

# How to teach production of live web projects

## Online Production, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

**Main Issue:** In the context of the decline of the number of jobs in the traditional media market and increasing pressure from employers on journalists to create content for several different media, journalism schools are becoming increasingly preoccupied with training entrepreneurship and innovation for the web with an expected end result of graduates becoming successfully self-employed.

This tipsheet is a recommendation derived from point n°7 of the State Of The Art report (ten tips guide, p. 17): "Future journalists should be given information about the new business models: selfemployment is a standard in today's media industry, and entrepreneurship is an important value to develop."

**Website:** <http://fspac.ubbcluj.ro/jurnalism>

<b>Courses:</b>	<b>Study program:</b>	<b>Level:</b>	<b>Students</b>
Web Design	Media Communication	Master	20
Online Communication	Journalism	Bachelor	100

**Keywords:** online business models, web, entrepreneurship, group/team, innovation

**Short description:** More and more journalism schools are offering training that is oriented towards entrepreneurship and self-employment. Based on courses taught at both Bachelor and Master levels, this tipsheet aims to provide journalism educators with advice on teaching in the context of live web projects developed by groups of students in a real-life environment, usually over the course of a semester. This approach is preferred to traditional teaching as it can sometimes lead to students continuing their projects after the end of the course.

To do	Topic	Teaching method
<b>Encourage students to work in the context of online entrepreneurship</b>	Online Business Models	Discuss automation, e-commerce, trading, UGC platforms, community sites, social transactions
<b>Allow students to develop their own ideas for web projects that they are likely to continue in the future</b>	Entrepreneurship	Encourage entrepreneurial projects that have a real chance on the online market.
<b>Encourage students to work as a team, and to efficiently distribute the workload according to each member's particular skills and abilities</b>	Group/Team	Show the students various methods of organizing their team and assessing their strong suits individually.
<b>Encourage students to come up with new ideas that may break through the traditional types of content/distribution and reach new audiences</b>	Innovation	Present students with examples of opportunities on the market and ways to combine content in order to create new products for uncovered audiences.
<b>Encourage students to work as a team, and to efficiently distribute the workload according to each member's particular skills and abilities</b>	Group/Team	Show the students various methods of organizing their team and assessing their strong suits individually.
<b>Encourage independence in terms of hosting and domain names</b>	Web	Allow the students to create their project's identity, to experience and solve problems relating to hosting, domain names etc. This also leads to a higher chance of students continuing their work after the end of the course.
To avoid	Topic	Why?
<b>Try to avoid unbalanced task division in the management of students' group projects</b>	Group/Team	Some students will do all the implementation work, while others focus solely on design documentation.
<b>Do not present existing success stories as concrete methods for a successful website</b>	Entrepreneurship	Students may try to reproduce patterns exactly, instead of understanding the mechanisms behind the success.

To avoid	Topic	Why?
<b>Avoid unbalanced approaches</b>	Web Content Management	Content-centric projects will prevent students from exploring functionality customisation in WCMS and will produce a user mind set. Giving up aesthetic values for functionality may produce an end result that may be a very functional, but an aesthetically displeasing product that has very little chance of becoming popular on the market. Great looking web sites that have bad functionality or poor content are just as undesirable.
<b>Discourage students from integrating other copyrighted material into their sites</b>	Production	Students may become lazy if they mainly use non-original content. Also, in a real environment, they might be confronted with copyright infringement claims.
<b>Do not ignore old-school methods of promoting projects like web directories</b>	Entrepreneurship	Students will think that there isn't much more about the web beyond Google and Facebook, which is far from the truth, especially when it concerns niche audiences.
<b>Do not give the impression that the ends justify the means, that an entrepreneur is to do absolutely anything to get more visitors in order to generate profit</b>	Entrepreneurship	Students may try to trick search engines and statistics for better ratings, and that will usually get their projects blacklisted.
<b>Do not encourage students to focus their work as a response to the moves of other competitors on the market</b>	Entrepreneurship	Students may focus their work in responding to potential threats on the market instead of developing new and creative ideas.

#### **OPEN QUESTIONS / DISCLAIMERS**

How can students be encouraged to further develop and work on their projects after the course has ended?

Teaching this as part of a journalism program, the question of popularity versus journalistic quality as a metric for success is raised. How do you evaluate?

Social media integration and reach (especially Facebook and YouTube) are an important part of this environment. What role does it play in the evaluation process?

## Recommended resources / tools

<http://aboutmediaecon.blogspot.ro/>

## Topic / Learning outcome

Good, pertinent analyses of emerging online business models and essential differences between the traditional media market and the new media market.

### Contact:



### Instructors:

Radu Meza, e-mail: [meza@fspac.ro](mailto:meza@fspac.ro)

Andrei Costina, e-mail: [costina@fspac.ro](mailto:costina@fspac.ro)

### Babeş-Bolyai University

College of Political, Administrative

and Communication Sciences – Journalism Department

### Bonus material:

#### Short quote from instructor

“Our capstone course takes the form of a competition where teams of up to 5 students compete with live web projects over the course of two months. We try to drive them to understand what the important elements are for a web project to be able to turn into a business. As such we emphasize the number of unique visitors the most, and emphasize structure, content and sustainability to a lesser extent. We feel it is important to make them understand that their project should become attractive for advertisers.”

### Teaching environment:

#### Testimonial from a student

“As I have been contributing to the creation of a website during the last few months, I have seen, among others, why thinking about the user’s needs is as necessary as thinking about my own, how essential team coordination is and the need for the existence of a starting plan of any sort before actually taking any steps in creating the website, and how unrealistic goals and overestimation can turn a brilliant idea into nothing.”

*Maria Purcariu – Web Design*



*Final presentations:  
Online Communication*