

## Pre-Dummed Products Give Advertisers Tangible Feel for What They are Buying

By Sean Ireland  
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Newspaper advertising sales have always been about making the proper pitch – clearly showing the potential benefits that the right message delivered in the right way can have for a business.

Though variations on that theme have been developed over the years, it still boils down to demonstrating how your products can deliver a valuable audience of potential customers to a business with worthy products and services to sell.

So knowing this is the formula, why do newspaper sales representatives still go out to make their presentations empty-handed?

A growing number of newspapers have been finding increasing sales success simply by showing potential advertisers the product the newspaper is producing as well as where those advertisers can place their ads in that product. It's not only a way to give a customer a tangible feel for what they are buying into, but also a method to create urgency to make the buying decision.

Of course, demonstrating content and placement in the general-circulation newspaper is usually impossible, but for the increasing number of newspapers that are jumping into the world of niche products – magazines and special sections – presenting pre-dummed products during the sales pitch is turning out to be a key tool to ramping up sales in a difficult economic environment.

“For years our industry was so cavalier – they had a section to show [advertisers], and they had nothing to show,” said Dan “Patio” Dalton, executive vice president of sales for [Content That Works](#).

“Advertisers felt they were handcuffed by it,” Dalton added. “They felt they should be in [a product], but never got a chance to see what the stories and art were going to be. Once they see it, it’s a whole new ball game for them.”



Dan Dalton

Newspapers that recently have worked with Content That Works, as well as ones that have produced special editorial products on their own, are quickly seeing the benefits to providing advertisers with a better idea of what it is they are buying. In fact, after seeing some clients take apart sections to show advertisers where their ads could appear, Content That Works is now providing products to newspapers in ways that make it easier to present and sell.

“Content That Works really does just that: It works. The idea of offering high-res PDFs with ad space already dummed has caught the attention of our advertisers – it creates a sense of urgency,” said Liz White, vice president and associate publisher for new media at The Record-Journal in Meriden, Conn. “As a matter of fact, I was at a business networking meeting the other day, and I showed [an upcoming] section to the group. After seeing the hard copy, a local advertiser reviewed the section, found the story and photo he wanted to be adjacent to, and asked if he could write me a check right there.”



A recent bridal section produced by Content That Works for [The Northern Virginia Daily](#) in Strasburg, Va., sold out in record time, according to Jim Gaaney, the paper’s advertising director.

“We now make up presentation binders for each sales consultant to show the customers,” he said. “They see where their ad will appear and what storyline they will have by the ad location. They really like this selling method.”

“We limit the size to a certain page count, and this makes the sale urgent. For example, our Bridal section was only 32 pages. If a customer waits, they could lose out on being in the tab. Some have questioned me, asking, ‘Why, in a down economy, would you limit the buy?’ Well, because of the downturn in the business, making a buying decision needs pressure. We are not making return trips to the customers. This does that very thing. This concept seems to be a good fit for our paper and team.”

The [Times-Georgian](#) of Carrollton, Ga., is another newspaper that has discovered how selling advertising can be made easier by showing potential customers the editorial product ahead of time. When a local high school football team made it to the state championship game, the newspaper decided to produce a magazine to commemorate the season's achievements. Advertisers responded quickly to the opportunity to buy into the premium product, with the banner ad in the center selling for \$1,500 to a local auto dealer. "I think it helped that we had developed the editorial content plan ahead of time to help the sales staff market the product," Publisher Leonard Woolsey said. "Advertisers understanding the content can many times be a critical element in the decision-making process."

It's a different approach to selling advertising than newspapers are used to, but this is a different sales environment. Used with the right niche products, it only makes sense that advertisers would be more interested in buying space when they know their message will be carried in a quality product that will attract readers.

"They see something tangible, and see the story and art, and you brought them into the process by allowing them to read through it," Content That Works' Dalton said. "It makes it easier to close."

*For more information, contact Dan Dalton at (909) 793-9890.*