



Earline Spence
Manager, Print and Digital Production
National Education Association (NEA)

Interview with Earline Spence

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The National Education Association (NEA), the USA's largest professional, employee organisation, is committed to advancing the cause of public education. NEA's 3 million members work at every level of education—from pre-school to university graduate programmes. NEA has affiliate organisations in every US state and in more than 14,000 communities across the United States.

NEA wanted to increase advocacy and engagement among its members, and at the same time reach new pro-public education audiences by expanding its digital footprint. To achieve this objective, it was decided the organisation needed an updated and more sophisticated app for its magazine. Earline Spence, Manager, Print and Digital Production, shares with us the strategy and process behind the launch of the upgraded magazine app and how it is making an impact in its community.

MCI: What prompted NEA to upgrade its magazine app?

Earline Spence: *NEA Today* is the flagship publication of our organisation. The quarterly print issue is sent to our 3 million-member base; and in addition to the print edition, the magazine is also available in an easy-to-read online version and downloadable app that can be accessed from any mobile device.

Looking at the evolution of our member profile and expectations we felt the need to innovate and offer a more interactive version of the original app.

MCI: What are the main features of the upgraded app?

E. S.: In addition to articles and features from the *NEA Today* magazine, content from many *NEA Today* vehicles is integrated into the app, so that NEA members and new audiences have access to continuously published updates and information.

MCI: How are you making the difference in your community?

E. S.: Since its launch in 2017, the use of the *NEA Today* app has been expanded to include access to association events and podcasts. Additionally, custom versions of the magazine have been developed and delivered via the *NEA Today* app to

various NEA audiences, including students studying to become educators, new and retired educators, and higher education professionals.

MCI: What were your key requirements in the development of the app?

E. S.: The number one requirement was to ensure the app is consistent with the magazine's overall branding and that it responds to members' and readers' expectations. We also wanted the upgraded app to be simple, user-friendly and flexible.

MCI: What process did you follow?

E. S.: First and foremost, we listened to our members. Our annual readership survey results found that very few NEA members realised that an app version of the flagship magazine existed.

The need for a new approach was clear. We wanted the new magazine app to fulfil and even surpass their expectations. Then, the key to success was to identify the right partner that could listen and develop a tool that matched our objectives within the allocated timeframe. In that sense, Network Media Partners has surpassed our expectations.

From concept to development, they have delivered seamless app and have brought

the right level of innovation that we would not have been able to think of ourselves. Their support and level of expertise was determinant in the success of the app design. Since the launch, we continue to collaborate on improvements to ensure digital reader adoption rates continue to grow.

MCI: Any results to share?

E. S.: Once Network Media Partners delivered the final app, we worked with our agency partner, Weber Shandwick, to create and execute an advertising campaign to increase awareness of the new app, as well as drive app downloads.

During the launch of the campaign, we tested multiple platforms and partners to determine the most effective tools to meet both goals and settled on a combination of social and direct digital advertising.

To date we have delivered creative to nearly 250K NEA members to help increase awareness and have driven 3.6K new downloads via our digital advertising. This launch represents a major accomplishment for our organisation. Engagement is up and our costs are down 80 per cent!

Insider's view

Jen Smith

Vice President, Creative Strategy
MCI USA



MCI: What was your starting point?

Jen Smith: The original app was produced using Adobe's Digital Publishing Suite (DPS). That version lacked a number of components that NEA had envisioned, and with fewer than 1,000 downloads during the first 18 months of the app's existence, the project was only minimally successful.

MCI: How did you proceed?

J. S.: To boost results, we created a new content strategy with NEA and started work on a redesign of the *NEA Today* app. We chose Twixl Publisher as our platform and partnered with Managing Editor Inc. (MEI), who provided the TruEdit HTML workflow and Twixl Publisher platform. MEI worked with us to integrate TruEdit and Twixl Publisher to build the new *NEA Today* app once our

design and content strategy was in place.

The results have been exceptional, and more than 1,800 downloads occurred during the first 3 months alone.

MCI: What are the main differences between the original and the new version?

J. S.: The new app is more intuitive, and we have been able to integrate content from many *NEA Today* vehicles—not just the print magazines. The redesigned app also includes a carousel on the home screen which allows us to continuously publish fresh content on a weekly schedule.

Our strategy to publish continuously and integrate three *NEA Today* titles and audiences was new to NEA. Also, we built content that is specific to each device, so

it's pixel-perfect for iPads and responsive for Smartphones. The user receives the best experience for the intended device.

MCI: You have been recognised by the 2018 Folio: Digital Awards for the digital design work of the app. What does it signify for you?

J. S.: We are thrilled to have our digital design work recognised and extremely proud that our creative work reimagining and producing the *NEA Today* app has helped the NEA increase advocacy and engagement among its members and related audiences.