



Planting New Ideas:

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What do you think?

MPA staff has been publishing Planting New Ideas for some time now, and we'd like to find out from our members how it's working.

Please e-mail us at readership@michiganpress.org and let us know what you think. What were some of the good ideas? What ideas could you have lived without?

We are also looking for other ideas to help newspapers all over the state grow their readership. If you've seen anything interesting in your travels, or have been doing something innovative at your paper, forward the idea to us and we'll get the word out.

Don't forget to visit our Web site MichiganPress.org to find out what's new at Michigan's newspapers.

Hosting special promotional events can lead to bigger circulation and ad sales

Excerpts From NAA "Growing Audiences"

At some newspapers, the goal is to sell advertising. At the *St. Petersburg Times*, Dave LaBell sees the goal as making the cash registers ring for their advertisers. The difference may seem like semantics, but it has steered the course for a highly profitable events group that also forges strong relationships with local businesses.

With two dedicated people and a total staff of five that helps out during show dates, the *St. Petersburg Times* handles 16-20 consumer shows a year with profit margins in the 45 to 65 percent range, with some of the larger shows hitting the 75 percent mark. The shows also develop and boost advertiser

relationships. Last year, for example, the Bridal shows were so successful that in January 2009, the newspaper is launching a free niche product for brides titled "Bliss." Other shows have brought in as many as 100 new advertisers.

Rather than working with other groups, the *Times* holds their own events to market and promote their product. This also fills a role local newspapers should have in their community. The future is about growing revenue, but it should also be about partnerships that help both business in the community and the newspaper.

Continued on the back

Local, Local, Local

Excerpts from NAA "Growing Readership"

In the Morris County, N.J., market, the newspaper increased market penetration from 20 to nearly 70 percent in one year after launching seven new "names and faces" weeklies with a total distribution of 140,000. Editions average 30 pages with 55 percent advertising. More readers, more advertisers – it's audience building at its most successful. While the daily newspaper covers the business, news, sports and other journalistic endeavors, the weeklies are a home-spun, chicken-dinner approach

to the community. "These weeklies won't win the Pulitzer, but that's not the goal," says Joe Cavone, president and publisher, the Daily Record. The success of these weeklies is counted by "the number of names and faces published."

Residents aren't the only ones who love to see themselves in the photographs. Advertisers have flocked to the products, including dozens of new, non-traditional display advertisers that see themselves as part of the community.

Continued on the back

Going hyperlocal

Continued from the front

By going hyperlocal and involving readers in the development and submission of content, the newspaper can afford to produce the depth and breadth of coverage that draws both readers and advertisers. “Readers want to see their friends and neighbors in print and we deliver,” Cavone says. “And while we deliver what readers want, we’re also delivering what advertisers want—value and audience they don’t get anywhere else.”

“We produce a local print version of Facebook,” says Cavone, referring to the popular Web site.

The community weeklies are mailed to nonsubscribers and inserted in home

delivery and single copy. The content is all positive news, with photos and news supplied by readers. Stories focus

on topics such as schools, churches, organizations, performances, Little League and other youth sports, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, pets, real estate, local restaurants and retailers. It’s home-spun, over-the-back fence, share a cup of jo’ news—and readers love it. With an emphasis on featuring the names and faces of local residents, each weekly edition is packed with photos, many of which are reader supplied. To see more go to: DailyRecord.com/section/NEWS01.

Promotions

Continued from the front

While some of the shows the *Times* puts on are major events—a three-day home show brings in 500 exhibitors and 15,000-20,000 attendees—not all the events are so large. A bridal show might have 100 exhibitors and be a one-day event. *The Times* team have produced events for themes ranging from home buying to health care to jobs.

In Michigan, *Crain’s Detroit Business* holds several events each year to offer a wide range of special event sponsorship opportunities that can help you further connect with customers, prospects and potential partners. Take a look at CrainsDetroit.com/files/08events.html.

Michigan Ideas:

Take-Aways—professional and personal for a *Lansing City Pulse* freelancer

When Leslie Wolcott headed to Virginia last fall to attend a Boot Camp sponsored by MSU’s Knight Center for Environmental Journalism, she returned to Lansing armed with a newly developed and “really fascinating network” of young and veteran journalists from around the country. She also became more familiar with technology tools including geo-tagging, database use, Twitter, and other social networking sites that she can put to use at *Pulse* and *GreenDaily.com*.

Unlike most *City Pulse* staffers, Wolcott has no formal training in journalism. “I thought it would be great to learn from those experienced in the business, and that I might have some interesting things to share about blogging.” She also has a new appreciation for branding, so much so that she created her own environmental reporting site, *GreenScales.com*.

On a smaller geographic scale, could newly hired (and perhaps younger) staffers from your news enterprises share their tech know-how with news veterans who attend the MPA Winter Convention? And hear about the incentives of a career in community journalism from those same veteran practitioners? The convention sessions offer affordable staff development opportunities; informal discussions throughout provide a storehouse of (perhaps lucrative) ideas adaptable across platforms.

From a comment on “To Prepare for the Future, Skip the Present” by Edward Roussel, digital editor of the Telegraph Media Group in the U.K.: “In a dynamically changing information environment, if employers and employees are not spending 10 percent of their workweek investing in their own learning, the industry will simply fail to thrive.” The commentor notes that a key ingredient for the changing environment is “constant teaching/learning/education.” The MPA Winter Convention is the place to be for you, and your staffers. Find out more on MPA Winter Convention at MichiganPress.org.

What readers want

From imediaconnection.com

Enlighten me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help me stay informed on issues that are relevant to me• Help me feel smart by stimulating my thinking
Educate me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help me make better decisions to increase my value as a parent, employee, student, etc.• Help me be more secure or healthy
Enrich me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give me information that will give me a material benefit, i.e. make/save money or time
Entertain me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep me from boredom• Give me enjoyment or amusement• Help me to relax
Engage me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect me with people who share my interests or views• Make me feel part of a community
Empower me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help me get action on things that matter to me• Provide me with information that is necessary to keep our democracy running
