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**NAA CEO Column: The Power of Daily News in our Digital Future**

*By David Chavern, president & CEO, NAA*

I was recently invited by [Digital Content Next](https://digitalcontentnext.org/) (DCN), an association of premium digital content creators, to attend their members' summit in Miami.  The summit was a great chance for me to hear from digital content managers representing a wide variety of media businesses – and the smart people they look to for advice and insight.  It also gave me an opportunity to evaluate the prospects for daily news organizations in the digital era, particularly as compared to other types of publishers.  The bottom line – I will gladly bet on the power of daily news in our digital future.

Legacy newspapers currently manage at least two very different types of businesses.  The first is a print business that is slowly declining but – surprise – has more legs than people think and – double surprise – actually makes money.  The second is a digital daily news business that is growing audience rapidly but, like other digital content business, is struggling to figure out how to be consistently profitable.  Legacy news organizations tend to get discounted as compared to their digital-only peers, but in fact, they shouldn’t be.  Legacy newspapers actually have some huge advantages.

1. **They have established brands and operations that still throw-off cash.**  Yes, newspapers have been struggling with legacy costs. But in the news business, one cannot underestimate the power of reputable brands and newsrooms – and the existence of print operations that still drive customers to advertisers and make money.  There are many digital-only businesses that would love to have something (anything) that made money – and it would be very difficult to over-estimate the investment that will be needed over many years to create credible brands and news cultures on par with historic newspapers.  Take the airline industry, for example. Many startups have challenged the status quo since financial struggles began in the 1970's, yet three out of four of the surviving major carriers in the U.S. are "legacy" companies.  Incumbency has its advantages.
2. **The public has a continuing, insatiable demand for news.**  Contrary to conventional wisdom, the public is consuming more news than ever and the curve is accelerating.  Cat videos and click bait may get the attention, but if you want to pick a digital content segment with legs, then news is where you want to be.  Newspapers are already there and, as I often say, "Google isn't going to interview the quarterback."
3. To paraphrase [IPONWEB](http://www.iponweb.com/) Founder, CEO and Chief Scientist Boris Mouzykantskii, PhD, who spoke at the DCN summit, **"Digital ad inventory may be infinite, but *good* digital ad inventory is not."**  Ad dollars will go to the best sites with the best kinds of traffic and engagement.  While ad inventory across the entire web is theoretically infinite, most of that inventory exists on low-value, long tail sites.  If you have high-value branded content with growing engagement by valued consumers, then your ad inventory is both scarce and valuable.  This is the space occupied by highly credible news organizations.

I don't want to underplay the wrenching changes that newspapers are going through as they move from a traditional delivery system to a new, very different one.   But looking forward, why would you count them out?  Instead, I think the better argument is that the digital businesses newspapers are growing today are very likely to be the long-term content winners in the race for both eyeballs and dollars.