

As Digital Ad Costs Climb, South Jersey Businesses Are Buying Attention the Old Way

Cherry Hill agency Strativera painted 100+ faces at Evesham's National Night Out and says community presence now outperforms the paid channels it replaces.

MARLTON, NJ, UNITED STATES, August 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Paid search is getting more expensive for nearly every business that uses it. Benchmark analysis of more than 16,000 campaigns by WordStream and LocaliQ found cost per click rising across 87 percent of industries, with the cross-industry average climbing roughly 13 percent year over year. At the same time, AI-generated answers are absorbing a growing share of the clicks that used to reach business websites directly.

“

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Janae Tanner, Co-Founder and VP of Growth, Strativera



Thousands filled the grounds for Evesham Township's National Night Out on Aug. 4, 2026, where more than 20 businesses, civic organizations and public-safety groups set up alongside Strativera.

The response from one South Jersey agency has been to send its co-founder to a township field with a palette of face paint.

Strativera, the [Cherry Hill Township digital marketing and revenue operations agency](#), ran a free face-painting station at Evesham Township's National Night Out on Tuesday, Aug. 4, where Co-Founder and Vice President of Growth and Client Success Janae Tanner personally painted more than 100 faces across the evening. The most requested

design, by a wide margin, was Spider-Man.

The agency, which builds attribution models and revenue operations systems for growth-stage and private-equity-backed companies, argues that the appearance was not charity or brand-building in the soft sense. It was channel strategy.

"Every business in our region is watching click costs go up and organic traffic get harder to hold, and most of them are responding by bidding more for the same clicks," Tanner said. "There is a channel sitting in front of them that competitors are not bidding on, and it costs a Tuesday night and a folding table. The families in that line know our name now. No auction was involved."

The Economics Behind the Face Paint

Rising acquisition costs are not a local phenomenon, but their effect on local businesses is sharper. Service businesses in competitive categories now routinely pay several dollars per click, and considerably more in high-value verticals, with no guarantee of a lead at the end of it. Meanwhile the trust signals that actually decide local purchases, meaning reviews, referrals and familiarity, are earned rather than bought.

Strativera reports more than 104 million dollars in client-attributed revenue growth and an average 28 percent reduction in customer acquisition cost across engagements spanning more than 17 industries. Its leadership says community-rooted businesses consistently show lower blended acquisition costs than similarly sized competitors who buy every impression they receive.

"We tell clients that community presence is an acquisition channel, and then we prove it with our own calendar," said Joe Levy, Co-Founder and President of Strativera. "Janae painting a hundred faces is the top of the same funnel we build for clients: trust first, everything else second. The townships, the chambers, the school fundraisers, the police foundation events, that is where South Jersey actually decides who it does business with. Companies treating that as optional are paying to rent attention they could have earned."

Levy said the honest version of the argument includes its limits. Community presence does not scale the way paid media does, cannot be switched on in a single quarter, and produces returns that arrive as referrals and warm inbound rather than as a line item in an ad platform. What it offers instead is durability. A reputation compounds, while an ad budget resets to zero every month.

Why the Shift Is Happening Now



Strativera Co-Founder Janae Tanner works the agency's free face-painting station at Evesham Township's National Night Out on Aug. 4, 2026.

Two pressures are converging on local advertisers at once. Auction prices are climbing as more businesses compete for the same commercial queries, and the supply of free clicks is shrinking as AI-generated summaries answer more questions directly inside search results, reducing the traffic that reaches business websites even when those businesses rank well.

The combination squeezes from both directions. Paid clicks cost more, and the organic clicks that used to offset them are harder to keep. Businesses that respond only by raising bids find themselves paying more for a smaller pool of attention.

Strativera says the strategic response is to diversify into demand that is not auction-priced at all, meaning referrals, reputation and community familiarity, which behave less like media buys and more like assets on a balance sheet. The measurement discipline stays the same, which is the part most businesses skip.



Tanner painted more than 100 faces across the evening, from opening through the fireworks finale.

"Nobody is arguing you should stop running ads," Tanner said. "The argument is that if the auction keeps getting more expensive, the businesses that also own a channel nobody is bidding on will be the ones with room to breathe. In South Jersey, that channel is the community, and it has been sitting there the whole time."

What Happened at the Table

The station was deliberately low-tech. There was no banner wall, no giveaway funnel, no QR codes and no lead capture of any kind. Tanner staffed it alone from the opening of the event through the fireworks finale, working a line that rarely thinned.

"The fastest way to be forgotten at a community event is to treat it like a trade show," Tanner said. "We did not go to collect anything. We went because a township that opens its fields to thousands of families deserves businesses that show up and do the work, not businesses that show up and pitch. Everyone standing in that line can tell the difference, and that difference is the entire return."

Strativera was one of more than 20 businesses, civic organizations and public-safety groups that supported or took part in the 2026 event, alongside companies including Cherry Valley Tractor Sales, Sprouts Farmers Market, Remington and Vernick Engineers, Adjust Your Sleep Mattress

Boutique, DiMeglio Septic Inc., Stephen's Exterminating LLC, and New Century Screen Printing and Embroidery. The evening's fireworks display was sponsored by A Suite for Harry's Heroes, and the United States Marine Corps provided a helicopter that the Evesham Township Police Department called one of the highlights of the night.

The department, which hosts the event, reported that thousands of community members, families, businesses and vendors attended, and wrote in its [public recap of the event](#) that when community members, local businesses, volunteers and first responders come together, amazing things happen.

A Pattern, Not a One-Off

National Night Out opened a three-week run of community commitments for the agency. Four days later, on Aug. 8, Strativera co-hosted the American Muscle Car Show alongside Floor Coverings International Cherry Hill. On Aug. 12, Tanner speaks at the D.R.I.V.E. HER Forward event. She also serves as Vice President of BNI Cherry Hill East, one of the region's most active business networking chapters.

Founded in June 2025, Strativera has grown to four offices, with headquarters at [7 Cooper Landing Rd, Cherry Hill Township, NJ 08002](#) and additional locations in Manahawkin, Tampa and Las Vegas. Much of the firm's client work is national, while its center of gravity has stayed in Burlington and Camden counties.

"A Cherry Hill address means nothing if nobody in Cherry Hill has met you," Levy said. "The firms that win regionally are the ones whose names come up between two business owners who have both worked with them. You cannot buy your way into that conversation."

Five Rules for Local Businesses Weighing the Channel

Strativera offers the following framework, drawn from both its client work and its own appearances, for businesses evaluating community investment against paid alternatives.

The first rule is to commit early. National Night Out falls on the first Tuesday of August every year, which puts the 2027 event on Tuesday, Aug. 3, and township planning typically ramps through late spring. Businesses that sign on early have their names carried by the event's own promotion rather than arriving alongside it.

The second is to bring an activity rather than a brochure. A hands-on station produces hundreds of unhurried conversations, while a table stacked with literature produces walk-bys. The activity is the marketing, and the logo on it is incidental.

The third is to send the people who own the business. Communities notice who actually shows up, and a principal working a station for four hours signals where a business puts its own time in

a way no sponsorship line communicates.

The fourth is to come back the following year. Community marketing compounds the way every other durable channel does. One appearance is a photograph, while five consecutive years is a reputation, and reputation is what buyers verify before they call anyone.

The fifth rule is to measure the channel like paid media. Businesses can capture referral sources at intake, track branded search volume in the weeks following an event, and log the origin of every inbound lead. Firms that instrument community investment stop debating whether it works and start deciding how much of it to fund.

Event and Company Facts

National Night Out 2026 was held Tuesday, Aug. 4, in Evesham Township, New Jersey, hosted by the Evesham Township Police Department, and drew thousands of attendees along with more than 20 supporting businesses, civic organizations and public-safety groups. Strativera's contribution was a free face-painting station staffed by Co-Founder and Vice President of Growth and Client Success Janae Tanner, who personally painted more than 100 faces. National Night Out 2027 falls on Tuesday, Aug. 3. Strativera leadership is available to comment on local marketing economics, rising customer acquisition costs and community-driven demand generation.

About National Night Out

National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. Coordinated nationally by the National Association of Town Watch and held on the first Tuesday of August, it brings residents, public-safety agencies, businesses and local organizations together in thousands of communities across the United States.

About Strativera

Strativera is a top-rated digital marketing and revenue operations agency headquartered in Cherry Hill Township, New Jersey, with offices in Manahawkin, New Jersey, Tampa, Florida, and Las Vegas, Nevada. Built for growth-stage, mid-market and private-equity-backed companies, Strativera connects strategy, campaigns, CRM and reporting into one revenue system, delivered by senior operators rather than junior teams. The agency holds a 5.0 rating across Google, Clutch and GoodFirms and serves clients in more than 17 industries. Learn more at strativera.com.

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