

## Results from the Readership Focus Survey

### For more information:

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### Executive Summary

An important segment of the New Readers (2004) study examined how focused the newspapers are on readership.

Using data from 6,600 employees in all departments and at all levels, the research probed five areas, each of which is statistically linked with readership results.

- **Environmental scanning:** how well the newspaper gathers and shares market intelligence
- **Responsiveness:** how well newspapers act on reader needs and feedback
- **Readership mission:** the extent to which readership is a focus of the business
- **New reader orientation:** the extent to which the newspaper is focused on specific groups
- **Staff efficacy:** the extent to which individuals feel a responsibility for readership

In general, results are relatively flat—hovering between 3.0 and 3.5 on a 5-point scale. In most cases, differences among departments and levels in the organization are apparent. As a rule of thumb, any differences of 0.10 or greater are statistically significant.

While all factors correlate with readership, environmental scanning has the strongest link. But it has the lowest rating overall, and newsroom employees are least likely to perceive the newspaper does a good job in this area, rating performance at 2.85 out of 5.

By rank in the organization, management feels the newspaper is performing better than does non-management; upper management has the most positive assessments. By department, newsroom employees grade the newspaper lower on every factor except staff efficacy.

### Background

Newspaper employees were asked to rate their newspaper on a series of statements about readership and readership strategy. Many statements came from a previous research project, Reader Orientation, which was part of the Impact (2000) study. Other statements were added to measure how much emphasis newspapers are putting on better serving readers and growing readership.

The original Readership Orientation report can be found at:

[http://www.readership.org/culture\\_management/reader\\_orientation/data/Jan\\_01\\_Reader\\_Orientation.pdf](http://www.readership.org/culture_management/reader_orientation/data/Jan_01_Reader_Orientation.pdf).

The survey consists of 30 randomized questions. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Using factor analysis, the statements were combined into five groups. Factor analysis clusters questions that respondents tend to answer in the same way: if respondents strongly agree with one of these statements, they tend to strongly agree with the others in this group.

<b>Environmental Scanning</b>	
13	We periodically discuss with managers in our department or with other managers how changes in the market could affect our business.
14	We regularly get information about reader satisfaction.
26	Marketing specialists or other personnel at our newspaper spend time discussing readers and their future needs with us.
(20) <sup>1</sup>	We rarely meet with other departments to discuss reader trends and developments.
15	We periodically review changes to our newspaper and services to ensure they are in line with what readers want.
4	Employees are asked to help devise responses to changes taking place in our business environment.
2	Management freely shares information about the readership challenges facing the business.

<b>Responsiveness</b>	
(10)	For one reason or another, we tend to ignore changes in what readers need or want from us.
(7)	We are slow to detect changes in our readers' preferences.
(29)	Even if our newspaper came up with a great plan to build readership, we probably would not be able to implement it in a timely fashion.
(9)	Internal politics drive the newspaper we sell more than reader needs.
(17)	Reader complaints fall on deaf ears at this newspaper.
11	When we find out that readers are unhappy with our newspaper, we take corrective action immediately.
5	Management is open to new ideas from employees to increase readership.

<b>Readership Mission</b>	
19	I believe this newspaper exists primarily to serve readers.
6	According to top management, serving readers is the most important thing our newspaper does.
25	Readers' interests always come first, ahead of profitability.
8	Increasing the newspaper's value to readers drives our business strategies.

<b>New Reader Orientation</b>	
22	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among minorities.
28	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among younger adults.
16	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among women.
23	Our newspaper is quick to respond to changes in our competitors' product or service offerings.

<b>Staff Efficacy</b>	
3	I am in close personal touch with average members of the community.
(24)	My role has very little to do with contributing to the newspaper's readership.
21	I understand what the implications of readership trends are for the future.
27	I have a good understanding of who our readers are now.

<sup>1</sup> NOTE: Question numbers in parentheses ( ) identify questions that have been reversed to be consistent with the others in the group.

The following statements were also included in the questionnaire, but in analysis did not fall into any of the five factors.

1	Our newspaper regularly measures how well we are serving readers.
12	As time passes, our readers will increasingly prefer to read the newspaper online.
18	As people age, they inevitably become more interested in what newspapers have to offer.
30	I think there is little we can do to attract younger adults to read this newspaper.

## Respondents to the Questionnaire

Employees from 48 newspapers responded to this survey, which was appended to the back of the culture surveys. The profile of respondents is as follows (“other” refers to marketing, HR, IT, finance and other administrative employees).

### Department

	Respondents	Percent
Advertising	1238	18.7
Circulation	737	11.2
News-editorial	1594	24.1
Operations	1290	19.5
Other	1032	15.6
Unknown	717	10.9
	6608	100.0

### Organization Level

	Respondents	Percent
Non-Managerial	3506	53.1
Line Management	1172	17.7
Middle Management	614	9.3
Higher Management	192	2.9
Unknown	1124	17.0
	6608	100.0

## Survey Results

The following tables summarize the survey results by department and by management level. The remainder of the report provides additional discussion and analysis of the results. As a rule of thumb, any differences of 0.10 or greater are statistically significant.

### Results by Department

	<b>Environmental Scanning</b>	<b>Responsiveness</b>	<b>Readership Mission</b>	<b>New Reader Orientation</b>	<b>Staff Efficacy</b>
News	2.85	3.18	3.29	3.25	3.67
Advertising	3.13	3.32	3.31	3.36	3.49
Circulation	3.13	3.30	3.45	3.32	3.55
Operations	3.03	3.42	3.40	3.42	3.16
Other	3.07	3.35	3.32	3.35	3.25
<b>All Respondents</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>3.34</b>	<b>3.43</b>

### Results by Level

	<b>Environmental Scanning</b>	<b>Responsiveness</b>	<b>Readership Mission</b>	<b>New Reader Orientation</b>	<b>Staff Efficacy</b>
Non-Managerial	2.97	3.31	3.35	3.33	3.38
Line Management	3.04	3.34	3.36	3.40	3.46
Middle Management	3.18	3.30	3.29	3.35	3.70
Higher Management*	3.48	3.47	3.42	3.43	3.91
<b>All Respondents</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>3.34</b>	<b>3.43</b>

\* There was a relatively small sample of higher management respondents. Therefore, when comparing this group's results to those of other groups, use 0.20 as a rule of thumb to identify statistically significant differences.

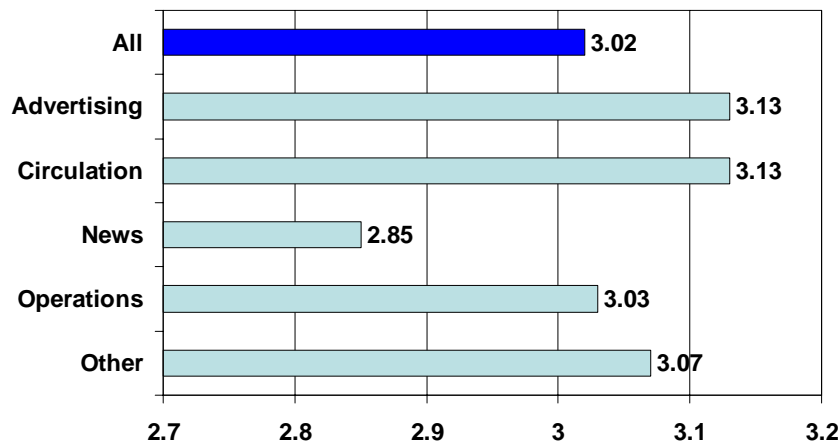
## Environmental Scanning

Environmental scanning has the strongest correlation to readership. In other words, newspapers whose employees rate the newspaper highest on these issues also have the highest Reader Behavior Score (RBS) levels. Therefore, although these practices do not necessarily guarantee readership in and of themselves, these are things that the newspapers with the best readership results tend to do.

Environmental Scanning	
13	We periodically discuss with managers in our department or with other managers how changes in the market could affect our business.
14	We regularly get information about reader satisfaction.
26	Marketing specialists or other personnel at our newspaper spend time discussing readers and their future needs with us.
(20)	We rarely meet with other departments to discuss reader trends and developments.
15	We periodically review changes to our newspaper and services to ensure they are in line with what readers want.
4	Employees are asked to help devise responses to changes taking place in our business environment.
2	Management freely shares information about the readership challenges facing the business.

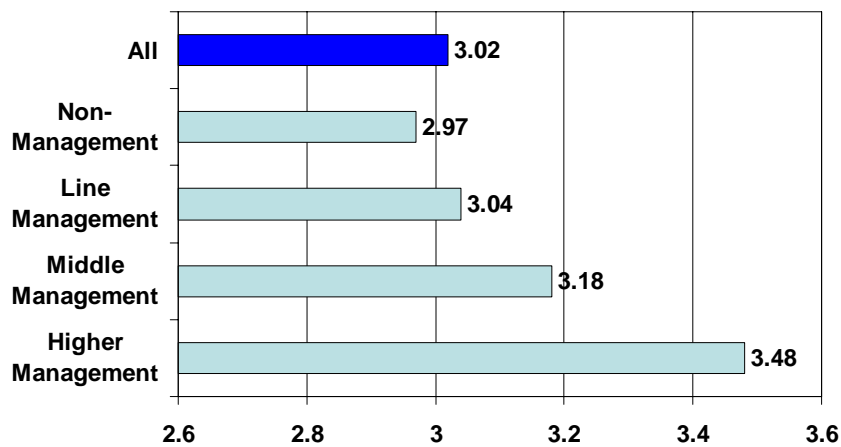
As is the case with several of factors, newsroom employees are more likely to rate these activities lower than people in other departments.

## Environmental Scanning



The higher the level in the company, the more likely employees are to feel these activities take place—although note that all scores are relatively low, apart from senior management. Interestingly, the biggest drop-off comes between higher and middle management. This is also a recurring theme. The newspapers in this study tend to have relatively market-focused higher management, but middle management lags significantly behind in many of the categories.

## Environmental Scanning



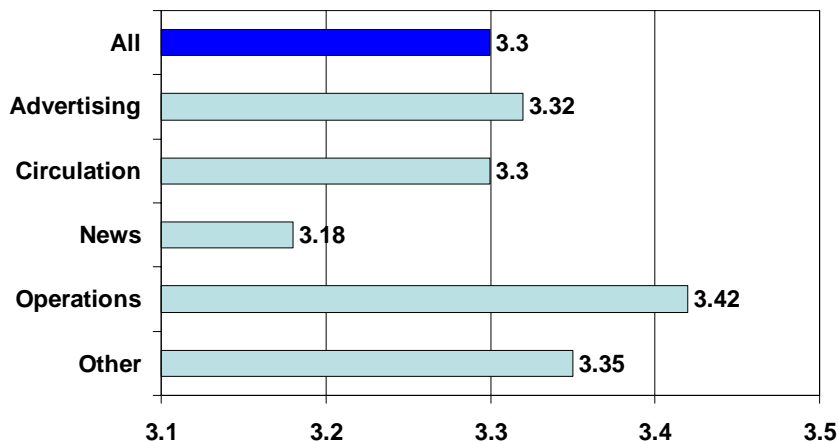
## Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the factor with the second-strongest correlation to RBS, meaning newspapers whose employees believe the following statements describe their newspaper also tend to have higher RBS scores.

Responsiveness	
(10)	For one reason or another, we tend to ignore changes in what readers need or want from us.
(7)	We are slow to detect changes in our readers' preferences.
(29)	Even if our newspaper came up with a great plan to build readership, we probably would not be able to implement it in a timely fashion.
(9)	Internal politics drive the newspaper we sell more than reader needs.
(17)	Reader complaints fall on deaf ears at this newspaper.
11	When we find out that readers are unhappy with our newspaper, we take corrective action immediately.
5	Management is open to new ideas from employees to increase readership.

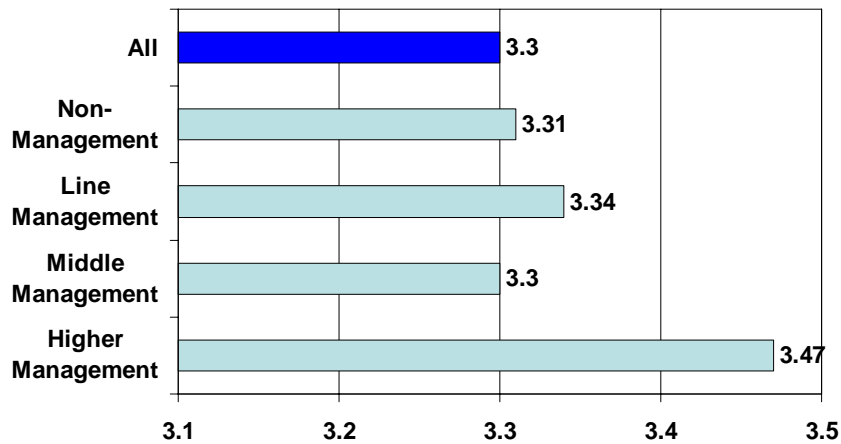
As indicated below, newsroom employees stand out from all other employees for how unresponsive they perceive the newspaper to be.

## Responsiveness



Similar to other factors measured in this survey, upper management has a much more positive perception of the newspaper's responsiveness than do others at the newspaper. All other respondents (middle managers, line managers, and non-management) see the newspaper as less responsive than do top managers. Perhaps the differences are real—top managers truly are more responsive to reader needs, and when issues reach their level they are dealt with decisively. On the other hand, perhaps higher management overestimates the responsiveness of the newspaper and those closer to readers on a day-to-day basis have a more realistic view.

## Responsiveness



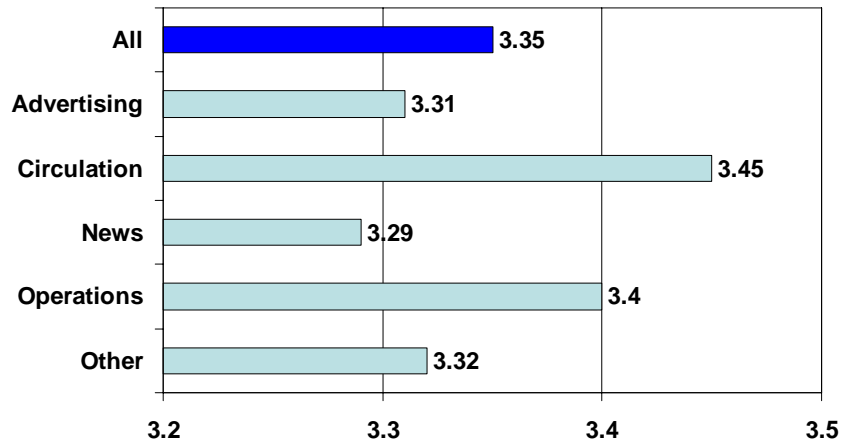
## Readership Mission

Readership mission measures the degree to which building and serving an audience is central to the newspaper's purpose.

Readership Mission	
19	I believe this newspaper exists primarily to serve readers.
6	According to top management, serving readers is the most important thing our newspaper does.
25	Readers' interests always come first, ahead of profitability.
8	Increasing the newspaper's value to readers drives our business strategies.

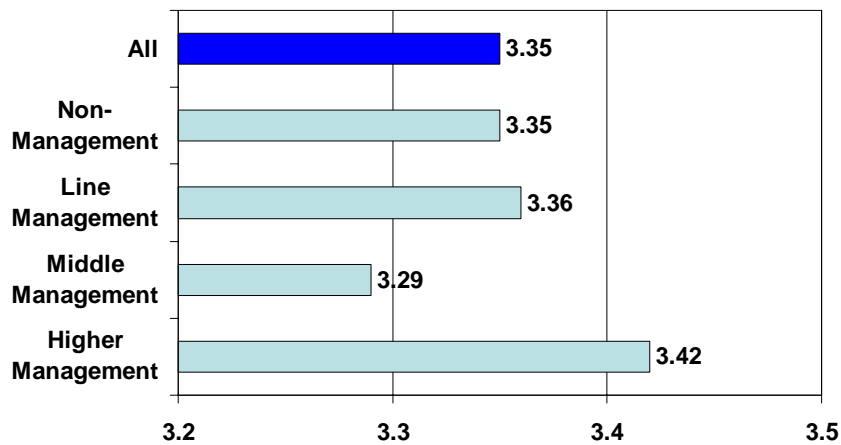
Circulators perceive the readership mission more strongly than do other employees.

## Readership Mission



Not surprisingly, upper management—whose role is to form and communicate the company’s mission—perceives the readership mission stronger than do other employees. However, it is interesting to note that middle managers rate the newspapers lower than do lower-ranking employees. The survey does not reveal whether middle managers are more jaded than others or if they are uniquely positioned to see issues that others don’t see. But the results indicate an opportunity to strengthen middle managers’ role in transmitting and “living” the mission.

## Readership Mission

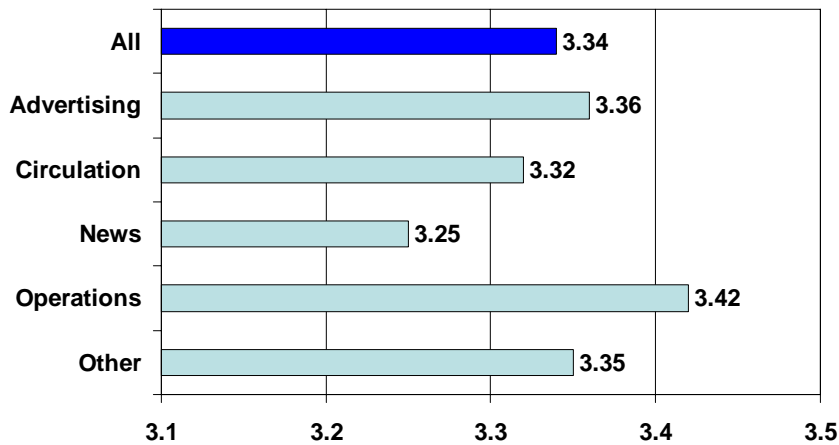


## New Reader Orientation

New Reader Orientation measures the degree to which newspapers focus on building readership among key demographic groups.

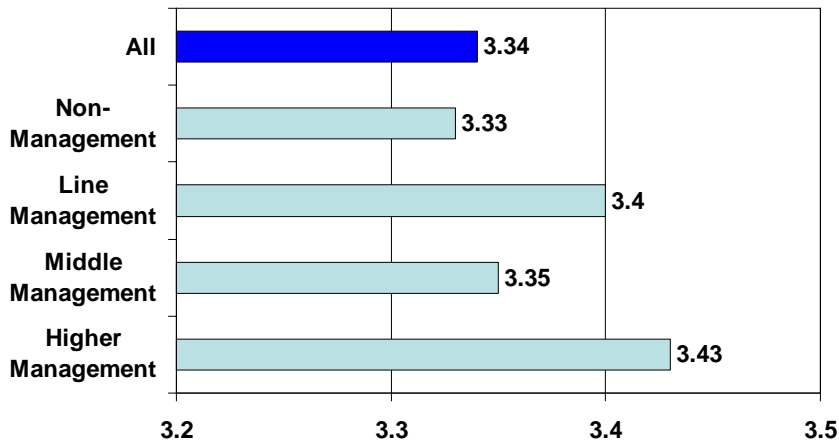
New Reader Orientation	
22	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among minorities.
28	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among younger adults.
16	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among women.
23	Our newspaper is quick to respond to changes in our competitors' product or service offerings.

## New Reader Orientation



Like several of the other factors, upper managers rate their newspapers' new reader orientation much higher than do other employees.

## New Reader Orientation



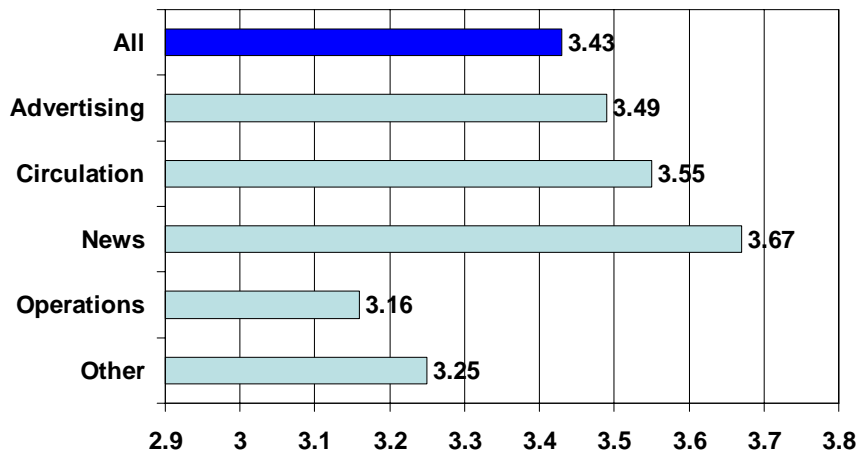
## Staff Efficacy

This factor measures the degree to which individuals feel a personal responsibility and commitment to readership. In a way, it measures the extent to which a newspaper's readership mission becomes real for people in their everyday work.

Staff Efficacy	
3	I am in close personal touch with average members of the community.
(24)	My role has very little to do with contributing to the newspaper's readership.
21	I understand what the implications of readership trends are for the future.
27	I have a good understanding of who our readers are now.

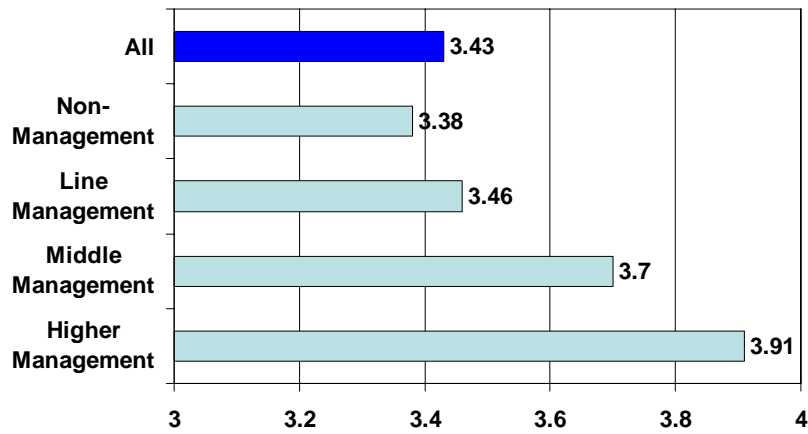
In this case, news personnel rate themselves and their newspaper higher than other departments. Operations employees and others (finance, HR, etc.) rate themselves significantly lower on this factor.

## Staff Efficacy



Staff efficacy varies strongly according to level. Higher management rates its efficacy substantially higher than all other respondents, while non-management rates themselves lowest.

## Staff Efficacy



## Individual Statements of Interest

Several statements are of particular interest and are listed individually.

As time passes, our readers will increasingly prefer to read the newspaper online.
As people age, they inevitably become more interested in what newspapers have to offer.
I think there is little we can do to attract younger adults to read this newspaper.
I understand what the implications of readership trends are for the future.
I have a good understanding of who our readers are now.
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among minorities.
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among younger adults.
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among women.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

## Results By Department

In most cases, responses to the individual questions do not vary greatly by department. Operations scores the lowest on understanding who current readers are and the implications of readership trends. In general, however, the responses are relatively uniform across departments.

	All	Adv	Circ	News	Operations	Other
As time passes, our readers will increasingly prefer to read the newspaper online.	3.22	3.20	3.32	3.28	3.05	3.32
As people age, they inevitably become more interested in what newspapers have to offer.	3.56	3.59	3.62	3.52	3.61	3.51
I think there is little we can do to attract younger adults to read this newspaper.	2.07	1.97	2.04	2.08	2.14	2.11
I understand what the implications of readership trends are for the future.	3.54	3.53	3.60	3.65	3.38	3.51
I have a good understanding of who our readers are now.	3.33	3.57	3.52	3.29	3.08	3.31
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among minorities.	3.44	3.46	3.36	3.39	3.53	3.44
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among younger adults.	3.50	3.53	3.53	3.48	3.50	3.52
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among women.	3.02	3.02	3.01	2.97	3.09	3.03

## Results By Management Level

In general, all respondents tend to moderately believe that as people age, they become more interested in what newspapers have to offer—a belief that the facts of newspaper usage over time do not support.

Respondents also tend to agree (particularly higher management) that readers will increasingly prefer online newspapers.

Newspaper personnel believe they can make a difference, with pronounced disagreement with the statement “I think there is little we can do to attract younger adults to read this newspaper.” They feel like they understand what is coming, with the majority of respondents agreeing that they understand the implications of current readership trends. Upper management has the strongest agreement on that statement. Most agree that their newspaper is focused on building readership among key target groups (especially young people, and/or minorities).

	All	Non-Mgmt	Line Mgmt	Middle Mgmt	Higher Mgmt
As time passes, our readers will increasingly prefer to read the newspaper online.	3.22	3.21	3.23	3.19	3.37
As people age, they inevitably become more interested in what newspapers have to offer.	3.56	3.59	3.58	3.52	3.45
I think there is little we can do to attract younger adults to read this newspaper.	2.07	2.05	2.05	1.98	1.89
I understand what the implications of readership trends are for the future.	3.54	3.46	3.59	3.87	4.09
I have a good understanding of who our readers are now.	3.33	3.28	3.36	3.59	3.78
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among minorities.	3.44	3.45	3.52	3.43	3.60
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among younger adults.	3.50	3.47	3.62	3.58	3.74
Our newspaper is focused on building readership among women.	3.02	3.00	3.07	3.11	3.22

## APPENDIX: Survey Questionnaire

The following list of statements is related to the relationship between a newspaper and its readers.

Please respond to each statement by selecting a number that best reflects what you think. The responses are on a 1-5 scale, where 1 means you strongly disagree with the statement and 5 means you strongly agree. **Record your responses in the space provided on page 10 of the OEI survey.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

	Statement
1	Our newspaper regularly measures how well we are serving readers.
2	Management freely shares information about the readership challenges facing the business.
3	I am in close personal touch with average members of the community.
4	Employees are asked to help devise responses to changes taking place in our business environment.
5	Management is open to new ideas from employees to increase readership.
6	According to top management, serving readers is the most important thing our newspaper does.
7	We are slow to detect changes in our readers' preferences.
8	Increasing the newspaper's value to readers drives our business strategies.
9	Internal politics drive the newspaper we sell more than reader needs.
10	For one reason or another, we tend to ignore changes in what readers need or want from us.
11	When we find out that readers are unhappy with our newspaper, we take corrective action immediately.
12	As time passes, our readers will increasingly prefer to read the newspaper online.
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14	We regularly get information about reader satisfaction.
15	We periodically review changes to our newspaper and services to ensure they are in line with what readers want.
16	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among women.
17	Reader complaints fall on deaf ears at this newspaper.
18	As people age, they inevitably become more interested in what newspapers have to offer.
19	I believe this newspaper exists primarily to serve readers.
20	We rarely meet with other departments to discuss reader trends and developments.
21	I understand what the implications of readership trends are for the future.
22	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among minorities.
23	Our newspaper is quick to respond to changes in our competitors' product or service offerings.
24	My role has very little to do with contributing to the newspaper's readership.
25	Readers' interests always come first, ahead of profitability.
26	Marketing specialists or other personnel at our newspaper spend time discussing readers and their future needs with us.
27	I have a good understanding of who our readers are now.
28	Our newspaper is focused on building readership among younger adults.
29	Even if our newspaper came up with a great plan to build readership, we probably would not be able to implement it in a timely fashion.
30	I think there is little we can do to attract younger adults to read this newspaper.