Lesson Plan: Introduction to Business Reporting

Course Context: Advanced Reporting / Specialty Beat Reporting
Class Length: 75 minutes

Learning Objectives
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify the core principles of business reporting and how they differ from general daily reporting.
2. Recognize the unique demands of accuracy, clarity, and context in financial journalism.
3. Analyze the tone and voice of business coverage compared to general news.
4. Apply these lessons in a short hands-on reporting/writing exercise.

Lesson Outline
1. Warm-Up: "What's Business News?" (10 minutes)

- Ask: *"When you hear 'business reporting,' what comes to mind?"*
  - Expected answers: stock tickers, corporate earnings, Wall Street, jargon, "boring."
- Broader definition: business stories also cover labor, immigration, housing, tech, consumer goods, consumer purchasing, carbon capture markets, free speech, and even sports franchises—essentially, there is a business angle to every story.
  - Ask: "*Considering the broader definition, what are some current examples of stories in the news with business angles?* "
  - Expected answers: tariffs, interest rates, inflation and beyond.
- Key takeaway: Business reporting touches every beat — it's how money, power, and people intersect.

---

2. Lecture: Similarities & Differences (20 minutes)
A. Similarities to Daily Reporting:

- Both require accuracy, clarity, balance, and verification.
- Both demand strong news judgment and a strong news peg: what matters now, and why.
- Both value human sources as much as documents and data.

B. Differences in Business Reporting:

- Helping readers understand intricate data and complex transactions of business requires reporters to translate difficult ideas and financial tools into approachable language. It also requires reporters be able to:
  - Read and analyze earnings reports
  - Dig through SEC filings
  - Identify economic indicators
  - Spot market trends
  - Recognize innovation in the market and industry
- Audience expectations: While there is significant overlap, writing for business-focused readers is different than writing for a general audience. They expect an extra layer of information.
  - General Expectations:
    - Clarity
    - Accuracy
    - Objectivity
    - Relevance
  - Business Reader Expectations:

        - Industry expertise
        - Data-driven analysis
        - Actionable insights
        - Broader economic impacts
- Specialized sourcing:
    - Business reporting requires more than lurking around c-suite offices. It requires an understand of the business community as a whole and the data and reports they traffic in. Sources can include:
        - Analysts
        - Economists
        - Licensing documents
        - Government filings
        - Court records
        - Trade associations
        - Shareholder reports
- Impact lens:
    - Business readers what to understand how a particular story is going to influence both their own interests and the broader economy. Reporters should always ask how an issue effects workers, consumers, investors, and the broader economy.
- Tone/voice: More restrained, analytical, less conversational.
    - Daily news: *"Storm slams Midwest, leaving thousands without power."*
    - Business: *"Midwest utilities face $40M in storm-related damages, potentially raising rates."*

---

3. Case Study: Tone & Voice Analysis (15 minutes)

Provide students with two short stories (you can choose, or you can. Use the provided materials):

1. A general daily news story
2. A business framing of the same event

Discussion prompts:

- How does the lede differ?
- What details are emphasized in each?
- What's the intended audience takeaway?
- How does the voice shift?

---

4. Hands-On Activity: Rewrite the Story (20 minutes)

- Students will be provided with a fictional press release focused on layoff at a Des Moines based tech company (printable one-page version below).
- Challenge them to rewrite two 3 paragraph briefs, one in a daily news voice and the other in a business news voice.

Share & compare as a class.

---

5. Wrap-Up & Reflection (10 minutes)

Discussion:

- *"What's hardest about shifting from daily reporting to business reporting?"*
- *"How do you balance clarity for general readers with precision for financial insiders?"*
- *"How does voice/tone affect credibility in business journalism?"*

Key takeaway: Business reporting is not "different journalism" — it's journalism with a sharper lens on money, markets, and impact.

Suggested Readings & Resources

- The Wall Street Journal – front page vs. “Markets” section (tone comparison).
- The New York Times – Business Day vs. Metro section.
- Reuters Handbook of Journalism: Business & Financial Reporting.
- *Show Me the Money* (Columbia Journalism Review guide).

Deliverables for Students

- Pre-class reading: Two short stories on the same event (general vs. business framing).
    - If possible, provide the following stories on your university’s digital content delivery system. Have students post a business story and, using their example, identify two differences in the story from typical daily news reporting. Students must also react to two other posts, explaining why they agree or disagree with the original poster’s findings.
- In-class exercise: Rewrite a press release into both a daily news and a business news brief.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TechCorp Announces Workforce Restructuring to Accelerate Shift Toward Cloud-Based Services

Des Moines, Iowa — TechCorp today announced a restructuring of its Des Moines operations that will impact approximately 500 employees. The changes affect multiple departments, including engineering, customer service, and marketing.

TechCorp currently employs more than 1,200 people in central Iowa. Company leaders emphasized that the restructuring is designed to better align staffing with the company's long-term strategic vision while allowing for increased investment in high-growth business areas.

"While today's decision is difficult, this restructuring allows us to invest in high-growth areas and secure TechCorp's long-term future," said Maria Jensen, Chief Executive Officer of TechCorp. "We are deeply grateful for the contributions of our departing colleagues and are committed to supporting them during this transition."

The layoffs are a part TechCorp's transition from traditional software development to advanced cloud-based data services.

Local economists note that this represents one of the largest single-day job reductions in the Des Moines metro in recent years, with potential ripple effects on housing, consumer spending, and small businesses. Despite the impact, TechCorp believes its renewed focus will position the company to deliver more value to clients and the community in the years ahead.

About TechCorp
TechCorp is a leading provider of innovative technology solutions, serving clients nationwide with software, data analytics, and cloud-based services. Headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, TechCorp has been recognized for its commitment to innovation, customer success, and community investment.

Media Contact:
Bethany Bethany
Director of Communications
XXX-XXX-XXXXX
Bethany.Bethany@techcorp.com