More stories, closer to home: Why automated content has become a priority for local publishers

Jens Pettersson, Head of Editorial Development, NTM group
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United Robots: Who we are
Veterans in automated editorial content

- Focus on news media
- 7+ years of consistent delivery
- > 5 mi pieces of content delivered since 2015
- 200 + newsrooms served
Miami Lakes, Florida house sells for $790,000

By Renee Hernandez
Urgent
November 23, 2021, 2:34 AM

Three square feet of luxury property does $1 million get you around the world?

Comparison of the most expensive cities for real estate: (Miami Lakes, Florida) (New York, New York) (Los Angeles, California) (London, United Kingdom) (Vancouver, British Columbia)

Shrewsbury Borough house sells for $519K

I Asbury Park Press
Published 9:31 AM EDT Mar 15, 2020

This Google Street View image shows the approximate location of 20 Shrewsbury Borough. The property at this address changed hands in 2019. The $519,000 sale on the right does not include the cost of the street view.
Not all AI was born equal
Reliable and structured data → Trustworthy content

1. **Data analysis**
   - What is the story in the data?
   - What are the triggers?

2. **Text creation**
   - Turns data into text.
   - Unlimited versions and formats.
   - Learns and improves.
   - Supports any language.

3. **Content distribution**
   - Injects content into customer CMS.
   - Automatically updates content at intervals or based on triggers in data analysis.

4. **Distribution channels**
   - Newsroom alerts
   - Text messages, push notifications
   - Customer CMS
   - Direct to web

united robots
AI for editorial quality text generation

Rules-based AI

Structured data

Human in the loop

Programming
Writing
Translating
Training

AI generated texts
- automated
- volume
- accuracy

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Generative AI

- Existing written language
- Prompt engineering
- Editorial checks

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NTM AND THE ROBOTS
LOCAL MEDIA ASSOCIATION

Jens Pettersson NTM
Head of editorial development
NTM - Sweden

Turnover: 177 Million Euro
Employees: 1200 (390 journalists)
Subscribers: 270,000 (90,000 of them are digital only)
Reach: 65% of the people in our areas.
“LOCAL NEWS HAS A GREAT VALUE”

“LET’S GET READY TO DOUBLE!”

VALUE  RELATIONSHIP  HABIT
HOW WE USE THE ROBOTS

What?
• Real estate sales
• Sports results from lower divisions
• Traffic news
• Newly started companies
• Soon: weather and business reports

Why?
• Using automated texts speed up our production.
• Large amounts of journalism on the right topics.
• Journalists can focus on other stuff.
Integrating robot journalism into our datadriven publishing strategy

- NTM:s front pages are all run by an algorithm.
- Real estate prices are super popular content. The higher prices - the more interest.
- We decided to use that knowledge to give texts with higher prices better positions on the frontpage - automatically.

What we actually do:
If a house is sold for a price above a given threshold value, it automatically gets higher news value, and thereby gets a better position on the front page.
HOW TO **MAXIMISE** THE EFFECT OF THE ROBOTS

**Aggregate and increase engagement**
All texts on real estate sales are published one by one.

But to make extra use of them we also publish top lists for different time periods.

These aggregated texts are really smash hits for engagement, and are often one of the most read articles in a day.
BENEFITS OF THE ROBOTS
RESULTS OF THE ROBOTS

This is our most read reporter in all NTM, Fredrik Qvist.

He works for Östgöta-correspondenten, one of our largest dailies.

His main focus is on crime.

Results: an amazing **4,9 million pageviews** from subscribers last year.

In the same time the robot generated **9,4 million pageviews**...
RESULTS OF THE ROBOTS YEARLY

**Acquisition:** Number of new subscribers on robots: 952 That's 2,5% of our total

**Engagement/retention:** Number of pageviews from subscribers: 9,4 millions. That's 4% of our total

**Engagement/retention:** Spent time on average per article and reader.
Sports: 17 sec
Traffic: 20 sec
New companies: 27 sec
Real estate: 31 sec
Real estate top sales (monthly/weekly): 40 sec
SOUNDS GOOD?
BUT HEY! "WILL THEY TAKE OVER MY NEWSROOM?"
THE ROBOT CALCULATION
CHALLENGES/RISKS

1. ORGANISATIONAL: Cultural challenges in the newsroom – will they steal our jobs?
   Answer: NO.
   The robots will help you increase productivity on the topics you choose, on the texts anyone could write. And let your great human reporters focus on the stuff that demands thoughts and consideration.

2. EDITORIAL: Are the texts and headlines of high enough quality?
   Answer: YES (mostly).
   The quality of the robots delivery has improved over time. Today the texts are more varied, they have fewer mistakes.

3. BUSINESS: Is it worth the money?
   Answer: not sure... hopefully - but the calculation is quite tricky
   - The robot material is a great add on to all our local journalism.
   - The amount of texts are cheaper to produce than if a human would have written them.
   - They contribute quite good to conversions and to engagement.

But to get most out of it you need to invest a lot of time in optimising the use of the content.
QUESTIONS?

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