**Make Something Happen**

The legendary circus founder, P.T. Barnum, was many things to people. In addition to launching “The Greatest Show on Earth,” Barnum was a showman, salesman, philanthropist, politician, and newspaper publisher. But his legendary status stems from his success as a promoter and among the many treasures he left behind is a collection of quotes, including this one: “Without promotion, something terrible happens…nothing!”

While businesses of every size and stripe consistently prove that Barnum was right, publishers have long been known to undervalue the importance of self-promotion. The truth, however, is that given current challenges and the proliferation of advertising media available around the clock and across the globe, no publication can afford to miss a single opportunity to reach readers and non-readers to promote both its content and community connections. After all, self-promotion not only stimulates readership, but also sends a strong, proactive message to advertisers that the publication they have chosen is a master of marketing and promotion.

Among the keys to successful self-promotion is ensuring that the efforts reach as many interested parties as possible. House ads are great, but are often a case of “preaching to the choir.” While some people in your community may not read your publication, chances are high that they would be attracted to some aspect of your content *if they were informed of its existence.* This is where social media can be of huge benefit — particularly when posts are geared to informing and ushering in targeted groups of readers.

Advertisers — both current and prospective — also need to be aware of your offerings and achievements. An eastern Pennsylvania publication actively promotes awards or kudos it receives with house ads, features and promotional bill stuffers that land in the hands of every active advertiser and reinforces the publication’s expertise in the eyes of readers and advertisers.

The publisher of a free weekly in northern Ohio recently took another tack and launched a campaign to spread the word among readers and advertisers that local community papers are not only alive, but also thriving. The campaign is structured around data showing that about [two-thirds of the adult residents](http://nnaweb.org/resources?articleTitle=two-thirds-of-residents-in-small-towns-and-cities-read-community-newspapers--1391441142--739--resources" \t "_blank) of small towns read their community paper and that the local paper or its Web site is the primary source of information for four out of 10 people in those same small towns. The publisher even had buttons made for his sales reps that urge people to inquire about the campaign.

Options abound for effective self-promotion. But they have to be put into motion and be ongoing, active, and engaging. That’s when something good can happen.

If you would like copies of the success stories mentioned above, feel free to contact me at jjohnson@metro-email.com.

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