

**"Meetings of minds  
naturally result in solving  
any problem, and ideas  
often blossom. It never  
hurts to pause and take  
stock of ourselves and  
our product."**

**— BEN REESE,**  
Former Managing-Editor,  
St. Louis  
*Post-Dispatch*

## **CHAPTER 21**

# *Keeping Alert to Progress*

**A** CIRCULATION MANAGER must look constantly for improvements, never being satisfied with conditions as they are. For him to fall into a rut of complacency would be a calamity, for when circulation stagnates the newspaper's financial stability is threatened.

Fortunately, circulation direction is fascinating work, continually presenting new and interesting situations that test ingenuity, versatility and integrity. For the man who wishes to grow in knowledge of good public relations, to experience the joys of mutual helpfulness and the thrills of worthwhile achievement, it offers much. It provides a position with satisfactory returns of money and personal accomplishment. If the circulation manager may ever be inclined to step out of the entrancing field he occupies, this training is excellent preparation for higher positions with greater responsibilities.

An ambitious and aggressive circulation manager can easily keep himself alert to progress. He is made conscious continually of the fact that his success in the position he holds depends on constant awareness of all that takes place within the newspaper organization, in the minds of his executive associates, in the planning within his own department, in the community which his newspaper serves, and in the wide field of circulation management and direction. He must know:

1. The product he sells.
2. The community he serves.
3. His associates, administrative and departmental.
4. How to make use of available help.

## **MUST KNOW HIS PRODUCT**

Success in circulation development depends first upon an ever widening knowledge of the product to be sold. Every single issue of

the paper must have the closest scrutiny of the circulation manager in order that he may pass on to his salesmen the merits of the features within it. Does it contain startling news that will be specially helpful to street salesmen? Are any new features being introduced in the issue? Are there pictures of outstanding interest? He should know in advance of press time what the issue of the day will contain. Getting the eyes of the public promptly is important.

## MUST KNOW HIS COMMUNITY

Keeping up to date on the wants and needs of the community is another matter demanding constant attention. This is accomplished largely through contacts with community leaders—those who plan progress for the community and who must depend upon newspaper support to accomplish their aims. The circulation manager himself should become a leader, or at least hold membership in the Chamber of Commerce or some other leading community organization.

"Our circulation service is predicated upon the belief that our personnel must be community leaders and their contacts must reflect the finest traditions of the newspaper," says Arthur Diaz of the Easton, Pa., *Express* (circulation 47,940, population 35,632). Keeping in step with the community is a prime essential of newspaper success.

The circulation manager must realize also that as the community develops and as general conditions change the interests of readers change. Features that were of great interest last year may have little pulling power today. Improvements in newspaper making and the coming in of other communication media cause readers to expect better typography, better handling of news and better delivery of the paper. Some of these points of betterment are not direct responsibilities of the circulation manager but he understands and should make known their effects to persons in the newspaper organization who are responsible. Most of the readership surveys that have been made were inspired by circulation managers because of their concern for newspaper readers.

The coming of television caused considerable self-analysis in the ranks of newspapers. The Minneapolis *Star* and *Tribune* (combined circulation 497,784, population 521,718) and the Des Moines *Register* and *Tribune* (combined circulation 355,089, population 177,915) sent representatives out to ask their readers whether, in their opinion, television would ever take the place of newspapers. Nine out of ten replied "No." Readers were asked next what they got out of newspapers that they didn't receive from television. An average of 60.7 per cent said "More news and more detailed coverage" or "More local and regional news"; 18.5 per cent named "advertising" and 4.8 per cent "editorials," but only 2.3 per cent made any reference to "comics."

A study of Sunday papers in the nation's five largest cities in 1954

revealed that papers which suffered most from television were those that featured entertainment—a field in which television has an obvious advantage. This and additional surveys have revealed that newspapers which regard full and fair presentation of the news as their primary function have not been losers, but have forged ahead despite competition. Here is a signal call for dependable newspaper service.

### **Surveys Are Revealing**

Much of the research that is taking place and most of the surveys that have been conducted on newspaper problems relate either directly or indirectly to circulation. Improvement in any department of newspaper production or newspaper content helps circulation. Much has been done to develop greater efficiency in all phases of circulation work, much still needs doing.

A group of more than 175 United States dailies launched the Institute of Newspaper Operations, which later was integrated with the A.N.P.A. Research Institute, to support on a large scale research in newspaper production and business methods. Organizations of circulation managers and press associations, too, have committees working to ascertain facts concerning conditions in newspaper circulation areas. They have assembled basic information and have formulated programs to correct false conceptions and reinforce confidence in the press.

A survey conducted by Michael Tynan of the Omaha, Nebr., *World-Herald* (circulation 250,359, population 251,117) for the Midwest Circulation Managers Association revealed methods used with greatest success in building circulation. It tabulated the efforts of 115 newspapers—51 with local competition, 24 alone in their metropolitan fields and 40 medium-sized papers in noncompetitive local markets. Midwest members learned from this survey that:

1. All papers were maintaining continuous sales promotion programs.
2. All were offering carrier awards for new orders.
3. Few used boys outside their organization to sell subscriptions.
4. Metropolitan papers without local competition looked to their salaried men for new order production. However, this was not the case with those having local competition or with medium-sized papers anxious to build up their circulations.
5. The percentage of papers offering incentives to distributors was increasing.
6. In most instances the cost line for producing new orders was being held.
7. Metropolitan papers with local competition, in the main, were not making an effort to build mail circulation. This was due

to many factors, such as current costs, territory not suited for mail use, and lateness of mail delivery as opposed to an early press time.

8. All papers, except metropolitan, were making a determined effort to increase mail circulation.

### Learn Reader Reactions

Many newspapers have conducted surveys in their own communities to determine reader reactions to features and services.

The Little Rock, Ark., *Arkansas Gazette* (circulation 93,274, population 102,213) threw sample copies for a week to 2,421 non-readers in its city delivery area and afterward had district managers and carriers call at the homes to solicit subscriptions or learn reasons why they did not wish to subscribe. The district men and carriers were able to talk to 1,860 of the nonreaders. They immediately obtained subscriptions from 238 and from the others a great variety of reasons why they did not wish to subscribe. The answers were so frank and pertinent that Leon S. Reed, circulation manager, and members of his department felt that four definite recommendations should be made to the management for improvements or changes in the newspaper's services:

1. That the *Gazette*, which is a morning newspaper, be delivered by 5:30 A.M. instead of 6 A.M. as previously. This change was advised because 17.7 per cent of those surveyed said they did not have time to read the paper in the morning before going to work.

2. That some additions and changes in the editorial makeup of the paper might help to put on the *Gazette's* list some of those who seemed to favor an afternoon paper.

3. That a continued story be used because many of those interviewed said they liked the continued story appearing in another paper and wished one could be had in the *Gazette*.

4. That something should be done to make the paper more readable and more desirable to the average housewife because an amazing number of women said their husbands were the only ones in their households who read the papers.

In a unique full-page questionnaire, the Washington, Iowa, *Journal* (circulation 4,185, population 5,902) asked its readers: "If you were the *Journal* editor, how would you change the paper?" Questions on the page touched every department, feature, advertising idea, comic, panel, occasional column, regular column, editorial, and other features that appeared in the *Journal*. The reverse side of the page had space for additional comments and the name and address of the newspaper, with a postage prepaid label so that the form could be folded and mailed. By this means Ralph E. Shannon, editor and publisher, assessed reader reaction to the newspaper's features and

services, and his circulation department received some facts to strengthen sales talks.<sup>1</sup>

At a time when circulation seemed to be at a standstill, when all the efforts put forth in selling by the circulation department did not seem to bring results, the Columbia, Mo., *Missourian* (circulation 3,415, population 31,974) decided that a survey should be made to learn what features were "never read," "read once in a while," "usually read" or "always read" and to receive suggestions for improvement of the newspaper. The information obtained indicated readers' likes and dislikes and enabled the *Missourian* to judiciously eliminate some features and add others. It also pointed out some weaknesses in the newspaper's services, which were corrected.

### COOPERATION OF ASSOCIATES ESSENTIAL

The extent to which the circulation manager depends upon the managing editor, advertising manager and the mechanical department for cooperation in keeping subscribers satisfied already has been emphasized. Not to be overlooked is the close relationship that must exist between the circulation manager and those in his own department.

All — from the assistant circulation manager down to the man who sells papers on the street — can assist in developing the general program of the department. Practical suggestions may be obtained from employees and the morale of the department may be lifted by a suggestion box placed at a convenient and conspicuous place with a cordial invitation to all members to participate.

A high degree of enthusiasm and cooperation may be developed through regular staff meetings. Plans and problems then are discussed, members become better acquainted with each other and the department's program, and a united front is established. The department's goals must be kept constantly before them.

The ABC report gives a clear picture of what the department is accomplishing. A comparison of their paper's report with reports of other newspapers of similar size helps staff members see how well they are steering ahead to meet local circulation needs or how far they are falling behind.

"No other department has so many and so varied tasks and responsibilities," George M. Cowden, manager of the Jackson, Mich., *Citizen-Patriot* (circulation 36,230, population 51,088), told members of the Central States Circulation Managers' Association. "You have your sales programs, service division, office accounting, promotion, purchasing, labor negotiation, cost-finding, contracts with haulers, hiring of personnel for circulation and many other responsibilities. The chance to work with, direct and plan together with so wide a

<sup>1</sup>Frank W. Rucker and Herbert Lee Williams, *Newspaper Organization and Management*, Iowa State College Press, Ames, Iowa, 1955, p. 136.

personnel is a tremendous opportunity to do great things for the newspaper and the community. Management should appreciate this."

### HELP AVAILABLE FROM MANY SOURCES

The circulation manager must be alert to all the best methods for developing circulation. With a substantial background of knowledge and experience, he can induce others to expend their efforts toward immediate and abundant results. Never can he let his interest lag nor his source of practical suggestions run dry. He finds remarkable help in maintaining a high morale for himself and his force from five sources.

1. *Belonging to circulation managers' associations.* The largest organization of circulation men is the International Circulation Managers' Association, which is open to all daily newspaper circulation men in the United States and Canada. Linked with it are area organizations, including Canadian Circulation Managers' Association, Central States Circulation Managers' Association, Mid-Atlantic Circulation Managers' Association, Midwest Circulation Managers' Association, New England Circulation Managers' Association, Northern States Circulation Managers' Association, Pacific Northwest International Circulation Managers' Association, and Southern Circulation Managers' Association. In addition to these are circulation managers' associations in various states, all of which provide an exchange of ideas and a united front in solving important circulation problems. Membership in such an organization puts the circulation manager in constant touch with fresh ideas that he may put to use in his own field.

2. *Attending circulation managers' conventions and conferences.* Rubbing shoulders with other circulation men and learning from them how they solve problems helps a circulation manager to solve his own problems. Taking part in question and answer periods causes a manager to think constructively concerning situations in his own area and equips him for explaining to his own staff what needs to be done. Listening to addresses by circulation experts and panel discussions whets his appetite for more knowledge. The wide-awake circulation manager is always able to gain from a convention sufficient practical information to more than pay his expenses while there.

3. *Keeping in touch with journalism schools.* Many schools now offer courses in newspaper organization and management, where circulation and other departmental work is studied thoroughly. Circulation managers can contribute to the success of such courses by appearing before classes to relate their own experiences. Journalism schools often hold circulation clinics and conferences and invite circulation managers to attend and take part in the discussions for

the benefit of themselves and the journalism students. These schools also issue bulletins with much practical information.

4. *Reading circulation books, magazines, bulletins and columns and making them available to members of the circulation staff.* The circulation manager should read every book that deals in any way with circulation. The Texas Circulation Managers' Association has issued a book entitled *Newspaper Circulation*,<sup>2</sup> which shows how a circulation department is organized, explains the duties of personnel and all the responsibilities that rest upon a modern circulation department. Another book following much the same pattern is *Newspaper Circulation Management—A Profession*<sup>3</sup> by Donald J. Wood. Still another book entitled *Newspaper Circulation—Backbone of the Industry*,<sup>4</sup> by John Scott Davenport, emphasizes the important place that circulation holds in newspapermaking and community building. The important problem of developing a successful carrier service is discussed thoroughly by C. K. Jefferson, circulation manager of the Des Moines, Iowa, *Register and Tribune*, in a useful 184-page book entitled *Newspaper Carrier Leadership*.<sup>5</sup> Also in each of the following books, two or more chapters deal directly with circulation aims, methods and problems: *Weekly Newspaper Management*<sup>6</sup> by Thomas F. Barnhart, *Newspaper Organization and Management*<sup>7</sup> by Frank W. Rucker and Herbert Lee Williams, *Newspaper Business Management*<sup>8</sup> by Frank Thayer and *Principles of Newspaper Management*<sup>9</sup> by James E. Pollard. The circulation manager should read *Circulation Management*, a monthly magazine devoted entirely to circulation methods and problems, and other magazines that touch upon the subject in any way. *Editor & Publisher* carries weekly an experience-packed column on "Circulation" by George Brandenburg that discusses various problems and relates the current accomplishments of circulation managers. Other magazines for newspapermen present valuable circulation information. In the newspaper's library should be a section devoted to circulation literature, and members of

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<sup>2</sup> Texas Circulation Managers' Association, *Newspaper Circulation*, The Steck Co., Austin, Tex.

<sup>3</sup> Donald J. Wood, *Newspaper Circulation Management—A Profession*, Newspaper Research Bureau, Oakland, Calif.

<sup>4</sup> John Scott Davenport, *Newspaper Circulation—Backbone of the Industry*, Wm. C. Brown Co., Dubuque, Iowa.

<sup>5</sup> C. K. Jefferson, *Newspaper Carrier Leadership*, C. K. Jefferson Publications, Des Moines, Iowa.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas F. Barnhart, *Weekly Newspaper Management*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York City.

<sup>7</sup> Frank W. Rucker and Herbert Lee Williams, *Newspaper Organization and Management*, Iowa State College Press, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Thayer, *Newspaper Business Management*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J.

<sup>9</sup> James E. Pollard, *Principles of Newspaper Management*, McGraw-Hill, New York City.

the circulation department should be made acquainted with important reading.

5. *Visiting other newspaper plants and observing their circulation department operations.* Much satisfaction is obtained from direct observation of good circulation practices and results. This a circulation manager obtains when he visits other newspapers that have been successful in building circulation, for facts and figures to prove any claims of success that may be made are right at hand.

The efficient and faithful circulation manager continually takes stock of himself, his product, his department, his community and his colleagues. Thus, he keeps on top in the game and builds for his newspaper a sound and growing circulation, its assurance of financial success.