



Audit Bureau of Circulations



The Post and Courier Receives Near-Perfect IVS Audit Proficiency Rate

Situation

Charleston, South Carolina's *The Post and Courier*, the South's oldest daily newspaper, has roots that run more than 200 years deep. It started as two newspapers: *The Courier*, founded in 1803, and *The Evening Post*, founded in 1894. The Evening Post Publishing Company produced a morning and afternoon newspaper until 1991, when the two papers were merged to become *The Post and Courier*. Its NDM covers Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester counties and its service area goes north to Myrtle Beach; west to Columbia; and south to Hilton Head.

Issue

The Post and Courier was already confident in its pre-print insert process and wanted a way to communicate its accuracy to advertisers. *The Post and Courier* also saw IVS as a useful measurement tool to compare its ratings with other newspapers enrolled in the service.

Solution

After hearing a presentation by Jerry Hill, circulation director, *St. Petersburg Times*, and then reading the [St. Petersburg Times IVS case study](#), *The Post and Courier* saw IVS as an opportunity to validate its pre-print distribution process to advertisers. IVS also acted as a valuable measurement tool to compare with other newspapers.

Results

By participating in IVS, buyers gain assurance and trust that the accuracy of their pre-print inserts are thoroughly tested. Advertisers appreciate newspapers taking a proactive stance by committing to testing the production process of their pre-print insert distribution.

The Post and Courier received a 99.32 percent rating on its IVS audit and plans on publishing these results to let advertisers know about the efforts taken to ensure the integrity of its insert distribution process.

 Audit Bureau of Circulations InsertVerification <small>500 N. Manchester Street Schaumburg, IL 60193-4768 www.auditbureau.com</small>	Insert Verification Service Report The Post and Courier Charleston (Charleston County), South Carolina Insertion Day Tested: Sunday Issue Date of Field Verification: April 15, 2007 Average Paid Circulation: Sunday — 108,903 as of 12 months ended March 31, 2006.				
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1. Results Of Field Verification</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Insert Proficiency</td> <td>99.32%</td> </tr> </table>		1. Results Of Field Verification		Total Insert Proficiency
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Total Insert Proficiency	99.32%				

“IVS allows us to be proactive and show accountability to our advertisers.”

– Michael Caristi, national and regional advertising manager, *The Post and Courier*

“We knew our pre-print insert process was sound and this was a way for us to communicate that to our customers . We understand their need for validation within the industry and decided to participate for their benefit. It also gave us the opportunity to really evaluate the process from the perspective of ABC, a measurement we could compare with other newspapers.”

— **Bill Cranford, Director of Advertising, *The Post and Courier***

Leon Barrineau, circulation administration manager, *The Post and Courier*, explained that they performed a mock audit several weeks prior to the arrival of the ABC auditors and how that opened communication channels between departments, which helped with the actual audit preparations.

“It [the mock audit] opened up a lot of conversation between our own departments as far as how things would be done and how the paperwork flowed concerning pre-press to each department,” **Barrineau** said. “The mock audit really did us a lot of good in preparation for the actual audit and at the same time helped us understand how each of our own departments worked.”

He described the mock audit as a “discovery process” and a good exercise to show them that their procedures were better than they had thought.

“You tend to develop doubts when you see the wrong bundle going to the wrong distribution center and you begin to wonder how deep the problem extends,” said **Barrineau**. “When you put it under a microscope, you realize these problems you’ve been catching are really not the tip of an iceberg and that the bulk of the work and distribution is getting done properly. The audit reinforced that from a circulation and production standpoint.”

Barrineau added that the IVS audit might lend a sense of assurance for their current customers.

“When our advertisers tell us where they want their inserts, there’s that 99.3 percent score that it’s going to be right,” said **Barrineau**.

From the advertising perspective, **Caristi** stressed the importance of finding strengths and weaknesses in the pre-print process before the customer does.

“You want to be confident in that what you are telling the clients is happening is in fact the truth,” said **Caristi**. “If you’re worried about the accuracy of your pre-print distribution, burying your head in the sand is not going to solve it. It’s better to take a hard look at it and find out if there are issues and then work on improving them.”

Caristi added that the audit is well worth the energies and efforts despite some nervous moments. “It’s still better to go through the process than alienating a customer or losing an account.”

He concluded by giving his thoughts on IVS becoming an industry standard. “I think IVS will eventually become as routine as an ABC circulation audit,” said **Caristi**. “I think clients will demand that. For IVS to be accepted in the industry, ABC needs to validate their findings and let their customers understand the process of what’s happening and what’s being given accountability. ABC gets the information out to the advertisers on how it’s been effective, validates study findings and then the newspapers get the message out to their advertisers.”

IVS Audit Timeline

- Connected with *St. Petersburg Times*, who had already gone through the audit, to get guidance and pointers.
- Worked closely with the ABC auditing team and followed the template that was provided.
- Conducted a mock interview about a month before the actual audit.
- Part of the mock audit involved understanding the pre-packs and ensuring they would be there in time for the audit.
- Barrineau was appointed as team leader of the audit.
- Key people were selected from each department to be a part of the core team to lead the audit.
- Created a timeline outlining what they wanted to accomplish over the preliminary steps of the audit.
- Questions that arose from the group were taken to the ABC auditors, answered at the next meeting and implemented into the program.

For more information about IVS, members are encouraged to contact ABC’s **Kristina Meinig**, marketing and sales manager at (847) 879-8412 or kristina.meinig@accessabc.com.



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