

Common Sense Pays Off

Industry takes note of "self made" publisher who succeeds by following his instincts, instead of jumping on latest trends

newspaperinstitute.com - kevin@kevinslimp.com



Kevin Slimp
The News Guru

Doggone that Joey Young. And doggone that Al Cross, too.

While we're at it, doggone the managing editor of that daily in Tennessee and the journalist from the metro paper who kept me up last night.

I should have known better. After several long days, punctuated by late-night car shopping for my son who had a "fender bender" two weeks ago, the necessity of a good night's sleep could not be overstated.

It's my own fault. After more than 20 years of column-writing, visiting newspapers and sticking my nose in just about every crevice of the journalism world, I should know better than to get online at night when I need sleep.

It started innocently enough, when I shared a blog post by Joey Young, a young (30ish) publisher in Kansas. The post titled "Editor & Publisher Is Starting To Get It: Invest In Your Print Product," sounded so much like a column I wrote three weeks ago I couldn't help but take a peek.

Joey is starting to get noticed, and for good reason. I remember when he came to me three or four years ago at the MFCP Convention in Des Moines and asked if we could spend some time discussing his plan to get into newspaper publishing. He was convinced others weren't making smart moves and newspapers could attract a significant number of readers and make a profit, if given the chance. He asked for my advice and he took copious notes.

It's not unusual for publishers to ask my advice. Over the past year, conventions have begun scheduling "20 Minutes with Kevin" sessions, where I visit one-on-one with publishers who schedule a block of time. In most cases, time runs out before I get to all the publishers.

At a newspaper convention in South Dakota a couple of months ago, a very successful young publisher, unable to get a spot on the one-on-one schedule, pulled me to the side and asked a very direct question about an important part of his publishing operation.

"I want your advice on something, and I want to know what you really think." I could tell he had given serious thought about the question before

posing it to me.

He asked how much emphasis should be given to the digital side of his newspaper. I could tell he really wanted to know my thoughts.

I paused, making sure I was giving him solid advice, then told him what I would do.

"Then that's what I'll do!" he responded.

I take it very seriously when a young or veteran publisher asks my advice. It's easiest to give the popular answer. But the popular response isn't always the best advice.

So when Joey Young asked for my help at MFCP, I didn't take him lightly. Little did I know he would, in just a few years, run multiple successful newspapers, both free and paid. Now I notice groups ask Joey to sit on their panels and speak with his fellow publishers about how he created successful, loved and profitable products.

I won't spend any more time writing about Joey's blog, other than to let you know it can be found at newspaperdisruptor.com. Some won't like it, so tread carefully. Joey doesn't have anything to sell you. He will just share what is working so well for him in Kansas.

Now on to Al Cross. After posting a link to Joey's blog on my blog, I heard from Al Cross, who became familiar with Joey's rise in the community newspaper world a while back. Most of you know Al, but for those who don't, he is the director of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky.

I suppose it's only natural, since Al and I both grew up in the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee, we went around several twists and turns during our conversation, agreeing that Joey and his newspapers have a great future. Our thoughts then turned to our newspapers closer to home.

With 1:00 a.m. approaching, I summed up my thoughts: "Al, I just care so much about these newspapers."

I wasn't surprised by Al's response, "I care about these newspapers, too."

Time's Changin' in Canada

During a recent trip with my best

friend to Western Canada, I was pleasantly surprised to hear from so many newspaper friends who learned I was in the area. In town after town, they welcomed us. A few drove hours to take us to dinner. Some brought gifts of local books, maps and homemade jams and jins.

My old friend, Roger Holmes, is a living newspaper legend in Canada and a graduate of the Newspaper Institute. I could write a dozen columns about his groundbreaking work, including developing the first affordable direct-to-plate system for community newspapers way back before anyone was giving much thought to direct-to-plate.

Not realizing we would be driving through his home of Wainwright, Alberta, we made a stop to visit his newspaper. Peter, his son and general manager of Star News Publishing, was the first to see us coming through the large windows. He rushed out to meet us, took us through the facility, then called several of the staff together.

"Do you know who this is?" he asked them. "This is the guru of the newspaper industry. This is Kevin Slimp!"

It's no wonder everyone says Canadians are nice.

I learned I missed Roger because he was in Moose Jaw, looking over the daily paper there, which he had just purchased. He didn't stop with Moose Jaw, apparently.

Peter explained they had just purchased two dailies, one major weekly, six small community weeklies and a number of specialty products in Alberta and Saskatchewan from one of the large national corporations, allowing these papers to operate locally. He showed me their newest press and we looked over their print products.

It's no wonder I feel so much enthusiasm concerning our industry. About the time I get discouraged by something that is going on in the world of journalism, it's time to hit the road and be reminded of the great things taking place in our business.

Joey Young gives us all hope. So does Roger Holmes. So does Peter Holmes. So does the young publisher in South Dakota and the managing editor in Tennessee. It's becoming increasingly obvious Al Cross and I aren't the only ones who care.



Wainwright's Roger and Peter Holmes