

Developing community audiences

One of Archant's strengths is its ability to remain valued by its customers and central to the diverse communities it serves.

Although 2006 has been a difficult year for the industry as a whole, and Archant has not been immune to the downturn, the business has performed well in terms of audience development.

The traditional newspaper business continues to immerse itself in the many communities it serves by actively campaigning to change things for the better for its readers. Hundreds of thousands of pounds was raised by Archant's newspapers for charities at home and abroad during the year. This strategy strengthens the bonds the business has with its audiences and means regional newspapers remain one of the most valued sources of information.

The conversion of paid titles to free titles has proved a successful approach to increasing audience share and in allowing newspapers to build relationships with a growing readership. The launch of new products, in print and on-line, has also enabled the

business to reach new audiences.

Archant's magazine businesses, whose core proposition is delivering high quality publications for readers and advertisers, also further developed their audiences. At Archant Life, acquisitions have consolidated the division's geographical coverage. This, together with the launch of new titles, has enabled Archant Life to deliver circulation growth of nine per cent year-on-year during its five years of continued success.

At Archant Specialist, the relaunch of niche titles has resulted in impressive increases in circulations. High quality, targeted editorial and improved designs have attracted new specialist audiences.

The Group's contract publishing business, Archant Dialogue, has also reached out to new audiences through successfully pitching for new contracts to produce customer magazines.

During 2006, Archant has taken steps to increase overall efficiency by making use of technology and refining complex processes to meet the needs of →

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the organisation. The centralisation of Information Services and the consolidation of all Accounting Services to Prospect House in Norwich have contributed to this.

While Archant continues to invest in its core business as well as new and existing products, media fragmentation demands that the business must explore new methods of reaching its audiences and take advantage of the opportunities offered by new media. The creativity of Archant's people, portfolio diversification, web activity and improved efficiencies have contributed to this strategy. The Group's many newspapers and magazines enjoying an established, loyal readership, now have the ability to layer their offerings and further enhance the relationships they have with customers by communication through a range of channels.

Ian Davies, Director of Business Development, explains: "Archant's overall strategy has always been about operating in local and special-interest markets where communities of consumers and advertisers can

interact with us – and each other – across our print publications. We now need to offer these same people additional channels of communication as well as capturing new audiences."

Building new audiences

The free formula adopted by Archant Regional at its Herts & Cambs division is proving a successful approach to building a larger audience share. The division's Managing Director, **Stuart McCreery**, comments: "The move to frees is considered a success although, overall, year-on-year profits are static. We have, however, increased our audience and have a stronger platform on which to build our business."

Recent independent readership research undertaken for the Royston and Ely markets confirmed the *Ely Standard* and *Royston Crow* as number-one titles in their respective markets. "This is excellent news, and partly due to the decision to go free," explains Stuart. "We do accept that the job is not



DYNAMIC DOCKLANDS

Since its launch in 2005, *The Docklands* has performed beyond expectations. Enzo Testa, Managing Director of Archant London, says: "It's a free newspaper and, despite launching in one of the industry's most difficult years, it has grown its market share and increased advertising revenues by 20 per cent during the year."

Enzo says *The Docklands* has managed to carve out a niche for itself in the market and set

itself apart from its long-established rival. "The paper carries an element of lifestyle content reflecting the aspirational aspects of a particularly affluent part of the capital.

The paper has an innovative distribution philosophy: "Of the Docklands' residents, 80 per cent only live there Monday to Thursday. We chose Tuesday as publication day and made the product free to either pick-up at strategic sites, such as shopping malls, or receive by delivery via

the concierges of the main tower blocks. We also deliver some copies door-to-door."

The Docklands is also supported, like all titles across London, by a web site and an electronic version of each week's edition that is available by email.

Enzo is positive about the future: "The Thames Gateway area is witnessing a range of huge regeneration projects resulting in a predicted 120,000 new homes and 180,000 new jobs," he concludes.



DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

During 2006, Archant Regional's web sites witnessed increased usage with year-on-year growth in December of 73 per cent.

"Combined with the three million newspapers that Regional circulates each week, it is clear that we have increased our overall audience, with many individuals choosing to interact with our trusted brands on-line as well as in print," says Tim

Youngman of Archant Regional.

"This growth also means levels are now sufficient to support investment in our digital classified offerings such as *Homes24*, *Jobs24* and *Drive24*. The focus for Archant is to convert this audience increase into revenue, with digital classifieds being a key part of the drive."

Further growth is expected in 2007 following planned investment in existing sites.

yet complete and we have specific advertising category work to do, which will be made much easier with our research results."

Within the division's Fenland titles, progress has been particularly pleasing. "We have witnessed improved revenues, a reduction in losses and an overall better design. The improvements were acknowledged with the *Cambs Times* winning the Best Free Weekly Newspaper in the West and East Midlands and Eastern Region at The Newspaper Society Awards in November. This is a fantastic achievement."

Overall web traffic across Herts & Cambs has also increased. "It exceeded 100,000 unique visitors each month during 2006; a significant milestone," says Stuart. "Web activity is complementary to the printed product and this is evidenced by the minimal impact on paid for sales. More regular editorial updates and the introduction of our new classified platforms will see growth continue in 2007."

With the need to evolve in the changing media landscape, an external consultant was brought in to

review the editorial workflow. "The introduction of frequently updated web content has meant the workflow has changed. We identified benchmarks and adapted the way the journalists work to accommodate these changes." Furthermore, efficiency savings in print workflow allow the web workload to be absorbed into the existing teams. "The key benefit of this exercise has been defining what is required from our editorial system to serve a multimedia output."

Complementary media

Archant's traditional position as a publisher at the heart of communities gives the business a distinct advantage over its competitors, as Ian Davies explains: "We are the strongest player in most of the markets we operate in. This has enabled us to build an on-line presence around existing brands that already have a prominent place in the community." Archant's digital strategy is to deliver web sites that complement its print brands, allowing the company →



ARCHANT SWEEPS BOARD

In November, *Cambs Times* editor Brian Asplin (above centre) collected an award for Best Free Weekly Newspaper in the West and East Midlands and Eastern Region for the *Cambs Times* at the 2006 Newspaper Society's Weekly Newspaper Awards.

But the glory didn't stop there, with other Archant titles being praised at the event. Sister title, *The Hunts Post*, was highly commended in the same category and *The Comet* series was highly commended for Best Free Weekly Newspaper in the South East, including Greater London, and won a merit in the Best Niche Publication (Free weekly newspapers) class for 'Making the Right Choice for Education'.

Meanwhile, Archant London's *Romford Recorder* was highly commended for a Newspaper Community Award and the *Weston & Somerset Mercury* received a certificate of merit under the same banner for its Weston Super Kids Appeal.

Archant London's *Hampstead & Highgate Express* was highly commended for its North London Restaurant Guide in the Best Supplement (Paid for weekly newspapers) category.

The Hertfordshire Business Awards from Archant Herts & Cambs also notched up a success of its own when it won the award for Most Unusual and/or Successful Revenue Producing Idea – Free Weekly Newspapers.

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WEB WINNERS

The *Pink 'Un's* web site was awarded the 'Website of the Year' accolade at the 2006 EDF Energy East of England Media Awards, just pipping fellow Archant web site, *EDP24*, to the post.

The *Pink 'Un's* site was singled out for its creativity and good use of submitted video and pictures. It also received praise for its mix of big news and local detail.

The nominated *EDP24* site stood out for its on-line broadcasts from the newsroom.

EDP24 was also named 'Website of the Year' for the fourth time in six years at the Regional Press Awards. *EDP24* Web editor Pat Prekopp (above right) was presented the award by ITV's Andrea Catherwood.

The Archant Norfolk site scooped the prestigious Press Gazette award, having carried off the title in 2005, 2003 and in 2001, the year of its launch.

to fulfil its role as a creator of distinct audiences that will prove attractive to advertisers.

Archant's regional newspaper editors are welcoming these new opportunities and are at the forefront of this interactive dynamic. *The Comet*, one of Archant Regional's Herts & Cambs' free titles, was one of the first of the newspapers to have an on-line presence. Darren Isted, the newspaper's Editor, says: "We view *The Comet* as a newspaper and a web site – it's all one entity."

It's a perspective that allows the brand to reach its audience through a variety of channels to meet their demands best. "Our goal is to make it first and make it fast. We print the newspaper on a Thursday, but with our on-line presence we are now able to publish news daily."

In editorial terms, one of the most marked changes has been the way in which news stories are broken to readers. "All stories are published on the web first, unless there's a good reason to hold it until the printed edition," he adds. "We are educating our readers to



//We preach the fact that we do not work for a newspaper, but rather a brand with print and electronic editions//



INTEGRATED ACCOUNTING

Archant Accounting Services (AAS) successfully completed its four-year integration project in November. Archant Finance Director, Adrian Jeakings, explains: "In 2002 we began a project to implement a single group-wide accounting system, merging all accounts payable, payroll and general ledger functions. It was then also decided to integrate all credit control and collections."

The positive effect of completion has been instant. "It has reduced the level of overdue debt and brought down the days of sales outstanding – a key measure for collections performance."

With a robust accounting structure in place under a dedicated management team, the Group is also now able to integrate any new acquisitions with impressive speed. Adrian says the quick turnaround delivers other key benefits. "It results in substantial cost savings and ensures a consistent approach to customer service, while the time taken to turn sales into cash has

reduced significantly."

Furthermore, business units are now able to concentrate on their core activity of serving customers and readers, while retaining access to important accounting information.

"In terms of cost, a single system based in one office delivers clear savings," he adds. "We can gain greater financial control via common processes and procedures, and a single set of standard reports improves the management information systems."

AAS now enters the next stage in its development, with the emphasis shifting from integration towards service provision and continued process improvement to benefit the business and customers alike. Adrian says: "Archant is primarily a local media company and it is essential that our advertising and editorial activities are part of the local communities they serve. However, when it comes to certain 'back-office' functions, customers simply want a fast, efficient and consistent service."

//Our goal is to make it first and make it fast//

interact with our web site every day through news updates, features, blogs, competitions and on-line polls."

Such a strategy highlights the evolving relationships between modern media and customers. Historically, readers played a more passive role, purely consuming news and information. Today, communication has become a two-way street. Readers now engage more with the titles they read, giving media outlets and publishers the ability to increase the frequency with which audiences are exposed to their brands through content-based and advertising services.

"At the *Norwich Evening News* we preach the fact that we don't work for a newspaper, but rather a brand with print and electronic editions," says Editor, David Bourn. It is a forward-thinking approach that is also changing the role of the traditional journalist. David says: "As we dissolve the cultural barriers between print and on-line, moving from co-operation to full integration, journalists begin to understand that they are not purely newspaper writers, but gatherers of news and information who →

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disseminate it through the most appropriate format for the consumer."

The *Norwich Evening News* web site now uses embedded audio and video, podcasts and a range of ways to interact with readers. "Recent examples include on-line condolence books and a challenge to recreate great Norwich City FC goals," he adds.

However, alongside these technological innovations, print still has a valuable role to play. "I firmly believe in the future of the newspaper format, but not without a multimedia backdrop," says David. "As a result of all this work unique visitors and page impressions were up by more than 100 per cent in December on the *Norwich Evening News* web site alone. This is not to the detriment of newspaper sales, which also performed better on a year-on-year basis in 2006 compared to 2005."

Digital 24/7

Consumer demand and free broadband deals have been instrumental in driving an increased uptake that



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has resulted in an estimated 70,000 new homes signing up to broadband every week. As increasing numbers of consumers explore the on-line space, Archant is ensuring it is well positioned to exploit fully its commercial opportunities.

In October, the launch of Archant's innovative property web site, *Homes24*, demonstrated the first stage of the Group's broader digital development strategy.

Development Director for Archant Regional, **Stephan Phillips**, was instrumental in the site's journey to going live. "With the support of a steering committee that brought together local estate agents, we have developed a much more user-friendly site, with greater consumer-facing functionality," he explains. "Moreover, as the estate agents are an important sector of the local business community, *Homes24* gives them greater brand exposure than they currently achieve on competitor sites."

The web site boasts a sophisticated mapping system at its heart, allowing users to 'drill down' →



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ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Following its launch in 2005, the Archant Academy has seen a particularly successful year.

"There's been a much greater take-up and a total of 524 delegates have attended 48 courses in 2006, which is a significant increase on the previous year," says Tracey Welbury, Archant's Training and Development Officer.

The Academy launched its new Senior Leadership for Managers programme, with the first training event held for managers from around the divisions at the Robinson Centre in Wyboston, Bedfordshire. "It was a huge success and we are absolutely delighted that the programme has been accredited with the Diploma in Management Certificate by the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM). This a fantastic achievement."

The Performance Leadership for Managers (PLM) programme, now in its second year, was heavily supported across the

business and saw 15 participants pass their PLM programme and go on to gain their Certificate in First Line Management, accredited by the ILM.

Another popular course during 2006 was the Personal Effectiveness Programme (PEP), open to every level of employee, department and business unit across the entire Group. The PEP centres around such areas as effective communication, assertiveness skills, confidence building and relating to other team members.

The Academy also delivers the Personal Effectiveness Plus programme, which is aimed at management level or those responsible for managing teams.

With participants from across Archant's business units coming together during training, Tracey believes the Academy provides an opportunity to improve a range of processes. "Participants share ideas, take them on board and use them when they return to their day-to-day role."

ROLLING TONES

Nick Schiller, Managing Director of Archant Print, says the company's two print facilities have continued to implement systems to increase consistency and reduce costly variables from the printing process. "The key to consistency is standard operating systems, and our challenge is continuously to improve consistency so we can produce excellent newspapers and publications on time, every day for our customers."

To that end, the division has made appointments in 2006 to strengthen its technical and management teams, most significantly a new Technical Director, Alan Finch.

Another exciting development

has been the greater quality and increased use of colour. "This has been achieved with new software that reduces the amount of ink we use and also makes images sharper and brighter."

At the Ipswich print facility the division is introducing the capability to produce a further 16 pages of colour. "This will give us a 48-page colour capability – an increase of 50 per cent on existing levels."

The desire to adopt a more efficient approach to manufacturing has led to Archant Print reducing the number of its paper suppliers.

Another advance for the division has been the launch of a new web site, primarily aimed at attracting interest from potential external customers.



// Campaigns are hugely important to regional newspapers as we can make a real difference to readers' lives, as well as form strong relationships with the public //

for in-depth local information, alongside enhanced search facilities where users can explore information such as schools' performance, transport links and hotels. The site is also capable of hosting pictures, video clips and PDF brochures about each featured property.

A key challenge during the initial launch phase was establishing a means of deriving revenue from potential advertisers, particularly in a space where well-established competitor sites were taking a larger share of the total advertising spend than Archant. "Homes24 demanded a new business model, so we created a unique system for advertisers that sets us apart from all our competitors," adds Stephan.

A unique selling point of the web site is its local focus and clear connection to existing newspaper and magazine titles. "This local approach is one of our key strengths. Our own research has shown that, in Norfolk, 60 per cent of properties are sold to people already living in the county who are aware of our brand."

The next phase in Archant's digital development was the launch of another member of the '24' family, *Jobs24*, aimed at the recruitment market. "We have made it straightforward for our sales staff to sell by creating an advertising package that offers our customers the print product and web site for an all-inclusive fee."

The *Jobs24* web site provides high levels of interactivity, including full search capabilities, mapping and cluster data. "With cluster data, applicants can look at information about how many people have applied for a particular position and map positions relevant to their job criteria," explains Stephan.

While there are countless 'job boards' already occupying the on-line space, Stephan is confident that the strength of Archant's offering is, again, its local aspect and high levels of brand awareness among its customers. "With thousands of on-line recruitment sites in existence, each consumer still tends only to look at five main web sites. If we can deliver a web site with a strong local focus then we will be in that top five."

BUILDING FUTURES

The desire to provide a working environment that reflects Archant's image as a modern multimedia company has been much in evidence throughout 2006, as Archant has continued a range of refurbishment programmes across the Group's facilities.

Archant Norfolk's headquarters at Prospect House in Norwich underwent a major refurbishment during 2006, following nine months of detailed planning.

"We moved Archant Accounting Services to an office nearby so we could use the vacant offices as a 'decanting' space for other departments," explains Project Director and Finance Director for Archant Regional, Brian McCarthy.

Despite the huge undertaking, Brian says the refurbishment's

accurate planning paid off. "This is a huge compliment to Trevor Ayers as Project Manager. The IS and facilities people are also to be commended for their work."

In December the project reached its conclusion and the building's 470 staff and many visitors now have a modern, flexible office space. Perhaps one of the most noticeable changes will be seen by visitors who come into the new reception area.

The project has also provided the opportunity to show exhibits from Archant's art collection alongside commissioned works by local photographer Richard Osbourne.

The next phase will see work to improve the car parks and the building's exterior.



During 2007 Archant plans to launch other new web sites and business models. Next in line is *Drive24*. Stephan says: "As our customers are central to any of these new developments, we are working closely with them in steering committees to develop web classifieds that meet their functionality demands and act as revenue drivers."

Community connections

One of the key factors that determines how Archant's brands are performing is the strength of the connection that customers make between the titles they read and the place in which they live or the interests they share. These customers look to those brands to understand and articulate the mutual opinions and concerns of their shared community.

The tragic story of the murders of five women in Suffolk at the end of 2006 created shockwaves across the county and far beyond. The events also reaffirmed how much Archant's newspapers remain at the heart of their community. **Kate Gooding**, Crime

Reporter for Ipswich's *Evening Star*, says: "The murders in Suffolk shocked the community to the core, not just because of their sheer horror but because so few realised the true extent of the town's problem with drug use and prostitution." The consequent outpouring of emotion, expressed in tributes from family and friends in the newspaper, and by many more in the on-line books of condolence, gave rise to the *Evening Star's* 'Somebody's Daughter' campaign.

The appeal aims to raise cash to help other vulnerable young people in Ipswich. The campaign is being run in conjunction with Ipswich Borough Council and has received backing from the community, drugs agencies and the families of the victims.

Kate says: "It's been successful because it has given those in the town the opportunity to channel their grief in a positive way. Ultimately, the aim of the appeal is for something positive to come from the events Ipswich has faced." **Nigel Pickover**, Editor of the *Evening Star*, says such campaigns form an integral part of regional press activities and act as a key tool for driving →



OFFICE INVESTMENT

In the Ely and March offices, home to some of Archant Regional's Herts & Cambs newspapers, a refurbishment programme was commenced to address the increasing needs of the division.

Managing Director, Stuart McCreery, comments: "The office in March has been changed to a more open-plan layout and, with new carpets and a fresh colour scheme, provides a much better working environment."

The Ely office has undergone a more extensive programme and staff will return to their refurbished offices early in 2007. "The programme comprises everything from new wiring, desks and carpets, to decoration, kitchen and toilet facilities." The aim is to make the office a much more welcoming environment for customers and a significantly improved workplace for staff at the office.

Stuart says the work at Ely and March sends out a message from Archant to those working within the Group and its valued customers. "Investing in our offices shows staff and customers alike that Archant is committed to the communities it serves."

// Archant has continued a range of refurbishment programmes across the Group's facilities //



ROMFORD EXTENSION

Archant's Romford offices have also undergone a transformation. Publishing Director, Paul Gregory, explains: "We successfully negotiated a ground-floor unit opposite our existing office space and have now refurbished the new premises to meet the Archant standard."

The work has included a new climate control system and an updated office and canteen

environment, as well as investment in new equipment and facilities. "The premises provide the perfect environment for the *Property Mart* team. They have more open space and break-out areas, along with modern conference facilities and meeting rooms.

"The increased traffic through the reception area has also had a positive effect on our brand exposure."



RELAUNCHED EVENING NEWS SCOOPS AWARD

The Daily Newspaper of the Year award at the EDF Energy East of England Media Awards held in January 2006 went to Archant Norfolk's *Norwich Evening News* – just one of a total of nine categories where Archant products came out on top.

The *Norwich Evening News* underwent a radical redesign a year ago, complete with a "new concept" relaunch edition. It was singled out for praise by the judges for the three strong front pages submitted in its entry and for "bold and brave" presentation and design. It was said to have "clearly identified the readership it is going after". The judges also said the paper "stood out from the others" and that "in an industry more challenged than ever, those who go out and try so bravely have to be commended".

Its new design introduced distinctive 'snapshots' at the start of every page lead, providing a summary of the main points for people with only a few minutes to spare. Positive news, in-depth analysis and an improved relationship with its web site were also among the targets for editor David Bourn.

At the ceremony, EDF Energy chief operating officer Paul Cuttill (left) and champion swimmer Karen Pickering (right) presented David Bourn (centre) with the award.

audiences. "Campaigns are hugely important to regional newspapers as we can make a real difference to readers' lives, as well as forming strong relationships with the public."

Across Archant's regional titles, other campaigns have also served to cement relationships with readers. The *Weston & Somerset Mercury's* 'Weston Super Kids Appeal' followed a successful campaign to raise money for improved paediatric care at Weston General Hospital. Weston Super Kids set out to raise £500,000 to buy new equipment for the facility by undertaking a range of fund-raising activities launched in the newspaper and on its web site. Activities included a large charity event on the town's pier, the raffle of a car donated by a local advertiser, and a competition for children entitled 'My Favourite Thing'. The newspaper's Editor, **Judi Kisiel**, says the incredible response from the community means the fully equipped children's ward opened in February 2007.

"The appeal captured the imagination of the town, judging by the number of organisations and

individuals who organised fund-raising activities and children who painted pictures of their favourite things. The *Mercury's* circulation increased year-on-year, so the appeal has helped to raise the newspaper's profile in the community and interacted with readers young and old."

Alongside numerous local campaigns, those that offer hope to people facing hardship abroad are also popular with the regional readership. During the past 15 years, the *Eastern Daily Press* has won many awards for its outstanding campaigning, including twice winning the One World media award.

The EDP's 'Dying of Thirst' appeal ran in April 2006 and raised more than £65,000 in one month. The money was used to support young children in more than 100 schools in the remote district of Kiteto in Tanzania, which was suffering one of the worst droughts in its history. Their plight was highlighted by Norfolk-educated Bishop John Hayden, who tends this remote flock. **Peter Franzen**, Editor of the *EDP*, comments: "The *EDP* is positioned as the hub of



//The appeal captured the imagination of the town//

//The EDP is positioned as the hub of Norfolk and the paper prides itself in taking a lead on behalf of its readers, whether at home or abroad//



Norfolk and the paper prides itself in taking a lead on behalf of its readers, whether at home or abroad. Since the *EDP* has been at the forefront of local and international campaigns, it has built a bond with its readership, so they know that if the *EDP* is backing a campaign it is well worth supporting. The work we have done in this arena has added enormously to the reputation of the *EDP* and has strengthened relationships with our readers."

Life-changing growth

Archant Life has a clear customer focus and determination to produce high-quality publications for readers, which also deliver the best platforms for advertisers. These have been central elements in the division's success during 2006. Managing Director, **Johnny Hustler**, says: "Although we're just five years from start-up, Archant's regional magazine business has already comfortably exceeded its first five-year objective."

One achievement of particular note in 2006 was the sale of 23,350 copies of *Lancashire Life* in December. →

A ROYAL TOY STORY

The *Newham Recorder's* Christmas Toy Appeal proved an instant hit with readers, and even attracted Royal attention.

Staff at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle contacted the appeal's co-ordinator, Kevin Jenkins, and asked him to visit the two palaces to collect toys. Royal Household member of staff, Sue Lewis, said: "The appeal was mentioned on our intranet and we were happy to help."

The *Recorder* has been running the appeal for the past

29 years, and 2006 proved to be the most successful to date, exceeding its target of 12,500 toys, raising the highest amount of money and receiving its largest-ever donation – an impressive £12,000 in cash and toys from workers at Barclays Capital in Canary Wharf.

Newham Recorder editor, Colin Grainger, said: "This year we set an ambitious target – one we exceeded, which is a truly magnificent achievement for the paper, our readers and links with the community."



// If readers relish the content we provide, they will also respond to the messages from our advertisers //

"We believe that's the highest sale of a single county magazine, anywhere in the UK, ever."

Archant Life has also strengthened its geographical coverage with the purchase of six titles covering the West Midlands and the launch of new titles in Cornwall and County Durham. This greater coverage has translated into impressive circulation growth for the division's titles. "While many media are finding audience growth elusive, Archant Life's county titles posted a like-for-like circulation growth of nine per cent in 2006, which included average growth of 14 per cent in the final quarter of the year."

Johnny believes this has been achieved through constant investment in fantastic editorial, coupled with energetic marketing. "We are the only nationwide magazine firm with its own field sales circulation team, where 10 per cent of the staff are focused purely on growing circulation." The ability to deliver ever larger audiences and excellent editorial is fundamental to Life's strategy of giving advertisers good value. "If readers relish the content we provide,



they will also respond to the messages from our advertisers. This simple truth is the key to success for any advertising medium."

He continues: "Archant Life's goal is to offer advertisers a truly national medium, comprising a portfolio of strong local titles all sharing high quality standards and a consistent readership. It's a strategy that works equally from the smallest local advertiser to national firms."

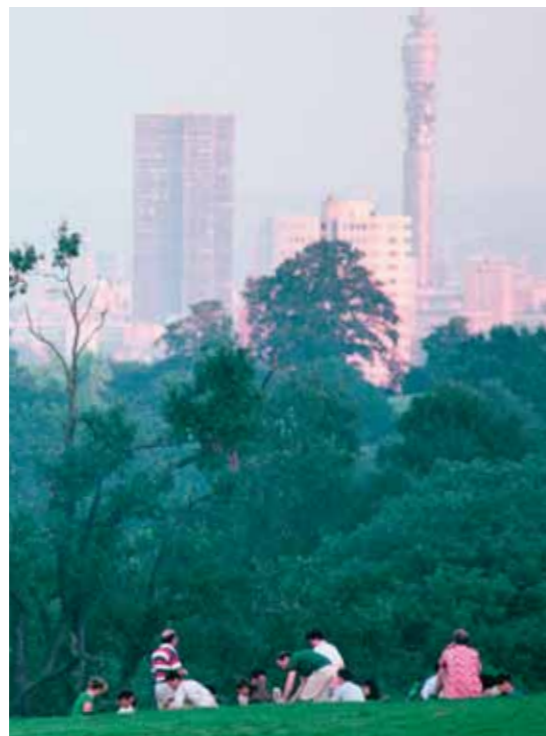
Success in the provinces has been replicated in Life's consolidation in London, where the purchase of Metropolis brought in another six glossy titles, alongside those acquired from Highbury House in 2005. Archant is now the largest publisher of local magazines in London, distributing around 600,000 copies each month. "The London consolidation has proved appealing to readers and advertisers, and the city formula that has been developed provides a blueprint for expansion into other UK metro centres."

Many of the larger provincial towns and cities offer good opportunities to provide a service for local

advertisers interested in a smaller catchment area. "To fill this gap, Archant Life has developed a town format, branded *The Oracle*, and is currently publishing this A5-sized title in Cheltenham and Gloucester. If successful, the brand could be rolled out alongside our county and city titles, offering advertisers a range of well-targeted magazines."

In conjunction with the strategy of achieving geographical infill, Archant Life launched a number of topical titles, including *Yorkshire Relish* for the county's foodies, a magazine about civil partnerships in Brighton, and various cover-mounted pub and restaurant guides across the country. Johnny says: "These titles tend to have a longer shelf-life than our monthlies and are supported by digital versions on the web, which has the effect of extending their distribution cost-effectively."

"We've made major progress on the digital front, with new web sites being designed and launched across the portfolio. These offer a range of digital services to complement the magazines and →



LONDON LIFE

In early 2006, Archant acquired six monthly magazines from London-based Metropolis Publishing Ltd – *The Resident*, *Grove*, *Westside*, *Angel*, *North West* and *Rise*.

With a total monthly distribution exceeding 250,000, the free titles consolidated Archant Life's geographical coverage in the north, west and south of the capital, adding to the six titles acquired from Highbury House in 2005.

The upmarket magazines joined Life's London portfolio in 2006 under Regional Managing Director for Archant Life in London, Jeremy Moreton, making the local magazine publisher the biggest of its kind in the capital. "Although some titles share distribution areas, their differing styles and content hold a particular appeal for advertisers. The metropolitan audience is younger and has

more aspirational values than the traditional readership. The content of the magazines reflects these different audiences, and advertisers have been able to exploit this by more successfully targeting their spend at very desirable customers."

"It seems that the audience's appetite for the upmarket regional magazine delivered free is still growing. The market is so competitive, however, that you can't afford to cut corners in terms of editorial, design and paper quality."

Jeremy is also confident that the lessons learned in the London market will have positive repercussions for Archant's free magazine strategy in other areas. "I think we've only started to scratch the surface and I'm sure the free, regional upmarket magazine format will prove successful in the country's other large towns and cities."



FILLING THE MIDLANDS

Paul Bates is the longest-serving Regional Managing Director for Archant Life, being part of the original team that created the business back in 2001.

Following the development of Archant Life in the south-west and mid-west, Paul has played a key role in the acquisition of the Midlands' business, which bridges the gap between the Cotswolds and *Derbyshire Life*.

"The Midlands is Archant Life's biggest challenge yet in the county magazine sector with five titles, *Staffordshire County*, *Shropshire Life*, *Warwickshire Life*, *Worcestershire Life* and *Herefordshire Life*, encircling the *Birmingham Life* city title," explains Paul. "With nearly 10 per cent of the UK population living in the region, it is without doubt one of Life's most exciting projects to date."

//I have no doubt that the travel team will continue to develop and grow *So British*, and that the synergies it enjoys with the rest of Archant Specialist's portfolio will strengthen even further throughout 2007 //

strengthen Archant Life's brands."

During 2006, Archant Life also undertook considerable work to consolidate its French portfolio. Greater business and creative efficiencies will be achieved by moving the existing three separate locations into a single unit in Cheltenham. "Good progress was also made with distribution in the leading supermarkets. A new annual, exclusive to WH Smith, was launched, offering readers a comprehensive guide to moving to France."

The market is particularly lucrative for Archant, and Johnny believes further openings exist there. "Good opportunities are seen from raising Archant's profile in France and providing tourist attractions and the accommodation sector with better ways to target UK visitors. The web will also open up new channels, especially through its use by people who are now resident in France." It's another exciting example of how Archant can meet the needs of a distinct community, based on a shared location or mutual interests.



Specialist communities

Archant Specialist has continued to identify and successfully target defined communities through its existing portfolio of magazines, alongside new launches. Attracting a new audience, Specialist acquired the rights from VisitBritain to publish a high-quality consumer magazine, *So British*, aimed at discerning travellers to the UK. "*So British* evidences Specialist's ability to achieve strong brand development and extension," says Archant Specialist Managing Director, **Farine Clarke**. "The title has already been very well received by advertisers and readers alike."

The magazine is an excellent strategic fit for Specialist, combining attributes of the publisher's key strengths, including impressive production values and strong lifestyle and leisure advertising. "We understand these aspects of magazine publishing very well and demonstrate them across our entire portfolio of titles, so the teams are well placed to take on this new venture."

Published by Archant Specialist's Travel Division, *So British* shares the editorial values of Specialist's two lifestyle titles, *The English Home* and *The English Garden*. The new magazine has a controlled circulation of 100,000 readers, primarily affluent Americans, making it a proposition that particularly appeals to Specialist's blue-chip advertisers. "*So British* has attracted a range of upmarket advertisers, such as the gun and rifle-makers James Purdey and Sons, the Mayfair Hotel and Graff fine jewellers."

Its circulation, coupled with specialised editorial content and stylish design, provides the perfect platform for advertisers to reach their target audience. "The focus is on travelling to the UK to enjoy the finest things on offer. This includes fashion and interviews with in-vogue British celebrities, such as Daniel Craig."

The first issue was published at the end of 2006 and Archant Specialist now plans to increase frequency alongside growing the subscription base. "We will continue to work closely with VisitBritain →

TOWN, CITY, COUNTY...

Layering city, town and county titles appropriately for each market is key to Archant Life's strategy. It generates a bigger audience and wins a greater share of local revenue than a single-title approach.



LIFE GETS THE TREBLE

Archant Life South East scooped three accolades at the Regional Media Co-operative Advertising Awards in October 2006.

The Archant division won the Best Motors Advertisement (in press and niche) award for a successful campaign with Volkswagen, as well as Best Manufacturer-led Advertisement for their work with home entertainment stockists Bose.

The region, which publishes titles including *Sussex Life*, *Kent Life*, *Surrey Life* and *Brighton & Hove Life*, was also highly commended in the Best Manufacturer-led Advertisement (in press and niche) for the same Bose campaign.

Rachel Lamb, Partnership and Brand Manager at Archant Life

South East, picked up both awards at the event, now in its 16th year. Suzanne Heaven, Regional Managing Director at Archant Life South East, said: "We are very proud that Rachel's commitment to developing effective co-partnership advertisement sales has been recognised with these awards. This is only the second year we have entered. In 2005 she gained commendations for her work with Land Rover and Brewers of Sandwich."

"The awards are highly competitive – a challenge that is relished by Rachel, who has committed to combining her revenue achievement and new-business growth with a high standard of customer service and creativity."



SPACE TO GROW

At Archant Specialist exploration into how its web sites can be further developed gathered momentum during 2006. The division has been investigating ways in which it can exploit the greater possibilities offered by the web.

With experts predicting that the web will move away from a domain where publishing is dominant to one where users have a much greater interaction with web sites, the possibilities are exciting. Nick Troop, Group Publishing Director at Archant Specialist, says: "We are thinking about the future of the internet in order to define our editorial and business web strategy."

The strategy is two-tier,

with the first stage comprising a programme of ongoing reinvigoration of the publisher's brand sites, such as *Pilot*, *Photography Monthly* and *Canal Boat*. "We're aiming better to serve the sites' true strengths, which are about helping to find, build and maintain communities of people with shared interests."

The next stage will see the start of a much deeper development programme, initially concentrating on *Sporting Shooter's* on-line presence. "The *Sporting Shooter* web site will become a beacon site and develop best practice for our future web presence."

The range of innovations put in place will aim to enhance the users' experience and reinforce the idea that they are part of a

mutual community. "Community development via chat rooms and blogs will be key," explains Nick. "These will be aided by user-friendly navigation across a range of features, from picture and video uploads to interactive maps and directories. The site will also include relevant news updates."

Once these applications have been perfected, the site will act as a template for others across the division. "It will be rolled out, with individual adjustments where appropriate, to all the other sites during 2007, including those which have been refreshed during 2006. This roll out will be key to developing further audience and advertiser participation with our brands."

// During 2007, Archant plans to continue its focus on audience development through investment in new and existing products and the development of its on-line activities //

in New York to ensure the title remains allied to their luxury marketing campaigns, thereby delivering high-value and controlled circulation readers to its advertisers."

Farine adds: "I have no doubt that the travel team will continue to develop and grow *So British*, and that the synergies it enjoys with the rest of our portfolio will strengthen even further throughout 2007."

A number of Archant Specialist's relaunched titles saw a substantial increase in audience figures in 2006. *Professional Photographer* increased its circulation by 46 per cent on the previous year and posted its first ABC in January 2007. This success is attributed to a new editorial philosophy to broaden the appeal, as Farine explains: "We've refocused the title to be of interest to aspiring professional photographers as well as the existing professional readership."

The English Garden also saw increased circulation during 2006. "In addition to catering for existing

readers, the editorial team focused on making the title more accessible to younger readers, adding a practical hands-on approach to gardening." This, coupled with new products, such as a new gardening calendar, helped to raise the ABC by six per cent during the year.

Sporting Shooter experienced an 86 per cent increase in subscriptions year-on-year in December as well as audited average monthly circulations of 21,859 in the second half of 2006. "We achieved this by giving the magazine a new look, highly focused editorial and the introduction of a gundog section," concludes Farine. "It's been a very successful year for us in terms of audience development on these three titles alone."

During 2007, Archant plans to continue its focus on audience development through investment in new and existing products and the development of its on-line activities, retaining its central position in the many communities it serves. ●



CUSTOMER IS KING

2006 has been another busy year for contract publisher Archant Dialogue, with four new clients, and an exciting move into web site management.

The division once again proved it has an almost intuitive understanding of its clients' needs, winning contracts to produce titles for Harley-Davidson, Countryside Alliance, Eastern Landlords' Association and Craegmoor Healthcare. The combined circulation of these new titles is an impressive 173,000, joining a portfolio that already boasts the likes of Saab, Olympus UK and the Hogg Robinson Group.

In September, General Manager, Chris Rainer, handed the reins over to Bob Crowley, former Publishing Director at Archant Specialist. Chris, who had four very successful years heading up the business and winning significant new contracts, is continuing to work part time for Dialogue looking after key clients. "It has been good for our clients that I was

able to hand over to Bob in a structured manner," says Chris. "Continuity means a great deal in our business."

Bob attributes Dialogue's success to the hard work of a very talented team and the desire to understand fully each client's unique demands. "We pride ourselves on the fact that prior to any pitch we get under the skin of a client through exercises such as hosting focus groups with their customers." It's an approach that impresses potential customers. "It stands up in good stead because we're seen as very proactive at an early stage in the relationship."

Even with long-standing clients such as Saab, which Dialogue has worked with for 17 years, the publisher continually pushes the boundaries in pursuit of excellence. "We're always giving Saab new ideas. We see ourselves as an extension of their team, and not just as a supplier."

In 2006, Olympus UK was one of Dialogue's clients to benefit from the team's value-added services. "We looked

beyond simply producing their magazine and held a joint subscriptions and direct mail strategy day for them with Archant Norfolk and Archant Specialist. We developed an 11-point action plan to drive new and lapsed subscribers."

This fully rounded approach to publishing has earned Dialogue additional business, evidenced this year, for example, with a contract to publish a magazine for Harley-Davidson's European Harley Owners Group.

"The initial requirement was to produce a magazine for the UK market," explains Bob. However, Dialogue's well-established reputation for producing magazines in many languages meant the initial brief developed into a Europe-wide project. "This has evolved even further into translating and managing content for their web site, alongside other projects."

It's a winning formula that results in Archant Dialogue's customer magazines being read by an incredible 1.3 million readers around the world.