
Two Steps Forward

July 13, 2019



When learning a new task as a youngster, it could be frustrating and seemingly impossible. But my mom would remind me that as long as I was taking two steps forward and only one back, I was making progress.

Perhaps not the rapid progress I wanted, but progress nonetheless.

Our transition to ownership of the Curry Coastal Pilot and Del Norte Triplicate has felt very much like two steps forward, one back.

Readers are seeing those discouraging backward steps because they tend to be the highly visible ones. Meantime, the bulk of our forward steps are happening invisibly behind the scene, so I thought I'd share them with you.

STAFFING – More than a third of the original staff opted not to take our offers of employment. Yet we're still getting papers published. Writers from some of our other Country Media publications are temporarily living here, contributing stories and getting to know you.

We're actively interviewing and hiring additional permanent staff. Two slow steps forward ... helped by the fact that those employees who have remained with us certainly appear to be the cream of the crop.

WEBSITE – A new and improved website for both The Triplicate and The Pilot have been built for us by one of the nation's premiere newspaper site management teams. We are in the process of testing it and hope to launch it next week. The previous websites (what you see today when you do a search) continue to be owned and hosted by Western Communications.

We have had only marginal success gaining access to our sites in order to keep them updated. Also, any letters to the editor you might have sent there are in the ether. (We were not ignoring you. We simply didn't know they were there.)

The new sites will be vibrant and user-friendly. Anyone who has a subscription will have full access to the sites. In the long run, they will be a significant improvement over the websites under previous ownership. Two slow steps forward.

PRODUCTION – Actually getting a paper produced has been confounded by a hodgepodge system already in place. Bits and piece were handled (often more than once) by a great many hands. It looks like a system that once might have made sense, but was continually cobbled as employees came and went, resulting in a patchwork quilt.

We are now taking a fresh look at all of the production steps and streamlining as much as possible. It will make it less frustrating for our employees and less frustrating for our readers. Two slow steps forward.

CIRCULATION – The way our readers pay for a subscription, the way we let our carriers know who gets a newspaper ... all that falls under the "circulation" category. The software that had been used by previous ownership was interwoven with all the other newspapers owned by Western Communications. There was no clean way to break it out for just The Triplicate and The Pilot, requiring us to find a new circulation software platform altogether.

The circulation staff at The Pilot and The Triplicate have worked an extraordinary number of hours to ensure all those data are correctly moved into the new software program. Our goal certainly is for you to keep getting your paper just like you always have. Two slow steps forward.

CHANGES - New email addresses are coming. When we soon move the domain name from the old website to our new sites, we've been told the current email accounts - which are tied to the website domains -- likely will disappear. As a precaution, we're creating new email addresses for all of our employees. (Please see the listing in today's issue.) Use of the new addresses should begin immediately. This one feels a bit like a step back.

Sadly, the rumor that we are shutting the papers refuses to die. We firmly believe that community newspapers are important. We especially believe that all of the Wild Rivers Coast communities deserve quality news coverage.

Those “For Sale” signs on the buildings that house our newspapers are designed to sell the buildings themselves, not the businesses inside. Western Communications retained the buildings so they could generate additional income by selling them separately from the newspapers. (And, yes, we are looking for new office spaces, given that our leases are month-to-month.)

WE ARE NOT CLOSING DOWN THE PAPERS! Why would we spend a goodly number of hard-earned dollars and then simply walk away?

Like many of you, we have faced adversity many times over the years. As always, we’re in this for the long term. You can count this a giant step forward.