DON’T BURY THE LEAD! UNDERSTANDING WHO AND WHAT SHAPES ORGANIZATIONAL MEDIA CONTENT

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ABSTRACT

Management scholars have found that the volume and tenor of organizational media content influences numerous organizational outcomes. This research stream, however, tends to focus on its consequences, while remaining largely silent on its antecedents. Given the media’s role in influencing observers’ perceptions of organizations, understanding the processes and factors that shape organizational media content is consequential. To advance theory and research on organizational media content, we investigate the simultaneous influence of: 1) Who is covered, 2) What is covered, and 3) How journalists’ routines shape their coverage of firms. To test our hypotheses, we examine the tenor and volume of media content around a newsworthy organizational occurrence—annual earnings announcements. Overall, our findings suggest that media volume and tenor are simultaneously, yet differentially, shaped by an organization’s reputation, its actual earnings relative to analyst expectations, its prior media coverage, and its earnings press release.