

# SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM

**Solutions Journalism 101**

Sarah Gustavus, Economic Mobility Manager

@soljourno #TheWholeStory

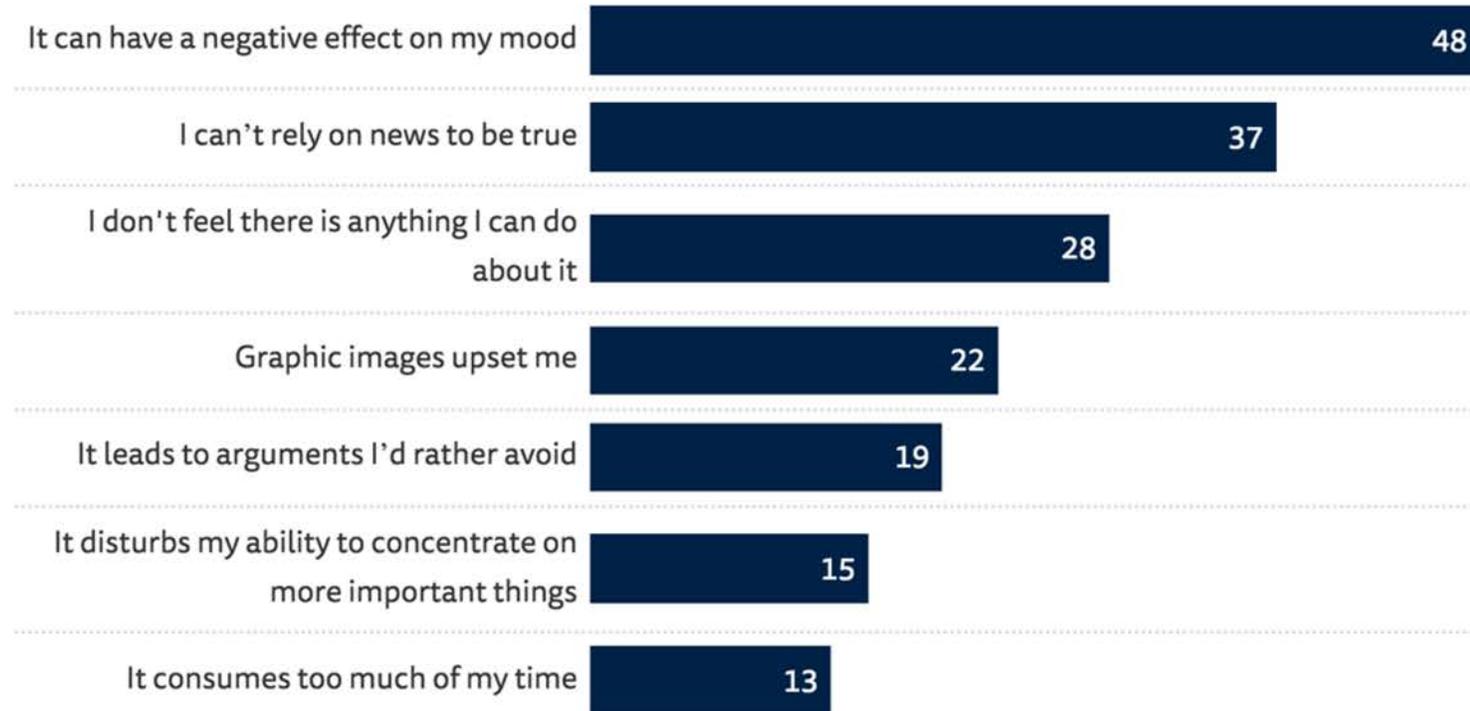
**SOLUTIONS**  
JOURNALISM  
NETWORK





## Reasons behind News Avoidance

All markets



Q1dij\_2017. You said that you find yourself trying to avoid news ... Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you actively try to avoid news?

Base: All who often or sometimes avoid the news: All markets = 21,011.

Source: [Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017](#)

**48%**  
avoid news because  
it's too negative

Solutions journalism is



**rigorous, evidence-  
based reporting on  
responses to social  
problems**



**WHAT IS  
SOLUTIONS  
JOURNALISM**

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## The Four Pillars...

Features not just a person, but a **response** to a problem and how it happened

Provides available **evidence** of results, looking at effectiveness — not just intentions

Discusses **limitations** and avoids reading like a puff piece

Seeks to provide **insights** that can help others respond — not just inspiration



# NOT HERO WORSHIP



Mommy Milk Factory // 60 Second Docs



60 Second Docs

**INSTEAD**, use characters to talk about systemic change



**Human Milk Banking: The Surprisingly Simple Way to Save Babies' Lives**

# NOT A THEORY

BROOKINGS



REPORT

## Using the Media to Promote Adolescent Well-Being

Elisabeth Hirschhorn Donahue, Marisa Nightingale, and Ron Haskins · Thursday, April 10, 2008



DOWNLOAD ↓

Download

**A**dolescent media use has exploded. Parents are worried that teens are drowning in messages about sex, smoking, drinking, consumer goods, and a host of other behaviors and products that threaten their health and well-being. This brief advocates fighting fire with fire by creative use of media to provide youth with positive messages that counteract the negative and potentially damaging messages to which they are so frequently exposed.

**INSTEAD,** something that's already in process

Menu

The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE  
MONITOR

Subscr

WORLD > EUROPE | FOCUS

## Iceland has largely kicked teen drinking. What can it teach other countries?

**A PATH TO PROGRESS** In the last two decades, Icelandic teens have embraced sobriety under a program that asks families and communities to rethink adolescent freedoms. Some are trying to export this model to Europe and the US.



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# NOT A MAGIC BULLET

## *Tough on Crude Oil, Soft on Ducklings*

By ANDREW ADAM NEWMAN SEPT. 24, 2009

ALTHOUGH cause-related marketing usually entails a company selecting a nonprofit in need of money and exposure, when it comes to Dawn dishwashing liquid, it was not the brand that chose the charity but the other way around.

In 1978, Alice Berkner, founder of the International Bird Rescue Research Center, which helps birds harmed by oil spills, secured a small grant from Chevron to test all major dish soaps for cleaning birds.

“The one that worked better than anything else was Dawn,” said the executive director of the group, said in a telephone interview in California, where the center operates outside San Francisco and Los Angeles. “It cut the oil faster than anything else.”



**INSTEAD,**  
tone down the rhetoric

## **WE'RE GETTING BETTER AT SAVING SEABIRDS AFTER OIL SPILLS**

A new study of brown pelicans after the Refugio oil spill in California shows how far oil rehabilitation techniques have come in the last few decades.





# **Stories about POVERTY**

FedEx handler gifted car from coworkers after walking 12 miles to work for months

*Three months ago her only car broke down.*

Co-workers buy car for teen UPS employee who walks 10 miles to work

An Alabama man walked almost 20 miles to his new job. When his boss found out, he gave him a car.

**Single dad walked 11 miles to work, so his coworkers bought him a car**

**Hospital team pays it forward, buys car for co-worker without**

Janitor Who Walks Miles To Work Drops To His Knees When Coworkers Raise \$7,000 For His New Car

**Co-workers surprise man with a new car after his was stolen**



## GET TO WORK

The jobs are in the suburbs, but many Philadelphians have no way to get there.  
The Philadelphia Unemployment Project has the answer: Car pooling

- **RESPONSE:** van pools and how they work
- **EVIDENCE:** number of people in current van pools
- **LIMITATIONS:** matching up workers and schedules
- **INSIGHTS:** how they are scaling up, can help workers meet demand



# **EXAMPLES OF SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM**

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## Cesarean births

Intervention	This Facility		Statewide
	#	%	%
Cesarean births <sup>‡</sup>	1,371	49.4%	34.2%
Primary cesarean <sup>‡</sup>	788	28.4%	21.0%
Repeat cesarean <sup>‡</sup>	583	21.0%	13.2%
General anesthesia	70	5.1%	4.4%
Spinal anesthesia	987	72.0%	68.6%
Epidural/local anesthesia	311	22.7%	26.3%

% based on total cesarean births excluding cases with missing information.

Good Samaritan  
Medical Center  
(West Islip, NY)

Intervention	This Facility		Statewide
	#	%	%
Cesarean births <sup>‡</sup>	459	18.4%	34.2%
Primary cesarean <sup>‡</sup>	267	10.7%	21.0%
Repeat cesarean <sup>‡</sup>	192	7.7%	13.2%
General anesthesia	15	3.3%	4.4%
Spinal anesthesia	307	67.8%	68.6%
Epidural/local anesthesia	132	29.1%	26.3%

Good Samaritan  
Regional Medical  
Center  
(Suffern, NY)

## POSITIVE DEVIANT

What can we learn from a hospital that has lower rates of cesarean births?



## Why Oslo's 'greedy method' may be the answer to Utah's air pollution woes

We sent Deseret News reporter Erica Evans and photojournalist Spenser Heaps to Oslo to find out. They discovered the 'greedy method' may be the key to Utah's clean air future.

1 of 25



## SIMILAR PLACES

A reporter from Salt Lake City traveled to Oslo to learn how that city dealt with air pollution



# Dying To Be Free

There's A Treatment For Heroin Addiction That Actually Works.  
Why Aren't We Using It?

By *Jason Cherkis*

JANUARY 28, 2015

## FRAME FOR AN INVESTIGATION

There's a better way. What forces are keeping us from using it?

# apolitical

## In Medellin, cable cars transformed slums—in Rio, they made them worse

Residents were ignored and money was misspent when Rio brought public transit to favelas

In city halls across Latin America, Medellin has a reputation for making miracles happen. Colombia's second city, which was previously infamous for drug and gang violence, has [transformed some of its most dangerous slums](#) with a [cable car system](#). Built in the early 2000s, the MetroCable connects the city centre to the sprawling hilltop slums – “barrios” – on the city's outskirts, the most violent of which used to be Santa Domingo.

Santa Domingo sits at the top of a steep hill, and like Brazil's more well-known favelas, was [built up over time as people moved to the city](#) from the surrounding countryside. Fleeing the civil war and looking for opportunity, people built their own houses from whatever they had on hand. Its crowded, narrow streets and steep inclines made it unsuitable for conventional forms of public transport.



**Mariana Dias Simpson**  
Policy Consultant, FAO

[View Profile](#)

### LOCATION



Rio de Janeiro  
Brazil

## INSTRUCTIVE FAILURE

Make sure the failure is instructive. Be OK with shades of gray.



storytracker.solutionsjournalism.org

## SOLUTIONS STORY TRACKER®

8,372 stories produced by 1,045 news outlets, from 170 countries, and growing every day.

[LIST](#) [MAP](#)

TITLE & DESCRIPTION	NEWS OUTLET & JOURNALIST	DATE & LOCATION	MEDIA TYPE & LENGTH	
<a href="#"><u>From spirits to sanitizer: Local distilleries joining together to fight COVID-19</u></a> <p>In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, some distilleries across the United States have switched their focus from the production of alcohol to the production of hand sanitizer. This new model meets the outsized demand...</p>	<i>The Register-Guard</i> Matthew Denis	25 March 2020 Oregon, United States	Text 800-1500 Words	   <a href="#">VIEW STORY</a>
<a href="#"><u>In The Age of Coronavirus, Libraries Are Getting Books Into People's Hands — Without Touching</u></a> <p>As public libraries in the United States are forced to close their doors in response to the coronavirus outbreak, librarians are trying new methods of (safely) getting books in the hands of community members. From org...</p>	<i>Next City</i> Elizabeth Pandolfi	24 March 2020 United States	Text 800-1500 Words	   <a href="#">VIEW STORY</a>
<a href="#"><u>People are helping each other fight coronavirus, one Google spreadsheet at a time</u></a>	Vox Sigal Samuel	24 March 2020 United States	Text 1500-3000 Words	  

# IT'S GOOD JOURNALISM

Makes reporting **stronger**, more complete

Tells the **whole story**

Strengthens **accountability**

Investigating **problems** right in front of us





**WHY  
SOLUTIONS  
JOURNALISM**

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Covering the problem without  
addressing associated responses



**omits critical  
information necessary  
for society to create  
change**

## IT ENGAGES PEOPLE

**Fresh approach** to stories often dismissed as “too depressing”

Solutions stories are more likely to be **shared** on social media

Makes audiences feel powerful and **less likely to tune out**

REPORTS  
OR  
SOLUTIONS  
JO  
C  
N  
O  
I  
T  
J

**+102%**

Page views

**+80%**

Time on page

(Engagement data for solutions-focused Seattle Times education stories relative to regular education coverage. Source: American Press Institute)



**+230%**

Social shares

**64%**

Returning Education  
Lab user rate

(Engagement data for solutions-focused Seattle Times education stories relative to regular education coverage. Source: American Press Institute)





# **HOW TO DO SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM**

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## KEY QUESTIONS FOR SOLUTIONS STORIES

Who's doing it better?

How does the response work?

What metrics matter?

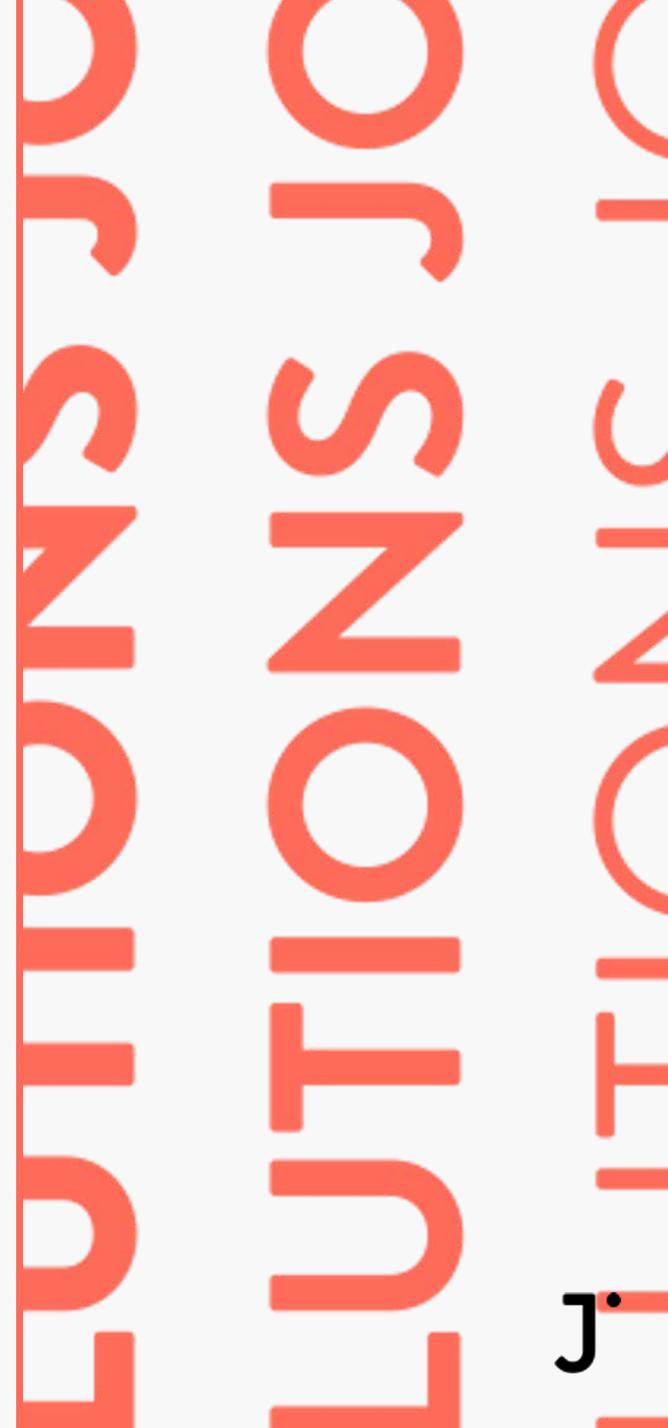
Who is the response NOT working for?

What does the research say?

What do critics say?

Is it being replicated elsewhere?

What are the barriers to replication?



## Remember ...

Don't overclaim or predict the future

Briefly paint the full landscape

Make your story about the idea behind the program — the program is just the illustration

Tell the audience about limitations



Solutions journalism happens when reporters regularly ask their sources

## **Who's doing it better?**

And regularly ask themselves;

## **Is there a possible solutions angle to this story?**

**THANK YOU**

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