

# tiny news collective

## Software directory

In the world of small independent news publishing, a growing niche of technology companies are popular with publications for a mix of tailored features and adaptable platforms. In our research, we asked publishers about what they were using, and certain vendor names reappeared. This list is not exhaustive, but we compiled a list of common providers we heard about over the course of our research for publishers who may be starting a vendor-search process.

If you have a recommendation for another platform to add for future materials we produce from this research, [reach out to us](#).

### Platforms that help with ad templates, formats and creatives

- *ResponsiveAds*, [www.responsiveads.com](http://www.responsiveads.com), Responsive ad creation and management for publishers
- *Broadstreet Ads*, [broadstreetads.com](http://broadstreetads.com), Ad creation and management for publishers' direct ad sales
- *Canva*, [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com), Graphic design tool for publishers who want to DIY their own ad formats

### Ad servers

- *AdButler*, [www.adbutler.com](http://www.adbutler.com), Ad serving and management platform for various digital ad channels
- *Google Ads Manager*, Ad serving and management platform for digital ad inventory
- *AdPlugg*, [www.adplugg.com](http://www.adplugg.com), Ad serving and management platform for digital ad inventory for publishers using sites built on platforms like WordPress, Wix or Squarespace

### Publishing platforms that also do ads

- *Indie Ads Manager and Indiegraf Experts*, <https://indiegraf.com>, Ads manager and building for multiple channels, additional a la carte support and product services for publishers using Indiegraf
- *Newspack*, <https://newspack.com/>, Ads manager and building for multiple channels with some advanced programmatic capabilities and custom tooling, for publishers using Newspack
- *Patch Labs*, <https://labs.patch.com/>, Ad building and revenue tools for publishers using Patch Labs
- *TAPInto*, <https://www.tapinto.net/>, Ads manager and building and DIY marketing platform, for TAPInto licensee and franchisee publishers

### Ad Networks

- *EmpowerLocal*, <https://empowerlocal.com/>, Digital advertising network technology that supports and slots national advertisers on news organizations' sites
- *URLMedia*, <https://url-media.com/advertise/>, Community ad sales, management and technology network to connect large brands with ethnic and community media, for Black and Brown publishers who are part of URL Media Network

### Newsletter platforms and email tools for ads

- *Beehiiv*, <https://www.beehiiv.com/>, Newsletter platform with monetization tools and ad network for email-based publishers
- *Letterhead*, <https://www.tryletterhead.com/>, Newsletter platform with campaign management tools to support various ad formats
- *ConstantContact*, <https://www.constantcontact.com/>, Email marketing platform with content creation features

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## Workflow tools for ad management

- *Google Sheets*, <https://workspace.google.com/products/sheets/>, Online spreadsheet tool that can be used for organizing, tracking advertising inventory, sales and client relationships
- *Airtable*, <https://airtable.com/>, Database tool that can be used for organizing, tracking advertising inventory, sales and client relationships
- *Excel*, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/excel>, Online spreadsheet tool that can be used for organizing, tracking advertising inventory, sales and client relationships
- *Bill.com*, <https://www.bill.com/>, Finance and operations platform popularly used for managing client relationships and invoices
- *Quickbooks*, <https://quickbooks.intuit.com/>, Accounting software used for charting revenue and managing invoices

## Other popular tools

- *WhoSponsorsStuff*, <https://www.whosponsorsstuff.com/>, Newsletter directory website listing sponsors, newsletter, and a newsletter ad rate calculator
- *Apollo.io*, <https://www.apollo.io/>, AI marketing assistant platform used for managing sales practices
- *Contezo*, <https://www.contezo.com/>, Audience engagement platform used to publish interactive contests
- *SecondStreet*, <https://uplandsoftware.com/secondstreet/>, Marketing software used for hosting interactive games and contests

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## Resources

*Local Independent Online News Publishers (LION)* – For publishers who are LION members, the [News Entrepreneur Academy](#) offers some courses on strategies for growing advertising and sponsorship revenue.

*Google News Initiative (GNI)* – GNI offers [case studies](#) on using Google Ad Manager and other digital advertising strategies, as well as [resources and training](#) on growing digital revenue. You can also watch videos from their GNI [Digital Growth Program](#) archives.

*Broadstreet Ads* – Broadstreet offers free [webinars, templates and guides](#) about advertising sales strategies and terminology specifically for small, independent publishers.

*Lenfest Institute* – The [Beyond Print toolkit](#) offers resources for publications scaling down print operations and growing digital revenue streams to manage advertising programs and advertiser relationships.

*Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB)* – The IAB offers research and insights and develops industry standards for modern digital advertising. Their [Standards, Guidelines & Best Practices](#) can be helpful for learning measurement techniques for various type of digital advertising and primers on adopting new ad formats.

*Lawyers for Reporters* – [Lawyers for Reporters](#) at the Cyrus D. Vance Center for International Justice provides pro bono legal services to journalism organizations.

*Blue Engine Collaborative* – Blue Engine Collaborative [shares case studies](#) on their LinkedIn and [newsletter](#) about successful advertising campaigns and experiments with their clients.

*URL Media* – URL Media has published [case studies](#) on their site about advertising and government contract campaigns.

*Indiegraf* – Indiegraf has published several case studies and resources on audience, ad creative, sponsorships and revenue on [its blog](#).

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## Checklist for launching an advertising program

Do you already have potential advertisers reaching out, but are unsure what you need to get started with ad sales? Are you wondering what minimum requirements your publication needs in place to make your first ad sale? Here's what publishers, ad sales and journalism technology professionals feel you need.

### Organizational

- A policy of what types of advertisers your publication will and won't sell to, and what types of advertising or sponsorships you will and won't accept (*See our section on Organizational Readiness in Part One for more about creating a policy and examples*)
- Knowledge of how you will report advertising income for tax purposes
- An understanding of any requirements, local regulations or prohibitions on special cases like native advertising, endorsements or advertisements for gambling, cannabis, alcohol or firearms
- A plan for who on your team will manage the ad sales process and production and how often
- A willingness to start experimenting with ad sales and lead generation techniques and methods within your physical and digital communities
- Knowledge about the size of potential audiences that an advertiser could reach by doing business with you (your email newsletter list size, your social media audiences or print circulation) (*See an example of that on [QCity Metro](#)*)

### Technology and workflow

- A plan of action for how you will offer ad spots in your product, whether it's an image and text spot in your newsletter, a spot on your website or in a print product
- A process (could be a spreadsheet, Airtable or Excel file) or a CRM (customer relationship management) system to keep track of advertising opportunities and sales
- An ad schedule to manage inventory and placements, creatives (that could be combined with your ad sales tracker when starting out — basically a system for seeing what ad spaces you have available and when)
- A media kit to showcase advertising opportunities to potential clients, if you have multiple ad spots (*See examples of that on [Taos News](#), [Chicago Reader](#), and [Illinois Eagle](#).*)
- An advertising inquiry contact method or page to make it easy for advertisers to reach out
- An understanding of what analytics, performance or impact metrics you may be able to offer your advertiser on their campaign (click-through metrics, pickup rates, etc.)

### Financial

- A contract template/insertion order for advertising agreements
- A billing system to process advertisers' payments
- Benchmarking knowledge of competitive ad pricing for advertising units in your local jurisdiction (whether from other media, commerce chambers, etc.)