

# Redesign is a team effort

**Y**ou've decided: You're going to redesign your newspaper. Its look is becoming dated, content needs reorganization and you want to make it more visually compelling. Good.

But who's going to be a part of the effort? Will it work for you to have a few preliminary discussions with your editor and just let him start working on some mockups—or should you have others involved in the process, too?

If you assign the job to only one person, odds are you're going to get some ideas and approaches that seem arbitrary and somewhat ambiguous.

A good redesign takes a team effort—and you should build that team first, before you begin work on the redesign itself.

Here are some of the players who need to be sitting at the table:

**PUBLISHER:** It's her newspaper—and her responsibility, ultimately, to approve of the final redesign. She needs to understand what changes are being suggested and why those changes will improve her newspaper.

**EDITOR:** A redesign is primarily a newsroom project and the editor should have a strong say in the eventual look and approach.

**PRODUCTION EDITOR:** This is the person who makes the design happen on deadline. He can tell you if a design idea will work or not over time.



**Burdening your editor with the entire redesign effort may result in ideas that are ill-informed and fuzzy.**

**DESIGNER:** The best designer in your shop may be in your ad graphics department. It doesn't matter: If she's your best designer, you certainly want her involved in the project.

**ADVERTISING DIRECTOR:** Her job is to sell your newspaper to advertisers. She can tell you whether jockeying an ad position here or there is going to help her sell.

**CIRCULATION DIRECTOR:** His job is to sell your newspaper to readers. He can tell you what changes to page 1 design are going to help him sell.

**AD LAYOUT PERSON:** She's the one who decides upon ad placement in every issue. If you're going to shift the position of certain pages (obits?) during the redesign, she can advise you how to make the change—and how certain advertisers will react to the change.

**PRESS SUPERVISOR:** He's going to need to know about your thinking on sectioning and color use, so he can advise you on how to make those changes work.

**SYSTEMS:** A redesign often requires tweaking of style sheets, templates and the like. Your systems guy can help make the updates work seamlessly for editors and designers.

**THE OUTSIDER:** It often works well to include someone in the design group who knows v-e-r-y little about design and v-e-r-y little about how the newsroom works. This is the person who makes no assumptions and often asks the questions that keep the rest of the group on its toes. His "Why are we doing that?" or his "Who's gonna do that?" may be just what's needed to make sure the eventual redesign works well.

Before you build your redesign, build your redesign team. It's a first step toward a better newspaper.



## '101 HENNINGER HELPFUL HINTS

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

### Kevin Slimp

Director  
Institute of Newspaper  
Technology

## FREE DESIGN EVALUATION:

Ed Henninger offers design evaluations—at no charge and with no obligation—to readers of this column.

**ED HENNINGER** is an independent newspaper consultant and Director of Henninger Consulting.

Offering comprehensive newspaper design services including redesigns, workshops, design training and design evaluations.

www.henningerconsulting.com  
edh@henningerconsulting.com  
803-327-3322