**MEASURING THE IMPORTANCE OF NEWS**

A constant and specialized kind of training enables reporters to draw a line of demarcation between an ordinary event and a newsworthy event. They come to know what incident, statement, portion of speech, or an activity of a renowned actor is to be treated as news and given space in the news bulletin.

After having enough material that is supposed to be a part of the coming news bulletin, a difficult yet the most important and sensitive task lays ahead is giving a specific order to the news items the typist has to follow while typing the news items and the news caster has to follow while reading out the bulletin.

Is it “first come, first serve” rule that applies here or “hit-and- trial method?” No, not at all. If not, then how to measure the importance of news story so that its turn in the sequence of a news bulletin can be determined? The order to be followed while placing the news stories in a bulletin is based upon a pretty scientific and systematic manner.

“Generally, the most important, significant, and interesting, is offered to the listener or reader.”

The following are the ingredients which make a story important and significant and according to its importance and significance its order in a news bulletin can be evaluated and determined.

**Intensity of an Event**

Something intense means something extreme, something powerful, something deep, and something very significant. Intensity involves power, force, and strength. When we evaluate a news story in terms of intensity, we as a matter of fact, make an attempt to gauge its importance in terms of its strength and consequently its affect on the society it is meant for. Intensity may be local, regional or global.

For instance, Pakistan wins world cup in cricket first time in the history of her participation in the competition. It involves extreme level of interest of Pakistani nation in the victory and the victory possesses great amount of intensity for Pakistanis. The news in Pakistani channels’ bulletins will be given first place.

**Extensity of an Event**

Something extensive means happening of any event or accident on a larger level involving a great number of people.

For instance, on 8th April 2005, a horrible earthquake left thousands and thousands of people in Azad Kashmir and northern areas of Pakistan, with unforgettable destruction and devastation. It was a titanic tragedy which affected people on extensive level. To cover this natural calamity and its affects on people, reporters from media throughout the world rushed to the affected areas. This was a kind of event that involved people on extensive scale coupled with mammoth intensity. That is why its news and coverage was given the highest importance and the news story stayed at first place in the bulletins for weeks.

“The importance of a story is determined by its intensity (the amount of disruption) and by its extensity (the number of people affected).”

**Recentness of an Event**

As it is said, time and again, that recentness or timeliness is the very feature of a news story. Any event or a statement that is stale and old can be anything but can not be news. Out dated stories may be taken as reference but these stories cannot be termed as news items. News is something that is new, as to some journalists, ***news*** is the plural of ***new***. Only the event or happening that carries all or some of the news values we have gone through, and possesses the feature of newness as well, deserves to be called news. That is why the most recent happening is treated as ***breaking news.***

**Proximity**

Proximity, as discussed above, is the nearness of an event. Local events are more important than foreign. An accident or crime or ceremony is more important in the city where it occurs. The same kind of happening occurred in any other city or country may be reported as news but in the bulletin it will be placed in the tail end.

**Consequence of an Event**

In his budget speech, the finance minister announces a drastic cut in the tariff of electricity, or a fifty percent raise is announced in the salaries of government servants. These changes will not come into effect immediate after the minister concludes his speech, rather, from the 1st of the 1st month of the coming monetary year that may start after a fortnight or twenty days. But since the consequences of the announcement are supposed to affect people in future, the news will be given a prominent placing in the news bulletin.

**Variety of news values**

It is a matter of simple understanding that more the news values in an event, the greater the importance of that news will be.

For instance, the murder of a person is news, but the murder of any important figure in a society is even bigger news. Earthquake anywhere in world is news, but earthquake in Pakistan is bigger news. If it is so intensive that it kills thousands and thousands of people forcing other thousands of people to shift and confine to tents, it becomes even the biggest news for almost all the news channels in the world.

**Factors of Magnitude Simplified**

Following is the list of the factors of magnitude of a news item:

* + - The extent of the disruption of the status quo (prevailing situation) i.e., INTENSITY.
    - The number of the people affected by the event; i.e., EXTENSITY.
    - The nearness of an event; i.e., PROXIMITY.
    - The recentness of an event; i.e., TIMELINESS.
    - The extent of the results flow from the event, i.e., CONSEQUENCE.
    - The variety of the news values in an event; i.e., VARIETY.