

# NEWSROOM EDITORS AT THE CROSSROADS: ECOSYSTEMIC CHANGE

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As newsrooms – and their management – continue to evolve, group culture poses a particular concern (Sylvie & Gade, 2009). News work involves a specific line of thought (Deuze, 2008), calcified by inherent, shared norms and values – culture’s brand (Schein, 1985). As a result, newsroom managers probably can expect some conflict and resistance.

To lessen the clash and adjust newsroom culture, editors will have to exercise leadership to persuade journalists to enable transformation (e.g., see Grojean et al., 2004; Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Bryman, 1996) and then take appropriate action (Gade, 2008; Sylvie & Moon, 2007; Singer, 2004). Such action basically would change a group that the current economy finds defensive and reactive (Filloux, 2011; Ingram, 2011) into one that welcomes new ideas (based on Miles & Snow, 2003) and abets innovation (Küng, 2010).

Fostering such innovation may require basic newsroom reform, such as reorganizing decision-making processes to cultivate the freedom journalists often crave (e.g., Axtell et al., 2000; Damanpour, 1991; Glynn, 1996; and Krumsvik, 2008). “Value stream mapping” (Wilson, 2009: 38) – a process that allows newsroom managers to experiment, collaborate with other groups, take risks, think the unthinkable, and link to others outside the newsroom – potentially provides such freedom.

Newsroom decision-makers face a great challenge. As innovation changed how audiences use news and search for knowledge, it created many options and increased audience influence over how, when, and in what form it consumes news (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001). Innovation also brought a glut of news goods, inexpensively swelling competition (Picard, 2005; Dimmick, 2003; Scott & Hansson, 2007; Carroll, 2004), disturbing business rules, drying earnings flows, and prompting cutbacks by managers striving for more tactical, creative, and elastic options (Sass, 2008; Chan-Olmsted, 2006c; Kanter, 2002; Picard, 2004; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008).

While responses during this uncertainty (Lowrey and Gade, 2011a) fell largely on management, many news managers slowly reacted (McLellan & Porter, 2007; Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002; Gade, 2004). Gade (2011) cited globalization and rapid technological innovation that rendered organizations – built for 20th-century needs – ineffective and inadequate. Healthy, growing organizations rethought their structures and moved toward core mechanisms proving more flexible in managing constant change (72-73). These decentralized applications primarily involve network structures (65), internal and social, that permit more fluidity between individuals and allow connections, regardless of organizational boundaries (Lowrey, 2011: 142). News organizations continue experiments with such tools to try to attract audiences, for whom the Internet and social media have enhanced – to the detriment of traditional newsrooms – how they approach news (143).

But some experiments, e.g., convergence and teams, met with mixed results (Filak, 2004). So I inspect value chain adjustment – via ecosystems, an increasingly popular analytical tool for scholars and strategy for industry executives (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1997; Afuah, 2000). Some (Casadesus-Masanell & Yoffie, 2007) have used ecosystemic frames to analyze challenges featuring unequal rewards between partners and to ascertain prescriptive actions help persuade partners toward favorable strategies (Gawer & Cusumano, 2002). But ecosystems also provide great impetus for news managers, particularly newsroom editors. So this essay uses ecosystems as a context for identifying and disentangling the tactics that newspaper newsroom managers must welcome and support to maintain their traditional influential role throughout the news organization and escape being simply a mouthpiece for upper-level management.

## 1. AN ECOSYSTEMIC LENS

Moore (1993) popularized the term “business ecosystem” in proposing a systematic approach to strategy. The approach has firms that “co-evolve capabilities around a new innovation; they work cooperatively and competitively to support new products, satisfy customer needs, and eventually incorporate the next round of innovations” (76). As opposed to a random group, an ecosystem evolves to “a more structured community” (76), each member having unique resources, and each – through its customers and market – contributing to an overall external environment in its own way.

In contrast, an industry’s networks – “stable inter-organizational relationships that are strategically important to participating firms” (Chan-Olmsted, 2006a: 169) – make up an ecosystem, in which firms operate. For example, Apple heads an ecosystem including newspapers, television networks, telecommunication firms, computer chip manufacturers, computer makers, software firms, etc. So newspapers effectively constitute “follower” companies in Apple’s ecosystem (Moore, 1993: 76).

Networks and media managers, as no strangers (Chan-Olmsted, 2006a), formulate as joint ventures and alliances that provide scale economies, expanded core competencies, and enhanced brand loyalty (170) to media while acting as entrée to innovation, intelligence, and markets (Chan-Olmsted, 2006b: 255-256). Thus newsrooms implemented their own, internal version of networks: teams (Sylvie & Gade, 2009, Gade 2011). In fact, news organizations have been recognized (Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002: 25-28) as networked structures. Meanwhile, globalization and the Internet hastened convergence and multiplatform storytelling, affecting the newsroom in myriad ways (Wirth, 2006); e.g., television stations and newspapers sharing a convergent partnership basically create a network.

Companies also build networks to gain competitive advantage over competitors (Porter, 1985); witness again convergence attempts and value creation (Rolland, 2003). But company *location* in the ecosystem also partly molds its talent in creating value (Adner & Kapoor, 2010); in convergence’s case, whether a newspaper lies upstream or downstream in the ecosystem establishes the value the paper can create (Wirtz, 1999) and the value of the

Apple ecosystem where it functions. To smoothly function as more than a minor cog of such “intermixing” (18) of industries and capture *substantive* value from, the growing mobile news market, news media will have to re-orient their strategic behavior – and thus organizational structure and managerial decision-making.

But, strategically speaking, a newsroom marshaling ecosystem dominance certainly appears doubtful. A newsroom’s decision-making options usually exclude vertical integration – which would bring additional resources to bear on the ability to capture value but also would require considerable capital outlay and/or research and development.

Yet media have a choice in their ecosystemic roles (Iansiti & Levien, 2004). First, an ecosystem includes several industry networks, which interlink – as do biological species – with other industries. All such networks have a set of equally reliant firms, goods, and tools that interact and create results (i.e., a whole-yet-complex situation) over which the networks lack direct power. But the ecosystem evolves, losing and gaining businesses over time (76). Second, key ecosystem members – these same networks – play pivotal roles and influence other members. At times, the influential members – while also serving special, niche functions – dwarf other members, but to the overall ecosystem’s benefit (76).

News media often may be such key actors, e.g., supplying considerable content for mobile phones, tablets, and notebooks. But news media also represent niche players because of their highly specialized competencies and their inability to provide most of the value creation and innovation; while they often may struggle with other niche players/content providers, they still can differentiate their content from that of other niche players (77). News media also might create information *networks* (as beat reporters do with their sources, regional newspapers do with their bureaus, or the Associated Press does with its members), supplier *networks* (for raw materials), and create a financial *network* with banks, venture capitalists, and stockholders. So while an ecosystem constitutes a *state*, a network comprises a spatially smaller, more ephemeral energy, or behavior, or information *within* the ecosystem.

Yet the newsroom performs no less a potentially important role. Ecosystem interoperability” – having the knack of working with other members (Iyer et al., 2006: 29) in order to access their resources (42) –

requires a knowledge of members' networking systems, their stability, and their task in advancing effective commercial prototypes. Many newsrooms have the seeds of such capabilities, though unused, in their reporters. But today's journalists and editors, preferring professional purity, doubtless would downplay a networking attempt and eschew any risk to traditional, culturally sacred journalistic ideals (Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002).

Still, ecosystemic models strongly suggest cooperation (Power & Jerjian, 2001) – with competitors, customers, and complementary firms. Such multi-level managing (Sylvie & Gade, 2009; Zott et al., 2010) would include assessing opportunities and threats (Adner, 2006). The resulting knowledge as to how member firms collectively create and capture value (Zott et al., 2010) implies that advanced tools, ideas, and products need more to flourish (Adner, 2006). This idea (Choo, 2006) of having an information-grounded view of organizations asserts that environmental changes, such as those inherent in an ecosystem, induce sense-making, transmitting signals that require an organization to retrospectively interpret events and information to produce meaning (17-23). So a news organization that uses employees' experiences and interaction within the ecosystem could create knowledge that doubles as a decision-making base; the new "knowledge organization" could capably "understand the key roles that information flow and communication play in the ongoing interaction between an organization and its environment" (Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002: 31).

Again, however, newsrooms – despite some willingness and desire to change (e.g., Sylvie, 1996; Gade, 2008) – have little experience in stockpiling or leveraging such knowledge. For example, when some newsrooms tried autonomous topic coverage teams, the positive results also faced claims of journalistic deskilling (Gade, 2011) and adjustment struggles (Raviola & Gade, 2009). Too, multimedia-oriented, convergent journalism fostered some inter-media newsroom teamwork but with short-term results, at low levels (Thornton & Keith, 2009) or with few uses (Ketterer et al., 2004). New media-traditional newsroom integration encountered newsroom opposition (Raviola & Gade, 2009) and hurdles (Singer, 2004). Predictably, the same fate has clouded the attempt to marry social media and citizen journalism with current news media (McClure & Middleberg, 2009); the limited success (Hansen et al., 2011) also prompted ethical concerns (Podger, 2009; Singer

& Ashman, 2009), with the apparent dominant theme involving culture. Singer (2011: 107) said:

This is a novel role for journalists, and it takes some getting used to. It is an especially challenging transition for those who see the practice of journalism as necessitating a certain distance from people outside the newsroom, including sources and audience members. Such a change is not simply about taking on new roles; it is about adapting to an entirely new occupational culture.

## 2. THE ORGANIZED PROFESSIONAL

A new media managerial ecosystem means looking beyond organization and envisioning roles for – that the manager also may negotiate with – new, different, potential partners in the chain (Porter, 1980; Teece, 1986; Brandenburger & Stuart, 1996). But much newsroom focus centers on its culture; strong occupational and professional socialization created entrenched subcultures in the creative/content sides, coupled with the relative lack of R&D and in-house technology development, initially made newspapers self-satisfied (Meyer, 2004) and slow to escape the journalistic mindset, fostering inertia-creating routines and values that slowed the march toward multimedia (Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002; Sylvie & Gade, 2009). For example, journalists in convergent situations showed patterns of intergroup bias (Filak, 2004). Scholars, only recently applying organizational culture theory to media organizations, hint at commonplace organizational and professional cultural conflict (Mierzejewska, 2011).

Journalism's claim to professionalization is porous, notably for journalism's inability to exclude amateurs (Witschge & Nygren, 2009). Journalists' working conditions and arrangements around the globe have gradually encountered more variety and uncertainty (IFJ, 2006). Still, journalists self-identify by referencing professional aspects of their craft (41), as evidenced when a combined Swedish-British, multi-methodological study showed journalists' concern for changes in daily work, established routines,

and normative rules (49-51), particularly the relationship to audiences. So the professional issues of autonomy and control over work practices remain arguable (56-57) and “values-based conflict between journalists and their employers” remains a strong theme in media management scholarship (Mierzejewska & Hollifield, 2006: 48).

But professional culture has potential advantages for managers, who, for example, can adopt new roles in agency, entrepreneurship, and teams (Sylvie & Gade, 2009), and for communication educators trying to revise curricula (Becker, 2008). Likewise media management scholars can use the concept to study change management (Mierzejewska, 2011: 22-23); indeed, an ecosystem lens poses – in studying media change management – a focal shift in control from professionals toward managers (Deuze, 2011: 3). Newsroom managers gradually have shown resolve to share journalistic functions with subordinates; e.g., multiplatform journalism expands editors’ abilities to reach new audiences while taking away some initiative from the journalist (Fenton, 2010) while editors’ digitally enhanced nursing of other sites for new story ideas (which subordinates then must duplicate) transforms content into a production-driven notion rather than a professional, journalistic effort (Boczkowski, 2011).

Still, traditional media’s entrepreneurial capabilities remain unknown (Hang & van Weezel, 2007); e.g., we know management often tries to change newsrooms (with journalists in full spontaneous, reactionary mode) via little to no planning (Sylvie & Moon, 2007). Such change attempts please neither party, despite managers bestowed with renewed fusion and cooperation skills (Sylvie, 1996; Neuzil et al., 1999; Gade, 2004, 2008; Sylvie & Moon, 2007). Some UK newsrooms virtually lack managerial preemptive maneuvers to co-opt reporting (Phillips et al., 2010) while others worry editors undermining professionalism via user-generated content (Singer & Ashman, 2009). Such uncertainty demands a more strategic, *ecosystemic* resolution.

Scholars (Adner & Kapoor, 2010) now notice that competitive advantage – *raison d’être* of an ecosystem – results from creating more value than competitors. Doing so means managers must understand the value chain (Porter, 1985: 36), which isolates the distinct bases for creating competitive advantage (33-43). In cyberspace, value chain vision often presaged using

market-oriented lenses that discovered new systems, efficiencies and customer relationships (Rayport and Sviokla, 1995). Managers, then, often reconfigure normally firm-specific value chains during change or convergence, and then re-bundle them – in the case of a newspaper’s online edition, e.g., the chain stages include content creation, content aggregation, and content distribution (Wirtz, 2001). As news media try to replace old business models and – lead by *The Times*, CNN, Disney, the BBC, and others – and realize that value chain manipulation (Porter, 1985; Brandenburger & Stuart, 1996; Picard, 2006a) provides added revenue streams we see more of such ventures as partnering *The New York Times* with the online, non-profit *Texas Tribune* in an attempt to gain advantage over *The Wall Street Journal* in Texas coverage and woo advertisers targeting Texans.

This translates to an “ongoing need for creativity” (Küng, 2011:47), techniques for which some (e.g., see Deuze, 2011; and Sylvie & Gade, 2009) have proposed although professional culture remains a chief obstacle (e.g., Küng, 2011:50; Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002). Such a conundrum reinforces “conceptual and practical dualisms” (Noordegraaf, 2011: 1350), pits managers and professionals as adversaries. Traditional media can change (e.g., Achtenhagen, 2007), and newspapers particularly can effectively manage dualities by eschewing ultimatums and allowing for “the simultaneous existence of conflicting demands” (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009: 33) complete with the tensions, intricacies and uncertainties inherent in cultural conflicts (39). But media firms especially are susceptible to such mindsets (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2007) and may never resolve some cultural tensions, forcing managers to develop new semantics with which to approach them (40).

One such method (Noordegraaf, 2011) developed in considering occupational/organizational and professionals/managers conflicts, especially when economics – dominate discussions of the conflict. Such “organized professionalism” (1355-1358) features professionals as organizing agents who create or renew a profession in ways professionals can accept (1355), all the while emphasizing and acknowledging external influences that affect service delivery (1358). This view would help a troubled industry then, e.g., journalism, to begin to see the audience- and technologically driven pressures on the journalism profession require organized, reliable answers. Journalism’s semi-professional nature inevitably would require managerial help.



Ironically, the challenge news media face in knowing how to integrate their content with the external technology components (think mobile telephony) already developed by Apple or the telecommunications companies and their accompanying suppliers and vendors – as well as the challenges the Internet and accompanying technology provide so many content options for audiences, creates a timely environment for organized professionalism approaches (based on Adner and Kapoor, 2010: 310-311). Add journalism's tests – from citizen journalism and convergent, multiplatform reporting to the current niche-oriented (Iansiti & Levien, 2004: 73-74), and its downstream position in the ecosystem and value chain, respectively – and a potential window of opportunity apparently opens for “organized professionalism” (Noordegraaf, 2011).

Seeds of the movement have appeared. Editors increasingly focus on the delivery (rather than the content) of media, creating a “highly specialized” set of media employees tasked with the responsibility of making media content into “final, marketable products and experiences” (Deuze & Steward, 2011: 8). Some scholars (e.g., Sylvie & Gade, 2009) called for “a new kind of manager” who will meld several skills into one without restraining the innovation process (137) while expecting “continued uncertainty” (138), to discourage journalists' concern with peer opinions and replace it with greater duty to inimitability in news production (Boczkowski, 2011: 129), or to confront journalists' basic, essential cultural beliefs and strategically leverage them (Küng, 2011: 53), and exploit untapped creativity assets (54-55). All indirectly blame journalism's – particularly the newspaper industry's – “paucity” (Picard, 2006a: 38) of managerial leadership, of deciding to maintain the *status quo* rather than create strategies for the future (38) and conquer their organizations' opposition to change (Lund, 2008: 199-200).

### 3. LEADERSHIP'S CHALLENGE

News executives have tried such tactics. For example, publishers and general managers have altered the value chain by allowing members of the public

to access their media (Deuze, 2006), albeit inconsistently (Fortunati et al., 2009). Too, influence of mobile platforms has risen while newsrooms become “more adaptive, younger and more engaged in multimedia presentation, aggregation, blogging and user content” (Rosenstiel & Mitchell, 2011). But many journalists still view attempts to build on the foundation of journalism professionalism as additional work, anti-professional or circumvention of their autonomy (e.g., Hermida & Thurman, 2008; Phillips, 2010; Singer, 2011: 108). Such attitudes require “developing and articulating additional values as foundations to produce value beyond functional benefit” (Picard, 2006a: 89).

But beyond more organized professionals (Noordegraaf, 2011) attempting to change content, welcome greater public access and technological change modification, and learn to manipulate and monitor risk (1363), managers should craft more “connective organizational forms” (1364) that *help journalists complement editors* and thus enable the journalists see how professional practices potentially link to much wider, organizationally friendly goals, such as cultivating new types of journalistic benchmarks besides story counts and exclusives, front-page placement, error-avoidance, and awards. Editors also might suggest new ways to write or structure content, how to use audience involvement in the least-invasive/most ethical manner, and how and when to successfully network knowledge specialty with networking. Or editors could try to help reporters to enlarge or extend journalism quality and increase autonomy while agreeing to more applicable and adjustable risk standards (1364-1365).

Again, scholars have suggested small-but-uncertain changes toward increasing value (and professional standards) – notably involving news values, professional credentialing, online content, journalists’ “brands,” content clusters, diverse newsrooms, and teams (Gade, 2011: 75-78). The uncertainty (Gade, 2011) would perpetuate tension between stability-and-confidence-hunting journalists and their supervisor looking for added value (Achtenhagen and Raviola, 2009: 40). So despite scholars’ belief in news organizations’ ability to reconfigure themselves into more flexible, convergent, innovation-nurturing organisms ready for multi-level competition (see, e.g., Porter, 1985; Napoli, 2003), newsrooms still will need new management techniques that also will adequately interface with dualism.

As professionalist beliefs (Deuze, 2006) and incumbent structures (e.g., see Davenport, 2006) hamper or choke advances, editors will have to change and diversify work functions (International Federation of Journalists, 2006) – prompting some media firm de-institutionalization (Dubini and Raviola, 2007) for news media to endure. And as news media partnerships, changing audiences, and innovation continue to propel journalists' current convergence mentality (Kolodzy, 2006), editors likely will have to raise content value (Picard, 2006a: 125-147) re-evaluate the job of editing and pick their battles in some cases.

For example, newsroom attempts at control – when facing commercial strain – tend to cede some influence to quality-lead innovation, as shown by some online journalism developments (Schmitz Weiss, 2008) in the case of the interfacing of workgroups with traditional forms at *The Chicago Tribune* and *El Norte*. And a Spanish online newspaper and a Spanish public broadcaster showed that differing concerns – although challenging innovation, learning, “mutual engagement and joint enterprise” (Schmitz Weiss & Domingo, 2010: 1165) – can coexist in a newsroom when journalists concurrently respect traditional newsroom needs and decentralized decision-making (1169). Meanwhile, a Tennessee newsroom rethought news, accepting “online first” approaches, fostering training, agreeing on new standards, accepting audience-involved dialogue, and creating firm news reporting targets (Lail, 2010). *Christian Science Monitor* editors emphasized “core journalistic values” while referencing the paper's history and labeling its goal to become the first national U.S. newspaper to replace its print edition with an online product as “repackaging” (Groves & Brown, 2011: 22-25). In adopting an adventurous social media project, the Journal Register Co., removed intradepartmental walls, redirected resources, trained, multitasked, and nurtured employee research (Paton, 2010; Buttry, 2011). Of course, it helps if media firms venture into entrepreneurial situations where economics and internal resources permit and management and operational factors align (Hang, 2007: 192). Or when managers enlist culture – particularly personality and work habits – to aid hiring (Hollifield et al., 2001) or lead change incorporating cultural feedback beforehand (Sylvie & Moon, 2007). Even the industry occasionally helps, as it did in trying to remake mid-level managing (McLellan, 2006; McLellan & Porter, 2007).

So despite skills that normally don't focus on human resource development (e.g., Steyn, Steyn, and de Beer, 2005), many editors still can exert considerably (but theretofore hidden) leadership (Greenman, 2006). Extracting that leadership may hinge on rethinking editors' role in the new, network-driven, ecosystem, as an editors' conference showed (Banaszynski, 2006):

A sophisticated "profile" of assigning editors at the [editors'] meeting showed that the jobs demand a dizzying array of almost contradictory skills: creative and analytical, administrative and emotional, strategic and fast. The profiling firm said it has never seen a job that included so many vital tasks that all had to be done in a minimal amount of time. In other words: a job in which almost everything truly is a priority (66).

That newsroom journalists certainly will lead the necessary interactions with the changing market (as suggested, e.g., by de Bruijn & ten Heuvelhof, 2008) compounds' editors' difficult task. So editors – to retain their vital roles – will need journalists' help, predictably using the *quid pro quo* approach implied in "organized professionalism," (Noordegraaf, 2011) and creating manager-journalist *networks*.

Such networks mean editors will have to lead by following, more heavily depending on journalists' cooperation than before in order to make decisions (de Bruijn & ten Heuvelhof, 2008: 5), thus heralding new leadership approaches consisting of an "interaction between leaders and followers" (Crevani et al., 2010: 78). Gone will be the search of traditional newsroom editors to gather – through reporter supervision – as much information to aid the packaging and distribution of news to as the widest possible audience. Replacing that search: pursuit of enhanced newspaper value and its accompanying vision of editing to "provide services that reduce the time and effort that readers, viewers, and listeners must devote to surviving and managing the torrent of news and information" (Picard, 2006: 133). Current editor-journalist networking – e.g., to aid Web-driven innovation – simply tried to facilitate that innovation, in the process of re-setting boundaries and clarifying professional values (Boczkowski, 2010; Singer, 2011: 105-106). But constant audience exodus – and the importance of industry survival – suggests that editors (not journalists) will have to transform themselves.

## 4. NEWSROOM NETWORKS AND DECISION-MAKING

Countless exchanges among network parties – a series of “pushing and pulling” (de Bruijn & ten Heuvelhof, 2008: 33), make network decision-making seem “capricious” (31-34), and intentional and projects the “winner” as plotting the result, even if untrue. So editors must determine how to work within such a framework.

### 4.1 STRATEGIC CONCERNS

A prerequisite will involve understanding a network’s nature. Many editors, promoted from reporter positions, understand reporter motivation. Reporters, seeing an editor’s fundamental incentive as completing the story and shaping it according to upper managerial preferences (managing editors and the like), still outnumber the editor. To prove that each reporter can trust him, an editor must behave reliably in their eyes, usually modeling a temperate decision-making air in a temperate, non-extreme matter in most cases – supervision that unfortunately is mostly slave to the production process. But editor-managers also will need to consider three, increasingly important, external influences: demographic changes, multiple social problems, and the potential for new incidents and risks (Noordegraaf, 2011: 1358-1362).

Others also have acknowledged as much in chronicling the troubling uncertainty in havoc-inducing audience trends (notably, Lowrey & Gade, 2011a). Solutions include “connective journalism” (Lowrey & Gade, 2011b: 279-285) featuring diverse views in stories incorporating the ambiguities inherent in those views (280). Scenarios of “unemployed and underemployed” journalists (270) in this scheme will use complex, communicative networks that markedly challenge conventional, “bureaucratic” structures (272-274). But aside from recognizing managers need to enable the “organizational flexibility” and “loose collaborative structures” (282) that journalists will need to adequately “connect,” no practical newsroom tool has yet appeared.

One obstacle resides in social problems begging for proper treatment from journalism professionals.

“Problems” change when societies change. When authority relations, cultural norms, household compositions (e.g., more single, divorced parents), social networks, visual stimuli, and so on, change, and when communication patterns change, social situations will change as well, and social problems might suddenly arise or change in nature. The rise of so-called “multi-problems” and the increasing stress on “inter-professional teams,” “multi-professional” and “multi-disciplinary” ways of working and “multi-agency work” are indicative (Noordegraaf, 2011: 1360).

For example, the United States has growing class divides, concentrated wealth, and increasing ethnic diversity (Kotkin, 2010: 26-29). Aging workers find themselves supervised by a growing group of younger managers facing skilled labor deficiencies, changing markets, and ever-increasing expectations of sustained upward mobility (210-226). The same has occurred within the newsroom, as frontline journalists have begun to report not feeling as connected to their news organizations as their managers (Hinsley, 2010). As a result, journalism needs “to sort relevance from irrelevance” (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 6) and engage citizens in democracy (8) by converting journalists from decision-makers’ message-bearers into citizens’ conduits so that citizens become *decision-makers* (91-105) themselves.

But this transformation likely will involve impending hazards for content, professional behavior, and public credibility (based on Noordegraaf, 2011: 1361-1362). Journalists and their supervisors will have to tend to internal matters of professionalism to assure credibility – e.g., journalists hesitate at the possibility of inviting public expression (Hinsley, 2012: 167-179) – and avoid uncertainty (Gade, 2011: 76-78). But journalists’ ongoing distaste for organized parameters may cue others to intrude, unless editors act.

## **4.2 ELEMENTS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

The focus of action for newsroom managers – notably frontline or mid-level authority figures – revolves on vigorously redefining editing as meaning the

creation of different value (Picard, 2006: 133). For years, modern newsroom managers saw their role as “the management activity that links the authority of managers to the work to be done” (Giles, 1988: 148). That maxim should stand, despite risks to journalistic autonomy (a somewhat specious claim considering journalists show fading inclination in joining professional groups; Beam et al., 2009) and because of changing news values (Picard, 2006). Although this suggests that editors work to provide additional value to their better journalists, who they should retain and inspire to accept new, added structures (Picard, 2006: 64), changes need not include “shifting over” (94) nor – in terms of control – “losing” (Sylvie & Gade: 120), “less” (127), or “loosening” (133). Effective and engaged middle managers have existed for more than a decade (Huy, 2001) and the newspaper industry has noted their necessity (McLellan & Porter, 2007).

This will not occur overnight (e.g., see Picard & Dal Zotto, 2006); we expect measured behavior, if the digital transition (Aris, 2011) is any indicator. Such restrained change should include an ecosystem perspective to create new organizational modes, in which editors first will have to choose their collaborators. Even prior efforts (e.g., McLellan & Porter, 2007), expressed self-doubt (110), concluding “too many newspapers persist in undertraining their workforce” (112). Once upper-level executives provide extra training resources (115), editors then must co-opt the training as a chance to change journalism.

Second, journalists’ professional concerns revolve around reporting about government and informing the public (Weaver et al., 2007), as well as having a more specific, job description or specialty (Hinsley, 2012: 174-175). Too, journalists’ self-identify via many professional attributes (Witschge & Nygren, 2009: 41), particularly in workload, routines, and conduct (49-51), particularly regarding audiences. These identifiers suggest that since autonomy and control remain arguable (56-57), editors could leverage the rise (albeit small) in journalists’ desire to rally the public and engage in public journalism (Weaver et al., 2007: 177). A recent survey (155) hints that editors could use newsroom training (155) as a chance to gain influence over news judgment (178).

In short, editors might want to change or purge the role of *reporter*, and substitute the more leading role of *composer*, *arranger*, *networker*, or

*engineer* (CANE, for short). Such descriptors more reliably fit current job expectancies (Phillips et al., 2009), give editors a start in reshaping journalism's basic job content and core mission, and neatly fall into training's "continuous improvement" motto. But this maneuver would not work without engaging journalists in collective decision-making so commonly thought to enhance journalist job satisfaction (Weaver et al., 2007: 113-115). Besides, improved recognition of the professional identity subtleties appears as less of an attempt at control, a more "neutral" tool, (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 621), and a managerial try at listening to subordinates (Hinsley, 2012: 184).

Third and somewhat related, editors will have to diversify their ranks. As noted earlier, structural transitions (Noordegraaf, 2011: 1358-1359) will pressure newspaper attempts at "organized professionalism" efforts, especially in an industry reluctantly accepting diversity (Sylvie, 2011) and new staff designs (Steyn & Steyn, 2009). More than others, that pressure may trouble habitually male-lead vocations (Noordegraaf, 2011: 1359) such as journalism. Women – despite a declining newsroom management role (Weaver et al., 2007: 186-187) – play central roles in journalism education (Becker et al., 2010), newspaper employment (Weaver et al., 2007: 8-10), and newspaper readership (NAA, 2010). Gender, to some extent, predicts newspaper editor decision-making style (Sylvie & Huang, 2008; Sylvie et al., 2010) as well.

One ripe change candidate entails – while addressing the gender issue and exposing newsroom interaction problems – teams, the use of which we earlier noted. Although news media doubtless will need teams in any ecosystem (Sylvie & Gade, 2009), teams have not met with universal success (Filak, 2004; Gade, 2011; Neuzil et al., 1999; Raviola & Gade, 2009). Editors know they often mismanage teams (Steyn & Steyn, 2009) and constantly undervalue them in comparison to subordinates (Neuzil et al., 1999: 6). Several obstacles (Sánchez-Tabernero, 2006: 95-97) place newsroom managers in the "critical dilemma" (97) of either yielding to funding issues or improving employee collaboration via teams. The solution, again, requires editors to embrace open decision-making and distinguish between project- and process-based change (de Bruijn & ten Heuvelhof, 2008: 60-89).



Managers using programmed, project-based change (de Bruijn & ten Heuvelhof, 2008) first define an issue, then try solving it (61); the manager in the non-programmed arena reverses the two (63). Current newsroom management unites both, with either approach dictating the outcome (Lacy et al., 1993) – using the collection and analysis of information to define the problem, specifying one’s goals to reach by solving the problem, developing a solution list, then choosing, using, and evaluating the solution (Lacy et al., 1993: 7-11). But managers using process-based change must agree on their *perception* of the problem’s definition, meaning any one actor analyzing the problem doesn’t necessarily help the other actors – *unless* that actor shows them how the problem relates to them (i.e., “priming”; de Bruijn & ten Heuvelhof, 2008: 61-62). A similar, later process re-occurs in “naming and framing” (66-67) the goals; meaning that actors co-shape and form the pertinent data (aka “negotiated knowledge,” 70-71) that informs the final decision, all the result of the process (76) and seen by most network actors as a positive, a “win-win” providing incentive for more such “open decision-making” (77).

This cooperation fuels its host ecosystem (Moore, 1993: 76). So sincere, cooperation-seeking editors will likely need new approaches to framing teams. No more vaguely defining team goals, or *ad hoc* team configurations, or blindly, unwittingly assigning team responsibilities (Steyn & Steyn, 2009: 60-61). The same, purposeful tactic should characterize the newsroom’s pursuit of diversity – particularly toward women (Weaver et al., 2007: 147, 155, 195). Despite criticism that newsrooms have tended to typecast them (Frölich, 2004), women likely will enhance newsroom managers’ communicative and teamwork capabilities (e.g., Everbach, 2006; Fisher, 2009; Nicholson, 2009). As Danish newsrooms have discovered, editors who recognize and accede to the “legitimacy of internal stakeholders” (Lund, 2008: 201) such as women (and other groups) grasp that they can affect more change “from an inside-out perspective” (204); highlighting employee-empowering initiatives ultimately results in improved content (209), so long as networking with key subordinate actors complements the message (212).

The final, most vital element concerns news processes as they might occur in a newsroom-dominant ecosystem. As previously cited, ecosystems

enable firms and individuals to create value unattainable outside the ecosystem (Adner, 2006). A company's ecosystemic *location* aids that value-developing process (Adner & Kapoor, 2010). For newsrooms to achieve this *upstream* location will require initiative, i.e., a management team alert to new opportunities (van Weezel, 2009: 44-45) – a substantial obstacle since newsrooms currently have no substantive experience in acting entrepreneurially and since news production largely is an industrialized, routine process (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991: 13, 97). While news itself focuses on describing changes, journalists are loathe to re-construct their reporting functions from the current focus of delivering reports on issue analysis, political developments, policy, and government actions to mass groups to effect reform (Weaver et al., 2007: 141-146). Editors must decide to take the initiative.

Such action would include changing their job description (Hamel 2006: 75-76). Outsourcing (Stepp, 2009) or inadvertent neglect (Russial, 2009) aside, editors could change what they do – less hiring and firing, assigning tasks, evaluating personnel, and allocating resources (Giles, 1988) and more reimagining the value-creating processes, earnestly and consistently servicing buyer interests, and underscoring reader values in while asserting operational control (Jacobides et al., 2006).

So editors – despite apparent inability to do so (e.g., Bernt et al., 2000; Meyer, 2004: 124-144) – must change reporting processes, especially the misuse of objectivity and the crutch of professionalism (Gynnild, 2006: 37-38). One substitute involves a creative cycling lens (Gynnild, 2006: 91-106) suggesting reporters flexibly shift roles and tasks while editors re-structure their work. In short, editors need to promote entrepreneurial behavior while maintaining some element of control, inclusiveness, and accountability (Kreiss et al., 2010). Some (e.g., Gynnild, 2006: 266-267; Grueskin et al., 2010: 123-124), have suggested redefining reporting. Others (e.g., Jarvis, 2009) propose a “news ecosystem” of collaboration, networks, hyper-localism, and entrepreneurship where several companies would provide news through “different means, motives, and models, each dependent on the others to optimize their success.” No one report specifically mentions the editor or the single, traditional newsroom.

Editors' biggest weapon involves the public, which editors should leverage into a broadened concept of authorship that enhances creativity

and returns news to its origins. As it stands, journalists – in the traditional watchdog role – come across as elitist and know-it-alls, harming their credibility and telling audiences, “We know better” (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 91-93). As the reporter’s supervisor and coach, the editor shapes facts and perceptions as the story advances – replicating the “elitist” process toward reporters (instead of toward audiences), often reinforcing conflict between the two that often arises (e.g., Neuzil et al., 1999; McLellan & Porter, 2007; Singer, 2004; and Steyn & Steyn, 2009).

Appealing to the audience also aids the reconfiguration of news, which originally sought to satisfy the audience’s desire and need to know about external events (Molotch & Lester, 1974). As such, news categories or values have remained relatively constant (Kovach & Rosenstiel: 9-10), with subtle variations developing in line with societal, technological, and business changes (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 31-39). But the public’s continuing mistrust of the news media (Pew Research Center, 2010) suggests the need for revising news definitions and allowing a greater role for audience values.

Newspapers operate in the marketplace of ideas (Owen, 1975). As Busterna (1988) noted (79):

For media markets to be allocatively efficient, sufficient resources have to be invested in those markets so that sellers obtain only a normal return on their investment. This condition can occur only if new competitors are allowed to enter individual media markets that earn above normal profits so that the ensuing competition forces prices and profits down to normal levels.

The current economy finds journalistic sellers – i.e., editors – not reaping normal returns on investment because their subordinates currently dominate how which sources are allowed to compete in the idea marketplace. Reporters (and their bilaterally dependent, consenting editors) largely discount the public in favor of professionally driven sourcing techniques. This unilateral decision effectively squelches the likelihood of complementary assets arising in the idea market and, thus, creates an overlooked, underappreciated value component (applying the logic of Jacobides et al., 2006: 1201). Editors and journalists currently co-specialize (given the intertwined, tailored and complementary nature of reporting/writing and editing), to the point of acting as value bottlenecks encouraging declining returns on value (Picard, 2006a), to the detriment and marginalization of the consumer.

Such dismissive methods, aggravated by ever-changing technology that has given audiences the upper hand, result in unoriginal, pedestrian, and manufactured-quality news. Professional, standardized news assumes standard news interests on the part of the audience; more importantly, it engenders audience distrust and bars them from “vigorous contributing” (Gynnild, 2006: 185-186) – involvement in the full news development, structural reformation, or perceiving relevance. So editors must regain *their* value by actively shaping the value chain in exchange for the inevitable loss of some level of control (Jacobides et al., 2006).

An obvious move would use social networking. Since audiences define and help generate news value via their news usage (Matthing et al., 2004), a major initiative would focus on the audience’s appraisal of the news utilization (Priem, 2007). Editors so inclined could merge efficiency – in the form of staying ahead of audience-driven ideas – with increasing audience desire for customization and individualization of news (Lull, 2007) and thus enhance the potential to “individualize relations to each customer” (Johannessen & Olsen, 2010: 507) and help audiences help editors (509).

## 5. THE CHOICE AHEAD

Innovative newsrooms inevitably will grant more autonomy and allow for more participative decision-making and leadership than their peers (Axtell et al., 2000; Damanpour, 1991; and Glynn, 1996). Consequently, creativity, which requires – and thus promotes – collaboration will flourish, first (in the form of permission) from managers and, second, among coworkers. Newsroom decision-making, then, will assume the form of creativity; i.e., not only will it find problems, gather data, analyze, provide feedback, it will brainstorm until it ultimately results in a solution *and* compels newsroom editors to nurture – instead of edit – reporters (Sonnenburg, 2004: 258).

Innovative news doubtlessly will either stop newspapers decline or signals their demise. Editors must realize the former requires leadership –

new forms, new styles, different listening, new news definitions, new ways to interact with audiences, and a battle to master the new ecosystem. Species within an ecosystem compete to establish who gets to grow (Moore, 1993: 80-81). For that competition to happen, editors need to be the first to “shape future directions and investments of key customers,” to expand their bargaining power in the ecosystem via new strategies and ideas. Editors, much like older parts of aged urban centers that gentrified and refurbished buildings have revitalized, need new ideas, too (Jacobs, 1961).

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