The news landscape 2015
4 Ideas to make your content better

1. Millennials are your pathfinders
2. You can transform your data and analytics
3. Create a metric that reflects your values
4. Improve coverage on magnet franchises
1. Millennials are not your next audience ... they are pathfinders for all users
They led your current readers to

- Facebook
- Texting
- Twitter
- Mobile
- Streaming TV
They will be first **to what’s next**

... your core audience will keep following their early adoption
Millennials are not a “newsless” or disengaged generation
69% of Millennials get news daily

88% regularly do so on Facebook

65% say news is important to them
40% pay for news out of their own pocket

57% follow at least 4 ‘hard news’ topics

49% follow at least 10 (of 24) overall topics
Social is the dominant path

Social is no longer just social
But not the only one:

- **Social** for lifestyle: food, music, TV
- **Search** for how-to: product, career, hobbies
- **News creators** for hard news:
  
  Govt., crime, sports, weather, traffic, breaking
2. You can transform your data into something better
We **inherited metrics** that don’t help us
They tell you if a single story did well

They don’t tell you why
They don’t help you improve your journalism or make it more engaging
Can you answer these questions?

• What drives readership in different beats?

• How do qualities like voice, initiative, or story type affect engagement?

• Do long stories help you or hurt you?
Do you really know?

Or are you guessing — based on gut, experience and maybe research from awhile ago?
Your partners and frenemies aren’t guessing.
You can **know** the answers

But you need **the right data**
Results from one approach:
API’s **Metrics for News** program:

55 publications using it

250,000 stories in the database
We teach publications to tag stories for journalism qualities:

- Why people read content
- What topics we cover
- How much enterprise went into this?
- What job is this story doing?
That **structured data** about your journalism is then **matched with** your analytics...
So you can answer:

- How does watchdog do?
- How does explanatory journalism?
- What works inside each beat?
- What should we do less of?
3. Clarify the Number Clutter
Distill one clear weighted index

“How’s the stock market doing?”

“How’s our content doing?”

Metrics for News Overall Engagement Index
Blended to what you think matters

Total Engagement Index

- Views
- Reading Time
- Social Shares
- Social Entries
- Commenting
Over 250,000 pieces of content tagged so far

What have we found?
Major enterprise stories earn nearly 50% more engagement

(83% more page views, 39% more time spent and 103% more shares)
But there aren’t enough of them

Just 1% of all content
Lighter enterprise is not as helpful
Initiative stories (your ideas) boost engagement by 30%

(62% more views, 11% more time spent, 101% more shares)
Initiative is different from enterprise

- Initiative = whose idea the story is (proactive)
- Enterprise = effort, time, resources
But there aren’t enough of these either

Just 5% of all content
People like long stories
Long-form stories:

- Drive 23% more engagement (+11% views, +36% read time and +45% shares)

- An average 1,246 words, at some publications more than 1,500 words
Writing it **straight** still works

For crime, government, most hard news
Analysis works better with cultural topics

- Food
- Dining
- Sports
Add one photo: +19%
Add multiple photos: +43%
Audio and video add 36% more engagement

81% more views
84% more shares
The analysis **differs by paper**

Results are often unique to each publisher based on their content and their community.
The reasons readers engage with content varies by topic.
What works inside Government coverage?

- Initiative (boosts engagement +52%)
- Major enterprise and blogs (both +46%)
- Watchdog (+25%)
- Photos (double shares and views but only 75% of stories have them)
What hurts in government coverage?

- Too much “For the record” — stories whose only job is to note some incremental update (meeting stories)
- 48% of all stories are for the record (25,000 out of 50,000)
Inside Business/Economy

- Initiative (+33% engagement)
- Conversation starters: (+20%)
- Watchdog: (+15%)
- Things to do places to go (+20%)
- Too much for the record (60% of all stories)
Inside Crime/Public Safety

- Online briefs hurt (-70% other crime content)
- Initiative helps (+54%)
- Explanatory does well (+30%)
- Here light enterprise helps (+23%)
Inside Food and Dining

- Most popular topic tied with crime (33% greater than average)
- Not just a lifestyle beat
- Twice as likely to be viewed a week after publication
Inside Sports

- “Analytical voice” helps (+34% over straight voice)
- Initiative stories +23%
- Major enterprise more than doubles engagement
Sports also:

- Gets more traffic from Twitter than any other topic
- Adding one photo: +20% engagement
- Adding multiple photos: +42% engagement
4. Build brand around magnet franchise topics
The old model for newspapers was the general store.

We had it all... calico, nails, beans, salt peter.
The web rewards specialization
Online...

...a better source on any topic is potentially always a click away
Get better and become indispensable on key topics

Rather than shrinking at everything
Results from partners working with the franchise concept
A Florida partner:


- **Environment:** +121% views, +200% shares
- **Our business future:** +73% more views, +150% shares
- **Lifestyle:** +33% more views, +115% shares
- **ALL CONTENT:** +40% views, +77% time, +115% shares
The data told them:

- More light enterprise and columns, fewer dailies and briefs
- More explainers and conversation starters
- More photos
- Lots more initiative

- + 231% page views
- + 251% shares

2015 vs. 2014

A Pennsylvania partner:

Stronger crime coverage
An Idaho partner:

Slowly rolled out franchise topics and is now seeing benefits across all content.

- **Franchises:** +150% on views, more than 50% increase in shares.

- **ALL content** +287% in views +51% in shares.
An Oregon partner:  

**Growth in Biz Audience**

Redesigned their ‘business’ coverage to focus more on ‘living in the local economy’


- + 65% page views
- + 124% shares
A partner company: All papers

Franchise beats:

- 24% more overall engagement than content overall
- 47% more page views
- 57% more shares
In short:

- Tell unique stories no one else has
- Do more major enterprise
- Do them long and use alternative story forms
- Use more photos, galleries, audio and video
- You do too many ‘for the record’ stories
- Study early adaptors: Are you 40% millennial?
Questions?

Tom Rosenstiel
Executive Director
tom.rosenstiel@pressinstitute.org
@tbr1