



PAKISTAN ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNALISM PROGRAM

خودمختار میڈیا، ذمہ دار صحافت

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE



Global Neighbourhood for Media Innovation (GNMI) ®



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Abbreviations / Acronyms

GNMI	Global Neighbourhood for Media Innovation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MOJO	Mobile Journalism
PEJP	Pakistan Entrepreneurial Journalism Program
PTA	Pakistani Telecommunication Authority
SEO	Search Engine Optimization

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Preface

Journalism and entrepreneurship are currently entering into a new relationship around the globe. Freelance journalists and activists are using internet technologies and platforms to change decades-old journalism practices that required them to affiliate themselves with news organizations to tell stories of their interest. They, now, have multiple platforms on the internet which they can use to disseminate their content directly into their target audience alongside building revenue opportunities.

This new form of journalism is making its slow entry in Pakistan too. Several senior journalists have switched from mainstream media to digital media in past five years, running their news websites, YouTube channels, podcasts, and newsletters. Many new entrants have also made their name in the field including women telling stories from their less developed areas away from the reach of mainstream journalism. There is still a large room waiting for new entries to leave their mark in the virtual world through their work.

Several universities in developed countries have already included entrepreneurial journalism in their curriculum offering it both as a course and special degree program. Pakistan does not have any special degree or non-degree program on entrepreneurial journalism.

Seeing the new trend and the need of the time, Global Neighbourhood for Media Innovation has launched Pakistan Entrepreneurial Journalism Program to guide journalists, independent news bloggers/vloggers, and digital news content creators through the basics of entrepreneurship and the avenues it can provide to journalists for their work on digital platforms. The main objective of the Pakistan Entrepreneurial Journalism Program is to increase journalists' autonomy and financial independence by providing them essential training and resources to launch their own independent digital news outlets.

Entrepreneurial journalism provides support to journalists to report independently on subjects that do not get much coverage in mainstream media. This document in hand aims to train its readers in establishing their own independent and sustainable digital news outlets serving their target audience and generating their revenues.

We hope it serves its purpose.

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Introduction



In the beginning!

The technological advancement and economic upheaval in media have changed journalism practices around the globe. These changes have also cost thousands of journalists their jobs and shuttered some media organizations altogether. Journalists are now looking for opportunities outside traditional newsrooms where they can get a relatively stable work environment. Although they are not anticipated to participate in business activities through their journalistic skills, the financial situation of Pakistani mainstream media that was never easy, to begin with, is becoming more and more difficult and the penetration of the internet and mobile devices is gradually redefining this understanding. It may sound like a new phenomenon in the context of Pakistan; however, it has already become a trend in developed countries where hundreds of journalists are running their websites, blogs, podcasts, and newsletters. There is a wide scope of entrepreneurial journalism in Pakistan and this might be the best time to make a start. This is the sense in which this guide and, accordingly, all significant components are outlined which journalist entrepreneurs should consider when starting their digital news startup.



The Guide

This guide has been developed to give its readers an understanding of Entrepreneurial Journalism and its scope in Pakistan alongside guiding them through the technicalities of the digital world, branding, and monetization to help them transform their startup ideas into sustainable business models. This has been written by the needs and requirements of local media and journalists to help them understand the basics of entrepreneurial journalism, digital ecosystem, content creation and publication on online platforms, market needs, and available monetization options.

This guide is, therefore, a reference from which the readers may adopt the most suitable strategy and tools for the implementation of their ideas.

Objectives

This document has the following objectives.

1. To give journalist entrepreneurs a basic understanding of entrepreneurial journalism including but not limited to producing unbiased, nuanced reporting for the target audiences, hence increasing their confidence and capacity to launch online brands and contributing towards diverse media landscape.
2. To help journalist entrepreneurs understand financial autonomy and revenue models of digital platforms, alongside the technicalities involved in the process from conception and clarification of their niche journalism projects to their implementation.

Audience

This publication has been developed for those journalists, independent news bloggers/vloggers, and digital news content creators who aspire to start their niche news startups on digital platforms.

What's Inside?

This guide contains 4 sections briefly described below.

Fundamental concepts

This section outlines the concepts that must be understood by journalist entrepreneurs before moving ahead with designing and implementing their ideas of a digital news startup.

Online content creation and production

This section discusses content creation on digital platforms and specific requirements and techniques that can help to build a brand. It further discusses Mobile Journalism (MOJO) that goes hand in hand with online journalism.

Establishing a news startup

This section of the manual discusses the steps of establishing news startups. What are the available options and how they can make use of those to make their entry into the digital world? Moving further, it gives an account of the blogging website, WordPress, and video sharing platform, YouTube. Both platforms are now favoring journalist entrepreneurs and are quite useful and easy to use.

Marketing strategy & monetization techniques

The final section of this manual gives an overview of market structure and the internet economy. It also discusses online news business models that news startups usually adopt and that have proved a success so far. At the end of this section, it discusses monetization options that digital news startups could use to generate revenues.

Fundamental Concepts

Before the beginning!

The prerequisite of every journalistic venture is knowing the fundamentals and specifics of online journalism. The main journalistic rules and principles of traditional media remain the same for the digital arena of journalism, although some important concepts must be understood before beginning his exciting journey. Following is a no exhaustive list and a brief description of these basic concepts.

Entrepreneurial Journalism

There is no standard definition of Entrepreneurial Journalism. Each media scholar has defined it as per their understanding. For example, this definition of entrepreneurial journalism defines it as a growing pool of freelance journalists living by selling bits and pieces of their work to their specified audience (Vos, and Singer, 2016). Another definition looks it up as news business models that journalists develop on the internet as individual entrepreneurs or in a group. This training manual will use this definition to highlight the significant factors which journalist entrepreneurs should have in their mind when starting their news ventures.

The revolutions in the field of communication have shaken the traditional news business models that run on advertisements only. The new models cannot rely on advertisements for their survival. They require new sustainable business models to survive in this fast-changing media landscape for the next few decades.

The concept of entrepreneurial journalism brings the essential help that journalist entrepreneurs can utilize to understand and adjust to the digital era and deal with the realization of changing economic structure and behavior of their audience.

Digital News Startups

Digital news startups are web-based news organizations of varying scales offering news and information about current happenings and affairs (Powers and Vera, 2016). The success of digital news startups lies in a sustainable business model, a defined niche, and a diverse revenue structure. Another important factor is the understanding of new technological trends. Entrepreneurs who take interest in new technological tools can discover new ways to engage their audience, content development, and dissemination.

Niche

The term niche means targeting a particular segment of the entire population for a specially designed, created, or produced product or service. Niche in journalism refers to the specific audience, media players intend to approach using their news-related products or services (Cook and Virkkunen, 2013).

New Media and Digital Platforms

Denis McQuail is considered one of the most influential scholars in the field of media and communication. Hailing from Britain, he served as a professor of Communication Studies at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands till his death in 2017. He defined new media as a disparate set of communication technologies that are new, digitalized, and widely available for personal use as communication devices (McQuail et al., 2005).

Scholars have further defined digital platforms as two-sided networks on the internet that allow an interdependent group of users to interact with each other in multiple forms (Asadullah and Kankanhalli, 2018). These platforms are getting popular in the masses because they are interactive, diverse, easy to access, low cost, and trendy. These platforms can be divided into different categories based on the services they provide. Some of the categories are:

- Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Knowledge platforms such as Yahoo and Quora
- Media sharing platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, and TikTok
- Service-oriented platforms such as Uber, Airbnb, and Amazon

Rise of Digital Platforms in Pakistan

The overall internet traffic in Pakistan has been on the rise since the launch of 3G and 4G services in 2014. Since then, the media landscape of the country has changed to a large extent. We saw media houses developing their websites and social media platforms which today have become our primary source of information. Newspapers upload their e-papers on their websites; TV channels have their websites which they use to push their content to their audience present on the internet. Media houses also use their Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts to do a live broadcast of important events. According to the latest indicators of the Pakistani Telecommunication Authority (PTA), the country has 169 million cellular subscribers, 85 million 3G, and 4G subscribers, and 87 million broadband subscribers. However, 76.38 million people are online in Pakistan with an internet penetration of 35% in January 2020 . Among these internet users, 37 million use different social media platforms which make 17% of the whole population. Facebook is the most used social media platform in Pakistan with 36 million active users. Instagram has 6.30 million active users, WhatsApp has 1.26 million, and YouTube has 32.5 million active users.

Online Content Creation & Production Guide

Let's Start!

Creating content for digital platforms is very different from the requisites of mainstream media. The first step of this process is to identify the topics that appeal to the targeted audience. The second step is to create content related to chosen topics either in a written or visual format. The key element is to make the content interesting by turning information into an appealing form such as a blog, video, infographic, or other formats.

Elements of good online content

It must have the following.

A catchy title

The title of your story should be catchy and clear. It should also include keywords so the readers can search it easily online.

Composition & Use of Keywords in the Text

The composition of the content depends on its topic. You can change your style from the inverted pyramid style to postponed effect depending on your topic. However, you must add keywords to your content because that will optimize the article.

Visual Pointing

The written story on the internet should be easy to overview and read. To achieve this purpose, you may make key sentences or phrases or words, bold. It will help you in drawing the attention of your reader to the most significant information.

Multimedia Effect

The multimedia effect is the backbone of online content. Always use a combination of different formats such as text, video, audio, infographics, and illustrations to make your content interesting and appealing.

Linking Techniques

Linking techniques help journalists to offer additional but relevant content to their audience. This also saves their time in explaining the background.

Tagging

Tags are those words in your article that your target audience may use to search the internet to find their desired information. It is recommended to use five to seven tags per story so it can appear on top results of search engines.

Text Optimization

Text optimization means the use of tags at the end of the text as well as using keywords in the title and text of the story. It helps to improve positioning on search engines

Mobile Journalism (MOJO)

'By 2020, MOJO will dominate the news,' says mobile expert, Glen Mulcahyin. MOJO is an emerging form of journalism in which a smartphone is used to create and edit audio, images, and videos. The journalists may use other devices such as laptops and DSLRs in later stages of their content creation and production process, however, the primary device is always a smartphone. MOJO allows everyone to assume the role of a cameraman, editor, producer, and publisher of news.

Smartphones offer cross-platform creativity and digital innovation more than any other device. A user can use a smartphone to make calls to line up interviews or to approach the source for comments. It can also be used to capture eye-catching clicks, important footages, and to cover events live for social media platforms.

Following mobile journalism, journalists just need their smartphones to connect to their newsroom, upload content to the server, and to share it online with their niche. It also makes it easier for the journalists to check the feedback of the audience on their content and to respond to it quicker than before. Now the question arises what makes a journalist with a smartphone different than its audience having the same smartphone or even better version. The experts on MOJO say that skill, experience, and perspective that a journalist hold with its smartphone is the key that makes them different than their audience.

Why MOJO Might Be Good for Journalism Entrepreneurs?

Journalism entrepreneurs can make the best use of MOJO to launch their niche new ventures on digital platforms because it is:

- Easier to use
- Faster in action
- Independent
- Not noticeable
- Efficient
- Cheaper to use

Professional Kit for MOJO

Although a single smartphone and techniques to use it professionally are enough to start MOJO, however, it is suggested to have a professional kit at later stages to enhance the experience of journalism with a smartphone and to increase the quality of the media content. A professional kit for MOJO is a fully equipped, full high-definition, broadcast-quality, multimedia mobile studio for novices and professionals alike.

Mandatory Kit Items

Professionals have suggested the following items to have in a professional MOJO kit.

• Smartphone

The iPhone 6s Plus scored 81 percent in a recent review by Australia's Choice magazine. Apple still sells and supports this model. It films in 4K. Has a lot of memory storage. It has a coveted mic/headphone jack and supports the widest range of accessories.



- **Protective cover**

If you buy a protective or durable phone case, you need to make sure you continue to use it. You must buy a cover that is shatterproof and drop-proof at the same time. This not only eliminates hindrance in work but also adds to the life of the device.



- **Lenses**

Smartphone cameras are amazing, but they are still limited, especially when it comes to their small lenses. Add-on lenses can help to improve video quality in certain circumstances. A wide range of telephoto, wide, and macro external lenses for smartphones are now available from manufacturers like Olloclip, Exolens, Moment, and Moondog. These typically attach to the phone via an external mount or with a clip that snaps onto the phone, and some brands allow you to attach ND filters.



- **Clip microphone**

Also known as lapel or lavalier microphones – are ideal for recording interviews in noisy or windy areas. The microphone attaches to your interviewee's clothing, and the other end plugs into your phone. Widely used microphones include the Rode Smartlav and the Boya BY-M1. These microphones have a 3.5mm jack, so if your phone does not have a 3.5mm port, you will need an adaptor. You can also buy clip microphones with lightning jacks for iPhone 7 and above – like the Sennheiser Clip Mic.



- **Extension cords**

For medium shots or for filming from a distance greater than one meter, you should plug your clip-microphone into an extension cord like the Rode SC1. This extension cord works with both Rode Smartlav and Boya BY-M1 microphones.



- **Tripod**

Using a tripod will give you the stable video footage and sharper photos. Many mojos use a robust tripod like the Manfrotto BeFree, but because you do not need to support a heavy TV camera or DSLR, an inexpensive lightweight tripod will also give great results



- **Extra Batteries**

Battery life is different for every smartphone and there are a lot of options when it comes to portable power banks. An Extra battery pack should always be kept handy unless you want to be at the scene of a great story with zero battery on your phone. It is recommended to carry a 20000mAH power bank to charge your mobile phone in-case the battery drains at a considerably higher rate



- **Gimbal**

A gimbal is not a mojo essential but can be useful. A gimbal combines a smartphone mount with a motorized grip. It keeps the phone camera pointing at an object being filmed while you move around. Popular brands include DJI, FeiyuTech, Movi, Zhiyun, and LanParte. Many gimbal mounts cover the phone's microphone socket, so you may need to record audio using a second phone or external recording device. Two gimbals that do not cover the microphone port are the LanParte HG-01, and the FeiyuTech G6 Plus



- **Hard drives/USB drives**

For extra storage use a cloud service combined with an external hard drive, a flash drive. There are many different brands, but two basic types. The lightning version for iOS devices (one example is iXpand by Sandisk) and a WiFi version that works across platforms (Airstash by Maxell). Preferably the hard drive should be in TeraBytes and USB in GigaBytes



Mobile Camera Apps That You May Use

- **Native camera app**

This is the built-in camera app in every smartphone and is quite easy to use. With newer models and software updates the performance of the mobile camera upgrades as well. Most smartphone cameras will shoot at 1080p (Full HD) and even 4K (Ultra HD). But most do not give you separate control over focus and exposure, and you cannot control audio levels. The other issue is framerate. Framerate does not matter if your story is going online or on social media, but if it is going on TV, you need to consider it. All iPhones and most Androids shoot at 30fps / 60fps, so if you are working in a PAL country, you need an app that allows you to select 25fps / 50fps.

- **Protake**

Protake is a free (for both android and iOS) top-rated camera app. It brings the filmmaking experience of professional cinema cameras to mobile devices for daily vloggers, directors, and well-established filmmakers, that benefit from Protake's features such as different modes, color stabilization, monitoring tools, focuses assistance, and metadata



- **Open Camera (Free - Android only)**

Is an app that is exclusive to Android with features such as an option to auto-level, so the pictures are perfectly leveled. Support for scene modes, color effects, white balance, ISO, exposure compensation/lock, a selfie with "screen flash", HD video. Handy remote controls: timer (with optional voice countdown), auto-repeat mode (with configurable delay). Option to take photo remotely by making a noise, or by voice command and much more.



- **FilmiC Pro (License - both Android & iOS, specially designed for MOJO journalists)**

The FiLMiC Pro is a licensed app and has been enhanced with cutting-edge capabilities and the most responsive manual camera interface available on Android and iOS to help achieve the highest quality of video clips, music videos, short films, or even feature movies. FiLMiC Pro has been used in more high-profile video & film projects than any other video app, including critically acclaimed movies like Tangerine and short clips like DragonBorne. As a professional film camera, FiLMiC Pro v6 includes several Banner Features:

Dual arc slider controls for adjusting focus and exposure.
Live analytics suite including Zebra Stripes, Clipping, False Color, and Focus Peaking. Ramped zoom rocker control.
White balance adjustment matrix with predefined and custom presets.
Content Management System for project file naming.



- **LU smart (Free/License - both Android and iOS)**

Is a free and licensed app for both Android and iOS widely used for MOJO. The LU-Smart HD Mobile App Solution brings LiveU's bonded transmission technology to mobile phones and tablets, combining Wi-Fi and cellular networks to reach optimal video quality



Mobile Editing Apps That You May Use

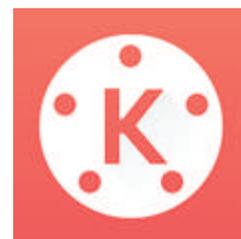
- **LumaFusion (Paid - iOS only)**

The most popular mobile video editing app for iOS is now better than ever! LumaFusion offers powerful features and an elegant UI. The simple-start timeline gives new users an intuitive head start, and professionals will find all the powerful features they need. Tutorials overlay help in the app and a detailed user guide will get you started and keep you going. Our friendly support gives you direct access to our editing experts.



- **Kine Master (Paid - both Android and iOS)**

KineMaster is an easy-to-use, full-featured video editor loaded with powerful tools. KineMaster and all its editing tools are free to use, but you can unlock even more KineMaster Premium. Videos can be edited and shared with KineMaster.



- **iMovie (Free, iOS only)**

iMovie app allows you to record, edit, and export your professional-looking HD movies on your iOS device. The app makes smart use of multi-touch gestures to allow you to add videos, photos, music, and sound effects, and piece them together.



Checklist before Shooting

One must have this checklist in hand before starting a shoot.

- **Minimize external noise**

Foam windshields are usually the first defensive tool against wind noise. An open-cell foam cover around the microphone will disperse and diminish the acoustical energy of the wind hitting the mic capsule, reducing that low-end vibration.

Shooting in low light causes images to be muddy and grainy. A way to mitigate this problem is to shoot with a higher ISO. Using a wide aperture lens so that more light hits your sensor is also highly recommended

- **Check battery**

Always check the battery of your phone and other electronic equipment before shooting as you do not want a dead phone in the middle of a great story. One can always check the health of their phone's battery through third-party apps and native apps.

- **Put the mobile phone on airplane mode**

Imagine being in the middle of a video interview with a Subject Matter Expert when your cell phone rings. You could ignore it and continue the interview, right? Wrong. When your cell phone rings it stops recording. So, save yourself the embarrassment of having to ask your SME to repeat everything that they just said and put your phone on airplane mode before you start shooting.

- **Check available memory**

Memory can be an issue while shooting from your smartphone. If you are short on memory the shoot will be interrupted making it nearly impossible to complete the task. Android phones have memory cards that can extend the space while iOS phones do not. In this case, you can either clear up space while backing your data on iCloud. Available memory can be checked in the settings of the phone.

- **Clean lens**

It sounds simple, but this is always a great place to start. It is the equivalent of remembering to take the lens cap off a camera. It is something so obvious that it is often easy to forget. Before you shoot any video with your smartphone, make sure the camera's view is not obstructed, and give it a quick swab. Moistened cleaning wipes are the best for this job, but a quick breath and your shirt will do the trick, too.

- **Check the background**

Make sure nothing in the frame looks odd. Avoid including any signs or other text in the background, as this will distract the viewer.

- **Do a test recording**

A function test is highly recommended before proceeding with the shoot. Ask your interviewee a simple question, like what they had for breakfast, or where they went on their last holiday, so you can check that the phone is working properly and that the audio sounds good. Press 'stop' and listen to your test recording on headphones.

Important Tips

Experts on MOJO have the following tips to share with the trainees waiting to enter the field.

- **Apps for manual control**

These apps are important to make your smartphone work like a typical DSLR. There are various apps for Android and iOS with manual control of focus, exposure, white balance, and other important features for example Cinema 4K (Android) and ProShot (iOS / Android)

- **Camera setting**

Smartphones might be limited in functionality compared to more dedicated video cameras, but that does not mean they are only capable of shooting one type of video. Most premium smartphones these days have a few different resolutions and frame rates to choose from. On Android phones, these settings are usually right inside the main camera app. Apple, however, has buried these options in the main settings menu. the three most used video settings are 1080p at 30 frames per second, 1080p at 24 frames per second, and 1080p at 60 frames per second.

- **Test mic level**

This function test ensures that your mic is working properly to avoid audio distortions. Several applications can aid you in optimizing the performance of the most important tool for MOJO.



- **Test light**

Sunny days mean lots of shadows. Partially cloudy days mean the light outside will change constantly. Under these conditions consider filming indoors and pack an external light. The main source of light – whether it is the sun or an indoor light – should be in front of your interviewee’s face. Any bright source of light behind your interviewee will cause their face to be in shadow, or even silhouette – and this will make the interview unusable.

- **Keep phone horizontal**

Remember to hold your cell phone in landscape mode (horizontally) when you are filming. The standard resolution for HD TV is 16:9, which is, essentially, a shot filmed in landscape mode. So, if your video is in landscape mode, it can be used on full screen. If you must move while shooting you should hold your phone horizontally with both hands for more stability.

- **The shot that makes the sequence**

The five-shot sequence popularized by video journalist Michael Rosenblum, also relies on wide, medium, and close-up shots, while introducing the idea of perspective. In a five-shot sequence, the first shot is a close-up of a subject’s hands — a pianist, for example, tickling the ivories. The next shot is a close-up of the subject’s face. For the third shot, move back from the action and capture a medium shot of the subject. Next, move to an “over-the-shoulder” shot. Standing just behind the subject, shoot downward toward the action — hands on the keyboard, for example — showing what is happening from a point-of-view. The three main benefits of a shot sequence are: Shot sequences promote continuity, compress time, and add professional polish.

- **Stabilize the camera**

Stability is key while recording a video from your camera and must be given utmost attention. A camera stabilizer, or camera–stabilizing mount, is a device designed to hold a camera in a manner that prevents or compensates for unwanted camera movement, such as "camera shake". For small hand-held cameras, a harness or contoured frame steadies the camera against the photographer's body.

- **Manual zoom**

By using manual controls, you can manipulate settings to produce the image you want. Manual mode can be intimidating for casual users; especially those with no knowledge of advanced camera theory. Most recent smartphones come with some form of a manual mode within the camera app. They might get fancy and call it pro mode or something along those lines. Simply go into the camera app and look at your shooting modes to find out if your phone has manual shooting capabilities.

Establishing A News Startup

Let there be News!

Establishing a news startup on digital platforms with a sustainable future requires a steady business plan, consistent hard work, and patience. The whole process can be divided into six stages starting from planning the news startup to thinking like a startup to picking the right platforms and toolbox to ensure digital security and to the big launch.

Planning for a News Startup

In the planning phase, one must have clarity on the kind of media products and services they would be throwing in the market and its pace and audience. One should also develop a clear timeline and roadmap of their plan of action to keep themselves focused on their goal of turning their business idea into a sustainable business model. It also includes building a revenue plan and team required for the startup. You should have answers to the following questions by the end of this stage.

- Who is your audience?
- What kind of content do they like to consume?
- Who are your competitors?
- What does their audience like?
- What is the reach of the product or service?
- How to take it from the local audience to a global audience?
- Which monetization options are available for this project?
- What are the right platforms to launch the platforms?

Thinking Like a Startup

Starting with a blank slate is important to launch a digital venture. The same techniques that big companies have used in their business strategy do not need to work for your startup too. Each business model has different needs and approaches that must be dealt with differently.

The key tips are to

- Have an entrepreneurial mindset
- Fake it till you make it
- Start on a low budget and using minimum requirements to start
- Defining the unique selling point of the business

It means:

- Do you want to become a podcaster? Yes? Start podcasting.
- Do you want to become a professional chef? Yes? Start cooking.
- Do you want to be a copywriter? Yes? Start writing
- Do you have side hustle ideas you want to start? Stop watching Netflix every night.
- Do you want to learn email marketing? Yes? Start building your email list today.

Picking the Right Platform

Not every business model is meant for every platform on the internet. Each media startup has its specifications that can meet only by specific platforms. For example, if one is interested in making podcasts, YouTube would be better for them. If one would like to build a community, they can choose Facebook to do so. The entrepreneurs can also choose a combination of platforms for their startups depending on the need of the need.

Preparing to Launch

The final stage of establishing a news startup is launching it. The main question is where to launch it? Should you make your entry on all digital platforms at once or you should take one step at a time measuring its strength and weaknesses and molding your business plan accordingly to meet you short-term and ong-term sustainable goals?

Introduction to WordPress Blogging

The blog has appeared as an effective form of media content on digital platforms. The word “Blog” is an abbreviated version of “weblog,” that is used to define those websites which publish an ongoing chronicle of information (Introduction to Blogging, 2019). Blogs can discuss a variety of subjects ranging from personal tales to political drama to sports to entertainment. A decade ago, bloggers would develop their blog websites to share their thoughts about a subject with their audience. Now, several news giants have included blogs into their websites that publish the work of renowned bloggers and vloggers. It indicates the value blogging has earned over the period. It also shows the power digital media holds in shaping the way mainstream media used to work traditionally.

WordPress is a free and open-source content management source that allows users to create their blogs. The interface is easy to use and manage. WordPress was released on May 27, 2003, by its founders, Matt Mullenweg, and Mike Little. You can design your blog on WordPress and can get it registered under name of your choosing.

Writing Your First Blog Post

The online platforms require special writing skills that can help the content to survive in the larger pool of content for a longer period. The content writers should know:

Value addition in a blog post

Any opportunity to make something feel more tailored to a specific audience can add more value to your content. It means the ability to present information within a blog that makes it more suitable for a specific audience need. This is done through additional context, relevance, and expertise.

Creating a Plot

No one will agree on what makes a good story completely. We all have our tastes that dictate which kinds of stories we are drawn to and the kind of language we prefer to read. But there are a few ways to consider a “good story” as you create your own.

There are also a few generalizations that can tentatively be applied across the board, no matter which approaches to the story you take.

- Simplicity is the best.
- Boring words do not work.
- Get familiar with literary devices.
- There must be conflict.
- Have characters your readers can cheer for.

Along with having conflict, you need characters that your readers can cheer for.

Importance of word-count

Defining text length is obvious: it is how long your text is. You have a better chance of ranking in Google or Alexa if you write long, high-quality blog posts, of 500-800 words.

The appropriate language to use

It does not matter which language you use for writing your posts –but you should learn to write properly. You do not need to have a literature-level command of the language, but your grammar and spellings must be correct. It is one such very important aspect that, often, is ignored by those who wish to take blogging as a career.

Digital Security

Digital security is highly important for digital startups to adopt and follow in this age. It includes the tools that can be used to secure the identity and data of the individuals or companies. These tools may include anti-virus software, virtual private networks, web services, biometrics, and secure personal devices that individuals or companies could use to keep themselves safe online.

While everyone online can get affected by security breaches resulting in losing their information in hands of hackers, journalists all around the world are, particularly at risk. They need to know the tools that will help keep them secure on digital platforms.

The digital news startups can make use of the following tips to protect their ventures from cyber-attacks.

Strong passwords

Strong passwords are utterly important – they prevent unauthorized access to your online digital accounts and devices. If you choose a very complicated and long password, you will make it very difficult for a hacker to crack it, whether by a brute-force attack (i.e., trying every possible combination of numbers, letters, or special characters) or an automated machine attack trying thousands of combinations per second to guess your one and only.

A strong password is 12 to 16 characters long including at least 1 capital letter, 1 small letter, 1 digital, and 1 special character. It must not be a phrase, name, title, or meaningful combination of numbers or words.

16 character-length password example: **^g3)Y_sf*-Gx4Q1b**

Using the right hosting service

Decide how much handholding you will need. You should consider the following before deciding on a hosting service and hosting plan.

Are you familiar with the technical knowledge required to develop and maintain a website? If you are not, then you should select a hosting service that provides efficient customer support in this area. Some service providers also offer web development services at some additional charges. Thoroughly read their service plans before deciding.

Have you estimated the amount of traffic you expect (and be honest with yourself)? Hosting providers generally charge based on storage and bandwidth usage. If you expect only a few folks to visit your site, the bandwidth will be low. But if you are suddenly featured at the top of Google or your product goes viral you can expect bandwidth requirements to surge.

Have you estimated the amount of content you will be putting on your website? This is the most important area of concern for any website owner. If you are planning to run a text-content-based website or a website where video and image content is linked to third-party web services

(Instagram or YouTube) then you do not need to worry much about getting short of storage space. But if you plan to host it on your webserver then you must make an estimate that how much content will you generate in at least, a year, and go for that much. You may want to consider a virtual private server (VPS) if you are concerned about the performance, security, and privacy of your website and content.

Be wary of unlimited offers. Some hosting providers offer so-called unlimited storage and bandwidth for a few dollars a month. This deal often is not what it seems to be. If you pay three bucks a month for hosting, there will likely be something in your terms of service allowing your hosting provider to either throttle your performance or shut you down after a certain usage level.

Own your domain name. Make sure you own the domain. That way you can change providers if needed and own any earned SEO benefits.

Backups

The purpose of the backup is to create a copy of data that can be recovered in the event of a primary data failure. While most service providers guarantee 99.99% uptime and backup of your online data, but you must set up the backup settings by yourself. You can also download your website backups from your hosting service provider. Many social media platforms like Facebook offer backups of your data but some do not. Therefore, you need to manually keep copies of your content at your local computer. Following are some online data backup service providers who offer limited data storage for free and extended storage for a paid subscription.

- Dropbox
- Google Drive
- Microsoft OneDrive

Using the right hosting service

Apart from your hosting provider's security software/application included in your hosting plan, you can also use other commercial or opensource solutions that can be integrated into your hosting service platform. These provide enhanced security for your website protecting it from DDoS attacks, malware, and hacks.

- Securi (<https://sucuri.net/>)
- Wordfence (<https://www.wordfence.com/>)

Virtual Private Network

A virtual private network, or VPN, is an encrypted connection over the Internet from a device to a network. The encrypted connection helps ensure that sensitive data is safely transmitted. It prevents unauthorized people from eavesdropping on the traffic and allows the user to conduct work remotely. VPN technology is widely used in corporate environments. Hosting services also offer VPN-based packages to ensure enhanced data privacy.

Marketing Strategy and Monetization Techniques

Cha-Ching!

In the world of media, the value of content depends on the size of a media organizations' audience. It means the bigger media companies with more audience will charge more for their advertisements than smaller companies with a lesser audience. The same formula works in the digital world.

Digital Media Ecosystem

The entrepreneurs need to learn about the digital media ecosystem before making their big move into the field. Digital media can ensure success but the path to it is not that easy as it sounds. Growing your brand on social media can be tough. It is a slow process especially for startups that have limited resources.

Tips

- Learn from your failures: Failure is inevitable. 90% of startups fail. But every failure is a chance to learn and grow.
- Organize your marketing strategy: The success of your business depends on your marketing strategy. Make an extensive plan with achievable goals and a timeline.
- Produce your content regularly to ensure sustainable growth: It is important to post content regularly so that the audience is engaged and satisfied. Regular posting also helps to be more visible on the audience's timelines
- Collaborate with influencers and other digital ventures who share the same target audience: Share, comment, invite, and collaborate with them. Engage positively to foster long-term cooperation. This will contribute towards improving traffic on your channel as well.
- Focus on engagement: Think of new and creative ways to engage with your audience. Engaging through comments on social media is not enough. Regularly post polls, ask questions, and be quick with your response.

7P's and 7C's of Marketing

Stick to 7P's and 7C's of marketing throughout your journey.

7P's of marketing

- **Product:** refer to a tangible or digital news product or a news service. Anything that has a demand.
- **Price:** Price includes discounts, terms, ads, fees, and so on. If you advertise as having a very high-quality product, your pricing should reflect that claim.
- **Promotion:** Refers to advertising, marketing, and sales techniques. This includes traditional advertising, via TV or more modern methods, like ads within web content, ads on a podcast, email marketing or push notifications.
- **Place:** locations—where a product is made, viewed in ads, distributed, and sold. You need to ensure that your audience can find it easily and relate to it.
- **Packaging:** Every visual element of your news platform available to subscribers/customers. Remember, people, form their first impression about your news platform within the first 30 seconds of seeing you or some element of your news product.
- **Positioning:** This is the image of your news product brand in the minds of the subscribers customers and how it is distinguished from the news products of the competitors.
- **People:** Those who are involved in selling a news product or news service, designing, and managing it. The 'people' element of the 7Ps involves anyone directly, or indirectly, involved in the business side of the news startup.

7C's of marketing

- **Customer:** Your marketing strategy must be focused on its customers and content consumers in the case of digital news outlet. The marketer must understand the customer as a person, not just a target market. Once you understand the target customer, you can adapt their product or service and even their brand to appeal to the target customer. Adapting to suit the target customer must be a continuous process.
- **Consistency:** Stick to the theme you have planned and started with. This way you will deliver what your audience expects, and they will be satisfied. If the consumer observes a change from what was promised, they will shift to another service.
- **Creativity:** People are constantly exposed to advertising. You need to find innovative ways to get the target customer's attention. Find new and innovative ways to inform, educate, and persuade your consumers.
- **Culture:** To reach a global audience, marketing messages must have a broad cultural appeal. Alternatively, specific marketing messages can be delivered to specific cultures. Companies cannot assume that everyone behaves and responds as their culture does. Such an assumption can harm companies.

- **Communication:** No one likes “in your face” marketing messages. Nor do people appreciate being “marketed to.” Most people prefer to be “communicated with.” The right communication message informs, educates, and persuades the target customer in a way that they understand—it gains the target customer’s trust.
- **Change:** As a marketer, you need to continually adjust your marketing strategy to accommodate the changing target customer, societal changes, and especially technological changes. Trying something different is likely what it will take to get the attention of the target customers. Marketing communication messages must reflect all these potential areas of change if they are to be effective.
- **Channel:** The transformational impact of the Internet on many modes of human interaction cannot be denied. The ability of companies to access global markets through a well-crafted online presence is particularly well recognized. Relatedly, the ability of competitors to target a company’s domestic market from remote corners of the globe presents a unique challenge for managers, including marketing specialists.

Defining Key Performance Indicator & Measuring Success

A Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is a measurable value that measures how effectively a business is achieving its key objectives. Organizations use KPIs to evaluate their success at reaching targets. Each business model requires different KPIs to measure its success based on its set goals and targets.

Once you have selected your key business metrics, you will want to track them in a real-time reporting tool. KPI management can be done using dashboard reporting software, giving your entire organization insights into your current performance.

Monetization Techniques and Business Models

With an increase in online readership and content consumption, online journalism is thriving. Advertisers have new forms of advertisements that were not possible to implement before. They can modify their campaigns based on the behavior of their readers measuring their effectiveness with unprecedented accuracy. The new model of business on the internet is threatening the legacy business model of mainstream media which are now struggling with managing their finances. The digital news startups are paving the way with disruptive businesses whose success depends on the capacity for exponential Internet market growth.

The Internet provides information that is abundant, long-lasting, and largely free to consume for the audience. With this concept in mind, entrepreneurs in digital journalism require business models that meet the requirements of the audience along with generating a stable income stream for themselves. A successful business model creates revenue for an organization while providing values for consumers.

The online news startups follow different ways to earn revenue from their products or services. These models can be divided into three categories.

Scale Dependent and Ad-Supported

This model looks up to the needs of the internet audience who are more interested in reading about viral content. BuzzFeed was launched with the very idea. Its purpose was to track viral content on the internet. BuzzFeed's executive chairman had predicted that the content companies of the future will focus on mobile, video, social, and technology. He focused on the area making the advertisements on the website as interesting as the content. The platform also gets insights from the data it receives to improve its content. This strategy proved a success and today we all look up to BuzzFeed as an icon in the field of news startups.

Subscription Dependent and Ad-Supported

Although it is not a trend in Pakistan now but in the west, many publications are giving subscription-based access to their content to their audience. New York Times, Wall Street Journal is two examples to mention. They offer rates that are not heavy on the pocket of their consumers and are enough to support some of their expenses. They also use advertisements to run their businesses. Additionally, once you completely focus your business around making your paying customers happy the quality of your work improves which ultimately brings you credibility and strength particularly in the case of the news business.

Digital Niche Publications

This third model implies small-scale news startups or blogs that take a low-key start but eventually develop their audience. Their hard work paves the way for them to monetize their blogs by diving deeply into a specific subject. Over time they may adopt a subscription-based model and advertisements to further support their startup. The key principle is to establish a trusted and respected brand that people can trust and pay for.

Social media platforms also offer different options for monetization of content on their channel. Entrepreneurs use a combination of platforms to push their content online, earning through each platform. The monetization on digital platforms requires a refreshed mindset that can understand and make use of different choices of their consumers. Here, we will talk about YouTube monetization only.

YouTube: Optimization and Monetization

YouTube is the best option for freelance journalists and content creators to earn through their content using this video-based platform. YouTube reviews channels before approving their content for monetization on its platform. This review process continues even after the first approval to make sure the content creators are adhering to the policies and guidelines of the platform.

To set up a channel for monetization on YouTube, one needs to join the YouTube partner program and meet its requirements to do so. Once it is done, the creators can activate monetization on their videos to start earning revenue through AdSense.

The following are the main requirements of this program.

- Adhere to all policies of the YouTube Partner Program.
- Live in a country or region where the YouTube Partner Program is available.
- Have more than 5,000 public watch hours in the last year.
- Have more than 5,000 subscribers.
- Have a linked AdSense account.

YouTube also monitors channels after this approval to make sure those are not violating community policies. It automatically removes channels from its partner program if it finds them violating its policies. YouTube monetization is based on the number of views – more views will generate more money. Companies also create advertisements that get placed at the beginning of their videos. These are called pre-roll ads. Each time a viewer watches an ad all the way through, it adds into account the content creator.

YouTube offers the following options to earn money through videos.

Advertising Revenues

The first two steps in earning online revenue with YouTube are to open an account and turn on account monetization. Enabling monetization requires accepting YouTube's advertising guidelines and connecting to an AdSense account for the payment. Enabling ads on your YouTube videos requires agreeing to Google's ad revenue share for YouTube. There is a 45/55 split for all content creators, so Google keeps 45 percent of all YouTube advertising on your videos, and you get the remaining 55 percent.

Channel memberships

Channel memberships allow viewers to join your channel through monthly payments and get members-only perks like badges, emojis, and other goods. However, there are minimum requirements to be considered for channel memberships, such as having more than 5000 subscribers, you are more than 18 years old and you are in one of the available locations.

Merch shelf

The merch shelf and related merch features allow eligible channels to showcase their official branded merchandise on YouTube. The shelf appears on the video page of eligible channels but may not show on all video pages.

Super chat and super sticker

Super Chat is essentially a comment that is going to be pinned and highlighted in your live stream chat, and similarly, Super sticker is an animated sticker that will remain pinned for a while in a live stream. Both can be bought by viewers, so their comment or sticker remains pinned and visible to everyone. When YouTubers enable super chat and super stickers, they earn revenue whenever someone in the audience buys one.

YouTube premium revenue

With YouTube Premium, members can enjoy any video on YouTube without ads while still supporting creators. By focusing on what fans want, YouTube Premium will play an important role in expanding user engagement on YouTube and provide you with an additional way to get paid for the content you are already creating.

Ethics of Online Media

Online media follows the same ethical guidelines as traditional media with few additions. It requires an additional check on the accuracy of the information, verification of facts, regulation policies, and privacy rights.

Also, check the following points before publishing your content online.

- Always use trusted sources in your stories.
- Double-check your facts and make sure you have provided enough sources to support them.
- Do not give your opinion on news-related content.
- Provide a link to reliable sources with the important information and facts in your content.
- Always acknowledge your mistakes and put a note with an updated version of your content.
- Take permission from the external sources if you are using their content or work in your stories.
- Keep open communication with your audience.

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Experts' Profiles

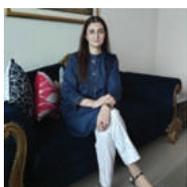
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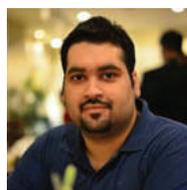
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