

# Media Writing Professions and Strategies

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“In my profession, my writing has to be ‘on point’ all of the time. I know that the audience I write for gets so many mixed messages every day, so it is up to me to relay the information in a clear, concise, and accessible way. To me, solid writing skills are a reflection of strong critical thinking and reasoning skills.”

—Cailyn Lingwall, Emory University

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the changing landscape of twenty-first-century media.
2. Discuss the major professions in today’s media environment.
3. Explain professional media writing strategy in terms of the Professional Strategy Triangle.
4. Apply the Fact-Analysis-Judgment-Action (FAJA) Points to the writing process.

## FRONTLINE MEDIA WRITING PROFILE

**Alycia Rea, Group Director**

**The Zimmerman Agency, Tallahassee, Florida**



For Alycia Rea, writing is an anywhere, everywhere, around-the-clock enterprise.

“I usually check my email from my phone before I’m even out of bed,” says Rea, thirty-one, a group director with The Zimmerman Agency. “Our bosses, clients, and teams are communicating 24/7, so you’re crazy to

think that you're not getting emails in the middle of the night."

Based in Tallahassee, Florida, Zimmerman is an advertising and public relations agency specializing in hospitality and consumer industries. Its clients include SpringHill Suites, Hard Rock Hotels, Cooper Tires, and Party City. Rea works remotely from her home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and travels the globe to work with clients.

Rea quickly learned that she must be able to write wherever she lands, day or night. "I have had to get used to pushing my work out from anywhere," she says. "Initially it was hard to do my best writing from a car or airport or hotel room. But these days, Wi-Fi is everywhere, so I really don't have an excuse for not getting it done."

Rea earned her bachelor's degree in communication from Clarion University of Pennsylvania in 2007.

At Zimmerman, the "average day" does not exist. "Recently, I spent a big chunk of time putting together a deck (visual presentation) for one of my hospitality clients to present to the hotel owners," she says. "Another day, it may be all about writing press material. Then, one of our new clients needed a fresh media kit, so I put together some creative fact sheets that spoke to the brand messaging in

a way that would make sense from an editorial perspective."

Rea puts her professional writing skills on the line every day as she engages in media relations on behalf of her clients. She's built lasting relationships with editors and writers at key travel and consumer publications largely on the strength of her writing skills. "At Zimmerman, we have so much respect for the journalists we pitch," she says. "That means our writing has to be distinctive, tight, and on point so we don't waste their time. If our writing isn't relevant, it will be ignored."

Today, most editors and journalists want pitches via email, according to Rea. "You have to be able to deliver your message clearly and efficiently to get your client noticed," she says. "Our clients need to be able to see, hear, believe, and trust that we can take their message and 'brand voice' and tell their story effectively to the press. And nothing can get lost in translation. At the end of the day, it's all that matters."

To ensure that the right messages are conveyed through all media channels, Rea works with a team of social media strategists who write and blog every day for Zimmerman clients. The team works hard to protect the brand voice they have carefully cultivated. She notes, "You can't lose brand voice, otherwise you end up making it confusing or boring to your audience."

## 21ST-CENTURY MEDIA: A RAPIDLY CHANGING LANDSCAPE

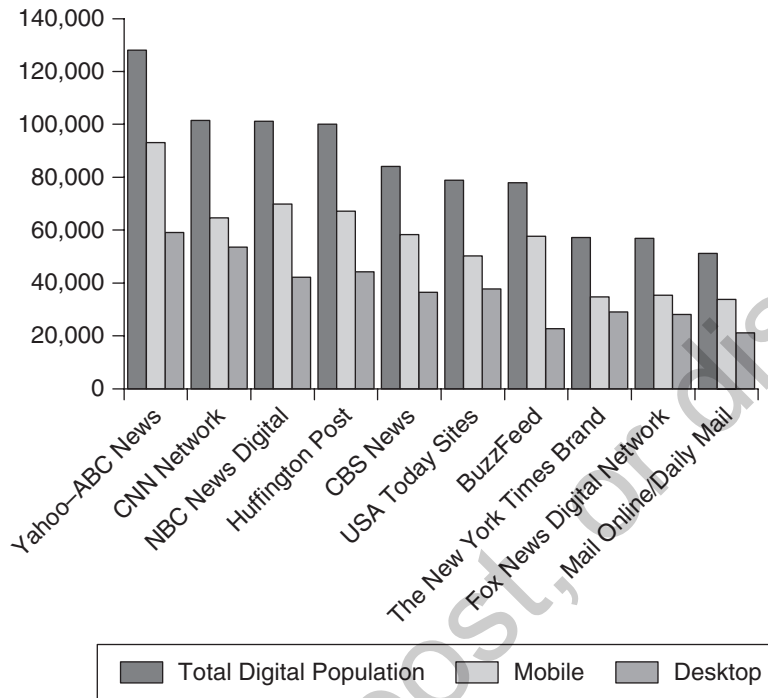
If you are contemplating a career in the media professions, you are exploring the field in a time of unprecedented upheaval and rapid change. Major newspapers that have thrived for a century are cutting back their publication schedules or going mostly online. Well-established radio and television stations, facing declining advertising revenues, are laying off news staffs. Indeed, the entire mass media industry, which appeared to be so solid a few short decades ago, is rapidly evolving into a digitally driven, interactive enterprise. Here, the spoils go to those who can convey the news to audiences wherever they are and whenever they want it, on their own customizable terms as they consume and produce media all at once.

The “good old days” of the mass media are not returning. Media ownership has largely been consolidated into several large corporations over the past three decades. All of this upheaval is being driven by a chaotic outside world. Consider for a moment the global conflicts, environmental crises, and political battles that make news headlines every day. In order to stay relevant in the information marketplace and keep up with ever-shifting audience demands in this complex environment, media organizations and professionals must be flexible and agile in terms of their business models, technologies, and skill sets. As a professional, you will need to be able to produce high-quality content across multiple platforms.

At the same time, there is much to celebrate in today’s new media environment and to anticipate in your own potential career. With media industry upheaval has come tremendous new opportunities for change and growth. Many digital media outlets have emerged, such as BuzzFeed or the *Huffington Post* (see Figure 2.1). Likewise, traditional media operations such as *USA Today* and NBC News have discovered new life and popularity online. As a media professional, you have huge volumes of information at your fingertips and can converse with anyone in the world, thanks to the Internet and social media. Digital reporting tools (most of which are now contained in your smartphone) enable you to write, edit, shoot photos and video, and instantaneously share your stories with readers, friends, and audiences from almost any location on the globe. It has never been easier to quickly convey breaking news and be an innovative content creator.

Yet, amid this massive media churn, one thing will never go out of style: the need for skilled, professional writing, produced by people who know how to select interesting topics and tell compelling stories with accuracy and speed.

**FIGURE 2.1 Top Digital News Entities**



SOURCE: "State of the News Media 2015," Pew Research Center, Washington, DC (April, 2015). Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2015/04/29/state-of-the-news-media-2015/>.

Regardless of the channel, your writing skills will ensure that you have a rewarding career, provided that you take the time to build your skills and learn professional strategies now.

## OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR MEDIA PROFESSIONS

Let's explore the major media professions including journalism, public relations, and advertising. Today, the public relations and advertising industries have largely combined under the banner of *strategic communication*. This means that organizations are integrating their communications with key stakeholders and speaking with one *brand voice* across public relations, advertising, and marketing channels.

## JOURNALISM: PRINT TO DIGITAL

In the early twenty-first century, **journalism** spans a rich tradition of print and an exciting future of interactive technologies that connect with and engage audiences in new ways. It is truly an exciting time to be working in the profession. While many critics predicted the death of print journalism in the 1980s and 1990s, newspapers and magazines have proven to be remarkably resilient in the new century. Many of them, such as *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, have attracted new readers and advertisers through their online publications while retaining their print editions. Others, more specialized or located in smaller communities, such as *The Derrick* in Oil City, Pennsylvania, and *The Bemidji Pioneer* in Bemidji, Minnesota, have survived as print publications by serving a traditional (and often aging) readership with news and advertising content they cannot get elsewhere. Still others like Mashable and BuzzFeed were born online and have never existed in print form.

According to the Pew Research Center, 2013 and early 2014 brought new levels of energy and optimism to the news industry, thanks in part to digital advertising revenues that have encouraged reinvestment in news operations.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, the Pew Research Center counted roughly 5,000 full-time professionals working at nearly 500 digital news outlets. Most of these jobs were created in the past half dozen years. However, the vast majority of original reporting still comes from the newspaper industry.

Modern journalists connect with their audiences and create content for them on a 24/7 basis. Online newspapers provide “comments” sections for reader input at the end of many articles. Journalists maintain ongoing conversation with readers through their news websites, along with email and social media channels. Similarly, online publications are updated more frequently than print-based newspapers and magazines. News writers face constant pressure to update their stories. Reporters also spend considerable time doing research, obtaining background information, and conducting interviews before they begin the task of writing.

## JOURNALISM: BROADCAST AND CABLE

Broadcast refers to radio or television where the signal is transmitted by radio wave to the receiver. Broadcast television channels include ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, and PBS. Cable television programming is delivered directly to paying subscribers. Examples of providers include AT&T, Comcast, and Time Warner Cable. Regardless of the medium, there has never been more competition to tell stories

**TABLE 2.1 Media Occupations, Salary Ranges, and Job Outlook for Journalists**

2015 Median Pay	\$37,720 per year/\$18.13 per hour
Typical Entry-Level Education	Bachelor's degree
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-Job Training	None
Number of Jobs, 2014	54,400
Job Outlook, 2014-24	-9% (Decline)
Employment Change, 2014-24	-4,800

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition, Reporters, Correspondents, and Broadcast News Analysts. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/reporters-correspondents-and-broadcast-news-analysts.htm>.

through video and audio channels. Career opportunities are abundant in a variety of market sizes and locations. Regardless of your staff position, your ability to write well will mark you for advancement throughout your career.

As a broadcast or cable news professional, you must be able to write quickly, clearly, and effectively under intense deadline pressure. You must also be able to operate in a highly competitive media environment that often encourages staff members to scoop the competition.

Just like print journalists, television journalists also face new writing challenges in today's converged media environment. For example, broadcast and cable station websites provide running audience commentary in response to each story, while reporters who write TV, video, and radio stories often post print versions of their stories on their stations' websites. As a media professional working in a converged newsroom, you will need to learn several styles of writing and be able to switch quickly between them.

For information about salaries and the career outlook for print, digital, and broadcast journalists, see Table 2.1.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

If you are considering working in **public relations**, you can anticipate a bright career future. Public relations is a dynamic and fast-growing profession. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts faster than average job growth for public

**TABLE 2.2 Media Occupations, Salary Ranges, and Job Outlook for Public Relations Specialists**

2015 Median Pay	\$56,770 per year \$27.29 per hour
Typical Entry-Level Education	Bachelor's degree
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-Job Training	None
Number of Jobs, 2014	240,700
Job Outlook, 2014-24	6% (As fast as average)
Employment Change, 2014-24	14,900

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition, Public Relations Specialists. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/public-relations-specialists.htm>.

relations through 2024, at around 6 percent per year (see Table 2.2). Job growth is predicted to be especially strong in the health care industry.

Public relations practitioners work to influence public opinion, manage relationships with key publics, and create favorable publicity for their clients and employers. Work settings can range from agencies and corporations to hospitals, sports teams, school districts, and nonprofit organizations. Throughout the public relations process, you can expect to work extensively with print, digital, broadcast, and cable media. You will also utilize a range of social media channels to tell your client's or employer's story. Many times, you will plan for and manage crises.

It should come as no surprise that the bulk of the public relations professional's work and the biggest career rewards are directly related to writing skills. Whether you are writing a speech for a corporate CEO, releasing new product information through your company's Facebook page or Twitter feed, drafting an online news release in response to a crisis, or editing the company newsletter, you will be polishing your writing skills every day.

## ADVERTISING

Like public relations, **advertising** offers promising career pathways to college graduates. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts 9 percent job growth for advertising professionals through 2024 (see Table 2.4). Possible



**TABLE 2.3 Top 25 Public Relations Agencies and Their Worldwide Fees, 2015**

1.	Edelman, New York, NY	\$797,328,238
2.	APCO Worldwide, Washington, DC	\$118,112,600
3.	Waggener Edstrom Communications, Bellevue, WA	\$106,676,000
4.	W2O Group, San Francisco, CA	\$82,625,000
5.	Ruder Finn, New York, NY	\$73,891,000
6.	Finn Partners, New York, NY	\$52,796,000
7.	MWWPR, New York, NY	\$51,775,000
8.	ICR, New York, NY	\$50,687,714
9.	DKC Public Relations, New York, NY	\$41,500,000
10.	Zeno Group, New York, NY	\$39,921,576
11.	Allison+Partners, San Francisco, CA	\$37,000,000
12.	Global Strategy Group, New York, NY	\$32,378,000
13.	PadillaCRT, Minneapolis, MN	\$31,624,111
14.	Racepoint Global, Boston, MA	\$27,274,597
15.	G&S Business Communications, New York, NY	\$25,438,112
16.	Coyne PR, Parsippany, NJ	\$23,010,000
17.	Taylor, New York, NY	\$21,700,000
18.	Prosek Partners, New York, NY	\$20,300,000
19.	Hunter PR, New York, NY	\$20,250,000
20.	5W Public Relations, New York, NY	\$18,961,046
21.	French   West   Vaughan, Raleigh, NC	\$18,753,747
22.	Fahlgren Mortine, Columbus, OH	\$18,616,471
23.	LEVICK, Washington, DC	\$17,231,618
24.	Sparkpr, San Francisco, CA	\$16,424,750
25.	Peppercomm, New York, NY	\$16,294,726

Adapted from “Worldwide Fees of Top Public Relations Firms with Major U.S. Operations,” *O’Dwyer’s: Inside News of Public Relations & Marketing Communications*, March 2015. Retrieved from [http://www.odwyerpr.com/pr\\_firm\\_rankings/independents.htm](http://www.odwyerpr.com/pr_firm_rankings/independents.htm).



**PHOTO 2.2:** Many advertising firms may hold brainstorming meetings in their offices to come up with new concepts or ideas about a new client or project.

work settings include ad agencies such as Crispin Porter + Bogusky in Miami, Florida, media employers including *The Dallas Morning News*, corporations such as 3M, or a range of small businesses.

Advertising is about creating messages that move people to action. Arguably, it is the most creative of the media writing sectors. Copy writers create new messages with fresh approaches to selling clients' brands, products, and services. Advertising professionals must understand pop culture and current events, and use what they know to generate attention among consumers in key demographic groups.

Copy writers listen to the needs of their clients and use their creativity to compose messages that will sell. They then work with production staff to shape those messages for particular media platforms. You can expect to write outdoor slogans, web page banner ads, radio and television commercials, print newspaper ads, and other types of promotions. You may also be a team member involved in developing an entire advertising campaign, where your key messages carry through all aspects of the campaign.

## WHAT IS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION?

Over the past three decades, the public relations, advertising, and marketing disciplines have largely merged in the industry world and are now collectively known as **strategic communication** or *integrated marketing communication* (IMC). The central idea is that organizations are always communicating with a *brand voice*, saying something positive or negative about their brand through their public relations, advertising, product packaging, customer relations, and everything else they say and do. As an example, consider Walmart. Which type of brand voice do they use? Strategic communication takes a consumer-centered approach to messaging. Did you ever notice how Southwest Airlines or Subaru seem to be intensely focused on you as the consumer? As Table 2.3 indicates, the world's top communication agencies earn considerable revenues

**TABLE 2.4 Media Occupations, Salary Ranges, and Job Outlook for Advertising Professionals**

2015 Median Pay	\$124,850 per year \$60.03 per hour
Typical Entry-Level Education	Bachelor's degree
On-the-Job Training	None
Number of Jobs, 2014	225,200
Job Outlook, 2014-24	9% (Faster than average)
Employment Change, 2014-24	19,700

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition, Advertising, Promotions, and Marketing Managers. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/advertising-promotions-and-marketing-managers.htm>.

by taking a highly integrated approach to promoting their clients. We discuss this concept further in the public relations and advertising chapters. As a writer in this setting, you are always telling your organization's "brand story" across multiple platforms using a variety of methods.

## ■ ■ ■ PRO STRATEGY CONNECTION

### Nathan Crooks's Seven Tips for a Successful Journalism Career

In a decade of work as a journalist, Nathan Crooks has learned a lot about how to report and write the news. His career has taken him across South America, from *The Santiago Times* in Chile to *Bloomberg News* in Caracas, Venezuela, where, at age thirty-three, he now serves as bureau chief.

Here are his seven career tips for aspiring journalists:

1. **Be ready to jump on a new story.**  
"Everything in Venezuela happens by surprise," says Crooks. "For example, the president likes to speak late at night and on weekends. But it's always

(Continued)

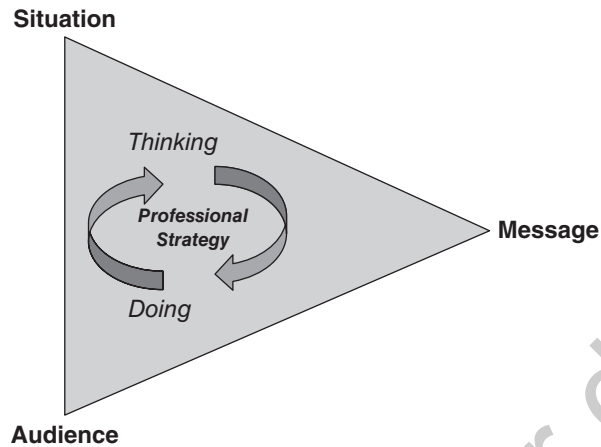
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- 2 p.m. somewhere. Just because we are asleep doesn't mean the markets aren't open somewhere else."
- 2. Be flexible and willing to work long hours.** "If the president speaks on Saturday evening, you will be writing the story that night," he says. "It's not always fun. But it is rewarding to make the front page. Then you can start tweeting it out to others."
  - 3. Be skeptical at all times.** "This is especially true with enterprise stories, scoops, and off-the-record information," Crooks says. "Ask yourself what this really means."
  - 4. Learn how to write interesting story pitches.** At *Bloomberg*, these are called "enterprise stories." "Here, you have a bit more leeway to think about how you want to develop and write the story," he says. "But you still need to be able to write the pitch clearly. Editors get so many of these every day, and your pitch must be compelling."
  - 5. Pick up an outside area of expertise.** "I learned how to speak Spanish, which came in very handy living in Chile and Venezuela," he says. "Pick up something extra like a foreign language or some type of technical expertise. This will give you authority and a leg up on the competition."
  - 6. Be hardworking and relentless.** "There are many jobs in journalism, but not where everyone thinks they might start," Crooks adds. "For example, many people in journalism get their start in specialized publications. So be flexible. Be willing to go anywhere and start at the bottom."
  - 7. Be willing to present the truth—even if you don't like it.** "There's such an appetite out there for truth and for unbiased news," he concludes. "If you provide these types of stories, you can make it in journalism."

## PROFESSIONAL MEDIA WRITING STRATEGY

Regardless of whether you report the news for a digital media outlet or create advertisements for an agency, you will face the task of writing a news or persuasive piece for your employer or client. Getting started with that writing can present real challenges to your thinking and creative abilities. If you often have trouble getting started with a piece of writing, know that you are not alone. Understand that media professionals use specific strategies to begin and organize

FIGURE 2.2 The Professional Strategy Triangle



their writing. These strategies must be simple and direct, because professionals face deadlines every day. They don't have time to sit back and ponder their approaches. You can benefit from their professional experience when you adopt their strategic approaches to carry out your own writing projects. Using strategy to tackle writing enables you to work more effectively and efficiently.

The **Professional Strategy Triangle** (Figure 2.2) summarizes a strategy that many media professionals employ in any writing situation they encounter. We will return to the triangle regularly throughout upcoming chapters.

As you can see above, the Professional Strategy Triangle features three corners that are critical to every media writing task: the Situation, the Audience, and the Message. Let's consider them in the order that professionals do, beginning with situation:

## SITUATION

When you begin to write, always first assess the situation for which you are writing. Here is a brief list of questions to ask yourself in this step to help define your situation:

*News versus persuasive writing:* Am I writing a news story, an editorial, a public relations piece, or advertising copy? For example, if your editor asks you to

observe a protest march by fast-food workers demanding higher pay, and to write a piece for the evening news, you will be writing a news story.

*If news:*

- What type of story is this—a hard news story on a news event or a feature story based on human interest?
- What are the facts of the story? Which ones are most relevant to my audience?
- Who are the key players in the story?
- Where will I go to get the information I need? For instance, at the protest march, you might interview marching workers and speak with a restaurant manager or city or county official.

*If persuasive (e.g., opinion pieces, public relations or advertising situations):*

- Is this a positive or a negative situation?
- Who are the key players?
- Which arguments should I use?
- Which rational or emotional appeals should I use?
- How should I structure my argument and appeals?

For instance, let's say that you are a community activist working for an organization advocating child adoption rights for gay and lesbian couples in the state of Missouri. You are writing a guest editorial to submit to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, a large metro daily. You reason that this situation could be viewed as either positive or negative, depending on one's involvement with the issue and their personal convictions. Key players in your state include the governor, the state legislature, activists, religious leaders, and community members who have not yet made up their minds. Your arguments would likely include a mix of rational and emotional appeals, including the fact that every child deserves a family, or that people of all backgrounds can love one another and become functioning families.

*In either scenario:*

- What are the organizational objectives for my employer or client?
- How does my message advance my employer's or client's agenda, profit, or return on investment?

In the above scenario, your organization's immediate objectives are to encourage successful passage of legislation allowing gay and lesbian couples to adopt children in the state of Missouri. If you write a forceful and convincing editorial that helps shift public opinion in favor of the legislation, you will have significantly advanced your organization's policy agenda.

## AUDIENCE

The second corner in the triangle refers to the people who read, hear, or see your message. You must be clear about who they are so that you can tailor your message to them.

*Whether news or persuasion:*

- Who are my readers, listeners, and viewers?
- What are their likely predispositions toward the issue?
- Which of their demographic factors are relevant (race/ethnicity, sex, occupation, income, education level)?
- Which psychographic factors (attitudes, dispositions, life stages, hobbies) are relevant?
- How is my audience likely to interpret my message?
- How credible is my organization in their minds?

For example, imagine that you work as a public relations staff member at a major state university that is trying to more effectively promote its online courses and degree programs. You are charged with creating a multimedia campaign to reach out to prospective students and to boost the university's reputation as a provider of high-quality online education.

Initial research reveals that your audience members are largely adult students, parents, working professionals, and military members. They are diverse in terms of their ethnic background; many have completed some college and want to finish their degrees. For the most part, these students are paying their own tuition, and their families are heavily invested in their academic success. Since many of the students finished some of their degree work at your university, you have some built-in credibility from the start. You also know that your audience members are likely to view attainment of a college degree as a significant professional achievement and personal milestone, no matter how

old they are. This knowledge arms you with powerful background information on which to base your campaign and the pieces you will write for it.

## MESSAGE

The final corner of the triangle encompasses the message. You've actively thought about your situation and audience, and assembled the pieces you need to create an effective message. What will it take to write a piece that meets the unique demands of your situation and audience?

Next, we move to the center of the Professional Strategy Triangle, described below. Here, you will learn about the importance of creatively envisioning your final story, getting outside of your comfort zone to actively learn, and refocusing your thinking once more before you begin to write.

## Craft Essential: Create Your Own Professional Strategy Triangle

Employing professional writing strategy becomes a personal pursuit. You work best with strategy when you own it. With that in mind, it is worth pausing now and thinking more about the Professional Strategy Triangle. Record your answers to each of the following items:

1. Referring to Figure 2.2, use your own words to explain the corners on the triangle.
  - a) Explain the concept of *situation* as you see it. Situation can relate to the jobs that media professionals do, the news articles they post, or the advertisements they create. How would you characterize situation?
  - b) What does *audience* mean to you? Is audience a collection of individuals or a like-minded crowd?
  - c) How do you define *message*? It certainly is more than text on a page. It refers to information that carries meaning for people.
2. Think about a recent social media post you have created, perhaps on Twitter or Instagram.
  - a) Consider the Professional Strategy Triangle and your social media postings.
  - b) Explain how you considered (or perhaps should have considered) audience, situation, and message as you created your social media post.



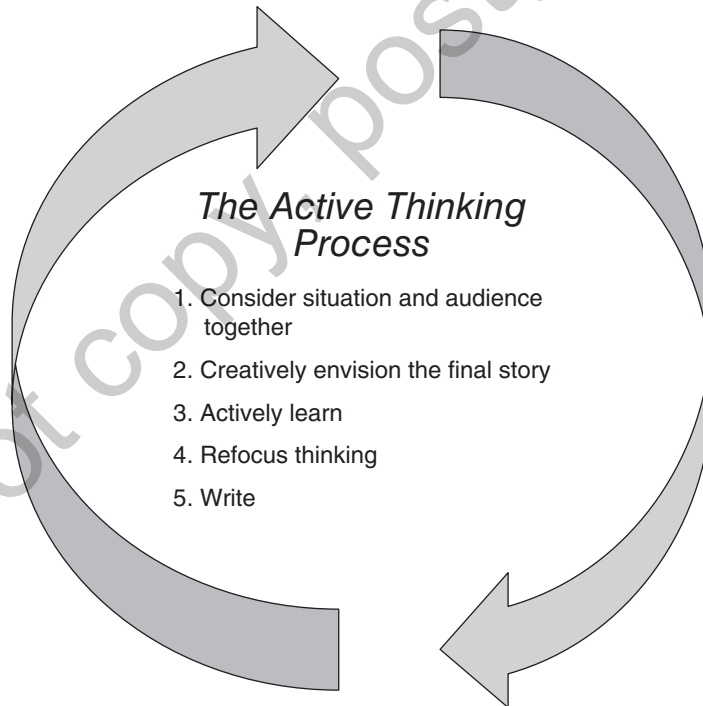
## IN THE CENTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STRATEGY TRIANGLE: THE ACTIVE THINKING PROCESS

Notice that the middle of the Professional Strategy Triangle contains a continuous circle. This illustrates the **active thinking process** that will help you gather the information you need and determine how situation and audience will drive your message. In preparing to write, professionals undertake an active thinking process as illustrated in Figure 2.3:

As you can see in Figure 2.3, writing is a multistep process. The quality of your final written piece will be determined by the strength of your vision and the thinking you do in these five steps. Let's explore each one:

1. **Consider situation and audience together.** In your mind or on paper, answer the situation and audience questions listed above. Ask yourself how situational factors affect your audience, and vice versa. Suppose that you work as a

FIGURE 2.3 Center of the Professional Strategy Triangle



general assignment reporter for your city's television station, a local CBS affiliate. You have been covering a story on funding for local school districts and how the state legislature's new funding formula is devastating their operating budgets. Recent school board meetings have been emotional and heated. You know that many of your viewers are parents, families, and community members who have children in the schools or work there.

2. **Creatively envision the final story.** Try to form a mental impression of what your final piece will look like in a major publication. Think about how it will look, feel, and read in finished form. Envision the characters and what they might say or do. Which visual elements can you see alongside the story? Visualizing in this way is a powerful technique professionals in other fields frequently use to break through to their best work. Just as a professional composer envisions a beautiful piece of music or a tennis player can see that winning shot, you can envision your finished story headlining *The New York Times* or your ad copy selling 100,000 new energy-saving solar panels.

Using the school scenario above, close your eyes and picture your finished story package (a self-contained prerecorded news report) on the 6 p.m. news. You envision your lead-ins, camera angles, and cutaways to interviews and shots of kids walking the school hallways. You can hear the impassioned pleas of parents and troubled responses from administrators. The story is already coming together in your mind.

3. **Actively learn.** Get out of your comfort zone. Head out into the world and feed your creativity. This might mean interviewing district officials, asking bystanders what they think and why, or researching school databases and governmental websites. Get the facts and assemble the most complete picture possible. In this scenario, you would pack up your camera gear and venture out to speak with average citizens about the school budget issue. Securing advance permission, you drive over to two schools located in areas of town that you would not normally visit. You ask the superintendent's secretary for budget records from last year and minutes from previous school board meetings.

4. **Refocus your thinking.** Stop and sift through all the information you gathered in Steps 1 to 3. Figure out how it all adds up and which key themes and messages are emerging. Who appears to be credible, and what needs further investigation? Run a mental "sort" on everything you have. You can also use the FAJA Points, described later in this chapter.

It's getting to be a late night, but you are still going strong. Replaying your interview footage, considering background information from anonymous sources, and reviewing your documents, you begin to realize that the local school district has actually been operating inefficiently for the past ten years. The district ran far over budget on several major construction projects and spent well above the state average on coaching staffs and sports equipment for its football program for the past eight years. You begin to see that administrators could have better prepared their district for this budget crisis if they had managed taxpayer dollars more carefully and built up budget surpluses in previous years.

5. **Write.** Finally, it's time to set it all down in words. As your mental gears begin to turn and your fingers start to click away at the keys, you can see that your story is headed in an exciting new direction. You know your situation and audience; you are inspired by your creative vision and armed with the information gleaned from interviews and research. Now it's time to write a story that will be driven by facts, insights, and a new perspective. Remember, you would have not gained all of this had you bypassed the Professional Strategy Triangle and the active thinking process at its center. It still takes you most of the night to assemble and edit the story, but you and your news director are extremely happy with the final package. Best of all, the story makes a major splash on the news that evening!

In the section below, we will see how a public relations professional uses the Professional Strategy Triangle and the active thinking process in the center to write a news release that is both news oriented and persuasive in nature.

## THE WAR ROOM

### Writing a Message to Put “Heads in Beds” and “Butts in Seats”

Before Alycia Rea, group director with The Zimmerman Agency in Tallahassee, Florida, sets her fingers to the keys, she first applies professional strategy to the task of writing. To her, the ultimate

question is, “How does the writing advance the client’s business goals?”

“We’re all about storytelling—how does our writing land compelling coverage

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

that puts heads in beds or butts in seats?” she says.

Whether Rea is creating a visual presentation outline, drafting a news release, or pitching a hotel feature to a travel editor, she considers these types of questions:

- What are hotel management’s overriding business goals? To boost occupancy rates or the average daily rate?
- Which markets are crucial for that hotel?
- How do guests travel to this hotel—by air? Train? Car?
- What are potential customers’ demographics?
- What are the considerations related to seasonality?

“When I am writing on behalf of a client, I always begin with a sound strategy that’s going to culminate in impactful results,” Rea says.

1. Review the above list of questions and recall the Professional Strategy Triangle. Which of them are related to situation? Which ones are related to audience? Explain your reasoning.
2. How would situation and audience considerations impact the message you write to persuade someone to book a stay at your hotel?
3. Go online at [www.zimmerman.com](http://www.zimmerman.com) to check out the work Zimmerman does for its various clients in the hospitality and consumer industries. What types of situation and audience considerations are evident in the work?

## USING THE PROFESSIONAL STRATEGY TRIANGLE IN HEALTH CARE PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING

You are the public relations director for Twin Lakes Regional Hospital, which will soon be building a new urgent care clinic in the heart of downtown Beldaire. To be known as City Centre Urgent Care, the new clinic will expand medical services to an underserved sector of your community. However, the project has created some controversy because its construction will displace the New Day Homeless Shelter, which has been a lifeline in the community for the past twenty years. Twin Lakes’ management has placed you in charge of announcing the opening of the clinic and creating positive publicity around it. You decide to begin by writing a news release for local and regional media to announce the project.

## Situation

Reviewing the Situation corner the Professional Strategy Triangle, you quickly realize the following:

1. You are writing a piece that, like much public relations writing, is both news oriented and persuasive in nature.
2. In general, the story is positive. However, it also contains potentially controversial or even negative aspects because of the homeless shelter that will be displaced. You will need to address this.
3. Key story players include community residents, hospital physicians and staff, city officials, people who are homeless, and their advocates.
4. You will need to conduct research on the background of the building, the homeless shelter, and hospital management's reason for selecting it as the new clinic site. You will also need to interview key story players.

## Audience

Moving to the Audience corner of the Professional Strategy Triangle, you consider who will be reading about the urgent care clinic project, and who will be most affected by it, either positively or negatively. You put together the following list:

1. Downtown Beldaire residents who will be served by the clinic
2. Homeless people who will be displaced by the project, along with their advocates
3. Readers, listeners, and viewers of local media including the newspaper, the TV station, and two area radio stations
4. Reporters for local, state, and regional media
5. Social media users who follow the community and the hospital through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other social media sites; visitors to the Twin Lakes website
6. Twin Lakes' administration, physicians, and staff
7. City officials

## The center of the Professional Strategy Triangle: The active thinking process

1. **Consider situation and audience together.** As a savvy public relations practitioner, you know that the strength of the writing in your news release will largely be determined by how carefully you have considered these two factors. You are excited about City Centre Urgent Care and the services your doctors will soon be able to provide to downtown Beldaire residents who badly need access to urgent care. At the same time, you are thinking hard about the homeless people who will have to relocate to another shelter several miles away. Where will these people go, and how could their difficulties reflect upon Twin Lakes' image as the hospital rolls out this new project? How are local and social media audiences likely to perceive the story? What are their educational levels and predispositions? For now, it appears that local and regional media will approach it as a positive news story, but it could easily turn negative if not handled in a sensitive manner.

2. **Creatively envision the final story.** Because you have invested time thinking about the situation you face and the audiences who will be affected by your news release, you can now begin to creatively envision the final story—even before you know everything about it. You picture the story being picked up by *The Beldaire News-Herald*, your local newspaper, and running on the front page of its website with a photo of hospital leaders at the clinic site. You think about the overall positive tone of the story, and how much local residents will appreciate a new urgent care clinic downtown. You also envision the story playing out on the Twin Lakes Facebook page, and how you can tweet the story link out to your followers, who will comment positively on it. Just for fun, you brainstorm some possible news leads and jot down a few.

3. **Actively learn.** That afternoon, you get busy with research and interviewing. After reviewing internal planning documents and blueprints for the clinic, you get out of your office to interview Yolanda Graves, your hospital administrator, along with two physicians who are spearheading the project. Next, you run some online research to review recent media coverage of the hospital and the downtown homeless shelter. Fortunately, the coverage is mostly positive. You pore over the hospital's Facebook page and community blog postings to get a sense of what people are saying about the new clinic.

The next morning, you drive downtown to check out the clinic site and interview Jennifer Longhurst, the director of New Day Homeless Shelter. She says her

organization regrets giving up this location, but she is now finalizing plans for a new location only two miles from the current site. Longhurst invites you to attend a meeting of the shelter's board members the next night so you can learn more. You gladly accept the invitation.

On your way out of the shelter, you engage in a conversation with a middle-age woman and her friend, who are both homeless. They tell you how distressed they are to see that their shelter will be moving somewhere else, and say they are against the City Centre Urgent Care project.

Curious about the conversation, a younger man joins you. In excited tones, he tells you he is glad to hear about the new clinic. After all, he says, there are no others in the downtown area, and his family may need urgent care sometime. You make careful mental notes of this information.

All three community residents agree to let you interview them for the news release. Once you are back at the office, you place a call to Ken Jorgenson, Beldaire's director of Zoning and Planning. He fills you in on more project details and enthusiastically expresses his support for the project, which has been developed in partnership with the Beldaire Community Redevelopment Council.

4. **Refocus your thinking.** Fast-forward two days. A draft of the news release is due to the hospital administrator in four hours. You begin to pore through all your information, reviewing your planning documents, website research findings, and interview notes. Focusing your thinking sharply, you consider the following:

1. The type of story is this shaping up to be, and how to tell it in the most positive way possible for your organization while still truthfully representing it to people on all sides of this issue.
2. Whether the media is likely to approach it in a positive or negative manner, and how community members are likely to perceive it.
3. The information gaps and anything you need to further investigate or verify. For example, what if you discover that the project is being slowed by costly construction delays? Or what if you find out that a small but vocal group of homeless advocates is planning a demonstration on the urgent care center's opening day? What does all this mean, and how might it impact your story?

5. **Write.** Finally, it's time. You think one more time about what you want to say, how to best say it, and where you will start.

## Message

Moving to the Message corner of the Professional Strategy Triangle, you once again consider situation and audience. What type of message best addresses this situation and all of the concerned stakeholders who are interested in the new urgent care center? Three hours later, you email the copy (Figure 2.4) to your hospital administrator:

### FIGURE 2.4 City Centre Urgent Care News Release

September 17, 2016

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jennifer Huang, Community Relations Director

803-344-5605 office

813-347-9662 cell

jhuang@twinlakes.com

#### **Twin Lakes Regional Hospital Announces New Urgent Care Center in Downtown Beldaire**

Thanks to a community partnership with the Beldaire Community Redevelopment Council, Twin Lakes Regional Hospital will open a new urgent care center in September 2017 in downtown Beldaire, hospital officials announced today.

“After several months of work alongside city planners and members of the downtown community, I am so happy to kick off this project today,” said Twin Lakes hospital administrator Yolanda Graves. “The people who live and work in downtown Beldaire will finally be able to access the urgent care services they have been lacking for so long.”

Construction on the new facility at 756 Union Ave. will begin December 1. Known as City Centre Urgent Care, the 10,000-square-foot building will house a triage suite, 10 examination rooms, a poison treatment unit, X-ray equipment, and two nursing stations. Two full-time physicians will staff the center, assisted by four nurses and a radiologic technician. Hospital management has now secured all necessary building and Department of Health permits, according to city officials.

The site’s current occupant, New Day Homeless Shelter, is in the process of relocating to another facility two miles away at 4604 S. Fourth St. Since last June, Twin Lakes officials have been helping the New Day board of directors to secure a new space. Owner John Beesom, who is also a hospital trustee, is reducing the rent by 50 percent for the shelter as a service to the Beldaire community.

Jennifer Longhurst, director of New Day Homeless Shelter, expressed her support for the City Centre Urgent Care project. “When we first heard the news, we felt uncertain about the future of the shelter,” she said. “But thanks to the hard work of the Twin Lakes board, we have found a new location that is newer and larger than our current facility. And because of Mr. Beesom’s generosity, we can now allocate more funding to food, clothing, and social services for our clients. It’s a win-win situation for everyone.”

Community members interested in learning more about City Centre Urgent Care should call Twin Lakes Regional Hospital at 914-566-0443 or visit the hospital online at [www.twinlakesmed.org](http://www.twinlakesmed.org).



As you can see from the above example, strategy plays a critical role in crafting a piece that is newsworthy, well researched, and built around key messages that the medical center's diverse publics will understand and appreciate. An afternoon's worth of work invested in active thinking and getting out of one's comfort zone can result in a piece of writing that is much more likely to be picked up and run in traditional and social media channels.

## ■ ■ ■ PRO STRATEGY CONNECTION

### The Top Five Things That Chris Kraul Loves About Being a Journalist

Chris Kraul, a freelance reporter in Bogota, Colombia, and twenty-two-year veteran with the *Los Angeles Times*, loves what he does. Here's why:

1. Journalism is a license to find out all kinds of things.
2. The job allows him to meet new people and have new experiences all the time.
3. Deadline pressure brings an adrenaline buzz. You stare at that blank piece of paper and wonder, "Will I be able to do it this time?"
4. There's no limit to what you can do as long as you can package your writing and sell it to your editors.
5. Seeing your own name in the media is a thrill.

### USING THE FAJA POINTS IN YOUR WRITING

The **FAJA Points** stand for *Fact-Analysis-Judgment-Action*. Every message should contain a basic organizational structure that fits the situation and audience needs. Broadly speaking, there are four basic types of message structures:

1. Messages based on simple *facts*, such as a news story about a recent Supreme Court decision regarding national health care.
2. Messages based on more detailed *analysis* of facts, such as a news story examining what the Supreme Court decision means for individual states and the people who live in them.

3. Messages that use *judgment* to show what is positive, negative, or otherwise about an incident or event. This could include an editorial about how the Supreme Court decision will benefit large numbers of people who do not currently have health insurance.
4. Messages that encourage the audience to take *action*, such as an online petition for signatures in support of a decision the writer wants the Supreme Court to make.

How do you choose the right structure for your message? Expanding upon the Message corner of the Professional Strategy Triangle, the FAJA Points provide a starting place for the more specific kind of thinking you need to do to begin your piece. The points feature a series of questions that you apply to your topic. Memorizing them gives you built-in starting points every time you begin a writing task.



**PHOTO 2.3:** The story is much livelier and interesting when a journalist has done their homework, researched the subject, prepared good questions, and can provide insights based on their findings.

You may need to address the basic information, or facts, behind a news event that occurred. Perhaps you need to dig deeper into the definition of exactly what something is—providing analysis. Or, in persuasive writing situations, you may need to persuade an audience that an idea or product has essential aspects that make it positive or negative, happy or sad—discussing judgment. Finally, you may be seeking to move people to do something—to adopt a companywide policy on sick leave, to purchase a prescription medication, or to try a new vacation destination. All of these ideas suggest an action to be taken.

Notice how the four structures are focused on particular media writing tasks. Writing news largely employs the fact and analysis components. Creating opinion and editorial pieces and writing for public relations sometimes involves the judgment component. And finally, advertising focuses on persuading people to make a judgment and to take action and purchase something.

Here is a list of the questions to clarify each of the FAJA Points:

## FACT

This relates to questions that identify the essential details of situations and events. Suppose that you are working as a general assignment reporter on your campus newspaper. This fall, university police have reported an unusually high number of sexual assaults in two dormitories on the west end of campus. Your editor has assigned you the story. The following questions will help focus your thinking as you begin your initial research and interviewing:

- What happened?
- Is there a problem or issue?
- How did it begin?
- What are its causes?

We've noted that journalists use fact-based questions to work on straight news stories. At the same time, however, public relations and even advertising writers also need to consider these questions in persuasive situations.

## ANALYSIS

Analysis questions help define and explain situations, problems, or issues. Again, these tend to be largely news oriented. Returning to the campus sexual assault scenario, you decide to do some investigative reporting. You learn that sexual assault is a major problem on many college campuses across the country and suspect it may indicate bigger societal problems behind the scenes (alcohol abuse, unhealthy sexual attitudes, or a lax university culture, for instance). These questions would help you to analyze what might be operating underneath the initial facts of the story:

- What kind of problem or issue is this?
- To what larger class of things or events does the problem or issue belong?
- What are the pieces of it, and how are they related?
- Which experts support this analysis? Which ones reject it?

While fact provides only the initial information and surrounding details, analysis gets at the heart of what explains or defines a situation or issue. Both fact and

analysis are essential starting points for journalists. They also provide “first stops” for public relations and advertising writers.

## JUDGMENT

Judgment enables you to apply critical thinking to judge a situation, issue, idea, or opinion. In the campus sexual assault scenario above, a fellow student or the director of your university counseling center might submit a letter to the editor or opinion column addressing the issue of sexual assault or sexual violence. He or she would be likely to consider these questions in drafting the piece:

- Is this a positive or negative situation?
- How serious is the situation or issue?
- How does it affect people?
- What standards should be used to judge its effect on people (happy versus sad, fortunate versus tragic, etc.)?

News audiences often criticize media organizations for saying they are delivering straight news, when in reality, they are essentially making judgments. For example, regardless of whether they are liberal or conservative, not many television news viewers would argue that commentators Rachel Maddow on MSNBC or Bill O’Reilly on Fox News are just delivering straight news, devoid of any judgment. In this environment, judgment seems to be inseparable from the facts and analysis behind key news issues of the day.

## ACTION

Throughout the ages, communicators have used various theories and techniques to move people to action. From the days of Socrates to the modern marketing era, professional persuaders have made a living creating messages to change behaviors.

The action starting point identifies what the writer must persuade people to do—for example, to support a new policy, purchase a product or service, or vote for a candidate. The action questions are as follows:

- Why should action be taken?
- What kind of action should be taken?

- Who should take the action?
- When should the action occur?

The FAJA Points trace their roots to ancient times. In the days of the ancient Greeks and Romans, before paper was used, people organized their thoughts to deliver speeches by using a system of “starting points” to ask questions about

**FIGURE 2.5 Using the FAJA Points (Fact-Analysis-Judgment-Action) to Focus Your Thinking**

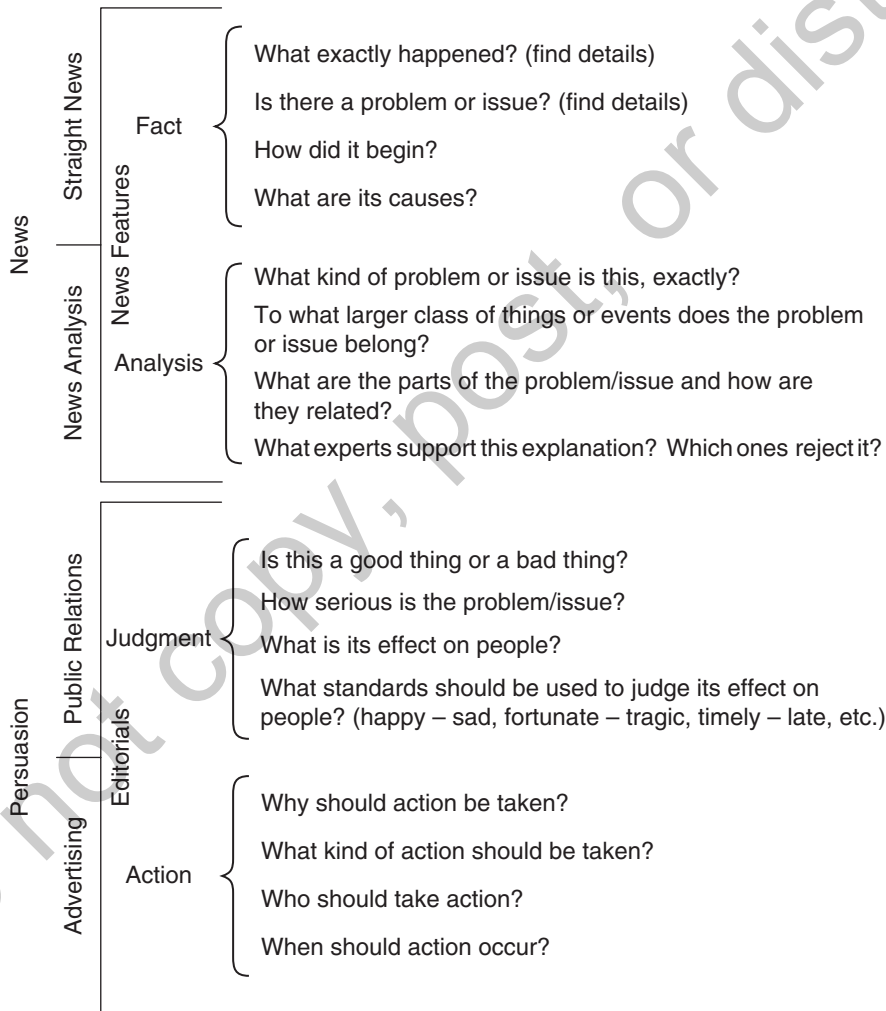
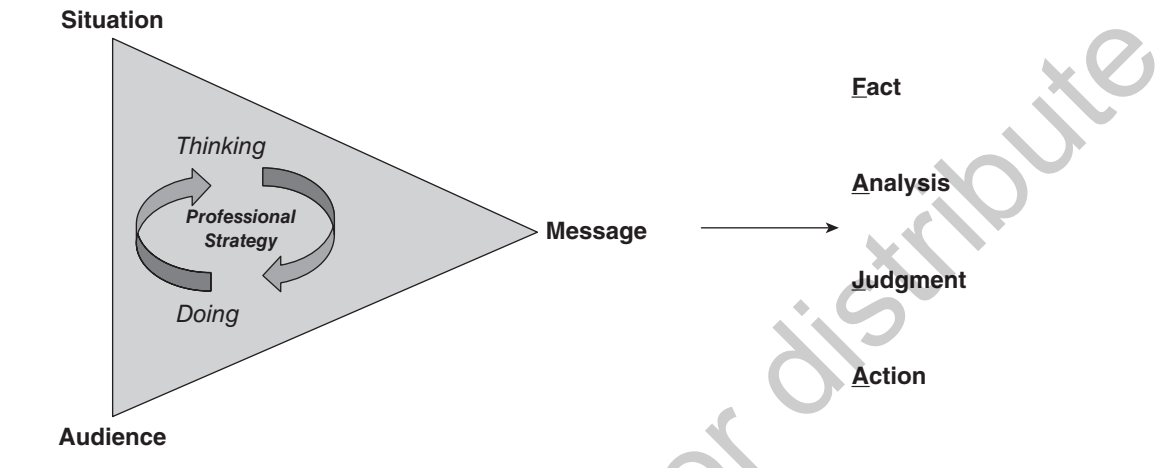


FIGURE 2.6 How the Professional Strategy Triangle Leads to FAJA Points



the topic and the material they would use to deliver it. You may have learned in another class that one system was called *stasis*, or starting points; a second was called *topoi*, or topic points.

Remember that the FAJA Points are just that—starting points. They are also thinking points that help you quickly find the focus of your piece. Professionals become so accustomed to these questions that after a short time they begin to use the questions like automatic tools they can quickly put to work. Whether you are working as a journalist, a public relations practitioner, or an advertising copy writer, the FAJA Points serve as valuable tools in your writer’s toolbox (see Figures 2.5 and 2.6).

Next, let’s take a look at three media scenarios utilizing the FAJA Points:

### SCENARIO 1: THE JOURNALIST AND THE STRAIGHT NEWS STORY

Katrina Sweet works for a small-town newspaper located in the Midwest. Called to the scene of a major car–truck accident on the nearby interstate highway, she arrives and surveys the situation. As she pulls out her notebook, she knows she has to begin to ask questions, establish the facts, and get the details right within a few short minutes. Her story is due within an hour. To begin, Sweet focuses her mind on the fact questions from the FAJA Points:

- When did this accident occur?
- What exactly happened in this accident?
- How did this accident occur? Was it caused by a person or persons, the weather, mechanical failure, or something else?
- Who were the passengers?
- How many people were hurt? Were there any fatalities?
- What do road crews have to do to clear the accident?
- What impacts did the accident have on traffic?

Once Sweet has the answers to these questions in her notes, she will move on to writing the story. When she arrives back at her desk in the newsroom, she will pull up her notes and think about the answers to these questions. The facts she chooses will serve as the lead for her story. They will probably center on the number of people killed and/or injured. Sweet has used the fact portion of the FAJA Points to quickly gather the details she needed to work with later at her desk. Thinking ahead helped her to write an accurate and concise story on deadline. This is how journalists work on a daily basis.

## SCENARIO 2: THE PR PROFESSIONAL IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT MODE

Ryan Southerman is a junior-level public relations manager at a major hospital in a Southwestern community. One Saturday afternoon, he gets a text message from the administrator, his boss, that health officials suspect a major MRSA (a type of staph-related infection) outbreak in his facility. Several elderly patients are near death, and one child is showing early symptoms of the infection.

First off, Southerman needs to determine the *facts* of the situation. Next, he *analyzes* the extent of the problem, working to understand how hospital management and staff are focused on addressing this crisis. Then, he uses *judgment* to create messages that communicate the good work being done by hospital employees to contain the MRSA outbreak. Finally, Southerman will advise audiences on what needs to be done to control the outbreak and ensure the safety of patients and employees (*action*).

Southerman's audiences will likely include hospital patients and their families, employees, the media, and community members. His questions will likely focus upon the following:

### **Fact**

- What was the situation leading up to the outbreak?
- What has caused the outbreak?
- What type of germ is behind the outbreak?
- How far has the outbreak spread?

### **Analysis**

- Is this outbreak connected with a larger trend occurring at hospitals elsewhere?
- Will this outbreak cause panic or anxiety among community members?
- What are the short-term and long-term outlooks for resolving it?

### **Judgment**

- How serious is the MRSA outbreak?
- Is the outlook for resolution negative or positive?
- Are the costs (human, financial) of a permanent solution affordable?

### **Action**

- What needs to be done to control the outbreak and ensure the safety of patients and employees?
- Why is this the best course of action? Is the hospital doing these things?
- What are the possible consequences of each course of action?



Southerman immediately begins making calls to hospital administrators and health officials to establish the *facts* of the situation. He glances at his phone and notices that two reporters—one from the local television station and another from the nearby metro daily newspaper—have each called several times. They are already working on stories and plan to run them whether hospital officials return their calls or not.

Once Southerman has tracked down all the details, he begins to draft an initial media statement and news release for the television and newspaper reporters. He also knows he needs to get busy assembling a news conference for tomorrow morning. This will require fact sheets, a background paper, and other written pieces that the hospital's chief administrator will need to have in hand when she addresses members of the media.

As you can see, Southerman is concentrating on *analysis* and *judgment*, the two FAJA Points he needs to understand this public relations crisis and to prepare the communication pieces that will help hospital administrators resolve it. These public relations pieces will become part of an overall crisis communication plan to include news releases, media statements, fact sheets, backgrounders, and perhaps position papers. Once Southerman has written these pieces and gained management approval, he will post them to the hospital's website, update the hospital's Facebook page, and notify his media contacts of the pieces via Twitter.

### **SCENARIO 3: A LOCAL RADIO SALESPERSON WRITES A COMMERCIAL**

Rosalina Martinez, a salesperson with WCTP-FM 98.5, is working with a local auto dealership in Connecticut that plans to hold a clearance sale of certified used vehicles next month. Martinez meets with her client and seals the deal for a series of thirty-second spots to be aired over a period of ten days next month. Like many other radio salespeople, Martinez wears two hats. She sells the advertising, but she also writes the ad copy because she knows her clients.

Martinez begins finding selling points for her client by drawing upon the *fact* and *action* starting points:

## Fact

- When does the sale take place?
- What vehicles are included in the sale?
- How long does the sale last?
- What do customers need to do to participate?

## Action

- What do customers who show up for this sale gain that they would not normally gain at other sales?
- How do customers benefit from buying the high-demand vehicles in the sale?
- What price savings come from buying during the sale?

Following these starting points, Martinez drafts three copy ideas. In one, a personality at the auto dealership yells responses that answer the above questions she just listed. The second version is a brief narrative to be read by a radio DJ and focuses on the high demand for and price savings on the vehicles. The third idea enlists an actor playing a husband explaining to his wife why they need to go to the sale to replace their car.

Martinez reads each of the three copy ideas over the phone to her client, who says he likes the first and the last ones. She turns the copy over to the production engineer, who produces rough copies of both ads over the next two days. Martinez brings the semi-finished commercials to the auto dealership managers for final approval. They decide they would like to go with commercial three. The production staff finishes the commercial the following week, and it is ready to run in time for the sale.

## Summary

### 1. Describe the changing landscape of twenty-first-century media.

This landscape is uncertain, yet

full of opportunities for aspiring journalists, public relations practitioners, advertising professionals,

and others who are strong storytellers, able to write well across media platforms.

2. **Discuss the major professions in today's media environment.**

These include print and digital media, broadcast and cable, and strategic communication in terms of both public relations and advertising.

3. **Explain professional media writing strategy in terms of the Professional Strategy Triangle.**

Media professionals use the Professional Strategy Triangle to understand situation, audience, and how these two factors influence one another as they create

a message. This process involves considering situation and audience together, creatively envisioning the final story, actively learning, refocusing thinking, and writing.

4. **Apply the Fact-Analysis-Judgment-Action (FAJA) Points to the writing process.**

The FAJA Points enable media professionals to determine the facts of a situation or issue, to analyze those facts, and in persuasive writing, to make judgments about them and encourage audiences to take action. Answering key questions from each of the FAJA Points will enable you to begin any type of news story or persuasive piece.

## Key Terms

journalism 24

public relations 25

advertising 26

strategic communication 28

Professional Strategy

Triangle 31

active thinking process 35

FAJA Points 43

## Discussion Questions

1. Reviewing the Frontline Media Writing Profile on Alycia Rea at the beginning of this chapter, what do you think would be the

most enjoyable and most challenging aspects of her job? Think especially about the writing and media relations Rea conducts on

- behalf of her clients in the hospitality and retail industries.
2. If you completed the MWSP scale in Chapter 1, how does your score fit in with the media professions covered in this chapter, and the career paths you might be considering? Which areas of your writing do you think need the most improvement in order for you to meet your career goals?
  3. Do you believe that the good writers working in journalism, public relations, or advertising are born or made? Explain your thinking.
  4. Explain why it is important for media professionals to pursue writing as a planned activity, with a clear audience and purpose in mind. Why can't a professional simply "write naturally"?
  5. In the age of digital media and social media, where messages are short-lived, do you believe that writing skills have become more important or less important for media professionals? Explain your reasoning.
  6. As a media professional, you are likely to write both news-oriented and persuasive pieces over the course of your career. Describe the necessary skills for each type of writing. Explain how they differ and how they are similar.
  7. Pick out a recent news story published in a newspaper, posted online, or on radio or television. Apply the Professional Strategy Triangle to analyze how the piece was constructed. Discuss the story's situation and audience, and then carefully read the story or message. Identify the relationships between the three corners of the triangle as you see them revealed in the news piece.
  8. Think again about the FAJA Points we have learned about in this chapter. As a journalist, which components (Fact, Analysis, Judgment, or Action) are you most likely to use? Explain. How about as a public relations practitioner? As an advertising professional? Again, explain your thinking.

## Chapter Exercises

1. Recall the media professions we have explored in this chapter. If you completed the MWSP scale in Chapter 1, write a 350-word paper describing

how your score fits with career paths that you might be considering. Discuss the areas of your writing that you most want to improve in order to meet your career goals. Proofread and edit your paper carefully, making it as professional as possible.

2. Interview a classmate on the subject of professional careers and his or her own potential career path. Prepare a list of six to eight questions to explore this student's thinking and life experiences so far. Which career paths is this student considering, and why? From your interview notes, draft a 300- to 400-word profile story on this student. Write a catchy headline and lead paragraph. Be sure to include plenty of quotes from your interview source.
3. Writing is a core activity that takes place across all the various media. Someone is writing all those news and persuasive pieces we hear, see, and read every day. Locate some local examples of media messages in your region. Search online for the following:
  - a. *A newspaper.* Locate the largest nearby metropolitan daily newspaper. Write down the names of some of the reporters who have bylines with their stories. List some of the types of stories in this newspaper that are of interest to you and your family.
  - b. *A broadcast television station.* Locate the web page for the TV news program for that station. Follow one of the news team reporters and examine the recent stories on which he or she has worked. Check out the TV reporter's social media links, especially Facebook and Twitter activities.
  - c. *A public relations firm.* From the PR firm's website, find out what services they offer their clients. If they list their clients, take note of some of these businesses and organizations that you recognize.
  - d. *An advertising firm.* Find out which clients they serve and see if their website offers links to television and radio commercials they have created for clients.

Prepare to discuss your findings with the class.
4. Work with a classmate to find either a compelling news article or a highly persuasive advertisement for a product or service. The samples may come from print, online, or broadcast and cable media.

Apply the FAJA Points to determine the piece's

- Fact
- Analysis
- Judgment
- Action (if applicable)

Discuss and record your conclusions. As necessary, refer back to the FAJA Points in this chapter. How did the media writer use them to effectively tell this story? What, if anything, would you have done differently? Prepare to report your findings and share the news story with the class.

5. Visit your university library. Consult with a reference librarian and conduct some research on the writing skills and strategies that media professionals employ in their careers. Which ones seem to be most common and easy to use? You may explore the work of journalists, public relations practitioners, or advertising professionals. Prepare a three- to four-minute talk for the class, highlighting what you learned in your research. You are also encouraged to develop visual aids to help tell your story.
6. Working with a partner, review the Professional Strategy Triangle. Visit the website for a major media organization (MSNBC, *The New York Times*, etc.) and locate a news story that interests you. Together, carefully read the story along with any connected links. Write a brief analysis of your news story that addresses the Situation, Audience, and Message corners as outlined in this chapter. Describe how you think the journalist in this case utilized the four-step active thinking process in writing the story. Be specific as you can. Explain why it was important for this journalist to utilize the Professional Strategy Triangle. Which key elements might have been missed otherwise?
7. Interview a journalist, public relations practitioner, or advertising professional from your community or a nearby city. Assemble a list of questions to determine the following:
  - a. How this media professional first entered the field and advanced to his or her current position.
  - b. The types of writing assignments the professional encounters in a typical week.
  - c. The kinds of writing strategies he or she uses to generate ideas for their written pieces.

*Note: You must interview your source either in person or by phone. Email is not acceptable for this assignment (or for any interview). It does not give you the opportunity to closely observe your source or their surroundings, or to ask follow-up questions. Also, your sources will tend to manage their quotes in an email message and will sound unnatural. They may even have someone else write the quotes for them.*

From your interview notes, draft a 500-word profile story on this professional. The story should focus on strategies that the professional employs in the writing process. Write a catchy headline and a lead paragraph. Be sure to include plenty of quotes from your interview source. Prepare to share your story with the class.

## Additional Resources

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American Advertising Federation:  
<http://www.adfed.org>

The Poynter Institute: <http://www.poynter.org>

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA): <https://www.prsa.org>

Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSA): <http://www.prsa.org>

Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ): <http://www.spj.org>

The Zimmerman Agency: <http://www.zimmerman.com>