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**NAA CEO Column: View from the Valley**

*By David Chavern, president & CEO, NAA*

The news industry today is all about experimentation. In the face of great change and opportunity, NAA members are constantly developing new strategies, offerings and partnerships to further engage with audiences, communities and advertisers. We are all looking for what will be the new sustaining business models for the industry.

In this way, the news industry is actually quite a bit like Silicon Valley. I worked with the tech industry extensively during my time at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and people always asked me how that industry compared with Washington, D.C. My response was always, “At least Silicon Valley is optimistic.” The tech sector is currently filled with people at ALL organizational levels who are dreaming, experimenting and believing that tomorrow will be better than today.

As tech blogger [Om Malik once wrote](https://gigaom.com/2009/12/02/what-makes-silicon-valley-special-eternal-optimism-of-the-innovative-mind/), “What makes Silicon Valley special? Eternal optimism of the innovative mind.” Whatever may come of today’s challenges or failures, there will always be a new idea tomorrow. While this can be a unique perspective in Washington, D.C., I fully believe that such optimism is more than warranted for newspaper media.

The demand for our product is soaring, with high levels of readership and engagement across every platform, as well as a growing willingness to pay for content. While the overall economics of running a newspaper business remain challenging, I strongly believe that these core economic drivers are a tremendous cause for optimism in the industry.

In the search for new business models, though, I do think the newspaper industry falls down in the area of collaboration. Nothing truly powerful in Silicon Valley comes from a single source. The computer mouse and graphical interface were created by Xerox, not Apple or Microsoft. Every innovation builds upon the work of others.

Today’s newspaper industry is (almost) unique in the fact that very few newspapers actually compete with each other. Given this fact, it should be teeming with intelligence-sharing and cross-collaboration, and yet we too often still see the ghosts of times past when newspapers lived in fear of cross-town rivals. A major objective of the NAA is to break down these barriers and foster information-sharing that not only helps the industry as a whole, but saves time and money for individual publishers. One place you already see this is at the annual [NAA mediaXchange conference](http://www.naa.org/mediaxchange), where speakers and attendees network throughout the conference and discuss best practices and revenue-drivers.

Everyone should know and understand that in 2015, newspapers launched a variety of bold new initiatives that fostered community engagement and provided new offerings to advertisers. For example, Associated Press, *The New York Times*, Gannett and *The* *Des Moines Register* received great acclaim for their journalism in virtual reality. Publishers leveraged Facebook’s Instant Articles, Snapchat Discover and other appropriate new platforms and produced content in a variety of forms to fit the audience. The *San Francisco Chronicle* launched one of the most successful crowdfunding campaigns to date on Beacon, raising community support for investigative journalism into H1B visas and hopeful immigrants.

These examples and more represent Silicon Valley-like innovation and optimism. And they are the product of an ever-expanding view that the future of the newspaper industry will continue to grow even brighter than the present. At NAA, we are not only committed to this view but will also work to ensure that our industry has the tools and information needed to make it a reality.