

Advancing in the Newsroom

Ten Tips for Visual Journalists

- 1 Show your journalistic skill.** Whether your craft is design, graphics or photography, create stunning work that significantly contributes to the newspaper's report. The work you produce should be of impeccable journalistic quality—there should never be any doubt that your contribution is enhancing the reader's experience.
- 2 Respect all forms of content.** Text, images, graphics, overall design. Be mindful that your specialty succeeds only when well-integrated with others' contributions.
- 3 Be proactive.** Get involved early in the story development process. Listen. Volunteer. Contribute. Show initiative and suggest ideas. Don't wait for the elements to be handed to you: Start creating visual concepts while the story is still incubating. Follow up and follow through on assignments; finish what you start.
- 4 Be diplomatic.** Cause good things to happen collaboratively. Nurture an environment where people feel part of a team. Strive to build consensus. Under pressure, remain calm—a voice of reason. Articulate how visuals contribute to the report without being preachy. Show examples. Realize that your role in the journalistic process may not be completely understood by nonvisual journalists and behave as an educator and ambassador for your craft.
- 5 Get personal.** Work face-to-face with reporters and editors. Participate in meetings and in other discussions with them. Talk about their lives. Listen to them. Read their stories and talk with them about your impressions. Show your interest in stories and content plans. Help them achieve their desire for an in-depth report. Demonstrate the visuals that will contribute to the same journalistic goals.
- 6 Step back.** View the paper as a whole, realizing that readers are not looking to the paper just for visuals or just for text. Readers respond to content in all forms, which must work together harmoniously. A paper should be compelling and informative in both visuals and words. Make sure every element of a package delivers content with clarity. And make sure every package reflects the mission of the section and your newspaper's overall philosophy.
- 7 Solve problems.** Be solutions-oriented. Don't identify something as a problem without presenting a solution.
- 8 Study, improve, grow.** No matter your success or your skill, remain open to continued growth. Listen to input and constructive criticism. Study trends in your craft. Read your newspaper, read other papers and magazines. Study how stories are covered and critique the different approaches to visuals. Surround yourself with smart people who challenge your perceptions. Remain open to new ideas and approaches. Analyze what works and what doesn't. Learn.
- 9 Love what you do.**
- 10 Have a passion for excellence.** Do not compromise quality.

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