

# **Shaking Up That Old Story List**

**Lyle Muller**

**College student journalism adviser**

**Former newspaper and nonprofit editor/executive director**

# Iowa's Rock 'n Roll Legacy



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# Iowa's Rock 'n Roll Legacy

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**Did you know that  
a Beatles' song was written by an Iowan?**


**“Till There Was You”**

**Meredith Willson**



# A few points

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- **Stories can be deeper than they first seem.**
  - **This topic is important as we trim the size of our newsroom budgets.**
  - **Stories exist within the stories you feel obligated to do.**
  - **Engaging stories can be found if we stop thinking about news beats in a traditional way.**
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# A few points

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- Engaging stories can be found if we stop thinking about traditional beats in a traditional way and, instead, seek new ways to handle our stories':
  - **Topics**
  - **Approach**
  - **Writing**
  - **Promotion**

# Traditional beats from where we get story ideas

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- **City Council**
- **Board of Supervisors**
- **School Board**
- **Business**
- **Social/Community Clubs**

# Traditional beats from where we get story ideas

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- **Taxes**
- **Road conditions**
- **Education**
- **Jobs and property development**
- **Recreation, things to do**



# Traditional beats from where we get story ideas

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- **Movers and shakers**
- **Changes in local law**
- **History that is interesting**
- **Disruptions in YOUR life**
- **You. You. You.**

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**“Using a human-centered design approach to understanding the needs and desires of young news consumers is the best way to anticipate changing demand for news from all users.”**

**Jeremy Gilbert, Medill Professor and Knight Chair in Digital Media Strategy**

**Source: ‘The future of news consumption can be glimpsed in the habits of younger news consumers today’;  
Northwestern Medill News; March 4, 2024**

# Traditional beats from where we get story ideas

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**Iowa City City Council - Formal Agenda  
Special Formal Meeting  
December 12, 2023 - 6:00 PM  
Emma J. Harvat Hall  
410 E. Washington**



You can watch the meeting on cable channel 4 (118.2 QAM) in Iowa City, University Heights and Coralville, or you can watch it online at any of the following websites:

- <https://citychannel4.com/live>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/citychannel4/live>
- <https://facebook.com/CityofIowaCity>

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- 1. Call to Order
  - 2. Consent Calendar – Approval of Council Actions (subject to corrections, as recommended by the City Clerk)
  - 2.a [Special Formal Summary of Minutes: November 21](#)
  - 2.b [Work Session Minutes: November 21](#)
  - 2.c [Formal Summary of Minutes: November 21](#)
  - 3. Consent Calendar - Receive and File Minutes
  - 3.a [Ad Hoc Truth & Reconciliation Commission: October 5](#)
  - 3.b [Ad Hoc Truth & Reconciliation Commission: October 25](#)
  - 3.c [Ad Hoc Truth & Reconciliation Commission: October 26](#)
  - 3.d [Airport Commission: September 14](#)
  - 3.e [Airport Commission: October 19](#)
  - 3.f [Climate Action Commission: October 2](#)
  - 3.g [Climate Action Commission: November 13](#)

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- 3.h [Housing & Community Development Commission: October 19](#)
  - 3.i [Human Rights Commission: October 24](#)
  - 3.j [Library Board of Trustees: October 26](#)
  - 4. Consent Calendar - Permit Motions and Resolution (as recommended by the City Clerk)
    - 4.a Liquor License - Renewal
      1. Special Class C Retail Alcohol License for Oyama Sushi Yan's Inc., dba Oyama Sushi, 1853 Lower Muscatine Rd.
      2. Class C Retail Alcohol License for 1st & Main Hospitality LLC, dba Pullman, 17 S. Dubuque St.
      3. Class C Retail Alcohol License for Samco of Iowa City, Inc., dba Joe's Place, 115 Iowa Ave.
      4. Class C Retail Alcohol License for Iowa City Cantina LLC, dba Coa Cantina Iowa City, 18 1/2 S. Clinton St.
      5. Class C Retail Alcohol License for Tun Restaurant, LLC, dba Sumo Sushi & Bar, 122 E. Washington St.
    - 4.b Liquor License - Ownership Change
      1. Class C Liquor License for Iowa City Cantina LLC, dba Coa Cantina Iowa City, 18 1/2 S. Clinton St.
    - 4.c Liquor License - New
      1. Class E Retail Alcohol License for Gurwinder Singh dba Iowa Smoke Time and Vapor Shop, 220 E. Washington St.
      2. Consent Calendar – Resolutions and Motions
  - 5.a October 2023 Disbursements
    - Motion to approve disbursements in the amount of \$15,787,663.29 for the period of October 1 through October 31, 2023, as recommended by the Finance Director subject to audit. Disbursements are published and permanently retained in the City Clerk's office in accordance with State Code.

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- 5.b [Amending budgeted position - Equity and Human Rights Division](#)

- Resolution amending the budgeted position in Equity and Human Rights Division of the City Manager's Office Department by renaming the Outreach and Engagement Specialist position to Equity and Human Rights Engagement Specialist and the AFSCME pay plan by adding the position Equity and Human Rights Engagement Specialist to grade 12.

Comment:

This item renames the Engagement Specialist's title and amends the AFSCME pay plan to reflect that change.

- 5.c [Sidewalk Cafe Fees](#)

- Resolution to waive the annual fee for sidewalk cafes on Dubuque Street due to the impact of construction.

Comment:

The City intends to reconstruct Dubuque St. in 2024 between Iowa Ave. and E. Washington St. which will entail full sidewalk and roadway pavement removal. Throughout construction there will be times when outdoor café spaces in this block will be unavailable due to construction, and even when space is available, the outdoor dining atmosphere is likely to suffer due to adjacent construction noise and dust. Staff recommends the annual fee be waived for cafes located in this block along with any cafe on the southwest corner of Dubuque St. and Iowa Ave. Council waived the annual fee previously during public improvements projects impacting cafes on Washington St. and the ped mall.

- 5.d [1311-1313 Sandusky Dr. Condo Declaration](#)

Resolution approving and authorizing the Mayor to execute and the City Clerk to attest a Declaration of Condominium Regime for the 1311-1313 Sandusky Drive Condominiums.

Comment:

The City purchased a duplex at 1311-1313 Sandusky Dr. as part of the South District Program. In order to sell each unit, the property must be converted to a two-unit residential condominium structure, which requires a Declaration of Condominium Regime be executed and recorded. City staff has prepared and approved the attached Declaration of Condominium Regime and recommends it be approved and executed.

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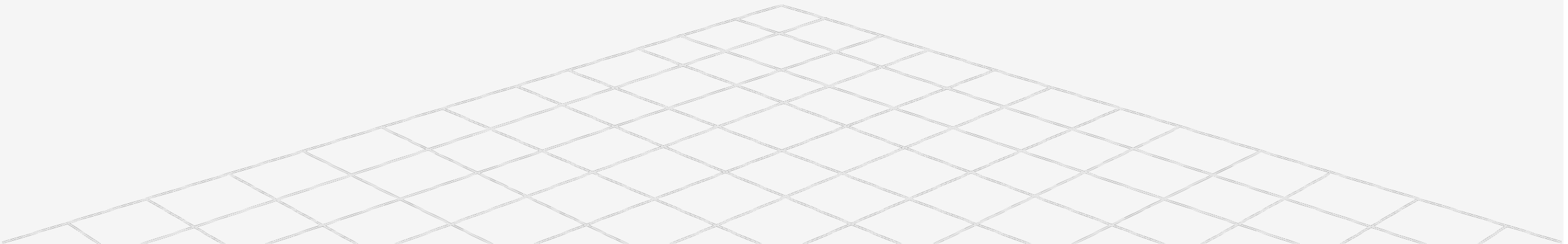
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**You ask your readers to enjoy this:**



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County Attorney Ed Woltz sought the guidance of the Surry County Board of Commissioner Monday evening regarding the county's new development ordinance plan and the status of grandfathered salvage and junkyards.

“We’ve been challenged for years on getting it right and implementing a policy properly,” Woltz told the board. He reminded them that in April the board approved the exhaustive new development ordinance code that had language regarding existing salvage and junkyards.

Woltz said in August that Development Services sent a letter to each existing yard that was registered in the county; at that time there were 46 such salvage or junkyards on the books with the county.

The letter advised those owners that an application was necessary to continue operation. Owners were advised of the fee attached and the deadline for return of those applications, which passed Oct. 17. On top of the application and fee, Woltz said that ultimately sketch plans would be needed that would show required buffer zones.

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“Since the letter went out, only 21 applications have been received. According to the terms of the ordinance the next steps would require a notice be sent to those who have not applied for the application of their discontinuance and their ability to appeal to the Board of Equalization. If they don’t appeal, then they have lost the right to operate a salvage or junk yard,” Woltz explained.

He went on to say that a period of monitoring will come next to determine which, if any, of the applicants are actually conducting business at their junk or scrap facility. “An active yard is one that has activity, not one that just has a bunch of metal, vehicles, or what-have-you with weeds growing up in them,” he said.

“We can establish that they are active by using business records or documentation from the owners and if a business is not operating, if it’s just a bunch of metal materials sitting there, we would give them notice of the fact they would be able to either contest it or not, but if you don’t contest it, they’re going to be determined not to be an active business and will no longer be entitled to operate a salvage yard.”



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Woltz pointed to an incident on Sparger Road where residents thought that a salvage yard had gone out of business when it had not. “If you recall Sparger Road ceased operations, or apparently did, and when it became a full-blown salvage yard again the residents said it was very disruptive. They really hadn’t noticed that this thing was apt to regenerate, which it did, and this ordinance is going to take care of similar situations.”

With the deadline passed, he asked the board if they would like to extend the period of filing or move ahead with the policy as it currently is written, meaning that those 25 yards who did not apply will be moving into the next step of the process. He said, “They had nearly three months to get it done and they didn’t, some of them did and some of them paid their fees and they’ll go forward.”

The board felt that the proper notice was given via certified mail to those business owners and a sufficient amount of time was given for reply; they opted not to extend the deadline for applications.

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# Try This:

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The owners of 25 junk yards in Surry County must clean up their yards now or face sanctions, the county's supervisors determined Monday.

"They had nearly three months to get it done and they didn't," County Attorney Ed Woltz said. He spoke at the supervisors' meeting.

Twenty-one of the county's 46 salvage yards paid necessary county fees to operate by a deadline the county had set. The supervisors declined Monday to extend that deadline for the others.

# A few points

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## **Blue Ocean Strategy**

**Publisher: Harvard Business Review Press**

**Authors: Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, professors of strategy at INSEAD and co-directors of the INSEAD Blue Ocean Strategy Institute in Fontainebleau, France**

**You can pursue your own market boundaries instead of being confined by existing ones.**

# Blue Ocean strategy

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## Blue Ocean strategy v. Red Ocean strategy:

- Compete in uncontested market instead of contested market.
- Make competition irrelevant instead of simply trying to beat it.
- Create new demand instead of exploiting existing demand.
- Break the value-cost tradeoff instead of meeting it.
- Align your operation to pursue efficiency and low costs instead of strategically cutting for efficiency and low costs.

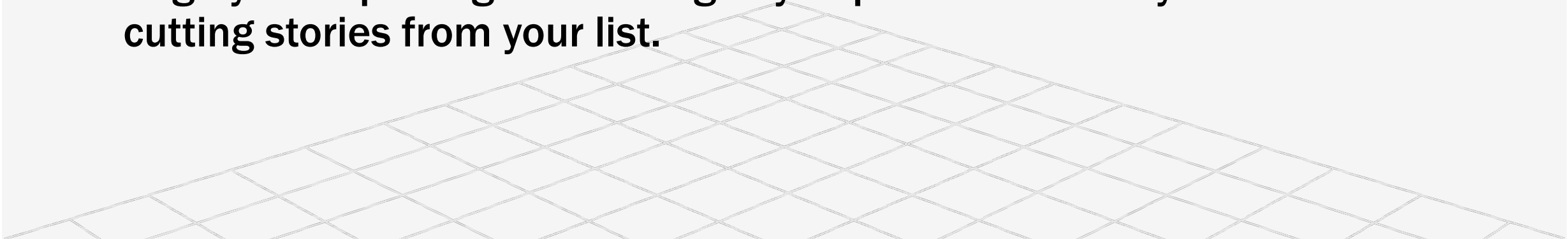
– “Blue Ocean Strategy book summary,” Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, authors

<https://www.blueoceanstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BLUE-OCEAN-STRATEGY-book-summary.pdf>

# Flip this idea to story lists

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## Blue Ocean strategy v. Red Ocean strategy:

- Tell stories for an uncontested market instead of contested one.
  - Make competing news stories irrelevant instead of trying to beat them.
    - Although, collaboration is now the way to survive.
  - Create new story ideas instead of the same, dreary ones.
  - Align your reporting and writing day to pursue efficiency instead of cutting stories from your list.
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DERELI CAFE  
WIFI ZONE

OMEGA IWC ROLEX BREITLING  
GENUINE FAKE WATCHES  
PATEK PHILIPPE RADO CHANEL Cartier  
GENÈVE Schaffhausen BIELLEVEUX BULGARI



WC

POLITICS · DISINFORMATION

# Trust in media is so low that half of Americans now believe that news organizations deliberately mislead them

BY DAVID BAUDER AND THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

February 15, 2023 at 1:13 PM CST



**Verzenio**  
abemaciclib  
50 / 100 / 150mg tablets

...to treat HR+, HER2-, node-positive, early breast cancer with a high chance of returning...

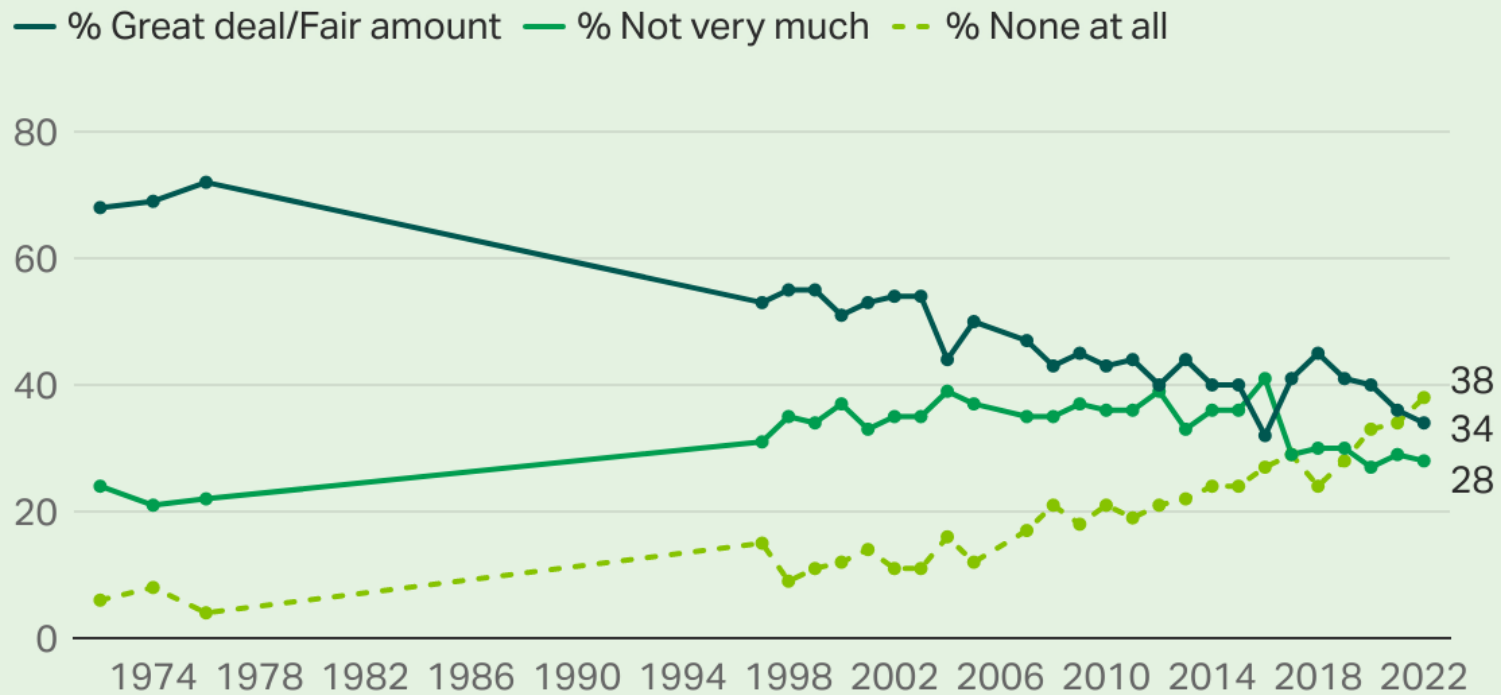
**INDICATION and SAFETY SUMMARY**

Verzenio® (ver-ZEN-ee-oh) is used to treat certain types of breast cancer known as HR+/HER2- (hormone receptor positive/human epidermal



## Americans' Trust in Mass Media, 1972-2022

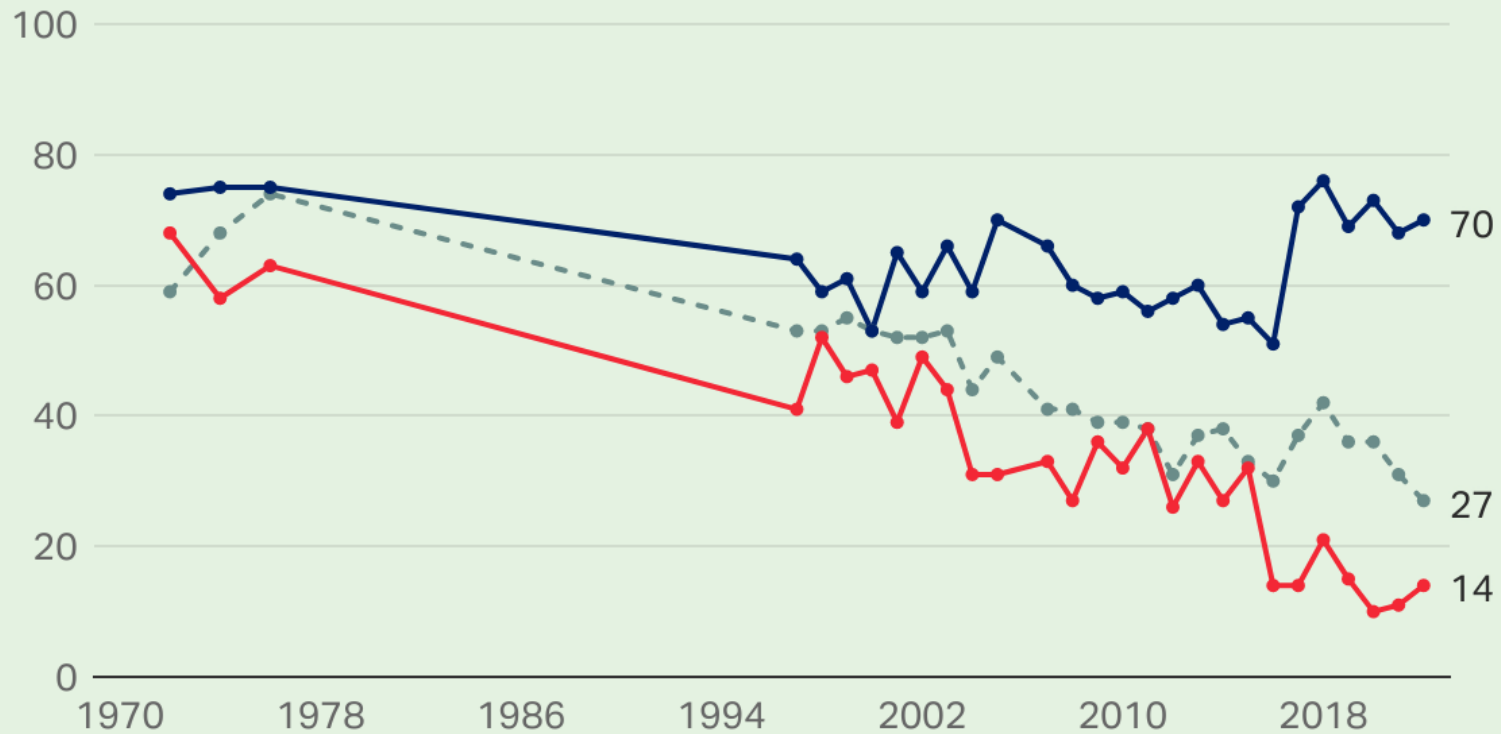
In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?



## Partisans' Trust in Mass Media, 1972-2022

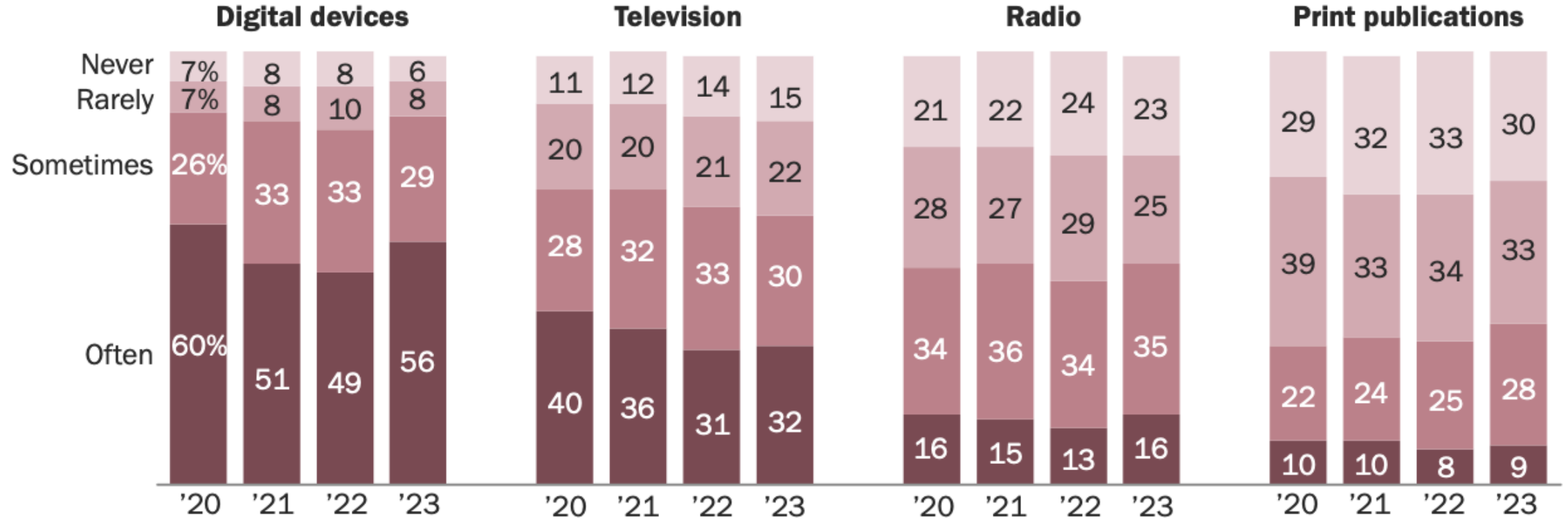
% Great deal/Fair amount of trust and confidence in the mass media to report the news fully, accurately and fairly

— Republican - - Independent — Democrat



# News consumption across platforms

% of U.S. adults who \_\_\_\_ get news from ...



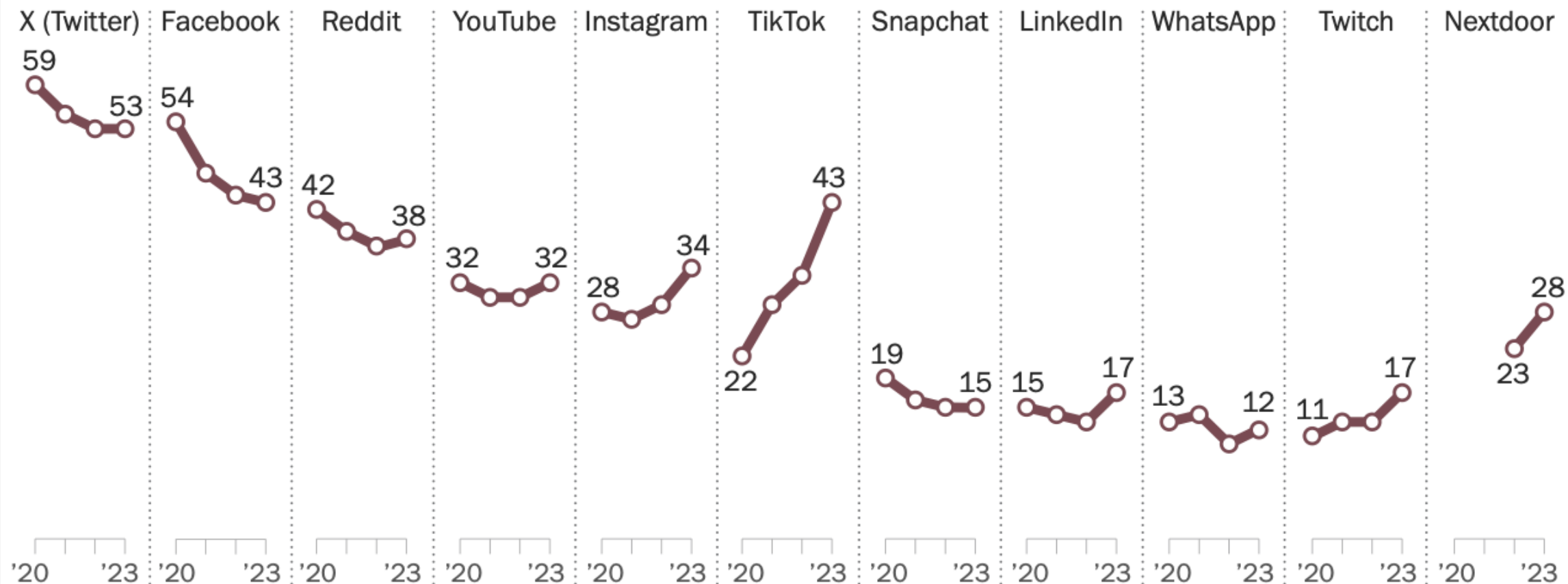
Note: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 25-Oct. 1, 2023.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

## Social media sites by portion of users who regularly get news there

% of each social media site's users who **regularly** get news there



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 25-Oct. 1, 2023.

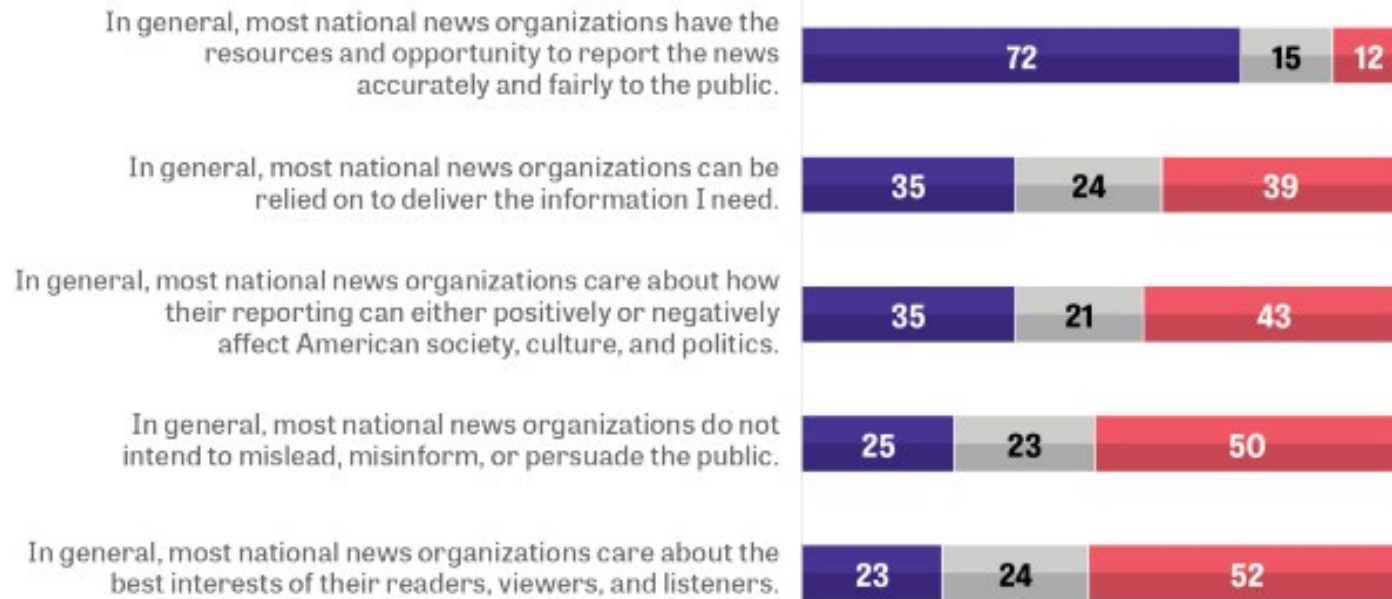
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

FIGURE 6

## Americans' Evaluations of National News Organizations

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about national news organizations in the U.S.?

■ % Strongly agree/Agree   ■ % Neither agree nor disagree   ■ % Strongly disagree/Disagree



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

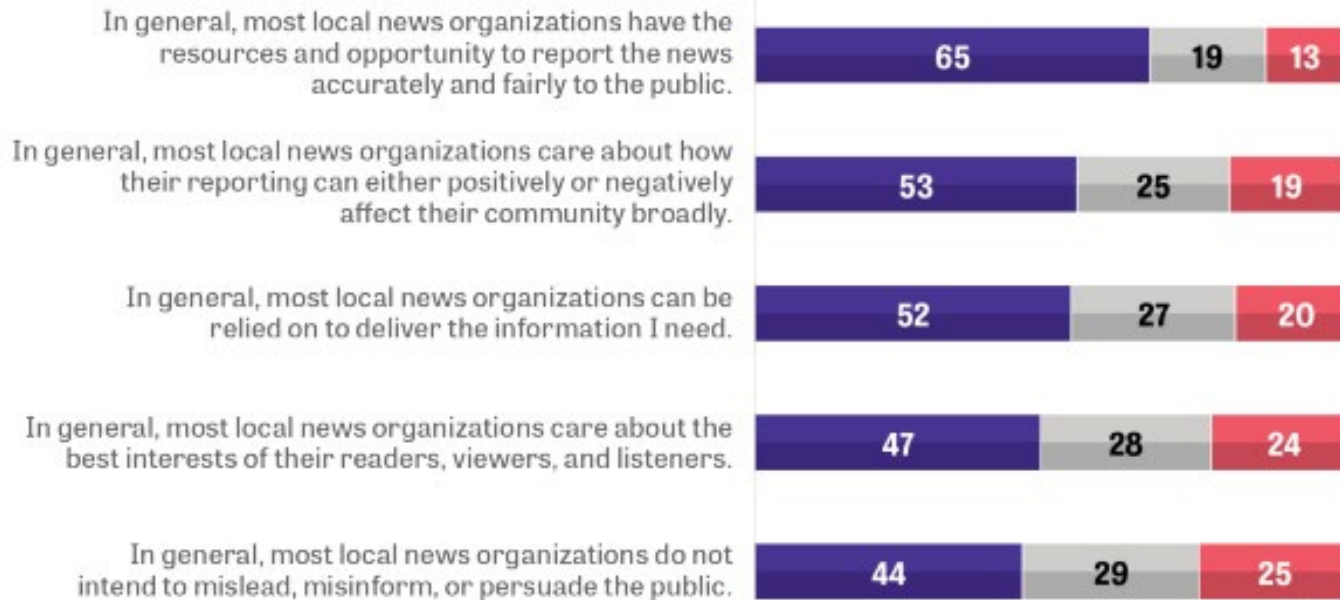
Source: "American Views 2022: Part 2, Trust Media and Democracy," Gallup Poll and Knight Foundation

FIGURE 7

## Americans' Evaluations of Local News Organizations

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about local news organizations in the U.S.?

■ % Strongly agree/Agree   ■ % Neither agree nor disagree   ■ % Strongly disagree/Disagree



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

Source: "American Views 2022: Part 2, Trust Media and Democracy," Gallup Poll and Knight Foundation

FIGURE 8

## Average Emotional Trust in National vs. Local News Organizations

■ % With high trust   ■ % With moderate trust   ■ % With low trust   ■ % With no opinion



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

Source: “American Views 2022: Part 2, Trust Media and Democracy,” Gallup Poll and Knight Foundation

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◆ Duet AI in Docs

Try it today

Google Workspace

## Google Tests A.I. Tool That Is Able to Write News Articles

The product, pitched as a helpmate for journalists, has been demonstrated for executives at The New York Times, The Washington Post and News Corp, which owns The Wall Street Journal.

TECHNOLOGY

# Sports Illustrations company data gone wrong

# AI it'



BOT CHECK | UPDATED JAN 29 by J

## CNET's AI Publishing

CNET is now letting AI write articles of a moron.

and corrections on a  
"I," after using an

ies, CNET's editor-

# r,

human

# icles. It

ice to produce surprisingly



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**“People don’t want drills.**

**“They want holes.**

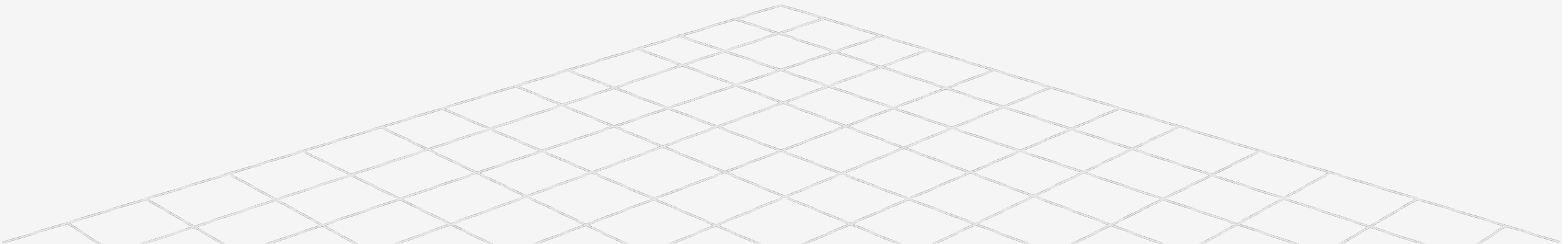
**“The consumer doesn’t want to read your article; they want answers to their questions.”**

**“What does the future local website look like? Part 1”  
by Guy Tasaka, Editor & Publisher, March 8, 2024**

# Your Obligation

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**Respond to the audience's demand to learn the truth.**



# Telling a Trusted News Story

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- **Tell a vested audience information it needs or wants to know.**
- **Satisfy that audience's practical and emotional need for information.**
- **Be leaders in telling the truth about important community matters.**
- **Pick good sources, cite them clearly in your story, link to them online.**

# Telling a Trusted News Story

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**Point 1:**

**Have a story to tell.**

**Point 2:**

**Tell it from the audience's point of view.**



# TOPIC: The week following January 1

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## Calendar

Events list

## Investigative

How much were people paid to work holidays?

## Personalities

People in town doing exceptional things

## Feature

When do people take lights down?

## Historical

That year it stormed

## Oddity

Weird traditions

Return to school

Did city utilities use increase last year?

The person in town who makes things work

Regenerating work energy after holidays

The start of the year 50 years ago

Weird phenomenon

Big events to look forward to in the coming year

New costs of medicines in coming year

Person coping with rare, personal situation (good/bad)

Fundraising needs of nonprofits post-holidays

Once-vibrant tradition that no longer exists

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**SEEMINGLY BORING TOPIC**

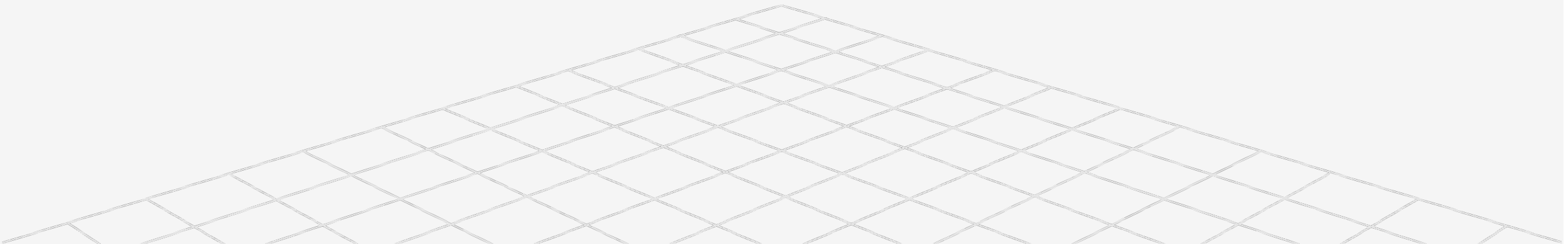
**MEMORIAL DAY**



# TOPIC: Memorial Day

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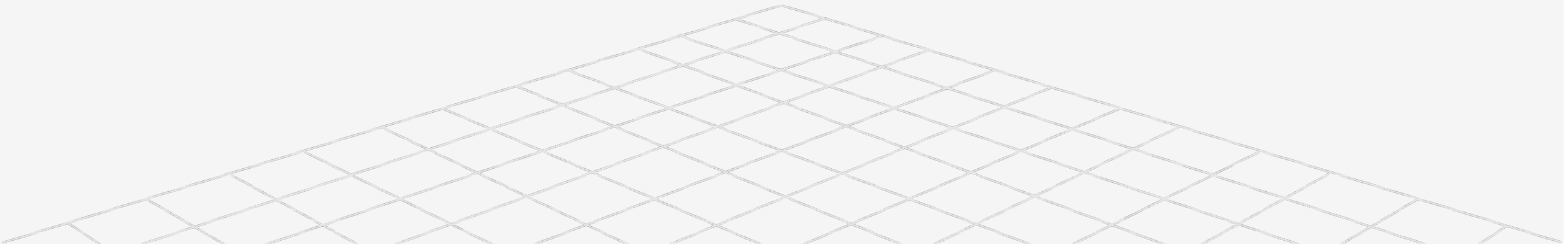
## CALENDAR



# TOPIC: Memorial Day

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**INVESTIGATIVE**

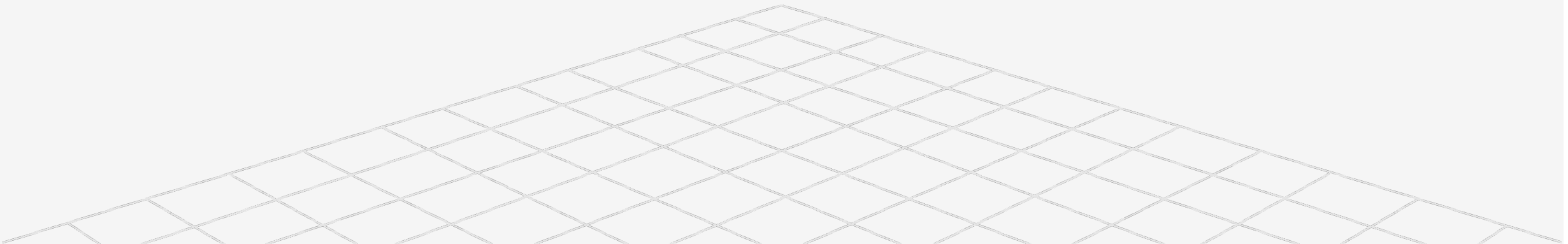




**TOPIC: Memorial Day**

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**PERSONALITIES**



# TOPIC: Memorial Day

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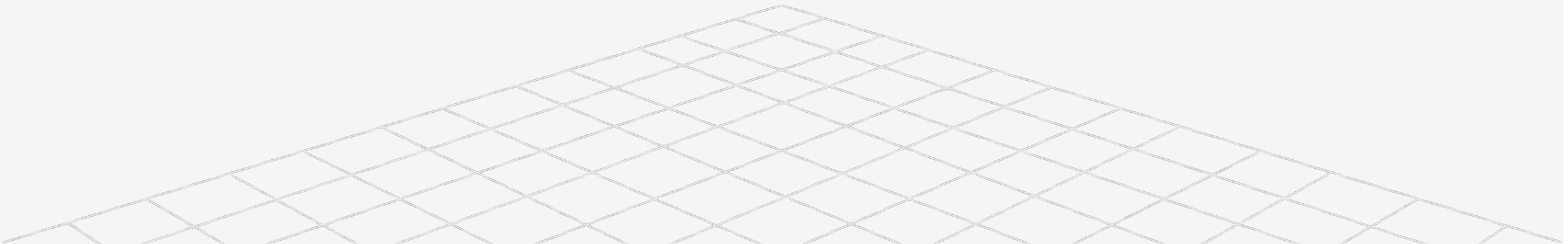
## FEATURES



# TOPIC: Memorial Day

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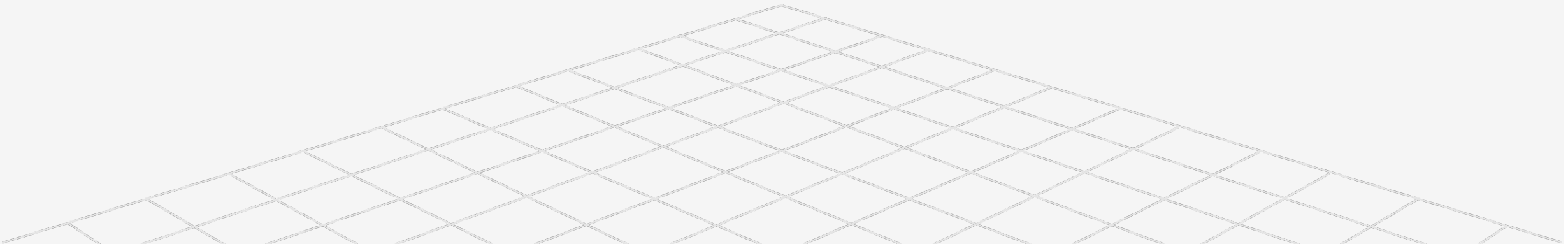
**HISTORICAL**



# TOPIC: Memorial Day

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**ODDITY**





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# What do BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social have in common?

- They are ridiculed by traditional news sources.
- They are right-leaning and pro-Trump, patriotic or religion-based.

*-- Pew Research Center, "The role of alternative social media in the News and Information Environment," Oct. 4, 2022; survey of U.S. adults May 16-22, 2022 and of 200 accounts for each website*

---

# What do BitChute, Gab, Gettr, Parler, Rumble, Telegram and Truth Social have in common?

- 6% of Americans regularly get their news from them.
- 65% of those people say they do so because they have found community.

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# Let your reporting earn trust in your local market

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- **Be transparent in your reporting to your community**
  - **Links to facts in online stories**
  - **Solid, apparent, vetted sourcing**
- **Have a conversation with your community if they suspect your motives**
  - **Harder to do in the electronic age**
  - **Even so, it still is about relationships**

# Conclusions

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- **A public (your community) hungry for the truth looks to news organizations to find it and tell it**
- **We can be leaders in telling the truth about important community matters**
- **People in your community still want news but engage in evolving ways**
- **Tell your community what it wants to know (Answer its questions)**

# Conclusions

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You can give readers in your community engaging stories if you stop thinking about traditional beats in the old, traditional ways when it comes to:

- Topics
- Approach
- Writing
- Promotion

# Questions / Wrap-up

Lyle Muller

[lylemul@gmail.com](mailto:lylemul@gmail.com)

319-389-4477