Using solutions journalism to cover climate change

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Solutions journalism is rigorous, evidence-based reporting on responses to social problems.
WHAT IS SOLUTION JOURNALISM?

- Covers a **response** to a problem and **how** it happened.

- Provides **evidence** of impact, looking at effectiveness, not just intentions (if a pilot, evidence may be incomplete)
  
  — Qualitative or quantitative data

  — Evidence showing that the response is not working? You can write sojo about a failed response too! There’s still a story here.

- Produces **insights** that can help others respond too

- Points out any **limitations or caveats** of the response (“to be sure…”)
INSTEAD, FOCUS ON WHERE THE RESPONSE DOES (AND DOESN’T) WORK

These probiotics for plants help farms suck up extra carbon dioxide
A mix of fungi and bacteria added to the soil makes agriculture more productive—and helps stop climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Best way to remove carbon: Sequestering it in its natural sinks
To curb desertification, we need to restore degraded soil via forest improve vegetative cover, enhance water use efficiency, reduce soil erosion and adopt better farming systems.

By Chandra Bhushan
Last Updated: Saturday 07 September 2019
Citizen science could help address Canada’s plastic pollution problem

Plastics straws are now hard to find. Are plastic bags next?

Tony Robert Walker
September 16, 2019 1:00AM (UTC)

This article was originally published on The Conversation.

Oceans have become sinks for vast quantities of anthropogenic debris — the human-created litter we dispose of. This debris has been a growing concern for decades and is one of the most
The Tiny Swiss Company That Thinks It Can Help Stop Climate Change

Two European entrepreneurs want to remove carbon from the air at prices cheap enough to matter.

By Jon Gertner

Feb. 12, 2019

Just over a century ago in Ludwigshafen, Germany, a scientist named Carl Bosch assembled a team of engineers to exploit a new technique in chemistry. A year earlier, another German chemist,

Green and Cool Roofs Provide Relief for Hot Cities, but Should be Sited Carefully

Reflective roofs are effective tools for cooling overheated cities. Research in Chicago shows that their impacts depend on local conditions, so planners should site them carefully.

By Ashish Sharma, University of Notre Dame / July 1, 2016
WHY USE SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM TO COVER CLIMATE?
A/B STORY TESTING

A/B Story Testing
Stories in the study reported on: child abuse, homelessness and poor people in India who lack adequate clothing

A/B study done in collaboration with student team at BYU and in consultation with the Engaging News project at the University of Texas. Survey conducted by Survey Sampling International (SSI); n=750 respondents, p<.05

- 59% would get involved in working toward a solution
- 35% would share the article
- 52% would read more articles from the same newspaper
- 47% would get involved in working toward a solution
- 36% would read more articles from the same newspaper
- 28% would get involved in working toward a solution
- 22% would share the article
- 22% felt inspired and/or optimistic after reading the article

A/B study done in collaboration with student team at BYU and in consultation with the Engaging News project at the University of Texas. Survey conducted by Survey Sampling International (SSI); n=750 respondents, p<.05
ENP experiment: Time on page up 10-25%
People are avoiding news. Why? Well...

**REASONS FOR AVOIDING THE NEWS – UK**

- Negative impact on my mood: 58%
- I don't feel there is anything I can do: 40%
- Can't rely on it to be true: 34%
- Disturbs concentration: 11%
- Takes too much time: 11%
- Leads to arguments: 11%
- Graphic images upset me: 11%
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And climate change is one of the worst offenders

- Coverage creates a “hope gap”
- Coverage frames people as “helpless” and “voiceless victims”
- No focus on resilience and response

Journalists shape narratives about climate change and do so by choosing the importance of one storyline over another. A classic storyline arc is in the shape of a “U.” A man falls into a hole and figures out a way to get himself up and out of it. The storyline ends slightly higher than where it began, which is encouraging, because after all, the man climbed up and out. The story is not as encouraging if he simply falls into the hole. Yet, most climate change reporting is the story of falling into an inescapable hole.
HOW TO DO SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM
Where might you find these stories?

- Think tanks/policy experts
- Academic experts
- Large datasets
- People involved in implementation
- People involved in the problem
- Networks of innovators
- Program officers in foundations
- Hold up a mirror to your own life
- Solutions Story Tracker

Who’s doing it better?

What question should I ask?
OTHER KEY QUESTIONS FOR SOLUTIONS STORIES

• How does the response work? Slow the interview down.
• What parts of the problem aren’t addressed by the response?
• Where did this idea come from?
• Is it being replicated elsewhere? With what effects?
• What does the research say?
• What do the critics say?
• What metrics matter when it comes to measuring success?
• In what ways is that response working, in what ways is it not working, and how do we know?
• What are its barriers to replication?
HOW TO AVOID ADVOCACY?

• Don’t overclaim

• Briefly paint the whole landscape

• Use data

• Make your story about the approach, not the org.

• Take out the words “inspiring,” “wonderful,” “super,” “unique,” “genius,” and, in most cases, “solution.”
The all-electric home: Tackling air pollution by cutting off natural gas
School district turns old buses into mobile cafes to feed students during summer

Posted: 1:49 PM, Jun 07, 2019   Updated: 4:38 PM, Jun 09, 2019
By: Kumasi Aaron
With eyes on COP24 in Poland, a Dutch success story offers inspiration

A lawsuit in the Netherlands shows ‘people power’ has the ability to change climate policy for the better.

BY: LIZAN NIJKRAKE / DECEMBER 7, 2018

A snowstorm, called the ‘Lake-effect snow’, a rare natural phenomena, arrives at the island of Schiermonnikoog, the Netherlands, February 27, 2018. REUTERS/Cris Toala Olivares

In April 2015, a motley crew of nearly 900, including
Figure 1 Age-standardized prevalence of reporting any physical activity by sex among adults age 20 and older, 2001, 2009, and 2011.
Data slices

**Comparison to peers**
Which city has the lowest rate of air pollution?

**Change over time**
Who has improved greenhouse gas emissions the most in the last decade?

**By method/best practice**
Who’s had interesting results using sustainable farming practices?

**By subgroup**
Who has reduced water usage in small-sized cities?
WHAT DO WE DO?

NEWSROOM PARTNERSHIPS
Workshops, coaching, research/data support and project funding

ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM
Toolkits, webinars, online courses, case studies — all for free

COMMUNITY BUILDING
Platform for shared learning and collaboration, regional journalist meet-ups, and the Solutions Journalism Summit

UNIVERSITY OUTREACH
Solutions journalism modules and full semester courses at partner J-Schools, plus SolutionsU works to apply sojo stories in all academic areas
Welcome Back, Samantha M.!

The Hub is our online gathering place for journalists like you. Our goal is for you to publish solutions journalism. Yes, we've set goals for you.

Join the 126 members who've already submitted a solutions story.

Submit your latest published piece.

We recommend these next steps:

- Register for our next in-person training or webinar
- View Upcoming Events

- Apply for travel grant
- Report your next solutions piece
- Apply here

JOIN THE HUB: OUR FREE MEMBER NETWORK

- Unlimited access to toolkits, reporting guides, and the Solutions Story Tracker.
- Info on upcoming events and webinars
- Travel scholarships, lists of editors who accept solutions pitches, and more
Welcome to the LEARNING LAB

Your one-stop guide to producing solutions journalism—rigorous and compelling reporting on responses to social problems. From finding great story ideas, to asking the perfect interview question, to spinning a powerful narrative, it all starts here.

START WITH THE BASICS

2 HOURS
WHAT YOU’LL LEARN: The key tenets of solutions journalism. What is it? What is it not? Why is it important? And how to make it happen, from idea to reporting to completed story.
WHO IT’S FOR: Journalists who want to add rigor and impact to any sort of reporting.

CONTINUE (15%) →

SHOW CONTENT OUTLINE →

EXPLORE OUR ISSUE GUIDES

EDUCATION GUIDE
1 HOUR, 25 MINUTES
WHAT YOU’LL LEARN: How to apply the solutions lens to the most pressing issues in public education, with a special focus on navigating complex evidence.
WHO IT’S FOR: Education beat reporters who want to raise the bar on their coverage.

CONTINUE (15%) →

VIOLENCE GUIDE
1 HOUR
WHAT YOU’LL LEARN: How to refine coverage of gun crime, sexual assault, detention, and more—with advice and examples from reporters in the trenches.
WHO IT’S FOR: Journalists ready to change their approach to reporting on crime.

CONTINUE (15%) →

HEALTH GUIDE
1 HOUR, 10 MINUTES
WHAT YOU’LL LEARN: How to use solutions reporting to enhance coverage of complex issues such as access to care, substance abuse, and mental health treatment.
WHO IT’S FOR: Health reporters aiming to shift the lens on their beat.

CONTINUE (100%) →

LEARNING LAB

• Self-guided courses to hone your craft

• Learn how to do solutions reporting with our Basic Toolkit

• Available in Spanish, French, Bahasa Indonesian, and soon Chinese, Arabic, and Russian

• Issue Guides for reporters covering education, violence, & health in the U.S.

• Upcoming guides for editors, engagement, collaborations, and investigative reporting
SOLUTIONS STORY TRACKER®

7,184 stories produced by 958 news outlets, from 164 countries, and growing every day.

The Solutions Story Tracker® is a curated database of rigorous reporting on responses to social problems. We collect and tag every story, providing you with the ability to find coverage of effective or promising ideas and approaches—by issue, location, journalist, and success factor (strategic insights that emerge as patterns).

Not sure where to start? Our tutorial will give you a quick tour of how to use Solutions Story Tracker®.
“GETTING BETTER MEANS COVERING SOME ISSUES DIFFERENTLY, NOT SIMPLY MORE.”
Thank you!