

COLLABORATION AND SEPARATION:  
HOW NEWS COMPANIES FIND INNOVATION

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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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

COLLABORATION AND SEPARATION:  
HOW NEWS COMPANIES FIND INNOVATION

presented by Kevin Drew,

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

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to family and friends who have supported me along my life journey, including a special soul I met in the 1990s. All have enthusiastically supported the decisions I have made and provided encouragement during times when I questioned the path I was on. More recently, they supported my decision to enter into the sea of uncertainty created by changing career course and entering into graduate studies.

My deepest gratitude, however, goes to my parents, the late Frank Bradford Drew and late Elizabeth Jane Smith Drew. It was their embrace of intellect, humor and sense of adventure, capped by the stubbornness of eternal optimism that has shaped my life. They pulled me out of the despair of a wheelchair and onto a path that I believe has more chapters ahead.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In August of 2013 I intentionally injected the stress and anxiety of the unknown into my life by returning to the United States to undertake graduate studies and research at the University of Missouri's School of Journalism. I moved from Hong Kong, where I had been based for more than eight years, first working for CNN International and later for The International New York Times. I was working at journalism's pinnacle.

Why would I leave that? What could academia possibly offer me? In the 1990s I had walked away from acceptance into another esteemed graduate journalism school in New York City because, as one professor there told me, I already was working at a level that most students in that program aspired to. Friends and colleagues warned that I would feel isolated in Missouri and that I would be unable to connect with my relatively inexperienced student colleagues. In many ways they were right. In a larger sense, however, they failed to know the people I would meet.

With that as a backdrop, my gratitude for this thesis extends on several fronts. I would like to recognize the Journalism Graduate Studies Office for helping guide me through the curriculum offerings and the bureaucratic process of graduate studies and its deadlines and requirements. Martha Pickens, in particular, has been of great help.

The MU School of Journalism is so large that it can be difficult to meet the many brilliant people working there – they are in their own private silos (cue a bit of foreshadowing of my thesis). I am grateful for meeting Roger Fidler. Our conversations over coffee were invaluable for journalism's true value is beyond technology. I also

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In a sense, work on this thesis mirrors where the news industry must head. It is the result of collaborating with many people. During the long hours I spent working on this research, reflecting on that idea and thinking of the many people who contributed in one way or another uplifted me. To all of you, know that you have my deepest thanks.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	viii
ABSTRACT .....	ix
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
Defining workplace barriers .....	9
Defining collaboration .....	11
Defining business initiatives .....	12
Economic duress and ethical challenges .....	12
Innovation .....	17
Diffusions of innovation .....	21
Bringing change .....	23
3. METHOD .....	26
Introduction .....	26
Research design .....	26
Research questions .....	28
Defining the sample .....	29
Data collection process .....	32
Data analysis .....	34

	Role of the researcher .....	35
	Limitations of the study .....	36
	Chapter summary .....	36
4.	FINDINGS .....	38
	Introduction .....	38
	Participant information .....	38
	Interview information .....	39
	Data analysis .....	39
	Co-workers .....	46
	Organization .....	50
	Audience .....	56
	Ethics .....	58
	Innovation .....	59
	Barriers and enablers to collaboration .....	62
	Chapter summary .....	64
5.	DISCUSSION .....	66
	a. Introduction .....	66
	b. Limitations .....	67
	c. Theoretical implications .....	68
	d. Professional implications .....	71
	e. The path forward .....	79
	f. Recommendations for further study .....	82
	g. Summary .....	83



REFERENCES .....	85-92
APPENDICES .....	93-194
A. IRB Approval .....	93
B. Participant Information .....	94
C. Email Protocol .....	95
D. Interview script .....	96
E. Interview transcripts .....	99-194

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Example of initial microanalysis process .....	41
2. First-level descriptive codes .....	42
3. Examples of first-level descriptive sub-codes .....	42
4. Example of second-level analytic codes .....	45

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Second-level analytic codes .....	43
2. Analytic codes and sub-codes .....	44
3. Relationship between collaboration and codes .....	46
4. Collaboration within an organization .....	63
5. Increased collaboration within an organization .....	64

COLLABORATION AND SEPARATION:  
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ABSTRACT

This research examines issues arising when employees at news media companies attempt to collaborate with each other to create, develop and execute strategies intended to enhance the organization's financial standing. The study involves a qualitative content analysis of interviews with individuals working in the editorial and various business (e.g., advertising, marketing) departments at various news organizations, including traditional (companies whose roots lie in print or broadcast) and new (digital-only) media. The research builds on the latest scholarship that examines how to create a culture within a news company that fosters innovation, be it process or product, and the dynamics at play between different departments at such companies.

The findings support previous research that shows the age and type of news organization (traditional versus start-up) affect collaboration. The research also provides a pathway for developing a "best-practices" strategy to help foster change. The idea of creating "intrepreneurial" thinking -- entrepreneurial attitudes within a company -- is an emerging area in journalism scholarship and this work represents only a step that offers more research opportunities in the best collaborative practices.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In March of 2014 The New York Times released to its staff a stunning document. The report, simply titled “Innovation,” bluntly stated that while the journalism being produced at The Gray Lady was excellent – the work by The Times is widely regarded as among the best in the world – it was failing to connect with digital audiences. It blamed this failure on internal issues: a lack of talent, and problems with both workflow and work culture.

The report listed other internal issues that, taken together, painted a raw picture of deep divides at The Times – generational, between departments and within the newsroom itself. Among the painful anecdotes the report shared: Michael Wertheim, the former leader of promotion at Upworthy, had turned down The Times’ offer to oversee digital audience development. “He explained that for anyone in that role to succeed, the newsroom needed to be fully committed to working with the business side to grow our audience.” (Innovation, p. 25) Later in the report, the authors said The Times’ senior leaders weren’t included in important strategy talks. “In recent months, the masthead has been left out of several important studies that will affect the newsroom, including marketing-led exploration of our audience development efforts and a detailed assessment of our ... capabilities and needs.” (Innovation, p. 74)

Attitudes and practices at The Times needed to change, the authors said, if the news organization was going to remain essential. The report recommended creating teams dedicated to analytics, audience development and strategy, as well as improved

hiring of digital talent. Perhaps most critical, the report's authors recommended better collaboration between the editorial and business departments.

The Times' is making progress in many areas – specifically, hiring digital talent, increasing its online traffic and growing engagement. Improving the internal culture, however, is moving at a slower pace. “Hiring is one thing, but changing longstanding work processes at an institution hidebound by print traditions like the Times is perhaps the hardest to do,” Lucia Moses wrote for Digiday (Moses, L., 2015).

In one sense, The Times' report isn't unique. Executives in many industries routinely put their companies through rigorous self-examination. But the company and existing media age makes “Innovation” unique. After several years of gloom and uncertainty hanging over the news industry's financial health, the report by The Times – one of the world's greatest journalism brands – was a sober admission that internal barriers still impede a news organization's attempt to develop strategies that enhance its financial standing. Solutions were needed.

It is important to avoid placing too much attention on The Times as an example for the rest of the news industry to follow. It is a unique news organization, but, as Anderson, Bell and Shirky (2012) note, its competitors have diminished, which “puts the Times in a category of one” (2012). Lessons learned from practices at by The Times are useful but have limits: “Any sentence that begins ‘Let's take the New York Times as an example ...’ is thus liable to explain or describe little about the rest of the landscape” (2012).

The Times' report does, however, underscore one of the great challenges confronting the news industry. At a time when collaboration between all divisions within

a news organization is essential to develop strategies and practices that will boost the company's financial standing, barriers remain. Cultures within various departments may be slowing such collaboration.

This thesis will examine those issues and attempt to address factors that may slow collaboration. The proposed primary research question is:

**What workplace barriers exist that slow or impede collaborative efforts to implement new business initiatives?**

This research is important because collaboration within news companies is essential to confront the pressing need to offset the continuing decline of the financial health of the news industry, an industry that is unique in its tradition of providing public service. Among the most noble of goals that the journalism industry strives for in democracies is to promote understanding by presenting facts and opinions that help guide citizens with their decision making. As Walter Dean described it for the American Press Institute, journalism's purpose is, "... to provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments" (Dean, 2015). Put in a more accessible way, the late playwright Arthur Miller famously said more than 50 years ago, in a pre-Internet age that "A good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation talking to itself."

In order to provide such a public service, however, news companies need to be financially healthy. The digital age has disrupted decades-old production and business models that supported news organizations and has underscored the sober economics of the print news industry, traditionally the sector of journalism possessing the greatest reporting resources. As Grueskin, Seave and Grave note (2011), the global reach of the

Internet has expanded markets for journalists, but also has sharply increased competition. The result: competition facing publishers “is nearly infinite, meaning much of the news has become a commodity, with pricing to match” (2011).

Even as news organizations have aggressively worked to boost online subscriptions – The New York Times reached 1 million online subscribers in the summer of 2015 – the abundance of journalism available online at no cost has fed continued reductions in print circulation, which in turn has led to lower print advertising revenue.

A quick review of numbers frames the news industry’s economic duress:

- Newspaper weekday circulation has dropped 19 percent in the United States from 2004 to 2014 (Mitchell, 2015).
- Total advertising revenue in newspapers from print and digital platforms dropped from a high of \$49.4 billion in 2005 to \$19.9 billion in 2014 (Barthel, 2015).
- Newsroom employment at daily newspapers stood at 32,900 full-time jobs in 2014, down from 56,900 positions in 1990 (Doctor, 2015).

The American Society of News Editors noted that 2014 marked the first double-digit percentage decline in newspaper newsroom positions since 2008, during the deep recession. As media industry analyst Ken Doctor remarked, the ASNE report underscores a pattern by newspaper companies to pursue a strategy that is “short-term, profit-maximizing, community-be-damned thinking” (Doctor, 2015).

The final job loss tally for 2015 may be even gloomier. Executives at the Dallas Morning News and The Seattle Times announced buyouts and layoffs in order to allow for future investment in positions with digital skills, but those investments remain



unclear. In the autumn, layoffs were announced at the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe, the Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News, Philly.com, the New York Daily News and at the National Geographic (Edmonds, 2015; Mullin, 2015). ESPN abruptly shuttered the award-winning online sports journalism site, Grantland.

Such a pattern of annual cutbacks fulfills the “death-spiral” prophecy journalism academic Phillip Meyer laid out more than a decade earlier: Job reductions lead to a reduced news effort, which in turn fuels a loss of circulation, which leads to lower ad rates and revenues, which in turn leads to even more news reductions (Meyer, 2004).

A similar disruption is beginning to unfold for the pay television model and poses a still-undetermined threat to a cable TV news industry that is witnessing its audience shrink (Holcomb, J., 2015).

The diminishment in reporting resources has opened the door for individuals and businesses to bypass news organizations and directly take their unfiltered messages to the public. When Kobe Bryant announced he would retire from professional basketball in late November of 2015, he did so by releasing his own unfiltered retirement message on a website created by former professional baseball player Derek Jeter (Mullin, 2015).

Bypassing journalistic institutions has less benign implications. When Amazon took issue with a New York Times report that was critical of work culture at the company, it posted its own response on Medium (Carney, 2015). Elsewhere, Verizon created its own website to present articles about technology, with a catch: writers were not allowed to report on U.S. spying and Net neutrality (O’Neill, 2014). Through Verizon reports, the public would not know that the company had turned over the telephone records of millions of people to the U.S. government without their approval, and sued to

prevent the Federal Communications Commission from blocking efforts by companies to charge more for a “fast lane” for data traffic.

The companies BlackBerry and Polaroid should pose a clear warning for the news industry: adapt or die. To improve a news organization’s financial standing and boost a news organization’s value to its audience, new business models and work practices will need to be discovered to fund original journalism content. New practices require innovation. Discovering and implementing innovation, however, isn’t easy. For years, research has focused on how little innovation has been taking place in newsrooms. Underscoring that point, Nordfors (2009) notes that news organizations have not been in a position to cover innovation, let alone implement it.

The news industry has, in many ways, had to return to business school. In its “Innovation” report, The New York Times authors acknowledge the principles from Clayton Christensen’s groundbreaking book, “The Innovator’s Dilemma,” (1997) which states that companies place priority on investments that sustain today’s business over investments that may create future business. Resources constantly need to be set aside to anticipate future competition and disruption (Christensen, 1997).

Pavlik (2013) argues that in order to remain viable in the future, news organizations must link innovative practice and experimentation with core journalistic values. Innovation implies a careful balance, namely “taking new approaches to media practices and forms while maintaining a commitment to quality and high ethical standards” (p. 183). Pavlik’s paper is noteworthy because it connects a news organization’s ethical values and relationship with its audience to technical innovation.

Finding ways to encourage collaboration within an organization remains a major challenge. Internal barriers at an organization are an outgrowth of human nature, writes Tett (2015) and can harm a company. Tett argues that:

“... our world does not function effectively if it is always rigidly streamlined. Living in specialized silos might make life seem more efficient in the short-term. But a world that is always divided into a fragmented and specialist pattern is a place of missed risks and opportunities” (p. 254).

Culture also plays a part in maintaining internal barriers at news organizations. As Shirky (2014) notes: “This disconnection between the business side and the news side was celebrated as a benefit, right up to the moment it became an industry-wide point of failure.”

Culture is an important focus for any discussion about innovation. Christensen’s disruptive innovation theory rests on “RPP” – resources, processes and priorities. The unique challenge at news organizations, then, is finding a way to change work culture to encourage collaboration between departments while preserving the editorial division’s independence from advertising pressures. In that regard, Latour (2014) correctly frames the challenge in a holistic manner. While principles and rules need to be in place preserving a newsroom’s independence, journalists should perceive they have a stake in the news organization’s financial health, and should collaborate accordingly. Latour argues that the relationship between an editorial department and an organization’s business departments:

“... should work less like a wall and more like a canal, purpose-built and with a clear narrow focus, transforming the areas it connects. Those news organizations

that align with business colleagues on relevant issues will be better positioned to respond to competitive threats.”

With Latour’s thinking as a guide, this research will examine the relationship between the editorial and business departments, both in theory and in actual practice. The research will incorporate the longstanding concepts of disruption and innovation championed by Christensen and creating internal change by Kotter to build on the latest research by scholars such as Boyles (2015) into how to install a sense of “intrapreneurship” – a start-up culture – into news organizations.

This research also will extend the early work by Silverman (2015) that examines best practices for establishing innovation in newsrooms. The themes and patterns arising from the interviews will provide an early step for creating values and guidelines to better collaborate within a news organization.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Essential to academic research is clearly defining terms that will be used and concepts that will be explored in the examination, as well as clearly stating the research goals. The research question provides multiple concepts that require clear definition:

**What workplace barriers exist that slow or impede collaborative efforts to implement new business initiatives?**

Precise definitions are essential. As Wacker (2004) argues:

“Definitions must be carefully designed to clearly represent the abstract concept.

The practice of using just common sense leads to imprecise formal conceptual definitions that in turn lead to ambiguous or vague measures and subsequently lead to ‘bad’ theory that cannot be confirmed nor refuted” (p. 630).

### **Defining ‘Workplace Barriers’**

Barriers to accomplishing goals are numerous, surrounding us in our personal and professional lives. The number of barriers is almost as endless as individual personalities. Barriers can be costly, as well. The human resources website Datis, for example, lists four of the most common workplace barriers being physical, language, gender and status (2015). The small business section of the Houston Chronicle, meanwhile, cites multitasking, poor communication and inconsistent policy enforcement as barriers to workplace productivity.

Seven typical workplace barriers that I present include:

- Hierarchy: The relationships between workers and the authority one has over another may facilitate or slow communication and collaboration.

- Physical separation: The layouts of workspaces, distances between office buildings and even separate time zones may pose challenges for workers to communicate and collaborate.
- Communication: This type of barrier includes the amount of communication between individuals and departments. It also includes the type of language that employees use. For example, the language used by an advertising or marketing employee about a product may be different than how an editorial department employee describes it.
- Culture: Most companies have their own unique culture that touch on practices, processes and communications. Cultural barriers also exist within companies and between departments. Employees in one department may be used to a less formal structure, while another department may be more accustomed to a more hierarchical structure.
- Diversity: Related to cultural barriers are barriers that stem from diversity issues. These touch on gender, ethnicity and personal values.
- Turf: A significant barrier touches on “turf” – the intersection of authority and control over assets. Employees and departments may resist change or opportunities to collaborate if they perceive a loss of personal authority.
- Fear of the unknown: This may be the most powerful barrier to facilitate collaboration and change. Avoiding experimenting with the unknown is baked into our DNA as a survival instinct. One study of subjects’ neural systems showed that people would prefer to make decisions with known

risky outcomes than ambiguous ones (Hsu, et al., 2005). The unknown releases stress hormones in people's bodies, which in turn, the researchers found, may lead people to pass up profitable opportunities.

### **Defining 'Collaboration'**

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary provides very stark definitions of "collaboration." One is positive: to work with another person or group in order to achieve or do something. The second, however, carries negative connotations: to give help to an enemy who has invaded your country during war. This research obviously focuses on the first definition, but perhaps the very different meanings plays a part in explaining why collaboration is difficult to achieve in the workplace.

Building on the dictionary definition, Nayar (2014) persuasively argues that effective collaboration requires a shared purpose. Yet instead of fostering a sense of common purpose, Nayar says, "... companies and executives spend endless amounts of time and money trying to foster collaboration through technology, training, and memos instead of quickly defining the problem, framing the challenges, and inspiring people to come together and tackle it" (2014).

Sharpening the idea of collaboration even further, Erickson (2012) notes that defining the roles of individuals in a team is far more important to discover innovation than a clearly defined approach to achieving the goal.

With those ideas as guiding principles, I define collaboration as two or more people working together, with a shared purpose and whose roles are clearly defined, to achieve a stated goal. That goal is a broad umbrella that includes work processes and tangible products that are of use internally, within the organization, or externally.

## **Defining ‘Business Initiative’**

Finally, the phrase, “business initiative,” is intentionally being left without a clear definition. This research allows the definition open to the interview subjects in order to obtain insight into their perspectives on what a business initiative is.

## **Economic Duress and the Ethical Challenge**

This research is framed with the news industry’s troubled financial health as a backdrop, and the ethical challenges posed by searching for ways to sustain journalism. These issues have existed since the creation of a commercial press and are the subject of substantial research. Schrader (2011) reminds us that the nature of journalism can create conflicts with the organization’s business model. This tension between journalism’s fundamental mission to inform the public and the company’s need to produce a profit has existed since modern journalism developed in commercial newspapers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The tension accelerated, however, with the birth of the commercial Internet at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the global economic recession that began in 2008.

Cho and Hongsik (2004) warns that the news industry did not understand that the way people interact with the Internet for news consumption is fundamentally different to how they interacted with a newspaper, television screen or radio broadcast. The researchers recognize that the Internet is a goal-oriented medium, and people using the medium see advertising as an impediment to reaching their goal (2004). At the same time, the idea of media convergence – the merging of print, video, audio and digital mediums – raises questions about the quality of journalism being produced. Quinn (2004) examines this tension between the financial and journalistic motives for promoting convergence. A growing business interest affecting journalism managers’ decisions, and



– in a warning that accurately predicted today’s news industry’s chase for online traffic – asserted that convergence could threaten democracy by focusing on content that is emotional and sensational (Quinn, 2004). Peeler and Guthrie (2007) note an eroding wall between journalism content and advertising. They emphasize the use of “traditional constraints” – ethics, law and the marketplace. They call for strong self-regulatory programs within the news industry and say media companies need to be transparent when they present content to the public.

Despite those warnings, the news industry did not adapt to new digital realities. Little creativity took place in the mid-2000s to develop new revenue streams in the newspaper industry (Mensing, 2007). Too few newspaper managers were considering online journalism content as a “path to profitability” (Mensing, 2007, p. 34). Only in the previous five years had there been a general recognition in the news industry to try to break away from traditional revenue models.

Herbert and Thurman (2007), in their study of British newspapers, warn of the major fiscal challenges caused by the abundance of free online content and the inability of news businesses to produce a feasible formula for generating income from their online activity. An examination into paid content strategies of British news sites led to the researchers’ conclusion that “many newspapers feel that the revenue they could gain from content charging would be less than what they would lose in advertising” (p. 214). Such a conclusion has led many news organizations to intentionally carry advertising designed to appear as editorial content. Starck (2008), through his research on paid obituaries in newspapers, shows how the industry is trying to experiment with new revenue streams. They do this by taking what had existed before, sponsored content, and turning it into

content that resembles journalism. The author warns that such practices pose a danger to a news organization's most cherished asset, credibility.

As the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century came to a close, the relationship between a news organization and its audience began to come under closer scrutiny and reassessment. Vanacker and Belmas (2009) argue that a deeper relationship between a news organization and the public can lead to increased public trust, which in turn creates economic benefits for the organization. Reddin van Tuyll (2010) argues that today's news industry should return to a landscape similar to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when smaller news organizations were able to thrive. "A return to smaller, independently owned, local and specifically targeted news products, with a limited number of important national and international journals, appears to be where the future lies." (2010, p. 483). Reddin van Tuyll discusses the news industry's economic health in the context of the size of the news organization. She represents a growing number of voices advocating many smaller-sized news organizations with a very few national and international organizations.

Nel (2010) – in his study of innovation in online news models – shows that few publishers were taking advantage of new technologies to exploit advertising opportunities. Vukanovic (2011) argues that news industry leaders should develop business plans that depart from traditional one-way relationships between news organizations and the public.

One expression of re-imagining a news organization's relationship with the public is through crowd funding, where the journalist has a stake in creating work the public wants. Aitamurto (2011) concludes that journalists must consider how to craft their work

to align with the goals and desires of the public. The author says a donation model builds a tighter relationship between journalist and public.

Almiron-Roig (2011) extends that reasoning by arguing that the public service tradition of journalism can be an important part of helping ease the industry's financial troubles. He argues that the journalism industry needs to stop tying the public interest function of a news organization to the economic performance of the business. The author focuses on non-profit alternatives to the traditional commercial business strategies, and hints at communitarian ethics not only being a part of the journalism's industry's social contract with the public, but also playing an important commercial role. A closer relationship between news organization and public poses hazards, however, and Pickard and Stearns (2011) ask whether "journalism-for-hire" revenue models place a journalist's independence at risk.

Wikstrom and Ellonen (2012) provide further momentum to building audience relationships when they evaluate the impact of social media on business models. Their research shows that news companies still rely on maximizing page views to draw advertising revenue. Yet they also show that social media features may enhance or even change the media company's value to the public. As a result, they say there is potential to develop an untapped revenue stream by developing social media content that could appeal to advertisers, and thus increase the value of online advertising. They see a new relationship forming between a news organization and the public through social media. This approach will require rethinking a news organization's relationship with both the public and contributing journalists.

Grueskin, Seave and Grave (2011) note that digital and mobile platforms present ways for news organizations to quickly build audiences. But, they ask, what is the value of an online audience? Increased numbers through standard analytical measures such as page views do not always lead to proportional gains in revenue.

At the very least it will take time to monetize new business plans and build tighter relationships with the public. Krumsvik (2012) shows that digital media will increase in value, yet, because of different conditions for profitability, will be unable to provide future funding for traditional journalism organizations.

Dangers remain prevalent for a news industry that remains tied to advertisers, which increasingly can take their messages directly to the public. Focusing on generating large amounts of online traffic pose ethical questions, as well, as previously noted by researchers such as Quinn. One essay produced by the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania that examines The Oregonian newspaper's work performance policy provides a comprehensive assessment of production quotas for journalists in the newsroom. Quotas, the essay points out, work best when tied to clear-cut tasks, are used on a short-term basis and when workers are allowed to work independently ("Productivity Quotas," 2014).

But issues arise from quotas, including misplaced incentives, and adversely affecting worker morale over a "sense of fairness." Applying story quotas to a news organization's website carries risks, according Adam Cobb, a professor of management at Wharton. "Journalists at The Oregonian might discover that the only way to drive traffic to their stories is if they write about sex scandals, celebrities and other forms of sensationalism" (2014).

## **Innovation**

As 2016 begins, three strategies dominate the news industry's approach to generating revenue: a subscriber-based strategy (such as through pay walls), a donor approach (the public radio model) or the advertiser-driven approach of providing most content for free to generate large volumes of online traffic. Other strategies such as new product development, sponsoring events or providing social media services play minor roles. The thinking about finding sustainability has changed little from the pre-digital era.

The New York Times' "Innovation" report marked a watershed moment in the news industry. The recognition for editorial and business departments to collaborate to discover innovation is now embraced by one of the most traditional and influential news organizations in the United States. At the same time, however, academic research and real-world practice demonstrate that thinking seems to be mired in the pre-digital world belief that financial health needs to be tied to advertisers.

Clearly, new approaches to find revenue are needed. Editorial and business departments, however, must do more than just collaborate; they must discover *innovation*, a word that, as Damanpour notes, is closely tied to change (1991). But what is innovation? The word is used so frequently in a digital media world crowded with start-ups and attempted reinventions that the meaning has become muddled. Just like "collaboration" and "business initiative," a precise definition is needed for "innovation."

Baregheh, Rowley and Sambrook argue that innovation plays an essential role in the process of creating value and sustaining competitive advantage (2009). This research thesis, then, will apply the three authors' definition of innovation to interpreting the interviews with subjects: "Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organizations

transform ideas into new/improved products, service or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace” (p. 1334).

Expanding on that definition, the researchers note that innovation and change may vary at organizations, “depending on the organization’s resources, capabilities, strategies, and requirements” (p. 1324). Diving deeper into the idea of innovation, Christensen, Raynor and McDonald differentiate “sustaining innovations,” which improve on existing products or processes, from disruptive innovations. Disruptive innovations are initially considered inferior but nonetheless create new markets. As the quality improves, the innovation replaces existing markets (2015).

For years, research has focused on how little innovation was going on in newsrooms. In charting the development of online news in the 1990s, Nguyen (2008) reveals a fear-driven culture in the traditional news industry that resists innovation.

Research by Westlund and Krumsvik (2014) examining newspapers in Norway provides mixed findings on collaboration. Cultural walls remain significant barriers to developing interest in collaboration and discovering innovation. In a conclusion that suggests areas for further research, managers at newspaper companies may find that technological employees are more important than workers in editorial and business departments to trigger change in the production and distribution of news content (2014).

In making the argument for developing innovation strategies, Pisano (2015) notes the challenges that managers have to overcome. He singles out four tasks that must be addressed: How is innovation expected to create value for the organization; developing a plan at a high level that allocates resources; creating a high-level plan that provides

sufficient resources to the innovation; managing trade-offs; and recognizing that innovation strategies must evolve.

Innovation requires collaboration and Hill, Brandeau, Truelove and Lineback (2015) note the hard work needed to foster collaboration. They argue that Thomas Edison's greatest contribution wasn't any individual invention but the shops he formed that turned into research and development laboratories. The researchers also emphasize leadership as key to creating encouraging conditions that push for testing possibilities before choosing one. They list three activities that innovative organizations use well: "creative abrasion," which calls for people engage in collaborative problem-solving; "creative agility," which requires people to learn through continual experimentation; and, finally, "creative resolution," which calls on creating solutions because they integrate existing ideas in unanticipated ways.

Anthony, Duncan, Pontus and Siren (2015) identify six mistakes organizations commonly make when trying to innovate: "Asking employees to generate ideas without creating mechanisms to do something with them; Pushing for answers without defining problems worth solving; Urging risk-taking while punishing commercial failure; Expecting experiments without providing access to a well-stocked laboratory; Pleading for breakthrough impact without allocating A-team resources; and demanding disruptive ideas, without ring-fencing resources for them."

Digital technology provides a way to rapidly innovate, say Grueskin, Seave and Grave (2011). News Organizations can quickly determine an audience size and extend, alter or terminate a business. That efficiency, however, makes it more difficult for any

single news organization to benefit from an innovation: competitors can adapt or imitate more quickly, reducing the amount of time any specific innovation remains unique.

In language pioneered by Porter (2008), a company's value is not in size, but by profitability. The five forces affecting business strategy to develop profitability include:

- The rivalry among existing competitors
- The bargaining power of suppliers
- The bargaining power of buyers (consumers)
- The threat of new entrants into a market
- The threat of substitutes

Seen through the prism of Porter's Five Forces, news organizations working on digital platforms face extremely high competition with little time to enjoy any specific innovation. Putting a human face to innovation, Ovans (2015) posits that innovation is as much about people as it is about process: "Talented people can be hobbled by poor processes; hesitant people can be uplifted by smart processes." Supporting that argument, Chan-Olmsted, Rim and Zerba (2013) argue that innovation must be quickly recognized and adopted. They show how public adoption of a technology is tied directly to the perceived advantage and ease of use of that technology. The authors suggest that mobile phone use is a stronger predictor of mobile news adoption than consumption of media through more traditional platforms.

As Dälken (2014) notes, Porter's model does have limitations. Globalization, deregulation and – critically – digitization affects the five forces. Porter's model also requires identifying the correct competitors, a practice that has echoes in a news industry that, as research will show, faces challenges in identifying competitors.



## **Diffusions of Innovation**

Discovering innovation, of course, isn't enough. New thinking and practices require effective communication throughout an organization. For purposes of this research, the experience and anecdotes that interview subjects share is being examined through the prism of the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory. Rogers (1995) defines diffusion as the way a new idea is communicated over time within a social system. The spreading of new ideas is influenced, he argues, by four elements: the idea, the social system, the communication channels within the social system and time. He goes on to categorize the people and social systems that adopt new ideas: the innovators, the early adopters, the early majority, the late majority and the laggards.

Rogers' book remains relevant today because, as Moseley (2004) notes, the book has been frequently updated to fit into industries and social behavior. In journalism, Rogers' DOI theory applies to developing revenue strategies and newsrooms trying to adapt to changing audience behavior. On the first point, news organizations such as Politico or Bloomberg News have been early adopters of developing "revenue verticals" – dividing a topic into more sharply focused subtopics that can be sold to subscribers.

On the second point of adapting newsrooms, Singer (2004) notes how the idea of "convergence" – the merging of platforms to disperse editorial content – has been seen at news organizations as a benefit, yet has faced obstacles to adoption, such as a lack of technological skills or differing cultures existing in different newsrooms.

Another aspect of DOI theory to incorporate when considering the intersection of technology and innovation is the traditional s-curve, a logistical function in business practice that applies diffusion of innovation (DOI) concepts to describe the spread of new

technologies over time. As Foster (1986) originally asserted, growth starts out slowly at first, and then when the product begins to connect with larger numbers of customers, growth rapidly accelerates. Eventually, market becomes saturated and growth tapers off, forming the top of the S.

For purposes of this research, scrutinizing the language of the subject interviews will be analyzed through the context of diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory, particularly in three areas: the development of ideas and products; the communication between departments of such ideas and products; and the adoption or rejection of such ideas and products.

Micó, Masip and Domingo (2013) applied both diffusion of innovations and actor-network theories to examine how the news organization in Catalonia carried out internal processes to innovate. The researchers found that the journalists' acceptance of innovative processes depended on their position within the news organization, with internal power relationships complicating the acceptance of new policies (pp. 134-135).

Application of DOI theory in the media industry has focused on measuring public adoption of products such as mobile devices. For example, Westlund (2008) reveals a disparity between the capabilities of mobile devices and how people actually use the device. In more recent research, Chan-Olmsted, Rim and Zerba (2013) show how public adoption of a technology is tied directly to the perceived advantage and ease of use of that technology. The authors suggest that mobile phone use is a stronger predictor of mobile news adoption than consumption of media through more traditional platforms.

Rogers' ideas have spurred researchers such as Hornik (2004) to ask basic questions: What is the process of invention and adaption of technologies or ideas subject

to diffusion? Why do some people adopt before others? What is the process that people go through as they adopt? To try to find answers to those questions, a closer examination of the processes and people needed to bring change.

### **Bringing Change**

For several years, change and innovation have received increasing attention as ways to evaluate an organization's success (Ford and Gioia, 2000; Friedman, 2005). But to begin answering Hornik's questions, attention first must focus on the processes used to encourage the necessary collaboration that develops innovative strategies. Crucial, definitive stages are needed to bring organizational change. Kotter (1995) put forth eight steps for what he calls transformational change within an organization. In explaining the eight steps, Kotter argues that internal change at an organization goes through a series of phases that usually require a considerable length of time to carry out. He also maintains that skipping steps or making mistakes in any of the steps can negate any progress.

Building on that, Kotter and Cohen insert a human element into the change process. They assert that the primary problems people face when trying to implement his eight steps don't lie in "strategy, structure, culture or systems" but rather are about "changing the behavior of people" (Kotter and Cohen, 2002). They assert that change initiatives may often fail because of a reliance of using just data and analysis to win support from employees. Emotions also play a role, and successful managers who bring about change need to appeal to workers' hearts in addition to their minds.

Appelbaum, Hebashy, Malo and Shafiq (2012) say Kotter's eight steps remains a good model to consider bringing change within an organization, but also note that little critical testing of the model has been executed. They warn against assuming Kotter's

model ensures successful change, noting what they call its rigid approach, that some of its steps may not be relevant and that the model may not help in all scenarios (p. 775).

Perhaps taking Kotter and Cohen as a cue, Gilley, Dixon and Gilley (2008) focus on the individual, examining the idea of leadership as being crucial to bringing lasting change within an organization. Their findings reinforce the idea that workers' skill sets and leaders' ability to communicate directly influence the ability for an organization to innovate. Organizations must focus on developing leaders with change skills (p. 166).

Building on that, Gill (2010) notes that while corporate values and culture are critical, it is the power of the individual that cannot be overestimated to bring about change. In areas such as vision for the company, developing strategy, providing empowerment, motivation and inspiration to employees, it is people, not process that is the most important factor. "Change requires good management, but above all it requires effective leadership" (p. 317).

Creating the proper work climate is essential to bring change and find innovation, argue Schneider, Gunnarson and Niles-Jolly (1994). The researchers assert that a work climate is the atmosphere that employees view exists by being created in their organization by work practices, procedures and rewards (p. 18). Three factors help foster what the researchers call "citizenship behavior" – workers voluntarily helping to preserve and protect the organization: management being viewed as trustworthy; norms of helpfulness and cooperation exist; and a rewards system exists that is seen as fair and is tied to organizational success (pp. 24-25).

How to bring about internal innovation at a news organization is a growing area of focus, particularly with the idea of "intrapreneurship" – employees at a company who

are tasked with a project and instructed to solve the problem as an entrepreneur. Through news innovation leaders in the United States and Canada, Boyles (2015) shows that the hopes of spurring creative intrapreneurship are slowed by longstanding structural practices of the newsroom. Differences between start-up and traditional newsroom culture can impair internal innovation within broader news organizations (Boyles, 2015). In a greater sense, work culture in newsrooms and management structures often “isolate innovative ideas from the core reporting functions of the newsroom (Boyles, 2015).

Perhaps those internal difficulties are understandable. As Hsu, et al. (2005) note, people are wired not to take risks. When it comes to finding innovation by trying new, unknown practices, managers may understandably default to the idea of better the devil they know than the devil they don't. As a follow-up study, Hsu and his colleagues examined people who had brain damage to the areas that were part of the alerting response. Those people were more rational in their assessment of risk, they discovered. Let us hope that brain damage won't be necessary for news industry leaders to take rational approaches to collaborate.

One of Boyle's questions for further research, then – what are best practices for newsroom intrapreneurs to create change within a broader organization – becomes an impetus for this research, which aims to examine workplace barriers. As we go further, the research question bears repeating as a guide:

**What workplace barriers exist that slow or impede collaborative efforts to implement new business initiatives?**

## **CHAPTER 3: METHOD**

### **Introduction**

This study collected the opinions from employees in the editorial and business departments at news organizations about their experiences working with colleagues in other departments. A primary goal of the research is to identify the barriers at news organizations that slow or prevent collaboration between various departments attempting to develop new business initiatives. A secondary purpose of the research is to develop a good-practices strategy that news organizations can employ that will facilitate collaboration and change.

The research is based on interviews conducted with members of the news industry. Conducting and then examining the texts of those interviews is a complex and rigorous endeavor. Various concepts must be explained and employed.

This chapter outlines the design of the research, including the research questions, recruitment of participants, data collection and analysis methods, as well as the limitations of the study.

### **Research Design**

This study employed the use of a qualitative research design. This method was selected because of the overall lack of literature existing on the research topic. Of the several characteristics that Creswell (2003) notes about qualitative research, one in particular resonates for this examination. Qualitative research is emergent, which allows the researcher to discover and then examine data without pre-existing biases.

Tracy (2010) lists three qualities that act as the “core” for good qualitative research: possessing self-reflexivity, context and thick description. Self-reflexivity addresses how the researcher’s experiences, attitudes and roles affect interactions with the research subjects and scenes (p. 2). Context refers to the researcher immersing herself/himself in the moment of examination, as well as building any moment of research into a larger idea of knowledge (p. 3). Thick description is closely tied to context (p. 3). At this stage, a researcher is immersed into a specific culture, considers the circumstances at the scene and then uses that data to begin building theories.

Additionally, Tracy (2013) maintains that good qualitative research assumes a “phronetic” approach, a method designed to address what she calls “real-world problems” (p. 4). This approach calls for the researcher to identify a problem and then analyze data that helps provide insight into the issue, even possibly providing ideas or practices that can address the problem.

The qualitative method of examination offers the researcher several strengths (Tracy (2010). Qualitative research helps probe behaviors that have previously been assumed or taken for granted. Additionally, qualitative method of research is helpful when little literature exists in the area under examination. Further, the qualitative research brings understanding about the world and the institutions that operate in society.

The rationale that leads to using qualitative research methods – the lack of substantial literature – also leads to employing the use of grounded theory to examine the data. Given the relatively new frontier of research on this topic – inter-department collaboration at news organizations to create “intrapreneurial” units – grounded theory is especially relevant. Grounded theory is derived from the need to “discover” the research

topic. Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that discovery is “the central purpose of using the grounded theory method” (p. 38).

With discovery as its central purpose, Tracy (2010) says grounded theory requires the researcher to collect data while simultaneously analyzing the data (p. 184). Grounded analysis requires the research to derive from the data, not the research question or existing literature, notes Tracy (2010, p. 184). This is critical for an examination with comparatively little existing literature. As Tracy (2010) notes, “... grounded studies are marked by delaying the literature review until after the data are collected” (p. 184).

Finally, because qualitative research has come under criticism for lacking scientific rigor (Creswell, 2003), grounded theory is an attractive choice for methodology because of its rigor (Lichtman, 2006).

However, while grounded theory is a useful tool to examine the data, it can lead to incomplete examination. The analysis method employed in this research is best described as iterative. As Tracy (2010) explains, iterative analysis methods alternate between using both emergent readings of the data and “an etic use of existing models, explanations and theories” (p. 186). The researcher weighs data emerging from the research with “the active interests, current literature, granted priorities, and various theories the researcher brings to the data” (p. 186). In this manner, an iterative examination is not repetitive, but reflexive. The researcher is examining the data, connecting to insights and, finally, refining the focus.

### **Research Questions**

The driving idea to develop research questions is a larger question: “What are best practices for newsroom intrapreneurs to create change within a broader organization?”



A primary research question and two secondary questions were developed to drive the inquiry and collect the opinions from employees in the editorial and business departments at news organizations about their experiences working with colleagues in other departments. To review, the primary research question is:

- What workplace barriers exist that slow or impede collaborative efforts to implement new business initiatives?

The secondary research questions are:

- How are new business strategies developed, communicated and implemented within a news organization?
- Who will be the early adopters and who will be slow in accepting and implementing new business strategies?

Lindlof and Taylor's (2011) discussion of "informant interviews" served as the basis for the development of the research and interview questions. It is explained in the data collection section of this chapter. Interviews allow for "mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation" between interviewer and interviewee (Tracy, 2010, p. 132). Interviews also help obtain information that the researcher may not be able to access, such as past events or secretive meetings. In a sense, interviews are about reconstructing stories (Tracy, 2010) that provide context and necessary background to understanding data. However, the researcher has to treat interviewees and data with ethical care (Tracy, 2010).

### **Defining the Sample: Participant Selection and Information**

The number of employees at news organizations to interview for this research is small but wide-ranging. When determining the number of interviews required to obtain

useful data is, Tracy (2010) points out the number is “unabashedly ambiguous” (p. 138). If too few people are interviewed, the research will be shallow. However, it is important to note that the nature of qualitative research does place limits: If too many people are interviewed, then, as Tracy (2010) notes, the data will be an overwhelming amount to assess. Indeed, Tracy estimates that a one-hour interview translates into 15 total research hours when factoring in planning, interviewing, transcribing and analyzing. Tracy has raised five to eight interviews as a minimum number to be “pedagogically valuable,” (p. 138), while other researchers have provided higher numbers.

For purposes of this study, the researcher analyzed and interpreted data along the way. The researcher assessed that a “saturation” point – the point when themes that addressed the research goal began repeating themselves – emerged at 11 interviews.

The research question dictated that the people selected for interviews are involved in developing strategies and practices that can benefit their companies. Additionally, the terms identified at the beginning of the literature review – workplace barriers, collaboration and business initiative – helped further narrow down who should be interviewed.

Interview subjects needed to work in either the editorial or business departments at a news organization. “Business” departments can include advertising, marketing and audience development divisions. Audience development is a relatively new term in journalism, and as one interview subject described it, the division functions in much the same way as circulation departments do for newspapers, only for digital platforms. Additionally, interview subjects needed to have worked with colleagues from other departments on a project they considered a business initiative.

Interview subjects were chosen to intentionally represent a cross-section of companies: traditional print, broadcast and digital-only. Both traditional print and broadcast news organizations have websites and accompanying staff, but these companies use print and broadcast as the primary medium to reach their audiences. They are older organizations, born before the dawn of the commercial Internet in the early 1990s. Digital-only companies are newer organizations, born since the creation of the commercial Internet and have a presence solely on the Internet.

The primary method used to identify potential research subjects was to examine publicly available information on news companies' internal organization: online mastheads, as well as publicly available reports from news employees that refer to colleagues. Another method used was the process known as snowball sampling. In this method, researchers identify potential interview subjects who match the research criteria to recommend a colleague for interviewing (Tracy, 2010). This method was considered but was used with extreme caution and discretion. This is because obtaining interviews was extremely difficult; the number of interview requests was roughly five times the number of actual interviews conducted. Most people in the news industry who were approached were extremely reluctant to candidly speak about their experiences working with colleagues. Anonymity of identities in the research had to be granted.

A total of 11 people were interviewed for this research. A description of the 11 interview subjects is listed in Appendix B. The concept of purposive sampling was used to help select the interview subjects. Payne (2007) states that, "Samples are generally selected purposively because it is believed that they can contribute to the topic under investigation" (p. 74). In reviewing the use of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin,

1990) and iterative analysis (Tracy, 2010), the researcher did not find a recommended number of people to interview. Additional justification on the number of interview subjects came from considering the concept of saturation, which will be elaborated further in the next discussion, on the data collection process.

Request for approval to conduct this study was submitted to the research site's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research site's Institutional Review Board approved this study (see Appendix A).

### **Data Collection Process**

The primary method employed to recruit interview subjects was by an email sent by the researcher directly to the prospective subject. On one occasion, an interview subject was asked to suggest other potential participants. On that occasion, the researcher asked for multiple potential participants to help ensure anonymity for any participant that would agree to the interview. The initial email carried the guarantee of anonymity for all participants. The researcher then made a follow-up telephone call to the prospective interview subject to further explain the research study and answer any questions. If the participant agreed, a consent form was emailed to them and they were required to sign and return before participating in an interview. Appendix C shows the email protocol.

A participant number was assigned to the subject, a precaution used to help ensure anonymity. The participant number is also included on Appendix B.

Interviews were conducted at an agreed date and time, and were conducted over telephone, on a one-on-one basis. Participants' permission for audio recording the interviews were obtained in advance of the interviews. The length of the interviews

varied, but averaged about 35 minutes. The shortest interview was with subject no. 2, lasting 22 minutes. The longest interview was with subject no. 6, lasting 62 minutes.

The researcher created a list of questions that were used during the interviews. These questions served as the overarching structure for the interviews, but the researcher also left open the possibility to explore answers in greater depth. In this sense, the study employed the use of the semi-structured interview method, an approach that Smith and Eatough (2007) stress is guided by a question order, but also allowing exploring responses in a guided manner.

The list of questions is listed on Appendix D. The development of interview questions was, in part, guided by the idea of “informant interviews” as defined by Lindlof and Taylor (2011). In this approach to interviewing, Tracy (2010) explains that the interview participants – informants – are people “who are experienced and savvy in the scene, can articulate stories and explanations that others would not, and are especially friendly and open to providing information” (pp. 140-141). Given the previously stated lack of literature in the area of research, interviews were used to help identify gaps in academic literature.

The concept of data saturation played a vital role in analyzing the data from interviews and determining when enough interviews had been conducted. Glaser and Strauss (1967) define “theoretical saturation” as a state when new pieces of data add little, if any, new value to the emerging data (Tracy, 2010). Strauss and Corbin (2012) build on this idea by stating that enough data has been collected if:

- No new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category;
- The category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions

demonstrating variation; and

- The relationships among categories are well established and validated.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher personally transcribed interviews following their conclusion. The researcher transcribed the data for two primary reasons: To ensure anonymity of the interview participants, and to help develop an understanding of the data. Additionally, Payne (2007) recommends novice researchers should transcribe interviews.

A thorough transcription process is time consuming, but also helps offset any limitations the researcher may have through “theoretical sensitivity,” a concept that refers to the researcher’s knowledge of the subject of inquiry, and the ability to detect subtleties from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The researcher also maintained notes of each interview. These notes, when compared with the notes of other interviews, helped identify useful statements that supported ideas and – eventually – themes emerging from the interviews.

A constant comparative method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used to analyze the data from the interviews and help generate categories, or codes. Strauss and Corbin (1990) cite four types of data analysis: microanalysis, open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open, axial and selective coding are the primary methods used in grounded theory.

These three methods together call for the breaking down of data into basic concepts, assembling the data into related categories, and then integrating the data to develop theory. Open coding calls for the data to be broken into a simple form – that of concepts. Subcategories may begin to develop during open coding. Axial coding calls on

reassembling the data fractured during the open-coding stage. Axial coding emphasizes the relationship between categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Selective coding calls on integrating data and further refining categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is at this stage that the researcher develops a central theme that all categories, or codes, can be related (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Identifying a central theme and showing the relationship between that theme and categories is called integration.

Microanalysis is a combination of open and axial coding. It is useful at the beginning of research to help develop categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). There are three stages of microanalysis: analysis of data collected from subjects and other sources; the researcher's interpretation of the data; and awareness by the researcher to analyze the relationship between observation and interpretation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher can, in effect, become part of the research process. As Creswell (2003) emphasizes, "...the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study" (p. 200). This is important to note, because Corbin and Strauss (1990) note that qualitative research is biased. Bias may uniquely affect qualitative research because of the researcher's role in the examination. It becomes vital, then, for the researcher to acknowledge openly the presence of any bias before an examination takes place.

The researcher in this study has extensive experience in the news media industry as a professional journalist. The researcher's experience is deeply rooted in traditional news companies – that is, companies with a focus on print and broadcast. Most of the researcher's professional journalism experience resides in companies whose historical

emphasis has been in printed daily newspapers. The researcher has a sharply defined sense of a separation between news and business operations – the so-called separation between church and state in the journalism industry.

However, the researcher also carries experiences that come from news and business departments collaborating, at best, in a problematic manner. Indeed, this research comes in part, from the researcher's experience of the news and business departments not successfully collaborating.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The characteristics of qualitative research place limitations on the research. The findings do not render themselves to broad generalizations. The research was conducted with employees at several news organizations. Yet there is no claim that these organizations represent the entire news industry. Further, the reliance on self-reported data means the researcher has to take into account the biases of the interview subjects, as well as their own motivations. Additionally, the nature of the interviews, where anonymity was an issue for all participants to participate, may allude to internal sensitivities the interview participants have at their news organizations. A final limitation may be the researcher's own lack of experience with academic qualitative research.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) warn of mistakes that novice researchers can make. Mindful of that, the researcher endeavored to be familiar with qualitative research methods.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the design of the research, including justifying the qualitative approach and using grounded theory as a guiding principle. The research question was presented and explained. The researcher described the recruitment of



interview subjects, as well as data collection and analysis sections of the research. The role of the researcher was explained, and the researcher's biases were clearly presented. Limitations of the research were provided.

In presenting this information, this chapter sets the stage for results and analysis of the interviews, providing new data in the area of collaboration at news organizations to achieve innovation.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### **Introduction**

If workplace barriers that impede collaboration at news organizations are seen as a negative, this research shows that the increasing recognition to address and remove those barriers is a positive development. However, the research shows that substantial space exists between what is acknowledged in theory and what is practiced. In short, collaboration between editorial and business departments is not happening at the pace needed to help a news industry under severe economic duress.

Data was analyzed using an iterative approach (Tracy, 2010) while factoring in open, axial and selective coding outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). This chapter provides an examination of data analysis collected from interviews with people working in the news media, and presents the emergent iterative data in narrative form.

### **Participant Information**

As detailed in the previous chapter, 11 people were interviewed for this research, holding various titles and hierarchical ranks within their organization. The criteria for selecting them included that they work either in the editorial or business development departments of their companies, and that they must collaborate with colleagues in other departments on projects designed to improve the company's position with its customers. Names, titles and demographic information such as gender has been withheld, in compliance with the interview subjects' requests.

The committee for this research has been provided confidential identification information about the interview subjects. Identification discussed in this research is provided in Appendix B.

### **Interview Information**

Interviews with the participants were designed to last about a half hour, and averaged 35 minutes. The longest interview lasted 62 minutes, and the shortest lasted 22 minutes. The researcher began the interviews by asking the subjects to describe their position within a news organization. Interviewees were then asked to provide their own assessment of the working relationship between the editorial and various business departments within a news organization.

The remainder of the interviews focused on the idea of a business initiative – the interviewees’ idea of what a business initiative means, and then their involvement in one. These questions were tailored to probe interviewees’ knowledge of business practices and to discover what, if any barriers exist at their news organizations. A complete script of the interview routine, including the questions, is listed on Appendix D.

Interviews were conducted individually and by telephone. Interview subjects agreed to be in a secure environment to ensure privacy. The researcher used a digital audio recorder to record the interviews. The researcher manually transcribed the interviews in a secure space, and the transcripts were locked in a secure environment.

### **Data Analysis**

Data from the interview questions formed the basis for breaking the material into categories, developing codes and, ultimately, generating broad themes that form the basis for the research findings.

As detailed in chapter 3, an iterative approach (Tracy, 2010) was employed that assesses data emerging from the research with “the active interests, current literature, granted priorities, and various theories the researcher brings to the data” (p. 186). Through this method, the researcher examines data, connects to insights and then refines the focus. The iterative approach was chosen because of the researcher’s own extensive experience in the news industry, and the belief that considering the data in the context of personal experience could both support and challenge the researcher’s theories about collaboration.

The researcher began by approaching the assessment of the interview data with the idea of developing a “code book” that would contain first-level descriptive codes and second-level analytic codes. Microanalysis was applied during this coding process as a way to evaluate data pulled from the interviews. This approach calls on evaluating textual data, breaking that information into basic concepts, re-assembling the data into related categories and then integrating the data to develop theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Microanalysis is effective at the beginning of research to develop initial concepts and categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In this manner, the researcher employed the method during the “initial soak” of data from the interviews. There are three aspects of microanalysis that apply to this research: analyzing data collected from subjects; the researcher interpreting the data; and the researcher being able to analyze the relationships between observation and interpretation (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Microanalysis was conducted during open and axial coding as a way to examine data and look for new data.

An example of analysis from this initial examination is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Example of initial microanalysis process**

<p><b>Excerpt from Interview subject No. 6:</b>          “Cultural change within an organization is one of the most difficult things you can do. I’ve been involved with it three times. Culture, depending on what you’re trying to do, can be a real stick in the mud preventing you from accomplishing what you want, or it can be a wonderful thing that preserves the strengths of what you do. Changing culture is both very difficult, but you also risk changing what your organization already is. At least when you’re a news organization, you essentially have process.”</p>	
<p><b>Initial coding from this excerpt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to create change</li> <li>■ Internal work culture</li> <li>■ Work processes within an organization</li> <li>■ Workers’ perceptions of their company and colleagues</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Next-step coding from excerpt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Creating change</li>   <li>■ Internal culture</li>   <li>■ Co-workers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rationale through microanalysis:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Creating change became a common theme as people discussed business initiatives. It also became tied to the idea of innovation.</li> <li>■ Internal culture became a larger topic that included work processes – that is, how work is accomplished is part of how that news organization defines itself.</li> <li>■ This broader code began to take shape as interview subjects discussed their company, colleagues and the idea of “turf.”</li> </ul>

The researcher then examined the interview transcripts line by line to develop a more formal list of codes. As data was coded, topics were grouped to form concepts. Four primary first-level descriptive codes were developed and are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. First-level (descriptive) codes**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Company	How the interview subject describes company he/she is working for.	An international news organization.
Job	How the interview subject describes her/his position and rank within the company.	A mid-level business executive at a traditional legacy news organization.
Business-editorial relationship	Statements about how business units and editorial at company interact with each other.	"... there used to be a very formalized way to talk to each other, and it only happened between literally only two or three individuals. And it's way more porous now."
Business initiative	Statements tied to subject's conception of a business initiative.	"... something that is being driven by some revenue goal."

Additionally, the data from the interviews provided first-level sub-codes. Table 3 shows the sub-codes, descriptions and examples.

**Table 3. Examples of first-level descriptive sub-codes**

<b>Sub-code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Recent business initiative	Statements about a recent business initiative at company that subject was involved in.	"A large interactive visualization."
Role in recent business initiative	Statements about subject's role in business initiative.	"I was the project manager."
Business initiative difficulties	Statements about barriers to implementing business initiative.	Getting people to feel ownership in the project.
What was easy about the business initiative?	Statements about what was easy in developing the business initiative.	"Having bosses signal to company that initiative is a priority."
Business initiative response	Statements about responses in company to business initiative.	"... there were so many frustrations (within the organization) that we were given a lot of green lights and runways that other teams were not. So they felt that we were kind of fast-tracked."
Business initiative adoption	Statements about the adoption or rejection of business initiative.	"Ultimately it was adopted, but we're still deciding what to do with it."

Five of the interview questions (Nos. 4, 6C, 6D, 6J and 6K) developed data for second-level, analytical responses from the interview subjects. Based on the responses to those questions, various analytical categories and five broad codes emerged:

**Co-workers:** Statements tied to workers' perceptions of each other, of products and of internal company processes. This includes communication between workers.

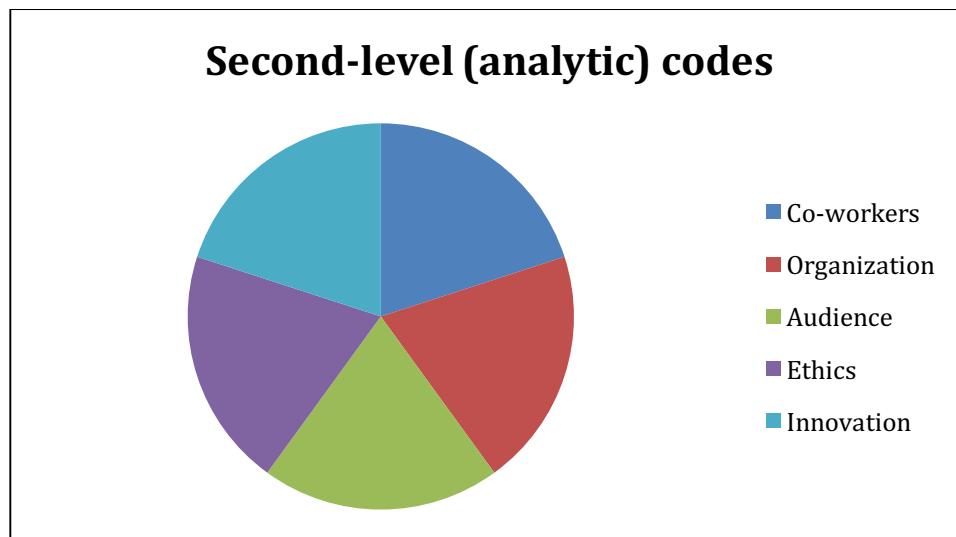
**Organization:** Statements about the structure and hierarchies within organization, as well as the work processes and the brand reputation unique to that organization.

**Audience:** How the interviewee imagines what the public is that consumes the news organization's content and ways the news organization reaches out to the public.

**Ethics:** How internal practices are discussed in the context of maintaining the traditional church-state divide between editorial and business departments.

**Innovation:** Statements that focus on bringing change within an organization.

Another way to conceive of these second-level codes is to visualize them as cumulatively comprising an entire examination about collaboration.



*Figure 1.* Second-level analytic codes. A visual depiction of the primary analytic codes comprising collaboration.

Additionally, data fractured into sub-codes for the primary co-workers and organization codes. As interviewees spoke about co-workers, they repeatedly spoke about workers’ perceptions of each other, of communication and of “turf,” or the idea of who has authority over colleagues and other resources within the news organization. Interview data about organizations broke down further into data about the unique work culture at the organization, about how the organization was structured and about empowerment, or how much authority the organization granted employees to make decisions.

Extending this visualization further, we can imagine the insertion of sub-codes, for Co-workers and Organization codes, in Figure 2:

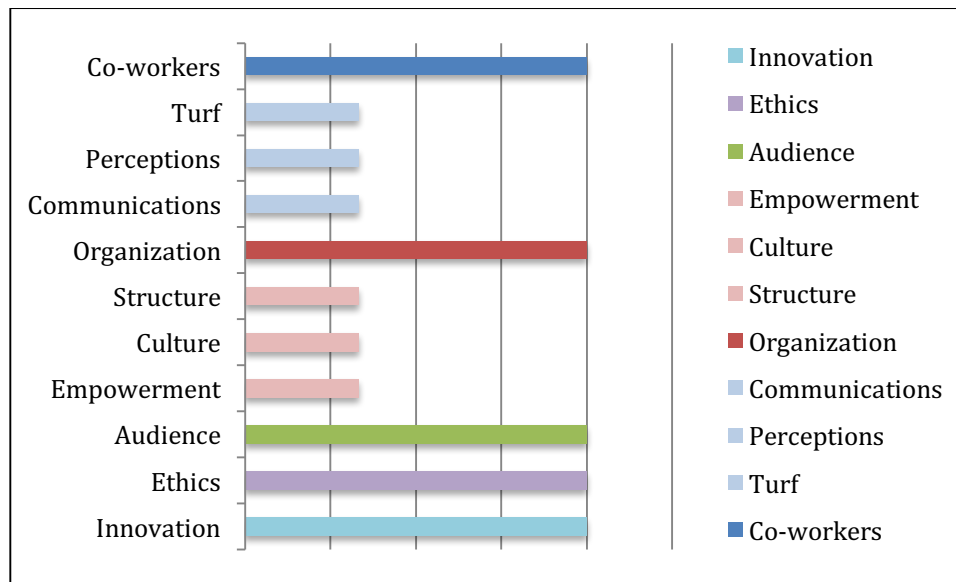


Figure 2. Analytic codes and sub-codes. A visual depiction of the primary and secondary codes comprising collaboration.

The researcher then began organizing the interview text data into the various analytic codes and sub-codes. Table 4 shows the second-level analytical codes and sub-codes, along with subsequent definitions and examples from the interview data.



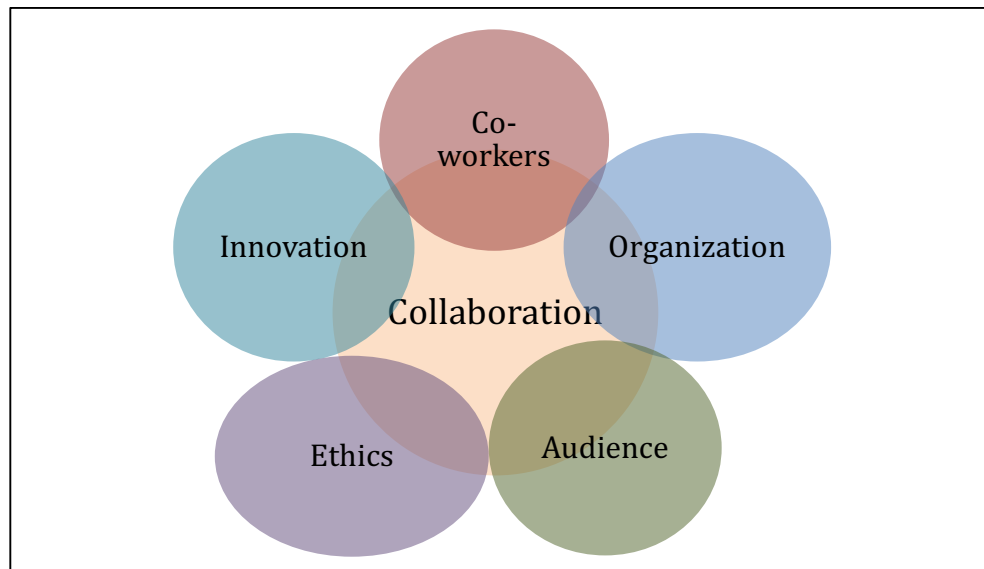
**Table 4. Example of second-level analytic codes**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Co-workers</b>	Statements about co-workers	"I needed to make sure the engagers felt good, that they weren't being co-opted."
■ Co-workers' perceptions	Statements tied to workers' perceptions of each other, of products and of internal company processes.	"... There were so many frustrations (within the organization) that we were given a lot of green lights and runways that other teams were not."
■ Co-workers / turf	Statements about workers' views on internal assets and who has authority over those assets.	"We brought in an outside design company. That never keeps your tech people happy, if you've got an outside technology company involved. "
■ Co-workers / communications	Statements about how communication is conducted between workers the news company.	"I found out a couple days beforehand that we were moving the bar code on the paper from the bottom to the top."
<b>Organization</b>	How the news company is referred to.	"There's an editorial sensibility that they need to uphold, so our content needs to be in line with our audience expectations."
■ Organization / culture	Statements about the way of doing work at the news company.	"You have to be mindful of the larger brand, of the organization, the editorial comfort level around different experiments in changes to tone and voice."
■ Organization / structure	Statements about the structure, including hierarchies, within organization.	"Then I would have said you have to identify what are the stakeholders, what are the obstacles? You know, why someone may or may not want to be helpful, and address their points."
■ Organization / empowerment	Statements on feeling empowered to act.	"We did not have to get a lot of high-level buy-in on decisions about the product, which helped."
<b>Audience</b>	Discussions about all aspects of audience.	"The analytics that people are embracing are bringing readers to the table."
<b>Ethics</b>	Statements about internal practices in an ethical context.	"And by no means do I mean that anything unethical is even broached. We have really good guidelines about that."
<b>Innovation</b>	Statements from subject focusing on bringing change within the news organization.	"Forcing the conversation was fairly easy ... people understand the world is changing every day and so we need to rethink basic assumptions every day. But even with that, sort of, willingness to discuss, it's still a really difficult thing to get people to do something that they've never done before."

What follows is a discussion of the five analytic codes that form the emerging themes that drive this research. First, to revisit the primary research question:

**What workplace barriers exist that slow or impede collaborative efforts to implement new business initiatives?**

The researcher then considered the analytic codes and their relationship with the focus of the research question, collaboration and barriers.



*Figure 3.* The relationship between collaboration and its codes. A more fluid portrayal between collaboration and factors that impact collaboration.

Each of the analytic codes touches others and all are focused on the central core of collaboration. A similar model can be envisioned about barriers, which will be examined at the end of this chapter. A look at the codes:

### **Co-Workers**

Interview subjects see co-workers and colleagues as both enabling change and as being a barrier to achieving change. The research data shows interview subjects discuss their colleagues in prominent ways when discussing executing a business initiative.

Those discussions fell along fault lines marked by their perceptions of their co-workers, the level of communication between co-workers and finally, the idea of “turf” – who has the authority to execute a task, and the sense that such authority is being threatened. Positive and negative expressions of these sub-codes are tied directly to positive and negative perceptions of successfully executing business initiatives.

### **Perceptions of co-workers.**

Perceptions of colleagues were shown to be part of a larger dynamic that focuses on relationships. These relationships are essential for successfully achieving work, the data shows. For example, this excerpt from interview subject No. 4, an individual who works on the business side of a traditional legacy news organization, reflects how highly valued strong relationships are: “I’ve had a couple of times where sales people themselves have developed relationships with folks from the editorial side and have generated ideas on their own.”

However, the traditional belief of a church-state divide between editorial and business departments can be perverted to impede developing good relations, according to many of the interviewees. Interview subject No. 6, a senior editor at an international news organization who handles editorial operations, reinforces that idea:

“Also, let’s face it, from our (editorial) side, too, it’s about not being prissy about ... not just insisting that you have no relationship with the business. Which some people will have, as well. The attitude that, ‘Hey, we’ll do what we do and it’s your job to sell it.’”

In summary, the data from the interview shows perceptions of co-workers plays a significant role in the framing of relationships that affect collaboration.

### **Turf among co-workers.**

The idea of “turf” – the authority over resources within an organization to execute a task – resonated in much of the interview data. Much of the data showed interview subjects framing turf in a negative manner. This excerpt from interview subject No. 7, a business executive at a large metropolitan newspaper, reflected negative framing of turf from many of the interviewees: “What’s been interesting is how we would give feedback on something and, of course, news was “We’ll do it the way we want to do it.”

Such negative portrayals tied to larger framing that interviewees had of casting their experiences working on business initiatives. Interviewees who framed working on business initiatives in a positive manner discussed turf in the context of effective collaboration and communication. Consider the way interview subject No. 10, a senior-level manager at a digital news organization affiliated with a larger news organization discussed recognizing turf and seeing it as an opportunity: “It was more coalition-building in the newsroom. ... So I needed to talk to that person, talk to her and make sure she felt good about it.”

In summary, the concept of turf resonated with many of the interview subjects. The positive or negative framing of co-workers protecting turf was tied to whether the interview subjects saw their experience working on a business initiative as a positive or negative experience.

### **Communication between co-workers.**

Following on the concept of worker perception, data from the interviews also emphasized the idea of effective communication between workers as a frame for conceiving collaboration. To collaborate, people need to be accessible, much of the data

shows. This excerpt from interview subject No. 4, an individual who works on the business side of a traditional legacy news organization, reflected that viewpoint and summed up much of the data from the other interview subjects: “Just knowing the details of what they’re (the newsroom) thinking of doing so we have enough time to articulate that to clients. Understanding what’s happening with the content they’re doing and how they’re distributing it.”

Interview subject No. 9, an executive overseeing both marketing and editorial departments at a distributed media company, reinforced the importance of effective communication: “There’s obviously different groups with different objectives, but at the same time everyone needs to ... work closely to ensure that the long-term initiative of the company is sound on both sides.”

Interestingly interview subject No. 4 acknowledged that achieving effective communication is very much a work in progress: “So there’s very concrete changes that have happened. But there’s still ... the flow of information back and forth between the two sides is still finding its new ... productive ways to work.”

In fact, as that discussion unfolded, interview subject No. 4 became increasingly candid about communication issues at that news organization. The subject directly tied effective communication between editorial and business departments to the financial health of the news organization, and that challenges remain: “It’s a hard thing to get anyone (advertisers) to commit when they don’t know what the content is going to be.”

It is worth noting that interview subject No. 7, a business executive at a large metropolitan newspaper, also expressed negative views about communication. Interview subjects Nos. 4 and 7 share the experience of working on the business side of a traditional

news organization with roots in print. Interview subject No. 7 recalled learning of an overall redesign of the newspaper late in the process. That experience created many issues that affected the financial health of the news organization. The interview subject acknowledged that both the editorial and business departments were slow to recognize the need to have an executive from the business department involved in discussions:

“I think in hindsight if we would have known how big of a deal this was going to be we would have certainly kind of pushed our way into some news meetings and said, ‘OK, help us understand, what are you talking about?’”

In summary, all of the interview subjects expressed communication as a factor that ties into executing work tasks. The unique culture in organizations, an idea that will be discussed below, is a factor in communication between co-workers.

## **Organization**

Discussions that included references about organization were closely tied to perceptions about co-workers and the process of innovation. How a news organization arranges its working units, and how much buy-in is accepted from colleagues at all levels determines whether change can be accomplished. This research notes that the position a person holds within an organization’s hierarchy influences that person’s view on many aspects about the organization, from collaborative processes to ethical matters such as maintaining a church-state divide and ensuring employees display mutual respect.

The first two interview subjects, chosen partly because of their comparatively high positions within their companies, expressed generally positive statements about their organization: the collaboration taking place, and colleagues having mutual respect for each other. This excerpt from interview subject No. 2 reflects that sensibility:

“It is ... very productive and very respectful of each of the other sides. That is instilled from the president, who comes from editorial side. Ultimately what we do is we provide news, and the editorial integrity of that news is first and foremost.”

Additionally, interviewees’ discussions about their news organizations were tied to broader discussions of knowledge of the economics of the news industry. The research reveals frustration over an uneven working knowledge of the news industry.

This excerpt from interview subject No. 4, an individual who works on the business side of a traditional legacy news organization, reveals insight gained by being briefly immersed in the news organization’s editorial operations:

“I was so astounded by the work ... they’re (editorial employees) arguably some of the smartest people in the world ... their lack of knowledge about how the (news) business worked and what was going on. If one of them had to report on it, it would have taken them 48 hours to understand the dynamics of the industry.”

Such a statement is revealing. In the years that have passed since the global economic crisis that accelerated the financial free-fall in the news industry, substantial energy has been devoted to bringing editorial department employees closer to the economics of the news industry. Yet a gap remains in knowledge about the industry.

The interviews with subjects turned into deeper discussions that touched on work culture, internal structure of departments and how empowered workers feel.

### **Organizational culture.**

One of the ways interviewees perceived their news organization was through the way they described how work is produced at their organization. Such processes helped distinguish their news organization. Such a sentiment is expressed well by interview

subject No. 3, an individual who oversees technology and product development at a traditional legacy news organization, in discussions about the difficulties of executing on a business initiative: “You have to be mindful of the larger brand, of the organization, the editorial comfort level around different experiments in changes to tone and voice.”

A news organization’s work culture may facilitate collaboration, or it may impede it. That culture can be expressed by the effectiveness of communication taking place between various departments. This research shows effective communication to be most problematic between news and business departments at news organizations with historic roots in the newspaper industry. The greatest frustrations were expressed by subjects working on these front lines between the editorial and business departments. This view is expressed well by interview subject No. 7, a business executive at a large metropolitan newspaper:

“So, yeah, definitely physical, the longstanding cultural (barriers) is still very much in existence. So ... (long pause) ... either being afraid to tell us something that’s coming because we might do something with it that we shouldn’t or just, “We’re going to run whatever we want to run because we can.” That all is very much so ... there.”

As companies age, work cultures become more entrenched. Those cultures, if accepted by employees, can become traditions.

In this sense, the perceptions employees have of a company’s work culture can also encourage collaboration or it can resist it. This idea is expressed well by interview subject No. 6, a senior editor at an international news organization who handles editorial operations, and who ties work culture to innovation:



“The (Wall Street) Journal is what it is because of the way they do things. The (New York) Times is what it is because of the way they do things. And that’s one of their great strengths and it’s one of their great weaknesses. Changing culture is both very difficult, but you also risk changing what your organization already is. At least when you’re a news organization, you essentially have process.”

This is an essential point to consider when examining work processes through the prism of collaboration. The way with which employees view their organization’s work culture is tied to the concept of innovation, one of the analytical codes and thesis themes that will soon be discussed.

### **Structure of an organization.**

Like organizational culture, structures – how a company organizes its workers – can become ingrained and stagnant over time. As Tett (2015) notes, over time structures can become silos that are barriers to collaboration.

Interview subjects discussed these structures both as a negative, a barrier to communication and collaboration, and in more positive ways that examine opportunities to reorganize.

For example, interview subject No. 3, an individual who oversees technology and product development at a traditional legacy news organization, described the creation of a new unit that acts as a bridge between the company’s editorial and business departments. The person referred to that unit as the “Switzerland” within the organization:

“What’s unusual about my team is that we have editors and developers literally sitting together while working on the products. In most cases they’re on two

different floors. But on my team we sit next to each other. And we actually sit within the technology and products organization.”

That insight is useful. It suggests that news organizations need to consider reorganization in order to produce worker collaboration. That point is reinforced by interviews with other subjects, such as No. 5, a senior-level news executive whose anecdotes came from working at a digital-only outlet.

The subject described how to conceive developing a newsroom of the future: “If we had to start over, and we weren’t beholden to the structures of print that dictate how we do things, how did we think up what?”

Such thinking expresses the ideal, the goal that many in the news industry are striving for. The reality expressed in the interviews, however, suggests distance remains in designing structures that encourage collaboration.

Interview subject No. 7, the business executive at a large metropolitan newspaper, used the experience of a redesign to stress how structure and culture impeded collaboration and communication. The redesign called for moving the newspaper’s bar code on the front page, yet the executive learned of that just days before implementation of the redesign.

### **Empowerment within an organization.**

The interviews revealed an important aspect about accomplishing work – empowerment, or the feeling of having the authority to perform a task. Interview subject No. 6 bluntly reflects that sense of empowerment during discussion of a business initiative: “How did I get it done? I got it done because I came in (to a job) and said, “This is really what I want to do, as well.”

Having the influence and clout to make such demands as interview subject No. 6 did, however, is rare. Interview data shows that a more common approach to gaining empowerment is obtaining support from above. Interview subject No. 10 reflected that sensibility when describing accomplishing a business initiative: “Overall, I think the response has been good. People above me have been very encouraging. They had been encouraging to try it.”

The interviews also show a connection between a feeling of empowerment and the interview subjects’ perception that there is “buy-in,” or general acceptance by others, within an organization about a specific task. Interview subject No. 3, who presented a positive view of participation in a business initiative, reflected such a connection:

“One thing was ... we had the freedom to ... because we were self-contained, we had a lot of ability to make our own decisions and then move quickly. We did not have to get a lot of high-level buy-in on decisions about the product, which helped. We also had ... because we had a lot of support we were able to pull in a lot of the best people within the organization, which again helped us move pretty quickly.”

Failure to obtain buy-in can present eventual roadblocks. As described by interview subject No. 6, the subject who earlier expressed empowerment through the prism of authority, a lack of buy-in eventually worked against an initiative:

“If you want something built, do it as a stunt work. But if you want something accepted, then that’s your ... I mean ... if I had given you enough money, to just go out and do it on the side. But once you’ve built is, the question is who would feel like they owned it?”

In summary, the interviews show a direct connection between a sense of empowerment and views of the organization. The stronger sense an individual has of being empowered to accomplish a task and getting the buy-in of others, the more positive view the person has about accomplishing work and of the organization overall.

### **Audience**

When interview subjects discussed the audience for their news organization, they framed those discussions by stating an audience can be viewed as a group to engage with and develop relationships with, or it can be seen as an object – a goal – to try and reach. The research showed that the type of news organization an interview subject discussed played a significant role in framing discussions of the audience. Traditional news organizations grounded in the structures, processes and cultures of a print-based news organization showed less ease in discussing an audience.

By contrast, interview subjects working at newer digital-only news organizations demonstrated the greatest ease discussing the audience. That ease came from knowing how to use analytical tools to assess public engagement with their organizations' editorial content. These views are reflected in statements such as this one from interview subject No. 5, the news executive who discussed experiences from working at a digital-only outlet. The interviewee described the easiest aspect of developing a website for a specific audience this way: "(Knowing) the market. Just showing a proof of readership. And having really interesting content, actually be engaging with readers."

Language used in discussions that showed understanding an audience consistently came from interviewees working in the digital space. Additionally, those interviewees expressed the most language when discussing the audience. Interview subject No. 8, a

business-marketing executive at a digital start-up, tied the use of analytics to not just engaging an audience, but also empowering both the public and news media organizations. The interviewee called analytic tools a new “reader representative” for news organizations that brings readers and viewers to the table when news media managers decide on producing content.

In fact, interview subject No. 8 extends the idea of the audience in a new fashion: thinking about the public and potential customers is a way to for news media organizations to spur editorial and marketing developments into collaboration:

“Everyone understands that editorial and marketing (departments) have been siloed and that there’s an assembly-line process in how to integrate the two. And instead of forcing the two to come together in a way that could be messy, allowing to bridge the two has become the easiest way.”

This line of discussion is noteworthy. The “audience” is now being discussed in a different way – as partners. The audience isn’t framed as an elusive target, or a source of negativity, such as reader complaints.

Interview subject No. 8 portrays the audience as part of a three-way partnership that includes the editorial and business departments of a news organization. This type of thinking reinforces the statements of others who speak about aligning positions, such as interview subject No. 3, when he discusses how a “Switzerland” exists at that person’s news organization.

Instead of worrying about forcing discussions that might imperil the traditional church-state divide, news organization executives can conceive organizational structures that place the audience at the center of work.

## **Ethics**

At traditional news organizations, ethics is seen as a quality-control safeguard. But in practice, it can be a barrier to collaboration between news and business departments. At digital organizations, ethics appears to be more seamlessly accepted as a cultural norm, but doesn't appear as a barrier to internal collaboration. The idea of ethics was acknowledged as important by interview subjects in both editorial and various business departments. Consider this excerpt from interview subject No. 11, a person who is described as a chief innovation officer at a non-partisan, non-profit online news source. The person stresses ethics as a factor that needed to be incorporated when considering ways to collaborate:

“And by no means do I mean that anything unethical is even broached. We have really good guidelines about that. But, I think there's a lot of collaboration between the business side and the editorial side in trying to find ways early and often that they can collaborate.”

The idea of a news organization's unique culture and “brand” can also bring in an ethical component. Interview subject No. 6, a senior editor at an international news organization who handles editorial operations, expressed this idea when discussing establishing quality-control standards for a new product:

“We had to set up all new guidelines. You think about really simple stuff: How do you do a correction in an online database? What are the standards for correcting something for if you show a visualization and you realize there's a mistake in it? How do you append a correction where one person might have seen (the inaccuracy) or a million people might have seen?”

The traditional church-state divide is, expectedly, stronger at traditional news organizations, be they rooted in print or broadcast. That rigidity is expressed by this excerpt from interview subject No. 4, an individual who works on the business side of a traditional legacy news organization: “I jokingly say that my job is to get as close to that (ethical) line as I can without getting myself fired.”

At start-up media companies, however, that rigidity fades. Interview subject No. 9, an executive who oversees both marketing and editorial at a distributed media company, reflects this sensibility: “I think the notion that a creative services department would ever scare editorial by creating some kind of native content ... I think that’s just a very antiquated way of thinking about it.”

Interview subject No. 9 suggests an idea that is critical: a news organization’s strong ethical culture isn’t grounded in work process or physical barriers, but rather, tied to the individual. This idea has significant implications about a news company’s organization and process as it seeks greater collaboration that strives for innovation.

### **Innovation**

No code, or theme, resonated more strongly in the interviews than the concept of innovation. Revisiting the definition of innovation provided by Baregheh, Rowley and Sambrook (2009, p. 1334), innovation is a process where ideas are turned into new or improved products, services or processes. Examining this definition in a broader sense, innovation is essentially about bringing change. Such change could be about developing a new product or process. It could be about improving an existing product or process.

All interviewees discussed change in one sense or another. All spoke positively of the concepts of desiring collaboration and innovation. But in the comfort of being able to

Speak candidly, many interviewees expressed to some degree the frustration of trying to bring about change. People working at traditional news organizations most frequently expressed negative feelings tied to a need to change work methods or strategies designed to execute business strategies. For example, interview subject No. 3, an individual who oversees technology and product development at a traditional legacy news organization, expressed such challenges:

“I think the big thing is there was a very high-level strategy that was ... even if we were beginning to execute on it ... it was challenging because the whole budget and the whole system was built on that strategy. There was not a good way to change directions as quickly as we would have liked.”

**Fear of the unknown.**

The interview data suggests that the greatest barriers to innovation may not be due to organizational structures, but within individuals' DNA. When discussing a new business initiative they had participated in, each of the interviewees acknowledged their greatest anxiety came from unknown factors. Consider this excerpt from interview subject no. 2:

“I'd say any time you're going to go and generate a new revenue stream, the difficult and challenging element of it is really the unknown. And the choice to allocate business resources, reporting resources, editorial resources to go generate body of content, kind of with the belief and the hope that audiences will follow.”

Fear of the unknown also can have ripple effects throughout an organization.

Creating a new product or process can complicate communicating and selling the idea to other departments, as interview subject No. 6 stated:



“How do you present, how do you, first of all, sell something that no one has ever seen before? When people saw it they were excited. But then you have to go to the next step, which is, OK, what are you going to do with it?”

And as interview subject No. 3 said, unknowns can increase the anxiety of superiors: “People above were very supportive but very ... I wouldn’t say nervous, but their reputation was on the line, as well, because this was their initiative.”

Anxiety about the unknown supports research by Hsu, et al, that show people would prefer to make decisions with known risky outcomes than make decisions that carry ambiguous outcomes (2009). There may be no process that absolutely ensures innovation. Change – may come down to individuals. As interview subject No. 1 bluntly stated: “Inherent with any organization, there’s a resistance to change. And at some point you’ve just to bite the bullet and do it.”

This human element needs to be factored into any collaborative endeavor an organization undertakes.

### **Structure and process.**

The interview data also tied innovation to organizational structure and work processes. That was expressed well by interview subject No. 11:

“... the way we used to do things here is that editorial would work in a vacuum, and then on the eve or close to the eve of launching, they’d say, “Hey, business side, there’s this huge thing that we’re doing, just so you know.” And that didn’t give the business side much time at all to solicit underwriters or sponsors or anything.”

The interview data also distinguished structure and process as it relates to change along the type of news organization. Interviewees working at long-established news organizations expressed more difficulty in changing approaches, as expressed by interview subject No. 3: “It’s very difficult to go from zero to ... at one point we hired about 60 people. That within a year ... hired or shipped in from another division. That’s a big organization to build from scratch.”

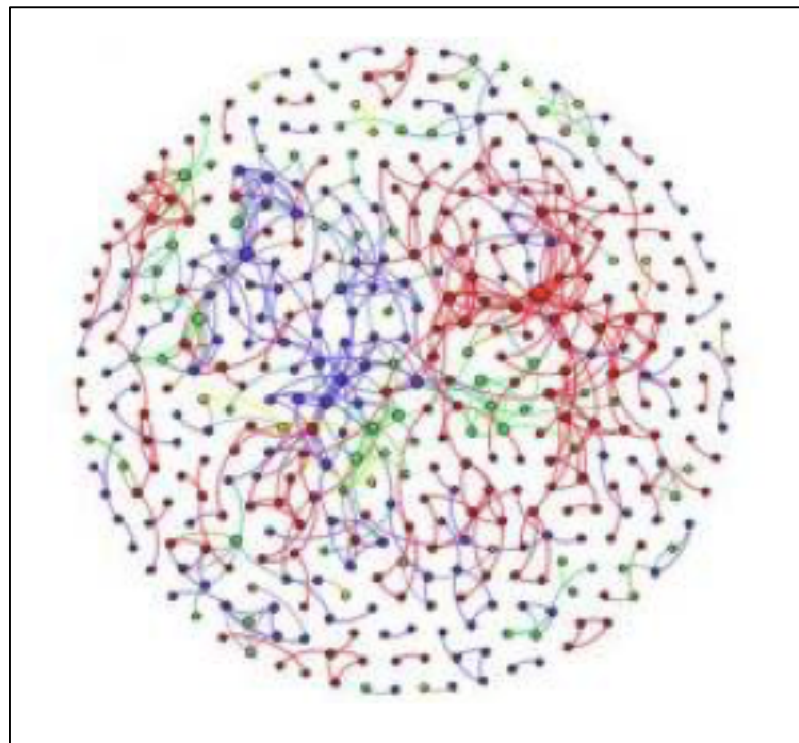
By contrast, interviewees at newer digital news organizations discussed the ability to quickly change processes and strategies because of the rapidly evolving economics of the news industry. This idea was reflected by interview subject No. 8: “Because we’re in a moment of constant change we need to have constant conversations about what we’re doing and be mindful of all things all at once.”

In summary, data from the interviews revealed the idea of innovation as a major theme. Interview subjects said they valued the idea of bringing change. The interview data connected the ideas of fear of the unknown, structure and process to innovation. Positive and negative experiences associated with innovation fell along how old the news organizations are.

### **Barriers and Enablers to Collaboration**

When reviewing the cumulative data from the codes and sub-codes, it is useful to return to the primary research question and examine the codes’ relationships to the idea of workplace barriers standing in front of collaboration. The data from the interview texts reveal a far more fluid relationship that the five analytic codes and their sub-codes have with each other. The discussions on co-workers, for example, interacted with more than just the organization of the news organization. It also interacted with discussions on

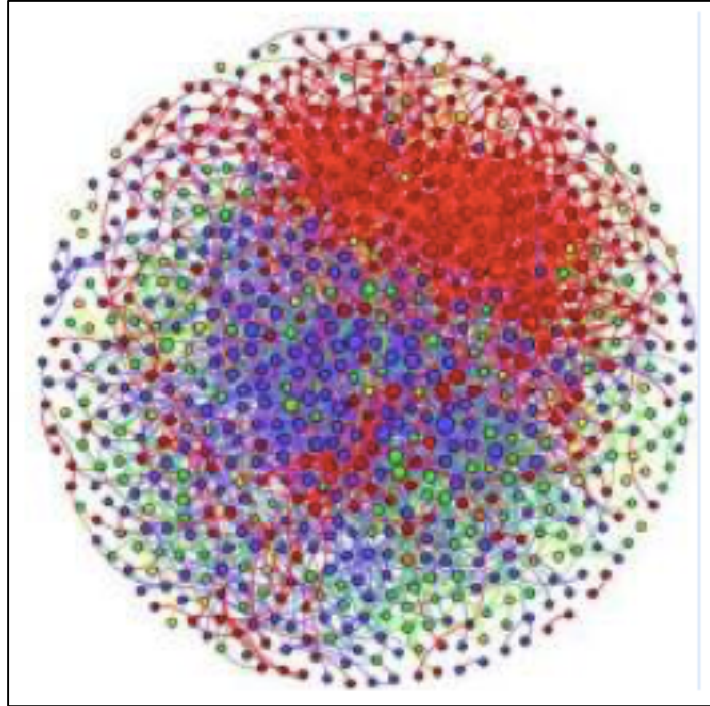
ethics, audience, and ultimately, innovation. The ultimate goal of collaboration, for example, doesn't occupy a central location, but is an all-encompassing idea that brings in the activities of employees (red), organization (blue), audience (green), ethics (purple) and innovation (aqua):



*Figure 4.* Collaboration in an Organization. A more fluid visualization of the way collaboration works in organizations.

The pathway to collaboration, then, requires constant activity and interaction between the primary analytic codes. For example, interview data reveals that the greater interaction between co-workers with each other, with the audience and with the overall organization may present some barriers but will also improve the chances for collaboration.

A more intense focus and level of activity is the logical goal. Workers and the codes addressing their behavior need to be more highly engaged, as shown in Figure 5:



*Figure 5.* Increased collaboration in an organization. A more energized visualization of successful collaboration at an organization.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter analyzed the interview data and explained how that data was developed into first-level descriptive and second-level analytic codes. Those second-level codes offer answers to the primary research question. The research data broke into major themes: co-workers, organization, audience, ethics and innovation. Differences were noted between the stated goals of the themes and the actual practice of them.

The data supports previous research that shows resistance to change being stronger at organizations that are older and whose work cultures are tied to traditional print news organizations. The interview data also reveals opportunities to improve collaboration within news organizations. What follows is a discussion of this analysis, an

assessment of its significance, and recommendations for the news industry to accept if it wishes to increase collaboration between its editorial and business departments.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Introduction

This chapter examines the research findings in the context of Rogers' (1962) theory of diffusion of innovation. Limitations of the examination are noted, as well as implications of the research and recommendations for further research. Finally, a best-practices strategy to improve collaboration is put forth.

When considering barriers to collaboration, the analysis of interviews of people working in news organizations provides mixed results. The data reveals some encouraging results. There is widespread recognition of the need for editorial and business departments to collaborate. Considerable thought, energy and time are being devoted within news organizations to that end. The data shows efforts to collaborate are provoking deeper examinations in news organizations that focus on perceptions of co-workers, how the company is organized, how the company conceives its audiences, ethical considerations to preserve editorial integrity and the pursuit of innovation.

However, the data also reveals, disturbingly, barriers to collaboration remain – years after academic and industry papers have called on editorial and business departments at news organizations to work more closely together. Perceptions of co-workers and a news organization's culture are slowing collaboration. Additionally, news organizations are achieving only problematic success in organizing their workers and departments to enhance collaboration. More disturbing, the data shows there is a sense of a lack of knowledge that editorial employees have about the economics of the news industry and how they conceive audiences. Efforts to achieve innovation are finding, at

best, mixed results, and the barriers impeding collaboration are strongest at traditional news organizations.

This bodes ominously for the news industry. With concern growing that a reliance on advertising revenue to sustain journalism will be problematic in the coming years as the backdrop, the focus of this research – the efforts to collaborate – take on added significance. This research shows that news organizations must shed practices of the past that worked under long-gone economic rules to achieve collaboration.

What follows is a discussion on the limitations of this research, its implications for both academic theory and professional practice, the establishment of guidelines to follow to increase opportunities for collaboration and recommendations for further study.

### **Limitations**

Various limitations are placed on this examination. The characteristics of qualitative research mean that the findings do not render themselves to broad generalizations. There is no claim that people interviewed represent people in the entire news industry.

Further, the reliance on self-reported data means the researcher has to take into account the biases of the interview subjects. Additionally, the nature of the interviews, where anonymity was an issue for all participants to participate, may allude to internal sensitivities the interview participants have at their news organizations.

A final limitation may be this researcher. His lack of experience with academic qualitative research can invite mistakes. Strauss and Corbin (1998) warn of mistakes that novice researchers can make. Mindful of that, the researcher endeavored to be familiar with qualitative research methods. Additionally, the researcher carries a personal bias,

shaped by the extensive experience working in the news industry. Most of the researcher's professional journalism experience resides in companies whose historical emphasis has been in printed daily newspapers. The researcher has a sharply defined sense of a separation between news and business operations – the so-called separation between church and state in the journalism industry.

The researcher also possesses experience that comes from news and business departments collaborating in a problematic manner.

### **Theoretical Implications**

#### **Diffusion of innovations.**

Everett Rogers' (1962) theory of diffusion of innovations served as the theoretical basis for this research. Rogers defines diffusion as the way a new idea is communicated over time within a social system. Rogers states that the spreading of new ideas is influenced by four elements: the idea, the social system, the communication channels within the social system and time. Rogers goes on to categorize the people and social systems that adopt new ideas: the innovators, the early adopters, the early majority, the late majority and the laggards.

This research validates many aspects of Rogers' theory. The data fractured into codes and sub-codes that touched on all four elements. The "idea" is represented by interviewees' discussions of a business initiative. Interviewees' framing of the initiative – positive, negative or neutral – was generally tied to the level of that person's involvement in the initiative, and her or his role: The greater involvement and perception of at least some control of the initiative, the more positive the language was used to frame discussions of the initiative. Rogers' elements of the "social system" and



“communication channels” also are reinforced from the interview data. Interviewees framed their discussions of business initiatives in the context of the news organization they were working as comprising multiple social systems. Their discussions of business initiatives also touched on the level of communication taking place.

Additionally, Rogers’ categories for people and social systems that adopt new ideas are touched on in this research. Data from the interviews clearly delineate interviewees and their co-workers as innovators, early adopters, the early majority, the late majority and the laggards. These categories are best expressed when interview subjects discuss the reception a business initiative received, and the challenges faced trying to execute the initiative.

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from this research is clear. When considering concepts such as collaboration and innovation, participants need to consider the idea of human capital. An innovation must be widely adopted within the organization to continue. Put more simply, there must be buy-in within the organization for innovations to succeed.

### **Intrapreneurial units.**

This research data also supports research by Jan Lauren Boyles (2015) in the area of real-world practices for intrapreneurial units in newsrooms. Intrapreneurship is the name given to the idea of introducing start-up units and their work culture into traditional newsrooms. Boyles found the actual experiences of introducing intrapreneurial units into newsrooms falls short of the original aspirations. Unrealistic expectations from bosses, a constant need to argue for relevance, failure to gain widespread adoption and a failure by

the intrapreneurial units to provide creativity into the broader news organization are among the challenges Boyles cites.

Data from this research touches on the challenges that Boyles cites. Likewise, this research reinforces Boyles' ideas that units and individuals can act quickly on ideas, recognize when ideas are unsuccessful and move on to other work. Consider again, this idea, expressed by interview subject No. 8:

“Because we're in a moment of constant change we need to have constant conversations about what we're doing and be mindful of all things all at once. That's a really difficult thing to do, because it can feel frenetic and schizophrenic and unsettling. But it's necessary, because you can quickly go too far down the wrong path and then not be able to find a way back.”

#### **Creating change.**

This research also reinforces the concepts put forth by John Kotter and Dan Cohen (2002) on the human element of organizational change. When interviewees discussed a business initiative they were involved in, the challenges they discussed frequently included winning approval from superiors and colleagues. When interviewees explained some of their negative experiences in a business initiative, they frequently discussed behaviors and attitudes of others that are rigidly tied to past practices. Consider this excerpt from interview subject No. 9, who ties a failure to change behavior in traditional news organizations to the idea of intrapreneurial units and fading business models:

“When you look at these media companies who think that they can kind of create these new digital companies internally and it's just at odds with their core

business model, and it doesn't work. And it's the companies that are built from the ground up that are the ones that are able to do it well, and those are usually the ones that are getting acquired.”

Continuing with the idea of creating change, the data supports research by Hsu, et al., (2005) which shows people are wired into avoiding experimentation with unknowns. This was one of the most common and powerful themes that emerged from this research. One conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that to collaborate with the end goal to arrive at innovation, participants must recognize that such endeavors will mean venturing into dangerous territory – the unknown.

### **Professional Implications**

This research shows reasons for both encouragement and alarm when examining how the news industry is approaching internal collaboration between editorial and business departments. The research supports the conclusion that collaboration is tied perceptions of co-workers, how the company is organized, how the company conceives its audiences, how ethical considerations are practiced and the efforts to create change to find innovation.

Efforts to collaborate between the editorial and business departments are widespread and, arguably, at its greatest level in the industry. Yet the barriers cited by interviewees shows that much more work needs to be done to foster collaboration. These barriers are especially acute at traditional news organizations with practices and structures tied to the past. And the barriers are sharpest at traditional print news organizations. Even when attempts are made to reorganize structures and introduce new practices, efforts to collaborate can fall short.

What is going on?

The greatest roadblocks and the greatest opportunities for collaboration rest with the individual. The strongest barriers are coming from people and their attitudes about their co-workers, of new initiatives and of overall change. These attitudes, in turn, affect the amount of human capital, or buy-in that is won by people trying to push through initiatives.

For example, the research shows that individuals' understanding of the economics of the news industry and audience behavior directly affects the quality of collaboration. Interview subject No. 8 reflected this knowledge when discussing attempts to develop a business plan:

“What we’re trying to do is build a business plan out of our editorial. And so that’s both exciting but also challenging because the way things have worked for so long is that editorial concentrates fully just on stories and then, like a supply chain, an assembly line, the stories have been handed to other people at the company who worry about distribution, packaging, readership, all of those issues.”

Such reverse engineering thinking about a business plan comes from a combination of a start-up not shackled by the culture and processes of the past. It also comes from people with knowledge of how the public interacts with media. Most fundamentally, such thinking comes with basic business knowledge: how to analyze an industry, accurately assess competitors and – most important – recognize the service an audience actually wants.

Again, referring to interview subject No. 8's previous statement about being able to nimbly adjust plans, it is clear that when creating something new – an initiative, a product or even a company – managers must be prepared to constantly assess and adjust preconceived ideas. In an interview with the news television program “60 Minutes,” billionaire entrepreneur Steve Case addressed this need:

“... In the entrepreneurial world, when you launch a company, you have a particular idea, a particular product, a particular service, almost always you pivot, you shift. You – the market – reacts to your initial idea. You make some adjustments. It's only after making a few adjustments that you see the success.”

The roadblocks to collaboration, however, go further than the level of knowledge about industry economics. Collaboration between editorial and business departments are falling short for a number of reasons, some rooted in journalistic ethics that place a premium on independence from commercial pressures, and some tied to basic behavioral theory within organizations.

The aspect of journalistic ethics referred to as the church-state divide is affecting collaboration. At this point it is worth considering the researcher's experience in the news industry. This researcher acknowledges carrying the mindset of a traditional journalist who not only prizes separation from commercial pressure, but also has viewed colleagues from business departments from his own company with suspicion. This attitude is steeped in decades of journalism education, training and practice that place the profession on a unique pedestal of public service, a noble endeavor to aspire to. The journalist, the thinking goes, may be an imperfect human with flaws, but still strives to seek truth and speak that truth to power. Individuals working in public relations, advertising and

marketing, industries that seek to fashion a message to the public, are viewed as parties trying to corrupt that mission of presenting the truth to the public.

This editorial suspicion of the business department is reflected in the data, such as from interview subject No. 7, who complains about editorial maintaining control of the company's social media, rather than consulting and collaborating with audience development specialists at the organization. It's reflected in the frustration voiced by interview subject No. 4, who describes being kept out of the communication loop by the newsroom. Elsewhere, interview subject No. 5 hints at possible future collaboration between editorial and marketing departments in the use of social media channels, but says it is dependent on the advertising department successfully selling the stories.

Barriers to collaboration aren't always a bad thing. Journalists must be independent from financial pressures to effectively report and maintain credibility with the public. And as the business models that for decades relied on advertising revenue have crumbled, suspicious attitudes within editorial departments have understandably remained, as journalists have witnessed the onset of new strategies such as native advertising that blur lines between advertising and editorial, and content quotas designed to chase page views, which take time and resources away from original reporting.

Indeed, the silos that journalists place themselves in, sheltered from the influence of business departments, have merit. In her book, "The Silo Effect" (2015), Gillian Tett frames silos in organizations through negative portrayals, preventing efficient communication and work processes. Silos, however, can also carry a protective function, be they sheltering food, protecting personal data or maintaining the journalist's unique, independent role in a democracy.

One unanticipated result of this research comes from interviewees' discussion of support received to allow collaboration. The researcher initially interpreted the data to reinforce existing research showing that touches on support from superiors and buy-in from colleagues. That is true, but some of the data shows something more. Interview subject No. 10 was among a very few interviewees whose testimonial data suggests working in safe, reassuring environments is a factor in collaborating and executing business initiatives. That would support recent research by Google on teamwork that shows innovation comes from workers being given "psychologically safe environments" (Duhigg 2016). Personalities are more important than pure knowledge and talent.

Google's research explains why many journalists – the experience of this researcher included – have faced obstacles when trying to construct collaboration. Google's research shows that a team of people who feel comfortable jumping into conversations and occasionally moving off the agenda is more likely to find innovation than a team of well-qualified people who follow rigid rules of etiquette.

Silos, then, can be critical to incubate collaboration and innovation. As research by Schneider, Gunnarson and Niles-Jolly (1994) demonstrates, creating a climate for collaboration requires workers trust management, which in turn demands that managers become champions for change. This research asserts that for collaboration to happen, executives and managers must act as advocates for protective silos, nurturing trust from and between employees. Consider this observation from interview subject No. 3 – the interviewee who described the existence of a "Switzerland" within the news organization – when explaining the easiest aspect of working on a business initiative:

“We had the freedom to ... because we were self-contained, we had a lot of ability to make our own decisions and then move quickly. We did not have to get a lot of high-level buy-in on decisions about the product, which helped.”

Ultimately, however, a reward system also must be in place (Schneider, Gunnarson and Niles-Jolly, 1994) to bring change. Employees at all levels – from worker to executive – will act according to the incentive system in place that go beyond being ordered to work with colleagues. In interview after interview, subjects, through their discussion of the fear of the unknown as an expression that rewards weren't in place to prod workers to collaborate and find innovation. Incentives may come from within a news organization, through recognition, financial bonuses or, as interview subject No. 11 describes, an excitement over a shared sense of mission to get a fund-raising initiative under way.

Rewards also can come from outside of the organization, such as when interview subject No. 9 describes the ease of asking staff to collaborate with another company:

“What was easy was the platform was exceptionally fast-growing and it was something where the upside of any partnership was always going to be substantially valuable for us. So you can concede the long hours because ultimately and in the end you're becoming part of something that is quite significant.”

So, what should collaboration look like? When should news organizations maintain internal barriers and when should they smash through them? It is worth revisiting the definition of collaboration on page 12: Two or more people working together, with a shared purpose and whose roles are clearly defined, to achieve a stated



goal. That goal is a broad umbrella that includes work processes and tangible products that are of use internally, within the organization, or externally.

The definition now looks ineffective – a reflection, in a sense, of the news industry. A mechanism must exist that encourages collaboration. The answer rests in testimony provided by one of the interview subjects. On page 75, interview subject No. 8 discussed how the business plan is being built out of editorial success. A simple notion, but one that is radically different from longstanding practices that separated journalist from marketing and connecting with an audience. To revisit that observation:

“What we’re trying to do is build a business plan out of our editorial. And so that’s both exciting but also challenging because the way things have worked for so long is that editorial concentrates fully just on stories and then, like a supply chain, an assembly line, the stories have been handed to other people at the company who worry about distribution, packaging, readership, all of those issues.”

Examining that observation, it’s clear that a reward system for journalists is moving toward finding at least partial success through audience development. The journalist isn’t subservient to the business department, and the business department isn’t walled away from editorial.

Such an environment isn’t without flaws: the time a journalist spends marketing a completed story is time taken away from reporting and producing more journalism. But there is a key line of thinking here: the business model plays a critical role in determining when and how effective collaboration can happen. A business model can help sculpt a

reward system and a work culture that encourages (though doesn't guarantee) collaboration.

Also crucial is examining the reward system at interview subject No. 8's organizations that extends up the ladder to management. More vital than the type of platform is the age of the company that interview subject No. 8 works at – it is a start-up company. Not only are new business models easier to craft at these companies than at existing media companies, the success of the organization's executive management is directly tied to the company's financial survival and success.

Such an environment doesn't exist at longstanding news companies, where the risk that executives face is limited; at worst, they may lose their job. This researcher asserts that executives at traditional news organizations are, like any other person, motivated by personal self-interests than in the success of the company.

This research, then, asks a troubling but necessary question: Are executives' short-term personal interests endangering the long-term survival of news organizations? Are executives, in their resistance to encourage experimentation, more interested in preserving their employment packages and, thus, sabotaging efforts to collaborate and find more innovation?

It's useful here to consider Tameling and Broersma's (2013) examination of the management at the Dutch newspaper de Volkskrant to institute a "converged" newsroom – one where journalists collaborated to work on print and digital platforms. After five years, however, the idea of convergence was scrapped. New management changed strategy, and de Volkskrant returned to separate newsrooms for print and online

journalists. The researchers concluded that the absence of a working business model and cultural resistance led to failure of a converged newsroom model working.

### **The Path Forward: Establishing Guidelines**

When considering the findings and its professional implications, certain guidelines begin to crystalize. In her research on newsroom intrapreneurial units, Boyles suggested four areas for additional research. One of those areas is to consider what are best practices for newsroom intrapreneurs to create change within a broader organization. Considering that question in the context of this research is the basis for developing a best-practices strategy to improve collaboration.

Here then, are points to consider as a best-practices strategy when building teams whose goals are to strive for collaboration in news organizations:

#### **Rewards.**

Any attempt to accomplish a goal within an organization must first consider the rewards system. It is essential that rewards – be they from within or outside the organization – are structured in a way that pushes people to collaborate. The rewards must extend to the highest level of management. News industry leaders must truly accept that change and innovation involve taking risks and facing the real possibility of failure. This isn't easy. As Hsu, et al. (2005) showed, taking risks is counter to the way our brains are wired. That caution is reinforced in the news industry by the journalistic sensibility of exercising caution and skepticism.

Additionally, the financial pressures that news organizations face, as well as the personal dynamics within those organizations – individual agendas and competition between workers and units – discourage taking risks. As Anthony, Duncan, Pontus and

Siren (2015) discussed, news executives contradict themselves when they urge workers to take risks yet at the same time punish financial failure.

Long runways are needed to incubate collaboration. People need time to work with each other, experiment, fail, absorb such losses and then move on to developing other strategies. News organizations need to factor these long runways into their annual budgets. This, then, means fostering collaboration and aiming for innovation is about more than creating incentives. An entire work culture that champions risk and failure is needed. This work atmosphere is discussed below.

### **Knowledge.**

As obvious as it sounds, people charged with collaboration should have a sound knowledge of business-plan development, as well as the news industry's shifting trends in economics and connecting with the public. However, this research shows that such knowledge is uneven at best. Participants in collaboration must have basic knowledge from traditional business schools, such as being able to conduct an industry analysis and recognize non-traditional competitors.

People in the news industry must also be ready to adjust how they conceive the public. Instead of using the term "audience," people in news organizations must start considering how they can service their customers. Knowledge of the news industry's economics and audience behavior is essential because, as interview subject No. 8 explains, they are constantly shifting.

### **Atmosphere.**

To collaborate, employees must know they have the full support of their superiors, and are not left on an island that risks being forgotten. However, the support

needs to extend beyond the stated task of the team, and beyond the team itself. People charged with collaborating must know they have the freedom to take risks. Additionally, people throughout a news organization must know that collaboration is a priority and that communication is essential to successfully collaborate. Cumulatively, these steps can help create, as Charles Duhigg's examination of research shows, psychologically safe environments.

### **Personalities.**

Identifying the correct individuals is essential to producing effective collaboration. In addition to possessing business analysis and industry economics knowledge, successful collaborators must be able to win the support of others, and be ready to support creative ideas from colleagues. This implies possessing a sense of empathy is important, or as Google's research shows, high social sensitivity.

Additionally, individuals must be willing to experiment, take risks, assess the success or failure of an endeavor and be willing to rapidly change tactics. This requires personalities able reach out to

### **Implementing a “winning” strategy.**

Finally, successful collaboration requires building the confidence of collaborators and their colleagues elsewhere in the news organization that their work is worthwhile. This requires establishing short-term goals that go beyond the abstracts of process. Successful collaboration must be able to show tangible products along the pathway to the eventual goal. Additionally, teams involved in collaboration need to exist beyond their own silos. They must constantly search for ways their work can enhance the work of the overall news organization.

## **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study was designed to examine what barriers, if any, exist, that slow or impede collaboration between editorial and business departments at news organizations. This study achieved that purpose, but the researcher identifies various areas that can and should provide more examination.

This study was conducted with the participation of 11 individuals working in a variety of news media organizations, from traditional companies with cultures and practices rooted in several decades of operation, to digital-only organizations that have are just a few years old. Future research can focus more deeply on the experiences, perceptions and challenges of people working in just one type of news organization. Such a deeper dive could more thoroughly examine the successes and failures in that one sector, providing more insight for the overall industry.

Further, additional qualitative research could be used to examine the climate within news organizations that exists to encourage collaboration. Such examinations could measure the progress of establishing psychologically safe environments for collaboration.

Additional research also can measure in qualitative ways the expertise that news managers involved in collaboration have with basic and essential business theory, as well as knowledge of the news industry.

Additional research is also needed to examine journalism education and how its structures need to change. Just like workers in the private sector, educators often exist in silos. One instructor at the University of Missouri candidly acknowledged to this researcher that, despite social media being the field of expertise, little hard data existed

about the university student newspaper's audience. The reason given? Because of a lack of research provided from another area of the journalism school. Educators need to set the example for future generations of media students that the future of the industry rests in collaboration, not finger pointing.

Finally, quantitative research is needed to add to the growing qualitative research to develop generalizable findings. Areas that lend themselves to such research include comparing which departments people charged with collaboration at news organizations are coming from. Additional quantitative research can examine the level of formal academic business training that people involved in collaboration actually possess.

### **Chapter Summary**

This is the culminating chapter of this thesis. The chapter examined limitations of the study, as well as the theoretical and professional implications of the research. The researcher put forth a best-practices strategy for improving successful collaboration within news organizations. Finally, areas of additional research touching on collaboration within news organizations are suggested.

Collaborative activity between editorial and business departments within news organizations is increasing. Yet, it is largely failing. It is failing because the industry is still approaching its work from antiquated business models that sabotage efforts to create true partnerships between editorial and business departments.

Some news media organizations are achieving successful collaboration between editorial and business departments, and doing so while preserving the editorial integrity of their companies. That path forward calls for editorial employees having a clearer understanding of the economics of the industry they are working in, including managers

possessing basic business knowledge that requires thinking of the public as customers, not a far-distant audience. The path also calls for reimagined internal structures that facilitate communication. The path forward also requires acknowledgement that protective silos can be a good thing for a news organization.

What is crucial is the crafting of business models that reward collaboration. News organizations need to blow up old revenue models, and link incentives for upper-level executives to the success of those business models.

Finally, a successful path to achieving collaboration must recognize the critical value of individuals. Rigid, hierarchical organizations do not reward individuals to solve problems. This research shows that the most successful work performed and the most positive feelings came from individuals empowered to work with others and solve problems. It is critical, then, that executives and managers constantly provide encouragement and support to undertake new initiatives – particularly when working with ideas that have few previous models to base judgments upon.

However, this research also shows – disappointingly – that barriers to collaboration are still prevalent at news organizations, primarily at ones considered traditional and print-based. While a sense of urgency does exist in the news industry to find greater opportunities for collaboration, a substantial lack of knowledge on how to achieve it remains.

With old revenue models of the past still actively used, the implications of these barriers suggest a new financial cliff – and subsequent crisis – may be rapidly approaching a news industry that remains poorly equipped to adapt and survive.



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## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



**Institutional Review Board**  
University of Missouri-Columbia

190 Galena Hall; Dc074.00  
Columbia, MO 65212  
573-882-3181  
irb@missouri.edu

May 11, 2015

Principal Investigator: Kevin Kirk Drew  
Department: Journalism

Your Exempt Application to project entitled Collaboration and Separation: How News Companies Find Innovation. was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2002521
IRB Review Number	204540
Approval Date of this Review	May 11, 2015
IRB Expiration Date	May 11, 2016
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Exempt Categories	45 CFR 46.101b(2)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All unanticipated problems, adverse events, and deviations must be reported to the IRB within 5 days.
3. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce immediate risk.
4. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.
5. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date. If the study is complete, the Completion/Withdrawal Form may be submitted in lieu of the Annual Exempt Form
6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize all approved research documents located within the attached files section of eCompliance. These documents are highlighted green.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB at 573-882-3181 or irb@missouri.edu.

Thank you,  
MU Institutional Review Board

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Because of the guidelines of the interviews – anonymity – information about age, gender, age, job title and name of the media organizations is withheld from this thesis. For reference purposes, the interview subjects agreed on the language used to describe them and their organizations. The descriptions are as follows:

- No. 1: A senior editorial executive at a U.S. television news company.
- No. 2: A senior executive at a U.S. multi-platform news organization.
- No. 3: An individual who oversees technology and product development at a traditional legacy news organization.
- No. 4: An individual who works on the business side of a traditional legacy news organization.
- No. 5: A senior-level news executive whose anecdotes came from working at a digital-only outlet.
- No. 6: A senior editor at an international news organization who handles editorial operations.
- No. 7: A business executive at a large metropolitan newspaper.
- No. 8: A business marketing executive at a digital start-up.
- No. 9: An executive who oversees both marketing and editorial at a distributed media company.
- No. 10: A senior-level manager at a digital news organization affiliated with a larger news organization.
- No. 11: Chief innovation officer at a non-partisan, non-profit online news source.

## APPENDIX C: EMAIL PROTOCOL

### Initial Email:

Dear [NAME],

My name is Kevin Drew, and I am a graduate student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. I am researching how employees at news organizations collaborate with each other to discover innovation. I am interested in gaining your expertise for this study.

If you agree to share your insights, I would interview you for about 30 minutes at your convenience. You and the name of the outlet you work for would not be identified anywhere in the research writing. Participating in an interview is purely voluntary and confidential.

Please let me know if you would be willing to share your expertise in an interview.

Thank you for considering the request.

Best,  
Kevin Drew  
M.A. Class of 2016  
University of Missouri School of Journalism  
Mobile: (573) 239-5070  
Email: kevindrew@mail.missouri.edu

### If they agree to do it, next email:

Dear [NAME],

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate. I look forward to speaking with you.

Do you have availability at [LIST] times? Is there a better time that works for you?

I am attaching the oral informed consent document for you to review before we speak. You don't have to sign anything; I just want to make sure you have the information ahead of time.

Best,  
Kevin Drew  
M.A. Class of 2016  
University of Missouri School of Journalism  
Mobile: (573) 239-5070  
Email: kevindrew@mail.missouri.edu

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

### **Introductory section of conversation:**

First, I want to explain my research. My thesis is entitled “COLLABORATION AND SEPARATION: HOW NEWS COMPANIES FIND INNOVATION.”

The goal of my research project is to identify patterns that help or slow financial strategy development at news media organizations. I hope my work refines existing guidelines for internal collaboration, or creates new ones between employees in the editorial and business departments.

There are a few issues I need to cover, but beyond those I’m hoping we can have a fairly open and wide-ranging conversation. Also, please feel free to interrupt if you need to end the conversation. Sound OK?

### **The script leading to the questions:**

Hi, [NAME], thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I really appreciate it.

First, I’d like to make sure you received the informed consent information I emailed you. The main points are that your identity will be kept confidential, as will any news outlet names that you mention. This interview is for research purposes, and of course, you don’t have to answer any questions that you don’t want to. Does that sound acceptable to you?

The goal of this research project is to identify patterns that help or slow strategy development at news media organizations. I hope my work refines existing guidelines for internal collaboration, or creates new ones between employees in the editorial and business departments. There are a few issues I need to cover, but beyond those I'm hoping we can have a fairly open and wide-ranging conversation. Also, please feel free to interrupt if you need to end the conversation. Sound OK?

### **Interview questions**

1. Tell me about your job and what you do.

(Ask to provide examples)

2. How long have you been at this position?

3. How long have you been with this company?

4. How do you describe the relationship between the marketing dept. and the newsroom?

5. How do you define a business initiative?

6. Let's discuss one initiative you were involved in. Can you detail a recent initiative at your company that you were involved in that was tied to helping the business strategy?

Question No. 6 deeper probes:

- What was the purpose?
- How long ago was this?
- What was difficult about developing this initiative?
- What was easy?
- Who did it affect?
- What was your role with the strategy development?

- How did people respond to this initiative?
- What do you believe was the appropriate response?
- What was not?
- Looking back, what could have been better?
- What barriers existed that slowed work on the initiative?
  - Physical
  - Verbal
  - Cultural

7. Was the initiative accepted and put into practice?

- If not, why?

8. Name and ID

## APPENDIX E:

### Thesis interview subjects and interview transcripts

No. 1: Senior editorial executive at a U.S. television news company.

No. 2: Senior executive at a U.S. multi-platform news organization.

No. 3: Individual who oversees technology and product development at a traditional legacy news organization.

No. 4: Individual who works on the business side of a traditional legacy news organization.

No. 5: Senior-level news executive whose anecdotes came from working at a digital-only outlet.

No. 6: Senior editor at an international news organization who handles editorial operations.

No. 7: A business executive at a large metropolitan newspaper.

No. 8: Business marketing executive at a digital start-up.

No. 9: Executive who oversees both marketing and editorial at a distributed media company.

No. 10: Senior-level manager at a digital news organization affiliated with a larger news organization.

No. 11: Chief innovation officer at a non-partisan, non-profit online news source.

**Interview Subject No. 1: Senior editorial executive at a U.S. television news company**

2:35: **RESPONDENT No. 1:** XXXX is a little bit unusual in that ... yes, we're a part of XXXX but we run fairly autonomously, as well. So I moved to XXXX about five years ago. Initially as the no. 2 editorial job ME and then moved to this job about four years ago. But I will say that one of the big differences – and tell me if this helps you or not – was how much closer the collaboration is.

I kind of wear one hat – that's obviously the lead editorial person – I'm (3:30 mark) thinking about the business a lot, as well. And the collaboration between finance department and my department is pretty strong. Much stronger than I ever knew at the XXXX. I mean at the XXXX you never see a budget. You know, you're told a budget. Over here I know exactly what my budget is, I know exactly how many heads I have, I know what the cost is, I know, so the collaboration is very deep in terms of ... I'll just give three or four examples and then tell me if this is helpful.

So, A) I just know myself what my budget is; B) I know, TV, TV is a very high cost, well you know this from CNN: It's very easy to spend a lot of money very quickly. So unlike in print, you're filing a story ... if they're sending you to Hong Kong to cover the protests ... you know, it's, uh ... you and you. At the end of the day ... a producer, a cameraman and everything like that at all times. And hair and makeup and everything else that goes along with it.

So you're much generally better tuned to the costs picture. Similarly, if there's an important speech from the president and you're going to lose commercials, you've got to



make decisions ... you kill the commercial breaks and what happens there and how much money is it going to cost you there, so ... The finance department, for example, gives me a running tally every month of how many breaks we killed every month. Which shows kill them, why we kill them, etc. So I want to make sure we're killing them for the right reasons, right? If it's a real news event, you want to kill them. If there's a plane crash, whatever, then you kill them. But if it's simply because the executive producer of the show did a bad job of running the show and the show ran long, that's not necessarily a good reason.

So that's one avenue we want ... to work together. (5:38) But strategically, there are very close partnerships on all our long-range planning. So right now, for example, I'm in the middle of a bunch of meetings with the finance department about our strategic and long-range plan going on five years. Which is a formal process and a formal document that we put together in collaboration. We talk about what we see as a vision for the future, what's our best way to combat the commodization of news, where should we invest, where should we come back. And then we present that my boss, who will present it to his boss, who's the head of all XXXX, so all that good stuff is a very, very close collaboration and nothing that we ever saw in the print world. So in some ways that's very refreshing. Does that make sense?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes, that makes sense. How long have you been at this position?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** I've been in this position four years. I was managing editor for a year and then I became head of the news division four years ago.

**INTERVIEWER:** And how long have you been at the company?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** Five years. I came here in XXXX, worked as managing editor for a year and got promoted a year later. In XXXX I took this position.

**INTERVIEWER:** What is the relationship between the business department and the newsroom and you've really explained well ... that was something I learned real quickly as a supervisor at CNN is that in broadcast there seems to be a closer relationship between business and the news side.

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** It's definitely true. You're constantly thinking about ... part of the thing about ... It works on two levels. One is on the cost level but also on the revenue level and also on the long-term planning. On the revenue side, for example, ... this part can be used in any public manner ... but we did a deal with another organization to do a series of conferences. And, you know, working on the economics of that deal – who gets the revenue share, how much is it split, what's the potential upside, what's the potential downside. You know, our business development team ... loosely when you say business, you're really talking about four different departments. You're talking finance, which is obviously key, you're talking business development, and you know, who does mergers and acquisitions, strategic partnerships, etc. And you're talking human resources. And marketing. I guess it's really ... So I deal with all those parts of the organization all of the time.

**INTERVIEWER:** The next question I have is how do you define a business initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** I guess initiative would be anything that ... you hope to see some kind of return on your investment. The return on the investment could be news driven, it could be financial incentive, it could be any one of those things. For example, it

could be ... to a certain extent almost any initiative is a business initiative beyond the day-to-day work (sic). Theoretically, hiring a top anchor is also a business decision, right?

**INTERVIEWER:** Right, right.

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** Think about how much you pay them, you're deciding what the marketplace is like, how much you need them, all that kind of stuff. And what's your return. But it could be something like that to trying to develop a new show, a new TV program. That's a business initiative but also an editorial initiative.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'd like to discuss one initiative you were involved in and see if we can explore that a little bit more. Could you describe a certain initiative that you were involved in, and what the purpose of it was?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** I'll give you two or three different options and you tell me what is best suited to your needs, and which is the most disguisable so that it's not too readily apparent ... who you're talking to. One would be the launch of a new show. That's fairly broad. Another would be, we're building up our conference and events business. I'd say a third would be an investment-slash partnership ... anything that involves money.

**INTERVIEWER:** All of them are good but since your business is broadcast and is unique compared to some of the other people I have spoken with, I'd be interested in you talking about the launch of a new show.

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** I'll give you another one and you can decide. So we, about a year plus or so ago, decided to launch a new program which was tech-focused. And as part of that, we had to make some key decisions on what's currently in that spot at

the time, what the casting is and what the production capabilities and costs are. How much staff would be added, etc., etc.

I'd say that we looked at, for example, would there be ... would you need a new set? Would you need a new location? We determined we could do it from the existing location.

We looked at current cast, one of the cast members we wanted lived on the other side of the country. We wanted to move that person here so we looked at whether that would mean doing a new deal with that person. We looked at the production team itself. Do you have the right executive producer, do you have the right talent on board or do you need to hire a whole new team, could the existing team do that show, etc. And then we looked at what's the right return. Is it ratings? Is it sponsorships? From a financial perspective, what's the right metric to look at.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was difficult about developing this initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** One is that there's always a fear that ... of removing what you have in place because it's working. There's always a danger of putting something new in there, unless you're confident. We did some market research in terms of the subject area. I would say the most difficult was really getting people to ... it's funny, now it's a big hit, people are saying "Oh my God, we should have done this a long time ago." ... it's really figuring out do you have the right team in place and the right content, the right stories and make sure it doesn't seem to discordant with whatever else you're doing. And the casting.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was easy about developing this initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** The easy part was that I knew that ... it's funny because it's jogging my memory. I wanted to introduce in an entirely different time slot But for a variety of reasons, most notably that one of the key people I wanted couldn't do that time slot, we didn't do it at that time and in some ways that turned out to be the best thing that ever happened because it forced me to focus on a different time slot where the cast was already halfway in place. So I had one of the right horses already there.

**INTERVIEWER:** Who did this initiative affect?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** Producers, who was going to run that team? The other part of it was that someone's already got the right person in place on the production side. And then the other difficulty was whether people like the (TV show) name. Did they like the name? Everyone's got to have an opinion on everything. You just have to have the confidence that you're doing the right thing.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what was your role in this strategy development?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** I'm overseeing the whole program development ... what the show is, who's in there, and get the people to execute it, but I had to come up with a plan to do it.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did people respond to the initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** Initially, skeptically. Inherent with any organization, there's a resistance to change. And at some point you've just to bite the bullet and do it. Resistance at first, and then people began to think, 'Should we do it this way? Should we do it that way?'

But we also could have ceded the landscape pretty well beforehand so that people knew what we were doing. We did some experimenting in real time so people weren't jarred by it.

I'll give you one entirely different example just because it was a very interesting that ... we worked very closely on the business side. We were doing a strategic partnership with another organization to share content and create events together. And that was a very hard negotiation. And for that I really needed the business side. I knew what I wanted to do, but I also wanted to make sure. ... you're probably aware from your background but people always want to partner with us and they want us to be the television partner because it gives them right publicity, right? And sometimes we think, 'What's in it for us?' In this particular content-sharing relationship that I'm thinking of we had very detailed discussions with the other side, and the finance people kept running through different scenarios for me ... almost like a bronze, silver and gold scenario. "This is what the worst-case scenario is, this is the best-case scenario is. Here's how much money you would invest. If it worked out really well here's what the return would be."

**INTERVIEWR:** What could have been better executed with the process?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** I should have done it sooner (laughs). I think that, well, every time you do one of these you just learn a couple of things. One is I learned that I probably should have done some market research sooner. Probably should have thought about other components that would have belonged in the program a little earlier. I'd say those would be the two major ones.

**INTERVIEWER:** What barriers existed that slowed development?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** The barrier was really fear of the unknown. And then the second barrier was additional investment from the hiring of a few extra people.

**INTERVIEWER:** When you say a fear of the unknown, was that in a specific department?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** That was in the news department. That was our concern. And I think on the financial side it was, ‘It sounds great, but how are you going to pay for it?’

**INTERVIEWER:** And the initiative was eventually implemented, put into practice?

**RESPONDENT No. 1:** Yes.

**Interview Subject No. 2: Senior executive at a U.S. multi-platform news organization.**

**RESPONDENT NO. 2:** I'm happy to participate. I want to double-check, though, that nowhere in anything you publish are there going to be direct references to XXXX, me or anyone at XXXX.

**INTERVIEWER:** Not at all. In fact, why don't we take care of this right now? How do you want yourself and your company to be identified in my thesis?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** Senior executive is fine. At a U.S. multi-platform news organization.

**INTERVIEWER:** Great. First off, can you tell me about your job and what you do?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** I'm the XXXX at XXXX. I'm looking over books and records, making sure things are fairly and accurately reported. Secondly and more broadly, it's controls and the process around our (internal) financial reporting in general. And then thirdly, I work very closely with the operations and the broader organization in the allocation of capital and the use of that capital to generate content.

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you provide specific examples of any of those areas?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** My role is more at the higher level and more of the total company view of how we're allocating resources and which pockets of the organization we allocate those resources as we plan for future growth.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long at position?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** Two years.



**INTERVIEWER:** How would you describe the relationship between the business side and the editorial departments at your company?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** It is ... very productive and very respectful of each of the other sides. That is instilled from the president, who comes from editorial side. Ultimately what we do is we provide business news, and the editorial integrity of that business news is first and foremost. Beyond that, there is the realization that we need to generate a return that XXXX is allocating to us. So the two pieces of the organization work well.

**INTERVIEWER:** How would you define a business initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** I would define a business initiative as something such as grow the digital content creation and monetization as opposed to growing the XXXX content and monetization.

**INTERVIEWER:** Describe a specific business initiative.

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** I'm involved in most if not all initiatives that grow through here. The business initiatives – they're longer term. Continued growth of multi-platform that we create.

**INTERVIEWER:** Is there one specific initiative that you can discuss?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** We just recently re-launched our XXXX subscription product. This was a key initiative for us because we continue to grow alternative forms of revenue. It's the re-launch of an XXXX subscription product. I've been working on it with the company pretty much since I've been here. We have done many market assessments, many market-opportunity assessments, to gauge our interest in the opportunity.

I'm involved in the discussion of the allocation of resources to generate the content to go and get that opportunity. And now that we've launched it, it's a new sort of process for us, so I continue to stay aligned with the resource allocation, but now we're starting to see some early results from what's coming back, so I stay aligned with that reporting and we see what type of return we're getting from that type of investment.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** We re-launched XXXX in February.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were there any difficult aspects of developing this initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** Sure. I'd say any time you're going to go and generate a new revenue stream, the difficult and challenging element of it is really the unknown. And the choice to allocate business resources, reporting resources, editorial resources to go generate body of content, kind of with the belief and the hope that audiences will follow.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was easy about it?

**RESPONDENT:** I think the easy thing about it is getting to the central belief that we have to evolve. And so generating the research and pulling the data showing the changing (media) landscape and the way that audiences are changing – all that is the easy part. In a lot of the (news media) research that you read right now it's very easy to come to the conclusion that we have to evolve. I think the hard part is then figuring out *how* you evolve.

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you describe who in the company the initiative affected?

**RESPONDENT:** Sure. It affected the entire editorial organization in a way, if you go from the smallest to the largest editorial teams that are generating the subscription

content for XXXX, which is on the digital element. There is the ... within the organization now there is the idea for changing the content and the type of content that they create just so slightly that it may more readily lend itself to being included in a subscription product.

From a research side, it now changed the type of data that we need to gather and track relative to subscriptions and subscribers and retention rates.

With the marketing side, it now creates a need for better tracking of the money that we're putting down various channels to promote adoption of subscription product and the effective yield of the money that's coming out of those channels.

Within the finance/reporting side of the organization, it now requires the need for different revenue recognition because it's actually a subscription product.

Because of how integrated we are and the processes we built up over time, any change that you make to a product that you're offering is going to naturally ripple through the entire organization. Because ultimately in some shape or form all of the organizations are here made to generate those products.

**INTERVIEWER:** How would you like me to describe this.

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** A more general subscription product.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was your role in this effort?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** It aligns with kind of back with where we started. It was the analysis of the business opportunity and then the decision-making around the allocation of company resources towards the opportunities with the highest return.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did stakeholders respond to the initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** Generally, positive. It's a product and an idea that you see across the media landscape lots of people are doing, so, I think it's positive in the eyes of the employees in that we continue to evolve. I didn't pick up anything negative of that and I think there's a lot of curiosity about how things will continue to evolve and how successful it will be.

**INTERVIEWER:** Person above you?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** I think it was positive. Positive in the sense that we think the content is good, that the content and the product that we released is a good one and the initial adoption rates have been positive, ahead of our expectations. So I think both of those things are good.

**INTERVIEWER:** Looking back, were there any aspects of the initiative that could have been better executed?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** You know ... no, I think we did it the right way and would do it again. But in this process, the continuous thing we do is analyze market opportunities. Figure out what's the right amount of capital and resources to put behind that to go chase it. I think generally in the digital space there's a push to do things faster and invest more heavily, more quickly. And I think it's the constant balancing of that with where you stand with the product evolution and how ready you are to go and do that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Any cultural barriers within the company during the development of the initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 2:** No, I don't think there were any cultural barriers. I think in general it was well executed.

**Interview Subject No. 3: Individual who oversees technology and product development at a traditional legacy news organization.**

**INTERVIEWER:** Tell me about your job and what you do.

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** About two years ago, XXXX launched a new project. Four or five years ago, XXXX started charging for digital access. And then two years ago there was an opportunity to create a series of new products at a lower price point to reach a larger audience.

So we created this team called new products. We launched three products in a year and this was last year. My role was to lead the development team. I hired 16 developers for three products. And then, working closely with each of those teams ... to go through the full process: from discovering what the product should be, talking to users, looking at research about audience sizes and usages on our site. And then building the teams, building the products and then launching the products.

Now we're transitioning. I still manage the dev (development) team but I've also taken on a bit of product responsibility. I'm currently the project manager for XXXX. And so in that capacity I re-launched XXXX as a free product ... last Monday, actually.

**INTERVIEWER:** Describe the relationship between the business departments and the editorial department at your company.

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** One thing to keep in mind is my first six years I was in the newsroom, and I've actually of kind of crossed that divide. Which is actually relevant to how our team is structured.

So our team, we're kind of in the middle between the news side and the business side. Product reports to the business side. Technology technically reports to the business side. Digital reports to the editorial side. There's this "Switzerland" as we call it, where there's things in between (the editorial and business departments).

Within new products, we have imbedded members within the design team, the product team, the technology team. Project managers who are also part of the technology team. Marketing (members), which is part of the marketing team. We also work closely with advertising – which help decide which ad elements go into the application. Uh, business development, which helps us with partnerships and contracts. We work with corporate communications department. What's unusual about my team is that we have editors and developers literally sitting together while working on the products. In most cases they're on two different floors. But on my team we sit next to each other. And we actually sit within the technology and products organization.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'd like to focus on the idea of a business initiative. How would you define a business initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** I would define a business initiative as something that is being driven by some revenue goal. I'll give you a couple of examples. One business initiative ... we are looking to replace a hum-drum ad-driven solution with "DFP" – DoubleClick for Publishers.\* The business initiative is driven by the fact DFP will give us capabilities to have different kinds of ad units than we've have now and there's a revenue attached to that.

Another business initiative is launching our events business. And that's driven by a revenue goal around events attendees, about ad sales, ad events that we can monetize that and make money off of it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Let's discuss one initiative you were involved in. Can you describe that initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** Sure, the whole XXXX team and the three products that were created would be one initiative. The goal was to create new products that would appeal to users of XXXX who are not yet subscribers. And hopefully encourage them to subscribe when they haven't done so before. And so we've created this team, which meant hiring designers, developers, project managers and then launched each of these products and so we had a marketing budget behind them. But the goal is creating new apps that people would subscribe to.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** This started two years ago and we launched all of the apps about a year ago. We're in our second year now.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was difficult about carrying out this initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** It's very difficult to go from zero to ... at one point we hired about 60 people. That within a year ... hired or shipped in from another division. That's a big organization to build from scratch. You can look at it as we had started three start-ups within the Times in the span of a year. One that was a XXXX site, one that was on news and one that was a XXXX app. And that level of just building a new culture, building a new process, building new teams was a challenge. And we're doing all of this within the context of the XXXX, You have to be mindful of the larger brand, of the

organization, the editorial comfort level around different experiments in changes to tone and voice. And so there were a lot of conversations about ... we were doing things within the organization ...they'll have to navigate what was inbounds and where the lines were.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was easy about executing the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** One thing was ... we had the freedom to ... because we were self-contained, we had a lot of ability to make our own decisions and then move quickly. We did not have to get a lot of high-level buy-in on decisions about the product, which helped.

We also had ... because we had a lot of support we were able to pull in a lot of the best people within the organization, which again helped us move pretty quickly. We had a good mix of veterans who were able to navigate the politics and the culture of this place, and people who brought in new ideas.

**INTERVIEWER:** Who within the organization did the initiative affect (editorial, business, tech, hierarchy)

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** It affected lots and lots of people. Where to start? Certainly the marketing department, who had to figure out how to market both these new products and how they fit within existing ... products. I think the shortest answer to the question is it affected the entire organization at some point or another. From the newsroom, who had to staff up and figure out how to edit this new form of journalism, to our entire tech team, who had to build pieces of these new products into existing products. The design team, who had to design these new products. It literally did affect the entire organization at one point or another.



**INTERVIEWER:** And what was your role in the development of the strategy of this new initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** I didn't really have a role in that. That was done at a more executive level before I was brought on board. I was involved in the strategy of how we would get news on it (the app products), and then what we would do in the future.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did people respond to the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** It varied. People above were very supportive but very ... I wouldn't say nervous, but their reputation was on the line, as well, because this was their initiative. So they were very ... eager to see if it would succeed, and they would clear roadblocks for us but also ... uh, not put pressure on us but ... there were so many frustrations (within the organization) that we were given a lot of green lights and runways that other teams were not. So they felt that we were kind of fast-tracked, which in some ways was true.

And then there were people who were really excited about some of the things we were doing. Like the newsroom, for example. Even though this was a business initiative that was driven by a revenue goal, it created new opportunities for the newsroom to explore different kinds of journalism they hadn't been able to do and so they were very excited about that.

**INTERVIEWER:** What do you believe should have been the response, and was the reality in line with what you thought was appropriate?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** Yeah, I think it fit in quite well. We got the support we needed, we got a healthy dose of skepticism, which was totally fair. And we were able to launch. Yeah, I think it worked out quite well.

**INTERVIEWER:** Looking back at the process, what could have been executed in a better way?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** I think the big thing is there was a very high-level strategy that was ... even if we were beginning to execute on it ... it was challenging because the whole budget and the whole system was built on that strategy. There was not a good way to change directions as quickly as we would have liked.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you see any kind of barriers that slowed work on the initiative (physical, verbal, cultural)?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** There's always tension between ... there were certainly some things within the product that we would have wanted to use that wouldn't have been possible w/o engaging a much larger portion of the newsroom or making bigger changes there. Honestly, there were more tensions between different pieces of the business side than there was between the newsroom and the business side. Particularly the marketing department and the product department. Or marketing and design.

**INTERVIEWER:** Why was that?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** Just a difference of goals. Some of the teams had slightly different goals than others and they were actually opposed in some instances.

**INTERVIEWER:** Was the initiative successfully put into practice?

**RESPONDENT NO. 3:** Yes, it was.

(Later in conversation): Now, we have one person who has all the design people on the business side report to, as well as all the digital people in the news side. It's a very clear top-level acknowledgment that this is one thing we should all be working on, not that there's this big church-and-state divide.

\* DoubleClick for Publishers (**DFP**), formerly called Google Dart, is an advertisement software as a service application run by Google. It can be used as an ad server but it also provides a variety of useful features for managing the sales process of online ads using a publisher's dedicated sales team.

**Interview Subject No. 4: Individual who works on the business side of a traditional legacy news organization.**

**INTERVIEWER:** How long have you been at your position?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** I have been the head of this team for about three plus years. I've been working in it for a decade.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long at the company?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** I've been with the company 15 years.

**INTERVIEWER:** How would you describe the relationship between your department and the newsroom?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** Broadly, it improves every day. There's a high degree of sensitivity and I would say caution and the legacy of that is there used to be a very formalized way to talk to each other, and it only happened between literally only two or three individuals. And it's way more porous now. And we're in another transition where we're trying to figure out how we widen that aperture without disrupting the core, you know, the essence of what the newsroom is meant to be about. Which is creating the best news and information in the world. And around the world, and not grappling w/the challenges of marketers.

But, the practical reality is that what we do is have to involve them more and more. So the organization continues to try and facilitate ... find a way for those collaborations to happen w/o jeopardizing the essence of what they're meant to be about.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'd like to follow up on that.

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** Sure.

**INTERVIEWER:** You say the reality is that your day-to-day activity calls for more involvement from the newsroom. What do you mean by that?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** Having a better window into what they're planning. Me trying to be able to suggest things in a respectful way, meaning, "We think we have someone who'd be interested in this type of content if we were to create it." Not that they (advertisers) would have influence over what was said, but just the type of things that people are asking for.

Just knowing the details of what they're (the newsroom) thinking of doing so we have enough time to articulate that to clients. Understanding what's happening with the content they're doing and how they're distributing it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you give any specific examples ... have there been any times where people on the business side have suggested content that there's an audience for and how was it received?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** The funny thing about it is we have a mechanism for this with print content. We had a special sections editor for the print product. And the whole thing was designed to address this question. That the topics that were of interest to advertisers were interested in we would talk to them about it and then they would come up with a set of ideas and would have to put together a section that would be about those topics.

Somehow, that essential notion has not spread across platforms. And my understanding of what happens at others places – I don't know how many people you've talked to at other organizations – are you specifically focused on newspaper organizations? Or are you also talking to magazine companies?

**INTERVIEWER:** I'm talking to different types of news companies. Traditional legacy print and broadcast, digital start-ups and those who dabble in multiple platforms.

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** Yep, OK, so what I've come to learn from some of the folks who I have now on my team, who've come from outside – I've hired a bunch of talent from different places – and as a backdrop I think that XXXX, who is the head of revenue and came in as the head of advertising a few years ago ... until XXXX ... and really XXXX and XXXX brought in a change with outside thinking ... there really wasn't a distinction of the marketplace. And it's understandable. It was all home-grown talent and I think just not a clear understanding of the things that were driving the marketplace. And so we've seen some of that layer into the thinking here. I've been around here long enough to know what this organization is about and so I'm trying to straddle that with moving it forward.

But, you know, all these folks tell me that, "Oh, at this place or that place the editorial team is right beside the marketing team and they discuss what stories they're going to create." And it's just a very different dynamic than what we have here. And I think we have our dynamic for very good reasons. I'm very, very mindful of that. I've had a couple of times where sales people themselves have developed relationships with folks from the editorial side and have generated ideas on their own. And in fact, there are things about them (the ideas) that we wouldn't actually do that fortunately have never left the building.

It's a slippery slope and it's just tricky navigating ... you don't know what has worked and what this place is about. A lot of what I hear at other places is just something I don't think we should do. Even though there's plenty of people who come in and say, "I

don't want to tell them (editorial) what to write or how to write it, but I want them that this is something that someone would be interested in sponsoring. And just even that notion of sponsorship ... we used to until ... not allow any client digitally or in print to own all the ad sponsorship for a certain type of content. Because we never wanted to have the appearance of the reason we're putting out this content is b/c of that client. And we've made some accommodations to that and now have 100 percent ways of sponsorship that we offer.

So there's very concrete changes that have happened. But there's still ... the flow of information back and forth between the two sides is still finding its new ... productive ways to work. And there are examples. I can think of one thing that we learned of something the newsroom was going to do and created a sponsorship for it and, you know, I know it's something in market now, they're going to sell. And not want to take their time to collaborate with us.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'd like to explore a specific business initiative. First, I'd like to ask how you would define a business initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** Of the two sides working together?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes.

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** My job is to try and get those two things to come together as closely as possible. Whatever I can do to facilitate an understanding and help of the client, whether that be in the form of packaging it differently, providing supportive research, whatever it is ... I will do. But there's a lot of proactive work that goes into that. And sometimes there's just not enough hours in the day to answer all of that.

Broadly speaking I did a newsroom immersion program about three years ago where I got to shadow most of the newsroom for three days. I was so astounded by the work ... they're (editorial employees) arguably some of the smartest people in the world ... their lack of knowledge about how the business worked and what was going on. If one of them had to report on it, it would have taken them 48 hours to understand the dynamics of the industry. (15:37) The fear-mongering of desire. They're some of the smartest people in the building and I'm thinking there's got to be a better way to do this. That's where I come from. I'm like, "Come on, guys, this is craziness." I have no interest in influencing what they're writing about. I think the core news reporting we do, the core investigative work we do, there's no way in hell I would want to touch any of that.

I do think, though, that there's a set of softer news, softer sections, that we could be more flexible with. And I don't mean crossing any lines. There's got to be areas where we can focus our efforts to work better together. And frankly, there aren't many (advertising) clients who have the stomach for the really hard-hitting stuff.

When XXXX (a project) came up, which I'm sure you know about, when they told us about that it was two weeks before launch. First of all, there's your first problem. There's just no hope, right? But let's pretend that even if (we knew) before that ... they told us what it was. And there was just no way – especially in that amount of time – have any way to convince anyone to run against that content. It's just this disconnect of, I mean that's an extreme example, but like, and then afterwards everyone's up in arms b/c we weren't able to (sell advertising for it). But for a while afterward advertisers said they wanted to sponsor the next (project). We said it doesn't quite work like that. We came up



with a term and told clients, “You could be the next sponsor of the next thing, but you don’t get to have any say.” So things like that.

It’s a hard thing to get anyone (advertisers) to commit to when they don’t know what the content is going to be.

**INTERVIEWER:** Describe one specific initiative and its purpose. (20:00)

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** I feel like my entire life is some version of that. We did have a case that ... I jokingly say that my job is to get as close to that (ethical) line as I can w/o getting myself fired. I knew I had with a particular advertiser an opportunity to sell a particular idea that has been kind of simmering around the building. And I was able to facilitate by hook or by crook to get a small pilot program of this type of content to be created to allow this advertiser to actually buy on a small scale. And once they did that the first time, they said, “Oh, we want to do it again and do more.” So after that it was like, oh, there was a particular set of content that they started producing. Now, the follow-up on this is six months later the (editorial) desk associated with it is telling us that they don’t like it and don’t want to produce it anymore. And I don’t know if that’s just sour grapes b/c they’re annoyed by it or what, but it was really trying to get to a specific chief (sp, 21:47) of an opportunity where there were dollars and trying to attach them to a set of content.

I don’t know if you’re familiar with the deal we did with XXXX where we integrated XXXX into our “XXXX” (a project) content. So what was great about that is the (editorial) desk said, “Hey, wait a second, we think we see great utility in doing this.” So that helped prompt a set of ... guiding an essential effort. If they hadn’t said that, I don’t think it ever would have happened. (22:40) There was a bunch of reorganization

that had to happen with other stuff. There was a fair amount of chaos in getting the project done. But that's because we're really not used to doing that as an organization. And I think that that juggling of priorities of, you know ... news has their priorities for the year, let's say, and a deal like that comes in and it's a shift, and it's essentially to make money.

I still like that's just not ... people want that to just happen on its own. They don't want to have to move their plans ... to have to think about it, really.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** Getting it to the point where everybody was interested in it, and people would plan around it, was about a year ago. And then that pilot piece of content launched in the fall (of 2014). And then they (advertiser) renewed for another set that just ran last month. And now we're In discussions about a next step.

**INTERVIEWER:** The difficult aspects of developing the initiative and what was easy?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** What was easy was to say, "I really think this is something they'll buy." And then we have to do these things. We have to schedule it. For example, we knew the newsroom wanted to run it October, November ... I don't remember exactly. The slate was November, December. So shifting newsroom's priorities based on what the client's needs were. Something like that is very anathema to how the newsroom operates. And frankly, I don't want to change dynamics of how they make decisions of what they do. That's terrible. But then, everyone was rallying around the point of trying to work together.

I don't know if that answers your question. The priorities were changed based on what the advertiser wanted. And you think of that as a core, central tenant. And I think if you talked to people in the newsroom they would say that was a destabilizing notion to grapple with. They had never had to grapple w/that before. (25:48)

**INTERVIEWER:** Who were the people in your department and newsroom who were affected by it?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** One of the news desks. A secondary products teams.

**INTERVIEWER:** Your role in development of strategy?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** I had people on my team helping put it together, but I was acting as the go-between on an informal basis. And the editor ... I knew him. I had a sense that I could call him about it. That only happens at a certain level.

**INTERVIEWER:** Response to initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** I think there was a lot ... keeping things focused. Getting something like this done was about creating an opportunity we could sell and we sold. That this is something that could be an example of how we might collaborate better. So that was my driving notion.

And I could just see that this was a realistic opportunity. I could tell from the sales person that the client was really interested and that we might actually have a chance in selling this. So like you get all those cues and feeding all that to people on the product and editorial sides, saying, "Guys, I think if we can really figure out how to agree, we could make this happen." And everybody focused on that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Was the response appropriate?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** I think it was appropriate as could be for this place at this time. I wish everyone had been a little more comfortable with working through it. But for here for now I think it was pretty good.

**INTERVIEWER:** What could have been better?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** How the resources were delegated and executed became sort of a factor in it. Looking back on it I think I would have wanted that to not have been such a big deal. That required so many conversations. Essentially it caused budget over on the news side to have to change. So that gets into how dollars are moving through the building. And that's not my expertise. Not my decision. It seems like we could have worked through that a little more easily.

**INTERVIEWER:** This was put into practice?

**RESPONDENT NO. 4:** Yep.

**Interview Subject No. 5: Senior-level news executive whose anecdotes came from working at a digital-only outlet.**

**INTERVIEWER:** Tell me about your job and what you do.

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** I was hired as the managing editor for editorial strategy, which is basically fixing the news to both enter the digital age with new forms of storytelling, but also, kind of, the innovative newsroom of the future, right? If we had to start over, and we weren't beholden to the structures of print that dictate how we do things, how did we think up what.

So I do everything from work on the photo stories – to how they look – to the ad lines, to official media strategy to get them out, to what video should look like, and on and on.

**INTERVIEWER:** That seems like a lot for one person to deal with.

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** Yes, it's a lot.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'm going to ask you a few questions about ... asking your opinion ... what is your view about the working relationship between the business, the marketing departments where you work at and the newsroom?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** For where I work now, we use marketing to amplify the message of the stories. I work closely with them, to make sure the stories are in line with our brand. There's increasingly an official media component to have each story have a shot at marketing, and some of that is an editorial function and some of that is on the communications marketing side to get what XXX (2:41) bookings around the Twitters or the ideas presented around those stories. Eventually, I think, there will be more of an

onus for marketing and editorial to work together. If advertising can actually sell what we're doing.

**INTERVIEWER:** That gets to the heart of what I'd like you to talk about, but first, how would you define a business initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** It really depends. There's internal, right? There's business initiatives to streamline our own operations, to increase efficiency within the organization. And then there's the external, which I would say is everything from an ad campaign to a branding campaign, like for example, letting the community know that we are out and about and paying attention to their stories.

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you describe an initiative in the past that you've been involved in?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** Sure, so when I launched XXXX, which is the global (site) owned by XXXX, I was noticing that XXXX readers were really showing up in droves. And so, I said, "What if we were to build a little more content that is specifically for an XXXX reader ... what would that get us?" And so we basically had a market that we filled. Proof that they existed. And the types of stories that they were interested in, which were actually pretty business, market content.

So, I went to the marketing department ... we packaged a deck so that they could intentionally go out and sell it. And initially we sold (?) about \$350,000, and then about a year later I said, "Can we try and do this for XXXX?" And we did that and we sold outside a million dollars.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** It was an initiative we launched in XXXX (month) of XXXX (year). And then XXXX we launched in XXXX (month) of XXXX (year).

**INTERVIEWER:** What would you describe was difficult about developing that initiative? The question is intentionally open-ended. I'm leaving it as subjective for you.

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** I would say the difficulty is getting the talent pool that can meet the general digital journalism as we practice it in the U.S. Also, the legal issues with launching a new vertical within a large company, and its overseas and it's just very complicated. I would say those are the two most important things.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was easy about launching the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** The market. Just showing a proof of readership. And having really interesting content, actually be engaging with readers.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did people within your company respond to the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** Internally, it was a really good example of innovation and that we could launch something new and make people feel excited. It was sort of akin to the launch of XXXX overall. So that was exciting. Generally we got a lot of praise for being different, for not generalizing the audience, for really being on brand. And today, about 10 to 15 percent of the traffic comes from the XXXX audience and that's only with about 100 to 125k in startup (? , 7:24). So it's the achievement of an entire vertical with the cost of one reporter.

**INTERVIEWER:** Was that an appropriate response?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** Oh, there's lots of things to improve. The thing about XXXX is that a lot of these niche sites ... they just want ... you have to prove that you

have a development ... every single day for a regular reader. That's a really big challenge.

**INTERVIEWER:** What barriers existed in developing the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** So we launched w/o really being set up for ... (? 8:50)  
... We really haven't had models where a Western company launches a regional (?) outlet and [dealing with] the way XXXX do things and we have to decide if it's a plus. We had to integrate costs and work cultures.

**INTERVIEWER:** This initiative was accepted?

**RESPONDENT NO. 5:** Oh, yeah, once we had funding for it.



**Interview Subject No. 6: Senior editor at an international news organization who handles editorial operations.**

**INTERVIEWER:** Tell me about your job and what it is you do.

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** You can call me a senior editor at an international news organization. If you need anything more specific, you can say who handles editorial operations.

**INTERVIEWER:** What is it you specifically do, and if you have any examples that would be great.

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** My day job is editorial operations, so budgets, admin, safety, security, resource management. That kind of thing, on a day-to-day basis. Which is the equivalent of my job at the XXXX. Over and above that, I run the graphics team directly. I officially run the data and computational journalism team. I have a hand in what they do, the design team. And I have some people who liaise w/corporate technology. Because we're an extra-large company, we don't buy a lot of technology off the shelf, we build it. We have a technology department. It's really because XXXX is essentially a technology and information company. I manage that relationship.

We also play with research and development. We play with the business ... one of my jobs is to liaise with people in the terminal business, the agency business. And just any other bits and pieces. I did the "XXXX" project.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long at that position and at company?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** I've been at XXXX four years this go around. This last (role) I took over at the beginning of last year, about a year and a half ago. The year before that it was data and innovation and the year before that it was data.

**(6:35) INTERVIEWER:** How would you describe the relationship between ...

**(6:45) RESPONDENT NO. 6:** Keep in mind this is similar at XXXX and at XXXX. This (XXXX) isn't an advertising-driven business. Functionally, XXXX is a company that breaks into three or four businesses, the two biggest of which are XXXX and XXXX. One is a \$7 billion business and the other is about a \$4 billion business. Then there's XXXX, XXXX, XXXX and a few other things. So if you think about the business only from a news perspective and not a XXXX perspective, basically, news is monetized, one, through what we call the agency business, which is wholesale selling of news to places like XXXX. Or to XXXX or XXXX, and so on. That's the bulk of the (news monetization) business, is TV, actually. TV footage, not even packages, per se. There's a very small business in XXXX. Because we're not a destination website in the same way that the XXXX or XXXX is. And those are ad-driven businesses. We do have ad revenue off XXXX but that's not a core business for us.

And then the news that we produce is sold basically through XXXX. In the same way that XXXX is sold through XXXX. Essentially at a very high subscription rate. It's hard to put a dollar value in it, because like XXXX, it (the news) is essentially bundled.

So what we're really doing, in the case of the agency, is looking at news that is valuable to other news organizations as opposed to, if you like, true end users.

And then on the financial side, the vast bulk of revenue from that side is to look at what it is that customers want. So for example, they obviously want XXXX news, like

XXXX. They want scoops. And then they want other ... relevant pieces. It doesn't mean they're XXXX stories, per se, but it does mean they're stories that a XXXX would be interested in.

So it's not dealing with advertisers so much as it's dealing with products people. And the relationship is pretty decent. There was a time when it wasn't great and we've worked on it the last couple of years. We see much more eye-to-eye about ... both in what we believe and they believe the part needs. And also what's doable with the resources we have.

**INTERVIEWER:** What were some of the issues that needed work, in your view?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** I guess the analogy is – and I've spent enough time in newspapers that I know the three-way tangle between editorial, circulation and advertising – so the analogy is if you ask an ad person what they want, they want what they're selling that day, right? So if that day, there are good prospects in auto dealerships, why don't you guys do more car stories? (11:31) That's the classic problem, right? Everybody wants your core to remain: "Yes, I want you to do all that great coverage you've been doing on City Hall, but if we could get some car coverage I could sell out the auto industry in town," right?

It's the same sort of thing here in that everyone takes the core for granted, and everyone wants the incremental, which, again, makes perfect sense. That was the issue we had, which was people focused on the specific periphery of what they wanted, and everyone would come in and essentially try to argue for, "Well, look, he was going to transfer a couple of head counts toward" (what advertising wanted). And don't worry about the core. So it's been a reasonable process of education about what it takes to

maintain the core. And that while it may make some business sense to edge over to the periphery, you really can make the most money ... the most efficient way is to take the core and spread it over as many groups as possible, then trying to serve the XXXX industry with auto news if nobody else is interested in auto news.

So it's understanding the economics of it. And also, let's face it, from our side, too, it's about not being prissy about ... not just insisting that you have no relationship with the business. Which some people will have, as well. The attitude that, "Hey, we'll do what we do and it's your job to sell it."

**INTERVIEWER:** I'd like to explore a specific business initiative. First, I'd like to ask how you would define a business initiative?

**(13:50) RESPONDENT NO. 6:** Hmm, that's a good question. Well, look, it can be anything ... in the old days, when you were at, say, a newspaper, a business initiative would be the creation of a section, let's say, right? Or the creation of a new kind of product that might be launching a conference. I did that when I was at the XXXX in XXXX. We launched a couple of ... conferences. And we opened up a couple of sections. So in the old days that was what we called a business initiative. You could also argue about smaller business initiatives, like, "Hey, why don't we have an advertising column?" There's a business rationale for it. Also, expanding coverage in a country where we might start printing.

But today in the digital age, a business initiative can be any damn thing. So XXXX(a project) was an all-digital idea from scratch that we set up. So that, you would say is a business initiative, even though we did not have a business plan, it was really an editorial initiative that potentially had some business potential. But there's other, not

relatively, not less ambitious, but more focused things. We created the new XXXX products, if you like, that happen to go straight on the wire but designed much more with XXXX(?) 15:58. We launched XXXX very recently, built for mobile. And created again from scratch. So those are all things that can be considered business initiatives.

**INTERVIEWER:** Describe one specific initiative and its purpose.

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** Look, I can give two examples that run fairly differently. So XXXX was this massive, huge, damn project. We hired essentially 18 people in XXXX to – I don't know if you've seen the thing. ...

**INTERVIEWER:** I'm familiar with it. Very impressive.

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** So we spent tons of money on it. It was built off, essentially, a vision and an idea that I had, which was, this was a much more powerful way to present information. It had sort of an explanatory, an exploratory way of fundamentally reshaping how you might think of some of these relationships.

How did I get it done? I got it done because I came in (to a job) and said, "This is really what I want to do, as well." (18:42) It took XXXX months, XXXX people and a ton of money. Really, at the end of the day, I wouldn't do it quite this way in the future, because it could have been done a little bit more efficiently. But nonetheless, that was driven because I had relationships and I had a goal and I could push. That was a time when we were relatively more flush and I could say, "I believe this is fundamentally a good idea."

So we pushed it all the way through. And XXXX months of sustained work with no output for something completely unproven in a newsroom is unprecedented. So I'm very happy I got the support I had to do it. There were any number of internal things,

from in the newsroom” “What the hell is your team doing?” to the business side: “Oh my God, what is this?”

We were thinking there’s got to be some kind of business model here. Whether that was going to be selling the data, or whether it was going to be creating some kind of mutational product out of this, or whether it was going to be a way of streamlining ... coverage so that we could do it more cost effectively by getting the XXXX bureau to produce content for it rather than a team. But in the long run, basically, we got to a position where ... and again I’ve learned a lot of lessons about product management here, and business models and thinking about what scales and what doesn’t scale, how you can get business people interested in an idea is obviously very different than thinking you’ve got a great product.

So I’m really happy with what we did. But ultimately we didn’t have the legs to make this thing go forever. It became less of a product and more of a great project, in the same way that you do a great five-part investigative series. (21:30) We’d say, “Well, that is done, now we’ll do something else.” So that was one where it involved a huge amount of internal work. To make sure we have technology. To make sure we have editorial. To make sure everything runs.

But it was different fundamentally by, if you like, act of will and support from management. In most other cases it’s much more of a longer and complex collaborative exercise. You have to work around a whole bunch of other constraints. There’s some very simple stuff, like for example, the graphics team is working on trying to get a lot more interactive onto the terminal product as well as the agency customers. We had a very standard, old-fashioned graphic business that fell mostly to newspapers.

What we've done over the course of two, three years, is tackle all of the issues and that takes a huge amount of work. It's dealing with the technology people to make sure we have the pipes that can move an interactive. It's understanding what the agency customers might want. It's making sure the technical constraints in the terminal business and what it takes to present graphics. It's a hell of a lot more complex than it sounds because these are closed ecosystems that don't allow a lot of external content to flow in. It's making sure we have servers and actively building a CMS to manage the graphics. And making sure we have the training.

So that's just picking the bits and pieces of what is a long chain of things that need to be done so we can get somewhere over a fairly protracted period of time. It's hard when it's not necessarily at the top of everybody's agenda because it's incremental improvement – even if we can see more revenue from it, which we can on the agency side – but it's just not ... it's a smallish part of what would be somebody's portfolio, so it's not at the top of people's agenda.

So a lot of it is trying to figure out how to get people's attention to fix things or to change things. And a lot of it is essentially trying to sell the story of why it matters.

**INTERVIEWER:** Back to XXXX, how long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** We started in late XXXX (year), I guess, and I think we launched it at the beginning of XXXX (year).

**INTERVIEWER:** What was difficult about developing that initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** Editorially, it was very difficult for lots and lots of reasons. It had never really been done on that scale. We had to set up all new guidelines. You think about really simple stuff: How do you do a correction in an online database?

What are the standards for correcting something for if you show a visualization and you realize there's a mistake in it. How do you append a correction where one person might have seen (the inaccuracy) or a million people might have seen? So this sort of thinking through the standards for publication. From an editorial point of view the creation of workflow from scratch, CMS from scratch, standards from scratch, practices from scratch. I mean that was just God-awful. Uh, difficult.

But if you're asking from the product side of it, then it was the technology. Data visualization – creating it from scratch. You have no templates to go to.

So even though I really love the design of it, I don't think it's been cracked yet: But it will come. Someone way smarter than us will figure it out.

And then the step after that is, how do you present, how do you, first of all, sell something that no one has ever seen before? When people saw it they were excited. But then you have to go to the next step, which is, "OK, what are you going to do with it?" I don't mean to belittle the difficulties of creating a website, but at least if I say, "Hey, we're going to do a Chinese-language website for CNN news," I have an idea in my head. It may not be exactly what you have in your head. (But) I can understand what the metrics are. I can go after this market. For XXXX, this was a completely new business opportunity. It had never been tested.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was easy about the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** What was easy was I had the support of top management and they were happy to let this thing keep riding. Which I'm incredibly grateful for.

**INTERVIEWER:** Who did this initiative affect?



**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** Ah. That's actually really interesting. Because we ran it on the side it didn't actually affect that many people. And that's one of the lessons: If you want something built, do it as a stunt work. But if you want something accepted, then that's your ... I mean, you could probably have built your CNN China website, if I had given you enough money, to just go out and do it on the side. But once you've built it, the question is who would feel like they owned it?

**INTERVIEWER:** Right, a good point. Back to you, what was your role in development of strategy?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** There were three people who were in the direct planning of this thing. We sat around and we talked and thought about people who might be interested. But there was a lot of running around, demonstrating it. People selling it upstairs to the CEO, we did a demo for him, as well, and his leadership team.

People would have ideas – “Hey, this would be a great thing in the XXXX market, this would be a great thing in the XXXX market.” I could see how X company might want this.” People would say this would be interesting if instead you had XXXX data, you had Y data in it. And we looked at it. I costed it out. What if we did a XXXX? What if we did a XXXX?

There was a fair amount of running around. In many cases it was XXXX doing the demos, in some cases it was me. We had frank conversations. Maybe they (potential customers) didn't want the visualization. Maybe all they wanted was the data.

I guess if we were an IPO start-up and our life depended on it I guess we would have been more active in getting that started. Ultimately, in trying to get people interested in the business, the problem is it kind of depends on ... at the end of the day it has to

become a really big business, and I think it will one day. But from a start-up point of view, I have to think well, what's my day job? I have to keep doing my day job and this is something on the side.

As I say, if you run it purely as a stunt work, you'll have a harder time getting ownership and buy-in.

**INTERVIEWER:** Response to initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** The people who were involved were really quite excited to be a part of this. Obviously, they would have liked it to go on forever, but it didn't.

The technology relationship was a little bit more fraught. The people who actually worked on it were quite happy, but I'm not sure their bosses were as happy, because again, they've got day jobs. If you're not completely bought in, then this is a distraction from the day job. We brought in an outside design company to do this. That never keeps your technology people happy, if you've got an outside technology company involved.

And again while people expressed great pride and so on from the business perspective, getting people to then say, "I'm going to spend the precious few hours I have in my day to help you make this a product," is a different exercise, right? And that's where the whole notion of selling and collaboration really kicks in. And that's just a time-consuming process.

Fundamentally, I think that's the difference between a start-up and a large organization. It's not that you've got smarter people in start-ups. Large organizations are built to do what they're built to do. Whether they do them well or do them badly, the point is you're optimized to do this thing. And a start-up is optimized to do this new thing you've decided to make it do. You are creating a lot of these processes on the fly and

your intent is to make that product successful. And I don't mean stock options. I mean this is what you do, so you go out and you do the hell out of it because you don't really have another job.

And everything, whether it's technology, editorial or sales, is built around the notion of, say, I hire you to sell my website, right? So you go out and sell my website. You don't say, "This is my job, to sell the English-language website, it's nice you've built this, but OK, I'll think about helping you out." Which is a very different process.

The advantages of a large organization is, obviously, you have scalability, you have imbedded knowledge, you may have customer relationships, which in theory are very valuable. You've got lots and lots of things. But the flip side of that, of course, is that you're actually optimized to do something else. And that's why large organizations can seem much more sluggish, much less responsive to the market. All of which is true, I just think it's not a bad thing or a good thing. It is what it is. Facebook, for example, depending on what you think of Mark Zuckerberg, is a great organization or is evil incarnate. The point is, he might say, "Hey, I want to open a restaurant." It's not what they're (Facebook) optimized to do.

**(38:30) INTERVIEWER:** What could have been better?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** It's a good question. It's two parts. If you want to think of it as an editorial initiative, I think we did everything right. To get a beautiful, kick-ass project out the door. To draw a straight line between here and the door and bat everything down along the way. That's the way you would run an investigative project, a story you want to get out the door. So from that point of view I think we did a more or less good

job. I would have simplified some stuff. I would have thought more about the end product. I would have tried to do it faster and cheaper.

On the other hand, if you want to talk about it from a longstanding product point of view – and that’s the difference between an editorial project or product and a business product. Business products have to live in time unless it’s a conference, and even then it does have a real lifespan. Then I would have said you have to identify what are the stakeholders, what are the obstacles? You know, why someone may or may not want to be helpful. And address their points. Think about ... it’s not about having lots of meetings so everyone can opine. It’s making sure you understand what their needs are and how you can help it.

And then I certainly would not try something over an XXXX -month gestation period, because the only people who have that kind of staying power are the creators and the people involved on a day-to-day basis. Everybody else loses interest. Especially thinking about people in a fiscal year. You need to show steady progress. In an ideal world you’re giving out bits of product every couple of months so that they stay engaged.

Ideally, you give them something they can sell – if it’s a product that you’re building – so that they understand what the possibilities are, so they can start optimizing their organization. The last thing you want is to go, “Here it is,” and then they, “Oh, great,” and they spend another year building a product to take advantage of this. So it’s making sure people are engaged, giving them stuff.

**INTERVIEWER:** What were the barriers that existed?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** There's always tons of barriers. There were clear cultural barriers. The editor doesn't understand what you're doing. The technology people don't understand what you're doing, the product people don't understand.

The cultural difficulties come from a newsroom where people are used to doing something a certain way. I'm sure there were people who were saying, "If you've got spare money why are you spending it on that and not on where I need help?" That's a classic problem.

In terms of ... what else did you say?

**INTERVIEWER:** Well, verbal. For example, are people from different parts of a news organization literally speaking another language?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** Yes, they are. That would be a good way of describing it. You have to spend a huge amount of time learning another person's vocabulary. And that has been true. My life has mostly been spent in print news organizations, so I've learned to talk circulation language, advertising language. And understand it. Because it's critically important to understand what they're saying. That way you can frame things in ways people can understand.

And here, as a XXXX news organization, as an agency organization, I've had to learn new vocabulary. And I talk like that now, which is sort of strange, disturbing at times. But you have to know how to communicate. That's the nature of the beast, right? I wouldn't say it was a huge problem other than this (project) was so new you had to create some new grammar and you had to hope that other people came along.

And that's something I've learned. If you're trying something reasonably, radically new, it's important to both have analogies and hooks to things that exist, so

people can say, “Oh, it’s like ‘When Harry Met Sally’.” It’s about creating a hook to existing things and creating a language so you don’t have to keep saying those hooks. It’s a very big barrier to completely new ideas.

**INTERVIEWER:** The project, it’s in use. Is it serving a purpose?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** We’re not updating it. We’re not presenting it live. We have access to it and we’re looking at it now and then. I’m sure over time that will age out and will be less and less valuable.

We’ve used the structure to look at other relationships, other domains. Other domains, but internally, to analyze other places.

**INTERVIEWER:** And how would you want XXXX to be referred to?

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** See, this is the difficult thing. You could say a large interactive visualization. If you get too specific, there’s only one of it in the way.

**INTERVIEWER:** Of course.

**RESPONDENT NO. 6:** Cultural change within an organization is one of the most difficult things you can do. I’ve been involved with it three times. Culture, depending on what you’re trying to do, can be a real stick in the mud preventing you from accomplishing what you want, or it can be a wonderful thing that preserves the strengths of what you do.

(Refers to Columbia Tow report on post-industrial media): There’s a wonderful line in there that refers to the value of tradition within culture. It talks about people as part of not products, but processes. The XXXX is what it is because of the way they do things. The (NY) Times is what it is because of the way they do things. And that’s one of their great strengths and it’s one of their great weaknesses.

Changing culture is both very difficult, but you also risk changing what your organization already is. At least when you're a news organization, you essentially have process.

**Interview Subject No. 7: A business executive at a large metropolitan newspaper.**

**INTERVIEWER:** (2:00 mark) Tell me about your job and what you do. What exactly do you do?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** So, in days of old this would have been the circulation role, if that helps place a little bit of framework around it for you. As XXX, I oversee growing our print and digital audience. The revenue associated with subscriptions for both print and digital, so again, not advertising revenue but the audience side. And then distribution of all of our products, so our paid and our free publications and to the extent that there's a digital component, our electronic edition, newsletters, those sort of things. So it's a blend of print and digital.

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you give me an example of what it is specifically, say you're looking at the audience side for growing revenue. Are you talking about subscriptions or any kind of premium products to grow revenue?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** Exactly, so on the revenue side, it's print home delivery subscriptions, single-copy delivery. On the digital side, we have digital-only subscriptions that we charge for, so it's any revenue associated with subscriptions of our products.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long have you been at this position?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** I have been in this role for two and a half years.

**INTERVIEWER:** And how long have you been with the company overall?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** I had my XXXX -year anniversary yesterday, so XXXX years.



**INTERVIEWER:** Happy anniversary. What is the relationship there, in your opinion, between the marketing and business departments and the newsroom, the editorial department? That's an intentionally open-ended question. I'm interested in your thoughts on how you view the relationship in terms of how much communication, how they work, what they are doing to work with each other, what they aren't doing.

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** Sure. So, we work together in a lot of different capacities. And so I can describe some of those. So on a very day-to-day sort of production fashion we work together on obviously deadlines on everything going from last news copy to get the customer's paper on the porch. We have a pretty heightened eye on that right now because we just adjusted a lot of our news deadlines. And so we're pretty focused right now on making sure that every aspect along the way is meeting the deadlines ... shoving the stories at the times that they need and the presses (are) printing, etc., etc. We don't actually work on that together from a day to day, there is literally a tracking that we're reviewing on a weekly basis and we're monitoring because it's a pretty important piece of us right now.

News has a pretty good – and I should say we have three different news divisions, obviously each of the three papers, but we have one what we call our command center production for news that does the layout and production for all three papers and that is here in XXXX. We have a pretty good relationship on this. News understands the importance of making deadlines and for us to get product out. The relationship is pretty good about extending deadlines, I mean there's just stuff that comes up, right? The Warriors last week with going through the NBA Finals was a time that we wanted to make sure we were capturing the final game score, so they're pretty good about and

we're all pretty good about requesting time back and forth. So that's kind of the production side.

From a day-to-day news side, um ... (long pause) ... I mean there's some good and some not-so-good. I don't think we do as good a job as we could communicating out or getting from news what's coming in the paper and what should we be promoting. There isn't as great a communication as I'd like to see that would allow us to market stories as much as we could.

We've recently had a breakthrough ... it's talked about differently at different-sized papers. At XXXX and XXXX, we've got a much stronger relationship – a much more trusting relationship, I should say – where, for example, the main social media sites for our papers, the main Twitter sites, are actually run out of news, as opposed to the marketing or audience side. And so they're predominantly used just to post a story. And we have not had access until recently on the marketing side to do any postings of our own. XXXX and XXXX, being smaller newspapers, we developed that trust much faster, where they said, "Go for it, here's the log-in and here's how to post."

In XXXX, we just recently after, like, years of trying to fight the battle, got access to be able to post things. However, everything still has to be approved by the news teams. So that's an area where we could do better, it would be great to be able to post a photo, of say, "Come drop by the dean's booth at the State Fair this weekend," or you know, here's what we're doing out here, this, that or the other.

And to be able to share in a different way, because our news posts tend to be "Here's the story and the link to read it." So we don't do as good of a job as I think we

could on engaging readers and getting comments and all of that, so that's an area I don't think we do as well in.

We just went through a major redesign, which is part of the reason we couldn't do this call when you asked a month ago. And just re-launched on XXXX, and as we're making our way through that process, particularly in XXXX, our project manager out of news was really good about sharing with us everything that was changing in the paper: columnists who were moving from one day to another, or things that were being eliminated. And so there was again, because there was a heightened focus on it, we had great communication. Since the launch, we've been testing different things and moving stuff around we're back to kind of not knowing, day to day, what's happening. And so, the kind of ongoing communications is always a struggle, with everyone moving quickly.

On our end, part of my role in audience is to oversee customer service, so we're the first to know (about customer complaints) and that's not only phone calls, but emails and other ways that customers communicate with us. So we're the first ones to get the call when Dear Abbey doesn't run on the day they expect, or the fishing report, or whatever.

11:00 mark

**INTERVIEWER:** It's interesting what you're saying about some of the areas the company could do a better job on. What kind of barriers do you see that prevented the company from doing a better job of what sounds like communication and any kind process of working with each other. Are there physical barriers ... are there cultural barriers ... are there any other kind of barriers that you see?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** So all that you describe. My group is on the XXXX floor and news is on the XXXX floor. So we are definitely in physically different places. We don't really have ... haven't for a while had any formal meetings where, or gatherings, if you will, where news folks and marketing folks interact with each other. So there's not just that normal, sort of, you know, "Hey, we've got this story coming out," or "We're working on this, not sure when it's going to come out but ..."

I mean we tend to hear about the bigger things, whether there's a big investigative story or some sort of series that we're working on, we'll, of course, hear about that, but it's more the day-to-day, week-to-week comments things. So, yeah, definitely physical, the longstanding cultural (barriers) is still very much in existence. So ... (long pause) ... either being afraid to tell us something that's coming because we might do something with it that we shouldn't or just, "We're going to run whatever story we want to run because we can." That all is very much so ... there.

And it's been interesting, actually, going through the redesign process. And I've always been on the audience side in my XXXX years here. What's been interesting is how we would give feedback on something and, of course, news was "We'll do it the way we want to do it." Yet if we would send something over like a marketing campaign, news has every right to give every opinion they want on the quality of our marketing campaign and what needs to be changed around. I'm not talking just factual things, which I want them to correct, but color and design and things that should be more our bailiwick. So that is, I've always thought is interesting.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'm interested in discussing business initiatives, whether you've been involved with them there at the company. First of all a very open question: How would you define a business initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** We have initiatives that are both broader at the company level and specific to our division and more and more XXXX has begun to do initiatives that are a little bit broader across the company as opposed to newspaper-specific. So for us we've got any number of different projects that are going on that are specific to audience and related to revenue and changing things in distribution, reducing expenses ... that sort of thing, as well as more company-wide things that might affect multiple divisions.

**INTERVIEWER:** Sure, I'd like to discuss an initiative that you might have been involved in. Would you be able to describe that initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** Sure, obviously the biggest one our company has been involved in is a complete redesign. And when I say redesign, this wasn't redesigns of the past, where put in a new color and new titles and change a few things around and call it a redesign. This was a complete overhaul of the paper where we went through and ... (15:50) introduced new sections, new naming conventions, new font, a completely new layout, changing justification, the amount of white space. Also, we went away sectioning by content to more of a sectioning by philosophy and how we organized the paper every day. And we were making a bold move to pushing our readers to digital content for certain things. That's a really good example of something we did that involved every aspect of the company because it affected, obviously, news, production, advertising,

production, audience, really the whole company. But we're doing things like that all the time.

**INTERVIEWER:** This might be a bit redundant, but in your view, what was the purpose of this redesign, this initiative to redesign the XXXX?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** There were two driving forces behind it. One was ... from a news standpoint, one aspect of it was redefining how we organized ourselves in the newsroom. To tackle news every day. So we used to be focused around we put a paper out every night at 11 o'clock and update the stories throughout the day online. Now, we're focused on four different times when digital traffic is higher and making sure that we're really staffed throughout the day to cover digital. And then, the end of the day, we put out a newspaper that is a 24-hour summary of what's happened. So that was a really big shift for news feed(?) in terms of going into digital.

And then the flip side of that is we went to much earlier deadlines, so we're doing major shifts and consolidations in our present packaging and our distribution to save or reduce expenses. So those were the two primary driving forces behind it.

**INTERVIEWER:** And how long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** This was on May 12<sup>th</sup>, so a little over a month ago.

**INTERVIEWER:** What, in your view, was difficult about developing and implementing this initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** From my vantage point it was the time frame, which was in what we did. We sort of kicked it off toward the end of the year. But I was responsible for the marketing side and we really didn't get that going until sometime in the spring,

and so we were launching a marketing initiative of something like this caliber in less than a few months. You know, new slogan, new creative, new messaging.

**INTERVIEWER:** Why the delay? That's interesting that it didn't begin until the spring.

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** Part of it was the news part was gaining, being at the same time, and they were working on it, but it all kind of gained pace at the same time. But not unusual in our environment, for the marketing side to go last from a starting standpoint but then launch early because we launched a teaser campaign before we actually launched a new redesign. So not unusual for us to have sort of a crunch time frame.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was the easy part about implementing the redesign?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** The easy part was it had top company priority from the publisher down. And everyone working towards the same deadline and goals. So it allowed it to trump other things that it needed to. Internally it was called our "XXXX Project," and when you're implementing something for XXXX and you know you're on deadline then it's easier to go and say, "Hey I need your help on this by such-and-such time," or, "We need to talk about this." You know, whatever it is, there was always just kind of an understanding that of the deadlines associated with it and the importance associated with it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Who did it affect?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** It did affect everybody in the company. It affected advertising, sizes, layout. Their color, font, everything else changed, as well. Press went

earlier. Packaging went earlier. Configurations were different. So, yeah, it literally affected every division.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what was your role in the development and implementation of this initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** I oversaw the marketing for all of our XXXX papers ... and then we developed the marketing campaign to be like the other XXXX papers ... because this is a XXXX -wide initiative. So we launched for the four papers in XXXX, (and) have other papers launching in July and on.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'm interested in your thoughts in how people internally responded to the redesign.

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** There was a lot of internal excitement as well as angst. It was a project that was so massive that starting on the positive side, people got super-excited about it, about making such a big change and about having something so new and different to go market with. There's been a lot of excitement that we are making such a big digital push and that this is something that we really need to do. And people were generally excited to be a part of it. On the day of launch we did a big employee celebration and had one of the best turnouts for an event internally for a long time. But again it really was such a big deal.

And anything like that comes with a lot of angst because there's unknowns. There's deadlines they're moving quickly. From a marketing standpoint there's going to be a lot of external pressures, so everything's got to get proofed 100 times. And when it comes to marketing everyone has their own opinion about what's best. So there's always



critiques and edits and all that, so it was definitely a stressful time frame for all involved. And obviously people working a lot of hours to get things implemented on time.

**INTERVIEWER:** Looking back at the process and how it all went down, what could have been executed better?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** Let's see. ...

**INTERVIEWER:** It could be cultural. It could be language. The bureaucratic process.

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** One of the things we have been really focused on is external research and getting feedback from readers, which we did a lot of during this process. I might have done and been connected to doing even more in our market. So I might have approached that a little bit differently. I probably in hindsight would have figured out how to get closer to what news was doing early on. You kind of poked at the question of "Why did you start so much later than the news team?" And I think in hindsight if we would have known how big of a deal this was going to be we would have certainly kind of pushed our way into some news meetings and said, "OK, help us understand, what are you talking about?" Hindsight's always 20-20. I don't think they knew at the time how big this was, either. Anyway, those are two areas I might have done a little differently.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were these cultural? I'm thinking of different barriers that may have impeded the execution of the redesign.

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** Knowing what's important to each other, it's obviously a lot easier for me to talk about what's important to me that news may or may not know. I probably don't have near of a good understanding, likewise, of what's important to news,

but you know little things. I found out a couple days beforehand that we were moving the bar code on the paper from the bottom to the top. Well that's a big deal because the bar code is what we used to scan the paper when a checker at a grocery store to charge the paper. And if the paper doesn't scan right then we don't get the revenue for it. So, you now, what seemed like maybe a small redesign issue to one division becomes a really big one to another.

And so things like that that we just need to do a better job communicating about.

**INTERVIEWER:** What has been the internal reception to this redesign?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** It's a mixed reaction depending on where you sit. To those that are maybe a little bit more digitally aligned, they're glad that we're really taking a serious focus on digital. And again that's from all aspects.

For example, in the newsroom, it's no secret that newsrooms – well, really all of us – are doing more with less today. And yet, today, in addition to writing a story ... you're supposed to Facebook and tweet and Instagram, push it out in all these ways. Well, all this takes time. So the whole idea behind this redesign was moving more people off print and into digital. We just a new video player, so we're trying to push more into video and training folks on video.

I talked a little bit about the four different times of the news day, but we're also a platform – this is actually a significant change in the production cycle – is that, it used to be you'd write the paper, you'd write a headline for print and then you'd have to go back into the online system to publish the story and write a different headline for online because the same headline might not have fit in the same space, etc. And this is not my area of expertise, but they've got it set up now to where when you publish a headline

you're publishing for both, you're not having to rewrite a headline. That might mean you have a little more white space around the headline on the print side because you have reduced space online.

So a lot of the publishers are seeing the cultural shift as a good thing b/c we're now making it easier to exist in a digital world.

On the flip side, there were some things that were not so well perceived. We made some pretty big shifts in sports coverage and putting a lot more of that online. And not all consumers reacted well, and so therefore I think some of the employees who have to handle more of the consumer side of it didn't see it as such a good thing. So some mixed reactions.

**INTERVIEWER:** So now there's less physical space in the (printed) paper than before, is that what you're saying?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** Correct, yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you have any questions for me?

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** I don't have any questions, but one other topic I really didn't cover is of personal interest to me because of how we're set up here. And so down the road I'd be curious to see what you find with others, if you're willing to share.

**INTERVIEWER:** Sure ... [explain thesis] ...

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** That's fantastic. I have two thoughts, then. So one of the things I find as one our bigger challenges here is that our digital team from a tech standpoint is within the newsroom. So by this group I'm referring to the folks that would do some of our coding. Would write. They don't necessarily build apps. That sort of thing is done out of XXXX Interactive at corporate today. But they're really the go-between

between all of our divisions and the corporate team, helping produce a Web page. Or if we need an order form we're going to this group. So really all things digital. And that's been a real challenge for us because they're officially housed within the newsroom and on newsroom payroll. And that means the newsroom gets first precedent, advertising gets second and we (marketing/audience development teams) fall down the road from there. So that's a real challenge and something we've had a lot conversation about. Should that group be part of advertising? Should they be a part of audience? Should they be separate and just support all?

**INTERVIEWER:** That's a really excellent point. The digital teams, for some reason, fall under the purview of editorial. But they're doing more than just editorial content. That's a real challenge the industry is trying to confront.

**RESPONDENT NO. 7:** Yeah. And that's ... I guess I'll wrap up with my last comment and its related to the notion of start-up companies. We're trying to make our way toward something like that while having the burden of all these legacy departments, divisions and procedures. Yeah, just legacy costs you wouldn't have if you were a brand new company today.

[CONVERSATION ABOUT A SPECIFIC INITIATIVE THAT WOULD GIVE AWAY IDENTITY OF INTERVIEWEE]

I share that last example because it speaks to the cultural difficulties that we still have today.

**Interview Subject No. 8: A business marketing executive at a digital start-up.**

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you tell me about your job and what it is you do?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** At the most basic level, my job is about making sure that we at XXXX, a digital magazine, are continuing to grow our audience. And to grow it with urgency, because we do believe there is a moment here for a few (digital media organizations) to use as a catapult. And that over the next year or two, rather than a continual expanding of offerings in the digital news space, there's going to be a shrinking.

And so for those of us who haven't been active/actors for a decade or more, as some of the big guys have, there's a different type of urgency because you're playing catch-up, but playing catch-up at the same time that the rules constantly change. Which is great for those of us who have come later, because there's constant disruption, but it's also challenging because there's less room to stay afloat. You have to try and fail in order to succeed in this space. But you've got fewer shots when you're coming into this later.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long have you been at your position and how long have you been with the company?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** I've been with the company for a year and a half, and I've been in this position for almost a year.

**INTERVIEWER:** What is your view of the relationship at your company between the editorial department and the business departments: advertising, marketing and audience development? I'm interested in your thoughts on how the different departments work with each, how often they talk to each other and so on.

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** I would say that that's probably one of the great challenges we're dealing with as a company. And I think that that's true across the board.

There are companies that start with a business plan. And then their editorial team and their content is actually into the business plan. But whether it's mastering IPO, mastering social, those are companies that reverse-engineer from consumer demand. And so that means editorial is largely feeding the business plan. And so in that world I think there's more seamless integration. So there's probably less of a unique voice to their editorial.

What we're trying to do is build a business plan out of our editorial. And so that's both exciting but also challenging because the way things have worked for so long is that editorial concentrates fully just on stories and then, like a supply chain, an assembly line, the stories have been handed to other people at the company who worry about distribution, packaging, readership, all of those issues.

In the digital age, a writer can't stop at the end of the last sentence of their story. The writers themselves have to think of how they would package that story on Facebook or how they would tweet about it. How they would help distribute and promote the piece. And that's critical, because the writer will have the most authentic voice around the packaging, and have the most insightful thoughts about distribution. Because so much of what we're doing in the digital world is micro-targeting people against specific stories. You don't have as much of the old model of the nightly (TV) news, or The New York Times' paper. Literal paper, where people came and followed you through your curation of things from around the world. A person (? 6:33) now, actively speaking, can have stories that interest them. I think they could put together their own equivalent of the

nightly news, or The New York Times print edition, by going to six different sites and reading 12 different stories. So you've got to be really impassioned and authentic in not just the writing of the piece but the promotion and distribution.

So, that's a new mindset still. And even if a digital native is still something that's taking work, at least we're now past the point at which that is under discussion. It's now clear that that's just the world we live in now and will only be more true as we go forward and for writers and storytellers who put pieces of themselves into each of their pieces, there's really a sense that those features are getting as many readers as possible. And so there's good motivation there ... it's just figuring out the right systems around that.

**INTERVIEWER:** So are you saying that people working in marketing are working with editorial ... teaching them, educating them about how to distribute? How to go about optimizing their content for search, or how does that work?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** Yeah, a lot of it is education. And there's a new term that's emerging – probably old by now – called “audience development.” And that has come to represent a hybrid of marketing and editorial. And in some places it's listed in editorial, in some places it's listed under marketing. But essentially it's a skill set and a portfolio that is meant to bridge editorial and marketing. And so with audience development a lot of that at a lot of places is about education of editorial. Especially at bigger places that are not digital natives but are transitioning to the digital age. A lot of that is educating the writers about the smart use of social tools. Not just to get bigger readership but to actually source stories and know what's of interest to the community of readers.

It's a big step forward in that it's probably the best reader representative that exists at a publication. A lot of the analytics that people are now embracing are bringing readers to the table, bringing the viewer to the table. So up until I would say pretty recently, a lot of networks and newspapers, programs with a presumption of what their audience wanted but without real data as to whether that was true aside from subscription rates and ratings. And now with analytics and this idea of audience development there's a real power of the reader to be relevant in the discussions within networks and newspapers and digital publishers.

And so part of it is education, part of it is bringing the reader into the room when companies are thinking about how they should cover or what stories to cover. And then I think part of it is also editorial bringing to marketing ... kind of in the days of old ... the pieces of their product that best represents the brand. And that they want to make sure that there is a focus from the rest of the company so that we're not reverse-engineering editorial from a business plan.

I see that those are the three main components and they've all started to live under the same audience development. And it's why I added that to my title.

**INTERVIEWER:** It's interesting that audience development is now the hot area of journalism.

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** Yeah, it's become an easy way to solve the problem. Again, everyone understands that editorial and marketing have been siloed and that there's an assembly line process in how to integrate the two. And instead of forcing the two to come together in a way that could be messy, allowing to bridge the two has become the easiest way. Whether that's an expandable thing or whether that will



essentially live outside its use because they'll become more integrated – which is where I think we're headed – we'll see.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'd like to spend the rest of our time speaking about business initiatives. First of all, how would you define a business initiative? And I'm leaving that intentionally open-ended.

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** I wouldn't define it because I think business initiatives are the everything that everyone has to do. I mean now in the digital age you won't survive unless you have revenue streams that are real and growing, an audience that is real and engaged and content that is real and unique.

And so ... the jig is up. That transition where we lived between an era where news could lose money and that was OK, to an era where news is a business just like any other. Entering that transition where there's a lot of talk that news would preserve the sensibility that it could lose money and not care while still worrying about the bottom line of the business. That, I think, is all over. And so now, everyone from The New York Times to others are doing native advertising. And I think a lot of it is responsive to an audience that the business never cared about as much as people thought they did as (much as) revenue as it relates to news. People want to know what is sponsored content but if it's good content they're going to consume it. People want to know why they're paying money for something but if it's something worth paying for, they'll pay it.

And so I think a business initiative is not just a falsely isolated need for revenue from one part of a company, but a share of responsibility.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'd like to discuss one initiative you were involved in. What was the purpose and what was the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** One of the first things that took over efforts in the marketing team was the idea of partnerships. Partnerships have become a key tool for publishers in the digital age for them to grow if you're new but also to expand if you've already got a sizeable audience, and to basically introduce your audience to another in exchange for that other place to reach your audience. That has always been a top company priority, and so making sure our editorial is supportive of our partners' needs but also not programming against our partners' needs has been important b/c otherwise we'll start producing editorial that is more about our partners' audience and not our own.

But making sure that our partnerships are locked in and they're excited about it because I do think that there isn't as much of a zero-sum reality to partnerships as people would have feared based on old thinking. I think that consumers are generally going to go to multiple sites. I think increasingly we're moving to an era where people will self-couple/buckle (16:11) in the way that a cable company gives you different packages you can buy, consumers will start to narrow the field on their own and see a bunch of sites that are all complementary as their go-to's for news consumption.

So we feel like being part of the quality group is a good play. And so partnerships are important b/c you can really build audiences together. And that allows you to have a lot of innovation and collaboration. And so I think alongside the competition that exists in this space, part of how you compete is you smartly collaborate.

**INTERVIEWER:** Let's recall one specific one you worked on.

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** Well, one of the things we did is we recognized before most that getting people's Facebook feeds, especially bigger publishers, was a great win for everyone. It allowed us to get traffic off of a true traffic driver ... and it allowed them

to have engaged posts that helped their reach. And so that became a really smart way for us to partner with big publishers and it ended up helping us enormously in our first year.

And so that was one where we really had to build a case that we deserved to be on Facebook feeds that prior to us being on them had not let other people on them. And it married with a moment where people generally felt like Facebook was rewarding feeds that curated and didn't just self-promote. And so responding to that sensibility we were able to advocate for something that ended up working really well for us and for our partners.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** It was like eight months ago.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was difficult and what was easy about reaching out to these companies for partnerships?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** I think the difficulty was trying to get them to do something new. That's always difficult, especially with big publishers b/c everyone's got a mindset about how the world is ... that, that people aren't interested in realizing that there's no rules to right now except trying to figure out what works and then do more of that until it stops working. So convincing them that it's something worth doing was the hardest part.

The easiest part was convincing them that it was something worth thinking about. Forcing the conversation was fairly easy because people understand that the world is changing every day and so we need to rethink basic assumptions every day. But even with that, sort of, willingness to discuss, it's still a really difficult thing to get people to do something that they've never done before.

**INTERVIEWER:** Who within your company does this effort affect?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** It was everyone, because it suddenly allowed us to have a true traffic driver. So that meant we wanted to make sure we got good pieces that would perform well on our partner feed. We had to make sure that our site loaded quickly b/c Facebook would penalize a site that if you clicked on it, it would take a while to load. People were bouncing, and so it was a true marketing-product-editorial collaboration.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was your role?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** Driving all of that. Making sure that we were reverse engineering from a growth opportunity across the company and figuring out how that's good. We needed to maximize the return.

**INTERVIEWER:** And internally, how did people respond?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** People are always going to talk well about things that are bringing more eyes to stories. People want to make sure ... unless you're kind of a clichéd Web offering, you're growing the right way. And so that was a moment of discussion for us b/c the stuff that does well on social feeds – the pieces that we had to did well on social feeds – were not representative of the full ... what we hoped to be represented as a brand. And so b/c that became the dominant traffic driver for us rather than a number of ways we were getting traffic ... we had good conversations about what were becoming our best-read pieces and whether those pieces were representative of what we wanted to be known as publishers.

And so we had to figure out how to grow traffic but also make sure you're growing in alignment with your brand. And that's a constant conversation that needs to be happening at your company.

**INTERVIEWER:** The people internally ... their responses ... were they the appropriate responses or were there some that may have been a little more problematic?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** Yes. Because we're in a moment of constant change we need to have constant conversations about what we're doing and be mindful of all things all at once. That's a really difficult thing to do. Because it can feel frenetic and schizophrenic and unsettling but it's necessary. Because you can quickly go too far down the wrong path and then not be able to find a way back.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about the process could have been better?

**RESPONDENT NO. 8:** When you're a start-up everything can always be better. If not than that means you're not pushing hard enough because you can do things only so well w/a small staff and big ambitions. Better executed, better tracks, better coordinated.

**Interview Subject No. 9: An executive who oversees both marketing and editorial at a distributed media company.**

**INTERVIEWER:** First of all, tell me about your job and what you do. Can you give me some examples of your job?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** I am XXXX at XXXX. Essentially, we are a distributed media company.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long have you been at that position and how long have you been at the company?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** I was hired into this position. I was employee no. XXXX, so I've been here since the beginning. It will be XXXX years in October.

**INTERVIEWER:** How would you describe the relationship between the editorial side and the marketing department at your company?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** I would say great. Although I'm managing both sides of that, I'd say that there's a clear delineation between the staff on both sides but ultimately we utilize a lot of the same resources – primarily the social insights group, which is essentially the publishers of our clients, the people who put the content to the marketplace, target it for a big audience, gather real-time data and feed it back to both the editorial group and (the) studios group, which is essentially the marketing group for your purposes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Is there consistent communication between employees in the business and news sides?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** Definitely. We're 45 people total company-wide, so we're a small company, so everyone fits in the same room. There's obviously different groups with different objectives, but at the same time everyone needs to ... the marketing group is essentially responsible for creating content you can put with the brand, but at the same time there's an editorial sensibility that they need to uphold, so our content needs to be in line with our audience expectations regardless if a brand is sponsoring it, so they need to work closely to ensure that the long-term initiative of the company is sound on both sides.

**INTERVIEWER:** How would you define a business initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** A business initiative for us is any kind of strategic decision-making helps grow the company, essentially. We're a young company and we're fortunate to have seen significant growth since we launched and I think that's a byproduct of a few business initiatives ... strategic partnerships, strategic investing, assessing the landscape, identifying niches and social platforms. We're always interested in distribution points so understanding these new social platforms ... knowing the potential upside, what is the potential downside ... is it something we want to dedicate time and resources to create content for that? Are there revenue opportunities? So a business initiative for us is anything that helps grow the company.

**INTERVIEWER:** Can you describe an initiative that you were involved in with your company and what it entailed?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** So, there is a very large social platform whose name I won't mention, but a company whose platform was creating a new product and we were very early with them, helping them model out what content on that new product, on that

platform would look like, what it would feel like, how did it function. Really helping them assess the strengths and the weaknesses of the product we've created historically and really help model that around how it would move on this platform.

That was a very big initiative for us, because not only did it give us access to a platform, which is essentially very valuable to us, but we were very early on in helping model out what ultimately went on to become this product.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** I would say a year ago.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was difficult about developing this initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** It was ... there was a lot of research, a lot of understanding, because we weren't only working to create a product for our demo, it was a product for a larger platform. There was a lot of audience research, understanding the sensibilities, the consumption habits of the people who live on the platform and ultimately modeling out ... that ... helps me to view the largest cross-section possible. That is a very difficult undertaking in any capacity. The reach of this platform is quite significant. So we have to do this in large scale. There's a lot of research and planning and experimenting that goes into that.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was easy about developing the initiative? Or was there anything that was easy about the initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** What was easy was the platform was exceptionally fast growing and it was something where the upside of any partnership was always going to be substantially valuable for us. So you can concede the long hours because ultimately and in the end you're becoming part of something that is quite significant.



**INTERVIEWER:** Who in your company did (the initiative) affect? I'm thinking different departments, different levels of workers.

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** It was the people in the editorial department, it was people in the studios department, it was people in our creative services group, our social insights team ... a lot of the, most of the groups had their hands in this project in one way or another.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what was your role in this strategy development?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** I was one of the people who helped bring the partnership in and I was the person who was responsible for creating the model that went on to become what it was in terms of the studios group and the creative services group worked together to kind of create a non-traditional format that in the end looked and felt like nothing that we had created before because there wasn't any outlet for this type of content. So a majority of the heavy lifting fell under my groups.

**INTERVIEWER:** How many people at your company responded to this initiative and by that I'm thinking specifically of people you worked with.

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** It was well received across the board. Most of the people in the office had already been active on that platform in their personal lives, and being able to create a new product on that platform in a professional capacity was something that everyone was quite receptive to. So it was well received and had become a large part of what we do every single day.

**INTERVIEWER:** Looking back at that experience, what could have been better, what could have worked better?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** Ultimately, we were helping create a product that wasn't proprietary to us, it was proprietary to someone else and we were essentially just a publisher who utilizes that product. And so ownership over great ideas is obviously very valuable, but because we're not a platform and because we don't operate in that capacity, it was mutually beneficial, and I feel like in a perfect case, we would have the ability to own the product that we helped create and own the IP because it's quite valuable, but wasn't what we set out to do and that's not what we do as a company. We're not a platform.

That's a difficult question to answer in terms of what we could have done better because I don't think anything in particular stood out other than it would be nice to have ownership over that end product.

**INTERVIEWER:** That's an interesting answer because it seems tied to the age of your company, where your priority is to grow audience.

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** Well the traditional, older legacy broad publishers ... the downside of a lot of their business models is that they're really tied to a couple of aging ad models and kind of revenue sources that really is a difficult proposition to push through internally ... to have your publishing model shift from 100 percent owned to kind of a shared model, where you're taking rev(enue) splits on the channels that you're publishing across. That's a difficulty for a lot of people, so we're willing to work with platforms, to help them create products that ultimately are beneficial to us in the long run, whereas other broadcasters or other publishers might be less likely to do that.

**In told,** (18:15) it's a proven model, something that's worked for the longest time. People weren't publishing to an Instagram, or to a Snapchat or to even to Facebook, and

so it was more of a secondary or tertiary strategy because everyone was publishing to their own channels. And then once the opportunity to come online and reach a larger audience, once this worked to be a proven distribution model, then people started jumping on it so people like Yahoo! who wanted to become part of Discovery, they kind of got into the game a little too late. They just booted from the platform yesterday. They were stuck on a very specific model and it was representative of the fact that they weren't ready to commit the time and the resources to do something that they didn't wholeheartedly own.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were there any kind of barriers that existed that slowed work on the initiative? Examples that have been given to me ... people have talked about cultural barriers between editorial and business departments. Some have brought up physical barriers. Or verbal (barriers).

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** No, no. All of those things sound like traditional legacy media companies who ... they're just very set in their ways, and I think the notion that a creative services department would ever scare editorial by creating some kind of native content ... I think that's just a very antiquated way of thinking about it. I think that the true companies of the future are the ones that have set departments and set objectives, but ultimately are flexible in that they share resources and they're not seeing a delineation between church and state for all intents and purposes, but there's no reason to keep yourself so siloed anymore. People tune out commercials on television because that's what they're perceived as, they're just commercials, not really at all tied to the actual programming. Even the ones who get it right, who actually create ad units that complement the editorial that's around them, the ones that are really going to create a not

only a more well-rounded experience but ones they're going to be able to monetize, they're content far more frequently and far better. That comes from what the other groups are doing and working together.

**INTERVIEWER:** Eventually this initiative was accepted and put into practice?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** Absolutely. It is an exceptionally valuable product on an exceptionally valuable social platform.

**INTERVIEWER:** Are there any other thoughts you have that we've talked about?

**RESPONDENT No. 9:** No, I mean, ultimately it seems to me that you're really trying to define how does editorial work with marketing or sales, and how to create synergy between the two, or is that an impossibility, and I think when you're going over your research at the end you'll probably see there's a well-defined line between the people who are accepting of the blurring of those lines and the ones who aren't. And the ones who aren't ... I would say the more traditional ones ... and the more progressive of the traditional ones who are trying to get into the game but maybe it's a little too late because there's definitely a consolidation. When you look at these media companies who think that they can kind of create these new digital companies internally and it's just at odds with their core business model, and it doesn't work.

And it's the companies that are built from the ground up that are the ones that are able to do it well, and those are usually the ones that are getting acquired.

You can see even something like The New York Times, a very well established, good, premier publisher ... they have a TV studio, and that's something that is their opportunity to create, to really kind of create, compelling content in conjunction with

their editorial department. And I think there has been some successes, but I imagine, just with kind of the history that they have, it's a little bit of an uphill battle to kind of create these things and for someone like The Times, who has such a deep-seeded journalistic integrity, it's often a losing proposition because ... to create marketing content alongside editorial.

**Interview Subject No. 10: A senior-level manager at a digital news organization affiliated with a larger news organization.**

**INTERVIEWER:** Tell me about your job and what it is you do.

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** Sure, I'm an XXXX at XXXX. XXXX is part of XXXX. But we're a network or channel of XXXX that focuses on social. We only produce content with social spaces in mind. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.

We're made up of four teams and I run one of the teams. The team that I run is called Engagement, and we basically focus on all content that is not video. And also working to make sure people (here) understand what people are talking about, what people are interested in knowing. How to have actual interactions, engagement, with the audience in different spaces.

**INTERVIEWER:** Engagement is a very hot topic in journalism these days so you must be in the middle of the mix of it all.

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** Yeah. A lot of it is audience development, where you're developing an audience on a platform and each platform is different, so you have to understand these platforms and what's unique about them.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long at that position and company?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** I joined the company in this position and it was last October, so it's coming up on a year. Ten or 11 months.

**INTERVIEWER:** The rest of my questions have to deal with the relationships between a newsroom and various business departments. How would you describe the relationship between your department and the newsroom?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** Sure. So, XXXX is a little unique, right? We do have a relationship with marketing and PR. I've worked at a couple of organizations. I've worked at a small organization and this is the largest organization I've ever worked for. XXXX as a global company is really huge. XXXX is small arm of it, we have about 80 on our team. And then we have an internal marketing and outreach team, of which I have conversations probably daily. And we talk about potential partnerships, potential PR we might work on – things like that. It's actually a sort of easygoing relationship.

But XXXX being a huge company has a PR department, a marketing department, of which I have no relationship.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'd like to focus on the idea of a business initiative. How would you define a business initiative?

**(9:20) RESPONDENT NO. 10:** For me I would define an initiative as something along the lines of like growing audience or developing a new product for audience.

**INTERVIEWER:** Let's discuss one initiative you were involved in. Can you describe that initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** For some reason what came to mind – and we don't have to think of revenue streams in how advertising will play a part in it. We decided to create an email, a daily newsletter. What's interesting is we actually used that internally for a long time. We have a kind of fellowship program that engages with people around the world and they sort of track trending stories around the world. They're part of the engagement team. They would track stories that are trending locally that might not bubble up to America. And they would compile these. And we would wake up in the morning and see this. We also have a trends report that we put out in the afternoon about

the Americas. And we would use that internally at XXXX. It's basically like our own tips service.

And eventually I began to think that maybe there's an audience for this beyond our staff. So we basically did something super quick and simple. We had a Mail Chimp account. And so it was super easy. We'd collect emails, put them into sort of an email list. We created a form to start collecting more emails. And it's been growing. We haven't really promoted it. I think the next stage of this is to advertise it in some way. Maybe look at partnerships on the newsletter side. There are so many newsletters. It's a sort of growing trend, right? And maybe there's ways some of those newsletters that have a larger audience to find ways to partner with them.

But anyway we refined it over time. It's in a really good place now. We recently said we'd explore a little on the editorial side and maybe change some things up just to improve the editorial quality. But from a technical perspective it's in really good shape. And from a business perspective, we actually did this with very little involvement from anyone outside editorial. Although if we push forward I do think we're going to have to start having those conversations.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long ago was this?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** I want to say about three months ago. We actually don't do a morning trends report or an evening trends report anymore. We only do a newsletter. But I've been thinking about making an evening newsletter, the kind of thing you read before you go to bed. There's no one doing it, which means either it's a really good opportunity or there's a reason why no one is doing it. I just haven't figured out why.



**INTERVIEWER:** I guess it depends on whose bedtime it is, and where you think your audience is.

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** Exactly, exactly.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was difficult about carrying out this initiative?

**(14:12) RESPONDENT NO. 10:** It was more coalition building in the newsroom. There was a newsletter that had been going on. So I needed to talk to that person, talk to her and make sure she felt good about it. I needed to make sure the engagers felt good, that they weren't being co-opted. I needed to make sure that one guy, we have this one person and he's based in XXXX, and in truth he's the one who does the majority of the work because of the time zone, felt good about.

I just had to go around and make sure everyone was cool with it from the other teams. Everyone is very sensitive about our brand. I had to talk to the designers to make sure they felt good about how it looked.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was easy about executing the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** For this one it was probably and surprisingly, it was easy because of Mail Chimp. I just had to get permission to pay their monthly fee, which is pretty minimal. And then bam! Normally something like this would have involved the tech team and that's a resource that you don't always have full control over. And they have their own priorities, sometimes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Who within the organization did the initiative affect (editorial, business, tech, hierarchy)

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** The majority of it was my department. The guy in XXXX, engagers – they’re my team. Even the designers are a part of my team. But again, Mail Chimp made it super easy.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what was your role in the development of the strategy of this new initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** I was spearheading it.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did people respond to the initiative?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** Overall I think the response has been good. People above me have been very encouraging. They had been encouraging to try it.

The overall quality isn’t very good. So we’ve occasionally been looking at ours and comparing it to BuzzFeed, and others.

I’ve had some critiques – they’ve been constructive. I wish the language were stronger. Pretty much all the criticism has been about us figuring out what is our tone, topics. And that’s fair game. I don’t think anyone has questioned why we’re doing it. Honestly, many may not be aware of it. We did have to figure out the happy medium of the super super-niche and more of a public face. Ex.: GOP debate. Everyone in the newsroom knows about it. But for a public-facing newsletter, we do have to mention it. We have had to create a workflow where we still serve an internal purpose but also serve the external. The engagers still produce that super-niche report. That guy in XXXX will cull some of it. He’ll take some of the best and decide which parts need to be external. It actually made it so we don’t create too much work. If anything, we have no extra work. But again, it raises the question on whether anyone here is using just the internal newsletter or is aware of the external. It’s hard for me to know.

**INTERVIEWER:** Looking back at the process, what could have been executed in a better way?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** I think the main thing is just a little more foresight about us doing it to begin with. Because when I joined a year ago, we started talking about it Day One and we could have been collecting emails in a better way and we could have created a list. If we had committed to it earlier, even if we waited until we did, I think the execution would have been better. I wish we would have committed to it earlier.

**INTERVIEWER:** Why do you think there was a pause in the beginning?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** I think, if I'm honest, it's just daily fire: There's just so much to do on any given day and week. It was ones of those things that was so easy to push back. You have so many beasts you have to feed. And this is creating a new one in a weird way. And even though this was work we were already doing with the Trends Report, it still required ... I eventually had to set aside a little bit of time so I could muscle it through and make it happen.

And now that it's going it's going just fine. I don't see it as a big burden.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you see any kind of barriers that slowed work on the initiative (physical, verbal, cultural)?

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** Not that I can think of. And this was actually pretty smooth. Biggest hurdle could have been technical. But we avoided the whole thing b/c we found a solution.

**INTERVIEWER:** It sounds like the biggest barrier may have been daily workload.

**RESPONDENT NO. 10:** Yeah, exactly.

**Interview Subject No. 11: Chief innovation officer at a non-partisan, non-profit online news source.**

**INTERVIEWER:** Tell me more about your job and what you do.

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** Sure, so my job ... I sit at the nexus of editorial, technology and business. And so in doing that, I try to make all of those groups to collaborate and play well together. So that we're jointly partnering to build business models but also products and services that go along to serve the business model.

And so in real tangible ways, that's our website; that's our multimedia offerings like podcasting, video and live-streaming; that's our online donation system, so that when people like us and they want to give us money, they have a pleasant, easy way to do that. It's our data systems, so that we're tracking both our engagement – how people are using the site – but also our supporters and our sponsors, so that we can understand that data and can treat them appropriately.

It's building systems that the user sees on the front end and then systems only the employees see kind of behind the scenes.

**INTERVIEWER:** How long at that position and company?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** Three and a half years. Same for the company – came in for that position.

**INTERVIEWER:** The rest of my questions have to deal with the relationships between a newsroom and various business departments. How would you describe the relationship between the business departments, such as marketing and the newsroom? And that's intentionally open-ended.

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** I would describe it as cooperative, largely harmonious, albeit with a bit of healthy friction built in. The XXXX did not have an actual marketing department until a year ago. So we're a small group, with just over 50 people. And prior to that, people ... various people here, people who did membership or fund-raising or social media, which kind of had a hand in marketing, but no one was in charge of that full time.

A little over a year ago we brought our first person to really focus on that. And she's done well. More specifically, to answer your question about editorial, she didn't come from a news or non-profit background. But she brought in practices and habits and things that she developed in the for-profit sector, such as around technology and retail product sales.

So largely I'd say the reception from editorial has been welcoming and good because they get the point, which is to get better reach, better distribution for our content, to get more people supportive, be it by engaging the content or giving us money or coming to our events. But there has been friction here and there, where I think editorial felt that things didn't cross the line (editor's note: the so-called separation of church and state), but they got up to the line. For example, we're non-partisan, so we have to be very careful when we report on issues that we paint a very comprehensive picture of it and not take sides – on frequent partisan issues. And even if it's not a partisan issue, we have to be very careful of the perception that we've got a predetermined outcome before we started reporting.

There's a little friction with marketing here and there where there's been some ways where they've (marketing) positioned some initiatives that editorial is undertaking –

an investigative report on X. And editorial had to reel them in at times: “Hey, wait. We’re starting this, we don’t know if it’s positive on X or negative on X.”

**INTERVIEWER:** I’d like to focus on the idea of a business initiative. How would you define a business initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** Part of being an online news group is that ... I think the walls between the advertising initiatives and editorial initiatives are certainly in place, but they’re perhaps not as tall and insurmountable as it seems like in other news organizations. And by no means do I mean that anything unethical is even broached. We have really good guidelines about that.

But, I think there’s a lot of collaboration between the business side and the editorial side in trying to find ways early and often that they can collaborate. So for example when editorial is undertaking a new project ... we have a yearlong project coming up in February. And when that was still in the planning stages last summer, people from the business side – people who sell ads, people who do marketing, people who do membership, fundraising – were brought in to be briefed about it. And so the business side can start getting it on the radar, and then they can start thinking about or start having conversations with, say, sponsors.

The corollary, or the way we used to do things here is that editorial would work in a vacuum, and then on the eve or close to the eve of launching, they’d say, “Hey, business side, there’s this huge thing that we’re doing, just so you know.” And that didn’t give the business side much time at all to solicit underwriters or sponsors or anything.

That’s a long circuitous explanation. So to answer your question about what a business initiative is, for us, a business initiative is an idea or a project that somehow

fortifies the sustainability of the XXXX. And largely that comes down to somehow ... it leads to revenue in some fashion. It might be Kevin being moved enough to give us ten dollars or becoming a member. It might be the Ford Foundation writing us a big check. All of those are important and all of those are seen as being part of the business model.

It's pretty open and works both ways in trying to find ways to work with one another but without ever compromising the integrity of the journalism or putting business in a bad spot, either.

**INTERVIEWER:** Let's discuss one initiative you were involved in. Can you describe that initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** About two years ago we did a Kickstarter crowdfund to enable us to purchase a bunch of hardware to get us into the live-streaming game. Prior to that we had dabbled with live-streaming exclusively by tapping into TV stations' streams, borrowing their streams and placing it onto our site. We didn't like that because we didn't have a lot of control, editorial control. They would often cut away or maybe had bad quality or focus on something ... that we wouldn't have focused on.

So we gathered the folks here and we put together a Kickstarter campaign to try and raise \$60,000 to buy our own equipment and not be beholden to borrowing it from TV stations. So it was fascinating and a healthy process because, one, the editorial group had to participate. Our editorial pitch was, "Hey, help us cover the governor's race by helping us live-stream." And the business side was involved with how to market and promote that. Although editorial was involved with that, as well.

Just so you know, crowd-funding is a slog. There's a lot of strategic communication that has to happen, but also a lot of just brute-force communication has to

happen. On the strategic side we tried to find partners and allies and influential people who we thought could help get the message out. And then more of the brute force side, was getting everyone across the company – we don't force people to do this, but we ask if they are comfortable with this – 90, 98 percent of the people are pretty active on Twitter and Facebook and other channels, so coordinating with them. We probably had 50-60 percent of the company participate. And that involved a lot of organized communication from the business side, the marketing through the editorial, because our editorial people have the largest profiles on social media.

We tried to have (internal) messages each day. Like, "Today it's about go to the places you're not going to see on TV news." Or, "Being there when things happen."

And we used a lot of transparency, too. Like, "Yesterday was a great day of making our goal," or, "Yesterday was pretty crappy, so we need to really make our goals today." So people (at the Tribune) really felt invested and that it (the fund-raising drive) was urgent.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where did the idea come from?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** It sparked with me and our editor, Emily and our tech director at the time. Some of our peers in the industry had worked with crowd-funding, and we had worked with the Knight Foundation. They've been really supportive. They are the ones who nudged it. They said, "Hey, why don't you do something with this?" So XXXX and I and the previous tech director ... we made a white board list of what we needed and we couldn't do otherwise, wasn't in the budget, and two, maybe this will resonate with the public enough for people to pony up five, 10, 20 bucks.



And we had a lot of ideas, like we had this really inside baseball idea of data analysis/inside baseball/SWAT team, which would be really helpful but we wanted to quickly get to, “What’s the elevator pitch on that?” And I can remember an idea in particular that took, you know, three minutes to kind of explain it. And I’m still a little fuzzy on it and I pretty much know what you’re talking about. You know, someone driving by on the Web, they’re not going to sit and try and figure it out.

So live-streaming rose to the top after we debated because it was a succinct pitch, like, “We’re going to bring you the governor’s race live the whole year.” And people knew us and trusted us and knew that we covered politics, but the twist was we’re going to make it immediate, live, lots of video. And we thought people can understand real quickly. Even if you don’t know us well, you’re going to be like, Oh, they’re going to cover this governor’s race. I could get behind that.”

The three of us then brought it to a larger group – to our CEO, and to our marketing person and some other people in the company and we’re like, “Here’s what we’re thinking. Does this make sense? You know, getting feedback. And then once everyone bought off on it we committed to doing it.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was difficult about developing the initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** One was just a fear of the unknown – we had never done it before. Two, there was an editorial consideration that we had to get past. And there’s an important detail I should have mentioned at the beginning: One of the catalysts to tackle crowd-fund around – live-streaming – was one of the live streams we had piggy-backed on became a very popular viral video. And we happened to be live-streaming that.

Obama tweeted about it ... it really caught fire because it was very dramatic and of the moment.

And we were like, OK, we were just struck by lightning, it's probably never going to happen, but we had a lot of technical problems because we were dependent on another person's feed. Uh, we didn't have a lot of control, we were worried that if this stuff were to happen again and maybe there's not someone else we can piggyback on, what do we do? So that was one of the catalysts ... let's control our own destiny so let's raise the money so we can control this ourselves.

But the long way to get to the editorial concern was that (the live-streaming anecdote) was very captivating to a lot of people, very motivating. It was like, "Oh, you guys did that, I saw that."

So the editorial group, we kind of had to make it more about the governor's race. And for the people who didn't know us, they didn't see the XXXX, we crafted the message about, "Hey, we're not new to the live-streaming game. We've done this here and there. You may have seen this XXXX we covered." You know, that kind of thing.

That took a lot of massaging ... both the written message ... we did a video, on Kickstarter, a short video. It was heavily edited. We showed it to reporters and editors, and they were, "Ugh. ... You need to tone that down."

That was a big hurdle. A third hurdle was crowd-funding ... there's an expected transaction of goods. For a lot of Kickstarters, it's not about, "Hey, I'm giving to you because I think you're great." But something like, "For \$40 I get a T-shirt and a bumper sticker and I know I can buy that for less than \$40, but you guys are doing great work." So figuring out that whole said, which was totally alien to us, the merchandising, pricing

it and then fulfilling it was a huge pain in the ass. Suddenly we're mailing buttons and notebooks and T-shirts all around the country, all around the world. We figured it out, we ended up working with a fulfillment group, but for a while my office was full of boxes.

We got the money, we finished up the program, shipped all the T-shirts and we had a pow-wow. And we asked, "Are we going to do this again?" And everyone went, "No." At least not soon. Maybe down the road. We earned the money. It was a lot of work.

**INTERVIEWER:** It sounds like it took a lot of internal resources.

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** It did. And that was one thing we also considered at the end because we beat our goal. I think we got 80 grand. A Kickstarter, Amazon take, a fair amount off the top. I can't remember the details, but maybe 10 grand to 12 grand went to them. And then the buttons, the T-shirts – that was another third of the money, and then the rest went to the hardware. We spent a little less than 50 grand on the actual equipment.

So it was great. We got the equipment. We did what we wanted, but one of the retrospectives we had was, "You know, there's got to be easier ways to raise 50 grand." Fifty grand is a lot of money, but there are institutions we have relationships with. There are foundations, there are rich people who give to the XXXX. And maybe we could have gone to them with the same pitch. And they would have written a check for 50 grand, which would have taken some meetings, some lunches, emails, but it would have been a little easier than what we just went through.

**INTERVIEWER:** When you look back at the process, what was easy about developing and implementing the initiative?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** Once we got the idea developed – the governor’s race and live streaming – it was easy getting the staff motivated. This was just six weeks after the XXXX live streams. So people were still kind of high from that. We got tweets and emails from Australia, Europe and Obama tweeted about it. So people wanted to do more, they saw the power of live streaming, which a whole new avenue for us.

But then that turns to Day 17 and it’s like, “Hey Kevin, can you email your friends again? We really got to get over this hump.” So people’s expressions change, and it’s like, “This thing isn’t over?” So it’s tough to maintain for many weeks.

It’s always fun to start stuff, not so to see it through.

**INTERVIEWER:** Whom did it affect? Sounds like everyone.

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** Yeah, it did. Video had to learn new tools. Our events group, which is under our business arm, it really changed them. Suddenly what became a series of small events became essentially a live TV production. There’s always going to be technical difficulties. It really changed how they had to produce all these events that we do. And there were challenges on the business side. They were involved and how they promoted.

But it did have some mildly negative impacts on our fund-raising after that. This was kind of a special fund-raiser we did. Just like a public radio station we have ongoing, periodic drives like that. We ask, join for 50 bucks a year, that kind of thing. And so the mild down side that our development people encountered was after the Kickstarter, which was kind of like an ornament on top of what we do, they would try to continue their work as usual. So they would call and say, “Hey Kevin, your membership is coming due.” And

Kevin would say, “But I just gave you some money.” And I know they lost some people that way. Not out of anger. But, “I think I’m done for now.”

**INTERVIEWER:** What was your role? You were the wrangler?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** That’s right.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was the internal response like from the various departments?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** Very favorably. People were excited about the idea. Excited that we could fairly quickly find a way to secure a lot of equipment that we begged for. We’re well funded but we’re a non-profit so every dollar is tight. We’re in the budgeting process and we could have asked for the 50 grand to be in the budget, but then the responsible thing is to ask what can we cut to balance that?

People realized that this (Kickstarter campaign) could be, put indelicately, free money. We wouldn’t have to go through the budget process. Those were very motivating factors for the staff, that it could happen very fast and be a cherry on top of what we were already doing.

There was a little skepticism. It’s not like everyone’s job stopped to do this. It was work on top of what they were already doing. It was extra work for me and others who were looking at the data and deciding who to call.

**INTERVIEWER:** What were some of the barriers that slowed work on the project?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** Yeah, a couple. We had some cultural barriers that we had never done fund-raising like this. It had been more like the public radio model. We have good data and who to bother, who not.

The pressure was, if we don't raise to our target than we don't get anything. And it would make us look like a failure. There was an "Oh, shit" moment where people were like, "We better hit it (the financial target) or we won't get any money. Plus, we didn't want to look like a failure.

Another barrier was ... there's a lot of rules and tips, best practices to do a Kickstarter, but none of us had done one. And so we found some people at other organizations ... kind of kindred spirits ... like in media, radio ... who had done really successful ones. One guy, XXXX, was super helpful. We had a couple of long calls with him. And he said, "Look, I made a lot of mistakes. Here's what works, here's what doesn't." He was good at telling us when things would be hard. He had tips to help us get through it.

**INTERVIEWER:** What could have worked better?

**RESPONDENT No. 11:** Overall, I was pleased with how it worked. I'd say better messaging every day. We had messages, but sometimes it wasn't planned. It was off the cuff. We were slow to fulfill. It took us a while to figure out the fulfillment side. We weren't the speediest people in getting T-shirts out and stuff.