

# Schibsted

## FUTURE REPORT



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# LET THE CHANGE BE FOR THE BETTER



Kristin  
Skogen Lund

## CEO

**Years in Schibsted:** 2 as CEO, and 6 as Commercial Director and CEO of Aftenposten 2004–2010

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Being able to visit my son who studies in Amsterdam.

**H**ow do we look forward in the midst of a pandemic? Another question is how can we not?

We've passed the initial troubles of adjusting all our ways and routines to Covid-19. We've realized that this is a marathon rather than a sprint — and one we have to get through together. We have also realized that some things will never go back to the way they were, even in the long run. Now is a good time to reflect, try to look around the corner and see what's ahead. Change is here anyway — why not use the momentum to make a change for the better?

The Schibsted Future Report is one way of looking around that corner. We see it as an opportunity to get new perspectives on trends and topics we find interesting. And never has it felt more important to share those perspectives with others. Conferences and large events are on pause, we don't meet in person to workshop and to discuss, and even if we do connect in more digital ways than we could ever have imagined — we do connect less.

That's why this year's Future Report is accompanied by a series of open webinars with conversations and discussions. Watch out for more information on [schibsted.com](https://schibsted.com).

## COVID AND BEYOND

This year, a portion of the report is reserved Covid and its impact on society. We're looking back through history to see the ways in which major crises have changed the world, how Covid has pushed digitalization and what new challenges leaders face because of it.

We also look beyond the pandemic to explore the next AI-challenges, what makes startups succeed, and how tech might be a gamechanger in farming.

Moreover, we explore how finding solutions to unpredictable challenges is a new mantra within sustainability as well. Experts believe a resilient mindset will help us invent solutions that enable us to cope with the challenges and even to create new opportunities.

## OPPORTUNITY AND LEGACY

"Opportunity" was certainly the key word when Schibsted, together with Adevinta, acquired eBay's classifieds businesses this summer — creating the world's largest digital marketplace company. Everything about the deal was done digitally and long distance. We weren't sure we could make it happen, and we were certainly an underdog in the bidding rounds. In the end, we believe our legacy, culture and commitment to societal trust were factors making us attractive as buyers.

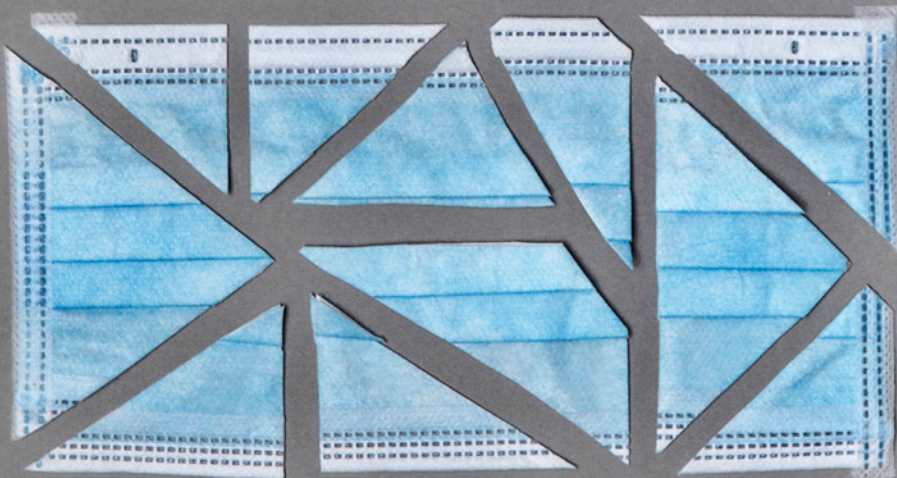
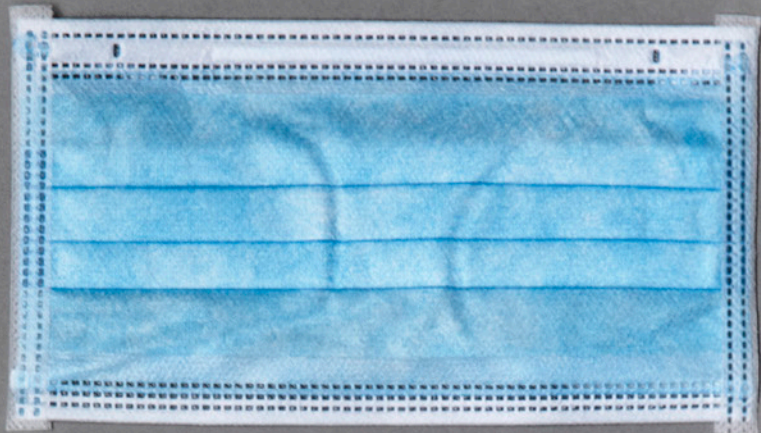
We're proud to contribute to a society where trust is still valued. We also know not to take it for granted, and our news media are always looking for new ways to inform society through high quality and trustworthy journalism. Frøy Gudbrandsen, Editor-in-Chief of Bergens Tidende, thinks tomorrow's news journalism should be based on nearness. News media need to have a deep understanding of what's important in peoples' lives, to be present where it happens, but also to be close to and understand customer behavior.

In times of crises, it is easy to see the importance of trusted and fact based news. It is also easy to see the need for boldness and change. In Schibsted, we want to keep making bold moves and keep being a force for change and empowerment in people's lives. That is also why we believe in looking around the corner and sharing new perspectives.

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50%





# HOW CRISES DISRUPT AND EVOLVE SOCIETY

Evolutionary changes, wars, natural disasters – and now a virus – all change the world and society as we know it. Covid-19 has pushed digitalization forward in ways that previously were unforeseeable, and healthcare is one of the most affected sectors.



Sven  
Størmer  
Thaulow

**EVP Chief Data and Technology Officer**  
**Years in Schibsted:** 1,5  
**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** The informal chats at work!

In 1347, the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* was carried along the Silk Road from Asia. An overpopulated Europe was already suffering from 50 years of famine. Ships carrying infected rats arrived in Genoa that year. In just four years, 40 percent of Europe's population died from the pandemic that would become known as the Black Death.

Between 1290, when the famine began, and 1430, when the pandemic began to recede, Europe lost 75 percent of its population. The Black Death remains one of the greatest catastrophes in human history.

So why am I talking about the Black Death? As a disease, Covid-19 is not comparable: *Yersinia pestis* is a bacterium, Covid-19 is a virus. The mortality rate for *Yersinia pestis* was

extremely high, while for Covid-19 it is much lower.

Nonetheless, they share a common feature: both were enormous shocks to the system for the global community. And shocks are also extreme catalysts of change.

History has shown how major crises change the world, initially for the worst, with poverty, disease and death, but then something new often emerges. Out of new knowledge and discoveries, new needs and behaviors, and new opportunities that arise, society is compelled to develop and to find new solutions, to chart out a new course.

The world wars not only redrew the world map; they also brought about fundamental changes in society. Political regimes fell and new ones emerged. A colonial world order was supplanted by two superpowers and a cold war, but



also by international treaties and organizations such as the UN and the EU, and financial support packages that led industry to change course and prepare to innovate.

Natural disasters have wiped out entire species and then paved the way for new ones. On a smaller scale, they have also led to innovations such as earthquake-proof buildings, flood defences and improved aid efforts.

And pandemics like the Black Death and Covid-19 have led to new insights and knowledge in medicine and healthcare.

**B**ut Covid-19 will also leave a more lasting imprint on history. The virus has paved the way for exponential digitalization. E-commerce and home delivery of goods ordered online have exploded. We have learned to work and learn digitally. We socialize via monitors and games.

Lockdowns and isolation have most likely accelerated the rate of digitalization in many industries, too. When suppliers of parts and components stopped production, the benefit of fully automated processes became obvious.

Not least, the health services and healthcare sector has been profoundly affected, having undergone fundamental change. Just as during the Black Death, new technology has

either contributed to, or resulted from, the current situation.

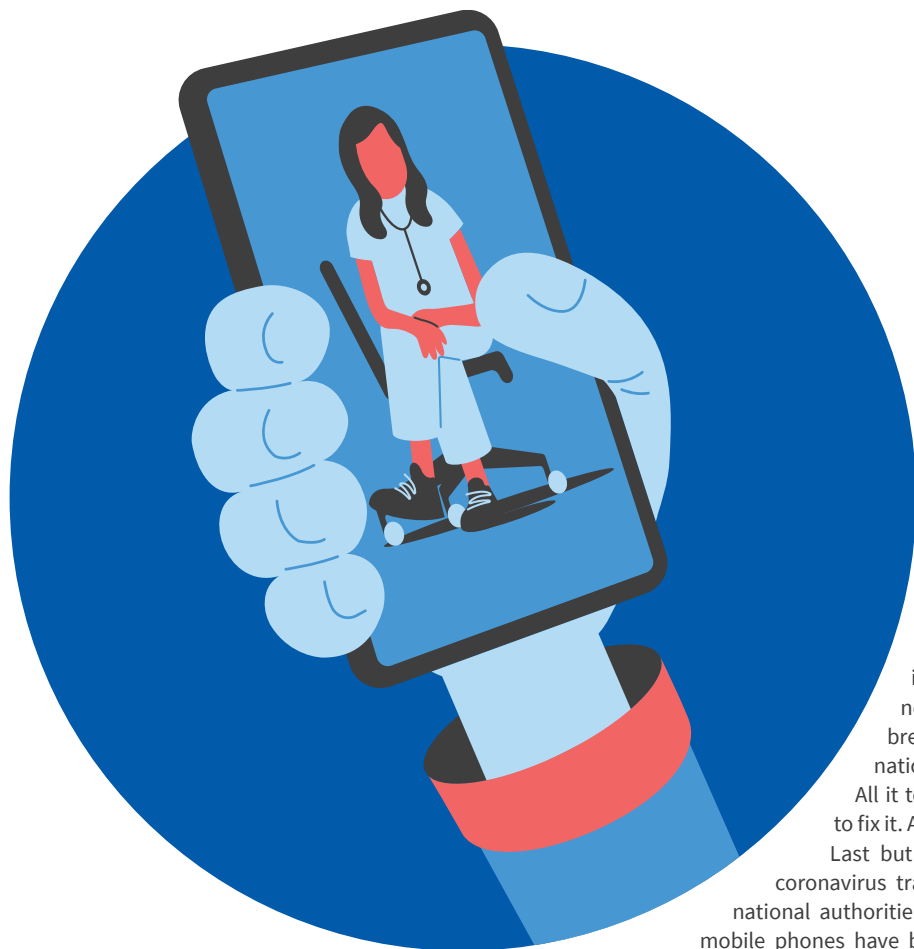
Prior to the Black Death, the role of medical science was led by the Church. The physicians were monks with close religious ties, who received their training at monastic schools in the largest countries or city-states. Like the Church, medical science was extremely conservative. The Black Death changed both medical practices and training. For example, treatments such as blood-letting and poultices of goat dung proved utterly ineffective in curing diseases. Slowly but surely, practices based on experience influenced medical training. Instead of cramming patients together, patient groups were kept separate from each other, goat dung was replaced with oils, healing was aided by fresh air, and different types of masks were used to treat patients.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the health sector has also suffered a shock, and many measures have been implemented to prevent it from collapsing altogether. However, this shock has accelerated the rate of digitalization. This sector is already one of the most high-tech sectors we have; apart from modern weapons systems, medical and technical equipment is among the most advanced and most expensive there is. But some parts of the healthcare service have suffered from an almost Luddite view of technology. A one-sided focus on security and privacy in particular has hindered digitalization. Compared with most other sectors, the level of friction for staff and patients has been and remains alarming.

Take hospitals as an example. Until the Covid-19 shock, staff at Oslo University Hospital were not allowed to use Skype to communicate with each other or with practices outside the hospital. The first surge of the virus marked the first time that health personnel were allowed to run applications on their home computers, where they could, for example, view live-streamed lung examinations of Covid-19 patients and advise on-duty personnel on how to improve the situation for their patients. This demonstrates that thorough assessments were made between benefit and risk

Some parts of the  
healthcare service have  
suffered from an almost  
**Luddite** view of technology.





to allow for pragmatic solutions to be used in these exceptional times. And it took a virus to make it happen.

As recently as February this year, for example, the Norwegian company Confrere was struggling to get general practitioners in Norway to start using video consultations. Apart from companies like Kry and Hjemmelegene, general practitioners have little competition to deal with. Despite patient demand, there was little motivation for change. When the Covid-19 virus broke out in the Nordic region, the use of video consultations exploded, and any self-respecting general practitioner now provides this service. It's better for the patients. Better for the doctors. Better for the private sector. And it took a virus to make it happen.

**F**inally I would highlight the process of testing and getting test results. I myself was tested for Covid-19 in February 2020. Everything was done manually, the information was chaotic, but we did get the test results relatively fast because we were among the first to be tested in Norway. In July, our children were tested again, and this time the entire process was completely automated! And this happened rapidly – not only in terms of technology, but also in terms of regulatory amendments, which can often take years. Now all laboratories submit their test results to Emsis, a national database which can be accessed

by patients and healthcare personnel alike via the patient's core medical records available at [helsenorge.no](https://helsenorge.no). So remember – before the outbreak of the Covid-19, Norway had no national infrastructure for test results!

All it took was a shock and a few months to fix it. And it took a virus to make it happen.

Last but not least, I want to mention the coronavirus tracing app in Norway. Attempts by national authorities to implement virus tracing using mobile phones have been contested in many countries. Nonetheless, the Covid-19 virus has proven the necessity to grant "some" access to highly sensitive personal data and often biometric data, and at rapid speeds. If we view this in connection with the critical need to make patients' medical records, case summaries and test results digitally accessible, we can easily subscribe to Yuval Noah Harari's analysis: "The corona-virus pandemic could prove to be a watershed event in terms of enabling greater surveillance of society. People could look back in 100 years and identify the corona-virus epidemic as the moment when a new regime of surveillance took over, especially surveillance under the skin which I think is maybe the most important development of the 21st Century, is this ability to hack human beings." Assuming that this capacity is used properly in terms of privacy and security, I believe that the extent to which it will prove to be good for society and for individuals is difficult for us to envisage today. And it took a virus to make it happen.

Now that we – hopefully – will return to normality during 2021 and 2022, it is vital that society, exemplified here by the healthcare services, does not revert to the old normal and reverse the digital quantum leaps that were brought about by the shock the Covid-19 pandemic caused. Those nations and companies that manage to seize the opportunities that have emerged will be the winners.



# HEALTHCARE WILL GO DIGIPHYSICAL

**The pandemic has sped up technology adoption in healthcare by three to five years. Both patients and providers have drastically changed their habits. But Covid-19 has also highlighted the paradox that digital isn't enough.**



**Nicolai Skarsgård**

**Doctor and CEO of Hjemmelegene**  
**Years in Schibsted: 1.5**  
**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis: Golf trips.**

**D**uring the era of social distancing, the way we interact with each other, companies and services is changing. As people were encouraged (or forced) to stay home, barriers to adoption of new technology were almost artificially lowered. Online groceries, pharmacies and retail all experienced unprecedented growth, as did the platforms that enable video conferencing. Something happened to patients and providers too.

Overnight, patients stopped visiting the doctor. However, their medical

needs did not go away. New habits formed, as many patients flocked to the digital front doors of healthcare for the first time. Some patients needed help directly related to Covid-19, while the majority of consultations were about the same medical issues as before: diabetes management, ear infection or a bad knee perhaps. Whatever the problem, patients realized they could get their first medical consultation without waiting or even traveling. Perhaps equally important – no risk of contracting, or spreading, the corona virus.

When Wuhan, China went into lockdown, patients went online. According to the Economist, half of the ten million digital consultations that Chinese health platform JD Health sold in February, were first-time online patients. At least a third will continue using the services, according to the company. The rest of the world has followed suit. In March 2020,

Norwegian tech news site Shifter reported that digital healthcare providers Kry, Eyr and Hjemmelegene had a three-digit volume growth year-on-year. Digitally enabled healthcare providers in the US, Sweden and UK reported the same explosive growth. Across the world, many relatively new providers assumed a vital role in primary care overnight. Not because governments asked them to, but because patient needs shifted. Providers and doctors shifted too.

**T**he technology needed to offer a digital front door to healthcare did not arrive in 2020. Smart phones, sufficient network bandwidth, camera and audio technology, security and encryption, and platform technology – all of these components have been around for at least a decade. So how come a pandemic was "needed" before healthcare changed?

Providers and doctors alike, have traditionally been somewhat slow to adopt new, non-medical technology. While medical knowledge, research and technology has made huge leaps forward decade after decade – drastically improving healthcare outcomes – service



innovation has not kept pace. The visit to the doctor's office has not changed much in the last 20–30 years.

Covid-19 changed this. Doctors and providers were forced to adapt in a matter of weeks. They had to enable patients to get in touch, while at the same time limiting disease spread. In Norway, the doctors' union used to see digital consultations as a threat, stating that it was outright dangerous to treat any condition without seeing a patient physically. Before Covid-19, 7–12 percent of family physicians in Norway offered video consultations. Six to eight weeks after Covid-19 hit the country, that number went up to 70 percent.

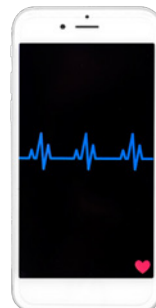
**M**ake no mistake, healthcare is going digital. However, digitization is challenged by the sheer complexity and physical nature of healthcare services. A bad knee still has to be physically examined to be diagnosed. No tech or AI can remove ear wax. The inherent physical properties of medicine and anatomy does not always translate well into ones and zeros. Also, humans are still humans. A physical consultation may enable

a richer conversation. Lastly, today's technology is not equally accessible and may leave the old and fragile behind. For all these reasons, healthcare has to become "digiphysical" rather than just digital.

Covid-19 has highlighted this paradox. Digital tools have proven useful in advising patients, screening for conditions, and even tracking the outbreak. However, diagnosis rests upon a throat swab and lab analysis. Providers need to offer a digital front door, and combine it with on-demand, physical services (e.g. Covid-19 testing) that meet patient expectations.

Digitization may improve patient outcomes, experiences, and lower costs of healthcare in the years to come. But the rewards may only be reaped if it plays along with the complexity of healthcare, and the biological, physical and psychological nature of medicine. AI may not replace doctors, but doctors who use AI will replace those who do not.

Hopefully, Covid-19 will eventually recede. Previous pandemics always have. But, just like previous pandemics, Covid-19 may have changed healthcare forever.



### SCHIBSTED'S INVESTMENTS IN HEALTHCARE

- AHUM is a psychotherapy service where patients and therapists can meet.
- Hjemmelegene is a platform that enables doctor home visits.
- Add Health Media consists of one media business and one investment business. Their media business consists of health portals such as Doktorn.com and in their investment business, they invest at an early stage, (almost pre-launch) in various healthcare startups.

### THROUGH ADD HEALTH MEDIA SCHIBSTED HAS INVESTED IN:

- Symbiome is a gut health startup, analyzing the balance of bacteria in your gut.
- Belly Balance is a femtech startup which has a service used for people with Irritable Bowel Syndrome – stomach issues. Femtech is a term for tech companies focusing on the women's health market.



# EDTECH PUSHES LIFELONG LEARNING

During the Corona crisis, schools have struggled to bring education online. But the pandemic has only shed light on a need that was already there. And now the edtech market is growing rapidly.



Ragnhild  
J Buch

**Business Developer**

**Years in Schibsted:** 3

**What I have missed the most during the**

**Corona crisis:** Meeting colleagues on a daily basis.

**I**magine an early morning in 2030. We are in Båtsfjord, in the North of Norway, where Roar has just logged on to his computer at home, ready for a new day of studying business interaction and international entrepreneurship. After 25 years in fishing, he has

gone "back to school" for an education that will give him new opportunities, hopefully in the international market. Roar and his fellow students from 20 different nations study in a digital, seamless system that's available anytime and anywhere.

Roar is not in a unique position by continuing his lifelong learning or finishing an international degree from his home. He is an example of a modern learner seeking an education that is not easily replaced by automation and artificial intelligence, but rather is focused on creativity and collaboration.

Today we're still quite far from this scenario. Education within lifelong learning

is grossly under-digitized, with less than 3 percent of expenditure on technology. At the same time the digital education market has grown rapidly during the last decades. The total expenditure in edtech is expected to double, reaching 342 billion USD by 2025, with an expected compound annual growth rate of 12 percent in the period.

2019 was also a record year for edtech investments, with 187 deals totaling 1.2 billion USD. Of all edtech investments in Europe, 18 percent are invested in the Nordic markets, indicating a growing market in this region.

**S**o we're on our way. This development is accelerated by the evolution of working life in the 21st century, which has given rise to the development of new skills. More and more people are willing to educate themselves as a part of lifelong learning.



Higher education matriculation data from 2020 shows that the applicants were older than ever before, on average. This can be partly attributed to the Corona crisis, during which a significant part of our workforce lost their jobs or were furloughed. But it is also a sign of these new learning habits – which need new solutions.

The biggest challenge to speed up digitization is to replace physical meetings and classroom lectures – which are still an important part of university education. This traditional type of learning is very institutional and people-driven. Thus, a key opportunity is to replace classroom training with edtech, but many content creators lack the knowledge to make the change. Due to the number of stakeholders involved, such as universities, professors, government, international institutions

etc, the speed of digitization in the education sector has been estimated to be at about one-fifth of the speed seen in other sectors.

**I**n the Nordic countries, there are some new players in this market, including Coursera, EdX and Udemy (Inspera), international companies with local connection in the Nordics. The traditional Nordic educational institutions have not yet tried to take a significant role. So, there are still openings for strong players to take a broad position as a “change agent” for lifelong

learning. Not just for distribution or a marketplace, but also to contribute to delivering today’s classroom training with edtech solutions – and with the opportunity to reach a broader, international audience.

Education is one of the greatest tools we have to reduce poverty and improve health, gender equality, peace and stability. This is easily underestimated in the Nordic countries, but nevertheless important to remember. For communities, education drives long-term economic growth, innovation and fosters social cohesion. All of these are strong incentives for continued growth of the edtech market. For Roar, digital education will open the door to new job opportunities. It will stimulate economic growth in his local community. And it will give the world a new, global employee.



Aftenposten Junior's reporters Ada Bertine Gunvordal and Kaja Bjelde Hjeltnes met with cross-country skier Therese Johaug for an interview in June of 2018.

Photo: Morten Uglum





# TOUGH NEWS GETS TRANSLATED FOR YOUNG READERS

Aftenposten Junior is something as exceptional as a printed newspaper success. It all started with the need to explain a tragedy to children – now even adults read it to really understand the news.



**Mari Midtstigen**

**Editor, Aftenposten Junior**

**Years in Schibsted: 3**

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Eating lunch with my colleagues.

In July 2011, Norway was shocked and horrified by the terrorist attack in Oslo's government quarter and on the island of Utøya. Naturally, Norwegian children had many questions about what had happened, and parents and teachers struggled to find the words to explain the incidents on a level that the young ones could understand.

It was about this time that the idea of launching a newspaper for kids arose in

Aftenposten. The first edition came out in the spring of 2012, coinciding with the opening of the trial against the terrorist responsible. That was the start of explaining a many difficult and complicated news incidents, which is what Aftenposten Junior still does today. As editor, I get to meet a lot of curious and smart kids with thoughtful (and challenging!) questions. I promise you I have the most interesting and meaningful job!

At the time of the launch some critical voices said a print edition would never gain popularity. Adult print newspapers had been declining for years, and there were even darker clouds ahead. Children were embracing digital services such as games and social media, and getting young ones to read a newspaper seemed like a mission impossible. Eight years later though, it is safe to say that Aftenposten Junior has become a huge

success. The circulation numbers steadily rose and have now stabilized around 30,000, and the brand Aftenposten Junior is well known among Norwegian children, to the extent that the editorial staff receive enormous amounts of e-mails and letters every week. But how did this all happen?

Over the last years, user research has become a very important discipline in all product development. In Aftenposten Junior, the editorial team was involved in user research right from the beginning, and it became apparent that this is a crucial part of the methodology to write engaging news stories for a young audience. Instead of doing user research now and then, it has become a continuous process that involves the readers at all times.

In the research, our journalists will ask kids how much they knew about a news story, and ask them what they would like to know. Later, the journalists have kids read the finished story to pinpoint difficult words. After a while, the concept of "Aftenposten Junior reporters" also emerged. Kids would interview top politicians and celebrities, and they had the most brilliant questions.

When writing for kids, there are certain challenges that our staff writers are very good at solving. For example, there might be a lot of historical aspects to a story, like when writing about George Floyd this summer. To sum up centuries of history and social studies in a very short text is harder than you think. The tough nut is to simplify the language without losing the important details and nuances. Often, our journalists will rewrite the text several times with their editor before it's good to go.

The presentation of the news

stories is also a very important part of Aftenposten Juniors success. Visual elements will trigger most children's reading desire. Outstanding photos from Aftenposten's photographers, striking illustrations and extensive use of infographics make the pages look inviting and give the readers a lot of information without overwhelming them with text. The cartoon format is also a good way to explain complex issues, as it combines several illustrations with small text pieces.

The Aftenposten Junior universe has grown bigger than only a print newspaper. For several years, Aftenposten Junior has hosted different events, like the wildly popular Minikloden. The successful cartoon Grønne greier has launched two hard cover books, one of them in South Korea. Aftenposten Junior is also producing a podcast, Junierrådet, where kids are talking about big and small challenges, like being nervous before a performance, or falling in love. This fall we will also launch a news podcast.

In 2015, there was a new addition to the family, with the launch of sister newspaper SvD Junior, from Svenska Dagbladet in Sweden. The two editorial teams co-operate on some of the content, and in 2019 another Junior was born when Postimees Juunior launched in Estonia.

The spring of 2020 was a very special time all over the world because of the Covid-19 situation. In Norway, all of the schools shut down on March 12th. The day after, Aftenposten Junior announced that we opened the paywall on our digital edition, so that all children in Norway could have access to reliable information at a time when

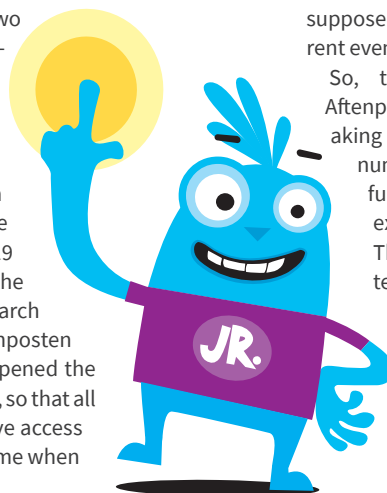
their lives were turned upside-down. Teachers were ecstatic when they could give their pupils engaging reading assignments, and we noticed that some teachers made questions, puzzles and quizzes tied to the editions. They said that they loved the current news stories that spoke directly to the kids, and that it taught them important things in a fun way.

During the time of homeschooling, teachers and pupils took a big leap in their usage of digital equipment and services. In fact, there were close to 800,000 openings of the digital editions of Aftenposten Junior during the period that the schools were closed.

This gave us the idea to make a special digital product for schools, where teachers could easily find the content they were looking for and share it with their class. After extensive UX research, the team of Aftenposten Junior skole are now on their way to creating a full on educational resource, planned to launch in late 2020. This is timed well with the introduction of a brand-new curriculum in Norway's schools this fall, one that is supposed to encourage the use of current events.

So, the future looks bright for Aftenposten Junior. Even though breaking news is faster than ever and the number of news sources is plentiful, there is still a need for a good explanation of current events. This might be why grown-ups tell me all the time that when they read Aftenposten Junior to their kids, they finally understand what that story was all about.

Aftenposten Junior has its own little mascot, with versions for all occasions.





8-13

is the age range that Aftenposten Junior targets.

264,693

unique readers opened Aftenposten Junior in Aftenposten's e-reader during the Covid-19 school lockdown in Norway.

6

people work on the magazine's editorial staff.

13,698

was the circulation back in 2012, the year when the Aftenposten Junior launched.

30,171

– the circulation in 2019.



Aftenposten Junior often runs comic-style explainers. This one tells the story of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945.



# AI – A TOOLBOX TO SUPPORT JOURNALISM

As artificial intelligence makes its way into editorial products and processes, media organizations face new challenges. They need to find out how to use this new computational toolbox and how it can contribute to creating quality content.



**Agnes Stenbom**

**Responsible Data & AI Specialist/  
Industry PhD Candidate**

**Years in Schibsted:** 2.5

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Global leadership.

**D**o you find human-like robots creepy? You wouldn't be the first to feel that way. 'The Frankenstein Complex' was introduced in novels by Isaac Asimov already in the late 1940s as a representation of human beings' intricate relationship to humanoid robots. While coined in science fiction, this term has found its footings in very real scenarios

today, based on key areas of concern related to robots replacing our jobs.

The concerns are not unfounded for. There are indeed a wealth of robots (or programmable machines) employed across the globe, rendering many human workers in sectors, such as manufacturing, transportation and healthcare, obsolete. These industries are undergoing rapid transformation through the use of robotics and technologies such as artificial intelligence.

These concerns extend into the media industry as well, where both creators and consumers of news express unease about the potential downsides of AI. To deal with these concerns, it is about time that we offer an alternative narrative to the Frankenstein Complex!

We might as well start with the basics. Robots are highly unlikely to

enter newsrooms any time soon. What is already there, though, is a great new computational toolbox that can help human reporters and editors create and share high quality news content.

AI technologies are currently used in newsrooms in a myriad of ways, from data mining to automated content production and algorithmic distribution. While the possibilities know no bounds, the applications tend to be geared towards information processing tasks like calculating, prioritizing, classifying, associating or filtering information – sometimes simultaneously.

**W**ith recent advances in technological domains such as natural language processing and generation (NLP/NLG), the potential to leverage AI in editorial products and processes is increasing rapidly. In Schibsted, we are currently exploring the use of AI in news work in various ways, such as helping editors decide when to put content behind paywall, supporting journalists in tagging their articles and optimizing something as old





school as printed papers in order to maximize sales and minimize waste.

The opportunities offered by AI are vast, but the technologies won't help with every newsroom task. To responsibly leverage the potential of AI, reflecting on the unique traits of humans and machines becomes key.

AI systems are incredible tools for identifying patterns in data. However, this feature also renders AI technologies susceptible to reinforcing biases. And through technology such as face recognition systems and language translations, we have uncovered a key limitation to AI: the learn from the past.

Journalists, on the other hand, shape the future. They introduce new ideas through stories and reporting, often subtly influencing the ways our societies and democracies progress.

**I**n order to recognize the unique skills (and limitations) brought by both sides of a human-machine relationship, we need to equip ourselves with reasonable expectations. We need to stop portraying AI as flawless human-like robots excelling at any task given to them. Instead, we should offer a narrative in which human beings are assisted by computational systems.

Let's use a kitchen metaphor. If you are expecting an AI system to bring you a perfect omelet, you are bound to be disappointed. But if you are expecting the AI system to help prepare your ingredients – crack the eggs, grind some cheese, chop an onion – you are more likely

to end up with a great lunch. You might have had to pluck some eggshells out of the mix or do a second round of onion chopping, but the overall process was smoother with the help of AI.

The idea of humans and machines working together is a topic gaining traction in academia, not least in the field of journalism where the term hybridization is increasingly used. One way of enabling constructive hybridization is to routinely practice decomposition. This means breaking down big news projects into smaller, more tangible tasks, so that news professionals can more easily identify what can be done by the machine and what requires human expertise.

To get to this point, news professionals should be offered appropriate training and information about the potential and the limitations of AI technologies. Introductory courses such as Elements of AI are a great starting point for anyone looking to familiarize themselves with the terminology. However, news organizations (Schibsted included) need to go beyond that and step up their game in terms of culturally and practically upskilling the workforce, aiming to bridge gaps between historically siloed departments.

We need to bring our full organizations onboard to understand how to responsibly leverage these new technologies. Schibsted is currently part of multiple research efforts at Nordic universities, such as the University of Bergen, NTNU in Trondheim and KTH in Stockholm, where we explore both technological and

social aspects of these new technologies. Just as we do in academia, we need to take an interdisciplinary approach when equipping our organization with the skills needed to thrive with AI.

We put ideals such as democracy and fair competition at risk if we allow the global information flow to be controlled – implicitly and explicitly – by a few conglomerate companies. It is time for news organizations to take the lead in the industry's AI developments. This does not mean that we need to match big tech's R&D funding (as if that was an option...), but we need increased reflection and engagement regarding how we want AI to impact our industry, organizations, readers, and ultimately, society.

**A** pressing task for the news media industry is to ensure that AI in newsrooms is optimized for values that support our publishing missions. To do so, we have to stop talking about robots and focus on how newsrooms – and just to be clear, the human beings in them – can benefit from the capabilities of these new technologies. One such attempt can be found in the global industry collaboration JournalismAI run by Polis at the London School of Economics, which Schibsted is part of. There, newsrooms from across the world are joining forces to experiment and test the potential of applying AI to achieve newsroom goals. The collaboration serves as a great illustration of what would make a nice bumper sticker: Power to the Publishers!





## PRIVACY AND DATA LIVES TOGETHER



In Schibsted, using and sharing user data is a crucial part of developing new, relevant products and services. Just as important is to handle data in a responsible way to protect peoples' privacy.

"It's about a lot more than just being compliant. To earn our users' trust we also want to be a driving force in finding that perfect balance between data and privacy", says Siv Kristin Henriksen, Privacy Project Manager.

Schibsted has quite a large privacy team which has been focusing on this since the early days of GDPR. The reason is simply that Schibsted is a tech-driven company working a lot with data.

"We want to be the ones guarding and leading the way – in discussion with legislators."

Lately Siv has been working a lot with startups that Schibsted is investing in.

"It's super exciting to meet them. Sometimes it's just three people having a very good idea."

She also recognizes the advantage to get help from her team, instead of turning to a larger law firm.

"We have a broader perspective and we look for possibilities because we realize both the entrepreneurs' needs and the user perspective."

### Siv Kristin Henriksen

**Legal Counsel, Privacy**

**Years in Schibsted:** 4.5

**What I have missed the most during Corona crises:** My colleagues! Having lunch together, and coffee chats.

## A PLATFORM TO INTEGRATE PODCASTS



Podcasts are a high priority in newsrooms – and now users can listen to them directly from Schibsted's news sites – thanks to our new, very own platform.

Erik Saastad got the assignment to investigate whether podcasts were effective in driving login and increasing willingness to subscribe on Schibsted's news sites. He soon realized they could – but they would need to be published directly on the sites, not only on external platforms, like A-cast or Spotify.

"To stream sound isn't that different from streaming video, and we already had a solution for that which we could build on", Erik explains.

For news sites such as VG and Aftenbladet, the new platform means they can publish podcasts earlier on their own sites to reach all their users and open up for more ads – and then on external platforms where the large podcast audience will find them. Aftenposten is experimenting with publishing behind their paywall to drive subscriptions.

"We have also found that we reach new users – people not that familiar with podcasts now find them", says Erik.

### Erik Saastad

**Product Manager**

**Years in Schibsted:** 8 and counting

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Colleagues and drinking beer with my team in Krakow.

## LOOKING FOR HIDDEN CONTENT

Ioana Havsfrid is part of Schibsted's machine learning team. She's working on a project that focuses on content understanding.

"Text, video or audio – in all forms of content there is a lot of hidden information. We want to understand this underlying content within the journalism that our newspapers produce."

With the help of machine learning the team is trying to automatically extract different kinds of information, such as people mentioned in a text, places or events, or even whether the sentiment is positive or negative on a given topic.

"That would differ in an article from Italy based on whether it's an inspirational travel piece or if it's about Corona", Ioana explains.

The main reason is to develop contextual ads – where you can match commercials more in detail with specific kinds of content. New regulations and tough competition are challenging traditional advertising. This makes contextual advertising, based on targeting, an interesting alternative. But this also opens up possibilities to create more personalized subscription offers, for example.

"It's crucial that the team knows the domain and the product, and that they read and follow to get ideas on how to apply the technology. And in our case, to work closely with the sales organization, then we can build something together."

Ioana also points out that this way of thinking is new, and that data can throw you in new directions.

"We need to explore more and explain to our organizations how these new technologies work."

### Ioana Havsfrid

**Engineering manager, Machine Learning team**

**Years in Schibsted:** 6 months

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Chats by the coffee machine.









With more and more people to feed in a less reliable world, the farming industry is the key to change. For years, the food production system has been one of the largest producers of emissions and a main reason behind reduced biodiversity. But new technologies to produce more food in a smart way are already here. Now it's about scaling and putting things in order for sustainable food production.

# TECHNOLOGY WILL FERTILIZE FARMING









Joacim  
Lund

**Title:** Technology  
commentator,  
Aftenposten

**Years in Schibsted:** 15  
**What I have missed  
the most during the  
Corona crisis:** Italy!  
Ever since I was a  
choirboy one summer  
in the Vatican in the  
80s, I've visited as  
often as I can.

In 1973, when I was born, there were 3.9 billion people in the world. Today there are 7.8 billion. Twice as many. Consider that for a minute. In 47 years humanity has doubled. And it keeps on growing.

The UN estimates that there will be 9.7 billion people on Earth in 2050, and that we will reach peak population of eleven billion in the year 2100. As if that wasn't enough, the population growth will not be evenly spread. For example, it is expected that the population of Africa, south of Sahara, will double before 2050.

Furthermore, things are going the wrong way in many areas. Rising temperatures mean less land for growing wheat, one of the most important sources of calories in the world. More extreme weather destroys cultivation, while flooding and intense farming leads to soil erosion. The use of pesticides is ruining bio-diversity both on the surface and underneath the soil.

The timing couldn't be worse. It will be difficult to keep pace with food production with 200,000 more mouths to feed every day, year round.

The irony is that those who are producing the food are, to a large extent, the same people who are destroying the

possibility to produce food. Globally, 23 percent of the man-made climate emissions come from farming, forestry and other land use, according to the UN. But the destruction caused by farming is not limited to emissions.

In September 2020, when the WWF published the report Living Planet, many people spilled their morning coffee in surprise (coffee, by the way, might be in short supply in the future). In the stock studied by WWF, there are on average 68 percent fewer animals than 50 years ago.

The main reason, the report says, is a change in area farming. The natural habitats are gone. Species are made extinct. Biodiversity is reduced. Pollinators are gone. The seas are warming and containing less oxygen, and they are being destroyed by over-fishing, pollution and contamination.

With today's food system, the world is moving towards catastrophe and everything that entails, from suffering and political uproar, to conflicts, wars and migration. But the report is giving a bit of hope as well. It is possible to turn the trend around and increase the biodiversity on the ground, in the soil and in the water.

"We know that it will take a global, collective effort; increased conservation efforts are key, along with changes in how we produce and consume our food and energy", the report says.

In other words; the food system is a large part of the problem, which means that it is also a large part of the solution.

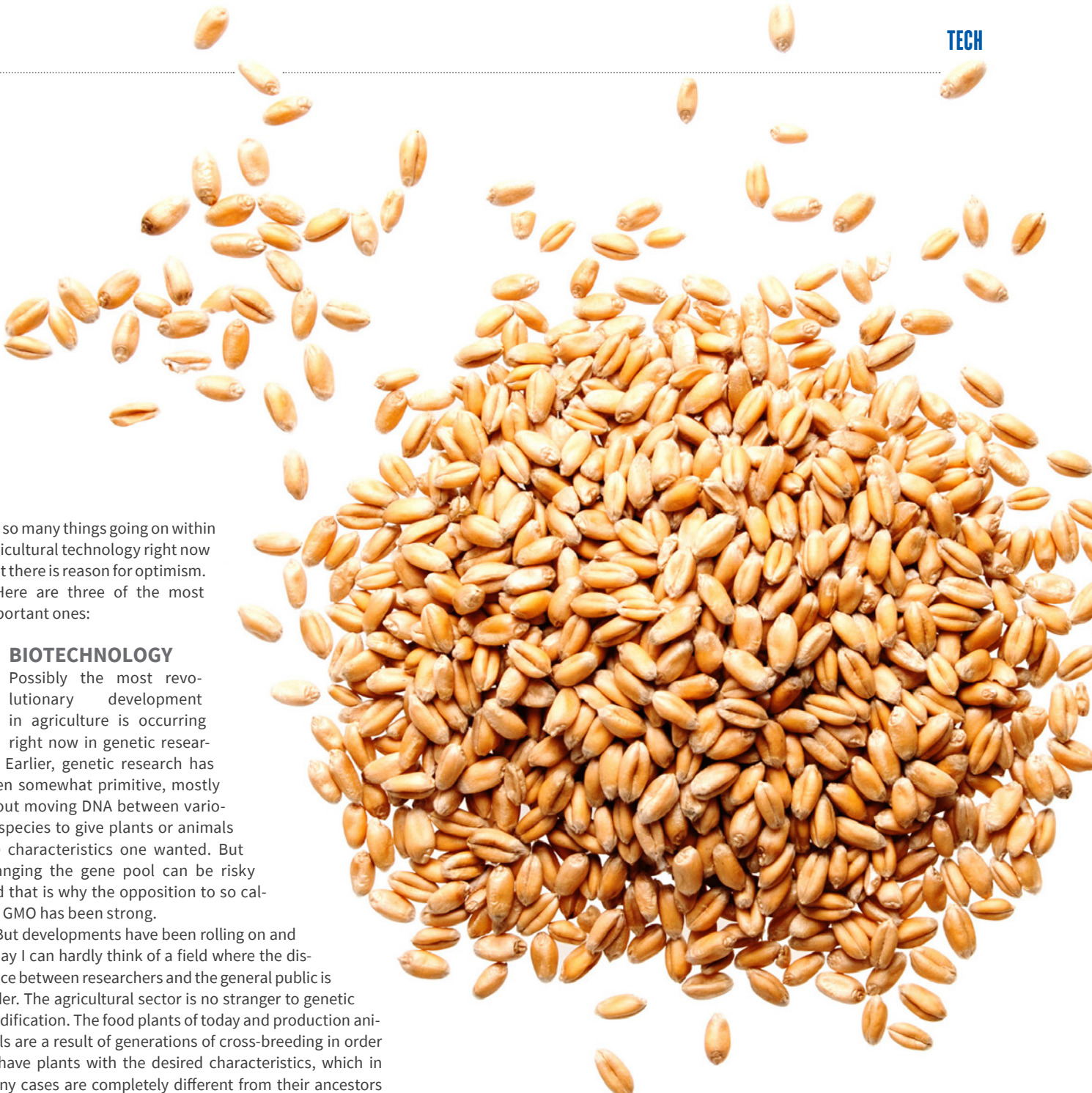
How do you produce more food in a smarter way? How can you reduce the energy consumption, throw away less food and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions? How can we use less water and fewer pesticides that destroy the microbiology of the soil? How do you use fewer fertilizers to block drainage and problems with the groundwater? And what about acreage? Is it possible to produce much more food in a much smaller place?

All around the globe, researchers and innovative centers are asking these questions. They find answers too. There

Actually, the Crispr  
technique has been  
developed by nature  
itself. The researchers  
have merely copied it.







are so many things going on within agricultural technology right now that there is reason for optimism.

Here are three of the most important ones:

## 1 BIOTECHNOLOGY

Possibly the most revolutionary development in agriculture is occurring right now in genetic research. Earlier, genetic research has been somewhat primitive, mostly about moving DNA between various species to give plants or animals the characteristics one wanted. But changing the gene pool can be risky and that is why the opposition to so-called GMO has been strong.

But developments have been rolling on and today I can hardly think of a field where the distance between researchers and the general public is wider. The agricultural sector is no stranger to genetic modification. The food plants of today and production animals are a result of generations of cross-breeding in order to have plants with the desired characteristics, which in many cases are completely different from their ancestors in nature.

The idea that modern gene modifications is "fiddling with nature" is therefore rather confusing, because people have been "fiddling with nature" ever since they went from being only hunters to being only gatherers who selected and grew plants with specific characteristics, about 12,000 or so years ago.

The really big breakthrough came with Crispr, the technology that makes it possible to enter DNA sequences and make changes in absolutely every living organism, whether bacteria, virus, insects, fish, human beings or other mammals. Actually, this technique has been developed by nature itself. The researchers have merely copied it. Already,

seed has been developed that is resistant to fungus infection, potatoes containing less acrylic (a substance that can induce cancer), mushrooms that don't go brown, corn that can survive a drought and pigs that are resistant to common virus infections, to mention a few.

AgriSea, an unbelievably exciting British start-up, is a splendid example of how gene technology can be used to get food to a growing population. They have developed a rice plant (and heaps of other plants, of course) that can grow in salt water and make use of the nutrients in the sea. Thus the food can be growing in a floating compound in the sea without soil, without fertilizers and without having





to add fresh water which, as we know, is a scarce commodity in many places. The first test installation will be run towards the end of 2020.

Crispr opens up endless possibilities for better food production and makes it more sustainable. With plants that are more robust, one can produce more food on a smaller area, with less loss and waste. Better animal health makes for better animal welfare and less wasted feed and energy.

The question is how one can secure all these improvements without losing control.

The next step for gene modification is to have regulations that make it possible put it to use. There are no international regulations. So far, EU has said that Crispr should be treated with the same level of severity as GMO with imported DNA, that is with serious restrictions. In other places in the world, like the USA, a difference is made between GMO and gene modification. Plants that could have been cultivated with traditional methods, but are improved with Crispr or some other genetic tool, are not hampered by any special restrictions. American authorities treat them as they treat all food from conventional farming.

With good regulations, gene technology has the potential to make a strong contribution to a more efficient and sustainable food production.

## 2 PRECISION AGRICULTURE

People like to think of agriculture as something a bit old-fashioned, close to nature and a constant. In reality, farming has been well on its toes when it comes to technology development dating back to the industrial revolution. Today it is common to have both milking robots and self-driving agricultural machinery. But big changes are on their way. The biggest problem with the farming technology of today is that it is too coarse. A huge field is usually treated as if there were no variation in the entire field. Even if some part can have more than enough humidity and another part too little, the field is watered equally much everywhere. Pesticides are being sprayed all over the place, sometimes even from an airplane. Fertilizers are evenly spread too. Giant, heavy trucks are driving on the

fields, compressing the soil so hard that it is difficult to grow anything there.

Next generation farming is much more precise and less harmful. Unmanned planes and drones can scan the cultivating areas, collecting and analyzing data to find out which places need watering, fertilizing or spraying. Down on the ground, all-electric light robots roll along between the plant rows studying plants on leaf level, sowing or spraying only on the exact spots where that is needed – and then rolling back to charge itself.

This technology makes it possible to have large plantations with a better quality on the same acreage, and at the same time reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers by almost 95 percent.

This will improve the soil quality, which in turn will mean large benefits. When the soil offers good conditions for microbes and living organisms, sufficient content of organic material and a good soil structure, it will be able to prevent erosion, produce better crops, create better conditions to store water and to drain off excessive water and, not least, ensure better conditions to store carbon.



**A long, long list of companies are now developing solutions that will ensure better animal health, animal welfare and yield in meat production.**



### 3 INTERNET OF THINGS

When everything is connected to the net, that is because there have been strong, simultaneous developments in many technological fields. Mobile tech, location tech, sensors and data storage are only a few of these key technologies. If you combine them you can make rather funky things.

Connected sensors can obviously be used in the field. But it can also be used to establish a more sustainable meat production.

A long, long list of companies are now developing solutions that will ensure better animal health, animal welfare and yield in meat production. What many of these projects have in common is that they put a sensor on the animal, gauging the animal's body temperature, movements and level of activity. The data is collected and treated in real time. When, for example, a cow has a slightly increased body temperature, is moving less and lowers her head, that could mean that she is about to fall ill. Such early warning signs can be next to impossible to detect in a herd, and the earlier the animal receives treatment, the easier it is to limit the passing of the infection in the stock and apply a treatment that stops a serious illness. Some systems even have a lamp on the sensor in the cow's ear. It lights up when illness is suspected, to make it easier for the farmer to find the right cow among all the others.

**T**o sum up, one might say that the constantly growing human population is facing an enormous challenge. Biodiversity must increase. The protection of natural habitats must step up. The soil health must improve. Plants and animals must become more robust. The production must be more reliable in a less reliable world.

I don't think it will happen through innovation. The solutions are here already. It is rather the scaling that will cause a problem. To make authorities invest, regulate and put things in order for sustainable, efficient food production and protection of nature. If they do this, they are contributing to saving the world, no less.

You reap what you sow.







# ON THE HUNT FOR HUMAN EMOTIONS

Artificial intelligence is behind countless services that we use every day. But how close is it to really understanding human emotions? Affective computing has already come a long way – and as in many areas, big tech is in the lead.



**Sam Sundberg**

**Title:** Freelance writer and Editor for Svenska Dagbladet

**Years in Schibsted:** 12

**What I've missed most during the Corona crisis:** City life!

**A**s a somber, suited man stands in a cemetery. Softly, he strokes a gravestone before throwing his arms up toward the sky, howling in sorrow.

The inscription on the stone reads:

*Clippy  
1997 – 2004*

The scene is from a Microsoft commercial for their Office software. In reality, however, few people mourned the demise of the paper clip-formed Office assistant, tasked with aiding Microsoft users in their screen work.

Unfailingly pseudo-helpful, Clippy may be the most ubiquitously reviled piece of software ever created. Not because a digital assistant is inherently a bad idea, but because its tone-deaf servility pushed Microsoft users closer and closer to insanity.

Ever since computers became everyday tools, tech companies have been investing heavily in improving the ways humans and machines interact. We have gone from the days when using

a computer required impressive technical skills and hours hunched over dense user manuals, to the plug and play era where software is designed to respond intuitively to our needs and wishes.

Even so, digital computers and human emotions have never gotten along very well. Too many computer engineers have made the cool rationality of computers the standard to which humans need to adjust. But as algorithms become more and more intertwined with every aspect of our lives, things are changing. For better and for worse.

In 1995, the American computer engineer Rosalind Picard wrote a pioneering paper, "Affective computing", about a nascent research field investigating the possibilities of computers learning human emotions, responding to them and perhaps even approximating human emotions to more efficiently make decisions.

Any algorithm that takes human behavior as input is indirectly responding to human emotions. Take Facebook for example, and the way its algorithms feed on human agitation, vanity and desire for companionship. Their algorithms systematically register the actions these emotions trigger (likes, shares and comments, commonly referred to as engagement), and then attempt to amplify and monetize them.

The field of affective computing,

however, is ideally less about manipulation and more about making tech less frustrating and more helpful, perhaps even instilling in it some semblance of empathy. Counter-intuitively, one key to making affective computing work well may be to avoid anthropomorphizing the interface. Humanizing Clippy did not make people relate better to their Microsoft software, quite the opposite. And while chat bots are popular among companies hoping to slash customer service costs, for customers they are less like magically helpful spirits and more of a needlessly convoluted way of accessing information from an FAQ.

**A**ffective computing endeavors to understand us better and deeper, by analyzing our calendars, messaging apps, web use, step count and geolocation. All this information can be harvested from our phones, along with sleep and speech patterns. Add wearable sensors and cameras with facial recognition, and computers are getting close to reading our emotions without the intermediary of our behavior.

In the near future this could result in consumer technology such as lightbulbs that adjust to your mood, sound systems that find the perfect tune whether your feeling blue or elated, and phones that adjust their notification settings as thoughtfully as a first-rate butler – just to name a few possible applications. It could also be used for surveillance of employees or citizens, for purposes malicious or benign.

Rosalind Picard is currently a professor at Massachusetts Institute of



Few people mourned the passing of Microsoft Office's digital assistant, Clippy. It was notoriously unhelpful, even for an early AI.

which robots are developed for everything from education and elderly care to sex work. These machines rarely rely on cutting-edge affective computing technology, but they nevertheless simulate a range of human emotions to please their users.

If science fiction teaches us anything about synthetic emotion it is a bleak lesson. Ever since the 19th century, when a fictional android appeared in Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's novel "The Future Eve", they have tended to bring misery and destruction. In the ongoing HBO series "Westworld", enslaved robots rise up against their makers, massacring their human oppressors. In the acclaimed British author Ian McEwan's 2019 novel "Machines Like Me", the first sentient androids created by man gradually acquire human emotions, and then commit suicide.

Of course, we should celebrate the ambition to create software that adjusts to our needs and desires – helps us live and learn a little bit better. But it is worth keeping in mind the failure of Clippy, and perhaps even the warnings from concerned science fiction writers. More than that: at a time when big tech companies are hoarding personal data and using that data to manipulate us, affective computing will inevitably be a double-edged sword. After all, why should we trust Facebook's or Google's algorithms to ever understand empathy so long as the companies themselves show little capacity for it?

Technology, running the Affective Computing Research Group. She is also the co-founder of two groundbreaking startups in this space: Affectiva in 2009 and Empatica in 2014. Through her work she has become keenly aware of the potential to use affective computing for for both humanitarian and profit-driven purposes.

Affectiva's first applications were developed to help people on the autism spectrum better understand facial expressions. Later the company developed technology to track the emotional state of drivers. And after Picard had moved on to form Empatica, a company hoping to address the medical needs

of epilepsy patients, Affectiva has been attracting clients like Coca-Cola – who use the technology to measure the effectiveness of their advertising – and political campaigns who want to gauge the emotional response to political debates.

**M**icrosoft's doomed Clippy was neither the first nor the last anthropomorphized bundle of algorithms. Robots have often been envisioned as synthetic persons, androids that understand, exhibit and perhaps even experience human-like emotions. There are currently countless projects around the world in



A dark, atmospheric night scene of a forest path. A glowing street lamp stands on the left, casting a warm light on the surrounding foliage. The path leads into the distance, flanked by dense trees and bushes. Large, bold, white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**WELCOME  
TO THE  
SYNTHETIC  
DECADE**



Technology is giving us tools to alter reality in more and more areas. You might soon not only eat artificial meat but also interact with your personal double. And – not least consume more and more information created by AI. Welcome to the Synthetic Decade.



Sophie  
Tsotridis

**Former Associate Product Manager and Trainee in Schibsted**

**Years in Schibsted: 2**

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Being able to see a movie in a theater!

**T**he idea that we're entering a new era, is established by futurist Amy Webb and her team at the Future Today Institute. She states: "Not only will we eat beyond burgers, but we will consume synthetic content, or train the next generation of AI with synthetic data sets".

Recent developments within AI, prove them right. AI will impact the way we consume, get informed and envision health and life span. It's not in a distant future, and you might already have encountered what is now defined as "synthetic content". If you've ordered a beyond burger you had synthetic meat, if you used a face swap filter on your phone you produced synthetic media.

As we will progress into the synthetic decade, synthetic experiences and relationships will shape greater parts of our life. A really good example is the development of synthetic biology and the ability to engineer living systems and structures, by programming DNA with Crispr, to design and re-design organisms to do what we want them to do. Editing DNA is possible since 2010, but it is a very laborious task. Synthetic

biology promises to automate the editing process. As Amy Webb puts it: "In this, decade synthetic biology is going to allow us to read, edit and write life. We will program living biological structures as we build tiny computers." This is not science fiction, and we can envision many positive use cases for improving our own health and life span, and also helping our living structures adapt to new conditions such as global warming or pandemics.

Looking into one of these fields – synthetic media – many of the trends behind the synthetic decade are uncovered. It has started to unfold, and it tells us a lot about the potential outcomes and the many questions it triggers, blurring the line between what we consider "real" or "virtual" even more.

2017 was a landmark for synthetic media, with Vice reporting the emergence of pornographic videos altered with the use of algorithms to insert the faces of famous actresses. The term "deep fake" was coined soon after, bringing a lot of attention to the phenomenon and its harmful potential for misinformation. It then triggered a fundamental discussion, that will likely be at the core of synthetic media, about ethics and the potential harm around the "forgery" of content through AI. A very famous example is a deep fake video of Obama, created by Buzzfeed and enacted by Jordan Peel, warning us that "We're entering an era in which our enemies can make anyone say anything at any point in time." – and indeed we are!

Synthetic media is the term used for content created using artificial intelligence. With an initial set of data,





# The cost to create **synthetic media** has considerably lowered due to the wide availability of the techniques.

algorithms learn to reproduce, and create, pictures videos, sound, gestures, text and more. The result is realistic-looking and sounding artificial digital content.

Looking closer at the tech behind synthetic media, the past few years have shown significant advancements in deep learning and generative adversarial networks (GANs) have accelerated their growth. Synthetic media is mostly based on GAN technologies, even if there are many different techniques being developed. This has resulted in the quality of synthetic media improving rapidly, and soon it might just be indistinguishable from traditional media.

**T**he potential impact of synthetic media lies in the automation of editing which makes it possible to create content at scale. The cost to create synthetic media has considerably lowered due to the wide availability of the techniques. Open source software already enables anyone with some technical knowledge and a powerful-enough graphics card to create a deep fake. This has led to a drastic improvement of synthetic media quality (check out [thispersondoesnotexist.com](#)), without countless tedious hours of work.

If we also think about new behaviors such as how we consume media on social channels, how we expect even more personalization and accessibility or the fact that we have normalized virtual spaces for socializing (see the rise of Fortnite, or Animal Crossing as social media during the quarantine period), we have a very favorable ground for synthetic content to be a meaningful trend and impact the way we create and consume content online.

This again raises the familiar question if synthetic media is bad. It is a delicate yet fundamental question, and the answer is the same as with most tech: it's not harmful in itself, it depends what we are using it for. Synthetic media has a lot of potential because it is not just deep fakes, there is a growing interest in how it could be used to support new business and creative areas. The industry around synthetic media is blooming and many companies and investors are looking into the trend, believing strongly in its future.

For now, entertainment applications are the entry point for larger audiences.

We all have the possibility to create synthetic media in our pocket today. For example, Snapchat released their gender-swap filter in 2019. Russian app, Faceapp made us look older and in China ZAO released a deep fake app that can engrave the user's face into some clips from famous films or series. It's not hard to imagine the next iteration of a social media app being one where users can transform their voices, create their own synthetic character, or pretend to be their favorite celebrities.

But it's about more than just entertainment – synthetic media could become a leverage for the media industry starting with automated news reporting and delivery.

In today's newsroom, some types of reporting are extremely tedious and straightforward – human opinion and effort are not adding value. Weather reporting is a very good example. In the UK, the BBC blue lab has been exploring how synthetic media could help weather reporting. Given the growth of digital assistants and the industry's drive for greater personalization, they are betting that in the future, we might expect that a video response to a query will be digitally generated. To try this out, the editorial department collaborated with the AI firm Synthesia and created an experiment where the presenter reads the names of 12 cities, numbers from -30 to 30 and several phrases to explain the temperature, to the camera. You can then pick your city and get a personalized, but synthetically created weather report.

Within Schibsted several of our media houses have simpler, but also automated

services, reporting on weather, sports and real estate.

Another application that is very promising is automated, real time translation and dubbing. In that field, Synthesia is one of the most prominent companies looking into real time automated translation, with use cases ranging from education to customer service.

With improvement in synthetic voices, we can also imagine a rapid adaptation of voice technology in traditional media production pipelines. Particularly in video games and audio books which are markets that today face significant challenges scaling human voice over. Overall synthetic media could be a powerful technology for businesses that are reliant on content and would like to adapt their offering to different audiences. Today what would require many hours of work could be done through synthetic content creation.

Texts and dialogue are prominent use cases of Synthetic media. Hence, we are seeing the development of more realistic and accurate conversational and companionship technologies. From a simple bot, which generates a tailored conversation to a virtual double, the potential for service or leisure conversation opens up.

**R**ight now, most of our interactions with AI are transactional in nature: "Alexa, what's the weather like today", or "Siri, set a timer for ten minutes". But what about developing a profound conversation with an AI? A stunning example is from a conversational bot called Replika which is programmed to ask meaningful questions

about your life and to offer you emotional support without judgment. Since its launch more than two million people have downloaded the Replika app.

Digital assistants could be used for companionship purposes, but also education or training. It could for example help us recreate a learning environment, especially when working remotely. What if you could interact with simulated persons to learn from them or practice management techniques? And – would you invite a synth to a dinner party?

For all of this to happen and to convince us to interact with our virtual counterpart, the improvement of virtual human character and emotional response is crucial. The more these companions will look, talk and listen like humans the more we will be inclined to interact with them. For example, Samsung's virtual human "Neon" which they describe as their "first artificial human" is here. These Neons can go out-of-script and develop their own "personality". It can generate new expressions, gestures, and reactions out of this unique "personality".

Producing quality synthetic content is still very costly and tech intensive, but companies that specializing in synthetic content are emerging, allowing businesses and individuals to buy and rent synthetic media.

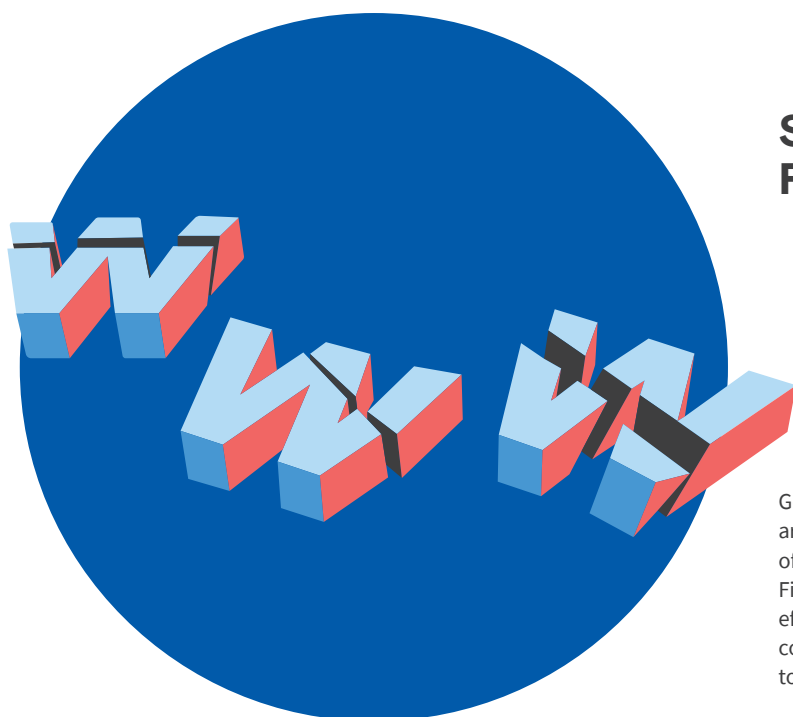
Synthetic media is rather new and it's moving fast. So fast that regulation has not followed yet. Whether it is about deep fakes, synthetic voices used for customer service, or entertainment pieces we will need to lay some ground rules about the ownership of such content and establish the responsibilities

that come along. So far, many questions are still left unanswered such as, who will "own" the content produced? How will copyright laws apply on a reproduction of a celebrity? Who would be held responsible if a digital assistant hurts someone in real life?

**S**ynthetic content has already made its way into our lives. But not all part of its ecosystem is moving at the same pace. The synthetic media sub trend, has already emerged to mainstream audiences, the technology powering it has left the research lab to find very concrete business applications. From strong ethical fears, to concrete valuable use cases, this development tells us a lot about the potential trajectory, outcomes and questions of the synthetic decade. Other areas such as biology are still in early stages, but their applications alter our lives even more profoundly. Overall, the technology underlying synthetic media, synthetic biology and other fields of synthetic content – namely AI, computer vision, deep learning etc., are the same. This means, the early questions that have risen with synthetic media are indicating the fundamental discussions we will face during the synthetic decade. In every field will arise interrogations and debate around the rights to edit, create and use what is created, determining ownership of the content, what is considered ethical or not. This also means we still have some agency to decide what comes next, and the synthetic decade to come will not necessarily be dystopian.



# 10 TRENDS FOR 2021 – THE PANDEMIC SHIFT



## SPLINTERNET: OUR NEW, FRACTURED ONLINE LIFE

**1** The web is dead. So said the cover of Wired Magazine in August 2010. Ten years later it is still around, but there is no denying that its original form – the free, global, hyperlinked internet – is a thing of the past. Governments around the world are increasingly asserting control of the digital realm. China's "Great Firewall" and other censorship efforts are prime examples. Other countries are in turn responding to China's global ambitions by

banning Chinese apps. India banned 59 Chinese apps in July, and the US threatens to ban some of the most popular: Wechat and Tiktok. Meanwhile, as the EU is trying to make American tech companies play by the rules of GDPR legislation, Facebook recently responded that they may leave the EU if they cannot store Europeans' data on American servers. Threat or promise? Many European tech startups would no doubt be thrilled to see Facebook go, hoping for a chance to create new social media platforms for European users.

## RISE OF THE SUPER APPS

**2** In Asia, "super apps" collect many services within proprietary eco-systems. Wechat, Alipay, Grab and Gojek all compete in this space; Wechat is the front runner with over one billion monthly users and one million mini-apps on its platform. Watch out for companies like Amazon and Facebook trying to bring this winner-take-all trend to the West.

## SHOPPING GOES ONLINE

**3** The pandemic has forced many brick-and-mortar stores to close, but according to data from IBM, this has fast-forwarded e-commerce growth by about five years. As new user groups learn to shop everything from groceries to fashion online, the pressure is on retailers to up their game, offering friction-free payments and same day delivery.

## GAMES BECOME SOCIAL

**4** Online gaming has been a refuge during the pandemic. For gamers around the world, hits like Fortnite and Animal Crossing offer more than just game mechanics. The games themselves, as well as Twitch streams, Youtube play-by-plays and Discord gaming chats, are spaces of connection and camaraderie – important forms of social media.

## 5G CHANGES EVERYTHING

**5** The battle for 5G supremacy may have stolen the spotlight for now, with several countries banning Huawei from their telecom infrastructure. But the more interesting news is that 5G speed (and bandwidth) changes the game for augmented reality and the internet of things. Finally, these hyped technologies have a chance to live up to our expectations.



## DINING IN THE CLOUD

**6** We may not meet up with friends at the restaurant as often these days, but we still need to eat. Thus, delivery services such as Foodora and Uber Eats are keeping busy. There is also new opportunity for nimble food startups, foregoing dining spaces (and expensive rent) and instead setting up efficient kitchens and selling food online to stay-at-home diners.



## DEEPER AUTHENTICITY

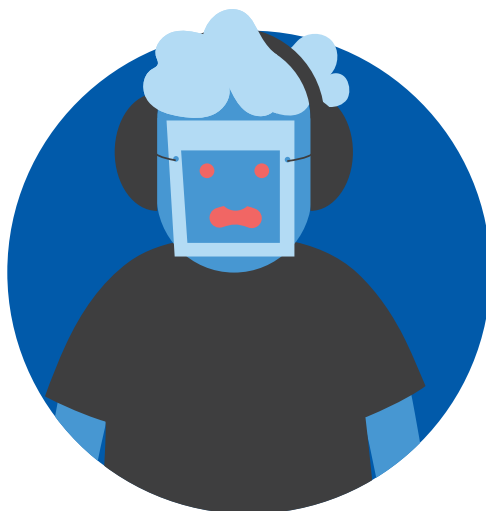
**7** Our lives are increasingly cloud-based and intertwined with algorithms. Despite this – or because of it – research shows that millennials crave authenticity: real people, real connections. The race is on to solve digital identity, ensuring users can own their online identity and data. And it may be a race where blockchain tech finally wins out.

## NO HIDING FROM BIG BROTHER

**8** 500 million surveillance cameras track the Chinese people, along with a country-wide network of human informers. The social credit program aims to create a record of the entire population's trustworthiness. Just wait for security-minded western politicians, and managers eager to check in on their work-from-home staff, to take a page out of the Chinese playbook.

## DEEP FAKES

**9** In September, The Guardian published an op-ed on why the human race must not fear artificial intelligence. The twist? It was written by an AI. Synthetic media is not coming, it is already here. Time to get used to AI-generated text, audio and video, created by learning algorithms, powered by engines from companies including OpenAI and Deepmind.



## SMILE FOR THE CAMERA

**10** We waited decades for video chat to take off, in schools, in the workplace and just for fun. The pandemic was the tipping point that finally made video tech like Zoom, Skype and Google Meet indispensable everyday tools. Watch this space for a burst of innovation as screen sharing and fun filters evolve into sophisticated AR applications.





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# MY HOME OFFICE STRUGGLE



Remote first is the new normal. But what about those of us who desperately miss meeting our colleagues, who know how to navigate the office, and who don't always appreciate mixing work and home space? Will we be outnumbered by a wide world competition or do we just need to break free to truly see the benefits? Join Dan Ouchterlony in his struggle.







**Dan Ouchterlony**

**SVP Schibsted Financial Services**  
**Years in Schibsted:** 15  
**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** My colleagues.

## **D** ESPERATE FOR A HUMAN CONNECTION

It is March 24th, 2:49 in the afternoon and I have just wrapped up another video meeting. It has been the better part of two weeks since I met a colleague in the flesh, the very same people I normally see several days a week and with whom I thoroughly enjoy chatting, debating, teasing, analyzing and brooding. I deeply miss the instant gratification of office work.

Missing it to the extent that I am about to break corporate policy and possibly Public Health Agency corona-protocol and sneak over to a colleague's home to meet up. Just sit and work together. Like we used to. Talk about things. Work. Comment on something. Work. Grab coffee. Work.

A few of us have plotted this act of rebellion in sheer desperation for a human connection.

During a team meeting we sit in separate rooms in my colleague's house, so that the others don't know we broke curfew. Then we reconvene in the living room. As the afternoon becomes evening, we share a bottle of wine and a conversation over a meal, and in the taxi home I feel peculiarly energized. The time we spent was productive, the work we did was creative, I rationalize as the evening streetlights glare through the windows of the car. I cannot rationalize the fact that we hugged each other on the way out, but it felt really good.

## **CHI MANGIA SOLO, MUORE SOLO**

The kitchen table is where the family spends most of our quality time together as we break bread, look each other in the non-digital eye, and share. As we partake in the deeply cultural, social and symbolic ritual of food, the family bonds deepen. I fondly remember feasts with my parents and grandparents. Thus, I have come to associate our round wooden kitchen table with a positive moment in time and as a positive place in space. Sitting down on the oak Windsor's sheepskin pad infallibly puts me in a positive state of mind. At least it used to.

Today is April 20th, 9:35 in the morning, and I am anything but positive, despite being in a favorite place. My right shoulder is already stiff, after only an hour of work, and my mind is churning from worry over missing our Q1 targets and a colleague who is seriously ill with Covid-19. As I try to stretch and massage the nape of my neck, I see the post-breakfast mayhem of spilt coffee and unfinished dishes on the table, and the breadcrumbs in the corner of the room sharp in the unruly morning sunlight. An hour earlier I sat down my Macbook in a hurry as my 7-year-old needed more time than usual to get to school this morning. As I fixed my gaze on a puddle of tomato seeds, that just a moment ago were part of a delicious breakfast sandwich, a sense of dread and disgust came over me. Why have I brought the serpent into Eden, brought work into my family sanctum? What if I sit down for dinner tonight and think of an investment pitch instead of my family? I decided I need another place to work, and set up station in the master bedroom fully aware the ritual of work in this particular location will seep into the very precious ritual of end-of-day conversations with my wife. And work would trouble my sleep.

## **THE MORE CONTACT I HAVE WITH HUMANS, THE MORE I LEARN**

Conversations with entrepreneurs are normally the best moments of my working day. Their passion and energy is contagious, their unwarranted faith in the future and personal commitments inspiring, and I feel privileged to sometimes be part of their lives. In "Skin in the Game", philosopher N N Taleb explains how society is, in sum, a beneficiary of the results of entrepreneurship, as it evolves and progresses, while the median entrepreneur is in fact a victim. We do not read about them that often but know that the road to success is littered by failed startups, shattered dreams and burned out founders. To be an entrepreneur is to face overwhelming odds with little more than faith – and persevere. I salute you!

Today is May 13th, 4:35 in the afternoon, the kids will be



home from school soon, and I have just been scolded, insulted and yelled at by a disappointed entrepreneur whose proposal I refused. My mind reels as I try to calm my bottled-up anger and shame with deep breathing, which is surprising in a Scandinavian setting, as losing control is unprofessional in almost any circumstance. Very rarely do these ranges of emotions seep through our stoic and rational facades. This is a professional failure for me. Saying "no" to an entrepreneur is one of the singular moments of truth in professional investing, I would argue, where I hold someone else's hopes for the future in my hand and crush it. Just as in a human relationship, I must crush it so gently, kindly, and constructively that I am – at least later – thanked for breaking a heart. This is why many in my profession practice ghosting, it-is-not-you-it-is-me, or other avoidance strategies. I think through my own actions and wonder why my concerned and empathic look and carefully crafted arguments did not work as well as they normally do, or how I so capitally misread the mood in the meeting? I give myself credit for only formulating the sharp responses to the outburst in my head, and for keeping my emotions rather hidden, but on the other hand, I shamefully recollect alt-tabbing away from the Google Meet window, wavering in the stream of emotions, and distantly humming along and excusing myself while gazing at the desktop wallpaper of my children. Are we losing the human touch in video meetings, all becoming Keyboard Warriors, not sensing or perceiving our disintermediated 2D-selves? Did I just do the equivalent of breaking up via text? I continue breathing. It is my daughter's birthday today and I need to be at my best in a few minutes as we will celebrate together.

### CO-WORKING, IN MY HOME

It is Wednesday morning, June 2nd, around half past seven in the morning, and I am walking to work in the morning summer sun. The bridge from Gamla Stan to Central Stockholm is being repaired so I take the boat a short hop

from Riddarholmen, as I watch heavy divers work on the pontoon construction. The cleaning company comes every Wednesday morning at 08:00 to freshen up our apartment. An everyday, tax subsidised luxury for the Swedish middle class, performed by the working class. That is why I now take a walk to the office to check the postal mail on Wednesdays. I might get a letter or two a month, but it needs to be checked regularly, right? Honestly, I am avoiding the cleaners. I cannot focus due to the noise of the vacuum cleaner, I tell myself, but frankly I cannot stand to see the work of cleaning being performed by someone else, someone I paid to do the work, in front of my eyes. I am too self-conscious of the class and power imbalance. And ashamed of myself for watching Netflix after a long day of work rather than vacuuming my own floors. Is that not terribly Swedish of me? I need to work on this, I decide, but I did not expect to cowork with strangers when I signed up for a cleaning subscription.

In contrast, I absolutely love coworking with my wife in our home. We typically sit in each end of the apartment, me in the bedroom, her in the living room, doors closed to muffle the sounds of endless video conferencing. We meet up in the kitchen sometimes, brew a fresh pot on the Technivorm Moccamaster together, and chat for a minute. Oftentimes she is back-to-back in meetings, so I stumble to the kitchen to pour myself a cup of ambition and sneak a peek at her from the kitchen door, working on the living room table, >



looking down into her laptop screen. I make some kind of sound, blow an air kiss, hold up the coffee pot pointing my finger in a silent question: refill? Who am I kidding? She always nods, so I tip toe over to pour a cup with a dash of milk and get a silent smile and a wink. My next meeting is usually a good one. What a privilege!

## THE FUTURE OF WORK, AND LIFE

The vision of a remote-first workplace is a strong one, and shortly after the pandemic induced lock-downs, tech giants like Facebook, Twitter and Google announced remote work was now the new normal. Directors and Vice Presidents of Remote Work were hired and Zoom rocketed

from tens of millions to hundreds of millions of users. US workers stopped commuting to the tune of 30-40 billion miles per month, and when they discovered that their big-city apartments were suboptimal workspaces, they started moving. According

to real estate brokers and consulting firms interviewed by CNN, the number of signed leases for condos and co-ops in Manhattan dropped 50-60 percent in July. Where did people go? The rich people went to the Hamptons. The middle class to single family houses outside the city. In a pleading

tone, Governor Andrew Cuomo has been begging New Yorkers to return to the city so they can continue contributing to the local economy: "We'll go to dinner! I'll buy you a drink! Come over, I'll cook!"

That was just the immediate impact. Is it becoming structural? Recently, fintech giant Stripe announced a USD 20,000 paycheck to employees that wished to leave cities in return for a 10 percent cut on their paychecks. When you can work from anywhere, why pay a premium for San Francisco, Manhattan or Seattle? When you are not commuting, countryside living certainly has its merits. And when your workers are remote, why not upgrade them with even remoter and cheaper workers?

Remote work visionary and entrepreneur Chris Herd, founder of Firstbase, thinks this is inevitable and predicts that a majority of desk jobs will be remote by 2029.

As I explain my doubts and emotions to Chris, he kindly reminds me I am caught in the middle. His hypothesis is that I haven't reaped the full benefits of remote first. I am emotionally and structurally still connected to the office and its routines and modes of work. Break free and you will find time and space to be human, he says. "Don't you miss meeting your colleagues?" I ask. Chris says Firstbase is a remote-first company, and of course they will meet up soon. But will he bring the whole team together in Scotland, where he happens to live? Or will they all meet up in the Canary Islands, in a conference hotel suited to the task of bonding a startup team together? Certainly flights and accommodation are cheaper there off-season than in a metropolitan area.

I think about it, and perhaps the real reason I like the office is the fear of the unknown. I know how to navigate an office. How to be effective. I can protect my turf as my skills and relationships are a local scarcity. At some deep level I can justify my own worth. Perhaps what I am scared of is when the world of the desk worker, my world, truly becomes flat, and I compete with the best of the best from Bogota to Baghdad to Bangladesh. What will a 45-year-old office-rat brought up in a cubicle be worth then?



# PREDICTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF WORK AND LIFE

By Chris Herd, founder of Firstbase (abridged and slightly edited)



**Diversity and inclusion:** The most diverse and inclusive teams in history will emerge rapidly. Companies who embrace it will have a first-mover advantage to attract great talent globally. Companies who don't will lose their best people to their biggest competitors.

**Output focus:** Time will be replaced as the main KPI for judging performance by productivity and output. Great workers will be the ones who deliver what they promise consistently. Advancement decisions will be decided by capability rather than who you drink beer with after work.



**Talent wars:** Remote work is the perk that is most sought after by workers globally. This will only increase. Remote-first companies will disrupt every incumbent who doesn't/isn't able to make that transition.



**Rural living:** World-class people will move to smaller cities, have a lower cost of living & higher quality of life. These regions must innovate quickly to attract that wealth. Better schools and faster internet connections are a must.

**Working too much:** Companies worry that the workers won't work enough when operating remotely. The opposite will be true and become a big problem. Remote workers burning out because they work too much will have to be addressed.

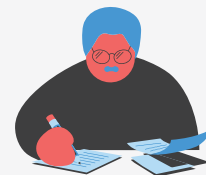


**Bullshit tasks:** The need to pad out your eight-hour workday will evaporate, replaced by clear tasks and responsibilities. Workers will do what needs to be done rather than wasting their time trying to look busy with the rest of the office.



**International talent:** Great for developing countries. International companies will have access to talent globally. Access to opportunity will be decentralized.

**Accessible jobs:** Remote work will make work more accessible than it has ever been. Nothing will stop workers getting the job they deserve because there will be no obstacles in their way.



**Older workforce:** Boomers may be standing in the way of the remote work revolution happening quickly, believe least in its benefits, and lack the trust for it to emerge. Ironically, remote work will allow them to work far more easily later in life.







## SHE MAKES SCHIBSTED'S VOICE HEARD

Petra Wikström is part of building future digital markets. She's director of Public Policy in Schibsted, and she and her team are constantly working to make Schibsted's voice heard when it comes to regulations and political decisions.

"We're talking to decision makers, members of parliament and officials in Sweden, Norway and not least in Brussels."

In many areas this is about trying to secure that all actors in a market have the same opportunities and play by the same conditions. Lately the focus has been on Amazon, which is entering Sweden.

"The big question in the Nordics is what the future market of distribution will look like. Amazon is a dominant player and we understand that they will use Postnord's delivery service – do the politicians think this is okay?"

The question is interesting to Schibsted which is already in the distribution business in Norway and is looking into it in Sweden. An even more important question is how Apple is challenging media companies, by keeping 30 percent of revenues from app sales in Appstore and not sharing user data.

The key to making yourself heard in issues like these, Petra explains, is to have concrete suggestions – and a good network. With many years in Brussels she knows how this all works and how Schibsted can be a leading voice in its market.

"The stakeholders need people they can trust and listen to, who have useful input. Schibsted is quite unique with all our different companies and different experiences."

Most challenging are the long processes. Most decisions take five years to reach.

"But on the other hand it's super exciting and it's nice to be able to lift Schibsted's role, that makes me proud."

### Petra Wikström

**Director of Public Policy**

**Years in Schibsted:** 2

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Travelling, cultural happenings and meeting people at larger events.

## EMPLOYEES SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY



When Niklas Hermansson saw the information on Schibsted's intranet about the sustainability change-makers program, he immediately knew he wanted to apply.

Before joining Schibsted he used to work with renewable energy, so sustainability has been an important area for a long time.

"The program sounded very exciting and my ambition is that it will support me in working with these aspects in Prisjakt", he says.

The program consists of an online education at Cambridge University. And then the change-makers get assigned to work on projects within Schibsted.

Niklas is looking into how Lendo can measure its impact on society – what good they contribute with and which risks are involved.

"It's super exciting to work with the other change-makers across Schibsted, we all have different competences and backgrounds."

The program has opened his eyes.

"To me it's become obvious how sustainability is about so much more than the environment. It's about societal impact, equality, how we can work smarter – the perspective is broad."

### Niklas Hermansson

**CFO at Prisjakt Group**

**Years in Schibsted:** 1

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Having a coffee and chat about life with my grandmother.

## STUDENTS CONNECT WITH SCHIBSTED



During the autumn, students from universities in Norway and Sweden have been able to sign up for the Schibsted Connect program – where they are matched with a Schibsted buddy to share knowledge and experiences.

Kamilla Abrahamsen from Schibsted's talent acquisition team is excited that this second round has attracted so many applicants.

"We will match some 30, 40 buddy-couples who will meet once a month."

The idea is a win-win situation where both the student and the Schibsted employee will learn and develop. The students will get insights into Schibsted and work-life and their Schibsted buddy will learn about younger generations habits – and how they experience Schibsted products.

Kamilla explains that the students are eager to learn more about Schibsted – they are often not aware of all options within the family. They might know that Schibsted invest in start-ups, but not that innovation is happening in all parts.

"To many students, having a role model from work life is a great thing. And our Schibsted people can be really proud to be ambassadors."

### Kamilla Abrahamsen

**Employer branding coordinator**

**Years in Schibsted:** 3

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Hugs!



# LEADERS UNDER PRESSURE

The responsibilities of business leaders have dramatically changed with Covid-19. We now need to thrive in a new reality while also maintaining innovation and high performance. This puts a lot of pressure on leaders. Mette Krogsrud, EVP People & Corporate Affairs, shares some of Schibsted's actions to support business and leaders.



**Mette  
Krogsrud**

**EVP People & Corporate Affairs**

**Years in Schibsted:** 7.5

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Time with my family and friends in London.

It is hard to recall what 2020 was pre-Corona. As I write this, the spread of the virus is still increasing, and we still find ourselves working from home. How will the pandemic impact future business and the way we work? Will there be changes for the better? What about

Schibsted, our family of businesses and brands – what will we make of this crisis?

The American economist and Nobel prize-winner Milton Friedman once said, "Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change". And these past few months confirm his statement. We don't know what the future will hold. But we do know that it will change.

It is said that in times of crisis, a leader's true self comes out. We know from before that empathic leadership is more and more important in our rapidly evolving and complex world, and now more than ever as people are having to cope with disrupted, detached and uncertain circumstances. How may leaders balance their focus on crisis

leadership while simultaneously drive business continuity? This is certainly a balancing act and not an easy transition. None of us were trained to lead in a pandemic and new leadership muscles are certainly being tested and trained.

To move forward in a crisis, leaders need to cultivate four behaviors in themselves and their teams, writes Nichols, Chatterjee Hayden and Trendler in Harvard Business Review. They must decide with speed over precision, reliably deliver, engage for impact, and adapt boldly. Inspired by these guidelines, let's explore some actions Schibsted has taken which addresses these four behaviors.

The beginning of March was chaotic, and the situation was changing by the hour. Schibsted established a Covid-19 task force on March 2 to process available information and rapidly make some bold decisions. Even though the information was incomplete, and emotions and anxieties ran high, we decided to have all employees work from home, starting March 11. Our CEO, Kristin Skogen Lund, held an epic all-hands





speech to our colleagues. Heartfelt and calm, she encouraged us all to "keep calm and carry on. Be safe, look after each other and we will get through this together." Our 5,000 employees headed home and started getting acquainted with the new reality, clueless as to how long it would last. The majority of us have been working from home ever since. Norway announced a lockdown of the entire country on March 12.

In the first weeks of home office, there was a great need for information and direction among our colleagues. Our Corona task force stayed on their toes, ensuring constant guidelines and communication across Schibsted. A few weeks in, 97 percent of Schibsted employees responded that they were satisfied with Schibsted's handling of the situation and an impressive 85 reporting a high level of motivation in their work!

**T**o reliably deliver, according to the HBR report, leaders need to align team focus, establish new metrics to monitor performance, and create a culture of accountability. Never have I experienced such a collaborative, innovative spirit, caring leadership and collegueship, and willingness to change across Schibsted as I did in those first weeks of the crisis! Our second-quarter results and giant acquisitions this summer are certainly manifestations of how our people reliably deliver, with transparency, speed, and courage. The Schibsted share price reached an all-time high and financial forecasts were no longer looking as bleak as they did when the crisis first hit. Our investors, and our own confidence in Schibsted's ability to deliver even in the midst of a crisis, certainly bounced back into place.

Strong leadership drives high engagement and high engagement drives great results. Through our pulse surveys we

identified some areas that were the most important to our colleagues. These areas included: a sense of belonging through interaction with colleagues, information sharing, well-being, and leadership. Leaders across Schibsted have made and are still making many meaningful small and big steps to address these needs.

A toolbox for leaders has been developed – filled with actions meant to engage and fuel interaction and well-being even when the casual encounters we all miss are no longer available. These include for instance walk-and-talks, park meetings, after work video conferences – and endless other video conference initiatives across teams and geographies.

In September we launched a state-of-the-art engagement programme, ACT, which equips all our leaders to drive change and engagement in their teams on a continuous basis going forward. Now it's all about engaging leaders and teams to create an impact!

There is no such thing as "business as usual" anymore. Almost 100 percent of the workforce is now working from home – some with their kids running around them. Change has been supercharged in the pandemic accelerator and we have all been forced to adapt. The adrenaline surge from the first lockdown shock is fading. Yet, future-oriented leaders get ahead of changing circumstances and take action and experiment their way to the new normal. Which begs the question: where do we go from here?

At Schibsted we have launched a Future of work project (read more about it on the page opposite) in a quest for



answers – aiming to turn challenges into opportunities. The project team works actively with gathering ideas and learning from experiments internally and externally. Our dream is that our ways of working in the future will make us an even more innovative, agile, collaborative, sustainable and attractive place to work.

**I** am convinced that how we work will never go back to how it was before Covid-19. How we will work in the future depends on the radical ideas that are lying around as we adapt and develop. Schibsted wants to fertilize the soil from which radical ideas can flourish. We want our leaders and colleagues to experiment, learn, and share on our journey to develop even more innovative and sustainable organizations. It won't be easy, but as Kristin Skogen Lund said upon the traumatic lockdown day on March 12th: "Schibsted has endured many crises before and even proved an ability to thrive and grow through troublesome times." Now our big joint challenge is to design our future of work. I truly look forward to being part of the journey and experiencing the many experiments and radical ideas that will emerge, with or without the virus circling. It's time to produce real change.

# OUR PROJECT WILL SEARCH FOR THE BEST WAY TO WORK



**Renate B  
Johnstone**

**Project Manager Group Communication  
Years in Schibsted: 3**

**What I have missed the most during  
the Corona crisis:** Seeing people face  
to face – no doubt!

**O**n March 12, 2020, all Schibsted employees left our offices to go home. And stayed home – our living space became our workspace. But where do we go from here? To investigate this Schibsted has initiated the Future of Work-project.

Despite obvious challenges, working from home has surpassed all expectations. In fact, we (employees worldwide) have actually been more effective per day, at home. We are more focused, and more productive. Comprehensive studies show that we work on average 1.2 hours more. In addition, many of us save on the time and stress due to our daily commute – benefiting ourselves and the environment, with less travel-based emissions.

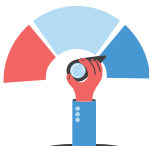
However, there are some risks emerging. Self-regulation can be an issue and there can be a tendency for increased stress, which in itself can contribute to employee "burnout". Our work-life balance, previously so clearly defined, becomes blurred – where does the office end and home begin? Many of us also miss working in teams, collaborating



**LEADERSHIP**



**WORKPLACE**



**EMPLOYEE  
EXPERIENCE**



**COLLABORATION**

face-to-face and socializing with colleagues. Those spontaneous chats by the coffee machines – the laughs, inspiration and shared ideas – are simply no more.

**T**his work-from-home period is and has effectively been a giant pilot exercise, one we must learn from to mould a better working environment for the future. What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are our key learnings so far? How can we adapt to optimize?

At Schibsted we've started by asking our employees what they want.

Change is the short answer. In surveys over 60 percent have expressed a preference for mixing working from home, remote from other places and working from the office and almost 20 percent want a fulltime home office.

Now it's up our leaders, to listen to these employee needs, to harvest great ideas, try them out and discover the best way to meet the changing requirements of our employees and the business itself. A challenge, but also an exciting opportunity – and this is where the Future of Work-project comes in.

The project will focus on four key areas: Leadership, workplace, employee experience, and collaboration.

The project is experiment-based to determine how we can adapt as a business and employer, creating the culture, infrastructure, routines and leadership for the future.

It will be exploratory, comprehensive

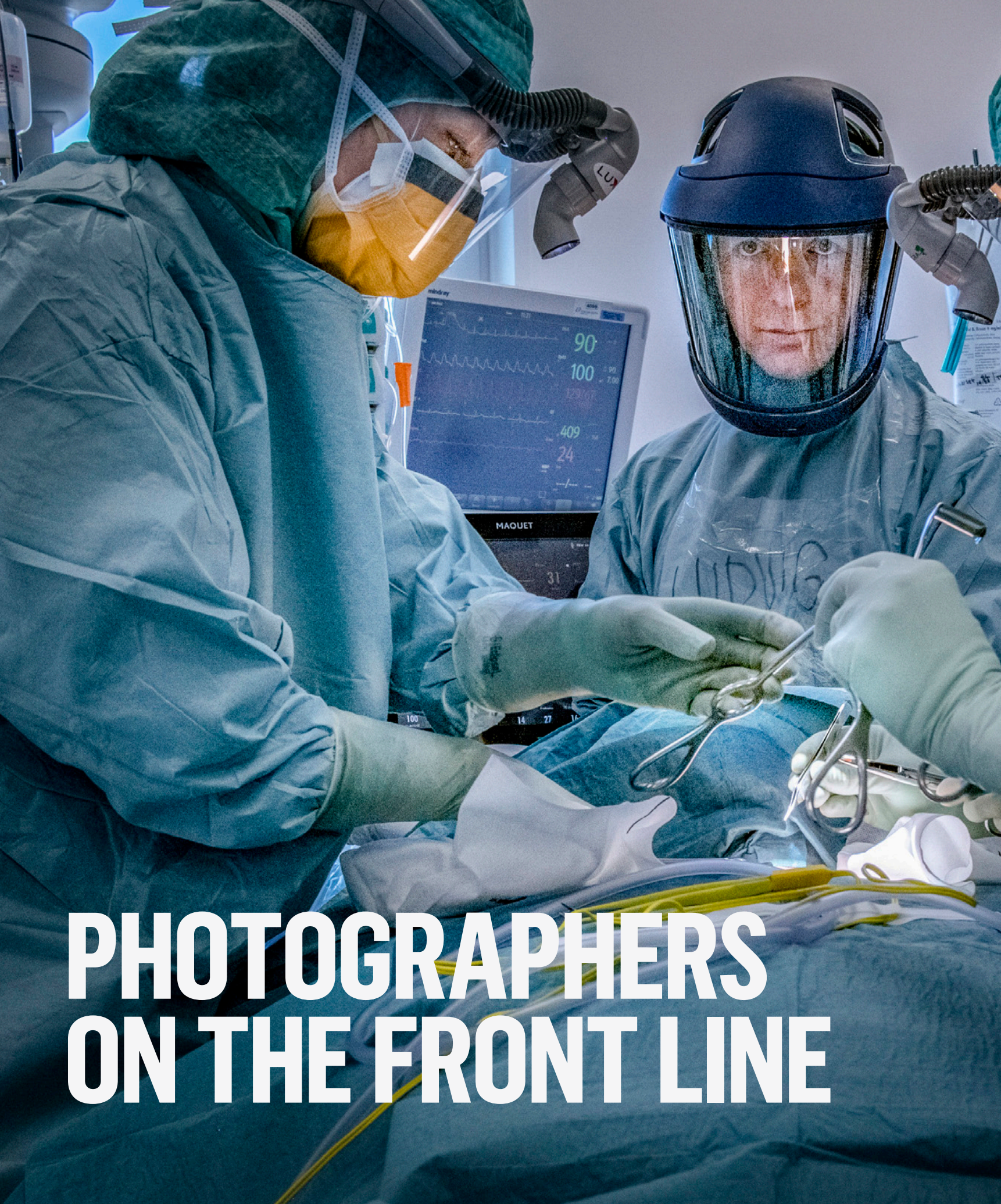
and inclusive – we will involve all of our brands. We will take time to test and research internal solutions and look into inspiration and input from external benchmarking and expertise. By experimenting we can see what works well and what does not for our individual brands, assessing strengths and weaknesses.

To help our brands navigate when working with the Future of work-project we have created a framework that can be used as a tool in the process. The framework helps brainstorm, set direction, define specific goals and what to measure.

**A**part from the focus areas we have defined a set of guiding principles that involves culture, innovation and sustainability to help us make choices and provide direction as we are experimenting our way towards the Future of work transformation.

To stay ahead as a business Schibsted needs to lead change rather than react to it, setting out bold ambitions and finding the strategies, tools and capacity to achieve them. We know we can and must do things differently. In a recent study carried out prior to the pandemic by Morten Hansen, Management professor at University of California, Berkeley, he found only 20 percent of employees, out of a focus group of 5,000, worked efficiently at their offices. So, for 80 percent of people there was a better way of working. We aim to find that way.





# PHOTOGRAPHERS ON THE FRONT LINE



They are always first on site, whether there's a war, an uprising – or a pandemic. In all of Schibsted's newspapers, the Corona crisis has put the photographers on the frontline. Future Report presents some of their pictures and Ebba Bonde, head of the visual department at Svenska Dagbladet, shares her experiences handling worry and the loss of a colleague.

**A**pril 2020: "This is what we have trained for throughout our professional lives." The photographer Magnus Hjalmarsson Neideman sounds angry but is probably more frustrated by the anxious atmosphere that permeates the meeting. We are in the middle of a discussion about how the editorial staff's photographers should be able to work safely in a reality where an invisible virus is spreading fast, and where the death toll rises rapidly day by day.

For everyone present in the online meeting, one of the thousands of the deceased is always in mind. A week earlier, our colleague Tomas "Onis" Oneborg died as a result of Covid-19. No one knows how he was infected, if it happened on the job or in his spare time – shock and grief are unspoken, but present. There is a fragile atmosphere where the fear of infection is in strong conflict with the desire to practice one's profession.

Perhaps the difference between press photographers and other photographers has been made clearer than ever this year. The press photographer's task is often to describe in pictures the situations that are impossible for the reader to actually experience. In the process of taking pictures that help people understand and discover complex issues, the press photographer often encounters risks. But press photographers are also trained to think of safety. To prepare well. Calculate the degree of risk and at the same time analyze the type of image that captures that special moment.

April 2017: It's almost exactly three years before the

A team from Svenska Dagbladet reports from the epicenter of the crisis at Södertälje hospital. At the intensive care a surgery takes place to avoid moving the patient to the surgery ward downstairs. The patient in his forties, is stabilized and will get a tracheotomy – a tube down his throat, instead of being connected to a respirator.

Photo: Staffan Löwstedt/Svenska Dagbladet





At 08:28 the alarm goes off at Haraldsplass diakonale hospital. A young woman with asthma and suspected Covid-19 is coming in. But this time it's a drill and the woman is a perfectly healthy student. "I'm more afraid of being infected in the store than at the job. As long as we follow recommendations, I feel safe", says ambulance paramedic Dan Remy Falkanger.

Photo: Eirik Brekke/Bergens Tidende



grief-stricken meeting in front of the computer screens. It's one week until Good Friday. Tomas Oneborg takes pictures of Easter sweets in Hötorgshallen in Stockholm.

Suddenly he sees people rushing for their lives towards Sergels Torg.

Tomas picks up his camera, and starts running against the stream of panicked people, towards the place where something had happened.

Less than a minute later, "Onis" arrived, as the first press photographer on site. The unique, important and later award-winning photos from the terrorist attack at Drottninggatan are a piece of Swedish history today. For him, it was obvious, a moment he had trained for in his entire professional life.

May 2020: SvD have been given the opportunity to report

from the center of infection and horror: an intensive care department where the battle between life and death takes place. The discussion is marked by everything that has happened this spring: Are we exposing ourselves to infection? How will patients and relatives experience it?

Staffan Löwstedt's pictures took the reader to one of those impossible places. The story caused huge positive reactions when it was published late May. Was it worth the risk? In retrospect, it's easy to say "yes". But careful deliberations were the basis for this particular story.

It was one of the most important publications SvD made during the spring 2020. In the same period, it became more obvious than ever that a press photographer always needs to be well prepared – ethically and in terms of safety.

But the remit is still to be in the front



**Ebba Bonde**

**Head of visuals at Svenska Dagbladet**  
**Years in Schibsted: 4.5**  
**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Hanging out with my parents.



In one of his last assignments, SvD's photographer Tomas Oneborg accompanied a team of ambulance paramedics along with reporter Erica Treijls. The idea was to describe how the paramedics were meeting a more brutal reality – but the story also turned into facing a new virus. The story was published on March 7, 2020.

**Photo: Tomas Oneborg/Svenska Dagbladet**









The whole family should have been there – but most of them live outside Trondheim. So, Selja was christened in the large Nidaros cathedral with only her parents, her sister and brother and the priest. "I'm a bit surprised how nice it was – close and intimate", the father Jøte Toftaker, said after the ceremony.

Photo: Ole Martin Wold/VG



A worldwide pandemic puts things in perspective – and gives us opportunities to reflect. Mars 12, when Norway was locked down, photographer Espen Rasmussen started to document his and his pregnant wife Julia Ingebrigtsen's life. Julia is a reporter, also at VG, and together they made a story on what it's been like to expect their first child in a world that from one hour to the other is turned upside down.

Foto: Espen Rasmussen/VG







Down in the cellar of Södertälje hospital lies the morgue. The team from Svenska Dagbladet has followed the destiny of an elderly man, Petri, who died. The caretaker Johan Haglund leaves him in the cold room which already holds some 20 bodies, all victims of Covid-19.

Photo: Staffan Löwstedt/Svenska Dagbladet



At last Sidel Falck, 95 years old, can have her hair done. Usually she and Rada Abidar meet every week, but now it's been months, because of the pandemic. Even more exciting, today Sidel will also meet her son Henrik. It's been tough not seeing them, she says.

Photo: Janne Møller-Hansen/VG





For once there is plenty of space for Rex on Stockholm's subway. He and his owner, Jenny Lindahl, were on their way to a lunch in Hagaparken when they met Aftonbladet's photographer.

Photo: Pontus Orre/Aftonbladet





When all of Sweden's attention was directed towards epidemiologist Anders Tegnell, Gustav Lloyd Agerblad chose to get a tattoo with his portrait on his left arm. Aftonbladet caught the moment and the whole world was intrigued. Foto: Lotte Fernvall/Aftonbladet



Aftenposten met two-year-old Viola in Bergamo, Italy. She lost both her grandmother and her grandfather to Covid-19. The closest she gets to them now is at the cemetery. Viola often looks at photos of her grandparents and says to the photographer: "They have gone up to heaven." Photo: Marte Christensen/Aftenposten



Stressful days at work crave preparations for both body and mind. Staff at the emergency room at Østfold Kalnes hospital in Skarpsborg begin their day with some exercises. Photo: Gisle Oddstad/VG



# EVERY STARTUP IS A NEW SPECIES

Where do startups actually come from? New companies come out of nowhere, grow exponentially and make a huge impact in the daily lives of millions in just a couple of years. Darwin can help us understand why.



Rune  
Røsten

Country manager,  
Schibsted Growth Norway  
Years in Schibsted: 13

**What I missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Meet my colleagues and my fellow cyclists at bike races.

**T**he truth is a mobile army of metaphors, Nietzsche infamously wrote, and the best metaphor to grasp the essence of startups is perhaps to look to nature, specifically Darwin and the theory of evolution.

Charles Darwin tried to figure out how and why new species originated and how change and adaptation took place in nature. Much in the same way we try to comprehend how new companies

come to life and the dynamics of society.

Through thorough world-wide research, Darwin reached an understanding of a universal principle of life, which he named natural selection. The principle of evolution means that inherited traits will be carried over from generation to generation only if the traits increase the likelihood of survival and reproduction – survival of the fittest.

However, Darwin was not able to identify the source of change. Mendel and later research found that DNA and random mutations are the actual driver of change, and natural selection decides which mutation will be carried over to the next generation. Darwin's theory of evolution is valid for all forms of life and explains both the vast diversity and the incredible complexity of nature.

But is this relevant to startups? I think so, even if society can't be compared to nature directly, the theory of evolution

gives us clues to understand the origins and life of startups. They are also a special type of new species with particular traits, and they have to successfully adapt in order to reproduce and survive.

A striking example of how startup evolution works is the Norwegian company Zaptec. They originated in Stavanger, the oil capital of Norway, and they were inceptioned within the oil business, making a super tiny but powerful transformer suited to deep ocean drilling.

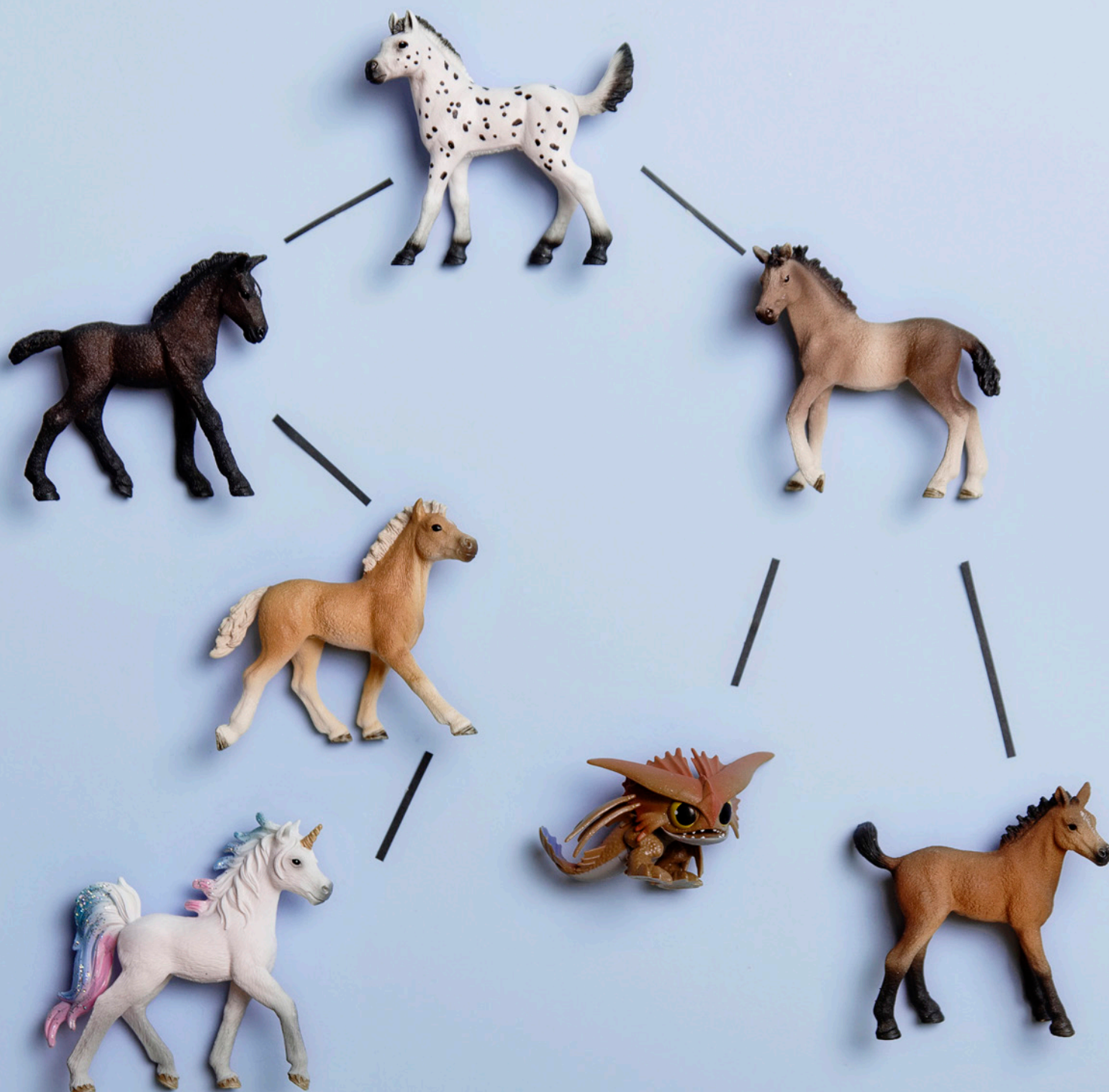
When I met the company back in 2014, they had left the oil industry and had set their eyes on other business areas. They were particularly enthusiastic about space exploration. The Zaptec team thought their transformation was perfect for drilling and exploration on Mars.

Fast forward five years and Zaptec has recently gone public on the Oslo stock exchange with a market capitalization just south of NOK 1 billion. Has their startup journey ended up in space, digging dirt on Mars? No, today you find Zaptec's solution just underground, most likely in a large parking house owned by a housing association.

The explosion of electric cars in



The evolution from a startup to a valuable unicorn is fraught with perils.





# The key is to find a **problem** that you are able to solve in a desirable way with an attractive price tag.

Norway in the past few years has led to a high demand for reliable, easy and secure charging. In large parking houses, that's a lot easier said than done and it's not an issue every single car owner can solve by himself. Based on their original transformer, Zaptec has developed a complete and simple solution for housing cooperatives and apartment buildings in need of facilitating convenient car charging on their premises.

Zaptec's solution is not only the charger in itself but a complete shared infrastructure for electric vehicle charging, including intelligent distribution of the available capacity between the charging stations and billing of the individual car owners. Zaptec have by mutation, trial and error been able to identify a particular niche in the market, in which they have created a powerful value proposition where there happens to be a high willingness to pay.

The company illustrates the bumpy road of a startup and how iterations,

random concurrence of events and changes in the market may work together in order to create a solution that the users love. The roller coaster journey of Zaptec is probably something that all entrepreneurs may learn and get inspiration from, and in particular through Darwin's spectacles.

**T**he key is to find a problem (or niche in the term of evolutionary biology) that you are able to solve in a desirable way with an attractive price tag. How the solution has originated, how much sweat, tears and money that have been invested and the composition of the team is really not relevant, if the company is able to deliver on their value proposition with a sound business model. In startup lingo this is often referred to as product/market-fit and I think that is pretty close to Darwin's principle of natural selection.

The theory of evolution might give us some clues as to how new companies

originate and fill new niches in the market. But how is it possible that tiny startup companies can compete with big corporations in the quest for product/market-fit? Why didn't a large and established player in the energy industry develop the same solution as Zaptec and in a considerably shorter period of time? They should have both the resources and knowledge to do so.

From time to time you will observe big corporations that come up with new and innovative solutions: Lyse Energi has been a successful pioneer within fiber-based internet access through the brand Altibox. Schibsted's fast-growing company Helthjem is a new logistic solution provider based on an old newspaper distribution network. However, I think it's fair to say that such initiatives are not the rule.

Often big companies will try to take advantage of their existing resources and know-how when they set out on a journey to innovate. That's understandable, since they will try to figure out where they have a competitive advantage. The downside is that then you initiate the process with a solution already in mind, the efforts you are making are directed towards what's possible to do. All too often that carries with it the endless and fruitless search for a problem to solve.

In my opinion most successful startups begin with a defined and often self-experienced problem of some kind, e.g. Daniel Senn made the highly celebrated learning game Poio in order to help his own hearing-impaired son to read. Starting out with such a clear value proposition, helping children crack the

reading code, is not a guarantee for success, but it reduces complexity and the startup team has no choice but to focus on the task at hand.

In large companies the opposite is often the case. The newly established "startup team" is pretty large and consists of stakeholders from the entire organization in order to gain strong support. This also implies a decrease in speed due to necessary coordination within the team and dialogue with other parts of the company. In a true startup they can move fast and there is most likely only one agenda.

Large companies also tend to issue a set of different policies. Google is well-known for letting their employees use part of their work time to innovate new products and services. However, Google and other big companies also foster cultures and processes optimized for the market they are present in already. As a Google employee you are expected to use Google's own tools and systems even if you try to make something entirely novel. It is also expected that the solutions you make are universally accessible and of high quality from day one. A startup might pick development systems and tools of their own choice and are not obliged to launch perfect products, instead they go through different paths of trial and error. This enables startups to keep up the speed, encourage many iterations and a high degree of flexibility.

But still, a startup has a limited

number of resources available. Some may have a longer runway than others, but it is always definite. Innovation projects in large corporations are seldom restricted by funding, but they tend to get shut down too early, whereas startups stay put until they reach some kind of breakthrough.

The reason for this supposed anomaly might be that incumbents have a steady cash flow from existing products and services and are in no hurry to come up with new revenue sources. To close down an intrapreneurial initiative will create no short-term negative effects, but in most cases increase the profitability.

A startup team faces an entirely different reality. They definitely have skin in the game, to quote Nicholas Taleb. They must act in order to stay alive. They must continue the quest for a niche in which they can reproduce or at the very least, they must convince investors that they are on a path to success.

Common wisdom indicates that entrepreneurs are driven by a high financial reward. I am not sure about that; I think that the best entrepreneurs are driven by problem-solution and to make a difference. On the other

hand, it's very hard to see why you should join a corporate startup. The reward is most likely limited, and you expose yourself to criticism and probable failure. Since it is by definition a startup and something new, it is hardly a

strong career move in the current legacy business.

All these factors work together to make startups better suited to go through the necessary struggle and make enough experiments to achieve product/market-fit. From an evolutionary perspective, startups often beat incumbents even if the large players have the upper hand.

The logical consequence of this insight for large companies is not to stop internal innovation projects, but rather to add startup investments to their innovation toolbox. However, this should be done in a manner in which the founders are still in control and the investors accelerate (but don't redirect) the journey of the startup.

In Schibsted's case this implies that we support entrepreneurs in different ways. The most important is probably through brand building and marketing. Schibsted has vast experience both operationally and strategically when it comes to launching new brands and strengthening established ones. We also support our startups with legal advice, internationalization, business development, recruitment and more. Other corporate venture investors might support their founders in other areas.

Regardless of how you choose to support the entrepreneurs, the most important aspect, I believe, is to recognize that every startup is unique and is a new species trying to get a foothold in an unknown territory. And it must run through large and small mutations on its evolutionary path to survival.





# RESILIENCE IS THE NEW BLACK

**Enabling consumption and improving people's lives have been the driving force for technological advances for the past decades. Now environmental and societal perspectives need to be added. A resilient mindset will enable us to find opportunities ahead and set new sustainability agendas.**



**Markus Ahlberg**

**Head of Sustainable Business Development**

**Time in Schibsted:** 3 months

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Laughing together with colleagues.

**H**uman practices have always been about taming environmental and societal forces. We are programmed to believe that we can control and optimize everything and, if we do not succeed, we just need to push harder. Companies reflect people's values, and the conviction of controlling and optimizing is very clear when looking at business practices in the past. During the past decades the hegemony has resulted in exponential growth of the global economy, but also short-termism that has led to irreversible negative consequences for the planet, people and in the long run maybe also for the companies themselves.

There are some clear examples; the fishing industry has exploited marine resources for decades with good financial results, but now this practice has led

to poor life below water, poor catch and an undermining of their business model long-term.

Another example is the social media platform's development and increased influence of the society. The platform's development has resulted in several positive societal effects, but also negative consequences that are now backfiring such as increased speed of spreading misleading information, disturbance of democratic processes and polarization of society. In both cases, the consequences of the short-term optimization focus could have been avoided if the initial analysis were future-leaning and had internalized societal and environmental perspectives.

The age of omitting societal and environmental analysis are, luckily, something that belongs to the past. Today, most companies are performing analysis of how their business practices interact with their surroundings today and historically. The results from such analysis are typically used to form a company's sustainability scope and agenda.

But how the companies have reacted to the pandemic and the first signs of the climate crisis has shown that looking into the present and past is not enough

to be prepared for a complex future. This is not surprising; the world has never been exposed to similar global events where man-made environmental disturbance is combined with globally interconnected societies.

However, in the aftermath of these events we should see companies widening their scope when defining the sustainability agenda. A sustainable business model, which means creating value for stakeholders without depleting environmental or societal resources, will be the prerequisite to play. But, to be able to thrive, be a solution to tomorrow's environmental and societal challenges and meet a bumpy road ahead, a forward leaning analysis and resilient thinking is needed.

**R**esilience can be defined as the ability to deal with irregularities and the consequences of changes, such as new political hegemony, earthquakes or a pandemic. This means being prepared for threats, absorbing impacts, recovering and adapting the changes.

In the public sector, which the business sector can learn from, there are some clear examples of the benefits. The preparedness plan for higher sea levels and floods that is created by cities and regions all over the world is one example. Of course, we will not know how much the sea level will rise, but prepared organizations have, and will, be more resilient and prepared for changes. The same applies to the preparedness we have seen among the public health agencies globally in relation to the pandemic.

A facility in Iceland pumps captured CO<sub>2</sub> and water into the bedrock, where it reacts with the basalt and transforms into calcite.



Photo: Magnus Hjalmarsen Neideman

They couldn't predict all the effects of Covid-19, but for sure, having some kind of a road map has resulted in a better outcome compared to none.

The future is, so far, impossible to predict, but there are several tools that can guide us to gain understanding about the future. Scenario analysis tools are one of them, and the purpose of such tools is to highlight central elements of a possible future and draw attention to drivers of change or critical uncertainties. The lens for such analysis might be sustainability, financial or legal. It is the combined depictions of the diverse perspectives and loads of possible scenarios that will point out possible directions. By completing the sustainability analysis with resilient thinking and scenario testing the sustainability agenda will be redefined and targets and actions better in terms of transforming and winning in the next new normal.

Looking into future hypotheticals, resilient thinking is important as a tool for identifying risks, but also an excellent tool to innovate and find robust sustainable business opportunities. Our age can clearly tell the benefits of business models that have grown and supported the society and environment during changing times. A recent example is the societal benefits of the video-conference tools which have connected people during the pandemic. Another example is the solar power companies that have offered environmentally friendly solutions in the current energy transition. At Schibsted we are proud of being an enabler of second-hand trade through our marketplaces in the transition to a circular economy.

Future business opportunities lie within these intersections of societal and environmental benefits and

long-term economic growth. If these are not combined, and accepted as trustworthy by consumers, businesses might undermine their own model over time (again) and opportunities of economic growth in combination of positive impact will be lost.

**T**he Sustainable Development Goals has pointed out a clear road map for how we must change the world until 2030. The boundaries of our planet are clear, and the planet has started to send us threats, such as bushfires, mass extinction and drought. It is time to rethink how to meet the future, not only for the sake of society and the planet, but also for business continuity. Resilient thinking will guide us in uncertain times and create the future-fit business models and the best business opportunities of tomorrow. The best ideas are yet to come!



# BLOCKET HELPS USERS REPAIR OLD THINGS

A third of the Swedish population don't mend things when they break. A main reason is that they don't know how. Now Blocket is helping them out.



**Tero Marjamäki**

Head of communication, Blocket

Years in Schibsted: 1.5

What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis: My wonderful colleagues.

The amount of things we throw away every year just keep getting bigger. At the same time we buy more new things than ever before. That's why Blocket made the book "Bättre begagnat" – a guide on how to take care of and mend things. "This is to care for our children's future", says Pernilla Nissler, CEO of Blocket.

To previous generations, it was obvious to repair and take care of the things you got. Today, many choose to buy new things instead. Every year people in Sweden throw away some 4.5 million tonnes of waste. When it comes to clothes, the average is 7.5 kilos per person and year. At the same time we buy 12.5 kilos of new clothes per person and year. Our environmental impact is clearly related to how we consume. And considering how much new things we buy per year, a transition to a more sustainable consumption is an important issue for our climate.

A survey conducted by Kantar Sifo shows that a third of Sweden's population do not mend their things when

something breaks (34 percent), and a big reason why is simply because they don't have the knowledge of how. At the same time, nine out of ten (93 percent) think it is important to know how to mend and care for clothes and things. Many people are also interested in learning more about how to care and repair, especially young people between 18 and 29 years old.

These insights made Blocket launch the book "Bättre begagnat", a guide on how to take care of and mend things and clothing – to make it possible for more people to extend the life of their belongings.

"The second-hand trade on Blocket



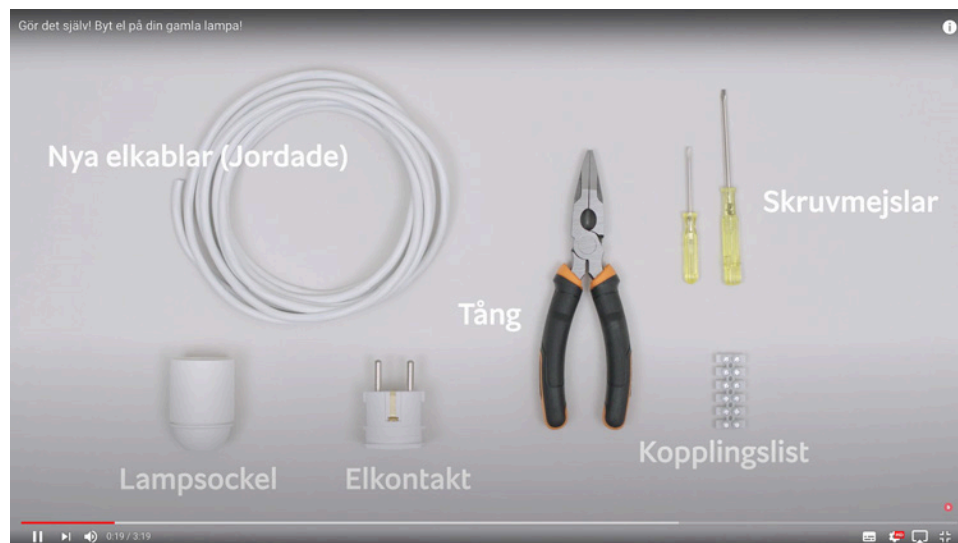
Above: Blocket's book released in 2020.

Below: Blocket publishes instructional videos on Youtube.

saves approximately 730.000 tonnes of CO2 annually, which corresponds to the amount of emissions that all traffic in Stockholm causes for ten months. We hope that the book will help more people to extend the life of their possessions, whether the purpose is to keep them or resell", says Pernilla Nissler.

"This is one of the most inspiring books we have ever published. From an environmental perspective second-hand is almost always better than new", says Jeppe Wikström, at the publisher Max Ström.

As a digital extension to the book, Blocket has also recently launched Blocket TV on Youtube, where you can find tangible filmed guides on how to carve together your very own outdoor table, change tires on the bike, draw new electricity in a lamp or learn to sew pillowcases from an old tent.





In 2019 users on twelve Schibsted and Adevinta marketplaces potentially saved 25.3 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> by trading second-hand. Reusing things means fewer new products are needed – decreasing the impact on the environment. We call it the Second Hand Effect.

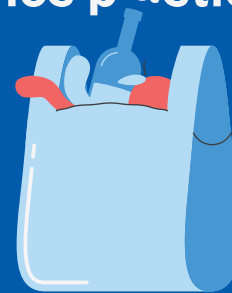
# Our users are environmental heroes

25.3 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> correspond to:

9.5 million tonnes steel  
= **2.5 million** containers

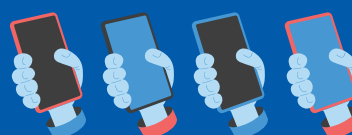


1.5 million tonnes plastic  
= **204 billion** plastic bags

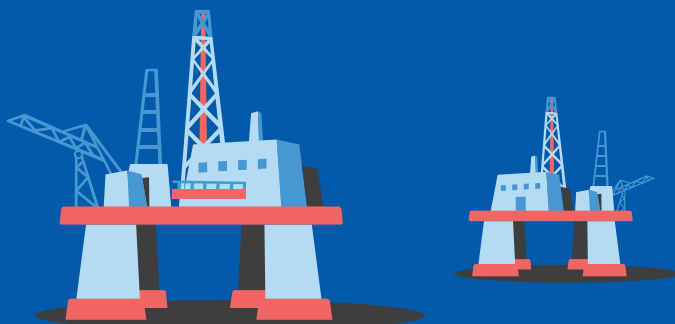


**25.3 million tonnes** greenhouse gas

= Traffic in Stockholm for **29 years**



= Production of **444 million** iPhone 11



= **50%** of Norway's annual emissions



# AN UNDERDOG RETHINKING DISTRIBUTION

From zero to ten million yearly packages delivered in just five years – the growth for logistics and distributor company Helthjem has been a masterclass in winning the hearts of the Norwegian population and becoming an enabler for sustainable shopping.



**Marius  
Husebø-  
Evensen**

**Chief Communication Officer  
in Helthjem**

**Years in Schibsted:** 3

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Visiting my grandmother and other friends and family who are in the risk group.

**T**here is something quite charming about the challenger. The David to the Goliath, and the story of the small-town boy who won the heart of the princess. Five years ago, start-up Helthjem was ready to disrupt the market and change the landscape for package delivery in Norway, going head to head against a giant with a near monopoly in the market for hundreds of years. Not an easy feat, but certainly not impossible.

Anders Lunde Angen, CEO – and the very first employee – of Helthjem Netthandel, was not intimidated by

the challenges ahead. On the contrary, he was absolutely convinced that the start-up could make a difference in the market.

"The idea to utilize the capacity within the already existing newspaper delivery chain was brilliant, and I could see how this could potentially revolutionize the way we send and receive packages with regards to speed and frequency of delivery. My main driving force though was the way I could see this making life easier for everyday people", he says.

The woman who hired Lunde Angen to do the job, CEO of Schibsted Distribution Cathrine Laksfoss, is very happy with Lunde Angen and his team's unfailing enthusiasm and continuous hard work to make Helthjem the success it is today.

"To watch him and the team fine tune and further develop Helthjem and its services has been absolutely amazing – and their collaboration with the distribution has definitely been a key to the success



for the whole distribution network”, Cathrine says.

And it seems both the market and the consumers are just as convinced by the Helthjem team’s efforts as Cathrine Laksfoss. A growth from zero to ten million packages sent per year in only five years is a solid testimony that the parcel service is a more than welcome player on the field. Helthjem has certainly become a competitor to be reckoned with. They were first in the market with home-to-home delivery and return from your own door, and the contactless home delivery has been well received.

Helthjem is a part of Scandinavia’s largest media companies, Schibsted, Amedia and Polaris. The distribution network has over 250 years of delivery experience from newspapers such as VG and Aftenposten, so it’s safe to say the newcomer had a solid history on which to lean. When newspaper subscriptions went down, there was available

capacity in the distribution network, so it made perfect sense to benefit from the well-functioning machinery. Lunde Angen saw the nationwide and efficient newspaper distribution as an excellent starting point for services that require fast delivery to the consumer’s doorstep delivered contactless before breakfast.

“Today’s consumers expect more from businesses to make their lives easier and more streamlined, and quite rightly so. Why should you be forced to queue up in a crowded post office to pick up a package, or get home delivery according to a time schedule that may or may not suit you? It’s just not good enough”, he says.

**T**here is no doubt that the business idea was good. In the five years Helthjem has been operative, several of the competitors have been forced to step up their game – so what was perhaps thought to

be yet another insignificant start-up is now considered an actual opponent. It’s healthy for the industry and definitely a benefit for the customers.

Listening to your customers and meeting their needs should be at the core of any business, but surprisingly this has not always been the case within the logistics industry. The pace of innovation has been low and the consumers were for a long time left with a parcel delivery model that suited the logistics companies better than it suited them. In a time when flexibility is perhaps the most important selling point for consumers, it is no wonder that inflexible parcel delivery was no longer good enough. The power now lies in the hands of the customer.

Chief Sales Officer for Helthjem, Daniel Kongstvedt, highlights the flexibility of their delivery service as one of the most important reasons for the company’s success.



"We aim to have the fastest and smoothest service on the market, and our customers have really embraced the possibility of not only receiving packages on their doorstep, but also sending parcels from home. This flexibility is absolutely crucial when today's customers choose how to send and receive packages", Kongstvedt says.

There is no denying that online shopping is the way forward for most retailers. Pre-corona, numbers showed that 80 percent of Norwegians between 16 and 79 had purchased goods online in the last twelve months, and the total consumption for e-commerce hovered around 170 billion NOK annually. It's safe to assume the numbers will be significantly higher going forward, meaning the number of parcels passing through the Helthjem delivery chain will most certainly increase. In 2020, it is expected that over 85 million packages will be bought online in Norway, almost three times as many as last year. Kongstvedt is confident the customers will appreciate Helthjem and their speedy and smooth delivery service.

"Unlike how other companies operate, you don't have to be at home for a given period of time when the package is to be picked up or delivered by Helthjem. In fact, you don't have to be at home at all. We also deliver on Saturdays, which is a real luxury in a country where the postal service continues to scale down the number of delivery days", he says.

Helthjem is a delivery partner of some of Norway's leading online retailers.

Every single day, protein supplements, the season's coolest sneakers, syllabus literature, bootcut jeans, designer coat hangers and every other imaginable type of goods make their way from retailers' warehouses – landing on the doorsteps of happy customers throughout Norway.

Apart from delivering parcels containing brand new merchandise from top retailers, Helthjem also offers their customers both pickup and delivery of customer-to-customer sent packages from their home. The service has proven to be very popular, not least among fans of vintage shopping across the country. The growing interest in sustainable consumption has given rise to a boom in the market for buying second-hand goods, many of which are being carefully packed up and sent via Helthjem. Anders Lunde Angen is proud to work in a company that plays a part in an important movement for sustainability.

"Through platforms like Tise and Finn, people are given the opportunity to not only save money by buying second-hand items. They are also contributing to reducing carbon emissions by choosing pre-loved clothes, shoes and household goods. When you add a pre-existing distribution channel and smart transportation to the mix, it really adds up to a win-win situation, he says.

Surveys also show that users of Helthjem are selling items they would otherwise have thrown out, making Helthjem an even larger contributor to a sustainable lifestyle.

"We knew from the start that

second-hand goods would be an important category for the service, but the effect of convenience has boosted the category even more than we dared hope", says Director of Business Development and Innovation at Helthjem, Tor Even Blom-Ramberg.

Helthjem is conscious of their positive impact, but they still have ambitious goals when it comes to sustainability.

"While we enable sustainable e-commerce, the parcel journey is still not eco-friendly enough. That's why an important part of our product development and goals for the future include skewing our delivery in an even more sustainable direction, for example using electric cars. It's a journey to get there, but we are so proud of how far we've come, and truly motivated to keep going, Talseth says.

Through lockdown and quarantine in connection with Covid-19, Helthjem has been a lifesaver for many who have been bundled up at home for longer periods. Gym equipment, home office supplies and a new shirt to look good on your Teams-meeting with colleagues – Helthjem has made sure your online purchases have landed safely on your doorstep. Without having to interact with anyone or leaving your house.

"We're very proud to have played an important part of making home life as comfortable as possible during difficult times. For me, it is just another testimony to the important role Helthjem is filling, both now and in the future", says CEO Anders Lunde.





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**IT'S NOT ABOUT  
THE ADS ANY MORE**







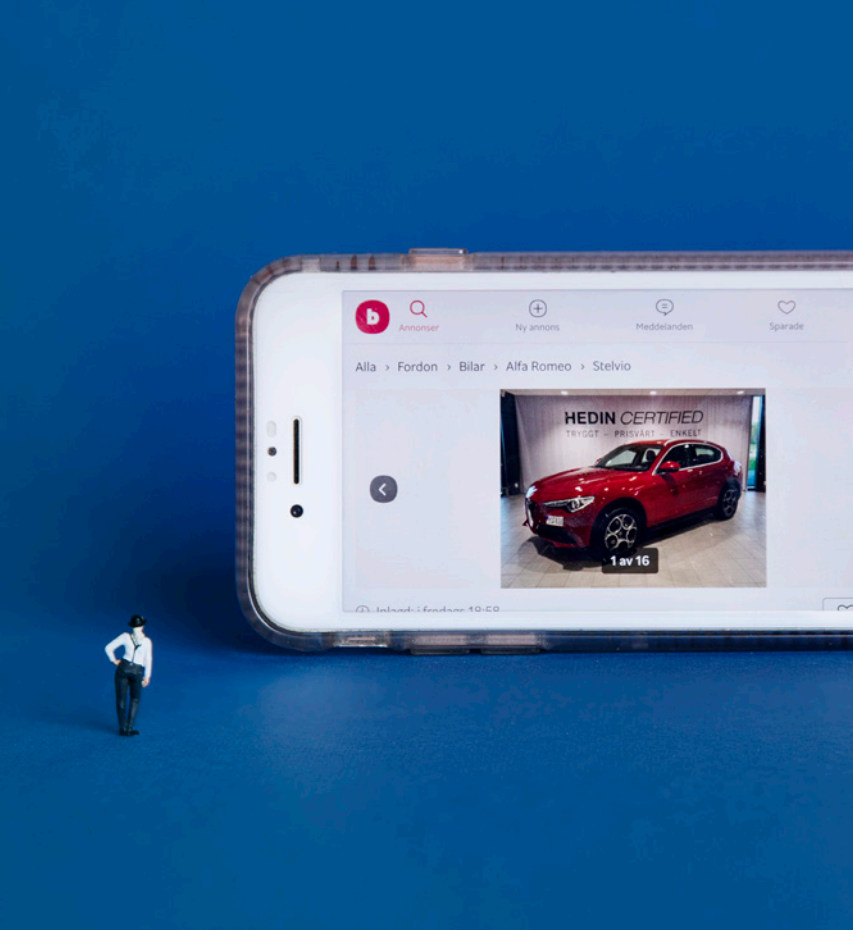
**20 years ago Schibsted challenged its own business by creating an online marketplace for classified ads. Now it's time to take the next step. Next generation marketplaces will meet the users' true needs.**

**M**aria and Niclas are moving in together and have decided to rent out Niclas' apartment on Södermalm in Stockholm. Listing it on Blocket is easy. But then it gets harder. Of all the people contacting them, who will be a good tenant? As first-time landlords, they choose Christer, a likable young man from Linköping. How could they possibly know that he would stop paying rent after four months?

Our online marketplaces are now more than 20 years old. During that time they have become an integral part of society. With more than 264 million visits per month, and unaided brand awareness in the range of 75 to 95 percent you'll be hard-pressed to find someone who doesn't know about Finn, Blocket, Tori or Oikotie. Sleek, modern apps have made it possible to post an ad in just seconds, while advanced search and recommendation algorithms have made it easier than ever to find what you're after. Even so, Maria and Niclas found it stressful and burdensome to rent out their apartment. Why?







## Christian Printzell Halvorsen

**EVP Nordic Marketplaces/ CEO of Finn**

**Years in Schibsted: 11**  
**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** The daily dose of fun and energy from physical interaction with colleagues.

The reality is that even with all the advancements we've made over the last 20 years, we still owe our heritage to the old newspaper classifieds. They were essentially poster boards which left it up to the buyer and seller to figure out what to do after the initial contact. This is, unfortunately, still somewhat true today. It turns out that while making it easy to post and find ads is important, there are also plenty of other pain points buyers and sellers encounter, as the example with Maria and Niclas shows. In fact, if we zoom out a little, we begin to recognize that the goals of our users have nothing to do with ads at all. In fact, they are not interested in ads. What they really want is to rent out their apartment, drive a car, hire a dream candidate for a job or buy that one-of-a-kind set of vintage sneakers. Achieving these goals means overcoming a series of pain points in a longer transaction journey.

Next generation marketplaces will meet these needs and solve these pain points for consumers and professionals. While ads for different categories are fairly similar, the processes and pain points can be wildly different. For example, a landlord is interested in choosing the right tenant, having a solid contract in place and being certain that rent is paid every month. A car buyer will be concerned about the condition of the car, how to get a car loan, and how the payment is matched with the new ownership registration, among other things. Finally, a buyer of vintage clothing may be interested

in shipment from a different part of the country. Each marketplace category has its own set of unique challenges to be solved in order to be called "next generation".

First and foremost, solving these pain points will make these services easier and safer. One example is Qasa, a fully digital real estate rental platform, which Schibsted is rolling out across the Nordics. Qasa has specialized in making the rental experience as convenient as possible. For the tenant it provides better search tools, such as making it possible to search within a specific commute time from where you work. The service revolves around a tenant profile which makes it easier for tenants to show who they are and for landlords to evaluate them. Finally, the service provides an added layer of security to the landlord by providing a digital contract, home insurance and payment guarantee.

Another example is within cars. Both Finn and Blocket have started the work to make the car sales process fully digital. This includes a digital contract, integrated payment and payout of car loans along with automatic ownership registration. There are also extra services, such as free insurance for 30 days to the new car owner. All these features are significant upgrades to our core service in order to meet the users' needs.

This digital process makes it much easier to sell your car yourself. Still, we know that some want it to be even easier and they are willing to pay for it. One indication of this is that

more than half of all car sellers choose to trade in their car to a dealer, knowingly leaving tens of thousands of kroner on the table. This is where Nettbil can help out. With this service you just enter your license plate number and you get an immediate price indication. If you're satisfied, you deliver the car to a certified test center. From here on everything is taken care of. The car is tested, pictures taken, and the car is put up for auction to thousands of car dealers across the country, ensuring that you get the best possible price for your car. You can literally sell your car in a day.

Some people will of course continue to just post an ad and do everything themselves, while others want a better and simpler service, and are willing to pay for it. Upgrading only a small percentage of our users to next generation marketplace models could have significant business potential – but not least it would also increase loyalty and meet the users' core needs.

Looking into the future, marketplaces will continue to evolve rapidly in line with market demands. This evolution will make private-to-private transactions more similar to retail e-commerce experiences. For our couple, Maria and Niclas, life will be easier as they can rent out their apartment without worries, knowing that the service provided will ensure they get paid on time every month.

## SCHIBSTED'S MARKETPLACES

**FINN.** With 13 million monthly users Finn is Norway's largest marketplace. It was founded in 2000, to meet the need of bringing classified ads online. Finn has gained enormous popularity among Norwegians.

**BLOCKET.** In 2003 Schibsted bought Blocket – the biggest marketplace in Sweden. Today they help more than five million buyers and sellers every week. The Blocket site also became the model when Schibsted brought the concept out into the world.

**TORI.** As the leading online marketplace in Finland, Tori connects more than 2.1 million buyers and sellers every month.

**OIKOTIE.** From its start in 1999, Oikotie has become the market leader in jobs and has a strong market position in real estate in Finland. In total Oikotie has over 1.2 million weekly users.

**ADEVINTA.** Schibsted is also the majority owner of the world's largest classified company – Adevinta. The company was formed in May 2019, consisting of Schibsted's international marketplaces in more than 20 countries. In the summer of 2020 Adevinta acquired eBay's Classified Group. And it all started with Finn and Blocket.









## "THE TIMING IS PERFECT FOR FINLAND"

After almost five years in sunny Barcelona Jussi Lystimäki is back in Helsinki to win the marketplace arena in Finland for Schibsted.

"It has been damned hard, but now we have a strong position and I'm 100 percent sure that we will succeed."

No surprise, he loves challenges and complex situations. So far, they have mainly been connected to making acquisitions on remote – Schibsted has recently bought the Finnish marketplace Oikotie. But it's also about building a new organization without actually meeting the people involved, but using remote meetings on video.

"I started off calling all communication people I knew to understand how to do this on video."

At the same time, it's all familiar, Jussi used to be the CEO of Tori, but left for Barcelona to develop Schibsted's international business.

"It's always hard in a new country when you don't know the language, you live in a rental, and you don't really get to know people. You adapt but only now I realize that I am relaxed, for real."

So, why Finland now?

"The opportunity for Schibsted is perfect. In Finland the media houses own the marketplaces – but it's their secondary business. And all the vertical positions are still open. Also, we thought the Corona crisis would be an obstacle when making the acquisition – turns out it was the opposite. Sanoma, like other media houses, needed to secure their main business and was eager to sell."

### Jussi Lystimäki

**CEO, Schibsted Marketplaces Finland**  
**Years in Schibsted:** 10

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** I miss the buzz and good energy in the office.

## SVD WANTS TO MEASURE ENGAGEMENT



How do you measure if your journalism is engaging? Media houses often struggle with qualitative metrics and to understand why their readers are leaving – once they do. At Svenska Dagbladet they have built a data model to follow and learn about this – supported by AI.

"We needed a compass, something that could indicate the level of engagement amongst our users", says Gabrielle Lindesvärd, responsible for data and analysis at SvD.

It was key to build a model that was easy to use and easy for the organization to understand. So, Gabrielle and her team developed an internal simple tool, tried it out and iterated as they went along.

"We decided on a model which measures how often our users interact with our digital products. And it really works. When we for instance are launching a new product we instantly know if engagement is up – which means it was a good idea."

The project also got some extra help from two KTH students who built a churn model, based on machine learning and the engagement model.

"Thanks to this we got a lot of data, proving that our method is valid."

### Gabrielle Lindesvärd

**Head of data & analytics, SvD**  
**Years in Schibsted:** 5

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crises:** People overall and Babette's stracciatella pizza.

## HYGGLO TAKES STEP BY STEP TO SUCCESS



Which tool is the one users at Hygglo are most eager to get hold of quick and nearby? A bolt cutter. This sign of desperation is not a significant pattern amongst most users though. And patience and an analytic mindset are more adequate words to describe the company and one of its founders, Ola Degerfors.

"In some sense, you might even call us boring."

Ola founded the service that allows users to rent out things in 2016, together with Axel Hellström and Henrik Fräsén. Schibsted invested soon after. At the time the idea had already been tried in those early days of the sharing economy.

"But our timing was right, we have had the patience to not give up and we don't make many mistakes."

Ola refers to the platform and how they analyze data and speak to a lot of users to make sure they make the Hygglo experience as smooth as possible.

"Our goal now is to be the first to prove this business profitable. And then we will take on Europe."

They will do this the Hygglo way – improving the platform even more, step by step. Ola is sure that's the key.

"Sustainability is a driver, but the user experience and convenience is what will change people's behavior."

### Ola Degerfors

**CEO at Hygglo**  
**Years in Schibsted:** 4

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** My routines – I like everyday life, like going to the office.



# FINN CHANGED THE HISTORY OF SCHIBSTED

Creating the Norwegian marketplace Finn was a milestone in Schibsted's history. The idea challenged the existing businesses within the newspapers – but it turned out to be an international success story.



Anne Sandvin

**Internal Communication, Finn**

**Years in Schibsted:** 22

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Social interaction with my colleagues.

In the late 1990s the advertising revenue of newspapers crashed.

Data and the internet were here to stay, and paper ads were no longer what they once were. The newspapers had to do something.

Five major Schibsted newspapers in Norway put their best people on the job to find a solution that would secure revenue from classified ads in the future.

The solution was [vis@visen.no](mailto:vis@visen.no) – a web site with pictures of the newspaper

ads! ([vis@visen](mailto:vis@visen.no) can be translated to: Show the newsp@pers).

The ads were not searchable, so it was really just the old newspaper ads on a screen instead of on paper.

It was not a success.

But the owners did not give up, they realized that they needed a different approach. The ads had to be digitized, and it had to happen quickly. There were several competitors who had already launched digital solutions, so it was not about being first anymore. It was about being the best.

Terje Seljeseth, IT manager at Aftenposten, was given the task. He gathered a small team that gave the new service the name Finn.

Finn was formally established as a separate company in 1999, but officially launched in March 2000, with great fanfare in central Oslo.

Remember that this was early in the age of the internet – so many people

shook their heads, and there was even a public debate about the future of the internet at the University of Oslo!

A lot of those who worked in the newspapers were skeptical and feared that the newspapers' investments in internet advertisements would make them unemployed. Many also had little faith in the internet in general.

But the founders decided to hire people who were specialists in real estate, jobs and cars, along with highly competent people from the IT industry.

The mantra was "We are all sales people. Launch and learn. Embrace change". These keywords are still used and are a strong base for the internal culture.

I worked in the advertising department at Aftenposten, and was employed in Finn in August 2000 to take care of the customers. There were only 10–15 people in the entire company, so everyone had to contribute.

We knew that in order to succeed, we had to do better than our competitors, and think differently than the newspapers.









For example, we wanted the real estate ads to have many nice photos. But almost no one had cameras that could take digital photos. Therefore, digital cameras were purchased, we gave them to our customers, and we taught them how to use them.

We spent a lot of time teaching people to post their ad themselves, and we also received photos that we scanned and posted on the ads. On several occasions we traveled to our most valuable customers and sat down with them to teach them to be self-sufficient.

**N**ot all of the customers were equally enthusiastic.

Real estate agents and car dealers were afraid to lose market share and did not want private individuals to be allowed to place ads. Fortunately, no one listened to them!

Finn quickly became popular and grew at the same time as most people got a PC and internet at home, so the timing was perfect.

Finn has done well, even during economic downturns, it has grown steadily. In bad times people sell houses and cars, and in good times they switch more often – and in both cases there is a need for ads.

Already after three to four years the company was making good money. In 2003, Torget (general merchandise) was launched, and in 2006 came Reise, the travel vertical.

In 2006, Finn had 548,332 ads on Torget, in 2019 there were more than

nine million new ads, and we expect to reach ten million in 2020.

We had cake for every million new page views. For a time, we ate cake every week, and we had to buy fruit and vitamins to balance our diet. I still blame those celebrations for all my extra pounds.

For me and my team at customer support, the focus has always been on the users' experience. All feedback is taken seriously, and the teams are doing their part to continuously improve the user experience.

Finn's marketing strategy has always been to be very down to earth, with a twinkle in the eye – and customer support are using the same tone of voice.

Since Schibsted also had newspapers in Sweden it was important to secure that market too. So, in 2003 Schibsted bought Blocket, which then became a template for the group's future classifieds websites. Schibsted was one of the first players to follow a global online classifieds strategy and made an impressive international expansion. In early 2019, the company owned classified marketplaces in more than 20 countries.

In May 2019, it was announced that Schibsted had spun off the international marketplaces into a new company – Adevinta. Today we know that the split has led to even more marketplaces worldwide, and so far it has peaked with the purchase of eBay's classified sites in summer 2020. Finn is now a part of Nordic Marketplaces in Schibsted, along with Blocket in Sweden, and Tori and Oikotie in Finland.

So, in a sense Finn was the beginning of an incredible journey for the company itself, for Schibsted, but also for society. The services provided by all these sites also help people to make sustainable choices, since trading second-hand goods is a part of a circular economy and reduces our environmental footprint.

Since Finn was an innovation in itself, innovation lies in the company's genes, and experimentation is a part of everyday life. Much has changed over the years, some marketplaces have come and gone, some have been successful, and some have failed. The old mantra "Launch and Learn" is still in the walls.

Usability is another keyword. All feedback from users and customers is constantly used to continuously improve the experience. Today, almost 30 people work with user experience and service design.

**T**he cultural values "Sult, Humør, Takhøyde, Presisjon" (Drive, Spirit, Tolerance, Precision) have been there all the way, and by living these values both internally and externally, Finn has a unique and strong culture. It is also one of the most known brands in Norway.

As in all other industries, Finn must also change over time as both technology and users' expectations are changing. We're now starting the journey to become the next generation marketplace, and we will always continue to help people make smart choices for themselves and society. And we will never stop focusing on innovation and growth.



# AN INSPIRING EXPERIENCE WILL ATTRACT GEN Z

Gen Z are accustomed to defining their own tastes, trends, and values. Most of their screen time is spent inside the big social media apps, where new shopping habits, ways of learning, and trends are emerging. Anniken Ore Larssen is part of a team that is investigating how Finn can meet their needs.



**Anniken  
Ore Larssen**

**Product Manager**

**Years in Schibsted: 3**

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Hugging my grandparents.

Since January 2020, I've been working with a small team at Finn to create a new marketplace experience tailored to the needs of Gen Z. With this we hope to meet Gen Z's need for inspiration, creativity, and speed. The result is a separate app, launched as an open beta this fall, which gives us the opportunity to iterate and learn fast without annoying Finn's usual users.

And there is a lot to learn.

As a 28-year old having researched Gen Z for more than a year, I have only one conclusion: I'm feeling old. If I was asked to describe them with just one word it would be impatient. Everything

seems to move a bit faster with this generation.

The fact that they have grown up with everything digital, social, and app-based has radically increased the pace of scrolling, liking and sharing. I encourage you to observe this next time you sit next to a teenager on the bus.

Being online "almost constantly" has not only led to a completely different way of navigating, it has raised Gen Z's expectations of digital services. This also changes their relationships to peers, brands, and influencers. While it is said that Gen Z's attention span is only 8.3 seconds (down from 12 for millennials), they are good at filtering out what's important information. They quickly make decisions about what and whom get their attention and time.

Gen Z also has a different way of expressing themselves versus previous generations. With the rise of stories, snaps and six-second Tik Tok videos, things are moving faster. Not only does the aesthetic seem rawer, as we can see

in clothing (think Billie Eilish), and photo editing (or lack thereof), also their message has an impatient, rebellious vibe.

They are vocal about their values, the labels they want you to use, and they will call you out if you do something that doesn't match their expectations.

You might know the creative sides of Gen Z best through memes, snap filters, and Tik Tok videos. Snapchat even names them the generation of super-creatives, and their own research shows that more than half of respondents engage in what we would call creative activities both online and offline (drawing, making music, taking photos, sowing and redesigning). They are constantly on the lookout for new inspiration and new things to learn.

Self-expression is taken to the next level by launching fashion brands on Instagram, enabled by simple, no-code tools such as Shopify and Wix. It has made it possible for Gen Z to act on trends and to influence what's cool in completely new ways. We can see it in an array of side hustles and smaller entrepreneurial efforts. As quoted by a Gen Z representative in a video by i-D magazine: "Everyone has a t-shirt brand nowadays".

I can imagine that Gen Z's impatience and creativity will be visible in the job market in a few years, for instance by working several jobs simultaneously.

Some will do this for a predictable income, while others will do it to fulfill their creative needs, applying this DIY (do it yourself) mentality to their careers as well.

Where consumption habits of previous generations might have been more or less dictated by advertising, Gen Z researches several sources to find the best deal. They consult friends, youtubers, and reviews before making a buying decision that is supported both by their wallet and their values.

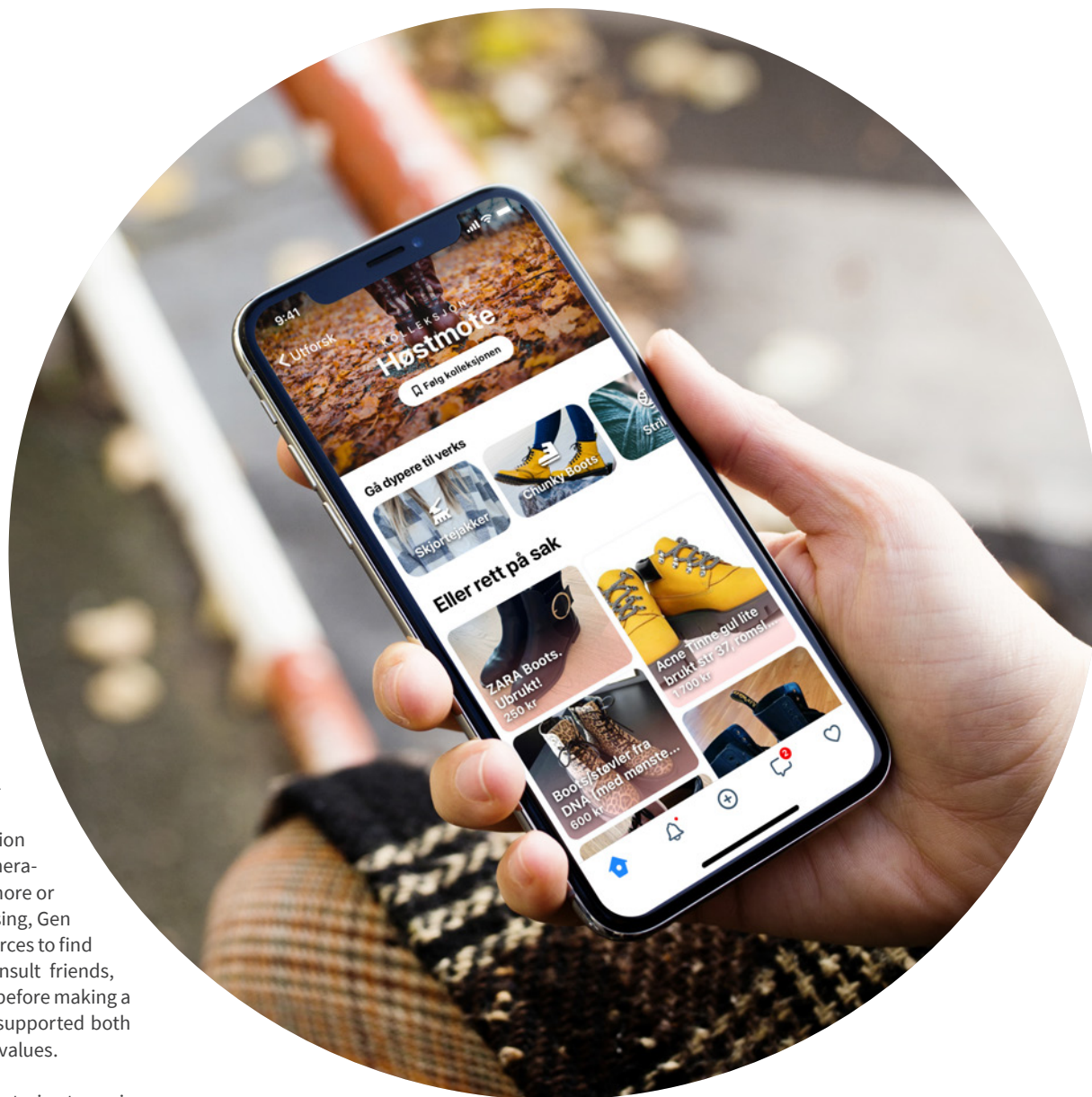
**B**ig corporations are trying to capitalize on this, such as through influencer marketing. But more importantly, platforms that were previously meant for inspiration only, are now gradually claiming a larger part of the buying journey. The best example of this is Instagram. I'm sure you've seen the white dots on some images, showing price tags when you click on them, or the new shops tab in the explore feed.

So, what are we going to do with all this information about Gen Z? In Schibsted, most of our brands grew up over the last 20 years – just like Gen Z. But it seems that this generation's expectations are

outgrowing us. With all this impatience and all this speed, can we, as a big organization, continue to develop products at our usual pace? This is why we started the Finn project and why we made it into a fast-paced process of testing hypotheses with real users during every two-week sprint. Our main idea is that Finn needs to make a similar journey to what Instagram has made – but the other way around. As just mentioned, Instagram is moving towards transaction. We believe that Finn, which has been a place purely for buying and selling, needs to move towards inspiration.

Therefore, we are looking at ways to combine editorial and marketplace content for a new and inspiring experience. We hope that user behaviour will change from using Finn only when you need something specific, to opening the app just to check what's new, to be able to discover something you like. We want to make it quick and intuitive to find what you're looking for and learn how to make sustainable choices.

I'm not going to claim we have found the solution to Gen Z's needs yet. I believe it is a continuous process of testing and evolving, just like they do.





# FINTECH WILL KEEP CHANGING BANKING

The financial services industry has been completely disrupted the last few years. What made this possible and what implications does it have on people's personal wealth and society at-large?



**Jeremy Cothran**

**Industry Editor, UpNext**

**Years in Schibsted: 1**

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Hiking in South Tyrol, Italy.

**T**he fintech landscape has changed dramatically over the course of the previous decade. Born out of the global financial crisis of the late aughts, a general distrust of traditional banks paved the way for a new wave of competitors, who utilized their technical superiority to reshape the financial services sector. Suddenly, your bank didn't require a physical location, just an app. This caught the old guard by surprise, as they not only lacked the technological know-how to respond but were

also limited by archaic legacy systems. Challenger banks arrived on the scene promising a user experience on par with the world's leading tech companies – frictionless, modern, and on-demand.

Today the smartphone is at the forefront of banking, capable of making payments, receiving funds, and managing our financial portfolios. The words "mobile-first" are not an aspiration but rather necessary for survival. Fintech has brought a new global standard of banking, from lifting emerging markets and helping to accelerate the adoption of e-commerce, to simplifying money transfers and expediting the end of physical currency. But where do we go from here? What does the future have in store for the next generation of fintech actors?

It's difficult to assess how fintechs will evolve without knowing the full extent of Covid-19's impact on the global economy. But let's look at what the trends portend.





Going forward, expect big data to play a more prominent role in conjunction with developing AI technology.

Risk assessment will take on a new shape as digital banks look to open up access to credit for new pools of customers. Whereas traditional banks relied largely on precedence when weighing credit risk, digital banks will have access to a much more nuanced, holistic, and accurate snapshot of an applicant's creditworthiness.

Real-time analysis of customer data (both financial and personal) will allow banks to cross- and up-sell products and solutions designed with the individual in mind. Advances in risk assessment will allow banks to reach the underbanked and consumer groups without a credit history.

That's why it's important to pay close attention to artificial intelligence and its continued integration into financial technology. AI has the potential to make banks more efficient, allowing for cost-reducing automation while eliminating errors.



Look no further than insurtech companies, which have embraced AI and advanced analytics to help make more accurate risk assessments on random events like catastrophes, based on historical data.

At the consumer level, automation has the potential to oversee our financial portfolio and help guide us through complex decisions such as investments, retirement planning, and home loans, while also carrying out routine tasks such as bill payments.

According to Deloitte's Bank of 2030 report, the ideal automated tool would operate behind the scenes, monitoring the market for deals and products without human intervention. Whether banks can deploy AI technologies at scale, however, remains to be seen.

**T**he pandemic in particular has been a boon for payment providers. Let's start here in Sweden, where Klarna has skillfully navigated the crisis to become Europe's most valuable fintech (\$10.65bn). When the Coronavirus forced us out of stores and towards e-commerce, Klarna was there, with a well-designed product, simple USP, and custom payment options that quickly caught on with Millennials and Gen Z. Retailers rejoiced. After all, the easier a payment provider can take the customer from shopping cart to checkout, the higher the conversion rate for retailers.

But Klarna's ambitions don't end with payments. As Germany's Handelsblatt notes, Klarna has grown to where it's not just competing against other payment

service providers such as Paypal, but has set its sights on banks themselves.

A host of other payment providers have thrived in a marketplace still marked by fragmentation. Dutch startup Mollie secured unicorn status (privately held with a valuation of more than \$1bn) thanks to its application programming interface (API) that conceals the complexity for merchants of accepting localized payment options. One of Mollie's lead investors in its most recent funding round referred to the company as aiming to be the "Apple of the payments world."

Globally, we're at crossroads with regards to fintech. As McKinsey points out, many European fintechs are still not profitable and thus reliant on a scarce resource – investor funds. Yet fintechs have several inherent advantages – such as agility – and the changes they've brought about to the financial world are here to stay. Customers want more digital with their banking services, not less.

What we may end up seeing is a consolidation of power in the 2020s, with the largest banks and payment providers expanding their product offerings and portfolios with strategic acquisitions.

Or we could see the continued build-out of fintech ecosystems by global tech titans, in the search to create an all-in-one super banking app. In China, both Tencent and Alibaba have a duopoly on mobile payment platforms (Wechat Pay and Alipay), which when combined, according to CB

Insights, serve nearly 94 percent of the Chinese population and act as a launch pad for other financial services, such as interest-free installment lending.

**O**ne of the biggest hurdles for challenger banks is customer acquisition costs, an area where multinational conglomerates will hold a sizable advantage with their flywheel economic systems. This is the route Google and Amazon want to follow as they strategically move towards offering digital banking services. Amazon's case study is particularly interesting, given the wealth of data it has on customers, from purchase history to entertainment consumption habits. Amazon is reportedly exploring forays into home insurance and medical insurance, to go along with a suite of financial services like banking, business loans, and payments. The question remains whether regulation will serve as a blocker, or merely an obstacle.

Let's peek into the future. There are indications that the new decade should bring about a level of refinement when compared to the disruption of the previous ten years. Clearer hierarchies will establish themselves as the focus shifts more towards products and services, and less on direct competition with incumbent banks. That means, ideally, consumers should stand to benefit from a broader and more comprehensive world of financial opportunities.



While traditional banks and startup-challengers have begun to cooperate, the next market to be disrupted is insurance. And payment is on its way into a new phase with biometric security solutions. These are three major trends within fintech.

## DISRUPTION IS OUT WITH DIGITAL BANKS

The first wave of challenger banks declared war on their traditional counterparts. But the newcomers on the market see the old guard less as adversaries and more as partners. Why? Because classic banks have leveled the playing field with the help of banking APIs – allowing for P2P payments. They've also introduced suites of digital services,

and UX-friendly apps – and invested in in-house accelerators (see BBVA) to help develop future fintech partners. And while challenger banks are here for the long haul, especially given their impressive funding rounds in recent years, they still need to diversify their services to sustain revenue models beyond card transactions.



## INSURTECH

More than a few fintech analysts have identified insurance as the next multi-billion dollar industry ripe for disruption. The consulting firm McKinsey assessed that the combination of tech-savvy players on the market would “alter the terrain on which incumbents compete.” This is particularly true among younger, forward-thinking consumers,

who can compare different offerings (such as homeowner, risk, and even pet insurance) and discover transparent, custom-tailored products packaged via AI. Europe is an especially promising market for insurtech (thanks to a robust insurance culture), helping power Germany’s Wefox to unicorn status and attracting global players like Lemonade.

## PAYMENTS

In recent years, payments have experienced more volatility and change than any other area of fintech. As the pandemic ushered in a new era of e-commerce, payment companies including Stripe and Klarna have seized the moment with their ability to manage what retailers have struggled with for over a decade: building a frictionless online payment system. This has also helped facilitate the growth of e-commerce in previously untapped markets.

The “new normal” of the global economy means uncertainty, with unemployment and fluctuating wages, which is why we’re witnessing a rapid adoption of “buy now, pay later” services, especially among younger consumers who might lack access to credit cards.

The need for more hygienic, contactless means of payment has also increased Western demand for virtual wallets and mobile point-of-sale terminals, the latter of which has big implications for Apple Pay and Alipay. Amazon took this one step further in September with its announcement of palm-recognition for payments. The use of biometric information is especially important to monitor, given how much security it offers.

Indicative of the rise of payments is how quickly the world’s two biggest payment providers (Visa and Mastercard) moved to acquire market space, particularly through strategic M&As and partnerships. However, the global payment infrastructure must address the issue of access, as a cashless economy will have significant impact on society’s unbanked.



# THE ECOSYSTEM THAT NURTURES GIANTS

They are obsessed with customers' needs, innovation and agility is crucial and they both compete and collaborate within. Companies working as market-oriented ecosystems have their own dynamic – and can grow into large dominators like Tencent, Amazon and Facebook. Here's how it works.

**W**e are living in an ever-changing and self-reinforcing cycle of technological development that continuously raises the bar for customer expectations. This in turn fuels the relentless forces that rapidly shape markets. From a macro perspective, this dynamic results in some interesting movements.

We see a concentration of:

- Infrastructure providers that offer highly scalable and far-reaching networks that deliver standardized services.
- Aggregation platforms and marketplaces that enable connections among fragmented players.
- Agent businesses that serve as

trusted advisors to consumers across the growing numbers of fragmented niche products and services companies.

As a large company, and especially if you are an incumbent in your current market, your likelihood for continued large-scale success relies on your ability to either become a dominant platform, infrastructure or trusted advisor company. If not, you should expect to be outperformed by smaller, faster and more innovative competitors empowered by the platforms.

In an attempt to understand how some of our most successful companies have prospered in these hyper dynamic markets, we have, however, found another compelling path – to transform your company into a market-oriented



**Lotta Wollentz**

**Head of Strategy at Blocket**

**Years in Schibsted:** 4

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Spontaneous micro updates and energy boosts from colleagues.



**Ian Vännman**

**Head of Strategy at Schibsted Next**

**Years in Schibsted:** 21

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Serendipity – there are fewer random surprises when you spend most of your time at home.





In a thriving bazaar, neighbouring shops both compete and collaborate, ensuring the success of the greater marketplace. This type of agile ecosystem is a perfect model for the online interactions, where niche-filling companies contribute towards the common goal – growth.



The ecosystem companies are obsessed with consumer needs, whatever they might be.



ecosystem that thrives by being both highly explorative and scalable at the same time. Becoming a company that inhabits the previously incompatible strengths of both mature companies with a culture of exploitation and start-ups with a culture of exploration.

Market-oriented ecosystems' ultimate purpose is to create and capture customer value. Typically, this is achieved by bringing together multiple players of different types and sizes in order to create, scale, and serve markets in ways that are beyond the capacity of any single player.

**E**cosystems are empowered by enhanced and simplified connectivity that enables the participants to discover and develop new products, services and business models. Discoveries that would not be possible without the access to the full spectra of the ecosystem's capabilities, especially the collective ability to learn, adapt, and innovate together. The sustained success from market-oriented ecosystems is achieved through both competition and collaboration. In some ways it is like a thriving bazaar where you both can compete with your neighbors' shops but also collaborate to achieve your mutual goals.

Studies show that companies operating as market-oriented ecosystems thrive and consistently outperform other types of companies when competing in hyper-dynamic markets. The most famous examples include Tencent, Amazon, Supercell, Alibaba, Didi, Facebook, Google, Huawei and Haier, that together nurture some of the world's most well-known brands.

The operating model of a market-oriented ecosystem is based on a common foundation or platform that all teams use and rely on in their daily

work. This foundation consists of four components:

- External services: Purchased on demand from market leaders (cloud storage, productivity tools, etc.).
- Internal services: Aims to solve highly differentiated needs that cannot be solved by external services. These internal services are always operated by a dedicated and customer-centric team. Ideally no difference exists between operating a team that is focusing on an internal or external customer.
- Exchanges: Transactional systems that minimize barriers of cooperation that drive value creation within the ecosystem.
- Functions: Supports platforms, teams and functions on specific topics (HR, finance, legal, communications, marketing, etc.).

The key ingredients of the ecosystem are the teams that offer services and products to other teams within the ecosystem and/or to end users. Teams operate like small startups but have full autonomy to develop, prototype and test ideas with support from the entire ecosystem. Accountability is created by having clear, agreed upon objectives and measurable targets. As they fail or succeed, the teams are readily started, stopped, split or merged in order to maximize learning and success rate for the ecosystem as a whole. The accountability, clarity and flexibility make teams truly committed to achieving customer value by being close to the market and being able to quickly shift focus in changing market dynamics.

A relatively small leadership team exists with the main purpose of nurturing a common culture for the ecosystem, decrease barriers of cooperation by developing governance and to set a compelling vision and strategic priorities

that align the ecosystem. Examples of governance mechanisms on which market-oriented ecosystem leaders outperform are performance accountability, idea generation, talent pipeline, information sharing and overall collaboration.

**O**ver time as companies develop into market oriented ecosystems, they begin to exhibit four common essential capabilities: Outstanding external sensing with strong focus on market dynamics, an almost religious customer obsession with a relentless focus on solving customers' jobs to be done, continuous innovation throughout the ecosystem, including an ability to always question the status quo, and finally agility everywhere that allows the whole company, even at a massive size, to quickly adapt to changing dynamics.

It is clear that companies that have been founded during the digital era of the last two decades have a clear advantage when nurturing market-oriented ecosystems. However, there are examples of older companies and parts of larger companies that are transforming themselves into market-oriented ecosystems.

How do they do it? There are three key ingredients: establish a bold yet compelling long-term vision, transform step by step, and always act with a generous mindset. The journey will be long, revealing and tough, but the good part is that you will harvest the low hanging fruits along the way and find plenty of value while doing so.

Want to learn more about market-oriented ecosystems? We recommend two books that offer detailed introductions into the operating model: "Reinventing the Organization" by Yeung and Ulrich (2019) and "Future Legends" by Krings-Klebe, Heinz and Schreiner (2017).



# SUBSCRIPTIONS DRIVE NEW BUSINESSES

Is the concept of ownership on its way to extinction? Subscription-based businesses have increased their revenues by more than 300 percent over the past seven years. Schibsted is looking into how to expand this model into new kinds of offerings.



**Hanne B  
Finstad**

**Head of Subscription Hub**

**Years in Schibsted:** 8+

**What I've missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Hugs.

have to make a confession.

I binge.

If I find a new TV series I like, I could easily watch all the episodes of all the seasons in a matter of days. For me, imagining a world without Netflix – or similar subscription-based streaming services – is almost impossible. But such a world existed not too long ago.

Netflix was introduced to the Norwegian and Swedish markets in 2012, after having launched its

streaming service in the US in 2007. In 2015, Netflix had grown to 70 million subscribers. Today, they have 167 million. When the new streaming service Disney+ launched on the American market last year, it amassed 10 million subscribers in just one day. Nine months later, it has grown to 60 million.

It is almost difficult to comprehend the massive growth subscription-based services have seen over the last few years. Internationally, more than seven out of ten consumers subscribe to one or more services, and the number is growing. The growth is largely driven by consumer demand; consumers want the convenience, flexibility and frequency that subscription models supply.

For businesses, the attractiveness of the subscription model is reflected in revenue growth. Subscription-based businesses have increased their





"You want to build a ship, don't drum up people to  
select wood and don't assign them tasks and  
work, but rather teach them to long for the endless  
horizons of the sea."  
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

# Klimatskiftet

Erica Treijs, skribent, Magnus Hjalmarson Neideman, fotograf,  
Peter Alestig, redaktör och Dan Eliasson, producent.



Svenska Dagbladet's Erica Treijs entertains and educates the audience during a climate conference where the newspaper's subscribers were invited. Schibsted's newspapers have a long experience of the subscription model that can be leveraged for new business opportunities.

Foto: Tomas Oneborg





Owning things is often a hassle. Both home appliances and cars are moving towards subscription-based business models to keep costs and maintenance down for users.

revenues by more than 300 percent in the past seven years, significantly outperforming other companies. In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, 76 percent of subscription-based companies saw a stable or even accelerated growth rate for their offerings. As a result, a growing number of industries and businesses are adopting the model.

Schibsted has been in the subscription game for a long time, and we've seen unparalleled growth in digital media subscriptions over the last few years. As the Corona pandemic swept our countries, the hunger for news, information and entertainment drove our subscription numbers to new heights. As of October 2020, we have more than 840,000 digital subscribers across our Norwegian and

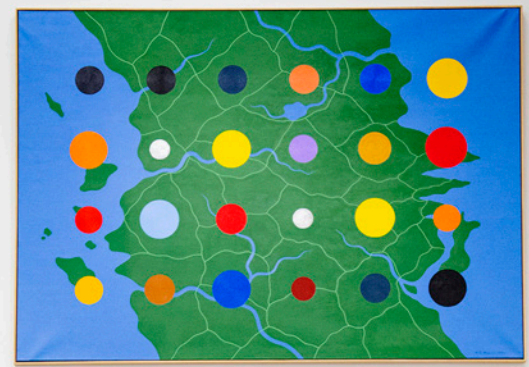
Swedish brands. The appetite for digital news subscriptions has never been greater.

**H**owever, subscription is no longer a game that only media brands can play. Industries as diverse as mobility and home appliances are increasingly adopting subscription as a business model. Today, you can subscribe to products and services as diverse as a car, a dishwasher, and a unicorn-themed "mystery box". Whatever your niche is, there is a subscription-based product for you.

At Schibsted, we are following this widespread adoption of subscription-based models closely. Next, a division in Schibsted that invests in digital startups

is increasingly looking at and making investments in subscription-based services, including the podcasting platform Podme and the digital medical service Knodd. In addition, our marketplace division is investigating a variety of subscription-related opportunities. We see that the subscription-related expertise and experience we have built up for years within our media division can be utilized in new ways, in very different parts of our organization. Our goal is no longer just to increase the number of media subscriptions we have – but to have more subscription-based business throughout Schibsted, and to deepen the relationships we have with subscribers today, by giving them subscriptions that offer them more and more relevant products,





Svenska Dagbladet subscribers meet up at the art gallery Sven-Harrys in Stockholm, getting intimate access to the exhibitors.

services and content. Being subscription-driven is about catering to genuine user needs and wants.

So, what do users want? Well, no matter the product or service, they will most likely prefer the option that is simple, convenient and easy to understand. Owning a product is often none of these things. In fact, product ownership is often a hassle. Owning something means that you have to pay up-front for a product that you do not know how many times you will actually use. Owning something might mean you have to pay for or spend time on the maintenance of that product. And in the age of rapid innovation and technological advances, owning something might

also mean the inevitable frustration of watching your product become obsolete as new innovations enter the market.

So, fundamentally, most of us very rarely actually want to own something – rather, we want access to what that product or service can offer us in value, right when we need it. Take washing machines as an example. Do you really need to own a washing machine? Or do you need your clothes to be clean, at a reasonable cost, with minimal effort?

Increasingly, research suggests that consumers favor “access over ownership”, and 57 percent of adults worldwide say they wish they could own less “stuff”. This trend is often known as “the end of ownership”. And as ownership ends, so begins the era of usership – where the

focus is on using and paying for what you need, rather than owning it. Just like with subscription-based products.

From a business perspective, the end of an era that has served business owners and shareholders well might seem intimidating. However, rather than being threatened by change, joint trends of usership and subscription could result in vast opportunities going forward for both Schibsted and others – within existing business, across businesses and within new product areas. By using our assets smarter and investing in the subscription economy, we believe we can secure existing business, create opportunities for future growth, and most importantly: cater to genuine user needs.



# GEN Z VALUES JOURNALISM

**Generation Z creates what they consume and consumes what they create. But, according to a report from Tinius Trust, their approach to news is different. When consuming digital information, peers content is replaced by the work of journalists.**



**Hansine  
Korslien**

**Head of communications,  
the Tinius Trust  
What I've missed the most during  
the Corona crisis: Live theatre.**

**T**here are many truths circulating about Generation Z. According to the news publication Quartz, they are concerned with the environment, sustainability and gender identity. They are the primary creators of the content they consume. They are online "almost constantly" and social media binds them together globally. But the new report reveals that Generation Z in Norway and Sweden has habits that differ from global truths, when it comes to getting updated digitally.

64 percent of the report's respondents in Norway and 53 percent in Sweden say that they go directly to national media to keep updated digitally. National media is the most popular source to keep updated in Norway, and the third most popular in Sweden. According to Reuters Institute, globally only 16 percent of those aged 18–24 prefer to start their digital search for news with a news website or app.

The report from Tinius Trust is based

on surveys conducted by the research company Norstat and it covers the digital information habits of Generation Z (born 1995 – 2005) in Norway and Sweden.

The results indicate that the strong, direct relationship between Generation Z and the media is a result of trust. It shows that 73 percent of respondents in Norway and 54 percent in Sweden trust that news media or journalists provide trustworthy updates digitally. Furthermore, 74 percent in Norway and 64 percent in Sweden agree with the statement "I like that information I find digitally is fact-checked by a journalist".

The scores are a little lower in Sweden. Some Swedes seem skeptical of a one-angle approach to digital news. The report shows a 21-percentage-point gap between the respondents' use of search engines in Norway and Sweden, making search the most popular source to keep updated in Sweden. The youngest group (aged 15–20) in Sweden use social media just as much as search (61 percent) and find blogs more useful (10 percent) than other respondents. They emphasize the value of receiving authentic stories directly from sources.

Strong media brands are valued by Generation Z. The report shows that 30 percent believe it is very important

that news they consume digitally comes from a well-known brand. Still, they do not recognize specific journalists. When asked to name a journalist, blogger or person to trust when consuming digital information, journalist Fredrik Solvang is mentioned by 18 respondents in Norway, and blogger Therése Lindgren by 15 respondents in Sweden – these are the two most mentioned names by over a thousand respondents in each country.

Generation Z has never experienced a life without smartphones. They are used to having a number of options available digitally and so, it is no surprise that they also crave options when consuming information digitally.

**L**anguage preferences are one such an example. In the report half of the respondents prefer their official language when they consume digital information. Still, 38 percent in Norway and 36 percent in Sweden don't care whether the language is Norwegian, Swedish or English. When speaking to respondents in smaller focus groups, some argue that media should offer English articles to those who don't speak the official language and ensure access to news for all.

Length is another example, although the shorter the better. 71 percent in Norway and 56 percent in Sweden agree with the statement "I like that digital information is short and explained rapidly". Yet, 36 percent in Norway and 35 percent in Sweden agree with the statement "I like that digital information is thoroughly explained and takes time to

The Tinius Trust is the majority owner of Schibsted. Read the full report at **Tinius.com**.



consume". In the focus groups some argue that media should write short summaries with the option to "read more".

The favorite format of the respondents in the Tinius Trust report is to read a text. However, 38 percent in Norway and 31 percent in Sweden prefer a combination of text, video and sound when they consume digital information. The youngest group (aged 15–20) is more positive towards the use of video. Only a few percent prefer a sound file or podcast.

Also, Generation Z is not so eager to

interact digitally with news content. 77 percent in Norway and 65 percent in Sweden disagree with the statement "I like to publish text, video or sound files based on information I find digitally". 42 percent in Norway and 38 percent in Sweden disagree with the statement "I enjoy to like, share or comment on information I find digitally". In the focus groups, respondents say they prefer objective news. A 19-year old man says: "If I look up information from a serious source and random persons could interfere and state their own opinions, it

would disrupt the core of why I chose a serious source to begin with".

The relationship between Generation Z and the media is largely run without a paid subscription. According to Reuters Institute, 19 percent of those aged 18–24 pay for digital news globally. The report shows that 15 percent in Sweden and 20 percent in Norway pay for digital news. More respondents pay for music, video/movies and games digitally today, than for digital news. In the future, news exceeds games. Twice as many, 34 percent in Sweden and 40 percent in Norway, believe they will pay for digital news in the future.

Some respondents in the focus groups frequently argued that news is a right and consequently it must be free and available to all. Eight out of ten respondents who are not willing for pay for digital news say it is because they find digital information for free. A 17-year-old woman says: "To pay for news is unnecessary. You will find the right information if something significant takes place, and that information will be available for everyone". In the focus group they also underline that while news is everywhere, entertainment is offered exclusively to subscribers. So, if digital news becomes just as limited, these opinions may change.

Based on the report from the Tinius Trust, there is at least one new truth about Generation Z in Norway and Sweden that should be carried along into the future: they value journalism. And now it's up to media businesses to turn that belief into subscriptions.



# GRAB THE READERS' HEARTS

It should be based on nearness, a deep understanding of society, and a talent for reacting quickly to what is important for people. Frøy Gudbrandsen at Bergens Tidende looks into tomorrow's news journalism.



**Frøy Gudbrandsen**

**Editor in chief, Bergens Tidende**

**Years in Schibsted: 8**

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Crowded concerts.

**A**s I write this, it is only a few days after the city of Bergen was once again locked down because of a sharp increase in Covid-19 infections. It had spread from student parties to builders at the university, to several choirs, to a school, and to two more schools.

Practically every cultural event was cancelled. The theaters were just ready to set up their plays again. Now they were closed. The hotels had just recently

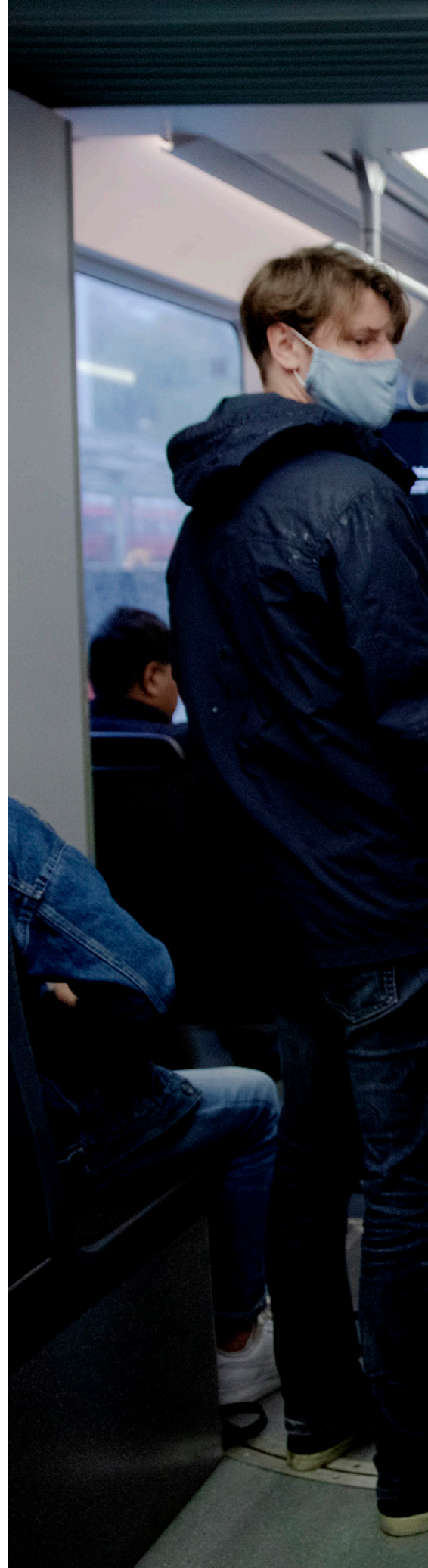
called back the staff that had been laid off. Now they were being laid off again.

"Don't be social", was the message from the local authorities – a seemingly straightforward instruction but in reality, it means no jobs, and plenty of worries, fear, loneliness, chaos and lots of uncertainties.

On days like this it is easy to envisage the future for the news media. We become important when a crisis hits. We do not know quite how we are going to distribute news in a few years' time. Formats and platforms may be new, but the need for news media to inform, interpret, explain and help people to navigate, will hardly disappear.

The larger the drama surrounding us is, the easier it is to see what our role should be.

A more demanding task is to see how we can remain important in people's







A young student rides the tram in Bergen on September 9, 2020. It is the first day with mandated facemasks on public transport in the Norwegian town.

Foto: Paul S Amundsen



lives when the message on the banners is "everything will be all right". In periods when most things go well and the big, big issue is what we are having for dinner, that's when the news media is less important. Well, of course we can exchange recipes but that is hardly why we are in this business.

A key to being a part of people's lives, as a news medium, is nearness. We should be near those we are writing for. There has been a substantial change from gut-feeling-journalism to a journalism that is taking in what is important in people's lives. But the transformation has only come halfway.

By nearness, I mean geographical nearness and physical presence where it happens; journalists who report what they see with their own eyes.

Nearness also means to be close to the actual behavior of the customer. We must understand people's needs better. Explain things they are actually wondering about and interpret what they need to know. This can mean going out, talking to local people and being good at catching what is worrying, irritating and thrilling them.

If the social distancing during Corona times has taught us anything, it would be that human contact is invaluable. Also, in journalism something is lost as the distance between people grow.

**B**ut it means more to have closeness to readers and to analyze data. This is the way for us to constantly learn more about what kind of journalism readers need in their lives and in what way news should be distributed in order to reach their target.

Sharp eyes and ears combined with solid and thorough analysis will give us that nearness.

It is also absolutely crucial to under-

stand society and the slow drama that we live in, a drama that is transforming working life and everyday life for very many people: the green shift. Along the Norwegian west coast this is particularly dramatic. This is an area where oil dependency is strong, and it will come to an end in a few years. This will have consequences for the entire Norwegian economy as well as for the working life, but a few towns will be more violently hit. The green economy shall prevail but exactly what that means, nobody knows.

These changes develop slowly, resembling what we have seen in the pandemic. But they are big changes that can shift powers.

Since climate policies mean big changes, they can be controversial and often polarizing. Both toll roads and wind power are examples of this in Norway.

If the news media is going to be important, we must do exactly what is so obvious to us in an acute, big news event. We must inform, interpret and explain to help people navigate in complicated waters. But precisely because there is such explosive power in the hottest news, those that affect people's lives, that nearness is necessary.

In the end, it is necessary to be quick in a different sense than before. The news media probably has less influence in deciding what becomes the big debate. At best you could say that ordinary people have gained more power to influence the topic of major debates. But the most frightening of all is the prevalence of fake news and conspiracy theories, a constant threat against an enlightened, public debate.

Another threat to the role of news media in the public debate is the tempo. The public debate has become constantly unstable. To me it appears more unpredictable and shifting. Through social

media, something that in the beginning looks like tiny protests takes on an exponential growth that can be difficult to predict – unless you are in tight contact with your readers.

One example is the road toll debate. It went from being something in the margins to dominating the election debate in 2019. In Bergen the first opposition appeared in the transport business, when trucks blocked the streets in town. But a few months before the election a forceful resistance grew among much wider circles in the population, emanating from a citizens' action on Facebook. The result was that a new political ticket had support from 16.7 percent of the voters in the Bergen election.

A year after the election, polls showed that the new listing had lost nearly all of its support.

**A**s news media, our goal must be to understand, explain and to communicate what is happening. In the intense debate our role must be to stand for fact-based, balanced and critical journalism. But in order to take a relevant role as the engagement is exploding, we must take the position to serve as an important venue for debate.

So far, the problems with fake news have been smaller in our part of the world than in other countries. But it is hanging over us in the public debate as a constant threat. Articles from unserious media, that make only a small effort to communicate the actual truth, partly have a large amount of readers and get widely spread through social media. That is definitely a cause for worry.

Our response to these challenges is to be the place that the readers know they can go to for trustworthy news. It is as important that we succeed in this in everyday life as it is in a crisis.

Local activists protest plans to build wind power turbines  
on Dalsfjordfjellet outside of Bergen, Norway. Foto: Tor Høvik





# A HUMAN VOICE BEHIND THE NEWS MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

**The interest in and need for news has never been greater. At Aftonbladet the number of visitors has increased dramatically. Live reporting with option to interact and ask questions is a success – as is audio. Some 15 new podcasts are on their way.**



**Niclas Bergström**

**COO, Aftonbladet**

**Years in Schibsted: 7**

**What I have missed the most during the Corona crisis:** Being in the stadium supporting my beloved football team AIK.

**T**he interest in news has skyrocketed during the pandemic. Most of us only need to look at our own behavior during the crisis to understand this need, but it's also proven in a survey from the Swedish research company Ungdomsbarometern (approaching 15–49 year-olds). They report that half of the respondents spend more time on news sites during the pandemic than before. At Aftonbladet the number of visits and page views almost doubled when it all started. During the shocking days in mid-March, we reached almost five million unique visitors and 55 million page views every day. The behavior was the same for many weeks, and surveys

tell us that the population has formed a stronger relationship with several news sources during the pandemic. There is a strong need to be updated and to get perspective on these complex events.

Especially one type of new behavior has characterized this longtime, ongoing pandemic: the dialogue-based news reporting. As a part of Aftonbladet live reporting there is a 24/7 opportunity for the users to ask journalists questions. During the pandemic, the urge to do so has been stronger than ever. Since March 12, we have received over half a million questions from our readers, and our journalists have answered as many as possible. It has become very clear that people in many cases turn to news sources to get information rather than to the official authorities, which really emphasizes our societal mission.

The user experience, with a live feed that keeps you updated, live video and the possibility to ask your questions or to read what others have asked, has generated never-before-seen engagement and love from the users. This open line with the audience is a competitive

advantage for us that really differentiates us from the big platforms.

In Aftonbladet there is that human touch, there is a person behind the news, always someone there who you can actually reach out to.

We believe that this engaging behavior will continue to grow in all types of news. This type of reporting is already available all the time in both Aftonbladet's Supernytt and in the VG Nyhetsdøgnet. Here the conversation between the newsroom and the audience goes on day and night – peek in and have a look. Many times the questions are very entertaining!

**A**nother trend that really reaches and engages our users is audio. And by that I'm not talking about the big buzz with "hi Google, give me the latest news"-voice assistants that haven't really taken off in the Nordics yet. I'm talking about podcasts. A medium that has been around for some time, but now really is accelerating with a 25 percent increase in weekly listening since 2018 (Orvesto). But still, only around 55 percent of the Swedish population are actually listening to podcasts and we know that there still is a big untapped market among the older segments.

That's why Aftonbladet, in the coming months, will launch some 15 new



podcasts – and a significant amount of them the users will pay for. This is a new strong trend in the market with Spotify (yes, it is a paid product, you have just probably forgotten you do pay) going in heavily on unique content, as well as the Schibsted-owned company Podme that builds its business model on paid pods.

At Aftonbladet we are already seeing a higher willingness to pay for online news and over a quarter of the Swedish population had access to paid online news in the last year. This and the fact that many users say they would pay for

their favorite podcasts gives us a great opportunity to combine and strengthen our paid offering, Plus.

**W**e had our first paid pod during the summer – Spring så snackar vi, a runners' podcast. It's a great example of users being ready to pay for niche content in the form of audio. Our upcoming launches will be in economy, sports, crime and news. For us the launch of our new podcast player within our own platforms has been an enabler for pods, and

it also opens up an opportunity to introduce the world of pod to the 45 percent who have not yet left radio or discovered standalone podcast players on their mobile phones.

All in all, the trends mentioned above are all about finding new ways of engaging our users. Whether it's about "being there" to deliver information and answering questions in a live chat, or whether it's about delivering podcasts that make the users dive into complex subject or just offering a short break from this complex time we live in.



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