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Skillfully Applying the “Four Forces” to Refine Converged Media “Premium Content” Post-Prints

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Abstract

The era of integrated media imposes high demands on journalists, who must not only capture news leads but also continuously enhance the substantive content of their journalistic works, while participating in news production and operation, mastering skills in gathering, editing, producing, and disseminating content. Simultaneously, journalists must firmly cultivate an awareness of creating exemplary programs and disseminating quality content to better guide and serve the public. This article analyzes the fundamentals of journalists’ self-cultivation in the integrated media era from the perspective of the “four strengths” –footwork, vision, intellect, and writing ability—aiming to facilitate integrated media journalists in effectively carrying out news communication and crafting quality news works for the integrated media era.

Full Text

The “Four Abilities” Framework for Crafting Converged Media Excellence

In an era of media convergence, journalists face heightened demands. They must not only capture news leads but also continuously enhance the substance of their work while participating in news production and operations, mastering the full spectrum of skills from reporting and editing to production and dissemination. Simultaneously, journalists must firmly establish an awareness of creating and disseminating high-quality content to better guide and serve the public. This paper analyzes the fundamental cultivation of journalists’ internal capabilities through the “Four Abilities” framework—footwork, eyesight, brainpower, and writing ability—to help converged media journalists carry out news propaganda effectively and craft exemplary news products for the converged media era.

As we continue advancing the deep integration of traditional and new media across technology, platforms, and management, we must emphasize “content

is king” to create converged media masterpieces, serving audiences with refined yet accessible products. Producing such excellence requires journalists to constantly hone their footwork, eyesight, brainpower, and writing ability, continuously updating their expertise and innovative concepts to better connect with life, reveal facts, serve the public, disseminate positive energy, and guide public opinion in the converged media environment. The “Four Abilities” represent a conceptualization of specific competencies for journalists in this era: footwork demands proactive grassroots engagement; eyesight requires penetrating insight to identify newsworthy angles within popular phenomena; brainpower encompasses thinking capacity and perspective—determining the narrative angle and desired propaganda effect after identifying reporting highlights; writing ability refers to linguistic proficiency, as even the best raw material requires skillful organization and appropriate expression to fully manifest its news value. In essence: footwork connects journalists to life and the masses, eyesight enables clever planning and angle selection, brainpower provides conceptual height and sophistication, and writing ability delivers depth and refinement.

1. Footwork: The “Three Closenesses” in Practice

Journalists must demonstrate professionalism and accuracy through footwork, employing deep expertise to analyze and evaluate news events, command discourse power, and voice public interests authentically. Reporting should stay close to reality, close to the masses, and close to life, expressing genuine public demands. This requires journalists to personally go to the grassroots and write from the public’s perspective. Although the information age offers multiple channels for news gathering, obtaining truth and depth demands leaving the office and entering the news scene. Only through firsthand experience and investigation can journalists authentically capture background and internal highlights.

For instance, my organization produced the feature story *The Final Party Fee: Eternal Faith*, which tells of Zhang Daogan, a veteran of the Anti-Japanese War and pre-1949 Party member who remained true to his original aspiration. For over 70 years, he persistently sought to rejoin the Party, finally returning to the organization and, at life’s end, contributing his savings of over 10,000 yuan as his final party fee. Our reporter followed this story for nearly five years, questioning why the elderly man so persistently sought his Party membership, accompanying him to civil affairs bureaus, archives offices, and locations across counties and provinces to find his Party introducer. Witnessing the veteran’s halting steps, repeated disappointments, resolute expressions, and unwillingness to give up, the journalist deeply felt the man’s inner conviction—his search was not for fame or profit but to prove his lifelong devotion to the Party. Without entering Zhang’s daily life and understanding his true thoughts through intimate conversations, the story would lack its vivid language and deeply moving narrative. The reporter’s sustained follow-through enabled the veteran’s wish to rejoin and make his final contribution. This case validates that “observing facts and approaching hearts” forms the foundation of strengthening the Four Abili-

ties. The piece won awards at provincial and municipal levels, was broadcast by multiple television stations, and has been used as Party education propaganda by numerous organizations.

Effective footwork also requires active participation in the “Go, Transform, Reform” campaign, taking strides to root oneself at the grassroots level. Many scenes and stories can only be discovered on-site, and single visits are often insufficient—repeated, deep engagement is necessary. Whether covering industrial breakthroughs, poverty alleviation, ecological environment, or rural revitalization, journalists must move beyond simple meeting reports and statistical summaries. Instead, they should identify key points and typical cases within the data, then frequently visit grassroots communities to practice the principle of “using small 切口 s to reflect major themes, small figures to present grand eras, and small stories to depict broad landscapes.”

In 2019, my radio feature *Pan Pei: A Modern Virtuous Farmer* won first prize for excellent broadcast news in Suqian City and third prize in Jiangsu Province’s “Go, Transform, Reform” awards. Starting from Pan Pei’s nomination as a “National Rural Youth Wealth Creation Leader,” the story deeply reported on this returning youth in Sihong County who abandoned a 400,000-yuan annual salary in Shanghai to farm lotus and raise shrimp, produce lotus leaf tea, and build the “Pan’s Big Shrimp” brand. Using internet thinking, he helped multiple returning youth develop e-commerce, created the “Sishui Virtuous Farmer” brand, assisted poor households in escaping poverty, and promoted ecological agriculture development. To uncover Pan’s unknown stories, the reporter followed him for over a year through different seasons, joining him at pond sites to observe shrimp larvae and growth, experiencing the hardship of digging lotus roots, and conducting market research. Through Pan’s entrepreneurial journey, the journalist captured a modern farmer’s genuine intentions—making green, organic, high-quality agricultural products accessible to people. The feature incorporated Pan’s 朴实 thoughts, recordings from pond sites and workshops, gratitude from poor households who prospered with him, partners’ confidence, and consumer recognition. Pan’s innovative path inspired many ambitious youth to learn and start their own businesses. Over eight years, he established three companies and earned three titles, yet his brands remain more recognizable than his official titles. Today, when Sihong residents mention “Sishui Virtuous Farmer,” lotus leaf tea, lotus roots, “Pan’s Big Shrimp,” spicy crabs, or Xinan Gang agricultural products, Pan Pei is the first person they think of. In November 2020, Pan was awarded the “National Model Worker” honor by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council—demonstrating the propaganda impact achieved through grassroots footwork.

2. Eyesight: Selecting the Right Angle

In the converged media era, ordinary people have transformed from passive information receivers to producers and disseminators, seemingly becoming “journalists” themselves. This intensifies journalists’ sense of crisis while reminding

them to sharpen their eyesight—cultivating observation, discovery, judgment, and discernment to effectively distinguish diverse voices and strengthen mainstream media control. With complex and rapidly changing information channels, converged media journalists must accumulate broad knowledge to improve discernment, identify news 闪光点, and create novel angles that see the large in the small and the general in the particular, achieving multiple meanings and impacts through small stories with great sentiment.

For example, Sihong Television produced the educational feature *Fu Peijian: Two Fingers Typing Toward a Prosperous Life*, part of the 2020 *Our Prosperous Life* series. Based on the theme of disabled entrepreneurship, it tells of Fu Peijian, a cerebral palsy patient confined to bed, who through perseverance and determination, taught himself using only two functional fingers to achieve a monthly income exceeding 10,000 yuan. Rather than focusing on his daily hardships, the report highlighted his use of internet technology to generate substantial income, demonstrating that in today's information age, anyone who loves learning, strives diligently, and thinks creatively can reverse their fate and achieve prosperity. After broadcast across radio, television, and new media platforms, the story gained widespread attention and sharing. Audiences drew inspiration from Fu's resilient character—understanding that prosperous living encompasses not just material wealth but spiritual and knowledge-based prosperity. Disabled individuals from Chongqing, Shandong, Liaoning, and Guangxi contacted Fu through the journalist, exchanging encouragement via WeChat. A young man from Chongqing with hemiplegia even traveled to Sihong to learn internet wealth-building techniques, establishing a mutually beneficial partnership. Fu's story has inspired increasing confidence among disabled people to escape poverty. The narrative elevated from an individual's entrepreneurial experience to a societal level: happiness is created through struggle. The conclusion further elevated the theme: knowledge changes destiny, and mastering advanced skills inevitably improves quality of life. The story resonated because the journalist found the right angle, selecting topics that audiences care about—recording real life without exaggeration, broadcasting information that is relatable, tangible, and replicable.

3. Brainpower: Retaining the Essence

Brainpower encompasses not just breadth and depth of thinking but also perspective and vision. It requires arming oneself with Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, continuously mastering new knowledge, familiarizing with new fields, and expanding horizons. With rapid internet development granting converged media significant status in news reporting, journalists should actively utilize online technology for simultaneous online-offline development. Official information released on new media platforms, being fastest and most accurate, is gradually gaining public acceptance. Converged media journalists must maintain a learning mindset, continuously grasping new policies, regulations, and systems to broaden knowledge coverage.

For instance, when reporting on the fishing ban and lake restoration in Hongze Lake area, journalists must cover not just the timeline but also why the decade-long ban is implemented, what happens to fishermen's boats, how housing and daily life are guaranteed after they leave the water, and what local employment measures the government has introduced—enabling warm, service-oriented reporting. Additionally, journalists should extensively collect comparable news 稿件, identify weaknesses in their own work, and continuously optimize for greater depth and breadth. Presentation should employ diverse forms: images, music, first-person narratives, and voice-overs.

In the converged media era, some journalists fall into panic, producing mediocre work due to insufficient brainpower or unwillingness to “think deeply.” Brainpower refers to the ability to logically organize complex 线索. Converged media journalists should possess broad knowledge of history, politics, economics, and law to interpret social hotspots, leveraging the interconnectedness of information, knowledge, and social significance. News creation should consciously serve the broader picture, using “brainpower” to retain essential elements.

4. Writing Ability: Producing Excellence

Writing ability means skillful expression that moves people with genuine emotion. The prerequisite is solid foundational writing skills. An excellent journalist must possess strong writing ability, demonstrated through rapid overall conceptualization, accurate headline refinement, and concise expression after fully understanding news events. While enhancing readability, visibility, and listenability, the writing should also be accessible and clear. Refined writing ability is essential for outstanding journalism.

The internet is a noisy public opinion space and breeding ground for rumors. Journalists must maintain strong public opinion awareness, researching and judging erroneous viewpoints that weaken social responsibility and ignore ethics. During field interviews, journalists should guide interviewees promptly; for online video or voice interviews, they should create questions logically and systematically based on detailed materials. They should evaluate and demonstrate facts with profound thinking to reveal essence, avoiding ambiguous questions merely for attention-grabbing. For sensitive online events, implicit information gathering should be conducted properly. For instance, experiential interviews that enter scenes and meet subjects are crucial for obtaining firsthand material. However, implicit interviews must observe legal limits—conducted in public places and objective environments without harming subjects' interests or causing psychological harm that leads to cyber violence. The pursuit should unify social responsibility with professional ethics.

In the converged media context, factors affecting journalists' writing effectiveness are increasingly complex, demanding higher professional quality. Journalists should adapt their writing style to different interview subjects, avoiding empty, rigid language, and creating excellent products from small figures and good

stories.

For the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China in 2019, Jiangsu Province's county-level radio and television program sharing platform launched a "Red Memory" series. Sihong Station collaborated with over 30 county-level stations to excavate local red culture, opening converged media broadcast ports for joint production and centralized broadcasting. Teams of videographers, photographers, and graphic editors traveled across the province to recreate red historical scenes, find figures, excavate stories, and locate authentic historical images. They ultimately compiled and edited these into a unified framework with fresh local red memories—featuring distinctive writing styles, profound photographs, clear videos, and deep commentary. Participating in this provincial joint production strengthened journalists' footwork, eyesight, and brainpower to enhance writing ability for optimal influence, credibility, and guidance. The series won the 2019 "Sharing, Uniting, Elevating" Action's Most Popular Column Award from Jiangsu's county-level broadcasting platform, with Sihong's documentary *Northern Jiangsu's "Little Yan'an": Forging Heroes by Hongze Lake* receiving the Best Program Award.

In February 2020, during the most difficult period of national COVID-19 response, Sihong's WeChat Moments widely shared an anonymous remittance slip showing a veteran donating 9,900 yuan to support Wuhan. Our journalists, moved and curious about this "veteran," were determined to find this generous soldier and launched the continuous report *Salute! Veteran Soldier*. The first installment, *Wuhan, Sihong Veteran Soldier Owes You 100 Yuan*, established authenticity. As the story developed, subsequent installments *Wuhan, Sihong Whole City Helps You Find the "Veteran"* and *Wuhan, Sihong "Veteran Soldier" Found* were rapidly disseminated across radio, television, Weibo, WeChat, and other new media platforms, demonstrating strong timeliness and audiovisual appeal.

The series featured clever planning, strong timeliness, and clear thematic connections across three installments centered on the search dynamic. The writing emphasized emotional elevation between the donor and the nation—an elderly rural veteran, not wealthy, holding only one belief: when Wuhan faces severe epidemic and the nation is in difficulty, he must contribute what he can, understanding that without the nation there is no home. Within three to four days, converged media platforms identified the anonymous veteran Wang Yuqi, revealing this nearly 80-year-old loving father and patriotic soldier who donated his entire pension savings to Wuhan, setting a benchmark and example that built confidence and strength for national anti-epidemic efforts. This converged media anti-epidemic propaganda series powerfully demonstrated mainstream media's dissemination capacity, guidance, influence, and credibility, winning the "2020 Jiangsu Province Radio and Television Converged Media Anti-Epidemic Propaganda Excellent Case Award."

In the converged media era, journalists can provide high-quality information and services by strengthening their "Four Abilities." They must advance with

the times, actively transform their roles and working methods, think from the audience' s perspective, disseminate news in preferred formats, and meet continuous technological updates with innovative spirit and lifelong learning. By practicing the Four Abilities to refine journalistic literacy, they can consistently create satisfactory works that fulfill their social mission.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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