

# Dog days opportunity



**Philip  
Dine**

**I'll describe a journalist's typical** Friday, then some other days, then tell you how this applies to us.

A newspaper reporter gets to the newsroom Friday morning and charges to his desk, adrenaline pumping. He has to put the finishing touches on the big Sunday story he's been working on throughout the week, in between his daily stories.

He's completed the reporting and most of the writing; what's left is to trim and polish the copy while dealing with the inherent tradeoff—the longer he takes, the better it'll end up and the better play it'll merit, but the tension is that the faster he moves it to his editor, the more likely it is to

make Page One. Being overly perfectionist may lead to it being bounced inside or held for Monday's edition—a downer because Sunday's paper has by far the biggest circulation of the week.

In a different room, the editorial page editor logs on Friday morning, facing her own daunting challenge. She has to fill the editorial pages—including letters to the editor and commentary pieces—for Saturday, Sunday and Monday, since the editorial page office is closed over the weekend. So she has three days' worth of work to do today.

That's Friday in a newsroom, and it's sheer chaos. The prior three days, while somewhat less frenzied, also were busy. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, the reporter was producing daily stories while carving out time for his weekender. Similarly, the editorial page folks were working on the next day's pages while also organizing the weekend sections.

Monday was a different ball game, especially for the reporter. He was refreshed from a weekend off, with no assigned stories at the moment, as editors and reporters looked for good stories with little idea of what the week will hold. So he's in a thinking mode, seeking ideas that can produce decent stories over the next few days and, with any luck, a blockbuster for Sunday.

So Monday's and Tuesday's newspaper will be relatively bereft of compelling stories—and the same conditions will be reflected in broadcast newsrooms, which get most of their ideas from their print competitors. Radio's rip-and-read guys will have a slow start to the week, as will TV assignment editors.

**Now, what's the relevance for us? In dealing with journalists, timing's pretty much everything.**

So, first, we're best off approaching newsrooms folks (re-

porters and editors) and editorial page editors early in the week; Monday is ideal, each successive day the odds get a bit longer, and Friday is a day to avoid.

Second, and most important at the moment, there's also a seasonal pattern to the art of using the media to get a message out. Summer typically is the slowest news period of the year, with the “dog days” of August most glacial of all. That's because many institutions (schools and more) are closed and so there's less news, but also because folks are on vacation—and among those folks are reporters who'd otherwise be generating stories.

This is especially the case in an election year, when Congress empties its corridors and when political journalists, having spent nearly a year covering the primaries and the national party conventions, are recharging their batteries for the autumn's frenetic two-month sprint toward the general election. To be followed, of course, by the frenzy of the balloting itself and the year's final two months' worth of endless interpretive pieces about what the voters said and what it all means when the new administration and Congress take office in January.

So, the month we're now in—August—offers the best opportunity we'll have all year to get our message out before voters go to the polls. Whether it's suggesting stories to reporters or putting our own voice out there via letters or op-ed pieces, we should try to do whatever we can between now and Labor Day, when newsrooms will be most receptive and likely give us the best play. And when readers, viewers and listeners will be least distracted.

Even though it seems like the political campaigns have gone on forever, and can't get any more intense, history tells us that elections don't really start until after Labor Day, when many Americans pay attention for the first time and when politics truly dominates journalists' attention.

**So, we need to get our news and views into the media—and thus out to the public and the candidates—over the next month. And the earlier in the week the better!**

**EDITORIAL STAFF:**  
Managing Editor Philip Dine  
Designer/Web Editor Mike Shea  
Internet Communications Coordinator  
Joe Conway  
Writer/Editor Rick Hodges  
Editorial Assistant Jenessa Kildall Wagner

*The Postal Record* (ISSN 0032-5376) is published monthly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Subscription included in membership dues. First-class subscription available for \$20 per year (contact Membership Department).

© 2016 by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Circulation: 287,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

CHANGE of ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube by going to NALC.org.

