

One of the key core competencies of a publication is the process of selecting “all the news that fits to print”.

No one can read every news story. Instead of even trying to consume everything, we all have a process we go through for discovery of news, information and topics of interest to us. We have sources we trust for our news and information. It may be a printed paper or magazine, a website, tv news, facebook or twitter updates, or some combination of everything we have access to.

No matter how we get information there is one certainty, there is a finite number of sources we will use.

When someone selects google news as their destination for news discovery it is probably at the expense of another destination or product who aspires to be a “discovery destination”. But let's pretend it is just an incremental source. That for a while at least a consumer will both go to Google News and to the website of their local paper. What is the branding message the consumer is receiving ?

When that newspaper allows itself to be included in Google News it becomes a de facto endorsement of Google News as an acceptable and probably preferable “discovery destination”. The branding message to the consumer is “I don't need to go to the newspaper homepage. Everything the newspaper has is referenced here in Google News. So if there is something of interest to me from the local paper, Google News will send me to their site. I don't need to go to both sites any longer. I can just go to Google News.

That's not good for the publication brand and business. They just lost their position as a trusted source where real people make decisions on what content they think their readers will want to discover – to an algorithm.

But wait it gets worse.

When that consumer goes to Google News, it lists the number of sources. You immediately become one of 2,172 articles. It is never good for a brand to be considered one of 2,000 plus sources. Ever. That makes you a commodity. All that promotion you did saying how good your reporters are ? On its way to becoming worthless. To the consumer there are 2,000 other people able to do the same thing (even though there really aren't 2k sources, that's not what the branding message they get from Google)

And the bad news will keep on coming.

As a newspaper or other information source, you can never discount the very real possibility that Google starts becoming a content creator. Why couldn't they hire reporters ? Why couldn't they give their content priority over all others ? More importantly, why wouldn't they ?

Never happen you say ? See AOL. See Yahoo. Both are now creating original content in huge quantities. I promise you, someday there will be a bunch of Googlers sitting in a meeting discussing how they can generate enough revenue and profits to increase earnings per share by a penny. You can bet someone will pull up a spreadsheet showing the increase in CPMs for original content with the trusted Google News brand on it. It will show that by simply hiring a bunch of reporters to create news, with Google's traffic and the higher CPMs of original content, we can make a lot of money for our shareholders. You are in denial if you think this will never happen.

It was smart to ride the Google wave of traffic when you were able to sell it all. Things change. Now you can't sell all your organic traffic, let alone the traffic you get from Google. Now the value equation has shifted. You are endorsing Google News as a discovery destination making their brand stronger by the day.

Google News' brand value will increase fast enough on its own. There is no sane reason to allow them to co-opt your brand and use it to accelerate the growth of a business, Google News that will very likely be your biggest online competitor

Update: I want to put a qualifier here because some people think this applies to any or all media companies. It doesn't. This is meant for media companies that have established brands and brand equity. If you are a startup, you should use Google for everything its worth. It can be very valuable. If you are trying to create or establish a brand, you should use Google. Google News. If you have no revenue, you should probably rethink your choice of professions and /or business, but Google traffic can only help.

For you, every visitor is a good thing and an opportunity to convert that user and build your brand image.

On the flipside if your company name is one of multiple choices that comes to people's mind when they need the type of information/news/info you provide, then you need to think through just what impact Google. Google News has on your business today and in the future.