

Getting the Goods – Interviews that Work

Jacqui Banaszynski's 11 Tips and Techniques

1. Reveal Emotion and Character
 - Ask not how people feel (or think) but what they do
 - Ask about specific moments or actions
 - Put questions in a frame
2. Create Partners
 - Give subjects a reason to invest and trust
 - Tap their motivation
 - Demystify your process, but keep needed control
3. Negotiate Terms Up Front
 - Don't assume shared understanding or agreement
 - Explain your purpose, process and context
 - Determine source concerns
 - Ask questions to find solutions
4. Differentiate Sources, Relationships & Ethics
 - Officials, public figures, experts, celebrities
 - Vulnerable
 - Ordinary folk
5. Spend Time (Slow Down)
 - Plan ahead to maximize time
 - Pace the interview with your notebook
 - Give people time to think, remember, articulate
 - Probe and peel
 - With what? How? Why?
6. For Every Question... Ask 5 More
 - Be an active, interested listener
 - Listen and develop storyteller questions

7. Shut Up

- Let silence work for you

8. Seek Out “Native Habitat”

- Try to interview or envision people in the context that informs the story purpose
- Set a scene or see action
- Notice meaningful details or surroundings
- Use props or artifacts as storytelling prompts
 - Photographs, books, personal treasures
 - Status details (report out for relevancy)

9. Report with All Senses

- Pay attention not just to what the person says
- Use sensory detail to paint scenes or to prompt better questions
- Pay attention to your own emotion or perception
 - Tap your humanity
 - Inform reader reaction/curiosity through your own
 - Channel it into better questions

10. Be Columbo

- Always do a second interview
- Move to a close, then reopen
 - Linger and listen
 - Ask what is most important to know or understand
 - Ask for elaboration on a gap in your notebook
 - Ask whom else to talk to or what others would say
- Use fact-checking as a second interview
- Always ask... “How do you know?”

11. Dare to be Stupid

- Ask what you don’t know or don’t understand
- Ask what you think you know that you might not
- Clarify terms, jargon, understanding
 - Restate it in your own language or understanding
- Seek plain-speak analogies or examples