

New trends reshaping the digital news business

By [Pierre Cassuto](#)

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Today's most successful digital publishers are those that build their businesses around their readers first, which in turn helps them to build quality audiences that they can sell to their advertisers.

The days of cynically chasing hits are over. Today, it's all about building engagement and relationships with readers that last. Here are three trends leading us in this direction.



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Truly responsive by design

Publishers have spoken about building responsive websites for years, but the approach has often been lazy and one-dimensional. They've often simply focused on the layout, reformatting the look of the website for mobile devices and traditional computers. But that's no longer enough in a world where people are looking for information to serve different needs as they roam between multiple devices in a single day.

Leading publishers today are embracing the complexity of serving audiences that use a wider range of devices with different screen sizes. They understand that reading habits and needs vary across different devices, meaning that the structure and nature of the content needs to be responsive too, and they are also planning for a future where wearable computers such as smartwatches and Google Glass are commonplace.

The New York Times' with its NYT Now App for the iPhone is one example. NYT Now doesn't simply reformat layout for a smaller screen, it repackages content for mobile reading behaviour. NYT Now's editors curate and summarise content to make it suitable for on-the-go reading; the app also features tight social integration.

The facts and history behind the news

Breaking news is a commodity. Once the first site has published a piece of news, everyone else will have the same headline and basic facts within 10 minutes. These days, the news will most often break on social media rather than on a mainstream news site, anyway. That means it's becoming more important to provide the context and host the conversation around the news than it is to be the first to break it.

That's why it's important to have a site structure that makes it easy for readers to research the context through links, as well as an environment that promotes conversation and commentary. Digital properties like The Huffington Post and Business Insider have become very good at framing the news with commentary and providing their readers with different facets of the debate. As recent news events like the Oscar Pistorius trial show, people want to talk about and debate the headlines - they want more than the dry facts.

Selling qualified audiences

In the past, digital publishers sold their audiences by thousands of impressions, as though they were selling sacks of potatoes by the kilogram.

This approach promoted fierce price competition for ad sales as well as click-baiting content, which has had a disastrous impact on the quality of digital content. But we are now seeing the focus shift towards selling an audience based on its quality rather than its size.

Quality publishers are now trying to get to know their customers and understand their needs, with the aim of building engagement. They don't just want an anonymous visitor who hits the site once or twice, they want a reader who they have a long-term relationship with. By building deeper relationships with their audiences and keeping them engrossed, publishers can build the exact profile of a reader that is also likely to engage their advertisers.

Rather than telling brands how many impressions and unique users they have, publishers will be able to talk about who these users are, what they're interested in and how they interact with the content on their properties.

We'll see a growing focus on demonstrating the value of the audience from publishers in future, paired with a focus on buying the right niche audiences from brands and agencies.

ABOUT PIERRE CASSUTO

Humanz is one of the world's fastest growing AI companies focused on empowering valuable creators and the marketers that work with them. Each day, Humanz analyzes hundreds of millions of social media profiles and content pieces as well as transaction data from online merchants, to generate better benchmarks and predictions for social commerce ROI, while also improving transparency, motivation and access for creators and marketers.

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