

What matters is journalism, wild ideas and crazy people

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Good journalism is good business, and it is also an essential profession for the political and democratic health of any nation.

This is according to Juan Senor, partner of Innovation Media Consulting, which assists news media to reinvent their editorial models, strategies, design, newsrooms etc., for the digital age. Their clients include *The New York Times*, *Le Monde*, the BBC, and in South Africa, Times Media. He was delivering the keynote address, entitled "*Mediamorphosis – How to reinvent news media for the digital age*" at this year's Future of Media conference that took place at the Sandton Convention Centre in Sandton, Gauteng.

"Good journalism changed the United States when it exposed Watergate, and this is not a thing of the past. Rather, no matter how much we change, the fundamentals remain the same with our primary objective still being to produce good and sustainable journalism," he told the audience.



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This is less about platforms, and more about the content, he continued. "Facebook, Instagram, YouTube etc. are not content creators, they are mediums for you to communicate the message."

Everyone said user-generated content would replace journalism – well that has not happened he said, calling it a myth, as is the paperless office and that everything will be free in the digital age, and that if you build it they will come. These are fables, he says, and just because masses of people come, does not mean that they bought the product, and if they did not, then it did not work. "We are here to sell. It is not a zero game; you do not have to choose between digital and print."

Underestimate print at your peril

Throughout the ages various mediums have been proclaimed the holy grail and that they would lead to the demise of the other... from radio to television. Yet, he told the audience, they are all still here. "No medium has been replaced, although some methods of communication have disappeared, such as the fax machine. The truth is that you will never find the answer in one platform."

Globally 90% of revenue is still from print and audiences are still consuming print. He also called print eternal. "It is tactile and physical and humans still love that about it." What is different is the editorial model that sustained newspapers has died, he says. "Paper is now premium *haute couture*. Online and mobile are the new mass medium or *pret a porter*."

Turning his attention to print newspapers, he admits that they are not the long term answer, but he says they are part of today's answer and tomorrow's solution. "In South Africa I expect another decade to 15 years of print. The multi-section newspaper model is dead. Newspapers for all are newspapers for none. The idea that a newspaper is the record of the day before is gone."

Single issue and niche newspapers are successful in that they take an issue and cover the hell out of it. Examples include *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. "There is still other content inside, but the selling proposition is the reporting on one story. Digital covers the other news." In this regard the weekend is a massive opportunity for print.

He believes that print is a fantastic opportunity for brands. "Print is prestigious while digital is the mass audience. The traditional newsroom needs to be transformed into the newsroom of the digital age. It is about connecting readers throughout the day, wherever they are and on whatever device. But it is about getting the right content to them when it counts. "

Print is a bridge to a digital future so we cannot let it crumble, he adds. ""The end game is to reinforce print and grow digital through more of tomorrow and less of today or yesterday."

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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