



2018 Q3 Company Reviews

People

Average Score - 8

High Score - 10

Low Score - 5

Common Theme(s) -

- Need to develop a growth strategy for Blue and News, as well as other positions that may become necessary with the new site features
 - Changes to Statements of Work around new site features
 - Editorial leadership for the news team
- Staff trainings for new site features
- Weekend team structure
 - Communication?

"We have the right team for what we're doing now. But not sure if our current team is right for what our goals are with the new site, including managing topic pages, coordinating coverage across teams, etc.," - (7)

"I think we're in a better spot than at the time of the last review. Bringing on a second editor has been tremendous. I feel like team leads, writers, and editors are more on the same page now than previously. There's always room to grow in terms of learning skills, but I feel like the team is better suited at this point to accept feedback and constructive criticism than it was just a couple of months ago." - (7)

"The additional writers on the team, along with the editing, has made things move really well. There can still be some delays, miscommunications on the weekends, but I don't have a better idea of how to improve that." - (9)

"Yes, I think we have great leadership but believe there could be more of a structure and strategy for the news team. While I understand that we're primarily a content company, I think it could help to have someone with more hard news experience in place to direct/coach all of the departments (finding the right events to go to, asking the right questions, finding the right contacts, etc..)" - (7)

Plan

Average Score - 7

High Score - 10

Low Score - 5

Common Theme(s) -

- Changes to content selection for Red
- How changes to the site will impact the writers' day to day
- Timeline around changes and rollout





"I think there is a bit of confusion among some of the writers who have been with the company longer on what type of content is still okay and what we're trying to avoid moving forward. Could be worth making it a little more clear how those changes fit in with the new mission and maybe reiterating that we're offering multiple distinct perspectives now and what the expectations are for making something Red or Blue beyond just the subject matter." - (8)

"It feels like we've been told where we're going (new site) without any communication as to how we'll get there. No timetable has been communicated, nor how or when our day to day operations will change. As I understand it, the jump to the new site will significantly alter how we do our work and what we do, and I think it would be better to communicate how we plan on making that transition sooner than later." - (5)

"I have a general sense of what the plan is moving forward, but I'm not too sure about how we're going to get there or what it entails. I feel that it gets discussed in passing during our staff meetings, but I don't feel like I have a good grasp on it." - (5)

"There are a lot of moving parts for the IJR strategy moving forward. I'm not sure that I have a complete grasp on what is to come between our goals for both content and the website itself or when it will all be implemented. With that said, I like everything I've heard so far and the general target we are trying to hit. I don't really have a recommendation for how to improve the plan moving forward. I think I just need to see it in action with the Red, Blue, and News teams." - (8)

Process

Average Score - 8

High Score - 10

Low Score - 6

Common Theme(s) -

- Need better communication around site issues and changes
- Structure around how different verticals collaborate with each other

"My first impression of the process as it relates to the structure of the new site seems confusing and not well thought out. We should be considering how Red and Blue teams will respond to original pieces earlier in that process, not after the fact. Springing it on the content teams after that original piece is done, and then instructing us to take a certain angle is not an effective way to inform our audience and put out the best possible work. Turning around a well researched and fleshed out argument on a topic as nuanced as health care policy shouldn't be treated the same way as an aggregated story pitch." - (6)

"I think there could be more communication on what is going on with the website, at least on the backend. There have been a lot of changes and some of them have been surprises. Other than that, I think the new pitch format is helpful for headline practice and doesn't take too much time and I think communication for other process issues (gifs, meetings, etc.) has been clear." - (8)





"Messaging tools like Slack are very helpful for contacting anyone during the day. It could be helpful to have more resources on Namely to explain things like healthcare and the 401K more clearly because it seems a little confusing and hard to access at times." - (8)

Promotion

Average Score - 8

High Score - 10

Low Score - 5

Common Theme(s) -

- Are there things we can do prior to the big rollout?

"Understandable that we're holding off on any big marketing/promotional pushes until after the site relaunch and rebrand, but I think in the meantime, we could ramp up our Twitter activity to reach more people outside of our Facebook audiences and to increase name recognition online. Once we're comfortable, I think doing more in terms of PR, events, getting our name out there needs to happen." - (5)

"It seems like we are doing well with promotion/messaging but could work on getting our writers to connect more with sources for potential stories. Sometimes our headlines can come off as gossipy, gimmicky, or exaggeration, which I think hurts our ability to be seen as a trusted organization for news." - (7)

"I think the mission is very clear within the company and is slowly being launched to the outside world, which is really exciting. I think the weekly updates are really helpful in the staff meetings, but it would also be helpful to see a timeline perhaps? I'm not sure what's going on with the Paperboys video, but I think releasing bits of that (at some point) could be a really cool hype strategy (even just within the office) could be beneficial." - (8)

"This is a little bit of a work in process, but I think we have done a great job cleaning up our image and message. Some of this has to do with now seemingly having a staff that isn't as negative or controversial publicly but also there's been a concerted effort, top down, to do good work and not just get numbers--which is a great improvement." - (8)

Product

Average Score - 7

High Score - 10

Low Score - 4

Common Theme(s) -

- How will shifts in coverage affect the site, readers, and teams?
- Improvement in content selection since last quarter

"I think our content is great right now. My biggest concern in how we serve our readers relates to the shift in coverage that will happen when we launch the new site. When we have to coordinate coverage to give the "red





and blue views" on topics, one side will invariably suffer because the things that concern the audiences of the two verticals have very little overlap, and that overlap tends to fall mostly on straight news pieces. " - (8)

"I think we've done a much better job in terms of the content we've put out. At the time of our last review, I felt uneasy about a good portion of the content we were doing. Some of it felt purposefully divisive, cheap, and condescending, and I always thought we were better than that. Just because we have Red and Blue doesn't mean we need to completely obliterate the other side. I feel we're heading in the right direction in terms of writing content that appeases each vertical's respective readership without being divisive or insulting, and I think neutral readers are more receptive that approach." - (6)

"I think the content does reflect the mission. Blue is slowly becoming a stronger presence, which allows the balance between liberal/conservative news to even out. I think the things that are denying our users an experience that is 100% is all the technical bugs that prohibit them from fully interacting with the website. For example, for the past week or so I've gotten numerous complaints that people aren't able to comment, upvote, or downvote content. People are severely peeved by this and while I understand it's not a top priority, our readers value the community as a way to have their opinions heard. Without this feature, our website does not reflect our mission. I'm not exactly sure what the best way to handle this is, but hopefully these bugs will be fixed when we transition to the new site. However, if something like this were to happen again, perhaps there is a more efficient way for us to blast to our users that we're having bugs. Other than this particular issue and the continuation of nasty commenters, readers really do enjoy IJR overall, which is awesome!!" - (7)