

Competition

Perceptions of competition have changed as the numbers of media voices have swelled. Fewer towns have a two-newspaper battle-royal. But 24/7 cable news and a sea of Web sites make a new set of arenas in the battle for attention. How have you defined the competition? And how do you aim staff to deal with competitive threats?

Neal Shapiro

You want to be first. You want to beat them every time. You also do not want to make deals you regret, just so that you could do it. You do not want to throw things on the air just because you think the competition might be working on the same thing. One of the biggest disappointments that I have had is to say: They are going to beat us sometimes. So be it. We are not ready yet.

You do not want to lose, but you do not want to be wrong. And I would rather come in second or third and be right.

Matt Storin

There is a pitfall if you simply say we must beat brand X on everything. We competed in Boston with a good tabloid paper, not a *National Enquirer*-type tabloid, but a tabloid nevertheless, with a small staff and its own agenda.

My message to the staff was, we must be superior to this paper in the areas where we share an agenda, which basically would be politics, sports, business news and some investigative news.

And I called those stories, to use a football term, the Red Zone. You can't get beat in the Red Zone. Everything else we do, we don't worry about.

Alberto Ibargüen

What causes the general decline [of newspapers] is the self-indulgence of a monopoly. So many newspapers are written for ourselves or for our colleagues, as opposed to for the readers.

I think the competition is anybody getting the story that we should have had or getting an advertising dollar I wish I'd been able to get. Now that there are so many

What causes the general decline [of newspapers] is the self-indulgence of a monopoly.

outlets, you've got to figure out where the market is. Sometimes it's a matter of presentation. Anything that we can do to make the story more accessible is something we ought to do. It's foolish to continue the same layout and format just because it has always been done that way.

Karen Jurgensen

This would not have been true in 1982 (when *USA TODAY* began), but I define competition now as anything that competes for our readers' attention. Whether it is a metropolitan newspaper or a Web site or a cable TV channel or an e-mail that somebody sent, an e-mail newsletter that goes out — the business has changed so much that we are inundated with information. News is a commodity, it's cheap.

Because news is a commodity, because it is everywhere, we have to give the readers the things they can't get anyplace else. My continual drumbeat is enterprise. Give me things that I'm not going to get anyplace else because that's the only thing that's going to bring people to us.

Tim McGuire

I don't have to lead anyone to recognize that the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* is competition. Every day it sits there, and our paper sits there. We win some, we lose some.

In many ways [newspapers] ought to be focused more on [different] competitors: lack of time and attention and apathy.

Burl Osborne

One of the saddest days of my life was when I saw the *Dallas Times Herald* go away because it, in a way, had defined what our competition was about.

That competition was like World War II — we faced our competitor across the lines and went at each other directly every day. The competition now is more like Vietnam or Afghanistan — our competitors for readers' time and money are shooting at us from their hiding places in direct mail or fragmented television or Web sites.

Arthur Sulzberger Jr.

Everybody is our competition. *The Wall Street Journal* is our competition. *Scientific American* is the competition. The *Los Angeles Times* and CNN are the competition. AOL Time Warner is the competition. *Newsday* is the competition. Fashion magazines are the competition. ... It's always a battle for time and attention. What's different now is there are just so many places to go for information.