

Observer

YOU. YOUR NEIGHBORS. YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.



The future is here. **PAGE 2**

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YOUR TOWN



Courtesy image

We want you!

Although we love our little helpers who go fetch the paper from the driveway, it takes a lot more to get all this great news to our readers each week.

That's why we're always on the lookout for smart, enthusiastic, entrepreneurial go-getters to help us remain the go-to place for local news in all the areas we serve.

At the Observer, we know that A players want to work with A players, which is why we're always recruiting the best and brightest to be part of our team. No matter the position, essential skills include having a team-oriented mindset, a willingness to do what's required to get the job done, creative problem solving and an attitude that's always trying to find a way to say yes.

If this sounds like you, reach out to our Chief Recruiting Officer, Emily Walsh at EWalsh@YourObserver.com



Courtesy image

All-archived

After a three-year long project with Heritage Werks, an archiving company that specializes in establishing state-of-the-art archival programs and curating content, all of Observer Media Group's print archives have been digitized.

That means all of those bound copies, print editions housed in storage units and filing cabinets full of photos, CDs, DVDs, slides and more are officially obsolete.

But aside from clutter-free storage spaces, the biggest benefit of this project is all of our painstakingly created local content from the past 124 years is now in a searchable database that is available to all of our OMG team members.

This will allow our editorial team to find and pull file stories, images and other items with ease.

And, future use of these archives by the community are still being developed with ideas to charge members for access or using the content to create historical videos or special sections. Stay tuned!

\$0.10



The newspaper of record

No matter the platform, the Observer brand is a household name. **SEE PAGE 3**



READ EVERYWHERE

Observed on street corners, in supermarkets and on readers' phones. **SEE PAGE 3**

Emma Jolly

Emma Burke Jolly takes a selfie with the Sarasota sales team in front of one of the modular news racks on Main Street in Sarasota.



File image

Emily Walsh, Lori Downey and "O-Man" at OMG's Annual Meeting in 2024. Celebrating milestones is part of the OMG way.

Work hard, play hard

'Live the culture you want.' **SEE PAGE 2**



YEAR OF 2029

"All of you are in charge of culture. If you want to have a great place to work, you have to live the culture you want."

Observer Media Group Founder and CEO Matt Walsh, Annual Meeting, June 13, 2023



Observer named 'Best Place to Work'

Observer Media Group recently earned the honor of one of Editor & Publisher's "Best Places to Work," a list of distinction the publication puts out annually.

Ranked and graded by an independent source, the awards consider factors such as overall culture, leadership, compensation and benefits and productivity.

The Observer Media Group ranked highly in all categories, with several comments from employees surveyed remarking how working at OMG, as it's affectionately called, feels like a family.

Although certainly an honor, President Emily Walsh said it's just more confirmation of feedback employees have been giving the company for years.

"If you look at the tenure of some of our employees, as well as the culture that they help keep strong, we know we have succeeded in creating a place where people want to come to work," she said.

OMG dominates FPA, FAME awards

Continuing to show its dominance among state media, the Observer Media Group swept multiple categories of the Florida Press Association's Better Weekly Newspaper Awards and the Florida Advertising Media Executives Creative Excellence Contest at the 2029 Florida Media Conference.

Specifically, OMG publications won General Excellence in the A and B Categories, and took home the coveted Sweepstakes Cup, which goes to the publication that has won the most awards in the FPA's annual contest.

In addition, the Observer Media Group's Creative Services team won an unprecedented amount of FAME awards for creative excellence, including best of show. Its advertising team also won Annual Salesperson of the Year.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

BY THE NUMBERS

1,000,000

Weekly readers reached across print and digital platforms combined in all of our markets.

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60%

Projected growth in gross revenues for Observer Media Group by year end of 2029.

PAGE 3

10,000

Subscribers to each of our business publications.

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CALENDAR

■ **Standing O Awards** — 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 11, 2027, at The Ora. An awards luncheon honoring unsung heroes in partnership with the Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

■ **Longboat Observer 50th anniversary** — Friday, July 28, 2028, at the Longboat Key Club and Resort Harbourside Ballroom.



Download the Your Observer app

Explore the latest news, this week's print editions and our magazines in the app.



Use your phone's camera to scan the QR code to download the app.



Read Now on Desktop >

News at Your Fingertips

Stay connected — anytime, anywhere. Tap into the heart of your community on your phone, tablet or desktop.

The new Press Reader app allows readers to enjoy OMG content anytime, anywhere.

File image

New app: The Observer's way of the future

The old business saying goes: If you aren't growing, you're dying. That's why the Observer Media Group is always on the hunt for new technologies to help it reach readers and serve its advertisers even better.

The latest iteration in OMG's technology journey is the second generation of its apps, powered by Press Reader.

In the 2.0 version, readers will still be able to enjoy the print edition of each paper in a digital form, but they will also be able to access content from each

publication's website as well as receive notifications.

The app is more than just another avenue for readers to enjoy OMG content. It's a new form of delivery that will allow the company to expand its distribution to readers regardless of their location.

"This will be a key in driving growth in the number of readers we reach each week without increasing our print distribution network," said President Emily Walsh.

This is key, Walsh said, for the more readers reached, the more

the publications can expand their areas of coverage without having to create new publications. This allows the paper to expand its reach and coverage without ballooning costs.

In addition, app readers will have access to all the convenience of having our OMG content on their digital devices. That means they can read stories optimized for their phones, check out products and services with one click and set up alerts that customize their experience and notify them of the things they want to know about most.

"We bridged the gap between Jacksonville and Sarasota in coverage."

"observer Media Group became a top media company in the nation."

"orange observer had 50k followers on Facebook."

"We had 1 million readers."

"If Trump announced that we are the premier weekly newspaper of Florida!"

"We had a Black Tie helicopter and an OMG jet."

"We owned our own building."

"There was an NFL stadium named after the company."

"observer won a Pulitzer"

"OMG had a huge mural downtown that people traveled to take pictures at."

OMG IMAGINE IF...

"We had 20 sales people."

"Everyone wore a bow tie."

"The observer was The Florida newspaper."

"OMG had an app with an integrated alarm clock that would wake you up and tell you the local news and weather for today."

"We expanded to east Sarasota county."

"We had our own money — The observer dollar."

"our local coffee shops had us on their cups."

"Everyone only needed us!"

"We had reporters sharing news on Apple eyewear."

"We sold OMG merch."

"We took over more counties in legal advertising."

"OMG is available in virtual reality."

"OMG could be integral in training college student journalists."

Observer
You. Your Neighbors. Your Neighborhood.

"observer was the largest paper in America."



MORE THAN PRINT



File images
Observer Media Group hosts and participates in many events throughout the year, such as the Jacksonville Daily Record's Trailblazer Awards and the Winter Garden Christmas Parade.

While the newspaper is still at its core, Observer Media Group serves as the model of a thriving media company for the future.

EMILY WALSH
PRESIDENT

Spanning from the west to east coast of Florida across the I-4 corridor as one of the largest, independent, family-owned media groups, the Observer Media Group contributes to the communities it serves by providing the highest-quality news and information to its citizens and by helping create economically vibrant and culturally engaged communities for businesses to thrive and grow.



KEY REVENUE DRIVERS

CORE PRODUCT

Observer Media Group continues to publish relevant news and information and provide advertising and marketing solutions in newspapers, magazines and websites as well as through digital solutions such as newsletters, social media and podcasts.

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Reader revenue becomes 10% of the Observer's overall revenue pie as subscriptions to the business publications' paywalled content and apps continue to grow.

EVENTS

Attendance and revenue doubles from OMG's core events: Top Entrepreneurs, 40 Under 40 and Trailblazers. OMG continues to grow its events with the Standing O Awards and a Commercial Real Estate expo.

We make communities great.

As you walk around the OMG offices around the state, you hear a buzz of energy — reporters on the phone interviewing sources, multimedia advertising consultants meeting with clients and laughter emanating from employees while they create a constant flow of ideas and innovation.

The energy emulates the growth of the markets we serve. It's fast and exciting, growing in every direction. In our flagship market, that means east into Lakewood Ranch and east Sarasota, and up, with the new condos and developments in downtown Sarasota. That means continuing to penetrate the ever-growing region of West Orange County. And that means continuing to penetrate deeper around Jacksonville and into St. Johns, Clay and Nassau counties.

At the company's core is the same mission: To inspire our communities with extraordinary local content and help our partners prosper. And vision: Innovate and elevate.

The O-mazing Observer people drive our culture. People who are intensely passionate about the mission and vision; who strive to be the best while having fun along the way; and who make a positive difference in the communities we serve.

The only thing that is different in 2029 is where the mission and vision is performed.

To grow, you must have scale, and we have figured out how to maximize efficiencies in operations while allowing markets to drive decisions that serve their areas best.

Our core products continue to thrive. With our markets continuing to grow, our publications reflect this. Throughout the company, we have added print distribution and have been successful in getting readers to use our new apps, which allows us to reach more readers more quickly and cost effectively. In three years, our app usage will account for 2.5% of our total readership.

We are obsessed with this digital experience and constantly adapt to new technologies and features we can offer our audience to keep it engaged and growing.

Riding the wave of legal advertising, our business publications continue to find ways to attract new legal advertising business and grow that revenue year over year. In fact, our legal departments are so efficient and effective, we have started providing this service to other publications as a new source of revenue. Setting the industry standard, our legal websites are the most comprehensive searchable databases and self-serve solutions for legal notices in Florida.

Together, our publications reach 1 million readers each and every week. Something that dwarfs other publications' wildest dreams.

GROWING NOT DYING

To continue this trajectory in our core markets, we are flexible and opportunistic. We believe in investing in the company to try new experiments aimed at uncovering the next great strategy toward sustained growth.

We try new things. We fail. But we maintain trust in ourselves and the process to uncover the journey to more growth and success.

This includes expanding coverage to new, underserved markets, and leading the way digitally to experiment with new models.

In Sarasota-Manatee, we have expanded our coverage east of I-75. After seeing the hunger for news in these underserved areas, we hired additional reporters, sales people and account managers and have added coverage that includes Sarasota County east of the interstate.

Rather than set up more print

publications, this is our first digital-only presence to reach an area, and it's a successful one — a model that we look to repeat in West Orange and Jacksonville.

Through our whiz-bang marketing and strong, visible branding, we have emerged quickly as the dominant news source in each of our markets and are poised to use this success to expand coverage where opportunities are calling us.

The business publications' paywall strategy continues to pay dividends as we have grown our total subscribers for each to more than 10,000, with 60% of those being paid.

Our West Orange operation is growing its profit margin year over year, allowing it to be a thriving, important contributor to the Observer brand.

HOUSEHOLD NAME

The Observer (and Daily Record) name is seen everywhere just like how it is read everywhere. With our increased distribution through print and digital avenues, our publications have become a part of residents' routine in all of our markets.

When they wake up they check out our websites on their phones, read a newsletter when they get into the office, listen to a podcast on their commute home and access our apps when they are in school, at the library or in the doctor's office.

It doesn't matter what edition or on what platform readers are consuming our news, we are a household name.

We are THE newspaper.

Our readers love us and our customers need us to help their businesses grow. Our news and information engages, entertains and connects them to the community because we are the trusted news source.

Customers say that we have the most cutting-edge mix of media and solutions that connects them to the audiences they want to reach. We work with clients of all sizes, mostly small- and medium-sized businesses, but larger brands have recognized that if they want to reach our audience, they have to do it directly through us rather than third-party ad networks.

The communities we serve want our coverage, sponsorship and appearance at events. Our presence equals credibility, and the community needs us to thrive.

Readers constantly talk to their friends and family about something they read or saw in the Observers and Daily Record and share it on social media.

Industry associations and publications want to write about our success and ask us to speak at conferences, but that's not our style. We

don't like to brag. Our success is no secret — content is king. Locally produced, original content, innovative design and user experiences, along with stellar customer service — these are all paramount to who we are. It's not rocket science: Quality counts.

POWER IN THE PEOPLE

Employees love our culture and we have a deep bench of A players. They contribute meaningfully to a winning team and know that their ideas and work helps us soar above our competition. They see the vision, believe in it and see their own individual roles and how they can contribute. They also know the importance it plays in the organization and see their paths forward clearly.

Not only can they recite our mission and vision by heart, our core values are what they live by each day.

We have a full account management team and sales army with feet on the street throughout the company continuing to create in-person customer relationships. Our new technology has made the sales process more automated and efficient, which gives our sales team more face time with their clients.

Our leadership team has created a structure that empowers everyone to make decisions and execute daily the things that matter most to our readers and clients, propelling all of us to continue being a growing, thriving organization.

Ad astra ... to the stars!



File image
OMG's culture shines through at its many internal events such as OMG After Hours.

Readers, clients: Let them talk

They say what people say about you is none of your business ... until it is your business. Here's what our readers and clients say about their experience working with the Observer Media Group.

WHAT READERS SAY ...

Community papers

- They are really the only source of local news in our area. If you want to know about something happening locally, whether it's an event or a government decision, you have to check the Observer.
- I get my news from the Observer in a variety of ways: print, newsletters, app, social media and the website. I find all of them easy to use and convenient for how, when and where I like to consume news.
- I have built a habit around reading the Observer, and I think of it first as a source when I want to know what's happening. When I Google things, the Observer stories are the first to pop up in relevance for what I'm searching.
- Observer stories are fair, balanced and reported without an agenda. On news stories, they have multiple voices that explore all sides of contentious issues.
- Feature stories help me connect better with my community and learn things I didn't know about. I find myself telling others about what I read in the Observer because they're so interesting.
- Reading the Observer is often fun. I'm engaged because I get a variety of content that is useful and relevant to me. I like seeing what's going on in the community or the business world, and rarely do I find things that don't interest me. There's something for everyone in every publication.
- The layout and presentation of stories is crisp, clean and engaging. They give me context to fully understand complicated issues. I find stories easy to navigate and easy to pull information out of quickly to help me understand what's going on and why it matters to me.

- They seem to cover everything. I'm always amazed by the amount of stories they produce and how they cover such a variety of things going on.

- They are often first to report the news I care about.

- I trust their reporting and I know I can count on it to be accurate and truthful.

- Reading the Observer, I feel like I'm part of an educated club that's in the know about what's going on in the areas I care about most.

Business papers

- My subscription to the Jacksonville Daily Record/Business Observer provides incalculable value with the information and leads I get from it. It makes me feel more connected to what's happening in my market and how I can adapt and run my business better to capitalize on opportunities. When I'm reading it, I get tons of ideas I can put to use in my work.

- I find it easy to read quickly to get the information I need to know most, and I find the newsletters chock-full of news I need to know so I can get up to speed fast and know what's going on.

- I find myself quoting something I read in the BO/JDR to others, and I often share articles with my staff and colleagues to help get them thinking in a more strategic way or to give them ideas on how we might solve a similar problem that they've covered.

- When it comes to business news, they're everywhere. They're THE source to turn to for deals, development or anything business happening in the area. I feel like I can't afford not to be a subscriber.

WHAT CLIENTS SAY ...

Advertising clients

- Advertising in OMG publications is the most effective use of my advertising dollars.

- Working with my rep is a pleasant experience. They are knowledgeable, helpful and truly looking out for the best interest of my business — not just their commission. They do what's right for me, putting me first.

- I'm always treated with professionalism, and they make it so easy to work with them. From meetings to ad review and invoicing, everything is easy, seamless and efficient. It takes little of my time to manage, and I know with their help they can handle much of my marketing for me so I don't have to worry about it.

- I feel like I get a competitive advantage by working with OMG, for their expertise is far more sophisticated than any other advertising sales outfit in town — and that includes agencies I've worked with in the past.

- They're always innovating and are on the cutting edge of what's new and how new technology can help me reach my targeted audience. I fully understand what I'm buying and why it is the best option to help drive my business.

- They help me do things with my messaging I didn't even know was possible. Their art department is above and beyond what we could do in-house, and the proofing process is easy and seamless with my rep.

- I get reports and updates on how my ads are performing and what may need to be tweaked to make my ads more effective. They are watching this for me to make it easy to make decisions and see clearly the value and the ROI of my advertising.

- It's easy for me to manage my account, understand my charges and pay my bill. With a great autopay feature, I can set it and forget it, and I can go into an online platform to pull my invoices and make updates.

- Their customer service is unparalleled. They are so easy to work with and answer any concerns or questions I have quickly to resolve issues. I always know they will get things fixed quickly and find a solution that's satisfying and fair, and it makes me feel like I don't ever want to work with anyone else.
- IT WORKS!

Legals clients

- No one is easier to work with than the Business Observer/Jacksonville Daily Record. From start to finish, they make placing a notice the easiest process possible. I wish they published in every county so I could use them for all our legal notices!

- They are lightning fast, and they go the extra step to handle the whole process for us, which we love.

- If there is ever an issue, they always come with a solution. They are always professional, courteous and kind. They actually have real people answering the phone! Their customer service will always keep us loyal.

- Rather than make us go through the hassle of online submittal portals or other time-consuming processes, it's easy to get our legal notices submitted and ready for publication. Rather than put the work back on us, the folks at BO/JDR take care of it, saving us time and money.

- Their accuracy in the printing and proofing process is unparalleled. They always make sure our notices are done properly, and that's a quality we can stand behind and trust.

The essential key to our success:

The customer experience

You've heard me say it many times: The only thing that differentiates us from every other business is YOU.

How you act, how you behave, how you treat our customers (readers, advertisers, the public, your internal staff members, everyone you touch) — all of that is what differentiates us. And all of those activities ultimately determine our success.

We all have an obligation every day we come to work: To make it easy for people to do business with us. And that includes your colleagues — your internal customers.

Recently, some of us had the good fortune of hearing Jim Knight, formerly the top executive at the School of Hard Rocks for Hard Rock International Inc., in charge of a huge training division.

Knight says one of the realities of your brand is that customers typically only see the proverbial tip of the iceberg of your organization.

Advertisers, for instance, often have limited experience with us through their advertising executive and the Creative Services Department, perhaps through accounting, too.

As Knight puts it, customers typically see 15% of a business; 85% is below the surface. And the 85% "is what needs to be right." That 85% — if it's right — will bubble up to the customer experience. Everyone must be "on."

To achieve the ideal customer experience — "service that rocks" — Knight offered seven takeaways:

1 Be like U2 — "Everyone must sing off the same sheet of music." Everyone must know exactly what the mission is. Everyone must be heading in the same direction.

2 Create and embody a "guest-obsessed" purpose to the business. Here are the ingredients for "authentic guest obsession":

- Sense of urgency
- Responsiveness
- Follow-up
- Genuine
- Attention to detail

3 People crave differentiation and personalized experiences.

"If you have any hope of sustainability with your business, you must create a 'differentiated experience,'" Knight says. "Great sustainable brands create memorable experiences. Personalized and customized service develops emotional attachments with customers.

"To create sustainability, create a service philosophy that you cannot get somewhere else!"

4 Value matters. "Memorable experiences help justify the price," Knight says. Research shows that 90% of the time a business loses a customer is because of poor service.

5 Phenomenal service trumps product, price and convenience. Whenever your customers say your service was "fine," "good" or "OK," "these words scream of mediocrity," Knight says.

6 Be the "chocolate" to avoid the above four-letter words. All consumers have "mental shelf space." When you ask any consumer to name his or her top five coffee brands or top five shoe brands or top five perfume brands, your brand must be in the top three.

"If you're not in the top three, you have no hope of people spending money with you," Knight says.

7 Fill your customers' mental rolodexes with nothing but +'. Great memories = raving fans.

— Matt Walsh



Courtesy image

Jim Knight led training for Hard Rock International and is obsessed with customer experience.