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A few minutes with ... Dean Ridings



Dean Ridings has been named as the first CEO of America's Newspapers, effective Nov. 11. He was interviewed by Mark Fitzgerald for America's Newspapers.

So, Dean Ridings, what is it you do?

I will be leading (as of Nov. 11) the newly merged organization of America's Newspapers, and working with newspapers across the country to improve the state of journalism in America.

And, of course, you most recently served for more than two decades as president and CEO of the Florida Press Association. What sort of changes did you see among associations over that period?

Associations face some of the same challenges as their members with the disruption we've seen the past decade. Many newspaper associations enjoyed revenue based on classified advertising, and as those revenue streams are being disrupted, they have had to look at new ways of funding their programs — or be faced with cutting their programs.

One of the ways the Florida Press Association found to generate new revenue was Intersect Media Solutions. Tell us about IMS.

IMS is the FPA's for-profit subsidiary that has evolved into an ad agency. It provides services to national and regional advertisers and makes it easier for them to advertise in newspapers. The profits from IMS have subsidized dues, so it has been beneficial to the members as well.

IMS also enables businesses to advertise in newspapers. It will provide the research and help advertisers connect with the right audiences, and it executes the buy and provides custom billing solutions.

Newspapers' strength is that they are intensely local, but that doesn't always work to their advantage in servicing advertisers. Most newspapers have different pricing structures, different deadlines and their ad sizes are different. So, that makes it difficult to make a regional or national buy. IMS does all the legwork and makes it easier to meet the deadlines and gets the best rate the advertiser would qualify for. It has helped keep advertisers using newspapers, because it keeps the cost down for the advertiser.

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