

# Polis – The Future Is Free

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So are newspapers dieing or not? Here's the view of one editor I spoke to at the [weekend](#):

"Newspapers are always going to the place where the best stories are broken. People like the physical convenience of a newspaper." But this editor also says that "commentary in newspapers will die out within 10 years as you can get all that online".

David Parsley is the editor of [City AM](#) the free business morning daily in the City of London that is currently reaching 100,000 people. He claims that sales of the [Financial Times](#) plummeted 20% after they started a year ago.

David says that from an advertiser's point of view he has the best readers in Britain. They have an average age of 36, own 2.2 cars, and take five holidays a year thanks to average earnings of £76,000.

He has 30 journalists compared with at least 300 at the FT but David claims he out-scoops the FT. It's partly down to his staff's determination and attitude but also because he doesn't have to fill City AM with the kind of background detail, features and analysis the FT provides.

It's a classic case of a new media business model – find a niche and advertising revenue and you can make money.

But are free newspapers a threat to "good" journalism? Well, editors of free newspapers like David and Kenny Campbell, the editor of [Metro](#), think that the kind of competition between free papers that we are currently seeing in London will force the freebies to get better. They will start adding the quality features and attractions that paid-for titles use as weapons in the war for readers. As they chase advertising the free papers' editorial will have to get better. "Whether it's bingo or more journalists, free papers will have to invest to compete" says Kenny Campbell. Parsley thinks that his old employer Richard Desmond should have made the Express in to a free newspaper. Now that the [Express](#) are cutting jobs – perhaps they will.

I started my career on a local free-sheet so I have no objection to un-paid for papers. But I think that it will be the internet and mobile TV that kills off the paid-fors rather than the free papers.

[POLIS](#) will be hosting a seminar in January looking at the business future for Newspapers – if you are interested get in touch at [polis@lse.ac.uk](mailto:polis@lse.ac.uk)

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