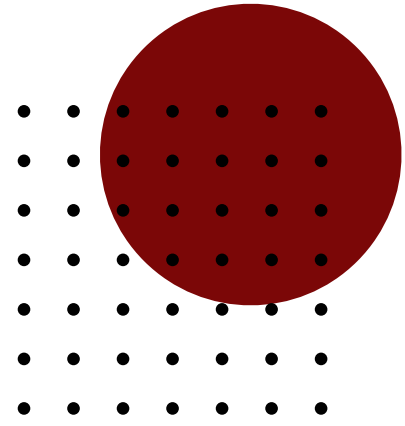




CherryRoad Media: Frugal Innovation

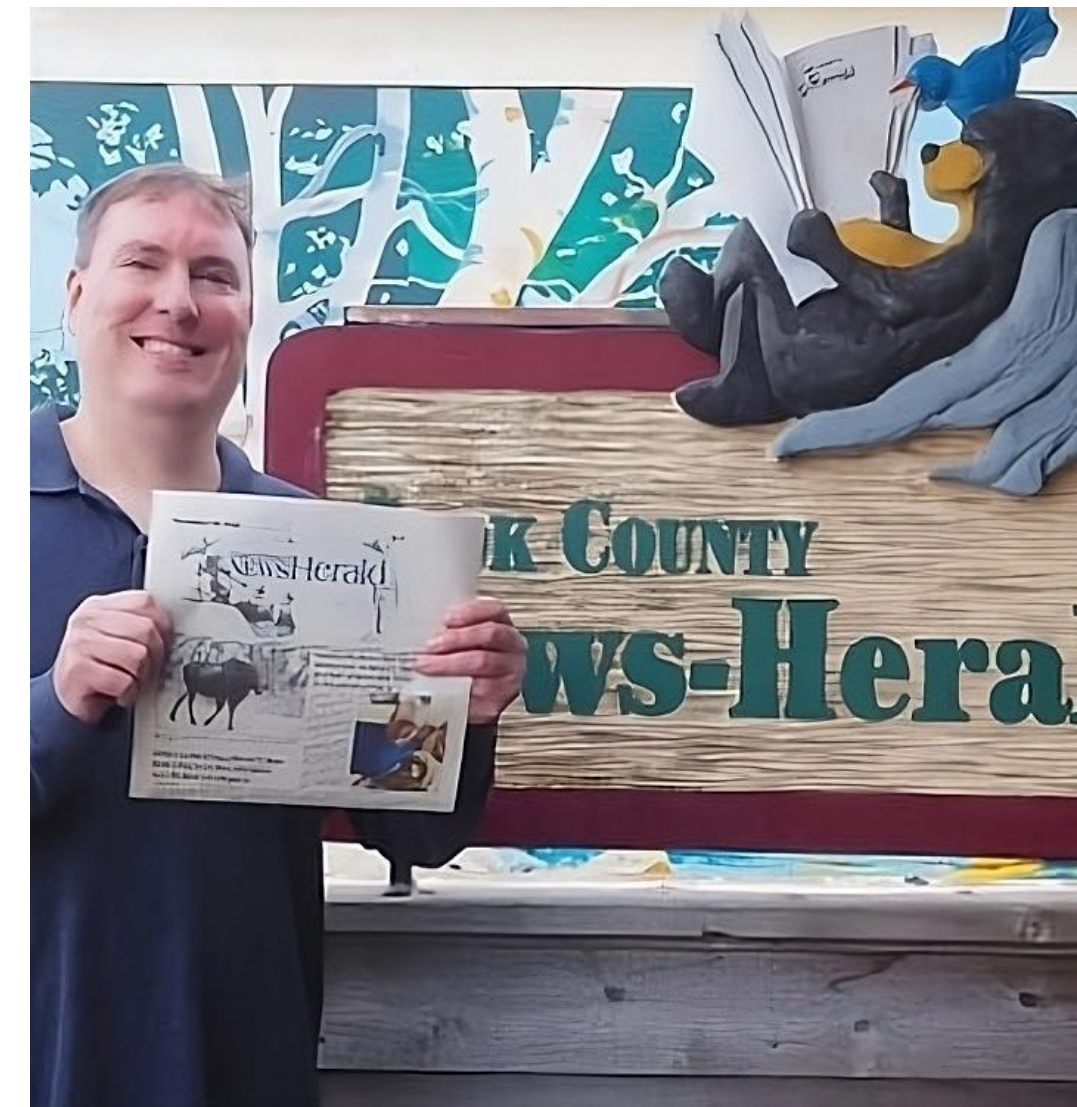
April 23, 2026

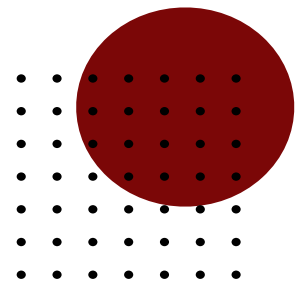
Jeremy Gulban



Who We Are: CherryRoad Media

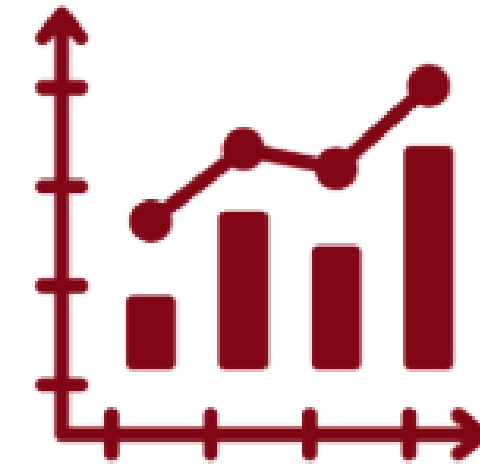
- Founded in 2020 as an offshoot of CherryRoad® Technologies
- Born from a concern that Big Tech threatens the future of community newspapers
- **Mission: Use our tech skills to preserve and grow local journalism**

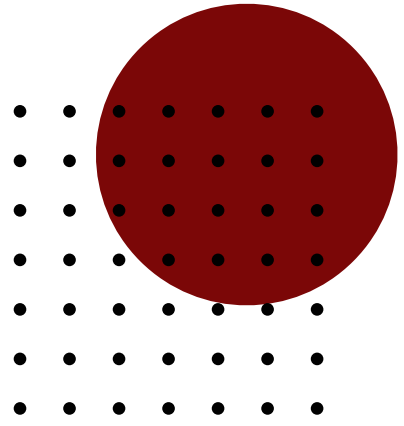




A Different Model for Smaller Markets

- Most markets operate with just **2-3 staff members**
- **90%** of revenue is still **print-based**
- Many acquisitions were financially distressed (underperforming revenue or bloated cost structures)
- Today: **~1/3 profitable**, ~1/3 break-even, ~1/3 still losing money

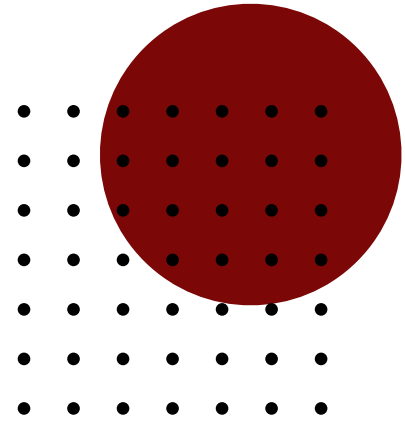




What We're Doing:

People, Revenue, Cost





Case Study: Boonville Daily News

BOONVILLE DAILY NEWS

- 1.5 Editorial Staff
- Shared salesperson
- 400 subscribers
- Annual Revenue \$130,000



Opinion

June 12, 2025

Letter to the Editor

Honoring the Hands That Hold Us in
Life's Final Chapter Dear Editor, As we
recognize Certified Nursing Assistants
with...

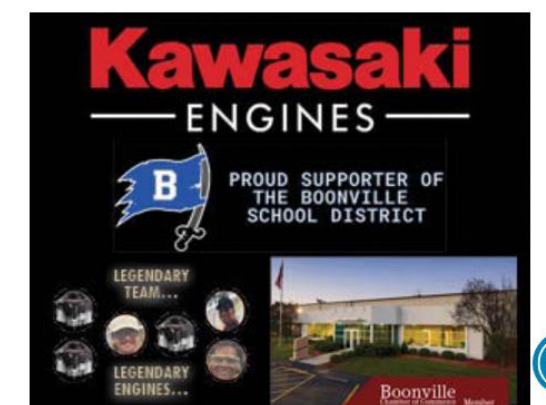
News

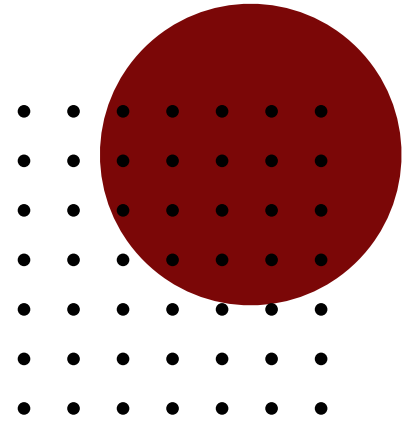


September 11, 2025

Local residents chosen as Missouri Farm Family for Cooper County

Boonville, Mo. – Dr. Wiley and Dr. Maryellen McVicker and family
of Boonville were among the families honored during the 68th

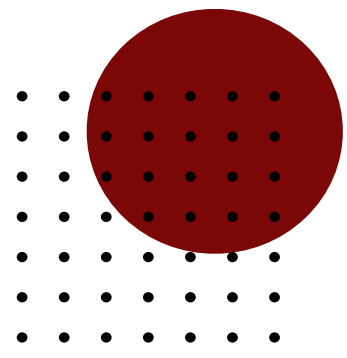




People: Our Key Differentiator



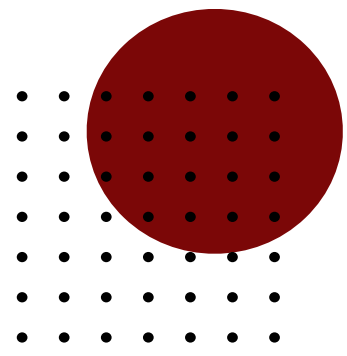
- Profitable markets all have **exceptional local staff**
- Culture of **transparency** around financial reality
- Strong sense of **mission** and **community impact**
- Monthly **professional development** for staff
- Staunch stance: **AI** will not replace journalists
- **Accessibility, collaboration, and retention** are key
- Provide **advancement** opportunities to top talent (e.g., editorial leadership, expanded sales roles)
- Embrace **change champions** (e.g. new digital content director, community storytellers)



Revenue: Making Print Work While Building Digital

- Majority of revenue still comes from print
- Bundling digital with print ad offerings
- “Sell the value of print” remains a mantra
- Digital trial offers: \$0.99 entry point
- Launching newsletters 2x/week

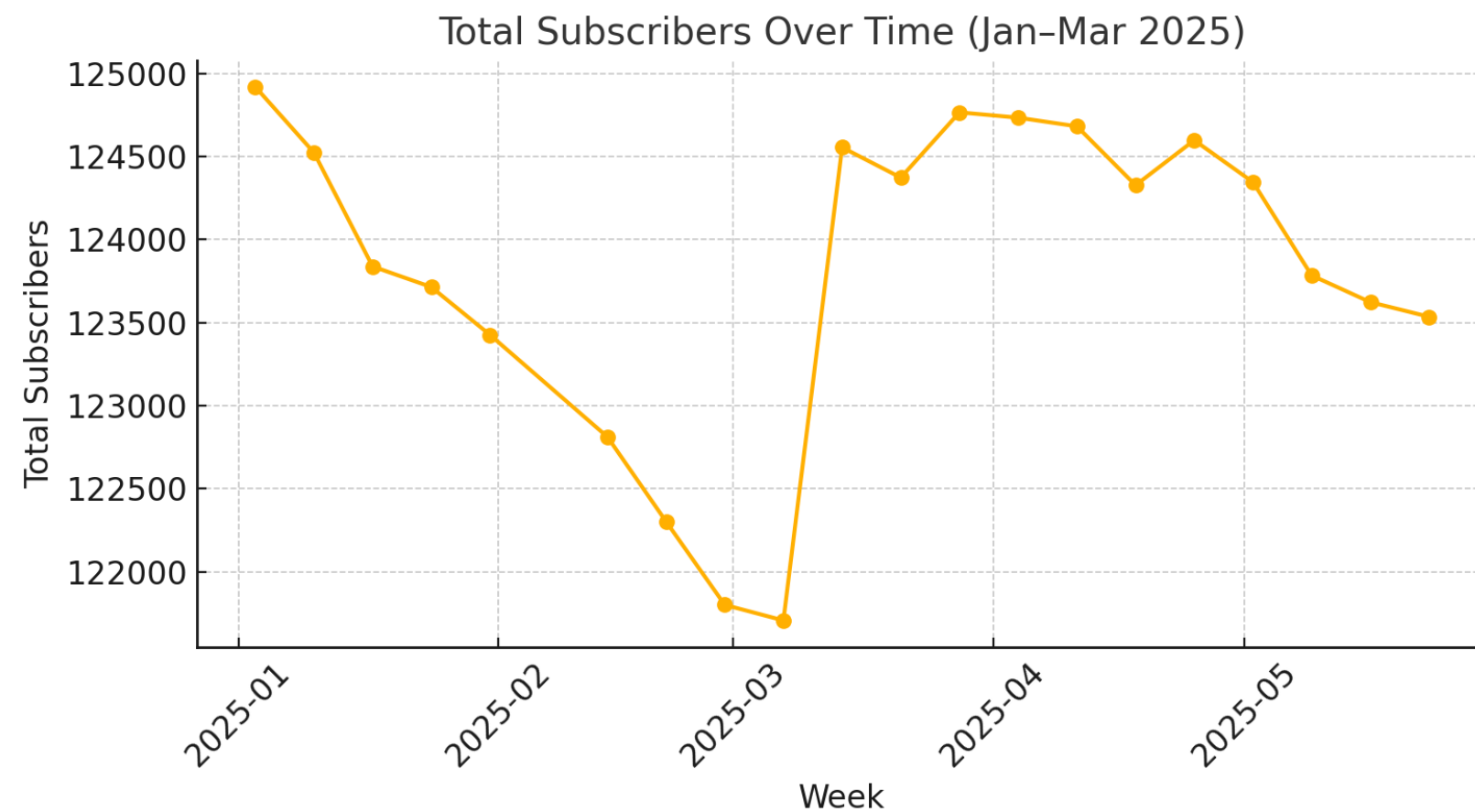




Revenue:

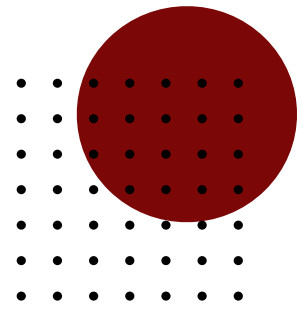
Making Print Work While Building Digital

Total subscribers are down 6.5%, but digital is up 46% — signaling a critical transition in how our audience consumes news.



We must invest in:

- Digital experience
- Aggressive pricing strategies
- Increased retention strategies
- Perks that encourage ongoing subs

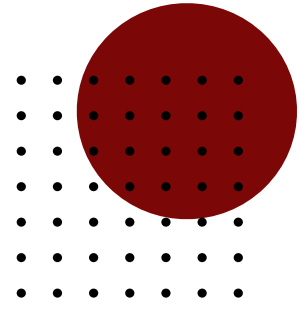


Cost: Smart Centralization

Invest locally in editorial and sales teams, centralize everything else:

- **No local publishers** – editors/salespeople are the face
- All but 6 papers **printed at CherryRoad-owned facilities**
- Pagination & ad building outsourced (variable cost model)
- Legals and Obits outsourced (user fee model)
- Central customer service
- In-house subscription system: flexible, **user-friendly**
- Drive decisions based on **fixed cost leverage**





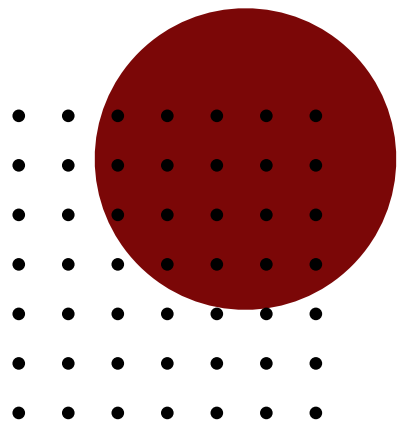
The Right Outsource & In-House Mix

OUTSOURCE PARTNERS

- **Ad Design** – Design IQ
- **Legals** – Column
- **Obits** – Legacy
- **SCS** – Systems
- **Impact X** – Social Media
Marketing with organic content

IN-HOUSE SERVICES

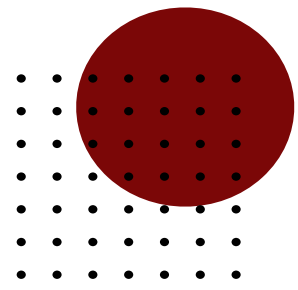
- **Circulation System**
- **Print Customer Service**
- **Accounting**
- **Printing**
 - **Hutchinson, Kansas**
 - **Delphos, Ohio**
 - **Slayton, Minnesota**



Digital Printing Innovation

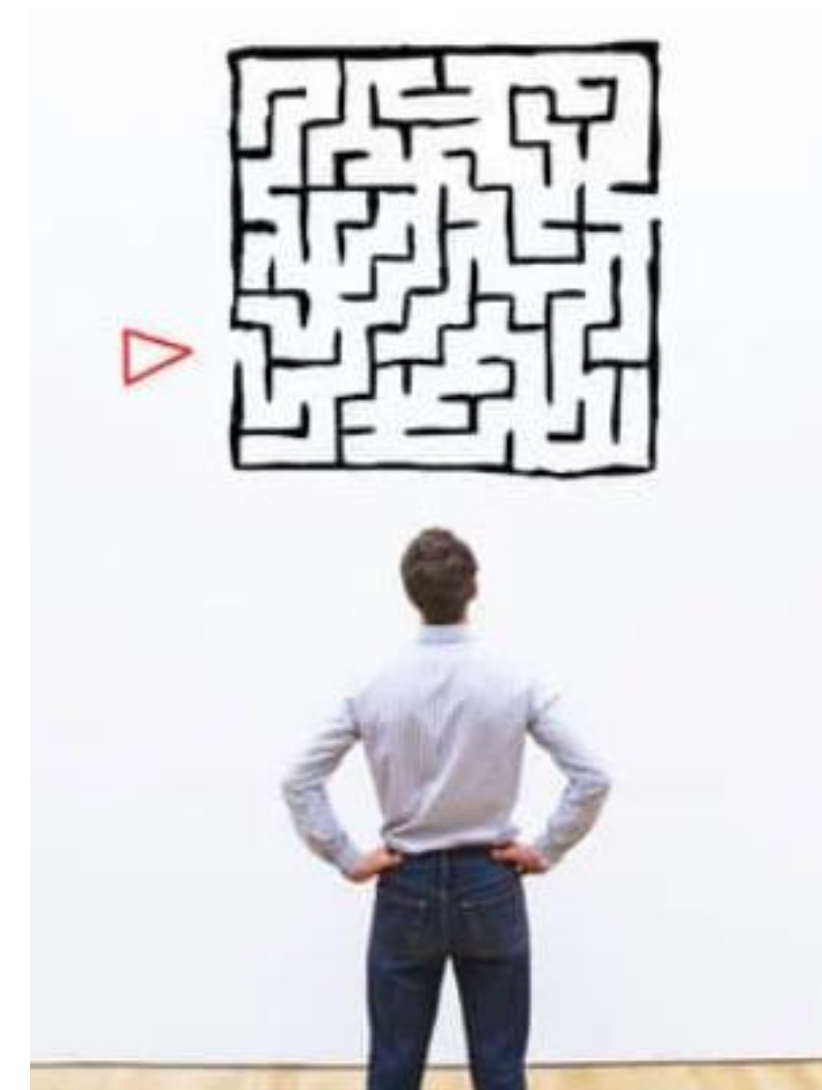
- Collapses 12–16 pg broadsheets into equal tabloid pg count
- Extends the viability of print for short runs
- Higher-quality, more elegant product
- Mail labelling
- Integrated QR codes to bridge to digital content
- Shifts printing to a variable cost in small markets
- Variable printing allows unique version for each subscriber
- Direct mail concepts
- Started converting titles in April of 2025

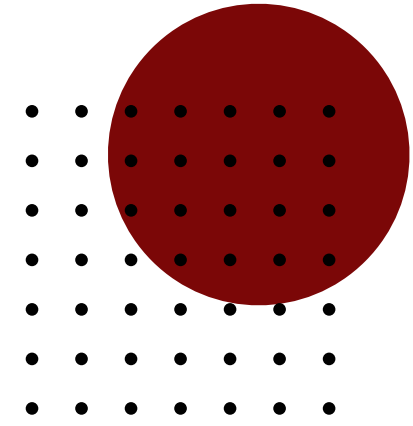




2025 Printing Challenges

- Waste 1,200 copies to print 500 sellable copies
- Finding skilled pressmen, especially in Slayton
- Tariffs on consumables and newsprint price increases
- Cost of long hauling routes





Digital Printing Plan

- Partner with CDS, largest Xerox dealer in North America
- Use high-capacity office printers to print short-run tabloid newspapers

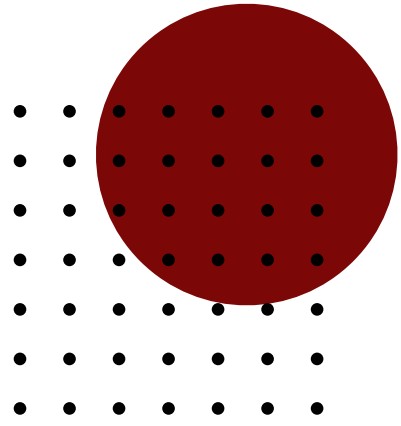
Ideal Use Cases:

- Short runs of under **1,500 copies**
- Book sizes of **20 pages or less**
- Remote locations

*Minimal skilled labor needed

*Two machine models

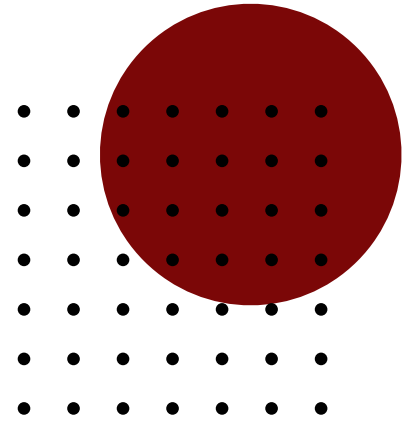




Xerox C9265

- Throughput = **48 pages** per minute
- 60-month lease Cost = **\$965** per month plus tax
- Color Impression Cost = **\$.049** plus tax (two pages)
- Black and White Impression Cost = **\$.009** plus tax (two pages)
- **15,000 Color Impression** monthly minimum per machine
- Staple Cost = **\$.011** plus tax per Book
- Paper Cost = **\$.0269** plus tax per Sheet (four pages)
- Labor Cost = Assumed at **\$20** per hour fully loaded
- Assume **15 minutes** per job for file preparation
- Assumed maximum monthly capacity per machine = **125,000 pages**

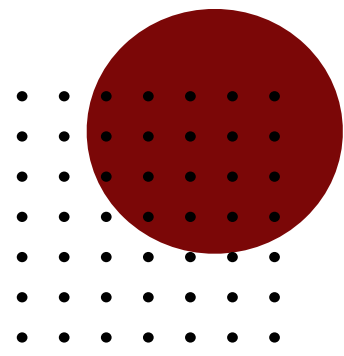




Xerox Versant 280

- Throughput = **60 Pages** per minute
- 60-month lease Cost = **\$1,650** per month plus tax
- Color Impression Cost = **\$.049** plus tax (two pages)
- Black and White Impression Cost = **\$.009** plus tax (two pages)
- **15,000 Color Impression** monthly minimum per machine
- Staple Cost = **\$.011** plus tax per Book
- Paper Cost = **\$.0269** plus tax per Sheet (four pages)
- Labor Cost = Assumed at **\$20** per hour fully loaded
- Assume **15 minutes** per job for file preparation
- Assumed maximum monthly capacity per machine = **300,000 Pages**





Fully Loaded Costs



- **12** Page Book with 4 B&W Pages = **58 Cents per copy**
- **16** Page Book with 4 B&W Pages = **71 Cents per copy**
- **20** Page Book with 10 B&W Pages = **68 Cents per copy**



Use Case #1 - Arkansas

- **Six** weeklies
- Print runs range from **200 - 750 copies**
- **620 miles** per week (\$744) of incremental hauling eliminated
- Installed **two C9265 machines** in **two locations**
- Each machine handles **three papers**
- Annual estimated **savings = \$57K**



Use Case #2 – Independence, MO

- **Two 1500 run**, five day-per-week papers; **21 weeklies**
- **Four 460-mile hauls** per week (\$2,258) eliminated

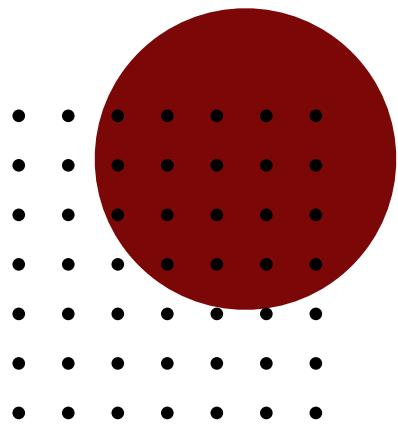
Hybrid Model:

- **Digital eight-page tabloids** on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Web press broadsheets** on Wednesday & Saturday capture legals, preprints, comics
- **Three** Versant 280 **machines**
- **Two staffers** can run all three machines simultaneously
- Estimated annual **savings = \$190K**



Use Case #3 – Northern MN

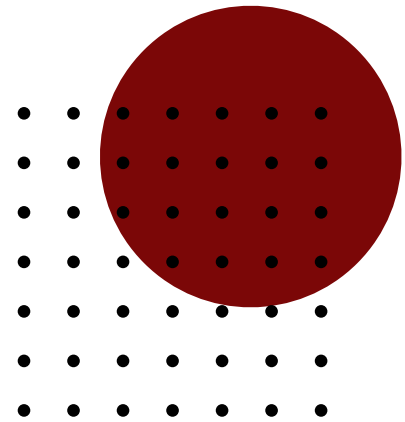
- **Three weekly** markets served by **two print locations**
- **Two C9265** in Cook (Centrally located- prints two markets)
- **One C9265** in Grand Marais (Remote, prints its paper only)
- **Printers are underutilized**, especially Grand Marais
- Estimated annual **savings = \$38K**



Digital Printing Results

- By end of July only 8 title will be printed using newsprint
- 22 machines in service today across 11 locations
- 20 additional machines on order
- In Q1 the 44 digital print markets produced an average 6% more contribution margin than the remaining newsprint markets
- Print subscriber loss rate is the same regardless of format





Where We're Going:

Print, Digital & Beyond



The Future: Our Print Vision



- Weekly subscriber-based publication remains key
- Strengthen community trust and brand presence
- Digital printing = exact run count = zero waste
- Expanded advertiser reach via newsprint-based free products

The Future: Our Digital Vision



- **Target 15–20% household penetration as digital subs**
- **Customized homepage for each user:**
 - Curated local content
 - Bundled third-party subs
 - AI-powered search & local assistant
- **Become the digital infrastructure for local biz:**
 - Host websites, run campaigns
 - Enable one-click purchases via subscriber accounts
 - Revenue circulates in community instead of Big Tech

The Future: A Blend of Mediums

Introduced Scratch Tab – Fall 2025

- **Ad-based free print product** linked to online sweepstakes
- Ads on **game website** can be changed weekly
- **Empowers staff** to sell print and digital ads
- Brings consumers online using QR codes for increased **digital engagement**
- Reimagined shopper – no postage, once per month printing
- Failed to gain traction – Need to retool. – USPS risk mitigation



Papers that Help Keep Dollars Local



- **Exclusive discounts** from local businesses as thanks for being paid subscriber
- Readers redeem via **QR code** or subscription info – QR to drive digital engagement
- Subscription can pay for itself – **economic relief**, directing \$ away from big-box-retailers
- More foot traffic and promotion for **small businesses**; positioned as journalism champions
- Great **brand reputation** and advertiser **relationship-building**
- Retooling to focus on print coupons in the paid product

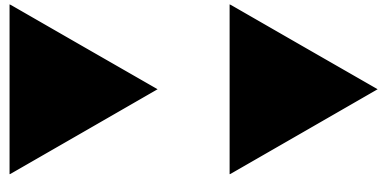
Hyper-Local AI Search

Readers can use **AI-powered search** on newspaper sites that produces **hyper-local**, accurate results **directly sourced** from trusted CherryRoad content with ProRata.AI's Gist Answers.

- Attribution and advertising revenue share
- First step towards a localized AI Agent
- Stronger reader engagement and expanded content reach
- Ethical content monetization by embedding targeted, native conversational ads adjacent to AI responses

Gist Answers

 Ask anything



Hyper-Local AI Search

What's happening in Boonville this weekend?

100% Boonville Daily News

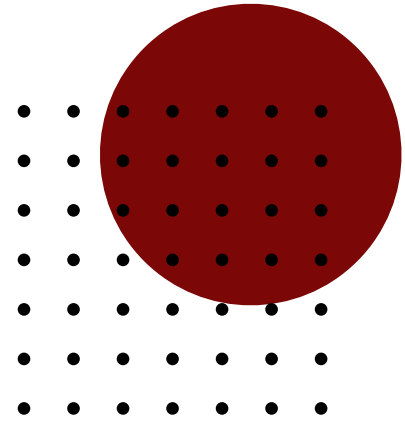
This weekend in Boonville, the **Back to the Farm Reunion** is taking place, sponsored by the Missouri River Valley Steam Engine Association. Here are some key events and details:

- The reunion is being held at the **Brady Farmstead Showgrounds**, located on Highway 179 at the Overton/Wooldridge exit on Interstate 70.
- This is the **62nd year** of the reunion, which is one of the largest steam engine shows in the state.
- The 2025 show features **oddballs, lesser knowns, and crawlers** as their featured brand or model.
- The **Hit & Miss engine display** will feature air-cooled engines for 2025.
- A top event not to be missed is the **tractor cruise** Boonville Daily News.

Additionally, the **Missouri River Festival of the Arts** is also happening around the same time, with a celebration of music, including a pipe organ celebration at Nelson Memorial, featuring Dr. Hofeling as the organist Boonville Daily News.

There may be other events, but these are the ones mentioned in the provided sources.

Gist can make mistakes, please verify responses.



Introducing The Trenton Telegraph

- First edition went to press in September
- New newspaper, new model
- Led by “Community Storyteller”
- Working to implement effective community ownership model
- Transparency around financial results
- Profit sharing
- Ultimate ownership of content



TRENTON TELEGRAPH

PRRRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Trenton, MO
Permit #99

ECRWSS
Postal Patron

Back to School
Trenton High School kicks off the school year in a fun way

By Gabe Stark
Trenton Telegraph
GStark@cherryroad.com

To start the new school year, THS planned a number of events throughout the first day to get students excited and engaged to be back at school. To start the day off, members of STUCO, FCCLA, and the band welcome students at the parking lot just before the bell on the first day of school. The long-standing tradition helps get the morning going. To follow, Senior Garrison Otto, Student Council President, warmly welcomes Trenton High School students back. STUCO helped sponsor four breakout sessions throughout the first day. The goal was to

CF RUSSELL STADIUM

Gabe Stark is the new face of the Trenton Telegraph.

A fresh start
Trenton Telegraph launches to tell the stories of the community

By Gabe Stark
Trenton Telegraph
GStark@cherryroad.com

I never pictured myself being a reporter. A financial advisor, City Administrator, Banker, many things might have come to mind if I were asked what job I would have, but never a reporter. My name is Gabe Stark. I grew up in Trenton and have never known anything different. As most do, I went to school in the district and quickly became involved in as many activities as I could. Student Body President, Football Captain, Prom King. I loved being a part of the circle I was in. I graduated from high school and attended NCMC, and continued being involved as the Business Club President, and looked forward to going to Student Senate meetings every other week. I got my degree and wondered what the next step of my life was, what my purpose was going to be. Well, through what could only be God's intervention, the mayor called me on a random Tuesday and offered me a summer job working as an intern in the basement of City Hall. While working for the city, my love for the community grew even

During the event, a large crowd of students, faculty and staff, alumni, and community members heard remarks from President Dr. Lenny Klaver, Board President and TJC Alum Chris Hoffman, current NCMC Student Senate President, Tailer Morrison, and Kristi Harris, Chief of Staff, who read remarks from the 2000 NCMC Student Senate President, Matt Younger. In her remarks, Tailer said, "Today isn't just about digging something out of the ground. It's about connecting -- with the past, with each other, and with the bigger story of this college that's now celebrating its 100th year...The people who buried this time capsule 25 years ago believed in us. They believed that we'd be here, continuing to build something worth celebrating. So now, as we honor the past 100 years, let's also think about the future. About what we will leave behind, in our actions, our friendships, and maybe even in

North Central Missouri College opens 2000 Time Capsule during Centennial Year
Submitted by NCMC

North Central Missouri College unveiled its 2000 Time Capsule as part of its ongoing Centennial Celebration, commemorating 100 years of education, community, and Pirate spirit. The capsule, sealed on September 7, 2000, as part of the 75th anniversary, has been opened for public viewing and offers a nostalgic glimpse into NCMC life at the turn of the millennium. For those interested in viewing the items, the time capsule contents are now on the first floor of the NCMC Library in Goyer Hall, near the circulation desk.

Jack Derry and Tailer Morrison revealing the 2000 time capsule.

FRESH START
CONTINUED TO PG 2

CENTENNIAL
CONTINUED TO PG 2

Vol 1 | No. 1 | September 12, 2025

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www.trentontelegraph.com

FIRST DAY
CONTINUED TO PG 10




In-House AI Support Tools



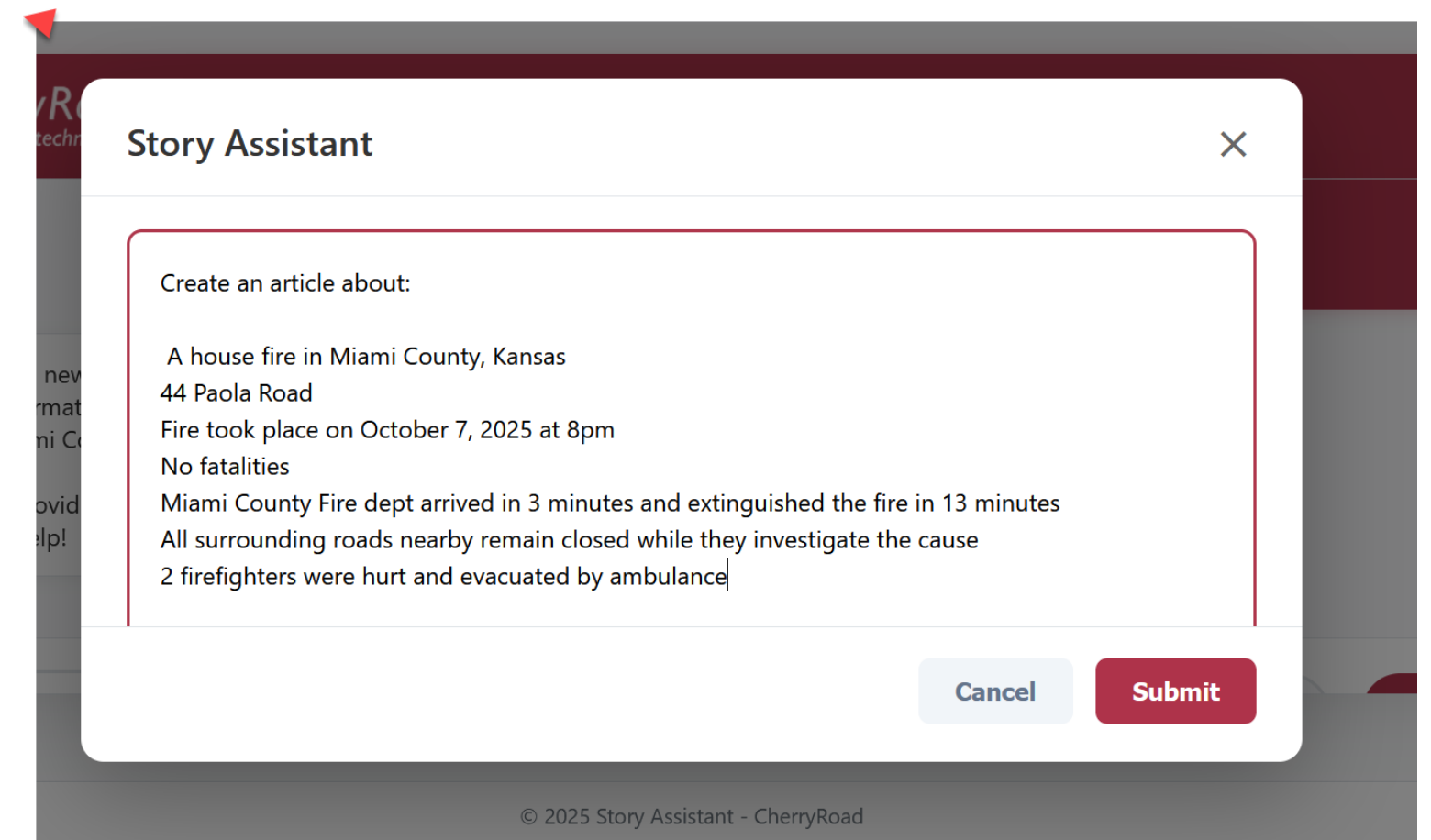
Story Assistant

Your AI Writing Companion

- Staffing and resource restrictions call for creative ways to introduce automation and efficiency while maintaining standards of ethical journalism
 - CherryRoad created **Story Assistant** – an AI support tool that uses our own content to help reporters generate and edit stories
 - AI Model sits in CherryRoad Cloud – No data leakage
- 

In-House AI Support Tools

- Allows staff to plug in facts and generate an article – this will become **essential as we enlist the support on Community Storytellers** without traditional journalism experience
- Story Assistant can also help with word choice, word length, and headline creation using **straight forward, accessible prompts** for all skill levels
- **Automated feeds** or scraps of public information that are automatically **formatted into a story**

A screenshot of a web application window titled "Story Assistant". The window has a white background and a dark red header bar. Inside the window, there is a text input area with a red border. The text inside the input area reads: "Create an article about:" followed by a list of facts: "A house fire in Miami County, Kansas", "44 Paola Road", "Fire took place on October 7, 2025 at 8pm", "No fatalities", "Miami County Fire dept arrived in 3 minutes and extinguished the fire in 13 minutes", "All surrounding roads nearby remain closed while they investigate the cause", and "2 firefighters were hurt and evacuated by ambulance". At the bottom right of the input area, there are two buttons: "Cancel" (light blue) and "Submit" (dark red). The window has a close button (X) in the top right corner. At the bottom of the window, there is a small copyright notice: "© 2025 Story Assistant - CherryRoad".

Story Assistant

Create an article about:

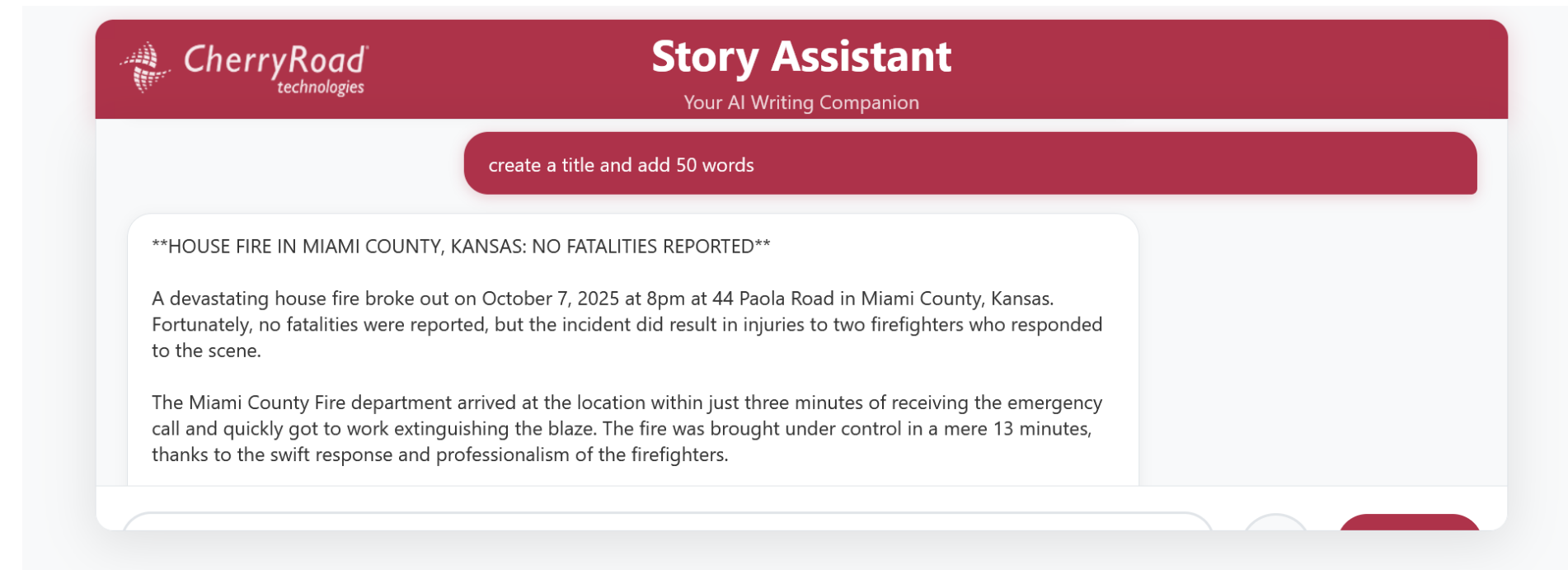
A house fire in Miami County, Kansas
44 Paola Road
Fire took place on October 7, 2025 at 8pm
No fatalities
Miami County Fire dept arrived in 3 minutes and extinguished the fire in 13 minutes
All surrounding roads nearby remain closed while they investigate the cause
2 firefighters were hurt and evacuated by ambulance

Cancel Submit

© 2025 Story Assistant - CherryRoad

In-House AI Support Tools

- All content is **reviewed and edited by human staff** to ensure accuracy
- We provide **transparent disclaimers** to let folks know we've used AI assistance



"This article was created with the support of Story Assistant – a CherryRoad Media Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool. It was subsequently reviewed by Kay Johnson, editor."

CherryRoadmap: 2026 and Beyond

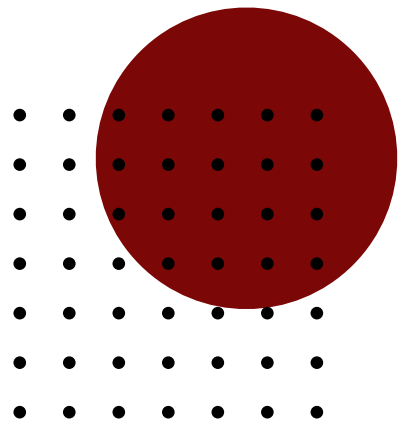
- Maximized **cost efficient** news delivery
- **Sustainable** recurring revenue streams
 - Subscriptions to digitally printed papers and online
 - TMC concept that maintains print ads at reasonable cost
 - AI licensing and monetization
- Insider Perks drives **subscription growth**



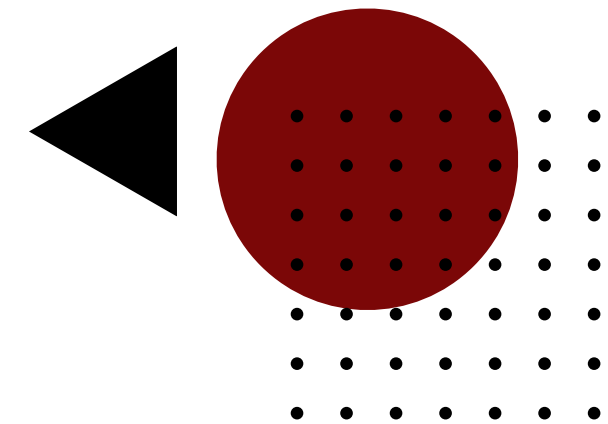
CherryRoadmap: 2026 and Beyond

- Position ourselves monetize the adoption of localized new technologies (AI Agents, & Crypto currency, etc.) bolstered by **trusted brand**
- **Community Ownership with Shared Services and Philanthropic Funding**





Reach Out: jgulban@cherryroad.com



Thank You

Let's strengthen communities and
drive progress – together.

