

Tell Your County's Story

Lessons from County Storytellers

November 30, 2016

TODAY'S CONTENT

Consider How To:

- ✓ Reclaim the conversation about the role and purpose of County Government
- ✓ Connect what people care about with your role in their lives
- ✓ Personify the role of government
- ✓ Build and sustain familiarity and trust in your Board of County Commissioners and your County government

TODAY'S CONTENT

“How To Tell Your County Story?”

- ✓ Mine for stories of service and stewardship
- ✓ Ask and evaluate the answers to the ‘so what’ and ‘why should the public care’ questions
- ✓ Tell the human story and demonstrate the public benefit
- ✓ Your employees can be among your greatest sources

Storytelling Takeaway #1

People are hungry for good news.

Telling Your County's Story

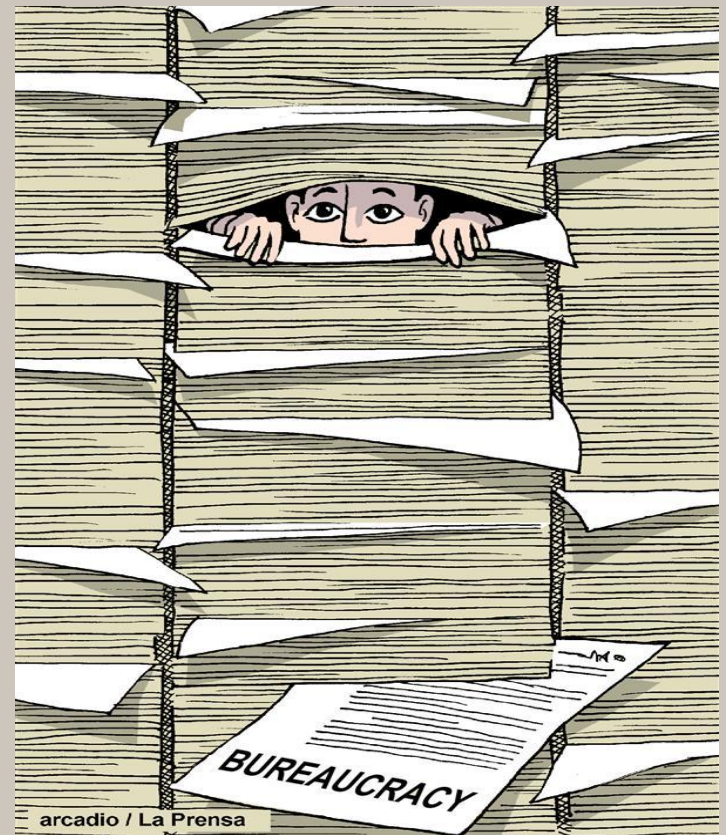
Good-news stories:

- ✓ Make us feel
 - ✓ Persuade
 - ✓ Inspire
 - ✓ Motivate
- Who is telling *your* good-news story?
 - Why does it matter?

Public Perception of Government



Search ID: prin18
Democrats and Republicans enter into yet another intellectual debate about the issues



Public Perception of Government

- Americans' trust in federal government at all time low
- Perception of misdeeds of one government is often seen as evidence of universal misconduct
- Inability to separate branches of government

Public Perception of the Media

Gallup Poll September 14, 2016

- Divisive presidential election has eroded Americans' trust and confidence in the media
- Dropped to its lowest level in Gallup polling history
- Only 32% saying they have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the media

Media Perception of Government -- Our Reality

Society of Professional Journalism Code of Ethics
referring to the role of the professional journalist:

- *“Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public’s business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.”*

State of the News Media - Our Reality

- Frantic 24-7-365 news cycle
- Often under-staffed newsrooms
- Reporters under great time pressure
- Some define government news as only that which has problems/conflict
- Unfamiliar with our positive role and purpose in people's lives - our human stories

Telling Your County's Story

Why does it matter that your story begins with YOU? You are the only one who can:

- ✓ Reclaim the conversation about the purpose of County Government
- ✓ Connect what people care about with our role in their lives
- ✓ Personify the role of government

Service and Stewardship - Our Reality

- The public benefit/human stories of our investments in:
 - Public Safety
 - Natural Resources/Parks/Trails/Open Space
 - Transportation
 - Human Services/Public Health
 - Examples of Fiscal Responsibility
 - Partnerships among others in the community

State of the News Media - Our Opportunity

- Many *local, community* newspapers are evolving to a new normal
- Recognizing the role of local newspapers in building citizenship
- Taking on a civic journalism role -- aspiring to:
 - Retain role as watch dog
 - Abandon role as attack dog
 - Add role as guide dog

Civic Journalism Invites Storytelling

- Civic Journalism Does NOT:
 - Keep Score
 - Focus on Conflict

Civic Journalism Invites Storytelling

- Civic Journalism DOES:
 - Focus on community stories
 - Focus on the public interest

Storytelling Takeaway #2

Birth stories or they may not be born.

Storytelling Takeaway #3

No more focus on “us and our stuff.”

Storytelling Success is in the Framing

- The greatest commandment of storytelling:

MAKE ME CARE

- ✓ Personify the role of government
- ✓ Feature a visual - a human face
- ✓ Connect what people care about
with the role of government in their lives

Storytelling Takeaway #4

There is no silver bullet.
Be where the people are.

Integration and Multimedia Penetration

Adding Layers/Depth to outreach:

- ✓ Your Website online newsroom
- ✓ High quality still photography & video
- ✓ Advertising
- ✓ Social Media
- ✓ Infographics/charts
- ✓ Live audio or video streaming of meetings

Integration and Multimedia Penetration

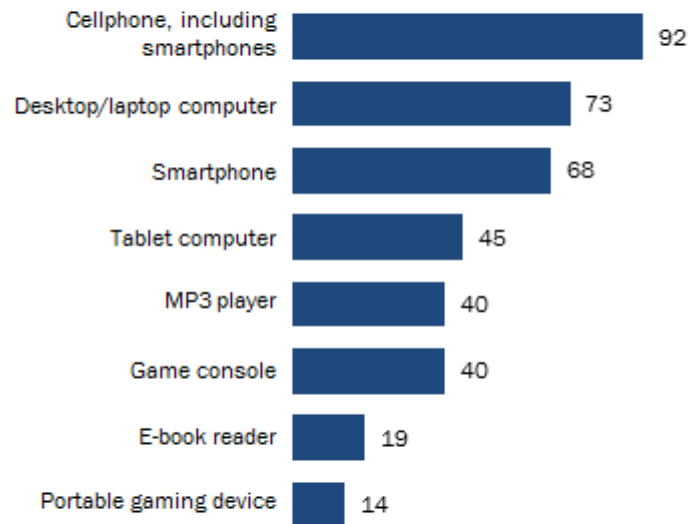
Adds Value and Reach

- ✓ Adding powerful images to your website
- ✓ Integrating social media or other communications tactics
- ✓ Add reach to your message
- ✓ Value to your conversations
- ✓ A stronger presence where your citizens already are

Pew Center Research October 29, 2016

Cellphones, Computers Are the Most Commonly Owned Devices

% of U.S. adults who own each of the following devices



Source: Pew Research Center survey conducted March 17-April 12, 2015.
Smartphone data based on Pew Research survey conducted June 10-July 12, 2015.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Smartphone Use for Government Info.

- U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015 (Pew Research)
- 40% use smartphone to ‘look up government services or information’
- Underscores the influence of personal technology on how we communicate; and
- Increased opportunity to be the primary source for our own information

Storytelling Takeaway #5

Storytelling Must Be T.R.U.E.

- True
- Relevant
- Useful
- Engaging

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Funds strengthen County's safety net

More than \$131,000 in grant funds were approved this week to 16 nonprofit programs that help serve the most vulnerable populations in the County.

The funds, received by the County annually from the Philip S. Miller Trust, are distributed to a variety of programs that focus on enhancing the quality of life for Douglas County residents, through emergency food assistance, medical care, youth development or crisis counseling. ...[Read More](#)

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Evacuation planning saves times, lives

Did you know that 80 percent of Americans live in counties that have been hit with a weather-related disaster since 2007, yet nearly 60 percent of American adults — including 56 percent of those living in Douglas County — do not have a plan in place if disaster hits? [...Read More](#)

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How do we make sure we get it right?

- Build positive, mutually-beneficial media relationships
- Write and publish well-written, multi-media rich conversational human stories
- Give reporters content in a format they'll use
- Have an online newsroom/become your own publisher
- Write for Google friendliness