

'Elf magic' can be a great tool to boost your holiday ad sales

Byline: Robert M. Williams Jr., NNA director of creative resources

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Being creative is a vital key to boosting your local ad sales revenue! And Deborah Farmer, ad sales manager for the Adel News Tribune in Adel, Georgia, has two extraordinary, innovative ideas that have produced consistent popularity and extra revenue in her rural market deep in South Georgia.

The first is a 24-page soft cover booklet themed around the Christmas holidays. It was inspired by a Metro graphics promotion featuring a holiday elf. The Adel News Tribune built upon the Metro idea in grand fashion by bringing the cartoon elf to life! Farmer's son was a good sport and dressed up in an elf costume and posed for photos with business owners and employees. It was just the right touch to spark extra sales for the holidays.

This Metro Creative Graphics promo section was the spark that helped Georgia's Adel News Tribune bring 'Itsy the Elf' to life and boost their holiday ad sales.

To show more creativity, Farmer wrote a story of her community's history, as told to the elf, and created even more local interest! The newspaper also provided 2,000 extra copies to the local elementary and primary schools.

Here's how Farmer describes it:

"The story was written to educate the children, and the parents who read the story to them, on the history of Cook County, and just how our City of Adel got its name," says Farmer.

"We used Itsy the Elf and Bitsy, his dog, as the main characters in our first books, but in our latest book, we introduced his Grandpa Jack, who told the history lesson to Itsy."

Deborah's second innovative idea is a calendar featuring locally contributed photographs that not only showcase the local community and its people, but also the significant photography talent in Farmer's small community.

The local hospital and related facilities bought the back cover of the calendar.

Here's the story of the Adel News Tribune's successful calendar promo in Deborah Farmer's own words:

"We always get hundreds of submissions for the contest each year," Farmer explains.

"The photographs must be taken in Cook County and by Cook County residents. Each submission is sent via email to me, and they provide me with the location where the photo was taken. We have the photos judged by an independent photographer not in our area to make it fair.

"I am the only one who knows who sent what group of photos. We had to start limiting them to five submissions per contestant. I list the submissions with and without the names, and provide the list without names to the judge.



"The winners have their photo with photo credit placed on a particular month on the calendar, and there is also a separate winner for the cover, as well. I offer advertising space to customers on a first-come, first-served basis for their choice of a particular month they want their ad placed.

"This causes a 'rush' to commit, and customers who own businesses such as jewelry, floral, etc., like specific months according to holidays, and their ads reflect the same. The hospital, school board, city, county offices and domestic violence centers like to be on a page where we provide local contact phone numbers.

"This is a very popular calendar, as some of our businesses pay extra for additional copies to hand out to their customers, since their wholesalers no longer send them stacks every year like they used to.

"So this is a win-win for both our local businesses and their customers, local community support, subscription/rack sales, and advertising revenue."

Creative thinking makes money in Adel, Georgia! Such innovative ideas can make money in your town, too!

Robert M. Williams Jr. is a longtime community newspaper publisher from Blackshear, Georgia. He was NNA president in 2013-14 and is now acting as NNA director of creative resources. He is available for consultation on how to create more revenue, help you deal with inevitable newspaper issues or be a sympathetic ear for NNA members looking for an experienced publisher to listen. Email him at robert@nna.org or call at (912) 281-5438 from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. ET, Monday-Friday.



This four-part Itsy the Elf Special Section storybook series is included with your Metro Holiday Advertising Service!

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