

If you really want to be digital – Get rid of Digital

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Summary

Launched in the fall of 2014 and dubbed “The New Digital,” it emphasizes opportunities for content creation, not platform.

- Separates content creation from print production.
- Changes how journalists find stories, deliver content and engage with readers.
- Liberates journalists to report each story in the way most suitable for that story.
- The printed newspaper continues to deliver high-quality content by reverse publishing what is first posted online. The paper benefits from a focused print production desk designed to effectively package the news.
- No one writes or photographs for a particular platform. Or page. No one writes to length. This surely is not print-first, but *it is not digital-first*, either.



It's rooted in a change we made in 2011-12

- Until 2011, digital and print products were created by distinct staffs, as was the common practice in the industry.
- Reporters wrote stories Editors edited, got them ready for the newspaper and sent them to the online producers. Although the thinking and workflow were digital first, content creation and digital production were still linked.
- I became the SunSentinel's editor in 2011. Top priority was to change that.

We set out to integrate print and digital workflow and personnel.



How did we integrate print and digital teams?



Get rid of the digital team!

Get rid of the digital team?

- Easier to teach digital skills and objectives to 150 journalists than to teach journalism to technical people.
 - Imbues digital platforms with journalistic values.
 - Large, experienced staff of journalists would now work for all platforms.
 - Created greater efficiency that blunted impact of budget cuts.
- Editors learned how to use the CMS, how to write SEO headlines, send text messages, participate in social media, etc. They learned to use data to drive more decisions.
- *Print section editors became section editors, responsible for content, regardless of platform. (Section editors became responsible for their verticals.)*



And we became a forward-thinking, fully integrated newsroom

Through this we wound up with a newsroom full of people who understand how to work in the digital space and what is needed to succeed in it.

The entire newsroom thinks of digital opportunities and knows how to execute on them. Our approach had become digital-first.

Problem solved.



Well, maybe.

Fast forward

In 2014, Tribune Publishing, the new owner of the SunSentinel and other papers (Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Orlando Sentinel, Baltimore Sun, etc.) establishes as its top priority digital subscriptions. (That is, digital subscriptions not given for free to print subscribers.)

Each newsroom would develop its own strategies for premium online content that would prompt digital subscriptions.



Problem: The lowest common denominator

Every idea for premium content, which would aid in getting digital subscribers, ran into a time crunch. We wanted to be more aggressive online, but print obligations got in the way.

No matter how much we had embraced digital, print was the beast that had to be fed.

No matter how much we had embraced digital, print was the lowest common denominator.

As such, it drove everything.



What if we didn't allow the lowest common denominator to drive decisions?

- Content folks can focus on content -
- instead of filling holes in the paper.
- Creative people are liberated to do
what they know they should do.
- We do what the readers want and
need us to do. That's why this is a
“reader first” initiative, not a “digital
first” initiative.



Why 'Reader First,' and not 'Digital First'?

Ask the Pennsylvania Railroad Company

- Founded in 1846, at its height it was the largest publicly traded corporation in the world.
- Budget larger than that of the U.S. government
- Workforce of 250,000 people.
- Paid annual dividends for more than 100 straight years – still a record.
- Doing OK through the 1950s.
- By 1970: *Poof*. It ceases to exist.



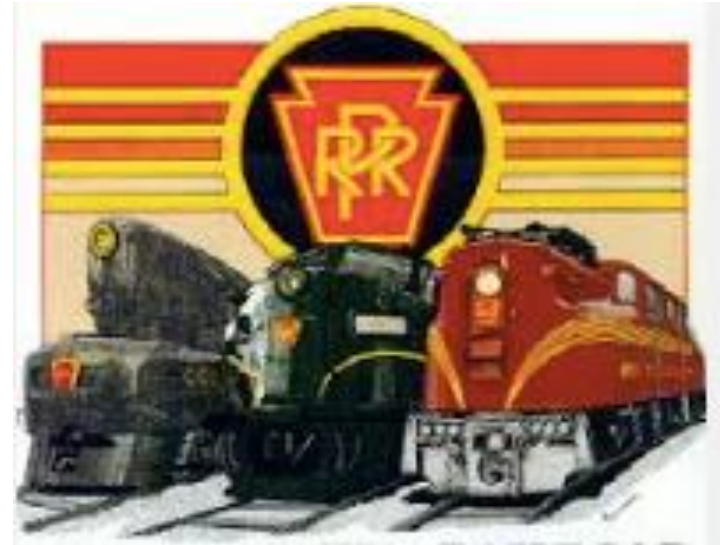
What happened?

Why did the mighty Pennsylvania RR fail?

- People began to favor cars and planes.
- Freight could often be moved more economically by truck.

Or, was there a fundamental reason the once-great Pennsylvania Railroad slipped into oblivion?

(And became a square on the Monopoly board?)



If 2 R.R.'s are owned	50.
If 3 " " "	100.
If 4 " " "	200.
Mortgage Value	\$100.

A comparison: McDonald's

- Started in 1940; soon dominates hamburger sales.
- But is McDonald's in the business of selling hamburgers, fries and shakes?
- No.

**Despite selling hamburgers,
it is not in the hamburger
business.**

It is in the food business.



- Early 1960s adds fillet-o-fish.
- Egg McMuffin is added in 1972 and a full line of breakfasts in 1977. By 1987 one-fourth of all breakfasts eaten out in the U.S. came from McDonald's.
- First chicken product in 1980. In 1983, McDonald's becomes the second largest retailer of chicken in the world.



**McDonalds is successful
because it knows it isn't
in the hamburger
business**

It is in the food business

So, what business are we in? What do we sell?

- We are not in the newspaper business.
- We have never been in the newspaper business. (Although we didn't know that.)
- So, now we're in the newspaper and digital business, right?
- Wrong.
- Our business is, and always been, to gather and distribute news, information and advertising; to engage and enable communities.
- We do this on multiple platforms now, including
 - WPEC-TV
 - Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival
 - El Sentinel
 - Jewish Journal
 - New interactive products
 - Hulu



Creating The New Digital

- Off-site meeting (at a local beach resort, of course) and subsequent meetings in the office, established the philosophy, but not a workflow or specific job duties.
- Anne Vasquez, one of the managing editors at the time, was charged with establishing the work flow and job duties, and for putting the plan together.
- Print production is entirely disrupted. But safeguards are put into effect to ensure print product is not harmed.
- The underlying premise is that content-creation desks determine the best way to inform and interact with readers. They do not worry about the “needs” of any platform. The needs that matter are those of the reader.
- Vasquez met with each of eight departments (Metro, Business News, Sports, Features/Entertainment, Photo/Video, Opinion, Copy/Production Desk, Audience Development) to establish specific shifts, job duties and responsibilities.



Workflow: Content-creation desks

- Write/edit stories
- Write/edit blog posts
- Create photo galleries
- Create videos
- Create polls
- Aggregate
- Send text alerts
- Create and update social media
- Program SunSentinel.com/SouthFlorida.com
- Add sharelines, geocoding, SEO, thumbnails and other related elements.



Workflow: Budgeting and planning

- Reporters/content editors create folders in front-end system.
- Reporters/content editors use folders in front-end system to assign photos/videos.
- In breaking-news situations, reporters/content editors to work in CMS first, but then for later updates, create folders in front-end system.
- Reporters/content editors create online packages only.
- Production desk creates print packages only.
- Nothing in print should override online or be exported to online.
- Links to other stories, galleries, etc. should be added to budgetlines.
- Daily distribution of budgets continues at 9:30, 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.
- 9:30 news meeting remains, focused exclusively on digital and trending topics.
- 11:45 a.m. news meeting, at which front page was planned, is eliminated. Production and design editors make decisions. They can solicit input.
- 3:30 news meeting, at which front page lineup and section leads were confirmed, continues. But it is a brief meeting around production desk.

Workflow: Print production

- Determine, in early afternoon, candidates for front pages and section fronts.
- Production leader goes from being re-active to pro-active, assuming role performed by editors from Metro, Business, etc.
- If unsatisfied with potential front-page and section-front selections, act. (Doing so earlier than before.)
- Pull pictures, identify wire stories, get MoDs and put them on pages
- Write headlines, proof
- Choose stories for specific news holes throughout print sections.
- Production editors identified for: Showtime, Food, Travel, Go, Local (Broward and Palm Beach counties), Business, Sports, Editorial/Opinion
- Designated production editors communicate with wire services, ad layout.
- Zoning handled by production editors, with the exception of stories that require vastly different versions. Those are requested from content desks.
- If production managers believe something should be in print and it is not in a form suitable for print, they can ask for a narrative story, still photo, non-interactive graphic, etc.

Workflow: Design Desk

- Working with production editor, start front page in early afternoon
- Working with production editor, ensure proper elements for section fronts.
- Showtime (weekly entertainment tab) cover
- Lifestyle (entire production work)
- Food cover
- Travel cover and Page 3.
- El Sentinel
- Special sections
- Graphics reporter starts earlier to work on digital graphics. Which may be adapted for print. (It had been the other way around.)
- Digital designer continues to work on digital presentations, breaking and long-term.



Narrative text not always best for readers

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OPINION

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EL SENTINEL

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ADVERTISE

BRAND EXTRA

SHOP

PARTNER SITES

PRIVACY POLICY

TERMS

Quiz: Which 'Love Boat' character are you?



SHOW CAPTION

1 / 24

By Johnny Diaz, Nick Sortal
contact the reporters

NOVEMBER 3, 2014

What's your theme song?

• "Leader of the Pack," the Shangri-Las

• "Smooth operator," Sade

• "You Got It," Roy Orbison

• "I'm Your Best Friend," Queen

• "I Will Survive," Gloria Gaynor

• "Young Americans," David Bowie

• "Conga," Gloria Estefan

You're likely to fall in love...

• At a leadership seminar

• While checking someone's rash

• On an errand

• Over a nice cocktail, perfectly shaken

• While helping him/her pick up opened, spilled

• At the malt shop

• By choosing the most handsome of a posse

What are you most likely doing on a Saturday?

• Calling my kids to make sure they're OK and

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Lifestyle

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Business / Black Friday

Black Friday Guide 2014



Shoppers buy up televisions once they make it to the register at BrandsMart. (Jan Passaro / Sun Sentinel)

By Miriam Valverde
contact the reporter

NOVEMBER 27, 2014, 7:29 AM

Search:

Store	Opening	Valet Parking	Closing	Address
Aventura Mall	6 p.m. Thanksgiving	Yes	12 a.m. Friday, reopen at 6 a.m.	19501 Biscayne Blvd., Aventura
Bass Pro Shops	8 a.m. Thanksgiving			
Best Buy	6 p.m. Thanksgiving			
Best Buy	5 p.m. Thanksgiving			
Big Lots	7 a.m. Thanksgiving			
BJ's Wholesale Club	7 a.m. Friday			
Boynton Beach Mall	6 p.m. Thanksgiving	No	1 a.m. Friday, reopen at 6 a.m.	801 N. Congress Ave., Boynton Beach
BrandsMart USA	4 p.m. Thanksgiving			
Coral Ridge Mall	6 a.m. Friday	No	10 p.m. Friday	3200 N. Federal Highway, Fort Lauderdale
Coral Square Mall	6 p.m. Thanksgiving	No	10 p.m. Friday	9469 W. Atlantic Blvd., Coral Springs
Costco	9 a.m. Friday			
Delray Marketplace	10 a.m. Friday	Yes	10 p.m. Friday	4851 Lyons Road, Delray Beach
Dick's Sporting Goods	5 p.m. Thanksgiving			
GameStop	12 a.m. Friday			
H.H. Gregg	4 a.m. Thanksgiving			

Visual Browse

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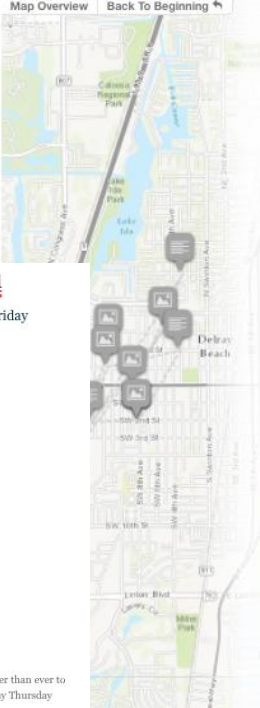
HEALTH


Delray Beach feud sparks shootings

By Cindy Jones-Hulfachor, Kate Jacobson
contact the reporters

OCTOBER 31, 2014, 12:25 AM

Map Overview Back To Beginning





Joe Cavaretta/Sun Sentinel

The Rev. Prince Ararat is seen in Pompano Park, the middle of an area of feuding neighbors. Ararat is trying to make peace.

Delray Beach feud sparks string of shootings

Three longtime Delray Beach families in two camps have been feuding during the past five years. And since May, the feud has led to two killings and at least 14 shootings, police say. The most recent shooting happened Oct. 19, leaving a 6-year-old girl wounded.

HOW SHOOTINGS UNFOLDED

SunSentinel

Ask about once-daily NAMENDA XR for moderate-to-severe Alzheimer's disease.

Learn more

There is no evidence that NAMENDA XR prevents or slows the underlying disease or improves symptoms with Alzheimer's disease.

IMPORTANT RISK INFORMATION

Before starting NAMENDA XR, talk to the healthcare provider about all of the patient's past and present medical conditions, including:

• Seizure disorders

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Biggest successes

- **More copy.** The metro, features and business-news staffs are producing more stories than will fit in print. Previously, print used a fair amount of non-local filler.
- **Ownership/focus.** People know what their jobs are and can better focus their priorities. On the production desk, there's newfound ownership of assembling/presenting the paper. They get to make decisions.
- **Budgeting.** We are way better (not perfect) at budgeting stories and content. We have to be, since a production desk is coming in cold.
- **Earlier deadlines.** Writers and editors have adapted to earlier and rolling deadlines. It means everyone is working more efficiently. We've tried to move up deadlines for years without success. Not until we divorced print production duties from content creation were we able to finally move the needle.
- **Better reporting for, and engagement with, readers.**



Biggest surprises

- The ease with which reporters and editors were able to adjust to earlier deadlines.
- How broadly embraced it has been by most in the newsroom. Once folks saw what it meant in action, the more they liked it.



Biggest problems

- We anticipated that the production desk would have a big adjustment, and we prepared for that. In hindsight, we should have prepared even more. We should have had production editors working alongside assigning editors before launching this initiative, to learn how to plan and book sections smartly, efficiently and strategically.
- The perception that leadership doesn't care about print.
- Foosball-gate.



What keeps me up at night?

- We're encouraging more forms that bypass editors: tweets, blog posts, live webcasts, podcasts, email newsletters with original content
- We're encouraging forms that specifically seek to riff, tweak, get snarky.
 - Twitter can be a wonderful tool (Arab Spring; riots in Ferguson)
 - But you can cause harm (tweet about governor about to be indicted becomes national news, but is false; Freelancer for ESPN tweets in bad taste.)
- Not only do these forms of journalism carry inherent risk, but most editors were trained to do other forms.
- Speed = less time to edit.
- Budgets have to be perfect.

What I've learned

- We were able to make this change because our staff learned three years ago to be “digital first.” By the time this initiative was introduced:
 - They already knew the CMS
 - They already knew how to read and use user data
 - They already knew how to use digital tools effectively
 - They just needed to be liberated
- The news budget is essential. So is “walking the room.”
- Declare your love of print.
- We can no longer hire anyone whose basic grammar, punctuation and word-usage skills are less than perfect. We can no longer hire anyone who doesn't understand fairness and libel. It's too easy to go directly from reporter to reader.



QUESTIONS?



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