



## NECESSARY SKILLS FOR VIDEO INTERVIEWS

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### **Abstract:**

During the communication process, the media person must use the interview method to collect information. However, due to the characteristics of each different type of communication, the language, methods and skills of interviewing are different. The video interview is considered the most difficult skill. In Vietnam, the images of interviewees appearing in video interviews make them feel shy and uninterested because they are affected by many factors such as psychological appearance in front of the camera. Sometimes, they are shy or do not want many people to know about them. Therefore, conducting a video interview becomes more difficult. Therefore, in order to conduct an effective video interview, media people need to equip themselves with the necessary basic skills.

**Keywords:** interview, video recording, skills, communication

### **1. Skills in approaching and having a conversation with interviewees**

The media person doing the interview means having to ask and answer the interviewees and objects related to the topic to get information. Particularly for video communication products, the use of the interviewees' answers is also the appearance of their faces on the screen. With propaganda topics, approaching the interviewees becomes simple. The media person comes to meet the interviewees and asks for an interview. However, for critical issues, approaching and talking to the interviewees is a time-consuming task because they can use any excuse to avoid the interview. Therefore, approaching and having a conversation with interviewees is not an easy matter.

Mrs. Hong Anh, a reporter VTV24 News Center also once shared: *"The failure of a video interview product is the failure to contact, approach and convince the interviewees"*. That is enough to see that the appearance of the interviewees is one of the factors that create objectivity and authenticity. Therefore, approaching and talking to the interviewees also requires the necessary skills. Within the framework of this content, the author boldly offers some skills to approach the interviewees most effectively.

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Firstly, contact the interviewees in advance by official letter and wait for a response; remember to ask for a specific time schedule and do not let the interviewees answer in a general way, such as *“when I have free time, I will call you back”*.

Secondly, go directly to the interviewees and convince them to participate in the interview.

Thirdly, for special and sensitive interviewees, such as HIV-infected people, prostitutes, offenders, people who are stigmatized by society or those who do not dare to face the public... If the interviewees turn down, the media person can ask other members (such as parents, teachers, friends, colleagues, and leaders of the interviewees) to persuade with gentle words, express feelings and possibly sympathize with other interviewees and want to hear from them.

Fourthly, the media person may not need to be a direct Q-A person, but can ask interviewees' relatives and most trusted people to help. For example: when reaching out to a child who has been sexually abused, it will be difficult for the media person to approach. Instead, it is possible to ask the parents and grandparents of the child through a few questions (maybe in a closed room and the media house has already prepared all the recording equipment).

Fifthly, go to the interviewees unexpectedly and think of a way to attract attention (at the interview destination). This can be one of the opportunities for the media person to reach out to the leaders who do not want to participate in the interview.

## **2. Skills in leading and mastering the interview**

The Master of Ceremonies (MC) is the person who leads the story through a question-and-answer session. Therefore, he or she will have to be the interviewer. It means that he or she is completely active in the interview process from starting the meeting to asking questions and finally closing the interview.

Before the interview, the media person/MC and the interviewees can talk about general topics, such as work, family, etc. in order to create a friendly and close atmosphere. It is also possible to tell each other funny stories as *“bait”* for the interview. It is advisable to avoid creating a feeling of tension before the camera starts running. While the camera is preparing, the media person/MC should talk to the interviewees about the content as briefly as possible.

When conducting the interview, the media person/MC appearing must be polite. Therefore, attention should be paid to form and makeup. It is advised not to wear too flashy jewelry.

The media person/MC declares *“I”* and the interviewees also declare *“I”* during the interview process, except for special cases.

During a conversation, the media person/MC should listen actively, take notes, and interrupt when necessary. They can even ask again if the problem is not complete and convincing.

The media person/MC should not force or suggest answers.

The media person/MC should come back to the topic if the interviewees go too far.

The media person/MC should ask another question if the interviewees' answer is too general.

The media person/MC should ask open-ended questions if the interviewees speak little, then return to the topic.

The media person/MC should not argue or give an opinion.

The media person/MC should not be afraid to interrupt the interviewees, or ask them to repeat.

The media person/MC should know how to get out of the original question if there's a statement that's off-topic but interesting.

The media person/MC intends to interview many questions but may stop the interview if one answer contains all the necessary information.

The media person/MC should use a pen and notebook to record important content so that it does not take much time in post-production.

### **3. Skills in recording a video interview**

One of the first skills when recording an interview is realizing that an interview can be just a few questions about a certain topic or event or the interview can be like a story in which it needs to have a good start, exciting middle and impressive ending.

According to Mrs. Hong Anh, *"The success of a recorded media production depends 85% on the role of the cameraman. What image he "gives" the media person, she/he gets it. A sophisticated cameraman can produce good images, frames, and lots of information. As for unsophisticated filming, the cameraman may give the editor "bad" images. It can be seen that the recording of the interview determines the quality and information effectiveness of the media product. Therefore, the interview recording process requires certain principles.*

When recording interviews, multiple cameras can be used. Having at least two cameras makes shooting and post-processing easier. Shooting with multiple cameras will make the interview safe if one of the cameras fails. Besides, to revive the interview, filming needs to pay attention to different camera angles, the scene where the editor is listening, the scene with two people, the scene over the shoulder or the surrounding background, and the expressive attitudes of both the interviewer and interviewees. This is very useful when rendering. Moreover, it can make the interview have real exchange and listening, not "inner monologue".

When filming interviews, pay attention to framing. For example, it is disadvantageous to close up a "problem" face (they have a defect in the face...). In this case, it should be captured in the middle, over-the-shoulder scenes so that the interviewees do not feel too bad when appearing on the video. When filming interviews, videographers should exploit a lot of middle scenes (scenes where two people talk to see the exchange atmosphere of both the questioner and the respondent. From there, the public realizes that there is an exchange and listening, etc.).

Currently, the frame in the interview is mainly 3/4 (tilt angle). Therefore, the media person/MC should sit close to the camera comfortably and politely and on a par with the interviewees. They should avoid sitting too high, too low or uncomfortable and they

should look directly at the interviewee in a friendly way. Therefore, the perspective of the media person /MC is also an essential skill that needs attention. This also affects the footage when recording. That is, when to look at the camera and when to look at the interviewee. Only then, the new cameraman can record beautiful camera angles and sizes.

An interview is like a conversation with friends and the cameras are only there for the public to see. When the media person/MC speaks to the audience (usually the introduction) and looks into the camera. At this time, the cameraman can record close or mid-scenes. When the media person/MC asks a question and listens to the interviewees' answer, close-ups will be recorded. At the same time, the cameraman can capture a variety of scenes that reveal the expressive attitudes of the interviewees, such as smiling, nodding and showing sincere interest in the interviewees' answers.

However, in order to capture the soul of the interviewees, it is required that the cameraman be a delicate person who engages with the story the interviewees are sharing... Besides, the cameraman must be a sensitive person who can predict the psychology of the interviewees and quickly capture valuable images.

Mrs. Minh Huong - Former Deputy Director of VTV24 News Center once said: *"There are interviews where the value is not in the interviewees' answer, but in the images which express emotions and attitudes of the interviewees..."*. This is understandable, because with some highly critical communication topics, when interviewing leaders or authority figures, they often avoid or answer roundabouts, even give confusing questions or are unable to answer the questions. At that time, the cameraman will be subtle to capture images of the interviewees' embarrassment and facial expressions. These images are valuable information.

If a lot of questions are going to be asked, the cameraman should change the camera angle to create rich and attractive images.

If the frame is tight, the cameraman should pay attention that the frame to have a place for the banner to caption the name, and age at the bottom of the logo of the communication channel above. In many cases, the caption banner falls into the mouth of the interviewees, leading to a very unsightly scene.

Currently, many video interviews are facing the fact that the context selection is stereotyped, not vivid and creative. The basic contexts often used are: If in the room, the interviewees sit at the table, next to the wall; coffee shop, or in a studio. The context is also often a green bush behind, or sitting on a stone bench, or sidewalk. In this context, the media person will not need to invest in the selection. That's what makes the interviews look similar. Therefore, depending on the topic of the interview, it is required that the media person choose the interview context to suit the interviewees and content to increase authenticity and objectivity. For example, it is not possible to interview the doctor in the hospital's garden to answer the interview, instead, the context of the interview can be where the doctor has just examined the patient. In this context, the background is the patients who have just been examined by this doctor. If an art teacher is interviewed, try to set it up so students can work in the context of art projects. The

cameras can be set so that the finished ceramic pieces are used as a background. The visual appeal of the image is just as important as the information.

Attention should also be paid to the noise of the scene for the best interview effect. It is the sound of the scene that can create an attractive feeling for the information being given. It is advisable to avoid unnecessary noises such as fans, air conditioners, vehicles, etc.

#### **4. Questioning skills**

It is said that: *“Interview questions are proportional to the answers”*. Thus, it can be seen that the question of the media person/MC plays an important role in obtaining the answer results.

The first important thing to mention here is that the media person/MC must ask the right questions to the right people and about the right topic of the interview. If good questions are not asked by the right people, all information obtained is not of good quality conversely, questions that are not suitable for the interviewees also lead to bad results. Thus, asking questions needs to be appropriate to the interviewees and the identified topic.

The interview questions are mostly open-ended questions. Open-ended questions require more than one or two words to answer. (Not Yes/no questions).

For example, it isn't advisable to ask the following question: How long have you been a DJ?

Instead, a question can be asked: Can you tell us how you became interested in DJ?

A good media person /MC must always be someone who can always ask suggestive questions, or “set traps”, causing the interviewees to show their intelligence or may fall into an awkward situation (interrogative interview case).

Questions should be asked in a direct, short manner with few clauses.

It isn't advisory to ask questions when the media person /MC knows the answer in advance.

The questions asked should always be kept short and simple. Long questions may yield the same answers, which proves that the questions are crucial to the whole interview.

#### **5. Post-production skills**

If it is a complete interview, post-production will become simpler because the interview process will be cut into 3 parts, including the introduction, middle and ending. It is also possible that before the interview, there will be a component report instead of the introduction of the interviewees.

It is necessary to build interactive images, question-answer, edit images, flexible scene sizes (full - mid - close - specification) and avoid a long scene. Images should be

filled with images that clearly show the emotions and attitudes of the media person/MC and the interviewees.

If the interview is used for journalistic work such as reports, news, memoir, etc., there should be a series of images of interviewees before the interview in order to create a seamless and integrated feeling. Specifically, an interviewee who does not appear in the report, but appears in an interview is taboo (except in the case of linking a series of interviews to create a forum).

It is necessary not to mistype the name and addresses of the interviewees.

A successful interview requires a combination of many factors, such as identifying the right topic, choosing the right interviewees, choosing the right location, choosing the right interview time and asking the right questions. With attractive questions, the media person /MC leads the conversation in a natural and attractive way, helping the interviewees to have a natural and comfortable mentality before and during the interview. The most important thing is that the members of the production team must coordinate closely during the interview to effectively exploit information to create a quality communication product.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author**

Le Thi Minh Huyen is currently working at Vietnam Women's Academy, Vietnam. She is doing research on the necessary skills for video interviews.

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