

## BUILDING TRUST: WHAT WORKS FOR NEWS SITES

Austin, TX – February 26, 2019 – Building trust with the audience is key to the success of a newsroom. In this era of “fake news,” however, trust is increasingly difficult to earn. In a new study, the Center for Media Engagement (CME) teamed up with Joy Mayer of [Trusting News](#) and two newsroom partners, *USA TODAY* and the *Tennessean*, to test two approaches to building trust:

- Showing the audience how journalists approach a story by adding an “explain your process” box to news stories.
- Showing the audience a commitment to balanced coverage of partisan topics by adding a “demonstrating balance” box to news stories.

The “explain your process” box included text informing readers how and why the news organization pursued the story and where reporters gathered information. The “demonstrating balance” box linked readers to a story expressing an opposing viewpoint. Experiments using the boxes led to the following findings:

- Adding a box that explains the story process improves perceptions of a news organization.
- Findings were inconclusive for adding a box that points readers to an article with an opposing viewpoint.

The “explain your process” experiments suggest newsrooms should consider using the box in news stories. “Newsrooms can easily put this tool together using information from reporters' newsgathering,” said Gina Masullo Chen, CME Assistant Director. “It’s a simple way to improve trust.”

To read more about CME's findings, access the full report on our website:  
<https://mediaengagement.org/research/building-trust>.

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*The Center for Media Engagement, part of the Moody College of Communication at The University of Texas at Austin, provides research-based techniques for engaging digital audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. Learn more at [mediaengagement.org](https://mediaengagement.org)*