The Personal Newspaper

A line of products, plus add-ons.

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UnTechnical Press

Uncle Michael's Theorem of Reading and Education

A good education is important.

Good reading skills are the basis of a good education.

Good reading skills are gained by reading—a lot of reading.

We are most likely to read if we find the material interesting.

We all find nothing in this world more interesting than ourselves.

Therefore: If we give kids a daily newspaper that talks about *them*—what they like and don't like, what they do, what they want to do—they'll read it. Every day. And that's a good first step toward a good education.

Working Title

The Personal Newspaper

Product Category and Target Audience

The Personal Newspaper can be fit into any line of educational software for the home. It can also be sold to and used in classrooms. It will be targeted for ages 5 or 6 (or whenever a child starts showing an interest in reading) on up. Different add-ons and version/edition variations can make it a viable product/engine all the way through elementary school, if not middle school. It can also be used in remedial reading courses.

Note: We also have the option of making The Classroom Newspaper, a modified version that is specifically designed for classroom use.

Brief Description of the Product

Personal Newspaper is a versatile, expandable engine that creates daily personalized newspapers with personalized stories. Readers (children from 5 up) will enjoy reading because *their* names and *their* friends and *their* birthdays and *their* pets and *their* likes and *their* dislikes will appear in fun, easy-to-read stories.

The single Personal Newspaper engine can be tailored, by altering the included stories, pictures, fonts and newspaper layouts, into 6 or more age-specific products (for first through sixth grades), with little or no programming beyond the initial shipping version.

In addition, Personal Newspaper will be designed from day one to accept additional stories and graphics, so we can create an unlimited number of general and subject-specific add-on packs without any programmer time, and very little testing time.

Classroom Newspaper could be based on the same engine, but with an altered database to handle the students, stories and features of an entire classroom. It will also have a few special features to help teachers track student progress with the product.

Similar Products Currently on the Market

There is nothing else exactly like it. There are "publishing" programs that let you make newspapers, and "make your own storybook" products, but nothing that generates actual stories about the reader on a daily basis.

Special Technical Requirements

A small amount of disk space (or a lot, depending on installation options), a CD-ROM drive and printer will be required. A sound card is optional. Additional hard disk space will be needed for story add-on packs.

Expanded Description of the Product

The Personal Newspaper will be designed around the metaphor of a newspaper office. It will consist of six departments.

1. **Reader Department**—This is where the parent or teacher (Editor-in-Chief) fills out a small database about the child (the Reader), consisting of name, age, gender, birthday, friends' names and birthdays, family members' names, nicknames and birthdays, pets and their names, favorite sports, etc., etc., etc., etc.

   In addition, reading preferences can be set for each reader: if someone won't read anything but sports stories, they'll get all sports stories; if all the child will read are fuzzy animal stories, then they'll get fuzzy animal stories. The point here is to give the readers what they want—so they'll read.

2. **Editorial Department**—This is where the Editor-in-Chief chooses the name and look of the newspaper, and customizes papers with their own stories and pictures.

3. **Print Department**—Where the papers can be previewed and printed, from a day to a year at a time.

4. **Story Department**—Where teachers, parents or kids can write their own stories for the newspaper.

5. **Print Department**—Where teachers, parents or kids can draw their own pictures for the newspaper.

6. **Help Department**—An onscreen guide to all the features and functions.

The Stories

The stories that come with the product and are used to create (at least) a year's worth of newspapers will be a mixed spattering of:

- Cute animal stories
- Future/space stories
- Scary stories
- Kid's movie reviews
- Historical characters
- Birthday countdown
- Grimm's Fairy Tales
- Sports stories
- Science stories
- Silly stories
- Famous Americans
- Advice column
- Holiday countdowns
- Aesop's Fables
- Jokes and cartoons
- Silly advertisements
- Kids' book reviews
- Famous people in the news
- Trivia facts
- Long serial stories
- Parodies of Grimm and Aesop

Stories will be written in appropriate lengths and using the appropriate vocabulary and font size for the age of the reader. The vocabulary will be graduated, so new words are introduced throughout the year's newspapers.

Stealth Learning

One of the ways we will encourage reading is to include serialized daily cliffhanger stories that will make the reader want to find out what happens next. If the child has the desire to read more, and reads the whole year's worth of papers in one sitting, that's just fine. They've gained the learning and love of reading that we're trying to teach. After finishing the papers

early, it'll be time for the reader to start writing their own stories or for the parent to buy the next year's Personal Newspaper.

Add-ons

To extend the usefulness of the product beyond a year, many add-on Personal Newspaper Story Packs that can be grouped by subject matter (to keep the Reader interested) and by reading level (to keep the Reader on a reading-improvement track) will be available. One or more add-on Story Packs can be made for each of the story subjects above, plus there are limitless possibilities, including:

- Pictures to write stories about
- Story starters (fill-in-the-blank stories)

There are also many possible custom educational add-ons and versions:

- Daily newspaper stories that recount the time of cavemen, the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Dinosaurs, the American Revolution, or any other time that can be studied in history or social studies.

Technical Issues and Logistics

Personal Newspaper is technically simple for production for both Windows and Macintosh. It is primarily a database (nothing new here) that generates small reports and prints them out (not rocket science).

The main issues in creating a successful Personal Newspaper are:

- Careful up-front design
- Great content

Resources

A lot of the writing can be done by our staff writers, but we can also make good use of local freelancers. In addition, we should be able to license a lot of the material (jokes, cartoons, book and movie reviews, clip art and graphics) from existing sources at a very low cost.

We will of course bring in educators to write or help write the special educational/historical versions and add-ons.

There are reference books with word lists for various grade levels that we can use as a vocabulary guide.

Why The Personal Newspaper Is a Good Product for the Company

- **First and foremost: leverage.** Personal Newspaper is an engine that can be designed and programmed once, and used to make a number of different products and add-on products. The First Grade edition through the Sixth Grade editions will all be created out of the same engine, but with different stories, fonts and newspaper layouts. That's 6 (or more if we decide to extend the line above 6th or below 1st grades) products for the price of 2. And when it comes to the add-ons, that's 10 or 20 products for the price of 1.

- **Low risk, low cost, high return.** There are no programming risks, nothing technically new or untried. The content is completely within the capabilities of our current writing and art staff, plus licensing additional material is cheap and unlimited. Even selling at a relatively low wholesale price, our break-even point will be low.

- **It's both educational and creative.** Yes, the content is all there for the Reader—at first. But when the time comes when the Readers will want to talk or write back with letters to the editor and stories of their own, Personal Newspaper can handle it. They'll be able to create *their* newspaper from scratch, something they can be proud of.

- **It can be used in the home and in school.** It will be easy to write useful teacher's guides for this product.

- **It's fast.** If given full staffing, the first complete product can be designed, programmed, tested and completed in 6 to 9 months. Additional full versions can be ready in an additional 3-6 months. Add-on products can be generated in 2-4 months.

- **It's flexible.** We can create many of these products simultaneously, and sit on them until a slow quarter, then release 1, or 3 or 5 products as needed to take up the slack.

Marketing Hooks

- We can include coupons for kids' books that are reviewed. We can include excerpts from the books in serials.

- The contest possibilities are limitless.

Suggested Platform(s)

Windows and Macintosh.

THE READER'S NAME TRIBUNE

A Personal Newspaper for Your Name!

Headline For Main Story

Byline for Main or Feature Story—
This is the body for the Main Story. The length of this body will depend on the grade level. This is the story that will be personalized for the Reader, and will be customized to be personal and special, like a birthday or holiday, whenever possible.

For first graders, this story will appear in at least 14 pt. type and be no more than six or seven sentences in two paragraphs. Volume I in the banner indicates that this is the first-grade edition.

Inserted into this story is the Feature Story picture or photograph. It will generally be line art, but may also be gray-scale.

Joke of the Day Head (+ Logo)

Joke Body, up to a couple sentences in case it's a riddle.

Joke Answer Body, perhaps upside-down, perhaps in italics.

Countdowns Head (+ Logo)

xx days until Reader's birthday.

xxx days until Christmas.

xx weeks until something else.

xx days until summer vacation.

CliffHanger (+ Logo)

This is the body copy for the second story—the cliffhanger. It will only be slightly personalized for the Reader, mostly the names, and will be fairly short.

Cliffhangers are stories told in 365 segments, each ending with, of course, a cliffhanger, so the child will be eager to get the next day's paper. The point sizes of all stories need to self-adjust to fill out the space available.

If the child actually reads all the stories ahead of time on their own, we consider it a success.

(continued tomorrow …)