

UNIT 2 QUALITIES OF A NEWS REPORTER

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Reporters write stories, report events and happenings in and around the society. They provide the core of news stories that are published daily in our commercial newspapers or broadcast in the electronic media. As there is no substitute for good reporting, so also there is no substitute for good reporters. A good reporter is a great asset for his/her media organisation. He/she is the ear and the eye of his/her medium.

It is what he/she reports that the audience will know about. The reporter touches lives with his report.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

- identify who a reporter is and what differentiates him/her from other media practitioner
- identify qualities a good reporters
- differentiate between a good reporter and a bad one.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Qualities of the News Reporter

Some of the major qualities that make a good reporter are discussed below.

S/he must have a mastery of the written or spoken language of the medium of expression: This will enable him/her to interact easily with news sources, eyewitnesses or even the victims of events.

S/he must have a nose for news: This means the reporter or journalist must be curious about getting news from newsy or stale situations. A good reporter must have a natural instinct for news and should be able to identify news from seemingly events that may not be considered newsworthy by everyone else.

S/he must be current and keep abreast of events and happenings: In the media industry, yesterday's news is stale and no more needed. To remain relevant in the industry, therefore, the reporter must keep abreast of happenings in and around him/her.

A good reporter must be fair, accurate and objective in his news writing and reporting job. Fairness, accuracy and objectivity are news virtues, which the profession thrives on. Any attempt to compromise any of these values makes a mess of the reputation and credibility of the industry. These qualities of a reporter must be jealously guarded.

A good reporter must be creative: Creativity makes the reporter see another unique story from an already published report. Without creativity, the reporter will remain dry, uninspiring and boring to his readers and even his sources.

S/he must also have the ability to dress well: A common idiom says how you dress is how you are addressed and I add that it also betrays your address. A good reporter must know how to dress for the occasion otherwise he/she will be lost in the crowd or misrepresented. Dressing well is not necessarily dressing expensively. It only means having the right kind of dress for each occasion or situation.

A good reporter must have perseverance: Perseverance is having the staying power and refusing to give up even when the situation calls for giving up. A good reporter must have the ability to stay longer and under stress or pressure.

A good reporter must be a “good mixer”: There is no room for the reserved kind of reporter who cannot easily get into a discussion with a potential news source. A good reporter should be able to blend easily with all kinds of persons especially when such persons are primary to getting the news he/she is pursuing at that moment. The good reporter should be able to make contacts, grow and maintain them.

S/he must have a high level of comportsment: The good reporter must have self-control and high level of comportsment no matter the situation or circumstances. He/she is not expected to be carried away easily by any surrounded situation.

A good reporter must have the ability to embark on **creative risk** and **courage** especially in reporting coups, wars, conflicts, crime, disaster etc.

S/he must have the ability to ferret out news through the process of monitoring people and events.

S/he must also possess good observatory skills and have an eye for details: Poorly trained reporters look without seeing. The good reporter is able to see leads and news worthy situations by merely observing people and situations. Whenever the good reporter looks, he/she sees. He/she is also able to taken in a lot of details by mere observation.

S/he must be a good listener and must have an unusual patience: The poorly trained reporters are only interested in hearing their voices in an interview situation. However, a good reporter is only interested in hearing the news source talk. Therefore, listening becomes a vital quality a reporter must possess in order to succeed.

S/he should also possess enough idealism to inspire indignant prose but not too much as to obstruct detached professionalism (Ragged Right cited in Agbese, 2008).

A good and modern reporter must be multi-skilled: S/he should be equipped with an array of skills to meet the demands of diverse media users (Mencher, 2010).

A good and modern reporter must also have the unique quality called enterprise: He/she should be able to work through tougher assignments or situation by instantaneously assessing the situation and taking decisions and steps that will give him/her what the media organisation wants.

A good reporter must also have the strength of character to lead a disrupted personal life without going absolutely haywire (Ragged Right cited in Agbese, 2008).

4.0 CONCLUSION

Good reporters are great assets to their media organisations. Not everyone who went to a journalism school usually turns out to become a good reporter. This is the primary reason they are always sought after anywhere they could be found. According to Sid Bedingfield, President, Fault Line Productions (cited in Mencher, 2010), "Reporting is the essential ingredient in good journalism. Everything else is