

Detroit Makes Radical Distribution Changes

Newspapers' changes come with eye toward the future

By Jennifer Streisand

The Detroit (Mich.) Free Press and The Detroit (Mich.) News will end home delivery four days a week beginning March 30, 2009, but the move has the potential to mold the changes necessary to preserve the great tradition of American newspapers.

The newspapers, as part of the Detroit Media Partnership, will offer subscribers home delivery on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, while making single-copy editions and e-editions or PDF versions of the printed newspapers available every day. The monthly subscription rate for the print and e-edition is \$12. The newspapers' Web sites will continue to be free to non-subscribers. These changes not only involve delivery, but also a revamping of the format in the printed editions and a lot of additional content and advertising online.

"I would say the feedback from major advertisers across the country has been extraordinarily favorable

because they view us as doing something positive to turn around what they see as an alarming decline in the future of newspapers," said **David Hunke**, CEO of the Detroit Media Partnership and publisher of the Detroit Free Press. Advertising in the single-copy editions will be sold on a fixed-inventory basis, he explained. Classified advertising will be included in the back pages of the single-copy editions and classified search technology is being upgraded online.

The Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News have a joint operating agreement, but Gannett Co., Inc., the owner of the Free Press, is the managing partner. MediaNews Group, owner of The Detroit News, had significant input into the plan, and agreed to it, added Hunke.

The two newspapers will continue to be separate and independent and will continue to have multiple sections on the days of home delivery.

Express copies available on the newsstands will have an entirely new look and will be designed to be a quicker read, running between 30 to 32 pages.

"Our editors and design team are working on creating a paper that will be as informative and invigorating as our current newspaper, only smaller," said **Jonathan Wolman**, editor and publisher of The Detroit News.

The newspapers have set up Web sites to inform the public and advertis-

ers about the changes and to receive feedback at www.freep.com/transform and www.detnews.com/transform. Readers can also get more information about the e-edition on the Web sites, said **Janet Hasson**, senior vice president of audience development for the Detroit Media Partnership.

"You can enlarge the print; you can scan over it; you can e-mail it; you can print it. There are a lot of benefits to the e-edition, and that is what we are trying to demonstrate to readers," Hasson explained.

Publishers and staff are hopeful the results will be lasting.

"We see this transition as a revolutionary change in how we distribute newspapers and an extraordinary attempt to save two established newspapers that serve one of America's most interesting markets," said Wolman.

Janet Hasson
 Detroit (Mich.) Media Partnership
 313-222-2373
jhasson@dnps.com
www.detroitmedia.com/transform

David Hunke
 Detroit (Mich.) Free Press
 313-222-2060
dhunke@dnps.com
www.freep.com

Jonathan Wolman
 The Detroit (Mich.) News
 313-222-2110
jon.wolman@detnews.com
www.detnews.com

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The Detroit News

