

THE BUSINESS OF NEWS





Four things production executives can do in the event of a crisis story

BY CURT HAZLETT

When the unthinkable happened on Sept. 11, 2001, newspaper managers needed to react fast to meet the needs of their readers. No one was busier than production managers, who needed to reschedule printing jobs, clear press time, rethink inserts and preprints, and shuffle staffing.

What if the unthinkable happens again? How will your production department respond? With the terrorist attacks fresh in our minds, here are four things production managers need to do if they are to meet the challenge.

1. Have a strong emergency plan and keep it updated.

Most newspaper departments have some sort of plan – an employee call sheet, emergency procedures and a reciprocal agreement with another paper nearby to print their product if they are unable to.

But the plan needs to go further. List every contingency that could stop you from getting the paper out, from the mechanical (loss of water and power) to the human (staff unable to get to the plant). Think hard about how to get around those obstacles, then commit your course to paper. Make sure everyone knows what to do.

And by all means keep the call sheet up to date; new employees need to be continually added and someone has to be assigned to keeping phone numbers up to date. The need for keeping current was recognized by many managers on Sept. 11, much to their unhappiness.

2. Remember the needs of your employees.

When the terrorists attacked, production staffs were understandably worried about the events outside their buildings. Del Varney, vice president of production operations for The Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch, says sensitivity to his employees' needs was a high priority in the days following the attack. Varney says the company had several moments of silence and allowed radios and televisions to be played where possible.

That same attention to human needs is necessary when it comes to scheduling; Varney says production managers need to be as flexible as possible in such stressful times.

Beth Ptak, pre-press manager for the Reno (Nev.) Gazette-Journal, says her paper did many of the same things as The Columbus Dispatch and also provided food for employees. Ptak, who came from a commercial printing background, says she was amazed at the willingness and enthusiasm of employees to go that extra mile – behavior that deserved recognition. "Everyone was trying so hard to help," she says.

3. Work hard to keep the lines of communication open with editorial – and everyone else, for that matter.

Nothing makes the task of producing a newspaper under pressure more difficult than faulty or ineffective communication. Editorial wants process color on a page, but the word isn't passed to the right people; plates need to be remade, the press run is delayed. Take some time to investigate how information is passed between departments and analyze ways in which the process can be improved. When the right people communicate effectively, the ensuing teamwork makes a huge difference.

"We all worked together," says Roseann Cardillo, pre-press manager of The Journal News in White Plains, N.Y. "It was amazing how we all pulled together on this." Cardillo lost a close friend in the attack on the World Trade Center – a loss that was never far from her mind as she worked to produce each day's paper.

4. Make sure everyone in production buys into the mission.

Newspaper companies, especially those with commercial printing operations, have diverse missions. In normal times, a great deal of emphasis is placed on printing and delivering non-news products.

But everyone on the staff needs to accept the fact that a big news story trumps everything.

"You've got to get everyone to buy into the idea that the public needs to be informed," says Peter Starren, publisher of The Union in Grass Valley, Calif. Some managers, focused on their own heavy workloads, may resist publishing an extra edition because it displaces other work.

"Production people tend to be very schedule oriented," Starren notes. "They need to realize the paper's first mission: to inform."





Advertising: Quick thinking and fast action are critical

BY CURT HAZLETT

A huge news story presents special challenges to advertising and marketing directors.

For those in advertising, the immediate need is to redesign ad layouts to accommodate the news, usually by clearing space in the paper's first section. This is a task that needs to be done with great speed, and it sometimes is days or even weeks before the makeup of the paper returns to normal.

Communication is crucial at a time like this. Advertising and news departments need to be clear with one another about their needs and desires, and the communication needs to be quick.

In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, key managers of the Pittsburgh (Pa.) Post-Gazette went to great lengths to keep the lines of communication open, first to create an extra afternoon edition, then to produce the next day's

paper. "We spent a lot of time talking," said Scott Brooks, the director of advertising.

Big stories such as this often produce other impacts for advertising managers. Ads are pulled, in some cases because of sensitivities (as with airlines after the terror attack) and in others because of perceptions that the ads wouldn't reach a receptive market. Ad managers must stay on top of such changes and work to get the advertising back in at the first appropriate opportunity.

While some ads are pulled at times like these, others are created as organizations offer condolences or support or start fund-raising efforts. It's important for newspapers not to appear greedy when such ads are presented. To avoid that appearance, Molly Evans, advertising director of the Cape Cod (Mass.) Times, notes that her paper offered such ads at half-rate for contract advertisers and at about one-third the open rate for non-advertisers.

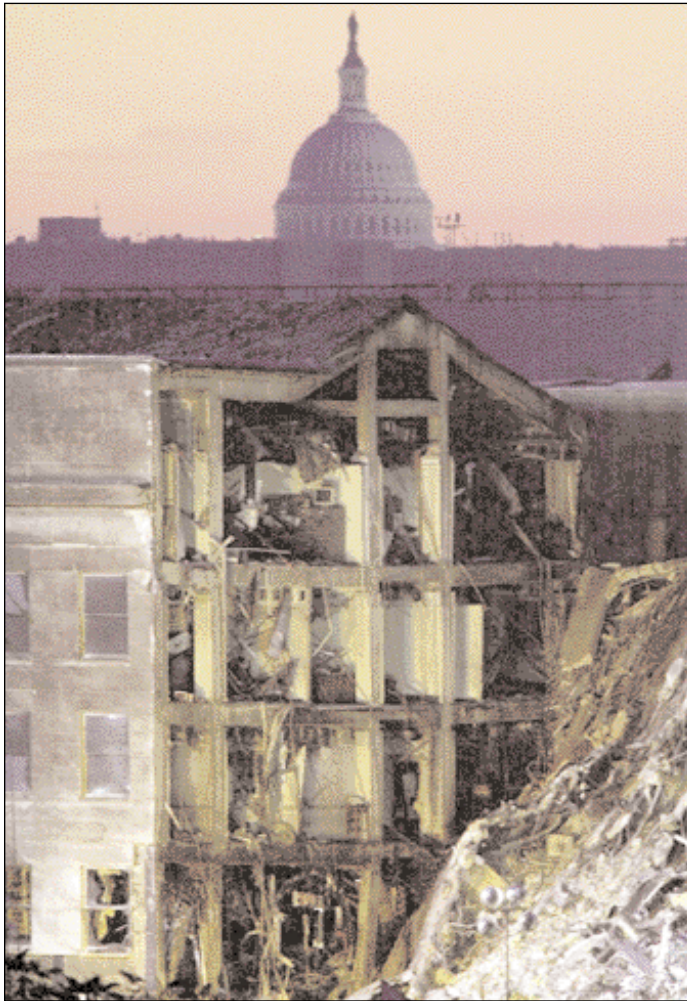
For marketing managers, the challenge during big news events – especially those involving tragedy – is how to do their jobs effectively without appearing exploitative.

Joe Frederickson, vice president/marketing for the Press-Enterprise in Riverside, Calif., said there can be a fine line between the two.

At his newspaper, Frederickson said, the coverage of the Sept. 11 tragedy brought thousands of extra readers to the paper as they tried to understand all they could about the events taking place; no other "proof of performance" was really necessary.

Newspaper managers need to be aware of heightened sensitivities at times such as these. Some readers charged the Seattle Times with profiteering after it offered glossy reproductions of the front page of its terror-attack extra edition at a price of \$15. (Copies of the extra itself were sold for \$2.50.) To these readers, the newspaper was being greedy. Times editor Mike Fancher defended the promotional effort, noting that the paper sells laminated copies of every front page for commemorative purposes. The lesson is that newspapers need to be especially aware of their images during emotional times, and their marketing managers need to ask: How will any action I take look?

Big news stories create challenges, but as we have seen, they also create a tremendous need for information. For newspaper managers, the surest path during such times is to make sure that need is met in every possible way.



STEPHEN J. BOITANO / Associated Press



Dealing with advertising issues in times of crisis

BY MOLLY EVANS

For what it's worth (because we certainly don't have all the answers):

Communicate. Find out what editorial needs in space and let the folks doing the dummies know your tolerance level and needs. If you won't push certain accounts out of the A section no matter what, have promotional ads ready to balance the overall newspaper so these folks can do their jobs.

Put your best promotional foot forward. Readership is high. You will have holes from late kills and the like, so gather your best promo ads, and make new ones if you need to.

Don't look greedy. We have been flooded with ads from regular customers and new ones of both a condolence nature and for fund-raising messages. We are running them at half price for contract advertisers, and \$12/inch for non-advertisers (approximately one-third our open rate). Try to accommodate them, but don't feel you have to take them late because the layout is being disrupted enough already.

Protect your readers from scams. There have been "fund-raising" phone scams reported, and these reports have

given us pause when accepting ads for fund-raising or proceeds from sales going to "x" fund. We have a simple form we ask the businesses we are not familiar with to fill out, verifying their ad claims. Call Theresa Lawrence at (508) 862-1128 for a copy.

Sell a patriotic page allowing advertisers to show their support and donate all the revenue to the relief efforts. Our classified staff sold a double truck, and the money is going to the Red Cross.

Give people room to express themselves and be with family when they need to. People's reactions and feelings are what they are, and we're trying to keep things light and respect their needs.

Have a little fun to break the tension. We had a telephone sales blitz planned for this week. We went ahead with it, and had fun prizes, food and balloons. There was friendly competition between teams, and a few laughs. The ads we sold were small, so no one felt uneasy about asking for big money and appearing pushy. We sold 100 ads in two hours for a holiday special, and the sales reps left that morning smiling.

Remember, it's just a job. Go home and hug your loved ones. Too much staring at CNN isn't good.



Molly Evans is advertising director of the Cape Cod (Mass.) Times.



ELAINE THOMPSON / Associated Press

Marcia McQuern, editor and publisher, *Press Enterprise, (Riverside, Calif.)*

Q Did the newspaper industry improve its connections to readers through this crisis? If so, how?

A Yes. People looked to us for the local impact others didn't have, as well as full, credible national and international news... In the early hours, the Internet was not very valuable because of the (user) overload. After that, the credible sites were very valuable, but there was a lot of nonsense on other sites.



Marketing newspapers during a crisis

Remember to use common sense and good taste

By SCOTT STINES



Scott Stines is former president of the International Newspaper Marketing Association - North America.

The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and on the Pentagon, had an impact on the way businesses, including newspapers, market themselves during a time of crisis.

How can newspaper marketing executives walk the line between the need to market their newspaper and the impropriety of appearing to be taking advantage of the situation?

First, let's recognize the role of the newspaper as a provider of objective news and information. A number of newspapers, including my local newspaper, The Gazette in Cedar Rapids, Ia., made a decision to publish a special bulldog edition Sept. 11. The Gazette printed an initial run of 20,000 copies of the four-page special issue featuring the latest photos from New York and Arlington, Va. By the end of the day, The Gazette had printed 70,000 copies and sold 60,000 copies at a price of 50 cents each.

While some may view The Gazette's special bulldog edition as taking advantage of the situation, few of the people standing in line to obtain a copy expressed those feelings, and not a single letter to the editor complaining about the special edition appeared in the days that followed.

The reason is simple: The special edition was a natural effort for the newspaper given the tragic events.

So should a newspaper discontinue all promotion during this time of crisis?

I asked this question of a half-dozen newspaper marketers during that first week following the attacks, and all agreed

that now is the time to increase promotion of newspapers.

The depth of coverage provided by newspapers, combined with the opportunity to cover local stories related to national events, demonstrates what newspapers do best.

Obviously any newspaper marketing effort must be done in good taste and with a heavy dose of common sense. Given the role of the newspaper in society, there is nothing inappropriate about marketing the newspaper during a time of crisis.



Marketing and promotion 10 things to do now

1. Publish a full-page American flag in the newspaper and run it a number of times. Arrange for a military band to play in your community. If one is not available, try to develop a community event of some kind where people can gather and commiserate about this month's events.
2. Publish flag etiquette in the newspaper – perhaps sponsored by an advertiser.
3. Publish the American flag in the newspaper's masthead.

4. Use "Make a Difference Day" (the last Saturday in October) to do some fund-raising or perform a service for the fallen peace officers in New York City.
5. Provide background information on terrorism and other news events to school children through the Newspapers in Education program.
6. Sponsor a blood drive with your local Red Cross and support or create community partnerships that address the crisis.
7. Prepare patriotic bumper stickers.
8. Collect newspaper pages and publish a special

classroom reprint for junior high schools and high schools.

9. Recruit local veterans to go into schools to discuss the meaning of freedom and to relate service experiences.

10. Quickly get out point-of-purchase materials that capture the crisis.

Developed by Warren Watson of API; Connie Gibbs of the Telegraph Herald in Dubuque, Iowa; Joni Silverstein of the News Journal in Wilmington, Del.; and Cindy Stevens of the Central Maine Newspapers in Augusta, Maine.



Circulation departments prepare to meet special challenges

BY CURT HAZLETT

A big breaking news story – especially one that stays big for days or even weeks – is one of the toughest tests a circulation department can face.

The terrorist attack on America was just such a story, and it presented many challenges. On the afternoon of the attack, most morning papers published a special edition, and that meant finding a way to deliver it – no small task for departments geared to work on the opposite side of the day. In the days that followed, press runs were bumped, sometimes substantially – creating the problem of incomplete papers in some instances. And then there was single copy sales. Draws were increased sharply, hawkers were hired, new outlets were added – and still demand was hard to meet.

Rufus Friday, circulation director of the Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser, illustrates one newspaper's approach to the breaking story.

After the attack, Friday said, "We called back as many of our single-copy delivery agents as possible and recruited some 21 employees and had them on ready alert for a 1 p.m. press start. We also rounded up 12 street hawkers." The Advertiser printed 14,500 copies of the extra and the next morning increased its single-copy draw by 314 percent.

The keys to managing such challenges are creativity, communication and planning.

Planning, of course, is something best done before a crisis arrives. By coincidence, API was holding a circulation executives seminar on the day of the attack. Participants – led by The Washington Post's Tony Mineart, who soon left to return to Washington, and Eric Wynn of The Dallas Morning News – quickly formulated a single-copy plan that serves as a model for such circumstances.

Their plan, outlined in detail on pages 54-55, started with a special edition whose retail sales focus was on gas

stations and convenience stores, chain accounts, supermarkets, newsstands and commuter locations. The plan also included hawkers, each with 200 papers, targeted at high-traffic, commuter and pedestrian areas. There would be bulk drops at hotels, as well.

Then the communication angle was developed. The plan alerted media outlets that an extra edition was forthcoming; radio promotion was created to achieve the same end; banners were placed on the hypothetical newspaper's Web site; and house ads were developed to advise readers of future coverage plans.

To boost delivery muscle, the plan called in all available employees – drivers, managers, customer service reps and telemarketers. All would be put to good use. And to help potential readers find papers, it established an automated message to alert the public to pickup locations.

The plan was detailed yet simple, and it created an effective method for not only delivering the newspaper but alerting the public to its presence and value.

Sept. 11 taught many lessons, perhaps the biggest of which is that we must always be prepared. And that lesson is as applicable to newspaper circulation as it is to our national defense.



DOUG MILLS / Associated Press



Single-copy perspectives of the Sept. 11 attacks

Sept. 11, 2001, was designated "Single Copy Power Day" during API's Circulation Executives seminar. Discussion leaders Eric Wynn of The Dallas Morning News and Tony Mineart of The Washington Post developed a full day of non-traditional approaches and practical applications to increase single-copy sales.

Little did anyone know that probably the biggest single-copy day in U.S. history was about to unfold.

Shortly after the session began, news broke concerning the World Trade Center and Pentagon plane crashes. Mineart, circulation director for metro single copy and retail sales, had to leave because The Post was putting out a special edition.

He challenged the members with a living case study: America is under attack. What is your circulation action plan today, tomorrow, Sunday? Here's what the seminar members – representing newspapers from the The Napa Valley (Calif.) Register to the Chicago Tribune – devised.

America Under Attack Special Edition Action Plan

Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001

Special edition draw: 50 percent to 100 percent increase in draw

Special edition released to press: 1:30 p.m. *Due to President's address at 1 p.m.

Scheduled press-start time: 2 p.m.

Single Copy Independent Agents notified of time and place to pick up special edition.

Area of focus for distribution of special edition:

Retail focus:

- Gas/Convenient Stores
- Chain accounts
- Major supermarkets
- Key accounts/newsstands/commuter locations
- Airport retail accounts

Hawker focus: Increase hawker locations (200 copies each)

*Focus on major pedestrian, high traffic and commuter locations

Hotels, 3rd party: Bulk drop to key hotels

Vending machine focus: None (promo material not available)

Promotion

Media notification: Contact all media sources and alert them that the newspaper will be producing a special afternoon edition (public service)

Radio promotion: Purchase 30-second spots on all major radio stations (AM/FM) alerting audience that an afternoon special edition will be produced

Web notification: Place banner on Web site alerting users to special edition. Add emphasis on home-deliver option

In-house ads: Start process for alerting readers to future coverage

Customer care: Initiate automated message-alerting readers to special pick-up locations (i.e., 7-Eleven). Also, address Web services. Revise as necessary

Distribution: Call in all available staffers (including drivers, managers, customer care reps, telemarketing reps, etc.)



Wednesday, Sept. 12 through Saturday, Sept. 15, 2001

Assumptions: Federal government open /investigation continues – ongoing coverage

Go-up estimates: 30 percent – 200 percent (depending on market)

Home delivery bonus distribution: Include if operation permits, i.e., ABC compliant and if bonus distribution clause is included in agent agreement

Hawkers: Additional emphasis on hawker locations. Increase both draw and number of sites

Promotion:
Rack signage
Radio
Web
Customer care message

Sunday, Sept. 16, 2001

Assumptions: Product supports increase (five-day summary/news analysis)

Go-up estimates: 15 percent to 30 percent (due to limited preprints)

- *Realize the fact that a percentage of copies will be incomplete
- **Revise Page 1 or 2 index to exclude mention of missing sections – to meet ABC regulations. Add Page 1 mention that a portion of Sunday's over-the-counter copies may be missing certain sections (comics/TV section/preprints).
- ***Use incomplete product for hawking locations and for recovery of retail accounts

****Special emphasis on recovery (eliminate sellouts, maximize sale potential)

*****Keep Sunday sale in store accounts up till Wednesday:

Additional emphasis on hawker locations. Increase both draw and number of sites

Recovery Hotline: Initiate retail recovery hotline for immediate re-delivery of sellouts



PATRICK SISON / Associated Press





Supporting the news media's most important resource: people

By SHAREN KARDON

In the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, employees at newspapers across the country had to deal with myriad emotions, – shock, anger, fear, sorrow – and a surge of adrenalin that fueled extra hours of frantic work to produce in-depth news coverage, special sections and extra editions.

Human resources departments were called upon to help their newspapers' staffs through the difficult days and weeks that followed. Based on that experience, here are steps human resources directors recommend for dealing with future crises.

Be flexible: Give staff a chance to gather and absorb information and to make contact with their families and friends. "People were stopping to watch TV in the newsroom, listening to radios at their desks, spending hours on the Internet," said Susan Davidson, vice president of human resources for Cox Newspapers. "We allowed this kind of flexibility, recognizing that we still needed them to get the paper out." Other newspapers allowed staff to leave early or to bring their children to the office.

Strengthen security: Several papers received bomb threats after the attacks. At The Boston Globe, incoming packages were checked for sender identification; additional guards were placed on duty at The Orange County Register. Even if there is no imminent danger, employees appreciate the company's concern for their safety.

Communicate and offer support: "We sent out e-mail messages to all employees telling them that it's normal to have a profound sense of loss, giving them information on dealing with their emotions and providing a list of resources," said Susan Ehrman, vice president of human resources for the San Antonio (Texas) Express-News. Many papers also circulated information about employee assistance programs and

provided on-site counseling.

Let people help. Reporters at The Spokesman-Review in Spokane, Wash., volunteered to hawk papers on the day of the attacks, according to human resources manager Connie Bantz. At the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, non-news staff offered to answer phones and go out for pizza for busy reporters and editors, Davidson said.

Review, update and communicate military leave policies: "We wanted to make sure we were current with regulations," Bantz said. At Knight Ridder, supplementary pay for military leave was extended to 180 days, according to Mary Jean Connors, senior vice president of human resources. "And we'll review that again, if necessary," she added.

Permit displays of patriotism: "We ran the flag in the newspaper . . . that's all over the building," Bantz said, "and we let several volunteers cut red, white and blue ribbons with the local TV station." Activities at other papers included moments of silence and monetary collections supplemented by matching funds from the corporate office or donations of proceeds from special sections.

Reiterate diversity policies: "We've had no incidents of harassment or backlash, but we've made sure that it's clear where we stand on diversity and sensitivity with both our employees and our customers," Davidson said.

Listen and care: "The best staff is one that feels that the company cares about them," Connors said. "We need to create an environment of care and concern, and keep our ears to the ground in case any individual might need a little extra attention."



Sharen Kardon is an API seminar associate with 30 years' experience in both the news and business sides of newspapers.



There are many people-oriented resources – use them

BY MARY LYNN MARTIN

You may have employees dealing with deep sorrow or undefined anxiety and stress in the aftermath of the tragedy of Sept. 11. Every American is affected, directly or indirectly.

We share this list of activities and resources with you and encourage you to participate in API's Forums pages (www.americanpressinstitute.org/forums) to share your ideas for supporting your staff.

- Provide materials for your managers on how employees deal with emotions. Educate managers about potential anxiety problems and signals.
- Remind employees to be respectful of ethnic and religious diversity. Request that employees immediately report any sign of harassment of a specific ethnic or religious group.
- Suggest donations to organizations such as the Red Cross, the New York Times 9/11 Neediest Fund and the United Way of New York. Employees want to help.
- Allow volunteer time for blood donations or fund-raising efforts. Employees want to act. Allow for a moment of silence during business meetings.
- Have counselors on hand from your employee assistance program or set up telephone counseling or brown bag lunch workshops.

- Respect the different ways your employees deal with anxiety, such as a resulting fear of tall buildings or of flying.
- Expect an increase in hallway conversations and a desire to listen to the news.
- Provide radios and televisions. Expect increased absenteeism and tardiness.
- Designate a human resources professional to be the primary contact for any issues related to this tragedy.
- Allow time to grieve. Set aside a quiet area for prayer or reflection.

Other Resources:

- The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at the University of Washington (www.dartcenter.org)
- The National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (www.ncptsd.org/who/journalists.html)
- Society for Human Resource Management (www.shrm.org)
- Employee Assistance Professionals Association (www.eap-association.org/index.html)



Mary Lynn Martin is an associate director at the American Press Institute.

Ellen Soeteber, executive editor, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Q What would you have done differently had you the opportunity to do it over again?

A We could have moved more quickly than we did to re-arrange and establish new reporting beats that reflect the new realities, such as military beats. We moved the second week to execute this, but we could have been more ahead of the curve if we'd thought this through by day two or three.

