

# THE FUTURE OF NEWS BELONGS TO THOSE WHO... KISS

LE 3 JUILLET 2010 ADAM WESTBROOK

Adam Westbrook, author of "Ten new ways to make money in journalism", joins today OWNI.eu's authors. He explains why old news organizations are dead and how to deal with the (bright) future of news.

**The traditional news organisations: the BBC, CNN, New York Times, the Guardian, Sky News – and all the others – have got a problem.**

Up until recently I thought the problem was revenue and the lack thereof; but that will solve itself organically over time.

And then I realised they've got *another* problem: it's one they'll never be able to solve – and it threatens their place in the future of journalism.

**They're too big.**

Sounds strange doesn't it (after all, size is usually good for a news organisation with a big remit). **The insight comes from Clay Shirky**, whose blog posts are rare, but always near revolutionary. **He talks about the collapse of the great empires of the past:** the Mayans, the Romans. They collapsed because they got too big, too complex and couldn't adapt to a new world.

His modern case in point: the Times paywall. He interprets Rupert Murdoch's justification for charging online content as this:

“

***Web users will have to pay for what they watch and use, or else we will have to stop making content in the costly and complex way we have grown accustomed to making it. And we don't know how to do that***

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In other words, News International is *so* big, *so* complex, *so* addicted to the exuberant and wasteful systems which it consumed in the 20th century, *it just can't change*. So it has to charge customers to help sustain its lifestyle.

Shirky goes on:

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***In a bureaucracy, it's easier to make a process more complex than to make it simpler, and easier to create a new burden than kill an old one... Some video still has to be complex to be valuable, but the logic of the old media ecosystem, where video had to be complex simply to be video, is broken***

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That last point about video is important. Think how many TV production companies are addicted to \$20,000 cameras, big rigs, professional lighting, large crews and plush offices in the centre of major cities. They don't know how to do anything different, and so they charge their clients thousands upon thousands to cover their secret addiction to luxury.

Video Journalism has been around as a cheap alternative to traditional TV news gathering since the 1980s. Why do all the big news organisations still send 2 or even 3 person crews to stories? Michael Rosenblum **points out dryly**, ABC News' move to VJing should have been news in the 90s.

Bad times for them. Good times for the next generation of journalists and producers.



## How to survive in the future of journalism

**Keep It Simple, Stupid.**

Next generation journalists have a big advantage: we're not addicted to expensive gear, offices, full time employment or bureaucracy. We know we can do things quick, cheap and simple. We can get impressive results with DSLRs, open source software, a laptop and creative commons media. We're not ashamed to interview someone on a FlipCam, or embed our video with Youtube.

**Do not underestimate the advantage that gives us in the market.**

Someone who gets it is **media commentator and lecturer Jeff Jarvis**. Here's **what he wrote for the Guardian**, when the Times paywall was announced:

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*...in Murdoch's folly, I see opportunity... As a teacher of entrepreneurial journalism at the City University of New York, I see openings for my students to compete with the dying relics by starting highly targeted, ruthlessly relevant new news businesses at incredibly low cost and low risk*

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And that's precisely it. Go in lean, mean and ruthless and start tearing stuff up. But know this: if your career takes you into the fold of the giants, you too will become addicted to their opium. It's a tough drug to get over. I've been lucky in some ways. I've only ever worked for tiny, struggling commercial outlets. I thought it sucked at the time, but it meant I always had to do things cheap, and quick – and I never got hooked on the luxurious journalism of the BBC or anyone else.

But the future is bright: here's Clay Shirky to wrap it up:



*It's easy to see the ways in which collapse to simplicity wrecks the glories of old. But there is one compensating advantage for the people who escape the old system: when the ecosystem stops rewarding complexity, it is the people who figure out how to work simply in the present, rather than the people who mastered the complexities of the past, who get to say what happens in the future*



This article was initially published on Adam's blog

Image Credit CC Flickr Okinawa Soba

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le 8 juillet 2010 - 22:35 &bullet; SIGNALER UN ABUS - PERMALINK



*I absolutely agree with you! The thing I find most exciting about your idea of keeping things simple and small, however, is that it is also tied into the idea of keeping things organic and localized. Different communities had different journalistic needs and desires, and the very push to have NATIONAL journalism, or even state wide journalism, which can meet all such needs and, in turn, does away with local operations has lead to its own destruction. People are more and more looking for something that is more grass roots. There are some great interviews about the future of journalism and where all this might be heading at [http://www.ourblook.com/topic/future\\_of\\_journalism.html](http://www.ourblook.com/topic/future_of_journalism.html) which I have found useful.*

VOUS AIMEZ



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VOUS N'AIMEZ PAS



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LUI RÉPONDRE

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