



8.26.26 + THE ATHENAEUM + INDIANAPOLIS, IN

NEAR + NOW

Move the Needle

The Work that Keeps Newsrooms Running



SciLine



AAAS

CONTENTS

What's inside

A place to think while you're here, and a plan you can act on when you're back at your desk.

What's next from PMJA	2
-----------------------------	---

Discover SciLine	3
------------------------	---

Today's schedule	4
------------------------	---

How to use this workbook	5
--------------------------------	---

SESSIONS

Building Adaptive Capacity in a Time of Polycrisis	6
--	---

Small Tweaks, Big Peaks	8
-------------------------------	---

It's Breakfast Time	10
---------------------------	----

ACTION PLANNING

Your accountability buddy	12
---------------------------------	----

Organizing your ideas	13
-----------------------------	----

Make a plan for change	14
------------------------------	----

TAKE IT HOME

Creating better documentation	15
-------------------------------------	----

10 signs your newsroom needs a change	16
---	----

Additional resources	17
----------------------------	----

Notes pages	18
-------------------	----

COMING SOON

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THE DAY

Wednesday, August 26

The Athenaeum · Basile Theatre

9:00–10:00 AM

Registration & coffee

10:00–10:30 AM

Welcome & opening remarks

Welcomes from our hosts and sponsors, then WFYI on navigating a season of uncertainty and coming out stronger.

10:30 AM–12:00 PM

Building Adaptive Capacity in a Time of Polycrisis

Practical Tools for Navigating Uncertainty · A. Rima Dael

12:00–1:00 PM

Lunch provided in the auditorium

1:00–2:15 PM

Small Tweaks, Big Peaks

Testing Workflow Changes to Reclaim Your Energy · Jan Ross P. Sakian

2:15–2:30 PM

Break

2:30–3:45 PM

It's Breakfast Time

How to Better Strategize a Healthy Newsroom Culture · Erica Peterson

3:45–4:00 PM

Break

4:00–4:45 PM

Action planning: what comes next?

Work out what you're taking away and how you'll act on it.

4:45–5:00 PM

Closing remarks & goodbyes

5:30 PM

Evening reception at Pins Mechanical Company, hosted by WFYI. Walkable from The Athenaeum. Included with registration.

START HERE

How to use this workbook

These problems aren't unique. And you already have more power to address them than you think. This book is where you keep track of both.

1

Take notes on two tracks of thought

Each session has a notes page split into **Key themes & takeaways** and **Put it into practice**. Two sections for two different types of notes.

2

Collect ideas without judging them

Anything that sparks—a phrase, a tactic, a question for a colleague — goes on the page. Sorting it all out comes later.

3

Narrow down what you'll actually do

In the afternoon you'll sort your ideas, choose a few changes you want to make, and map out what you need and how you'll get buy-in.

4

Trade contact info with your buddy

You'll leave with an accountability buddy and a date on the calendar. Write both down on page 12 before you go home.

You leave with more than notes. You leave with a plan.

Your expertise belongs in the room. Use these pages like they're yours, because they are.

01

Building Adaptive Capacity in a Time of Polycrisis

Practical Tools for Navigating Uncertainty

LED BY **A. Rima Dael** CEO, National Federation of Community Broadcasters

Evolving technologies. Political polarization. Declining trust. Staff burnout. Economic uncertainty. Each challenge would be significant on its own. Together, they create what scholars call a polycrisis: multiple crises that overlap and reinforce one another. This session explores how to build organizations that can stay grounded in mission through all of it — and how psychological safety, productive conflict, and knowing your spheres of influence make the difference.



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BEFORE WE START, JOT DOWN

What's the uncertainty weighing on your newsroom right now?

SESSION 01

■ Key themes & takeaways What new theories or facts have you learned?

■ Put it into practice How might you apply what you've learned?

02

Small Tweaks, Big Peaks

Testing Workflow Changes to Reclaim Your Energy

LED BY **Jan Ross P. Sakian** Certified Product Manager

Every newsroom has processes that quietly drain time, energy, and coverage quality. This workshop gives you a practical framework for addressing those pain points and testing small, targeted changes without waiting for a full organizational overhaul. You'll leave with tactics to share and at least one action item to bring back to your newsroom.



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BEFORE WE START, JOT DOWN

Which recurring task eats the most time for the least return?

SESSION 02

■ Key themes & takeaways What new theories or facts have you learned?

■ Put it into practice How might you apply what you've learned?

03

It's Breakfast Time

How to Better Strategize a Healthy Newsroom Culture

LED BY **Erica Peterson** Independent Journalist and Newsroom Strategist

You've probably heard the old maxim "culture eats strategy for breakfast." That may be true, but culture isn't just something that happens. It's something we can plan for and actively shape. This session helps you design an action plan with concrete steps anyone in a newsroom can take to build a healthier culture, whether you're starting from scratch or trying to reset.



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BEFORE WE START, JOT DOWN

Name one thing about your newsroom's culture worth protecting.

SESSION 03

■ Key themes & takeaways What new theories or facts have you learned?

■ Put it into practice How might you apply what you've learned?

ACTION PLANNING

Your accountability buddy

Your buddy is the person who will ask you how it's going. You'll pair up during our final session and take time to support each other's goals.

NAME	
NEWSROOM / STATION	ROLE
EMAIL	PHONE / SIGNAL
BEST WAY + TIME TO REACH THEM	

OUR CHECK-IN DATE

/ /

Put it on the calendar today. Two to four weeks out works well.

HOW WE'LL MEET

- ☐ Video call
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Email thread
- ☐ Other

THE ONE THING I PLAN TO REPORT BACK ON

Get it all on paper. Then organize it.

1. BRAIN DUMP • LIST EVERY IDEA FROM TODAY, IN BRIEF

2. NOW SORT THEM IN AN EISENHOWER MATRIX

Urgency is about deadlines. Importance is about value. The top-right box is where change really lives.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	DO NOW	SCHEDULE IT
NOT IMPORTANT	WHO ELSE COULD OWN IT?	LET IT GO

ACTION PLANNING

Make a plan for change

	CHANGE 1	CHANGE 2	CHANGE 3
The change I want to make			
What it helps me accomplish			
Who & what I need			
How I'll get buy-in			
Steps 1-3			

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

How will your community or team be impacted?

WHAT SUCCESS FEELS LIKE

Energizing? Stress-relieving? Inspiring?

ROUGH TIMELINE Keep it reasonable yet motivating, then add it to your calendar.

days/months	days/months	days/months	days/months

Creating better documentation

Highlights from our July 2026 Idea Lab peer conversation.

**START
HERE**

One link to rule them all

The top reason documentation goes unused is that there's no single source of truth. You need one key link, posted somewhere obvious, that hosts or points to everything else.

1 · CHOOSE A FORMAT

- **How-tos, SOPs, training manuals** — step by step, including the idiosyncrasies.
- **Style & brand guides** — copy, audio, and visual standards.
- **Trackers, calendars, budgets** — who's doing what, and when.
- **Diagrams & decision trees** — how information actually moves.
- **Wikis & intranets** — homebase for everything above.

2 · CHOOSE A TOOL

The best tool isn't the fanciest one — it's the one your team will actually open.

Wikis: OneNote, Google Docs or Sites, Notion

Trackers: Excel, Sheets, Airtable, Notion

Tasks: Planner, Google Tasks, Trello, Asana

Diagrams: Figma, Canva, Scribe, Venngage

Chat: Slack, Teams, Google Chat

3 · GATHER YOUR PEOPLE

Involve the team in building it — you'll capture what's really needed and earn buy-in. Test it on someone unfamiliar with the process. Hold a small "launch" so everyone knows where it lives.

4 · KEEP IT ALIVE

Assign an owner per document, not just for the system. Set a recurring calendar hold to review it. Fold a documentation check into a meeting you already have.

ONE DOCUMENTATION GAP I'M GOING TO CLOSE

TAKE IT HOME

10 signs your newsroom may need a change

A quick self-assessment for when the work isn't flowing quite as well as it should.

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- ☐ Someone must re-explain the same process to every new person because it was never written down.
- ☐ A decision that significantly affects the newsroom was made, and most people found out after the fact.
- ☐ A deadline was missed in the last six months because two people thought the other one was handling it.
- ☐ There's a meeting your team has every week that everyone privately agrees is a waste of time.
- ☐ A new tool was introduced, used enthusiastically for about three weeks, and is now basically ignored.
- ☐ You've had the same conversation about the same culture problem more than twice and nothing changed.
- ☐ Feedback — upward, downward, or peer-to-peer — rarely happens unless something goes wrong.
- ☐ "That's just how we do it here" is a complete answer to the question, "Why does it work that way?"
- ☐ Someone new asked a question about how something works and you realized you didn't actually know.
- ☐ Your newsroom has a stated commitment (to diversity, to a way of working, to a value) that most people privately agree isn't reflected in how things actually run.

YOUR SCORE

1–2 checks:

You're in good shape. A few rough edges worth addressing.

3–5 checks:

Normal for most newsrooms. Worth having an honest conversation about which items keep recurring.

6–8 checks:

Significant friction. Some of this is fixable quickly; some requires more intentional effort.

9–10 checks:

Your team is probably running on goodwill and individual heroics. That's not sustainable.

The good news: None of this is unique to your newsroom. And unlike a lot of journalism problems, these are actually solvable. Change management is a skill that can be learned, practiced, and improved. You don't have to be in charge to contribute to it — you just have to know where to start.

Developed from PMJA member research, including our 2026 gathering survey and our 2023 diversity study, "A Look at Diversity in Public Media Journalism."

TAKE IT HOME

Keep learning

A day is a start. These are the places to go next when the work gets specific.

READING LIST

Work Happy

Jill Geisler — a step-by-step leadership guide from a journalism legend.

The Waymakers

Tara Jaye Frank — how influential leaders create real change by breaking barriers.

Immunity to Change

Robert Kegan & Lisa Laskow Lahey — why well-intentioned groups fail to change and how to overcome it.

Project Management in Newsrooms

Robin Kwong — a journalist's guide to the whole process, from launch to sunset.

Managing People Through Change

Emily Ristow — from the American Press Institute's Digital Transformation Guide.

Transforming Newsrooms

Carrie Brown & Jonathan Groves — based on years of studying real newsrooms.

VOICES WORTH FOLLOWING

Samantha Ragland

Senior Vice President, American Press Institute
sammyragland.com

Emma Carew Grovum

Newsroom Hiring, Retention, & Culture Leader
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Felicitas Carrique

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P. Kim Bui

Consultant on Newsroom Innovation & Inclusion
kimbui.com

RESOURCE HUBS

Trusting News — practical audience-trust research **Better News** — case studies you can copy

News Product Alliance — a community of future-forward thinkers

ALL OF TODAY'S RESOURCES, ONLINE

Slides, tipsheets, and tools all in one place.

Scan the code, or visit pmja.org/resources.
Send questions any time to conference@pmja.org



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

NOTES

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal blue or grey lines across the entire width of the page. The lines are thin and consistent in color and thickness. There is no handwriting, printed text, or any other markings on the paper. The background between the lines is a clean, solid white.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

NOTES

[illegible]



You don't have to go far to go further.

Indianapolis + MOVING THE NEEDLE

New York City + EMERGING TECH & AI

Austin + BEYOND THE BROADCAST

San Francisco + COMMUNITY-CENTERED JOURNALISM

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