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Future Newsrooms Study 2026

*A global benchmark of how newsrooms are changing,
what they are prioritising and where they are going next*



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Foreword

Dear colleagues,

What characterises the world's most successful news organisations is a relentless commitment to evolving their newsrooms to meet ever-growing audience expectations. That has always been true, but the speed at which it is now required has changed everything.

In today's AI-driven era, editorial tools, audience needs, and the competitive landscape are shifting at a pace that few of us anticipated even two or three years ago. The questions facing editorial leaders are no longer abstract. How do you reshape a newsroom culture built for one era to deliver distinctive, relevant journalism in another? How do you invest wisely when the ground keeps moving? And how do you bring your people with you?

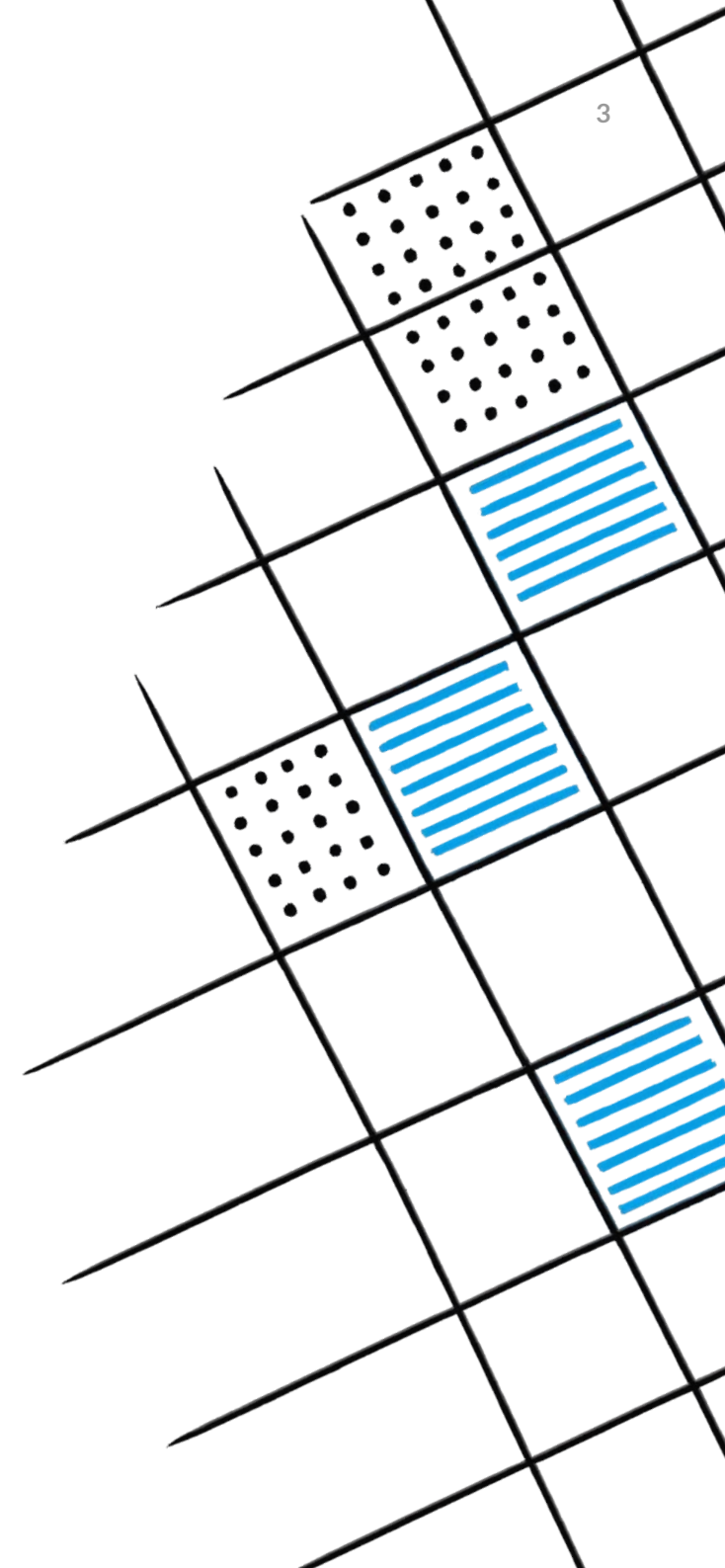
This report, produced in collaboration with FT Strategies, is our attempt to provide an evidence-based answer. The Future Newsrooms Study examines how editorial leaders are defining and executing strategy, integrating AI and automation into workflows, evolving their organisational structures, shifting investment priorities, and identifying the skills that will define successful newsrooms in the years ahead.

But this is more than a one-time snapshot. Our ambition is to build a recurring global benchmark, a resource that newsroom leaders can return to year after year for rigorous, comparable insights into strategy, operating models, and technology readiness. Understanding how newsrooms navigate structural change, and learning honestly from the experiences of peers, has never been more important.

I hope this first edition proves both useful and genuinely thought-provoking, and that you will be part of the conversation as it develops.



Stig Ørskov
CEO, WAN-IFRA



Introduction to the Future Newsrooms Study

After thirty years of working in newsrooms, my fascination with workflows, the production and craft of journalism has never subsided. There is an equal fascination with how newsrooms respond to pressure, and the relentless pace of change – especially with tech and information.

As media business models have imploded and content has become ever more ubiquitous and abundant, it is becoming clear that any newsroom operating on the old playbook of optimising purely for reach and reactive, breaking news, is actively managing its own decline.

The data in this report – which will be the first of an annual research effort – confirms this, and provides a stark wake-up call: our newsrooms are not well prepared for a disrupted future.

This shouldn't be all that surprising. A combination of short-term targets and thinking, the determination to cling to “the old ways and the good old days” and the reluctance to embrace change is well known. Even the most resilient editors will tell of the constant battles, dogged resistance to change and the persistent

and damaging view that commercial and tech colleagues are arms length frenemies, best left on their side of the church / state divide. The report shows this scepticism is also tainting the process of accepting AI tools and opportunities.

We talk a grand game about audience-first journalism, yet our workflows tell a different story. About 64% of newsrooms still design for a single legacy channel and adapt them elsewhere. Only 21% begin commissioning with a defined user need or specific audience group in mind. We are still letting destination, rather than the audience, dictate our purpose.

Operational structures are throttling transformation. Leaders acknowledge future sustainability hinges on audience engagement, but reporters spend a meagre 11% of their week on post-publication work like community building. Our organisational structures simply don't support our ambitions.

Meanwhile, production drag eats up 38% of their time – despite the wide availability of workflow automation solutions in media production, that arrived long before AI even entered the frame.

The data shows a willingness to spend on technology but a documented failing to upskill the humans meant to wield it. An astonishing 61% of newsrooms offer no formal training for new skills, and 57% have no AI representation in the newsroom. There is also a lack of confidence in future preparedness.

But the report also contains an undeniable blueprint for success. Editorial growth stems directly from strategic discipline. Moving away from reactive structures yields immediate dividends: 32% of newsrooms have achieved alignment between their strategy and daily coverage and when these aligned newsrooms bring audience and platform leaders to the strategy-setting table, they unlock a massive competitive advantage in strategic maturity.

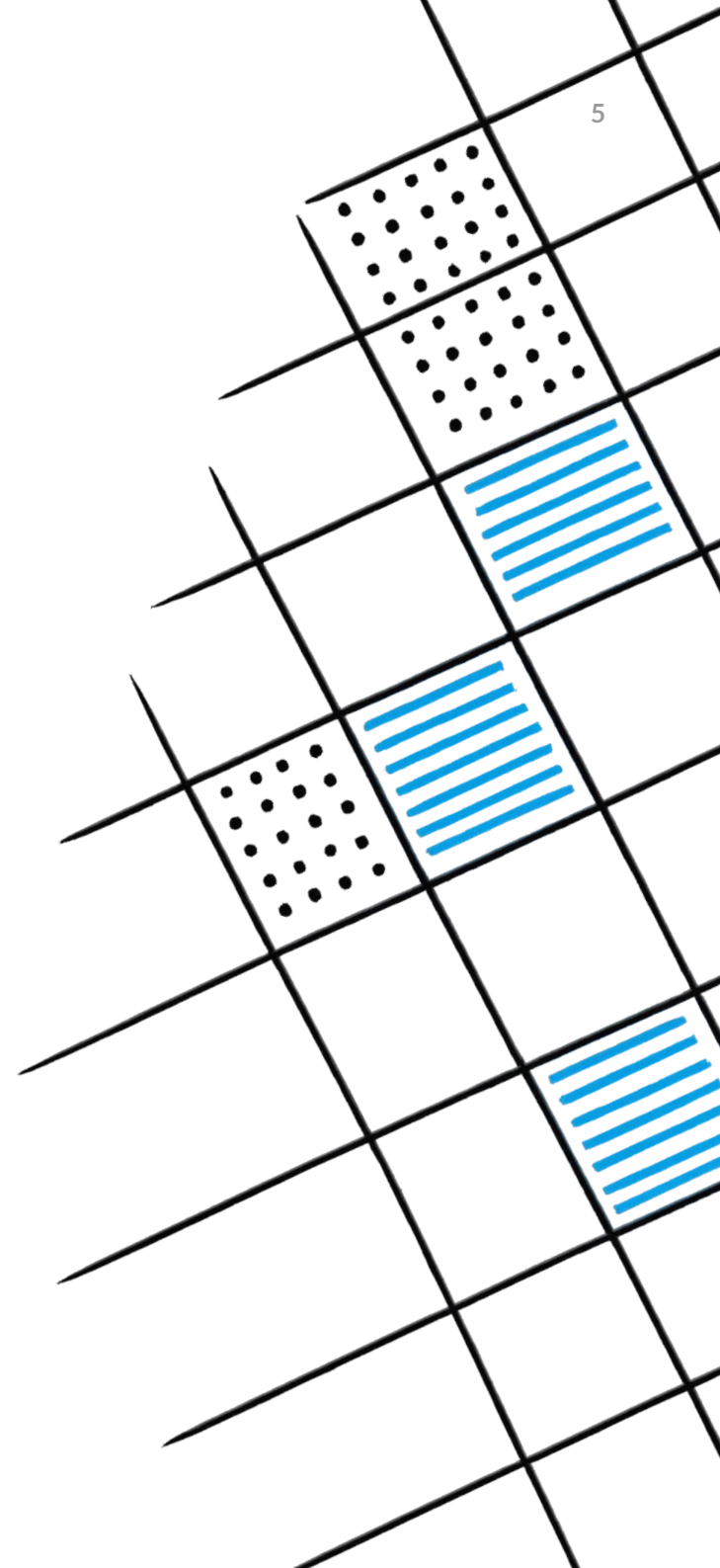
This seminal report will serve as a baseline for newsrooms looking for a step up to face the challenges, and a brighter future ahead.



Lisa MacLeod
Director, FT Strategies

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Executive summary

When generic content becomes easier to produce in an AI era, newsroom advantage shifts toward what is harder to replicate: original reporting, trusted relationships and tighter audience–journalist communities. Our Future Newsrooms Study, which draws on 448 survey responses from newsrooms across 86 countries, shows that newsrooms broadly understand the direction of travel — engagement, clearer trust signals, AI, audience focus and new formats. Still, they face four interconnected gaps that prevent them from turning understanding into consistent execution: a strategy gap, an audience trust gap, a capability gap and a skills gap.

◆ Newsroom strategy is becoming more audience-led, but execution still lags.

Audience engagement is the most commonly selected top-three goal for 2026, while business sustainability is the highest weighted priority. Yet alignment remains uneven: 25% of newsrooms are primarily reactive, 42% show loose alignment and 32% show structured alignment between overall strategy and coverage decisions. This alignment gap is a recurring theme across the report.

◆ Audience and platform leadership are becoming markers of strategic maturity.

Only about 30% of newsrooms involve audience or platform leaders in strategy setting, but those that do are more likely to align coverage with strategy.

◆ Editorial growth depends on discipline as much as revenue model.

About 38% of newsrooms reported editorial budget growth, while 35% faced cost cutting. Newsrooms that regularly discontinue low-impact initiatives are nearly twice as likely to report budget growth.

◆ Audience-first rhetoric still often runs through destination-first workflows.

Most newsrooms still develop stories for a primary channel first, then adapt them elsewhere. Just 21% begin with a defined audience need or audience group.

◆ Trust is moving from institutional authority to relational signals.

Reporters spend 38% of their time on production, but only 11% on post-publication work such as community engagement. This limits the ability to build visible expertise and direct audience relationships.

◆ AI is being adopted mainly as an efficiency tool.

Time saved is the most common AI success metric, cited by 42% of newsrooms.

◆ The biggest AI barriers are people-based, not technical.

The top three barriers to adoption are skills gaps (61%), cultural resistance (52%) and unclear use cases (45%).

◆ Future readiness depends on skills, not just structures.

Confidence on whether today's skills are fit for purpose falls when leaders look three years ahead. Priority skills include tech-enabled journalism, audience engagement and niche subject expertise.

◆ The creator shift is outpacing newsroom support systems.

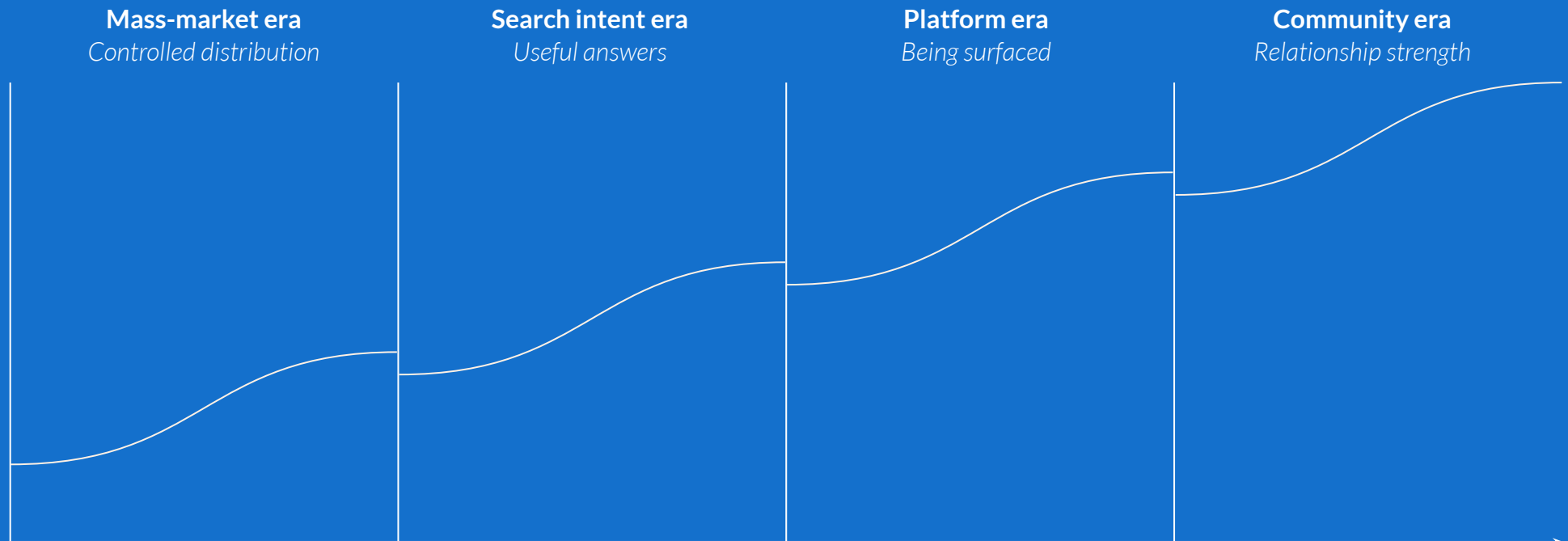
Most newsrooms are trying to make existing staff more 'creator-like', but 68% of those pursuing this route offer limited training to do so.

◆ Distinctiveness is moving toward visual and community-led journalism.

Explainers are the leading storytelling approach (74%) and short-form video the top format priority (79%). Audience forums/live events has also emerged as an important format for more than half (51%) of newsrooms.

Community as the differentiator in an age of content abundance

When generic content becomes easier to produce, the advantage shifts to what is harder to replicate: original journalism, trusted relationships and communities that give audiences a reason to return.



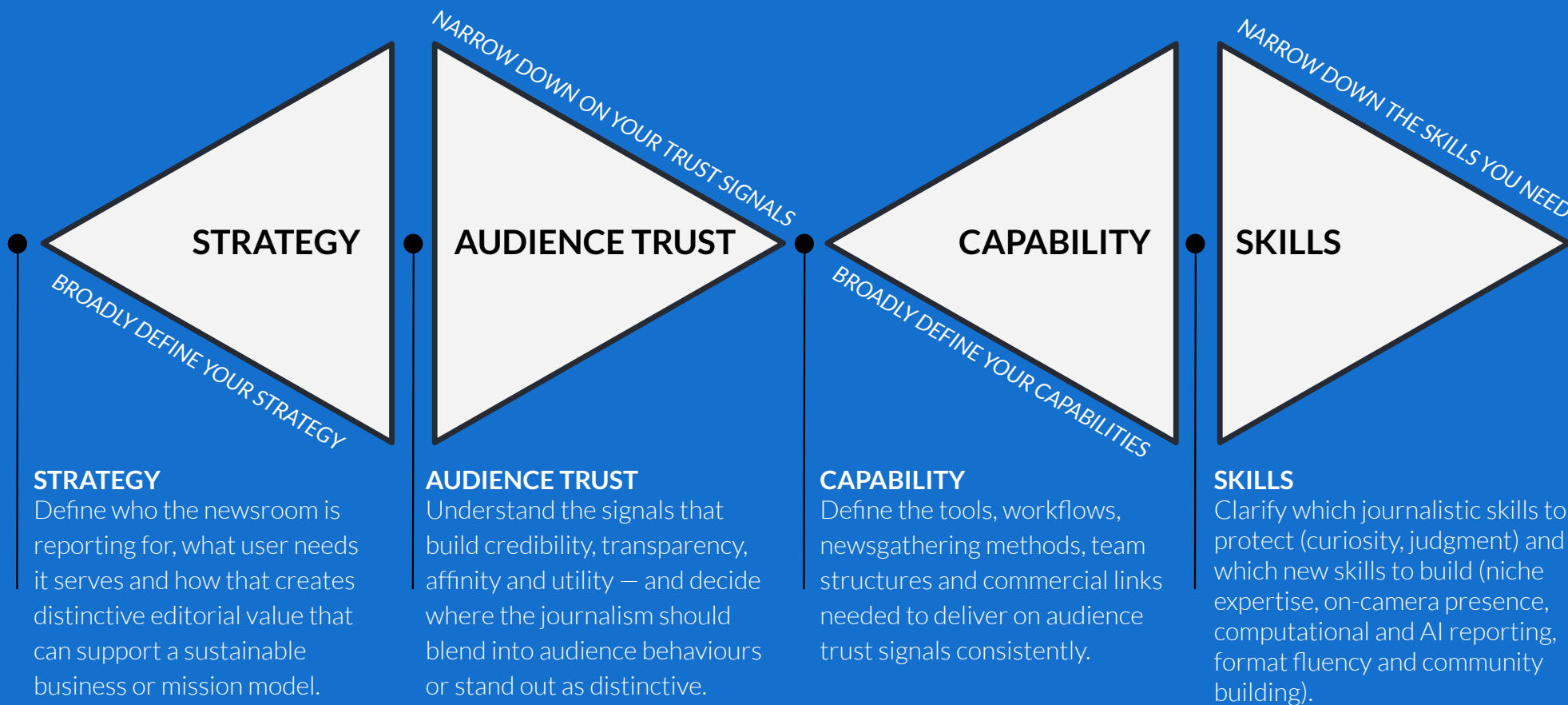
Reach, scarcity and authority defined advantage. Strategy was narrow, trust was institutional and endorsed with the heft of print branding and presence, operations followed desk-based production rhythms and skills centred on core journalistic craft.

Advantage shifted to being discoverable at the moment of need. Newsrooms became more demand-driven, answering users' queries with trust built through relevance, authority and expertise.

Advantage shifted to visibility across feeds, platforms, aggregators and AI interfaces. Newsrooms had to signal trust quickly and develop platform-native formats and presentation skills.

The lessons from each era remain important and continue to shape news models. But the new advantage shifts toward building trusted networks and communities around specific niche topics, supported by specialised editorial and product teams.

To compete in this environment, newsrooms will need to redefine some of their core assumptions

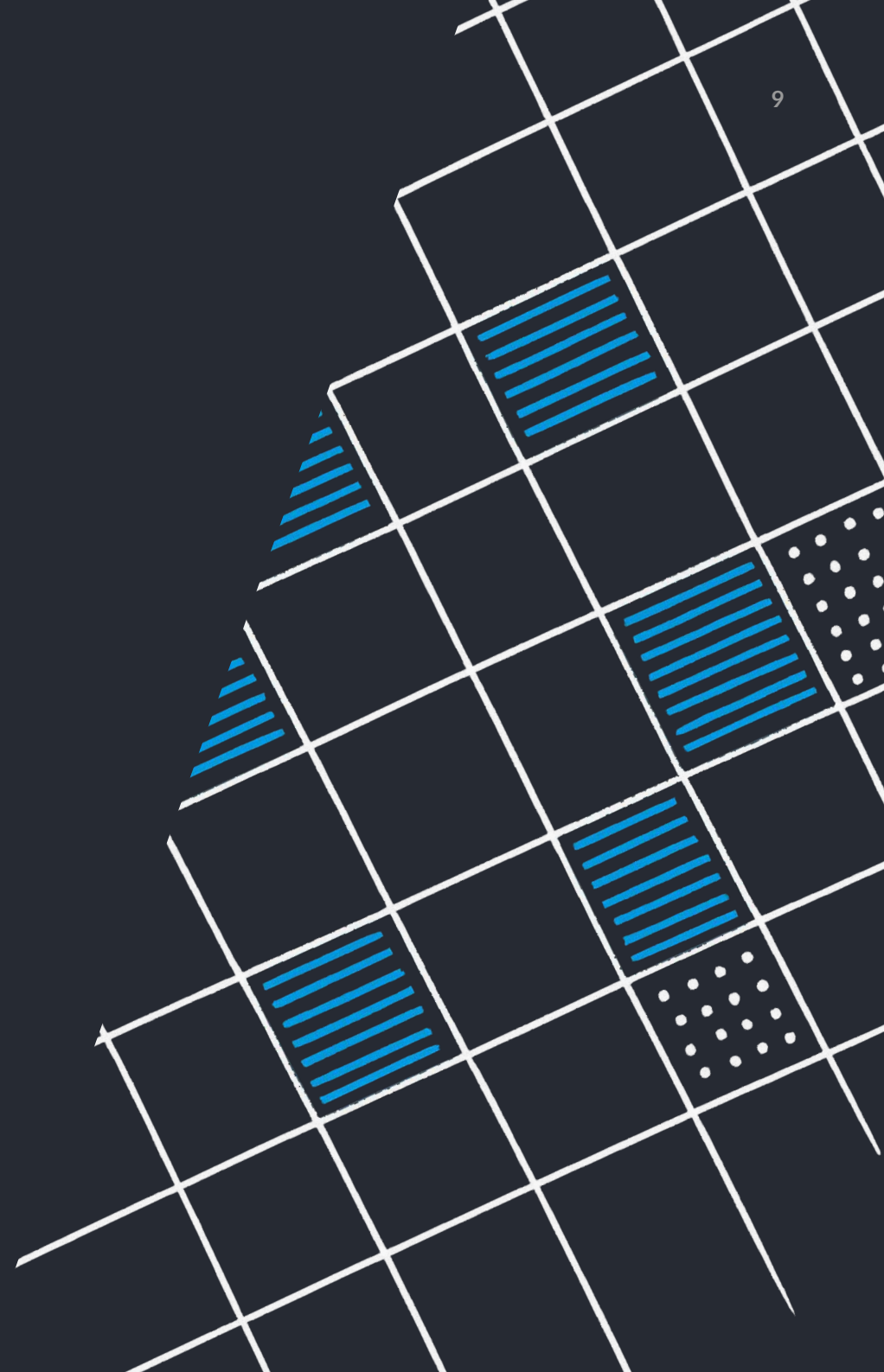


How to read this report

This report follows the four chapters – strategy, audience trust, capability and skills – showing where gaps are emerging today and where newsrooms are heading next.



Methodology

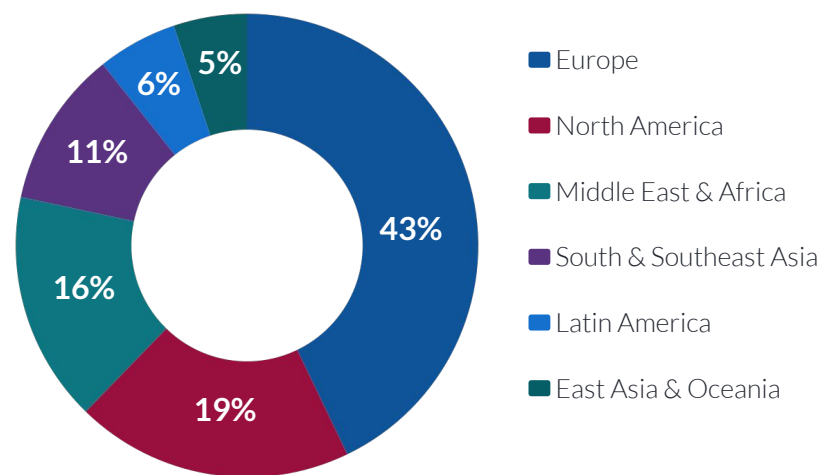


The inaugural Future Newsrooms Study features survey data from 448 unique newsroom respondents across 86 countries

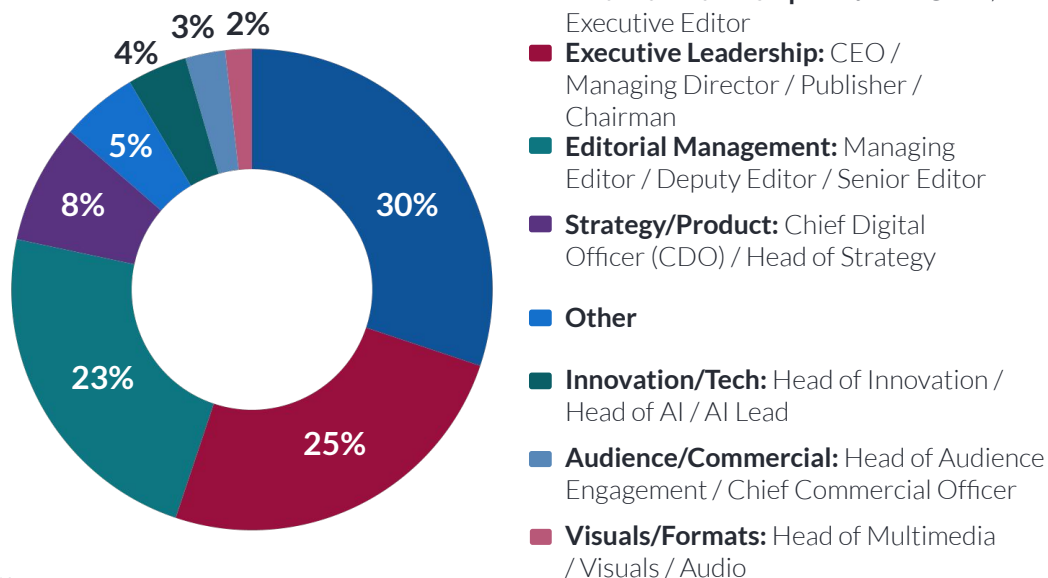
The quantitative findings in this report are based on a survey that ran from 19 March 2026–24 April 2026. Participants were recruited via email outreach, LinkedIn promotion and direct invitations from FT Strategies and WAN-IFRA. The survey featured 45 questions across seven themes: Strategy; Editorial Spend; Newsroom Structure, Talent and Skills; Workflows and Processes; Technology and AI; Emerging Voices and Creators; and New Verticals and Formats. We analysed 377 fully completed responses and a further 71 partial responses from newsrooms that completed at least the entire Strategy section.

Responses were collected from newsrooms across 86 countries. This year’s sample skews toward European newsrooms (43%), followed by North America, the Middle East & Africa, South & Southeast Asia, Latin America and East Asia & Oceania. Most respondents held either an editorial leadership role – such as Editor-in-Chief, Executive Editor, Managing Editor or Deputy Editor – or an executive leadership position such as Chief Executive Officer, Managing Director or Publisher. Additional responses came from strategy, innovation, technology, audience and commercial leaders.

Survey participants by region



Survey participants by role



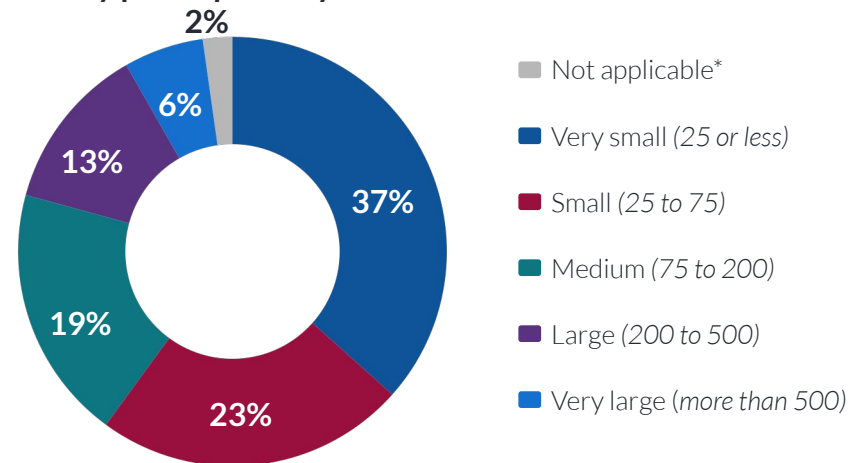
Questions: What country is your organisation primarily based in? n=448; Which of these positions best describes your role? n=448

Notes: Individual countries have been grouped and coded into regions; submissions from newsrooms whose organisation could not be located online were discounted

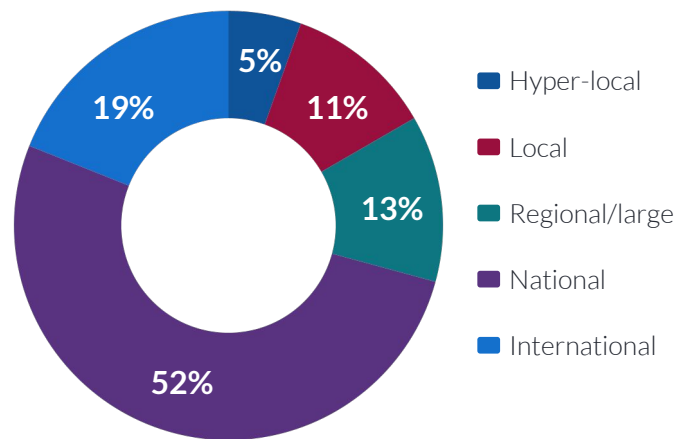
Our survey respondents skewed toward newsrooms with a national, generalist focus

Our respondents came from newsrooms of diverse sizes. We asked respondents to approximate the number of full-time staff at their organisation overall as well as the number working in their newsroom specifically: the median overall organisation size was 101, while the median newsroom size was 50. Most respondents belonged to broad, generalist newsrooms rather than specialist or aggregators. In terms of editorial focus, the sample was dominated by outlets that publish national news coverage, including several of the largest and most trusted news organisations identified in [Reuters Institute rankings](#) across different countries.

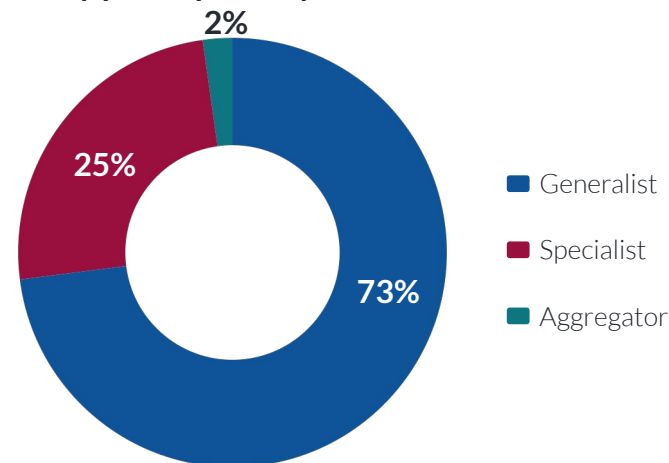
Survey participants by newsroom size



Survey participants by geographic scope of original coverage



Survey participants by editorial focus



Questions: Please describe how many full-time staff you have in total and in your newsroom specifically. *n*=448; How would you describe your newsroom's editorial focus in terms of subject matter? *n*=448; What is the primary geographic scope of your newsroom's original coverage? *n*=438

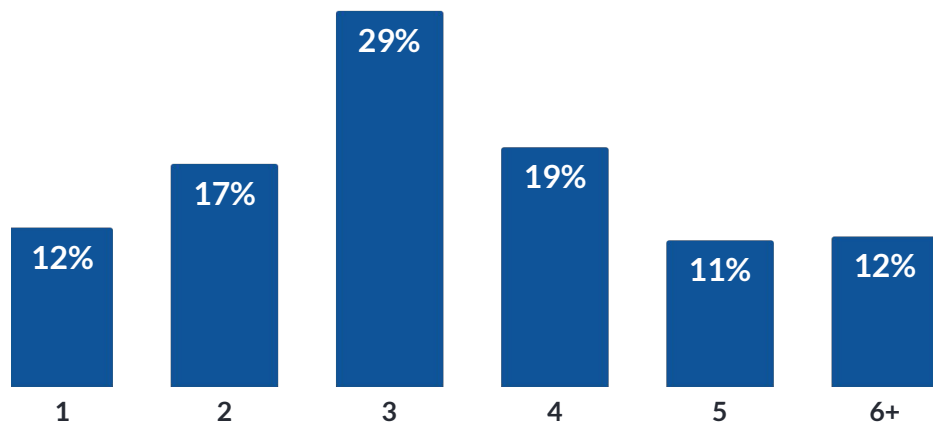
Notes: Aggregators were not asked to indicate their primary geographic scope; *'Not applicable' refers to survey respondents who did not provide valid figures

Most respondents reported relying on multiple revenue streams, led largely by advertising and subscriptions

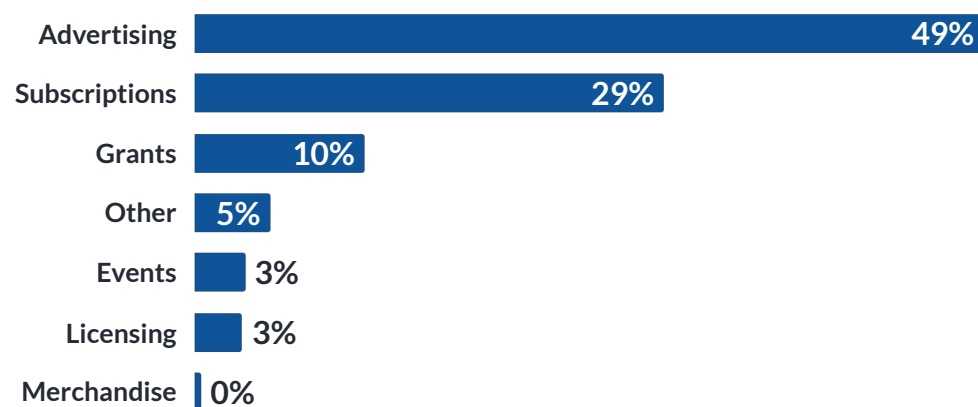
In our survey, we asked newsrooms to rank a list of revenue streams in order of importance to their business. We refer to **reader-first** and **ad-first newsrooms** based on whether a newsroom ranked reader revenue (eg subscriptions, membership or contributions) or advertising (eg programmatic, direct and branded content), respectively, as the most important. Newsrooms that ranked other types first have been categorised as **other-first newsrooms**.

The characteristics of our survey participants correlate with what other industry-wide research has found: according to the [News Sustainability Project](#), most newsrooms have three to four significant revenue streams. Meanwhile, the [World Press Trends Outlook 2025-2026](#) identified advertising and subscriptions as the dominant sources of publisher revenue globally, with smaller contributions coming from areas such as events, licensing, grants and more.

Survey sample distribution based on number of revenue streams



Survey sample distribution based on most important revenue stream



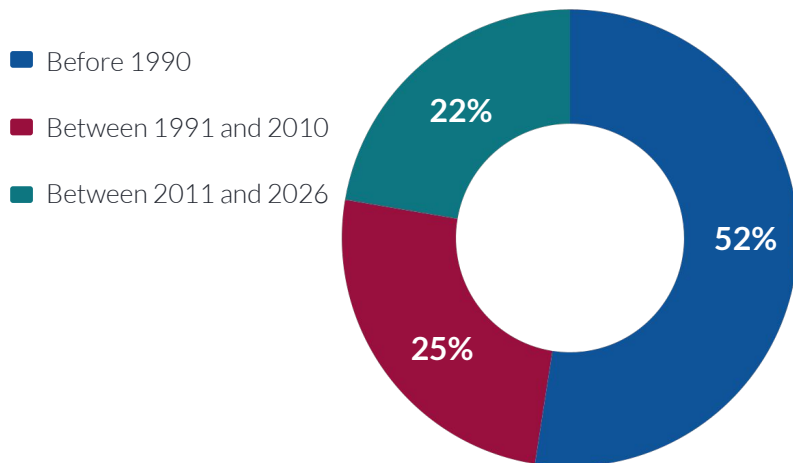
Question: How is your business funded? Rank the revenue streams in order of their importance. n=448

The majority of respondents came from organisations founded before 1990 and were either independent or part of a group

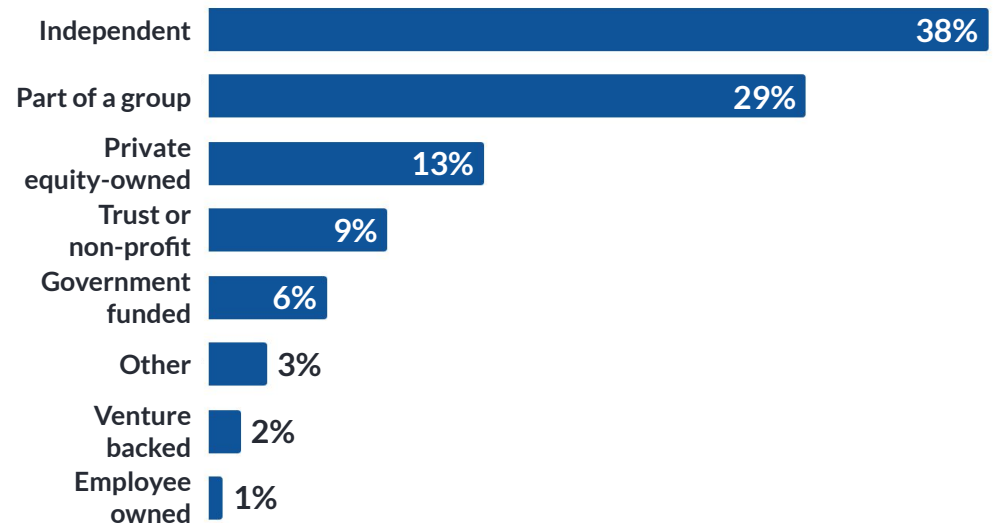
We asked survey participants to tell us when their organisation was founded and have grouped them into three approximated categories: newsrooms that belong to organisations founded before 1990, between 1991 and 2010 and between 2011 and 2026 are defined as **legacy newsrooms**, **dot-com era newsrooms** and **digital-native newsrooms**, respectively, throughout this report where relevant.

We also asked each respondent to select the business setup that best describes their organisation’s business model. Most organisations were either independently owned (38%) or operated as part of a wider group or conglomerate (29%).

Survey participants by founding year of the organisation



Survey participants by ownership type



Questions: When was your organisation founded? *n*=448; Which setup best describes your organisation's business model? *n*=448
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding

To complement the quantitative survey, we established a 10-person advisory board and interviewed 16 editorial leaders

To help guide our approach, research and findings, we convened a **10-member advisory board** made up of editorial, strategy, innovation, product and AI leaders from across the news industry and within academia. Board members participated in one-hour qualitative interviews, reviewed the survey questionnaire and joined a collective feedback session to discuss the quantitative results.

Advisory board members:

- ◆ **David Walmsley**, Editor-in-Chief, The Globe and Mail, and President, World Editors Forum
- ◆ **Dmitry Shishkin**, Independent Media Adviser
- ◆ **Dr. François Nel**, Director of the Media Innovation Studio, University of Lancashire
- ◆ **Gina Chua**, Executive Director, Tow-Knight Center at CUNY, and Executive Editor at Large, Semafor
- ◆ **Hannah Sarney**, Editorial Product Director and Executive Editor, Financial Times
- ◆ **Jim Egan**, Senior Research Associate, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford
- ◆ **Dr. Joe Ageyo**, Editor-in-Chief, Nation Media Group
- ◆ **Lyn-Yi Chung**, Chief Editor, Growth and Innovation, Mediacorp
- ◆ **Phoebe Connelly**, Organisational and Social Psychology, London School of Economics
- ◆ **Renée Kaplan**, Head of Substack, France

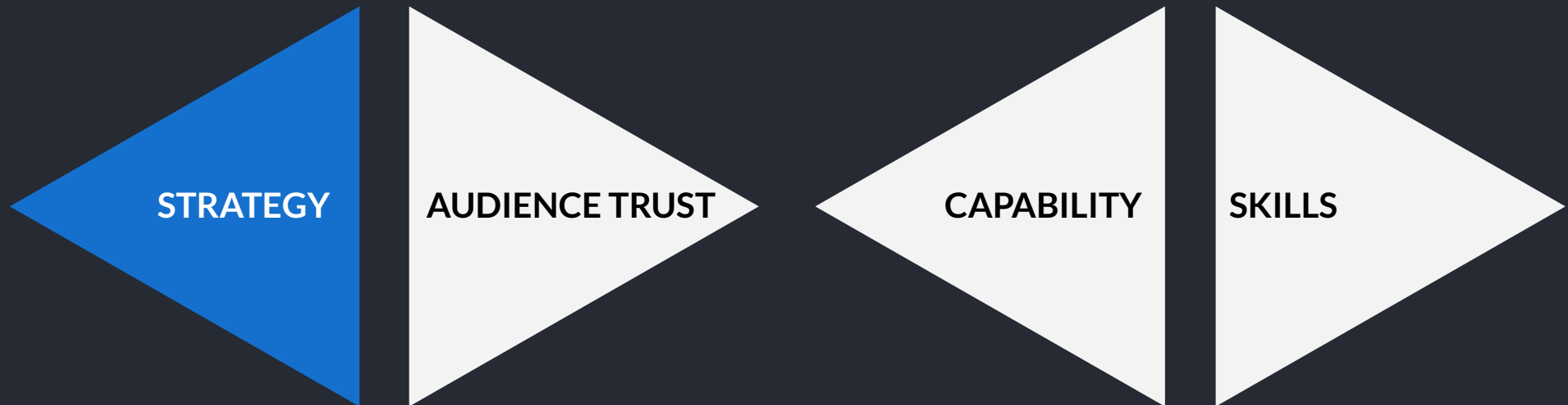
As part of the study, we also conducted **interviews with 16 editorial and executive leaders** to better understand newsroom strategies, operational challenges, success stories and emerging case studies across the industry. All interviews were conducted virtually, on background and kept anonymous unless participants gave explicit permission to be quoted in the final report.

Interview participants included:

- ◆ **Roles:** Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, Head of News, newsroom strategist, AI and innovation leaders and publishing executives
- ◆ **Regions:** North America, Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia

Finally, we partnered with the Journalism Innovation and Leadership Programme (JILeaders) at the Media Innovation Studio, University of Lancashire, to run a 90-minute workshop on 27 April 2026. 20 publishers from eight countries, across four continents, participated. The session explored three core themes: editorial decision making and strategy, the future of audience and strategy roles and AI pain points across editorial workflows. Insights from the workshop have helped guide the report's framing and thinking.

Chapter 1: The Strategy Gap



The Strategy Gap

Moving from strategy as a silo to strategy as an everyday practice

DEFINITION



We view strategy as the long-term priorities of the newsroom that inform its direction. Key considerations of formulating a strategy include a precise understanding of **who the newsroom serves, what distinctive value it provides and how resulting editorial choices reinforce** the first two components in order to support broader business, audience or mission goals.

THE GAP WE FOUND



Newsroom leaders say they have a strategy, **but the connection between editorial priorities, business goals and everyday decision making must be strengthened.** Where this alignment is weaker, newsrooms appear less prepared for the future — particularly when strategy does not translate into portfolio discipline, audience choices and clear journalistic decisions.

WHERE NEWSROOMS ARE HEADING



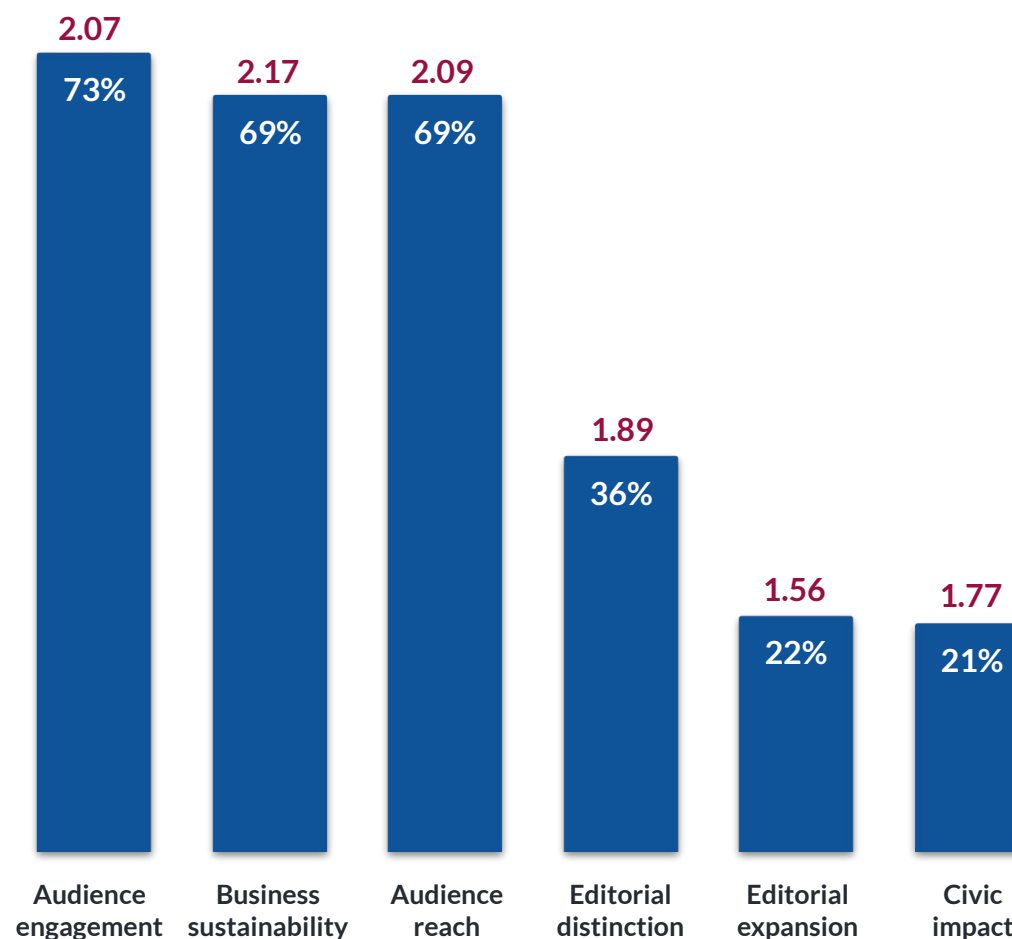
Future-ready newsrooms are building a clearer strategy cascade: **from clear ambition, to audience choice, to distinctive value, to everyday practice.** This means newsrooms do not need to chase every platform, but must define how their owned platforms can become unique destinations — and how that value extends beyond the brand into stronger networks of user communities, journalists, formats and products.

Newsrooms are recognising that engagement is the strategic lever that may unlock financial sustainability more than reach

Newsrooms are being confronted by a digital media landscape defined by increasing fragmentation, disintermediation, algorithmic volatility and pressure on search – a reality that makes relying on the old playbook of optimising for reach far more challenging. Leaders are shifting their goals accordingly. When we asked them to rank up to three priorities for their newsroom this year, we found that **audience engagement most frequently appears as a top priority for newsrooms, while business sustainability emerges as the most important goal by weighting.** Together, these findings suggest that engagement ought to be considered the mechanism through which financially viable news businesses are built.

This industry transition has long been underway in subscription-led news businesses, with newsrooms like the [Financial Times](#) and [Der Spiegel](#) evangelising the use of metrics that measure reader engagement to define success. But **even newsrooms whose most important revenue stream is advertising are recognising that reach alone is insufficient unless it can be used as an input into deeper relationship-building strategies.** Of the newsrooms that selected advertising as the most important source of funding to their business, more than half (52%) selected both engagement and reach as top-three priorities, suggesting that they are redefining the role that scale plays in achieving a sustainable business going forward.

Top newsroom goals in 2026, overall (%) and weighted (#)



Question: What are your top goals for your newsroom in 2026? Please rank up to three priorities, in the order of importance (1=most important). n=447

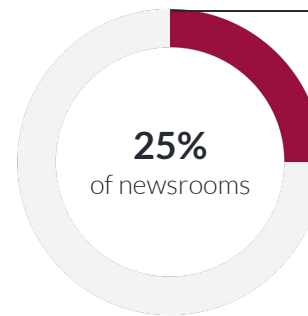
Notes: Weighting calculated by assigning scores of 3, 2 and 1 to goals based on their ranking as first, second or third respectively; weighted scores for audience engagement, audience reach, editorial expansion and civic impact have been changed from 2.09 to 2.07, 2.07 to 2.09, 1.77 to 1.56 and 1.56 to 1.77, respectively, due to mislabelled data after print release

One quarter of newsrooms still do not factor strategic priorities into their decisions about editorial coverage

Strategy does not succeed without thoughtful execution. In most businesses, this is considered conventional wisdom. But the news industry appeared to resist formalising strategy as it enjoyed favourable financial conditions and practised a tradition of commercial non-interference in editorial matters. Under greater economic pressures, there was a recognition that newsrooms (whose outputs power the commercial side of the business) must be more attuned to the strategic objectives of the wider organisation in order for journalism to be a financially viable practice.

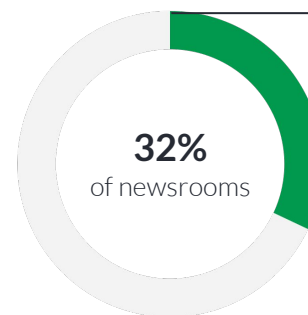
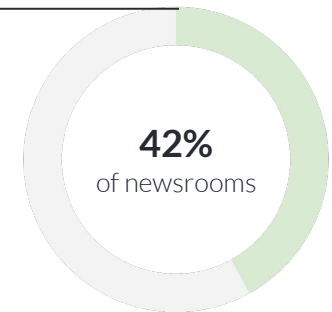
We use the term ‘alignment’ to measure the extent to which strategic priorities actually cascade into editorial decisions. What we found is that **a strategy-to-execution gap persists: 25% of newsrooms still make editorial decisions largely through instinct.** Achieving synchronicity between strategic and editorial cadences is critical – without true alignment between the wider business and the newsroom, strategy risks remaining a plan on paper rather than an operational reality.

Levels of alignment between strategy and editorial



Primarily reactive: Editorial priorities are largely driven by immediate news events and editor judgment, with little explicit reference to the wider business’ organisational strategic priorities.

Loose alignment: Organisational strategy informs high-level newsroom priorities, but day-to-day commissioning decisions are mostly made independently by editors.



Structured alignment: Strategic priorities are regularly communicated and considered when shaping editorial coverage, including which topics we invest in and which formats/audiences are prioritised.

“It’s not enough to give people the strategy, to tell them ‘What are we doing?’ and ‘Where do we go?’ You have to have that on the street, every day, in each conference. You have to ask, ‘Is this what we want from our strategy?’”

Christian Tretbar
Editor-in-Chief, Tagesspiegel



Question: Which statement best describes how your newsroom leaders reflect strategic priorities into editorial coverage decisions? n=441
Note: Respondents who selected ‘Other’ or ‘Unsure/I do not know’ have been omitted

Newsrooms with the greatest alignment feature more diverse seats at the strategy-setting table

In general, strategy setting continues to be the domain of:

- ◆ **A small group of decision makers:** 62% of newsrooms said 1-2 roles were involved in deciding on long-term editorial vision and strategic priorities for their newsroom, compared to 32% who said that 3-4 roles were involved and 5% who said that at least 5 roles played a part in this.
- ◆ **Traditional leadership functions:** Typical newsroom leaders such as Editors-in-Chief and Managing Editors are the most frequently cited editorial and strategic vision makers, followed by corporate executives such as a parent company, board of directors, CEO, publisher or company owner.

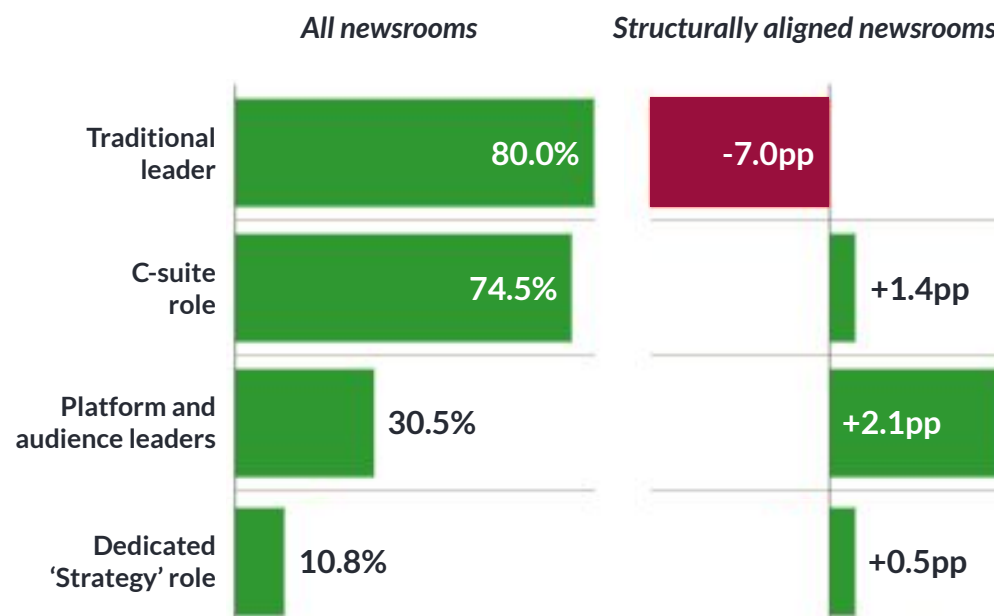
But there is evidence that **the greatest levels of alignment are driven by having non-traditional roles at the strategy-setting table:** 30% of our overall sample had platform and audience leaders involved in strategy setting, but 33% of structurally aligned newsrooms said they featured these roles in this activity – a difference of 2.1 percentage points. Similarly, dedicated Strategy functions, while making up 10.8% of strategy-setting roles on average, also feature slightly more in the newsrooms that are most aligned.

“It's not just what roles, but what place at the decision-making table do these roles have and how is that formalised in the decision-making structure around strategy and investment at an organisation?”

Renée Kaplan
Advisory Board Member



Strategy-setting roles, all newsrooms (%) vs structurally aligned (pp)

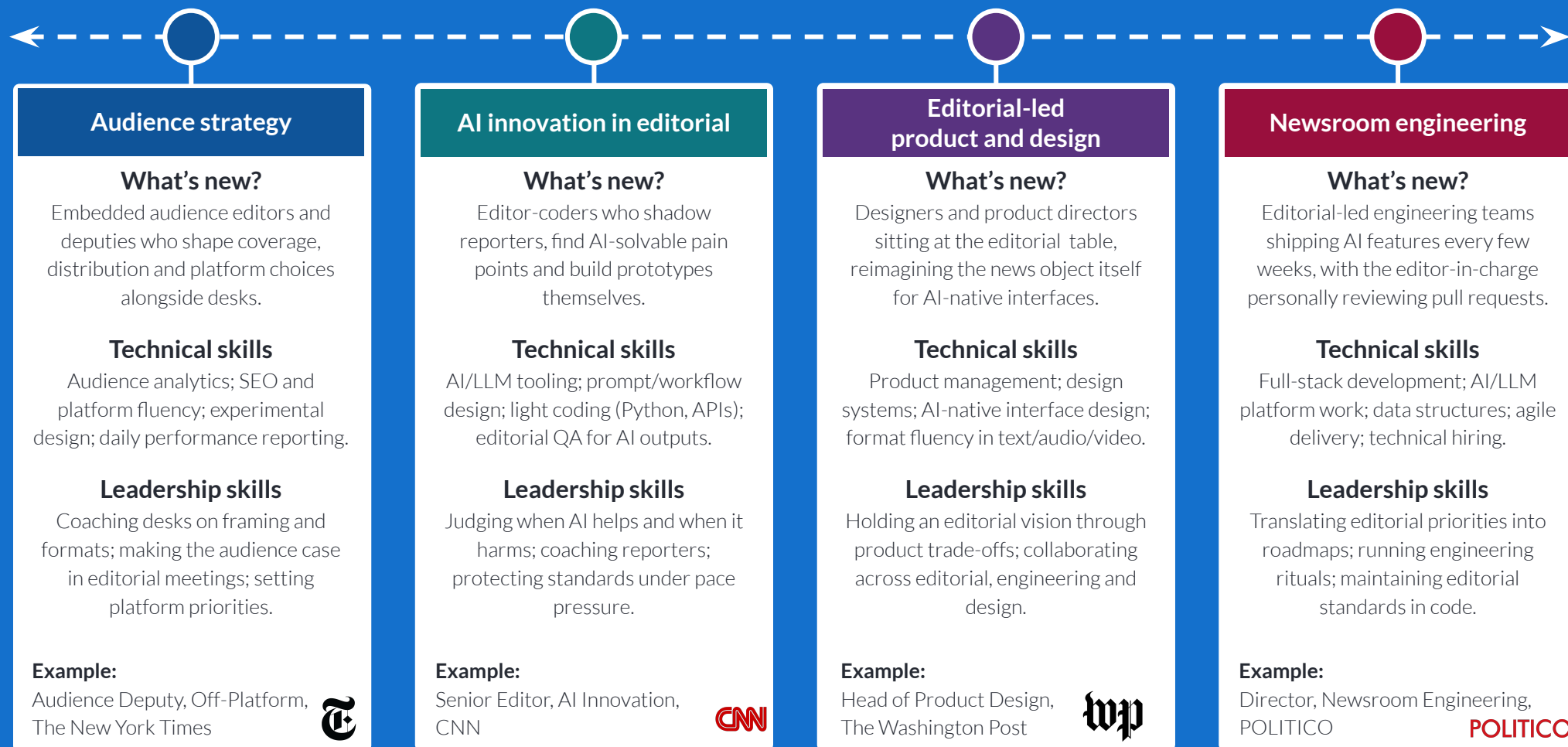


Questions: Which roles are formally involved in deciding the long-term editorial vision and strategic priorities for your newsroom? n=436, Structurally aligned n=141
Note: Respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

The key elements of a Strategy function: what shapes do strategy roles take in a newsroom?

Closer to reporting desk functions

Closer to editorial leadership



We analysed 6,687 real job listings posted to LinkedIn by various news organisations in 2026 in order to identify the common attributes and skills that appear among the roles specifically looking to bring strategic thinking and editorial execution closer together. [See appendix for more examples.](#)

Editorial growth stems from sharper choices: unlocking greater spend is correlated with stopping initiatives that don't resonate

A healthy 38% of newsrooms saw increased editorial budgets in the past 12 months, while 35% of newsrooms experienced cost cutting. [When we investigated whether a newsroom's main revenue stream was related to budget changes, the differences were modest.](#)

Instead, **positive budget outcomes are most closely correlated with portfolio discipline: 50% of newsrooms that review and discontinue initiatives systematically saw budget increases, compared to just 28% that do so rarely, never or on an ad hoc basis.** Moreover, structurally aligned newsrooms are the most likely to conduct reviews regularly.

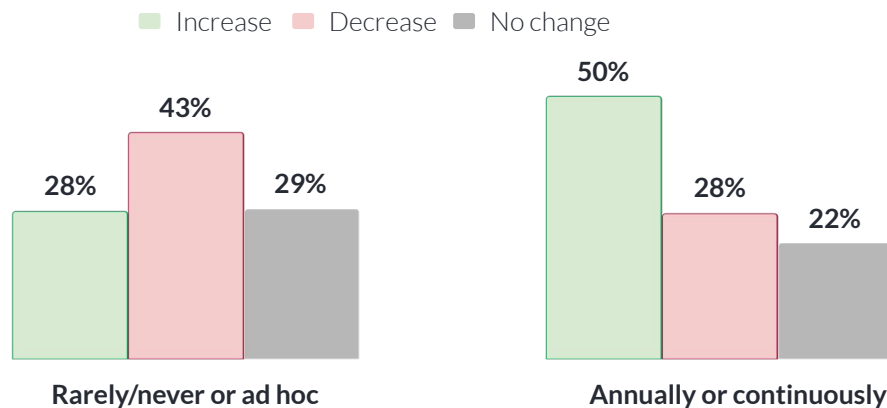
Put together, these findings show that the newsrooms best positioned for growth are those that regularly reflect strategy into daily editorial decisions and direct resources toward the coverage, formats and products that are resonating most with their audiences.

“ We survive because we stay relevant, and we've killed shows because they were not finding their public... We can't ask for budget and have minimal audiences. It's something we're very keen to look at, and there are lots of people in the company dedicated to looking at performances. ”

Thomas Seymat
Head of Innovation & Digital for News, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, ARTE



Editorial budget changes by frequency of portfolio review



Frequency of portfolio review by strategic-editorial alignment

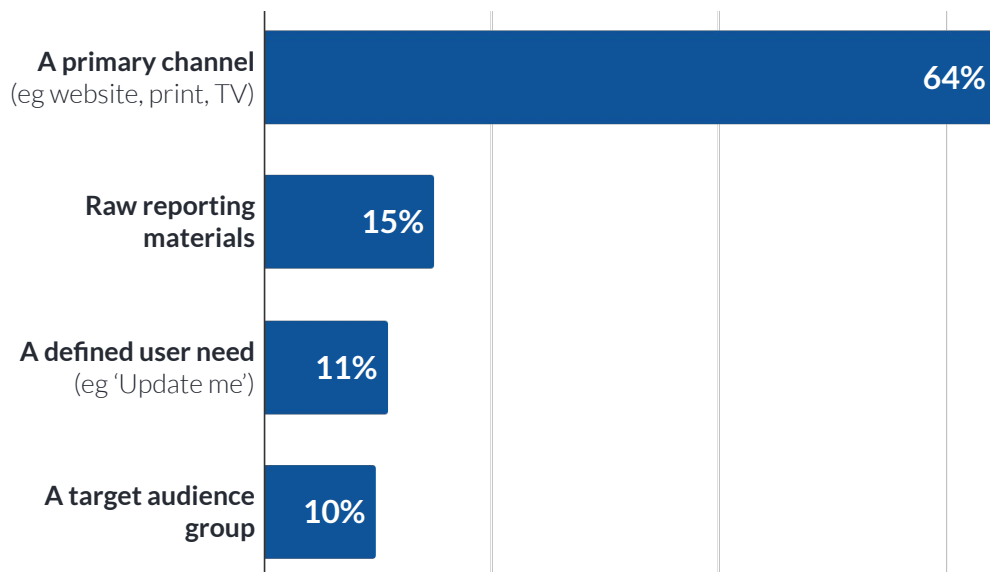
	Primarily reactive	Loosely aligned	Structurally aligned
Rarely/never or ad hoc	53%	64%	34%
Annually or continuously	47%	36%	66%

Questions: How has your editorial budget for creating content changed over the past 12 months? Increase n=163, Decrease n=150, No change n=110; Which statement best describes how often your newsroom discontinues existing products or initiatives? Primarily reactive n=109, Loosely aligned n=182, Structurally aligned n=139
Note: Respondents who selected 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

Most newsrooms prioritise a destination-first commissioning process, with data playing a lagging role in editorial decisions

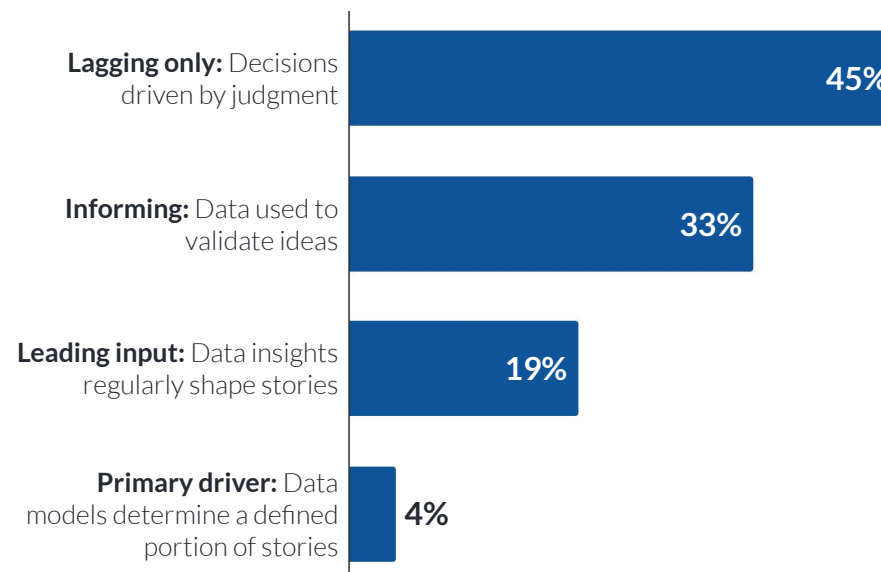
If leaders are intent on designing their strategy around audience engagement, the industry as a whole may need to reconsider its approach to editorial development. **Most newsrooms continue to develop stories based on destination rather than commissioning in an audience-led way:** 64% of respondents said they create stories for specific channels (eg website, print or TV) and adapt it for others, with just 21% saying they start with a specific audience need or group first and shape the story accordingly.

First prioritised element when developing a story



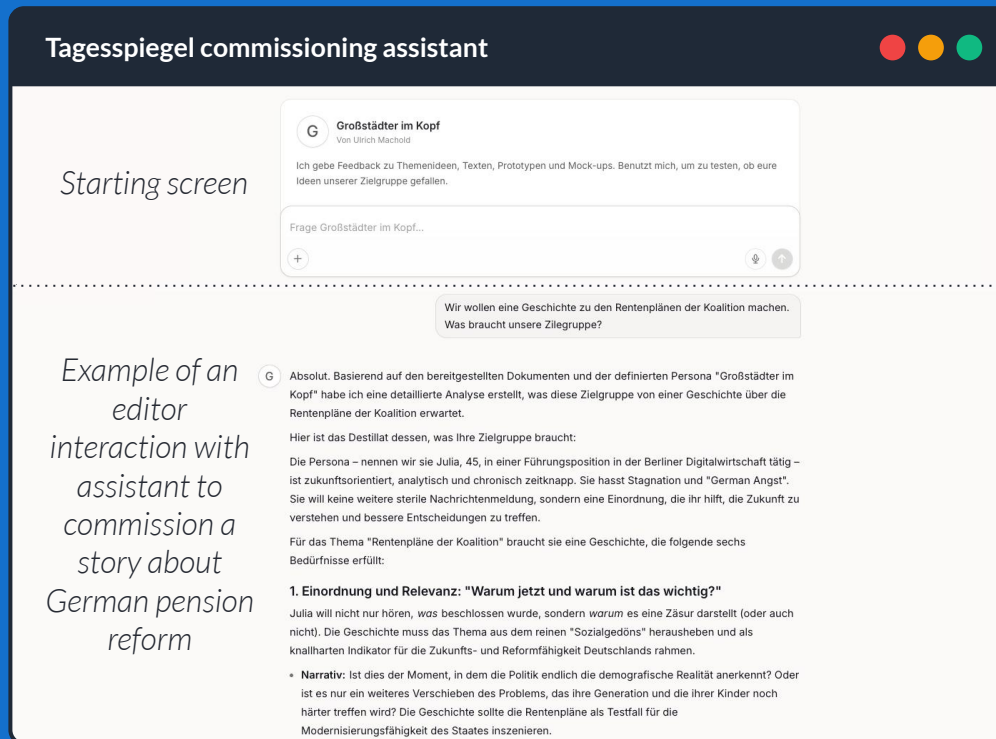
The slow shift toward audience-based commissioning may stem from how data is used in newsrooms: **45% of newsrooms say data is as a lagging metric that is reviewed only after a story has already been published.** New AI tools such as 'commissioning bots' that encourage editors to combine news judgment with data to anticipate whether a story will address an audience or need may help more newsrooms move toward a commissioning process that places audiences closer to the start of editorial decision making instead of at the end.

Role of data analytics in commissioning



Questions: In your newsroom's main workflow, what do you prioritise in the process of developing a story? n=397; Which statement best describes the role of data analytics in deciding which stories to commission? n=398
Note: Respondents who selected 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

Tagesspiegel has created a ‘commissioning bot’ with AI to help editors frame and configure stories based on target groups



Who is Tagesspiegel?

Tagesspiegel is a Berlin-based daily newspaper known for its focus on political, cultural and social issues. It regularly publishes analyses and reports with an international lens and is read by ~394,000 readers daily.

What was the initiative?

Tagesspiegel introduced an AI-based assistant (created with Langdock) that helps editors configure stories to ensure they will meet the needs of their intended target groups. The assistant provides a space for editors to interrogate what the most important aspects of a story are and which user needs should be in focus, allowing them to better identify interview subjects or elements to emphasise.

What can newsrooms take from this?

- ◆ **Data should play an active part in daily commissioning decisions,** rather than being measured post-publication. AI can play a role in ensuring greater strategic and editorial alignment by focusing on getting the right content commissioned at the start.
- ◆ **User needs, not destination, should be at the heart of story development.** Editors must continue to blend editorial judgment with a deeply informed view of who their journalism is serving, not just where it is appearing.

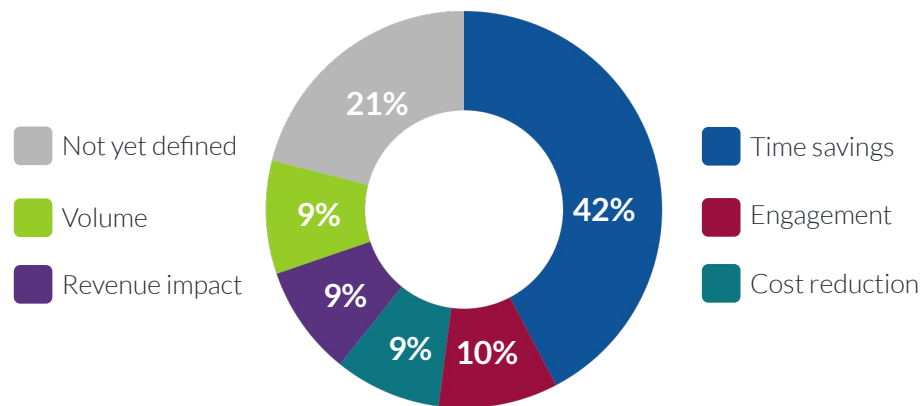


In the AI era, tech is protected across the board: newsrooms are cutting budget elsewhere and investing more in it when they can

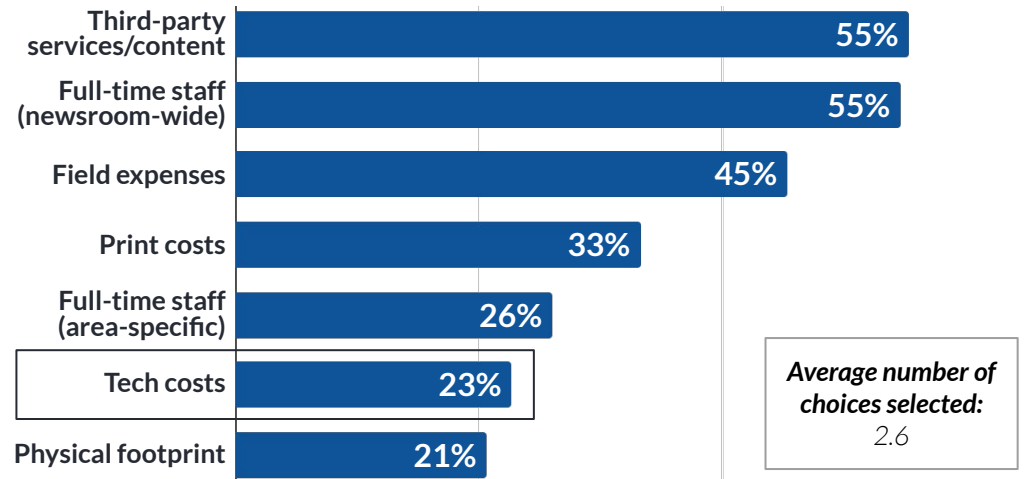
Survey data shows that newsrooms facing cost cuts and those that saw budget increases are both protecting their technology spend by default, [even as more respondents view skills and talent gaps \(38%\) as a larger barrier to achieving their goals than limited tech and tooling \(25%\).](#)

The impulse to maintain tech spend is understandable as newsrooms brace for AI, but a clearer vision for the strategic role it plays is needed. 42% of newsrooms use time savings to measure AI success, compared to 28% using engagement, volume or revenue – revealing a disconnect between wider organisational goals and how AI fits in as a strategic enabler for them.

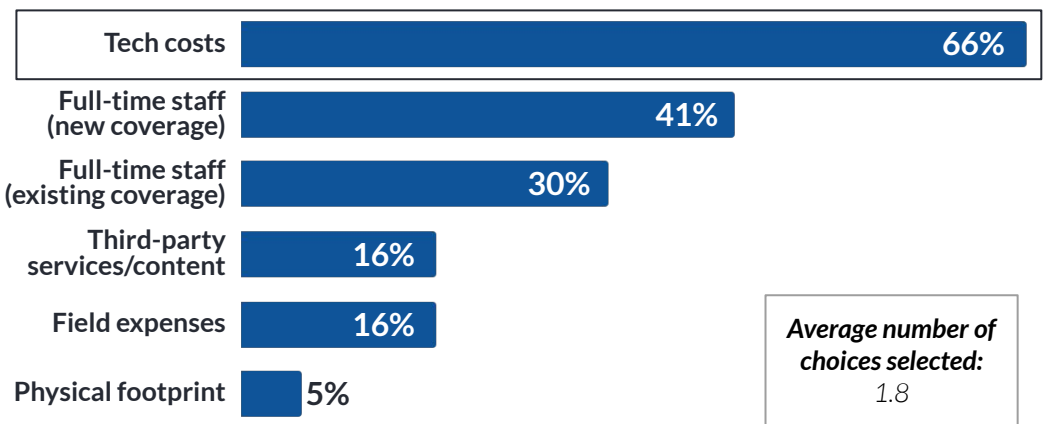
Primary KPIs for AI success



Areas affected by cost cutting for newsrooms with decreased budgets



Areas of anticipated greater spend for newsrooms with increased budgets



Questions: What is your primary KPI for AI success in 2026? *n*=390; Which area(s) of your newsroom has been most affected by cost-cutting in the last 12 months? *n*=150; Which area(s) do you anticipate spending more of your budget on this year? *n*=158
Note: Respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

Most newsrooms expect headcounts to shrink while they largely look to maintain or increase their editorial outputs next year

“ Maybe the KPI isn't 'We saved seven hours', it's 'We did more original stories this week.' The right question isn't necessarily [about] time saved, it's 'What are you doing now that you couldn't do before?' ”

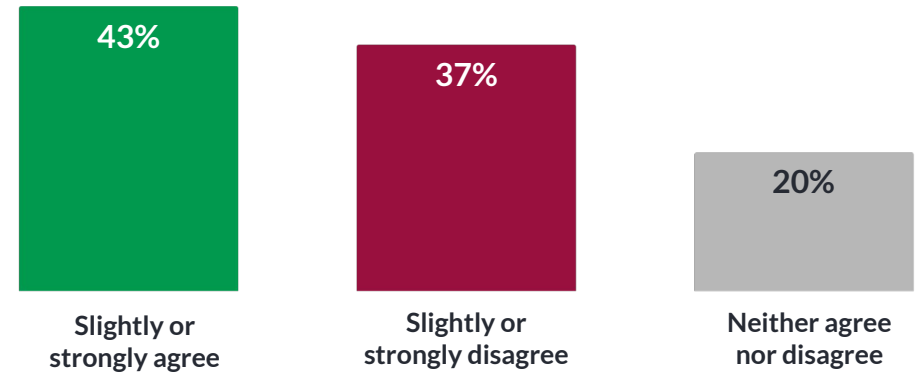
Freja Sofia Kalderén
Development Editor, Bonnier



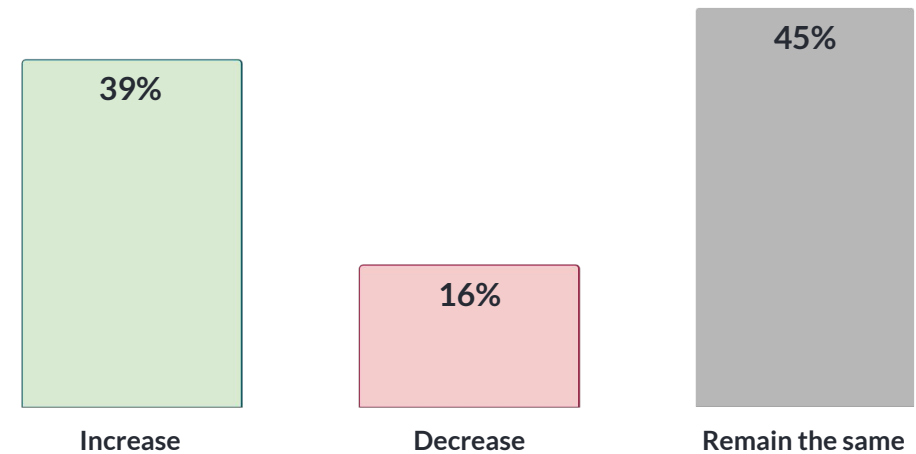
During our interviews, multiple newsroom leaders told us that a more robust conceptualisation of AI success must consider how to tie efficiencies to an overarching objective that can drive audience or commercial value. In the current state, however, newsrooms appear to be defaulting toward [time savings as the main indicator of AI success](#), and this risks orienting newsrooms toward doing the same work, just faster and with fewer people. 43% of newsrooms agree that advances in AI will reduce the number of people employed in their workplaces over the next three years even as 39% of newsrooms expect their overall editorial outputs to increase.

As newsrooms look to double down on audience engagement, it will be important to move toward a more mature approach to AI that measures its ability to enable journalism that wasn't previously achievable, such as pursuing investigations that weren't possible in the past or identifying a way to interact with audiences that couldn't be served effectively in the past.

Level of agreement AI will reduce headcount in the next three years



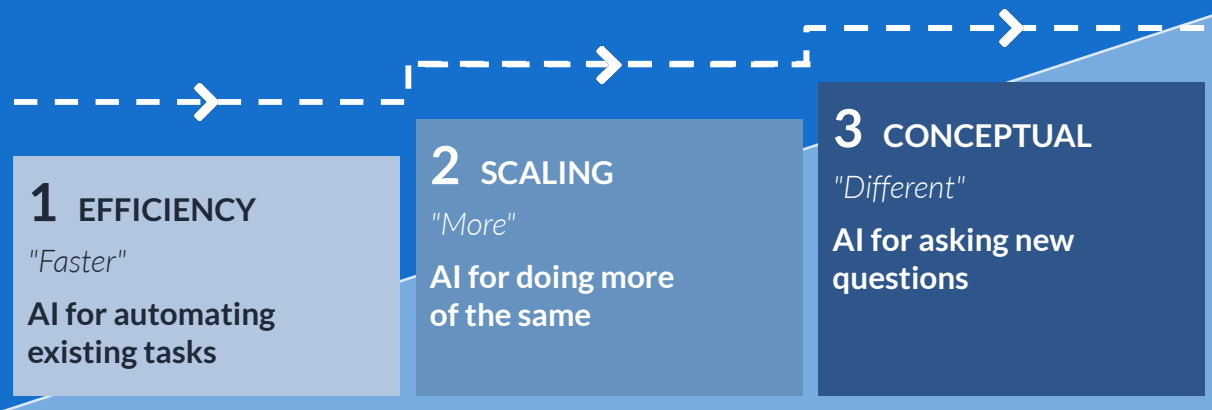
Expectation of editorial output changes in the next 12 months



Questions: To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Over the next three years, advances in AI will reduce the number of people employed in my newsroom. *n*=367; Over the next 12 months, how do you expect [your newsroom's average daily output] to change? *n*=390

Note: Respondents who selected 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

From efficiency to capability: three levels of defining AI maturity and success in newsrooms



The maturity framework

This framework maps how newsrooms use AI – from automating what already exists to introducing a new paradigm that enables newsrooms to do work they couldn't do before. **Each level represents a different strategic vision about what AI is for.**

The strategic implication

Levels 1 and 2 act on the newsroom's **status quo**, focusing on goals such as accelerating production and expanding editorial output. Meanwhile, level 3 changes the ambition itself, focusing on more radical objectives such as enabling original journalism and unlocking editorial capability that the newsroom was not able to do before. This is where **distinctive value** comes from. Yet most newsrooms are concentrating AI at level 1 and measuring success on its terms – time saved – even as leaders recognise that their competitive position depends on how their journalism can engage audiences differently and meaningfully.

EXAMPLE USE CASE		
Transcription automation	Auto-generated earnings summaries	AI agent for source monitoring
WHAT IT MEASURES		
Time saved	Output volume	New editorial capability
WHERE THE INDUSTRY SITS TODAY		
Most newsrooms	Common	Rare

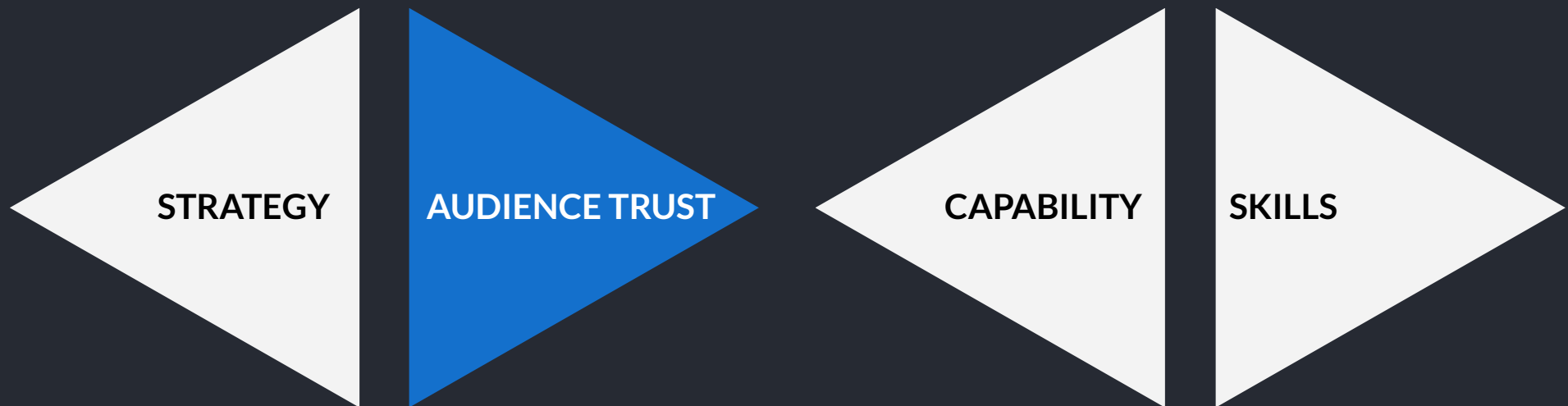
EXAMPLES WITHIN THE INDUSTRY

South China Morning Post
Saved 300+ hours through [tool implementation](#)

Grew newsletter portfolio through [automation](#)

Uses agent-based AI to produce [hyperlocal journalism](#)

Chapter 2: The Audience Trust Gap



The Audience Trust Gap

From engagement as distribution, to community as infrastructure

DEFINITION



We view audience trust as the relationship that is built when audiences are able to believe in the **credible** expertise of a news brand or journalist, feel **affinity** with the people behind the journalism and understand the **intentions, perspectives and motivations** behind the work.

THE GAP WE FOUND



Newsrooms are aware of the importance of audience trust, but **the way they look to cultivate it can fall short**. Many view trust building as an exercise in elevating their newsroom's brand and by ensuring their visibility across distribution channels, instead of one that focuses on key elements that younger and more fragmented audiences care about, such as individual and relatable voices, transparency and community engagement.

WHERE NEWSROOMS ARE HEADING



Future-ready newsrooms are moving away from relying on institutional trust alone, **toward a model that builds up greater relational trust**. They do this by developing editorial capabilities that move audiences closer to the start of production; by making expertise more visible in their work; by focusing on producing formats that allow for authentic connection; and by being more transparent about how and why journalism is made.

Most time is spent on production, with efficiency gains yet to meaningfully free up capacity for pre- and post-production tasks

We asked newsroom leaders to estimate how they expect reporters to split their time in a typical working week across five primary tasks. In today's newsrooms, **production work remains the dominant activity, accounting for 38% of newsroom time**. Meanwhile, post-publication work (which includes activities such as community engagement and responding to audience feedback) accounts for just 11% – a potential mismatch with newsrooms' stated ambition to deepen audience engagement.

The relatively high share of time spent on pre-publication and publication reflects the continued importance of these activities in creating distinctive formats and uncovering original stories that showcase expertise and credibility. However, the limited time allocated to post-publication activities suggests **many newsrooms are still underinvesting in the relationship-building side of journalism**, such as engaging directly with audiences and bringing them into the reporting process to build stronger affinity.

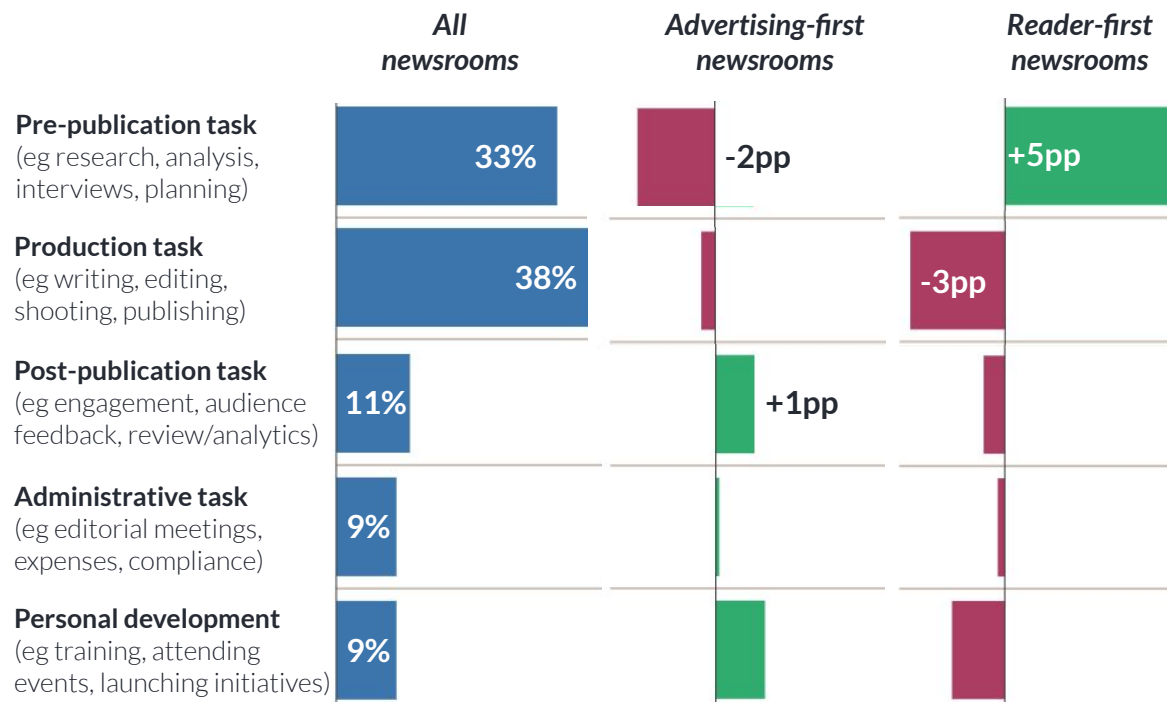
Expected time allocations to reporter tasks in an average week



Question: In an average week, how would you expect your reporters to split their time across the following tasks? n=402

Where newsrooms expect their journalists to spend their editorial time aligns to their business model

Time allocated to reporting tasks in an average week by primary revenue stream



Percentages of newsrooms that also expect output to increase



Business models also shape editorial workflows. **Ad-first newsrooms** spend less time on pre-publication work (-2pp) and slightly more on post-publication activity (+1pp), reflecting a stronger focus on distribution, audience reach and maximising performance of content across platforms. **Reader-first newsrooms**, by contrast, devote significantly more time to pre-publication work (+5pp) and less to production (-3pp), suggesting a greater emphasis on uncovering original stories, developing deeper analysis and creating differentiated journalism worth paying for.

This aligns with newsroom leaders' expectations around future output. Only 33% of reader-first newsrooms expect total output to increase, compared to 45% of ad-first ones, reinforcing the divide between the two models.

“You could write 30 bylines this month, or you could write one that is memorable – and that one has more value.”

David Walmsley
Advisory Board Member



Questions: In an average week, how would you expect your reporters to split their time across the following tasks? *All newsrooms* n=402, *Advertising-first* n=204, *Reader-first* n=119; Over the next 12 months, how do you expect [your newsroom's average daily output] to change? *Advertising-first* n=193, *Reader-first* n=114

Note: Respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

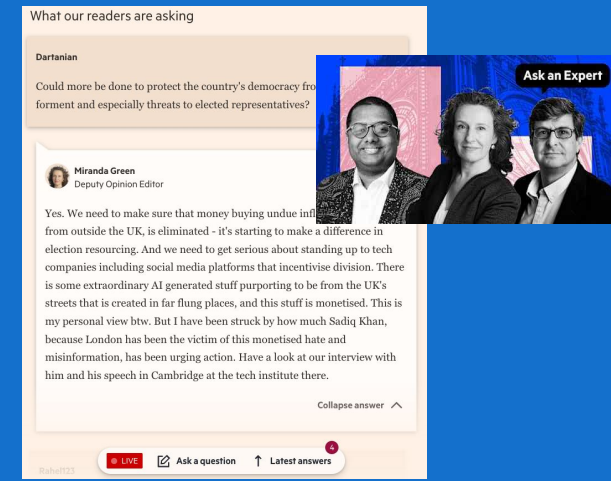
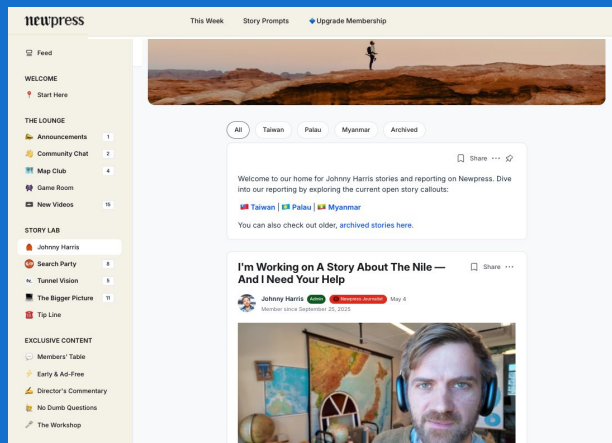
Some newsrooms are rethinking audience participation, bringing it back in-house rather than relying on off-platform spaces

newpress

verificat

FT Ask an Expert

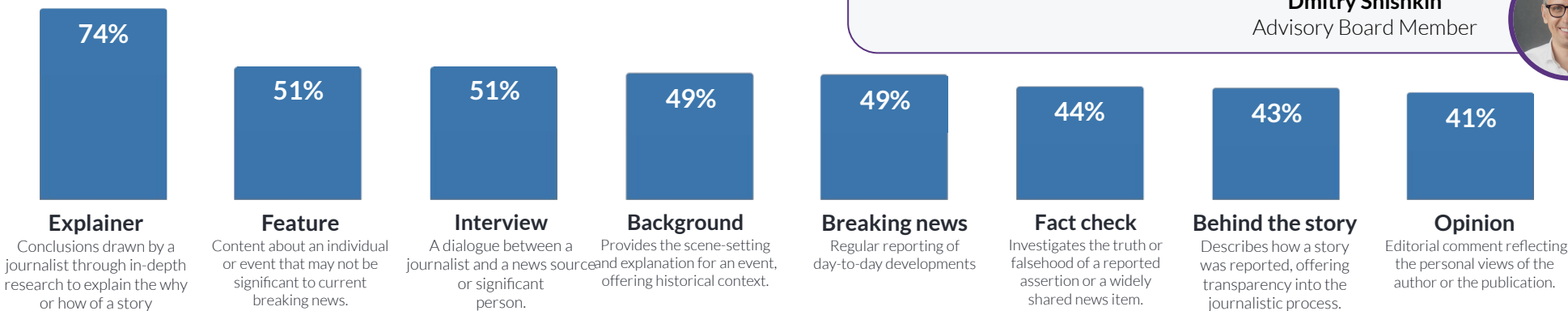
<p>Who are they?</p>	<p>A creator collective that believes algorithmic platforms have weakened audience connections and community journalism.</p>	<p>A Catalan non-profit fact-checking platform that verifies political and social media content to support more informed news consumption.</p>	<p>A leading international news organisation recognised for its authority, accuracy and expert columnists.</p>
<p>What did they do?</p>	<p>They created their own Reddit-style platform for active audience participation: an “<i>algorithm-free corner of the internet</i>” where audiences are invited to help creators as they are crafting their stories.</p>	<p>They produce structured live debates about issues shaping the public through ‘Verified Debates’. Speakers’ arguments and data are verified in advance and published prior to the debate to support informed public discourse.</p>	<p>They host online weekly, live Q&As through ‘Ask an Expert’, giving subscribers the opportunity to ask questions directly to the FT’s best-known experts beyond a single article or headline.</p>
<p>So what?</p>	<p>Bring core audiences into the reporting process by moving beyond platform comment sections towards deeper participation, collaboration on stories and greater transparency around journalism.</p>	<p>Create structured spaces through live events for informed, evidence-based debate, helping audiences move beyond reactive online arguments and toward more constructive discussion.</p>	<p>Turn newsroom expertise into recurring audience engagement through regular forums that build stronger relationships and encourage journalists to spend more time on post-publication efforts.</p>



In terms of storytelling approach, most newsrooms will prioritise explainers – underpinned by originality – in the AI era

In the AI era, newsrooms increasingly see explainers – with the recognition that the nature of explanatory journalism might need to evolve – as the highest-value storytelling approach. This is followed by features, interviews and background reporting. Breaking news still matters, though editorial leaders remain divided on whether its importance will grow or decline as AI evolves, particularly as AI cannot currently independently conduct meaningful newsgathering. Overall however, **the broader shift is toward journalism that has clear originality** and offers distinctive value through unique perspectives, on-the-ground reporting and original analysis.

Storytelling approaches newsrooms plan to focus more on next year



“The evergreen explainer is a thing of the past. In our explainers, and all our work, we have to be either really unique or really immediate.

Keith Lynch
Editor-in-Chief, Stuff Digital



“The idea of the container of a story is being exploded and disintermediated, and we have to figure out where the shards of the value are and try to pull them together.

Gina Chua
Advisory Board Member



“If 80% of your coverage is going to become commodity coverage handled by AI, you need to be very clear – niche by niche – about what original content you produce and why you are producing it.

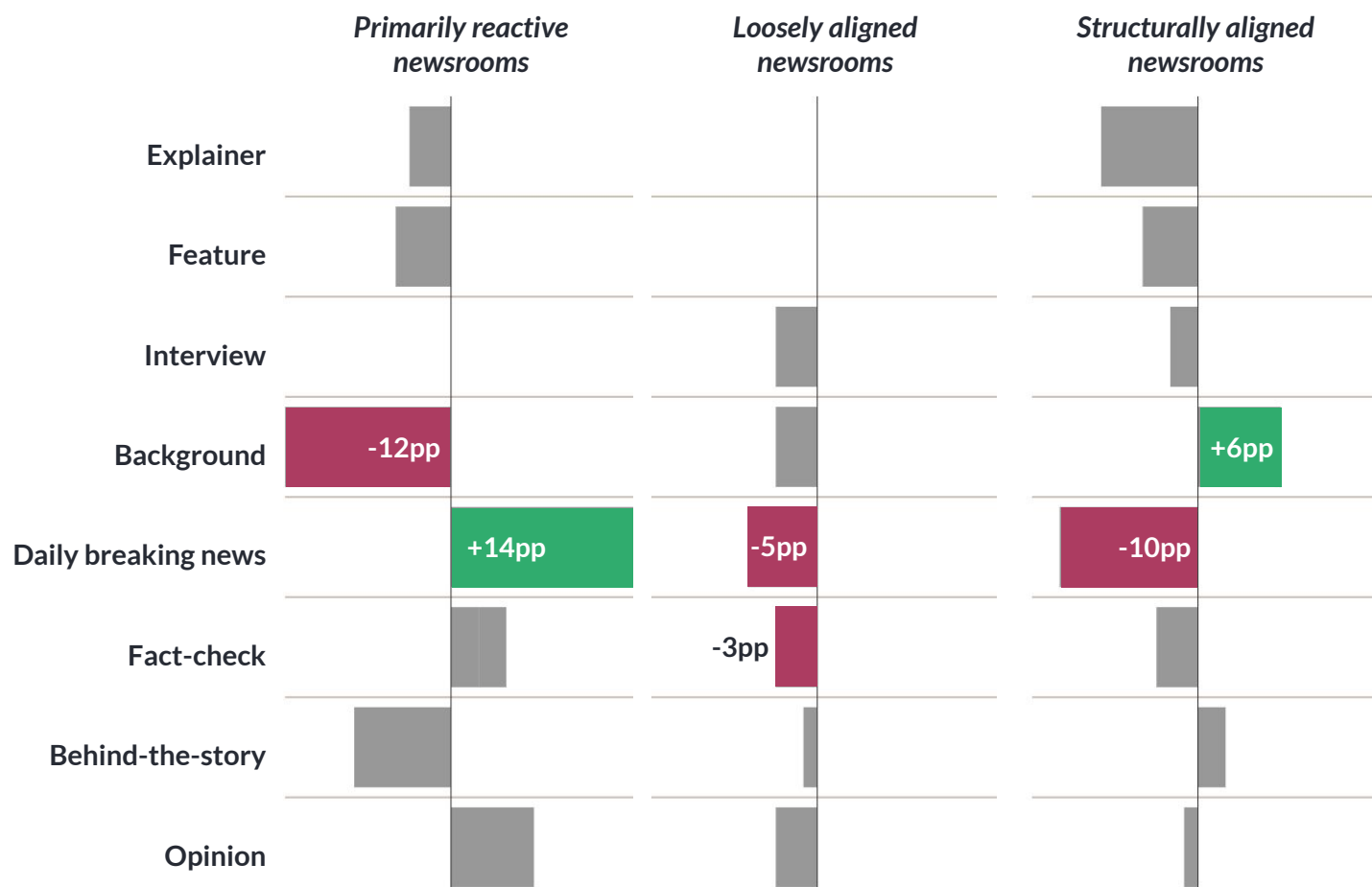
Dmitry Shishkin
Advisory Board Member



Question: Looking ahead to the next year, which of the following storytelling approaches are you planning to focus on more to maintain a distinctive editorial voice? Select all that apply. n=382
Note: Respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

Structurally aligned newsrooms are more intentional about what they cover, while reactive newsrooms rely more on breaking news

Difference from average¹ for storytelling approaches, by strategic-editorial alignment



When we look at what storytelling approach newsrooms with different levels of strategic alignment are focusing on, an interesting pattern arises.

Reactive newsrooms heavily over-index on daily breaking news storytelling (+14pp), while significantly under-indexing on background reporting (-12pp), showcasing a stronger focus on immediacy and updates.

Loosely aligned newsrooms do not over-index majorly on any storytelling approach, while deprioritising daily breaking news and fact-checking. It overall however suggests a broader but less clearly prioritised editorial mix.

Structurally aligned newsrooms over-index on background storytelling (+6pp) while significantly under-indexing on daily breaking news (-10pp), indicating a stronger emphasis on depth, context and differentiated journalism over constant news flow.

Questions: Looking ahead to the next year, which of the following storytelling approaches are you planning to focus on more to maintain a distinctive editorial voice? Select all that apply. *Primarily reactive* n=93, *Loosely aligned* n=164, *Structurally aligned* n=125
Notes: ¹See [page 32](#) of this report for overall averages; respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted. This slide has been updated due to mislabeled data after print release.

Stuff Digital has shifted storytelling approach to service-oriented journalism through 'Solving Stuff'

Who is Stuff Digital?

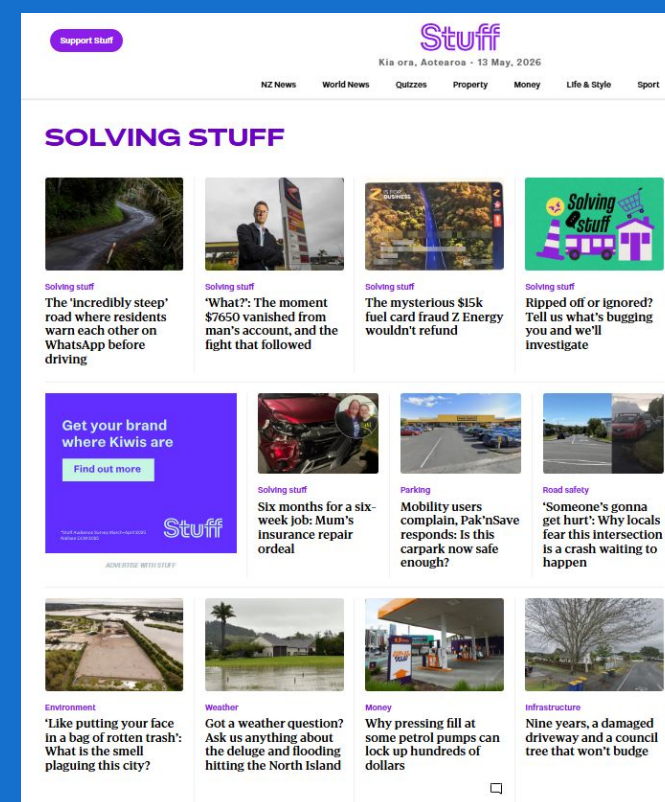
Stuff Digital is the flagship website of Stuff Limited, a media company based in New Zealand. The newsroom employs 380 journalists, with both a national news operation and a local footprint across the country. Stuff Ltd's vision is to be the most trusted organisation in Aotearoa New Zealand, and its mission is to help make Aotearoa a better place.

What was the initiative?

In line with this mission, Stuff has been experimenting with **leaning into audience participation and creating a sense of community on the page through Solving Stuff**, an editorial initiative that encourages readers to contact the newsroom and submit problems they want Stuff journalists to investigate.

What was the impact?

- Received **over 500 individual submissions** through the Solving Stuff form post-launch, providing a steady pipeline of reader-generated ideas — many contributors also returned with new questions after seeing a previous issue investigated, indicating growing confidence in the round
- Generated **more than 420,000 pageviews** through the first 10 Solving Stuff stories, with several stories among the most popular published on Stuff on a given day
- Achieved **higher than average time-on-page and completion rates**, reflecting deeper reader investment in stories audiences helped initiate



Through ‘Solving Stuff’, Stuff is fostering on-platform community and a sense of audience buy-in to the editorial process

Readers submit problems on the Stuff website via Google Form

Solving stuff

Let us know about an issue you think needs delving into and Stuff senior journalist Natalie Akeorie will investigate.

We're talking about problems, big or small, that you've been unable to solve. It could be a consumer concern, and it may or may not be of national significance, but is persistently annoying nonetheless.

Please note: We can't respond to everyone. If you don't hear from us, please know that we have still read and considered what you've shared. And if we decide to write a story, we will ask you to be named and to supply a photo.

[Sign in to Google](#) to save your progress. [Learn more](#)

* Indicates required question

Tell us about the issue that's grinding your gears. *

Your answer

What's your name? *

Your answer

Stuff investigates the issue, explaining how they did it and what the outcome was

Life on the ‘Goat Track’: The road where residents check WhatsApp before driving

Natalie Akeorie
May 12, 2026 · 3:19am

The problem

Residents of a country road north of Auckland say its deteriorating surface is so treacherous they fear someone will be seriously injured in a crash.

But according to Auckland Transport (AT) only 60 vehicles a day use the gravel road near Pūhoi, and it is low priority.

What we did

When *Stuff* heard about the road we went to Auckland Transport, a council-controlled organisation, for answers.

A spokesperson said there had been nine complaints or requests for repair since January this year, two of which were logged on January 16 following a significant weather event.

So have we solved it?

On this occasion *Stuff* hasn't solved the problem - but we tried hard to convey the concern of residents to Auckland Transport, pushing for answers and putting the issue firmly on its radar.

Kilvington said residents would now consider funding the curve mirrors themselves, although she says they shouldn't have to.

What can newsrooms take from this?

The ‘Solving Stuff’ initiative represents a concrete way of moving audience engagement from a post-production exercise into a true activity in journalistic co-creation:

- ◆ **Workflow changes can accommodate audience buy-in** if readers get an active voice in coverage and investigation decisions.
- ◆ Journalists can afford to be candid about the work that was done, **offering credibility and transparency into the journalistic process.**

The formats that newsrooms plan to produce more of signal a growing focus on short-form video and community

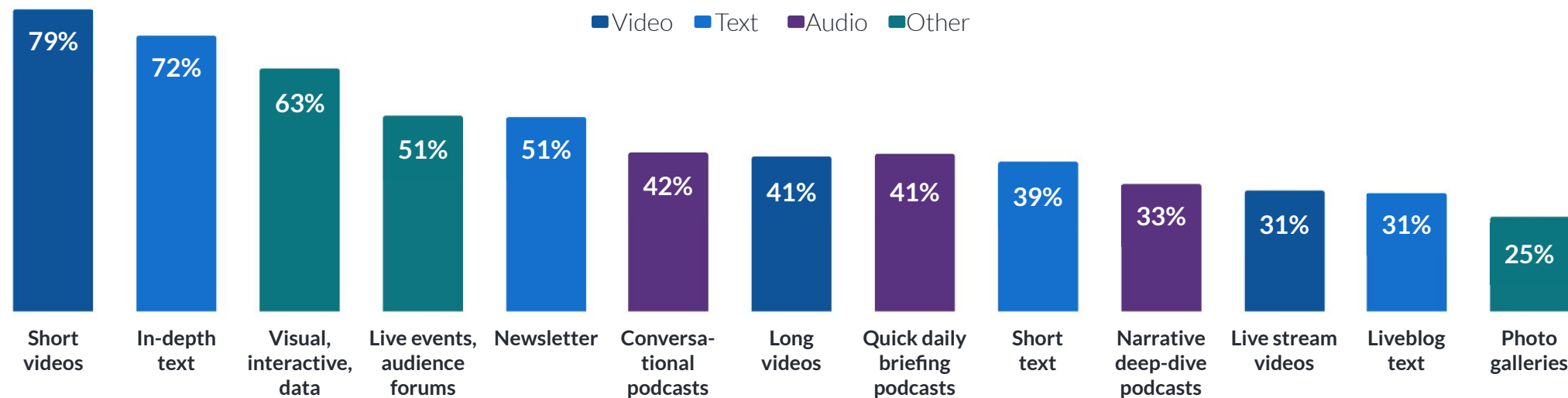
When it comes to formats, short-form video has emerged as the top priority, signalling that the second major ‘pivot to video’ is now underway. [At a macro level however, text](#) remains dominant, with 97% of newsrooms prioritising across in-depth articles, newsletters, short articles and liveblogs. **Video** follows at 91%, driven by growing investment in both short- and long-form formats. **‘Other’** formats remain strong (86%), particularly data stories, live events or audience forums and photo galleries to a lesser extent. **Audio** (78%) continues to play an important role via a variety of podcast formats.

“ We are moving away from the idea of comments under every article and instead thinking about how we create spaces for audiences to discuss the biggest topics together. The goal is to build a stronger sense of community and shared ownership around the conversation.

Lyn-Yi Chung
Advisory Board Member



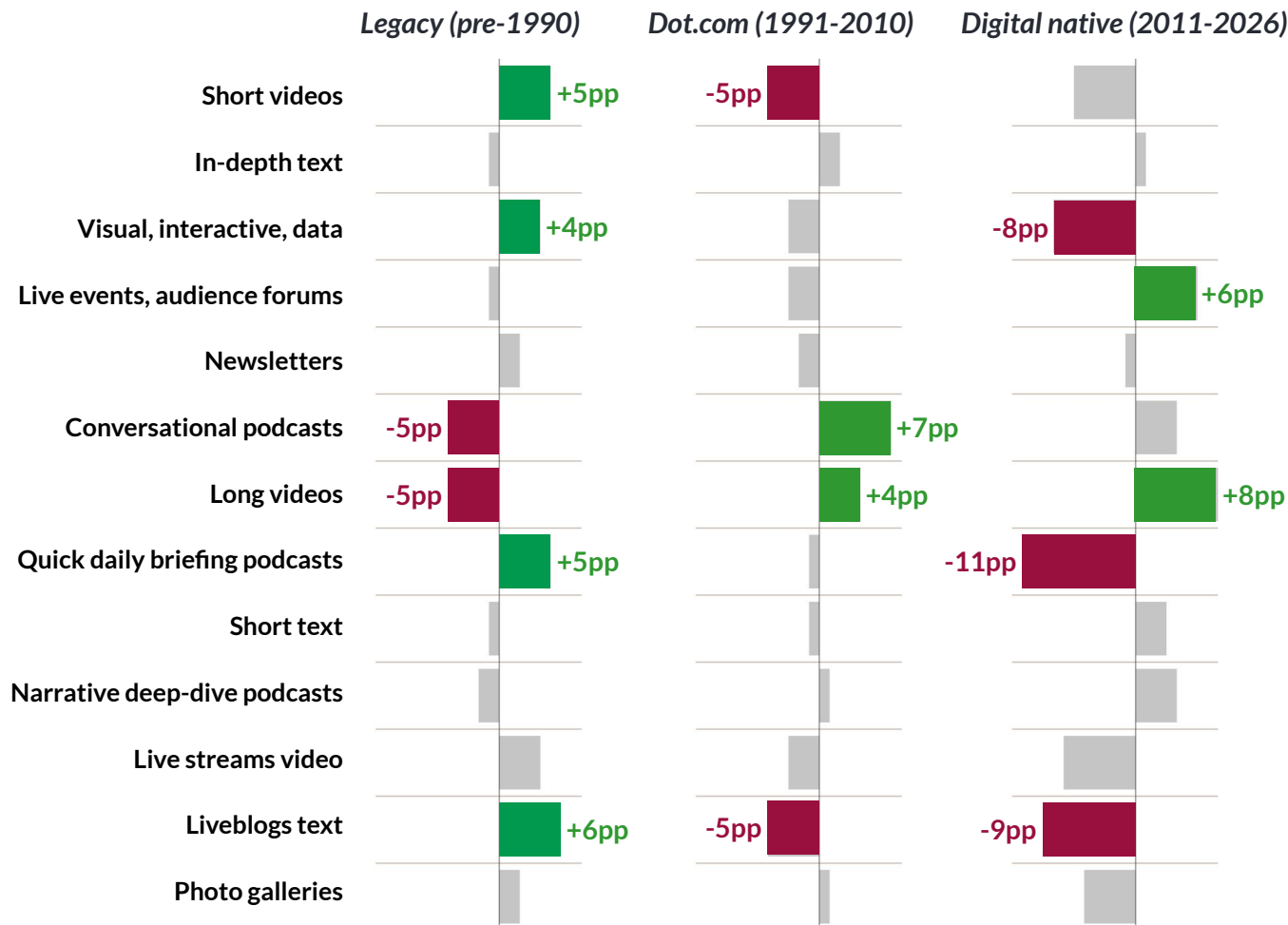
Formats newsrooms plan to focus more on next year



Question: Looking ahead to the next year, which of the following format approaches are you planning to focus on more to maintain a distinctive editorial voice? Select all that apply. n=385

Format priorities diverge by organisational age: digital natives prioritise community, while legacy focus on visual & data

Difference from average¹ for format focus by organisational age



Analysing format priorities by organisational age shows interesting differences.

Legacy newsrooms remain strongest in formats where they have long-standing expertise – including liveblogs, visual/data journalism and quick daily briefing podcasts – while also ramping up investment in short-form video to catch up with competitors. However, they remain less focused on long-form video and conversational podcast formats.

Dot-com era newsrooms are leaning heavily into conversational and opinion-led podcasts, while investing less in short-form video, likely because of a strong foundation.

Digital-native newsrooms are investing more in community-driven formats – such as audience Q&As and live events – alongside long-form video, while placing less emphasis on visual/data storytelling, liveblogs and quick briefing podcasts.

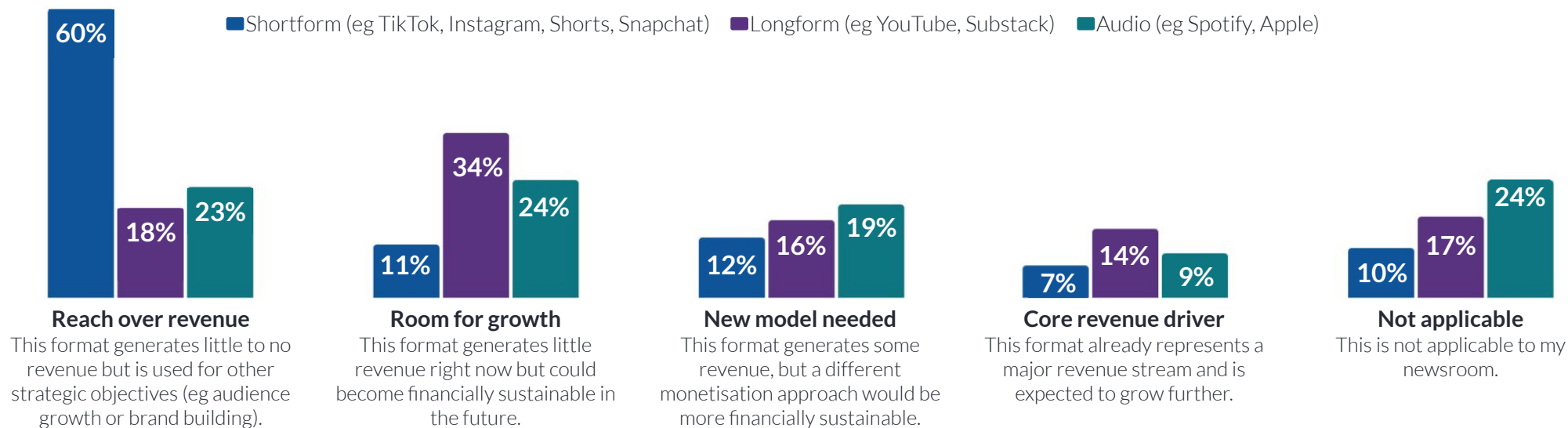
Questions: Looking ahead to the next year, which of the following formats are you planning to focus more on? Select all that apply. Legacy n=205, Dot.com n=99, Digital native n=81
 Note: ¹See [page 36](#) of this report for overall averages

Off-platform, newsrooms use shortform to drive reach, longform to drive revenue; audio struggles with scalable monetisation

As the [Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025](#) highlights, there is no longer a single dominant social platform for news. Instead, the industry is experiencing a broader platform reset: newer platforms such as TikTok, Substack and Bluesky are becoming increasingly important; established ones like YouTube, Instagram, Spotify and Apple remain influential and others such as Facebook and X are declining. In response, newsrooms may need to recalibrate and think more tactically about the ways they use different platforms and formats.

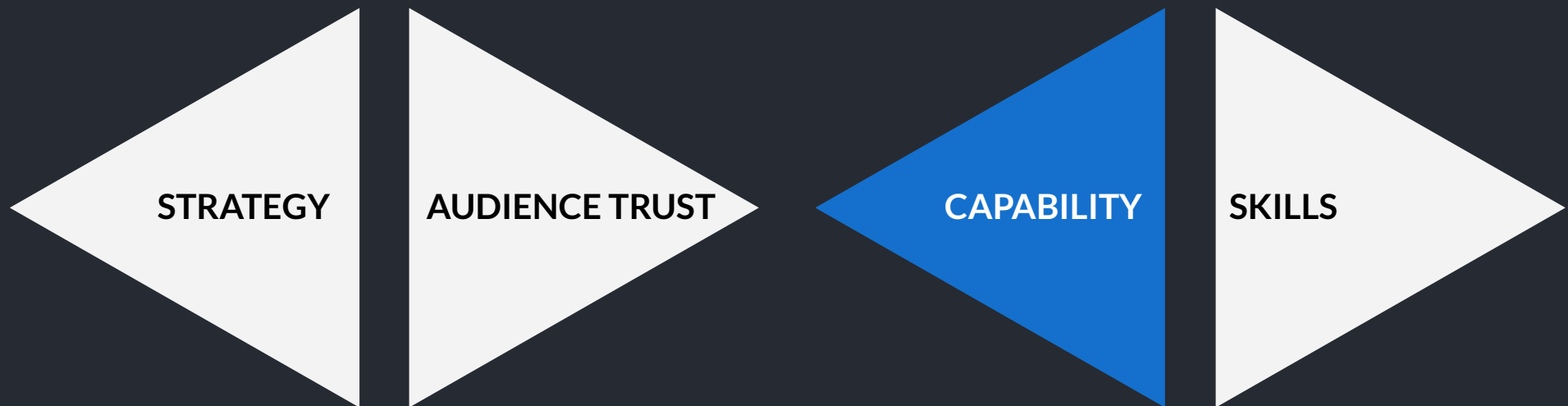
60% of newsrooms view **short-form** platforms as a way of generating reach rather than revenue, while **long-form** platforms are either already core revenue drivers (14%) or seen as having strong growth potential (34%). Many remain uncertain about how to monetise **audio**, with 24% not experimenting with it at all. Revenue priorities also vary across regions: Southeast Asian newsrooms place greater emphasis on short-form content; Latin American ones prioritise longform; and European ones see more commercial potential in audio.

Current and future monetisation approaches to off-platform formats



Questions: Looking ahead to the next year, which of the following formats are you planning to focus more on? Select all that apply. Shortform n=333, Longform n=321, Audio n=268

Chapter 3: The Capability Gap



The Capability Gap

From fixed newsroom structures to adaptive editorial capabilities

DEFINITION



We view capability within the newsroom as the combined ability to **adapt features such as its structures, workflows, tools and decision making processes** in order to respond to audience needs, shifts in technology and emerging editorial opportunities with the appropriate speed and focus required.

THE GAP WE FOUND



Newsrooms know that changing audience habits and expectations require a response. But some are still dragging when it comes to ensuring they have the tools in place to ensure that individual experiments translate into more wholesale, operational change. How newsrooms are deploying AI is just one example of the broader challenge that exists in **creating the space, ownership and support structures** required to serve audiences effectively.

WHERE NEWSROOMS ARE HEADING



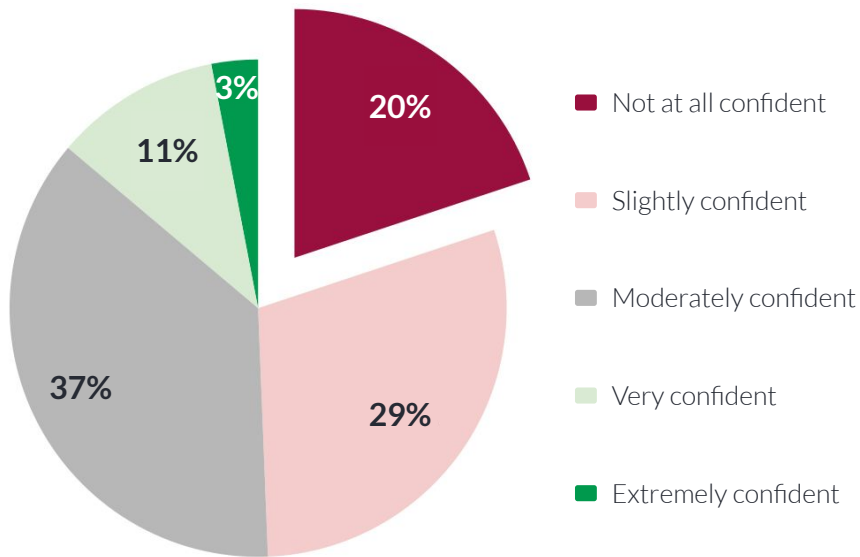
Future-ready newsrooms are **turning successful experiments into routine newsroom practice**. They do this by embedding technical and project capabilities into editorial teams, without adding layers of bureaucracy. They also build strategic training programmes to test new approaches, evangelise what works and shift focus when the capability becomes part of the everyday.

Most newsrooms lack confidence in both their current tools & tech and the future-readiness of their organisational structure

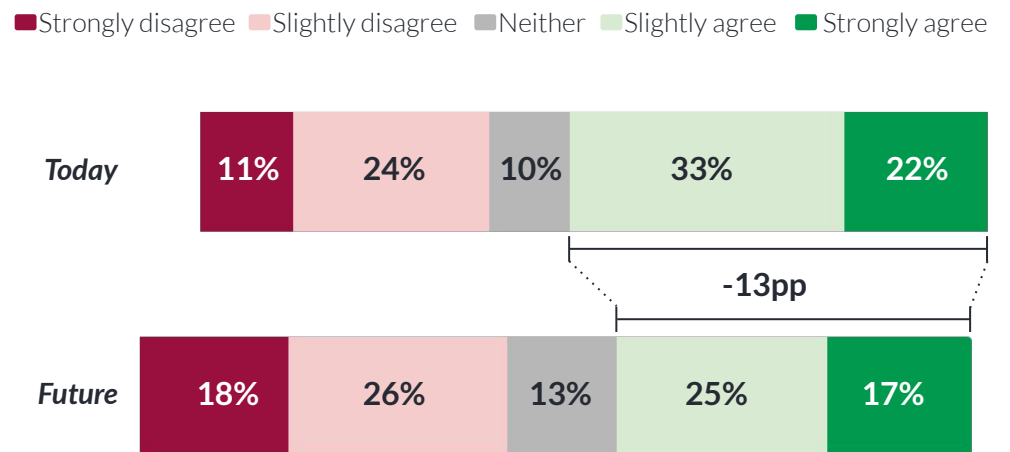
We are now firmly in the AI era, and many newsroom capabilities are shifting in response to the technology’s transformative potential. In the best cases, AI offers newsrooms the ability to uncover stories in new ways, deliver personalised journalism and unlock efficiencies. Still, confidence in the future-readiness of newsroom tools & tech remains low: only 14% of newsroom leaders said they are very or extremely confident that their setup will meet future needs, while 20% said they had no confidence at all. Four years after the launch of ChatGPT, many newsrooms are continuing to struggle with modernising their tech and

adapting operationally to the scale of change underway. Besides the tools and tech themselves, a second major capability challenge is organisational structure. While 55% of newsrooms believe their current reporting lines and structures are fit for purpose today, confidence drops by 13 percentage points looking three years ahead. Many are increasingly questioning whether traditional beat- or topic-based desk structures can keep pace with a platform-based ecosystem that rewards niche communities, targeted content and more direct audience relationships.

Confidence in current technology stack and AI tools



Confidence in readiness of reporting lines today and in three years



Questions: On a scale of 1–5, how confident do you feel that your current newsroom tools/technology are fit for purpose or future-proofed? *n*=397. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about your newsroom's skills and capabilities? 1) Today, our newsroom has the skills and capabilities required to achieve our goals. *n*=418; 2) Looking three years ahead, our current newsrooms skills and capabilities will still allow us to achieve our goals. *n*=409
Note: Respondents who selected 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

The main barriers slowing AI adoption (skills, scepticism & unclear use cases) are people-based, each with a different fix

The top three barriers to AI adoption are skills gaps (61%), cultural resistance and scepticism (52%) and unclear use cases (45%). These are primarily people- and mindset-based barriers rather than technical ones, and each demand a different intervention:

- ◆ **Skills is a capability gap.** AI training is often too generic and not specific to journalistic needs. The fix is structural via dedicated and specialised AI training for newsrooms.
- ◆ **Cultural resistance is a framing problem.** Too often AI vision setting is done outside the newsroom, with few having dedicated AI editorial roles. Bringing journalists into the technology fold can alleviate messaging problems and resistance.
- ◆ **Unclear use cases is a strategy gap.** The default KPI for newsrooms is efficiency, frequently measured as time saved. The fix is showcasing the transformative nature of AI tools in helping journalists uncover and expand original stories.

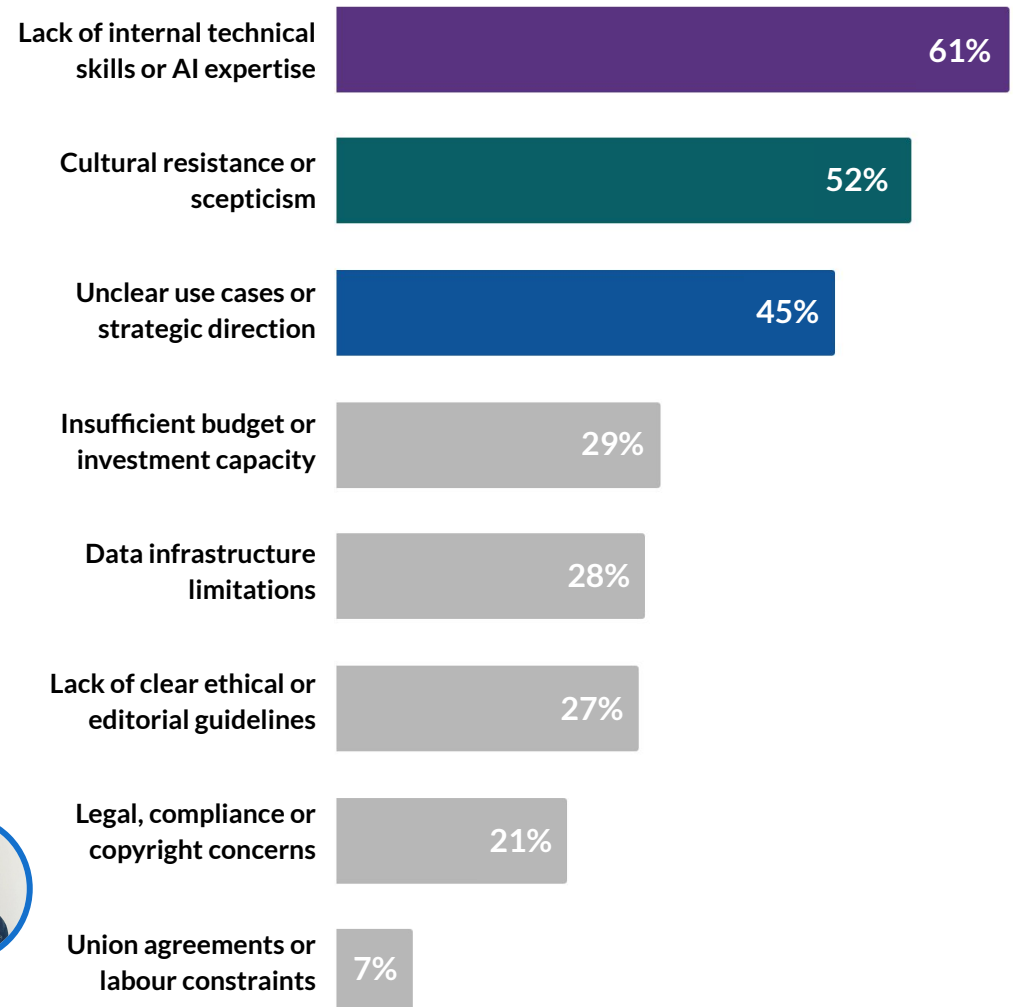
“ I kept meeting people in the lift saying 'It just hallucinates, I tried this and it can't solve the task.' So we ran prompting workshops – not to teach the tools, but to explain what AI actually is and what you can use it for.

Freja Sofia Kalderén
Development Editor, Bonnier



Question: What is the primary barrier(s) preventing wider AI adoption by your newsroom? (Multiple choice) n=216
Note: Respondents who selected 'Other' have been omitted

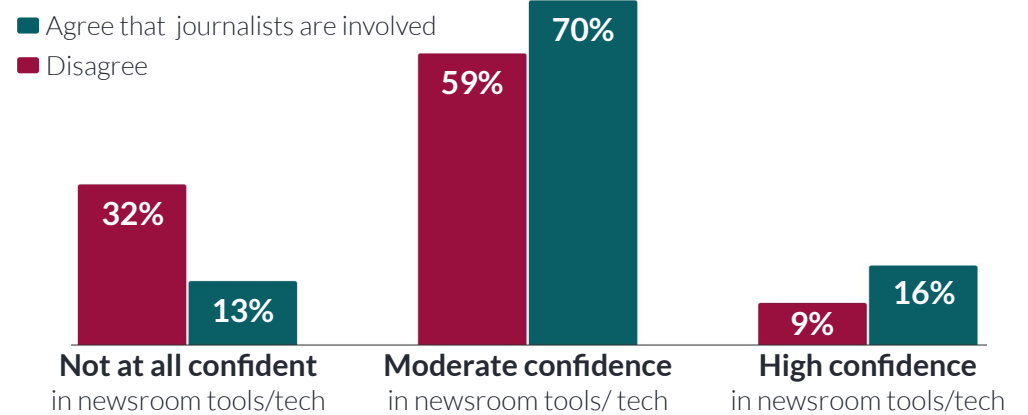
Primary barrier(s) preventing wider AI adoption



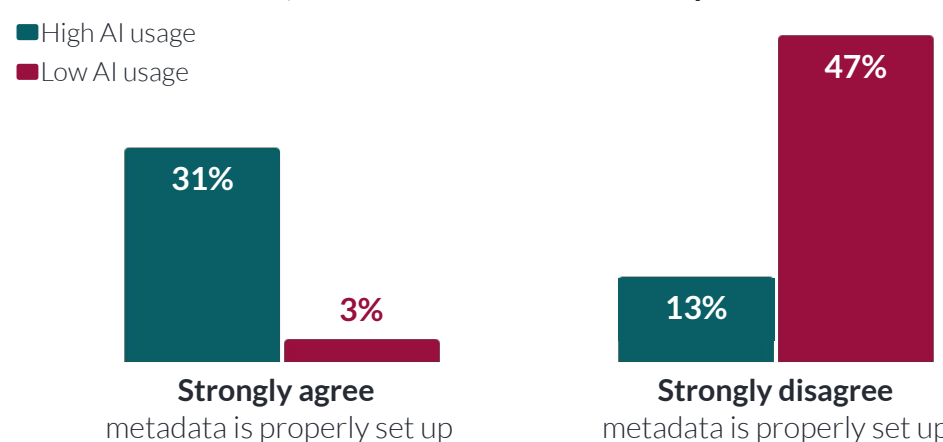
Newsrooms are typically more confident when journalists shape tech decisions and strong metadata systems exist in the backend

The capability gap is most visible in confidence around AI tools, with a [majority of newsrooms feeling low confidence in their current tools & tech](#). One factor that improves confidence is whether journalists are involved in technology decisions. Among newsrooms where journalists are not involved, 32% report low confidence; this falls to 13% when journalists are included in the process. Another factor is strong metadata infrastructure. Newsrooms with better backend systems (making content more searchable and usable via AI) are more likely to report higher AI usage.

Confidence in tech based on whether journalists are involved in tech and tooling decisions



Share of newsrooms AI usage levels based on whether they agree their tech infrastructure, data and metadata are set up for AI actionability



“Tools are being procured by CTOs and CMOs, not editorial. That’s the fundamental disconnect – the people choosing the technology aren’t the ones who have to make journalism with it.

Dmitry Shishkin
Advisory Board Member



“When we were building Ask The Post [at the Washington Post], we realised some of the technologists building it weren’t familiar with the inverted pyramid [which lets you cut story for wire]. That’s why you need subject matter experts on hybrid teams: not just to tell you whether the answer is correct, but to tell you what questions to ask to find out why it’s failing.

Phoebe Connelly
Advisory Board Member

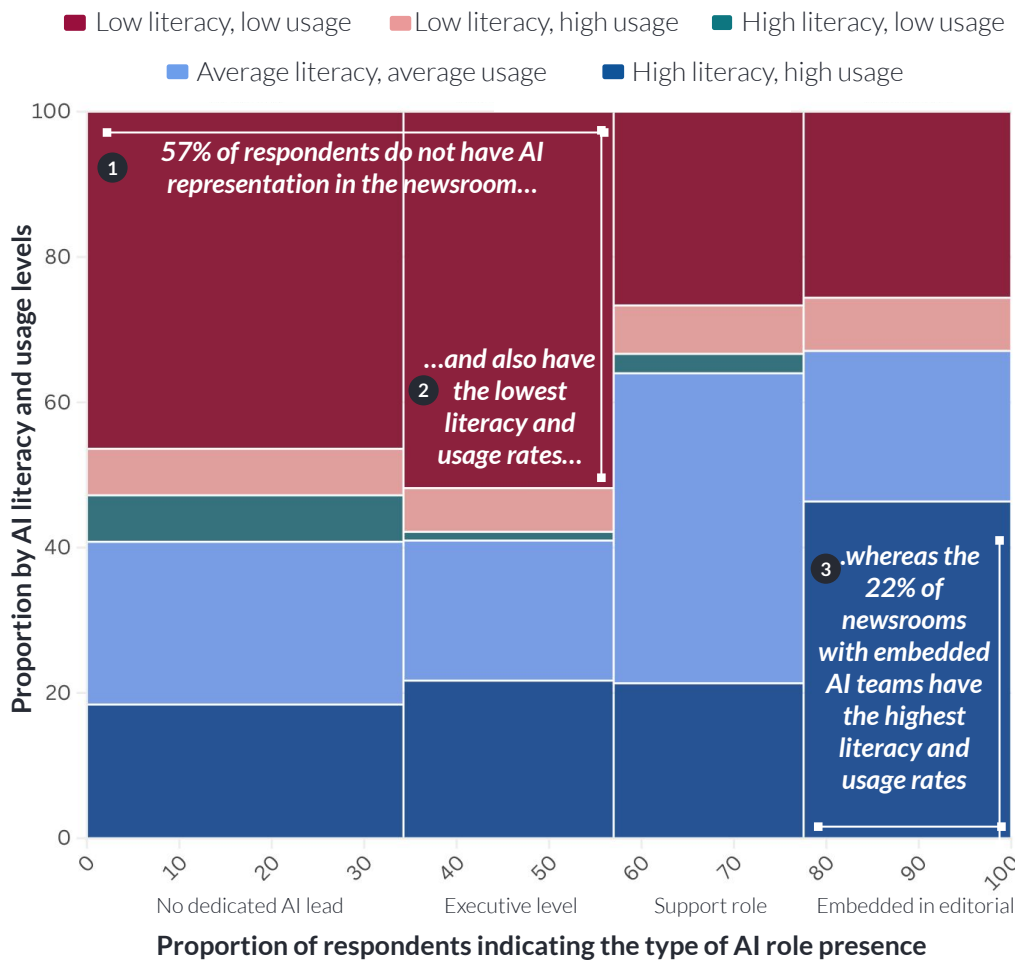


Questions: How confident do you feel that your current newsroom tools/technology are fit for purpose or future-proofed? *Journalists are involved in tech decisions* n=228, *Journalists aren’t involved in tech decisions* n=105; To what extent do you agree with each of the following statement? Our tech infrastructure, data and metadata are properly set up to make our content retrievable and actionable by AI. *Low AI usage* n=32, *High AI usage* n=59

Note: Respondents who selected ‘Unsure/I do not know’ have been omitted

Most organisations don't have AI representation in the newsroom, which corresponds to low literacy and usage rates

Presence of AI roles in the newsroom by AI literacy and usage levels



We asked newsrooms to describe the location and formality of AI authority in their organisation. The options included having **no dedicated lead**, having AI sit at the **executive level** outside the newsroom, having someone serve in a **support role** that builds tools when requested by the newsroom or having someone that is **embedded in editorial** to build tools more actively.

Those without any kind of AI authority in the newsroom (34% with no dedicated AI lead and 23% with AI sitting with non-editorial executives) reported the lowest levels of AI literacy and usage. Meanwhile among the 22% of newsrooms with AI roles embedded within editorial, almost half (46%) reported both high AI literacy and usage. These findings suggest that having a structure that places someone directly within the newsroom to advocate for AI in the editorial context matters to adoption rates: newsrooms that want to make the most of AI would benefit from incorporating these roles into the newsroom environment and iterating on them.

“Every five minutes there's a new role – head of AI this, head of AI lead that. Some organisations have 20 different people on those teams. I don't think those are the right roles, but the first roles often aren't.”

Renée Kaplan
Advisory Board Member

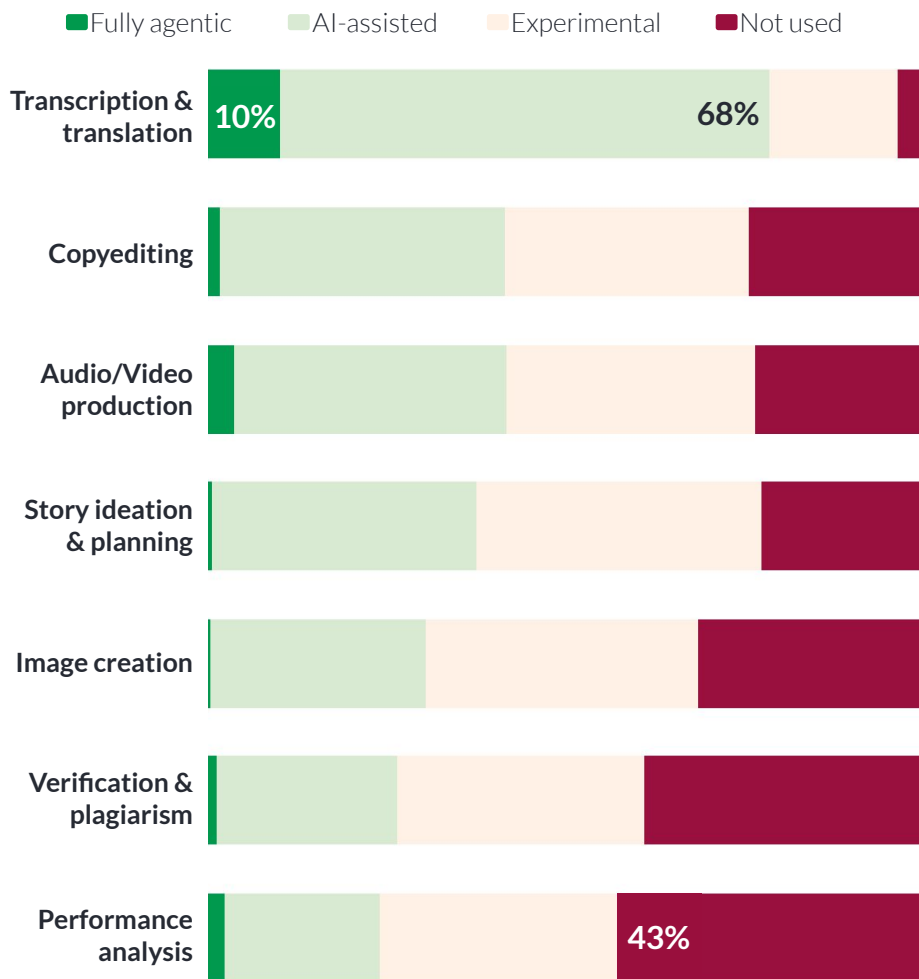


Questions: Which statement best describes the authority of the primary AI lead/team in your organisation?; To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements: AI literacy is widespread across my newsroom & AI usage is widespread across my newsroom. n=365

Notes: Respondents who indicated 'Slightly disagree' & 'Strongly disagree' or 'Slightly agree' & 'Strongly agree' across both statements have been combined to reflect low and high literacy and usage, respectively; respondents who indicated 'neither agree nor disagree' for one statement have been categorised as average literacy and usage; respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

AI adoption is more prevalent in low-risk workflows and less automated in workflows that carry higher reputational stakes

Level of AI integration into newsroom workflows



Across most editorial workflows, AI is widely integrated but rarely autonomous: agentic usage remains at 4% or below in every category except transcription, where it reaches 10%. More generally, using AI for transcription and translation is the most common practice, with 78% of respondents using AI in some way for it, compared to a more typical range of 21%–40% of respondents using AI to some degree for other workflows.

The slowest-adopting areas share an important characteristic: they carry direct publication and reputational risk. Drafting, story ideation and image generation sit much closer to the core craft of journalism, where mistakes are visible to audiences and attributed directly to journalists. Transcription, by contrast, supports the reporting process.

Some newsrooms are using AI in more ambitious ways to support newsgathering. For example, the New York Times built [an AI tool to monitor and summarise podcasts within the ‘manosphere’](#) to better understand how political conversations evolve online, and the Philadelphia Inquirer [developed a tool called Scribe to transcribe videos from public meetings](#), helping reporters track developments across local municipalities and school districts more efficiently.

“The discussion has moved from ‘AI will replace journalists’ to ‘AI will strengthen them.’”

Adriaan Basson
Editor-in-Chief, News24



Question: To what extent are the following AI use cases integrated into your daily production? n=380–383

Notes: Respondents who selected ‘Unsure/I do not know’ have been omitted; ‘AI-assisted’ for Transcription & translation and ‘Not used’ for Performance analysis was changed from 69% to 68% and 41% to 43%, respectively, due to mislabelled data after print release

For new initiatives, few newsrooms have spending autonomy at desk-level, raising doubts on organisational nimbleness

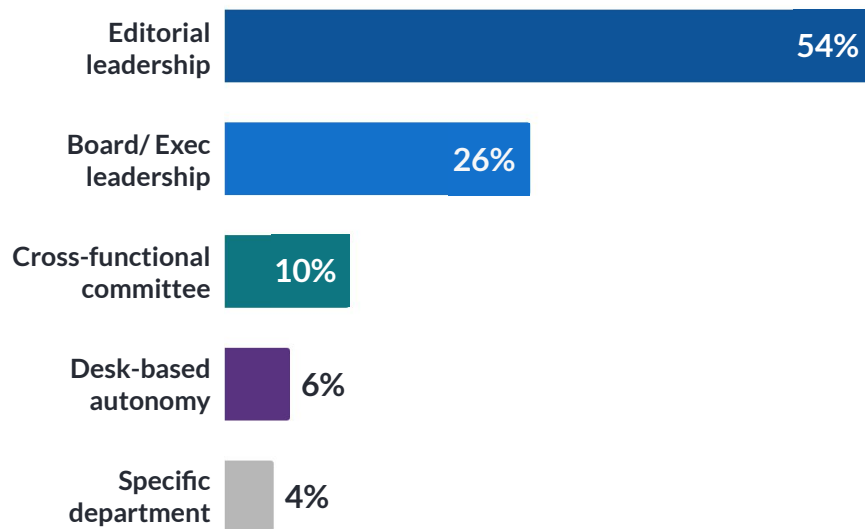
Organisational nimbleness is another key newsroom capability. Greater desk autonomy can help newsrooms with moving faster on launching new verticals or editorial technology investments, yet only 6% of respondents operate this way, with most decisions still sitting at editorial or executive level. Differences between large and small newsrooms are limited, though larger organisations tend to rely more on cross-functional committees (29%).

“I think it's really important that editorial teams get responsibility and the P&L, because otherwise it's always difficult to make these kinds of organisational structures very effective and successful.”

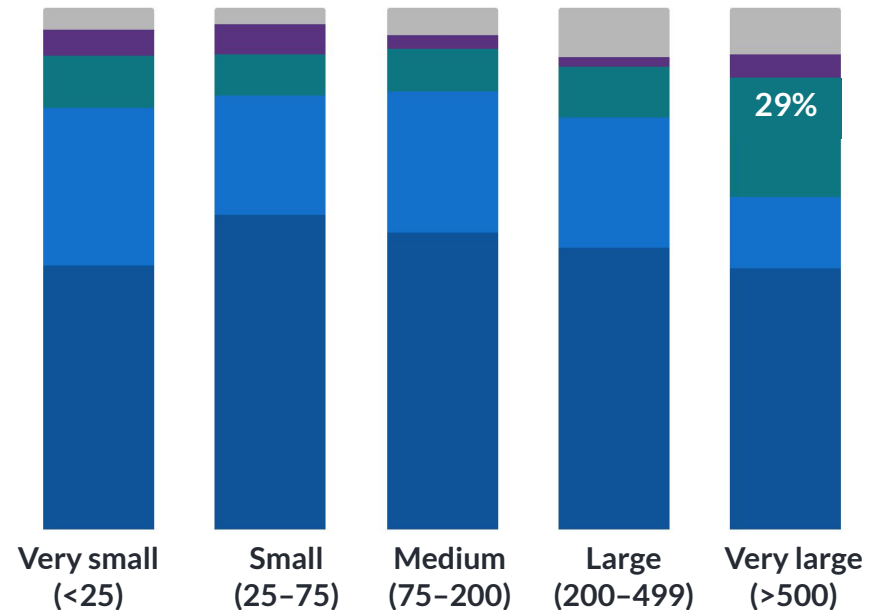
Christian Tretbar
Editor-in-Chief, Tagesspiegel



Who editorial teams submits business cases to for new initiatives



Who editorial submits business cases to by newsroom size



Questions: How does a desk (eg Politics, Culture) typically secure funding for a new strategic initiative or technology/editorial investment? n=363; Very small n=119, Small n=88, Medium n=74, Large n=52, Very large n=22
Note: Respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

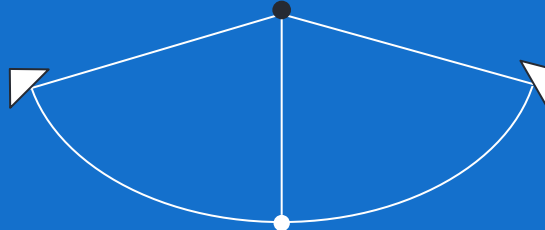
As audience trust signals shift from brands to individuals, newsrooms are swinging between two organisational structures

Desk model

The core of these operations is the news fact – the individual story itself. Editorial teams focus on newsgathering, product supports all stories relatively equally, commercial strategy focuses on a dominant monetisation model with centralised budgets and the brand serves as the primary institutional trust signal.



The news structure pendulum

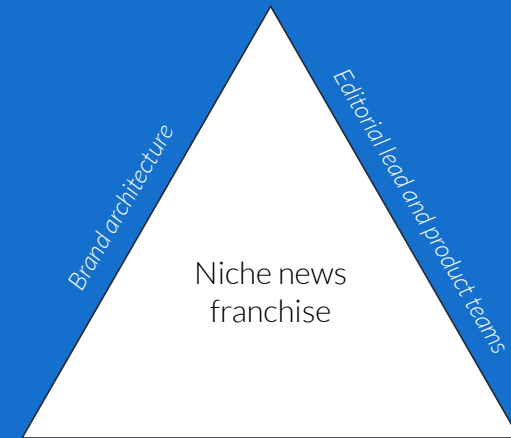


Many newsrooms will continue to swing between the two sides of the pendulum, maintaining desk-based structures while simultaneously trying to build mini-brands around their most prominent journalists, most commonly in opinion and analysis



Niche model

The core is a series of niche topical 'franchises' that cover stories through the combined strength of three elements: recognisable hosts and dedicated product teams, a clearly defined topical niche and back-end brand support. Each franchise typically has spending autonomy to further their coverage.



Specific topic, category, niche



Grupo RBS redesigned its editorial teams to move beyond a desk structure, creating two separate teams with clear audience goals

Who is Grupo RBS?

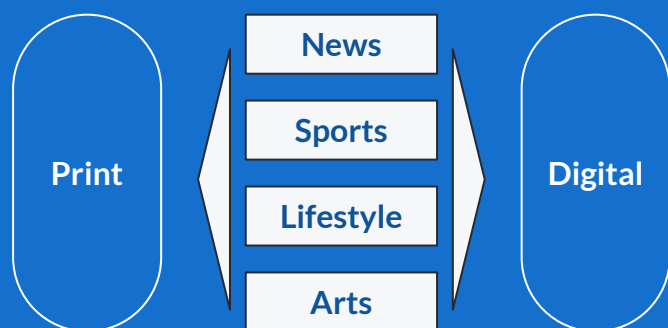
Grupo RBS is a major Brazilian media conglomerate based in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. They are most known for Gaucha (the leading news and sports radio station in the Greater Porto Alegre area), Zero Hora (the fourth largest newspaper in Brazil) and GZH (their news digital product available through web, app and streaming).

What was the initiative?

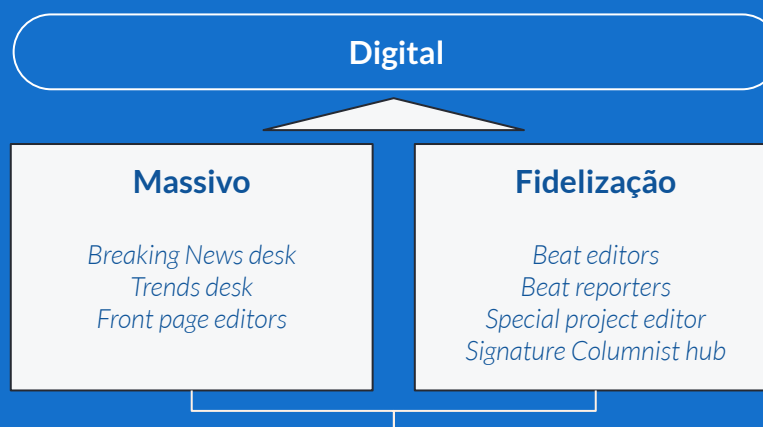
In 2024, Grupo RBS had a desk-based newsroom setup creating long- and short-form content for all digital *and* print products. They realised editorial teams were overwhelmed with too many tasks across the various products, and editors lacked a clear audience focus. In 2025, they restructured their newsroom into two teams:

- ◆ The **Massivo (broad) team** draws in new users by covering breaking news and owning the front page, liveblogs and social media.
- ◆ The **Fidelização (loyal) team** engages loyal users through longer-form content centred on deeper beat reporting, investigations and original analysis, as well as a columnist hub that features signature journalists' analysis and opinion.

Structure in 2024



Structure in 2025



Supported by specialised horizontal teams that focus on multimedia/audience engagement and a small print hub

What was the impact? (year-on-year changes)

- +18%** loyal visitors
- +19%** pageviews per journalist
- +8.5%** pageviews on stories with video
- +38%** Pageviews from Fidelização
- +200%** returning visitors

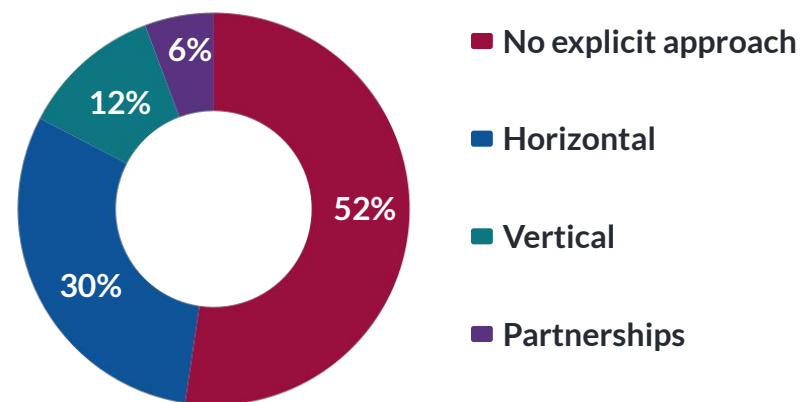
A majority of newsrooms lack an explicit strategy for coverage of underserved groups, pointing to limitations in existing structures

As newsrooms place greater emphasis on audience engagement, many may need to reconsider whether their current organisational structures are equipped to serve underrepresented and minority audiences effectively. We asked respondents how their newsroom approaches coverage of these audiences, offering four models:

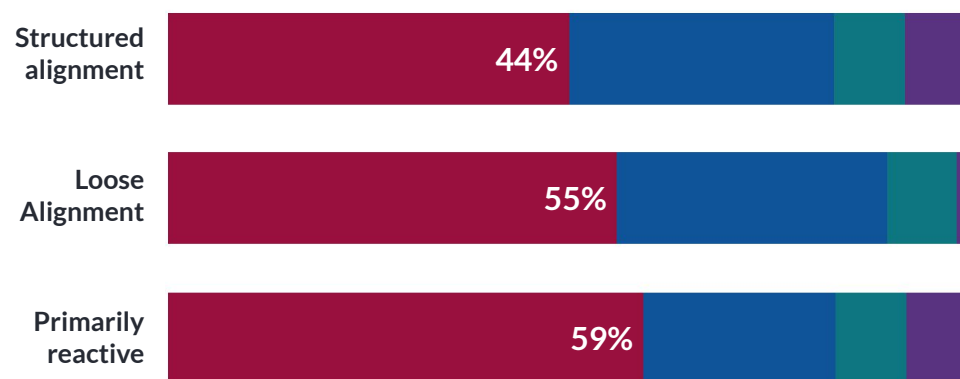
- ◆ A **generalist approach**, with no explicit targeting or segmentation of coverage
- ◆ A **horizontal approach**, where reporters across all desks are expected to include these groups within their reporting
- ◆ A **vertical approach**, with dedicated teams focused on specific communities or issues
- ◆ A **partnership approach**, where newsrooms work with external creators, experts or community voices to help tell these stories

More than half of respondents (52%) said they do not have an explicit approach. However, newsrooms that are structurally aligned in terms of their editorial and strategic goals are less likely to have a generalist approach compared to primarily reactive newsrooms (44% vs 59%). These findings suggest that reaching underserved audiences may increasingly require structural changes, rather than simply expecting existing journalists and workflows to adapt organically.

Newsroom approaches to covering underrepresented/minority groups



Approach to representation by level of strategic-editorial alignment



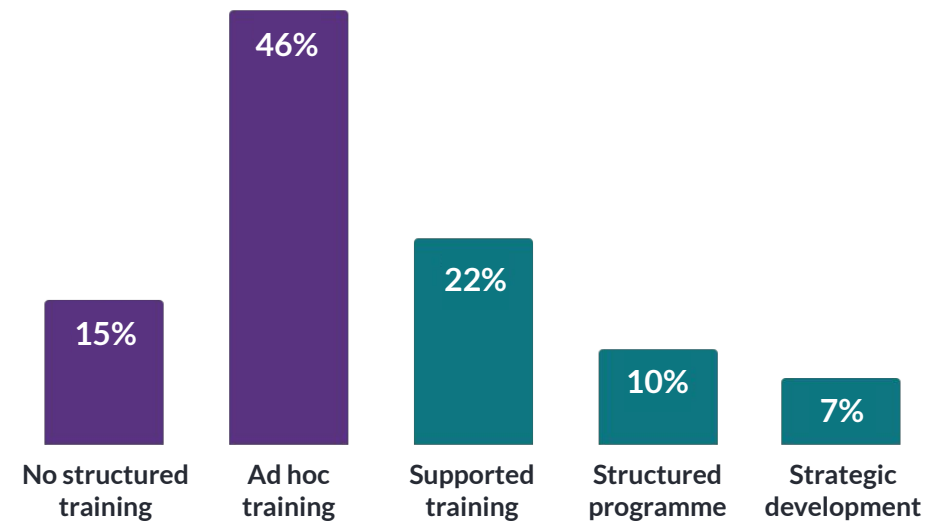
Question: How does your newsroom primarily structure its coverage of historically underrepresented or marginalised groups (eg specific genders, ethnicities or socioeconomic backgrounds)? n=386; Structured alignment n=126, Loose alignment n=164, Primarily reactive n=92

Note: Respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

Structured training is key to building confidence and capabilities, yet most newsrooms provide limited support

More than half of newsrooms (61%) report having no formal training programmes, compared to 39% that offer more robust training opportunities. **Our findings suggest that training is a key differentiator:** newsrooms that offer dedicated resources to training and view skills development as part of their strategy report much higher average confidence levels in their ability to meet both current priorities (3.61 vs 2.71) and future challenges (3.07 vs 2.72) compared to newsrooms that offer no formal training at all.

Level of structure in approach to skills development

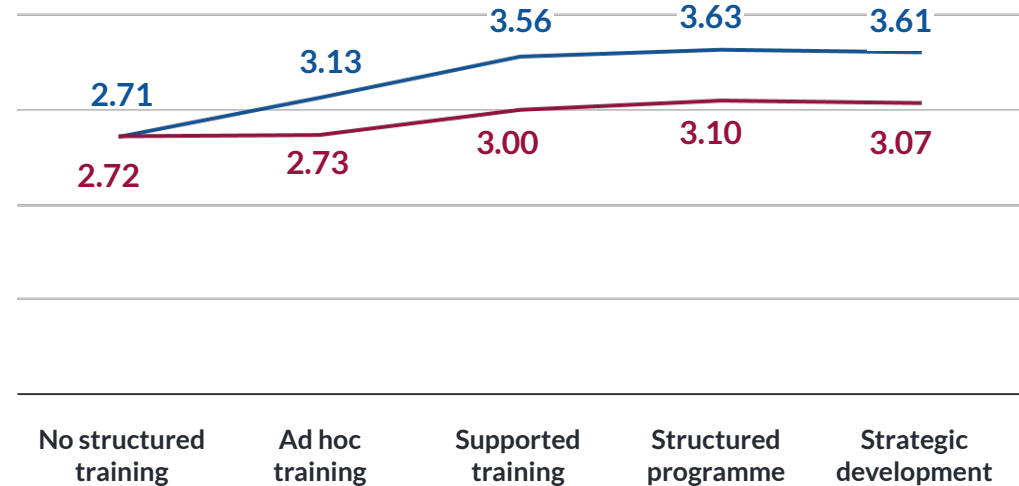


“To make AI training sustainable, you need to prove the business case. We track usage through monthly reporting and consistently see spikes in active users and sessions after training programmes and workshops. The initial surge may level out, but the long-term increase in adoption is very real.”

Freja Sofia Kalderén
Development Editor, Bonnier



Mean confidence in newsrooms skills for current vs future goals based on the level of structure in approach to skills development



Questions: Which best describes your newsroom’s approach to developing new skills (eg short-form video, AI) within teams? n=417; To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about your newsroom’s skills and capabilities: Today, our newsroom has the skills and capabilities required to achieve our goals. n=411; Looking three years ahead, our current newsroom’s skills and capabilities will still allow us to achieve our goals. n=400

Note: Respondents who selected ‘Other’ or ‘Unsure/I do not know’ have been omitted

Bonnier News built a suite of AI platforms that required upskilling of, and buy-in from, its thousands of journalists to succeed

Who is Bonnier News?

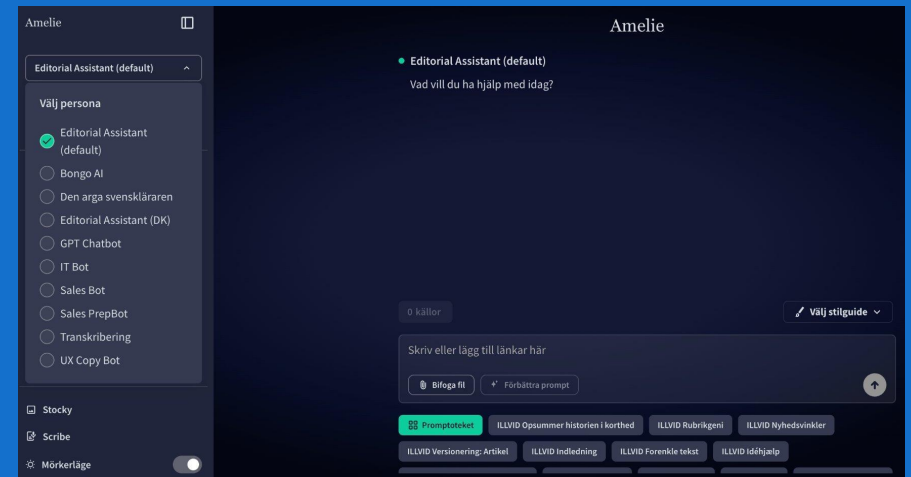
Bonnier News is one of the largest media companies in the Nordics, housing a mix of national titles such as Dagens Nyheter, Expressen and Dagens industri as well as dozens of other international and regional titles. Bonnier News employs roughly 6,700 employees, including approximately 2,000 journalists and operates across 11 countries around Europe.

What was the initiative?

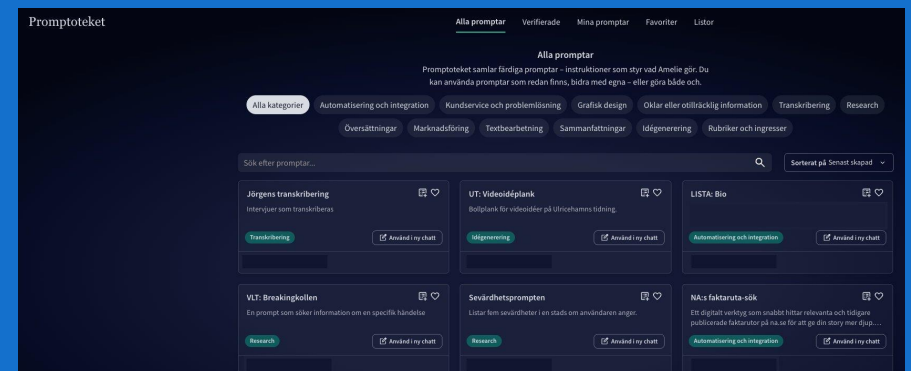
Bonnier News has developed bespoke AI platforms in-house for use across all areas of the organisation, such as **Amelie** (an editorial assistant that has now developed into an interface for different agents), **Promptoteket** (a shared prompt library that individual journalists can contribute to) and **Atom Builders** (an agent-building tool).

The challenge of rolling out these products is one of adoption at scale: Bonnier News has invested heavily in training programmes and workshops to encourage usage of these platforms across the organisation. Development Editor Freja Sofia Kalderén has been involved in designing and running workshops to counter the scepticism that had built up among journalists who had tried AI once and concluded it couldn't do their job — explaining what AI actually is and what it can do, not how to use specific features.

Amelie: Editorial AI assistant

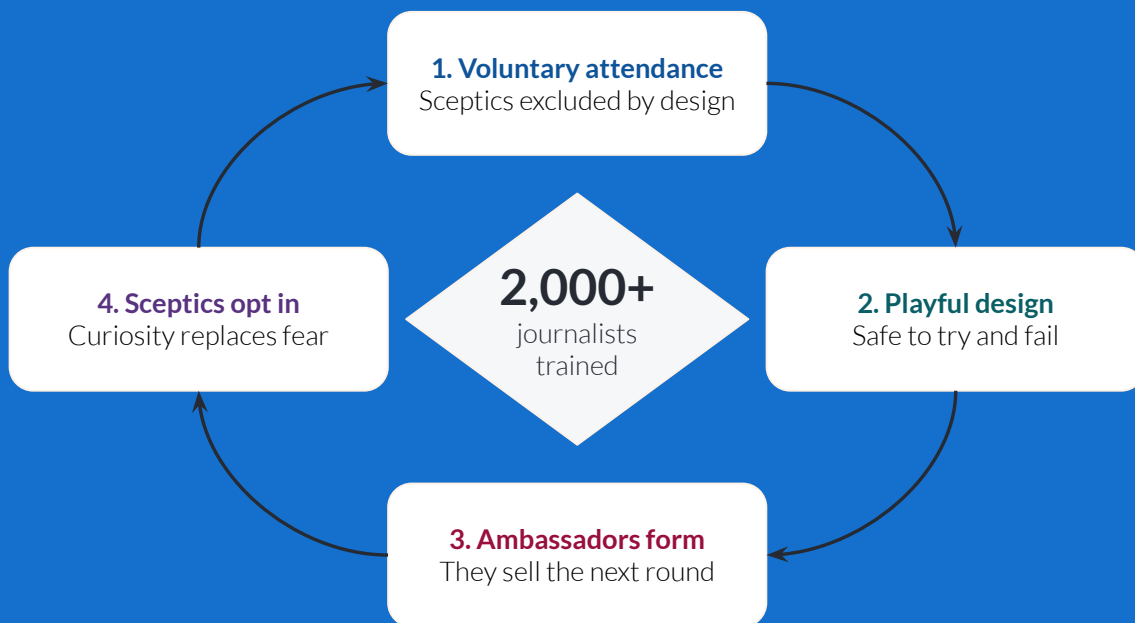


Promptoteket: Shared prompt library



To build a culture around AI, Bonnier News has heavily invested in training that seeks to turn newsroom sceptics into ambassadors

How were the workshops structured?



What was the impact?

2.4 4.1

Overall platform satisfaction, before vs after training

7 800
Prompts in library
in 10 months

+45%
Weekly active employee
user growth

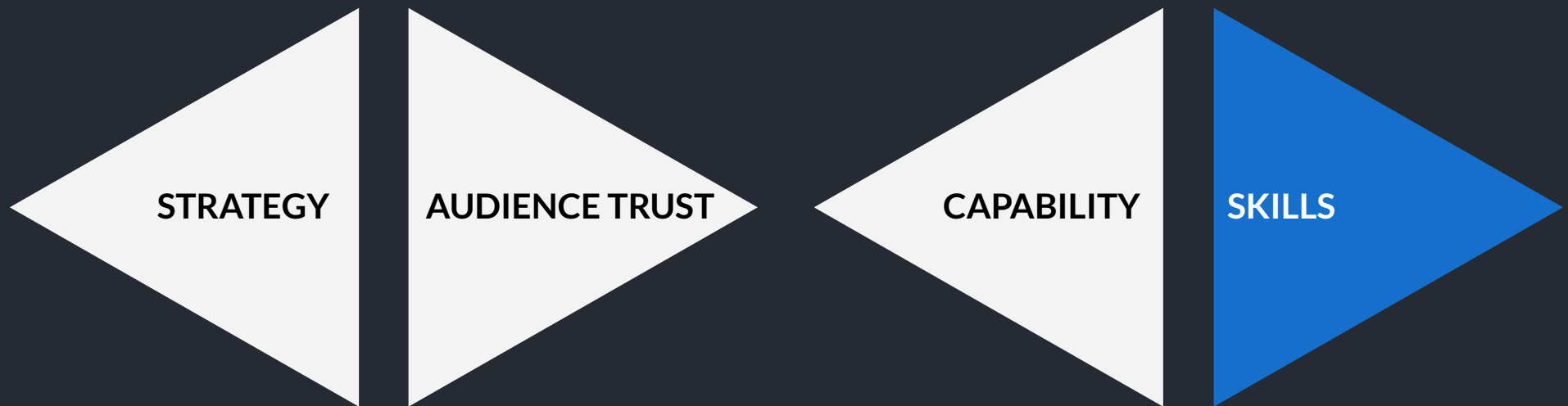
+30%
Monthly active employee
user growth

+62%
Monthly
session growth

What can newsrooms take from this?

- 1. Making training optional can work better than making it mandatory.** Sceptics rarely arrive ready to learn. Letting the curious come first builds a group of advocates inside the newsroom who later bring the sceptics in – without management forcing anyone.
- 2. Teach what AI is, not which buttons to click.** Workshops focused on what AI can and cannot do helped journalists understand and accept the technology itself, rather than memorising a specific tool that may change in six months.

Chapter 4: The Skills Gap



The Skills Gap

From assumed upskilling to a clearer newsroom skillset

DEFINITION



We view skills as the mix of **knowledge, behaviours and practical expertise** journalists need today – which feature enduring fundamentals such as editorial judgment, reporting, verification and subject expertise alongside newer ones in disciplines such as community, formats, data and technology.

THE GAP WE FOUND



Newsrooms do not lack talent, but **those with less alignment between strategy and editorial are less confident about their future and more uncertain about the exact skills they need.**

Some newsrooms also expect their teams to acquire new skills without providing the resources required to do so.

WHERE NEWSROOMS ARE HEADING



Future-ready newsrooms are moving from **broad generalism to sharper specialisation.** They are investing in skills that **combine journalistic craft and deep subject expertise with format fluency, audience intelligence and technical literacy.** They are also learning from creators and developing ways to better work with them.

Confidence in current newsroom skills erodes when looking to the future – but the most aligned newsrooms feel more prepared

More than half of newsrooms (55%) slightly or strongly agree that the skills and capabilities that exist in their organisations today are sufficient to help them achieve their current goals – but agreement levels drop down to 39% when they are asked whether their current skills will still be fit for purpose three years from now. This suggests that newsroom leaders across the board believe that the operating landscape in three years will require **some fundamental changes to the skills that will be expected of journalists** as technological, commercial and audience pressures continue to accelerate.

Forecasting for the future is inherently uncertain for any newsroom, but an interesting picture emerges when we break down confidence levels by alignment: structurally aligned newsrooms are markedly more confident that the skills that exist in their newsrooms today will help them achieve their goals in the future. These findings point to **a potential preparedness gap across the industry, in which newsrooms with stronger integration will be better positioned to anticipate skills gaps and align their talent development accordingly.**

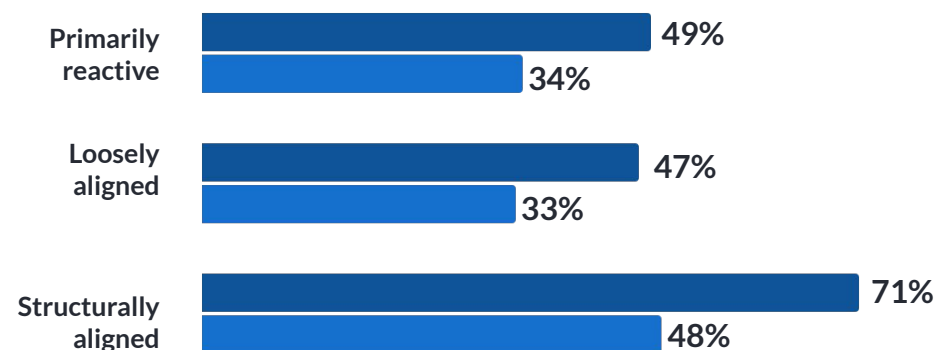
Agreement skills are fit for purpose

Strongly disagree Slightly disagree Neither Slightly agree Strongly agree



Agreement* skills are fit for purpose by strategic-editorial alignment

Today Looking three years ahead



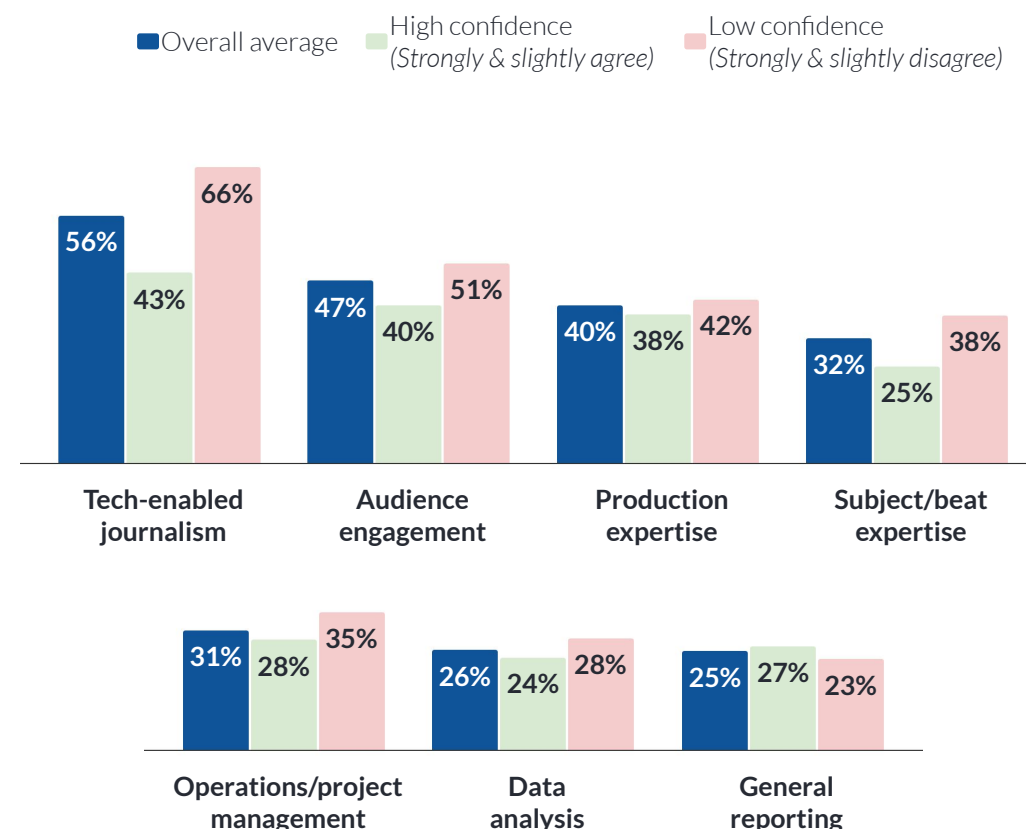
Questions: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your newsroom’s skills and capabilities? 1) Today, our newsroom has the skills and capabilities required to achieve our goals. n=411 (Structured n=130, Loose n=174, Reactive n=101); 2) Looking three years ahead, our current newsrooms skills and capabilities will still allow us to achieve our goals. Structurally aligned n=129, Loosely aligned n=174, Primarily reactive n=100
Notes: Respondents who selected ‘Other’ or ‘Unsure/I do not know’ have been omitted; *Agreement calculated as the sum of newsrooms that slightly agreed and newsrooms that strongly agreed

Across newsrooms, tech-enabled journalism, audience engagement and production skills are most prioritised for future

When we asked leaders to identify up to three skills they would prioritise to future-proof their newsrooms, the top areas emerged as **tech-enabled journalism expertise** (eg open-source intelligence skills, computational journalism and AI prompting); **audience engagement skills** (eg trend monitoring, content optimisation and off-site distribution); and **production-based competencies** (eg video editing, animation and sound editing). There were some notable differences in the way leaders who were confident that their current newsroom had the skills to meet future goals responded to this question compared to those who were not:

- ◆ **Low-confidence newsrooms** selected more responses on average, indicating they see more gaps to fill across a range of skills. They were also more likely to prioritise tech-enabled (+23pp), subject expertise (+13pp), audience engagement (+11pp) and project management (+7pp) skills.
- ◆ **High-confidence newsrooms**, by contrast, selected fewer responses on average, suggesting they are more tactical and deliberate in their needs. They were also more likely to prioritise general reporting skills (+4pp), potentially indicating these newsrooms believe they already have the right audience engagement, product and multimedia skill sets in place to support raw journalistic talent.

Skills prioritised for future readiness by confidence levels



Question: When thinking about the skills you need to prepare your newsroom for the future, which would you prioritise? Please select up to three. Overall average n=409, High confidence in current skills to achieve future goals (strongly agree & slightly agree) n=173, Low confidence in current skills to achieve future goals (strongly disagree & slightly disagree) n=179

Note: Respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

New reporting roles bundle skills from multiple disciplines

Discipline that each skill relates to:

- Traditional reporting
- Data and analysis
- Engineering and tools
- Formats and platforms
- Audiences and community

<p><i>The New York Times (United States)</i></p> <h2>Open Source Intelligence Reporter</h2>	<p><i>Verdens Gang (Norway)</i></p> <h2>News Reporter</h2>	<p><i>Thomson Reuters (Global)</i></p> <h2>Short-Form Video Content Creator</h2>	<p><i>SPH Media (Singapore)</i></p> <h2>Podcast Correspondent</h2>
<p>Role description: A reporter who hunts stories by analysing satellite photos, scraping unstructured data and writing code to monitor flight and shipping traffic.</p> <p>How it's different: A traditional investigative reporter starts from documents, sources and FOI. This one starts from satellite imagery, scraper output and geospatial analysis, and also writes the code to gather it.</p> <p>Skills recipe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigative reporting Geolocation & chronolocation Satellite imagery analysis GIS & cartography Custom scraper development Git & Bash in production 	<p>Role description: A reporter whose briefs come from audience data and AI tools, finding stories that drive subscription conversion in real time.</p> <p>How it's different: A traditional news reporter takes assignments from the morning meeting. This reporter's briefs surface from audience signals and a subscription-conversion target.</p> <p>Skills recipe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> News reporting Data-driven story selection AI as a working tool Conversion-target reporting Multi-format publishing 	<p>Role description: Owns TikTok end-to-end for a B2B legal brand – coaching lawyers to be on-camera talent, while testing ChatGPT-native ad creative.</p> <p>How it's different: A traditional social media editor repackages reporting for distribution. This one produces native content end-to-end and helps to develop new on-camera talent.</p> <p>Skills recipe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-form video production Platform algorithm fluency On-camera talent coaching Brand identity development ChatGPT ad experimentation Performance analysis 	<p>Role description: One correspondent owning Asian business, finance and geopolitics across audio, video and written formats – from first pitch to final edit.</p> <p>How it's different: A traditional podcast producer focuses on one medium, supported by reporters and editors. This one is correspondent, producer and editor in a single role, working across three formats.</p> <p>Skills recipe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional expertise as a beat Multiformat (audio/video/text) On-mic correspondent skills Audio editing & post-production Cross-platform packaging

We analysed 6,687 real job listings posted to LinkedIn by various news organisations in 2026, filtering for emerging reporting roles that combine traditional journalistic competencies with emerging skills. These four examples demonstrate the breadth of skills becoming essential to newsrooms.

The creator era highlights particular skill sets of prominent journalists and raises questions about compensation structures

Views on compensation structures for prominent journalists

Compensation structure and description		% of respondents
Higher bonuses	Larger or more frequent performance-linked bonuses, without formal revenue share	23%
Higher base	Increased fixed salary, with standard bonus structure	21%
Hybrid contracts	Bespoke packages combining higher pay, bonuses and potential revenue share	20%
Revenue share	Compensation linked directly to revenue (ads/subscriptions, sponsorships, events)	14%
No differentiation	Same salary and incentives as the rest of the newsroom	22%

Audiences are increasingly shifting their trust from institutions to individuals, according to research from [FT Strategies and the Knight Lab](#) as well as [the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#). Prominent journalists, news creators and personalities are adept at building trust with audiences in three ways: they establish credibility through expertise and lived experience, they create affinity through authenticity and demonstrate transparency about their intentions, perspectives and motivations. They then amplify this trust by coupling it with the ability to experiment with formats and delivery mechanisms that make them stand out across platforms.

One of the main ways that newsrooms must navigate this era involves deciding how these skill sets are compensated.

There are signals that a fundamental shift is due to take place: **78% of newsrooms agree that some type of payment structure that differentiates prominent journalists from the rest of the newsroom may be needed**, highlighting the importance of these individuals and their ability to authentically reach audiences and build community on behalf of a brand.

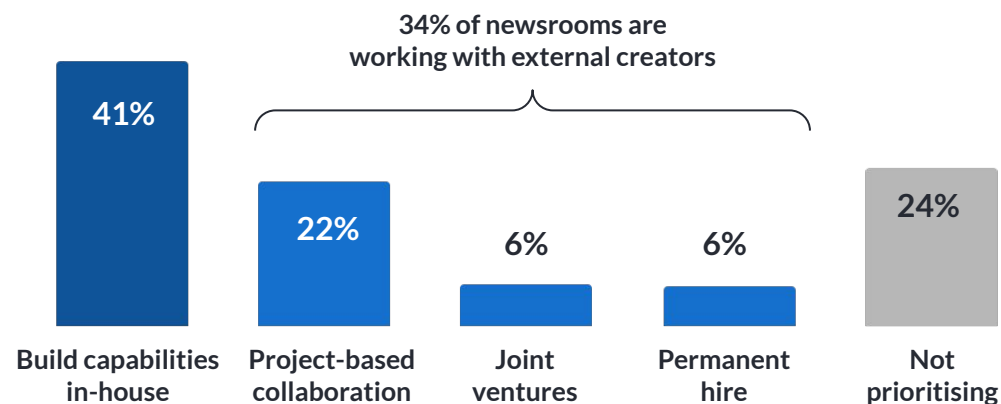
Question: As the creator economy becomes a more significant feature of the media landscape, how do you believe your organisation's compensation structures should evolve to introduce greater differentiation between prominent journalists and the wider newsroom? n=324

Most newsrooms are looking to upskill existing staff on ‘creator’ approaches, but few are offering the required training to do so

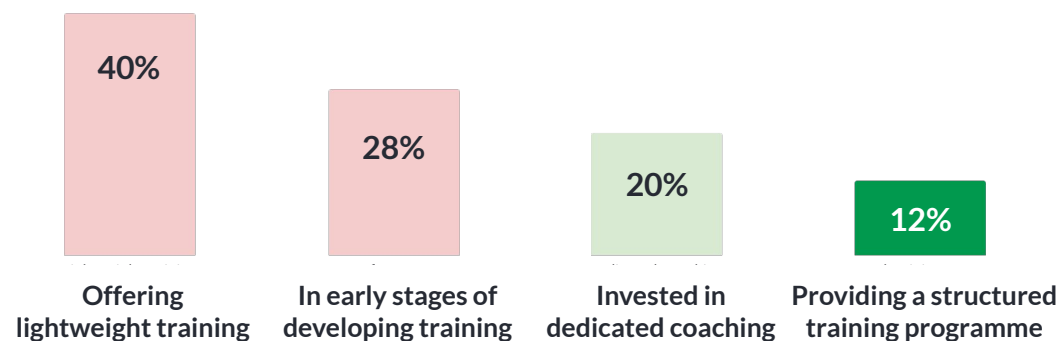
Most newsrooms are considering their approach to working with creators, with just 24% of newsrooms saying that this is not a priority for them right now. Among those investing in the space:

- ◆ **41% are building internal creator capabilities**, indicating they believe they can upskill their existing journalists to shift toward new formats (conversational podcasts, long-form video) and storytelling (informal tone or explainers). Still, 68% still have not yet developed formal ‘on-camera’ training programmes, raising concerns that expectations may be outpacing journalists’ capacity to adapt with the time and support they need to properly develop these skills.
- ◆ **34% are working with external creators in different capacities**, with some opting for project-based collaborations (such as NBC’s partnership with Cleo Abram for Olympic news content), others for joint ventures (such as Kara Swisher and Scott Galloway’s four-year podcast deal with Vox Media) or employing creators as full-time staff (such as the acquisition of Geopop by Ciaopeople in Italy).

Views on most effective models for working with creators



On-camera ‘creator-training’ across newsrooms looking to upskill staff

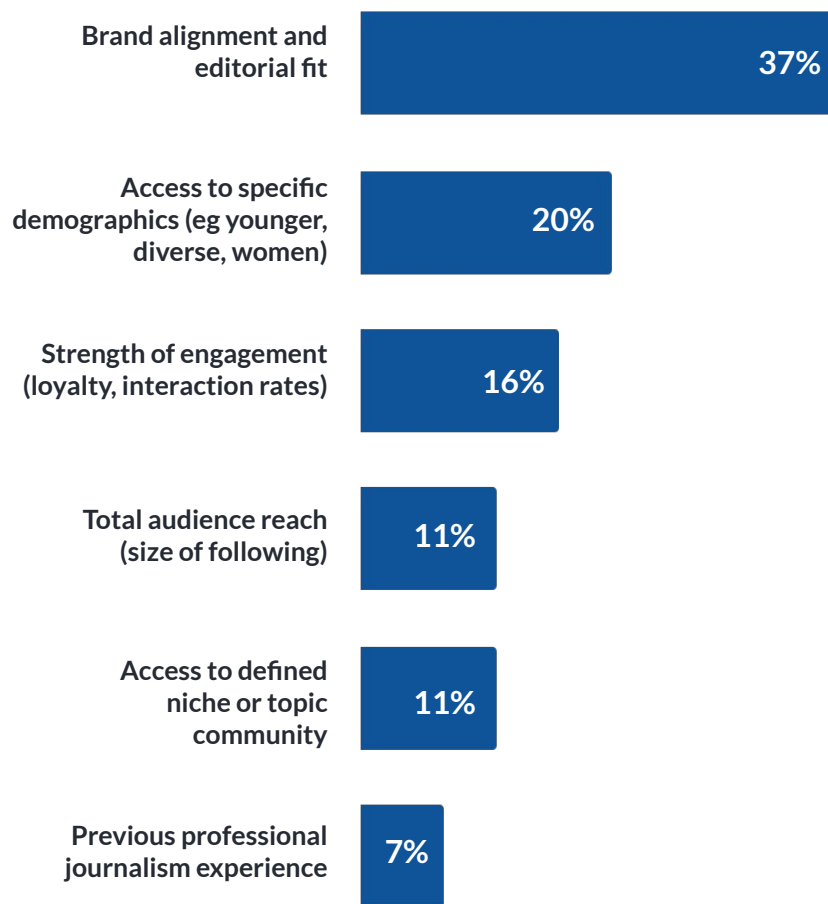


Questions: What do you view as the most effective model for working with creators within your newsroom? n=376; How is your newsroom approaching on-camera presentation and talent training for journalists to compete on visually demanding platforms? n=138 (only displayed if answered ‘building internal creator capability’)

Note: Respondents who selected ‘Other’ or ‘Unsure/I do not know’ have been omitted

Brand alignment is the primary criterion for creator partnerships, reflecting a risk-mitigation rather than growth mindset


Most important criteria for creator collaboration



More than one-third (37%) of newsrooms that work with creators externally are continuing to prioritise brand alignment as their main criterion for deciding who to work with. This suggests that **newsrooms are approaching creators through a risk management lens**, potentially choosing to constrain themselves to existing norms rather than embracing a growth and experimental mindset. During our qualitative interviews, several newsroom leaders argued that the more important factor is identifying creators based on their ability to unlock niche expertise, reach underserved audiences or lead conversations with communities that newsrooms struggle to access on their own. In this sense, the most effective creator partnerships are therefore most likely to be highly targeted and audience-specific.


“It becomes manageable if you can clearly articulate the vision and find people willing to embrace it... The recipe for success [is] finding a niche where you can create something no one else is producing.”

Keith Lynch
Editor-in-Chief, Stuff Digital



“Creator partnerships work best when they are clearly framed as experimental, transparent and purpose-driven – bringing new perspectives and access rather than simply chasing reach.”

Renée Kaplan
Advisory Board Member

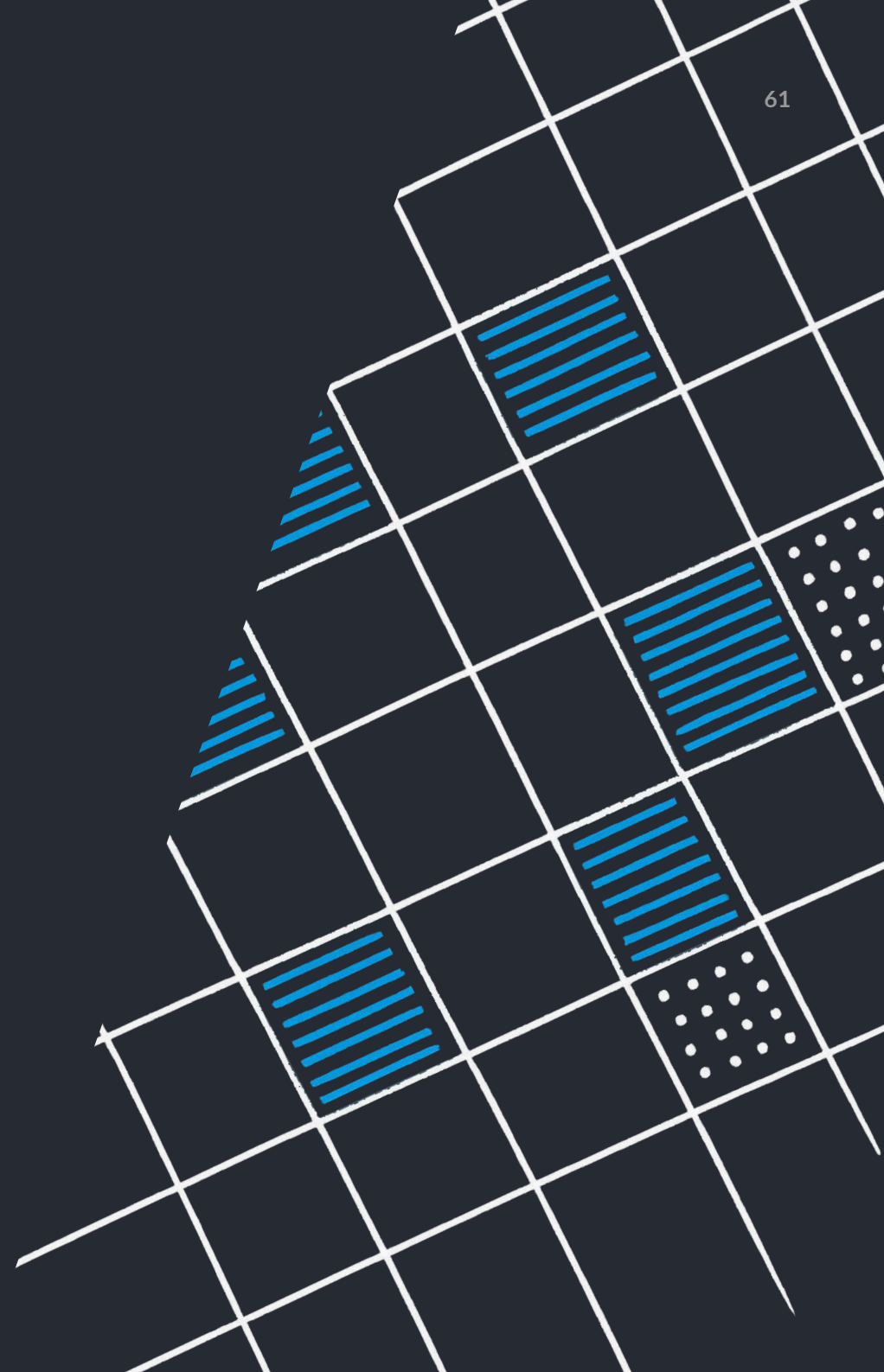


Question: What is the most important criterion that you look at when deciding on which types of creators to collaborate with? n=122

Notes: Respondents who selected 'Other' or 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted; question was displayed to respondents who selected 'project-based collaboration', 'permanent hire' or 'joint venture or co-owned entity' in a previous survey question



Closing thoughts



There is no single answer to what your future newsroom should look like, but there are questions worth asking to frame direction

Newsroom strategy is evolving. Newsrooms need a closer connection between commercial and editorial goals, alongside a clearer understanding of where and how they can be truly distinctive. If you are considering a strategic reset, ask yourself these four questions...

Component	Core questions	What it should clarify
#1 Ambition	What are we ultimately trying to become as a newsroom and organisation?	The long-term editorial, audience, commercial and mission-driven outcomes the organisation is optimising toward
#2 Audience	With which audiences are we deliberately choosing to serve, prioritise and build relationships?	The priority audiences, communities, needs, behaviours and value exchanges that should shape editorial and product decisions
#3 Distinctive value	What makes our journalism and audience experience meaningfully different from alternatives?	The editorial DNA, expertise, authority, perspective and experiences that cannot be easily replicated or commodified
#4 Destination	Where should our journalism, personalities and communities live and connect?	The spaces and mechanisms through which audiences can contribute, respond, participate and build networked relationships

Audience trust is shifting from institutions alone to the individuals within them. Newsrooms need to rethink how they build credibility, affinity, transparency and participation through personalities. If you are rethinking how your newsroom signals trust, ask yourself these four questions...

Component	Core questions	What it should clarify
#1 Credibility	Why should audiences trust the accuracy, expertise and authority of our journalism?	How expertise, evidence, sourcing, reporting depth and editorial judgment are demonstrated and made visible to audiences
#2 Affinity	What keeps our audiences connected to our journalism, journalists and brand?	How journalism creates emotional connection, habit, relatability and stronger audience relationships through tone, formats, personalities and community
#3 Transparency	Why should audiences trust our motivations, perspectives and editorial process?	How clearly the newsroom communicates its intentions, methods, editorial choices, uncertainty, corrections and the purpose behind its journalism
#4 Participation	How can audiences feel more recognised, involved and engaged in the journalistic process?	The extent to which audiences can contribute, respond, participate and build two-way relationships with the newsroom and its journalism

There is no single answer to what your future newsroom should look like, but there are questions worth asking to frame direction

Newsroom capabilities are increasingly defined by adaptability, technical fluency and clearer ownership structures. Newsrooms are embedding these directly into editorial rather than treating them as separate functions. If you are rethinking your capabilities, ask yourself these four questions...

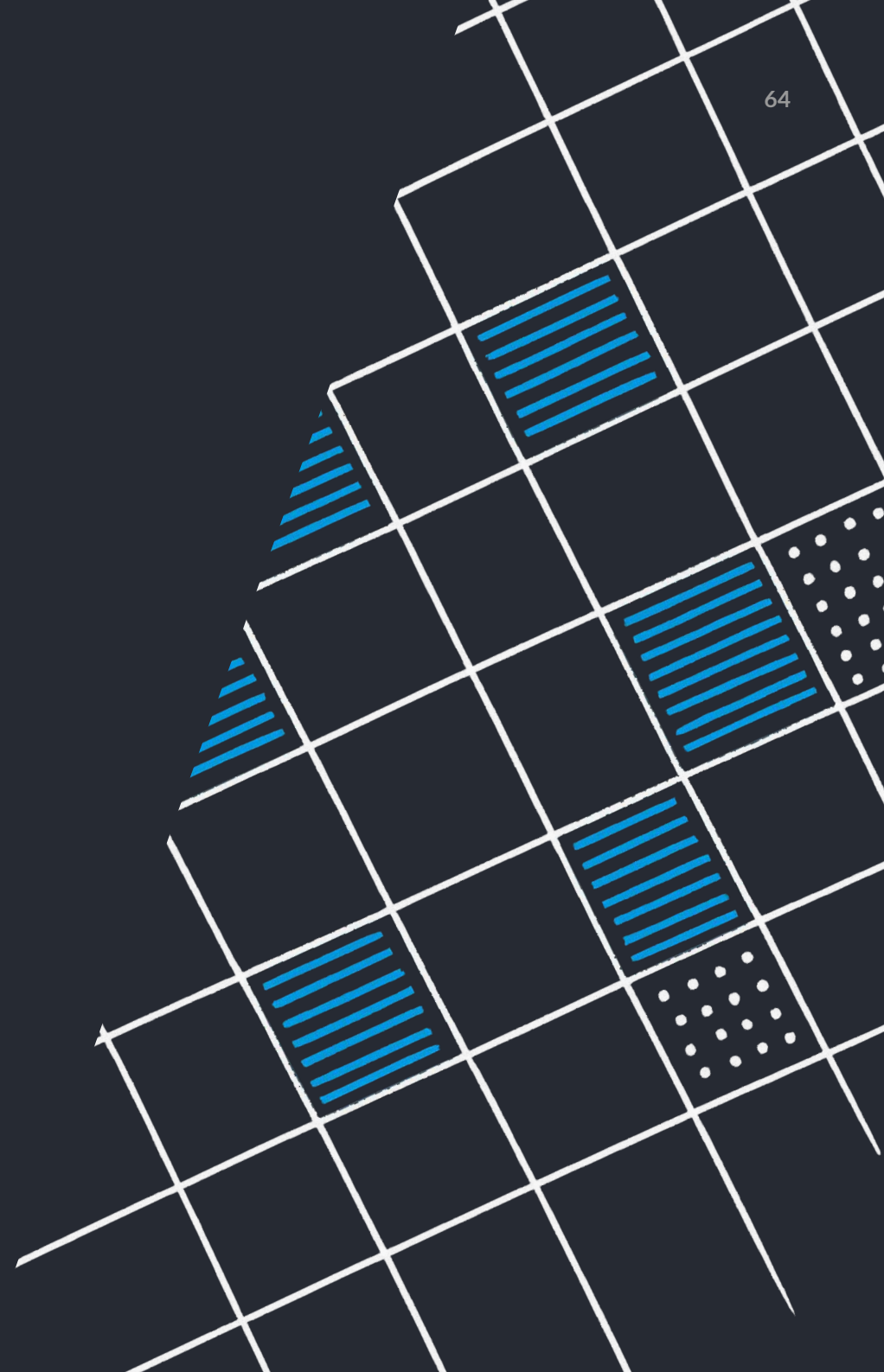
Component	Core questions	What it should clarify
#1 Nichification of capability	Which audience need is this team designed to serve?	How newsrooms move beyond broad desks toward more focused 'franchises' with a clear topic, format and audience need
#2 Editorially informed technology	Which editorial tasks or workflows should AI improve?	How technology decisions are shaped by editorial and audience needs, rather than being imposed externally or driven solely by efficiency
#3 Embedded ownership	What are we testing, who owns it and how will it become part of regular work?	How much autonomy editorial teams or editors have over product decisions, experimentation, investment and audience growth
#4 Strategic training	Which future priorities do our people need to be trained and ready for?	How training can be a differentiator, helping with long-term adaptation to AI in support of strengthened storytelling approaches

Skills are shifting from individual strengths to newsroom-wide expertise. Newsrooms need to rethink how they build, organise and reward editorial judgment, format fluency, audience understanding and technical literacy. If you are rethinking your skills, ask yourself these four questions...

Component	Core questions	What it should clarify
#1 Editorial judgment	Which human editorial capabilities will remain most valuable as automation keeps growing?	How reporting, verification, expertise, sourcing and editorial judgment become more important for AI resilience
#2 Audience intelligence	How well do we understand the audiences, communities and behaviours we are trying to serve?	How data literacy, audience insight, engagement and community understanding shape stronger editorial and product decisions
#3 Format fluency	Which storytelling approaches, formats and platforms do journalists need to deeply understand?	How journalism can feel native to different environments while remaining recognisable, trustworthy and distinctive to audiences
#4 Technology confidence	How comfortable are our teams in shaping, testing and working alongside new technologies?	How AI literacy, automation and product thinking enable journalists to influence tools and workflows rather than passively receive them

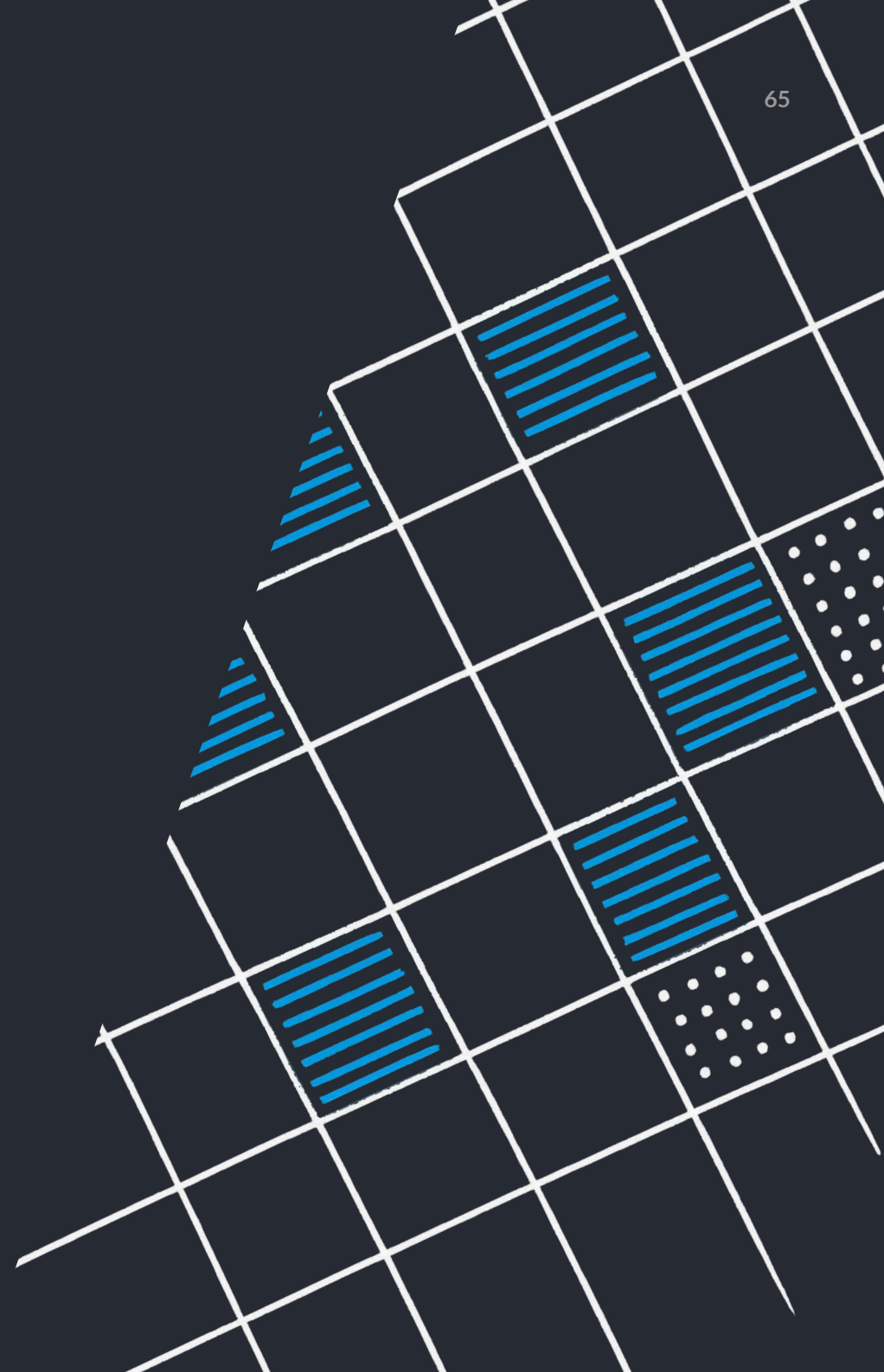


Appendix





Additional data



The usual ways of grouping newsrooms by business model do not explain whether editorial budgets have grown in the past year

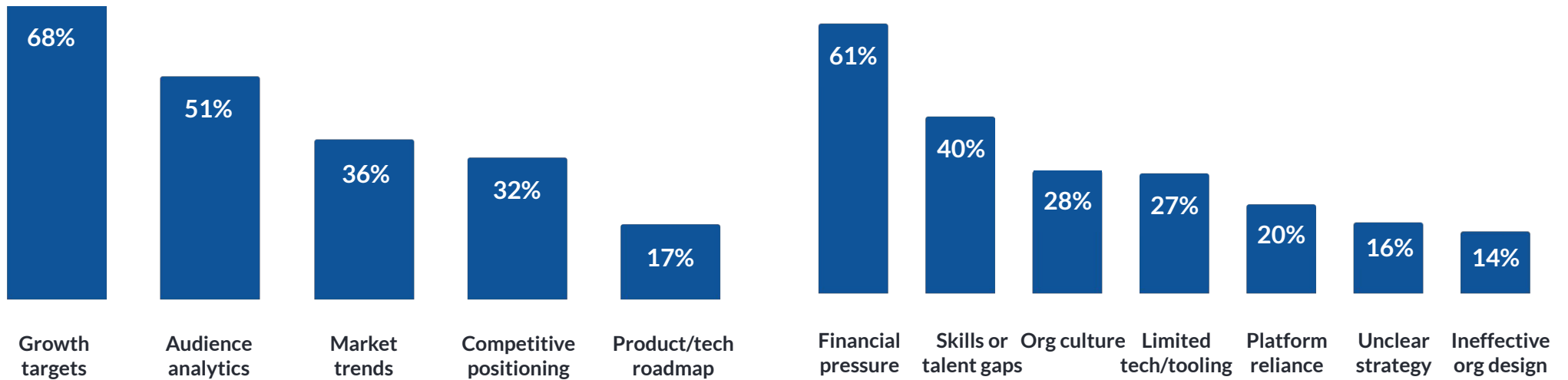
	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Difference from overall by business model</u>			<u>Difference from overall by newsroom size</u>				
		<i>Reader-first</i>	<i>Ad-first</i>	<i>Other-first</i>	<i>Very small</i>	<i>Small</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Large</i>	<i>Very large</i>
Increase	38.5%	+3.3%	+2.5%	-4%	+0.1%	-1.8%	+1.2%	-1.5%	+5.5%
Decrease	35.5%	-0.2%	+3.0%	-2%	-4.1%	+2.3%	+5.5%	+0.3%	-0.5%
Stay the same	26%	-3.1%	-0.6%	+9%	+4.1%	-0.5%	-6.7%	+1.8%	-6.0%

Question: How has your editorial budget for creating content changed over the past 12 months? Overall n=423; Reader-first n = 122; Ad-first n=207; Other-first n=94; Very Small n=153; Small n=98; Medium n=83; Large n=54; Very large n=25
Note: Respondents who selected 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

Few newsrooms cite unclear strategy as a barrier to achieving goals; more are constrained by financial pressure or skills gaps

Top influencing factors on setting newsroom goals

Top barriers to achieving newsroom goals

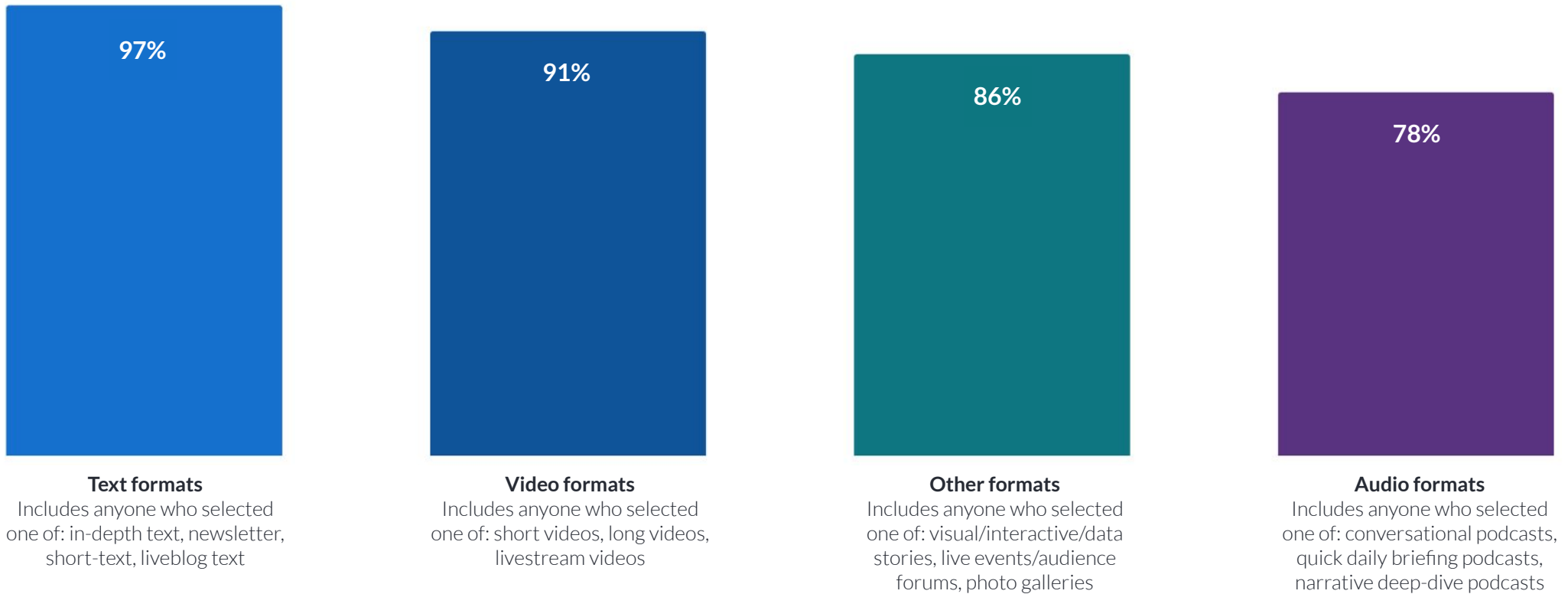


Question: What were the two biggest factors in deciding these goals? n=426; What are the two biggest factors that might limit your newsroom's ability to meet these goals? n=388

Note: Respondents who selected 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

At a macro level, text remains the dominant format newsrooms plan to focus more on next year, followed closely by video

Formats newsrooms plan to focus more on next year, at a macro level



Question: Looking ahead to the next year, which of the following format approaches are you planning to focus on more to maintain a distinctive editorial voice? Select all that apply. n=385

Note: Respondents who selected 'Unsure/I do not know' have been omitted

There was no dominant investment model when it came to a hypothetical budget exercise we presented to respondents

We asked newsrooms to imagine they received one-time funding for an editorial project or initiative, and to allocate that budget across the areas they believed would most effectively help them reach their goals. Technology and infrastructure attracted the highest mean allocation (20%), reflecting the perceived importance of AI, internal technology improvements and data capabilities.

Content production also received high mean allocations, signalling the increasing importance newsrooms are placing on audio-video. Overall, however, responses suggest limited consensus on what drives success: high standard deviations across all categories indicate that newsrooms are prioritising different levers depending on their context, capabilities and assumptions about what is required to reach their goals.

Theoretical budget allocations toward an editorial initiative to reach a goal

	<i>Mean (%)</i>	<i>Median (%)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Tech & infrastructure	20	20	17.01
Content production	19	20	15.98
Upskilling & culture	15	10	16.28
On-the-ground reporting	14	10	16.40
Audience growth & marketing	12	10	13.07
Editorial expertise	12	10	15.73
External contributors & partnerships	8	3	12.46

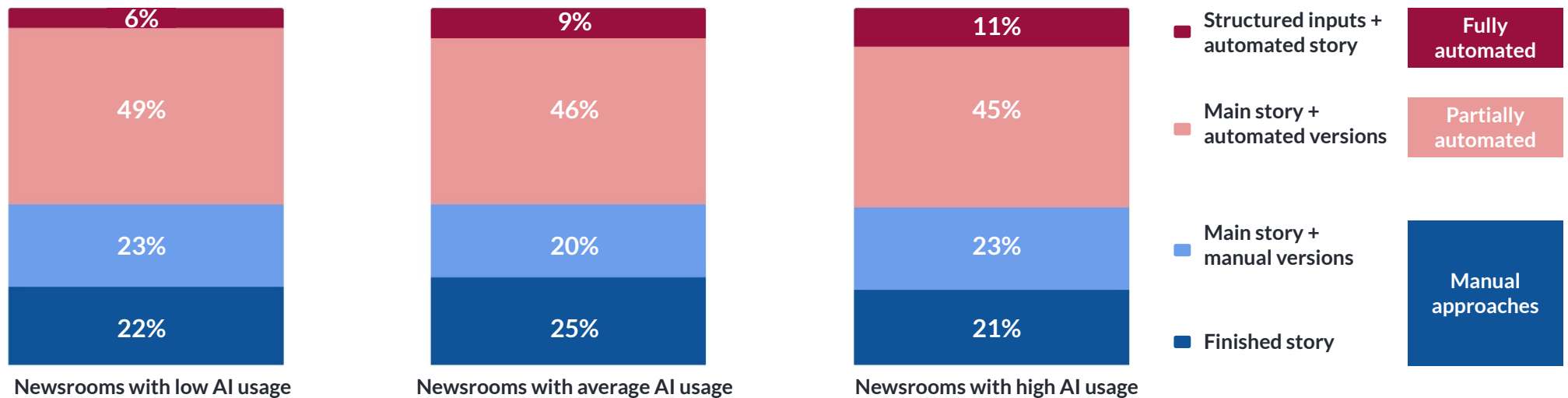
Question: If you were to receive one-time funding for an editorial project or initiative, how would you allocate this money to most effectively reach your goals? n=423

AI adoption is beginning to reshape filing preferences in a ‘liquid content’ future

We asked newsrooms to consider a future in which AI makes automated repackaging and ‘liquid content’ (the ability to adapt stories into multiple formats and versions via AI) possible, and how this would change the way journalists should be filing stories. Across newsrooms with different levels of AI usage, the differences in expectations is largely marginal: most newsrooms continue to anticipate manual-first approaches, though those with high AI usage are slightly less likely to expect journalists to write a complete story with little AI involved.

More meaningful shifts appear at the most automated end of the spectrum. **Expectations of fully automated filing** – where a journalist might upload structured inputs such as data, interview scripts, original analysis (rather than a finished story) which is then taken by AI to create various versions – **rise from 6% among newsrooms with low AI usage to 11% among those with high AI usage.** This suggests that greater AI maturity is slowly translating into a broader appetite for automation across the filing process.

How publishers would want their journalists to file stories in a ‘liquid-content’ future, segmented by AI usage levels in the newsroom

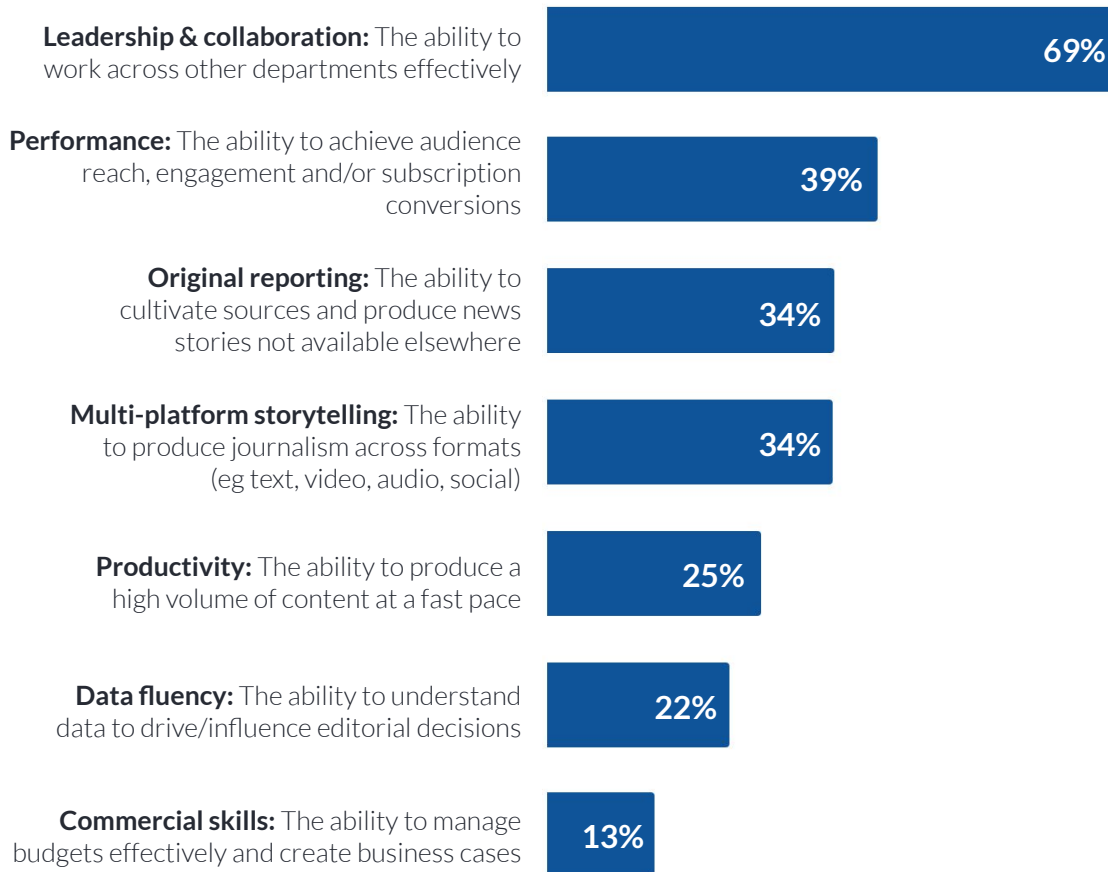


Questions: AI has the potential to make automated repackaging and ‘liquid content’ a reality in the near future. By this time next year, how would you want your journalists to file stories for other/multiple formats? To what extent do you agree with the following statements: AI usage is widespread across my newsroom. *Low AI usage n=178; Average AI usage n=69; High AI usage n=118*

Notes: Respondents who selected ‘Unsure/I do not know’ have been omitted; respondents who indicated ‘Slightly disagree’ & ‘Strongly disagree’ have been categorised as newsrooms with low AI usage; respondents who indicated ‘neither agree nor disagree’ have been categorised as newsrooms with average AI usage; respondents who selected ‘Slightly agree’ & ‘Strongly agree’ have been categorised as newsroom with high AI usage

The number one criterion for journalist to get promoted to senior editorial roles is ‘soft skills’ in leadership and collaboration

Most important attributes for promotion to leadership or managerial role



69% of respondents selected leadership and collaboration as the most important criterion for promotion to a senior editorial or managerial role, placing it well ahead of other attributes such as performance against KPIs (39%) or original reporting and multi-platform storytelling (34% each).

These findings suggest that seniority within newsrooms is largely viewed through **the lens of people management, cross-functional collaboration and organisational influence, rather than individual output or commercial contribution alone**. Editorial leaders we interviewed, however, noted that there is a need to emphasise a blended approach to newsroom leadership that elevates a mix of both editorial and commercial skills in order to succeed.

“ [People] need to understand how to deal with KPIs and they need to have a technical understanding... We also need classic reporters who go outside on the streets and bring back their stories. You have to have both, it’s not that one is replacing the other... but now it really sticks together: you can’t make a good, successful newsroom team without having these abilities.

Christian Tretbar
Editor-in-Chief, Tagesspiegel



Question: When evaluating a journalist for promotion to a leadership or managerial role, which of the following attributes is currently weighted most heavily by your organisation? Please select up to three. n=417

Note: Respondents who selected ‘Unsure/I do not know’ have been omitted



Additional case studies



Expanded view of emerging strategy function roles

01) Audience strategy

Embedded audience editors and deputies who shape coverage, distribution and platform choices alongside desks.

Audience Deputy, Off-platform	The New York Times	This role leads off-platform audience strategy across search and social, using editorial judgment, analytics and platform expertise to grow reach and referrals. It requires experience managing global audience teams, SEO and social strategy, AI-driven discovery shifts, performance insights and cross-newsroom collaboration.
Editor, Audience (News)	CNN	This role supports newsroom desks with audience insights, shaping coverage, framing and distribution across search, social, homepage and newsletters. Requires digital journalism experience, data analysis, SEO/social expertise, editorial judgment, testing, newsroom collaboration and strong editing instincts.
Senior Channel Manager, YouTube	BBC	This role leads a portfolio of YouTube channels, managing channel strategy, scheduling, performance optimisation and audience growth. It requires YouTube platform expertise, editorial judgment, analytics skills, team management and cross-functional collaboration across editorial, production and marketing.
Podcast Social Video Editor	Vox Media	This role leads social-first video and motion content for podcasts, overseeing producers, creative standards, calendars and editorial workflows. It requires short-form video expertise, motion design, platform optimisation, data analysis, team leadership, project management and collaboration across hosts, producers, marketing and brand teams.

02) AI innovation in editorial

Editor-coders who shadow reporters, find AI-solvable pain points and build prototypes themselves.

Assistant Manager, Content & AI Innovation	South China Morning Post	This role builds and deploys AI tools, agents and automation workflows to improve newsroom productivity and AI literacy. It requires LLM/API experience, coding and automation skills, data analysis, editorial workflow understanding, technical translation and cross-functional collaboration.
Editor, Newsroom Development and Support	The New York Times	This role leads newsroom training and upskilling, helping journalists adopt internal publishing tools, improve workflows and build confidence with specialised media technologies, including AI. It requires editorial leadership, experience managing mixed teams, strong communication skills and close coordination with product, design and engineering teams.
Senior Editor, AI Innovation	CNN	This role develops AI-powered newsroom tools and workflows to support reporting, research, editing and production. It requires editorial judgment, AI/LLM expertise, prompt and agentic workflow design, prototyping skills, Python/API fluency, verification standards and collaboration with reporters, product and engineering teams.
Senior Product Manager, AI Product	USA Today	This role builds and scales AI products for newsroom workflows, turning prototypes into production-ready tools. It requires product management, GenAI prototyping, user research, low-code/API experience, spec-writing, impact measurement, editorial understanding and collaboration with engineering and newsroom stakeholders.

FT Strategies analysed 6,687 LinkedIn job listings posted at major publishers in 2026, 234 of which were classified as Strategy roles. The strict filter applied here further narrows these to roles whose job descriptions show clear on-brief signals for each of the four elements.

Expanded view of emerging strategy function roles

03) Editorial-led product and design

Designers and product directors sitting at the editorial table, reimagining the news object itself for AI-native interfaces.

Head of Product Design	The Washington Post	This role leads product design for news experiences across web, mobile and emerging platforms. It requires senior design leadership, strong product intuition, AI-interface thinking, systems design, storytelling craft, team management and collaboration with product, engineering and editorial leadership.
Product Director, Multimodal (News Product)	The New York Times	This role leads product strategy for multimodal news experiences across audio, video and apps. It requires product leadership, newsroom collaboration, roadmap ownership, consumer app experience, data-informed prioritisation, people management and the ability to translate editorial priorities into shippable features.
Senior Product Manager	The Atlantic	This role leads product development for reader experiences across web, mobile and email. It requires product management, mobile-first thinking, experimentation, data analysis, AI awareness, prototyping, stakeholder management and collaboration with editorial, design, engineering and data science teams.
Manager, Product Design	The Philadelphia Inquirer	This role leads product design for reader experiences across web, mobile, newsletters and emerging platforms. It requires design leadership, hands-on coaching, UX craft, accessibility, design systems, experimentation, subscriber journey optimisation and collaboration with product, engineering, research, newsroom and commercial teams.

04) Newsroom engineering

Editorial-led engineering teams shipping AI features every few weeks, with the editor-in-charge personally reviewing pull requests.

Editorial Director, Newsroom Engineering	POLITICO	This role leads newsroom engineering, building AI-powered tools, workflows and platforms for reporters and editors. It requires editorial judgment, full-stack technical leadership, AI implementation experience, agile delivery, code review, roadmap ownership and collaboration across newsroom, product, audience and engineering teams.
Senior AI Engineer, AI Lab	The Economist	This role builds LLM-powered systems for journalism, including fine-tuning, RAG workflows, editorial style transfer, evaluation pipelines and audio generation. It requires GenAI engineering experience, Python, NLP/LLM tooling, dataset management, prompt testing and close collaboration with editorial, product and design teams.
Technical Product Manager	The Sun	This role manages core digital platforms and tests new tools, including AI, to improve newsroom efficiency. It requires technical product management, understanding of software and APIs, roadmap planning, stakeholder communication, experimentation and the ability to turn editorial problems into practical product solutions.
Technical Product Manager, Content Platform	Bloomberg	The role owns the end-to-end platform strategy for Bloomberg's unstructured content, setting standards, defining the roadmap and identifying AI use cases. It will closely coordinate with Engineering, Data and Product teams, linking editorial content needs with platform development rather than focusing on day-to-day reporting or news-gathering.

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