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Process of News Writing

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News writing can be compared neither to essay writing nor to book writing. Cut throat competition that has now crept into the journalistic world has ensured that only those newspapers will survive in modern competitive era which give their best performance in every field of journalism. A concoction of various ingredients in specific quantities is required to dish out a good news story.

A news story has three parts

We can easily divide any news into following three parts:

1. Headline.
2. Intro or Lead.
3. Body or descriptive part of the news.

1. Headline

Headline is the first part of any news story that grabs the attention of the readers. The decision to read or not to read a news story by the readers is normally taken on the basis of headlines. For this very reason headlines are printed in larger fonts or in bold fonts. Message communicated through headlines should be concise and be able to arouse curiosity in the minds of the readers. Headlines are the epitome



of news. They are indicative of the news summary, result of an event and situation depicted in the report. Headline writing is an art employed to mesmerize the readers. Perceptive, attentive, competent and talented sub-editors design attractive, intelligible, perspicuous, sharp, unambiguous and credible headlines. Headlines perform various important functions in newspapers such as making conspicuous the gist of the news to the readers, helping the readers in searching the news of their choice, making the layout of a newspaper appealing to the readers, lending credibility to the newspaper, etc. Headlines of newspapers are of vital importance. They establish a rapport with the readers. They entice the readers to read a news story by repeatedly appealing to their senses. In fact, headlines epitomize news. They are a concentrated capsule form of the news. Headlines are soothing for the eyes. They are like advertisements that encourage the readers to buy a newspaper.

2. Intro or Lead

Intro or lead of news can be compared to a 'showroom', where various goods are displayed in an attractive manner to entice the consumers to buy them. Similarly, if the essence of any news can be presented in the first paragraph itself then, more often than not it would be able to persuade the readers to read the complete story. In other words, intro or lead contains the most important information of the news story. A typical intro should be interesting and captivating for the readers and should be able to persuade them to read the entire report. An intro or lead which is considered to be of superior quality in a certain environment or context may become inferior with a change in the environment or context owing to factors like diversity among human beings, countries, socio-cultural or socio-economic structure of various different societies, etc. Newspapers also have their own points of view and perspectives and readers are also divided into various different categories. Due to this, five different newspapers published from the same city may write five different types of intros or leads for the same news. Lead contains gist of the news therefore, it should have following elements in it:

i. Who?

“Bhartiya Janta Party's octogenarian president Lal Krishna Advani was today admitted to a hospital.”

ii. What?

“40 people have died and 14 others have been critically injured in a collision between two buses in Delhi.”

iii. Where?

“Shimla, the capital city of Himachal Pradesh, is receiving snowfall since yesterday night.”

iv. When?

“The Prime Minister today informed the Members of the Parliament that there will be no compromise with terrorists in Kashmir while responding to a question from the Leader of Opposition Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee.”

v. Why?

“Two teenagers committed suicide in Delhi because their parents were against their marriage.”

vi. How?

“A Japanese mountaineer died at Mount Everest due to excessive chilly winds.”

Intro or lead is written in inverted pyramid style. Leads make the process of editing easier. A news story can be easily edited from the bottom upwards if it has a good intro as a good lead or intro contains all the necessary important information pertaining to the report. That is, even after heavily editing the story; the readers are able to get a gist of it.

3. Body or descriptive part of the News

Intro captivates the attention of the readers whereas purpose of the body is to completely engage them. Body or descriptive part of news should have attributes such as clarity, simplicity, coherence, lucidity, etc. Body of any news should be written in a perspicuous manner to ensure that it remains comprehensible even to the commonest of the readers. The language should not be esoteric and the style of writing should be unambiguous. If readers have to concert a dictionary every time they read your news; it means that your writing has failed to achieve its objective. Sentence structures should also retain organizational uniformity. Data should be clear and accurate. If there is any ambiguity or uncertainty regarding the data then, it is always better a better option not to include them in the report. A news story gets conceived in the intro while its growth and development takes place in the body.

Continuity and coherence hold a very important place in the realm of news writing. Hopping from one point to another without any logic creates chaos and confusion in any news story and baffles the readers. All the questions related to any news story cannot be answered in its intro or lead but each and every pertinent question



related to the development of the story must be answered in the body. That is, if questions like 'what', 'when' and 'where' are answered in the intro then, questions like 'who', 'why' and 'how' must be answered in the body.

It is always beneficial to give the context and background of any news as it helps in proper development of the story and facilitates the readers in understanding the importance of the news. Importance of giving background or context grows manifold while writing about political

events, economic events or news based on speeches, etc.

Quotations should be given extra importance while writing news. Quoting a speaker directly always has much deeper impact on the readers than paraphrasing or rewriting them by the journalists, even if they are reproduced in the best possible manner using the most powerful words. A news story should be culminated in a logical and orderly fashion. Every single fact should be delineated properly. Paragraphs should be kept short as it aids readability. A reader prefers news with logically constructed shorter paragraphs. Such news stories appear appealing to the readers. Mistakes in news stories with shorter paragraphs can be easily rectified.

Giving final touches to the news

The job of giving final touches to a news story is assigned either to a trained journalist or to a sub-editor. But the task of primary editing of the news is done by the reporters themselves. Clarity is an absolute necessity for any news story. To avoid writing ambiguous and chaotic news stories it is imperative that they are organized logically prior to actually start writing them. Every fact and data to be given in the intro and the body of a news story must be decided beforehand in order to ensure that none of the pertinent data and facts gets left out. If any journalist keeps the above mentioned facts in mind and sets out to perform his/her duties in an orderly manner; she can surely catch a fast lane to success in the journalistic world.

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