

Facebook's Message to Media: "We Are Not Interested in Talking to You about Your Traffic...That Is the Old World and There Is No Going Back" | Nieman Journalism Lab

By Joshua Benton

August 13, 2018

Joshua Benton highlights what he considers an overlooked part of the recent article "[Worth With Facebook or Die: Mark Zuckerberg](#)" in *The Australian*. He argues that this is evidence that people, not platforms, are going to provide the sustainable solution to the news industry's woes.

Much of the attention given to this story by Media Twitter has focused on the "doesn't care about publishers" bit and the work-with-us-or-die implication of the second quote. But the story has an [attached illustration](#) that includes an alleged Brown quote that didn't make it into the final story, and in some ways that's really the most important one: "We are not interested in talking to you about your traffic and referrals any more. That is the old world and there is no going back."

That's the big reversal here, given that "traffic and referrals" were roughly 99 percent of what Facebook had to offer publishers over the past half-decade or so. It was that firehose of eyeballs that led to new editorial strategies designed for share-friendly content, as well as the thought that maybe digital advertising could pay the bills after all.

[...]

But news organizations are going to win or lose their subscription battles on their own, ultimately; getting people to pony up \$10 a month for a news subscription depends on them having a strong enough relationship with and commitment to the outlet that they're willing to say *The giant sea of free content online isn't enough, I want more*. And that's roughly the opposite of the Facebook ethos — it is that giant sea of free content.

In any event, if Brown's quote is real and accurately reflects Facebook's view, publishers should take it to heart. Facebook isn't interested in sending you more traffic. That's its right! But it's a reminder that the responsibility for building a sustainable model for news is on *us*, not on anyone in Menlo Park, Mountain View, Cupertino, Redmond, or Seattle.

Source: [Facebook's Message to Media: "We Are Not Interested in Talking to You about Your Traffic...That Is the Old World and There Is No Going Back" | Nieman Journalism Lab](#)