



The Jury is Out: The *Long Beach Post* and Online Local News Epilogue

By spring 2011, the *Long Beach Post* had experienced some significant personnel changes. It had also moved forward on some of the revenue-producing schemes that co-founder Shaun Lumachi had considered.

On the personnel front, the first person to leave was sales rep Christopher Foster, who quit effective November 1, 2010. Lumachi decided as a transitional arrangement to replace him with a commission-only salesperson for three months. When he left, the permanent replacement was a local marketing firm which had offered in December to take over the *Post's* entire advertising program. The three-person firm closed up its office and moved into the *Post*. Two of them sold ads, and the third managed technological improvements to the website.

The new ad team persuaded Lumachi to move from a sponsorship model to one based on CPM, or cost per thousand impressions (how many times readers view an ad). They argued that, over time, the ability to sell ads based on specific placement within the website would plateau because space would run out. The CPM model would give the *Post* more control over the placement, as well as ebb and flow, of ads. The new arrangement went into effect on March 1, 2011, and all advertisers agreed to the switch. The website charged advertisers between \$6 and \$12 CPM.

Next to leave was executive editor Ryan ZumMallen. In mid-February, he informed Lumachi that he had another job offer and would be leaving effective the end of the month. He would continue, however, to contribute to *Long Beach Post* as a sportswriter—his initial role at the website four years earlier. In his parting note to readers, ZumMallen said:

What [Robert Garcia and Lumachi] created in the *Long Beach Post* became the perfect template, an almost literal blank slate, and I was unbelievably

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given all the confidence and creative freedom that any journalist could ever ask [for]... This has been the experience of a lifetime.¹

On March 1, Allison Jean Eaton took over as executive editor. Eaton began her career as a staff writer and assistant editor at the *Signal Tribune*, a weekly serving Long Beach and a neighboring community. She then spent five years at the Compton (CA) *Bulletin* as editor-in-chief and staff writer. Lumachi introduced Eaton to readers, expressing his confidence in her “ability to transform the events of the day into through-provoking news coverage.”²

On March 1, the *Post* started to run Google™ AdSense. Within a month, it had earned the website \$350. On March 8, it announced that a print edition was coming in April. In making the announcement, Lumachi told readers:

Since our beginning, we have always said—albeit internally—a *Long Beach Post* print version will be a product of our online version, not the other way around. In other words, we will include exclusive print version stories but we will also rely upon our online version’s coverage to recap the month’s most important headlines to help drive our print version.³

Lumachi says that while ZumMallen’s departure sparked a sudden fall-off in readers, the numbers quickly rebounded with some 30 percent more readers in March than February.⁴ As he noted with confidence in a message to readers, he and co-founder Garcia had “wondered if it was possible to not only create, but sustain an independent news website from the ground up that could compete with established local organizations with decades of experience. Four years after the *Long Beach Post* first went live in February 2007, we no longer doubt that possibility.”⁵

¹ “Thank you, Ryan ZumMallen,” *Long Beach Post*, February 28, 2011, <http://www.lbpost.com/news/staffreports/11142>.

² Ibid.

³ Shaun Lumachi, “Long Beach Going Print,” *Long Beach Post*, March 8, 2011, <http://www.lbpost.com/news/staffreports/11208>.

⁴ Email from Lumachi, March 28, 2011.

⁵ Shaun Lumachi, “Long Beach Going Print.”