



The newspaper editor as brand manager

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David Stoeffler, Lee Enterprises

And now, a word from our sponsor ...

- Lee Enterprises is based in Davenport, Iowa
- With the purchase of Howard Publications, will own 38 dailies and have a joint interest in 6 others
- In 18 states – 5 papers in Illinois, 5 in Iowa, 5 in Montana, 7 in Wisconsin, 4 in Nebraska where I was recently editor in Lincoln

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Core values and beliefs

- Newspapers are a great business now and will be in the future
- We play an indispensable role in the midsize and small communities that we serve
- Job One is to uphold our 1st Amendment duties to keep government officials and other powerful interests on their toes

Brand new questions

- But what is the essence of a newspaper in markets like ours?
- What is the fundamental need that a good newspaper satisfies?
- And what is the role of the newspaper editor in establishing and *building* that brand image?

It's not a product, dammit ... it's a newspaper

- For us hard news reporters, all this “audience and brand” talk sounds like mumbo-jumbo
- But it helps demystify the newsroom for our colleagues in circulation and marketing
- And it reminds us that we are in the business of selling something – and it sure beats selling shoes

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Enter the world of marketing

- Take off your editor hats for a minute
- Let's put ourselves in a different line of work to try to understand this business of marketing

Red Pens 'R Us

- You have been named as the brand manager for a well-known product – the red ink pen
- Your goal: to increase sales and “pen”-etration in the market

Getting started

- Define the current product
- Judge the quality vs. the price
- Who uses the product and why?
 - ◆ Why is our product relevant to them?
 - ◆ How does it satisfy their wants and needs?
 - ◆ What is its basic value?
 - ◆ Does it have any negatives?

Defining opportunities

- Current regular users who don't use the product everyday
- People who are like them but use the product only occasionally
- New users

Weighing options

- How would we have to change the product to:
 - ◆ Increase frequency among those who use it now, especially those who use it only occasionally?
 - ◆ Get new users?
- Are there things about the product we could stop doing in order to afford improvements?

Making the pitch

- How do we get our message out that we have improved the product?
- What should the message be?

Translating to the world of newspapers

- Too often, we operate on gut instincts
- If our goal is to sell more newspapers, our process for figuring out how best to do that ought to be more or less the same as for Red Pens 'R Us

A marketing approach

- Analyze the current newspaper:
- Do what some people call a “content map” or otherwise outline the current content: local vs. wire; mix of news, features, sports, business; front-page approach
- Content quantity, especially in key areas of reader interest
- Content quality

Understanding the audience

- Analyze market research and gather customer feedback
- If you don't have any, do some
- If you can't afford it
 - ★ Use data from Readership Institute
 - ★ Low-cost in-paper surveys
 - ★ Informal reader gatherings
 - ★ Coffee sessions
 - ★ Send everyone into the community

Understanding the audience

- Collect and analyze economic and demographic data for your market
- Where are the best opportunities?
 - ◆ Growing communities
 - ◆ “Good” demographics – higher income, education, home ownership, white collar
 - ◆ Areas of advertiser interest

Market data example

HOME COUNTY							
	Town A	Town B	Town C	Town D	Town E	Town F	Town G
Daily circulation	1,500	425	810	220	2,150	2,260	610
Est. household penetration	56%	31%	51%	13%	37%	34%	21%
Sunday circulation	1,700	385	910	253	2,500	2,305	640
Est. household penetration	63%	29%	57%	15%	43%	35%	22%
Total competitors daily penetration	7%	10%	3%	25%	18%	12%	23%
Total competitors Sun. penetration	7%	12%	4%	27%	15%	18%	26%
Total population	6,210	3,105	3,680	3,795	13,340	15,180	6,670
% change 1990-2000	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	-1%
Population age 25-54	3,000	1,000	1,800	1,820	5,100	5,200	2,200
% change 1990-2000	18%	2%	14%	12%	9%	16%	-2%
2000 household total	2,700	1,350	1,600	1,650	5,800	6,600	2,900
Est. annual household growth	1.2%	0.1%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	1.2%	-0.3%
Median household income	\$ 53,000	\$ 38,000	\$ 43,000	\$ 29,000	\$ 48,000	\$ 51,500	\$ 42,000
% home ownership	70%	66%	52%	54%	69%	70%	55%
% college graduates	34%	22%	28%	26%	37%	38%	27%
% professional, white collar workers	38%	24%	30%	22%	40%	39%	32%
Use core city for shopping, health care, entertainment, etc.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

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Developing a plan

- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- Choose geographic and demographic targets
 - ◆ Can't be all things to all people
 - ◆ Don't run away from the base but choose some customers to go after
 - ★ Current occasional readers
 - ★ New markets

Changing the product

- Re-align existing resources to better serve market needs and opportunities
 - ◆ Change reporter beats
 - ◆ Analyze use of newshole
 - ◆ Revamp feature sections
 - ◆ Consider newsroom structure
- Propose added resources and outline potential payoffs

Getting the word out

- Create simple, consistent messages:
 - ◆ Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em
 - ◆ Tell 'em
 - ◆ Tell 'em what you told 'em
- You have the most powerful medium
 - ◆ In markets like ours, the paper reaches 75% to 85% of the adults every week
 - ◆ No one else can buy the space you have in the paper
 - ★ Use editorial space
 - ★ Write columns to readers
 - ★ Be creative!

The brand essence

- As one of our editors put it recently, the newspaper should be “an enjoyable experience.”
- People have a fundamental need to be part of something larger than themselves – the newspaper can help them connect to the community

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Editor = brand manager

- Take ownership of your newspaper
- You should be the market expert
 - ◆ Know what the readers want
 - ◆ Know what the readers need
- Translate that information to your staff
 - ◆ A good writer always keeps the audience in mind
 - ◆ Help them see where you're going
 - ◆ Help them prioritize daily workload

The good news

- Marketing works
 - ◆ In Lincoln, reader satisfaction is growing
 - ◆ Daily and Sunday circulation is up
- Readers want the news
 - ◆ High interest in local news and local-local coverage
 - ◆ Investigative reporting is hot
 - ◆ The biggest stories always sell

Contact info

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