

Six Types of Feature Stories

Jacqui Banaszynski, assistant managing editor / Sunday— at the *Seattle Times* and professor of journalism at the University of Missouri, lists six paths a reporter can take to present information in a compelling fashion:

1. **Profile.**
"Who are the people behind a story? Who is the central character behind an event, issue, trend, development? A profile can reveal not just a person but a place, a building, an event."
2. **Explanatory Piece.**
"One of the most overlooked genres in American journalism."
3. **Issues and trend stories.** "Is there a social issue or trend I can explore? What's the story writ large?"
4. **Investigative Piece.**
"Follow the money. Is there a system that needs to be looked at critically?"
5. **Narrative.**
"A story with a central character, plot, core tension."
6. **Descriptive/Day in the Life.**
"Sometimes a full narrative isn't possible yet. Focus on a piece of it: a ride-along, a trip to church..."

A reporter thought back to the time when he covered the controversy over breast implants in the early 1990s. Using Jacqui's paths as a template, he quickly come up with story approaches:

1. **Profile.** Story possibilities: women who blame their breast implants for health problems; a plastic surgeon; breast implant inventor
2. **Explanatory pieces.** How breast implants became popular; how breast implants were invented; how silicon causes health problems.
3. **Issues and Trends.** The rise of plastic surgery in America. Class-action lawsuits.
4. **Investigative.** How manufacturers got FDA approval for breast implants. How much lawyers handling class action suits make.
5. **Narrative.** The story of the first victim. An activist's tale.
6. **Descriptive/Day in the Life.** Inside the Operating Room. A Day in the Life of a woman sickened by her breast implants. The making of a breast implant.

Now conceive story ideas in these formats that could improve your publication or strengthen your side in the battle over postal-service change.