A resource for newsrooms:
Identifying and measuring audience engagement efforts

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Journalists have a lot to learn from other disciplines about tracking what works. We're not used to gauging our success in ways more sophisticated than ratings or circulation numbers, and we're behind the measurement curve. But these days, it's hard to value what you can't measure. And as newsrooms grapple with how to make room in tight budgets for audience engagement, it's natural that they'd also wonder what the return on that investment might be.

With these issues in mind, a group of journalists interested in audience engagement gathered in early May 2011 at the Reynolds Journalism Institute in Columbia, Mo., to talk specifically about measurement. Some of the participants were widely recognized experts. All were working to effect change in their traditional newsrooms or products. They came because they believe that as news organizations fight for survival, a more connected relationship with their communities should be valued, and therefore measured. They were joined by smart folks from other disciplines who shared their time to help guide the discussions and share their expertise.

Our multi-disciplinary group (participant bios are online at http://www.rjionline.org/events/engagement-metric-bios) focused our conversations around specific strategies for audience engagement, what their value is to the news organizations, and how the success of the efforts can be evaluated. We spent a full day creating a communal spreadsheet

of ideas. Presented here is an edited version of that document. It's not intended as a comprehensive guide to engagement, but instead as a sampling of practical ways to be strategic in our efforts.

Many of the participants have jobs that involve audience outreach and engagement, and they talked about their need to be able to show the concrete results of their work. They also felt the need to persuade their colleagues and their bosses to value engagement. Metrics are key. And by metrics, we don't just mean web analytics. The number of people who show up for a newsroom tour is a metric. The number of people who "Like" a Facebook page is a metric. The number of story ideas or new sources resulting from a community conversation is metric. Academic research also has a lot to teach us about measurement beyond counting. A content analysis, for example, can help us track the civility of conversations or the diversity of sources.

And if it's information we seek, don't overlook what newsrooms already know how to do: report. If we want to know if our work is making a difference in the community, what if we assigned reporters to find out, whether we publish it or not?

As you read this document, we encourage you to keep a particular question in mind: What do you wish you knew about your relationship with your community?

A FEW NOTES ABOUT THIS REPORT

1. This is not a guide to engagement possibilities. Many ideas we discussed didn't make the cut, and many more didn't find their way into the conversation. This is a list of strategies we discussed that we thought might be measurable.

2. There's no one-size-fits-all solution. What works in one organization might not work in another. Tactics, and therefore metrics, must be specific to your newsroom, and perhaps to individual projects.

3. What success looks like in engagement is continually evolving. Once you've figured out Twitter, the world will be on to something else. When you've made inroads with a specific group of people in your community, you'll be starting over with another. The industry is changing rapidly, as is our culture. Journalists need to learn to adapt more quickly, to be comfortable with shifting definitions of success and to invest in continued strategic planning.

4. Some of our measurement suggestions are easy to implement now. (Example: Use outbound links, not just incoming links, to track whether we're the first stop for someone online or the last). Others would take some sophisticated knowledge or software. (Example: What if our metadata had fields for things like story idea genesis, so we could track the benefits of listening to diverse voices?) Others are more like dreams than suggestions — things we wish we could measure but need help figuring out how. (Example: Making a network map of our newsroom's community connections and relationships.)

5. This is a working document. If you have ideas you'd like to see reflected, resources that should be shared or clarifications to make, please let us know. Email Joy Mayer at mayerj@missouri.edu.

This report presents some general suggestions for getting started and being strategic about engagement. Then it moves to the specific engagement ideas, broken into three broad categories. The categories were developed by Joy Mayer after dozens of interviews conducted during her fellowship at the Reynolds Journalism Institute over the 2010-11 academic year. Joy asked professionals about audience engagement — what it meant theoretically, and also practically. She then took the strategies and tips and grouped them using more specific terminology. There is undoubtedly crossover among the three broad categories, but our hope is that they can serve as a starting point for talking about the purpose of engagement. The pages that follow present a summary of what each category means along with concrete examples of what each might look like in action.

PLANNING FOR ENGAGEMENT

In moving forward with any engagement efforts, it might help to consider these suggestions:

• Develop a written strategy for the organization's efforts.

• Start every project with a measurable goal. In 12 months, six months, one week or one day, what would success look like?

• Consider whether your goals align with any other community organization's goals, and consider partnerships.

• Build capacity within the organization (hire people who know engagement, assign specific duties, train staff, etc.).

• If engagement is a priority, it should be valued in the newsroom. Consider including engagement strategies in the performance evaluation of individual journalists, and of departments. Consider hiring people (perhaps even non-journalists) with different expertise, such as analytics, marketing or research. Embed them in the newsroom, and hold them accountable for newsroom training and culture changes. Consider allocating staff time for audience interaction and understanding, and for thoughtful strategizing, as Google does with its 20 percent innovation time.

• Consider learning from disciplines like marketing, analytics, nonprofits, anthropology, social media, civic activism, etc. Whether you want to launch a community project, learn about your community, increase the community's investment in your work or change the perception of your brand, there are folks who know more about how to do it than you do.

• Identify specific communities in which to make inroads. Consider a long-term investment in a specific community (community of interest or geography or socio-economic level or education or any other unifying characteristic), with a goal of addressing that community's needs, or of transitioning individuals from non-participants to collaborators.

• Build community profiles of target communities, like the CIA World Factbook reports on different countries.

LEVEL 1: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Outreach includes efforts to share ourselves, our expertise and our content with our community. It involves: Taking the content to the audience, rather than hoping they'll find us. Identifying information needs, catering our products to meet them and distributing them in a way that makes sense. Being willing to participate in the community as individuals, building connections and personalizing our brand. Inviting the community to get to know our people and our processes. Enriching our community, sharing our own knowledge and supporting other community enrichment efforts.

STRATEGY	SOME SUGGESTED TACTICS	WHY WE VALUE THEM	HOW WE COULD MEASURE THEM
Be visible in the community	• Spend time being visible/available in the real-world community (coffee shop hours, co-working spaces, libraries, etc.) • Consider the relationship that the editor of a small-town weekly newspaper might have with his community, and imagine building those kinds of connections. • Create a street team specifically to be out in targeted/underrepresented parts of community introducing your organization and registering people for your site • Attend social events with no journalistic agenda but instead just to meet people and be present (Tweet-ups, topical events, community gatherings, etc.) • Show presence in online communities where people are engaging by commenting on discussion threads, adding to Twitter hashtag streams, etc. and thereby help connect people with information/resources the news organization knows about. • Reach out specifically to the people who your stories apply to. For example, find the Facebook pages of the people/groups your stories apply to, or find the listserve people use to discuss the issue. Don't just be on a platform, be THE place on the platform for your story.	• Build awareness and value of your brand • Make your organization more approachable • Make your organization more relevant to community • Increase audience/community loyalty • Improve trust/credibility, especially within niche communities • Lay a foundation for conversation and collaboration • Reduce risk that labor-intensive stories might be missed by key target audiences, or by the people who would most benefit from the content • Help reporters do their jobs more efficiently by increasing likelihood of callbacks from sources and making citizens more likely to go on record • Increase job satisfaction among reporters	• Overall web traffic numbers (specifically is percentage of traffic coming from sites other than search engines increasing?) • Number of stories generated from being out in the community (metatag on such stories to give credit to process of reader input as well as the journalist) • Number of new sources gained/quoted in stories (content analysis) • Breadth of range of sources in news stories (content analysis) • Number of contacts listed in newsroom database (e.g., Public Insight Network or other tracking tool) • Benchmark reporters' awareness of whom to call on specific issues (pre- and post-testing) • Are we getting more PR notices, invites from new communities/organizations, etc.? This indicates increased awareness and/or relevance (track incoming notices) • Are reporters getting called back by sources more frequently/quickly? Are reporters having easier time finding real people to go on record for stories? (ongoing newsroom tracking/survey) • Number of touchpoints, e.g., # of people stopping by coffee shop open hours over time; # of commenters on web site, etc. • Spread of content via referrals (track # of retweets; traffic from Facebook and blogs, number of people emailing links to stories, etc.) • Changes in participation and tone of chats (textual analysis of chat transcripts) • Can you measure truth and authenticity of a story to the people who are covered in the story? (survey) • How do you measure actual impact, for example did someone go to jail? change a policy? receive attention by the group-in-charge? community problem get fixed? (follow-up reporting after stories publish) • Has volume of conversation about an issue changed since the story appeared? (content analysis, pre- and post-publication online search analysis, survey research, follow-up research, track movement of stories through social networks like New York Times tool being developed) • Do stories sourced in the community outperform other stories? (compare web traffic, referral numbers) • Number of new advertisers (simple count, along with qualitative assessment from ad sales team about what they are hearing while on new sales calls) • Map issue network and centrality of publication to the issue

STRATEGY	SOME SUGGESTED TACTICS	WHY WE VALUE THEM	HOW WE COULD MEASURE THEM
Actively make contact with key stakeholders/ potential partners	• Meet with key connectors in the community(ies) to seek feedback on coverage and community needs, as well as spread the word that you are trying to reach out and be more inclusive • Ask specifically what about the news coverage is not meeting their specific needs, not including their points of view and/or not accurately representing their communities. • Get the word out to and/or meet with other content producers (bloggers, etc.) as well as other groups working to help community (nonprofits, public agencies, etc.) • Reach out to communities online and solicit their help in directing content to the people in their networks who might want/need it.	• Improve knowledge of audience needs so you can deliver more relevant materials • Gain insight/connection to community/issues/trends • Get more and better story ideas Build relationships/loyalty/stickiness with community influencers • Identify new sources of expertise • Expand range of voices present in your content/coverage • Become catalyst for community improvement • Build community investment in the success of your news organization • Help strengthen civic engagement in issues important to community by getting more people involved in the community dialogue • Get content out to new audiences/attract new customers (this may lead to attracting advertisers who want to reach these target communities)	• Overall web traffic numbers (specifically is percentage of traffic coming from sites other than search engines increasing?) • Number of stories generated from being out in the community (meta-tag on such stories to give credit to process of reader input as well as the individual journalist?) • Number of new sources gained/quoted in stories (content analysis) • Number of connections made (size of rolodex) • Breadth of range of sources in news stories (content analysis) • Number of contacts listed in newsroom database (e.g., Public Insight Network or other tracking tool) • Benchmark reporters' awareness of whom to call on specific issues (pre- and post-testing) • Are we getting more PR notices, invites from new communities/organizations, etc.? This indicates increased awareness and/or relevance (track incoming notices) • Are reporters getting called back by sources more frequently/quickly? Are reporters having easier time finding real people to go on record for stories? (ongoing newsroom tracking/survey) • Number of touchpoints, e.g., # of people stopping by coffee shop open hours over time; # of commenters on web site, etc. • Spread of content via referrals (track # of retweets; traffic from Facebook and blogs, number of people emailing links to stories, etc.) • Changes in participation and tone of chats over time (textual analysis of chat transcripts) • Can you measure truth and authenticity of a story to the people who are covered in the story? (survey) • How do you measure actual impact, for example did someone go to jail? change a policy? receive attention by the group-in-charge? community problem get fixed? (follow-up reporting after stories publish) • Has volume of conversation about an issue changed since the story appeared? (content analysis, pre- and post-publication online search analysis, survey research, follow-up research, track movement of stories through social networks like New York Times tool being developed) • Do stories sourced in the community outperform other stories? (compare web traffic, referral numbers) • Number of new advertisers (simple count, along with qualitative assessment from advertising sales team about what they are hearing while on new sales calls) • Map issue network and centrality of publication to the issue

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Invite people into the process/ workflow	• Solicit user feedback via story commenting, chat rooms, submissions, etc. • Include links to other credible sources of information they are helping inform your audience • Organize contests for submissions of specific types • Making your office a place where people can and want to come to accomplish their own goals (meeting space? coffee? internet cafe? library of some sort?) • Publish a ladder of participation, or suggestions for all the ways people can interact with your organization, with varying levels of commitment or investment required.	• Increase range of content, voices, ideas in the coverage/content • Validate views and opinions of individuals by helping them be heard (thus increasing users' perception of your organization's value) • Increase appreciation/under-standing/acceptance of what your organization does • Increase willingness of community to collaborate with your organization • Make it easy for people to see how they could get involved.	• Increase in number of comments, submissions and/or chat room comments (count) • Increase in number of different people commenting, submitting, or joining chat rooms (count) • Improvement in quality or tone of comments or chat room discussions (textual analysis) • Track where money/advertising/etc. comes from - did they come from an aligned outreach effort. • Measure if levels of awareness/trust/positive attitude increase (survey) Measure levels of engagement the audience members take (track activity on site along with attendance at events, etc. Could use some sort of CRM tool to help with this)
Sponsor or organize community events	• Community events sponsorship -partnering with a nonprofit/cause to support an existing event (e.g. donating money to and sponsoring and attending local Relay for Life event) -organizing events of your own, some around journalism and some just for brand awareness and money-making (like singles events, community-wide games, hacks/hackers)	• Gain exposure to potential new audience • Deepen relationship with audience • Garner goodwill from other organizations in the community (could lead to raising positive attitudes about your brand as well as cooperation with news sourcing and coverage) • Have fun and create a shared positive experience • Establish self as vital community institution • Generate revenue (using either freemium or flat charge model) • Make organization easier to approach (could lead to more willingness to suggest ideas, be part of news coverage, etc.) • Generate new sources • Improve coverage of event(s) • Reengage journalists as part of community rather than separate from it • Improve quality of life in community by adding things of interest for people to do	• Measure attendance and empty beer bottles (the group was note really kidding on this one!) • Measure revenue • Exit surveys (did you have fun, how was the food, what is your opinion of us, etc) • Measure chatter/buzz - tweets/flickr photos. • "How did you find out about us" - survey. • Measure who came to your content after the party, i.e. sign people up at event and then track their activity on site after the fact. • Specific url or QR code: Tracks traffic elsewhere based off that initial landing page. • Measure levels of engagement the audience members take (track activity on site along with attendance at events, etc. Could use some sort of CRM tool to help with this)

STRATEGY	SOME SUGGESTED TACTICS	WHY WE VALUE THEM	HOW WE COULD MEASURE THEM
Share expertise with audience members and with groups that have similar mission of creating/ supporting community	• Community events sponsorship -partnering with a nonprofit/cause to support an existing event (e.g. donating money to and sponsoring and attending local Relay for Life event) -organizing events of your own	• Position organization as an entity that cares about improving the community • Build trust, credibility, other positive affect towards your organization • Gain added validation of your organization's value by association with other trusted/respected organizations in the community • Develop sense of gratitude and desire to positively reciprocate from people you assist • Increase civic engagement which leads to increased need for the information contained in your journalism • Increase civic capacity by helping make other community institutions stronger • Expand the network of contacts for your journalistic staff • Expand the audience for your journalism • Asking for ideas and suggestions in non-emergency situations increases likelihood of getting information quickly in breaking news circumstances • Helps news organization live up to a mission of making sure community members get all the information they need to fully participate in the democracy • Build news organization's understand of the information needs of the community; also helps news org better understand where these organizations are coming from which could improve the accuracy of coverage • Foster goodwill all around	• Number of people who sign up and percentage who subsequently participate, and how often (counts of attendees to trainings, along with some sort of tracking) • Can you track the usage habits on the website of participants who do something beyond passive reading? (require registration and track use profiles) • How many reader bylines appear on the site? How much content from trainees appears elsewhere on the web? (count) • People may pay for training workshops through fee-for-service on narrative storytelling/master technique/topic classes, so income could be a metric • Number of partnerships and/or number of members of other organizations reached via new partnerships (count) • Track referral link traffic by providing different link URLs to different partners to forward to their constituencies and then seeing how much traffic comes through each of those forwarded URLs. • Level of credibility, trust, etc. (survey) • Amount of staff time invested in individual relationship with a partner organization (should diminish over time as relationship becomes more solid)Amount of activity related to a partnership (should increase over time) • Number or complexity of issues or problems "solved" or addressed via a partnership. • Growth in audience for partner organization's communications (count) Assess community response to collaborative reporting on gaps in services or other (follow-up reporting)

STRATEGY	SOME SUGGESTED TACTICS	WHY WE VALUE THEM	HOW WE COULD MEASURE THEM
Create and promote content/solutions that meet specific needs identified by specific community and/or audience	• Tailor and develop offerings based on community feedback to better address the specific needs of individual constituencies or the entire community. This is not just simply about volunteering ideas for the community to choose from, but really listening to what they say when you actively make contact with them, and then developing solutions to get them the information and/or news-related resources they need to become more informed and/or engaged in the news landscape	• Develop trust and credibility, along with the loyalty associated with a sense that the news organization cares about what the audience cares about • Increase public's appetite for and reliance on news coverage • Increase use of news outlet's offerings by audience (reading, sharing, linking, responding) • Clarify work priorities by better understanding what parts of news organization's efforts are delivering value to the audience and what parts are not; this can steer news organization as it attempts to allocate limited resources	• Measure trust, credibility, loyalty, etc. (survey) • Measure traffic/audience for new initiatives • Measure response to new initiatives (survey, focus group)

LEVEL 2: CONVERSATION

Being in conversation with our community means listening as well as talking, and adjusting what we do and cover based on what we hear. It involves: Hosting discussions in person and online on topics that matter to the community. Participating in conversations we're not hosting, both in person and online. Valuing how a continuing dialogue can make us better journalists and improves the journalism. Using web analytics to better understand what people are showing us they value in what we do, and basing at least some of our decisions about content and staff resources based on what we're seeing. Recognizing that journalism is a process, not just a product, and involving more voices in the process means more diverse journalism.

STRATEGY	SOME SUGGESTED TACTICS	WHY WE VALUE THEM	HOW WE COULD MEASURE THEM
Make it a priority to transform web traffic into conversation.	• Ask questions at the end of posts. • If comments don't happen naturally, encourage staff to post the first comment. • Assign staff time to reading and responding to comments within the first 20 comments (or whatever makes sense for your organization). • Assign staff to stay involved in the content they have a hand in, taking note in and, where appropriate, responding within 24 hours to user reactions and questions. • Create tiered comment system so the community can help reward productive, useful, enlightening comments. • Allow for easy online sharing of individual comments, not just posts. • Share user comments as unique content (as in on the home page), not just as a reaction to journalists' content.	• Increases journalistic connection to the community, staying involved. (Don't file and run!) • Invites users to spend more time processing and responding to content. • Offers chances to be transparent about who journalists are, how journalism gets made, etc. • Makes the community feel heard, which encourages future interaction. • Lifts the relevance, substance and civility of the online conversation. • Rewards good behavior, encouraging further interaction and loyalty. • Saves staff time by having the crowd help monitor. Also, users who help monitor reinforce the culture we're trying to create. • Makes the news more social, and encourages sharing of content and comments.	• Analytics such as time on site, return visits, tweets, Facebook likes. Another good one to use for measuring whether traffic drives engagement: ratio of page views to comments. • Staff comments as a percentage of overall comments. • Speed of response on the part of the staff or individual journalist. • Sentiment analysis: Do users notice/appreciate/respond to involvement of journalists? (survey) • Number of comments, and number of comments shared. • Number of people involved in rating or voting on comments (it's likely that many people would make themselves heard with a vote but wouldn't comment themselves) • Civility of conversations (content analysis)

Encourage and reward conversation as a goal, not just a means to an end.

• Allocate staff time for community conversations that might not yield immediate productivity (consider Google's "20 percent time" for innovation)

• Create a culture of two-way communication, not just broadcasting.

• Attend community gatherings not to cover them, just to listen.

• Reward frequent commenters/contributors with recognition, invitations to happy hour or lunch, branded merchandise, credits to advertisers's businesses, etc.

• Reward staff who use conversation threads online to encourage more debate, not to prove themselves right or share what they know.

• Report to the community what journalists hear (in person, analytics, etc.) about what's important to them, and what the follow-up plan is.

• Leads to better understanding of the community, and deeper connections, which could pay off in all kinds of ways. Serves as an early detection/warning system for community problems and issues.

• Sends a message to staff that being in touch and involved is truly important, and that you trust them to do that.

• Allows for the exploration of ideas and projects that could pay off in the long term.

• Sends a message to the community that their voice is desired, appreciated and equal in importance.

• Serves as a feedback loop for community input.

• Offers a window into how the staff uses feedback from users, along with validation that the voices mattered.

• Perceived value on the part of the staff (internal survey).

• Reach into the community — number of conversations journalists wouldn't have otherwise had.

• Strategic analysis of which (content) areas journalists want to know more about, and have they spent time learning about them?

• Percentage of the community that has talked to journalists or seen/heard them around town or online (external survey).

• Number and diversity of unique contributors, and commitment of repeat contributors

Have a consistent social media voice and action plan

• Decide what tone and voice your news organization should have on social media, and put it in writing in a company-wide plan.

• Consider the communication norms of the platforms you're using, and consider what's appropriate for different kinds of content.

• Develop a plan for dealing with inappropriate comments or communication from users, or inappropriate messages linked to your brand (from internal OR external sources)

• Relationships are formed through consistent conversation with users, making them feel comfortable.

• Staff time is used efficiently, with less guesswork.

• Setting the tone for the conversation is done in-house, rather than letting the audience set the tone.

• Sets clear, acceptable boundaries for staff, minimizing problematic interactions and facilitating consistent brand perception.

• Experiment with different tones and track what drives conversation (similar to A-B testing)

• Track consistency of the brand's voice (content analysis)

• Staff acceptance of and adherence to guidelines (internal survey)

• In case of problematic posts, track speed of response time on the part of the staff.

Be consistent with journalists' invitations to conversations, and with their participation in community conversations they're not hosting.

• Have regular times and places to meet, online and in person (examples: reader panels, Twitter hashtags, community coffee shop hours)

• Decide that no message from a reader/source/member of the public will go unanswered, including tweets that mention the news organization.

• Join or collaborate with community conversations already going on, both formally (partnering with a nonprofit to sponsor a discussion, partnering with a blogger) or informally (sitting in the audience at a community event, commenting on a Facebook thread)

• As part of covering a beat, make it a priority for a journalist to comment on outside sites and blogs that cover their topics, to add context, share links and be a present, consistent, authoritative voice. Post on discussion boards. Share a link on a group's Facebook wall.

• Ask a regular (daily?) question, inviting responses and highlighting the best of them (based on journalists' views or user votes)

• Make it easy for people to contribute in whatever way they feel most comfortable. Take news tips, photos and other contributions via text message.

• Makes it easy for the community to know where to go and who to talk to, encouraging ideas and interaction

• Help users feel like they're part of a valued relationship.

• Conversations can continue where they left off.

• Each group reached will likely include people not in your existing audience, offering a chance for recruitment and solicitation of coverage ideas.

• Increased visibility among non-users offers promotional value and increased social capital.

• Opportunities for crowdsourcing among non-users.

• A window into brand perception and community impact — positive, negative or neutral — among non-users, and a chance for journalists to (non-defensively) ask follow-up questions and invite more feedback.

• Positive interactions lead to third-party promoters, which is earned (free) marketing

• Log interactions. Track both stickiness (how often the same people come back) and reach (the number of new people who join). Both are valuable for different reasons.

• Think of a Twitter hashtag as a place, and track how crowded it is during a set chat time, and how often it is mentioned at other times.

• Ask the people who participate (online or in person) why they're there and if it's a good time/place for them.

• Track story ideas that emerge. How many stories are enriched or suggested by conversations with users?

• Number of events involved in, people attending, social media impressions.

• Track whether involvement in an issue or event drives traffic to those content areas.

• Keep a log of names/groups of those reached, and follow up to see if those people register on the website, or if their visits change after the interaction, or if they invite you back to their conversations.

• Track incoming links from sites and conversations journalists are participating in, and retweets and other mentions from those involved. One way to do that is with unique bit.ly links for each site.

LEVEL 3: COLLABORATION

Collaborating with our communities, the highest form of engagement, means we have a shared investment in and influence over our journalism. It involves: Soliciting and relying on user contributions. Soliciting and using user input about what we should cover and how we should allocate our resources. Valuing the role the users play in reacting to and sharing our content. Recognizing that we can accomplish things with the cooperation of the community that we could not do alone.

STRATEGY	SOME SUGGESTED TACTICS	WHY WE VALUE THEM	HOW WE COULD MEASURE THEM
Work with specific communities or groups	Examples: -Allow nonprofits or advocacy groups to post their own content and get the word out about their own activities. -Identify interests that are shared with a community group like a school, university or historical organization. -Identify specific geographic communities, for increased coverage or collaborative projects.	• Get stories that more authentically represent the community — that are OF something, rather than ABOUT something. • Expand your source base, building connections in an underserved group. • Gather story ideas. • Build connections, and less separation as the media elite. • Foster a sense of shared purpose, community and goodwill, on behalf of the group and for the benefit of the news organization. • Encourage solutions to community problems, and suggested actions users can take, to bubble up from the group	• How much content is contributed, and the traffic to that content. • Outbound traffic to those organizations — sometimes it's better to be the first stop, or the hub of information, than the last stop. • Flow of traffic between news organization and community partner, as page views or social media chatter. • Number of partnerships or active projects. • Number of sources we wouldn't have reached otherwise (would require qualitative reporting from the staff). • Does audience increase (registrations, page views, followers) from those groups or partnerships? Can be tracked with unique urls, or with geocoding and IP address tracking. Could make a game with different partner groups to see who can drive the most participation or traffic. • Sentiments of contributors — do they feel it made a difference in overall coverage and in representation of their community (survey). • Ideas that emerge that we wouldn't have had otherwise. Could be tracked with new metadata field or other internal process. • Ratio of partnerships we propose to those that are pitched to us, over time • Community goodwill and brand perception (survey). • Impact in the community — did we help shape debate or policy? (follow-up reporting, or survey) • Newsroom time spent on organization. Does it decrease over time, increasing the return on investment?
Make collaborative niche products.	Examples: -Give a church access to our archival content for the purposes of a historical book. -Release our API to a community of developers.	• Profit-sharing, on a book or on ideas that bubble up from developers. • Demonstrating that we value a community, and our shared history or interests. • Expanding our role and reach. • Demonstrating our relevance.	• Profit from sales. • Households reached by news organization's brand through sales. • Possibility of revenue streams from collaboration with developers, who often have great ideas about how to package content in ways journalists might not consider.

STRATEGY	SOME SUGGESTED TACTICS	WHY WE VALUE THEM	HOW WE COULD MEASURE THEM
Harness the power of the crowd.	Examples: -Add a collaboration layer to big stories like data reports or citywide mapping projects. -Share our digital expertise with contributors. -Use distributed reporting to share the workload. -Learn to watch for opportunities where the community will be naturally making and sharing their own media. Figure out if you have a role in collecting and sharing it.	• Get a breadth of information we could never gather on our own, and the whole is often greater than the sum of the parts. • Get a sense of trends that would be less likely to surface through more isolated reporting. • Foster an increased sense of loyalty and investment on the part of the contributors. • Invest in the contributors' ability to provide us with quality content. • Invest in community media literacy. • Harness wide, diverse, distributed resources in a time of newsroom cutbacks. • Broaden the definition — and increase the relevance — of journalism. • A built-in network for sharing the content produced.	• Number of participants. • Range of geography or other diversity, compared to other projects (content analysis). • Traffic to collaborative projects, compared to traditionally produced projects. • Ratio of active versus passive traffic to collaborative projects (looking at sharing, recommending, contributing as compared to overall visits) • Time on site statistics for traffic to collaborative projects. • New unique visitors to collaborative projects. • Time spent in newsroom to organize collaborative projects, when compared to benefits gained. • Sharing statistics (email, social media, etc.) for collaborative projects, as percentage of overall visits, compared to what's normal for the site. Satisfaction survey for contributors — does it make you feel more connected, more valued, better represented?
Use collaboration to meet specific community needs.	Examples: -Connect people who need their driveways shoveled with willing shovelers. -Focus on services, enabling people looking for a piano teacher or plumber to seek recommendations from the wisdom of the crowd. -Offer a database of volunteer opportunities, sortable by expertise needed, time commitment, skills required, etc. -Publicize resources for timely needs, such as experts willing to help with foreclosure, or heating bills, or medical questions.	• Establishes us as being in touch with what community needs are, and invested in helping solve them, thereby building trust and loyalty. • Brings users to the site for a specific reason. • We're seen as a community resource for practical needs, not just the source of news and stories. • Opportunity to connect these projects to related stories, to share published stories. • Opportunity to post queries and crowdsourcing opportunities connected to these projects, using a shared interest to diversify sources. • Potential to find new compelling stories about the community interactions to report out to the rest of the community as part of our journalistic offerings	• Sponsorships sold for specific databases or projects. • New unique visitors. • Visitors to these projects who become more invested, going on to other pages or contributing to reporting. • Community brand perception after using these services (survey) • Increase in awareness of media brand in overall community (survey)

STRATEGY	SOME SUGGESTED TACTICS	WHY WE VALUE THEM	HOW WE COULD MEASURE THEM
Invite the community to help shape your agenda and resources	Examples: -Become a localized news question & answer source, tapping community experts and letting the questions drive the agenda. -Publish a running list of projects being explored or reported, and invite feedback on their value. -Give people a more direct seat at the editorial table, determining what projects get funded or pursued. -Allow individuals to fund specific projects.	• Be seen as working with the community, recognizing and rewarding expertise. • Increase a sense of community investment, in the organization and in specific projects. • Make decisions based on actual community information needs, not just the journalists' perspectives.	• Number of specific requests or questions that are answered by a community expert, and traffic to that content. • Sponsorships sold for specific collaborations or content (as with a Q&A/expert project) • Amount of feedback on story ideas, and how responsive the newsroom is to that feedback. • Traffic to stories with the most interest, and whether they do better than the ones that didn't get as much interest. • If funding is part of the collaborative process, how many stories get funded? How diverse are they? • If one goal is to increase participation, measure active contributions compared to overall visits.
Become an active part of a diverse media landscape.	Examples: -Embrace and amplify content from other community voices — other media outlets, bloggers, community groups. -Create tools for post-production collaboration, such as digital wrappers that track activity on other sites, or embeddable widgets for content partners.	• Be seen as a good steward of community information and needs, with a focus on collaboration, not competition. • A more diverse collective product. • A sense of our investment in the community, and the other media's investment in us. • Being able to track how our content moves, and know its reach and impact. • Being able to more specifically and strategically push content out, based on what has worked before.	• Inbound and outbound traffic to other media sites and blogs. • How often our content is shared, and how it's used on other sites. (For example, a wrapper on text, similar to embed code from YouTube, would let us track how our products are consumed when they leave us.)

WHAT WE WISH WE KNEW HOW TO DO OR MEASURE

• Make a network map of the staff's professional and personal connections, to evaluate our community connections and reach.

• Make a network map of community and stakeholder connections. How are people connected to each other, regardless of how they're connected to us?

• Use analytics in the sophisticated way other industries do. A few of us are good at this, but it's shocking how many newsrooms still rely on a few basic numbers like page views. There is huge opportunity for a company to offer software customized for news organizations, and help journalists figure out how to strategize around what they know about their audiences.

• Track our interactions with our audiences. We need a real Customer Relationship Management tool that makes it easy to record how community members interact with us, on the phone, in person, on social media or on our website. We want to be able to see a snapshot of how what we do shapes those interactions, how people find us, whether they come back, and whether they donate or contribute content. All of it. With as much automated as possible. This would also help us identify the stumbling blocks that may get in the way of readers spending more time with our content online.

RESOURCES

A few specific websites and articles came up as we were talking, as examples of how journalists can use metrics, or find help using them:

• How Postrank measures engagement:
https://analytics.postrank.com/docs/engagement

• How Philly.com measures engagement (from Nieman):
http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/10/getting-beyond-just-pageviews-philly-coms-seven-part-equation-for-measuring-online-engagement/

• The transcript of the #wjchat on social media metrics:
http://wjchat.webjournalist.org/2011/03/chat-3-30-11-social-media-metrics/

• Gawker's approach to measuring "branded traffic" (from Nieman):
http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/03/a-reader-affection-formula-gawker-creates-a-metric-for-branded-traffic/

• Confusion Online: Faulty Metrics and the Future of Digital Journalism:
http://www.journalism.columbia.edu/page/633/437

• Information about Joy Mayer's fellowship work at RJI:
http://www.rjionline.org/blog/highlights-joy-mayers-community-engagement-fellowship-blog

• Links Joy has saved on metrics:
http://www.delicious.com/mayerjoy/metrics