

# A CULTURE OF AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT IN THE NEWS INDUSTRY

---

A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of Missouri

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by  
JOY MAYER

Dr. Yong Volz, Thesis Supervisor

DECEMBER 2011

© Copyright by Joy Mayer 2011

All Rights Reserved

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

**A CULTURE OF AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT  
IN THE NEWS INDUSTRY**

presented by Joy Mayer

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

---

Professor Yong Volz

---

Professor Michael Diamond

---

Professor Lynda Kraxberger

---

Professor Tim Vos

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated ...

To my husband, Joe, and two sons, Patrick and James, who have tolerated years upon years of multitasking.

To my grandfather, Donald Mathis, who is no stranger to fancy degrees, for telling me that a master's degree is no big deal and that I should go for it.

To my colleagues at the Columbia Missourian, who inspire me daily.

To my first bosses in full-time journalism, Sara Quinn and Janet Coats, for mentoring me and exposing me to what creativity, optimism and a sense of purpose looked like in a newsroom, and for setting the bar high.

And to my college newspaper adviser at the University of Oklahoma, Jack Willis, who quietly held me to the highest of standards, and who asked me when I was 21 if I was sure I didn't want to stick around and get a master's degree.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many journalists who shared their time and expertise with me as I explored the topic of community engagement in journalism. Whether you gave me an hour on the phone or let me follow you around on the job, I'm grateful. Thank you to Matt DeRienzo and the staff of the Register Citizen for their openness.

Thank you to the Reynolds Journalism Institute for making so much of my research possible. Thank you to Ken Fleming at the Center for Advanced Social Research for conducting a survey of editors on my behalf.

Thank you to Dr. Yong Volz, my committee chair, for her calm, unwavering support, and for always sending me out of her office feeling optimistic. My appreciation extends to my other committee members — Professors Diamond, Kraxberger and Vos — whose wisdom guided me through.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
3. METHODS.....	20
4. DEFINING AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT? .....	28
5. A CASE STUDY OF THE REGISTER CITIZEN .....	46
6. OBSERVATIONS ON AN EMERGING CULTURE.....	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	85
APPENDIX	
1. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS .....	89
2. INTERVIEW SUBJECTS.....	90
3. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	91
4. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REGISTER CITIZEN STAFF.....	107
5. REGISTER CITIZEN DOCUMENTS.....	109

# A CULTURE OF AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT IN THE NEWS INDUSTRY

Joy Mayer

Dr. Yong Volz, thesis supervisor

## ABSTRACT

This research examines the concept of audience engagement in journalism, and the changing nature of the relationship between journalists and their audiences. It uses the theoretical framework of newsroom sociology and organizational culture to explore how journalists are incorporating new audience-focused values into their work.

The researcher employed in-depth interviews with 29 journalists, a case study of one newsroom undergoing bold experiments, and a national survey of daily newspaper editors to attain a broad look at how journalists in different situations are finding ways to get audiences more involved in their journalism. The research identified three major categories of audience engagement: community outreach, conversation and collaboration. This study will expand our understanding of an emerging culture in newsrooms.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration	Page
1. Model of mutualization.....	41
2. Community access to Register Citizen archives.....	48
3. Listing of community classes.....	49
4. The table where news meetings are held .....	50
5. Directional signs at the Register Citizen main entrance.....	62



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Journalists spend less time than one might think considering the preferences of their audience. Research has shown that occupational and organizational considerations weigh more heavily than audience needs and interests (Shoemaker and Reese 1996, 116). In a time of great economic and cultural change and uncertainty, however, newsrooms across the United States are adjusting their processes and their products to allow for more interaction with their communities. Motivated in large part by declining readership and the realities of a continually fragmenting media market, professional journalists are working to build loyalty in their audiences. News outlets vying for audience attention are hoping to protect a shrinking market share and deliver information that is wanted and needed.

The U.S. newspaper industry is facing a crisis of declining revenues and readership. It has not experienced growth since 2006 (Doctor 2011). Print circulation continues to decline, and online readership is not growing fast enough to make up the difference (Edmonds 2011). Readers are increasingly getting their information online and on the go, as mobile and tablet news consumption grows.

Along with, and partially as a result of, the economic disruption have come technological and cultural disruptions. The Internet allows anyone with a computer and online connection to create and distribute media. Publishers sharing information online is equivalent, says NYU professor Clay Shirky, to

throwing in a printing press when distributing books (Shirky 2005). News publishers have spent a decade grappling with how best to survive and thrive in a world in which audience members have become co-creators, not just passive receivers. Through online comments with stories, social media and user-generated content, publishers have invited readers to participate in the news.

Digital tools also offer access to unprecedented information about what information is actually being consumed. Journalists have an opportunity to be responsive in ways that used to be impossible, to involve the audience in the news and in community problem-solving, to be in near-constant communication with their audience, and to distribute their content on platforms and in locations that will reach specific parts of that audience. Efforts like these are commonly referred to in journalism as audience engagement.

One way newsrooms are going about redefining their relationship with their audiences is by inviting the audience to be more involved, in shaping news coverage, suggesting ideas, helping gather the news and being in a dialogue with the journalists. Efforts to collaborate with audiences, especially around large community problems, were widespread before the Internet began to seriously threaten the print newspaper business model (Rosen 1999). They go back to press critic John Dewey, who said in the 1920s that newspapers should become vehicles for public education, debate and discussion rather than just reporting the events of the day (Rosenberry and St. John 2010, 2-3). The public journalism, or civic journalism, efforts of the late 1980s and 1990s were experiments in citizen-engaged coverage that aimed to facilitate citizen involvement in community problem-solving and involve citizens in news selection. Digital tools

offer many more ways to engage citizens in the news than were available during the early years of public journalism. In an article updating the concept of citizen involvement, Nip highlights new strategies such as online contact information for staff, interactive games, citizen blogs and online polls (Nip 2010, 14).

Opening up journalistic processes and products can involve an attitudinal shift on the part of individual journalists. They might be allowing more public opinion to shape what they cover, or soliciting content from users, or spending part of their time responding to ideas or comments from community members. They are increasingly finding ways to think of news as more of a conversation between journalist and community — as less one-to-many and more many-to-many. While the products they produce will change, it would be interesting to also study the changes in their attitudes and procedures — in how they talk about and practice journalism.

In the following chapters, I will address what journalists mean when they talk about audience engagement and how the prioritizing of engagement influences a newsroom's organizational culture. The literature review will examine the theoretical framework of organizational culture and newsroom sociology. It will also provide an overview of the concept of audience and an interdisciplinary introduction to the concept of engagement. Theoretically, this research will attempt to provide a link between previous studies on newsroom sociology and current industry practices involving audience engagement. Practically, it will contribute to the journalism industry's understanding of how those new practices manifest in the newsroom.

The results are based on three research methods. I relied most heavily on a series of in-depth interviews with journalists, and on a case study of a community newspaper in Connecticut. I also draw from a national survey of daily newspaper editors to paint a more complete picture of journalists' interactions with their audiences.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

To study how a newsroom's organizational culture influences and is influenced by a focus on audience engagement, it will be useful to have an understanding of what organizational culture is, and how it has previously been applied to newsrooms. It will also be important to understand how media professionals understand the concept of audience. Additionally, this review will address possible frameworks for the concept of engagement, and how those can be interpreted through the lens of journalism.

#### **Organizational culture**

The theoretical framework provided by organizational culture offers a useful way to study potential changes that occur when a newsroom focuses on audience engagement.

Culture can be described as a group's shared norms, values, beliefs and assumptions, along with the behavior and artifacts that express them. Those behaviors and artifacts include language used, the way work is done, the value and possibility of changing or innovating, relations between lower and higher ranking members and the nature of the environment (Harrison 1994, 30).

As applied to a group, then, organizational culture is:

“a pattern of basic assumptions — invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration — that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein 1985, 9).

Schein's three levels of analysis provide a useful framework for approaching the practical research on organizational culture. The first is artifacts and creations, in which the researcher studies factors such as the organization's physical and social environment, behavior patterns, technology, manners, dress and language. The second is values, in which the researcher assesses the organization's collective beliefs of how things ought to work, and what it collectively prioritizes. The third is the usually invisible basic assumptions, which include the organization's views of human nature, the culture's accepted relationship to its environment and the outlook it takes for granted (Schein 1985, 13-18).

Applied to a newsroom, the first level, artifacts and creations, would look at the physical layout of the newsroom, how formally colleagues address each other and their superiors, the hierarchical structure and the communication style. The second level, values, would look at the newsroom's mission statement and stated goals, written priorities for departments and individuals, the measure included on staff performance evaluations, and how ideas get expressed and evaluated.

The third level, basic assumptions, is the hardest to see and evaluate because it relies on the values and views that are not overtly expressed. Through observation and interviews, the researcher would evaluate what underlying assumptions and unwritten rules guide the work of the journalists. This level of analysis represents the part of the culture that can be the most difficult to change. But it is only when these underlying assumptions surface that it is possible to understand the culture of an organization (Schein 1985, 21).

Culture is formed when the intentions of individuals within a group come to be shared, consensually validated, and passed on to new members as correct (Schein 1985, 50). Culture is not static, however. One key factor in an organization's ability to adapt, change and innovate is its capacity for learning. Learning occurs both when an organization achieves what it intended to do and when it learns from missed opportunities. The depth of the learning process has been described in terms of single-loop and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning occurs when an organization changes its practices to produce desired results but does not also rethink its underlying values. Double-loop learning goes beyond simple changes to involve questioning fundamental assumptions and values. It represents a deeper commitment to change. (Argyris 1999, 68).

Organizations, though, don't perform actions. Individuals, acting as agents of an organization, produce actions and behaviors that lead to learning (Argyris 1999, 67). One key to significant organizational change, therefore, rests with the capacity of individuals within the organization to reflect on their work and make adjustments. Schön's "The Reflective Practitioner" provides a detailed look at the ways in which professionals across disciplines consciously and subconsciously assess their ideas and processes (Schön 1983). Adjustments to stated, clear practices are often simpler to undertake than what Schön refers to as "know-how," or aspects of the work that can be recognized but not necessarily described. Consider the way baseball pitchers adjust for a batter's weaknesses, or the way a tightrope walker moves. Spontaneous decisions in those cases are made based on learned theories and techniques and tacit understandings of complex situations (Schön 1983, 50). Practical competence often depends on

qualitative, spontaneous judgments that are based on having a “feel” for the job and a sense of how individual actions contribute to a collective experience (Schön 1983, 55-56).

Another aspect of thoughtful, reflective work is the ability to approach individual problems as unique situations, attending to the peculiarities and complexities of the situation at hand. Reflective professionals rely on long-held experience but continually question whether a specific situation should be handled the same way a previous situation was (Schön 1983, 129-138). Often those unique situations are best navigated with an eye toward experimentation and a sense that fluid situations are inherently experimental and require continual adjustments. “At the same time that the inquirer tries to shape the situation to his frame, he must hold himself open to the situation’s back-talk. He must be willing to enter into new confusions and uncertainties” (164).

Leadership is a key factor in the culture of an organization. Leaders communicate values in many ways, including what they pay attention to, how they react to crises, what behaviors they model, and who they recruit and promote (Schein 1985, 225-235). The impetus for widespread change often comes from the top, and the choices made in management positions play key roles in determining the success of the change efforts. One way to characterize the essential function of leadership is as “the manipulation of culture” (Schein 1985, 317), or the enabling of changes needed to ensure the health and survival of a group.

Other important cultural factors are the presence of a common mission and how well it is articulated; a consensus on the means by which goals will be



reached; agreement on how peer relationships and authority problems will be navigated, and the criteria for systems for rewards and punishments (Schein 1985, 65-82). A body of research exists that examines the culture of newsrooms specifically, including how journalists and their organizations have traditionally gone about their daily work and adapted to industry and societal changes.

As with other industries, journalism involves its own shared customs, values and assumptions, and much work has been done to outline the work of journalists. As this research intends to evaluate the organizational culture of a newsroom through a specific issue, it will first be valuable to understand previous studies of newsroom routines, and of how journalism gets produced.

### **Newsroom routines and culture**

Journalism culture can be defined as the ideas and practices by which, both consciously and unconsciously, journalists legitimize and find meaning in their work. Hanitzsch found journalism culture to be articulated at three levels of analysis. At the cognitive level, they form the foundation on which news work takes place. At the evaluative level, they drive the professional worldviews and occupational ideologies of journalism. At the performance level, they materialize in the journalistic practices (Hanitzsch 2007, 35).

Journalists use patterned, routinized, repeated practices to do their jobs (Shoemaker 1996). The routines make it possible to do a large job — turning the events of the world into a news product — while minimizing risk of criticism or libel (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). A reliance on journalistic practices is especially useful, and has been repeatedly studied, in regards to how newsworthiness is

determined. Lists of news attributes commonly include: timeliness, proximity, importance, impact, interest, conflict, sensationalism, prominence and novelty (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, 25).

Those factors are up to the interpretation of individual journalists, but they are heavily influenced by those journalists' interpretations of newsroom norms. Newsroom socialization is a process by which individual journalists learn newsroom policies and preferences by trial and error, and through observation of what behavior and practices are rewarded (Breed 1997, 109). The camaraderie journalists feel with each other also contributes to the desire to conform to a set of standards and fit in with the rest of the newsroom (Breed 1997, 113). Journalists sometimes use a "moral vocabulary" to discuss their work, such as "good" or "bad" journalism, while implying that only "good" journalists can tell the difference (Ryfe 2009, 212). The sense of identity involved with being a journalist is often closely tied to routines, tasks and practices. Ryfe found in his newsroom ethnography that when a journalist was asked what a reporter is, for example, he described it based on the tasks involved in the job. And when asked to vary his practices, the journalist was likely to feel less like a "real" journalist (Ryfe 2009, 198). This particular study found that, when asked to change how they practiced journalism, a group of reporters rejected the changes and quickly felt lost.

Technology is often a driver of newsroom change — both internally, such as with the advent of email, and with more fundamental changes to the way news is delivered and shared. Internet-based news has been described as a

paradigm shift (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, 58), and in many cases is requiring journalists to rethink long-held practices and beliefs.

In writing about barriers to organizational change, Argyris discussed how individuals use defensive routines to prevent their own embarrassment or threat (Argyris 1993). Some reasons people react negatively to change are when they sense an accompanying loss of control, when they feel their security might be threatened and when they see the change as increasing their workload (Sylvie and Witherspoon 2002, 36-41).

Adapting a set of newsroom standards is not easy. Newspaper journalists in particular have been described as having a “culture of risk avoidance” and being “mired in the muck of tradition” (Sylvie and Witherspoon 2002, 7). In a study of newsroom resocialization, Singer (Singer 2004, 841) looked at how being a journalist factored into the identity of individuals in the newsroom, and how news itself can be thought of as a social construction. When asked to change, journalists often responded as if personally threatened. Singer’s research also found that routines established in traditional print-based organizations remained a strong force as online production was included. Journalists were found to be skeptical about motivations for change. They expressed a strong desire to keep the quality of their journalism as a more important goal than business concerns. That suspicion of motivation was also found in a four-year study of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Gade and Perry 2003). As the journalism industry grapples with a changing media marketplace, journalists’ concepts of and attention to audience will grow ever more important.

In studying the life of one newsroom, this research will focus on the journalists' attitudes toward their community members, and whether an expectation of more audience interaction has changed the way the journalists do their jobs. It will therefore be useful to understand how interpretation of and allowance for audience preferences have been addressed in other newsroom studies.

### **Audience**

The media industry serves what has been called a dual-product marketplace, serving two distinct but related products to two distinct groups of consumers. The primary product is commonly thought of as the media content, made for audience consumption. There is not typically a market transaction made with the audience, however. The transaction occurs when advertisers pay the media companies to share their ads with the media audiences, in an effort to reach potential customers (Napoli 2003, 2). The audience is therefore both a market and a product (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, 78). Journalists seek audiences for their work because of the gratification involved in information consumption, but also because larger audiences lead to greater economic success. Journalists who don't deliver on what audiences desire have less to offer advertisers.

The process of buying and selling audiences, and therefore the economic model for most journalism, is facing significant challenges because of the increasing fragmentation of the media environment and increased audience autonomy (Napoli 2003, 135). Fragmentation refers to the increase in small, homogenous audience segments, which require new approaches by journalists

and advertisers. Audience autonomy refers to the control individuals have over what, when and how they consume media. With more media options, audience attention is harder to get and keep, and the capacity for and expectation of content that appeals to a narrow audience segment are increasing. Transaction costs are also rising, because reaching people with journalistic content or advertising requires more customization of message and delivery (Napoli 2003, 139).

To share specific news content or advertising with specific audiences requires sophisticated audience knowledge, but gaining that knowledge is not simple, and it is not always prioritized by newsrooms. Some “market-driven” news organizations are focused on identifying and meeting customers’ and potential customers’ wants and needs (Beam 2003, 369). These organizations are admired by some who argue their approach is essential to long-term survival, and derided by others who see it as audience pandering that undermines journalists’ social responsibilities (370).

Other studies have found, however, that many journalists rely on generalizations and presumptions when conceiving of their audiences. One case study revealed that editors satisfied their “audience hunger” through chance encounters with strangers, telephone calls and letters from readers, and their own social circles (Sumpter 2000, 338). They had a mental image of socially constructed readers — an image that often resembled the interests and characteristics of the newsroom staff. They also consulted with one another about news coverage, believing in many cases that their interests mirrored that of their audiences. In actuality, individual journalists have traditionally had little

exposure to their audience (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, 52). Gans wrote that after assuming that journalists took the audience directly into account, he was surprised to find they had little actual knowledge about their audience and actually rejected feedback from it (Gans 2004, 230).

As requirements for audience information grow more intense, however, so do the speed and sophistication of data reporting tools and timeliness. Whereas newsrooms used to rely on monthly TV ratings, newspaper circulation trends and periodic focus groups for information on audience preferences and market share (Napoli 2004, 157), online news offers real-time web analytics. Newsrooms can know how many people consumed each specific piece of content. One issue raised by access to that information, however, is what the journalists plan to do with it. Gans found that editors felt audience members were not capable of determining what information they really needed (Gans 2004). Other studies have also determined that journalists generally ignore or reject market research (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, 53). Communication with audience can be more personalized now, with the publication of reporter email addresses and the accessibility of story comment sections. The standard criteria for determining newsworthiness can expand to include direct input from audience. But will journalists embrace the opportunity for more audience communication and feedback?

## **Engagement**

Involving the audience in the news, commonly referred to in a general sense as “audience engagement,” is accepted as standard practice for journalists.

The book “The Elements of Journalism” includes on its list of basic tenets: loyalty to citizens, providing a place for public criticism, and the need for citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007). Those basic functions of the press imply an audience-centered approach to news, and an acceptance that making news is not done in a vacuum. In practice, however, the spectrum of beliefs and practices that fall under the “engagement” umbrella, however, is so broad as to be unwieldy. “Engagement,” as both a term and a concept, appears across many disciplines, and it is useful to investigate how the concept of involvement, in business and in more mission-driven work, is studied in other fields.

In the fields of marketing and advertising, “engagement” is frequently used to refer to customer attention or interest, and how to keep customers coming back (Black 2010). Some research makes connections between sponsorship or marketing efforts and “engagement,” measuring consumers’ involvement in the brand, attitude toward the brand or recall of a campaign. (Harvey 2006).

Businesses also use “engagement” when referring to customer service. Corporations like Dell give customers a voice by using social media to listen to feedback, and make the customers feel heard by assigning employees to participate in the online discussions with customers (Crawford 2009).

“Engagement” as a kind of listening translates to civic pursuits as well. Politicians are seen to be authentically engaged with their communities when they participate in dialogue rather than just spreading their message with one-way communication (Crawford 2009). And the field of civic activism uses “engagement” to mean involvement or participation in activities, which can

contribute to individuals' sense of social identity and overall civic engagement (Kotilainen and Rantala 2009, 662). A study on grassroots community organizing addressed the importance of relationships in social change. Forming connections with other people helps participants to feel more engaged, and to understand how they fit into their various social systems (Christens 2010). An anthropological look at community-based problem solving shows how rallying community action, or engagement, around an issue can lead to collaborative strategizing and sustainable change (Chaiken et al, 2009). The concept of a ladder of participation, or ladder of engagement, is used in civic engagement work, and also among nonprofits, as a model for increasing involvement. Nudging participants along the ladder means moving them from passive, simple involvement to high levels of commitment and difficulty (Arnstein 1969). For journalists, that concept can apply by thinking of passive readers as people who might then share a story, comment on a story or submit a news tip (Kanter 2008).

Psychological research addresses different forms of emotional engagement. One study on engagement in education (Suarez-Orozco et al, 2010) used a three-tiered approach to look at the degree to which students were connected to what was going on in their classes. Cognitive engagement represented the degree to which the students were engrossed and intellectually involved in what they were learning. Relational engagement was described as the extent to which students felt connected to their teachers and peers. And behavioral engagement reflected their participation and efforts.



Journalists are joined by professionals in other disciplines in looking at turning a formerly passive experience, such as reading the news, into a more active one through audience involvement and collaboration. One example is found in the world of museums, where bold experimentation is occurring to “make cultural institutions more dynamic, relevant, essential places” (Simon 2010) in an effort to reconnect with the public and demonstrate the value of the institution.

Embracing the more active role of the audience is increasingly important in the media marketplace because content creation tools are in the hands of any reader who wants them. Through social media such as blogging, the digital revolution puts the tools of production and distribution in the hands of the people formerly known as the audience (Rosen 2010). The audience is capable of collaborating in their media consumption, and they’re increasingly expecting to as well.

Two long-held journalistic notions should be discussed as factors in current journalists’ attitudes about community engagement: a goal of objectivity and a disdain for public relations work.

Objectivity, often held up as an ideal approach to journalism, involves taking “a detached, unbiased, impersonal” approach to news gathering and writing (Tuchman 1972). Community engagement work, however, often involves the willingness to step out from behind the news to talk to readers, and the injection of personality and voice into an otherwise faceless news brand.

Professional journalists are often trained to stay separate from what they cover,

and to remain detached from their subjects. That notion can sometimes be in conflict with what engagement proponents suggest.

An additional tension is prevalent in journalists' attitudes toward engagement work when it involves finding and reaching the audience. Sharing content on social media, running contests to increase readership and handing fliers out around town are all tactics being used by journalists to ensure that the people who most want and need specific content will find it. To some journalists, that work sounds like marketing or public relations, and journalistic disdain or hostility toward public relations professionals goes back to the end of World War I (DeLorme 100). Journalistic conceptions and attitudes in this area can make them less open to strategies being suggested in the name of community engagement.

As the concept of engagement in online journalism becomes more widespread, research will be useful to study how and why it succeeds, how it is interpreted by audiences, whether it contributes to a news organization's financial health, whether it improves the community's perception of the news organization and, in the case of this study, whether it changes the journalists themselves and how they do their jobs. So far, little research has been done in these areas. This study will address how journalists think and talk about audience engagement. It will also look at one newsroom's focus on audience engagement, and whether those efforts have changed the way journalism is discussed and practiced. For that case study, therefore, engagement will be defined by the efforts of that newsroom to interact with the audience in the

newsroom's physical space, to encourage audience input in newsroom decision-making, and to provide training as a service to the community.

### **What won't be studied**

This research will address engagement as defined by individual journalists working in the area of audience participation. It will also focus on the culture of one newsroom. The changes brought to a newsroom with a focus on audience engagement are many, not the least of which is a changing product. When newsrooms focus on audience engagement, they have in mind concrete changes in the news they produce. Perhaps they want to publish more community voices, or to improve their reach in underserved neighborhoods. Perhaps they want their journalists to be in more regular conversation with community members, or to attract new readers. Using the theoretical framework of organizational culture to assess a newsroom's changes will not address changes in product. It will also not involve audience members' perceptions of the changes, and therefore will not set out to determine whether the engagement efforts have been successful.

## Chapter 3

### Methods

The culture of a news organization has been found to significantly influence the actions of its employees. Innovative companies create opportunities for fresh thinking across organizational boundaries, and most organizational development efforts are attempts to change an organization's culture and customs (Gade and Perry 2003). In the case of a newsroom that is attempting to change dramatically with a focus on audience engagement, this study will look at how the changes are affecting the newsroom's culture.

Engagement with audience is something most journalists would claim to believe is a good idea. Many would say that they're practicing it in their own journalism. In this study, I ask journalists about their engagement routines and also observe them on the job, to see how what they say they're doing relates to what they're actually doing. I also ask questions of newsroom managers and the journalists who report to them, to determine how the values espoused by the leadership, and the routines in place in the newsroom, affect individual journalists' actions and priorities.

This research relies most heavily on two sets of data. Through a series of in-depth interviews with journalists, I examine the concept of audience engagement in journalism. The journalists interviewed represent journalists doing hands-on work in engagement. Using a case study of one newsroom, I then examine how an extreme focus on audience influences a newsroom's culture and values. The case study includes perspectives from working journalists as well as newsroom

managers. A third method, a national survey of newspaper editors, is also used to further broaden our understanding of the concept of audience engagement. The survey was administered to people in management positions at daily newspapers across the country.

### **Interviews**

To answer the question of what audience engagement means to journalists, I draw from a series of interviews I did while a fellow at the Reynolds Journalism Institute. Between September 2010 and April 2011, I interviewed 29 journalists. The interviews were conducted over the phone or using video chat. The journalists represented a purposive sample, selected based on the work they were doing in audience engagement. I used snowball recruitment to continually broaden the range of interviewees. They worked at a variety of organizations, from small startups to public radio to regional newspaper to national wire service.

I asked questions about the mission of their organizations, their relationships with their communities, their interaction with individual users, and their daily routines. I also asked for specific examples of projects they thought represented their work in audience engagement and how they judged the success of those projects.

### **National survey**

This study will also draw from the results of a national survey of daily newspaper editors. In March, April and May of 2011, the Center for Advanced

Social Research at the Missouri School of Journalism administered a survey I helped design. CASR conducted a telephone survey of 529 managing editors, executive editors, and editors of daily community newspapers with a circulation of 100,000 or less, drawn from the database of the American Society of News Editors. The survey asked the editors about the concept and practice of audience engagement, how important they felt specific engagement strategies were, and what they were doing in their own newsrooms (Fleming 2011). The results of this survey offer a useful snapshot of general industry perspectives on audience engagement, in the form of both the statistical data and the open-ended responses offered by participants.

### **Case study**

Case studies are not intended to study an organization in its entirety. They are ideal, rather for examining a particular issue or feature (Noor 2008). Case studies examine phenomena in their own context rather than in isolation. They allow for in-depth study of a complex situation and rely on multiple sources of triangulating evidence. (Yin 2009). Case studies allow researchers to treat the case holistically rather than isolating variables (Platt 1992) and also deal largely with the nuance of how and why things happen (Noor 2008). In the case of intrinsic case studies, the case is selected because it itself is the thing most worthy of study. In instrumental case studies, the case is chosen because it can help shed light on a larger research question. And when multiple case studies are needed to paint a complete picture, the combined research is known as collective case

study (Stake 1995, 3). This research is an example of an instrumental case study, looking at one newsroom.

### **Case selection**

In doing case studies, the researcher must determine whether to study cases that are unique or typical. One consideration is maximizing what can be learned, investigating which cases are likely to lead to understandings, assertions, and perhaps even generalizations (Stake 1995, 4). Other factors are ease of access, willing sources, and the uniqueness of the case.

In the case of engagement efforts, studying a typical newsroom that has not made bold changes would be unlikely to produce interesting results. The changes would be difficult to identify, and even more difficult to tie specifically to audience engagement. The focus of this study, therefore, will be a newsroom that has gained unique national attention for its engagement efforts.

The Register Citizen in Torrington, Connecticut, was in 2011 named to Editor and Publisher's "10 Who Do It Right" list because of its community-focused innovation (Journal Register Company). It also received an Innovator of the Month award from Associated Press Managing Editors in January 2011 (Associated Press Managing Editors).

The Register Citizen is part of the Journal Register Company, which runs more than 350 print and online products in 10 states, according to the company's website. The company's CEO is John Paton, who is credited with leading the company away from bankruptcy, for which it filed in February 2009, and toward innovation (Kirchner 2011). His company has an advisory board that includes big

names in the future-of-journalism landscape: Emily Bell, director of the Tow Center of Digital Journalism at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism; Jay Rosen, media critic and professor at New York University; and Jeff Jarvis, author and director of interactive journalism at the City University of New York's Graduate School of Journalism. The Torrington newspaper is leading the way with a digital-first, print-last strategy, a new newsroom that invites the community into the journalism, and new processes and routines that are designed to change a traditional culture.

Paton's investment in the digital-first strategy is the result of what he calls a broken newspaper business model. He has attempted to turn the focus of his company to the future, rather than trying to recapture a past that is gone for good. On the business side, he has attempted to cut many of the high costs associated with legacy print newspapers and drastically increase digital revenue. On the editorial side, he has focused on encouraging innovation, putting digital tools and strategies in the hands of the staff, harnessing the knowledge of the community to help improve the product, and, in Torrington, literally inviting the community into the physical newsroom (Paton 2010).

But is it working? A few leaders, including the publisher and a community engagement editor, are widely quoted discussing the newsroom's efforts. It is interesting to study, however, whether the bold changes in philosophy have penetrated the newsroom, and if the changes represent leadership's priorities or changes in the overall culture.

Though it focuses on one community newsroom, this research should provide useful information for the newspaper industry at large. The Register



Citizen is widely recognized to be ahead of the rest of the industry in its engagement efforts, and other newsrooms will surely follow its lead. They, too, will grapple with how to incorporate a focus on audience into daily routines, and with what effect that focus will or won't have on the culture of the newsroom. Some lessons learned at this Connecticut newsroom are situation-specific, or especially generalizable to small, community papers. Other findings have implications for the industry overall.

### **Data gathering**

Stake suggests these basic types of data gathering in a case study: observation, description of contexts, interview, and document review. This section will serve as an overview of those types, and an explanation of how they have been used in this study.

The goal with observation is to provide a relatively incontestable description of a situation, to provide a basis for further analysis. The situation should tell its own story, with the researcher refraining as much as possible from interpretation (Stake 1995, 62). Fieldwork is an opportunity for the researcher to share firsthand observations about the environment, language, relationships and problems of a specific group of people. The culture of a group of people is a slippery concept — one that is intangible, and constantly changing. It is made visible only through how it is represented (Van Maanen 1988, 3). For this research, I visited the Connecticut newsroom for participant observation, which included news budget meetings, interactions between staff members and interactions with the community. I listened specifically for evidence of

journalists' attitudes toward the community and toward management-driven changes, and for the language used and attitude conveyed when discussing how journalism is practiced. I took notes and made audio recordings of meetings and interviews. The Register Citizen streams its daily news meetings on the Internet, which also provided me with a long-distance window into newsroom discussions and priorities.

The description of contexts centers around the physical space that is being examined. In the case of the Register Citizen, the new newsroom building, which the staff moved into in 2010, was chosen intentionally to be symbolic of a more open, transparent operation. I described the space and how it is used, and collected photographic evidence.

Interviews formed the basis for learning about individuals' sense of reality, and how they combined to form an organization (Stake 1995, 64). Especially when painting a picture of the culture of an organization, insight into how individuals see the group and their role in it was essential. For this study, informal interviews were conducted as preparation for the newsroom observation, over the phone and using video conferencing. While on site, I conducted semi-structured interviews with key newsroom staff, including the publisher, editor, managing editor, engagement editor, and reporters. The interview format allowed for follow-up questions that seemed appropriate. I took notes during all interviews, and some were also recorded, with the subjects' permission. All subjects we asked if they would prefer their comments to remain anonymous, and all declined.

In addition to basic questions about their work history and newsroom duties and roles, the journalists were asked questions in these categories about newsroom practice and routines, newsroom values and culture, and their conceptions of their audience.

The last category of data gathered was documents. Most case studies find the need for some examination of articles, meeting notes or correspondence (Stake 1995, 68). In this study, I had the benefit of previous media interviews with newsroom leadership, along with leaders' own writings about newsroom changes.

## Chapter 4

### Defining Audience Engagement

A new culture of audience-focused journalism is emerging. Newsrooms across the United States are adjusting their routines and their journalistic products to allow for more interaction with their communities. This research looks at what journalists mean when they talk about audience engagement, and how the prioritizing of engagement influences a newsroom's organizational culture. In this chapter, I will look first at how journalists talk about the significance of audience engagement, then at the kinds of strategies they've developed to engage their audiences.

Findings in this chapter are based primarily on a series of 29 interviews I conducted between September 2010 and April 2011. I talked to journalists about why engagement is important and what duties and projects it encompasses. The journalists I interviewed had jobs that involved aggressively reaching out to their communities. The interviewees ranged from editors of local, startup news organizations to editors in national newsrooms. Their answers varied widely and often correlated with the missions of their specific publications. For example, some mission-driven newsrooms reported being oriented toward solving community problems and being in touch with local issues. In contrast, some commercial newsrooms reported activities focused on driving traffic to their websites and encouraging more pageviews and user loyalty.

It is important to note, however, that the journalists I chose to interview were selected because of their work in audience engagement. Their perspectives

should therefore not be seen as representative of the industry as a whole, but instead as a sampling of a growing movement to further involve the audience in the journalism.

Three basic reasons were offered in answer to the question of why journalists should embrace this new culture.

One, it's good for the journalism. A more responsive, plugged in newsroom makes for more relevant stories. As Andy Carvin, senior strategist at National Public Radio, said about social media: "It's a way of furthering our mission to create a more informed public. It's a way to empower the people who love us and listen to the people who don't." National Public Radio is a non-profit radio network with a mission statement that includes creating "a more informed public — one challenged and invigorated by a deeper understanding and appreciation of events, ideas and cultures." Carvin describes his job in a way that is consistent with the mission of his organization, and his projects and strategies are designed to enhance that mission.

Another outlook on the importance of audience engagement was shared by Lauren McCullough, news engagement manager for the Associated Press in New York. She said her team's strategy involved personalizing the AP's brand, both through its flagship national social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter, and also by encouraging its network of 3,000 journalists around the world to share more of themselves and develop deeper relationships with their local communities. One of their goals is that more interaction with readers will help them be more responsive to readers' interests and needs.

Two, it's good for the community. Local journalism should reflect community life, respond to actual needs and work to make the community better. Denise Cheng of the participatory journalism site The Rapidian said one goal of journalism should be to provide people with information they need to make well-reasoned civic decisions. An audience-focused newsroom can better respond to information needs. John Temple, editor of the Civil Beat in Honolulu, said the goal of his newsroom is to behave as a "trusted friend" of the community, sharing more of themselves personally, being in continual conversation with readers and speaking up for what's best for the community.

Three, it's good for business. James Janega of the Chicago Tribune said engagement with readers is the right thing to do anyway, but it's also necessary to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when readers have so many news options. For the bottom line to flourish, a connection with readers is necessary.

That notion was supported by a telephone survey of 529 managing editors, executive editors, and editors of daily community newspapers in March, April and May of 2011. The Center for Advanced Social Research at the Missouri School of Journalism administered a survey I helped design. CASR surveyed 529 editors of daily newspapers with a circulation of 100,000 or less, and asked them about the concept and practice of audience engagement (Fleming 2011). Editors reported that they see engagement as part of good business. Eighty-six percent said their newsrooms were having conversations about how to make the news more social or participatory. In the open-ended responses, they said connecting with and listening to their communities is vital to their newspapers' survival, and

their answers were dominated by a focus on business needs, rather than editorial or community interests.

In the next section, I will summarize the duties and strategies journalists shared with me that they considered to be a part of audience engagement. I did not define for them what that meant but instead asked them to describe for me how they interpreted engagement and what they were doing, both short term and long term, that they considered to be a form of engagement. The duties and strategies they shared fit into three categories: outreach, conversation and collaboration.

### **Outreach**

Several strategies journalists shared involve reaching out into the community, rather than expecting the community to come to you. That refers to both journalist and content. Journalists should themselves be out in the community more, and should also be identifying ways to take their content out in the community, rather than waiting for readers to come to them.

The idea of taking content to niche audiences reflects an understanding that, as the media market becomes more diverse and readers get their news from more sources, journalists cannot assume their content will be found. Even dedicated readers who actively seek content on a specific subject might not monitor all possible sources every day. The “unbundling” of the media market (Kovach 2010) means each story has to justify itself and find its own audience. It can't rely on being part of a trusted brand. Readers graze several brands, and they count on Internet searches to bring them the content they seek. Community

outreach and audience seeking, therefore, need to happen not just for the entire publication but also for individual stories. Community outreach, then, involves helping users find the content they're most interested in and inviting them to connect with it.

Grant Barrett, engagement editor for the Voice of San Diego, said he considers it his job to aggressively seek and connect with niche audiences, especially for important stories. He figures out how to get stories into communities that want and need them — not every story, but those that are especially significant or interesting. "We are carefully finding individuals and groups who, if they did not hear about these stories, would be worse off for it," Barrett wrote to me in an email. "We are hunting for change toward goodness, quality and enlightenment." If journalists are creating stories that they think will help make their communities better, as Barrett believes they are, they should consider it part of their job to make sure people see those stories.

An example from the Voice of San Diego is a six-month project on the life of a refugee who was deaf and unable to speak. Barrett and his staff went beyond merely investigating, writing and publishing the project and spent time working to ensure that people who would be most interested and affected found the piece. They reached out to refugee and refugee rights groups, the deaf community, and the public services community with invitations to read and share the project.

California Watch is an investigative news organization that says in its mission statement "We place a major emphasis on solution-oriented reporting intended to have an impact on the quality of life for Californians and our



communities.” With a focus on finding solutions to problems, it makes sense that taking those solutions directly to affected communities would be part of the newsroom’s strategy. Ashley Alvarado, California Watch’s public engagement manager, considers it part of her job to make sure the newsroom’s stories are easily understandable, get translated into all appropriate languages, and are easy to find and act on.

In one example, reporters investigated unsafe levels of lead in jewelry. After the investigative project published, Alvarado and her colleagues held free lead screenings around the state. The newsroom staff dedicated their time and money to make it easy for people to see if their jewelry was safe. They viewed that as a natural and needed extension of their journalism.

Another California Watch project investigated the seismic safety of the state’s public schools. As they identified who in the state most would benefit from their investigation, they talked about the children who attend public schools. Part of their plan for covering the issue therefore included publishing an educational coloring book about earthquake preparedness. Visuals paired with words that kids could understand explained complex issues and provided information they’d need in an emergency. The books were translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese. The staff had a particular readership in mind, and it went to extreme measures to get important information to the right people. They would not have considered their job done if they had not invested in this form of outreach.

Another form of community outreach involves individual journalists being more accessible and personal. Often that takes the form of being active and visible in the community on behalf of the brand they represent.

The Chicago Tribune hosts community events and panel discussions, often based on a topic the staff senses the community is interested in. James Janega is the manager of Trib Nation, the Tribune's umbrella department for outreach efforts. He said that his job is to build bridges between the newsroom and its communities, and that people who attend the Tribune's events feel a connection with and an investment in the newspaper. He wants community members to get to know individual journalists, so that when they think of the Tribune, they think of faces, not a brand. The Tribune also hosts Chicago Live!, a weekly stage and radio show done in partnership with The Second City comedy troupe. The shows combine humor and journalistic impact. They aim to capture the Chicago experience, and the newspaper sees the live events as a means of publication. The goal is for readers to feel a connection with the Tribune, and Janega wants to offer plenty of possible ways for that to happen.

Another, much smaller news organization focusing on in-person events and connections is the Civil Beat in Honolulu, which launched in early 2010. The Civil Beat calls their reporters "reporter/hosts," and part of their job is to build relationships with readers, both in person and through their reporting. The Civil Beat's business model is built on membership, and accountability to individual readers is therefore key to survival.

Editor John Temple said his reporters share information about themselves and their observations, writing about their personal experiences and about how

they practice journalism. They also host conversations around their coverage area, both online and in person. The reporters/hosts participate in online discussion forums around their beats, answering questions, clearing up misconceptions and providing context. They also host what the Civil Beat calls “beat-ups,” which are in-person discussions on a specific topic area. Key community members are invited to participate, and it’s the job of the journalist to use the reporting as a jumping off point for a community conversation. Taking key civic issues out into the community is an example of community outreach.

An even more personal strategy that falls into the outreach category is transparency on the part of individual journalists. To encourage readers to make connections with individuals rather than brands, some news organizations are encouraging or requiring journalists to post information about themselves online, including their professional background and experience but also sometimes expanding to hometowns, family, hobbies, community involvement and political beliefs.

New York University professor Jay Rosen writes about what he calls the “View from Nowhere” that American journalists take in an attempt to appear impartial or unbiased (Rosen 2010). He recommends that journalists experiment with disclosing and sharing personal information, letting readers know where they’re coming from. Many websites have adopted this strategy. One particularly widespread example is AOL’s Patch. Each of the hundreds of Patch editors, who live and work in the communities they cover, is required to include a bio of themselves.

One particularly specific example is the Wall Street Journal's All Things D website, which covers technology and media. Co-Executive Editor Kara Swisher's disclosure statement includes where her spouse works, her views on a controversial social issue, and information about her financial holdings. In sharing so much personal information, journalists hope to build trust and connection in their community and with individual readers.

### **Conversation**

The second broad category of engagement is conversation. Almost every journalist I interviewed discussed finding ways to talk to and listen to the community, in hopes of being more accessible, more responsive and more relevant.

Methods for digitally talking and listening are changing and expanding rapidly, as more Americans use social media as part of their everyday lives. News organizations large and small are using social media to broadcast their content, to build a loyal following, and to find sources.

The Associated Press is using Twitter and Facebook to broadcast as brand, and they're also encouraging their thousands of journalists to talk directly to and share content with their readers using social media, said Lauren McCullough, manager of social networks and news engagement for the AP. McCullough and her team were also responsible for reporting to other editors about what was being discussed online. When Twitter "mentions" of specific topics or issues went up, editors might take that into account when assigning stories. Digital tools can make it easier to listen to or eavesdrop on a nation's conversations.

Twitter can also be used to convene conversations on specific issues or within specific communities. Andre Natta, publisher of The Terminal, a community news site in Birmingham, Ala., hosts Twitter conversations about issues important to Birmingham. Using the hashtag #bhamchat, he can announce what time an online chat will occur, then gather interested people together to talk about matters of community interest. That conversation is a way of staying in touch with a community, and the conversation itself is considered a form of journalism.

Steve Buttry considers engagement to be two-way communication — listening and reacting, not just broadcasting. Buttry now works in audience engagement for the Journal Register Company. When I interviewed him, he was director of a six-person community engagement team at TBD, a Washington D.C.-based news startup. Buttry said a meaningful, reciprocal relationship is key for true engagement. At TBD, he and his staff would monitor blogs and social media sites like YouTube and Twitter to see what their community was responding to, then adjust their coverage in order to be responsive. They set up email alerts based on google searches, so they would know when topics they were covering were mentioned online. They also used social media to share links to the newsroom's coverage, but the real value, Buttry said, was in listening.

Journalists also use social media to find sources. National Public Radio has almost two million Facebook fans, and the newsroom uses its Facebook page in part to identify people willing to be interviewed for stories. A journalist will post an idea for a story the newsroom is working on, and ask people to comment or send an email if they would be willing to share their own experiences. It's not

uncommon for a post to get more than 1,000 responses, from people sharing their experiences, opinions or questions. Andy Carvin, NPR's senior strategist who is involved in their social media efforts, said he considers engagement to be "any meaningful exchange" between the journalists and their users, or among the users themselves.

A meaningful exchange can lead to a greater connection to a topic and to a newsroom, said David Poulson of Greak Lakes Echo, a news project based at Michigan State University and charged with covering the environment of the Great Lakes. Poulson and his students try to make serious topics fun, and they use digital tools to generate interaction around sometimes dense topics. In one example, the site created a contest called the Great Lakes SmackDown, asking readers to vote for which invasive species was the most destructive. Poulson said he thinks news and information can have a unifying effect on a community, and he hoped making his variety of news more engaging would help form connections between people with common interests.

These efforts, of course, can take significant time and resources. Poulson has the advantage of a staff of students to assist him. Many of the editors in the spring Reynolds Journalism Institute survey expressed their concern about fitting engagement work into their already strapped and shrinking newsrooms. An additional strategic consideration is what kind of success makes the projects worth the effort. Poulson said he often gets less community participation in his interactive projects than he would like. His audience isn't large, and while his innovative engagement ideas might be worthy of study, he is not always successful in prompting his audience to interact with him.

Online comments are another common way to generate conversation and collect feedback and opinions from readers. Meg Pickard, head of digital engagement at The Guardian in London, said journalists in her newsroom are assigned what they call thread duty — the task of monitoring online comments. Sometimes the journalists join the conversation, and sometimes they use it to inform follow-up reporting. Even if they just listen, however, the time is seen as an important investment in community conversation and staying relevant.

Not all community conversation is productive, of course. Editors who moderate online comments are continually seeking ways to encourage more civil discourse (Thompson 2011). The journalists I interviewed said the value of online comments outweighs the risk of incivility and the time spent in moderation. But some newsrooms have experimented with turning off comments all together, disabling them on certain stories, or hiring outside moderators to take care of policing them (Ellis 2011).

Conversation can also be a goal with offline engagement strategies. The in-person panel discussions and events discussed in the section on community outreach were also mentioned by journalists as an important forum for listening to and responding to readers. Issuing an invitation to talk is standard practice for some newsrooms. Grant Barrett from the Voice of San Diego said his newsroom held monthly coffees and invited readers. Ashley Alvarado of California Watch joins other journalists from her newsroom in periodic Open Newsroom days, where journalists spend the day in specific coffee shops and other locations for the sole purpose of talking to readers in person.

## **Collaboration**

The third broad category of audience engagement encompasses the ways journalists and community members can work together to produce more accurate, representative and complete coverage.

Perhaps the most basic way to invite readers to help with the news product is inviting them to alert the newsroom if they see an error in a story. Many news sites allow for a story to be flagged if an error is spotted. Some newsrooms, such as the Washington Post, go a step further. They also ask readers who have noticed an error whether they'd be willing to be contacted for follow-up stories, offering a chance for the reader's expertise to benefit future reporting.

Asking for reader expertise is a form of what's known as crowdsourcing, or asking for help from a community or large group of people. Sometimes, expertise can come in the form of personal experience.

Twitter hashtags have been used to gather responses on a specific topic over time. The Washington Post on the ninth anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks asked its community to share where they were on that morning. Using the hashtag #wherewereyou, the Post was able to collect responses and tell a collective story.

When Chicago was hit by a massive snowstorm in February 2011, the Chicago Tribune set up a crowdsourced map inviting the community to share items such as updates on street plowing and reports of people who needed help shoveling snow. The journalists could not possibly have gathered facts like these,



or kept them up to date. But with the help of the community, more information was shared and the Tribune's collective snowstorm report was more complete.

When ProPublica reported on wrongful foreclosures, journalists asked their readers to share the experiences they'd had with their banks and mortgages. They used the information both to find sources with specific stories to tell, but also to get a broader picture of how people in general were affected.

The spirit of cooperation is a way of life at The Guardian. Editor Alan Rusbridger and his newsroom subscribe to a philosophy of mutualized interests being served. Journalists bring to the table expertise, skills, standards and a brand people trust. The community brings to the table diversity, expertise and on-the-ground experience that the journalists can't achieve without including them (Rusbridger 2010). Rusbridger has as a goal a more conversational, two-way and engaged style of journalism.

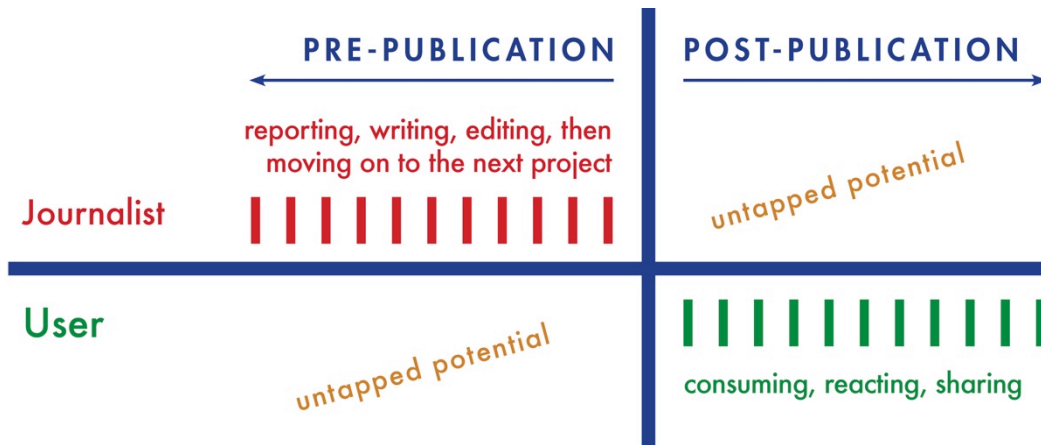


Illustration 1: Model of mutualization by Meg Pickard; drawing by Joy Mayer

This diagram (see Illustration 1), conceived by Meg Pickard, head of digital engagement at the Guardian, demonstrates where the potential lies for audience engagement. Traditionally, journalists report, write and produce stories. After sending the pieces on to publication, they go back to the beginning and start over with a new project. Their involvement with each story typically ends when it gets published. Conversely, the public gets involved in a story only after publication, to consume it and react to it. As a result, the journalists and the users don't find themselves in the same quadrant. Pickard said her view — one that has been adopted at the Guardian — is that the journalist has an obligation to stay involved in the content after it publishes by “raising the baby we birthed” — to clear up misconceptions, answer questions, and offer follow-up reporting. The community should be invited into the process before publication, to offer expertise, help shoulder the workload, suggest a direction for the reporting, or contribute content.

An example of the Guardian's approach can be found in a crowdsourced document project, when the newspaper invited readers to help sift through almost half a million pages of Member of Parliament expense reports. More than 28,000 readers participated in the project and reviewed far more documents than the journalists could have on their own. A similar approach was taken by several news organizations, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, ProPublica and msnbd.com, when the state of Alaska released emails from Sarah Palin's time as governor. They asked readers to help go through them and draw journalists' attention to anything that looked newsworthy.

Sometimes, collaboration in journalism can take the form of allowing readers to tell their own stories, either with the help of journalists or completely on their own. When the Washington Post set out to cover the tragic story of a young mother who died after giving birth, they used the woman's Facebook posts, with permission from her family, to weave together a chronological look at how her story unfolded. Using her own words as a window into her experience was a powerful alternative to hearing from only the reporter and the people he interviewed.

And finally, the most direct form of collaborative journalism might be what is commonly referred to as citizen journalism or user-generated content: publishing stories directly from the community. Some sites, like Examiner.com and The Rapidian, exist specifically for citizen journalism. Others, such as Bakotopia, CNN's iReport, and MyMissourian here at the University of Missouri, are subsets of larger news organizations. Most citizen journalism products are online only. Some, such as Neighborsgo, published by the Dallas Morning News, have print components. Most have as a goal to diversify the perspectives represented, to cover more than professional journalists could cover on their own and to more comprehensively reflect the communities they cover.

### **Implications**

These strategies and categories indicate that audience engagement as a concept is increasingly a part of traditional journalism. How journalists interpret the concept, however, varies significantly on the part of individual newsrooms and individual journalists.

The journalists I interviewed were selected because of their work in the area of audience engagement. They shared different views of what that concept means in their own newsrooms, but they unanimously agreed that journalism should be more focused on community. They shared strategies that demonstrated how they were taking their journalism out into their communities, how they were attempting to be in continual conversation with their communities, and how they were striving to make their journalism more collaborative. Their perspectives, however, do not represent views in the industry at large.

In contrast, the editors interviewed for the survey of daily newspaper editors expressed a general acknowledgement that audience engagement is important but a lack of knowledge about what they could mean for their newsrooms. They also demonstrated that they are not taking advantage of some basic tools for conversation and collaboration. For example, 84 percent said they used social media to interact with their audience, but only 49 percent said social media was used very often or often to listen to what the audience was saying, rather than just distribute content. Regression analysis showed that larger circulation papers were more likely to do so, as were younger and less experienced editors.

The culture of journalism is becoming more receptive to experiments with audience engagement in its many forms, and bold experiments are generally being celebrated. Another question I asked the journalists I interviewed, however, is how they define success. What makes a day at a coffee shop worth the time and effort? Is the success of a Twitter chat measured solely by the

number of participants? How is a citizen journalism website assessed? Several of the most experimental journalists I interviewed worked in newsrooms that had made a commitment to audience engagement, and they said they were not yet being asked to answer for the resources dedicated to their projects. They were developing a culture of trial and error in their newsrooms, adjusting their idea of success and attempting to change the culture of their newsrooms. But they were often not being asked to demonstrate proof of success.

Those days will not last. In more typical newsrooms, such as those run by the 529 editors we surveyed, resources are scarce, and a true commitment to audience engagement will require evidence of a return on that investment.

The next chapter will take a look at one newsroom, and company, that has made a bold commitment to audience engagement.

## Chapter 5

### A Case Study of the Register Citizen

The last chapter looked at why journalists value audience engagement, and the kinds of strategies they consider to be part of that concept. This chapter will look at one newsroom's extreme engagement efforts and whether those efforts are affecting the organization's culture. Based on the literature review, the culture will be studied using Schein's three levels of analysis: artifacts, in which we will look at factors such as the physical environment and behavior patterns; values, in which we will assess the organization's priorities; and basic assumptions, in which we will look at the organization's unwritten guidelines and attitudes.

The focus of this chapter will be the steps taken by one newsroom, The Register Citizen in Torrington, Conn., to reshape its journalism, its relationship with its community, and its bottom line. The newspaper is remarkable in the boldness and scope of the changes it has undergone. It is also noteworthy because its newsroom staff size (15), circulation (about 8,000), and city (population 36,000) are typical. While many of the other high-profile audience engagement efforts have taken place in very large newsrooms or in small startups, the unprecedented changes in Torrington are demonstrating what can be possible at a more typical community newspaper. The company's digital-first approach encompasses many strategies. The findings in this chapter are the result of a case study of one newsroom and its efforts to be more focused on its audience.

## **The Newsroom Café project**

Matt DeRienzo, publisher of the Register Citizen, said he and Paton had early agreement about what needed to be done. And first on the list was getting the newsroom out of an old, falling-down building. The new space, they decided, should be symbolic of the newspaper's priorities.

In December 2010, the newspaper operations moved into a new building that was designed with transparency in mind. Combined with some online strategies, the Register Citizen offers a useful example of the engagement categories of outreach, conversation and collaboration put into practice. Some of the newsroom's strategies will be broken down here, according to our established categories of engagement.

### *Outreach*

The Register Citizen offers free access to its 120-year archives (see Illustration 2). The paper invested in a system that makes printing or emailing stories easy, and the newsroom makes its staff available to help visitors use it. During the time of my visit to the newsroom, the archives were the feature that attracted the most visitors, at about a dozen per day.



Illustration 2: Community access to Register Citizen archives

The newsroom also includes a community classroom, available at no charge for public meetings. The staff organizes and recruits teachers for classes and workshops offered on topics such as social media, genealogy, blogging and the First Amendment. The classes serve the mission of being a resource for the community and also bring foot traffic into the newsroom. The newsroom reports that the classes are popular with the community (see Illustration 3).



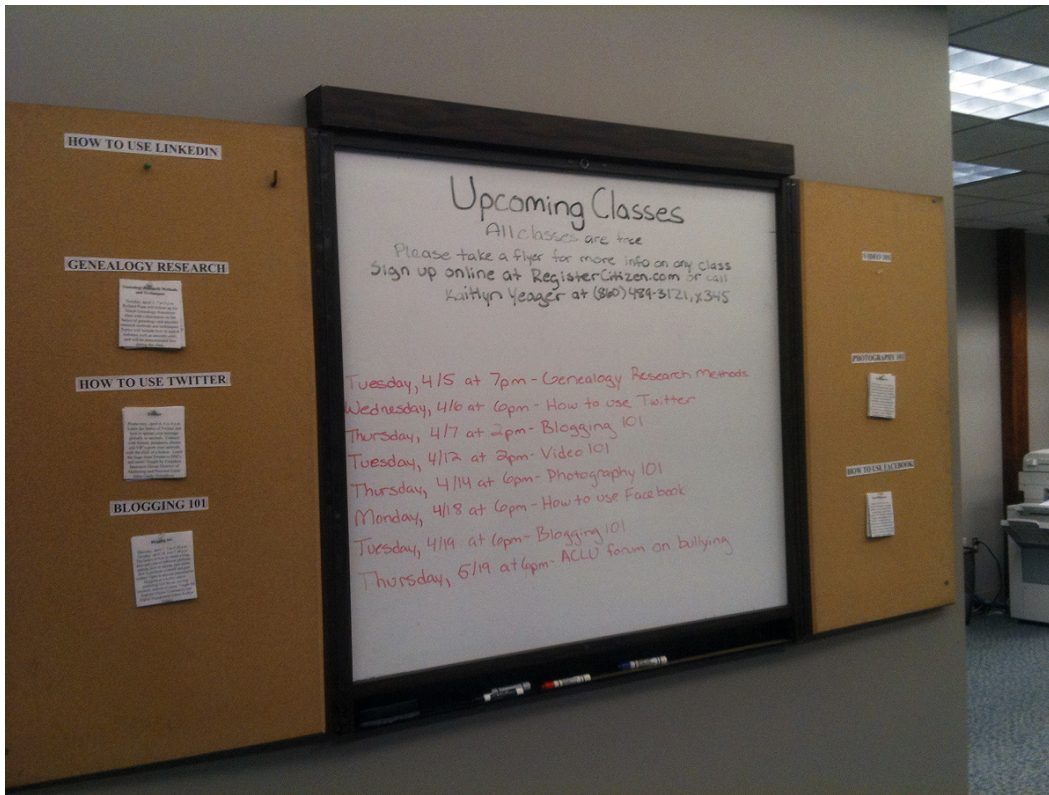


Illustration 3: Listing of community classes

### *Conversation*

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the Register Citizen newsroom is the lack of walls between the Newsroom Café and the newsroom, and the accompanying open invitation for the community to interact with the journalists. Anyone off the street can wander freely in the newsroom, strike up a conversation with the journalists or offer opinions about the news. That invitation includes the daily 4 p.m. news meetings, which are open to the public (see Illustration 4). They are also livestreamed online, along with a live chat conducted by the engagement editor. Community members are invited to offer questions, comments and ideas. Participation during my visit, the fourth month

of the experiment, was still low. A handful of people joined in the meeting online, and in person visitors were infrequent.



Illustration 4: The table where news meetings are held, between the Newsroom Café, to the left, and the newsroom, to the right.

Another newsroom practice rooted in a belief in conversation is a staff policy encouraging journalists to interact with readers in the comments sections of the website, moderating the conversations, removing inappropriate comments and generally being present and participatory.

## *Collaboration*

Next to the archive machine is what the Register Citizen calls a Community Media Lab, encouraging community members to blog, write their own stories, edit videos or work on their websites, with advice from the staff available. This physical resource reflects a commitment to local bloggers. A section of the paper's website is dedicated to local blogs, and a full-time curator on staff is responsible for, in part, sharing with readers the best of other content being created in the community.

The community is also invited to collaborate around accuracy in reporting. An online form at the end of every story invites readers to submit error reports, and also offers the opportunity for them to offer their expertise as sources for future stories.

DeRienzo said the fundamental goal with all the changes is better journalism, stemming from a more open, transparent relationship with the community. He acknowledged that he had a young, inexperienced staff, and that the newsroom had had credibility problems. The fact-check feature is designed to demonstrate that the newsroom will take responsibility for its errors, and to invite the community to help keep the staff accountable. The print-first model of journalism had meant that readers didn't know what was being worked on, and didn't have a chance to weigh in, until after publication. The physical layout of the newsroom is an attempt to mimic the more open nature of the Internet, with readers invited to contribute ideas, shape how stories come together, offer their expertise and get to know the journalists individually. It is also an attempt to

share its resources, such as the archives, in a more open way that benefits the community.

### **Newsroom staff changes**

Most of what has been written and celebrated about the Newsroom Café project has been from the perspective of the management — Paton on the corporate level and DeRienzo in Torrington. But this research set out to discover how individual journalists were perceiving and reacting to the changes, on a newsroom level. It will first be useful to talk about the structure and duties of the staff, then about how individual staff members viewed the changes.

When I visited the newsroom in April 2011, there were 15 journalists working in the newsroom: an editor, a managing editor, and thirteen other reporters and editors. I interviewed 10 journalists. Four were women, and six were men. The staff members were younger and less experienced than an average newsroom, and several reporters had been journalists for less than two years. Three of the people I interviewed, including the publisher and the managing editor, had more than 10 years of journalism experience. Of all the employees, one journalist's job had changed the most drastically. A young woman who had been a reporter was named Community Engagement Editor for the Register Citizen just before the move to the new building. She said her job is wide-ranging and is made up of many duties that weren't being done before, such as coordinating the artists of the month program, organizing community classes, helping readers who come to the Newsroom Café, and managing the live chat during news meetings.

A second employee had transitioned from being an early morning breaking news reporter to a job more focused on web reporting, comment moderation and social media. She reported spending some time helping community members in the Newsroom Café figure out how to use the microfilm machine. The rest of the staff had taken on new duties but had not been significantly reassigned. I interviewed eight of those 15 journalists about their perceptions of the newsroom changes, whether their routines and content had changed, and what they thought the newsroom was trying to accomplish.

### **Staff perceptions of the project's origins and priorities**

Several staff members reported only a vague understanding of the origins and goals of the Newsroom Café project. One reporter said journalists all over were starting to experiment with social media, and he knew his newsroom was taking community engagement further than anyone else. DeRienzo had told the staff about the changes, and had asked for their ideas as well, but he hadn't said who had conceived of the Newsroom Café. This reporter said DeRienzo first talked about the open newsroom concept in general, and he thought the idea for the café came later. He also said he didn't know much about Paton and didn't know if he was involved. Another reporter said that he didn't know the origin of the changes, but if he had to guess, he'd say they started with DeRienzo. He said it might have come from "higher up the food chain," but he wasn't sure. In addition, another said she guessed the plan for the open newsroom came "from the CEO, maybe? But I'm not the best one to ask."

Several staff members reflected on a staff meetings held in the new newsroom while it was still under construction. One editor said the staff sat in a circle on the floor, and Matt explained that when they moved in, they would not have a wall around them but would be out in the open. He spent time describing what the new newsroom would look like and how it would function. In general, that editor described the newsroom efforts as carrying out “Matt’s insight and Matt’s vision of what he wants us to be.” The journalists reported that, except for that one staff meeting, newsroom changes had been communicated mostly over email.

The engagement editor said the staff’s relative youth and inexperience have helped it adapt, because the journalists’ routines and practices were still flexible. She said that she and many of the reporters had never worked in other newsrooms, so their concept of practicing journalism was being developed at the Register Citizen. She viewed new practices such as the live streamed news meetings and the open newsroom as examples of good management and common sense, and she said it was easy to forget that they are not commonplace in other newsrooms. Conversely, one of the most experienced journalists in the newsroom, said that the print product is actually still a dominant task. “We are all creatures of habit, and we fall back into print habit. The print still dominates, even though it’s regarded as something that we’re losing ground with.”

The two male reporters mentioned above both said that a primary goal of the changes has been to get more story ideas and feedback from readers. They both talked about online comments as a primary vehicle for both. An editor said

community foot traffic into the newsroom would make the paper more a part of the community, which would lead to more ideas and feedback as well.

### **Newsroom practices and routines**

I visited the newsroom four months after the move to the new building, looking for signs of how the daily job of doing journalism was evolving, and whether the culture of the newsroom seemed to reflect the changes in emphasis, structure and routine.

#### *Inviting the community into the physical space*

Almost all the journalists interviewed mentioned how different it was to have readers able to walk directly into the newsroom. Several expressed initial apprehension over whether that would affect productivity, and whether the interactions would be productive. One reporter said the newsroom had been concerned that readers would wander around stealing things, and that hasn't happened. He also said he had been afraid that the "comment bashers" who interact negatively (and anonymously) online would begin coming into the newsroom, and he's happy that hadn't happened. "The people who get the most attention online for criticizing us aren't going to show their face" in the newsroom, he said. He said he had had "one or two" visitors talk to him directly since the Newsroom Café opened.

Another reporter who had been with the paper just a few months said he didn't actually see the newsroom until he'd been hired. "I didn't realize it was going to be this open.... I thought it would be a separate community space and

work space, but it's not. It's completely open," he said. "I thought people were going to be tearing my head off, but it hasn't happened." Another said he has a heightened sense of concern about safety, but the people he was most concerned about dropping in, such as intoxicated or unstable community members, haven't been a problem. Several staff members told a story about a woman who came in one night and wanted to talk. She seemed unstable and had to eventually be ushered out. That anecdote was held up by several staff members as one of the only examples of an unwelcome visitor.

Employees' specific job duties had a significant effect on how they viewed the newsroom changes. The engagement editor and web reporter both reported noticing how much time they were spending helping community members. When it was suggested that the job now included an aspect of customer service, both said independently that they had not considered it that way before, but that the description fit. Both sat at the front of the newsroom, and both tended to look up when someone came in to see if they needed help. The engagement editor said the classified advertising sales representatives who sat by the front door sent readers her way if they had a question, and that was happening two to three times per week. She said getting interrupted a lot could be flustering, but it was now part of the job, and she had started to forget that most newsrooms didn't operate the same way. "It's part of our norm." She pointed out that she and the web reporter dealt with community members in more of a general service capacity, and that most reporters talked to readers only when it had to do with their specific story or coverage area. The web reporter said that she noticed readers walk in and look around with confusion, so she was regularly getting up



to help. She reported, though, that the “wingnuts” the newsroom had been afraid would regularly come in hadn’t happened, and that most of the community members they interacted with were people researching family history, a boy scout troop on a tour, or people attending a community class. Several staff members mentioned that foot traffic increased significantly on days when there was a community class.

An editor agreed that the people the newsroom had been most worried about hadn’t arrived in person. “The ability to be anonymous is a treasured thing for people on our website. Anonymous nastiness doesn’t translate in person,” she said. Readers “like the idea that they can walk in and be with us while we do our work.” She said she observed that a really good story idea resulted from a reader who came in with a tale to tell. “That wouldn’t have happened before the open newsroom.” She surmised that the reader probably felt an instant gratification. He didn’t have to call, leave a message and wait to hear back but instead was heard immediately.

The same editor reflected that it takes a lot of time to interact with people, and that that time was supposed to be built into the job now. “It has become part of our job description to be greeters, and to be whatever they (the community members) need us to be.” She said the journalists had to “shake off the annoyance” and remember that the newsroom was open for a reason — to be a community space.

### *Live streamed news meetings*

A second big newsroom change that affected everyone's job was inviting the public to the daily news meetings, both in person and online. Though having readers present in person was not a common occurrence, most journalists talked about how different it was to know that online viewers were getting a window into their newsroom and their journalism.

During three news meetings observed in April, no readers joined in person, but a handful of people were watching the live stream online or participating in the live chat, run by the engagement editor. A few asked questions or otherwise interacted with the journalists. Each day, the editor who was running the meeting spoke directly into the camera, introducing the journalists at the table and sharing what the newsroom was working on. Then each reporter or editor took a turn to speak about their coverage area, as is common in most newsroom. About half of the journalists spoke directly to the camera, and therefore to the community; the other half spoke to their colleagues. Even among the journalists who did not directly acknowledge the audience, however, there was a sense of professionalism and formality that indicated an awareness of being observed. The staff members were on their best behavior, well spoken and articulate.

A few reporters expressed wariness about the relatively new practice of being observed while on the job. One said of the news meetings, "I felt like, oh my God, people are maybe actually watching it." Another reporter said his news meeting experiences had not included any comments or reader interactions. When asked if more contact with readers had changed the newsroom's news judgment, one reporter pointed to the meetings. "If there has been a change (in

news judgment), that's where I would say" it was coming from, he said. Another offered a different perspective, however. Though his job duties are the same as the colleagues mentioned above, this reporter said he had gotten "great tips and stories during news meetings" and feels more plugged in in general. He and others discussed the need to sometimes protect information that could be useful to the newsroom's competitors by not saying it on the air during news meetings. "I'll say what I'm working on, but only if it's something I know they (the competitors) already have. If it's sensitive, I'll say that I'll save it for off camera," he said.

#### *Effects on news gathering*

A stated goal of the Newsroom Café project was to have community members more involved in the news gathering. "We are issuing a permanent invitation for the community to be engaged and involved in how we report local news and information, at every step in the process," DeRienzo wrote on his blog just before the move (DeRienzo 2010). Four months into the experiment, journalists expressed mixed views on whether that was taking place. A few said that the company's digital-first philosophy had so far done more to change the reporting, and the journalism, than the Newsroom Café had. An experienced editor said the good came with the bad online, and nasty comments went along with tips, ideas and questions. The journalism is "not static anymore. It's not flat anymore. It's a living, breathing organism all the time, and it's very hard to keep up with it," she said. "Our online community keeps us on our toes. They ask questions we didn't think of. They give us tips all the time." She said reporters

were encouraged to start their days by reviewing comments to find out if they'd missed anything.

A reporter agreed that online comments sometimes contributed constructively to his journalism. His perspective was more critical, however. He said he was more often frustrated, though, that people don't understand that the journalistic content was separate from the comments and blamed the newsroom for the views in the comments. He said he had been one of the more skeptical people in the newsroom about the value of comments, and of reader input in general. He said he didn't want to invite questions on every item he covered. "I could write a fifty-five inch story and include comments on every line item in the (city) budget. But I don't do that. I'm going to write about the big items. People don't go to the meetings. They don't actually know what's going on." He said he got angry when people made ignorant assertions and comments and expressed satisfaction that he could sometimes clear up misconceptions by commenting himself. He said the move to the new space had so far not affected what he did, but he had a general sense that he was better in touch with the community.

Another reporter said the move had influenced his journalism less than he expected. The digital-first push, he said, put new technology in reporters' hands that had made his job easier.

One experienced reporter, who worked part-time in the Torrington newsroom and part-time in a different community, said the push to publish to the web faster, and to include more video reports, had affected her duties significantly. She said she had worked some shifts in the newsroom since the Newsroom Café had started, but she didn't know much about how it was

supposed to work. She liked the idea of inviting the community it but hadn't given much thought to how the presence of community members might affect her job. She said that she tries to pay attention to online comments and has entered them herself "once or twice, only if it was to clarify a point. Often, it's just an opinion, and if I were a columnist or editorial writer, then I could engage in that. As a reporter, we're not supposed to." She hadn't been a part of any newsroom conversations about online comments. She also was unaware of the online fact check feature, which appeared under every story, asking readers to flag errors.

### **Newsroom organizational culture**

I will now analyze, based on interviews and observation, whether the culture of the newsroom was shifting as a result of the Newsroom Café. We will use Schein's three levels of analysis: artifacts and creations, values, and basic assumptions. I will also look at the newsroom's capacity for double-loop learning and individual reflexivity.

#### *Artifacts and creations*

An organization's physical and social environment can offer a first layer of clues about its overall culture. In the case of the Register Citizen, these factors are especially relevant because a move to a new building served as the foundation for more philosophical proposed changes.

The layout of the newsroom, and of the Newsroom Café, is designed to both welcome the community in and to make the journalists more accessible to

and aware of the community. Upon entering through the front doors, a community member is standing in a lounge area with televisions. From that vantage point, he can see the blogging stations, the archive machine, and the kitchen and café area. Just to the left is the newsroom, with no walls separating it from the community area. During regular business hours, customer service representatives are sitting directly to the left of the entrance. In the early morning and evening hours, when those representatives aren't working, it is the job of the journalists to look up and see if the visitors need assistance. In the construction of the newsroom, a wall was knocked down to encourage literal and metaphorical openness. Unlike in most newsrooms, visitors do not have to check in, ask for directions or make an appointment to talk to a journalist or other staff member. Advertising and circulation departments are in the same large space as the newsroom.



Illustration 5: Directional signs at the Register Citizen main entrance

Directional signs indicate where visitors should go, depending on the nature of their visit (see Illustration 5).

Straight ahead is the Newsroom Café, with coffee and baked goods for sale and tables and chairs for eating. In the café area is an exhibit of historical photos from the paper's archives, along with a display of work from the newspaper's Artist of the Month.

Throughout the building, free public wifi is available, which is something only a few other buildings in town were offering. To the left is the community blogging station and access to the newspaper's archives. At the spot where public space meets working newsroom is the conference table, TV and camera where news meetings are held. That space was designed to be as much a part of the Newsroom Café as it is the newsroom, DeRienzo said. A sign on the wall invites all visitors to attend the daily 4 p.m. meeting.

Directly past the conference table, rows of cubicles for reporters and editors begin. In the first row sit the newsroom assistant, who is responsible for handling many of the announcements and listings that bring the public to the newsroom, the engagement editor, and the early morning web reporter. The three of them handle the bulk of interactions with community members who have general questions. In the front section of the room, the cubicle walls are short enough that, sitting down, the journalists can see and talk to each other. In the back section of the room, the cubicle walls are higher, and the staff members cannot be seen when sitting down. A staff member who worked in building maintenance explained that originally, all the cubicles had the tall height. The plan changed to include the lower walls so journalists could more easily interact with each other and with the community. The editor, though, has higher walls, because his predecessor liked the privacy. When a community member asked to see the

editor, he was guided back to the correct cubicle, and the editor stood up to shake his hand.

The social environment of the newsroom was casual yet reserved. Business casual dress was the norm, and staff members all called each other by their first names, as is common practice in most newsrooms. Compared to other newsrooms, the Register Citizen was exceptionally quiet. People spoke in low tones, and when conversations happened among more than two people, or across any distance, the volume stood out and was noticeable by all. It did not appear that noise was frowned upon, however. In fact, the publisher's young daughter skipped and laughed around the room one day. But a custom seemed to have developed that encouraged more reserved newsroom behavior in general.

### *Values*

The Newsroom Café project has been written about and celebrated worldwide. Its creators' ambitions are well documented, and the values it espouses are well-known. The Register Citizen newsroom, however, is a separate entity from the Newsroom Café project. In April, most of the staff members in the newsroom expressed being only tangentially affected by the Newsroom Café experiment. This analysis will look not at the values of the project, but at the apparent values in the routines and practices of the newsroom staff.

Most of the newsroom journalists expressed little investment in the Newsroom Café. When asked to share their perspectives on the goals of the project, they were happy to share some basic facts — that one goal was to invite



the community into the journalism, and that doing so would result in more accountability and better stories. They seldom expressed dissent. It was clear, however, that they were repeating what had been said to them, and that they were not very involved in the execution of the plan. Many seemed more like bystanders, watching from the sidelines as a few key players took the lead. The authority to change the newsroom seemed to rest fully with few staff members: DeRienzo, the engagement editor, the brand new editor and, to an extent, the managing editor. To a person, the journalists interviewed talked about what DeRienzo and the engagement editor had been working on. They offered verbal support for the efforts, and a shared value seemed to be the need to make it clear they were on board with the ideas. But most of the journalists interviewed said their day-to-day jobs had not changed very much.

Little decision-making happened in public during my three days of newsroom observations. Conversations between reporters and editors were private or quiet. There was no group meeting to discuss what would be on the front page, no celebration of good work, and no collective brainstorming on how to better serve the community. The room came together once a day at the public news meeting to share what they were working on, but little collaboration was visible. When asked about feedback, editors and reporters expressed that, in terms of guidance on specific stories or projects, the editors gave direction in one-on-one situations. A shared norm seemed to be a sense that journalism is practiced by individuals, not taken on as a team.

One way to get a sense of an organization's priorities is to see how work is evaluated, both collectively and individually. The newsroom did not have a

system for collectively critiquing its products, as some newsrooms do. The new editor said he planned to do periodic critiques of the paper and invite the staff to read them, a method that reinforced a hierarchical approach to decision-making and feedback. He also said he sometimes sent stories back to reporters if they were not sophisticated enough journalistically, but he did not indicate that he evaluated his reporters based on their audience engagement.

Individually, no staff member reported having had a recent performance evaluation. One employee said there hadn't been pay raises during his time there, so there didn't seem to be a point in formal evaluations. When trying to change a culture, shift an organization's focus and introduce new priorities, it is interesting to note that individual staff members were not being assessed on how well they were demonstrating mastery of the ideals of the Newsroom Café. DeRienzo had, however, come up with a concrete assessment of individual journalists' digital skills. With input from a few staff members, journalists were rated on their skill level with tasks such as digital publishing, video, blogging, social media and data journalism. The digital-first mentality had therefore made its way into a form of formal evaluation, while customer service, broader sourcing, participation in community classes, comment responsiveness and other ideals of the Newsroom Café had not yet.

The engagement editor had a job made up almost entirely of new tasks. She was essentially inventing a job as she went, taking on duties assigned to her by her managers and creating some on her own. She said that she had personal goals, and that success for an individual project, such as a community class or the artist of the month program, often meant that it went better than it had the

last time. In terms of feedback on her work, she said she and DeRienzo would talk about why attendance had been low at a class, for example. She had the general sense that her work was valued but had not had any formal goal-setting and did not have a formal job description.

When individual journalists were asked how good work was rewarded, they said DeRienzo and his bosses tended to draw attention to successful projects, such as those taken on by the engagement editor, in emails that went sometimes just to their newsroom and sometimes to the whole company. One reporter said he found out in emails about “website numbers,” or analytics reports, and the page views were one indication of success. And when somebody did something really big, “there will be some sort of ‘good job on that.’ “

One editor said she worked really hard and was proud to be seen as “somebody they can count on to get the work done.” While that had sometimes meant that she felt more work was piled on her, she also said she thought she’d had career opportunities because she was seen as being on board with company-wide changes, though she had not had an official performance evaluation in recent memory. She also, however, said the digital-first push sometimes ignored the realities of producing a print product, a job that was still requiring day-long focus and effort.

Another shared value was observed among the editors who ran the daily news meetings. Both seemed to believe in being personable, and did not have a problem expressing congratulations to the community. In some newsrooms, a more objective, detached view is adopted by editors. At the Register Citizen, one editor observed running news meetings made a comment indicating her support

for a local sports team, and another said he was happy to be able to run a positive story about a local business.

### *Basic assumptions*

Invisible assumptions are the hardest part of an organization's culture to assess, especially given that this observation occurred over just three days. Some ideas, however, did seem to be universally unsaid.

It was clear that staff members felt they were supposed to want the public more involved in the journalistic processes and products. Both the invitation to the public to visit the physical space and the constant stream of online comments were a foregone conclusion, and while a few staff members seemed excited by the possibilities the changes might offer, most gave the impression they were doing as they were told.

There seemed to be a general understanding that the people in charge were making decisions, and that the rest of the staff would be told as much as they needed to know to do their jobs. Most staff members knew less about what their newsroom was trying to accomplish than an outside observer did, but they did not seem surprised when faced with questions they could not answer. Most did not seem to feel a stake in the project's eventual success or demise, but were generally deferential to newsroom leadership. When asked about how newsroom plans were communicated, all said email, and several mentioned that one newsroom meeting in the new space while construction was still going on. During that meeting, DeRienzo shared the new vision. "He doesn't say it like a dictator would say. He has listened to our suggestions all the way," said one

reporter. “We have open discussions on it.” When pressed, however, he did not remember specific suggestions that were contributed by a staff member. In general, the reporter said about DeRienzo, we “have butted heads before. Sometimes he listens to me, sometimes he doesn’t. He’s my boss. I do what he said.”

Another senior newsroom editor reinforced the idea that the change came from the top, rather than being driven by the newsroom. “A lot of the things we’re being told to do by Mr. Paton’s office.... It’s a company-wide directive.” She described many of the newsroom changes as a “combination of Matt’s insights and Matt’s vision of what he wants us to be.” The perspective is noteworthy because this particular editor had been interviewed by other journalists about newsroom changes and had helped spread the word about the vision behind the changes. She said DeRienzo “just tells us what we’re going to do,” mostly through email, and she expressed awareness of the pressure her boss faced, since the Register Citizen was seen as a guinea pig in the Journal Register company. “Everybody’s watching us,” she said.

#### *Double-loop learning and reflexivity*

Any organization’s ability to change depends at least in part on its capacity for double-loop learning, which involves the questioning of its fundamental values and assumptions. In addition, individual journalists are most adaptable when they reflect on their own work and make adjustments, both thoughtfully and spontaneously. Reflective professionals are able to rely on experience and also continually question whether a situation should be handled the same way it

had been in the past. The relative youth and inexperience of the Register Citizen's staff made reflexivity and double-loop learning difficult in two ways.

One, many of the staff members lacked a sophisticated understanding of how journalism was practiced. They were still trying to learn how to do journalism and were not yet able to focus on how to do journalism *differently*. And a few of the journalists with more experience were not invested in changing how they did their job; they were merely responding to directions they'd been given and did not appear to have significant motivation to change. They also, however, did not express a strong desire to stay the same. In a more experienced newsroom, the management would certainly be coming up against more resistance to proposed changes. The relative inexperience of the staff means they were likely to be willing to accept experimentation, even if they were not particularly thoughtful about the reasons behind them. Several staff members indicated that they tended to forget that most newsrooms didn't welcome people in off the street, livestream their news meetings and offer community classes.

Two, most were not aware of how their newsroom fit into the larger industry. When asked about some of the Newsroom Café plans and goals, many were completely unaware of some facts and insights that had been widely shared on industry websites. That was clear when staff members had trouble articulating where company changes were originating. "I don't really know much about John Paton," said one reporter. "I couldn't really say much about whether it's (the newsroom plan) his idea." Paton's vision has in fact been celebrated globally. Another reporter answered the same question by saying, "The CEO, maybe? I'm not the best one to ask." And another: "I would guess

Matt (DeRienzo), if I had to put one face on it. I'm getting a sense that it also came from higher up the food chain." Staff members were also not generally up to speed on industry changes. One staff member whose job involved social media had never heard of some widely used social media platforms. She had been working in journalism for only a year.

The newspaper's editor said he thought the staff did have a sense of being part of something innovative. "Yes, it's exciting (for them)," he said, "but it probably also really scares them. When there's a magnifying glass on you, it can get overwhelming sometimes." Another senior editor described the newsroom's efforts as groundbreaking and displayed an understanding for how unusual, and public, the efforts were. Among the younger staff, however, one staff member stood out for being in touch with the Register Citizen's unique role in the industry. The engagement editor indicated that she read industry publications, and she articulated the vision for the newsroom changes in a more sophisticated manner than most of her colleagues. She also demonstrated a personal motivation to improve her work, and reflected on how she assessed her own efforts to bring the community into her journalism. She was chosen to be a part of a Journal Register Company "ideaLab" project, in which just fifteen of the company's journalists would be given resources to focus on experimentation. Most of the tangible, daily changes in newsroom routines and practices seemed to be because of her work, and DeRienzo's. The newsroom as a whole, however, seemed to lack a sophisticated understanding of the newsroom's mission, and therefore could have no sense of purposeful, continual adaptation.

## **Limitations and implications**

It is important to note that, because these interviews and observation occurred just four months after the newsroom moved to its new building and launched the Newsroom Café, it was very likely too early in the process for a culture shift to have occurred. The newsroom staff, as a whole, perhaps had not had sufficient time to understand and act on the newsroom's new mission. Having only three days for observation also surely means that I missed much nuance and understanding. The staff was also welcoming a new editor, the newsroom was in a time of transition, and my visit perhaps occurred before they'd found their stride.

However, any student of the Newsroom Café experiment should understand that, overall, the newsroom is staffed by young journalists who are not arriving for work each day attempting to change the industry but are instead following directions and doing their jobs. A few big thinkers and trailblazers, in the newsroom and certainly in the corporate offices, share the burden of organizational change in the newsroom and company-wide, and of the eventual success or failure of the Newsroom Café.



## Chapter 6

### Observations on an Emerging Culture

In this research, I talked to journalists about what audience engagement meant to them and their newsrooms. I then looked at how particularly bold engagement efforts were affecting one specific community newsroom.

First, I selected 29 journalists who were immersed in engagement as a concept, and who were regularly putting strategies into place in their newsrooms that were designed to enhance their relationships with their audiences. Those journalists listed and described strategies that fell into three categories: outreach, or reaching out into the community rather than expecting the community to come to you; conversation, or finding ways to talk and listen to the community; and collaboration, or working together to improve coverage.

In a national survey of daily newspaper editors, I found that editors were overwhelmingly on board with the idea of community engagement. They expressed that they knew a more connected relationship with their communities was important, but they displayed a limited understanding of what that could mean. Many of the strategies shared by the journalists I interviewed would be foreign to the average newsroom editor, and a large gap exists between editors' knowledge of a need for engagement and their understanding of how to proceed. In addition, editors cited their limited resources as a barrier to more aggressive engagement tactics. In an era of shrinking newsrooms, they expressed reluctance to invest in experiments.

The newsroom I looked at in-depth, the Register Citizen in Connecticut, was employing strategies that were in line with all three of those categories. The newspaper's management had decided that its relationship with its audience would be improved by inviting the audience into its physical space, and many of its engagement efforts focused on strategies that involved face-to-face interactions.

### **Significance**

This research takes the commonly used and commonly misunderstood concept of audience engagement and provides a clear picture of what it means to the news industry. By asking journalists what they mean when they talk about engagement, we can now see just how varied their answers are, and therefore how important it is to be specific with our language.

In addition, this research demonstrated that some journalists and newsrooms are embracing engagement work as part of their routines. The new technology of the Internet era is forcing widespread change in the industry, and engagement efforts are a response to those changes. Journalists rely heavily on routines to make complex tasks more manageable, and there are commonly accepted values in newsrooms nationwide that help journalists legitimize their work. In some newsrooms, a focus on the audience is becoming a shared value.

For values to change, however, evaluation must change. For a newsroom to intentionally shift its priorities, leadership must find ways to hold employees accountable for behaving in a way that supports the new values. In addition,

specific tasks and actions need to be tied to those values, which requires that managers tie their values and goals to employees' routines and tasks.

Practically, this research makes it clear that it does newsrooms little good to talk about "engagement" as a general goal. The word on its own means little, and if newsrooms want to make changes in their relationships with their communities, they need to be more focused about what they're trying to achieve and how they're going about it. My interviews demonstrated that what worked for National Public Radio was very different from the priorities of Great Lakes Echo, which was very different from the strategies employed at the Civil Beat. Newsrooms have very different overall missions and styles, and their engagement work needs to be consistent with the rest of their efforts and products. Newsrooms need to be able to articulate what they're trying to accomplish so they can focus on specific strategies that will help. That notion was reinforced by the national survey of newspaper editors, who expressed enthusiasm for but little understanding of engagement. Without more clearly articulated goals, customized for individual newsrooms, it would be difficult to design new journalistic routines.

The case study of the Register Citizen revealed that a highly touted attempt at audience engagement — one whose innovation had attracted national attention — had affected limited cultural changes in the newsroom. In this case, it was possible for the vision of two people and the buy-in of a few more to produce significant change in the way the newsroom invited interactions with its community. Those changes, however, did not seem to be having significant

influence on the ways the news was gathered or the way many of the journalists discussed their audience or gathered the news.

In this newsroom, a gap existed — one between the vision of a few key employees and the much less sophisticated understanding of that vision on the part of the rest of the staff. The newsroom and company leadership had widely shared goals that were ambitious and applauded, yet they had seemed to invest little time in encouraging staff investment in those goals. Without reinforcing the new cultural priorities in more day-to-day decisions, and in assessment of both the journalism and employee performance, fundamental change does not seem possible.

The changes in the newsroom at the time of my observation seemed to be more structural than fundamental. Two staff members had new jobs, and their routines had changed significantly. But the concept of journalism did not appear to have changed significantly for most of the staff. The pattern of basic assumptions that lay the groundwork for an organization's culture, as described by Schein, had not shifted, and new values had not become normalized. Evidence of a change in newsroom culture existed at the level of artifacts, and the mission statement and goals had shifted, as evidence of declared values. But in terms of evaluations of success, of the organization and of individual employees, no change was evident. Change seemed to be dependent on the actions of a few people, and nothing in my observation suggested that change was occurring on the level of basic assumptions.

The observations conducted for this study did not determine whether the lack of buy-in from much of the staff was due mostly to a lack of newsroom

communication about the new ideas, as it seemed on the surface, or whether an underlying resistance to change on the part of individual journalists was coming into play. Staff resistance can take the passive forms of feigned ignorance and subtle subversion, not just direct questioning or confrontation. In this newsroom, which did not emphasize dialogue, it is possible that some resistance was invisible.

### **Limitations**

It is important to recognize the limitations of this research. Our understanding of what audience engagement means came from the interviews I conducted with 29 journalists. In those interviews, journalists told me what they were prioritizing in their newsrooms, what they were actually doing, and what they were trying to accomplish. Those accounts came mostly from one employee per newsroom and therefore provided limited perspectives. I did not in most cases triangulate the research by talking to other employees or observing their work for myself.

In the case of my newsroom observations in Connecticut, I visited in April, just four months after the open newsroom experiment began. Staff members were still getting acclimated to new routines and educated about what to expect. It is possible that, had I visited a few months later, more of them would have been able to articulate the vision for the project and discuss how it was affecting the journalism they were practicing. In addition, staff members expressed disappointment at the low levels of participation from community members so far and said they hoped that as the winter ended, more people would be out

around town and decide to stop in. It is likely that community participation picked up after my visit.

The biggest limitation of my study, however, is that it does not attempt to measure the success of audience engagement efforts. I did not study web analytics to see if the newsrooms' strategies were driving more visitors to the website. I did not interview any community members about whether they noticed or appreciated the newsrooms' outreach efforts. I did not study the journalistic products to investigate whether they reflected more community voices or showed signs of being more collaborative.

### **Recommendations**

Newspaper editors' hesitations, revealed in our national survey, involve their reluctance to commit resources to an untested field. They see engagement as key to survival, but they are hungry for information that shows a link between engagement efforts and survival. Their desire for data is rational and should be encouraged.

Engagement proponents say they believe their work leads to a more connected, more loyal, more dedicated audience. That audience investment could lead to business success, whether in attention for advertisers or member donations. But proving that link will be key, and that task is the shared responsibility of the journalism practitioners and the journalism academy.

I asked all the journalists I interviewed what they considered to be signs of success in their engagement work. Many said they had no idea. They were proceeding with what felt right, without any accountability for or measures of

success. Some shared benchmarks that are hard for working journalists to track, such as more civil online conversations, more community contributions, more connections with audience and more social media attention. Some are looking at numbers for how many people attend an event, download a resource from the website or comment on a story.

Because the engagement culture is so new, several journalists said they felt in the dark about what reasonable success would look like. In some cases, they just tried to improve upon what they'd already done. "The best I can do is look at past growth and aim higher," said Zach Seward, who manages social media for the Wall Street Journal. Seward paid close attention to social media metrics, and he said no industry standard yet existed in that area. That notion was echoed by Andy Carvin at National Public Radio. NPR's Facebook page is widely regarded as an industry standard. With no clear guideline on what to strive for, success for that effort can be measured in part on the follower growth rate, Carvin said.

Other journalists cited newsroom buy-in as a goal, and internal training and change as measures of success. Lauren McCullough of The Associated Press said one area of focus for her team in New York was encouraging more of the AP's reporters to actively use Twitter as part of their reporting efforts. Meg Pickard at The Guardian said a good day for her was when her colleagues cited her mutualisation philosophies back to her, demonstrating an understanding of the importance of audience efforts.

Newsrooms like Hawaii's Civil Beat are based on a membership business model, and Editor John Temple said the measure of success for them was whether membership was increasing. Knowing specifically what drove

membership, however, is difficult. Quality content is surely a piece of that. But Temple also said he valued whether the community was talking about the Civil Beat's work, whether the work was encouraging debate, whether the website was seen as a community resource, and whether other sites linked back to his journalists' work. Increasing membership is a legitimate goal, but tracking what influences membership is not easy for working journalists.

One real struggle for the news industry is that journalists often do not exist in a culture of assessment. While they perhaps have a sense for whether general circulation, website traffic, or broadcast viewership or listenership are trending up or down, they often do not track the effectiveness of specific projects or strategies as part of their daily work. When newsrooms allocate resources, they usually do so based on what kind of content aligns with their mission. That's appropriate, but they should also be looking at their audience's information needs and desires in a more scientific way.

It did not used to be possible to know which specific stories got the most audience attention and interest. With online news, journalists can use web analytics to know not only which stories were the most clicked on but which ones had the most time spent on them, which ones were the most shared, which ones kept people on the website and what search terms brought people to the stories in the first place. Newsrooms have access to that information. But of respondents to our national survey, only half said they used that data to help make news decisions.

What if decisions about newsroom resources took into account traffic to the website? If traffic to a particular beat or coverage area reveals that users are



hungry for more information, managers could shift more employees to that department. And likewise, if great efforts are being made in a section that is drawing little readership, management could shift resources away. That idea tends to make editors nervous. They want to make their own decisions about what their staff should cover. If, however, they want to run a responsive newsroom, they would do well to at least consider how their product is being received and whether it is reaching the intended audience.

Some measurement approaches are beyond the scope of what newsrooms can take on without investing in extra staff. A survey of community attitudes toward a newsroom, for example, is not something a traditional newsroom is equipped to take on. There are small, more focused strategies, however, that would help newsrooms gauge the success of what they do.

If, for example, they have as a goal to increase the community conversation in the comments section of their website, they could look at how well they're converting traffic into conversation. To do that, they could look at the number of comments as a percentage of overall page views, and see if their efforts to increase conversation increase that number. If they want to increase community contributions to their product, they could count the number of individuals who submit content. If they have as a goal to reach a new audience with a specific online project, they could analyze their analytics data to see if the ratio of new and returning visitors is different for that project than for their overall product. For journalists hoping to demonstrate the concrete effects of their engagement work, measurement is key.

For journalism to continue to meet the needs of its audiences, newsrooms will need to have a greater understanding of who their specific audience is and what audience members' information needs are. Making those pieces of information part of news decisions would require a shift in the culture of journalism overall. It would be useful for newsroom managers to begin engagement work by asking what they value in their relationship with their audience or community, and what resources they are willing to contribute to those values. If, as stated above, they value conversation in comments, are they willing to divert newsroom time to fostering that conversation, even if it means producing less content? If they want community members to be invited to help shape the newsroom's agenda, are they willing to share what they are working on before it is published, and to go out in the community inviting input? If a goal is to be responsive to the information needs of regular readers, is the newsroom staff willing to pay close attention to what those regular readers say they want, along with what those readers demonstrate that they read and share? Will they make coverage decisions based at least partially on what they learn? Is the newsroom willing to actively solicit feedback, and then to spend time sharing with the readers how that information has helped guide news decisions?

Engagement takes work. A real focus on audience is not a specific action, and it cannot be achieved by hiring a social media editor. Community engagement in journalism is about an attitude of embracing the role the audience plays in consuming and contributing to journalist processes and products. For that attitude to spread through a news organization requires a clearly stated mission, strategies that align with that mission, and a plan to assess progress. In

addition, the buy-in of the staff is key. Most people in a community will come into contact with a news organization through its reporters, not through its leader. If those reporters are not demonstrating to community members that reader involvement is valued, they are not only missing an opportunity with each interaction but also potentially sabotaging the newsroom's chances for true change. As Sumpter's research demonstrated, journalists' perceptions of audience, and of audience needs, are heavily influenced by their own perspectives and worldviews (Sumpter 2000). The journalists who are out in the community making connections on a daily basis have the potential to do the most good in keeping the newsroom in touch with its audience.

A sustainable, growing news business in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will need to be in continual touch with the needs of the people it serves, and also in a continual state of assessment about how well it is meeting those needs. As more news outlets become niche in some way — serving a particular interest or geography, or focusing on particular subjects — they will be increasingly defined by the people they serve.

### **Suggestions for future research**

Some measurement of the success or impact of projects can be done in the newsroom. To truly examine whether audience engagement is key to the success of news operations, however, the industry needs academic research that would demonstrate what engagement efforts accomplish. Community surveys can be used to look at audience awareness of and perception of news products, along with perceived accessibility and credibility of journalists. It would be interesting

to track whether community outreach efforts changed overall perception. Also, sentiment analysis of online comments is often used among major commercial brands to assess whether the brand has more supporters than detractors, and therefore make determinations about perceived value and customer attitudes.

Journalists often prefer to focus more on quality than quantity, and in this way academic research could provide valuable expertise. Content analyses could help newsrooms track the civility of online discourse, for example, if the newsroom is tracking the success of a new online comments policy or strategy. Diversity of coverage is also often cited as a goal of engagement, as a sign that a newsroom is in touch with its community. A content analysis could provide information about who is photographed and quoted in stories, and how well an overall product represents its community.

Business success is perhaps the most important factor to track. Whether that means increased advertising, more member donations or a more diversified income portfolio, newsrooms need to see signs of sustainability and profit. News organizations will often not volunteer those numbers themselves. But research that tracks specific engagement efforts' effects on the bottom line could be a key factor in whether the culture of engagement is more broadly adopted.

## Bibliography

- Argyris, Chris. *Knowledge for Action: A Guide to Overcoming Barriers to Organizational Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *On Organizational Learning*. 2nd ed. Oxford ; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Business, 1999.
- Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35, no. 4 (1969): 216-224.
- Beam, Randal A. "Content Differences between Daily Newspapers with Strong and Weak Market Orientations." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2003): 368.
- Breed, Warren. "Social Control in the Newsroom." In *Social Meanings of News : A Text-Reader*, edited by Daniel A. Berkowitz, xiv, 535 p. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Chaiken, Miriam S., J. Richard Dixon, Colette Powers, and Erica Wetzler. "Asking the Right Questions: Community-Based Strategies to Combat Hunger." *NAPA Bulletin* 32, no. 1 (2009): 42-54.
- Christens, Brian D. "Public Relationship Building in Grassroots Community Organizing: Relational Intervention for Individual and Systems Change." *Journal of Community Psychology* 38, no. 7 (2010): 886-900.
- Crawford, Kate. "Following You: Disciplines of Listening in Social Media." *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 525-535.
- DeLorme, Denise E., and Fedler, Fred. "Journalists' Hostility toward Public Relations: An Historical Analysis." *Public Relations Review* 29, no. 2 (2003): 99-124.
- DeRienzo, Matt. "Register Citizen to Move Office, Open Newsroom Cafe." In *The Register Citizen Open Newsroom Project*, 2010.
- Ellis, Justin. "The Writing on the Wall: Why News Organizations Are Turning to Outside Moderators for Help with Comments." (2011).  
<http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/04/the-writing-on-the-wall-why-news-organizations-are-turning-to-outside-moderators-for-help-with-comments/>.

- Fleming, Kenneth; and Mayer, Joy. "2011 Journalist Engagement Survey." (2011). <http://www.rjionline.org/news/highlights-2011-journalists-engagement-survey>.
- Gade, Peter J., and Earnest L. Perry. "Changing the Newsroom Culture: A Four-Year Case Study of Organizational Development at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2003): 327-347.
- Gans, Herbert J. *Deciding What's News: A Study of Cbs Evening News, Nbc Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time / Herbert J. Gans*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2004.
- Hanitzsch, Thomas. "Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Toward a Universal Theory." *Communication Theory* 17, no. 4 (2007): 367-385.
- Harrison, Michael I. *Diagnosing Organizations : Methods, Models, and Processes*. 2nd ed. Applied Social Research Methods Series. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994.
- "Innovator of the Year Expands: January Winner Is Register Citizen of Torrington, Conn.", Associated Press Managing Editors <http://www.apme.com/news/57985/General-News-Innovator-of-the-Year-expands-January-winner-is-Register-.htm> (accessed 3-6 2011).
- "Journal Register Company Publications Named as Three of 10 Newspapers Who Do It Right", Journal Register Company <http://www.journalregister.com/press-releases/518-2/> (accessed 3-6 2011).
- Kanter, Beth. "How Do Social Networks Applications Incorporate the Ladder of Engagement?" In *Nonprofits and Social Media*, 2011, 2008.
- Kotilainen, Sirkku, and Leena Rantala. "From Seekers to Activists." *Information, Communication & Society* 12, no. 5 (2009): 658-677.
- Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007.
- Kovach, Bill; and Rosenstiel, Tom. "Creating a Navigational Guide to New Media." *Nieman Reports*, no. Winter 2010 (2010). <http://nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102533/Creating-a-Navigational-Guide-to-New-Media.aspx>.
- Nip, Joyce Y. M. "Exploring the Second Phase of Public Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 2 (2006): 212 - 236.

- Noor, Khairul Baharein Mohd. "Case Study: A Strategic Research Methodology." *American Journal of Applied Sciences* 5, no. 11 (2008): 1602-1604.
- Paton, John. "John Paton's Dec. 2 Presentation at Inma Transformation of News Summit in Cambridge, Mass." In *Digital First*, 2010.
- Platt, Jennifer. "'Case Study' in American Methodological Thought." *Current Sociology* 40, (1992): 17-48.
- Rosen, Jay. *What Are Journalists For?* New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Journalists Formerly Known as the Media: My Advice to the Next Generation" (accessed 3-27 2011).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The View from Nowhere: Questions and Answers." In *PressThing*, 2010.
- Rosenberry, Jack, and Burton St. John. *Public Journalism 2.0 : The Promise and Reality of a Citizen-Engaged Press*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Rusbridger, Alan. "The Hugh Cudlipp Lecture: Does Journalism Exist?" *The Guardian* (2010). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/jan/25/cudlipp-lecture-alan-rusbridger>.
- Ryfe, David M. "Broader and Deeper: A Study of Newsroom Culture in a Time of Change." *Journalism* 10, no. 2 (2009): 197-216.
- Schein, Edgar H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 1st ed. A Joint Publication in the Jossey-Bass Management Series and the Jossey-Bass Social and Behavioral Science Series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985.
- Shoemaker, Pamela J., and Stephen D. Reese. *Mediating the Message : Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*. 2nd ed. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, 1996.
- Shoemaker, Pamela J., and Tim P. Vos. *Gatekeeping Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Stake, Robert E. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1995.
- Suarez-Orozco, Carola, Marie Onaga, and Cecile De Lardemelle. "Promoting Academic Engagement among Immigrant Adolescents through School-Family-Community Collaboration." *Professional School Counseling* 14, no. 1 (2010): 15-26.

- Sumpter, Randall S. "Daily Newspaper Editors' Audience Construction Routines: A Case Study." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17, no. 3 (2000): 334 - 346.
- Sylvie, George, and Patricia Dennis Witherspoon. *Time, Change and the American Newspaper*. Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002.
- Thompson, Matt. "A 5-Minute Framework for Fostering Better Conversations in Comments Sections." (2011). <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/digital-strategies/121664/a-5-minute-framework-for-fostering-better-conversations-in-comments-sections/>.
- Tuchman, Gaye. "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newmen's Notions of Objectivity." *The American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (1972): 660-679.
- Van Maanen, John. *Tales of the Field : On Writing Ethnography* Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research : Design and Methods*. 4th ed. Applied Social Research Methods Series. Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2009.



## Appendix 1

### Interview Guide For Journalists Working In Engagement

What is the mission of your organization?

Describe your relationship with audience/users/readers/community members/advertisers. (And what do you call them?) Is it a different relationship than one you've had in other jobs? How do you think the community members would describe the relationship?

Do you see yourself and your organization as active in your community? How? Do you consider yourselves as working to make your community a better place? Would you call that being an advocate for the community? How does that fit into your notion of what it means to be a journalist?

Is interaction with community members part of your day? If so, what does that look like? How much of your day do you spend actually talking to community members? Using social media on behalf of your organization? What strategies do you use to encourage interaction? Do you participate in conversations or try to get them started anywhere besides your own website?

The word "engagement" is being thrown around a lot. What do you think it means? Is it something you strive for? How does user engagement enrich your product or conversation? What motivates community members to engage with you, do you think? What are the biggest obstacles to interaction/engagement?

How often is the work you do steered by input from users? Do you have examples of work that responds to specific requests or questions?

What have you tried that doesn't work?

How do you know if you've been successful? What does a good day feel like and look like? Is there a way to measure success?

What do you wish you could measure?

## Appendix 2

### Interview Subjects

<b>NAME</b>	<b>PUBLICATION</b>
Steve Buttry	TBD.com
Michael Wood-Lewis	Front Porch Forum
Grant Barrett	Voice of San Diego
John Temple	Civil Beat
Brenda Williams-Butts	WNYC
Nicole Hollway	St. Louis Beacon
Breeze Richardson	WBEZ
Amanda Michel	ProPublica
Olivia Ma	YouTube News
Jessica Clark	Center for Social Media
Tracy Van Slyke	The Media Consortium
Andy Carvin	National Public Radio
Bob Boilen	National Public Radio
Andrew Haeg	American Public Media
Lauren McCullough	Associated Press
Zach Seward	Wall Street Journal
Meg Pickard	The Guardian
David Poulson	Great Lakes Echo
Vadim Lavrusik	Mashable
Mark Briggs	King 5 TV
Belinda Baldwin	Belo
James Janega	Chicago Tribune
Doreen Marchionni	Seattle Times
Randy Ching	Civil Beat
Denise Cheng	The Rapidian
Ashley Alvarado	California Watch
Tracy Record	West Seattle Blog
Chrys Wu	Independent journalist
Ann Alquist	Center for Media Engagement

## Appendix 3

### Survey Questionnaire

#### **Journalist Engagement Survey: Joy Mayer The Reynolds Journalism Institute**

**Center for Advanced Social Research  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
March 2011**

##### Question YesAns1

Hello, my name is [FILL NAME], calling from the University of Missouri School of Journalism.	[1]	Speaking with Correct Person, Continue to Intro
I am not trying to sell you anything. I am calling because we are conducting a short confidential study to learn your opinions about interacting and engaging with the audience in your community for better journalism.	[3] [4] [5]	Call Back Later Wrong Number Other Unavailable
The results of the study will help researchers of The Reynolds Journalism Institute better understand the level of engagement in which daily newspapers are involved now and in the future.	[7]	Refusal
The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete.	[8] [9]	Communication Barrier Ineligible
Is now a good time to talk?		

##### Question GTOK

Before we begin, I just want to make sure you know that your phone number has been randomly selected from the database of American Society of News Editors.	[1] [2] [3]	Continue No Time, Call Back Refusal
I can assure you that all the information you will provide will be kept completely confidential, so that you cannot be identified. Also, your participation is absolutely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question or stop the survey at any time if you do not feel comfortable with it. There is no more risk than experienced during every day conversations about this topic.		
The researchers of The Reynolds Journalism Institute agree to protect your survey answers by using and disclosing it only as permitted by you.		
If you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact Professor Joy Mayer at (573) 882-8182 or the University's Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (573) 882-9585. The Campus IRB oversees all research activities involving human subjects at the University of Missouri.		

##### Question Type\_1

First, is your primary responsibility in your news organization as an	[1]	Editor
---	-----	--------

editor or a reporter?	[2] Reporter
	[3] Other - specify
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER = 2) SKIPTO TCS\_INEL

IF (ANSWER > 7) SKIPTO TCS\_INEL

Question Type\_2

Is your job title Managing editor Executive editor, or Editor?	[1] Managing editor
	[2] Executive editor,
	[3] Editor
	[4] [Do not read] General manager
	[5] Publisher
	[6] President
	[7] Other - specify
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER > 7) SKIPTO TCS\_INEL

Question Q1

First, I would like to know how your news organization is involved with the community you serve.	[5] Very close
	[4]
	[3]
On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all close and 5 is very close, how would you describe your newspaper's current involvement with its community?	[2]
	[1] Not at all close
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q2

Over the next 12 months, would you say your newspaper's involvement will	
Increase	[3] Increase
Remain the same, or	[2] Remain the same
Decrease?	[1] Decrease
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER = 3) SKIPTO Q2a  
 IF (ANSWER = 2) SKIPTO Q3a  
 IF (ANSWER = 1) SKIPTO Q2b  
 IF (ANSWER > 7) SKIPTO Q3a

Question Q2a

Why do you say so?	[1] Specify
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

SKIPTO Q3a

Question Q2b

Why do you say so?	[1] Specify
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q3a

Next, I'd like to ask you a few questions about what your newsroom does in interacting with your audience.	[1] Yes
	[2] No
Do you make decisions about what stories to cover based on what you hear from your audience in person?	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q3b

Do you make decisions about what stories to cover based on what you hear from your audience on your Web site?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q3c

Do you seek input from your audience about what to cover?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q3d

Question Q3ca

How often do you seek input from them? Would you say	
[5] Very often	[1-5]
[4] Often	
[3] Sometimes	

[2] Rarely, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[1] Never?	[9] Refused

Question Q3d

Do you use social media such as Twitter or Facebook to interact with your audience?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q3e

Question Q3da

How often do you use social media to interact with your audience?	
[5] Very often	[1-5]
[4] Often	
[3] Sometimes	
[2] Rarely, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[1] Never?	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER = 1) SKIPTO Q3f

IF (ANSWER > 7) SKIPTO Q3f

Question Q3e

Does your news organization encourage individual journalists to interact with the community using their own social media accounts, or just with the organization's accounts?	[1] Yes - journalists using their own accounts
	[2] Yes - journalists using organization's accounts
	[3] Yes - Journalists using both accounts
	[4] No, does not encourage journalists to do so
	[7] Other - specify
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q3f

Does your newsroom offer training for your community on things like writing, digital media and social media?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Q3g

Does your newsroom have conversations among yourselves about how to make the news more social or participatory?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Q3h

Do you interact with your audience in the comments section of your news site?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q3i

Question Q3ha

How often do you interact with your audience in the comments section of your news site? Would you say	
[6] Every day	[1-6]
[5] Several times a week	
[4] Once a week	[7] Other - specify
[3] Once in two weeks	
[2] Once a month, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[1] Less than once a month?	[9] Refused

Question Q3i

Do you invite your audience to your physical newsroom, for example, to attend meetings, offer input, and interact with the staff?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q3j

Question Q3ia

How often do you invite them to do so?	
[6] Every day	[1-

[5] Several times a week	6]
[4] Once a week	[7] Other - specify
[3] Once in two weeks	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[2] Once a month, or	[9] Refused
[1] Less than once a month?	

Question Q3j

Does your news organization sponsor community events?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q3k

Question Q3ja

Are your newsroom employees involved in the events, or just your business-side employees?	[1] Only newsroom employees are involved
	[2] Only business-side employees are involved
	[3] Both are involved
	[7] Other - specify
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q3k

Do you offer biographical information about your employees in print?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q3ka

Do you offer contact information such as telephone numbers or email addresses about your employees in print?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused



Question Q3l

Do you offer biographical information about your employees on your Web site?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Q3la

Do you offer contact information such as telephone numbers or email addresses about your employees on your Web site?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Q4a

Do you invite your audience to contribute information to add to stories, making them more complete?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q4b

Question Q4aa

How often do you invite your audience to do so?		
[6] Every day	[1-6]	
[5] Several times a week		
[4] Once a week	[7]	Other - specify
[3] Once in two weeks		
[2] Once a month, or	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
[1] Less than once a month?	[9]	Refused

Question Q4ab

Will the audience receive credit?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Q4b

Do you invite your audience to contribute their own stories?	[1]	Yes
	[2]	No

	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q4c

Question Q4ba

How often do you invite your audience to contribute their own stories?	
[6] Every day	[1-6]
[5] Several times a week	
[4] Once a week	[7] Other - specify
[3] Once in two weeks	
[2] Once a month, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[1] Less than once a month?	[9] Refused

Question Q4c

Do you invite your audience to help you report specific stories?	
	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q5a

Question Q4ca

How often do you invite your audience to help you report specific stories?	
[6] Every day	[1-6]
[5] Several times a week	
[4] Once a week	[7] Other - specify
[3] Once in two weeks	
[2] Once a month, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[1] Less than once a month?	[9] Refused

Question Q5a

Does your newsroom receive Web analytics reports about data such as page views, length of visit, and traffic of your Web site?	
	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q5b

Question Q5aa

How often do you receive the report?
--------------------------------------

[6] Every day	[1-6]
[5] Several times a week	
[4] Once a week	[7] Other - specify
[3] Once in two weeks	
[2] Once a month, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[1] Less than once a month?	[9] Refused

Question Q5ab

Do you make decisions about what stories to cover based at least partially on the Web analytics report?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q5b

Do you encourage your audience to get more involved with the news process and product?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q5c

Question Q5ba

How often do you encourage them to do so?	
[6] Every day	[1-6]
[5] Several times a week	
[4] Once a week	[7] Other - specify
[3] Once in two weeks	
[2] Once a month, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[1] Less than once a month?	[9] Refused

Question Q5c

Do you have non-journalists on staff with expertise in technology?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q5d

Question Q5ca

Do they contribute to decisions about how to tell stories?	[1] Yes
	[2] No

	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q5d

Do you explain your journalism process to your audience or offer them behind-the-scenes information?	[1] Yes
	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

IF (ANSWER != 1) SKIPTO Q6a

Question Q5da

Could you briefly tell me how you do it?	[1] Specify
	[2] Nothing in particular
	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9] Refused

Question Q6a

How often do you try to share specific content with specific parts of your community? For example, if you have a story about school programs, you would try to share it specifically with people who have a special interest in schools. Would you say	[5] Very often	[1-5]
	[4] Often	
	[3] Sometimes	
	[2] Rarely, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[1] Never?	[9] Refused

Question Q6b

How often do you use digital tools such as social media tools to listen to what your community is saying on platforms or Web sites other than your own Web site? Would you say	[5] Very often	[1-5]
	[4] Often	
	[3] Sometimes	
	[2] Rarely, or	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
	[1] Never?	[9] Refused

Question Q7

Next, I would like to learn your opinions about three concepts related to your interaction with the community.	[5]	Very important
The concepts are:	[4]	
Conversation, Collaboration, and Outreach.	[3]	
	[2]	
On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, how important is community OUTREACH in your newsroom?	[1]	Not at all important
READ THIS SLOWLY AND DON'T RUSH!	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

IF (ANSWER = 5) SKIPTO Q7a

IF (ANSWER = 4) SKIPTO Q7a

IF (ANSWER = 3) SKIPTO Q8

IF (ANSWER = 2) SKIPTO Q7b

IF (ANSWER = 1) SKIPTO Q7b

IF (ANSWER > 7) SKIPTO Q8

Question Q7a

Why do you say so?	[1]	Specify
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

SKIPTO Q8

Question Q7b

Why do you say so?	[1]	Specify
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Q8

How important is being in conversation with your community in your newsroom?	[5]	Very important
	[4]	
Read if necessary: Please use a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important.	[3]	
	[2]	
	[1]	Not at all important
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

IF (ANSWER = 5) SKIPTO Q8a

IF (ANSWER = 4) SKIPTO Q8a  
 IF (ANSWER = 3) SKIPTO Q9  
 IF (ANSWER = 2) SKIPTO Q8b  
 IF (ANSWER = 1) SKIPTO Q8b  
 IF (ANSWER > 7) SKIPTO Q9

Question Q8a

Why do you say so?	[1]	Specify
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

SKIPTO Q9

Question Q8b

Why do you say so?	[1]	Specify
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Q9

How important is collaboration with your community in your newsroom? Read if necessary: Please use a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important.	[5]	Very important
	[4]	
	[3]	
	[2]	
	[1]	Not at all important
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

IF (ANSWER = 5) SKIPTO Q9a  
 IF (ANSWER = 4) SKIPTO Q9a  
 IF (ANSWER = 3) SKIPTO Comment  
 IF (ANSWER = 2) SKIPTO Q9b  
 IF (ANSWER = 1) SKIPTO Q9b  
 IF (ANSWER > 7) SKIPTO Comment

Question Q9a

Why do you say so?	[1]	Specify
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

SKIPTO Comment

Question Q9b

Why do you say so?	[1]	Specify
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Comment

In your opinion, what are the difficulties or hurdles journalists face in engaging with their communities?	[1]	Specify
	[2]	Nothing in particular
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question DemoStrt

All right, we're almost finished. I just have a few questions that will help us analyze the results of the survey.	[1]	Press to continue
--	-----	-------------------

Question Age

How old were you on your last birthday?	[18-120]	Years of age
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question Prt\_Line

Is your responsibility in mainly print or online at your newspaper?	[1]	Print
	[2]	Online
	[3]	Both
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

Question E\_Year

How long have you worked in your current news organization?	[0]	Less than 1 year
	[1-120]	Years of experience in news organization
	[888]	Don't Know/Not sure
	[999]	Refused

Question J\_year

How long have you worked as a paid journalist?	[0]	Less than 1 year
	[1-120]	Years of experience in

		news organization
	[888]	Don't Know/Not sure
	[999]	Refused

Question Size

In total, what is the size of your organization's news staff: that is, how many people who work in news are now on your organization's news staff payroll?	[1-777]	Number of news staff
	[778]	More than 777
	[888]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[999]	Refused

Question Paper

Is your newspaper published daily or weekly?	[1]	Daily
	[2]	Weekly
	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
	[9]	Refused

IF (ANSWER = 2) SKIPTO Weekly

Question Circ\_Day

What is the weekday circulation of your newspaper?		
Read if necessary		
[1] Less than 25,000	[1 to 7]	
[2] 25,000 but less than 50,000		
[3] 50,000 but less than 75,000	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure
[4] 75,000 but less than 100,000	[9]	Refused
[5] 100,000 but less than 150,000	[10]	NOT APPLICABLE
[6] 150,000 but less than 200,000		
[7] 200,000 or more		

Question Circ\_Sun

What is the weekEND circulation of your newspaper?		
Read if necessary		
[1] Less than 25,000	[1 to 7]	
[2] 25,000 but less than 50,000		
[3] 50,000 but less than 75,000	[8]	Don't Know/Not Sure



[4] 75,000 but less than 100,000	[9] Refused
[5] 100,000 but less than 150,000	[10] NOT APPLICABLE
[6] 150,000 but less than 200,000	
[7] 200,000 or more	

SKIPTO Result

Question Weekly

What is the weekly circulation of your newspaper?	
Read if necessary	
[1] Less than 25,000	[1 to 7]
[2] 25,000 but less than 50,000	
[3] 50,000 but less than 75,000	[8] Don't Know/Not Sure
[4] 75,000 but less than 100,000	[9] Refused
[5] 100,000 but less than 150,000	[10] NOT APPLICABLE
[6] 150,000 but less than 200,000	
[7] 200,000 or more	

Question Result

We are offering to share the results of the study with all of those that participated. If you would like results of this study I would need your name and mailing address or e-mail address if you'd prefer.	[1] Specify: Name, mailing address, or email
Interviewer: Do NOT leave a blank line in the text of the open-end box. Just leave a comma between name, mailing address, e-mail address	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not sure
	[9] Refused

Question GENDER

Record respondent's gender [DO NOT ASK!]	[1] Male
	[2] Female
	[8] Cannot Tell

SKIPTO TCS

Question TCS\_INEL

I'm sorry, we are only supposed to be interviewing managing editors others in managerial positions in your news organization for the purposes of this study. Because it is important to understand opinions of managing editors, can I please have the names and phone numbers of the managing editor in your newspaper?	[1] Specify all of the following: NAME, PHONE NUMBER, NEWSPAPER NAME of managing editor
Interviewer: Do NOT leave a blank line in the text of the open-end box. Just leave a comma between name, phone number, newspaper, etc	[2] No
	[8] Don't Know/Not

		sure
	[9]	Refused

Question TCS\_INL2

Thank you for your time and cooperation. Have a nice day/evening.	[1]	To End Call
	[2]	If you need to leave a note for the supervisors.

Question TCS

That was the last of my questions. Thank you for your time and cooperation. Have a nice day/evening.	[1]	To End the Interview
	[2]	If you need to leave a note for the supervisors.

## Appendix 4

### Interview Guide For Register Citizen Staff

How long have you been a professional journalist?  
How long have you been working at the Register Citizen?  
What is your role in the newsroom?  
Who do you report to?

#### *Questions on newsroom practices and routines:*

Tell me about the changes the newsroom has undergone, and what you see as the main purpose.

Tell me how you spend your time on the job, and how much of that time is spent in direct contact with the community.

Has your role in the newsroom changed in the past year?

How has the move to the new building affected the way you do your job?

Have you noticed the involvement of more community members in the newsroom since the move to the new building? If so, has that changed the way you do your job?

Whose jobs in the newsroom are most involved day to day in the changes?

Has your news judgment changed in the past year?

Has the news judgment of the paper overall changed in the past year?

Has your relationship with your sources or other community members changed in the past year?

Has the quality of the journalism you produce changed in the past year?

Has the quality of the journalism produced by the newspaper overall changed in the past year?

#### *Questions on understanding and evaluation of organizational culture:*

Which people have been the driving forces behind the newsroom changes?

What has the pace of new ideas been, and where are you as a newsroom in the process of change?

In what manner are changes communicated? Are they communicated clearly?

How is progress and change evaluated in the newsroom?

How are you evaluated individually?

Do you spend more time reflecting on why and how you practice journalism than you used to? Does the newsroom?

How has the environment in the newsroom changed in the past year?

What is it like to work there? Are you more satisfied or less satisfied with your job than you were before the changes?

*Questions on the conceptions of audience:*

What is community or audience engagement?

Tell me about the Torrington community.

Tell me about the Register Citizen's audience. What is their relationship with the newspaper?

Would you say your community is routinely critical of the newspaper?

What is the role of a newspaper in the community?

What is the role of an individual audience member in relationship to the newsroom?

In what manner is the audience discussed in the newsroom?

Tell me how the changes at the Register Citizen came about. Who was involved, and what problems were the changes designed to address?

How did the goals get communicated? Were they clearly stated? Did you understand how they affected your job?

What changes came first to the newsroom? How did they affect you?

What do you understand to be the most important goal of the project?

## Appendix 5

### Register Citizen Documents

The next page will display a guide to the Register Citizen newsroom provided by the building's front door. It is shared as evidence of how the public is invited into the newsroom, and how the newsroom describes its experiments.

The following four pages are excerpted from the Register Citizen's Reporter's Handbook. They are the pages that describe the Open Newsroom experiment to the staff.

# YOUR GUIDE TO THE REGISTER CITIZEN NEWSROOM CAFE



## THE CAFE

- Open 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Free Public Wifi Internet Access: Bring your laptop or iPad and enjoy.
- Green Mountain Coffee for 75 cents a cup.
- Muffins, pastries from Through the Grapevine Bakery of Morris.

## THE NEWSROOM

- By inviting the community in to a working newsroom, we are inviting you to interact with reporters and editors to whatever degree you are comfortable with. Don't be shy ... if you have a question, or thoughts about, stories and potential stories that we could cover, please wander over to members of our staff and speak up.
- You are invited to sit in on our daily news meetings (4 p.m.). Just listen, or speak up with your thoughts on how we are planning story coverage.
- Like any workplace, sometimes we get busy with a deadline for a breaking news story, and ask that you understand if sometimes a reporter or editor is temporarily unavailable or has to put off their conversation with you.

## THE ARCHIVES

- Microfilm archives of the Torrington Register, Winsted Evening Citizen and The Register Citizen from 1874 to the present are available for free public access.
- Staff assistance with the microfilm is available - just ask.
- With only two viewing machines and one that prints/emails articles, we ask that you be patient and respectful of other visitors' time with the archives.

## COMMUNITY MEDIA LAB

- Computer terminals in The Register Citizen Newsroom Cafe are there for local bloggers and citizen journalists who are partnering with The Register Citizen's "Community Media Lab." If you are interested in being part of this project, see Digital Projects Editor Kaitlyn Yeager at the cafe or contact her at 860-489-3121, ext. 345, kyeager@registercitizen.com, or on Twitter at Twitter.Com/kmyeager.

## COMMUNITY JOURNALISM SCHOOL

- Free classes and workshops in our Community Journalism School will start in January. A schedule for the first quarter of 2011 will be posted soon at RegisterCitizen.Com/newsroomcafe and at the cafe.

## COMMUNITY MEETING SPACE

- Our classroom (with video conferencing capabilities) is available free as meeting space for community groups and nonprofits. A conference room is also available for smaller meetings. View our online calendar of available times at RegisterCitizen.Com/newsroomcafe, and reserve space/get more information from Kaitlyn Yeager at 860-489-3121, ext. 345, kyeager@registercitizen.com, or on Twitter at Twitter.Com/kmyeager.

## RULES OF CONDUCT

- We ask that you please respect your neighbors and our staff and be courteous in your interactions with others at The Register Citizen Newsroom Cafe. If you are engaged in disruptive behavior, or are viewing pornographic images, we will ask you to leave and not return.

The Register Citizen, The Avon News, The Canton News, The Granby News,  
The Litchfield News, The Simsbury News, Thomaston Express, Litchfield County Mom

# Foothills Media Group

## Reporter's Handbook

### The Open Newsroom

The Register Citizen's move to new offices this month represents a radical shift away from the traditional newsroom operation.

The "Open Newsroom" concept means that we are asking the public to be involved at every step in the process of our local news reporting and decision making. It will change our reporting, not just our seating arrangement and physical surroundings.

Basic principles of the Open Newsroom include **Transparency, Crowdsourcing, Collaboration, Learning and Experimentation.**

We want the public in on it from the moment we assign a story (and before that, actually. Because collectively, our audience knows better than we do what stories should be assigned). We want the process of reporting demystified. We believe more sources for a story always makes it a better (more accurate, more comprehensive, with better context) story, and so crowdsourcing wins every time over a closed reporting process utilizing only a handful of sources.

And we cannot lead efforts to provide local news and information in Northwest Connecticut by attempting to tightly and arrogantly control and "own" all content. In an open source world, that's a ridiculous, impossible and self-defeating proposition. Instead, we will help equip, train and collaborate with citizen journalists, bloggers and organizations in telling their stories via the platforms and in the manner that works best for them, and we will then aggregate and curate this content to best serve our audience.

Finally, as symbolized by the classroom that we have built into the newsroom, the Open Newsroom is about continual learning and experimentation. Our goal is to spread knowledge to the community and citizen journalism partners, but also to be pursuing a continual program of professional development for our own staff. We have a classroom

and a “lab,” and labs are meant for experimenting. We will try new things and fail at many of them. In the process, we will learn a lot about the present state and future of journalism.

**Here is the press release that will be distributed by JRC on Thursday:**

### **Journal Register Company Unveils Open Community Newsroom Concept at Connecticut Site**

YARDLEY, Pennsylvania – Journal Register Company, a leading local news and information company, today announced the relocation of The Register Citizen to an open, community-focused newsroom that includes a newsroom café, a community meeting room and access to more than a century of archives.

The Register Citizen, a daily website and newspaper serving Connecticut’s Litchfield County, is moving from offices the staff has used for 110 years to a reclaimed manufacturing site that is focused on community access and reader involvement in the newsgathering process.

“This is an example of the physical manifestation of the changes Journal Register Company has been making under our Digital First business model. Bringing audience into the physical space and providing a welcoming area for readers and staff to interact will continue to foster greater engagement,” said John Paton, Chief Executive Officer of Journal Register Company. “The inclusion of the crowd – through our Community Media Labs and the community meeting space – provide additional voices to the coverage of our communities. This is what our readership wants and it is what we will deliver.”

The Register Citizen’s new 13,000 square foot office space includes:

- Community Media Lab: Featuring five dedicated workstations for community bloggers and contributors, the Lab is located adjacent to the staff’s news meeting conference space. The Register Citizen Community Media Lab provides workspace for all community contributors interested in adding their blog and their voice to the community dialogue. Community Media Lab participants will receive training and have their work featured on [www.RegisterCitizen.com](http://www.RegisterCitizen.com).
- Community Meeting Room: Home to The Register Citizen Community Journalism School, this space features large screen monitors for video conferencing, this classroom environment will be used for Community Media Lab training on topics ranging from blogging to visual storytelling. This space will also be made available to community groups for meetings.
- Newsroom Café: With free WIFI and Green Mountain Coffee and muffins and pastries for sale, this gathering space provides a welcoming environment to those visiting the newsroom.
- Open Archives: More than 120 years of stories, photographs and newspapers will be made available to the public. Photographs from The Flood of 1955 will be on display when the archives are opened.

“As the primary vehicle for debate in the communities we serve, The Register Citizen now has a physical space that reflects the engagement of our readers,” says Matt DeRienzo, publisher of The Register Citizen. “Our audience – the community as a whole – is welcome to participate at any level and in any part of the news gathering process.”

About Journal Register Company

Journal Register Company is a leader in local news and information serving 992 communities



in 10 states. The Company's 324 multi-platform products reach an audience of nearly 14 million people each month. For more information visit the company website at [www.JournalRegister.com](http://www.JournalRegister.com).

**Here is the story that will appear in The Register Citizen on Thursday:**

**Register Citizen to move office, open newsroom cafe**

TORRINGTON – The Register Citizen announced Wednesday morning that it is moving its offices to a new location in Torrington on Dec. 13 and launching a Newsroom Cafe, Community Media Lab, Community Journalism School and a Local News Library, free and open to the general public.

“When you first walk into our new space at 59 Field St., it will look like a cross between a coffee shop, library and newsroom,” said Publisher Matt DeRienzo. “We are issuing a permanent invitation for the community to be engaged and involved in how we report local news and information, at every step in the process.”

The Newsroom Cafe will offer free public wifi Internet access, comfortable coffee house-style seating, Green Mountain Coffee and local baked goods for sale.

“With no walls, literally, between the Newsroom Cafe and The Register Citizen newsroom where reporters and editors work, the space is designed to invite readers into the process,” DeRienzo said. “We want readers to feel comfortable interacting, in person, with the reporters and editors who are making decisions about how to cover local issues they care about.”

The community will be encouraged to sit in on and participate, if they wish, in the newsroom’s daily story meetings, which will also be livestreamed at RegisterCitizen.Com, offering editors advice on how to cover stories, or pitching new story ideas.

The Register Citizen will be moving after more than 110 years in its offices at 190 Water St., a transition that DeRienzo said reflects a move from focus on print newspaper manufacturing to a “digital first” business model.

“Our digital audience at RegisterCitizen.Com is now significantly larger than our print audience, with online readership quadrupling over the past two years while our print circulation has remained flat,” he said. “That reflects a huge increase in audience overall, and we are engaged with that audience in an unprecedented way thanks to a digital-first, 24/7 news cycle and technological tools such as social media. Now we’ll have a physical space that reflects that engagement with the audience and encourages more of it.”

“This is an example of the physical manifestation of the changes Journal Register Company has been making under our Digital First business model. Bringing audience into the physical space and providing a welcoming area for readers and staff to interact will continue to foster greater engagement,” said John Paton, Chief Executive Officer of Journal Register Company, which owns The Register Citizen as well as other newspapers in Connecticut, including the Litchfield County Times and the New Haven Register. “The inclusion of the crowd – through our Community Media Labs and the community meeting space – provide additional voices to the coverage of our communities. This is what our readership wants and it is what we will deliver.” The new office is set up as a place where the community can consume news, by grabbing a cup of coffee and muffin and sit in the Newsroom Cafe with a laptop or iPad and access The Register Citizen’s free public wifi.

But it has also been designed as a place where the community can contribute news. In addition to participating in newsroom meetings or informally talking with reporters and editors, the new Register Citizen office will have workstations available and staff on hand to assist readers with submitting press releases, local calendar announcements, neighborhood and family news. Incorporated into the space will be a "Community Media Lab," with workstations set up for use by local bloggers and citizen journalists. The Register Citizen has named a Digital Projects Editor, Kaitlyn Yeager, who will be training and working with existing bloggers and community members who wish to start blogging. In addition to using the resources of our newsroom, they will also have the opportunity to have free links to their writing from RegisterCitizen.Com. "Our goal is to create a network of staff and citizen reporting down to a local neighborhood and niche interest level in Northwest Connecticut," Yeager said. "If you feel there is a void of information available about your neighborhood, or the sport that your child is interested in, or your hobby, I am here to help you fill it."

Yeager can be reached at 860-489-3121, ext. 345, at [kyeager@registercitizen.com](mailto:kyeager@registercitizen.com), or at [Twitter.com/kmyeager](https://twitter.com/kmyeager).

The new office will include a "Community Journalism School," where classes will be offered year-round for free or at a nominal cost to cover materials. Courses and workshops starting in January will include "Blogging 101," "Introduction to Social Media," "The Freedom of Information Act" and "Storytelling" with longtime Litchfield County journalist, author and Register Citizen columnist Owen Canfield.

And for the first time, The Register Citizen's complete archives, including editions of the newspaper going back 120 years, and detailed index card files from the first half of the century chronicling the birth, death and notable accomplishments of local residents, will be open and accessible to the public. A new microfilm machine will allow the public and staff to find an article from 1895, or 1953, convert it to a PDF and email it to themselves or digitize it for web-based reporting and history projects.

The Register Citizen's new offices at 59 Field St. in Torrington will be located in the former Torrington Company's "Excelsior" building, in space between the Intergis software company and where the temporary Torrington City Hall was located earlier this year. Improvements to the space included the addition of a handicapped-access ramp at the main entrance to the office. Free parking for the public is abundant.

For more information about the new office, Newsroom Cafe, Community Media Lab, Community Journalism School and Local News Library, visit <http://registercitizen.com/newsroomcafe>. You can also follow updates on this project, as well as highlights of the work of local citizen journalists, at <http://twitter.com/RCNewsroomCafe>.