

DFG StRATEGy University Potsdam  
Workshop 13 December 2016

1. Interviewer guidelines, or: How to be a better listener

1. **Pay attention.** Don't listen with the intent to reply. (Stephen Corvey)
2. **Don't multitask.**
3. When your thoughts drift to associations during the interview, let them go and **refocus**.
4. Ask **open-ended questions**: Who, what, where, when, how, ~~why~~ what for
5. If you don't know, say so and **ask**.
6. You think you know? Set your certainty aside, keep your mind open, prepare to **be amazed**.
7. His/her experience is **unique**. Don't equate it with yours.
8. Be **brief**.
9. **Don't repeat** yourself.
10. **Don't get lost** in details.

Watch Celeste Headlee TED Talk: 10 ways to have a better conversation  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/celeste\\_headlee\\_10\\_ways\\_to\\_have\\_a\\_better\\_conversation/transcript](http://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation/transcript)

2. Working with the media

1. The reporter is **not** your audience.
2. Understand the **rule of thirds**: The interview consists of your, your opponent's, and the reporter's voice.
3. Deliver ahead of the deadline to **influence and shape the story**.
4. "No comment" means **"guilty"**.
5. Comment without commenting: "I can't say... and I'll leave it to (institution)... but **what I can say** is..."
6. Everything will be **on record**. Repair is difficult.
7. **Achieve control**: Ask for questions in advance, time limit, raw recording; offer to fact check
8. Recognize the **dangerous reporters**:
  - a. The friendly guy at the bar
  - b. The quiet type
  - c. The jerk
9. Stay relaxed and friendly. Welcome all questions. Don't get mad, use sarcasm, or walk away.
10. "The best way to be boring is to leave nothing out." Voltaire

3. Avoiding traps

1. Don't bury the **lead**: Start at the end.
2. In recorded interviews: **Don't rush** your answer, answer when you're **ready**.
3. Avoid **false forced choices** (The choice isn't A or B, it's whether...)
4. Talk about what you **do know**. (What I do know is...)
5. Zoom out and **generalize**. (Whenever/ wherever we have A, we also see B).
6. Identify any **false premise** in a question. (Actually, that's not quite right. / I disagree with the premise of your question because...)
7. Don't comment on the **competition**. (I'll let A speak for himself/itself, but I can tell you...)
8. In difficult questions, **transition** to the second (safe, reassuring) part of your answer:
  - a. It's important to remember.../ Keep in mind...
  - b. However.../ That said, the bigger issue is.../ But even more importantly...
  - c. The main thing.../ What our research shows is...
9. **Don't bury** the bad parts or **delay** your response. That only makes it worse.
10. Always offer **your own proof**.

#### 4. Crafting messages

1. Base what you say on the **audience's level of knowledge** – aim for a 12-year old nephew who loves science.
2. Create **three fully-formed messages**. Each should combine one of your key points with one of your audience's key needs/values.
3. Each message has one sentence with **max. 30 words/ 30 seconds** and two commas.
4. **Message types:**
  - a. Fact/Result (X has resulted in Y.)
  - b. Problem/Solution (By doing X, we have achieved Y.)
  - c. Advocacy/Call to Action (We need X in order to do Y.)
  - d. Benefits (Through X, we can now do Y.)
5. **Support** messages with
  - a. **stories** (challenge and a creative breakthrough)
  - b. **statistics** (relatable through ratios)
  - c. **sound bites** (triples, rhetorical questions, contrasts, paradoxes, superlatives, emotions, surprise twists)
6. Use **strong** language:
  - a. We may -> Here's what we are committed to:...
  - b. I think -> Here's what I know:...
  - c. It seems -> It's clear that...
7. Evoke **concrete** images. Turn abstractions into something people can visualize.
8. **Avoid jargon**. Introduce unfamiliar words by first using familiar ones.
9. Use **natural** spoken language (short words, phrases, contractions).
10. Listen to the **sound** of your messages spoken by someone else.

#### 5. Tips for interview types

1. **Radio:** Prepare for an abrupt start, be passionate
2. **TV:** Frame your face (hair, collar), use makeup, avoid anything shiny, reduce body language
3. **Email:** Check your answers with a colleague
4. **Phone:** Stand, use a headset, smile, use prepared notes
5. **Social media:** Participate, know the culture, respond to feedback

#### 6. Interviewing the interviewer

1. Who are you?
2. What can you tell me about the story you are working on?
3. What's your angle of approach?
4. Who else are you interviewing?
5. What's the format?
6. What do you need from me?
7. Who will be doing the interview?
8. When will you be publishing the story?

#### 7. Creating a Q&A document

1. Brainstorm the most likely questions
2. Brainstorm the most damaging questions
3. Reduce both lists to six questions
4. Spend an hour developing answers to all 12 questions
5. Add open questions (Can you tell me about...)
6. Practice with a partner + record + assess