Workflow & The New Normal

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We've all been waiting for the pandemic to end so we can return to normal. For many small magazines, however, there is no going back. The future is all remote work all of the time. And that's a good thing! To produce multi-channel content in a publishing environment that never sits still is to adapt constantly as a way of life. Remote workflows, ironically, make it possible to maintain quality over the long term, keep up with the industry, and build your brand without burning out your team. Here's how.

Basic Stuff. Your workflow is not about technology. It's about building a team and a process that can absorb and adapt to change. That means you need to know your current state of affairs.

1. **Make It Visible.** The best way to create a shared understanding of your existing process is to assemble every member of your team in the same place at the same time then map out and talk through the steps together. This can happen virtually or in person (virtual can be easier). The goal is mutual agreement about what is happening Right Now.

2. **Set Measurable Targets.** One possibility: Your team should be able to adapt their own workflow as quickly as they edit an article. Your leadership may have others. It's important to be clear and precise about what you want your workflow to do for your team and your product.

3. **Create a Roadmap.** How do you connect your current state to your target future state? With the help of your current state map and working as a team, look up and down stream in your process to surface, examine, work through, and solve problems that create bottlenecks, cause delays, or duplicate effort. Remember that each person doing the hands-on work knows it the best, and they often have terrific insight into how things can improve.

4. **Test Your New Flow.** Using the smallest, simplest article in your magazine, run a live experiment using your roadmap. Track and measure what happens – did the article reach your readers faster, with less effort, in a streamlined way? Are there additional changes you want to make now that you've seen what's possible? Use your results to adjust your roadmap and run the experiment again (and again) on new articles.

5. **Scale Up.** Experiment with more and more of your magazine until you are using your new workflow to produce 100% of your content in all of your channels.

Pro Tips

- Pace yourself and take chances. Your workflow solutions, like your audience, will be unique to you. Support your team with whatever they need to evolve.
- People will surprise you. Live experimentation engages whole teams and job descriptions may change as people adapt to new conditions. This is good.
- You are more resourceful than you think you are. Use remote work to rethink how you engage with each other. Missing skills can be learned.
- Stay flexible and transparent with your tech needs and solutions. Stick to cloud tools if you can. Ideally your content team's technical world exists outside of your VPN.

Food For Thought

- The secret to great content is a great team.
- Today's tech makes it possible for anyone to build, implement, and adapt a new workflow.
- Your multi-channel content team has all the resources you'll need to work remotely without sacrificing quality, growth, or sanity.