

The Hidden Costs (and Pain) of DIY Daily News Briefs

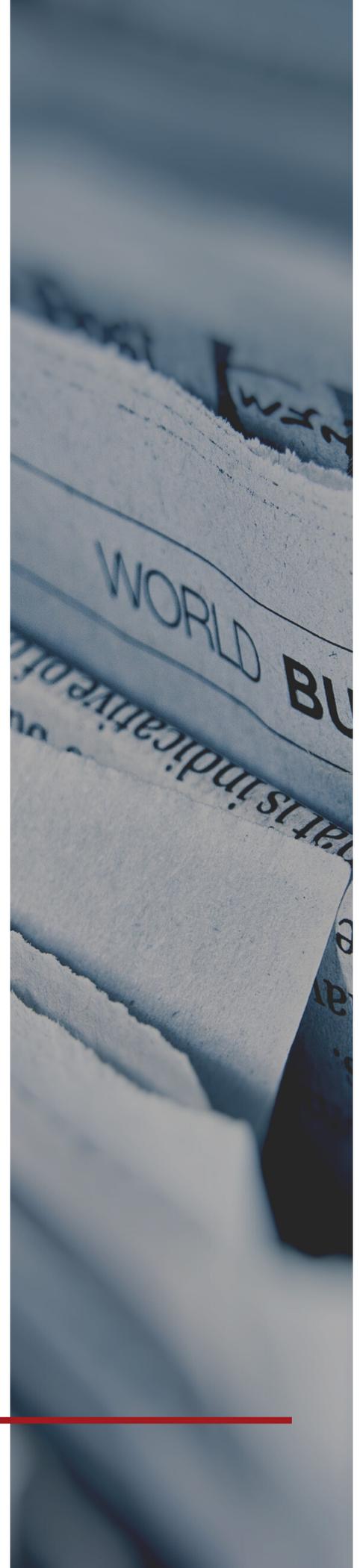
Curating daily news briefs in-house or through an agency? If so, you're probably spending too much.

INTRODUCTION

For most PR teams, daily news briefs are one of their most important deliverables. Also called “daily briefs” or “executive news briefs,” they’re typically distributed in the morning via email and are composed of the most relevant news items from the past 24 hours.

No matter how they’re produced, they’re a vital part of PR and communications for most medium- and large-sized organizations. They help keep executives and comms team members informed on actionable news about their brands, products, competitors, and industry issues across traditional and social media. They should include some or all of the following:

- Traditional and social media content
- News organized by client-chosen categories (product mentions, corporate mentions, CSR mentions, industry news, competitor news, etc.)
- Social media and reach data
- Graphic-rich layout easily consumed on mobile devices
- Easy sharing with stakeholders
- Your organization’s branding
- Easy-to-consume article summaries



Executive news briefs are typically prepared in three ways: Either in-house using a SaaS tool, through a PR agency, or via an expert curation and media monitoring service. This white paper will provide an in-depth look at the cost (both human and financial) of producing briefs in-house or through a PR agency, compared to an expert curation service.

“I’m saving close to \$30k annually, which is incredible, considering the work quality and efficiency gains.”

**- Lindsay Bohlander
Senior PR Director, Shionogi Pharmaceuticals**

Consider the following costs:

In-house briefings with SaaS tool: **\$56,000/year**

In-house briefings with PR agency: **\$153,960/year**

An expert curation service returns valuable time to your team by managing executive brief production and quality assurance. **Expert curation also saves money: Typically between up to 60 percent of your direct costs when PR agencies are used, and between 30-40 percent compared to doing it yourself.**

We’ll take a deep dive into these numbers later in this white paper. But first, we need to quickly look at how most briefs are curated – and why doing it yourself, or through an agency, can cause all sorts of pain.



THE THREE TYPES OF NEWS BRIEFS

Third-party, automated news briefs (software as a service only)

Some providers offer automated news briefs with content gathered each morning from a news aggregation feed, collected by automated harvesting scripts and pre-set Boolean search strings. News briefs are automatically populated with that morning's news based on search string results only. While this method can be relatively inexpensive, it's known for being littered with mistakes, including irrelevant content or missed content from niche sources, paywalled sources, or sources that don't allow aggregation.

This means automated news briefs with no human oversight usually lead to a lot of cleanup work for the organization receiving them – especially if that organization has a large media footprint. After all: The larger your media footprint, the more cleanup work you'll likely need to do when cleaning up irrelevant hits. That means on top of paying a provider to assemble news briefs, staff must then take time to make edits and updates for relevancy – usually very early in the morning.

There are other problems that come with a SaaS-only approach:

- 1. SaaS tools are becoming more limited as premium sources opt out.** News aggregators and feeds can be great, but become a little less so every time an important publication opts out. Indeed, even as the volume and importance of online coverage skyrockets, more and more premium sites are opting out and going behind paywalls or licensing their own content to customers directly.
 - 2. SaaS tools are getting slower.** Anyone who regularly uses a news aggregation platform has likely noticed that results can sometimes lag for various reasons. Sometimes web crawlers are delayed. Other times, articles don't show up for several weeks after publication. It all adds up to missed articles on the day your news brief goes out – and likely the wrath of stakeholders.
 - 3. SaaS tools have always been somewhat unreliable without human intervention.** Boolean logic is a powerful thing and automated monitoring can seem like a lifesaver, until you find hundreds of false positives within your dataset. Auto-monitoring tools will pull in any article containing your keywords, even if the article is completely irrelevant.
 - 4. SaaS tools often have hard limits on the number of results or clips per time period, and going over these limits can shred budgets.** Stories of companies being charged tens of thousands of dollars extra for going over these limits, either in the number of news clips or social media posts collected, are commonplace.
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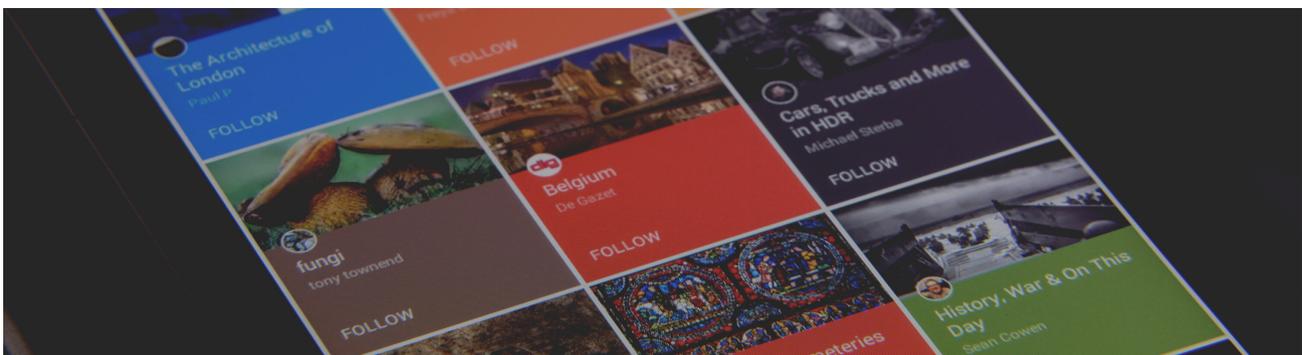
In-house news briefs (supplemented by SaaS or PR agency)

News briefs created in-house are often assembled using a combination of automated and manual steps. In-house briefs can be great because you control the process – the media monitoring, the curation, the quality control and the distribution. The downside? You and your team are responsible for every aspect of an incredibly tedious, time consuming and, at times, thankless process. The financial costs and schedule pain that often comes with producing in-house news briefs can sometimes be too much to bear. And even companies that do their briefs in-house almost always rely on at least one third-party service for assistance, usually either a SaaS platform or PR agency.

Third-party, expert curated news briefs

Expert-curated news briefs are produced by professional media analysts, typically at 5 or 6 a.m. to meet a 7 or 8 a.m. delivery deadline. Although they're curated by media experts, they also use automated tools to initially harvest or sort traditional and social media content before analysts fill in the gaps and run quality checks. The best providers use a dedicated analyst who becomes an expert in your business and gets to know what's important to your company, including industry language, product lingo and personnel mentioned in news coverage. Expert curated services also apply manual approaches for harvesting premium content not offered in aggregators or hidden behind paywalls.

While expert-curated news briefs are typically superior to automated in terms of relevancy and quality, however, not all human-curated briefs are expertly curated. As with most services, quality varies from company to company.



IN-HOUSE CURATION: THE FOUR TYPES OF PAIN

Curating your own news briefs in-house is not an impossible task by any means. But a deeper analysis reveals just how much this approach can cost, both in pain inflicted on your team and hard financial costs that can quickly shrivel your budget.

In-house news brief curation brings four main types of pain to PR teams:

1. **(Super) early mornings:** Daily executive news briefings typically need to be delivered before 9 a.m., which means whoever is assembling the brief likely needs to start work at around 5 a.m. To provide a strong brief the morning's stories need to be meticulously researched with an expert eye; important news coverage can't be missed, even if it's behind a paywall or doesn't show up in your SaaS monitoring solution. And it must all be done with a hard deadline creeping up on you by the minute.
2. **Scheduling and finding qualified backups:** News briefs for company executives and other stakeholders can't wait because someone is sick or on vacation. Well-trained backup staff for holidays and sick days must be available at a moment's notice. You need bandwidth to handle ad-hoc requests, run media analysis reports to show your value, and perform real-time crisis media monitoring when required – a tall task for many communications groups who also need time for core responsibilities.
3. **Employee turnover:** Because daily executive news briefings require such an early start, the task usually falls to lower-level employees – many of whom, like many of us, have little desire to get out of bed every day at 4 a.m. to produce a news brief. This mix of very early mornings and the painstaking attention to detail required to capture all of that morning's most relevant news and social media posts – no exceptions – can lead to job dissatisfaction, burnout, and, ultimately, high employee turnover.
4. **Lack of focus:** Producing media monitoring news briefs in-house often causes PR teams to lose focus. Since your team is solely responsible for each brief, teams who produce in-house briefs spend more time working on and worrying about news briefs and less time fulfilling core mandates. Media monitoring tools require regular, ongoing maintenance and tweaking to ensure you're always capturing all relevant content. This includes fine-tuning search strings, dealing with questions from stakeholders, and identifying important publications that have opted out of your news aggregator and require manual monitoring (pro tip: The aggregator won't give you a heads up).

Some companies turn to PR agencies to try to alleviate these pain points. Unfortunately, because media monitoring and news brief creation are far down the list of most agencies' core competencies, they inevitably run into the same problems.

IN-HOUSE OR PR AGENCY CURATION: THE COSTS ADD UP

There are significant costs to doing your briefs in-house – so much so that it can cost significantly more than outsourcing to an expert curation service. That’s because aside from the pain and distractions associated with producing your own briefs, they also require a large amount of resources from your organization (and, in many cases, your group’s annual budget).

We break down both the high-level and detailed costs of in-house and PR agency news briefs below (all figures in USD):

Cost comparison: In-house briefings (SaaS) vs. through a PR agency

In-house briefings with SaaS tool	In-house briefings with PR agency
\$56,000/year	\$153,960/year

“Why would you pay someone to compile something for you if they’re just automating it – which most people can do on their own?”

**- Doug Grassian
Director, Global External Communications,
Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.**

IN-HOUSE OR PR AGENCY CURATION: THE COSTS ADD UP

Here's a detailed breakdown of what goes into those in-house and agency costs (costs based on industry averages):

Daily briefs cost breakdown: In-house

Third-party SaaS monitoring tool	Starting at \$10,000
Broadcast content subscription	\$6,000
Print content subscription*	\$6,000
Paywalled subscriptions	Average of \$1,500
Automated translation**	\$4,500
In-house news brief curation (@ ~3 hours/morning)***	\$23,000
News brief QA and edits (@ ~ 30 minutes/morning)****	\$5,000
Annual Total	\$56,000

*Please note: In some media monitoring packages, print content is included at no extra cost.

**Optional.

**For a PR specialist earning \$60,000 annually (\$30/hour @ 252 working days/year)

***For a PR manager earning \$80,000 annually (\$40/hour @ 252 working days/year)

Daily briefs cost breakdown: PR agency/consultancy

Third-party SaaS monitoring tool	Starting at \$10,000
Broadcast content subscription	\$6,000
Print content subscription*	\$6,000
Paywalled subscriptions	Average of \$1,500
Automated translation**	\$4,500
In-house news brief curation (@ ~3 hours/morning)***	\$120,960*
News brief QA and edits (@ ~ 30 minutes/morning)****	\$5,000**
Annual Total	\$153,960

*Please note: In some media monitoring packages, print content is included at no extra cost.

**Optional.

***For an agency/consultancy billing at \$160/hour @ 252 working days/year. Many agencies bill as high as \$225 for these services.

****For a PR manager earning \$80,000 annually (\$40/hour @ 252 working days/year)

It should also be noted that these costs only include media monitoring and daily briefs – not regular monthly, quarterly nor annual media analysis reports, or ad-hoc reporting.

Fullintel has made my media monitoring less painful, and less time-consuming. You get off the phone confident that things are going to be done the right way.”

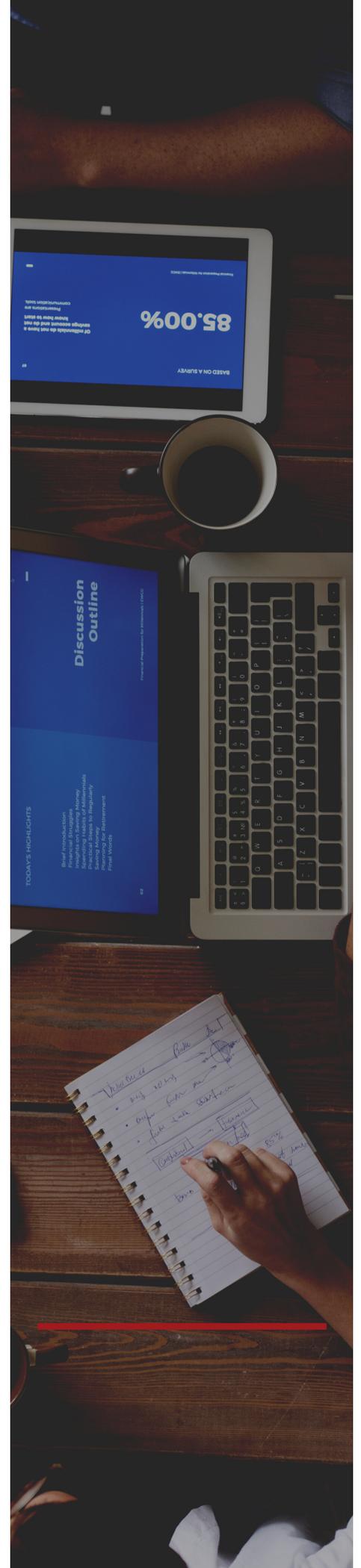
- Lindsay Bohlander
Senior PR Director, Shionogi Pharmaceuticals

The miscellaneous costs of in-house curation

Along with the ongoing distraction, relatively high turnover rates, and other issues and costs mentioned above, several miscellaneous costs also come with curating news briefs in-house. Most communications teams need to hire a junior employee to handle the extra work, which also entails:

- Recruitment costs
- Employee onboarding
- Employee training (including any required technology training)
- Related paperwork and administrative time spent

All these hidden HR and other costs amount to an average of \$4,500 per employee, according to *Deloitte* research. Add in other costs including benefits (an average of \$11.82 per hour, per employee, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) and these miscellaneous costs become significant.



EXPERTLY CURATED DAILY BRIEFS: BETTER AND LESS EXPENSIVE

An expert curation service such as Fullintel may seem more expensive than doing it yourself. But as our analysis shows, the former can actually save organizations money – and provide better results – while eliminating all that pain we spoke of earlier. And that’s with monthly competitive analysis reports (and a near real-time SaaS dashboard) included in the overall cost.

An expert curation service saves between up to 60 percent of your direct costs when PR agencies are used, or between 30-40 percent compared to doing it yourself. That’s not even counting the miscellaneous costs and indirect costs in the form of pain and distractions to your team when they’re forced to correct mistakes, or hunt down irrelevant or missed content.

The best of both worlds: Expert curation and daily brief creation

An expert curation service provides the best of both worlds: A near real-time SaaS dashboard, but without the full automation that leads to inaccurate results and missed content from a SaaS-only approach.

All that pain we mentioned earlier becomes a thing of the past. Clients can contact their dedicated media analyst anytime – for ad-hoc services, to tweak search strings, or for other requests – without totally sidetracking their team.

Expert curation services also guard against high employee turnover or inexperienced media analysts prone to making rookie mistakes.

They keep their analysts on the same file from Day 1, so they become experts in your organization’s goals, structure, competitors, business parlance, and more.

To ensure you’ve always got an experienced, expert analyst handling your file, your media monitoring and daily brief service should always:

- Hire expert analysts with an educational or professional background in your industry
 - Be able to easily scale to meet demand during large events or other busy periods such as earnings days, trade shows, or fast-breaking crises
 - Have 2-3 well-trained backups who can step up and fill the regular analyst’s shoes at a moment’s notice
 - Aim for a shuffle rate between media monitoring teams of five percent or less, to ensure the highest level of continuity
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FULLINTEL: THE EXPERT CURATORS

Fullintel does all the above and more, which is why our executive news briefs are the most reliable in the industry. Your dedicated Fullintel media analyst works diligently each morning to produce a graphic, richly-formatted email media report including images, media coverage highlights, summaries, sharing options, and other media intelligence information. Articles are hand-picked for relevancy by a dedicated analyst trained in the nuances of your business and industry vertical.

Fullintel clients can choose from a Daily Digest (a brief, executive overview of your most important media coverage), a Media Coverage Report (an in-depth overview of your daily media coverage), or a Media Impact Report (a comprehensive overview of your daily media coverage and social media impact).

Fullintel news briefs are delivered to stakeholders' inboxes at the start of each business day – no matter what time your day might start – and include the following:

- Hand-picked items from social media, print, broadcast, or online news, summarized for quick scanning
- Customized delivery times at the start of each day, or throughout the day
- Choose your desired delivery times and frequency
- Graphic-rich briefs that are easily shared and easy to digest
- A customized look and feel, including logo, colors, and fonts; users can also personalize their briefs depending on the news that matters to them

Fullintel prepares daily news briefs for *Johnson & Johnson*, *Goodyear*, *the Miami Dolphins*, *Royal Caribbean*, and other large organizations. To learn more about how your organization can save money, improve results, and increase stakeholder engagement through Fullintel's expertly curated news briefs, [contact us](#) to request a free customized sample.

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