

Briefing Paper: The next era of news media

Part 8 - Impact on business ([full paper](#))

Potential challenges

As the world starts to comprehend the implications of digital disruption on news media, we will begin to see tighter restrictions placed on digital publishers and platforms to address fake news, hate speech and censorship, data privacy and algorithms that determine the news we see and don't see. These could start to impact how and where organisations share information and engage audiences.

For example, we might start to see news content published by reputable media organisations gain prominence over news content produced by organisations in searches and feeds. We might also see accuracy and objectivity ratings impact the ranking of corporate news content.

Organisations will also need to be aware of defamation law, censorship rules and their responsibilities when fostering community engagement on social platforms. It might be necessary to hire dedicated community managers to moderate discussions and keep the organisation aligned with regulations.

Digital platforms like Facebook will also move away from open sharing platforms to towards more privacy-focused messaging platforms. Facebook has also flagged the possibility of exiting countries in which the regulatory environment prohibits their quest for user privacy. These developments will most likely present some barriers to distributing and promoting content.

Finally, the impact of press censorship in Australia could start to have an impact on business confidence. Former political adviser Innes Willcox said, "The raids on the media have set back Australia's reputation internationally... That raises alarm bells for business as well about the sort of country that Australia is to do business with and what could happen here"ⁱ.

Recommendations

When developing communication, marketing and community engagement strategies, organisations will need to understand the complexities and evolving nature of the news, the media and digital platforms. Organisations should consider changes in news consumption, the ownership and audiences of the media they engage with, their rights and responsibilities around engagement on digital platforms, and upholding the integrity of their owned media.

Potential measures to stay on top of the changing news environment include:

- **Owned newsrooms** – Digital newsrooms owned by organisations and managed by professional journalists are a way to distribute engaging, newsworthy and timely content to journalists and stakeholders without relying on social media and search engines.
- **Leaders on social** – Strategic consideration should be given to the social media presence and profiles of company executives and spokespeople to ensure they contribute to the organisation's overall business strategy.
- **New media training** – It is important that the scope of corporate media training be extended to include communicating in public forums such as social media.

- **Community managers** – Organisations will need to consider hiring community managers to build and moderate online groups. This is in light of the recent defamation case that puts the onus on content publishers to delete defamatory comments from their social pages as well as the call for governments, publishers and technology companies to act to reduce hate speech online.
- **Crisis management** – Corporate crisis management plans should take into account risks associated with social media, such as the social media history of executives, as well as the way social media can and should be used when responding to a crisis.

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ⁱ Ryan, P 2019, 'AFP's media raids risk 'eroding business sector's confidence in Australia', *ABC News*, 8 June, accessed 3 July 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-08/afp-raids-may-erode-business-investor-confidence/11192210>