



Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute  
Missouri School of Journalism

June 4, 2012

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Clarity is emerging: the news industry can begin to fix its stubborn revenue problem by creating more compelling content and building a common framework for understanding and meeting the needs of its customers. To make that happen news organizations need to execute a quick and comprehensive pivot. The industry and its partners need to work together to create a viable, competitive future. We can start this month.

On April 20, I began my new job as executive director of the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism. Aware of the magnitude of the many issues confronting journalists and their stakeholders, I wondered how I could best and most immediately begin serving the industry's interests. Many new products and services have changed the habits of news consumers, creating both exciting avenues and dead ends on the media landscape.

That's why I'm writing to you.

I'd like your help in establishing a meaningful role for RJI in the ongoing effort to find the right path for journalism so I invite you to join me at "Pivot Point: Reinventing Community, Reinventing News in a Connected World" a two-day summit in Chicago from 9 a.m. on Tues., June 26, through 3 p.m. on Wed., June 27. It's designed as an efficient, effective, project-focused, task-defining gathering of no more than 30 thought leaders to discuss issues regarding journalism, system design, social networks, identity, metrics, technology, engagement and community. For some details: See: <http://www.newshare.com/pivotpoint.pdf>

This is a great opportunity to shape the future of the news business; please join us. We have set aside some funds to cover airfare and the planned one hotel night if you need it. More logistics to come.

That's the windup. Here's the pitch:

Our plan is to crystallize a big idea that's starting to gain traction in the industry and that is also something that RJI can play a role in accelerating and guiding. We have distilled several trends, comments and industry analysis to pose this call to action for the Chicago meeting:

The franchise that our brands have enjoyed forever – bringing our communities the news and bringing our advertisers new customers – is sputtering. Fewer people are relying on newspapers to get the story, and sending news out faster, in high definition or with animation doesn't address this problem. We need to pivot and swing our business to a new paradigm that's based not just on writing the story but on contextualizing and explaining the relevance of the information. We can combine our expertise, substantial reach and resources with the best of emerging media practice and practitioners to reconvene and sustain our communities.

In Chicago, together we'll identify or invent 10 ideas to help the industry perform the pivot. In a preliminary conversation I had with Tom Silvestri, publisher of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, he cautioned me not to come to work every day at the RJI "think tank" but instead make sure Reynolds was journalism's "think-and-do tank." I whole-heartedly agree. We're prepared to make these ideas the foundation of RJI's agenda, raising and putting money into them, and building collaborative efforts around them.

Chuck Peters, President and CEO of the Gazette Company in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, also provided excellent ideas early in the planning process for the Chicago pivot-point summit. His insight was so good that I asked him to join me as a co-facilitator. Happily, he accepted and will be sharing his expertise at the event.

Reinventing the role and business of journalism is grueling work. RJI's commitment to you is that the environment in Chicago will nurture a fresh, spontaneous, Socratic-like discussion concerning the solutions we need. This is not easily effected via webinar or conference call and will be well worth your time.

We have our topic. We have our location and our dates. The only question left is whether we'll have you – and your ideas. Please let me know by May 28<sup>st</sup> if you can join us.

Sincerely,

Randy Picht  
Executive Director, RJI