

Audio Transcript
Episode 185 of "[E&P Reports](#)" Vodcast Series
With Mike Blinder



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[Guy Tasaka's takeaways for news publishers from the NAB](#)

In this 185th episode of "E&P Reports," we chat with Editor & Publisher's new Technology Columnist, well-known media consultant Guy Tasaka about his recent report on the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) 2023 annual convention to learn what the news publishing industry should know from the world's largest gathering of broadcast professionals.

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0:00:03.9 Speaker 1: This is E&P Reports, a vodcast from Editor & Publisher Magazine, the authoritative voice of news media since 1884, serving newspapers, broadcast, digital, and all forms of news publishing.

0:00:19.7 Mike Blinder: And greetings once again. Mike Blinder, publisher of E&P Magazine. Housekeeping as usual. If you are listening to this series on your favorite podcast platform of choice, we urge you to follow us. Watching us on our YouTube channel, there is a subscribe button below me, there's a bell to the right. If you hit both of those things, not simultaneously, one after the other, you get an update each and every time we upload a new episode of E&P Reports. I have a friend on, someone I've known for a while, I have a lot of respect for, and I'm really excited to introduce him to this audience, although you likely know him, unless you've been under a rock, Guy Tasaka, welcome to E&P Reports.

0:00:58.5 MB: Thank you so much, Mike. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to your audience, and you've been a great supporter of me and everything I've been able to do in the industry. So thank you so much.

0:01:11.3 Guy Tasaka: Guy has got quite a pedigree. I'm gonna try to run this down, Guy. But anybody can go to your LinkedIn profile, but you're obviously a highly sought after consultant, digital strategist. You were the founder of Tasaka Digital that you've been keeping going like I kind of do, where people wanna get your help. But, very recently, very exciting that you were the founding Managing Director for the Technology Resource Center of the Local Media Association. Before that, you built your chops at some of the top media companies in the world. Gatehouse, Head of Mobile Strategy, Calkins, Chief Digital Officer, 10 years at the New York Times in various research and strategic positions. Guy, you have recently also added to your LinkedIn profile that you are our new tech columnist here at E&P. First of all, welcome one board. We're very excited. You've already filed your first piece, which we're gonna break down in a few minutes, but, thank you for joining us. My wife, who runs editorial, has been going back and forth with you, emails and chats and all this. All she talks about is Guy's brilliant. He's got great ideas. Guy, what is your motivation? Why did you come on board?

0:02:24.1 GT: Thank you. I'm a huge supporter of local media. It's why I went to LMC. I really didn't enter local media until I got to Calkins, and really saw the value that it was providing for the local communities. And now, as we go through this transitional phase where we're struggling to find a business model, where we're trying to make technology work for us to forward the industry, I love the opportunity to talk to your executive suite, to talk to senior management and really kind of demystify technology. It's not that hard. Business models are not that hard if you really understand how the technology comes together. And I've done things that we actually really demystified a lot of tech and paywalls, OTT, mobile strategies. It was very easy once you understand what the key

revenue drivers are in that.

0:03:22.1 MB: And make it understandable, 'cause not everybody's is tech driven and understands every acronym. Your first task, which was a hard one, is we sent you to Vegas. You went to the largest, show of broadcast professionals, the NAB, National Association of Broadcasters 2023 show. I understand, over 65,000 attended. It was huge this year. And your job, you already filed your first report, but we're gonna put a little meat on the bone, is to break down your key takeaways for news publishing executives, and with your permission, Guy, we'll get to that on the backside of this message.

0:03:57.5 S1: This episode of E&P Reports is exclusively sponsored by BLOX Digital, formerly TownNews. Even though the name has changed, their commitment to the media industry is as strong as ever. BLOX Digital is now even better positioned to deliver integrated solutions like content management, audience development, advertising revenue, video management, and more. Join the over 2000 news publishers worldwide that power their ongoing digital transformation with BLOX Digital, serving over 141 million monthly users who view over 6.5 billion pages of content each year. You can trust BLOX Digital to empower you, to connect you at scale with the community you need to reach. BLOX Digital, formerly TownNews, now reimaged to help meet the news publishing challenges of tomorrow and beyond. Learn more at bloxdigital.com.

0:05:02.5 MB: All right, Guy, you gave us three takeaways from the NAB. I'm gonna start with those and I'm gonna get then your overall feeling of the mood there. So here you are in Vegas. There is hundreds of panels, events, a big show floor. Your mission was obviously to look at it through the eyes of the news publishing industry, who, and many likely attended the NAB. Your first one ways all about broadcast quality. What do you mean by that? Why was that the first takeaway that you wanted to report on?

0:05:31.5 GT: Sure. No, when I entered the broadcast industry, I worked at a media company, Calkins Media, which was both newspapers and TV stations. The gap between what a newspaper could create or what a YouTube creator could create and what was considered broadcast quality, TV quality, was enormous. Technology in the broadcast world was incredibly expensive and was so much better than anything prosumers had. One of the things that really stood out to me is how the gap has closed. Cameras, our iPhones are better than what broadcasters used five, 10 years ago.

0:06:12.8 MB: Exactly.

0:06:13.9 GT: Also, in the broadcast world, equipment was incredibly expensive. So you think about cameras, playout servers, automation systems, they were hundreds of thousands of dollars. So most people, probably in the newspaper world, don't realize that broadcasters buy equipment every 5-10 years, and they amortize it over that period. A lot of them don't upgrade their software or upgrade their hardware. So as the world transitions into streaming, it becomes incredibly difficult for broadcasters to manage their legacy system into the new paradigm. So what I noticed, and I had seen this coming along, particularly as COVID came along, is the creator community is huge. The YouTube creators, the podcast creators, the prosumer equipment started to get cheaper and better. And as I mentioned in the article, when we saw American Idol Finals, that was all done off of a smartphone and a ring light out of somebody's house. Jimmy Kimmel, Jimmy Fallon, they were all broadcasting with prosumer equipment out of their home. So what we thought of as broadcast quality has really narrowed. One of the things that jumped out at me, several years ago, you would

see newscasters or reporters doing standups with big lighting sets and big camera rigs. And I saw several dozen TikTok or YouTube creators walking around reporting from a corner as they were walking through...

0:07:58.8 MB: By themselves, without a shooter.

0:08:00.2 GT: By themselves with...

0:08:01.0 MB: Right. Yeah, holding up the...

0:08:02.3 GT: It was fascinating how the creator community and what's acceptable has changed.

0:08:07.8 MB: Well, let me break this down then, because this is what I... Because I used to manage a TV station in the '90s, and you're right, the equipment we had in that room was massively expensive, but we held the keys to the candy store. No one else could do video like us. But I always had to send a reporter and a shooter to do a story. And then there was that TV show, Max Headroom, if you remember, where the reporter went out on their own. Is the industry finally moving in a direction, talking about the regular broadcast, affiliate news where they may start just sending reporters out with their own equipment, put up the tripod and start reporting so they can get more out in the field and get more stories covered, or is it still gonna be that two team in the truck thing?

0:08:50.3 GT: No, I think New York 1 pioneered single shooter MMJs back in the the '90s, the equipment's just gotten much better. One of the things that's really interesting is, as I was covering NAB for you, I was sitting in the press room checking my emails and I would see these international MMJs, multimedia journalists come in and they had equipment I had never seen before. They had these tactical backpacks, they had these things that looked like an iPhone on steroids. But it was a single reporter. They were just shooting B-roll and doing standups, and it was fascinating. If anybody ever wants to see next generation, next level equipment, go to an international show like NAB where you see the technology from around the world sitting there. It's fascinating.

0:09:48.9 MB: But then go to the press room and watch the real thing.

0:09:51.1 GT: They all go to the press room, especially around meals, especially be there during lunch and breakfast, and you see the best equipment in the world.

0:09:58.2 MB: I'm kind of a closet historian and I'm always reading history and I watch history and I absorb it. One of the things I've learned over history is that crisis creates change or accelerates change, I should say, Guy. So one of the things I watched during COVID, pre-COVID, for me to get on Morning Joe or the Fox & Friends, they'd have to fly me into New York City, put me up at a four star hotel, limo me into the green room, get me all prepped and I'd have to be on the set. Now it's okay to watch someone interview someone in their living room with the cat walking behind them on the desk and everybody accepts it. Are we at a stage now where we don't have to have all the studio lights and camera and action to actually run a sincere local news operation? Should we just accept the fact that people are okay with interviews in any background and in any environment?

0:10:49.5 GT: 100%. I think that's what came out of COVID. I think acceptability, I think

authenticity, actually getting... I think somebody would rather see an event captured on an iPhone rather than a TV crew go and do a standup as the police were cordoning off the area. I think that's what we want. We want real time, we want authenticity. I think it's a great opportunity for the newspaper, the news media industry to really level the playing field.

0:11:28.1 MB: Guy, I wanna move on to the next topic. You mentioned FAST, you said FAST was the second most important takeaway at the NAB.

0:11:35.2 GT: So, for those of you who haven't seen the article, FAST is an acronym for Free Ad-supported Streaming Television, if you're familiar with Pluto TV or Tubi or some of the other, I'll call it, cable-like experiences that are available streaming. You no longer need an FCC license to be able to reach a big audience. So the creation part is really leveling. The distribution part is really leveling. So there are a number of local broadcasters who are on these FAST platforms. One of the gotchas or the caveats or caveats, they can't distribute their network programming. They don't have the rights to distribute their network programs.

0:12:26.4 MB: Of course, 'cause the network owns that, right.

0:12:29.5 GT: So they're creating these channels with either replayed news or original content or licensed content, but your local affiliates FAST channel is very different from their over the air.

0:12:45.8 MB: Okay, so I'm a local broadcast TV executive. Let's assume I run a local TV station. I did that years ago in the '90s before this whole internet thing came out. Let's assume I'm watching my favorite Sunday morning show, is a guy named Willie Geist. I don't know if you've ever heard of it, NBC Sunday morning. And at the end of the show, he always says, "And make sure you're watching our app today. Peacock will have a game." If I ran the local affiliate, would I not throw my coffee cup at the screen and say, "How dare you tell my audience to not watch my tower supported spectrum transmission signal and go..." Is that what this is all about with FAST now, or the TV stations are trying to get in the same place? Is it a battle now with the networks is what I'm saying?

0:13:35.7 GT: Yeah, that's a great question. I would be furious if I was a local broadcaster. I think the biggest challenge to local broadcasters are fewer people watching live TV live.

0:13:49.7 MB: So the mood there was, rather than be fear streaming, embrace it. Correct? Is that what I'm getting from this year of the FAST? We're not gonna fear it. We're gonna jump in there and have our own channels, correct?

0:14:03.8 GT: They are. Some of the bigger stations, you look at Scripts, you look at the Nexstar and St. Clairs, they're actually creating a lot of their own content. So exclusive content to them, which is, if you have the means, by all means. But what happens to the long tail of family owns and some of the smaller ones? I think there's gonna be a lot of content available to syndicate. A lot of the streamers have content, a lot of... You watch things on Hulu and you say to yourself, "I've never seen this show. How did I miss it the first time it was around?" It's probably because it was on an Animal Planet 7, or, there's so many cable channels and there's so much great content that was missed the first time around.

0:14:50.0 MB: Of course.

0:14:51.5 GT: That's an opportunity for local broadcasters and local media companies. And if you think about...

0:14:57.1 MB: So if I was...

0:14:57.1 GT: I'm sorry, go ahead.

0:14:58.6 MB: So if I was a local news organization, rather I'm... Okay, let's take this broadcast versus print away and just say local news. I should be thinking now of some kind of a hyper local content show, is what you're thinking? And if I can start building that, I could find ways to stream it and get it out there. Correct?

0:15:16.7 GT: You have your audience if you're a local media company. You have an audience. You have an established audience. You have a very loyal audience. There's always gonna be a need for local news and information. Media companies have come to me, newspapers in particular, and they say, "Can you give us a playbook to get into video? Gordon Burrell says CTV is the hottest thing around. How do we get into it?" And my advice is always learn to sell video first. Learn to sell video. There's a lot of people who want you to sell their video. Second is learn to aggregate other people's video and build a video audience. Third thing, create your own evergreen lifestyle. And the last thing you do is create news. News has the narrowest appeal. It's the most expensive and has the shortest shelf life. But typically, newspapers, when they say, "Let's go do video," CEO says, "Let's go do video," the newsroom takes it as licensed to go build a studio, create these Vice-like mini docs, which, and...

0:16:27.4 MB: It's a very narrow audience. You're right.

0:16:30.3 GT: Very narrow, and the sales guys go out and sell it and overpromise and way under deliver and they never get a second term.

0:16:39.0 MB: And then you hit the most important topic that goes way back in both of our days in this industry, critical massive content, right? Everybody was building... Remember when we were all building directories? [laughter]

0:16:48.6 GT: Absolutely.

0:16:48.7 MB: But there was nothing in there. If you're gonna do video, do video, right? Collect it, get it...

0:16:54.7 GT: Collect it, aggregate it. Become the megaphone in the market. You don't need to create your original content yet. There's a lot of people who want to borrow your audience.

0:17:05.5 MB: Well, let's get to the overall mood. I look at broadcast as a tremendous industry since I came from it, and I still serve it. But I also look at the challenges they have because the three major revenue streams, now you're gonna have to correct me if I'm wrong 'cause you have a much more, knowledge base of the broadcast industry, but the three major revenue streams of the local affiliate, I'm not talking networks, are number one, retransmission fees, correct? If the local... Because they still own that local football game or that football broadcast, and if Hulu or someone is

running it, not Hulu, but one of the channels like YouTube, they pay a fee to the local affiliate, correct? So I can have all the local channels and still broadcast local news.

0:17:49.0 MB: Number two is political advertising, right? This is gonna be, every time there's a political season, it's huge. Millions and millions and millions of dollars. Three is automotive. That's still an industry that puts a lot of cash into advertising and local broadcast TV. But when I read data about those last two categories, some of the things that Burrell is even predicting is they may go more into OTT. They may start moving more away from that local broadcast affiliate. How do you feel about the mood? Were they hyped? Were they happy? Or it was like, 'cause when you go to, I wanna say it out loud, when you go to a newspaper convention, Guy, you and I both know, the mood ain't that positive, right? It's like, help me navigate these tumultuous waters. Was everybody just pumped there or was there a real sense of urgency to adapt and change?

0:18:45.5 GT: I think there's a real sense of urgency understanding that the world is... What I sense is they all understand, maybe they didn't understand two or three years ago, that the world is moving towards streaming. And that's really the biggest urgency I saw, is getting their systems in place and be able to stream and monetize their streams. Three years ago, it wasn't that urgent. The behavior wasn't established. The behavior is there and real right now. You had mentioned about OTT. OTT is targetable. Now, I can target homes that are fence sitters, the purple homes as opposed to the red and the blue homes. But that was always the big fear, that Facebook and first party data was gonna take all the political advertising. We didn't see that happen in the last election. Broadcast was still very, very powerful in its ability to get political advertising. For awareness, there's nothing else. You know this as a broadcaster, nothing else beats awareness than TV.

0:19:58.0 MB: But that then OTT is TV in a way, and so you have a challenge where the dollars go.

0:20:01.4 GT: It is. It is addressable TV.

0:20:03.7 MB: So then finally, where are we, sir? You have straddled that line. I'm not saying in a bad way, a good way. LMA, Local Media Association. I'm a big believer in Nancy Lane. I did conferences with her for six years. But she basically decided to take that organization, which used to be Suburban Newspapers, as you remember in the old days, and turn it into one organization representing all local media. Meanwhile, you still have newspapers versus broadcast lobbying separately and all that. You've been on all sides of this. You're a multi-platform person, which is why we're so excited to have you here at E&P. Is that gonna change? I'm asking you now to put on your soothsayer hat. I want you to take out your crystal ball then tell me what stocks to buy as well, Guy, if you don't mind. But where are we going? Will there be just local media, period, or will there always be that legacy history that you think that our industry is kind of chained to?

0:21:07.0 GT: That's a great question. I firmly believe that there will be, and I wrote about it in the past and spoke about it when I was at Calkins, there's gonna be an omnichannel media company, single media company, single newsroom that's gonna be able to distribute everywhere. And I think generative AI, and we haven't spoken about that, is gonna help close the gap. Because one of the biggest challenges that we had at Calkins was we wanted our newspaper guys to be able to do video, our TV guys to be able to do long form and fill in the gap. Generative AI can do all that right now.

0:21:49.0 MB: Exactly.

0:21:49.2 GT: And synthetic media, and synthetic media is getting so good. That's been able to take a piece written for newspapers and turn it into radio script, turn it into a video script. And synthetic media is actually taking it the last mile, to actually be able to create the voice, the radio voice from the script, being able to create a broadcast avatar from a script. And I've done tests and I was able to do AI end to end, from piece of content all the way to a radio piece, and...

0:22:30.3 MB: You're kidding. See this...

0:22:32.3 GT: No, I'll send it to you after this call. But I send it to... And I did it two months ago, and the technology gets better month by month. It's frightening.

0:22:42.3 MB: Oh God. Hour by hour. And we're just...

0:22:43.4 GT: Hour by hour. It's difficult to keep up. And a lot of the CEOs and the senior leadership, it's hard to keep up, to get your head wrapped around it, and from a strategic standpoint, where do you go from there? Where do you invest? What are the opportunities?

0:22:57.3 MB: You see, this is exciting to me because I am a... My wife always accuses me of being too Pollyanna. I now believe more than ever that local journalism will survive because people are now realizing it's a necessity in a Madisonian republic. It's finally coming out. When you have a news desert of town falls apart, corruption grows, people stop voting, it's just an amazing world we're in now. So you said, when we started this interview 30 minutes ago, you said, there's always gonna be need for local... You just did that as a given. There's always gonna be. But you got to understand, Tofel was on the show and he basically said that the constitution says there should be an unfettered press but it doesn't say we need one. You see? So we both are in agreement that there will always be that need for a school board to be watched, or a city council to be monitored for that voice, that independent unfettered voice. So then imagine what, Guy, you just said, imagine if that number three TV news operation and that local media newspaper come together and with AI behind it, all you gotta do is get one reporter, one... Just start the story and before you know it, it's multi-channel cost effectively. Did I sum it all up?

0:24:08.8 GT: Yep, that's absolutely it, and the number three or four TV station, the newspaper, they have an enormous audience and trust in the community. One thing I do wanna say, and my observation in working with a number of media companies, it's... And I don't mean... And I've worked for a number of media companies. It's 10% technology and 90% culture. The technology is not hard to solve. It's really getting the culture to embrace and adopt, and it's the same at a newspaper as it is a TV station.

0:24:44.2 MB: I always say, if you can just get out of your own way, there's so much success, but it's true. This is exciting. This is just the beginning of many chats I knew we're gonna have. And I envision, I already know it's gonna happen that you and I are gonna be interviewing other people about the tech world. But what I love most about you, Guy, I'm gonna blow some smoke your way, is you got a good way of breaking it down so old people like me, who don't know all the acronyms, understand it. And that's gonna be our vision here at E&P as we take technology, as you just said, which is really only 10% of it, and make sure that the people who are in control of news publishing understand the value of it and how to use it to have a sustainable business model. I pretty much got

it. Is that it?

0:25:25.3 GT: Absolutely. You nailed it.

0:25:28.1 MB: Guy, welcome on board. Looking forward to working with you. Thank you for your commitment to the industry, and I'm looking forward to seeing your amazing work in the months to come.

0:25:37.6 GT: Thank you, Mike. I appreciate it.

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