



Showroom



Roots - role - ethics - impact



Training suggestions



Learning outcomes

At the end of this chapter, trainees...

- ... can explain how constructive journalism differs from other forms of journalism.
- ... can list the role of journalists practicing a constructive approach.
- ... can discuss the potential of constructive journalism in their regions.
- ... can describe the impact that constructive journalism has had on audiences according to studies.



Training schedule

Group discussion / 30 minutes

A new role for journalists? (fundamental)

Trainees think about the different roles journalists can play and what role a constructive journalist takes on.

Debate / 45 minutes

Pros and cons of constructive journalism (fundamental)

Trainees reflect on the arguments for and the pushback against the concepts of constructive journalism.

Line up / 40 minutes

Ethical dilemmas

Trainees are asked to choose a position in three concrete cases involving ethical dilemmas. They have to decide how they would act and then explain their choice.

Group work, discussion / 40 minutes

Discovering biases

Trainees brainstorm on biases and stereotypes that influence news reporting in their countries and reflect on ways to avoid this.

Role play, simulation / 1 hour

Being constructive in the newsroom

Trainees simulate a newsroom discussion on the choice of news regarding one big topic. They experience how difficult it can be to report more constructively under challenging conditions and discuss how to open a room for maneuver.

Input and discussion / 30 minutes

Constructive journalism's impact (fundamental)

Trainees examine and discuss studies looking at constructive journalism's effect on audiences and media consumption.



Requirements

Technology

Internet

Face-to-face: laptop, boxes, projector / video screen (trainer), laptop, smartphones (trainees)

Online: laptops and smartphones (trainer + trainees), headsets

Materials (face-to-face)

Board/whiteboard, flipchart stand and paper, cards (if available), markers.

Tools (online)

Video conference: Zoom (Back up: WhatsApp)

Visualization: Miroboard, JamBoard (Zoom offers digital whiteboards as well)

Quizzes: Slido, Mentimeter

Communication: WhatsApp, Email

Documentation, shared documents: Google Drive folder



Session Details

• A new role for journalists?

Objectives

Trainees discuss a brief history of the constructive movement, then critically reflect on the role(s) of journalists and the role of those who are reporting constructively.

Duration

Collective brainstorming: 5 min.

Group work: 15 min.

Presentation and discussion: 10 min.

Preparation

Assignment (optional): Trainees are given the handout “History of constructive journalism, comparison with other journalism forms” and asked to read it.

Prepare task and (virtual) board for collective brainstorming and the following group work.



10 min., Input / discussion

Timeline of the constructive movement

Presentation: PPT Roots-role-ethics-impact, slides 2-8



30 min., Collective brainstorming / group work

If trainees have been given the assignment to read the handout, start the session with a short Q + A. Then invite trainees to brainstorm collectively what different roles journalists can play. If no assignment has been given ahead of time, it could be helpful to offer a set of keywords describing different roles, such as observer, facilitator, activist, investigator, gatekeeper, explainer, etc. (Otherwise, trainees might stick to the activity level and not reflect on roles in a more abstract way.) Collect their answers on a (virtual) board.

Divide the trainees into two groups. Each group considers roles that they would attribute to constructive journalists. In the plenum, each group shares their results and discusses their choices with the others.



10 min., Input / discussion

Different roles of the journalist

Presentation: PPT Roots-role-ethics-impact, slides 9-13

- **Pros and cons of constructive journalism**

Objectives

Reflection on the arguments that both advocates and opponents of constructive journalism have used.

Duration

Group work: 10-15 min.

Discussion: 20 min.

Input : 10 min

Preparation

Read trainer helpsheet



45 min., Buzz groups / debate

Explain to trainees that constructive journalism is not uncontroversial. There are both proponents and opponents of a constructive approach. Some media organizations and journalists are skeptical. This exercise allows trainees to practice arguing for constructive journalism with wary colleagues or editors.

Divide trainees into two groups. Group 1 will take the “con” position, against constructive journalism, while Group 2 will be “pro”.

Each group will gather to discuss and formulate their arguments for or against for 10-15 minutes. Each group should choose someone to be the presenter to the full group. Once back in the plenary session, the two presenters will have 5 minutes to present their arguments, writing key words on flipchart paper or digital whiteboard is desired.

Then the trainer will open the floor for debate from all trainees, making sure the conversation doesn't spin out of control. If needed, the trainer can intervene to ask for counter arguments from both the “pro” and “con” sides.

- **Ethical Dilemmas**

Objectives

Trainees develop an awareness of ethically problematic decisions that can arise in reporting and editing the news.

Duration

Positioning: 30 - 45 minutes (minimum 10 min. per case)

Preparation

Face-to-face: write the 3 questions on a flipchart, write the optional answers on cards (printed pictures for suggested case 2) and place them on the floor/wall at opposite sides of an imaginary line in the room.

Online: Prepare three frames for each case and sticky notes with the questions, draw a horizontal line in the middle on each of them, put the potential answers on sticky notes (upload pictures in case they are the choice options) and place them at the end point of the horizontal lines.



40 Min., Line up

Trainees are shown 3 ethical dilemmas and asked how they would deal with them. Trainees can choose cases they find interesting. Some options include questions related to the role of journalist (active - activist), stereotypes or privacy (dignity and respect), or paying a source. Here are some suggestions:

Case 1: You are an experienced environmental journalist. Would you participate as a panelist in a public forum organized by an initiative to reduce pollution in a community while you are planning to produce a constructive story about the initiative's response?

Trainees can position themselves somewhere between Yes and No on a line in the physical or virtual room.

The journalist should not be on the panel even though he or she is not paid by the organizing initiative and is not openly supporting its ideas. He or she would nevertheless be seen as no longer being independent. The journalist should take part as an observer. It would allow him or her to get deeper insights that could be useful for the story.

Case 2: Imagine you work in a newsroom and get 2 pictures from the Iraq war, one shows victims of ISIS snipers, the other a child playing in ruins. Which one would you choose knowing that there will be a decision on an international action against ISIS the following day? You could search for pictures from war photographers, for instance Jan Grarup.

Case 3: Imagine you report constructively on a family in a rural area of Egypt. The man has lost his job in the pandemic, his wife has set up a street food bakery to feed the family. Would you cancel the production when the man fears negative reactions because traditionally, he should be the breadwinner of the family? Yes or No.

Every time trainees have made their choice you "walk" around and ask some of them why they have chosen this position. You may select the only one who said "no" or someone placed in the middle. Line ups are a very effective method to make people talk and get into a vivid

discussion. It might be difficult to keep to the timetable. If you feel the discussion is really fruitful it might be better to drop one case than to stifle the debate.

Here are additional examples that could also be used for discussion:

Example on stereotypes from The O'Reilly Factor on Fox News:

<https://www.vox.com/2016/10/4/13169256/fox-news-watters-world-chinatown>

Examples on hate speech, racism and xenophobic rhetoric in this report (see p. 22 from Bulgarian media and p. 41 from British media for example):

<https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/assets/docs/038/141/6adda26-23eaf8d.pdf>

Article that offers examples on Western-centric and colonial stereotypes:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/7/9/the-problem-is-not-negative-western-media-coverage-of-africa>

• Discovering stereotypes and biases

Objectives

Trainees develop awareness of how stereotypes and biases can influence their reporting. They critically reflect on how to avoid this.

Duration

Group work: 20 min.

Presentation and discussion: 10 min.

Input presentation: 10 min.

Discussion: 20 min.

Preparation

Offline/Online: Prepare 3 frames/boards for each group and written task.

(Optional: Search for three videos with different ethical problems: one with stereotypes, one with a gender bias and one with an ethnocentric/eurocentric view.)



30 Min., Group work / presentation and discussion

Divide trainees into 3 groups and ask them to answer the following questions:

1. What biases have you encountered in the media of your country?
2. What biases play a role in your work?
3. What can you personally do in your work to not fall into the traps of these biases/stereotypes?

Optional: Show all trainees three videos, one with stereotypes, one with gender bias and one with ethnocentric/eurocentric view. Each group works on one of these videos and analyzes what is unethical about the video and proposes solutions on how to avoid this ethical weakness.

The groups present their results and discuss them with all trainees. Together they reflect on where this comes from, why journalists do this and how stereotypes and biases could be avoided.



10 Min., Input / discussion

Ethics, stereotypes and biases

Presentation: PPT Roots-role-ethics-impact, slides 14-20

• **Being constructive in the newsroom**

Objectives

Trainees experience how to be constructive under challenging conditions in a newsroom.

Duration

Simulation: 30 min.

Plenary discussion: 30 min.

Preparation

Collect 8-10 news items on one big topic from a news agency of the day (merged into a .pdf or a set of copies for 2 groups).



30 Min., Simulation

Divide trainees into 2 groups: Each group simulates a newsroom in a country/region they come from. They are given 8 news agency reports and must decide which 3 to cover in the upcoming news show and how to present them according to a CJ approach.

Without their knowledge one participant in each group acts as an opponent of CJ and tries to have them focus on non-constructive, problem-centered news.



30 min., Plenary discussion

Each group shows their choices, the others comment on them.

• **Constructive journalism's impact**

Objectives

Trainees understand what scientific studies have shown about the effect of constructive and solutions-oriented stories on audiences.

Duration

Input presentation: 10 minutes

Preparation

Review study findings

Materials

None

Technology

Computer, projector



15 Min., Input, discussion

Impact

Presentation: PPT Roots-role-ethics-impact, slides 21-24

(The handout 6 “Impact of constructive journalism” has these studies on it. Trainees can be given this if workshop time is limited.)