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User Engagement Manifesto

**Who are our users?**

Our users come from a variety of backgrounds, whether young or old, black, white, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, or what have you, and from student to designer to construction worker. There are clear majorities, however. 28 of the 44 users we surveyed fell into an age range of 21-28. 59.1% percent of responders were female. 24 of the 44 users were of the white race. 18 of the 44 users listed “Student” as their occupation. We collected the data via in-person interviews at retail stores and using our social networks. This leads me to believe that our users are heavily skewed younger, white, educated, and more Internet-savvy. Going forward, we should look to be more inclusive so as to add a more diverse array of respondents.

**What are their needs?**

***Less Fluff –*** Throughout our surveying, respondents’ wanted less gossip and celebrity news, less “horserace” reporting of politics, and less news that was news for the sake of ratings. At the same time, they wanted more community-based reporting, specifically of local, underserved, and minority communities, and stories about international happenings. To me, this meant less “fluff”. Our users want to know about things that affect them, rather than be updated on the peripheral and the entertainment-based.

***Less Bias –*** One of the responses that stood out and embodied the sentiments of the rest of them was this: “Give more context to those who are ‘outsiders’.” It echoed calls for less bias in other responses. Users know that reporting is inherently biased based on who is doing the reporting, but still want their news to be as unbiased as possible. They want clear and total reporting from all perspectives possible, rather than just one. They want to be able to point to different opinions in order to form their own, and that can only happen with less bias.

***More Context* –** The final response that stood out as all-encompassing was from a teacher who said “It would be nice if, as a teacher, I could show my student's news articles that actually taught a little about the subject that they are broadcasting about.” This points to a problem in the news media that while people are receptive to the news, they don’t always know what it means in the greater framework of society. Although a story may pique one’s interest, it doesn’t draw the person to action, or to understand why they should care, or how the story came to fruition. Contextual-based reporting would certainly solve that for our readers.

**How can we fulfill those needs?**

We can fulfill those needs as journalists by creating an environment where stories are sourced in the communities our users are paying attention to. Several of the users we surveyed spoke of the LGBT community and people of color as needing more representation and coverage. Journalists should be vigilant in garnering leads, sources, and beats that reflect this need. Whether that is by deep-listening in #BlackTwitter feeds or popping up at LGBT events or visiting underrepresented houses of worship or just striking up conversations with people that are different from you, we can easily serve these communities by just opening our eyes.

**Do we have data?**

We do have data, both from our [survey](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1A9meDpFlK0EuYjSJkdRLVPm3J1OHmooU4ihQfPMcdrM/edit?ts=56b65fde#gid=294231395) and from outside sources such as Pew Research and Gallup. However, I think we need to better refine what exactly we are looking for in terms of data, whether it’s demographic, sentimental, or otherwise. Based on what we want to do, there will be specific data that we can use to refine our goals for how to construct our Upshot-like publication.

**Are there any constraints?**

There are definitely constraints to our work here. While we made great efforts to survey a host of different kinds of people, there will inevitably be shortfalls because of human error and nature. Between where we surveyed, the time of day we surveyed, and the way we surveyed, any number of different results could have come about. However, the same tenet holds true as before: to get the best representation of perspectives, we need to continue to collect information from our desired demographic.

**Which is/are the best way/s to tell a story that serves our users?**

The best way to tell stories that serves our users seems to be visual. In speaking to many of the users, it was obvious that there was a lot of clutter and misunderstanding in peoples’ consumption of the news. If there were a way to quickly and emphatically represent the most relevant stories, I believe our users would readily consume it.