

President's Message

BY RUSS DAVIS



Eileen Widdison

It's an honor to be your new president. I will do everything in my power to serve the needs of this organization. I've been fortunate in my newspaper career to have been surrounded by bright, articulate and knowledgeable peers who have supported, listened, cajoled and told me the truth as they saw it. The NICE organization has been instrumental for me in learning the ins and outs of the circulation side of our business. I hope that I can give back even a fraction of what I have learned from our membership.

It's usual for the president of the organization to take this newsletter and talk about things learned at the May conference. We usually pat ourselves on the back for a "job well done" and we tell the usual "wish you were there" stories. Trust me. We really wish more of you had been there. Our smaller group size (around 40 or so) was a mixed blessing. Smaller group sizes tend to make event organizers nervous because of cost issues. I am sure that all of you can relate to cost issues right now. The smaller group size had a hidden benefit as it made it possible to talk with almost everyone there. The smaller group size made it possible for a freer exchange between larger and smaller papers. I think that we were more transparent in our problems and solutions than at other conferences of

NICE that I have attended.

Any good leader knows that listening is the key to learning. You are in charge of the conversation when you aren't talking. Our industry as a whole has a lot of listening to do. We need to really hear what our readers have been saying. The changes afoot in the newspaper business aren't a surprise to those who have been paying any attention to what their readers and customers have been saying for years. The NICE organization is also entering a time of opportunity for change. The

board of directors have been talking about a redesign of the convention program to better reflect the current fiscal and time constraints which many of us are operating under.

The board of directors of NICE will be starting an active program of listening. We will be making a concerted effort to reach out and ask our members and potential members to tell us what is of concern to you at your newspapers. The most valuable tools that we have are the shared knowledge base of our members. We want to know what you find valuable. It's important for us to know what your greatest challenges are. We need more input on what would motivate your publisher to free up travel and education money to allow you to attend conferences. We are in the process of developing our list of questions but I want to place an open call to you to e-mail me or call with suggestions, complaints, input, questions or concerns.

I am going to close each president's letter with an idea. Some of the ideas we float around here are good and some are bad. We call it the right way...the wrong way....and the Daily Courier way. Most of these ideas have been stolen - probably from a NICE member. We just started adding a laminated card in our vending racks that we stock with 15 or more copies. The card is a \$5.00 coupon for gasoline at our favorite station. They call us when they find the card and then we deliver the coupon to them the next day. If they're not a current subscriber we gather their info and put them on our handy free sample list. People seem to like it and it gives us a better base for some requested samples.

Call me with what's on your mind. Let's talk about our organization and our industry. I promise to listen. Thanks for reading!

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My Conference Recap - Adam Sears



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listening to some excellent speakers. Occasionally, something may come up, but shouldn't this be the opportunity to save some time and money on promotions and go straight to what has worked for other papers that you pick up at the roundtables or in promotion sales packets of entries for the awards? Or single-copy ideas from someone at NAA who travels all around the country? What about hearing something thought provoking about the change in the industry and our survival depending on how we adapt to that change? Come budget time, please re-think your conference budget for '09, and get to the conference! The better you do, and the more you invest, the better for the rest of us in the industry.

The first day had some introductions, etc., and then we went to a vendorama led by Ray Lyon, which was a great way to introduce all of the business people who help make these conferences happen. Our first speaker was probably my favorite; Tim McGuire from Arizona State University came and gave a wild speech about the future and where

This year's N.I.C.E. conference was worth the trip for me. I'm always disappointed when leaders of different newspapers don't invest in themselves or their people by learning from others in the industry by he feels newspapers may be headed <http://cronkite.asu.edu/mcguireblog/>. While we all may not have agreed with everything he said, it was very thought provoking, and I think almost every day about points he made. With the technology sector going crazy, and the Googles and Microsofts of the world spending millions on R&D, don't you think our industry's going to change a hell of a lot in the next 10 years?

The second day was busy. Dave Gillard from the Oregonian spoke about database marketing. I think technology will help us all in this area. Already companies are providing customer data, new mover lists, etc. Target marketing is an invaluable tool we can use to get those percentages up and increase saturation. Mike Zinser talked about current legal issues and about the importance of independent contractor relationships with newspapers, as well as e-mail and union cases throughout the country. Mike's a valuable part of N.I.C.E. and how we should proceed in the future.

Next came a tour of the new Columbian Building. What a beautiful facility! From the environmental aspect to the flexibility of the design, it had a great feel. I think we all left feeling a little jealous. (Also, talk with Marc Dailey about customer service sometime-it's fun to see his passion about how your customers should be treated in these times of budget cuts.) Roundtables were held in the circulation department. I think most of us agree that it's one of the great aspects of the conferences every year-a time to sit down with our colleagues and talk about what we're doing correctly and incorrectly, and give one another some ideas for the next year.

In the evening we enjoyed a hospitality hour with our awards presentation and banquet. This is another area to which I hope more newspapers will contribute. We here at The Bulletin won some awards, and entering was quick and easy. Pam, our circulation manager, and I spent a little time one morning sending our entries off. I think my cruise entry took me all of 10-15 minutes to send off. Showing off awards to publishers is always nice, and it's also a way to promote your department.

Our last day had Kevin Hohnbaum leading the hot ideas gathering, which was another fun way to brainstorm and exchange ideas. Robert Rubrecht and Bernie Gitt were in attendance as well, which I thought brought more great perspective. Robert then took the floor and gave a presentation about single-copy from his NAA analysis. There are some great ideas in his presentation, and if you shoot him an e-mail, I have no doubt he'll send you a copy Robert.Rubrecht@naa.org. Our first implementation here at The Bulletin will probably be the great rack card ideas he shared from another newspaper. Next, Bernie Gitt talked about e-editions and how Denver is incorporating them with their print. This is familiar territory for us as we have a paid e-edition as well. Managing all of the delivery frequencies seems difficult, but it's probably where we're all headed.

All in all, a good conference. The board has already talked about changes for next year and what we can do better. Seattle will be a great place to host next year's conference, and hopefully, you'll start budgeting accordingly to make sure you're there!

Photos From the 85th Sales Conference



President, Russ Davis and Marc Dailey our host from The Columbian.



The conference included lunch and a tour of the brand new Columbian facility.



Roundtable sessions are always a hit and provide lots of new ideas.



Heading to the Columbian.



Bernie Gitt from The Denver News Agency talks about things that have worked in Denver.



Dave Jacobsen, past NICE president, is now with Brainworks.

Sponsors Recognition 2008

Our thanks go to the following companies that sponsored portions of the 85th Annual Sales Conference in Vancouver, WA.

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