

# SNPA Convergence Report

A discussion of newspapers and convergence

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The challenges in the newspaper industry have become increasingly clear. Audience fragmentation, declining readership, lowered revenue and vanishing classifieds demand new responses as never before. Newspapers no longer assume that students graduate, get married, have families and then become loyal readers. Cell phones, iPods, broadband, laptops and the generation of readers that grew up with them are changing the nature of media consumption.

David Thompson, publisher of The Oklahoman in Oklahoma City, says the new questions to ask readers are: “What do you want? How do you want it? and When do you want it?” And the new mandate is to deliver it – across whatever platform the reader chooses.

Thompson’s comments were made at the June 24 roundtable discussion in Atlanta sponsored by the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association. The topic was convergence – the cooperative efforts of newspapers, radio, television and web sites in shared markets. Newspapers are aware that printed news is just one of many ways that their customers interact with information, and newspapers are exploring ways to leverage their greatest asset – a long-standing mechanism for collecting information and reporting news.

“The world is going digital,” Michael Craft, president and publisher of The Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, Miss., said. “And we operate in silos. Convergence is a process that breaks those [silos] down. If we’re going to survive, we have to adapt.”

Adapting, however, is sometimes easier than it appears, despite the frequent need to create partnerships with former rivals. Newspapers and television news organizations, for example, often have different cultures, different standards and different skills. Add radio, the Internet and all the other digital information delivery systems and the challenge gets even larger. But it can be done successfully and profitably, the roundtable participants concluded.

Throughout the five hours of discussion, fifteen participants examined their successes, failures and lessons-learned. This report highlights their suggestions for structuring partnerships, mediating culture clashes, building trust, creating effective web sites, managing personalities, and creating new revenue streams.

Reid Ashe, chief operating officer of Media General in Richmond, Va., and chairman of the SNPA New Media/Convergence Committee, moderated the discussion. Other participants included:

- Betsy Brenner, president & publisher, Milwaukee (Wisc.) Journal Sentinel
- Sherry Chisenhall, editor Wichita (Kan.) Eagle
- J. Michael Craft, president & publisher The Clarion-Ledger, Jackson, Miss.
- John J. Fish, president & publisher Naples (Fla.) Daily News
- James Gentry, professor School of Journalism and Mass Communication University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan.
- Bruce R. Hartmann, president & publisher Knoxville (Tenn.) News Sentinel
- Frank P. Hughes, general manager The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Tenn.
- Steven Kaylor, regional editor Bristol (Va.) Herald Courier
- Rondra J. Matthews, president, publisher, CEO The Daily Press, Newport News, Va.
- Ronald R. Redfern, former president Florida Communications Group, Tampa, Fla., currently publisher & CEO The Press-Enterprise, Riverside, Calif.
- David L. Thompson, publisher The Oklahoman, Oklahoma City, Okla.
- Kathy Trumbull, vice president & director Palm Beach County/Multimedia South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
- David Underhill, president & CEO CLTV News, Oak Brook, Ill.
- Freda Yarbrough, new media director The Advocate, Baton Rouge, La.

### **Convergence? Cross platform? Multimedia?**

Where “convergence” at one time meant the coming together of newspaper, television, online, radio or anything else to extend reach and brand, the term doesn’t seem quite right today. Yes, media organizations are creating partnerships but very few really “converge”

or come totally together. So perhaps a better term for what’s happening today should be “cross platform” partnerships. Or “multimedia.”

In any case, if you are considering forming a partnership, the continuum on page 4, developed by James Gentry at University of Kansas, will give you an idea of how “easy” or “difficult” it will be to create the relationship and truly make it work.

Oh, and “easy” isn’t really easy. It’s very difficult. And “difficult” isn’t difficult. It’s more like your failed marriage.

### **Selecting a partner**

Many of the companies represented at the roundtable found their initial convergence partners easily. With some, newspaper management simply looked to a co-owned television station. In others, the newspaper selected the only television or radio station serving the same market. In other cases, however, the newspaper used a systematic approach to identify the best partner available. Roundtable participants warned against establishing a relationship without comprehensive analysis.

John Fish, now of the Naples Daily News, chose a television partner while in his previous role as publisher of the Topeka Capital-Journal. He engaged James Gentry of the University of Kansas to develop a series of questions to narrow the choice. Fish and his team identified five areas of concern for the partnership. They included questions related to company management and ownership, news management and programming, advertising revenues, web presence, and commitment and reputation. A more detailed

discussion of the process can be found in a sidebar on pages 7 and 8.

The analysis conducted by TCapital-Journal led to a seemingly counter-intuitive choice of partners. As the convergence team researched potential partners, they found that the number one television station in the market – the station they would have chosen without the analysis – was not the best partner. The station’s viewers were essentially the same market as existing newspaper readers. Instead, the Capital-Journal chose the number two station in the market in order to reach new readers.

Kathy Trumbull of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel recommends being flexible with partnerships – if one isn’t working, establish a new one. The Sun-Sentinel operates several

partnerships with several different stations. The newspaper’s goal is to cover its own market and to expand circulation into the television partner’s market.

**Structuring the partnership**

Changing partners is easier, the participants agreed, if the initial agreements include an exit strategy. Experienced participants at the roundtable advise negotiating the split-up at the beginning of the relationship. For example, if the partnership includes a jointly-operated web site, the agreement must address the question of who will own the URL if the partnership dissolves. The contract should define minimum expectations, outline journalistic parameters and quantify cross-promotional expectations. In Fort Lauderdale, the Sun-

**James Gentry’s Convergence Continuum**

**‘Easy’ Convergence**

**‘Difficult’ Convergence**

**Management/Leadership Issues**

Central to organization’s strategy  
 Committed, focused leadership  
 One manager  
 Extensive communication  
 Same ownership  
 Same values  
 Culture of innovation, risk-taking  
 Cultures flexible or similar  
 Past successes together  
 Coordinating structures (ie, multi-media coordinator)  
 Systems aligned

Secondary or worse  
 Leadership with multiple priorities  
 Multiple managers  
 Poor communication  
 Different ownership  
 Different values  
 “Always done it this way”  
 Cultures not flexible or similar  
 Previous problems or no relationship  
 No coordinating structures  
 Systems not aligned

**Structural Issues**

Cable  
 Co-located  
 No unions

Over-the-air  
 Located some distance apart  
 Unions

Sentinel requires affidavits that verify when promotions run. Sherry Chisenhall, editor of the Wichita Eagle, Kathy Trumbull and David Thompson use signed contracts to detail the specifics of the partnership and the potential break-up.

David Underhill of CLTV News suggests that newspapers should be very careful about “exclusive relationships.” A newspaper might have a news relationship with one station and a classified relationship with another. “As the last standing ‘mass medium,’ newspapers might benefit from relationships with multiple partners,” he said.

### **Managing conflicting cultures**

Most newspapers and television stations have decidedly different cultures and expectations. A successful partnership must negotiate the differences so that the two sides can work together effectively.

As president of Media General’s Florida Communications Group, Ron Redfern led the most recent stage of convergence of the Tampa Tribune, WFLA-TV and TBO.com. He said that his team discussed possible conflicts among the properties, such as reporting the names of juveniles and crime victims, using anonymous sources, establishing comfort levels for confirming sources, handling reporters who “sandbagged” stories to maintain an exclusive, mediating rapid story development for television and a more measured development for print and responding to a 24-hour news cycle.

Redfern and his 60-member team held a nearly month-long series of off-site meetings to frame the purpose and mission of the partnership and to define shared values. They decided to commit to a “platform neutral” approach – not to prefer one platform over another – but to exploit both

the immediacy of television and the thoughtfulness of the newspaper. The goal was to focus primarily on content and audience while being mindful of brand, but not platform.

Reid Ashe, who led phase one of Tampa’s convergence when he was publisher of the Tribune in 1999, observed that when faced with conflict, people tend to retreat rather than talk to each other. Management’s job is to make them interact, and often managers must overcome a “bunker” mentality to initiate the discussion.

Mike Craft agreed that editors and news directors are historically antagonistic and competitive. The Clarion-Ledger and its TV partner address the issue by “talking about it every day” to encourage each newsroom to learn from the other. The newspaper works on a slower schedule and can be more thoughtful; television is faster and has mastered self promotion.

Kathy Trumbull said the Sun-Sentinel employs a television reporter, paid by the newspaper, who works in the newspaper’s newsroom. The reporter’s sensitivity, experience and understanding of newspaper procedures have helped the newspaper staff to trust both the on-air reports and promotions. As an example, Trumbull said the television station was pursuing a story, but the television reporter at the newspaper couldn’t verify a source. The television station would have run the story; the newspaper wouldn’t run it until they had verification. The television reporter at the newspaper pulled the story. By honoring the source requirements of the newsroom, she gained a measure of trust in her overall approach. Of course, she had to justify her decision to the television news director, too.

David Underhill said, “24-hour news is a fact. TV and the Internet make it more urgent.” But, he added, breaking news can benefit a newspaper because it changes expectations for reporting. Sherry Chisenhall, editor of the Wichita Eagle, agreed that their partnership with a local TV station has made the newspaper much more “story quick.”

### **Communication is key**

Regardless of how newsrooms are staffed or stories are coordinated, communication between the partners is vital to success. Managers can’t assume that their reporters understand the partners’ operations. To broaden new employees’ understanding of the partnership, many companies require new newspaper reporters to spend a week or more in the television newsrooms and likewise, TV and radio stations cross-train reporters at partner newspapers. Steve Kaylor of the Bristol Herald Courier said his newspaper sends every new newspaper reporter to the television station. Other companies have institutionalized regular meetings between partners.

Sherry Chisenhall said the partnership at the Wichita Eagle began with staff exchanges. “We went to their newsroom; they came to ours,” she said. She said that since the relationship between newspaper and television editors has developed, they know each other personally, not just professionally.

Bruce Hartmann of the Knoxville News Sentinel and John Fish suggest that sharing story budgets forces more interaction and establishes relationships.

The roundtable participants who have fostered relationships between partnering newsrooms report that conflicts are handled

quickly or are averted before they become crises. James Gentry said that the natural antagonism between newspapers and television magnifies situations when things go wrong. He suggests that managers reinforce good behavior and celebrate things that go well. David Thompson of The Oklahoman and the general manager of the newspaper’s partner television station decided that they would personally model the communication behavior they wanted from their staffs. Thompson said the live example helped create the daily exchange of information that currently exists between the partners.

Sherry Chisenhall said the Wichita Eagle made an early mistake in deciding that the editor was the contact person for their partnership. Every problem went up to the editor and then down to the story editor, slowing down the solutions. Now, contacts exist on several levels, and newspaper and television counterparts have established relationships. Problems are solved in less time, with fewer interactions.

### **“If it’s everybody’s job, it’s nobody’s job”**

Most of the participants in the roundtable agreed, however, that someone must be charged with managing multimedia efforts in the newsroom. Experience had shown them that “everyone’s business is nobody’s business” when it came to maximizing multimedia.

David Underhill’s top recommendation for successful collaborations is appointing someone as the owner of the relationship, perhaps a director of multimedia. The project, he says, must have “owners” throughout the newsrooms. In Chicago, one person is charged with being sure the newspaper coverage coordinates well with Internet and television. If the systems and

## Tips on Choosing a Partner

By James K. Gentry

One of the biggest decisions an editor can face today is whether to form a partnership with a local television station. So how does an editor make this decision?

Some editors choose to partner with the television station run by a friend they've met at Rotary or because the station is No. 1 in the local ratings.

When John Fish faced this decision as publisher of the Topeka Capital-Journal (56,000 daily circulation) in 2000, he and I chose to take a more detailed route, which was part of an overall strategy to build cross-platform partnerships. Our process had two parts.

First, we "auditioned" each of the three local television news operations. In other words, we had long lunches with each general manager, asked a lot of questions and took tours of each facility.

Second, and probably more important, we worked with a "transition team" of 12 C-J newsroom managers and staffers to develop a detailed list of criteria for what we wanted in a television partner. We also collected extensive data about ratings, coverage areas and revenues.

We started with questions that were divided into the following categories that we called:

### From the top

These questions related to management, ownership and the station's motivation for partnering.

### The basics

These questions focused on news management, the quality of news programming, how will the partners complement each other, etc.

### Financial matters

These questions looked at advertising, revenues, etc.

### On the Web

These questions examined each station's web presence and commitment.

### Reputation

These questions looked at how the stations were perceived in the community.

### Bottom line

The key question: Would the television partner let the Capital-Journal be the dominant or lead player in the partnership.

Once the categories and some general questions were developed along the lines identified above, the team  
(Continued on page 8.)

personnel are in place when the big stories break, it is completely natural for the multimedia director to touch base with the people in other newsrooms.

The multimedia manager, identified by a number of job titles, takes the lead in planning a multimedia piece. According to the nature of the story, the manager identifies and plays to the strength of each medium, advancing the story using a second day or third day story approach. The total package may take several days to unfold on all media.

Bruce Hartmann said The Knoxville News Sentinel tackles one multimedia project per quarter. The newspaper launches the story on Sunday and television advances it beginning on Monday. The total television run may be five days, and the coverage is different from the newspaper coverage.

Ron Redfern said that the top editors and news directors are the coordinators of the multimedia packages in his organization. They create virtual teams that revolve around people who "get it."

The Daily Press and its partner television station broke a big investigative piece on Thursday, rather than Sunday, because the drama "ER" was the lead in to local television news that night. They were able to direct more than 100,000 eyes to the Sunday paper by exploiting the popularity of the program.

Kathy Trumbull said the Sun-Sentinel planned print stories to coincide with the television station's programming for sweeps month. The team responsible for the coverage created a budget for the month and placed aspects of the stories on the appropriate platforms.

Sun-Sentinel management has hired people out of television and radio to work with the multimedia effort at the newspaper. People with cross-platform skills are valuable because of their familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of each medium.

### **Finding new revenue opportunities**

Even with new products to promote, newspapers are fighting decreasing advertising budgets. Newspapers and television are exploring “promotional” and “sponsorship” dollars as other sources of revenue. Reid Ashe said Media General has sold several multi-media ad campaigns to state agencies. The campaigns have covered public health, highway safety and alcohol and drug abuse.

Other government agencies also have promotional budgets, but the real work comes in identifying them and navigating the approval process. It can take months to research the application process, prepare the proposal and make the presentation, and approval often doesn’t come quickly. Be aware of the measured pace of the process to award government contracts.

Kathy Trumbull said the Ft. Lauderdale partnership creates packages that include print, television, online and radio. The Sun-Sentinel is also adopting the broadcast model of day parting – selling ads for specific times of the day such as drive time or other specific programs – and intends to sell web site ads that way, as well. The hours – such as drive time – that draw more listeners or viewers command a higher rate.

The day-parting concept has also had an impact on placement of ads in the newspaper. The Sun-Sentinel has adapted the idea to sell guaranteed innovative ad positions. The

## **Tips on Choosing a Partner**

(Continued from page 7.)

developed about 50 more detailed questions. Then the individual members of the team and I took on specific questions to research.

After the research was collected, a committee member created a grid that organized the questions and answers in the following categories: Top Management, The Basics and Financial. The earlier categories of On the Web, Reputation and Bottom Line were folded into the three final questions we examined.

The transition team even went as far as developing a system to weight the questions by importance.

After the questions were answered and data was collected, team members studied the results and then held a lengthy discussion. Ultimately the members all agreed on the station to invite to become the newspaper’s partner.

Interestingly, the team did not select the No. 1 news station in the market. Instead, we selected the No. 2 station because its audience did not look as much like Capital-Journal readers as the top-rated station did.

Afterward, Fish called the selected station’s general manager to offer the partnership, which was accepted immediately.

From time to time, Fish and I have discussed what we did with editors who almost always argue this process was too detailed and time consuming (approximately three months). We strongly disagree.

First, you will be entering a relationship that can affect your revenues, your reputation and your internal morale. You want to be careful.

Second, a process like this forces the editor and newspaper to decide exactly what they want from a partnership – in other words, they develop their priorities, the areas that they think are important, etc.

Third, editors have asked us for the specific list of questions. We are glad to discuss the questions but believe each paper needs to go through its own process to develop its own questions.

Fourth, involving a transition team in decision-making gets a number of people involved in the process who will have to work with partners and brings more perspectives into the discussion for analysis and discussion.

John and I would be glad to discuss the process or any other aspects of our experience in developing cross-platform partnerships.

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program, however, must be tightly controlled, Trumbull said, to keep advertising from stepping into content. Editorial and advertising worked together to establish guidelines for where ads can run.

Another idea used by many of the newspapers represented at the roundtable is to create an event or promotion. In each situation, the companies decide which part of the event is best handled by which medium. They cross-sell the event or promotion and split the revenue. Some examples of events and promotions are:

- Outdoor expo – The Bristol Herald Courier has developed an outdoor expo for people who like hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation. The newspaper, television station and web site all promote the event. Revenue comes from ads, sponsorships and booths.
  - Health and fitness campaign – Memphis has been voted one of the most unhealthy cities in the country. The Commercial Appeal and its partners created a multi-media campaign to help area residents become healthier. Booth space at the health expo and ads in both the newspaper and TV were sold. And revenue was split 50/50 between the newspaper and the television station. The \$5 admission charge for the expo was donated to an organization concerned with diet and fitness.
  - Hurricane expo – Tampa's hurricane preparedness promotions include multi-media advertising packages, special sections, TV sponsorships, hurricane guides and, this year, a preparedness expo. Portions of the expo aired live on television and included county Emergency Management teams sharing important safety information, local vendor demonstrations - including how to use a generator safely and staff meteorologists conducted weather seminars. The expo also included a blood drive, police and fire equipment demonstrations plus Internet instruction sessions. The expo is offered as a bundle to sponsors.
  - Jefferson Awards to honor local volunteers – While in Topeka, John Fish and The Topeka Capital Journal produced a volunteer recognition program that included television spots profiling the volunteers, profiles in the newspaper, and video feed on the web site. The governor presented the awards at a special ceremony open to the public. Sponsors got great exposure through heavy promotion.
  - Magnificent Mile festival – A partnership with the Michigan Avenue Retailers Association to produce a festival celebrating Chicago's Magnificent Mile on the weekend before Thanksgiving. The event closes with fireworks. The partnership produces a live broadcast, replays, radio packages, print packages and booths on the plaza the day of the event. The festival attracts more than a million participants.
  - Health care – The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel produces a health care package every year. Newspaper staff members collaborate with television staff members to produce on-air spots, interactive web topics and a double truck in the newspaper. The content is advertorial. The partnership collaborates with a local hospital. Sponsorship packages are marketed to health- and beauty-related businesses such as spas, salons, Lasik eye clinics and cosmetic surgeons.
- Ron Redfern recommends that newspapers identify and focus on the sections

that are most popular. Create the content for the franchise you're known for and do it better than anyone else, he said.

Other participants have created revenue-generating packages in the following areas:

- Weather
- Investigative reports/public service
- Entertainment and "things to do"
- Crime and personal safety
- Gardening — Public Broadcasting underwrites segments of the Newport News gardening program.
- High school sports, especially football — Media General's Roanoke television station shoots video at many high school games, but has to boil it down to two minutes on air. Now, in partnership with Media General newspapers in nearby Lynchburg and Danville, the station posts all of the video on the web. The newspapers contribute statistics, texture and background to the coverage.

Naples sells one sponsor the "Friday night game of the week." The newspaper runs three house ads. The TV partner uses the game as a lead in. The partnership developed a logo for both TV and the newspaper. The logo includes the sponsor's name — for example, the "Credit Union" Game of the Week.

- Cooking — In Florence, S.C., a local personality started a feature inviting readers and viewers to send in a favorite recipe. The host chooses a recipe, goes to the person's home, and tapes them cooking it. It appears as a two-minute segment on television and becomes a column in the newspaper. It proves that unique, local content appeals to an advertiser's desire to become entrenched in the community.
- Special reports

- Breaking news
- Health — The Bristol TV health reporter produces stories that become part of a printed monthly health tab. The newspaper distributes it to doctors' offices both within and beyond its circulation area.

### **Web site partners and podcasting**

As part of their initial discussion, Ron Redfern and his convergence team from Media General properties decided to focus on content and the audience, choosing the platform to complement the content. Each of the available platforms — print, television, radio and web sites — has advantages.

Web sites lend themselves to interactive content and can present information that would be difficult to present any other way. For example, one newspaper provided a feature on its web site that allowed readers to type in their ZIP Codes and access a list of recent crimes committed in their neighborhoods. Another newspaper posts all the video shot of high school football games. Still another allows readers to post their own photos of community events.

James Gentry mentioned that audio is often neglected, even though it plays very well on web sites. Some newspapers are sending audio recorders out with their reporters.

Some newspapers that operate independent web sites have toyed with the idea that streaming video shot by newspaper photographers can help the newspaper operate exclusively of television. More newspapers are either sending photographers out with video cameras or hiring experienced videographers to shoot breaking news.

“Citizen reporters” in the community are a growing source for news. Newspapers and television stations are using photos and videos provided by witnesses of news stories. Cell phones with still photo and video capabilities put recording devices in the hands of most people. Early photos from the 9/11 disaster, for example, came from amateur videos and stills. Similarly, early dramatic coverage of the London subway bombings came from cell phones. Video shot on cell phones in smoke-filled, bombed-out subway cars gave a sense of immediacy that was both compelling and chilling.

David Underhill said [chicagotribune.com](http://chicagotribune.com), in conjunction with CLTV in Chicago is putting live video of events on the web. The video has no advance promotion, but the website works on the theory that people at work who have no access to television at their offices can watch breaking news on their computers. The website has logged as many as 8,000 viewers to individual web streams, which would be the equivalent of a couple of tenths of ratings increase in Chicago.

Some newspapers have begun providing podcasts – low-cost, informal audio recordings delivered to iPods and other MP3 portable devices. Freda Yarbrough of the Baton Rouge Advocate said her team began podcasting in May. A news update is produced between 9 and 10 a.m., and a sports report between 10 and 11 a.m. The newspaper also provides breaking news as needed and traffic updates before the afternoon drive time.

Frank “Butch” Hughes said The Commercial Appeal is redesigning its web site for a launch in the early fall. Plans include 60- to 90-second podcasts three or four times a day. The content will be sports, news and an

advertiser’s spot. A local radio station has offered to buy the podcasts. The radio station can save money by buying local spots from the newspaper rather than producing them in-house.

Freda Yarbrough said the Baton Rouge newspaper has plans to develop podcasts of audio tracks that sync to photo galleries. The first photo podcasts are planned for sports with a voice-over transition from photo to photo.

Roundtable participants reported that Verizon Wireless may be interested in forming partnerships with newspapers. Because Verizon is working on a high-speed wireless system that delivers video to cell phones, the company is looking for content and may be willing to pay newspapers for it. Weather and live, real-time traffic updates seem to be natural places to begin the service.

Most of the roundtable participants said they are beginning to cross-promote and cross-sell their web sites and their partners’ web sites, but it’s still an uphill climb. Everyone said more effort should be used to promote simple aspects of a partnership by printing reminders to visit web sites or to watch television programs.

### **Staffing and Compensation**

With staff members working in multimedia projects, staffing and compensation can become problems. Newspaper web site designers may work on the television web site as well as the newspaper site. If that happens, who pays them?

Freda Yarbrough said that even though The Advocate’s partner television station is owned by the same company, the operating

expenses are considered in different budgets. She authorizes some web site designers to work more than 40 hours, and the newspaper pays the overtime. By paying for four to six hours of overtime a week, she has been able to quadruple the page views on the entertainment portion of the web site. Having personnel dedicated to the project provides content worth viewing, and the increase in page views more than compensates for the overtime expense.

Some roundtable participants felt that it is generally easier for television people to work on newspapers than it is for newspaper employees to work on-air. In some cases, especially without TV training, newspaper reporters tend not to be overly concerned about their appearance or voice quality -- two things that are very important on television. The transition from print to broadcast can be difficult without prior planning. Conversely, few of the markets represented at the roundtable had examples of substantive television content appearing in print beyond the notable exception of weather pages.

Some partnerships spend time training newspaper reporters to work on camera. Veteran television reporters are often asked to conduct seminars on the finer points of working on video. Newspaper reporters are taped delivering a report and then see themselves as the audience will see them. Roundtable participants agreed that watching a video of themselves often convinces reporters to work on their diction or to wear makeup.

Some newspaper reporters, however, just do not have the skills or voices to work on television. Partnerships may allow television reporters to "interview" newspaper reporters on air, relieving the newspaper employee

from having to carry the segment. Roundtable participants caution newspapers about allowing reporters to wander from fact into opinion. Clear guidelines about the ethics of the reports can help keep journalistic integrity intact.

As more interaction occurs between partners, how should reporters think about their work? Are they doing extra work when they cross-report? Reid Ashe of Media General thinks not. He explained that Media General employees work for a media company and are merely moving from one medium to another when they work in multimedia. He added that developing multimedia skills is one way employees can increase their value to the company. "If you can write like Hemingway, you don't need multimedia skills," he said. But if employees aren't writing like Hemingway, multimedia skills can help them advance in the company.

Ron Redfern said that companies need to develop a new tier of job descriptions for those with multimedia skills. To begin the process, they must define skills and competencies for multimedia.

Competition in the new structure isn't just within newspapers anymore. Newspapers are competing with television and radio for employees. Bruce Hartmann said he has lost two sports reporters to radio because radio pays better.

Compensation can be especially complicated when "personalities" get involved. Television is used to negotiating with news anchors or reporters who are "stars" in their community; newspapers aren't. Some media companies have grandfathered special deals with television personalities, particularly sports personalities.

Newspapers deal with the “names” in the profession, such as columnists and opinion writers, differently.

It’s clear, however, that personalities can attract an audience with strong opinions. Conflicts between newspaper and radio or television have been created when a radio talk-show host, for example, regularly blasts the newspaper for its coverage or editorial stance. How much should the newspaper take without responding? And if the paper responds, who should do it and how? Should the newspaper ask for help from corporate? Participants of the roundtable, while acknowledging the problem, agreed that each property must answer those questions individually.

### **Gold at the end of the rainbow**

So what are the challenges for newspapers?

Sherry Chisenhall:

“We’re behind the curve in understanding how people use media. While newspaper circulation has declined, Real Simple magazine has increased its circulation by 25%.”

Freda Yarborough:

“The public has left us behind. We need to get ahead of them.”

Ron Redfern:

“We’ve limited ourselves to print delivery. We have to learn to change this.”

James Gentry:

“A whole generation of youngsters has grown up learning to publish on the web. They are not going to need us.”

Convergence of media may be the answer – or a least an important step in the right direction.

“It’s how we fight back against audience fragmentation,” Reid Ashe said.

Ronnie Matthews agreed: “It’s about aggregating audiences.”

All agreed that newspapers have to figure out how to marry traditional media with newer ways to communicate with audiences that demand immediate, interactive, on-demand information from a variety of sources.

One key business advantage is the industry’s unrivaled capability to gather information and report news. But for newspapers to successfully compete in a digital age, their managers may have to shift their thinking and develop new business models.

Sherry Chisenhall suggests that newspapers stop defining themselves as “newspaper products,” and start thinking of themselves as “information products.”

“We may have to get over the idea of being competitive,” Kathy Turnbull said. “The next frontier is to start working together, to aggregate our content.”

And as David Thompson said, it might be as basic as giving readers what they want, when they want, and how they want it . . .