



Dick Blume / The Post-Standard

Syracuse Media Group will have its new downtown headquarters at Merchants Commons, Warren and Fayette streets.

# 'POST'-MODERN MEDIA GROUP FINDS DIGITAL DIGS



The new office is dramatically different. Cubicles and filing cabinets are replaced by a space that is mostly open, with a variety of workstations but no assigned seats.

NEWS, PHOTO AND ADVERTISING TEAMS FOR SYRACUSE.COM AND THE POST-STANDARD WILL MOBILIZE OUT OF A NEW DOWNTOWN HUB.

By **Tim Knauss**  
Staff writer

**G**oodbye, cubicles and copy editors. Hello, collaborative work space and curators. About 150 journalists and advertising salespeople soon will leave their desks at The Post-Standard building in Clinton Square to launch a new company five blocks away. Their mission is to redefine the news business in Syracuse.

Syracuse Media Group, a new company started by the owners

of the newspaper, will move this spring into a glass-lined, street-level office it's leasing at the downtown Merchants Commons building at Warren and Fayette streets.

The new company is taking over news reporting, advertising and marketing for The Post-Standard and its affiliated website, [syracuse.com](http://syracuse.com).

The company's goal — a profitable, digital-first news operation that also prints a newspaper — represents a sharp break from traditional newspaper work. Tim Kennedy, hired in August as president of Syracuse Media Group, said he considers it a startup company.

"We're starting a new company," Kennedy said. "We're making a significant investment in the way we work, and we think that's much different in the future than the way it was done in the past."

If office furnishings are an indication, the change will be distinct.

Unlike The Post-Standard newsroom, where desk phones ring at

HISTORIC, PAGE A-8



AN ARTIST rendering of the Syracuse Media Group headquarters shows the airy interior behind glass-in-walls designed to be inviting to the public.

# HISTORIC CORNER BECOMES HOME TO DIGITAL FUTURE

**HISTORIC, FROM PAGE A-1**

cubicles and papers overflow from filing cabinets, the new location is mostly open space with a variety of work stations but no assigned seats and no place to store documents or display personal effects.

Employees will carry their work tools — state-of-the-art smart phones and laptop computers — in company-issued backpacks. Syracuse Media Group journalists will be able to post news stories, videos and photographs on [syracuse.com](http://syracuse.com) at any moment and from any location. Often, they will not need to come to the office at all.

Kennedy said he wants "more feet on the street" and more opportunities for free-thinking collaboration when people come into the office.

"We don't want to create a cubicle culture," he said. "We want to create a mobile culture."

The glassed-in office was designed to be inviting to the public, Kennedy said.

Like sister companies in Michigan, Alabama, New Orleans and Harrisburg, Pa., Syracuse Media Group will cut back on traditional newspaper production and focus more resources on digital news reporting and advertising.

Beginning Feb. 3, the company will reduce home delivery of newspapers to three days a week. On the other four days, papers will be printed for newsstand sales, but only in Onondaga County.

"We're making a bold move to the digital world," said former Post-Standard editor and publisher Stephen A. Rogers, whose new title is chairman of Syracuse Media Group. "I think we're pioneers in an exciting new venture that we see as absolutely essential."

Advance Publications, a newspaper chain owned by the Newhouse family, has split its Syracuse operation into two new companies. As part of the reorganization, the Post-Standard laid off about 115 of its 415 workers, some of whom had worked at the company for decades. Syracuse Media Group is in the process of hiring 60 new employees.

Kennedy said that has been a painful transition.

"There are a lot of new positions that didn't exist in the old company," he said. "There are community engagement specialists. There are data analysts in the newsroom as well as in sales. We tried to build an organization that was digitally focused and that gave us those skills."

Syracuse Media Group, which has 187 employees, will provide news, advertising and marketing. Advance Central Services has 154 people who still work at the Clinton Square building. They will print the paper and other publications and provide back-office support such as accounting, customer service and human resources.

After Syracuse Media Group moves into its new office, the first floor of the Clinton Square



A DRAWING of the new Merchants Common contrasts with the turn-of-the-century Snow and U.S. Government buildings which once stood on the site at the corner of Warren and Fayette streets.

go out and make this change — basically ripping the Band-Aid off," Pacheco said. "Everybody in this industry is watching."

The company's task will be difficult, said Pacheco, who has years of experience developing online publications. Building a digital audience is easier than developing new revenues, he said.

"Newspaper companies, when they have tried doing that, even if they've had success in growing an audience they tend to stall on the revenue side," he said. "That seems to be the innovation that has yet to happen."

Vin Crobbie, an adjunct professor and new media consultant at SU's Newhouse School of Public Communications, said newspaper companies are struggling to find a sustainable business model in the digital world. They have little choice but to try, he said.

Many long-time newspaper subscribers in Syracuse question why they will only receive three issues a week on their doorstep. But to young people, Syracuse Media Group's new direction seems like the obvious path, Crobbie said.

"Most young people will see this as the company evolving and keeping up with the times," he said.

A contingent of Syracuse Media Group employees will remain at a "publications hub" in the Post-Standard building, preparing pages for the print

editions. Unlike copy editors of old, who worked alongside reporters and editors in a newsroom, these employees — some of whom are called "curators" — will select material published on [syracuse.com](http://syracuse.com) to put together a newspaper.

Rogers said Syracuse Media Group remains dedicated to

printing a newspaper, despite the company's overriding digital focus.

"I see The Post-Standard remaining a strong newspaper for a long time to come," he said.

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David Lottman/The Post-Standard

STEPHEN A. ROGERS (left), chairman of Syracuse Media Group, and company President Tim Kennedy arrive for a news conference Friday to announce the company's plans to locate at Merchants Commons, at Warren and Fayette streets.