

Intra-Newsroom SoJo Collabs

Sharing bylines to help solutions journalism catch on quick



What do you mean by a “SoJo Collab”?

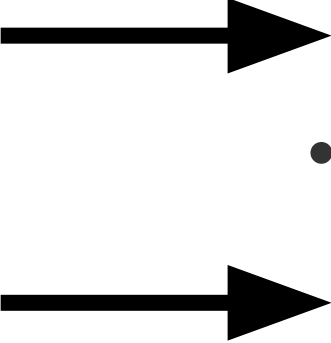
In these slides, a sojo collab refers to a project where **a reporter who has done solutions reporting before partners up with a colleague who hasn't yet.**

- Often involves shorter news stories that normally wouldn't get a multi-person byline the way a major enterprise story would
 - Generally the story's topic should be in the comfort zone of the reporter less experienced with sojo
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Why do sojo collabs?

- Lowers barriers for reporters new to solutions journalism
- Moves solutions journalism from theory to practice for more of the team
- Breaking out of beat silos & doubling the expertise = better journalism!

Potential challenges & possibly helpful tips

- Besides one or two people, no one in the newsroom understands solutions journalism
 - Reporters are used to working in silos; collaboration is new
 - [Host a training](#) for the newsroom from an SJN trainer! This can also be useful for gauging interest
 - Reporter initiating the collaboration writes out step-by-step how they would do the story alone—then share the doc and meet to discuss how to delegate and/or change
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- A diagram consisting of two thick black arrows pointing from the left column of challenges to the right column of tips. The first arrow connects the first challenge to the first tip, and the second arrow connects the second challenge to the second tip.

Potential challenges & possibly helpful tips (cont)

- Reporters are hesitant to take on a solutions story because it feels like *one more thing* on an already tight schedule
- Try to get an editor on board to push solutions collabs newsroom-wide
- Pitch solutions angle for a “problem” story that would get coverage anyway
- Pitch an evergreen solutions story and give potential partners scheduling options (what week in the next month can we do this?)

Pitching a sojo collab: get the ball rolling

- Start with your own solutions story idea on your colleague's beat (bonus points if it intersects with your own beat!)
- Ask what they think, and if there are other, better/more interesting responses to the same problem or a different one
- Emphasize ways that collaboration can lighten the load; you're splitting time spent reporting in two, and you can split the writing too (bonus points for splitting it along the lines of the four pillars)
- If it's evergreen, choose a timeframe — I like to ask “what week in the next month would work best for you?” and then follow up, follow up, follow up

Sample schedule: a sojo collab in a workweek

Day 0: Make your pitch & get buy-in to work together on a story idea. This may be best as a phone call or in-person. 📞

Day 1: Discuss what sources you need & what questions will need to be asked in order to get info for all four pillars. 🏛️ Delegate who's doing what; don't forget to talk about what images you'll need and who should get them. A shared doc & some Slack/Teams/whatever messages may be enough for this.

Day 2-3: Reporters do reporting 🤖 The initiating reporter should check in at the end of both days so info gathered is shared; it can also help if interview notes are in a shared folder or doc.

Day 4: Writing day! 🖋️ But first: Decide together how to tackle the writing process—create a shared outline, and one person does the drafting? Draft separate sections and weave them together later? Make sure you're on the same page about this, then write. Chat about the plan in the morning or as part of the previous day's reporting check in.

Day 5: Finish writing & editing in a shared doc, then file the story & high-five! 🎉