Using data to inform and improve your journalism
### API’s 4 areas of focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding your audience</th>
<th>Growing subscribers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advancing cultural change</td>
<td>Renewing watchdog role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meet the Metrics for News team

Liz Worthington
Director of Content Strategy

Tom Rosenstiel
API Executive Director

Jeff Sonderman
API Deputy Exec Director

Lindsay Carbonell
Success Engineer

Katie Kutsko
Partner Development Manager

Shirley Qiu
Audience Engagement Strategist
Thank you
Now, more than ever, it’s important to know what in your coverage is connecting with your communities
Newsrooms are:

- Doing incredible work
- Focusing on core audiences
- Welcoming new audiences
- Serving readers in new ways
- Asking for support
We’re here to share what we’ve learned and offer resources
The problem:
Web analytics measure web pages
Journalists don’t make web pages
We make journalism experiences stories relationships
API’s custom solution now with critical coronavirus engagement data

- Aggregates & transforms data from Google Analytics, Adobe, Chartbeat, Facebook

- Engagement Scores = simple + comprehensive

- Personalized dashboards empower everyone to act

- Flexible integration with any data source or CMS

Analytics that align your editorial values and business models
11 lessons on using metrics for newsroom change
1. Bad metrics lead to bad decisions
Pageview-focus leads to clickbait

How we get 434,886 pageviews per month
This is why many journalists dislike and distrust ‘metrics’
2. Keep the “K” in KPI
Don’t settle for metrics just because they are available
Decide what is important, then look for relevant metrics
A focus on conversions

Dallas Morning News learned unexpected content could lead to new subscriptions.

- SMU sports coverage performed poorly in general but converted subscribers at a much higher rate than any other sports coverage

- Now building similar franchise and marketing around high school sports
Example: Learn what works across the state

For the Anchorage Daily News, growing engagement across Alaska is important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEIGHT (%)</th>
<th>METRIC</th>
<th>THIS STORY’S PERFORMANCE</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Alaskans pageviews per story</td>
<td>43.2K</td>
<td>Google Analytics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Alaskans average reading minutes per story</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>Google Analytics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Percent of traffic from alaskans segment</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>Google Analytics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In practice: Coverage reimagined

Analyzing coverage of Iditarod across the state helped ADN learn:

● To do: Unique stories, analysis and important updates
● To stop doing: Incremental updates and photo galleries
● The result? More page views, more readers, more engaged users and more digital subscriptions than the previous year
Coronavirus
Coverage of the coronavirus outbreak and COVID-19 infections
Feb 27 to Mar 28

Select from your newsroom's priorities:

- Growing online audiences: 224
- Building loyalty: 212
- Building our membership base: 135
3. Use several key indicators, but don’t overwhelm
Every metric has a perspective
You need more than one to capture everything that matters
Beware: The Cherrypicking Problem

What it is:

- Give people multiple metrics and they choose whichever one makes them look good in each case, ignoring the others.

How to solve it:

- Don’t give *too many* metrics to choose from.
- Agree in advance which metric(s) matter for a given objective, and what counts as success.
- Communicate to the newsroom often.
Engagement Scores

Simple
Comprehensive
Customizable

How this score is calculated

Total Engagement Score
A blend of pageviews, time spent and social engagement by all users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
<th>METRIC</th>
<th>THIS STORY'S PERFORMANCE</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pageviews per story</td>
<td>7.96K</td>
<td>Adobe Analytics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local People pageviews per story</td>
<td>5.83K</td>
<td>Adobe Analytics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average reading minutes</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>Chartbeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average local people reading minutes per story</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>Adobe Analytics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social interaction rate per visit</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Facebook and Twitter interactions, Adobe Analytics visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social interactions per story</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Facebook and Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent of traffic from mobile users segment</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>Adobe Analytics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Different people may have different primary KPIs
Washington Post example

- “Morning Mix” team is tasked with aggregating, driving large pageview counts and story volume. “Top of the funnel”
- Investigative or local teams are expected to serve loyal readers and convert subscribers. “Bottom of the funnel”
5. Isolate key audience segments
Serving potential subscribers

The Minneapolis Star Tribune used Metrics for News to track reading habits of potential subscribers it calls “intenders.”

- Found religion and philanthropy among untapped beats
- Went from part-time religion writer to two full-time beats
- Coverage performs 50 percent better than content on average
- Email newsletters have played a big role in converting intenders to paying subscribers
Be selective about what to cover

A Florida newsroom made coverage of environment, development and dining high priorities in the newsroom. This led to:

● A focused newsroom
● New revenue
● Lifted engagement across all topics (+40% views, +77% time, +115% shares in one year)
### Subscribers read different topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Subscribers rank</th>
<th>Casuals rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Government</td>
<td>#1</td>
<td>#1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Workers</td>
<td>#2</td>
<td>#6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>#3</td>
<td>#5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>#4</td>
<td>#8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disasters / accidents</td>
<td>#5</td>
<td>#2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearest NFL team</td>
<td>#26</td>
<td>#3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local NBA team</td>
<td>#7</td>
<td>#11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from a major newspaper in a state capital.
## Subscribers read different story forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story form</th>
<th>Subscribers Score</th>
<th>Casuals Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major enterprise reports</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily news stories</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-Eds</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial cartoons</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to the editor</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Taxonomies bring metrics to life
Why apply a taxonomy?

- Knowing how different types of content perform collectively gives you more strategic insight
- Shows you what kinds of content to do more or less of
- Compares apples to apples
- Allows you to learn WHY people engage with your journalism
Journalistic categories & analysis

Tell you which characteristics are working and not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trends in these stories</th>
<th>About this Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is working best with Growing Online Audiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFINED TOPICS</td>
<td>DEFINED TOPIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (21 stories)</td>
<td>Coronavirus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety - Crime (30 stories)</td>
<td>#2 out of 271 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety - Fires (16 stories)</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 out of 264 stories</td>
<td>DEFINED TOPIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENTERPRISE LEVEL</td>
<td>DEFINED TOPIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longform (39 stories)</td>
<td>Public Safety - Fires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 out of 25 stories</td>
<td>DEFINED TOPIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTHOR TYPE</td>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer (33 stories)</td>
<td>#2 out of 277 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter (52 stories)</td>
<td>DEFINED TOPIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DETECTED ENTITIES</td>
<td>ENTERPRISE LEVEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California (40 stories)</td>
<td>Longform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 out of 64 stories</td>
<td>DEFINED ENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central San Diego (14 stories)</td>
<td>beaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 out of 5 stories</td>
<td>DETECTED ENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central San Diego Region (22 stories)</td>
<td>city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 out of 21 stories</td>
<td>DETECTED ENTITY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Entity detection

Entities are the things you write about — people, places, companies or organizations automatically detected in your stories.

examples:

Donald Trump  China  universities

nursing homes  health officials  banks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>RETURNING USERS SCORE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bigger crowds than expected flock to Anchorage’s new mass shelter complex</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>Coronavirus  Homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Dobbyn March 23, 2020</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As virus spreads, homeless take shelter at Anchorage arenas</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>Coronavirus  Homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Dobbyn March 21, 2020</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage officials eye ice arena as emergency homeless shelter as they brace for coronavirus impact</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>Coronavirus  Health care / medicine / public health  Homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Dobbyn March 15, 2020</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage prepares to open arenas to homeless</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Dobbyn March 20, 2020</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example: Thematic thinking

Erie Times News transformed crime coverage

- More enterprise, explainers, photos, initiative
- Created a franchise focused on solutions for making the community a better and safer place to live
- Grew views by 200% and shares by 250% in one year
7. Everyone should be empowered with data
Everyone needs their own data

This:

Not this:
How to get everyone into data

- **DO:** Relevant, personalized reports for each person / role
- **DO:** Weekly newsletter from analyst to staff
- **DO:** Use data to start one-on-one conversations

- **DON’T:** Automatic, sitewide, basic reports
- **DON’T:** Rely on TV screen dashboards that aren’t actionable
- **DON’T:** Don’t replace human feedback with data tools
Example: Buffalo News

“Most reporters appreciate having their editors’ blessing to avoid some stories and pursue others. So reward the enterprise stories.”

- Start with a culture of learning and using analytics
- Simplify the data with blended metrics
- Give freedom to STOP DOING things

The result: Enterprise team stopped doing meeting and regional stories, incremental updates on the school board, crime and narcotics coverage. Engagement increased 22%.
8. Combine multiple data sources whenever possible
Engagement is fragmented
Why we centralize all the data

- One place to see all of an article’s engagement
- Able to mix all sources into one Engagement Score
9. Supplement data with qualitative surveys & discussion
The “analytics blind spot”

Analytics only give you feedback about what you’ve done, not what you might do.

Analytics rarely tell you “why”
Human insights added to data

Use surveys, focus groups, interviews, community listening to layer in other insights about why the numbers say what they say
Example: API’s audience survey

- Designed to learn what your audiences SAY they care most about
- Questions are not about you but about them.
- Match it with your analytics to see if what they SAY is what they DO
- Identify opportunities analytics alone may have not revealed
10. Identify new target audiences, and test them rapidly
Identify coverage opportunities

The Sacramento Bee identifies what it calls “audience sprints” — new content areas around which it believes it can build digital subscriptions. These audiences include:

- Health care workers
- Pub & grub
- Homeowners

Short cycles of test and learn, powered by Metrics for News
11. When to ‘stop doing’
## Popular-Important Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Popular</th>
<th>Not popular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High importance</strong></td>
<td><em>Do it all</em></td>
<td><em>Do enough</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low importance</strong></td>
<td><em>Do enough</em></td>
<td><em>Stop doing</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 steps to evaluate content

1. Does it matter to everyone?
2. Does it matter to someone? (A key segment)
3. Can we make it matter to someone? (Change the approach)
4. Is it essential to other business strategies?
5. Is it mission-critical anyway?

If all “no” — stop doing it.
Learn more about us

Metrics for News analytics for your editorial values and business models

metricsfornews.com
Thank you!

Questions? Ask us:
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liz.worthington@pressinstitute.org