Measuring Impact: Start from the Beginning

Start Here

The Question of Impact

Measuring impact is journalism's Holy Grail…

Elusive

In most cases, impact isn't immediately obvious

Filled with imposters

Web metrics have lulled us into thinking of views, clicks, likes and follows as impact in and of themselves

Valuable

Understanding impact guides decision-making, demonstrates value to community, funders and members, advertisers

The Question of Impact

- The value lies in understanding not just whether people consume news and information but how they act on it
- The problem is that acting on news and information isn't always an immediate response
- Impact can happen over a very long time frame, sometimes years
- And it can happen in increments, a piece at a time

The Question of Impact

- Add to those facts this one: We know both through experience and instinct that different kinds of journalism have different impacts.

- Those impacts can range from awareness to affinity to action.

- So the way we approach and present stories affects the impact equation

Breaking News Informs

Feature stories entertain or inspire

diversions ▸ driveway moments

After 66 Years, Veteran Reunited With Dog Tag

March 04, 2009 4:00 PM ET

Listen to the Story
All Things Considered 4 min 47 sec

+ Playlist
↓ Download
≡ Transcript

oseph Farish's dog tag from 1943 as found in a tunnel in New York ity last week by a 19-year-old and er boyfriend, who returned it to im.

A week ago, 19-year-old Sydney Rector of the Bronx went to a music store in Midtown Manhattan with her boyfriend, Stevin Tyska.

When they left, they were playing around in a tunnel between 48th and 47th streets — and that's where they stumbled across a 66-year-old dog tag.

"It's a plastic tunnel and above you there's a waterfall," Rector tells NPR's Robert Siegel. "So you see the water falling on you; it's pretty cool. We were walking through, dancing around, being stupid, and my boyfriend saw

Explanatory stories elucidate

Understand the News

Investigative stories seek change

St.LouisPublicRadio

News ▾ Programs ▾ Station Info ▾ Support ▾ Events ▾

Union Station
St. Louis' Union Station Debuts Grand Hall Multimedia Show

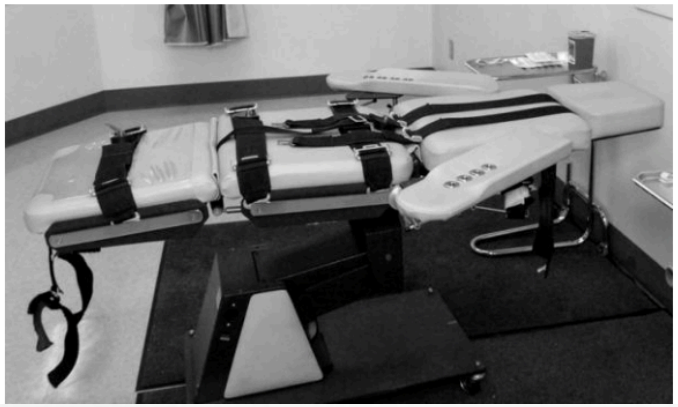
Mobilitracker.org
Use Our Missouri Legislative Tracker To Follow Key Bills

Death Penalty 12:54 AM TUE DECEMBER 31, 2013

Investigation: Missouri's Execution Drug Source Raises Legal, Ethical Questions

Share Tweet +1 E-mail 1 Comment Print

By CHRIS MCDANIEL & VÉRONIQUE LACAPRA



Internal and External

- We have web analytics and listener numbers that help us understand the size of our audience and the reach of our journalism.
- But to understand impact, we have to make a direct connection to decisions we make about the journalism itself.
- We have to be purposeful about the subjects we report on, the ways we do the reporting and the ways we reach audiences most inclined to act upon that reporting.
- That means looking at impact with both an internal lens and an external lens.

Planning for Impact

1

Think through the story of your work from beginning to end

What is the possible trajectory of this story? What do you hope will happen? Think about how to look for correlation, not just causation

2

Create content that is designed to be used

What can the user do with this content? Include information that can lead to action. Think about how it can be shared. Make sure you are transparent with readers about what you hope they'll do with it.

3

Think about the targets for your content

Who is most likely to be affected? Who is most likely to act? In what ways could they act, and how does that relate to your content?

4

What platforms or tools are best suited to the task?

Which stories can you best tell where, and in what ways?

Four measurement categories

These four categories of measurement act as a wheel, with each reinforcing the other

Content

Focus on setting goals that reinforce creating content that is designed to be used

Targets

Focusing on who you want to reach with a story and to what end: What actions are possible?

Results

Tracking what happens as a result of the journalism

Platforms

Identifying the right platforms through which to reach your targets effectively, setting and tracking platform-specific goals

Each of these categories could be tailored to match goals for specific stories or types of coverage: by topic, by approach, by program

Content

1

Subject Matter Focus

This focus would be useful in newsrooms that have identified a master narrative and core topics they are pursuing consistently. Examples could include education, health policy, economic disparity, etc.

2

Types of Journalism

This focus would be useful in instances where you are tracking impact within a particular project or topical focus. Examples would include explanatory, investigative, feature, breaking, etc.

3

Content Approach

This focus would be helpful when you are tracking impact within either a particular program or channel and you want to understand the value of different content assets, such as data, narratives, photos, video.

Targets

1

Relationship to issues

What is the relationship of the audience you seek to reach to the subject you are covering? Are you trying to reach policymakers? Stakeholders? Experts?

2

Geography

Are there specific geographic areas you want to reach with your coverage? Is your focus on local audiences, regional audiences, statewide audiences? Are there neighborhoods you want to reach?

3

"Voice Share"

Are you attempting to reach audiences with differing levels of participation in conversation on this topic? Are you seeking influentials? Are you attempting to attract new voices? Are you attempting to reach under-represented communities?

Medium

1

Traditional

This could include factors such as use of content in newscasts, reporting through audio features or use in talk shows, use in print products (either your own or through a partner)

2

Digital

This could include use of digital tools and storytelling forms such as data visualization, curation, photo galleries, video, etc. Consideration of desktop, tablet, mobile platforms

3

Social

This could include use of links, data, photos, video, hosted chats or forums, live event coverage, new social networks or tools

4

Events

This could include hosting events or participating in events sponsored by others

Results

1

Creating Affinity

The direct and early response to your journalism. This would include calls, emails, likes, shares, tweets, comments. We call this “look, listen and like.” It reflects the personal response.

2

Engaging Others

The intermediate response to your journalism. It moves beyond the personal response to sharing and engagement with others. It could include deeper social engagement and real-world events.

3

Contributing to Change

Sustainable, long-term change. This includes legislation or policy changes; studies or investigations; criminal charges; new organizations formed; funds raised; alliances formed to solve problems.

Metrics that matter

- Reach of Content
- Loyalty/Commitment of Users
- Conversation around content
- User knowledge and intended action
- External change

Reach of Content

- Number/percentage who open email newsletters
- Number/percentage of invitees who attend events
- Audience growth to specific content areas
- Audience growth from key stakeholders/influencers
- Growth of audience according to goals (demographic, geographic)
- Exposure to new audience through partnerships

User Loyalty

- Return visits during set time period
- Growth of active visits
- Lowering exit rates from landing pages and key content
- Involvement of key, identified stakeholders

Conversation around Content

- Moving beyond usual social metrics to focus on invitations to specific conversations
- Responses to specific requests for participation
- Actual participation in live chats (site, Reddit, Twitter)
- Asking a question of a specific journalist
- Inviting others to participate
- Becoming a repeat commenter/contributor

User Knowledge/Intended Action

- Quizzes and polls help you gauge awareness/knowledge
- Printed surveys
- Online surveys embedded in key content
- Telephone/email follow-up with sources/stakeholders in stories to ask “What happened next?”

Focus on asking about:

- Consumption
- Learning and understanding
- Changes in beliefs/attitudes
- Changes in behavior
- Suggestions for future coverage

External Change

- This is the long-tail focus
- Indicators include other media coverage, increase in conversation
- Changes for individuals, organizations, systems
- Changes in policies, processes, laws
- Change in quality or quantity of public discourse

Visualizing impact

- Write down your goals – we like 100-day plans
- Excel is your friend – use it to track goals and to record specific progress
- Save examples – links to best practices, emails, letters, phone calls, tweets and comments that reflect impact
- Review your analytics to make sure your approach supports your impact goals and measurements
- Visualization can be basic, using open source tools

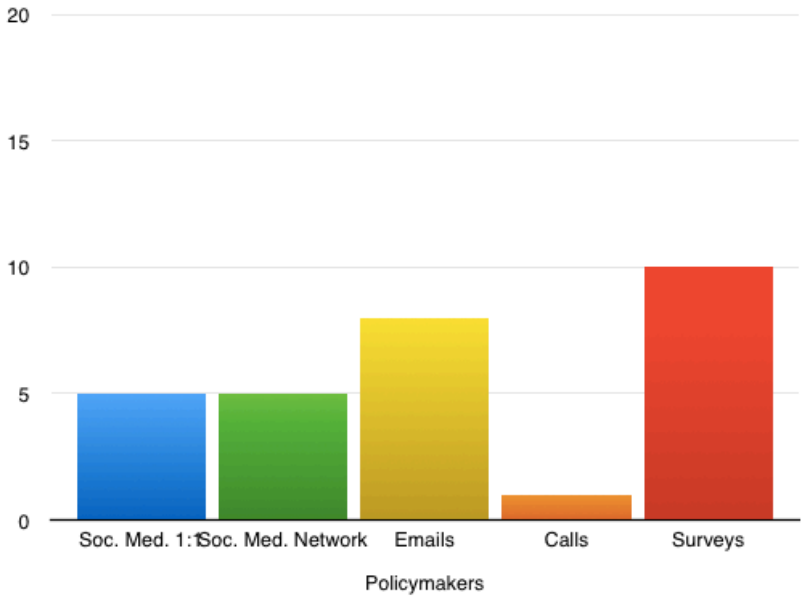
100-day plan

100-day milestones

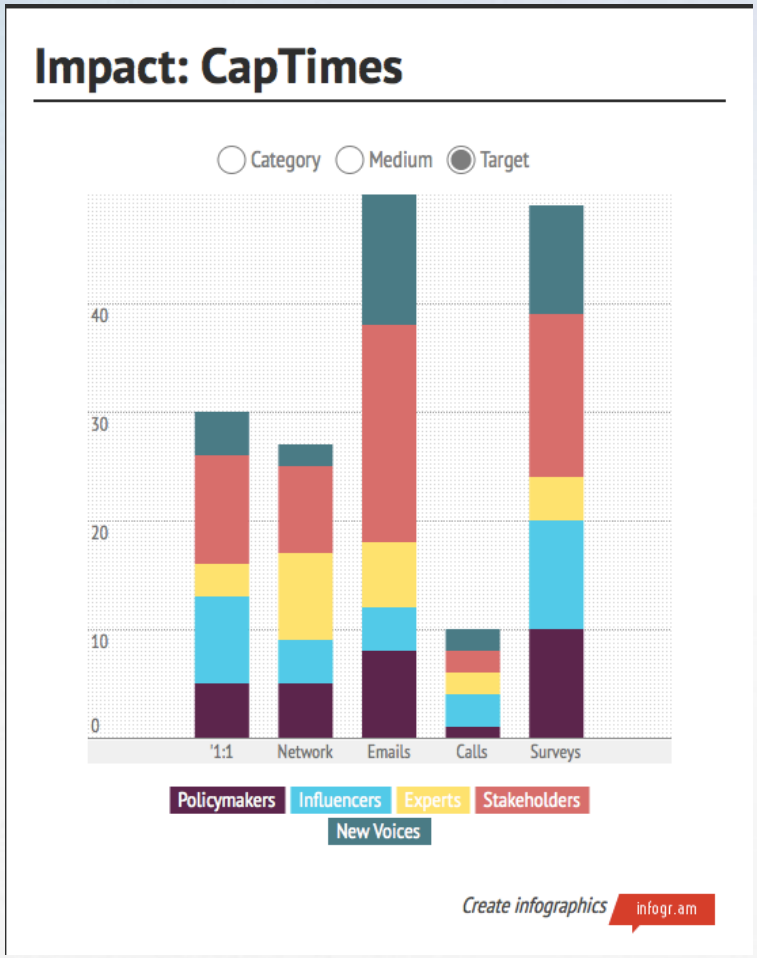
Timing				
	START			
	FINISH			
SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely)				
1	Build coverage plan to keep disparity issue in front of community			
2	Build partnerships with key community organizations			
3	Identify and include voices of people currently missing from conversation			
4	Raise staff awareness of issue while diversifying coverage overall			
Priorities / Key Performance Indicators				
		Not meeting expectations	Improving but needs focus	Meets expectations
1	Build coverage plan to keep disparity issue in front of community			
	Identify key questions/issues for coverage	Not started	1-2 scenarios run	Completed
	Build Wikipedia-style entries on topics related to key issues	Not started	Started	Completed
	Identify high utility content elements	Not started	Started	Completed
	Launch landing page	Not started	Started	Completed
	Develop plan to integrate coverage regularly in print section	Not approved	In discussion	Approved
	Evaluate & adjust	Not started	Started	Ongoing
2	Build partnerships with key community organizations			
	Define role of partnerships in terms of news coverage	Not started	Started	Completed
	Develop partnership guide: roles, responsibilities, anticipated outcomes	Not started	Started	Completed
	Identify organizations for initial approach	Not started	Cherry-picked	Fully implemented
	Tailor the ask for each organization	Not started	Started	Completed
	Track responses and build followup			
	Evaluate & adjust	Not started	Started	Ongoing
3	Identify and include voices of people currently missing from conversation			
	Develop process for determining who is missing	No contact	Contacted 1-2	>10 contacted
	Evaluate opportunities for adding voices based on impact	No guarantees	Positive feedback	Verbal guarantees
	Identify outreach methodology	Not started	Started	Completed
	Develop tracking methodology	Not started	Started	Completed
		Not started	Started	Completed
	Evaluate & adjust	Not started	Started	Ongoing
4	Raise staff awareness of issue while diversifying coverage overall			
	Baseline survey of staff	Not started	Started	Completed
	Develop process for sharing learnings & best practices	Not started	Started	Completed
	Diversify source lists for ongoing coverage	No contact	Minimal involvemer	Integrated
	Develop content audit process to track diversity in coverage	Not started	Started	Completed
	Evaluate & adjust	Not started	Started	Ongoing

Visualizing impact

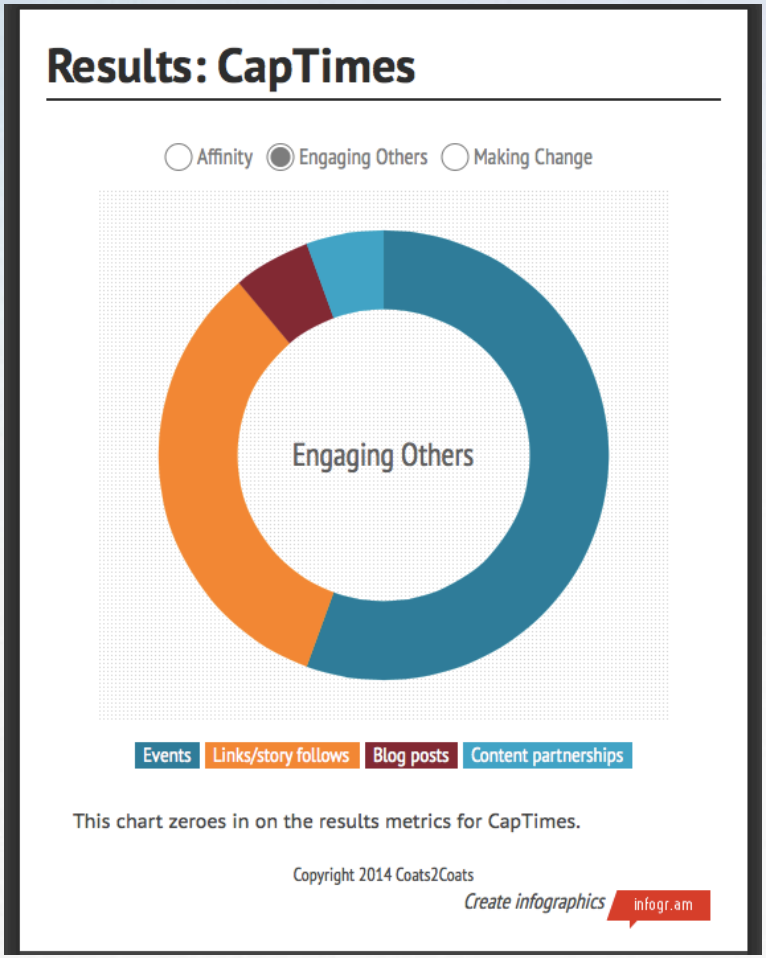
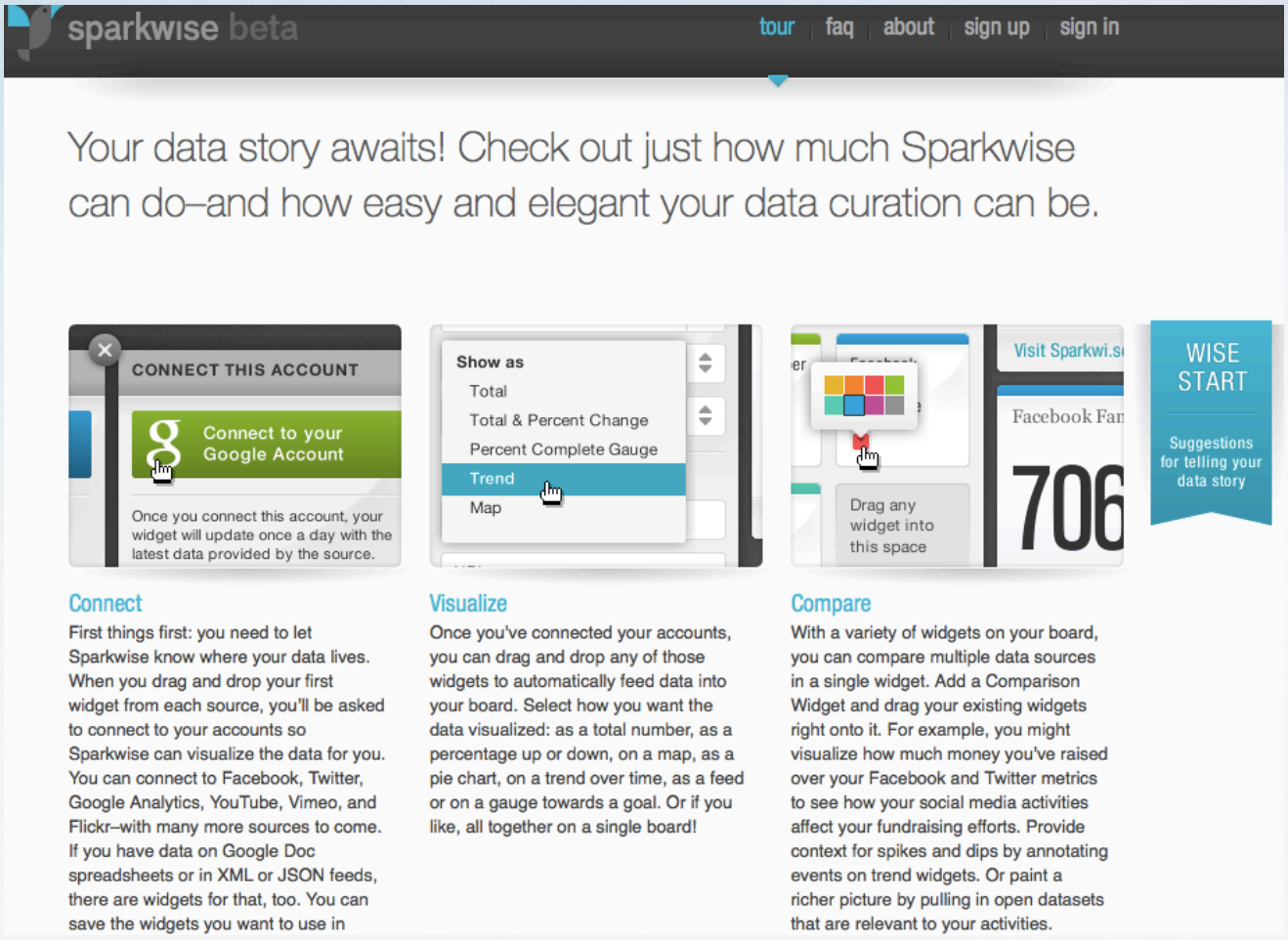
	Soc. Med. 1:1	Soc. Med. Network	Emails	Calls	Surveys	Examples
Policymakers	5	5	8	1	10	
Influencers	8	4	4	3	10	
Experts	3	8	6	2	4	
Stakeholders	10	8	20	2	15	
New Voices	4	2	12	2	10	



Visualizing Impact



Visualizing Impact



Visualizing Impact