

PRACTICAL TIPS FROM 19 NEWS SITES AROUND THE WORLD  
FOR HOW TO INVOLVE YOUR SUPPORTERS IN THE WORK

# MAKING JOURNALISM MORE MEMBERFUL

## WITH EARNED WISDOM FROM

Direkt36, Krautreporter, CORRECTIV, Inside Story, Maldita, De Correspondent, Eldiario.es, GEDI Group, Nice-Matin, ProPublica, Cape May County Herald, CHOICE, The Quint, Clydesider Creative, Kosofe Post, RED/ACCIÓN, Tvoe Misto, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and the Financial Times.

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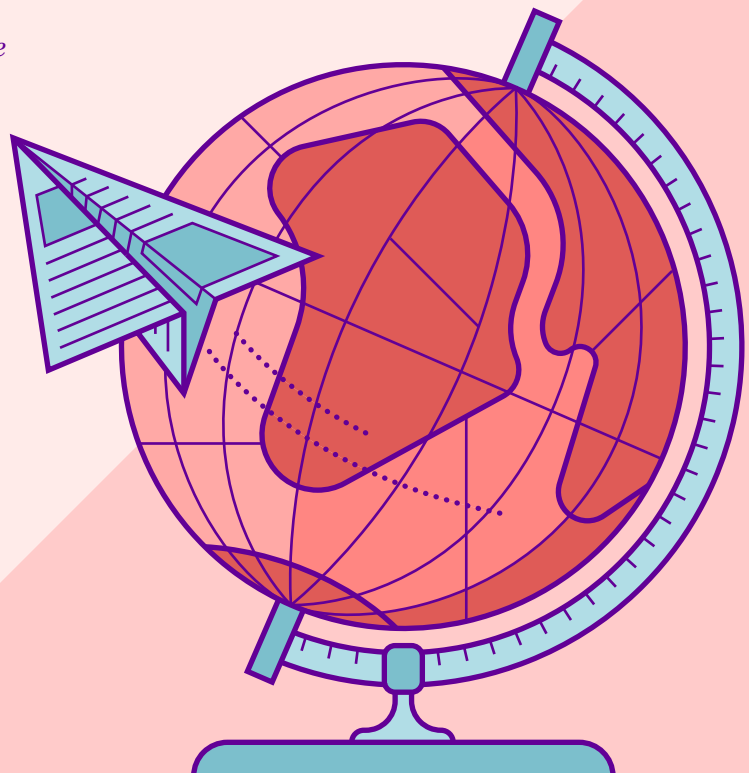
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*the*  
**MEMBERSHIP  
PUZZLE  
PROJECT**

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# *the* **MEMBERSHIP PUZZLE PROJECT**

[The Membership Puzzle Project](#) is a public research project studying how to optimize news for trust. The project (MPP) is funded by [Knight Foundation](#), [Democracy Fund](#), and [Luminate](#).

Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. It invests in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. The goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy.

Democracy Fund is a bipartisan foundation that invests in organizations working to ensure our political system is able to withstand new challenges and deliver on its promise to the American people. Today, modern challenges – such as hyper partisanship, money in politics, and struggling media – threaten the health of American democracy. Democracy Fund invests in change makers who advocate for solutions that can bring lasting improvements to our political system and build bridges that help people come together to serve our nation.

Luminate is a global philanthropic organization focused on empowering people and institutions to work together to build just and fair societies. It was established in 2018 by Pierre Omidyar, the founder of eBay. Luminate works with its investees and partners to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in, and shape, the issues affecting their societies, and to make government, corporations, media, and those in positions of power more responsive and more accountable. Luminate does this by funding and supporting innovative and courageous organizations and entrepreneurs around the world, and by advocating for the policies and actions that will drive change across four impact areas: Civic Empowerment, Data & Digital Rights, Financial Transparency, and Independent Media. Luminate was previously the Governance & Citizen Engagement initiative at Omidyar Network and is now part of The Omidyar Group. To date it has supported 236 organizations in 18 countries with \$314 million in funding.

For this report, we received research design advice and editing from Julie Posetti, PhD, Senior Research Fellow, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford.

## Introduction

Jay Rosen

Director, the Membership Puzzle Project

This report had its origins in a question I asked myself and the research team at the Membership Puzzle Project, led by Emily Goligoski, in April 2019. We had been studying for two years the rise of member-supported newsrooms around the world. It was time to ask: What do we know about how different news companies have progressed from special projects that may involve members to company routines that effectively incorporate members into the work?

We put the emphasis on routines because if members can contribute routinely—and it works, meaning adds value—then it’s possible that a unique style of journalism can be built on top of those routines. It’s also possible that your organization can [grow faster](#). [Really](#). And do better stories.

If there are, in fact, these memberful routines emerging around the world of member-driven news sites, if they can be applied and repurposed by others in journalism who are recruiting members, then we at the Membership Puzzle Project were going to find that out, organize our knowledge, and bring it to you.

That is why we exist. And that is what this report is about.

**By *memberful routines* we mean normal ways of operating that incorporate members and produce value for a news organization, which is how they got to be routines in the first place.** A simple example would be a database of members and their expertise that is *routinely* tapped to provide technical proofreading of articles and investigations. It might take time but it also adds value. The value includes the added “stickiness” of the member who is consulted about things that member knows a lot about.

Together with two researchers whose work we admire, Joy Jenkins, PhD, and Katharine Quamby, we visited 11 sites we knew to be innovative. We thought they could help us answer our question. Eight others with knowledge to share volunteered to participate in our detailed survey form. We asked them all: what have you learned so far about memberful routines? What works for you and your community? And when is “community engagement” more trouble than it’s worth?

In answer to our original question--what kind of memberful routines are emerging around the world?--we found a lot of them for you to learn from:

At CORRECTIV in Germany, community members are trained in fact-checking, given organizational email addresses (albeit slightly different from regular staff email addresses), and paid for their fact checks.

At Inside Story in Greece, readers propose story ideas and are assigned a professional reporter partner for joint investigations.

At RED/ACCIÓN in Argentina, members are invited to join a [WhatsApp group led by a reporter](#) while he or she is covering a story so that their questions, perspectives, and needs are better addressed.

At the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, journalists joined with social workers across the UK to track publicly available resources for victims of domestic violence, leading to 12 members of parliament speaking about the problem to their constituencies.

At Maldita in Spain, readers flag possible disinformation in the text, videos, and images they see and charted rising instances of information about LGBTQ issues during gay pride month recently.

At ProPublica in the US, patients and their family members have used private social network groups and other means to communicate to reporters preventable instances of medical malpractice, leading to policy changes nationwide.

This is our report.

## What are memberful reporting routines?

Katharine Quamby, Emily Goligoski, & Joy Jenkins, PhD

Ideally, every work of journalism to which a member-funded site makes a substantial commitment (measured in reporter time, costs, reputation-at-stake, and more) should be made *memberful* enough to earn back those costs. That's the way to a sustainable newsroom.

We present these approaches to reporting *with* members as steal-able ideas (take them and hack them!). They are proven approaches for organizations of different sizes and with different revenue models. Most importantly, they represent not one-off crowdsourced reporting projects, but a shift toward routines.

At the core of these memberful routines is the belief that journalism is not an esoteric art nor a rarified practice. Many parts of it are teachable to users of the product. CORRECTIV in Germany practices this:

*CORRECTIV founder David Schraven said: "We believe that everyone can do journalism and that we journalists are on the same level as everyone else in society. And you have to be ready to share."*

Memberful routines can happen at many different points in the long arc from inception of the idea at one end to distribution and reaction once the final product emerges at the other. We saw it in all of these phases:

<b>Planning stages</b> (e.g. audience listening)	<b>Research &amp; reporting</b> (co-reporting, offering reporting tips or source assistance)	<b>Editing &amp; fact-checking</b> (proofreading a draft)	<b>Post-publication</b> (helping distribute a work of journalism to the people who really need it)
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This report is the result of a four-month project to identify, categorize, and name these forms of knowledge sharing. It represents the Membership Puzzle Project's most detailed pursuit into practices and procedures since the 2018 publication of the [Tow Guide to Audience Revenue &](#)

[Engagement](#). More recently, MPP published [this research into ways that individuals meaningfully contribute to news organizations—and why](#).

Our team was keen to pursue this research. We saw that while interest in these ways of working is high, more practical ideas for implementing these routines was needed. We know that every reporter is different and each story or investigation is its own thing. No one can force good journalism into a formula for making it *memberful* enough. So we want to widen journalists’ understanding and use of the options.

We hope to show that there is no one formula or a “checklist” but an array of options involving different types of commitments.

When it comes to learning about, listening to, and collaborating with people outside professional practitioners, we’re certainly not the first ones to promote the value of these participatory practices. Co-production has a long history of working with stakeholders not for engagement but involvement. Within particular communities, such as people with disabilities, co-production means involving experts by experience working alongside those who represent them publicly, such as journalists or artists. It’s summed up by the phrase ["nothing about us, without us."](#)

Marketers have not been far behind with what they call “co-creation.” The professors who popularized the term, Venkat Ramaswamy and Francis Guillard, [point to profitable examples](#) such as the platform MyStarbucksIdea.com and the Nike+ co-creation initiative. At MIT, the team behind a new [Collective Wisdom report](#) explains co-creation as a series of collective practices that don’t “displace singular authorship in media-making [but open] up parallel pathways for funding, institutional support, celebration, distribution, and sharing.”

In journalism, as in many other spaces, we are still in the early days for the intersection of audience revenue and substantive engagement as publishers’ digital ad businesses continue to decline. Consumer revenue is a key piece of this equation, and we think that audience involvement and participation is, too.

Here is what you can expect from this report:

<b>Memberful reporting routines at a glance</b>	<a href="#">Methods</a>	<a href="#">Organizations</a>	<a href="#">Descriptions of memberful routines in practice</a>	<a href="#">Practicing organizations’ intentions</a>
<b>Tactical considerations</b>	<a href="#">Channels</a> *	<a href="#">Workflow</a>	<a href="#">Staffing</a>	<a href="#">Risks</a>
	<a href="#">Tech</a>	<a href="#">Size &amp; Skills</a>	<a href="#">Impact</a>	

\* The most common means we saw for enabling memberful routines are through [self-hosted platforms](#) (including voting, comments, and callouts); [shared work with data](#) (including hackathons); [email and email newsletters](#); [surveys](#); [social media](#); [trainings and other education](#); and [editorial meetings and events](#).

## Methods

This qualitative research comes from 34 60-minute or longer interviews, both in person (through visits to newsrooms) and remote (through web technology), with numerous staffers and freelancers at these organizations:

- [Direkt36](#) is a Hungarian non-profit investigative journalism center launched in 2015.
- [Krautreporter](#) is a digital ad-free German magazine focused on politics and society, online since 2014.
- [CORRECTIV](#) is a German non-profit investigative newsroom founded in 2014.
- [Inside Story](#) is a Greece-based digital medium that provides investigative journalism.
- [Maldita](#) is a Spanish journalistic platform created in 2017 focused on fact-checking and data journalism techniques for the control of disinformation.
- [De Correspondent](#) is a majority-member funded Dutch news website created in 2013 and based in Amsterdam, Netherlands. De Correspondent is a partner of the Membership Puzzle Project.
- [Eldiario.es](#) is an online newspaper based in Spain launched in 2012.
- [GEDI Group](#) is an Italian publishing group founded in 1955 that operates in press, radio, digital, and advertising.
- [Nice-Matin](#) is a regional daily French newspaper that has been covering Nice and the French south-east region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur since 1944.
- [ProPublica](#) is an independent, nonprofit newsroom that produces investigative journalism in the United States, founded in 2007-2008.
- [The Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#) (TBIJ) is an independent, not-for-profit organization founded in 2010 that holds power to account. The [Bureau Local](#) is a collaborative, investigative network with an emphasis in stories and communities across the UK. It is part of the wider TBIJ. (Note that we have interviewed TBIJ staff and that a consultant for the Bureau Local completed the survey. Also, Katharine Quamby, one of the co-authors of this report, is a former senior editor and consultant for the TBIJ.)

In the summer of 2019 also we hosted a detailed open survey to learn about memberful reporting routines. It generated 10 responses, and we've featured anecdotes from staff and freelancers working for these eight sites:

- [Cape May County Herald](#) is a community newspaper based in Cape May County, New Jersey, USA, that has operated since 1968.

- [CHOICE](#) is a consumer advocacy group created in 1959 in Australia that offers reviews, product tests, articles, information, and buying guides.
- [The Quint](#) is an Indian news website launched in 2015 that publishes in English and Hindi.
- [Clydesider Creative](#) is a community media and creative training social enterprise based in West Dunbartonshire, Scotland, launched in 2016.
- [KosofePost.com](#) is a website reporting on Kosofe, Nigeria, since 2018.
- [RED/ACCIÓN](#) is a new Argentine website created in 2018 that covers social issues and invites its audience to action. It is a grantee of MPP's Membership in News Fund.
- [Tvoe Misto](#) is a media hub that includes a portal, a platform, online television and a production studio based in Lviv, Ukraine, since 2012.
- [The Financial Times](#) (FT) is an international daily newspaper founded in 1888 focused on business and economic news. Staff from the US and the UK responded to the survey.

Please note that our survey sample is small and geographically limited. It reflects only organizations that are interested *and* currently practicing these routines. Their stories are worth telling because their teams, including leadership, are bought in: four out of five respondents said they “have complete management buy-in for this work” with the remainder said management is “mostly supportive.”

You can find and repurpose our research questions in the [Appendix](#).

## **How practitioners describe memberful reporting**

In the European Journalism Centre report [“Stronger journalism through shared power”](#) researcher Fiona Morgan wrote that these engaged approaches “offer an opportunity to build not only an audience for this work (meaning, people who consume and share content), but a community that will contribute to the work of information gathering, reporting and distribution, provide eyes and ears on the ground, be equipped to take action and, ultimately, increase the impact of that work.”

A “community that will contribute to the work” is exactly why it’s worth developing memberful routines. Here is a sample of how other leaders in the field describe these routines to us:

- Schraven’s colleague at CORRECTIV, events manager Hanna Wollmeiner, said, “We want to get out of the high buildings where we are hidden away and be more open. We have all been trained in making a decent coffee!” (She’s not kidding. All staff are taught how to make coffee for guests of the Essen newsroom and coffee shop.) CORRECTIV reporter Marcus Bensmann said: “We should not be separate from the community. I am not writing for journalists, but for everyone. Only by showing our presence (‘Schaufenster



Journalismus,' or picture window journalism) can we be part of the life on the street. As journalists we should always discuss our own ideas with the community, not because we are being nice, but because then we get new perspectives on our work.”



A CORRECTIV visualization about how journalism can contribute to citizen knowledge and action.

- Rachel Hamada at The Bureau of Investigative Journalism described these routines as offering a change in the power relationship: the idea of mutual respect. They entail “working with our network during story development, and helping them be able to connect with each other and share skills, and experiences, and information. It’s also about looking at story dissemination. When we have a story, how do we get that story back to the people who it most affects?”
- At The Bureau Local, director Megan Lucero said that journalists who work in these ways have a different challenge compared to their colleagues working with more traditional practices: “You’re in charge of mobilizing a group of people. You’re in charge of communicating with them. You’re in charge of collaborating with different types of people. Every job at the Bureau Local has incorporated this into their role--it has been important to us to make everyone part of the process.”
- Rob Wijnberg, co-founder of De Correspondent, said that asking members for collaboration with journalism through “data, knowledge, and anecdotes” challenges

traditional conceptions of journalists' work. "You become a hybrid between a researcher and a conversation leader, community organizer, it involves all kinds of new skills and changes the nature of the stories you make."

- The Quint CEO and founder Ritu Kapur described these editorial benefits: "It has pushed the newsroom to look for untold stories, to hunt harder for exclusive breaks, and to find new multimedia formats to tell these stories."
- Esther Alonso, the head of marketing and development for El Diario, emphasized that, more than other ways of working, these routines require buy-in from the newsroom and set expectations. They shouldn't be seen as a strategy forced on them from the "dark side" (the business side).
- Aurore Malval of Nice-Matin said they've been able to develop relationships with readers and differentiate those who are loyal and non-volatile from those who read one article and "fly away." Memberful routines offer highly transparent opportunities to "create the news with them."
- Lilah Raptopoulos at the Financial Times said: "There are too many [benefits] to name – they make our reporting richer and more accurate and more human, they give us story ideas and tips, they help us better serve our readers and their needs, they build loyalty to our journalists and to the FT, and offer a depth of engagement that is pretty unlike anything else, they build trust, they show that we're listening and respect our readers."

## About the organizations

The organizations in this study:

- Have blended revenue models and see these routines as part of their ultimate revenue generation;
- Are sometimes memberful in practice before having sustainable membership revenue;
- Practice these routines out of necessity, not idealism;
- See journalism as a public service and are self-critical and reflective;
- Are mindful of resource limitations and collaborative in their reporting partnerships;
- Openly study and imitate routines practiced by other news organizations they admire; and
- Are often the first in their countries to practice these ways of working, and they are gaining regional competition in doing so.

All of the sites we studied that are working in these memberful ways have **blended revenue models**: they combine several means of funding, including but not limited to membership,

foundation support, syndication, and/or advertising. Their tax structures range from non-profit to commercial. In all instances, individuals can contribute to these organizations financially as members, donors, or subscribers (note that these aren't interchangeable and [represent different business models](#)).

Organizations don't have to host membership (as in, individuals contributing time, money, ideas, and/or expertise to a cause because they believe in it) to have memberful routines; subscription-driven organizations can be innovative in these areas, too. **Having successful memberful routines doesn't require that a publication have sustainable membership revenue (or have it yet), or that all reporting projects involve audience members.** András Pethő of Direkt36 in Hungary said: "The truth is that our membership model is still in the early stages. We interact with our supporters in various ways but given the sensitivity of some of our investigative projects we have engaged with our members for those only on occasional basis." At Maldita in Spain, member "ambassadors" pay to help underwrite the site's work, and they may or may not fall into the category of "people with [superpowers](#)" who offer their abilities, knowledge, and expertise. We saw many organizations offer multiple concurrent ways to be involved.

**These memberful reporting routines are born out of necessity.** This isn't a monetization study, yet we heard that these organizations have a major business impetus for working differently. Betty Tsakarestou is an associate professor and head of the advertising and public relations lab at Panteion University, and a partner/consultant to Inside Story in Greece. She said that during the global financial crisis and Greek debt crisis, advertising revenues for media fell substantially. Audiences were still reading news during this time, but legacy media faced challenges in producing it. Inspired by organizations like De Correspondent, Inside Story looked to disrupt the media landscape in Greece and pursue a membership-based, independent, investigative digital news venture bringing together journalists, researchers, developers, illustrators, and photographers. They describe three reasons for their approach:

- In a deadline-driven environment, journalists can often export information without taking the time to listen. But the world is complicated; as reporter Thodoris Chondrogiannos said, "if you don't listen to the people, you will not have good ideas, because it's impossible to know Athens, or to know the world, without talking with others."
- Members indicated that they had curiosity and interest to offer. They offered their time and energy to co-creating journalism and trusted the experiment. This type of journalism is a transformative process. It builds citizenship among people who might otherwise be considered to be "on the outside".
- Working with a distributed group of collaborators offers journalists the opportunity to consider story ideas they wouldn't have normally pursued.

Maria Ramirez, director of strategy for El Diario in Spain, wanted to pursue the increased independence that would come from being less reliant on advertising. Their program drew 10,000 new members in two months in 2018 following a major investigation for a total of 34,500

today. Having such an active community online and at events improves the journalism, she said, and enables journalists to pursue larger stories. El Diario co-founder and deputy director Juan Luis Sanchez said the organization focuses on membership and on member funding partially because it helps build a brand around the personality of the organization.

## Independent journalism does not pay for itself

Thanks to more than 34,000 members and partners, nobody tells us what we can publish and what not. Nor what we have to say or investigate. It is our weapon to end impunity of the most powerful.

We need you too to continue making a journalism free of political and economic pressures.

**Become a member | Become a member**

### MORE IN ELDIARIO.ES

*An on-site promotion for El Diario emphasizes the importance of independence.*

At Nice-Matin in France and GEDI Group in Italy, audience-inclined approaches are seen as a promising, sustainable solution to the continuing financial difficulties affecting local legacy news. After Nice-Matin was on the verge of bankruptcy, the employees decided to become “owners” of the newspaper in 2014, giving one month of their salaries. In 2015, the newspaper attempted a solutions-driven approach to some reporting. At a crossroads for how to produce local journalism, the team needed to question how things had always been done. After 20 years as a journalist, Sophie Casals knew that some readers had been getting frustrated with journalism; reporting on solutions offered a way to build bridges.

The International Journalism Network, a community of the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), [says solutions journalism](#) focuses on reporting solutions to known problems: “after identifying the problem and causes, it goes on to look for the solutions that exist around the globe.” For Nice-Matin, solutions journalism offered an opportunity to “drive people back to news,” according to Casals, and address their trust problem with readers. Subscriptions manager Ati Roufai said that solutions journalism helps readers feel they’re more a part of the publication, and it outperforms other content in driving subscriptions. Roufai said: “They have to feel that they are part of the magazine, that they are not just readers...they participate in the city where they’re living.”

Nice-Matin hasn’t seen the same “lying media” and “fake news” criticisms with solutions coverage that they have received with other journalism. Staff we spoke to said this reporting is not questioned in the same ways because questions are addressed outright in the articles.

Marianna Bruschi, head of the Visual Lab for GEDI Group, who oversees membership for 13 local newspapers, said that focusing on membership--and not just subscriptions--can increase and rebuild trust for local newspapers. Because local newspapers serve a public service function that membership models can help support, it's not best to install a paywall, according to Bruschi:

This is not the fastest solution. But the problem is that if you see that your print copy [sales] decline and that it doesn't stop, it's 10 years that they are declining. I think that simply, you have to try to find something different to help you.

I think that if we ever asked our newsrooms to simply put a paywall on their website, we have done the worst [thing]. In part because we have a lot of competitors in a lot of cities, even if they are very small in contrast with our titles. It's quite impossible to lock all your content away.

Bruschi said that this is a particularly effective strategy for local newspapers because they focus on managing community and connecting with people as part of their core business.

**When asked about the commercial benefits of working in these ways, half of the respondents to our survey said they were generating revenue (five of 10), including through gains to related revenue, like new advertisers and sponsors who wanted to be involved, and brand benefits, like rewards.** At the Bureau Local, some of the positive (if not primary) benefits have included “finding out stories for which there are high demand but little existing coverage, creating impact that impresses funders, producing good journalism that wins awards and benefits our brand.” Survey respondents shared that memberful routines have also helped them identify new stories to cover (nine of 10), reach new audiences (nine of 10), and meet new sources (seven of 10).

At the Financial Times, higher engagement correlates with higher conversion and retention rates: US head of audience engagement Lilah Raptopoulos said that “when readers participate in our journalism we see a jump in their engagement metrics—subscribers read more, come back more often, and stay longer. They also presumably are more likely to renew their subscriptions, and feel good about the FT so are more likely to recommend it to others. It's good for our brand reputation. It's good for our subscription numbers. It's good for our bottom line.” Some found memberful routines money-saving: as Taras Yatsenko, CEO and co-founder of Tvoe Misto, said, collaborative efforts like distributed newsgathering and multisource research and reporting, when managed well, were helping them spend less time and money. Two organizations wrote that they didn't know yet, and one was finding the routines to have a negative financial impact to date.

**We saw that these organizations are self-critical and reflective.** This work is an investment and they put care and craft into it. As the subhead for the ProPublica resource [What to Ask](#)

[Yourself Before You Start a Crowdsourcing Project](#) reads: “Engagement reporting is a powerful tool for journalism. Don’t take it lightly.”

Juan Luis Sanchez, the co-founder and deputy director of El Diario, cited the importance of being responsible with resources. That includes community and paying members, who are included in published revenue reports on their site. “If you’ve never had a community online, it will take time to develop,” he said, saying that a long-term, professional strategy is advantageous compared to asking for money “out of the blue.” He added that there is benefit in being cautious in taking on new editorial endeavors (including strategic partnerships), membership projects, and related campaigns:

We haven't invested any Euros that we didn't have previously [on the books], ever, and that's something that I think has been a very good decision, specifically by the financial team and the editing team. We are not going to hire a new section of 10 journalists and go to the bank to ask for a loan. We are not going to do that. And that's something that works.

Sebastian Esser, founder of Krautreporter in Germany, said, “We treat members like sources. If one member tells us something we don’t take it for granted. But we've not experienced one of our members wanting to manipulate our reporting.”

**One way they are resource considerate is in being collaborative in their reporting partnerships.** Direkt36 works with the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. CORRECTIV works with factcheck.eu for its community factchecking initiative. El Diario and TBIJ both partner with The Guardian for international news and regional publications for local and regional news. And Maldita produces segments in collaboration with radio and TV stations with different political leanings.

**The organizations we spoke with and surveyed have a tendency towards transparency while trying to guard work-in-progress investigations and editorial control.** When asked whether their organizations face security issues or have legal concerns about sharing information pre-publication, some organizations say they aren’t yet sharing investigations outside their staff. The Financial Times chooses to involve people outside of staff selectively and mainly on non-sensitive stories. Kosofe Post regularly consults expert stakeholders, pro-bono legal advisors, and law enforcement.

Other organizations have proceeded carefully, like the Bureau Local. Rachel Hamada said: “Our stories tend to be exclusive and we will have worked on data for months, so [we] don’t want leaks. However we ask all people collaborating on investigations to sign an MoU [memorandum of understanding] and agree to an embargo day and so far that trust has been rewarded.”

Clydesider Creative has a growing, committed group of contributors, and director and editor Amanda Eleftheriades-Sherry said: “Trust is extremely important to us and we find that believing

in and trusting our volunteers is essential to our security. This trust has not been abused.” We think this is an important finding. In legacy newsrooms and digital start-ups, reporters often worry that if they use these more open methods “someone will steal my story.” We did not find cases of that. If anything, we see the threat not in reporters being scooped but in participants not being adequately trained and protected (please see Risks).

**They openly study and imitate routines practiced by other news organizations they admire.** Direkt36 looked to Krautreporter, ProPublica, and CORRECTIV for ideas about community collaboration and story distribution. De Correspondent advised Inside Story about their launch. Nice-Matin’s solutions reporting team actively seeks out suggestions for thorny problems from outside of France. And we saw that staffers look to one another for practices that work well: De Correspondent editor-in-chief Rosan Smits is seeing higher correspondent eagerness to work with members and higher tolerance during the times when the results aren’t as expected. This is partially because they have more examples to reference from colleagues than earlier in the site’s evolution (please see Staffing for more details). The examples of what they’re attempting and the power it can have makes these approaches not just nice to do, but research multipliers.

**We saw that they’re sometimes the first ones in their region or country to work in these memberful ways.** András Pethő of Direkt36, said about working in Hungary: “We were the first ones who did this here – we were not just asking for money but we wanted to create a real relationship, we tried to give supporters something in return.” Inside Story encountered low public trust in media and frequent political partisanship when it launched in Greece, according to founder and publisher Dimitris Xenakis. It was challenging to introduce a membership model because no one else was doing so. Readers didn’t know about the strategy and its value, Xenakis said, and were not used to supporting journalism and in being involved as audiences. They therefore offered multiple opportunities for readers to engage with journalists (please see Channels), in part to demonstrate the importance of public service journalism.

**Many of them now see other organizations in their countries pursuing direct audience engagement and revenue.** El Diario was the first of its kind in Spain, a large welfare state where public institutions fill the gaps of private companies and where public media largely doesn’t cover issues that are important to society. They have a different relationship with readers than other newspapers in Spain, Luis Sanchez said. The member and reader focus El Diario launched with is having ripple effects, even among the establishment media like El Pais and El Mundo that they sought to disrupt. It’s a difficult strategy for legacy media to adopt, according to staff at El Diario, and requires treating individuals as if they’re part of partnership. Esther Alonso, head of marketing and development, explains the importance of establishing a relationship with readers before asking for money: “What is your promise to them?”

## **Practicing organizations’ intentions**



Our research subjects' intentions for memberful reporting and common reasons for starting these routines include:

- **To meet audience members and identify what they care about.** Marcus Bensmann, a CORRECTIV reporter, said: "As investigative journalists we have to find and use data and reports, but the most important resource is other human beings. They are not just the object of our stories, heroes in that, they are also subjects."
- **Similarly, to strengthen the reporting in ways that individual reporters can't alone.** As ProPublica [encourages reporters and engagement editors to consider](#): "What is the investigative vein/purpose of the reporting? Will engagement feed it, or is the pitch just an interesting aspect of the story?" ProPublica engagement reporter and editor Ariana Tobin said: "My favorite kind [of ask] is called 'Help us with the task'" or a constituent ask. This is what Jay Rosen calls three of the most powerful words in journalism: "Help us investigate."
- **To better understand their audience members' motivations for taking part.** Organizations that responded to our survey have several ways to track what motivates their audience members. Focus groups and surveys are the most frequent methods. They also pay attention to comments online and emails to the editor. The FT's Audience Engagement team works with the company's customer research and customer service teams to help them answer editorial questions. They are starting to consider how they can conduct more qualitative user research from within editorial. Clydesider Creative in Scotland hosts open community meetings and events, pop-up newsrooms for informal public engagement, and a weekly community-based newsroom to provide one-on-one support and training for volunteers.

To the best of their knowledge, respondents to our survey said their audience members contributed to be part of something bigger (10 of 10), to have a say and be heard (eight of 10), to share love because a topic and/or public service mission matters (eight of 10), to contribute their expertise (seven of 10), to get the inside scoop and or to find out about process (three of 10), and to learn something new (three of 10). One respondent explained that readers are involved "to show there is more to our community than the negative stereotypes portrayed by traditional media."

- **To diversify the reader and member base.** Esther Alonso, the head of marketing and development for El Diario, is keen to see the organization's membership become larger and more inclusive. Their members are mostly older than general readers and are majority male. This represents only a portion of viewpoints that can inform their reporting. At TBIJ, Rachel Hamada said: "I would love to bring in more of a mix of members. We've got a really exciting mix already, but I think we could extend it even more, to make it even more representative of Britain." Hamada added that the network is



keen to link up with people who can train others so that they feel able and confident to contribute more.



*A party to celebrate the five-year anniversary of the creation of [eldiario.es](http://eldiario.es) Castilla-La Mancha, a local edition. More than 200 people attended, including citizens and politicians.*

- **To identify solutions and encourage change.** Most of these organizations encourage their audiences to demand change. There are different levels of this, from just calls to action to active participation in an advocacy group. FT only encourages its readers to share their opinions, and De Correspondent asks members to offer their knowledge. CHOICE says that it has “very sophisticated campaigns and advocacy” around key changes that arise from its reporting. These include email updates, signing petitions, emailing parliamentarians. RED/ACCIÓN uses Action Button so members can sign a petition or address policy-makers on specific issues or projects.

## Channels for memberful routines

The most common means we saw for enabling memberful routines are through [self-hosted platforms](#) (including voting, comments, and callouts); [shared work with data](#) (including hackathons); [email and email newsletters](#); [surveys](#); [social media](#); [trainings and other education](#); and [editorial meetings and events](#). Examples of each follow.

### Self-hosted platforms (including voting, online conversation, and callouts)

**Voting:** At The Ferret, a Scottish investigative site where Rachel Hamada has also worked, the team shortlists possible investigations and then makes them available for public comment,

which has been quite effective in deciding some of the stories to research. At Nice-Matin, every other month a selection of three possible stories for solutions journalists to pursue are available to subscribers (and non-subscribers when relevant) via an email newsletter. The voting period is open for up to two weeks and up to 600 subscribers vote. And at the [Bristol Cable](#), a member-owned cooperative in the UK that wasn't a specific focus of this report but [whose work is well worth exploring](#), members have voted on topic areas and the editorial team honed those general indicators down to specific investigations.

CORRECTIV had tried member voting. David Schraven said: "We asked members in the past to vote on stories they would like us to investigate, and put money on the beat. But we found that it was difficult to keep track of that." They now crowdfund on particular stories instead to gauge member interest while also earning funds, which they've done to the tune of 80,000 Euros so far.

**Online conversation:** At Inside Story, readers pitch story ideas through the organization's online platform, then discuss the winning ideas at an in-person workshop. They discuss why they proposed the topic and whether and how it should become a story. (Sometimes participants are asked to invite non-members they knew to the workshop, even if they didn't submit an idea through the online platform.)

El Diario has developed a tool, funded through a Google DNI grant, through which readers can point out grammatical and factual mistakes in stories. Reporters receive daily reports and are asked to respond to as many queries as they can. Readers are notified when mistakes are corrected.

Maria Ramirez, director of strategy, said that because El Diario does not have a copy editing desk, this tool can help fill the gap. It has been "satisfying because you [journalists] are getting help from readers," she said. It also helps journalists identify experts among their readers, as some provide highly detailed feedback. These readers are then identified as "super experts" in a database.

Juan Luis Sanchez, co-founder and deputy director, said comment sections have not been an ideal way for journalists to interact with readers. El Diario wanted to "imagine new ways of interacting with readers because comments are not dragging to the surface the best of the communities, are actually a lot of times dragging to the surface the worst of communities. So, how can media look for the best in their communities?"

Esther Alonso, head of marketing and development, said that although journalists needed a few weeks to adjust their routines to accommodate the reader feedback, and that there was some uncertainty around embracing readers pointing out mistakes, the process has resulted in enhanced engagement, helping audience members to feel heard.

The El Diario team is considering other approaches that go beyond text-based approaches, including polls, debates, quizzes, interactions with journalists, and gamification, which might help diversify the group of members who engage. Alonso said they are also developing new surveys to continue to engage with members about “what they like and how they feel about all these channels.”

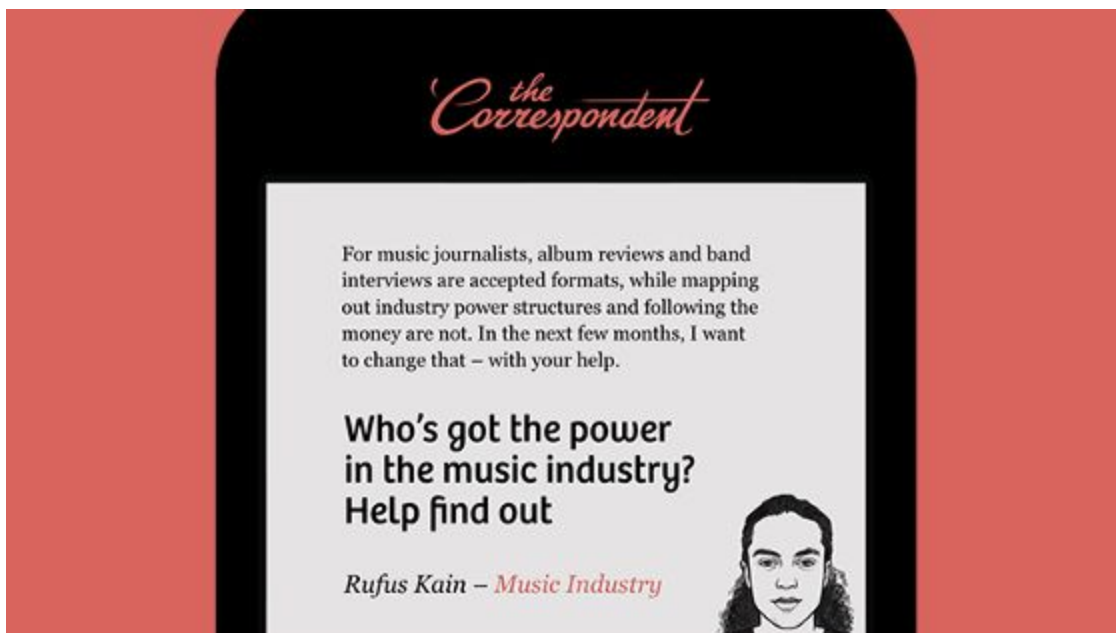
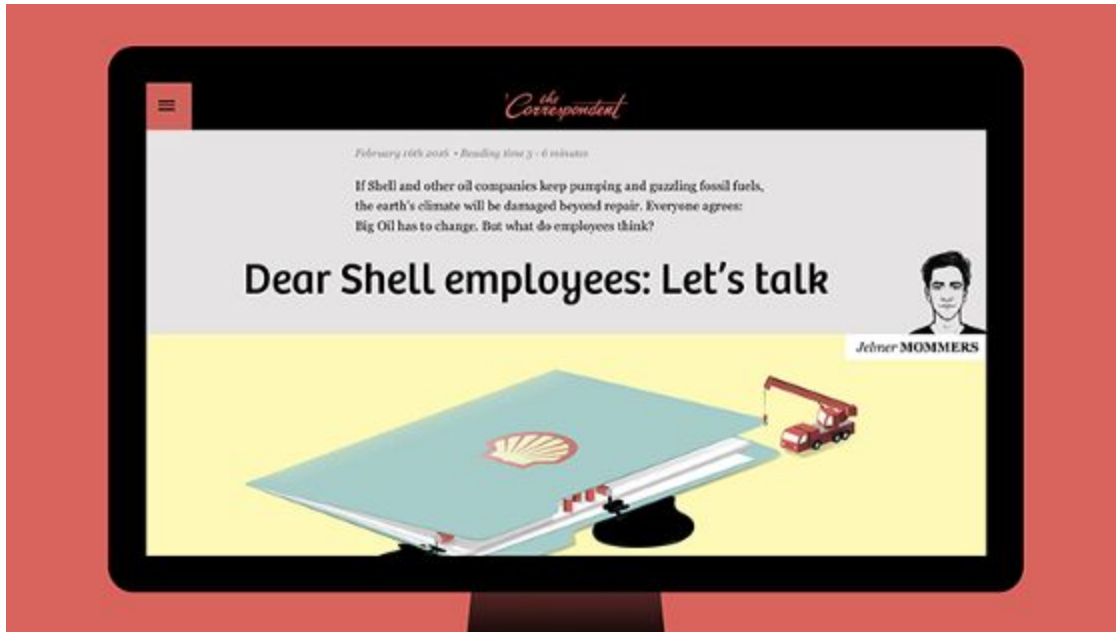
**Callouts:** As the use of callouts grow in frequency, Joy Mayer has written [thoughtful guidance on publishing callouts](#) for the Gather community of engagement journalism professionals. At ProPublica, Adriana Tobin thinks about what information people are more likely to search for online, then works backwards in thinking about the most inclusive ways to publish callouts. “How can you use internet sourcing to get better questions?” she asks.

At De Correspondent, reporter Sanne Blauw advised involving members by being very specific in what to ask them. “We need to ask them something not so general that it feels that it generates a lot of noise--unhelpful contributions. Be specific, and you might get fewer contributions, but they are all good. Think about the goal, which will depend on each topic.”

[Blauw used this rule when asking experts to provide guidance for a book she recently wrote about the fallibility of statistics](#). She published this ask of De Correspondent readers: “Are you or do you know an expert who wants to read my book?” Some followers of Blauw’s writing met her in person to provide feedback at live readings. Ultimately at least two people with relevant expertise proofread each chapter, which she said improved the final draft.

*Pro tip: Gwen Martèl from De Correspondent said that good questions from journalists at the start of a project works well for promoting fruitful conversations. This then allows her as conversation editor to curate an interesting discussion, using the member Rolodex to ask questions of a very specific set of members. Broader, fluffier call-outs are much less useful as a starting point to dialogue.*

Rob Wijnberg of De Correspondent said, “You should have specific reasons for involving people in their work. I try to frame it as asking for help. What are you trying to answer, how can people help?” Rosan Smits added, “What I find problematic is when engaging members is an afterthought – when journalists say *we must ask the members what they find important about these topics, maybe I’ll write a callout*. This is compared to the creativity of the inner drive of engaging people in their own investigation, not filling out templates that we provide them with.”



Two examples of callouts from De Correspondent. As co-founder [Ernst Pfauth explained](#), “By sharing ideas before you get started, you give readers the chance to be involved in your reporting — to help you figure out where to look, what to ask, and what to make of what you find.”

Some reporters at De Correspondent are comparison testing the results of publishing callouts as individual articles and via weekly newsletters. Smits said there is room for improvement around collecting input in structured ways. “We can send out a Google form, or ask people to leave contributions on the site, but then [staff] have to separate the noise out. The idea of membership is that you can scale your investigation with a huge network, but there is still just



one correspondent who has to go through the information it could generate.” The amount of work to review responses is not insignificant, especially for reporters and editors working alone. “Scaling can work when you can automate responses, otherwise a correspondent might not want to do a callout as the results can be time-intensive.” (Please see Workflow.)

## Shared work with data

At CORRECTIV, four staffers work with community member contributors on fact checking to boost the accuracy of its reporting. These contributing members are initially given simple responsibilities, such as fact-checking images with reverse searches, then building on those skills to check articles. Journalist Cristina Helberg said, “We at CORRECTIV can’t check everything ourselves. But with the community, and all its knowledge, it can contribute to that process.” Community members receive their own Crowd CORRECTIV email addresses and are paid between 50 and 70 Euros for every published article that they fact check.



*CORRECTIV's Cristina Helberg with the Community Fact-check Project dashboard.*

In 2017, the Bureau Local, collaborated with local journalists, non-profit organizations, and grassroots groups to record the number of homeless people who died in the UK in a project led by journalist Maeve McClenaghan. [The Dying Homeless investigation](#) included an initial count by the Bureau Local central team, who then activated the reporting network to research the number of deaths in their areas. These reports were then incorporated into a national database.

Community organizer Rachel Hamada called the project a “grassroots-driven campaign.” She said, “It was an example not of us collecting a dataset and feeding it to people, top down, but of our members gathering data, on the ground, and pulling that together,” which contributed to “democratising the process.”

The investigation not only spurred public discussion and government efforts to begin officially collecting this data, but it also “had more engagement than any Bureau Local story, ever,” Hamada said.

## Emails & email newsletters

**Email:** The benefits of email for reporting projects are in its widespread use and low technical bar to entry, especially for inbound information. But on the journalists’ side, the amount of email to sort and respond to can be overwhelming for some projects. At ProPublica, email management was difficult for one reporter who was flooded with 300 complaints from readers about TurboTax, a company they were investigating, and was ill-prepared to respond.

**Email newsletters:** Much has been written about [promoted practices](#) for developing a purposeful newsletter and growing subscriber lists. The resource [NewsletterGuide.org](#) features useful open source templates and guidance. It includes this note about the unique nature of email newsletters that explains why all of the organizations in this study publish free or paid newsletters:

For consumers, email can be a refreshing antidote to the onslaught of constant content. In a world overrun by endless algorithmic feeds, the email list and email inbox make for the only democratic platform: users retain full control of the coverage they choose to consume in finite, curated reading spaces.

One of the organizations that puts a great deal of care into non-programmatic newsletters is De Correspondent. In addition to publication-wide newsletters for general readers and members, individual designers and reporters publish their own newsletters with smaller, more targeted subscriber lists. They often feature not published work but research questions in progress and opportunities for email subscribers to lend their expertise.

## Sanne Blauw

Correspondent Ontcijferen



### Ontvang mijn wekelijkse mail

Elke week stuur ik een mailtje waarin ik je op de hoogte houd van mijn journalistieke zoektocht. Wil je mijn verhalen in je inbox ontvangen en een kijkje krijgen achter de schermen? Meld je dan aan!




*Sanne Blauw covers statistics for De Correspondent and is one of the reporters who publishes a weekly newsletter for readers interested in her beat. The focus of this newsletter is Blauw's process and journalistic search, and subscribers get "a look behind the scenes."*

We heard a great deal about topical newsletters, which may be a response to reader interest in focused dispatches rather than general news of the day. CORRECTIV, for instance, publishes 15 newsletters from its 40-person staff, and the individual newsletters vary by publishing frequency and list size (they say that most vary between 40,000 and 70,000 subscribers). El Diario has launched a feminism-focused vertical newsletter following a successful event about sexism (please see Editorial meetings & events). Marianna Bruschi worked with the central newsroom in Rome to develop multiple newsletter templates that local newsrooms can choose from to implement, with some developing daily newsletters to highlight events of the day; some focusing on theme-based offerings, such as food, weekend events, economic issues, and health care; and some creating members-only options.

## CUARTO PROPIO



The new equality, gender and feminism newsletter

-  A reflection on gender debates selecting the best of eldiario.es and other sources
-  Every Wednesday in your email
-  Figures, analysis and recommendations

### Complete your data

E-mail

I accept the [conditions of use and privacy](#)

Sign me up

*In January 2019, El Diario launched Cuarto Propio (a reference to Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own"), a free newsletter focused on gender, equality, and feminism. Edited by Ana Requena Aguilar, the newsletter addresses current debates and highlights relevant articles, books, songs, and other resources.*

## Surveys

**Surveys:** Surveys can be advantageous when organizations need information from a broad, geographically distributed group of people. They can also be useful when responses are needed about specific or niche uses, which can be a good fit for memberful reporting data-gathering. (This [survey question library for news organizations](#) is available for use and additions.)

Online surveys have been generative for these organizations:

- ProPublica uses Screendoor software to generate responses to conditional questions and filter the answers. It serves as an organizational system, messaging system, and input system simultaneously.
- Nice-Matin received 800 responses to its survey that asked readers, among other things, if they would ride-share and, if not, why (including security and schedule flexibility concerns). The aim was to learn why it hasn't taken off in the same ways as other regions in France and what would be required for community members to change their habits. They then received 1,500 responses to three surveys about cyclists' experiences: data and suggestions that journalists could use to press local authorities. The resulting



pieces had a built-in audience for social sharing amongst the local cycling community. The project passed a high bar for reporter Sophie Casals in being “good, co-constructed with our readers...and useful to the community.”

**nice-matin** RETOUR | Environnement - Nice Métropole (1/3) Participez à notre grand son... f t

## Nice Métropole (1/3). Participez à notre grand sondage sur le vélo dans les Alpes-Maritimes

#COTE-D-AZUR #ENVIRONNEMENT PAR LA RÉDACTION Mis à jour le 23/08/2018 à 16:36 Publié le 23/08/2018 à 17:30

A peine 2% des Azuréens circulent à bicyclette tous les jours ou presque pour se déplacer, aller travailler... Et pourtant, plus d'1 déplacement sur 4 est inférieur à 3 km. Pour notre dossier d'enquête du mois, "Comment lutter contre les embouteillages et réduire la pollution?", on a cherché à comprendre pourquoi la bicyclette est à la traîne sur la Côte d'Azur. On compte sur vous pour répondre à ce sondage.

9.10.11 AOUT 2019

DJ SNAKE - ORELSAN - SOLOMON  
 MARCELO PLEX - TOSAMI & MALAA  
 ANASTASIE - GARDOPHIC - CLAPTON - JUL ZHES  
 ANNA ANNE GILES - HODSON - MESTRE - MIE GEE  
 DRUMMOND/ANASTASIE - TOSAMI - TOSAMI - TOSAMI  
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VOUS AVEZ LU 10% DE CETTE ARCHIVE.  
 POUR LIRE LA SUITE, VEUILLEZ CHOISIR UNE OPTION

À lire aussi sur Nice-matin  
 Jérôme Rivérin avec a

*Several local authorities called and requested the data that resulted from Nice-Matin's surveys into non-vehicle modes of transportation.*

- With 100 new members each month, CORRECTIV used SurveyMonkey to get to know them and existing members better (information which was added to a member database). The survey served another purpose: to know how to be better structured to serve members and make use of their knowledge.
- Maldita has used surveys and training modules to vet contributors, according to the European Journalism Centre's [“Stronger journalism through shared power” report](#). They serve as a useful screener for interest and fit. According to Fiona Morgan, “Filters can reduce the likelihood that people will be able to be disruptive [to an organization’s process]. Filters can include registration forms, minimum commitments of time, or training.”
- The Bureau Local with TBIJ used Google Forms to research availability of government resources for victims of domestic violence. Journalist Maeve McClanaghan said:

We got our local reporters involved and said, ‘Look, we don’t know exactly what the story is yet, the FOI’s are still coming in, we’re still doing the research, but it seems like this is happening. Can you use this survey as a template to go out and ask people in your area, just these simple questions, so “has your funding been cut? Has that led to X, Y, Z [effects]?’...Can you check those things off?”

The more than 40 responses they received showed that more than 1,000 women and children had been turned away in the last six months because of those cuts and cuts to resources. “What was really gratifying was then these really beautiful, deep nuanced reports came out across the country,” McClanaghan said. The Bureau Local provided national context to which local reporters added real value.

## Social media

Ten of 10 of respondents to our survey said their organizations use outbound email and social outreach in research and reporting phases. Four of 10 use live events to reach audience members in these phases. (In trying to reach the wider community or people less familiar with their organization’s work, all use social media and four of ten host live events. Three of 10 use each advertising and ambassadors, too.)

Practices vary by platform. Facebook tools we saw used for memberful reporting were mostly Messenger (which ProPublica has used to publish unstructured callouts for topics like the US immigration travel ban) and Groups (Nice-Matin has a [group for subscriber conversations](#) and voting on solutions story possibilities).



*The Nice-Matin Solutions team’s Facebook group for subscribers is a place for readers to leave feedback about past investigations (including to share other solutions not addressed in the stories) and vote on prospective future topics. It has led to follow-up reporting.*

After the 2015 Germanwings plane crash, Krautreporter's team looked at its member contact list and found that it had 50 members from the aeroflight industry. They invited them to join a closed Facebook group to ask them specific questions about how flight security worked and other issues that had led to initial false reporting. These members explained how the doors worked, making it clear that the first ways that journalists were reporting the story couldn't be true. Krautreporter brought the group together and provided a room for conversation. Members pointed them to specialised forums that they wouldn't have found on their own. As Sebastian Esser said, "This happened because we had their email addresses and they had an existing connection to us so we didn't have to build trust." It's hard to find a better example of how memberful reporting leads to good journalism.

Social communication can be as time-consuming as answering individual emails, if not more. Laura Del Rio, coordinator of [Maldita Bulo](#) for Maldita, said she aims to answer the 200 to 250 daily messages that come in from readers on Twitter and WhatsApp (where they send messages to distribution lists proactively). These have the tone of personal conversations and represent two-way dialogue: community members provide information from their feeds and private groups that reporters wouldn't have access to on their own. Maldita also engages with readers on other platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Tiktok.

Other social platforms that these organizations have used include:

- **Reddit:** In some instances, Subreddit moderators have helped ProPublica spread their work, including callouts. In others, ProPublica staff have been turned down or even banned. "It's quite specific what works for some channels over others," Ariana Tobin said. (ProPublica has also used browser extensions, for example to [collect different Facebook ads](#) that its readers see based on their political preferences, but they were the only organization in this sample to do so.)
- **Telegram:** El Diario hosts a Telegram group with three daily stories and uses an informal writing style. With 25,000 subscribers, it call its reach limited but targeted, including usage by political leaders. Maldita uses a bot to respond to community members immediately through Telegram.

## Trainings & other education

Alec Saelens has written for this project about [organizations that offer open or closed journalism education opportunities](#). For this study we found that in doing such work, organizations including CORRECTIV stress knowledge exchange rather broadcasting: these are opportunities for learning, not simply generating attention for their work. Their Reporterfabrik web academy features over 50 online courses from 105 journalists. Courses range from free to 25 Euro each, and CORRECTIV has generated more than 7,000 subscriptions to date. CORRECTIV also

works with educational establishments like libraries and community colleges to train citizens in media literacy.



*[Reporterfabrik](#) is a self-described “web-based educational platform for journalism and media literacy” with tutorials and workshop materials.*

Programs for children are increasing in frequency. Correctiv runs a reporter4you program for students, for which more than 300 journalists have visited schools across Germany to talk about the reasons why democracy needs journalism. Nice-Matin has hosted workshops for children to write solutions articles, and they do so partially because these are future readers and participants.

## Editorial meetings & events

**In-person editorial meetings:** Even if they seem like a daily chore for journalists, the invitation to join newsroom editorial meetings can be appealing for people who are taking part in them for the first time. Inside Story uses member participation in such meetings as a “second filter for journalistic standards,” according to Dimitris Xenakis: after they’ve worked on their story ideas with journalists, contributing members come to the meetings to discuss their forthcoming co-reported stories with the team. It illustrates to them how much work is involved in story reporting, and it also encourages journalists to pursue stories they might not have considered before.

At El Diario, members are regular figures in editorial meetings, whether they are participating in person or not. In regularly talking to staff, members have made their values known to the point that their presence is felt even if they aren't in the room. Their involvement and requests have inspired staff to invest resources in covering topics they might not have covered otherwise, such as migration, feminism, and environmental concerns.

At GEDI Group, readers are invited in for several reasons: to meet staff, take part in follow-up events from crowdsourced reporting projects, tour the newsroom, and observe the decision-making process for story coverage. Two local newspapers now offer a monthly coffee with the chief editor.

**Other participatory live events:** In taking advantage of their jealousy-inducing location, local GEDI newspapers have offered reservation-required educational visits for up to 20 readers to a small island in Tuscany and a palace not usually accessible to visitors. In a more civically-oriented move, they've also offered readers visits with chiefs of police.

At El Diario, head of marketing and development Esther Alonso said they try to take risks with launching new events strategies. They host plentiful events and debates, all of which are free to members. A recent topical event on sexism ("micromachismo") featured a popular feminist poet and drew new members from the young women participants. Most events are currently held in Madrid, but like many publications we studied, they are trying to broaden to different cities and venues.

Beyond regular publication birthday parties, we heard about less conventional reasons for gathering. Nice-Matin hosts an annual "trophy of solutions" awards for people featured in coverage as well as regular working sessions in which reporters solicited audience questions via email for ongoing investigations (and conducted better interviews as a result, according to reporter Sophie Casals). At Inside Story, members at a co-creation workshop talk with other readers interested in their co-reported story topics.

CORRECTIV's annual Campfire Festival brings together citizens, journalists, and other expert groups such as scientists. In Essen, the organization's newsroom, bookstore, and cafe includes a built-in events space. They host events in the space every week until 10 PM. It's a great deal of work, said David Schraven, but "the gains are immense. You learn a lot about business, and you can do A/B testing on things like headlines." Talking with readers and generating story ideas has been a major gain.

At Direkt36, events often precede investigation publication. András Pethő explained, "We hold workshops, invite them into the office, and share some of the techniques we use. It's mostly through the live events that there's a real opportunity to establish closer relationships and get to know each other."



In Hungary, the space for journalism that is holding the powerful accountable is shrinking rapidly. But we at Direkt36 are focusing all of our resources on this mission. We launched the organization in early 2015 to strengthen Hungary's democracy through fair but tough investigative reporting.

This kind of journalism requires full financial and editorial independence. Therefore, Direkt36 is mainly maintained by contributions of our readers (for more details [click here](#)).

The more supporters we have, the stronger our journalism will be. If you support us, you will become a member of the Direkt36 community, and you will get insight into our work through exclusive newsletters, e-books and events.

<p><b>Insider</b></p> <p>from 100€</p> <p>or monthly 8€</p> <p>If you need help to research companies or public records (especially if they are Hungary-related), we'll share our tips with you. You will also be welcome at our events and will get our e-books and newsletters.</p>	<p><b>Partner</b></p> <p>50€</p> <p>or monthly 4€</p> <p>You will be welcome at our events (or in our office if you ever visit Budapest) and will also receive our e-books and newsletters with the backstories of our investigations.</p>
<p><b>Friend</b></p> <p>20€</p> <p>You will get our e-books, in which our reporters tell how they conducted their investigations. You will also receive our exclusive newsletters with our latest stories.</p>	<p><b>Supporter</b></p> <p>10€</p> <p>You will be the first one to learn about our latest stories from our exclusive newsletters.</p>

Direkt36 has [designed four different levels of engagement](#), including with benefits like events and office visits.

Clydesider Creative hosts regular free, day-long Creative Cafés with subsidized meals and workshops that align to the upcoming issue, such as health and wellness. Director and editor Amanda Eleftheriades-Sherry designated “active listeners” to participate in each workshop to capture details about community members' thoughts, ideas, and concerns. It didn't work as expected, in part because written instructions and a brief chat with volunteer listeners didn't provide enough grounding. “On reflection we should have provided a training session with opportunity for Q&A,” said Eleftheriades-Sherry.

For subsequent events, they've also built in more time for discussion about how community members felt after taking part in the workshops. Making this a purposeful part of the time together (not accidental or picked up by the listeners in the room at random) has served the organization well, including for “Walkin' Talkin'” events: a series of participatory photography workshops followed by a community exhibition, conversation, and reporting. These represent

Clydesider's training-style projects which increase volunteers and staffers' skills and result in new editorial coverage.



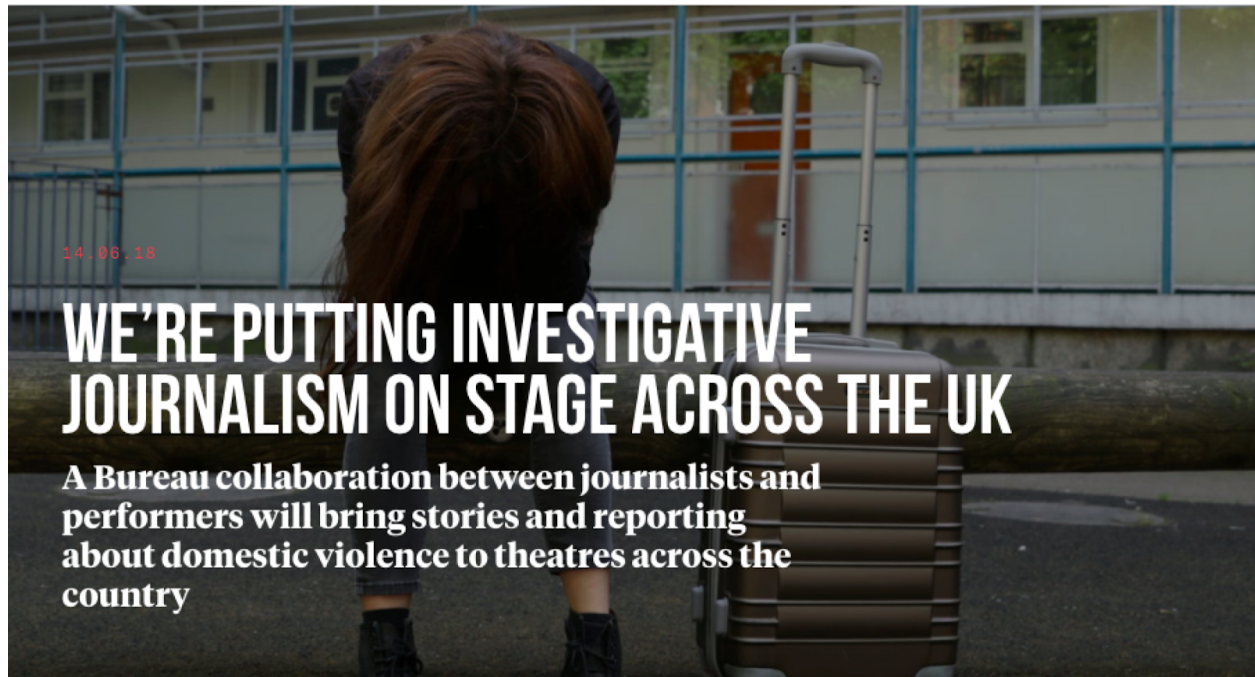
*Charlie Eleftheriades-Sherry shows participants in a photo workshop at a Clydesider Creative [Creative Café](#) their images. The events include a pop up newsroom. Photo by Robert Wilson.*

**Events can serve a different, more utilitarian purpose than more involved forms of participation.** Pethó said: “Our events and workshops are for more people, and we also communicate with the members a lot, they have the opportunity to give us feedback, not only during live events. We want to make sure that they have a chance to tell us about our work and those relationships are evolving all the time.”

The Bureau Local successfully took a single event on tour as part of its [Refuge Woman production, in which a domestic violence survivor, Cash Carraway, shared her story in the form of a stage show called Refuge Woman](#). Reporter Maeve McClanaghal led the nationwide tour, which included question-and-answer sessions with social workers, local reporters, and domestic violence survivors on stage after the performances.

The Bureau Local director Megan Lucero said that “the first half of the show was this powerful semi-autobiographical performance where you can experience one person's perspective - similar to a case study in classic journalism. After the show, [there] were talk backs with local experts...which is what you might traditionally think of as a journalism analysis piece--but where you're experiencing it live. You are being informed about your community, but in a completely different way.”

Hosting the events in partnership with local charity groups created bigger and longer-lasting change than traditional reporting might have. As McClanaghan said, “what most papers tend to do is work very hard on a project, put it in the paper and then forget about it.” After local reporters called on their members of Parliament, 15 called for policy changes to a worsening national problem.

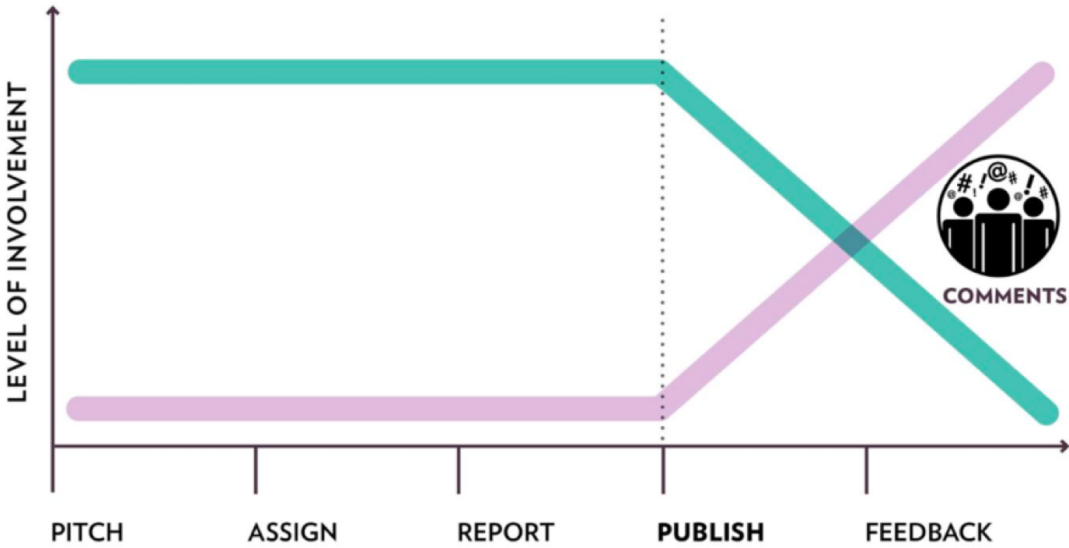


*The Bureau Local planned a theatre tour to get the Refuge Woman story to communities around the country.*

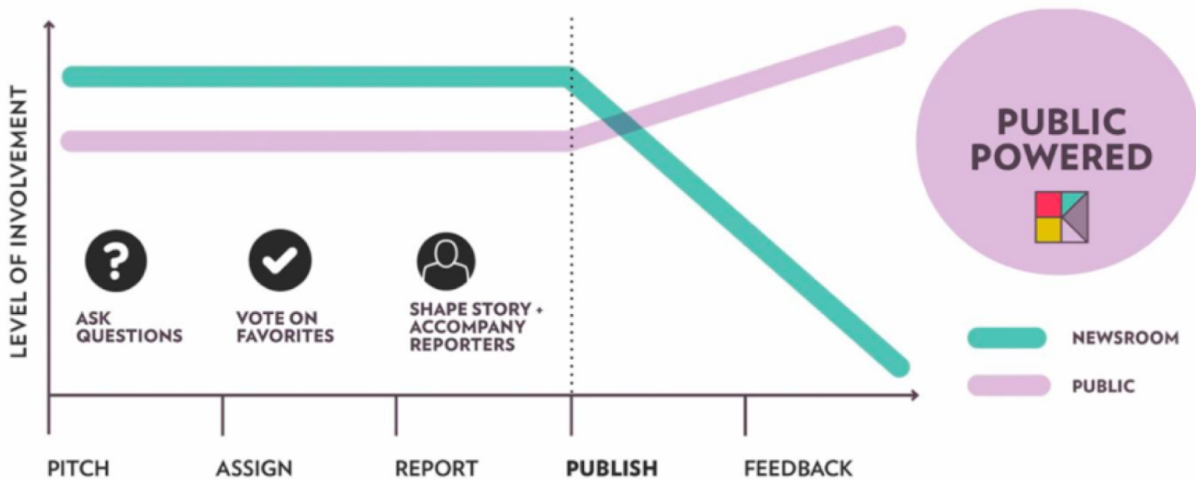
### **Workflow:** When & how to involve community members in the work

Jennifer Brandel, founder of Chicago-based engagement and listening tools company Hearken, visualizes the current problem that many organizations face in involving members of the public (the purple line) too late and relying exclusively on staff and freelancers (the green line) early on, but not regularly in post-launch feedback:





Brandel, her team, and the news sites and stations they serve advocate a “public-powered journalism” approach that involves higher levels of public and staff collaboration from project inception. Users are encouraged by sites that use Hearken tools to post questions and vote on topics they want to see investigated, and they’re sometimes brought along with reporters in pursuit of answers. Unsurprisingly to us, these people are subsequently more likely to become loyal and paying supporters.



The experience can be a bit uneven in practice, sometimes because of differences in external supply and internal demand for memberful routines. At TBIJ Rachel Hamada describes the practice of “a three part process, which is: get the story, develop the story, get the story out. I think where the Bureau Local, so far, has been absolutely amazing is the middle stage, develop the story. That collaborative working is super well developed. People really understand how it works. They’re used to it. That collaborative journalism is absolutely brilliant.” The place where

most help is needed now is the first and third stages, she said, where trying to democratize processes and distributing work still requires new approaches.

At Nice-Matin, Aurore Malval described a process that includes: identifying the local problem; searching for the solution, whether in Nice or elsewhere; describing the route to the solution; and digging deeper to find other solutions. She said that one thing that has worked well is an emphasis on transparency about the reporting. The team produces a “making of” article at the end of a solutions investigation to show readers how they work, including how sources were chosen and how the investigation operated.

At CORRECTIV, CEO Simon Kretschmer talked about the three regular phases of work (a creative phase, production, and a follow-up phase) and the four disciplines that are involved in each (editorial, design, community, and tech). “In the past, a lot of stories were generated from the editorial team, but if you involve communities earlier in some stories, you can create something far bigger than what you have envisaged,” Kretschmer said.

We asked respondents to our survey to reflect on memberful routines during four phases. (Note that we have phrased them slightly differently from how Hearken describes interaction points above.)

<b>Planning stages</b> (e.g. audience listening)	<b>Research &amp; reporting</b> (co-reporting, offering reporting tips or source assistance)	<b>Editing &amp; fact-checking</b> (proofreading a draft)	<b>Post-publication</b> (helping distribute a work of journalism to the people who really need it)
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During planning and research, all respondents said their organizations involve audience members as sources for interviews or story ideas. Half involve them in events as assistants, presenters, or programmers. Less frequent but notable are those organizations that solicit help from individuals as reader panelists or product testers (four of 10) or subject matter advisors who offer legal assistance and other guidance (three of 10).

Useful guidance we learned for the planning phase came from ProPublica’s engagement team, and their “engagement project pre-reporting pitch memo” in particular. It asks reporters to consider the problem and cause of the issue being covered; who the people are they want to have respond; what they hope people will tell them; how people will respond; how they will track progress; and more. Although intended for internal planning purposes, its guidance can be useful for publishing callouts and other outreach: “Topic-wise, be ambitious and specific.”

## Pitch Guidelines

This part of the process requires some pre-reporting to help you to figure out not only what you're pitching, but how feasible it is.

- **Issue:** What problem is at the heart of this project? Who is possibly being harmed, and how? Who is probably responsible, and is that possible to prove? What is the team working on this project planning?
- **Scope:**
  - **Time/Resources:** What is the minimum we could do to gather an effective group of people and what time/resources will it take to accomplish? On the flip side, what is the maximum, dream version of this project? Is it worth it?
  - What is the investigative vein/purpose of the reporting? Will engagement feed it or is the pitch just an interesting aspect of the story?
- **Community:**
  - **Community:** Who are the people you want to respond? Why are they the best community to involve? What does the community stand to gain from this? What are the concrete reasons someone would participate? What are the reasons someone *wouldn't* participate?
- **Evidence:**
  - What, specifically, do you want people to tell you through engagement? Is it to crowdsource data, a collection of anecdotes, gather evidentiary materials, etc? How do you envision publishing what you collect, and why?
- **Practical questions:**
  - What's the easiest way for a participant to give you the concrete pieces of information you need?
  - How will you user-test?
  - How will you keep track of progress, such as reaching a goal for the # of callout respondents or collecting X# of materials or etc? Is there any way to do this publicly?
  - How will you report back to the people who participated? What's your vague sense of distribution strategy?
  - What do you need and who do you need from ProPublica to get this done?

A few things about the pitch:

- **Topic-wise**, be ambitious and specific.
- **Collaborating:** Feel free to pitch something yourself, work together with someone else on the team, or, if you've always wanted to look into a new angle of something ProPublica has already done, that works too. Who would you be working with? Why?

ProPublica's [engagement project pre-reporting pitch memo](#), courtesy of Ariana Tobin.

In the research and reporting phase, the organizations we studied frequently engage readers' knowledge by publishing callouts, reviewing tips, asking about experiences/preferences, and hosting online open newsroom events. In editing and fact-checking phases, half of respondents'

organizations involve them in fact-checking/verification; four of 10 each in identifying sources/interviewees and research; and two of 10 in suggesting calls to action.

Post-publication or broadcast, survey respondents involve audience members in a range of ways: in conversations via comments on site (nine of 10), through callouts for additional reporting (seven of 10), in story promotion and distribution (six of 10), and through policy work (e.g., speaking to government, other advocacy (six of 10)). Fewer (two of 10) involve members in helping to report on story impact and through training (e.g., storytelling, research, and verification).

In calling on readers who share their personal lived experiences and professional expertise, it's critical to acknowledge their contributions. As organizations now regularly ask for targeted help, it's vital to authentically express gratitude and tying their involvement to the coverage they contribute to. ProPublica did this well in their 2017 [maternal mortality reporting](#).

The screenshot shows the ProPublica website header with navigation links like 'TOPICS', 'SERIES', 'NEWS APPS', 'GET INVOLVED', 'IMPACT', and 'ABOUT'. The article title is 'What We've Learned So Far About Maternal Mortality From You, Our Readers' by Adriana Gallardo, dated May 18, 2017. The article features a large image of a woman and a man, and a smaller image of a woman on a beach. A 'SQUARESPACE' logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the article preview.

*ProPublica demonstrates acknowledgement of readers' contributions.*

The Bureau Local is similarly skilled at knowing how and when to wrap up an investigation in ways that respect those who were involved. This was particularly noteworthy with their homelessness reporting project. Still there are questions about best practices. Rob Wijnberg said that the team at De Correspondent has considered how they publish credit and to whom:

“for instance, at least 25 people contribute on most of our stories but only one [the correspondent] gets the credit.” Inside Story also faces this question, and is considering whether collaborators from the community should be identified as co-authors.

**Memberful routines can be operationalized at large-scale and distributed organizations, too.** Marianna Bruschi, head of the central newsroom for 13 local newspapers for the GEDI Group and of the Visual Lab digital division, and her team develop digital tools for organization-wide use. They offer a menu of events, newsletter template, and social-media-engagement possibilities; and provide strategic guidance. They encourage local newspapers to choose the approach that works for their communities, staff, and other resource availability. Most newspapers don’t have the ability to offer weekly events, for example, but they can organize occasional events. This experiment began with one local title (the *Messaggero Veneto*) and, as of February 2019, has expanded to all the titles in the GEDI Group.

The Visual Lab’s digital division and the central newsroom for local titles also develops data-driven editorial projects that encourage reader participation. These have included a look at the “broadband gap,” for which readers conducted speed tests and shared the results with journalists, and an investigation into wait times for routine health examinations, which involved distributing a survey asking readers to share their stories. The Visual Lab then helped compile the data and created visualizations newspapers could use. The entire central team also assisted with planning public events where the institutions involved could respond to readers’ concerns and potentially “make efforts to solve the problem,” Bruschi said. These efforts, she said, are not just crowdsourcing but campaigning for change, allowing newspapers to work on behalf of readers to address their concerns and make their voices heard—what she sees as a key benefit of a membership model.

**Some beats and some projects are more appropriate than others.** David Schraven said that CORRECTIV made the incorrect assumption that audience members were relatively interchangeable, only to later realize that topics attracted individuals and engagement volume differently. This was especially clear with Crowdnewsroom, a program to launch investigations that draw on the skills and interests of CORRECTIV members. “We started with a topic that was quite far away from most people’s experience, banks. We learned that fewer people can get involved in something like that, but that they had a higher motivation and invested a lot in the work.” A community fact-checking initiative led to a similar insight: “It’s a pyramid of involvement, and at the top you have very highly motivated, intelligent people. But whether or not people get involved is up to them...The reporter has to be interested in involvement too. Some reporters do it naturally, I’d say that applies to about half of our team, and the other half less, but they have to do it anyway.”



**Circumstances that we heard can be an especially good fit for memberful reporting routines include:**

- Areas where there is a tradition of people organizing, i.e., labor-related topics;
- Topics that incite strong emotions and in which some people have long felt ignored;
- Areas prone to disinformation, including immigration, feminism, and science;
- Topics that are not covered often or well by mainstream media;
- Accountability reporting, especially that which addresses long-standing open questions about the roots of civic problems; and
- Solutions-oriented storytelling that offer alternate approaches with promise.

## Staffing

These practitioners know that it can be unrealistic to involve readers in the entire process from listening and story idea to distribution. Still, they look for key areas for audience collaboration with staff and freelancers. Some of their guidance includes:

- **Learn when to say no to new or underperforming projects.** With 50 staff members, El Diario needs to focus on prioritizing and stay on their strategic path. “No” and “not now” are important responses to enticing but resource-intensive opportunities. At ProPublica, not every project gets the “full engaged reporting treatment,” according to Ariana Tobin, and the level of complexity and assistance can sometimes reflect how invested the other journalists seem in the process.
- **Focus on listening**, said Bea Lara, community coordinator for Maldita, and be prepared to change the culture of the newsroom to emphasize this (if you have or can create the power to do so). Everyone should be expected to hear community members and have discussions with them, including answering their questions. (Know that it’s normal to receive criticism and it can improve your work; be critical with yourself, too, Lara advised.)

Sometimes listening can turn to co-production. With only eight full-time journalists (but with a group of more than 50 freelancers), Inside Story’s members often propose general or overly vague story ideas. (Sometimes these ideas are difficult to achieve in practice; one suggested measuring the amount of pollution in communities in Greece.) They work with a partner journalist they’re assigned to to “find the path to telling the story,” said Thodoris Chondrogiannos. They develop a list of sources during one-on-one

meetings, much like two professional journalists working on a story together. “Readers are not so distant from what we do,” even if the professionals have more experience with the process. This routine allows journalists to get to know readers, and it allows readers to make a more substantial contribution to the reporting process. Chondrogiannos said that this provides an invitation to go into neighborhoods they don’t usually go to and tell stories as readers with readers’ suggestions. Community members will take part in interviews and the pairs will review documents, write together, and jointly shape the narrative. The overall process helps readers and journalists better understand each other “which is important because in Greece, journalists tend to be thought of as aliens, outside of the normal [people].” Several times we heard that interacting with members in these ways helps combat media mistrust.

- **Make it an interdisciplinary effort.** Distributing memberful routines across departments is vital, both culturally and logistically. At Maldita, the leadership team looks to get everyone bought in on community, which involves practical responsibilities: engaging with the public and making broadcast appearances is a team effort, and all staff are required to be involved with taking their work to the public.

Even with a point person identified, such efforts must be integrated across the organization, said Marianna Bruschi of GEDI Group. Some of the smaller newspapers in their portfolio select one representative staff member who makes requests of journalists, marketers, and technologists, both within their single publication and at the broader company level.

At Nice-Matin, it’s important to spread memberful routines beyond the central Nice newsroom to local editions, a challenge we heard at all of the organizations that have more than one publication. Sophie Casals said some staff may be reticent to involve readers in the reporting because of concerns about compromising objectivity and neutrality. Yet, “we are not just a one-way channel,” Casals said. “People will buy the story, will buy the subscription, will buy the newspaper if the content is interesting. But to know what will be interesting for them, you need to listen to them.” She saw this in her reporting on traffic and pollution, which led to [solutions reporting on cycling and ride-sharing](#). The coverage was aligned for audience involvement: “The experts are everybody because we all move from one point to the other.”

# #SOLUTIONS

IDENTIFIER LES PROBLÉMATIQUES C'EST BIEN... LES RÉSOUDRE C'EST MIEUX



## RENDRE NOS VILLES PLUS HUMAINES

### 5 PROPOSITIONS POUR RENDRE NOS VILLES PLUS HUMAINES ET PLUS AGRÉABLES

En finir avec les centres commerciaux, améliorer les transports en commun, redynamiser les centres-villes, créer des lieux de vie tout en impliquant davantage les habitants... On a demandé à Olivier Razemon, journaliste et écrivain, auteur de *Centrer la France*, à Franck Michel, professeur associé à l'Institut d'urbanisme de l'université d'Aix-Marseille, et Christophe Baraton, délégué général au Club des maières de centre-ville, de nous livrer quelques pistes pour rendre nos villes plus agréables...

#### C'EST QUOI LE PROBLÈME ?

« Depuis une cinquantaine d'années, et plus particulièrement depuis qu'on a pu jouer des cartes, on peut dire que le même constat dans les villes de taille moyenne : les commerces ferment, les logements se vendent, et les équipements sont installés en périphérie, à 2, 3 ou 5 km. L'emploi, les commerces et les activités quittent le centre-ville. »  
« À peu près partout où j'habite, Olivier Razemon observe le même phénomène. Il en a fait un livre, *Centrer la France* et fait ses villes (éditions Rue de l'Épingle), dans lequel il évoque les vitrines vides, les réseaux balisés et autres signes défilés des centres-villes. Le journaliste invite donc à regarder du côté de la grande distribution pour expliquer les causes de cette dévitalisation urbaine qui touche la France entière. »

« On continue à construire des zones commerciales en périphérie dans des proportions qui s'ont nettes à l'égard de la demande. »

« Pour lui, c'est une aberration ». Cette tendance persiste, selon lui, à la « persécution générale des centres-villes. On continue à construire des zones commerciales en périphérie dans des proportions qui s'ont nettes à l'égard de la demande. Professeur associé à l'Institut d'urbanisme de l'université d'Aix-Marseille, Franck Michel, Christophe Baraton se constate. Lui aussi lit que cette « dispersion de l'attractivité commerciale, dont « les élus sont en partie responsables. »  
« Aujourd'hui, constate-t-il, tout le monde vit dans l'urgence, dans le tout vitesse, sans prendre le temps de s'arrêter. »  
« Pour rendre les villes plus agréables, pas besoin forcément d'une grande révolution. On apprend à s'habituer à de simples décisions qui visent avant tout à se réapproprier l'espace public, à voir que les habitants s'y sentent bien, et peuvent plaisir à s'y promener. »



#### >1

##### ARRÊTER D'ÉTALER LES VILLES ET DE CONSTRUIRE DES CENTRES COMMERCIAUX

Michel Chappero propose par exemple de mettre en place des « dispositifs de limitation commerciale en périphérie des villes. Et pourquoi pas faire un moratoire sur l'implantation des centres commerciaux ? »  
Or, pour cela, il faut un certain « courage politique ». « Même les grands groupes de distribution comme Carrefour ou Casino ont compris qu'il y avait un marché de proximité en matière d'installer dans les centres. La profusion d'urbanisme fait partie de celles et ceux qui les deux experts se rejoignent sur un autre point. « Car on ne pas se laisser exploiter par la part Christophe Baraton, les centres commerciaux commerceront le centre-ville. Mais, plutôt que de les combattre, il faut s'occuper, et pourquoi pas travailler avec eux. »

#### >2

##### PLUS DE TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN ET PLUS DE PISTES CYCLABLES

C'est la base de tout. Michel Chappero reconnaît que « certaines villes font des efforts, en créant des parkings relais et des dispositifs d'accès simplifiés. Là encore, même les supermarchés sont mieux organisés car ils sont tous jours très accessibles. »  
Pour Olivier Razemon, la « vraie solution se trouve juste au-dessus de la tête des transports en commun. Lui regrette leur « faible attractivité, malgré avec eux même « plus d'offre de bus et de métros », les gens s'habitent sans doute leurs (mauvaises) habitudes. » C'est aussi le cas pour le vélo. Avec plus de pistes cyclables, ça rendrait les villes plus agréables. « Le journaliste invite donc à « choyer tous les citoyens qui se déplacent en bus ou en transport en commun. Car, par défaut, si on est en voiture, on fait ce qu'on veut, on peut s'en aller. Alors qu'en bus, on se rend un peu plus longtemps en ville. »



#### >3

##### CRÉER DES ESPACES DE VIE ET AÉRER LA VILLE

La question des espaces publics est essentielle pour Michel Chappero. « Il faut créer plus de lieux de vie où l'on se sent bien. » Telle est selon lui, la meilleure des recettes pour combattre cette « urgence dont on a du mal à sortir ». Pour prendre l'exemple de Toulouse, Olivier Razemon rappelle « qu'il y a des quartiers de la ville où il n'y a presque pas de trottoirs, car on a juste mis des arbres et des voitures. À pied, dès qu'on a un sac de courses ou une poussette, on se retrouve dans une situation compliquée. »  
« Quand on a une belle place, avec de jolies rues, ça a beaucoup plus de sens. Il faut pouvoir s'y promener, s'y arrêter. »

De par « l'urbanisme la ville ». Il faudrait s'occuper des quartiers à proximité du centre. « Quand on a une belle place avec de jolies rues, ça a beaucoup plus de sens. Il faut pouvoir s'y promener, s'y arrêter. Pas forcément tout piétonner, mais juste élargir les trottoirs, signaler des travaux de maintenance intelligents. » Bref, faire preuve d'un minimum de « bon sens ». Michel Chappero milite, par exemple, pour l'installation de bancs publics qui ont tendance à disparaître. Il insiste sur la dimension sociale de l'espace. « Ça n'a rien de rien comme ça, mais c'est vraiment essentiel. Les bancs permettent aux habitants de se réapproprier la ville. »

#### >4

##### CONSULTER ET IMPLIQUER D'AVANTAGE LES CITOYENS

Créer des commerces, améliorer les transports, d'accord... Mais comme « c'est de dire Olivier Razemon, une ville, ce n'est pas que des habitants, c'est avant tout des habitants, ce sont eux qui font la ville. Et on ne réussit donc pas à la changer quand on se passe des citoyens. Le journaliste pense donc, qu'il faut « davantage les consulter, et les impliquer. » Pour lui, en matière de transports, par exemple, représenter un « véritable atout, puisqu'ils ont du temps et un peu d'argent. »  
« C'est pas très facile, de retrouver le plaisir d'être en ville et de l'échanger. Tout doit partir de là. »

Mais les personnes âgées ont sans doute plus que qu'on ne se rend compte. Elles ont effectivement tendance à se déplacer à pied. Or, l'après Olivier Razemon, « les gens qui marchent dans la ville, c'est un véritable trésor. Ça met de l'animation, il y a plus de monde, les gens se croisent, se divertissent, se retrouvent. » Michel Chappero appelle ça « l'esprit d'être ensemble. » C'est pas très simple de retrouver le plaisir d'être en ville et de l'échanger. Tout doit partir de là. »

#### >5

##### NE PAS AVOIR PEUR D'INNOVER ET PRENDRE DES RISQUES

La maire de Paris a beau « se faire détester pour son projet de présidentialité » de la capitale, Michel Chappero n'en reste pas moins persuadé que c'est grâce à ce genre d'initiative que l'on rendra les villes plus agréables. Et de prendre en exemple Aix-en-Provence qui a pris « une ligne publique » en décidant de supprimer le centre-ville. « Au début, contre le projet de l'urbanisme, ils se sont fait connaître, mais deux ans après, les commerçants sont montés au créneau parce qu'ils souhaitent voir en dire. »  
Olivier Razemon parle quant à lui d'une « attention de tous les instants. Parfois, il faut aussi accepter de revoir les propositions, prendre des risques, essayer quelque chose d'expérimental les deux semaines par exemple. » C'est un peu ce qu'il est passé à Nantes, qui a décidé de piétonniser certaines rues il y a dix ans. « Comme d'habitude, les commerçants avaient des réticences au début mais six mois plus tard, tout le monde était ravi et avait même souhaité comment c'était avant... »

A cover and print layout featuring Casals' coverage.



- **Determine the person responsible & their advisors.** At ProPublica, some reporters run their own memberful routines. Reporter [Marshall Allen](#) runs health-related callouts himself and hosts a Facebook group where he engages with relevant readers. He's well acquainted with their concerns after years of reporting on the beat. For projects like Allen's, the publication-wide engagement team may help with planning but isn't involved in day-to-day management.

Similarly, at TBIJ Megan Lucero said that journalists are responsible for engaging with relevant community members, answering their questions, writing reporting recipes ([such as this one on immigration checks](#)), and standardizing data for collaborative use and review. Staff look at the community more strategically, identifying who isn't included in the community, where diverse voices are most needed (including geographic diversity), and opportunities for collaboration well before stories begin and throughout the process.

At Krautreporter, no one individual has been responsible for memberful routines and they have recently appointed someone "whose job it is to be the voice of members in the organization." Sebastian Esser said: "It's extra work, but we've learned it's important to build it into the journalistic process, asking questions such as *did you include member sources? Did you talk to members enough? If not, why not?*...It doesn't become part of the culture overnight, you have to keep revisiting it." The small group of senior managers is committed to the routines, and they've found success in scheduling them throughout their routine editing workflow from story planning to post-publication.

Managing these routines requires significant team management skills. At De Correspondent, editor in chief Rosan Smits has created teams of correspondents covering different subject areas who help guide one another's work. Peer leadership is key: each group has a facilitator from the reporting team and meets weekly. Correspondents help guide, not manage, their fellow correspondents' projects and provide examples of memberful routines they've attempted. This team approach, as well as the increasing amount of internal evidence that these routines can work with diligence, has increased experimentation beyond traditional reporting.

Even at an organization as member-oriented as De Correspondent, Smits said that approximately three out of 20 correspondents weren't keen on memberful ways of working. "Some journalists were hesitant at first, fearing that it would cost them time rather than help them forward. But they have now embraced it as a way of working," Smits said. "They get more out of it than they imagined and their work has improved, and they get more out of members as well."

Creative thinking and ownership are the key to creating memberful routines, Smits said. "As soon as correspondents and journalists have clear questions and come up with ideas themselves, that aren't already in our toolbox, to get the information out of

members or sources, then...it can work. [It's about tapping] the creativity of the inner drive of engaging people in their own investigation, not filling out templates that we provide them with."

- **It's okay for these practices to be work-in-progress.** When asked how organizations determine which reporting projects receive engagement support, we heard that there is rarely one answer. As Robin Kwong said about how the Financial Times handles this: "There are no set rules or guidelines. Sometimes it is determined by the engagement team, and specifically the community editor. Sometimes digitally-minded editors, like our creative producers, will suggest and run these with support from the engagement team."

Kwong's US-based colleague Lilah Raptopoulos added: "We're at a place where editors will suggest ideas to the community editor / audience engagement team for guidance or advice, and then run the projects on their own. Often there is a digitally-minded editor on a desk like a creative producer who will also suggest and run these. It can be sparked from the audience engagement team. On big projects, it is now common practice for our editors to ask, *how can our readers contribute and what gaps in reporting can they help fill?*" In this way, the FT has moved from projects to routines.

## Risks

**Arguably the greatest risks associated with these routines is the significant time investments and talent they require.** Reporting, editing, and engagement teams don't always know the best ways to engage members. They don't always think that doing so is part of their jobs. They aren't crazy. Thodoris Chondrogiannos, reporter at Inside Story, said these approaches take longer, and audience members aren't always available or briefed on key points in story development, reporting, writing, editing, or production processes. (Chondrogiannos said that ultimately the resulting coverage makes the time investment worthwhile, particularly for additional stories and follow-up reporting it can bring.)

We also heard about uncooperative newsroom staff who don't want their knowledge challenged, community members who over-commit, and less-than-ideal matches between audience members and journalists (which can sometimes be improved with more intentional expectation-setting on both sides).

**Projects that aren't well structured to scale can reflect a lack of project management expertise** on teams or having those skills committed elsewhere for the news report. Megan Lucero, director of The Bureau Local at TBIJ, said: "I don't think journalism has traditionally been very good at project management. Perhaps in managing a wide range of foreign reporters, but not necessarily in managing a wide range of skills and disciplines." She mentioned, for example, the need to simultaneously manage technological challenges, journalistic challenges,

specialist knowledge, and local mobilizing, which are “special skills that are quite difficult to do and don’t traditionally sit in journalism.” Direkt36 has recently hired a project manager whose role is partially to develop relationships with the site’s supporters.

**Protectionist instincts, however warranted and well-intended, can threaten the success of these routines.** András Pethő of Direkt36 is cautious about how and to what extent it is possible to successfully marry memberful work with investigations. “This is where the special nature of investigative reporting comes in, your instinct is that you want to be very cautious especially at the beginning of stories, so that’s why we are careful about our reporting process, it’s hard to open it up.” Because they can’t screen their members for malicious intentions or allegiance to government intelligence services, closed social groups aren’t viable. Direkt36 works with very few members on its investigations as a result. At CORRECTIV, a partner investigation with other European newsrooms into high-level tax scams (the [#CumExFiles](#)), the secrecy of the reporting-in-progress necessitated that community involvement started later than it does in CORRECTIV’s other projects.

**Security of staff, freelancers, and community members is a concern.** Digital security, including trolling, is a serious through less frequently noted concern amongst this group. Several organizations said that potential contributors are afraid of the effects that being affiliated with independent or antagonistic media can have on their wellbeing, their careers, and their families. Some news organizations say they sense unintentional apathy and take measures to protect their members’ and contributors’ anonymity. We did not hear of specific newsroom-led trainings with community members on these security topics.

**Like everyone else, members can lose perspective.** RED/ACCIÓN said that they don’t request reader opinions but personal experiences, advice, and suggestions. Aurore Malval, journalist at Nice-Matin, noted that readers can sometimes become too involved or too opinionated. It can be difficult for staff and freelancers to disengage, including after investigations. She noted an investigation on loneliness in which she spent weeks chronicling the story of a woman who dropped out of school at age 18. (Malval had a conversation with the source about the relationship and the need to dis-engage.)

*Pro tip: At Krautreporter, Sebastian Esser said: “What hasn’t worked is where we just ask members for their opinions...You have to pose the right questions, otherwise you get views and judgments instead of information or analysis that might be useful for the reporting.”*

Some community members develop confirmation bias. Esther Alonso, head of marketing and development for El Diario, noted an effect of some members becoming so loyal that they expect all or most content to confirm their views and become frustrated when it doesn’t. The

expectation that journalism would mirror their own opinions is unrealistic, of course. [Some ideas are here](#) for mitigating risks of potential audience over-reach.

Some projects lack public interest. And even if they had it at the beginning, journalists, editors, and community members can all lose enthusiasm for a topic, especially ones that feel intractable. Before working at ProPublica, Ariana Tobin was skeptical investigative journalism was a fit for these routines, saying it can lack sex appeal. “You don’t want to click on a dry, boring story. Investigative journalism’s packaging sometimes doesn’t answer a fundamental question: what does someone want to click on? You need to make a clear and compelling case for someone to participate.” This human-centered approach is one we’re seeing more organizations undertake, but it isn’t easy.

*Pro tip: Ariana Tobin suggests standard language for generating contributions about topics that an organization is revisiting: “If you’ve heard about this, help us collect more.”*

**Making asks of community members, no matter how savvy or experienced they are individually, rarely works if the requests are too vague.** The FT tried to ask its readers what they would like to see on coverage about AI and the future of work. The topic and questions were “probably too broad” said Robin Kwong, head of digital delivery. They generated reader interest in some sub-topics but didn’t earn specific, actionable insights for reporters or readers. “I think people are a lot better at describing what frustrates them or what doesn’t work, rather than describing something that doesn’t exist.”

**Finally, the efforts may have little or no returns.** These routines aren’t certain routes to success. Ariana Tobin from ProPublica said that “as journalists, we think about how to prove things first. With engaged reporting, we may not come out with anything.”

## Tech

As [ProPublica asks](#): “If this project goes gangbusters and you get a huge response, how will you organize it? What do you need to put in place beforehand?” Organizations had a range of answers, but it’s clear that almost no one is satisfied with their past and present solutions. Growing interest from audience members in supporting and participating in news organizations only exacerbate the challenges (please see Size & Skills). We suggest deputizing the most eager participants to help with the work of organizing and responding to the rest, as [Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting did with their memberful Hate Sleuths reporting](#).

Of survey respondents whose organizations use software for organizing memberful reporting, eight of 10 use commercial options like Google Suite and the rest employ bespoke or proprietary software. CORRECTIV uses Slack to communicate about fact-checking projects with participating community members. ProPublica uses Screendoor to make inbound communications manageable for teams (please see Workflow as well as Surveys). Krautreporter pays for Typeform for hosting surveys with its members and has pioneered in a user-friendly membership management platform called Steady. Such off-the-shelf software has advantages: with it comes on-call or regular support and more features than small or traditional organizations could design and build themselves. But many of the [commonly used tools aren't created with news organizations as primary users](#). New routines that center on journalism are emerging, but it is early.

Securely collecting data is front of mind for many organizations. A number of those we spoke to had concerns about keeping investigations secure and memberful routines not creating a “backdoor: to the organization that was open to abuse. As with many organizations, at ProPublica, Tobin said, “We don't have an answer for high security at scale.” Receiving communications via the most secure channels available, Signal and physical mail, has been the best interim solution for them.

Organizations that try to create their own solutions don't find it easy, either. Even with a sizeable team of in-house developers and designers and six years of work on their platform, De Correspondent struggles to devote significant resources to these use cases compared to other front and back end designs. Rosan Smits said, “We are at one percent of what we want to do because of limitations such as tech. We want the social media power of Facebook, combined with journalism standards.”

Smits said she is eagerly awaiting an open source “community relationship management” project being developed by CORRECTIV and others. A number of European news organizations are in the early days of working together on a community relationship management initiative that is envisaged would be open source so that media organizations could adapt it to their own needs.

De Correspondent conversation editor Gwen Martèl adds that she wishes she had more agile tech solutions, such as being able to search by areas of expertise and other interests in the organization's [member database \(or “Rolodex”\)](#). Profiles in the member Rolodex are quite broad, so she doesn't know, for instance, what area of law are practiced by lawyer members unless she searches manually (this is a limitation of the software rather than a data collection problem, we're told).

## Size & Skills

**Small can be mighty! And scale can be challenging.** As Clara Jiménez Cruz of Maldita explained, working with a sizable community involves a huge amount of work and can be difficult to scale. With 15,000 registered users, Maldita categorizes audience members with “superpowers” and those who serve as “ambassadors.” Ambassadors are members who donate money, while people with superpowers lend expertise and make it possible for Maldita staff to diversify their sourcing. Individuals define their own superpowers, which represent professions, skills, and experience. Examples include a nun with religious expertise, doctors who draw comics to explain complex topics, individuals who’ve experienced a particular health condition, and readers who live outside of Spain and can provide insights into other countries.

**The appropriateness of audience member fit is vital.** For the vast majority of routines, working with people with relevant expertise and skills is more important than collaborating with lots of people. (“Find your fifteen” is a shorthand recommendation from one of the co-authors of this report, Emily Goligoski.)

At TBIJ, Rachel Hamada said, “You’re never going to have 100 percent of the members receptive to everything. Different people have different interests, and different priorities, and that’s totally fine...Especially at the story dissemination stage it’s important because you don’t want to be producing all these great stories, as a network, but they don’t get to the people who are affected by the stories or need that information.”

*Pro tip: Rachel Hamada of the Bureau Local stresses making detailed versus general asks: “We tend to find members get most engaged when offered specific, discrete tasks to get involved with, or questions to feedback on. The vaguer the ask, the less their interest or engagement.”*

Dimitris Xenakis at Inside Story said it’s “not just about drawing huge numbers of members” especially given the amount of monetary and human resources that they put into managing these routines. He recommends adjusting as needed according to the ultimate aim: involving more people to produce good journalism and understand how it’s produced.

The [YourStory](#) project, now in its third year, began in 2017 to celebrate the one-year anniversary of Inside Story and encourage readers to share their story ideas after the Greek debt crisis. Membership manager Arelina Merakou said they hoped the project would “increase trust and educate both our readers and the journalists about each other’s habits and ways of thinking and practices.” Staff members reviewed the ideas and determined which ones to pursue. The process ended with a public event where journalists pitched the stories and attendees voted on which ideas they liked most.



In the second year, Inside Story invited advisor and academic Betty Tsakarestou to help develop a process that would use design-thinking methods to cultivate more in-depth engagement between journalists and members. The result was the addition of a co-creation workshop during which readers met in groups with journalists and discussed and focused their story ideas. The co-creation workshop continued in the third year of YourStory, followed by another workshop where readers created story prototypes, including envisioning possible outcomes and impact.

After the prototype workshop, journalists and readers paired up and began work on the suggested stories, working together to identify sources, find data and documents, and conduct interviews. Readers could also attend an open newsroom where journalists pitched the stories and determined which ones would be published in a special section in September.

Dimitris Xenakis said the emphasis on design thinking has been instrumental in the success of YourStory. For Tsakarestou, the process has been “a good surprise for the citizens. I would call them citizens first, for the citizens that really had the curiosity and the real interest to get involved actively, and offer their time and their energy and their minds, into the creating, together with journalists, and giving some trust into the experiment we were running.” It has also encouraged journalists to incorporate the most effective YourStory practices into their news production processes.

## #YourStory Findings

- Readers
  - Participate because they **believe** in you
  - They do **work**, because they believe what they strive for is worthwhile
  - They have a **good time** learning the mechanics of journalism
  - They leave asking for **more** work!
- Journalists learn a lot about who they write for
  - how to **engage** with their audiences
  - their **interests**
  - how to **listen**

*Inside Story in Greece launched the #YourStory initiative three years ago to give readers an opportunity to suggest story ideas. Now, the initiative includes multiple workshops in which*



*readers work alongside journalists to develop, focus, and transition story ideas into full-scale investigations on topics including local government, health, education, and the environment.*

Skills sought are wide-ranging, not one-size-fits-all. At TBIJ, where the global part of the news organization does not yet have a paid membership program, collaboration includes local journalists, citizen advocates, and others with relevant expertise. The collaborators vary from investigation to investigation. With a global superbugs project the team mainly worked closely with scientists and campaigners. With food and farming reporting projects, the team collaborated extensively with the Guardian, its readers, and a wider global audience concerned with the nexus between food, pollution, and health.

The team working on TBIJ's [shadow wars coverage into "murky military campaigns" by the US government](#) said that while they have a relatively large amount of interaction with readers, much of it is with artists. They would like more agility in terms of what stories they could do and can see a role for membership in asking people with expertise to suggest specific stories, with callouts to aid workers, freelancers, and defense contractors.

Just as Thodoris Chondrogiannos at Inside Story said that one of the impetuses for their collaborations with readers in Athens is that as journalists "we can't have 1,000 eyes," journalist Maeve McClanaghan of the Bureau Local said that in a recent project on homeless deaths came out of the question:

'What could we do if we had 800-plus pairs of eyes on the ground across the country that nobody else could do?' We could ask them to be alerting us to these things as and when they happen, so that kind of shift from a top-down thinking to, we can also get stories from the bottom-up as well, but there's a middle ground of something in the middle.

The potential, I think, is still vast for what we could do with it, but yes, I would say that, it was we needed to establish ourselves to local journalists. We needed to build trust and test the model of, if we give them a target time, would they be able to stick it? And do they report responsibly and accurately? So, once that was tested in the initial couple of stories we did, I think we got a bit more ambitious in, when we bring people in, that we trust them and what we ask of them.

András Pethő said that for Direkt36, working relationships with members have deepened over time but are mostly concentrated around a small set of members. The work began when some readers suggested collaboration ideas. "Some of them had special skills such as coding, language skills, and then we started to work with them on some projects," Pethő said. Some were information technology experts who scraped databases and others helped with story translation into Russian. (More details about these specific projects can be found in [this participation report](#).) "We started with this process organically, but now we reach out to

supporters and ask them whether they would like to be involved, what special skills they have, how much time they can volunteer.”

**On the topic of frequency--how often it's advisable to work with community collaborators--we similarly heard that relevance is a better rule than constancy.** Sebastian Esser of Krautreporter said, “At the beginning we thought we needed to engage with members all the time, and that was what they were paying for. But many weren't interested in that, they have lives to get on with, and now we engage when we want to know an answer to a question, we are authentic about that and using the expertise and knowledge of our members. It's very dangerous if you don't take your members seriously, they can tell immediately if that's not the case, and then they doubt the intention of the whole project.” Krautreporter's general guideline is that three out of five of the stories they publish each week should involve readers on some level, even if through seemingly casual communication via WhatsApp or Telegram or more collaborative software such as Typeform surveys or Slack.



**THINKING ABOUT HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR CROWD?  
HERE ARE THINGS YOU MIGHT ASK THEM TO DO**

**If you have too much information to sift through, your supporters can:**

- Review data
- Track & report trends
- Contribute original journalism
- Program & volunteer at events

**If you don't know what you don't know, your supporters can:**

- Share tips
- Collect data
- Ask questions about what they want to know
- Provide oral histories
- Provide expertise as sources

**If you need help to get it right, your supporters can:**

- Provide technical proofreading
- Contribute professional skills you need
- Test products
- Contribute code
- Cast their vote in important organizational decisions
- Offer language translation
- Help write your ethics policies
- Moderate site comments

**If you want to empower people to involved in journalism, your supporters can:**

- Train them & have them work as apprentices
- Champion your brand as an ambassador
- Be a part of a user advisory or community board
- Serve as volunteer guides & hosts
- Train others
- Onboard new members
- Curate your social media
- Fund your work!

*[This guide](#) includes ideas for more practiced routines for responsibly, enthusiastically allowing community members past the gatekeeper.*

## Impact

To assess impact, organizations we surveyed most routinely measure readership, overall engagement, participation, anecdotal responses from readers, and actions taken. During story research they monitor callout participation and time spent answering reporters' and engagement editors questions among other data sources. Consistency of evidence collected from audience members matters too. Post-publication, common measurements include the number of projects that made it to publication, qualitative impact, pageviews, social sharing, time on page, awards earned, and feedback in the form of social media, comments, and emails. Frequently used impact tracking sources include national statistics, an organization's own analytics, press coverage, survey responses, and anecdotes from audience members and affected individuals.

In the longer term, we saw that organizations pay close attention to and even create new roles for impact producers to kickstart the following:

**Policy changes:** Rachel Hamada of The Bureau Local said that policy changes can be imprecise and time-consuming to measure. "Sometimes, as with lots of investigations, it's not always that you can prove that X led to Y. Often, it's like, X led to there being a debate in Parliament, and, then, suddenly, two years later, something shifts. It's not always easy to prove direct impact from investigative journalism."

The homeless deaths coverage was more straightforward. As a result of the Bureau Local's investigative work with community members, the Office for National Statistics in Britain announced that it will collect official data on homeless deaths, and offices in Northern Ireland and Scotland are following suit. The Bureau Local has also partnered with the Museum of Homelessness to [continue to collect stories of those who have died homeless and make those stories publicly available](#).

Hamada stressed that one way for such projects to incite change is in making them open source. Data and information on projects with important public service ramifications shouldn't be limited to only a few data scientists or data journalists. "[It] needs to be in the hands of any person who wants to scrutinise their council to understand homeless deaths, to understand cuts to domestic violence refuges. You should be able to access that information and journalism should play a role in that."

*Pro tip: Just as many sites feature details on how to share tips, Rachel Hamada recommended creating a page on an organization's site with open resources, including data, reporting resources and recipes, and code, for public review and use.*

**Member pride:** Audience members' pride in the organizations they support is a hard-to measure but noticeable area for monitoring impact. Emily Goligoski and Jay Rosen saw this when visiting The Texas Tribune and members referred to seeing CEO and co-founder Evan Smith on television by saying "we were on TV." At The Bureau Local, Megan Lucero said: "Active members get quite excited whenever they see The Bureau get mentioned anywhere...Everyone kind of sees it as their win too--the fact that every time we get an award it is an award for this community. Every time there's a change, it's a win that we've all fought for. It's about being a part of something bigger that both benefits your local community and the wider system."

**Culture changes:** Clara Jiménez Cruz of Maldita said that memberful routines shift how organizations think about news values. They can no longer cover primarily what journalists see as journalistically important: they need to cover what readers tell them they are concerned about.

Regarding pace of change, we saw that the degree of frequency for testing new means of audience participation varies. Among survey respondents, four of 10 said their organizations try new approaches with high frequency (at least once a week), three of 10 with medium frequency (once per quarter), and three of 10 once a year or less often. The amount of prototyping and testing we're seeing is cause for optimism in a field that badly needs new approaches.

## Conclusion

Even at the most audience-informed organizations, journalists recognize the immense difficulty in making sense of what audience members and relevant experts know, particularly without presently available tools and ample staff. This work is hard, yet there is an increasing amount of interest in it. We hear more reporters, editors, and audience development staff around the world asking: *how can this work be operationalized?*

With this report you see what we have learned so far about memberful routines. We close by highlighting some of the limits and cautions of working closely with members. We do this not to dissuade you from pursuing these routines, but to help as you undertake your own projects with members, donors, subscribers, and contributors:

- Not every story can have, and not every story should have, reader involvement.
- Make it crystal clear to community members: Everyone has opinions. Your opinions will not run our newsroom.
- Member engagement is hard work. Staff need to be identified, trained, and given time to do it right.
- Be ready to handle the incoming traffic if your callouts and other outreach succeed and you have plenty of takers. Design for potential over-supply of information!
- Project management is a discipline unto itself. Without it, news sites will find it hard to succeed at establishing memberful routines.
- Members in their natural state do not necessarily know what news organizations need from them. We have to teach them that part.
- Not everything “takes” and new approaches are sometimes required.
- This work may not have immediately positive revenue results. But it can get there.
- Memberful routines are growing in use. But they can’t be turned on and off like a brand campaign. These are professional practices that require use, additional research, and crucially, gratitude to participating community members.



## About the researchers

**Katharine Quarmby** (@katharineq) is incoming Senior Investigator for the UK human rights charity, Liberty. Previously, she worked as a senior editor at the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and advised the Bureau on engagement. She has worked as a correspondent for the Economist, as a producer at the BBC and has reported for many UK and international publications, including Private Eye, Newsweek Europe, the Atlantic and the Guardian. She also writes non-fiction books.

**Emily Goligoski** (@Emgollie) is research director for the Membership Puzzle Project and the incoming senior director of audience research at The Atlantic. She previously worked as a user experience research lead in The New York Times newsroom and brought design research to Mozilla Foundation. Emily completed her Master's in Learning, Design & Technology at Stanford. She previously worked at Chicago Public Radio (WBEZ) and studied journalism at Northwestern. Emily has written for The Guardian, Columbia Journalism Review, and other sites that produce coverage worth paying for.

**Dr. Joy Jenkins** (@joyjenkins) is an assistant professor of digital journalism at the University of Tennessee School of Journalism and Electronic Media and a research associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. As a postdoctoral research fellow, her work was published by the Reuters Institute with the support of the Google News Initiative. Her research uses a sociological approach to examine changing organizational identities and practices in newsrooms, with a particular focus on local media. She also studies the experiences of women journalists and the functions news organizations play in spurring public discourse about feminism and gender roles. Her work has been published in journals including Journalism Studies, Journalism Practice, Journalism, Journal of Media Ethics, and Feminist Media Studies. She worked professionally as an editor at a city magazine in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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## Appendix

### A. Discussion guide for interviews

#### ***Introduction:***

- Please tell me about your work.
- How does your organization reach audience members?
- Individual: how did you get into this work?
- Tell me about how your organization involves members
- Tell me about your involvement in that process
- What do you think about the model of community-involved journalism?
  - How does it compare with how you've practiced journalism in the past?
  - Are there any advantages to more traditional forms of journalism? How do you balance that against editorial independence?
  - What are the editorial benefits of "memberful reporting"? Commercial benefits?

#### ***Processes:***

- What are the biggest opportunities of a "memberful" approach? Challenges?
  - Can you describe a membership initiative that was particularly effective? When this works, what changes in audience participation and involvement?
    - What initiatives do you think have worked particularly well at your organisation and could work well with more resources, training, members, etc.?
  - Can you describe a membership initiative that was ineffective? Why do you see it that way? What did you learn from it?
- How do you project manage member/support/community input? How do you process audience member contributions so they're actually used in meaningful ways?
- What are the least time intensive ways to do this work? What are the most efficient?
- Are some means of participation that most "appropriate" for different reporting genres (i.e., investigative) and beats?
- When is it worth investing in particular forms of participation (vs. paying a professional to handle that without help from the public)? Is there a "participation dividend" when you successfully involve members in such things?
- How have your memberful reporting routines approaches changed over time?
- How does your organization gauge/measure impact? What role do memberful approaches play in this?

#### ***People:***

- How would you describe your members or contributors?

- How does your organization staff this work? Whose responsibility is it to work in these networked ways?
- To what extent are these memberful approaches supported by senior management?
- Did other organizations inspire your memberful approach? Which ones? How?

## B. Survey questions

### ***Introduction:***

To sustain independent news sites, membership has to evolve from *projects* to *routines*. That's why we're in the field now looking for "memberful routines," examples of news sites routinely involving their members in the work of keeping the journalism going. To guide the field across that divide — from projects with members to memberful routines — we need measures and metrics that tell us if we're making progress with these routines.

We're looking to learn what your organization is trying to involve people outside your newsrooms who have relevant knowledge. **We're studying repeatable processes, not one-off crowdsourced reporting projects. We want to know: what can be improved editorially for better and more regular work with these members of knowledge communities? How can working with members work at scale?**

Thank you for contributing to what we hope will be an actionable report into memberful routines.

### ***General questions:***

- First, how does your organization staff its memberful reporting or engaged reporting projects?
  - Everyone is expected to be involved
  - Reporters and editors manage such projects
  - We have an engagement team who manages such projects
  - Other \_\_\_\_
- How does the organization determine which reporting projects receive engagement support?
- Roughly what portion of your reporters believe in involving audience members in the organization's work? To put it another way, what is your supply of willing reporters?
  - 0%
  - 25%
  - 50%
  - 75%
  - Nearly 100%
  - I don't know

- To what extent are these memberful approaches supported by senior management?
  - We have complete management buy-in for this work
  - They are mostly supportive
  - They are mostly skeptical
  - We have little to no management buy-in
  - I don't know
- What benefits have you found from introducing these routines?
  - We have met new sources
  - We have identified new stories to cover
  - We have improved our audience reach
  - We have improved our revenue
  - We know that memberful routines have had meaningful benefits, but we haven't measured them yet
  - I don't know
  - None
  - Other
- How would you describe the editorial benefits of memberful reporting or engaged reporting projects?
- How would you describe the commercial benefits of memberful reporting projects?
- What kind(s) of software do you use for member-involved reporting, if any?
  - Commercial (if so, which software?)
  - Bespoke
  - Other \_\_\_\_

**Now we'd like to ask a few production workflow questions. We'd like to know how your organization works with audience members in research and reporting phases.**

1. In what ways do you regularly reach out to your audience members?
  - a. Email
  - b. Social media
  - c. Live events
  - d. SMS
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_
2. How do you reach out to the wider community or to people who are less close to your organization's work?
  - a. Advertising
  - b. Social media
  - c. Live events
  - d. Ambassadors
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_
3. Does your organization involve audience members in any of the following ways?
  - a. As participants in a reader panel or group of product testers
  - b. As co-authors of organizational policies



- c. As event assistants, presenters, or programmers
  - d. As subject matter advisors (e.g., offering legal assistance)
  - e. As sources for interviews or story ideas
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. What kinds of member involvement does your organization seek during the research phase?
5. Why do audience members want to contribute to your organization, to the best of your knowledge? *Some of the member motivations we've seen are shown below. We want to know why people give their time and talents to your team's work.*
- a. To learn something new
  - b. To contribute their expertise
  - c. To have a say and be heard
  - d. To get the inside scoop and to find out about your process
  - e. To show love because a topic and/or a public service mission matters
  - f. To be part of something bigger
  - g. Other

<p>I want to learn something new: <b>Curiosity / learning</b></p>	<p>I want to contribute my expertise: <b>Show a superpower!</b></p>	<p>I want to have a say and be heard: <b>Voice</b></p>
<p>I want the inside scoop &amp; to find out about your process: <b>Transparency</b></p>	<p>I want to show some love because this topic / your public service mission matters: <b>Passion</b></p>	<p>I want to be a part of something bigger: <b>Community</b></p>

- How do you know about these audience motivations (e.g., feedback questionnaires, focus groups)?

**Now we'd like to ask about member involvement in the editing and fact-checking phases.**

- Before publication, do you involve audience members in any of these ways?
  - Research
  - Fact-checking/verification
  - Identifying sources/interviewees
  - Translation
  - Suggesting calls to action
  - Other

- Does your organization face security issues or have legal concerns about sharing information pre-publication? If so, how do you involve people outside staff meaningfully?
- Let's talk about what happens after you publish or broadcast. Do you involve audience members in any of these ways *post-publication*?
  - Through callouts for additional reporting
  - In story promotion and distribution
  - In conversations via comments on site
  - In helping to report on story impact
  - Through policy work (e.g., speaking to government, other advocacy)
  - Through training (e.g., storytelling, research, verification)
  - Other
- How do you encourage your members to create change based on your journalism? Examples could include encouraging them to contact their political representatives or share on social media.
- How does your organization measure impact? How do memberful reporting routines factor into your measurement, if at all?
- How do you gauge the impact of memberful routines in your reporting and distribution strategies?
- What memberful reporting approaches have you tried that didn't work? Why not?
- How regularly do you try/test new means of audience participation?

***Details:***

- Optional: Name
- Optional: Email address
- Optional: Role