

The Business Journal

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Society of American Business Editors and Writers

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Plain Dealer column attracts women readers

By Mary Ellen Huesken

A recent readership survey confirmed our suspicions: Women found little of interest in the Plain Dealer Business Section.

The reasons for this are many— I, for one, have been campaigning to run fewer pictures of white-guys-in-suits — but our reserach told us that our main enemy was time. While *working* women regularly look at our pages, they don't take the time to read them and when they do they read in the evening.

We decided to offer working women a column for, about and by them. It was to be a place where, in the absence of mentors in the workplace, a woman could find some advice.

"Women's Work" began Oct. 6 with a piece by a local consultant on how women can come across more effectively. It was followed by one on the difficulties of breaking into male-dominated construction trades. The third week we ran a column urging working parents to discuss family concerns with their bosses — to "bring them out of the closet."

I mix the subjects of the columns. Work/family concerns are popular, and a recent piece on the basics of choosing child care was a big hit.

But I aim other articles at women who don't have children at all or who don't have children at home. Pieces on career planning, women entrepreneurs and rape in the workplace are just a few.

One piece looked at how women's needs in outplacement differ from men's — we tend to take job loss more personally than men do, local experts believe. The current economic climate made that one timely.

The column runs down the left-hand column of the Sunday business cover. So far, all but one have been written by outsiders, people I know or people who call me cold to suggest an idea. (I compiled the odd but very popular one, a



"Women's Work," a new column in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, highlights issues of particular interest to working women. One column focused on a graphic design and video production firm that runs a day-care center for employee's children in its building.

addition to the business section.

But that's the nice part. The hard part is working with non-journalists on focusing topics and tightening writing.

Before the October debut, I had half a dozen columns ready to go. I compiled lists of ideas and potential writers last summer by meeting with dozens of women. Most were prominent in the local business or social service fields, but a few were mid-level executives juggling careers, children, homes and husbands.

The most controversial part within the newsroom concerned the title of the column. We just didn't think "Babes in Business" would work.

duties to make time for this project. And because some of the pieces aren't as well written as others, it gives me a chance to write, even if my name doesn't appear.

(No matter how few or how many changes I make in a piece, I fax to the writer a copy of exactly what will appear.)

Some of the success is attributable to the Plain Dealer's promotions department. To launch the column, the promotions director created house ads with such slogans as, "For a man's world, it sure has plenty of women," and "Where exactly is a woman's place these days?"

Other ads appeared on rack cards throughout the area, and a letter asking ideas and even whole column suggestions.

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The column runs down the left-hand column of the Sunday business cover. So far, all but one have been written by outsiders, people I know or people who call me cold to suggest an idea. (I compiled the odd but very popular one, a piece on handling Christmas stress in which I quoted a variety of women on how they get through fiscal year-end and holiday hell month.)

We don't pay the writers — some write for publicity, while others write because they want to effect social change.

The response has been wonderful. Women who have written for it tell me they receive countless comments on their pieces, and many people I meet say they enjoy the newest



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The most controversial part within the newsroom concerned the title of the column. We just didn't think "Babes in Business" would work.

Hand-wringing about keeping women in the title (sexism) or taking women out of the title (no market hook) went on for weeks. Finally, we decided it was important to keep the word women in the title to draw women to the new column.

While a few readers objected to the title, most focused on the content.

As business copy desk chief, I was able to shift some of my

duties to make time for this project. And because some of the pieces aren't as well written as others, it gives me a chance to write, even if my name doesn't appear.

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Other ads appeared on rack cards throughout the area, and a letter seeking ideas and even whole columns went out to 100 prominent local women.

The Plain Dealer as a whole and the business department in particular are still looking for ways to appeal to women readers. Women's Work isn't the final answer — but it fills a niche.

Mary Ellen Huesken is business copy chief for the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Top 100 lists: how to make them, how to use them

by Henry Dubroff

With newspapers and other business publications hungry for added revenues and new database research firms entering the field, Top 100 sections appear headed for a growth phase.

How much they will grow and how many markets will adopt them remains uncertain. But it appears likely that in the next few years at least one publication in the 25 biggest cities will offer a Top 100 section to business readers.

Top 100 sections — sometimes scaled down to Top 50s in smaller markets — are graphics-laden lists of public companies in a geographic area, typically broken down by performance, size and sectors.

In essence they are a localized version of The Fortune 500. Some newspapers have run Top 100 sections for years —

either by hiring an outside contractor or doing the research internally by reviewing filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Many other newspapers are tinkering with them for the first time.

Although some papers operate their own turnkey sections, it's often an outside contractor that takes on the dull and boring number-crunching and data collection involved in building a localized Top 100 data base. The contractors also lend some advertising support. It's then up to the local publication's business news staff to produce the stories, layouts and designs that make the section a unified whole.

The contractors' fees range from \$15,000 a year to \$30,000 a year.

The leading Top 100 subcontractor is Mansoor Zakaria, whose MZ Group in San Francisco will produce databases for

14 Top 100 sections this year for newspapers ranging from the Los Angeles Times to the Cleveland Plain Dealer and Indianapolis Star-Tribune.

Zakaria started out six years ago using a software program originally designed for stock traders at the discount brokerage Charles Schwab & Co. Zakaria sees Top 100 as a first step by newspapers into the world of computerized information gathering. But he said he's sometimes disappointed by clients who simply reproduce his tables in special sections without taking time for a thorough analysis. "I hope we don't see Top 100 sections become the ultimate banality," he said. When it comes to linking computerized research and business journalism, he concedes, "there's a lot left to do."

(See Top 100, page 3)

Inside: details on the Chicago convention, page 3

The Business Journalist

A publication of the Society of American Business Editors and Writers

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Gary Klott, Author, Times Books/Random House

Jim Mitchell, Business Editor, San Jose Mercury News

Dallas, Arkansas papers shut down; Baltimore Sun employees take buy outs

By Mark Calvey

It's been a tumultuous period for the media industry and business journalism. The Dallas Times Herald and Arkansas Gazette shut down, and the Baltimore Sun saw 350 employees, more than a quarter of the paper's white-collar staff, accept buy out offers.

The newspaper, owned by Times Mirror Co. of Los Angeles, had expected about 100 employees to accept the buyout offer.

As The Business Journalist went to press, several business journalists from the Dallas Times Herald were weighing job offers. **Peter Hillan**, former business editor of the Times Herald, joined the San Jose Mercury News as assistant business editor Feb. 24.

Daniel Fisher, former banking and real estate reporter at the Times Herald, has joined the Houston Post as banking and telecommunications writer.

In another sign of the industry troubles, Richmond Newspapers Inc. named editors who will take new positions when the Richmond News Leader is merged into the Richmond Times-Dispatch on June 1. As part of those changes, **Dave Burton**, city editor of the afternoon News Leader, will be deputy managing editor for the business, sports and features departments. Richmond, Va.-based Media General Inc., which owns the newspapers, announced last September that it will cease publication of the News Leader after May 30 and produce only a morning newspaper with a combined staff.

At the Commercial Appeal in Memphis, **Sonny Albarado**, former deputy business editor, was named projects/Sunday metro editor. Business editor **Bob Hetherington** has launched an immediate search for a replacement.

James Goldschmidt, business editor of the Knight-Ridder Tribune News Wire in Washington, D.C., picks up the additional title of systems editor. His responsibilities now include overseeing the news service's computer system in addition to handling business news stories that move over Knight-Ridder Tribune, formerly called KRTN News Service.

Knight-Ridder Inc. recently launched Knight-Ridder/Tribune Business news service, a joint venture of Knight-Ridder and the Tribune Co. of Chicago.

The new electronic service will deliver business and related news to business executives via their desktop personal computers, researchers, the media and others.

Service, where she worked closely with the Prodigy on-line computer service. Malone more recently was a special projects reporter for the Journal Newspapers in Fairfax, Va.

The services' sources of news initially will include all the Knight-Ridder and Tribune newspapers and magazines, along with affiliated newspapers that currently contribute to the Knight-Ridder Tribune News service.

business newspeople

Contributing newspapers include the Dallas Morning News, the Miami Herald, the Chicago Tribune, the Orlando Sentinel, the San Jose Mercury News and the Charlotte Observer.

The service carries same-day, full-text articles from contributing newspapers and magazines. The new Knight-Ridder/Tribune Business News service replaces the financial report carried on Dialog Information Services.

Missouri graduate **Curtis A. Young**, previously deputy business news editor, has been appointed business news editor of the Hongkong Standard. He formerly worked as business editor for Business Korea magazine in Seoul, South Korea. He will soon be handling a new, eight-page, color, stand-alone financial data section in addition to the paper's current eight-page stand-alone business news section.

The Charlotte Observer has named **Barry Kolar** business news graphics editor. He was previously layout editor in the Metro department.

Mark Calvey is Assistant Business Editor for the Charlotte Observer.

Job Listings

"Job listings" is a service of The Business Journalist. To list a job, free of charge, fax a three- to five-paragraph announcement to (314) 882-9002.

We're looking for an experienced, aggressive self-starter to add to a high-producing business department. The best candidate will be able to show well-written interpretive work that makes complex business issues understandable for all readers. No calls please. Respond with resume and writing samples to: Michael Peluso, Executive Business Editor, St. Paul Pioneer Press, 345 Cedar St., St.

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Richard Papiernik, Executive Business Editor, Albany

(N.Y.) Times Union

Jodi Schneider, Executive Business Editor, Orlando

Sentinel

Peter Sinton, Executive Business Editor, San Francisco Chronicle

SABEW Administrative Staff School of Journalism University of Missouri-Columbia

Yves Colon, Executive Director

Doris Barnhart, Administrative Assistant

SABEW Purpose

Members of the Society have joined together in the common pursuit of the highest standards of economic journalism, through both individual and collective efforts. Recognizing that economic freedom is inextricably linked to political freedom and that an informed citizenry can ensure that these freedoms are sustained, it is the Society's mission as an independent, not-for-profit organization to encourage comprehensive reportage of economic events without fear or favor and in a manner in keeping with the proud heritage of American journalism.

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The new electronic service will deliver business and related news to business executives via their desktop personal computers, researchers, the media and others.

Robert L. Harris was named director of Knight-Ridder/Tribune Business News. Harris was director of special projects for Knight-Ridder's Business Information Services division. He previously worked at the Journal of Commerce and was start-up editor for Crain's New York and Electronic Media, another Crain's Communications publication.

Knight-Ridder/Tribune Business News' other staffers are news editor **Brenda Cronin** and assistant news editor **Roger Malone**. Cronin previously was an editor with States News

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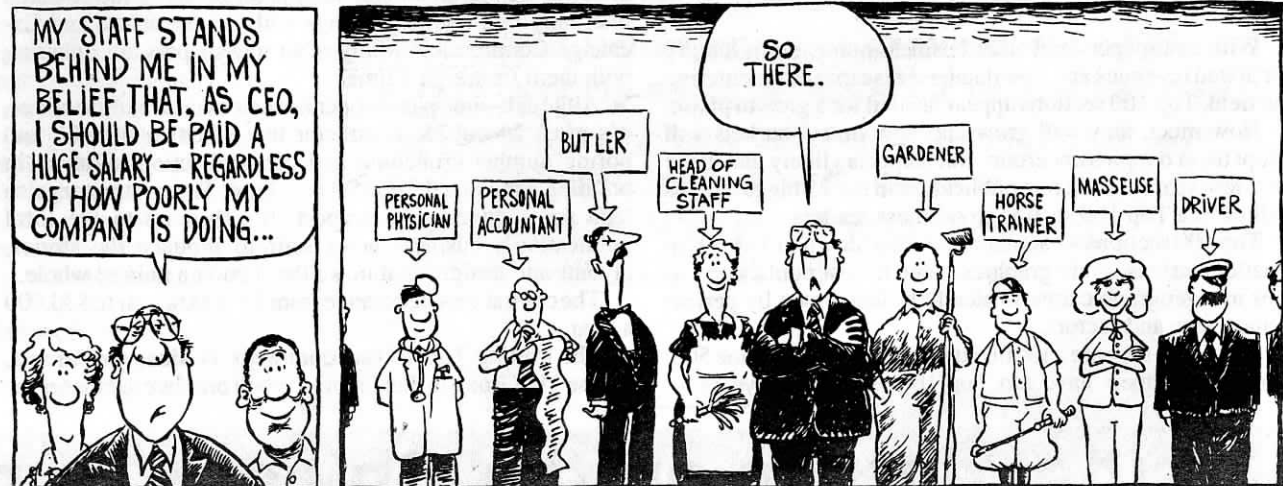
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The Akron Beacon Journal, a 160,000 Knight-Ridder paper, has an opening for a seasoned business reporter. Applicant should have strong writing skills and a minimum of three years experience. Send clips, resume and letter to Geoffrey Gevalt, Business Editor, Akron Beacon Journal, 44 E. Exchange St., Box 640, Akron, Ohio 44309

Dan Shefelman, Newsday; distributed by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

FUNNY MONEY



Dan Shefelman's Funny Money is a regular TBJ feature.

Top 100 lists

(continued from page 1)

For MZ Group, however, the next challenge may be meeting its objectives in the face of new competition.

Others, including Nordby International in Boulder, Colorado, and Tribune Media Services in Chicago, have developed Top 100 programs in recent years.

Nordby International President Neil Nordby says that in some areas — notably upstate New York — a group of cities is getting together to produce and jointly market a Top 100. "Eventually, a preponderance of the top 25 papers will do them," he said. However, he added, newspapers may reach a limit in the size of their sections dictated by corporations' limited budgets for so-called 'image' advertising.

"With economic forecast sections, Top 100 and other special sections, you reach a saturation point. You have to wonder about going back to the well too often," he said.

For business staffers working on Top 100 sections or contemplating adding them, here are some items to watch for.

1. Be creative in identifying your market. Obvious statewide or citywide borders may need to be rethought if you're going to find 125 or 130 companies that can be culled to a Top 100 list with quality entries.

2. Even if you've hired one of the outside services, you can do your own database research as a cross-check. A helpful local stock brokerage that has SEC data from Disclosure Inc. or another database on CD-ROM could do a quick sort for you by state or city. You may be surprised at the result.

3. Let reporters and other staffers in on the ground floor. They may provide ideas, insights and ways of looking over the data that you and your service may never dream of.

4. Out-of-state employers can loom large. Employers like IBM, AT&T, McDonnell Douglas, Martin Marietta and others have a huge presence in states outside their headquarters' cities. Look at adding a list of the top 50 non-local employers.

5. There are many ways to rank the top 100. One way is revenues. Another way to level the playing field between big and small companies is to use total return to shareholders over a year or two. Other ways include return on shareholder equity, or you can create an index that amalgamates a number of factors.

6. Make Top 100 a publishing 'Act.' Have a kick-off breakfast. Get the marketing department to help out. Exposure will build readership — and invaluable help in the data collection process.

7. Sort data so it tells the story. Ranking companies by revenues can be helpful. Also look at market capitalization. Or separate companies that plan to do a lot of hiring from those that plan to cut back.

8. Make charts work harder. You can use lead-ins or boxes that explain how the charts can be used by job-seekers,

Schedule for SABEW Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 25

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Annual Board meeting.
9-11 p.m. Registration: Hospitality Suite

Sunday, April 26

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tour United Airlines facility at O'Hare Airport and meet with Steve Wolf, chairman and CEO of United.
4:30-6 p.m. General Welcoming Meeting. Cocktail party sponsored by Reuters.
7 p.m. Dinner and Second City Theatre.
8:30-11 p.m. Hospitality suite is open.

Monday, April 27

8-11:30 a.m. Tour Chicago Mercantile Exchange.
Noon-1:30 p.m. Sam Zell, takeover artist, is guest speaker.
2-3 p.m. Yves Colon, multicultural management workshop.
3:15-4:15 p.m. Two concurrent workshops:
1. What's happening to ethics in our business section. Gary Klott, moderator.
2. How to become better business writers. Bill Luening, writing coach for the Kansas City Star, moderator.
4:30-5:30 p.m. Two concurrent workshops:
1. Quick ways to improve your business section. Moderator is Sandra Duerr.
2. What to do about those stock tables. Moderator is Larry Werner.

6-9 p.m. Tribune Media planning an event.
Evening: Hospitality suite is open.

Tuesday, April 28

9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tour McDonald's. Visit the Ray Kroc museum, the test kitchens and meet with Mike Quinlen, the president and chief executive officer. Lunch is a smorgasbord of McDonald's food, some of it untried in the marketplace.
2-3:30 p.m. Health care forum with David Jones, chairman of Humana Inc. Duerr to moderate.
3:30-4:15 p.m. Steven Brown, chairman of John Hancock.
4:30-5 p.m. General SABEW Meeting.
5:30-7 p.m. cocktail party sponsored by AP.
7 p.m. Annual Dinner. Robert Stempel, chairman and chief executive officer of General Motors, is speaker.
Evening: Hospitality Suite is open.

Wednesday, April 29

9-10 a.m. Speech by Thomas Theobald, chairman of Continental Illinois.
10:15 a.m. - 12:15. Elliot Jaspin, seminar on computer assisted reporting.
Luncheon.

Schedule Subject to Change.

PUBLISH WITH CONFIDENCE

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8. Make charts work harder. You can use lead-ins or boxes that explain how the charts can be used by job-seekers, investors, vendors and other groups of readers.

9. Don't ignore the spinoffs. Use information about big losers and gainers to guide beat reporters to potential stories. Collecting proxy statements can give baseline data for CEO pay surveys.

10. Do a thorough post-mortem. Hang on to comments and insights from readers and do some pre-planning for NEXT year's Top 100 within a month after this year's appears.

Henry Dubroff is business editor for the Denver Post.

J-Line Opens

SABEW members now have access to a published list of job openings from the University of Missouri School of Journalism's J-Line.

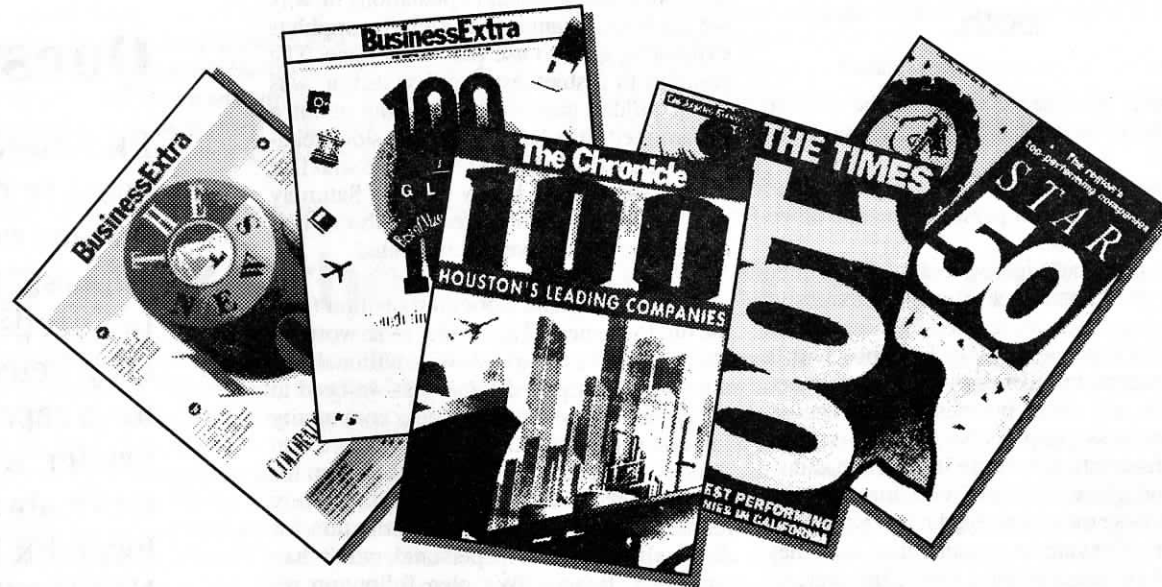
The line is open 24 hours a day. Use a touch-tone phone to call (314) 882-8822. When the recording starts, touch 9 for immediate access to business journalism. To list jobs on the line, fax the information to Yves Colon, (314) 882-9002.

moderator.
4:30-5:30 p.m. Two concurrent workshops:

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To find out why the most successful Top 100 publishers partner with MZ Group call Larry Fishkin at 415/543-8290 x 444.

MZ GROUP

PIONEERS IN DATABASE PUBLISHING AND NEW MEDIA

Star Tribune cuts stocks, adds consumer section

By Larry Werner

At Disney World in Orlando, there's a ride called Space Mountain—a terrifying trip up, down and around tracks that are enclosed in a pitch-black re-creation of outer space. As we enter the Magic Kingdom, thoughts of Space Mountain stir feelings of eager anticipation, which evolves into anxiety as we wait 45 minutes in line. The fear turns into stark terror as we hurtle down the first horrifying descent, and before the ride is over, I'm wondering, "Why am I doing this?"

Changing the Star Tribune Marketplace section to our new "bifurcated" approach to financial news has a lot in common with a ride on Space Mountain. For about two years we conducted and analyzed research to figure out what the readers of financial news wanted. Once we decided they wanted distinct business and consumer sections, we launched our new approach and got the necessary news hole by cutting back drastically on stock listings.

That decision — trimming 4,000 stocks from Tuesday-through-Friday Business and all stocks from Sunday's new On the Money personal finance section — resulted in a wild ride on Customer Complaint Mountain.

But within a week, complaints were down from a thousand a day to a few, and our subscription cancellations reached only about 150. In the same way that I swagger away from Space Mountain glad I endured the pain for the satisfaction of saying "I did it," we're glad we endured the storm of protest over our

What they wanted was a separation of business news from personal finance news, and more of

We addressed the needs of the populists by creating On the Money, an unequivocal alternative to a corporation section for those who wanted news of personal finance, which we define as consumer, workplace and small-business matters.

The space for On the Money came from moving our weekly stock tables to Saturday, when we continue to run the full list of 5,600 stocks.

Our streamlined daily list is an alphabetical arrangement that consolidates stocks from the three major markets and includes a data field that identifies the exchange with an 'n,' an 'a,' or an 'o.' The day we introduced our new Business section with reduced stocks, we launched an audiotex system, which is a much cheaper way for us to provide individual stock prices than by printing them for everyone on newsprint.

Which stocks to keep was a major decision. Basically, we kept big stocks and any with local identities — headquartered here, large operations here, many outlets here and so forth. Through careful analysis by our researcher, Glenn Howatt, working with our vendor, Tribune Media, we came up with a list that captures 90 percent of market capitalization — \$9 of every \$10 invested in the equity markets. We chose Tribune Media, and dropped AP Stocks, for several reasons, including these major ones: We wanted an alphabetical list to replace the old groups by exchange; we wanted weekly stocks early enough for our Saturday "mall" edition, and we wanted a real-time feed of stock information that Glenn could manipulate to monitor our local companies and to do breakouts of stock information (e.g. biggest gainers, losers and volume leaders). AP Select Stocks couldn't meet these requirements.

We got a huge customer reaction to cutting the daily stocks. However, we were prepared with an army of newsroom staffers who provided personal explanations of why

The Press and PR Newswire: Partners in News

Providing Corporate America with the best way to transmit news to the press is the reason PR Newswire was founded 38 years ago. Today, while we've expanded to serve your colleagues on city, national, international, entertainment and features desks at some 2,000 newsrooms, delivering news to business journalists remains the core of our business.

An Important Link

We deliver to you -- quickly, accurately and reliably -- full text releases, statements and announcements from some 15,000 news sources. Most public companies, including leaders on the NYSE, Amex and NASDAQ, rely on PR Newswire. It is an indispensable source of breaking news and timely background material, as well as features and story ideas. And every item carries a contact name and phone number.

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stock cuts because we now have the space to give our financial readers what they said they wanted.

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Our old Marketplace section was edited for a general audience. But in an extensive research project, we learned that our section was read thoroughly only by those with a keen interest in business — not consumers, workers and small business entrepreneurs. The business people who read the section were dissatisfied because the section didn't have enough news about Twin Cities business and because they perceived it lacked sophistication. Consumers, meanwhile, said they wanted personal finance news, but weren't noticing the consumer news we put in Marketplace because they perceived that section was for business people. By trying to be all things to all, we were too little to both the "pinstripes" and the "populists," the two basic audiences we defined for financial news.

So we replaced Marketplace with Business on Monday through Saturday, getting more space for hard-core business news by cutting stock tables Tuesday through Friday.

large operations here, many outlets here and so forth. Through careful analysis by our researcher, Glenn Howatt, working with our vendor, Tribune Media, we came up with a list that captures 90 percent of market capitalization — \$9 of every \$10 invested in the equity markets. We chose Tribune Media, and dropped AP Stocks, for several reasons, including these major ones: We wanted an alphabetical list to replace the old groups by exchange; we wanted weekly stocks early enough for our Saturday "mall" edition, and we wanted a real-time feed of stock information that Glenn could manipulate to monitor our local companies and to do breakouts of stock information (e.g. biggest gainers, losers and volume leaders). AP Select Stocks couldn't meet these requirements.

We got a huge customer reaction to cutting the daily stocks. However, we were prepared with an army of newsroom staffers who provided personal explanations of why we made the change and offered pamphlets explaining how to use our Stock Line. The reaction to a stockless Sunday section was much milder than the complaints about a streamlined daily list. That told us stock readers have a daily habit and that those who like weekly stocks were happy with our Saturday list. We got hundreds fewer subscription cancellations than we had projected.

It was a long and difficult transition from the old to the new. The results were worth it. Daily, we have the space (six additional columns) and sharpened focus that we need to cover our sophisticated business community for our sophisticated business readers. On Sunday we offer a section that is written for the general audience — a helpful, lively feature section with lots of information for those whose focus is on personal, rather than corporate, finance. We plan follow-up research, but the anecdotal evidence suggests our new approach is working beautifully.

The secret to this success was listening to readers and reclaiming news hole from the monster that haunts every business editor: stock agate.

Larry Werner is assistant managing editor/business for the Star Tribune.

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