

### **Former Hearst CEO Bennack: AI is next major change in news media, news orgs must adapt**

Amid an ever-changing news media climate, Hearst executive vice chairman Frank Bennack Jr. said in a press conference Monday that diversification is “critical” to modern media success.

“If you don’t change — if you have a workforce that is uninterested in changing what they do and understanding what the new world is like — then growth is going to be hard to come by,” Bennack said.

[A 2025 Pew Research Center report](#) discovered that 86% of U.S. adults — and 93% of U.S. adults ages 18-29 — at least sometimes get news from a smartphone, computer or tablet, while only 7% consume news via printed newspapers or magazines.

It’s a shift Bennack foresaw in 1979, his first year of a combined 28-year run as Hearst CEO, when he determined digital expansion was his “No. 1 goal.” Over the next 47 years, Hearst made significant digital advancements, partnering with ABC in 1981 and later acquiring a 20% stake in ESPN to further the company’s digital movement.

While the digital shift sparked an overhaul in how news is produced and consumed, another change is fast approaching: The introduction of artificial intelligence.

[A 2025 Reuters Institute study](#) of 326 digital leaders across 51 countries found that generative AI is fully or somewhat transforming 87% of newsrooms. Furthermore, 70% of the newsrooms surveyed said they would explore providing AI summaries at the top of stories, and 65% said they would consider using AI to translate articles into different languages.

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“The biggest change ahead is that AI may be more dramatic than any of [the changes] I've talked about — the arrival of digital, the changes that have taken place in broadcasting,” Bennack said. “... All of those were important changes, but I think the consensus is that AI will change [news] more than any of those things.”

Popular news organizations such as The New York Times, [which attracts roughly 475 million monthly visitors](#), have begun integrating AI into their newsrooms.

In February 2025, the Times [developed a newsroom-wide AI training program and launched an internal AI tool called Echo](#), which [summarizes journalists' articles, extracts information and identifies key quotes](#).

Bennack said there are both offensive and defensive approaches to integrating AI in news media. But Hearst prefers an offensive strategy that remains unafraid of technological advancements in how people produce and consume news coverage.

“We're not afraid of [AI]. We're working hard to have our people understand how to utilize it,” Bennack said. “Everything requires a combination of defense and offense, and we're on the offense in AI.”

Bennack believes the next major area of expansion will be human activities that bring people together.

“As we are more dependent on things like AI, the more we'll need interaction with people,” Bennack said. “Count on more people coming together as a further response to the degree to

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which we've been depending on technology and the degree that it will increase as a result of AI.”