

An Exploration of Interviewing Techniques in In-Depth Reporting

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Abstract: Successful in-depth reporting is not just about conveying information, but also about reflecting valuable and influential facts and phenomena, inspiring thought and even introspection. This article explores how to use interviewing techniques to maximise the benefits of in-depth reporting and to obtain the most effective and compelling factual information by looking at interview formats, interview attitudes, the interviewee environment and how to guide the subject matter and go deeper into it.

Keywords: In-Depth Reporting; Interviews; Themes

Introduction

Communication is the most important step throughout a news report or programme documentary in order to achieve the multi-layered and multi-perspective requirements of in-depth reporting from the surface to the inside. Expanding from the surface to the deep, from listening to the interview to subjective perception, the interviewer is never just a questioning machine. In his *Creative Interviewing*, Professor Ken Metzler defines the interview as "an exchange of information in the form of a dialogue between two parties, on behalf of the audience behind it, to achieve a level of knowing that neither party could achieve alone." It is the exchange and circulation of information that is the ultimate goal of an interview. In order to reveal the thought-provoking connotation and essence of a person or event, the interviewer needs to use some communication skills appropriately, and through the accumulation of rich material for interviewing people, to both discern and predict and summarise; to be responsible for the real information conveyed in the report, and to give full and equal respect to the interviewee, revealing in a subtle way The interviewee's mental state and inner world.

1. Closed versus open-ended interviews

Conducting in-depth interviews requires attention to the design and arrangement of the questions asked. Generally speaking, there are two types of interviews: closed interviews and open interviews. Closed interviews are simple and clear, usually in the form of judgmental sentences, with one question and one answer, focusing on the content of the answer rather than information about the interviewee, and are mostly found in formal interviews such as popular opinion survey programmes and official press conferences. The closed interview format can also side-step the narrative style of a programme or documentary. For example, Beijing's *Wind is Strong*, which won the highest accolade documentary award at the Australian International Independent Film Festival in 2000, is structured in the form of numerous street interviews in which passers-by walking through the streets of Beijing are asked the unannounced question, "Is it windy in Beijing?" Typically, closed interviews capture the natural, intuitive thoughts and physical responses of the interviewees. The responses to the closed interviews are often firm and clear, reflecting a clear attitude.

Open-ended interviews, on the other hand, use a non-directed form of communication, where the questions are usually broad and general in scope, where the interviewee can interpret the questions freely and flexibly without precise answers, and where the conversations are generally longer, and therefore more conducive to creating an atmosphere of mind-liberating conversation, and thus to uncovering deeper clues to the causes of the events and the psychological emotions of the interviewee. Open-ended questions make it easier for the interviewees to get caught up in their memories of the incident, to re-examine themselves and to express a more mature re-conception of the facts after the emotional ferment of the experience. For example, in the famous online interview programme

Thirteen Invitations, the writer Xu Zhiyuan, as the interviewer, conducts an in-depth interview with the actress Yao Chen, and is unconsciously cautious in the face of her status as an actress. The interview also answers the public's curiosity by drawing out from this seemingly uninteresting and hopeless memory why Yao Chen was determined to go to Beijing to act and start a new life. The interview is no longer about the high and mighty actress, but about Yao Chen, who, like ordinary people, is confused and hesitant, but never gives up.

In the course of a long in-depth interview, we should try to combine closed and open questions, with tensions and tensions, both with closed questions to ask for more detailed information and with open questions to clarify the event or delve into the subject of the event. By combining the two, you can also build on your strengths and avoid your weaknesses, avoiding the superficiality of closed interviews to obtain information and overcoming the disadvantages of open interviews that are time-consuming and have too much personalised information.

2. An equal 'befriending' approach to conversation

Regardless of the social status of the interviewee, the interviewer should adopt an equal and friendly attitude towards communication, believing that his or her sincerity and honesty can only lead to a sense of trust and security on the part of the other party, thus naturally presenting himself or herself and removing taboos. The "father of documentary cinema", Flaherty, has advocated to the public the "friendship style" of filming, which means that the creator and the subject establish a good relationship of cooperation, but also a good social relationship, mutual equality and respect, in order to make the documentary in a friendly This allows the documentary to record life in a friendly atmosphere and to dig deeper into the subject matter of the work.

The interviewer should start the process of asking questions with a level perspective, while observing, comparing, analysing and studying. As the process questions deepen, they may generate their own subtle or strong emotional experiential activities. On the one hand, this indicates that they have touched the spiritual world of the interviewee and are infected by their deeply buried emotions, on the other hand, it is time to remind themselves to return to rationality, not to mention that they should not interfere or interfere less with the ongoing behavioural activities of the interviewee. With a sense of self-reflection, the interviewer should use self-critical language at the right time, because when faced with an unfamiliar interviewer sitting across the table, even if he or she has prepared mentally in advance, the interviewer's words, attitude, reactions and even some subtle expressions and movements may affect the sensitive interviewee's psyche.

3. Suitable interview environment for interviewees to relax

The right environment for the interview can have a different effect on the interviewee's mindset. For example, when interviewed at home, in the office or in public, the interviewee's language system will unconsciously change. Depending on the interviewer's desired content and effect, choosing to interview at home will make the interview atmosphere more relaxed and allow the interviewee to speak freely and get a more personal response. When interviewing in public, the interviewees' responses are generally more restrained and their posture is more tense; or when conducting live interviews on unexpected events, the context is vivid and complex, the images are rich in information, and the interviewees are more likely to produce dramatic interviews when they are emotionally charged.

Choosing the right setting for an interview is crucial to the tone, style and content of an in-depth interview. For example, in a special production of "History Explodes Before Your Eyes", which was produced by Phoenix TV to review the horrific events of September 11 in the United States, the host who had hosted the live coverage of September 11 was interviewed as a witness to history. The host sits down at the studio in a different perspective and posture from that of the time, and calmly recalls the tense state of the broadcast as the interviewer guides him step by step; while the reporter who was on the scene of the terrorist incident goes back to the location and recalls the chaotic and panic scene at that time. "The Guardian's senior executives, who were responsible for the entire live coverage, used the keyed images of the September 11 terrorist incident as a backdrop to talk about the news interruptions, emergency deployments, connections to the US and many other background information. These elaborate designs made the whole interview fit with the environment and content and went exceptionally well.

4. A clear theme to guide the topic in depth

In the course of a long, in-depth interview, it is easy for the interviewer to fall into the misconception of an 'exhaustive interview', where 'exhaustive' does not mean in-depth, and there is a clear distinction between the two. "An 'exhaustive interview' needs to start from the surface of the interviewee's own events and emotional experiences, and record in detail the line of development of the character's story, but it is easy to be disorganised, not reflecting a clear common theme, and not highlighting the key points of interconnection between each segment of the interview. What we need is a multi-faceted interview from point to point, extending horizontally and vertically, from surface to surface, around a certain issue or phenomenon, so as to give the audience a structured understanding, even from the perspective of the whole layout. The perspective of the subject matter provides insight and expands one's own emotions and perceptions.

In order to clarify the subject and phrase the questions clearly, the interviewer should prepare for the interview by reviewing background information on the topic in question beforehand, developing the current situation and organising questions and logical constructs based on what is known. Richard Merriman, a former journalist for Life magazine, always took the upcoming interview with the utmost seriousness: "Preparation for an important interview includes refraining from alcohol and eating starchy and sugary foods for several days in a row, getting enough sleep the day before the interview and eating a high-protein breakfast on the day of the interview. The purpose of this is: to keep your mind clear so that you can listen carefully during the interview and be prepared for follow-up questions".

The philosopher and educator William James once gave a piece of advice to teachers: make sure you know the content of your lecture thoroughly, and leave the rest to chance. The same applies to the field of interviewing. Only a thorough understanding of the subject matter of the interview will allow you to develop new ideas for the conversation, and even if the interviewee deviates from his or her previous interview plan, the conversation will be able to return to the original subject matter smoothly because of good planning and forethought.

In the interview process, the interviewer is a communicator but is also essentially a questioner, and although he or she must not be aggressive in his or her language, the goal must be to get "hard facts". Therefore, the first thing an interviewer needs to have is a curious mind, to look at things from a questioning point of view and to ask a lot of "whys". In "Thirteen Invitations", Xu Zhiyuan overheard young people dressed in exaggerated anime characters reading books in a bookstore, so he became deeply curious about this kind of people who are deeply involved in the secondary world and decided to find out what the charm of the secondary world is. In the programme, he visits post-90s anime cosplayers, post-80s anime business idols and post-70s secondary genre reclusive gods, discovering that underneath this seemingly superficial and deviant secondary genre culture lies the emptiness of dreams, the deformity and sadness of society, and every soul that escapes life and yearns for freedom.

If you sense different attitudes or detailed information about an issue during the interview, you need to respond immediately by asking for the underlying reasons. If the interviewee falls silent in response to an unexpected question, the interviewer should respect the "moment of silence" in the right way. This is in fact a silent action and language in which the interviewee hesitates, struggles, regrets or feels sad in his or her reflection, an emotion that has the power to be heard on camera.

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