

MyHero.com Reporters' Style Sheet – Sidewalk Interviews

Description: how to produce short, strong, well-lit, clear personal-opinion statements. A production exercise that provides multiple opportunities for workshop participants to gain experience in the interview recording process and that yields a fascinating well-recorded video data bank.

FINDING A LOCATION

An appropriate location really makes this assignment easier. Your aim is to record as many short interviews as possible in whatever time you have. Choose a location that is well-lit, quiet and where people have the time to talk. A good place is where people are waiting on line. Or where people spend leisure time. Often whether in the city or small town, pedestrians on the sidewalks are busy on their way to somewhere. Parks, public plazas, shopping centers, bus stops, train stations, and cinema lines are all good bets to find a variety of potential sidewalk interviewees. Some places like firefighters' stations, taxi waiting stands, a classroom or a college campus will supply a predictable demographic group. We recorded in New York's City Hall Park during lunchtime, and about half the people who were asked to be recorded agreed. With a crew of 3 we recorded 30 short interviews in 3 hours. If you can, choose an interesting background that describes your location e.g. that includes a well-known cultural landmark or representative architecture.

CREW

Production can be done with 1, 2, 3 or more in your crew. A 3rd (or more) crew member lines up interviews and gets releases, so the audio and camera crew members stays in production, recording more interviews in a shorter period. We encourage you to rotate jobs equally during the exercise.

ENGLISH AND SPANISH LANGUAGE (and others)

Interview statements in English and Spanish can be posted on the website. There are limited opportunities for interviews in French or another language but you must contact info@myhero.com to make arrangements. We are planning to expand our translation capacity.

APPROACHING POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEES

Be friendly, non-judgmental and informative about the project. You can approach people who are in a group, but you might want to record them one at a time. Some people need encouragement before they'll agree to be recorded, but they sometimes are the most surprisingly articulate. It's ok if people say "no" (and you have to bear the rejection graciously). You'll have to ask many in order to secure a few who'll do it.

Suggested approach: "We are interviewing people about your theme here in the location for MyHero.com, a non-profit website. We are asking people to make short statements about the theme. You can say anything you like. Be as strong as you want but make sure your statement is less than a minute. We'll be posting a selection of our interviews on MyHero.com and you may be on the site! The interview will have to be in English. Is it ok? You'll have to sign this release."

SIGNED RELEASE

Make sure the interviewee signs our release. If they are younger than 21 their parent or legal guardian must sign. It is best to secure a signed release before the interview.

RECORDING

Press the record button and say, "Now please look towards the camera and tell the camera operator your name, where you live and your succinct open-ended question".

Let the interviewee make his or her statement; don't interrupt.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCINCT OPEN ENDED-QUESTIONS with hero theme:

1. Theme: hero Question: Who's your hero and why?
2. What's a hero?
3. Can one person make a difference?
4. How can the web be used for personal stories and for intercultural exchange?
5. Make up your own damn question!

ONE QUESTION SURVEYS For instance, "Who's your hero and why?"

Single question public opinion polls allow you to record the widest variety of people with the widest variety of opinions in the shortest period of time. . As an exercise this allows lots of practice. Compilations of the variety of opinions make for fascinating viewing.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

It is more time consuming to ask follow-up questions but you can get deeper answers with a wider perspective. For instance, after the question for instanced above: "Do you know what lead them to their heroism?" "What obstacles did they overcome to succeed?" and "Can one person make a difference?" This exercise will help develop interview skills more.

TRY TO EDIT IN THE CAMERA

Press the record button "on" right before or after the question and off when the interviewee is finished.

RECORDING THE OPENING AND CLOSING SHOT

Record one long clip at the beginning of the segment showing the entire landscape and pedestrian traffic at your location saying:

"This is the MyHero.com opinion poll about your theme. Everyone was asked your question. No one is edited out because of his or her point of view. This video was recorded at your location, on date and produced by crew's names."

For the closing shot, voice the same script but record the picture of all crew members (either set the camera on a tripod or wall, ask someone to hold it, pass it around your crew, or hold it at arm's length.)

If you are editing in the camera you'll have to record these clips in place. Otherwise you can choose when and record both in a row and then edit them into the right place later.

TECHNICAL PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS – learn to do this quickly

1. Standard head-and-shoulder framing.
2. Keep lens in wide angle and move close enough to get proper frame.
3. Sharp focus (zoom in to nose or forehead, focus, zoom out).
4. Steady handheld camerawork, with no camera movement, no zooming while recording.
5. Bounced or reflected light is best, with a bounce white card, professional reflector or using natural bounce off a light colored building or windows. Otherwise full lighting on the interviewee; keep the sun behind you and watch out for shadows (including your own). Adjust your location as the light changes.
6. Set white balance and exposure on auto or manual as needed but look carefully before recording.
7. The voice must be perfectly clear. Always wear headphones and monitor the sound that you are recording. A directional mic should be aimed directly at the interviewee's mouth and as close as needed. Don't keep the mic on top of the camera. If it's a quiet location, hold the mic just out of frame, but if there's much background noise it's ok to see the mic in frame (but don't block the

interviewee's mouth and do put a MyHero.com sticker on the mic). With a one-person crew, you can learn to hold the mic in one hand, camera in the other.

EDITING

If you can, edit the videos. (If you can't, skip below to SCREENING YOUR NEW VIDEO.)

1. Start with 30 seconds of bars or black and then the Opening Shot.
2. For pacing and clarity, you can include or exclude your questions, and an interviewee's pauses before they speak or after they're finished.
3. Look carefully at your footage. Leave out sections or whole interviews if:
 - a. It's difficult to hear or see even after adjusting with filters.
 - b. Their opinion is unclear or they do not answer the question.
 - d. Their answer is hateful or otherwise personally destructive.
4. You can select entire answers or shorten an interview that is too long.
5. You can keep them in the order you recorded or rearrange the order.
6. You can make a shorter edit of only a few of the best, most surprising, most articulate, strongest, provocative and thought-provoking opinions. Or make montages of short phrases and sound bites.
7. If you have time, add titles: opening title including location, lower-thirds, translation or end credits.
8. End with the Closing Shot. Then add at least 10 seconds of black.

SCREENING YOUR NEW SIDEWALK INTERVIEW VIDEO

1. View your completed assignment several times. Once (or more) for the creative pleasure and hard-earned satisfaction of completing this new production.
2. Keep viewing and look more carefully and critically in both recognizing where the video succeeds and where there are flaws that need correcting.
3. Show it to test previewers who may be able to tell you if anything is difficult to hear and other problems. Any honest criticism will aid you to becoming a stronger producer next time. Sometimes criticism is off base so you have to account for the biases of the test previewer.
4. Show it to friends or others just to get a sense of the feeling in the room while it's on. If they laugh at a humorous line it tells you that it's clear and they're paying attention, without you having to ask them.

If there are flaws, and you can, correct the flaws, view the video again for your enjoyment and final OK, and then refer next to SENDING YOUR NEW VIDEO.

SENDING YOUR NEW VIDEO TO MYHERO.COM– add your new Sidewalk Interview video to our popular website and enter our shorts festival.

Label the tape cassette and case with the location, date. Also include a paper note or email us you're your location, date, theme and question, duration of the sequence, the production crew's names, and a contact's address and mail it to:

MyHero.com Glenneyre Laguna Beach, California

<<<UPLOADING?:??>>>