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## Backgrounder

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An e-newsletter from Ellenbecker Communications focusing on the PR, marketing and creative needs of B2B equipment manufacturers

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### Here's why print isn't dead

Marketing and marketing communications managers are constantly being asked to comment on the longevity of printed magazines, brochures and other promotional and educational materials. Is print dead? If it is, why are we advertising in dead-tree magazines? Why are we still sending press releases? Why aren't we focusing all our attention on other media? Should we be tweeting our new product announcements, 140 characters at a time?

And if print isn't dead today, when will it die? One year? Two, three, five, ten? How will this change our approach to PR, advertising, content marketing?

A February 22 article by Michael S. Rosenwald in the Washington Post examines a phenomenon reported on by digital communications expert Naomi Baron in her new book "Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World." That phenomenon is summarized in the article's headline: "Why digital natives prefer reading in print. Yes, you read that right."

Baron found that "digital natives" like millennials—people who reached young adulthood around the year



2000—actually prefer the printed page for pleasure reading and for learning. Many studies in the past couple of years have shown that physical, printed materials are often superior to digital versions when it comes to comprehension and remembering what is read.

In our "hard hat" manufacturing industries, we have often recognized that those who own the businesses that buy our clients' products are usually in their 40s, 50s or 60s. We are not surprised to hear that, even though this group is very computer-literate, they still prefer physical, printed material most of the time. But this article in the Post, and books like Baron's, underscore that the preference for printed matter is not as generationally divided as we had thought.

Of course, some things are better in digital form, and the article in the Washington Post notes this fact. Speaking of the main subject of Noble's book, college students, the article says, "They prefer them (electronic textbooks) for classes in which locating information quickly is key—there is no Control-F in a printed book to quickly find key words."

In our industries, the vast majority of trade magazines have a digital version or web portal, for those who do

prefer digital reading, or for those types of information where the “Search” function is handy. But the print versions are not going away, for the simple reason that people still like them, even prefer them.

An interesting blog post from this past August emphasizes this point. The author, Peter Rose, calls attention to the fact that in the United Kingdom, there were more than 5,000 B2B magazines and 3,000 consumer magazines published in 2014, the U.S. has over 7,000 print magazines of various kinds, and in Germany there are over 6,000 print magazines on the market. Worldwide, there are roughly 600,000 print publications.

What this all means is that we need to help our general managers, presidents and non-marketing VPs to understand that the growth of new media doesn’t mean that the old media is going away anytime soon. It’s not a matter of print magazines vanishing, and everyone cleanly converting to digital everything. No, we are simply faced with an ever more complicated media landscape, where social media, other forms of digital media and tried and true printed pages are all combined.

*(A shorter version of this article appeared on our blog earlier this year).*



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*Do I annoy the editor—  
or my boss?*

I received some interesting feedback from the article in our last issue, “Four more ways to annoy an editor.” Some good points were raised, so I thought I’d comment on them here. Specifically, one of you told me—half in jest, half serious—that while she agreed with our suggestion to use capitalization properly, sometimes that is in conflict with executive preferences or even corporate norms.

For example, the rule states that you only capitalize a title if it comes before a name (Executive Vice President Smith-Smythe.) But some executives and others feel that their titles are demeaned when they are not capitalized in other situations, such as in the sentence, “The national sales manager reported a bump in sales in the last quarter.” Sometimes this is personal preference, and sometimes there might be corporate custom (usually not an explicit standard) that titles are always capitalized.

Our advice—and our practice with clients—is to recommend that the publishing standard for capitalization be followed in any content (press release, job story, etc.) that is meant for an external audience. If you get push-back from within your organization, though, sometimes the better part of valor is to allow an improperly capitalized title through the process, and let the editor make the change in the final published version. If you are careful to make sure that this is the only irregularity that made it into the final draft, I’m pretty sure that the editor will forgive you.