Oops, we broke the article machine

#ONA13, #articlemachine, @AmPress

INSTRUCTIONS

Momentarily you will work in assigned groups. Each group has a hypothetical story scenario. We want you to brainstorm as freely as possible new ways to cover the story, or present your reporting, that opens up coverage—that sees alternative storytelling not as a bell or whistle, but each form having its own different strengths. Appoint a note-taker for each group. One of us will help facilitate and/or keep you on track for time. You'll present your best ideas briefly at the end of the session.

Remember, for this session, you may not use the traditional news story as a solution to storytelling. The article machine is broken.

SCENARIO 5: Long-term story

You work at a local newspaper and TV operation, the St. Louis Herald and WSLH, and are part of a small team covering the Affordable Care Act/Obamacare rollout. The website, healthcare.gov has only been online for a little over two weeks now but several people in your community have already posted questions about signing up. At the same time, many people are confused about the politics of the policy as well. There are two very distinct sides of the story to consider: the actual policy itself and how it affects the individual, as well as the political battles surrounding the ACA. You need to explain what's happening, how it affects your readers and the community in a local context, and what to expect in the coming months as the January 1 deadline to sign-up approaches.

Curious where to start? Look at the back of this sheet for some questions to think about.

Questions to think about

Consider the challenges of your audience in this scenario:

If the story has been present in the news for a few days, bits of information could be scattered (various lede-all stories, across different news sites, new developments), so readers may have been lost in the mix and lacking some sort of holistic synthesis of the course of the story

Jargon-y words and/or phrases ("continuing resolution," "Vitter amendment," "health care exchange") may dominate some stories, in order to synthesize or refer to a complex side story, which may confuse some readers

Users may have already judged the issue at hand/come in with preconceived notions of what some of the facts are

Users may be bored of the topic or affected by political rhetoric

Users may not understand how this issue affects them/is part of a larger scenario/will lead to future issues

Users may be confused by the timeline/linear course of events or may be afraid to admit they only know disparate pieces of the law or don't have full understanding of what an exchange is

Users may have forgotten some of the initial prompts to the issue, since time has past

Some of your storytelling decisions:

How could you invite people into coverage about healthcare that would answer their questions and engage people who are not engaging with your content now?

How could you use multimedia to deliver aspects of this coverage? What combinations of video, audio, images, etc.?

How could you use data and visualization, like maps, charts, infographics?

Story levels: Good stories are more than just facts -- How do you serve all three levels?

How will you deliver the facts about what's happening in this story as it develops?

How will you deliver analysis and sensemaking?

How will you capture the emotional impact and human reaction and tell that story?