

2017 Training needs

Fairfax Survey on Training

20 News Directors, Editors and community paper editors, surveyed June 2017.

- Quality of journalism training good
- Quality of graduates fallen “markedly” over last five years

What's good about today's grads?

- Technologically strong
- Very good at social media
- Some better than existing journalists at doing a whole package - headline, video.
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Trouble attracting good grads?

This was completely split, perhaps along regional lines.

One-third said Yes, one-third said No and one third said it depends.

From the written comments, it appears the problem is, as expected, in attracting to regional and community offices where a lot of Fairfax business is still done.

What can be done?

Many felt that regional offices are always behind Stuff, broadcasting and Mets so the standard of grads will fall.

“We need to improve the pay and regard of the industry.”

“More rigorous selection process to ensure people are actually interested in News.”

“Put students under a lot more pressure at school, replicating newsrooms, so you weed out the dilettantes early.”

What should J Schools teach?

Split down the middle.

Half said, better basics.

The other said, better attitude.

The basics included story structure, interviewing, good grammar, finding stories, recognising a story, intros, video craft and working with interviewees.

The attitudes were around those considered good for a reporter in a newsroom; resilience, flexibility, curiosity, willingness, being responsive to stories around them, work ethic, hunger, enthusiasm and a drive to know.

Top Skills you look for in a Grad

All respondents picked a cluster of skills. There was a large clump of skills which attracted no votes at all.

The top skills were in descending order:

1. Accuracy (a long way ahead)
2. Interviewing techniques
3. Structuring a News Story
4. Good spelling
5. Good grammar
6. Generating story ideas
7. Building a round
8. Contact building
9. Specific digital news storytelling skills
10. Intro writing
11. Video composition and structure
12. Feature storytelling
13. Accurate note-taking
14. Legal knowledge

Zero ratings

The following skills received NO votes: Knowledge of NZ society, te reo, knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi, social media skills, podcasting, audio skills, data journalism, news editing skills, knowledge of a second language, cultural understanding of diversity, headline writing, SEO.

Single trait you rate

This was interesting. It all clustered around several simple concepts. The biggest was curiosity and finding stories; words like curiosity, ideas, interest, recognising a story kept being used.

Second was enthusiasm; a hunger, desire, interest in telling stories or being a journalist.

Third was adaptability and flexibility; ready for change, “suppleness”

But I also like the plaintive cry of the person who wrote anyone "who could just write clearly".

How would you improve training?

- Bring more students back into newsrooms to experience the industry
- Get more working journalists in classrooms as guest tutors
- Increase the competition to get into J-School
- Clarify early what skills needed in newsroom
- Better marketing to get higher calibre people into the industry. Promote the industry
- Set qualifying criteria to get into the courses to weed out the illiterate
- Help them with inter-personal skills early
- An industry-led diploma which is practical, practical, practical.