

The Story Cycle

#1 The Idea.

Your story idea may come from a colleague's suggestion, leafing through your file of regular media opportunities, a spotted opportunity. It may be inspired by an outside event – Christmas, the release of new research or an awareness week. Every media hit starts with an idea. Here are some standard issue story catalysts:

Anniversaries: of organisations, key staff, contracts, major machinery, locations, contracts and products.

Milestones: the 1,000,000th customer served, widget produced, burger scooped, website hit, client housed, student taught.

Surprises and Counter Intuitive Information: What is it that you tell outside people about your organization that surprises them? Recently I discovered that there are people in their 30s diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Sad but also surprising and counter-intuitive.

Good News: Good news gets plenty of space too.

Appointments and Departures: Think careers sections - CEOs and CFOs to CIOs, marketing directors, clinical staff, nurses and volunteers.

Firsts and Lasts: Opening new facilities? Closing old ones? Is old technology being superannuated? Can we get nostalgic about the last pie to be baked in the old Pie Corp oven? Can we see the Minister for Health excited about the new hi-tech scanner in the oncology department? Is the lift lady / old-fashioned switchboard operator pushing her last button? Is the paperboy being replaced with an automated, spring-loaded device?

Gender and Age: Is anyone breaking convention? Anyone over 50 with a job is news!. Have you got a "youngest ever something" someone? Women performing all manner of roles is still (inexplicably) news.

Comebacks: Has a staffer come back from illness, disability or retrenchment? Has your company returned from the brink of bankruptcy? Has your organization been renewed had a flood of volunteers?

Are you breaking a Commonly Held Perception? Are you a bank extending credit to farmers? Are you an environment group working with loggers? Are you peace activists working with the RSL? Are you Muslim working with Jews or Christians? Are you bucking the trend of your particular industry? EG: An airline that is booming, a church with swelling congregations, a .com company on the up and up?

Are You Answering a Frequently Asked Question? Questions can be eternal or topical. How was Earth formed? Do dogs dream? Will interest rates rise? Who will win the next big sporting event? Is there a Tasmanian Tiger left? When will we vaccinate against breast cancer? When will we cut flying time Europe? Did the accused commit the crime? How bad is the drought? Will the value of real estate rise? What's the new Governor General like? How much does the celebrity earn? The media wants answers.

Release of Information: The information may be about you, your industry or public opinion. The media is obsessed with public opinion - that's why there are endless and often dubious surveys launched every day.

Is something bigger, smaller, faster, cheaper, dearer, different, lighter, superior?