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SRDS—Your Connection to National Advertisers

Many, many, many years ago when I landed my first sales job, one of the “old-timers” gave me some advice that I forgot, *“This job is simple kid, the more you tell, the more you sell!”* He went on to explain that to be successful, a salesperson needs to reach out to as many potential buyers as possible and tell them what your product has to offer them. This is as true today as it was forty years ago. The only problem is that today, those prospects are harder and harder to find. Many of the goods and services once offered by local merchants are now provided by large national chains. Once, a salesperson could walk into a business on Main Street, introduce themselves to a business owner and have a conversation about advertising. Today in many cases, the local store manager doesn’t have time to talk and if you do manage to get a few minutes with them, they will likely tell you that they have no control over their advertising. You will most likely hear, “That’s handled by corporate, you’ll have to talk to them.” The spread of “big box” stores, franchises and national chains has had a major impact on local community papers. Many of the small local businesses that made up our traditional advertising base have been forced to close up or to align themselves with a national franchise. The local businesses that have managed to survive have done so by cutting costs, often including deep cuts in their advertising budgets. (A short-sighted strategy that often hastens their decline.)

Fortunately, the changes that have shaken the media world in the last few years have opened up new opportunities for local community papers to do business with major national advertisers. While national retailers have wholeheartedly embraced digital media, their media research has discovered what we’ve always known, *“Nothing beats print when you want to really connect with consumers!”* After spending years building their online presence these major advertisers have found that print is, by far, the best way to get coupons and sales flyers in the hands of their customers. For decades, national advertisers relied on the metro daily papers to deliver their flyers and run their display ads. The closing of many of these papers and the industry wide decline in daily newspaper circulation has led national media buyers to seek other methods to connect with consumers. After decades of ignoring the reach and readership of free and community newspapers, national media buyers have begun to realize the value of our publications. Many papers are receiving orders from large retailers that refused to take their phone calls just a few short years ago. This is a windfall for these papers providing a consistent source of revenue with a minimum of effort required, as they usually consist of preprinted flyers or camera ready layouts. Running these programs also enhances the value of your publication...local consumers want to know what is on sale where they do most of their shopping.

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Making the Connection

Before a national media buyer can place an order with you, they have to know that your paper exists and that it reaches the market they wish to target. How does a media buyer in New York or Chicago who has never been to your town or even in your state know which papers to contact in Iowa, Texas or anywhere else? They turn to SRDS. SRDS stands for Standard Rate & Data Service and is the media buyer's "bible." Published by Kantar Media, SRDS provides media buyers with the information they need to make informed buying decisions for their companies and their clients. To learn more about what publishers can do to enhance their chances of attracting national advertisers, I spoke to David Crawford, Account Manager for SRDS. During our conversation, I asked David a number of questions about how publishers can use SRDS to connect with buyers. Here is what I learned from David Crawford.

How can SRDS help small publishers connect with media buyers?

Kantar Media's SRDS platform connects buyers and sellers of media through the largest online media discovery platform in the U.S. (SRDS.com) and through online and in-person events (Media Mixology and SRDS Media Pro webinars). Publishers who are listed in SRDS.com (as the vast majority should be) get daily visibility with active media buyers and planners. PaperChain members have the added benefit of preferred placement in SRDS.com search results and the inclusion of a direct link to their CVC audit statement. Additional and customized visibility packages are available to help publishers further reach the SRDS media buying and planning community.

How have changes in the media landscape made community publications more attractive to national and regional advertisers?

Many advertisers have shared for years that they want to reach "local markets" to be "part of the community." Thanks to continued exposure and great third party data (like the information provided in CVC Readership Surveys), media buyers and planners feel more comfortable working with community publications.

Who uses SRDS to make media buying decisions?

While the SRDS subscriber base spans the media spectrum (titles, levels of experience & savvy), the power user is best visualized as a 24-year-old planner/buyer. They lack time, confidence & experience, and have an average budget of \$26 million to work with annually. They have a short window to put their buys together and a great deal of distractions (everything from vendor calls to Pokémon Go) – begging the question, how do you get in front of them? How can a publisher in the Midwest tell their story to a young buyer in New York? Of course, the answer is through SRDS.

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How does a publisher's profile on SRDS influence a media buyer to choose a particular paper?

It depends on the market and competitive landscape of a given area, but think of a publisher's profile as the chance to communicate the value of a publication just as you would on a sales call, but happening right at the moment when a buyer is making her decision. It might help publishers to visualize this by seeing how they currently appear in the SRDS database. If a publisher is interested in seeing their visibility on SRDS.com (or their competitors), they can reach out to me at david.crawford@kantarmedia.com

What does a publisher have to do to ensure that their SRDS profile properly reflects what they have to offer buyers?

To piggyback on question 4, it is a good exercise to periodically view your listing on SRDS.com. The view of a publisher's SRDS.com profile may be the closest thing to a sales call that the organization may be afforded. It is imperative that information in your profile be as up to date as possible.

What specific actions does a publisher have to take to properly present their paper on SRDS?

First, reach out to me to receive credentials for accessing the site. Upon review, they can share any changes that need to be made and we can help make them to ensure the basic data is up to date. Audited data is sent automatically by our friends at CVC. If publishers are interested in more strategic exposure, we can share examples of that as well.

Do you have case studies or success stories of community papers securing new businesses as a result of SRDS?

While we have heard many stories from publishers sharing their success in partnering with SRDS and Kantar Media, I received the following statement from Joyce Beverly at The Citizen Newspapers in Fayetteville, Georgia:

"Our SRDS listing is the most consistent and valuable way to reach agencies and corporations looking for solid placement for inserts in the Atlanta DMA. It's a "right place at the right time" 24/7 kind of strategy, an effortless media kit surfing for American preprint business. Correspondingly, these revenues... are up 15%. Even more encouraging, the number of customers placing inserts in various zones with us during this period has nearly doubled."

SRDS helps those that help themselves

I am extremely grateful to David for being so generous with his time and for the information he provided me. Both he and SRDS are dedicated to serving their customers and helping media buyers connect with media providers. SRDS is a powerful tool to help your publication secure advertising from large national retailers. Any workman knows that to get the most from his

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tools, they need to be sharp. The same is true of SRDS, to get the best results publishers have to keep their profile up to date and to ensure its accuracy. This is the modern equivalent of polishing your shoes and combing your hair before a sales call... you want to look good for the buyer! Taking the time to review and update your SRDS profile requires only a minimal investment of your time, but making the effort to do so can potentially produce big results for your paper. SRDS provides a terrific way for you to present your publications to media buyers, but it is the responsibility of each publisher to make sure that their profile tells their story accurately. A regular review of their SRDS profile should be a priority on every publisher's schedule. The lesson I learned long ago still applies, *"The more you tell on SRDS, the more national accounts you have a chance to sell!"*

This article was written by Jim Busch.

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