



## Generate More Revenue from Special Sections

What makes a special section “special” is that it provides a potential source of new revenue from new advertisers. Therefore, special sections should be planned around advertisers or advertising categories that are not currently and regularly represented in the paper. We recommend that you first review your current special section calendar and ask yourself, “Does this section/tabloid give me the opportunity for new business – new revenue?” If the answer is yes – great! If the answer is no, then maybe it is time to substitute for a different section aimed at a new list of potential advertisers.

When launching a new or improved special section, allow sufficient time for planning. You’ll need to:

- Decide whether this special section will run as ROP or as an insert.
- Build a prospect list.
- Budget costs and establish pricing.
- Talk with production about capabilities and any special needs.
- Meet with editorial to discuss content options.
- Design a cover page or section header to be used for sales purposes.
- Develop sales collateral.
- Promote upcoming sections through house ads.
- Allow for optimal advertising sales time.

### **ROP or Insert**

Consider running your special section as ROP pages if you have limited editorial content, fewer advertisers or limited production capabilities. Choose a stand-alone supplement if you want something more eye-catching and impactful that can be easily retained for future reference.

The goal of the ‘special section’ is to secure incremental ad dollars from existing customers but also attract non-traditional or budget conscience advertisers with targeted content.

### **Building a Prospect List**

As you are considering the potential advertisers for this section, write down the likely candidates. If the list predominantly features existing advertisers, then in all likelihood, the section you had in mind is not a special section at all. Focus on new account acquisitions by:

- Building a unique prospect list by sales representative.
- Searching the Yellow Pages, Chamber of Commerce directories or perform Google searches by section focus to identify target advertisers.

- Including, if necessary, advertisers from previous editions, but the list should not be entirely made up of previous participants.

### **Budget Costs and Establish Pricing**

Before determining the advertising pricing for the special section, consider and budget for the cost of producing the product.

- Will it be printed on special paper?
- Will it use special inks?
- Will it be produced on straight time or on overtime?
- Will it be “over-run?”
- Consider the distribution method. Will it be mailed?

When establishing the advertising rates, keep in mind that special sections should not be offered at rates that represent a discount from an existing rate card. The rate should take into consideration any and all unusual costs associated with production or delivery.

### **Talk with Production**

Work with your production staff to plan an in-paper date that works with their schedule. Consider scheduling the insert on your newspaper’s least busy day. Account for production requirements and count backward ten days from the date production needs the product. That will be your sales “lead-time.”

- Communicate whether the section will run as ROP, or run separately and need to be inserted.
- If it is to run on special paper or require special inks, are those items in-house, and if they aren’t, how long will it take to get what you need?

### **Meet with your Editorial Staff**

Confirm whether your editorial staff has the manpower to write original content for the special section. A good advertising to content ration is 60/40.

- Encourage your editorial staff to contact one of your regular newspaper advertisers for copy input.
- If original content is not an option, contact the retailers or manufacturers of the various products and services that align with the theme of the special section to see if they have copy they can provide to you.
- You may also consider purchasing canned copy from a company such as [Content that Works](#).

## **Design Marketing Materials**

Build the front cover page or section identifier early so you can incorporate the design elements in other collateral materials.

- Send out “thematic” invitations to participate to all potential advertisers. Be creative with the invitation – remember, you want to arouse interest in the upcoming section and you want to demonstrate your creativity.
- Create “leave behinds” for sales people. Once the advertisers have been sent an invitation, the sales team will follow up with a sales call. For advertisers not in or for advertisers that can’t be closed on the call, sales collateral with pertinent information should be left behind.
- Build success charts. The chart helps staff visualize how the sales event is going. The chart should also account for calls made that were not closed. Seeing accounts that said “no” can prompt other sales people to consider similar accounts from their lists.
- Develop and run house ads that promote the upcoming section to generate reader and advertiser interest. House ads should be run a week ahead of the insertion and then again on the Sunday prior to the in-paper date.

## **Advertising Sales**

Announce the special section to your sales team only after all of the necessary legwork has been completed. Ten selling days is the optimum selling time to create a sense of urgency, avoid overlapping sales initiatives, and eliminate procrastination. There are sections that could take longer, and some that require less sales lead time, but on average, a sales effort that lasts longer than ten days often will not result in more sales than can be achieved in the 10-day window.

- Sales representatives should aim for 10 sales calls per day because on average it takes six to seven calls to make one sale.
- Schedule special sections accordingly so that sales efforts don’t overlap.
- Discuss and determine how to best handle the most common question asked by advertisers: “Will participation in this section count toward my contract fulfillment and will my standard rate apply?”
- Anticipate likely objections and talk over what might be used with the sales team. Discuss what should be said when an advertiser says, “I like the section, but I don’t want to spend any new money – can’t we run my regular ad in the section?” The appropriate answer is – “Yes, we can do that but only if we redesign the ad so the ad ties with the section focus.”
- Follow up. Solicit regular updates from your sales staff and accompany them on sales calls if necessary.

See ‘em, Tell ‘em, Sell ‘em. The more you see, the more you tell, the more you tell, the more you sell.

Good luck!