

# STARTING POINT

A study of entrepreneurial journalism  
courses in Spanish



 **SEMBRA**MEDIA

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# The missing link in journalism education: business and entrepreneurship

## Introduction

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A Google search for the term "journalism crisis" in Spanish brings up more than 24 million results; in English, this figure rises to nearly 80 million. The phenomenon has been widely documented and addressed.

Seemingly every journalism conference has a panel with experts pontificating about the "future" of the journalism profession – and when the problems facing media are not being discussed, it seems we are forever looking for a "silver bullet" that will solve the problem. Each year, there is another new technology that will 'save' journalism, from virtual reality to chatbots to blockchain. Despite the many discussions on these topics, no single solution has emerged.

Despite the gloomy outlook that prevails around the world, in Latin America and Spain there are some positive trends, although even these are not without their challenges.

In 2017, SembraMedia published *Inflection Point*, an in-depth report about digital native media in Colombia, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. The research revealed something that is happening region-wide: new digital media are growing, and they have managed to sustain themselves over time, diversify their income, and forge close connections with their audiences. However, many have also paid a price for their editorial independence. Nearly 50% of media

entrepreneurs interviewed by SembraMedia report they have suffered physical and virtual attacks.

Despite the obstacles, digital native media have had significant impact in their communities and have received prestigious awards, including the Gabo Award from the Gabriel García Márquez Foundation for the New Ibero-American Journalism (FNPI for its initials in Spanish).

However, while the "crisis in journalism" has been well-documented, especially as it affects news distribution and the relationship media have with their audience, there is a journalism institution that has largely remained invisible, or at least in a secondary role. Universities – in particular schools of communication and journalism – have resisted changing the way they teach in the midst of this transformation, even as pressures have mounted on the (post)industry media, and upon academia itself. What type of transformations are occurring, and how does what is being taught in journalism classes show up in newsrooms?

To answer this question, SembraMedia commissioned this study to examine how entrepreneurial journalism is being taught at Latin American and Spanish universities. We were most interested in learning about the professors who teach this subject, because through them, we believe that it is possible to observe

and analyze the dynamics and trends developing in classrooms that will then shape the journalism profession as a whole.

We asked ourselves three questions to guide the research:

- First: what kind of training and experience do professors have who teach entrepreneurial journalism courses in Latin America and Spain?
- Second: what is the content of these courses?
- And third: what kind of impact have professors had on their academic communities and how journalism is practiced?

These sections are preceded by an explanation of the methodology used to choose the interview subjects and develop the interview questions. In the last sections, you will find a basic resources kit with readings, references and sources of information about entrepreneurial journalism.

Since its inception, one of the motivations of SembraMedia has been to connect and stimulate collaboration among digital media entrepreneurs in Latin America. That same spirit is the motivation behind this study. Journalism schools are a key player in the reconfiguration of how people receive information and are reinventing the ethos and professional identity of journalists, redefining what it means to do journalism.

Reports such as *Inflection Point* have revealed that Latin American and Spanish journalists are not only reporting, narrating and distributing news, but also creating a vibrant ecosystem for digital native media. The more than 60 professors we found so far who teach entrepreneurial journalism are working to provide this missing link in the ecosystem, as they plant the seeds of entrepreneurship in future journalists. What we found in our study was that there is an eager, enthusiastic, and growing number of professors working to help journalists become entrepreneurs, draw attention to their work, and increase their impact. This report reflects how they are doing it and what results they have obtained.



# METHODOLOGY



## How we did the study

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From the beginning, this investigation was designed to be a qualitative look at how entrepreneurial journalism is taught in Latin America and Spain.

To do this, we built a database of professors who teach entrepreneurial journalism courses or who incorporate entrepreneurial journalism skills into their courses. Finding these professors was possible thanks to the information shared by SembraMedia's ambassador network (currently operating in 18 countries in Latin America, Spain, and the U.S. Hispanic market) and a direct search for higher education institutions that have communication or journalism schools.

We designed a questionnaire to cover different aspects of teaching methodologies.

We defined eight sections with open-ended questions, focused on professional experience, including:

1. General background
2. Training and academic experience
3. Journalism experience and roles in media companies
4. What teachers say about their students
5. Characteristics of the courses (curriculum/syllabus, bibliography, etc.)
6. Impact (whether their students launched a media project)
7. Academic and / or professional networks professors participate in
8. Online teaching experience

Our initial database contained more than 40 teachers (and has since grown to 59), but we decided to do a maximum of 25 interviews so that there was sufficient time for each conversation to be in-depth.

The first categorical distinction we made was between professors and trainers who lead workshops.

When we use the term “professor” in this report, we are referring to instructors who teach material which is part of an established course of study. The professors included in this study have an ongoing teaching relationship at an academic institution, whether or not they are part of the permanent faculty. These professors also usually live in the country in which they teach.

Trainers operate with a different model: their courses may be outside of the curriculum (rather than integrated into required courses), they tend to be globetrotters, and they don't necessarily live in the country of the institution at which they teach. Their “nomadism” puts these trainers and their workshops into a separate category which deserves to be studied in a future research project.

We attempted to make sure that there was balance as well as diversity in this study. First, regarding gender balance, 56% of those interviewed were female. The second area in which we wanted to maintain balance was the geographic distribution of the professors interviewed. In Spain, we identified almost a dozen professors, but in other countries the list of potential interviewees was much shorter. For this reason, we established a limit of four teachers per country with the intention of including at least one person from Central America and one from the Caribbean. The final list was dominated by Spain with four professors; followed by Argentina, Peru, and Chile, with three apiece; Uruguay and Mexico with two; and Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, the United States, and Venezuela with one professor each.

According to the *“Map of training centers and programs of communicators and journalists in Latin America and the Caribbean”* published by UNESCO, in 2009 in Latin America, there were more than 1,700 schools and universities teaching journalism.

We have identified 48 Latin American universities which offer entrepreneurial journalism courses, which means that only 2.82% of universities that provide communications courses in Latin America offer this subject. We are aware that this study includes only a sampling of the total number of teachers of entrepreneurial journalism at universities, which is why we think there is much opportunity for research and development of more of these kinds of courses.



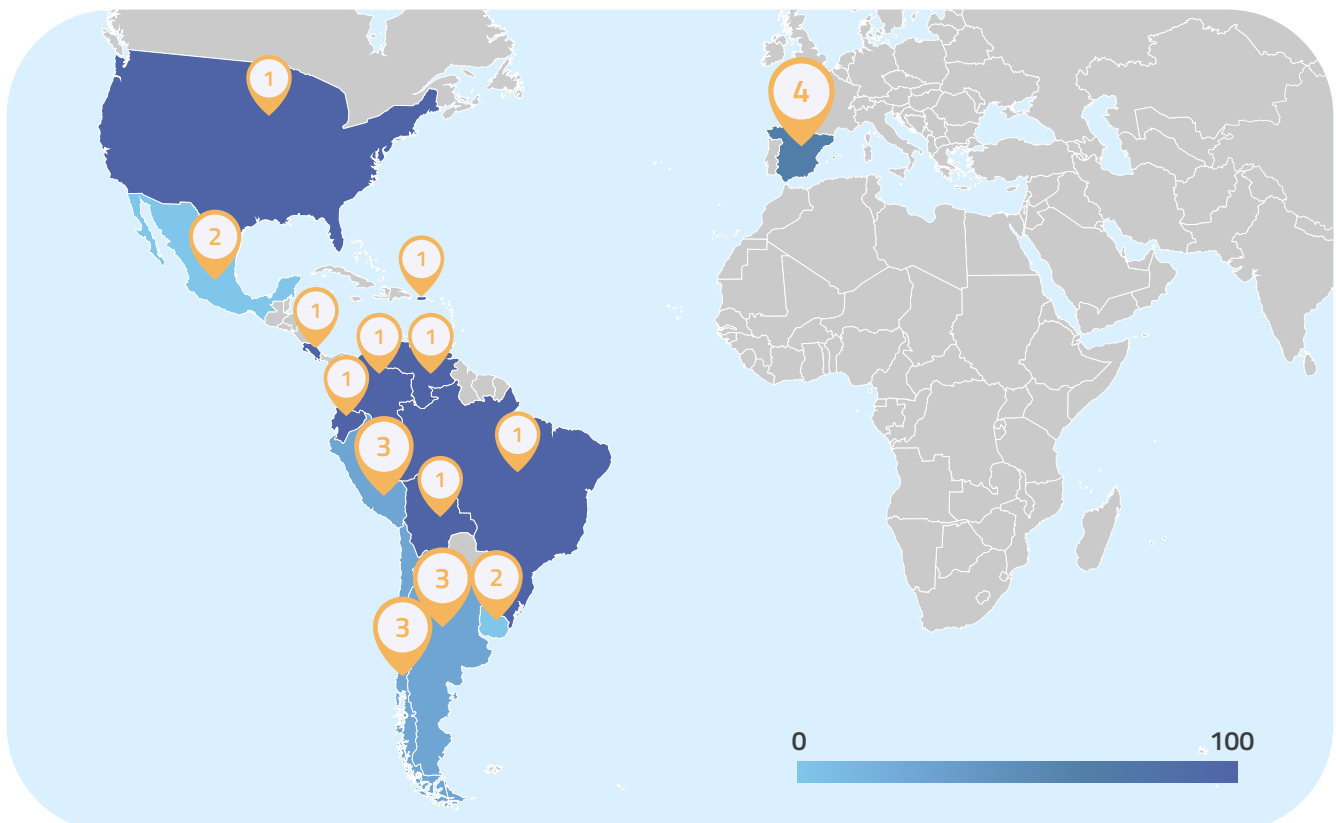
In Latin America, only 2.82% of universities that teach journalism include entrepreneurial journalism courses \*

\* According to the courses that we have been able to identify

Spain, meanwhile, has a much more developed academic ecosystem, with its own characteristics worthy of further study. According to the article, "[How do we study communication in Spain?](#)" by Ángel Carrasco-Campos, Enric Saperas, and Manuel Martínez-Nicolás, in 2015 there were 54 universities that offered a degree in communications in Spain. The 11 Spanish teachers in our database represent 20.3% of that total, a percentage that - compared to the Latin American percentage - reflects its robustness.

The majority of the interviews were conducted virtually and SurveyMonkey was only used to enter and organize the data collected. Additional materials, including published academic research and links to media projects created by students based on what they learned from these courses, was gathered during follow-up interviews and meetings.

## 25 journalism professors in 13 Latin American countries and Spain



# Professors in Latin America and Spain

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## Spain

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**Javier Galán** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Carlos III in Getafe, Spain.



**María Sánchez** is an associate professor in Málaga, Spain, who is not affiliated with a specific university.



**Miguel Carvajal** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche in Spain.



**Juan Luis Manfredi** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Castilla-La Mancha in Madrid, Spain.

## Argentina

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**Fernando Ruiz** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Austral in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



**Alexandra López** is a part-time professor at Escuela TEA and DeporTEA in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



**José Crettaz** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Argentina de la Empresa in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



## Chile



**Roberto Bulgarini** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez in Santiago and Viña del Mar, Chile.



**Jimena Carrasco** is a guest professor at the Universidad del Desarrollo in Santiago, Chile.



**Miguel Huerta** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago, Chile.

## Peru



**César Lengua** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas in Lima, Peru.



**Jenny Canales** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya in Lima, Peru.



**Carolina Albornoz** is full-time professor at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Lima, Peru.

## Uruguay



**Gonzalo Sobral** is a guest professor at the Universidad ORT in Montevideo, Uruguay.



**Carina Novarese** is a guest professor at the Universidad de Montevideo in Uruguay.

## Mexico



**José Luis López** is a full-time professor at the Universidad Panamericana in Mexico City, Mexico.



**Abraham Torres** is a part-time professor at the Universidad Anáhuac Cancún in Mexico.

## Bolivia

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**Sarita Murillo** is a guest professor at the Universidad NUR in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

## Brazil

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**Elizabeth Saad** is a full-time professor at the Universidad de São Paulo in Brazil.

## Costa Rica

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**Yanancy Noguera** is a guest professor at the Universidad de Costa Rica in San José, Costa Rica.

## Ecuador

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**Óscar Maldonado** is a guest professor at the Universidad San Francisco in Quito, Ecuador.

## Venezuela

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**Albor Rodríguez** is a guest professor at the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (Puerto Ordaz campus) in Ciudad Bolívar, Venezuela.

## United States

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**Summer Harlow** is a full-time professor at the University of Houston in the United States.

## Puerto Rico

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**Lillian Agosto** is a guest professor at the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

## Colombia

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**Diana Taborda** is a full-time professor at the Universidad de Antioquia in Colombia.

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# **THE ANATOMY OF AN ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNALISM PROFESSOR**

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Their academic careers, their job roles in media,  
and media projects they have created

## Academic and professional experience

The academic and professional careers of the teachers we interviewed are varied and reflect the diversity of those who teach journalism classes in Latin America and Spain. If we only looked at the average number of years these professors have worked in media (13.1 years) and their average number years of experience as university teachers (13.8 years), our analysis of these professors would be limited.

The first data point that stood out to us was that the teachers we interviewed have only recently begun to incorporate entrepreneurial journalism into their classes. Some 76% of professors we interviewed started teaching this subject between 2012 and 2018. Only one professor had academic experience in entrepreneurial journalism prior to the year 2000.

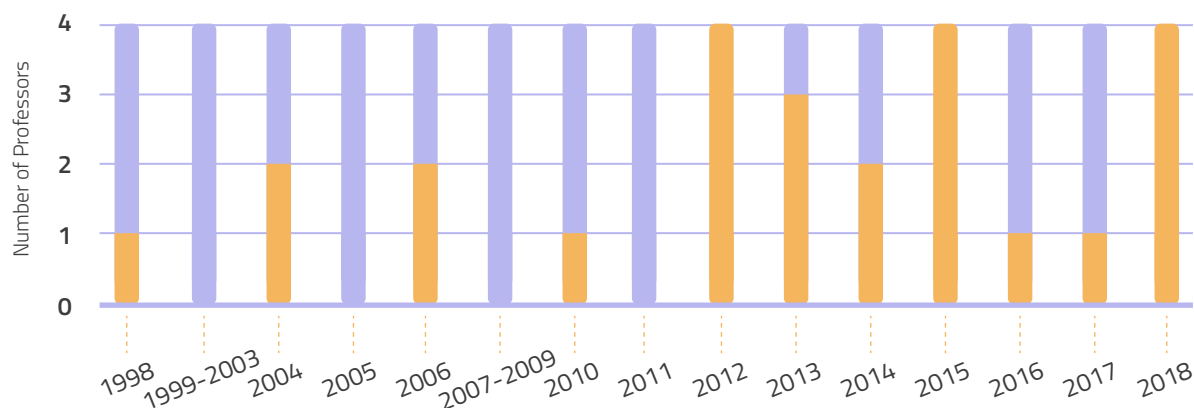
When we compared the data about how long these professors have been teaching with their experience working in media and the time they have been teaching entrepreneurial journalism, it led to some interesting insights. While most of the professors in

our sample have worked in media for roughly the same amount of time, we found that those with fewer years of classroom experience were more likely to have become professors specifically to teach entrepreneurial journalism. On the other hand, the more experienced professors (six professors in our sample have more than two decades experience) had to learn new skills and expand their focus to include entrepreneurial journalism.

In 2010, Miguel Carvajal, a professor at the Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche in Spain, did a postdoctoral stay in New York, where he visited media startups, investigated new journalism financing models and met professors like Jeremy Caplan and Jeff Jarvis. When he returned to Spain, his university tasked him with setting up a postgraduate course of study.

"I brought some cultural and academic baggage back with me from New York, and that came into focus in 2011-2012, when I started designing the master's degree in Journalism Innovation. For a

### What year did you start teaching entrepreneurial journalism?



## The two paths to teaching entrepreneurial journalism

Total years of teaching	Percentage of skill areas taught	Average years teaching entrepreneurial journalism	Average years spent working in media
1-4 years	16%	2.3	12.8
5-9 years	24%	3.8	8.8
10-14 years	16%	9.5	20.0
15-19 years	20%	7.8	11.2
20 or more	24%	6.2	14.8

moment, I thought about calling it a 'Master's in Entrepreneurial Journalism,' but we thought that name would have restricted our future growth. By focusing on innovation, we can incorporate not only the creation of startups but also the creation of innovative *intrapreneurial* projects."

Venezuelan professor Albor Rodríguez took another academic route; for 25 years, she lived in Caracas, but in 2006 decided to return to her hometown of Ciudad Bolívar, where she started teaching at the Puerto Ordaz campus of the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello. In 2016, Albor used the crowdfunding platform Indiegogo to help launch *La Vida de Nos* (The Life of Us), a site dedicated to longform narrative journalism. Albor used that experience to inform her course on editorial processes, which went from being a reporting workshop to a course where students were challenged to work with entrepreneurial tools.

We asked teachers if, in addition to their years of experience in the classroom, they had ever had hands-on experience as media entrepreneurs. Almost two-thirds of those interviewed (about 64%) had created a project related to media, journalism or communications. There are many others who have also provided advice to other entrepreneurs, or are currently designing a project that they hope to launch in the future.

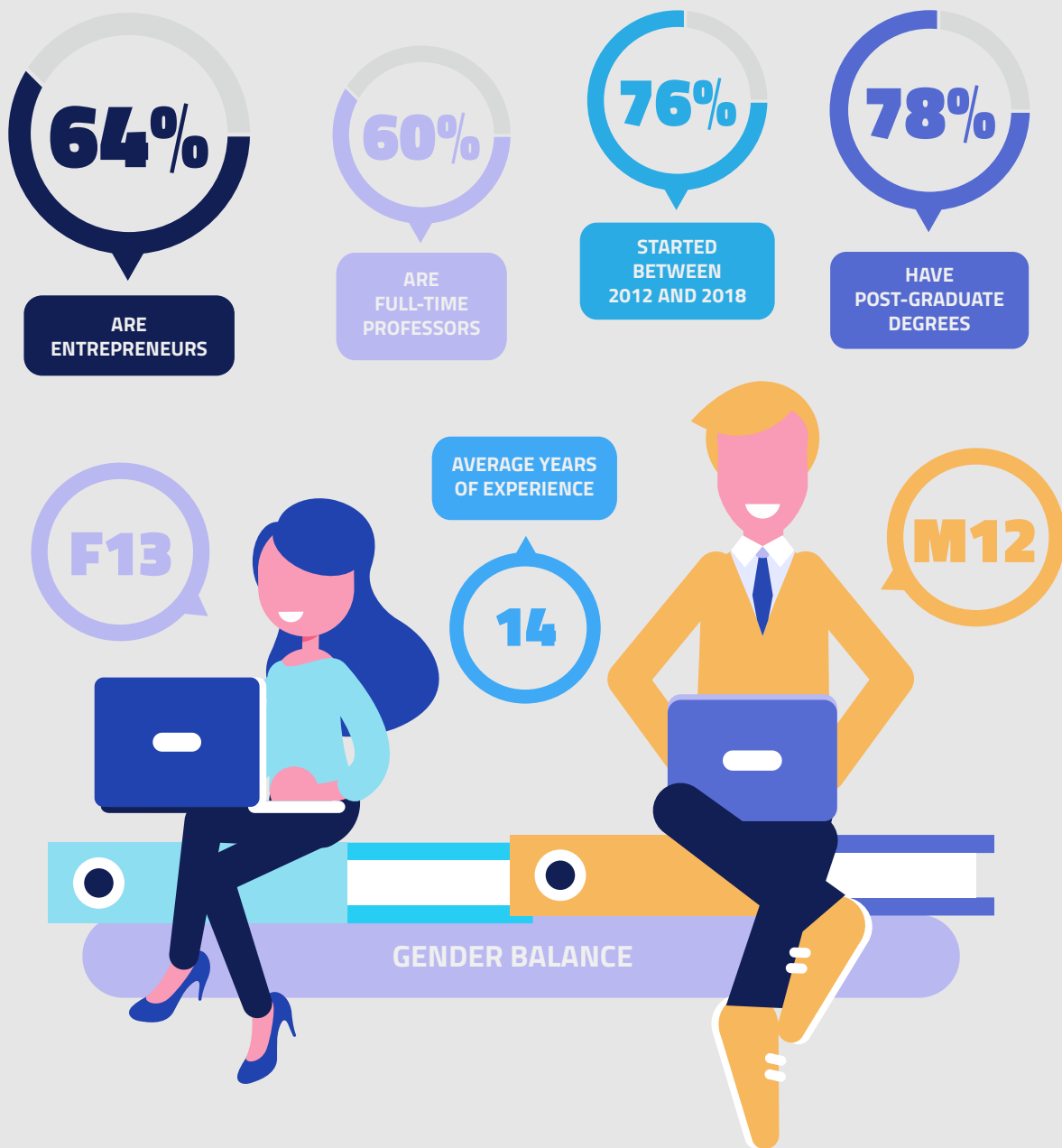
Óscar Maldonado from Ecuador is the founder of *Paralelo* (Parallel), a media organization dedicated to producing branded content using new digital narrative techniques. Yanancy Noguera in Costa Rica created Punto y Aparte (Period, Paragraph) a platform that connects young and experimental journalists and allows them to work on projects collaboratively.

Moreover, not all of the entrepreneurial projects launched by professors have been digital: in 2005, Fernando Ruiz launched La Ciudad, a print newspaper in the province of Tucumán, Argentina, which he published for three years.

In our sample of professors, 76% had once worked as a reporter, while 24% had worked as an editor. Only two of our interviewees had worked as media administrators or executives. In contrast, teachers who had no experience working in newsrooms tended to have professional experience outside of the communications field. This explains a phenomenon we noticed in some universities: because there is a shortage of specialists in entrepreneurial journalism, some journalism schools have had to request for professors to be "loaned" from other schools within their own institutions.

For example, professors like Roberto Bulgarini in Chile come from the business school but work to

## The anatomy of an entrepreneurial journalism professor



adapt themselves to the field of journalism in order to teach entrepreneurial journalism effectively. From an academic point of view, 84% of the professors interviewed completed a degree in communications and/or journalism, depending on the nomenclature used by universities in the different countries.

The remaining 16% represents professors who began with different types of degrees – such as political science, business, management, or higher education – who later pursued postgraduate studies in business administration or marketing. When we looked at the education level of the professors in our

study, we found that more than half (52%) had bachelor's and master's degrees.

About 36% of the professors in our study have a doctoral degree. This fact is related to the kind of academic position these professors have in the universities where they teach classes and brings us to the final element of our anatomy of a professor.

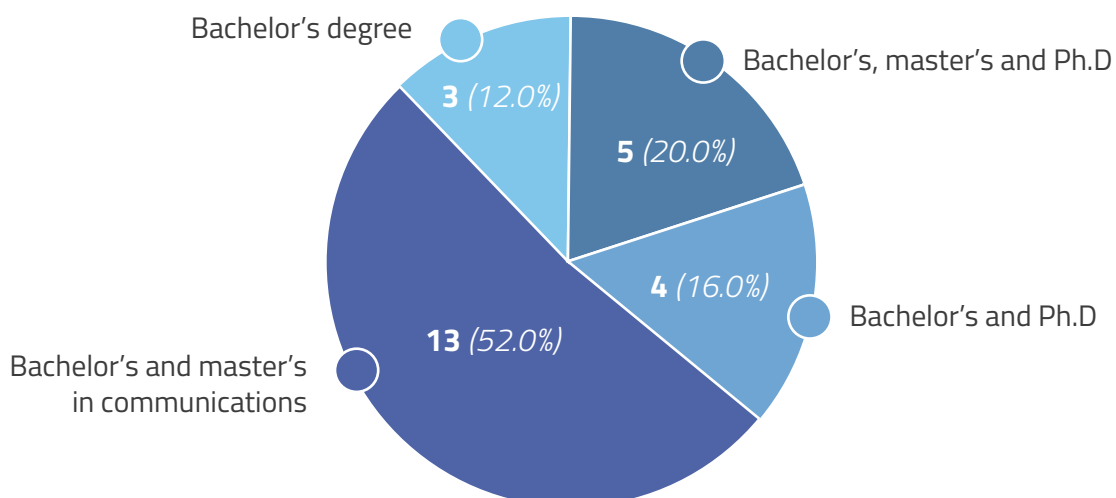
About 60% of the interviewees are full-time teachers, which implies that they are completely dedicated to working in academia. All nine teachers who have PhDs fall in this category.

The 40% who are guest professors also work full-time on their own media projects or in traditional media, often in positions where they lead innovation projects. A good example is Óscar Maldonado who teaches at the Universidad San Francisco in Quito, Ecuador.

*"For a moment, I thought about calling it a 'Master's in Entrepreneurial Journalism,' but we thought that name would have restricted our future growth. By focusing on innovation, we can incorporate not only the creation of startups but also the creation of innovative intrapreneurial projects."*

**—Miguel Carvajal, professor at the  
Universidad Miguel Hernández  
de Elche, Spain**

## More than half of the interviewees have a master's degree





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# **A DECONSTRUCTION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNALISM COURSES**

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What is taught, how it is perceived by students, and the challenges that they have identified



## Three recurring characteristics

The entrepreneurial journalism courses taught by the professors we interviewed share some common characteristics; the differences in these courses emerge when one considers how long the courses have been taught and the professors' levels of professional and academic experience.

The first recurring characteristic: 92% of the courses are "semi-annual" - that is, they last between four and five months, and students are in the classroom about 3.5 hours per week.

One course included in our sample is a notable exception: DeporTEA School of Journalism, an Argentinian school that has been around for more than 30 years, has a course called "self-management and media marketing" which lasts for an entire year. However, this course is divided into three modules, each taught by a different professor. Alexandra Lopez teaches one of these modules, in addition to a course of the same name at TEA School of Journalism, but that course lasts for only four months.

The second recurring characteristic: 92% of our interviewees teach their courses as part of an undergraduate program which culminates in a journalism or social communications degree.

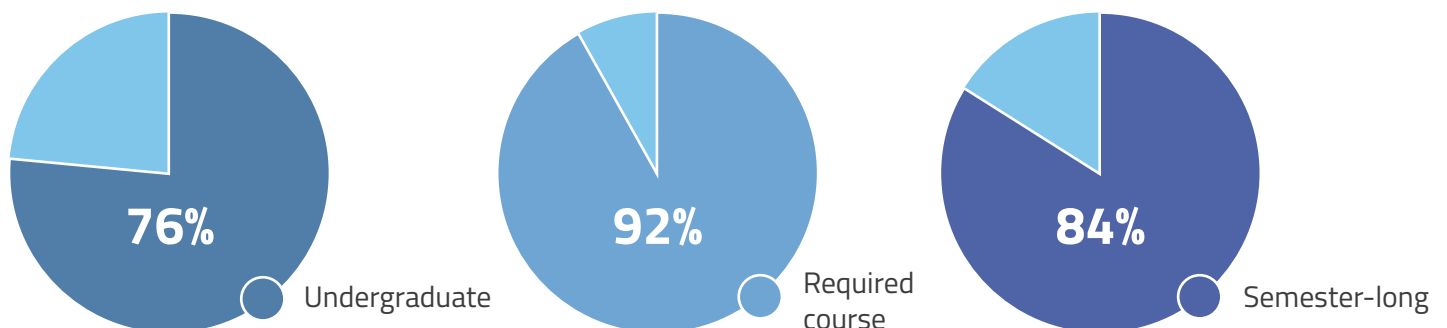
Only two professors teach courses in post-graduate

programs. These courses are generally shorter (four weeks with two hours per week spent in the classroom) and the content structure is usually more focused. Carina Novarese teaches a communication module for a master's degree in communication management at the Universidad de Montevideo in Uruguay, where in the first month, students are expected to deliver an overview of the digital trends which are currently shaking up media.

The third recurring characteristic: 76% of these courses are mandatory; in some circumstances, students have to take prerequisites before they can take entrepreneurial journalism courses. For example, Professor César Lengua from Peru requires his students to pass a course called "Market analysis," which gives them a in-depth understanding of the *(post)media* ecosystem.

Only six professors reported that their courses were optional. Summer Harlow, is a professor based in the United States, where universities are traditionally more flexible with their curricula than their counterparts in Latin America and Spain. She said that in the future, it is likely that entrepreneurial journalism will be a mandatory subject for all journalism students at her university

### Entrepreneurial journalism course characteristics: undergraduate, required, semester-long



## Professors pitch their courses

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As part of our interviews we challenged the professors – just as they challenge their students – to craft a compelling pitch for the course they teach. These are some of the best responses we gathered:

*"We train students to create new, informative content that is both viable economically and attracts audiences."*

**—José Crettaz, Argentina.**

*"I look for strategies to demonstrate the many processes involved in the confection of an editorial product, which can range from a book to an application to a website – always considering that they have to have a journalistic purpose."*

**—Albor Rodríguez, Venezuela.**

*"My course focuses on exposing students to content and ways of thinking that train them to act like traditional journalists, or as editorial managers, or as entrepreneurs."*

**—Elizabeth Saad, Brazil.**

*"We help [students] to identify the value of their proposed projects and then plan how to build a minimum viable product that will result in a sustainable media project by using the Business Model Canvas."*

**—Miguel Carvajal, Spain.**

*"In my course, I teach about the state of the journalism industry, how to launch a project and what strategies you have to keep in mind when you are attempting to launch your own journalism project. For me, the word 'strategy' is very important, so I dedicate the most time to understanding this topic. That is, 'strategy' understood as, 'Where do I focus, how do I use my resources, and what am I really saying to the reader?'"*

**—Juan Luis Manfredi, Spain.**

*"If you are a student interested in new things, in interesting things, if you are creative and like innovation, then you must take my course to learn how you can change the future of journalism."*

**—Summer Harlow, United States.**

## Students

Our research focused on teachers and their courses. However, we also wanted to know about the professors' perceptions of their students in relation to entrepreneurial journalism. The results presented here are from interviews with professors and offer a first glimpse of student reactions to these classes. We believe further study of student motivations and the factors that help them become more successful is warranted and could be done through interviews and surveys with students.

We asked the teachers in our sample to evaluate the degree to which their students have both interest in, and knowledge of, entrepreneurial journalism. For that, we used a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates a low level of interest/knowledge, and 5 indicates a high level of interest/knowledge. The average level of prior entrepreneurial journalism knowledge can be considered low at 2.04. This can be explained by the novelty of entrepreneurial journalism at many universities and the lack of connection these courses have with other courses in the curriculum, something that we will describe later as "discouragement factors."

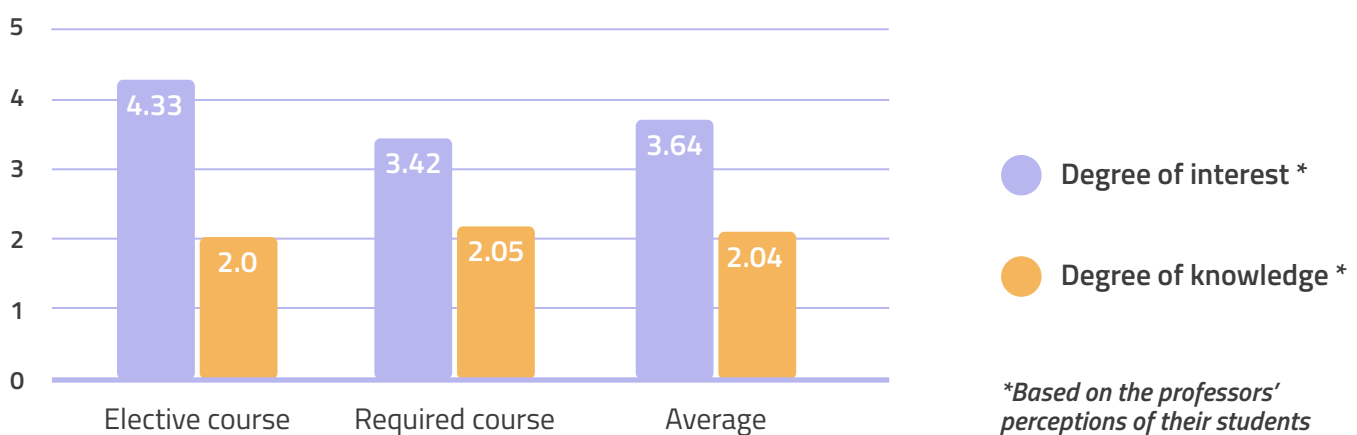
When talking about the degree of interest that students show towards entrepreneurial journalism, the average rises to a medium-high level (3.64). This interest is even higher for elective courses (4.33), where the students must actively decide to take the class.

The paradox between course popularity among students and the higher chance that an elective course could be cancelled warrants the attention of the highest levels of academic management. On one hand, elective entrepreneurial journalism courses generate high levels of interest with students. On the other, these courses are often relegated to the margins of the curriculum where they are more likely to be modified or eliminated.

We compared the professors' perceptions of their students' level of interest and knowledge with two additional questions:

**The first question:** What do teachers believe encourages (or would encourage) students to become entrepreneurial journalists? The answers

### Elective entrepreneurial journalism courses capture students' interest



were open-ended, but were later grouped according to their central themes. About 48% of teachers say the most important factor is students believing they can create their own project with editorial and financial independence.

Or, as expressed by Peruvian Professor Carolina Alborno: "Ideological independence (not following in the footsteps of big media) and economic independence (creating your own source of income)."

The other big motivator for students (about 28%) to become entrepreneurial journalists is the possibility of creating alternatives to established media. According to teachers, after students have completed professional internships or have had hands-on experience inside a newsroom, they are more motivated to create their own projects.

"After spending an internship in traditional media, they realize that they want to do something else, because they didn't like the experience, or they wanted to do something that was more personally fulfilling," said Gonzalo Sobral of Uruguay.

"My course," says Miguel Huerta from Chile, "is in the second semester in their fourth year of classes,

which is when [students] have already spent time working in media and have seen the reality of media. And the reality of the media in Chile is sad reality. "

The rest of the factors that encourage students, include:

- Learning about other entrepreneurial journalism startups
- Discovering that others have managed to create, launch and sustain a news site
- Student passion for a particular project, topic, or audience
- Conquering the fear of trying something risky
- The need to find work in an increasingly competitive journalism market

As José Crettaz from Argentina says: "You have to plant the seed of an entrepreneurial mind-set, because it is key to being employable, regardless of where you find work; whether it's your own project, or if it's within someone else's business."

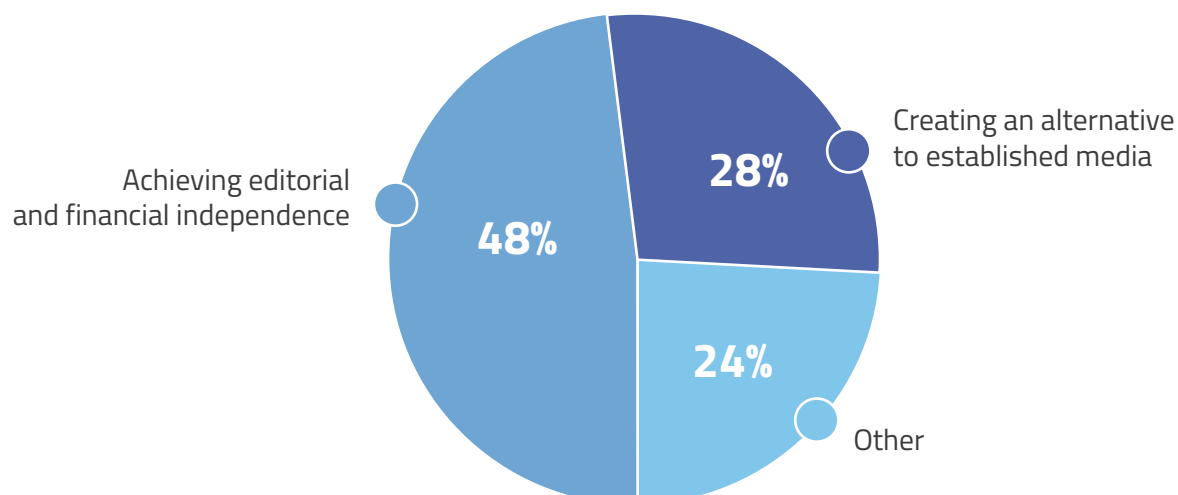
**The second question was the opposite of the first:** what do these teachers think discourages their students from undertaking entrepreneurial journalism?

Here, the variety of answers was greater and, therefore, it was more difficult to group them into

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## What professors think will attract their students to media entrepreneurship

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common themes. The most common response was a lack of economic resources (28%), followed by the lack of design and management skills to create a new website.

In the wide variety of “discouraging factors” suppressing entrepreneurship, each individual country has its own characteristics, but some patterns started to emerge. For example, Yanancy Noguera says that Costa Rica has a weak entrepreneurial ecosystem, and that the State has guaranteed employment. This combination discourages self-starters, creating a notable contrast with other Central American countries.

“Of course there is corruption, of course there is inequity, and there are many problems that need to be resolved. But the problems are not so critical that journalists feel an obligation, or a necessity to develop different kinds of journalism that are more innovative, more aggressive,” Noguera said.

*“You have to plant the seed of an entrepreneurial mind-set, because it is key to being employable, regardless of where you find work; whether it's your own project, or if it's within someone else's business.”*

**—José Crettaz, Universidad Argentina de la Empresa.**

Elizabeth Saad from Brazil, on the other hand, says that the main problem is that university curriculums are outdated and out-of-step with market conditions. The gaps that occur in educating journalists about entrepreneurship do not exist in a vacuum, but are inextricably linked to the whole process devised by universities to train journalists. This breakdown offers us valuable insight into the ways that educators and professionals are re-imagining what the future of journalism is going to look like.

María Sánchez from Spain notes that not everyone has the “culture of entrepreneurship,” while Gonzalo

Sobral from Uruguay believes that a large problem is a lack of creativity: “The students who are attracted to journalism seem like the restless type, curious bookworms. Meanwhile, students who are more orderly and systematic tend to wind up doing corporate communications. Each side fears that the other is where all the creativity is happening.”

## Guests Speaker

The entrepreneurial journalism courses taught by the professors we interviewed have become a space where students are exposed to real-world examples of successful entrepreneurship – whether that be a case study that deconstructs how an independent media project became successful, or via a guest lecture. We discovered that 80% of the professors we interviewed have invited at least one entrepreneurial journalist to share his or her experience with their students.

For example, Professor Sarita Murillo (Bolivia) brought Doly Leytón to her class, the founder of [La Region](#), a publication focused on tourism and the environment, as well as Fabiola Gutiérrez, the ambassador for SembraMedia in Bolivia.

Meanwhile, in Professor Alexandra López's (Argentina) class, Roberto Dánna has spoken about [Flores de papel](#), a neighborhood newspaper - in print and digital format- that he created in partnership with the merchants in his area on the outskirts of the city of Buenos Aires to generate a mutual profit.

In Spain, two professors mentioned visits from Ignacio Escolar, the founder of [eldiario.es](#) who is one of the most mentioned sources when talking about successful entrepreneurial journalism.

While the professors mentioned journalism entrepreneurs as the most commonly invited guest

speakers, they have also invited other speakers to their classrooms, including freelance journalists and entrepreneurs from areas outside of the media. These guests help reinforce the idea of a journalist's personal branding. The professors have also asked professionals to come speak who work in traditional newsrooms but have taken on leadership roles related to innovation within the company, a concept that also comes up in some of the courses analyzed as part of this study.

Only one teacher mentioned having invited a media investor, which reflects the disconnect that not only academics but journalists in general have with the field of investment.

## Challenges

What are the most challenging aspects of teaching an entrepreneurial journalism course? Answers from the professors included:

- Developing the course itself
- External factors, including fitting the course into the overall academic curriculum
- The type of students and the experience they bring to the class

- The general characteristics of the job market in the country where they teach

One of the challenges teachers must navigate, which came up repeatedly, was the fact that their students have difficulty adopting a business mind-set. The knowledge gap can be broken down into a few common areas of difficulty for students: identifying the problems and needs of the market, creating a balanced business model, and managing basic accounting, among others.

Gonzalo Sobral says teaching his students about business plans is the most complex issue they tackle. To his students, the idea of creating a business plan is daunting. "It's as if you've mentioned the devil," he says.

Diana Taborda from Colombia agrees: "For them it is nuclear physics, it's where I take the longest. I need them to understand it, not completely master it."

A second recurring theme is that both professors and students struggle to understand the magnitude of the disruption that the journalism industry has experienced in recent years. José Crettaz says: "The first challenge is to make students understand the depth of the transformations happening to the media, which is the industry in which they are choosing to work."

### Guest speakers in university classes

Type of guest speaker	Number of professors who said they invited guest speakers
Media entrepreneurs	20
Entrepreneurs from any area	6
Academics from the field of entrepreneurship	2
Experts in the field of entrepreneurship	2
Investors	1
Journalists who work in traditional media	4
Freelance journalists	6
Other professors	2

Many of the professors interviewed said that understanding this tectonic shift is crucial to comprehending what it really means when we talk about entrepreneurial journalism.

"One of the most complex issues for me is having my students understand the importance of entrepreneurial journalism in the context of our country," says Abraham Torres from Mexico.

Elizabeth Saad from Brazil says that her students come to the course with a "distorted" idea of what journalism is actually like these days: "They think they're going to work in the newsroom and go out onto the street to report. Things have changed a lot."

Juan Luis Manfredi is convinced that entrepreneurial journalism is real, not a fad, adding: "The reality is that launching your own entrepreneurial journalism project is going to be the most likely way to find a job."

Other challenges mentioned by the teachers interviewed include obstacles faced by the teachers themselves, such as how to have up-to-date knowledge for each lesson and how to plan the course as a whole.

One professor who regularly has a course with between 70 and 80 students said that the size of the

group is the main complication: "I divide them into groups, and yes I realize that not all of the group members are equally involved or accept the challenge to be creative. This is a challenge that I have to solve with the right methodology. In the end, the results can be dramatically different, very uneven."

*"One of the most complex issues for me is having my students understand the importance of entrepreneurial journalism in the context of our country."*

*—Abraham Torres, Universidad Anáhuac  
Cancún, Mexico*

*"Entrepreneurial journalism is real, not a fad. The reality is that launching your own entrepreneurial journalism project is going to be the most likely way to find a job."*

*—Juan Luis Manfredi, Universidad Castilla-La Mancha in Madrid, Spain*

## Five challenges when teaching an entrepreneurial journalism course



# PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT

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Data points: Measuring the efficacy of an  
entrepreneurial journalism course



To measure the degrees of both effectiveness and impact for the courses taught by entrepreneurial journalism professors, we defined some performance parameters.

First, we put together a list of 17 basic entrepreneurial journalism concepts, from cash flow to different forms of monetization, to the creation of a journalist's personal brand.

Second, we defined a list of six tools or Agile Methodologies: Design Thinking, Business Model Canvas, Lean Canvas, Lean UX, Sprint, and Pitching.

Third, we asked the professors if they had recently published any academic reports or papers related to journalism entrepreneurship.

Fourth, we asked if any of their students had started or continued a journalism project during their entrepreneurial journalism course.

## Content and basic concepts

In general, the professors interviewed addressed, to a greater or lesser extent, more than half of the

basic concepts included in our predefined list. Among the most recurring themes are key concepts such as the Unique Value Proposition (96%), followed by branded content and marketing for media (92% in both cases). Case studies of entrepreneurial journalists, entrepreneurial media, memberships, and subscriptions also had a major presence in the courses included in our sample.

The Key Performance Indicator, known by its acronym as "KPI," was the only concept mentioned less than 50% of the time. As its name indicates, KPIs allow performance to be measured through a process with previously defined objectives, and it is commonly used in strategic planning. Other concepts not mentioned frequently include: programmatic advertising, minimum viable product, monetization through consulting, and cash flow. Cash flow, however, was included in two out of every three courses.

The professors interviewed also mentioned concepts which were not part of our list. For example, using the book *The Blue Ocean Strategy* to compare red ocean strategies (in crowded existing markets) with blue ocean strategies (in new markets).

Other topics mentioned included the use of ad blockers, cryptocurrency, blockchain, organizational structure, and personnel management.

### Entrepreneurial journalism course content in Latin America and Spain

#### Most popular course content

Unique Value Proposition	24	96%
Branded Content	23	92%
Media Marketing	23	92%
Case Studies	23	92%
Memberships and/or Subscriptions	21	84%

#### Least popular course content

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	11	44%
Programmatic Advertising	13	52%
Minimum Viable Product	14	56%
Monetization Via Consulting	16	64%
Cash Flow	17	68%

Javier Galán emphasized the importance of understanding the unique peculiarities of having an ethical, operationally-sound media company: “A media company is not like a business that makes soda cans; one has to manage it in a different way. We really emphasize that everything which applies to a normal business is something else entirely in a media company. A media company has a social responsibility that is core to its mission and everything else is a tool to help it fulfill that mission.”

## Tools and Methodologies

The entrepreneurial journalism professors interviewed have a preference for two tools/Agile Methodologies: Design Thinking and the Business Model Canvas. One out of three professors interviewed (32%) use both, while these two tools were mentioned separately by 14 professors (56%).

The next most mentioned methodology is pitching, which is usually taught at the conclusion of a course by having the students present the projects

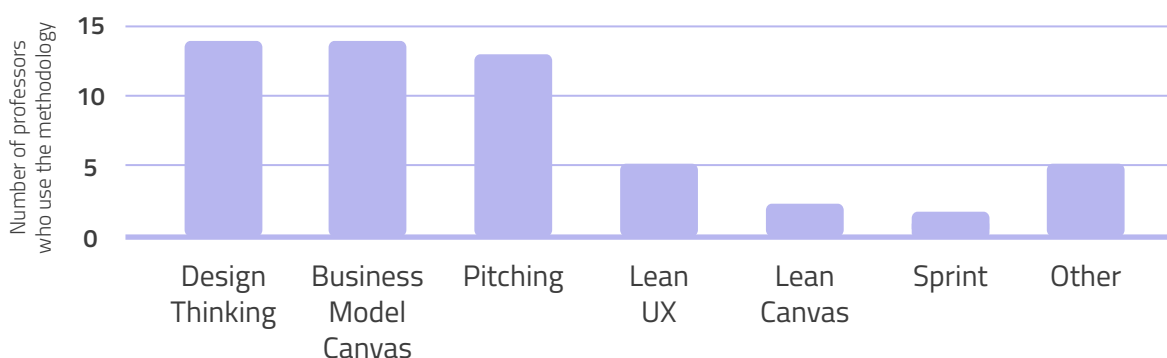
they created during the semester. Some professors approach this topic by having students make short videos, a type of “elevator pitch,” that the creators of each project have to record and publish.

Other techniques professors mentioned that they use in their courses include: brainstorming, participant observation, and Scrum, a brand of Agile development that is often used in the software industry. Scrum is designed to make incremental changes to a product rather than completing a full development cycle without making adjustments along the way to ensure the product is not obsolete before it's finished.

## Academic Publications

The academic publications sector is one of the areas with the most potential for growth that we think exists for entrepreneurial journalism professors and researchers. Whether it be a book or an academic paper, only 36% of those interviewed had published academic-style research in the last five years related

### What Agile Methodologies do entrepreneurial journalism professors use?



to the topics of entrepreneurship, business models, innovation, or new digital media. Since there were few responses on this topic, it is worth examining some specific examples.

Summer Harlow has published research on business models, innovation, and the sustainability of entrepreneurial journalism in Central America. She focused on one country specifically: El Salvador. In 2017, she published the book "Liberation Technology in El Salvador: Re-appropriating Social Media Among Alternative Media Projects." It is an ethnographic study that explores how four Salvadoran alternative media projects integrated digital technology into their practices.

In Spain, there are more and more recent publications. In 2017 Maria Sánchez published, "Strategic Management, Innovation and Communication Foresight," a manual about techniques and case studies. Javier Galán was the coordinator of "Media Company XXI. Strategic Planning," a book published in 2017, on which Juan Luis Manfredi also collaborated. In 2015, Manfredi was also the coordinator for "Innovation and Journalism: Start at the University," which is [available for free](#), and addresses real-life teaching experiences related to entrepreneurial journalism. Miguel Carvajal, meanwhile, has focused his research on journalism innovation and new business models.

In Argentina, Fernando Ruiz has published books about the media, such as "La Opinión" by Jacobo Timerman and "Ámbito Financiero." In 2018, he also published "Cazadores de noticias. Doscientos años en la vida cotidiana de los que cuentan las noticias." In Mexico, José Luis López has researched the ecosystem of social networks and the challenges digital journalism faces in order to adapt, innovate and survive. In Brazil, Elizabeth Saad has researched innovation strategies and the business models of media companies, among many other topics.

## Creating Media

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Is it possible to incubate or plant the seeds which will inspire the creation of a journalism site in a course that, in most cases, doesn't last longer than five months? The information provided by the professors interviewed offers some hopeful data: 72% mentioned at least one entrepreneurial journalism project led by former students.

Abraham Torres told us about a project in Mexico called Belafonte, a site founded by [Pablo Luna](#) that uses multimedia narratives to "cultivate people's opinions."

In Colombia, Diana Taborda mentioned [Mente Abierta](#) (Open Mind), a communications agency that designs collaborative strategies with a focus on educating viewers through the use of multi-platform storytelling. Manuela Torres and Alejandra Echavarría, its founders, are journalists trained at the Universidad de Antioquia.

Miguel Huerta told us that in 2015 in Chile, two of his students created a website called [Blink](#), with the intention of teaching children in as little time as possible. As they state on their website: "Everyone believed that they would die, until they both fell into a barrel of toxic waste that turned them into Blinkers. Since then, they have dunked people in the same barrel so that they become part of this radioactive community."

## Novice Professors, Experienced Professors

Looking at the following four criteria – ex-students who start their own sites, content and basic concepts, tools and methodologies, and research about entrepreneurial journalism -- we ranked our sampling of teachers based on how much they met each of the defined criteria. At the top of our ranking there are experienced professors and at the bottom there are novice professors. These two rankings do not imply the value of the teaching performance is being judged, they only show the degree to which each of the criteria was met. They are the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that we have defined to measure the impact of entrepreneurial journalism teaching in Latin America and Spain, which enabled us to trace the path of development and specialization for others who are interested in venturing into this field.

A fifth of the professors interviewed scored the highest marks, and showed tangible results. These professors are also the ones who incorporated the most topics from the list of skill areas we identified as good practice among entrepreneurial journalism teachers. Among the reasons they scored so high — their former students have started their own projects based on their courses.

Within this group of teachers you will find the highest use of tools and Agile Methodologies, and

their portfolios include research and publications related to the topic of journalism entrepreneurship.

The teachers ranked in the highest tier had an average of 13 years teaching experience and 15 years experience working in media. Their entrepreneurial journalism classes are, on average, not more than 5 years old, following the trend identified earlier. In addition to their extensive experience in the classroom, they also have field experience; the vast majority of these teachers also started their own media sites.

On the other end of the spectrum, teachers who are not ranked as high for their performance have not started their own media sites. On average, the professors in this group have more than a decade of teaching experience, but only recently started teaching in the field of entrepreneurial journalism. They have already tackled teaching the concepts and basic content of journalism entrepreneurship, and they have the potential to incorporate Agile Methodologies. Despite being new to teaching in this area, they have demonstrated the ability to research by publishing academic books and papers, and they have the potential to develop this area of journalism that, as of yet, does not have a well-defined space in academia or a clear identity in the journalism profession.

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[!\[\]\(05be7c7a8995decd503647c99211f7c2\_img.jpg\) The Sembramedia model for ranking high-performance teaching of entrepreneurial journalism in Latin America.](#)

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Percentage of professors interviewed who scored the highest	At least one student started his/her own site	Percent of skill areas taught	Tools and methodologies used	Research and books published related to entrepreneurial journalism
20%	100%	97.6%	56.2%	60%

# RECOMMENDATIONS



Findings and proposed courses of action for  
professors and universities

**A recent phenomenon.** 76% of the professors interviewed began teaching entrepreneurial journalism courses between 2012 and 2018. These professors can be separated into two different categories: those professors who joined academia recently did so to teach this type of course specifically, while the more experienced professors -some with up to three decades of teaching experience- had to refocus their careers to include entrepreneurial journalism. Universities commonly respond that, in the face of the (post)industry media crisis, entrepreneurial journalism courses expand the skill set of the journalists they are training.

» **Recommendation.**

Implement these skills across the curriculum, not solely in a single isolated course, and follow up with graduates about their career progression. There is room for many universities in Latin America and Spain to incorporate entrepreneurial journalism courses.

**The professors are entrepreneurs.** 64% of the professors interviewed have been or are media entrepreneurs. Those who were not part of founding a project have provided advice and support to other media startups. And 76% of the professors interviewed worked at some point as a reporter, which is why they have knowledge of the internal workings of newsrooms. In addition, in academic terms, more than half of the professors have a master's degree. This level of specialization, both theoretical and practical, is an attribute which should be utilized.

» **Recommendation.**

Incorporate media entrepreneurs into the pool of professors. Communications departments and journalism schools at colleges and universities can offer consulting services to new or already established media. In turn, in the absence of professors interested in teaching in this area, the media entrepreneurs who have already established their projects are potential entrepreneurial journalism professors that universities can recruit.

**The paradox of elective courses.** Although they are a small portion of our study sample, elective entrepreneurial journalism courses attract students with a higher level of interest in the topic than required courses attract. However, not being included in the core course plan for a communication school, elective courses run the risk of being modified or eliminated from the curriculum altogether, and may not be in alignment with the university's graduation plan. Committing to an entrepreneurial journalism focus requires addressing the weaknesses and opportunities of making courses part of the required curriculum.

» **Recommendation.**

More research is needed related to keeping journalism curriculums up to date. The goal should be to establish the best way to add entrepreneurial journalism seminars, or even complete courses of study, with a study plan that builds skills strategically.

**Enthusiastic students afraid of numbers.** Almost half of the professors interviewed think what most motivates their students to pursue entrepreneurial journalism is the possibility of creating something that is their own, both editorially and financially. This desire is followed by an interest in creating alternatives to previously established media. But a lack of both financial resources and anxieties over the challenges of managing their own organization are the main discouraging factors. The lack of a business mind-set and the fact that students still do not understand the transformation of the journalism industry are also the main difficulties noted by the professors as they taught their courses. The disconnect between entrepreneurial journalism courses and the rest of the curriculum makes it difficult to address these concerns in a consistent way.

» **Recommendation.**

Offer complementary workshops to introduce students to a business mind-set, where they can work with faculty from their university's business administration department.

**Courses connected with entrepreneurs.** 80% of professors interviewed have invited a media entrepreneur to their class to share his or her experience with their students. They have also brought in journalists who have developed their own personal brands, as well as invited professionals known for their inter-company innovation. In our analyzed sample group, there were hardly any investors invited as guests. This is a noted weakness, but it is also an opportunity to expand networks and approaches to entrepreneurial journalism courses.

» **Recommendation.**

Establish connections among key stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in general, share knowledge, technology, networks and opportunities, and provide training, funding and coworking spaces.

The background is a gradient of blue shades. A dark blue shape in the top-left corner contains a pattern of white 'x' marks, dots, and a small double-headed arrow. A large, light blue shape occupies the center. A dark blue shape at the bottom contains a pattern of white 'x' marks, dots, and a small double-headed arrow. A solid orange horizontal line is positioned below the title.

# **A BASIC KIT FOR TEACHING ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNALISM**



The following recommendations are a compilation of answers given by the 25 professors interviewed when we asked them what they read, how they kept informed and what works they consulted related to the topic of entrepreneurial journalism.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The professors interviewed use a wide and diverse source of texts to develop and teach their entrepreneurial journalism courses. These are the five books and manuals the interviewees mentioned the most:

✓ **"Death to the Mass," by Jeff Jarvis (2016).** An essay about the future of the news from the perspective of the multiple business models of the media, the various forms of media-audience relationships, and the never-ending evolution of the journalistic narrative.

✓ **"The Lean Startup," by Eric Ries (2011).** A key text which introduces the Agile Methodology for creating companies quickly, using the least resources necessary in order to validate a business idea.

✓ **"Innovative Journalism in Latin America," by Ismael Nafría and Teresa Mioli (2017).** A compilation of articles published on the Knight Center blog that cover projects related to new narratives, distribution and innovative ways of doing business. *Available for free.*

✓ **"The Reinvention of The New York Times," by Ismael Nafría (2017).** A comprehensive, detailed look at the evolution of the Gray Lady of U.S. journalism and its organizational transformation, especially in regards to its audience-focused business model. *Available for free.*

✓ **"Business Model Generation," by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur (2010).** A text which addresses the challenges of building a business model using the nine essential blocks of the Business Model Canvas.

## REFERENCES

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We asked the professors we interviewed to name the people they consider to be experts on the topic of entrepreneurial journalism. Many mentioned local leaders, as well as the founders of successful entrepreneurial endeavors. Others mentioned regional and international professionals. This list is a compilation of the names of six experts (in the order of number of mentions) who were cited as references by the professors we interviewed.

✓ **Janine Warner**, entrepreneur, digital journalism pioneer, author of more than 25 books. Knight Fellow with the International Center for Journalists (ICJ). She is the co-founder and executive director of SembraMedia.

✓ **Jeff Jarvis**, director of the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism of the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, The City University of New York. He is the author of the book, "The End of the Mass Media."

✓ **Ismael Nafria**, journalist and media consultant, author of the book "The Reinvention of The New York Times" as well as author of the digital media newsletter, Tendenci@s, (Trends). He is the vice president of SembraMedia's executive board.

✓ **James Breiner**, bilingual digital media consultant and a visiting professor at the Universidad de Navarra in Spain. Author of the blog, [Entrepreneurial Journalism in Ibero-America](#). He is also the treasurer of SembraMedia's executive board.

✓ **Rosental Alves**, founder and director of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas in Austin. He is part of the SembraMedia board of directors.

✓ **Ramón Salaverría**, professor at the school of communication at the Universidad de Navarra in Spain. He is the author of several books, including "Ciberperiodismo en Iberoamerica and Periodismo Integrado". He is part of SembraMedia's board of directors.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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Time after time, the professors we interviewed mentioned two information sources they use to keep up with what happens in the media industry and journalism: [Nieman Lab](#) from Harvard University and the [Poynter Institute](#).

However, we also observed that the information consumption habits of these professors are fragmented and biased. The professors recognize that they no longer keep up with the news: the news find them.

Miguel Carvajal said he does not usually seek out specific sources: "The information comes to me. I use [Mediagazer](#) - an aggregator service - a lot."

Juan Luis Manfredi also shares this habit and said that, "Twitter is the channel through which I tune into things."

The clearest sign of this pattern of behavior is that professors mentioned a source of information that we did not have on our list: newsletters and personal blogs, published by recognized journalists in specific focus areas. The following sources stood out:

- The *"Tendenci@s"* (Trends) newsletter by Ismael Nafría
- The newsletter *Laboratorio de Periodismo* (Journalism Laboratory) by the Luca de Tena Foundation
- The *IJNet* (International Journalists' Network) newsletter
- The *WAN-IFRA newsletter*
- The *Editor & Publisher newsletter*
- *Mark Deuze's blog*
- *Miquel Pellicer's blog*
- *The Online Journalism blog by Paul Bradshaw*
- *Enrique Dans' blog*

# THE STARTING POINT TEAM

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SembraMedia is a nonprofit dedicated to increasing the diversity of voices and quality of content in Spanish by helping digital media entrepreneurs become more sustainable and successful.

Through business and technical training, market intelligence and networking opportunities for and by the community, SembraMedia's diverse team has worked with thousands of entrepreneurial journalists and inspired the launch of dozens of new media organizations.

From SembraMedia's founding in 2015 until now, the SembraMedia team has mapped the digital media landscape in Latin America, Spain and the U.S. Hispanic market and built a regional network that represents more than 875 digital publishers. The media directory, case studies and reports such as Inflection Point have been cited in more than 150 articles and blogs and have helped SembraMedia evolve into a respected knowledge repository and a platform for sharing best practices and innovative ideas.

With this study, SembraMedia aims to contribute to empowering the teaching of entrepreneurial journalism in Spanish. This study was made possible thanks to the initial research done by the SembraMedia team of ambassadors and the extraordinary board of directors who represent a global network of educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, media publications, and businesses. The Google News Initiative also provided key support for this project.

## Google News Initiative

The Google News Initiative (GNI) is a global program created by Google to collaborate with the news industry to promote the growth of journalism in the digital age. Google works to develop products for journalism organizations, collaborate in an ongoing way with organizations in the media sector in order to solve commercial challenges, and develop programs that promote innovation in newsrooms. In the last two years, News Lab, one of the GNI programs, has provided digital training tools to more than 11,000 journalists in 18 provinces of Argentina as well as in Chile, Peru and Uruguay.

## The Author of the Study

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Patricio Contreras

Patricio is the coordinator of academic initiatives for SembraMedia. He is a journalist and a professor of entrepreneurial journalism and digital narratives for the school of journalism at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Chile. He is also the editor of the digital magazine [www.puroperiodismo.cl](http://www.puroperiodismo.cl). In 2011 he co-founded [www.ojoentinta.com](http://www.ojoentinta.com), a digital site for book lovers. In 2018 he was a fellow of the Scripps Howard Journalism Entrepreneurship Institute, organized by the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University in the United States.

## Coordinators

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Mijal Iastrebnier

Mijal is the co-founder and managing director of SembraMedia. She created the material for Entrepreneurial Journalism in 2014 for the Escuela de Periodismo TEA and the Universidad de San Andrés and in 2016 she was an instructor for the MOOC SembraMedia offered for the Knight Center. She worked as a professor in the master's program in journalism at La Nación at the Universidad Torcuato de Tella in Buenos Aires. When she was 22 years-old she founded Cultra, a culture magazine, and worked for years as a consultant to a diverse array of businesses and regional startups.



Janine Warner

Janine is the co-founder and executive director of SembraMedia. She is a Knight Fellow with the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and has worked with thousands of journalism entrepreneurs all over Latin America. Warner is a digital journalism pioneer, has authored 25 books and is a conference speaker who specializes in topics including the Internet, entrepreneurs, digital media, strategy and projects related to online learning. She has taught three successful courses about journalism entrepreneurship for the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas, with more than 9,000 virtual students and continues teaching through SembraMedia.

## Digital Editor

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Felicitas Carrique

Felicitas is the digital director for SembraMedia in charge of projects related to design, optimization, performance and development. She has a degree in journalism and communications, studied web layout and specializes in media, business, technology and innovation. She has collaborated with the business community supplement of La Nación (The Nation), has worked as an independent contractor developing content for search engine optimization, and also worked as part of the Infobae Innovation team.

## Data Analyst

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Catalina Roig

Catalina graduated from TEA School of Journalism and is currently studying sociology at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. She worked at Chequeado.com, primarily analyzing databases, and has worked in radio as a society columnist. She is originally from Buenos Aires and is currently living in Barcelona as part of an exchange program for her sociology degree.

## Editor

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Abraham Torres

Abraham is an ambassador in Mexico for SembraMedia. He specializes in online writing, creation of multimedia content, immersive narratives and entrepreneurial journalism. He is the coordinator for the undergraduate degree in communications at the Universidad Anáhuac Cancún. He is also part of the panel of evaluators for the Accreditation Council for Communication and Social Sciences, CONAC AC. He has been a journalist for 17 years.

## Translator and Editor

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Natalie Van Hoozer

Natalie is the ambassador for SembraMedia in the United States and works as a program assistant at the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ). She has degrees in journalism and Spanish from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). For her undergraduate thesis, she researched the landscape of bilingual Spanish-English reporting in the state of California. She has also worked as a reporter for National Public Radio member station KUNR Public Radio and Noticiero Móvil, UNR's bilingual student news outlet.

## English Editor

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David LaFontaine

Dave is a UX researcher and designer, expert in creatively solving problems in ways that bridge the divide between the creative and business sides of organizations. He has extensive experience with research, digital design and development, multimedia content creation and web analytics. David has taught Digital Immersion and Online Multimedia at the Annenberg School for Journalism at the University of Southern California. He has also been a guest lecturer at more than a dozen universities, including: the Institute for the Digital Future of Journalism the Mohyla University in Kiev, Ukraine; the Nelson Mandela School of Journalism in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and the Universidad Mayor in Santiago, Chile. David has twice been awarded Fulbright specialist grants. In 2017, he traveled to Yangon, Myanmar, to work with the Thabyay Educational Foundation. In 2012, he traveled to Ethiopia to train NGOs, journalists, and pro-democracy groups in digital media skills.

## Special Thanks

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