

NewsBeat

Published by the New York Press Association
on behalf of New York's Community Newspapers

May 2015

NYPA



The Way Forward: A strategy for local news organizations

- Making data driven content decisions
- Covering all aspects of the community
- Focusing internally, not externally
- Becoming platform agnostic

CLIP & SAVE

Mark your calendar

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



Thursday, April 7, 2016

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

**Friday & Saturday,
April 8 & 9, 2016**

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

NYPA

NYPA's groundbreaking newspaper industry research project advances

A little more than a year ago NYPA partnered with a team of industrial engineers from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Lally School of Management and Technology to analyze the newspaper industry — specifically New York's community newspaper industry — to identify challenges and opportunities, and to provide recommendations for the creation of a sustainable path going forward.

The research team has extensive experience with industrial disruption and has conducted several similar projects with other industries.

They were tasked with developing an overall strategy for the newspaper industry; for recommending new business models; and for recommending operational level strategies that can be immediately implemented.

One year in, with at least one more year of research to go, NYPA has a substantial preliminary report to deliver, so we have scheduled a series of regional meetings to present our findings to publishers and newsroom staff.

The schedule for the regional meetings follows:

Thursday.....May 7th.....	Hotel Indigo, Riverhead.....	10 am – 2 pm
Friday.....May 8th.....	Richner Communications Herald Community Newspapers, Garden City LL.....	9:30 am – 1:30 pm
Thursday.....June 4th.....	Straus News, NYC.....	10 am – 2 pm
Thursday.....June 11th.....	Rochester (location to be determined).....	10 am – 2 pm
Friday.....June 12th.....	NYPA offices, Cohoes (Albany).....	10 am – 2 pm

We'll talk about internal organizational and cultural changes that need to be made in order to remain competitive. We'll talk about organizational inertia, why our mission needs to be re-visited, where newspapers' sustained competitive advantage comes from, why reporters are the value initiators, and developing a platform agnostic perspective.

Content is a product systematically targeting various market segments — are you creating the right product? How do you know? We'll talk about the importance of enterprise journalism, solutions journalism, content archiving and synergizing print and digital. And we'll address circulation marketing (the poor step child), providing digital agency services, content sharing, event planning and re-allocating resources.

Then, Garry Pierre Pierre will drill down a little deeper, and answer your questions, such as, "How do we get the staff to buy in?"

"How do we pay for this?" "Where are the revenue opportunities?"

"How do we implement?" And we'll talk about the path forward.

We hope you will join us for one of these meetings. In the meantime, if you have questions or want more information, please contact Bryan Boyhan, Michelle Rea, or Garry Pierre Pierre directly.

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API’s program to create data-driven content strategies

Publishers share a fundamental problem — they can’t really quantify the nature of the content they produce and how the audience engages with it. The American Press Institute has developed a program that helps publishers build an empirical, modern news strategy. Using API’s tools and guidance, publishers are empowered to create a new content strategy built around measuring and improving.

API has developed Metrics for News content analysis software, new journalism metrics and innovative audience surveys to help publishers build smarter, more data-driven content strategies.

The program can help publishers develop centers of coverage excellence — specific areas of indispensable content that connect to citizens’ needs and passions. Any strategy for the future must focus on increasing the value of content to consumers and advertisers.

API’s program blends content auditing, new readership and engagement metrics, and deep audience research that helps publishers see how their journalism is connecting with the audience.

Know what content you really produce. By meta-tagging content with API’s auditing software, publishers quantify over time how much content they produce by topic, enterprise level, author type, location and other qualities. The characteristics each publisher tracks are completely customizable.

Get content metrics that are vastly better and different than standard web analytics. Basic web analytics vendors like Google Analytics and Omniture just aren’t built with news companies in mind. Our software imports data about web traffic, social media sharing and reader comments and transforms it into new, more useful metrics you can analyze for any type of your content.

Compare what you really want to compare. Publishers can compare what works best just within their in-depth enterprise coverage. Or within government coverage. By imposing their own journalism values on their data analysis, publishers can stop chasing pageviews story-by-story and get smarter about how to excel at whatever kind of journalism they choose to do.

Instill a data-driven culture in the newsroom. This process puts meaningful content metrics in the hands of editors and reporters, to inform their decisions and spark conversations about how to do work that better serves and connects with your audience. It still values the judgment of experienced journalists, but removes some of the guesswork.

Get to know to your audience. Research tools, including an online survey, probe how readers live their lives and what they are passionate about. Don’t ask people what they think they want to read in the news — a mistake many audience surveys make. Instead, ask them what’s relevant in their lives, which empowers editors to devise the journalism that will serve their needs and passions.

How it works

Step 1: Quantify your content

The programs begins with customizable software that lets editors analyze empirically what news they are covering and the characteristics of that journalism. These data are integrated with the paper’s web analytics, social sharing and reader comments to create new custom metrics, which reveal how different types of journalism perform with readers.

Topic (s)					
Tag	Avg Views	Avg Time (m)	Facebook Avg Shares	Count	% of total
Disaster / Accidents / Fire	318	2.17	10	70	0%
Crime / Courts	238	2.19	12	182	12%
Social Issues	204	2.89	30	91	2%
Business / Economy	191	2.37	28	50	5%
Health Industry	190	2.90	1	0	0%
Development / Land-Use	188	1.88	3	17	1%
Weather	157	1.97	4	13	1%
Environment	153	2.40	12	26	0%

Metrics for News reports provide insight into how readers engage with different types of content.

Step 2: Deep research of readers’ passions and concerns

The program includes a survey and other tools to assess how people live their lives, why they live there, what they are worried about, what they deeply care about. Unlike conventional market research, the research is not focused on what they think of the paper; nor is it designed to describe your readers to advertisers. The data, rather, are designed to help the newsroom make better-informed decisions.

Step 3: Use the data to create a content strategy built around the audience

News organizations then combine their audience and content data to discover where their content is aligned and misaligned with the passions and concerns of their community. News leaders develop new content strategies to improve coverage in core areas that will reach new audiences and create new advertising and subscription opportunities.

Getting better means covering some issues differently, not simply more. In the end, the program empowers the publishing organization to set a clear strategic direction and energizes the whole staff to get better instead of smaller, and to use data to test their assumptions and measure their progress.

By JONATHAN STRAY

Editor's Note: *NYPA recently commissioned a survey of New York's newspaper industry and the initial results closely mirror the opinions expressed below. This is something newspapers might want to try at home.*

Take two steps back from journalism: What are the editorial products we're not building?

"Imagine all the wildly different services you could deliver with a building full of writers and developers."

WThe traditional goal of news is to say what just happened. That's sort of what "news" means. But there are many more types of nonfiction information services, and many possibilities that few have yet explored.

I want to take two steps back from journalism, to see where it fits in the broader information landscape and try to imagine new things. First is the shift from content to product. A news source is more than the stories it produces; it's also the process of deciding what to cover, the delivery system, and the user experience. Second, we need to include algorithms. Every time programmers write code to handle information, they are making editorial choices.

Imagine all the wildly different services you could deliver with a building full of writers and developers. It's a category I've started calling editorial products.

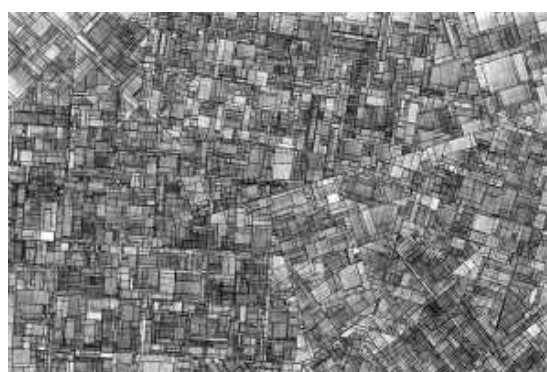
In this frame, journalism is just one part of a broader information ecosystem that includes everything from wire services to Wikipedia to search engines. All of these products serve needs for factual information, and they all use some combination of professionals, participants, and software to produce and deliver it to users — the crowd and the algorithm. Here are six editorial products that journalists and others already produce, and six more that they could.

Some editorial products we already have

Record what just happened. This is the classic role of journalism. This is what the city reporter rushes out to cover, what the wire service specializes in, the role that a journalist plays in every breaking story. It's the fundamental factual basis on which everything else depends. And my sense is we usually have enough of this. I know that people will disagree, saying there is much that is important that is not covered, but I want to distinguish between reporting a story and drawing attention to it. The next time you feel a story is being ignored, try doing a search in Google News. Almost always I find that some mainstream organization has covered it, even if it was never front-page. This is basic and valuable.

Locate pre-existing information. This is a traditional role of researchers and librarians, and now search engines. Even when the product is powered entirely by software, this is most definitely an editorial role,

because the creation of an information retrieval algorithm requires careful judgment about what a "good" result is. All search engines are editorial products, as Google's Matt Cutts has said: "In some sense when people come to Google, that's exactly what they're asking for — our editorial judgment. They're expressed via algorithms."



Filter the information tsunami. This is the act which produces your trusted information feed, whether that's Facebook's News Feed or Politico's morning emails or Google News. It's here that we can most productively complain that something "wasn't covered."

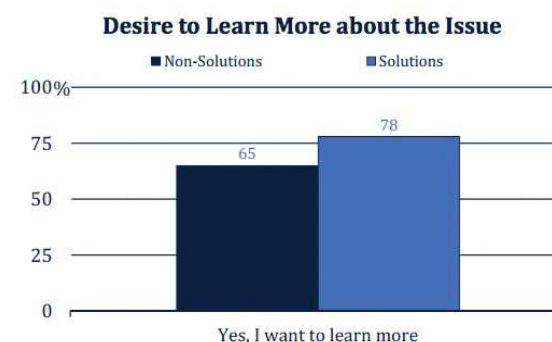
Filtering depends upon aggregation and curation, because no one organization can produce original reporting on everything. Most filtering products also lean heavily on software, because human effort can't match the scope of a web crawler, nor can a human editor prepare personalized headlines for millions of users. As with search engines, information filtering algorithms are clever combinations mathematical and editorial objects, and the best products use clever combinations of machines and people.

Give me background on this topic. This is also about locating pre-existing information, but in a summary or tutorial form. Because there are more complex issues than anyone can follow, most news is going to be about things that you don't know much about. This has been called the context problems for news, and there have been many experiments in solving it. There are now entire sites devoted to explanatory journalism, such as Vox, but the 800-pound gorilla of getting up to speed is Wikipedia. So far, no other product can match Wikipedia's scope, cost of production, or authority.

Expose wrongdoing. This is the classic role of investigative journalism, which fits within a whole ecosystem of accountability. Every government transparency initiative and every open data nonprofit aspires to support this goal, but transparency is not enough. Democracy needs people who are committed to exposing corruption, crime, and abuse. Sometimes this requires inside sources and secret documents, but accountability can also be about drawing attention to little-noted facts. But it is always about scandal, what has been called "the journalism of outrage." This makes it powerless in the face of huge systemic issues without a clear locus of wrongdoing. Investigative journalism is vital, but only one part of the broad intersection between information and power.

Debunk rumors and lies. In this fairly new category, we have products like Politifact, which checks what politicians say, Emergent.info, which tracks the spread of rumors, and the venerable Snopes. It's a little strange to me that the news media of old weren't much into debunking, but I guess they thought "publish only true things" was sufficient. Clearly, truth-testing has since become a valuable public service, and journalists have learned to pay more attention.

Some editorial products that don't exist yet



Readers like stories about problems more when they also include possible solutions

What can I do about it? More and more, this is the only beat I care to cover. Accurate news is essential to know the world, but reports of what just happened do not tell you what can be done about it, at a personal level. I don't believe that citizens have become apathetic; I believe

we are overwhelmed in the face of large and complex problems where it is hard to know where to start. We already know that stories that include solutions are more engaging. The main problem is one of plausible effectiveness: If you have ten dollars or ten hours to donate, where should you put your resources? Not every problem can be helped by large numbers of small actions — but some can. You could build a whole product around the question of what the reader could do.

A moderated place for difficult discussions.

Traditionally, journalism has tried to present an objective truth that would be seen as legitimate by everyone. I'm not convinced that truth always works this way, and I'm sure that no institution today has this sort of argument-settling authority. But I do see a need for unifying narratives. Americans are more polarized than they've been in decades, and we fight online about everything from catcalls to tax rates. Perhaps there is a need for a safe place to talk, to know the other, with real human moderators gently tending the discussion and discouraging the trolls. When everyone can talk, the public sphere needs fewer authorities and more moderators. To me, seems a natural role for journalism.

Who should see what when? Three principles for personalized news



Personalized news that isn't sort of terrible. It seems obvious that different people need different news (if I do say so myself) and this requires algorithmic recommendation to scale, but the results have often been unimpressive — as anyone who has complained about the Facebook News Feed knows. I've spent a lot of time with recommendation algorithms and I've come to believe that this is fundamentally a user interface design challenge: How do you tell the computer what you want to see? Optimizing for clicks and likes inevitably degenerates into clickbait and likebait. Other systems require you to choose subjects in advance or people to follow, but none of these is really satisfying, and I still don't have a "mute" button to tune out Kim Kardashian. I'm holding my breath for an interaction design breakthrough, some elegant way to create the perfect personal channel.

The online town hall. Democracy is supposed to be participatory; voting is not enough, but there is no scalable communication channel between citizens and government. So how does your voice get heard? And how do you hear the voices of other people — and how does a civil servant make sense of any of this deluge? There's a hard problem here: We don't have good models for a "conversation" that might include millions of people. I'm imagining something like a cross between Reddit and civic-listening platform PopVox. This too would require thoughtful moderation.

Systematic government coverage. Journalism has long looked for waste and corruption. But how many stories do you read about the Bureau of Land Management? Or the Office of Thrift Supervision, which should have been monitoring the financial industry before the crash? Sometimes it seems like journalists pull their subjects out of a hat. If we're serious about the notion of an independent check on government, we need to get systematic about it. No one reports department by department, bureau by bureau, with robot reporters scrutinizing every single open data feed. Sound boring? It might be. But maybe that just means current accountability journalism is badly skewed by the demands of entertainment.

Choose-your-own-adventure reporting. Story creation could be interactive. There have been crowdfunding platforms such as Spot.us and Beacon, but nothing that operates on quite the level of granularity and speed envisioned by Jay Rosen's explainthis.org, where users type in questions for journalists to answer. There are thousands of variations on the idea of having the users direct the reporting, everything from demand-driven production to a quiz after each story that says, "what should we report on next?" The point is to put journalists and users in an interactive loop. Good reporters listen anyway, but I want something stronger, a sort of contract with the audience where they know exactly how to be heard. For example: "Our reporter will investigate the top-voted question each week."

What's editorial, anyway?

I've used the word "editorial" to sidestep discussion of what "news" or "journalism" is. To ask that question misses the point of what it does. And there has been a strange lack of innovation here. Silicon Valley has never been afraid of wild ideas, but the tech world is allergic to any service which requires a lot of humans to deliver. That doesn't scale, or so the thinking goes. Meanwhile, the journalism world has evolved and finally embraced software and new story forms. Yet the espoused goals of journalism — the fundamental services that journalists provide — seem virtually unchanged. That's a pity, because there are so many different, useful things you can do by applying humans plus machines to nonfiction information production. We've barely scratched the surface.

Jonathan Stray is project lead of the Overview project and a fellow at the Tow Center for Digital Journalism.

— Reprinted from *Neiman Labs*

If Public Notices are Important to You, Please Use Our New Public Notice Website



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.

By AMY GAHRAN

How to build a networked beat in your community

People often know a fair amount about what's going on in their local community, and now they have more tools than ever to share what they know. Collecting and synthesizing this community knowledge, and inviting the most engaged people to offer more, can be a valuable community media offering. The trick is: having a good system that makes it easy for people to participate.

For the better part of two decades, New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen has been talking about ways that journalists and others can create news in collaboration with a type of community — their audience. Or rather, “the people formerly known as the audience.”

Over time this evolved into his vision of networked reporting: “When the many contribute (easily) to reporting that is completed by a few.”

In a 2013 presentation to the editors of Quartz, Rosen outlined eight steps to building a networked beat at a news organization. Recently, he elaborated on how this model could work at a hyperlocal news site or similar community media venue.

Rosen emphasized that an underlying principle to creating a successful networked beat at the community level is the 1% Rule: In a group of 100 people online, one person will create content, 10 will “interact” with it (commenting, liking, sharing, editing, etc.), and the other 89 will simply view it.

The point of a networked beat is to:

- Create better community news and information for the 90% who will only consume it...
- Through efficient interaction with the 10% of your community who might actively engage with it, while...
- Recruiting the most engaged, connected or skilled 1% of your community into co-production.

Not every kind of community news is a good fit for this approach. “It makes the most sense to choose a beat where it can truly be said, ‘the readers know more than we do.’” said Rosen. “There are plenty of

community issues where the relevant knowledge is widely distributed.”

Generally, this involves complementing traditional journalistic reporting on agencies and institutions (where knowledge is held by a few people) with community knowledge, insight, and experience.

For example, Rosen suggested that networked community reporting might work well in situations such as:

- Education. Networked coverage of education at the classroom and family levels, complemented with traditional reporting on the inner workings of the local board of education.
- Community development. Networked coverage of community development needs, complemented with traditional reporting on the city planning department.
- Transportation. Networked coverage of traffic conditions and transit issues, complemented with traditional reporting on the transportation department.
- Big local industries or companies. “A great beat to try this on is when you have a dominant local company or industry, like Big Pharma in Northern New Jersey, or covering Microsoft for Redmond, Washington,” said Rosen.

An example of a topic that's getting this treatment, albeit from a major news outlet, is Motherlode, a blog from the New York Times on parenting and family issues, in which editor KJ Dell'Antonia “invites contributors and commenters to explore how our families affect our lives, and how the news affects our families — and all families.”

If your community site covers several topics, it's a good idea to package the networked beat in a unique blog on the site with its own feed, rather than mix it in with other coverage. “It needs a home, a container, a space of some kind,” said Rosen. 8 steps to building a networked community beat

Here are Rosen's thoughts on how his eight steps to creating a networked beat might work at a hyperlocal news site:

Step 1: Define the right combination of news flows for this particular beat.

“Find all online sources of information that already exist (feeds of any kind) that tell us about, say, community development in Anytown, USA. Combine them into a river of news.”

This could include following the social media accounts of local officials, agencies, organizations and influencers, as well as feeds from their blogs and websites, or from relevant local hashtags. It also could include feeds from filtered searches of local news outlets, or from news aggregators such as Google News.

Step 2: Put an intelligent filter, made for multiple uses, on the combined flow.

Tools such as Hootsuite and Feedly can be useful for pulling the feeds from all these community news sources together into a river of local news. Then, spend time adding filters and otherwise tweaking that river so it's easier for you to spot the kind of content, voices, and early signals that will prove valuable to your production process.

“Finding the right tools for what your local site does is part of the challenge,” said Rosen. “The point is to devise a way of filtering that river which is likely to surface the best stuff.”

This filtered river will remain for internal use only, for the time being, until you're confident in the quality of your filters.

Step 3: From smart filters on combined streams, make a series of simple and useful products.

Creating a production routine gives structure to how you will make use of the filtered river of news.

An easy place to start is to offer a morning roundup post on the topic of your networked beat — daily, or a few times a week. This should

happen on a set day/time schedule, so people know what to expect and get accustomed to incorporating your product into their daily routine.

The morning roundup post can feature a handful of quotes, links, blurbs, commentary or context to highlight a few especially timely, important or interesting items from your filtered local news river. It should be posted to your site, and also sent out as an e-mail newsletter, and promoted via social media. “The point is to develop a regular user base for it,” said Rosen.

Having a highly structured, simple product with a regular production routine gives focus to how you filter your local news river. “The best filter is the one that helps you do that morning roundup post with the time and the people you have available,” said Rosen.

The morning roundup post also directly fuels your news cycle for the rest of the day or week. “Once you have the morning roundup down, some of those items will be worth followup, a phone call, or some additional reporting,” said Rosen. “So the morning roundup generates 2-3 short posts a day on your site about the beat. Add an afternoon check-in or roundup, and you have a publishing day.”

Step 4: Start to register, verify and make contact with the best independent sources on the beat.

“This is where you start rolling out the ‘asks,’” said Rosen. “Where you are solicit the help of the 10% of your online community who are already engaging somehow with your content, and get them to assist with tasks directly related to your production process.”

The simplest example of this would be say (in a footer to your roundup, or to mention in social media occasionally), “See something that should be in our morning roundup? Send us the link.”

A more challenging example might be to tell your community, “There’s a ribbon-cutting ceremony today at the new pocket park. Want to take pictures?”

Or: “We’re setting our coverage priorities for the next few months. Help us out by taking a quick survey.”

Step 5: When your filtering system is good and reliable, enough, hook your filtering tools up to the work flow for beat coverage.

Expand how you use your filtered news river internally, exposing it to more staff and trusted volunteers, to make it easier for everyone at your site to focus on the most current, relevant, and interesting content from the networked beat.

Step 6: Launch your “inbox on steroids” to prove to the your community that it works.

This is a another way to collect and utilize community input employed by Talking Points Memo, the Daily Dish and other sites. “They don’t have comments, but they encourage users to e-mail constantly -- tips, links, letters, something the bloggers should know about, pay attention to. Then they add a step to ‘sort through the inbox’ to their daily production cycle. By featuring incoming letters from readers you advertise to other readers that this is a way to contribute. By summarizing reader reactions you feed back to the user community a sense of what it thinks.

Step 7: Bring key sources (from step 4) and fellow obsessives into co-production. Be prepared to compensate.

This is where recruiting and utilizing the 1% comes in, through targeted asks that are privately communicated to individuals who have already stepped up constructively through the earlier public asks.

Targeted asks elicit this higher level of community engagement might include:

- “We need to make this a group blog. Want to be one of the authors?”
- “We want to run a weekly informed sources poll. Are you willing to be a part of it?”
- “We need our most engaged users to take over the roundup one day a week. Are you in?”

Step 8: Go pro-am (professional-amateur). Try some crowdsourcing campaigns focused on specific stories or issues on the networked beat, where both the 10% and the 1% collaborate with staff from your site.

How long will all this take? Rosen suggests committing to 4-6 months to try to take this process through all eight steps. “Keep going as long as you are getting enough engagement enough to warrant trying the next step.”

More tips for moving forward...

Rosen again emphasized that it’s important not just to have a clear process for your networked beat, but to focus on continually improving that process.

“In all of these steps, the thing that you have to keep driving for is not just engagement or participation, but efficiency in converting that involvement into production for the beat. The tools are there; what we need to discover is efficient practices to leverage the scarce labor of journalists. Keep engineering your tools and procedures so that they help you produce better information for the 90%.”

“Actionable” is an important part of “better.” Rosen notes, “We’re not just producing spectators here. We’re trying to equip people to become better participants in their community. That is what will motivate people to participate in your beat.”

Support your networked beat with live gatherings. “At a certain point you’ll want to convene you user community in real time with in-person meetups.” This is easier in a local community than a big metro area, and can be supported with a tool like Meetup.com, or with events posted to a Facebook group.

Who’s doing networked beats? So far Rosen has not seen such the full approach applied to a beat at the community level, but he believes it’s viable and worth trying.

Currently Rosen is working with Deseret News wellness reporter Kelsey Dallas and editor Allison Pond to implement exactly this kind of approach. This project is due to launch within the next few months.

— Reprinted from the Knight Digital Media Center

By JAKE BATSELL

On convening a community: An excerpt from Jake Batsell's new book on engaged journalism

"An engaged journalist's role in the 21st century is not only to inform but to bring readers directly into the conversation."

*Editor's note: Our friend has a new book out called **Engaged Journalism: Connecting with Digitally Empowered News Audiences**. It "explores the changing relationship between news producers and audiences and the methods journalists can use to secure the attention of news consumers." Lab readers will find it covers some familiar ground: events, audience development, community engagement. Here's a brief excerpt from one of its chapters.*

Where was God in Aurora?

It was a frank, arresting, and painful question to ask in the days following the macabre shooting spree that left 12 people dead and dozens of others injured at a screening of a Batman movie in Colorado on July 20, 2012. Still, the question struck a nerve for hundreds of thousands of readers of CNN's Belief Blog.

The blog aims to intertwine religion with news. But in the shocking aftermath of Aurora, Dan Gilgoff, religion editor of CNN.com, and his colleagues in Washington, D.C., were struggling with how to bring perspective to such a senseless tragedy. "It was actually a little bit desperate," Gilgoff said. "The thought occurred to me, 'Where is God in this tragedy?' — which is this age-old question in religion. So I just put it out there." He first posed the question on Twitter, then summarized the emotional array of responses a few hours later in a blog post that itself attracted more than 10,000 comments.

Gilgoff's question triggered a week's worth of impassioned, generally thoughtful debate as readers argued about the notion of divine sovereignty versus human free will. The episode showed how journalists can create community by actively involving the audience in the stories they cover. An engaged journalist's role in the 21st century is not only to inform but to bring readers directly into the conversation through digitally powered techniques such as real-time coverage, alternative story forms, crowdsourcing, beat blogging, user-generated content, and comment forums.

An audience-driven conversation

In the days following the Aurora tragedy, Meredith Artley, managing editor of the Atlanta-based CNN Digital, watched in amazement as the post featuring Gilgoff's question attracted 2,000 comments during the first six hours after it was published. The comments quickly grew to 5,000. Then 10,000. Over the next week, "Where was God in Aurora?" became a fervent but largely civil conversation, driven by the audience. "It's not our job to say, 'OK, everyone, we're done,'" Artley said. "We just kept it going. People kept on wanting to talk about it."

As the original post gained traction, "it was not only a conversation — it was a unique conversation that CNN provoked and was starting to own," Gilgoff said. To keep the momentum going, he said, "we wanted to do something that was educationally meaningful that would showcase the conversation, and do it in a way that would show more depth." So the next natural step, Gilgoff said, was to bring in other voices. He invited a religion scholar, Stephen Prothero, and a Colorado pastor, Rob Brendle, to write columns explaining their take on the where-was-God question. That's another opportunity in convening a community like this, Gilgoff said: connecting experts and the masses. "It allows you to kind of give the keys to someone else, as opposed to calling them to get a quote," he said.

Days later, as the conversation began to wane, Gilgoff wrote a recap post noting the strong presence of atheists during CNN's where-was-God



conversation, demonstrating how the Internet can serve as a "de facto global church" for nonbelievers during times of crisis. In all, Belief Blog's Aurora-related posts drew about 2 million page views during a single week. Earlier in his career, when Gilgoff worked for U.S. News and World Report, "we had no window into who was consuming our content, other than newsstand sales," he said. Had he been assigned a reflective piece like the where-was-God story during his days at the magazine, Gilgoff told me, he might have interviewed ten or twelve sources for a seven-hundred-word story that left 90 percent of his reporting on the cutting-room floor. He also probably would have moved along after writing that single story. "Before, you would think a story has come and gone," he said. "What the Internet allows you to do is see that people are still talking about it. We didn't know that a few years ago."

However, tapping into the power of a digital community requires shedding some of the work habits of a traditional reporter. Today's journalists

can't just gather facts and quotes and dispense them to the public; they must actively seek out their audience and create opportunities for interaction. "If you don't hear from your readers, the tendency is to have a very insular notion of your beat," Gilgoff said. "If you open it up, there are a zillion angles that wouldn't have otherwise" come to light.

Plenty of journalists remain wary of the onslaught of social media and audience interaction — even CNN's president, Jeff Zucker, has called Twitter a "frenemy." But by asking questions that respect readers' intelligence, journalists can raise the quality of the dialogue surrounding their stories, as evidenced by the Belief Blog's where-was-God discussion. "When you start a conversation like this, the comments tend to be a lot more thoughtful and constructive," Gilgoff said. "If the comments were lame or less than meaningful on that post, we wouldn't have done it." With each new Aurora post, Gilgoff said, the goal was not to generate easy clicks but rather to listen and react to the Belief Blog community, moving the conversation forward: "It had a lot of integrity and substance. It wasn't advancing the conversation in an attempt to ride the wave. We were harnessing what our readers were saying to teach them something, too... It's not as cynically done as, 'Can we get 250,000 more clicks on this?' That's the effect, but it's not the cause." (The Aurora experience would later inform the Belief Blog's news coverage when another tragedy occurred in December 2012. This time, a mass shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, left twenty children and six staff members dead, prompting Belief Blog readers once again to openly question, defend, and debate the presence of God.)

For Gilgoff, the provocative reader-driven conversation that followed the Aurora tragedy demonstrated the value of interactive journalism. "Our whole mission is meeting the audience," he said. "For the moment they are caring about that, we want to meet them. We

can shed light on what everybody's thinking about today. I think that's the primary goal of journalism."

After three years as CNN's religion editor and coeditor of the Belief Blog, Dan Gilgoff left the network at the end of 2012 to become National Geographic's director of digital news. In his farewell column, published on New Year's Eve, Gilgoff linked to the "Where Was God in Aurora?" coverage from six months earlier and ended his column with a plea to readers:

In the world of digital journalism, your voice matters more than ever. With the proliferation of reader comments, social media and instantaneous metrics on what our audiences are clicking and how they're responding, your choices and opinions are shaping our coverage more than ever. Some of our best content from the last year was more about conversations happening around the news than about the news itself. We choose to do certain stories and skip others partly based on whether you're engaged in those stories or not. Use your power wisely.

The comments beneath Gilgoff's farewell featured the usual smattering of trolls and religious arguments but also a genuine sense of gratitude from readers. "A big THANKS to you and cnn for letting the discussions flow so freely on your site," one commenter wrote. "I cannot tell you all how interesting and important this blog is to me and i read it every day," added another. Like a good pastor, rabbi, or imam, Gilgoff had convened a vibrant community, and the congregation kept coming back.

Jake Batsell is an assistant professor of journalism at Southern Methodist University, where he teaches digital journalism and media entrepreneurship.

— Reprinted from *Neiman Lab*

"Where's the evidence?"

NYPA member Brett Freeman, publisher of *Mahopac News*, *The Somers Record* and the *Yorktown News* reports that when a student from Mahopac was suspended for the remainder of the basketball season for alleged using racist language which he insists he never used, his father told the Mahopac News his son would be willing to take a lie detector test.

The newspaper quoted the father as saying "Where's the evidence?" That quote became a front page headline and all the fans wound up holding up our newspaper at a game against the team where the player was accused of using the offensive language.

They say high school students
don't read
newspapers anymore.



Well, they certainly read
OUR newspaper!

**Mahopac
News**

By JAY ROSEN

When to Quit Your Journalism Job

When the sales people are happy to sell what the newsroom is happy to make, there you have a well-run editorial company. So measure your own newsroom's misery by its distance from that (ideal) state.

1. If you work in any kind of editorial organization, it is your job to understand the business model. If you feel you can't do that, you should quit. By "understand the business model," I mean you can (confidently) answer this question: What is the plan to bring in enough money to sustain the enterprise and permit it to grow? Can't answer? You have the wrong job.
2. If your instinct is to say, "that's the business side's problem," sorry: your instinct is wrong. That whole way of talking, in which the business "side" takes care of the business model so the journalists can just do their journalism... that's wrong, too. It's infantilizing you. The more you believe it, the more likely you are to be placed at the kids table—organizationally speaking. And properly so, because you're a dependent.
3. The business model is not the business only of the business "side" (a wretched metaphor) because a vital part of any such model is the way in which the editorial staff creates value, earns audience, wins mind share, generates influence, builds brand. These are the sorts of goods a good sales staff sells. It's your job to understand the business model, because you have to know what kind of good you're being asked to create, or you won't be any good at creating it.
4. Take Politico. One part of its business model is a print edition distributed for free on Capitol Hill, but only when Congress is in session. Those who have business before Congress advertise to reach the people who work on Capitol Hill, especially the ones who work for members of Congress. The famous "metabolism" of the Politico newsroom and its "all politics, all the time" coverage make it a must-read among Washington insiders, which Congressional staffers aspire to be. The editorial staff creates value by being relentlessly "inside" DC politics. (Which is also what makes Politico so annoying to outsiders.) The sales staff — get ready for a word you hate — then monetizes the newsroom's creation by selling ads in the print edition.
5. If either staff misunderstands the other's work, Politico is in grave trouble. But Politico is not in grave trouble. It is expanding, conquering new worlds— lately, it's Brussels and the EU. The journalists who work there understand what kind of value they're being asked to create. The sales people are happy to sell what the newsroom is happy to make. This describes a well-founded and well-run editorial company. So measure your newsroom's misery by its distance from that (ideal) state.
6. Speaking of words you hate: get over it. Understanding the business model may require you to learn some terms to which you don't immediately cotton. BFD. Since when are journalists allowed to back away from language they don't instantly understand? That was never the deal. If you report on corporate finance, you can't say: don't give me this debt-to-equity bullshit. No way. It's your job to understand what is meant by these terms. That requirement doesn't disappear just because it's your own business at stake.
7. When I see journalists throw up their hands at new media or Silicon Valley "buzzwords," I smile. Because my students aren't permitted to do that, and they're going to eat your lunch. I teach them to find out what terms like pivot, native advertising, microtargeting, value-added and, yes, "vertical integration" mean. They aren't allowed to cry "buzzword!" unless they understand what was originally intended by the phrase before it was degraded by overuse or picked up by poseurs. If they blanch at the word "brand" I make fun of them.
8. "Product" is one of those terms. What technology people mean by product is something editorial types have to learn. Product is the built thing that users actually interact with, which includes the front-end technology, the editorial content, any ads or commercial material that users encounter, plus the experience of using the thing. It's all that. When Steve Jobs said design is not how it looks, design is how it works... he was talking about products.
9. In tech, "what should the product be?" is a hard question, and the answer is constantly shifting as technology advances, platforms rise and fall, and user behavior shifts. What works keeps changing, so you have to keep asking yourself "what should the product be?" For journalists, "what should the product be?" is an easy question to answer. The product should be great journalism! Break news, lead the pack on big stories, find brilliant writers and pay them so they don't go to someone else. That's how you make a great product. It's hard to do, but easy to define.
10. Make fun of BuzzFeed and Vox all you want (though I would advise against it.) One thing those companies have accomplished: everyone is on the same page about product. This is a huge advantage for them. For if the tech people keep using "product" the way they define it, and the journalism people hear it the way they understand it, the news organization that employs those people will eventually come to grief. So if you work in a company like that, I have a link for you.
11. There is a person who is supposed to prevent that. Traditionally, that person is called "the editor." Nothing has yet been invented to take The Editor's place, so if your site doesn't have one — which is said to be the case at boston.com — your site is dysfunctional. Most people think The Editor's job is to hire, fire and supervise the editorial staff, set standards, direct coverage and be the final word on what is published. And that's correct, but there is more.
12. The Editor has to come to a clear agreement with the publisher and commercial staff on: a.) what the business model is, meaning: how are we going to sustain ourselves and grow? b.) exactly how — in that model — the editorial team creates value for the business, and c.) the zone of independence the editorial team will need to meet those expectations. Not only does The Editor have to secure that agreement, he or she must agree with it, as well. And be able to explain it to anyone who asks. There can never be a situation where The Editor doesn't know what the business model is, doesn't accept it as appropriate and doable, or can't articulate it. A situation like that cannot last, as Franklin Foer of the New Republic learned this month.
13. Every successful publication that does journalism operates with a kind of contract between The Editor and the people who own the joint. (Unless they're the same people.) If the contract is unclear, if different people have different ideas about what it says, if the staff doesn't understand it, then neuroses will set in. The result will be an unhappy place to work.
14. If you work on the commercial "side" (misleading image) of an editorial company and you cannot explain the kind of value the journalists have to add for the business model to click on all cylinders, or if you see them as merely an expense item — and a whiny, entitled one at that — then you too are in the wrong job. Please leave as soon as possible.
15. But what about separation of church and state? I already said: the editorial team requires an agreed-upon zone of independence to do its work. That's a key separation. But separation of church and state has no value as an intellectual principle. Meaning: it's a dumb and risky situation for you when you don't understand how your organization plans to sustain itself. Want more? Separation of church and state — for all the good it did in a previous media era — also meant "no seat at the table when the key decisions were made." Is that really what you want?

— *Reprinted from Pressthink*

Print media more powerful than agencies believe



Sir Martin Sorrell. Photo: Eirik Solheim/Flickr

Print media is more powerful than agencies believe and advertisers should direct a greater percentage of their revenue there, the CEO of the world's largest advertising group has said.

Readers would be more likely to remember information in print products than on digital platforms, said WPP Group's chief executive Martin Sorrell in comments made at a Broadcasting Press Guild event and reported by *The Times*.

Advertisers should look at engagement rather than measuring time spent on a page when deciding where to spend their money, Mr. Sorrell said at the event.

"There is an argument at the moment about the effectiveness of newspapers and magazines, even in their traditional form, and maybe they are more effective than people give them credit [for]," Mr. Sorrell told the guild.

Mr. Sorrell has pushed WPP's investment towards digital platforms, with between 40 and 45 percent of its revenue over the next five years slated to come from new media.

The Sorrell analysis has been welcomed by the chief executive of The Newspaper Works, Mark Hollands.

"Martin Sorrell is one of the world's most respected media thinkers and strategists," he said.

"Many executives are asking about the balance of their marketing, and the possible over-emphasis on social media and digital in general. Mr Sorrell has underscored the validity of those conversations."

The deeper engagement with newspapers was a critical factor that was often overlooked by those trying to find quick, inexpensive and efficient channels, he said.

"The difficult conditions for newspapers is a global one. The choice for clients and agencies has never been greater, and the competition for their dollar never more intense," Mr Hollands said.

"Publishers need to ensure their offering is a quick and simple to buy as other solutions in the market. In doing so, they will no doubt continue to prosecute the case not only for the value of their audience but the engagement and influence of their mastheads and digital properties with those audiences."

Newspapers could offer advertisers unparalleled audience engagement and deserved a higher share of ad spend, the CEO of WPP subsidiary GroupM told The Newspaper Works last year.

"It actually has a level of engagement like no other mass media does, in terms of leaning forward," John Steedman said.

"Newspapers still play a very important part in brand building, through the fact that it's a trusted medium and brands want to be associated with at trusted medium," Mr. Steedman said.

— Reprinted from *The Newspaper Works*

By NY YANG

To Build An Amazing Sales Team, Start Here First

When Pete Kazanjy and Jason Heidema first started selling their new recruiting product, TalentBin, they got the same question over and over: “Why should I pay for software to find good candidates when I can just use LinkedIn or post to job boards?” Naturally, the answer to this question became one of the pillars of their sales pitch, but it also called attention to what a good pitch has to include: It must take existing solutions into account — and it must be crystal clear why the product you’re selling is not only different but better.

After three years landing clients like Facebook, Microsoft and UPS, TalentBin got bought by Monster, and Kazanjy emerged with proven wisdom about building an effective sales strategy from the ground up. The first step? Building a persuasive, bulletproof narrative that will grab people’s attention, get them to question existing solutions, and ultimately convince them that not using your product is costing them big.

A sales narrative is not to be confused with a sales pitch. Rather, it’s the core story that can be adapted for slide decks and presentations, demos and calls. And despite popular belief, it shouldn’t be a laundry list of why your company is awesome (in fact it should bake in some not-so-awesome facts too). In this exclusive preview of his forthcoming book on enterprise sales, Kazanjy speaks directly about how startups can build a powerful narrative to expedite traction and scale.

Start with This Framework

What do you want in a sales process? First, you want it to be effective. It should inspire customers to convert and help you beat your goals. But second — and this is important or you’ll regret it down the line — you want it to be repeatable and scaleable. That’s why you need a narrative — a comprehensive story with all the components you need to then create slides, spoken messaging, website copy, videos, etc. You probably already have a lot of the language you’ll want to use somewhere — either in product descriptions or fundraising pitches. But to make sure you have everything you need (in the right order to make a good argument to customers), it’s critical to have structure.

Note, structure does not mean that your narrative should be set in stone. As you talk to more people and get customer feedback, you’ll learn a tremendous

amount about your market, your own strengths and what resonates with people. So keep it agile, and make sure you establish a healthy feedback loop between product and sales so that they can evolve side-by-side. That said, here’s what I would recommend.

I am a fan of the Problem — Solution — Specifics framework:

- **Identify your problem:** What are the pain points you want to solve? Who has them? How are they currently solved or not?
- **Solution:** What has changed to make new solutions to your problem available? How does your new solution work to solve the problem?
- **Specifics:** What are the quantitative and qualitative proof points that validate your argument?

These three steps will make up the skeleton of your narrative. Once you have that, you can build in other things specific to clients or situations (i.e. what competitors are doing, features coming down the line). But the benefit of this bare-bones structure is that each part builds on the one that came before, allowing you to make an increasingly stronger case.

This way, if someone disagrees with how you’re defining the problem you set out to solve, you can focus on that (or end the conversation), rather than rehearsing parts of your pitch that aren’t relevant. If the person you’re talking to agrees with your problem, but isn’t the one at their company who needs your solution — great — you save time and they can point you in the right direction. The narrative unfolds in a way that optimizes efficiency on both sides.

Once you have this framework mapped out, you can start filling in each section with the information that will make the biggest difference for prospective customers.

What’s Your Problem?

As quickly and clearly as possible, you need to identify the business pain point that you’re trying to solve so your audience can just as quickly assess whether it speaks to their needs.

As an example, TalentBin’s problem statement was: “Technical recruiting is hard. It’s hard to find software engineering talent with the relevant skills that people need to hire for, and even if you can find them, getting in contact with them is tough. And once you’ve

found and contacted the relevant talent, keeping on top of all those conversations can be a huge time suck fraught with dropped balls, all leading to slower hire times and raised cost of hire.”

Or in the case of, say, Groupon, it might be: “Finding new customers for your local business is hard. With all the time you spend running your business, who has time to figure out how to drive new business through the door? But if you don’t grow your customer base to find new, repeat customers, how can you get off the hamster wheel and grow your business?”

Or in the case of Salesforce, it might be: “B2B sales is hard. You’re working on a million things at once, and it can be really easy to lose track of deals and let things fall through the cracks, which hurts your ability to reach your quota. And as a manager, it’s hard to know that your teams are working on the right things, that their efforts are directed towards the highest value opportunities, and how they’re tracking against their goals. Which leads to underperforming teams and missed forecasts. It’s tough.”

Or in the case of HubSpot, it might be: “Being an online marketer is hard. Sales wants more leads. And there’s so many things you could be spending your time on, but you’re constantly pulled in many directions, many of them not particularly fruitful. Really, you just want an all-in-one solution that can help you do the right things, automate them, and help you keep track of your success.”

Notice how colloquial the language is. Your explanation of the problem needs to be clear above all else, and shouldn’t be overly elaborate or packed with jargon. It should be built to relate directly to the person with the problem.

A good test for whether you’ve nailed your problem statement is if you can ask anyone in the industry: “Have you encountered this?” and they not only say “yes,” but can have a more detailed conversation about it.

Who has the problem?

You need to know this for two reasons: You want to make sure you’re talking to the right person (the one who needs your product and has the power to buy it), and they should want to listen to what you have to say. In B2B sales, there’s usually a specific person or group of people responsible for solving the problem you’ve laid out. As organizations get larger, you’re likely to have more stakeholders.

In these situations, your number one goal is to focus on the people who are purely responsible for eliminating these pain points. The buck may stop with the CEO, but he or she is probably not the one closest to the problem.

With TalentBin, our direct audience was the recruiters responsible for filling open positions and their managers.

A good rule of thumb to make sure you're targeting the right person is to determine who has budgetary control of the resources allocated to solve the pain points your product fixes. Be sensitive to people's titles — it's your best tip-off that you're speaking to someone who can pull the trigger on a purchase. It can also help you qualify accounts. (Sometimes if a company doesn't have certain titles in house, they aren't actually a prospective customer after all.)

What is the problem costing?

To sell anything, you have to convince your audience that they should pay for it. The easiest way to do this is to shed light on all the money they're losing because of the problem you'd solve. Basically, if they invest in you, they'll see a return.

Sometimes these costs are very concrete: A company is paying for a ton of data storage, let's say, and your solution is storage virtualization that will be much less expensive. With a little research, you can estimate dollars saved.

It can also be opportunity cost: Your solution may allow a company to do something much more effectively and capture more revenue. For example, maybe you build software that lets sales reps get more done in the same amount of time. Now, instead of closing eight deals at an average value of \$8K a month, they can close 10 deals a month — a 25% bump and \$16K more revenue per rep per month. These types of boosts can be harder to prove but are very compelling to customers.

Lastly, there can be qualitative costs: Depending on who you're talking to, perks like "increased agility" may be very convincing. But these are even harder to prove. You're basically handing them a hypothesis about what your product can do based on experience. It's what you might call "soft ROI" in a pitch.

Setting Up Your Solution

Knowing what existing solutions to your problem look like is vital. You have to be able to demonstrate thorough market knowledge, and show a delta between what people have now and what you can do for them. For TalentBin, existing solutions included LinkedIn. Knowing this and what the experience was like gave us an opening to show how TalentBin would surface 5x as many solid candidates as LinkedIn Recruiter.

You may also encounter clients that have no tool to solve your pain points. The challenge there will be persuading them that they are indeed worth solving. This may be a tall order if they have no precedent for it — which is where calculating or estimating the cost of not having a fix can help close a deal.

Others will solve the problem with several tools or a process they devised themselves. To make your solution a contender, you have to identify where this process is weak and where it breaks.

A winning argument for TalentBin was that recruiters have no time to waste. Hot candidates come on the market and are snapped up in a heartbeat. Slow processes mean lost revenue. There's also a lot of logistics when it comes to staying in touch with people and matchmaking them with companies. Manual work means people can get lost in the shuffle, damaging valuable relationships in a relationship-driven business. Seeing these consequences spelled out so clearly moved a lot of customers into the 'Yes' column.

Your more advanced customers are likely to be paying for a solution already. It's helpful not to think of these other tool providers as competition. It's actually a good sign and can work in your favor. When it comes to qualifying clients, the best sign that you can and should go after someone is if they are already spending budget to bridge the gap.

Deep knowledge is the best way to build your credibility and authority with clients. Your narrative needs these traits to get attention and make an impact. Customers want a resource, not just an answer. If they can ask you questions about the broader market or issue — not specific to your product — and you can come back with smart, well-researched responses, they're more likely to see you as an asset and trust your opinion.

What changed?

If you're selling someone a service that will make their lives easier, you're going to have to explain why they aren't already using it. It can't just be that they haven't heard of you yet. Your narrative needs to show that the service you provide will increase their capacity to grow their business.

How does your new solution work?

You need to explain how the service you provide is something no one else is doing better. The most critical thing is knowing how to easily explain this in an understandable way to your prospect. I recommend using contrast and comparison with solutions you know they already understand.

With this in mind, we could explain that TalentBin is a resume database, or even like LinkedIn search, but that it takes advantage of all professional activity that candidates engage in online to help recruiters discover them, even if they aren't actively looking for new jobs. Make an analogy the springboard to highlight your best features.

Getting into Specifics

This is where you'll need to pick and choose which details strengthen your argument the most. Ideally, you will have already gathered the material you need — particularly the costs associated with the pain points you're solving and how you address them. The language you use has to be familiar, simple, and speak directly to what your audience values.

This is all well and good in most conversations, but you also need to break key metrics down into their components. As an example, TalentBin's key metrics are all about cost per hire, quality of hire and time to fill a role.

A good test for your sales narrative is an elevator pitch. This is how you might explain your story to someone you meet by chance at a cocktail party. They have no assumed knowledge, connections or biases. What do you tell them and in what order? What level of complexity do you start with so that they understand you? What questions does your story raise for them?

It's highly recommended that you practice your elevator pitch in front of real people who have no more context than a stranger.



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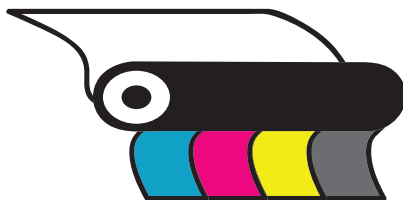


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By RICHARD PARKER

How the *Houston Chronicle* is catching up to a changing city

Top editor Nancy Barnes opens up about the paper's transition

HOUSTON, TX — The biggest city in Texas isn't just big. Houston is vast, growing, and changing — fast.

The city proper is the fourth largest in the country, and the population of the sprawling metropolitan area is now greater than Philadelphia's. By at least one account, it's the most ethnically diverse city in America, too — the home of Urban Cowboy and Billy Bob's is now a place where over 90 languages are spoken and the kimchi taco is a hit. And while downtown was once deserted when the sun went down, it is now alive with hotels, restaurants, and night life.

Over on Texas Street, the *Houston Chronicle* is getting some new life breathed into it, too. After nearly a year and a half in Houston, the top editor, Nancy Barnes, is generally getting good marks for the direction of the Hearst-owned daily. Since coming to the *Chronicle* from the Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* in 2013, Barnes has focused on the blocking and tackling of a brawny, big-city paper. That has meant staffing up in core beats, like government coverage. It has meant stripping away many columns and lifestyle beats. And it has meant populating the outer suburbs of the Houston metro area with reporters. The work is far from complete, though, and Barnes herself wonders if she can change the paper as fast as the city around it changes.

The paper's transition dates to the fall of 2012. Editor-in-chief Jeff Cohen had managed the fallout of the 2008 economic crisis and the Great Recession, which had triggered cutbacks and uncertainty at dailies everywhere. Then Cohen, a native Houstonian, Hearst lifer, and only the paper's 10th editor, decided to leave the job after a decade and take charge of the editorial and opinion pages.

A Hearst veteran, Steve Proctor, had recently come in from San Francisco as managing editor, and he was tasked with leading the newsroom day to day — but no one knew what would happen next. A little more than a year later, Barnes, whose *Star-Tribune* was widely respected, won the job. She'd never worked in Texas, let alone Houston, before, and was quickly struck by two observations: The city was astonishingly large, complex, and global, and the newsroom staff was demoralized.

"I think the rest of the country doesn't understand how big and cosmopolitan a place Houston has become," she said. "But the newsroom was downtrodden in its spirit. It's taken a lot of energy to lift spirits up."

After gauging the place, a third observation struck: Much of the vast city was simply uncovered by the paper, and core government beats like Austin, the state capital, were under-covered. There were no reporters in many of the suburbs where half of metropolitan Houston actually lives. There was just one reporter up in Austin.

Today, through a mix of shuffling personnel around and some new hires — which required tinkering with internal budgets and getting a little money from Hearst in New York — she has five reporters covering state government in Austin and has lured away specialty reporters from other news organizations to cover subjects like the nexus of energy, business, and policy. And *Chronicle* reporters have set up far-flung bureaus in the large suburbs of Spring, Katy, and The Woodlands, with plans for more to come. The task of staffing the suburbs, Barnes estimates, is only 35 to 40 percent complete.

In many cases, the focus is local, local, local. In the suburbs, it's all about schools, growth, zoning, development — and of course, traffic. The Austin and Washington reporters are assigned to cover developments in the context of local delegations and local impact. But Barnes and managing editor Vernon Loeb — another non-Texan brought in from *The Washington Post* — are also kicking back for more digging, enterprise, and investigation.

An ambitious recent story explored the accidental shooting death of a 4-year-old boy; cases of child abuse and neglect have been high on the editorial agenda in the wake of tragedies at area day cares. The *Chronicle* also sent a reporter to Russia and Kazakhstan for a series about the state of the American space program and its reliance on Russian rides into orbit. On its face, that might seem a stretch of the local emphasis — but NASA's Johnson Space Center in Clear Lake is in charge of manned space flight, and though those flights have slowed to a trickle the center employs some 3,000 government employees and 12,000 contractors.

"Certainly there have been changes at the paper that any reader can see," said Margaret Downing, editor of the alternative *Houston Press*. With fewer columns and more reporting, "I think that they're trying to find their way."

— Reprinted from *Columbia Journalism Review*

By BENJAMIN MULLIN

15 political clichés journalists should avoid

Politico's Mike Allen, founder of the influential Beltway tipsheet "Playbook," once wrote that those who write in clichés are probably thinking in clichés, too. As news organizations prepare to cover the 2016 election, here are some hackneyed words and phrases they should consider leaving off the campaign bus:

New York Times standards editor Philip Corbett weighed in Tuesday with a list of well-worn words that sneak into The Times' coverage: "I can project with confidence that we will see far too many uses of 'optics,' 'narrative,' 'pivot,' 'war chest' and 'coffers' in the months between now and November 2016."

A 2012 election style guide from The Associated Press offers a litany of stale verbiage. The biggest cringers:

- **pressing the flesh** ("shaking hands is preferred.")
- **rainbow colors**: ("Instead, use "Democratic-leaning, Republican-tilting or swing-voting, etc.")
- **hat in the ring**: ("a candidate decided to run for an office")
- **veepstakes**: ("the competition to be a candidate's running mate.")
- **horse race**: ("closely contested political contest.")

Meanwhile, The Washington Post has this index of 200-plus journalism clichés to avoid. The most egregious offenders:

- **A favorite Washington parlor game**
- **Game-changer**
- **Hotly contested**
- **Political football**
- **Partisans on both sides**

In September, Poynter conducted a minuscule, non-scientific poll to see which words journalists couldn't stand. The worst stinker? **Ballyhoo**, with 56 percent of the vote. Other contenders were **lambaste**, **opine**, **salvo** and **pontiff**.

— Reprinted from Poynter

What your smartphone addiction actually looks like

"All social etiquette regarding the use of phones in company seems to have disappeared. The device takes precedence over the person that is present, and that felt wrong. It is a form of rejection and lowers the self-worth of the person superseded for a device. I feel it also highlights a growing sense of self-absorption in people as they would rather focus on their world in their phone, rather than speak to the person they are with."

— **Babycakes Romero**, British photographer, on his new photo series, "The Death of Conversation," documenting obsessed smart phone users, "what your smartphone addiction actually looks like," *The Washington Post*, October 2014.

— Reprinted from the *Washington Post*
Images: Babycakes Romero



More than half of online display ads are not seen by consumers, claims Google in first ad-viewability study

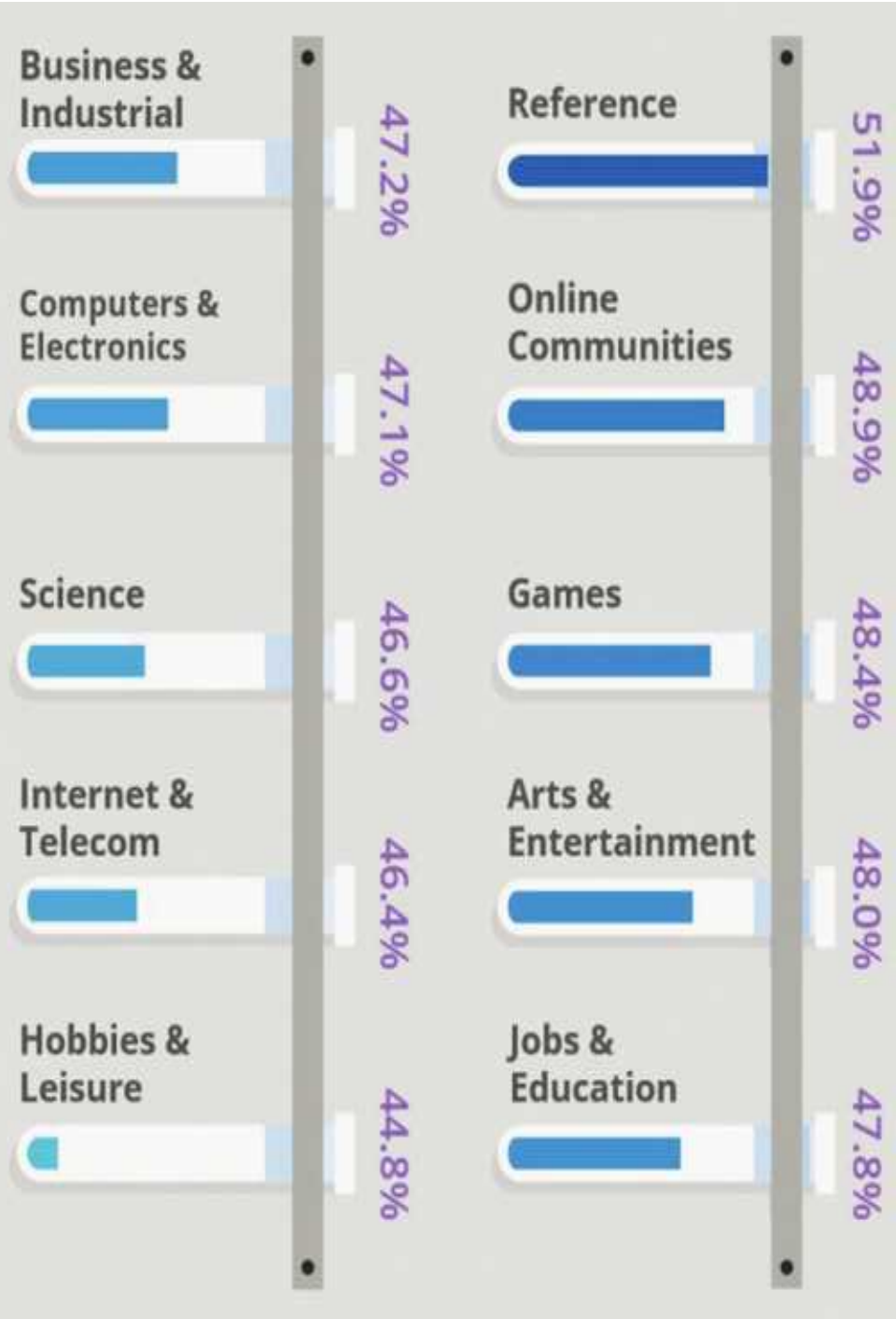
You might have heard: 5 unfolding developments in advertising explained: ad viewability, fraudulent traffic, advertising metrics, programmatic buying, and native advertising.

But did you know: “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,” writes Jessica Davies. “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 David Ellison, marketing services manager for advertiser trade body ISBA.

As more advertisers move toward buying display ads on a viewable impression basis rather than by served impression, Google looked across its display ad platforms, including DoubleClick, to find out what affects an ad’s viewability.

A viewable impression occurs when at least 50 percent of an ad in view for more than one second, according to the IAB standard. Google’s study looked at display ads across web browsers on desktop and mobile devices and came away with 5 key findings.

- 1. Viewability averages are being dragged down by a an outsized number of publishers. The study found that 56.1 percent of display ad impressions were never viewable. However, the average publisher viewability rate was 50.2 percent.
- 2. Top of the page isn’t as important as you might think. Turns out the most viewable ad position is right above the fold, not the top of the page. That’s true for 300 x 250, 728 x 90 and 320 x 50 ad units.
- 3. Viewability rates above the fold are higher than below the fold, but nowhere near 100 percent. Most likely the result of fast scrolling, 68 percent of above-the-fold ads were deemed viewable. Meanwhile, there is activity below the fold: forty percent of below-the-fold ads were viewable.
- 4. Ad size impacts viewability as well. It’s not surprising when you think about it, but vertical ad units are the most viewable as they stay on screen longer as users navigate the page. The 120 x 240 unit had the highest viewability at 55.6 percent, while the ever popular 300 x 250 had the lowest rate of viewability at 41.0 percent.
- 5. Interestingly, not all publishing verticals are alike when it comes to viewability. The chart below shows how each vertical stacked up. Reference scored highest in viewability at 51.9 percent, while hobbies and leisure scored lowest at 44.8 percent on average.



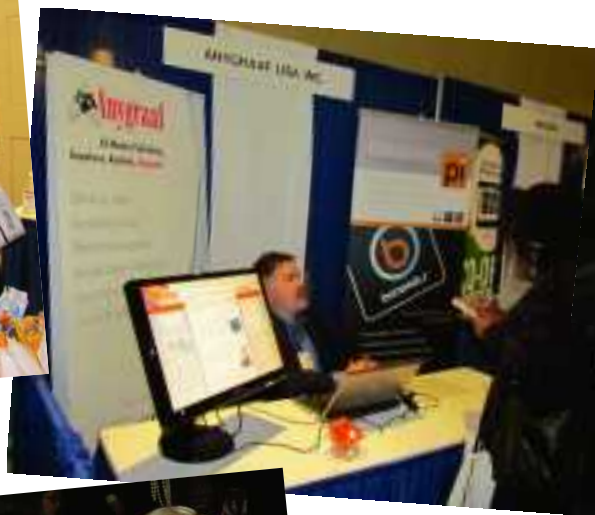
— Reprinted from The Drum



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By PAUL McNALLY

Guardian digital chief: Killing off comments ‘a monumental mistake’

The Guardian’s executive editor for digital has described the trend among some news sites of switching off reader comments as a “monumental mistake” — saying user interaction is a “huge resource we are largely ignoring”.

Delivering the opening keynote at the news: rewired conference, in London, Aron Pilhofer said sites such as BuzzFeed and Upworthy were “quite frankly eating our lunch” — and news organizations need to do much more in the areas of community engagement and user analytics.

Pilhofer — who joined from the New York Times last year — said he believes “fundamentally” that newsrooms can make a successful digital transition, adding: “We are all in this together.”

‘Journalism should be a conversation’

Reuters recently announced it was switching off comments under its stories — and other publishers including The Chicago Sun-Times, tech site Re/Code and Popular Science magazine have all done the same.

Pilhofer said:

I feel very strongly that digital journalism needs to be a conversation with readers. This is one, if not the most important area of emphasis that traditional newsrooms are actually ignoring.

You see site after site killing comments and moving away from community — that’s a monumental mistake. Any site that moves away from comments is a plus for sites like ours. Readers need and deserve a voice. They should be a core part of your journalism.

He gave the example of Guardian Witness, a user-generated project on the Guardian site that invites readers to contribute video, pictures and stories to “assignments”.

“These are the kind of things we should be doing more of. It’s a huge resource we are largely ignoring [as an industry]”, he said.

Pilhofer added:

Sites like BuzzFeed and Upworthy are quite frankly eating our lunch. Often editors talk about them in mystical ways. There’s nothing magic about it. It’s an incredibly targeted, brilliantly designed product that has a very clear audience in mind. They know how to get content to their target audience and they know when they’ve succeeded and failed. I am not saying in any way that the Guardian or the New York Times should become more like BuzzFeed in terms of content. We need to understand a whole lot more about how BuzzFeed does what it does.

Better analytics

Part of that understanding comes from developing better newsroom analytics. Blogging platform Medium, for example, has begun measuring “total reading time.”

Borrowing the terminology used by Medium to explain its move, Pilhofer said:

Every newsroom should have some not-so-bullshit metrics that provide an indication of its health. I think this is where newsrooms have to go. We have to become much more sophisticated about analytics and metrics. We have to get better.

The Guardian has an internal analytics tool called Ophan which “blew my mind”, Pilhofer said, and it “gives journalists real-time access to “just about any metric you could ever want”.

‘We need to move forward together’

Pilhofer concluded:

When you talk about digital transformation a lot of the time it ends up becoming, unfortunately, sometimes a divisive topic. It becomes print v digital and that’s nonsense. We are all in this together. The entire newsroom needs to be involved in this — everyone. We are incredibly lucky to be in an industry in which great reporting, editing, and storytelling is as valuable — arguably more valuable — in the digital world than on traditional platforms. We need to move forward together and I believe fundamentally that we can actually do it.

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By MATTHEW INGRAM

The Guardian is right — publishing reader comments is important.

No one seems to like web comments any more, at least not in the traditional media anyway. Websites like Reuters and Re/code and Popular Science and Bloomberg have gotten ride of them, and plenty of media insiders have been cheering this movement on, since they see comment sections as cesspools. So it's nice to hear someone like Guardian digital editor Aron Pilhofer say killing off comments is a "monumental mistake."

In a talk at the news:Rewired conference in London, Pilhofer — who used to run the digital team at the New York Times, before joining the Guardian last year — said that many traditional newsrooms are failing to take full advantage of the web's ability to create a two-way relationship with readers, and that this is a crucial element of what journalism has become in a digital age. As he put it:

"I feel very strongly that digital journalism needs to be a conversation with readers. This is one, if not the most important area of emphasis that traditional newsrooms are actually ignoring. You see site after site killing comments and moving away from community — that's a monumental mistake... readers need and deserve a voice. They should be a core part of your journalism."

Pilhofer talked about how the Guardian looks at its audience, which is as a partner in its journalism, through projects like Guardian Witness — a site where readers can suggest story ideas and also become involved in the reporting of them — which emerged from its repeated experiments in "crowdsourcing." For the British paper, the concept of "Open Journalism" as a dialogue between reporters and readers has been a central part of its mandate under outgoing editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger.

The fact that I agree whole-heartedly with Pilhofer probably won't come as a surprise to anyone who has been reading Gigaom over the past few years: I've argued repeatedly that real and ongoing engagement with readers — which involves more than just a passive "Here's our content, please click on it" kind of relationship

— is a crucial part of what journalism is now, in part because this trusted relationship with readers is the only real asset that media companies have left to monetize in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Projects like Guardian Witness are the kinds of things that all media companies should be doing more of, Pilhofer said, because reader engagement is "a huge resource we are largely ignoring" as an industry. That's the bottom line: not so much whether a newspaper or news site has comments or not, but whether it is trying to reach out to its readers in any real way and make them part of its journalism. Or do they just see the audience as a giant click factory?

All readers matter

Whenever I try to make this point, someone inevitably says that of course they want to have a relationship with their readers, but comments aren't the way to do it, because they are just a cesspool of bad behavior — and/or because the people who post in the comments aren't their real readers, as Bloomberg editor Joshua Topolsky argued in an interview about the site's redesign:

"You're really talking about less than one percent of the overall audience that's engaged in commenting, even if it looks like a very active community. In the grand scheme of the audience, it doesn't represent the readership."

Topolsky's is a common response to comments: "Those people aren't our real readers, so we can afford to ignore them, and pay attention only to the people who choose to be on the social networks that we frequent, like Twitter and Facebook." But what about the people who don't want to have their comments tied to their identity on Facebook — or the readers who choose not to belong to those social networks at all? They in effect become second-class citizens, whose opinions or input aren't wanted or valued.

On top of that problem, the readers who are on those networks still have to seek out the



MATTHEW INGRAM

commentary on the stories they are interested in discussing. Tools exist to pull responses from Twitter and Facebook back into a comment section on a news site, but few publishers use them. It seems that most would rather outsource their commenting — and by extension, their relationship with their readers — to these third-party networks.

But comments are unfixable, right? Or at least, without spending huge amounts of time and resources on them. That's another common response when anyone proposes that they not be killed off. But some sites have shown that it is possible to improve them without an enormous resource commitment: Digiday wrote recently about how comments at Salon improved dramatically once someone started to pay attention to them, and took a few steps to encourage good behavior.

Comments aren't the ultimate expression of community or a relationship with readers by any means. Social networks are also very powerful tools in different ways. But if you can't figure out how to engage with your readers and build a community of some kind on your own website — around your own content — how can you expect any of your readers to take your commitment to that relationship seriously?

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Note: This list is **NOT** all-inclusive. Each word must be considered in context.

AVOID • AVOID • AVOID

able-bodied adult community* adult living* adults only* adult park* African agile AIDS alcoholics, no American Indian Appalachian Asian black(s) blind, no board approval required Catholic Caucasian Chicano children, no	child(ren), (number of) Chinese Christian colored crippled, no church deaf, no disabled, not suitable for drinker(s), no employed, must be empty nesters* English only (ethnic references) golden agers* group homes, no handicapped, not suitable for healthy only Hindu	Hispanic HIV Hungarian impaired, no Indian Irish Italian integrated Jewish landlord, (description) Latino married mature couple* mature individual* mature person(s)* membership approval required mentally disabled, no mentally ill, no	Mexican-American migrant workers, no Mosque Muslim (nationality) Negro non-drinkers non-smokers older person(s)* one child Oriental parish park rules, must comply with Philippine physically fi t only Polish preferred community	Protestant Puerto Rican quiet tenant(s) (religious references) responsible retarded, no seasonal workers, no senior discount* smoker(s), no Social Security Insurance (SSI), no Spanish speakingstable Synagogue Temple tenant(s), description of two people unemployed, no white, white only
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CAUTION • CAUTION

55 and older community* 62 and older* active bachelor bachelor pad close to country club, near couple couples only curfew exclusive executive female(s) only female roommate	fi sherman’ s retreat gay(s), no (gender) gentleman’ s farm grandma’ s house golden agers only* handicap handyman’ s dream heterosexual homosexual ideal for... lesbian(s), no male(s) only male roommate	man, men only membership approval required Mormon Temple mother-in-law apt. nanny’ s room near newlyweds one person older person* perfect for... person(s), (number of) play area, no prestigious	quality neighborhood restricted retired retiree(s)* retirement home* safe neighborhood Section 8, no secure seeking same senior(s)* senior citizen(s)* senior housing* (sex or gender) shrine	singles only single person single woman, man sophisticated straight only student(s) students, no temple traditional two people walking distance to... woman, women only
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ACCEPTABLE

accessible alcohol, no assistance animals only bedrooms, (number of) bus, near convalescent home convenient to credit check required den desirable neighborhood domestic quarters drugs, no drug use, no	Equal Housing Opportunity family, great for family room fi xer-upper golf course, near great view guest house handicap accessible hobby farm kids welcome luxury townhouse master bedroom membership available	(neighborhood name) nice nursery nursing home places of worship, near play area privacy private driveway private entrance private property private setting public transportation, near	quality construction quiet quiet neighborhood references required responsible (school district) (school name) seasonal rates secluded security provided senior discount* single family home	sleeping area(s), number of smoking, no (square feet) townhouse traditional style tranquil setting verifi able income view of view, with wheelchair accessible winter rental rates
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*Senior housing may be exempt if:

- 1) HUD has determined the housing is specifi cally designed for and occupied by elderly persons under a federal, state or local government program, or;
- 2) It is occupied solely by persons who are 62 or older, or;
- 3) It houses at least one person who is 55 or older in at least 80% of the occupied units, and adheres to a policy that demonstrates an intent to house persons who are 55 or older.

“Baby Backus”

Mark Backus with new grandson James Austin Backus, 8 lbs, 3 oz., born March 11, 2015 to son and daughter-in-law Michael and Andrea Backus and big sister Madelynn.



Grandson and Pop having a chat!

“ The trouble with quotes on the internet is that you never know if they’re genuine. ”

— Abraham Lincoln

Queens Courier Acquires Ridgewood Times and Times Newsweekly

Schneps Communications, publisher of The Queens Courier group, *Brooklyn Spectator*, *Home Reporter*, *El Correo* and 16 other newspapers and magazines, has acquired the 107-year-old *Ridgewood Times* and *Times Newsweekly*.

Schneps Communications co-publisher Victoria Schneps-Yunis and Joshua Schneps expressed their commitment to not only continue the papers’ mission to readers, but to also introduce an updated print format and an enhanced digital presence.

“From one family to another, I am happy to pass the torch onto Victoria and Joshua, as I know they are best positioned to grow the papers,” added Maureen Walthers, publisher, editor and owner of the *Ridgewood Times* and *Times Newsweekly* since 1986.

Maureen Walthers will be staying on through a transition period at the company.

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