



manifesto

audience centric media



a manifesto for audience centric media

This is a first statement on what an audience centric newsroom should look like. Is it set in stone? No. We would like to encourage you to react.

This first version is a result of research on the topic from our team, comments during a webinar with Dmitry Shishkin and Marcela Kunova and of course the experience smartocto has after ten years in content analytics.

But it's you who can contribute to a next version, making this brighter and more useful for everyone who is working in media and who wants to put their audience at the center of their publishing strategy.

Go to smartocto.com/manifesto and leave your comments.

Know **who** you are

Understand why people come to your platform for information and write it down.

How? Look at your 50 best and 50 worst performing articles over a longer period of time to understand your strength and weakness.

Ask yourself what would happen to your audience if you no longer existed tomorrow.

This exercise should lead to a clear set of user needs. Are you there for inspiration, help, humour, or connection with others?

User needs are the proxy for audience centricity.

Talk to your audience

Organise dialogues with your audience through webinars or even live events. Ask them what they think of the content of your journalism through surveys.

Then use their language in your publications or even in the navigation and sections of your website.

Decision makers should be part of this conversation themselves, or at least be able to witness it first hand.

Change the culture

Tools are useful, but mindset is vital.

Appoint ambassadors in the newsroom: professionals who, in every meeting, ask which user need is being served and why.

Ambassadors who actively push for collecting questions and feedback from users.

Pay attention to language as well. Not an audience engagement manager, but an audience engagement editor.

The entire editing team needs to be involved.

Aim for loyalty

If you value a long term, meaningful relationship with your audience, loyalty should be the key metric you optimise for.

Loyal users return more often, consume more content, and are more willing to contribute and to pay.

Treat sections as 'mini brands'

Start seeing your most important sections as individual brands. Describe and position them around specific user needs.

This gives each section its own character, which strengthens recognition and loyalty. Timing, channel, navigation, and format all play a role.

Every section should have its own clear identity.

Make use of **smart editorial analytics**

Systems are becoming smarter by the day.

They offer real time suggestions, think along, are AI driven, and structurally identify opportunities that humans cannot keep up with in the daily rush.

Use these tools intelligently and functionally to improve your work, not to hand it over.

They are a means, not an end.

Keep **going**

Do not expect miracles from the first article you publish with this mindset.

Audience centricity needs to be an integral part of your strategy, and that implies a long term commitment. It is part of digital transformation, and that does not happen overnight.

It requires perseverance and persistence.

The work is never finished.

Actively **build niches**

The popularity of newsletters and podcasts is no coincidence.

Find and develop your niche by experimenting within a single section. Build mini experts in your newsroom.

Claim topics that truly matter to you and cover them, together with experts, from multiple angles to tell the full story.

Use these insights to strengthen other sections step by step.

Fail **forward**

Embrace experimentation. Innovation and experimentation go hand in hand.

Actively look for new ways to reach and engage people.

Dare to break things.

Dare to make mistakes.

Learn from them and use those insights as the starting point for the next experiment.

Co create. Use the wisdom of the crowd

Audience centricity cannot exist without taking your audience seriously.

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood," as Stephen R. Covey writes in The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

Empathic listening is the foundation for better communication and trust, but the best way of exposing that you have listened is to use the input in your reporting.



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