political-endorsement-letters

Grand Forks: Publisher Korrie Wenzel message to readers

Red Wing, Minn. group: Editor Anne Jacobson message to readers
https://www.farmingtonindependent.com/opinion/columns/4389327-column-endorsement-letters-are-advertisements

Feedback from the group …

Who else has paid political endorsement letters? What feedback did you get from readers? Candidates?
HOT TOPIC NO. 3: Advertising incentives and commission plan ideas

Industry benchmark: 15 percent cost of sales was standard, however a tighter labor market means this percentage is likely growing.

How much does the list generate in revenue?
- $200,000 x .15 (cost of sales) = $30,000
- $200,000 x .20 (cost of sales) = $40,000

Cost of losing a good salesperson?
- One company says $150,000 to $200,000 in lost sales
- Another company says $35,000 in lost sales
- What is the cost of losing a good sales person at your operation? Next time there is a vacancy, look at the numbers to determine your own turnover cost.

Have you reviewed the total sales by rep recently?
- If sales are declining on a list or multiple lists, the best people leave first because they have the most opportunity.
- Poaching is common among other businesses because newspaper sales people are so visible.
- How many reps should you have based upon 2018 numbers?
- Proactively looking at this – especially if there is an opening – can provide an opportunity to consolidate two poor lists into one good list able to generate enough income to competitive for a quality sales employee.
- Do you keep new customers as house accounts? This can save money in the short-term, and cost money in the long-term.
- If it is an account owned by the house, who is actively working it? What are you missing?
- If the buy is coming from an agency, that account needs attention, too. How many agency accounts are buying less this year than last year? What if someone worked the account?

Rules of thumb:
- 80 /20 – percentage of overall compensation is 80 percent base and 20 percent commission
  - $40,000 total pay means $32,000 base with $8,000 in commission
- 70 /30
  - $40,000 total pay means $28,000 base with $12,000 in commission
- What do other businesses in your area pay salespeople?
- How does your base and commission plan compare?
- Your position is more stable than selling cars, doesn’t involve nights and weekends.
HOT TOPIC NO. 4: Prospecting – motivating sales teams to find time to fill the top of the leaky advertising revenue bucket

How much time are your prospecting each week? What about scheduling a two-hour block?

✓ Prospect every week
✓ Have prospects at every stage of the sales funnel

Vince Coultis, Training and Development Consultant, Propel Coaching and Consulting LLC

Ryan Dohrn, Brain Swell Media, spoke at MNA last year
Ryan@BrainswellMedia.com

- Time management - 20 percent new biz, 60 percent babysitting, 20 percent retention
- Manage to meetings – If monthly goal is $40,000, and average deal is $2,000, need 20 deals, need 35 meetings to hit that number - book 40 meetings - manage to meetings, not goals.
- Become a time management master - Every day map out every second of every hour of every day. President, Jack Welsh, big leaders have mapped out schedules. Prime prospecting times at 11 am and 4 pm. People don’t book meetings at that time. Manage to-do list in my phone. 5 pm - update to-do list. Final e-mail quick reply and clean up at 5:30 p.m.
- Three percent of people are buying, 40 percent poised to begin, 56 percent not ready, one percent other. Sales teams focused on special sales projects. Will you get off? No. But, should slow it down.
- Rejection happens, most customers say no four times. Most salespeople ask four times. Ask five instead.
- Generic e-mails don’t work. Be specific. “Hi John, I see your promoting zero turn mowers, I have a solution to grow your sales for that.”
- Pick up the dam phone. Phone calls are 10x more likely to lead to sales. E-mail doesn’t have same results. Burn phone lines up.
- Don’t say your name first when leaving a voicemail. It will be deleted by advertiser. Leave message that is charismatic. “I have a great idea for you. I sent you an e-mail as well. By the way, this is Ryan from Press Gazette.”
- Sell and help clients create four promotions per year. Ask clients, “what are your four promotions this year?” Get 12 ads for four promotions, three ads each.
- Make your prospecting e-mail very relevant - from facebook, instagram.
- Ask for referral. “Who else do you think can benefits from a good marketing campaign?”
HOT TOPIC NO. 5: Public notice and legal ads – MNA statewide network, positioning notices in the print and online editions for better engagement, promotions, helping public bodies see value

Left: The Proctor Journal positions its printed public notice ads within the front part of the paper for better readership. For example, school board minutes shown here are on a page with school lunch menus. That is certainly a better position than in the back of the paper.

Below: The Jackson County Pilot organizes its public notices by public body right in its navigation bar on its homepage.
Sign up to begin using the Public Notice site today! Call us at 612-332-8844 or email member@mna.org to begin the setup process!

Other ideas ...
HOT TOPIC NO. 6: Events – making money, new ideas

What is your formula?

- With an issue of the paper or special edition, publishers know if 60 percent of the pages are ads and 40 percent is news, the issue will generally have an acceptable profit margin.
- How much revenue do you need to make money hosting an event?
  - Depends upon expenses
  - Venue cost
  - Talent cost
  - Material cost – food, signage
  - Add total costs
  - Determine how much revenue you need to cover costs
  - How much margin is needed to make this effort worthwhile?
  - What value do participating businesses receive?
  - Do you charge accordingly?
  - Do you limit the number of businesses? Fear of missing out, or FOMO
  - Do you limit the number of businesses in a category? FOMO
  - Do you have sponsors in addition to participating businesses?
HOT TOPIC NO. 7: Customer appreciation ad sales, winter ad sales, one-day ad sales

Do you have unsold ad inventory during your slowest months?

What do retailers do when business slows in January?

Consider a winter ad sale to match your slowdown.

Best practices:

One-day only

Ads only run during slowest weeks of year

Ad confirmation form

Ads get discounts if they meet published deadlines.

FULL AND HALF-PAGE AD SALE ORDER CONFIRMATION

Friday, Jan 11, 2019

This form is a confirmation your business placed an order during the Customer Appreciation full and half-page ad sale on Friday, Jan. 11, 2019. Please verify the details of this order, sign it and return it to your multi-media advertising representative to complete the order and earn the discounts.

Thank you for your advertising order.

Time of call:

Business name:

Business person ordering ads:

Date of insertions, publication names, rates:

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Total # of ads: 

Total $:

All ads qualifying for the full and half-page discounts will run after Friday, Jan. 11 and on) before Thursday, Feb. 28, 2019. Ads are eligible for the discounts shown above if copy is submitted by the published deadlines. Ads turned in after published deadlines receive normal earned rates, not sale rates.

I confirm the above information is accurate and agree to the ad quantity and discounts shown above.

Advertiser:

Please return form to:
HOT TOPIC NO. 8: Classified strategies to grow volume, readership and revenue. Roger Lee of TownNews, Bill Ostendorff of Creative Circle

Morristown, Tenn.  
"Classified ads revenue was 185 percent more in June of this year than last year. A lot of that had to do with the functionality of BLOX Ad-Owl being very user friendly." Emily Chapin, classified manager

To make it even easier for its users, the Citizen Tribune offers only two packages: "Citizen Tribune" and "CT Life-TMC and Citizen Tribune." The intentionally simple strategy is easier for staff to set up and doesn't overwhelm customers. "A lot of times, customers pop on the site to place a quick ad for their yard sale," Chapin said. "They don't want to look through 18 different options. Usually they go with the first package they see. We've always kept it simple. Coming from a user's standpoint, if I was at home placing an ad, this is easy!"


HOT TOPIC NO. 9: Financial benchmarks – labor to revenue, newshole, cost of sales, inventory day supply (newsprint on hand), gross profit

- Labor to revenue – Overall labor to overall revenue – industry average among dailies is 34 percent labor cost
- Newshole – Overall news inches verses ad inches – industry average among dailies is 63 percent news to 37 percent advertising. Weeklies tend to be closer to 50 percent news and 50 percent ads. Special sections and magazines run richer at 40-plus percent news to 60 percent ads.
- Cost of sales – percent of labor costs for revenue sold – 15 percent was benchmark
- Inventory day supply – amount of newsprint on hand in the plant – 30 to 40 days not counting odd ball sizes used infrequently.
- Gross profit
- Paywall conversion rate – percent of people hitting your paywall who subscribe – 2 percent is national average.
- Unsold digital ad inventory – percent of locally sold ads your traffic allows you to run – 20?
HOT TOPIC NO. 10: How to create ad pricing for a new sales project, best practices from the group

- Cost to print – 20 pages
- Cost to distribute
- Cost of sales
- News costs
- Profit margin
- Total costs - $1,000
- If 50 percent news and 50 percent ads, calculate how many pages of ads will fit – 10 pages
- Based upon this number, divide $1,000 cost by 10 pages = $100 cost for full-page
- Increase ad prices for smaller sizes. For example, $75 per half-page, $50 for quarter-page
- Sponsors – can you get one or more premium sponsors for your themed projects?

Ideas from group ...
HOT TOPIC NO. 1: Digital reporting – what to show advertisers, when to show advertisers, what are acceptable results for a digital campaign?

What reports do you show a digital advertiser?

- Impressions
- Click-through rate (CTR)
- Interactions
- Leads
- Google analytics – UTM traffic

How often do you show advertisers reports?

- Monthly?
- After campaign is completed?
- How do you share? In-person, e-mail

What is acceptable?

- Number of impressions – cost of campaign compared to size of audience who saw campaign
- How much does a lead cost? $25? If campaign cost $700 and customer received 28 leads, they paid for the campaign

HOT TOPIC NO. 12: Customer service – how do you greet customers on the phone, in written communications, e-mails, in person? How can you track and improve customer service among team members?

- Greetings – “Thanks for calling the Press-Gazette, how can I help you?”
- Communications written in conversational language
- Position yourself in the public’s mind – “The best local and regional news in Northeast Minnesota.”
- Testimonials – share good stories
- Rank our service – ask for customers to share how you are doing
- Ask customer opinions – Did you like this story? Do you have an opinion about this story? E-mail reporter Clark Kent at ckent@pressgazette.com.
- Other ideas …

What did you think of MNA’s Hot Topics session?

- E-mail me at matt@presspubs.com.
- What topics did you like? What topics would you like to see if Hot Topics returns?