

## 1. Structural Shift

“There used to be one [news industry], held together by the usual things that hold an industry together: similarity of methods among a relatively small and coherent group of businesses, and an inability for anyone outside that group to produce a competitive product. Those conditions no longer hold true.

## 2. Digitally Capable vs. Fundamentally Digital

“In the 1980’s, much academic ink was spilled over the “productivity paradox” where businesses had invested heavily in information technology over the preceding two decades, but, despite the capital outlay, had very little to show for their efforts. A few firms, however, did show strong early productivity gains from their embrace of IT. The companies that benefited didn’t just computerize existing processes; they altered those processes at the same time that they brought computers into the business and became a different kind of organization. By contrast, companies that simply added computers to their existing processes produced no obvious gains in output or efficiency.

We believe that a similar dynamic is at work today, one we’re calling post-industrial journalism, a phrase first used by Doc Searls in 2001, to mean “journalism no longer organized around the norms of proximity to the machinery of production.”

## 3. What we don’t know...

“We are plainly in an era where what doesn’t work is clearer than what does, and where the formerly stable beliefs and behaviors of what we used to call the news industry are giving way to a far more variable set of entities than anything we saw in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 4. Insight vs. Data

“Self evident as it is, journalists can be much more efficient than machines at obtaining and

disseminating certain types of information. Access and “exclusivity” or “ownership” of a story is created through interviewing people. Making phone calls to the White House or the school board, showing up at meetings and being receptive to feedback, sharing views and expressing doubt all make news more of the “drama” that James Carey identified as central to the concept of a newspaper. These very personal and human activities mark journalism as a form of information performance rather than simply a dissemination of facts.

## 5. T-Shaped Professionals

“The extent to which a journalist now needs to have in-depth knowledge about something other than journalism is increasing. Exposed by the wider availability and quality specialist commentary and knowledge, a deficit in skills in professional journalism is all the more obvious in areas such a economics, science, international affairs and business, the complexity of information and the speed at which people wish to have it explained and contextualized leaves little room for the average generalist.

## 6. Quantity AND Quality

“The ultimate goal of continual engagement, however, is to produce journalism that is of high quality, and significant insight and impact.

## 7. Pains of Change

“Our interviews with journalists in a variety of institutional settings, we were struck by the contrast between the pride they expressed in the organizations they worked for and the frustration many of them felt when talking about the slowness of organizational adaptation.

## 8. Defeatism

“Occasionally, this frustration with the slowness of institutional change spills into a general organizational nihilism: If institutional arrangements are failing, the thinking goes, and

if these failing organizations won’t face reality and change, then blow them up and start from scratch! The problem with anti-institutional thinking of this sort is that, paradoxically, the very qualities that make organizations conservative are the same ones that occasionally make them such powerful producers of the “iron core” of news.

## 9. Digital Workflow Fakery

“A failure to rethink workflow under conditions of digitization can often lead news organizations to suffering all the drawback of digital processes while achieving none of the benefits.

## 10. What is our Purpose?

“Once we no longer define success as simply “making money” but rather as “making an impact on the world,” however, our calculation changes. There are many more ways of defining impact than there used to be, although the complexity of the question has correspondingly increased.

## 11. Data vs Insight

“The problem now is figuring out which data to pay attention to and which to ignore. It is about setting up frameworks for testing, analysis and interpretation that are both scalable and replicable. It’s about finding that clear signal among the white noise that tells us whether our journalism is resonating or not, whether it is having the impact we believe it should.

## 12. Workflow

“[Current] workflow management is designed to produce a single finished product that will be “consumed” once and then disposed of... [o]nline, journalistic content can be produced, added to, altered and reused forever. To take advantage of this change, workflow will have to be altered to support these new technological and cultural affordances. Creating a workflow that reflects the more flexible production of digital

content will have the secondary consequence of making rigid newsroom routines more “hackable.”

### 13. 21<sup>st</sup> Century opportunity

“What do social media conversations, large data sets, and on-the-scene, first-person media production all have in common? In essence, they present the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century journalist with a plethora of new sources that can be integrated into the journalistic production process.

### 14. Minimizing Friction

“[W]e cannot continually require reporters to master new skills and evaluative procedure without simultaneously providing them with a workflow and an organizational structure that shows them that such skill mastery is valued and rewarded. Such a workflow will need to be both hackable and networked in smart, labor-enhancing ways.

### 15. Silver Bullet Absence

**“The main effect of digital media is that there is no main effect. The changes wrought by the internet and mobile phones, and the applications built on top of them, are so various and pervasive as to defeat any attempt to understand the current transition as a single force or factor.**

### 16. “Citizen Journalists”

“Journalists have always used tip lines and man-in-the-street interviews, and members of the audience have always slipped and forwarded favorite articles. What’s new here isn’t the possibility of occasional citizen involvement. What’s new is the speed and scale and leverage of that involvement, the possibility of persistent, dramatic amounts of participation by people previously relegated to largely invisible consumption. What’s new is that making public statements no longer requires pre-existing outlets or professional publishers.

### 17. Change Magnitude

“[W]hen you’ve made something 10% better, you’ve made an improvement, but when you make something 10 times better, you’ve created a new thing. New digital tools can accelerate existing patterns of news gathering, shaping and publishing so dramatically that they become new things.

### 18. Reputation vs. Execution

“Two things that have changed dramatically in the past decade are the value of reputation (higher) and the cost of production (lower). So many sources of news are now available that any publication with a reputation for accuracy, probity or rigor has an advantage over the run-of-the-mill competition. However, digital tools have also dramatically reduced the cost of finding and publishing information, leading to profusion outlets that publish by the ton.

### 19. Model

“A core thesis of this essay is that the country’s news organizations are no longer adequate to ensuring coverage of the news on their own. This puts existing institutions in the awkward spot of needing to defend or even improve parts of the current ecosystem from which they may not profit, and which may benefit their competitors.

### 20. Personal Brands

“Though the concept has been somewhat tainted by the cheesiness of “Brand You!” boosterism, we live in an age where the experiments of individual journalists and small groups are ideal for identifying possible new sources of value process is a response to group dynamics, so the smaller the group, the easier it is to balance process and innovation (though later, of course, those innovations will have to be rendered boringly repeatable.)

If you were looking for an ideal mantra for a journalist, writer, analyst, media artist, data miner

or any of the other roles and tasks that matter today, “Proceed until apprehended” is a good one. As an NPR executive said to Andy Carvin during his invention of the curated Twitter news feed, “I don’t understand what you’re doing, but please keep doing it.”

### 21. Your Role?

“While the coming increase in possible modes and tempos of journalism, our overall recommendations for journalists are these:

Know yourself. Know what you are good at and what you are not good at, and know how to explain those things to others. Know your areas of expertise, both for content (North African politics; civil engineering; historical weather patterns) and skills (are you an interviewing journaist? A researching journalist? A Final Cut journalist? An Excel journalist? A Hadoop journalist?).

Know when the tools you need are algorithms or crowds, Know when a person you need to talk to is more likely to be found via Twitter than directory assistance. Know when your network can help; know when someone in your network’s network can help, and get good at asking for that help (and also rewarding people who help).

Know when process is aiding your work and when it’s not, and, to the degree you can, know when to break the glass in the latter case. Know when to work alone, when to call for help, when to partner outside your usual sphere.