

THE COMMUNITY NEWSROOM

INNOVATION's vision for newspaper companies is that they must migrate from readers to audiences and from audiences to connecting and creating communities which will consume their content on any platform at any time.

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Today, more than ever before, newspapers must reach out to their communities using all digital means and all other ways possible. This will guarantee that their content remains relevant to the communities they serve.

And consumers now play an increasingly vital role in the gathering, production and distribution of the news and information coming out of the newsroom.

They fall into four rough categories:

- **PASSIVE CONSUMERS** are people who just receive news and information.
- **COMMENTERS** are people who will post comments on stories, post reviews, or react in some fashion.
- **NETWORKERS** are those who will actively join a site, aggregate content or connect with other readers.
- **CREATORS** will actively create higher level content such as photos, videos, blog posts.

The challenge facing newsrooms is to understand how this increasingly complex community can be kept in constant contact with our content.

And just as our communities are constantly evolving and networking digitally, so should our newsrooms to expand our vision. Innovation is the key to the future relevance of our

news brands and we believe it should be at the heart of the news production cycle, with a dedicated space for testing new concepts, products and ways to tell stories across all platforms.

Creating a dedicated Innovation Desk is a way to bring innovation into the newsroom. In any organization, it is easy to fall into the trap of putting all of your energy into the current process. But we are now in an era of constant change taking place at an increasingly rapid pace, especially in the area of media and news organizations. Innovation must be a constant process. We have seen many early online pioneers falter because they focused too intently on one system, and stopped innovating.

It is essential for all news organizations to embrace innovation as a core value, and they must build the capacity to innovate into their organization. *Google* famously allows its employees to spend 20 percent of their time working on developing their own projects. A news organization probably can't afford that level of commitment but they should create a team, or a group, under the supervision of a director of innovation, whose role is to identify and test new tools, new products, new platforms, and new ideas. In a sense, this desk becomes an incubator within the newsroom that defines its embrace of innovation, and provides a pragmatic system for fostering continuous innovation.

All this requires deep re-engineering of our newsrooms in both physical and mental terms.

INNOVATION is at the forefront in the design and architectural development of fully integrated multimedia newsrooms with mod-



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ern workflows where creativity, planning, and content development across all platforms are at the core of the news production process.

The audience is always our starting point. We begin by studying, charting and understanding the news consumption cycle of a newspaper's audience and build newsrooms that produce multimedia content that is relevant to them throughout the day on paper, online, on air, and on mobile.

The daily newsroom workflow should reflect the daily workflow and content consumption habits of our audiences. This means our newsrooms should become real Information Engines™ where the story comes first and the medium second.

Here are the key elements that we believe should be present in an Information Engine™ newsroom:



NEWSROOMS

OPEN SPACES, WALLS DOWN

INNOVATION FORMULA

$$\text{OPEN NEWSROOM} = \left. \begin{array}{l} \text{CREATIVITY} \\ + \\ \text{COMMUNICATION} \\ + \\ \text{COLLABORATION} \end{array} \right\} \text{BETTER CONTENT}$$

1 Fully integrated on/offline. News first, platform second. we tell the story as we know it on the best, most suitable and most instant platform.

2 Rolling deadlines. Content contacts with our audiences when they need information and in the platform they prefer.

3 Two-screen PC. Each desk is equipped with a two-screen PC, – one for input the other for output.

4 Superdesk. The chiefs are where the action is, not hiding in offices. They are visible, accessible and responsible.

5 Radar desk. We monitor the world via technology so we can focus on the why and what's next as opposed to the who, where, and how many.

6 Community desks. A team is devoted to making the newspaper accessible to its community by monitoring, moderating and integrating audience comments, pictures, videos, tips and opinion into every page and section of the newspaper and its digital platforms. It is divided into three sections that reflect the different roles the community plays: **consumers, creators and networkers.**

7 Assignment desk. Planning and assigning resources in the best and most efficient manner are essential to keep an information engine newsroom running at full speed year-round. the superdesk relies on the assignment desk to continuously track the whereabouts of reporters, photographers and correspondents and coordinate their schedules.

8 Graphic desk. Infographics and photo desk must be next to the superdesk, producing visual journalism where "show, don't tell" is the norm.

9 Digital walls where we see our online websites and community sites and they are updated by the webmaster so everyone sees and feels the 24/7 energy of a multimedia operation. these walls should also display twitter posts as well as wiki posts. By using Adobe client applications, a newsroom can visually display tweets being sent by the community. The objective is to create a visual representation of the conversations taking place in the community. This should become as vital as monitoring the news being displayed on other websites or being broadcast on our channels.

10 Viral desk. A key element to connect with new audiences is to have a dedicated team whose role is to disaggregate content and spread it widely on all digital platforms such as networking sites, blogs, public video channels and search

engines. Rather than waiting for the audience to come to us, we go to them.

11 Innovation desk. Placed inside the newsroom, it is staffed by programmers, journalists, illustrators and project leaders to experiment across all platforms and introduce new products to the newsroom that mirror the ever changing ways our communities connect, network and communicate.

12 Public gallery–conference rooms. Our newsrooms should be open spaces internally and externally. every newsroom should have a public gallery where staff and public conferences, town

meetings, presentations, news conferences and exhibitions are a daily occurrence.

13 Macroeditors. No more beats, no more silos. Team reporting, street reporting with macroeditors.

14 Integrated mini tv–radio studios around a radial system – sections and themes and products emanate from the superdesk which commands and controls the news workflow. Content first, platform second.

15 Hot desks. Broadband, mobile internet and the omnipresence of PC terminals makes working from the field ever so simple and efficient. Columnists, contributors, weekly editors and staff

who do not need a permanent seat in the newsrooms should have access to free–seating hot desks where a simple connection to a laptop plugs them into the newsroom's editorial system.

Finally, nothing in our newsrooms should be fixed, everything should be on wheels. This floor–plan provides maximum flexibility and adaptability within the newsroom. As platforms change, storytelling strategies change, and audience consumption habits change – we must continuously change as well, to set and keep the pace.

