

SUPERDESK FAQ

What is Superdesk?

Superdesk is a newsroom management system. It is an end-to-end news creation, production, curation, distribution and publishing platform. Built by journalists, for journalists, Superdesk has a modular software design that enables news organizations to pick and choose the functionality relevant to their business. Superdesk is open source, free, platform/device neutral, low-cost and easy to update. It has a lovely user interface, too.

What is a 'desk' and what is a Superdesk?

In a newsroom, journalists working on a specific type of content – sport, world/domestic news, finance, features or other theme, however defined – sit around the same desk, the better to communicate. If an event, such as the Olympics or an election, is big enough to warrant it, an ad-hoc desk may be created to handle just that.

Superdesk, then, turns the concept of physical desks into code. It is all the desks in the newsroom, co-ordinated, managed and configured by journalists to suit their normal workflow – and for them to change that on the fly to cope with events needing a non-standard workflow.

Even if your newsroom is virtual and your journalists are in different physical locations, Superdesk provides the organizational structure, communication and collaborative tools to see your content from creation to output.

Is Superdesk a content management system?

Yes and no. Superdesk can do the job of a content management system in that it's a tool for creating and managing content. But most CMS are built for a single medium (print, online, broadcast). CMS usually don't work well when it comes to multiple outputs (web+print, web+mobile, print+tablet, print+e-reader). Neither are they good at integrating inputs from different channels (wire services, RSS, social media). Worse, though, is that because so few are open source, they're much harder to change – and usually at a punishing vendor-dictated price – once they're in place.

Superdesk is flexible, not monolithic. It can serve as a connector between otherwise incompatible systems. Its focus is on enabling journalists to do their jobs the way they want to, not to force them into ways of working dictated by inflexible software.

Is there anything out there like Superdesk?

No. Superdesk aims to fill in the gap of a real open-source solution for newsrooms. There are commercial solutions in the form of desktop or web applications, as well as hosted services offering similar capabilities to Superdesk, but those are usually too pricey for all but the biggest organizations. Most importantly, newsrooms are expected to adapt their workflows to how those solutions operate. We think that this is the wrong way round.

We produce a lot of press material, but we're a charity, not a news organisation. Is Superdesk for us?

If you maintain an informational site, update it continuously and want to author articles and curate your text archive along with your multimedia assets – to have them to hand to re-use – you should take a look at Superdesk. Its COPE (create once, publish everywhere) approach means that all your text and media assets are available for you to interrogate, retrieve, update and/or repurpose for you to publish in any medium you want at any time.

You're inviting other news organizations to join the Superdesk project. Why?

The more people who take an interest, the wider their business perspectives, ideas and requirements will be. These unique needs and insights will inform Superdesk's development and capabilities. Yes, we are open to ideas and we're keen for industry players to follow our progress and suggest features or approaches that we've not thought of ourselves.

Perhaps your organization is considering sharpening up its editorial or media toolset. If the Superdesk project looks as though it might be useful to you, talk to us with a mind to joining in the main development effort - maybe to do with adding an area of functionality particularly aligned to your business needs. Or, of course, an organization might decide to fork our work at some point and take it in a direction all of its own.

This is open source: the freedom to collaborate directly with us or the freedom to go your own way, the freedom to modify our code to suit your needs.

Why is Sourcefabric making Superdesk?

Sourcefabric believes in quality, independent journalism. We provide media organisations with the open source software, tools and support to produce it, no matter what their resources or location. Superdesk is Sourcefabric's flagship project, and with it, Sourcefabric is addressing a need communicated repeatedly over the years – that newsroom management tools are either too costly, too rigid or too focused on a single medium.

When can I start using Superdesk?

We already have working prototypes, but we're going to put Superdesk through its paces in the demanding environment of our development partners at Australian Associated Press. If anything can shake out the bugs and expose weaknesses, this is it. However, we expect to start making beta releases in early 2015.

How can I check in on your progress?

Like every good open source project, you can check out our activity on [Github](#).