

# Presstime

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Innovation doesn't have to be high tech. Winners of this year's Presstime Best Practices Awards have tackled challenges with imagination and ingenuity, and some did so with surprisingly low-tech, straightforward solutions.

You'll even find a few of the same names that were recognized last year, a fact that underscores what the awards are all about: constant honing of the newspaper craft, making its practices better than before.

These newspapers not only demonstrate how the industry can be more efficient, but also provide models that can be emulated, from the rural small-town paper to the large metropolitan daily.

Representatives of the Association and members of its Technology Group selected the winners of the ninth annual awards. Winning teams will be honored this month during the Newspapers '05 conference in Dallas.

Here are our winners »



<b>ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</b> The Monterey County (Calif.) Herald	
<b>PRESS &amp; MATERIALS</b> Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	
<b>PRE-PRESS</b> COXnet (Cox Newspapers Inc., Atlanta)	
<b>BUSINESS</b> The Palm Beach Post, West Palm Beach, Fla.	
<b>PACKAGING &amp; DISTRIBUTION</b> Los Angeles Times	
<b>NEW MEDIA</b> COXnet (Cox Newspapers Inc., Atlanta)	
<b>EDITORIAL</b> The Arizona Republic, Phoenix	

## ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH & SAFETY - The Monterey County (Calif.) Herald

### 'Safety' Gets Rave Reviews

Fresh from working for an artichoke manufacturer, for whom she spearheaded the making of an in-house safety video, Lis DeBartolo became The Monterey County Herald's human resources director. Publishing a newspaper, she soon realized, can be just as dangerous as processing artichokes.

DeBartolo, with the help of the Herald's safety team, spent six months making "Safety," a video scripted, acted, filmed and produced entirely by the paper's staff. Most lines were ad-libbed, and someone dug deep into a closet to dust off the video camera. An employee's home equipment was used to edit hours of video down to 30 minutes.



Completed in December, the video blends comedy with valuable information, covering proper fire extinguisher use, pre-press and pressroom precautions, ergonomics and worker's compensation.

"Common sense keeps you out of trouble," says Dave Howell, a Hawaiian-shirt clad operations mechanic, as he leads viewers through a tour of the Herald pressroom.

One advantage of producing an in-house video, DeBartolo says, is that it's specific to the audience's workplace.

Highlights include a segment in which staff members demonstrate earthquake safety by swaying back and forth before ducking under desks, and another in which a Superman-suited staff member urges employees to lift with their legs rather than their back.

All new employees are required to watch the video during orientation, DeBartolo says. "It gives a new hire the flavor of the building. We're a happy, fun crew." Furnished with funny outtakes and a classic rock 'n' roll soundtrack, the video has been in such demand that DeBartolo set up viewing sessions with popcorn for each department.

"In all of my years in human resources, I have never before had an employee ask to see a safety video," DeBartolo says.

"It's very effective," says Best Practices judge Tom Croteau, NAA senior vice president of technology.

#### PRESS & MATERIALS - Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

### Silo-Busting Reaps Rewards

The days of finger pointing are over" at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, says Insert Operations Manager Peter Kowalewski.

The paper has delegated accountability for press and operations functions to all production supervisors. In the past, responsibility was divided among two different departments with distinct management teams. Now, managers say, bosses oversee both teams and all wear purple shirts, symbolic of their united front.

It's a new team philosophy in an industry that loves its silos, says Quality Assurance Manager Scott Humby.

The idea took shape during a meeting on how to maximize efficiency beyond machinery or production floor workers. "We thought, 'What about the supervisors?'" Humby says.

Called the "line mentality" or "end-to-end" process, the method designates that a floor supervisor manage an entire production line from start to finish. For instance, one person manages the plate room, a press, the conjoining stacker line and cart loaders. This allows one supervisor to focus on run of paper and another to oversee insertion.

Creation of the system, which gives "everyone ownership of the production department," was very much a team effort, says Vice President of Operations Royce Miles. "The days of old packaging and pressroom management are over.



Everyone shares in accountability of production.”

To accomplish this change, managers are trained in all production areas through an informal mentoring system.

While still quantifying results of the one-year-old system, managers report increased communication, not just between supervisors but among department members, as well as insertion efficiency gains and reduction in overall waste.

“This is a great idea,” says Best Practices judge Harshad Matalia, NAA vice president of production operations. “It’s particularly innovative as a home-grown concept as well as showing results and cost savings.”

#### PRE-PRESSS - COXnet, Atlanta

### Fixing Systems on the Fly

The anxiety that accompanies taking a newspaper’s computer system offline for upgrades or other changes, especially close to deadline, may be over for Cox Newspapers Inc.

A team at the Atlanta company’s COXnet unit developed a “hot,” or “live,” deployment solution that enables Cox’s 22 newspapers to swap software with upgraded versions in real time, without requiring a moment’s downtime.



“This allows the publication of news on a 24/7 basis, even when being upgraded,” says COXnet Chief Technology Officer Rajiv Pant. “We can replace the new software without bringing the site down.”

Typically, it can take a newspaper two to four hours to upgrade a system, he says, and at least six hours to revert to the last version that worked correctly before an upgrade, if need be.

With the hot deployment solution, newspapers can spend this time continuing with the publication process rather than waiting for systems to be returned to normal.

The process is “transparent to everyone,” adds General Manager John Reetz. “It makes things always appear normal” to system users.

As an added benefit, changes to a system can be made without requiring members of the information technology department to work overtime.

“Not having to take the entire system down to launch enhancements, bug fixes and new products has been wonderful,” says Julie Leddon, manager of product development. “Hot deployment enables us to deliver products to the newspapers in a more timely fashion, without having to force 22 newspapers working in a 24/7 operation to pick a convenient time to bring the system down.”

Best Practices judges liked what they saw. “It’s a new process and a new approach that we haven’t seen,” says Tom Croteau, NAA senior vice president of technology.

“Getting online upgrades in an automated fashion, and having the framework to handle them in an organized way, is a step beyond what others are doing,” says Annie Loftus, NAA senior project manager of technology

#### BUSINESS - The Palm Beach Post, West Palm Beach, Fla.

## Ads Do Double Duty

Capitalizing on the success of its Web site's searchable real estate advertising section, The Palm Beach Post introduced searchable online health, travel, business and entertainment ad sections in January 2004. It also began automatically posting display ads from each day's print edition on [www.palmbeachpost.com](http://www.palmbeachpost.com), a move that is bringing in additional revenue.



Display ads are taken apart, and each product or service featured within the ad comes up during a search of the Web site's shopping section, [www.palmbeachpost.com/shopping](http://www.palmbeachpost.com/shopping). This gives a larger advertiser, such as a department store, more opportunities to showcase its offerings. It also gives customers an easier way to find a bargain.

Today, the expanded Web site features more than 22,000 goods and services, offering savings on items including a slice of pizza or a multimillion-dollar mansion.

"Customers just want the best deal they can get," says Dan Shorter, general manager of [PalmBeachPost.com](http://PalmBeachPost.com).

While adding display ads to the Web site has meant an increase in ad rates, Shorter says local advertisers have been receptive to the new practice because the site brings "foot traffic" to their stores.

[PalmBeachPost.com](http://PalmBeachPost.com) also features print ads from two other Post publications: the Florida Pennysaver and La Palma, a Spanish-language weekly.

Best Practices judges were particularly impressed by the Web site staff's development of technology that automatically helps prepare print ads for the Web.

The software searches the paper's publishing database four times a day, automatically converts ads to PDF files and sends them via Internet to HarvestINFO in Mason, Ohio, to format for posting online.

"It's like an online Yellow Pages with coupons and links to stores," John D'Alessandro, NAA director of production operations, says of the online shopping section.

"There was a time when new media was separate from the business side," adds Annie Loftus, NAA senior project manager of technology. "More and more, you see them blended."

## PACKAGING & DISTRIBUTION - Los Angeles Times

### Bundle Flipper Saves a Bundle

Sometimes, technology can only take us so far," says John Craig, packaging and distribution division manager for California Community News, which handles packaging and distribution for its sister company, the Los Angeles Times. "Then employee ingenuity takes over."

It was an inspired combination of both that led to the invention of the Bundle Flipper, a homemade device that vastly improved the way the Times bundles and ships preprint inserts to the U.S. Postal Service for mailing to nonsubscribers.

For more than two years, California Community News has delivered millions of insert packages to the USPS for distribution. The problem was that addresses printed on the bundles always ended up on the bottom, and the post office requires that information be on the top of the package.



It took two shifts a day, four days a week and 16 workers flipping over the 20- to 30-pound bundles on the conveyor by hand to avert this problem.

Inspired, Steven Toma, packaging supervisor for California Community News, created a prototype "bundle flipper." Using a two-foot piece of banding wire, he curled one end into a hook, with the other duct-taped to the bundler. As the bundle passed by on the conveyor belt, the hook, suspended above, grabbed the front of the bundle. As the conveyor continued to move, the bundle was forced upward until it was flipped and then released.

Later, a more stable base was installed above the conveyor, complete with a grabbing arm.

Since then, 12 devices have been installed at less than \$100 each, and fewer repetitive-motion injuries have been reported, Craig says.

"It's a low-tech solution to a high-tech concern," says Best Practices judge Tom Croteau, NAA senior vice president of technology. "It shows real ingenuity."

## NEW MEDIA - COXnet, Atlanta

### Bridging the Print-Web Divide

By creating a system for publishing the same content in a variety of print and digital formats, a team of technology gurus at Cox Newspapers Inc.'s COXnet in Atlanta has tackled one of the industry's greatest new-media roadblocks. The COXnet Suite of Print+Web Applications allows Cox writers and editors to enter content once, edit it once and output all of it to the Web, print publishing systems or both. The software streamlines workflow by ensuring newspaper staffers no longer are duplicating efforts by typing or formatting copy separately for print and the Web.

"Usually, data are entered in the newsroom and pushed out to the Web site," says Rajiv Pant, COXnet's chief technology officer. "This is a problem because data are created in a static form for a [print] format."

The suite allows Pant and his team to take advantage of new media's capabilities, including its ability to make information searchable and to add hyperlinks and other interactive elements.

"The suite makes our job more efficient because we can manage both the print



and Web at the same time," says General Manager John Reetz. "It also bridges the relationship between Web and print in the newsroom and our operations at COXnet."

The Web site now combines real-time sports scores, statistics and standings, content originally written for the print edition, and box scores that are updated immediately on game nights.

Additionally, event calendar listings from the newspaper are posted with Web links online, and a database of local restaurants is coming soon.

"It addresses the vexing problem of needing to publish data in different formats for different platforms," says Rob Runett, NAA's director of electronic media communications. "I bet we could see this develop into a product that's sold to other papers down the road."

EDITORIAL - The Arizona Republic, Phoenix

## Your Community, Now Searchable

Your news, any way you want it.

While that's not The Arizona Republic's official marketing slogan, it could be, thanks to its use of technology that serves up customized information on sports and community news.

The newspaper's Web site,

[www.azcentral.com](http://www.azcentral.com), maintains a sports database of high school football and baseball history, [www.prephistory.azcentral.com](http://www.prephistory.azcentral.com),

dating to 1921. The page is so popular that it draws a larger audience than the Republic's online professional sports section and more traffic than local sports coverage on ESPN.com, says Digital Media Director Mike Coleman.

Featuring statistics gathered by the paper's editorial department and the Arizona Interscholastic Association, the sports database showcases the names of every all-state honoree, as well as team titles and the players and coaches of the year. A database reporter in the print edition's newsroom analyzes trends and information for news stories and research to post on the Web site or publish in the newspaper.

"We see this as an investment in building a quality local audience and serving our local market to a level that no one else can," Coleman says.

In 2004, the paper designed its databases using the open-source programming language PHP, or PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor, which was chosen for its flexibility, Coleman says.

The Web site's police beat database allows users to search for crimes by ZIP code. Launched in the second quarter of 2004, this database draws almost 250,000 views each month, yet requires only a few minutes of work each week. A news assistant simply uploads Excel files sent by police departments in cities throughout metropolitan Phoenix via a Web-based administrator.

"This is a great example of print and online working together in a convergence package," Coleman says.

Rounding out the site's local-information-on-demand menu is a database of recent home sales reports and home-value trends, based on public records and searchable by ZIP code or street name. Maps of each property are provided with the results, courtesy of a partnership with MapQuest.com.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a sports database. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'azcentral' and 'Sports' links. Below that, there's a search bar and a table of statistics. The table has columns for 'Team', 'Year', 'Score', and 'Opponent'. The data is organized into sections for different sports and years.

Team	Year	Score	Opponent
Arizona State	1921	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1922	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1923	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1924	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1925	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1926	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1927	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1928	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1929	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1930	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1931	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1932	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	1933	14-0	Yavapai
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Arizona State	2020	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	2021	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	2022	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	2023	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	2024	14-0	Yavapai
Arizona State	2025	14-0	Yavapai

The site's features are "portable and can be shared with other papers," says Tom Croteau, NAA senior vice president of technology. "You can easily make tweaks with this and be up and running right away."

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