▶ video case

chapter 10 Online Content and Media

case 10.2 **Vox Media**

watch the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88Em_5A265U

summary In this video, James Bankoff, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of Vox Media, discusses Vox Media's approach to digital media. L: 6.29

watch the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQnhigbl4g4

summary In this video, learn more about Vox Media's news site, Vox.com. L.2:43

case The problem of developing engaging online content that serves the interests of readers, journalists, and advertisers alike has persisted since the explosion of the Web in the 1990s. Information may want to be free, but high quality journalism also wants to be compensated. Although modern media companies have learned valuable lessons about how to create high quality, profitable online content, the industry still has more to learn about how to create content better suited for the capabilities of the Web. One company, Vox Media, is hoping to develop answers to these problems and to other important challenges in online journalism.

Founded in 2003, Vox Media is a digital media company that manages a set of editorial brands focusing on major content categories like sports (SB Nation), technology (The Verge),

gaming (Polygon), and real estate (Curbed). Vox Media hopes to become a purely online version of media companies like Conde Nast, Time Inc., and Disney. Vox Media consists of over 300 sites, all of which are built on its proprietary Chorus digital publishing platform. For example, the SB Nation brand consists of hundreds of sites, most of which are focused on individual professional sports teams. Vox Media also launched a news and politics site under its flagship domain, Vox.com, in 2014.

Vox.com plans to use the persistence of the Web and freedom from the space restrictions of traditional print media to cover the news more effectively and engagingly. In traditional print media, there are space constraints for every article, and each inch of column space is precious. Space online is more abundant, and the editorial compromises required to get the most information possible into a fixed space are no longer necessary. Vox hopes to avoid oversimplifying a complicated topic or omitting any details except the most pertinent.

Not only that, but the Web makes it much easier to find older material or to search within archives. Most home pages emphasize only the newest developments. In print media, each day's news is forgotten, as staff and management continually focus on the next day's content. But on the Web, this doesn't need to happen. Topics can build organically, and journalists can focus on new developments instead of repeatedly explaining the same concepts each day. In this way, the Web is "persistent" in a way that print media is not; the previous day's content is still readily available, and the next day's content can build on it, enriching coverage and reducing journalists' workloads.

Sites like Wikipedia use the persistence of the Web to great effect, as articles continue to build over time, retaining information that is still relevant while updating information that has become outdated. But very few online news outlets take advantage of the persistence of the Web. Vox envisions this type of approach to covering the news. In the past, many of the most important topics in the news have been troublesome for media companies because they're distasteful, difficult to understand, and difficult to cover. If Vox reaches those lofty goals, it will likely be because of unique features like the card stack. Card stacks are modular topic resources that are updated to reflect the most recent developments in a particular area. For example, there are card stacks for Bitcoin, ISIS, and Obamacare, where each card discusses one specific element of the topic; for example, the Bitcoin card stack features cards such as "How do people get bitcoins?" and "Does Bitcoin have a security problem?" For complicated topics with a lot of jargon or subordinate topics that need to be frequently explained, card stacks are a perfect companion to relevant news articles. Highlighted text within these articles indicates when a card can better explain a phrase or a topic. Card stacks have some things in common with Wikipedia, including persistence and

contemporariness. However, card stacks are focused on explaining topics fully and clearly, whereas Wikipedia is more interested in defining topics. Card stacks are also edited by individual expert journalists working for Vox, not by other readers. A change log exists that shows how each card stack has been updated over time.

video case questions

1. How does James Bankoff, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of Vox, describe Vox Media?

2. What does Bankoff say Vox Media's approach is to digital media?

3. What does Bankoff think about the issue of trust and quality with respect to online content as it relates to Vox Media?

4. According to Bankoff, how does Vox Media intend to grow?

5. What is the difference between Vox Media and Vox (Vox.com)?

6. What does Matthew Yglesias say that he is hoping to achieve at Vox.com?