

RTNDA

APRIL 2004

Communicator

THE MAGAZINE FOR ELECTRONIC JOURNALISTS

NIGHTLINE

PLUS:

**Anchors as
Leaders**

Page 34

**Ethical Crisis
in News?**

Page 42

**The Art of the
Interview**

Page 56

**On the
Health Beat**

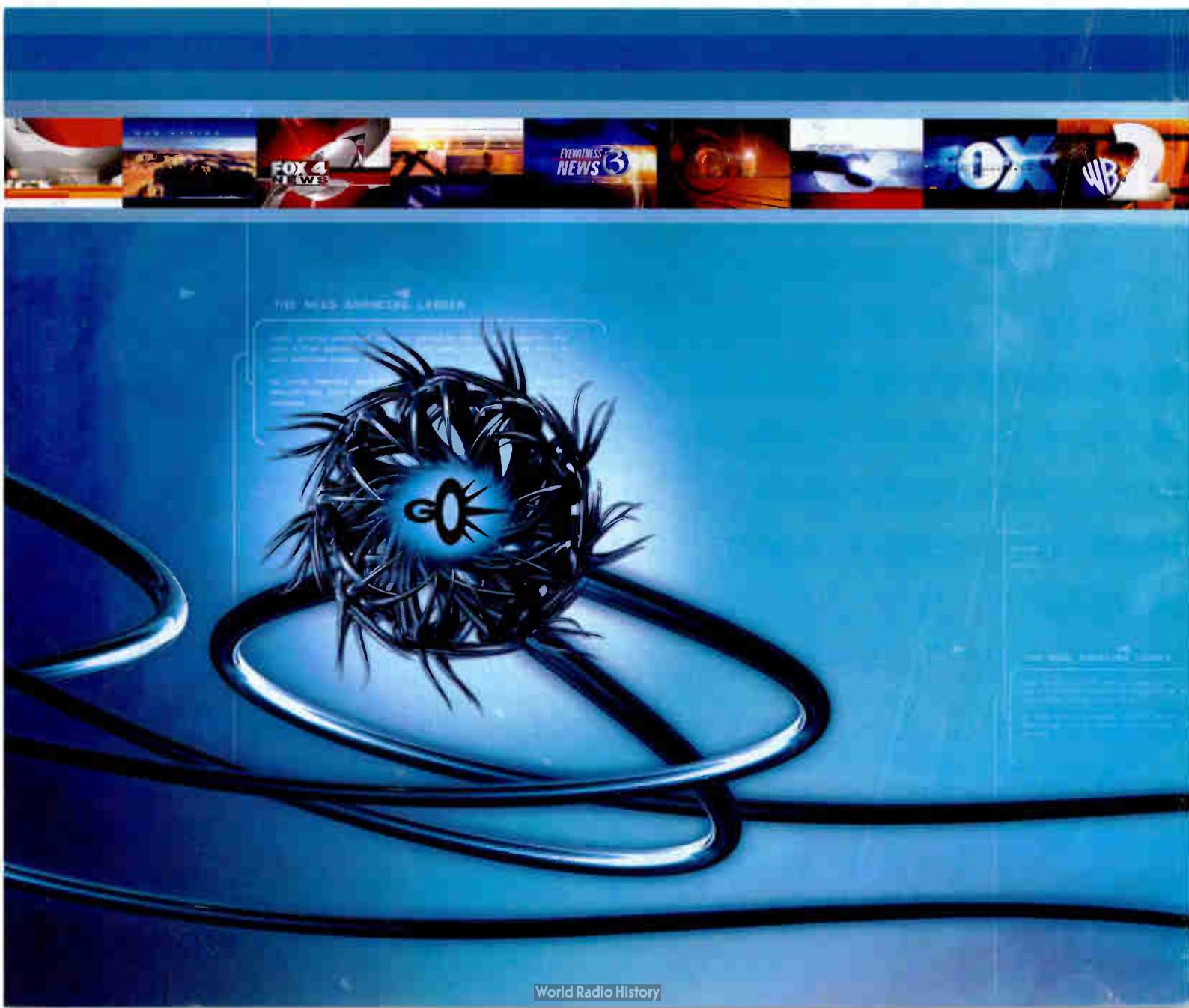
Page 66

**TED
KOPPEL**

**2004 Paul White
Award Winner**

Page 28

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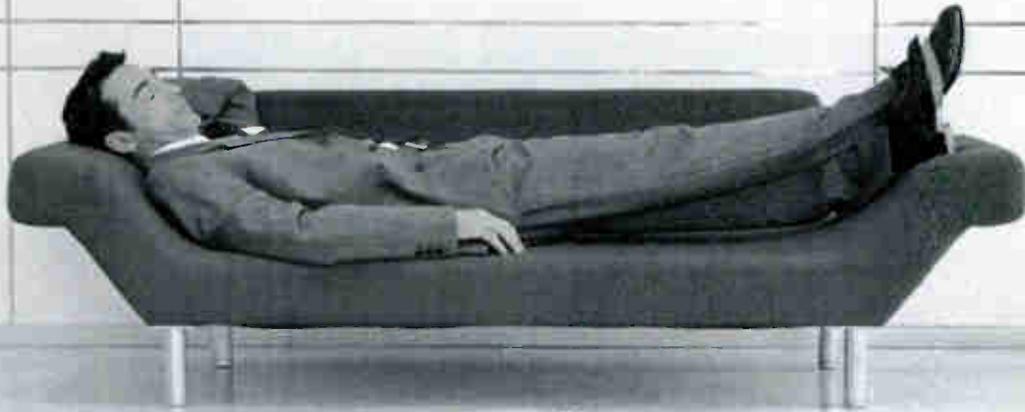
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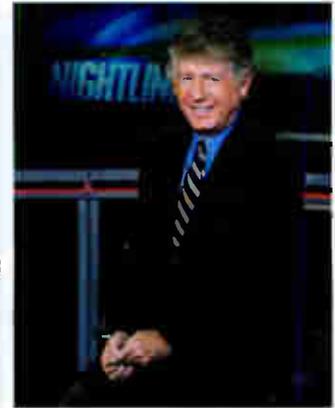
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RTNDA Communicator

April 2004 Vol. 58, No. 4

THE MAGAZINE FOR ELECTRONIC JOURNALISTS



ON THE COVER

Ted Koppel, 2004 RTNDA Paul White Award recipient. Photo shot February 4 on the set of Nightline.

Cover photo: Allure Photography

FEATURES

28 Holding the Line

BY DAVE BUSIEK

Ted Koppel, 2004 RTNDA Paul White Award recipient, talks about the importance of substance over mass appeal.

34 Leading Edge

BY MIKE CAVENDER

Are your anchors news leaders or news readers? Meet some anchors who value coaching, mentoring and taking a leadership role in the newsroom.

42 A Crisis of Faith?

BY BOB STEELE

The trade headlines spotlight one ethical lapse after another, be it sales influence on news, Jayson Blair, or simply newsmen in unfavorable situations. Is the industry facing a crisis?



48 Helping Hands

BY CAMERON McGAUGHY

How effective are your community outreach programs? We polled far and wide to find unique examples that work—for the community *and* the station.

56 The Art of the Interview

BY SHARON O'MALLEY

It's easy to spot a good interviewer, but much harder to translate those observations into useable skills. Take some tips from recognized interviewing pros.

66 On the Health Beat

BY ANDREA ROUDA

A look at what makes a good health reporter and a good health story. First in a series.

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Newsbreak
- 20 Advertisers
- 80 New Products
- 84 Tough Calls

COLUMNS

- 18 Chairman's Column
- 22 President's Column
- 70 Newswriting
- 74 Management

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Newsbreak

CONVENTION

Hit the **RTNDA@NAB** Show Floor Running

New at RTNDA@NAB this year: Showcase Sessions. These are targeted, focused sessions on a specific industry niche, where you can hear directly from vendors and watch a live demonstration of products and services. After the session, meet with your GM and engineer to assess new technology and weigh future purchases by visiting exhibitors on the RTNDA@NAB floor.

After you check out all the products and services on the RTNDA@NAB floor in the Las Vegas Hilton, make a trip across the driveway to the Las Vegas Convention Center to visit NAB2004, the biggest broadcast technology show in the world. It's free to RTNDA registrants!

RTNDA@NAB **Showcase Sessions** Products. Performance. Innovation.

Here's a list of the planned Showcase Sessions and some other events that will take place in the RTNDA@NAB Exhibit Hall.

Tuesday, April 20

10:15–10:45am

Showcase Session:

615 Music Library

The session will feature the latest trends in news music. You'll see and hear what's happening with the sound of newscasts in 2004 and get ideas that win ratings, viewers and add to the bottom line. This session will feature video and audio of the most cut-

ting-edge news music opens in the industry.

Tuesday, April 20

11:45am–12:15pm

Showcase Session: Litton

News Service

Simple Solutions with Jill Cordes. This live performance will offer fresh, helpful and tasty ideas for spring.

Wednesday, April 21

12:00–12:30pm

Showcase Session: Prophet **Systems Innovations**

Prophet Systems Innovations will be demonstrating PocketGen—PDA software that allows news and sports reporters to easily send interviews and breaking news stories wirelessly. Transferring dig-

ital files from your remote location back to the station has never been easier.

Also on the Exhibit Hall floor:

Monday, April 19

10:30–11:45am: Liveshots

Monday, April 19

3:30–4:45pm: The Talent Coach Was Here Last Week—Now What?

Tuesday, April 20

1:45–3:00pm: Winning Your 2nd Quarter Hour. Techniques That Hold Viewers Longer

Wednesday, April 21

10:30–11:45 am: Crisis Makes History. Or Does History Make a Crisis?

RTNDA@NAB Exhibitors (as of March 15)

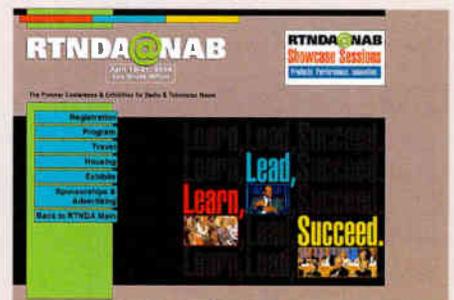
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Access/Middle East, R922
America's Road Team, R1009
Bloomberg Television, R607
Briargate Media, R412
Broadcast Design International, R713
CanWest Global-Innotive, R712
Consumer Reports TV News, R920
Daily Shortcuts, R612
Devlin Design Group, R1017
FX Group, R616
Giant Octopus, R622

HD News, R926
Litton News Service, R1012
Mayo Clinic, R613
Meat and Poultry Comm. Alliance, R1010
Medialink, R722
National Center for Courts and Media, R1020
NBC Enterprises, R307
NewsProNet, R1021
Nielsen Media Research, R910
Non-Stop Music/News Music, R723
Philip Merrill College of Journalism, R312
RIAS Berlin/RTNDF

German/AJEP, R617
Stephen Arnold Music, R419, C1852
Television Music License Committee, R620
The Poynter Institute, R618
UNITY: Journalists of Color, R718
VDO, R619

Exhibit Hall Hours

Monday: 10:00am–4:30pm
Tuesday: 10:00am–5:30pm
Wednesday: 10:00am–4:30pm



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TRADE SECRETS

What's Your Most Challenging Story?

Ask any reporter this simple question: "What was *your* most challenging story?" Chances are they'll have a long answer for you; one full of obstacles, sheer hard work and a mix of personal and professional rewards.

It is in the telling of such tales that reporters define who they are, what they stand for and the importance of what we all do for a living. Here are three such stories.

KING-TV: Nailing the Bad Guys by the Hundreds

Every so often a story comes along that is so compelling, it is almost unbelievable. Such was the case with Fugitive Aid, which aired on Seattle's KING-TV in November 2002.

Kellie Cheadle, KING's investigative producer, provides this overview: "Hundreds of criminals are on the run in Washington State. Because of overwhelming numbers and a lack of resources, police can't seem to find them all. The [KING team], however, discovered state welfare checks seem to find the suspects just fine."

As often happens, KING stumbled across this story in the course of an otherwise normal news day. "Our reporter Lisa Beukelman had worked on a story in May 2002 involving a drunk-driving suspect," says Cheadle. "After the story aired, the girlfriend of the suspect called [Lisa].



During the conversation she mentioned the suspect had previous convictions, had a warrant out for his arrest, and was also on welfare. 'How can this be?' we asked ourselves. 'If there's one, there have to be more!' So our investigation began."

The KING team crunched the numbers in two state databases—one that contained all felony warrants for the largest county in the state and another that contained the people receiving state assistance, Cheadle says. The result? Hundreds of people wanted for serious crimes were receiving state assistance from taxpayers.

One might expect state authorities to be supportive of the news team's efforts in

tracking down hundreds of fugitives. But this wasn't the case. "Citing state privacy laws, the public records request we made to the Washington State Patrol was filed without the dates of birth of the suspects," Cheadle says. Because this identifier was crucial to the cross-check with the state's welfare roles, the producer had to fight the agency for the records. Eventually they were released.

Fugitive Aid didn't require any special resources, yet made a big impact in Washington. "After our story aired, the State Patrol and DSHS got busy," Cheadle says. "They started a new program that does exactly what we did—cross-checking...welfare rolls with every outstanding

felony warrant in the state. The first batch produced 799 felons on the run, all receiving state assistance."

Local police departments love the new program. Because the addresses are correct, they can grab a list of felons and come back with arrests. For KING's viewers, Fugitive Aid made a real contribution to enhancing public safety and reducing welfare fraud. KING's staff learned that computer-assisted reporting can be an incredibly powerful investigative tool.

"We also learned the importance of fighting for public records," Cheadle says. "Had we not argued our rights to the initial data, the story never would have happened." For its efforts, KING won a 2003 Regional Murrow Award from RTNDA.

WITI-TV: Exposing Child Abuse at Day Care Centers

Stories about child abuse are gut-wrenchers, but when the abuse is taking place in supposedly safe state-licensed day care center, it's all the more horrifying. Milwaukee's WITI-TV news reporter Joyce Garbaciak found such a case in February 1998, with the active assistance of WITI producer Teresa Nazario and photojournalist Mary Krusick.

Under the name Day Care Law, WITI's three-part series highlighted cases of child



abuse that had been documented by Wisconsin day care inspectors. "We reported what the state had found, such as workers disciplining kids by putting ice cubes in their pants," says Garbaciak. "Another worker placed a toddler in a highchair close to boiling water. The water spilled and the boy was severely burned. These are the instances I can easily recall; we cited many others."

Not surprisingly, "the challenge was to get comments from the day care centers we mentioned," she says. "As you can imagine, not many wanted anything to do with this.

Another challenge came from other day-care providers, who said we were slamming all day cares with this kind of series; never mind that we clearly stated these problems were relatively rare among the thousands of licensed providers."

Even with the solid backing of WITI's management, getting this story was no easy feat. "It took five weeks to secure the records and go through them, and then to get video and sound from the day care centers," says Garbaciak. "We also had to convince the families...that this would not be a sensational story, but one

that was intended to help the community."

As it turned out, Garbaciak was right: Day Care Law changed how Wisconsin day care centers are regulated. "In the course of my reporting, I learned that smaller, home-based day cares were not required to post copies of state inspection reports by their license, as larger day cares were," she explains. "When checking with the state, I learned that this was an oversight: it happened simply because smaller home-based day cares were not as prevalent when the law was created."

Garbaciak brought the oversight to the attention of a state senator, and that got the ball rolling. "She proposed a bill; it passed; and the governor signed it into law—even signing me out at the signing ceremony and giving me one of the pens he used," Garbaciak says. Now, all Wisconsin day cares in violation of state inspections have to post the violation report near their license in a visible spot near the center's entrance.

"I was most touched when I received a congratulatory letter from a relative of the boy who was burned in that scalding incident," Garbaciak says. "To get that note from that family—letting me know that I did a good job with their story and would be helping other children because of the law—was the greatest reward I could ever hope for."

KMOV-TV: Inside the Battle To Avoid Bankruptcy at American Airlines

St. Louis has a long history as an aviation town, and KMOV-TV reporter/anchor John Mills has been covering the beat since 1996.

Fast forward to April 2003. Along with other major U.S. airlines, American Airlines has taken a pounding in the post-9/11 travel market. In an effort to stay solvent, American asked its pilots, flight attendants and ground crews for billions of dollars in pay concessions and layoffs, Mills says. "Without the givebacks, the airline said it would be forced to declare bankruptcy, as United and US Airways had

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already done," he notes.

After a vote and a re-vote, the unions agreed to the cuts. Then an SEC filing revealed that American Airlines CEO Don Carty was due to receive a huge cash bonus. In fact, Carty and other AA executives had negotiated personal bonuses worth two years' base pay each if they stayed with the restructured airline until January 2005. All of this had been arranged quietly while the pilots, flight attendants and ground crews had publicly argued about and ultimately accepted \$1.62 billion in cuts to their own pay packets.

Not surprisingly, AA's

employees were incensed by senior management's cash grab. As a result, "At about 8:30 p.m. on a Friday evening, I received a tip that the flight attendants had decided to re-vote on their acceptance of the pay cuts and layoffs, a move which could result in American Airlines having to file for bankruptcy," Mills recalls. "I was able to confirm the story and broke [it] on KMOV's late newscast. Because of our initial tip, WFAA-TV also was able to do its own exclusive report in its late news in the Dallas-Forth Worth market, where American Airlines is headquartered." Shortly afterward, Mills

scored another coup in breaking news on Carty's resignation.

"St. Louis has suffered," he explains. "All former TWA flight attendants lost their jobs, many with more than 30 years on the job. (The flight attendants' union placed them at the bottom of the seniority list after the bankruptcy purchase.) Many senior pilots also lost their jobs for similar reasons, and the issue

was a big part of my follow-up stories that spring and summer."

Keeping up with changing information, sometimes on an hourly basis, was the most difficult part, Mills notes. "[Fortunately] I received a ton of help from WFAA in Dallas. Belo's help enabled us to get video our St. Louis competitors frequently did not have."

—James Careless is a freelance writer in Ottawa.



Entravision's Walter Ulloa and NBC's Andrea Mitchell pose with RTNDF Chairman Dave Busiek (left) and CBS's Bill Plante at RTNDF's First Amendment Awards Dinner on March 11. Ulloa received the First Amendment Service Award and Mitchell received the Leonard Zeidenberg First Amendment Award. Receiving First Amendment Leadership Awards were Sen. Charles Grassley and Sen. Patrick Leahy.

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INDUSTRY NEWS

An Influx of New Grads

This May, hundreds of graduating broadcast seniors will leave the arms of academia and flood an already tight job market, looking for jobs in radio and television newsrooms across the nation. They are entering a competitive world of long hours and low pay. How ready are they?

"I have found a small core of students who really want to make a difference in the world—to change the way journalism is done, to cover the tough issues, the community and what matters in the

world," says Marsha Della-Giustina, a journalism professor at Emerson College. "These are the people who go out and read everything and talk to people and who are leaders of RTNDA, their student newspapers and SPJ, and who work really hard to get the most productive internships."

These students understand the changing demands of a multimedia industry, says Doug Sudhoff at Northwest Missouri State. They are eager

to not only report, but to take photographs, record their own video, and produce multiple versions of their stories for the radio and the web.

"I think the biggest issue now, as far as preparing students for the workforce, is preparing them for a changing newsroom and making them understand that the traditional roles in journalism are really breaking down," Sudhoff says. "One way we have done that is we have taken an advanced reporting class that has traditionally done longer reporting stories and changed it into a multimedia experience. Some students in the past haven't liked that, but this year's class seems to be a little more receptive."

But this is an industry with image, and it often attracts another caliber of student, as well: Those who want to be seen on TV. So how do you know which graduates are in it for the glamour and which ones are in it for the good of the community?

Della-Giustina suggests news organizations should look for a student who is dedicated, who respects both the organization and the community he or she will cover, and who has a news philosophy that matches your organiza-

tion. She also suggests news organizations give a current events quiz and grammar test as well as bring potential new hires to the newsroom to shadow for a day to see their work ethic—*before* bringing them on board.

Sudhoff also notes that news directors should check if a student interned at a radio or television station. Ask, "Did they work 30–40 hours a week doing voice-overs, writing scripts, interviewing and reporting? Or did they sit at a desk and answer the phone for their assignment editor?"

Sudhoff says employers should always ask for writing samples. He also suggests giving students wire copy and asking them to write a 20-second reader to find out how well they write without the aid of an editor.

To help get you started, here are some of the top graduating broadcast students in the country today. Some were nominated by their teachers, others by their fellow classmates.—Elizabeth Crawford is RTNDA's editorial intern and a senior at George Washington University in Washington.

Standout Students

Ayobami Bell

School: Emerson College

Achievements: Production assistant and assignment desk assistant, WLVI-TV, and news reporter and anchor, WEBN-TV

Desired Job: Reporter

Email: senero@aol.com



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Brandon Lee Bratcher

School: Western Kentucky University

Achievements: News director at WWHR-FM, the campus station

Desired Job: Assignment editor, executive producer or documentary producer

Email: brandon.bratcher@wbko.com

Michelle Brown

School: University of Florida

Achievements: Reporter, anchor and producer for campus station WUFT-TV, and summer intern/reporter at WPEC-TV

Desired Job: Reporting
Email: mbrownuf@yahoo.com

Josh Davis

School: Arizona State University

Achievements: Intern reporter at KNST-AM and anchor and reporter for the campus station, SDTV

Desired Job: Anchor
Email: jostdavis10@aol.com

Jonathan Dunn

School: University of Alabama

Achievements: Weekday and feature reporter for WVUA-TV

Desired Job: Reporter
Email: jonathandunn789@hotmail.com

Amanda Harley

School: Ohio University

Achievements: Summer intern with NBC's Today Show and WYFF-TV

Desired Job: Producer
Email: arh7500@hotmail.com

Brant Johnson

School: Northwest Missouri State University

Achievements: GM for student station KNWT-TV, and intern at KQTV

Desired Job: Producer
Email: brant2321@hotmail.com

Santosh N. Johnson

School: University of Alabama

Achievements: Reporter and current weekend anchor for WVUA-TV

Desired Job: Reporter
Email: santoshajohnson@hotmail.com

Waliya Lari

School: University of Texas at Austin

Achievements: Reporter for the campus' *Texas Newswatch* and *Daily Texan*

Desired Job: Producer or assistant editor
Email: waliya@mail.utexas.edu

Jennifer Lawrence

School: Emerson College
Achievements: Consumer investigations intern at WHDH-TV, and reporter for campus station WERS-FM covering the Iowa caucus

Desired Job: Producer
Email: jtmlawrence@yahoo.com

Brandon Long

School: The University of Tennessee

Achievements: News intern at WPTY-TV, and reporter and anchor for weekly student newscast on WBIR-TV

Desired Job: Reporter,

anchor or producer

Email: brandon@utk.edu

Steven McCarron

School: Washington State University

Achievements: Producer for Cable 8 TV, and host at student station KUGR-AM

Desired Job: Anchor or reporter
Email: stevemccarron@hotmail.com

Sarah Rooney

School: University of Maryland

Achievements: Assignment editor at campus station UMTV, and president of RTNDA student chapter

Desired Job: Health reporter in a small market
Email: srooney@wam.umd.edu

Michelle Stacy

School: Northwest Missouri State University

Achievements: Former production manager and current producer for campus station KNWT-TV, summer intern at KQTV

Desired Job: Video production
Email: Michelle_Stacy@hotmail.com

Alexander James Stewart

School: Franklin Pierce College

Achievements: Intern at News 12 Norwalk, director and anchor for the campus FPC-TV, and disk jockey for campus WFPC-AM

Desired Job: Sports anchor, reporter
Email: astewart18@hotmail.com



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TRADE SECRETS

Choosing Newsroom Hardware

Necessity, the adage goes, can encourage invention. That's how KBJR-TV in Duluth, MN, became one of the first television stations in the country to design its own server-based newsroom automation system with non-linear editing.

VP and station manager David Jensch says the building that housed the station burned to the ground in 1997, destroying the physical plant. "Non-linear systems as we know them today didn't exist then, so we pulled together several vendors and wrote a lot of code," Jensch says. Today, the systems include non-linear editors, automation, server and integration to the word-processing software.

Stations taking the non-linear route today don't have to start from scratch, but they should be aware they'll have a few fires of their own to put out. Eventually, KBJR ended up with the Discreet Logic editing system with Edit* software, which is compatible with its Windows-based NewsKing newsroom computer producing system. News and commercial playback are done via Grass Valley Profile servers.

Jensch admits the initial process was not easy and it came with its share of headaches before engineers could debug the piecemeal system. Now, nearly seven years later, Jensch says it is time to shop around for a new, non-linear system. "Computers don't last this long," he says. Parent company Granite has asked him to evaluate various products as it searches for a non-linear system for all stations in the Granite Group.

The decision to buy a new non-linear system should be a lot less painful for Jensch the second time around. There are more product choices, and there are more stations to turn to for advice. Here are some suggestions from news managers who've made the plunge.

See It Firsthand

Don Schoenfeld, news operations manag-

er and chief photographer at WNDU-TV in South Bend, IN, suggests visiting stations with the systems you are interested in, and when you get there, ask a lot of questions. He says all of the companies—such as Grass Valley, Avid and Sony—will give stations a list of stations that use their systems.

Debbie Bush says, "Don't rely on technical people to do it all. You should ask questions, too. Demand more information." Bush should know. She was news director at WRTV in Indianapolis when the station installed one of the first applications of Parkervision, a fully automated system. Now she is news director at KSHB-TV in Kansas City, which uses the Grass Valley NewsEdit system, with the Autocue news-producing computer system.

WNDU narrowed it down to three products after visiting stations using two of them. Schoenfeld says WGN-TV in Chicago uses Sony's News Base system, WKYC-TV in Cleveland uses Avid's NewsCutter, and Grass Valley demonstrated the NewsEdit system two times at his station and they got a third demonstration in Chicago. He says they decided on Grass Valley, and believes they made a good choice. "One of the big reasons we went with Vibrant (now NewsEdit) is because we liked how we could edit from tape to computer," he says. "We did not have to pre-digitize our field tapes. You can record directly from tape to timeline."

Steve Sweitzer, news operations manager at WISH-TV in Indianapolis, says the station is currently making the switch to Avid NewsCutter. But he says they brought in at least four systems over the past two years and let everyone at the station check them out. Photographers and editors got a chance at the controls.

Seek Advice Internally

Schoenfeld agrees that several people should be involved in the decision-making

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process. He says it took three years to make a final decision, and the process included himself, a senior editor, the news director, a producer, the station manager, computer technicians and engineers.

Kirk Love, chief engineer at KOIN-TV in Portland, OR, says he wishes station management had asked for advice from newsroom employees who would be using the equipment. KOIN bought two standalone Sony DNE 700 non-linear editing systems in 1998, but they sat unused for two years.

Later, Love says Sony designed a computer interface with the system which was "a more traditional looking timeline with clips to observe." Now the station has eight DNE 700 systems and uses a Sony server to air their newscasts.

Have a Plan B

Schoenfeld says when the Grass Valley system made its on-air debut on March 17, 2002, the automated playout system was

flawless. That is, until two days later, when the server was overloaded and some of the 5 p.m. newscast was lost. Luckily, he says, the server had a mirrored profile, so when the first profile crashed the backup profile helped them get back on the air quickly.

Jensch suggests playing tapes simultaneously with the automated system for the first few months as a backup. He said for the first year at KBJR, they ran simultaneous tape during newscasts, so the technical director could take the taped story in case a server lost a story. This way, the viewer would never know there had been a problem.

Bush says the key is to be able to remove the system from the server so tapes can be played back manually if necessary. At KSHB, they can playback from their edit bays.

Schedule Training

Finally, block out time and manpower for

training. Now that WISH is making the switch to Avid NewsCutter, Sweitzer says the plan is everyone will have 16 hours of training. Plus, two edit systems were installed earlier so people could experiment and practice on their own.

Schoenfeld suggests extensive training for two or three photographers who can then teach the other photographers. And after training, Jensch scheduled mock newscasts. He admits this takes time and extra staffing, but in the end, it was worth it.

And don't forget, staffs change and programs upgrade. Jim Garrott, WEEK-TV news director in Peoria, IL, says his newsroom staff is undergoing a refresher training session, and it's not only to teach keyboard shortcuts that some people missed earlier, but to learn how to use new features and manage the system.—Karin Schwanbeck is an assistant professor of journalism at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT.

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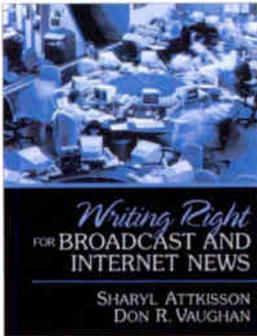
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Writing Right for Broadcast and Internet News

By Sharyl Attkisson and Don R. Vaughan, Pearson Allyn & Bacon, 288 pages, paperback, ISBN

020534511, \$54.20
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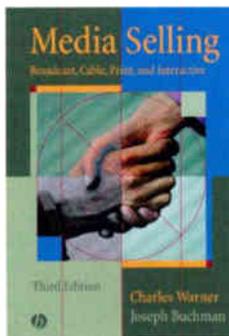


an introduction to the industry for anyone interested in writing news copy for broadcast. It details the difference between writing for television and the web, and includes salary information as well as career advice from professionals like NBC's Iraqi television correspondent Kerry Sanders.

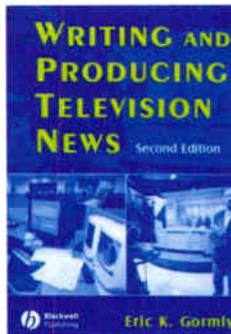
Media Selling: Broadcast, Cable, Print and Interactive

By Charles Warner and Joseph Buchman, Iowa State University Press, 598 pages, hardcover, ISBN

0813804175, \$49.99
Two veteran media-sales experts and journalism educators bring the classic text "Broadcast and Cable Selling"



into the 21st century by adding new information about selling for interactive media in an increasingly consolidated industry. It also includes information on sales ethics, and walks readers through the process of fulfilling the emotional needs of potential advertisers in order to achieve the maximum benefit for your organization as well as for clients.



Writing and Producing Television News

By Eric K. Gormly, Iowa State University Press, 408 pages, paperback, ISBN

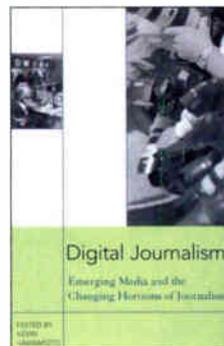
0813812992, \$39.99

Focused on teaching broadcast students how to write well, Gormly draws on his experience in the newsroom to teach readers not only how to interview sources, process information and format a script for broadcast, but it also puts the reporter within the larger context of how a newscast is produced. For readers preparing to enter the workforce, it includes a chapter on how to break into the industry with tips on landing first jobs and internships.

Digital Journalism: Emerging Media & the Changing Horizons of Journalism

Edited by Kevin Kawamoto, Rowman & Littlefield, 224 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0742526801, \$69

By examining the role of digital communications and photography in the U.S. war in Afghanistan, the World Trade Organization protests of 1999 and the emergence of online health coverage, Kawamoto analyses the impact of new technology and the development of digital journalism on the traditional role of the media in this book. Written primarily by electronic journalists, the book also looks at the history of online journalism and includes a case study of multimedia coverage.



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Final Thoughts Before Passing the Gavel

RTNDA and its members serve an important role in preserving First Amendment freedoms.

A few years ago, a group of journalists from the former Soviet Republic of Moldova visited my newsroom. The chains of state-controlled media were loosening in their country, and they had come to the United States to learn what they could about doing news in a free society.

At one point during our conversation, I asked a gentlemen who had been a TV newscaster in Moldova for many years if his job had become easier or harder since the break-up of the Soviet Union. I expected him to say easier. Wasn't it, after all, easier for him to do his job as a journalist without always answering to some party propagandist? Wasn't it easier to report the news on TV without fear that if he spoke the wrong words, secret police might burst into the studio at any moment and whisk him and his family away to the nearest gulag? Sure sounds easier to me.

That, however, was not his answer. Through a translator—but without hesitation—he told me that his job had become much harder since the USSR went out of business. Why? Because, he explained, in the past all he could really do was report what someone told him to report. Now, he said, "I have to try to find the truth."

I have long since forgotten the gentleman's name, but I have never forgotten the conversation. For me, it's an anecdote to cynicism. A metaphor for why what we do matters. It's a reminder on those inevitable days when we become discouraged or dis-

illusioned that we still have that awesome responsibility to seek the truth.

Citizens of a democracy expect nothing less of us, and should receive nothing less. It is always easier, as our Moldovan friend pointed out, to read what someone wants you to read. It's much harder to cut through numbing rhetoric, stonewalling silence or restrictive regulations to find that which closest resembles the truth.

This again came to mind as I considered the approaching end of my term as RTNDA chairman. One of the reasons I have devoted so much of my time to RTNDA is because, like so many of my colleagues, I worry about the future of journalism. I worry about the quality of journalism in the intensely competitive and overly commercial environment that we operate in. And I worry that I am personally not doing enough to improve the state of affairs.

Still, I'm proud of what RTNDA has accomplished over the past 12 months, though in all honesty I deserve little personal credit. Credit lies with Barbara Cochran and her talented and hard-working staff, which has succeeded on so many fronts despite budget constraints and other obstacles. Credit also lies with the board of directors, a dedicated group of volunteers who devote countless hours to matters of finance, membership, convention planning, programs, diversity, ethics and First Amendment, while asking for little in return. Above all, credit goes to the RTNDA membership, without

whom our organization would have no means, no purpose and no future.

As I prepare to turn the gavel over to the able and steady hands of Bob Priddy, a once and future RTNDA chairman, I recognize that there is much left undone and many challenges still ahead. Of all these challenges, none, I believe, is more important than maintaining and growing our membership base.

It is no secret that in our bottom-line world, some managers and owners have chosen not to include RTNDA membership in the budgets for their newsrooms. We are extremely grateful, of course, to those owners who do support RTNDA, and we are also grateful to those individuals who feel strongly enough about our association to remain members even at their own expense. Yet we must make a stronger case to the decision-makers in our industry that a small investment in RTNDA is part of a much larger investment in the success of their stations, in the success of the radio and television industry and in the quality of journalism in our society.

We must also make certain that our members feel a strong connection to RTNDA, have a stake in its future and the ability to participate in its governance. That is why I asked Mark Millage, news director of KELO-TV in Sioux Falls, SD, and a past chair of RTNDA, to lead a Voting Rights Task Force. Its most important job will be determining whether we need reform in the criteria for active membership in our association.

Notwithstanding our name, the Radio-Television News Directors Association is clearly an organization that represents the full spectrum of news professionals. Our membership ranks include not only news directors, but anchors, reporters, producers, assignment editors, videographers and so on, not to mention educators, students, retirees and many others.



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Chairman's Column

I want all of our members to feel that they have a voice in the affairs of RTNDA, but how we achieve that goal while maintaining our unique identity is a delicate question that deserves substantial thought. I encourage members with an opinion on this topic to contact Mark and make known their views.

No matter the outcome of these and other important issues, I am confident that RTNDA will retain its strong presence and powerful voice. It will always help journalists in their daily pursuit of the "truth," if you will, and never take the easy way out.

Far too much is at stake. We must hold to the same values as Sig Mickelson, Jack Shelley, John Hogan and others like them—those who in 1947 founded an organization called the Radio News Directors Association, dedicated to broadcast news standards and the defense of the First Amendment.

Thank you again for the wonderful privilege you have given me to serve the membership of RTNDA.—Bob Salsberg is RTNDA's chairman and a broadcast editor for the Associated Press in Boston. You can reach him at bsalsberg@ap.org.



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A Strong Presence in the Capital

RTNDA's headquarters gives all electronic journalists a voice in Washington.

For its first 25 years, RTNDA was a grassroots organization run by volunteers. But by 1970, freedom of information issues were becoming so important that the leaders of RTNDA decided they needed a voice in Washington to guard against government interference in the gathering and reporting of news. And so in 1974, RTNDA opened its Washington office.

The RTNDA leaders of the 1970s acted wisely. There is almost always something on the Washington agenda that requires a voice on behalf of RTNDA members. From a federal ban on news helicopters to the restrictions on health information created in the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) to increased government secrecy fostered since the terror attacks of September 11, RTNDA members have needed a representative to fight on their behalf. That's one of the most important activities the Washington office undertakes for you.

Recently, the hot topic has been the reallocation of 2GHz spectrum currently used by television stations for electronic newsgathering. To clear the way for mobile satellite service (MSS) operators, and now advanced wireless services (AWS), the Federal Communications Commission is requiring incumbent Broadcast Auxiliary Service (BAS) licensees to give up two of the seven analog channels they currently use principally to send transmissions from remote locations to the studio for newscasts, sports or other live pro-



grams. In reaching that decision, the FCC determined that new digital technology would eventually permit broadcasters to operate seven narrowband digital channels in the spectrum currently used for five analog channels.

In devising its reallocation plan, the FCC determined, consistent with its longstanding policy, that MSS operators would be required to negotiate with and, presumably, to compensate incumbent BAS licensees for the costs of relocating to the narrower band. In December, however, the FCC issued a report and order in its 2GHz proceeding containing a revised relocation plan that places additional and significant burdens on ENG spectrum users, particularly in small and medium markets.

The FCC decided that MSS operators would be required to negotiate with stations in the Top 30 markets to compensate them for the expense of acquiring the digital equipment necessary to switch to narrowband ENG operations before the broadcasters would be forced to give up two channels. But BAS incumbents in markets

31-210 would be required to vacate the two channels without receiving any compensation, without the right to negotiate for compensation, and without adequate assurance of future compensation.

These broadcasters are faced with a Hobson's choice—continue to use analog equipment for ENG with two fewer channels and the potential for significant interference, or absorb the costs of converting to digital ENG operations without negotiating leverage and without much hope of being reimbursed by MSS.

When we got word of the FCC's revised plan, RTNDA and its allies went to work. With the Association for Maximum Service Television (MSTV), the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and the Society of Broadcast Engineers (SBE), we asked the FCC to reconsider its decision. In February, we met with FCC commissioners and key FCC staff to make our case. We plan to meet with members of Congress.

What are our principal arguments? In reaching its conclusion that the revised plan would only result in minor inconveniences for small- and medium-market broadcasters, the FCC apparently assumed that stations outside the Top 30 markets do not offer as much news and do not make the same use of ENG spectrum to gather and provide news as do large-market stations. Armed with research conducted by RTNDA, we stressed that stations in markets 31 and smaller do just as much news and use the 2GHz spectrum allocated to them just as much as stations in larger markets.

Moreover, we question why the FCC is asking these small- to mid-market broadcasters—whose budgets may already be strained—to subsidize the MSS by forcing them to bear the entire cost of relocation. In its petition filed with the FCC, MSTV estimates the conversion will cost stations \$387 million.



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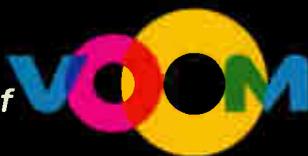
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If stations decide to stick with their analog equipment, there will be problems. Not only will congestion increase, but SBE commissioned a study by Microwave Radio Communications that shows that the digital and analog ENG systems are fundamentally incompatible. All stations in a market must use the same system, or none will be able to operate without significant interference problems.

In addition, under the FCC's new plan, more profitable stations could force the less profitable to buy new equipment they may not be able to afford, or the less-profitable could prevent the entire market from making a switch. Some stations that can't afford to make the switch might drop news altogether.

Another problem with the incompatibility of the systems comes when a Top 30 market wants to cover news in a 31+ market, or vice versa. If the smaller market is still operating with analog equipment, the two will have tremendous difficulty covering a significant event. Recently, a crane collapsed on a major highway in Toledo. The story was big news in Toledo, where the local stations covered events live for four hours. Stations from Detroit also came to cover the story. If the new rules had taken effect, stations in the two cities might have been using incompatible systems and might not have been able to adequately cover an important story that affected thousands of people.

Local news could be diminished in other ways. Since 37 state capitals are in markets 31+, coverage of state government by large-market stations would become much more difficult.

A final argument comes from the realm of homeland security. The FCC's own Media Reliability and Security Council recommends that stations that experience a disaster be prepared to transmit using ENG facilities if their studio and station equipment cannot function. That, of course, would be

much more difficult—maybe impossible—under the new rules.

The impact that the plan would have on local news—particularly in small and medium markets—appeared to make an impression on the FCC commissioners. It is also a powerful argument with House and Senate members. Particularly at a time when Congress and the FCC are stressing the importance of local news and the need to maintain a variety of voices providing news and information programming in local communities, the FCC's ENG relocation plan would work in contravention of these policy initiatives.

What can individual RTNDA members do? First, become familiar with the issue and understand the impact on your station. We notified all RTNDA members of a web conference in March for general managers, chief engineers and news directors to explain how to plan for the change.

If you have a good, concrete example of how the new system would affect local news coverage, please send it to me by email or phone. You also can make sure that your local representative or senator is aware of the harm this could do to your local coverage.

RTNDA will keep working on this issue, just as we have on others in the past. Many stations remember how we fought to get news helicopters back in the air when they were grounded for months after 9/11. We tried to prevent HIPAA restrictions on health information from being adopted, but lost that fight to privacy advocates. Still, we continue to work with other press groups to expose the damage to public interest created by HIPAA regulations, and we created a guide to HIPAA so journalists won't give up more access to information than they need to. As time goes on, more people, and key members of Congress, agree the rules should be changed.

Homeland security fears triggered a whole new set of concerns. RTNDA successfully fought against the passage

of an Official Secrets Act, but other laws and regulations are limiting access to information and records. As those laws are translated to the state and local level, RTNDA members will find themselves confronting new obstacles and greater secrecy. RTNDA will continue to keep members informed and to fight back to keep government open and accessible.

These efforts are demanding and time-consuming. We conduct research, prepare filings and participate in dozens of meetings. We hire legal counsel to assist in these efforts.

Of course, our fights don't benefit RTNDA members exclusively. These battles are on behalf of all electronic journalists. But it is RTNDA membership dues and activities such as the annual convention that support our efforts. That's why we work so hard to keep our member base and expand it to include more journalists. That's why your dues and participation are so important.

Without RTNDA, electronic journalists would be voiceless in Washington. And that could be a very dangerous thing.—Barbara Cochran is president of RTNDA. You can reach her at president@rtnda.org.

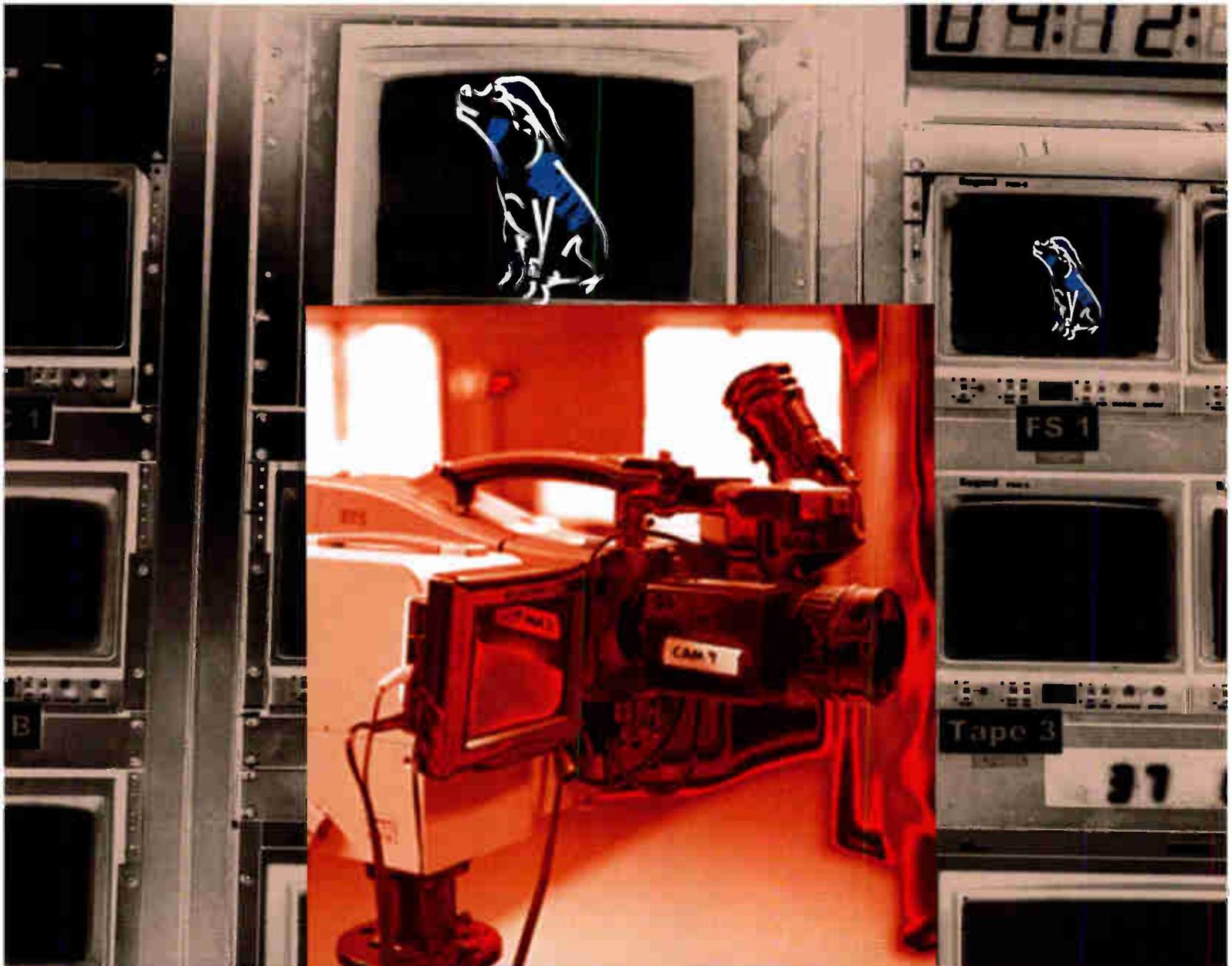
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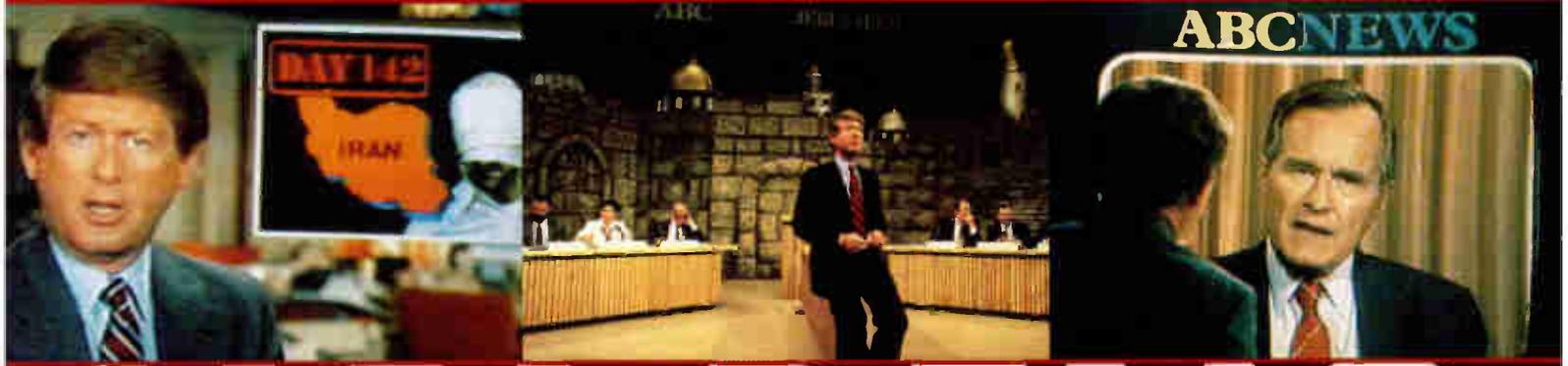
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HOLDING

Attendees of last year's RTNDA convention in Las Vegas remember the powerful images of the Iraqi war that week, including the picture that will live forever in our memories of the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in the heart of Baghdad.

News junkies could satisfy their fix on this war 24 hours a day, watching as much news as they wanted. But at the end of the day, we counted on Nightline to make sense of it all. That's because anchorman Ted Koppel was embedded with the Army's Third Infantry Division fighting its way from Kuwait to Baghdad. Each night, Koppel and his Nightline crew expertly gave both the macro view of the war as well as an up-close look at how the Third ID managed crises.

Koppel's outstanding reporting from Iraq—and his return visit in January of this year—make this the ideal time to recognize his 40-year career at ABC News. Koppel is the 2004 recipient of the Paul White Award, the highest honor bestowed by RTNDA.

In an interview in his Washington office, Koppel told *Communicator* that when he first heard about the embed process, he felt compelled to go. He spent more than three years in Vietnam where the media had plenty of access to the military, but it took two and a half days to get material back to the United States for airing. When the military



THE LINE

Ted Koppel, 2004 RTNDA Paul White Award recipient, talks about the importance of substance over mass appeal.

By Dave Busiek



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promised total access in Iraq, Koppel wanted to see this war for himself.

"The difference was that the story could get back to the States not in two and a half days but in two and a half seconds. And I just wanted a piece of it," Koppel says. "I wanted to see how that was going to work. And I also truly felt that sometimes because the rule of thumb is you do those things when you're 25 or 30, and you stop doing them when you're about 45, that way a lot of the experience you've acquired over the years gets totally lost. And finally, I'm an adrenalin junkie. And [war coverage] gets your adrenalin going."

The New York Times said, "Mr. Koppel brings a cool intelligence and perspective to war coverage...." But Koppel says his approach to war coverage was no different from what he's tried to do every night for the past 24 years on *Nightline*. "I take a certain aspect of what I'd witnessed during the day and put it into some kind of context. And, where it's appropriate, some kind of historical context, and where it's not appropriate just talk about what's happened."

He says covering a war is demanding, but it's really not brain surgery. "There are few things more photogenic than a strong young man or woman carrying a weapon aboard an armored

personnel carrier or a tank or a Humvee," he says. "It just looks as though something interesting ought to be happening. And when the opening sequence is 20,000 men and women crossing into enemy territory aboard 10,000 vehicles and you don't know what's waiting on the other side of the sand dune, man, it doesn't get much more dramatic than that."

Nightline's Beginning

It was another dramatic international crisis 24 years ago that gave birth to *Nightline*. Islamic students seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran on Nov. 4, 1979, holding 52 Americans hostage. Four days later, ABC News created a special program in late night called *The Iran Crisis: America Held Hostage*.

Twelve days later, ABC News president *Roone Arledge* asked the network to let him have the time period for a few weeks to report on the Iran crisis. Ratings soared for the new program that began with the now-familiar music and an announcer saying, "America Held Hostage—Day 24!" *Frank Reynolds* anchored those first programs.

As the crisis dragged on, and the days that Americans were held hostage piled up, Koppel took over. The program's title was changed to *Nightline* on May 24, 1980. Koppel, who had

worked on the program and occasionally filled in as anchor, became its permanent host.

Koppel says he knew early on that the program would have staying power. "By the time we began doing *Nightline*, we had been doing *America Held Hostage* for five months and people couldn't get enough of it," Koppel says. ABC News took that momentum and turned it into a national treasure.

"The thought struck me very early on that if we had been able to do a program for five months now on the very same subject night after night after night, we surely ought to be able to continue doing this if we change the subject and do whatever is the most interesting subject of the day or the month," Koppel recalls. "That's pretty much the way it has worked out."

The news business has changed a lot since 1979, when cable news did not yet exist and the Internet was still 15 years away from popular acceptance. Koppel says *Nightline* succeeds because in some ways, the world really hasn't changed at all. "People are always getting into scuffles with one another. There's always a war of one kind or another," he says. "You and I have never had to worry when we get up in the morning whether we're going to be able to fill our respective

Koppel On:

Choosing meaty topics vs. fluffier subjects that might attract more viewers:

"I said several years ago—and my colleagues always remind me of it—simply because everyone in the country is talking about an event is not reason enough for Nightline to do it. Sometimes you become overpious."

Advice for college seniors about to graduate from J School:

"You just wasted four years in journalism school. Go out and get yourself an education. I really do think the most important thing that young people can bring to the profession of journalism is an education in *something*. I don't care if it's economics or history or foreign policy...but know something about something and at least be able to read and write the language. Also, read some of the great writers in your own language, and if you can, learn somebody else's language."

Iraq and WMDs:

"Was I a believer at that time? Oh, devoutly so. The thought that any minute there might be a biochemical attack was with us morning, noon and night. And a couple of times when we took incoming and someone made the sign this could be biological or chemical, I had that gas mask on in less than nine seconds, believe me. I had practiced so that I could do that. And I didn't feel foolish at all putting that gas mask on because I really believed, as everybody else did at that point, that this was going to happen at some point. And the fact that, ultimately, there was nothing caught all of us by surprise."

The coming presidential election:

"What will determine whether George W. Bush is re-elected or a Democrat is elected is something neither you nor I have thought of yet. It's almost always a surprise."

The New York Times said Koppel's reporting brought "a cool intelligence and perspective to war coverage."



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half hours. There are days that are better than others."

Nightline has endured because the premise has been pretty simple. "Take what we consider to be the most interesting story of the day. Go to the most interesting places in the world. Talk to the most interesting people who are willing to talk to us," Koppel says. "Then put that together using liberal amounts of ABC's money, and stir. And if we can't make it interesting we shouldn't be the ones doing it."

Koppel is known as a thorough interrogator. His questions are intelligent and usually elicit answers that inform the audience. He doesn't let interviewees glide over the top of the subject. He says preparation is one of the keys to a successful interview. "Know your subject. But then leave the notes behind. Different things work for different people. Some people don't feel comfortable unless they have a list of questions in front of them."

As I tried (unsuccessfully) to hide a reporter's notebook full of questions under my leg, Koppel continued. "I've found the best kind of interview is a conversation. And the best kind of conversation is where people listen to one another. If you conduct an interview in which you are so focused on, 'I'd better get to question number 7; you're going to miss out on some great stuff.'"

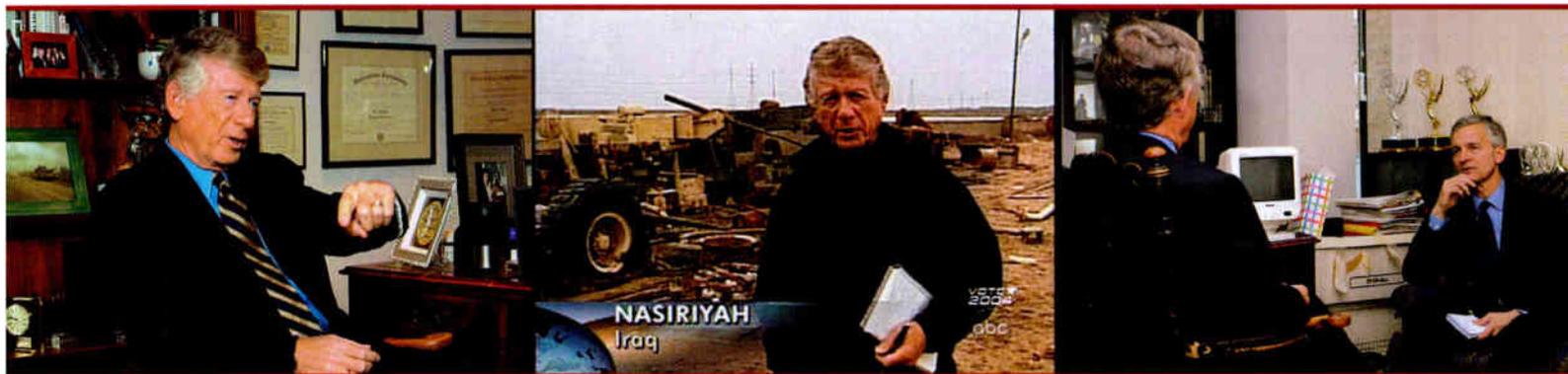
World Traveler

Koppel began his career at ABC News 40 years ago in New York City. He was born in Lancashire, England, and traces his passion for journalism to his father's habit of listening to BBC rebroadcasts of Edward R. Murrow's reports from London during the blitz.

"I first heard Ed Murrow when I was about 4 or 5 years old," Koppel recalls. "And, believe it or not, I remember thinking at that time, wow, that's exciting stuff. I cannot remember ever having wanted to do anything other than be a reporter. That's all I ever wanted to be."

He moved to the United States with his parents when he was 13 years old. He graduated from Syracuse University with a bachelor's of science and obtained a master's degree in political science and mass communications research from Stanford. Koppel was working as a copy boy at a radio station in New York in 1963 when a colleague told him he had just obtained a reporting job at ABC News and that the network was looking to add several other reporters for a new program called *The Flair Reports*.

Koppel says he interviewed for the job, wrote a few scripts and cut a demo tape. ABC called him and said he wrote well and sounded good, but they considered him too young to be an



ABC News correspondent. He was 23 years old and making \$90 a week. ABC News offered him \$175 to start as a writer, but not a reporter.

"I've always been stubborn and stupid. I said no," Koppel remembers. "I [told them I] want the job that I applied for and it doesn't make any sense to me that you're worried about my age. You say I'm a good writer and you say I sound good and unless you preface every time on the air by saying, 'Ted Koppel is only 23,' who's going to know? And I left."

Two days later, ABC called and offered him the reporting job. He took it and started on *The Flair Reports* on the same day as another new correspondent named Charles Wood. But ABC already had an announcer named Charles Wood so Koppel says they asked this new employee to pick a different name. Wood chose his mother's maiden name, Osgood. And so Ted Koppel and Charles Osgood began their network careers together on the very same day in New York.

Koppel has been a fixture for so long on *Nightline* that fans often don't know about his long reporting career prior to 1980. He became the Miami Bureau Chief in 1968, where his assignments included Latin America. In 1969, he was Hong Kong Bureau Chief, where he covered stories from Vietnam to Australia. From 1971 to 1980, he was chief diplomatic correspondent for ABC News, covering the State Department. Koppel flew nearly a quarter million miles covering Henry Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy."

Looking back on his career, Koppel says he's proudest of a weeklong series of broadcasts on apartheid in South

Koppel returned to Iraq in January 2004 to follow up on his earlier war coverage, visiting Nasiriyah and other locations where resistance remained active. RTNDA past chairman Dave Busiek met with Koppel in February (right).

Africa in 1985. "We put that subject on the radar screen and I'm very, very proud of that," he says.

He also points to a 1988 town meeting in the Middle East to generate dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian citizens. "Whether or not they were going to get a huge audience, we've tried to explain the complicated stories. We've tried to put the stories that really do have meaning for people on the front burner for at least a half hour a night."

A Lasting Legacy

Only one question produced a long pause, and that was when I asked how he would like people to regard him.

"[I'd like to be regarded] as someone who never gave in to the baser appeals of our industry—and I don't mean that to sound as pompous as I know that it does," Koppel says. "It's become so easy now to focus on the stories that have mass appeal rather than significance or importance. It has become much more difficult because the industry has become so fragmented that the audience we could once take for granted we now have to battle for."

Away from the office, Koppel is writing a novel that he'd like to finish. He enjoys riding his motorcycle, running, hiking and playing tennis. And he's looking forward to writing his speech to deliver to RTNDA attendees when he accepts the Paul White Award.

Koppel joins a list of the giants of broadcast news who have won the Paul

White Award—Murrow, Cronkite, Brinkley, Severeid, Chancellor. "It is wonderful to be included on that list, because this is a peer-review process. It's people in our business who've made that decision," Koppel says. "And that gives me great pleasure and enormous gratitude. I always dreamed of one day being able to count myself among those guys on any list. And to have it be as one of the recipients of the Paul White Award is a big deal."

"As you run through that litany of names, I know every one of those guys," he says. "I grew up admiring those guys... wanting to be like those guys."

As for the future, Koppel says he has no plans. "I hope I die in the job," he says with a smile, while leaving the impression he just wasn't ready to discuss his plans.

"In the final analysis, that's what you want to do when you're nearer the end of your career instead of the beginning," he says. "To sum it up a little bit and say a few things that may have some meaning to younger people in the business."—Dave Busiek is RTNDA's past chairman, and news director of KCCI-TV in Des Moines, IA.

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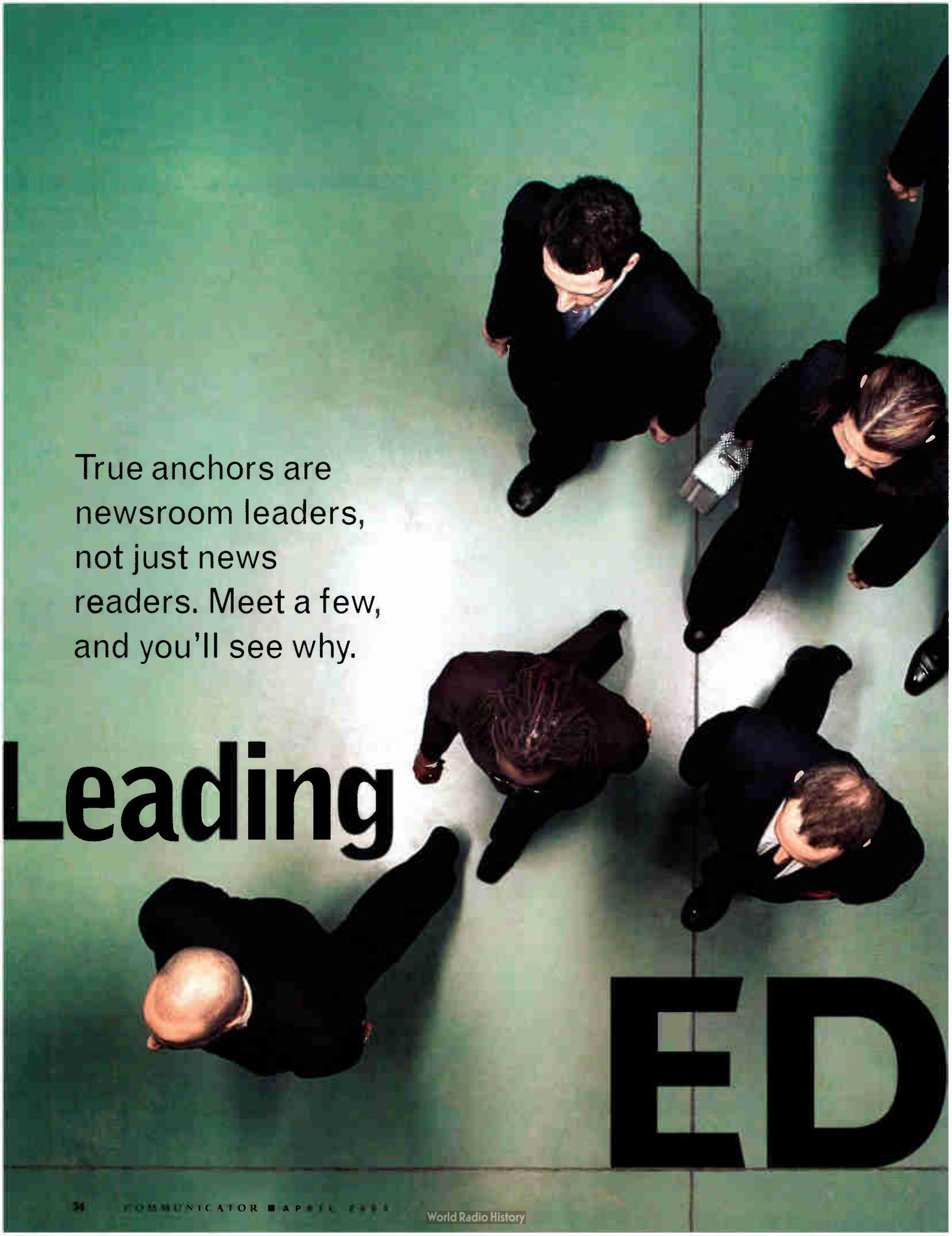
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Leading

ED



By Mike Cavender

GE

When viewers think about their favorite newscast, it's the anchors who most often first come to mind.

"One of the reasons TV news comes across as more credible than other forms of journalism is because the viewers make a connection to the anchors," says Jill Geisler, who heads the Leadership and Management Program at The Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, FL. "Since they are the face of the news, the voice they carry forward needs to be an informed one."

That informed voice is best achieved, she says, when anchors are active leaders rather than passive participants in the editorial process. But creating an environment where anchor leadership is encouraged on a daily basis can be a challenging goal. Geisler, like many news directors, knows that only too well.

A former anchor and news director herself, Geisler directs Poynter's "TV Anchors as Newsroom Leaders" seminar. It's one of the institute's most popular offerings. Last year, 33 anchors enrolled in the program—twice the usual number for other Poynter seminars.

One of the lessons taught in the program is that to be a successful leader, you must first develop the ability to influence those around you.

"The three key elements to having real influence on others are competence, integrity and empathy," Geisler says. "The best leaders are empathetic and help their co-workers understand that they have their best interests at heart."

Geisler says when an anchor or a manager accomplishes these goals, they have the influence they need to provide true leadership.

"The best anchors get involved in the editorial process early in their day—usually with the editorial meeting," she says. "When the process works well, reporters in the field will talk with the anchors as well as the producers and managers as they develop their stories. That way, a connection is developed between the on- and off-air staffs that results in better stories and, ultimately, a better newscast."

Set the Tone

In small markets especially, it's not unusual to find anchors who have more experience and tenure in their communities than the producers and writers with whom they work. As a result, they often can bring important depth to stories and editorial plans. Even in shops with more experienced managers and production staffs, anchors provide another "voice" and a perspective that can have a significant impact on the overall news product.

Mike Jacobs, a 27-year veteran of the anchor desk at WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee, knows what it means to be a leader. His station, by most industry measures, has one of the top television newsrooms in the country. A stable staff both on and off the air along with scores of journalism awards and an enviable ratings track record all combine to put this NBC affiliate on a lofty perch among its peers. And its anchors play an important role in keeping the news machinery humming efficiently.

"Just like other anchors here, I participate each day in the morning and afternoon editorial meetings and

"Our anchors are a very valuable resource not only to the newsroom, but to the community as well. Their involvement is one of the key reasons why our journalism is so strong."

—John LaPorte, news director

spend time with the producers working on the rundown," Jacobs says. A former investigative reporter, Jacobs also still regularly covers stories while maintaining his duties behind the desk at 4 and 6 p.m. each weekday.

At KPRC-TV in Houston, anchor Khambrel Marshall says he has a lot of opportunity to influence the morning newscast—one of two daily programs he anchors. "There are fewer hands on the show in the morning," he explains. "I do a lot of writing and rewriting and have input into how the shows lay out."

Marshall says it sets a better tone in the newsroom when the anchor is willing to "roll up his sleeves" and work on

the programs. But, he says, it's important to work as an equal with the production team.

"You have to be careful to strike a balance so that you don't irritate the producers and others who work hard on the shows," he says. "The goal should be to contribute, not to 'big foot' the process."

With 30 years in the business under his belt, Marshall says he learned early on the importance of anchors "stepping up" when it comes to the editorial process. He has spent a number of years in heavy spot news markets like Miami and Houston, where that proved particularly true.

"In breaking news situations, anchor leadership is critical," Marshall explains. Providing clarity to the viewers on a fast-developing story is paramount, he says, and the best way to do that is to be involved in every aspect of the story—on and off the air.

"Tropical Storm Allison was a good example," Marshall recalls. "I worked a lot behind the scenes in addition to being on the air for long stretches at a time."

Geisler calls that an example of an anchor's "skills without script." And those skills are developed best by anchors who take their leadership roles seriously. For many of them, the seminal test of their leadership ability came on September 11. Some months later, Geisler wrote in an article for Poynter: "September 11 separated news readers from news leaders...September 11 and its aftermath demanded the best of anchors as journalistic leaders, not prompter-bound performers."

The reason: September 11, at least in its first day, came with no script. As local anchors around the country worked to make sense of this horrific story, the demands placed on them were tremendous. The story required them to have a broad knowledge base, the ability to process continually changing information, interviewing finesse and a real sensitivity to what Geisler calls "the ethical land mines that often litter the field of live, breaking news." And on top of all that, anchors had to utilize those skills on the air for many hours at a time.



Anchors play a key role at WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee. Pictured from left to right are news director John LaPorte, anchor Mike Jacobs and producer Kelly Frank.

the set design FACTOR

BY AMY MILLER

After seven years on the air, FOX News Channel's Studio A — home of The O'Reilly Factor and Fox & Friends, two of the top programs on cable — was overdue for a renovation. And so FOX executives called on Blyth Design, a broadcast set design and art-direction company.



FOX News Studio A

When he got the call from FOX, Blyth Design owner and principal designer Graham Blyth immediately began sizing up the street level midtown-Manhattan studio space. "We wanted the studio to have a modern, inviting look," explains Blyth. "It needed to be both sophisticated and homey."

With that in mind, Blyth and his team began designing the 1,500-square foot studio, keeping the schedule and budget front of mind as well. "We make sure the money is spent where the camera can see it," he says.

pieces and rebuilt the new set tighter to the walls, with rich wood tones, aluminum accent trim, and a gloss black floor.

Blyth appreciates that good lighting breathes life into a set, and so he added columns filled with cutting-edge LED accent lights that can change colors. "Graham understands the limitations of the TV technical system and how everything is affected by light," says renowned lighting designer Imero Fiorentino. "He knows what will work."

Once the design was approved by the

client, Blyth drafted the set, which ensured that every measurement was accurate, and provided swatches of all materials. Blyth Design also coordinated the construction of the FOX set, but installation presented one last challenge. With FOX News' fast-paced schedule, the studio is never dark. But for one week last fall, it was — and it went live again with a great new look thanks to the team at Blyth Design.

For more information on Blyth Design, visit www.blythdesign.com.

Blyth Design understands our artistic ideas and studio space requirements. They consistently produce an ingenious and resourceful solution for our needs."

—Richard O'Brien,
Senior Vice President, Creative Director,
FOX News Channel

Blyth uses 3D computer software, scanning in the colors and textures of materials to create an exact rendering of his proposed set design. He provides multiple angle shots to accurately plot specific camera blocking.

Studio A received a complete overhaul. "The only thing we kept from the old set was the thermostat cover," Blyth says, only half kidding. He got rid of the bulky set

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Stay Involved

Longtime news consultant and former Pittsburgh news director Joe Rovitto is adamant about the need for anchors to be involved in the editorial process every day. That way, he says, they'll be better prepared to deal with even the most unthinkable stories.

"Anchors who are involved tend to be more passionate about their on-air work and that often translates to a better performance," he says. "I think it's vitally important to a successful news operation."

Anchor involvement also can have a positive impact on newsroom morale, Rovitto adds.

"I've seen it time and again," he observes. "Staff members feel better about themselves when they work with anchors whom they perceive as hard-working and truly concerned about what goes on the air."

Sue Stephens has spent more than 20 years as a news manager in markets like Charleston, SC, Springfield, IL, New Orleans and Atlanta. Now she's news director at KOAT-TV in Albuquerque, NM. She quickly admits she's fortunate to have anchors who are not shy about engaging in what she

calls "passionate discourse" on stories and editorial ideas. But she knows that's not the case in some other newsrooms.

"There was a time, some years back, when the emphasis was on creating 'producer-driven' or 'desk-driven' newsrooms," she observes. "While getting producers and assignment editors to take greater responsibility for the shows is a good idea, the trade-off, in some cases, has been to diminish the role of the strong anchor-leader."

A key to returning a leadership balance in the newsroom, Stephens says, is to encourage the anchors to be a part of the whole process—from beginning to end.

"Here, anchors go out each day to shoot stories, turn three or four pieces for sweeps without the help of a producer, and still find time to attend the editorial meetings and help write the shows," Stephens says.



At KPRC-TV in Houston, anchor Khambrel Marshall says it sets a better tone in the newsroom when the anchor is willing to "roll up his sleeves" and work on the programs.

The end result is a "true partnership" between the anchors and the rest of the news team. Since many anchors are opinion-leaders in their newsrooms, getting their buy-in to the approach and tone of the newscasts is important.

"If news managers take the time to help the anchors understand the philosophy, the approach and the brand of the newscast, they can help convey it to the rest of the staff, sometimes more

effectively than the management team," Stephens says.

As an anchor and reporter at WGCL-TV, Helen Neill says she tries to contribute something every day to the process at her station in Atlanta. "I came into the business thinking leadership and involvement were part of everybody's job," she recalls. "To me, it's a part of the job I really love—the discussion and debate over stories and the airing of different perspectives."

Creating an Environment for Anchor Leadership

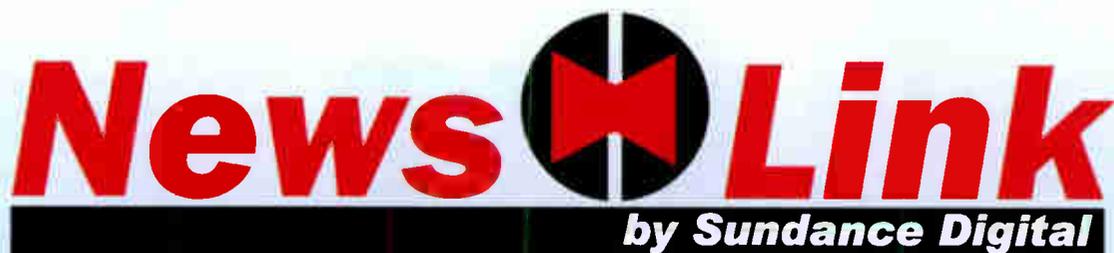
1. Advice to news directors and managers who want to build a newsroom that supports anchor leadership:

- Make editorial participation a clear part of an anchor's daily responsibilities. Formalize your expectations by making it part of the written job description.
- Involve the anchors from the beginning when it comes to major projects or coverage plans. Don't wait until everything has been decided to bring them into the process.
- Develop a team culture that supports the anchor's efforts to provide leadership and input. Help anchors and producers alike understand that the best newscast comes from collaboration—not conflict and "power-grabbing."
- Hold regular conversations, in and outside the station, between the news director and the anchor teams. These help them maintain focus on the newsroom vision. Better-informed anchors make for better advocates and better leaders.
- Create mentoring opportunities for key anchors. When they take a young staff member or trainee under their wings, everybody can benefit from the exchange of knowledge that results.

2. Advice from their colleagues to anchors who want to improve their leadership skills:



- Clarify your leadership role with your news director and other newsroom managers. Get "buy-in" from them in support of your active participation in the editorial process.
- Take a genuine interest in the stories your newsroom is covering—or not covering. Think carefully about what contributions you can make to the programs and then articulate them.
- Don't wait to be "fed" reporting or writing assignments. Step up and volunteer with your own ideas and concepts. Be pro-active in your participation.
- Collaborate—don't dictate! Sometimes acrimony can result from "power struggles" between anchors and producers. Speak up, but even more important, listen.
- Demonstrate that you have the best interests of the team—not just yourself—in mind. Then you will be accepted as a leader.



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Because she grew up in Atlanta, Neill is in a position to help new staff members understand some of the nuances of the city. "Mentoring is part of it (leadership)," she says, "and I like helping others learn, just as they help me learn."

Longtime Milwaukee resident Jacobs feels the same. "I hope I can bring some perspective to our coverage after living and working in Milwaukee all these years," he observes. "That's what I try to do."

WTMJ news director John LaPorte agrees. "Our anchors are a very valuable resource not only to the newsroom, but to the community, as well," he says. "Their involvement is one of the key reasons why our journalism is so strong."

Marshall's leadership extends to his activities outside the newsroom, as well. As board chairman of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Greater Houston and a board member of the March of Dimes, he believes his involvement in civic groups gives him additional insight into the community's needs and helps him be a better contributor in his newsroom.

Keep Perspective

Rovitto says good leadership is, in part, about pride. "In news, as in any business, the people who take pride in what they do and pride in the product are more likely to emerge as leaders," he says.

Another key to leadership, according to WTMJ's Jacobs, is dedication. "Be one of the hardest working people in the newsroom," he advises his anchor colleagues. "That way, you'll earn the respect of those around you and you'll be seen as a leader."

While many recognize the value in serving as a leader in the newsroom, not everyone feels invited to participate fully.

"Some anchors complain they're not included in the editorial process," Rovitto observes. "But too many of them do precious little to see that they are included. They have to find ways to get involved without waiting for others to come to them."

KPRC's Marshall agrees. He laments what he sees as a lack of effort



As an anchor and reporter at WGCL-TV in Atlanta, Helen Neill says she tries to contribute something every day.

on the part of some anchors.

"Too often, people anchor for exposure or for material gain alone, and that's too bad," he says. "It's not just about looking good on the air. It's about what you contribute."

Stephens adds that station management's perception of its anchors can affect their leadership ability. "We're always so busy giving feedback to reporters, producers and photographers about their work," she says, "that we can neglect that other really important part of our team."

She says if news managers treat their anchors as more than just news readers, many will be more comfortable participating in, and ultimately leading, the newsroom.

As in any organization that attracts strong personalities, there can sometimes be tension between anchors who want to actively participate in the news process and producers and others who see the creation of the newscast as solely their responsibility.

"In sessions at Poynter, you'll hear about this conflict from both sides," says Geisler. "Anchors often have more experience than producers. They can be authoritarian and heavy-handed at times. But the best ones are coaches."

Jacobs says the tension can be reduced by keeping your perspective.

"It's about work, but it's also about having some fun," he says. "Take your leadership role seriously, but also take time to enjoy your successes and the people you work with."

"I'm a big believer in the team concept because everybody brings something to the table," WTMJ's LaPorte

"Mentoring is part of it (leadership), and I like helping others learn, just as they help me learn."

—Helen Neill, anchor

says. "So, it's important for managers to foster an open environment in which everybody can speak their mind and offer their opinions."

But, often the most effective anchor-leaders aren't the loudest or the most forceful people in the newsroom. Subtlety, according to Neill, can work just as well.

"It's not always about making speeches and pounding fists," she observes. "It's about doing the work, day in and day out, and contributing everything you can so the newscasts can be everything you want them to be."

And that, many would agree, applies to anyone who wants to be a leader.—Mike Cavender is an Atlanta-based news and media consultant. He can be reached at mike@cavendergroup.com.

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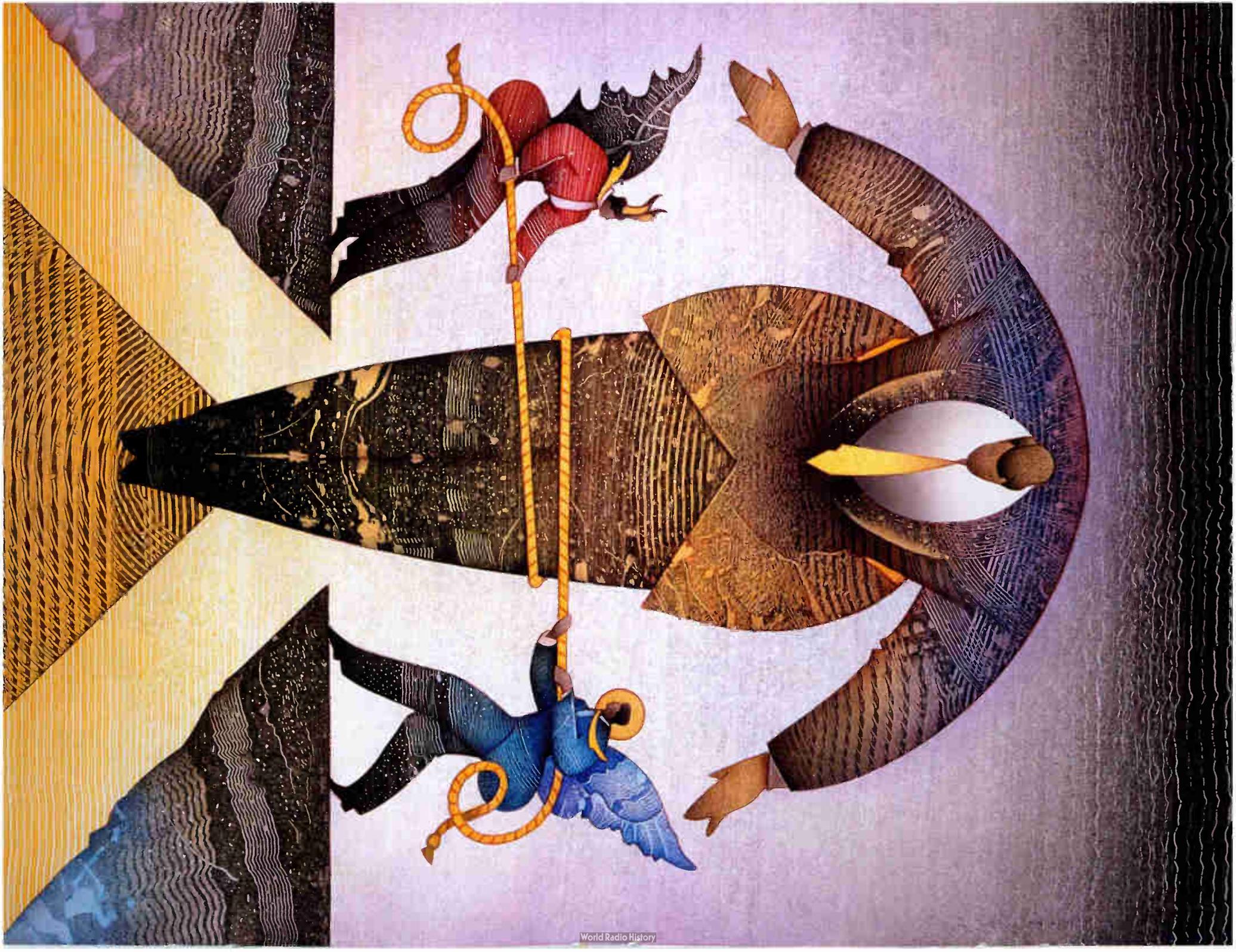


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A Crisis of Faith?

You don't have to spend much time with citizens to get an earful—or maybe two ears full—of opinion about the state of ethics in American journalism. I hear it all the time given the nature of my work—from seatmates on airplanes, from guys I play tennis with and from relatives who want to vent about journalism at family gatherings. “Let me tell you, Bob, what I think about those damn reporters and how they are covering...”

You can fill in the rest of the sentence. Covering Kobe or Arnold. Covering the Peterson trial or the latest missing child tragedy. Covering the war on terrorism or the battles in Iraq.

Sometimes the critics go beyond the news coverage to what they see as the roots of the problems. “Of course the TV reporting is sensationalistic,” some say. “They’re just out for ratings.” Or, “The reporters don’t stand a chance. The business pressures from corporate make it impossible to produce quality journalism.”

Just because my work in ethics and values makes me a logical target for

Allegations of news for sale.
Corporate juggernauts.
Sagging ratings.
Increased competition.

Is the industry facing
an ethical crisis?

By Bob Steele

these expressions doesn't mean I'm alone on the receiving end of the concerns. There's not a newsroom leader in the land who hasn't heard the complaints and condemnation, nor are the journalists in the trenches and the executives upstairs immune to barbs and bashes, some justified and some hyperbolic.

To be sure, the profession of journalism has given the public plenty of fodder when it comes to weak spots in our

ethical underbelly. Think Jayson Blair and *The New York Times*, of course. That was the mother of all ethical earthquakes in recent times. Lying, stealing, cheating by a journalist, mixed with big-time organizational system failure.

But there have been plenty of other ethical issues that created tremors on the journalistic landscape.

The war in Iraq provided particularly difficult ethical challenges. Embedded journalists were scrutinized for their ability to report with independence. And their news organizations were tested—and often criticized—for their degree of either patriotic support for or rigorous scrutiny of our government.

A wide range of critics from multiple ideological points claim journalists and journalism are biased in both process and product, in covering politics and politicians, in reporting on religion and race relations, or in storytelling about hot-button social issues from sexual orientation to sexual assault.

Ask those who are leading newsrooms and stations and you will hear substantive thoughts about the state of ethics in local television news. There is

no consensus that there is a crisis, but interviews with several leaders in electronic journalism reveal plenty of concern about the challenges they and their colleagues face.

Angie Kucharski, news director at KCNC-TV in Denver, says the thought of an ethics crisis “might lead some to believe that journalists in today’s newsrooms are less concerned with the ethics of what they do—and how they do it—than they used to be. I am not sure that’s necessarily the case,” Kucharski says.

While acknowledging that recent high-profile instances of ethical misbehavior have received more notoriety, Kucharski believes those incidents that raise doubts for the public help us re-dedicate ourselves to ethics. “[They heighten] our willingness to explain our decisions and be accountable to the public for the decisions we’ve made,” she says.

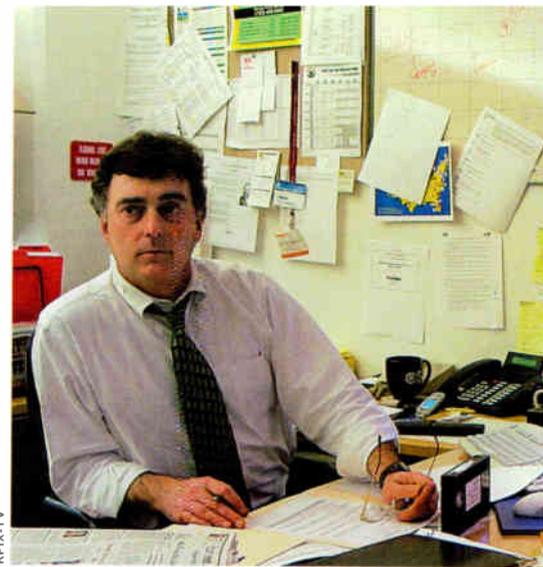
Polly Van Doren-Orr, who is news director at KOLR-TV

and KDEB-TV in Springfield, MO, doesn’t believe our industry is in crisis mode. “I do believe the Jayson Blair scandal and subsequent resignations at *The New York Times* sparked debate in good newsrooms across the country,” she admits. “And that’s a very positive thing...the best way to circumvent a values meltdown is to have plenty of good dialogue with news staffers every day. A culture of values is one of the most hard-won assets of a successful news operation.”

Dan Rosenheim, the news director at KPIX-TV in San Francisco, also questions whether we are facing an ethics crisis, while acknowledging the problems.

“Overall, I think journalists may have a better-developed sense of ethics and balance than has historically been the case.”

That said, Rosenheim emphasizes that “the struggle to preserve journalistic integrity—like the struggle to preserve such democratic freedoms as free



Dan Rosenheim, news director at KPIX-TV, says recent high-profile ethical breakdowns may help today’s journalists have a better-developed sense of ethics and balance than has historically been the case.

speech—never ends. The proverbial wolf is always at the door, whether it takes the form of sales departments attempting to influence news or outside entities attempting to buy favorable treatment.”

Q and A

What are the essential ethical, values and credibility challenges facing electronic journalists in 2004?

The biggest challenge I see is for journalists to pursue difficult stories that question powerful institutions: investigative reporting about government or corporations, clear reporting on terror threats and national security, persistent reporting about the war in Iraq. All [of those] are examples of the kind of reporting that takes courage and commitment from individual journalists and their news organizations.

—Barbara Cochran, RTNDA president

To be able to deal responsibly with the increasing pressure to do more with less. We should be mindful that the process of ethical decision-making should not be a casualty in these circumstances. Rather, it is one of the key things we all need to do to enhance our storytelling and protect franchises.

—Steve Minium, senior VP, news and marketing, Clear Channel Television

Newsrooms need to look deep within their own ranks and examine their own management practices to ensure that voices—especially contrarian voices—are being heard and encouraged.

—Forrest Carr, news director, WFLA-TV, Tampa, FL

Viewers distrust us, in part because our newsrooms are opaque. We work in big buildings with tight security and tortuous telephone trees that make it difficult for viewers to talk to a human being. We never explain why we make the decisions we do, and we are rarely called to account for them.

—Dan Rosenheim, news director, KPIX-TV, San Francisco

Given the challenges, what responses and remedies do you advocate?

Make sure that ethical decision-making becomes more of an integral part of each news organization’s culture...not just “something extra” that only gets occasional attention. And that everyone in the process is empowered to raise a question and “hit



Candy Altman, vice president, news, for Hearst-Argyle Television, stills hears about deals being made to sell news content that should not be for sale.

An Intersection of Values

For Forrest Carr, news director at WFLA-TV in Tampa, FL, the situation is already grave. "We are way past the

crisis stage and well into structural deterioration—but it's not just about ethics," he cautions.

"[Local television news] is under attack on every possible front," Carr says. "Audience fragmentation [leads] to shrinking viewership, which leads to shrinking revenues, which leads to shrinking coverage resources, which leads to shrinking quality coverage, which leads to shrinking viewer confidence, which leads to shrinking viewership, etc., etc."

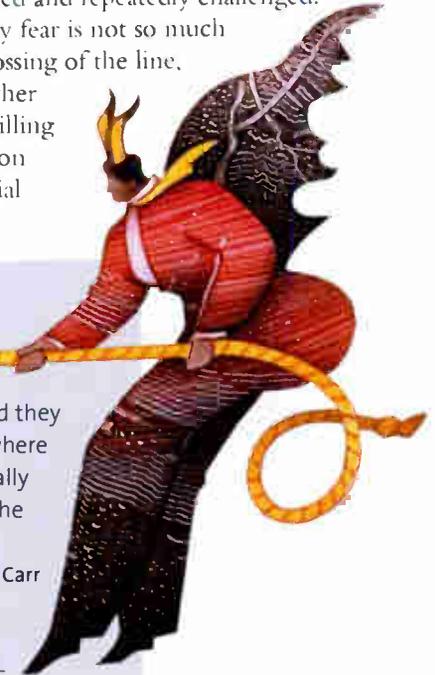
Those tensions between business values and journalism values are major concerns, says RTNDA president Barbara Cochran. "Stations are trying to maximize their profits, and the sales departments can come up with some ingenious schemes to generate revenues that may involve the news department," she says. "The best test for such plans is how it would look if it were exposed on the front page of the local newspaper. If it would be embarrassing, it's probably not a good idea.

Stations that ignored that test have had to change their plans. The cost in credibility is huge compared to the dollars earned in revenue."

John Lansing has thought a great deal about this intersection of journalism values and business values. He dealt with it as a news director and general manager before becoming a corporate executive for Scripps Broadcasting.

"The key challenge for journalists is learning how to manage the editorial process amidst the growing encroachment of commercial interests in broadcast television news," Lansing says. "That said, I believe the bright line continues to separate commercialism from journalism in most broadcast newsrooms, but it is a line that is often discussed and repeatedly challenged.

"My fear is not so much the crossing of the line, but rather the chilling effect on editorial



the pause button" if they believe that an individual or group in the newsroom is engaging in questionable activity.

—Steve Minium

I am a strong supporter of continuing education for our personnel. Participation in workshops at Poynter and the RTNDA convention, among others, allows journalists the opportunity to develop new skills and grow as leaders and decision-makers....We simply cannot operate in a vacuum. There is so much to be learned by sharing ideas and concerns.

—Polly Van Doren-Orr, news director, KOLR-KDEB-TV, Springfield, MO

As the worlds of the news consumer and the news-gatherer change, one of our biggest challenges as journalists will be to keep one thing constant—our abilities to evolve our processes to include the human elements of conscience and responsibility. And to realize that there will always be accountability for this to the people we serve.

—Angie Kucharski, news director, KCNC-TV, Denver

Discriminating viewers are out there, and they do count. I encourage all stations everywhere to state what they stand for journalistically and provide a feedback mechanism for the public to hold them to it.

—Forrest Carr

For staff, stations should have ongoing opportunities to discuss ethical and credibility challenges. Sometimes managers think guidelines and practices are clearer than they actually are. It helps to take time out to make sure everyone understands what the station's practices are, and to give staff an opportunity to discuss their concerns.

—Barbara Cochran

We need to continue discussing...the issues, incidents and possible solutions to maintaining our integrity. We need constantly to educate journalists about these issues, and a key way to do this, I think, is regional seminars that allow attendance by journalists from smaller markets without a large expenditure of time or money on their part.

—Dan Rosenheim



KCNC-TV

KCNC-TV news director Angie Kucharski says high-profile ethical stumbles make news managers more apt to explain decisions and be accountable to the public.

decision-making to avoid further conflicts. It is probably the sin of omission that is least talked about and may be having the greatest negative effect," says Lansing, who is now executive vice president for E.W. Scripps Networks.

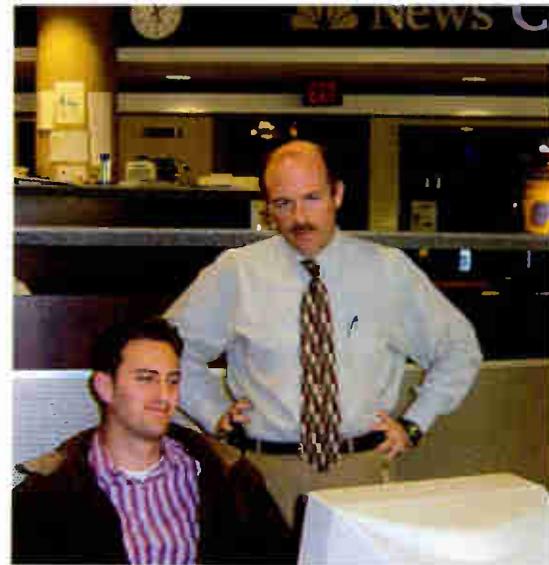
Candy Altman also views these

challenges from the corporate level. She is vice president, news, for Hearst-Argyle Television, and says the news/sales line ethical dilemma continues to rear its ugly head.

"Thankfully, our company is very clear on this issue," Altman says, "but I still hear horror stories about deals being made to sell news content that should not be for sale."

Carr knows this scenario firsthand. His station was the focus of national attention in 2003 when some critics suggested that WFLA was engaging in pay-for-play journalism with interviews and content in a program called Daytime. Critics said the show looked like a news product and carried the station's seal of journalistic credibility. Carr said the program was strictly entertainment, not news, and was not produced by the station's news department.

Carr paints a picture filled with multiple challenges for local television



WFLA-TV news director Forrest Carr (standing) thinks the problems loom large, but that those who remain committed to the traditional values of journalism and service will endure in the long run.

journalism. "Pressures to find 'new ways' to generate revenue are at an all-time high," Carr says. "Our society does need to recognize that the financial model that's made local television

The Public Perception: Views From Viewers

Is there an ethics crisis in television news? If so, what's the reason for the crisis?

Crisis maybe isn't quite the right word, more like finally nearing the bottom of a slow, steady decline. News journalism of all types was once considered a fairly noble public service, but as more players have entered the game...competition has intensified and the winners have been those who've approached it as more of a big-business entertainment industry... Television news must compete with hundreds of stations to immediately get our channel-surfing attention and keep it; therefore, hype and drama rule the day.

—Pam Mahling, New York Mill, MN

A crisis implies that something is at a critical point. I don't think that TV journalists are any more or less ethical than they have ever been. The issue is one of objectivity—I think it is unrealistic to believe that journalists don't

bring their own world view into their reporting.

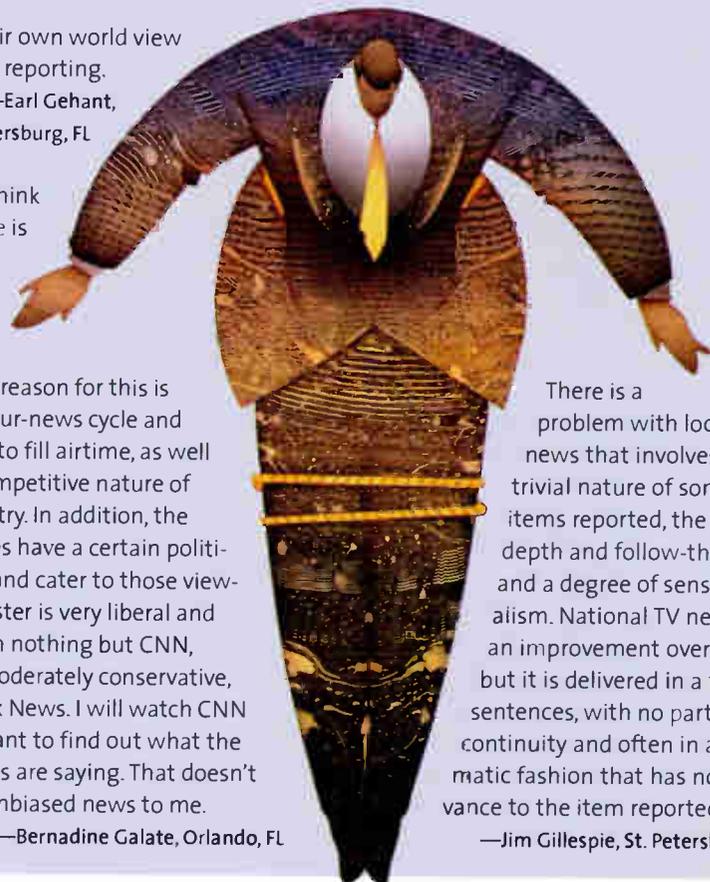
—Earl Gehant,

St. Petersburg, FL

Yes, I do think that there is a crisis in the television media. I

think the reason for this is the 24-hour-news cycle and the need to fill airtime, as well as the competitive nature of the industry. In addition, the companies have a certain political slant and cater to those viewers. My sister is very liberal and will watch nothing but CNN, while I, moderately conservative, watch Fox News. I will watch CNN when I want to find out what the Democrats are saying. That doesn't feel like unbiased news to me.

—Bernadine Galate, Orlando, FL



There is a problem with local TV news that involves the trivial nature of some items reported, the lack of depth and follow-through, and a degree of sensationalism. National TV news is an improvement over local but it is delivered in a few sentences, with no particular continuity and often in a dramatic fashion that has no relevance to the item reported.

—Jim Gillespie, St. Petersburg, FL

news possible for decades is disintegrating." Yet, Carr retains hope.

"I don't think all is lost and still believe that those who remain committed to the traditional values of journalism and service will endure in the long run," Carr says. "But it's a matter of faith, not fact."

Lansing believes that in the end, the best defense of journalistic values is education—education in the profession of journalism.

"We should arm [journalists] with the knowledge and vocabulary to meet the debate of commercialization at a holistic level, not simply argue for independence," Lansing argues. "Raising the level of understanding among all the interested parties... can help diminish the emotional arguments with stark, oversimplified alternatives and introduce a value system that others can buy into, and, when appropriate, work within the system to continue to accomplish the goals of

practicing excellent journalism while running a good business."—Bob Steele is the Nelson Poynter scholar for journalism values at The Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, FL. He conducted the interviews for this article by email exchange in late January and early February.

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What do you see as the essential ethical, values and credibility challenges facing television journalists?

The major challenge is acting professionally and objectively so a report is balanced, accurate and not overly hyped for audience appeal. Because of time constraints TV news often must diminish balance in major stories.

—Jim Gillespie

We should be hearing more about the crisis in our schools, etc., but that's just not exciting enough. Waste in government could become a weekly series! The news channels could be a great facilitator in our country but have fallen short of late.

—Bernadine Galate

Given those challenges and examples, what remedies do you suggest?

Keep responsible journalism in the forefront. Focus on facts and verify before going live. Beware of unnamed or anonymous sources that could add to

lack of credibility. Shy away from sensationalized celebrity stories crossing over into mainstream news.

—Jennifer Moss and Terri Behling,
Bradenton, FL

I would like to see television/cable news companies have a review based on a code of ethics that is predetermined. A "Mission Statement." I know that things happen so fast that a huge review board isn't possible, but there needs to be a culture of morality that seems obvious to the producers, etc.

—Bernadine Galate

Maybe hiring an editorial ombudsman. Maybe citizen advisory boards can sit in on newsroom meetings. Maybe there should be a super-hyped Academy Awards-type ceremony for news, with stringent guidelines, and awards for ethics and professionalism. After all, what gets rewarded gets done!

—Pam Mahling



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Helping

A look at what stations do to stay connected to their

With a bra gripped in his hand, Colin Campbell nervously approached Ellen DeGeneres, unsure of what to expect.

His mission was simple: Get the star to autograph the undergarment.

“I walked up with a bra and asked her if she’d sign it,” says the director of marketing at WWDC-FM, a rock station that serves the greater Washington area. “She thought I was joking. And then I explained it to her, and she was like, ‘Oh wow, that’s great! That’s really different.’”

The autographed cups joined the station’s “BRAuction,” part of a larger fund-raiser. “Bras Across RFK” was a joint effort between the station

and the Washington Freedom, a team that played at RFK Stadium as part of the now-defunct professional women’s soccer league. The goal: to raise money for breast cancer research at the Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University.

The station asked listeners to send in bras with a recommended \$5 donation and also staged “BRAnanzas,” in which it collected bras at area businesses or high-traffic locations where people driving by could drop them off. The collection was displayed during a Freedom home game last June, with the bras strung together and hung around the inner bowl of the stadium.

“The number of bras we ended up getting could



Hands

By Cameron McGaughy

communities while also improving their image.

have wrapped RFK five times,” Campbell says. “Our interns ended up having it go around one and a half times because it took so long to do.”

The effort raised \$26,170 through donations and close to \$6,000 through the BRAuction—which included autographed bras (not used, of course) from DeGeneres, tennis star Venus Williams, soccer stars Mia Hamm and Brandi Chastain, singer Alanis Morissette and NBC Today Show anchor Ann Curry. The bras were sanitized and then donated to the Dinner Program for Homeless Women, a Washington-based charity that helps women and children.

“It was kind of funny...we overheard people in

the stands, and they were trying to figure out why the hell there were a bunch of bras hanging around,” Campbell says. “Obviously, they weren’t our listeners...” But they quickly caught on, and will undoubtedly never forget the effort.

“People get it into their minds that if you’re not an NPR station, you’re strictly in it for the dough,” Campbell says. “But there are quite a few of us who want to have the best of both worlds. It’s a win-win for us. We give back to the community, and then the community remembers things we do.”

Can you say that about your community outreach initiatives? And if you can’t, how can you change them for the better?

Community Affair

Years ago, the Federal Communications Commission required a station to show it was involved with its communities to get its license renewed.

"The public airwaves were supposed to be used for the public good," says Karen Holmes Ward, director of public affairs and community services at WCVB-TV in Boston. "With the growth of cable outlets, 24-hour news stations and syndicated programs being the same from city to city, the one way that you can distinguish yourself in the market is to provide the best local service possible."

Some journalists find it hard to get connected to their community because they move so much, notes Tracey Rogers, news director at WAFF-TV in Huntsville, AL.

"You may spend a year and a half to two years in one place...how do you get connected to the community?" she asks. "The power of television is so incredible. We can help a lot of people

in a very short amount of time."

One of the station's successful programs was "Buckle Up Baby," which set up safety checkpoints where residents could see if their child car seats were installed correctly (at one stop, only two of 63 passed the test). The station also aired safety stories and gave away 100 car seats donated by Costco.

"So many times, we get wrapped up in the ratings and how much money we're making, and it's so important for a station to step back," Rogers says. "We have a retreat twice a year with the department heads and discuss the important things we're going to do for the year, and many times, what we do is not about making money. And for a lot of GMs, that's a hard pill to swallow."



At WSPA-TV in Spartanburg, SC, managing editor Karen Kelly notes that her station bases all of its community projects on the needs of the community, which usually come from stories in the news department.

"The ideas need to come from true community needs, and not just [special] events," Kelly says. "So many times we participate in Race for the Cure and Walk for Diabetes, which is really important—but we really try to have our pulse on [other] real issues."

Call to Action

News director Kevin Keeshan notes that KGO-TV has traditionally been a station that has felt comfortable calling people to action. "You can never do enough to try and stay in touch with the people you're serving."

Words of Wisdom

Here are some more helpful tips on making the grade with your community service projects.

Size doesn't matter. "On the ABC 7 Listens program, I don't think there's an issue with how big a station you are," says KGO-TV's Kevin Keeshan. "We believe you can run a big station like you ran a smaller station. There's nothing I'm doing here that I didn't do at KFSN-TV in Fresno." At WCVB-TV, Karen Holmes Ward says the Commonwealth 5 initiative is simple to manage once it's set up.

Tap your talent. At WAFF-TV, an anchor shared her own mission to find her birth mother and later won a national award for helping start a Kids to Love program. She now serves on a state board to provide advice on children getting stuck in red tape in the foster care system. "She does special assignments where she'll go and look at a problem with the system. She has also talked with the governor and his committees," says Tracey Rogers. "It is truly her passion."

Get greedy. "Put some of the people on television who are donating the most," says WHEC-TV's Adam Bradshaw. "Today, the GMC Dealers of Rochester are bringing two truckloads with \$1,000 worth of toys, and that gives them good exposure, and it helps the drive, because some other dealer in town is going to see that and try and top it."

Be thankful. "After it's over with, we don't want to pat ourselves on the back, but you want to thank the people who really made it happen, those corporate sponsors and people from the community," notes Karen Kelly at WSPA-TV.

Keep it simple. "I've been involved in some projects that got so complex that it ended up really diluting the whole project, and that's devastating, not only for the project, but also for the people who are working on it," says Tracey Rogers. "If it gets too complicated and too complex, people start to get frustrated."

Be resourceful. "You have to look at your resources and what you really can handle and accomplish," advises Tracey Rogers. "How much time do you have to do it in? You have to be ready to respond when the need arises."

Ponder. "We get a lot of pitches, and you just have to evaluate the ones that you think would really have traction," says WHEC-TV's Adam Bradshaw. "The worst thing you could do is get involved with a program that fails or just doesn't live up to its promise."

Little things count. "It's important that we look at creative ways to use our resources. And our resources are not always in dollars and writing agencies checks," says WBAL-TV's Wanda Draper. "We're in the neighborhood association where we're located, and we print their meeting notices."

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KGO hosts ABC 7 Listens, monthly town hall meetings where residents voice concerns that then lead to community outreach programs and stories. Keeshan did the same campaign at KFSN-TV in Fresno, CA, and got the idea from colleague Jennifer Rigby, then news director of WPXI-TV in Pittsburgh.

"For news managers in particular, it's been a great opportunity to get out of the newsroom," he says. "You get into some of these communities that, quite frankly, some of the management has just seen on a map, and it gives them an appreciation for everything."

From a neighborhood effort to battle mail theft in Montclair to a conflict involving a stringent law protecting a tree called the Coastal Live Oak, the meetings result in solid stories and also give the station instant sources.

"It really did get us out in the community and gave us time to just do what it says: Listen to people," says Rigby, now news director at WSB-TV in Atlanta. "We always had producers or managers or even promotions people really getting out in the community, seeing different parts of it and listening to what people had to say."

Sometimes, being accessible can be hard. At WCVB, Holmes Ward says the station does a lot of community service, but times are difficult.

"The economy is slowing down, donations are slowing down, and our ability to give cash contributions to public-service agencies has also slowed down," she says. "So we were trying to come up with another way that we could supplement and continue our support of nonprofits in the community."

The economic and highly successful answer is CommonWealth 5, an initiative that began almost three years ago on the station's website (TheBostonChannel.com) and connects volunteer benefactors with local nonprofit organizations in their communities.

There are currently more than 225 nonprofits in the greater Boston area that people can access through the site.



The meat of the system provides a marketplace for donors to match their items with nonprofits. When donors fill out their forms, an automated email system sends notifications to potential agencies, which then respond via email if interested. The donor then chooses whom they are interested in.

When a local man's sister died, he wasn't sure what to do with the many boxes of yarn she had for knitting. Through WCVB's site, he found an organization called The Knitting Connection. A Brownie troop then used The Knitting Connection to get stockings to stuff for homeless children, and the stockings went to another organization on the site.

"It came together full circle," says Holmes Ward. "It doesn't take the place of the other things that we do, but it certainly is becoming a bigger and bigger part of how we do outreach to the community."

Get Help

Holmes Ward notes that the success of the site wouldn't be possible without the support of three main sponsors that underwrite the program. And as the economy continues to find its footing, stations have become increasingly aware of financial limitations and learned to rely on others for help.

At WHEC-TV in Rochester, NY, news director Adam Bradshaw has been successful asking one company to sponsor each program, as opposed to several. Whether it's the ESL Jefferson Awards that honor volunteerism or the Pirate Toy Fund sponsored by Chase-Pitkin, Bradshaw says it's important to limit the sponsorship.



"Stations, especially radio and TV stations in the past, have looked to get five or six sponsors for something, and we decided to change that and just find one big partner to work with," he says.

The station gave ESL Federal Credit Union the spotlight for the Jefferson Awards, just putting their logo on materials.

"That makes them look great in the community, and it gives us the financial support we need to do the awards program," Bradshaw says. "By partnering with a single entity that is financially sound and community-minded, we get a lot more bang for the buck and will get a lot more participation."

At WBAL-TV, like at most stations, deciding what community outreach program to get involved in can be challenging.

"It gets difficult, because a lot of people think you should do the same thing every year," says Wanda Draper, director of programming and public affairs. "But there are some things we do only once, not because it's a bad event but because we want to do different things and we want to help different causes. Sometimes you're not sure if things are going to work, but you have to do it to try."

Like the "Barbie Ball," WBAL found a local woman who buys a lot of designer clothes and has a lot of contacts with designers. She had done fashion shows for charity and is also a Barbie doll collector.

"She asked a couple of designers like Oscar De La Renta if they would dress a Barbie doll, and they said yes. So then we called Mattel and they supplied the Barbie dolls, and then we put all the dolls in glass cases on display at the Baltimore Museum of Art," says Draper.



Barbie: Lawrence Lucier/Getty Images

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"You never know," says Draper. "It turned out to be great. Who ever would have thought that a 'Barbie Ball' would work?"

Think Outside the Bra...um, Box

If Colin Campbell learned anything from "Bras Across RFK," it was that success comes from patience and perseverance.

"If you believe strongly in a program, never give up until you make it happen," he says. "'Bras Across RFK' was pitched to the Washington Freedom three years in a row. They didn't accept it until the third year."

Each year they met with someone new, and explained that it wasn't meant as a joke. But the idea actually started as a joke.

"It almost sounds distasteful," Campbell says. "We do the chili cook-off every year with the National Kidney Foundation, and the largest revenue



generator for the cook-off is beer sales. Obviously, no one has any issues with that. No one states the obvious...that's almost a ridiculous irony. So there was a joke about doing a breast cancer one and having people donate bras."

In the end, it was all worth it.

"If we had just done a straight charity drive and asked people to send us money for breast cancer awareness, we probably would have raised money, but would we have raised 30 grand? Probably not," he says. "This way it's a

little more memorable. It sticks in people's minds."

So much so that the station still gets inquiries about the event. The station recently received an email that was read on the air.

"Some people wanted to take 'Bras Across RFK' and go to the Redskins with it so that we could do 'Bras Across FedEx [Field]'. That's something that we've approached them with," he says. "So who knows?"—Cameron McGaughy is a freelance writer based in Arlington, VA.

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A Second Opinion

Not everybody thinks community outreach is a no-brainer.

Jerry Gumbert doesn't mean to spoil everyone's fun, but in his opinion, the community outreach initiatives of most stations aren't effective.

"About three or four years ago we came to the conclusion as a company that the community involvement and the community participation strategies of television stations of the last 15 to 25 years no longer work," says the managing director for Audience Research & Development LLC.

"In fact, you could make a very strong case that it is a total waste of time, resources and money to sponsor community projects at a time in which

television stations really need to be spending every ounce of their public relations and marketing abilities on building a brand."

The media research and development company based in Fort Worth, TX, has developed several community outreach initiatives designed to develop an emotional bond with viewers, taking on an advocacy or leadership role—instead of participatory—in projects.

"It's time for stations to be community leaders again. Claiming and showcasing the community commitment that you have ultimately will endear you back to the community the way television stations used to be," Gumbert says. "What are the unserved community issues?"

One such initiative is "Safe Family," a syndicated outreach program used by some 15 television stations and designed to make communities safer by addressing personal safety and family safety and acting as facilitators for community leaders. "One Class at a Time" is an initiative in

which a station gives a weekly \$1,000 grant (written by various local community residents) to a deserving classroom.

"[Most advertiser recall studies] show that there are very few television stations that get credit for the community projects and services they provide," he says. "And when that happens, you have to stop and ask yourself, 'Why are we doing this?'"

Gumbert says that broadcasters no longer have the financial means to do whatever they want to as great community corporate citizens, as stations that were owned by community leaders in the 1960s and 1970s have been sold to big media corporations. He also notes that a large layer of media clutter that wasn't there 15 to 20 years ago clouds the issue.

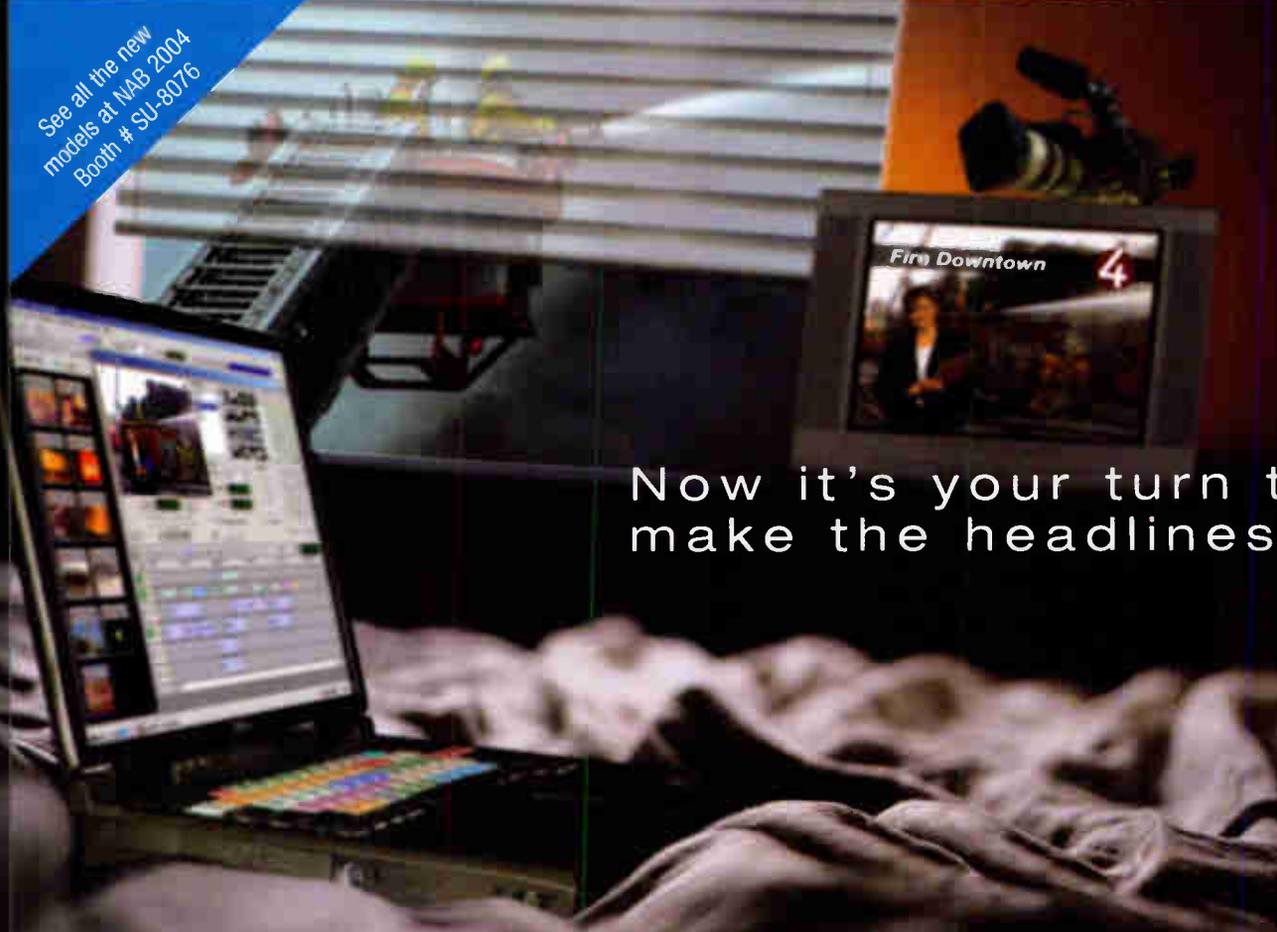
"The problem with television stations is that they either don't know how or they are completely and truly sensitive to ending the current relationships they have," he says.



AR&D managing director Jerry Gumbert advises his clients to inventory and catalog every community project, then go through an analysis that puts a value on each of them. Does it add meaning and value to your brand? Does it bring revenue?

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The Art *of the* INTERVIEW

Getting a source to open up requires a mix of preparedness, experience, sociology and good old reporter's instinct. Here are some tips from the pros.

By Sharon O'Malley

Public radio talk show host Diane Rehm wondered if Jimmy Carter would walk out of the room when she asked him if he had ever considered divorcing his wife. She and the former President sat speechless for more than 10 seconds—a Grand Canyon-sized gap for radio—as he considered her question and she waited for his reply.

“I thought, ‘Oh, my God,’” recalls Rehm, who was talking to the President in her Washington studio about his just-published autobiography. “But I decided to wait it out.”

“Yes, Diane,” he finally responded.

“What did you do about it?” she followed up.

“We both got down on our knees and prayed.”

The exchange is something some broadcasters don't have the patience to pull off during an interview, says Rehm, whose syndicated two-hour program originates every weekday on WAMU-FM. In her 20-plus years on the air, she has interviewed celebrities ranging from Secretary of State Colin Powell to children's television favorite Mr. Rogers.

“We broadcasters are too anxious to jump into the void,” she says. “We're afraid of silence. I happen to love silence on radio.”

“We have in mind so much what we want to ask that we don’t listen to what people say. There’s nothing wrong coming into an interview with a set of questions you want to impart. But you have to be prepared to change them.” —Scott Simon

The pause really communicates to the listener that something’s going on. The listener is eager to hear what happens after the silence.”

Yet broadcasters famous for their interviewing coups agree that keeping quiet is not among the strengths of most on-air questioners.

“Broadcasters talk too much,” confirms Al Tompkins, group leader for broadcast and online journalism at The Poynter Institute and a former television news director. “They talk from the time they meet you until the time they leave.”

“Ego gets involved an awful lot,” notes Rehm. “One of the big mistakes that too many interviewers make is the ego issue.”

The problem is that “too many interviewers are enamored with their own questions. They want to show the audience and the interviewee how much they know,” says Marc Zumoff, the TV play-by-play announcer for the Philadelphia 76ers and sometime host of the interview show *The Radio Hours* on Philadelphia’s NPR affiliate, WHYY-FM.

But TV viewers and radio listeners don’t tune in to hear how smart the journalist is, notes Tompkins. “It’s not important that the public thinks you know everything,” he says. “The common denominator for every bad interview I’ve ever done: You just have to shut up.”

And in the process, listen. CBS correspondent Steve Hartman, whose



Nothing kills an interview faster than an inane question, according to NPR’s Scott Simon (above). Jim Bohannon (left) of Westwood One suggests softball questions to open an interview session.

series *Everybody Has a Story* features ordinary

Americans in their everyday lives, says he has been interviewed by reporters too eager to get through a static list of questions to consider the answers he’s giving them.

“In the middle of the interview, I could say I killed my dog with a sledgehammer, and they’d say, ‘So how long have you been doing *Everybody Has a Story*.’” he muses.

Scott Simon, NPR’s *Weekend Edition Saturday* host, agrees. “We have in mind so much what we want to ask that we don’t listen to what people say,”

he notes. “There’s nothing wrong coming into an interview with a set of questions you want to impart. But you have to be prepared to change them and listen to what people said so you can be as responsive as they are.”

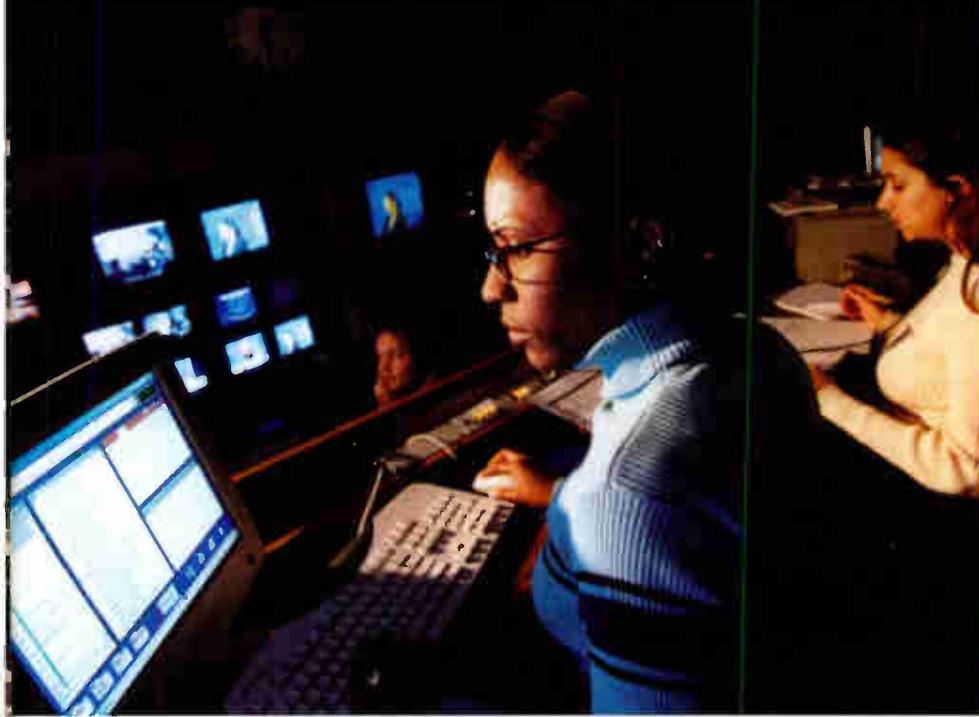
That can be hard when lights, cameras and action surround the interviewer and source.

Jim Beaman, author of *Interviewing for Radio* and head of the radio journalism program at Britain’s Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College, notes that broadcasters ask questions in between operating controls, listening to producers through their headsets and even setting up music. In the midst of it, the interviewer should try to keep eye contact because neglecting it distracts the source.

And Beaman says the journalist should try to make the source com-

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The faculty is made up of some of the leading journalists of our time—former CBS News White House correspondent Lee Thornton, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and PBS commentator Haynes Johnson and Washington Post columnist David Broder.

comfortable with the flashing lights and other distractions that clutter the broadcaster's world.

"Explain to them that they shouldn't speak when the red light is on, and that when this light flashes, it's just [your] internal telephone," advises Beaman. "Make sure they are comfortable in the studio before you start the interview. Once it's done, it's done. You don't get a second chance to do it live."

Hartman concurs. "The first thing and the most important thing to make a TV interview great is helping the subject forget it's a TV interview," he says. "With lights and the camera, people's first reaction is fear."

So he fills the setup time with small talk. "I try to make it all seem casual," he says. And when it's time for the interview to start, he just keeps talking. "I definitely think it's a bad idea to say, 'Are you ready? Let's start. Here's my first question.'"

In fact, says Hartman, he begins each interview with a question he knows



Marc Zumoff

won't make it on the air. He often asks his subjects how they felt when CBS called to initiate their interviews. "Make it a softball," he says, "to make sure things are going well."

Likewise, veteran interviewer Jim Bohannon, host of Westwood One's *The Jim Bohannon Show*, favors the softball question as an effective way to open an interview.

While they typically generate little useful information, he says, such questions can establish some empathy with the source and "soften them up for what's to come," although he notes that if a journalist suspects a reluctant source

Left: Marc Zumoff (on left) says too many interviewers are enamored with their questions. Below: Stop and listen, advises CBS correspondent Steve Hartman. You may miss a great opening if you're only focused on your next question.



CBS

will tolerate only one or two questions, the interviewer should cut straight to the point.

Indeed, says Beaman, a onetime BBC correspondent, every reporter should approach the interview with one "must-have" question. "As long as you come up with the answer to that question, it doesn't matter what the rest of it sounds like," he says.

"The first thing you have to remember is what your objective is," Bohannon says. Conducting an interview that will result in a personality

Who's Your Favorite Interviewer?

Al Tompkins: **Tim Russert**

"He's totally prepared. You know when you sit down that he's got the stuff that will hang you from the rafters. He pulls stuff from years ago. He asks, 'What do you mean by that?' He and his researchers do a lot of work. They make it look so easy, but it's only easy because they're so good."

Diane Rehm: **Jim Lehrer**

"His questions are brief, to the point, they enlighten with brevity. He's not overloading the question, he's not putting words into people's mouths. He's simply asking the next logical question, but the questions are always interesting."

Steve Hartman: **Mike Wallace**

"I like that he's very take-charge. If any interview subject is going to be nerv-

ous, it's going to be somebody who's sitting across the table from Mike Wallace, yet in every story, he gets people to answer questions honestly. That's a major accomplishment."

Jim Bohannon: **Mike Wallace**

"Wallace has the most interesting technique of saying nothing; of just sitting there. It's very unnerving for people. If he asks a question and the other person answers it and stops, nobody says anything. And the other person is thinking, 'I've answered the question.' Wallace just sits there and looks at him. At that point, a lot of people will blurt out something that they'd been holding back. That will be the gem you're waiting for."

Marc Zumoff: **Larry King**

"He's quick. He fires [questions] out

quickly, which tends to evoke a more sincere response from the interviewee, because they don't have time to make it up."

Scott Simon: **Terry Gross**

(host of NPR's *Fresh Air*) "Nobody draws out more unexpected sides of a person than Terry Gross. She is able to lead them into a direction that is unexpected because she is actually listening to them."

Jim Beaman: **Eddie Mair**

(BBC broadcaster) "He has a wonderful sense of humor, but he's very sharp, very astute and always researches well. He always asks the right question in the right way, and puts people on the spot when they need to be put on the spot. He does it politely, but he does it with authority."

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Interview Like a Pro

The Dos:

- Use the interview to get good soundbites. Ask questions that evoke responses full of passion, emotion and opinion rather than those that call for simple facts.

- Ask the same question several times in different ways so you'll have some choices during the editing process.

- Listen. Most broadcasters talk too much during interviews.

- Follow up with spur-of-the-moment questions when the source offers something unexpected.

- Ask obvious questions. Listeners and viewers are unlikely to know as much as the interviewer does about the subject, so the answers won't seem obvious to them.

- Show some respect. Dress professionally, turn off pagers and calm sources who appear nervous.

- Treat every interview as though it's important. Al Tompkins of The Poynter Institute regrets a TV interview he did with a beauty queen—an assignment he resented. Later, he felt bad for asking her a hostile question.

- Thoroughly research the topic. Sports reporter and announcer Marc Zumoff confesses his biggest on-air blunder: During an interview with NBA star Bob Lanier, Zumoff asked the former Detroit Pistons player why he never made it to the Basketball Hall of Fame. Calmly, Lanier admonished his questioner: "As a matter of fact, Marc, I am a member of the Hall of Fame." Zumoff's take on his gaffe: "That should be illegal."

- Use the source's own language to get answers to questions they dodge. If someone says, "I can't talk about that," ask, "When will you be able to talk about it?" or, "Why can't you talk about that?" Tompkins suggests.

- During tragedies, use what some call the "nonquestion question": "I'll bet this really hurts" or "I can't imagine what you're going through."

- Distract the source from the camera and the microphone. If they're paying attention to the setup, says CBS correspondent Steve Hartman, they won't be able to give a relaxed interview.

- Invite the cameraman to ask questions. When Hartman does an interview, anyone on the scene can ask questions and talk to the source.

- Let sources know when they sound too rehearsed, advises Hartman. "It works," he says. "It lets them know I'm on to their game."

- Consider the interview a conversation. "It's a shame that there's even a whole separate word for conversations on television," says Hartman. "It's a shame that we even call it an interview."

The Don'ts:

- Avoid double-barreled questions. Asking a source two questions in one breath gives the speaker the choice of which question to answer. Al Tompkins of The Poynter Institute says the source inevitably will choose to answer the easier question.

- Don't bully sources. Public radio talk show host Diane Rehm avoids confrontation on the air, opting instead to ask questions "in a normal, conversational tone that allows that person the freedom to answer in a conversational tone or for him or herself to get hostile in the process. That's their decision. I don't want to put people on the defensive. I think you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar."

- Skip the blackmail and coercion. Applying too much pressure on a victim can backfire, says Tompkins. And telling sources that you'll be forced to get your information elsewhere if they don't talk to you can come off as a threat.

- Don't badmouth other sources. The one you're talking to might fear you'll do the same thing behind his or her back.

- Whisper when you make small talk at a crime scene. Some reporters, like other first responders, tend to ease their own shock with off-color humor that families can overhear. It can cost you the interview.

- Conceal your agreement or disagreement while the source is speaking. Tompkins says even nodding your head to show that you're listening can be mistaken for agreement.

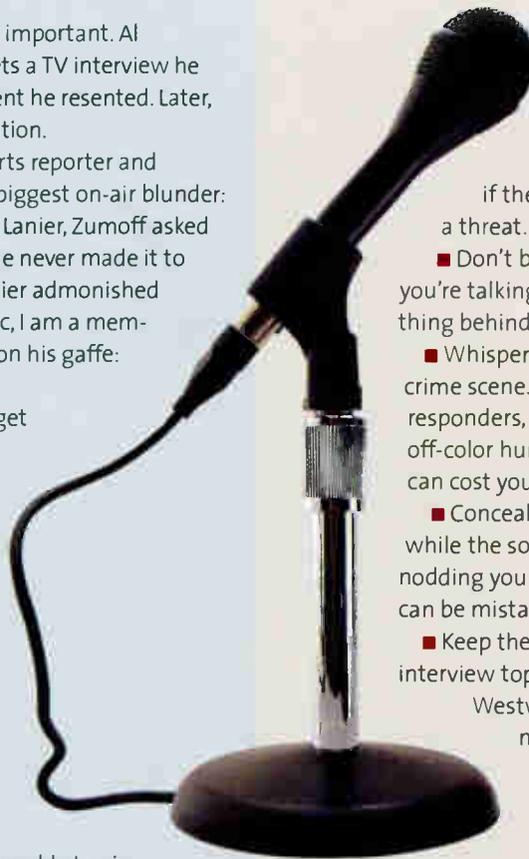
- Keep the source from talking about the interview topic until the tape starts rolling.

Westwood One's Jim Bohannon avoids meeting the source until it's time for the show to start. "Most people have only one good explanation on a given point in them, and I don't want it wasted on me," he says. "I

want the audience to hear it."

- Reword leading questions. Sportscaster Marc Zumoff bristles when he hears reporters tell coaches, "You must be pleased with your team's performance." He'd rather hear the coach say if he's pleased or upset.

- Know that sources can't speak for others. NPR host Scott Simon labels "inane" questions like: "Why do you think the people of New Hampshire didn't vote for you?" or "Why do you think the prosecutor is trying to convict you?" Such questions, he says, invite self-serving answers or lead the source to quote polls or answer, "I don't know."



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Jim Beaman (above), head of the radio journalism program at Britain's Surrey Institute of Art and Design, says you need to make interview subjects comfortable with the broadcast equipment. NPR's Diane Rehm (right) says silence can be a useful tool to pull answers from subjects.



“What you're doing every single minute is dancing with a new partner. You're following sometimes; you're leading sometimes; you're pulling closer; you're pulling further away depending on the type of dance you're doing.” —Diane Rehm

profile, he notes, is “a bit different from pinning someone in a corner to get an admission or confession.”

And if the on-air part of the Q&A will last for only two minutes, there's no need to keep the source in the hot seat for a prolonged period, advises Beaman.

In fact, great interviewers say they are consistently courteous to their sources, dressing in a respectful way and speaking to them in a nonconfrontational tone, even when the subject matter is contentious.

“There is a whole group of people in America...whom you're asking to come out of their usual lives to be interviewed,” notes Simon. “It's those people whom you really do owe an extra-special effort to be courteous.”

And because journalists often interview people during tragedies, Simon

says, “you owe it to them to handle yourself in a professional and considerate manner.”

Even sources who tote an agenda into Simon's studio—hawking a book or trying to scare up votes, for instance—meet a congenial interviewer, he says.

“Do them the dignity and honor of listening to them,” he says, “but don't be reluctant to, in a very nice way, cut them short and say we've got limited time so let's refocus.”

Besides, notes Simon, sources who arrive at an interview determined to spread a message will not be receptive to the journalist's questions until they do it. “You have to give them a chance to say it...and then you can get some original answers,” he concedes.

Every interview, Rehm notes, is different. “What you're doing every single minute,” she says, “is dancing with a new partner. You're following some-

times; you're leading sometimes; you're pulling closer; you're pulling further away depending on the type of dance you're doing. But it is like a dance.

“That's why the job is such an exciting one. You never know what to expect.”—Sharon O'Malley is a writer in College Park, MD. She teaches a journalism class on interviewing at the University of Maryland.

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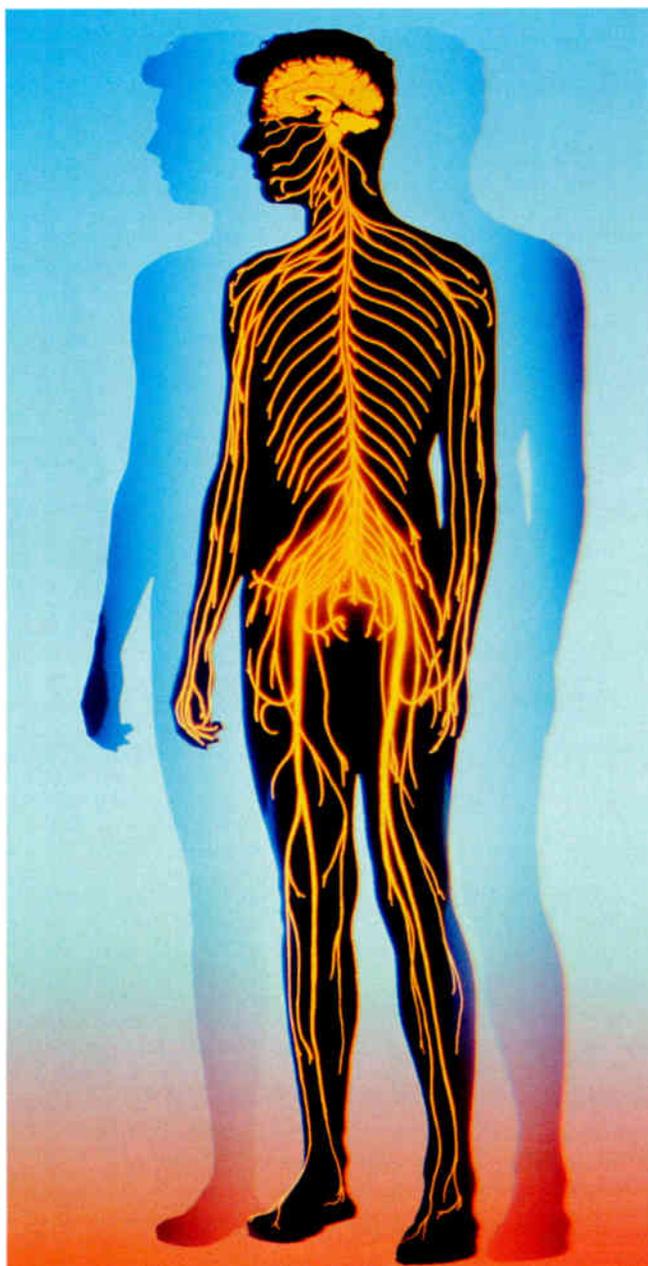
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By Andrea Rouda

Most journalists would agree that theirs is a tough job, fraught with tight deadlines, dead-end leads and fierce competition. Those working in the health arena carry an additional burden: Beyond simply delivering “news you can use” to a knowledge-hungry public, they face the task of getting people to pay attention to what *really* matters. And when it comes to their health—or the health of their loved ones—people feel vulnerable and self-protective; it’s never easy delivering a message someone may not want to hear.



Health reporters must gingerly walk a thin line between offering healing hope and misleading with false hope. Diana Penna, reporter for KOVR-TV in Sacramento, CA, puts it this way: “Effective health reporting *must* be considered a community service. After all, people’s lives are in the balance.”

Valerie Willingham, senior medical producer for WRC-TV

Health reporters must gingerly walk a thin line between offering healing hope and misleading with false hope.

in Washington, stresses that giving people hope is what medical reporting is all about. As evidence, she cites a popular series she and her news team presented concerning a man suffering from colon cancer. Told he had only months to live, he had written his will and said his goodbyes to his family, when his doctor suggested he try a new vaccine targeted at his particular cancer.

Willingham's team covered his initial treatment, and did follow-up stories after six months, one and two years, finally celebrating his 63rd birthday, three years after he had been given a death sentence by his doctors. Says Willingham, "We got hundreds of calls. People went wild over that story, because it gave them hope."

Story ideas come from a variety of sources: contacts in the medical community, coworkers, wire stories, local newspapers and, most important, health journals and newsletters. Occasionally, ideas come from the audience; NPR health policy corre-

spondent Joanne Silberner received a letter from a loyal listener who described a medical problem she was having. Their continuing correspondence later inspired Silberner's moving report on gene therapy.

Other reporters, like Madge Kaplan, senior health editor for Boston's WGBH-TV, look to societal trends and cultural issues for inspiration. Since 2000, she also has reported for NPR's All Things Considered and Morning Edition. Says Kaplan, "Public radio audiences expect something new. They have the attitude: Tell me something I don't know." To that

end, she reported on changes in medical training in the United States aimed at teaching doctors how to better deal with patients, as well as family health dynamics—such as the surge of baby boomers caring for their aging parents.

An ongoing challenge is to make health news fresh, since there is a natural tendency to hitch a ride on the hot story of the moment: Mad Cow disease and low-carb diets dominate the media, only to be replaced by the Next Big Thing.

But even when a subject is done to death, a responsible journalist has got

OUTSTANDING IN THEIR FIELD



DIANA PENNA

Health Editor
KQVR-TV
Sacramento, CA

Experience: 14 years in the business

Of Note: Emmy Award

News Philosophy: Guided by a strong sense of her responsibility as a journalist, Diana considers health reporting to be a community service.

TOP THREE TIPS:

When it comes to interviewing, no question is too dumb. This tenet is especially true in the health field, where you have to fit in a lot of information in a short amount of time. Make sure you fully understand what you are saying; many times, "viewer's lives are in the balance."

Get involved in the community, not only to find story contacts, but to understand the power of the medium and learn what programs are out there. To that end, she runs community blood drives and speaks in classrooms.

Stay informed by reading health newsletters. Those prepared by the Mayo Clinic, Shriners and St. Jude's Hospitals, and *Consumer Reports* boil down the massive amount of information emerging in the medical field. Penna always consults with a physician before she puts anything on the air.



MADGE KAPLAN

Senior Health Desk
Editor
WGBH Radio, Boston

Experience: 18 years in the business

Of Note: 2003 American Women in Radio and Television/Gracie Allen Award

News philosophy: Look at the big trends and ideas.

TOP THREE TIPS:

Make a strong commitment to learning. The health beat is not for the faint-of-heart. Reporters do not need mountains of educational background in the medical field, but they do need to learn through attending workshops and conferences, and delving into the research domains.

Keep a skeptical ear and eye; always ask the hard questions. We live in an age of medical discovery, an emerging genetic and scientific revolution. Caution is important, and journalists must work hard to not sensationalize facts.

Develop a good base of experts who don't mind you calling them on the fly. To clarify issues about which you are uncertain, you need an enriched group of consultants to whom you can admit, "I don't know this." This group may include medical professionals as well as other reporters.



JON PALFREMAN

Senior Producer
Frontline (PBS)
Boston

Experience: 25 years in the business

Of Note: Peabody Award

News philosophy: Focus on the process of finding the "truth" when confronted with scientists and clinicians who disagree.

TOP THREE TIPS:

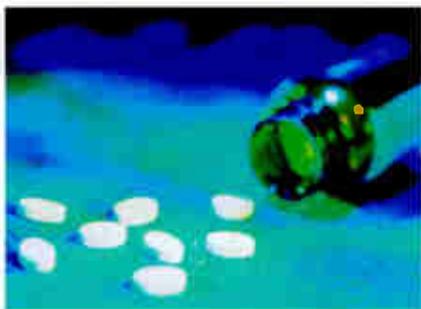
Beware the expert claiming his theory, therapy or test cannot be scientifically validated. Medical history has many examples of commonly used procedures that ultimately proved useless when tested under controlled conditions.

Weigh the balance of evidence rather than trying to balance the number of experts. Unlike political coverage, science journalism does not require equal time to be given to both sides of an argument.

Beware of biased data. There is selection bias, where researchers have chosen a group of subjects that are not a random sample of the population. There is reporting bias, where researchers preferentially report some findings and ignore others. There is publication bias, where journal editors prefer to publish positive findings rather than negative ones.

to cover it. As Silberner explains, "You really can't ignore a big story, since a lot of listeners really do go to only one source, and your listener may only hear your take." How many times can people hear that smoking is bad for you before they turn off and tune out?

Adding something unique can ensure listener loyalty, suggests Willingham. "Tell them about a new cancer treatment, or a vaccine designed to help them stop smoking, and I promise you, you'll get their attention. That's why we call it news."—Andrea Rouda is a freelance writer living in Washington. She has written for numerous magazines and websites and is a frequent contributor to *The Washington Post*.



BEST OF THE BEAT

These health-related stories won Edward R. Murrow Awards from RTNDA last year:

Blind Faith

KVBC-TV, Las Vegas

A four-part investigative report that looked into the practice of salespeople, not doctors, telling patients they were perfect candidates for laser eye surgery.

War of Words

KOMO-TV, Seattle

A two-part series that tracked two chronic stutterers as they tried a revolutionary device designed to help them speak normally.

Gifts of Life

KOMO-TV, Seattle

The story of a 20-year-old man who died in the 2001 Mardi Gras riots, and the people who inherited his donated organs.

20 HEALTH STORY IDEAS

Coffee May Be Good For You! Studies have shown that more coffee may actually reduce the risk of developing the most common form of diabetes.

Women of a Certain Age. A round-up of health news for menopausal women can include current thinking on nutritional needs, bone density testing, benefits of drinking red wine, the latest mammography techniques and alternatives to hormone replacement therapy.

Breakthroughs in Alzheimer's Research. Recent scientific studies indicate that high doses of Vitamins E and C may curb the onset of the disease baby boomers fear the most.

Wonder Wheels. An investigative report on the technological advances, range of costs and health care coverage for state-of-the-art wheelchairs.

Is This Test Necessary? Colonoscopy, prostate screenings, mammograms, stress tests: What tests do healthy people *really* need, and at what age?

Bird Flu and Mad Cows: Crossover Animal Diseases. Can medical research protect man from diseases that begin in other species?

How To Handle a Hangover. Surely modern medicine can recommend a better treatment for this all-too-common ailment than "the hair of the dog." Some remedies for overindulgence in alcohol.

Vitamins: Help or Hype? There are vitamins specifically created for infants, teens, women, men and seniors. What are the differences between them, and are they really necessary?

Indoor Safety. Bad air, household poisons, fire hazards: Is your home a hazard to your health? What you need to know to be safe *indoors*.

Varicose Veins. Is vanity the only reason to repair those "spider veins"? Is the treatment worth the pain? What new therapies are out there?

Teens and Drug Addiction. In his recent State of the Union message, President Bush cited teen drug use as down from last year at this time. True? How far down? What is the complete picture?

How Safe Is Our Beef? The recent discovery of Mad Cow Disease in Wash-

ington has made many people fearful of their usual fare. How about tips for making safe meat choices at the dinner table?

Exercising for Health vs. for Fitness. Cardiovascular health, endurance, stronger bones—all worthy goals of an exercise regime. What are the differences in training to achieve different results?

The Future of Fast Food. One-third of America's children, ages 4-19, eat a steady diet of fast food, packing on about six extra pounds per year. Can the industry continue without killing off its customers?

This Place Is Making Me Sick! According to divorce rates and suicide statistics, where you live can greatly affect the quality of your life. Here's an in-depth look at the most and least stressful places to live.

The I-Word. Incontinence, a real health issue for many people, is too embarrassing to talk about. Are adult diapers the only answer? Find out more about a new device, similar to a pacemaker, which will soon be widely available.

Organ Donations. Your driver's license application asks you to specify whether you are an organ donor. Should you be? What body parts do *you* want to give away? Which ones are most needed, and by what groups?

The Pros and Cons of Clinical Trials. You read and hear ads for them every day, offering free treatment for a variety of ailments, and payment to boot. However, those clinical trials often involve risks; know the right questions to ask before you sign on.

The Little Purple Pill. What was once considered mere "overindulgence" in food and drink has grown into big business for the pharmaceutical companies. Should you just take a Tums, or are you one of the 15 million Americans requiring serious treatment—even surgery—for gastrointestinal reflux disease?

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Times Change, But the Mistakes Are the Same

In 20 years of reviewing network news scripts, Mervin Block sees lots of repeat offenders.

Has newswriting changed in the 20 years since *Communicator* ran my first column? No...and yes.

No, there are no new writing rules. But yes, there are new writing tools: computers. Yet, even with this new super-swift system, we can still type only one word at a time. In fact, one letter at a time. And we're still trying to be writers, not typewriters (as typists were first called). And we're still trying to remember our mistakes long enough to benefit from them.

Are more mistakes made on the air now than 20 years ago? No one can say for sure; these days, I hear many anchors and reporters making their share of mistakes—and then some. And I'm grateful to them. After all, those I quote in my articles are contributing to the advancement of newswriting. After I harvest their mistakes and process them, I end up with tips for writing better.

I focus on network scripts for several reasons: we all expect a network to do good work; almost everyone in the country can watch or listen to network news; and I'm able to quote network newscasts, word for word. Besides, wouldn't you rather read the mistakes made by the mighty in midtown Manhattan than mistakes by mere mortals in Minitown? So let's look at some network excerpts:

"The war goes on in Iraq. At least two people were wounded in Baghdad today in another suicide bomb attack, the target today, the Turkish embassy...." The war goes on? Makes you wonder how *that* got



on. It says nothing new. And says it feebly. That's not newswriting; that's snoozewriting. The editor should have asked for a rewrite. How about "A suicide bomber in Baghdad attacked the Turkish embassy"?

Another network presented an even blander lead:

"And there is more violence to report. [There's always more violence to report somewhere or other. So report it. Don't waste our time telling us you're going to report it.] **A U-S military convoy** [insert *was*] **attacked outside of** [delete *of*] **Tikrit, hit by what witnesses say was a rocket-propelled grenade. No casualties there, but in Baghdad, one U-S soldier is dead after a roadside bomb hit his convoy.**" The script should have led with the death in Baghdad, not with an encounter that resulted in no casualties. Further, to say a soldier is dead is not newswriting. *Is* is a linking verb and conveys no action. A bomb *killed* him.

"During the month of January, the Dow and Nasdaq each hit their highest levels in more than two years." January *is* a month. So we don't say "the month of January" any more than we say "the game of baseball." The script was broadcast in February, so the

writer should have said "last month." As for *each*, it should have been deleted.

A Chicago newspaper used to have three words on a pillar in the newsroom: on one side was a huge *yesterday*, the next side had *today*, the third had *tomorrow*. The displays reminded the staff to use those words rather than the names of days.

"Forty thousand attended the concert and...authorities say the situation could have been much worse." Situation is a hollow word. Better: *bombings*. *Could have been much worse* is a cliché. Most crimes, accidents and disasters could have been much worse than they were.

"Michael Jackson [insert *is*] **under protection tonight as well** [he's always protected]...**bodyguards surrounding his limo like the Secret Service, after dancing through the most important day of his life.**" That day of arraignment was not the most important in Jackson's life. And who was dancing, MJ or the guards?

"The second canceled flight for Continental Airlines in as many days...." That sentence should have been canceled. You can't use an ordinal number (second) and have it stand in for a cardinal number (two). An ordinal number lists items in order: first, second, third and so on. Cardinal numbers are one, two, three and up. Correct: "The second flight canceled by Continental Airlines in two days."

"Apologies in advance, Senator, for a handicapping question. But how well do you think you need to do in New Hampshire?" Never apologize for a question. And never deprecate your question by calling it dumb or silly. (Interviewees and audiences can judge that for themselves.)

"Can I ask you a question?" Never ask permission. Ask your question. When someone asks me that, I sometimes reply, "You just did."

Interviewing is one of the weakest



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elements in many newscasts. For readers who skipped Journalism 101 or flunked or forgot it, here are several more tips: Ask only one question at a time; don't ask double- or triple-barreled questions. Don't ask long, complex questions. Don't ask questions that can be answered *yes* or *no*. Don't

suggest answers. The art of interviewing can't be reduced to a few tips, but those are a start. Best bet: a good book on the subject. (Or the article that starts on page 56.)

We return to the program in progress, a look at network scripts. Anchor:

"I looked at this memo, as you're suggesting. It almost exclusively focuses [better: "focuses almost exclusively"] on the economy. What about Iraq?" Reporter: **"That's a good question."** Not a good response. Why? A reporter shouldn't be praising or appraising an anchor's questions. And that question was routine.

On another newscast, after an anchor asked a question, the correspondent said, **"That's a good question, isn't it?"** Was he uncertain or was he underlining what he thought was so good? (And sometimes a correspondent even says, **"A very good question."**)

But the oddest follow-up I ran across was by an anchor who commented on his own question to a doctor: **"What could this mean now for treatment of the nation's number-one killer? A good question."** Give the anchor credit. When he evaluated his own question, he saved time and cut out the middleman.

So even though 20 years have passed, I still find myself singing the same old song: "Let's not make yesterday's mistakes tomorrow."—Mervin Block is the author of *Writing Broadcast News—Shorter, Sharper, Stronger* (Revised and Expanded), 2d ed." He provides writing tips at www.mervinblock.com.

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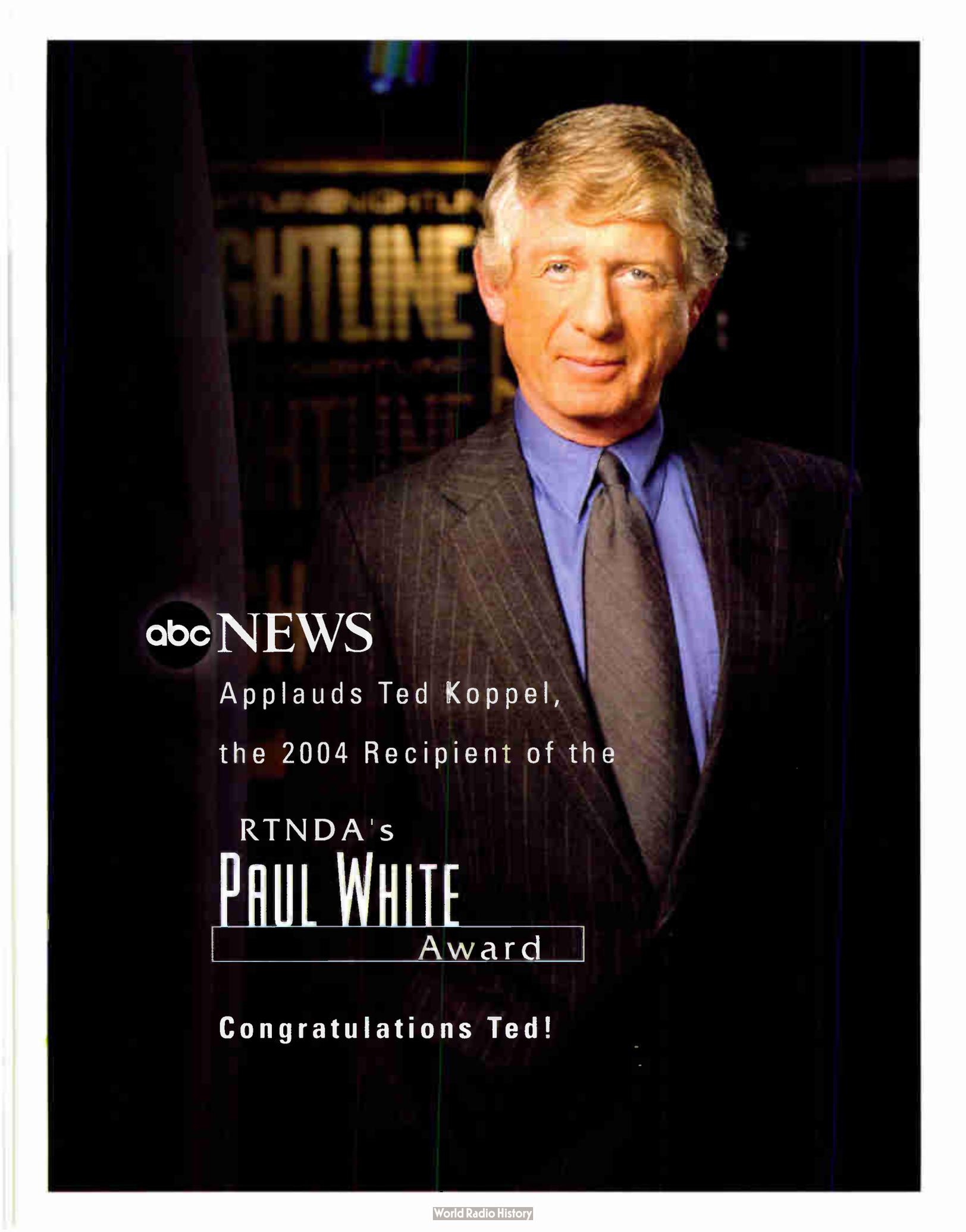
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Managing Your Morning Meetings

The morning editorial meeting is where good newscasts—and good promotion—begin.

Whether your goal is reinforcing a strong, credible brand or to get more sampling and frequency of viewing to make a move in the market, it all starts with the morning meeting. That's where the debate and discussion begin on what to air, and also, what to promote.

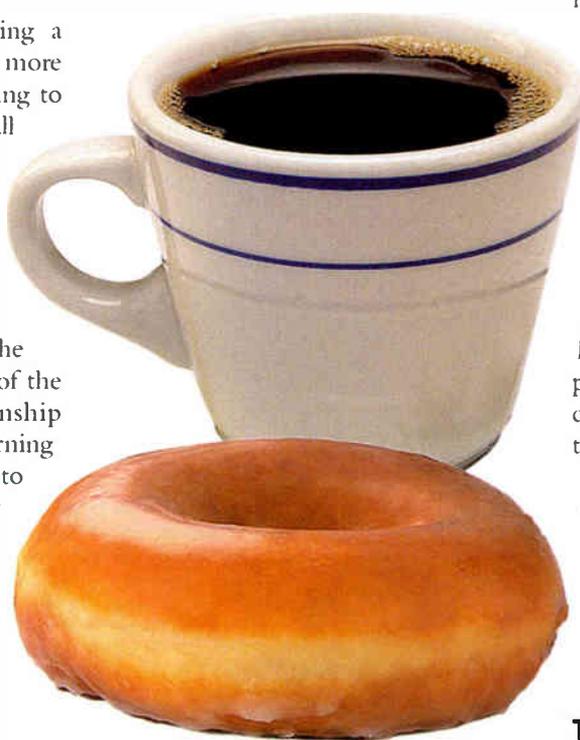
The news director can really set a tone in terms of getting the staff focused on the importance of the marketing/promotion relationship during these meetings. If the morning editorial meeting is the place to manage ideas all day long, why not shape the promotion as well as the news stories right there?

Here are some tips for keeping your meetings—and your promotion—*viewer-focused* and more effective.

The Morning Meeting

Picture yourself going to an ad agency's creative meeting. If you ever attended one, you would not think of going through the process of storyboarding without spending brainstorming time in the agency's creative room. The news meeting can serve the same function. Make sure the viewer as the "consumer" stays the focus.

You may think this is heresy of the highest order, but if your promotion staff isn't in on your morning meetings, your newscast may be missing something. The promotion manager or producer probably represents the viewer more than anyone in the newsroom.



Their role is to promote news content to an entertainment audience vs. a news audience, a concept that sometimes makes news people shudder.

The morning meeting should be the place where all groups in the newsroom are represented. This is the place where news talks not only about what is good content but also what is good television. So, here is where you can make your case for good promotion. Build systems that deliver a product you know your viewers will care about. More than one news director has pushed, "Don't produce news for the newsroom. Produce news for viewers."

News must understand that good promotion is essential in the war for better ratings. If your promotion director is seen as a contributing member during the morning meetings, it will help build respect for him or her as an expert on audience flow and the target audience.

Use these meetings to establish and build rapport. Promo producers—like news producers—should do some homework before the editorial meeting, and know what's happening on the news front as well as what people are talking about. Houston's KHOU-TV news director Mike Devlin has made an original story idea the ticket to get into their editorial meeting. It has been pivotal in setting a standard for his very successful enterprise product. Make sure everyone is informed. If preparation is a problem, distribute a daily reading list of websites that plays to your target demo and content.

It also helps to set a positive tone. One tried-and-true way to kick off the morning meeting is to show a well-executed piece from the day before. Why not show the promo for the piece as well, to prove it makes the viewer connection?

The Story Board Is the Meeting

Try constructing a newscast-oriented story board *instead* of an assignment board in the actual meeting room. Save one section for your news lead-in program so you know the program and the content that day. Audience flow is critical. Make the first column the most important lead-worthy or compelling stories and your angles to those stories. Maybe make the second column the rest of the news of the day, logical follow-ups, along with scheduled events. Think about a third column with all the special emphasis stories, ones that need special explaining, animated graphics or showcasing. Flow the debate from column to column, so you will keep the

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WCNC-TV, Charlotte, N.C.

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Walker Stone Award, *Editorial Writing*

John Kass, Chicago Tribune

Commentary

Kelley Benham, St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times

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The Washington Post

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Walt Handelsman, Newsday, Melville, N.Y.

Editorial Cartooning

Rochelle Riley, Detroit Free Press

Charles E. Scripps Award, *Distinguished Service to Literacy*

Dayton (Ohio) Daily News

Edward Willis Scripps Award, *Distinguished Service to the First Amendment*

Brian Vander Brug, Los Angeles Times

Photojournalism

Clint Riley, The Record, Hackensack, N.J.

William Brewster Styles Award, *Business/Economics Reporting*

Nathaniel Creekmore, Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tenn.

Charles M. Schulz Award, *College Cartoonist*

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WINNERS

focus on viewer-based storylines.

If your station does research, your content decisions should reflect how your viewers have voted. Most research today reinforces that viewers want a lot of weight given to the top story as well as explaining the news in an understandable way. Building your board this way keeps the debate on track with

those preferences. Some stations actually post this list of content priorities in the meeting room.

Also dedicate space and discussion to live coverage, so you start thinking early about how you will *produce* the live shot *and* the reporter insert. Most stations put all the thought into the package and the live angle becomes an

afterthought—thus the breathless “Live with the Latest” appearance in front of a dark building. By starting the thought process early, you have time to plan a demonstration to help understand the story better. Your live shots can be a point of difference between newscasts and with your competition.

Have sections on your board that deal with more strategic goals; issues like special projects, longer-term investigations and upcoming special events. Maybe cite how you will be interactive or even solicit viewer response and share important resource info through your website.

The Best Ideas Are in the Most Obvious Places

Stations spend hours in news meetings agonizing over that one “miracle” story; probably a stunt or a one-day trend or something lifted out of *USA Today*. Consider changing the culture.

Take the six key “news of the day” stories you know your viewers are interested in and brainstorm angles you know your viewers will find interesting. Get the coverage beyond the event-driven, traditional general assignment treatment of the who, what, where. Make your package focus on the *why*. Tease and promote those angles to drive viewers from newscast to newscast. You were planning on running the stories in later newscasts anyway, right?

Use your best enterprise and investigative reporters to help in the debate. Use your most resourceful, web-trained producers and desk people to set up the stories. Facilitate the debate and move a computer with modem into the meeting room so they can be researching ideas that let the reporter hit the ground running. Look at the best national stories of the day that have local impact. These become *local* stories!

Using this approach will actually feed “the topical beast” for afternoon and prime promos with stories that differentiate. Over time, they should create

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an expectation from your viewers that all started in your morning meeting.

The "20-Minute Rule"

If you still struggle with promotions buy-in for the morning meeting, try the "20-Minute Rule." Graeme Newell, a former creative services director at WBNS-TV in Columbus, OH, who now travels the country doing promotion tease writing workshops says a time limit may help. "Too many promo producers feel the morning meeting may be a waste of time. News tends to debate event coverage and logistics, not storylines and promotable angles."

Make it a rule that you will get to the important/interesting (promotable) stories within 20 minutes, or you'll get the attention of the person running the meeting!

You also could try to produce the meeting like the newscast: Start the meeting with potential lead stories, then move to impact angles for news of the day and other promotable stories, rather than by event timelines from the news daybook.

Talk About How the Stories Will Appear on the Air

Debating story treatment is one final—and sometimes overlooked—element to managing a good morning meeting. Don't just talk about what to cover; talk about how the stories will appear on the air. For example, the whole country was concerned about the Washington-area sniper shootings last year. One of the most captivating angles was how someone could shoot so accurately over long distances and then disappear so cleanly.

Baltimore's WBAL-TV brainstormed early in the coverage what was obviously synonymous with 100 yards. Their reporter shot a standup with a telephoto lens at a nearby football field to visually dramatize for viewers what these rifles could do. When the snipers were captured late at night, Good Morning America sketched for viewers and their stations an animated graphic showing the inventive car trunk "pill box" the gunmen used to execute their plot so effectively. They beat the other networks by 12 hours.

What's helpful about all this creative debate is you are helping formulate interesting promotable angles to stories rather than just promoting, "Live with the latest," "More details," or the event itself, which may be old news. The earlier in the day you drive the news marketing agenda, the better off

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Management

the news department will be. The news department needs to admit they can't get there in today's fragmented markets without the proper marketing.

Marv Danielski, vice president of marketing for Hearst-Argyle, has a lot of experience and success in his station group with this approach: "Mutual respect comes from mutual communication. Both entities must be actively engaged in the editorial process."

Danielski says the promotion department needs to remember that the price of admission to the editorial meeting is story ideas, interesting topics and the ability to communicate and determine what topics are newsworthy and promotable. He advises that the news director and the creative services director must both be actively engaged in this process multiple times on a daily basis.

But it all begins with the editorial meeting. As Danielski says, "Successful stations place a premium on developing this process into a strong mutually important relationship. Other stations fail because they can't execute this fundamental editorial and communication process."—Tom Dolan is a former news director. He is president of Dolan Media Management and can be reached at dolan@smartrecruit.com.

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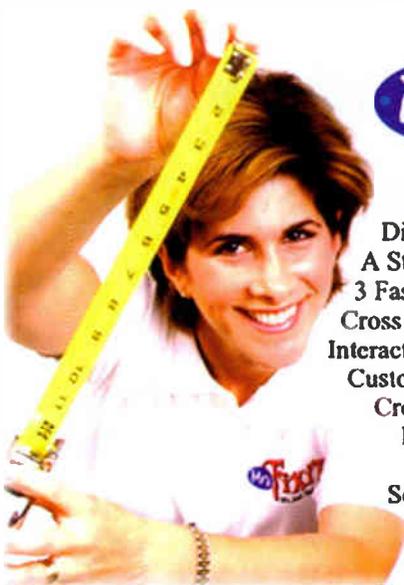
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Innovations for Video and Graphics

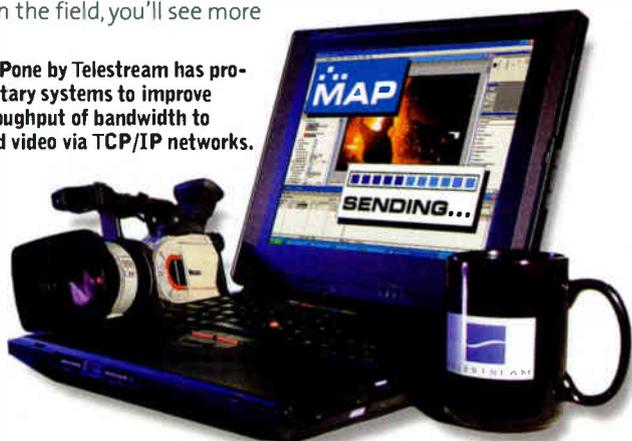
Watch for more at RTNDA@NAB

With RTNDA@NAB upon us, the new product announcements are rolling in. Before previewing the trends, however, note that NAB plans a big new post-production educational conference all day Saturday and Sunday, April 17 and 18, and the afternoons of Monday through Wednesday—the days of most RTNDA sessions. News-related topics will be among the 160 sessions, including news editing, animation, web design and digital imaging.

As for new products, the integrated in-house news production systems will continue to grow in capability and decrease in price, making some systems feasible for smaller operations. Watch for more file-based transfer capabilities for video and more open standards such as the Material Exchange Format (MXF), which increases interoperability among servers and other devices.

In the field, you'll see more

MAPone by Telestream has proprietary systems to improve throughput of bandwidth to send video via TCP/IP networks.



video and audio recorded on optical and other disks and on solid-state memory devices. In camcorders, you'll see more capability for less cost at all levels. For example, among this month's new products is a three-chip camcorder that operates in low light. You'll see more options to convey video via Internet Protocol, in some cases avoiding costly and awkward microwave feeds.

Laptop Video from the Field to the Newsroom

Telestream's MAPone (\$1,950) is software that uses Internet Protocol to transmit video across wired or wireless networks. Telestream says MAPone's single-step transfer process works with FlipFactory back at the newsroom. FlipFactory ingests, converts and delivers news content and its metadata to newsroom automation systems, editors or servers in appropriate for-

Panasonic AG-DVC30 Mini-DV camcorder with Infrared mode.



Xmedia Election Graphics System allows user to link live data sources to graphics on air.

mats. A reporter in the field with a Windows laptop can send an urgent story at 1Mbps. Where time is not an issue, she can send higher quality at 10Mbps. MAPone also indexes media on laptops and archives it to removable CDs or DVDs.

Telestream: 877.257.6245 or www.telestream.net

Election Graphics

VertigoXmedia has a new Election Graphics System that integrates templates, production tools and off-the-shelf hardware. The system is especially for the small to mid-sized operation. After the election, the system can be repurposed for regular news, sports and weather. An operator can create graphics in templates with links to live data sources, then insert the graphics into playlists. The system works with a VertigoCG or other

common character generators, such as Chyron, Pinnacle, or Inscrubber. VertigoXmedia: 435.655.7138 or www.vertigoXmedia.com

Inexpensive Infrared

It won't be your frontline camcorder, but if you need something inexpensive and small to shoot in low light, check out Panasonic's AG-DVC30 (\$2,595). It's MiniDV with a 16x lens and three 410,000-pixel CCDs. A feature called Super Night Shooting records in black and white in low light. An optional IR light (\$380) extends the view in darkness.

Panasonic: 800.528.8601 or www.panasonic.com/dvproline

MXF

Look for more announcements like this in the coming weeks. Omneon is now supporting MXF in all its Spectrum media servers. Omneon says its new ES has low cost per channel for its six playout channels, with up to 72 hours of 12Mbps video. The Spectrum production system has a shared storage infrastructure for collabo-

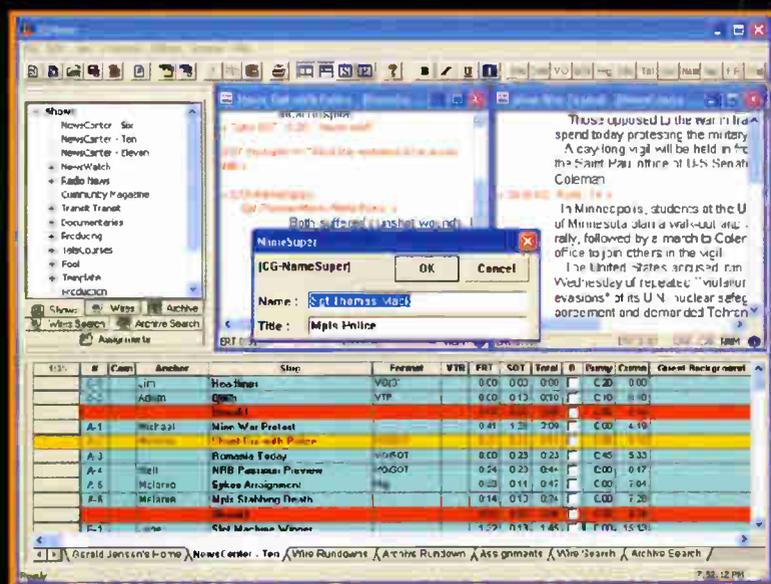
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EZNews is a modern, integrated application proven in over 100 installations. EZNews includes integrated prompting – one of the industry's best – and handles show production and rundowns better than any other system.

... [A-8] ...

(Jane)

The Minneapolis woman who was found dead in her Aldrich Avenue apartment Saturday was murdered.

The coroner has not yet identified the 27-year-old .. but says she was killed to death.

No word yet

0:10 ..Std On

... [A-9] ...

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New Products

rative production and can include Final Cut Pro editing directly on the server and immediately ready for play-out. Omneon also has an application for browse-level editing. In addition to production, Omneon has distribution and archive systems. Omneon Video Networks: 408.585.5000 or www.omneon.com

Download a Set

Virtualsetworks, a designer of virtual set libraries, has downloadable sets for FOR-A's DigiWarp EX-II Virtual Set system. These would probably be of interest to smaller news operations. The sets can be for motion-tracked production; that is when the camera moves, the virtual background

or set moves with the talent. The set features can be put behind and in front of talent.

Virtualsetworks charges \$249 per set, \$800 for a package of 20 sets and \$849 for all three packages. FOR-A: 714.894.3311 or www.for-a.com; Virtualsetworks: 714.832.0346 or www.virtualsetworks.com

Auto-update Weather Graphics

AccuWeather has an upgrade of its Galileo system that automatically updates data. The feature requires an optional secondary system as a rendering engine while the primary system is used for the on-air presentation. A network tool transfers images



Downloadable virtual sets from Virtualsetworks.

and data from the secondary to primary system to update on air. Galileo 2.1 also includes other new features, such as animations within animations and improved usability features like key frames on a timeline. AccuWeather:

814.235.8600 or www.accuwx.com

Video Both Ways

Another low-cost option is a new version of the LinkXP wireless digital wireless camera system called LinkXPe (\$15,000-\$25,000). The system offers only 4:2:0 MPEG output

and one analog video and audio input. On the LinkXP (\$50,000), reverse video is now available in a model called LinkXPR. Reverse

video shows a camera operator a second camera or positioning of overlay graphics. LinkXP mounts on a camcorder via a standard BVV5 Sony interface. Link XP also has a new wideband transmitter that operates over the 2Ghz band, giving more flexibility when spectrum space is limited, especially for some overseas situations. Link Research: 44.01.923.200.900 or www.linkres.co.uk

What are your experiences with new products? Contact michael.murrie@pepperdine.edu

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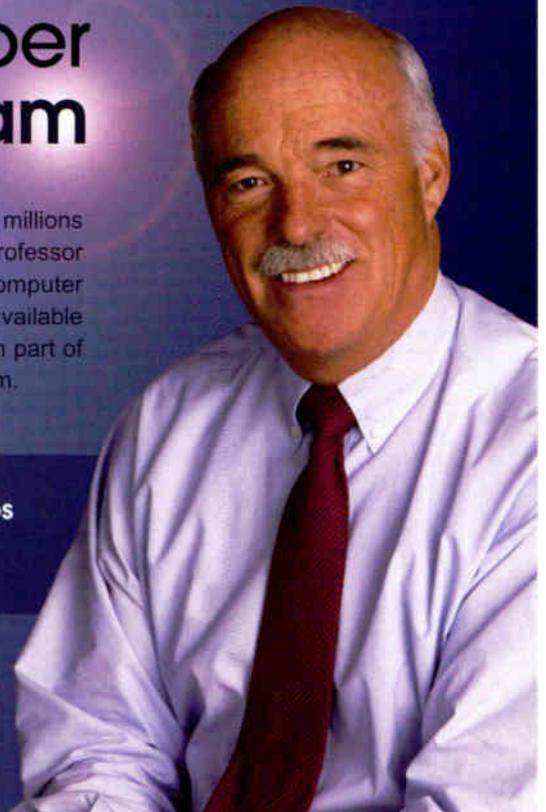
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Tough Calls

THE QUESTION:

One of your biggest advertisers submits an ad that masquerades loosely as a newscast item, to run inside your news. How do you handle the situation?



MIKE GARBER
News Director
WLTX-TV
Columbia, SC

I think every news director struggles with the realities of our industry when it comes to the news and sales relationship. However, as I have experienced here, having good communication and a plan does help. We had a situation come up with a small client who presented a faux newscast. I sat down with both our GM and GSM to review the ad and consider a policy. I am fortunate to work for a company that includes news in this decision. In the end, we as a team decided that though the commercial looked like a newscast, it looked nothing like ours and we would run it. Then, just last week, a more serious scenario arose. We were at the beginning of a potential severe weather day when I noticed a "Severe Weather" alert flash across the screen with accompanying tone. It was the start of a car ad, but you can imagine my reaction. I immediately called my GM and asked if we could review the commercial. Later, after meeting with the GSM, we decided that it had too many attributes of a real weather cut-in and pulled it. More important, however, we began work on an SOP for the folks who ingest the commercials on our server. At times they are the last line of defense and must have the authority to raise a red flag. I feel confident now that they can and will.



CURT NICKISCH
News Director
KCSF-FM
Sioux Falls, SD

This is one of those situations where making the decision is easier than handling it. Though many advertisers are seeking more transparent ways of communicating their messages, paid-for and sponsored material should still be recognized or identified as such. It's okay to be seamless, just not deceptive. There is probably no time window on the studio clock where the firewall between news and advertising needs to be higher than during the newscast. Masquerading advertising as a news item, however loosely, goes too far. That said, not every paying client will understand the difference. This might be aggravated for a big advertiser, who may feel entitled to tools that aren't in the toolbox. No matter. You have to reject the ad as submitted and do your best to explain why it can't run during the newscast. Then, look at other options. So the ad is unsuitable as a news item, but what about somewhere else on the clock? What was the reasoning behind the unconventional submission? Examine alternatives that satisfy the advertiser's intent in a manner consistent with broadcast standards. Obviously, the advertiser wanted to try something different. Use that creativity together to find something that works. The solution may even hit the mark better than the idea initially proposed.



KELLY RUNYON
News Director
WEIU-TV
Charleston, IL

While I would like to think a station's sales department would never accept such an ad, things don't always work that way. With shrinking bottom lines becoming more prevalent in the industry, sales departments often agree to deals that might fall into that proverbial "gray area." And while it's not fair to place all of the blame on the sales department, it should be noted advertisers tend to have selective hearing when it comes to the details of a deal. Ultimately, as news director I have to protect the integrity of the newscast, to include what runs in the breaks. An ad that could be even slightly misinterpreted as a news story has no place inside of a newscast, or even adjacent to it. An argument could even be made that they have no place on a television station at all without a prominent disclaimer. In an attempt to rectify the situation I would immediately schedule a meeting with the GSM to discuss the situation and try to offer suggestions and options. Such options could include reworking the ad to remove the offending portion(s), or re-placement of the ad outside—and not adjacent to—the newscast. Hopefully such an approach would net positive results with both the advertiser and the sales department... leading to a more productive operation internally.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Visit rtnda.org and vote.

NOVEMBER RESULTS

Your station is hosting a political debate and the front-runners make a demand: If a vocal and popular third-party candidate is included, they will not participate. Do you appease them?

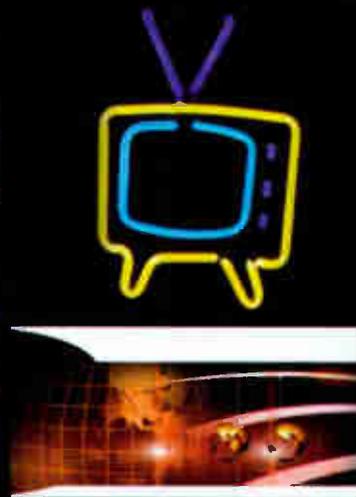
Yes: 17%
No: 82%
Total votes: 469

Send your Tough Calls ideas to Bryan Moffett at toughcalls@rtnda.org.

Garber courtesy WLTX-TV; Nickisch courtesy KCSD-FM; Runyon courtesy WEIU-TV

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