

# QuarkXPress production quintuples 'VegNews' sales

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The tag line at VegNews magazine — “More Than Recipes” — makes the magazine’s commitment to the vegetarian lifestyle clear: It’s not a food fad; it’s a way of life. As proof, the publisher prints on 100% post-consumer recycled paper with soy inks, a practice leading industry watchers call an “environmental home run.” The printing can be a challenge, especially because the magazine recently upgraded from a black-and-white tabloid to a four-color glossy. But with the help of San Francisco-based branding agency Vertebrae and its longstanding commitment to QuarkXPress®, the magazine tackled the challenges. In fact, the publisher credits the QuarkXPress 6.5 output of its new format with quintupling newsstand sales, tripling subscriptions, improving renewal rates, and encouraging advertisers over the last 18 months.

To understand the impact of QuarkXPress on VegNews magazine, it’s imperative to know how the publication got off the ground. In the mid-1990s, publisher Joseph Connelly launched a small, black-and-white local newsletter produced in ClarisWorks. The newsletter targeted the vegetarian lifestyle, going beyond simply reviewing restaurants and providing recipes to offering travel tips, information on animal testing, cosmetic reviews, and encouragement.

“We’re the only real vegetarian lifestyle publication — most are based on recipes and food,” said Connelly. “We really created this lifestyle niche for ourselves.”

#### No classes necessary

To take his unique, vegetarian lifestyle content to the next level, Connelly used QuarkXPress to develop a tabloid newspaper in 2000.

“The first success story is about QuarkXPress 4,” said Connelly. “I was able to transform a small regional newsletter into a national newspaper using QuarkXPress.”

Connelly’s business partner, Colleen Holland, introduced him to QuarkXPress, and Connelly taught himself the program.

“I never had so much as a single class in QuarkXPress,” Connelly said. “It’s so user friendly that — backed by a couple of entry-level design courses — I was able to produce VegNews completely in QuarkXPress. I didn’t need to hire a graphic designer or a trainer. I taught myself

on-the-fly, asking questions of proficient users as necessary.”

With the rich pool of experienced QuarkXPress users in San Francisco available to help, Connelly was able to serve as both publisher and designer, all the while building a loyal following for VegNews.

#### Exploiting the bells and whistles

Continuing the evolution of VegNews, the publisher decided to upgrade to a four-color glossy magazine in 2004. Based on the magazine’s positive experiences with QuarkXPress — and strong encouragement from their printers — the publishers decided to stick with QuarkXPress for the reformat.

“We decided to stick with QuarkXPress because we liked that it is an industry standard, and we like Quark — we really like Quark a lot,” said Connelly.

Connelly knew that with his limited background, he wasn’t getting the most out of the software.

“Even now, I’m still learning it, and an intern will show me some amazing trick you can do within the application,” he said.

With the upgrade, the publishers decided to “maximize the bells and whistles in QuarkXPress” by outsourcing the design. Jim Allsopp, creative director of Vertebrae, a small branding agency in San Francisco, stepped in and also recommended QuarkXPress.



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“When Vertebrae took over, a Luddite like me was amazed at all the features at his fingertips,” said Connelly. “It’s fair and safe to say that every feature in QuarkXPress came in handy when taking VegNews from tabloid newsprint to four-color glossy.”

“QuarkXPress is not only the industry standard — it’s our studio standard,” said Allsopp. “All our designers use QuarkXPress as the tool of choice for implementing their ideas, from concept to artwork. Obviously, it’s the best thing out there for page layout.”

*VegNews* made the move quickly, too. A bi-monthly publication, the first issue of 2004 was a newsprint tabloid. The second 2004 issue, which came out in March, was a glossy magazine.

“We didn’t skip a beat,” said Connelly. “We moved straight to magazine in two months.”

Making the move also meant the magazine was working with a new printer, Democrat Printing in Little Rock, Ark.

“The printer encouraged us to stick with QuarkXPress, too, and we’ve all been really pleased,” said Connelly, although he and designer Allsopp say they face many challenges working with the recycled papers they’re committed to.

#### Listening to the experts

Throughout the evolution of *VegNews*, printers and designers touted QuarkXPress.

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Vertebrae’s QuarkXPress use doesn’t stop at design.

“We make sure nobody is using Microsoft Word, even in administration,” said Allsopp. Whether staff is producing letters, mailing labels, or invoices, the administrative staff “needs control and precision over the layout,” he said. “You won’t believe how excited we were to discover PDF export. That is how we send most of our invoices these days.”

In fact, the built-in PDF export helps with all of the agency’s projects, particularly with sending PDFs directly to printers.

“PDF export is the difference between a late night and a very late night,” said Allsopp. “It’s a great feature not only for sending finished artwork, but also for on-the-fly visuals so clients can approve concepts.”

As Vertebrae’s designers continue to delve into QuarkXPress 6.5, they say that they’re intrigued by the possibilities of the enhanced tables features and the ability to import native Adobe® Photoshop® files.

“Annual report designers will know why I’m so stoked about tables,” said Allsopp.

#### Moving forward with confidence

Today, *VegNews* magazine is on solid ground, and Joseph Connelly is exploring the possibility of launching a second magazine. With 40 employees, contractors, and a healthy stock of interns, The *VegNews* Network saves money by performing

as much work as it can in-house — producing ads, creating initial layouts, and completing the production work in QuarkXPress. Files are shuttled back and forth between the office and Vertebrae — both all-Mac® shops — as necessary.

“In the Bay Area, we have access to a large number of wonderful and talented interns,” said Connelly, who recruits from Craig’s List. “We hire ‘design assistants’ for six months, give them a free lunch, and teach them a lot about design, small business, and running a magazine.”

“Prior to moving to a magazine, we were a two-person operation. Aside from our network of writers, all of the work was done by the two founders,” said Connelly. “But since we converted to a magazine format with the help of QuarkXPress 6.5, our business has grown, allowing us to grow our staff very quickly, both off-site and on-site, whether coming for a paycheck or for experience.”

Connelly is also enthusiastic about the overwhelming success of the *VegNews* magazine itself, which now takes its place on the newsstand with four other major vegetarian titles. In its new, QuarkXPress-produced format, *VegNews* reaches 100,000 readers with its mix of information on living a “compassionate and healthy lifestyle.” To learn more about *VegNews*, visit the magazine’s web site at [www.vegnews.com](http://www.vegnews.com).

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