Being a journalist

WHAT IS IT?
In late 2017 the Washington Post launched a video series called “How to be a journalist.” The series uses notable news stories to explain the reporting process, helping people understand the techniques of journalism. Included: how journalists receive tips and do research. Videos are seen by everyone from high school students to regular news consumers.

HOW TO DO IT
Fancy cameras are not required. Phone videos can work. Use breakouts such as “What is a whistleblower?” to explain concepts. Let questions your journalists get from the public guide you. Executive producer Jaconi told Editor & Publisher to have some fun with the storytelling, and highlight journalists who are best-of-class when it comes to specific techniques (running down sources, interviewing, etc.).

WHO’S BEHIND IT?
Post on-air reporter Libby Casey hosts and produces the series with the support of executive producer Michelle Jaconi. The newsroom helps out: 2018 Pulitzer Prize winners Stephanie McCrummen and Beth Reinhard joined Casey to explain the investigative process in covering Roy Moore’s run for senate, past Pulitzer Prize winners Kimbrell Kelly and database editor Steven Rich explain how to make Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

DOES IT WORK?
Research by The Trust Project shows that more open journalism is more trustworthy. Engagement in the video series is measured by clicks, tags, shares and comments from the Post website, Amazon Prime, Facebook and YouTube. Journalism school interest (such as Columbia’s) is important. Media writer James Warren of Vanity Fair notes that the Post series speaks to trust issues outlined in Poynter’s 2017 poll.

Education

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