



European Broadcasting Union
EBU International Training

Union Européenne de Radio-Télévision
UER Formation Internationale

Week of the News Neusiedl am See, Austria, 2 and 3 July 2007 Report

DAY 1 : 2 July Tom McGuire - Story Genres

Tom: Our challenge is to challenge the audience, to see things in a new way not just report things in the same old way. We have to fight predictability. We have to do more than just report today. If you watch national broadcasters - they always put the "kicker" at the end, the light/funny/thoughtful story. It works for the genre (of the newscast), but lets agree that in terms of style, it is very predictable. What about starting with the kicker?

So let's look at new ways to do the same things. Of course the main thing, and something that can never be lost, is our credibility. So under no circumstances can a new approach threaten that. But also recognize that audiences have seen it all before, and we need to meet the challenge to find new ways to report things.

Lets also recognize that certain stories are traditionally reported certain ways, we could even say, in a specific genre.

Some genre suggestions from the audience:

- Politics
- Party politics
- Economics
- Social
- Human interest
- Culture
- Sport
- Weather
- Science
- Traffic
- Disasters
- Breaking news
- Consumer - news you can use
- Military affairs
- Foreign / int'l news
- Human emotion

Tom: But keep in mind the possibility that stories do not have to always be reported in their traditional genre. Every one of our cultures deals with political stories, with economic stories, with cultural stories (in our own way)... but who is to say that we can't mix genres from time to time, for example, telling an economics story like a sports story.

Some **genres** I would suggest (and the characteristics of each) are:

Political news

- Politics is about people (both politicians and the people they represent - even the word "politics" is from the Latin for people) not only what do THEY want to say, but what do WE (the audience) want to know?
- The menu and the venue - the color and the clips - where do they stay, what do they eat?
- Ear/eyewitness news - we now use many opportunities to integrate the public's own recordings and images of the event; phone, text, email, blog; using them in our coverage has now become part of the genre.

Economic news

- "Breakfast roll man" (the guy who wears a hard hat, reads a tabloid newspaper, and eats a bacon roll for breakfast) how does it affect his wallet?
- It's a small world - things are connected internationally - for example, if the US sneezes, Ireland has a cold. We do not live in a bubble, things are connected and we try to show the connections.
- We try to keep it simple - the goal is not to show how much you know, but how much people can learn.

Social news

- My neighborhood... what's happening around me? In coverage, this implies you are a journalist 24/7 with many different interests; you observe and report on everything in your neighborhood - the shops, the schools, the streets, the neighbors, etc.
- My livelihood, how I support myself and my family? Are my health/health care, my pension, even my grandchildren affected by what happens to my job?
- Quality of life issues - we think know what the audience wants, but do we know what does the audience really needs? We should think more about what the audience needs: find out about it, and give it to them.

International news

- Do I care? This is a question that must be asked - does my audience care?
- Does it matter? How relevant is another meeting of NATO/Hamas/EU, etc. to your audience?
- Sell it to me! You have to be able to convince an editor or producer that the story should be reported; if you can't sell it to the editor, it's likely it wouldn't interest the audience either.

Cultural news

- Different sounds, different pictures for the newscast - things you wouldn't normally use. This adds more texture to the program.
- Real people and performers, not necessarily professionals; people who do things for fun, to keep things alive; giving color and excitement.
- "An identity for the audience" - such stories are a reminder of our collective cultural identity, reminding or reinforcing "this is what it means to be part of this culture", it even works on a personal level, "this is me."

Sports news

- Emotion and pride: fun, enjoyment and especially tears! We like to see how people win, we like even better to see how people deal with loss or adversity.
- Uncertain, developing, incomplete, evolving, urgent, jumpy!
- Where life meets news. Sports news is not always about the result of the match, it may also be about the person, and not just individual players: also the a fan, the crowd, the (occasional) violence, the owners, so forth.

Wow!

- "I never knew that/did you see that?" - the conversation piece, to be talked about at the water cooler, with the family, etc.
- The mad, the sad, the heart rending and the strange
- More and more, the sources are from the digital world, multi-media, YouTube, amateur video, camera phone and blogs
- Be lucky - seeing something amazing and having the images

Day 1 - afternoon session

Peter Fritz and Hanno Settele ORF Foreign correspondents

Peter: we were both working on the desk, but due to changes at ORF, now we are correspondents again! I am in Berlin now and Hanno is going back to Washington.

Hanno: The Washington office is ORF's largest overseas office, employing 10 people - last year we produced about three radio stories and one TV story a day. The question is not who is in DC, it is who is not in DC. We are closely monitored, and we understand that 8 million Austrians are competing with 100 million Germans, and it is very competitive. German TV market is the most competitive TV market in Europe, and it is tough to compete against ARD and the ZDF.

Peter: We, in Berlin, don't have much competition for domestic Austrian issues. But just like Hanno, when we are covering issues about Germany, we have to compete against German stations which have lots of resources. We have about 8 people in our office, and also do about three radio stories and one TV story a day. We also count on our German partners, who help us and we share material and facilities from ZDF and ARD. We also do a lot of German domestic politics because Austria and Germany are closely connected.

Peter: Another problem about working in Germany is "federalism" the decentralization of power and the institutions of government. It is decentralized because of history: Frankfurt is finance, Hamburg is media, Munich is culture, Karlsruhe is the supreme court. That makes it hard to cover what's happening in Germany, because we have to be everywhere.

Peter: Our network remains very Euro-centric, pretty much mirroring the old Austro-Hungarian empire! We use several freelancers and also our staff people, and we even have a presence in Beijing now. As for our competition, ARD Germany has the largest grid of correspondents all over the world, on practically every continent. That is significant for us, because we are actually directly competing with them because the ARD is broadcast widely in Austria. TVE Spain also has a very large international presence, mirroring their former colonies in Latin America for example, although they are cutting back, for example they recently closed their Miami bureau. CNN is another competitor of ours, and has a completely different approach to covering news. They make mobility the priority instead of having fixed bureaus. They send people all over the world, while at the same time have consistently closed down bureaus. Now they rely mostly on locally shot footage or agency material for daily news from abroad, and only send their own people when news breaks.

Hanno: As far as working goes, the time difference between Vienna and DC is significant for me. I have to be ready at 8am with a complete idea on what I will be delivering that day (which is 2pm Vienna time). And they always expect something. They always want something from us. So that means I get up at 6, look at the morning news programs, read the Post and the Times, most of the work is done in the morning, with the work day ending about 4-5pm. And of the three correspondents, one of us has to work until midnight each day. That's because of the new late night news program in Austria.

Hanno: Do we really need foreign correspondents? What do you think?

Reactions from the audience:

- I think it is important, very important, having someone who makes real stories for us.

- I understand exactly what you are saying, and I think the tendency remains, to get rid of bureaus. We are now sending correspondents abroad rather than having them based in the country. With the changes in technology, there is a big difference in how correspondents operate now. The role of foreign correspondent has changed, from daily reporting to analysis.
- you see the editors demanding much more analytical work from us, not only just shooting stories. Plus a lot of times you can't get pictures for stories (such as Iraq) and because of that limitation we need to play a more analytical role.
- The agencies such as Reuters or APTV often are not as strong journalistically as our own people. The agencies and feed material don't make good pieces.

Question: what is the meaning of the foreign correspondent to the audience? Does the audience recognize the difference between what you do, and agency and feed material?

Hanno and Peter: The key to our survival (and stations continuing to pay for us to live abroad) is reminding viewers about our real value which is: digging up good stories that the feeds will never do, finding "Austrian" angles that will never be on the feed; finding human angles that the feeds don't find. For example, in New Orleans, during Katrina, Sean Penn asked me for a cigarette. I didn't recognize him actually, but my cameraman did. Penn had been there, driving around in an airboat, handing out food and supplies. So I gave him a cigarette, and he gave me an interview. That would never happen if it was a feed situation. Or it would have been on the feed 50 times, and everyone would have had it. Instead we got an exclusive, and he gave us a great interview ripping Bush and how the entire Katrina situation was being handled. People here in Austria remember my stories from Katrina even today, I mean they really remember them, they come up to me. So this is the value.

Reactions from the audience:

- I think many editorial departments are already coming to the conclusion that the foreign correspondent is worth the money as long as it brings added value and is refreshing.
- I think the question of "do we need foreign correspondents" is irrelevant. It remains very important in television. The money issue is less important than the value of the perspective of the correspondent on the scene. It is a prestige issue.
- "Parachute journalism" is the growing trend, dropping a correspondent in to a breaking news situation. I think it is interesting for viewers, but the perspective is limited for the parachute person. We need a person who is living there, who understands the context and has the sources. That ultimately is better for viewers.

Peter: the hardest thing for me (and for Hanno) is doing both radio and TV on the same day. They are completely different mediums with different demands. How do we report for radio and TV at the same time? It is just very hard.

Hanno: Do we still need foreign correspondents in a traditional way? I would say yes, but it has less to do with primary news gathering, and more and more with analysis, perspective and background, especially the ability to the angle for that is meaningful specifically to your own country. This is something the feeds would never do.

Day 1 - afternoon session

Hasse Svens - SVT "VJ: news in a backpack"

Hasse : I do everything by myself - when it comes to stories, I shoot them, cut them, and feed them. All from me. I work from Helsinki, around the Baltic States, part of Russia, and I go at anytime.

One night, I was drinking a cup of coffee at home in the evening, I got a phone call from SVT, and an hour and a half later I was on a ferry boat to Tallinn. Not such a great trip exactly. Some thugs broke my camera, which I had used for two years. Now I have a new camera.

I use the P2 memory card in my camera. This is great, because I don't need to download with a memory card (when I shoot on tape I have to download and that is in real time. When I use a memory card, can just plug it into the laptop and work directly off the card. Much better.

I also have a tripod that I use. This is my microphone, it is also my pen, and my notebook. "In Sweden, we always do stories with at least 50% females. If it's only men, it's as not good. A nice girl in the news, we always look at." Does interview with two participants.

I use a camera on a fishing rod apparatus coming out of a backpack to hang in front of me. I can balance the camera with a couple of fingers. There is no way to balance this particular camera on the shoulder - so it saves my strength, plus it makes it very easy to walk backwards.

One big advantage of working alone: I know all the pictures already, before I cut the story; I already know when I will be able to arrive at the edit room; I already can predict what difficulties I may face in cutting the story.

I pay a lot of attention to the following things when I am shooting on my own: 1) white balance. I make sure I do that as often as I need to; 2) audio is something I really focus on - it is very important. I don't use headphones, though, because I can get tangled up. I watch the meters, and I definitely pay attention to that.

Questions from the audience:

What's difficult as a VJ? Press conferences with a lot of people, the audio is hard; big events with lots of different things happening at the same time in different places obviously is very challenging for a VJ to get what is needed.

Hasse: What is important is training. You must do this all the time, to get better, to learn how to shoot and cut. I am not the best cameraman, I am not the best editor. This is not something for everybody. If you are just interested in technical things, such as cutting, or just as being a good cameraman, this is not for you. This is about the basic use of camera and cutting to tell stories by myself. I want to do the story, I have feelings for it, not that it will be necessarily shot perfectly, or cut perfectly. It will definitely be shot and cut better than the worst cameraman would do it.

You have to be very physically fit, and you have to have a lot of energy. One time, I shot 30 stories in five days. And I am carrying a camera, a tripod or monopod, and two laptops and batteries. It is 12-15 kilos. That's a heavy weight.

You need to be a lone wolf to do it. You need to like to work alone and do a good job that way. Immediacy is the biggest value. We can do things faster and more efficient.

Reactions from the audience:

Is it a problem for you, to do everything yourself? I mean, you are the only person to read the script, there is no oversight. Don't you have a problem with subjectivity, putting too much of your own point of view into a story?

Hasse: My boss doesn't know what was possible. So if there was another angle, he would not know what it was. I am the one that decides the angle, and I am submitting cut pieces, not rough cuts.

Hasse: I think, not everybody, but a large number of the TV journalists, will be working like I am working in the future. I think that is definitely the way it is going, that most journalists will be working this way.

Question from the audience: What about the person who does this, who has less journalistic background than you do? Can that person do a good job without oversight, just submitting cut stories, and what are the implications for credibility, and for the institutions we work for?

Hasse: I think you have to be a reporter first, and for years, before you do this. You have to have the background to make editorial decisions independently. You should be an

experienced journalist before you start to do it by yourself. News organizations should make sure of this.

Reactions from the audience:

- was there hostility to you at the beginning?

Hasse: Yes, I got some bad emails! But in general it was OK.

Question: Do you access to everything that all reporters have, like feeds, archive, etc? Yes, I have access to everything in my office.

Hasse's **ten points** for VJs

1. Think about everything first - almost the entire story in your head.
2. Do your own story. You are working by yourself, tell your own story.
3. Use light equipment - which is also easy to use.
4. Learn how to do this step by step. Do an interview first, then move up to shooting stories.
5. Get familiar with your own equipment, so you can do it in your sleep.
6. Don't think about the whole day. Take it step by step or you will be too tired!
7. Don't worry: you have a right to make mistakes.
8. Look for easy solutions. Don't make it complicated, either your technical solution or your story.
9. Put your feelings and your personal impressions in the story.
10. Be optimistic (like your approach to everything in the world).

DAY 2 : 3 July

Eric May : Separating facts from spin

Powerful forces are at work every day to “spin” the news. Politicians, businesses, and institutions have always had their own agendas, but their skill in manipulating the media to get their message across is increasingly effective. When powerful interests “have our number”, how do journalists determine what is factual and what is spin? How do journalists respond to pressures to report only part of the story, or suppress the facts altogether? Who do we serve - the interests of institutions, or the public interest?

Facts are what we report.

Spin are Sources that... Interpret, Emphasize, Mislead, Misdirect, Propagandize.

Why do sources spin? for Political interest, Business interest, Personal interest, Ideology, Hide the truth, “For fun”.

The question is Who spins and who stands between spin...and the public?

Spin are created when there is Indirect evidence (many sources), internal pressure on newsroom, many conflicts of interest. Therefore:

- Use the information (cautiously)
- Report the conflict of interest

Facts are: Insightful, Credible, Believable but ...so is Spin

Try to get Middle level people:

- Bank clerk, not bank president
- Bureaucrat, not ministry official
- Police detective, not chief of police
- Administrative assistant, not boss
- Factory worker, not industrialist

Spin is :

- Hard to confirm independently
- General, not specific or detailed
- Ideological/someone’s opinion
- Changing
- Often sensational

Facts are...

- Confirmable (two independent sources)
- Specific and detailed
- Factual, not someone’s opinion
- Unchanging
- Often not sensational

The spin detector:

ASK YOURSELF: ...

- Who gains?
- Why now?
- What is the conflict of interest?
- What is the hidden agenda?
- Follow the money
- Too good to be true?

Afternoon Day 2

Siegfried Bracke - Politics & Elections: "Thinking out of the box"

Siegfried: I am going to talk about a new program, which is another approach to the news, a sort of "upside down" look at politics.

Our mission was to reach that part of the audience, who does normally follow politics or watch TV programs about politics.

Our first thought was that politics is about people, and the program should be about people to interest the audience. We focused on five parties, and their policies. But we also focused on the people behind the policies, for example what kind of person is the new prime minister?

To find out about that aspect of the politicians, we had to think about the job of a politician. We observed that the job of a politician is not just to react, but also to "forsee", to predict what will happen.

So we wanted to put the politicians in situations where they had to react quickly, without the chance of much thought before they had to make a decision. Had they thought about what might happen, or not? And how well did they handle an unpredictable, new situation, at the moment it happens?

We wanted them to be honest about their own weaknesses, not just telling us about the weaknesses of their opponents.

Our concept, "thinking out of the box", was "The Mirror" - possibly the place where all of us humans are most honest with ourselves.

From each of the five politicians, we wanted to find out, who do you think YOU are? They all were put under the same conditions, and all were asked the same questions:

- who is... (the politician)?
- do you like yourself?
- what is your strongest point?
- what is your weakest point?
- are you always honest?

Question: is this not a little sensationalist?

Siegfried: Of course it is. Television is expensive. We have to make sure we get sufficient return on our investment, in terms of viewers. So in this sense, a more sensationalist approach is appropriate and even required.

Stories from childhood make interesting information for voters. For example, one politician said he was given money to ride a Merry go Round as a child, but he kept the money, and put it in his little box. That behavior is significant information for voters.

We interviewed politicians' parents, at their homes.

We asked each politician who their main political opponent was, and then we arranged to have the politician's opponent speak, anonymously, in a confessional about the politician, but saying only things they respected or liked about the opponent.

We also asked the five politicians who their "big example" was, who was a role model for them in politics, and then we interviewed that role model in the studio about the politician, with the politician looking on.

In another segment, "Wit and Wisdom" we gave the politicians ten words, and they picked a word. Then we showed a funny/nonsense/famous statement/political proverb with the word they chose - and they had to debate this silly/famous statement/proverb with the presenter.

The next part: we gave a summary of other programs... using some of the funny highlights of programs that were on when this program was broadcast. This was a transition to...

We came back to the politician at the end, and asked them one question, "what did they learn?"

Afterwards, the feedback from the politicians was: this was one of the most difficult programs for them to do, precisely because it was (from their experience) so spontaneous, so unplanned. Many were so shaken up by the experience, they told us afterwards they couldn't remember exactly what they had said, for example most couldn't remember what they said in front of the "mirror."

The newspaper critics criticized us. They said it wasn't about politics, it trivialized the issues. We have our audience. We had a good rating for that. We did what we set out to do. That's what's important to us.

Afternoon Day 2

Audrius Lelkaitis: Migrant undercover investigation

Audrius :The first thing to remember, is to recognize that this is very expensive to do. You have to cover the costs of the three investigative journalists, including food, hotel, and travel, you have to use rented or special equipment which costs a lot, and sometimes it would take three months, and you might end up with nothing. So it is a challenge.

I knew the BBC would not abandon me if I got in trouble. That is very important from a psychological standpoint. My wife was also very much against my doing this and I have to persuade her. I called her every night.

The equipment really sucks. The camera is big, the cables are painful, and it was impossible to see what I was shooting as the camera was taped to my body. For example, to shoot wide shots, I had to lean forward to get the whole scene. So I pretended I was putting a text message into my mobile phone. But I was never sure that the equipment was working... except for one thing: the battery gets hot.

Audio is very, very important, and the quality of the audio is better than the images.

I intended to shoot short clips, and that was a mistake. It was better to shoot longer clips. But when I had to change the battery, I had to go to the toilet, and at times I was dropping the battery, and I also burned my skin on the rubber belt that held the recorder and the battery.

Also: there were a few times when I should have rolled more quickly, like a fight that broke out between Russian guys. The tape rolls slowly.

Ask open questions, not leading questions. Open questions are answers that are useful in court.

I had the right to take pictures for note-taking and for images. The BBC was very ethical and legal in that sense. Otherwise the evidence you are gathering will not be able to be used in court, if there is a criminal prosecution.

Plan and think ahead. It is quite difficult to change your personality. For example, I could not tell anyone I spoke English. This was extremely difficult to suppress. Spontaneous behaviour also had to be suppressed. I always had to be thinking and it was exhausting.

I SMS'd the BBC every night. But using a top up card, or coverage limits, made it difficult. You have to erase all your SMS messages, and your phone book, because people snoop.

You have to download every day. I met my support guys on quiet streets to give them the material. I laid down, and covered my face, because someone can spot you.

Count your expenses every day. You lose track after three months.

Drinking alcohol: I like to drink, but it hurts my brain. I stopped drinking the moment I wanted to talk about myself. Other people are not so interested in you, they are interested in themselves.

At the beginning you will be afraid of everything. Starting with the camera, which you think reflects the sun. I was also afraid that people would touch me. But I told people when that happened, it was my purse, where I kept my money.

After several months I got more reckless, and that was very dangerous. I sometimes came out of the toilet with the equipment hanging out of the pockets. I had to have a checklist, otherwise I would forget something.