

Lifetime Subscription Rate Rewards Most Loyal Readers



Sean Ireland

By Sean Ireland
Special to the eBulletin

It started out as a joke.

Two friends and colleagues on the phone, hashing out new ideas, and one proposes something that seems a little too far out of the box, a little too outrageous. It draws a laugh at first, and then, they really give it some thought – the potential benefits, the drawbacks. Suddenly, the idea doesn't seem so outrageous anymore.

That's how Leonard Woolsey, publisher of the [Times-Georgian](#) of Carrollton, Ga. (owned by Paxton Media Group), said the idea to offer lifetime subscription rates to customers was developed.

"We were searching for ways to 'reward' subscribers long term, something beyond the usual 'subscribe and get a free fill-in-the-blank' or temporary discount promotion," Woolsey said. "After we stopped laughing about the concept of a lifetime subscription price and figured out how to market it with guidelines to protect both parties, we kind of wondered why we never thought of it before."

The concept is simple. Subscribers who sign up for a newspaper subscription using EZ Pay or who agree to automatic credit card payments or bank drafts can lock in their subscription rate for as long as they maintain the subscription. It's an initiative that rewards a newspaper's most loyal customers, and it costs the paper very little.

"The lifetime program rewards your very best customers – something we generally don't do as an industry," Woolsey said. "While most promotions are focused on getting a new start by way of premiums or discounts, we tend to ignore long-term subscribers. An EZ Pay customer is not only your best customer, but also your least labor-intensive relationship. I'll trade two of these for five promo starts any time – the latter costs all kinds of expense when you really get down to measuring the effort."

Started late last year, the program represents a significant portion of the Times-Georgian's home-delivery subscriber base and is very popular with senior citizens and people coming off new-start promotions, Woolsey said. The rates have been promoted with fliers sent by direct mail to previous customers, as well as other attractive potential customers, and with zoned inserts in the newspaper.

While it is true the newspaper earns marginally less circulation revenue per subscriber for the Times-Georgian, this is offset by the growth in home-delivery subscriptions, a rare trend among newspapers since even before the recession. "Anytime a newspaper can demonstrate solid, sustainable circulation growth, the halo effect carries over to all other areas of the operation," Woolsey said.

LIFETIME PRICE GUARANTEE
Limited-Time Offer



Say goodbye to higher prices with this special limited-time offer from the Times-Georgian!

Subscribe with Easy-Pay and you'll enjoy:

- Guaranteed low monthly rate of only \$10 per month!
(over 50% off our newstand price)
- No future rate increases to your Easy-Pay rate!
- Convenient Home-Delivery - rain or shine!

Times-Georgian: Sign Me Up For Easy-Pay at only \$10 per month!
Call for faster service
770.214.2285

name: _____
address: _____
city: _____
phone: _____ email: _____
credit card:    bank draft
(not advised!)
card number: _____ expiration: _____

This guarantee applies only to Easy-Pay participants. Available to new and existing subscribers. Offer ends December 31, 2008.

“Only by stabilizing your home-delivery number can you ever put in place an effective and sustainable promotional model for overall home-delivery growth. Now, with more than one out of three of our home-delivery subscribers on EZ Pay, our other promotional efforts no longer drive wild swings in our churn ratio. Also, our sales representatives get to tell their customers, ‘The Times-Georgian has more home-delivery subscribers than one year ago,’ and that helps their sales effectiveness.”

It’s a promotion that gives a newspaper a lot of ways to gain – in circulation and good will – for little cost. “What do you have to lose?” Woolsey asked. “If they stop and begin to restart a year later, they pay the new or current rate, which can increase each year. In essence, we’re not really doing anything different than before. However, we’re perceived as rewarding the subscriber, and they like that.”

For more information, contact Leonard Woolsey at (770) 834-6631.

SNPA eBulletin 6-25-09