

How Media Companies Embrace the Process of Innovation

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About the International News Media Association (INMA)

INMA (www.inma.org) is a global community of market-leading news media companies reinventing how they engage audiences and grow revenue in a multi-media environment. The INMA community consists of 7,000+ executives at 600+ news media companies 80+ countries. Headquartered in Dallas, INMA has offices in San Salvador, São Paulo, Antwerp, and New Delhi.

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Introduction

There is a difference between news media companies that embed the process of innovation into their companies and those that dabble in innovative ideas. The former is a culture change and the focus of this strategic report.

Justin Ferrell, a former art director at The Washington Post and currently director of fellowships at Stanford's University's d.school, offered this "simple roadmap to how to create an innovative organisation" to a group of INMA members at a recent visit to the school:

1. **Creative confidence:** Do you feel the self-efficacy to be able to look at a problem and come up with a different way to solve it?
2. **Creative agency:** Put your creative confidence into action and apply it in a multi-disciplinary team.
3. **Creative outputs:** This is the package, product, or service.
4. **Creative impact:** If you do all that well, you have impact in the world.

"This is an inside-out model," Ferrell says. "It moves from internal to external. If you feel like you're creative and can take the personal risk to try something different, then that leads to this. If you want to be here [impact], what are you doing here [confidence]?"

Yes, even dabbling in innovation leads to cool products or differences in the ways companies do business. But innovation within the process is an entirely different beast.

"Most media companies are way too outcome-focused," Ferrell says. "Every product you create is going to be superseded by someone else. If you're outcome-focused, you're going to be limited by this never-ending cycle of outcomes. But if you're process-focused, that yields more interesting outcomes and more outcomes than being outcome-focused."

For example, when news media companies decide to build a new app, the first thing they do is start working on the app. Ferrell points out: “You never stop and say, ‘Should it be an app?’ When you’re really good at what you do, you think you know what needs to be done.”

The 17 case studies featured in this report have been surfaced as “best in class” from INMA awards competitions from the past two years. They are examples of news media companies around the world that are good at what they do — good enough to now ask, “What needs to be done?”

In these case studies, we see three models for innovation:

1. ***Innovation as a seedling for ideas:*** Berlingske Media, The Dallas Morning News, The Economist, Gannett, La Presse+, Toronto Star.
2. ***Connecting your brand to innovation:*** Chicago Tribune, The Irish Times, Sanoma Oyj.
3. ***Innovation as a cultural accelerator:*** El Colombiano, Die Welt, Expressen, Fairfax Media, Independent News & Media, MittMedia, Storyful, The Times of India.

“We’re only limited by the vision we put out there,” Ferrell says. “We need to move away from a hierarchical model, instead doing bottom-up leadership and setting up conditions and a way of working that allows for interesting outcomes to emerge. [Employees] have to operate in a hospitable environment, in a culture and a place where you aren’t going to get fired for taking a risk. Until people feel comfortable with that, you can’t change.” ■