

NAM RELEVANCE PROJECT

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

31 JULY 2019

I. Project Overview

Relevance committee: Michelle Rea, Tom Newton, Layne Bruce, Steve Nixon, Laurie Hieb, Brian Allfrey, Mark Maasen, Phil Lucey, Josh Sharp

NAMers agreed last August when we met in Park City, to move forward with the Relevance Project.

The Relevance Project is a “take back the night” movement. Its goal is to help newspapers and state press association owned ad services get their mojo back.

At its most basic level, the Relevance Project is a coordinated promotion and marketing campaign designed to reposition and rebrand state press association ad services and the community newspapers they represent, and position them for relevance in a digitally focused world.

State press associations and the newspapers we represent share a common problem: we no longer matter in the same powerful way we once did. We have lost our unique roles and relevance in the marketplace.

Restating the unique role and relevance of state press association ad services: Together, the members of NAM provide the ONLY platform for local engagement on a national scale. We alone provide local, on-the-ground knowledge of EVERY community newspaper in North America and the personal connection and market knowledge to drive the best results for our advertising clients. No other entity knows the newspapers and the markets they serve like we do.

Repositioning newspapers for relevance: Relevance is the paramount driver of news consumption. Citizens navigate a high-choice media environment with an abundance of ways to stay informed. What makes content relevant?

- Affects you and your life
- Impacts basic life priorities
- Reflects personal preferences
- Is related to the work you do
- Is geographically relevant
- Is civically relevant
- Is topical – local elections, health, education, environment
- Is shareable – originates in the belief that family and friends might take an interest in the story

The Relevance Project is working to create a movement which will gain momentum over time. It seeks to harness the collective reach of 9600 newspapers throughout the United States and Canada to create a uniform voice spreading important messages about the unique value we alone deliver.

Developing the promotion and marketing campaign has been a difficult and time-consuming journey. It is a journey that is ongoing today.

The Relevance Project committee met in person for two days in San Francisco and again in Washington DC and met weekly by phone at least 40 times during the past year – sometimes we spoke two or three times per week. To do this right took time.

The promotion and marketing campaign is multi-dimensional with lots of arms and legs, and the various elements of the campaign will be expanded over time.

The committee has developed a detailed implementation plan which follows. The Relevance Project should not create a lot of additional work for state press associations or newspapers. All materials will be provided in bite-sized pieces – pre-packaged, ready to use however you and your newspaper member choose.

This is not a one-size-fits-all campaign. It is not mandatory. It is simply a large-scale movement whose goal is to remind citizens that newspapers are the glue that holds communities together and that the community forums that our newspapers shepherd are an essential pillar of our democracy. And to remind ad agencies and clients that

association-owned ad placement services provide the ONLY platform for local engagement on a national scale.

II. Objectives and outcomes

Specific goals to be achieved and their respective measurable results

Re-tooling Ad Placement Services –

Integrate the message architecture of the promotion and marketing campaign into sales collateral materials, websites, sales training, sales calls/presentations

Incorporate the “elevator story” whenever possible

NAM will build a “Relevance website” to archive all materials and to introduce new materials

NAM will contract with a full-time person to execute project objectives

Re-positioning Newspapers –

Delineate the problems to be addressed: declining readership and revenue; diminished staff resources; lost digital opportunities; isolation; staff morale

Delineate the opportunities to be developed: increasing readership; new newsroom efficiencies; increased collaboration; greater innovation; getting ahead of media trends; staff training, HR materials

Establish a communication plan: define the plan; include timeline; unveil in series of regional forums; identify how we measure success

Create broad editorial support for audience education: emphasize our role in democracy; give context to today’s news; build trust;

brand credibility; foster community conversations; become essential part of readers' lives; emphasize hyper-local content

Incorporate community forum message architecture into news stories, editorials, HR packets, speaker's bureaus, events, niche products, and social media

III. Stakeholders

Individuals and organizations impacted by or influential to the project's outcomes

State press associations

Newspapers

Affiliated vendors

IV. Scope of Work

The specific work required to accomplish the project's objectives

1.) Marketing – 6-person committee chaired by Phil Lucey (to include Michelle Rea, Brian Allfrey, Mark Maasen, Carolyn Nolte, Cecelia Drake). Advertising sub-committee to include Laurie Hieb, Samantha Fett, Violet Kirk, Eliot Putnam, Walt Dozier, Joanna Weatherall).

2.) Relevance website – chairman, Layne Bruce
Forward-facing for public; back entry for stakeholders

3.) Engage services of FT contractor to execute project activities– chairman Michelle Rea. Position to be housed at a

state association – answerable to NAM board. Responsible for keeping Relevance Project top-of-mind for all stake holders. Job description, RFP, NAM board to be selection committee.

4.) Fund-raising committee – chairman Susan Patterson Plank, committee includes Tom Newton, Phil Lucey. Funding to compensate contractor(s).

5.) Newspaper/Editorial committee – chairman Judy Patrick (NY) – committee to be determined

V. Schedule of activities

The sequence and duration of project's activities

1.) Soft launch during National Newspaper Week – chaired by Mark Maasen, October 6 – 12 – simultaneous activity in Canada coordinated by Canadian News Media Association – chaired by Kelly Levson

2.) Relevance website to be launched by October 6 – Layne Bruce

3.) Marketing and advertising committee to have initial roll-out plan for collateral materials and messaging for review by Relevance Project committee meeting October 4. Graphic and content assist from Metro Creative Graphics – chaired by Darrell Davis.

4.) Regional staff meetings with newspaper publishers and editorial staff in each state to introduce Relevance Project. To begin mid-September and be completed by November 31.

5.) Issue RFP for contractor(s) by November 1

6.) Secure funding for contractor(s) by December 31

7.) Relevance Project Committee meeting Milwaukee (in conjunction with NNA meeting) 2 pm Friday, October 4

VI. Quality Assurance

Measurements used to determine if the project's outcomes have met the objectives

Meet the October deadlines for project launch during National Newspaper Week; development of website by Oct. 6

Meet November 1 deadline for funding and issuance of RFP for contractor(s)

Engage contractor by January 1

***Relevance Project Official Launch January 2020

VII. Cost projections

To be determined by October 5 subsequent to Marketing and Advertising committee recommendations; job description for contractor(s); cost for website

VIII. Risk Factors

Threats or opportunities associated with the project's activities

Getting alignment among publishers and state associations

Project gets shelved – execution fails

Lack of engagement by state associations or newspapers

Naysayers/jaded perspectives

Failure to fund

Timely production and distribution of relevant materials in bite-sized pieces + strong communication to and buy-in from publishers X reach of 9600 newspapers throughout North America = powerful share of voice

Message architecture can help drive market awareness and increase demand for newspaper advertising placement services (and other related services) provided by state press association-owned ad placement services.

IX. Communications plan

Process of sharing information with stakeholders

Relevance website will function as both an archive and initiation point for distribution of materials.

NAM listservs including executive director listserv, ad manager listserv and meeting planners' listserv will be used to distribute information and materials. Metro Creative Graphics will distribute materials to their subscribers and the Relevance Committee will enlist the support of other industry associations and vendors including ASNE, CJR, Editor & Publisher and others.

Until January 2020, Michelle Rea and Judy Patrick will develop and distribute a monthly Relevance Project newsletter; beginning January 2020 this will become the responsibility of the FT contractor.

State associations will work to keep Relevance Project initiatives top-of-mind for newspapers and press association staff. Bulletins, newsletters, state association websites, sales materials, conferences, training sessions, will incorporate message architecture.