

WHAT IS A POLITICO STORY?

THE POLITICO FORMULA: We explain how Washington really works, pull back the curtain on the palace intrigue of official Washington, and document who is trying to get and keep power, and how. Our stories are **NECESSARY** for political and government players, and **FASCINATING** to outsiders.

THE MISSION: Politico journalism drives conversation in official Washington, making us **ESSENTIAL READING** for anyone who is or wants to be a player, and a **KEY OUTLET** for anyone who is trying to shape a political or government debate.

A Politico story works **THE POWER EQUATION:**

--**WHO** is trying to **GET** or **HOARD** it?

--**WHAT MEANS** are they using and what **OBSTACLES** are they encountering?

--**HOW** are they doing, and how is this contest affecting or reshaping the city, state, party, caucus, government body, industry, corporation or social set?

We are not the AP or The New York Times! They are wonderful at what they do and we will not supplant them in their space. If we **ONLY** do what those two great organizations do, **WE WILL NOT SURVIVE AND WE WON'T HAVE JOBS.**

A Politico story pulls back the curtain and shows the reader something intriguing, surprising and important **BEHIND** the straight-news headline or data point.

Sometimes we'll want to pop a market-moving fact on the Web just as a headline: Al Gore is going to make a surprise appearance at a blogger convention.

But as **SOON** as that's up, we have to find out why he's doing it, how it came about and what his next move will be: After a first burst of publicity, he wants to keep pressure on the campaigns, but he doesn't have the ability to command repeated news coverage.

THE SECRETS TO OUR SUCCESS:

--OWNING THE MORNING is vital to our prosperity. Early links have longer shelf life, and our journalism has more of an opportunity to shape to shape the Washington agenda. We're online by 5 a.m., promoting your stories and looking for fresh opportunities to drive the conversation. The campaigns and White House have senior staff meetings at 7:30. If we're not in the day's NEW conversation by then, we're behind.

--Speed kills. Velocity -- SPEED + POWER (good sources, smart thinking) -- will make you a winner. Insights and developments (an explanation of why Bush had a press conference today, a quote that'll be on Jon Stewart tonight) are perishable. A smart thought today can be conventional wisdom by tomorrow.

--Stories need to be both interesting and illuminating -- we don't have the luxury of running stories folks won't click on or spend several minutes with in the paper.

- a) Would this be a "most e-mailed" story?
- b) Would I read this story if I hadn't written it?
- c) Would my mother read this story?
- d) Will a blogger be inspired to post on this story?
- e) Might an investor buy or sell a stock based on this story?
- f) Would a specialist learn something from this story?
- g) Will my competitors be forced to follow this?

IN MOST CASES, THE ANSWER WILL BE "YES" TO SEVERAL OF THESE QUESTIONS IF THIS IS A STRONG POLITICO STORY. If you are not certain that several of these are "yes," you can reframe your reporting or analysis so people will say, "POLITICO is reporting ..." or "The way POLITICO put it is ..."

If your friends or source are buzzing about something related in any way to public affairs, don't ask yourself WHETHER it's a Politico story. Ask yourself HOW you can make it a Politico story, to capture built-in traffic and mindshare.

3 QUESTIONS TO ASK EACH MORNING:

A) What can I or my reporters write for the Web by NOON?

B) What will I or my reporters have for the PAPER or Web by late afternoon?

C) What is a medium-term project that I or my reporters can work on TODAY that will drive conversation on my beat and FORCE our competitors to follow it?

THIS IS YOUR A, B and C STORY. IF YOUR EDITOR ASKS YOU WHAT YOUR A, B or C STORY IS at any given moment, you will know.

This is a Darwinian business. People are not looking for MORE to read. They need to NEED and WANT each individual story in POLITICO. If they don't, we will not capture the eyeballs and mindshare that we must have to thrive in this brutal environment.

THE REWARD for cracking this code is that you're part of an enterprise that is already famous and respected, and that is one of a tiny handful of news organizations in the WORLD that is actually GROWING in size and scope, and launching new initiatives.

Because of the way times are changing, POLITICO journalism can be as central to the Washington conversation as the "Big Three" newspapers used to be. It is one of the greatest adventures in journalistic history, and we're grateful and thrilled you're along. Thank you for indispensable your contribution and for helping us tell our readers HOW WASHINGTON REALLY WORKS.