

How to start an online newspaper ?



The complete startup guide for a successful
and money earning online newspaper

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Introduction

Back in the 1950s, Chicago had four major newspapers. In the morning there was the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun Times. In the afternoon the Chicago Daily News and Chicago Herald American vied for readership. The Trib and the Times both boasted almost a million readers back then and printed three editions a day with the afternoon papers not far off at almost half a million subscribers each.

But Chicago, like all major cities, was and still is broken up into dozens of neighborhoods: From Wrigleyville to the West Side, Logan Square, to Portage Park and on and on with names sometimes as colorful as their inhabitants.

Back then, there were probably fifty sections of the city that were in and of themselves min-cities all their own.

Those neighborhoods, sometimes with strong ethnic ties, had their own grocery stores, and shoe stores, drugstores and eateries, doctors and lawyers and butchers and bakers as well. They were a separate world within the great city and inhabitants considered themselves part of their neighborhood as readily as they called themselves Chicagoans.

Into these neighborhoods were also born neighborhood newspapers. Almost all once-a-week editions, these free papers were swallowed up at the stores that carried them faster than all the giant papers of the day. The reason was simple. This paper was about their neighborhood; it was about them, and people loved to read about themselves and their friends.

The content was never earth-shattering. Perhaps the local pool hours for the summer were being announced. A new shoe store was moving in or an old newsstand was closing up after many years. Local scouts, church events, and obituaries of neighborhood friends with much more detail than could be afforded in the bigger, more expensive papers were in these little papers: and the neighborhood people grabbed them up as soon as they hit the stands.

The papers made a living by getting neighborhood businesses to advertise. It made sense for those businesses back then. The brunt of a shopkeeper's business came locally and advertising rates were considerably less than they were in the giant papers.

And so these little mom-and-pop papers made a good living for years and although many are still in existence, many have folded after being bought up by newspaper consortiums that have forgotten the lesson taught by those early papers. The neighborhood newspaper needs to be about the neighborhood and not somewhere else.

In this eBook, you will learn how to create a viable, money earning, online paper with that one basic rule as your guide.

The search for a webmaster

When I left my previous employ as managing editor at another online only publication, I had helped build readership and thus ad revenues to well over six figures. In a small town in one of the smaller counties in Illinois, that was unheard of in the paper business. But still I felt there was more, and could be more that we could be doing to gain further readership loyalty, be an important part of the community and make a good living in the latter stages of my newspaper career. I felt the publication I had worked for was losing their way with too much AP and copy and paste stories that readers could find in literally thousands of other websites.

Finally I decided to take all I had learned and create a neighborhood newspaper just like the ones I read as a child back in the 1950s.

The first task was to find a design: a template that would give readers the look and feel of a real paper only this time on a computer screen. The task of finding such a format almost made me give up my search and the idea of making a newspaper more than once.

Studying dozens of major online newspapers was no help. Almost all have become enamored with the electronic world they are displayed in. They all have too many intrusive ads surrounding the masthead to the point you almost don't know what the name of the paper is. They all have annoying dropdowns and giant ads running across the screen that makes it obvious the geeks and not the news people are running their websites.

I decided to go on a search of smaller papers in smaller towns all across the country looking for that elusive template that said. "HERE IS WHAT AN ONLINE PAPER SHOULD LOOK LIKE". I continued to be disappointed in my search. For one, many of these smaller papers were owned by bigger conglomerates and as such had the same template as that company's larger papers used. Still others were just a mess of too many things in too small a space to make the paper worth looking at. I was beginning to worry that I wouldn't be able to find something ready-made that I could turn into a new online paper. Would I have to sit down with an expert and after a great deal of time and money have what I want? The notion depressed me as much as my search for the eventual webhost would.

Looking for a webhost was harder than finding the right looks for my newspaper. Oh there are hundreds of webhosts out there and they all are sure cheap enough, but at my age I have learned that cheaper rarely converts into better.

What I wanted in my webhost was service, server capacity (A newspaper can't afford to go down or you will lose your readers) a template design that would make me feel like I was producing a newspaper and lastly, but most important to me, I needed an online newspaper software that was easy to use, easy to understand and one that gave me the flexibility to change some things that I didn't like. For several weeks, I felt looking for the Titanic must have been easier than what I had embarked upon.

As an old salt reporter, I never just jump into something on the web without doing some homework. I looked at "Ten Best Web Hosts" and other ratings sites and compiled a list of hosts that showed up on more than one of these lists.

I then visited these sites and got nowhere fast. Many allowed me to look at the hundreds of templates available and that was a joke. Most templates offered by these hosts look like something the third graders at a school would pick to have their drawings posted on. Too many colors with too many ancillary things that did nothing but make the template look cluttered were what I continuously found. What was worse was that the templates, outside of colors, allowed no changes to their format. They were truly "what you see is what you get" and what I saw wasn't worth getting.

I also noted that many boasted of a million or in some cases millions of clients. Call me a skeptic but if I have a question I need to send to them, I don't want to be number one million and seven on the respond list.

I will be honest and admit I did make a few mistakes. I figured I would grab my domain name, practice with a host to get the feel of things and continue my search for templates.

My first foray was with one of the biggest. As it turns out in later emails, they do care about their clients but to me their system from multiple passwords that had to be hard or they were rejected to poor choice of templates gave me to say goodbye to them.

I signed up with another host that boasted more than a million users and they were and are terrible. I used a blank template just to start getting local news online and get the word out that a new local paper headed by three ex-paper people was being developed locally.

I had to use another domain name that was similar but cumbersome to remember but still readers came and most of them saw the paper. I say most because this host, which does a ton of bragging, never mentions how much “UP” time they guarantee and after a few weeks of seeing fully 10% of hits going to ‘404 server error’, I knew I couldn’t stay with these people even if I found templates that they would accept to host.

And so now more than a month into looking for a host and format, I had resigned myself to having to hire someone to build my site and pray I could find a host that would accept it and stay the heck online so people could read our stories.

And then a friend of mine said he too was doing some searching for me and came across a web host I might want to check into called Techcruiser. I took a look at <http://techcruiser.com> and saw for the first time a newspaper CMS that actually knew what a newspaper should look like. The preview sites were cleaner and more reader friendly than any others I had seen and they said they could make changes which means I could drop something or change something; or they could, to tailor the new paper to what I had in my mind.

A couple of the examples were way too busy for me and looked to be trying to be a complete international paper, which number in the thousands on the web. It looked like they decided to go up against the big boy papers and I wished them well but I had another niche in mind. The point noticed was this group of papers, although similar in a few ways, had totally different looks. They had their own style and that told me here was a company that wasn’t going to say. “Sorry that’s the way it is, we can’t change anything.”

What really stood out for me was that on their online newspaper templates the ad spaces were large and were obviously built for real advertisers. What I mean by real advertisers is Joe’s Shoe store or Ralph’s Grocery store. These people understood that one local ad placed in a local paper could get more ad revenue than all the Google, MSN and Yahoo click-for-a-penny ads would ever get a person.

I took them up on their 15 day free trial and again, to be honest, I didn't do much with it at first. The practice site had a little too much Flash for my liking. A full ten different stories with pictures and captions of stories around the world didn't make me feel at home.

I spent the next few weeks working hard to gather local news stories and post them in my temporary website at www.thelcherald hoping something would happen that would get this project really rolling.

I also learned something else that was very important during those days. As I went to every event during that time, and I mean everything, promoting my temporary site, people were telling me they loved the temporary site. "It's easy to read". "It's so basic" "I love that everything makes sense" were comments I heard over and over.

It became obvious that the website I hated because it was too Spartan and sophomoric-looking was a hit with local readers. I remembered back to a lesson I had been told by an old editor decades before "Sometimes less is more". He was right. And then everything fell into place in my mind. Be simple and clean and easy to navigate and the readers will come, and come back again.

I received an email from Techcruiser noting my 15 day trial was almost up and that I hadn't really dabbled with the practice template very much. They asked if they could do something for me and I explained the multiple 10 story flash format on the practice template wouldn't work as even though I would have local stories, having to produce ten local stories a day would sometimes be impossible.

I mentioned in my response that the closest thing I had found to my idea was one of the sites they hosted for a small town in Ireland but it still had several things I didn't like including too small a font, a subscriber section (we would be free) and several other items.

Their response was "No problem." After a few short emails asking for this and for that to be changed, and receiving responses saying "How is this?" I found I was actually creating a clean, clear, and easy to navigate and read paper and I couldn't wait for the 60 days to come so I could transfer my domain over to Techcruiser.

In the meantime, I was storing some articles on the new site, and learning how easy it was to post things and bring minor changes to a story or picture if I thought a bit of a difference would help catch a reader's eye. By the time we were able to switch over to www.newheraldnews.com here was a nice full edition for readers to find. I changed the old website at www.theherald.com by posting boldly that we had moved and to click the new URL for the redirect.

The response was enormously positive. The Herald had arrived and we had found a responsive, aim to please, webhost that actually understood what a newspaper online should look like. But more important than that, the readers absolutely loved it. People were spreading the word about a new, local paper that was fun to read and page requests started moving along from a hundred a day to several hundred to more than five hundred to a thousand a day in less than three months...and there were people out there who still didn't know about us.

What is driving the Herald to success and how you can do the same?

When I and Marla and Nancy and Tim decided to create a new local newspaper, the first thing we did is embed ourselves into the community and find out what they wanted to see and to read. We have always been visible, around the town newspaper people, but we needed to get everywhere as soon as possible to make the Herald known. All the search engine submissions in the world can't replace going to one local ice cream social and telling everyone to visit their new local newspaper.

I passed out a thousand business cards the month we began with the temporary site and asked everyone who would stand still long enough what they wanted in a local paper. I knew that the weakness of the two other publications in the county was that they were printing or posting what they wanted people to read rather than what people actually wanted to read and I wanted to make sure I didn't make that same mistake again or the Herald wouldn't survive.

I was schooled that month and found out my idea of a neighborhood newspaper with some regional, national and international news wasn't what folks wanted. What they asked for was more local everything. No one said they wanted Cubs, Cards or White Sox stories. They could find them in a thousand different places on the web. The same for business and other news, they already had their favorites. What they wanted, what they were saying they weren't getting enough of was more local news.

This unanimous response reminded me of another bit of sage advice that I had forgotten that an old veteran editor had given me in my days as a columnist. I had just written a column about some crook out east that had gotten away with a mail fraud conviction. The editor called me into his office, holding up my copy...before everything was on computer, and he tore the story up. "I have hundreds of educated idiots through AP that can give me this kind of story. "What I want from you is local and nothing but." Everyone in town was now telling me the same thing. The concept was so basic, so fundamental. Kids, adults: their replies were all the same, "We want to read about us." It felt like we had re-invented the wheel. Now all we needed to do was to get it turning with some speed.

Using social media to build your newspaper

I'm 64 years old and the last thing I ever envisioned myself being was a Facebook user. I remember typesetting, fedoras, a cigarette dangling out of the side of the mouth as keys on an old Underwood typewriter banged out triple copy news items.

But I have changed. And I have changed because I see that social media really does work.

By a fortuitous stroke of luck I wasn't able to create a Facebook business account. It is more difficult than a personal one and requires more detail and setup and I quite frankly lost my patience with it all.

So instead I created an account under my own name Michael Fak, and that has been a real help in getting the word out about the Herald. First off, it is more personal than a business address. It is more, "Hey guys, check out the story on so and so we just posted in the Herald at www.newheraldnews.com.

We get feedback, suggestions, praise and a person to person sense of communication that beats any Facebook business account. It is more like friends chatting and friends like to help friends and thus they read a story, spread the word through their own Facebook and the results can be exponential.

By having person to person conversations with readers that are in turn monitored and read by other readers we expanded our loyal reader base and allowed readers to feel vested in the Herald and they are rooting for us, for themselves, to succeed

Here is a perfect example. In downtown Lincoln, a poor lost deer rammed through the plate glass door of a beauty shop. Badly hurt, police had to come in and find the deer inside the building and put it down for humanitarian reasons. A deer downtown is different news and I rushed home and posted the story along with a picture of police ready to go into the shop.

I then told my Facebook friends who in turn told all theirs and in just a few hours I was getting bulk emails back saying "Hey everyone check out this crazy story in the Herald."

That story by the way had almost 1,000 hits that day. We were almost brand new at the time and the one friend who had stepped up to advertise with me, said everyone must have seen his ad that day and to let him know when it would be time to sign a long-term contract. And he has.

Now there are other social media sites out there. Twitter is big but it seems to overlap Facebook and having too many things to have to keep an eye on can slow the most important job I have....getting more neighborhood news. Good local product is essential, but making sure people know it is in the paper “right now” is just as important.

Our decision to be a corporation

I'm quite sure no business has the flexibility of creating a business model more than an internet venture. For just a few dollars you can get a domain and a host and you are off and running. I can't think of any other business where you can say, "I don't have any money, but I don't really need any to start online newspaper." Now that might be true but starting out really small with your paper means the road to viability and profitability will be longer so I don't recommend you start this venture without some working capital.

In the case of the Herald, we decided to become an S corporation which allowed a shield on liability but a tax requirement the same as an individual proprietorship. This was our decision and you can decide otherwise with no effect on the product save perhaps the amount of paperwork at tax time.

I had other ancillary income coming in from writing projects so I determined I could be comfortable the first year with a \$1,000 draw each month. Marla has a good part time job so she became a sublet writer, as did Nancy with each being paid for each assignment they turned in. Tim also became a sublet vendor supplying graphic arts and such for set fees. All of us were willing to take less to get the Herald going and to make sure it would stay going. By my being an S corp. and everyone else being sublet workers, we avoided the need for payroll software and accountant's fees. Now all sublet employees have signed agreements noting they are required to pay their just and fair taxes and they will receive a 1099 at the end of the year, but this makes bookkeeping much easier.

I have already mentioned that all of us are well known in the community and that is a must to have a successful neighborhood newspaper. If you are, you have a great head start but in the event you are not then I recommend you partner with someone who is well known in your market area.

How we moved along

There is so much to explain that I believe it is important that we look at this venture in a step by step process.

First, and this might seem obvious, is that you will need to determine the name of your paper. I recommend something that has a relationship to your community and to avoid some of the silly names I see on some papers. Gatehouse Media Services name some of their online papers the “Wicked Local”. A silly name that only shows computer dweebs and not news people are running the sites. Plus a name such as that will turn off some older readers who still take their news seriously.

We chose the Herald as a sign of our respect for the history of the newspaper in our county. Back in the 1850s, the Evening Herald was the principal paper in our county, so we dropped the evening part (since we post early each morning) and explained our choice to the community. It went over well and also showed we had respect for the job we were taking on. Silly or cutesy names are fine for blogs but if you intend to run a professional newspaper then choose a professional sounding name.

Then it is important to sit down and work out the finances of your new business. Will you start part-time or full-time? Will there be others involved or will it be just you to start? Do you have some quality writers in mind that can cover events for you for a set fee per story or photo array, especially if you are part time? Depending on where you live will dictate how much to pay for a freelance story. It can range from \$25 to \$75 per submission and you will have to find out what the good writers in your area think is a fair price.

Like any small business you should make up an expense sheet and list all the costs involved on a monthly basis. Your draw, freelance costs, incidentals including newspaper hosting and necessary software needed as well as computer additions etc. should all be factored into a monthly cost. A good rule of thumb is to have enough cash on hand to last six months without any income coming in. That working capital will help take the pressure off the finances and allow you to concentrate on getting more local news for your paper.

You can find that capital several ways. One, is you have it already. Another is you go to the bank with a financial plan and borrow the funds

or establish a line of credit. The third is to sell some of the new business to local folks who like your idea and see the new venture as a sound investment.

At the Herald, we used investors for a portion of the business capital. That way, we didn't have any debt to repay and it allowed us to concentrate on getting news and not worry about a dwindling checkbook. We sold 30% of the ownership thus allowing decisions to be made by myself without any concerns of an outside majority disputing or rejecting any of my ideas (allowing that they have sage advice from time to time).

Having a stronger than needed cash position allowed us to take advantage of several options that we wouldn't have been able to take on if we needed to watch cash closely. One was an office downtown; larger than we needed, came up for rent just 2 months after we started and before we had sold any advertising. Owned by a good friend, it was offered to us at half the rate of the smaller available offices in the area. We had to grab it and since we had cash on hand, we were able to factor in rent and utilities that we had not planned to need until later into our first year.

We have included the original business plan at the end of this book so you can see how we approached the sale of our stock. The last page, with numbers and projections, has been left out as we don't care to give our competition any chance to see the inner finances of the Herald. Make sure that you do include a list of expected expenses as well as revenue estimates in your plan. Be honest and add costs to the high side and revenue projections to the low.

In the case of our investors, they all are in this for the long haul, expecting no dividends for at least 2 years to allow the Herald to gain solid footing in order to expand and to thrive. It looks like we will be able to start dividends next year but getting investors who are dividend or yield happy is far worse than borrowing money from a friend or relative.

We did not put an ad in a paper asking for investors. Instead we made a list of community leaders and other people who have invested heavily in our county and then approached them on a one on one basis. In effect our investors were hand-picked...and they have been great supporters of our efforts. They also are all great business minds and their input has been invaluable when we have pondered expansion of news related ideas.

If you have followed me step by step to this point, you now have a name and the money to get the paper going. Now comes an essential decision: determining who your webhost and webmaster will be. I have gone over this earlier in the book and I strongly recommend Techcruiser. There are other newspaper website software that are cheaper but cheap isn't any good if they can't keep your website up all the time. They also might be much bigger, but most of them are so big, a single client is meaningless to them. Of all the things that we have done the first eight months at the Herald, absolutely no decision we made was as important as our choice of Techcruiser. And I promise you if I felt otherwise, they wouldn't get even a mention by name as those other sites didn't earlier on in this book.

Expecting now that you have signed with Techcruiser, you will need to register your domain with them and set about practicing with the template you choose. Also, study all the ins and outs of the system by reading all the "Documentation" highlights that are at the lower left of all the pages in their control panel. It's a good idea to ask Techcruiser to keep you offline at this time. They can give you an access URL to work your site but it won't show up on browsers.

Next: get a ton of business cards printed up. I recommend professional cards and not cards printed on your computer. People can readily tell the difference.

At the start you might only have your name and a phone number plus the eventual URL of your paper. In our case I had the temporary site and explained we were building a new one that would be online soon. We all used our personal cell phone numbers as numbers to get in contact with us.

And so we did what we could with the temporary website waiting for 60 days to elapse to transfer over the real domain name we would use with Techcruiser. Yes, that meant a reprint of more business cards. People thought it was funny as I explained my mistake. I had registered the domain with a host I quickly found out didn't understand what a newspaper should look like on the web and now I had to wait. In the meantime, they could see our product at the temporary site and I implored everyone to give me feedback. Everyone thought this a refreshing change of pace as the other publications rarely answered anyone's email.

We also made a true effort to go to every local event imaginable spreading the word on what we were planning to do. We took note pads and wrote

down the emails of everyone we talked to that could be a source for us to obtain local news items from.

The list of potential submitters is huge even in a smaller community. Secretaries and teachers at local schools can send you announcements of activities and let you know when a good photo-op or story requires you visit the school. Members of civic organizations and church groups that are in the know are important leads so we got their names, if we didn't already have them, and got them enthused about what we intended to do. We talked to all the businesses and explained to them we wouldn't just put on their public relations pieces that are really ads for them but that we would use their work when it is genuine neighborhood news. Examples would be employee of the year announcements, or an expansion of the business, or a name change, or an employee, after decades, retiring from their employ just to list a few.

I also began lining up speaking engagements at as many civic, church and social organizations as possible. During speeches I spent just a small amount of time explaining the Herald's intentions and plans. Instead I spent most of the time asking everyone what they wanted to see in a neighborhood publication. This allowing the community to feel a true sense of being a part of what we are doing and going to do and freely accepting all feedback, whether good or perhaps not, has helped develop an even stronger link with the community.

Although the Herald has an office, it isn't initially essential. Decide if you will have a physical presence immediately or will you work out of your home. Although not a true necessity to start with a storefront, our sign on the storefront window with our name on it is a great advertisement for us. Every day, people drop in or stick their heads in the door. Sometimes it is to offer encouragement. For several months folks who didn't know about the Herald would come in and asked what was going on and we always found time to tell them and show them on a computer what we were all about. It has also become obvious to all of us that the office gives a visual legitimacy to the Herald that isn't possible from a work-at-home publication.

As mentioned previously, in the case of the Herald, we intended to wait until about 8 months in to our venture but when a great, and inexpensive, rental opportunity arose to be in the downtown area, we decided to jump on it and move our business plan ahead about 6 months.

Who will work with you and how much, or little they will be involved is a key element in starting up your newspaper. In the event you intend to begin this venture as a part-time business, it is essential you have at least a couple freelancers who can cover news in the neighborhood for you. Say you have a regular job that prohibits you from going to a significant event in the community. It is of extreme importance that you have someone cover that event for you. Going about telling everyone you will be their true neighborhood news source and then not going to special events or not having someone there will cut the community support in your endeavor quicker than anything else.

At the Herald I was lucky. I was friends with two retired newspaper reporters, one a former editor, and they were enthused about getting back into the business with some leeway to do other things in their later years. I also knew some great photographers who loved the idea of going to events and capturing the faces of friends having a good time. I also enlisted the help of some professional people to write timely articles on all types of issues for free with the trade-off being the inclusion of their credentials and where they worked at the end of the articles.

Just 100 days into the new templates being online, I had assembled a dozen solid contributors making original copy much easier than if I had to do it all myself. And you can never have too many freelancers. It's a part time job so frequently the writers will be busy with their normal lives and if you just have one or two reporters, you can find yourself starving for news to post.

And lastly I enjoined everyone in the community who read us to tell others about the new Herald and to please send us everything they could about local events happening or that have just happened for inclusion in the Herald. These folks are a huge source of free material and the trade-off is beneficial to all. The Herald gets great local news and the submitter gets personal recognition plus free publicity for their favorite cause.

At this time the Herald is a true blend of professional writers and photographers, specialty writers and local sources with knowledge and expertise in a certain field or event. But you need to do more to make your paper successful...you need to make it unique.

As mentioned in my brief bio, I am by calling a writer and although I had to keep an eye on many things, including an office remodel, I knew I had

to personally get some quality stories with my name on them out to the readers. I had been a popular columnist with the local print paper years before and I needed to get back into doing commentary to help boost readership.

I covered many events myself but those events frequently ended up as photo arrays with just a few words. They were important but I knew the community was expecting more from me and I made a list of interesting stories I should write and made the determination of completing at least two of these human interest stories each week.

I also made it a point to not only have weekly reports sent to my investors but also to our readers. As we began and then started growing I wrote commentaries that were updates to what we were doing and planning to do. I was chatting with our readers and they in turn sent us feedback. I even included a slideshow of our new offices before they were remodeled and from time to time popped a picture of something being done. It made readers feel more a part of our journey. I have included a few of those commentaries in the back of this book.

Determining your format

I left this out of the line of things to do because this is such an important issue that it deserves its own lengthy discussion. It should be done early on but never think that what you have cannot be tweaked, or changed or removed from your end product. At the Herald we make changes almost every week. We intend to be a never-ending work in progress and have found high interest in bringing some different products to the Herald.

We remembered how everyone told us they liked a clean, simple, and easy to navigate publication and that was our first job. We deleted or had Techcruiser delete several items that we felt made the paper busier than it needed to be.

Folks loved the stories all being right up on the front page, which we call Neighborhood News with a ([click here for more](#)) that allows multiple readership scans of our stories without the entire article being right there to make the page ridiculously long. The brief paragraph also met with much more favor than just a headline linking to a story. Readers could get a gist of the story and then decide if they wanted to read it all. This format has been a huge, actually unanimous hit, with our readers over our competitors' formats.

Techcruiser allows us to publish a story into a specific category, say Local Sports, but we also posted it in Neighborhood News as we were still getting new readers each day and we wanted them to see how diverse we were. Sub menus are great but new readers will peruse the front page the most and we wanted them to see all that we were posting. Later on, when our readership became used to us, we posted stories where they belonged in their proper sub menus.

We also incorporated several navigation and sub menu items that we are certain will always be getting some tweaking. We have already dropped a few and added a few others as we continue to find out what readers want...and don't want. It is easy to note what readers want. If there are few or no submissions for that menu, and little feedback or page hits, then there is little need to keep that menu online. Again, we are looking to prevent useless clutter as much as possible. Besides it only takes a minute to bring something back into our navigation if things change later on and interest begins again.

We found that everyone loved the local slideshows and when we sprang videos of local events that really hit the mark. We began video with a three-minute snippet of the annual Relay for Life walk around the Lincoln College Gymnasium and just seeing the faces of the cancer survivors as they walked past the camera caused the video link to be sent out to others all over the country. We had waited for this event to spring the video and it was a good call on our part.

We also used two navigation items to give links to our local civic organizations and smaller communities that do have websites. This went over well with all of them as we did this as a free public service.

We also change the size of the pictures accompanying a story using larger pixel sizes in group photos and smaller, but still a good size, pictures when it is an individual. This is done in a few seconds by changing Global Settings in the Control Panel.

We also have had polls asking what readers wanted. The last poll was strongly in favor of our doing interviews with people i.e. a min-news report and we have begun to do that. In effect, the Herald will also be a local television station, from time to time, and we look forward to expanding that capability as we continue.

We have decided to call out videos HIVE, an acronym for Herald Internet Video Experience. We are currently parking them on YouTube but look to move them to a more sophisticated, client oriented site in the near future.

We have a local access cable channel and we will be submitting those videos to be shown on that channel as well. Plus we plan to do half-hour programs and place them on the local channel. It is a great advertising opportunity plus it will drive readers to look at the Herald.

The look of our masthead (logo) has changed 3 times in the past 3 months and perhaps it is now done. The masthead is an essential ingredient in the initial look of your paper so spend time making sure it looks as good as it can.

All these things we did to link with our community and to give them a product they enjoyed coming to. Your publication could end up looking

entirely different than ours and that is fine (just as long as the end result is what your readers want and not what you want).

What you will need to get started

The first item is about as obvious as anything could be: you need a computer, but it needs to be a very good one. You are going to need to purchase some software items and graphic arts programs and those will take a great deal of space on your drive, the kind of space that an older computer just won't handle.

In the case of the Herald, everyone involved has their own computer and all are fairly new but there has to be one central machine and it has to be a very good one.

Hindsight is always 20/20 but if you intend to buy a new computer I would recommend it be a laptop. We have 4 laptops and being able to carry them to events or from home to office is easy. We have larger screens at the office we can plug into so even a smaller screen laptop is no problem. The Herald only purchased one as everyone involved with the Herald had their own.

We also purchased a few rebuilt computers and had several donated to us, but the time spent getting them working right or finding out which ones could do the job and which ones couldn't wasn't worth the time spent: Especially now when new laptops can be found in the \$300 to \$500 range that are excellent machines.

We looked at many newspaper website builder in everything we needed and will note them here with the caveat that outside of Techcruiser, we find no need to rave about any of them outside of they get the job done with only minor irritations.

For graphic arts the Herald uses Adobe 5.5CS. It is far from cheap at \$600 to \$800 dollars but it is essential your ads be clean, clear, eye-popping ads to help your advertisers get noticed by readers.

Like many software programs there is a lot that really isn't essential and that makes learning the system take a longer time.

For our slideshows we purchased an online program from Kizoa that is relatively easy to use and inexpensive at \$39. But it has issues. For one, it doesn't really allow captioning as words go into the photo. Thus any lengthy caption would cover the entire photo. Kizoa, like the dozen or

more other slideshow hosts we tried also is geared towards bells and whistles rather than professional looking, clean albums. All kinds of music and special effects and colors etc. don't belong in a real papers publication. They also have "slow" times especially on weekends that tell me they might have a capacity issue. And there is no need to ever send them a query about a problem. The two we sent were replied 5 days later and were just a canned statement saying "Switch to Google Chrome and clear your cache".

They are who we have now as of June 2013, but when we have free time we will continue our search for someone who understands what a professional and clean slideshow should look like with a capacity for captioning.

For our videos, we currently, with reluctance, use Youtube as our host. Youtube downloading can be preposterous with times noted in the hundreds of minutes even for short 5 minute videos. We got past this by buying AVS conversion software that speeds the process up although it can still take up to an hour or more when we have a 15 minute or longer video to download. We are not sure why but from one of the office computers that has the often criticized Vista software we actually can post to Youtube in minutes after about 20 minutes of "preparing" the video for upload.

There are other video hosts out there but many have outlandish prices of upward of \$1500 to \$2000 dollars a year. Others are cheaper but have their own ads in the video which we won't accept. And so our search continues

Everyone on staff has a digital camera and a couple of the photographers have exceptional cameras as it is their hobby as well as the instrument of making some part time money.

After a great deal of research and looking, we decided on purchasing a Canon SX40 for the Herald. It is a great camera for roughly \$300 to \$350 dollars and is extremely versatile. With an 16G card we have actually done 45 minutes worth of video and the resolution is excellent. The one flaw in the SX 40 is it doesn't allow for an external microphone and sometimes background noise filters into one of our productions. We will be buying a Canon EOS Rebel T4i shortly as we have respect for the Canon product and the T4i will allow us to use a shotgun microphone plus video in HD.

There are many great digital cameras out there, especially from Nikon so if you find a great deal or really like a certain brand, go with it.

In case you are wondering, we decided against buying a camcorder as the digital cameras of today can do double duty as a still photo taker as well as producing quality video...and sometimes at an event you will want to do both.

Step by step through the Herald's income plan

As I mentioned previously, we wanted to wait for solid numbers being produced before hitting the streets and asking for advertisers. We did have some income; a few hundred in Classified ads and a few hundred more from business friends who just wanted to help.

We also made up some ads and posted them for a few weeks for free. It established goodwill with that business, made the competition scratch their heads and allowed readers to see that we weren't a non-profit just posting everything without needing money.

We also made a decision that will cost us a lot of money but will make us much more in return. The Herald does not charge for fundraiser advertisements. That means Cub Scouts selling popcorn, Girl Scouts selling cookies; Rotary and Kiwanis selling something all get a 15 day ad free of charge. Fundraisers for folks holding an event to help a person or family in need also get their ads for free and the Herald also buys a couple tickets to the event as well.

We have found that many organizations have set aside funds for advertising and although we offer them a free ad, we also offer an upgrade: perhaps to an animated GIF or a back page poster for half the normal rate and most groups are opting for that. In effect we get the goodwill that we are willing to help them for free but they are choosing to pay us a bit to have more. These fundraising events are so prevalent around our area that even at half price they total enough to pay the rent each month.

We always use a check too when we go to their events so that when the organizers start depositing money they see that the Herald not only gave them their ad for free or half price but also helped monetarily.

Our ad saleswoman uses this point immediately when calling on businesses and she has met with positive enthusiasm from area businesses that often times are helping those same causes. In effect businesses that help the Herald by taking ad space are also helping all the fine charities and civic and church groups with their fundraisers.

After mostly having money going out and little coming in, we decided in late June to begin selling in July. We had various ad plans from a very low

\$50 a month to much higher \$350 a month plans and everywhere in between. We based the prices on what other area online papers were charging for ads. They all have a section telling how much their ads cost so it was easy to find out. We then priced ourselves lower and decided to live with those current rates for several months.

Neighborhood News (The front page) was where we charged the most with secondary sections being less.

We also allowed one month ads for small businesses that had to watch their money month to month. Once we have an ad made up it isn't that hard to take it out and put it back in another time.

The slideshows have been a hit so we have been selling those as an ad. The slideshow is presented by; and then in the middle of the slideshow is a company logo as one of the pictures. We have a waiting line for those openings.

We intend to do the same with the videos actually filming a fifteen second commercial that we will splice into the video. Several businesses that have ads made for television want those slots as they will be significantly less than the TV stations charge and the viewership is targeted locally.

We also have begun dabbling with fifteen minute video reports where we interview someone involved with a major event happening in the county. The first few we did were big hits and we already have a list of events organizers that have requested we interview them...and we have sponsors waiting to be part of that video interview with an ad.

Perhaps the biggest event that put us over the financial hump was our local county fair. A one week event in late July in an agricultural community, it carries great interest. Even those who don't go to the fair like to read about it and we went full bore into making a coverage package that left our competitors in the dust. First off we had 8 different reporters and photographers covering events. After the smoke cleared the section we called "Our Fair" had seven small videos with slideshows that totaled 554 photos. But most importantly, we had 13 original stories about the fair and the people who participate that clobbered the competition's coverage...and we lost \$800.

Our ad rep said that she was doing great starting to sign up advertisers for yearly contracts but it was hard to then ask them for something extra for this section(as other papers in the area did). I agreed and decided to eat the freelance costs and try and set the tone to readers that the Herald was the publication to read. The original stories were actually what set us apart. The other papers reacted to the fair, taking pictures and posting results. Herald staff went out and found the stories and wrote those stories that neither other paper had the manpower or time to do....and our effort and coverage was not lost with area businesses. By the way, we spiked to over 2,200 page requests a day during the fair. And yes we paid out over \$800 to cover the fair as well as we did.

When the annual weekend art and hot air balloon fest came up at the end of August, our ad rep went to area businesses and asked them if they wanted to be in the special section of coverage we would be doing and they signed up in droves. Although just a three day event, she signed up 26 advertisers to be in the section at either \$50 or \$75 each. So after losing money on the fair we recouped all of it at the festival. And six of those temporary sponsors signed year-long contracts when they saw their ad and our coverage adding over \$8,000 in ads for the year.

Now keep in mind some of the numbers we used are for central Illinois. It is a small town area and if you are in a bigger city then these numbers should be much higher. I recommend you check out all your competition and find your advertising dollar niche safely nestled between not too low and not too high.

With all the time we have spent trying to tell you what we have done I think I should spend some time mentioning things we haven't done.

What the Herald didn't do

We didn't waste any time or money on getting search engine optimization as Google and the other search engines will find you in their own good time. In our case it took less than a week. And you have to think small. You are producing a neighborhood newspaper and that means you are directing your work to a specific area of folks. A grocery store who will advertise with you wants to know how many local readers you have. Hits from cities a thousand or even a hundred miles away won't do that grocery store any good so don't waste time trying to have the world find you those first few months.

In the case of the Herald, we actually didn't even ask for advertisers until early July, more than three months after going on line and eight weeks after our finished product through Techcruiser was up and running. We wanted to wait for the numbers to be good, numbers that would make a business take notice and decide to spend money with us.

Yes, that meant we did some bleeding financially when we started but you have to have a good product to sell and it has to make sense for a business to spend money with you, so if you can, hold out.

Another important reason we waited was we didn't want to set ad prices and then as readership grew, set them higher, and then higher. The quickest way to lose an advertiser is to keep raising rates even if warranted by increased readership. And so we held out until a large portion of the community knew about the Herald and page requests started averaging 1,000 to 1,500 a day. We were then able to offer advertising packages that were far less than the printed paper asked for but by offering multiple placements of each business's ad, they began to sign up quickly. And we were comfortable signing advertisers up for a year without later lamenting their rate was way too low for the current readership we were getting.

Again using local resources, I hired on a retired newspaper ad manager to handle the selling portion of our business. What I basically did was hire her on as I would an ad agency. She gets 25% of the ad money, runs the business as her own (with constant contact with me to make sure we are on the same page) and I let her run with the ball.

I will get into this a bit later, but after 10 weeks on the job, the Herald began running in the black and projections look outstanding. Initial

contracts signed for long terms of 6 to 12 months projected at a rate we are currently signing, will put the Herald's gross revenue near 6 figures for the period of June 2013 to June 2014.

Getting back to things we didn't do at the Herald, another is we didn't include a chat room or comment section. For two centuries, the newspaper mantra for a letter to the editor submission was the inclusion of name, address and phone number. It still is in print but many papers have dropped that philosophy all to get more hits to their websites. Heated exchanges between people who don't even have to use their names bring numbers to those papers but the numbers are of zero use to an advertiser since his ad isn't in those dialogue areas. And most of the time, the advertiser wouldn't want it there as sometimes, the exchanges get nasty and that reflects back on the newspaper that allowed those remarks to go online.

Now there is nothing wrong with feedback. At the end of a story we post the writers email and will respond to any and all comments and if the comments have merit, we will post those comments as a letter to the editor. But comment forums on newspapers have been a black eye to the industry so why allow someone else's rude or nasty comments to sully your reputation. Oh, and yes, if you manage the chat room and disallow some remarks that will bring about another round of nasty comments directed this time at you and your paper for preventing a knucklehead from spewing some silliness. So why bother. Spend your time writing a great local story rather than arguing back and forth with someone who is looking for an argument.

We have a few blogs in our area and none of them are making much money: you can tell by the few advertisers they have. Moreover, the blogs allow anyone to post without being checked for content by an editor and many of their submissions are just gossip and rumors that in time are found to be incorrect and hurt the blogs credibility in the neighborhood. Never let anyone just post without you first seeing what they are posting. Someone has to be responsible for news being accurate, fair and correct and letting just anyone say whatever they want in your publication will undermine what you are trying to do faster than anything else.

We also didn't allow any popups or running graphics to be used on our site. I find nothing more aggravating than to have some ad pop up right in the middle of my reading a story and having to look for the "Close" icon

to get rid of the thing. I can't fathom why advertisers think paying big money for these intrusive ads help them get any business. We do use animated GIF in some of our ads but only in the ad section and never within the reading area boundaries.

We didn't waste any time with pay for click ads either. Many big newspapers now have Google ads running right inside a story. These ads are disruptive to a reader and many times their subject matter is embarrassing. Google and MSN and Yahoo all make a big deal about how a business has to be approved to be in their system but we have all seen the "get rich quick in 10 days" ads that show their standards aren't very high.

We decided to not accept any Classifieds that were questionable. All those "Make \$1500 a week part time at home" ads will have to go somewhere else. There are also a few questionable businesses in the community that have a very poor reputation and we have left them off our list of businesses to call on for advertising.

We also didn't hire an accountant. There are no sales tax reports for us to file, or payroll taxes so we went with QuickBooksOnline at \$26 a month and we are pleased with that. We went with the online version because we are thus networked, with any of us able to enter a deposit or new customer name from anywhere and not just the one computer that has a hard drive copy of the software.

It also helps that even if our computers all crashed, our record keeping is safe at QuickBooks headquarters. I had a friend lose his accounting once and it was a nightmare for him that I didn't care to see happen at the Herald.

Dispelling the myth that will get you more business

I had spent my earlier years in retail and I always pondered only one thing when I was spending money on an ad. “Will people see my ad?” Starting out as a neighborhood newspaper, we had modest numbers but nowhere near what our two competitors had for readership so we had to make our ad plan special. We used an important analogy that made sense to our merchants and helped many of them sign up with us.

If a retailer wants to put an ad in a Sunday edition of a major paper, say with circulation over a half-million, that retailer will spend dearly for that ad, even a small one. Now the paper has a huge readership, but who can say how many people saw that ad in section 7, page 156 of that day’s edition? Circulation numbers aren’t the key. Good ad placement with repetition is.

With the Herald using Techcruiser’s system a Neighborhood News ad is on the front page plus every story redirected from that front page. As we currently allow the last 30 stories to remain on that page, the advertiser’s ad is in 30 pages, thus giving the retailer a great chance for their ad to be seen. It also means that if we have 1,500 to 2,500 visitors to the front page, the retailer has that many opportunities to have their ad noticed. That number might be more than how many times their ad was noticed in the huge Sunday paper.

It was also very important that the Techcruiser’ newspaper publishing software allows for random placement of those ads (done by the computer program) on both sides of the edition. In other words, every time someone goes to the Herald, the ads are in a different place. One might see their ad at the top, another third, still another sixth or seventh. But if they go back in to the edition again they will see their ad place differently, including much higher on the page.

This random order is absolutely essential to getting more advertisers. In the event the side ads were static, few would spend the money to be tenth on a page as some other business would to be first or second. The random order allows everyone a chance to equally be featured on each page and probably is the most important element of our long-term advertising strategy.

It thus made sense for our retailers to allow us to make colorful, sometimes animated GIF ads that helped their message stand out even more. And in a few cases we loaded in a slideshow on the back of the ad that really makes our ads different from our competitors. And every time they look for their ad it is in a different place, including being first. The masthead ads across the top are always where they are and this allowed us to charge more for those.

Constantly continue to engage the community

We decided to throw a success party at our office. In all, well over 200 came to eat and drink and visit with us. It was by all accounts one of the biggest business open houses in the county in a very long time.

We had 238 names in the drawing for the mini-netbook we gave away and we know many more of the visitors gave up trying to get their name in the jar.

We made deals with restaurants to get a price break on food, spending only a few hundred dollars for much more than we could have hoped for and the amount of goodwill we received was worth thousands of dollars as everyone could sense that the Herald was for real and was on the way to being the principle news source in the county.

As all of us walk the town, we are constantly being asked when the next party will be and we will have one in the summer of 2013 for certain.

The evening did more than just show the community we were viable and for real. It showed all of us working at the Herald that the community was behind us and supported our efforts. That night will be long remembered by the Herald staff. The memory of that night will be what will keep us going when we hit bumps in the road in the days ahead.

In conclusion of a never concluded process

If you ask any newspaper, in print or online, where their highest readership is, they will all answer the same. The number one read is obituaries and number two is matter of record (which would include police reports).

In the case of the Herald we offer the posting of obituaries free of charge and have found positive feedback not only from the area funeral homes (who all advertise with us) but also with the community that understands at a time of bereavement you don't need someone telling you to spend hundreds of dollars on an obituary notice. In many cases, the bigger area papers get a condensed obit with a more complete obit sent to us. This also builds readership as we have more details than the other papers on a person who has passed away.

Matter of Record, as we call it, includes fire and rescue calls, police reports, marriages and disillusions and public notices. People are curious, or nosy, and every paper has high readership in this category.

Another category that we have found out does exceptionally well is coverage of the local schools. We have one freelancer who specifically is in charge of keeping tabs on all 12 county schools and their activities. People love to read and see their kids in the paper and we do extremely well with our Local Sports and School Beat sections for readership numbers.

We also give attribution whenever possible for photos or a story. For decades newspapers would take a PR release and put their own byline on it. No doubt an attempt to fool readers into thinking they were doing more than they actually were. Whenever we get something in, we include the name of the submitter and that goes a long way to getting more info from that person then by taking their news and taking credit for it.

Well, that is about it. It is hoped the information you have just read will help you create a viable, important neighborhood newspaper that will do service to your community as well as make you money.

We hope you see the difference between creating a blog that relies on click for pay revenue and a real newspaper that will allow you the opportunity to sell real-world ads that can make you profitable.

On the accompanying pages are some of the plans and editorials we submitted to gain investors and readers. We will continue to always communicate with our readers.

Statement of purpose: Intent to create a community news outlet for Logan County.

Background

When Abraham Lincoln - a friend of many people from Lincoln and Logan County - traveled to the nation's capital it was a newsworthy event covered by all seven newspapers that existed in the city of Lincoln. At the time it took almost two full days for national and international news to reach Logan County. The local papers, operated as "mom and pop" businesses, were aware of community news and the people who lived in their towns and a favorite son making it to Washington was big news, albeit a bit tardy compared to modern reports.

At one time Lincoln had seven newspapers, Atlanta had two and Mt. Pulaski, Emden and Middletown each boasted one each. These "mom and pop" papers were eventually bought by larger ones.

In Lincoln, one newspaper stood out among the others - the Evening Herald. At one time it had an unbelievable 8,000 subscribers in a county of only 12,000 homes. After a long line of name and ownership changes and identity transitions over 155 years, its distant descendent is known as the Courier.

With so many news sources disseminating the same news stories through syndicated outlets, it has become more and more obvious that the strength of a local newspaper depends on its ability to gather and promote local content, the original mission and cause for success of all those papers a century and a half ago.

It is the intent of the proposed Logan County Herald to fulfill the mission begun more than 150 years ago - to provide news coverage of local events and information for communities within Logan County.

Description

We live in a day and age when everyone can start a website for a few dollars. We do not intend to run a website, but rather a local content news portal that will eventually be reflected in a partnering print media source. The latter will be created in a second stage as a result of community support demonstrated by readership and advertising revenue.

The Herald will also carry a modest number of national and international news stories through Reuter's syndication. Reuters was chosen due to the overuse of Associated Press articles in area newspapers. The Reuters connection will offer readers a fresh outlook and an alternative perspective for their news and information. (Note: As previously mentioned, we dropped this idea after finding out folks weren't interested in our including such stories)

Marketing

In order to introduce the initial website news source to the public it will be necessary to gain name recognition with fliers, presentations, distribution of business cards and interviews with non-competitive news outlets. Promotional events and sponsorships of local activities will generate interest and display the image of an involved business. Membership in the Chamber of Commerce will include involvement and visibility. Individual staff members belonging to community organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis will also provide connections and opportunities for event sponsorships.

Operating procedures

The initial business and operating location for the Logan County Herald will be in the home of Mike Fak, 221 N. Union, Lincoln. (That changed quickly) Publication tools are currently in place and being used to create the website which will be the launching pad for the news source. Additional input in the form of written articles will be completed by correspondents who will send material and photographs to the office via email transmissions.

When it is possible to expand, a physical site will be found where operations can be in a setting more accessible to the general public and visible as a storefront business. With the modern method of sending news pages to the commercial printer by email there will be no cost for machinery other than computers and regular list of small office equipment for copying and telecommunications. It is then hoped the next growth pattern will be to begin print editions of the Herald.

The baby is on the loose and we are trying to catch it.

Editorial by Mike Fak

Well with just a few days to go in our first three months of publishing, the Herald is humming along just fine. We are off to a start much better than we projected and that has caused things to be a little hectic. We knew from all the conversations we had with so many of you that our format was what you preferred. We just didn't think so many of you would prefer it so soon.

I talked to a group recently and used the analogy of a soon-to-be toddler to explain how things are going at the Herald. Most of you have gone through this. The baby is ready to start taking steps so you put it down on the rug. You expect it to maybe take a step or two and then fall on its kiester. Maybe the baby will grab the chair or couch and pull itself up and then take a few more steps before succumbing to gravity. Well we put this baby, called the Herald, down on the rug and it took off on the run headed for the kitchen with all of us in hot pursuit. If you know me, you know why I said the kitchen rather than some other room.

We have a long way to go and there are many challenges ahead of us but we are encouraged and strengthened by all the support we have been getting in the community.

That support tells us our mission to cover our area as much as possible is what you are looking for.

In the Herald you won't see news from other communities. We cover Logan County and our very close neighbors and that is it: period. We do cover statewide news that has an effect on us but we will remain like Ivory Soap, 99.99% pure to Logan County. The larger communities around the state have their own publications and we feel that directing interest to other, larger communities' news and events isn't the mission of a newspaper that calls itself a local publication. Either you are a local newspaper or you are not.

Good, bad or indifferent, the news you see in the Herald will have a relationship with all of you in Logan County because it will be Logan County news.

So far we have done only a fair job of documenting neighborhood events. In many cases we were the only ones in the media who attended an event.

If you look through our front page you will notice many of those articles and slideshows were obtained by old fashioned shoe leather hitting the streets. But there are many things we didn't get to and we know we need to do better. There is so much going on in Logan County and we know there are miles of improvement still needed by us to deliver local news.

We are busy assembling a great group of freelance photographers to help us get to all the events you hold special. Those freelancers will be important to us as it will free up time for me and Marla Blair and Nancy Saul to go about finding those special local stories about people that we feel will be a signature portion of the Herald's local coverage. There are so many interesting stories out there to tell and we look forward to focusing on them very soon.

We had originally planned to have a physical presence in the community later this year. But circumstances offered meant we needed to jump on an opportunity that arose and so we have. We are excited about being on the square in Lincoln but the office, now under remodel, also is taking away time that could be devoted to hitting the streets and getting those great human interest stories.

I have always said a good reporter's office should be the pair of shoes they are wearing and that won't change. We will man the office but look for all of us out and about in the community even more than we are now.

We appreciate all of you sending in neighborhood news and ask you to please continue doing so, and tell your friends to send us their good news as well, but a paper needs to be more than just a copy and paste publication. We understand that many of the events we cover have only the possibility of local coverage in order to be documented and so we shall take upon ourselves that task.

We have so much to do, and so much to improve upon but we look forward to the journey.

The Herald is your local newspaper, and this baby is on the run. Tell a friend to check us out. We are for you, about you and with you. And we can't tell you how much your support means to us. It is the fuel in our engine. And we are dedicated to doing better...and better...and better.

Area businesses agree with Herald's fundraising philosophy by Mike Fak

Commentary by Mike Fak, I wish I could give some idea of the number of fundraisers I have gone to in the past 30 plus years. I tried to average it out at least at one a week, but some weeks, I went to 3, or 4, so that won't help.

So forgive me if I simply say I have been to a thousand fundraisers or more and that I am proud of that accomplishment.

But this isn't a commentary about me, nor a self-serving effort at gaining any praise. Lord knows I never have found a reason not to buy a ticket that allows me to eat something as well as help another great cause. What this commentary is about is an explanation of our philosophy regarding fundraisers and why the Herald will be different than other publications.

Over the years I have always been struck by the tables-full of merchandise and gift certificates donated for auctions to help yet another worthy cause. Always from local businesses, I have always been struck by the incredible generosity level produced time and again by local merchants and businesses.

The Herald's philosophy is that we need to join all the businesses that are represented on those tables of auction items.

The Logan County Herald will not charge any church, club, civic organization or fundraising committee for advertising their event. Currently there are ads for Family Fun Day and the Humane Society on our front page. Recently there was a LAMS ad as well as a Kiwanis Club advertisement. Those groups will receive no bill for their advertisement. We feel that media should also donate to all our great causes and that doesn't mean special rates, it means free...just like all the merchants and businesses do when they donate services or wares for the auctions.

Now there are several organizations that prefer to have a year-long footprint in the media that doesn't necessarily translate into a fund raising event and the Herald appreciates their wanting to help us help them and others. Those image ads will be at very low rates with interest in placing them where the most readers will see them.

Herald staff has been struck by how positively this philosophy has been met within the community. In several cases organizations we are helping or have told we will help with their fundraisers have told us they want to help back. It's a neighborly way of helping each other.

Many businesses are delighted to see us join them as contributors to help neighborhood causes and have expressed an interest, or have already signed up as advertisers as we spread the news about all the great local events and causes that happen all the time in Logan County.

In the next few weeks, as ads are finished, you will see a great many more businesses on our pages. These business partners will allow the Herald to continue our service to the fundraising community by getting their word out without having to open their pockets or purses to do so.

And so it comes down to this. You can see what we are and you have been given an inkling of what we are evolving into as you follow us each day. We are dedicated to this neighborhood and this neighborhood alone and we are striving to be the best area publication for readability, simplicity and supplying the local news you want to read.

Others can worry about bragging rights for who is bigger. We are too busy working on being the best. And to be the best, you have to step up and do your fair share in support of this community and all our wonderful causes. And so we shall.

The Herald's Fifteen Business Principals

People always like to buy from a friend.

If you go to other people's stuff, they will come to your stuff.

In order to be heard best: be a good listener.

You can never grow a business by contracting.

Busy people always have time for one more thing. That's what makes them busy people.

You must earn your clients' business every moment of every day.

An unsolicited compliment to another is the highest compliment you can give yourself.

A good employee is an asset not an expense.

No one has a monopoly on great ideas.

Be smart enough to know you aren't that smart.

Give a person the tools and the training and then let them do their job.

If you would have done something differently, then why didn't you do it in the first place?

You can find out what people want simply by asking them what they want.

Bigger isn't better; smaller isn't better; only better is better.

If you consider this work, you are in the wrong job!

Wishing you the very best for starting an online newspaper venture.