

Dagens Nyheter: The Nordic Way of Doing News

Scandinavian newspapers are unlike any others in the world: nowhere else does the press enjoy such a high volume of subscribers. Even today, with declining circulation and an increasingly older readership base across the globe, subscriptions in Scandinavia still account for more than 95 percent of the newspapers sold there. This level of market penetration represents a successful long-standing relationship between the press and its public, where reliability and trust are the values that matter most.

Furthermore, the press embodies a perfect reflection of the general culture of these northern European countries. Newsrooms there are not intimidating, overwhelming, or ultramodern; on the contrary, they are warm and welcoming, with something of a living room-like atmosphere. The journalism produced there always keeps the hearts and minds of its community of readers and their everyday lives at its core. In addition, the Scandinavian press boasts an extraordinary level of professionalism both on a macro- and microlevel: a local who appears in the press is treated as if they are a leading Hollywood actor. There is also a deep sense of engagement with the public, which allows readers to feel like they have ownership in the paper. This is true to such an extent that, before making any changes to a paper, the management will seek out the public's vote on a proposed change.

Founded in 1864 by Rudolf Wall, *Dagens Nyheter* is the most important newspaper in Sweden. It has the highest circulation of the upmarket newspapers and is one of the largest mastheads in the region. It is a part of the Bonnier Group of Sweden, an enormous publishing and media conglomerate that



Basic Facts

Headquarters: Stockholm, Sweden
Type: National daily
Days of circulation: Monday to Sunday
Format: Tabloid
Year of foundation: 1864
Founded by: Rudolf Wall
Owners: Bonnier AB

controls 175 companies in 15 countries. Other newspapers in the group include the popular tabloid *Expressen*, the business paper *Dagens industri*, and the regional newspaper *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*. But, above all, *Dagens Nyheter* is a part of the Scandinavian ecosystem: it is a great newspaper that operates with that unwavering Nordic penchant for proximity to the reader. During its ambitious

1. Although the front pages of *Dagens Nyheter* always rely on a grid, less formally structured presentations are possible, such as in this example from March 28, 2012, in which the lead story was an assessment of Fredrik Reinfeldt's 2,000 days as prime minister of Sweden. Five single-column-width news items across the bottom of the page provide a foundation, while the top of the page is framed by the logo and red banner beneath it, the top and bottom elements creating an open canvas for the lead story.

2. On Sundays, the culture section is published as a supplement; the front pages greatly resemble magazine covers.

3.–4. *På Stan* (In the city) is the weekly Stockholm leisure guide published by *Dagens Nyheter*.

The supplement attained an extraordinary level of visual potency in the 1996 redesign through a combination of photography and illustration, resulting in multiple awards from the Society for News Design.

5. The first issue of *Dagens Nyheter*, founded by Rudolf Wall, was published on December 23, 1864.

6. In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, the headline announced: "A Jubilant World Awaits a Free Europe."

7. In 1996, still in broadsheet format, *Dagens Nyheter* underwent a profound redesign that established its foundations as a modern and elegant newspaper and came to be used as a design reference point for other European papers.

2011 redesign project, of which many elements are still in place, the company carried out scores of individual interviews in addition to conducting an extensive online survey that gathered thousands of opinions. On the first day of the redesign's launch, then publisher Gunilla Herlitz went to a Stockholm metro station early in the morning to hand out copies and get commuters' reactions to the new paper firsthand.

The redesign brought *Dagens Nyheter* worldwide recognition and awards. And though it was named the best-designed newspaper in the world three times in a row, its transformation was far-reaching, more so than a standard redesign. One of its goals was to once again become the leading Swedish newspaper of record; another was to recover several distinguishing features of the paper's identity that had been discarded when it converted to tabloid format in 2003, a move calculated to reduce costs. "The goal was to get the same amount of content on smaller pages. The result was a design full of compromises. In many ways, *Dagens Nyheter* felt more like an evening



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tabloid than a quality morning paper," admits Lotta Ek, who today is the paper's art director. In 2010, coinciding with management changes at Bonnier and at the newspaper, it was decided that *Dagens Nyheter* had to be completely remodeled. According to Ek: "We wanted to bring back the feel and the look of a morning paper. To be more sophisticated, but at the same time folksy, and appeal to all audiences."

To do that, the first step involved studying the past. A look at the paper's archives revealed that the first journalistic illustration published in *Dagens Nyheter* appeared in 1869, that in 1925, in a Sunday supplement, color was

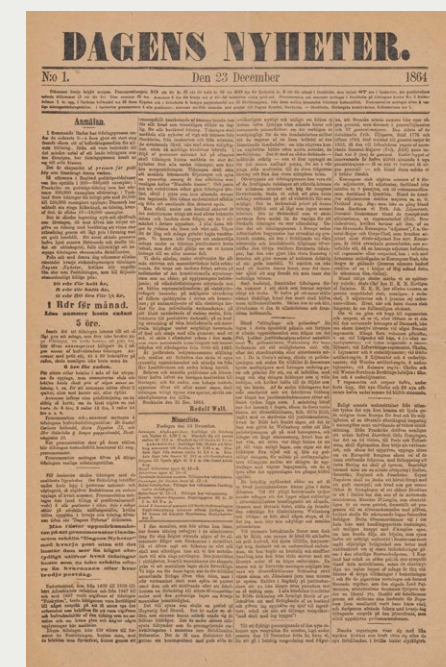


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used for the first time, and that in 1930 the paper began using the Bodoni typeface, which has been a hallmark of the paper for nearly a century. Another milestone came in 1996 when the newspaper was given an elegant redesign, still in a classic broadsheet format; Jonathan Hoefler carefully updated the 1864 logo, Bodoni was complemented with Akzidenz Grotesk, and, most of all, the foundations of a modern, well-designed newspaper were firmly established. This period also marked the first appearance of the leisure activity guide *På Stan* (In the city), which later won multiple awards from the Society for News Design.



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