2022 Newsroom Goals

OVERVIEW
Our newsroom goals reflect WPLN’s priorities in 2022. It’s intended to guide our decisions about where to place resources (time, money, hiring, etc.). It’s also still a living document, because who knows what this year will bring?

NEWSROOM GOALS

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NEWSROOM GOALS

In this section, we’ll walk through the five main newsroom goals. Each goal has some tactics (to help us take action steps) and some metrics (to help us evaluate whether we’ve been successful).

1. Relationships within the newsroom: Foster a culture of support, creativity and growth.

Our newsroom is in season on transition. We’ve doubled in size, changed our org chart, implemented reporter tiers, added a new daily show, and embarked on station-wide initiatives about audience and digital transformation. Ultimately, these changes create a more ambitious, nimble newsroom — as long as people feel invested in each other, feel comfortable voicing concerns and feel heard when they do. Because journalists who feel respected and empowered ultimately serve the public more effectively.

“Trust, you have the same issues brewing (pay equity, cultural exclusion, problems of recruitment and retention). You are not immune, and you are not doing all that much better.”
— Audie Cornish

Tactics:

DAILY SHOW:

• Q1 | Develop clear communication, workflow and expectations between show and non-show staff (Emily, Chas, Andrea, Steve)
• Q2 | After show launch, create intentional culture-building activities for the show team, which will be working in a particularly fast-paced rhythm (Andrea, Khalil)

NEWS DESK:

• Q1, Q2, Q3 | Train our Reporter/Producer II staffers how to host and edit. This will allow them to learn new skills and discover if those roles are something they want to pursue. (Nina, Blake, Julia, Tony)
• Q2 | Implement “passion project time” into reporters’ weeks — time to explore interesting ideas, engage with community members, and/or connect with others in the newsroom. (Chas)

NEWSROOM-WIDE:

• Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 | Foster the skills of consciously raising internal DEI issues and having fruitful discussions when they come up. Celeste Headlee’s DEIB facilitator training and the next iteration of Culture Shift training will be key. (Nina, Anita, Emily)
• Q2 | Identify ways to build an internal culture of growth and critique — helping each other think about ways to improve our work through training and discussions. (Tony, Meribah, Julia)
• Q2, Q4 | With the daily show up and running, evaluate the balance of priorities for reporters. Are “passion project” days working? Are expectations aligning, rather than competing, with each other? Lead two newsroom-wide meetings (one in Q2, one in Q4) to discuss. (Emily)

Metric:

• At least 1/3 of the staff fills out weekly feedback surveys each week.
• On an end-of-year staff survey, 85% of staffers express satisfaction with their job, with the organization’s commitment to equity, and believe that this is a place in which they can grow.
• Dedicate two news meetings a month to peer learning or evaluating work.
2. **Audience engagement: Create more intentional relationships between the newsroom and our community.**

In 2021, our reporters and show team spoke to dozens of classes and community groups and attended many community events. But we want to be more intentional about a) talking to groups that don’t already have a relationship with our station, and b) developing meaningful relationships with sources. We especially want to meet people in predominantly BIPOC groups, areas outside of Davidson County, or working-class communities (people who have lower incomes or don’t work 9-5 jobs).

**Tactics:**

- **Q1** | Set meaningful goals for each staffer on community engagement. (all editors)
- **Q1** | Create an internal system to track who we’re talking to for public-facing community engagement and what feedback we’re getting from you. (Emily)
- **Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4** | Organize regular, public-facing engagement opportunities for our staffers. (Emily, Chas, Andrea)
- **Q2** | Develop a replicable process for “listening sessions,” in which 5-7 newsroom staffers meet with a group of community members to hear feedback. (Andrea, Steve, Emily)
- **Q2** | As the daily show launches, create an explicit strategy for how we’ll receive and integrate regular community input, on a daily and long-term basis. (Andrea, Steve)
- **Q3** | Lead a newsroom-wide discussion about what community engagement is, and how to do it intentionally (Andrea)
- **Q3** | Help develop a station-wide community engagement strategy, along with other departments. (Emily, Andrea)

**Metrics:**

- At least 50% percent of structured community engagement activities are with predominantly BIPOC groups.
- Host at least 2 listening sessions per quarter (show or newsroom-wide) — and at least two over the course of the year that are focused on residents outside of Davidson County.
- One story per week originates from community feedback. This includes answering Hearken questions, responding to follow-up ideas on previous stories, and answering show feedback with “@ Us.” (How to track this? Not sure yet)
3. Diversity on digital: Super-serve more diverse audiences on mobile.

In 2021, two-thirds of our users accessed WPLN.org on mobile, and even more connected to us on social media. We have leaned into Instagram, a platform with an audience that is generally more diverse — in terms of race/ethnicity, age and socio-economic status — than our radio listenership. We want to super-serve that audience with content that reflects their lived experiences and offers important resources (see: our story priorities, page 7).

Tactics:

- **Q1 |** Boost promotions and improve user experience of the Nashville Public Radio app. This includes pushing the app on air. (Mack, Elle, Rachel, Anna, Cindy, Paige J.)
- **Q1 |** Identify new digital hires to advocate for in FY23 (Emily, Anita, Rachel)
- **Q1, Q2 |** Reimagine our “daily news update” email with the goal of reaching people who don’t currently listen to WPLN News. (Anita, Chas, LaTonya, Rachel, Elle)
- **Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 |** Develop month-long digital “sprints” that try out new strategies and assess how they’re doing to reach our target audiences.
- **Q2 |** Convene staff, particularly from under-represented groups, to give input on digital strategy. (Rachel)
- **Q3 |** Create a preliminary social media strategy that elevates stories about BIPOC communities and establishes WPLN as a resource of usable information. (Rachel, Anna)
- **Q4 |** Create the first, comprehensive digital strategy with the help of Poynter/CPB digital transformation training. (Mack, Rachel, Elle)

Metrics:

- Increase our app usage by 10%
  - Daily users from 1150 to 1600
  - Avg. sessions per user/month from 15 to 20
  - New users each month from 409 to 450
- Increase engagement (open and click rates) on Daily News Update email by 20%.
- Increase Instagram reach (# of people clicking on or seeing our posts) by 20% from an average of 2,900 to 3,500 per grid post, including reels
4. Impact: Tell better stories every day, and tell our best stories more impactfully.

We’re proud of our high-quality, human-centered storytelling. Our best stories tell you not just what happened, but how we got here and why you should care. Now, we want every story we produce to meet that standard, and we want to effectively use all our platforms to highlight really important work.

Tactics:

- **Q1** | Set meaningful goals for each staffer to improve as a reporter and storyteller, and identify professional development opportunities to do that. (all editors)
- **Q1** | Create a “360 approach” template for high-priority issues and special projects — how we’ll integrate the news desk, the daily show, special projects and digital, and include follow-up. (Tony)
- **Q1** | Refine source diversity goals and talk about them transparently with our audience. (Chas)
- **Q1, Q2** | As the show launches, define and refine our workflow, deadlines and communication. (Emily, Chas, Andrea)
- **Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4** | Identify 2-3 newsroom-wide topic priorities over the course of our year from our listening sessions (starting with the rising cost of housing), and integrate community input into the coverage. (Emily)
- **Q2** | Develop a special projects strategy that clarifies how reporters can pitch them and how many we can take on at once. (Tony)
- **Q2, Q3** | Create two pipelines for diverse, local talent: a reimagined internship program for local emerging journalists, and a robust freelancer pool that pulls from across the region. Develop recruiting and hiring practices for these positions in line with the newsroom’s existing protocols. (LaTonya, Tony)
- **Q3** | Update our “story standards” list, which was first created in 2019 to define what makes a WPLN story. Editors, producers and reporters should refer to the story standards daily, and newsroom leaders should regularly review work to make sure we’re meeting them. (Chas)
  - Some ideas we’ve discussed: more of an emphasis on being nimble, on on-the-ground scene, on telling stories for lower-income communities

Metrics:

- Increase enterprise reporting on the news desk: 33% more superspots/features from the news desk — from about 260 (in 2021) to about 350 in 2022. This will come primarily from building up our Reporter I’s ability to produce more regular enterprising work.
- Produce three special projects per quarter (which includes partnerships, major investigations, newsroom-wide topics, etc.).
- With our newsroom-wide topic priorities, produce at least 7 features or superspots, 6 show segments, and integrate meaningful community engagement over the course of the quarter.
- 75% of our freelancer work tells stories from outside of Nashville.
- 50% of our interns and freelancers are BIPOC.
- Each staffer participates in at least one professional development training annually (conferences, classes, mentorship, etc.).
5. **On-air sound:** Deepen the radio-listening experience, keeping audiences longer and returning more often.

Radio remains the largest access point for WPLN News. We need to build greater awareness of our high-quality news and its relevance to the daily lives of Middle Tennesseans. We control the quality of our content, the user experience, and the promotion of it. The promotional heft in the coming year will be on our **midday and afternoon listening**.

**Tactics:**

- **Q1** | With the launch of the daily show, we’ll have our first sustained external marketing push for WPLN News. This will bring attention to the work of the newsroom and in particular our midday. Point persons for external and internal promotion meet weekly. (Anita, Andrea)
- **Q1, Q2** | Focus produced :30 promotion on *This Is Nashville*, special projects, specific national programming, and block programming. (Anita, ops producer)
- **Q2** | Hire and onboard a new promotions/operations producer (Anita)
- **Q2** | Enhance the use of live host copy, forward promoting local content either for the next 15 minutes, *This Is Nashville*, or *All Things Considered*. (Anita, Nina, Marianna, producer)
- **Q3** Develop strategy for maximum use of airtime for promotion (Anita, ops producer)

**Metrics:**

- Increase Daily TSL (time spent listening) from 1:02 to between 1:12 and 1:16
- Increase Daily Occasions (listeners tuning back in) from 3.8 to between 4.5 and 4.7
- Increase our 14-month average midday for 25-54 by 15%
  - Share% - 4.2
  - AQH - 2,316
  - AQH Rtg% - .3
  - Average WK Cume - 18,739
- Increase our 14-month average midday for 25-64 by 15%
  - Share% - 4.8
  - AQH - 2,555
  - AQH Rtg% - .4
STORY PRIORITIES FOR 2022

Story priorities, as the name suggests, reflect the kinds of stories we want to prioritize. That means we will intentionally decide to pour more of our reporting time and resources into these buckets. These intersect with everyone’s beats and projects.

1. Service-oriented journalism.
We want to be a public service by providing helpful resources, explaining how our systems work and sharing how our community can be involved. We’ll do this with a focus on audiences who have fewer access to resources and civic engagement because of their income, working hours or location.

   Examples | Nash In The Know, explainers, evergreen how-tos
   Goals   | One service-oriented story per week from the news desk, three service-oriented moments per week on the show

2. Stories about joy, resilience, and the human experience.
The heaviness of the news is a burden to listeners and reporters alike. We’ll continue our focus on accountability and systemic inequities, while telling more stories that inspire creative solutions and help people in this region feel connected to each other. We especially want to reflect and add depth to the lived experiences of people of color and other groups that aren’t often given positive attention in the media.

   Examples | Curious Nashville, “Pin Drop” feature, solutions-focused stories
   Goals   | One “resilience/joy” story per week from the news desk, one “resilience/joy” moment per day on the show, striving for each story to have a moment of flair or joy