

FROM CONTROVERSIAL TO COMPATIBLE:  
Newspaper Editors' Views on the Value of Reporter Beat Blogs

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A survey of top editors of large-circulation newspapers in the United States and follow-up interviews were conducted to determine the degree to which editors believe reporter blogging is important to their online sites and why. The study explored whether professional norms had been modified in the adoption of reporter blogging. The findings cannot be generalized to all newspaper editors because the survey was not of a random sample, but the study offers insight into how newsroom leaders view the relatively new practice of blogging by reporters.

Findings indicate that editors believe beat blogs have become an important content tool and have helped make news organizations more competitive. The findings support earlier research that suggested newsrooms adopted blogs to bolster their gatekeeping authority. This study revealed significant correlations between factors measuring editors' desire for gatekeeping authority and three of five characteristics used in Diffusion of Innovations theory to explain the rate of innovation adoption.

In terms of professional norms, most respondents felt strongly that blog content should be accurate and fair but not as strongly that reporters keep their opinions out of blogs or that blogs be edited before being posted. Many editors acknowledged having reporters who were confused about what should be in their blogs. Future research could help editors analyze the potential success of innovation adoption. With specific regard to blogs, research could be done with reporters to determine whether written policies about blogging are helpful and, if so, what guidelines are useful to include.