



Storytelling That Pays - Inside the Branded Content Project


'Keep It Local' Webinar Summary – April 30, 2025

Summary and key takeaways from the 'Keep It Local' podcast episode featuring Shannon Kinney, Client Success Officer of Dream Local Digital and the Branded Content Project, hosted by Ryan Welton from the Local Media Association. The discussion explored how branded content can be a powerful and sustainable source of digital revenue for local media companies.

Want to watch the replay? Here's the [link](#).



Key Takeaways:

Market Shifts & Strategic Response


- Branded content = storytelling sponsored by advertisers, formerly known as 'native advertising' or 'advertorial'.
- It's a *credible, high-performing* source of digital revenue that strengthens community relationships.
-  Local readers often *engage more* with sponsored stories than traditional news.
- *Reverse publishing is a strategy*, taking digital branded content back into print, radio, or TV.
- Aligning content with mission, values, and audience utility can *unlock sustainable revenue*.

Program Design & Execution


- The [Branded Content Project](#) offers *training, cohorts (12-week 'Cash Camps'), case studies, and go-to-market strategies*.
- Branded content can be video, print, podcast, interactive, or a full digital section- *versatility is key*.

-  Effective programs generate **revenue AND utility** (i.e., things to do, wellness tips, local guides).
-  Case studies available from [LMA](#) & [BCP](#) can serve as blueprints for success.
- News organizations can apply for cohorts or access free training via brandedcontentproject.com.
- Monthly calls and newsletters are available for *continuous learning and inspiration*.

Organizational Readiness & Culture Shift

- Internal *alignment between leadership, sales, and editorial is critical* to success.
-  **Sales teams need help** pitching, packaging, and protecting margins on these products.
- Transparency and trust are essential; labeling sponsored content clearly maintains credibility (*and keeps you out of trouble with the GOOG!*).

Distribution & Audience Engagement

- *Social media plays a huge role* in distributing branded content.
- Businesses can publish themselves, but *media outlets offer a trusted platform and broader reach*.
-  BCP has helped many outlets *attract national advertisers* they previously couldn't access.