

NewsBeat

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on behalf of New York's Community Newspapers

February 2015

NYPA



**Je suis
Charlie**

CLIP & SAVE**Mark your calendar****Thursday, March 26, 2015**

NYPA/NYPS Boards of Directors Meetings
 NYPA Foundation Board of Directors Meeting
 Gideon Putnam Hotel, Saratoga Springs, NY

**Friday & Saturday,
March 27 & 28, 2015**

NYPA Spring Convention and Tradeshow
 Gideon Putnam Hotel, Saratoga Springs, NY

Friday, June 5, 2015

NYPA/NYPS Board of Directors Meetings
 NYPA Foundation Board of Directors Meeting
 Straus News, 333 Seventh Ave. (6th flr.), NYC

**Thursday, September 17, 2015**

NYPA/NYPS Boards of Directors Meetings
 NYPA Foundation Board of Directors Meeting
 Marriott Providence Downtown,
 Providence, Rhode Island

**Friday & Saturday,
September 18 & 19, 2015**

NYPA Fall Convention
 Marriott Providence Downtown,
 Providence, Rhode Island

NYPABy **BRYAN BOYHAN** — *Co-Publisher, Sag Harbor Express; President, NYPA Board of Directors*

Je Suis Charlie: A 360 Degree Perspective

It was hard to ignore last week the passion France expressed for the fate of staff members of a satirical magazine that prides itself in skewering the sanctimonious. Charlie Hebdo is an exercise in freedom of expression, where — admittedly — staffers can be equal opportunity offenders, ridiculing political and religious figures of all stripes in an effort to humble those that deserve to be humbled. It is a form of journalism many of us take to heart: comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Something that can be done in a free society, but not so much in an environment that seeks to control what people think and how they behave; how, who and if they worship.

Twelve people died in an attack that stunned a world, which has in the past two decades become increasingly accustomed to threats of terror and suicide bombers. Yet, not since the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City have we seen such a public response as we have in the Charlie Hebdo attacks. Two million demonstrators filled the streets of Paris to declare their unity, with representatives from governments and religions around the world; more than those who turned out to celebrate the end of World War II. Many of those participating wore shirts or carried signs that read “Je Suis Charlie” (I Am Charlie) and images broadcast on CNN, coverage in thousands of newspapers and their websites and tweets from marchers brought the global community to the narrow rues of France’s capitol.

While the showing made a statement that terrorism would not be tolerated or yielded to, the remarkable size and scope, I believe, was because the attacks were against our most sacred of our democratic rights: freedom of expression.

Each week in our newspapers, we give our readers and the members of our communities an opportunity to freely comment on what is going on in the world around them. We do this through our letters to the editor columns, through blogs, postings on our web pages and in interviews we conduct for news stories. At our paper, The Sag Harbor Express, we also actively solicit comments through a weekly survey on issues of both local and national interest.

The other day, in preparation for this column, I sent out a survey that asked readers to respond to an observation:

“As journalists, the massacre at the offices of Charlie Hebdo last week resonated in many ways. It speaks to freedom of expression, democratic values and religious extremism. The response, including wall-to-wall news coverage, tremendous and instant communication through social media and the largest mass rally in French history, speaks to the power, principles and value of public expression in a free world.”

The wide-ranging responses offered perspectives that were perhaps expected:

“The people of Paris and Charlie Hebdo are very brave people and I have an incredible amount of respect for them. France should be lauded for their undying commitment to an open and democratic society.”

And: “The attack was a bastardization of Islam and the extremists who twist the teachings of Mohammed to fit their goals of terror. The radical Islamists are trying to stifle democracy, free speech, and personal choice.”

And: “Freedom of speech is a fundamental right given to a free thinking society! When terrorists or countries exercise their strong arm tactics to suppress an individual’s right to freedom of speech it is up to free thinking democratic nations to oppose those views and defend the rights of individuals who live in totalitarian dictatorships. The rally in France is a clear sign that free thinking individuals will rally to freedom’s cause and oppose any and all who attempt to suppress an individual’s right to free speech!”

But they also were unexpected and provocative:

“Freedom of Expression YES! Freedom of Religion (freedom to wear a veil if Muslim) YES! Wishing France was as keen on the latter as the former. The attacks were atrocious, ABSOLUTEMENT! But I can’t help but worry what the “je suis Charlie” campaign is doing to further ghettoize non-radicalized Muslims and bolster the European National Front (Europe’s Tea Party).”

And: “The idea that Muslim outrage at vile depictions of their religious icons can be evaluated separately from the persecution of Muslims in the West and the invasion and occupation of Muslim countries is the product of a complete incapacity to empathize with the experience of sustained and systemic oppression.

What is extraordinary, when even the most cursory consideration of recent history is taken into account, is not that this horrific incident occurred, but that such events do not happen more often. It is a great testament to the enduring humanism of the Muslim population of the world that only a tiny minority resort to such acts in the face of endless provocation.”

And others were openly critical of the magazine:

“I am all for Democratic values. But to malign or degrade a religious icon such as Jesus, Abraham, Mohammed, etc. is crossing the line and surely the aim of such journalism is to sell more of the publication and, by the very nature of the writing, a quest for a massive reaction and the publicity it brings. I believe in free speech but along with it restraint and respect.”

And: “I, for one, wish they did not exist at all, but I hold my nose to defend the principle of free speech.”

Taken collectively these comments reveal a community that can examine an issue from broad perspectives, a 360-degree view. For the global audience, Charlie Hebdo may not offer a complete, objective view of its world, but it does contribute to at least a few of those 360 degrees. And for better or worse those degrees are important to our understanding of the world around us.

Back at home we sit at our desks on Monday mornings and pull together the pieces — degree by degree — that make up our newspapers or our websites. We look for the stories that will give our readers an understanding of what has occurred in their community that day or that week. When some of those pieces are missing, when the wheel is not complete, then our readers are cheated of a full understanding of their world.

In our business there are constant threats to making the wheel complete: officials lobbying to keep stories out of the press, meetings held behind closed doors, slap suits intended to stifle uncomfortable reporting. At times these threats can turn more violent, and we only have to look inside our own organization to remember when the offices of the Riverdale Press were fire bombed because of their reporting on Salman Rushdie.

There must be no small consolation for the families, friends and co-workers of those staffers at Charlie Hebdo who lost their lives in this battle to keep their piece of the wheel intact. And their publication of a new issue that is as defiant and iconoclastic as those before it (and with a print run of 5 million!) is testament to the appetite of a public that demands full, complete and unfettered perspectives that reflect their world.

One of the comments I received this week read: “Our worst decision would be to succumb to them by altering how we live as a free, democratic society including how we speak, what we print, and where we go in this world. Let’s not give them that satisfaction!”

Indeed, let’s not give anyone the satisfaction of disrupting our mission of presenting an unbroken wheel.

NewsBeat

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The Must-Attend Conference of the Year



With the digital landscape changing faster than ever, the time is NOW to invest in professional development that will enable you to implement creative new strategies that position your news organization for fast future growth.

NYPA's spring convention, March 27th and 28th in Saratoga Springs offers a diverse group of speakers and workshops that go far beyond talking about digital disruption, innovation and strategies.

You will go home armed with actionable, process-oriented information that you can implement immediately.

The cost is so low you can't afford not to come! For only \$49* per person, you can choose from 64 workshops offered during the two days of the conference. It is a bargain that will pay HUGE dividends!

New organizations have a temporary sweet spot, but print-only strategies will not sustain us.

News organizations need to get back to being the facilitators of all important community conversations. We need to control as many of the information pipelines as possible. We need to methodically and strategically change our content so we can connect with and engage ALL segments of the communities we serve.

We need to develop and implement business-oriented processes for generating content, and start utilizing metrics, benchmarks, and demographics to drive content decisions. What is your process for generating content? Can you write it down? Do you have a documented strategy for generating content and assigning stories or is it just in someone's head? Content is a product — are you creating the right product?

If you are going to create better content you're going to need stronger writing and better storytelling, so we've got:

- Jacqui Banaszynski — Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and Knight Chair in Editing at Missouri School of Journalism
- Beth Jannery — director of the journalism program at George Mason University
- Geneva Overholser — former editor of the Des Moines Register, ombudsman for the Washington Post, and director of the USC Annenberg School of Journalism
- Linda Loomis — former NYPA "Writer of the Year", journalism professor at SUNY Oswego, and arts critic for the Post-Standard, Syracuse
- Rick Thomason — veteran journalist, editor and publisher

If you're going to create better content, you're going to need to make more money, so we've got:

- Kelly Wirges :
 - Prospecting the Pays
 - Persuasive Communication that Leads to Yes
 - Addressing Objections
 - Time Management Skills Make More Money
 - SOLD! On Classifieds!!!
- Tom Stoyan:
 - Stop Selling and Double Your Revenues!
 - Answers to Your Toughest Sales Coaching Questions
- LuShep Baldwin:
 - Revenue Builders for Small Newspapers

If you are going to create better content, you're going to need to take advantage of digital opportunities, become platform neutral in terms of delivery, be more responsive to more segments of your community, and do a better job of engaging your community, so we've got:

- Tom Rosenstiel — executive director of API:
 - What the Audience is Telling Us About the Future of News
- George Bodarky and Amy Tardiff:
 - Broadcasting isn't Just for Radio and TV Anymore
- Val Hoepfner:
 - Apps for Journalist Who Work and Publish in the Field
 - How to Engage Your Digital Audience
 - Building Engagement with Social Media
- Brian Steffens:
 - 10 Ways to Build Your Social and Mobile Presence NOW!
- Kevin Z. Smith:
 - Dirty Dozen Coolest Tools and Apps for Journalists
- Matt Ingram:
 - Journalism's Biggest Competitors Are Things That Don't Even Look Like Journalism

And there's a whole lot more including:

- The release of the initial results of NYPA's groundbreaking research with a team of industrial disruption experts from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Don't miss the most important keynote address we've ever delivered: Time to Look Ahead: A Business Strategy for News Organizations to Thrive in the Future
- Michael Zinser — The State of New York's Holy War Against Independent Contractors
- Kelly Frankeny — Designing for Print, and, separately, Designing for the Digital

And there's more... watch your mailbox and your inbox for the complete schedule of speakers and workshops, a complete list of trade show vendors, the contest awards schedule, hotel and conference registration forms, and the delicious details on our spectacular Friday night extravaganza — COMING SOON!

By SARAH SCHANTIN-WILLIAMS

It is time we developed strategies for making content decisions

While many media companies are making missteps along their journey to paid content, Västernorrlands-Kuriren has converted more than 60% of readers to paid-for print + digital. Success started with a strategy to reflect audience preferences within newsroom content decisions.

It's fair to say that many in the media industry have found charging for digital content to be a tricky process to get right.

Some have found that putting up "walls" and forcing customers to pay for content they may not find appealing can result in significant drops in traffic and a low uptake. Some have even had to relinquish charging completely and consider going back to 100% free.

Perhaps the clue is in the term "walls."

Premium digital content can easily stray from being about creating a valued and satisfying relationship between media house and audience. Instead, it can sometimes become about building a wall over which we pray someone will throw some money over.

The trouble often starts in the strategic thinking phase.

Confusion and lack of insight have the habit of accompanying the process of working out new revenue and content strategies. Establishing paid-for content can then become a burden, something that has to be done quickly without really thinking it through.

The top five most common sins we regularly witness are where media organisations:

1. Throw up a "wall" in a rush without any real understanding of which types of audience could and would pay for content.
2. Construct a paid-for content model that looks great on an Excel sheet but does not reflect the true value of the content and brand experience.
3. Copy blindly what the neighbour or competitor does without querying and investigating one's own market and situation thoroughly.
4. Start paid-for off as a technical project, building a user (un)friendly system that deters and revolts clients away from parting with precious funds.
5. Only focusing on a paid-for solution in isolation, in any one department, without really looking at the wider creative transformation process of the media house.



SARAH SCHANTIN-WILLIAMS

So what might be an alternative way to go about it from the outset?

One example is from a regional media house called Västernorrlands-Kuriren (VK) from the north of Sweden.

Three years ago, its journey of transformation started in the newsroom, with an acute awareness of the company's lack of knowledge around its rapidly diversifying audience.

The journey has (so far) culminated with converting more than 60% of readers to use digital as well as print, having the largest reach in the north of Sweden, a successful premium model, and launching a whole host of new digital products and services.

The process of getting to this state started with editorial developing and applying audience knowledge to daily decision making. Every day they improved how they plan and followed up — not just stories or articles but how the newsroom developed wider and richer themes.

This involved each desk on VK learning how to create content across multiple channels in a way that did not damage any one particular platform but instead saw digital become a healthy complement to the print offerings.

Importantly, it became an opportunity to redesign the content structure of the VK print brand, more in line with audience interests and needs.

The work of editorial increased the overall quality of content and brand engagement, setting the ground for an organisation wide effort to consider how premium content would work.

"We had the whole company in on the change — eight teams working on all angles of paid-for content," explains Jessica Wennberg, VK's deputy and managing editor. Wennberg led the transformation strategy design and implemented the entire process with VK's Editor-in-Chief Ingvar Naslund.

"For example, we did audience research on transactions and value for digital, a new design on the Web site, new systems, we did extensive work on our publishing strategy, working out which content would be free/paid for over 150 different content types and scenarios. And we changed the way we worked, new technologies, even put in some new roles and simplified our processes.

"In the end we did a considerable marketing campaign, which warmed up the readers to using both print and digital together"

Paid-for content has been in place for over a year at VK now, which is a good amount of time to see if all that preparation, time and effort has been worth it:

"We have higher reach than before paid-for and we have also more traffic than before and it has helped us with print subscriptions," Wennberg says. "Normally we would have 5.6% down but now we are only seeing around the 2% decline. It will be very interesting what will happen next year."

So at VK, paid-for content represents an opportunity to have a different kind of relationship with diverse audience types, some free, some premium and in print.

Because the newsroom had spent time integrating and strategising thoroughly, paid-for content became essentially one of many aspects of an innovation process, as Wennberg explains: "The work won't stop. We are already on our way to more. TV, tablet editions, new special apps. Paid-for content is just one milestone of many."

If you would like to read more about VK's transformation journey please e-mail the author for a special report.

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— Reprinted from *Institute for Media Strategies*

By JOSH STEARNS


From Transactional to Transformational Listening

Listen, Learn, Act

Last November I wrote about the need for listening and empathy in journalism, arguing that “better reflecting and responding to our communities has to start with better listening.” A year later, I’m encouraged by the many newsrooms which are hosting events dedicated to listening to the diverse voices of their communities.

While these promising experiments and new start-ups are proving the value of deeper forms of listening, as an industry we still have a lot to learn. Listening is after all not a passive act, but rather an active skill that we can learn and employ strategically. As the examples above make clear there are many different kinds of listening with different goals and outcomes. Below I’ve tried to map out five models for listening at the intersection of newsrooms and communities.

- **Listening to sources and interviewees:** One of the most fundamental parts of journalism is listening to the sources who make up our stories. Too often, however, we turn to the same voices. Part of listening better will be listening to find new sources and looking for new perspectives.
- **Listening for story ideas:** Journalists listen to their communities to discover new story ideas. Curious City takes this idea further by not just listening for story ideas but also listening to community priorities. Rather than an editor deciding which story gets covered, the community gets to decide.
- **Listening for feedback:** Listening shouldn’t stop once a story is published. Newsrooms should actively invite community feedback on stories. This goes beyond having a comment section, to actually creating venues for stakeholders to respond to the reporting in a sustained way. For example, Chalkbeat has a Reader Advisory Board.
- **Listening for understanding and context:** Sometimes in newsrooms we describe these kinds of interviews as “on background” but my notion of this idea goes beyond that. Most newsrooms could do much more listening to the concerns, passions, challenges and hopes of local communities. Understanding the lived experiences of people in different parts of our community will help us rethink the role of our newsrooms, ask new questions in our stories, and challenge our assumptions. This kind of listening, and an awareness to these contexts, will make other forms of listening — specifically those in points one and two above — easier and more impactful.
- **Listening for relationships:** We often talk about community engagement, but to what end? Engagement is a means to building more meaningful relationships with our communities, relationships



Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.

Words: Stephen R. Covey / Image: Marc Wartheu

rooted in trust, empathy, transparency and accountability. This effort to build relationships around the news is at the heart of newsrooms’ push into new membership and event models. It is about doing better journalism and hopefully making that journalism more sustainable. But, sometimes in a relationship we just need to listen because someone else needs to be heard. Listening for the sake of listening, for the sake of showing up and being present for others, is critical to building trusting relationships. Newsrooms should be places people can come together and have their voices recognized and heard.

Too often newsrooms approach listening as a transaction — you give me info, I’ll give you journalism. We need to move beyond transactional listening to something more transformational that helps reshape newsrooms, communities and the ties that bind us. To do that, we have to make listening a part of the entire journalism process. It can’t just be a tactic used during planning or publication — it is fundamental to both.

And we should create better infrastructure to capture what we hear, synthesize it and measure it. But listening is a form of engagement that can’t be easily captured in analytics dashboards, so we need new ways to recognize the role listening plays across online and offline interactions with the public. Done right, our listening gives us new material to build stronger stories and stronger relationships.

We can’t strengthen the practice of listening if we can’t see it. We should recover listening from its largely invisible place in journalism and put it at the core of what we do.

— Reprinted from the Local News Lab

Adding a Listening Layer to the Entire Journalism Process



Picture by David Robert Bliwas, used via creative commons

By GRAHAM KENNY

Customers Are Better Strategists Than Managers

I was once appointed CEO of a company in need of a turnaround. We made trusses and frames for houses, and one morning, after I'd been on the job about three months, I found myself staring out my window, watching the trucks and forklifts below. I thought: What am I doing here? Can I, on the fingers of one hand, list the ingredients of success in this industry?

In the weeks and months that followed, the senior management team and I made a number of major decisions about the company's future. As a team, I observed, we were busy doing things and making changes, all of which made sense to us as managers. But as time progressed, I returned to these questions, over and over: How well do we know what our customers want? How well do we know what our suppliers and employees expect? What would it take to meet those needs better than our competitors could?

In short, I'd begun to think in a way that I'd now call "strategic." Up until that point, most of my focus had been on saving the company from ruin, which had led largely to "operational" thinking — worrying about the proper staffing numbers, the ratio of overhead costs to direct costs, the prices we were paying for supplies, how machinery was utilized in the plant, the overstocking and obsolescence of products used in manufacturing, the cash flow for the business, that sort of thing.

It was after I left that job and started working as a consultant that the penny finally dropped: I realized I'd been looking at the business from the inside out. From that perspective, all I could see was the activity that consumed my day. I also realized that customers and other stakeholders have the opposite perspective. Their view is outside-in, and that's what makes them good strategists.

Think about it: As a customer, how often do you ask yourself, "Why don't they...?" When you go to a department store, do you note which products should be added or removed? If you could have

your way with the store's presentation, would you change the layout, the lighting, and perhaps the color scheme? How about the service? No shortage of suggestions there, right? So it goes with airlines, telephone companies, banks, every organization you deal with — you're continually redesigning strategic factors such as product range, presentation, and customer service. We all do it.

Now try doing that for own your organization. Suddenly it's much harder, because it requires an outside-in view. Here are my suggestions for making it easier:

Tap your stakeholders.

If your company's two-day offsite involves a group of senior executives getting together to develop a strategic plan, and they do so right there and then, my guess is it's not a strategic plan at all. It's an operational plan. Your management team is most likely looking inside-out, and it surely doesn't have all the answers. It probably hasn't even asked the right questions.

Effective leaders listen. They observe. And they translate what they learn into strategy. Hubris has no place in outside-in thinking and effective strategy development. You have customers and other stakeholders who are dying to share their ideas about how you should change your company in ways that will make them even greater supporters. So empower them to do that.

Conduct interviews to understand your stakeholders' needs. You want to hear, for example, how customers decided to buy from you or from the competition. You want to hear how employees committed to join your organization or decided to leave to work somewhere else, how suppliers agreed to enter into contracts to provide you with goods or services when they had a choice, how partners signed up to sponsor your events when there were plenty of others options on offer. You're looking for insight into their

"journey" with the organization, to put this in marketing terms. On the criteria that emerge from their stories, you want to know how your organization performs — and what suggestions people have for improving your competitiveness.

Each interview should take place soon after the customer's shopping trip, the supplier's experience with your company, and so on. Wait too long, and people will forget important details and convey only vague impressions.

Go beyond your current customers.

Interview potential stakeholders, too. That includes customers and others who are currently dealing with your competitors — but also those who interact with neither you nor your rivals. In the wine industry, you would talk to people who don't drink wine — beer and cocktail consumers, for example — in order to appreciate why they prefer these other beverages, understand fully any objections they might have to wine, develop ways to eliminate any barriers to purchase, and figure out how to appeal to them in order to disrupt their pattern of choice. This is how you glean insights into new areas of competitive advantage (also known as blue ocean opportunities).

Listening is important, but you also have to determine who to listen to — that is, work out who your key stakeholders are. That will help you adjust your company's positions on the factors that matter.

— Reprinted from the *Harvard Business Review*

Warren Buffett: What Newspapers Need to Do to Survive



WHAT NEWSPAPERS NEED TO DO TO SURVIVE

If there's one thing Warren Buffett knows, it's how to earn the most money in the smartest way. Buffett, the "Oracle of Omaha," understands that the newspaper industry isn't dead. It would be wise for publishers to listen to what he's got to say.

Inland Press reports that in Buffett's annual letter to Berkshire Hathaway shareholders, he successfully explains why he believes in the newspaper industry and how publishers everywhere can turn their profits and readership around.

The Best Results Come from Assembling the Best Team

You need an experienced, dedicated team that cares about the quality and integrity of the newspaper and about good journalism in general. Buffett says great editors are the driving force behind why the six small dailies and two big-city dailies his group owns experienced either unchanged revenues or a 3% loss, a far cry from the revenue losses experienced by newspapers across the board in 2012.

Passion does matter, and the proof is in the revenue trends that some newspapers show. When those dedicated editors gather a team that cares, the community cares right back and shows it in readership.

If You Don't Value Your Content, Neither Will Anyone Else

Life certainly hasn't become duller than two generations ago, and newspapers don't have to be. They shouldn't be. What's missing in some areas is the connection — the living thread between newspaper and reader.

Every community has news and values. It's the job of the newspaper to dig into the community, learn what's important, and produce relevant copy that informs and engages its readers. As Buffet mentions, "Indeed, skimpy news coverage will almost certainly lead to skimpy readership."

The paper can settle for ho-hum, boring copy and watch readership fall off, or it can create vibrant material that leaps off the page. It's a choice.

The Internet is railed or hailed, depending on who is talking, for the demise of traditional newspapers. News is available for free, but which news? No one can produce the copy that your team can, and you have a choice about whether you're paid for it.

Buffet's BH Media newspapers will have paywalls, although he didn't go into a lot of detail about them. Yours can too. Maybe readers can access a few articles at the newspaper's website for free, but need a subscription for full access. Because your team knows the community, they also know what's reasonable.

Slow Down on Circulation, and You'll Become Less Relevant

Short-term gains come from cutting back circulation, but that's counterintuitive, says Buffett. "The less-than-daily publication that is now being tried in some large towns or cities — while it may improve profits in the short term — seems certain to diminish the papers' relevance over time."

This is similar to the need for meaty copy. When the newspaper gives its readers less, readers learn to expect it. But that doesn't mean they want less.

The newspaper business isn't a lot different from life in general. We teach others what we're worth. When a newspaper teaches its readers that it's not as valuable or relevant as bigger papers or the Internet, that's exactly what they're going to believe.

The upside is that your team has a choice.

By MATT DERIENZO

In a rush to maintain profits, newspapers are abandoning the art of customer service

The chase for short-term gain is undercutting local papers' long-term position in the community — the one asset national outlets and tech companies can't match, argues a former editor at Digital First Media.

We are at least a decade into panicked conversations about whether the U.S. newspaper industry can save itself — or evolve its way through our transformation to a digital culture. For a while, apathy, denial, and the inaction that comes with both were the worst reactions to this wakeup call. But over the past few years, a more offensive and damaging trend has emerged: Local newspapers have gotten really good at mistreating their most loyal customers. They're treading water today by drowning the local revenue base of tomorrow.

From predatory, report-it-to-the-Better-Business-Bureau-level print circulation tactics to websites clogged with popup ads and clickbait, publishers sure are acting like they're in the desperate, dying industry that the public perceives.

Let's start with the people who still subscribe to the print edition of a newspaper. They provide a very significant, although certainly shrinking, chunk of the industry's revenue, one that has been substantially more stable than print advertising. Whether consuming content in print or another platform, they are local and engaged, community influencers who can shape a brand's reputation.

Over the past few years, across newspaper chains borrowing these ideas from one another, print subscribers have seen steep price increases. One subscriber could be paying \$600 a year while his neighbor pays \$100 for the same product, all based on an algorithm designed to get as much money as possible out of those either willing to pay more or inattentive to their household bills.

Losing a significant number of print customers in the process isn't a problem if the rest agree to a big enough price increase for the math to work.

Leveraging newspapers' remaining print revenue as a "bridge" to a digital business model for local journalism is a no-brainer. But across the industry, there's little evidence of investment in digital. Rather, aggressive price increases on the print side coupled with deep newsroom expense cuts are simply being used to maintain the profit margins the shareholders of legacy newspaper companies have come to expect.

And the war on both print and digital readers is intensifying.

In the past two years, community newspaper companies have moved toward website paywalls that are really about print revenue. Aside from national brands such as The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, minuscule numbers of people are actually paying for digital-only access to local journalism. The move to paywalls was a way for newspapers to get a significant increase in revenue from print customers now forced to purchase a "bundle" of print and online access.

And even that has not been enough. A popular new tactic is producing "premium" special print sections periodically throughout the year, and charging home delivery subscribers a dollar or two extra for them unless they "opt out" of receiving the additional service. To opt out, they have to catch the small type in print edition house ads or on billing paperwork explaining the new policy. Some newspapers are charging subscribers extra for the Thanksgiving Day paper because of all the advertising circulars that are included. And rather than itemize these on an actual bill that would draw attention to the practice, newspapers charge extra by shortening a customer's subscription period.

Last spring, I got busy and let one of my newspaper subscriptions lapse. A grace period is typically offered after a subscription ends to give a customer time to renew. A first for me, however, was the bill I later received for that grace period...from a collection agency. I'd paid up front for one year, and didn't sign up for anything more than that.

Of course, one would rather go to the dentist or wait around for the cable repairman than pick up the phone and try to talk to a live person who knows things and has the authority to do something about it.

Long ago, newspapers outsourced their main point of contact with customers. Attempting to bypass that system and talk to someone who actually works at your local paper is notoriously difficult. And of the four daily newspapers delivered to my home, only one — *The Wall Street Journal* — has a functioning online system for managing one's subscription and reporting problems.

Meanwhile, community newspaper companies have taken shortcuts to digital audience and revenue growth that alienate the non-print customers. Websites are clogged with dozens of banner ad positions, popups, and page "takeovers." Little money has been left after hitting margins, apparently, to invest in mobile platforms that work well.

And hurt by a poor user experience and diminished ability to produce original content, newsrooms feel pressure to manufacture pageviews by aggregating the latest viral video or minor piece of national breaking news that 1,000 other sites are also rushing to post. Rather than make it as easy as possible for a reader to access even this kind of information, editors go out of their way to put immediate pageviews on their own site first. Whether it's forcing them to click twice or three times to get the content they were looking for, or writing clickbaiting headlines that trick some into chasing a story they weren't actually interested in, the tactics are similar to what publishers are doing with print circulation.

If the value in community newspapers is having a trusted brand and engaged local audience — leveraged by a grassroots salesforce with access to and relationships with local businesses that national tech companies can't reach — the newspaper industry's current tactics are a ticking time bomb.

— Matt Derienzo has worked as a reporter, editor, publisher, and corporate news director, most recently for Digital First Media.

By SANDY MACLEOD

Behind the scenes of Toronto Star's \$10 million niche print business

The *Toronto Star* successfully launched a \$10 million niche print business by investing in research, using reader panels and focus groups to test concepts, making the sign-up process simple, and offering a weekly price with an auto-pay system.



In early September, Ken Doctor, a news industry analyst and author of *Newsonomics*, published an article in the Nieman Journalism Lab about the *Toronto Star's* \$10 million niche print business.

Since the article appeared, I have had several people contact me seeking details, which I have gladly given to them.

Here is what I've told them.

Importantly, it is true that there are incremental profits in our print businesses. The key point, though, is that we have to think about them differently. Our opt-in approach to special print products is simple: Determine what your readers want, package it the way they ask you to, allow a long trial period, and ask for the order.

To date we have three such products, namely a television book, a puzzle book, and a New York Times supplement. All of them are very profitable.

Startweek, our legacy TV listings book, was our first approach at repackaging and offering our readers an opt-in product. We were seriously considering pulling the plug on the book because advertising revenues had dropped to the point where the book was posting a loss.

We pushed ourselves to determine how much value readers placed on the TV book. Using our reader panel, we quickly determined that while roughly 50% our readers no longer used the book (mostly opting for online/onscreen versions), the remaining 50% were not only still using the book, but were very engaged with it and found it quite valuable.

The original research convinced us to delay pulling the product and to determine if we might be able to turn the book into a profit center.

More research with the panel, prototypes, an internal working group, and focus groups finally led us to a new re-designed TV listing offering that met reader needs. What surprised many of us was that these readers did not want content, photos, a glossy cover – they just wanted TV listings and they were willing to pay.

Obviously the challenge was to decide how much to charge. Many on our team felt that because the product had been free for years that \$0.25 would be the right price. Our cost to print and distribute was about \$0.12 cents a copy.

Finally we landed on \$0.50 cents a week. Some were worried the price was too high, but it turned out we could have charged even more money.

The next hurdle was marketing this new offering. We acted on suggestions by readers and increased the listings and size of the product by more than 50%. But we still had to convince readers that *Starweek* was improved and worth buying. To do that, we built a detailed marketing plan, including six weeks of sampling.

The plan worked because we dramatically exceeded our most optimistic expectations. At the peak we were producing roughly 250,000 books each week to satisfied, paying subscribers.



At this point we knew we were on to a new revenue stream. We were able to forge a partnership with The New York Times and created a new product featuring international content from The Times along with a condensed New York Times Book Review feature.

We priced this offering at \$1 a week, followed a similar marketing approach we had used with the TV book and launched a large, city-wide marketing/brand campaign. This product also went over very well with a selected group of our readers, and we had our second successful opt-in product.

Our third opt-in product is a puzzle book. By now we were bullish on pricing and brought this offer to market at \$1.50 a week. Once again, our strategy worked.

The opt-in approach can be successful in any market, but there are several steps I would suggest are crucial to bringing these products to your readers:

- Invest in research, test your concepts, and show readers prototypes of the product you will be offering.
- Use reader panels to test concepts; the cost is much less than traditional surveys or focus groups.
- Move to focus groups just before launch because real people will give you insights that are difficult to get at through panels.
- Invest in marketing; the call to action here is very important.
- Sample for at least four weeks. Six is better.
- Make the sign-up process as simple as possible.
- Offer a weekly price, but bill monthly through an auto-pay system (our churn on these products is incredibly low).
- Set up a P&L for each of these offers (counting the money is really fun).

We have a number of other concepts in the works and have plans to bring additional products to the market in 2015.

One final point: The margins on this type of business are very attractive after the first year. We run all three products with less than one full-time employee. We spent heavily up front in research, marketing, and sampling costs, but the costs since then are minuscule.

One final thought: Not all new innovations in media have to be digital.

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Reprinted from INMA

By DENA LEVITZ

6 principles Clark Gilbert used to transform *Deseret News*

Industry wide, American newspapers today derive an average of 17 percent of their revenue from digital. The *Deseret News* and Deseret Digital Media averages 45 percent, a little more than three years after former Harvard Business School professor Clark Gilbert took over the company.

How has he done it?

Gilbert laid out the principles behind his strategic model for innovating media businesses in two recent workshops that are part of the American Press Institute's Transformation Tour. The tour is a series of 14 in-depth training sessions being held around the country that are also being developed into digital training modules with The Poynter Institute.

Gilbert developed his theories as part of his work with Harvard's Clayton M. Christensen, the author of "The Innovator's Dilemma" and employed the research to recalibrate the way *Deseret* is organized and does business.

Some wonder whether Gilbert's ideas are translatable to other companies. Gilbert argues all of these concepts are relatable to media companies elsewhere.

We identify six core principles in Gilbert's strategy, some of them difficult but he argues essential to successful transformation.

1. You must make digital a separate company

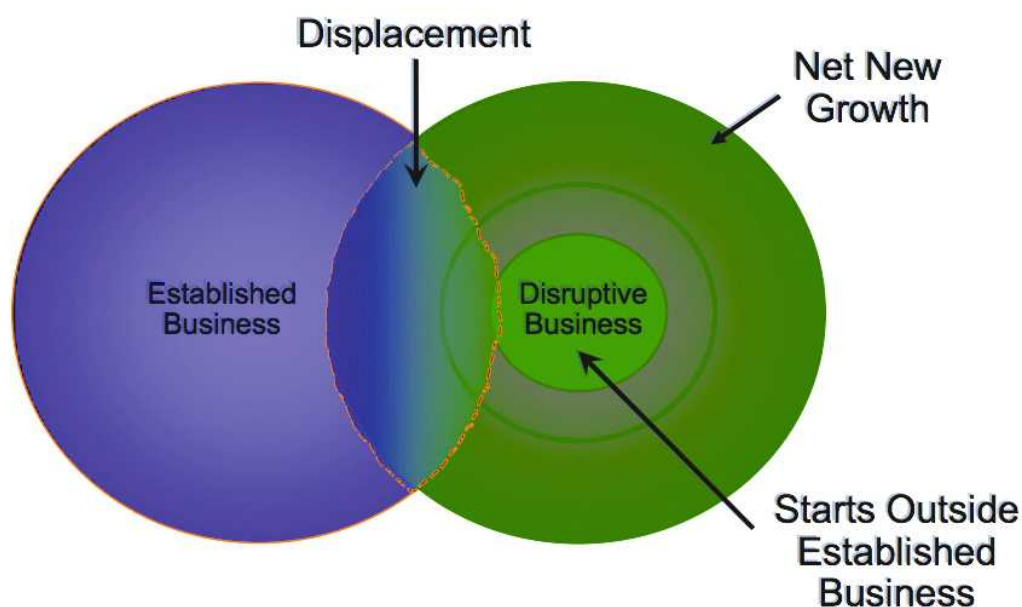
Across industries, only 9 percent of disrupted organizations ever recover, Gilbert's work with Christensen found. Of those, 100 percent created a separate digital unit to take on the disruption. Not one company Gilbert studied succeeded trying to develop digital inside the existing company. Such correlations are almost unheard of in social science, he argues. Yet Gilbert says the evidence is so damning it's "like arguing against gravity." This is one of the concepts workshop attendees tend to push back on hardest. It is also one on which Gilbert refuses to bend. He even shows video testimonials from digital buyers who talk about how they discount sales staff who try to sell print and broadcast along with digital. A separate digital company won't ensure success, Gilbert argues. It is "necessary but not sufficient." Without it, he contends, overwhelming evidence suggests failure is nearly assured.

2. The transformation of a legacy company is really a dual transformation

Part of separating a company's operations, in Gilbert's thinking, is recognizing that you are conducting two transformation.

How a disruptive business forms outside the market of an established business at first.

Organize for Dual Transformation, Not Evolutionary Dead-ends



One is the evolution of your legacy business — in the case of the *Deseret News* the print newspaper. The second is the birth of a new business that encompasses more than just digital advertising. Its divisions include, but are not limited to, e-commerce, marketplace services, digital consulting and other emerging revenue streams in which tablets, mobile and social are integral parts.

The evolution of the print newspaper is Transformation A, in Gilbert's thinking, while the simultaneous creation of a new business unit is Transformation B. The people in Transformation B think differently, talk differently and see technology as an unrivaled opportunity.

"You don't get excellent from either if they're integrated," Gilbert says.

3. The transformation of the print newspaper — Transformation A — involves making hard choices, getting smaller and, just as importantly, getting better

Gilbert often refers to analogies from evolutionary biology. In the evolution of species, crocodiles managed to survive from the time of the dinosaurs to present day by becoming half their length, literally altering to fit their current conditions. In this same way, Gilbert argues, the legacy business has to become leaner, more efficient and more up-to-date in purpose.

For *Deseret* — and for other media organizations — this means, first, cost cutting. Trimming costs alone, though, is not transformation. To transform the legacy organization also means excelling in traditional sales channels like broadcast and print and, on the journalism side, focusing on content areas in which writers and editors can go beyond the work they once did. The Internet, Gilbert and others have argued, rewards sites that are superb at one thing. It tends to punish sites that try to be competent at many things, which, of course, was the model of the community newspaper.

At *Deseret*, Gilbert and his team used detailed research of the Salt Lake City marketplace as well as larger studies of the national and international audience to identify six core subject areas where its news division could not just improve but become world class. Those beats include: 1) values in media; 2) faith in community; 3) excellence in education; 4) strengthening the family; 5) caring for the poor; 6) and financial responsibility.

Some audience members at the Transformation Tour expressed skepticism that such a model could be replicated in smaller markets, or those not tied to a religion, as is the *Deseret News*, owned by the Church of the Latter Day Saints. Gilbert vehemently disagrees. Any publication is able to go through the process of uncovering natural advantages and unmet needs in their marketplace. For one newspaper that could mean bolstering coverage of a specific sport or sports team, for another more fully covering an industry that drives the

region’s economy. For others it might be an issue such as the environment depending on the region and interests of people in the market. No matter the core subject areas, differentiated coverage allows the organization to distinguish itself and to allocate enhanced resources to those targeted areas of coverage.

4. Transformation B, which happens simultaneously yet apart from Transformation A, is the creation of new businesses and marketplaces

This new unit has separate staff, a separate physical space, a separate balance sheet of profit and loss, its own management structure and distinct content and product teams. Because this unit will be centered on digital, the content produced is different, appealing to the strengths and user behavior inherent to Web-based platforms. That means instead of more traditionally reported articles, the new unit’s content division focuses on such features as interactivity, user-generated stories, SEO-optimized selections, links to other sites, generated lists and posts by remote contributors and more made possible by digital technology. The sales side is populated with digital natives who, similarly, take the opposite of a traditional approach, pushing cutting-edge revenue areas that go well beyond selling ad units to long-time customers.

5. The relationship between A and B is challenging and can easily go awry if not aggressively managed

Gilbert describes the dynamic as a capabilities exchange between the two. The two sides meet solely to share resources and overall vision, not to combine into a hybrid model. Specific tasks that they collaborate on include crafting a unified mission statement, making core navigation decisions about the website and researching the entire customer base. Beyond that, in Gilbert’s model, interactions between A and B are limited in both duration and frequency.

How the “dual transformations” work with each other. The tendency is for A to “suck the life out of B,” Gilbert says, so top managers have to take great care to let each organization work independently. The legacy transformation will be the better for it, and so will be the new and frankly disruptive entity. If a spirit of competition rises between the two entities, Gilbert encourages fostering it so that each side becomes better at its core mission. Let the legacy organization make the traditional product great while the new business unit solely targets new opportunities that the traditional unit might even consider competitors. Ultimately it takes discipline and courage to keep the units separate. But it’s absolutely critical, Gilbert stresses. It is a point he makes repeatedly.

6. The magnitude of the disruption cannot be ignored

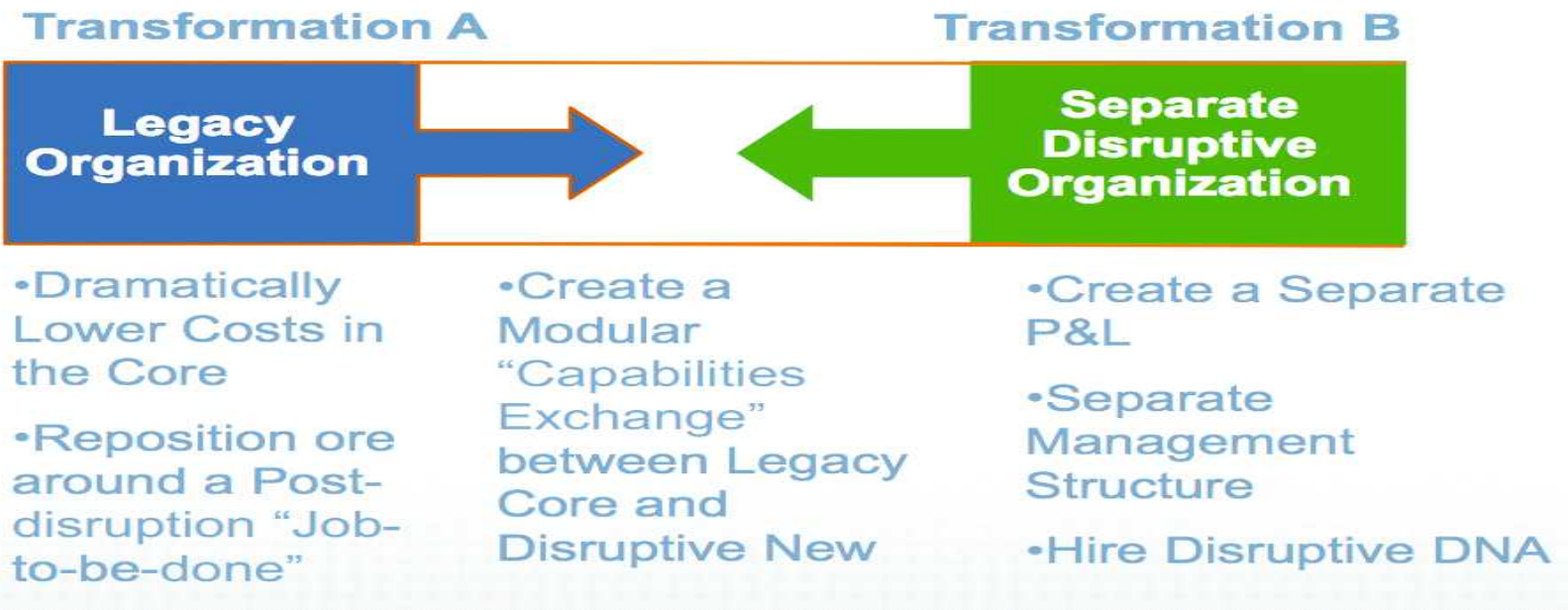
The bottom line for newspapers, Gilbert’s data show, is that the industry has shrunk and has no choice but to morph around that reality. In the 1950s, newspapers were a \$20 billion annual revenue industry. At its height, a decade ago, the industry was a \$60 billion business. However the industry is back to 1950 levels and needs to rejigger staffing and content decisions to match this. It’s simply impossible to be everything to everyone anymore. Doing so is a “choice to be mediocre,” in Gilbert’s words.

During the Transformation Tour, Gilbert’s charts show the three phases of Christensen’s disruptive innovative model and how the newspaper industry’s rise and fall aligns perfectly with the model. Phase one involves parallel growth for both the legacy industry – in this case newspapers – and the disruptive innovation. During phase two there’s uncertainty for legacy organizations and, often a final surge before phase three, at which point, there is steady permanent decline. Gilbert said undoubtedly the newspaper industry is in the midst of this third phase in which the disruptive innovation freezes all growth.

“Newspapers are still a multibillion dollar industry,” he said. But the growth is all on the digital side, most of it in new businesses.

— Reprinted from API

Dual Transformation



By NY YANG

Newspapers: Your Audience is Waiting — It's Time to Deliver!

Imagine this. It's Super Bowl Sunday, and you and your football buddies are watching the biggest game of the year along with millions of other sports fans around the country. But maybe you're like me and you just watch for the commercials. What if in between the advertisements for beer, cars and potato chips, this image appears?

The sun is barely rising over the horizon. A pair of headlights illuminates a dark suburban street and a delivery person tosses a rolled-up newspaper on to the front porch of a house. Inside, the sound catches the attention of an adorable golden retriever who slips through the doggie door to retrieve the newspaper. Later, the family is seen sitting at the dining table, eating breakfast and going over the newspaper. Dad scans the sports page, Mom clips coupons and the kids laugh at the comics. While a moving instrumental score plays, we see others starting their day with their news: a commuter sitting on a subway train scrolling through his newsfeed on his tablet; an elderly couple trading their favorite newspaper sections as they drink their coffee at their favorite diner; a college student watching a news video on her smartphone; Robert Downey Jr. shaking his head (or maybe patting himself on the back) as he reads the reviews on his latest movie. As the commercial fades to black, these words flash on the screen: In print and online #ReadNewspapers.

Cute dog? Check. Celebrity appearance? Check. A strong message with an opportunity to go social? Check. Come Monday morning, people will be asking each other, "Did you see the newspaper commercial?"

Now you know why I asked you to use your imagination at the beginning of this story. A commercial for the newspaper industry during the Super Bowl, the television mecca for marketing? It's a far off dream, considering the hefty price tag. The Washington Post reported last year that the average cost of a 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl was about \$4 million.

But my Super Bowl commercial is just one scenario. Locally, newspapers have been thinking of great and creative ways to promote their brand, but when it comes to marketing the newspaper industry on a national level, the ball has been dropped. For every "Print isn't dead" headline newspapers run, there's at least five "So-and-so newspaper reports declining revenue, numerous layoffs." It would be easy to pick up the shovel and start digging the grave for newspapers, but before we prepare for the wake, let's take a moment to breathe new life into the industry and reintroduce ourselves to the public.



Get the message out

In 2011, the Newspaper Association of America introduced a campaign called "Smart is the new sexy." According to the NAA, the ads were meant to "speak to the timeless merits of newspaper journalism, newspapers as vehicles for savvy shoppers, and the community insights and information that newspapers provide."

The campaign featured print ads which included QR codes to encourage users to share their connections with newspapers, and the NAA encouraged newspapers to engage with consumers via social media. The campaign was meant to create a "national dialogue," instead there was backlash from members of the media. "(The ad) features a skinny (geeky?) young woman with green hair and glasses sitting at a table with a cup of coffee. Does she look smart or sexy to you? If so, you need to get out more," said John Hamer, creator of the TAO of Journalism. Even here at E&P, we were disappointed with the NAA's execution to market the industry.

If we want people to see the newspaper industry as something innovative, perhaps launching a campaign with cartoons under the slogan "Smart is the new sexy" wasn't the best way to do it.

Take a look at the American Library Association's Read campaign. When ALA Graphics was created in the mid-1970s, it created posters and bookmarks to coincide with National Library Week. In addition, ALA produced and placed radio public service announcements with the help of celebrities, and there were print ads and media interviews. According to an American Libraries magazine article written by Peggy Barber, former ALA associate executive director of communications, the first Read poster debuted in 1980 and featured Mickey Mouse reading by a fire. From there, the Read series was born.

Read posters have featured the likes of Snoopy, actor Orlando Bloom, and most recently, musical artist Taylor Swift. According to Barber, "Every ALA Read poster featured original illustration or photography and none of the celebrities ask for a dime for their participation."

Current ALA Graphics director Rachel Johnson said new Read posters come out every year. "We do our research and see who is an avid reader, and then we reach out to see if they would be willing to participate. Celebrities get to pick their own book for the photo shoot, and sometimes they bring their own copy."

Over the years, the Read logo and design has evolved (and ALA even tried a Listen campaign marketing audio books), but Johnson said the main points are still there: the familiar Read brand pictured with the celebrity holding a book. "That has stayed constant," she said.

Although ALA has trademarked Read when it comes to "posters intended with encouraging reading," Johnson said she could see a similar marketing campaign with the newspaper industry. Why not find well-known newspaper readers who would be willing to participate in a promotional photo shoot, and then place the images in places where people read them, such as coffee shops and subway trains?

Johnson admits libraries have been affected by the economy, but the goal of Read is to get people to the library and show them "a library is more than just books. It's about information, an access to computers... there's so many things you can do there."

Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Find your identity

With more and more choices on how audiences can choose to receive their news, newspapers need to find who they are and appeal to that market, said Karen Post, author of "Brand Turnaround."

"What is their personality?" she said. "Newspapers need to add a human personality and realize that great brands can't be everything to everyone. Don't be afraid to create sub-brands, like sports, lifestyle, and investigative... there's the mother brand, and there are the children of the brand."

"Newspapers need to re-learn their communities, figure out who the audience is, and the appeal to that market."

Branding expert and author of "Reinventing You: Define Your Brand, Imagine Your Future" Dorie Clark said what used to make newspapers stand out was its location.

"Newspapers used to be protected by their regional boundaries, but now the Internet has opened doors. People in California can now read about what's going on in Boston," she said. "What makes you different? It's not about your geography anymore. You need unique content."

If newspapers are looking for star power to promote the industry, they only have to look inside their newsroom. "Newspapers should celebrate their columnists who have created a strong personal brand," Post said. "The opportunities and resources are already there. You just need to support them. Don't underestimate the power of speaking engagements and co-branding. Ramp up your identity with something thoughtful instead of just your columnist's photo and byline in the paper."

As more newspapers shift gears to drive into the digital realm, and we see more media organizations erase the word "paper" from their brand, what becomes of the name?

"News is not outdated, but the word paper is," Clark said. "They should focus more on the news part... the conception hasn't faltered, but the execution has."

Post said, "Rebranding with a new name can often be an excellent strategy as it gives the brand a reason and opportunity to connect to the market and make a splash. Plus it can serve as a new positioning element if the name better reflects their distinction. In light of many big brands making a change that backfired, it's always a good idea to test and socialize the proposed change before fully committing to it."

Newspapers should also embrace its multiplatform identity. They have to remember they're no longer just in the print business.

Be disruptive

It may be hard to believe now, but print may one day be a disruptive media force. Before Bob Provost began teaching at Rutgers Business School in Newark, N.J., he spent nine years as director of marketing with the Star-Ledger and three decades with the Albany (N.Y.) Times Union. Provost said newspapers face marketing challenges in two ways: with advertisers and with consumers.

"What made us stand out at the Star-Ledger were our print offerings," he said. "That gave us a competitive advantage as more media companies headed toward digital offerings. By offering print, we were offering something different. Print also offers a level a trust... it's about the institution."

Provost said, "We need to tell people we are a multimedia company. That people are reading us on computers, tablets and in print...we undervalue ourselves and the power of reach and knowledge we have with our audience... If you think about it, people always say, 'I was reading my newspaper.' You don't hear 'my TV' or 'my channel six news. You have to respect that level of intimacy and ownership."

Bill Day, an executive director with research-based consulting firm Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc., said when he works with businesses their contracts usually include a marketing component. "They usually ask, 'So, how do we get the word out?' But in the newspaper world, that's a rare request. They're very hesitant to try marketing strategies because there's no budget or it's not very high on the list."

Day, who has served in sales and advertising departments with both Gannett and Tribune, said his company recently conducted a study with 3,000 news consumers and found that while many still want their news, they don't make an appointment to consume it. "They don't pick up a paper or watch the six o'clock news," he said. "They want the news to come to them. They think, 'It will find a way to me.'"

So, how can newspapers find them? By being everywhere and on everything.

"Take advantage of TV. Shove an ad in the consumer's face," Day said. "Don't put it up on your own website. Go outside... Look at Google. When they want to promote a new app or Google Plus, they go outside their online box and put out TV commercials. Same with Apple. They put together a TV and print campaign."

Engage with audiences

Chances are you or someone you know participated in the ALS ice bucket challenge this past summer. The New York Times reported people shared more than 1.2 million

videos on Facebook between June 1 and Aug. 13 and mentioned the phenomenon more than 2.2 million times on Twitter. That's a lot of ice, but most importantly, that's a lot of people learning about ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease). So what made this challenge so popular that everyone from your Aunt Sally to LeBron James participated?

One reason is that the ice bucket challenge was a shared experience.

Not only should newspapers take a cue from YouTube and Vine to create social engagement, but they need to educate consumers on how to use the product.

"You never have to explain to someone what a newspaper is," Day said. "People are familiar with the product, but no one really knows about it." He explained that people already assume they know what a newspaper is and what it provides, but that's not always true.

"They always want to see more of things to do (or a calendar of events), but the paper already has that on its pages," he said. "It means people are not familiar with the product. That's a marketing problem. Either people don't know it's there or they don't appreciate the format it's being presented in."

News consumers are looking elsewhere for their content because frankly, newspapers aren't doing it for them. Day said, "They're watching Jon Stewart and John Oliver...look at what Oliver did with the FCC (a Net neutrality segment from June caused the FCC's website to crash due to online comments)...newspapers used to do that... have the ability to get consumers engaged, excited and passionate." He also points to the highly-popular Serial podcast series from the creators of This American Life as another example of "consumers desperate for high quality."

Whether it's engaging with audiences socially or with provocative content, now is the time for newspapers to step up their game because it's true — the audience is waiting.

"Now is the time for newspapers to step up their game, because the audience is waiting."

Shake your pom-poms

Remember what I said about picking up that shovel and digging the grave for newspapers? It's time the industry stopped contributing to the doom and gloom that's constantly hovering over us like a dark cloud.

"The newspaper industry is constantly beating itself down," Day said. "When you're dealing with layoffs at The New York Times, it's a big deal in New York or with a publication like E&P, but why should USA TODAY cover it? It shouldn't be a national story; it's only relevant in its own markets."

Provost said the newspaper brand is damaged because they are not defending themselves. "Instead of celebrating our digital audience and growth, we're wringing our hands over declining print and staffing changes."

He traces it back to 2006 when high-profile media acquisitions, like McClatchy and Knight-Ridder and Sam Zell and Tribune in 2007, along with the reported financial troubles that came with them dominated the headlines. "Those stories shook the confidence we had with advertisers and readers," Provost said. "And we haven't restored that confidence."

Go back to your roots

When department store JC Penney went through its own reinvention a few years ago with a new CEO, the business rebranded with a new logo and store layout, and it even eliminated sales in its new "fair and square" advertising campaign. After consumers rejected this new JC Penney, the company immediately restored its logo and brought back its sales and clearance racks. Business experts say this model for JC Penney failed because it did not realize brand and culture went hand in hand.

If newspapers are going to experiment with their marketing strategy, they must not lose sight of their true mission, which is to be a trusted news source. Their history is steeped in democracy and fighting for the truth. Somewhere along the way, in between chasing digital dollars and responding to a brave new world, newspapers forgot who they were, and now it's time for a reassessment. Clark advises any brand in need of a reinvention to "do some soul-searching. Who are you? Who do you want to be, and what steps do I need to take to get there?" It might like sound like an appointment with a therapist, but I believe a little soul-searching wouldn't hurt.

"Newspapers forgot who they were, and now it is the time for a reassessment. A little soul searching won't hurt."

But keep moving forward

We live in a world with a 24-hour news cycle, so the greatest challenge for newspapers is to find a way to stand out in the crowd. But the entire industry has to come together to start this movement.

When I reached out to the NAA to ask if they would be the ones to take the lead, director of communications Sean O'Leary said, "We don't technically do a national marketing campaign for newspapers and we do not have a marketing committee. We provide content and materials to our members for them to use at their discretion." At their discretion? In my opinion, there shouldn't be a choice. If newspapers don't make it a priority to fight for themselves, to invade every market and meet every consumer, the brand will surely suffer.

Newspapers aren't the first to deal with a reinvention. Look at what iTunes did to CDs; Netflix and video stores. The key is staying relevant, and information will always be relevant. People will always want their news, but if newspapers stay vigilant on reporting the truth on any and all platforms, and if they work on raising their self-esteem, newspapers will be known, not as a dying brand, but as a healthy one.

— Reprinted from Editor and Publisher



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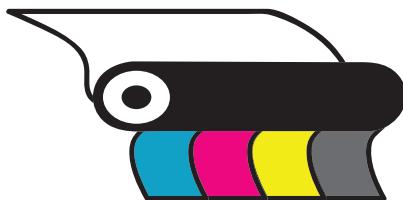


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By JESSICA DAVIES

56% of online display ads are not seen by consumers, claims Google in first ad-viewability study

More than half (56.1 percent) of online display ad impressions are not seen by consumers, according to Google's first global viewability report unveiled following a series of trials with advertisers.

The internet giant, which opened up viewability-based trading across its display network last year, letting advertisers pay only for impressions likely to be seen, has conducted its first global report into the area as it looks to "take a lead" in building understanding in viewability-based trading.

The report centers on impressions taken from a wide range of global publishers, from small sites such as blogs to national newspapers, across Google's Display Network (GDN), DoubleClick for Publishers and DoubleClick ad Exchange.

The issue of viewability, which refers to whether an ad is actually in-view to readers on publishers' websites, has become a hot topic over the last year as advertisers have increasingly questioned the accountability of their media investment.

Google has adhered to the IAB standards which specify that for an ad to be in-view, 50 per cent of pixels — so half the ad — must be in the viewable portion of an internet browser for at least one second; and two for video ads.

Speaking to The Drum, Google's director of media buying solutions for the UK, Phil Miles, said the report forms part of the search giant's plans to work closely with publishers and advertisers to make viewability a bigger part of the ad trading ecosystem.

"Viewability is a big focus for us, and we see it as an increasingly important [trading] currency for the digital industry," he said.

However, the fact 56 per cent of ad impressions have been deemed not in-view has triggered concern among some advertisers.

Kellogg's was one of the first brands to extensively test viewability metrics, having paired with ComScore earlier this year to run research around viewability-based campaigns, which remain ongoing. The brand saw a 75 per cent hike in sales lift by increasing its viewability rates by 40 per cent.

Alex Tait, digital director for EMEA at Kellogg's, said Google's study demonstrates why viewability is an important area for advertisers. "At Kellogg's we were one of the first advertisers to adopt this as an important metric and to demonstrate a clear uplift in sales and ROI by its use. For 56 per cent of impressions in the study not to be seen shows

why it is an issue brand advertisers in particular need to be aware of and optimising against," he added.

Above-the-fold advertising slots have traditionally been deemed more valuable, yet the study revealed there is evidence to show that ads appearing below-the-fold also have high viewability rates, according to the report.

Ads above the fold had an average 68 per cent viewability rating, while below-the-fold was at 40 per cent.

David Ellison, marketing services manager for advertiser trade body ISBA, said that market statistics on viewability vary "considerably", however, he added that if 56 per cent of ads aren't being seen that will be a worry for advertisers.

"If 56 per cent of impressions are being paid for by advertisers but aren't being viewed, advertisers will quite rightly be concerned."

Advertisers have been concerned about viewability for some time, with the first concerns voiced in 2012, when an

ISBA member demanded a move from 'served' to 'viewable' ad impressions, according to Ellison.

"This initiative makes it easier for advertisers and their agencies to move towards a 'viewable currency' for online ad impressions. Viewability will of course continue to be an important issue for advertisers until they are satisfied that they are getting value for money. In other words they want to pay a fair price for viewable impressions," said Ellison.

Discrepancies between how the various vendors measure viewability remains an ongoing challenge — an issue which the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) aims to address. Last month it announced that four viewability measurement products have been certified: ComScore, DoubleVerify, Integral AdScience and Moat.

The report also highlighted that vertical ads perform best for viewability.

— Reprinted from The Drum

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ADVERTISERS

Viewability varies significantly by page position and ad size.

In general, advertisers should consider the relationship between page position and ad size while planning creative and targeting.

Page position doesn't tell the whole story.

Ultimately, advertisers should target based on viewability measurements to achieve the best results.

Vertical ad units are the most likely to be seen by users.

On average, publishers have 50% viewability rates, but some publishers have much lower viewability.

Advertisers seeking viewable impressions should steer towards high viewability sites.

Consider targeting sites with more engaging content to achieve higher viewability rates.

USPS Plant Closures Will Affect Discounts and Delivery in NY

The USPS is scheduled to close 82 mail processing plants in 2015 – two of them in New York State. One in Newburgh and one in Queens. The impact of these closures will likely hit newspapers' wallets hard, not to mention further delaying the delivery of newspapers.

Here's the situation:

Newspapers receive a discount for sorting and bagging newspapers by zip and delivering them to postal processing centers; however, the Postal Service has been and will be closing or downgrading processing centers.

Newspapers served by processing centers that have been or will be closed, will now be shipped to processing centers as far as 100 miles away, to be sorted and then returned to local post offices for distribution.

The USPS has eliminated discounts to newspapers that no longer deliver to a processing center (because the processing center no longer exists). Other newspapers are, or will be, losing their in-county discounts.

It will come as no surprise that the information coming from the USPS is confusing and frequently contradictory.

We have been told that some newspapers affected by plant closings have been granted extensions on DSCF discounts, but those discounts will be honored only until May, 2015.

For Upstate newspapers, after May, 2015 only mailings entered in Albany or Syracuse will be eligible for DSCF rates. All mailings entered outside of these two BMEUs will pay the "NONE" rates only.

Newspapers have the option of drop shipping (no laughing) the SCF mail to Albany via either of the following methods:

- With a PS 8125 Plant Verified Drop Shipment Verification & Clearance
- Using Priority Express Open & Distribute (EMOD) or Priority Mail Open & Distribute (PMOD)

Or, newspapers can hold their mailing permits in either Albany or Syracuse and drive the newspapers to one of those locations.

The NYPA board of directors has formed a Postal Committee (Bryan Boyhan, Jeanne Straus, John McIntyre, Fred Stabbert, Mark Vinciguerra). If you would like to join the committee, you are most welcome.

Early in February the committee will be meeting with postal officials in Albany. If you would like to participate in the meeting please let Michelle Rea know, and also let her know what your specific issues are.

By RUTH Y. GOLDWAY — *Postal Regulatory Commissioner*

Postal Service cuts ill-considered

Last week, the U.S. Postal Service reduced its service standards for First-Class mail, and eliminated nearly all overnight letter mail delivery. Most mail will be delivered in two to three days — longer if weekends and holidays are involved. During 2015, more than 80 processing plants serving small cities and rural areas throughout the nation will be closed in the Postal Service's push to shrink its network.

The Postal Service has achieved considerable success in removing costs from the system during the last six years, at a time when mail volumes were in decline. This latest round of operational cuts, however, threatens the very integrity and concept of Universal Service — the Postal Service's primary obligation under the law.

These measures will result in a two-tier patchwork network in which service to smaller cities and rural areas will be degraded much more than major urban areas. This despite the fact that the law requires that postal customers in all areas be provided prompt, reliable and efficient services. The law also mandates that the Postal Service shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular service to rural areas, communities and small towns where post offices are not self-sustaining. Under the law, the Postal Service is required to give the highest consideration to the requirement for the most expeditious collection, transportation, and delivery of important letter mail.

While we have experienced increased access to electronic communications options, particularly in metropolitan areas, a great many American homes and businesses rely upon the mail. It remains essential that all Americans can rely on a fundamental communication service and avenue of commerce that provides equal access and prompt service to all, regardless of region.

Binding the nation together is the founding principle of the Postal Service's mandate.

The Postal Service is moving ahead with these changes despite three cautionary reports: a March 2013 Management Advisory Report; a September 2012 Audit Report issued by its Office of Inspector General, and an Advisory Opinion produced by the Postal Regulatory Commission in 2012.

The Inspector General in his reports called on the Postal Service to carefully evaluate actual measured cost savings and service impacts for the network changes implemented in 2013 and 2014; to accurately and fully disclose to mailers and other stakeholders the savings resulting from closed facilities, and to provide a more reliable estimate of future changes during the notification process.

In its 2012 Advisory Opinion, the Commission pointed out that by identifying the productivity levels of plants and by basing closures and processing rearrangements on measurable efficiency gains, the Postal Service could do better than in its original plan: save more money, maintain higher service standard levels and keep more plants operating.

In fact, the Commission's analysis indicated that the Postal Service could undertake significant network improvements and reap large cost savings while preserving most current service levels. As a result, the Commission urged the Postal Service to carefully review the first set of plant closings and service standard reductions before embarking on this second phase of closures and further reducing service.

Unfortunately, the Postal Service has not taken those important steps. First, the Service has not publicly identified the impact on revenue and profit from the proposed changes. Second, the Postal Service has not disclosed a robust, reliable figure for savings obtained from the first set of consolidations. Third, the Service has not identified projected savings from the second phase of consolidations.

"An essential role of the Commission is to help ensure that the Postal Service provides adequate transparency and accountability, particularly where there may be a gap in the public record. I believe that such a gap exists with regard to the proposed plant closings."

In August, 51 senators signed a bipartisan letter asking the Postal Service to delay these announced service changes and plant closings because of continuing uncertainty over the impact on the public. The following month, 160 House members asked for a moratorium on the plant closures, expressing concerns over slowed mail.

At a time when the Postal Service is proudly promoting its Sunday delivery and same day package delivery offerings in major cities, it should not be impairing service in other parts of the country. The Nation depends on a Postal Service that provides as consistent a level of service and pricing as possible to all Americans.

Before proceeding with these changes, the Postal Service should — at the very least — offer well-supported projections of the impacts on operational efficiency and solid estimates of financial savings before hastily embarking on this new round of cuts and closures.

— *Goldway has served at the Postal Regulatory Commission since 1998 and was Commission chairman from 2009 to 2014.*

By MATHEW INGRAM

Journalism's biggest competitors are things that don't even look like journalism

Ever since the web was invented, newspapers and other media entities have had to continually expand their view of who their competition is: in the good old days it was other newspapers, and then TV, and then after the web it became other news websites, or maybe Yahoo or Google. But even now, their perspective on that competition may still be too narrow — as my friend Om has argued, they are competing with anything that captures a reader's attention. And I would argue that they are competing with any service that fills an information need.

I started thinking about this again earlier this week, when a link to an old blog by journalist/programmer Stijn Debrouwere showed up in my Twitter stream, posted and retweeted by multiple people. I couldn't track down exactly where it came from, but I'm glad it appeared, because it reminded me of how much sense it made in 2012 when it was first published — and how much sense it continues to make.

Debrouwere's essay is simply called "Fungible." Fungibility is an economic term that is used to describe products or services that are interchangeable; in other words, if consumers don't really care whether they get Product A or Product B, then those two things are said to be "fungible."

Journalism is being replaced

What the web is doing to journalism, Debrouwere argues, is taking the things it used to consider its bread and butter and making them fungible in ways they never were before. That hasn't just changed the business model for news or media companies, it has changed the expectations of their audience in some fundamental ways, ways that go beyond whether someone reads a news story on the web or in print.

I'm not talking about digital first or about blogging or about data journalism or the mobile web or the curation craze. Yes, journalism has evolved and is better for it. I'm talking beyond that. I'm not even talking about the fact that everyone is a potential publisher now... beyond even that. I think journalism is being replaced.

The examples are legion: as Debrouwere notes, many people used to find new music by reading reviews or coverage in a newspaper or magazine, and did the same thing for movies and TV shows — but now they get access to all the music and movies and TV shows they could want, and all the commentary surrounding them, via services like Spotify or Netflix, or websites like IMDB and Amazon. So what purpose does the local newspaper or newsmagazine serve?



If you want to read an expert's take on a variety of different topics, or listen in on an interview with a celebrity like President Barack Obama, you don't have to wait for a newspaper or magazine or TV network to interview that person — you can find something similar, and possibly even better, in the crowdsourced interviews that appear on sites like Quora and Reddit.

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If you want to read about real estate, you can find dedicated blog networks or sites like Curbed, and the same goes for sports: many people are turning away from their baseball or hockey columnists and newspaper coverage to visit crowd-powered sites like SB Nation or Bleacher Report. And then there are media sites created by commercial entities, such as the editorial operation ticket seller StubHub launched this week — or the example Debrouwere uses, a video-blogging site launched by an electronics chain called SparkFun. As he puts it:

Curbed is a superb real-estate website. Is Curbed journalism because they started out with news and added a marketplace later? Conversely is SparkFun not journalism because they started out selling components and their video blogs came later? When does a blog or podcast or newsletter stop being content marketing and start being journalism with an innovative business model?

Your competition is everywhere

On a local level, a whole series of websites and services from LocalWiki or Everyblock to Pinwheel are providing people with information about their neighborhoods, Debrouwere points out. And many

people are duplicating what they used to get from their newspaper by using Twitter, Facebook, blogs and other platforms. As he puts it, those services may not replace a good local newspaper, "but they offer a combo that is increasingly becoming good enough."



This is an important point: if you're a media company, your competition isn't the product or service that is better than you — and it's certainly not the one that you think is doing journalism — it's the one that is good enough for your readers or users. In other words, if it provides a service or information that is useful or valuable to them, that is all that matters, not whether it fits the objective definition of something called "journalism."

I think this is also what Jeff Jarvis means when he talks about journalism as a service, and it's what I was trying to get at when I wrote about companies like BuzzFeed and Gawker and Quartz and how they see news as a service: they don't seem to worry much about whether it's journalism or not, they are more concerned with whether they are serving readers.

What can you do to survive if you are a traditional media entity? You can adapt, obviously, but you can also do a number of other things, Debrouwere says: focus on storytelling and personality, because those things are irreplaceable, and concentrate on appealing to readers who are passionate about a specific topics. Just don't think that the only things you're competing with are other journalistic outlets.

Notice that I didn't mention digital-first or social data crowdjournalism or anything like that? Wonder why? Because the entire point is that journalism is not being disrupted by better journalism but by things that are hardly recognizable as journalism at all. Stepping up your game is always a good idea, but it won't save you.

— Reprinted from Gigaom

No Free Lunch for Nonprofits that Charge Admission

Do you have a policy to deal with nonprofit organizations that run various fundraising events and projects, and want free publicity in the news pages, rather than running an advertisement?

Here are some thoughts from three community newspaper publishers:

Only Free if Admission is Free

From Barry Merrill, publisher, Princeton (NC) News Leader

We decided earlier this year, as others have struggled with this issue, to turn down requests for “free ads” for fundraisers. We put in what we felt was a fair policy.

We will accept requests for Community Calendar fundraiser events only under two circumstances: 1) if accompanied by a paid ad for the newspaper or 2) a \$5 per week charge for 25 words, \$10 for 50 words. Give us your debit card number and we’ll take care of it. If the event is free to the public or a giveaway, we will print at no charge.

Explain Advertising “Bennies”

From Don Rush, publisher, The Clarkston (MI) News

I ask them for their marketing budget, explain the bennies of paid advertising (guarantees of running), double their budget in ad space and take their money. Fundraising is money making. If they want to make more money they have to spend some money.

We have two million, gagillion service, non-profits... and I keep a mental track of who is our friend and who is trying to take advantage of our kindness. Does the president of the group subscribe, members, paid staff? Do they support us in anyway, or do they just put their hands out wanting?

I put out to my editorial department and members of the different groups that my generosity only goes so far. That I have costs to cover, staffs that need to feed their families. I will do one or two stories (maybe less if I am cranky) a year on any group. If I feel the group has no respect for our business, I have instructed editorial staff not to attend events/functions and not run notices. And, then to have the group’s contact person contact me, “to work things out.”

It was a tough way to start out, but most of these groups have come to see they need us as much as we need them and it gave me the opportunity to speak frankly and tell our story to these groups. Bottom line, we are more respected.

“If they charge, we charge.”

From Mary Huber, general manager, The Archbold (OH) Buckeye

Our policy on fundraisers is that they run in ads. “If they charge (whether admission, freewill donation, or a per meal price), we charge.”

It’s a fairness issue: you can’t say yes to one and not to all, and you can’t give away that kind of space, because we have a LOT of fundraisers in our communities. I once had an advertiser with a nonprofit say, “I don’t care if you say no to us, as long as you say no to everyone who asks the same thing. Don’t say no to us, that it can’t be in a Community Calendar, for example, but then I see the same thing for another nonprofit in another time.”

We do run short articles on community-wide events: our annual town festivals and a Quilt Auction that’s a community-wide event because people from the community make quilts and wooden pieces that are sold at the event.

Thanks and a tip of the hat to Mr. Merrill, Mr. Rush and Ms. Huber.

— Reprinted from Ken Blum’s *Black Ink*

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By RICHARD PARKER

Due Diligence — How to uncover any problems **BEFORE** you buy

Due diligence is probably the most critical stage in the buying process. Many prospective buyers incorrectly identify this period as strictly a financial review, but it goes far beyond that. Due diligence encompasses a far-greater project and that being the complete investigation and review of the business.

One of the keys to buying a good business, comes from your ability to learn the intimate details of the business. To identify the strengths, weaknesses, pluses, minuses, growth opportunities and areas of concern. If you do not do a flawless job of gathering information, you will not be able to pull the trigger and complete the transaction since you'll be uncertain about too many components of the business.

When To Start The Due Diligence?

The investigation process must begin the moment a business becomes of interest. Naturally, your goal is to make certain that you uncover everything about any business **BEFORE** you buy it. You don't have to meet the seller or even visit the business for your research to begin. The Internet is an incredible tool that will allow you to investigate the business, the industry, the competition, the marketing, the suppliers, and on and on.

The importance of beginning your investigation early on cannot be emphasized strongly enough. This way, you'll position yourself to ask the proper questions to the seller. Once you progress to the stage of an accepted offer, you will commence the inspection or financial due diligence. This period usually lasts 10-30 days. This is the time when you'll have access to all of the company's books and records.

Once you begin looking at a particular business, you'll find a thousand things crossing your mind regarding the acquisition. Keep a notepad handy at all times and log your thoughts. You'll have many thoughts about things "I need to check out." Write these all in one place. Don't trust your memory; these little things are the ones that can come back to haunt you down the road. Begin to put together your checklist of what you need to investigate and how you're going to do it, along with the materials you may need from the seller to accomplish it.

A couple of things to keep in mind Allow yourself enough time:

Many sellers and some brokers will press for a very short inspection period; sometimes just days. Don't get bullied into this - give yourself ample time to complete this part of the process. You should allow for, negotiate and not settle for less time than you comfortably need to complete a thorough inspection/due-diligence period. The financial review can usually be done in days but there is more to investigate and that is why a 20 business day period is not unreasonable for larger businesses, while a 15 day period is needed for smaller ones in order to complete the review and move the deal forward to closing.

Prepare properly

Since you'll have some time restrictions (you'll only have x number of days per the contract), provide the seller with a listing of all of the materials required for you and/or your CPA to complete this exercise. No matter what you're told, do not begin the process until they have provided what you/your CPA need to properly complete the review.

Dealing With Surprises

You'll probably find some surprises; don't panic, it's normal. Work through them. Get clarification. Build your case. Don't run to the seller or broker every time you find an inconsistency between what you've seen versus what you were told. No business is perfect. The rule to follow is do not treat any incidents as catastrophes or any catastrophes as incidents. If you find a major problem, get your facts in order and you can then decide the appropriate action to be taken with the seller (i.e. renegotiation, walking from the deal, etc.)

According to industry statistics, nine out of ten people who begin the search to buy a business never complete a transaction. While there are many reasons for this dismal figure, a lot has to do with the inability of people to "pull the trigger." This gun-shy reaction is related specifically to uncertainty: if you have not gathered the right information or failed to investigate the business thoroughly, you will not be 100% certain of what to do. And so, you'll drop the project. Conversely, if you do a flawless job of investigating the business, and everything else adds up right, then making the final decision is simply one more step in the process!

— By Richard Parker, President of The Business For Sale Buyer Resource Center™ and author of "How To Buy A Good Business At A Great Price©"

Tell me a story

Storytelling is back. Who doesn't like a good story? A good story is a timeless treat — enjoyed by people of all ages. Remember the time-honored tradition of the bedtime story? Awesome and rewarding on many levels.

Newspapers used to be good storytellers — sometimes even great storytellers. It is time to get back to telling great stories. Short stories. Medium stories. Long stories. Happy stories. Sad stories. Funny stories. Sports stories. Stories that people share. Stories that people save. Stories that make people think.

The great reporters are great storytellers. Great reporters hone their craft by cultivating sources, asking questions, digging deep, checking facts, analyzing information, identifying solutions, and then writing stories. Reporting what happened is just the beginning.

Storytelling is an art. NYPA's spring convention March 27th and 28th will offer several workshops on the art of storytelling. Come and learn the art of crafting compelling stories. It's a surefire way to build audience for your news organization. Hope to see you there.



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By ERIK SASS

Americans Sick of Gossip, Sports in News Coverage, Want More Substance

If you think some topics receive way too much attention in news coverage, you're not alone. Per a new online survey of 2,537 adults conducted by the Harris Poll in August, a large proportion of Americans are fed up with news coverage that skews toward the sensational, superficial, and sports-centric.

The Harris Poll found that 76% of U.S. adults surveyed believe that celebrity gossip and scandal stories receive too much coverage, while 49% believe that entertainment news in general gets too much attention. Meanwhile, 44% believe that the news focuses too much on professional spectator sports, and 33% believe the same for politics and elections.

Other topics receive too little attention, according to the Harris respondents, including humanitarian issues in the U.S., cited by 47%; education, also 47%; science, at 45%; government corruption and scandals, at 44%; corporate corruption and white collar crime, at 42%; global humanitarian issues, at 33%; and health, at 30%.

Harris found there is some variation across generations when it comes to attitudes toward news, although there is still broad agreement on some basic trends. Thus, 88% of older Americans believe celebrity gossip receives too much coverage, sliding to 79% of baby boomers, 76% of Gen Xers, and 68% of millennials.

On the other hand, 59% of older Americans believe that government corruption receives too little coverage, compared to 41% for Baby Boomers, 39% of Gen Xers, and 41% of millennials. Millennials are more likely to believe international issues receive too little coverage.

Americans seem to be fairly skeptical about the reliability of news media, with only a relatively small proportion of respondents saying they have "a lot of trust" in various news sources, although a larger share expressed some amount of trust.

Here, 25% of respondents expressed great confidence in local TV news, versus 53% who said they have "some trust" and 17% who said they had little or no trust. For local newspapers, the proportions were 21%, 55%, and 19%, respectively; for radio, 16%, 57%, and 20%; for cable TV news, 15%, 51%, and 28%; for national newspapers, 16%, 50%, and 27%; and for network TV news, 17%, 48%, and 30%.

Online news ranked lowest in terms of trust, although sites associated with long-established news media have somewhat more credibility. For online news sites tied to traditional outlets, 17% expressed a great deal of trust, 50% some trust, and 26% little or no trust. For pure online-only news sites, the proportions were 11%, 50%, and 32%.

"Isn't the news itself still valuable to anyone? In any format, through any medium — isn't an understanding of the events of the day still a salable commodity? Or were we kidding ourselves? Was a newspaper a viable entity only so long as it had classifieds, comics and the latest sports scores?"

— **David Simon**, former *Baltimore Sun* reporter-turned-executive producer of *"The Wire,"* in *"Does the News Matter to Anyone Anymore?"* *The Washington Post*, 2008
(Thanks to alert WORDster Campbell B. Titchener)

By KELLY McBRIDE

Journalism's problem is a failure of originality

Professional journalism isn't facing a plagiarism problem. It's facing an originality failure.

And you can't blame the Internet. Our originality breakdown results from many pressures — the overwhelming volume of writing incessantly pushed out into the digital space, the pressure on writers to feed a content beast that's never satiated, the diminishing economic forces that support professional writing.

The Internet preceded all of these changes, but it isn't itself the cause.

The methods we use to groom writers to become original thinkers in the modern media environment are suspect. In fact, they're largely absent.

We have no way of knowing whether, proportionally, there's more plagiarism in journalism today than there was 20 years ago. But we do know that commentators now work in very different circumstances. It used to be that local columnists used the phone and their feet. They spent time out of the office, just like their reporter colleagues. They went to the bar, the barbershop, the local college, the courtroom.

Why? Because, that's where ideas took shape. Talking and thinking, thinking and talking, then trying it out on the keyboard. That's how writers write. Sometimes, the work was good; more often, it was mediocre. Sometimes, editors sent it back. Whatever the quality, the ideas belonged to the columnist, informed by her reporting and research but grown in the writer's head.

This isn't to condemn the research patterns of modern journalists, who start their thinking with a Google search. We can't pretend the media world hasn't changed. These days, we must see always what others have written before we begin — and there's so much that's been written about any given topic because writing now is mostly the continuation of a conversation already in play.

Before the Internet, newsrooms were lucky enough to stumble into a method for growing writers. It wasn't perfect and there certainly were scandals, such as when The Washington Post's Janet Cooke fabricated a character in a story that went on to win the Pulitzer, or when Boston Globe

columnist Mike Barnicle stole material from comedian George Carlin. But those were few and far between.

These days, it feels like hardly a week goes by without a professional journalist being exposed for plagiarism, fabrication or patchwriting, which is a failed attempt at paraphrasing that over-relies on the original writer's syntax and vocabulary. That last transgression is likely today's most common sin, according to Rebecca Moore Howard, the Syracuse University professor of writing and rhetoric who coined the term.

Originality is elusive today in every place that people write — not just in journalism, but in academia, professional writing, book publishing, speech writing and politics.

In our panic to keep up with a changing world, we've failed to identify new methods for originality. We need to look to the writer-editor relationship, to the community of writers and thinkers and to the very process that writers use to go from nothing to something.

We're mystified by the prospect of building a culture that breeds original thinking and writing in today's digital world. Yet, we can look to writers who are successfully hitting the mark of originality and imitate their methods.

Today's most original successful writers often combine the new and the old to foster their thinking. Writers such as Anne Lamott or columnist Connie Schultz test out their ideas in social media settings such as Twitter or Facebook. And they stay grounded in the real world, allowing for the influence of other people and experiences.

If we're going to solve the problem of unoriginal writing, we need to focus on the process of writing, instead of simply careening from one failure to another.

Kelly McBride is a senior faculty member for ethics reporting and writing at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Petersburg, Fla.

— Contributed to *The Globe and Mail*

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Protecting the print publication requirements of public notices is of paramount importance to NYPA. As part of that effort, NYPA partnered with NYNPA and the New York Law Journal to build a new statewide website — **NewYorkPublicNotices.com** — as a central online database for all New York public notices. This website is managed and controlled by NYPA.

This is a completely new website with enhanced search capabilities. Jill Van Dusen at NYPA will work with your staff to address any technology issues you may encounter with the upload process. Please contact Jill by phone (518-464-6483) or email **Jill@nynewspapers.com** to arrange for staff training.

In addition, we have designed an icon to identify public notices in your print product, and online, as a way to draw attention to public notices. The icon can be downloaded from NYPA's website.

New York's newspapers must present a united front to protect the publication requirements and readership of public notices. It is imperative that newspapers remain the primary providers of this vital government information. Please support this effort by uploading all of your public notices as they are published in your newspapers. This is a pre-emptive measure to counter legislative efforts to move public notices to government-controlled websites.

If you'd like to use the public notices logo above, you can download it from our website at: www.nynewspapers.com.

Richard Manville, former owner of Brown Newspapers, died January 1ST

Richard Manville, 88, of Baldwinsville, died January 1st.

Dick was born and raised in Troy, NY, served in the Air Force during World War II, then attended Syracuse University on the GI bill.

After graduating from Syracuse with a journalism degree he accepted a “short term” job selling advertising for the Brown Newspapers in Baldwinsville, a job that turned into a long and successful career as publisher of three community newspapers: *The Baldwinsville Messenger*, *The North-Syracuse Star News*, and *The Liverpool-Salina Review*.

Dick purchased the papers from Donald Brown in 1966 and sold them in 1992 to *Eagle Newspapers*.



Deborah R. Kwiatoski, publisher of the Hudson Valley Business Journal, died December 12TH

Debbie was born in Menands, N.Y. June 12, 1953. After a long battle with cancer, she passed away at Vassar Brothers Medical Center December 12, 2014.

After studying at Skidmore College and the University of Pennsylvania, Debbie built a long career in journalism, public relations and economic development. She formerly worked at the Daily Freeman (Kingston) as a correspondent reporter and at the Hudson Valley Business Journal, as editor and later, owner. Debbie is survived by her loving husband, Stephen, and two daughters, Jenna Cody and Becca Kwiatoski. A celebration of her life was held January 10, 2015 at the Reformed Church of New Paltz.



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By KEVIN SLIMP — *Institute of Newspaper Technology*

I'm not dead yet!

Even if profiting experts like to write that I am

Kelli Bultena, publisher of *Tea (SD) Weekly*, sent me a link to a column titled, “The Bad News About the News,” in the October 16, 2014 edition of The Brookings Essay. The essay was written by Robert G. Kaiser, former editor of *The Washington Post*.



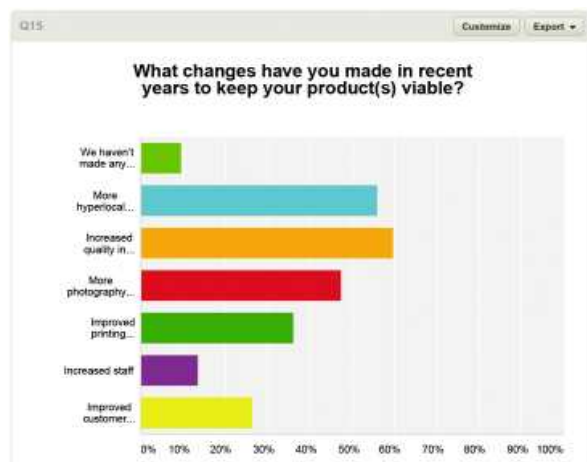
Kevin Slimp

Hank Bond, co-publisher of *The Greenup Beacon* (Russell KY), wrote last week to ask me a pointed question, “You keep writing about people saying that newspapers are dying. I don’t hear it. Who are they?”

Well, Hank, here’s another one to add to the list of about a dozen or so I sent you last week and those were off the top of my head. As Hank would probably attest, he finally said, “Enough,” after I’d rattled off the list in just a few seconds.

Mr. Kaiser wrote several things in his essay that caught my attention, but this sentence stood out: “One immediate effect of all these changes and cutbacks is that there’s no paper in America today that can offer the same coverage of its city, suburbs, and state that it provided 20 or even 10 years ago, and scores of city halls and state legislatures get virtually no coverage by any substantive news organizations.”

I called Victor Parkins, publisher of the *Milan (TN) Mirror-Exchange*, just now and asked if that was true of his paper. “I think we cover it better. I would like for him to come to Milan, Tennessee, and see how we do it. I would love to let him go through my binders from ten years ago. Using digital technology gives us so many more contacts with our readers, and we use that as another tool in our arsenal.”



Contrary to popular opinion, most newspapers are investing in the future in several areas.



I feel quite certain I could have called a hundred other publishers and gotten similar quotes, but I’m guessing you get the point. Which leads me to my next question: Why would Mr. Kaiser write this essay in the first place?

If you’ve been reading my columns for very long, you know I don’t take much at face value. I like to dig a little. Because, as a good journalist learns over time, it’s in the digging that the truth comes out. And if you go all the way to the end of the column, which is quite lengthy in its attempt to add another scoop of dirt on print journalism’s grave, you pick up this kernel which goes a long way toward answering my question. I’ll quote it, so I don’t get it wrong: “He is the author or co-author of eight books, including *The News About The News*, *American Journalism in Peril*, written with Leonard Downie Jr.”

Remember what I wrote in a column last year about believing experts? It went something like this: “I don’t care if you’re watching a politician on TV, listening to your Sunday School teacher, or in the audience, listening to an expert speak at a newspaper convention, I want you to ask yourself this question: ‘What will this expert gain if I believe what he or she is saying?’”

Perhaps Mr. Kaiser will sell a few more books.

If I might borrow a musical term, that seems a natural segue to my next topic: the survey of 612 publishers completed in October 2014. In my last column, I shared interesting information concerning the use of social media in newspapers and the effect social media has on newspapers’ bottom lines.

Today I’d like to see what publishers have to say about Mr. Kaiser’s topic. Specifically, I’d like to know if there is “no paper in America today” that can offer the same coverage that it did 10 years ago.

Question 15 in the survey of North American publishers asked: “**What changes have you made in recent years to keep your product(s) viable?**”

Boy howdy, did we get answers. How about this response: 56 percent of respondents answered that there is more emphasis on hyperlocal/local news than a few years ago.

Hmmm. But Mr. Kaiser wrote, “no paper in America today...” I’m sorry. I’m digressing.

A whopping 60 percent report that they’ve invested in increased quality in production and design, 47 percent have invested in improved photography and 36 percent report they have invested in printing improvements.

Finally, drum roll please, 14 percent have increased the size of their staff.

Hmmm. Yes, but.

One could argue that these are weekly papers. Obviously, Mr. Kaiser was writing about daily papers, though he never mentioned that in his column. Well, maybe. Maybe not. Thanks to technology, I can divide the survey responses by newspaper type. Guess what? 11 percent of daily newspapers reported that they’ve increased their staff size over the past few years.

People really should be more careful when they make broad pronouncements like that. It’s like the time the dean of that world-renowned journalism school told me he believed there would not be one newspaper in business in the United States by 2018. In all fairness, he still has a little over three years to prove me wrong about that one.

So there you have it: according to a survey of 612 (we quit accepting responses at 612) newspaper publishers, there seems to be at least one newspaper that isn’t fitting into Mr. Kaiser’s scenario.

And, just so you know, that survey is not for sale.



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