



BY ANICKA QUIN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, WESTERN LIVING MAGAZINE

DEVELOPING AN EDITORIAL MIX FOR YOUR REGIONAL MAGAZINE

THE EDITORIAL MIX for any magazine is like a terrific novel or a great piece of music: there's a rhythm to it. Think of it as a bell curve: the shorter pieces in your front of book warm you up and get you in the mood. You might then transition into something just a little meatier, flex your muscles a bit, let the reader know where you're going. Your feature well is the climax, that part in the song when everyone's on the dance floor with their hands in the air. And then you send them off with a quieter exit, a denouement that sends your committed reader on his or her way.

That's the overarching theme, but it's the specific content you curate that creates that epic moment with the reader, and it's what makes your regional magazine unique: a magazine that could only exist in the area in which you live.

First things first:

STUDY YOUR AUDIENCE

If you've got access to PMB stats, that's terrific. If you don't, get online or go to your local library, and get to know everything you can about your local reader. Create a fictional person or couple who represents your ideal reader, and flesh them out to be as real as you can. Do they own their home, have two grandkids and spend Saturday mornings at the local brunch spot? Are they mountain bikers or homebodies? Every story you select from this point forward should be something that your couple X would get a kick out of—something they could learn about, something they're already passionate about, or something they should be passionate about.

CELEBRATE WHAT YOU KNOW AND LOVE

Your strength is your region and your readership. Every story that appears in your magazine should be uniquely yours, whether it's a small front of book piece about a great new chair (has one of the local stores just started to carry it?) or a food story about picnicking in the summer (are you using a local chef for recipes? Where are the best spots in town to host a private affair?)

THINK GLOBAL, GO LOCAL (WHAT DO YOUR READERS DO?)

Don't feel you have to shy away from general-interest, national or international trends. But do make sure you're making even a general interest piece (holiday entertaining, money-management tips) as local as possible. Bring in local voices to illustrate what's happening. How is the trend similar or different from what we might be reading about in national media?

THINK LOCAL, GO GLOBAL (WHERE DO YOUR READERS GO?)

Just because your magazine is regional, doesn't mean all of your subjects need to be. If you're covering travel, celebrate the local haunts and undiscovered spots in your territory, but appreciate that your readers aren't just going to stick to their own backyards any more than you do. The trick is to tell the story through a local lens: is there a local hook to a destination (an international hotel designed by a local architect, an expat that runs the local bar)?

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CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH WRITERS ACROSS YOUR REGION

Great writers are your ears to the ground in all of the communities you represent. While there are many commonalities across a region, there are differences that make each micro-community unique—and magazines are in a unique position to unite those communities. Make these writers part of your magazine family in a mutually beneficial relationship: give them a masthead title, a monthly stipend, and work up an agreement that states what you're looking for from them each issue, whether it's finding new stores and great events, or tracking down the best sources for a story you're working on.

DEVELOP ANNUAL PACKAGES THAT BUILD YOUR BRAND

A regional magazine is in a unique position to become a leader in your market. *Vancouver* magazine's restaurant awards are the top awards program for the restaurant community in their city, obsessively followed by both readers and restaurants. *Western Living's* Designers of the Year

awards have become the lynchpin that have strengthened our relationship with the design community, been a winner with advertisers and the issue readers most often request. Both of these topics celebrate what's unique to our region, create engaging content for the reader, and have brand extension opportunities (events, sponsorship, marketplace) that generate revenue.

FINALLY, MAP OUT YOUR YEARLY CALENDAR

Once you've narrowed in on topics that have local resonance, give your editorial team, your readers and your advertisers plenty of advance warning. Your readers (and when they'll want to read about certain topics) are your priority, but don't forget to check in with your advertising team for times of year that certain content is helpful for them. If you're planning to do an annual package celebrating the Top 40 Foodies in your region, check in with the sales team to see if there are healthier advertising budgets for restaurants, suppliers, markets, etc. at certain times of the year.

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