NOW PLAYING
Newsroom mix ▶
Scan to add a song

*Live from room 005...*

# BONDS BEFORE BYLINES

How to engage and grow strong editorial teams, with a little help from my dad, a TV station and some human-centered leadership

• LIVE

Jules Morris, PhD · Haslam College of Business

PREVIOUSLY ON…

# WHO'S HOLDING THE MIC



### THEN · WBIR CHANNEL 10

Director of Marketing & Community Relations. The bridge between promotions and the newsroom. EP, Heartland Series.



### NOW · HASLAM, UT

Teaching marketing, human-centered design and leadership. Research on creativity and leadership.



### ALSO · SWEET BOMBDIGGITY FARMS

A farm, rescue and sanctuary. Goats are easier to manage than a 6 p.m. newscast. Barely.

*Not sales. Not exactly news. I was the balancing act in the middle.*

THE VOICE I GREW UP WITH

# *“Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains…”*

- 🎙 The voice of Clemson
- 🏈 ACC Game of the Week
- 📣 Communications, University of Kentucky




*Yes, Kentucky. Yes, we beat them this weekend. He’d have written them a gracious press release anyway.*

LESSON ONE

# “READ IT AGAIN.”

He had me read poems, play lines and speeches over and over, and coached me through every take. Even when I did not want it.

**Coaching = reps + belief.**



HOW HE LED

# FOUR MOVES FROM THE BEST BOSS I EVER WATCHED



## HAND THEM THE MIC

He empowered people to do their jobs.



## GET OUT OF THE SHOT

Then he gave them the space to do it.



## RAISE THE BAR

He held people accountable and expected big things.



## LEAD LIKE A TEACHER

Full of empathy, and he helped people reach their goals.




# 500+

**people came to his funeral. Reporters. Journalists. Radio personalities.**

And we heard the same story again and again:

*"He taught me."*

**Your staff is your legacy. The stories are a bonus.**

HUMAN-CENTERED LEADERSHIP

# DESIGN YOUR NEWSROOM AROUND THE HUMANS IN IT

## 01

### EMPATHY FIRST

Learn what your staff is carrying: classes, jobs, deadlines, the 8 a.m. they keep sleeping through.

## 02

### BUILD WITH THEM

Co-create the beats, the workflow and the norms. People protect what they help build.

## 03

### PROTOTYPE IT

Try a new process for two weeks, ask what worked, then adjust. Nothing is final.

*Your best reporter is also taking Organic Chem. Plan accordingly.*

• SUNDAY, JULY 27, 2008 · KNOXVILLE

THE STORY IN OUR NEWSROOM

# GUNMAN OPENS FIRE DURING A CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE OF "ANNIE JR."

About 25 kids on stage and roughly 200 people in the audience at Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church.

**BREAKING** 2 killed, 6 wounded by gunfire

Members tackled the gunman · Usher Greg McKendry, 60, shielded others · Linda Kraeger, 61, also killed

*The next day, children ended the service singing "The sun will come out tomorrow."*

THE GUT CHECK

# HEART DOESN'T MEAN SOFT

Someone handed us the footage. We sat in a room and decided what, if any of it, to run.

**We chose not to run it.**

- Does it advance the story?
- Is it ethical?
- Does it show empathy for the people and the community?

THE TAKEAWAY

# BONDS BEFORE BYLINES

Great newsrooms are built from the bottom up. Skip the foundation and the stories wobble.




*Start with the stories and you get 47 unread messages and zero stories filed.*

THE 5 I'S OF COMMUNICATION

# TALK TO YOUR STAFF LIKE YOU INTERVIEW A SOURCE



## IMMERSION

Notice what's said, what isn't, and the energy in the room.



## INVESTIGATION

Understand their experience before offering yours.



## IMAGINATION

Step inside their frame instead of picturing yours.



## IMITATION

Match your pace, posture and tone to theirs.



## INQUIRY

Ask one question. Then listen until they're done.

*You'd never interrupt a source mid-quote. Give your copy desk the same courtesy.*

CREATIVE ROLE IDENTITY

# EVERYONE ON STAFF IS A CREATIVE

My research: when people see themselves as creative, they take more creative risks. So name it out loud.

TONIGHT'S CREDITS

| | |
|---|---|
| CREATIVE | The copy editor |
| CREATIVE | The photographer |
| CREATIVE | The social media lead |
| CREATIVE | The data person |
| VERY CREATIVE | Whoever finally fixed the CMS |

CHANGE VS. TRANSITION

# CHANGE IS THE EVENT. TRANSITION IS HOW PEOPLE GO THROUGH IT.



## ENDINGS

Seniors graduate. Editors hand off. Honor it with a send-off and a toast.



## MESSY MIDDLE

New roles, nobody's sure who does what. Make it safe to experiment.



## NEW BEGINNINGS

New voices, new beats. Celebrate that first byline like it matters.

*Every May your newsroom gets a cast change. Treat it like a series finale, not a cancellation.*

STEAL THIS

# YOUR MONDAY PLAYBOOK

1. **Check in before the checklist.** Five minutes of people before the story budget.
2. **Hand them the mic.** Real ownership of real stories.
3. **Get out of the shot.** Give space. No hover-editing.
4. **"Read it again."** Edit with them, not for them.
5. **Decide your gut-check questions now,** before the hard story shows up.

STAY TUNED

# KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

OR EMAIL ME

julesmo@utk.edu

## CONNECT ON LINKEDIN

linkedin.com/in/julescmorris

## GET THE NEWSLETTER

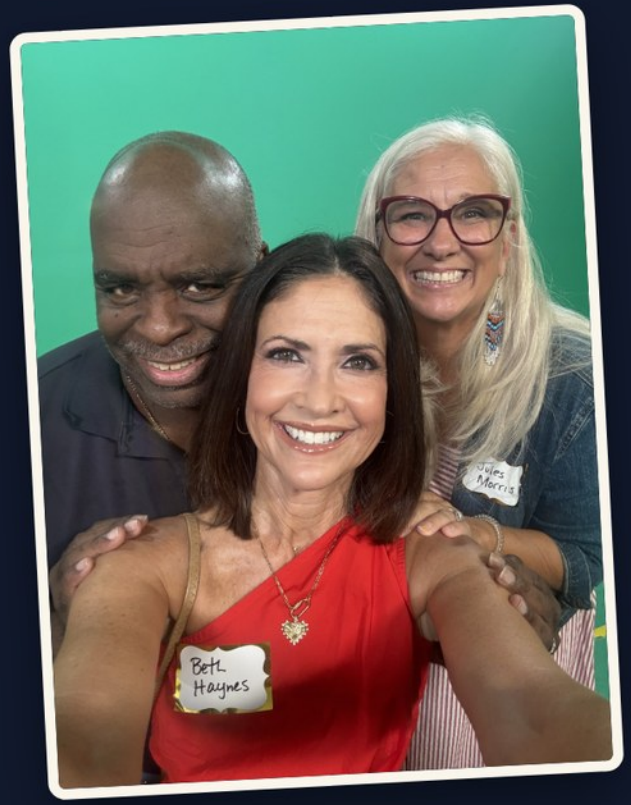
Human-centered leadership, monthly on LinkedIn

THAT'S A WRAP

# BONDS BEFORE BYLINES.

*Now let's chat. Ask me anything (yes, even about TV).*

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*Years later, still on the green screen together.*