

Let in the Light:

Thrive in the New Age of Media

Perhaps the single biggest change in the media revolution has been the stunning paradigm shift from the newsroom as a dark and impenetrable fortress to that of a glass house that rolls out the welcome mat. From print to digital, the press to the Internet, there is no turning back.

So what's a media organization to do to survive? Embrace change. Better yet, be the change for others to follow. You may have seen Gannett adopt this tack as it launched its "newsrooms of the future" campaign in summer 2014. Collective thumbs up. After all, they were only taking the lead from the innovators at Advance Publications, and their #1 ranked Michigan brand, MLive. MLive partnered with Progressive AE in Grand Rapids, Michigan to transform their environment to reflect their progressive outlook and commitment to the future growth of their brand.

If you are the design lead charged with transforming the image of a strong brand in an industry that's changing so fast even its own heads are spinning, what do you do? Ask Director of Design, Bryan Koehn. Koehn and a diverse design team have carved out a new specialty in national brand rollouts. The approach grew out of a mind-bending, three-year adventure with Advance Publications. As a result of our collaborative trailblazing in design, purpose and execution, the Advance Publications brand now stands as a media industry leader and success story.

The reinventing of 42 locations across the country started with Advance Publications' Michigan headquarters and local MLive offices. Knowing the road would be long and winding, Koehn and his team set about to create a cohesive, repeatable concept. They wrapped it around the Advance Publications' brand, while giving it room to breathe.

In essence, the concept became a "kit" of elements that could be applied and adapted to meet the needs of any hub, anywhere. The innovative approach allowed the brand to shine wherever one found an Advance Publications house, while also allowing local teams to create a space that met their individual needs. Today, this customizable, yet efficient approach is attracting national clients from many industries. It offers the power to protect (or establish) a strong brand while being responsive to grassroots realities, time and budget.

[Wondering how it all comes together?](#)

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A New Kind of “Press Kit”

Koehn and team’s solution to tackling the sheer volume of work was a bold move. Using the Michigan MLive home base as the pilot study, the finished product was equipped with every option, bell and whistle. That fully-loaded, custom model would serve as the benchmark by which all others would be defined.

The brand objective of creating literal and figurative transparency across the board became engaging when presented as a “kit” of options. Regional leaders were empowered, while being intrinsically aligned with the desired direction from the start.

A Full Team of Support

Progressive AE’s role in transforming Advance Publications media bases all over the US went beyond design. The project included a dedicated program manager who served as the point man, scoping real estate in the “next-up” city and even doing some “under cover” scouting of each hub’s current state to deepen the knowledge base for the transformation that lay ahead. Armed with a posse of technical project managers who could make sure every detail came together, Progressive AE’s supported the client’s every need while maintaining schedule, budget, design consistency and brand integrity.

Success in the Zone

Koehn and team’s versatile kit of options also served to create excitement within each market, making change management easy. When you’ve got 25,000 employees to get on-board, that’s a good thing. Make way for spaces called “café zones,” “heads down areas,” “short respite enclaves” and “flex zones”. Bring it on. And for the parent company, brand integrity was ensured, and creative efficiency was the rule of the day.

The creative journey has ignited a new passion that unites design creativity with reality for a kind of practical magic you just might need to try for yourself. Progressive AE took their experience with MLive and Advance Publication’s multi-state rollout and perfected it. Adaptable for any enterprise with multiple locations (whether statewide, nationwide or around the globe) their four-step process is designed to ensure that any business, including yours, seeking to transform or enhance its image in the marketplace. It only makes sense to take advantage of a proven process; especially when it leads to a work environment that speaks your language of success.



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