

High expectations

Achieving high standards when resources are tight

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The starting line: having standards

- What are your standards and expectations?
 - For reporters?
 - For photographers?
 - For copy editors?

The simple truth

- Most people want to do a good job.
- Most people want to know what's expected.
- Most people are willing to work hard.
 - They expect something in return: a fair wage, recognition, some sense of loyalty.
- What most people need ...

LEADERSHIP



Overview

- We'll talk about the keys to being a strong leader in challenging times.
 - How to develop a strategy – changing the tires while the car is still moving.
 - How to focus on the most essential things.

Overview

- We'll talk about the day-to-day leadership activities that really make a difference.
 - Are we having fun yet?
 - Some not-so-fun but necessary steps.
- We'll share some tricks of the trade and discuss your ideas for setting high expectations and accomplishing your goals.

The times they are a-changin'

- Paid circulation is declining.
 - Subscription revenue is reduced and remaining circulation costs more to acquire and maintain.
 - Also hurts ability to price aggressively on advertising.
- Online usage is increasing and consumers are moving toward a multimedia mindset.
- On an industry-wide basis, double-digit revenue growth in online is not offsetting losses in display and classified advertising.

Interest in news is declining

- In the last decade, the number of minutes spent consuming news declined 28 percent for 25-29 year-olds and 11 percent for 25-49 year olds.
- Interest in news every day is declining – down to 42% of adults in 2005 vs. 50% in 1995.

Source: Newspaper Association of America

Underlying causes: technology

- We're becoming more interconnected – due to cell phones and the internet.
 - Mobile devices are ubiquitous and media usage increasing.
 - There are more than three times more mobile users as internet users.
- We're connecting at ever-faster speeds due to broadband cable and DSL – and increasingly available wirelessly.
 - News consumers go online first (or turn on cable TV – or both) when breaking news occurs.
 - In the US, broadband penetration exceeds 50% and is growing.
 - Video and other multimedia content is now expected, not supplementary.

Underlying causes: retail

- Driven by Wal-Mart's low-low price strategy, consumer habits have been changing, forcing consolidation among retailers.
 - Traditional newspaper advertisers like Sears and other department stores have been struggling, while non-advertisers, like Wal-Mart and some other specialty retailers, have been growing.

Underlying causes: classified

- For many classified categories, the internet provides a better solution for shoppers and sellers.
 - Job-seekers are mobile, particularly for higher-paying jobs for which newspapers have collected premium rates.
 - Auto shopping online continues to grow, giving manufacturers a direct line to consumers.
 - Search technology and now video make it easy to shop for homes online.

Underlying causes: fragmentation

- Multiplication of media choices –and demographic trends – are fragmenting the audience:
 - Decline of the middle class and increase in affluent and low-income households.
 - By 2010, four out of 10 consumers will be 45 or older – about one-third will be 25 or younger.
 - Younger people have not formed the print or news readership habit of earlier generations.
 - U.S. becoming more ethnically diverse as non-white population grows more rapidly.
 - Majority minority about 2042.

Underlying causes: credibility

- Public distrust for the media is growing, fed by arrogance, a series of highly publicized incidents, talk radio, blogosphere and other issues.

Trend in Print Credibility

	<u>1998</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2008</u>
<i>Believe all or most of what organization says</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Wall Street Journal	41	41	33	24	26	25
Your daily newspaper	29	25	21	19	19	22
Time	27	29	23	22	21	21
U.S. News	--	--	26	24	21	20
New York Times	--	--	--	21	20	18
Newsweek	24	24	20	19	18	16
Associated Press	18	21	17	18	17	16
USA Today	23	23	19	19	18	16
People	10	10	9	7	8	8
National Enquirer	3	4	3	5	6	5

Percentages based on those who could rate each organization.

Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Underlying causes: time pressure

- Consumers say No. 1 reason for not subscribing is “not enough time.”
 - We used to think it was about the value proposition – either change the price or improve the content and we can get them to buy.
 - Now it seems more obvious it is really that people do not have enough time.
 - Competition from leisure pursuits.
 - Family changes and pressures to fill kids’ lives.

Issues: Current newspaper web sites

- News web sites don't demand much time.
 - Minutes per month for average user:
 - Average print newspaper: 425 minutes
 - Facebook.com: 190 minutes
 - Average newspaper web site: 43 minutes
 - Sources: Nielsen, comScore and Readership Institute reports
- More than half of online revenue comes from the same advertisers who are now in print publications, according to Borrell Associates.
 - 71% of revenue is from classifieds, about half of that from print upsells.

How these trends affect community papers

- ❑ Trickle down effect – in particular if part of a larger or publicly owned company.
- ❑ More insulated from shakeout occurring in classified and national advertising.
- ❑ Not immune from retail – in fact, perhaps more susceptible to Wal-Mart impact.
- ❑ Growing expectations for online – and risk of being left behind as broadband reaches rural areas.
- ❑ Fragmentation of media choices, time crunch and credibility issues affect all.



Discussion

- How have you seen these issues play out in your market?
- What steps have you taken in response?



Steps to achieving high standards

- Step 1: Knowing where you want to go.
 - The good news: you have friends who will help you figure it out.
 - The bad news: it won't be easy.

Point of No (Know) Return?

- Feels like we have gone over the edge, leaving the world as we have known it.
- But where are we going?



Ideally: Create a strategy

- To develop a strategy, you need to:
 - Understand your market.
 - Current and prospective print and online users.
 - Current and prospective print and online advertisers.
 - Economic, demographic, technological, regulatory and other factors likely to have a significant impact on the business in the next 1-3 years.
 - Know the competition.
 - Local.
 - National.

Short-term: adaptive change

- If we don't know where we're going, we need to use an “adaptive change” approach.
 - Ronald Heifetz, a senior lecturer at Harvard University and former co-director of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.
 - “Transitions inevitably cause people to ask a fundamental question: what's essential and what's expendable? What's precious and what isn't as precious?”
 - The problem is in needing to let go “of elements from the past that to many seem precious.”
 - “Change is hard when it represents the possibility of loss. It's the possibility of loss, and the apprehension, fear, and anxiety associated with that possibility of loss that generates resistance.”

Adaptive change

- Heifetz continues:
 - **“Leadership is about mobilizing people’s capacity to sift through and hold on to ... what’s precious and essential from that past.”**
 - “They carry that forward, and discard and let go of that which is no longer essential so that they can take advantage of the opportunities.”
- “When they adapt, they carry forward from the past that which is best, and yet have the openness to learn from engaging with the wider world so that they can continue to thrive and carry forward and sustain that which is precious.”

Essence of strategy

- It is often said, the essence of strategy is denial.
 - What is precious in our organizations?
 - What is no longer essential?
- When resources are tight: you cannot be all things to all people.
 - Employees waste a lot of time on activities that are not critical to your mission.
 - Employees waste a lot of time worrying when it seems like the organization is adrift.

Where to start: with your staff

- If you're new to the job, do this now. If you're not new, pretend you are.
 - Take some time to study and reflect on your market, your customers, your organization.
 - TALK to your people in a systematic way.
 - One-on-ones or small group discussions.
 - Ask open-ended questions:
 - What can we do to improve the paper, web site, etc.?
 - What is one thing I can do to make your job better?
- Sort through their ideas, organize them and put your own touch on them – and turn that into your plan for change.

Questions you must be able to answer

- Why do we need to change?
- Who can help me lead this change?
- What is our vision for the direction we're heading – and how will we change along the way?
 - What is our competitive advantage?
 - How can we offer customers exactly what they want, better than others can, and be able to sustain it?

Steps to achieving high standards

- Step 1: Knowing where you want to go.
- Step 2: Evaluating the talent.
 - The good news: You will have allies.
 - The bad news: Not everyone will want to go along – and some won't be able to make it.

Maximize current resources

- Do you have the right level of employee doing the work?
 - Oftentimes, clerical people, part-time employees and interns can do very good work with the right amount of direction.
- Can some work be done by freelancers, rather than by employees?

Maximize current resources

- Can you use community contributors?
 - Individuals, non-profit organizations, certain non-political government agencies (like libraries).
 - Businesses.
- As you expand online operations, don't have staff doing what vendors can do better (or “good enough”) and more cheaply.
 - Use off-the-shelf solutions whenever possible.

Confronting poor performance

- Think about your best employee.
- Now think about your worst employee.
 - Now imagine: if you had another person like your best employee instead of like your worst employee.
 - The tighter the resources, the more critical every worker becomes.
 - In small organizations, you know what a difference one person can make.



Squeeze out inefficiency

- ❑ Look carefully at the structure of your organization.
- ❑ Eliminate layers of management.
- ❑ Combine departments.

Steps to achieving high standards

- Step 1: Knowing where you want to go.
- Step 2: Evaluating the talent.
- Step 3: Putting the plan in motion.
 - The good news: Now the fun begins.
 - The bad news: It won't all work as planned.

Keys to changing culture

- Make targeted training a priority.
 - Put somebody in charge.
 - Require a certain amount for each staffer.
- Improve business literacy – any good journalist will want to know why we need to change.
- Foster innovation – new ideas must be welcome.
- Keep communication lines open.
- REWARD your best employees in some way:
 - Recognition at least.
 - More training they want.
 - Pay if possible.

Things you must do

- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
 - Special events.
 - Consistent messages through multiple channels.
 - Five-minute managing.
- Be able to lead and invite others to join you.
 - Model the right behaviors: Keep the faith!
 - Be human.
- Execute, monitor/measure, change again.

Show your passion and have fun

- Show your commitment to journalistic values.
 - Define them for your staff. Why are you in the business?
 - Get excited about good stories.
- If your staff sees you having fun, it will help them have more fun.
 - Pick one thing every day that is fun for you and do it!

Tricks of the trade: Set standards

- “Inspect what you expect”
 - What do you expect?
 - Are you sure people know that?
 - How do you know if it’s being done?
- Written standards.
- Start with your best performer and use that person as the standard by which you judge others.
 - Allow for differences in experience.
 - Adjust standards for various jobs (the police reporter can usually be more productive than a feature writer).

Tricks: Open critiques

- You need to make reading and critiquing the paper – and the web site -- a top priority.
 - Talk about the current edition for 5-10 minutes at the beginning of a news meeting or staff meeting.
 - Write a critique or post a marked-up paper when possible.
 - Rotate the duty among editors – or among all staffers.
- Some editors shy away from open critiques because of concern about hurt feelings.
 - We all learn by talking about what's good – and holding that up as an example to follow – and what could have been improved.
 - Key point: Talk about how and why it could have been better.

Tricks: Organizing, prioritizing

- Keep yourself organized.
 - Touch each piece of paper or e-mail only once if possible.
 - 2-minute rule: If it will take “2 minutes” or less, do it now and get it out of the way.
 - Managing your inbox:
 - Leave things in your inbox until they are dispensed.
 - Let the lowest priority items sink to the bottom.
 - Clean up every once in a while.

Tricks of trade: Create a space to fill

- People rarely volunteer to do more work.
 - When they do: take them up on it!
- But, if you give them a space that needs to be filled, people will usually find a way to fill it.
 - People hate a vacuum.
 - Remember: People want to do a good job!



Tricks of the trade: Your ideas

- What are your favorite ways:
 - To motivate people?
 - To get more done in less time?
 - To increase performance of those around you?

Summary

- ❑ To get high performance, you have to ask for it – and you have to expect it.
- ❑ You need a plan based on market conditions and understanding of your customers.
- ❑ You need to show the passion and have fun – model the behavior you expect from others.
- ❑ Inspire your employees – provide them the environment in which they can do their best work. They want to do a good job!

Thank you! Contact info

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Key programs and services:

- **Rapid Review** includes a high-level look at the newspaper and web site, plus a review of budgets and staffing levels.
- **Visiting Editor** is a low-cost on-site training program offering daily seminars on a variety of topics, plus one-on-one coaching for top editors and others.
- **Survive and Thrive** is a program to help companies develop new strategies for challenging times.

