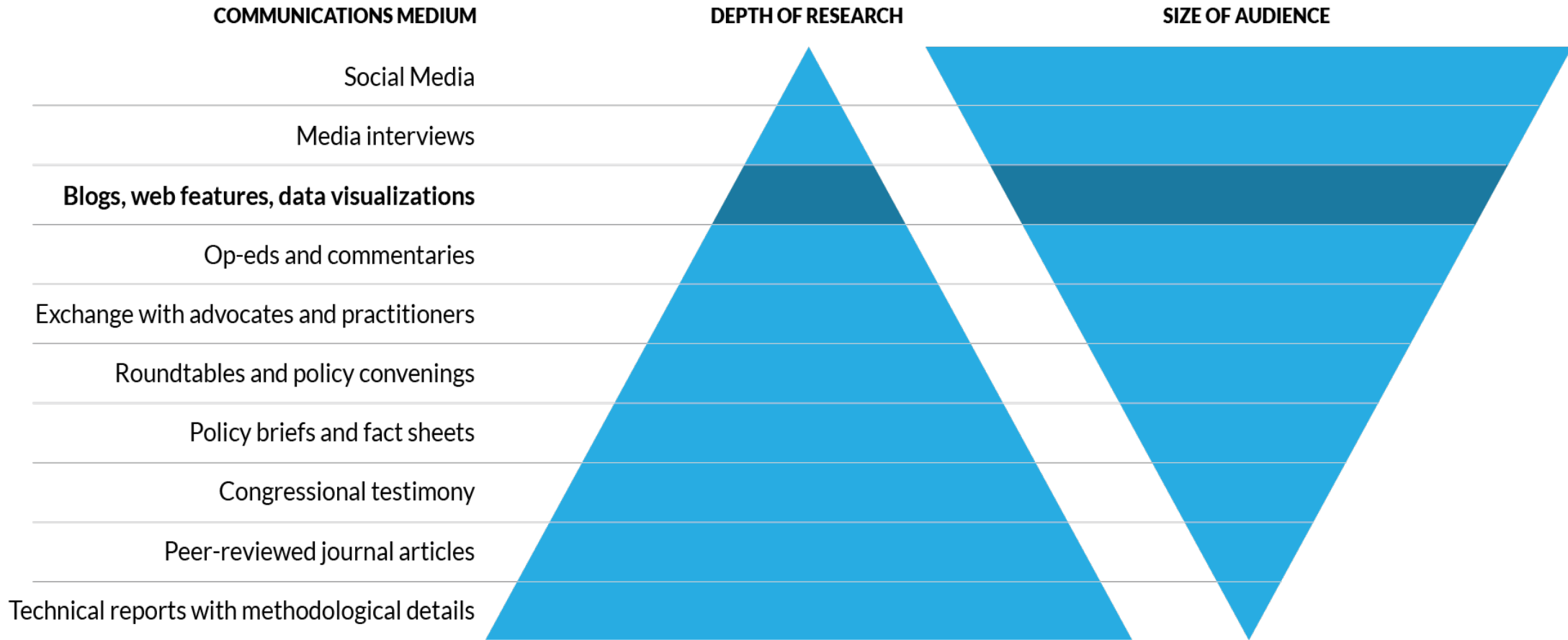


# Research to Policy Bootcamp

Blogging and Newsletters 101



# Our Communications Strategy





# Why should you blog?

- Create digital content that online audiences expect and can use
- Engage audiences and create community on your topic over a long period of time
- Engage and educate a broader audiences including the media, lawmakers, or advocates



# Engage the Audience

Write in a way that's different from a research publication

- Direct
- Personal
- Familiar
- Opinionated (with evidence)



# Teach Something

The reader should finish with a new understanding of the issue. It's preferable to have **one point per post**.



## Make it shareable

Readers should be able to easily summarize your post in one sentence (280 characters) and share it on social media.



## Expand on your findings

Say what you hope to study next, or reveal implications in today's context.

# Dive into one finding

## HEALTH AND HEALTH POLICY

Why do a larger share of millennials and gen X have past-due medical debt than older Americans?

Lower rates of health insurance coverage and wealth accumulation are making it harder for younger generations to pay off past-due medical bills.



Explain why it matters and make policy recommendations.





# Briefly explain multiple findings



CRIME AND JUSTICE

## Five problems with criminal background checks

Flaws in background checks can mislead employers and create unnecessary barriers to employment for people with criminal records.

For research with lots of recommendations – but keep it simple.



# What makes a good blog post?

- **Headline:** Less than 60 characters, around ten words
- **Strong lead:** A few sentences on the post's context and what you have to offer.
- **Length:** Keep it short, 300-800 words



# People read differently on screens (especially on mobile)

- Internet users scan first and read later
- Mobile users will scroll to the bottom and move back to the top
- People scan in an “F” pattern
- Average time on page is a little over two minutes



# What makes a good headline?

- **Descriptive search terms**
  - “Why the proficiency-versus-growth debate matters for assessing school performance”
- **A single fact or declarative statement**
  - “Retaining the current price for government mortgages is a good idea.”



# What makes a good headline?

- **A question the blog post answers**
  - “Can Trump make Mexico pay for his wall?”
- **A connection between distinct concepts or an explanation of a relationship**
  - “When interest rates go up in a healthy economy, history says home prices will rise.”



# What makes a good headline?

- **Lists and search terms**

- “Five Ways to Solve Crime”
- “Nine Charts on Wealth Inequality”
- “Say African American or Black, but first acknowledge the persistence of structural racism.”
- “Millennial homeownership in three charts”



# What makes a good lead?

- A point, finding, or reason for writing/reading within the first three sentences.
- A global or national context and a sense of urgency
- An explanation of why conventional wisdom is misleading



# What makes a good lead?

- A surprising or compelling new statistic or finding
- A correction, nuance, or explanation in response to a recent event, article, or other research
- A personal narrative on the issue



# How should you conclude?

- What prompted you to write the post in the first place?
- Why does this issue matter for people other than those it immediately affects?
- Are there policy implications for the findings?

# LinkedIn

- Pros

- Zero barrier to entry (part of your existing LinkedIn account)
- Dead-simple user interface
- Posts are easily shared to LinkedIn Network

- Cons

- No unique domain
- No design control



# Medium

- Pros
  - Low barrier to entry
  - Dead-simple user interface
  - Robust platform for discovery
- Cons
  - No unique domain
  - No design control

# Blogger

- Pros

- Part of Google, so integrates with their tools
- Can set your own domain name
- Limited set of design templates to choose from

- Cons

- Not as simple to use
- User interface and design templates seem dated

# WordPress

- Pros

- Very powerful blogging and website creation platform
- Can set your own domain name
- Infinite design templates to choose and custom templates

- Cons

- Can be very complicated to work on
- It's a '57 Chevy when you probably just need a Honda Civic

# Why Newsletters

- Drive traffic
- Direct relationships
- “Guaranteed” delivery
- Still shareable
- Great flexibility

# How to run a newsletter

- Pick a platform
- Pick a format
- Get writing
- Tell your colleagues
- Stay regular
- Promote, promote, promote



# Pick a Platform

- TinyLetter
- MailChimp
- Revue
- Substack





## Pick a format (and stick with it)

- “Check out what I **found** on the Internet”
- “Check out what I **wrote** on the Internet”
- “I wrote a blog post, and now I’m emailing it to you.”
- I have thoughts on several things people are talking about, and here they are.”
- ... and whatever else you can think of.

# Get writing

- Newsletters instill discipline
- The writing style is similar to blog posts
- Think of it as a one-to-one email to a close colleague.
- Don't miss your deadlines



# Tell your colleagues

- Cultivate a list
- Be careful who you send to
- Introduce the newsletter, provide samples, and ask readers to sign up
- Check your stats and think about culling your list
- Don't be spammy.



# Stay regular

- Daily
- Weekly
- Twice a month
- Monthly
- Every other month
- Quarterly...
- Pick one and **STICK WITH IT.**



# Promotion

- Forward to a friend
- “Did someone forward this to you? Sign up here.”
- Email signature
- Social media
- Presentations at conferences
- Other newsletters
- Your Bio