TRUST IN "THE MEDIA":
What do news consumers want?

Charles N. Davis, Dean, Grady College

TrustingNews.org
Trust has been falling for decades.

Gallup has been asking about media trust since 1972 and found it hit a high-water mark in 1976, three years after the Watergate scandal.

That year, 72 percent of Americans said they had “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of “trust in the mass media.”
Trust has been falling for decades.

With the advent of cable news and the rise of talk radio in the 1980s, that number began to fall to the low and mid 50s by the 1990s, and remained there for roughly a decade.

It has fallen slowly but fairly consistently since the early 2000s, dropping below 50 percent in 2007. In September 2016, it hit a new low of 32 percent. Among Republicans, it was just 14 percent.
FOCUS ON THE WORK

Most of what journalists do is far removed from the “fake news” climate

Headlines from one morning in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune
— Top 5 Things To Do This Week
— For inaugural Sarasota Balloon Festival, it's no glow
— Lawmakers pass criminal reforms aimed at racial injustice
— Early voting brisk on school tax referendum
— Venice holds first strategic planning session
— Red tide on the rise in Sarasota County
— Sarasota police arrest dozens on drug charges
TRUST IN NEWS

People trust the news they use

PROPORTION THAT SAY THEY TRUST NEWS FROM EACH SOURCE - ALL MARKETS

- Trust news overall: 44% (+1)
- Trust news I use: 51% (+2)
- Trust news in search: 34%
- Trust news in social: 23%

Q6_2018 1/2/3/4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think you can trust ‘most news’/‘news I consume’/‘news in social media’/‘news in search engines’ most of the time. Base: Total sample in all markets = 74194.
WHY WE’RE HERE

We have an education problem. A storytelling problem, actually.

Stop assuming people know what you’re offering them. Don’t let yourself be lumped in with “the media.” Tell them why you’re worthy of their time, trust and support.
WHAT’S A JOURNALIST TO DO?

ONE: We have to accept that actively earning trust is part of our jobs …

… and that just doing good journalism isn’t enough anymore.
WHAT’S A JOURNALIST TO DO?

TWO: We have to invest in understanding what our audience thinks of us — what they value, what they misunderstand, what they complain about.
WHAT’S A JOURNALIST TO DO?

THREE: We need to build into our journalistic processes and products messages that educate the audience about *us,* not just about what we cover.
We need to deal with this on two levels

Institutionally

What do we communicate about our brand?

Our policies, ethics and guidelines?

Our mission?

Day to day

What do we communicate about our processes?

Our choices?

Our people?
Let’s look at how newsrooms are working day-to-day to demonstrate credibility and *earn* trust.
Earning trust by inviting questions ... and answering them
Covered in the KCRG Q&A

— ethics (no, we don’t purposefully suppress stories)
— process (here’s how we check facts)
— news judgment and perceived agendas (here’s how we decide what to cover)
— commitment to the local community (we’re raising kids here too)
Covered in the KCRG Q&A

— their relationship with national news and with their parent company
— balance and fairness (no, those aren’t the same thing, and equal time isn’t always what’s fair)
— how investigations work (they take time and often unfold “like layers of an onion”)
— why they need viewers’ help to keep a pulse on what needs to be covered
Anticipate criticism of a story and be proactive about sharing your motivation and process. When possible, get in front of the curiosity.

WCPO I-Team spent months researching how law enforcement agencies handle accountability

BY: Mike Canan
POSTED: 10:00 AM, Oct 29, 2017

One of our most important roles at WCPO is to look out for you.

We take seriously our job as a watchdog on those with power, especially in government.

That's why we fight for open government records and meetings. We spend considerable staff time investigating how your tax dollars are being used.

And we also find out if people in power are being held accountable, if the systems of governments and law enforcement are working fairly like they should.

That's why chief investigative reporter Craig Cheatham began looking into tips that said some law enforcement officers were not being held accountable the way regular people – you and I – might be.
Consider how you report on crime, select stories, etc.

The Coloradoan

Hello everyone, I wanted to provide some insight on our reporting process with this story: While the individuals were cited, none were arrested. We do not report the names of individuals accused of crimes unless we plan to follow the cases through to a verdict out of fairness to the suspect, as oftentimes suspects arrested and charged with crimes are later exonerated or the charges against them are dismissed. We treat these stings much like we do increased DUI enforcement. We feel it's important to report on the results and make the community aware of the issue, but we will only name suspects in these cases if they are a high-profile individual, the crime itself was high profile in nature, or they are charged with a serious offense.

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How the Coloradoan reports on crime

Jennifer Hefty, JenniferHefty@coloradoan.com

Published 3:27 p.m. MT Feb. 8, 2018 | Updated 2:34 p.m.

Content Strategist Jennifer Hefty oversees the breaking news team at the Coloradoan.
Balanced and accurate reporting is a priority for the News Tribune, whether the reporting comes from News Tribune staff reporters or from the Associated Press. To provide a full view of the issues involved in the various investigations surrounding the governor – the House investigation, the St. Louis criminal case, the charity investigation, and the Confide lawsuit – we’ve gathered all related coverage below so you can read about the different perspectives, opinions and facts of the ongoing story in one place.
Be proactive about your commitment to fairness.
By Steve Gunn
The Virginian-Pilot
Feb 5, 2018

News, opinion, analysis: Here's how
The pilot defines these story types

Opinion: Fort Collins banners getting fixed in the name of
inclusion

This is the opinion of Coloradoan columnist Kevin Dugon.

Kevin Dugan, kdugan@coloradoan.com
Published 4:57 p.m. MT Feb. 1, 2018 | Updated 5:02 p.m. MT Feb. 1, 2018

Make it clear
what's opinion and
what's news.
(And what
does "editorial"
mean?
anyway?)
Share the factors behind your tough decisions.
Cover the basics by publishing your ethics policies … provided you feel comfortable with where you stand.

This is what guides us.

Our ethics policies help ensure that our reporting is trustworthy and fair.

Privacy Rights for Suspects and Victims of Crimes

In reporting on situations where people have been accused of committing a crime, we must be careful to avoid jumping to conclusions. We cannot ever refer to individuals as “criminals” or say outright that they committed a crime, because we will never know on our own whether they did. Likewise, we cannot say that someone was arrested “for” a crime that he or she may not have
And look for opportunities to make those ethical decisions visible within your stories.

After seeing Annenberg Media's February coverage of the lawsuit, a current undergraduate student reached out to share his own experiences. The student, who identifies himself as a gay male and has not come out, asked to speak anonymously. Because the information he shared involves his personal medical information and his sexual orientation, Annenberg Media is honoring his request, in accordance with our ethics policy.
Recognize what people don’t know about journalism and be proactive.

What happens when you send The Pilot a tip? We check it out.

By Cindy Clayton
The Virginian-Pilot
Mar 26, 2018

Behind-the-scenes on selecting national and world stories for the Pilot

By Tim Tlumey
The Virginian-Pilot
Mar 20, 2018

Why we sometimes use anonymous sources – and how we vet them

By Eric Hartley
The Virginian-Pilot
Mar 19, 2018
Your journalism has value.
Go ahead and explain why you have a paywall.
People have way more questions about ownership and money than journalists realize.

**WCPO uses Sinclair video to educate community and earn trust**

WCPO, the E.W. Scripps-owned, ABC-affiliate TV station in Cincinnati, Ohio, published two posts about their own mission and ownership.

“Act independently,” writes News Director Chip Mahaney. “That’s one of a few basic creeds of journalism ethics, and we claim it proudly. At WCPO-9 On Your Side, our journalism decisions—what we decide to cover and how we tell our stories—begin and end every day right here in our Cincinnati newsroom.”

Mahaney’s article, posted Monday, gets directly to the point.

“At WCPO, you don’t have to worry that our anchors, reporters, digital journalists, photographers—or anyone else—are being told what to read or what to report from outside influences. That’s not us.”
CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (KCRG-TV9) - In the wake of the shooting at Douglas High School in Florida that killed 17 students, schools nationwide have seen a spike in threats. Some are due to a copycat effect and others from heightened awareness of potential threats to student safety.

This week, one eastern Iowa school district reported a threatening comment to police who launched an investigation. Police determined "there was not a viable threat towards students or staff".

You will not see this as a story on KCRG-TV9, along with several other threats we will undoubtedly learn of during the rest of the school year. Here’s why.

That creates a difficult balancing act for news outlets - report a possible threat to public safety and it may cause more threats to public safety,

Most newsrooms, including KCRG-TV9, has set standards for when to report or not report a threat. Ours is simple, yet complex: is there a public impact? It seems simple - if the threat rises to a level where there is an impact on the general public, we report it for the overriding public good it can do. For example, when police evacuated Anamosa High School this week, we covered it because police had taken a public action, signaling the threat was one taken more seriously than most.
Share what you stand for. Remind people you’re on their side. Tell them you have a public service mission.

The Gazette
January 19

As a locally-owned news organization, we exist to tell stories of life in Eastern Iowa. Our only agenda is to provide accurate, useful and compelling information.

With that in mind, we’re listening: What LOCAL stories do you want to see more of?
Share your favorite work. Remind people of your value. Demonstrate breadth.
Be human. Actually answer. Know what you want to say.

Tone matters.

Be genuine.

That means reading the comments and answering questions.

“Hi Paul, thank you for your note. There certainly is lots of partisan information out there. We try to report both the positive and the negative. If you have specific stories that you feel were unfair or biased, please email me at mike.canan@wcpo.com. Our goal is never to divide people. But there are often multiple sides of any issue. Our goal is to bring about healthy conversation -- either through our journalism or by engaging people in discussion here on Facebook or in other places.”

— Mike Canan, WCPO
Explain how you protected the privacy and wishes of vulnerable sources.
Indigenous activists are protesting an oil pipeline that could destroy these reservations' only water supply. newsy.com/62769

“THE LAST TIME THE SEVEN BANDS OF DAKOTA-NAKOTA NATION STOOD...”

JON EAGLE

In a nutshell - The best way to refer to people would be by their specific tribe, but this was a historic gathering of people not only from all over the Dakotas but also from all over the country and even some First Nation Canadians, so there were tons of different tribes represented here. Of the people we asked, most said they preferred American Indian over Native American, and AP Style, which we follow, says either American Indian or Native American is acceptable.
How to get started

Newsrooms need to tell a consistent, repetitive story about what motivates their work, the range of information and stories they offer, what sets them apart, who they are, how they operate and how people can reach them.
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Your Mission and Motivation:

Your Decisions and Ethics:

How You Ask For Feedback:
How to get started

TrustingNews.org has newsroom examples that can be sorted by issue/problem.

Newsroom Examples

Click on the expandable search boxes below to see hundreds of examples of how our newsroom partners have used trust strategies in their journalism. You can learn more about the strategies tested here and find a list of all the newsrooms we've worked with since 2016 here. And email us with ideas for testing or problems we can help with.

- Advertising and Funding
- How News Works
- Ethics and Values
- Bias and Fairness
- Engaging with Users
- Who are Journalists?
- Story Topic
Request a trust coaching session:
trustingnews.org/coaching

Subscribe to get one tip in your inbox each week:
bit.ly/trusttips

Project highlights are pinned to the top of
twitter.com/TrustingNews