



Planting New Ideas:

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What do you think?

MPA staff has been publishing Planting New Ideas for some time now, and we'd like to find out from our members how it's working.

Please e-mail us at readership@michiganpress.org and let us know what you think. What were some of the good ideas? What ideas could you have lived without?

We are also looking for other ideas to help newspapers all over the state grow their readership. If you've seen anything interesting in your travels, or have been doing something innovative at your paper, forward the idea to us and we'll get the word out.

Don't forget to visit our Web site www.michiganpress.org to find out what's new at Michigan's newspapers.

Life stage segmentation can help develop new audiences

In a rapidly changing media environment, where choice, convenience and control are now defining consumer behavior, newspapers must adopt new strategies and build new products to successfully expand their audience. The Audience Development Initiative sponsored by the Newspaper Association of America and the American Society of Newspaper Editors has been focused on life-stage segmentation as a framework for developing new audience-building strategies.

Life-stage segmentation is more specific than targeting 18-to-34-year-olds. Sixty percent of people in that age group have children at home, while 40 percent do not, so their lifestyles are entirely different. That's true, too, for people within the age group with different incomes.

The study divides the

market into three life-stages: young (under 45 with no children), family (people of any age with children under 18 at home) and mature (over 45 with no children at home). Using those definitions, 16 percent of Americans are young, 44 percent fall into the family category, and 40 percent are mature.

Such segmentation can help a newspaper determine where to target its publications. It's also relatively inexpensive, since many papers already have access to this data. For example, you can determine the reach of various products in a portfolio by life-stage segment and use the inherent differences to drive product and promotion strategies. This will help to develop newer innovative

niche products for the various groups.

For more information and tips on how to implement this strategy go to www.growingaudience.com



Targeting the home improvement movement

Copley News Service is now offering a syndicated home-improvement package.

These special sections offer ideas for refinishing wood floors, making your home energy efficient, eco-friendly building and many other items. They

also provide information on the pit falls of do-it-yourself projects and when you should use a professional.



These sections are a continuing way to target the audience of people who are interested in home improvement. Television channels like HGTV and TLC have ratings that indicate a growing audience of people are interested in these topics.

Implementing a regular home improvement section in your newspaper might be a great way to net new readers.

For more information go to: copleynews.com.



Developing Web content to keep your core audience

(excerpts from the *Washington Post*)

The trick to growing your online readership is to have a real sense of who your core audience is. Local content is crucial to the formula of success online.

A constantly updated stream of intensely local, fresh Web content—regardless of its traditional news value—is key to building online and newspaper readership. According to a recent article in the *Washington Post*, Gannett Newspapers are redirecting their newsrooms to focus on the Web first, paper second. Papers are slashing national and foreign coverage and beefing up “hyper-local,” street-by-street news. They are creating reader-searchable databases on traffic flows and school class sizes. Web sites are fed with reader-generated content,

such as pictures of their kids with Santa. In short, Gannett—at its 90 papers, including *USA Today*—is trying everything it can think of to create Web sites that will attract more readers.



“Whatever you spend your time and money doing,” said Fort Myers, FL News-Press managing editor Mackenzie Warren, “is news.”

Using mobile journalists or “mojos” as they are dubbed is the method employed to gather this local news. The mojos have high-tech tools—ThinkPads, digital audio recorders, digital still and video cameras—but no desk, no chair, no nameplate, no land line, no office. They spend their time on the road looking for stories, filing several a day for the newspaper’s Web site, and often for the print edition, too. Their guiding principle: A constantly updated stream of intensely local, fresh Web content—regardless of its traditional news value—is key to building online and newspaper readership.

Michigan Ideas: Let’s make a deal

When “Cabin Fever” overwhelms Mason and Oceana residents every February, they eagerly await the on-line auction in the *Ludington Daily News*, *Oceana’s Herald-Journal* and *White Lake Beacon*. While the Shoreline Media papers might have been the first in Michigan to use the popular Internet draw for readers and advertisers, more papers are putting dibs on the bids.

The *Petoskey News-Review* completed its third auction last month; *Pioneer Newspapers, Inc.*, the *Cadillac News* and *The Daily News* in Greenville also are players in the silent on-line auction game. Jim Frost, major accounts and event marketing manager in Ludington, says February’s auction (called the Cabin Fever Auction) registered 211,000 web hits, 441 per hour in the opening days. Beginning in 1998 with

an audio text system, Ludington switched to an Internet auction in 2001. Rather than using an outside vendor, the paper hired a programmer to create a software program that’s constantly being refined to permit more user options. For example, bidders now can choose to submit a proxy bid to cap their highest offer; the software ups the amount until a bidder either wins the item or it exceeds his or her preset limit. That refinement means readers don’t have to constantly check the bids, notes Frost. “Readers are excited by the quality of the available products,” he says; A tab insert in the papers pictures the items (a newspaper subscription is always on the block). Advertisers set an item minimum; this year 338 people registered to bid online.

Marilyn Barker, *Manistee News Advocate* publisher (part of the Big Rapids-based *Pioneer Group*), said the papers featured

315 items in a first-time auction last month. The two-week event drew 557 participants who submitted 2,500 bids online and 88 by phone. “Readers loved it; thought it was fun, they want to know when the next one is going to be. Absolutely we’ll do it again.” Previously skeptical advertisers also want in on the new game in town.

The *Petoskey News-Review* is a two-year auction veteran, says advertising director Christy Bur. The N-R auctions run in the spring and fall, with the just-completed auction featuring several garden and outdoor living related items.

The auction software developed at the *Ludington Daily News* is available for lease or sale. For information contact Frost, jfrost@ludingtondailynews.com, 231.843.1122, ext. 343. For the *Petoskey News-Review* perspective, contact Bur, cbur@petoskeynews.com, 231.347.2544.