From Student Journalists to Local News Entrepreneurs:
A Case Study of *Technically Media*

Abstract: This case study of *Technically Media*, a media consultancy and publisher of the local technology blog *TechnicallyPhilly.com*, seeks to gain a systemic understanding of key entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and behaviors demonstrated at an online news startup and to investigate how one particular group of young journalists developed those core competencies in their educational and work experiences. It also offers suggestions for how entrepreneurial values and practices might be incorporated into a journalism curriculum. It suggests that entrepreneurship is increasingly required for a career in the news industry and that journalism programs should establish more project-based opportunities for turning student-built projects into viable businesses.

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From Student Journalists to Local News Entrepreneurs:
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In 2009, Christopher Wink, Sean Blanda, and Brian James Kirk – three aspiring journalists in their early 20s – faced a humbling reality: their undergraduate degrees, internships, awards, and news clips were not enough to land a full-time journalism job, at least not the kind of job they wanted. So the three Temple University graduates cobbled together $250 to purchase a few website domain names and a small-business license and launched their own online news venture. "It was shear desperation and fear," said Wink. "All three of us saw ourselves as more above average journalists, more than above average writers, [and] above average in everything we did. For us not to have people on their knees begging for us caused a lot of humility. We felt like we had to do something."

Today, Wink, Blanda, and Kirk run a company that has been described as "a prototype plucked from an entrepreneurial journalism textbook" (Slocum, 2009). They publish the blog *TechnicallyPhilly.com* and cover technology-related businesses, issues, and policy in the Philadelphia region. They organize Philly Tech Week, an annual event that draws more than 4,000 participants and generates enough revenue from sponsorships to fund the online publication. They have secured philanthropic grants to report on digital divide issues and to create web-based and mobile applications using city government data. They also provide media consulting to other nonprofit and news organizations seeking to build online content and web audiences.

Technically Media is still a small business, generating approximately $250,000 in revenue annually, but it is profitable enough to employ the three co-founders and an additional reporter. And unlike many local news startups that have launched in recent years, it has a sustainable business model that does not rely on outside investment or large foundation grants. "We are not sexy to the journalism community," said Blanda. "But we are one of the few profitable small news sites."

This paper is an in-depth case study of *Technically Media*, a media consultancy and publisher of *TechnicallyPhilly.com*. The purpose is to gain a systemic understanding of key entrepreneurial skills,

knowledge, and behaviors required at an online news startup and to investigate how one particular group of young journalists developed those core competencies in their educational and work experiences. The research also seeks insight into how entrepreneurial values and practices might be incorporated into a journalism curriculum.

While it is a limited study of a single organization with small staff and budget, it has relevance for wider discussions of entrepreneurial journalism and education. *Technically Media* plays a significant role in the Philadelphia news ecosystem, serving as a connector to dozens of local and niche online publications. Because the co-founders launched the business with minimal professional experience, this research provides a unique assessment of their university journalism education and training. By placing the experiences of *Technically Media* in a framework of entrepreneurial learning outcomes, the case study offers practical suggestions that can be incorporated into a journalism curriculum.

Literature Review

The study builds on previous research on entrepreneurial journalism education and online news startups. An overview of *Technically Media* and *Technically Philly* provides history and context.

Entrepreneurial Journalism Education

Entrepreneurship has been defined as the ability to apply a set of behaviors, attitudes, and skills to a successful business venture (Herrmann, 2010). Lazear (2003) argues that an entrepreneur must be competent in a wide range of skills, rather than a specialist. Research also suggests that the motivation for launching a company is not merely financial, but also emotional (Wadhwa, Aggarwal, Holly, & Salkever, 2009). Gibb (2005) proposes an educational framework of entrepreneurial learning outcomes that identifies 12 key entrepreneurial capacities: opportunity seeking, initiative taking, ownership of a development, commitment to see things through, personal locus of control, intuitive decision making with limited information, networking capacity, strategic thinking, negotiation capacity, selling/persuasive capacity, achievement orientation, and incremental risk taking.

Increasingly, entrepreneurship is a stated goal of journalism education. Courses and advanced degrees in entrepreneurial journalism are offered at a many universities (Benkoil, 2010; Chung, 2011; Jarvis, 2010; Paley Center for Media, 2010). Workshops, textbooks, and instructional resources aim to provide business skills and training to journalism students and mid-career professionals (Briggs, 2012; Buttry, 2010; Entrepreneurial Journalism Education, 2010; Gillmor, 2010; McLellan, 2009). There is a growing body of research on the challenges and benefits of not only preparing journalism students to gain employment in the news industry, but to pioneer new products and business models (Baines & Kennedy, 2010; De Burgh, 2003; Deuze, 2006). Hunter and Nel (2011) argue that entrepreneurial journalism education involves more than merely adding business courses to journalism curriculum: it requires opportunities for students to practice the attributes associated with entrepreneurship in a news publication setting.

Online News Startups

It is impossible to accurately assess the number of independent online news ventures launched in the United States in recent years. The increasing breakdown of the boundaries between news producers and the audience and the use of traditional press tools by citizens to gather and distribute information has helped local online news outlets proliferate (Allan & Thorsen, 2009; Outing, 2005; Rosen, 2008). J-Lab has created a database of more than 1,200 local news startups in the U.S. (Schaffer, 2011a). The *Columbia Journalism Review* has profiled more than 250 new online news websites (Stivers, 2012). In her research, McLellan (2010a) surveyed 800 web publications and identified a list of "promising online local news sites" that demonstrate journalistic content, practices, engagement, frequency and a serious attempt at developing a sustainable business model (McLellan, 2010b). McLellan also divided these startups into subcategories for more precise classification, including "niche" websites that are characterized by a tight focus on a specific topic. Niche news sites can also be geographically specific to a region, city, community, or neighborhood. *Technically Philly* defines itself as both a "niche" and a "local"

online news publication. In addition to *Technically Philly*, regional technology news sites have sprung up in Minnesota, Portland, Omaha, Des Moines, and Kansas City (Engle, 2012).

Technically Media and *Technically Philly*

Sean Blanda, Brian James Kirk, and Christopher Wink founded *Technically Media* in February 2009. The company describes itself as a media consultancy that provides content and editorial strategies for businesses, news organizations, and nonprofit organizations; the slogan boasts: "we build audiences" (Technically Media, 2012). *Technically Media* is the parent company of *TechnicallyPhilly.com,* a regional technology blog for the Philadelphia metropolitan area. *Technically Philly* provides news on local and regional startup businesses, venture capital, social media, web design and development, digital access, science and math education, and technology-related government policy (Technically Philly, 2012). *Technically Philly* publishes 5 days a week and attracts approximately 25,000 unique visitors a month. A 2011 readers survey identified *Technically Philly's* target audience as affluent young people who work in the technology, science, and media industries; approximately 70% of readers are in their 20s or 30s and 63% earn $50,000 or more annually. Nearly half of readers said they visit *Technically Philly* at least once a day (Technically Media, 2012b).

As a consultancy, *Technically Media* assists clients in creating editorial content for websites, blogs, and social media. Consulting clients include the National Constitution Center, a museum located on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, *PlanPhilly.com,* a nonprofit news website that covers issues of land use and zoning, *CampusPhilly.org*, an organization that provides information and services to college students, and *PhiladelphaSportsDaily.com,* a local sports blog (Technically Media, 2012).

Technically Media hosts multiple events related to technology, media, and news, which helps create its unique role in the Philadelphia news ecosystem (Anderson, 2012). Philly Tech Week, the company's signature event, draws more than 4,000 participants to 65 events (Armstrong, 2011). Since 2009, the company has also hosted BarCamp News Innovation, an annual 1-day "unconference" on online journalism that follows a format of participatory, user-generated workshops. Lail (2010) described the

attendees of BarCamp News Innovation as an eclectic group of "news and technology geeks, seasoned traditional journalists trying to refashion careers, software developers with visions of the future, mainstream journalists looking outside their box, [and] enthusiastic journalism students full of hope and ambition and others just eager to carve a space in the media landscape."

Technically Media has received grant support to cover digital divide issues and to advocate for public access and applications for government and non-city data. In 2011, *Technically Media* received $82,500 from the William Penn Foundation to cover the "open data movement" in Philadelphia. Grants from J-Lab have funded coverage of the city's plan to expand broadband to underserved neighborhoods, a database of abandoned property in Philadelphia, and the creation of mobile application for locating Wi-Fi hotspots in the city (Schaffer, 2011b).

In 2011, *Technically Media* generated approximately $250,000 in revenue; about 51% of the revenue comes from consulting, 35% from philanthropic grants, 12% from events, and 2% from advertising. Future plans for the company include expanding its regional technology blog into other markets. In the summer of 2012, the organization plans to launch a new publication, *Technically Baltimore,* to test if the model can be replicated in another location. *Technically Philly* is also exploring a paid membership program that would provide members with discounted events and access to a database of local investors.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to gain insight into how entrepreneurship is developed in the context of a local, niche online news venture and how those practices might inform a journalism curriculum.

RQ1: What domain-specific skills and knowledge has the staff of *Technically Media* developed in the launch and operation of the online news venture?

RQ2: How has the staff of *Technically Media* acquired the skills and knowledge required for the launch and operation of the online news venture?

RQ3: How have key entrepreneurial capacities shaped the business model and strategies of *Technically Media*?

RQ4: What are the recommendations for integrating the skills, knowledge, and experience of *Technically Media* into a journalism curriculum?

Method

This research project is a case study of *Technically Media*. Yin (2009) defines case study research as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (p. 18). This method can be particularly useful in understanding a particular organization and how decisions are made within an organization (Berg, 2007). This study focuses on a singular organization as the unit of analysis to gain insight into entrepreneurial journalism. It relies on multiple qualitative data sources, including direct observations, interviews, and internal and public documents. The three co-founders of *Technically Media* provided the researcher with access. The researcher conducted direct observations during the week of June 13-18, 2011, and attended staff meetings, a public presentation, work sessions, and meetings with consulting clients and grant officers to understand the daily operation of the company. The researcher conducted a total of 8.5 hours of interviews with the three co-founders. All interviews were conducted at the offices of *Technically Media* at 1515 Market Street in Philadelphia. The questions were semi-standardized, which allowed for exploration of issues that emerged in the discussion (Wengraf, 2001). All interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder with the permission of the respondent and transcribed verbatim. The content of the interviews were analyzed following the five stages outlined by McCracken (1988). In addition, the co-founders provided the initial *Technically Media* business plan, a series of public presentations, internal memos, timesheets, and financial information. Data from all of the sources were coded and analyzed using key themes that emerged from the research study, as outlined by Lindlof and Taylor (2002).

Results

RQ1: Skills and Knowledge

The staff members of *Technically Media* report working between 50 and 70 hours a week. Staff members work from a variety of locations, including telecommuting from home, reporting in the field, working in the office, and attending events in the evenings. While the company produces a 5-day a week online publication, the staff spends a significant portion of the workweek on business operations, dividing time between the publication, consulting, grants, and events.

Many of the journalism-specific skills employed by the staff are similar to those of a traditional newspaper reporter. To create news content for *Technically Philly*, the researcher observed skills such as news judgment, working under tight deadlines, interviewing, developing sources, writing, fact checking, proofreading, and attention to accuracy. In addition, attention to search engine optimization principles and web analytics, use of an open source content management system, website development, and social media strategies are essential to operating the independent online publication. While multimedia skills like shooting photos and video and producing information graphics are a routine aspect of the job, the staff emphasizes functionality over high production value. The staff of *Technically Media* also engaged in discussions of ethics, policies for message boards, and the challenge of avoiding conflict of interest with companies who are advertisers or event sponsors, but are also the subject of news coverage.

Business skills observed include those often associated with the publishing side of the news industry, including contacting advertisers, meeting with potential consulting clients, budgeting, and strategic planning. In addition, staff members were involved in various aspects of grant-funded work, including producing reports for funders and managing project budgets. Staff planned for future events, including discussions of sponsorships and promotion. In their work as consultants, *Technically Media* staff operates as project managers, facilitating group sessions with client staff and coordinating tasks with outside web development firms. Finally, the routine tasks associated with running a small business – monitoring cash flow, taxes, paying vendors, and payroll – were also observed.

RQ2: Acquiring Skills and Knowledge

In interviews, *Technically Media* co-founders emphasized that the skills and knowledge required to operate the company are not particularly specialized or unique. Staff members attribute the success of the venture to the implementation of widely shared ideas. Staff members expressed this in the following ways:

> "I'm a firm believer that ideas are cheap, but execution is costly. In the news ecosystem, let's be honest, there are the same five ideas being tossed around. And the people who ballyhoo their ideas as being beyond pale are idiots. The hard part is execution" (Wink, 2012).

> "It was a necessity. We didn't have a job. This had to make money or it was not worth our time. It's like if you kick someone off in a jungle to fend for themselves and you came back in a week and said, 'How did you learn to hunt?' It's because I'm hungry. I had to figure this out" (Blanda, 2012).

> "There is no shortage of people who are smarter than we are, more accomplished than we are, better resources, better instincts, but just don't do it. Take everything way from us, but we do things. And that is what I'm most proud of" (Wink, 2012).

In addition, the staff of *Technically Media* identified several key educational experiences and work-related strategies for acquiring and developing the knowledge and skills required to launch and operate an online news venture.

Student publication, internships, and entry-level jobs. When asked about their undergraduate education, staff referenced *The Temple News,* a twice-weekly student-run university newspaper at Temple University, as one of the most valuable undergraduate journalism experiences. Blanda, Kirk, and James all worked on the newspaper and its website, and it was at the newspaper that they formed the relationships that would lead to *Technically Media*. Wink (2012) stated:

> "The great success of my college career was relationships. I met a lot of smart professors and other students that I still deal with. I saw college as a way to get to a place. I wanted to be in a big East Coast city. Temple gave that to me. I wanted to meet a lot of smart people that I can work with. Temple gave that to me."

In addition to course work and student publications, the co-founders collectively performed internships at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Philadelphia Daily News*, *Philadelphia Business Journal*,

Metro, *Philadelphia Magazine*, *Pennsylvania Legislative Correspondents' Association*, and

Philebrity.com. Blanda (2012) said:

> "The reason I liked Temple and the reason I think historically it's a good journalism school is that they would just throw you out to internships to the *Daily News* and the *Inquirer* and you would learn how it all worked. You'd learn."

> For much of the 3 years it took to build *Technically Media* to sustainable business, the co-

founders also freelanced or worked second jobs. Blanda covered the media industry for *Vital Business*

Media. Kirk and Wink freelanced for local weeklies, magazines, and blogs. Wink (2012) also worked as

the director of social media and marketing for the nonprofit organization that works with homeless

individuals, where he helped develop a content strategy and a blogging platform for the organization:

> "In effect I was doing public relations, but I wanted no part of it. I was a journalist. I was covering homelessness. I would do these homelessness news roundups, and I would curate these national conversation on homelessness because no one else was doing it and seeing similarities in different national conversations."

More than the traditional university course work, staff members said, practical, hands-on educational and

job-related experiences provided the experience and relationships to launch their own business.

Reporting as a pathway to business knowledge. Staff members of *Technically Media* also

emphasized that they use their skills as journalists to identify the business knowledge they lack. They

stated:

> "Journalism prepares you for many things. You are not afraid to talk to random people. You learn how to organize your thoughts on the fly. Even the concept of a lead is really important in selling – what is the thing I need to know? It's funny that in learning about how the business world works, we see how journalism helps you do that" (Blanda, 2012).

> "Our approach has been that we don't know the information, and we are going to find out that information. It is so boring, but every business decision we have ever made, all we did was use the same process that we use when we report on technology. Who are the smart people we need to talk to? Where are the credible online resources? Everything you teach in Journalism 101 is what we did" (Wink, 2012).

Creating forums for discussion and education. When staff of *Technically Media* cannot find

the information or expertise they need, they create forums and platforms to facilitate the transfer and

sharing of knowledge. For example, the first BarCamp News Innovation event organized in 2009 was

created in part so that *Technically Media* could meet others who were launching similar online journalism

ventures and struggling with the same challenges. Kirk (2012) stated:

> "We wanted to learn from others, but there wasn't any infrastructure for these conversations. So
> in a way we had to create it. With BarCamp, none of us wanted to travel to the middle of the
> country and none of us could afford it…. The conversations are so new in the industry that there
> was nowhere we could go to seek advice about what we were doing. So we had to look broader
> than just Philadelphia. There are a few other organizations like us. But it was hard to get a
> conversation going about what we needed to do to survive. I think we have a lot of great contacts
> and a lot of great mentors throughout the news industry in Philadelphia too, but they are not doing
> the consulting piece. They are not small organizations. So it was really hard to find lessons from
> others. So naturally, it was like if no one is going to talk about it then we'll talk about it."

And in the same spirit, often when the *Technically Media* staff learns something new or has an

insight into the business of online news, they share it with others at an event or on their personal blogs.

Wink (2012) stated:

> "Every time we learn something we write a blog post about it. For us, that is because that
> information didn't exist. So 3 years from now when someone is looking for it, they'll have it."

RQ3: Entrepreneurial Behaviors, Attitudes, and Skills

In observations, interviews, and documents, the researcher observed evidence of all 12 of the

entrepreneurial behaviors, attitudes, and skills outlined by Gibb (2005). However, several key

developments in the launch and development of *Technically Media* emerged as the most critical,

including initiative and opportunity seeking in the initial launch of the site, intuitive decision making in

seeking out alternative revenue sources, selling/persuasive capacity in establishing a media consultancy,

networking capacity in the use of events, and incremental risk taking in the strategic plans to move the

technology blog into other markets.

Initial launch. The idea for *Technically Media* and *Technically Philly* originated from several

sources. The co-founders had a general interest in technology journalism. As students, they were writing

about it and building websites in various capacities. They recognized that there might be an audience for

online news publication covering local technology issues after observing the popularity of events like

Ignite Philly, a gathering of young professionals who make 5-minute pitches for how to improve the city.

After a few brief conversations, they launched *Technically Philly* and drew up a rough business plan.

They emphasized the importance of setting the publication up quickly and then adapting to the response.

Wink (2012) said:

> "We didn't talk much about what the content would be. We said let's just do it and let it grow. February 9, 2009, tossed up a blog platform that Sean set up. Sean bought the domain name I believe. And let's just do it. Let's not take 18 months studying it, let's just do it, and see what was going to happen. And our thought was maybe we'd get a month or two in and just say there is nothing here. But that clearly wasn't the case…. In April 2009, after a month or so, we said, 'Let's talk about it.' We looked at it. And that business plan has a lot of things that we are doing now. The timeline was silly, but in the structure of a lot of it was there. In early 2009, it was every idea that was on the table and [let's] throw out things that don't work for us."

Facing the limits of traditional revenue generating ideas. In 2010, *Technically Media* faced

the challenge that plagues many online journalism ventures: advertising revenue is not sufficient to

support the news operation. This reality forced the company to more aggressively seek out new revenue

streams, including event sponsorships. Wink (2012) said:

> "We had really struggled with moving on the finances of *Technically Philly*. That was the hurdle. We kept coming up against our shortcomings in ad sales, in marketing, in business planning, in accounting. But we were doing well editorially. We were starting to connect with people and going to events. And we are good at that."

These events also led to more conversations with other local and niche news startups where

Technically Media staff worked alongside the founders of other websites who were struggling with

similar challenges. One possible solution, the staff thought, was to create a business services hub that

could reduce overhead costs for multiple websites. The staff turned the idea into a Knight News

Challenge proposal called "News Inkubator" and submitted it to the competition that funds innovative

news projects. The proposal did not receive grant funding, but it eventually led to *Technically Media*'s

consulting business. Staff members stated:

> "Putting our ideas out there in such a broad way made us the touch point for a lot of conversations…. I think those Knight Challenges are good thought experiments. Because every once in a while you should sit back and say, 'If I had unlimited resources what would I do?' It helps to find your mission. It has helped us do that" (Blanda, 2012).

> "In those conversations, in a lot of brainstorming sessions, we talked about that we could offer support for nonprofits or others. That was the seed: that there are other people who could benefit from these services" (Wink, 2012).

It also became clear to the founders that it was unlikely that *Technically Media* would receive significant outside investment or large funding grants. Staff said:

> "Talking to venture capitalists for *Technically Philly*, I ask them what would it take to invest in media companies. They say, obviously it needs to scale and the only way it can scale is you are doing page view grabs like *Huffington Post*…. Or do what *SBnation.com* and *Bleacher Report* are doing, which is user-generated content, and then you sell against it by paying ridiculously low amounts of money [to bloggers]. And those are the only two ways that mass media has proven to scale online as far as I can tell. So investors aren't going to invest in anything that is less than that. And those models are terrible for journalism, I think" (Blanda, 2012).

> "Everything that we do we pitch to someone with money and they say 'no.' And then we end up having to tough it out and do it ourselves" (Kirk, 2012).

Selling journalistic values as a product. In 2010, *Technically Media* took their basic ideas about building online publications – growing audiences by offering quality information and content and developing strategies for how to convert web visitors to financial backers – to other nonprofits and businesses. Staff described the idea in these terms:

> "No matter whether you are a nonprofit or a small news site, the idea is the same. You gather these people to consume what you are writing and then you want them to do something. Traditionally, that was backwards, you subscribed, and then you read. Online, you read and then you have to subscribe or donate or purchase something or whatever. Content at the end of the day is marketing for something. It makes the content better if it is of journalistic value" (Blanda, 2012).

Technically Media landed several contracts, including one with the National Constitution Center. They built a blog platform for the museum where legal scholars, historians, and museum staff write about timely constitutional issues and current events. *Technically Media*'s goal is to instill some of the values of a news publication into a museum culture to help it extend its programming to a digital platform. In turn, the museum hopes to widen its reach, attract visitors to exhibits, and ultimately educate more people about constitutional issues. *Technically Media* had to sell the museum on the idea that it should view its online content the same way a journalist does. Kirk (2012) said:

> "I mean the National Constitution Center is a great example. They have tracked over time how much less mainstream news there is about constitutional issues. They are a non-profit, non-partisan institution… so why can't NCC be seen as a journalism publication or be seen as that? It helps their mission. It helps cover that uncovered area of constitutional issues. So I think that is what is innovative. We see being able to provide news goes beyond a news bureau."

Building an event funded online news publication. The revenue from the consulting side of the company allowed the staff to invest more time and resources into *Technically Philly*, and in particular into the larger, weeklong series of events called Philly Tech Week. By its second year, event sponsorships for Philly Tech Week and some moderate grant funding generated enough revenue to pay for the staffing of the blog and the hiring an additional reporter:

> "We took the money we made in consulting and invested our time in bringing *Technically Philly* to a place where it is sustainable. With events, some modest advertising, and grant funding for journalism projects, we make money" (Wink, 2012).

Expanding into other markets. After more than 3 years in business, the co-founders of *Technically Media* say that the company has hit a plateau and must take additional risks to continue to grow. The next test of their business model is to replicate the local technology blog and brand in other markets. In the summer of 2012, the company will expand to Baltimore. Staff said:

> "In 2011, the struggle was achieving stability. And we struggled to know what the next step was. It was either going to be a lifestyle business, where we were consulting and have a handful of clients. Or we had to be really risky and put ourselves out there go more national" (Kirk, 2012).

> "Baltimore will be a test of our model. Is it us? Is it the market? Is it the location? Is it the timing? Is it the writing? We think Baltimore is Philly 3 years ago. We will open shop and see what happens" (Blanda, 2012)

RQ4: Journalism Curriculum/Education

When asked for recommendations for integrating their experience at *Technically Media* into a journalism curriculum, the staff said that in their experience journalism education should focus less on skill-based training for employment in the news industry and create more opportunities for students to build online publications and journalism tools as part of their educational experience. Staff members said:

> "There are tons of people in my generation and slightly younger who are bitter that they followed the right path and the jobs are not available. We need to teach students to recognize when the old way doesn't work and to shift accordingly….We are not teaching students to be flexible in new ways. We are still turning out newspaper reporters. And that's a problem" (Blanda, 2012).

> "I think the multimedia knowledge set and everything that we are using and talking about – Twitter, Facebook, Storify, Adobe Flash – all these tools are just tools. These are things that help

you create or position content, but [in journalism school] you don't need to learn Adobe Flash, you need to learn to how to acquire new skills all the time" (Kirk, 2012).

"From a trade-school perspective, journalism is a hard sell. But if you infuse entrepreneurial teaching into a journalism program, it has the potential to be enlightening. Then I know how media works, how communication works, how business works, how advertising works, and how messaging works" (Blanda, 2012).

All of the staff members said that student journalists should be testing their products in the market place and exploring revenue streams beyond advertising. Staff members said:

"I launched a business out of that [Temple entrepreneurial journalism] class. It didn't go anywhere. And it wasn't *Technically Philly*. But I walked out of there with a media kit that I was selling to people. It was a failure, but that was so valuable. It made me think about things differently. Or it forced me to action. I wouldn't have thought I could produce something in 3 months. That was huge for me" (Kirk, 2012).

"I would want more testing. Everything should be tested. Everything should be a student having an idea and testing it… The most successful computer science students and programmers build their own products and business while they are in school. They are constantly testing things, learning things, and exposed to some of the best minds in the country. Why don't we do that in journalism?" (Blanda, 2012).

"I was scared to death to sell anything, and I can sell now. It's because you can learn it. It's a practice thing. You can't teach someone to be less risk reverse, but you can teach someone to sell something, to understand your marketplace, and to research the probability of success" (Kirk, 2012).

Staff also said that even if student publications and projects do not become viable businesses, demonstrating the ability to produce something independently has become increasingly important to gaining employment with traditional news organizations. Wink (2012) put it this way:

"If *Technically Philly* was to implode tomorrow, I could probably get a job covering business or technology. [Having] that line on your resume that shows you have built something close to what you want to do is part of your education. It may become a fundamental step. Newsrooms are saying 'before we waste our time or our business resources on you, you need to have already done something. Then maybe we'll find resources and bring you on after you've proven you can do it.'"

Conclusions

A case study of *Technically Media* offers multiple insights for news entrepreneurs and journalism educators. The basics of journalism – how to obtain information and communicate it in an effective manner – can be essential tools for acquiring new business knowledge. Many undergraduate and graduate

university journalism programs already have significant assets for the development of an entrepreneurial curriculum through student publications, internships, and project-based courses. Based on experiences of the founders and their company, the skill set of an entrepreneurial journalist goes beyond the reporting and writing skills required in a newsroom. Journalists seeking to build a successful venture will likely spend a bulk of their time on the financial aspects of their business. While some entrepreneurial journalism courses are designed for students to pitch original ideas for products to possible investors, the experience of *Technically Media* demonstrates that local online news publications may be less likely to receive outside funding, but can generate revenue through a diverse collection of revenue streams that match content and audiences. In an educational setting, adding opportunities for students to explore alternative revenue models can enhance the entrepreneurial aspects of a journalism education. Entrepreneurship is an increasingly valuable skill – and may become a requirement – for a career in a rapidly changing news industry. This case also affirms that students are capable of building practical and useful tools for the future of journalism and testing those in the marketplace.

Limitations and Future Research

This case study is limited to singular organization, a few staff members, and a relatively short time frame. A comparison of the business models of numerous regional technology blogs and future study of *Technically Media* as it seeks to expand to other markets and experiment with membership revenue models would provide further context to this study. Future research should include a wider survey of recent graduates of journalism programs who have launched their own business ventures. In particular, research that tracks the career paths of students who have graduated from university programs with a particular curricular emphasis or degree in entrepreneurial journalism would help assess the value of these programs in creating new ventures and business models for the news industry.

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