

PAPER CLIPS

Midwest Community Publications

Official Newsletter | October 2026

PUTTING THE 'WORK' IN NETWORKING

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President's Corner

Putting the 'work' in Networking



Some people are blessed with the gift of gab. We all know the one person who might talk too much. However, that gift of gab can be a huge help in more ways than one. I want to take a moment to reflect on the gift of networking.

At the recent ACP conference in Minneapolis, MCP was well represented with over 19 of our member publications attending. During one of the keynote sessions, I took a moment to look around. Some of my closest friends were sitting in that room. How did they become part of that small but extremely important group? Networking. Sitting across from one another and being able to talk about what is going on in our businesses. Not necessarily the small talk, but the conversation that really matters. If you have taken the time with a group of professionals to gain their insight, you know that time is well spent. That continues past conference. I have several times picked up the phone to ask the opinion of one of my fellow MCP members. I trust what they have to say. More times than not, they have experienced the same thing I am going through.

Was taking three days out of the office worth every moment? Yes, of course. Whether you attended ACP or not, I would encourage you to find your people. Take the time to sit across the table if that is at a lunch meeting or at the Whirlyball court. I experienced the new "sport" at ACP. I found out we are a very competitive group on the court, in the laser tag room and the escape room. I know several, including myself, had

bruises to prove it. Luckily, I don't think any bones were broken.

One huge benefit of having ACP in Minneapolis was several of us were able to drive. It was so great to not have to pack a bag that had to be less than 50 pounds. Actually, I just kept throwing things in the back of my Tahoe right up to the moment I left. One of those being the large light-up Plinko board Cory used at the MCP booth to promote the upcoming conference in April. Which, by the way, is actually still in Minneapolis due to the fact I forgot to throw it back into my vehicle before leaving. Don't worry though, if you missed the Plinko board at ACP, it will make another appearance at the MCP Conference in Johnston in April. Everyone will have another chance to win one of several different prizes that are all focused on our rock band theme.

Networking doesn't happen on its own. It takes work. It takes you actually leaving the office. But that time and work will pay off. Mark your calendars now for the MCP conference in Johnston, Iowa, April 8-9. The conference committee already has started planning a memorable rock-band-themed event. This gig is one you won't want to miss.

Lisa Miller
MCP Board President



From the Office

Raise Your Voices

Last month, I wrote about getting involved in all the offerings MCP makes available to you. But participation is only part of what makes an association truly effective. To make our meet ups, roundtables and conferences worth your dues, and your time, we need to understand what matters most to you and where you need support.



think. Chances are, someone else is asking the same questions you are. And if they aren't, we have a wealth of experience, knowledge and innovative thinking within our membership to draw upon.

When we share our challenges and work together, there's very little we can't tackle. But it starts with speaking up and letting us know where you need help.

We want to hear from you.

What is the most pressing issue in your business right now? Where could you use some guidance or fresh ideas? What challenges are you facing?

We're here to help, but we can only do that if we know what you need. There's no reason to struggle in silence. Across our membership, despite the differences in the size and scope of our individual publications, we have far more in common than you might

So, raise your voice. Reach out. Tell us what's on your mind and how MCP can better serve you. After all, that's what we're here for.

Cory Regnier
Executive Director



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MVP at Work

Protecting Your Sight

Sit back, take a deep breath and a moment to rest your eyes. I feel like our lives are so consumed by screens. Whether it is the screen in our pocket or on our desk, we use them everyday. That being said, being able to manage our eyes to the ongoing screens is just as important as the work we do everyday.

There are various ways to take short breaks throughout the day to give your eyes a break.

- Go for a short walk, whether it is around your office or around the block.
- Get a glass of water, make a cup of coffee or tea, or even getting a snack.
- Printing information to review on paper versus on a screen.

I know realistically days are hard and it is not possible to do some of the above options. Other ways to help protect your eyes can simply be by adjusting some computer settings.

- Set your brightness to match the lighting in the room.
- Make the text darker so your eyes don't strain to read.
- Use built-in night modes to reduce the blue light in the evening or darkness.

You can also adjust your workspace to help.

- Sit about 20 to 26 inches away from the screen.
- Position the top of the screen at or slightly below eye level so you gaze downward.
- Turn your monitor away from direct windows or harsh overhead lights, and use a matte screen filter if needed.



Aside from these ways there is also a 20-20-20 rule. This rule means every 20 minutes you shift your eyes 20 feet away for about 20 seconds. Although it may be hard to do this every 20 minutes, making a point to occasionally do it may benefit your eyes in the long run. By following the 20-20-20 rule will allow your eye muscles a moment to relax.

Finding a way to protect your eyes with all the screens daily can be beneficial in the long run.

Sarah Young
MVP, Star Publications



Ad-Libs

Effective Ads Are Audience-Centered

I look at ads from a lot of publications, because there are lessons to be learned from all of them. Recently, I ran across two that were so interesting that I showed them to my wife.

For the first ad, I put my thumb over the logo – which revealed the products they sold – and asked her what they seemed to be selling. The headline read, “Visit our showroom.” The body copy – with vague bullet points like, “Locally owned and operated” and “Ask us about smart home technology” – was equally unhelpful. As a result, it was up to the photograph in the center to reveal what they sold. The picture showed a wall filled with samples, which looked like

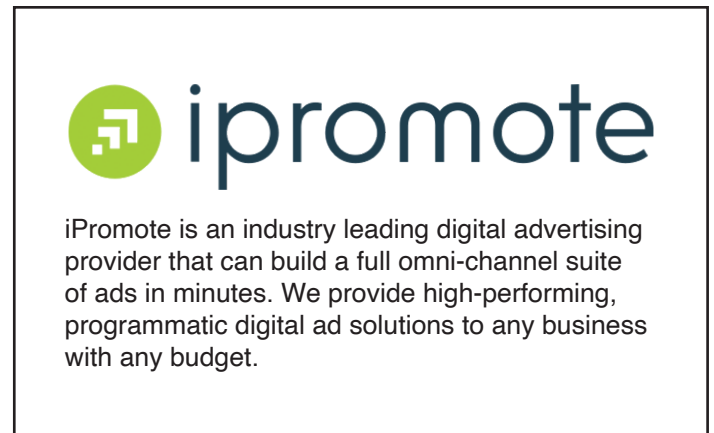
blobs of different colors. Suellen took a quick glance and said, “Paint and carpet.”

Considering all the confusion in the ad, she made a good guess. But the correct products were blinds and shutters.

With such ineffective copy and a misleading photograph, the ad’s only hope of communicating something as basic as the advertiser’s line of work was the logo. And that was not going to do any selling all by itself.

• **EFFECTIVE**

Continued on page 7



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Ryan Dohrn

IMPROVE YOUR CALL-TO-CLOSE RATIOS!

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Friends, I'll admit something right up front: I am not a big fan of math. I love commission checks. I love hitting goals. I love closing deals. But spreadsheets, formulas and complicated sales calculations? Not exactly my idea of a good time.

That said, every time in my career when I've experienced real sales success, there has been a process behind it. And somewhere inside that process was some very important sales math. If you want to consistently hit your sales goals, you need to understand two numbers: your meeting-booking rate and your closing rate.

To find out how to use these numbers to your advantage, read the whole article at:
www.salestrainingworld.com

*Ryan Dohrn is an award-winning ad sales training coach, a nationally recognized internet sales consultant, and an international motivational speaker. He is the author of the best-selling ad sales book, *Selling Backwards*. Ryan is the President and founder of Brain Swell Media and 360 Ad Sales Training, a boutique ad sales training and sales coaching firm with a detailed focus on ad sales training, internet consulting, and media revenue generation. Ryan is also the Publisher of *Sales Training World*.*

Ryan Dohrn
"Mr. Revenue"



www.salestrainingworld.com

• **EFFECTIVE** *Continued from page 5*

The second ad put the words “dental services” out front for everyone to see, so at least it identified what the ad was about. The body copy listed various disease treatments, which could be uncomfortable reading for some people. Like the ad for blinds, a major issue with this ad was the photography – there were three pictures. The largest photo was a closeup view of a patient, mouth open wide and a dentist’s hands reaching inside with a mirror and another dental tool. If a reader was nervous about dentist appointments – and there are a lot of those folks around – this photo could be a complete turn-off. Another prominent photo featured a machine which looked like a filing cabinet and was described as an “innovative way to treat gum disease.” The third and smallest photo was a headshot of a person with a big smile. Suellen’s comment was, “We don’t know if it’s the dentist, a patient or someone who works in the office, because there’s no name or title.”

These two ads call attention to the importance of information. The ad for blinds doesn’t have enough information to appeal to anyone. And the dentist’s ad

has so much of the wrong kind of information that it turns people away. The underlying cause in both cases is a lack of audience-centeredness. The advertisers miss their audiences’ interests and concerns by a mile.

The purpose of advertising, as defined from the beginning of the profession, is “to sell.” This means that everything about an ad campaign, from inception to execution, is to put the advertiser’s best foot forward. In other words, learn about the audience, then present product features and benefits in a way that makes readers say, “Hey, I can see myself doing business with that company.”

When you center your attention on the audience, it’s difficult to go wrong.



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The Fourth Estate - AI Brief

From Searching to Brainstorming

A lot of people give AI a single try, pose one question and conclude that it's just a dressed-up search tool. That undersells its capabilities. Its true strength lies in idea generation and there are many approaches you can use.

Have it question you. Lay out a problem, then say, "Ask me ten questions before giving any advice." Quite often, you'll uncover knowledge you already had.

Prioritize volume. Ask for 25 ideas for a new section, ad promotion, or reader contest. Most will be unremarkable, yet two or three could trigger an idea you would never have reached on your own.

Turn it into a critic. Present your plan and ask, "What could go wrong?" A helpful skeptic that never gets tired is tough to top.

Take on a different perspective. Ask how a skeptical advertiser, a busy reader, or a new subscriber might respond to your idea.

Refine the material you already have. Give it one strong idea and request five distinct versions, or transform one story into a headline, a social post, and a newsletter blurb.

Use limits. Creativity often works best when boundaries are clear. Ask for promotion ideas that cost nothing, take under an hour, or require only one person. Narrow constraints push both AI and you beyond the obvious response.

Begin with a jumble. You do not need a polished prompt. Drop in rough notes, half-formed thoughts, or a scattered list, and ask it to identify the themes. It's remarkably good at detecting patterns that are hard to

see when you're too close to them.

Continue the exchange. The initial response is seldom the strongest one. Follow up with "Make that more local," "Simpler," or "Give me something bolder." Each round tightens the output, and that dialogue is where the best ideas usually emerge.

Remain in control. AI can be wrong at times, and it does not understand your community. Treat each suggestion as a starting point, and verify facts before you publish them.

The key is to use AI as a discussion, not a vending machine. You contribute local knowledge and judgment. It contributes unlimited patience. Try one of these this week and then try another. The more you experiment, the more useful it gets.

Trevor Slette
Founder of Quadd.ai



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— John Draper, Pipestone Publishing

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Board Nominations and Voting

Let's Talk Leadership

MCP is blessed to have a very active board of directors who work hard to keep our association strong for the benefit of all members. We value networking, training and education, and work diligently to keep our eye on future trends. If you or someone from your staff value the association and would like to be considered for a board seat, now is the time to apply.

Our board meets in person three times a year and via Zoom nine times a year for about an hour each call. We have several active committees including: Conference, Engagement, Digital, MCN/MDN AD Network, MVP, and Nominating. As a board member you would be assigned to a committee. Each committee also meets several times a year via Zoom.

If a board seat is something you would be interested in applying for, please contact the office for an application.

Along with any nominations, as we approach the end of 2026, it's almost time to help shape the future of MCP by casting your vote for the 2027 Board of Directors. Your input is crucial, and we encourage you to participate in this important decision.

Our Board of Directors plays a vital role in guiding the direction of the association. Their leadership and expertise ensure that MCP remains strong and continues to grow, offering valuable resources and opportunities to all members. By voting, you have a direct impact on the future of MCP and the continued success of our association.

Ballots will be sent out via email in November and be due back by mid December. Selected candidates will begin their term January 1, 2027.



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Spring Conference 2027

Meet Your Keynote Speaker

A heart-centered metalhead business strategist is a thing — and you're about to meet her!

Amber Swenor is a transformational leadership strategist, Wall Street Journal bestselling author, and founder of Soul Seed Strategy, whose work centers on a single belief: leadership doesn't fail because of pressure. It fails when leaders lose themselves under it. This work is informed by lived experience in business and on the road as frontwoman of her metal band, Morningstar.



SAVE THE DATE
MCP Annual Spring Conference

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THE
POSSIBILITIES**

APRIL 8 & 9 2027

Hilton Garden Inn | Johnston, IA

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