

SEVEN QUICK THINGS YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT TO JUDGE NEWS VALUE BEFORE YOU CALL A REPORTER

Does a story have...

1. IMPACT By impact, we mean importance or significance. One way to judge impact is to figure out what the results or consequences of a news story about the event might be. If many people will be affected, the reporter knows that the event is important enough for a news story.

Are elements in the story....

2. UNUSUAL One of the oldest definitions of news says that when dog bites man, it isn't news, but when man bites dog, that's news. The interruption in the expected, the different, makes news. If something makes a reporter stop and stare, wonder, or exclaim, then the reporter knows what she or he is looking at is newsworthy.

Does it involve a person or institution of...

3. PROMINENCE People who are widely known or who have positions of authority are said to be prominent. These are the newsmakers of our community and country. What prominent people do, even if unimportant, is often newsworthy. Names make news.

Are there elements of...

4. CONFLICT Conflict underlies our lives, and in some cases, the business of news... City Council is in conflict with voters. Any number of people or organization can be in conflict with government. A person charged with a crime is in conflict with the judicial system. The news value is in explaining the conflict.

Does a story have....

5. PROXIMITY Proximity usually refers to something physically or geographically close. A fatal accident on the corner of your street may not have the same proximity in a community 100 km away, unless a resident of that community was killed. In carrying news of an event such as a plane crash in a distant country, news outlets will often indicate whether or not there were Canadians on board. The fewer the number, the less proximity it has to a Canadian audience.

Is there an element of ...

6. TIMELINESS What's happening now? News has a short lifespan. What occurs today has a greater impact than an event that occurred a week ago, even if that event was not reported at the time.

Is the story...

7. CURRENT Current issues, whether they be political (Government policy etc), social (crime rates), or personal (education, religion, Sunday shopping), are all factors in deciding the news value of stories. What's in the news today? How does it affect people?

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