

The media industry's preexisting conditions | Columbia Journalism Review

By Jon Allsop

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In March and April—as the economic crisis linked to the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, started to hammer the media industry—news organizations made cuts. Some of these involved layoffs; others, including furloughs and salary reductions, were billed as temporary, storm-weathering measures. At the time, [such claims attracted skepticism](#). Last Wednesday, two major media companies which already made COVID-era cuts deepened them. Condé Nast, which moved to cut pay for higher-earning employees in April, laid off around a hundred staffers, and put roughly the same number on furlough. And *BuzzFeed*—which imposed tiered salary reductions in March, then put 68 staffers on furlough in May—furloughed a further four US-based employees, as well as its entire local-news teams in the UK and Australia; [sources told *The Guardian* that the latter staffers are “highly unlikely”](#) ever to come back, with *BuzzFeed* planning a strategic pivot to “news that hits big in the US” under its new editor in chief, Mark Schoofs. [As CNN’s Kerry Flynn noted in a story on the two rounds of cuts](#), “media executives are signaling that pay cuts implemented at the beginning of the pandemic are no longer enough to stave off the economic headwinds stemming from the crisis.”

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