Michael R. Grant

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Summary

I am a seasoned media professional and entrepreneur with extensive experience in digital and traditional media. As the founder of Get Current Studio, I specialize in delivering editorial design, web development, and product thinking to local news. I co-founded the HBCU Digital Media Collaborative, empowering HBCU newsrooms through technology. My previous roles include the Google News Lab Teaching Fellowship, UX Design Editor at Reveal, and the John S. Knight Journalism Fellowships at Stanford University. My work advances digital preparedness for local newsrooms, HBCU student newsrooms and ethnic media publishers.

Experience

CO-FOUNDER, DIR. OF PLATFORMS & PROGRAMS
HBCU Digital Media Collaborative
June, 2024 - Present
As Co-founder of the HBCU Collaborative, I'm responsible for overseeing technological platforms and program development tailored to serve America's HBCU news ecosystem. Our mission is to empower HBCU campus newsrooms by driving technological innovation and offering hands-on support for student news publishing and product development. Our aim is to create valuable experiences that nurture emerging journalists and media professionals, cultivate a pipeline for more Black journalists to thrive in the industry and facilitate regional news collaborations. We address the critical challenges faced by HBCU student media, particularly barriers to producing digital media and the concerning decline of campus newsrooms. We're dedicated to sustaining and innovating campus newsrooms, ensuring that they remain vibrant and relevant in today's digital landscape.

FOUNDER, PRINCIPAL DESIGNER
Get Current Studio, Sacramento, CA
June, 2020 - Present
As the founder and CEO of Get Current, I oversee a team of full-time and contract workers who collaborate on various client projects that address editorial design, web development, and product thinking in ways that lead to growth in audience engagement and revenue. Our focus is on serving local news organizations with legacy products. The challenge for these organizations lies in keeping up with the rapidly changing web landscape. Our approach involves optimizing print workflows to free up more time for learning and producing online content. We also provide consulting services to organizations committed to supporting ethnic publishers. Among our partners are the Google News Initiative Ad Transformation Lab, The American Press Institute Listening & Sustainability Lab, CUNY Center for

Collaborative Media's [Black Media Initiative Bridge Project: Audience Revenue](#), Borealis Philanthropy Racial Equity in Journalism Fund, and the Fund for Equity in Local News [Transformation Tech](#) lab, a joint initiative by NNPA, NAHP, and AAN. By collaborating with these organizations, we aim to empower ethnic publishers and equip them with the resources and knowledge necessary to thrive in the digital age.

TEACHING FELLOW
[Google News Lab](#), Mountain View, CA
September 2019 - December, 2020
Beginning in September 2019, I commenced my tenure at Google News Lab, where my primary responsibility was to equip news organizations with comprehensive training on various tools crucial for reporting and storytelling. My journey took me to countless news organizations, ranging from journalism conventions and associations to media studies programs in universities. Through virtual training sessions, I have had the privilege of reaching over five thousand journalists across the nation. Additionally, I have conducted training sessions in multiple locations across fifteen states.

UX DESIGN EDITOR
[Reveal, Center for Investigative Reporting](#), Emeryville, CA
October, 2018 - September, 2019
During my role, I spearheaded and supervised all significant website development initiatives including special projects and investigations. In collaboration with internal content teams, including audio producers of the Reveal podcast, video producers of documentary films and investigations for American television, data analysts, and text writers, we worked in synergy to manage the website effectively. I conceptualized strategies to enhance user engagement with our online content. Additionally, I led an audit process of the site. This comprehensive review played a pivotal role in our newsroom's acquisition of Airtable as a collaborative planning tool across teams, and the selection of our newsroom to contribute to the development of Newspack, a content management system tailored to provide a solid business foundation for small and medium-sized news organizations.

JOHN S. KNIGHT JOURNALISM FELLOW
[Stanford University](#), Palo Alto, CA
September, 2017 - June, 2018
As a Knight Fellow, I delved into the digital preparedness of HBCU student newsrooms and ethnic media publishers, seeking ways to enhance their adoption of technology. My experiences at Stanford extended beyond my fellowship project, encompassing the application of design thinking in the d.school and the "[lean methodology](#)" in the [Lean LaunchPad](#) course led by [Steve Blank](#) — creator of the customer development method that launched the [lean startup](#) movement. In collaboration with a small team that included [JSK](#)

[Fellow Titus Platner](#) of Tamedia (a Switzerland-based media company) and two computer science students, we explored the possibilities of news personalization, which became one of my most formative experiences at Stanford. Through user interviews, prototype development, and continuous pivoting, I gained insights into product-market fit and content resonance. Additionally, I facilitated the addition of legendary designer [Cheryl D. Miller's collection to the Stanford Library](#), which includes audio with former Esquire Art Director, Paul Rand. By examining the conditions necessary for ethnic media publishers to leverage technology and develop innovative revenue models, I aim to create a conducive environment for their success.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
San Francisco Business Times, San Francisco, CA
February, 2017 - September, 2017
During a time of transition, I took on the challenge of leading visuals in both digital and print media. My primary contribution stemmed from my success in managing and staffing my team through this period of change. Other notable achievements included the implementation of innovative workflows, such as "Asana training." This novel approach enhanced our ability to track assignments and optimize story budgets, contributing to our overall success.

SENIOR DIGITAL DESIGNER
Star Tribune, Minneapolis, MN
November, 2015 - January, 2017
As the lead designer, I was entrusted with the responsibility of developing innovative approaches to showcasing our storytelling through the web. My daily tasks involved delving into alternative story formats, crafting data visualizations, and creating efficient workflows. Within half a year, I successfully executed five major enterprise projects and contributed to several high-profile narratives.

DIGITAL DESIGNER & DEVELOPER
San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco, CA
December, 2013 - November, 2015
As the newsroom's first ever digital designer, I helped lead *The Chronicle's* digital storytelling initiatives. Leveraging my expertise in web frameworks and emerging web technologies, I crafted captivating digital narratives that transcended CMS limitations. My work encompassed story sketches, low and high-fidelity prototypes, design, and web development for sfchronicle.com. Through innovative solutions to complex challenges, I significantly enhanced user engagement, transforming the digital storytelling landscape.

PRINT DESIGNER
Asbury Park Press Design Studio, Asbury Park, NJ
February, 2012 - May, 2013
Now defunct, this *Gannett* studio was one of five news design hubs in the U.S. serving the northeast. I earned a "*Gannett* Award of Excellence" for print design work featured in the *Poughkeepsie Journal*. I earned a "brand specialist" title because, time-over, I delivered compelling design systems for our most extensive coverage. I earned a "Gannett Award of Excellence" for visual journalism work featured in the Poughkeepsie Journal.

DIRECTOR OF VISUALS
Forum Publishing Group, Deerfield Beach, FL
June, 2011-January 2012
FPG is a Tribune Co. community newspaper chain - a miniature of its parent paper, the Sun-Sentinel. There, I set the tone for visuals across its most viable publications, successfully pitched, designed and coded a MailChimp newsletter, and redesigned several publications with a company award for bringing new ideas that improved revenues.

PART TIME DESIGNER
Appen Newspapers, Alpharetta, GA
January - May, 2007
I worked as a part time page designer for a weekly community newspaper while attending Savannah College of Art and Design, Atlanta Campus. I brought an ambitious style to a local news organization that wanted to push the envelope of design. My attractive layouts brought new-found attention to their weekly content.

Internships

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 2007
Sun-Sentinel, 2006
ASNE Reporter, 2006
Baltimore Sun, 2005
NABJ Monitor, 2005 & 2007
Orange County Register, 2004
The New York Times Student Journalism Institute, 2004
The Black College Wire, 2004 - 2006

Education

Santa Monica College, Media Technology campus, 2008
Savannah College of Art & Design, Interactive Design, 2007
Grambling State University, Visual Communication, 2006

Boards

Reg Murphy Center for Collaborative Journalism at Mercer University
National Journalism Advisory Board Member, 2018 - Present

Consulting & Cohort Programs

ONA HBCU Digital Media Fellowship
Fellowship Leader, mentor and coordinator, 2014 - Present

GNI + Fund for Equity in Local News Transformation Tech Lab
Newsroom coach, January 2023 - December 2025

Borealis Racial Equity in Journalism Fund
Technical & Tactical Online Media Consultant, 2023 - Present

American Press Institute Listening & Sustainability Lab
Listening coach and program coordinator, 2020 - 2021

Local Media Association Digital Transformation Lab
Lead Consultant and Technologist, 2019 - 2020

Professional Development, Awards & Writings

2023 "Nation's best Black newspaper", The Sacramento Observer, NNPA
2022 Creative Visionary, Editor & Publisher
2022 Best Black Newspaper Website, The Houston Defender, Editor & Publisher
The Kalish, 2019 | Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY, June 23 - 29
2019 Nieman Lab Prediction, "More newsrooms experiment their way to success"
2016 Poynter-NABJ Digital Leadership Academy, St. Petersburg, FL, Dec. 4 - 9
SND Award of Excellence, 2015, SND – 37th Edition