



# Relevance Project

## Helpful Advice

Best practices captured in one-page handouts.

An initiative of Newspaper Association Managers whose trade groups represent collectively more than 8,500 newspapers in North America.



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# USE BUSINESS REOPENINGS As Spark To Publish Great Ads

**There's a tendency to jump to something new when times are tough.**

Pause.

**Here's to making sure your approach to advertising basics is solid before you do.**

"Too often we sell space and then create bad ads that don't maximize response," says John Derr, publisher of the Chestnut Hill Local, a weekly in northwest Philadelphia.

"Retaining customers has a lot to do with ads we are creating."

Derr was a presenter in the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association's America East webinar on "Tips to Secure Advertising Business in the Green Zone."

#### **His clear advice:**

"Build ads that get results."

That's also a relevant reminder to chart how your ads help advertisers. Do you know? In his presentation, Derr offered an effective checklist to make sure every ad has a:

- Strong headline
- Compelling graphic
- Right message or offer to attract the right audience
- Call to action (if response-oriented)

Check, check, check, check.

#### **Then think here:**

Great ads are the building block to ensuring your outstanding-deal solution delivers desired results because you've given the advertiser prominence in your publication, complete with frequency in a smartly planned campaign.

"More seen, better results," Derr adds.

Power to the basics.

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# WHAT'S A GOOD DAY IN A PANDEMIC?

**10 + 1 suggestions from sales professionals  
who shared advice at media conferences.**

- Getting YESES, of course!
- Staying positive. The only thing you can control is your attitude.
- Showing empathy. And getting thanked for listening.
- Building, maintaining relationships. That allows you to think long term.
- Checking in with clients. Care first. Sales next.
- Keep calling and calling and calling. Sales is a numbers game. More calls give you more chances to win. Tell yourself over and over businesses need your help.
- Driving for a yes, but smiling when you get a maybe.
- Organizing your desk so everything on the surface is focused on sales.
- Seeking, completing training programs to learn something new.
- Separating the good from the bad. In sales, you're going to have both over time. Just don't get them mixed up. Always move forward.
- **Finally:** meeting face to face, with safety measures in place. Now, that's a GREAT DAY in 2020!

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# 15 TIPS ON WINNING BACK ADVERTISERS

## Never give up when a major advertiser quits.

Here is a series of suggestions on how to win a return:

- 1.** Be thorough in constructing both sides of the departure: put yourself in the shoes of the advertiser and list its known reasons; then, hear out your ad team, especially the sales representative assigned to the account. Facts, not feelings.
- 2.** Analyze the lists for strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and further challenges. Here, you can speculate in pursuit of more facts.
- 3.** Get to the decision-maker and secure a meeting ASAP to learn more about the reasons.
- 4.** Dig into the advertiser's key performance indicators. Then, rank them by importance. Was the advertiser, for example, focused on driving traffic to its store, or was it more interested in getting email addresses or text numbers for a digital campaign? Match your follow-up conversation and pitches to these customer-desired metrics.
- 5.** If it's a chain with outside-your-market ownership, strengthen the newspaper's relationship with local managers who know your market. Are they good advocates for you? If so, further improve. If not, focus here.
- 6.** Secure research and data that support your value. Local market research is the best.
- 7.** If local market statistics don't exist, tap the research that regional and national organizations have compiled to show newspaper effectiveness.
- 8.** Know your competition, especially if they've gained your advertiser. Where can you show you're better? Use discretion here, as merely badmouthing a competitor may backfire. Make it about your strengths knowing a noted point can be compared to a competition's shortcoming.
- 9.** Save all reader reaction when it's discovered the advertiser decided to leave you. Ask readers how they used the ads to make shopping decisions. Compile and share with the advertiser to press your point further.
- 10.** Refrain from blasting the advertiser in public. Others will note that for future reference.
- 11.** Get creative. It's always amazing just how many advertisers are surprised by your strong digital products. Repackage your advertising solutions with a multi-media approach to offer different solutions.
- 12.** Come up with a new campaign for the advertiser. Surprise them.
- 13.** Consider finding a middle ground apart from, say, a store's sale ads. Many businesses support local charitable efforts. Offer to partner there in terms of a sponsorship where you are hired to help inform what the non-profit group is doing. (Label this sponsored content to distinguish from news coverage.)
- 14.** Invite them in to your office (works best when there isn't a pandemic shutdown) to meet your staff. Suggest they watch a news decision meeting in action. Let the advertiser see the local residents working at the newspaper, which depends on ads to pay salaries and other bills.
- 15.** Keep at it. It could take multiple pitches. Walk a fine line between being a pain in the neck and professionally persistent. But each time you knock, you could pick up added insight.

**Winning back an advertiser makes for a great victory. Here's to more happy days.**

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# Climb Lamb's LADDER To Lift Up Selling



**Great sellers are great listeners.  
Peter Lamb says they also  
"ask great questions and shut up!"**

The owner of Lamb Consulting based in Florida says a successful sales rep thinks like the customer and climbs this LADDER when working with clients to solve problems and capture opportunities:

**L** is for **LOOK** your client in the eye when talking to build trust. Not making eye contact is a turnoff.

**A** is for **ASKING** questions, great ones that spur thinking not yawns.

**D** is for **DON'T INTERRUPT** the client when he or she is responding to your great questions. "As long as you are talking, you are losing." Listening is winning.

**D** is for **DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT** when the client is talking, even it a glowing report about a sports team you detest. Let them talk. It's their time.

**E** is for **EMPATHIZE**, especially during these challenging COVID-19 times. Be a comforting ear.

**R** is for **RESPOND**, often on the spot when you seek to close a deal. Don't leave the client meeting without a sale or answer on next steps. If necessary, take out your smartphone and book the follow-up meeting right away.

Note: Lamb positioned his LADDER as a featured presenter at the New York Press Association's daylong virtual conference on Sept. 18, 2020. His topic: "Who is winning the revenue war and why."

For a related story on his presentation, check out the Relevant Points at [www.relevanceproject.net](http://www.relevanceproject.net)

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# TIPS ON GROWING YOUR EMAIL LIST



**Lon Haenel, the founder and president of Local News ROI, shared his “tactics to grow your email list”** with the New York Press Association during an audience and subscription workshop. Consider these sources:

- Ask for an email address with every customer service touchpoint (vacation holds, payment, service questions, etc.).
- Your contest and survey activity. That’s another reason to do more.
- Web registrations (Example: activating your print account).
- Your digital-only subscriptions.
- Your classified private-party customer list.
- Last year’s county fair, home show, boat show where you promoted the newspaper’s multimedia solutions. (“If you collected addresses, let’s use them.”)
- EVERY circulation sales channel (kiosk, telemarketing, direct mail, samples, etc.).
- Users coming to your website (Again: “Ask them to type in their email address for newsletters.”).
- Renewal bills to subscribers. Go so far as to offer a buck or two off the subscription cost for those who give you an active email address.

Adapted from the New York Press Association’s “How to grow audience and revenue derived from audience” workshop on Sept. 18, 2020. For a related story on his presentation, check out the Relevant Points at [www.relevanceproject.net](http://www.relevanceproject.net)

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# BUILDING LASTING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

## Use this list of common-sense actions to build lasting relationships with advertisers:

- For starters, asks yourself: When is the last time you talked with your customer and it wasn't about your product? Creating a give-and-take relationship is more than just selling them something.
- Know that building relationships is not a quick process. It takes a lot of time and effort. It's no different from nurturing a longtime friendship.
- Realize in all of your dealings that clients want to know how much you care about them.
- Consider not walking into a customer's business with your "sales tools" — computers, binders, briefcases, etc. Instead, arrive empty-handed as you visit for an update.
- Choose a casual time or pick different times for when you drop by.
- Ask more open-ended questions.
- Listen. (And while you're at it, listen to more than the boss. Employees of the business have great insight as well.)
- Understand that nobody went into business "to buy advertising."
- Shop with your customers. Encourage your newspaper employees to do so as well.
- Even if you don't buy from that advertiser at least give them a chance. (The reference was to buying a car and giving all of the advertising dealers an opportunity to compete.)
- Provide your customers with case studies proving newspaper ads work. Consider building a library of testimonials and parking it online. Add video.
- Talk to customers well ahead of a special section to get their suggestions before you commit to publishing. They'll feel more a part of the project, and not an afterthought.
- Make sure ads stand out in the newspaper and online. (Hint: Avoid tiny type.)
- Send sympathy cards to clients when there's been a death in their family.
- Make sure the sales rep thoroughly reads the newspaper to help the advertiser know it's a reliable source "for what's going on."
- Point out to new subscribers your list of advertisers and ask them to mention the newspaper when buying goods and services.
- Finally, deliver on this guarantee: the more ads that have calls to action and the more times ads run, the better the result for the valued advertiser. Beware of "one and done."

*The Relevance Project thanks longtime publisher Robert M. Williams Jr. for his workshop at the National Newspaper Association's 2020 conference.*

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