

Daily Press Re-Engineering Newspaper Business Model

The launch of the all-color Daily Press on Sunday, May 3, was the latest in a sequence of product and procedural changes initiated by the Hampton Roads, Va.-based newspaper to introduce a new advertising model, while also providing customers with a more compact, dynamic and visually impactful medium.

The transition to all color was made possible through the company's introduction of computer to plate technology in 2007 and mechanical modifications made since then to its existing 16-unit Goss Metroliner offset press to add full color capability for all printed pages. Though news photos regularly ran in color throughout the pages of the Daily Press, advertisers had previously negotiated an add-on premium for color in their ads. Full color is now built into the rate card as a standard.

The all-color premiere followed the company's adoption of modular sizing and fixed inventory policies for its advertising space earlier this year.

Both are strategies that support its move to determine an optimum page count for each day's edition based on profitability and the average volume of news and advertising by day of the week.

Since late February, the Daily Press has been offering advertisers a choice of 17 modular ad sizes ranging from 1/32 of a page to a two-page center spread, though nonstandard sizes are still accommodated for clients willing to commit to frequency agreements.

"We have abandoned the traditional column-inch model in favor of marketing page impact," says Daily Press President and Publisher Digby A. Solomon. "By determining the optimum size of each day's paper, our editorial staff is not required to literally design the paper from the ground up each day, after ad orders have been placed. Since we know where ads will run, our ad stacks have a clean, squared off look that improve the look of both the content and the advertising. The paper overall now has a cleaner, less cluttered appearance, creating more of a showcase for each advertiser."

A fixed amount of ad space was set for each day's edition to make less space available early in the week when advertising and news content tended to be lightest, with more space allotted later in the week to accommodate heavier volume. Page layouts were templated to evenly distribute ad positions throughout the paper and maintain a 50-50 news-to-advertising balance.

"We recognized that as more readers shifted to our online product and our print circulation reached its natural level, we needed to scale the size of the newspaper so we could continue to operate profitably," says Solomon. "It was a



radical departure from how we'd traditionally sold advertising and designed the paper, so we planned carefully to train our sales, production and finance teams and properly brief our advertisers."

"As a result, we've developed what we believe will be a new business model for a sustainable newspaper in the 21st century," says Solomon.

The Daily Press' all-color launch is highlighted in a video on the company's Web site at www.dailypress.com/color. Produced for presentation at a reception attended by Hampton Roads business and community leaders, the video also includes a surprise endorsement from a Hollywood superstar, a movie industry giant – or to absolutely truthful, one of its "little people." As one of the original Munchkins, the beloved inhabitants of the Land of Oz made famous in the 1939 MGM classic "The Wizard of Oz," 93-year old Meinhardt Raabe talks on camera about his role as the coroner and the movie's groundbreaking use of color in contrasting the mundane world Dorothy Gale left behind in Kansas before being transported by cyclone to the brilliantly colored Land of Oz.

"On behalf of the Munchkins, I salute you!" Raabe joyfully proclaims from his home in Penney Farms, Fla., where Daily Press Consumer Marketing Director David Messick, a lifelong fan of stage and screen, tracked him down.

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