

CREATING A PERSONAL REEL: A GUIDELINE TO ENTERING THE BROADCAST

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## Literature Review

The following research explores the common variables of a “good” news reel, with a focus on providing beginner journalists a guide to produce their own. First, what “good” meant in terms of a broadcast journalist's personal newsreel had to be defined by identifying what the goals of a reel are. In nearly all cases, there are three basic goals of a reel: to get a job, to get a promotion and to showcase one's skills and experience. By determining these end goals, and working backwards, multiple qualities within a reel that can aid in achieving these goals can be identified. These qualities include positive self-presentation, exceptional personal branding, a clean physical appearance, technical skills, and a knowledge of video sharing platforms.

### Self Presentation

In *It's about me: A study of journalists' self-presentation of their visual and verbal selves*, Carpenter et al. (2017) provided details into how journalists can present themselves or frame their identities in social media spaces. Although this research about self-presentation is focused on social networking sites, a majority of the concepts can still be applied to a video reel.

Self-presentation in journalism is how journalists portray themselves both professionally and personally to not only their viewers but to both colleagues and superiors in the industry as well (Carpenter et al., 2017). This research stressed that the most important part of a journalist's self presentation is presenting journalistic capabilities and consistent work. This is reiterated in *Basic Journalism Skills Remain Important in Hiring* by Pierce and Miller (2007). Most editors found writing skills such as grammar and knowledge of journalism ethics to be the most important skills that all new journalists should have.

This further proves that the most important factor when creating a reel with the goal of being hired by a station, is presenting one's journalistic and technical skills. “Editors are less

concerned with what degree students have or the type of program from which they graduate but instead, are more concerned with their knowledge of basic journalism and their ability to write” (Pierce and Miller, 2007, p. 53). If these abilities and knowledge are not highlighted in a reel, it can be assumed that one would not receive results desired from the creation of a reel such as job offers or promotions. In *Basic Journalism Skills Remain Important in Hiring*, the authors expanded on the journalistic knowledge and skills that are important to highlight in the hiring process, and thus important to highlight in one’s reel. These include writing skills as well as grammar, editing, and knowledge of journalism ethics.

In addition to these journalistic skills, on camera skills are also very important when attempting to positively self-present oneself in a reel. “Body language is a big communicator particularly on TV. Impressions of people form within the first few minutes when they’re on camera” (Schwager, 1986, p. 64). Appearing relaxed and comfortable in front of the camera throughout one’s reel is vital, as it is a main objective of a television journalist’s daily duties. “Effective use of your hands, arms and body will add to your appearance; awkwardness will detract” (Diefenbach, 1958, p. 12). Movements on camera should appear natural but may need to be meticulously planned in advance to ensure that one’s body remains centered and in the frame of the camera at all times throughout one’s reel. It is important to show movement throughout one’s reel so the news director can see that multitasking such as reporting, while walking can be achieved.

Energy is another crucial part of self presentation in one’s reel. “The two true tellers of energy level are voice volume and tone” (Schwager, 1986, p. 64). Throughout one’s reel, voice and energy levels should be consistent. Avoiding a monotonous tone, or soft volume during one’s reel will help show those viewing the reel that they are experienced and able to present on

camera in a way that is pleasing to the audience. “The average conversational speaking voice is adequately powerful for pickup and production over today’s broadcast systems” (Diefenbach, 1958, p. 13). Journalists must also be mindful of powerful non-verbal cues that need to align with the information they are reporting on throughout their reels, such as attitude, tone and composure (Schwager, 1986).

### **Personal Branding**

In addition to self presentation and journalistic skills, personal branding is another important quality to emphasize when creating a reel. In *Gender and branding practices among journalists*, the importance of personal branding for journalists is discussed heavily. The main goal of a journalist’s personal branding is to effectively communicate to others their value and experience (Molyneux, 2019). This personal brand is communicated in a variety of ways, from in-person correspondence, to social media and online interactions.

The “why” of having a strong personal brand, is explained in this research, including showing credibility to both one’s audience and employers, as well as demonstrating one can follow the strict guidelines and journalistic rules of television reporting. Molyneux (2019) stated, “Journalists’ branding efforts speak to multiple constituencies. They market their content and defend their credibility to their audiences. They demonstrate to their employers their careful adherence to policy and commitment to the organization” when speaking on personal branding.

As public figures, journalists specifically have to be more mindful of their personal brands, than others in different fields. “These professionals face different pressures and dynamics than the average user that may induce them to devote more time and attention to their personal brands” (Molyneux, 2019, p. 2). The belief is that if one does not define themselves with their personal brand, they are letting others define them (Molyneux, 2019). This push for personal

branding in journalism has been caused by a variety of different factors, including “precarity in the job market, weakening organizations and American individualism” (Molyneux, 2019, p.2). As organizations weaken, journalists are becoming more independent and therefore need to have a strongly defined personal brand. Journalism is an individualistic profession, as when a piece is published, it is published under the journalist's name and associated with them, therefore it’s crucial that they have control over their own brand and therefore reputation.

Overall, personal branding in journalism is how a journalist promotes their experience, expertise, reporting style, and personality to gain credibility and communicate their worth. This research on personal branding can be applied to the process of creating a reel because one is attempting to gain credibility and communicate worth to a news director or hiring manager, through a 6-8 minute long video.

Journalists can also use their reel and personal branding to convey their “beats” or specific area of journalism they prefer to focus on. “People often seek professional advancement and personal recognition, which leads them to adjust their self-presentation behaviors” (Carpenter et al., 2017, p. 1249). This same strategy of self-presentation applies to journalism and reels as well. Demonstrating the specific area such as sports or weather that the journalist prefers, by including more footage and stories of said topic in their reel, also has the immediate goal of obtaining a job. This will allow a news director to get a better understanding of one’s personal brand and reporting style.

The professional side of personal branding and self presentation has been previously discussed in this literature review, such as strong journalistic skills and self presentation. However, the personal side is just as important. In *It's about me: A study of journalists' self-presentation of their visual and verbal selves*, Carpenter et al. (2017) say that journalists

must combine a small glance into their personal lives and who they are as individuals with the professional side of journalism in order to brand themselves sufficiently. She goes on to explain that branding efforts are not strictly professional and journalists' self-representations often blend both professional and personal aspects of their lives (Carpenter et al., 2017).

There are many benefits to blending personal and professional aspects when showcasing one's personal brand in a reel. "Previous scholarship has determined that journalists mix personal and professional elements of self into their appeals for audience attention...branding for journalists is essentially an effort in garnering attention and relationship building" (Molyneux, 2019, p. 2). It is crucial for news directors to see that journalist's are able to build a relationship with the audience, therefore this part of personal branding must be adequately demonstrated within one's reel. This can be achieved by ad libbing small personal comments when reporting on stories and including them in one's reel. Every personal comment reflects a journalist's personal brand and can be used to create a connection with the viewers therefore creating trust, communication and mutual understanding (Molyneux, 2019). Combining this personal side of branding with the journalistic skills previously discussed, will aid in the creation of a superior reel.

### **Physical Appearance**

Physical appearance also plays a large part in personal branding, as well as the overall quality of a newsreel. One must look professional, clean and organized throughout the entirety of their reel, while also showing a touch of personal style, to again, add to their personal brand, and connect with the audience.

The overall goal of one's television Physical appearance should be to compliment their face (Schwager, 1986). "Since you depend largely upon facial expressions to convey your

emotions and sincerity to viewers...anything that detracts the viewers' attention away from your face is detrimental to your purpose" (Schwager, 1986, p. 8). Clothing is one of the main parts of crafting a successful on camera appearance for one's reel. Many of the same principles of dressing professionally or for an interview can be applied to a reel, because a reel serves a similar purpose to a job interview.

Clothing should be solid, and primarily neutral shades that are not considered distracting to viewers. Patterns can come across flattering or busy to the eye on camera. Journalist's are encouraged to avoid pure white clothing that can cause "reflective blooms" on camera and distract from the overall shot (Schwager, 1986). Clothing should reflect current fashion trends, while still being professional. It is crucial that clothing is well-fitted, and flattering to one's body type, ensuring that it is not too tight or too revealing (Giorgenti, 2015). Accessories should be very minimal and not distracting, this includes items such as jewelry, belts, and handbags. Shoes should also be in solid, neutral shades, with heels for women not exceeding more than 3 inches. Closed toe shoes are preferred over open toed shoes (Buckingham, 2003).

In addition to clothing, personal hygiene and grooming are an important part of personal branding and creating a reel. Hair for both men and women should be in a natural color, and appear clean and in a hairstyle that compliments the face. Back-lighting will make loose or flying strands more noticeable so it is important that hair is kept well groomed (Giorgenti, 2015). In addition to hair, one's nails should also be polished or well-groomed.

Lastly, makeup is important for personal branding and creating a reel because journalists rely heavily on their facial expressions and movement of the face for conveying emotion and diction in reporting. Makeup should be applied in a way that is flattering to one's face, but does not alter their overall appearance drastically. Eliminating oil and shine as well as under-eye

“bags” are two crucial areas to focus on when applying makeup. Journalists should be mindful of what tones and colors accentuate their natural features and present well on camera (Schwager, 1986). Successfully combining professional dressing with good hygiene and grooming will aid in achieving an overall superior quality of a reel, while helping define a strong personal brand.

### **Knowledge of Video Streaming Platforms**

The last variable of a “good” news reel that young journalists must master is knowledge of streaming platforms such as YouTube as well as SEO as related to these platforms. In *How YouTube videos are discovered and its impact on video views*, a more technical side of the reel can be understood. As YouTube is the main platform in which journalists will post their news reels, and send links to possible employers, it is important to understand how to increase engagement and drive more views to their video.

Zhou et al. (2016) discussed how organic growth and understanding what drives it can bring larger numbers of views to one’s videos. “Discovering the major sources that drive views to a video and understanding how they impact the view growth pattern have become interesting topics for researchers...or anyone who wishes to have a shortcut to stardom” Posting YouTube videos in ways that positively impact the growth patterns is important to journalists who wish to get their image and personal brand seen by as many people as possible. The more people that view one’s reel, the more exposure they gain.

There are many ways to improve growth patterns on one’s reel after being uploaded to Youtube. Journalist’s can organize their YouTube channels by content to make it easier for viewers to find what they are searching for. “For instance, create separate playlists for live footage...behind-the-scenes, and so on” (Chertkow & Feeha, 2015, p. 1). Additionally, adding a post-roll or call-to-action after the video can help increase views and shares of one’s reel while

the viewer is still watching. This includes asking viewers to subscribe to the channel, like the video or share it on their social media. It is also vital that journalists use their own social networks to share and announce their own video content such as their reel. Combining these strategies can help journalists successfully share and market their reel after completion.

The variables layed out in this research, such as positive self-presentation, exceptional personal branding, a clean physical appearance, technical skills, and a knowledge of video sharing platforms, all aid in the creation of a superior reel. Once created, said reel can be used to accomplish a variety of goals, such as obtaining a job, obtaining a promotion, or gaining exposure online while building a personal brand. Combining the guidelines identified throughout this research will allow young journalists to successfully create a newsreel and define their personal brand.

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