

Feature Structure

Marcus O'Donnell Jour 202 2006

Openers

| Hennessey | Sumner & Miller | Ricketson |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Surprise or shock | shock lead | surprise |
| Anecdote | anecdote | anecdotal |
| Atmosphere | | |
| Argument by Analogy | | summary |
| In this together | direct address | |
| Significant scene | scenario lead | descriptive |
| Quote | indirect quote | |
| Literary allusion | | |
| Celebrity peg | | |
| Cryptic/Intriguing | blind lead | suspense |

Shock or surprise

- Make the reader sit up and take notice
- Does not have to be an earth shattering shock
- Focus is on the unusual or unknown
- When a Sydney businessman spent a whopping \$3.52 million on a "postage stamp" size block of land in Bondi in February, it shocked even that most jaded of creatures, the real estate agent
- "The result was beyond our wildest expectation Raine & Horne's Michael Pallier said of the 120-square-metre block at the time. So notorious was the auction that it drew spectators from far and wide - even Olympic Swimmer Ian Thorpe showed up."
 - Tiny Town, SMH Domain 16 July

Shock or surprise

- The Investment and Financial Services Association recently calculated that Australia has a retirement savings gap of \$452 billion - or \$93,000 per person. This is the difference between the retirement people expect to have and the retirement present super contributions plus the age pension will produce.
- For many of the over-40s the problem is more acute. Unlike later generations, these people have not had the benefit of a 9 per cent compulsory super for their full working lives and they have less time to make up the shortfall before the money is needed. And unlike earlier generations, the baby boomers aspire to live well in retirement. Past surveys by the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia have shown most baby boomers expect they'll need an income of at least \$30,000 in retirement, with many wanting at least \$50,000. Eking out an existence on the age pension is not part of their plans.
- The good news is that many are well positioned to play catch-up. By their late 40s and 50s, they often have the mortgage paid off or under control and are at or near the peak of their earning capacity. So long as the boomerang kids don't hit the hip pocket too hard, they have the capacity to save more and, as retirement draws nearer, a clear incentive to do so.
 - Great Expectations SMH Money 23 August 2006

Anecdote

- Make sure it is sharp and sharply told - no shaggy dog stories
- Make sure it sets the right tone as well as signals the right content
- Geoff Gallop is trying to concentrate on his toes. It is a seemingly trifling task for a man who until recently was premier of Western Australia, but he is struggling.
- "It's not easy. You have to focus on the moment ... on your toes, and then up through your body, to get control rather than worry about what has happened, or might happen. If you don't relax easily - and you're looking at someone who doesn't - then it's very difficult. But it's something that can help."
- Help with depression, he means. On January 16, without warning, Gallop resigned. At the peak of his political authority, and less than a year after being re-elected to lead a state in the midst of an economic boom, the modest, usually buoyant and likeable leader decided he could lead no longer. "Living with depression is a very debilitating experience which affects different people in different ways," he said at the time, flanked by his wife, Bev, and youngest son, Leo. Staff and colleagues stood behind him, some of them weeping. "My doctors advise me that with treatment, time and rest, this illness is very curable. What has made this announcement all the more difficult today is that I love being premier, I love the work, I love the state, and I love its people." With that he walked out on a 20-year state political career.
 - Out of the Blue Good Weekend July 8 2006

Scene

- Make sure it is sharp and sharply told
- Make it concrete and visual
- Make sure it sets the right tone as well as signals the right content
- Use evocative but simple language - no purple prose

Scene

- Perched on the edge of a bright white power sofa on the supernaturally quiet eighth floor of the News Corporation's global headquarters, the last thing Rupert Murdoch looks like is a fire-eyed revolutionary. Starched cuffs. Courty manner. A month past his 75th birthday. But then he starts talking. "To find something comparable, you have to go back 500 years to the printing press, the birth of mass media - which, incidentally, is what really destroyed the old world of kings and aristocracies. Technology is shifting power away from the editors, the publishers, the establishment, the media elite. Now it's the people who are taking control." And he's smiling.
- Hold on a minute. Rupert Murdoch is the media elite. His Sixth Avenue office, lined with shelves devoted to dead-tree properties like London's The Sun and muted video monitors tuned to news channels including News Corp.'s Fox and rival CNN, sits squarely within jaywalking distance of NBC, CBS, Time Warner, McGraw-Hill, and Viacom. But these days, midtown Manhattan's valley of old media dinosaurs is besieged by a Cambrian explosion of digitally empowered life-forms: podcasters, bloggers, burners, P2P buccaneers, mashup artists, phonecam paparazzi. Viewers are vanishing, shareholders are in revolt, advertisers are Googling for the exit.
- Twilight of the moguls, right? Not for the T. rex of mass culture. "We're looking at the ultimate opportunity," Murdoch says. "The Internet is media's golden age."
 - My Space Wire July 2006

Suspense

- Suspense is about build and release - so don't hold it too long
- Don't be too clever: balance between intriguing and pissing off readers
- HE HOLDS the secret to Australia's sloaziest deal with Saddam Hussein's regime. After the Iraq war he briefed senior Foreign Affairs officials on how Australia could get its hands on Iraq's oil. He smoothed BHP-Billiton's entry into postwar Baghdad as their partner in a potential oil bonanza. He advised AWB when it was time to pay "influential people" in the occupation government.
- But he is the witness the commissioner of the oil-for-food inquiry, Terence Cole, cannot nail.
- "No, no, I really have got no comment to make at all. You will just have to wait and see," the elusive Norman Davidson Kelly told the Herald from Britain when asked whether he was returning to Sydney to give evidence at tomorrow's hearings.
 - The Man in the Know SMH 21 August

In this together

- Audience is key - don't assume too much familiarity when writing for general publications
- Direct address often used in How-To & Self Help articles - it's instructional
- Also critical in times of crisis

Risk: How Much are we willing to take?

- We should be feeling safer right now. British officials appear to have foiled a plot to blow up as many as 10 U.S.-bound passenger jets with liquid explosives hidden in carry-on luggage. Another batch of alleged operatives has been discovered and taken out of commission. Several thousand men, women and children did not die ghastly deaths over the Atlantic Ocean. "This," said Republican Congressman Christopher Shays when the arrests of 24 suspects was announced last week, "was a good day."
- Then why did it feel so bad? Why did a bullet dodged feel like the beginning of something and not the end? Minutes after the news broke, counterterrorist experts popped up on TV screens like Pez dispensers to remind us that our homeland-security system is ill equipped to stop the kind of attack the suspected London bombers were said to be planning. President George W. Bush warned against false comfort, saying although he believes the U.S. is more secure than it was before 9/11, "we're still not completely safe." Worst of all, the Brits, who can normally be counted on to sniff out hysterics, warned that we had narrowly avoided "mass murder on an unimaginable scale."
 - Time 13 August

- The sense of dread can be attributed in equal parts to the identities of the suspects (24 men and women believed to have been born in Britain, one of whom has already been released without charge), to the supposed imminence of the attacks and to their purported targets: more planes falling out of the sky. But our collective shudder is by now practically instinctive. Since Sept. 11, 2001, we have conditioned ourselves to spike every triumph in the struggle against terrorism with a shot of anxiety. Try as we might to secure the perimeter, we walk in the shadow of risk. "This is the story of terrorist threats," says Bruce Hoffman, a counterterrorism analyst at the Rand Corp. "We close up one set of vulnerabilities, and they attempt to exploit another."
- Our triumph last week was muted because it was also a test—a test of our understanding of terrorism. Do we continue to react reflexively to each new scheme, regardless of the probability of the threat and the feasibility of preventing it? Or do we have an honest discussion about risk and the costs of safety? After the discovery of the liquid-bomb plot, does it make sense to funnel billions more dollars into new machines that can detect liquid explosives, even though the past three sizable attacks pulled off by Islamic terrorists in major metropolises have been on trains in Madrid, London and Bombay? Banning cologne from planes and testing bottles of baby formula for explosives may make us feel proactive, but are we being smarter? "We can't just radically shift our strategy every time there's an event," Michael Chertoff, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), tells TIME. "The key is balance and constantly looking at the entire landscape."
- Our triumph last week was muted because it was also a test—a test of our understanding of terrorism. Do we continue to react reflexively to each new scheme, regardless of the probability of the threat and the feasibility of preventing it? Or do we have an honest discussion about risk and the costs of safety?

Celebrity/Popular Culture Peg

- Popular culture becoming the lingua franca
- We use celebrities the way christian cultures once used saints - points of reference and role models

Out of Mel's mind

- As all the world knows, Mel Gibson fell off the wagon last week. Spectacularly. He also fell from grace, when his anti-Semitic blast at the cop who had the audacity to pull him over hit the internet with lethal speed. The actor/director/producer whom Forbes magazine named in 2004 as the world's most powerful celebrity was brought low by what he called his "horrific relapse". Disney cancelled plans to co-produce his Holocaust-themed miniseries and America's television queen, Barbara Walters, said she didn't think she wanted to see any more Gibson movies, triggering a Boycott Mel movement. But as Gibson growled before American Jewry (for which read Hollywood) for forgiveness, and pleaded for help with "recovery", there was little sympathy shown for his "disease". Gibson was held – and held himself – morally accountable.
- Yet new research threatens the moral high ground of those who stand in judgment. There's now a startling pile-up of evidence to suggest that addiction – to alcohol, nicotine, methamphetamines, gambling or even eating – is a neurological disease. "In the past, addicts were thought to have a moral or personal problem," says University of Sydney professor of psychopharmacology, Iain McGregor. "When you cast [addiction] as a brain disease it is a very different set of baggage."

• *The Bulletin* 15 August

Sumner & Millner's Structural Models

- Full Circle technique
- Chronology
- Scene by scene
- Person to person
- Problem and possible solutions
- Problem and possible causes
- Persuasion and Argumentation