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CEO: Don't pivot from what makes you great

By [David Chavern](#) September 28, 2017



I'm not usually one for cliches, but there is a lot of wisdom in the saying, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket."

Recently there has been an industry-wide battle cry for the pivot to video. Many are crediting it as the singular solution to engaged audience, revenue and solving all newsroom problems. Some companies have radically restructured their editorial teams to make room for the pivot. This summer, MTV News, Mic, Fox Sports, Vocativ and Vice Sports each [laid off writers](#) as they pivoted to video.

Don't get me wrong—video is great. And so many of our members are top notch at producing great video content. But in the world of news, video is a fundamentally different product from in-depth written analysis—and audiences will always want and demand both.

CBS Sunday Morning and *The New York Times* Sunday paper both have great products with loyal audiences (I consume both.) But the argument can't be made that CBS Sunday Morning can replace the Sunday paper—the show would be 12 hours long.

Video has to be a part of any forward-thinking news editorial strategy—it just shouldn't be the only strategy. Digital and print news organizations have an incredible history of great text-based journalism, and a large portion of the news audience will still want and value that.

Some publishers who switched to all video have seen a drop in audience. Fox Sport's audience [dropped 88 percent](#). [Mic's audience has dwindled](#), according to comScore, although the publisher argues viewership just moved to Facebook (a whole other can of worms I won't open here).

Putting all the efforts into video shortchanges what makes good journalism so powerful. It should not be a pivot, it should be an embrace.

Melissa Bell, publisher of Vox Media, [sent an open letter](#) to her staff emphasizing they would not pivot to video, but lean in. "We do not believe video comes at the cost of our journalism or people with non-video skill sets. Writing is a crucial component of what we want to offer our audiences – as is photography, video, sound, graphics and illustrations."

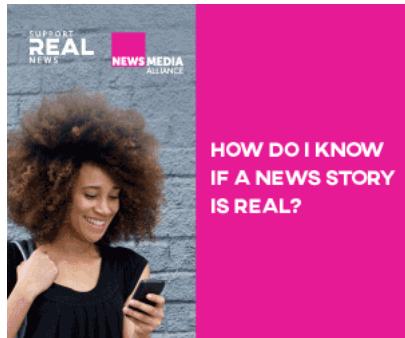
She went on to say, “Great videos don’t emerge from the ether, or from a desire to make more money from higher advertising rates. Great videos emerge out of great journalism, a great creative culture, and deep collaboration with creators of many different kinds.”

I will not downplay the importance of the power of video, but publishers should not forget what made their publications great in the first place. Each part of journalism is a puzzle piece to create an amazing bigger picture. In a future world of digital convergence, all news sites will have video and audio and text — and our members have a unique skill of producing world-class text that just can’t be easily replicated or replaced. I can’t wait to see what they do with all the tools at their disposal.



David Chavern

David Chavern serves as President & CEO of the News Media Alliance. Chavern has built a career spanning 30 years in executive strategic and operational roles, and most recently completed a decade-long tenure at the United States Chamber of Commerce.



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