



# Saving Community Journalism: **The Path to the Future**

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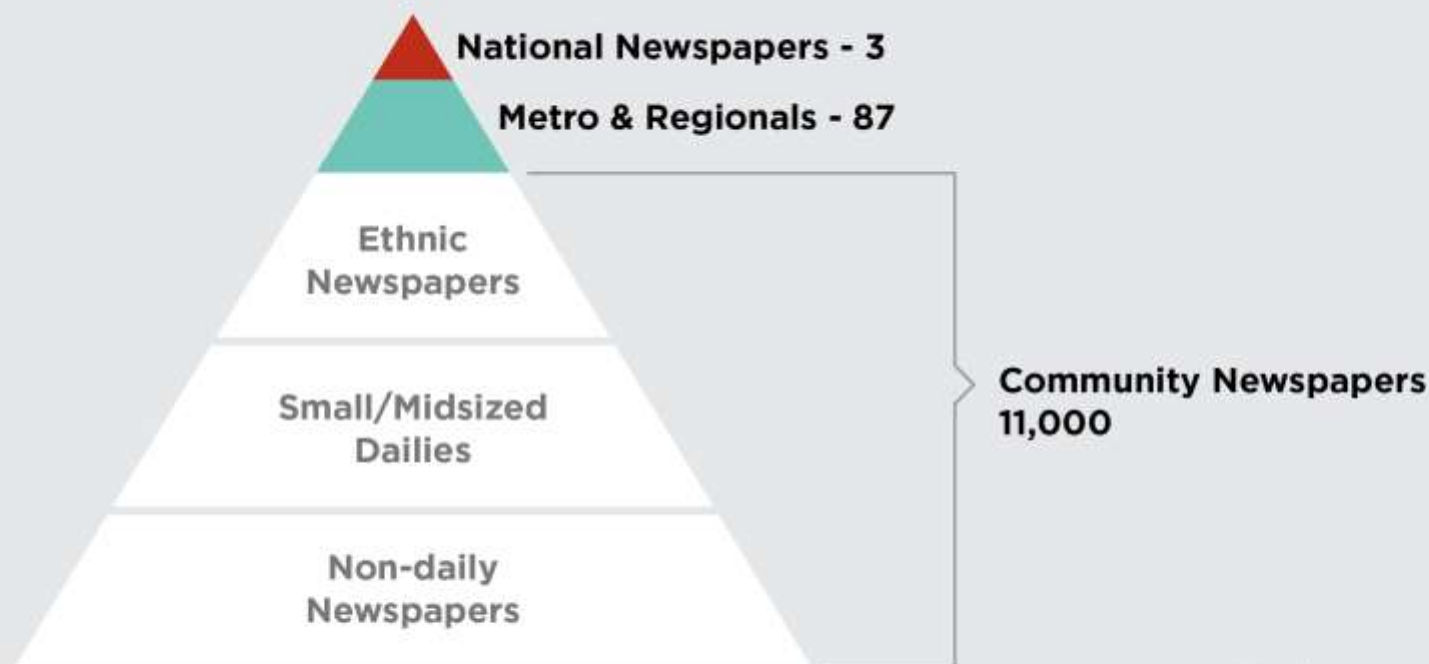
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# Developing a 21st century definition of “community newspapers,” based on mission not circulation:





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# What Does the Future Hold?



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## **The Key Question:**

What must community newspapers do to remain relevant (and therefore profitable) in the digital age?

# Why It is Critical that Community Newspapers Survive



**Historically, community newspapers in the U.S. have:**

- Set the agenda for debate of public policy issues
- Encouraged regional economic growth and development
- Fostered a sense of geographic identity



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# What Do Your Key Stakeholders Expect?



## Readers expect newspapers to:

- Identify the main issues
- Help them navigate daily life efficiently (i.e. spend money wisely)
- Give them a sense of social and political identity

## Advertisers expect newspapers to:

- Help them connect with consumers



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# What We Know From Our Surveys



- Current readers remain loyal, but their habits are changing VERY quickly
- Advertisers are confused and searching





# Checking In with an “8 Ball”



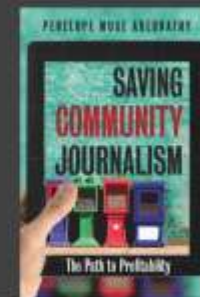
**You know the challenges your newspaper is facing  
but do your readers know?**

*Probably not.*



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# Newspapers must respond with a three-pronged strategy approach:



Attack	Response
Destroyed barriers to entry	Shed legacy costs associated with print-only era
Siphoned off readers	Rebuild community on many platforms
Decimated advertising	Aggressively pursue new revenue opportunities



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# Key Questions: Shedding Legacy Costs



- What do you know about how fast your readers' media habits are changing?
- What are you doing to prepare your readers for the day when their daily paper is only **printed** three times a week?



# What we know about shedding legacy costs



- Internet attacks distribution costs directly
- Value comes from content creation and aggregation
- Cost drivers should be value drivers

## **Implications:**

- Print/Distribution Schedule
- Staffing/Outsourcing
- Content

*Shedding costs frees up funds for investment.*

# What we are learning about consumer behavior during this period of transition

- Technology is a behavior, not an audience
- The news cycle is asynchronous, not continuous

—Tom Rosenstiel, *API*



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# Key Questions: Building Loyal Community Online



- How many of your current readers are loyal?
- Why are they loyal?
- What do they care about?





# What we know about building community on many platforms



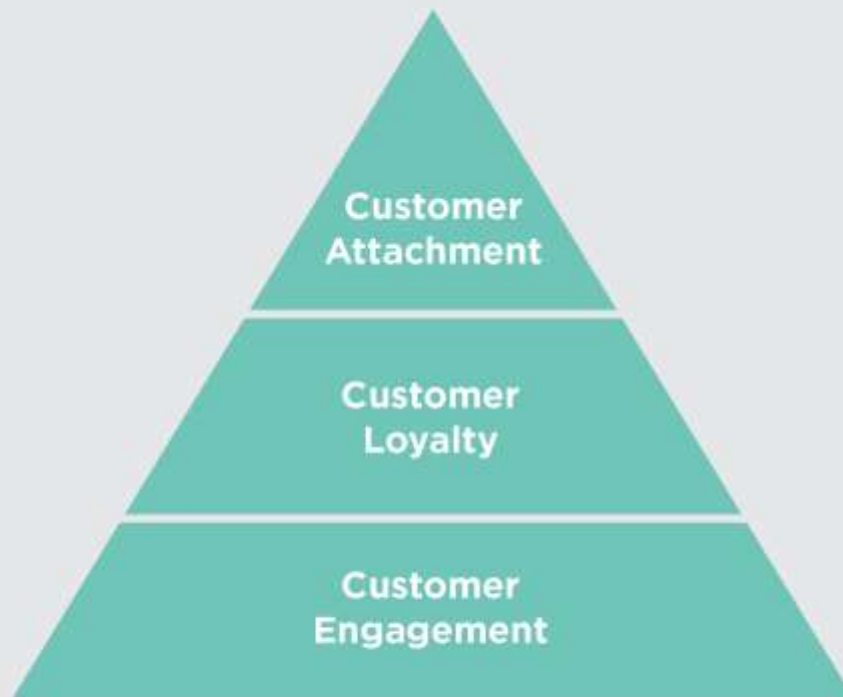
- Our customer habits are changing rapidly
- We must not alienate our loyal readers during the transition.

## Implications:

- Newspapers must cover geographic communities **and** build communities based on special interests.

*Building community on many platforms is key to pursuing new revenue.*

# The Brand Ladder



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## The editor is the critical link to:

- Shedding legacy costs, which allows investment in ...
- Building vibrant communities across many platforms, which then allows newspapers to
- Pursue new revenue profitably

“It’s the journalism, stupid”



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# Key Questions: Pursuing New Revenue



- What is the story your advertising sales reps are telling about your readers?
- How well is your advertising serving the needs of the advertisers?
- How well can your sales team sell across multiple platforms?



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# What we know about pursuing new revenue



- Our advertisers are confused and look to us for answers.
- Local newspapers still best advertising mediums for most local businesses.
- By combining two or more mediums, advertisers significantly increase reach and effectiveness.

## **Implications:**

- There needs to be a new sales strategy built around the segmenting of audiences and that captures the true value of multiplatform distribution.

*Newspapers need to position themselves as a multi-platform medium by revamping rates, compensation, sales strategy and training.*



# The Various Uses of Advertising

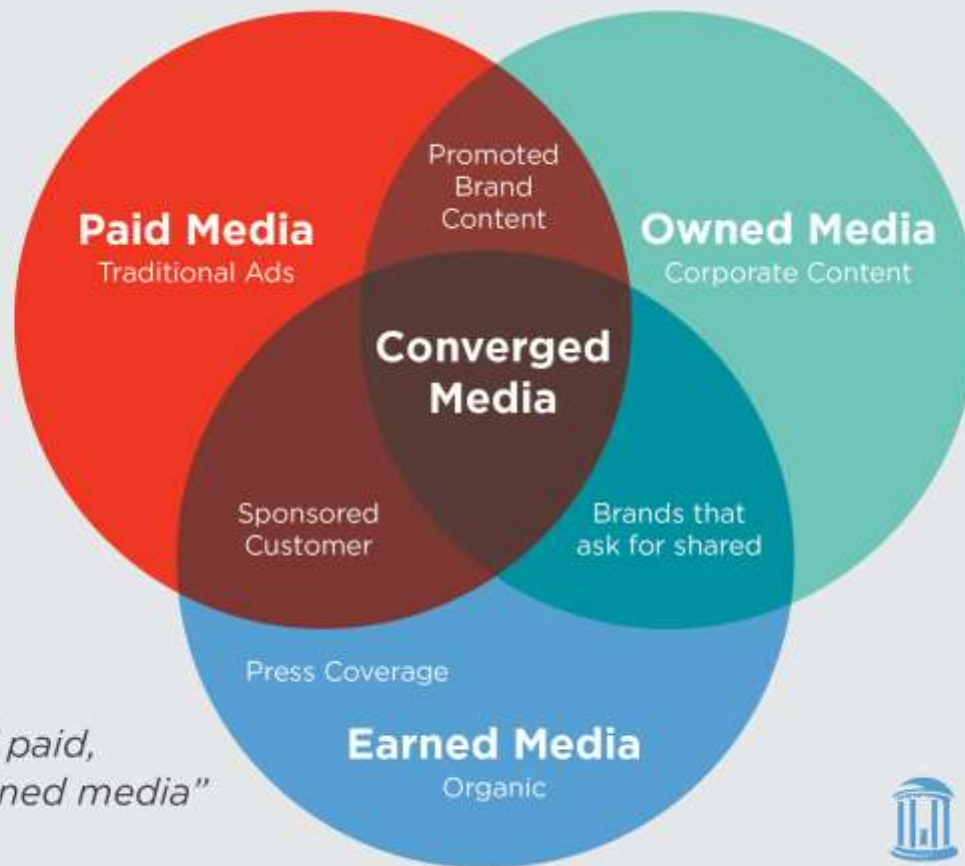


- Create awareness of the need
- Create demand for a product
- Introduce a product
- Encourage purchase
- Put consumer and seller together
- Encourage re-purchase
- Differentiate an existing product
- Attribute more value to a product
- Reinforce loyalty with existing clients





# Merger of Marketing & Advertising



— J.Chaffey,  
“A definition of paid,  
earned and owned media”



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— Earl Swenson-Ryan, Professor of Journalism, University of Wisconsin

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## WHY SAVING COMMUNITY JOURNALISM IS IMPORTANT

LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS ARE THE CLUE THAT BINDS COMMUNITIES, REMINDING US "EVERY DAY OF OUR COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, THE STAKE WE HAVE IN ONE ANOTHER, AND THE LESSONS OF HISTORY." —RON HERFETZ, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The historic role of newspapers — informing, informing and inspiring communities (on a large and small) — is rapidly changing in the digital age. That's why local newspapers and digital journalism have become essential and relevant. This book explains why and how to save them.

Read more

## ABOUT THE TEAM



Robert W. Lyman  
Author, Saving Community Journalism

Learn more about the challenges and opportunities of digital journalism by reading this book. It will provide a solid foundation for understanding the challenges and opportunities of digital journalism.

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## FEATURED VIDEO



Learn More: Building New Newsrooms, Business Models

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# Whiteville Case Study



# Staying Up-to-Date

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### DO SOME NEWSPAPERS WANT TO DIE?



Do some newspapers have a death wish? Allegra Jordan, managing director of the consulting firm, innovation Aldey, asks that provocative question based on her recent experience advising media and technology companies, as well as nonprofit groups that are helping communities around the world rebuild and renew themselves.

Confronted with either a natural disaster or a manmade one, such as war, some communities never seem to recover, she observes, while others come back stronger than before. What determines the fate of a community? "Healthy communities have compelling visions of who they are and why they exist," she says. "They also act in ways that help them realize their desired end states."

In other words, people in the communities that bounce back stop doing the things that just don't work anymore. They adapt to the changed environment and circumstances and adopt new behaviors so they can survive and eventually thrive. I've thought a lot about Jordan's comparison between communities and newspapers as I've researched *Saving Community Journalism: The Path to Profitability*.

The fate of a newspaper and the community it serves are inextricably linked. "Strong papers 'renew a community everyday of its collective identity, the state we have is one another,'" says Harvard University professor Ron Hefetz. Strong newspapers can lift up a struggling community, and point the way to renewal. "The economy, health, education - we know there are a lot of quality-of-life issues here. . ." says Les High, editor of the twice-weekly *Whitely News Reporter* in rural Columbus County, one of North Carolina's poorest. "And if we don't cover them, no one else will."

Like most of the 12 innovative newspapers profiled in *Saving Community Journalism*, the *News Reporter* has that "compelling vision of who they are and why they exist." So despite significant financial challenges, the staff of the *News Reporter* is reinventing itself, so that it can move from the print-only world of yesterday toward a digital future, and continue to serve the citizens of Columbus County.

However, in adjacent counties that are confronting many of the same quality-of-life issues as Columbus, other newspapers seem to have a subconscious death wish for both themselves and their communities. In general, I found there are two types of publishers stuck in the past: the longtime owner, who refuses to acknowledge that the media habits of younger residents in the community are very different from his own, and the new owner, who assumes that the previous owners were doing everything wrong. Typically, these "new" owners don't know the business of newspapering - only the bottom line. So, they discount the trend lines and double down on print, which, at the moment, is more profitable than digital, but won't be for long. Nor do these publishers understand the intertwined relationship between a good newspaper and a strong community. Instead of identifying and discussing important quality-of-life issues, these papers either ignore the problems or simply report the basic facts, without giving context or meaning to any of the stories.

Communities - and newspapers - that survive a disaster, or unexpected assault on their legacies, have "leaders who model hope," says Jordan. Two of the most inspiring newspaper leaders today are Catherine Nelson, general manager

# Conclusions: It's tough keeping three plates spinning simultaneously.



## **SUCCESSFUL NEWSPAPERS ASKED THE QUESTION:**

*If we were building this paper today, how would we do it?*

- How would we look to our customers, employees and shareholders?
- At what processes and procedures would we excel?



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The big question:  
**Who Will Save  
Community  
Journalism?**



In the end, it's  
still about story  
telling . . . **And  
newspapers do  
that well.**

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