

# 'So, What's Your Plan?'

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# WHY PLAN?

- ✓ It makes everyone's lives easier.
- ✓ It will help us build the audience channels we each decided are right for our communities.



# BEAT PLANS FOR FRANCHISE AND CORE TOPICS

- ✓ What stories do I need to work on this week?  
This month?
- ✓ What A1 enterprise is on the horizon  
for the coming months?
- ✓ What project am I plugging away at as time allows?
- ✓ What are the emerging issues on my beat?

# BEAT PLANS FOR FRANCHISE AND CORE TOPICS

- ✓ What does my reporting tell me will be the emerging issues in six months?
- ✓ What do I not know enough about?
- ✓ How can I learn more?
- ✓ Who/what are my key sources for story ideas and reporting?  
What gaps do I need to fill and how can I do that?

# BEAT PLANS FOR HIGH-ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

- ✓ What are people talking about right now?
- ✓ What do I expect they'll be talking about in six months?
- ✓ What types of content have been the most successful in the past week? Month? Six months?

# BEAT PLANS FOR HIGH-ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

- ✓ What types of content might get people to engage more in my topic area?
- ✓ Which ones should we try?
- ✓ How can we test readers' level of engagement?

# BUILDING STORY BUCKETS

(WHAT TYPE OF STORY IS THIS?)

## Daily story

- ✓ New development
- ✓ Breaking news
- ✓ Localizer
- ✓ Talker
- ✓ Quick take
- ✓ Weird news

## Enterprise

- ✓ Affects a large swath of the community
- ✓ Complex topic that needs to be explained
- ✓ Big 'so what' factor

# BUILDING STORY BUCKETS

(WHAT TYPE OF STORY IS THIS?)

## Project

Addresses something so important to the community, compelling or outrageous that it makes readers sit up and pay attention.

- ✓ Online elements
- ✓ Highly readable
- ✓ Can lead to change
- ✓ Subject readers care or will care deeply about



# START WITH A CALENDAR

- ✓ Write in beat-related annual events, key dates and holidays.
- ✓ Add beat-related dates, previous stories that should be updated.

041918-cal-mscarecard	Pub Date	Section	Photo	Graphic	Mult.
<a href="#">mScarecard</a> 	04/19/2018	Caliente	Handout	No	No
<b>Reporter:</b> BURCH, Cathalena E. [573-4642]		<i>No sidebars</i>			
<b>Locations:</b> Enterprise		<b>Length:</b> 15"			
<b>Headline:</b> 041918-cal-mscarecard					
Hi Cathy, Thanks so much! The show with Dash is April 21st. I am including my EPK link. It has pics, bio and songs there. Hopefully that's ok. <a href="https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4qabrqc2f30wqxq/AAAXye3PMzbimmRmSMvT2LVOa?dl=0">https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4qabrqc2f30wqxq/AAAXye3PMzbimmRmSMvT2LVOa?dl=0</a> Thank you, Brad					

- ✓ Pencil in pending enterprise, watchdog and investigative stories.

# PLANNING FOR WEEKLY ENTERPRISE

- ✓ Weekly check-in with reporter or team
- ✓ Weekly enterprise meeting – ours is after the Monday A1 meeting
- ✓ When something big pops up, decide how to tackle it. One reporter? Two? A team?



# SCHEDULING ENTERPRISE

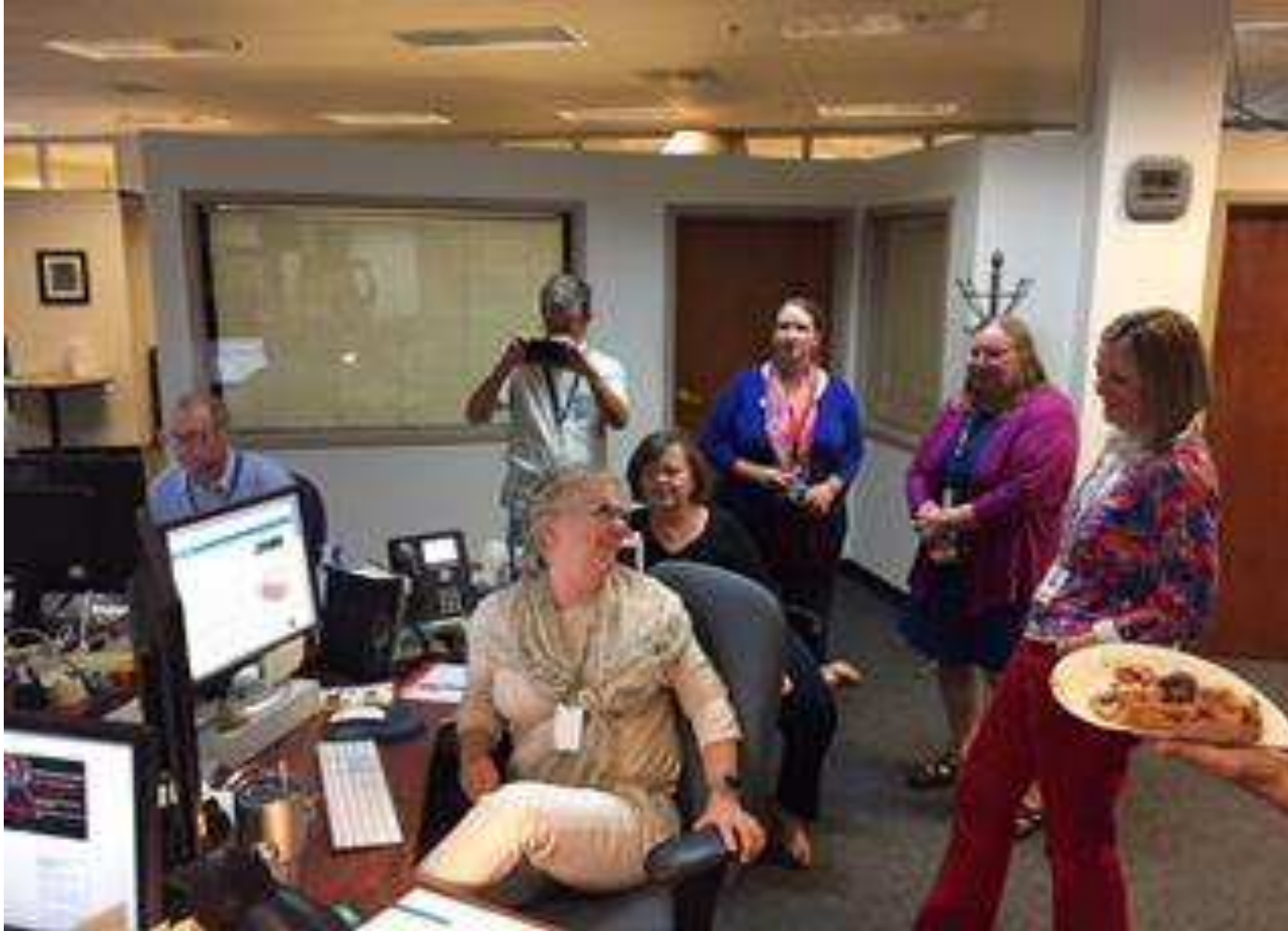
(IT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE)

## Things we can't know:

- ✓ When will requested records arrive?
- ✓ How long will it take to get a key source to talk?
- ✓ Will we need experts to help us understand complex documents?
- ✓ How long will it take to clean dirty data?
- ✓ Uh oh. New information sends the story in a new direction.

# SCHEDULING ENTERPRISE

(IT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE)



- ✓ Keep it flexible, but make a schedule and review it frequently — it will help keep everyone on track.

# BEAT PLANS 101

(COACHING NEW REPORTERS)

- ✓ Read other publications related to the beat topic.
- ✓ Schedule regular face-to-face meetings with key experts on the topic to find out what's hot, what's coming and to ask what topic/nuance the reporter is missing.
- ✓ Print an occasional box with beat stories asking readers what else they want to know on the topic.



# BEAT PLANS 101

(COACHING NEW REPORTERS)

- ✓ If your site runs comments, get reporters to engage with readers there.
- ✓ Encourage reporters to engage with readers on social media after posting a story on the beat topic.
- ✓ Schedule 'coffee with the reporter' sessions and encourage readers to come and share their thoughts on the beat topic.

# YOU'VE GOT A PLAN!

NOW ... HOW TO MAKE IT WORK?

- ☑ **Reporters:** Keep a story list, review weekly with editor.
- ☑ **Editors:** Initiate weekly check-in on beat plan story ideas.
- ☑ **Both:** Put stories — even very preliminary ones — on the budget so everyone can see them, everyone knows what's coming and everyone has a sense of who's doing what.
- ☑ Choose the form that works for your newsroom — spreadsheet, Word doc, Google doc, etc.

# KEEPING PLANS FRESH

MAKE TIME FOR QUICK, WEEKLY CONVERSATIONS

- ✓ Conversations about the content plan help move stories along.

Stuff we are working on this week:

Tuesday:

American Eat Co: We already did an Instagram story, this is an article with breakdowns of eat restaurant and what to eat - Andi/Sam

Yoga + kids classes - Angela

Wednesday:

Bookman's has a new second Saturday program with local artists - Johanna

Neighborhood mural fest - Angela

- ✓ They cross off stories that weren't as expected and aren't worth the time to report – those that matter to sources but not readers, those that affect very few people, etc.

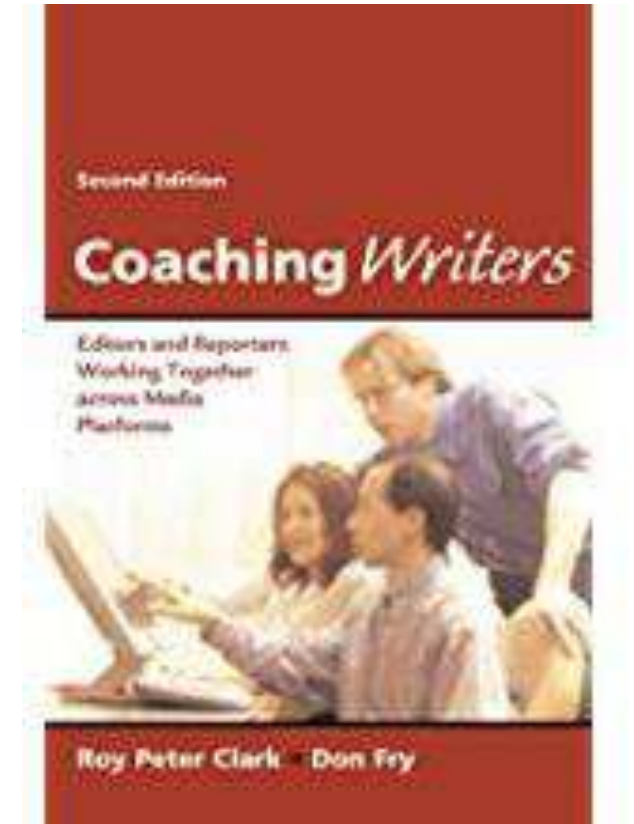


# HOW PLANNING SAVES TIME

(WITH THANKS TO DON FRY AND ROY PETER CLARK)

## First conversation

- ✓ What story does the reporter hope to pursue
- ✓ Ideally, what will the story reveal or accomplish?
- ✓ Who does the reporter need to talk to?
- ✓ How long will it take?



# HOW PLANNING SAVES TIME

## Second conversation

- ✓ What I learned in my reporting...
- ✓ What will be the focus/point of the story?
- ✓ How will the story be structured?
- ✓ Possible lede?
- ✓ Approximate length

# HOW PLANNING SAVES TIME

- ✔ Complex stories, investigations and projects may require interim check-in conversations if the focus of the story changes or the reporter hits a dead end or needs to strategize a difficult interview.

# HOW PLANNING SAVES TIME

## The magic questions

- ✓ What? (What's the point of the story?)
- ✓ So what? (Why does this matter?)
- ✓ Now what? (What happens next or what could this lead to?)

# HOW PLANNING SAVES TIME

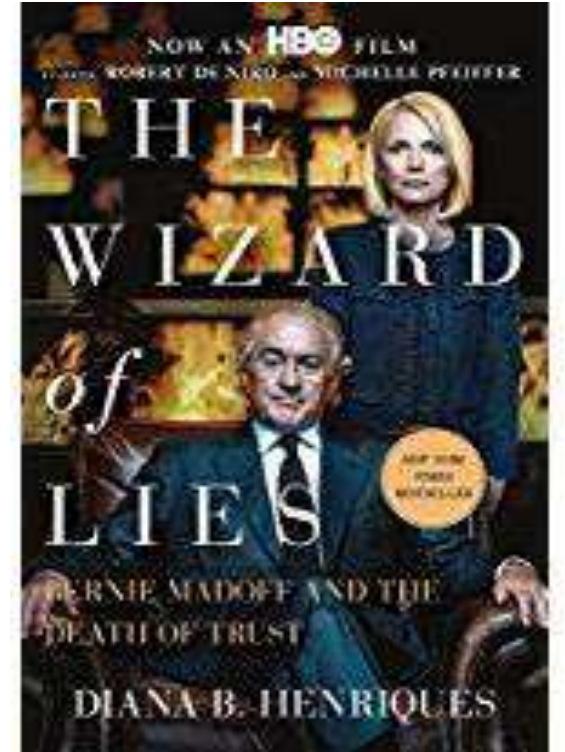
## The editing process

- ✓ First edit — determines if the reporter followed the plan you agreed to, and if there are unanswered questions or structural problems that need to be addressed.
- ✓ Second edit — polish and trim.

# PLANNING A PROJECT

(WITH THANKS TO DIANA HENRIQUES)

- ✓ Come up with a temporary hypothesis.
- ✓ Talk through big-sky digital elements.
- ✓ Weekly progress meetings will keep everyone on track.
- ✓ At each one, decide: Does the temporary hypothesis still stand? If not, come up with a new one.
- ✓ Review proposed digital elements – do they still work? Can your newsroom build them? Can the Lee digital center help?



# PLANNING A PROJECT

- ✓ One you've done enough reporting, finalize the hypothesis – that will become the lede or nut graf for the project.
- ✓ Start working on digital elements.
- ✓ Continue weekly check-in meetings with reporters, photographers, digital producers, editors.
- ✓ If you make a video, use it to promote the project.

# PLANNING A PROJECT

- ✓ Launch the project on your busiest online day of the week. Run it in print the following Sunday.

**Added bonus:** Doing it this way, you have time to get the kinks out before it's committed to print.





# BUILD PLANNING INTO YOUR NEWSROOM



- ✓ Put an extra chair by each editor's desk.
- ✓ The message: Sit down and chat.



# BUILD PLANNING INTO YOUR NEWSROOM

- ✓ Replace unused desks with a conference table/chairs repurposed from elsewhere in the building.
- ✓ Sofas, love seats, armchairs are great, too.



# BUILD PLANNING INTO YOUR NEWSROOM

- ☑ And a coffee maker doesn't hurt...

