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Thank you, Mark Schiffhauer.

A while back, a respected Swiss scientist raised a cry of deep alarm about the effects of information overload brought on by the technological revolution. Conrad Gessner, in a landmark book, described how people were overwhelmed with data and that this overabundance was both “confusing and harmful” to the mind.

That book, to tell the whole story, was written in 1565.

And the revolution that Gessner found so alarming was being driven by the movable parts of the new printing press, which was invented close to here in Mainz (Maintz).

I mention this incident -- recently brought to my attention by Vaughn Bell in an article in Slate -- to make a simple point.

While the pressures we in the media world feel are real and demand from us courage, imagination, leadership and innovation, we, as a society, have been here before.

And the core challenge is still the one described by Gessner almost five centuries ago – how in a world cluttered with media choices, do any of us break through to establish and maintain the critical relationship of trust and value with our audience?

We know from vast experience that there is no single answer. Each speaker on this panel works for an enterprise that is coping with this problem in its own way -- with its own strategy, its own value proposition and its own vision of where the market is heading. These ideas and views will frame our discussion.

But let me suggest, in the spirit of media togetherness, that we begin by rallying around three-interlocking core ideas:

One, quality news and information are more necessary than ever in these turbulent times.

Two, with the Internet, broadband communication and an array of new devices all readily available, more people than ever have access to world-class journalism – and this is a very good thing.

And three, democracy -- here in Germany, in the United States and everywhere else – depends to a large degree on the profession of journalism getting it right.

The multi-billion-dollar question for all of us is how to make money from all this wonderful, life-affirming content, and how do we create a business model that supports our most noble ambitions?

The New York Times, as with most companies, is seeking new ways to leverage the underlying elements of its business. To do this successfully requires that we make a very conscious decision to engage in organization-wide reinvention: We are reinventing our strategy, re-imagining our journalism, and rethinking our relationship with our news and business audiences.

This work is enabling us to become a truly multi-platform news organization, one that utilizes all forms of distribution, from print to online to video, to mobile to e-readers, to the next-new-thing.

Yet, at the end of day, much of our focus must be on achieving greater reader engagement.

And this brings us to NYTimes.com. By a variety of metrics, it is one of the world's most popular news Web sites. Yet, from a decade of experience, we recognize that we need to constantly rethink our underlying digital premises and reformulate what is already working well.

As most of you know, early next year The New York Times will introduce a pay model – in our case, a metered approach on our Web site. Simply put, this means that users will have to pay for the site after viewing a given number of free pages.

To do this successfully requires that we think even more deeply about what our readers want. Fundamentally, we must reconsider the very nature of reader engagement.

This is because the more value we deliver to them, the more likely they will be to pay. In a very direct sense, greater engagement contributes to our emerging business model.

That's all true and good and important.

But we need to think even more deeply about engagement -- whether on or off the Web -- and consider how it centers on the emotional connection that our users have with us.

This takes us to a basic point: The media arts -- including journalism -- are fundamentally about storytelling.

But what is "storytelling" in an interactive network?

What's different about it online?

The emotional side of this transcends technology --- it is not about the printing press, or the server, or the cave drawing for that matter. It is about creating an essential human connection.

News Web sites have, so far, achieved limited success because, in part, the rules of engagement are so different online.

Why, for example do people spend so much more time with the print edition of The Times than they do, on average, with the Web site?

The answer, in part, has to do with the fundamental ways that we relate to our tools; in this case, the tools we use to tell stories and engage human emotion.

One of The Times's great accomplishments over the past three years has been to build an intersection between technology and journalism. While we are still examining the sociology of that intersection, we have made great strides in digital storytelling, in data visualization, in video and multimedia, all of which is helping to build a tighter emotional bond.

And, this is all leading to greater engagement.

As part of this effort, we are placing an even greater emphasis on establishing the identity of our users, which we believe is a fundamental building block for engagement.

Actually, this is something we have been working on for a very long time at nytimes.com. We were the first Web site to succeed at scale with a registration scheme.

The idea of users helping users is fundamental to the DNA of the web. Tim Berners-Lee wrote the worldwide web protocols, in part, so that scientists could link to one another, communicate with one another and help one another.

Facebook works because it is rooted in identity. It is an exercise of one's ego online. As I'm sure you all know, the usage statistics on Facebook are off the charts, in part, because of real identity, the exercise of one's self in the digital realm.

This offers something important to publishers. For the first time, we can populate our site with users who come to us as themselves, not merely as anonymous screen names.

We have always thought that among our most leverage-able assets is our audience. Yes, we leverage them in advertising sales and always have. But here, I'm referring to our audience as knowledgeable participants in the life of our Web site. This creates the essential emotional bond that will lead to real engagement in an interactive setting.

At the heart of this kind of knowledge sharing is identity. I don't just mean real names, although that helps. I mean a track record based on a lot of input.

Basically this is about the publishing community building an even deeper emotional relationship to our day-to-day work – and this all about reinforcing and expanding our social connections to our audience.

We need to do a better job sitting on our digital stoops, connecting with our friends and colleagues, creating things that are absolutely extraordinary. No amount of modeling, analysis or research can ever replace that. "Some things have to be believed to be seen," as Steve Jobs says.

Creating a social connection is not a sideline to our business model: it is in the center. Our collective mindset must shift in this direction if we're to succeed in the coming years.

The good news, I think, is that we're finally pushing harder in this direction at The New York Times:

- We're deepening our integrations with Facebook and Twitter.
- We're taking seriously the policy implications of having outside contributors curate and create for Times Topics.
- We've partnered with Google to build the Living Stories prototype --- a whole new way to organize content on the Web.
- And, we're beginning to experiment with badging, by including user photos and other identity-based design cues.

Let me close by saying that we're about to take an incredibly exciting new turn at The New York Times. Literally and figuratively, this turn is not free.

We have an opportunity to redefine the essential relationship that we have with our users --- and change the contract we have with them --- from one that is loose, free and casual, to one of real emotional commitment.

Thank you.