THE SOCIAL NEWS NETWORK: CREATING COMMUNITIES
Kaity Conner, Jacob Corrigan, Isaiah Griffin, Kaitor Kposowa, Bradley W. Parks

The Challenge
The Akron Beacon-Journal seeks a way for users to tailor content to their specific needs, giving them a platform for constructive discussion.

The Research
· People turn to Internet and newspapers as their top two sources for some of the most important news topics including local politics, schools and community events.
· Younger generations share more news, helping to create the open forum the Beacon Journal desires.
· Growing evidence shows that news is becoming a more important and pervasive part of daily life.

The Proposal
The Beacon Journal wants to give its readers more control over what they read and stimulate community conversation. Our proposal turns the Beacon Journal into a kind of social news network, offering suggested content, advertising and connectivity through Facebook Connect. Through the creation of Beacon Journal subscriber online user accounts, the paper can track users’ news consumption to better understand what those users want to read. Thus, it can suggest content to users based on viewing history, allowing the readers to get straight to what they want to see.

The Beacon Journal, according to our research, already has a devoted following. The outlet is bursting with content. Our proposal seeks to eliminate some of the work users must do to find the content they want. Users are already commenting and liking the Beacon Journal’s activity on Facebook, so by connecting users to Ohio.com through the popular social media site, each individual story creates a small community in which to generate discussion. Our proposal takes advantage of these communities by implementing YouTube Live to host virtual town hall meetings, bringing that conversation to life and building a grand stage for constructive discussion of the area’s issues.

The Benefits
Through the utilization of Facebook Connect, the Beacon Journal will be able to tailor its content and advertising to the subscribers. Expanding to the social networking app creates an opportunity to not only create conversations, but to engage younger readers where they are--their mobile devices.

Our proposal presents a solution that not only creates a community surrounding the Beacon Journal’s news content, but provides effective marketing surrounding the news consumers’ use of mobile technology. According to our research, our proposal will both create a more effective forum for advertising and create a thriving news community in the Akron area.