



Archant: **Newsroom** **transformation** **in the British** **regional press**

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Archant sets a new precedent for editorial transformation

Root-and-branch change across five editorial centres and 64 titles generates success and lessons learned

Four years ago, when Archant started to map out a path for editorial transformation, there were a handful of British regional newsrooms starting to integrate print and online, with some introducing new technologies.

But as far as Newsplex could tell, there were no other UK regional publishing houses of the same scale as Archant that were planning to go through a root-and-branch change of every one of its newsrooms.

Now in 2010, Archant has raised the bar of how a regional publishing organisation can fundamentally change how content is planned, created and produced in all of its newsrooms, at the same time as implementing a new editorial and CMS system.

The goal has been to restructure all newsrooms in the division of Archant Regi-



Dietmar Schantin

onal with similar approaches and working practices yet allow enough flexibility for individual editorial brand and resource considerations.

Ultimately these changes

will support each newsroom in meeting its audience's needs across digital and print channels.

This Newsplex Special relays the Archant journey from 2008 when the transformation began of established ways of working, technology and newsroom culture in 64 titles across five editorial centres. All have been through a similar experience of change and this report aims to highlight some of the key aspects the different newsrooms have focused on.

Over the next few pages we will take a tour across England, starting with the pilot project at the Welwyn Hatfield Times, moving across to the weeklies situated in the English heartlands and over to see how multiple-title newsrooms such as Norfolk and Suffolk are implementing Archant's

vision. Looking at the most recent centre to start editorial transformation in London as well as measures for continually improving editorial change across Archant, rounds off this report. Many of our readers may be going through similar changes, and we are grateful to Archant for allowing us to share their insights with our members.

We at Newsplex believe that some of the most valuable lessons of change are gleaned from newsrooms that have limited resources but lots of passion for the craft of storytelling.

We hope you will agree that there is much we can learn about change management, cultural and mindset shifts, introducing new ways of working and technologies, and rethinking content, particularly from the following pages. □

DEDICATION

Ian Davies (1959 to 2008) was one of the pioneers in Archant who understood that a future without audience understanding, integration of print and digital platforms, and innovative storytelling was no future at all for the regional press.

With a professional background in BBC radio, TV and newspapers, as well as specialist magazines, Ian had a strong belief in Archant's editorial brands, which had been built on a foundation of trust and respectability within regional communities.

As editorial projects

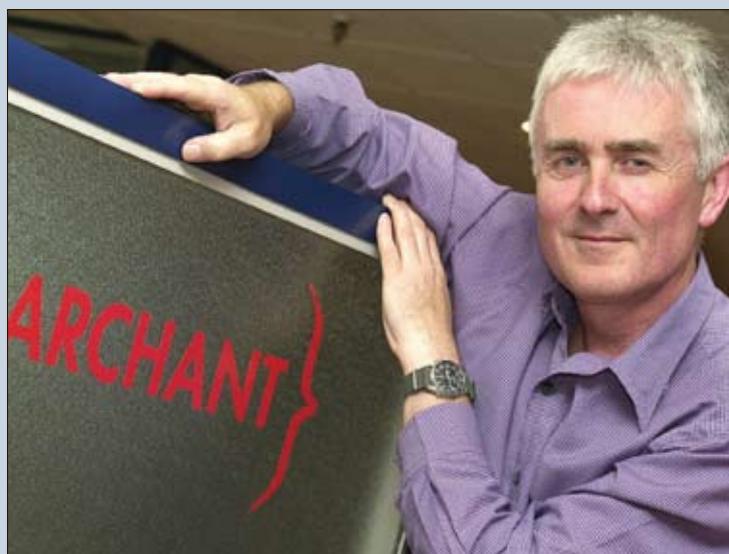
director, Ian led the search for the kind of technology Archant required to realise its vision and launched the pilot project at the Welwyn Hatfield Times.

Ian was a skilled pilot and spent as much time in the air as he could, flying both fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.

His life was tragically cut short by a flying accident in October 2008. His passion extended into all areas of life, his family, flying and his extensive work within the media industry.

Newsplex dedicates this report to Ian and his family.

Ian Davies



'Change is about culture and how we put our content together'

Adrian Jeakings, Archant's chief executive, discusses the starting point of the company's editorial transformation

Steering Archant through editorial change has been the task of Chief Executive Adrian Jeakings. We asked Adrian to reflect on the starting point of the Archant journey.

What motivated Archant to start transforming its newsrooms?

It began in 2006 with the desire to grow traffic, audience and find new ways to generate revenues. When we first started out, we focused on process automation as we had pretty clunky systems, so it was mainly seen then as a systems project. After many false starts we realised it was far more than just purely processes or technology. It was in fact about a cultural change, fundamentally about how we put our content together.

How would you describe Archant's newsrooms back then, in terms of structure, culture, technology etc.

Archant has grown over the years through acquisition but we had never made any attempt to standardise how we run our editorial function across all the businesses that we had bought. There were some similarities between the daily centres and others between the weeklies but that was more by accident rather than design. Within our multi title centres we would have completely separate teams for the various titles, two sports editors, two sets of photographers, so two of everything. Secondly, although we had some award winning websites, some of the newsrooms were

Archant at a glance

Over the last 160 years Archant has grown into the UK's largest independently-owned regional media business.

It is a community media company active in the fields of regional newspaper and magazine publishing, contract printing and internet communications with the head office in Norwich.

All of Archant's titles serve clearly defined communities, based around locations or interest groups. A private company, it employs 1850 people across England and has an annual turnover of 142 million British pounds.

Archant Regional is the newspaper publishing arm of Archant. It publishes a portfolio of four daily titles, 26 weekly paid-for and 34 weekly free newspapers totalling a combined weekly circulation of around 2.4 million copies. It also publishes



CEO Adrian Jeakings

around 100 websites, most of them associated closely with printed publications.

Archant also owns three magazine companies, which among them produce around 80 magazines. Archant Specialist is the consumer magazine publishing division. Archant Life produces a growing number of city and county lifestyle magazine titles. Archant Dialogue is the contract and customer publishing arm of the group.

very print focused, web tended to be an afterthought, with content often being dumped on the web after publication of the printed product. I think a combination of cultural legacy and technology inhibited publishing to web.

What were the biggest obstacles facing Archant at the outset?

As this is a resource intensive project you need to have

the means and the people to make this kind of fundamental change. We were doing this during the recession and had pressure to reduce costs at the same time as starting the change process in some of the centres. Of course this made everything more difficult.

I would also say that resistance to change in some quarters was an obstacle.

Some people's frame of reference which they have been working in for twenty years

was threatened and so they were not keen to change. This didn't apply to everyone, nor did it necessarily correlate to age. Some of our longest serving journalists have been amongst the most enthusiastic.

There are inevitably teething problems with a major technology change. These are frustrating but, what's worse, can be used by those who don't want change to suggest that the whole project is a mistake.

Finally the sheer amount of time it takes to effect change. People lose enthusiasm for a project if they don't see results quickly but major change takes months or years, not weeks. As chief executive I also find this hugely frustrating because I am already thinking about the next project.

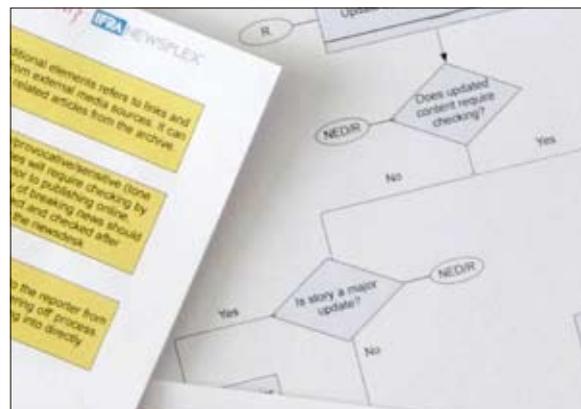
Today, how do you see how this process has affected Archant?

Interestingly the thinking and debate from the change process is now reflected in the organisation as a whole, not just editorial.

For example new business proposals used to be solely about print. Now we are seeing integrated business proposals including all the appropriate channels to deliver the content to the audience.

As an example, our recent launch in Cambridge, Cambridge First, included print, web and mobile from day 1.

I think this is very important for how we now approach audience, content and revenue developments across the organisation. □



James Foster discusses the editorial changes which include new workflows and structures (right)

Mapping out the way forward

Vision, tools and technology for new kind of newsroom

Overseeing the evolution of more than 60 titles in a little less than two years is a project the former editor of the Evening News in Norwich did not anticipate. After the death of Ian Davies, James Foster, in his new role of editorial projects director, stepped in at the infancy of Archant's editorial transformation.

The vision Foster inherited was to create newsrooms that placed audience expectations at the heart of decision-making, content creation and production. This meant creating a change process that would help Archant:

- Remove cultural barriers between journalists and their audience that had been built up by traditional structures
- Help editors reach the widest audience by streamlining how they deliver content to all channels
- Improve digital and print products by ensuring quality is built in from the start of the editorial process, not thought about at the end
- Use new technology to put the story at the heart of all editorial processes
- Integrate digital and print

After seeing what other newsrooms around the world had to offer, Archant focused on defining what integration could entail. For Foster this meant editors and section

editors taking responsibility for how their stories appear in print, online and on mobile. No longer would content be "fobbed off" to an online desk to be packaged and uploaded by someone else. "We need to be masters of all channels. It should be as important to a journalist to have a lead story on the web as to have a front page story," he says.

Changes to classic print workflows

Integrating digital and print is only half of the Archant evolution. Rethinking how pages were planned and produced was intrinsic to the process.

One key driver was removing the traditional separation between those who create stories and production. "In many newsrooms, there was little page ownership and planning at the start of the process. This, coupled with the desire to remove production bottlenecks, helped us decide on different print workflows. We needed shapes and pages to be decided earlier, pages owned by desk editors and production involved from the start, not at the end of the editorial day."

Technology as a tool

The search for a tool that could support these new principles became vital, says Tony

WAN-IFRA

Involvement of WAN-IFRA Newsplex

A team lead by Dietmar Schantin and Sarah Schantin Williams supported Archant's editorial change process by working alongside James Foster and each of the newsrooms to set up and create the change processes, advise on change and project management, analyse and redefine workflows, structures and roles and support with training and coaching of the new newsroom vision. Sarah and Dietmar were supported by Birthe Kretchmer, associate consultant, and Melanie Shah, consultant and trainer.

Davison, director of Archant Information Services (AIS).

"I think few publishers can honestly say that, at this time, they had a system which would enable all journalists to handle both print and web seamlessly. We certainly didn't in 2008." Archant spent over a year working alongside a

supplier to configure their first "integrated print, web and mobile content management platform, which supports the creation and repurposing of content for distribution through multiple channels, available throughout Archant for reuse and sharing," says Dan Hall, AIS program manager.

Technology now supports new print workflows by enabling editors and desk heads to see the adverts and place the shapes and images at the start of the process.

"Editors and production staff can choose from a library of predefined shapes and pages for routine stories, but production staff also have a new and more sophisticated design tool for prominent pages," says Foster.

"Technology alone isn't the solution to our problems, but it is much simpler to do the job with the right tools. We're trying to get journalists to change their behaviour first then use the technology."

Archant's transformations required a consistent approach to change. This meant changing newsroom structures and mindset, then system training for more than 500 people.

The Welwyn Hatfield Times was chosen to pioneer this approach (see Page 6).

Welwyn and Hatfield Times pilot leads the way for rest of the group

The first “new” newsroom in Archant creates a blueprint for the future

Creating a new type of newsroom organisation in Archant began in a small newsroom in Welwyn Garden City.

In summer 2008, the Welwyn Hatfield Times (WHT) had “a very separated print and online organisation in geography, structure and mindset,” said its editor, Terry Mitchinson.

At that time the bulk of the WHT website consisted mainly of an online “dump” of the print content on press day, doing little favours for either the web or the print audience.

As the pilot project, WHT had the opportunity to be the first in Archant to think through some fundamental questions which included: Who are our audience and how can we meet their expectations online and in print, and what kind of newsroom structure and tools do we need to do this?

The work of the “Welwyn Four”

During autumn 2008, four key players termed the “Welwyn Four” met regularly with the Newsplex team.

Background

With a newsroom of 10 people, The Welwyn Hatfield Times provides a weekly paid-for publication with a circulation of more than 14,000 copies for Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and Potters Bar, all small towns north of London. WHT is part of the Herts and Cambs editorial centre in Archant Regional.

The Welwyn Four were led by Paul Richardson, the editorial director for the Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire centre.

The Welwyn Four consisted of editor Terry Mitchinson, Alan Davies (deputy editor, then sports editor), news editor Chris Lennon, and Kelly Ann Kiernan, the chief reporter.

“We rethought content strategies, organisation workflows and structures; newsroom roles and responsibilities; and the newsroom mindset,” Mitchinson says.

The work of the team culmi-



The Welwyn Hatfield Times newsroom was first to change



The “Welwyn Four”: (from left) Terry Mitchinson, Kelly Ann Kiernan, Alan Davies and Chris Lennon

nated in a blueprint for how an Archant newsroom should operate. One of the key outcomes was the importance of making the right decision for

content and resources for the right kind of stories. This meant moving away from last-minute decision making and getting a routine established



its workflows and mindset towards publishing online and in print

for handling web and print ideas more regularly and thoroughly.

Some of the new ideas created by the Welwyn Four were content prioritisation systems, online editions, content policies for new channels, new types of meetings and cross referencing strategies.

Implementation and new technology

These ideas were fed back to the team responsible for configuring the new system because it was crucial that new technologies would mirror and support how Archant's newsrooms needed to work.

Welwyn started implementing new workflows and structures in December 2008 without any new technology as Mitchinson was keen to get the cultural change moving early on.

"There was no point in wait-

ing for the system to come in and then have to combine working differently and smarter while having to come to grips with a whole new system," he said.

Within a few weeks, WHT started breaking established records for unique views across Herts and Cambs and continues to break their own records.

As Alan Davies, says: "No one ever expected such simple changes to how we think about stories would generate such massive hits."

The Welwyn Hatfield Times is now working 100 per cent with the new editorial system. For the web, it is using the technology to create picture galleries, links, related articles and polls.

This, combined with cross-referencing from web to print and vice versa, whilst maintaining a different take on stories in print, helps the WHT team

"The role of the weekly editor is evolving as our portfolio adjusts to a modern media landscape. I am fortunate to have a team that can adapt and take advantage of the opportunities that I am sure will come."

**- Stuart McCreery,
MD for Herts & Cambs
and Suffolk**



Welwyn's front page



Online election coverage

realise the crucial Archant philosophy of using digital and print to complement each other and not compete.

One recent example came in May 2010 with the Welwyn Hatfield Times's coverage of the election.

As well as keeping viewers up to speed with developments on election night, the team focused on interviews, chats, providing humorous insights into candidate's behaviour and utilising social networking platforms.

This combined approach helped WHT hit 75,000 unique views, beating all other titles in the Archant Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire editorial centre.

The last word comes from Mitchinson: "I'm lucky because the team here is behind the whole thing as well. They see the future in the same way, and I think that's the real key to it all." □

Creators of content have strong input into how their stories look

East Anglian Daily Times and Evening Star lead the way for the daily titles

Spring 2009 saw the first dailies in Archant Regional begin work on their own structural and cultural change after the recent move of merging the two titles into one newsroom.

At this time, reporters were at the early stages of learning how to create content for both the East Anglian Daily Times (EADT) and the Evening Star (ES), while the titles maintained separate editors, deputies and news editors. In this newly merged newsroom, the stages of print/digital in-

tegration and workflows for print page production were different for the titles.

The editors wanted all editorial staff to receive a consistent vision of integration, so the first step was for everyone to attend a one-day workshop on the key themes of changing audience, integrated planning and newsroom workflows and structures created in the Welwyn pilot. After this, the Suffolk cohort was set up. It consisted of key editorial decision makers who worked through



When editors meet for news conferences they discuss how

spring 2009 to map their new newsroom structure, create audience and content strategies for the web, and rethink roles for web and print production. This information was then cascaded through the newsroom in a series of workshops and coaching. Three key players from the cohort give their insight, here and on page 10, into some of the key changes in Suffolk: how web content is handled, how print processes were transformed and lessons learned in implementation. □

BACKGROUND

The Archant Regional Editorial centre in Suffolk houses two daily titles, the East Anglian Daily Times and the Evening Star. Suffolk also has four weekly titles. Around 85 members of editorial staff plan, create and produce content for a combined circulation of 380,000 copies per week for all titles.

East Anglian Daily Times improves production

The Suffolk cohort defined new structures for more effective and creative print page production as “we saw that we were leaving too many pages to be designed and edited too late,” says Terry Hunt, editor of the East Anglian Daily Times.

“This meant that too much of our production workflow was unnecessarily squeezed into a few hours leading up to deadline.”

Before system implementation, the newsroom took the opportunity to have pages



Terry Hunt, Editor of the East Anglian Daily Times

planned and finalised in a new way. The combination of a new system of page categorisation, earlier page placement, and increased copy



flow, with bringing in more production staff into earlier shifts to work alongside desk heads, has “initially enabled us to get between seven and

nine additional pages completed much earlier on a daily basis,” Hunt says.

The introduction of the new editorial publishing system has recently enhanced this process.

“We have now found it is easier to particularly improve the coordination with the newsdesk and desk editors working hand-in-hand with the day shift production person, so the content providers have a significant input into how the finished product looks,” Hunt says. □



stories will be treated in print, online and on mobile

Evening Star puts audience at the centre of its thinking

If we don't give people what they want someone else will, says editor Nigel Pickover

"Harmony is, for us, the key word. We've started to balance all of our thinking, be it for web or print or different brands," says Nigel Pickover, editor of the Evening Star.

For Pickover, the philosophy of audience focus and integration first came about when the two newsrooms began merging in 2008/2009.

This triggered the need to go further with exploring ways to complement content across multiple brands and channels. "In a house of two very different daily titles with websites that have a similar design, we found it even more important to make sure content online is handled in another way to print."

The Evening Star uses the web for publishing fresh updates, web enrichment with links, and for utilising a selec-



"We've started to balance all our thinking, be it for web, print or different brands."

**- Nigel Pickover,
Editor, Evening Star**



tion of visuals online that are different to what is published in print. This kind of thinking changes a newsroom belief system.

As Pickover says: "We've learned to not be afraid of online. We are servicing a world and a group of people who are avaricious for news and information and unless we give it to them efficiently and speedily, someone else will." □

Sutton Hoo gets global treatment for its 70th anniversary

One of the first examples in Ipswich of bringing together all the elements of audience focus, early digital planning, channel differentiation and early page planning happened soon after the cohort formed.

May 2009 saw the 70th anniversary of one of Britain's biggest ever archaeological finds: the Sutton Hoo burial site near Woodbridge in Suffolk.

The East Anglian Daily Times broke the story as a world exclusive and it was decided to record the anniversary with a special print and online package.

A series of planning meetings was held to discuss content and the decision was made to create a 12-page supplement and a mini-site for the EADT website. Some of the content was shared between the publications, but the website was populated with extra material. In particular, it carried picture galleries and a short video piece. The newspaper was handled differently, with a unique timeline graphic.

The project was well-received and the story attracted worldwide interest online.

The coverage of Sutton Hoo provided an example not only of how a news story can be handled but also how more plannable features based stories can be covered. In 2010 the coverage of events such as business conferences and interviews with celebrities saw decision makers take an earlier and more coordinated approach to integrating print and digital ideas. □



Lessons learned in implementation

Leading the newsroom through the introduction of new workflows and technology was the duty of all members of the Suffolk cohort, however Dominic Castle, Deputy Editor for the EADT and Implementation Manager for Suffolk, was given an additional specific responsibility.

His role was to provide hands-on support for the more than 90 people using new workflows for integration as well as new print production workflows.

We asked him about the main lessons he learned.

1. How would you describe your role as Implementation Manager?

Initially ensuring all editorial staff received workflow and CMS training. Then over a 12-week phased implementation of the system, I made sure

people were able to get working on the new system and produce pages.

This included encouraging and motivating everyone involved, troubleshooting and dealing with technical issues and making sure that we reached our target switchover date.

Going forward my role moves more from the system to workflow development and improved web content provision.

2. What are the main challenges Suffolk faced for new system implementation versus organisational/cultural change?

System changes are relatively straightforward. It is about having a robust training plan, understanding and driving the changes to a realistic timetable with plenty of support for



Dominic Castle: "Don't be afraid to change quickly"

your people. Organisational changes are far more complex. Chiefly you are asking people to change a series of ingrained habits, and that's difficult.

The challenges are finding and nurturing the right kind of leaders of the project within the newsroom, those who truly believe in what is being proposed and who are

prepared to work hard towards achieving it and continually reinforce key messages.

3. What dos and don'ts would you recommend to others going through a similar process?

When you appoint an implementation manager, don't expect them to do anything else in the business for the duration of the project, otherwise you are less likely to get the focus your project deserves.

Don't underestimate the length of time it might take to change the habits of people who have been doing their jobs one way for a very long time.

Do measure your progress with regular reviews and, if you find something is not working as it was planned, don't be afraid to change it quickly. □

Herts and Cambs editors join forces to evolve 10 newsrooms

Fresh from leading the Welwyn pilot, Paul Richardson, the editorial director for Herts and Cambs, was keen to trigger a similar process for his other titles, starting in early 2009.

"We had to find the quickest, most effective way of getting the other editors to learn from what Welwyn had accomplished and start implementing the newsroom blueprint back in their own newsrooms," he said.

For Richardson this meant a process of two stages, designed to help transplant the lessons learned from Welwyn, and test, refine and develop this knowledge for the particular needs of the other titles, which are housed in 10 separate (localised) offices.

Stage 1: The "change cohort"

Creating the change cohort meant initially putting all Herts and Cambs editors together to work with key players from the Welwyn pilot and the Newsplex team.

"The cohort were made responsible for print and web integration, improving how the newspapers were planned and produced back with their teams," Richardson said.

"Principally this meant preparing the teams mentally for working with a whole new system; structurally, technologically and culturally."

The cohort met on a fortnightly basis for a series of workshops to learn from the Welwyn experience and develop topics such as audience and brand planning, content policies for the web, and developing new editorial workflows and structures for content sharing for new target groups across Herts and Cambs.



The editors: (above l-r) Paul Richardson, Matt Adams, Debbie Davies (middle l-r) Darren Isted, Terry Mitchinson, John Elworthy, (bottom l-r) Barry Hunt and Andy Veale

Stage 2: Individual coaching at the centres

Taking the knowledge gained in the cohort sessions and implementing this "back at home" was a first for most of the Herts and Cambs editors.

As Richardson says: "It was important to demonstrate to all what was required in print and, most importantly, online. The editors had to be given time and tools to fully understand that, then take information and actions back to their teams and involve them."

To support this process, Richardson provided each editor with a "tracker", a project plan of core activities defined in the cohort sessions such as new types of planning mee-

tings, measures to improve print copy etc. Each new activity had a deadline. Richardson visited each newsroom to see how each editor was progressing and to provide monitoring, coaching and group sessions to help editors prepare their newsrooms before this system implementation.

After a program of training and coaching on the new editorial system, all the editors are getting to grips with the new technology and workflows.

"One of the most positive outcomes of what has been a challenging implementation is the way that all the editors within Herts and Cambs have supported each other and Paul Richardson throughout the process. "The sharing of

experiences, tips and ideas is something I am keen to keep in place for further development of our editorial activities," says Stuart McCreery, managing director Herts and Cambs and Suffolk. □

BACKGROUND

The Archant editorial centre of Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire (Herts and Cambs) consists of nine community-focused weekly titles including the Welwyn Hatfield Times, Cambs Times, Comet series, Herts Advertiser and Saffron Walden Reporter. The collective weekly circulation is 350,000 copies.

Norfolk adapts key news roles to improve co-ordination

“We are already starting to see reporters having more control over stories, better planning of stories across all platforms, and departments working more closely than ever before.” Several weeks into using the new editorial system, Richard Willner, sports editor, and Paul Hill, editorial development manager for Norfolk, can see how the Norfolk newsroom is moving forwards.

Working alongside Peter Waters, editor of the Eastern Daily Press (EDP) and Tim Williams, editor of the Evening News (EN), the team is responsible for transforming how Norfolk operates. Both Hill and Willner feel that: “This process is in part about getting the web and mobile rooted in our eve-

BACKGROUND

Norfolk editorial centre has 146 staff, a central Norwich newsroom and eight district newsrooms. The Evening News and The East Anglian Daily Times are daily titles with a combined daily circulation of approx 80,000. Norfolk also publishes several weekly titles across Norfolk county with a combined weekly circulation of over 230,000.

ryday thinking, about how we approach stories.”

This thinking helps the editors “provide relevant content whilst protecting and enhan-



Members of the Norfolk team celebrate reaching a project

cing the values of the brand across all channels. Clearly there will be a differentiation in the way people come to these channels,” says Waters.

A continued use of this approach will help both editors reach their target of breaking established records of audience by using the combina-

Stories, visuals and production are central

The content desk is the heart of the Norwich newsroom. Coordinating and executing news, visuals and production and liaising with weekly titles, sports, business and features desks are the daily tasks the content desk fulfills.

No one “owns” any one particular editorial brand; instead the team owns stories, content. Crucial brand direction comes from the editors who liaise throughout the day with the desk.

Dave Powles and Peter Hannam, the senior content editors, started running the desk after the EDP and EN newsroom was merged in 2009.

In the early days of the

new operation, Powles and Hannam configured how the content desk should function across every stage of the editorial day, scrutinising every activity and role.

“It quickly became very evident how fundamentally important planning has to be in this complex newsroom. Add the need to prioritise emerging multi-media channels, co-ordinating and planning editorial have to play as great a role as anything in what we do – every day,” says Hannam.

The nature of the Norfolk newsroom required a simple model. “We wanted to build the desk workflows around



The Norwich content desk

the two major activities in any newsroom – planning and execution. Because when you are working in a newsroom like ours with various titles,

platforms etc all being fed by one group of people, there is the danger of having little time to developing content ideas early on. □



milestone

tion of mobile, web and print. Two significant organisational changes towards reaching this goal have been the restructuring of the content desk by

placing planning at the heart of its activities and the evolution of the role of chief reporters in the district newsrooms. □

to new content desk

“So we made planning more than just a new structure; we made planning essentially into a role.

“Every day, one of the senior content editors looks after all planning activities whilst the other focuses more on daily tasks of getting papers out and websites up.”

This change led to improving activities that ran through the desk such as reporters’ individual creative planning, briefing, reviews and development touchpoints through the week and day.

A recent example of how this change has helped brand and content planning is the coverage of the local govern-

ment debate on unitary reform.

This story, crucial for both titles’ audiences as front page leads, showed how by harnessing the combination of early planning and brand direction, the EDP and the EN developed original and opposing angles on one theme, thus enhancing the vital differences between the EDP and the EN brands.

“We are now able to get a handle on content for both web and print ideas to serve very different brands.

“Getting the time to do that means we can essentially provide better coverage,” Hannam adds. □

Chief reporter’s role evolves for districts

Not only have the working practices for the daily titles changed. Norfolk’s district offices, which consist of small teams of journalists who create content for the daily titles as well as the weekly community-based titles, have seen the role of chief reporter evolve.

Pete Waters and Tim Williams saw the editorial change process as an opportunity to provide a systematic approach to working practices and roles in each district office.

Williams, who is the overarching editor of all of Norfolk’s weekly titles as well as the Evening News in Norwich, says: “I want all teams to have the necessary skills and resources as the media landscape rapidly develops. Best practice, uniformity and clear processes are key for me. Overlaying that, it is imperative we are as efficient as possible in our production and distribution.”

In the past, most chief reporters in district offices fed the weekly papers with copy that would be wholesale planned and produced back in the central Norwich newsroom. Now chief reporters will become increasingly community and brand focused, taking more ownership. “Our district teams are closest to the communities their titles serve, therefore it makes sense to empower them as much as possible to shape the news agenda their readership wants.

“The roles are evolving rapidly, but we are working towards our district journalists having the skills, training and equipment needed for far less centralisation,” Williams says.

Some of these changes started with print whereby the weekly cycle kicks off with a discussion between the chief reporter and a member of the production team in Norwich as to how the newspaper could start to look. Production staff

then supply shapes and pages to the district offices, which are developed and owned through the week by the chief reporter and his or her team.

In addition, all chief reporters direct and feed their websites and have started using similar structures for digital decision making as in the Norwich office. For Williams the aim is for “the journalist to reach the reader much more quickly.”

“These sort of changes don’t just happen overnight. Our staff have worked hard to adopt new methods of news gathering and production as well as understand the importance of leading their teams through a challenging but rewarding change process.”

– Stephan Phillips,
Managing Director

For Norfolk, the coming months will be about improving the partnership of new ways of working and technology Paul Hill says: “The most fundamental lesson was that implementation does not stop when everyone uses the technology. People who think change is an event misunderstand the process entirely.” □

London begins final roll-out of titles across four newsrooms

The last two centres to go through the change process are Archant South West with weekly titles covering Exeter, Barnstaple and Weston Super Mare; and Archant London.

London has approximately 100 editorial staff across four multi-titled newsrooms producing 36 titles that have a combined average weekly circulation of 370,000. By mid-July 2010, all editorial staff had gone through workflow and system training.

For Enzo Testa, Archant London's managing director, this represents the first time London has had the opportunity to synchronise its working practices and technology.

"The way we have approached the creation of our newspapers and websites has remained the same for years, despite significant changes in our audience's behaviour," Testa says. "By adopting new ways of thinking about content and the way we use technology to deliver that content, we will be better placed to satisfy our audience and exploit the opportunities that lay ahead."

The group editors for the four newsrooms first got together to work on how their newsrooms could adapt to new print production workflows and print and digital integration across multiple titles. These editors were joined by the then newly appointed editorial director for London, Bob Crawley.

One of his first tasks was to help the editors take these ideas home, start changing their newsroom set-up and adopt the new editorial/CMS system. Here, Crawley explains the possibilities and challenges this kind of change can bring to a centre like London.



Romford Record newsdesk in Ilford, London



Bob Crawley

1. What opportunities does the combination of new workflows and technology offer to London?

Simple really. We will be able to excite our audiences by creating better, more targeted content in print and online. Our journalists will have more opportunities to develop and use their creative skills.

We now have the opportunity to evaluate what we do and how well we do it. We have spent a great deal of time reviewing what we provide our audiences. I think in the past the planning process got swallowed up somewhere and we lost our editorial compass

a little. The implementation of a new CMS and workflows will allow us to forward-plan great content, react better to breaking news and make sure our audience is more than satisfied with our work.

This means we will now have to think about every story, every brief: Is it relevant? Is it tightly written? Have we answered all the questions for our audience instead of just filling space? These changes will help us improve standards and make sure we are covering our patch as best we can.

2. What challenges does a multi-title centre in London face with this kind of approach?

London is a very different landscape with a vast population churn, which makes it a unique place to cover. Our audiences can be totally different from street to street, which means the targeting element of the new technology and how we approach content creation will be powerful.

Inside the newsrooms the biggest challenge is people moving at different speeds. Some people will grasp the

concept of what is required very quickly. Others may take longer, but hopefully when they do get it, they are then in a position of greater strength. We have to continually make sure everyone is motivated and understands the need to formalise structures for content handling. The teams have done a good job of handling all of this, but going forward the challenges are making sure we don't drift back.

3. When do you think the newsrooms will settle into new working practices and technology?

By the end of July all newsrooms will have the new technology. Within six months I believe all our editorial teams will be using the new workflows effectively, and we will all see real benefits in the way we create, manage and disseminate content.

Ultimately, we are aiming to have a common approach: You should be able to go into one London newsroom and see a mirror version of what is happening elsewhere.

The only difference will be the content itself. □

Iford takes on change one week, one title at a time

In the editorial centre of Ilford, north east London, the implementation process has been carried out on a week-by-week, title-by-title basis. With four main titles, this approach gives the newsroom the chance to get a full weekly publishing cycle working before moving onto the next.

Ilford Recorder Editor Chris Carter was responsible for helping the Ilford newsroom through this process in the role of implementation manager working alongside two



Chris Carter

other editors and the Ilford group editor. One of Carter's key tasks was to meet regularly with the teams in Ilford to take them through how the system would be put in place, update them on the roll-out timings and ensure all were up to speed with any issues.

Once the system roll out began, he worked alongside each editor to help them through the process. He also paired up those who had gone through implementation with those going through it the next

week, to get news editors sharing experiences and supporting each other in new workflow/technical changes.

One example is how "each news editor has passed on to the others how he/she worked in setting up and using the story grid (the electronic planning tool).

"This has helped us develop a unified model for story planning tools which is passed on to the other news desks so we can have a standardised protocol on that." □

Continuous improvements and leadership will sustain change

The journey for Archant's newsrooms to move into more streamlined, effective and consistent editorial models has already seen improvements to print and digital content creation, and particularly better planning, co-ordination and page production workflows throughout.

Leadership

But the journey, like all change process, has been far from easy. The importance of editorial leadership has been one key lesson learned.

Archant chief executive Adrian Jeakings says: "I think we have learned just how vital it is to have someone clearly and effectively in charge in each newsroom.

"Senior management have to be behind it and sponsor the project.

"But we have also seen how you need to involve the right people within the organisation and who those people are will change depending on your circumstances.

"I would say we have learned to not tolerate dissenters for too long."



Kelly Ann Kiernan, chief reporter and a chief change agent at the Welwyn Hatfield Times

Continuous improvement

The newsrooms are at, perhaps, the most difficult point of all. The new technology is nearly in place but now it is about sustaining the changes to structure and culture long term and continue developing the newsroom environments

for harvesting innovation and creativity at all levels of editorial.

For Jeakings, the first step is to get "to a point across the whole organisation where all recognise what has been achieved, and we can then transit into continuous improvement." Over the coming

weeks, Archant will start putting in place continuous improvement measures in all editorial centres.

One measure will be for each newsroom to have one person responsible for ensuring all workflows and technology work side by side. They will be joined by a small group of colleagues who meet regularly to track the progress together and transfer measures back to their own teams to help the newsrooms continue to adapt to change.

The end result will be part of Archant moving onto its future plans of getting a better "understanding of audiences, driving more engagement with our media and using more reader content," Jeakings says. "Increasingly we are focusing on advertising effectiveness, quality of design, usability of our media and the response it generates.

"In the future, we will be a true community media business, whether that means geographic or communities of interest, and our organisation will be equipped, technologically, structurally and culturally to make that happen." □

