

DIVERSITY WITHIN AND BEYOND THE NEWSROOM

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Diversity in both coverage and within our newsrooms has been an important topic of discussion in the industry for many years.

Why should we care? Some may ask.

Because our world is diverse, our communities are diverse, our audiences and readers are diverse. And if we want to serve them best, we need to have diverse perspectives, experiences and voices represented in our workforce and our content. This impacts the stories we cover and how we cover them.

We have improved in how diverse our coverage and newsrooms are. But we have so much more to do.

A recent study by the Radio Television Digital News Association and Hofstra University found that TV newsroom diversity is at an all-time high. About 25% of newsroom staffers are people of color like African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Asians. And women in TV newsrooms and management is at an all-time high of 44%. But that doesn't mean we have gotten there. These numbers are not comparable to the growth of the non-white population, and people of color and women are still very much struggling to reach representation at the senior levels in newsrooms.

It is also important to look beyond race and gender and consider a range of differences in ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, socioeconomic status and life experiences.

Increasing diversity in the staff also helps news organizations to have more diversity in the stories they cover. It is important for news organizations to consider what stories they are covering, what stories they are spending their time and money on, who they are interviewing, and who they are using as expert voices.

And the focus cannot only be on broadcast journalism. You need to reflect diverse voices online as well. The diversity of our platforms gives us an opportunity to know what our readers are interested in. It allows us to shed light on stories that we may not have had in our radar. With digital platforms and social media, we are now better able to hear from many communities who in the past did not have a voice. We have an even bigger window into what the public is talking about, the conversations they are having. Also, having different platforms allows us to inform different communities and audiences about what they want to hear. For example, you may not have the time to cover a story on TV, but you may choose to do so online. It is important to create those deep relationships with the viewers and readers in order to build trust.

Diversity in the stories we cover not only connects us to our communities, but it also creates innovation and makes news organizations more successful.