



## ENGAGING NEWS PROJECT

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# DIGITAL NEWS LEADERS SHARE EXPERIENCES WITH TOOLS, BRAINSTORM TOOLS FOR MILLENNIALS, POLITICAL POLARIZATION

The Engaging News Project recently hosted its third news engagement workshop – the first to focus on news tools. During the two-day workshop, 12 participants from a variety of news organizations shared their ideas and experiences with using tools to improve engagement.

One of the topics discussed during the workshop was what tools could be created to combat political polarization. Participants broke into groups to brainstorm ways that news organizations could better inform the public about political polarization and diverse political viewpoints. The ideas that emerged included:

- A story database that would curate stories from everyday people who had different views on important issues.
- An interactive online poll that would ask people to rate values related to an issue, such as how much they valued free speech when discussing a controversial protest. The poll would then display data about the values prioritized by people with different views.
- A “digital dinner party” where individuals would upload videos featuring their viewpoints on issues. The news organization would then record and produce segments based on the dinner discussion.
- A “decision tree”/choose your own adventure-style tool that would allow users to learn about multiple viewpoints related to an issue by going through the decision tree in different ways.

Workshop participants also brainstormed new tools that could engage millennials with the news and politics. To gain background, participants had the opportunity to talk with 25 students from the University of Texas at Austin about their news habits.

After meeting with the students, the workshop participants came up with the following ideas:

- A Facebook tool allowing users to rate news articles on the political spectrum (“Is this article left-leaning or right-leaning”).
- A distribution platform that displays five daily issues and features short summaries of each. The tool would allow users to receive notifications on issues of interest.
- A newcomer’s guide for those who have recently moved to a new area. The guide would feature a digest of important stories in the area (e.g. information on major road construction projects) as well as a list of key local services (e.g. the nearest DMV).
- Present articles with diverse perspectives on a particular issue in different columns.

“Over the course of 24 hours, our workshop participants provided incredible insight into how tools are used in newsrooms and how they could be better,” said Dr. Talia Stroud, director of the Engaging News Project. “For the Engaging News Project, our next step is to test several of these fantastic tool ideas and see which ones have both democratic and business benefits for newsrooms.”

Participants included:

Jenn Abelson, The Boston Globe

Marine Boudeau, WNYC/New York Public Radio

Andrew Chavez, The Dallas Morning News

Joe Germuska, Knight Lab at Northwestern University

Ken Judy, The Daily Beast

Amanda Krauss, The Texas Tribune

Priya Krishnakumar, Los Angeles Times

Valeya Miles, NOLA.com

Penny Riordan, GateHouse Media

Dwight Silverman, Houston Chronicle

Patrick Tolbert, KXAN

Devin Walker, Media General

*The Engaging News Project provides research-based techniques for engaging online audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. Learn more at [engagingnewsproject.org](http://engagingnewsproject.org)*