



The Impact of Live Journalism on Media Revenue Strategy



The Business of Live Journalism

Live journalism is not a new concept; it has been used for many years to report on events in real time. Today, however, purpose-built live story formats are also being used to cover breaking news on a broad range of major stories, from a war unfolding in Europe to a U.S. Supreme Court decision.

The speed of today's news cycle underscores the value of, and need for, verified, consistent and reliable content. To provide this value, media organizations need to develop a revenue strategy that supports covering breaking events comprehensively—and responsibly—by investing in the resources that will grow their audiences.

The realization that user data can be harnessed to convert large audiences arriving for breaking news into paying customers is a key driver of the move to live journalism. Live journalism plays out on digital channels, so it's easier to identify "fanatic users"—those who return to a site most frequently and stay the longest. This approach is essential to the success of both subscription-based and advertising-supported media.

Media Organizations' Revenue Strategy Is Changing

Historically, media companies struggled to react to breaking news given the limitations of traditional print and evening news broadcasts. Cable TV news took the first steps in changing the model, and digital **platforms** now enable even more dynamic ways to break news and engage consumers. The financial benefit of this engagement is that it fosters a deeper relationship with consumers and yields long-term readership and revenue.

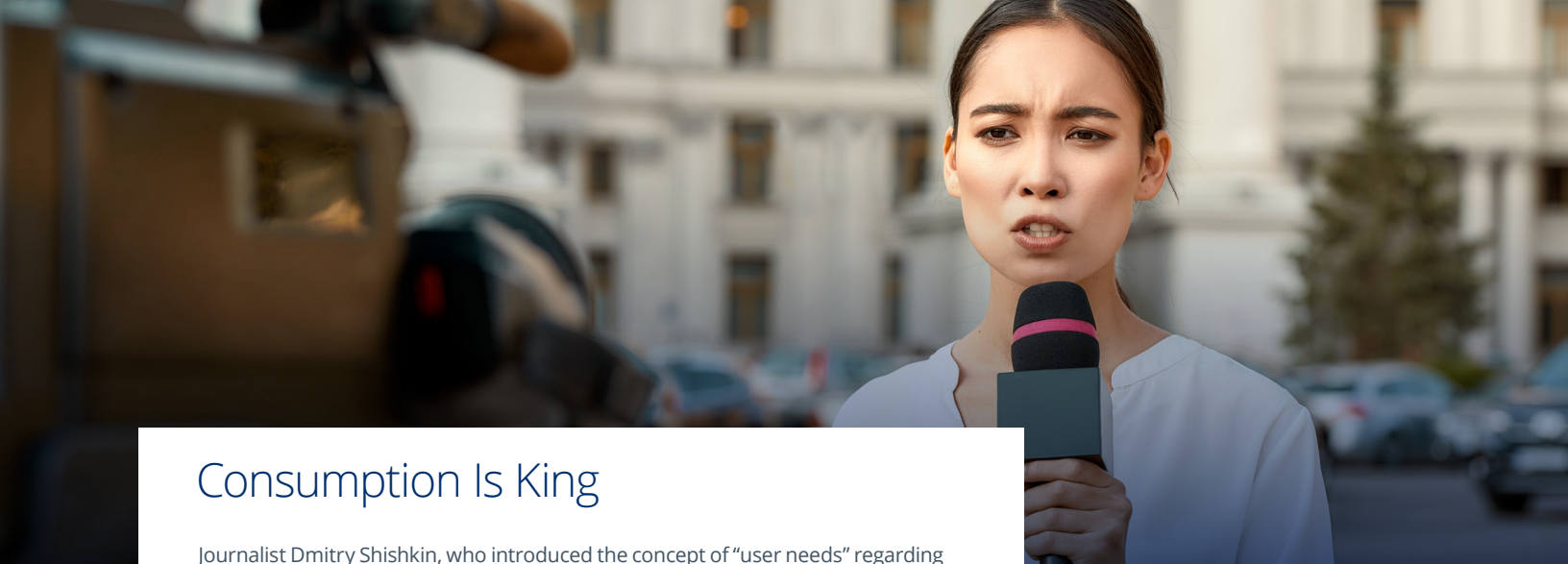
One company executive running multiple print magazine brands told us that they do not expect to break news in their print editions anymore. Instead, the breaking news and live coverage on their websites and mobile apps drive interest and engagement for audiences to read "the story behind the story" in the print edition.

The key to converting consumers to long term subscribers or viewers is to create differentiated content to keep users engaged and give them the right options to recognize the value of the coverage and journalism. The most effective version of this is a multi-pronged approach—ranging from hard registration walls and hard paywalls to partnership offers and donation buttons.

Dataminr commissioned Mather Economics to determine the business value of live journalism and its role as a key component of revenue growth. To do so, Mather Economics conducted interviews with dozens of media industry experts and analyzed data that highlights how breaking news coverage has changed to reflect business priorities.

Not all breaking news is created equal

There is an extremely limited supply of global and cross-regional breaking news and intense competition over covering that breaking news. That's why journalists in over 650 newsrooms around the world rely on **Dataminr for News** to discover the earliest possible indications of breaking news and gain an edge in covering the stories that matter most to their audiences—particularly on news stories that continue to "break" over an extended period of time and across geographical boundaries, like the COVID-19 pandemic.



Consumption Is King

Journalist Dmitry Shishkin, who introduced the concept of “user needs” regarding revenue and editorial strategies for newsrooms, said that publishers focus too much on breaking news at the expense of providing the supporting coverage that consumers want. As noted above, consumers value content that is both useful and reliable. Mather industry benchmark data for 2022 shows that most of the growth in subscriptions goes to larger publishers.

And Reuters Institute, in its **most recent annual report** on the news industry, said: “In most countries, a large proportion of digital subscriptions go to just a few big national brands—reinforcing the *winner takes most* dynamics. This dynamic has also shown the value of accurate and reliable information.

In many countries, we see audiences turning to trusted brands—in addition to ascribing a greater confidence in the media in general. The gap between the ‘best and the rest’ has grown.”

For smaller news brands, the key opportunity lies in delivering local news content. For example, at the height of COVID-19, coverage focused on how each community was experiencing the global pandemic. Readers in each country, city and neighborhood sought information about local cases and how governments and health organizations were responding.

The impact on engagement and subscriptions reinforced the value of local news coverage and having reporters embedded in the communities served.

Content Sources Are Growing

As user-generated content has grown with the rise of social media, journalists need to carefully vet eyewitness accounts for inclusion in breaking news coverage. Take Sky News for example. In 2019, Dataminr **alerted its journalists about the fire** that eventually destroyed the Notre-Dame Cathedral.

The source of the Dataminr alert was the public social media account of a student that included a photo of smoke billowing out from one of the cathedral’s spires. The photo was captioned in French, meaning it would have been very difficult to find manually. Within moments, journalists at Sky News London interrupted their broadcast with news of Notre-Dame on fire.

“We didn’t just see it first on the AFP news wire, we saw it first on Dataminr...with some incredible imagery,” said Adam Parker, Sky News Digital News Editor. “We’ve seen pictures and videos that just wouldn’t be there—just wouldn’t exist—if it wasn’t for user-generated videos and pictures that allow us into those areas.”

The story dominated news coverage in Europe for more than a week.

Identify the Most Engaged Audience

Engaged users, those that return to a site most frequently and stay the longest, make up just 3 percent of the total number of users visiting the site, but represent more than 50 percent of conversions to paying subscribers. During the pandemic, media companies of all kinds experienced a significant lift in the need for accurate information and the overall increase in people accessing information online grew. Publishers that want to acquire this highly-engaged audience must demonstrate value quickly and deploy their conversion tactics effectively.

For example, if two readers have matching characteristics, but one is registered with a news site and the other is not, the registered reader is four times more likely to subscribe to the site. This underscores the value that live journalism can contribute to both subscription and advertising-based news businesses as a means of breaking news and gaining a wider audience.

Speed Matters

In our interviews with industry experts, speed and accuracy were viewed as essential traits of organizations looking to break news and grow viewership. Interviewees cited their investment in digital tools, such as event discovery platforms, as critical elements of this effort. Being the first to break a story also increases the Google ranking of content as media outlets define the news cycle.

Deutsche Welle experienced a 70 percent increase in search traffic by using real-time alerts to develop stories, and further engagement with supporting content.



70% ↑
Search Traffic



Real-time Alerts

Its Head of Audience Engagement, Sebastian Kattoever, said, “We also see the follow up stories being clicked more than the breaking story. So, the effort we put into being quick to a story pays off with engagement in our ‘long tail’ content.”

Fox News Digital has a designated SEO team that uses tools like Adobe Analytics, Chartbeat and Dataminr to ensure it’s first and accurate with breaking news. As a result, it owns the breaking news stories that are of interest to its audience, while developing regular and original reporting. Deputy Managing Editor Michael Arroyo said, “We have a breaking news desk and we have an original exclusive reporting desk.”

Deutsche Welle Uses Dataminr to Stay Competitive

German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW) has been a Dataminr customer for over two years. Its journalists and social media strategists use Dataminr for News to break news faster. “For some stories, Dataminr has given us a 45-minute head start,” said Katthöver. [Learn more](#) about how Dataminr has made a difference for DW.



Using Engagement to Generate and Drive Revenue

Speed, real-time verification and purpose-built live news products play key roles in delivering news that converts casual readers into reliable sources of revenue. First-party data is key to monetizing that engagement over the long-term. Not all consumers who engage with content when news breaks have a clear propensity to subscribe or become loyal. This means publishers have to keep breaking news audiences engaged long enough to identify hallmarks in key segments of the audience and dedicate their marketing resources to converting users.

Subscription-based and ad-supported large news organizations rely on real-time audience insights. The most successful will be the ones that best integrate the people, processes and technologies that provide these insights.

Midsize news organizations will be best served by concentrating their live journalism resources in providing local, live coverage of events and stories that are of interest to their specific audiences.

The smallest media outlets can positively impact revenue with appropriate live coverage of hyperlocal events, utilizing social media to attract new audiences.

The impact of breaking news on revenue depends on the types of stories being produced and how unique the coverage or product offering is. There are instances where revenue should not be a priority, and media organizations will need to focus on the needs of their audience to ensure coverage is responsible and useful in a way that enhances their organization's reputation.

The rapidly evolving digital news landscape, and data's role within that space, presents a number of opportunities for newsrooms to grow their revenue through live journalism.





Subscriptions

Organizations that successfully boost subscriber revenue create distinctive content that clearly shows the value of their subscription products. Breaking news coverage is an important part of this dynamic, as it creates an opportunity for acquisition and retention.

Also key to generating subscription revenue is having the resources to cover stories in a way that competitors can't. Conde Nast, for example, gained 100,000 newsletter signups as a result of their exclusive coverage of the 2022 Met Gala.

Advertising

Advertising allows news organizations to monetize their audience and, in turn, provides the resources required to cover stories. Purpose-built live journalism products can be used for major stories and live events that are advertiser-friendly, while allowing organizations to create premium advertising partnerships.

MSNBC Executive Producer Kyle Griffin said, **“Add value to the breaking news; make the case to the viewer about why this is breaking news and why it is important. Plot out ways to differentiate; we want to arm out viewers with proper context.”**

Streaming

Some major news organizations are producing content, either directly or indirectly, for streaming services that they own or partner with. In-depth and mini documentary-style coverage can often be produced for streaming networks within a much shorter time period.

This streaming strategy is increasingly feasible for small and mid-sized news organizations not owned by large media companies, but only if they create original and valuable content and form partnerships that allow them to provide coverage to streaming networks. Owning a big story in-region can allow a local news organization to create content that is attractive to streaming networks.

Not all revenue is created equal

Mather research shows 37 percent growth in digital revenue year-on-year for Q4 2021, tied to digital strategy focus and the increase of fanatic and overall user conversions following the rise of the COVID-19 Delta variant.

However, digital revenues only made up 12 percent of overall revenues compared to 88 percent coming from print hybrid subscribers (those that have both a print and digital subscription to a newspaper). Average subscriber values for print hybrid are significantly higher than average digital revenues, and print hybrid revenues declined by 3.7 percent over the same period.

Fifty-five percent of new subscribers are coming from digital-only, so closing that average subscriber value with a diversified revenue strategy is critical.

Key Takeaways for Success

Our analysis of live journalism and its impact on media revenue strategy illustrates that the path to success is built on keeping audiences engaged longer and leveraging user data in real time to identify the most engaged customers, convert engagement to loyalty, and finally, convert that loyalty into revenue.

In establishing this path, media organizations need to follow seven key principles:

Have a plan

1

Establish a plan in advance of a breaking event and train your team to execute within the intensity of rapidly evolving coverage.

Be first with purpose

2

Invest in the tools that enable your organization to discover developing stories before your competitors. This time advantage gives newsrooms a critical head start in validating events and implementing content strategies that engage audiences.

Create differentiated content

3

Provide in-depth and quality content aligned with the needs of your users that can't be consumed elsewhere.

Develop new products and audiences

4

Consider offering existing web and TV audiences a set of products and experiences that will keep them engaged by evaluating their consumption habits. Some organizations are creating live news teams while others are developing standalone streaming products.

Connect differentiated content with user data

5

Invest in the technologies and services that allow you to extract meaningful user data during breaking events (news, features and beyond), so that you can quickly activate your conversion tactics.

Drive registration and subscription during engagement spikes

6

Track user data in real time during major stories, feature stories and live events to identify the propensity to subscribe and register of your consumers.

Decide when to advertise during breaking news

7

Ensure that advertising is appropriate, of the same quality as your content, and does not impact the user experience.

Learn more

[Request a demo](#) to see how Dataminr for News supports journalists in over 650 newsrooms worldwide.