

A publisher's questions

A new publisher's got a lot to think about: cash flow, staffing, profit and loss, circulation, paper costs, internet presence—and that's just for starters.

Eventually, he's going to want to focus on the paper's design—because he understands that the visual impact of his newspaper is critical to its success with both readers and advertisers.

What does he need to know? What are the questions he needs to ask so he can take a leadership role in the design process?

It's not important that he know all the details, or even that he remember them if he's told. What is important is that his managers—especially in the newsroom—know the answers and be ready to respond when asked.

25 questions a publisher should ask about the design of the newspaper:

1. What is the size of our text type?
2. What is the spacing between lines of text?
3. What is our text font? Why that one?
4. What is our display type face? Why that one?
5. What are the rules for non-standard typefaces?
6. Why do we use (or not use) page labels?

type face? text? units?
color? **style guide?** picas?
gutters? **software?** consistency?
page position? **display face?**
signature color? limitations?
calibration? **measures?**

A new publisher should have a batch of questions about the design of his newspaper.

7. Do we have a consistent style for labels and other standing elements?
8. How wide are our gutters?
9. Why that width?
10. What unit of measure do we use: picas or inches (or other)?
11. What are our rules on color use?
12. Do we have a signature color? What is it?
13. Why do we have certain pages positioned where they are?

14. What pagination software are we using?
15. When did we last upgrade our software?
16. When was the last time we redesigned?
17. Why did we do it then?
18. How is it holding up?
19. Do we have a design style guide?
20. When was it written?
21. Who wrote it?
22. Who is in charge of updating it?
23. When was the last time it was updated?
24. Whose responsibility is it to keep the design on track?
25. When did we last do a focus group looking at the design?

If the newsroom can answer these questions without hesitation, the new publisher can rest assured that someone is looking out for the well-being of the design.



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is filled with so many good ideas. You'll find yourself asking: "Why didn't I think of that?"

Kevin Slimp

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