

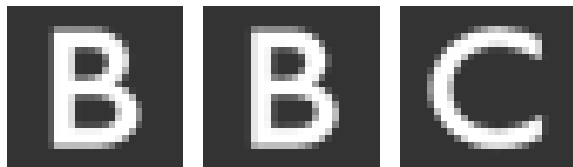
Release your inner journalist:
excellent charity news, features and
press releases

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PSYCHOLOGIES
theguardian



THE BIG
ISSUE
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for the facts



Plan for today

- Work out what we mean by news and features.
- Give you some tips on writing them – including some new ideas for features.
- Look at writing better press releases.

Exercise

- What does 'news' mean to your charity?
- How do you use it?

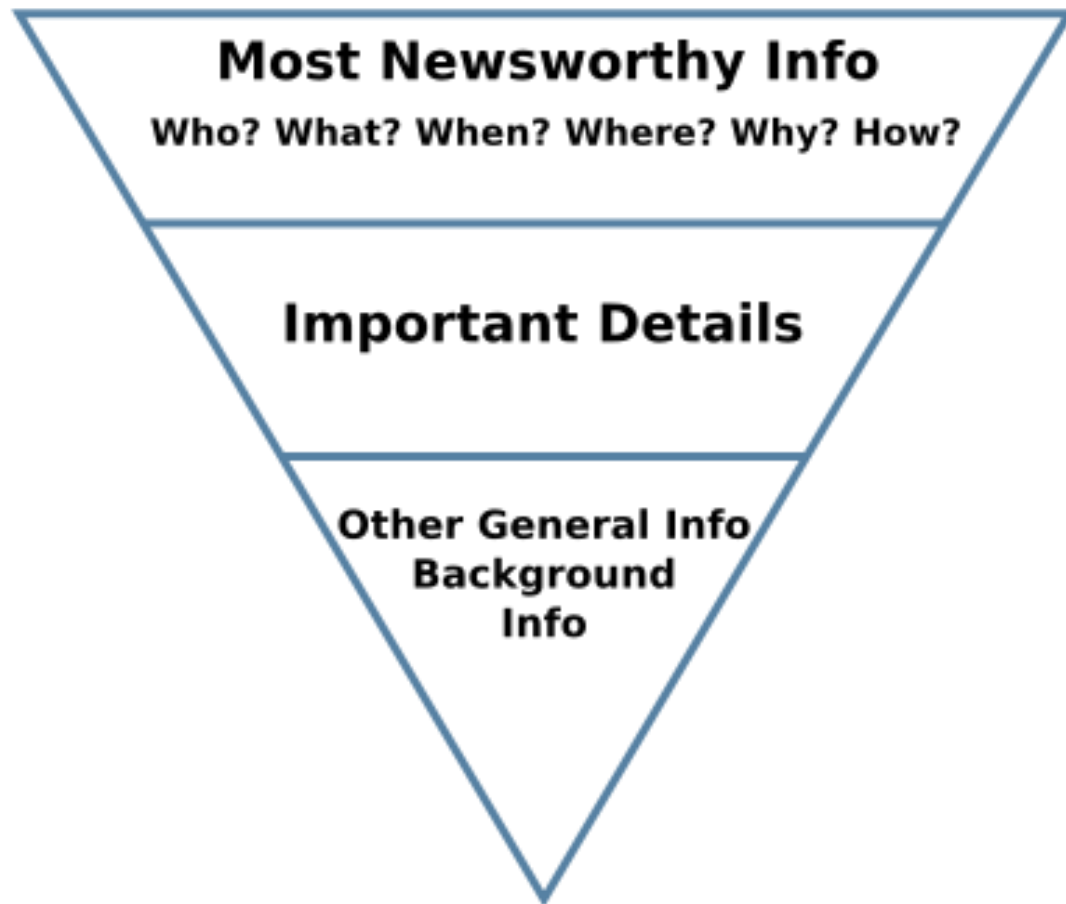
News is...

“...new information that’s of interest to your target audience.”

1. How to write news

How to write news

- News is a formula.
- It's not about flexing your writing muscles.
- Starts with understanding the inverted news pyramid.



Most newsworthy info

“I keep six honest serving-men: (They taught me all I knew) Their names are What and Where and When And How and Why and Who”

– Rudyard Kipling.

The first paragraph

- What?
- Where?
- How?
- When?
- Why?
- Who?

- What? I'm running a training session...
- Where? At the DSC
- How? On PowerPoint and by speaking
- When? 25 October
- Why? So you can learn more about news, features and press releases...
- Who? Me – and you...

Shell cuts losses, abandons Arctic drilling



12



142



1



472

Posted on 28 September 2015

WWF welcomed a decision today by Royal Dutch Shell to abandon efforts to drill in the Chukchi Sea, off the coast of Alaska.

WWF has long opposed drilling in this Arctic region, where a spill would have enormous impacts on wildlife, fisheries and local people.

"Shell's experience illustrates that further investments in oil development in the Arctic are not worth the risk to Arctic life and livelihoods", said Alexander Shestakov, Director of WWF's Global Arctic Programme.

"We hope this will provide a reality check to other companies considering the unpredictable proposition of Arctic drilling, and that investors will transition their funds instead toward low-carbon solutions."

Question:

In pairs go through the news story and identify the:

- What?
- Where?
- How?
- When?
- Why?
- Who?

The top of the news story must:

- Grab the reader's attention.
- Make them want to read more.
- Give them the most important information as soon as possible.



What's the rest?

Basically, the stuff that you don't expect anyone to read – but it would be nice if they did!

- Information to put the story in context.
- A quote to add human interest.
- Information on what might happen next...

"We hope this will provide a reality check to other companies considering the unpredictable proposition of Arctic drilling, and that investors will transition their funds instead toward low-carbon solutions."

Shell's previous attempts to drill in the Chukchi Sea ended badly, from damaged vessels to malfunctioning safety equipment to an on board fire. Most notably, Shell lost control of its drilling rig in January 2013 while towing it from Alaska to Seattle for maintenance. The rig grounded on a pristine island in the Gulf of Alaska.

Previously: Shell again intends to drill off Alaska, despite mishaps

The announcement comes weeks after Arctic nations, including the US, [pledged to cooperate on ambitious climate actions](#) at December's international climate negotiations in Paris.

"We must stop expending resources and time seeking to exploit fossil fuels from the most hostile and remote places on the planet and risking irreversible environmental damage", said Brad Ack, the Senior Vice President for Oceans at WWF-US.

Quotes

Every good news story should have a quote at least two paragraphs in.

- It adds human interest to a story.
- Can underline the human impact.
- Can't get one? Get it from somewhere else...

Top tips

- Aim to make the first line around 24 words.
- Keep all sentences under 30 words.
- Keep paragraphs short (around three sentences) – it encourages people to keep reading.
- Write for as long as you've got something informative to say, then stop.

More top tips

- Show don't tell. Rather than use 'amazing' or 'sad' explain why it is so.
- Edit, edit and edit again.
- Give it to someone else to read. Do they understand it at a glance?
- Practice.

Adding brand and personality to news

- Many organisations want to be ‘friendly’, ‘approachable’ etc
- Traditional news writing isn’t really either...
- ...But you can add in a touch of warmth and personality
- Keep to the inverted pyramid, however

You wait ages for a release...

...and then two come at once! We've had some fantastic news on two of our long-term cases in recent weeks.

Journalist and poet Shi Tao was released on 23 August 2013. Shi Tao served eight years and nine months in prison, and his sentence was reduced by 15 months.

Shi Tao was serving a 10-year prison sentence for sending an email summarizing a Chinese Central Propaganda Department communiqué on how journalists should handle the 15th anniversary of the crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy movement.

Amnesty International

World's largest palm oil trader turns over a new leaf

If there's ever a time for bad puns, it's when the world's largest palm oil trader promises to protect forests. Wilmar International, responsible for almost half of the world's palm oil, will no longer sell oil from companies that are destroying the rainforest.

Wilmar, which sells 45% of the world's palm oil, had announced that by the end of 2015 it will no longer buy or sell palm oil from any company that was destroying the forest.

Wilmar sells to just about every household brand in the world. Its new policy means that the companies that make Gillette and Durex now have no excuse not to protect forests.

Greenpeace

News checklist

- Have you answered all the questions your reader might have?
- Are you making any unconscious assumptions?
- Are there any other facts, figures or statistics you could include to support your arguments?

2. How to write features

So what exactly is a feature?

What a feature looks like

- It's longer than a news story – from 1,000 words to 40,000!
- It gives you space to slow down and fully bring an issue to life.
- Gives you the chance to flex your writer's muscles with description, colour and craft.

Ideas for different features

1. The Listicle

29 Cats Who Failed So Hard They Won

**13 Things We All Do After Watching
Scary Movies**

23 Hilarious Tweets

**About Being A Grown-Ass
Adult**



18 Facts That Will Change Your Perception On Tanning

Warning: We're gonna throw some shade here.

posted on Jun. 4, 2015, at 4:01 p.m.



Cancer Research UK
Brand Publisher



Let's start at the top. Everything you believe about tanning is (probably) wrong.



Tips for listicles

- Try and make them hyper-specific.
- Think hard about the headline – phrase like ‘must- have’ ‘unmissable’ and ‘...before you die’ work well for BuzzFeed.

Ideas for different features

2. The interview / Q&A

Interview: Greenpeace campaigner shares her stories after winning award from NAACP

January 16, 2015



Interview tips

- Think cross-content.
- Get some juicy quotes – ignore the blather.
- Get to the point in the piece.
- Try to avoid an ‘interview with the ceo’.

Ideas for different features

3. The Live-in

...an in-depth 'I was there'-style feature.

What It's Like to be a Rohingya Refugee for 23 Years

January 28, 2015

by Mojob as told to Lauren
Gillin

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Live-in tips

- Include the voices of the people you're featuring.
- Put your experience (and theirs) in a wider context.
- Don't patronise or over-dramatise.

Tips on feature writing

- Work out the structure before you begin.
- Do the research: find the facts, interview the right people.
- Don't be too clever!
- Think cross-content.
- Read and rip-off other people.

How to open a feature

- As with news – a feature opening has to grab your attention...

Opening a feature

1. Topical

Tweeting is no longer just the sound that birds make. Over the past few years, social networking site Twitter has revolutionised charity communications.

Opening a feature

2. Tease/oddity

Sam Pringle is a man on a mission. Tasked with running 13 half marathons in 13 months, he's become a slave to the treadmill and sees more of his physiotherapist than he does his girlfriend.

Lucy may be deaf, but it didn't stop her passing her Grade 8 piano exam.

Opening a feature

3. Talk directly to the reader

Do you give to charity? Do you ever wonder what happens to your money before it's put to use? Charity donors will be relieved to know that over half of UK charities have an ethical investment policy.

Opening a feature

4. Eyewitness

Being pushed from side to side, Mary struggles to hold up her placard urging an end to global poverty and inequality. She can hardly see above shoving crowd or keep up with confused chants. She wonders if the message will be drowned out like she is.

Opening a feature

5. Quote

'I didn't feel it was possible to achieve much in a career. I never felt I fitted into society because of my blindness. I didn't go out much because I didn't feel comfortable around people.'

Opening a feature

6. Contrary

Disabled people can't contribute as much as others.

Sadly, that's still what a lot of employers think. Perception is still a big barrier to gaining employment.

Opening a feature

7. Shock

Safia was just five years old on the day she struggled into her wedding dress.

The end

- Authoritative/poignant quote/statement to summarise conclusion
- Call to action

It's the first time I've ever had a dream like that, although I've had loads of dreams before, waking up crying because I've dreamed we were in Kos and the police come to us and say they've found a body they think might be Ben's and we have to go and look at it and see if it is actually Ben's and then I look up just as we walk through to see if it is - and I never find out.'

<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/mar/29/missing-child-ben-needham>

She is, no doubt, prepared for more phone calls in the night, not perhaps about riots but because of those intermittent thunderstorms of media and political expectations that build up and crackle with disapproval over controversial cases.

<http://www.theguardian.com/law/2013/nov/08/director-public-prosecutions-alison-saunders-profile>

Exercise

- Think of a news story your charity has coming up. Can you spin five feature ideas out of it?

Writing a press release

What's a press release for?

- To get your charity in the media.
- To start a relationship with journalists.
- To build brand awareness for your charity.

How do you do this?

- By giving them the facts they need to write the story immediately.

Format

- When I'm talking about press releases I'm generally talking about emails.
- They're cheap.
- They're eco-friendly.
- Admittedly, they're very disposable.

Format

- You can:

Create the press release as a Word document and attach to the email.

Write the press release as the body of an email.

Format

Do both!

- Write the press release in Word first.
- Copy and paste to the body of email and then attach it. Use the headline as your email subject line.

Format

- Never use PDFs!



Format

- Keep things to the point.
- That means no more than two sides of A4 (one is great if you can manage it).

Format

- Keep things simple.
- Only use a couple of fonts.
- Expect any fiddly design elements to be lost in translation.

Images

- Providing great images improves the chances of getting your story featured.
- Publications increasingly can't send out photographers – so they're relying on you.
- Sometimes images can communicate your charity's brand better than words alone.

Images

Images a journalist would typically need include:

Your charity's logo.

A head and shoulders shot of your ceo.

Some 'action' shots.

Images

- Have them ready to go.
- Make sure they're 300dpi for print and 72dpi for web.
- Make sure they look professional – avoid holiday snaps.

Images

...but don't attach them to the email.

Images

- Emails with images can get caught in spam filters.
- They can be too big to get through to personal email accounts.
- Invariably the images you send won't be what the journalist wants.

Images

- “We’ve got some great images available on request”
- Also gives you an indication of who’s biting.

Images

- Same applies to media rich content like video.
- Make people aware you've got it – but don't send the kitchen sink.
- “We've got some great Vines and inspiring video of our supporters on request.”

Killer headlines

- We're talking about the subject line of the email – and the headline of the press release.
- Journalists get hundreds of press releases every day. Yours needs to stand out.
- To do that you have to write a headline that's honest and credible, but gets attention.

Killer headlines



Killer headlines

“Press release from A.N. Other Charity”

“News from A.N. Other Charity”

“A.N. Other Charity November Newsletter”

Killer headlines

Imagine the publication's headline for your story. Then write that.

Killer headlines

Use statistics

- Stats are amazing!
- They add credibility to a story and make it more tangible.

Killer headlines

- “New study: 25% rise in teens sleeping rough in London”

The first paragraph

- The headline and the first paragraph of a press release needs to reveal all the facts as fast and accurately as possible.

Quotes

- Write one for your ceo then get her/him to sign it off.
- “We’re delighted that our new project is now providing support to the 150,000 people we find sleeping rough in the UK every day.”
- But even better – get quotes from your service users instead.

Quotes

“I’ve been on the streets since I was 13. A.N. Other charity helped me survive by giving me the practical advice I needed during very dark time.”

Quotes

- Have case studies ready to go with lots of first-person commentary they can quote from.
- If you haven't got a bank of case studies – make time to create them.
- Let journalists know you have them: “We’ve got a variety of case studies available on request.”

Making contact

- Creating a positive relationship with a journalist means you're more likely to be featured.
- Giving journalists a polite call a couple of days after you've sent the press release to "make sure they've got it" is fine.
- ...but calling more than once can come across a bit 'stalker-ish.'

Making contact

- Every blog, paper and publication has busy times and down-time.
- Phone up and find out when the down-time comes – that's when journalists will be most receptive to ideas.

What journalists want

- Good PRs are worth their weight in gold. They feed through amazing ideas and good stories.
- Be honest. Don't promise that you can share some amazing stats about homelessness, and then realise you can't because the ceo wants them embargoed.
- Be reliable. Keep your promises and accept that journos are often stressed around deadlines.