

Community Newspaper Review 2011

*Are you looking to improve the quality of your newspaper?
Would you like to receive honest and constructive comments and suggestions
from other community newspaper professionals in the industry?*

The Ontario Community Newspapers Association is pleased to offer our annual program for member newspapers. This year OCNA will invite community newspapers across Canada to participate; this is an opportunity to exchange fresh ideas with newspapers from across the country. **The Community Newspaper Review** is NOT a professional critique program costing thousands of dollars and performed by consultants. It IS a program that makes use of the skills and experience of community newspaper professionals who have helped earn this province's newspapers the reputation for outstanding, quality products. They will offer thoughtful and constructive comments and suggestions about your product. Yes, it will be subjective; it's their opinion.

Why should I have my paper reviewed?

Ontario Community Newspapers Association member newspapers often want to receive feedback from other newspaper professionals in order to receive positive reinforcement and honest, constructive comments and suggestions on various elements of their newspaper.

PLUS this year's incentive program offers each newspaper who completes the program by the deadline, a free registration to the first editorial webinar in the Fall of 2011.

Who will review my newspaper?

Those conducting the reviews must have at least five year's experience in the newspaper industry. The key contact is asked to have other professionals at that newspaper get involved in the review so you will receive a variety of comments and feedback.

OCNA will match you with a similar-sized publication wherever possible. The names and experience of the person(s) completing your review will be listed on the information you get back.

Each reviewer will be provided forms to complete that will encompass the following areas:

Front page, editorial and op-ed pages, classifieds, features, sports, news coverage, advertising design, and overall presentation.

Becoming involved...

If you would like to have your newspaper reviewed and conduct a review yourself, you must complete the attached registration form and fax it to OCNA by Friday, June 17th, 2011.

Participating newspapers will cover the postage to mail their newspapers to and from the reviewer.

Please see attached **To Do List** for complete details.

In the spirit of our association

We believe both the participating papers and the reviewers will find the process very educational and worthwhile. This program is meant to provide positive reinforcement and constructive criticism for the work you do on a weekly basis. By cooperating together we improve the worth, value and reputation of Ontario's Community Newspapers. For more information, contact Karen Shardlow at OCNA, 905-639-8720 ext 232, or e-mail k.shardlow@ocna.org.

Your To Do List:

- Print this Document
- Complete Participant Registration form and Fax to OCNA by **June 17, 2011**.
- Complete Newspaper information form
- Enclose in an envelope: - The two most recent editions of your newspaper
 - A large, **self addressed** envelope for returning your reviewed newspapers
 - Completed Newspaper information form
 - Credentials and Criteria form (for reviewer to complete)
- Address and mail/courier your package - **On June 27, 2011** Karen Shardlow will e-mail you with the contact person and address of the newspaper you will switch with for review.
- Review your partners paper - all packages should be mailed June 27th 2011; you should have received your papers for review by July 8nd, 2010. If you have not received your papers to review by this date, contact Karen Shardlow at 905-639-8720 Ext 232 or k.shardlow@ocna.org. The deadline for completing your review is **August 12th, 2011**.
- Mail/courier your partner's reviewed papers- using the addressed, envelope enclosed return your partners papers by **August 12th, 2011**
- When you receive your reviewed papers back to your office please notify Karen Shardlow at k.shardlow@ocna.org that your participation in the program is complete.

IMPORTANT- In order to receive your **free registration** for the OCNA Editorial Webinar in the fall of 2011, you will need to complete and mail/courier your completed review by August 12th, 2011. Should you fail to complete the review by this deadline you will forfeit the free registration.

Community Newspaper Review 2011

(Complete and fax to OCNA by June 17th 2011)

Participant Registration

____ Yes, I want to have my newspaper reviewed by a member of the Ontario Community Newspapers Association in July 2011. I am also willing to share my knowledge and experience by reviewing an OCNA member newspaper between July 8th and August 12th, 2011. In doing this, I agree to participate in both aspects of the member review program and will follow through with the review of the newspaper sent to me.

I agree to abide by the highest ideals, ethics and traditions of the industry. Any dealings with members will be on a professional basis and should try not to demonstrate any personal bias. Any comments, opinions, and suggestions will be offered in an honest and constructive format using the forms provided and will be given for information and professional development purposes.

I have five or more years of experience in the newspaper industry. I understand I am able to seek the opinions and suggestions of other qualified individuals to participate in this review. Our names will be listed on the review forms when they are returned to the participating newspaper.

I understand I will cover the cost of postage/courier to get my newspapers to the person doing the reviewing and to return the newspapers I am reviewing.

Now for the legal stuff:

As a Participant in the Program you agree to abide by the following guidelines:

You acknowledge and agree that all advice, information and opinions given under this program are provided strictly on a voluntary basis for the purpose of information and support and not for the purpose of making business decisions for you. Such advice, information and opinions are provided strictly on a "without recourse" basis. Should you choose to take any action or refrain from taking any action as a result of such advice, information or opinions provided to you, it is completely at your own risk and you assume the entire responsibility and liability for any losses, damages or costs arising from any decisions made by you from advice, opinions and information given through this program. You hereby agree that you are not entitled to make any claims against Ontario Community Newspapers Association, its Board of Directors, association staff or the reviewers participating in this program with respect to any such losses, damages and claims.

Name _____

Newspaper _____

Mailing Address _____

E-mail address for June 27th notification:

Fax to OCNA, 905-639-6962 by June 17, 2011

Questions? Call Karen Shardlow at 905-639-8720 ext. 232 or email to k.shardlow@ocna.org

Community Newspaper Review 2011

Newspaper information form

Name of Newspaper _____

Number of employees _____

Ownership _____

Circulation _____

Production process (digital cameras, software used, etc)

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(to be completed by reviewer)

Your Newspaper _____

Name of Reviewer _____

Experience/Info About Reviewer _____

Name of Reviewer _____

Experience/Info About Reviewer _____

Name of Reviewer _____

Experience/Info About Reviewer _____

E-mail address if you don't mind the newspaper staff making further communication with you if they have any questions after reading your review _____

Thank you for agreeing to Review an OCNA member newspaper in this new Community Newspaper Review. You are providing a great service to the participating newspaper by sharing your skills, knowledge and experience about the community newspaper industry, and their publication in particular. We believe both you and the participating newspaper will find this process educational and informative. Please remember that you have agreed to abide by the highest ideals, ethics and traditions of the industry.

Any dealings with members will be on a professional basis and should try not to demonstrate any personal bias.

Any comments, opinions, and suggestions will be offered in an honest and constructive format using the forms provided and will be given for information and professional development purposes. Participating newspapers understand your comments will be subjective as they will reflect your views and opinions of the elements that make a quality community newspaper. If you don't like something in the newspaper, state why and offer constructive comments and suggestions on how you would change it. Also remember to give the newspaper staff a pat on the back by commenting on elements you like.

Please return your review sheets and copies of the newspapers directly to that newspaper in the self addressed envelope they provided by **August 12th 2010**.

In exchange for meeting this deadline OCNA will offer your newspaper one free registration for our Editorial Webinar in the fall of 2011.

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your expertise. If you have any questions, please call Karen Shardlow at OCNA at 905-639-8720 ext 232 or e-mail k.shardlow@ocna.org.

Include this page and these forms with the newspaper you have critiqued.

Please note: We have adapted the OCNA General Excellence criteria as part of the review format. We will be asking participants for their comments following this process so we can refine it for next year. These notes are to be used as a guide. If you have further comments/suggestions or areas to review, please feel free to add them.

Front Page

Reviewers should look for:

Editorial Content

News stories or articles are relevant to the community. Leads should be tight and intriguing. Writing must be simple and straightforward. Each story must provide a complete understanding of the event or issue.

Layout and Design

Design should be clean and sharp with simple, uncluttered mastheads. Lead stories and pictures should feature prominently. Creative use of spot colour which contributes to a powerful image or front page is an asset.

Photography

Front page photos, black-and-white or colour, news or feature content, composition, cropping, quality, size and placement. Static colour photos used only to put colour on the front page do not warrant extra consideration.

Headlines

A powerful headline should easily identify lead story. Heads should be informative and pull readers into stories. Watch for: words in headlines spaced out to fill in space; too much or too little white space; too much or too little variety in headlines.

Use of Ads on Front Page

Comments

Community News

Editorial Content

A good newspaper should provide news content that is relevant to the community and gives a clear reflection of the nature and the people of the area it serves. A mix of reporter-generated news with some input from sources within the community indicates good community support and interaction. Content should not be simply event-driven, items that were provided to the newspaper. Use of follow-up items. The use of outside sources should be localized. Don't confuse copy generated locally with canned filler.

Editorial Quality

Well-written stories with tight leads. Stories should contain reporter insight, initiative and a complete understanding of the events and issues. Stories should be easy to read and interesting. Look for all sides of the story. The "5 Ws" must apply--who, what, when, where, and why. Stories should attempt to answer readers questions. Quotes must be solid and attributed. Long stories should have visual breaks. Photos should be relevant, sharp, active, well composed, tightly cropped and properly sized. Stand-alones should be designed to clearly identify them as separate news items. News photo essays must include all the elements of a news story.

Headlines and Cutlines

Heads should pull readers into stories and snappy leads should keep them reading.

Local Features

Local features go beyond the news, providing a more in-depth look at the issues and people of the community.

Feature Content

Interesting topics, accompanied by powerful presentation, creativity, and graphic elements. Relevant to the community and gives a clear reflection of the nature and the people of the area it serves. Are the articles event-driven or generated by the newspaper?

Editorial Quality

Well-written stories. Stories should be easy to read and interesting. Long stories should have visual breaks. Number of sources or contacts in each article. Easily identifiable issues. Does the story address an issue; answer questions about the community?

Layout and Design

Creativity used in design; go outside the box yet stay within the flow of the newspaper. Effective use of photos and graphics. Photos should be relevant, sharp, active, well composed, tightly cropped and properly sized.

Editorial Page and Op-Ed

The editorial page and/or op-ed page are the heart of the newspaper.

Editorial

One or more staff-written editorials. PLEASE READ EDITORIAL PAGES CAREFULLY--content is the most important element here, but all elements of good layout and design should be present on these pages. The best designed page leads to nothing if there is nothing on it worth reading. Editorials should be written in simple language and have a clear message. Tight and concise writing is paramount to length. Good editorials identify problems and offer reasonable solutions or alternatives. An editorial can be about a local or national topic as long as it has relevance to the local community. Editorials question, inspire thought, and provoke action. Editorials are opinions. They should be judged on the quality and the presentation of the opinion. Editorials can be signed or unsigned.

Opinion Columns

Editorial style columns and/or guest opinions. Quality local opinions score higher than syndicated columns.

Cartoon/Graphics

An appropriate cartoon or editorial photo that makes a statement.

Letters to the Editor

Good letters attract readership. Reader response can be sparked by an editor's stand on the issues and by controversial opinions. Quality local opinions score higher than syndicated columns. Look for a balance of opinion.

Layout and Design

All elements of good layout should be present on these pages.

Sports

Sports and recreation are a significant part of community life.

Content and Quality of Editorial

Sports pages which include different age levels as well as a variety of events and activities which reflect the community. Staff-generated copy should be active, lively and concisely written. Photos should be featured prominently. Interesting and well-written local sports opinion columns are a definite asset as are local sports features. Headlines should be active. Effective presentation of score stats is an asset.

Photography

Composition and Creativity

Be aware of: grip and grins; dull, static photos; cheque passings; group shots where nobody can be identified; too many people in too small a picture. Sometimes, these shots are necessary but the photographer should look for creative ways to present the scene.

Photos should tell the story.

Colour or black-and-white photos which have impact, action, good composition.

Quality and Layout

The photos should be properly sized and positioned on the page; well cropped.

Look for effective use of colour where applicable, rather than the presence or absence of it.

Quality is better than quantity.

Cutlines should fill in the significant details and clearly identify all subjects.

A photo is the focal point of the page.

Presentation

Composition and Layout

Composition and layout contribute to continuity and logical sequence of elements, resulting in an attractive package.

Crisp design with rationale or continuity of layout of news and advertising.

Boxes, screens, sidebars, and graphics should enhance the look of the paper.

Watch for too much clutter that detracts from the overall design.

Fonts, column sizes

Font, type and column sizes should make it easy to read.

Headlines, Cutlines

Look for good use of white space and continuity of style in standing heads and section heads.

Watch out for tombstone headlines, too many one-line heads and heads that are too small or large.

Cutlines must accompany photos to clearly identify subjects.

Organization

A good paper is easy to read, consistent in its layout and design, and organized according to topic, such as sports, arts and entertainment.

Advertising Content

Advertising content is important to the bottom line of a newspaper. Also, it is an indication of how well the newspaper and the community work together for the readers.

Type of Content

Innovative ideas by advertising staff that bring additional lineage into the paper.

Look for simple promotions which build extra revenue on community interests (i.e. festivals, sporting events, hobbies, seasonal topics or product or customer features).

There should be evidence of both traditional advertisers and creative new ideas, such as business and profile features and in-house promotions to support sales staff.

Mix of local retail advertising; multi-market retail; and national advertising.

Advertising Design

A well-designed ad is a benefit to both the advertiser and the reader.

Effective advertising

Good ads are laid out attractively and are easy to read. Look for effective, uncluttered artwork; effective use of white space; copy that is complete, easy to read and understand, and provides extensive information about the product. Four basic elements of an ad (headline; body copy, graphics or photos; and, signature) must work together to sell the product. Use of colour in ads.

Placement

Placement should be conducive to overall design of the paper. Positioned in appropriate sections of the newspaper.

Complementary to the layout of each page.

Classified Advertising

A strong classified advertising section attracts readership.

Classifications and Organization

Classified advertising should be properly classified (organized and categorized). Ad categories easy to find with good headings and a wide variety of classifications.

Volume of classified advertising is a measure of readership and community participation.

Layout and Design

Layouts should be easy to read. Use of effective fonts. Clear and helpful instructions make buying classified ads and using the classified section easier. Display classifieds are well integrated with word classifieds.

Production Quality

The production quality directly reflects the newspaper's commitment to excellence.

Judges should assess: Their overall impression of the newspaper. Points should be awarded for the sharpness of the printing reproduction and the quality of the newsprint. Quality control must be a priority throughout the complete production process, for example, neat fold lines, colour registration, etc.