

## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual International Symposium on Online Journalism

**Day 2, April 2, 2011**

**Research Panel: *Engaging Communities with the News***

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### **Panelists:**

- **Chair: Jim Brady**, Journal Register Company; formerly Editor of TBD.com and WashingtonPost.com
  - **Espen Egil Hansen**, Editor-in-Chief, VG Multimedia, Norway
  - **Mitch Gelman**, Vice-President, Clarity Digital Media - Examiner.com
  - **Jennifer Preston**, Staff Writer, Former Social Media Editor, *The New York Times*
  - **Amanda Zamora**, Social Media and Engagement Editor, *The Washington Post*
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**Jim Brady:** The panel has met a couple of times in the last few days, and the one goal we have set is, we're not going to let Rosental wander up here and do this little like dropping a hint that we're running late thing. So, we decided we're going to move -- we're going to be pretty aggressive about moving through. We have a lot of great speakers here and want to be able to get through them all, but we've set the goal to make sure we're leaving a good half-hour for the conversations. Because in the end, this panel is about community and we should be having a conversation here and not doing PowerPoints for 90 minutes. So, I'm going to... I'll be the bad guy who sits on the front row. Rosental, you can sit this entire panel. If anybody's got to put pressure on the speakers, I'll do it this time. So, we're going to walk through.

Again, I would ask if you have questions, if you're watching this on the live stream or you're in the audience and you want to ask a specific question for the Q&A, if you use both hashtags—#ISOJ and #NewsEngage (one word)—that would be great.

We're just going to—so I don't waste any time up here—get right into this. We've already worked out the order in which we're speaking, so I'm not going to come back up here and introduce each speaker. As they go, they will introduce themselves. And we'll start with Espen Hansen from VG Multimedia, Norway.

**Espen Egil Hansen:** Thank you for inviting me to this great symposium, Rosental and Amy. I ask my journalists to spend a minimum of 10% interacting, engaging with the readers. And I will show you some examples that maybe will explain why I do that. And I'll start by taking you back one year. When you were here gathered for this symposium one year ago, the chairs of the European participants were empty, right, because of this

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volcano out in the Atlantic on the little island of Iceland. And it got all kinds of local consequences, of course, but also the dust from the volcano—(Where is Iceland? It's up here.)—were drifting within days to Norway, to England, and then going south, effectively shutting down every airport in Europe. And this gets consequences. This is our readers. People not being able to go to Austin and business people being on a trip not being able to get home to their kids. Weddings, guests, and so on.

Even the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mr. Stoltenberg, he was stuck on the Kennedy Airport in New York. And as it happened, the iPad had been launched just a few days before, so this is a live photo run by AP, and the caption said, "The Norwegian Prime Minister running his country by iPad." [Laughter] But I happen to have some very good sources on that office, so I know that the first thing he did was to read my online site. [Laughter] So, this was what he was reading.

VG Net is a very, very updated news site, much more minute-to-minute updated than what you are used to here in the U.S., and he could read about himself down there from our New York reporter, but more importantly about the airports being shut down one by one, the rescue helicopters being stranded, and so on. But in a situation like this, we try to do something more as a news organization.

And this is a journalistic approach we have developed for the last ten years. We try to ask our self, what is the real need out there? And we posed the question internally: Can we help the readers to help each other? And someone, not a journalist, came up with the idea, okay, if the real need is to get our readers home, let's get them home. And the programmer programmed a little marketplace called The Hitchhiker's Central in seven hours. We cannot work with this for two days, because the need is now.

It's not sophisticated. It's not beautiful. It's not sexy. But it works. And we built this into our articles, news articles, and we don't know how many readers we brought home. We only know that there were several thousand—probably tens of thousands. There were bus trips organized from all capitals in Europe going back to Norway. We sent children across the country. We sent parents across the country--people having a car meeting up with people needing a ride. We even sent a cat 500 miles north to Finland for a cat exhibition. [Laughter]

And we integrate this in our news journalism. Here it says, "Can you help someone to get home?" Here's our news. We give the readers news, information, insight. We give them this meeting point. And what happens is that they start to give us news back. They say, "Hey, you missed on this story. I know about a great story. The little boy here. Write about him. It's a fantastic story. He got home to his parents because of The Hitchhiker's Central and so on. They sent us pictures, videos by the hundreds.

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Another example. I love this headline. [Headline: Mississippi's literacy program shows improvement.] [Laughter] But it's a fact; journalists do [make] mistakes, right? And online we do more mistakes than in our newspaper. And as an editor-in-chief, I used to get up to ten emails every day from readers complaining about our poor language.

So again, we discussed and we have been working with this for years, to be honest, but then a programmer again came up with an idea, "Let's make a little tool. Can we not invite our readers to help us?" And we had a discussion, "Can we do that?" "Of course, we can do that." So, we said, "Do you want to help us to correct typos?" And I think there was 5,000 readers that applied for that to work free for us. And about 400 got a little tool, a little program installed in their computer. So whenever they read VG Net, they have this little box, and if they find a typo, they can mark it and they can suggest a correction, and it pops up on the screen of the computer.

Last year, we started in April last year. We corrected 17,000 typos and mistakes. It's a dramatic improvement in quality. And since we launched, I have gotten three emails from readers complaining. And not only do we do less mistakes now, when we do them, we correct them faster, and we learn each and every day, and we make analysis of the corrections telling us where do we have the most problems.

Let's talk about Japan. What's our problem in a situation like this? Anyone? [No response.] Well, first, as a news organization, we don't know. Second, we are not there, right? It happens. We are not there. However, this shows the traffic. This [graph] is not on the Japan event. I wasn't able to take out that, but it's on another event this week similar. From one minute to another, the readers tap into [VG.no](http://VG.no) to get the answer, what is happening? They know. Through social media, through us, we have the first line, "There's been a major tsunami outside the coast of Japan." So, this is from one minute to another. So, they expect us to explain, but we are not there, and we haven't got the knowledge. So, the first thing we do in a situation like this, of course, we report what we know, as we do, as all news organizations do, and we start to investigate.

But we also put up a live... We connect to a Japanese TV station, NHK, which is live. Then we have a chat. This picture is from the day after then. I had three reporters who had arrived in Japan. Here they are reporting. The explosion at the site, they were a little bit too close, so they had to go away, and they are reporting this on the way. Here is our newsroom sharing as they report, before they write the story. "This is what we know now." Answers and the questions from the readers. Here's a guy working with infographics posting, getting feedback, and so on. So, this is the front page again. We build the news, the infographics. We have the live video for Japan, but also further down here, we have the chat on the front page. We also put up a chat saying, "If you are in Japan and okay, tell about it here."

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How am I doing? [Inaudible response.] Five. I'll try. [Laughs]

What do we call this in English? The swine flu. The Norwegian health authorities decided that -- they recommended that everyone get a shot. So, they brought in 9-million shots, flew them to Norway. They just forgot one thing. Where will people get the shot? And who will be first? It's not.... We're a little country, okay, but you can't give the shot to 4.5-million people in one day. So, it was a chaotic situation. The government said, "Well, the local authorities have to figure this out." And some of them were really good actually [at] putting up a website, but not all of them, and there was no one place you could get this information. So again, we asked the readers, "Do you know?" We made this little Wiki-site, just putting in every little town in Norway. And they knew. They started to investigate. They phoned the town hall and so on. And within six hours, within six hours, we had a complete national site for where you could get the shot and who would be first.

I'll try to give a graphic illustration of our history working with this. In ancient times, let's say, 12-15 years ago, we were a traditional news organization, the main newspaper, the main news site in Norway, but it was pure monologue, right? Then about ten years ago, we really started to communicate with the readers, having them send us pictures, SMS, tip-offs. We made forums with blogs and so on. And we used a lot of time on dialogue with the readers. Today, we have built another layer, I would say. We still do this, but today we work a lot with social media. We post questions out there. We get feedback. We send out our articles. They comment [on] them, and it gets back, and it improves the quality of what we do.

We could see it this way: this is traditional journalism, one-way communication, how we have been working now for almost 400 years, and this is social media where people [are] talking with each other, sharing. We want to be something in the middle. We clearly come from this tradition, but we want to adopt this and really build it into our journalism.

I think of the Super Bowl final. You have like 100,000 people. Is that right? No, we don't play this game in Norway, but I like this picture. [Laughter] No one complains that the people watching this game is a threat to the quality of the game. I have more than ten times the amount of people reading my news site every day, every day. Of course, they know that we—well, that the journalism is out there, but we want them to engage. Of course, there are people out there in this crowd that can help us, and they do.

And finally, does it work if you see the 10% as an investment? Well, 76% of all Norwegians read my news site last month. 76%. More than 30% reads us every day, seven days a week. I'm not saying we are the news site with the strongest position in the world, just that we haven't been able to find anyone else competing. [Laughter] I challenge you. [Chuckles] 87% of our readers reads our front page, first page. Again, I'm not saying it's a world record, but I think the typical—you have to correct me—in the U.S. would be around 30-

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40%? And why is this important? Because if you control the traffic, if people come to the first page, they go to an article and back to the first page, you have a business model. We have been profitable for the last eight years. And for the last five years, with an average profit margin of 33%.

Okay. Thank you for listening to me.

[Applause.]

**Mitch Gelman:** As you all know, we're both in a transformative and a golden age of journalism. That's why you're all here today. It's exciting. The potential has never been greater. I work at a company called [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com). It's not big like *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* or The Journal Register group. It's a small little startup based in Denver, Colorado. And we are in the transformative part moving toward that golden age. It is a site that is built entirely upon user-generated content from knowledgeable, passionate, community influencers across the country. Over the last two-and-a-half to three years, [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com) has recruited more than 70,000 contributors. It's become a top 10 news site and a top 100 site on the Internet across the world. All of the content is created by people who know their communities, who live in their communities, and who have an interest in what it is that those communities are going to become.

[Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com) is right now at the nexus of what I like to call Web 2.5. If Web 1.0 was giving the access to information to everybody, and Web 2.0 was giving the power of publishing to everybody, and Web 3.0 has become the ability to share and interconnect amongst one another, then what [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com) does and what I'll talk about a little bit this afternoon is, it's taking the power of publishing from the people and the power of sharing that information among friends and colleagues and likeminded folks and try to turn it into a business and a source of information and news for communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We don't claim that the people that are contributing to [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com) are necessarily journalists; although, sometimes their work does rise to the level of journalism. We're not aiming to be the watchdogs or the conscience of the communities. That's something that others can do better. But these are people who are in the towns, in the cities, who want to share information that they know.

These are some of the subjects that people write about—everything from art and entertainment, food and drinks, bars, games, their neighborhoods. And as you can see, the 70,000 are spread across the major markets in the United States and a total right now of 242 sites in towns in the U.S. and Canada, and a national U.S. and national Canadian edition.

The first community that we have to engage, because this is the source of our news, our information, and our content, are the contributors, the

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examiners themselves. So, we have a large community that we've established in which the examiners come in and interact and help each other. Some of them are former professional journalists. Some of them are experts in specific fields. Some of them are more technologically savvy than others. Some of them have questions about our pay structure and about ways to develop traffic and market their work. We have a community for them in which they can participate in groups and start conversations and be their own best advisors, with some folks back at the main office in Denver going in and answering and facilitating the conversation. So, the first community that we engage in order to sustain the volume and the quality of the content that we get is the community of the examiners.

The second community that we engage is the community in the audience. And the way that we have focused on doing that is building those communities, building those spheres of influence around the individual examiners themselves. So, this is an example of the power, the distribution power, the circulation power of the social media and other person-to-person communication that we've established. Tony Hake is one individual. He's the Denver weather examiner. He gets a limited amount of traffic that comes directly to his sites through search and through other areas. But if you look at two degrees of separation, Tony, by posting to his Twitter account to his friends and his friends posting and re-tweeting to their friends, can access another 1,800 potential views each day. Email followers who subscribe to his work, two degrees, 300. 400 through his friends and family. 12.5-million through Technorati and blog rolls. And the potential of 127-million Facebook followers in two degrees of separation sharing with their Facebook friends have the potential of coming back. So, the first community is examiners. The second community are the spheres of influence around the examiners themselves.

The big challenge that we're focused on, and it's an industry-wide challenge.... Jim, how much time do I have? [Inaudible response.] The biggest challenge that we face right now is with 3,000 stories per day coming in. That is more stories per day coming in from examiners than *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA-Today*, ESPN, [CNN.com](http://CNN.com), and [MSNBC.com](http://MSNBC.com) combined. How do we sort through that? How do we identify for our audience, for our users, for our advertisers, for our distribution partners, for our search partners, how do we identify the different levels of content? We understand that there is a wide variety. There is stuff that is very, very good. There's stuff that's adequate. And there's stuff, frankly, that we're not sure we want a lot of people to see.

And we have a quality cycle. It starts with the recruitment, where people have to pass -- in order to become an examiner, they have to pass a writing test, run a background test/check, and have to prove an expertise or a passion around the subject they want to write. The activation standards are put into place. Then we have a team of mostly former *Rocky Mountain News* copy editors right now, who work as contractors to review the content, rate

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it, provide feedback, and then offer training to the examiners. The interesting part... I know there's a lot of people here from journalism schools. Traditionally, in training a journalist, you train them first to be communicators, and then they pick up a beat and develop a focus or an expertise. [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com) works differently. The people who come to contribute already know or care about their school board or their engineering background. They have an expertise. Part of our job is to help them become better communicators.

So, we go from training to assessment, and then the applications of the quality data once we receive it. This is one of the ways that we assess that quality. And the reason that assessing the quality and improving the quality, the accuracy, the time limits, the credibility, the formatting, the manner in which the stories are told is vital to our community engagement, is because unless we establish the trust with our audience around each of the individual examiners and their subjects, that engagement is going to collapse. It's a fundamental, obviously, for places that are traditional brands and have that as part of their DNA. For what we're doing, it is key to the sustainability of the business to build on the phenomenal growth that we've already seen.

So, we have folks that go in and look now at the stories the examiners designate as news, the stories that are by local examiners, the stories that are designated as evergreen topic or national focus. And they go through and they rate them based on whether they're appropriate, whether they're good, and they are able to offer feedback directly to the examiners in areas for them to focus and develop. And once we have this numerical quality data, based on these 2,500 to 3,000 stories per day, we can then use it to tier the examiners at different levels of performance and inform the display on the site, the distribution, advertiser adjacencies, the pays and incentives that the examiners receive, as well as our mobile programming search and the work flow within the office itself.

This is the key to continuing to build that community on a fundamental challenge that we have, which is how to take all this terrific community-generated content, news, information, and make it relevant to the audience that it's trying to connect with.

So, thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to questions.

[Applause.]

**Jennifer Preston:** So first, I just want to thank the professor and all of the wonderful people here at this conference, because one of the most important things that I learned when I was first named social media editor, almost a couple of years ago, was just the value and the importance of sharing and collaboration, and that's what is so glorious about us all being here today.

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So what I'd like to do is tell you a little bit about finding the value of social media in the newsroom at *The New York Times*. And that was a big part of my job when I was named social media editor as well as being an evangelist to get our journalists to use these tools. And now, I am just completely blessed, because I've returned to reporting, and I'm using everything that I've learned about these very powerful tools to tell some of the stories that we were talking about today. So, I hope we'll also have a little bit of time to talk about that.

So first, at *The New York Times*—and we heard so much of this from Amanda—is, what's the value for our journalism? What's the value for our users? So obviously, I think everyone understands the value in using these tools for reporting. That's been proven. Secondly, real-time publishing and curation. For us to be able to deliver news and information in real time to our users has provided tremendous value for our site--and building community and engagement. And we're going to talk a little bit more about that in just a few moments. And also, the power of involving users in the creative process, beyond what Jim describes, you know, "Send in the photo of your cat." And also, what we've been able to do at *The New York Times* is to use the rich data from these social media networks to tell stories through data visualization. So, I have an example to share with you.

So, my best advice for news organizations looking to deliver and provide real-time news updates using Twitter in your newsrooms—start in the sports department. Who can argue with baseball when you're delivering, you know, real-time news and information about baseball? I've got to tell you, it was a very big step for us at *The New York Times*, where we have a very, very, one might say, very focused editing process—multiple layers of editing. For us to actually take that risk of putting content that is not only produced by our journalists but is produced by other journalists that is produced by users right on our website in real time. And so now, this is a feature that we have on almost all of our blogs across our website. But where we began is in the sports department and moved to breaking news.

As many of you know, this terrible tragedy took place here in Texas, and we were lucky to have reporters here in Texas. And we were lucky to have the *Austin Statesman* folks just be right on top of delivering real-time news and updates on Twitter when this happened. So what we did—and this was the first time that we did it with a major news story—is we put the live updates from the *Killeen Daily Herald* live on our website, along with Twitter updates from radio stations, TV stations here in Killeen. And that way, we were able to share with users what we were learning in real time as the story evolved.

So, the big question of course is, do you get it first or do you get it right? I think all of us learned, if anyone had any doubts, that getting it right is what's most important. This is a slide that I share with my journalism students at Columbia University, because if you ever wonder what it means



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to someone that you get it wrong, just think of Representative Gifford's husband's response.

Comments, rate and review. So, let's talk about community. Many of us have comments on our site. Many of us provide our users with the chance to rate and review, but one theme that many of us in this space have talked about over and over again is that we don't have very powerful tools on our site for users to interact with each other or with our journalists, not yet anyway, but that's where enormously powerful, fabulous tools of social media can be helpful.

So, blogs. We have 70 blogs at *The New York Times*. Blogs do give us a great opportunity to engage and interact with our users. And it has been a wonderful platform, especially for our bloggers like Tara Parker-Pope—TPP to our users, to our readers of the Well Blog. She gets right in the middle of the conversation. And all of you, I'm sure, are familiar with what Nick Kristof has done using Facebook, using Twitter, using his own blog to provide users not only again with real-time news and information and updates, which he did, of course, from Bahrain and across the Middle East in recent months, but also really listen and engage with users.

So, beyond the conversation. All right, so we have blogs, we have comments. How else can we involve users in the creative process? So, what I wanted to do was just share with you a couple of examples here. This is very simple. This is called the Mood Train, and this was launched a couple of years ago when we just asked our users, "Just describe one word that describes your current state of mind." And we launched this during the election, and we've used it from time to time, during Obama's State of the Union, you know, just at different moments in time. And what we've tried to do whenever we're asking this question and there's a Republican/Democratic thing, just in case you're wondering, the blue's the Dem's, the red's the Republicans.

Healthcare conversations. As I said, we don't have tools yet on our site that really allows us across our site for users to engage with each other and with our journalists. So, Andrew DeVigal's team working with Aron Pilhofer, and Steve Duenes, and Matt Ericson, and Tom Jackson, who is this brilliant multimedia producer/developer, came up with what we call the Bento Box. And this allowed our users to jump into the part of the conversation about this very complex, you know, issue—healthcare reform—and offer their thoughts. And we were able to thread comments, and this changed every single day. The public option, of course, dominated the conversation for many, many days, but at other times it was other parts of the debate. So, the Bento Box was like a wonderful tool for us to, again, foster engagement beyond some of the more traditional ways.

And this was one of my favorite projects. This is the Moment in Time Project. How many of you have heard of the Moment in Time Project or participated

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in it? This was one of those projects where, like so much when you're just trying to get in there and figure it out and, you know, take risk, we had no idea what would happen. What we did was we set a time on a Sunday in May and said, "Hey, world, we'd love for you to take a photograph and we will share it, you know, with our users on [NYTimes.com](http://NYTimes.com)." And so, we had at that time about a half-million fans on Facebook, and so, we created an event just like the activists in Egypt created an event in January of this year. We created an event asking people, "Hey, sign up and join our Moment in Time Project." And of course, we went on our main Twitter feed and invited people to, you know, take a photograph at 11:00 a.m. Eastern time on this one Sunday in May. Well, the response was astonishing. We got 14,000 photographs files, overwhelming our servers, bringing everything crashing down at 11:03 a.m. on Sunday.

But for me at that time in my role as social media editor, what was most exciting is that people did not want to wait until the *New York Times* put together this absolutely fantastic, gorgeous multimedia presentation. They wanted to share their photo right then and there, and that's what they did on Facebook and on Twitter. And it was a Sunday, so I was home, so I had a choice, do I help my husband move the gigantic pile of mulch sitting in the driveway or do I sit on the living room couch and just share photos all day? And that's what I did. And it was so fantastic, you know, just the response that we got. As Amanda said so powerfully, rewarding the users is vital if we want to involve them in the creative process. And people just loved it. They would reply, "@NYTimes, here's my photo." And then when I would retweet it to 2.5-million people, that was pretty awesome.

So then, we had many lessons learned from this. And it was about 10 days later that we produced this amazing multimedia presentation of these photos. And I would urge you to actually take a look at it. What I'm going to do, folks, for you is, I'm just going to have one page with links to these different interactives and I'm going to make that available to Amy so that you can see them yourself and play with them, that's the key.

Fix the budget with Twitter. We launched this in November, and this drove more traffic from Twitter to the Week in Review Section. And it was very simple. We just asked users, "Hey, everybody has an idea about how to fix the federal budget. What's your idea?" And this was one my faves. One of the things that, again, as I describe finding the value of social media in the newsroom, I think for Twitter, the value that we found was for reporting, of course, and for delivering news and information in real time. With Facebook, it provides us and I think all of you with an enormous opportunity to seed communities using the very platform that is Facebook with 500-million users.

And, you know, one of the most important things to remember in terms of creating communities for news organizations is, newspapers are not organized for communities. Many of us have organized our websites in the same way our newspapers are organized around sections. So it's very

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important when you're thinking about social and when you're thinking about community within your news organizations to think about, what are the communities? And they go beyond [the] education section. Well, when we started the Disunion Series on the Opinionater Blog, you know, it's obvious, right? Anyone who knows anything about American history knows that there is this gigantic community of Civil War buffs. So again, we had no idea. So we went right to Facebook and said, "Hey, let's just create a page, low cost, and let's see what happens." We have 18,000 fans. This is less than six months old. We did the same with movies, and again, the beauty is seeding the community on Facebook, inviting them to your site. This is our integration for the Oscars, and it was really a triumph of our interactive news team of just with our Oscar ballot and integrating Facebook.

Again, one thing that Amanda and I have spoken about, too, is the importance for organizations to recognize you must be wherever the conversation is—on your site, off your site. Here's an example of a Tweet chat that we did with folks about how museum directors were using social. Again, visualization, this World Cup visualization.

Monetization. So, as many of you know, *The New York Times* launched its pay model. So, what does that mean in terms of engagement? Brian Stelter, "Why I subscribe to NY Times digital: to pay @brianstelter's salary." Brian is my colleague in the media group at *The New York Times*. He is fantastic [and] a must follow @brianstelter. And if you are looking for people who -- for journalists who are engaging in the most superb way, I would point to Brian Stelter as the perfect example. And if anyone asks about the value of engagement and monetization, there's your answer. Thank you.

[Applause.]

**Amanda Zamora:** I've got to be fast. But I first want to just say thank you, again, to Rosental for inviting me. I was one of Rosental's students, and so I attended some of the first versions of ISOJ, and it's been amazing to see it grow into such a wonderful event.

So in any case, I'm here to talk mainly from a social media perspective. Engagement can mean a lot of things, and I'm sort of focusing on how we leverage social networks and social channels, specifically, to kind of build our audience and engage with that audience. And I can tell you that I started this.... I started back at *The Post* in June, and I started focusing on social more specifically in August. And really, my job has been about kind of taking the earmuffs off the sleeping giant and taking these accounts that had essentially been shovelware, (as you guys have been talking about shovelware), and turning them into something dynamic and with voice and that folks could sort of expect something more from.

So, I just wanted to walk you guys through, kind of at a high level, some of the things that we've been talking to our journalists about and to our

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newsroom about in order to kind of make that happen. So first of all, and I'll say that before we even get to the engaged part, we're trying to just teach people about the medium and teach people how to use it as reporters and editors and as journalists first. We're talking to them about how to use social networks to track. And none of this is going to sound that innovative to you guys, because you guys are so savvy, but we're really trying to get the basics down with a lot of our journalists. So, teaching them what it is to track news in real time, teaching them to listen first, teaching them then how to take that information, to curate it, and to be a source of information in these networks, and then, of course, obviously, to roll all that up into something that we can make that's engaging.

So, this is sort of my mission control every morning. And by the way, I'll say, too, that we have two social media producers, so there's, basically, we're trying to make social an integral part of the newsroom. On the whole, we have this hub-and-spoke model. We are sort of the hub, this sort of three-person unit, which this is new, right? But we're trying to sort of build capacity beyond the newsroom, so you'll see I have my *Post* list. We're looking and monitoring sort of what our folks are tweeting and doing every day. And every day, there's more and more great content from our reporters and bloggers. But we're using it to track explicitly what we know, what we're sending out, what our competitors are doing, big stories that we already know about, but we're also, you know, trying to use it to get insight into what we may not know yet, and to be listening to the audience to see what is important or what's sort of breaking in terms of conversation or news and especially in our local market.

We're also, you know, this is also sort of stating the obvious, but finding, you know, social is becoming a source *of* the news. It *is* the news. We all saw it in Egypt. [We're], more and more as stories break either locally or nationally or internationally, looking to Twitter to kind of be the first -- get that first response information, relay it to other reporters and editors as they sort of learn to kind of use the medium themselves and get set up. By the way, I was telling someone I think earlier today, as each new blogger comes online, we're trying to.... If you can't figure out what your beat is by the looking at your Twitter lists, you're doing something wrong, right? So, investing in that network first, so that it's giving you this kind of information, so that you're able to sort of act when news breaks and integrate that back into the content itself on the site.

We're also using it... Which, you know, I remember just initiating these conversations in the newsroom, you know, the instinct at legacy media for editors can be, "Well, using Twitter to report? Isn't someone going to edit that first?" But really empowering the reporters to go out there and use social to be the source of real-time information. And in this case, when David Nakamura was at the Gifford's -- at the Jared Loughner arraignment, which only wound up being 17 minutes, I think, he said in total, the actual hearing, he took his Blackberry and he was sort of letting folks know that he was

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going to be there interacting with readers in real time. He couldn't take it into the courthouse itself, but it was such a short hearing that it didn't seem like such a huge break. But, I mean, this is a space where the cable networks weren't carrying it live in that way, the other news organizations weren't, so, we had something exclusive to offer on social, and then we pulled it back into the site and this became the story for that, you know, moment in time.

And then all of this is sort of building up to what has become for us sort of the building block for engagement, at least on social. We sync up these call outs across networks, but we really -- we've learned a lot from Twitter. In the last six months or so, we've been able to sort of use the hashtag to kind of proactively frame conversation. And once people got used to kind of seeing us jumpstart the conversation, engage in conversations that were already happening, go above and beyond that to then start to actually crowdsource and collect data and information, and then making sure that as we're doing all of that, we're rewarding people for participating with us.

The other thing that I tell journalists as we talk about, you know, why social media? You know, is it just one more thing that I...? How much time does it take? How do I know that it's worth the effort? How many followers should I have? Do I have to follow everyone back? And what I say generally is, you know, the sign of success for us in social is, if you issue a call, you get a response. It's not about the number of followers that you have.

So, this is just one example of the callouts that we do. We did it for [the] State of the Union. We did a little blog post about sort of, you know, that typical line in the actual address where the President says, "The state of the union is..." Is it good? Is it bad? And we asked people to sort of give us their perspective on what the state of the union was ahead of Obama's speech this year, and we got really thoughtful, great responses. And every time those responses go out and they are linking to our account and linking to our content, that's great for our brand. We're building our audience and, of course, rewarding people by bringing it back into the site.

The other thing that we're doing—someone mentioned this earlier, too—is teaching our bloggers and our reporters to think about how to leverage the network for their reporting, too, and to, as they're pulling stuff in, to give back. You know, when Chris Cillizza who's one of our early adopters, as Jim Brady will tell you, he is game for anything, right? One of our early adopter bloggers. He said, "I would really love to figure out, you know, who the best tweeters are across the country. So, let me ask my Twitter followers. Duh." So, we did "the fix faves." I think that was the hashtag. Yeah, "fix fave tweeters." And he got an enormous response. And he wound up being able to compile a list that was fantastic for his own reporting purposes and that he was able to offer back as a resource for his readers. So, he's just building a relationship there with his audience that is meaningful. And I think he wound up with, like, 300-plus, more than 300 people on that list.

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And then, again, thinking about syncing up these callouts. Sometimes we're asking for something a little more specific than just, "How do you feel or what do you think?" But, you know, one of our tech bloggers, Hailey, had noticed that people were really grumbling when the new iPad came out and had dropped in price by 100 bucks. So, she noticed the conversation. She said, "Huh. I should follow up on that." So, we posted a callout. She posted one on her account. We posted one on the main account. We posted it on Facebook. And we got a lot of great responses that she was able to report out and pull back into something that we put on the site.

This is my favorite one, because this was my "ah-hah" moment. When I started at *The Post* in 2003, I'd been digital. Worked my way across the newsroom. I took a sojourn, as Catherine Williams likes to -- or a sabbatical as Catherine Williams likes to call it. But I went to work with Larry Roberts at *The Huffington Post* Investigative Fund, nonprofit investigative journalism, now is part of Center for Public Integrity. But in being able to kind of step back and start from scratch and look, I remember looking at the Massey Mine coverage in mainstream media and people asking, "Well, how do you feel about the Massey Mine explosion?" I'm like, why aren't we asking, "What do you know?" So really, working with reporters, and if you can demonstrate success in little ways like this, they are quick to eat it up.

But we use Google forms all the time now--so simple. Framing the callouts in a way that is channeling the information in a productive way. You're getting so much more valuable input than, you know, a fly-by comment or a rant or a rave. But we're asking for specific data points, because reporters have a sense of where the reporting is going. In this case, you know, Joe Stephens and Mary Pat Flaherty were looking into how the D.C. power company, whether or not they were really as responsive to their customers outside of an actual weather event. They were having issues with these so-called blue sky outages. So, they wound up getting.... We did a simple Google form attached to a spreadsheet that they could collaborate on and sort the responses and make notes. "I'm going to call this person. You're going to call this person." And they got sources for their story that they wouldn't have had otherwise.

The other thing that I was.... And I'm putting this in here, too, because sometimes it's not just about the conversation. It's not just about, you know, the journalism and the facts. We're trying to have fun, too. Katy Rogers is one of our social media producers. And I had been bugging her. I'm like, "We should really put a digest every Friday of the most social, the most shared stories on our site, because sometimes it's an interesting list." She'd been doing the list and like, "Oh, this is kind of lame." So, she figured out how to turn it into something that our audience could have fun with. She turned it into a news quiz. So, on Friday kind of at the lunch hour, which seems like an appropriate time to kind of lighten up the mix a little bit on our main feed, she turned the top five most shared stories into questions, and people ate it up. It's a way to just kind of, again, make sort of our branded accounts into

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something beyond just sort of spitting out headlines, but making it a little bit more interesting.

And the other thing, and this is something you just can't avoid, it's also engaging. We've become sort of the virtual help desk too. It's also about being able to connect with readers about how their experience -- what their experience is with the brand itself.

So, our new CMS launched two weeks ago. And we had a ton of bugs, you know. We knew that we were going to have people talking about it on Twitter, and we didn't want to wait for people to just -- we didn't want to wait for the complaints to come in. We wanted to be proactive. This one doesn't have the hashtag, but we came up with a hashtag and said, "WP redesign. Whatever you see, let us know, so that we can actually monitor this in a proactive way." So Katy and T.J. and those guys were great at jumping in and sort of.... This wouldn't technically be the job.... Any journalist in the newsroom wouldn't think, "Ah, this is my job." But they are jumping right in and responding to readers, because we want our readers to have a great experience with our content.

And then this is sort of my Pilates stretch. I'll be really fast. We're trying to sort of experiment with new platforms. This is just one of them. But we're on Tumblr and Foursquare. We're experimenting. We're failing fast, for sure. This is...I love this event or this example, because we used [Intersect.com](http://Intersect.com). You should go check it out if you haven't already, because you can build a lot now with their RSS feeds, and they have these great embeddable maps. But we sent our reporters out with iPhones and apps. And the Stewart-Colbert rally was just a huge story on social--so many people talking about it. It was one of the, you know, most high-traffic social stories on the site since I have been back at *The Post*. And we wanted to collect vignettes, but I did not want the typical reporter goes out in the field, he picks up the phone and he calls something in, and someone at the newspaper types it up and puts it in a blog, and that's the report. So, they were filing scenes and texts and photos from the field, but we invited our users to do it too. And so for the first time we had this real-time, integrated account of that day that blended accounts from our reporters and accounts from our readers, and we just got a great [response]. It was a great example to me of what we can do when we get proactive about engaging our audience.

We're trying to do it in more of a niche way right now with Michael Williamson, who's a Pulitzer Prize winning photographer who does this great Americana photo journalism. And he's out, back out on the road trying to document the recession. And we're working to try to get people to help tell us, you know, about the recession from their perspective with photos, so we're trying again. People can submit to us via Intersect. We're also collecting photos via Facebook and Twitter, and we'll see how that goes. But in any case—oh, that's an example of one—we are constantly trying to

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improve, scaling that hub-and-spoke model, so that we're building capacity throughout the news organization.

Something that I can't fail to mention [is] that it's not just about what you're doing off site on these third-party channels, but making sure that it's as easy as possible to share your content from your website. And then what I'm really interested [in that] *The New York Times* and others are doing really good work with, and I think this takes good infrastructure on the backend to kind of make this happen, but starting to treat social data as narrative in and of itself. And that's all.

[Applause.]

**Jim Brady:** I'm actually going to talk about TBD. Obviously, a fair amount of you probably know that I left there a while ago after a significant disagreement over strategy. And the irony is, a lot of the disagreement was over stuff in this presentation that I thought was pretty clearly working. So, don't look at what happened in terms of the staff being cut back and the commitment by the company I was working for as a sign, because I believe absolutely that this model works in any community. And the monetization piece of it didn't even get much of a chance to get off the ground, so don't tie the one to the other. So, this is just the theory we were working under, which is, no news site can be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by having readers ... it needs to have engaged participants. And to Jen's point, they need to be engaged in journalism, not uploading pet photos.

Because a lot of what we did in journalism for a long time was this: Engagement as viewed by many news organizations. [Shows a photo.] See, I didn't know this was going to be on a huge screen like this or else I would have gotten a high-res picture. But this is how a lot of news organizations view engagement. We kind of tell you when you're out there. But you're kind of in the yard, but you're not really -- we're not really going to let you in the house. So, we come out, we tell you what's going on, and you get to clap or you get to boo or whatever you want, and that's pretty much the end of the engagement. And I think a lot of the stuff that news organizations did when they got started, which was uploading pet photos and posting a comment that no one ever answers, to me is like handing somebody a cell phone with no battery in it and saying, "See, we're talking to each other."

So, if you're not engaging in that way, this is the way you have to engage, in my view, [shows another photo], which is you're all in it together. You're all talking to each other, you're sharing information. That information that you're collecting from the audience is being used by the journalists. The journalists are communicating information to the audience. And you have to view it as a two-way street. And if you don't, you're already doomed, in my view.



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So, here's how we went about it. I'm just going to go through a bunch of things pretty quickly here. We built a community network of more than 220 local sites. These were partners. These were contractual partners who we agreed to drive traffic to directly from our website. We didn't rewrite stories and then link to the blog. These are all people we linked to directly. And for about a third of the blogs, we actually sold advertising on them, so we were trying to make them a little bit of money at the same time. These were people who were actively engaged with us on a daily basis throughout Twitter.

We curated the best content about [the] D.C. region regardless of source. If somebody in the community wrote something great, we link to it. That's community engagement too. Community engagement isn't just about what happens on your site with the community. It's about acknowledging that there's really good stuff going on outside your site from the community too. And when it's out there, you should point to it and you should reward people who are producing high quality content by trying to help them build their own sites. And obviously in our case, we were trying to sell ads on a lot of those sites, so we had some vested interest as well. But a lot of things we pointed to like *The Washington Post* and WTOP and other TV stations in town, there was no vested interest in us pointing off at all. We just wanted to be a place where people would come to find out what was going on in the region regardless of whether we wrote it, a blog network member wrote it, or another media organization wrote it.

We leveraged our audience to report out stories, which I do think is important. Here, this is an example of something where WMATA, our local transportation agency, did not like a report we did about how many escalators in the metro system were out. They claimed the percent we had quoted was far too high. So, we just said, "For the next three days, any reader who sees a broken elevator anywhere in the metro should tweet it to us." And we'll crowd-map it out like this, and we'll actually show that our percentage was a lot closer than what WMATA said their percentage was, because we were getting reports from all over the region about a broken escalator at DuPont Circle and all of these other sort of.... And anybody who's ever been to D.C., it's mystifying how many of the escalators are out at any given time. So, we just decided, all right, you think the numbers are wrong? We'll get the community to band together and pull together the information for us. And we put this up, and that was the last we heard on that particular topic.

Again, we drove traffic to the work of the community members. And this is an important concept if you work with your community, too. This was one of the bloggers in the network who said, you know, "TBD linked to my post and it's the third most viewed post in eatniks history." Third most viewed, it should be, but she was obviously excited, so she got the tweet wrong. But we saw this a lot, that a lot of the people in our network, when we pointed to them, they would have record traffic days. And so in their mind, like, we

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were in the little D.C. region serving that Drudge and Huff Po model of, like, we could really drive a lot of traffic to local bloggers. And so, they were more engaged in letting us know what they were doing and what work they were putting out there. And so, we had this really good two-way going on with the community about stuff that they were writing, because they saw a huge benefit in getting a link from us and having a relationship with us.

We delivered curated information about the community, which is really geocoded every piece of content. Human beings went through these 300 RSS feeds that we had and just applied geocodes to them to say, "This is about Arlington. This is about Prince George's County. This is about Reston, Virginia." And once you gave us a zip code, we would give you on the homepage a pretty steady stream of stuff about the area you designated. As you can see here, these are from all sorts of sites that weren't TBD. These were any site in the region that was writing about the area that you live or work [in] will deliver information to you.

Another important point—we use Twitter and Facebook to gather news, not just disseminate it. When the Discover Channel hostage situation happened in D.C., we went out on Twitter, not just communicated out what TBD was reporting, but we actually went out and found all these photos users had uploaded on the site from the scene. This was a whole gallery of about 15 pictures that people had uploaded onto Twitter. And we just went out there, found all these pictures, got permission from the people who uploaded them to use them, and ended up building a photo gallery basically out of user photos from the scene of this story that was red hot in D.C. for a couple of hours certainly and then had a pretty long tail even after that.

Second way we used.... I haven't even mentioned Foursquare on here, but another thing we did for this story was we were trying to find people. And for those that don't know TBD structure, we were associated with a local TV station as well. And we were looking to get people on air who were at the scene to talk about what was happening at the Discovery Channel. We were trying to figure out the best way to find out who was at the Discovery Channel at a given point. And Mandy Jenkins, our rock star social media editor, went to Foursquare, checked in at the Discovery Channel, and found a bunch of people who had checked in there. And we managed to communicate with them through that back channel and eventually we were able to get them on the air. And you think, well, why wouldn't we? I mean, here's a tool that's only purpose is to say—not only purpose—but main purpose is to say, "I am here." And as journalists, like, why wouldn't you use that in terms of reporting at times? If you're trying to find where somebody is, obviously you've got to confirm it and obviously you've got to do all the things you would normally do, but it's a pretty good tip to finding people who are in a certain area. So, we really try to use all of these tools to gather information and not just spit out what we were up to.

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And then we also are very conversational in our social media links, which I still think is a problem a lot of media companies have is, they just put, you know, headline, colon, link, and there's not a lot of personality, not a lot of conversation going on there. And I don't think people identify with that format. I think they want to feel like there's real humans typing these tweets and that they're responding to criticism, they're responding to compliments, they're responding to anything that the community is giving them back, and I think we encouraged everybody to have a very conversational tone in Twitter and not feel too institutional.

We went crazy on mobile. But I know we're running low on time here, so I'm going to skip some of this. Some of the other pieces of this... I always love this picture of Buttry. I don't think he's actually drunk here. I know it looks like it. [Laughter] That's pizza in his hand, not a bourbon or anything. But we also wanted to go old school a little bit and say, well, you can't do this *all* virtually, right? You've got to actually meet the people you're working with. You've got to be sitting across the table from them, having a drink with them, learning a little bit about how they got to where they are. So, we had like a whole bunch of events with local bloggers and other media types. Open houses that anybody could come to to meet the staff and talk to them about what we were doing. And if they wanted to join the network, find out a little bit more about it. And these were really helpful in terms of, you know, really getting to know who people were and not just who they were on the other side of a screen.

We also started doing public office hours at coffee houses. Our whole social media team would like fan out. One would announce on Twitter, "I'm going to be sitting in a coffee house—this coffee house in Fort Washington." "Maryland, for the next two hours, if you have criticism about our coverage or you think there's a good story you want to bring to us or anything you want to talk about, this is where we'll be." So, I think as virtual as the world gets, if you ever lose the human touch, I think that's where we really run into trouble.

And we also offered free training to all the community members that we were working with. In addition to everything we did, we also gave them -- we did six sessions with the American University on social media blogging, SEO, online ethics, and basically opened that up to anybody who wanted to come and basically sit in on those sessions.

So, this is internally unique visitors, which has been publicly reported at this point. 715,000 in 2010 November, 838,000 in December, 1.5-million in January, two months after the -- or about a month after they -- or a month before they kind of blew the thing up by getting rid of half the staff. So, you know, we were pretty confident the model was working editorially. There were certainly some issues on the business side, but certainly not enough for it to have seen the fate that it saw relatively quickly after this. So, that's why I would urge you to not look at the result too much in looking at the model,

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because a company that's truly committed to this and is willing to give it a long runway is going to end up happy about having done it. Because we really felt like we had gotten ourselves in a pretty good position.

Some of the quick results were... (Let me see if I kept myself inside my window here. Oh, I was really trying to keep... Oh, I'm only six seconds over.) So, we had a terrific buzz in the D.C. region. The blog community viewed us as partners, not rivals, right? So if we're all covering the same story, we're all covering the same mayoral race, you have 222 bloggers in the region who are going to link to you, not to *The Washington Post* or not to anybody else, because they're your partners. They want you to get traffic because you're driving them traffic. So, it creates this wonderful little ecosystem that they link to you really frequently. And we actually found out that people were starting to just use this hashtag, #HeyTBD, when they wanted to tell us about a breaking news story that was going on somewhere. It'd be like, "Hey TBD, there are four cop cars in front of the building next to my house." And that was pretty nice to get a tip that way. And some of them also would put the post on there or put "TWTOP" on there, so it wasn't just us, but people started to look to us and alert us to things that were going on, because they knew we were on Twitter all the time and that if we were the hashtag, we would see it.

I think we were just able to leverage the community to produce better journalism than we ever could have by ourselves. And it's a great symbiotic relationship because there are things that journalists can do that not everybody else can do, whether it's about access, or whether it's about understanding all the ethics of journalism, but I think any time we demean anybody who's not in our craft as needing to have an arms-length relationship with, I think we just set ourselves back a little bit.

So, since then, since this all happened, not much has really happened at TBD. So... [Laughter] Thanks.

[Applause.]

**Jim Brady:** All right. I think we have a hashtag set up. There's a couple of questions I've already...

**Amanda Zamora:** I'm trying to find them, but go ahead.

**Jim Brady:** All right. Well, a couple questions already that I've favorited, so I have a few here ready to go, but why don't we start with questions? Since we have a longer line over here, we'll start here? Maybe just might say who you are and all that.

**Jeremy Littau:** Hi. I'm too tall for this microphone. [Laughter] Jeremy Littau, Lehigh University.

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**Jim Brady:** Uh-huh.

**Jennifer Preston:** Oh, in person! [Laughs]

**Jeremy Littau:** Yeah, I know, I'm...yeah, anyway, so I'm one of those power users. And I think about the psychology of sharing a lot. You don't have to convince me that this stuff matters, because I'm on social media all the time, right? I'm very interested in how you as a panel—and anyone can answer this question—how you conceive is the motivations why your audience wants to be involved in this. Because people Clay Shirky say that, okay, we have this intrinsic motivation to share, right? But we have so many outlets and venues for sharing now, you know, across different types of spaces we've got, that it seems to me, what attracts them to share on your brand? And how do they think about that? And do you have those kind of conversations at newsroom levels when you think about that? So, what's the benefit for them? Is that a convoluted question? Sorry.

**Amanda Zamora:** I'm sorry. Is the question, what compels them to share the brand, or, what compels them to share with each other?

**Jeremy Littau:** Why do they share with you? Why don't I go on Facebook? Why don't I start my own blog and go around *The New York Times* or *Washington Post*?

**Amanda Zamora:** I mean, I tend to think it's because we were taking the time to ask in the first place what they think in a thoughtful way. I mean, you're being...you're presenting the opportunity for them to do it, I think, in the first place, is what matters. And if it's an issue that's important to them and you're asking a question that resonates with them and you're making it as easy as possible for them to answer, I think that's when -- those are sort of the elements that create a likelihood for sharing, in my experience.

**Jennifer Preston:** Yeah, and the only other thing I'd add to that is that it's of course not new that people are sharing content from *The Washington Post* or content from *The New York Times*. I mean, I don't know if any of you are old enough to have ever received a clipping in the mail from an aunt, you know, or your mother about an important article that you must read. I mean, that has been going on forever. And the beauty of these powerful social media tools gives us and our users an opportunity to scale that conversation.

**Espen Egil Hansen:** I think media usage has always been social. We read mostly to have something to talk with others about. And we've always been sharing content. As you say, it's just the tools are so much more powerful now.

**Jeremy Littau:** Just a quick follow-up to that. Do you talk about the benefits in your newsrooms of why they share? When you build products, some of this cool stuff that I've heard about and these really amazing things

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you're talking about, do you talk about, what are the benefits to the users when we're building this, as you're doing it, or is it just kind of a 'throw everything at the wall' approach and kind of see what's working with people on a given day?

**Jennifer Preston:** Well, I think that the benefit at *The New York Times* is pretty obvious, because our users are awesome, and they have so much to contribute. That for us to be able to engage them in the creative process and to get them involved in helping us, you know, create and scale some of these interactive presentations is because of the audience.

**Jim Brady:** You know, I think I'm speaking over my previous life as Editor of [TheWashingtonPost.com](http://TheWashingtonPost.com). I think you can spend a lot of time sitting in a conference room trying to explain to people why they ought to engage in all this stuff. I think the only way you really, you know.... You need a couple of pioneers who are out there showing the rest of the newsroom what the benefit is. I think it's hard to just talk about it. You know, I always joke that you can never go wrong appealing to the egos of a newsroom. And if they see somebody is doing all this stuff on social media, and they're picking up followers, and they're getting all this attention for it, they're much more likely to want to do it, frankly, because they've seen somebody else -- you know, what's happened when somebody else has done it. And some people will appeal to just the logical explanation of social, but I've found a lot have to sort of see other people do it before they buy in. That may be changing over time. I'm sorry, let's switch sides.

**Patty:** I'm Patty, Loyola University. I definitely see the benefit of engaging with communities, and I'm sure website traffic has been increasing. I'm just wondering if advertisers are seeing the benefits. You know, are you charging more than you were a year ago for ads? Do advertisers get it yet?

**Jim Brady:** Well, I'm speaking for the TBD piece of it. It was not.... You know, the direct revenue off of that was not going to be a lot, but I think the idea is by doing, by applying these or trying these strategies out, you're going to build a lot of repeat usage. You're going to build a higher level of engaged, frequent visitors to your website, which is frankly what you're out there trying to sell these days, not some big number of unique [visitors]. You're trying to sell a really core, loyal audience that comes to you every day. And in our case, one that was primarily in the Washington, D.C. region. So in our mind, the strategies would lead to more revenue, but it's not like, okay, we're going to go sell this specific social media thing for some amount of money. It was much more of a strategy building toward that.

**Mitch Gelman:** At [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com), one of the signature advertising products we offer is called Examiner Connect, and what Examiner Connect is, is it enables an advertiser, without getting any editorial influence over what the contributor in the vertical is writing about, but the ads are trafficked against that individual's content. For example, the National Transportation Highway

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Safety Board around the holidays wanted to do an anti-drunk driving campaign. So, they got certain examiners who were writing about automobiles, and motorcycles, and transportation. And the benefit to them was that they were getting an absolute focused audience, a premium group that had an interest in the topic that they were trying to convey, and there was added value. And part of the value of the advertising is the earned media that they're getting through those individual's spheres of influence, whether those spheres of influence are through Twitter or Facebook, their blog rolls, or their subscribers all coming back to their articles. And there is a natural value that is assessed to the click-backs and the traffic that is coming from those spheres of influence via these social networks in terms of increasing the advertiser's earned media, which so many advertisers are after these days.

**Jim Brady:** Take one more over there, and then, Amanda, you have one from the --

**Amanda Zamora:** [inaudible] webs.

**Jim Brady:** -- [inaudible] webs?

**Scott Thomas:** Hi. I'm Scott Thomas with [AustinPost.org](http://AustinPost.org). Jim, I liked what you said about people wanting to feel like there's somebody -- a real person on the other end of the Twitter account. And I was wondering if, Jen and Amanda, you guys could talk about if there is ever any sort of like internal conversation at your papers about, like, maybe we should have *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* account have a voice, a personality, maybe even re-tweets and, you know, throw in an 'lol' every once in a while. [Laughter] Was there a conversation like that and, like, how did it go?

**Amanda Zamora:** We do have a real person behind the main branded account, and there aren't lol's, but there's definitely.... And actually, people are quick to tell us if they think that our voice is veering off a little bit and is getting off brand. They'll complain. So, I've given Katy and T.J. sort of the framing for that voice is really to help be a news navigator for our audience and to help plug them into the most interesting conversational and news-worthy content that we have at any given moment, and treating, sort of, Twitter and Facebook as sort of alternative front pages for that audience. So, it's not lol's voice, but it's, we're trying to make it something well above and beyond just headlines.

**Jennifer Preston:** Yeah, no, I think that's a great question. And anybody who follows the @NYTimes account, and if you're up at seven o'clock in the morning, on our radar is @NYTJim, who is our Assistant Managing Editor, Jim Roberts. And in addition to the main accounts, what we've done at *The Times*, and this is something that I would urge all of these organizations to do, is when I took on the role of social media, I said, "Look, I do not want to be the Twitter cop, you know? Let's encourage innovation. Yes, we have

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guidelines at *The New York Times*, but let's just encourage our journalists to get out there." So, we have done that. And so in addition to our many branded accounts, we also [have] like @NYTimesDining, [where] you can also get @SamSifton, who is our dining critic, you know, giving you regular updates every day. So, what we try to do at *The Times* is to provide that mix of the branded accounts, where, you know what? There's some people, they don't want the personality. They want the links. They really want the links now. And then you also get the personal touch personality.

**Scott Thomas:** Thanks.

**Jim Brady:** Amanda, you want to grab one from...?

**Amanda Zamora:** Sure. There's one from.... Hang on. It's one of the first ones that we got. So, from David Clinch at Storyful wanted to know how we identify communities that emerge around stories and events in real time. Jim, you talked about that a little bit. Do you...?

**Jim Brady:** Yeah, yeah, and I do think that's an important thing to remember is, you can build all these communities on Twitter that are local politicians and people who are known in the public eye, but these stories can break that suddenly for us to an awful lot of people who are not public into the eye or a subject that hasn't been discussed before. You've got to be able to move pretty quickly to be able to identify that in the end. The example I was using at lunch was, if anybody saw Andy Carvin's thing yesterday about how this—I'm not even sure where—a missile that landed somewhere in Libya. That there was a picture of them holding up the missile and there was, I think, a cut line that said, "There's a Star of David on this missile. This is an Israeli missile." And over the course of a week, a couple of days, I think, or maybe even longer than that, people looked at the picture and were able to determine what kind of missile it was, where it came from. It wasn't Israeli. And it was this sort of crowdsourcing effort of some people who know small arms sort of know about missiles. Some people who knew about -- just had a fair amount of knowledge about military or, I'm sorry, military weapons, and they just managed to break this entire thing down over the course of a week. That was sort of a fascinating way of taking in experts on a topic that you weren't expecting to have to cover. So, I thought that was...anyway, it's on Andy's Storify feed, if you want to find it.

**Jennifer Preston:** Yeah, two tools that are very powerful and useful is Storify, which is fabulous. Who was it who put together the Storify yesterday?

**Jim Brady:** Burt Herman.

**Jennifer Preston:** Thank you.



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**Jim Brady:** Oh, yesterday.

**Jennifer Preston:** That was really terrific. And Storyful which has been a very powerful tool for us at *The New York Times* and many newsrooms, because.... And it's David actually who is curating -- helping curate the conversation.

**Amanda Zamora:** And one other resource I would throw out there, which you guys already heard about this week or yesterday, is Zulia. They do a great job of compiling lists of influential sort of tweeting around a certain topic. And those lists tend to include mainstream news organizations, but also in the case of the Middle East, journalists that might not have been on your radar and, you know, blogospheres, so that's another great place to kind of go and jumpstart topical lists around the time of these events.

**Jennifer Preston:** Yeah, and obviously [Search.Twitter.com](http://Search.Twitter.com). With Fort Hood, I had no idea who.... I had no idea what the name of the local newspaper was. So, using Google and [Twitter.Search.com](http://Twitter.Search.com) you can get a lot of information. And obviously, the most important thing for anyone to do in putting together a Twitter list, when using Twitter as a news source, is to look at the stream. Just go into that person's stream, and you can tell pretty quickly a lot about someone's judgment and about whether they will bring value to your report and to your real-time updates.

**Walid Al-Saqaf:** Walid Al-Saqaf from Örebro University in Sweden; though, I originally come from Yemen further away. And that's where I'd like to present the international perspective of this international event. I can see, I mean, on the skeptical side, this is a bit of a U.S. centric. I mean, I'd say a stream of ideas. How do you presume there could be an impact on the international arena? For example, I must applaud at this stage [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com), because I wasn't expecting to find stories on Yemen today on [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com), which is quite interesting. Though, of course, the contributor was based in the U.S., and that bring a bit of a slanted image; although, I respect her a lot. She's a friend of mine, Jane Novak, the contributor. The idea is that....

**Mitch Gelman:** We'd love to have you as a Yemen examiner on [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com). Please apply.

**Walid Al-Saqaf:** Wow. That's an honor. Then, the issue is, how do you perceive or, let's say, plan for the, let's say, expansion of the service? This goes to the different projects that have a global perspective, to expand further away from the U.S. environment and perhaps across the Atlantic. We've heard the news of the demonstrations in Afghanistan. Two events happening here in the U.S. So, we've talked about this before. We had discussions about the need to bring a more international awareness to local communities of what is happening across the world. So, how do you perceive the challenges or the ideas could be for such a path?

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**Mitch Gelman:** I'll defer to my colleague from Norway on the international perspective.

**Espen Egil Hansen:** Wow. [Laughter] Well, I think [it is] what clearly is happening now, that even being a national newspaper in Norway, we get so much more input. It's so much easier to reach us. And you living in Sweden is a good example. When the events in Egypt broke out, we had readers in Egypt correcting us, giving us input. We also had Arabic-speaking journalists being able to communicate through Twitter or other sources with people in Egypt before we are there. So, I think this is, from my perspective, we are committed to journalism. That's our main, main job. We use the social aspects to [raise] the quality to do journalism better. And if you see our coverage today, we are much more international oriented today than we were ten years ago. And I think it has something to do with this. We have more friends and more input. We cannot say anymore that, "Hey, we are only Norwegians." And that's why Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya has been our main focus now for six weeks.

**Jim Brady:** We only have three minutes left, so we're going to try a lightening round [for] the rest of the questions.

**Cecilia Alvear:** I'm Cecilia Alvear from UNITY and NAHJ. And I did send a picture to *The New York Times* and then I was checking to see if they ever printed it. But my question has to do with, how do you engage communities of color? Do you have people who understand those communities and reach out to them? I noticed that, for instance, in the case of the girl who was sent back to Guatemala, the four-year-old U.S. citizen, I read about it in *El Piñón* a whole week before the story was picked up by the mainstream media. Do you monitor ethnic media?

**Jennifer Preston:** Since I've been back to reporting, I've been covering what's been happening in North Africa, in the Middle East. And one of the tremendous sources that I found was [GlobalVoicesOnline](#). I don't know if everyone here is familiar with it, but it is a fantastic resource. And I encourage all of my colleagues to, you know, look for bloggers. Bloggers are fantastic. Bloggers in so many parts of the world is another word for an independent journalist—a fantastic, award-winning journalist who can't have that title because he or she has decided not to work, you know, in a censored environment. And that's, you know, when I look at like Wael Abbas and just like the amazing bloggers in Egypt, you know, they're bloggers, but they are fantastic journalists. So, I think that, again, these very powerful social tools, these platforms give us opportunities to find new voices, and it's our responsibility as journalists to amplify them.

**Jim Brady:** And I also would say if you look at....

**Cecilia Alvear:** In the United States as well?

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**Jennifer Preston:** Yes. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

**Jim Brady:** I would say if you look at the blog network that we built at TBD, the easiest thing to do, as opposed saying, "Let's find some journalists to go cover this particular community," find people who've been embedded in it for three years blogging about that community. You're much better off working with them than you are trying to dump a reporter into an area they might not know that well, a community they don't quite yet understand because they just moved there. So, that was our attitude, which is find people who are already there, work with them, and....

**Amanda Zamora:** I have two quick responses, too, and one that bridges the question before yours and yours. I think we should be looking at translation technology more probably to try to be able to plug into other communities and surface that information....

**Cecilia Alvear:** I wouldn't trust the translation technology. I have some stories about it. [Laughs]

**Amanda Zamora:** Okay. But then the second thing I would say, *The Washington Post* is doing this quarterly project to try to engage the African-American community a little more proactively. The last one they had was they had coverage and some polling on the issue of sort of the economy and how African-Americans were faring in the downturned economy. And there was a town hall event and 400 people came, signed up, were really enthusiastic, and there was an obvious desire there for the conversation to continue. And our charge, and we haven't done it yet, and one of the reasons that we haven't is because in addition to tapping into the folks who are already blogging or in that community, is having someone who's really on our end of it willing to guide and kind of cultivate that conversation apart from just a once a month [event], like, to be able to sustain that conversation in a meaningful way. And if we can't do that, we need to figure out why we can't and how we can, as opposed to just start something for the sake of starting something. So, we're working on it.

**Jim Brady:** Last one. One more.

**Woman:** Okay. Sure. I'm putting together a story on just the ways that news is now being, you know, given to the consumer. And so, just as industry professionals, how do you all get your news? Are you getting it linking from Twitter feeds or how do you get your news?

**Jim Brady:** I can go down a list if you want. I have a short list of news sites I go to every day, but I frankly get a lot of it from Twitter now just by setting up feeds and a lot of news alerts, Twitter, and like I said, about a handful of sites, but I don't get a newspaper anymore. I haven't watched a network

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newscast or a local newscast in quite some time. I can't see why I would, to be honest.

**Espen Egil Hansen:** Same for me. It's a combination. I use Twitter, but I also use a lot of news sites. I also really read newspapers actually. [Laughs]

**Mitch Gelman:** Everything I get comes from [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com) and [VG.no](http://VG.no).

[Laughter.]

**Jennifer Preston:** Awesome. I get a lot of....

**Mitch Gelman:** Occasionally complemented by *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. [Laughter]

**Jennifer Preston:** Thank you, Mitch. I use Twitter all the time. Although, I also use this other really cool *New York Times* app, and it comes to your house every single day in this new bag [laughter] 365 days a year. And I find that even though I'm using the website, I'm using Twitter, I'll miss something. I'll miss like a beautiful tale or a beautifully told important story by not also reading the paper. She's set.

**Amanda Zamora:** Twitter, for the most part, for me. And [Paper.li](http://Paper.li), if you haven't heard of it, is a great site.

**Jennifer Preston:** Yeah, great.

**Amanda Zamora:** -- I think we've seen for kind of turning that into sort of a magazine style display. There are sites...I mean, there are accounts that are dedicated to sort of surfacing the long reads, actually @longreads is one of them, in case you missed them. So, primarily Twitter, but then I think I have like a set of bookmark links called My Sunday Read, and that's like *The New Yorker* and just other sort of sites where I'm going to do a little bit more deep dive.

**Jim Brady:** All right. I feel Rosental behind me, so...[laughter]...this must be....

**Rosental Calmon Alves:** Okay. A great applause for this wonderful panel.

[Applause.]

**Rosental Calmon Alves:** [Thank you] very much to all of you. I don't know exactly how many tweets, but I think we passed easily 5,000, and this was a grand finale. This was a great panel. I think this afternoon was really strong also, so we kept that same thing. So, see you next year. And for those of you who speak Spanish and are going to come tomorrow, we're going to have a

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post ISOJ meeting in Spanish to talk about digital journalism in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. Thank you. Bye.

[Applause.]