

ShopTalk

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'Herculean Effort' on Inauguration Day



From over 450 “Extra! Extra!” hawkers pushing papers like it was 1939 to high-tech mobile phone alerts and photo mosaics of tomorrow, Washington Post Media used every imaginable resource to engage the estimated 1.8 million inauguration pilgrims in D.C. Beyond print and online newsroom collaboration, Post Media banked on the compounding effect of early coordination by assembling a



One of these four inauguration editions: \$2. A packet with the four editions and one inauguration Post Magazine copy: \$10. Distributing these products in downtown D.C. on Inauguration Day: Priceless! Inconceivable even!

company-wide, cross-sectional inauguration committee months earlier. The results were a significant step forward in realizing Post Media’s strategy of becoming a “more nimble” organization and an “indispensable guide to Washington.”

Post Publisher and Post Media CEO **Katharine Weymouth** said, “This was an event the likes of which we have not

seen before and may never see again. It was our moment to shine with all of the out-of-town visitors, and our local and online readers. And we did.”

Indeed. Approximately 3.1 million papers were delivered on Jan. 20 and 21, while *washingtonpost.com* had 28,302,328 page views during the two-day frenzy. This means that for two straight days the paper and Web site nearly surpassed its previous

one-day records (achieved the day after this recent election) of 1.58 million circulated papers and 15 million page views. The live video cover-



PHOTO - BILL O'LEARY

Post photographer **Bill O’Leary’s** photo had to be set as a doubletruck at the Northwest Building and then couriered over to College Park by bicycle to ensure it would arrive on time.

age, anchored by Post reporters **Chris Cillizza**, **David Maraniss** and **Dana Priest**, set a new record with 334,180 views—an almost 500 percent increase from the election. Of note, several newspapers including The Australian, the Denver Post and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette syndicated The Post’s live coverage.

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Print Distribution

Considering the amount of people, buses, barricades and checkpoints on Inauguration Day in D.C., getting the paper from point A to point B, was a formidable challenge. To further complicate matters, 910 newspaper racks needed to be cleared from downtown for security reasons.

Post Circulation Director **Mike Towle** said, "We had to approach this like a military offensive. Every manager was mobilized and each team had its own timelines, supply routes, intelligence and communication plans. Our maps really invoked images of a military operation."

wheels, who easily rerouted the trucks. Though a few inbound shipments delivering the inauguration afternoon "Extra" edition were stopped by the National Guard, Towle said, "You can say we used a little of our Circulation charm to get those papers through."

With College Park being better situated to deliver the afternoon papers, but no longer having daytime printing operations, it had to assemble two teams under **Andy Sendish** and **Tom Huurman** to print the 435,000 papers following the

swearing-in ceremony. Another obstacle was Post photographer **Bill O'Leary's** doubletruck image, which had to be set downtown.

College Park Plant Manager **Sherry Gryder** said, "The doubletruck that appeared in the Jan. 21 editions were actually couriered to us from the Northwest

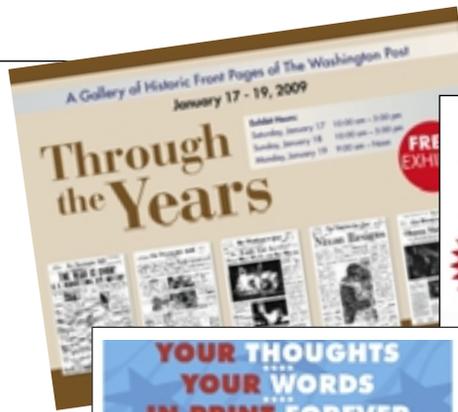
Engraving Department by bicycle because we were concerned that the one being couriered by car might not make on time." Gryder then said, "It was an all-hands-on-deck night—well, two nights. It was an extraordinary effort by the entire team, made possible by a well-developed and executed plan and the best Production and Circulation folks in the business!"

Online Distribution

Though *washingtonpost.com*

didn't have to worry about street closures and crowds, it had to contend with all the world's media congesting cyberspace. And in cyberspace, there's no such thing as home-court advantage. *Washingtonpost.com* had to provide unique, indispensable and—wherever possible—mobile content for the largely pedestrian public.

Washingtonpost.com Local Assistant Managing Editor **Jonathan Krim** said, "Virtually every *washingtonpost.com* editorial staffer had a hand in inauguration coverage. Beginning shortly after the election, we worked with our newspaper colleagues to launch Inauguration Watch, a blog that tracked every development on inaugural news and preparations, and Inauguration Central, a destination page with links to all of our content. As we got closer to Jan. 20, we added maps, graphics, FAQs, videos, information on balls and interactive content, including a ball-gown design contest. *Washingtonpost.com* quickly became the definitive reference source on the event. For Inauguration Day, more than 25,000 people signed up for



Ads ran in the paper and online promoting the "Through the Years" exhibit, the "Welcome to the White House" classified ads and replica press plates sale.

special transit alerts on their mobile devices to help them move around. Jan. 20 and 21 were among our highest readership dates in our history."

Post Metro Assistant Managing Editor **Bob McCartney** said, "I couldn't have been prouder of our staff, both at the newspaper and the Web site. Their coverage captured the spirit of the event, and provided our community with valuable news-you-can-use." McCartney pointed to Post columnist **Robert "Dr. Gridlock" Thomson's** tips, the "Grab and Go" guide and the mobile alerts as being particularly valuable to readers trying to maneuver through the madness.

McCartney said, "We also achieved some significant advances in covering a big, moving story for multiple platforms. More than 80 reporters filed 1,092 feeds to a single e-mail address available to both the Web site and print editors. Some information went out virtually instantly in blog postings or text alerts. Others were woven into elegantly written stories appearing in three editions produced in less than 12 hours. This system allows us to reap the full benefit of our advantage in newsgathering resources over competing Web sites."



The main inauguration hub site with everything you ever needed to know about the inauguration but were afraid to Google.

The Presidential Inauguration Committee authorized Circulation to have four trucks parked at four strategic locations downtown to feed the hawkers and to target the out-of-town charter buses parked at RFK stadium. The maps were drawn. The plan was set. Miraculously, the only hiccup was the earlier-than-announced closure of bridges into D.C. on the night before the inauguration—a problem quickly remedied by experienced managers at the

Print and Online Business Collaboration

"The spirit of collaboration between print and digital is growing steadily," Post Media President and General Manager **Steve Hills** said. "This past week gave us a glimpse of what we can accomplish when we work together. The results were impressive."

Apart from the two newsrooms, which have experience and success in working together, the business side of the paper and the Web site also joined forces. Shortly after the Nov. 4 election of President Obama, an inaugural committee chaired by Post Marketing Vice President **Candy Lee** was formed. Lee worked closely with Weymouth, Hills, *washingtonpost.com* General Manager **Goli Sheikholeslami** and representatives from departments all across the paper and the Web site, including Accounting, Advertising, Building Services, Circulation, Community Relations, Creative Services, Events, HR, IT, Post Magazine, Post Mobile, News, Online Advertising, Online Marketing, Online News, Production and Public Relations. "After the election, we knew we wanted to be prepared for the historic day, so we started meeting every Tuesday to create a multi-layered approach to the day," Lee said.

Inauguration committee member and *washingtonpost.com* Marketing Vice President

Denise Simpson pointed out, "This is probably one of the most comprehensive Marketing projects

the paper and the Web site have worked on together—at least in my time here. The goal was to make a bigger bang by coordinating our efforts across channels and optimizing our presence in all of our vehicles."

The committee ensured a unified print and online front in not only promoting the four historic newspaper editions and robust online coverage, but also the many other inauguration initiatives designed to generate revenue and extend the brand.

For example, the Northwest Building's "Through the Years" Exhibit during inauguration weekend featured memorable Post front pages and drew a steady crowd. Visitors had the opportunity to pre-order two products—the "Inauguration of Barack Obama: A Photographic Journal" book and replicas of the Jan. 21 Commemorative Edition press plates. Creative Services' **Sean McLaughlin** and a team of graphic designers and copy writers designed posters, print ads, flyers and other material promoting all things inauguration. Post Consumer Marketing Director **Rich Handloff** developed the promotion and communi-



With the "Through the Years" exhibit behind them, Jane Heath of Hardwood Artisans and Walter Heath playfully give each other a "terrorist fist jab," as made infamous by Fox News anchor E.D. Hill when President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama made a similar gesture on the campaign trail and Hill reported it as such.

cation strategy for the book, the press plate and the inauguration newspapers. Post Photo Assistant Managing Editor **Michel du Cille**, Post News Desk Assistant Managing Editor **Ed Thiede** and Post A1 Features Editor **Mary Hadar** put together the book with a foreword by Vice President at Large **Ben Bradlee**.

Post Media Advertising Vice President **Ken Babby** and *washingtonpost.com* Sales Vice President **Steve Stup**

synced up to push print and online inauguration-related advertising. The "Welcome to the White House" initiative, where the community had the opportunity to purchase classified ads congratulating and welcoming the Obamas to D.C., resonated with readers. Post Media Advertising Services Director **Leverne Moore Laws** conceptualized the idea and Post Classified Advertising Director **Tim Condon** headed the ad sales. Post Marketing Classifieds Manager **Jackie Conrad** and *washingtonpost.com* Brand Manager **Zoey Rawlins** promoted the ads in print and online, respectively.

Following the weekend exhibit, Weymouth hosted the Post Media Inaugural Ball on Jan. 19 for Post Media advertisers. "Body of Lies" author and Post Associate Editor **David Ignatius** was

the guest speaker. Hills hosted a similar event on Inauguration Day. Advertising's **LaToya Scott**, along with other folks from Post Advertising and Post Marketing, coordinated the two events aimed at welcoming and thanking advertisers.



Andrew Schneider, Marketing (left), sells some Post memorabilia to Spanish journalist **Francisco Barón** from Canal Sur TV. Barón heard about the walk-in Post store and sale through a report he read in the Spanish paper *El País*.

Post Media Corporate and Public Policy Advertising Manager **Marc Rosenberg** with Post Advertising Account Manager **Donna Singletary** led the way in selling over 30 pages of advertisement into the four editions of the paper published on Jan. 20 and 21. Rosenberg said, "The inauguration ad sales were the most successful one-time project in years. The list of advertisers was remarkably eclectic, too." On the online side, *Washingtonpost.com*'s **Katherine Mckee** and **Emilie Epelman** brought in Audi as the dominant advertiser on the Web site for Inauguration Day.

There was also a coordinated Advertising push for the Jan. 18 Post Magazine inauguration issue headed up by Post Magazine General Manager and FW Publisher **Jenny Abramson**. With a

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slick, glossier cover and features dedicated to the occasion, like Post Food Critic **Tom Sietsema's** tips for the Obamas on where to eat in D.C., the magazine appealed to readers, which in turn appealed to many advertisers. The magazine is usually a Sunday insert, but for the special occasion it was sold individually at 7-Eleven and local hotels. Abramson said that Post Media Communications Director **Kris Coratti** and her Public Relations team drove up circulation by having DJs from key local radio stations talk about the special issue. Abramson added, "The amount of incremental dollars for The Post was a significant feat given the many competing magazines being sold at the same time to every client."

To supersize the retail efforts during inauguration week, Post Media took a two-pronged approach: an online store set up by *washingtonpost.com's* Marketing team and a walk-in store set up by Post Marketing and Post Media Community Relations. Post Advertising Promotions



College Park Pressroom Superintendent **James Perry** holds up the Jan. 20 swearing-in afternoon edition hot off the presses. Shortly after, over 400,000 papers were distributed in downtown D.C. during the parade.

Manager **Nicole Marshall** worked closely with her online counterparts to place inaugural products online. The walk-in store at the Northwest Building stayed open for four days and was manned by folks from the paper, including Marketing, Community Relations, Accounting, HR and News. Apart from the inaugural merchandise, Community Relations researched, ordered and sold additional items like ball caps, T-shirts, umbrellas and mugs online and at the store.

Post CFO, and Finance

and Administration Vice President **Usha Chaudhary**, who also formed part of the committee, acknowledged her team and said that their role included sales, cash handling, accounting, revenue tracking, staff coverage throughout most of the week, setting up the exhibits, coordinating the catering,

security during the store hours, and circulation price variations and volume tracking. Additionally, about ten folks from Revenue Accounting volunteered to come in over inauguration weekend.

Post IT Client Services Director **Bill Liberti** also recognized the often unseen, but critical support from IT. He said, "IT staff worked at Northwest, Springfield and College Park before, during and after the Presidential Inauguration to provide special support for News, Advertising, Marketing, Production and Circulation." Apart from

setting up computers so that the public could purchase their "Welcome to White House" ads, IT equipped News with handheld backup radios to ensure communications throughout the ceremony and parade, and set up alternative work sites for Advertising and Production.

Weymouth concluded, "We put out four stellar newspapers in the face of large logistical obstacles. And online, we took full advantage of the capabilities of the Web to provide our readers with constant, up-to-date and top-notch coverage of the events. This was a Herculean effort by everyone from the Newsroom to Circulation, Marketing, IT and Production. We should all be proud." ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is not an exhaustive account of everyone's hard work on this historic day, but if you feel an individual or a team from the paper or the Web site deserved a special mention, please send a concise e-mail to onam@washpost.com. Thank you.

PostScripts

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