

‘To Inform and Not Troll’: The Information’s Kevin Delaney on Its New Opinion Page

With its new opinion section, business and tech publisher The Information is offering something else: perspective.

For this task, the company hired former Wall Street Journal reporter Kevin Delaney, better known as the co-founder and former editor of digital-first business publication Quartz.

Delaney is promising to use the new vertical—which published its debut opinions earlier this month and officially launches in January—to enhance the sense of community among The Information’s audience while avoiding some of the worst instincts of opinion pages.

Adweek caught up with Delaney to discuss what differentiates it and how opinion journalism fits into a subscription model.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

So, what’s unique about The Information’s approach to opinion journalism?

The Information has always had a great community of readers among the decision makers in tech, media, finance, consulting—those kinds of industries—and they come for the exclusive reporting. There is a community of people who wind up interacting at events and the comments section of the reporting, and what was clear is there’s an opportunity to engage them in discussion about ideas that relate to the

topics The Information covers. These are people who understand the value of ideas, and we could serve them by actually starting an opinion section.

The voices that we're bringing to this—and you may have seen some of the names: Tracy Chou at Block Party; Joanna Coles, former chief content officer at Hearst; Nadia Eghbal, who is now at Substack; Arlan Hamilton, managing partner at Backstage Capital, a VC firm. It's a diverse group of voices in areas that The Information covers, and we're excited to start in January.

You mentioned community. The Information founder and editor in chief Jessica Lessin recently tweeted, “Too often [opinion journalism is] playing to its audience, and designed to troll, not inform.” What’s the difference between building community and playing to one’s audience?

Our aim is to inform and not troll. Too often, opinion sections are so ideologically hidebound that they're just predictable and ultimately kind of boring. You know what the people are going to say and they cease to be interesting. Or they're so ideological that one of their chief purposes is to troll people who might not agree with them.

By the nature of what we're writing about, it's not a game of political alignment or loyalty; we're just looking for the smartest people writing about issues this readership cares about.

[Our] readership is really interested in things that are really high-protein. Maybe they're pieces that are a little more nerdy or intellectual than ones you might read elsewhere. They're hungry for ideas developed with a deep level of sophistication, so that's a different path than predictably reacting to whatever is happening in Washington in the given moment, which is a lot of what happens on other opinion pages.

We're aiming to surprise and challenge the readership, to

bring them ideas they might not have considered before.

What are the differences in launching a subscription-supported media business compared with an ad-supported one?

We have a great community of subscribers, and we want to deliver more value to them with this opinion section. So we have no interest in trolling or clickbait or anything like that, which I imagine are some of the pressures you might feel with an ad-supported opinion section.

The biggest difference is The Information readership is a really engaged community. They're there every day. They're there for the journalism The Information is producing. They're highly engaged. That's actually a pretty unique and exciting opportunity to be publishing ideas into that community and getting a reaction, and what we're seeing so far is they're really receptive and interested in opinion pieces.

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