

**National Journal Communications Council**

**Media  
University**

**AMU 401: Narrative Storytelling in the Digital Age**

# Making Stories Social

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# Exploiting Points of Shareability

## Key Practices Behind a Successful Social Story



I

### Designing for Shareability

- #1: Find the “Thing” That Will Travel
- #2: Don’t Rest On Your Sharing Laurels
- #3: Reduce Sharing Friction



II

### Executing for Shareability

- #4: Step Away from the Cross-Post
- #5: Write Headlines That Earn Clicks
  - *Creating the Coveted Curiosity Gap*
  - *With Social Headlines, One Size Does Not Fit All*
- #6: Use Images That Tell the Whole Story
  - *Variety is the Spice of Social*
- #7: Timing is Everything
- #8: Lather, Rinse, Repeat (and Measure)
- #9: Put Your Money Where Your Best Content Is
- #10: Prepare for the Future in Social Sharing

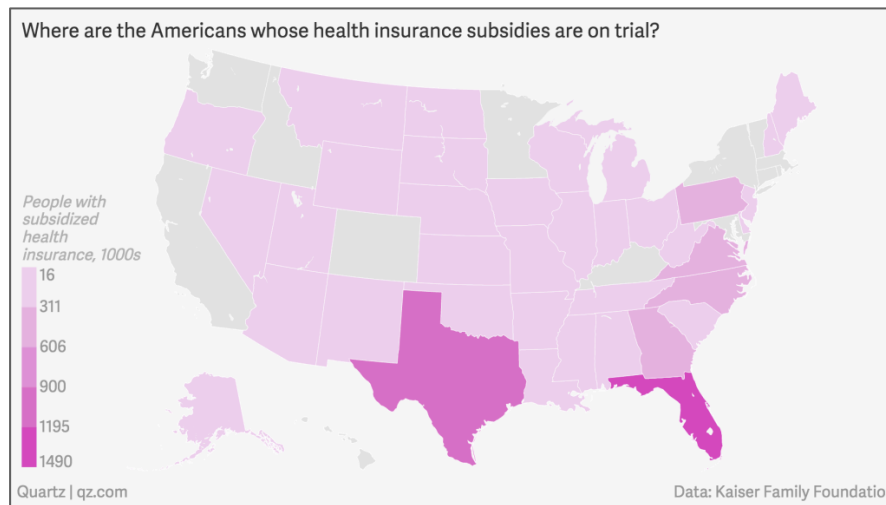


# 1. Find the “Thing” That Will Travel

## Adjusting a Story Treatment to Highlight a Single, Sticky Element Can Reap Social Dividends

### Re-Focusing a Broader Story Through A Single Visual

#### Mapped: The 7.6 million people whose health insurance goes on trial today



- Focuses less on breaking news, and more on why the news matters (e.g., the “second day story”)
- Uses data to make the story more personally relevant to the audience
- Pulls out the single most interesting piece of a story (e.g., a fact, a surprising statistic, a quote or a visual)

## QUARTZ

### A Break From Conventional Storytelling

“Thing’ is simply our catchall term for stories that break free of the traditional article format to convey information in ways that work better on the web.”

Quartz Editorial Team



## 2. Don't Rest On Your Sharing Laurels

Continuously Hone in on Right Combination of Features, Design and Call-to-Action Using A/B Testing



### What Can Be Tested?

<b>Platform</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Appearance</b>	<b>Call-to-Action</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Public social sharing (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)</li> <li>✓ Private sharing (e.g., Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, SMS, Email)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Top, bottom or sidebar</li> <li>✓ Fixed, or “floating”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Colors and fonts (e.g., inherited branding, or unique organizational branding)</li> <li>✓ Icons only, or channel names</li> <li>✓ Sizes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Language</li> <li>✓ Incentives</li> <li>✓ Social proof (e.g., showing current share counts per channel)</li> </ul>



# 3. Reduce Sharing Friction

## Content Design and Plug-Ins Can Guide the User Down the Decision-Making Path to Sharing

### Handpicked, Automated Quotes Help the User (And the Author) Look Their Best

#### Forbes

Obama’s speechwriter is skilled at creating emotional moments. I recommend that all **leaders** tap into storytelling techniques to motivate their teams. Stories educate. Stories inform, illuminate, and inspire. Stories connect us to one another and, yet, stories are also vastly under appreciated in business.

**Wired for story.** **It’s nearly impossible for us to ignore stories because our brains are wired to be receptive to narrative.** While going research for my last book, I interviewed Uri Hasson at **Princeton University**. Hasson and his colleagues recorded the brain activity of a speaker telling stories. Next, they measured the brain activity of the person listening to the story. The researcher found that the brains of both speaker and listener “exhibited joint, temporally coupled, response patterns.” To put it simply, the listener’s brain mirrored the speaker’s brain. There was actually a mind meld bet

✓ Eliminates the need for the user to pick the most quote-worthy part of the story to share (but still should be used sparingly)

✓ Ensures that the key messages stay in tact as content travels across social media

✓ Allows for customization in how the links appear on social media (e.g., headlines, images, teasers)

Share a link with your followers

It's nearly impossible for us to ignore stories because our brains are wired to be receptive to narrative. <http://onforb.es/1Bec9TV>

11 Tweet



Chris Fisher @FisherSpeaks

It's nearly impossible for us to ignore stories because our brains are wired to be receptive to narrative. [onforb.es/1Bec9TV](http://onforb.es/1Bec9TV)

Forbes

**What Leaders Can Learn From America's Storyteller-In-Chief**  
Leaders, by definition, must inspire and motivate their teams. Telling stories like Barack Obama did in the State of the Union is a powerful way to connect with your audience.

View on web

11:46 AM - 21 Jan 2015



# 4. Step Away from the Cross-Post

## Pushing Content in the Same Way to Multiple Platforms Reduces Engagement, Limits Features

### Minor Modifications to Language, Format Play to Platform Strengths and Use Cases

**ONE** 11 Global campaigns that prove women rock

With International Women’s Day less than a week away, we thought it appropriate to look back at some of our favorite global campaigns that prove that women totally rock. And most importantly – they show how important it is to invest in girls and women around the world.

*Original*

- ✓ Promotes conversation on the platform by asking a question
- ✓ Includes original article headline in its entirety
- Opts not to tailor article preview for Facebook, resulting in cut-off description



Shared on Facebook



Shared on Twitter

- ✓ Adopts more conversational tone and use of platform-specific slang
- ✓ Includes same image, optimized for platform preview size
- Forgoes hashtags, although they are much more common to Twitter than Facebook



# 5. Write Headlines that Earn Clicks

Four Proven Approaches to Creating the Coveted Curiosity Gap

## 1. Be Decisive

**Some Buyers Test-Drive Homes Before Buying**  
DAILY REAL ESTATE NEWS | TUESDAY, MARCH 03, 2015



*It's OK to Let Your Buyers Spend More Time Test-Driving Their Potential Purchase*



## 2. Create 'Things'

**Pennsylvania's Taxing Proposal**  
energy taxes , shale energy , natural gas , pennsylvania , jobs , economy , taxes



*One Chart Shows How Risky It Is to Tax Pennsylvania's Natural Gas Production*



## 3. Stir Emotions

**The Real Costs Of Patchwork Labeling Initiatives**



*Why GMO Labeling Could Cost Your Family 138 Gallons of Milk This Year*



## 4. Lead With a Fact

**Who Really Benefits from Bonus Depreciation?**  
Jun 6 Posted by: Carolyn Lee under Taxation on June 6, 2014 @ 5:15 pm



*Firms Could Boost GDP By 1% Solely Through Bonus Depreciation*





# With Social Headlines, One Size Does Not Fit All


Combine Headline Types and Platform-Specific Strategies to Arrive at Optimal Choices

## One Story, Five Distinct Headline Opportunities

**1 Why Don't Convenience Stores Sell Better Food?**  
 New programs aim to put more produce in corner stores in order to improve the health of low-income communities. Will it work?  
 OLGA KHAZAN | MAR 2 2015, 8:00 AM ET

Original

**2** Can the bodega become a healthier place?



**3** Americans Should Shop More Like Europeans Do  
**4** Why small, local vegetable stores might help with the obesity epidemic  
 THEATLN.TC | BY OLGA KHAZAN  
 Like · Comment · Share · 863 34 188

Shared on Facebook

**5** A new program seeks to expand healthy offerings in low-income communities  
 theatln.tc/1zzX5wn



View more photos and videos

Shared on Twitter

- #1 **Original Headline**  
Asks a “big simple question”
- #2 **Facebook Intro Text**  
Reframes original headline as shorter and more conversational
- #3 **Facebook Preview Headline**  
Reframes original headline to be decisive, stir emotion
- #4 **Facebook Preview Description**  
Offers a similarly decisive sub-header
- #5 **Twitter Headline**  
Mimics original, explanatory article sub-header

### Head-First Writing

“Headlines have to work on their own, unlike in print. What’s the proposition you want to say to the reader to earn their click?”

Gabriel Snyder  
Former Chief Editor, The Wire





## 6. Use Images That Tell the Whole Story

Channel Specifications and Limitations Dictate Image Choice and Editing

User Engagement Suffers When The Punch Line is Cropped Out



...But It Can Be Easily Avoided

- ✓ Consult up-to-date size restrictions for each platform
- ✓ Upload standalone images when sharing links if necessary
- ✓ Design images with text overlays with standard dimensions in mind (note: this is particularly important with promoted content on Facebook)



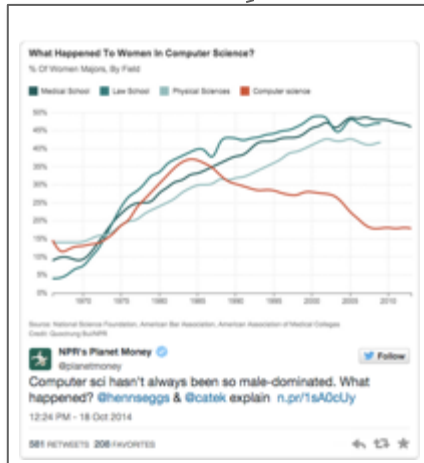
# Variety is the Spice of Social

## Creating Multiple Images Per Story is No Longer an Option, But an Imperative

### A Single (Audio) NPR Story Yields...



- Gives digital team the opportunity to A/B test and find out what format works best for which audiences
- Provides a variety of evergreen content options for web properties
- Follows the modified COPOP (rather than COPE) formula: Create Once, Publish, Optimize, then Publish again



A Chart Tweet



A Photo Tweet



A 'Quotable' Tweet



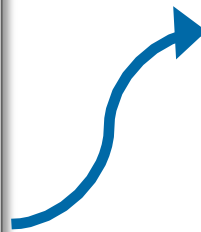
# 7. Timing is Everything

## Rather Than Scrambling to Create New Content, Look to Archives for Existing Tie-In Opportunities

### Capitalizing on Popular Conversation



### ...To Resurface (Appropriate) Older Content



✓ Facebook intro text uses a trending hashtag to direct ongoing conversation to thematically related content, in addition to a successful headline meme (e.g., "10 more...") to hook readers

✓ Link preview has a custom-uploaded image that fits within the size limitations and gives an accurate sample of content within the story

✓ Article headline in Facebook preview is slightly modified from the original to make use of keywords (e.g., perception), while retaining the original's decisive quality



# 8. Lather, Rinse, Repeat (and Measure)

The Most Successful Social Stories Are Products of Iteration

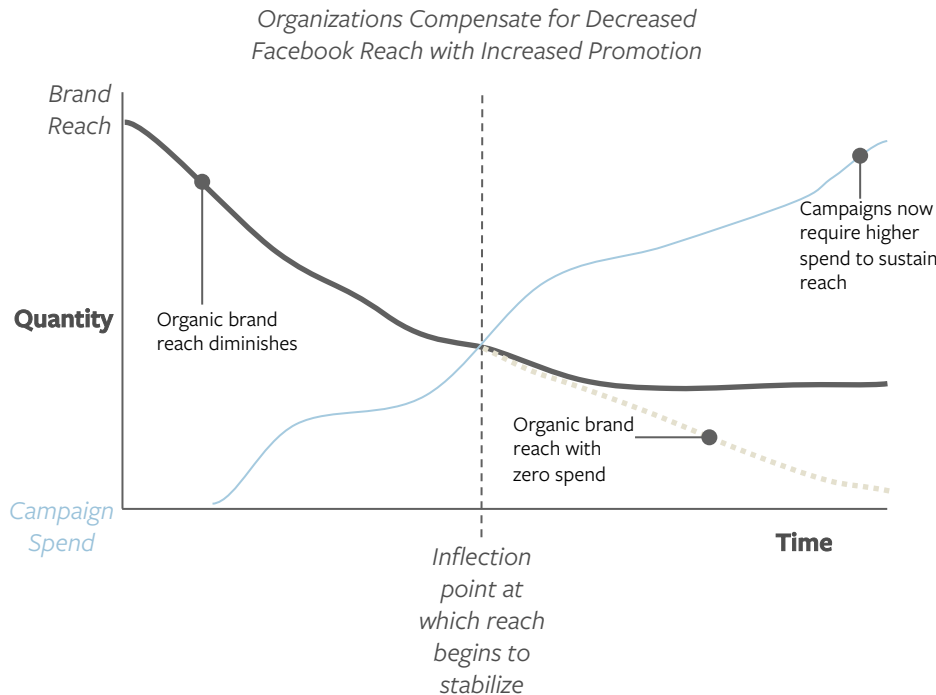




# 9. Put Your Money Where Your Best Content Is

## As Platforms Adopt More Restrictive Algorithms, Paid Promotion Is Increasingly Key to Reach

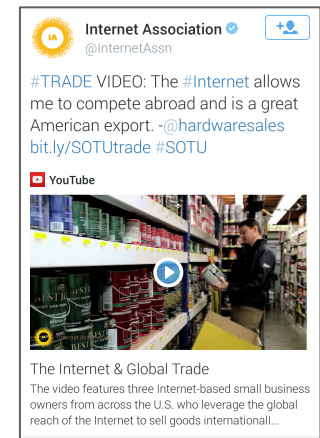
### A Familiar Scenario For Non-Media Brands: More Spend, Less Payoff



### ...But Consider Opportunities to Invest At Key Times

#### When Content is in the News

Time promoted posts to align with conversations already occurring on social channels—but make sure that your content isn't overly promotional and adds value to the ongoing dialogue






#### When Content Performs Well Organically

Pay attention to metrics around which posts or post types generally do well on their own, and allocate budget toward boosting these



# 10. Prepare for the Future in Social Sharing

Changes in Big 3 Platforms Can Help Content Creators Heighten Engagement and Strengthen Networks

	Pre-2015 “Rules of Engagement”	2015 ‘Rules of Engagement’
 <b>From Photo Posts to Video Uploads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing photos more desirable for maximum organic reach than videos</li> <li>• YouTube videos more prominent than native video on Facebook</li> <li>• Promotional posts more effective than general interest posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Video views on News Feed now outpace photo views by a factor of 2:1</li> <li>✓ Facebook algorithm now favors native uploads over external video posts</li> <li>✓ General interest posts now more likely to be seen than promotional posts</li> </ul>
 <b>From Short Vines to Longer Video Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six-second Vines were primary mode of video engagement (but not native to Twitter)</li> <li>• Tweets had to be sent at the right time to hit target audiences</li> <li>• Direct messaging functionality limited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Users can post native 30-second videos with in-app editing functionality</li> <li>✓ “Tweets While You Were Away” feature makes timing of tweets less important</li> <li>✓ Group direct messaging (up to 20 users) and ability to share tweets in messages expands engagement opportunities</li> </ul>
 <b>From Building Connections to Promoting Thought Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blogging platform lacked customizability</li> <li>• Slideshare less integrated with LinkedIn interface while commanding high barrier to engagement (pay-to-play for top features and access)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Blogging interface much more streamlined with added tools for maximum engagement (e.g., create entries from main LinkedIn feed)</li> <li>✓ Option to share Slideshare material via LinkedIn now a prominent feature (e.g., sharing buttons)</li> <li>✓ Slideshare material featured on LinkedIn today (first source of content not provided by publisher)</li> </ul>

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