

5 questions for making serious-but-shareable stories

So how exactly can you make serious content shareable? What you don't want to do is wait until after the story's already on your site. Consider your approach from the beginning. Here's how:

What's the headline?

Write a headline first — before you begin crafting your story. The headline should be a simple, straightforward, specific promise about what the story's about. You might discover a different headline through your reporting, but starting with something precise will help focus the story.

What is your approach to telling the story?

What's the best way to convey the story? Whatever you decide, get to the point right away and make the piece easy to understand. Charts, images, videos or other visuals can be helpful, but only incorporate them if it's useful to the audience.

How will this be different from what others have already done?

Cut through the noise. A lot of media might be covering the story, but how can you differentiate yourself? What can you add to the story? Try creating an explainer, where you take the complex issue and make sense of it for people.

Why will people share it?

Imagine someone coming across your story online — what will make them take the next step to share it? Will it make them happy, sad, enraged, informed or intrigued? If it leaves your audience with no reason to interact, you've missed something.

What's next?

Don't ignore the story after it's published. Compile the metrics, and ask: Did the story's traffic and engagement fall flat? What would you do differently? Take a look at the comments and shares to learn how people felt about the story. This should inform future coverage.