

If you want to redesign your paper, **you must redesign yourself.**

## Redesign the way you think

It's the key  
to making  
your redesign  
work for readers

HENNINGER  
ON DESIGN

**Y**ears ago, the editor of a newspaper I was redesigning asked: "What's the most important thing we can do to make our redesign a success?"

My immediate reply: "Change the way you think."

His reaction: "Yeah. Right."

Yes...it was right. Then...and now. If you want to redesign your paper, you must redesign yourself.

Editors and their newsrooms must begin to see that some of the habits they've developed over years won't work if they really want a new newspaper—one that works for their readers.

Some of the changes you'll have to make:

**1. STOP WRITING LONG STORIES.** Learn to edit. Learn to segment. I worked at a newspaper where a story would go to the city desk at 18 inches—and come out at 24 inches. Material had been "edited in to provide proper context." Right.

**2. STOP CONFUSING** what you think the reader "needs to know" with what you want your readers to have to read. Know your readers and understand that there may be behind-the-scenes politicking involved in a school levy effort that you may find fascinating but that they, frankly, just do not care about.



**If you want to make your redesign a success, stop doing what you've always done—and redesign the way you think.**

**3. STOP THINKING STORIES.** Think packages. Think photos. Think briefs. Think graphics. Think infoboxes. Think color. Think of ways to give readers the information they need in the format that is easiest for them to understand.

**4. STOP THINKING** of reporters as writers. They are also data-gatherers. If the information is better presented as a graphic or a photo, let them gather the graphic information or set up the photo.

**5. STOP THINKING** of photographers, graphic artists or designers as people who can't write. Some of the brightest writers I've worked with are folks who spend most of their time with Nikon, Photoshop, Illustrator or InDesign.

**6. STOP REACTING**—start planning. Don't wait until your city's long-planned new YMCA opens—begin work now on the graphics and the photos and the interviews for that special section.

**7. STOP THINKING** of advertising as the enemy. If you want that special section—and you want it set up so you've got the space you need in the

configurations that work best for readers—get your ad director involved in the planning.

**8. STOP OPERATING IN A VACUUM.** Include other newsroom departments (yes, even other departments throughout the entire company) in your thinking and your planning.

**9. STOP CHEATING.** Set realistic deadlines for photographers, reporters and graphic artists—and demand that they meet them. Your page designer can't do the proper job unless she has the finished material in hand.

**10. STOP. JUST STOP.** Be still for a few moments. Take a look at what you've done. Evaluate your work. We newspaper folk tend to become much like the news we cover: what was important yesterday isn't even a memory today.

Another quote that helps us to change the way we think: "If you keep doin' what you've always done, you'll keep gettin' what you always got."

Amen.

'If you keep doin' what you've always done, **you'll keep gettin' what you always got.'**