Creating Print Demand & Economic Well-being
by Sid Chadwick

Several years ago, I repeatedly nagged a client to start his own hometown publication. After a year or so, he confessed, “Sid, I’ve come to the conclusion that it’s easier to start-up the publication than to continue listening to your argument as to why I should do it.”

Today, his small-town monthly publication runs 72 pages, with approximately 50 percent ads. It is his company’s single largest project in terms of dollars contributed toward the bottom line. One small difference, however, is that his company owns the creative and all revenue streams. That awareness and financial success led to the start-up of a second publication for a nearby town two months ago.

LOCAL PUBLICATIONS
In the past three years, we have discussed with and/or counseled clients on current as well as start-up publications for the purpose of increasing revenues for the printer and publisher. These publications tend to focus on local, small-town stories—but not exclusively. Consider the following examples:

Example One: With a soon-to-be launched supplemental edition, Heart-of-Ohio started-up this year in an extremely economically depressed area. The publication focuses on inspirational, personal stories of people in the community. Many of these stories focus on people who have surmounted difficulties that were created by today’s economically challenging conditions. The upcoming supplemental issue is expected to concentrate on new companies that were generated to create a new business service or that were crafted out of challenges brought about by the economic crisis. The publisher tells us she has more stories—and ads—than she can use in the first supplemental issue. CPAs and commercial bankers have lined up to write editorial content on:
• How to write a business plan;
• What reports need to be filed—and when; and
• How to approach and deal with your banker.

Newly formed companies wanting their story told are required to buy certain ad space—for which there has been an oversubscription. Surprisingly, spin-off print projects continue to spontaneously occur.

Example Two: Recently, a client handed me a local motorcycle publication that is less than a year old. Problem? The publisher needs more revenue. After a review of the 44-page publication and a couple of questions, my suggestions included providing a quote for a 48-page edition. From a production cost perspective, the extra four pages are practically free and can be used for developing new...
advertisers and selling more ads. We also noticed there were no ads for gun and knife shows or gun and knife shops (part of the motorcycle rider’s culture). In addition, there were no ads for the sale of motorcycles—ads that also should include QR Codes. The publication should have at least four pages of such ads and related revenue.

**Example Three:** Several weeks ago, a client sent an email informing me that they have committed to launch their first publication—a monthly that focuses on microbreweries. This modest-sized community, where the client is located, has 42 microbreweries—the bane of international brewing companies that haven’t figured out how to stop this global onslaught that is slowly chewing at their brand names, market positions, and previously predictable revenue streams. Local microbreweries have lined up to have their stories told to the local community as well as to tourists. The magazine will be a vehicle for sharing information on new varieties and unique flavors and encouraging readers to become members of their “Flavor of the Month Club.”

**Example Four:** Another client, located in the middle of one of the Civil War’s most storied battles, produces a bimonthly that captures first-person stories of the four-day battle and the men and women who died there. There are between 3 million and 4 million visitors to their town every year. Local subscriptions, as well as subscriptions from tourists who were personally touched during their visits, continue to climb! Quarterly supplements have been rolling out for more than two years, and additional supplements are planned! Late last year, this commercial printer hired a creative team (husband and wife) that now numbers 13 people. The company anticipates creative revenues of seven figures for the first year as well as an ongoing stream of print—and related—projects! As no small footnote, this supplier has developed a package of value-added services that allow his organization to print—with only half-size sheetfed presses—for publishers halfway across the United States.

**Example Five:** Another client—a commercial printer—bought a struggling local publication whose publisher was tired of “fighting the good fight.” Many of us know several someones who resemble that description. He moved to
Our main focus should be to improve our customers’ economic well-being—that’s the only reason we have to exist as an industry or as a company. Observing and developing case studies and sharing examples with personnel, customers, and suppliers is a senior management responsibility.

- Sid Chadwick

Ad revenue continues to increase as word spreads among merchants about how he has increased traffic for his advertisers.

**IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER’S WELL-BEING**

The client mentioned at the beginning of this article who started his hometown publication some years back recently wrote us: “What you do is create a sense of urgency, an atmosphere of learning, and a desire to improve all the time so we can become better in our business than we ever believed.

This type of directional leadership is what we should expect from our industry associations. However, when we review the educational offerings at Graph Expo, we again find the focus primarily is on equipment and technology, which of course we need. However, what we don’t seem to understand is how to use our equipment and technologies to improve our customer’s economic well-being. In addition, we don’t know how to explain the benefits of the equipment and technology to our customers. How long will we tolerate this lack of educational offering where we need it most?

Top executives are responsible for organizational direction and standards of performance. Our industry needs inspiration and guidance on how to improve our customers’ economic well-being. I believe only when members demand that type of direction and that type of information will associations provide that guidance and direction needed.

My final question in closing: “How much new and meaningful education and training is your business development team receiving?”

Chadwick Consulting is sponsoring a *Publications Conference for Commercial Printers*, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 18-20. The focus of the program is *How to Make Money For Your Publishers, Your Advertisers, and Ultimately Your Company.*

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Sid Chadwick is head of Chadwick Consulting, a business development focused practice for the graphic arts. In addition to facilitating three CEO Peer Groups, they focus on improving an organization’s position and performance with customers for improving revenues and bottom line performance. Services include: business development strategy creation, major customer surveys that lead to additional business, business development training for improved employee performance, improved workflow and organizational communications for developing customer preference with suppliers, creation of long term agreements with target customers, and equipment justification studies.

With more than 30 years in business-to-business environments, Chadwick has more than 18 years experience as a business development consultant, sales team educator and trainer for the graphic communications industry. www.chadwickconsulting.com