

## How the Emporia Gazette Digitized Affidavits with Column

The Emporia Gazette's newsroom is an excellent place to write a story. Persian rugs blanket the floor, exposed brick walls are adorned with marble statues and a map of Kansas rests atop William Allen White's original desk next to a sealed ream of Staples printer paper.

White purchased The Gazette in 1895 for \$3,000, and the newspaper has served Emporia with family-owned, community-driven journalism for over a century. The Emporia Gazette also happens to be the newspaper of record for Lyon County. County and municipal officials, legal service professionals and private parties work with The Gazette to distribute public and legal notices to the communities they impact.

In January 2020, The Emporia Gazette modernized its public notice process using Column.

### Challenge: Public Notice is Painful

As the Operations Manager for The Emporia Gazette, Bettina Shank is the face of the newspaper's public notice process. Each day, Bettina receives public notice orders from customers, submitted via emails containing attachments of different types, in various formats and at varying degrees of completion or correctness. She works directly with customers to fix any mistakes, generates proofs, sends invoices and lays out the content using InDesign, adjusting the formatting for publication.

Once each notice has been printed and the corresponding invoice has been paid, Bettina cuts the notice out with scissors, glues it to an affidavit, asks a notary public to notarize her signature and then mails those clippings to the Lyon County Courthouse. The Courthouse stamps and scans the affidavit into Kansas' digital e-filing system.

Between formatting notices, tracking payments and creating affidavits through "arts and crafts," the Gazette's public notice process was time-consuming and, at times, resulted in human error, upset customers or delays in legal proceedings.

### Solution: Automated Placement & Digital Documents

"The Emporia Gazette started using Column in mid-January. We notified all of our attorneys and local governments about the change and sent them the instructions to get started. It's so easy that everyone can upload their legal into the system themselves." - Bettina Shank, Operations Manager

With Column, Bettina is now equipped with best-in-class technology designed specifically for the public notice process.

Instead of e-mailing Bettina, Gazette customers can navigate directly to their public notice portal. There, Column walks customers through the process of creating their notice and scheduling publication, proofing and payment.

Back at the Gazette, Bettina receives a notification from Column about each order and logs in to review it. She clicks once to send an invoice, a second time to download the notice, already formatted for publication in the Gazette, and a third time to download the affidavit.

"Digitizing affidavits has been my biggest time saver. I print off the affidavit, sign it, have it notarized and then upload. I don't have to worry about mailing them out." - Bettina Shank, Operations Manager

### Impact: Time Saved & Increased Revenue

Column has turned a process that used to take Bettina up to 30 minutes per notice into just three clicks. This enables Bettina and The Emporia Gazette to better serve their customers and focus on revenue without the labor that is typically required to manage public notice. Throughout the implementation of these time-saving tools, the Column team has been right by Bettina's side to answer questions.

"The Column staff have been extremely helpful with all my questions and requests to help make things easier on me!" - Bettina Shank, Operations Manager

The partnership between Column and the Kansas Press Association pays dividends to participating newspapers, meaning that The Emporia Gazette is now earning more revenue for each notice that was processed using Column than they would have by doing things the old-fashioned way.

If your publication is looking for ways to streamline processes, delight customers, and safeguard public notice revenue, please get in touch with our team at [info@column.us](mailto:info@column.us). We are standing by and ready to equip you with modern technology to support public notice in your communities.