

Stephen Mitchell

From: Stephen Mitchell
 Sent: 05 June 2003 03:28 PM
 To: Stephen Whittle-and-Chris, Mark Damazer & PA
 Subject: TODAY process

Gentlemen, I have only had a brief conversation with Mark and have been unable to reach Stephen so I have erred on the side of more rather than less as I am not clear how much is needed and it will be easier to sub rather than add to . . . let me know if you need more or something different . . . s

Bringing a story to air on TODAY

For a reporter with a story, in this case Gilligan, the routine first contact is with an output Editor (Band Ten) responsible for putting together first thoughts for the following days programme or, if it is a slower burn, to the Planning Editor (Band Ten) for a more distant programme . . . if it involves very complex and controversial issues he/she goes directly to Programme Editor, Kevin Marsh. Obviously there are occasions when this process works in reverse and ask staff call in a reporter and give him/her a brief

Day/Planning Editor is the first filter on veracity and strength of story, early legal reference if necessary, operational contact and obvious further lines of inquiry plus deployment of extra effort if needed, also first trip wire for significant issues, legal, political or policy, connected with the story. If any of these significant issues are involved Day/Planning Editor calls in Programme Editor, Kevin Marsh and it is at this point Corporate Policy or Legal advice is brought in. . . In the case of Gilligans dossier story the source spoke to Gilligan late night he did checks and came to day editor last Wednesday afternoon (May 28th) with a proposition for the following days programme. The day editor immediately referred Gilligan up to the Programme Editor

Programme Editor discusses story with reporter (and lawyer or CEP, Political Advisor if appropriate, not in the case of the dossier) The discussions with reporters usually cover sourcing, legal risks, tone, context given any other information available, feel and significance . . . With the Dossier story Kevin Marsh's conversation was about the strength of the source (not the name) and about whether the Gilligan story was consistent with separate Intelligence sources we were aware of who had expressed concern about the handling of intelligence before the Iraq war.

If the Programme Editor thinks the story of sufficient significance, potentially controversial, carries high legal risks etc he contacts Head of Department, Stephen Mitchell, in the case of the Dossier, Head of Radio News was tipped off in general terms about the nature of the Gilligan piece (and another programme exclusive ready for the following day about the use of cluster bombs in Iraq) and there was a general discussion about source and wider context.

Head of Department considers it necessary for instance if a agree a cross News approach to a difficult legal or policy issue is needed, then Director/Deputy Director of News will be brought in . Not in the case of Gilligans dossier exclusive.

The Overnight Output Editor(Band Ten) takes over from Dayside Editor during early the evening he/she takes over detailed management of following mornings programme including discussing in detail pieces with reporters, this figure also talks to Programme Editor (Kevin Marsh) several times during evening about how programme is shaping up and clearly any significant elements there of. The management of story rests with this figure up to and through TX but a second senior figure (usually the programme Editor or one of his deputies) arrives at about 0500 (colloquially known as the "Interferer") to take an overview of that mornings programme and double check significant items. It should be noted that on TODAY the majority of the programme is live so discussions are about general approaches, occasionally a "two way" or interview is pre recorded (usually if the item is legally sensitive) the scripts of packages are discussed pre recording and recorded items are listened to prior to TX .

The news bulletins on TODAY are produced from the Radio Newsroom and they are almost always fully scripted . . . A script here is discussed with the reporter by the overnight Newsroom Output Editor of the Today news bulletins (Band Ten) and the producer handling it in the newsroom.

So in the case of Gilligan the live two way at 0610 was discussed in general terms by the programme with Gilligan while John Humphrys had a brief, written overnight, to work from, , the 0700 bulletin piece was scripted by Andrew Gilligan and checked by the Newsrooms Output team, the 0730 illustrated package was scripted but played in live, the script would have been seen by the programmes overnight Output Editor, and the 0810 sequence of a scripted reporter piece by Ian Watson outlining the issues around WMD and the other story of the morning about cluster bombs, was followed by the live interview of Defence Minister Adam Ingram . Ingram had been booked by a programme producer the night before and the outline of the Gilligan story and the Cluster Bomb story outlined to his

office and a brief for the interview had been written by the programme team including input from the reporters.

Events often move on during a three hour programme such as TODAY , in the case of the Gilligan story Downing Street called at around 0715 with their "denial" (as we know not actually denying what the piece said) the inclusion of this and fielding of complaints is in the hands of the senior output editor . . . sometimes such developments require work by the overnight production team, new interviews boking checks etc who have a reporter in the office if they need it . . . this wasn't the case with the Gilligan story.

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