

Can local online news work? (apart from Seattle...)

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/09/25/can-local-online-news-work-apart-from-seattle/

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[My Ballard](#) is a very smart and popular local website in Seattle serving about 35,000. Its creators are confident they can make advertising income. Have a [read](#) about why they think it worked but I think the trick was to see themselves as facilitators rather than local journalists:

“the appetite for neighborhood news has been tremendous. Newspapers are covering less, and TV stations only storm into a neighborhood when there’s breaking news or a quirky story with regional interest. We receive so many email tips, comments and forum posts, we’re able to provide a steady stream of original stories. We’re also able to beat the traditional media on larger Ballard stories, thanks to our active readers. In effect, we don’t “cover” the neighborhood, we “moderate” it. Users are our eyes and ears, and we provide a layer of journalism over the top, confirming stories before we post them.”

The best equivalent I’ve seen here is [KingsCrossEnvironment](#) although I suspect it gets a lot less UGC. There are caveats. Both Seattle and north London are highly Internet-literate places and vibrant, developing communities. Neither site makes a penny/cent.

It’s interesting to compare these small independent sites with the rich but complex offerings from major local media groups such as [MEN](#) in Manchester. Have a look at their [blog](#) about the Labour conference that has just been held in their city to see how many clever ways they used new media to engage with the public.

I don’t draw any conclusions. Both versions of local online news are fighting for revenue, both may end up having a place in the future regional news environment.

[Here’s Craig McGinty’s](#) candidate for a UK version of good local online from the [Isle of Wight](#).

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