

"The most absurd statement is, 'We don't want any more circulation.'

This is an admission of the complete failure of imagination on the part of management, and complete inability to meet the problems of our time and our industry."

— JASPER E. RISON,
Retired Circulation Director,
Louisville, Ky.,
Courier-Journal and Times

CHAPTER 13

Circulation Policies

CIRCULATION POLICIES vary as publishers' ideas, community conditions, competitive situations and reader interests vary. No policy of circulation development has been devised that will exactly fit the situations of all newspapers. Even newspapers of approximately the same circulation in cities of the same population may be forced to pursue policies directly opposite. A newspaper of excellent content and typography and with no competition may develop a sustaining circulation with little effort, while another with competition and an indifferent public may find it advisable to increase its sales staff and offer premiums and discounts in order to increase circulation.

At one extreme is what may be termed a "tight operation," a policy in which operating profit is of first importance. The other extreme is a "loose operation," a circulation policy designed primarily to produce a large circulation volume, with operating profit or promotion expense of secondary consideration.¹ Somewhere between the two extremes, circulation policies are worked out, depending primarily upon conditions peculiar to the individual newspaper. Four factors influencing circulation policies are:

1. Economic conditions.
2. Need for added circulation to balance income with expenditures.
3. Ambition and aims of the publisher.
4. Attitude of the publisher and the public toward methods that may be used in building circulation.

¹ Texas Circulation Managers Association, *Newspaper Circulation*, The Steck Company, Austin, Tex., pp. 167-68.

BUSINESS CONDITIONS INFLUENCE EXPANSION

The extent to which a publisher will go in building circulation depends greatly upon the general business conditions of his community. Will the revenue to be derived from increased circulation warrant the cost required to obtain it? Will it make possible a higher advertising rate and increased revenue from that source? Business conditions within the community may be at such a stage that it would be difficult to persuade merchants to spend more for advertising. Under such circumstances, the publisher would weigh heavily any step that might be taken to increase circulation, if the profit from such increase would depend upon added advertising.

Some areas that a newspaper would like to reach cannot be profitably served owing to the expense involved in keeping residents sold on the newspaper and in getting the papers to them. Efforts put forth in building and maintaining circulation in such distant areas might yield better returns when invested in strengthening the circulation closer in. This is a point of circulation policy that must be considered.

The Cincinnati, Ohio, *Enquirer* (circulation 212,879, population 503,998) in a single year eliminated a total of 11,257 daily and 13,937 Sunday copies of "fringe" circulation, because of transportation, maintenance and promotion costs for certain distant communities. Records in the circulation department revealed that circulation trends over the years in these particular areas were more or less static despite consistent hard-hitting promotional efforts — mainly because those towns were in the orbit of another city.

But when the *Enquirer* eliminated that section of its circulation area, it instituted a campaign to intensify its circulation in nearby areas. The loss of "fringe" circulation was soon recovered by the gains within the close-in territory. In this more compact area it was easier to control delivery and promote circulation. A slight change in the newspaper's policy regarding circulation service to a limited area proved profitable.

Not often, however, do unfavorable business conditions or community indifference thwart a publisher in developing circulation if he produces a creditable newspaper. There are scores of ways to build circulation on a sound basis. All that is needed is a careful organization, a bit of courage and a building-up of enthusiasm for the task. Usually when publishers decide to reach a certain circulation goal, they attain it. And there always comes a time in the life of a newspaper when the publisher wants and needs to improve circulation.

WILL ADDED CIRCULATION PROVE PROFITABLE?

In formulating circulation policies the circulation manager must work closely with the publisher or the general manager. What

should be done circulation-wise depends upon what would be good for the newspaper from all standpoints. Byron Vedder, general manager of the Champaign-Urbana, Ill., *Courier* (circulation 28,610, population 62,397) told circulation managers at a convention in Daytona Beach, Fla., that the circulation department's effectiveness may not necessarily depend upon obtaining the most circulation, charging the best price, bringing in the greatest income or operating it at the lowest expense, but that the job of a department varies with situations and conditions. The publisher and the circulation manager must determine the policies, based on factors best known to them. The circulation manager must be sufficiently experienced, observant and talented to aid management in establishing goals for the general good of the newspaper and the community.

To illustrate, Vedder compares in a chart (Table 13.1) the income and expenses per subscriber of four typical newspapers.

TABLE 13.1
INCOME AND EXPENSE PER SUBSCRIBER

	Paper No. 1	Paper No. 2	Paper No. 3	Paper No. 4
Circulation	21,000	22,200	22,500	23,300
Circulation Revenue (Per Sub)	\$10.40	\$10.30	\$ 9.90	\$ 9.30
Circulation & Delivery Expense (Per Sub)	\$ 2.60	\$ 3.80	\$ 2.90	\$ 3.10
Net Circulation Revenue (Per Sub)	\$ 7.80	\$ 6.50	\$ 7.00	\$ 6.20
Newsprint Expense* (Per Sub)	\$ 6.20	\$ 6.10	\$ 7.20	\$ 5.70
Net Circ. Revenue Less Newsprint Expense (Per Sub)	\$ 1.60	.40	— .20	.50
Advertising Revenue (Per Sub)	\$35.30	\$27.40	\$35.10	\$25.00
Total Net Revenue (Per Sub)	\$36.90	\$27.80	\$34.90	\$25.50

* Includes newsprint, handling, and ink.

Vedder then explained that, because of different conditions, different policies should be applied by these newspapers, as follows:

Paper No. 1—Sell as much additional circulation as possible without increasing office and delivery expense per subscriber. Increased circulation will add to the net profits of the paper and high advertising revenue per subscriber suggests that probably the newspaper has not fully covered the market.

Paper No. 2—At current circulation department revenue and expense, not much would be gained by increasing circulation. On the other hand, the circulation department revenue is fairly good.

Probably the chief emphasis should be placed on the possibility of reducing circulation and delivery expense.

Paper No. 3 — Under conditions revealed, this paper most certainly should not undertake to increase circulation. However, the high advertising revenue per subscriber suggests the possibility that the market has not been saturated. Therefore, it is possible that circulation rates could be increased without affecting the total circulation.

Paper No. 4 — It is very possible that this newspaper has too much circulation. Either that or the advertising department needs some new blood. Assuming that the advertising department is reasonably efficient, then this newspaper should concentrate on a material increase in circulation revenue, even at the risk of some loss in circulation.

AMBITIOUS PUBLISHER FINDS WAYS TO SELL

A newspaper always wants to maintain a circulation volume that will reflect public good will and appeal to advertisers. It is generally recognized that it is easier to obtain national advertising when circulation is above 10,000. An increase of a few hundred subscribers may bring a newspaper to a circulation bracket that will greatly increase its revenue potential. When that is true, any newspaper will put forth every effort to build circulation.

Publishers generally agree that a newspaper with a circulation of 5,100 has a much greater pull for advertising than one with a circulation of 4,900, although they are only 200 readers apart. When a circulation is beyond 5,000, the publisher feels more like striving for increased advertising volume.

When a publisher sees the circulation of his newspaper drop even fewer than a hundred below 5,000, he will concentrate every effort to bring it back to its previous standard and far enough beyond to prevent it from ever again falling below the 5,000 mark. Such was the case with Robert K. Beck and his daily newspaper, the Centerville, Iowa, *Daily Iowegian* (circulation 5,255, population 7,625).

When Beck saw that the ABC audit average for July, 1955, had dropped to 4,990, he wondered what was the matter. The typography of his paper conformed to specifications set up by the Department of Journalism at the University of Iowa, the paper contained much local news and feature material, and had won several prizes. It was a good paper in every way but needed some special selling. So Beck and C. B. DePuy, his managing editor, began mapping a campaign to hold the present circulation, and to add new subscribers in Centerville and small towns nearby. They planned to contact every resident in the area served by the *Daily Iowegian*. The following steps taken in the campaign brought quick results:

1. Each carrier in Centerville was asked to turn in the names of

ten prospective customers on his route. These names were listed, and on each list of ten, one was marked with a red X. Each carrier was told to sample his ten prospects for one week and then solicit each one for a subscription. He did not know which name was marked, but if he sold that customer he received a new wrist watch. Center-

SAMPLING LIST

Please list 10 addresses of homes on your route that DO NOT take the Daily Iowegian.

After we receive the 10 addresses we will pick one of them as a JACKPOT house. After you turn in this list we will give you FREE OF CHARGE EACH DAY FOR 10 DAYS ten samples to deliver to these ten homes; at the end of the tenth day you can try to sign up as many of these homes as you can. If you sign up the JACKPOT house you will win a beautiful prize.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

One of the above addresses will be picked as the JACKPOT house; you don't know which one is the JACKPOT so try to give very good service to all of the above prospects when you are sampling them. Don't call on any of the above until after the tenth day of sampling. No one will be allowed to solicit any of these homes while you are sampling them. If any of the above call the office and start the paper before you see them, you will be given credit for the start...even if it is the JACKPOT HOUSE. The JACKPOT is worth a beautiful wrist watch or Eastman Kodak with all of the flash attachments.

Make a copy of the 10 above addresses to keep with you on your route.

FIG. 13.1 — This plan was used by Centerville, Iowa, **Daily Iowegian** to induce carriers to solicit for subscriptions in an intensive circulation campaign.

ville was close to the saturation point in circulation but this sales feature added 63 new subscribers (see Fig. 13.1).

2. Four solicitors were employed to obtain subscriptions on a straight 50 per cent commission basis. One was a school teacher, two were farm housewives, and one had been an oil station attendant. Each was assigned a definite territory.

3. The newspaper gave one \$25 prize and three \$10 prizes to its readers for the best letters, beginning, "We save money by subscribing to the Centerville *Daily Iowegian*." Result: over 70 persons wrote in to say how much they liked the home paper and how in dozens of ways it had saved more than its subscription cost (see Fig. 13.2).



A HAPPY YOUNG LADY, Carolyn Johnson, of Centerville High School, looks over a copy of the *Daily Iowegian* as she holds in her hand a check for \$10 which she won by writing a letter to the *Iowegian*, beginning with this sentence: "We save money at our house by subscribing to the Centerville *Daily Iowegian*." (Courtesy of Centerville, Iowa, *Daily Iowegian*.)

FIG. 13.2—One of the promotion features used by the Centerville, Iowa, *Daily Iowegian* to bring the newspaper's circulation above 5,000.

4. A large chart was hung in the carriers' room, showing the production record and progress made by each boy. This helped to keep the carriers busy.

5. The publishers appealed to parents to send the papers to their children away at college (see Fig. 13.3).

6. A sizeable promotion campaign was carried on in the paper,

The Iowegian Printing Company

PUBLISHERS OF
THE DAILY IOWEGIAN AND CITIZEN
CENTERVILLE, IOWA

OFFICE OF

C. B. DEPUY, MANAGING EDITOR

Dear Parents:

Our boy, who started to college this fall, tells us that he really enjoys getting the home paper. We're glad that it's a comfort to him. We'd like to write him a letter every day because for all his grownup-ness, we know there's a touch of homesickness. In every letter he says: "Tell me about the things that are going on at home."

We don't get a letter to him every day, but the paper does go every day, and it tells more than we can write.

You send him the letters with money in them, you send him, probably, some things that come out of the family kitchen. They are the most important. But, can't we help by giving him that news about things back home every day?

We've got a special arrangement for boys and girls away at college. If you subscribe right away, your college student will receive the Daily Iowegian every day for the rest of the college year for \$4.00. If you would like to cut that in four equal payments, send \$1.00 and we'll start the paper right away. That's cutting the out-of-town subscription price sharply, but just call it our gift, too, to that boy or girl at school. Drop us a line and we'll start it today.

Sincerely yours,

CBD

Iowegian Circulation Department

FIG. 13.3 — Letter used by Centerville, Iowa, *Daily Iowegian* to promote sending papers to college students.

pointing out the advantages of being a regular reader of the *Daily Iowegian* (see Fig. 13.4).

7. A special incentive of two extra months with a year's subscription and one extra month with a six months' order was given to mail subscribers (see Fig. 13.5).

A Load of Wood Still Buys The *Iowegian* for 1 Year

**A Greater Bargain Than Ever—
A Load of Wood Now Buys A Daily
Paper, 307 Issues a Year, Instead
of a Weekly (52 Issues a Year)**

Sixty-seven years ago E. E. Withrow, of Exline, then 11 years old, came to Centerville with a load of wood. He talked with Editor J. C. Barrows of the *Iowegian* and made a deal — the load of wood for a one year's subscription to the Weekly *Iowegian*. He received 52 copies for the wood. Today a load of wood is a greater bargain than ever. A load of wood will still pay for a year's subscription, but there's a difference — you get 312 issues instead of 52.

Incidentally Mr. Withrow may be the longest time subscriber to the *Iowegian*. He's been a steady subscriber for 67 years.

Here's The Approximate Annual Cost Of The *Iowegian* In Grain and Produce As Of Now!

WHEAT — $4\frac{1}{3}$ Bushels
CORN — Nearly 7 Bushels
CHICKENS — 12 Chickens

OATS — 14 Bushels
SOYBEANS — $4\frac{1}{4}$ Bushels
EGGS — 18 Dozen Eggs

Your *Iowegian* Is A Comparatively Greater Bargain Than It Was 20 Years Ago

Right now the *Daily Iowegian* is seeking to widen its family of subscribers. If you are not now taking the *Iowegian* or have never subscribed, please mail the coupon below and we have a special plan for you that we are sure will be of interest and value.

Clip This Coupon

Circulation Department,
Daily *Iowegian*,
Centerville, Iowa

I am interested in subscribing to the *Iowegian* and want a representative to call and explain your *special thrift offer* — offered as a special for a limited time only.

Name _____

Address _____

Clip and mail to "Circulation," care of the *Daily Iowegian*, Centerville, Iowa. It will be worth many times the cost of a postage stamp to you.

FIG. 13.4 — Unique promotion used by the Centerville, Iowa, **Daily *Iowegian*** in circulation campaign.

With appeals going out at so many angles, the campaign took hold and grew. Five hundred and sixteen new subscribers were added to the *Daily Iowegian's* list and the total circulation jumped to more than 500 above the 5,000 mark. On the basis of the circulation increase, the rate for local advertising was increased by 3 cents a column inch, and total advertising revenue increased along with circulation income.

Newspaper Must Be Good To Hold Subscribers

Every publisher would prefer to have his subscription list composed of persons who voluntarily subscribe, but no paper can expect to have such an ideal situation. The results obtained by the *Daily Iowegian* refute the argument advanced by some publishers that a newspaper should be sold on its merits alone. This was an unusually good paper, but it was losing subscribers until an alert campaign was launched. The fact that it still holds a circulation well above the 5,000 mark signifies the subscribers are satisfied with the product. While merits alone may not sell a newspaper, they are essential in holding subscribers and getting them to renew voluntarily. The best selling methods will bring only negligible results if the quality of the newspaper is poor.

Some papers will not offer prizes or premiums of any kind and will not conduct contests to obtain subscribers. Usually these are newspapers that have no local competition. They are satisfied with a creditable circulation, obtained simply by calling attention to the newspaper's features and services.

"We don't use premiums or conduct popularity and puzzle contests because we've never felt they could be made effective in a weekly operation," says Francis Schweinler, editor and publisher of the Mosinee, Wis., *Times* (circulation 1,678, population 1,453). "Our best means of building circulation is by putting out a good newspaper, using pictures of local people and events as generously as possible. Furthermore, we have learned that a good editorial policy, whereby the editor is willing to take a stand, is respected. It causes people to want to know what the 'Old Man' is saying this week."

SELECTING THE BEST SELLING METHOD

Robert A. Macklin, an experienced circulation man, says that in order to meet competition and grow with its community a newspaper, large or small, needs just three factors: (1) a good product that meets the needs of its community; (2) a good distribution system with excellent service and well trained district managers, and (3) a good, energetic sales force.

"If a newspaper has these important assets," Macklin says, "and can afford to spend money to get the newspaper into the homes, the

FIRST NATIONAL BANK
of GOOD WILL

Pay to the order of _____

Two and 50/100 Dollars

Circulation
Centerville Daily Iowegian

This check will be redeemed at face value when accompanied by a new one year's subscription to the Iowegian at the regular price of nine dollars. In other words you will receive with a one year's subscription our check to pay for an addition of approximately one quarter year of Daily Iowegians free of charge to you. This offer will end December 1.

FIG. 13.5 — In this way the Centerville, Iowa, **Daily Iowegian** featured a discount price during intensive circulation campaign.

newspaper most likely will stay in the homes. The best selling point for a circulation department is to have a good product that can be sold on its merits. Then its merits will keep the newspaper sold.”

Should Premiums Be Given?

The extent to which premiums, bonuses, contests, and discounts should be used has been the basis for many arguments among publishers and circulation managers. Some newspapers are willing to throw in a handy gadget for the housewife, an insurance policy or club rate with a magazine or another newspaper in order to bring in new subscriptions quickly. Then there is always the question of whether the subscriber is buying the newspaper or something else.

Prior to the purchase of a second Racine newspaper, by which competition was eliminated, the Racine, Wis., *Journal-Times* (circulation 30,694, population 71,193) used insurance policies in promoting circulation in both city and county, and magazines for promoting mail subscriptions in the county, only. At one time it had over 2,000 policy holders and between 750 and 1,000 mail subscribers renewing magazines.

But when the *Journal-Times* instituted a new seven-day package

— six evening issues and a full-fledged Sunday issue — at an increase in the weekly delivered price, it discontinued offering insurance, club rates, and premiums to subscribers, and instead offered attractive incentives to carriers. It sent to the parents of all newspaper boys a personal letter containing information on valuable prizes to be offered during November and December. The first prize in each district was a set of Universal Reference Encyclopedia, consisting of fifteen volumes. To the next sixteen carriers in each district it offered a consolidated Webster Encyclopedia Dictionary containing 1,429 pages. To the following sixteen carriers with passing marks in each district it gave theater tickets. The district managers were given a 25-cent bonus each month for each net increase order. The results of this switch of incentive from subscriber to carrier were quite satisfactory. The office was relieved of some collection details, carriers became more active and efficient, and circulation was maintained at a satisfactory level.

Charles W. Staab, circulation manager of the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, justifies the use of incentives under certain circumstances. "Some newspapers," he says, "use inducements because the habit pattern of the newspaper is up against rough competition. In competitive situations most editorial products don't sell automatically. They have to be sold over and over again, aggressively and continuously by combined efforts of the circulation, promotion and advertising people using many emotional and factual inducements until permanent acceptance becomes a reality. And strange as it may seem, so-called permanent acceptance has no permanent home in many a competitive situation."

That there is a wide difference of opinion regarding the use of premiums and prizes is revealed whenever the subject is brought up at a meeting of publishers. Those opposed to special outside inducements in selling are as valiant in defending their stand as those who favor them. All agree, however, that for the building of permanent circulation, more depends upon the merits of the newspaper than upon the gadget that is offered as an extra inducement.

"All the pots and pans given for subscriptions in the late 20's and early 30's, I fear, had little permanent effect on the circulation of newspapers," Theodore A. Serrill, executive director of the Washington, D. C., Publishers Association, says. "There are good gadgets and gimmicks, but there are those that lend little permanent growth to your publication."²

And Robert A. Macklin chimes in on the same note: "I don't recommend giving away merchandise or begging for charity in order to get your newspaper in the homes of new subscribers, because no

² Editor & Publisher, April 17, 1954.

one benefits from premium offers except the merchandising houses. I have had to set aside my personal feelings regarding honest promotion the past few years but I hope the day is not far hence when we can return to selling our newspapers on merit alone.”³

Some newspapers bar premiums and prizes to subscribers but offer prizes or bonuses to carriers, solicitors or to boys and girls of the community who will sell subscriptions. In such cases, they contend, the subscriber pays the full price for the paper; he buys it on its merit.

Should Prices Be Cut?

Reduced prices sometimes are used by newspapers to force sales and boost the circulation total, but with many newspapers, as with manufacturers of reliable products that serve the public, “price cutting” is not considered good practice. It is likely to provide for the circulation department more trouble than help. When subscriptions are sold to a few on a time-limit basis, those who have subscribed at the regular price are inclined to think that they have paid too much. They, too, will begin looking for announcements of special offers when their subscriptions expire. Hence, a newspaper might easily become a “cut-rate institution.”

This analysis of results from price reductions will not be accepted by all newspapers because some, mostly weeklies, have used sparingly special reduction offers to bring in new subscribers quickly. The Mount Holly, N. J., *Herald* (circulation 9,190, population 8,206) occasionally announces reductions in the price of 3-year, 2-year and 1-year subscriptions (see Fig. 13.6). The saving on the 3-year and 2-year subscriptions is greater than on the 1-year subscription, and consequently more long-term orders are received. That, of course, is the result desired.

The Lapeer, Mich., *Lapeer County Press* (circulation 8,886, population 6,143) uses a “special offer” to induce persons who previously were subscribers to return to the newspaper’s family of readers. “Our records show that some time ago you were taking the Press, but did not renew your subscription,” the notice reads. “We miss you in the family of *County Press* subscribers and invite you to once again be among those who get the paper every week by mail. As a special ‘welcome home’ present, we are offering a five months’ subscription for \$1. Send no money now. We’ll send you the next issue and you can pay later.”

The Charlotte, N. C., *Meklenburg Times* (circulation 1,982, population 130,042) allowed readers who renewed their subscriptions in December the privilege of sending a gift subscription to a friend or relative at small additional cost.

An offer of 16 weeks for \$1.00 by the Rock Rapids, Iowa, *Lyon*

³ Official Bulletin of the International Circulation Managers Assoc., May, 1955.

County Reporter (circulation 2,036, population 2,640) produced a 10 per cent mail response.

Reduced prices generally are discouraged. It is considered better to lengthen the term of the subscription than to lower the price. A bonus of a month or two is a better offer than the saving of a dollar.

How About Popularity Contest?

Popularity contests based on votes allowed with subscriptions were quite common among newspapers at one time, but in recent years have been little used. The winner in the contest usually received a prize such as a large cash purse, a trip to Europe, a week in New York City, an automobile or a television set. Some were conducted satisfactorily but more often the results have been disappointing.

Should Professional Circulation Builders Be Hired?

In 1956, the Centralia, Mo., *Fireside Guard* (circulation 2,258, population 2,460) decided that it should (1) increase the size of the

Special Subscription Offer!

MOUNT HOLLY HERALD

John Doe

1117 North Blank Ave.

Enjoy Reading
Burlington County's
Leading Newspaper
Every Week!

MORE NEWS . . . MORE PICTURES . . . MORE FEATURES . . . MORE ADVERTISING!

Greatest Saving
Ever Offered
ACT NOW!

Fill in Enclosed
Card and Mail
in Postage-Free
Envelope with
Your Check or
Money Order

THREE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION

YOU SAVE \$5.60 OVER
SINGLE COPY COST

TWO-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION

YOU SAVE \$2.90 OVER
SINGLE COPY COST

ONE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION

YOU SAVE \$1.20 OVER
SINGLE COPY COST

\$10 00

\$7 50

\$4 00

FIG. 13.6 — Many publishers would frown on an offer like this but it brought results for the Mount Holly, N. J., *Herald*.

paper, run more pictures and give wider news coverage, (2) build up its circulation quickly, and (3) increase its advertising rate. The chief problem in this was to increase the circulation substantially within a few months. If it could add a few hundred subscribers, it felt sure it could hold them with the improvements to be made in the newspaper; and with the increased circulation, the merchants would not object to an increase in advertising rates.

To accomplish this, the *Fireside Guard* accepted a proposition from a professional circulation-building organization to put on a subscription-selling contest. Prizes of \$800, \$400, \$200, \$100, and \$50 were offered to the five entrants turning in the most subscription money and thereby receiving the greatest number of votes in the contest. By means of this contest, the newspaper added 544 names to its subscription list—a 25 per cent increase—and felt justified in raising its advertising rates 25 per cent. Immediately the paper increased page width from 7 to 8 columns, and number of pages from 8 to 10 and sometimes as many as 14 pages.

"We accomplished all we set out to do," G. H. Miller, publisher, said at the close of the contest. "With the extensive improvements in our paper, I am confident we will be able to hold practically all of the new subscribers obtained in this contest, and our advertisers will be happier with the results from their advertising, although they will pay a higher rate for it."

Carl Hamilton, editor of the Iowa Falls, Iowa, *Citizen* (circulation 3,610, population 4,900) says, "There must be a better way to build circulation than through the use of current circulation-building companies. For my money, there are only a few such companies that are good."

Hamilton points out that the dangers from this method are those of paying out virtually all of the gross income for commissions and prizes and the possibility of some bad public relations. A contest, he believes, has to be well and skillfully run if all the contestants are to finish in a pleasant frame of mind.

When he began putting out a paper twice a week instead of once a week, he used a circulation campaign company to help in establishing the Tuesday newspaper. It put the Tuesday issue on a circulation par with the Thursday paper, and since then the circulation has grown steadily, but Hamilton has not seriously considered another campaign. He thinks that another campaign might add an additional 200 or 300 and possibly 400 to his list of subscribers, but to accomplish that it would be necessary to give up half of the revenue from all renewals for a two- or three-year period as well as from a few hundred newly obtained subscribers—a high price to pay for additional subscribers, whose allegiance he could not be sure of holding for any length of time.

"Weekly newspapers should spend some money all the time in building circulation," Hamilton adds. "Very few of them do, however, and spending a lot of money on a super-duper circulation campaign doesn't seem to be the answer. Nevertheless, it is a practice followed by a good many publishers. Campaigns are almost a must, I believe, in establishing a second paper, in doctoring a sick enterprise, or in establishing a field that has been neglected."

Other publishers who have employed professional circulation campaign companies have had disappointing results. They don't care to talk about their experiences because as one said, "In doing so I would expose myself as a publisher with poor judgment and little understanding of what is good for my paper."

"I am unalterably opposed to circulation contests," says another. "Under certain rare circumstances, it is barely possible that a few benefits can accrue. However, I would not personally publish even such a delimited statement for fear some publisher would take this half-hearted endorsement seriously and enter into a contest contract."

Summarized here are the principal objections offered by publishers to such contests:

1. The paper is not bought on its merits but simply to help somebody win a prize.
2. It is a costly way of building circulation. Prizes are expensive and commissions are high.
3. Commissions are paid on many renewal subscriptions that would come in without the contest effort.
4. The temptation is strong to misrepresent the paper under the stress of a contest.
5. It is difficult to reconcile contest-obtained subscriptions with ABC standards.
6. Many subscriptions obtained in such contests are delivered outside the newspaper's territory and form a section of circulation of no value to home-town advertisers.
7. Identity of the newspaper is almost completely lost in a contest; public interest is in the major prizes and the prospective prize winners.
8. Always there are plenty of opportunities for dissatisfaction among contestants in the final results.
9. Unless carefully conducted, much ill will against the newspaper may be stirred up.
10. The results are not permanent. A large percentage of those obtained during a contest will not renew when subscriptions expire.

A contest staged by the publisher himself has been found to be better than one put on by a professional organization of outsiders. If a publisher wants to put on a circulation campaign, why pay some

promoter wages to do something the publisher can do himself? For years Harry C. Purcell, publisher of the Broken Bow, Nebr., *Custer County Chief* (circulation 6,016, population 3,396) has been conducting an annual contest with all the attractive features that may be offered by a professional organization and devoid of the mistakes that can occur when the contest is conducted by someone not personally known to local people and unfamiliar with local conditions.

Purcell puts on his contest during the three or four months preceding Christmas. It is the better time of the year. Crops are well on the way to be harvested or are already gathered in. Persons are thinking about Christmas and are easily induced to become contestants so as to earn money for Christmas spending. Selling subscriptions as Christmas gifts is easy at this season.

Purcell has found cash prizes to be better than merchandise. Ponies, pianos, cars, motorcycles, horses and buggies and the like have been given but they do not have the pull that money provides. The inducements offered in recent years have been: First, Second and Third Prizes, \$500; Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Prizes, \$250; and Seventh Prize, \$100. The *Custer County Chief* is sold at \$4.00 a year delivered in the state and at \$4.50 out of state. A contestant is given a 2,000-vote card for each subscription he turns in, and also a 10,000-vote card for every \$10 payment turned in. Contestants are allowed to hold their votes and cast them as they choose, and at the end of the contest the votes are counted publicly by three judges chosen from outside the community. The expenses of the contest have varied from 10 to 30 per cent of the gross receipts.

This type of self-conducted campaign has been put on by a number of weekly publishers to whom Purcell has outlined the plan.

The Fair Oaks, Calif., *San Juan Record* (circulation 1,821, population 3,500) conducts an annual contest, in which commissions are paid on every order or renewal turned in, but only at half the normal rate. The other half of the commission is counted as a certain number of votes toward one of several major prizes, including a bicycle, a table-model radio, a nylon lariat rope and fishing tackle.

Do Word Games Pay Dividends?

The modern counterpart of the popularity contest is the puzzle contest or "word game," in which prizes of \$20, \$25, \$50 or perhaps \$100 a week are offered on a cumulative basis. This feature creates a great demand among regular readers for extra copies from which to clip the puzzle coupon and enhance their chances for winning. It definitely boosts street and newsstand sales so long as the puzzle is carried. Here the question is whether or not the extra papers bought are ever read and whether they should be counted as bona fide circulation.

The Des Moines, Iowa, Sunday *Register* (circulation 509,320, population 177,965) uses a "Cashword" puzzle with satisfactory results, according to Ernie Schwartz, recently retired circulation manager. It provides space on the puzzle entry blank for readers who are not regular readers to order the papers delivered to their homes. Between 200 and 300 such orders are received each week.

"The only danger we can see in the contest," says Schwartz, "is temptation for some people to buy extra copies of the paper just to enter the contest. However, at the rate of 20 cents per copy, for which our paper sells at newsstands and on the street, I doubt if very many people would spend many extra double dimes for the purpose of making duplicate entries when we permit them to enter on graph paper or make reasonable facsimiles. Very few extra clippings are used for multiple entries. Most of them are facsimiles."

The Minneapolis, Minn., *Star* and *Tribune* (combined circulation 497,784, population 521,718) have had similar success with a prize-word puzzle. "We received tremendous response," says M. E. Fisher, circulation manager. "It helped our newsstand sales."

The Atlanta, Ga., *Journal* and *Constitution* (combined circulation 452,667, population 331,314) look upon the prize-word puzzle as a great advertising stunt for a newspaper but as not very effective in obtaining full-week subscriptions. "We cannot cite solid circulation gains of any consequence as a result of the contest," Arthur Daniel, circulation manager, reports. "Sure, we sell newspapers by the bushel on the day this puzzle appears, but we realize full well that as soon as the contest is over all of that circulation is gone."

The puzzle contest has helped newspapers which have competition in the same town to pull up with, or ahead of, their competitors, but it is not much help in building permanent circulation. It stimulates sales at newsstands and on the streets while the contest is appearing in the newspaper.

Worthy Causes and Charity Tie-ins?

Some newspapers use school classes to solicit new subscribers, allowing a commission in support of some class project. Boy Scouts sold subscriptions to the Sand Springs, Okla., *Leader* (circulation 1,800, population 6,994) and received \$1.00 for each subscription obtained. The money was used by them to buy new uniforms and help pay expenses for summer camp.

A telephone selling campaign in which the newspaper solicits subscriptions on the basis of giving a certain percentage of the subscription money to some popular charity is another means of building circulation rapidly. The orders usually are for three months, six months or a year and the newspaper pays from 25 cents to a dollar

per order to charity. This is good while the subscriptions are in force, but the percentage of renewals to be obtained is never very gratifying.

"Charity tie-in circulation campaigns are like going to some church affairs," says one circulation manager, "10 cents to get in, and \$10 to get out." Another says: "It builds good circulation. If we hadn't gone into it as thoroughly as we did, we would have lost city leadership." Another, taking a rather middle ground, puts it this way: "It is another variation of circulation promotion with a new dress. In circulation you must vary your appeal; otherwise you soon deplete the potential in a given classification while the others remain virgin territory. Results on this form of promotion depend on the organization and the persistent effort employed."

These and other plans are favored by some newspapers and are wholly rejected by others. Some sort of a policy must be established, and just what it will be depends to a great extent upon how badly additional circulation is needed and how the community responds to certain kinds of promotion. In a highly competitive field, the publisher is not likely to be very restrictive in the use of promotions. On the other hand, in order to hold the new subscribers obtained by such means, he must give attention to the quality of contents and the efficiency of service to subscribers.

Jasper E. Rison, then circulation director of the Louisville, Ky., *Courier-Journal* and *Times* (combined circulation 392,063, population 369,129) described the situation well when he told the National Newspaper Promotion Association: "The circulation manager must bring the reader to the show, the promotion manager must get him inside the tent, and the managing editor must see that he is entertained."