Entrepreneurial Journalism

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With Dan Gillmor, Syndicate Expert
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*And Syndicate Participants (below)

Day One: Dan Gillmor, Syndicate Expert, presents his views:

Entrepreneurial Journalism Definition:

1. Owning a business – not necessarily in terms of stock ownership, but going through a process and achieving an outcome;
2. Learning to respond to ambiguity and change;
3. Innovation –putting things in different ways to achieve different results; and
4. Focusing on the business.

Process of Entrepreneurship Involves:

1. Starting something you care about, that you're passionate about;
2. Getting it online quickly;
3. Not waiting until your website is perfect or you have all the answers; and
4. Improving as you go.

The Silicon Valley Model involves deciding how you want to finance your enterprise, and

1. Launching before inviting investors;
2. Deciding how much control you want to exercise in relation to other stockholders.

Teaching Entrepreneurial Journalism:

Entrepreneurial journalism is cross-disciplinary. Students need to take courses in other speciality areas, such as business and ICT. They don't need to become experts in such specialities, but they need to gain a basic understanding of them.

As for the cost of setting up a media enterprise, the use of Open Source software is recommended to keep prices down.

Examples of the type of enterprises Gillmor's students have worked on:

1. An online community of film-makers;
2. Twitting and SMS on multimedia signage; and
3. A mobile-based system of offering help to immigrants.

Gillmor also suggested that professors leave their syllabi for such courses open-ended.

Some participants expressed discomfort with this approach, stating their concerns with:

1. How to deal with students' expectations;
2. How to make an open-ended syllabus attractive to students; and
3. How to deal with faculty colleagues.

Next, Gillmor pointed out several aspects of entrepreneurship:

1. Identifying an idea or opportunity;
2. Coalescing the idea into something new;
3. Identifying something that people need or that solves a problem;
4. Anticipating something that does not exist; or
5. Doing something better than what exists.

The issue of how to grade students was then raised. For example, what should happen when a project taken on by a student or student group fails?

Gillmor answered: "Projects are important, but even if a project fails, the student can still get an 'A'." After all, he added, start-ups fail. He concluded that students should also be graded partially on their efforts and process.

To help students understand the process of entrepreneurial journalism, Gillmor said he often has successful role models talk to students about their hands-on success at this endeavor.

A syndicate participant raised the issue of how to contextualize entrepreneurial journalism in the case of Africa given the low penetration of technology.

Gillmor responded that "mobile" is the medium for Africa, that radio is still popular there and that the principles of entrepreneurship are not vastly different from one society to another.

However, another participant pointed out that, in his institution, all students, whatever their discipline, take a course on entrepreneurship. At his school, professors encourage students to think of being job creators, rather than be job seekers, through:

1. Engaging in freelance journalism and photojournalism;
2. Becoming bloggers;
3. Setting up as independent radio/TV producers; and

    4. Becoming community newspaper publishers.

Day Two Discussion – Gillmor asked syndicate participants to offer their views and experience, which follow:

1. An example from Oklahoma, USA.: An online student magazine with multiple media formats that provides stability and entrepreneurship where students can initiate and post projects;
2. From Britain: Student projects compete in the business reality show DRAGON. (Courses are offered based on accreditation requirements and are not
as flexible as in the U SA); and
3. From Zambia: Noticing shortcomings in business reporting, students receive airtime from a national broadcaster after creating a business program that earns revenue. Student graduates are also encouraged to create their own programs with national broadcasters.

Gillmor defined the start-up culture as follows:
1. It's chaotic;
2. Ambiguous;
3. Requires team work; and
4. Makes rapid development.

The issue of raising funds for the business without compromising the independence of the media was raised, and the argument went back and forth about the need to make a profit for stakeholders, while, at the same time, remaining true to the ethics of journalism.

Gillmor reiterated the need to remain transparent when news and related conflicts of interest collide – audiences should be made aware of this.

Other participants raised the importance of journalism remaining a service to the community, though at a profit to the stakeholders. After all, the media must be sustainable.

Concluding Topic – Audiences:

What led to the advent of citizen journalism, in which the audience began to create its own contents? Audiences were not being properly represented by the traditional media, their needs were not being met. To succeed as an entrepreneurial journalist, the needs of the audience must be met.

*Syndicate Participants: Heather Birks, Broadcast Education Association, USA; Debora Wenger, University of Mississippi, USA; Geneva Overholser, University of Southern California, USA; Nico Deok, Windersheim University, Netherlands; Francois Nel, University of Central Lancashire, UK; John Cokley, University of Queensland, Australia; Zaneta Trajkoska, School of Journalism & Public

Relations; Rosental C. Alves, University of Texas, Austin, USA; Dan Gillmor; Remzi Lani; Solomon George Anaeto, Babcock University, Ilisan, Ogun State,Nigeria; Noriko Takiguchi; Clayson Hamasaka, Eveyn Hone College, Zambia; Charles C. Self, University of Oklahoma, USA; Peter Schrurs, Radio Netherlands & Receiving Centre, Netherlands; Ujjwala Barne, University of Pune, India; Patience Mushuku, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe; Vitaly Viniehenko, South Federal University; Muda Ganiyu.