

METROFEATURE

NEW LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES for New England Newspapers

**New England Newspaper & Press Association
DEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

■ In today's rapidly evolving media landscape, a newspaper's ability to adapt to change and adopt state-of-the-art sales strategies is critical to its survival and success. The same can be said of national, regional and state newspaper press associations, which have long served not only as professional trade organizations and advocates for newspapers but as providers of professional development through conferences, trade shows, awards programs, and a range of other events and services.

In this time of titanic change and limited resources, press associations have a critical role to play in preparing newspaper professionals not only to rise to the challenges of the new media landscape, but to seize the myriad opportunities it offers. In recent months, the New England Newspaper & Press Association (NENPA) unveiled new initiatives to assist its member newspapers in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont to meet today's challenges head on. Chief among those initiatives is NENPA University, a series of cutting-edge, cost-effective professional development sessions that launched in August 2012.

NENPA Executive Director Dan Cotter explains that NENPA University was created to fill a critical newspaper industry need.

"Our organization, like other state and regional press associations, does all of the things that people expect, such as put on conventions, seminars and awards programs," he says. "But today, when newspapers have fewer resources

available for training and professional development, we also have a vital role to fill in helping members remain competitive in the changing media landscape. NENPA University is our effort to fill that vital role by providing systematic and comprehensive training that is not only accessible and affordable, but is presented by advertising professionals who are out there doing the work at newspapers across New England."

Among those advertising professionals is Mark French, who, in addition to serving as Advertising Director at *The Republican* in Springfield, Massachusetts, chairs the NENPA Marketing & Advertising Council, whose members collaborated on developing and delivering the NENPA University sessions. While French and his colleagues created the five-part training series, whose topics include "The New Rules for Successful Newspaper Ad Sales," "Ask, Listen AND THEN Sell," "Selling Solutions Not Ads," "The Anatomy of New Business Prospecting," and "Show Me the Money," as a sequential development program geared to new hires or those with three years of experience or less, they agree that the program has a lot to offer any newspaper professional who needs a "recharge" or an update on working in today's environment.

Cotter and French concur that the first-ever NENPA University session, held on August 7, 2012, was an enormous success. The class was at full enrollment ("We had to turn people away," notes French) and received dazzling reviews from attendees. In fact, there was such great interest in "The New Rules for Successful Newspaper Ad Sales" that NENPA offered to repeat the session in September.



In addition to professional development opportunities available to New England newspaper personnel at NENPA's annual convention, the association also provides high quality, low-cost training sessions at its headquarters and other locations throughout the New England area. They address mission-critical issues relevant to those who labor in all areas of the newspaper workforce, including news, advertising, circulation, production, promotion, new media, and administration. Visit nenpa.com for more info.

"We designed the program as a series, but the sessions can certainly be taken a la carte," French notes. "For \$75 for a full-day session, participants get a dynamite package that includes the training and takeaways, but also access to a network of people with incredible experience in the industry. As a faculty, my colleagues and I become contacts for the participants in the classes as they build their careers, so they get a lot of benefits above and beyond the content of the curriculum."

In addition to the training offered through NENPA University, the staff of member newspapers will also have the opportunity to take part in the association's Skunk Works, a term coined by a Lockheed Martin executive in 1943 to describe a collaborative process for identifying key challenges and developing

innovative solutions.

Explains Cotter, "Like any good university, ours will have a teaching component and also a piece devoted to R&D, which is Skunk Works. We see it as a way to develop new products, concepts and techniques for the industry through research and development and then pilot testing, refining and sharing the results. Most newspapers simply don't have the time or resources to focus a lot of attention on 'big-picture' initiatives, but we're in the perfect position to do that." Cotter and French envision Skunk Works as a forum for dealing with the pressing issues and challenges faced by member newspapers and then developing strategies and solutions that will benefit all newspapers. For example, says Cotter, Skunk Works will be tackling the question, "How do newspapers make their digital efforts pay off?" And French notes that the process would be an ideal venue for exploring ways that newspapers can capture a larger share of political revenue during election seasons.

While both Cotter and French acknowledge that NENPA's new initiatives will continue to require a phenomenal amount of work, they look forward to rolling out the four remaining NENPA University courses and to launch Skunk Works sessions over the next few years.

"Our role as a press association is to do something about what we see are the challenges facing our industry and our members," Cotter says. "But we don't do it alone. I think it's important not to overlook that, despite being stretched thin and wearing more hats, people in our industry — like Mark French and his colleagues on our Marketing & Advertising Council — are putting in the time and effort beyond their normal work days to develop initiatives that will help everyone." ■ (P1211B04001C)

For more information, contact Dan Cotter, Executive Director, New England Newspaper & Press Association (NENPA), Dedham, Massachusetts, at d.cotter@nenpa.com.

Learning opportunities for the rest of us

In addition to myriad national press associations and a handful of regional organizations, nearly every state has its own newspaper press association. The following is a partial listing of those organizations and the type of training they provide to their member newspapers along with a contact name, phone number, e-mail address, and Web site info.

If you don't see your organization listed here and would like your training mentioned in an upcoming issue, or would like us to do a feature story on the training you provide, please e-mail Lauren Lekoski, Marketing Coordinator, Metro Creative Graphics, at llekoski@metro-email.com.

Association of Free Community Papers (AFCP)

Provides leadership and sales training support through The Leadership Institute (TLI) training program. TLI classes are also available in an online format. Contact Loren Colburn, Executive Director, at loren@afcp.org, call 877-203-2327, or visit afcp.org for class schedule.

Iowa Newspaper Association (INA)

Produces extensive sales training through its webinar initiative, Online Media Campus (OMC), sponsored by the Iowa Newspaper Foundation (INF) and Southern Newspaper Publishers Association (SNPA). Offers 25-30 webinars per year and a new digital sales certificate

program. Also provides numerous seminars throughout the year. Contact Jennifer Asa, Foundation Director, at jasa@inanews.com, call 515-422-9070, or visit onlinemediacampus.com or inanews.com.

Local Media Association (LMA)

(formerly *Suburban Newspapers of America*) Presents a media sales certification program in a webinar format. Contact Al Cupo, Vice President, Operations, at al.cupo@localmedia.org, call 215-256-6801, or visit localmedia.org.

New England Newspaper & Press Association (NENPA)

Conducts various training sessions throughout the New England area.

Contact Dan Cotter, Executive Director, at d.cotter@nenpa.com, call 781-320-8048, or visit nenpa.com.

New York Newspapers Advertising & Marketing Executives (NYNAME)

Offers webinars and training sessions on a wide variety of topics, including sales, marketing and digital advertising. Contact Don Ferlazzo, Advertising & Events Manager, at dferlazzo@nynpa.com, call 518-449-1667, or visit nynpa.com for more info.

Pennsylvania Newspaper Association (PNA)

Holds a variety of seminars and workshops throughout the year that focus on sales training and advertising issues.

Contact Melinda Condon, Executive Director, at melindac@pa-news.org, call 717-703-3002, or visit pa-newspaper.org/Events/training.

Virginia Press Association (VPA)

Hosts about 12 workshops a year on various topics such as news, online, sales, management, and circulation in addition to training offered at the annual conference. Also partners with other associations and organizations to offer ongoing online training and webinars. Contact Kim Woodward, Assistant Director, at KimW@vpa.net, call 804-521-7574, or visit vpa.net.