

Intelligent Business

A Before you read

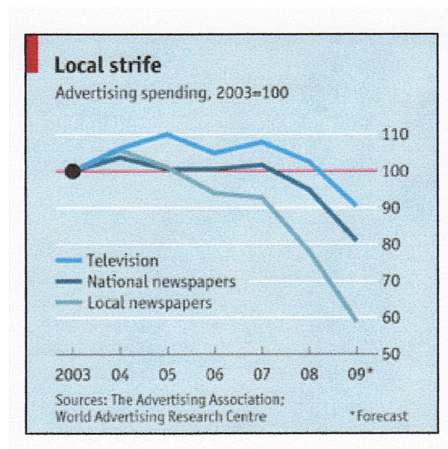
1 Read and discuss

We can all get access to international news through newspapers and magazines such as *The Economist*. Through radio, television and, increasingly, the Internet, we can read reports, examine data, hear interviews and watch videos of events around the world.

But where can we learn about local news? How do we find out about local events and planned changes in the residential, commercial or industrial landscape? How do we learn about local births, marriages and deaths? In the past, local newspapers supplied this information, but how long will local newspapers survive?

B Read the graph

2 In the past, local newspapers generated a lot of their revenue from advertising, both national advertising and local (classified advertising). Tick the true statements below.



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- a) In 2007, advertising spending on television was well above the 2003 level.
- b) In 2007, advertising spending in national newspapers was well above the 2003 level.
- c) In 2007, advertising spending in local newspapers was significantly below the 2003 level.
- d) Since 2007, advertising spending has dropped in all three media.
- e) Since 2007, the most dramatic decline in advertising spending has been in local newspapers.

C Reading Comprehension 1

3 Read the first two paragraphs of the article. Choose the correct option to complete the sentences.

- 1) _____ local newspapers have closed since January 2008.
 - a) Twenty-nine
 - b) About eighty
 - c) Thirty per cent of
- 2) The *Bedworth Echo* _____ newspaper reporting on Bedworth news.
 - a) was the only
 - b) is the last
 - c) is a local
- 3) Paul Zwillenberg says some local newspapers have survived because they _____.
 - a) are supported by advertising.
 - b) had good operating profits.
 - c) have negligible earnings.



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4 Read the next two paragraphs. Complete the sentences.

- 1) The reduction in advertising revenue has _____
 - a) hurt local newspapers less than national newspapers.
 - b) hurt local newspapers even more than national newspapers.
 - c) hurt local newspapers as much as national newspapers.
- 2) The loss of advertising _____
 - a) has also hurt *Rightmove* and *Auto Trader*.
 - b) has included advertisements for property, cars and jobs.
 - c) has shifted to official websites.
- 3) As a result of falling revenues, the *Bedworth Echo* _____
 - a) reduced its circulation by more than 50%.
 - b) reduced its news coverage of local affairs.
 - c) used to write the stories for the journalists.

5 Read the next three paragraphs. Complete the sentences.

- 1) The closure of the *Bedworth Echo* _____
 - a) has damaged to local sense of community.
 - b) means that Bedworth will receive less money.
 - c) the people will survive on more humble fare.
- 2) Anne Tippett of the Civic Hall, an arts centre believes _____
 - a) local people will quickly adapt to getting local news on the internet.
 - b) local politicians are not good communicators.
 - c) readers of the *Bedworth Echo* do not have the skills to adapt quickly.



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- 3) Claire Elders says _____
- a) local news on television and radio does not have much detail.
 - b) the BBC local news service is vital for old, poor and immobile people.
 - c) the local clinic is about to close.

6 Read the next two paragraphs. How has the closure of the Bedworth Echo stimulated new ways to circulate information? Tick the statements which are true.

- a) The local borough council has opened its own website.
- b) The local borough council delivers its own newsletter.
- c) Local politicians have started local residents' groups.
- d) Lynne Price hands out leaflets about local issues.
- e) Lynne Price has started a website about local planning proposals and crime.

D Reading comprehension 2

7 Read the last two paragraphs of the article. Answer the questions.

- 1) What is the problem of local news?
- a) The population is getting older and less able to handle new technology.
 - b) The traditional readers of local newspapers don't know how to use the internet.
 - c) The internet is too expensive for advertising sales of cars, property and so on.
- 2) What are the two intriguing experiments mentioned in the article?
- a) Local websites containing both news and discussion forums.
 - b) On-line newspapers written by local politicians.
 - c) Local chatterboxes in every town.



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- 3) What conclusion does the article reach?
- a) Local newspapers are essential for delivering local information.
 - b) The value of local newspapers was giving people space to exchange ideas.
 - c) Local newspapers talk to themselves, they don't communicate with others.

E Vocabulary

8 Look carefully at the words in *italics*. Complete the sentences.

- 1) If you live in a *former mining settlement*, you live in a place ...
- a) where there are a lot of mines.
 - b) where there used to be a lot of mines.
 - c) which was previously occupied by miners.
- 2) If your earnings are *negligible* ...
- a) they are tax free.
 - b) they have recently reduced.
 - c) they are very low.
- 3) If a *trickle becomes a torrent* ...
- a) a large loss reduces to a small loss.
 - b) a small loss increases to a large loss.
 - c) a small irritation becomes a severe pain.
- 4) If recession *erodes* something, it ...
- a) cuts it off very quickly.
 - b) destroys it completely.
 - c) reduces it slowly and gradually.



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- 5) If you *undermine* a business, you ...
 - a) reduce the revenues which support it.
 - b) compete with it aggressively.
 - c) help it to become more successful.
- 6) Information about *local goings-on* is ...
 - a) news of people arriving and leaving.
 - b) news of the romantic affairs of local politicians.
 - c) news of local activities.
- 7) A *conduit* for views and information is ...
 - a) a channel for delivering views and information.
 - b) a filter for controlling views and information.
 - c) a plug for preventing exchange of views and information.
- 8) If you want to *get the word out*, you want to ...
 - a) remove the word.
 - b) tell the idea to only a few people.
 - c) tell everyone about the idea.
- 9) If you are a *chatterbox*, you are a person who ...
 - a) always has good news.
 - b) always complains.
 - c) never stops talking.
- 10) A *check* on local politicians is ...
 - a) money you pay to get the decision you want.
 - b) a control on their activities.
 - c) a measurement of the work they do.



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F Discussion

9 The Economist article is about one local newspaper in a small town in the Midlands of England. Think about the implications in your own community. Will the developments be the same? Will they be different? Will the solutions be the same? Will they be different?

10 Do you agree with the conclusion of the article – that local newspapers are both important as a source of information and as a forum for discussion?

11 Do you have an in-company newsletter, website or intranet? How is that used?



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The town without news

Jul 23rd 2009 | BEDWORTH

From The Economist print edition

As local newspapers collapse, information is finding new ways to reach people. Not all are hi-tech

WHAT happens when a place loses its newspaper? Most of the 80 or so local papers that have closed in Britain since the beginning of last year were the second- or third-strongest publications in their markets. But the weekly *Bedworth Echo*, which published its last issue on July 10th, was the only paper dedicated to the town's news. A small former mining settlement in the Midlands, Bedworth also lacks a radio station. Although it will still be covered by newspapers focused on its bigger neighbours, it is now a town without news.

It will not be the last. With a few exceptions local newspapers are declining quickly. Trinity Mirror, which owned the *Echo*, shut 27 local newspapers last year and has already closed 22 this year. The main reason more local papers have not collapsed, says Paul Zwillenberg of OC&C, a consultancy, is that they were cushioned by large operating margins. Many have gone from annual profits of up to 30% to negligible earnings. As they tip into loss, the trickle of closures is likely to become a torrent. Enders Analysis, a media consultancy, reckons a third to a half may go in the next five years.

An advertising slump has hit local newspapers much harder than national papers or other media. The growing reach of national brands like Rightmove and Auto Trader means that local papers have lost their grip on property and car advertising. Most painful has been the disappearance of job ads. Public-sector recruitment has shifted mostly to official websites in the past few years, and recession has eroded the rest. In July 1999 an edition of the *Echo* carried 17 pages of job advertisements. The final issue had one-fifth of one page.

As it declined, the *Echo* withdrew from its office in the middle of town and trimmed its coverage of local affairs. By the end it was hardly an effective watchdog. "We used to nearly write the stories for the journalists," says Richard Chattaway, a county councillor. Not surprisingly, the newspaper's circulation more than halved between 2001 and 2008.

Something is nonetheless being lost with its departure. The *Echo* carried reports of school plays, notices of future meetings of the Korean war veterans' association, local sports results and other humble fare. It also reinforced a sense of community. Borough politics has generally revolved around assertions that Bedworth is receiving more, or less, public money than neighbouring Nuneaton, according to Bill Hancox, a councillor. It is not clear where the debate will carry on. The internet is undermining local newspapers much more effectively than it is supporting alternatives.



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"This is a poor town, and not computer literate," says Anne Tippett of the Civic Hall, an arts centre. Bedworth has no prominent blog. Indeed, local politicians appear to be just coming around to e-mail as a means of mass communication. Even if online sources of local news existed, they would not reach many of those who relied on the local paper. The *Echo* was disproportionately read by skilled manual workers and by the middle-aged and old. In its final throes it reached just 15% of the town's 15- to 24-year-olds but 31% of people aged 45-54, reckons JICREG, a local-newspaper research group. Not, in short, the sort of people with Twitter accounts.

Claire Enders of Enders Analysis notes that the people who most need information about local goings-on are the immobile old and the poor, for whom the news that a local clinic is about to close can be vital. They are the people least likely to have access to broadband. As newspapers close, people will seek local news on television and radio, much of it supplied by the BBC. It will not be nearly as detailed.

Yet alternatives are emerging. As its newspaper declined, Bedworth's politicians worked to set up local residents' groups as a conduit for views and information. Their meetings are advertised by means of leaflets posted through people's doors. The Civic Hall too sends leaflets to 12,500 households, and hands out more at the annual carnival and on Bonfire Night. Now that the local paper is no more, Ms Tippett plans to do more of that. The local borough council delivers an increasingly professional-looking newsletter. So do local churches. Oddly, a problem that is high-tech in origin has strengthened a low-tech form of communication.

One person who hands out a lot of leaflets these days is Lynne Price, a local activist known affectionately as "Gobby Lynne". Yet she gets much of her information about planning proposals, crime and so on from the internet. This illustrates one effect of the digitisation of information. As newspapers weaken and die, most people probably become less informed about local affairs, but a few motivated folk grow extremely knowledgeable. Ms Price will miss the *Bedworth Echo*, but not as a source of news. It was, she says, a useful way of getting the word out.

To an extent, the problem of local news is generational—a result of the difficulty of adapting to new technology. As more newspapers fail, and the broadband generation ages and settles down, it is likely that online local-news outfits will strengthen. Intriguing experiments are already under way. In northeast England, Trinity Mirror has "Gazette Live", a mix of professional news and user-generated content, sorted by postcode. Associated Northcliffe Digital, an arm of the media group that runs the *Daily Mail* newspaper, is rolling out a string of town-oriented websites. Associated cleverly located the local gadflies and community chatterboxes—the "gobby" folk—and got them to contribute.



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At the moment hyper-local sites tend to be filled with discussions of town fetes and the next music night at the village pub. It may be, says Roland Bryan of Associated, that this is the equivalent of small talk at a cocktail party, and that people will eventually get down to local politics. Or they may not. As local newspapers fail, we may learn that their real value was less as a check on politicians than simply as a forum for casual conversation—a place where a town can talk to itself.

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http://www.economist.com/world/britain/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14082998



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Key

- A1 open answers
- B2 a), c), d), e).
- C3 1b, 2a, 3b
- C4 1b, 2b, 3b
- C5 1a, 2c, 3a
- C6 b, c, d
- D7 1a, 2a, 3b
- E8 1b, 2c, 3a, 4c, 5a, 6c, 7a, 8c, 9c, 10b
- F9, 10, 11 Open answers



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