The State of Local Media

# Problem Defined

Locally sourced news outlets and media organizations are on the decline. As increasing numbers of neighborly news organizations close down their offices, [impoverished communities are hit hard](https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2022/06/newspapers-close-decline-in-local-journalism/) and the [political divide](https://www.axios.com/2022/07/04/local-newspapers-news-deserts) is deepened. The shift from print media to digital media presents new challenges in getting information to those who have limited access to critical news and information. Additionally, this shift presents an opportunity for the **REDACTED** to reconstruct our communications strategy. How can we grow our earned media in this new digital age?

## Decline of local news

The [decline of local news](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/local-news-coverage-is-declining-and-that-could-be-bad-for-american-politics/) is rooted in the proliferation of digital media that drives people to viral, often national-focused stories, but misconceptions surrounding the financial strength of local media are also a contributing factor. According to FiveThirtyEight, in late 2018, 71 percent of Americans surveyed told the Pew Research Center that they believe their local news media organization was doing very or somewhat well financially, even though only 14 percent said they had paid for local news in the past year. Further demonstrating this trend, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that newspaper publishers saw a [33.6 percent decrease in revenue from 2010-2020.](https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/06/internet-crushes-traditional-media.html)

## Emergence of independent news

The steady decline of local news consumption has opened the door for large media conglomerates like Nexstar, Sinclair, and Gannett to increase their market standing. As newsrooms continue to close at a pace of two per week, [major media companies such as Gannett are quick shut down newspapers.](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/29/business/media/local-newspapers-pandemic.html?) The vacuum created by newsroom closure has lead to the emergence of local news alternatives in effort to [rebalance the news](https://mediablog.prnewswire.com/2018/01/17/non-profit-investigative-news-sites/). These are non-profit newsrooms such as Mother Jones, ProPublica, The Marshall Project, Reveal, and more than [70 local newsletters](https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2021/more-than-50-local-newsrooms-launched-during-the-pandemic/) founded since 2020. The [Institute for Nonprofit News](https://inn.org/) lists more than 300 independent news organizations that can be found [here](https://findyournews.org/campaign/inn-network-directory/).

## News consumption trends

With news being consumed in a variety of ways, there is a plethora of new opportunities for the **REDACTED** in gaining earned media. A look into media trends can give us insight into how we should develop communications strategies around new media reporting platforms.

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These [statistics](https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/news-platform-fact-sheet/) from the Pew Research Center gives us a look into where platform usage is headed. The spread of where people are their news from is increasing. While the “often” response saw a decline going into 2022, the “sometimes” is increasing for nearly each category. This is likely a result of [historic lows](https://www.axios.com/2022/07/08/news-republicans-democrats-trust-partisanship) of trust in news. Interestingly, the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change found that Americans still [look to big name news](https://institute.global/policy/us-midterms-five-trends-american-news-consumption) brands for news. However, individual journalists are now [more significant](https://institute.global/policy/us-midterms-five-trends-american-news-consumption) than in a pre-internet age. These consumption trends mean that opinion pieces that appear in mainstream media are more influential than those that appear elsewhere.

While legacy news outlets like print are on the decline, the trend is not exclusive to them. All forms of news platforms are seeing an increase in the number of U.S. adults completely tuning themselves out of the news. As seen in the survey, the percent of people who never receive news from each platform has seen growth year over year. Overall [news consumption is down](https://www.axios.com/2022/07/12/news-media-readership-ratings-2022) from 2020.

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Following the patterns observed at a macro scale, news consumption across digital platforms has seen an increase in the number of people who sometimes or rarely get news from each platform. While [news consumption](https://www.axios.com/2022/07/12/news-media-readership-ratings-2022) may be down, those who keep up with the news are diversifying their consumption across the platforms. When combined with [individual journalists](https://institute.global/policy/us-midterms-five-trends-american-news-consumption) having more sway than ever before and Americans’ tendency to [look for big name news](https://institute.global/policy/us-midterms-five-trends-american-news-consumption), gaining more earned media would require having journalist’s pieces on as many platforms and news outlets as possible.

# Earned Media in todays’ news cycle

This [piece](https://www.bizjournals.com/sanjose/news/2020/03/23/the-role-of-media-and-pr-in-the-24-hour-news-cycle.html) in the Silicon Valley Business Journal provides information on how to secure more earned media opportunities. These include:

1. Build strong relationships to create opportunity
2. Remember that timing is everything
3. Provide relevant content

The **REDACTED** has received earned media in the news recently as with the [suit against Albuquerque](https://abcnews.go.com/US/aclu-new-mexico-sues-albuquerque-treatment-homeless/story?id=95615227) or the [reinstatement of Donald Trump](https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1618622296071016451). Notably, these two examples are on digital platforms, and the latter is on Twitter with over 85,000 impressions.

# How we can consider Earned Media in our Comms strategy

The data from the [surveys](#_Where_is_the) as well as analyses like these from [media](https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2020/02/25/how-to-turn-your-owned-media-into-earned-media/?sh=1532508e4051) and [SEO](https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2022/10/14/a-guide-to-social-media-algorithms-and-seo/?sh=7f59070652a0) experts at Forbes can help us shape our Earned Media strategy. Effective ways to increase our earned media include:

1. Identifying opportunities to engage with local media
   1. Consider the timing of a release
   2. Why is it important to share now?
2. Reach out to as many [outlets](https://findyournews.org/campaign/inn-network-directory/) as possible for placements
   1. As the [surveys](#_News_consumption_trends) showed:
      1. Individual writers hold a lot of influence
      2. Americans look to big name news brands
      3. Americans are using multiple platforms to get news
3. Pair local media coverage with social media posts
   1. Shares and reposts to social media platforms builds audience
   2. User reposts and shares promotes our content and increases our reach

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