



thepartnersgroup  
PR & marketing communications

# What is News?



White Paper 4  
What is News?

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# **Every second of every minute, day, month, year, news is happening and being shared.**

**We wake up to it, we read it, listen to it, watch it and we may create it or be part of it. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the push of a button.**

**This white paper explores the interpretation of news; what makes news and looks at how news is created.**

The dictionary meaning of the word news is: ‘Newly received or noteworthy information, especially about recent events’.

There has been much discussion over the years as to ‘what is news’, with most notable interpretations being:

**“News is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress; all the rest is advertising.”**

American newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst (and purported others), 1953.

**“A good newspaper is, I suppose, a nation talking to itself.”**

Arthur Miller, 1915-2005.

**“When a dog bites a man that is not news, but when a man bites a dog that is news.”**

Charles Anderson Dana, American journalist, 1819-1897.

What is certain is that news relies on communication. News is about the unusual; it is current, ‘new’; it is informative; can be written to convince an audience; and it is considered to be important. News stories should be interesting, they usually involve people; and cover subjects people need to know about.

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## Who, or what, makes news?

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News is communicated by journalists, employed by media outlets which give them a platform from which they can report stories of interest to their audiences. With the rise of social media and online reporting, citizen journalism also has a significant place in sharing news, without censorship.

The means by which news is delivered to us and its immediacy is ever changing but the core of what is news remains the same. Whether something is reported as news or not depends on a number of factors. It is important to consider these variables to set expectations before you plan a story. After all, news coverage is not guaranteed, unlike paid for advertising.

### **Consider the variables**

Whether or not a story is deemed to be newsworthy is reliant on individual journalists, the media outlet they work for and the news agenda set for those outlets.

It is important that you know who the right reporter is and that you know they are still in post. There is no point sending a story about a business expansion to the sports reporter, for example.

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## Who, or what, makes news?

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News, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. What is important or interesting to one person might not be interesting to another. And so it is particularly important to target the news story to your audience. Again, this comes back to targeting appropriate media outlets and journalist who cover your subject area.

Also, consider the bigger picture. Whether a story is considered newsworthy is also dependent on whatever else is happening in the world.

### 1. **Timeliness**

It's happening this month, week, today, this minute. And often the most captivating news is happening this second. News is about recent events or recent developments on past events.

### 2. **Controversy**

It might be an angle that will rattle a few cages and go against the status quo but it is certain to grab the attention of journalists.

### 3. **Conflict**

The media frequently report on conflict and disputes, often gathering information from court hearings.

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## Who, or what, makes news?

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### 4. Prominence

There is no mistaking that people who have more social relevance and prominence such as A-list celebrities, high-profile business men and women and royalty are deemed to be more newsworthy.

### 5. Proximity

Is it happening close to home? If not, how will it affect where you are? It should be relevant to the audience reading, listening or viewing.

### 6. Consequence

Who does it affect and how? What will be the outcome and what are the knock on consequences?

### 7. Human interest

This is the story about the oddball, the unusual case, the usual case with an unusual outcome. It might be bad news, it could give help or advice and a human interest story will usually tap into emotion.

### 8. Novelty

It could be that it is news about a world first - the last ever of a product to be made; the biggest; the fastest; the smallest. The novelty angle plays on story elements which are unique.

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## Media types and what they want

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Here's a snapshot of what the differing news forms are looking for from a story:

### 1. Local news

- Keep it local, local and more local!
- Happy to look at the big issues but from a local perspective
- Stories their readers can relate to
- Eye-catching photos
- Photo opportunities
- A snappy title to grab their attention to make it stand out from the crowd.

### 2. Regional news

- Similar news requirements as local news stories but looking for a region-wide view
- Wider circulation = greater geographic scope for stories
- It also means more competition for space
- More likely to have reporters covering specific topics.



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## Media types and what they want

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### 3. National

- Colossal competition for space. Making the requirement for well-targeted copy absolutely paramount
- Needs to be significant for a large audience
- Well thought through exclusives and strong spokespeople for comment
- Research and/or statistics relevant to a national audience
- Nationally/internationally recognised figures to front the story.

### 4. International

- The story needs to have an overseas element for its audience
- It should outline how a product or service will benefit the country
- How will it impact on the country it is targeting – needs to be specific.

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## Media types and what they want

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### 5. Trade

- Story needs to appeal to the specific industry you are targeting
- Stories are often issues-led and solutions driven
- Usually a specific profession/market
- Good product or project photography is required
- Timely news that directly affects professionals or those who work with them is useful for garnering attention from this media.

### 6. Broadcast

- Need a strong visual or interview element – and usually both. Who can be interviewed? What can the audience see that helps tell the story?
- Need flexibility in timings and need it to be as accessible as possible.

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## Media types and what they want

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### 7. Online

- Consider all elements which can be 'liked'; shared; followed; commented on
- More room available and so pictures, video footage, blogs, tweets, weblinks can be used simultaneously or all together
- Most stories break online first as information can go live instantly - so make sure you are well prepared to answer questions quickly!



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## Making it newsworthy

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Coming back to William Randolph Hearst 'News is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress; all the rest is advertising', where skilled PR consultants can add value is by creating news that tells a positive story for businesses, without reading as advertising.

If you are confident enough to write a story and approach the media yourself, here are some tips to think about before you start:

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## Making it newsworthy

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### 1. Know the media

- Buy and read the title – this might sound a bit basic but it's the first step in getting to know the news the title publishes, the tone it takes and the quality of the copy
- When is the title published (daily, weekly, or monthly)
- What kind of stories do they run?
- What kind of photos do they use?
- Make sure the story is geographically relevant
- Who (if anyone) writes on the topic you're writing about?
- If no-one, got for the business or news editor depending on your story
- Find out editorial deadlines and don't call then!



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## Making it newsworthy

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### 2. Consider incorporating...

- Bad news sells newspapers, but you can present a solution
- Start with a problem and pitch your product/service as a solution
- Tap into fear
- Offer help/advice
- Present a milestone – for example, 100 years of production or millionth ticket or product sold
- Smaller players challenging the status quo
- How will the world change as a result of this announcement?
- Back them up with research including statistics, a case study and examples of time/money savings
- Use a quote from a credible spokesperson – someone who has been involved in research, someone affected by the event, someone in the know
- Include competitor knockouts – who did you beat to win the contract and why?
- Identify the three key benefits you want to get across
- Identify the typical issues
- Build in best practice if appropriate
- Find something to make it current.

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## Making it newsworthy

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### 3. Test it

- The 'so what?' test. Really get to the bottom of the story by asking 'so what?'
- The pub test. Tell it how you might tell it down the pub
- Remember the key points which will grab the audience's interest and help paint a picture of the story
- KISS – 'keep it simple, stupid'. Do not use unnecessary jargon
- Distil the story down into two sentences. A journalist is short of time so the opening paragraph must grab attention.

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## Photography and video

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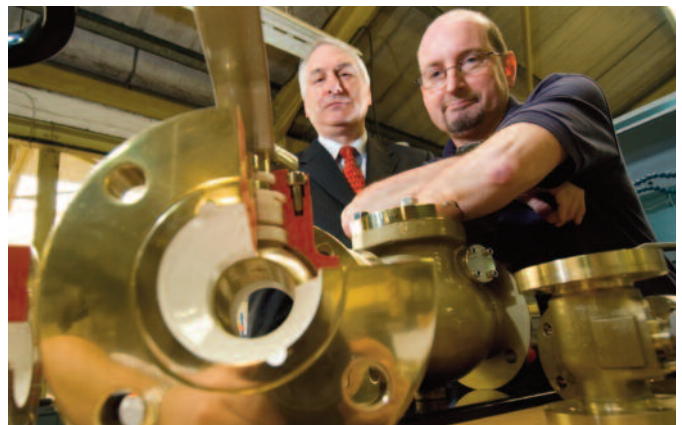
You will have heard the saying ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’. A photograph or film (for online pieces) can contribute significantly to a story and particularly to media uptake.

As with selecting the right PR agency for you, it is also important to select a photographer or film company who is the right fit.

They ought to be a professional creative who has experience in PR photography or film work. These professionals might also specialise in different areas, such as food or construction and so choose one which has experience in your business field.

Journalists are more likely to use a story with a good picture and more often than not the story is given more prominence.

Online journalists have more space to allocate to stories and can use footage as well as text and photography so long as it is relevant to the story and can be shared with its audience.



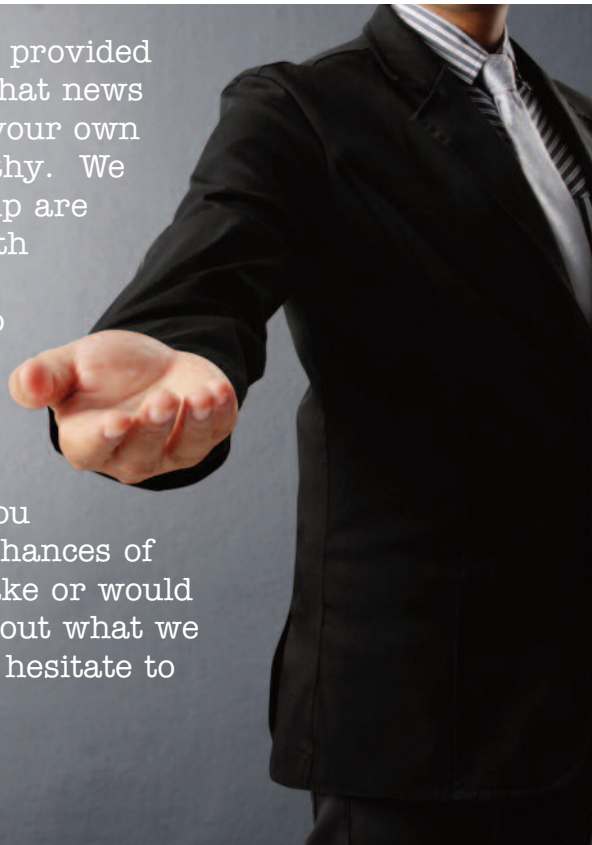


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## Need more guidance?

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This white paper has provided an outline guide of what news is and how to make your own story more newsworthy. We at The Partners Group are in regular contact with the various forms of media and keep up to date with changes that affect reporting of news. So whether you have a query about how you could improve your chances of achieving media uptake or would like to know more about what we do, then please don't hesitate to get in touch with us!



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## About The Partners Group

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Partners is a friendly and professional public relations and marketing communications agency based in York, North Yorkshire - and this year we are celebrating our 25th anniversary.

If you're looking for strategic and creative as well as practical, hands-on PR and communications support - we're the people to talk to.

Services include:

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**PR consultancy**

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**International PR**

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**Partners Pathfinder**

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**Events PR**

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**Online PR**

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**Green PR**

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**Marketing support**

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**Public consultation**

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**Crisis communications**

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**Leisure marketing**

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thepartnersgroup  
PR & marketing communications

We help organisations throughout the UK - and across a range of industries - achieve their objectives. Our roots are in business to business public relations and marketing communications, but our experience spans local, regional, national and international campaigns for clients in the building, property, construction, manufacturing, food processing, professional services, family law, leisure and tourism sectors - among others.

**For more information  
about our services please  
call:**

**01904 610077**

**or email:**

**[karen@partners-group.co.uk](mailto:karen@partners-group.co.uk)**

**Comments or queries about  
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