

Considering how digital and print co-exist puts RailDirector in the driving seat

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The rise of online publishing has created a shift in the value of print media. Print publications can be perceived by some as an anachronism, an old-fashioned throwback to outmoded methods of communication.

This is nothing new – the trend to shift publications online is at least a decade old. Coupled with the reluctance of readers to pay for print products and to risk getting ink on their hands, it is also a trend that is considered the death knell of magazines and newspapers. Equally, it is also the reason traditional media outlets continue to scramble for the right model to monetise an increasing amount of digital content.

It's an unlikely time, then, to launch a new print publication such as **RailDirector**, the magazine distributed exclusively to rail industry directors, covering everything from track to train.

Yet it's precisely the right move as David McLoughlin, CEO of Business Daily Group, explains.

“In the present moment, as we all come to terms with the impact of a global pandemic, RailDirector has already proved to be a highly relevant and essential platform. It's a publication that, because of the timing,

allows the industry to share key and essential messages. We've been met with some extremely positive feedback that underpins our thoughts that this is the right direction to move in at exactly the right time.

"The shift away from print, with some rail publishers moving to online-only models, is the place where content distribution intersects with audience demands. That is, if we're to look at media trends and nod our heads in agreement without thinking about what this might mean if we adopt a more critical perspective.

"Inescapably, the way people consume content has changed and reading habits have been transformed by mobile phones, tablets and other devices. The pace of contemporary life also makes it understandable that people feel that they simply don't have the time to pore over long form content. As digital has grabbed a bigger and bigger audience attention spans have also declined, which is something we all accept and, as we grab the morning headlines from our news apps, can also relate to. We know that content has to be presented online to suit the way people consume it.

"The story of print media, however, is far from over. We simply need to reconsider the role of print and the benefits it brings to its readership. We established **RailDirector** after taking the time researching the wants, needs and expectations of CEOs, MDs and directors of businesses across the entire spectrum of rail. Print titles for the rail industry have been or are in the process of being displaced as publishers follow trends but those we spoke to expressed a genuine desire for a high-quality title they could hold in their hands.

"Responding to that desire, **RailDirector** adds to railbusinessdaily.com's media mix and is very much a complementary part of the family. It follows the same philosophy that we have for our well-received daily newsletter, which is positive news by the industry for the industry, but allows for more in-depth coverage, and lengthier interviews, features, news stories and insight.

"We publish online with great success too so we absolutely understand the power and strength of distributing content in that way but it is our belief that effective communication requires taking different approaches across an entire suite of relevant platforms, rather than taking a one size fits all approach. So as we developed RailDirector through to its launch in September we did so by considering how digital and print work together and how these very different media can co-exist.

"In creating a new print publication we couldn't hide from the reality that advertising revenue and circulation figures have declined dramatically across print media. Yet it's our media mix that will ensure the longevity of the publication so we're bucking the trend with great optimism.

"Nobody should underestimate the power of print, even now. We're all intelligent enough to work out which sources of information online are reliable but there remains a great deal of trust that is inherent in content that is read and consumed in printed materials, both editorial and advertising. Print adds weight, gravitas and authenticity to words, and the printed word is still valued as more credible.

"There is also much to be said for the tactile nature of a physical magazine and, with RailDirector, we're creating something that will have a strong sense of familiarity and value. Copies of RailDirector will be around days, weeks, months and, we would hope, years after publication, providing prolonged exposure for those within its pages and even being retained and collected as keepsakes.

“So far, **RailDirector** has been met with positivity. 2,000 copies are produced and distributed to decision makers and influencers in rail every month and we have 5,000 readers of the magazine online, a number that is increasing with every edition. We’re already looking ahead to increasing our circulation.

“As for our other platforms, railbusinessdaily.com has 50,000 daily subscribers, while our website has a staggering four million visitors every year, and our social channels are also demonstrating industry-leading engagement, with 10,000 connections on LinkedIn alone.

“However we distribute content we are committed to positively promoting what is happening across rail and providing the opportunity for the industry’s leaders to come together with those who, in the broadest sense, are responsible for building Britain’s railways. Collectively, this means that we are all better for business.

“We already held a strong position in the rail industry media and, with the arrival of RailDirector, our presence is even stronger and puts us in the driving seat.

“Our reach is not only incredibly powerful – it brings the entire industry together at a time when this is essential. RailDirector is a vital conduit for communicating with each other in these most difficult of times. When coupled with our daily newsletter, online and social presence, our ongoing, forward-thinking efforts ensure that we are the go-to place for industry news, allowing rail’s widest cross-section of businesses to promote what they do and providing direct lines of communication.

“Please contact us today if you want to raise your profile by becoming part of the railbusinessdaily.com community.”

David McLoughlin, CEO of RBD, www.railbusinessdaily.com