



Which newspapers do people read?

TN9 Training Notes series: Communication

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If churches and Christian groups are to communicate effectively to the world today, it helps to be taught by professionals. There is much to learn from the secular press on how to catch people's attention and hold it, on the kind of news people want to read, and on how to present it well.

Each national newspaper knows exactly what kind of readership it is aiming for. But do you have any idea of how many people read each title? The results may surprise you. Try this light-hearted quiz to see how well you are aware of the circulation figures for both daily and Sunday national newspapers.

Here are two lists. The first gives the eight top-selling UK national newspapers in alphabetical order (by main word) as of August 2018. Alongside you will find the equivalent list of total circulations but in descending order of size. All you have to do is to match each title with its correct circulation.

The eight top daily titles in alphabetical order (by main word)

Daily Express

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Daily Mail

Daily Mirror

Daily Star

The Sun

The Daily Telegraph

The Times

and their circulations in descending order (nearest 1,000)

1,448,000

1,270,000

558,000

428,000

371,000

361,000

339,000

244,000

Not making it into the top eight are: The Financial Times, The Guardian, The Daily Record and The Scotsman. Regional and free papers are not included so the list does not show the London Evening Standard and the Metro which would be well up the list otherwise. The figures do not include free 'bulks' taken by some supermarkets and travel companies.

Circulations are falling steadily as people cut back on expenditure and access news through digital media. Most papers are losing about 5% of sales per year. These figures do not show online web hits.

Now for the Sundays

The second list shows the top eight national Sunday newspapers. As before, their circulations are printed alongside them but not in the same order. Again, match the titles to their correct circulations.

The eight top Sunday titles in alphabetical order (by main word)	and their circulations in descending order (nearest 1,000)
Sunday Express	1,233,000
The Mail on Sunday	1,066,000
Sunday Mirror	722,000
Sunday People	466,000
Daily Star – Sunday	299,000
The Sun on Sunday	291,000
The Sunday Telegraph	223,000
The Sunday Times	184,000

Not making it into the top eight are: The Sunday Mail and The Sunday Post (in Scotland) and The Observer. Circulations are, again, falling steadily. Figures here do not include online readerships.

Notes

Figures shown are full circulation figures for August 2018 (source ABC taken here from the Press Gazette website for 13th September 2018). Be aware that UK-only circulations lead to some changes. For example, though not shown here, the Financial Times exports more than half its copies.

Only read on if you have now tried the exercise above - the answers are printed on page 4.

Some Christians argue against what I am trying to do here, saying that we should not be copying the secular press, especially some elements of it. But my point is that, even if we are uneasy about some of the values (or lack of them) that some papers clearly display, there is much to learn from how they go about their job.

I am not arguing for a cult of celebrity, one biased political view, the suppression of truth or questionable means of finding stories. But I am saying the professionals know how to get messages across and there is much we can and should learn from them.

Exercise

Ask your local newsagent how many copies of each of these titles he or she orders each day or week and see if there are any major differences in order from the national figures.

Then try an anonymous questionnaire on your congregation to discover how many regularly read each title and compare with the comparative figures in these notes and sales from your local shop. Any surprises?

Study different kinds of daily newspapers (by the market they are aimed at) to look in particular at how each communicates a story. Look at how many sentences per paragraph they average, the use of powerful adjectives and verbs in the so-called tabloids, the visuals used, etc.

Try it too with your local papers which of course seek to reach every sector of the population.

Questions

- 1 Consider those in your church who write or produce materials for those outside the church. Which newspapers do your writers read? How does this compare with the figures studied here? Anything to learn?
- 2 Which of the above national newspapers most closely match the style and content of any literature that your church produces for people who do not necessarily belong to any church?
- 3 What are the main differences in style of writing? How do the top-selling papers tell a story? What can we learn from them (even if we don't want to tell the same stories or focus on the same aspects of them!)?
- 4 Similarly, what are the main differences in presentation? What can we learn?
- 5 Should Christians read newspapers? If so, which ones should they read?

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes> then TN9. They cover one aspect of a possible training event on the media or on preparing materials for those who are not church members. For the concept of writing 'news' stories see also Training Notes TN39, *We've got news for you!*, TN63, *How not to write a newsletter*, TN75, *Writing for the media*, and TN89, *Hold the front page!* For presentation, try TN22 *Appoint a church photographer!* and Articles A2, *Watch your image!*, A21, *The use of print in outreach*, and A29, *A basic guide to paper and print*.

Contact John if you would like to enquire about the possibility of his running an event for you on any aspect of communication in churches.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File TN9 under Communication.

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QUIZ ANSWERS**Top eight daily titles and their correct circulations** (nearest 1,000)

The Sun	1,448,000
Daily Mail	1,270,000
Daily Mirror	558,000
The Times	428,000
The Daily Telegraph	371,000
Daily Star	361,000
Daily Express	339,000
i	244,000

Change over two years ago: The Times has risen two places and the Daily Star has slipped two places. All circulations have fallen quite significantly (the equivalent range two years ago was 1,722,000 to 291,000).

Top eight Sunday titles and their correct circulations (nearest 1,000)

The Sun on Sunday	1,233,000
The Mail on Sunday	1,066,000
The Sunday Times	722,000
Sunday Mirror	466,000
Sunday Express	299,000
The Sunday Telegraph	291,000
Daily Star – Sunday	223,000
Sunday People	184,000

Change over two years ago: Sunday Express has risen one place and The Sunday Telegraph has slipped one place. All circulations have fallen quite significantly (the equivalent range two years ago was 1,476,000 to 271,000).