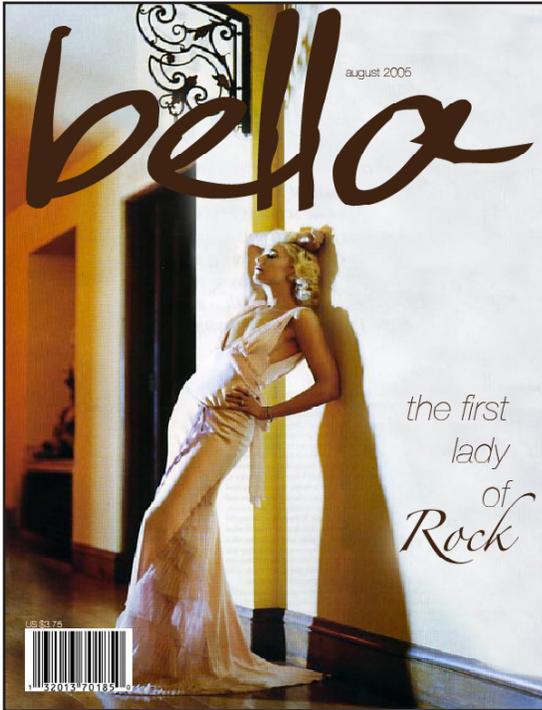


A major error in developing new publications is in creating titles nobody wants, titles that are of little interest to the staff but that hold little appeal to a larger group of readers. The editor may be a member of the audience, but he may be the only one in the audience. *James Kobak, publication consultant*

Publications failed because they lacked an editorial reason for existence, a clearly defined editorial pattern, and a solid advertising base. *Harlan Logan, publishing consultant*



Final project, cover. Cameron Thompson, Summer 2005

A picture of the reasons for a publication's success. In order, they are:

1. A highly focused editorial philosophy.
2. A clearly defined formula.
3. A thorough understanding of, and connection with, the audience.

These elements exist within a supportive structure that includes adequate financial support; a well-planned marketing and distribution system; and solid management. All the money in the world, however, cannot save an ill-conceived publication.

Editorial Philosophy

An editorial philosophy is a publication's focus. Just as we develop our own personal philosophies, which differentiate us from our friends and serve as the basis for our personalities, a publication has a driving philosophy that, if strongly defined, gives the publication its identity and personality.

An editorial philosophy explains what the publication is intended

to do, what areas of interest it covers, how it will approach those interests, and the voice it will use to express itself. It is highly specific.

The statement of philosophy serves as the guide in developing a new publication and keeps an existing periodical on track. It defines the purpose of the publication, the type of content that will serve that purpose, and the voice the publication will use.

Essential to the philosophy is an understanding of the publication's target audience. All this is built on a title that embodies the publication's image and identity.

Title

A good title positions the publication, and it does so with as few words as possible. It is short, direct, and clear. It also should be timeless, able to grow old with the publication. Titles can position the publication vertically, indicating that it gives in-depth coverage of a narrow topic, or it can position the publication horizontally, indicating that it covers a wide range of topics.

In 1967, Jann Werner considered calling his new publication *The Electric Newspaper*. Instead, he wisely chose the name *Rolling Stone*, which has weathered the passage of time.

Publication Purpose

Whether working with an established publication or a new launch, the essential question to ask is: Why does this publication exist? Publications may inform, interpret, entertain, advocate, and provide service.

Inform – Publications whose function is primarily to inform include the news publications and many trade titles that provide basic day-to-day industry information to professionals. (Time, Newsweek, National Geographic)

Interpret – Many journalists are still uncertain about the place of interpretation in a field heralded for its objectivity. Interpretation, however, helps readers make sense of a complex world. (Money, Worth, Rolling Stone)

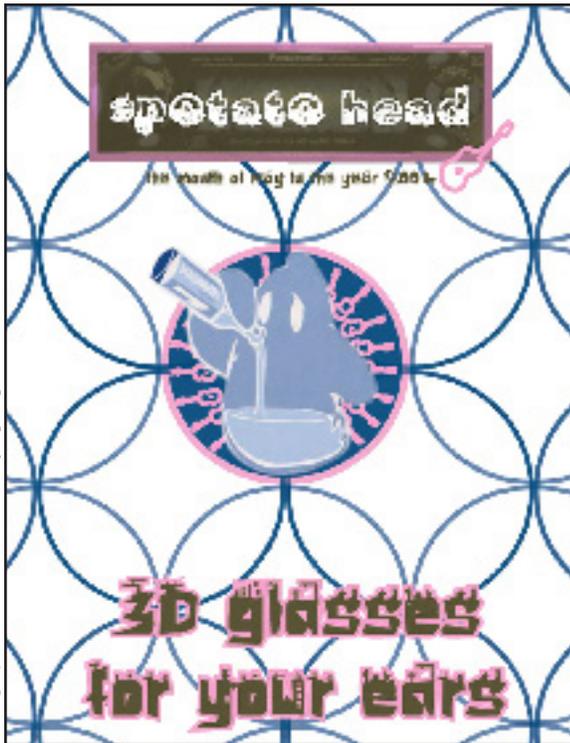
Entertain – Content that entertains makes readers laugh, smile, or simply relax. (Readers Digest, Mad)

Advocate – Advocacy goes beyond interpretation into taking a position on not only what *is* but what *should be*. (Sierra, Modern Maturity, AARP)

Provide Service – Service articles help readers take action to better their lives. How-to articles are included here, but service goes beyond simply telling us how to firm our abs or file our taxes. (Smart Computing, Better Homes and Gardens)

Most publications provide a combination of these five functions. Individual publications, however, develop their unique identity by determining which purposes take precedence and which will be secondary.

The more explicit the statement of purpose, the better the phi-



losophy and, therefore, the better the publication's direction. The purpose, of course, has to be logically tied to a need or interest in the broader society. Editors should not be so arrogant as to think they can do something better than the competition. Do something different.

Type of Content

How is a publication's purpose to be achieved? What is its character and overall slant? What special mood or tone does it capture? The answers to these questions help determine the type of editorial, design, and advertising content that will characterize that publication.

Editorial – If it is an entertainment publication, is that entertainment straightforward and practical, as in *Games* publication? Or satirical, as in *Mad*? Does the publication inform people on how to do things of a practical nature, as in *Wood*? Does it inform about general weekly events, as do *Time* and *Newsweek*, or does it cover only business news, as does *Business Week*? Is the advocacy going to be forthright, as in *The Advocate* or does the publication have an understated political point of view, as is the case now with *Mother Earth News*?

Successful publications have a compelling editorial strength. The reader expects a specific kind of content served in a specific style.

Design – A publication's look is essential to its concept. Just as the way you dress represents who you are, so too does the way a publication dresses define what it is.

How does the publication look, and why does it look that way? Does the publication make generous use of white space? Is it type-heavy? Are photographs used for information or illustration or both? Does it always use large photos? Sometimes? Never? How much color does the publication have? Does it use spot colors? Where? How? Why?

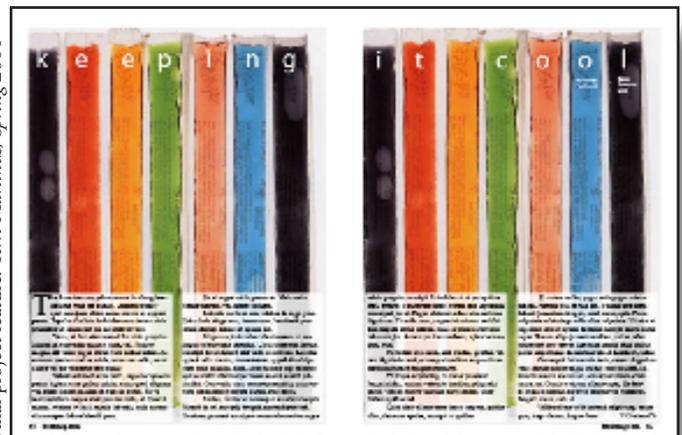
Advertising – Readers assess the identity of a publication through both its editorial and advertising content. What's more, readers hold the editors responsible for that ad content. Advertising should do more than simply match a publication's audience demographics and psychographics. It should match the philosophy. A publication that doesn't want cigarette ads, waif-thin models, red meat, or liquor should say so up front.

The editorial and advertising staffs should be singing the same song. The editorial philosophy is also the best defense against advertisers who expect special treatment of their products, or who cringe at a publication's coverage of topical events or issues.

Often, an ill-defined advertising philosophy will cause the editorial staff to self-censor material. In other cases, it causes advertisers to pull out because their perception of the publication is different from the editor's vision.

Advertising Hybrids – Advertising hybrids have complicated advertising-editorial dynamics, at the same time adding a boost to the publication economy. One reason for the healthy growth in publication advertising is the creative use of hybrid advertising forms such as advertorials, inserts, and outserts.

- **Advertorials** – An advertorial combines articles and advertising in a publication supplement sponsored entirely by the advertiser. Advertorials can be as short as four pages and as long as 32. They are produced separately from the publication, then bound in. Many look like miniature publications; some even have covers. Their use does require forethought. When dropped right in the middle of an article, they are intrusive. When placed between articles, they can blend with other editorial content. More than one advertorial in an issue can seriously hurt the publication's flow, no matter the location.
- **Inserts** – An insert is an ad created and produced by the advertiser; it comes to the publication already printed and is then bound into the publication. An insert is noticeable because it is often printed on different paper from the rest of the publication and may even have a different shape. Other inserts advertisers use include CDs, pop-ups, holograms, stand-alone booklets.
- **Outserts** – An outsert is a preprinted publication that contains advertising and may also include editorial material. An outsert differs from an insert in that it is not bound into the publication. It is mailed to subscribers with the publication, the two being contained inside a shrink-wrap.



Voice

A publication's identity is most easily defined by its voice, that is, the tone and tenor of articles and graphics. A publication with a well-defined voice not only offers the reader consistency and imagination, it also gives advertisers the opportunity to develop unique ads to match the publication's voice.

Editorial Formula

The editorial formula ties all the elements of a publication together, logically and coherently, in a readable, usable package. It is the practical application of the editorial philosophy, and it offers a blueprint for each issue of the publication. It defines the type of content staff members will use in implementing the editorial philosophy.

The editorial formula also details the specific subjects with which the publication will deal and defines how much emphasis will be given to each subject. Like the philosophy, the formula should be written down and should be highly detailed and specific.

Questions editors should ask when planning a formula are:

- How many pages will the publication typically be?
- What is the advertising-to-editorial ratio?
- How many continuing departments will the publication have and what will they be?
- How long will department stories be?
- How many feature length articles will the publication have and what type will they be?
- How long will your feature length articles be?
- Will the publication include fiction, poetry, photo essays, or any other special content?
- How will this content be organized?

Developing an editorial formula is as simple as it is vital. A worksheet for an editorial formula typically contains the following information:

- Number of total pages
- Number of pages of advertising
- Number of pages of editorial, including cover, masthead, and table of contents
- Number, if any, of pages of continuing departments
- Number of feature pages
- Breakdown of feature material, including types of articles, the number of each type, and their length
- Names of continuing departments, plus a description of what each department will cover, how many articles may be included and their length
- Placement of content

Advertising and Editorial Pages

A successful publication staff determines in advance how many pages it will target for advertising and how many for editorial. This is stated in terms of the advertising-editorial ratio as well as the total number of pages.

An advertising-editorial ratio of 60:40 means a publication has 60

pages of advertising for every 40 pages of editorial. If that publication has 100 pages, 60 contain advertising and 40 contain editorial. If it has 120 pages, 72 are advertising and 48 are editorial. The publication staff must determine how many pages it can reasonably sell to advertisers and how many pages it needs for the level of content it has planned.

The ideal ratio and number of pages usually is the result of trial and error and reaches a balance after a publication has been published for several years. The best advice when starting new publication is to study the competition. What is the audience size of the closest competitor? How similar is the new publication to that competitor? How different? What are the competition's ad and circulation rates, number of ads run, number of pages, and advertising-editorial ratio?

Competition includes publications, newspapers, and broadcast programs that reach a new publication's target audience as well as other media that cover the same type of content. What advertisers are missing from the competition that could be lured to a new publication? Could this new publication reach a larger audience? Or a smaller audience with more targeted information?

Media that successfully serve the target audience will also appeal to the same advertisers, whether or not the content is at all similar. Look at what is already being done and compare this to what a new publication could do. More important, look at what is not being done and imagine what gaps a new publication could fill. Editors often start publications because they are frustrated readers: No existing publication serves a specific need they have.

Departments

Departments offer consistency to readers by providing shorter articles, essays, and columns that offer updates, details, and perspectives on a wide variety of predetermined issues.

These are grouped together under one common topic area so that an individual department may have a single article or as many as several dozen. These whet the reader's appetite for the longer features, and they also satisfy the need for a broad range of topics. The staff knows exactly what departments it must fill every issue, and the readers know which to expect. Well-planned and executed departments are often the easiest way for a publication to maintain consistency. Short pieces bring readers quickly into the book and allows the writing staff to add late-breaking information.

The first question to ask when planning the editorial formula is: Do departments belong in the publication? What kinds of departments fit the publication's editorial philosophy and fill the needs of

Final project, departments. *Treva McCrosky, Spring 2004*



its audience? Not all have to appear in every issue, but a consistent group of departments should regularly appear.

The second question is: What kinds of content will these short articles regularly cover? Some departments are built entirely of service articles, others of essays, and still others have a mix of article types. Department titles should give an immediate indication of what's included in that section. Department names should be the same from issue to issue and the length of department pieces should be consistent.

The third question is: What will be the length of department articles? They can be snippets of fewer than 50 words, or longer pieces that take up a whole page. Typically, department articles are shorter than 500 words. Often, one department includes a range of lengths: perhaps two pieces under 50 words, three at between 150 and 200 words, and one at 500 to 600 words. This range, however, should be consistent.

Final project feature. *Cameron Thompson, Summer 2005*



Features

Features are the bread and butter of a publication, the content readers take time to sink their teeth into. The features in any given issue connect logically as well as aesthetically and emotionally. Over time, those features create the backbone of the publication.

Planning for features often begins one to two years before publication. Editors look for topical issues but offer the writers enough time for planning, research, and development. Features provide spark to a publication by the diversity of their content and length.

Some publications plan, for example, for one major service article, one profile, and two general features. Others go for one long feature—3,000 to 5,000 words—surrounded by smaller features at 1,000 to 1,200 words. Features have shrunk in word length throughout the past century and now average fewer than 2,000 words. They range, however from 1,000 to more than 10,000 words. Children's publications, not surprisingly, have short features.

For a start-up, the essential questions are: What kinds of feature articles will be included? What kind of content will full-length articles cover? How does the publication define a full-length article? The formula for features should be specific enough to offer the reader—and the staff—some direction but broad enough to give everybody some room to move around.

Placement of Content

There's no one "right" way to organize all this material as long as it follows a plan. Some publications are entirely departmentalized,

some have a mix of departments and features, and some combine department articles and features on similar topics into regular sections.

Think of the publication structure as a house. The cover is the front door, the departments are the hallways, and the features are the bigger rooms. You want that front door to look inviting enough for the reader to walk in. Just as the interior design of a house makes it comfortable and reflective of the owner's personality, so too should the design of the publication make the reader's stroll through its pages easy and pleasurable. You want a visitor to your house to sit down every now and then and just look around. You want them to be comfortable.

A good publication host plans for a smooth and comfortable pacing from article to article. A short article after a longer article gently encourages the reader to keep reading. A design with consistent signposts tells the reader when one department ends and another begins and helps the reader follow the articles from page to page.

Editorial jumps—in which an article continues from the middle of the publication to the end—are like serving coffee in the kitchen and telling them to go through the bathroom, down the basement stairs, through the laundry room, and out the back door if she wants cream and sugar.

Departments are usually placed either in the front of the book (FOB) or the back of the book (BOB). Advertising is often sold for placement in specific departments. In other cases, it is sold to be placed anywhere in the front or back, with ad contracts, then, requesting FOB or BOB placement. Those few advertisers with no preference simply ask for a run-of-the-book (ROB) placement.

Many departments have both advertising and editorial material on a single page. These pages, called "A and E" for advertising and editorial, may change from day to day during the final stages of a publication's production, as editorial pages are dropped to make room for advertising or added to replace ads that don't materialize.

Features are usually structured according to "wells," or blocks of editorial material unbroken by advertising. A "monowell" structure means that all feature material is placed together, usually in the center of the publication, and all ads are either in the front or back of the book. National Geographic has a monowell structure.

More common is a "multi-well" structure, in which editorial remains unbroken in smaller wells throughout the publication. Advertising appears between wells. This maintains the integrity of the editorial material while allowing advertising to be placed in the middle of the publication. Some publications modify the multi-well approach by adding jumps to longer pieces.

Audience

Before a publication is published, the editors have to define the way in which the publication's content is geared to the needs, interests, and motivations of its audience.

Although advertising is sold based on a clear delineation of reader demographics and psychographics, much editorial material is created based on the editor's inherent understanding of their audience. In many cases, the editor is the reader, and the publication is aimed at the editor's tastes, which often mesh nicely with the tastes of the larger audience.

To grow, a publication strives to reach a broader audience. As part of the process, the publication may look more to advertising to help generate revenue. If not done with care, this makes the publication less of a voice of the community it helped solidify because it may become more attuned to the needs of advertisers than to readers.