



# The Newsplexer Projects

PROTOTYPING THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

PROJECT BRIEF

## Journalists and Repertoire (J&R) Story Band Talent Scouting and Media Development Mentoring

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### Summary

The Newsplexer Projects is an experimental news studio focused on committing noticeable journalism while prototyping new ways of doing news and training people for the new mainstream media.

The J&R Project is designed to discover, recruit, train, mentor and then showcase a new band of fusion journalists who will produce an innovative style of massive-media storytelling around an ongoing news emphasis or planned occurrence.

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*See Explanations section concerning story bands, massive media and fusion journalists*

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### Lead

The project lead is Kerry J. Northrup, chief editorial officer & news experience producer, The Newsplexer Projects. For background, see [www.linkedin.com/in/kerrynorthrup](http://www.linkedin.com/in/kerrynorthrup).

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### Band

The Newsplexer Projects will support the startup and provide mentoring for a new story band to help prototype something fresh in journalistic storytelling while the group itself develops its unique collaborative style and hopefully a following and eventual monetization. That way we produce meaningful content helping to satisfy society's need to know at the same time that we turn out a few more edgy media folk to make a difference in the future of journalism.

For each story band, we recruit an eclectic group of usually five to ten already well-skilled up-and-comers with varied journalistic and media talents and a commitment to making beautiful stories together. The more complete and cohesive the band is already at the start, the better. There should at least be a core of three or four with a strong internal bond and shared motivations who can then help recruit the rest of the needed members based on the initial news experience design.

Ideally, the core band members should incorporate at least the three media skillsets central to the new mainstream news media:

- Writing in varied styles
- Video production
- Social engagement

Other skills for the complete band could include graphic and UX design, coding, audio, photography, advertising, public relations, scriptwriting, production management, content management, crowdsourcing, analytics, data visualization, virtual and augmented reality, online and mobile publishing, and web apps, among many others. The ultimate design of the massive-media experience and of the band's unique collaborative style will be based on the particular instruments from the orchestra of millennial media that the group brings to the stage.

Newsplexer Projects are fundamentally journalistic endeavors in that they intend to contribute to the process of society informing itself. However, they also embrace a very wide-ranging, nontraditional view of what constitutes contemporary journalism. Not all story band members need consider themselves journalists, although their involvement and shared motivation will make them what the Newsplexer Projects model calls fusion journalists. Similarly, not all the skills in the band will come necessarily from typical areas of journalistic expertise. That very fact serves the innovation and prototyping these projects seek to produce.

## Explanations

The concept of the journalistic or story band comes out of Newsplexer Projects research and development of techniques to engage the increasingly significant millennial and post-millennial cohort that largely ignores legacy mainstream news.

With the expansion of social networks and the closing of the media era termed the Gutenberg Parenthesis, millennials neither need nor want the same relationship with news as their parents. In today's increasingly participatory, always-on infosphere with its widely available and heavily replicated news materials, the actual *experience* of being informed becomes a key differentiator of sources. An individual's selection of sources that satisfy the instinctual need to know and that deliver the sought-after authentic experience becomes a lifestyle choice, a personal expression, the same as picking the style clothes you want to be seen wearing or what musical groups you identify with.

Experiential news media are based on high-end story production and unique user experiences that generate high engagement with bespoke communities. They are entrepreneurial activities with startup-style staffs bearing little resemblance to legacy editorial operations in terms of workflow and organization. Instead, they comprise small, independent, multiskilled, multitasking teams that can be looked upon as the journalistic equivalent of a musical band. Such story bands tend to incorporate narrative lyricists, multimedia content composers, news experience rhythmists, social context producers and news technology accompanists, among other reinterpreted editorial specialties. Successful story bands combine a range of formats and approaches that all together come to be recognized as their unique style. And just as with a popular musical band, it is their style as much as their stories that engages their public.

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Massive-media stories as developed by The Newsplexer Projects have three defining characteristics, only one of which is apparent from the name.

First, they are stories that you can *own* in terms of competition, at least in approach if not significantly in topic. Stories that duplicate what others do or that are themselves easily replicated typically fail to differentiate their sources.

Second, they are stories around which you can build an experience, an encounter that leaves an impression with those who engage the piece. This typically requires that the story be multifaceted, integrating many different issues layered with various levels of detail and offering multiple points of entry for different mindsets. It is the intellectual and emotional wandering within the story, the process of discovery and becoming personally invested, that effects an experience.

Then thirdly, as expected, they are stories that integrate a mass of individual pieces of content, combining a number of different media formats that are each most appropriate to their part in the whole, all of it harmonized across multiple environments such that they contribute to the story's overall fidelity. In most cases these are not stories that occur all at some single moment of either event or telling, and rarely are they exclusively about the past rather than the ongoing present. A massive-media story will typically be produced and experienced over an indefinite period from the time it starts, as it organically develops in its many different dimensions.

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Fusion journalists combine the ethics, mission, production values and professionalism of quality editorial work with an atypical range of expertise in making that work more visual, more tangible, more accessible to a contemporary public. They are entrepreneurial journalists primed to work in the start-ups, spinoffs, NGOs, non-profits, social networks, digital divisions and corporate activities that are becoming society's new mainstream media. They don't just tell stories but produce the environments in which people engage with those stories across multiple technologies and platforms.

Traditional journalists tend to define themselves by a format specialty — as writers or photographers, for example — and generally have been trained to work alone on their own content. Fusion journalists often contribute expertise across several formats but their real specialty is in innovation and collaboration. They are engagement experts as well as story experts. Their job is to connect and inform. Their goal is journalism that gets noticed, because if it doesn't, what's the point?

## Partnerships and funding

The Newsplexer Projects operates not for profit and actively seeks to partner with and work in adjunct to universities, corporations and other institutions and organizations that are interested in sponsoring and/or helping to facilitate recruitment and training of highly talented people who can make a difference in the future of journalism and news media. Basic J&R projects can be conducted on an expenses-only basis covering travel, accommodations and per diem. International inquiries welcomed.