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PAPER CLIPS



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President's Corner



Joyce Frericks

Learning From “The School of Hard Knocks”!

My dad was a great man. He was one of 13 children. He wasn't allowed to attend school past eighth grade, but that didn't stop him from being the smartest person I've known. He wanted to learn something new every day and read as much as he could.

I have always wanted to be like my dad – work hard and learn much. Unfortunately, some of our learning came from “the school of hard knocks.” We've been learning from that school at Star Publications in the last few months.

In the middle of May, some of our advertisers started getting emails from a scammer that said we changed our bank and we were no longer accepting checks. It started slowly, a few calls the first few days. Then for over a month, the scammers hit us hard. They sent out emails every few days to a new batch of customers. Most of our customers know us very well and contacted us in one way or another to confirm the information.

The scammers opened several bank accounts. A few of our customers got the “new bank account” information and sent it to me. I was able to call the bank where the accounts were opened – under our name – and get them shut down.

One of our customers paid the scammers. We figured it out quickly as we get emails from those who pay us automatically and we noticed the last digits of the bank account number didn't match ours. Luckily, the customer was able to get the money back from the bank even though the transfer had already taken place. However, this bank account I was not able to get closed. They told me it was a third-party account that originated out of the country and there was nothing they could do.

In defense of the customer who paid, the scammers made all of this look very real. They made up a letter with the bank information. They opened an onmicrosoft.com email with our employee's name and our business name. They told our customers that it was because our old accounts were compromised that we were opening new ones. It looked so real that, when it first started, our accounts receivable employee wondered why I didn't tell her we were making the change.

May and June were spent playing defense. We called our banks to be sure nothing had changed on our accounts there. They watched our accounts for anything fishy. We called the police and filed a report. They were helpful and filed a subpoena to the bank for information. We sent out several emails to our advertisers that alerted them to the scammers. We mailed an insert with our statements and put notes on both the invoices and the statements.

I also called every customer who normally pays us by automatic deposit. These phone calls made me feel a little better about the situation. Not one of these customers got mad at me, and they were all very understanding. Several of the larger accounts said they receive these kinds of scams often. Many of them have procedures in place to be sure they do not make unauthorized changes. One of the larger customer's account supervisor called me and gave me some information about these kinds of scams. He even sent me the procedures they follow so that we can give our customers tips.

I have lost a lot of sleep over this issue in the last few months. How can we make sure it doesn't happen again? If the scammers have this information, what else do they have? To our knowledge, none of our customers have lost any money, but if it happens, will those customers be upset with us? Where did the scammers get the list from? The account supervisor I talked with gave me some ideas as to how the scammers might have nabbed their information, but, of course, we will likely never know for sure. Does our insurance cover this kind of loss? So many questions...

I'm very thankful that we seem to have made it through this lesson. My dad passed away in 2009. I still miss him and his wisdom every day, and I want to continue to learn every day – hopefully that learning won't all be from the “school of hard knocks.”

Joyce

From the office



Fenelon Place Elevator - MFCP members enjoy the view from the top!

MFCP Summer Summit

We hit it out of the Ballpark!

Wow! That's the best word to accurately sum up the Summer Managers' Summit. We had a great 2-day meeting with lots of take-aways.

At the end of the second day, we went around the room and asked folks to share what their key take-aways were from the sessions. The responses were varied – and most folks had more than one. Here's a list:

SCAM ALERT – This was an idea that came out in the roundtables. Publishers partner with their local banks and law enforcement to inform your readers about current scams on a weekly basis.

10% POSTAGE DISCOUNT - We are all trying to cut expenses and the newest program put in place by the USPS allows you to save 10% off your postage bill for engaging in Marketing Mail. This one makes me smile as the USPS describes marriage mail as sharing the message of a minimum of four companies in one publication. We've been doing that for years! It's about time we qualify for some of the discounts. Need to know more? Send me an email and I'll fill you in on the details! *Special thanks to Peter Schultz, Woodward Printing Services for helping me navigate the ins and outs of this new program so that I can share the info with each of you.*

NEWSPRINT PRICE REDUCTIONS HAVE HIT THE MARKET – Yep, you read that right. Print costs are headed down. Hopefully you've heard from your printer and those savings have been passed on to you. If not, you may want to initiate a conversation with them.

SALES COMMISSIONS AND BONUS STRUCTURE – Several attendees walked away with some new ideas for ways to incentivize sales reps while driving sales. There was also discussion on ways to structure your staff to enable a “team” selling environment. The bottom line from those that are doing so is that the sales reps on the street are able to maximize their selling time while support staff is back at home handling all the paperwork. And, let’s face it, most sales reps don’t love paperwork!

HACKING AND RANSOMWARE INSURANCE – In this day and age it’s probably not a question of if you get hacked....but more a question of *when!* During our discussion we discussed insurance to help protect you from losses. And, we discussed best practices for protecting your data right now!

iPROMOTE – MFCP has entered into a partnership with iPromote that will allow you to sell programmatic advertising at a reduced cost. We’re still working out all of the details – but I can assure you this is an easy-to-implement program that is going to change how you sell digital.

CHAT GPT – We had a lot of great discussion regarding how folks are using this new technology to assist in various aspects of the business. And, we had several words of caution as well. Knowing everyone is interested in Chat GPT and learning more about it and the other models that are available to us, we are going to soon host a Publishers’ Roundtable to discuss the issue. Continue to watch for emails from MFCP.

GREAT MEMORIES! – Late Wednesday afternoon we took a trip up the bluff on the Fenelon Place Elevator – which is the world’s shortest and steepest railroad. The elevator was originally built in 1882 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Once at the top we enjoyed a great 3-state view.

We left there and headed to Eagle Point Park where we had a delicious Steak Fry. Eagle Point Park sits high on a bluff that overlooks the Mississippi River and the Lock and Dam. We watched several barges move through the locks and saw a number of bald eagles.

On our way home Thursday, we stopped by the Field of Dreams for a hotdog and beverage. There was a group of young kids playing on the field. The weather was awesome and again everyone in attendance enjoyed the fellowship.

BEST TAKEAWAY OF ALL ... The time spent with others– sharing our successes and getting advice on our failures, learning new ways of looking at and solving problems, making new friendships and strengthening old, and walking away with lots of ideas for making our papers run better. We hope to see you at next year’s summit! We guarantee you won’t be disappointed!!

Lee

Member News



In Memory of Joel Klaassen

MFCP lost a good friend last month. Joel was admired for his forward thinking, keen sense of humor and generous spirit. He will be missed.

Joel Klaassen, 77, died on Thursday, June 29, in Decatur, Georgia.

A Celebration of Life will be held in September at First Mennonite Church in Hillsboro, Kansas. He is survived by his wife, Nancy; children, Amy (George) Cameli, Decatur, Ga., Dan (Katie) Klaassen, Seattle, Wa.; sisters, Janet (Orvin) Voth, Newton, Kan., and Elaine Klaassen, Minneapolis, Minn.; brother, Mark Klaassen, Tulsa, Okla.; grandsons, Alexander Cameli, Savannah, Ga., and Louis Cameli, Dillon, Co.

Joel was the founding publisher of the Hillsboro Free Press in Hillsboro, Kansas, a member of the Kansas Press Association Hall of Fame, and a recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from Midwest Free Community Papers organization. Joel served as our President 2012-2013.

If you would like to send your condolences to Nancy and the family you can use this address:

Nancy Klaassen
2266 Crestknoll Circle
Decatur, GA 30032

Should more information become available I will be sure to send it your way.

Lee

Lee Borkowski
Executive Director MFCP
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Industry Pioneers

The free-paper industry has a rich history. And, many people from the Midwest played an important role in its development and growth. The caring, sharing and support members offer each other make this an industry like no other. In this section we will share features from people past and present who helped create the unusual dynamic we enjoy today.

MFCP lost a good friend this month. JOEL KLAASSEN, a true pioneer in the print industry, died on June 29th in Decatur, GA. His story is one of inspiration and you will want to read it.

We would like to feature many more pioneers. Do you have someone in mind? If so, please reach out via email to director@mfc.org with the appropriate contact information. We'll take it from there!



Joel Klaassen A True Believer in MFCP

By Joey Young

HILLSBORO- Joel Klaassen has been in the print industry pretty much his entire life. He swept floors and helped with the press at the old Hillsboro Star-Journal as a child, helped start a free competitor to the Wichita Eagle called the Wichita Sun that lasted for about two years, and eventually started his own free newspaper in Marion County called the Hillsboro Free Press.

Klaassen, frustrated with the Kansas Press Association and several of their members who didn't like his inclusion as a free publication into their society started looking for alternative groups he could join to be among like-minded individuals which is how he found the Midwest Free Community Newspapers group.

He quickly started attending, vocally appreciating the free conferences and training the group was providing. Despite the over six-hour drive from Hillsboro to Des Moines, IA many times the whole Free Press staff would accompany Klaassen to conferences.

Never a serious man, Klaassen was constantly telling jokes to staff members and folks he met through MFCP. A saying that is uttered in the Hillsboro office to this day is:

“Two heads are better than one, unless one is cabbage,” which was a favorite saying of Klaassen's when talking about collaboration on projects.

After several years of attending the conferences and interacting with the many members in MFCP, Klaassen joined the MFCP Board of Directors where he served for over a decade, often driving the furthest each time to participate in board meetings and conferences.

He often touted that the Hillsboro Free Press was the southernmost newspaper in the association and even managed to get a MFCP Board Meeting located in Kansas City so he wouldn't have to drive so far for once.

Klaassen always believed scale and availability made his product the best in his county and through MFCP he found a group of people who believed the same. Many of his favorite memories were from interactions he made at MFCP over the years.

Eventually, Klaassen sold his interest in his company to Joey Young and moved into semi-retirement, often coming to the office four-five times a week anyway. He and Young would travel together to MFCP conferences while they could.

In 2017, Klaassen was diagnosed with a rare brain disease that has robbed him of his mobility and forced him to eventually move to Atlanta, GA where he and his wife, Nancy, can live with their daughter and near better health facilities than he could get in rural Kansas.

Klaassen is a member of the Kansas Newspaper Hall of Fame and a 2021 recipient of the President's Memorial Award for Distinguished Service from MFCP.

MVPS At Work



The First Year is Always the Hardest

Desiree Whalen, WI-IA Shopping News; Woodward Communications, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

They say the first year of working in sales is the hardest. With my first year now behind me this July, I found that to be true. There are so many things to learn and juggle being new to sales, let alone in this industry. There are details and lessons about our clients, and those who choose not to be clients to learn. Creating a sales process that works, software, revenue needs, tracking expenses, and time management. The list of to-dos seems infinite. It feels like it is a rollercoaster ride of highs and lows. It can be overwhelming.

There are a couple of solid principles that I will share that were passed down to me by my sales managers and CEO that have assisted me in getting through tougher days, weeks, months.

First, is to remember our “why”. Tom Woodward (CEO, Woodward Communications) recently reminded us in a meeting to think about what effects the absence of our publication in the community might be and look like. We should take pride in the support we offer our communities and businesses. We have no purpose without our why.

Next, stay consistent. There are many variables that impact sales. Sales is a roller-coaster ride at times, but the efforts we are putting in to support our clientele and community should always be consistent. It is important to build a sustainable routine that outlines specific goals, but also provides an element of ease and flow. Think long term sustainability of energy and effort.

Third, from recent group publisher, Greg Lawrence, “Nothing is ever as good or bad as it seems”. This has proven to be relevant in the days where it feels like zero progress is being made *and*, on the days, I feel like I am winning. This keeps us humble and working consistently.

Finally, when things aren’t looking so good, and we feel like we are letting down our team, clients, co-workers or anyone else we are serving, one thing that brings me back is remembering what Mindy Carter from Richland Center Shopping News tells me. “Just remember, we are not performing brain surgery.” Think of the pressure the people who do brain surgery are under, compared to the pressure we feel in the salesforce. We move past the challenging moments, life and business go on and we learn from our challenges. No one dies. There is no need to worry ourselves sick if we are doing our best.

It took me an entire year to even start to find my footing in the sales world. We face stiff competition in our location and people’s faith in print is not the most consistent. We need to be consistent in showing up, stepping up and educating our community about the benefits of both print and digital media. We are in a world that needs both medias to create successful, sustainable local businesses!

Cheers to the next year!

Kevin Slimp



Sharing the Good News of Newspapers

Everywhere I turn, I see healthy, growing newspapers

As I listen to the July 4 fireworks outside my window, my thoughts revolve around the newspaper colleagues I've met over the past few weeks and the lessons I've learned. Having finished several major redesign projects in June, I've recently traveled to speak at several newspaper conventions and visit some newspapers on-site.

In Alabama, I spoke about my vision for newspapers. I told stories of things I've seen in the past that had both negative and positive effects on our industry. I shared about newspapers that are growing, as well as newspaper colleagues who are starting new papers across the U.S. Following my presentation, I visited with several publishers individually to discuss their papers. My enthusiasm about the state of our industry was once again renewed while visiting with Tommy and Dee Ann Campbell.

Just three years ago, Tommy left his publisher's position in Tennessee after he and Dee Ann purchased the Linden, Alabama, newspaper. The circulation had fallen to 133. While Dee Ann continued to serve as publisher of the newspaper in Gilbertown, Alabama, Tommy took over as publisher of the Linden newspaper, newly named "The Leader." Today, The Leader has more than 1,500 subscribers.

In Kansas, I was able to visit with my friend Joey Young. I've written about Joey and the success he, Lindsey Young, and their team have enjoyed several times in previous columns. While in Wichita, I sat in while Teri Finneman interviewed Joey and Lindsey about new things they've initiated over the past year at their newspapers.

Once, several years ago, Joey asked me why I was working so hard to make him famous. I explained that I wasn't doing anything to make him famous. I just liked telling my newspaper friends about this young man in his late 20s and the success he and his wife had found beginning new newspapers in Kansas. A few years have passed, and I still beam with pride when I see Joey and Lindsey speaking in front of audiences at newspaper conventions. Joey didn't need me to make him famous. The work he and Lindsey were doing spoke for itself.

If you are a regular reader of my column, you've heard me mention Dale Gentry and his staff at the Jefferson City (Tennessee) Standard Banner several times. Dale and his team continue to make improvements at their ever-growing newspaper, discovering new ways to meet the demands of their readers. I love the newspapers Dale's staff publishes for each school in the area. Stories written by the students are featured in these papers, printed on broadsheets, distributed to the schools, and inserted into The Standard Banner. Is it any wonder that after 96 years, The Standard Banner continues to grow?

Having just finished several months of work with Dale's staff, we'll soon focus on creating a new publication. Like other growing newspapers, The Standard Banner has learned that cutting to grow doesn't work. Investing in future growth does.

While preparing to speak in Alabama, I contacted North Dakota publisher Jill Friesz to ask how things were going with her ever-growing group of community papers in North Dakota. It seems that Jill has been quite successful at creating new papers – or reviving former papers – in communities where newspapers have been closed. I was thrilled to hear things were going great at her papers, not just because that allowed me to include her example in my Alabama keynote. I was also excited to hear that Jill has recently revived another community paper in the state.

I plan to take some time to relax, maybe two or three days, before jumping into several redesigns in July and August. I'll also visit on-site with a few newspapers from Knoxville to Chicago. I may sound like a broken record, but I don't make this stuff up. I run into healthy, growing community papers everywhere I look and wherever I go. That's one reason I love working with newspapers so much.

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



What Are They Selling?

John Foust, Greensboro, NC

My wife and I once visited with Rick and Karen, a couple who had served as missionaries overseas. As part of their work to get involved in the community, Rick was assigned to teach a class at a local school. “For some reason,” he said, “they wanted me to teach advertising. I had absolutely no experience in advertising, but they requested that subject, because they wanted their students to learn something about business.”

How in the world did he deal with such a big challenge? “I figured the best way to handle it was to make the class as interactive as possible, so we could learn together,” he explained. “On the first day, I pinned ads from newspapers and magazines to the wall. Then I asked the students to identify what each ad was selling. To put it mildly, it was a lively discussion. All of their other classes had been lectures, and they weren’t accustomed to contributing their ideas in the classroom. They really dove into it, walking around the room, studying the ads. It was interesting to hear their perspectives – and to watch them bounce ideas off each other. From the beginning, the students were attracted to the ads that clearly indicated what they were selling. Along the way, it was surprising to see how many ads were so unclear that none of us could figure out exactly what those particular ads were all about.

“The conversation progressed from ‘What are these ads selling?’ to ‘What makes some ads better than others?’ That’s when the fun started. They talked about nice-looking photographs and drawings, good headlines, and what types of people would likely buy the things various ads were selling. Their reaction was so positive that – in the next few class meetings – we went into detail on the things they mentioned.”

Rick said the class was a “wow” experience, and it’s easy to see why. He discovered an excellent way to teach the basics of advertising – and the students learned a lot about how businesses promote themselves. “Together, we learned that advertising is not some distant intellectual topic,” he said. “It’s ground-level communication.”

The point for us to consider is simple: Are our readers really that much different from the students in that overseas classroom? Aren’t readers also drawn to well-written copy, and compelling photos and illustrations? Of course, they are.

One of the first questions to ask an advertiser is, “What do you want to sell?” If he or she does not provide specific information, the resulting ad or series of ads will not perform well on Rick’s classroom wall or in the paper. Maybe they have so many products and possible audiences that they need to narrow their focus. Maybe they don’t realize that effective advertising is more than slapping their logo on the page. Or maybe no other ad person has talked to them about the value of marketing strategy.

In many ways, selling is teaching. Your client list is your classroom.

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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



Self Service Sales

This month Ryan discusses the importance of having enough on your website to allow your customer to use your product and service before they have to talk to a sales person.

Check out why and how to make that happen on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBfIs13DwZA>

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*.