

Is the Washington Post trying to alienate subscribers?

Over the past five years, since I moved to Washington, I have seen the Washington Post decline as its price continues to climb. When I got here, you could get the paper for 50 cents. Now, it is 75 cents. Subscription costs also continue to rise. And yet, the paper gets smaller and more irrelevant. It's almost like the Post wants to get rid of its subscribers and print edition readers.

Here are several questionable moves the Post has engaged in over the past couple of years:

- Increased subscription rates and got rid of the ability to pay for more than 8 weeks at a time (there used to be an option to pay for 12 weeks, etc., thus locking in a price)
- Made TV Week opt-in and then charged 15 cents for each copy
- Got rid of separate business section and folded it into front section
- Created Capital Business "for subscribers only" and is charging \$50 per year for it
- Posts print content online a day or two before it is published, effectively making newspaper content available sooner to the entire world for FREE.
- Cut back substantially on copy editors and other newsroom personnel, making the newspaper rife with errors (grammatical, spelling and factual)
- Publishes the Express, a smaller version of the Post, for FREE

All these moves seem (with the exception of publishing all content online for free) seemed to be designed to increase the Post bottom line AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS BASE. The most loyal

readers are those that pay to get the newspaper, and yet, the Post is basically screwing those readers by charging them MORE to get what others get for free.

Clearly, it is not a financially wise move to subscribe to the Post, so why do we continue to subscribe? Often, it is because of habit. Many of us still like reading a paper newspaper with our morning coffee. And some of us love the puzzles. Otherwise, the printed Washington Post has NO value. Everything in the printed edition is available online, for free. If I want to take it with me, I can pick up an Express. There is absolutely no financial incentive to subscribe. And the Post seems to be doing everything in its power to get me to stop subscribing.

If the Post continues down this path, it will reduce its circulation numbers substantially, which in turn will affect the amount of money they can charge advertisers. As ad revenue goes down, along with subscriber revenue, the newspapers bottom line will suffer. And then they will want to charge for online content. Online readers will probably not pay since plenty of other quality content is available elsewhere for free.

Can the Post reverse course? Probably not thus leaving us with a crappy newspaper we are paying more for...good thing some of us have birdcages to line.

