



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Chief Operating Officer Deep South Today

[Location Flexible]

Nonprofit, nonpartisan local newsrooms in Louisiana and Mississippi
serving communities with the information they need.

A Unique Opportunity

[Deep South Today](#) (DST) is a networked hub of nonprofit digital newsrooms that serves one of the country's most challenged regions. It was created from a shared belief in the inherent value of crucial *local* news reporting—robust, unfettered, nonpartisan—backed by a shared commitment to local journalism's essential role in a democracy.

DST currently consists of [Mississippi Today](#) and [Verite News](#). Each newsroom has editorial independence and local leadership. DST is thriving and actively exploring opportunities for continued growth and expansion. This may include creating newsrooms or merging existing newsrooms into the DST network. Arkansas and Louisiana are target markets.

Founded in 2016, Mississippi Today is now one of the largest newsrooms in the state. In 2023, it won the Pulitzer Prize for Local Reporting for its series *The Backchannel*. Verite News launched in 2022 in New Orleans, covers inequities facing communities of color. With its regional scale and scope, DST is rebuilding and re-energizing local journalism in communities where it had previously eroded, working to grow its audience and ensure sustainability.

The success of Mississippi Today and Verite News demonstrates the effectiveness of DST's central hub model, which supports impactful newsrooms across the region. The goal is to expand the number of local newsrooms focused on producing content while DST provides centralized support for business functions like finance, human resources, and audience engagement.

With [Warwick Sabin](#) as its first President and CEO, DST has gained diverse philanthropic support and initiated key projects identified by its editorial teams. To continue this growth trajectory, DST seeks an inaugural Chief Operating Officer (COO)



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Both newsrooms showcase DST's commitment to covering essential stories in the South and advancing the future of local journalism.

Mississippi Today

Founded in 2016 as a statehouse watchdog, Mississippi Today's roots in Capitol coverage have grown to encompass many beats beyond politics and policy, including education, public health, justice, environmental equity, and sports.

Led by the state's top journalists, marketers, and business minds, Mississippi Today is nationally recognized by the Institute for Nonprofit News, American Journalism Project, Knight Media Fund, and the Online News Association as a leader in public service journalism and newsroom innovation.

Verite News

Founded in 2022 and based in New Orleans, Verite News elevates voices from historically dismissed or ignored communities to create thoughtful, solution-based coverage on crucial topics, including education, housing, health care, criminal justice, the environment, and politics. It also uplifts the voices of vulnerable minority populations in communities facing existential threats. Verite News uses the power of journalism to expose and dismantle inequities. Through investigation, collaboration, and inclusiveness, Verite News establishes strategic partnerships with HBCUs and other vested collaborating organizations to recruit, train, and mentor the next generation of diverse journalists.

DST is experiencing exceptional growth. For greater insight on [Deep South Today](#), [Mississippi Today](#), and [Verite News](#), please visit their websites.

For more on nonprofit journalism, Deep South Today is a proud member of [The INN Network](#), [Local Media Association](#), and [Lion Publishers](#); their sites can provide helpful context.

DST is currently collaborating with national and regional organizations, including the New York Times, ProPublica, Associated Press, Grist, The Trace, Open Campus, The Marshall Project, The Hechinger Report, KFF Health News, AJI/NOTUS, CatchLight, and others. In May 2025, DST hosted The American Journalism Project in New Orleans.

The current Strategic Plan will drive scale and efficiency, creating more capacity for its journalism and meeting the need for accurate local news. The inaugural COO will be a future-forward leader who can focus on the organization's strategic priorities of geographic expansion, expanded reporting scope across all newsrooms, talent development, and community engagement.

Whether implementing a process to reach new audiences or investing in language translation of DST news, the COO will define, implement, and evaluate all processes and resources to ensure the ideal partners, people, and plans are leveraged.

DST seeks an entrepreneurial COO who embraces a bold vision, can thrive in a fast-paced environment, and will develop the structure, establish the process, and organize the team to facilitate the extended reach sustainably. A skilled Chief Operating Officer will manage daily operations and ensure strong financial oversight, helping to achieve DST's goals.

To support the growing needs of a rapidly evolving operation, the COO will execute strategy, motivate the team, institute policies and procedures, manage the resources using business acumen, and ensure the staffing, structure, and capacity-enhancing services required are in place.



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The Organization

As a nonprofit business entity, DST has transitioned from a start-up to an industry model. In the past year, it has grown from \$3 million in revenue to just under a \$10 million annual budget. Eternally entrepreneurial at heart, DST will remain a locally focused organization even as it develops regional systems and national resources.

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The Chief Operating Officer reports to the President & CEO and will be a key DST Senior Executive Leadership Team member. As the architect charged with building the infrastructure to implement sustainable growth, the COO defines, establishes, and monitors the CEO's vision as a strategic thought partner. The COO will ensure transparency throughout the organization and will continuously be focused on people, systems, services, and fiscal management, aligning with the overall mission and aspirations for growth. To optimize effectiveness, DST's COO must leverage data and digital resources to collective advantage while ensuring DST's CEO's vision and revenue strategy are in sync.

While Deep South journalism's focus and immediate audience are local, the appetite for equitable and accurate local news has traction nationally. To help realize its ambition for expansion into new markets, DST requires a proven COO with the demonstrated ability to coordinate people, processes, and mission to optimize organizational effectiveness.

The Mandate

The Chief Operating Officer of Deep South Today will be a management expert. The inaugural COO will:

Translate Strategy into Actionable Steps

- Provide forward-thinking leadership, continuously looking for improvement and greater impact with a growth mindset.
- Effectively communicate while consistently learning and responding to organizational needs across all newsroom functions, promoting accountability and transparency.
- Establish Key Performance Indicators to manage all aspects of business operations. Use metrics and data to monitor performance against goals, budgets, and the strategic plan.
- Serve as both confidant and strategic advisor to the President and CEO, while demonstrating a willingness to challenge collaboratively and diplomatically.

Sustainably Scale the Organization

- Provide innovative methods to expand the audience and increase investigative reporting coverage using technologically savvy and sound business practices.
- Create and manage an operational framework that supports the organization's current and future opportunities while enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and impact. Assess whether the right people are in the right seats.
- Strengthen the organization's core by establishing synergistic systems, policies, processes, and practices.



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Armed with deep financial acumen and appreciation for the value of journalism, the COO will ensure Deep South Today has the funding, ideal team, and audience to justify expansion into new markets.



- Bring a logical and analytical approach to business strategy using research-based informed metrics for sustainable expansion into new markets.

Drive Operational Integrity

- Implement additional structure and processes in this fast-growing entrepreneurial environment, with clear organizational objectives, team accountability, and strategic resource management.
- Identify editorial needs for each newsroom and implement processes to attract expanded audiences.
- The COO will be an engaging, trusted leader who builds, manages, and motivates a world-class team by valuing input from empowered staff and creating space for innovation and ideas.
- The COO will be an effective intermediary who drives confidence among staff and partners to reach Deep South Today's ambitious goals in a disciplined, collaborative manner.

Strengthen the Fiscal Business Hub

- Armed with deep financial acumen and appreciation for the value of journalism, the COO will ensure Deep South Today has the funding, ideal team, and audience to justify expansion into new markets.
- Collaboratively drives financial discipline into all functions.
- The COO will elevate organizational capabilities in areas such as financial skills, data analysis, business intelligence, and forecasting.

The COO of Deep South Today can expect to have several overlapping priorities, among them.

- Confirm DST's overarching vision with the President and CEO, then develop and execute the strategy to make that vision real.
- Build a supportive relationship with the operating entities, respecting local autonomy while delivering collective value.
- Marshal the innovative thinking and financial resources required for a financially sustainable enterprise characterized by diverse revenue streams.
- Develop or tap best practices in technology and data management.
- Establish relationships with sponsors and advertisers to facilitate growth and expansion.
- Embody DST's commitment to the region by being a connected, embedded presence.
- Ensure a pervasive commitment to excellence throughout the organization.

The Relationships

Reports to:	Deep South Today's Chief Executive Officer
Direct reports:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Director, Mississippi Today • Executive Director, Verite News • Managing Director of Revenue • Finance, Information Technology, and Human Resources functions (including outsourced resources or consultants as appropriate)



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As the day-to-day implementer of the bold vision of the organization's CEO, Deep South Today requires a proven leader who is adaptable and motivated by what is best for the organization.



The Candidate

Deep South Today is an equal-opportunity employer committed to democracy, social justice, and racial equity. The organization proactively pursues leaders who embody its ideals and aspirations.

As the day-to-day implementer of the bold vision of the organization's CEO, Deep South Today requires a proven leader who is adaptable and motivated by what is best for the organization. The COO has working knowledge of publishing and journalism; a leader who understands and respects the distinctions between general management, leadership, and editorial oversight.

Personal Characteristics: A COO who is

- An active listener.
- Responsive, taking care of colleagues to create an innovative culture.
- Creative and innovative.
- A proven manager who is highly adaptable.
- Demonstrated ability to build trusted relationships.
- Instinctually organized.
- Flexible.
- Exceptional level of EQ and the ability to navigate organizational dynamics deftly.
- A creative thinker.
- Ability to leverage all digital platforms.
- Deep appreciation for the South.
- Demonstrated growth mindset.

Culture: A COO who is

- Inclusive (DST's newsrooms reflect our audiences).
- Transparent & accessible; civically engaged and grounded in community.
- A champion for justice, equity, access, and truth who gets the nuance of a nonprofit news service focused on government accountability (vs. politics).
- Independent-minded but fundamentally collaborative; a natural relationship-builder.
- Clear-minded about the interdependence of mission and margin.
- A pragmatic optimist who thrives in fast-paced environments; someone who gets things done.
- Able to conceive and build the right systems.
- An ally of issues, institutions, and people of the South; someone who is neither naïve nor cynical; an advocate, not a zealot; a leader who operates from a sense of abundance rather than scarcity.
- An MVP Team player.

The Location

Ideally, the COO will reside within DST's service footprint (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, or Tennessee); the location is open to discussion.

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email

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or call **Cynthia Moreland, Sam Pettway,**
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at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).

