

Trib readies new weekly

Spanish paper set for Sept. launch

By JEFF BORDEN and ADOLFO MENDEZ

Targeting the estimated 1 million Hispanics in the Chicago metropolitan area, the *Chicago Tribune* plans a September launch for a Spanish-language weekly newspaper.

The publication will be closely patterned after *Exito*, a free-distribution weekly published in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., by the *Sun-Sentinel*, a daily newspaper owned by Chicago-based Tribune Co.

Exito, which was created about 18 months ago, has a circulation estimated at 80,000. Eighty percent of the content, which skews heavily toward entertainment and lifestyle news, is printed in Spanish, with the remainder in English.

Exito, which means "success," is likely to be the name of the Chicago publication. Sources within the *Tribune* say the newspaper will have its own sales and graphics staffs and an

See *Trib* on Page 69

CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS MAY 31, 1993 69

Trib

Continued from Page 1
editorial roster of five bilingual editors and reporters. Office space for *Exito* is reportedly being sought in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood.

Sources say the newspaper will initially be offered free, but may eventually evolve into a paid-circulation publication.

In Florida, plans to charge 25 cents a copy for *Exito* were implemented last July, but dropped a month later in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, in the belief that it was vital to continue reaching the Spanish-speaking community. Efforts to charge for the paper, which has yet to turn a profit, haven't been revived.

Bilingual market

among Spanish-language publications here.

But the company's entry into the Chicago Hispanic market may serve to expand the limited market for advertising dollars earmarked for Hispanic print media.

"I don't see this as a threat. I see this as a very positive step," says George San Jose, president of San Jose & Associates Inc., a Chicago advertising agency serving the Spanish-language community.

"Any time you have a major company coming into the Hispanic market, in a sense discovering the Hispanic market, it's a good thing," he says. "They have the resources to tap into advertisers that would never come into the Hispanic market. And that will give the Hispanic media a shot at those new advertisers."

Exito will confront a conundrum

peculiar to the Chicago market, which is the sixth-largest Hispanic market in the U.S.

Unlike other cities with large Hispanic populations, radio dominates the media here, grabbing an estimated 40% to 50% of all Spanish-language advertising. Television takes an estimated 30% to 40% of advertising dollars, leaving newspapers to scrap over the leftovers.

New focus on print

The arrival of *Exito* will focus new attention on the Spanish print medium.

Luis Rossi, publisher of the weekly *La Raza*, says the entry of a Tribune Co.-backed newspaper gives his publication and other Spanish-language media more credibility. Not that Mr. Rossi, who claims circulation of 40,000,

doesn't intend to battle *Exito* when it debuts this fall.

"They do pretty good in English," he says of the *Tribune*. "Let's see how they do in Spanish. We know they'll make a lot of noise and they'll come at us with a lot of money... But after six months, everything is going to be back to normal. We'll survive. There's room for both of us."

Adds Mary Montgomery, executive editor of Extra Bilingual Community Newspapers, which claims a circulation of 68,000: "We're not delighted, but this is America. Competition is one of the things that does happen... There's always a concern when heavy competition comes in."

Both Mr. Rossi and Ms. Montgomery believe they'll have an edge if the Chicago's *Exito* mirrors the Florida version by emphasizing lifestyle over

hard news.

Hard news or soft

"This is something I hope the community thinks about," says Ms. Montgomery. "If you're a basic entertainment piece when there are vandalism on your street, how is it going to get to the community?"

Alfredo Duran, publisher of *Exito* in Fort Lauderdale, confirms that the newspaper has a strong commitment to entertainment and lifestyle stories, but he insists it doesn't ignore hard news. Instead, he says, it takes a more analytical approach.

"We don't compete with the dailies," says Mr. Duran. "So, we try to do more profiles, more analysis of issues. We try to be ahead of the curve, to catch the waves in the community that often go uncovered."

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