



FALL LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8

12:30-5:30 PM **Board of Directors Strategy Meeting**
5:30-7 PM **Opening Reception**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9

8-9 AM **Group Breakfast**

9-9:15 AM **Opening Address: A Moment of Disruption & Opportunity**
 Event chair Matt Coen will set the stage for the CRMA Fall Leadership Roundtable with what he sees as huge opportunities for city and regional media companies as they respond to major disruptions from AI and other outside forces. Hear why Matt is excited to be investing and building for a stronger future as media leader. *Speaker: Matt Coen of St. Louis Magazine*

9:15-10:15 AM **Google's AI Overviews and the Rise of AI Answer**
 Google's search engines are rewriting the rules of discovery, siphoning clicks while sitting atop of the search results page. Early studies show an average 34 - 35 % drop in click-through rate when an AI Overview is present. Local and niche magazines—already fighting for every reader and advertiser—can't afford to wait this out. In this fast-paced session, Melissa Chowning unpacks what the shift really means for city & regional



publishers and the impact on their website traffic. Drawing on fresh, anonymized traffic data from multiple CRMA titles plus industry research, she'll show where losses are happening, where quality traffic is improving, and what forward-thinking brands are doing right now to reclaim visibility, revenue, and leverage. *Speaker: Melissa Chowling of Twenty First Digital*

10:15-10:30 AM

Break

10:30-11:15 AM

Unleashing Efficiency with AI Workflows

Learn how media organizations are using the right tools and platforms that are leading to efficient AI workflows across a variety of departments including editorial, advertising, and design. You'll see how companies are automating repetitive work that slows teams down making work faster but also opening up new product ideas. You'll see workflows in action that you can easily bring back to your team. *Speaker: David Arkin of David Arkin Consulting*

11:15-11:30 AM

Break

11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Case Studies in Harnessing AI for Sales

Hear real world case studies and live "how to" demonstrations from CRMA members have used AI tools to prospect in very easy and practical ways including building prospecting lists, integrating smart email sequencin, how to set up AI assistants for efficient proposal writing and how members use AI to create compelling storytelling presentations including AI-generated video to close more deals. *Speakers: Mike Martinelli of San Diego Magazine, Logan Aguirre of 417, David Arkin of David Arkin Consulting*

12:30-1:30 PM

Group Lunch

1:30-2:30 PM

Intentional Branding

How much are you investing in your own brand? 5% of revenue? 15%? More? More importantly, how are you deploying those dollars? New Publisher and CEO of 5280, Charity Huff will lead a discussion on how she's taken her start-up, entrepreneurial bent on advertising and marketing to the Denver market. Its starts with the fundamentals and a clear goal that the city magazine should have an unobstructed relationship with its readers, advertisers, and community leaders. *Speaker: Charity Huff of 5280 and other CRMA panelists*

2:30-2:45 PM

Break

2:45-3:30 PM

Your Biggest Move for 2026

CRMA members and associate members discuss where they are bullish for 2026. *Roundtable led by Susan Farkas of Washingtonian and Laurie Laykish of LOCAL Life*



3:30-3:45 PM

Break

3:45-4:45 PM

How to Monetize a New Business Vertical

Beyond traditional business magazines, CRMA members are finding new ways to build revenue and audiences in the business vertical including business "studios", dedicated business newsletters and podcasts, new annual business magazines and unique business events. *Panelists: Todd Tucker of Evansville Business, Gillea Allison of D CEO, Matt Coen of St. Louis Business, Logan Aguirre of Biz417*

5:30-8:30 PM

Group Dinner at Rosebud Steakhouse

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10

8-9 AM

Group Breakfast

9-10 AM

Why Events Matter More Than Ever in the Age of AI

As AI accelerates disruption across content creation, digital advertising, and audience behavior, CRMA publishers are being challenged to rethink how they drive engagement, revenue, and relevance. But while the digital space gets noisier, in-person experiences are becoming more powerful than ever. This session explores how events, when done strategically, can become a powerful tool in your portfolio and serve as a high-impact, high-trust solution to today's digital disruption. We'll discuss how to evaluate when to add events to your lineup (and when not to), the types of events that drive real value for media brands, and how to build an event strategy that deepens editorial connection, fuels sponsorship, and reinforces your brand's role in the community. *Speaker: Diana Vdovets of DRV Collective with CRMA Panelists TBA*

10-10:15 AM

Break

10:15-11:15 AM

Strategic Thinking: Taking the Longview

It's no secret that the publishing world has changed a lot in the past 20 years and with the advent of AI, these changes will now only accelerate. CRMA is always awash with great ideas that our members can take back with them, but many of these ideas are tactical and focused on short term opportunities. This session will give you an opportunity to think about and share the long term, strategic opportunities for your company. How do you set up your company and your organizational leaders to achieve long term success? *Speaker: Don Harkey of People Centric Consulting Group*



SPEAKERS



David Arkin, with a 25-year career in media, has served in various roles such as reporter, editor, director, consultant, and executive for newspapers, TV stations, media associations, and startups. Renowned for his audience leadership, he has developed high-quality content and transformative digital strategies, leading to significant audience growth, new revenue streams, and improved processes for both large media organizations and family-owned companies. David led content for nearly a decade at GateHouse Media. The Local Media Association named him Digital News Innovator of the Year, and he served on boards including the Associated Press Media Editors. He currently owns his own consulting company, David Arkin Consulting, where he provides fractional digital leadership, branded content, SEO and social media services to more than two dozen clients.



Melissa Chowning is the CEO of Twenty-First Digital (aka TFD), an audience development agency with a mission to help media organizations create an indispensable relationship with their audience that drives relevance, sustainability, and profitability. She has also served as a coach for The Meta Journalism Project Accelerator Program, Google News Initiative (GNI) and the Poynter Institute where she teaches newsrooms worldwide how to grow their audiences online.



Don Harkey is sought-after for his business insights in multiple industries. As a former engineer, Don brings a unique perspective to every organization he works with; he views every business as a machine and that machine is perfectly designed to get the results that it is currently getting. As the CEO of People Centric, Don loves to help people adjust their machine to produce better results. He is highly strategic, process driven, and an engaging keynote speaker.



Diana Vdovets, over the course of a nearly 20-year career, has been on all sides of event production from coast to coast. In 2011, Diana planted roots in Chicago and in the past decade firmly established herself in the media industry, managing events for storied institutions like Crain's Chicago Business, the Chicago Sun-Times and the Chicago Tribune. Prior to founding DRV Collective, Diana was the head of events + marketing for Chicago magazine; she was the driving force behind the publication's entire event strategy, including annual signature events and custom advertiser events, spearheaded media sponsorship efforts and developed brand partnerships. In 2023, Diana launched DRV Collective, a boutique events + marketing firm that produces buzzworthy events for corporate clients, brands and nonprofits.

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