

FLINT HILLS PUBLICATIONS WORKSHOP • K-STATE • JULY 2026

BEYOND BYLINES

Building Your Brand on Social

Cindy Augustine | Owner, Kazoo Media

**You've already mastered the
algorithm.**

Now let's put it to work for **your
newsroom.**

The skills that make you good at scrolling are the same ones that make you good at this.

QUICK INTRO

Why I'm up here

Cindy Augustine

Owner, Kazoo Media — a marketing agency.

I buy **paid media** for a living — I spend my days figuring out how to get the right message in front of the right people, and how to tell if it actually worked.

I'm not here to teach you how to shoot a Reel. I'm here to teach you how to think about audience — and that's a skill that makes any journalist more powerful.



Audience

Who are we trying to reach?



Reach

How many actually saw it?



Proof

Did it change anything?

TODAY'S GAME PLAN

Two brands, one hour

We'll build up in two parts — first your publication's brand, then your own.



Your Publication's Brand

Getting your reporting seen, shared, and trusted — platforms, hooks, and making one story go further.



Your Personal Brand

Building your name and reputation as a young journalist — voice, credibility, and standing out.

Plus: a hands-on challenge where you'll do it live — and 5 quick wins to take home.

Brands known in a glance



Owns sports — loud, fast, confident.



Gen Z sports, built entirely on social.



Sneakers, music, culture — the crossover brand.



The wire everyone else quotes — trust, in two letters.



The yellow frame = world-class photography.



“Explain the news.” Clean, modern, useful.

The common thread: *one consistent look, used everywhere, for years. That repetition IS the brand.*

THE BIG IDEA

Publishing is the start line — not the finish

01

Readers won't come find you

Your audience isn't refreshing your website. They're on their phones. You have to meet them there.

02

Social IS the front page

For most of your readers, your social feed is the publication. It's the first — often only — thing they see.

03

Unseen work can't have impact

A great story nobody reads can't inform, change minds, or hold anyone accountable. Distribution is part of the journalism.

KNOW THE LANDSCAPE

Where journalists & publications live



Instagram

Your home base.
Reels for reach,
carousels to explain,
Stories for daily
voice & polls.



TikTok

Where discovery
happens. Short
video, raw and fast.
Great for explainers
& behind-the-
scenes.



YouTube

Long-form + Shorts.
Where deeper video
journalism and
packages can live
and be found later.



X / Twitter

The journalist's wire.
Breaking news, live
updates, building a
professional
reputation.



LinkedIn

The long game.
Where your future
editors, internships,
and j-school
connections are.

Same story. Different cut.

The #1 mistake: posting the exact same thing everywhere. Each platform speaks its own language — give it what it expects.

**ONE
STORY**



Instagram Reel

A 20-sec vertical video with the single most surprising fact up front.



Carousel

Swipeable slides that explain the 'why it matters' in plain language.



X thread

Bite-sized updates + a link, for people who want the details fast.

THE FORMULA

What actually gets seen & shared



HOOK

Stop the scroll in the first second or first line.



VALUE

Teach, surprise, or make them feel something.



FORMAT

Built for the platform — vertical, short, captioned.



TIMING

Posted when your audience is actually awake & online.

INGREDIENT #1

You have 3 seconds. Maybe.

SKIP IT ✕

“School board holds monthly meeting to discuss budget items”

STOP THE SCROLL ✓

“Your parking lot might be gone next year. Here's why.”

A hook makes one promise:

“Stay, and you'll get something.”

Lead with the surprise, the stakes, or the question — never the process.

WORK SMARTER

One story = a week of content

You already did the hard part — the reporting. Now squeeze every drop out of it.



Teaser Reel

The one wild fact, 15 seconds.



Explainer carousel

5 slides: what / why / what's next.



Story poll

Ask readers what THEY think.



Behind-the-scenes

How you reported it — builds trust.



Quote graphic

One powerful line, big & bold.



Link + thread

For the people who want it all.

PART 2 · PERSONAL BRANDS

People who ARE the brand



Marques Brownlee

MKBHD · YouTube

Consistency + top production quality. Think tech reviews, think him.



Johnny Harris

YouTube · ex-Vox

A signature style — maps, first-person storytelling. The style IS the brand.



V Spehar

Under the Desk News

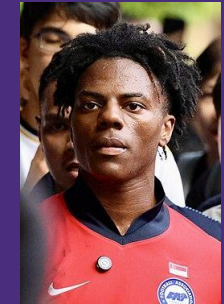
Delivers the news from under a desk — a format so distinct it's unmistakable.



Cleo Abram

Huge If True · YouTube

Optimistic science & tech explainers. Proof you can build this young.



IShowSpeed

YouTube · Streaming

Content creator— the loudest personal brand alive. Unmistakably, consistently himself.

See the pattern? *Known for ONE thing · shows up consistently · has a recognizable style. That's a personal brand.*

YOUR NAME, YOUR REPUTATION

Build your personal brand

1

Pick a lane

Sports? Investigations? Photo? Being known for something beats being known for nothing.

2

Find your voice

Curious, sharp, funny — be consistent. People follow a person, not a logo.

3

Show your work

Post the reporting process, not just the result. Process builds credibility.

4

Be findable

Real name, clear bio, school + role, one link. Make it easy to take you seriously.

NON-NEGOTIABLE

Credibility is your currency



Accuracy beats speed

Being first means nothing if you're wrong. Verify, then post.



Own your corrections

Made a mistake? Fix it openly. Trust grows when you're honest.



Pause before you react

Screenshots are forever. Don't post angry; protect your future self.



Be transparent

Label opinion vs. reporting. Disclose AI use. Cite your sources.

Don't guess. Read the numbers.

This is what I do all day. The accounts that grow aren't lucky — they pay attention to what works and do more of it.

Saves & shares



likes

“Save” = I need this. “Share” = you need this.



Post consistently

A steady rhythm beats a viral fluke. The algorithm rewards regulars.



Engage back

Reply to comments fast. Conversation tells the platform you matter.



Watch what works

Check reach, saves, shares, watch-time. Repeat your winners.

STEAL THESE

5 things you can do immediately

- 1 Rewrite your bio: name, school, role, one link. Make it findable.
- 2 Turn your next story into a hook + a carousel before it publishes.
- 3 Add captions to every video — most people watch with sound off.
- 4 Reply to every comment for one week. Watch your reach respond.
- 5 Check your top 3 posts this month. Ask: what did they have in common?

LET'S MAKE SOME NOISE

Activity: Story to Scroll-Stopper

Grab a partner. You've got a boring headline and 5 minutes to make it impossible to scroll past.

YOUR MISSION • 5 MINUTES

Story to Scroll-Stopper

1

Pick your platform

Instagram Reel, TikTok, carousel, or X — your call.

2

Write the hook

First line or first 3 seconds. Lead with stakes or surprise.

3

Draft the caption

2-3 sentences. What's the value for the reader?

4

Plan the visual

What's on screen? Describe the photo, clip, or graphic.

HEADLINE BANK — PICK ONE

1

“School board approves new attendance policy”

2

“Cafeteria updates its lunch menu for fall”

3

“Debate team places third at regionals”

4

“Construction on science wing starts in June”

5

“Student council sets the homecoming date”

Find the human stakes — or bring your own real headline.

SHARE IT OUT

Who's got a scroll-stopper?

1

Read the hook only

If it stops the room, it'll stop a feed.

2

Which platform & why?

Did the format fit the message?

3

What's the value?

What does a reader take away?

Take 2-3 volunteers. Celebrate the hooks — applause for the boldest one.

BACKUP · A COMPLETED EXAMPLE

Here's one we finished earlier

A model answer for Headline #1 — notice how it runs through Hook · Value · Format · Timing.

THE HEADLINE: ***“School board approves new attendance policy”***

- 1 Platform** Instagram Reel for reach — with a carousel follow-up for the details.
- 2 Hook (first 3 sec)** “Starting this fall, too many absences could stop you from walking at graduation.”
- 3 Caption** New attendance policy just passed for next year — what changes, what counts as excused, and what to do if you go over. Full breakdown + how to appeal at the link.
- 4 Visual** Board-meeting clip → bold text “NEW ATTENDANCE RULE” → a simple OLD vs NEW graphic → a student reacting. Captions burned in for sound-off.

Why it stops the scroll: *it leads with the stake (graduation) — not “a meeting was held.”*

Another angle — different platform

A model answer for Headline #3, built as an X thread — same formula, different format.

THE HEADLINE: ***“Debate team places third at regionals”***

- | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Platform | X (Twitter) thread + a team photo — fast, shareable, easy to tag the school and the rival teams. |
| 2 | Hook (first post) | “Our debate team just outscored schools 3x our size to place 3rd at regionals. A thread:” |
| 3 | Thread | Post 1: the result + why it's a big deal. Post 2: name the two seniors who carried the toughest rounds. Post 3: what's next — state in 3 weeks + link to the recap. |
| 4 | Visual | Photo of the team holding the trophy, faces visible — or a screenshot of the final bracket with your school circled. |

Why it stops the scroll: *it reframes “third place” into “beat schools 3x our size” — leads with the surprise, not the ranking.*

IF YOU REMEMBER 4 THINGS

Take these with you

1

Distribution is the job

Getting work seen and trusted is part of journalism now — not an afterthought.

2

Earn the first second

Hook, value, format, timing. Lead with stakes, never with process.

3

Credibility is everything

Accuracy over speed. It's the only thing that's truly yours.

4

Let the numbers coach you

Watch saves & shares, do more of what works, post consistently.

THANK YOU

Now go make some noise.

Cindy Augustine · Owner, Kazoo Media

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