

Newspaper industry must return to basics, adjust to new era

While weekly newspapers have not been hit as hard as larger publications in a brutal economic attack on the print industry, they've still suffered significant losses as advertising and circulation revenues have fallen drastically with the increasing popularity of online media and advertisers' reluctance to spend money.

According to the Newspaper Association of America, print and online advertising revenue dropped to \$6.4 billion in the third quarter of 2009 from \$8.9 billion in the same quarter the previous year.

Print advertising revenue fell 28.95 percent to \$5.8 billion, with classified ad revenue down 37.9 percent to \$1.46 billion.

Print advertising revenue at U.S. newspapers has now fallen for 13 quarters in a row, according to NAA figures, while online ad revenue has dropped for the past six quarters.

The newspaper industry, once powerful and influential, is just not what it used to be.

Much of that can be attributed to technological advances, some of it to newspapers becoming little

more than political activists or mouthpieces for politicians.

For some newspapers, it's not even about journalism and serving advertisers anymore. They've gone into survival mode by cutting staff and eliminating services.

While it makes sense to save money in tough times for the industry, what most newspaper executives don't understand or just don't care about is that they're cutting their own throats by heavily cutting costs.

And it shows in every aspect of production. Most notably, original reporting doesn't appear to be a priority, balanced and attractive newspaper designs don't seem to be as important as they once were, and inexperienced and inexpensive reporters, editors, and photographers are replacing experienced and more expensive newspaper professionals.

When that happens, you've got newsrooms being run by amateurs. And when newsrooms are being run by amateurs with little or no stake in their work, you've got a product with poorly written headlines, poorly written stories,

poorly captured images, and poorly built pages.

But it doesn't necessarily start and end with newsrooms. The cost-cutting madness involves the entire newspaper, from the publisher's office all the way down to the carriers who deliver the papers.

The irony here is that these newspaper types are advancing their own demise while trying to prevent it.

Their answer has been to eliminate positions in every area of the newspaper instead of embracing — and adjusting — to changes in the media industry and in the economy.

Newspapers are unlike other businesses, so they cannot be managed like other businesses. They are unique — and must be treated as such.

But many in the industry appear to be ignorant of that fact, and it's hurting what have traditionally been good newspapers. Not only that, but good newspaper people are retreating to other careers during this downslide. Already underpaid, overworked, and un-



Bryant

derappreciated, this economy has forced them out the door, adding insult to injury.

Spare me the excuses, because I'm not interested. I grew up in newspapers. I walked the pressrooms, smelled the newsprint and ink, watched advertising executives and reporters scurrying about. I shook hands with great newspaper people and sat with my father at his desk while he worked late on his customers' ads.

Growing up, I collected newspapers with big stories, photos and graphics and kept them in boxes in my closet. I took newspaper clipping to an entire new level, and I bought a newspaper every time I traveled. I was raised with an appreciation for the industry, a respect for its people, and a love of ink.

That's why it is so difficult for me to watch newspapers continue to decline, mostly of their own prideful doing. I remember how things used to be.

I remember how hard talented and dedicated newspaper people worked and

how positively they were perceived in their communities.

It's just not that way anymore, and I hate it.

As I've written before, not everyone is cut out for the work. It's hard, it can be unflattering at times, and we're expected to be tolerant of everyone and everything else in the interest of impartiality.

Newspaper people sacrifice enough without having to endure the misguided — however well-intentioned — actions of desperate newspaper executives.

I haven't gone their way. I learned the right way in this business, and those lessons have stayed with me wherever I've gone. Every newspaper is different, and every community it serves is different.

It's that belief that drives my primary newspaper philosophy: That a good newspaper manager takes his experiences with him, combines them with sound industry standards and research, and uses that to advance the company he represents while also serving the community.

But I don't see much of that anymore. I see people going through the mo-

tions to simply collect a paycheck, and that leads to mediocre or bad newspapers, especially in the newsroom.

What we've all got to understand is that newspapers exist not for newspaper people but for their communities. Again, the news industry is unlike any other.

To that extent, it deserves the attention and respect needed from inside to survive on the outside. If newspapers don't appreciate their own, they certainly can't expect to be appreciated by readers and advertisers.

In other words, the print industry must clean up its own house before it can clean up someone else's. It must continually adjust to an ever-changing media industry, ensuring its survival no matter what happens.

And it must figure out how to do that without cutting its own throat.

Paul Bryant is managing editor of The Chandler & Brownsboro Statesman. In a 16-year career, he has been recognized by state press associations for investigative journalism, features writing, and photojournalism.

EDITORIAL

Trustees made mistake in decision to terminate Caldwell

The Brownsboro Independent School District made the wrong decision when it elected to effectively end Superintendent Elton Caldwell's tenure a couple of weeks ago.

Nevermind that trustees are allowed by law to hire and fire superintendents almost at will. That's not the point.

Instead, we question the board's motives to terminate Caldwell nine months before voters decide whether taxes will be raised to finance improvements at some schools and construction of others.

Furthermore, this vote could have waited until January 2011, the same year Caldwell's current two-year contract is set to end.

It appears the four members who want to make a change in the superintendent's office for the first time in over 20 years rushed their Jan. 18 vote. After talking to several district officials and not having our calls returned by others, we still don't know why Caldwell was terminated.

But we do know the board's president, Bobby Teague, and its vice president, Dusty Wise, were "shocked" by the move.

We also know that Caldwell was not expecting his career to end this way, and we've been told by some in the community

that they didn't see it coming, either.

If we are to believe everything we've been told - and we do - then why did Jeffrey Fulgham, Becky Grantham, Donny Wilson, and Ricky Wyatt vote to terminate their superintendent? Wise said some board members had received "flack" from voters over Caldwell's performance.

Teague told us "flack" was a bad word to use and that he has heard no negative feedback about the superintendent.

Moreover, Wise and Teague — the board's longest-serving trustees who voted against terminating Caldwell — said they have enjoyed working with the district's CEO and praised his efforts over the last 20 years.

So we have to wonder what's really going on.

The board members don't want to talk about what was discussed in the Jan. 18 executive session, and state law doesn't require them to do so.

But after 20 years with the district, Caldwell deserves to know why he's losing his job. And the communities he's served for two decades deserve an explanation, too.

At a time when many crucial decisions must be made regarding the district's projected growth and what

it can afford in the way of new construction and renovations, a decision on whether Caldwell needed to be replaced by the end of his contract should not have been a priority for board members.

Rather, district officials should have been focused on this bond proposal. While we're optimistic it will succeed, we understand raising taxes for any reason is not a popular proposition and should not be taken for granted.

The last thing this district needed was to deal with the possibility that Caldwell won't stay around until summer 2011. If he does decide he's had enough, and if he leaves before the November tax election, that's only going to be a distraction and could derail the district's bond-proposal efforts.

For the good of the district, we encourage Caldwell to finish his contract. But, certainly, we would understand if he did not. He's put in his time, and we would not criticize him for walking away sooner rather than later.

Caldwell deserved better, and so did Chandler and Brownsboro.

We hope trustees are more thorough in their decision-making process the next time they make such a big decision.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Reader: Selling alcohol at Y's a bad idea for community

I grew up in Brownsboro and am now attending Stephen F. Austin State University. Yesterday, I was appalled to return to town and discover that Y's Home-town Foods was pushing for a liquor election.

Y's used to be one of my favorite grocery stores, but from now on I will shop elsewhere, whether Y's is allowed to sell alcohol or not.

A few things in the article certainly caught my attention — one being when Dusty Wise suggested how much the selling of alcohol would help the city with its sales tax.

While this may be true, the article did not mention how much Mr. Wise stood to make by selling alcohol.

Sure, it will help the town but it is sure to pad his pockets even more.

Another thing is when Mr. Wise said that he would not knowingly sell alcohol to a minor. Selling alcohol to minors is not the real problem here.

The problem is that adults will buy alcohol for minors even though it's against the law.

A recent survey noted that 25.1 percent of eighth graders nationwide have

been drunk at least once. Certainly, no one is selling alcohol to eighth graders, so someone must be buying it for them.

One last point is the employees working at Y's. I know many high-school students who work there who are younger than 18. Texas law states that anyone working where alcohol is sold must be at least 18 years of age.

All of these younger employees who are trying to maintain a job will automatically be unemployed if this passes.

I hope that others who care about our community will also take their grocery

shopping elsewhere, and then maybe Mr. Wise will decide it is not such a good idea to sell alcohol at his store.

All figures and statistics can be found at <http://www.teenhelp.com/teen-alcohol-use/teen-alcohol-abuse-statistics.html>.

I read the article and noticed that it was very one-sided, that it included only the positive aspects of selling alcohol at Y's.

I figured I would also include a few of the negative aspects just to make it fair, whether this letter gets published or not.

Peyton Williams
Opelika

CHECKLIST CHARLIE

All mothers of the bride know that when women think of wedding guest attractions, they are generally thinking of all their kids' single friends who will be showing up for the big day. Match-making heaven.

But the reality is, knowing that the moms are trying to set someone up is usually death to the idea. And you still have to entertain all those families coming from out of town.

Since spring weddings are around the corner, here is the list of my favorite area attractions, just in time to add it to your welcome goodies for the hotel.

- Local Restaurants**
 - Potpourri House, 3320 Troup Hwy., 903-592-4171. Excellent food, fabulous boutique.
 - El Charo, 2623 E. Fifth Street, 903-596-7222. An East Texas Mexican tradition.
 - Jucy's, 2330 E. Fifth Street, 903-597-0660. One of the best burgers anywhere.
 - Bruno's, 1400 S. Vine Ave. or their new location on Old Jacksonville Hwy. Pizza like none other; worth the drive.
- Easy Entertainment**
 - Tyler Rose Garden and Museum, 420 S. Rose Park

- Dr, 903-597-3130.
- Caldwell Zoo, 2203 W. ML King Blvd, 903-593-0121.
- Discovery Science Place, 308 N. Broadway Ave, 903-533-8011.
- Tyler Museum of Art, 1300 Mahon Ave, 903-595-1001.
- Brookshire's Wildlife Museum, 1600 WSW Loop 323, 903-534-2169.
- Goodman Museum, 624 N. Broadway, 903-531-1286.
- East Texas Oil Museum, Kilgore College, 1100 Broadway Boulevard,

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SEEKING BIDS

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Water office representative needed. Must be fluent in accounting with QuickBooks PRO, Microsoft office, payroll and taxes. Have exemplary communication and etiquette skills. Experience in RVS software a plus. Mon-Thurs, 26 hrs w/week. Mail resume to James Hutchins Edom WSC P.O. Box 245 Brownsboro, TX 75756.

Charles Curtis ~ Candidate for Henderson County Judge

I have filed for the office of county Judge of Henderson County with the County Chairman of the Republican Party. I feel my education and my administrative experience qualifies me to hold this office.

I have a Bachelors of Science degree in Industrial Technology from Texas A&M Commerce and a Masters of Education from UT Tyler. I have 72 hours of Post Graduate studies in specialized certifications from Texas A&M Commerce. I also was trained to inspect, write response and maintenance plans for hazardous materials in the work place. I was also performance appraiser, which is adaptable to all supervisors in the work place. I made the President's List, Dean's List, Tau Sigma National Honor society and Who's Who in American Universities.

I am not a polished politician. I am not endorsed by any big name politician but I have the backing of friends that know me and have known where I came from, how I accomplished these things and how I got to where I am now. I do not have the financial backing and will run a lost cost campaign with my own money and be just as conservative with the taxpayer's money as if it were my own. I will not need the county's insurance and in this time of economic uncertainty, I will return 20% of the judge's salary.

I bring 20 years of administrative experience that put me in the public's watchful eye and scrutiny. I was directly involved in the preparation of multi-million dollar budgets. It was also one of my responsibilities to oversee multi-million dollar construction projects. I am well versed in preparing Agendas, Open Meetings Act, Inter-local Agreements, the Public Information Law, Competitive Bidding Law, Public Notice ads, for invitation to bid, know very well the components of Request for Proposals and the procedure to follow in bid openings. All of these and much, much more are essential for a candidate seeking this office.

I will establish and schedule meetings with community leaders from each city in the county. The purpose and goal is to assure everyone gets involved in the planning for the inevitable growth of Henderson County. This will include but not limited to Mayors, City Mangers and Chamber's of Commerce. I will also meet with the Sheriff's Department, Chief's of Police, other county judges and Constables to brainstorm, share ideas and think of innovative ways we might be more effective in accessing punishment and/or fines. I also want to work with the County Attorney and defense attorneys and challenge them to suggest ways to improve the flow of cases that are current, as well as those that have the courts backlogged and has the potential to overcrowd the jail. We must look in depth at changing some of the ways we are doing things now because of it is apparent that it is not effective in this day and time.

I will meet with the Superintendent's of School to begin a dialog as to what they see is needed in helping them to better prepare students as to the consequences of their actions. Police Officers, Sheriffs Deputies and Constables are a great resource to hold in-service sessions for teachers and administrators as to what to look for in suspected illegal activity. They can provide a wealth of information dealing with gangs such as type of clothing, signs and language. The Superintendents need to know who to call on to deal with a potential problem especially if they do not have a campus police force.

I will work tirelessly to implement these and other programs that have the potential of improving the service to the citizens of Henderson County. I will also give you term limit. I had a wonderful career in public school and have no aspiration to further a political career. I want to see us get away from doing business as usual. Yes there will be resistance but if the citizens want to improve we must seek out and try to change the direction that so many have chosen.

I will communicate to the citizens on a regular basis to inform everyone as to what is being considered by the Commissioner's Court as well as what was acted upon and give a brief explanation if needed. This is your county and you deserve the right to know how the elected officials are conducting your business. I will inform you of the benefits that are provided by ETMC which is a great asset by providing health services for charity and indigent cases. ETMC's annual report to the commissioner's will be shared as well as other business by as many media outlets as possible.

Charles Curtis

Political ad paid for by Charles Curtis.