

Wan-Ifra launches European news transformation and coaching programme

Wan-Ifra, the World Association of News Publishers, has launched European news transformation and coaching programme for regional and local news publishers, in partnership with the Google News Initiative.



Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

[Table Stakes Europe](#) uses a performance challenge as the basis for participating news publishers to identify and close shortfalls in their core digital capabilities (the so-called ‘table stakes’, an expression for the money needed to have a seat at the table in a poker game).

The programme comes from the US where publishers like *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald*, and *Minneapolis Star Tribune* were among the first news organisations to experiment with the methodology.

A year later, these organisations had learned and developed skills and capabilities improved not only their journalism but also their economics. Since these first results, more than seventy news organisations have now worked through the programme over three years.

Performance results

“Most change efforts fail because they violate a core principle: Performance results are the primary objective of change, not change activities. Instead of falling into the change-for-the-sake-of-change trap, participants will identify and commit to success against a performance challenge that meets the Programme’s objectives” explained Doug Smith, Wan-Ifra associate consultant and architect of the programme.

Announced in Glasgow, Scotland during the World News Media Congress, and funded by [GNI](#) in its first year in Europe, the programme will provide an opportunity for a dozen or so local and regional news enterprises to identify and make significant progress in addressing their biggest current challenges. The Table Stakes manual is for local news organisations, identifying what’s required to play and win the game of news in the 21st century.

“Our belief is that trust, democracy and civic engagement are built from the ground up. Local news plays a critical role in that process and high quality and financially sustainable local journalism are indispensable for people to have a shared understanding and connectivity on which communities depend to govern themselves effectively.” said Vincent Peyrègne, CEO of Wan-Ifra.

“I am delighted by the prospect of working with Doug Smith and the Google News Initiative to support European local news enterprises improve their financial and economic sustainability through providing audience-focused, high quality journalism that provides value to the audiences (and democracies) they serve” he added.

Programme outline and outcomes

The Programme builds upon the successful track record of an initiative funded initially by Knight Foundation and the Lenfest Institute for Journalism, and developed with major metropolitan daily news organisations in the US. It is meant to accelerate journalism’s shift to digital from print, help newsrooms evolve their practices, reach new audiences and better engage their communities.

Seven common themes have emerged to tie together the granular, specific table stakes for core work, workflow, roles, skills, technology, tools, organisation and culture. All are predicated on the belief that putting the audience at the centre is the most and best way to deliver value.

“No single local media organisation has discovered the perfect blueprint for successful digital transformation. But as a participant of the first two Table Stakes cohorts, I can say with certainty that the program has infused dozens of American newsrooms with newfound confidence and capabilities to tackle the significant cultural, technical and economic challenges of today. The peer-to-peer learnings alone have inspired a dynamic realm of shared experimentation, innovation and best practices.” said Stan Wischnowski, executive editor and senior vice president at *Philadelphia Inquirer* PBC, one of the early participants in the US programme.

Applications now open

The deadline for [application](#) to the Programme is 1 September 2019. The Programme will begin in October 2019 and will run for about 12 months.

More details about the programme curriculum, eligibility to enter, and the application process are available [here](#).

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