

## **Who we are**

We are The New York Times.

Founded in 1851, today we employ more than 1,550 journalists, on the ground in over 150 countries, with 31 foreign bureaus spanning every corner of the globe, covering its diverse stories and bearing witness to events as they unfold. We are one of the few remaining independent news organizations, and have received 125 Pulitzer Prizes for our reporting, more than any other news organization.

We spend more money, time and resources holding government, organizations and powerful individuals accountable and protecting freedom of information than anyone else, and we do this on behalf of our readers and in service of society at large. As a result, The Times has built one of the largest regular audiences and the largest subscription model for journalism in the world.

## **Why we exist**

Our mission statement is simple: We seek the truth and help people understand the world.

This mission is rooted in our belief that great journalism has the power to make each reader's life richer and more fulfilling, and all of society stronger and more just.

More than that, great journalism holds power to account without fear or favor. It gives a voice to the voiceless. It promotes understanding between people of different backgrounds, but most of all, it has the power to affect real change in the world.

But our mission is only as important as the people who read it, understand it, and value it.

## **The challenge**

News, analysis, and opinion are the three pillars of what we know as "journalism." In the days of print, there were dedicated sections for each, clearly marked, to avoid confusion between what was a statement of fact and what was simply one person's opinion.

But in a complex, fast-paced, context-free, information-overloaded media landscape, the lines have become much more blurred. The result being that news consumers have become unable to tell the difference between what's news and what's opinion.

This idea is supported by a recent Pew Survey , that showed just that:

*“The findings from the survey... which measured the public’s ability to distinguish between five factual statements and five opinion statements, found that a majority of Americans correctly identified at least three of the five statements in each set. But this result is only a little better than random guesses. Far fewer Americans got all five correct, and roughly a quarter got most or all wrong.”*

Not only were respondents unable to properly discern the difference, they were also more likely to classify a statement as “fact” if it agreed with their existing political views. Yet another telling conclusion from the survey showed that attributing a statement (whether fact or opinion) to a particular news organization, had almost no impact on their ability to distinguish between the two types of statements either.

This study, and many like it, are a troubling sign of the times, highlighting an increasing inability of news consumers to distinguish fact from fiction and critically analyze how it shapes the way we see and interact with the world around us. More troublingly, it points to an overall decline in news literacy (a subdiscipline of media literacy), a skill set defined by the Stony Brook School of Journalism as follows:

- Recognize the difference between journalism and other kinds of information and between journalists and other information purveyors;
- In the context of journalism, recognize the difference between news and opinion;
- In the context of news stories, analyze the difference between assertion and verification and between evidence and inference;
- Evaluate and deconstruct news reports across all news media platforms, based on the quality of evidence presented and the reliability of sources;
- Distinguish between news media bias and audience bias.

This is a serious threat not just for The Times and our mission to simply help people understand the world, but to society at large, as divisive rhetoric, filter bubbles, and disinformation have created deep divisions within our culture that is having a profound impact on the world.

## **Your challenge**

To help us create awareness of the importance of news literacy as a critical skill for understanding the world, and why credible, independent, and deeply-reported news sources like The New York Times are crucial to this effort.

This is not about fighting fake news. This is not about fighting back against attacks on the free press. While both are a very real threat, they are but symptoms of this larger issue.

The issue we're asking you to take on could seem quite straightforward and even dry, but this is precisely the reason why we're looking to you to help bring it to life in a way that is emotionally engaging. We're looking for modern, disruptive, non-traditional ideas that capture attention and demand people's attention.

## **Who this is for**

Our readers, viewers, and listeners are diverse. They represent the cross section of ethnicities, ages, genders, religions, and livelihoods that exists in the world. What they do share is a set of values:

- They are lifetime learners with broad curiosity about different cultures and topics. They want to know the truth about what's going on and why.
- They have opinions, but they crave being challenged about what they believe and invite new perspectives to hone their critical thinking.
- They desire, in nearly all phases in life, to engage with journalism in a meaningful and habitual way.
- They want to go beyond reading, viewing, and listening to use what they know to make better choices and more informed decisions, and to take more powerful action in the world.

But more importantly, it is you, the next generation of thought-leaders and culture creators, who are critical to this effort. We're counting on you and your peers to internalize and elevate the conversation about the importance of news literacy as a critical skillset for navigating the content landscape of the future.

## **Brand Voice**

**SMART**

*knowledgeable, thoughtful, precise*

**STRAIGHTFORWARD**

*direct, candid, efficient*

**ACCESSIBLE**

*personable, relatable, inclusive*

**CLARIFYING**

*illuminating, informative, definitive*

**ENGAGING**

*lively, compelling, timely*

NOTE: Watchouts to add in terms of ideas we're looking for

- This is not about fake news (that is a symptom, not the cause)
- This is decidedly apolitical (this is a problem that affects people across the ideological spectrum)
- This is not about the current President (this is not about combating attacks on the media/free press)