EBU

OPERATING EUROVISION AND EURORADIO

50 WAYS TO MAKE IT BETTER

NEWS REPORT 2018

Building audience and trust

ABOUT THE EBU

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is the world's leading alliance of public service media (PSM). We have 119 member organizations in 56 countries in Europe, and an additional 34 Associates in Asia, Africa, Australasia and the Americas. Our Members operate over 2,000 television, radio and online channels and services, and offer a wealth of content across other platforms. Together they reach an audience of more than one billion people around the world, broadcasting in more than 160 languages. The EBU operates Eurovision and Euroradio services.

AUTHORSHIP

AUTHORS

ATTE JÄÄSKELÄINEN

Is a Professor of Practice at LUT University, Finland, and Senior Advisor at Fourkind; an advisory company on artificial intelligence and digital business models. He's also a Visiting Fellow at LSE, co-directing a research project on the future of national news agencies in Europe. He is the former Director of News and Current Affairs at the Finnish Broadcasting Company, Yle, having previously served as CEO and Editor in Chief for the Finnish News Agency, and as Political and Business Editor for Finland's leading daily paper. He recently served as a Visiting Fellow for the Reuters Institute in Oxford.

MAIKE OLIJ

Is a journalism consultant and media innovator at ./bureaumaike. With a background in Communication Science, Maike has worked in journalism for 12 years, primarily at the Dutch public service broadcasters NPO and NOS. She has done extensive research into people's motivations for consuming news, which culminated in her 2016 book, Why we need news? Maike now develops new journalistic formats and gives strategic media advice to media organizations, journalism foundations and (local) governments.

Isabel Woodford assisted the authors in the research and writing of the report. She is a freelance journalist, having previously reported for Reuters in Madrid and London. She currently works at the Reuters Institute in Oxford as a research assistant. She has a Bachelors in War Studies from King's College London and a Master of Philosophy from the University of Oxford.

EBU TEAM

Justyna Kurczabinska leads the Eurovision News Exchange and News Strategy at the EBU. Since 2017, she has also overseen the Public Service Journalism Initiative aimed at strengthening and supporting independent trusted news that includes the Report.

Jeff Dubin is Head of News and Events at the EBU, overseeing the EBU's news output. Prior to joining the EBU he was an Emmy award winning producer at CBS News, based in New York and London.

Luis Jimenez has been operational project liaison. He works for the EBU as News External Relations Manager.

Ed Mulhall is an editorial advisor and consultant with 40 years' experience in broadcast and news media. He was previously Managing Director of RTE News, Ireland, as well as a television and radio producer, and editor. He now advises the EBU, leading their EVN Rules project.

TONY HALL

Tony Hall, EBU President-elect and BBC Director General, says that a democracy that can't rely on access to the truth is a democracy undermined.

"Public service journalism matters more than ever – journalism that's on the side of the viewer, the listener, trying to make sense of a world littered with disinformation – from false information, to opinion dressed as fact, to downright lies. The challenges are the same wherever you are and the answer must surely be to work together to fight for accuracy, for journalism, and for democracy itself."

"At the BBC we seek to be a beacon of trust, to offer independent, impartial reporting based on first-hand accounts and specialist analysis. What this report shows is just how important those values are – and how much can be done to secure the future of truth."

NOEL CURRAN

Noel Curran, EBU Director General, points out the very high levels of trust the vast majority of EBU Members enjoy but also warns that this hard-earned trust should not be taken for granted.

"Journalism is a very difficult profession at the moment, but it has never been as important. We need to continue to invest heavily in journalism and continue to prioritize it within our schedules and within our digital output. We need to invest in journalistic training. We need to invest in areas like fact-checking. We need to invest in investigative journalism. PSM is trusted more than other media and significantly more than social media and we accept the responsibilities around that trust. We accept the responsibilities around investing in non-commercial forms of journalism - journalism that is expensive but has a huge public value."

"I feel everyone involved in journalism needs to stand back and ask: Have our standards shifted? How much have they shifted? Are we all happy with that?
I think there is a constant need for honest open debate in public service media newsrooms, not just about the story of the day but about the danger of how professional journalism can be driven by social media, by repeating other people's speculation, accusations."

"We may be happy with our answers when we ask ourselves those questions. But as this report shows we need to ask them - journalism is just too important not to."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EBU News Report 2018, '50 ways to make it better', published at EBU News Assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland, in November 2018, highlights practical and concrete solutions and 50 real examples on building engagement and trust in public service journalism.

In several European countries, creeping polarisation has threatened the independence of public service journalism and in some public trust has started to erode. Audiences are on the move and media habits are changing systematically. And more people feel disconnected from news altogether.

The authors suggest that journalistic organisations should defend themselves when they are attacked. Declining trust has sometimes fuelled hostile, unfair attacks against the media. When improperly managed, these critiques may be - and sometimes are - dangerous for the very democracy that public service aims to defend.

"Face the criticism openly and respond but don't fuel the fire. Be transparent about mistakes, create alliances, communicate your journalistic practices and values, and promote media literacy", are among the 25 recommendations the authors give, with concrete examples of best practices mostly from Europe.

The report proposes actions to be undertaken in several fields affecting public trust and engagement: New media habits, societal change, eroding professional standards and the threat of political contamination and declining willingness to be represented by any institution.

They highlight ways in which the new technologies can be harnessed to assist the engagement with the audience rather than just seen as a threatening disrupter. For example, it pays off to actively include audience perspectives in strategic decision making, even if that means radical innovation and breaking journalistic taboos.

They also remind that a more critical audience may sometimes be a good thing: "Declining trust may also be a sign showing that the audience is more sceptical in a healthy way."

To find the best solutions the authors first critically examined the challenges with some of the leading experts in the media field and then surveyed 62 of the senior executives in public service media to get their perspective on workable solutions. During the process, they collected around 150 proposals for solutions for the problems identified from both within public media and outside. Finally, 50 of the best, from 24 countries, were selected and presented in the report together with insights from those involved.

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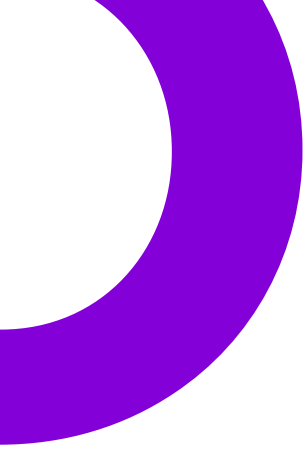


01 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

01

"We are not talking about challenges anymore. This is a real threat."

Atte Jääskeläinen

"We're talking too much about challenges, we need to see more opportunities."

Maike Olij

What is the state of Public Service Media (PSM) news in Europe in 2018? The European Broadcasting Union asked two former public service journalism professionals to reflect on this question: Atte Jääskeläinen and Maike Olij.

That's us.

When we took on the assignment of the EBU, we looked at a landscape in turmoil.

In Switzerland, the very existence of public service was questioned by means of a popular vote. In Denmark, the government decided to cut its PSM funding by 20 percent. And in several other countries, creeping polarisation has threatened the independence of public service journalism.

Although trust in public service news is still high in most European countries, it's not in some areas. Populism and extreme movements, from both the left and right, have accused public service companies of bias, while some governments have taken a tighter grip on them, eroding the public's trust.

Audiences are on the move: from traditional mass media to online platforms. And it's not just the young that are moving; media habits are changing systematically.

People feel more and more disconnected with news altogether, feeling that it represents a world they don't live in, or don't want to live in.

So what can you do? How can you survive amid this unrest?

We really wanted to focus on solutions. On giving you inspiring, practical tools on how you are able to solve issues.

In order to do that, we set out on a journey. The result of our it is this report: 50 ways to make it better.

A report full of stories of media professionals who have built trust and engagement with public service news with their own actions: inspiring stories that we hope show you the opportunities there are in your profession.

Atte Jääskeläinen **Maike Olij**

IN OUR JOURNEY, WE APPLIED THE FOLLOWING METHODOLOGY:

1. We began with desk research, building on our existing professional expertise.

   A full list of all the sources we used is at the end of this document.

2. After that, we conducted a survey among 62 EBU news executives.

   In 27 questions, we asked editor in chiefs, heads of news departments and other news executives within the membership how they felt about audience engagement and trust. They were asked to self-reflect on their profession, flag the topics that concern them most and suggest possible solutions.

3. Then we conducted interviews with leading media academics.

   The academics we interviewed include:

   Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford, Great Britain.

   Irene Costera Meijer, professor of Journalism Studies at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

   Kim Schrøder, Professor of Communication at the Roskilde University, Denmark.

   Thomas Hanitzsch, professor of Communication Science at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany.

   Emily Bell, Director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, United States.

   Alexander Görlach, founder of the European and adviser to the F. D. Roosevelt Foundation at Harvard University.

   Although most of the academics featured here are from Northern and Western parts of Europe, we tried hard to talk to a broad and diverse selection of media experts. Still, to counter this geographic imbalance, we made an effort to also include written sources from other parts of the continent.

4. Besides academics, we also collected valuable insights from practicing news experts at the EBU News Contacts Meeting, the Editors in Chief meeting and the RIPE Conference 2018.

5. And finally, we talked to people who had themselves tried to find practical solutions.

   From a long list of 150 cases, we selected 50 that represented a broad and diverse scope of solutions to the problems faced. For each case, we interviewed the person who was in charge of the project. These were CEO's, editor in chiefs and heads of department, but also digital editors, audience insights researchers and start-up owners. Their names and contact details are listed in the report, so you can contact them for additional information.

   Once again, it was harder to get information from Eastern and Southern parts of Europe. We can't tell if organisations and people in these parts are more modest or shy, but we do know that there are equally inspiring stories to tell from there.

There is a lot of diversity in media and there are major differences from country to country. Many of our findings deal with the more digitally advanced jurisdictions. We hope, though, that media professionals from other countries can also find inspiration in the presented cases.

WHAT ACTUALLY IS TRUST?

In this report, we talk a great deal about trust. But what is trust, really? And how do we distinguish it from trustworthiness?

We understand "trust" as a bilateral relationship, comprised of various components:

> It is built on past experiences, creating expectations about how an institution or person will act, 'Trusting' involves risk and uncertainty as the intentions of the trustee are not fully known or controllable.

In the media sphere, audiences' main risk rests in their limited ability to verify facts or unbiasedness themselves. So they come to expect truth, based on their previous experiences, and coherent selection of topics, facts and accurate depictions and journalistic assessment, as well.

In other words, trustworthiness is a prerequisite to being trusted. But that's not enough. Trust in an interpersonal thing. That means it's possible to trust someone who is not trustworthy, just as it is possible not to trust someone who is trustworthy.[1]

02

THE VALUE OF NEWS: ON TRIAL

02

THE VALUE OF NEWS: ON TRIAL

News in the era of the digital boom and audiences' changing needs.

Over the last decade, one of the most significant audience migrations in history has occurred: the shift from television, radio and newspapers to mobile. From watching live to on demand.

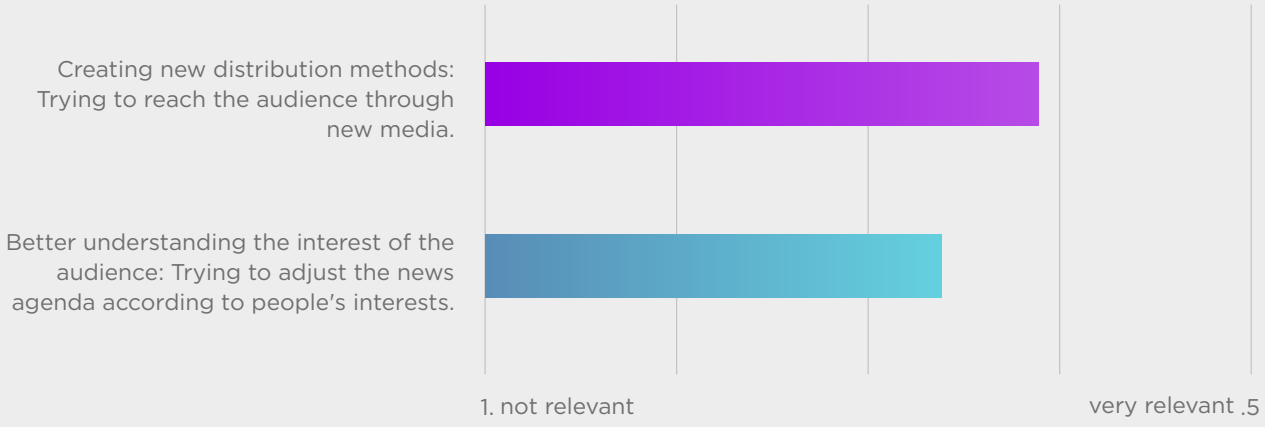
The speed in this shift has varied between countries, and traditional media certainly still hold appeal for some groups. But, to us, it seems clear that everything is becoming digital and digital is becoming everything.

It's too simple to state that it's just the young that are moving online - all audiences have been influenced in some form or another by the digital shift. Because the shift is not just about the platform people choose to consume media with. It's a mind shift, a cultural change. The whole way we think about media has changed.

So, what are the main changes that you need to consider?

The news managers of the EBU membership are very well aware of the need to move along this migration. In the survey we conducted, more than 80% of respondents said that *'creating new distribution methods and trying to reach the audience through new media (online, mobile, social)'* is very important. And that the best way to improve the connection with the audience is to invest in new online formats.

Q1 There are different approaches to improve the connection with the audience of PSM news. To what extent do you think the following two approaches are strategically relevant?



Source: Expert survey for EBU News Report 2018

DIVERSE CONSUMPTION

It is often said that news audiences are declining. But, actually, media consumption and even consumption of news has increased. What has really declined are the ratings of individual news products, especially on traditional platforms.[1]

In part, this is because there is simply much more choice on offer and people are using more sources to inform themselves. The 2018 Reuters Digital News Report states that 47% of people use two or more news outlets.[2] *"Where before people relied on one or two sources, they now often have a 'news loop'",* says Irene Costera Meijer, professor of Journalism Studies at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. *"In this loop, they check three or four news sources, usually in a fixed order."* This means that organisations' audiences often overlap: people consume brand A, but also brand B.

People's habits with intermediaries have also had an effect; when you check your timeline, you see both brand A and B (and C and D). This means that people spend less time with one particular brand and have a diluted connection with single organisations. *"People switch between brands with great ease,"* says Costera Meijer. *"This does not mean they are less loyal, but that they are in a polyamorous relationship."* Except, that is, in times of crisis, when people still tend to favour the strongest brand.

This diverse consumption is actually a good thing from the audience's perspective. It often leads to being a more informed citizen, and people with a diverse media consumption also show more trust in media and in society.[3]

But diverse consumption is a challenge for individual brands.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS AND PRACTICAL BENEFITS

What makes people decide what source they will choose?

Media researcher Joëlle Swart identified six main reasons for choosing a particular news source.[4] Besides obvious reasons like accessibility and familiarity with the medium, they reflect on the 'relative advantage' a news outlet needs to have. This means that for the user, the benefits must outweigh the costs (money, time, effort or supplying personal data). It must be 'worth it'. As Gregory Lowe, Director of the communication programme at the Northwestern University in Qatar, argues in his paper *What Value and Which Values,* 'for people, the choice of a news brand is based much more often on very practical grounds, on the utility value.'[5]

And it seems that this practical value, is even more important today. if anything, the digitalisation of news has led to more critical consumers. And what is often mistaken for disinterest is actually proof of their rising expectations and their preference for practical value - meaning highly relevant news. "The attention will be there if the offering is good enough," says Anders Hofseth, strategic advisor and acting editor of NRKbeta department at NRK, Norway.

However, Emily Bell, Director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, notes, *"there simply isn't the time (and money) to live up to those high expectations. At the beginning of digital, there was the perception that digital would be, compared to print, quick and cheap. But this has not proven to be the case. For all different digital outlets you need to develop specific formats and products, for which you need quite specific skills."*

So the choice that the audience makes is often a practical one, and they have high standards. This is something commercial media have already recognised, by making their products more practical. *"We as organizations are still old... even the young people are socialised into an ancient newsroom culture. And thus the newsrooms themselves often still uphold some values from the 1960s,"* says Anders Hofseth.

FROM MASS TO ME

One of the expectations that came with the digital migration, is that the news should be tailored to fit one's personal interests. People are getting used to being catered for as individuals, and not being part of the masses. Spotify makes a personalised music playlist, Netflix chooses the best drama productions and Amazon selects the books that best fit your previous purchases. And many of the recently-launched news brands also offer personalised content.

That personalised news is growing in importance, can be seen in the survey the Reuters Institute conducted for their 2016 Digital News Report.[6] Here, more people said they prefer personalised recommendations as a way of accessing news than editorial selections or suggestions based on social recommendations. *"When it comes to getting news, most people trust themselves more than they trust journalists."*

But, as with any trend, there is also a countereffect. With the growth of more personalised content, there is also a growing need for shared stories. And the characteristics of the digital media make it possible for "the mass" to be even bigger than before; the whole world can be talking about the same story. *"The way stories work in a digitalised environment is that big stories get huge, and there is a big undergrowth,"* says Kim Schrøder, Professor of Communication at the Roskilde University, Denmark.

WHAT IS NEW(S)?

"Before, news was what we aired basically," says Marcel Gelauff, editor in chief of the Dutch NOS Nieuws. In the former era of media scarcity, news organisations had a monopoly on what defined news content.

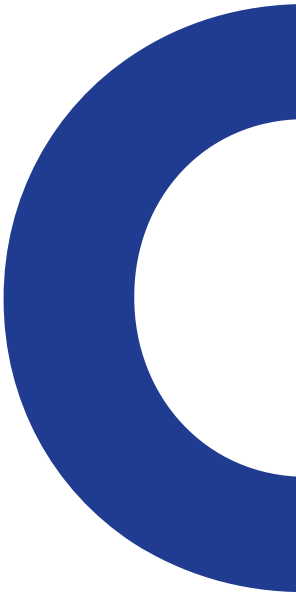
But this position has drastically changed: now news is everybody's game. Digital intermediaries (search engines and social media) don't clearly distinguish the quality or author of the content; 'news' is whatever appears on your timeline, ranging from family updates to viral videos and opinion articles.

And in the scramble for engagement, news organisations themselves have also started mixing in 'soft' or 'opinionated' news into their online service. *"The distinction between a news and debate programme, for example, is often somewhat eluded on [social media] platforms, in part because of the decision of the companies that run them,"* explains Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Ironically, studies show that people still define journalism as a 'formal' field expected to provide 'independent, reliable, truthful, comprehensive information' that supports democracy.[7] The audience also thinks it's important that journalism adheres to 'particular standards, such as being accurate'.[8]

But their consumption patterns tell a different story. Here, people mix formal journalism with content that does not adhere to the same professional standards. Media researcher Joëlle Swart explains, *"the boundaries people draw between 'news' and other information are shifting."*[9] Checking your timeline becomes checking the news. And when you feel you have seen everything there was to see in your timeline, you are up to date. There is no urge to also check formal journalistic sources.

This has had two key implications: first, the content that news organisations produce is not always considered 'news' by the audience, and second, the content that the audience perceives as news is not always produced by news organisations.



DIFFICULTY IN NAVIGATING THE INFORMATION OVERLOAD

With so many news brands on offer, the choice can be overwhelming. And media outlets are not making it easier, producing as much content as they can for each platform. The result may be that some people are switching off, because they are overwhelmed.

"One of the things I really worry about at the moment, is volume. I think we are doing a disservice with the amount of stuff we're putting out. Rather than doing 5 or 10 stories per day, and that's it, we do 200, 300. If you're putting out close to 10,000 items per month, most of it won't be good, original journalism, and the important stories will risk drowning in the noise," says Hofseth of NRK.

It's easy to forget that people are not as focused on news as those in the journalistic profession. *"There is a tendency among journalists and editors to believe that people's consumption habits are the same as their own. They think everybody checks the news 10 times a day."* But most people don't. And as the production flow is constant, people miss the context and balance when they do check.
On the other, hand however, as audiences are spread across various platforms, it's not always clear what people have consumed where, so it is hard to offer the right level of detail and information on each.

MISLED BY DATA

The digital migration has also given us a great new tool: data. Data about audience behaviour, data you can feed algorithms, and data that shows how successful news products are. But the new focus on data can be a wolf in sheep's clothing if insufficient attention is given to putting this data into context.

"I think, in terms of building knowledge, there should be a happier marriage between the big behavioural data and the contextualising data." (Schrøder)

Because what does data tell us? Take clicks, for example. These are often used as an indicator for success, but often clicks do not correlate with genuine interest. Media researchers Tim Groot Kormelink and Irene Costera Meijer identified no fewer than 16 reasons for people to click on an article, including simply to get clarity on a story when a title is too unclear.[10] *"I think that the ranking of news topics that comes out of the "most-read" count is not an accurate reflection of what people are really interested in,"* confirms Schrøder, suggesting it takes excessive precedence in editorial decisions.

There is another side to this as well; (most) people are really bad with numbers, meaning most journalists find it hard to interpret them. If there are, let's say, 2,000 responses to a post on social media, this might feel like a lot, when in reality this is just a fragment of the audience. Again, these numbers can determine strategic choices, which can be a pitfall.

02 WAYS TO MAKE IT BETTER

Selection of possible solutions and our recommendations

The digital migration has already happened. It will only increase and the past will not return. So you must be better at working with the situation as it is, as various EBU members have successfully done using different strategies.

1. INCLUDE THE 'NEW WORLD ORDER' IN YOUR STRATEGIC PROCESS
Let the audience, with their new mindset, needs and definitions of news, help you shape the organisation and outline the core focus.

VALUE FOR ICELAND
When the time to develop a new five-year strategy came about, Iceland's RÚV decided to take a truly holistic approach and ask all stakeholders in its ecosystem to provide feedback on the public service broadcaster and share what they would like to see in future. All of this input was combined into a strategy that puts Icelandic society front and centre.

VISION 2022
RTBF is implementing a new strategy, changing the way it develops new content.

2. FIND AUDIENCES THAT LOVE YOU
In today's news media landscape, there is more polyamory than monogamy. Therefore an interesting strategy could be to build exclusive relationships, to find audiences that love you and are committed to you. But, for public service media, this is a tricky strategy. This is because one of the values of public service is universalism, meaning that they need to serve all - even those who are not even that interested in news.

But in order to stay alive, all news organisations need some audiences that love them because these audiences will fight for their existence, and will prove that they are needed. Perhaps this is one of their tactics then rather than a strategy. A tactic in which different audiences are identified and each approached in their own way. Good examples can be found in newspapers and new online platforms, where the 'layered approach' has proven successful, for example in The Guardian and De Correspondent.

RECLAIMING JOURNALISM
The Swiss online magazine Republik is co-owned by its readers, who have a say in the election of board members, vote on annual reports and choose council members. The brand promotes 'no-bullshit journalism' and upholds independence and transparency as its key values.

CITIZEN VIDEOS OF UMBRIA
The Italian public broadcaster RAI's regional base in Umbria, located in the beautiful town of Perugia, collects daily videos shot by citizens, which it shows in its 20-minute lunchtime TV newscast. These videos are also posted on Facebook as a way to connect with younger viewers.

PORTUGAL LIVE
Covering human-interest news stories has proven to be a success for Portuguese national television. This is partly down to the regional offices' ability to identify interesting local topics from all over the country and report on them in an upbeat manner.

3. TACKLE INFORMATION OVERFLOW
In a world of news overload, you can truly add value to your audience by helping them filter it. There have been a lot of initiatives around helping readers keep track of all the news out there, with the Dutch startup Blendle being a leading example. They gather news articles from all the national newspapers and rebundle them into a concise package for their members. Newsletters are also a good example of limiting the offering.

NEWS THAT YOU CONTROL
With their app launching in January 2019, Kinzen is aiming to help people fight information overload by refining their news consumption through personalized, relevant content. They focus on young audiences that are taking news seriously for the first time but can't find the content they need. There is no proof that the Kinzen app is a 'success' story yet, but the case shows clear direction for handling this issue.

DISCOVER
The Discover app of WNYC is making it possible for people to download a personalized news playlist, which they can listen to anywhere they want. This feature is especially appealing to "brand lovers".

4. INNOVATE RADICALLY AND TRY NEW THINGS
To truly ride the wave of the new world, traditional media need to radically innovate. Startups and fresh news outlets are constantly entering the stage, upping the stakes daily. They initially lack reach and the advantages of a strong brand name, but it will be only a matter of time before they have replaced the old world order.

In order to keep up, public service news media need to drastically rethink their offering and start working on new formats and solutions. And as audiences' expectations have risen, they need to develop some pretty great things in order to impress.

You need to also be able to stop doing things. It's psychologically much easier to start doing something than to stop doing something, especially for public service, because of the outcry every closure causes.

But, as several experts have expressed, PSMs are also in a good position. Like Rasmus Kleis Nielsen says: *"The BBC is getting four billion pounds a year from the license fee, which gives you a rather robust space for trying to think about the future of public service delivery. And this is not a luxury that most commercial providers have. So I am empathetic to the challenges faced, but I wouldn't want to go overboard."*

NEWS LABS
Good examples of innovation can be found in the various news labs of the EBU members. The NOS News Lab brings together multidisciplinary teams for short projects, working with new technologies and testing out new storytelling methods. The Lab tries not only to innovate its

output but also shakes up the internal newsroom culture.

NOVI
Through Novi, ARD-Aktuell is offering the more passive (younger) news audience bite-sized news portions on the platform they are already using: Facebook Messenger.

NOUVO
SSR, the French-language Swiss broadcaster, created an online video news service for younger audiences called Nouvo. The platform has its own editorial style and theme, based on topics and formats that resonate most with its viewers. Now a market frontrunner, its producers' willingness to take risks and explore new production methods has been key to its success.

PODCASTS SLOVENIA
Podcasts are increasing engagement between RTVSLO and its audience. And by focusing on various aspects of storytelling, traditional journalists are challenged to reconsider their habits and routines.

5. MAKE THE TOOLS OF THE NEW WORLD WORK FOR YOU
The principles of the 'new world' are not inherently threats; they can also be applied to serve the public interest.

PUBLIC SERVICE ALGORITHMS
Discussions about how public service algorithms should operate are complex and sometimes heated. The best answers are to be found by experimenting. The BBC tries to balance page views and engagement with novelty, relevance and diversity.

VOITTO THE ROBOT
In Finland, they introduced a computer to do 'simple' content creation. Voitto's main job is fairly standard for a robot, namely writing stories that no one else has time to. Voitto can write articles about sports events and elections. But one thing makes Voitto special: he is personified as an animated character, even signing off his stories.

BLOCKCHAIN FOR TRUST
Civil Media Company hopes to build a self-governing authorization network for high-quality news organizations (echoing the peer review system used by blockchain), and aims to support the network through the sale of cryptocurrency. Although cryptoeconomics and blockchain may be difficult topics to master, public service companies should follow them closely. It may change the role of middlemen (like advertising companies and even news organizations), open up diverse revenue opportunities, and create novel ways to determine whether news organizations are credible.

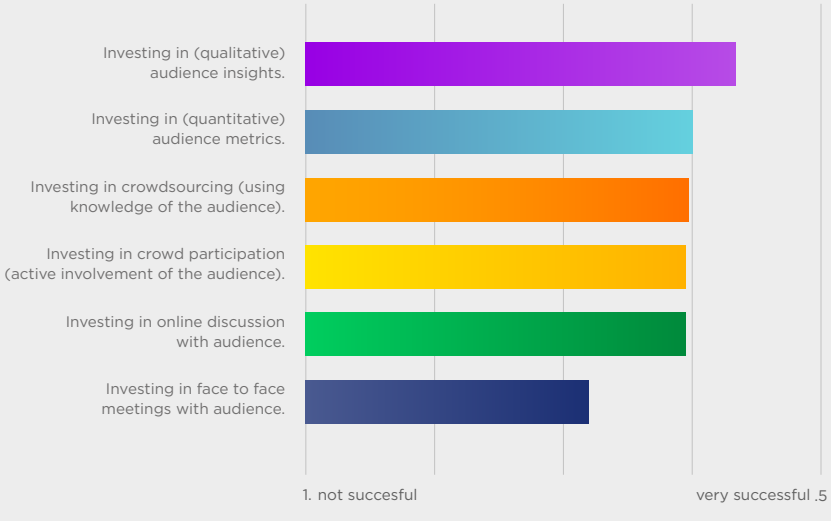
SOCIAL MEDIA VERIFICATION
Deutsche Welle is one of the few organizations that collaborate globally to verify social media and other digital content. It created a cloud-based system to support its efforts, which is now also used by the human rights organization Amnesty International.

6. CONTEXTUALISE THE DATA
As data is the gold of today, you need to make sure you actually gather the right information: that you measure what you think you are measuring and that you can rely on the data to make informed decisions. The best way to improve data is to add insights from qualitative sources. "You can have the big pictures from the big data, but you also need individuals' permission to track them on their mobile phones during the day," says Kim Schrøder.

LEARN FROM INFOTAINMENT
The BBC's research department used a threefold strategy to provide the main television news bulletin with the insights they need to stay relevant in the future. One of the tactics was to carry out a content analysis of popular infotainment programs, to determine what successful characteristics can be adopted for news.

Fortunately, EBU news executives are largely aware of the need for more qualitative inputs to enlighten their quantitative metrics. Indeed, 'investing in qualitative audience insights' was the most selected option out of six ways to build a better relationship with the audience in our survey. The case 'Learn from entertainment' is one example of putting this into action.

Q4 Regarding understanding audiences in the production of news, in your opinion, how successful are the following means in building a better relationship with the audience?



Source: Expert survey for EBU News Report 2018

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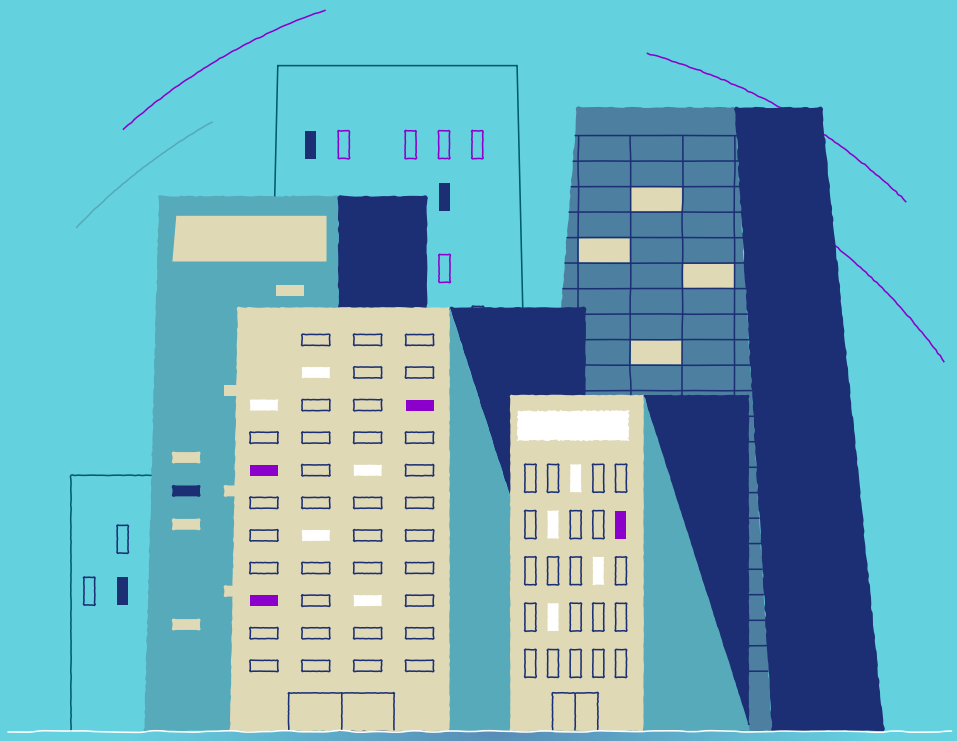
IT'S A MORE POLARIZED WORLD



03

IT'S A MORE POLARIZED WORLD

The world is full of people asking who they are, joining tribes with strong identities

***"I call this period a time and age of identity. You find a reinvigorated interest in who we are and why we are who we are."*- Alexander Görlach.**

So the media have changed. But as the media are a central pillar of society, we can't look at the changes in news without looking also at the shifts in society.

So how and what are the main changes, in our eyes?

US VS. THEM

In large parts of the world, anti-globalisation, eurosceptic, nationalistic, and anti-immigration sentiments have gained ground, and populist parties have increased their support in elections. Together with rising income inequality, populist anger and disinformation campaigns, a turbulent political climate has emerged.

"I call this period a time of identity. You see a reinvigorated interest in the question of who we are and why we are who we are. This search for identity is reflected in society and politics, and recurs in waves", says Alexander Görlach, founder of the European and adviser to the F. D. Roosevelt Foundation at Harvard University.

The search for identity comes with the forming of groups with strong links. *"To say very broadly, it usually comes with a very severe 'us vs. them' rhetoric, which means you reassert your own group by defining the other",* says Görlach.

People are questioning the very existential and fundamental question of who belongs in our society. Who should even be considered part of the people? Who should even have access to living on our territory, let alone access to welfare benefits?

ARE THE MEDIA TAKING SIDES?

In turn, the media have reported on and influenced this identity search in different ways.

"In some societies, journalists have been very inclusive of views that were once considered quite extreme in these issues. In other societies, they have constrained themselves to the elite political discourse that considers such views to be extremist, and not part of polite company," explains Kleis Nielsen. *"Whether you pursue one or the other route, you end up with parts of the public considering you either an agent of excluding certain voices, or an agent of actively promoting certain voices in ways that aren't considered impartial by much of the public."*

So the media have either been seen as a conspiring, subjective actor, or as a promoter of dangerous voices. Either way, they are being blamed for polarising the debate.

"The high polarisation in political discourse is translating into people's view of the [media] messenger. It seems to me that, in part, the media are punished for the kind of things they report on, which is political conflicts, and this fuels a lot of political polarisation," agrees professor Thomas Hanitzsch from German University LMU.

Especially in societies with a turbulent political situation, it is hard to execute good journalism. *"In a society in which both sides of a debate politely disagree, you can report without alienating much of the audience,"* explains Kleis Nielsen. *"But in societies with a fragmentation of political space, where it's not really the case of one side or the other, but many different sides, that don't even agree on what are the most important issues are, it becomes much more complex."*

And the media are not completely free of blame either. They tend to prefer the strongest voices in the debate, polarising opinions in the public debate. The best stories are those with two opposing opinions, with winners and losers.

As a result, it can seem that the media are taking sides, or at least ignoring the 'middle ground. *"The audience is much more, let's call it centre-oriented than we maybe feel it is. Most of the people are in the middle, just like they were 10 years ago or 20 years ago. But because of social media, the media hear more noise from the extremes and are therefore more inclined to paint a black and white picture,"* says Hofseth of NRK.

A DESIRE TO SPEAK FOR OURSELVES, NOT VIA ELITES

Growing political divisions and rising education levels are occurring simultaneously, alongside rising expectations for democracy and democratic institutions. Ironically, the public regard for the existing model of social institutions has also plummeted in many countries, and people are no longer satisfied being represented exclusively by elites: politically and otherwise.

"Over the last 50 years, most western countries have drifted away from an orientation towards strong trust and confidence in public authorities such as the government, political parties, public administration, the police and also the media," says Hanitzsch.

By extension, people also look at the media much more sceptically. The media are often seen as part of the elite, whom the public have become more critical of in continental Europe. *"Therefore to me, it comes as no surprise that in countries where we find a very strong anti-elite sentiment that there's also a dramatic loss in media trust,"* says Hanitzsch.

SOCIAL MEDIA ECHO

Social media have been researched widely in recent years, and there are conflicting viewpoints about their implications on democracy. On the one hand, it is underlined by the Reuters Institute that people using social media consume a more diverse variety of news sources than before, and are therefore more able to make informed decisions.[1] On the other hand, social media seem to systematically amplify falsehoods at the expense of the truth, as a large MIT study published in The Science in summer 2018 points out. Lies are shared much more, and they get a wider audience, travelling deeper into networks. That happens with all topics, but especially stories about politics.[2]

This effect is not created by Russian trolls and bots (who may accelerate the distribution) but because that's how people's brains react. Fake news is often surprising and novel, and therefore stands out. Also, fake news is designed to spark emotions and threat, things the human instinct reacts to. Adding to that, what comes through in the feeds is a product of calculations made by powerful algorithms and machine learning models designed to create optimal effect.[3]

UNCIVILISED, DISTORTED DISCUSSION

In turn, the dominance of social media platforms means that the conversation has shifted onto unregulated and often anarchic social platforms. Here the loudest voices rule, often resulting in rather uncivilised discussions. Posts with the strongest comments are preferred by the algorithms, making posts that have no reactions, or much more nuanced standpoints, disappear in the stream.

This can give the impression that the public debate is very fierce and negative, while the nuanced crowds in the middle are neglected.

In order to counter this, many public service media have tried to create an online space themselves, where the public can engage in conversations. What is often overlooked in these efforts, is the fact that most people - and usually exactly those people that don't have a very strong opinion about a topic - are not very interested in engaging in a conversation at all.

"Much of the public is perfectly happy to be relatively passive consumers of information about public affairs while they get on with their lives," explains Kleis Nielsen. Instead of being informed citizens - one of public service news' targets - there actually is, and always has been, a more passive or entertainment-seeking news consumer. This is what American sociologists and journalism professor Michael Schudson calls the 'monitorial citizen'.

03 WAYS TO MAKE IT BETTER

Selection of possible solutions and our recommendations

The media can't solve all society's problems. But as public service media have a mission to empower societies and democracies, they can focus on those solutions that make a positive contribution.

7. SHOW SOCIETY YOU ARE AN ALLY

Public service media have a mission, a task, to benefit society as a whole. And it could be very helpful to stress this point more clearly. As Kleis Nielsen explains: *"The idea that there is a societal exchange going on, that there are values created that go beyond individual consumption. This is something people within public service media feel very keenly. And they are always mildly offended when the public doesn't always share their view, but hey, sometimes you need to tell the story for people to actually listen to it."*

Emily Bell, Director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, also underlines that there is greater power in PSMs mission than you sometimes believe. *"It seems that their whole 'reason to get up in the morning' is an important aspect of the survival of 'old' platforms. Their historical perspective somehow shines through. And this is a chance to bring together splintered and fragmented audiences. Especially when this mission is translated in a new way. Like NPR has been able to do, for example. They adopted their mission to new and exciting formulas and managed to become a brand to love."*

NO TO NO BILLAG

In March 2018, the Swiss public voted on the future of their public service media. Crucially, more than 70% of the population voted to safeguard this institution by maintaining the licence fee. SRG-SSR learned that in the end, the country was not voting about the price-tag of public service media but about the form of democracy that it wanted. The connection forged with civil society during the campaign provides a solid foundation for SRG-SSR's renewal.

SHOWCASING PUBLIC VALUE

NPO publicizes examples of how its programmes add value to society as a whole and to its audience. It commissions outside experts to evaluate how well it has met certain public-value criteria.

55 UNTERSCHIEDE

'55 Unterschiede' is the name of the latest annual 'Public Value Report', listing 55 ways in which ORF, the Austrian PSM, creates value for society. Each year, ORF publishes a variation of this report as a magazine, a newspaper, a small booklet or as a series of posters. A 'Public Value Week' also accompanies it, consisting of TV, radio and online programmes which discuss ORF's positive impact on the country.

8. CREATE A SENSE OF UNITY

In the search for new identities, public service media can provide space for connection. Besides one's political orientation, people belong to various other 'groups' that can bring a sense of community. Rather than focusing on political differences based on rational debates, public service media can appeal on emotion and collectivity. This is supported by Per Westergaard and Søren Schultz Jørgensen, two Danish editors and media executives who travelled in US and Europe visiting 50 inspiring newsrooms searching for means of reconnecting with communities. The result was a book 'Den Journalistiske Förbindelse' with nine recommendations for news organisations. They also reflect on the strategy of creating a new sense of belonging: "Gathering people around the news media, in clearly defined communities, or clubs, is a strategy gaining momentum on both sides of the Atlantic".

SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEOS THAT UNITE

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country with a difficult political landscape. BHRT is trying to foster unity in Bosnia by publishing videos on social media telling stories about ordinary people and everyday-life situations. They want to help audiences appreciate their shared values and struggles, rather than their political and ethnic differences.

BREMEN VIER

The local radio broadcaster Bremen Vier decided to grow alongside its audience in an effort to maintain the community they had built twenty years earlier. The station tries to cater to their ever-maturing listeners as best they can, focusing on live interactions and on gathering an accurate insight into their needs.

9. LISTEN TO THE AUDIENCE

Journalists are well aware that they need to listen to their audiences and take their viewpoint into account. Emily Bell even states that *"...in no other profession do you see people so aware of their position as in journalism."* But time is a major pressure to make valuable connections. *"In our research we often find that journalists are very willing to make connections, but are pressured by time and a focus on high output. You can't really connect to people if there is no time for it."*

What therefore often happens is that journalists look at what is happening on social media. But there is a risk of relying too much on social media to be the 'antennas of society'. Only a fraction of the public is active on the same platforms where journalists are. Due to the algorithms at place and the distinct features of the active audience on

these platforms, there is a chance that social media will reflect a different interest than people in society actually have. Additional resources, like polls, nationwide research and face-to-face interviews can therefore be very useful.

The American Press Institute has collected experiences and advises on how to strengthen connections with communities by 'culture of listening', leading to more human-centred reporting. But they say listening has to change behaviours in the newsrooms.[6]

DUTCH OPINIONPANEL

On a daily basis, the EenVandaag Opiniepanel asks some of its 50,000 members what they think about news-related topics like politics, economics, healthcare or crime. The input from this panel is then used to balance the reporting and to challenge politicians.

ON LOCATION

ZDF launched a project which involved a team of reporters reporting 'on location' for four weeks, aiming to engage with citizens outside federal-state capitals.

GENERATION WHAT ALGERIA

EPTV participated in the Generation What? project to get to know their own young audiences and those of neighbouring Arab countries better.

ORF FÜR SIE

The Austrian ORF team travelled around the country for three weeks asking people what they want from their broadcaster. The public had the opportunity to express their views by phone or in writing and were also invited to meet ORF reporters in communities across Austria. Around 23,000 responses were recorded, 450 of which directly on camera.

10. INCENTIVISE CIVILISED DISCUSSION

As the debate in social media hardens, it sometimes seems that the only way to interact with the audience is to join the polarised discussion. But there is an alternative: incentivising civilised discussion. Anders Hofseth explains, *"As a journalist, you should treat a person with respect, but you shouldn't necessarily treat their thought-errors with respect. The role of the journalist is to be the grown-up. Not the authority with all the answers, but at least the one that will take responsibility for having a proper discussion."*

Some of the most polemical figures and events of our time – Trump, Palestine/Israel, Catalonia – have made this time very difficult for news outlets. They often attempt (with varying degrees of success) to overcome the 'bias challenge' by getting emotive, non-objective spokespeople from the other side to present their view. Instead, it could be helpful to engage with the debate, deconstruct the tension points, and present articles or informative sources who can present their view logically and articulately.

KNOW2COMMENT

By asking people a few questions to test their knowledge on a topic, NRKbeta is trying to improve the comments people leave underneath articles.

POLITIBOT

Politibot sends out a conversational news digest every day about one major story from Spanish, European or global politics. The company avoids what it thinks has alienated traditional audiences: an overly formal tone, excessive jargon and insufficient background context.

04 SO WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE PUBLIC MEDIA?

04

SO WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE PUBLIC MEDIA?

A diverse media diet may be a good thing. Healthy scepticism can be too.

So society is changing. And audiences are changing. But is this all really such a big problem? The public seems to be, at least in part, quite satisfied with the changes.

Danish professor Kim Schrøder reminds us that in media studies, there is a thing called 'media panic', or 'moral panic'. Every time a new medium is introduced, there is first optimism. *'Now everything is going to be wonderful'.* But then, immediately after, comes the panic: *'Everything is going to be absolutely horrible.'*

So we wonder: is this, again, just a media panic? Much ado about nothing?

AUDIENCES ARE DOING JUST FINE

Journalism's 'golden days' can be traced back to the time when people consumed the news as part of a package: a newspaper, a radio channel, television. The audience was believed to unilaterally share journalists' interest in serious news. Today, if the media do not give people the content they want, they are willing to spend their time on other outlets they prefer. The result? Emerging, news-only products have only a small fragment of the previous audiences.

But that needn't be a reason to panic. Not all people are not that interested in having a conversation about public affairs all the time and are quite happy to be relatively passive consumers. This suggests that many groups are also fine with not being deeply engaged in news about politics.

At the same time, as Kim Schrøder points out, the average 20-year old of today is much more knowledgeable about the world than those in the 1970's. This is partly because people spend most of their time consuming some form of media.[1] And yes, this includes sending messages to friends and family, binge-watching Netflix or playing video games, but it also means checking news media. And the people that use social media as a platform for news, also means have a more diverse media diet than people that don't.

So, it seems, the audience is doing just fine.

TRUST IS TRICKY

That trust. Yes, trust in news media is historically low, as measured by the Edelman Trust Barometer 2018,[2] but not everywhere, reiterates professor Thomas Hanitzsch. *"The US-American development is too dominant in the discussion. There are countries in which trust has not declined, and in some countries, it has even been on the rise",* he says.[3]

Indeed, his group's major study indicates that the decline in media trust is true for only about half of the featured countries, with the United States experiencing the largest and most dramatic drop since its peak in the mid-1970's.

"I do think it's a problem, but what the media often do, and of course I'm over-generalising here, is piggyback on this criticism and reporting it as a sensation. That's a very typical crisis narrative that journalists often use," says Thomas Hanitzsch.

Meanwhile, Anders Hofseth notes that in Norway, for example, there's very little political polarisation and trust in institutions is still high. He suggests the problem may feel worse than it is because the few thousand people who make a lot of noise are heard much more than the 'silent majority'. *"The audience is much more, let's call it centre-oriented than we feel it is."*

However, while there may be differences in how severe the drop is, trust in both media and politics is, in general, declining, and the tie between these two is tightening. Political polarisation, ideological extremity and social media's ability to echo the extremes combined are a real threat.

FLUCTUATING TRUST IS NOT A NEW PROBLEM - AND COULD BE NEEDED

So, how does this situation compare to the so-called golden age?

"There is a tendency to idealise the past, to think that everything was better at that time. It mostly wasn't better", says Kim Schrøder.

While trust has generally eroded compared to the last century, it may be that this scale of relatives is a helpful starting point. *"Is it a problem of low trust today, or of too high trust in the past?",* asks Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. *"Maybe the real problem was why the hell did people trust American journalism in the '60s, where it was patently sexist and racist, and pegged to a political establishment that excluded many voices?"*

In other words: is the public simply holding us to a higher standard? Is it likely that there is simply a greater diversity of opinion reflected in media spaces today, instead of it being a controlled space for the elites? And is trust in the elites is now being put under scrutiny? This could be an opportunity to get trust levels to better reflect what is merited.

Various experts stress the positive side of this shift. Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Hanitzsch and Costera Meijer all underline that the decline in trust in media can also be a signal of something positive, the scepticism people have is, in a way, a display of healthy democratic citizenship. *"Young people even perceive trust as a form of naivety,"* explains Costera Meijer, *"so they will not often say they trust media."*

Finally, the lure of false news is not particularly new, given that it is a human trait. What is different now to, say, 1918, is that the sender of information is much better documented. How much did the newspaper reader of a century ago know about his world? Was the information they received presented in a contextualised, substantive and reasonably-balanced manner? Was there bias and, if so, how did the reader navigate that bias? Wasn't that a time of extremely partisan press, in many countries?

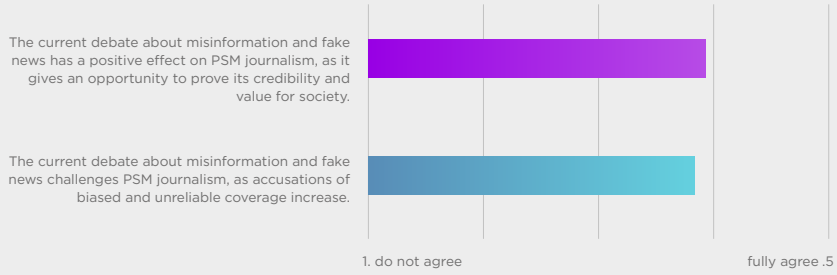
RECOGNISE THE OPPORTUNITY?

Emily Bell recognises the positive sides all the transformations have. *"It is said that a specific combination of economic and social circumstances can create an optimum environment to create something new. And I believe this moment is now: this is the moment in time where we can build new things. This is a time of transformation where we need to build new things that relate to the old."*

And, you have to remember that overall, the problems of PSMs are much smaller than those of your commercial counterparts. Funding may be eroding, but not on a scale largely facing purely commercial media.

In our survey amongst EBU news executives, half of the respondents saw the current situation more of an opportunity for public service, than a threat. They agreed that the "current debate about misinformation and fake news has a positive effect on PSM journalism, as it gives an opportunity to prove its credibility and value for society". Also, they see it as their own task to fix the problems there might be.

Q11 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



Source: Expert survey for EBU News Report 2018

SO IF IT'S NOT SO BAD, WHAT IS IT?

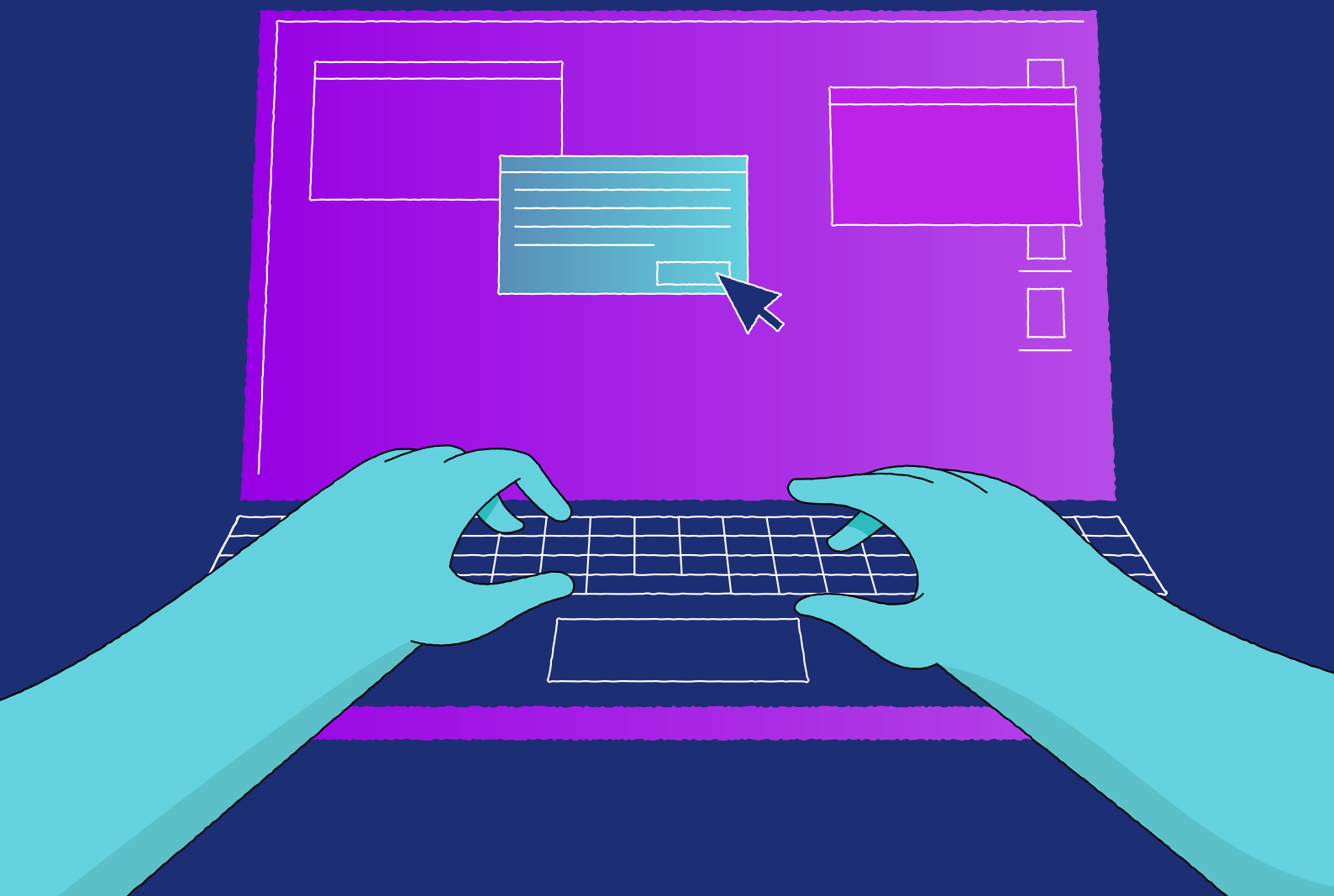
Having said that, it's too simple to state that there are no problems.

There are undoubtedly serious challenges of falling engagement, particularly amongst the youth. While we may disagree about how severe these issues are - and indeed their severity fluctuates from country to country - they may well worsen if unaddressed in the present environment.

What has yet to be resolved, however, is why levels of trust in the media in Europe vary so starkly. Even if the places where trust is high, there are undeniably pockets of society who are alienated and perceive public service media to be an agent of the elite.

"I think there are two kinds of problems with trust. One is if people don't trust things they should, and the other is if they trust things that they shouldn't." - Rasmus Kleis Nielsen.

05 TO BE TRUSTED, BE TRUSTWORTHY FIRST



05

TO BE TRUSTED, BE TRUSTWORTHY FIRST

A solid foundation for trust must begin with better journalistic practices

"We have successfully made parts of the audience distrust everything they disagree with" **- John Ziegler (American talk show host)**

Not all problems facing journalism are external, however. We believe that there also are some important challenges that come from within the profession.

Think about Jason Blair, the journalist found to have plagiarised and fabricated quotes in The New York Times in 2003. Think about the chemical weapons coverage prior to the invasion of Iraq. And think about the phone-hacking scandal in the UK, where not only the phones of celebrities, politicians and royalties were hacked, but also those of a murdered schoolgirl, relatives of deceased soldiers and victims of terrorist attacks.

What are the strongest indicators for distrust? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the aforementioned instances of misconduct as well as personal experience of inaccurate reporting rank most highly.

Moreover, in her book 'Becoming news', Ruth Palmer tells stories of ordinary people who became the objects of US news. The striking part of the book is not that journalists sometimes made mistakes and behaved in a way that was rude and impolite. The point was that this was assumed to be a normal part of the profession.

So are our standards slipping? Are you perceived more harshly than you even realise?

Digitalisation and, more specifically, the evolution of Google and Facebook, seem to have coincided with a broad erosion of journalism's central pillars of objectivity and trust. For instance, media dashboards are being designed to maximise engagement or 'impact', whilst reporting from the 'personal' rather than the 'third-party' perspective is becoming the norm. In short, striving for objectivity has been silently wiped off many countries' ethical codes, as news outlets compete with the internet giants for advertising revenues and air-time.

By taking a close (and rather harsh) look at the profession, we identify its five main faults:

1. Blurring the line between opinions and facts
2. Prioritising simple narratives above the complicated truth
3. Being excessively negative
4. Forgetting context and the needs of irregular news consumers
5. Unchecked biases

These faults represent risks. If you don't address them, you will continue to lose relevance.

BLURRING THE LINE BETWEEN FACTS AND OPINION

The Knight Commission led a study to understand why trust had eroded in US media outlets. When Americans were asked to explain their lack of general trust in news organisations, their top categories of answers largely focus on perceived inaccuracy and bias. More than 60 percent of the respondents saw *"too much bias in the reporting of news stories that are supposed to be objective"* as a major problem, and only 44 percent could identify any news source that they believe reports the news objectively.[4]

"Popularity has become the most important professional measurement, overriding the earlier emphasis on expertise and verification," wrote Ellen Hume in the Global Investigative Journalism Network's 2017 report.[5] *"Previously, there was a promise to inform the public, even if the facts didn't conform to what the news owners or advertisers wanted. It assumed the public would trust the journalists to tell the truth as well as they could... but the internet destroyed the media monopolies, freeing captive audiences to choose their own favourite news streams... there was little interest left in nonpartisanship."*

Hence, blurring the line between news and opinion has been partly brought about by the eroding professional standards of the internet era, and also due to declining control over the news published on third-party platforms.

Now, it can be tempting to indulge in the endless philosophical debate about whether there is such a thing as 'truth', and if journalism can truly be 'objective', or if objectivity is just a strategic ritual protecting journalists from criticism, like it has sometimes been said.[6]

But perhaps most importantly, it is worth questioning what the role of these principles is, or what the principles of 'accuracy' and 'impartiality' really mean in today's journalism. Is subjective reporting something that is discreetly encouraged because of its power to grip audiences? Is transparency the modern, diluted version of objectivity? And can the erosion of journalistic standards be reversed, amid time-pressures, heightened competition, and a fear of losing audiences?

PRIORITISING SIMPLE NARRATIVES OVER THE COMPLICATED TRUTH

'Story bias' or 'narrative fallacy' are the names scientists give to the instinctive human response of hearing just a couple of facts, and trying to make sense out of them by creating a story. Psychologist Shahram Heshmat explains it like this in Psychology Today: *"When an unpredicted event occurs, we immediately come up with explanatory stories that are simple and coherent. Our intuitive mind is the sense-making organ, which sees the world as simple predictable, and coherent. This coherence makes us feel good...The urge for explanations is automatic."*[7]

Journalists expedite this process and help audiences make sense of the complicated nature of the world by generalising and simplifying. The problem is that with these simplifications the story can become partly or even totally inaccurate and false.

Dig into the work of Nobel-prize winner Daniel Kahnemann or read 'Black Swan" by Nassim Taleb, and you learn about the same simple features of human brain - told in a form of an engaging narrative, by the way.

"We are quite stupid, everyone is. So we tend to think in narratives", says Anders Hofseth. *"You try to, for storytelling purposes, sort of divide the story into for and against, instead of saying, it's this, this, this, and it's complicated. Nobody wants to hear it's complicated."*

BEING EXCESSIVELY NEGATIVE

"Fake news is not the real problem. News is," writes Ulrik Haagerup, former Director of DR News, in his book, Constructive News (2017).

People are growing tired of media negativity, Haagerup argues, and Seán Dagan Wood, editor of 'Positive News', agreed in an interview in The Guardian, seeing this as a 'big elephant' in newsrooms.[8] While news negativity is a necessary part of being society's watchdog, Wood said it has gone too far.

This should come as little surprise, as humans are more attentive to distressing information.[9] Negative events or emotions also have a stronger and more lasting impact on individuals than positive events or emotions.[10] As such, there's a short-term benefit to be gained from problem-focused news in the form of intense, concentrated engagement. *"We are hard-wired to pay attention to threats and alarming information, and the media capitalise on this",* writes Wood.

Journalists are drawn toward conflict and drama and indeed are trained to identify these themes as inherently newsworthy. By extension, media organisations also see conflict as routine 'news'. This is not necessarily unwarranted, as journalists unquestionably have a duty to alert the public about certain threats, corruption, etc.

But evidence suggests that some groups are disengaging with the news because they recognise it makes them feel bad. Negative news can make viewers feel depressed, less emotionally stable and more apprehensive about potential harm to themselves.[11] Graham Davey, a professor emeritus of psychology at Sussex University in the UK and editor-in-chief of the Journal of Experimental Psychopathology, has also shown that negative TV news is a significant mood-changer, and the moods it tends to produce are sadness and anxiety.[12]

"Even those who still choose to consume news are disengaging with its content by experiencing compassion fatigue – the belief that audiences are left feeling unmoved after consistently hearing about human suffering", write Karen McIntyre and Cathrine Gyldensted, a Danish journalist and director of constructive journalism at Windesheim University.

Hanitzsch and his colleagues provide a long list of research that also strongly argue that the persistent pattern of news negativity and cynicism is linked to the erosion of media trust in a large array of western countries. This media malaise, it is believed, fosters public cynicism, pessimism, alienation and estrangement.[13]

There's a case of shooting the messenger here, as research shows that the less politicians are trusted, the lower the trust is in media.

Certainly then, bad news comes at an overall cost, albeit necessary in part.

FORGETTING CONTEXT AND THE NEEDS OF IRREGULAR NEWS CONSUMERS

Take any of the basic textbooks of journalism; all say that putting things into context is one of the basic tasks of a journalist.

The public agree, with the most important reason they watch television news being to 'make sense of the world', according to a group of some of the most influential PSM news directors gathered in a forum in Oxford in September 2018.

However, journalists don't always succeed at this. Television news and current affairs programmes may be the worst culprits, with several studies conducted by media companies and academics alike showing that non-heavy news users, especially young audiences, feel significant disillusionment towards the traditional way of framing news.[14]

"If you don't check 10 times a day, then 90% of what is published will just pass you by without you seeing it...There's this quote: 'It's like coming into a theatre in the middle of the third act' - and that's exactly what it is," says Hofseth of NRK.

Essentially, the news is often designed in a way that assumes people follow events and coverage on them on a daily basis. In reality very few do, meaning it's not always easy to follow the story and audiences who do not closely follow the news on a daily basis feel quickly excluded. Instead, many rely on social media - where the context is largely provided by surrounding reactions and comments.

Of course, politics must be covered. But most people, especially young, feel that the way stories are told don't reveal the relevance of them, on them - if there is any.[15]

UNCHECKED BIASES

Leo Tolstoy famously wrote in The Kingdom of God is Within You: *"The most difficult subjects can be explained to the most slow-witted man if he has not formed any idea of them already; but the simplest thing cannot be made clear to the most intelligent man if he is firmly persuaded that he knows already, without a shadow of doubt, what is laid before him."*

Journalistic practices are designed to help navigate a world of manipulation and to find the best obtainable version of truth. However, journalism schools or newsrooms rarely teach about the inescapable realm of 'unconscious biases.'

Perhaps one of the most important and well-known types is confirmation bias: our tendency to see only the facts that support our previous beliefs and reject facts that oppose them. This may be result from the human mind being deeply programmed to protect our role in social circles, since being left alone has proven fatal for the human race over time. Social connections may be more valuable for us than understanding the real truth of a particular fact. *"Skilled arguers are not after the truth but after arguments supporting their views",* say Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, the authors of Enigma of Reason. And, more strikingly still, the most rationally talented debaters are the ones that reject rational facts the most.[16]

These laws of psychology apply to journalists as well, not only to the members of the audience or politicians. You may be biased, even if you don't notice. You may be accused of being biased when you are not, for the same reasons.

05 WAYS TO MAKE IT BETTER

Selection of possible solutions and our recommendations

There are several things that journalists and organisations are doing to resolve the industry's errors and renew their age-old commitment to objectivity.

11. SET AND FOLLOW HIGH PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

There are several projects worldwide working to outline the highest possible professional standards. For instance, the Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI) was launched last year by the EBU, together with 'Reporters Without Borders', AFP and the Global Editors Network (GEN), to create an international blueprint of best journalistic practices. Its director Olaf Steenfadt explains how once launched, the JTI will give its members a clear identity and help the public distinguish levels of trustworthiness. "We are not reinventing the wheel...we are offering a new level of compliance," said Mr Steenfadt. *"We will refrain from judging anything by the content itself... anything that annotates or ranks content, can be easily used as censorship...instead, we will look at the process level, the institutional level, the environment in which journalism is being credited"* to measure whether news outlets are adequately abiding by journalistic principles.

Meanwhile, the European Commission's high-level expert group encouraged media organisations to work together on implementing measures to minimise the risk of reporting mistakes and to create transparent systems of investigating leads. Indeed, this is being done on an international platform, as advertising an individual organisation's guidelines and ethical standards may not be enough as a solo project.

THE TRUST PROJECT

The Santa Monica Trust Project aims to clearly communicate the sources behind individual news story and who the journalist is; helping the public to assess the media's practices and guidelines. Underpinning this is an ambition to establish an internationally-agreed benchmark of journalistic quality and to enforce it.

AGILE NEWSROOM

The Agile Newsroom is a real-time workshop that brings together EBU member journalists working on social-media account verification, to share skills and experiences and strengthen the Social Newswire network.

12. BREAK JOURNALISTIC TABOOS

Challenging some of the oldest reporting, formatting, and scheduling traditions is key to ensuring citizens re-engage with the news. Of particular importance is breaking journalists' exclusive, top-down feed of information, born from ingrained media dogmas which have created an 'us' (the media) and a 'they' (the public) mentality. Integrating these two mediums may be a good start.

OBSERVERS

Broadcast by France 24 as a weekly TV show and as a collaborative website accessible in four languages, 'The Observers' covers international current affairs and societal stories based on eyewitness accounts from real observers: people at the heart of an event or phenomenon.

13. EDUCATE YOURSELF ON BIASES AND RISKS OF STORYTELLING

News organisations would benefit from understanding the psychology of how news is received as well as the psychology of how journalists behave themselves. Bringing in experts is the more costly way, but educating yourself is another.

MEDIALOGICA

Medialogica is a television programme that shows the media mechanisms that are in place when a story becomes a hype. It is aimed at a general audience but is also an eye-opener for many professionals.

FACTFULNESS

Gapminder, an organisation created by late Hans Rosling, now run by his son Ola and daughter-in-law Anna Rosling-Rönnblad, developed the concept of factfulness – a new habit of only forming opinions based on facts – and published a book about it. By adopting 'factfulness' themselves, journalists can avoid the ten so-called "dramatic instincts" that may influence their news reporting.

14. FIND A SPACE FOR SOLUTIONS, NOT ONLY PROBLEMS

In the US, it's solutions journalism and in Europe, there's constructive journalism. In Denmark, many journalists and academics are researching and practising this new approach of covering problems: giving voice to those who may have a solution. It's partly being faithful to the journalistic idea of giving a true view of the world, partly a means to improve user engagement and success.

PUBLIC SERVICE ON DR1

Constructive journalism had been practised regionally in Denmark for more than ten years. In 2018, however, Jesper Borup and his team faced a fresh challenge: to apply this approach nationally, four days a week, via radio. It turned out to be not only possible but also rewarding.[18]

15. BETTER UNDERSTAND YOURSELF AS A JOURNALIST

There's always something in you that others see, but you don't see yourself. Getting to know yourself better is an universal method to improve both personal and organisational capabilities. One way of doing that is to send reporters out without a specific assignment and pre-established point of view.

TIOMILJONER

Swedish Radio SR noticed that too often, reporters already know the answers before asking the questions. So

it started a project in which SR journalists went out and listened to the problems of ordinary people – and only then conceptualized their stories. The result? New topics, new angles, other revelations.

LET'S DO IT WORLDWIDE

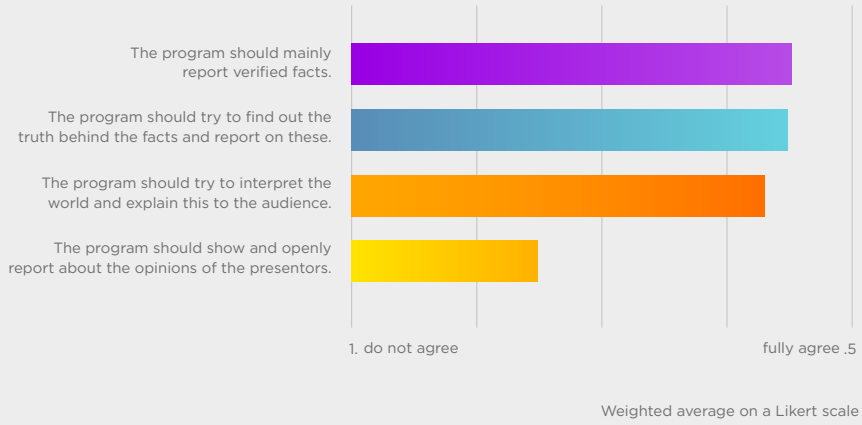
On 15 September 2017, 17 million volunteers and partners from 158 countries cleaned up waste from beaches, rivers, forests and streets on World Cleanup Day. A 24-hour broadcast covered this worldwide event, produced by a group of 'free spirits'.

ZPRAVICKY

Zpravicky is a children's news programme with audiences as young as four years old. The programme has learnt to collaborate with experts to make their content as pedagogically appropriate as possible.

In our survey, most EBU news executives said anchors should be credible and approachable, while not openly showing their opinions or values.

Q23 'In your opinion, which of the following statements is true?'



Source: Expert survey for EBU News Report 2018

6 GET CLOSER TO THE AUDIENCE, AND FURTHER FROM POLITICS

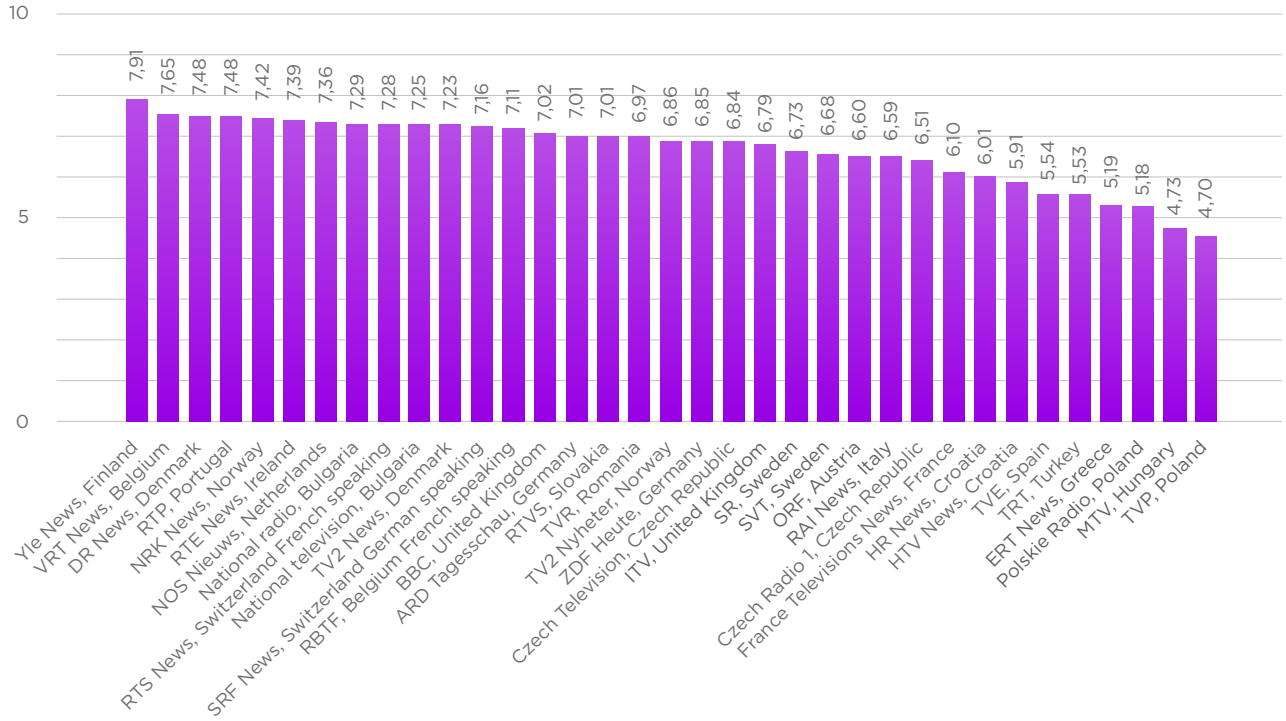
06

GET CLOSER TO THE AUDIENCE, AND FURTHER FROM POLITICS

Public service is unavoidably political, but this relationship should not be unhealthy

We believe that trust is built on good journalistic practices. But setting high professional standards is not the only answer. 'Trust' is, after all, a bilateral relationship.

The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018 measured trust in different news brands in 37 countries. The good news is that in several markets, especially in Northern, Western and Central Europe, the public broadcaster is the most trusted news brand. But the situation is not as satisfying in southern Europe, where in some countries trust in PSMs is alarmingly low.



In our eyes, two other elements are crucial in building trust. They are, especially in regard to public service media, the questions of unhealthy political interference in reporting and the question of being able to identify as an organisation or person to whom to trust.

POLITICAL CONTAMINATION

No public broadcaster can be totally independent from politics. Those who claim otherwise are blind to reality. It's easy to find historical examples of political interference even in countries with high levels of independence and trust in PSM journalism, like Finland, Sweden or the UK.

Public broadcasters are institutions established by politicians, as parts of the democratic system of the country. The existence of public broadcasting, the size of its funding, and the independence of its journalism are ultimately subject to political will.

Yet the independence of journalists and their ability to report the unbiased truth is the cornerstone of a trusted relationship between the audience and newsrooms.
"Anything that is public is unavoidably and necessarily political. The only issue is how do you ensure there's not an unhealthy degree of intervention in what is political, as it affects public trust", says Greg Lowe, professor of Northwestern University in Doha, and one of the leading scholars on public service media management.

Professor Thomas Hanitzsch considers this structural dilemma to be a key problem in the question of trust: *"Populists have a very good sense of the connections and affinity between public service broadcasters and certain political actors."* But, there's a positive side as well: In countries where the PSM is truly politically independent, the trust is high.

How to solve this eternal chicken and egg problem of public service? How to be independent operationally and at the same time safeguard independence at the institutional level, whilst reaching a political consensus around this independence?

The good news is that research shows that state ownership of the media is not something that in itself erodes trust. Actually, in countries enjoying a high level of democracy, the effect of government control of the media was positive. But in nondemocratic societies with oppressive leaders, state ownership of television is negatively associated with trust in the media, as media researchers Tsfati and Ariely found in their research of 44 countries based on World Values Survey data.[1]

The researchers assumed that in democratic societies, the public either appreciates higher quality news sources, or distrusts private corporations in general, or the style of coverage more typical in commercial media.

INSUFFICIENT SOCIAL REPRESENTATION

Instead of becoming too closely intertwined with politics and elites, a change that has to be accepted by politicians, public service news should build their legitimacy in serving audiences and getting their mandate from them.

Before the digital migration, it was easier to reach people with a mass media formula. But due to the fragmented nature of media consumption today, some groups can easily avoid "real" news altogether. It seems that the audiences that (PSM) news media are reaching less are audiences that feel underrepresented and not understood by the news media. The news seems to be a product for 'them' rather than for 'us'.

This is especially tricky as public service media's theoretical mission is to serve everybody. Private media are able to choose their target groups, but PSMs cannot. In practice, however, the representation in European public debate has mostly been very selective:
confined to those in power, representing a well-educated, middle-class, white majority, with clearly articulated opinions.

Do women feel that they are represented? Do different ethnic groups see themselves and their life in the news? What about those belonging to a sexual minority? How should PSMs deal with the role of religion - or not deal with it at all? How about the common man?[2]

In response to not feeling represented, identity politics has been on the rise since the mid-2010's, spurring a 'white' backlash in its path. Indeed, the white Caucasian groups fear becoming a minority in some countries.

"Very crudely put, the media have been dominated by white men, covering white men, for white men", says Kleis Nielsen. *"Often with a more or less pronounced upper middle-class bias. The [audience] response is: I don't care about the media's professional commitment to impartiality and inclusiveness. Everyone I see dominating public debate looks different from me and they are defining the issues of my life in a way that I don't feel reflect my experience, or my aspirations, or my hopes for the future. And I'm not going to have any confidence in this."*

According to Kleis Nielsen, PSMs have to battle between trying to produce genuinely inclusive and engaging news content for everybody, versus satisfying the people who are dominating public debate and want more stuff for the elite. *"And they may believe, in good faith, that everybody wants more stuff for the elite."*
Still, making news 'representative' is not a straightforward task; if you cover and include the views of the political extremes too, the moderates accuse you of giving them too much airtime and visibility. For far-right politicians, it is also a very useful narrative to claim that they are being excluded; the feeling of exclusion is a very strong one and triggers political action.

To include or to exclude, that is the question.

Meanwhile, local newsrooms have been downsized, and local and regional politics is seldom covered because of financial difficulties.
So people feel distanced because journalists are now physically much more distant. Emily Bell compares that to the role of policemen being visible on the streets. In countries where the police are trusted, the public see them patrolling and it increases trust.

A digital presence does not replace a physical presence.

06 WAYS TO MAKE IT BETTER

Selection of possible solutions and our recommendations

There are basically two simple measures - easy in theory, but extremely difficult to realise in practice - to move the delicate balance of dependence away from politics to the audience. Invest in a trusting relationship with the people, and try to agree on a framework for a healthy political balance accepted by politicians, who understand and respect the role of independent media in democracy and are willing to establish de jure framework to protect that. In the end, the solution is based on and is dependant on the existence of a democratic and journalistic culture in the country.

16. BE MORE SENSITIVE TO THE NUANCES OF THE ISSUES

It is important to keep interacting with people in order to understand their viewpoints and sensitivities on issues. Only when you actually meet people, you can truly get in touch with their worldview.

FIKA WITH SVT

Swedish public service media began sending journalists out to ask the public what they wanted from the news. This helped them to better understand the needs of their audience and make both an immediate and a long-term impact on the work in the newsroom.

17. FOCUS ON DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION

You can never be fully representative in your newsrooms, as there are too many dimensions people can be different on. People may even feel disrespected if they are addressed only on one dimension, like age. It's not only about proportional representation of sex, ethnicity or age.

Irene Costera Meijer talks about diversity in terms of a cultural and social sensibility that you can develop. This sensibility can be transformed into a professional skill which you can put into practice. *"It helps to evaluate your own productions, to organize workshops and invite 'sensible' people to reflect with you. It's not complicated, just something you need to do a few times per year."*

50:50

Developed by a local presenter, the 50:50 initiative assesses the gender ratio of experts and interviewees featured on BBC programmes. By tracking how many men and women are on screen every month, teams are able to self-evaluate whether the proper balance is being achieved. So far, it has been very successful.

DIVERSE GEORGIA

With the Diverse Georgia project, the Georgian national Through the Diverse Georgia project, the Georgian national broadcaster 1TV has invested heavily in providing content for the country's Armenian and Azerbaijani audiences.

TOOL FOR DYSLEXIA

3asyR is a tool that highlights, underlines and makes fonts bigger, in order to help dyslexics read more and better online.

18. SERVE SOCIETAL NEEDS, FILL THE GAP

RTÉ gathered its forces to cover topics that it considered of special importance: youth mental health. Young people and their parents from across Ireland spoke of the pain and frustration involved in seeking professional help. Approximately 20 original broadcast items were commissioned to the topic.

THE BIG PICTURE

In 2018, three hours of never-before-seen footage showing the Russian and some neighbouring countries' armies invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was discovered by chance. CT made a special program and website on the material, sparking varied reactions from a public still suffering from the national trauma of what happened during the repression of the Czech liberalisation movement.

HISTORY RETOLD

In 2018, three hours of never-before-seen footage showing the Russian and some neighbouring countries' armies invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was discovered by chance. CT made a special program and website on the material, sparking varied reactions from a public still suffering from the national trauma of what happened during the repression of the Czech liberalisation movement.

19. DISTANCE YOURSELF AND YOUR PERSONNEL FROM POLITICS

A media organisation is made up of its management and crucially, its journalists. These employees are also ordinary citizens at their core and are naturally prone to their own biases and disagreements. It is important for the organisation to create an active distance between these political inclinations and their professional independence. If either segment breaches this separation, the PSM can face internal strife and even protest. Policing this may require political cooperation, legislative restraints, or cautious appointment to the PSM directorship.

Let's compare PSM to other institutions that have the same characteristics: central banks (to protect trust for the value of money) or courts (to protect the trust of legal systems). In these cases, the independence of the institutions is written in law, often on a constitutional level. Chris Hanretty, professor of politics at Royal Holloway, University of London, has conducted in-depth statistical and historical research around the independence of public broadcasting in countries like the UK, Sweden and Italy. His conclusion: the independence of public broadcasters should be deeply enshrined in law, at the highest institutional levels. However, this alone is not a guarantee for independence.

There is a second defining factor: a country's political and journalistic culture along with the level of professionalism is key. The younger the democracy, the thinner the robes and, by extension, in more populated countries, with strong traditions of accurate and professional journalism, it is easier to recruit journalists that share the value of unbiased news, thus strengthening the independence and producing output that is also appreciated by politicians.[3]

BLACK FRIDAY

The staff at Spain's RTVE uniformly and publicly protested against political interference. They wore black every Friday – both in the office and on air – for 12 consecutive weeks, gaining support across the organization's regional and international offices.

9 IF UNDER ATTACK, DEFEND!

07

IF UNDER ATTACK, DEFEND!

Learn to know how to live in a hostile media environment and battle disinformation

You might assume that once a PSM has trustworthiness, they'll gain the trust of the audience.

But, unfortunately, that is not always the case. Building trustworthiness is the first of two key steps. The second involves communicating an organisation's commitment to truth and integrity, only then meriting an audience's 'trust'.

The problem today is threefold, in our eyes:

1. People are less willing to 'risk' believing PSMs on the facts;
2. Organised attacks by powerful elites are shedding further doubt on the media's delivery of facts, and;
3. Once trust is retracted, there is no 'quick fix' to regaining it - even if the organisation is indeed 'trustworthy.'

The growing distrust in even the most trustworthy organisations can be attributed to the following factors.

POPULISTS TURNED MEDIA CYNICS

Questioning the impartiality of public service news is not a new phenomenon. Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, nuclear power, development aid, recently even climate change, a certain nutrition diet or Crimean occupation, will have all received fierce claims of not being fair and accurate over time.

But while attacks on PSMs were once driven largely by commercial media interests, the motives are now increasingly political. The media serve as both a proxy for political elites as well as a vocal critic: leading those in power to question the accuracy and objectivity of certain outlets in the hope of attracting voters. Private media are also amongst those who question the role and even the existence of PSM, and believe they benefit from the diminishing role of PSMs - especially in European societies.

Rasmus Kleis Nielsen says that sometimes for public service media it is unclear how to respond to elite criticisms. *"It's not really clear that the public service agreement allows public service media to actively and aggressively contest politicians who question their impartiality."* Indeed, low trust in media in the US[1] has not been helped by their president Donald Trump, who tweeted that the media are *"the enemy of the American people".* He calls the media *"fake news".* And later, he says that, *"fake news, which is a large percentage of the media, is the enemy of the people".*

Ironically, however, the relationship between politics and journalism is a two-way road. If politicians are not trusted, those who report on them are not trusted, either.[2]

THE SPREAD OF MEDIA MISINFORMATION; SOCIAL MEDIA AND BEYOND

Lies are told every day about the media, and social media has amplified the power of those lies, as it has for all lies.

Disinformation is not only a strategic challenge for societies. It is an issue that has to be tackled on a tactical and operational level in news organisations as well. Journalists are accused, threatened, harassed, sometimes even killed because of their work.

"Simply pushing out more 'factual information' into the ecosystem, without sufficiently understanding the emotional and ritualistic elements of communication, is potentially a waste of time and resources", wrote Claire Wardle and Hussein Derakshan in their report to Council of Europe.[3]

One of the most striking results of the numerous recent studies about mis- and disinformation is that lies are much stronger stories than truths. False news spreads farther, faster, deeper and more broadly than fact-based stories. Lies are more novel than truths, awaking interest, making real humans spread false news, not only robots. And the more people see fake news, the more they believe in it.[4]

There is research about 'hostile media environments' that has shown the role of the news organisation in perceived bias in news: the same news story felt unfair and fair, depending on the ideological leaning of the person and the knowledge of the brand of the media in case. This, of course, has become more a severe problem in countries with increasing ideological extremity and polarisation. The reasons for this are deeply coded in our brains: humans want to be loyal to tribes, and if media are part of an enemy tribe, there's no way to become trusted.[5]

LIMITED TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION OF VALUES

Award-winning journalist turned academic Sally Lehrman explains how *"trust is a relationship"* that requires learning about the institute, or the journalist. Indeed, knowledge is a source of comfort and reassurance in building any connection; just as you trust a person more, the better you understand them.

However, the public is not aware - or being made aware - of journalistic ethics and values. Journalistic reputation and credibility have, especially in public service organisations, taken decades to accumulate. The brand name is the signal of values the organisation stands for.

The reputation grew under the time when journalists' methods were not widely questioned and mistakes reported. Now, social media and the general call for transparency have forced the organisations to admit their mistakes in a way that, in the short run, may even damage credibility.

Think carefully. If transparency is a sudden requirement, are you fit for that? If not, transparency may hurt. And, for sure: those who would rather see lower trust ratings for your organisation are not going to treat you nicely.

Taking for granted that everybody understands the idea of independent journalism or public service is a mistake. Let's remember that trust in institutions is high, at least in surveys, in countries like China, Indonesia, India and Emirates, but low in France, Germany, Sweden and Japan. What are we to think about that?[6]

07 WAYS TO MAKE IT BETTER

Selection of possible solutions and our recommendations

Ultimately, hard-earned trustworthiness has to be recognised, cleverly marketed, and - yes - defended, if need be. The invention of social media has given the public a much more active forum for accountability – but also misinformation. It is no longer good enough to shy away from criticism or to dismiss it as ignorance.

Sometimes, this means calling on the courts for support. By way of example, Austria's ORF filed a lawsuit against Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Stache after he accused the company and one of its journalists of lying. The Vice-Chancellor apologised publicly and paid out a 10,000 euro settlement (which was donated to a research institute).[7] In Finland, the editor of an anti-immigration website was sentenced to 22 months in jail after overseeing a three-year harassment campaign against a YLE journalist, while his collaborator was given a one-year suspended jail sentence for aggravated defamation and stalking.[8]

There are risks in leaving journalists exposed to social media trolling. The BBC, for example, advises some of its journalists to keep off social media to protect their privacy and avoid online harassment.

Journalists and organisations alike need to share clear guidelines about how, when and where to respond to criticism. In doing so, PSMs also have an opportunity to continue learning and illustrating their commitment to accuracy and reliability. Failing to do so may well give credence to doubts about the media's agenda and commitment to truth.

20. FACE THE CRITICISM OPENLY AND RESPOND...
Transparency may not be something that restores trust once lost, but it may be needed anyway and be a strategic approach with no alternatives. In some surveys, it is among the most highly rated factors influencing trust in the media. People have regarded organisations as more trustworthy if they faithfully disclose conflicts of interest and address bias and inaccuracy concerns.[9]

SAY IT TO ME, FACE TO FACE

The editor of ARD's flagship news programme started a blog to explain the show's editorial decisions as well as his own work as a journalist. Kai Gniffke's openness was not always understood or respected, and it was even misused by the press at times. However, he continues to believe in the need for transparency.

COPING WITH COMPLAINTS

The BBC has an industrial-scale mechanism to deal with the complaints they get each year. But they say this response is not just a regulatory obligation, but also an ethical commitment.

21. ...BUT DON'T FUEL THE FIRE
Having said that, research shows that the strongest criticism against journalists is produced by a minority of people who are very articulate on social media. Thomas Hanitzsch says that this is especially true in Germany and Scandinavian countries, meaning *"the impression that we often get is that it's actually more people being sceptical of the media than we can actually find in reality. So this is a biased perception of public opinion".*

As a result, the Council of Europe report proposed something called 'strategic silence' in some cases: totally avoiding engaging with those who want to amplify mal- or disinformation and who seek to manipulate any response you do give.[10]

UNDER ATTACK

Swedish television, SVT, and its reporters are facing organized attacks by groups on social media. The company follows online comments closely and tries to answer users' questions about SVT's news output. It also publicly disputes false allegations about its news operations and publicly discloses any corrections. On the other hand, it avoids engaging with purely political comments.

22. BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT MISTAKES
Journalism is a human craft, meaning mistakes are unavoidable. Acknowledging and correcting mistakes with a clear policy is good journalistic practice. This is exceptionally important in the age when errors are politicised and widely and eagerly reported.

FAKTISK NORWAY

Four top Norwegian news companies decided to commit substantial funds to an independent operation that fact-checks even its own news.

23. CREATE ALLIANCES
Try to ally with those who share the same values. They may be other journalistic organisations or communities of organisations.

STEM'RNE

On the island of Fyn in Denmark, three media companies decided to collaborate to encourage local youth to vote in the 2017 regional elections. They learnt a lot, not only about the interests of their young audience but also from each other.

24. COMMUNICATE THE JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES AND VALUES
"I think there's a question of making sure that one tells the story of how one tells the story. That all the work that

goes into doing these things is, if not transparent, at least sort of translucent, if you will. So that people understand that there is a real professional effort that goes into the production of news, and opinion programmes, and the like", says Rasmus Kleis Nielsen.

One way of doing that, is to have real live, physical interactions with the audience. Like Le Monde is doing with their Festivals; they bring the most newsworthy people on stage and have their reporters interview them for a live studio audience. Westergaard and Jørgensen, the Danish editors, when looking at how newsrooms were searching for means of reconnecting with communities, also saw this trend: *"Many media companies are pursuing new ways to create physical journalism in the form of public meetings, festivals, events, and stage plays, becoming easier to approach and understand."*[11]

→ NEWS OMBUDSMEN

News ombudsmen hope to bridge the gap between the broadcasting company and the public by being accessible to both. They give feedback to journalists and editors and help them comply with ethical guidelines and be more transparent.

25. PROMOTE MEDIA LITERACY

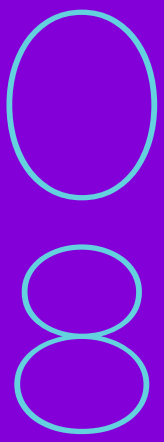
Communication is a two-way process, so in order to have an optimal transfer of information, the receiver also has to take responsibility. They need to be critical and not accept information at face value. Hence, news literacy is crucial. For PSMs therefore, it may be valuable to focus on media literacy and help people with their 'news consumer skills'.

Indeed, the European Audiovisual Observatory mapped media literacy projects in EU Member States in 2016, identifying 547 projects. 'Critical thinking' was the clear leader in skills targeted, concerning 403 of the 547 projects.[12]

→ L'INSTANT DETOX

In his programme L'instant Detox, Julien Pain talks to passers-by on Paris' streets and confronts them with hoaxes and fake news. He wants to find out why people see the world the way they do while at the same time explaining what journalism is all about.

25 RECOMMEN-DATIONS



We set out to discover inspiring examples of how to make the media better. How you can build engagement and trust in public service journalism.

Along our journey, we found that these cases share and highlight a list of concrete courses of action you can take. To recap, these are:

1. **Include the 'new world order' in your strategic process**
2. **Find audiences that love you**
3. **Tackle information overflow**
4. **Innovate radically and try new things**
5. **Make the tools of the new world work for you**
6. **Contextualise data**
7. **Show society you are an ally**
8. **Create a new sense of belonging**
9. **Listen to the audience**
10. **Incentivise civilised discussion**
11. **Set and follow high professional standards**
12. **Break journalistic taboos**
13. **Educate yourself on biases and the risks of storytelling**
14. **Find a space for solutions, not only problems**
15. **Better understand yourself as a journalist**
16. **Be more sensitive to the nuances of the issues**
17. **Focus on diversity and representation**
18. **Serve societal needs, fill the gap**
19. **Distance yourself from politics**
20. **Face the criticism openly and respond...**
21. **...but don't fuel the fire**
22. **Be transparent about mistakes**
23. **Create alliances**
24. **Communicate your journalistic practices and values**
25. **Promote media literacy**

In our final section we will detail the case studies as tangible, descriptive examples of how you can put these pillars into pracitce. Of course, there are more than 50 inspiring and enthusiastic people working to this goal in reality. But the most inspiring part of our journey has been meeting some of them.

We think that the value of this report lies in the connections we have drawn between the key issues, their root causes and the given solutions. It has shown for example that, yes, fact-checking and high professional standards are important, but they do not solve the trust issue alone. Or that connecting better with your audience is not a complete solution if you reach only a select, elite part of it.

We also dived into exploring the severity of the issues at hand today. We are living in an era of information overflow; the audience is fragmented and individualised. But they're also more demanding and better educated than ever before. And hey, this may be all right! Meanwhile, declining trust has fuelled more hostile, unfair attacks against the media. When improperly managed, these critiques may be - and sometimes are - dangerous for the very democracy that public service aims to defend. But, declining trust may also be a good sign, by showing that the audience is more critical and sceptical in a healthy way.

Finally, we have discussed how news media today are simultaneously in a period of great opportunity, holding the ability to meet the growing expectations and needs of their audiences - including their need to belong to society.

So: go for the challenge. And remember to focus on putting your own house in order - there's no time to lose.

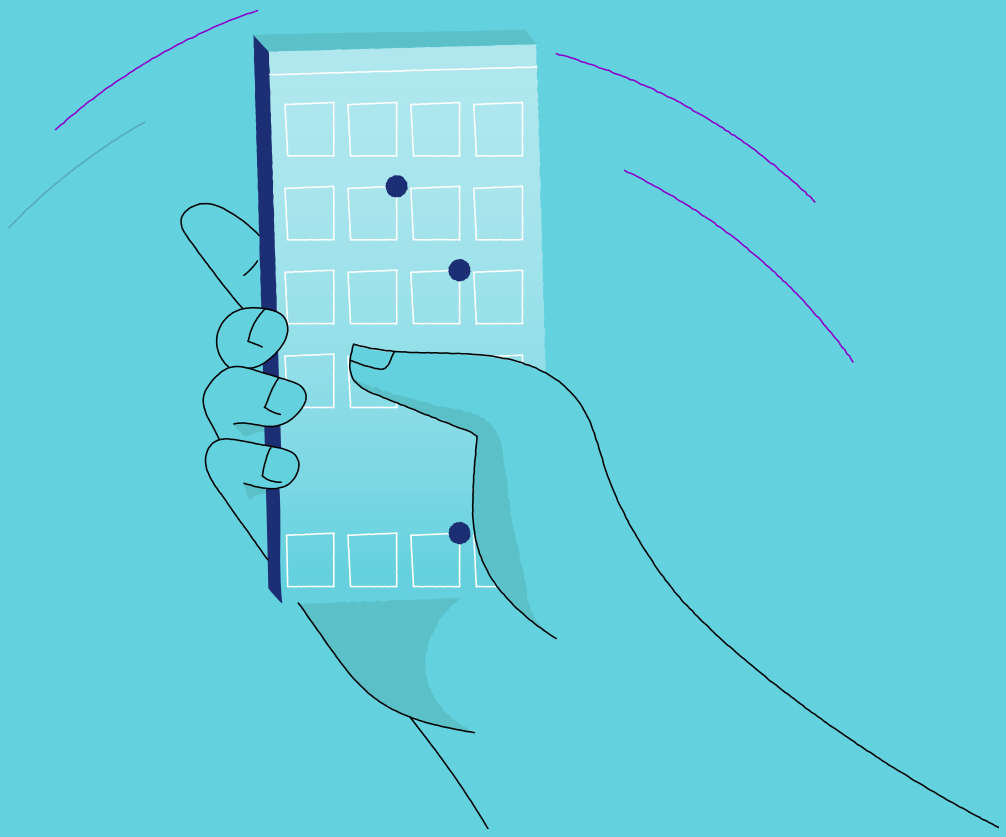
"News is not a scarcity anymore, but trust is. If you have it, it's a precious treasure. Take good care of it."

Atte Jääskeläinen

"See the unique identity of every person in your audience and focus on serving their needs."

Maike Olij

50 CASES



50:50

BBC, Great Britain

"I think the gender imbalance should be as important an issue as political imbalance, yet it has never had the same attention from journalists." (Ros Atkins)

Ros Atkins, presenter BBC News
ros.atkins@bbc.co.uk

Developed by a local presenter, the 50:50 initiative assesses the gender ratio of experts and interviewees featured on BBC programmes. By tracking how many men and women are on screen every month, teams are able to self-evaluate whether the proper balance is being achieved. So far, it has been very successful.

THE STORY

Sometimes a project simply works better when it's not initiated by management. Indeed, it was Ros Atkins, a TV presenter for the BBC programme Outside Source, who developed the stand-out project to reduce gender inequality in the organization - starting with his own show.

"I started 50:50 in January 2017. While the BBC has some fantastic initiatives around gender such as 100 Women, I wanted to try and create something that more systematically measured and changed how we were doing [things] every single day."

"I think gender imbalance should be as important an issue as political imbalance, yet it has never had the same attention from journalists. We needed something that was going to work, as I was convinced we could make our shows consist of (on average) 50% women and 50% men."

He had three goals: to raise awareness about gender equality among reporters, to increase the actual data on gender representation and to motivate people to improve gender equality on their own shows.

"The first thing that we needed to do was to collect data. Only if the journalists could see the state of gender representation for themselves would they then be inspired to act. It was crucial that the people collecting the data were journalists themselves. Not data experts but the actual people making the programme. They would see for themselves what is going on."

Ros started the project with Outside Source, convinced that you must 'practice what you preach.' *"If you want to sell an idea to journalists, you have to be credible. Being a journalist myself, using this method daily, I was able to persuade them that this is actually working."*

He started collecting data and raising awareness in his own team, and after just four months, the programme had achieved a 50:50 gender split. This success story encouraged other teams at the BBC to follow suit. The project has expanded rapidly, and now over 80 programmes from across the BBC – both within the news desk and beyond – are taking part in the challenge.

To achieve his third goal, namely to encourage people to take on this challenge, Ros makes participation voluntary. Management was informed about the project, but no programme has been forced to take part. This proved to be a very powerful approach, as peer group dynamics are an important stimulus. In addition, the monthly collection and sharing of data led to some friendly rivalry between programmes.

An important aspect of success is that you shouldn't rush it. *"Take your time to have everybody committed and convinced. If you rush, you run the risk of losing the energy in the project. At the BBC, there are now 320 teams working with 50:50, and only one team has quit during the process. With them, we rushed. Which is too bad, but we will not try to convince them to join after all. It's a voluntary project that will only work if you want to participate,"* says Ros.

Of course, the BBC will always interview the relevant minister, official, or organizational representative appropriate to a story as they are the individuals in charge or who are accountable. The 50:50 concept is focused on 'expert contributors' who comment or report on events or bring particular expertise to a news story or item. The gender balance is then measured every month.

The project has been enthusiastically endorsed by senior BBC management. They have even set the challenge for all radio and TV programmes that use expert contributors to achieve a 50:50 split by April 2019.

50:50 PROJECT

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

0:50 shows what intrinsic motivation can achieve. By truly wanting to combat gender inequality, a unique kind of momentum was generated that the management would not have been able to.

It's more effective to focus on better journalism than to 'tick the boxes' regarding gender equality.

It remains to be seen whether this method is applicable to ethnic or disability-related representation.

55 UNTERSCHIEDE -
communicating PSM values to the public
ORF, Austria

"We have to defend the distinctive quality of public service media. Otherwise, there's no justification for a licence fee." (Klaus Unterberger)

Klaus Unterberger,
Head of Public Value, ORF
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'55 Unterschiede' is the name of the latest annual 'Public Value Report', listing 55 ways in which ORF, the Austrian PSM, creates value for society. Each year, ORF publishes a variation of this report as a magazine, a newspaper, a small booklet or as a series of posters. A 'Public Value Week' also accompanies it, consisting of TV, radio and online programmes which discuss ORF's positive impact on the country.

THE STORY

"We can't take anything for granted at the moment. We are in the midst of a perfect storm in which we must secure the legitimacy of public service media [to the people]", says Klaus Unterberger.

It has been more than ten years since Klaus first suggested that the Austrian ORF should launch a comprehensive review of whether it fulfils its public service values. This meant asking: does it create public value: a metric later required by the EU Commission in its 2009 Broadcasting Communication.

"When I started, many people on the inside of ORF said: Why is it actually necessary to speak about public service? We're here for journalism; those kinds of notions don't make any difference. Since then, the situation has completely changed, because now we have to defend the distinctive quality of public service media. Otherwise, there's no justification for a licence fee."

Since 2008, ORF has published a yearly review of the public value it creates. It always publishes this report in a creative format. In the past, it has been a magazine, a newspaper, a small booklet or a series of posters, to mention just a few formats. In addition, ORF hosts a 'Public Value Week', consisting of TV, radio and online programmes which discuss the impact of ORF in Austria.

Some figures representing Austria's far-right Freedom Party have demanded a change in reporting standards at ORF, which some have accused of left-wing bias and proposed cutting its licence fee. The board overseeing ORF is composed mostly of politically appointed members, and the government has the right to nominate some members directly.

To combat that, one of ORF's many publications is the official Public Value Report. *"Our competitors always accuse us of reaching into the pockets of licence fee payers, like we're gangsters,"* explains Unterberger, *"So we have to work much harder to make our unique selling position visible."*

The most recent report took the form of a booklet and carries the title '55 Unterschiede', roughly meaning '55 ways in which we make a difference'. Austrians pay 55 euro cents a day for ORF, so the publication lists 55 things they get in return. To gauge the rather abstract concept of 'public value', ORF decided to use a very practical metric of *"is it worth the money?"* and created an artificial 55 cent coin to symbolize that. Next, the organization that collects the license fee in Austria will print 50,000 copies of the report to deliver to the public.

Today, Unterberger's designated job title is 'Head of Public Value'. He defines his and his team's role as an *"interdisciplinary task force focusing on the public service mission and remit."* Together with ORF, he is also working with the research community on the "European Public Open Space", a new paradigm for the future of European PSMs.

ORF 'QUALITY DIMENSIONS':

How does ORF create distinctive quality for the common good

- Individual Value
- Social Value
- Nation Value
- International Value
- Corporate Value

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

With '55 Unterschiede', the ORF is showing the audience in a clear way how they get value for their money.

The report is a concise, attractively designed booklet.

By using very precise wording, they convey the value of their efforts to the audiences that pay for it.

AGILE NEWSROOM

EBU, international

"A lot of content can be a trap. We need to do everything to make sure we are telling the truth." (Aleksa Boljanović)

Derek Bowler, Head of Social Newsgathering at EBU
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The Agile Newsroom is a real-time workshop that brings together EBU member journalists working on social-media account verification, to share skills and experiences and strengthen the Social Newswire network.

THE STORY

The Eurovision News Exchange Social Newswire manages requests from broadcasters seeking to use third-party online content. Here, stories are checked and verified via News Exchange's Slack platform, where over 450 journalists, editors and producers from 28 countries collaborate. Since its founding in February 2017, over 6,200 pieces of content have been discovered, cleared and verified, making them accessible within the core Eurovision News Exchange.

This might happen on witness-based stories like 'Pro-abortion rights protesters flood the streets of Buenos Aires' and 'Saudi football fans on a plane to Russia World Cup'.

During the Agile Newsroom Workshop in June 2018, 60 of the network's collaborators were sitting together in a conference room in Sarajevo. In six teams of ten, the journalists checked content relating to a specific region or theme (Europe, US, Asia/Oceania, Middle East, Africa, the World Cup). And as the Agile Newsroom is a free-flow event, much like a hackathon, most of the learning is by doing. So even though the workshop starts with a training session and an introduction to the software used, most of the time is actually spent working. For some, this is challenging. If you don't understand the instructions in the beginning, the dive is deep. But as teams consist of both experienced and inexperienced members, help is never far away.

Project manager Derek Bowler oversees the ongoing activities from behind his laptop, monitoring each team's workflow. *"The main problem is not locating the content and verifying it but getting clearance. You need written consent from the actual producer of the content. Verifying is actually basic journalism – checking if things are true or not. But getting the clearance quickly and securely, that's the trick."*

The Sarajevo Agile Newsroom is the second live event of the Social Newswire, following the success of its debut. Bowler says, *"The Agile Newsroom not only offers the opportunity to learn new skills, it's also adding new members to the Social Newswire network, making the network even stronger and more productive."*

And it's the power of the network that makes this initiative so relevant. All over Europe, newsrooms face the same challenges when it comes to using social media content. Speed is everything, but content still needs to be checked before it can be used. The Social Newswire, with its international reach, provides special assistance for breaking news stories by verifying sources for collective use.

One of the attendees in Sarajevo is Aleksa Boljanović, an online journalist at RTS Serbia. *"A lot of content on social media can be a trap. We need to do everything possible to make sure we are telling the truth. I have learned practical tools that help me to handle social network data. And I have more knowledge to avoid traps."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

A good way for journalists to collaborate and improve their skills on clarifying social media content.

By putting beginners and experts in the same room and having them work on the same project, all participants learn by doing.

Those trained return home more confident and with a peer network.

A network offers real-time collaboration, but the immersive experience is challenging and rewarding.

BLACK FRIDAY

RTVE, Spain

"We have to work for the audience...or we'll disappear." (Asun Gómez Bueno)

Asun Gómez Bueno
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The staff at Spain's RTVE uniformly and publicly protested against political interference. They wore black every Friday – both in the office and on air – for 12 consecutive weeks, gaining support across the organization's regional and international offices.

THE STORY

What happens when a PSM faces low levels of trust as well as accusations of political interference?

Spain's RTVE is one example of a European PSM in this predicament. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018 found that Spain's publicly-owned station was ranked amongst the least trusted media brands within the country. Meanwhile, a governing law from 2012 permits the ruling political party to appoint RTVE's Chairman, meaning that its management (and editorial tone) changes with each electoral shift.

In 2018, in response to the organization's alleged political interference, RTVE's staff protested uniformly and publicly. Their mode of operation was to wear black every Friday - both in the office and on screen - for 12 consecutive weeks, gaining support across its regional and international bureaus. In doing so, employees aimed to collectively communicate their fear about the dwindling independence of the country's main news channel not only to their audience and politicians but also to the PSM management itself.

RTVE has been no stranger to murmurs of discontent within its ranks, with employees having privately questioned the channel's independence repeatedly over the last decade (including lodging a formal complaint with the European Parliament). Yet the Catalan Referendum in May 2018 proved a trigger point, as RTVE faced widespread accusations that its reporting on this constitutional impasse had been biased by the channel's Chairman and the country's political leadership. In response, RTVE's current News Council - an internally elected group of 13 non-executive employees - unanimously voted to take visible, organized action.

Critics might argue that bringing attention to one's own reporting faults could heighten consumers' misgivings about PSMs. Indeed, the management of RTVE has stayed silent on the issue. Some might say they are stoking the fire. Others are concerned that personal politics infiltrated the protest at RTVE, coinciding with broader opposition to the conservative government.

But the 'Black Friday' (#ViernesNegro) movement argues that they are saving the organization from itself, fearing that a constant decline in trust could send viewing levels plummeting to the point of closure - as it did for Valencia's Canal Nou in 2013. Asun Gómez Bueno, one of the core initiators of "Black Friday", argues that protests of this sort are "raising awareness" that there are individuals within PSMs fighting to enforce the values in which the public should trust, and working to keep the news trustworthy for its members. As such, she defends the publicity around RTVE's protest, noting that journalists' efforts needed to be visible to garner public support.

Certainly, in political terms, the movement has created waves. The new government (which came into power in June 2018) made a cross-party legal pact to guarantee RTVE an independent board, regardless of who is leading the country. Ironically, they appointed a new (albeit temporary) Chairman upon being elected. Still, for now, the government's promise of a non-partisan, professional head has been enough to suspend Black Friday. It is "a new start."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Low trust and political interference may escalate to an open conflict and internal fragmentation within the organization.

Public protest is controversial and can have diverse effects on the trust placed in PSMs.

Publicity campaigns focused on "giving the people back the media" can hold appeal and have the power to secure legislative change.

BLOCKCHAIN FOR TRUST

Civil, United States

"This is serious news-people using blockchain technology to solve the twin crisis in journalism." (Vivian Schiller)

Vivian Schiller, CEO,
Civil Foundation
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Civil Media Company hopes to build a self-governing authorization network for high-quality news organizations (echoing the peer review system used by blockchain), and aims to support the network through the sale of cryptocurrency. Although cryptoeconomics and blockchain may be difficult topics to master, public service companies should follow them closely. It may change the role of middlemen (like advertising companies and even news organizations), open up diverse revenue opportunities, and create novel ways to determine whether news organizations are credible.

THE STORY

If blockchain is working to 'tokenize trust' in trade and in the financial world, could it also increase trust in journalism? That's what Civil Media Company, one of the most widely discussed startups in the news world, is claiming to do.

"The key ideology behind blockchain is to get rid of the middlemen who are needed to secure transactions," says Mats Nylund, a Finnish professor who recently wrote a report about the opportunities for blockchain in the news industry for the world's association of newspapers, WAN-IFRA. *"Blockchain is another way of securing transactions. It creates a new form of trust and replaces the old forms"* by keeping automated records of all transactions in a computer network which can't be modified or destroyed afterwards – a leap forward for auditing.

Digiday.com describes Civil as *"a startup that aims to support a network of high-quality news outlets through the sale of cryptocurrency"* called CVL. Meaning that contrary to common belief, Civil is not a news platform. Vivian Schiller, the Civil Foundation's CEO, explains that, instead, its key idea is to build a self-governing authorization network for news organizations. Anyone wishing to challenge a news organization's reputation can do so. Hence, the mechanism is based on a peer review of the network, echoing its inspiration – blockchain.

Meanwhile, Civil's also plans on providing tools for journalists to share and create content for independent newsrooms. One of its first newsrooms is called "The Colorado Sun" and consists of ex-Denver Post editors and journalists.

"This is not blockchain people coming to the news. This is serious news-people using blockchain technology to try to solve the twin crisis in journalism: the crisis of funding and the crisis of trust," says Schiller, a former executive of major news organizations including the US public radio NPR.

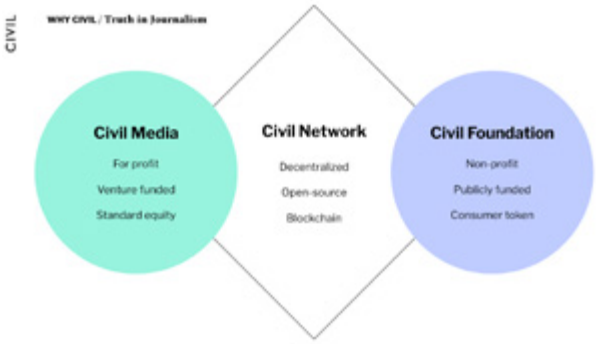
Schiller addresses the question of trust by assuring that *"in order to be part of the [Civil] network, a newsroom has to meet the ethical journalism standards that signal its trustworthiness to the community. If you don't follow the rules, you can be expelled."*

In September 2018, the Associated Press announced that it will license its content to newsrooms within the Civil network. In return, Civil will give AP tokens as well as track and fight illegal licensing of their content.

Still, Civil has not had an easy start. Its cryptocurrency token (CVL) sale earned less than $2 million from some 600 customers, when the minimum target was $8 million. *"We're disappointed, but we're as committed as ever,"* the company's founder Matthew Iles wrote, hinting that CVL may eventually become a scarce resource and rise in value.

In response, Civil's main funder, ConsenSys, has committed $5 million in capital and technical services to build the platform. Civil itself has given a million dollars to fund its "first fleet" of independent content-producing journalists.

One of the challenges for public service media will be that the Civil platform uses cryptocurrencies, not official money. This is not always a comfortable or even legal area for public services. But there are also opportunities for transparency and greater self-sufficiency.



AUTHORS' REFLECTION

A project based on a"higher purpose for journalism" can lock in investments and get people to work for it.

A transparent governance system, with incentives for checks and balances, could help fuel trust.

New technologies may erode the role of financial and organizational middlemen.

The challenge for blockchain and cryptoeconomics projects is that they are difficult to understand.

BREMEN VIER

Radio Bremen, ARD, Germany

"We decided to grow up along with our audience." (Helge Haas)

Helge Haas,
Program Director Bremen Vier
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The local radio broadcaster Bremen Vier decided to grow alongside its audience in an effort to maintain the community they had built twenty years earlier. The station tries to cater to their ever-maturing listeners as best they can, focusing on live interactions and on gathering an accurate insight into their needs.

THE STORY

Bremen Vier began radio broadcasting as early as 1986. *"Back then, it was the first platform completely aimed at young people,"* says Helge Haas, head of the station. *"The offering was very focused on the local, urban youth scene, and people really grew up with us."*

But then, the audiences got older. The teenagers became twenty-somethings and embarked on careers and started families.

"A few years ago, we saw that our audiences had become much older. We had a choice: either to stay young and discard a loyal group of listeners, or to grow up with our audience and create something new for young people. We decided on the latter."

Radio Bremen created a new station, Bremen Next, as an alternative youth offering, which besides a radio presence boasts a large offering on YouTube and Instagram. It is here that the urban youth scene now finds its content. The 30 to 50-year olds have stuck with Bremen Vier. The station now airs mainstream pop for people that balance families and careers. *"Their needs have become different, so we have adjusted our offering."*

There is a lot of close contact with the audience, and people can call in or send messages through WhatsApp and Facebook. *"In a lot of our programmes, you hear the voices of our audiences. Interviews are never pre-recorded, making the interaction between the presenter and the person who calls in dynamic and fresh."* The output is often surprisingly good. But perhaps this is due to the location of the radio station. *"Bremen is a typical 'Northern' city here in Germany. People use little words to express themselves and are often quite funny in their replies."*

There is a strong community feel amongst the audience. *"It helps that Bremen is not a large city, and even though a lot of our listeners live outside of the city, we feel like we all know each other."* Also in its style and tone, Bremen Vier tries to be familiar and welcoming. *"Our presenters are not tied to strict format restrictions or wordings, we actually encourage them to be themselves, to be real people. Listeners sense that. If you want to be close, you have to be real."*

Last year, listeners were encouraged to send in a video of their homes for the chance to win a living room concert. *"The response was overwhelming, and this gave us such a wonderful insight into the lives of our listeners. It was not representative research, but it did offer a great sense of who our community is. We shared the videos online so people could also get to know each other."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

If your audience changes, it might be worthwhile If your audience changes, following suit might be worthwhile. That way you don't need to recruit new audiences but can keep in step with the life-cycle of your community.

In order to have real contact, you have to be real yourself.

For a local platform, direct contact is probably easier to achieve than for a national platform.

CITIZEN VIDEOS OF UMBRIA

RAI TgR Umbria, Italy

"The idea was to create a real interaction with people." (Valerie Radiconcini)

Valerie Radiconcini,
Journalist
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The Italian public broadcaster RAI's regional base in Umbria, located in the beautiful town of Perugia, collects daily videos shot by citizens, which it shows in its 20-minute lunchtime TV newscast. These videos are also posted on Facebook as a way to connect with younger viewers.

THE STORY

A year ago, a group of journalists from RAI's Umbrian regional office started collecting videos shot by ordinary people from all over the region.

These videos, referred to as Dal Nostro Inviato ("From the citizens"), are verified and used as material in a standard newscast – which means they must fulfil the usual criteria. However, this material is much more varied than professionally produced shots.

"The idea was to create a real interaction with people, especially people that think that journalists are very far removed from normal life, from everyday problems," says Valerie Radiconcini, one of the journalists working on the project.

Another project goal is to reach younger viewers – older than teenagers but younger than the typical television news audience – by posting the videos on social media, in this case using RAI Umbria's Facebook account.

It was not an immediate success. The office initially received only one or two videos per week, but the team's persistence paid off. Now they receive 5 or 6 daily, typically about problems people face in their everyday life. Quite often the videos posted on Facebook even go viral.

"We have issues, for example, with overflowing trash cans full because there are not enough workers in the companies to pick them up. Or they point out that there's a problem with polluted rivers. These kinds of problems are important for people to see on TV."

Radiconcini says that the key lesson of the project is that you can trust people and, in return, they trust you. *"We can show people that we are not strange beings closed off in the newsroom trying to play odd content that has nothing to do with their lives. With Dal Nostro Inviato we can show that if they stand up to point something out, we'll listen to them. I think this is very important because in Italy there's a lack of trust between people and journalists."*

To reinforce the positive bond, the journalists always thank contributors for their videos, even if they are not used, and for their cooperation and trust. Sometimes journalists themselves cover the issues brought to their attention, signalling to citizens that their actions have triggered a response.

Valerie Radiconcini says that the innovative format lets the team, as journalists, bridge the gap between themselves and viewers, building a new relationship with the public. It also helps RAI's regional office, one of 24 in the country, better understand the problems of everyday people. For RAI, producing local news is a way to distinguish themselves as the only broadcaster offering regional news on both radio and TV.

Size matters, says Radiconcini. *"Dal vostro inviato is good for regional broadcasting because we are not overwhelmed with videos. At a national level, the number might be so high that choosing only one could disappoint people But for a regional newscast, this project is manageable."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Creating a relationship of participation can be a long process of learning

Something that is useful in television may not be successful in social media, and vice versa

It's easier to connect with the audience if you are operating on a regional level

COPING WITH COMPLAINTS

BBC, Great Britain

"The BBC is always under scrutiny and sometimes, it's under attack." (David Jordan)

David Jordan,
Director of Editorial Policy and Standards

The BBC has an industrial-scale mechanism to deal with the complaints they get each year. But they say this response is not just a regulatory obligation, but also an ethical commitment.

THE STORY

The BBC receives between 200,000 and 250,000 complaints a year from their UK users and from around the world. The public can lodge a complaint by phone, by submitting an online form or by writing directly to the BBC's directors, and begin a process with various stages of escalation.

The British broadcaster is unique in its handling of complaints for two reasons. Firstly, the UK's Complaints Framework obliges it to respond to at least 93% of complaints within ten working days. And secondly, it receives an unrivalled number of complaints, which reflects the company's size and international scope. This, in turn, means its complaints process is of a rare scale, managed by David Jordan - the BBC's Director of Editorial Policy and Standards.

Jordan notes it isn't normal for European broadcasters to have their own mass complaints framework, but the size of the BBC makes it necessary.

"If you came to this fresh, you could get the impression this [complaints system] was imposed on us. But it's not true," explains Jordan, noting that some BBC policies preceded more recent regulation and are voluntary.

Essentially then, while the BBC's complaints framework is a UK legal and regulatory obligation, its robustness is partly based on an editorial decision taken to build trust and accountability.

"The fact that you're prepared to admit that you've got something wrong and that you're prepared to publish it to the wider audience, I think builds trust," says Jordan, arguing that covering mistakes up makes things far worse. Indeed, other countries have "rudimentary" systems in comparison, he notes.

Jordan also personally heads up the second stage of the complaints process, for complainants who are unsatisfied with the BBC's initial replies and are appealing to a higher authority. If they are still unsatisfied, they can then appeal to Ofcom. In "a proportion" of cases, the complainant is told the BBC didn't get its original response right.

A high-profile example in 2018 was sparked by the BBC's current affairs show, Newsnight, where the opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn's face was superimposed over Red Square as part of a report in the aftermath of the Novichok Salisbury attack (as pictured below). Accusations were made that the BBC's Newsnight had digitally modified his hat to make it look more Russian.

It is at times like this when the complaints team must assess the validity of the public's complaints. They are responsible for checking whether the BBC is sticking to its own editorial guidelines requiring "due impartiality" and "due accuracy", and avoiding bias," as well as avoiding unjustified "harm and offence" to the audience. On this occasion, the BBC rejected the complaints, showing producers had not modified the hat and that the same backdrop had been used previously for a non-socialist, Conservative minister.

"The BBC's impartiality is always under scrutiny and sometimes, it's under attack, so obviously it's a very important part of what we do," Jordan stresses.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Replying to each and every complaint – where resources allow it – is key to engaging with the public. Doing this in a structured and consistent format gives people a stake in the PSM and helps them hold the media accountable.

Admitting to mistakes gives broadcasters credibility and shows their ability to learn to provide better journalism.

Highly contentious events like Brexit or terrorism merit their own specific editorial guidelines, providing a clear and consistent reference resource.

DISCOVER

WNYC, United States

"A feature like this is not just a product, it's a whole philosophy on how you produce and tag audio." (Nate Landau)

Nate Landau,
Chief Digital Officer at WNYC
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The Discover app of WNYC is making it possible for people to download a personalized news playlist, which they can listen to anywhere they want. This feature is especially appealing to "brand lovers".

THE STORY

In March 2014, the public service radio station of New York, WNYC, launched the Discover feature in its app. *"We wanted to make it possible for our listeners to also consume our audio content while being in the subway, with no internet connection,"* explains Nate Landau, Chief Digital Officer of WNYC.

They therefore created a tool that made it possible to create a personalized, up-to-date playlist of news audio from all of WNYC's content. This playlist is downloaded and can be listened to anywhere. *"Discover also solved the wish of our listeners to combine different forms of audio together – live shows, podcasts and in-depth stories on specific topics – while at the same time catering to their specific, individual wishes."*

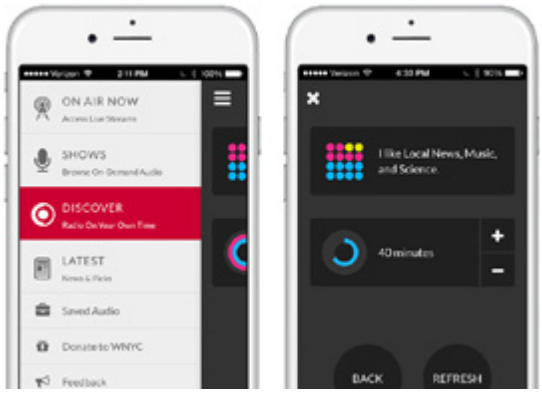
In the years that followed, WNYC learnt a great deal. *"First of all, a tool like this is not something to generate big audiences with. It really is for brand lovers. For people that know your content really well and want to have it catered to their needs."* Of the millions of WNYC listeners, only around 200,000 use Discover on the app. *"It's a sticky feature that our heavy users use."*

Over the years, people have become even more accustomed to personalized offerings, with brands like Spotify and Netflix entering the market. This has upped the stakes. *"A feature like this is not just a product, it's a whole philosophy on how you produce and tag audio."* Shows need to be atomized and tagged correctly in order to be taken up by machine learning. There needs to be deep metadata on the content for the feature to work.

The success of Discover also depends on the content that is offered. Both in its app and on air, WNYC covers a broad array of topics, from investigative journalism to service journalism that provides practical information on subway traffic and local festivals, for example. *"This combination of information is what makes us indispensable for New Yorkers. And the Discover app is just an extension of this strategy."*

There have been a number of Discover copycats. NPR offers something similar to NPR One (https://www.npr.org/about/products/npr-one/), but on a national level and based on all content from American public service radio stations. *"And there is a company that Google bought, so I assume that they are doing something interesting as well."*

For news brands interested in building a similar offering, Nate stresses that there must be total commitment. *"This kind of investment is only worthwhile if you are also willing to make the effort to atomize and tag the content. If your metadata is not complete and up to date, there is no point in promising a personalized offering."* Similarly, it was no easy task for WNYC, who had to develop all the technology in-house when they started working on Discover. *"But nowadays, there are plenty of solutions out there you can use, saving you time and money."*



AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Personalized content within a brand might be mainly interesting for heavy users. It does not seem to be a crowd-pulling strategy.

Collaborations between various brands might be an interesting way to go, as the offering can then be bigger and more diverse, making it more attractive to all kinds of users.

DIVERSE GEORGIA

1TV, Georgia

"They also need to hear about what's going on in the rest of the country." (George Gvimradze)

George Gvimradze,
Director of News and Current Affairs at 1TV
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Through the Diverse Georgia project, the Georgian national broadcaster 1TV has invested heavily in providing content for the country's Armenian and Azerbaijani audiences.

THE STORY

In a nation of 3.7 million Georgians, about 10 to 15% belong to the Azerbaijani and Armenian ethnic minorities. These are only two of the nine ethnic minorities that live in the country, mostly based in specific regions. The elderly in particular rarely speak Georgian, speaking Azerbaijani and Armenian or Russian instead. Because of their lacking language skills, these groups can be largely disconnected from the rest of the country.

"We really wanted to empower these people," says George Gvimradze, Director of News and Current Affairs at 1TV. *"As they don't speak Georgian, they were restricted to the news supply coming from their own region. But they also need to hear about what's going on in the rest of the country, especially with regards to societal and political issues."*

Diverse Georgia was therefore launched in the summer of 2018. Through the project, 1TV aims to ensure access to information for ethnic minorities, thereby promoting the integration process and increasing civic consciousness. *"When you don't speak the language, it's hard to stay connected to the national news and participate in the democratic process. This was sometimes taken advantage of by politicians. With the presidential elections in October 2018, we wanted to ensure people were able to make their own, informed decisions."*

The project's main focus is on airing 12 hours of radio and television content online, including cultural and entertainment programmes as well as news and current affairs shows. The website, 1tv.ge, translates the content into no less than six languages, including Russian and English. Most importantly, the main Georgian news bulletin, Moambe, is translated into Azerbaijani and Armenian, and all debates for the elections are interpreted live.

Protecting and preserving the Azerbaijani and Armenian languages is another important aim of the project. *"We need to emancipate the ethnic groups and give them a platform to protect their languages and cultures. Therefore we also focus on producing cultural programmes on ethnic groups."* Such programmes are also broadcast to the rest of the nation to promote dialogue among diverse cultures.

Although the project has only run for a few months, the response has so far been positive. *"We do need to spread the word even more," admits George. "We need to let the Azerbaijani and Armenian people know that this exists."* But he's confident that this is just a matter of time.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

In a country with (ethnic) minorities, diversity is an important tool to ensure that all people can participate in democracy.

Addressing diversity with a goal to empower and preserve is a positive approach that can help garner support for the initiative.

DUTCH OPINIONPANEL

AVROTROS, Netherlands

"Our Opinionpanel is a great tool that shows what people really think about certain topics. As the membership is so vast, our results are representative and are a true reflection of the Dutch sentiment." (Gijs Rademaker)

Gijs Rademaker,
Project Manager EenVandaag Opiniepanel
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On a daily basis, the EenVandaag Opiniepanel asks some of its 50,000 members what they think about news-related topics like politics, economics, healthcare or crime. The input from this panel is then used to balance the reporting and to challenge politicians.

THE STORY

Current affairs programme EenVandaag realized that many people in the Netherlands felt 'disconnected' from government and from mainstream media. As Gijs Rademakers, project manager of the Opiniepanel explains: *"People had the impression that their views and opinions didn't really count, and that they were never included in news items. We wanted to close that gap and give people a voice."*

So they set up the Opiniepanel – an online research panel, through which people can voice their opinions on current affairs. And as the membership of the panel is vast and diverse, outcomes are representative for the whole country. Moreover, because the panel sends out its surveys quickly, people's input can often be used the same day for challenging the 'talk of the day' with real viewpoints. This has proven particularly effective during political reports, where politicians easily claim a certain sentiment among the population. A poll from the Opiniepanel can give nuance to statements or even suggest the opposite is true.

The Opiniepanel consists of 50,000 members who represent a broad and diverse range of Dutch people, taken from all layers of society and from all over the country. Six different variables are enough for scientific representation: age, gender, educational level, marital status, geographical location and political preference. On average, each member is sent a questionnaire once a week, and over 25,000 people participate in the surveys every single week. If the topic requires it, a specific subgroup can be singled out, like teachers, members of a certain political party or parents.

Questions focus on news-related topics like politics, economics, healthcare or crime. The questionnaires are drafted by skilled editors at EenVandaag. To ensure the research is credible, EenVandaag has appointed a scientific advisory board.

EenVandaag is the leading current affairs programme in the Netherlands. Results from the panel are published regularly during EenVandaag's TV and radio broadcasts, via the website and on other online channels.

Gijs Rademakers says, *"The Opiniepanel is a great tool that shows what people really think about particular topics. As the membership is so vast, our results are representative and are a true reflection of the Dutch sentiment. Far too often, assumptions are made about people's opinions on topics – either by politicians or the media. But in this case, we actually know what people in the street feel and think. And being a public television broadcaster, that is very important to us."*

The insights gained often lead to public debate and discussion in the media and parliament around a whole range of topics. As the queries can be made in a short time frame (usually within a few hours), outlets or indiviudals who have made dubious statements can be challenged with counter-evidence almost immediately.

"The Opinion Panel gives us insights no other competing medium has, as it is much faster than other news media, giving us have real-life data about people's true opinions. We make headlines with our surveys every week."

The Opiniepanel is also a valuable source of interview candidates and case examples. The sample contains people with unique experiences some of whom are willing to share their story on national radio and TV.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

It can be hard to listen to your audience, as they hardly ever speak with a single voice, and it's hard to filter out the loudest voices.

A panel (with as many participants as the Opinionpanel) makes receiving balanced input possible, including from those who are otherwise not heard.

This input is valuable for editors, as it can balance and challenge the agenda of those dominating the news agenda, i.e. politicians.

FACTFULNESS

Gapminder, international

"Let me be clear: this is a human problem, not a journalism problem." (Fernanda Drumond)

Fernanda Drumond,
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Gapminder developed the concept of factfulness – a new habit of only forming opinions based on facts – and published a book about it. By adopting 'factfulness' themselves, journalists can avoid the ten so-called "dramatic instincts" that may influence their news reporting.

THE STORY

All journalists are human. And all humans have flaws. We all have, for example, a craving for drama. Nothing to be ashamed of, but when journalists act on this instinct, the effects can be quite damaging. The recent debate about fact-based journalism shows the importance of controlling some of our instincts, and of purging news reports of our own unsubstantiated opinions.

In the book Factfulness, the late Hans Rosling, his son Ola Rosling and daughter-in-law Anna Rosling Rönnlund explain the ten "dramatic instincts" all humans have. Rosling's insights are invaluable to journalists, as they show how they can rise above their instincts.

"As you can figure, 'factfulness' is a play on the word ' mindfulness'," explains Fernanda Drumond, Head of Operations at Gapminder. *"Where mindfulness is about being aware of the present moment, factfulness is being aware of the dramatic instincts that usually skew our worldview. And then understanding how to overcome them. And just like mindfulness, factfulness is a state of being that you can train, a new habit that you need to adopt."*

Because of our dramatic instincts, gradual social trends often go unnoticed while general tendencies and nuances go unmentioned. This can lead to a skewed worldview, as Hans Rosling often showed in his inspiring talks, where he confronted the audience – and their perceived facts about the world – with actual facts.

"Let me be clear: this is a human problem, not a journalism problem. We by no means want to blame journalists. These dramatic instincts happen all over society," says Fernanda. *"But the responsibility is greater for journalists, as they reach so many people. You can even say that it's the task of the journalists to conquer the impulses of regular people. Give society the facts to balance their worldview with."*

In the eyes of Fernanda, the biggest problem facing journalism is not fake news, it's general, everyday news that is being skewed. And the issue is not inaccurate content, but rather the manner in which it is presented, which aims to grab the audience's attention.

"It should be part of the basic ethics of journalists to better balance their stories and not to be too biased one way or another." This isn't easy, admits Fernanda, and a newsroom is not always an optimal environment for being factful. *"To be truly factful, you need time. And this is not always given. But there is a lot you can do. Explain what information is missing, or that this is an extreme situation. And hang a reminder next to your computer screen, in order to at least be aware of your own instincts."*

As with mindfulness, patterns and old habits are not going to be broken overnight. *"But you can learn to be more aware of them. Journalists have to remain humble and curious, even if they have done a lot of research into a certain topic."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

We need to critically review the way we bring our general news. Our problems are bigger than fake news alone...

Changing habits is a time-consuming effort and needs to be done consciously.

The idea of factfulness needs to be included in the general journalistic curriculum, not just in the (relatively small) segment of constructive news.

FAKTISK NORWAY

NRK, Norway

"We need to be checked. This is really important. Otherwise, we lose our credibility." (Hildegunn Soldal)

Hildegunn Soldal,
Head of Digital at NRK
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Four top Norwegian news companies decided to commit substantial funds to an independent operation that fact-checks even its own news.

THE STORY

The idea of www.faktisk.no took root in Myanmar and Cambodia. This is where Hildegunn Soldal and Helje Solberg were part of a mentoring project for national and regional media. They advocated the role of fact-checking operations, pointing to leading examples in other parts of the world. However, the response from a journalist there took them by surprise: Why don't you have one in Norway?

"Oh, that is a good question. Why don't we have fact-checking sites?", Hildegunn thought. Hildegunn and Helje were working for the two fiercest competitors in Norwegian media, Dagbladet and VG, but they thought that this kind of operation could be based on collaboration.

Eventually, the four founding fathers were Dagbladet, VG, TV2 - another commercial broadcaster, and NRK - the public broadcaster. This was partly driven by Hildegunn Soldal's move from Dagbladet to NRK, where she became Head of Digital. Helje was also recently appointed as NRK's Director of News Operations.

"Fact-checking is a journalistic genre more than anything else. It's a structured way of working with news and presenting it in a particular way," says Hildegunn

Still, there are more than one hundred fact-checking operations in the world. What makes Faktisk.no so special?

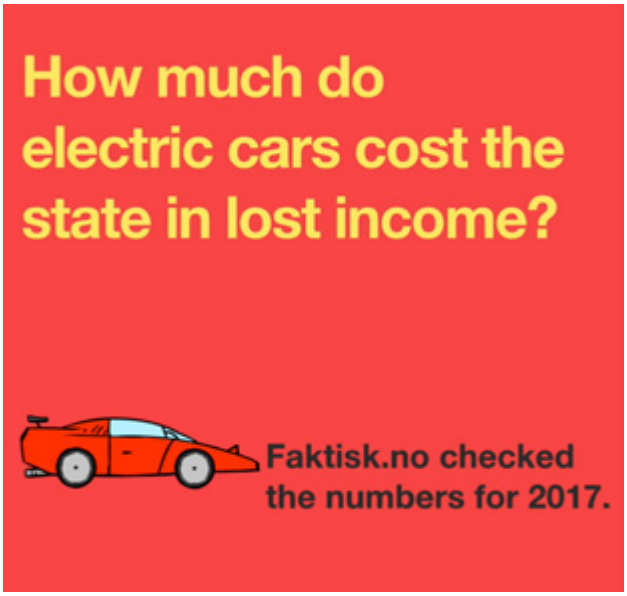
Primarily, it is a unique collaboration between both public and private media. And it reaches a wide audience since everyone is free to share all their fact-checks – which they do. The operation also has its own reporters. Hildegunn adds that the collaborative factor makes the fact-checking operation more credible than it would be individually.

The user-friendly, nuanced approach is also appreciated, with the fact-check results being presented in a readable traffic-light scale (totally true – green; partly true – light green; unclear – yellow; mostly untrue – orange; untrue – red).

Moreover, each of the founders has promised to fund it with one million Norwegian Kroner per year, and two more companies, Amedia and Polaris, have announced plans to join the operation as well, meaning the financial base is very solid.

Crucially, Faktisk publishes statistics on its assessments of media groups and individuals. For instance, surprisingly, NRK has been checked eight times and shockingly, in seven cases, the verdict was that the information published was totally or partly false. Even political parties have done better in checks. *"Yeah, we've done badly, it's true,"* says Hildegunn, but insists she's still happy with the result. *"Definitely! I think that's the key. We need to be checked. That is really important. Otherwise, we lose our credibility. It has helped with that too."*

Today, the founders insist that Faktisk *"is the most successful media startup in Norway, saying it has managed to become important and relevant to public discourse and improving it."* That is despite initially receiving significant criticism when it launched. To their credit, they've openly engaged with the scrutiny, participated in the debate to better explain the initiative, and they've also admitted *"okay, we've made mistakes. We're trying to be open about how we correct them. Everything on the site is transparent."*



AUTHORS' REFLECTION

To be successful, fact-checking operations (and corrections) have to reach those making alternative claims. A joint media operation is a good way of securing that.

A fact-checking operation that is independent of its founders gets covered by various media outlets – more so than a single checking operation.

Media groups that can debunk their own reports (and fund tools that do the same) is a bold signal of their commitment to corporate social responsibility.

FIKA WITH SVT

SVT, Sweden

"The purpose is not marketing, it´s learning."
(Christina Johannesson)

Christina Johannesson,
Project manager, Future Competencies
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Swedish public service media began sending journalists out to ask the public what they wanted from the news. This helped them to better understand the needs of their audience and make both an immediate and a long-term impact on the work in the newsroom.

THE STORY

Christina Johannesson had just started as the project manager of SVT's Future Competencies (Swedish Television) when she suggested launching a campaign to ask the audience for help. She pitched an informal format: simply inviting the audience to have a cup of coffee, a "fika" in Swedish, with SVT journalists – including some of its best-known television stars.

"It's an idea that had occurred to many in our organization before, but the key is to actually do it," says Christina. *"It was so clear. This foundation of knowing your audience is the basis of all knowledge, and it offered insights that co-workers needed to make the cultural transition."*

In November 2016, the campaign trailers began, coinciding with SVT's 60th anniversary. The response was overwhelming. Groups of anything between 3 and 30 people were able to suggest a coffee meeting, and around 700 proposals were received in the first 12 months.

Why were people so eager to get into it? Because SVT warmly, humorously and clearly said that they needed help, says Christina. *"The trailer said: we've been doing news and sports for 60 years, and we would like to continue to do that in the future, but we need your help to make sure that we are as good and as relevant to you as possible."*

The first meetings took place in February 2017. Since then, more than 125 events have been held, allowing SVT's coworkers to meet more than 1,200 people from all over Sweden at their workplaces, in schools, at sports clubs, at associations, in churches and even around kitchen tables.

Christina has witnessed a change in the thinking within the newsroom. *"When you ask very open questions, you get to learn new things about people."* The effect on their work has also been tangible. After an audience meet-up, *"almost everyone comes back with at least one new insight and returns to the office filled with new energy and ideas as well as a sense of urgency that we need to do things differently."*

"Sometimes we simplify reality in our jobs as journalists. Reality is a lot more nuanced than we think. Listening to your worst critics sometimes gives you the most."

Although 'Fika' is set to remain a valuable and permanent part of the agenda, it costs money and most of all, time. Three to five SVT employees generally commit a whole day's work per meeting. Multiply that by 175 meetings so far.

Regardless, SVT now also organises meetings on its own initiative, without prior invitations, because they understood that the groups to whom they have the weakest connection don't see the trailers, and they are unlikely to take the initiative in these kinds of event. For instance, illegal immigrants, the far right, the far left.

"I've learned that most critics have very high expectations of us. They want us to do fulfil our main goal – to be impartial, to be accurate. Most of them want us to promote democracy, as we are a public service. The honest dialogue and feedback have been extremely valuable."

"Their arguments are really worth listening to sometimes," says Christina. She pauses – *"I think this is the most important project of my whole career".*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Don't underestimate the work needed to connect. Scheduling events, rescheduling them, scheduling co-workers' time to host the meetings, and responding to all the proposals was much more time-consuming than SVT expected.

This requires a dedicated project manager who commits substantial time to it, in order to give the project structure and direction.

Audiences appreciate honest, humble appeals.

Listening closely to the thoughts of an audience is a solid strategy for corporate culture changes.

GENERATION WHAT? ALGERIA

EPTV, Algeria

"The survey revealed, very much to our surprise, the optimism and positive outlook of Algerian youth about their country and their future."
(Massika Meddour)

Massika Meddour,
Head of department programming
and diffusion at Chain 4
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EPTV participated in the Generation What? project to get to know their own young audiences and those of neighbouring Arab countries better.

THE STORY

The EBU's landmark Generation What? project enables its partners in various countries to conduct a standardized survey amongst their 18 to 34-year-old audience. The EBU initiated the project in 2016 alongside 18 members operating in 16 countries, with the aim of giving a voice to the generation that most institutions find hard to reach: young people. To make more suitable content for this audience, EBU Members need to get better acquainted with their younger audiences and what they think about politics, immigration, national identity and the future in general.

Algeria also took part in the project together with several neighbouring Arab countries. In total, there were 7,211 respondents across the Arab world. EPTV's coordinator, Hakim Amara, said the following: *"We have been engaged in the Generation What? project for a year now and have come to the conclusion that we're not as close to our audiences as we thought, especially when it comes to the younger generation."*

By conducting a survey amongst a broad youth audience, EPTV secured insights that would otherwise be hard to obtain. As project manager Massika Meddour explains: *"The Generation What? project allowed us to re-establish contact, and get a little bit closer to our youth. The survey revealed, very much to our surprise, the optimism and positive outlook of Algerian youth about their country and their future. We saw that our young generation is very mature and responsible for their age. They are generous, very concrete and capable of making firm commitments."*

These insights will help EPTV make better content for this audience, now that it has a clearer idea of what young people are like today. A new focal point, for example, will be positive stories of hope that can showcase young people's creativity: this theme will be popular with its audience. Other action steps will be defined once all input from the surveys has been processed.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Even though we often think we know our audiences, the truth can be quite different. If you don't check regularly with your audience who they are, what they dream of and what they fear, it's harder to make content that suits their needs.

Especially when it comes to topics that are hard to talk about (sexuality, violence, politics), a survey is an excellent method for understanding

Translating the outcomes into suitable content is another challenge. Though a good start, knowing your audience is not enough. Your content needs to be appealing as well.

HISTORY, RETOLD

CT, Czech Republik

"You know the history is all around us, it's nothing that is hidden somewhere in the dusty attic; we're living it." (Martin Řezníček)

Martin Řezníček,
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In 2018, three hours of never-before-seen footage showing the Russian and some neighbouring countries' armies invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was discovered by chance. CT made a special program and website on the material, sparking varied reactions from a public still suffering from the national trauma of what happened during the repression of the Czech liberalisation movement.

THE STORY

It was found by accident.

A metal box full with high-quality, historical footage capturing the 1968 violence, the end of the Prague Spring. Discovered, unexpectedly, by a documentarist and filmmaker.

Martin Řezníček, the deputy Editor-in-Chief for Czech Television, CT, did not expect much as he sat down in front of a 35 mm projector to view the 3-hour film. No sound, no description. Within the first couple of minutes though, he was amazed.

"It was very high quality, professionally shot…Shots that I had never seen before."

CT and Řezníček decided to make a special program based on the raw footage, coinciding with a year of anniversaries. The broadcaster's 50th anniversary was approaching on August 2nd. The country was turning 100, established in 1918. It also marked 80 years since Hitler took partial control, 70 years since the communists took over, and half a century since the events of 1968.

The reaction to the broadcasted feature was immediate. *"I was anchoring the program, and my producer told me while we were on air, 'we already have people calling in.'"*

Somebody saw his sister in the footage. Another saw a familiar church tower from East Bohemia and could name the military base. People also started to share other unseen content from their private archives. All this material is now under preparation for a new documentary to be sent out on the next anniversary of the Russian crackdown, in August 2019.

And why did it provoke such a reaction? *"The combination of the right footage and the sentiment that is still related to it,"* says Řezníček.

According to Řezníček, the issue was not discussed officially at all before 1989, after the end of Communist rule. *"No history lessons mentioned 1968, so for us, it's still a national trauma."*

Some of the fiercest battles took place around and inside the premises of the public service radio company. Some 14-15 people died in front of the radio building and in the beautiful lobby, defending the broadcaster. The television personnel, including the well-known host Kamila Mouckova, then tried to continue broadcasting pretending that the signal came from pirate studios from Prague, but finally, they were discovered inside the building. *"So it's part of our history too",* remarks Řezníček.

"You know the history is all around us, it's nothing that is hidden somewhere in the dusty attic; we're living it. So I think for public service news, like us, it's definitely worth it to try to figure out how to get this message about what really happened in Czechoslovakia, to people."

And who shot the footage? "We don't know. It's only speculation. It was probably shot by young students who had been studying in the film faculty. There was a mandatory army service for two years, until mid-1990's, and in some cases, these guys (were put in) units where they could kind of use their knowledge."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

If the topic is of relevance, it can spark emotions, a snowball-effect can evolve, which enriches the coverage and makes engagement by the audience rewarding for them

The coverage of nationally important historical events was considered by the audience both valuable and fit for public service

KNOW2COMMENT

NRK, Norway

"Nowadays, media have a stronger connection with their audiences than ever before, but somehow we still feel that we are falling short. People today express themselves loudly, and disagreements tend to be unconstructive. We wanted to try a different approach compared with what the social-media giants have done."(Ståle Grut)

Ståle Grut,
Strategic advisor at NRK
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By asking people a few questions to test their knowledge on a topic, NRKbeta is trying to improve the comments people leave underneath articles.

THE STORY

NRKbeta has an active relationship with its audience and has adopted the thesis that "99% of the smartest people do not work in your organization" (as quoted by the CEO of Lego). That's why the department spends around half its time interacting with its audience through the comments section of their blog, nrkbeta.no.

NRKbeta is a small, advisory "sandbox" within Norway's public service broadcaster (NRK) that explores the nexus between technology and the media. Six employees are constantly on the lookout for emerging technologies which can be adopted by the company or utilised by the public. NRKbeta then offers the findings from its various experiments to the rest of NRK and to the broader Norwegian media landscape. What are the strengths and weaknesses of a new type of technology? How can it be used? Is it worth the time and effort? The focus is on news but the team is also interested in other kinds of media production.

In early 2017, NRKbeta saw that a controversial story that it was running on its blog was attracting negative comments. People were throwing mud and the discussion spiralled out of control. NRKbeta asked itself what it could learn from this experience. It also asked its audience how it could improve on this point. Interestingly enough, the solutions that NRK (and the rest of the media industry) came up with were largely around 'behind the scenes' tools; systems to automatically detect hurtful words, for example. The suggestions from the audience, on the other hand, were much more front-end, strategic measures, such as setting a timer to allow replies after 3 minutes of thinking; or *"ranking the comments so people can see which ones are deemed to be valuable."*

This inspired Ståle Grut to introduce Know2Comment, a small multiple-choice quiz that readers need to fill out before they can leave a comment underneath an article. The questions aim to determine if someone knows enough about the story to leave a valuable comment. The questions, which are not particularly difficult and are based on the content of the article, draw upon knowledge people have obtained from reading the story. They are not meant to go into opinions people have about the topic.

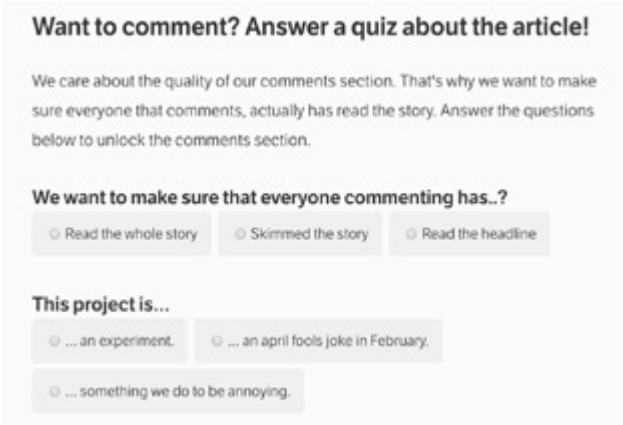
The idea behind the quiz is that people will need to agree on a few basic facts before they can join the discussion. This feature fits within the belief of NRKbeta that people should be encouraged to stop and think for a second before they blurt something out. As such, the quiz is supposed to work as a speed bump (not a roadblock) before leaving a comment. The quiz needn't be attached to every single article – sometimes the comment section can just be open to everyone. But when the discussion is heading in the wrong direction, there is now a tool to intervene.

The audience response has been extremely positive. People felt their presence was treated much more seriously and felt they were more protected from unfounded mudslinging. What is also interesting is that quite a few people simply play the quiz, without leaving a comment afterwards. This 'gaming' element is apparently half the fun.

Know2Comment has attracted serious attention, with Nieman Lab, CNN, BBC and a swathe of other international media groups reporting on it. The NRK even presented it at South by Southwest. However, interestingly enough, the quiz has not been implemented by any of these organisations in their own news sections according to NRKBeta – not even on NRK's main news site, where comments are largely disabled.

For some reason, this innovation is not yet on newsrooms' radars.

The link to the open source code is: https://github.com/nrkbeta/nrkbetaquiz.



AUTHORS' REFLECTION

There is a way to stimulate civilized discussion that is more appealing than simply closing down comment sections altogether.

It is surprising that the tool has not been implemented by any general-interest news department so far – not even by the mainstream NRK.

L'INSTANT DETOX

France Info, France

"What I can do is raise their awareness of how easily they are influenced. And I point them to credible sources that have done the checking for them: journalists." (Julien Pain)

Julien Pain,
presenter of l'Instant Detox
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In his programme L'instant Detox, Julien Pain talks to passers-by on Paris' streets and confronts them with hoaxes and fake news. He wants to find out why people see the world the way they do while at the same time explaining what journalism is all about.

THE STORY

"We talk too much to people who already agree with us, who share our worldview. But this is just a small part of our society. I wanted to reach audiences that are not in our inner circle. And the best place to find them is on the streets."

Julien Pain started L'instant Detox on Facebook Live. In this show, he walks the streets of Paris and confronts passers-by with a piece of information. *"This is fake news, a hoax or a well-known prejudice. I show the tweets or posts that have been circulating on the topic and get a response. At some point, I will reveal that the information is false, and continue to talk about how easy it is to believe the information was true."* In the comments section below, a community manager posts links to the fact-checks mentioned in the video. The show is also edited down to a 3-minute weekly show for TV and social media, which further increases its reach.

The topics Julien covers are diverse – from political, health-related and social issues to immigration and religion. *"I want to discuss those issues that are of relevance to French society. Not every little meme needs debunking. I choose topics that matter and that get the most traction on social media."*

The audience that L'instant Detox is reaching is a representative 50-50 split between men and women, averaging between the ages of 25 and 30. *"Through Facebook Live, I'm reaching people who don't necessarily agree with me. It's evident to the viewers that the information is live, real and not edited in any particular way. People can't say 'you didn't show me everything', as it's a live stream."*

Media literacy is the aim for Julien. But he doesn't explain how you can detect fake news yourself in every item. *"That can be very repetitive. And people don't actually undertake all those actions. What I can do is raise their awareness about how easily they are influenced. And I point them to credible sources that have done the checking for them: journalists."*

Around 20% of the comments Julien receives on social media say something like *"you're fake news yourself"*. *"'We are all put in the same bag' is a French saying that applies to how people see politicians and us journalists. But I try to show that we are not the same, that we are actually checking the politicians."* The best way to do that is to engage in real-life discussions with people. *"When you talk to the same people who made those bad comments on the streets, the conversation is very different. You can even sometimes change the way they think."* Although this is not necessarily the aim for Julien. *"I reach them, for starters. And that's already an important first step."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

The best way to have a valuable interaction with people is actually to talk to them face to face. Without the barrier of a screen, it's much easier to have a proper conversation.

If you want to reach new audiences, you'll need to work hard to find them. They will not come to you.

LEARN FROM INFOTAINMENT

BBC, Great-Britain

"It's difficult to change the culture of an organization, but these insights help to show what the audience wants and needs." (Emma Theedom)

Emma Theedom,
Head of Audiences, BBC News
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The BBC's Audience Research department used a threefold strategy to provide the main television news bulletin with the insights they need to stay relevant in the future. One of the tactics was to carry out a semiotic content analysis of popular infotainment programs, to determine what successful characteristics can be adopted for news.

THE STORY

How can we go beyond our metrics? This was the question Emma Theedom had when she and her fellow researchers looked at the long-term viewing trends for TV news programmes. What does it mean that people are not watching the television news as much as they used to? And how can a new generation of viewers be reached?

To get a thorough answer, Emma and her team decided to combine ethnographic research and in-depth interviews with content analysis. And in order to find inspiring, new answers, they decided to conduct the content analysis outside the news domain.

What tactics do popular informative television programmes use in order to get information across? And what could the news department learn from this? Six popular informative television programs were analysed to find an answer to these questions, amongst which The Great British Bake Off, Top Gear and Countryfile. These programmes have proven that they are able to engage with target audiences while at the same time being informative.

"And although news is very different to this content, it helped us to understand what resonates with the audience," explains Emma. *"By understanding the worldview and techniques of this content, we can begin to see approaches that might be useful to news."*

The informative programmes were dissected based on their formats, tone of voice and ways of explaining complicated issues. The team then searched for patterns in the way knowledge is shared. The end result was four insights themes, like 'authority is based on effort and working hard on behalf of the audience' and 'successful content interacts with the wider information environment and the world of the audience beyond the screen.'

To bring the insights back to the news realm, the insights were combined with the lessons learnt from ethnographic research and in-depth interviews. The true value of the research lay in the combination of various pieces of research, which led to six major insights, such as 'news stories should be led by humans, not institutions' and 'the story range should include important positive news'.

The news department embedded these insights in their strategy, and the results can be seen in the content. "*There still is a way to go, but you can see that some changes have been made. They are aiming to increase the number of constructive stories in the bulletin. And Stacey Dooley is now making reports for the 10 o'clock news, which is a great way to tell news stories in a more personal way,"* says Emma.

To make sure the outcomes of the research continue to have impact, Emma and her team focus on repetition and follow-up. *"It's difficult to change the culture of an organization, but these insights help to show what the audience wants and needs."*

The full research report can be requested at the BBC.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

News is not a unique form of content: be open to learning from professions other than your own.

Don't expect your audience to have all the answers – thorough content analysis can bring you insights ethnographic research can't.

Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. And make research as tangible as you can by using real-life cases.

Be open to challenge your own assumptions when it comes to metrics. Does a click really mean that people find the story important?

LET'S DO IT WORLDWIDE

Let's Do It Foundation/ERR, Estonia

"It's like acts of terrorism – if the media don't show them, they might as well not have taken place." (Mart Normet)

Mart Normet,
Head of Broadcasting at Let's Do It Foundation
martnormet@gmail.com

On 15 September 2017, 17 million volunteers and partners from 158 countries cleaned up waste from beaches, rivers, forests and streets on World Cleanup Day. A 24-hour broadcast covered this worldwide event, produced by a group of 'free spirits'.

THE STORY

"People really took to the idea of 'Let's do it'. They all realised that waste is a huge problem in the world. Not just in the sea, but also on land – in fact, this is where the trash problem starts," explains Mart Normet, in reference to the huge spread in popularity of the cleanup initiative worldwide. What started in 2008 as an Estonian project has grown into a civic-led mass movement with 120 participating countries and 20 million volunteers.

By 2017, the NGO wanted to hold a large global event that would connect all volunteers. *"A powerful 'green wave' of cleanups that would start in New Zealand and end in Hawaii, with millions of people working towards one goal: a clean and healthy planet."*

First they considered BBC and National Geographic as host broadcaster for the event, but then it was decided to take on a new approach: to make a 24-hour online broadcast. And they turned to their country of origin to find a producer, in Estonia.

Here they found Mart Normet, who had been Head of Entertainment at ERR for the past ten years, looking for a career change. *"I took upon the idea immediately and decided to bring together a team of engaged professionals. The whole broadcast was made without a production company. There was just a collection of free spirits that were producing the show: people who had day jobs but who shared a passion for the project."*

The NGO had some budget for the production, and the ERR was co-producing, delivering editors and providing technology at a low cost. The show was broadcast on www.worldcleanupday.org, YouTube, Facebook and the ERR website, and was hosted by two presenters (from Ireland and Zimbabwe). Citizen journalism was the keyword for the show, with input streaming in from all the partners of World Cleanup Day.

"But it's amazing to see how spontaneous and fresh the material is when it's made by people with no production experience to speak of. I was extremely happy with the show. It was one of the best I have ever produced. And being the Head of Entertainment at ERR for over ten years, I have quite some reference. The free spirit mentality was what made the programme so good. We all really wanted to make this show and we were doing it as best we could."

Mart doesn't have numbers of how many people viewed the show. *"As it aired on different platforms and the time spent watching was very different, we still need to figure out how to present the final number."* But to him, the main result of this experience was not the viewership. It was the fact that the network was empowered in their efforts to clean their country from waste. *"It's like acts of terrorism – if the media don't show them, they might as well haven't taken place. We gave all our volunteers airtime and appreciation for their effort, and showed that together, we can make a difference."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

When you bring people together willingly and with passion, without the strict boundaries of a broadcast organization, you can really achieve something.

The true value of a network is respecting and empowering the collective.

Don't focus too much on viewing rates as they are not always the best tools for measuring success.

MEDIALOGICA

HUMAN, Netherlands

"We need to take a critical look at the supply-side of journalism. We are in control of the supply; we can [take measures] to reduce the hype, and we have a moral and societal obligation to do so." (Marc Josten)

Marc Josten,
Chief Editor at Medialogica
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Medialogica is a television programme that shows the media mechanisms that are in place when a story becomes a hype. It is aimed at a general audience but is also an eye-opener for many professionals.

THE STORY

Medialogica explains how reality can be repressed by media imagery, thereby creating a whole new reality altogether. *"Besides sleeping and eating, people spend most of their time connecting with the media. They are our guide to making sense of things and determining how we perceive society. But how reliable are the media, really? How does the world they portray compare to reality? And what default mechanisms are in place? We try to find answers to these questions on our television programme,"* explains editor-in-chief Marc Josten.

The television programme is aimed at a general audience but it has also attracted considerable praise from the media profession itself. By diving deep into case examples, Medialogica is able to reflect back on how stories became hyped, thus showing how news media shamelessly create their own truths.

One example is the news story about two Dutch brothers (aged 9 and 7) who went missing. This generated considerable attention in the public domain, and many news media organizations covered the search for the boys. As the search continued, the media attention spiralled out of control. *"To me, the case of Ruben and Julian represents the all-time low when it comes to demand-driven journalism. The disappearance of the boys brought our country to a state of psychosis. People wanted to know all there was to know. The media were gladly surfing this wave, providing people exactly what they wanted, ignoring all reasonable boundaries of privacy and decency."*

But it's not just the media that are at fault; the 'medialogica' process is also affecting other areas of society, with (local) governments, civil society and businesses all joining the rat race. *"That was also apparent in the case of the missing brothers, with Child Protection Services revealing personal information about the mother and the police department staging night-time searches in order to have something to show in the evening news. It seems to be that if the people want invasions of privacy, we will give them invasions of privacy."*

Medialogica aims to show how dangerous it is to cater to this sensationalism. The show runs meticulous, long-term journalistic investigations of cases. It highlights recurring patterns and reflects on cases depending on the current hype. *"We need to take a critical look at the supply-side of journalism. We know that the demand-side is loud and present, but we, the media, can confine the sensationalism. We are in control of the supply; we can [take measures] to reduce the hype, and we have a moral and societal obligation to do so."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

News media are often so focused on producing for broadcasting in real-time that they forget to stop and reflect on what they are actually doing.

As the stakes are high and the consequences of news media's actions can be far-reaching, critical reflection and evaluation should be higher on the agenda. If this does not happen internally, within newsrooms, an external programme can be a reliable alternative.

NEWS LAB

NOS, Netherlands

"Our learnings benefit the entire organization and improve the general level of online awareness and skills. Through this, we are preparing ourselves for the future of media consumption." (José de Vries)

José de Vries,
Product Innovation Manager at NOS
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The NOS News Lab brings together multidisciplinary teams for short projects, working with new technologies and testing out new storytelling methods. The Lab tries not only to innovate its output but also shakes up the internal newsroom culture.

THE STORY

In 2015, the NOS introduced a space where new techniques and ways of storytelling could be experimented with: the NOS Lab. In the Netherlands, there are eight national broadcasters, of which the NOS is the one responsible for producing news, sports and information on national events. As such, its Lab is a true newslab, where all efforts are directed towards discovering new forms of journalism. The Lab exists at the crossroads between the digital department and the newsroom, boasting an ideal mix of technological and journalistic expertise. The Lab does not have permanent staff. Instead, new groups are formed based on needs and people's expertise.

"Our Lab has inspired a new way of working and thinking within the NOS organization," says product manager José de Vries. *"The Lab has the opportunity to develop, test and evaluate innovative ideas in short periods of time. Our learnings benefit the entire organization and improve the general level of online awareness and skills. Through this, we are preparing ourselves for the future of media consumption"*

The Lab is not an independent entity; it exists within NOS. But the Lab's project manager coordinates with the editor-in-chief and the digital services manager to decide which topics and areas should be the focus, before creating the teams needed for the projects. In turn, the latter two support the Lab's projects by contributing experience and emphasizing its added value to the wider organization. In doing so, they make the management's commitment to the Lab visible; something which is considered crucial in its success.

The Lab has produced several inspirational projects and products. The interactive specials, which focus on a specific theme and provide an online format, have been acclaimed and often generate a considerable amount of traffic and impact. One episode looked at on the synthetic party drug MDMA. Other specials have reported on the Jews deported from the Netherlands in the Second World War, or offered an in-depth story on the Nigerian capital, Lagos.

Besides the specials, the Lab has also inspired other ventures such as the introduction of a chatbot for news called NOS update. Users receive a daily overview of the latest news, weather and traffic through Facebook. They can ask for news on a specific topic as well as for the latest updates.

During the US elections, the Lab introduced 'The Series', a separate site with a daily stream of videos divided into five series that helped people make sense of the elections. The NOS US correspondents contributed weekly 2-minute stories about Trump and Clinton, which were both explanatory and engaging. These correspondents also made vlogs offering behind-the-scenes footage and a much younger tone of voice.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

A news organization needs a safe space to test, learn and fail with new formats before releasing them out into the real world.

To make learning an integral part of the organization, 'the new' has to be inspirational rather than off-putting.

NEWS OMBUDSMEN

NPO, The Netherlands

"Journalists often forget that most people don't know how the news is created." (Margo Smit)

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News ombudsmen hope to bridge the gap between the broadcasting company and the public by being accessible to both. They give feedback to journalists and editors and help them comply with ethical guidelines and be more transparent.

THE STORY

"My goal is to be a critical friend to both sides; the public and the broadcaster," says Margo Smit, the Netherland's first news ombudsman, overseeing the country's public broadcasters. She is amongst a small but growing international army of news-ombudsmen, defined as an independent and impartial media employee who responds to public complaints.

Currently, however, only nine EBU members have a news ombudsman or equivalent. Tim Pauwels, Belgium's public ombudsman, says there's a big difference between this position and handling complaints through a customer service centre. Aside from providing personalized responses to citizens, he says the real value lies in having somebody who relays valid concerns to journalists. He uses the critiques as a "source of improvement", often presented during workshops, where he says journalists do listen.

By doing their job, news ombudsmen hope to bridge the gap between the broadcaster and the audience. They also encourage "respectful and truthful discourse about journalism's practices and purposes" – an oft-neglected practice.

"Journalists often forget that most people don't know how news is created," says Margo. *"Answering questions [about our reporting] is a huge step in at least regaining contact with the public"* and addressing the growing mistrust about the media. This is particularly pressing for public media, as they are not actively subscribed to and consumers can easily opt for alternative sources of information whenever trust dwindles.

As such, a news ombudsman's primary duty is responding to complaints via email or Facebook. Tim says around 50% of his 4,000 yearly complaints provide lessons or are valid (such as picking up on a factual mistake). *"Whether or not I convince [the complainent],"* it the process can still lead to improvements in the newsroom, he argues.

Still, the extent to which ombudsmen actually influence audiences' trust in PSMs is unclear. *"If I tell them that they are mistaken, they often tell me I am part of the corrupt establishment too,"* says Margo. *"Many have already made up their mind."*

An ombudsman's challenges do not stop there. In public companies where this 'bias-checking' role exists, it is largely being performed by a single individual, leaving some "chronically overworked" and "understaffed". Meanwhile, the nominated ombudsman is often very senior and thus has considerable salary expectations. In an economically-strained industry, broadcasters face a serious question about whether this can be justified.

Still, the role is taking work away from busy editors, Tim argues, and is worth the cost given the learning it offers. Meanwhile, Margo acknowledges that restoring trust where already lost might be outside her remit, but argues she can and does sustain trust for those on the "border", threatening to withdraw. Explaining how the media operates in what can be a convoluted, insular industry could be key in convincing 'doubters' of its credentials.

But to do this effectively, greater resources will need to be invested into creating a solid buffer, and to raise public awareness of the ombudsman platform.

"I'm more convinced of the value of ombudsman today than when I started," Tim assures.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

At best, a new ombudsman can keep those on the sidelines engaged, and avoid everyday viewers losing trust in an organization. However, he or she cannot build trust among the sub-sect who have already lost it. Expectations must be kept in check.

For public broadcasters, news ombudsman may increase transparency towards the audience and awareness of ethical issues in the newsroom.

Single ombudsmen can easily become overworked in large public service organizations.

NEWS THAT YOU CONTROL

Kinzen, Ireland

"People are no longer a mass audience, but a collection of unique individuals." (Mark Little)

Mark Little,
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With their app launching in January 2019, Kinzen is aiming to help people fight information overload by refining their news consumption through personalized, relevant content. They focus on young audiences that are taking news seriously for the first time but can't find the content they need. There is no proof that the Kinzen app is a 'success' story yet, but the case shows clear direction for handling this issue.

THE STORY

"We want to solve the problem of information overload that people suffer from," says Mark Little, one of the Kinzen app's founders. *"Our mission is to put every individual in control of a daily news routine that respects their time, rewards their trust and broadens their minds."*

In times of information overload, it can be difficult to manage your own news routine. *"People are now their own gatekeeper. Before, they relied on the news routines provided by the news sources. But these are now destroyed."* It seems that news organizations have, for a long time, put their faith in social media, but this has proven not to be the answer. *"People are now trapped in algorithms."*

At the same time, there is a great demand for high-quality news content, especially from young people. *"When we look at the United States, you can see more willingness to pay for quality information, and a more open mind to experiment with news. We see young audiences that for the first time are taking news seriously but can't find the content they need. We want to cater for them."*

But the youth have distinct expectations. *"They have been conditioned by Netflix and Spotify and their excellent personalized suggestions based on collaborative filtering, like Discover Weekly. They expect a product to be personalized, while at the same time giving them control. They are looking for discovery and serendipity with input from multiple sources."*

The app that Kinzen is developing *"lets the user be in control,"* says Mark. On their website, they explain further: *"We do not use your browsing history to keep you addicted to the same sources and opinions. Instead, our machine learning systems respond to your conscious feedback to the articles you see in your chosen channels. After you read a recommended story, you will be prompted to offer feedback using Kinzen's purpose-driven ranking system."*

Besides developing the app, Kinzen's founders are also creating a community of curators, using collective knowledge to provide the best sources and stories. Through an additional plugin for news websites, they also want to offer the benefits of purposeful personalization online.

Mark stresses that in these times, news organizations need to recognize the unique identity of people. *"People are no longer a mass audience, but a collection of unique individuals."*

"I have been a PSM journalist for 20 years," explains Mark, *"after which I started the social media verification platform Storyful to sort the news from the noise. This solved the problem for the newsroom, but not for the ordinary user. With Kinzen, we are focusing on the interests of the individual news user."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

As the Kinzen app is not due to be launched until January next year, it is impossible to determine its success yet. But our research suggests that it is full of promise and focusing on a critical issue.

NO TO NO BILLAG

SRG-SSR, Switzerland

"It changed, really, everything."
(Ladina Heimgartner)

Ladina Heimgartner,
Deputy Director-General SRG-SSR
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In March 2018, the Swiss public voted on the future of their public service media. Crucially, more than 70% of the population voted to safeguard this institution by maintaining the licence fee. SRG-SSR learned that in the end, the country was not voting about the price-tag of public service media but about the form of democracy that it wanted. The connection forged with civil society during the campaign provides a solid foundation for SRG-SSR's renewal.

THE STORY

"Life is never the same again after you go through something like that. It changed, really, everything."

This is how Ladina Heimgartner, Deputy Director-General of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG-SSR), explains the legacy of the popular vote on 3 March 2018 concerning the future of public broadcasting.

The vote sparked an existential question for SRG-SSR, namely *"Does the Swiss population still want to fund us?".*

SRG itself could not be an active campaigner. There was also considerable fear among staff. *"For three, four, five months – people were only talking about this. People would look at you with big eyes, asking, "Do you know more?" And you'd have to say, "No. We'll know on 4 March, not before."*

This process began in 2012 when members of the conservative Swiss People's Party and the Liberal Party's youth wings concluded that having a public broadcaster was fundamentally against their understanding of social freedom.

By 2015, 100,000 Swiss people had signed a proposal to change the country's constitution through a popular vote. They proposed introducing a ban on collecting fees for radio and television, in Switzerland called "Billag fees". That would have spelt the end of the Swiss public service broadcaster while also impacting 34 private regional TV and radio stations partially funded by public fees. Although both chambers in the Swiss parliament voted against the motion, it had to be brought to a popular vote given the size of the petition (the Swiss democratic system relies heavily on referendums). Three years later, it finally did.

Only three months before the vote, it seemed that the 'No Billag' side of the campaign was winning: opinion polls showed it had garnered 51% support, but 41% were still undecided.

But in a stark turn-around, by "January or February, hundreds and hundreds" of influential lobbyists definitively committed to the 'yes' camp, resulting in a shift in the numbers. National and regional organisations all joined to support SRG-SSR while calling on their hundreds of thousands of members to get out and vote.

In the final count, 71.6% of the Swiss public voted in favour of continuing to finance public media. But why such an overwhelmingly result?

"I don't think they supported us as a company, or as an organization. What they supported was a certain idea of democracy," concludes Heimgartner.

But, as Heimgartner says, nothing is the same as it used to be.

"We always thought that in Switzerland it's a hundred percent clear that we need public service media. But all of a sudden, we saw how fragile it was and how we had to fight for it. Otherwise, it can be lost in one single day."

"But it made us grow together, talk, to think about our core values, and to be more aware of who we are, who we have to be, and how we have to make the public understand us. We have to listen to people and connect with them."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Public media has to explain its 'contribution to society' more clearly. Companies need to work on communicating their way of thinking and connecting better and more often with society.

When management communicates professionally and credibly, it helps both audiences and political stakeholders.

Maintaining balanced reporting on the campaign was a rewarding challenge for SRG-SSR.

NOUVO

SSR, Switzerland

"Something else is going on, so we have to find out what that is." (Nathalie Ducommun)

Nathalie Ducommun,
Producer
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SSR, the French-language Swiss broadcaster, created an online video news service for younger audiences called Nouvo. The platform has its own editorial style and theme, based on topics and formats that resonate most with its viewers. Now a market frontrunner, its producers' willingness to take risks and explore new production methods has been key to its success.

THE STORY

Four years ago, Switzerland's French-language public service broadcaster, SSR, decided to do something about the fact that it was not connecting with Swiss youth.

"We wanted to get close to them, try to understand what was happening, what their needs were – and, of course, find the right way of telling stories so that we could contact and inform them," says Nathalie Ducommun, the founding producer of Nouvo, SSR's online video news service.

This called for something original. SSR decided to focus on social media, and they concluded that it had to be suitable for mobile access. *"The first observation was that when we simply transfer our TV content onto social media, it doesn't work. People don't want to watch TV on social media."*

Ducommun said they diagnosed several issues. *"TV news involves someone speaking in the studio, so the audience has to use headphones. The picture also takes the wrong dimensions."* She also highlights how formal TV news show are. *"You have the main presenter, and people in the studio to talk and debate. But we don't want talking heads on social media. We want punchlines, we want strong footage."*

Television also prioritizes longer, more complex analysis, while *"social media users want information efficiently. They don't want to spend ages listening to an analysis because people want to make their own analysis online."*

Nouvo was created in response to these observations, becoming SSR's designated social media page where quirky, informative and highly visual animations are posted about issues that matter to millennials. It has since become a hit by digital standards.

Ducommun identifies several reasons for this. The first is Nouvo's editorial approach, which has a distinctive tone and storytelling techniques, including text overlays, subtitles and specific graphics optimized for mobile use. It also leans towards positive coverage, often focusing on success stories, constructive narratives and local stories. The audience can also message Nouvo's page administrators with questions, congratulations or criticisms. Together, this makes Nouvo accessible and familiar.

Another crucial component is that the editorial strategy offers as much original content as possible. *"Local footage works really well,"* says Ducommun. Timing helped, too. They also launched the service for the French-speaking Swiss audience at a time when there was hardly any competition.

She says that another success factor was having somebody on the team who really knew the technical and production requirements of social-media and graphics. *"If you want to be close to this audience, you have to be quick and light and flexible. So you need that kind of person on the team. Someone who's a journalist and also knows about graphic design and IT systems."*

Ducommun notes her surprise at the editorial team's ability to take a totally new, lighter approach. She has also learnt a lot herself about interacting and engaging with viewers. *"Knowledge of the audience is no longer a communications and marketing issue. It has to be truly and totally integrated into the editorial strategy."* That's key not just for news, she says, but all "kinds of media."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

The group was enthusiastic and willing to explore, and was able to create a successful service for millennials. This success cannot be recreated in other parts of the organization by merely copying the lessons learnt. There has to be ownership and enthusiasm.

Be there first, experiment, fail and learn.

It is possible to create journalistic services for millennials based on public service values. They are, however, totally different than traditional news services on television or radio.

NOVI

ARD, Germany

"We needed to find our own voice and our own approach to journalism, without being influenced by the traditional way of doing things." (Timo Spieß and Christian Radler)

Timo Spieß,
Project Manager of Novi
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Through Novi, ARD-Aktuell is offering the more passive (younger) news audience bite-sized news portions on the platform they are already using: Facebook Messenger.

THE STORY

Be where your audience is. That was the main reason why Funk, the youth network of ARD and ZDF, chose to investigate alternative platforms they could put news onto. With a television audience primarily in their sixties, they decided to explore the possibilities of breaking out of traditional formats in order to attract a younger audience.

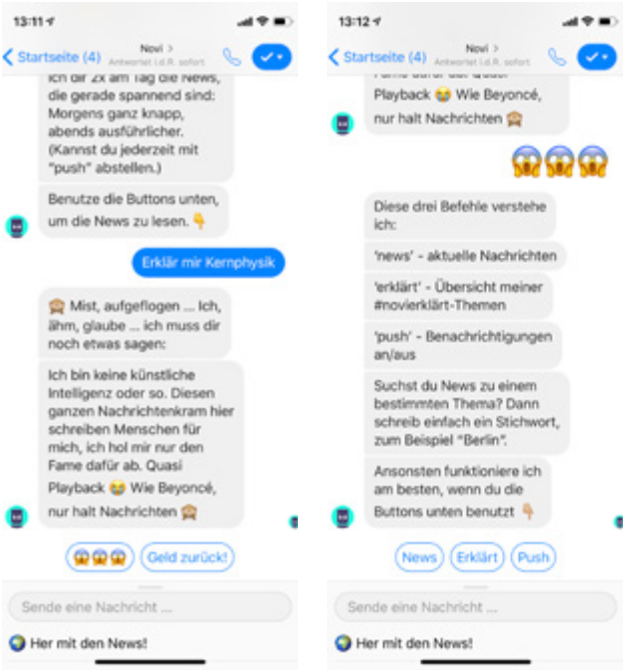
From their research they learned that young people were more passive news consumers than older audiences, expecting that news would come to them rather than searching for it. This drove the decisions to bring news onto the platforms young people were already on. Inspired by the success of the Quartz newsbot, they decided conversational journalism was an interesting approach.

They then developed Novi, a newsbot that broadcasts a selection of the news through Facebook Messenger twice a day. Followers get a message with the main headlines, after which they have the option to 'talk back' and receive additional information. The follow-up questions are predesigned for the users, with a few multiple-choice options.

Novi is designed to look like a robot, not a person. This is done deliberately, to not raise the wrong expectations. *"Expectation management is everything. We don't want to give the impression that Novi knows all there is to know about all the news, as a real-life editor would. Novi only helps you to get the news in atomized portions,"* explain Timo Spieß, project manager of Novi and Christian Radler, head of R&D at Tagesschau. The chatbot has reached 110,000 users and has 26,000 subscribers. This seems like a small group compared to the 1.5 million followers Tagesschau has on Facebook, but Novi followers are much younger and use the bot regularly.

Followers can't ask Novi anything – it merely structures the news stories in bite-sized volumes. There will always come a point at which Novi followers also realize this. Therefore, the team has included a 'coming out' conversation in the design. By using humour, they have developed an interactive process in which Novi shamefully admits that he is not a know-it-all. *"The followers respond well to that. Screenshots of this particular dialogue are often shared on Twitter, together with smileys and positive comments."*

Novi's tone of voice is what really sets it apart from other ARD output. It steers away from journalistic jargon and explains the news in a way a friend would do. The team has introduced GIFs, for example, to explain difficult topics in a more appealing way. Their approach is noted not only by their followers; other ARD news departments are also keeping a close eye on Novi. *"We sneakily try to influence the decision-making process in our main TV bulletins,"* say Timo and Christian, *"but in a positive way."*



AUTHORS' REFLECTION

The technical side of this innovation is not the most interesting point. This merely facilitates the way in which the newsroom wants to tell stories and connect with their audience.

Conversational journalism is a useful learning process for the future of news transmission, where interaction will be important (think 'smart speakers' and 'news assistants').

OBSERVERS

France 24, France

"We wanted to make a real connection with real people, making them a trusted source for newsworthy stories." (Derek Thomson)

Derek Thomson,
Editor in Chief of The Observers
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Broadcast by France 24 as a weekly TV show and as a collaborative website accessible in four languages, 'The Observers' covers international current affairs and societal stories based on eyewitness accounts from real observers: people at the heart of an event or phenomenon.

THE STORY

How do ordinary people experience news? What stories can be told that are not told by traditional journalism? That is what the team at The Observers wanted to find out back in 2007. *"We wanted to go beyond the 'man in the street' interview. We wanted to make a real connection with real people, making them a trusted source for newsworthy stories,"* explains Derek Thomson, editor-in-chief of The Observers.

In response, they set up a network to encourage ordinary people to share their stories. *"The Observers send photos and videos in, which are then verified and contextualized by our team of professional journalists in Paris. The stories are then published by France 24 as a TV show and on the [designated] website in four languages (French, English, Arabic and Persian)."* The journalists also actively chase up amateur images they find on social media and ask the original photographer to become an Observer. This has so far resulted in a worldwide network of 5,000 Observers, who have contributed to one or more stories. And there are as many as 50,000 potential Observers: people that have listed their contact information in case newsworthy events happen close to them.

"This is not a replacement for traditional journalism; it is complementary," explains Derek. "*Our contacts are not a replacement for France 24's professional correspondents. They don't get journalism training and are not asked to be an expert. They are an additional source for our coverage. They represent themselves."* This worldwide network does come in handy with breaking news in faraway places, however. As the network is so vast, there is always an Observer close by to contact.

The main asset of this network are the original stories – stories that generally don't make the headlines of traditional news outlets. The biggest audiences and main contributors are from the Middle East and North and West Africa, often from countries with relatively weak governance or an active civil society. "*It seems that people in these places are eager to get their stories out because they want to see the problems in their societies fixed."*

"It takes a long time to build a network of trusted sources," explains Derek. *"The Observers now feel part of our community, and we know that we can rely on them."* But this does not happen overnight as, like any other source, the Observers need to be verified and checked for reliability. To build such a strong network, it also helps to take away as many barriers as you can. *"We use a WhatsApp number for people to get in touch with us, for example, and this has proven to be very successful."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

It's easy to say that you need more stories from ordinary people. But to actually obtain interesting, meaningful stories from trusted sources, you need to invest heavily in a network. And that takes a considerable amount of time.

Working with real people, not journalists, calls for thorough professional verification, like The Observers stress. Eyewitnesses should not be mistaken for journalists, but they do provide valuable, complementary perspectives.

It's hard to break the dominant journalistic agenda and tell the stories of 'civil society', but The Observers proves it is possible.

ON LOCATION

ZDF, Germany

"People from Cottbus, they are proud of their city." (Katrin Lindner)

Renate Lintz,
Head of Tagesmagazine Mainz
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ZDF launched a project which involved a team of reporters reporting 'on location' for four weeks, aiming to engage with citizens outside federal-state capitals.

THE STORY

How do you engage directly with regional citizens without a local broadcasting presence? For ZDF (Zweite Deutsche Fernsehen, Germany's second main TV channel), the answer was to send a team of reporters to report 'on location' for four weeks.

"We want[ed] to get even closer to citizens," explains Renate Lintz, project manager for ZDF On Location. *"We wanted to identify the topics on-site and immerse ourselves deeply in our viewers' everyday life,"* adds ZDF editor-in-chief Dr Peter Frey.

The first location was the city of Cottbus, the second-largest city in the state of Brandenburg, at Germany's eastern border. Cottbus is a former lignite, or "brown coal" production centre, and was hit heavily by its declining usage. The number of people working in coal production has fallen from around 100,000 to 8,000 in a couple of decades. Cottbus' population has also thus decreased from 140,000 to 100,000 since Germany's reunification. Meanwhile, the city's demographic has visibly changed in recent years due to the mass arrival of refugees. The result: tension, raids and less-than-flattering news coverage of the city.

On 14 May 2018, Katrin Lindner, the editor of ZDF's Brandenburg studio in Potsdam, began her planned month-long reporting assignment in Cottbus.

"Normally we are quite well prepared when we go to an area or have to cover a special topic in order to interview someone. But this was different," says Lindner. *"We went to Cottbus and had to find out what matters to people. What are their problems? Why is it as it is?"* Here's what happened.

Initially, Lindner felt a palpable distrust towards the media and journalists. She would hear, "You are coming from the media. Cottbus is now known as a bad and dirty city. What did you do to our city?"

"People from Cottbus, they are proud of their city", she says.

Eventually, however, Lindner was able to build trust and, finally, people grew more comfortable and wanted to explain their problems, and even to be shown on television. People came to the reporters and thanked them for the stories. *"We didn't expect it. It was just stories, portraits and so forth. It was only another point of view about Cottbus, about the people and their problems there, to understand why it is so difficult there."*

The interviewees discussed a wealth of subjects: How difficult it is to find a job there. How you can't live and have a future because you only get a low-paid part-time job after years of education. Heart-breaking stories of ordinary people.

Overall, she and her colleague Benno Frevert covered ten people's stories whilst 'on the road', which were aired on different programmes on ZDF – including the main news programme.

"Normally we cover a topic and then we leave for good. In this case, we come back after six months. Normally we don't have so much time. Normally we prepare everything by telephone. This is quite different because you have more time. You can talk for much longer with people in one place."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Living in the social milieu, not in a hotel, helped get closer to people.
It was a good idea to be transparent with the audience regarding the project, the reasons behind it and its structure.
Publishing stories on TV while the project was under way helped people in Cottbus to understand what it was all about.

ORF FÜR SIE

ORF, Austria

"It is particularly important for us to always have an open ear to suggestions." (Alexander Wrabetz)

Martin Biedermann,
ORF Spokesman
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The Austrian ORF team travelled around the country for three weeks asking people what they want from their broadcaster. The public had the opportunity to express their views by phone or in writing and were also invited to meet ORF reporters in communities across Austria. Around 23,000 responses were recorded, 450 of which directly on camera.

THE STORY

It is not uncommon for public service media to receive regular, impromptu feedback from their audience. But ORF, the Austrian public service company, decided to turn this into an active research operation, launching a campaign on 28 May 2018 called "ORF Für Sie - Was wünschen Sie sich vom ORF?", which translates to "What would you like from ORF?"

The three-week campaign was conducted both on and off air. The audience had the opportunity to express their views by phone or by writing and were also invited to meet ORF reporters in communities across Austria. This part of the campaign was broadcast as an ORF TV show each day.

ORF made it a clear priority to seek direct contact with the audience. Praise, requests, questions and criticism were all encouraged. *"It is particularly important for us to always have an open ear to suggestions,"* says ORF Director-General Alexander Wrabetz.

The public could respond to the survey by calling a free hotline or going online. It was also possible to express opinions in person, speaking directly to a camera at the campaign's minivan, a specially branded VW vehicle transporting a mobile studio to various locations throughout Austria.

The campaign was accompanied by TV spots, with presenters Claudia Reiterer and Peter Resetarits encouraging the audience to participate.

"People were glad that someone from the ORF in Vienna came and spoke with them, and that they could talk to someone they only knew from TV," says Peter Resetarits, host of Bürgeranwalt ("Lawyer for the People") and Am Schauplatz Gericht ("The Local Court").

Numerous TV and radio adverts accompanied the campaign, inviting people to join the discussion. By the end of the campaign, some 23,000 responses had been received, of which around 450 were expressed directly on camera.

What were the most pressing messages from the audience? For Peter Resetarits, the most surprising message was that they wanted more regional and national content. *"More Austrian culture and more Austrian things and Austrian entertainment. I was convinced we had enough, but we probably need more."* Other requests included fewer repeats, more children's programming – and, ironically, both more sports and less sports.

Additionally, people complained about ORF's online catch-up service, which removes replays only seven days after broadcasting and was considered especially problematic for those wishing to screen children's programmes. More investigative journalism on consumer issues was also on the wish list.

Contrary to the hosts' expectations, people did not come to complain about the licence fee. *"There were very few. Out of 50 or 100, there were perhaps six or seven with whom we discussed this topic."*

Listening to people's opinions brings with it the responsibility of demonstrating that these opinions matter. *"People have told us their suggestions and their requests, and it's very important now that we incorporate all these things into future programmes. Because otherwise, it would be terrible for ORF. Otherwise, our credibility would be badly hurt,"* says Peter Resetarits.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Daily updates on the survey's progress, broadcast on the ORF2 television channel, promoted greater participation, as did the conspicuous participation of well-known television personalities.

People, especially in the countryside, were impressed that they were able to meet the hosts of programmes they watch, and that these hosts were interested in their opinions.

It is important that the survey has a visible impact on programming. Implementation of audience requests began in September 2018.

PODCASTS SLOVENIA

RTVSLO, Slovenia

"Audience numbers are much lower than for radio, but motivation and engagement are at a peak." (Matej Praprotnik)

Matej Praprotnik,
Assistant Director of Radio Strategies
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Podcasts are increasing engagement between RTVSLO and its audience. And by focusing on various aspects of storytelling, traditional journalists are challenged to reconsider their habits and routines.

THE STORY

Matej Praprotnik talks with great passion about the biggest love of his life: podcasts. In a country with a population of 2,000,000, Matej was among the first podcast enthusiasts in the country. He fell in love with the genre around 2007, and his affections deepened when he moved to the US for a short while. There, he realized how powerful audio stories can be, especially thanks to his favourite show, Radiolab. *"The key is genuine storytelling: you need to take the time to guide listeners through stories and really give them a valuable experience,"* says Matej. He wanted to introduce podcasts to his own audiences and started strategizing a podcast series for RTVSLO.

When Matej took on his quest, the Slovenian public radio was – as in so many countries – rather traditional. But now, his and other podcasts are aired on linear radio, changing the way stories are told and produced. In the beginning, he faced scepticism from radio colleagues, as they found the podcasts to be overproduced. *"It would need too much attention to listen to, as it's produced for headphones, not for aerial radio,"* says Matej. But he held firm to his beliefs, and the ratings proved the sceptics wrong.

The podcasts also introduced another form of audio production. While radio shows usually consist of one-on-one interviews, podcasts generally air people talking or telling a story. *"The audience can listen in, as if you are party to a private conversation. That is much more compelling and leads to less 'radiosplaining'".*

RTVSLO podcasts are 5-star rated and almost always on the top of the podcast charts. The audience is highly engaged, and people give extensive feedback on the podcast. In real life as well, Matej regularly receives compliments. *"Podcast listeners are badass. Not only will they be the first to listen to a show, but they will also share their enthusiasm with others and spread our content with their friends."*

Matej's is not the only podcast success story in Slovenia. Independent producers have also been effective, even before RTVSLO was. Anže Tomić, the presenter of tech podcast 'Odbita do bita' , was arguably the first and biggest podcaster together with Maruša Kerec.

"This show has a strong strategy: it's encouraging badass listeners to send audio opinions, [to] review the podcast in iTunes and share episodes. It also airs a short, 5-minute version of the podcast on the radio. All of these efforts helped to make 'Odbita do bita' one of Slovenia's highest-rated podcasts on the iTunes national chart."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Innovation also means 'not giving up'. Podcasts were around for a long time before they became the success story they now are.

The impact of an experiment can be bigger than you first think: radio in Slovenia has a different sound since the podcasts were launched. The 'old' learns from the 'new', thereby giving audio a new chance to be a major factor in people's news consumption habits.

POLITIBOT

Politibot, Spain

"The formal tone of mainstream news is not helpful – it's a barrier to large audiences who [as a result] don't understand the issues." (Maria Ramirez)

Maria Ramirez,
Co-Founder, Politibot
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Politibot sends out a conversational news digest every day about one major story from Spanish, European or global politics. The company avoids what it thinks has alienated traditional audiences: an overly formal tone, excessive jargon and insufficient background context.

THE STORY

Politibot was founded in Spain just over two years ago with the aim of engaging young audiences, for whom the news can seem a convoluted, partisan maze.

Every day, the Politibot chatbot sends a text-style breakdown of a key story to its users via Facebook Messenger or Telegram. Interaction is simple, with the user selecting a phrase or emoji to keep the conversation moving and the information coming (think Quartz, but in Spanish and without a stand-alone app). Through this, the company is beginning to understand – and address – what it is that has alienated traditional audiences.

"The formal tone of mainstream news is not helpful – it's a barrier to large audiences who [as a result] don't understand the issues. There's a lot of jargon," says Politibot co-founder Maria Ramirez. *"The media rarely try to explain it in very basic language."*

She argues that the conversational approach Politibot uses, built on short bursts of 'chatty' text, graphics, GIFs and links, allows readers to better digest complex issues. In other words, Politibot has returned to basics: looking carefully at dissecting policies and topics that may otherwise go unexplored.

The company emerged in the midst of the Spanish 2016 national elections, when complaints about the lack of nuance in mainstream reports were rife. In 2017, Politibot experimented by asking users their opinions on Catalan independence and sending them well-reasoned articles from the opposing side. *"Users appreciated that,"* says Ramirez, explaining that audiences now want news agencies to break the social-media "echo chambers" and examine the key facts on controversial issues.

"The news can be partisan, so relaying the contrasting view has benefited us."

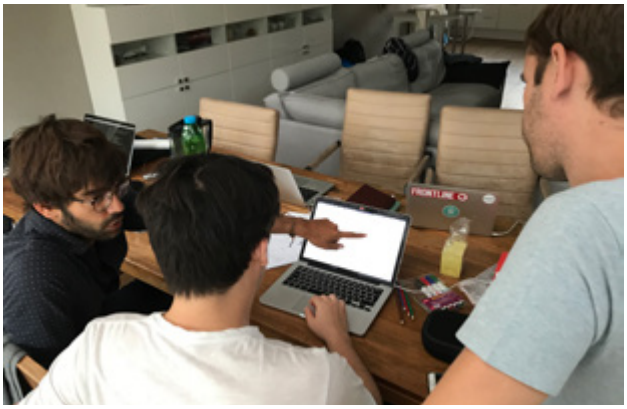
Politibot's numbers speak for themselves. The platform is growing, with over 10,000 users currently on Facebook Messenger and Telegram. The recent addition of a fortnightly podcast has also seen around 40,000 downloads, thus providing an audio version of Politibot's explanatory ethos.

However, Politibot's reach extends mainly to one demographic: young 20-to-30 somethings who are already highly engaged in politics. In other words, those who already feel represented. Politibot also relies on messaging platforms that have been criticised for their uncontrolled spread of misinformation. It remains to be seen whether it can retain legitimacy within an unregulated sphere.

Nonetheless, Politibot's continuing popularity suggests that transmitting the news over intimate spaces like messaging platforms could help build trust.

And aside from delivering digestible non-partisan news, Ramirez and her co-founders are driving a bot-making service. This means building customised chatbots for fellow media organizations (like PSMs) who want to send personalized, SMS-style news updates to their audiences too. This trend looks set to grow with the help of El Diario, one of Spain's major online newspapers, which recently launched news digests via messaging-app Telegram too.

Can PSM organizations emulate this appeal amongst the youth and deviate from their time-honored formats? At the very least, PSM could learn from the personalised 'devil's advocate' approach, which helps audiences to slow down, ask questions and wrestle with opposing views. That could be important in winning over the under-30s.



AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Presenting audiences with opposing, unfamiliar viewpoints is an attractive feature and helps identify bias.

It may be worthwhile to explain the news and complex issues in a provocative but objective form.

Media should focus on promoting 'healthy conversation' and debate.

Consider creating your own chatbot rather than to rely on existing mega-corporations like Facebook, if financially viable.

PORTUGAL LIVE

RTP, Portugal

"We are more than ten million people. We have more than ten million stories." (Dina Aguiar)

Dina Aguiar,
Host
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Covering human-interest news stories has proven to be a success for Portuguese national television. This is partly down to the regional offices' ability to identify interesting local topics from all over the country and report on them in an upbeat manner.

THE STORY

Dina Aguiar has been anchoring Portugal em direto ("Portugal Live") five days a week for 13 years. Every night, she ends the programme by bidding her audience goodbye until the next broadcast – "if God so wishes".

While some recently criticized Dina for showing her spiritual side, most of her Portuguese audience consider her a member of the household. Her critics were overwhelmingly drowned out by the loyal, supportive audience she has gained over more than 40 years in television.

Portugal em direto now lasts one-and-a-half hours, starting at 5.30pm. It consists of news reports from regional offices all over Portugal, from the mainland to Madeira and the Azores, combining daily news reports with community voices. It reflects aspects of local life that spark interest all over Portugal – and also with the Portuguese community worldwide.

Originally one hour long, the programme was extended by a half-hour to offer more detail, different formats, and to allow discussion time afterwards. Producing ninety minutes of local news on a daily basis sounds like an exhausting job. But Dina Aguiar says that they have always had enough topics to cover. *"We are more than ten million people. We have more than ten million stories."*

On average, seven minutes are devoted to each topic, making them easier to follow for the elderly viewers, which constitute the programme's main audience.

Dina also deviates from traditional news professionals in her content strategy. *"We always have positive news. It's my philosophy of life. We have news that can help people. And I am passionate about the news. I'm always commenting positively."*

As such, this programme typically stays away from national politics, sports and business stories. These topics might be covered, but only if they have a local or personal angle. Instead, culture, traditions, food and heritage are prioritised.

Producers try to report or record live from the region, as its name suggests, rather than being broadcast as edited pieces. This means that well-known journalists are reporting from all over the country, even in small villages, showing they care about life even in remote areas. This approach also brings journalists closer to the places on which they report.

A large part of the programme's success is the regional offices' ability to identify interesting local topics and stories within their respective regions. *"They know the people",* says Dina Aguiar. The regional centres also focus on emulating the production quality of a national broadcaster. So they have to maintain their ability to cover local topics professionally in a live broadcast that engages a national audience. And they must do so to a high quality. That is not a simple task to do every day.

The producers strive to include daily reports from each of RTP's regional broadcasting centres in Bragança, Coimbra, Castelo Branco, Évora, Faro, Madeira and the Azores. The staff here then work with Dina and her small editorial team in Lisbon, along with a journalist from Oporto's editorial office.

In some cases, the programme's topics also end up in the main newscast at 8pm.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

It's possible to find a concept that is built on regional content but engages a national audience.

Local proximity and connections are assets even for national news programmes, provided the concept is well thought-out.

The presenter's charisma is a major factor even for a news magazine like this.

PUBLIC SERVICE ALGORITHM

BBC, Great Britain

"We've started to incorporate metrics that are reflective of our editorial values." (Magda Piatkowska)

Magda Piatkowska,
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Discussions about how public service algorithms should operate are complex and sometimes heated. The best answers are to be found by experimenting. The BBC tries to balance page views and engagement with novelty, relevance and diversity.

THE STORY

"Personalized to your likes and loves, depending on the time of day or week, and even what mood you are in."

No, this is not a quote from a data geek at Netflix or Spotify, but from the BBC's Director-General, Tony Hall, in 2017, talking about the company's commitment to what he calls a "public service algorithm".

"It's not telling audiences, 'Here's what customers like you have bought,'" says Hall, *"but rather using our powers of curation to serve them what they might like and need to know. Bringing them what they love, but also surprising them with content they may grow to love."* This is where the algorithm's public service component fundamentally lies, providing diverse, novel content that surprises users, creating greater informational value.

Magda Piatkowska, Chief Data Scientist for BBC News, touches on another important quality of public service algorithms: transparency. *"We don't really want to have information about the user. It's important for us to keep it clean and anonymous,"* she says. *"We've started to incorporate metrics that are reflective of our editorial values."*

The practical design of the algorithm is very much learnt by doing and testing: Should it post four recommended stories or eight? On which part of the page? Does it base its recommendations on browsing habits or on the time of day and the device the news is consumed on? In fact, there's an optimal balance: the more articles you recommend, the shorter average engagement time per story you typically get. So recommendations should be relevant and accurate, but these targets don't change one fundamental cornerstone: *"We still want people to click, we still want people to stay engaged,"* says Piatkowska.

Now Piatkowska is working on the algorithm for the whole BBC World Service at the London headquarters, which serves people in 40 languages and recently concluded its largest expansion since WWII.

While the BBC's UK audience is made up of millions of registered users, the international audience consists mainly of unidentifiable, occasional users. Often that means a simpler algorithm. *"There's a specific segment of users who come from social media on the mobile phone in the morning. They just want general news, and that is what works best for them."*

Alternatively, the algorithm's selection may depend on whether the BBC was accessed via Facebook or Google. Coming from social media, *"you are just in a different state of mind and you're looking for something else. That's important."*

The journey in artificial intelligence has only just begun. The next phase is to use it to guide what kind of content should be produced. *"How do we support journalists with smart solutions to commission better content for larger audiences? What angles should we use? Which ingredients in this story make it interesting for a certain audience?"*

"We love having conversations about public service algorithm, we love that limit. I think, on one hand, you kind of may feel the joy of it in a way, but it's hard. It's hard work," says Piatkowska.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Algorithm-based recommendations can be adjusted to take into account different kinds of metrics. Creating public value or "service" is a challenge, since public value is often not clearly defined.

There is more in AI than just recommendations and personalization. Content creation may in future be based on computer-aided decisions. That would change newsroom culture totally: What's the role of editors in that kind of world?

You can also find other, simpler yet innovative ways of serving the audience than fine-tuning your system with the finest artificial intelligence technologies.

PUBLIC SERVICE ON DR1

DR, Denmark

"We can change journalism so that we contribute to solving problems."
(Jesper Borup)

Jesper Borup,
Host
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Constructive journalism had been practised regionally in Denmark for more than ten years. In 2018, however, Jesper Borup and his team faced a fresh challenge: to apply this approach nationally, four days a week, via radio. It turned out to be not only possible but also rewarding.

THE STORY

The concept of constructive journalism has existed in Denmark for more than ten years. Jesper Borup, a radio host on the Danish island of Fyn, was one of its earliest pioneers.

"People were getting tired of traditional journalism always being negative…So we wanted to respond to this on our regional station," explains Jesper. He and his colleague Morten Rønnelund were among a half-dozen pioneers from various Danish organizations who started to address society's most complex issues through practical, solutions-based discussions.

"Journalism as such cannot solve the [social] problems, because we are not in power. But we can change journalism so that we contribute to solving problems instead of making small problems bigger or just talking about problems that are not even there and focusing simply on conflicts. I think that's the downside of modern journalism."

This is undoubtedly a new role for journalism. But is it activism? No, says Jesper, *"not if you do it properly."*

Jesper committed himself to practising, teaching and even researching the concept of constructive journalism. Talk radio's continual flow made it a natural platform for "constructive" news stories by first defining a problem and then, perhaps the next day, asking for possible solutions from listeners.

But in 2017, Jesper faced the even greater challenge of taking his approach to the national level. The show's design was accepted and it went on air in the autumn of 2017 – four times a week, for an hour each time.

"We were excited and nervous," says Jesper, referring also to his colleagues Tine Rud and Anna Hjortdal. *"The listeners on P1 were not used to constructive journalism so it was a new thing for them to relate to as well."* The commissioning meant that, for the first time in Denmark, constructive journalism was given a national platform and an exclusive radio programme.

What does this concept look like in practice? The P1 editorial structure is as follows. First, the team selects a social issue to be discussed on the nine regional DR stations around the country. Next, Jesper explains, *"we take the reporter who produced the original report onto the programme to conduct a Q&A session. Our studio panel then talks about what the problem is and what we can do about it. We use that to inspire the listeners so that they can also contribute with ideas, proposals and experiences to solve the problem."*

The panel can also take two other approaches. It can broadcast follow-up episodes, evaluating whether the solutions discussed in earlier weeks are realistically feasible or, alternatively, it can share inspirational stories, reporting on somebody who has solved a problem in some capacity.

Jesper's many years of experience in radio and constructive journalism at the regional level helped him and his team overcome potential problems. He had already proved that it was possible, and listeners – he says – love it.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

It's possible to introduce an alternative approach nationally, offering new voices and a more constructive tone.

Society can be engaged in solving problems – not just challenging political power

Don't allow others' ambitions and agendas to take over. The aim is to gather ideas from listeners, not opinions.

It is not about politicians or well-known debaters. Create a new style to talk about problems.

RECLAIMING JOURNALISM

Republik, Switzerland

"Our members know that nothing is free. If journalism seems to be free, someone will eventually be benefitting from it. Whether it's advertisers or politicians." (Richard Höchner)

Richard Höchner,
co-founder and head of community relations at Republik
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The Swiss online magazine Republik is co-owned by its readers, who have a say in the election of board members, vote on annual reports and choose council members. The brand promotes 'no-bullshit journalism' and upholds independence and transparency as its key values.

THE STORY

These are exciting times for Republik, the Swiss news platform, as they are finalizing their reader-owned ownership model. *"Our yearly subscribers were already part of a non-profit cooperative, which owns 47.4% of Republik. But from October 2018, for the first time, they are also able to vote on our annual reports, new council candidates and board members,"* says co-founder Richard Höchner. And within two days, 1,500 already had.

Of the 5 million German-speaking Swiss population, 22,000 have a yearly membership with Republik. Many of these members signed up for the online magazine before a single word had even been published, at the beginning of 2017. Trump was just being inaugurated, presidential elections in France were causing turmoil and the dangers of fake news were dominating the public agenda. At the same time, newspapers in Switzerland disappeared while others were purchased by the former leader of the far-right Swiss People's Party.

The timing seemed right for a news platform that would advocate true 'no-bullshit journalism' and complete independence, from both advertisers and politics. People were seriously worried about the loss of quality journalism.

"The idea of Republik emerged from a group of people that wanted to do things differently," explains Richard. *"From our various back gardens, we drafted a mission statement."* One part of the statement reads: *"Without journalism, no democracy. And without democracy, freedom disappears. We are reclaiming journalism as a profession."*

"Our members know that nothing is free. If journalism seems to be free, someone will eventually be benefitting from it. Whether it's advertisers or politicians. [So] we ask people to pay for journalism, and they know they will get quality and independence in return."

When looking at Republik's mission statement, you could mistake it for a public service medium. *"But the main difference is that we don't have the legacy. We can build up a relationship with the audience from scratch. We can reinvent everything. The downside is just that we need to reinvent everything."*

Republik is still finding its editorial style, admits Richard. And *"we can still improve."* But it's clear that they have a reader-centred approach. The brand is approachable, transparent and responsive. Located in the heart of the city, in a former brothel, Republik often hosts gatherings in the public space of their office. *"We try to be a host, both online and in real life."*

And it seems to be paying off. The brand is popular, and the membership seems to be very active. *"But the true test comes in January, when it's time for the members to renew their membership. Or not."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Being clear what you stand for helps people understand what they are buying into. And it proves that a lot of people are still rooting for independent, transparent journalism.

The 'old' values of public service journalism still resonate with the audience. But it's possible this legacy can sometimes get in the way of true connection.

With an organizational model founded on co-ownership, the interests of the readers are safeguarded.

SAY IT TO ME, FACE TO FACE

ARD, Germany

"Most of the callers were astonished that we let them on air." (Kai Gniffke)

Kai Gniffke,
Erster Chefredakteur, Tagesschau
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The editor of ARD's flagship news programme started a blog to explain the show's editorial decisions as well as his own work as a journalist. Kai Gniffke's openness was not always understood or respected, and it was even misused by the press at times. However, he continues to believe in the need for transparency.

THE STORY

In 2007, Kai Gniffke, Editor-in-Chief of Tagesschau (a news programme broadcast on German TV channel Das Erste), started a blog with his deputy, Thomas Hinrichs, to share behind-the-scenes insights about newsmaking.

"In the beginning, it was just two guys trying to be cool," says Gniffke. It ended up becoming *"a great success because we had a lot of users who read and commented on our blog."* The blog was even awarded a prestigious Grimme Online Award. *"But over time it started getting a bit boring because the arguments and criticism were almost the same every day,"* he explains.

And there was another downside to their openness. *"If you want to write a blog in the evening, you have to concentrate because sometimes it is misused by the press. Some media outlets took quotes [out of context] to scandalize our work."* Moreover, criticism posted on the blog – and even the editor's own admission of mistakes – often made the news itself, while others who made the same errors but stayed silent went unnoticed.

Now Kai Gniffke writes much less frequently, using the blog to address controversial decisions by his editing team. In addition to responding to criticism, he sometimes also anticipates it, providing a proactive defence.

However, Gniffke has adopted a policy of meeting critics face to face in a new interactive forum. In 2016, Gniffke appeared in his first episode of Sag's mir ins Gesicht ("Say it to me, face to face"), a live broadcast where he responded directly to criticism from his audience, including about the decision not to report on the rape of a young woman by a refugee. It took the form of direct conversations through Skype that were broadcast on Facebook, Periscope, Google Live and on the 24-hour Tagesschau news channel. Questions were not vetted in advance.

"Most of the callers were astonished that we let them on air. And most of them stated they were sympathizers of Germany's populist party. To my own surprise, we had a respectful and constructive dialogue with every user – probably because of the face-to-face element."

"What I learnt was that there was a growing distrust regarding the established media, and also a high demand to know how journalists work."

In the autumn of 2018, Kai Gniffke initiated the show's third season with Tagesschau on Tour. In this version, journalists and editors visited people who feel ignored by Tagesschau and forgotten by the established media.

Gniffke even accepted a request from Germany's right-wing Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) party to appear on the panel discussing Tagesschau's journalistic principles openly and transparently, once again face to face. The decision triggered critical questions both within and outside the organization.

"I think in the long run openness and transparency – communicating with your audience – will be rewarded. But what I'm very unhappy about is that the established media, especially newspapers, have misused this." Such transparency can be a double-edged sword, especially in the short term.

"I know it's a risk, but also more of an opportunity."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Communicating with the audience is necessary as the work of journalists is not widely understood.

It is possible to have a constructive dialogue with your critics.

Openness is a double-edged sword that may sometimes have undesirable consequences.

SHOWCASING PUBLIC VALUE

NPO, Netherlands

"We're aiming for something extra, something that goes beyond just being a really high-quality television programme." (Hanna Kimmel)

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Arthur Schuitemaker,
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NPO publicizes examples of how its programmes add value to society as a whole and to its audience. It commissions outside experts to evaluate how well it has met certain public-value criteria.

THE STORY

In 2016, the Dutch public broadcaster, NPO, began a project to showcase the public and societal value of its programming.

NPO selected five topics through which to present its case: News and Debate, Culture, Education, Innovation and Cohesion.

In a report published in the summer of 2018, NPO made a key distinction between public value and societal value. *"Every television programme has to have public value. But whether it has societal value is the next step that we aim for. Something extra, something that goes beyond just being a really high-quality television programme that deals with debate or with the news,"* explains Hanna Kimmel, Strategy and Public Policy Advisor at NPO. *"You can see it having an impact on society as a whole. It goes beyond just personal experience."*

To illustrate how the broadcaster is meeting this benchmark, NPO selects examples of programmes that could fulfil a certain criteria denoting 'value'. It commissions an outside expert for each of the five topics, who then evaluates how well the programme meets the expectations of public value. The 2018 expert for News and Debate was José van Dijck, a media professor at Utrecht University, who has previously addressed public service media's role and responsibility to distinguish fake news from real news.

The results of these value reports, alongside other metrics, are compiled online and in a PDF brochure which is widely distributed to the public.

More broadly, all NPO programmes should aspire to fulfil at least some of the metrics that constitute public value:

- Independence
- Reliability
- Pluralism
- Diversity
- Impact
- Engagement
- Authenticity
- Boldness

The project to assess value is particularly helpful in light of the nature of Dutch public broadcasting, where several broadcasters create content serving the different religious and social pillars of society. Different broadcasting associations can have very distinct brands, so this evaluation series brings them together.

Arthur Schuitemaker, the project's corporate communications advisor, underlines its additional importance to the complex Dutch public broadcasting system itself. *"It's also key for the internal cohesion of our own organization as well as the bond between all the broadcasters we have in the Netherlands. Our own staff are important NPO stakeholders, so it's helpful that they also have a clear image of what we add to society as a whole."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

It took a lot of time and effort to collect information about the nominated programmes.

Launching the project at a designated event garnered a lot of positive attention.

Producing an easily accessible website to show the results turned out to be a wise decision.

SOCIAL MEDIA VERIFICATION

Deutsche Welle DW, Germany

"You get karma points as well."
(Jochen Spangenberg)

Jochen Spangenberg,
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Deutsche Welle is one of the few organizations that collaborate globally to verify social media and other digital content. It created a cloud-based system to support its efforts, which is now also used by the human rights organization Amnesty International.

THE STORY

SSocial media is the ultimate source of both first-hand accounts and disinformation. But what can be done to help journalists discern which news is true and which isn't?

Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany's public international broadcaster, started to analyse its options for a centralized fact-checking and verification system in 2012, before the term "fake news" was widely used. Together with its partners, it launched a research project financed by the European Commission.

After interviewing several media organizations and journalists, it concluded that there was a distinct lack of journalistic resources or organized platforms for online verification. Google Digital News Initiative co-funded a 15-month pilot project that ran from 2016-2017 to create a commercial product for this purpose. The project was tackled in collaboration with Athens Technology Center, ATC, a Greek software development company.

The result is a web-based, algorithm-driven system for collaborative verification. It supports the journalistic task of verifying digital content, allowing for real-time collaboration amongst team members working across time zones for different organizations.

Underpinning the system is a tool which helps analyse indicators of fake Twitter posts. The platform is now used by some 300 people, including not only DW's social media team and other DW journalists, but also Amnesty International. Indeed, verifying human rights abuses shares similarities with the work done by journalists. However, no other media organizations currently use the tool.

It's not easy to find paying users. There's a limited number of organizations who can benefit from such tools and are prepared to pay for it. Moreover, most social media verification is specialist work – even in the largest newsrooms, it is assigned to select people.

"We consider it a success in terms of interest," says Nikos Sarris, head of ATC's Innovation Lab, *"but I wouldn't say it is a commercial success yet because there are not enough resources in the media industry to support it."* So far, DW and ATC have borne most of the costs of developing the tool.

As a broadcaster operating around the globe in 30 languages, Deutsche Welle itself is one of those benefiting from the tool.

Wilfried Runde concludes that it is already an achievement to see the product utilized at DW and Amnesty. *"Being open-minded, entering into a public-private partnership, dealing with all the restrictions of the unchartered territory that we moved into – that is, to us, definitely a success."*

Jochen Spangenberg says that the project has also given DW very positive publicity. *"We stand for freedom of information, trying to be as impartial as possible, showing that we're providing something for the media, but also for the human rights community. That's worth all the effort and something to be a little proud of, too."*

"And you get karma points as well."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

It's possible to create public value in public-private partnerships.

You can get third-party investment (EU, Google) for these kinds of initiatives.

The early involvement, feedback and testing of prospective users brought together the interests of both editorial and technical teams.

Don't underestimate the challenges of developing, launching and implementing a product focused on journalistic needs and requirements, and then earning money with it.

SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEOS THAT UNITE

BHRT, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"In the eyes of the public, we were just a channel for politics that spoke at them. Now we show we care about ordinary people and are also a channel for them." (Aleksandar Brezar)

Aleksandar Brezar,
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BHRT is trying to foster unity in Bosnia by publishing videos on social media telling stories about ordinary people and everyday-life situations. They want to help audiences appreciate their shared values and struggles, rather than their political and ethnic differences.

THE STORY

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a post-war country which faces a host of complex political issues. In Freedom House's 2018 report[1], there are few positive words to be found about its current state of democratic governance and the extent of corruption there.

Hoping to alleviate people's difficulties, Aleksander Brezar, BHRT's media editor, started producing short (1.30-min), up-beat videos for Facebook and Twitter. It also played into the national broadcaster's favour to counter its image as "conventional and boring."

Although the funding is limited and the team is very small - consisting of just two full-time employees, two part-timers and a student intern - it has been winning acclaim. *"The videos are young and hip, produced very much in the style of AJ+. And they don't feature politicians but ordinary people instead, which makes the videos relatable to people in general. We try to give national context, showing all its diversity amid the stress. The stories show how much the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina actually have in common, rather than focusing on the (ethnic) differences that have always been highlighted."*

The team films most of its stories in the more rural areas of the country, not in the capital Sarajevo. The stories have a positive feeling and highlight people's resilience and resourcefulness. One example is the story about a man who has a high-altitude vineyard, which would ordinarily be a hard place to wine grapes – but he is very successful at it. The video inspired many others to start planning vineyards at high altitudes.

Another example is a video about three young women who set about publishing a book about Bosnia's most notable women in history. This eventually became one of the most successful crowdfunding campaigns in the country. The story not also highlights their success but is also an important sign of how the country's norms are shifting and becoming more modern.

The videos have been popular, but Aleksander is not looking too much at clicks to measure success. What makes the process really successful is that productions are on the same level as the viewer. *"We show people that we care about them,"* says Aleksander. *"Often, the media only give room to politicians so that they can talk about their views, making the output rather dull. In the eyes of the public, we were just a channel for politics that spoke at them. Now we show we care about ordinary people, and are also a channel for them."*

1. https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/bosnia-and-herzegovina

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

By focusing on shared human values, BHRT is able to create a sense of togetherness for the people.
It pays off to show that you are truly interested in audience stories: BHRT has become much more approachable as a brand.
It's hard to deliver true quality when you have little funds and a small staff.

STEM'RNE

TV2/DR/Fyn Stiftstidende, Denmark

"Here on the island of Fyn, we have quite a good relationship." (Peder Meisner)

Peder Meisner,
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Esben Seerup,
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On the island of Fyn in Denmark, three media companies decided to collaborate to encourage local youth to vote in the 2017 regional elections. They learnt a lot, not only about the interests of their young audience but also from each other.

THE STORY

"Stem'rne" is a Danish word meaning both "voter" and "speaking out loud". It was also the code name of an ambitious media project led by TV2 Fyn and DR Fyn, the two Danish public service broadcasters on Fyn island, who were joined later by their national counterparts, TV2 and DR, and Fyens Stiftenstidende, a regional newspaper group.

Their decision to collaborate was driven largely by their shared goal of encouraging local youth to vote in the 2017 regional elections. The target was to secure a voting rate of no less than 80% among the younger generation. To put this into context, the figure stood at just 59.5% in the previous election.

Aside from promoting participation in the democratic process among the young, the organizers also wanted to demonstrate that private and public media houses can work together.

"We know each other and get along quite well. They know me and I know them," explains Esben Seerup, TV2's regional head in Fyn. *"The media environment in Denmark has been very hostile for the last couple of years,"* explains Peder Meisner, DR's regional head in Fyn, *"but here on the island of Fyn, we have quite a good relationship."*

Indeed, the editors of the three regional media organizations originally united to brainstorm how to create a "brighter future for the region" and its media. And then someone asked, "What about the youth?" They joined forces with national news organizations, the University of Southern Denmark and 16 local high schools.

The project leaders established a joint newsroom of thirteen journalists who were freed from their regular tasks and encouraged to explore new ways to reach the under-25's. They organized political debates and role-plays at local universities and high schools, directly engaging with their communities both in person and on social media.

In total, Stem'rne worked together for three months. The average age of the temporary team was 27 years old.

For Esben Seerup the key lesson of the project was that while it is possible to address youth with relevant regional content, it has to be done in an entirely untraditional way.

Peder Meisner says that the youth are a diverse target group, not a homogenous mass. *"Some are still living at home, [whilst others] have got their own families and are having children...They have very different kinds of lives."*

And, did the project reach its goal? Not quite. Only 62.5% of young voters turned out on election day. But it was not a failure either, as it beat the previously recorded mark of 59.5% and increased turnout twice as much relative to elsewhere in Denmark.

Finally, Dr Søren Schultz Jørgensen, a media professor and journalist, also published an evaluation report of the project. He concluded that although the official target was not reached, *"there are still several indications that the project contributed to strengthening the political involvement of young people, increasing their interest for politics, increasing their faith in politicians and their own political awareness."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

The organizations learnt a lot from each other and from their efforts to reach young adults.

The project reinforced the media's role as a contributor to democratic society.

It engaged directly with people in communities who do not often vote, offering new knowledge about subjects that interest them.

The young liked when news media communicated in a traditional, serious format. They didn't like it when they tried to be young and funny.

THE BIG PICTURE

RTÉ, Ireland

"The mission was to shine a light on one of the country's most significant, and potentially under-reported issues." (Tara Peterman)

Tara Peterman,
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RTÉ gathered its forces to cover topics that it considered of special importance: youth mental health. Young people and their parents from across Ireland spoke of the pain and frustration involved in seeking professional help. Approximately 20 original broadcast items were commissioned to the topic.

THE STORY

A dramatic, 20-metre mural depicting a young man with closed eyes, head deep in his hoodie, adorned one of RTÉ's main buildings in Dublin. This art installation, made in April 2018 by artist and mental health activist Joe Caslin, became a symbol of the broadcaster's major project investigating mental health amongst the youth, The Big Picture.

This series consisted of programmes, interviews and features specially dedicated to looking at how young people are coping with today's pressures, and how society is responding to those challenges. Young people and their parents from across Ireland spoke of the pain and frustration involved in seeking help. The country was particularly moved by the story of 11-year old Milly, who committed suicide. Approximately 20 original broadcast items were commissioned to address mental health and well-being. The central piece was an investigative documentary on RTÉ One, followed by a studio discussion.

Its impact can be largely attributed to the masterful use of RTÉ's online and social media services as well as its youth radio channel, RTÉ 2fm, the platforms used most by the target group. News2day, RTÉ's bulletin for younger viewers, also had a dedicated programme on the topic. In addition, there was a specially curated Spotify playlist and coverage of the making of Caslin's artwork.

All this amounted to what some have described as a form of advocacy journalism.

"The goal was to really reinforce that we are here to serve the public, wherever they are – whether it's online, on TV, on the radio," says Tara Peterman, the producer of The Big Picture series.

The initiative began by choosing an issue that truly resonated and that could help start a national conversation, concerning which, as Peterman says, *"we needed a sort of push, some big momentum, a big-scale approach to say 'this is an issue that matters'."*

The mental-health project was actually the second series for The Big Picture, which shed light on homelessness in its first airing, in December 2017. *"The mission was to shine a light on one of the country's most significant, and potentially under-reported issues."*

"We sent teams out to talk to people in the streets, to talk with services that provide help to homeless people, to get a sense of 'a day in the life of' a homeless person. So, that was the first one and it was a place that we as a company could, kind of, gather together."

The second time around, however, the editors sought a larger-scale approach. *"We tried to look at a concern that we knew many people had. I knew that mental health was something that would resonate. When you spoke to people around the organization people came back and said, 'yes, I'd like to participate in that, that's something I think we could do something with.'"*

For RTÉ, this was perhaps the first time that teams and people across the organization from different disciplines worked together on such a scale. So, there was an internal benefit for the company too. But for Peterman, the most important thing is that the project resonated with the audience. *"I'm very much aware that we're only able to cover subjects of such sensitivity and of such importance because individuals share their experiences with us. And often they're sharing painful experiences. So that does really resonate with me personally and with my colleagues, that you've been entrusted with something important and there's a duty of care there."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Choosing the right topic for a major effort is important. It has to be something that resonates widely and is deserving of national attention.

If you want to stand out, you have to break out of the ordinary way of doing things.

Staff learn from one another if they collaborate but have an opportunity to cover the issue with their own special stamp.

Creating an impactful project without a specific budget is demanding.

THE TRUST PROJECT

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, United States

"We're making the ideals we share as journalists clearer to the public, and also to ourselves." (Sally Lehrman)

Sally Lehrman,
Director
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The Trust Project aims to clearly communicate the sources and journalist behind a news story, helping the public to assess the media's practices and guidelines. Underpinning this is an ambition to establish and enforce an internationally agreed benchmark of journalistic quality.

THE STORY

In Santa Clara University, USA, the "UN of journalism" is being born. Its real name is "The Trust Project", and its purpose is to codify, for the first time, international indicators of high-quality journalism. This includes examining which media groups actively disclose details about funding, their political agendas, conflicts of interest, and editorial mistakes. *"We're making the ideals we share as journalists clearer to the public, and also to ourselves."*

Although only light-hearted, likening the project to the UN captures the weight of this task, as well as its idealistic foundations and potential. *"It's not the first time I've heard that comparison,"* jokes Sally Lehrman, the project's director. *"It's a long process. It's going to be hard to undo the damage that's been done over the last 20 years. This project is about taking those first steps and [defining] real journalism."*

The project began with dozens of in-depth interviews with groups representing different ages and socio-economic backgrounds. This helped identify four types of news readers – from the avid to the disengaged. Incidentally, researchers also found that these groups shared similar expectations of trustworthy news. *"They all want to know who the journalist and what the agenda of the media agency is,"* Sally Lehrman says. *"They also want the information they are reading to be more clearly distinguished: is it news, opinion, analysis or advertising?"*

In response to these interviews, she led workshops with news executives from 80 organizations to carefully design eight core journalistic "trust indicators", which cover everything from fact-checking standards to policies regarding unnamed sources. Currently, news sites in Brazil, Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, the UK and the US feature their commitment to complying with the 'Indicators.'

However, a key critique of the Trust Project is whether everyone trusts these indicators. So far, randomized pilot experiments have delivered promising results in this regard, but the real test will be whether indicators are accepted by readers and news agencies across the political spectrum. It is perhaps telling that the likes of The Washington Post and The Economist were consulted primarily, with little input from non-liberal, non-elite organizations. Another challenge will be enforcing the indicators in a way that avoids politicizing or discrediting the project itself.

Does Sally Lehrman believe that the average adult, whose trust in the news has already dwindled, will actually examine the trust indicators and the project's methodology in depth? She explains, *"It's okay if they don't read it, but it's reassuring for them to know it's there. It's telling them, 'Hold us accountable.'"*

Moreover, she argues that the trust indicators also benefit the media groups themselves. *"Companies are saying, 'We haven't looked at our ethical guidelines in 20 years,"* she says. She hopes the desire to be recognized for complying with the indicators will spur groups worldwide to examine their operations – which is long overdue – and *"help news organizations uphold their own highest values",* buoyed by a shared global commitment.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

There are different types of news consumers. While three out of four value the news, they differ with respect to the time and effort they spend on evaluating the news as well as confidence in their ability to do so.

TIOMILJONER

SR, Sweden

"Do we really have this listening approach? No. We don't." (Helena Giege)

Helena Giege,
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Swedish Radio SR noticed that too often, reporters already know the answers before asking the questions. So it started a project in which SR journalists went out and listened to the problems of ordinary people – and only then conceptualized their stories. The result? New topics, new angles, other revelations.

THE STORY

"Turning things on their head." That's how Helena Giege, the head of Swedish Radio's SR describes #tiomiljoner, or the "ten million"– a reference to Sweden's population.

This project spurred SR reporters to go out and listen to the problems of ordinary people. This then guided their coverage, with news stories conceptualized only after the research stage. Largely, we seek quotes for stories that have already been scripted in our minds. That makes stories boring – news that doesn't surprise anyone.

"As journalists, we have to do our work quickly. We go to where we know there are people who can give us the right answer. There are a lot of questions that are important to people but we don't deal with them," says Helena Giege.

Now, local reporters first ask citizens what they care about, what is most important to them? These stories create a choir of voices, each one representing the ten million Swedish inhabitants.

These short, 2-minute interview segments are published on SR's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts daily during publishing periods. They are also available on the SR website, the Radio Play app and are aired twice daily on national prime-time radio.

The format has three stages: collecting, publishing and following-up. Subsequent reports are also always fact-checked before publishing, and relevant information is added to the original stories.

In turn, these segments serve as a starting point for debates, in-depth interviews and election coverage, prompting party leaders to offer solutions to the problems raised. This method has even been implemented in political reporting, concerning which many colleagues were initially dubious.

So what has changed in SR since this project began a couple of years ago? First, SR reporters actively visit places they did not go before. As such, they also cover people who they previously did not, making ordinary citizens feel their stories are worth telling, in turn leading to more ideas and tipoffs. Quite often these new stories end up being the most read and shared SR stories on Facebook. *"I think this is quite amazing because this is not drama,"* says Helena.

Helena Giege concludes: *"I think that this is really a public service, because we are taking questions that are important to our audience and we are elaborating them. We are publishing them in steps, adding facts, adding constructive discussion to them."*

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

No extra technique or expensive features are needed for this approach. You can scale it to fit your local needs.

The approach produces more constructive comments and activity on social media. It allows the audience to be empowered and be a part of a solution-based discussion.

The project allows people who do not normally appear in media to be heard.

SR's method has challenged and changed the way journalists collected, presented and thought about the news.

Ordinary people are not used to being the focus of a story. They may need support and help, especially in connection with controversial topics.

TOOLS FOR DYSLEXIA

3asyR, Greece

"My vision is to help all dyslexics read and learn easily in the digital era." (Maria Tsania)

Maria Tsania,
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3asyR is a tool that highlights, underlines and makes fonts bigger, in order to help dyslexics read more and better online.

THE STORY

"Being dyslexic myself, I always experience difficulties with reading, both in print and online. Although many attempts have been made to improve learning and reading for dyslexics, especially in print editions, there are still improvements that need to be made," says Maria Tsania, founder of the startup 3asyR.

According to the International Dyslexia Association, around 15 to 20% of the global population may have symptoms of dyslexia, including slow or inaccurate reading, weak spelling and poor writing. Estimates for the internet population in 2018 suggest that over 7 billion people are online worldwide - and for quite a lot of those people, online reading can be quite a challenge. *"My vision is to help all dyslexics read and learn easily in the digital era. Therefore I created 3asyR, the name being a play on the word easier."*

Her company helps dyslexics and other people with reading difficulties to read online. Through an extension for a Chrome browser website, texts can either be underlined, changed into a larger font size or highlighted as you hover over with your mouse. Users can also choose the option to have the text read out loud to them, avoiding the reading altogether.

For (news) organisations, 3easyR has developed a web plugin that will make websites fully accessible for their audience with reading difficulties. The Greek news agency AMNA is using the tool, making the texts readable for all - also those without the plugin. And also the websites of IKEA in Greece, Bulgaria and Cyprus are using the 3easyR tool.

"Our application has received three awards since 2014, both at innovation and startup competitions. We were also among the ten most promising companies in Europe at the GESA educational technology business competition. In a time when everything is happening online, we cannot neglect the people that need some extra help."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

For public service organisations, there is a social responsibility to be accessible to all, making tools to better serve dyslectics a necessity.

A large portion of the population has some kind of special need - being aware of these needs and adapting your product to these needs enlarges your audience.

As a news organisation you don't need to have all expertises in house; working together with a startup is also an option.

UNDER ATTACK

SVT, Sweden

"Our team are not allowed to voice their personal stance on the more controversial issues." (Charlotta Friborg)

Charlotta Friborg,
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Swedish television, SVT, and its reporters are facing organized attacks by groups on social media. The company follows online comments closely and tries to answer users' questions about SVT's news output. It also publicly disputes false allegations about its news operations and publicly discloses any corrections. On the other hand, it avoids engaging with purely political comments.

THE STORY

The Swedish public news service is currently the target of a Facebook group with 30,000 members dedicated to posting criticisms of the organization in what appears to be an attempt to undermine its credibility. This is just an example of what Swedish television, SVT, faces almost daily.

However, Editor-in-Chief Charlotta Friborg largely downplays the issue. *"For sure, there's been a growing tendency to criticize the media in the last three or four years. But given our degree of influence, this is as it should be. It would be really dangerous if we closed ourselves off and treated the criticism as some kind of ultra force that's at war with us."*

How then has SVT coped with it?

First, SVT continuously surveys what is written about it on social media and in the press. It monitors comments closely, answers questions and provides additional facts through its own social media account. To deal with alleged misinformation, SVT explains the logic underpinning its news-finding operations and journalistic methods to the audience, as recommended by researchers and specialists.

"We respond publicly when someone claims that we have done something we haven't," says Charlotta. *"[But] we do not respond when the criticism is purely political, written to make a political point rather than call our attention to a mistake on our part."* Indeed, some social media accounts repeatedly criticize SVT from a set ideological standpoint – from both the right and left.

"But as long as the criticism is relevant, we consider it to be our mission to communicate transparently and openly," says Charlotta.

"When we see that many people are contacting us about the same issues, we usually try to find out first if this is an organized effort or if it is purely organic. Essentially, are users contacting us independently?" says Charlotta. *"Our ambition is to be transparent and open to criticism. We try to respond to the emails and social media messages."*

In addition, if news stories are updated in response to legitimate criticism, such corrections are made publicly.

Moreover, SVT's journalists follow rigid rules on social media. This *"means that public service media staff are really boring on social media. We're really strict when it comes to that, and that's a way of protecting our credibility,"* says Charlotta.

But there's a darker side to all this. Journalists and news anchors at SVT also face personal threats daily. This has been on the rise, often forcing the security department or the police to get involved. Admittedly, the people behind these threats are usually mentally unstable, but they are nonetheless inspired by the increasingly polarized aggression around them.

"That's the worst part. We have had a lot of discussions about how to empower our staff and give them the courage and ability [to do controversial reporting], even though it's hurtful. This issue represents a really true attack on journalism."

How can a public service organization and its people respond to this? *"I don't see any sign of it decreasing. Quite the opposite, I'm afraid,"* admits Charlotta.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Don't overreact to criticism. Put it into a context. Tens of thousands of people are still just one-tenth of one percent of Swedes.

Relevant criticism has to be taken into account and responded, no matter who presents it.

Long-standing traditions limiting reporters expressing personal opinions have also made it easier to clarify policies in the era of social media.

VALUE FOR ICELAND

RÚV, Iceland

"We needed to give something back to the audience and to society. This is not a time to lean back and to stay fixed in our old position. We have to show people why we're worth their money." (Hildur Hardardottir and Valgeir Vilhjálmsson)

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When the time to develop a new five-year strategy came about, Iceland's RÚV decided to take a truly holistic approach and ask all stakeholders in its ecosystem to provide feedback on the public service broadcaster and share what they would like to see in future. All of this input was combined into a strategy that puts Icelandic society front and centre.

THE STORY

Despite years of economic turmoil, the Icelandic public broadcaster RÚV retained its strong place in the market. But the company anticipated that this position wasn't permanent, and that it risked being eroded.

As such, a new CEO was appointed to develop a new strategy to focus more on their audience, alongside five experts including Hildur Hardardottir and Valgeir Vilhjálmsson. *"As we truly wanted to focus on the audience, our first step was to look outward. We needed fresh viewpoints and input from the outside, not the same perspectives from the same people inside the organization."*

This audience-centred approach was also underpinned by the belief that a public service broadcaster must be kept accountable. *"We needed to give something back to the audience and to society. This is not a time to lean back and to stay fixed in our old position. We have to show people why we're worth their money."*

The team defined various stakeholders and set out to interview them all. As the market is small, it was relatively easy to speak with all relevant audience groups, including private and public interest groups, educational and cultural institutions, independent producers, the general public, government and RÚV employees. *"Icelandic people are very active citizens and consumers, and they were quite keen to participate in our sessions,"* says Hildur.

The result of their extensive efforts is a strategy that, quite literally, puts the audience first. The five-pillar approach starts with "For you", followed by "for the future, for our culture, for independence and for society".

An example of the new strategy is that RÚV wants to focus its efforts more sharply – doing less, but better. *"In a way, the financial crisis gave us a reason to focus, as did the emergence of big global players in the market. We know we can't compete with the big guys (Netflix, Facebook and Google) in terms of range and reach, but we can focus on what makes us truly special, and what we know and are good at: unique Icelandic content. And this is also what our audience expects from us."*

As the strategy was launched just over a year ago, in May 2017, it remains to be seen whether it will succeed on all points. *"We have listed 86 actions we want to take over the next five years to realise the strategy in a huge spreadsheet. And actually, quite a lot of them have already been implemented, for example, the introduction of a new investigative journalism television programme, a revived news studio and the launch of RÚV zero - a service offered to young people. But also open pitch days where people can send in programme ideas, a new and improved online player and a new training curriculum to enhance the skills and knowledge of future staff."*

The general feedback of the public has been very positive so far, and research data shows high ratings for trust, importance and satisfaction with RÚV services – indicating that the Icelandic people like the path RÚV has chosen.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

If you truly include the audience as an integral part of your strategy, you will have clear direction when re-evaluating your mission.

Actively including the audience creates a deep bond with the people of your country.

This is, of course, much easier in a small country. It remains to be seen whether other countries are able to achieve a similar degree of involvement. All public service broadcasters naturally try to do what's best for society, but RÚV is taking this approach one step further.

VISION 2022

RTBF, Belgium

"Nobody knows what to do, really. But...a change like this takes time." (Nathalie Mush)

Nathalie Mush,
Change manager at RTBF
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RTBF is implementing a new strategy, changing the way it develops new content.

THE STORY

In September 2018, RTBF launched its new strategy, Vision 2022, to prepare and secure its future.

The biggest change is that the organizational model is being flipped around to put the audience centre-stage and to prioritize Belgian Francophone productions. This means there are now two major hubs at RTBF: a media and a content hub. The media hub analyses the needs of RTBF's audiences. The content hub is responsible for suggesting, creating and producing content for the audiences identified by the media hub. So, based on these insights, programmes show content in the most appropriate formats.

The result will be new content offerings as from late October.

This strategy is based on data from an audience survey. Now that the initial outline has been drafted, deeper insights are being gathered through qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Within this, RTBF has identified four major audience groups it needs to simultaneously reach. Two of these are based on age: the new generation of consumers, who are younger than 20, and young adults aged 20 to 35. Both groups are digital natives and hard for RTBF to access. *"We hope that with this approach, we are able to make better content for these groups."*

"The upcoming elections in May 2019 are the first real news project that will be handled using the new organizational style, targeting the four audience segments. We will no longer take a one-size-fits-all approach," explains Nathalie Mush, leader of the transformation team responsible for the project. *"The youngest group also includes non-voters, so it will be exciting to see what forms of content will be produced for them."*

Nathalie is part of a 12-person transformation team responsible for the cultural and leadership change shaking up RTBF, which has 2,000 employees. This is not an easy task. *"Nobody knows what to do yet, really,"* admits Nathalie. *"They all get the general idea, but the details are still unclear. And that is fine. This is a process that takes time, and we will need to take various steps in order to implement the new strategy properly."*

"It's still in the early days. The new strategy has only just been implemented at management level and now the rest of the floor is being introduced to it."

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Audience insights can be gathered in various layers. You don't need to know everything about the audience before starting a strategic plan.

The more concrete a project becomes, the easier it is for people to commit to it.

It takes time to change the culture of an organization. It helps to view the project as a process, with various steps leading towards the final goal.

VOITTO THE ROBOT

YLE, Finland

"Voitto is kind of a larger entity, more like a philosophical being." (Jarkko Ryynänen)

Jarkko Ryynänen,
Project Manager
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Voitto's main job is fairly standard for a robot, namely writing stories that no one else has time to. Voitto can write articles about sports events and elections. But one thing makes Voitto special: he is personified as an animated character, even signing off his stories.

THE STORY

If Voitto were an ordinary piece of code, he would just be another robot-journalist: lacking creativity, requiring extensive maintenance and, frankly, rarely the smartest guy in the newsroom. However, one feature distinguishes Voitto from other robot-journalists, namely that he has a personality.

"I thought I'd captured a goal... Doh, practice makes perfect!" Voitto sarcastically tweeted during the 2018 FIFA World Cup after previously tweeting a video of the Mexican team missing a goal, mistakenly believing they had successfully scored.

Voitto's main day-to-day job is fairly standard for a robot. He writes stories for which no one else has time. During the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, for instance, Voitto learnt (or tried to learn!) how to watch live games and identify goals from video streams. In addition, he produces infographics for sports articles. Voitto can also write articles in Finnish and Swedish about elections, using the available data sources. Like his fellow human journalists, he signs off his stories with a picture of himself and sometimes tweets using the Twitter handle @voittorobotti.

"Voitto is kind of a larger entity, more like a philosophical being. Voitto can write stories. Voitto can draw pictures. Voitto can be some kind of personal assistant or something else – we don't even know yet," says Jarkko Ryynänen, project manager at the Finnish broadcasting company Yle.

Voitto started as a small experiment in December 2016, writing ten articles about the National Hockey League. Since then, Voitto has written over 1,000 stories. Not overly impressive (yet) but he's learning fast as new AI features are added to his DNA.

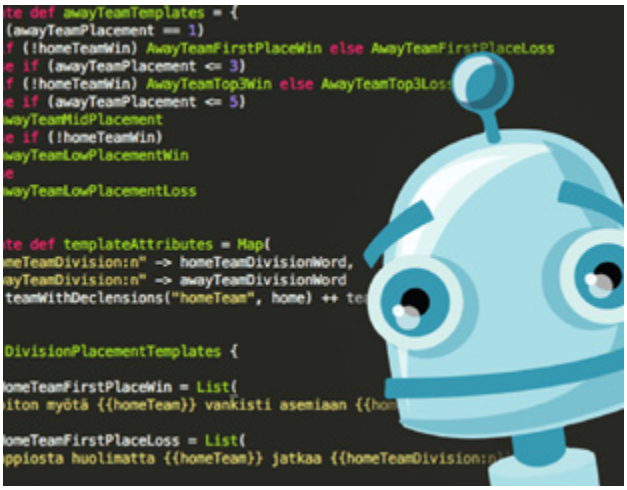
In October 2018, Yle announced that Voitto can show machine learning-based recommendations directly on the locked screens of mobile devices. The robot-journalist combines historical data with each user's selections and feedback, providing people with new ideas and perspectives.

Yle's News Lab created a real-life stuffed Voitto to showcase him in tangible form and, of course, allow colleagues to take selfies with him. As a sign of the culture at Yle's News Lab, Voitto's hands are optimized to hold cans. Journalists have grown to love this endearing creature, giving him a certain celebrity status. *"Journalists are no longer afraid of this robot-journalist. They want to work with Voitto. They ask, 'I'm doing political journalism. When will Voitto help me?'"* explains Ryynänen.

In contrast to Voitto's light-hearted nature, his creators are taking the issues of robot-journalism seriously. *"We have to think of the ethics. What kind of entity is Voitto? What kinds of things can Voitto do, and what kinds of things can he not do? Voitto is like a fictional character with a certain mindset and certain values,"* says Ryynänen.

"It's actually a good lesson when you have to think about values for robot-journalism. It actually clarifies the shared values of whole organizations when you have to think of them for this fictional entity."

Some of Voitto's features and talents are available in open source.
https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/yle_releases_code_for_robot_journalist_voitto/10126261



AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Turning a robot-journalist into a fictional character made it easier to market, understand and accept the robot.

Voitto can produce stories for very small audiences, which editors would otherwise be reluctant to invest human resources in.

Content recommendations generated by robot-journalists and personalized news streams are two sides of the same coin and both must be developed simultaneously.

ZPRAVICKY

CT, Czech Republic

"We took the critique very seriously...This inspired us to change our way of storytelling" (Petr Kopecky)

Petr Kopecky,
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Zpravicky is a children's news programme with audiences as young as four years old. The programme has learnt to collaborate with experts to make their content as pedagogically appropriate as possible.

THE STORY

Right before a popular children's programme telling bedtime fairy tales is aired on Czech Television, there are stories of war, immigration and economic crisis – reported by the children's news programme Zpravicky. With an audience of 4 to 10-year-olds, this news programme has one of the youngest demographics.

The daily five-minute programme used to be aired weekly, but changed to a daily format when the children's television channel was launched. In the beginning, this scheduling led to substantial negative feedback from parents and experts, who claimed that children so young needn't be bothered with the news.

Petr Kopecky is the editor-in-chief of Zpravicky: *"We took this critique very seriously and engaged in many debates with psychologists and pedagogues. We also turned to our international youth news colleagues, who we meet annually at the Youth News Exchange. This inspired us to change our way of storytelling to accommodate our young target audience. One of the key solutions was to introduce the 'whiteboard'. This particular narrative form explains difficult topics, like terrorism and war, using an object from every child's room as a frame for the animations."*

This innovation proved to be valuable and effective. Over the five years of its existence, the show has grown more and more popular, and criticism has lessened. Parents and experts now see that Zpravicky is capable of presenting difficult news stories within a context appropriate for young children.

Besides the whiteboard, Zpravicky focuses on audience participation to make the content as relevant as possible. Children are encouraged to share their own experiences in a section called "Issue of the Week". They send in their personal experiences and stories on topics like online catfishing and bullying, which are then used to produce a report for the following week. Children have responded positively, as they feel a strong connection to the show to which they have sent their input.

Truly connecting with children is a main focus for the programme, says Petr. *"We have good contact with schools, for example. In a specially designed media literacy programme, school classes are invited to the CT head office for workshops and meet-and-greets. The rest of the year, school classes are encouraged to produce video reports which are collected on a special webpage. A selection of these stories is used for the actual news reports on television."*

Zpravicky is also diving into social media and plans to improve their Instagram presence.

AUTHORS' REFLECTION

Know what you don't know. Being a journalism expert doesn't necessarily make you an expert in producing news for children.

But having an open mind and accepting feedback will help you improve.

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