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>> PERSON: As part of a "Talks at Google" five-part podcast miniseries in partnership with the Google News Initiative, in this episode, you'll hear from Dmitry Shishkin of BBC World service about the future of news at the first Google News Initiative Innovation Forum in London. You can watch a video of the talk by visiting g.co/TalksAtGoogle/GlobalConversation.

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>> DMITRY SHISHKIN: Hi, all. It's a real pleasure to be here ten days before I leave the BBC, so thanks. Really, really delighted to be sharing something which probably has been the most important project that my team and I have been doing in the last two years or so. So everybody knows about famous six user needs that BBC has been applying like crazy across the world in the last 18 months or so. So I would like to unpack it a little bit and I would like to actually explain to you how we did it and when it means to other newsrooms, and the disclaimer is

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going to be that I have been [inaudible] a lot of time by our marketing comms and audiences team. I don't really care. This is important. BBC is a public service organization. Whatever we come up with in terms of research which is relevant to the global journalism, we need to give back. And this is my--this is my mantra, and I'm going to share it with you. This has been available publicly before. So, um, so 28 teams up until 18 months ago--so up until 12 months ago. So all very different, all doing very different things across the world. My problem was that I'm digital editor of four languages. I don't control what they output, but I control how they output and what they do and what they prioritize. So my problem was that, at some point of time, languages stopped growing internationally because they are--they have been really great 10, 15 years ago, and then suddenly, competitors just kind of came in and competitors overtook us. And they really have become better.

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So my job was to think with audiences, with other teams, with the product teams to think about, "How else can we grow?" And actually, BBC Mundo, our largest and most successful team around the world has led the way. So about five years ago, they decided that there was no way BBC Mundo, a team of 40 people or 50 people can beat Latin American competition. So they needed to find a niche, and this was basically the mantra which have we have been talking to people around languages. And we were saying, "If you can explain why you exist in every single market around the world, then you have a chance to succeed." And we then--then we started--we had been given the money by the government to launch 12 new teams around the world to address some of the news deficiencies situation around the globe, and we had decided to start applying the six user needs model to the new teams because actually, it is easier to tell new people, new teams how to do journalism in a different way rather than retrain the

existing 28. But when we launched the 12 new teams, we basically said to them that--

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"Do your editorial content. Do editorial morning meeting. Do your commissioning and planning process according to this." So this is a much more beautified Google version of six user needs, I have to say. Really beautiful colors and everything. But the gist stays the same. Basically, every person who wakes up and checks the news, they are likely to consume the headlines already with the local providers. The BBC probably, with the exception of maybe five or six teams around the world, the BBC is not going to tell people anything new. I would argue even further, if you have a subscription to AP, to France-Presse, to Reuters in our newsroom, you already have access to international news. BBC has got to be delivering something different. And I this is what we were saying. This is where it really becomes really important thing. Our audiences team, this is not what BBC has come up with. This is what audiences told us they needed from news. So we went around the world and we spoke to people--real people--and we actually have formulated that strategy according to what we have been told.

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So actually, we have been very carefully using the words that people have been using to us in our interviews. And they have said that these are six reasons why they consume news. And of course, "update me" is one of the reasons why they consume news. The trouble is, majority of newsrooms still think that "update me" is the most important thing. However, what we have shown--again, using data, numerically, what we have shown is that as soon as you start addressing other five user needs on a continuous basis, using the same, covering the same news agenda that you have on the day the growth is coming, because this is, again, becoming your differentiate, and this is becoming what basically separates you from the rest of the market. And just very briefly, "update me" is what has happened; "keep me on trend," what do people talk about, event on social media; "inspire me" is about "tell me a story about inspirational person who has gone through a particular difficult time or experience and persevered"; "divert me" is "give me something different apart from Syria or something really hard news; I really want to be diverted into learning about something else."

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And two other user needs. One is "educate me"--"explain to me; don't tell me about another, say, incursion in Gaza, for example, but tell me and explain to me the process and the conflict in Q and A, for example." And "give me perspective" is about "give me a story and tell me what people talk about this, but not on the social media level, but on the level of different perspectives from different experts and stuff." So the reason why I wanted to talk to this about today, because this is what unites 40 BBC languages around the world. They also have completely different audiences and they also have completely different circumstances. I mean, you know, there are markets of want and there are markets of need. There

is Somalian market and there is your Iranian market, where the BBC is banned, or Vietnamese or Russian or Latin American. All of them are quite different, but as soon as we have moved the team to divert the commissioning and planning process to, according to these user needs.

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I mean, yeah, there are some times when I fly around the world. You go to a newsroom and they see the whiteboard and they pitch the ideas and suddenly, you see that they suddenly don't pitch the idea just to say what they are going to cover. They actually say what user needs they are applying. And this basically kind of proved my point, that my team and I have succeeded, in terms of enforcing that new approach. And that is great because that--sometimes people think that this is just only about commissioning story, but no, because you can commission a story in a particular user need, but then your headline will still indicate a different user need, then the people will not be interested. So the way you write your story and the way you pitch your story, I mean, it's great because sometimes you go to a editorial meeting and people will not stop until somebody formulates the headline. And some editors are becoming incredibly, incredibly energetic about this. So they say, "Don't tell me about something is interesting, but tell me how you're going to pitch it to me." So what I'm going to show you, and I guess the reason why this is important is that this is about the schizophrenic output of some of teams in the past. And I mean it in kind of the most, you know, in the kindest possible way, here.

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So the graph basically shows you the number of items per used-- red line--and the gray bar is basically the popularity of each user need. And you see that people have been producing a lot of "update me" stories, whereas actual, "update me" story was the least popular category of that particular output. So we have been addressing this in the last two years. New teams, old teams alike. And I wanted to briefly go through the actual examples, and I wanted to use Mo Salah. So I'm not a Liverpool fan, but this is something which we have been using with BBC Arabic team at one of the away days. This is really powerful, actually. Get a bunch of editors in the room and say, "Give me three headlines for each user need about a particular story in five minutes." And they come back, and they come back with suddenly--suddenly, you have 20 ideas or 30 ideas, and they're all very interesting and all very different. I have done it in Nairobi with Swahilis. I have done it with Arabic team. Recently, we have--my team and I have been doing it a lot.

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So "update me" story is more, "Salah, we need something," you know? Or, you know, we need the best person or the best footballer of the year or some kind of different kind of award. Typical story, you know, worth writing. "Keep me on trend" is about what kind of songs have Liverpool supporters created about Mo Salah. Still about him, still about him winning something, because you can mention it in the headline, but the story is different. That's "keep me on trend"--what do people talk about

this? Or that you can actually buy stuff with Mo Salah's face on it bedding. Mo Salah's bedding. That's typical "keep me on trend" type of story. "Educate me" is about how Mo Salah goes fasting, still plays football at the same time. I didn't know that, but that is a really good indicate--so instead of-- basically, instead of writing a story about Mo Salah winning something, because probably like 10,000 other news operators in the world will still write the same thing on the same day. So we will write something different. And we will not be afraid of actually leading our websites with a different story. Another "educate me" story is that "how many times does he do yoga every day" or "every week" or something like that.

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So that--what kind of physical exercise routine he's sticking to. "Give me perspective story" would be a typical background piece on him funding, you know, football schools around the world or in his area in Egypt where he's coming from. Or another "give me perspective" piece would be about while he lived in Chelsea. You know, exactly. So you can, again, write the story with just headline saying, you know, " he has won something," but then the whole story will still be about something else. And then "divert me" was about--this was a wonderful story, I think, I took from, I think, "Liverpool Echo." I think this is about a Liverpool falafel seller who was give falafels for free every time Mo Salah scored or something like that. So that's a "divert me" story. And then another "divert me" story is about "can you actually show me a picture gallery of all wonderful murals with Mo Salah's face on it?" That's another story.

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So it's basically--this is, very quickly, I showed you 12 different options of covering the same Mo Salah story. And imagine, if you have been on Nairobi on the day when South Africa--something really important happened in South Africa. I think it was decriminalization of--can't remember, won't say. But it was exactly the same situation. I got all the editors into the same room and said, "Give me six options of covering that story apart from 'update me.'" Because "update me" is knee-jerk reaction for every editor. On the day when Macron won elections in France, probably out of 40 teams that we have at the BBC, 37 areas around the world probably wouldn't care that, you know, elections of France resulted in Macron winning. Let's be honest, right? If you're in Jakarta, why would you care? We as an international broadcaster are obliged to cover it. We are because it's an important story. We need to explain to people why it is important. But instead of writing a story of "he said," "she said," percentages, reaction, all that kind of stuff, we actually did a story that Macron has become the youngest leader of France since Napoleon. And we used it in the first paragraph, and then we did a listicle on five other youngest leaders around the world.

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So we told people the story, but we actually made it more interesting to them. So that really is working for us, and another inspirational story--these are two kids of somebody from my team. And it's a piece which she

has written for BBC News website, one of the most popular stories on the website on that day. It's about how the two London kids are inspired by Mo Salah's story. It is really great, and then another "inspire me" story is about, of course, you know, his story from--you know, from humble beginnings to super stardom. So these six user needs really revolutionized the way BBC projects itself around the world and the way we are trying to carve out niches around the world in media markets, from Indonesia to Latin America. And my advice to any news organization, and indeed to any other content organization would be about, "you only will succeed if you understand why you exist in the market and what your niche is."

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And you learn--use the data. You interpret the data, take out the decisions, and then explain it to the rest of the company so everybody pulls to the same direction, and the growth will come. And I think that's it. Thank you.

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>> PERSON: Launched in 2018, the Google News Initiative is Google's effort to work with the news industry to help journalism thrive in the digital age. To learn more about the GNI, please visit g.co/TalksAtGoogle/GoogleNewsInitiative.