



Thinking community

The author discusses the resistance to change often seen in the professional news industry. Indeed, journalists (and journalism educators) are creatures of habit. Routines are difficult to break, but if they aren't, inertia sets in and new products and processes can't be created.

Activities at three levels:

Flashlight: [Following up on the largest-ever U.S. readership and newsroom study](#), the Media Management Center at Northwestern University concluded that newsroom culture was highly change-resistant. Attributes important to journalism, such as perfectionism, oppositional thinking and competitiveness – when taken to extremes – can stop innovation cold. Study the center's findings. Do you have the constructive attributes the study describes? If not, can you change? How?

Spotlight: The [human-centered design firm IDEO](#), known for reengineering the computer mouse and conjuring successful new brands like Swiffer, uses anthropological techniques to study people. IDEO focuses on developing insights around what people need, yet are unable to express. That's the opposite of journalism, which reports on needs that are expressed. Do you see the difference? Ask students to investigate IDEO's web site. Should news organizations study the people they hope to serve in this way? How might journalism education change if teachers used [IDEO's toolkit for educators](#)?

Searchlight: Try it. Using human-centered design techniques, investigate the unspoken information needs of a wide range of students at your campus. In addition to what you observe, try doing interviews using these [Diversity Toolbox techniques](#). Discuss your findings. Are there insights about how student media should improve? Share what you learned with the student newsroom at your school. Were they as [defensive as the professionals studied by Northwestern University](#)? What happened next?