ORGANIZING A STORY/labeling

Directions
This is a graded "in-class" exercise on story organization. Below is information from a story, divided into three sections based on the source: profile, interview, and document. You are to combine this material into a story, just as you will be doing for your final story in the representative profile.

Step 1:
Take each paragraph and label it as a sub-theme in the larger story. In short, put material that has a similar content together. You should mark material for the lead, the nut graph, and for each sub theme you see. Watch that you don’t have too many sub-themes.

Step 2:
Construct an outline of the sub-themes for the story. Write a paragraph or two explaining what you are attempting in this outline and why.

Step 3:
Write the story by organizing the pieces into a cohesive story, complete with lead and, if possible, a strong conclusion. You do not need to use all the material, but you should use most of it.

The key to Step 3 will be constructing bridges and transitions that link each paragraph together smoothly. (You can write your own material here to add to the story, but this should not be extensive. A sentence or even a phrase or word should be enough.)

I'll give you the rest of the class to do Steps 1 and 2. If you have time, you can begin Step 3. Step 3 is to be handed in at the beginning of the next class.

STEP 1: LABELING SUB-THemes (AND LEAD, NUT GRAPH)

Step 1: Labeling sub-themes
In the line in front of each paragraph, write the label the sub-theme you identified.

Profile material

________________ Koch is an attorney here in Bloomington. He has been an attorney for 20 years.

________________ Since entering the field, Koch has found that not everyone looks up to lawyers in the way he once looked up to Perry Mason.

________________ Koch thinks that some contemporary legal dramas may compound the image problem of lawyers. "I love 'L.A.Law,'" said Koch. "I have a friend who practices
in the same building that the show is filmed in, and he says the show is really accurate. But 'The People's Court,' now that's a disaster. I think shows like that can help start misconceptions."

"My most frustrating experience in law is the public misconceptions," Koch said. "People think all attorneys are wealthy and greedy."

Koch's work has been moving more towards personal injury work recently.

His personal injury clients aren't getting rich off of their suits, Koch said. Unlike the multi-million dollar settlements that make the newspaper headlines, most of Koch's cases result in settlements of $3,000 to $5,000. A few of his bigger cases have settled for as much as $40,000, but these are very unusual.

[On the public criticism of personal-injury lawyers:] "If people could see the suffering of victims, the economic suffering, and the unfairness, they would have a different attitude," Koch said

"In most of the cases with the big money, the suffering or injury is so profound that no dollar amount could begin to compensate the person for what they've been through," Koch said. "Usually the amount is not much more than legal fees, medical bills and lost wages."

When Eric Allan Koch was about eight years old, he made a career decision. He wanted Perry Mason's job.

Interview material

David Ferguson, local attorney :

People often greet David Ferguson with a smile. But they aren't just happy to meet him, in his opinion. "They think of a great lawyer joke, but they're afraid of offending me," Ferguson said.

On advertising: "I think it's great," Ferguson said. "It educates the public about what legal services there are and what their rights are."

Ferguson is puzzled by some people's reactions to legal advertising. "People don't look at Pepsi and say, 'Boy, that company must really be hurting. They have to advertise to get business.' That's the attitude some people take when lawyers advertise, though."

"In general, people hate lawyers," Ferguson said. "But theirs is the greatest."
James Cooper, IU professor who teaches a class at IU about the relationship of law and society:

James Cooper thinks that lawyer jokes may indicate the overall attitude society holds toward lawyers. "People give lawyers a high status, but they don't respect them," said Cooper. "They think they don't have principles."

Cooper thinks that lawyers' high salaries are part of the reason people view the profession negatively. "There's a certain amount of jealousy," said Cooper.

Despite the prejudices people might hold towards lawyers as a group, they are often very loyal to the lawyers they know personally. Cooper compared this opinion to how people complain about politicians. "They gripe about how crooked congress is, but then they stand up for their own congressman," he said.

Jane Davidson, IU law school faculty:

Personal injury attorneys may have the worst public image of all lawyers. Labeled sharks or ambulance chasers, they are portrayed as greedy or dishonest on television shows and in jokes.

Bill Andrews, Bloomington lawyer, 28 years:

Bill Andrews doesn't think that money is an important factor in how the public perceives lawyers. Andrews explained that much of the negative attitude about law is due to the nature of the profession. For every winner in a court case, there is also a loser. "Lawyers do make enemies in being an advocate for their client," said Andrews. "Fifty percent of the people you meet, you aggravate."

"It [advertising] does detract some from the professionalism of lawyers in general," Andrews said.

Ken Nunn, local attorney, 23 years:

Ken Nunn would probably defend legal advertising more ardently than any other lawyer in Bloomington. Nunn was the first to advertise in Bloomington. His advertisements can now be found in the phone book, the newspaper and on billboards.

Feedback about his advertising. "I get one letter a year, if I get that many," Nunn said.

"I think people respond to the quality of the ads," Nunn added. "It's not like the late-night advertising on television with red lights flashing and an ambulance in the background. I read a survey where 80 to 90 percent of the people said they receive tasteful advertising in a positive way."
In a poll conducted by New York Woman Magazine, lawyers were ranked with investment bankers and used car salesmen as the three most hated professionals. A company in Berkeley, California, has even come out with "Gummy Lawyers," chewy candies that are shaped like sharks.

A fourth of all lawyers make $100,000 a year or more. At the top 15 law firms in the nation, salaries for each partner average $739,000. (American Bar Association survey)

In 1988 the average first-year salary for a law school graduate was $32,757. If the graduate chose to join the 62 percent of lawyers who are private practitioners, he would have made $37,000 the first year, up 12 percent from the previous year. (American Bar Association survey)

A survey published by the Illinois Bar Journal found that the opinion people have of lawyers dropped remarkably after viewing television commercials for lawyers. Questioned before and after viewing sample television commercials, people's rating of lawyers as trustworthy dropped from 71 percent to 14 percent. The rating for honesty dropped from 65 percent to 14 percent.

STEP 2: OUTLINE AND JUSTIFICATION

On a separate sheet of paper (on the computer), structure an outline of your major sub-themes. Think carefully about the order in which they make the most sense. The outline should look like this:

LEAD: [Type in the lead you have chosen.]

NUT GRAPH: [Type in the graph that states the main point of the story. (There is a nut graph already in part of the information given. However, if you want to construct your own, you can.)]

SUB-THEME A: (A word, phrase, short sentence)

SUB-THEME B:

SUB-THEME C:

SUB-THEME D:

SUB-THEME E: . . .and so forth.
JUSTIFICATION: Tell me what you are attempting to do with this structure, ie. why you have ordered the story in this way? You should give me reasons for the specific order you have chosen. Do the ideas build on one another, for example?

STEP 3: WRITING THE STORY

Move the blocks of text around into the order you want them. Recommendation: Do the lead and nut graph first, then sub-theme A. Write the bridges/transitions you need to make that flow smoothly. Then go to sub-theme B, and so on.