



TIPS & TOOLS FOR REDUCING CYCLE TIMES

In today's hyper-competitive environment, speed-to-market is increasingly important for advertisers. The immediacy of the digital age is creating new expectations for faster access to the marketplace than ever before. As a result, pressures are mounting for media, including printed magazines, to lengthen the window during which ads may be booked and submitted while shortening the time it takes ads to impact the consumer.

With proper planning, many, if not most, publishers have the ability to respond to agency and advertiser needs by streamlining their production cycle. Greater flexibility and speed-to-market helps to reposition magazines, individually and as an industry, as nimble marketing powerhouses. It provides publishers with more selling time and it provides advertisers with the ability to see the impact of their creative in the marketplace much sooner.

Getting Started

An initiative of this magnitude must be driven from the top of the organization if it is to succeed. All affected departments need to know that it is a strategic initiative and that the entire publishing team must pull together, give and take, if effective change is to occur. Keeping everyone focused on the same end goals is critical.

Publishers need to establish objectives and a strategic direction for editorial, sales, circulation and production teams to follow and communicate why the company needs to do this. If you can, select a target date for internal testing. Consider starting with one title (or one editorial/sales/production team) to work out the kinks before rolling out to other publications. Allow enough time for teams to get used to new expectations and new schedules, but be firm on hitting deadlines to ensure new workflows stay in place.

Setting Objectives

The first step for publishers is to choose a realistic time frame from production start to end. These include: ad close, material close, first consumer impact, on-sale date, etc. It's important to keep in mind that advertiser needs are driven by longer ad closing and material closing dates and earlier consumer impact dates. New production start/end dates, perhaps even new on-sale dates, are therefore very important strategic decisions.

A sample workflow for a monthly publication could look something like this:

Day 1:	Ad close date
Day 7:	Material close date
Day 17-18:	First impact date (when the magazine first reaches the reader)
Day 30:	On sale date

Impacts & Considerations

EDITORIAL

The Editor is critical to the success of a tighter schedule. Time savings, or least a portion of it, depends on your magazine's editorial workflow: Do you hard close then paginate? If so, this may be using up valuable time that could be saved in the overall workflow. To save time, it's recommended that a dummy pagination, based on a preliminary sales close, be created at least one week before magazine close. This will give you time to assess what's in hand editorially and from sales. It's best to document the ad/edit mix for all to see so that everyone understands the issue make-up and needs going into the final week before the hard deadline.

In the final week, editorial should be prepared with a pool of articles, allowing for maximum flexibility when it comes to last-minute or unexpected pagination needs.

PRODUCTION

Must be willing to work with a new schedule within a more condensed timeframe where workload may peak and valley rather than remain

steady. Special executions (inserts, gatefolds, tip-ons, etc.) may need to be sent to the printer early; ensure that editorial is aware of these timelines.

PRINTER

Discuss with your printer to determine what scheduling opportunities they can provide. Are they able to work out a staggered (sometimes referred to as “level-loading”) schedule that is coordinated across all magazines printed and bound at the print facility? Printers will likely appreciate the efficiencies that good deadlines and staggered schedules help create for their business. Ask them what services they can provide to improve the workflow. Do they have access to programs like *Kodak InSite*, *Apogee StreamProof Option*, or others that allow for seamless and quick file transfers?

It is essential that you build and continuously maintain trust with your printer by ensuring that pre-established file delivery dates are always met. Keep in mind that compressed schedules require on-time deliveries throughout the process. Both printer and publisher must ensure on-sale dates are met.

CIRCULATION

Ensure that availability of subscriber labels or variable printing files are synchronized with new printing/binding/labelling schedules, including files for split press runs.

SALES

Ad sales professionals are key communication links for agencies and advertisers who need to become aware of any changes you make to schedules. The change announcement provides opportunity for sales to review the process and promote the reduced time-to-market initiative with their advertising clients. Sales and production need to work together to create a simple communication piece describing what’s changed, why, and most importantly, what’s in it for the advertiser/agency. It’s critical to communicate that the closing date is “the closing date” and that extensions cannot be counted upon. (Remind them that they are receiving faster time-to-market.)

Useful Tools

EDITORIAL SOFTWARE

Editorial software can be a powerful tool for automating your editorial workflow, saving you time and money. Software from leading companies such as *WoodWing*, *MEI* and others inject valuable flexibility into the editorial process, providing greater speed and ease of closing an issue.

PAGINATION SOFTWARE

Pagination software can automate and improve the production planning process and link many separate system together. Examples of software are *MEI*, *Proteus*, *Impoze* and others.

AD PORTALS

Web-based ad preflight and delivery portals such as AdDirect provide timely, accurate, ready-to-print ad files. Less time is spent fixing ads and the print-ready files can be immediately delivered to the printer, saving time for the production department and allowing for extensions up to the material close date. Depending on your operation, ad portals can cut a total of 2-3 days from a production cycle.

Digital Editions

Digital providers need to be given impact and newsstand dates. It is important to sync all delivery timing to ensure planned coordination across platforms.

BENEFIT SUMMARY

Publishers

- A more streamlined and efficient workflow that competes more effectively with other media in an ever-changing and quickening media landscape
- Positive sales message, meaning increased revenue (and commission)
- Allows production teams (and sales) to better enforce their close dates with agencies/advertisers
- Promotes ability for all internal departments to work better as a team to deliver a premium product to their readers

Agencies/Advertisers

- A shorter workflow means agencies and advertisers have more time to book/submit ads meaning extra revenue potential

- Faster impact in the marketplace
- A demonstration that the magazine industry is listening to their needs

Printers

- Facilitates a stronger partnership with publishers
- Level-loading, if achievable, creates greater scheduling predictability and efficiency
- A stronger magazine industry means a stronger print industry

ads that are expected to come in. The sales team makes note of any additional shapes and sizes required for the book, and continues selling with these in mind.

The material close is four weeks before the publication date but material will be accepted up until the first black and white proof. Canada Wide works with the agency/client to provide the most flexible schedule possible. The final possible date for material is always well communicated, so the magazine's print date is not missed.

Case Studies



Rogers Publishing/Transcontinental Media

Publishers across the country are already experimenting with reduced production cycles; most notably, Rogers Publishing and Transcontinental Media have successfully decreased their production cycles to 15 days (from material close to impact date), branding the joint initiative "Pressexpress."



The PresseXpress initiative encouraged siloed departments at Rogers and Transcontinental to communicate with one another to evaluate their workflow

schedule. Through evaluation they discovered that they could save valuable time by paginating at least a week before the hard close. They were also able to provide flexibility to their clients by allowing them to submit their ads through the AdDirect ad portal up until their print date, allowing advertisers to have a much quicker turnaround to market.

Success of the PresseXpress system is still being measured but organizationally the publishers have experienced increased efficiencies in their everyday operations and in their relationship with clients.

If ads cannot be sold, in-house ads included in the book may be added or taken out. The publisher may also need to take into consideration whether cutting the book by a form or adding a form will be necessary to meet advertiser demand.

Canada Wide has improved the management of their workflow by mapping out their milestones and communicating openly among their various departments as well as with clients/agencies. By communicating with the client, the magazine is able to stay attuned to the client's needs. The backend flexibility also allows clients to have a shorter wait for their ads to be in market, making magazines a viable option for some advertisers who were previously discouraged by the long wait to get into market.

Summary

Publishers of both mid- and large-sized magazines have experienced success by evaluating their workflows, paginating in advance of the hard close, assessing their ad needs for each issue, working with clients to keep an open dialogue and clearly communicating ad material deadlines.

The entire industry has the opportunity to improve its workflow. By doing this together, publishers are keeping magazines competitive, while meeting the needs of agencies and advertisers. Properly done, reduced cycle times translates to greater revenue opportunities and strengthens the medium's position in a rapidly evolving marketplace.



Canada Wide

The production team at Canada Wide paginates the magazine after a preliminary closing, incorporating the ads received to date and the