

HAVE YOU LOOKED AT A NEWSPAPER LATELY?

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**By Bob McElwain**

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No, I didn't ask if you had read a newspaper lately. I asked if you have looked at one. Closely. Have you examined one with care? If you take a good look at the front page, here is what you will find.

It's A Work Of Art

The main headline can be read at a glance, even when located on a newsstand quite some distance away. It grabs attention hard. It often draws you toward the rack, at least close enough to read the subheadline. And, as often as not, just as millions do every day, you buy a copy to read the related article.

Does the creation of the headline for your site matter less than that of creating one for a newspaper?

Other Headlines Matter

In putting together the first page of a newspaper, the major task is to pull from the day's stories those most likely to interest readers. Only those with maximum appeal are selected. And the headline for each is crafted with extreme care. The object is to have at least one that grabs the attention of any reader. The best are used in the first fold, the part that shows in the newsstand.

Do you have at least one subheadline that grabs the attention of most visitors? Have you a couple others in the first screen that loads?

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### Formatting

The amount of space given to the text of each article on the front page varies. Such decisions need to be handled with care, for space is limited. If one chooses to run too much text in a given article, another may need to be removed to an inner page, which subtracts that headline from the front page.

While a web page has no fixed limit, visitors will not scroll down indefinitely. Thus formatting matters here as well. Include those elements most likely to be of interest to your

target as close to the top of the page as possible. And each needs an attention grabbing headline.

### Teasers

Newspapers generate profits from advertising. Yet you will not see an ad on the front page of any major daily. Instead, all is headlines, followed by the beginnings of the story. Photos are used sparingly on the front page, for headlines and content are generally the better draw.

Further the article begins with the most important story elements. What is presented ends with a teaser. This is the first part of a sentence, laden with emotion, that seeks to compel you to turn to an inner page. For it is on the inner pages you will find the ads that generate the profits.

An example often used is to end with, "The officer drew his pistol, cocked it, crouched down, then ... (Cont on page 23)

### The Site Parallel

I don't want to get carried away with this. There are differences between the front page of a newspaper and your home page. Still, your best benefit needs to be featured in the page headline. And subheadings should define others. The text is always benefit loaded and has but one purpose: To draw your visitor deeper into the site.

### Another Parallel

Newspapers are written for people in a hurry. So is a website. Thus the pattern of turning to an inner page to finish

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an article begun on the first page, compares in some ways to clicking off your home page to another for further information. Then clicking back.

### And Another

If your home page is cluttered with graphics and/or ads, ponder some before deciding to leave them. The front page of a newspaper is all about easy reading and drawing people into inner pages. There are no ads and photos are minimal. This is a great formula for your home page as well.

### Inner Pages

As with a newspaper, you fire your biggest guns on your home page. Thus your inner pages will have to make do with lesser

benefits, unless a neat way can be found to restate the originals. Newspapers do a very good job with their inner pages. We would all do well to follow suit.

### Print And Competition

Competition in the print media is awesome. Of all forms, newspapers seem to face the greatest challenge. All find it difficult to make profits. And indirect competition through books and magazines adds to woes. Television steals newspaper readers by the millions.

Publishers struggle with this burden every day. They must continue to beat the competition or go broke. There is no option but to seek to put out a better paper today than was produced yesterday.

### Is The Web Less Competitive?

There are some who would argue it is less competitive, but I'm not one of them. With the flood of existing business expanding to the Web, I feel competition is increasing at an awesome and increasing rate. And I see no end in sight.

As webmasters, though, we do have one distinct advantage over newspapers – We don't have to do it every day. A newspaper is history tomorrow. We hope our websites have a somewhat longer span. On the other hand, we best get it right, and make some

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changes now and then to keep it that way.

Every time I see a newspaper headline that grabs at me, it reminds of my website. Mentally I begin yet another review of my headlines, content and format. I continue to learn a lot from newspapers about grabbing and holding attention. It might work for you as well.

Bob McElwain Want to build a winning site? Improve one you already have? Fix one that's busted? Get ANSWERS. Subscribe to "STAT News" now! <mailto:join-stat@lists.dundee.net> Web marketing and consulting since 1993 Site: Phone: 209-742-6349

### **Guidelines For Wedding Announcements**

**By Hana Lee**

Getting married is one of the most exciting things that a person can do. While the process of planning and executing a wedding ceremony takes a lot of time and attention to detail, once it's all over it is obvious that all of the stress involved was well worth it. Once the wedding is done, however, there are still a few details that should be looked after. Wedding announcements fall into this category.

Wedding announcements are intended to let people know that you are now married. The responsibility for creating them typically falls upon the bride or her family and there are a number of ways of completing wedding announcements.

Newspaper wedding announcements are quite common. If you choose to announce your wedding in the local newspaper, you'll want to contact the offices of the publication for information on how to do this. Check the paper's wedding page as well since many newspapers print their guidelines for wedding announcements right there. Different publications will have different ways of going about this, so it's important to look into each one if you plan to submit wedding announcements to more than one newspaper. Some papers charge a nominal fee to publish wedding announcements and some will do it for free. Some will also print photographs with the announcement if you so desire. Again, check with the individual publication to see what they will and won't do.

The information to include in a newspaper wedding announcement will depend on how much you want to print and how much the paper is willing to print. Some papers will ask that the bride fill out a simple form, others will ask that the information simply be submitted. Some of the information that you will want to consider including is the bride's full name, the names of the bride's parents and their place of residence (the city or town, not their street address), the names of the bride's grandparents (both sides of the family), what school or college the bride attends or graduated from, the bride's occupation, the name of the groom and his place of residence, the names of the groom's parents and their place of residence, the occupations of the groom's parents, names of the groom's grandparents (again, on both sides), where the groom attended school or college, the groom's occupation, and details about the wedding itself such as the date and location, the names of those in the wedding party and their relationships (if any) to the bride or groom, where the couple has gone for their honeymoon, and any

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other information you may deem pertinent or interesting.

Personal wedding announcements are also appropriate to send. These will typically be sent in the names of the bride's parents and will go to friends, relatives, and acquaintances who were not invited to the wedding itself. It is customary to send these wedding announcements immediately following the wedding date. If the wedding were held on, say, Saturday the first, the wedding announcements should be in the mail on Monday the third.

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