

## Four Tiers of News Coverage:

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This system challenges all of us to consider these four tiers of coverage and ask two questions:

- *Which tiers are we spending most of our time on?*
- *Can we do less of Tiers I and II and more of III and IV?*

### Tier One: COMMERCIAL

“If it bleeds, it leads.” Crime, fires, sensationalized weather, local sports teams, plus those quirky/human interest kickers that inevitably end the TV newscast or create a “fun” moment on the bottom of page one. This is coverage that is lead by the local newspaper or TV station, rather than by the curiosity or will of the local Member station newsroom.

*Many would deny that their station covers such stuff. But in its analysis of the 7-8am hour of Morning Edition on more than 40 stations, the Morning Edition Grad School (MEGS) team reported hearing a “disturbing amount” of this tier.*

### Tier Two: STAGED

City council meetings, school board meetings, local government and political pronouncements, news conferences. These are scheduled events, pre-scripted in many cases by communications officers and rehearsed by participants. It’s pretty safe to cover this stuff—it will usually sound like news. Much of it is not very important in the long run, or very interesting. Much of it is worth a line or two of copy—maybe an actuality—but not a report or interview.

### Tier Three: LOCAL IMPACT/NATIONAL

What is the local impact—or local representation—of a national or international story? This kind of reporting is more difficult, but can be more satisfying to the audience, as it connects local communities and activities to what is happening in the rest of the nation or the world. At its best, this kind of reporting fosters civil discourse, the desire to learn more, and to become more involved.

### Tier Four: LOCAL MEANING

What news event, person, trend or new idea is or is about to make a real difference in my life and my community? What truly reflects who we are and why we live here? What will have lasting impact? What trends and events are not being noticed?

Focusing your local news programming on tiers three and four will accomplish three important goals.

1. It will clearly differentiate your public radio service from the commercial news media available to our listeners

2. It will point the way to the most effective allocation of personnel and resources, and allow us to lead coverage rather than follow others.
3. It will emphasize quality over quantity in your local news programming and deliver greater service to listeners.

*So how does your station's coverage stack up? Here's a good way to find out:*

*Audit your station by listening to the 7-8am hour of Morning Edition across a single week. As you listen, map where each element of your coverage falls in the tier structure. How much time are you devoting to each tier?*